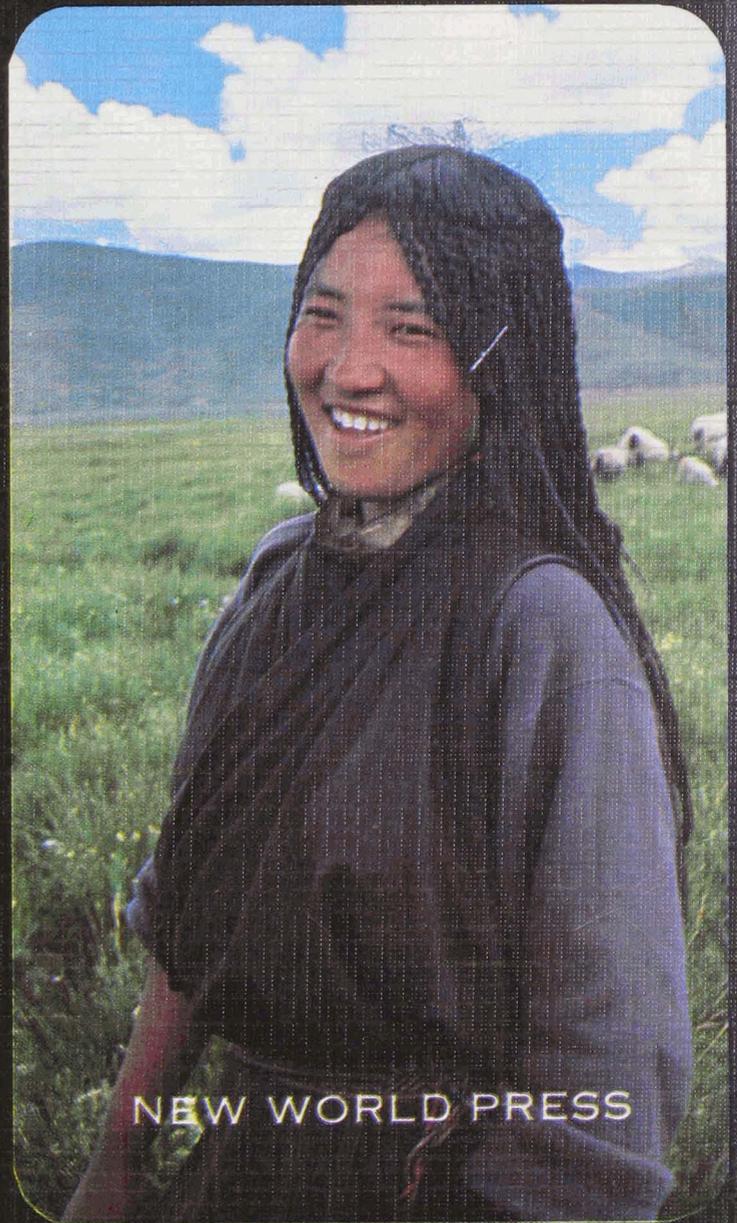
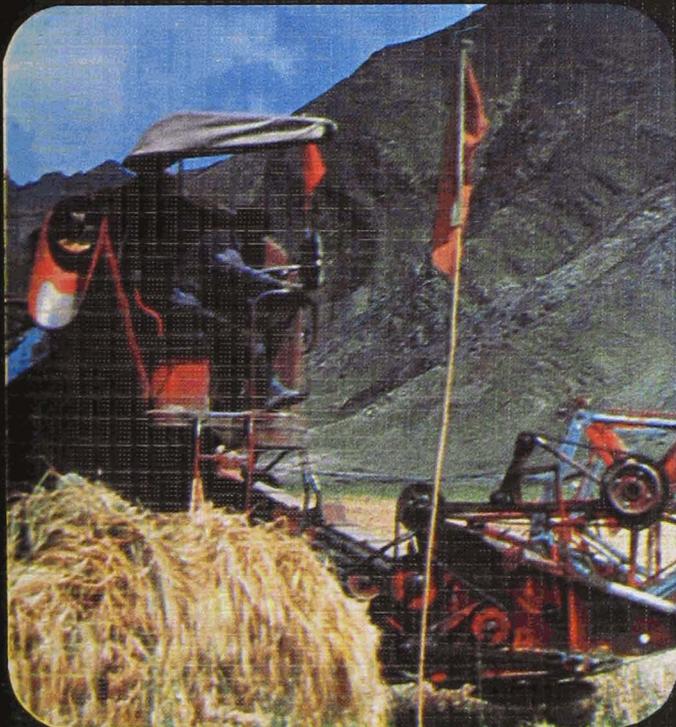


# TIBET TRANSFORMED

Israel Epstein



NEW WORLD PRESS



*Israel Epstein*

*Tibet Transformed*

NEW WORLD PRESS  
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## CORRECTIONS

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- P.126 Picture p.8 after p.126, caption "Tsering Lhamo (right)" should be "Tsering Lhamo (second left)".
- P.144 Line 1 of footnote, "1970's" should be "1950's".
- P.230 Picture of Ngapo Ngawang-Jigme on p.3 after p.230, line 1 of caption, "1961" should be "1981".
- P.256 Line 10 from bottom, "voluntarily" should be "involuntarily".
- P.262 Line 7 from bottom "will be reconciled" should be "will never be reconciled".
- P.283 Middle of page, "In 1955, forty years after Grenard's testimony" should be "In 1955, sixty years after ..."
- P.454 Last line of second paragraph "Przevalski" should be "Przevalsk".
- P.538 Line 3 from bottom, "Missoori" should be "Mussourie".
- P.550 Line 8, column 2, "Energy" should be a new entry, not under "Encyclopedia, Great Soviet".
- P.563 Line 26, column 2, "Tsemen Sonam Bianju, ex-rebel, serf" should be "... ex-rebel, serf-owner".

There are other minor technical errors not affecting meaning for which we apologize.

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# CONTENTS

|                                   |    |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| <i>Foreword</i> . . . . .         | 7  |
| Chapter 1 Reincarnation . . . . . | 11 |
| Chapter 2 Contrasts . . . . .     | 26 |

## REVOLUTION IN THE MANORS

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Chapter 3 Serfs and Slaves Rule Khaesum Manor . . . . .                              | 42  |
| Chapter 4 Palha Manor — A Footnote to the <i>Britannica</i> . . . . .                | 64  |
| Chapter 5 Recollections of Two Beginnings . . . . .                                  | 76  |
| Chapter 6 Gyaepa Commune and Tsering Lhamo, Pioneer<br>Among Tibetan Women . . . . . | 90  |
| Chapter 7 State Farms — In Class Struggle, Production and<br>Science . . . . .       | 102 |
| Chapter 8 The New State Farms — Machines, Irrigation<br>and Grain . . . . .          | 116 |

## FROM THE DEPTHS OF HELL

|                                  |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Chapter 9 The Accusers . . . . . | 126 |
|----------------------------------|-----|

## LEADERS OF THEIR PEOPLE

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Chapter 10 Tibetan Cadres: From the Long March to Today . . . . .   | 152 |
| Chapter 11 Ngawang Gyatso — Steeled in the Heart of Lhasa . . . . . | 165 |
| Chapter 12 Champa Gyaltzen — Serf Tailor to County Head . . . . .   | 173 |
| Chapter 13 Tsering Phuntso — People's Policeman in Lhasa . . . . .  | 180 |

## ARMS FREE THE PEOPLE; THE PEOPLE TAKE UP ARMS

|            |   |     |
|------------|---|-----|
| Chapter 14 | The People's Liberation Army in Tibet . . . . . | 192 |
| Chapter 15 | The Old Tibetan Army . . . . .                  | 211 |
| Chapter 16 | Big Tashi — Soldier of New Tibet . . . . .      | 227 |

## UNITE ALL WHO CAN BE UNITED

|            |   |     |
|------------|---|-----|
| Chapter 17 | United Front — Always Open-Ended . . . . .      | 242 |
| Chapter 18 | Nachi: Khamba Serf Teacher to Lhasa Aristocrats | 258 |

## INDUSTRY AND WORKERS

|            |   |     |
|------------|---|-----|
| Chapter 19 | Industry — From None to Socialist . . . . . | 266 |
| Chapter 20 | Old Crafts in New Society . . . . .         | 282 |
| Chapter 21 | Family of Tibet's New Workers . . . . .     | 294 |

## ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

|            |                                      |     |
|------------|--------------------------------------|-----|
| Chapter 22 | New Sun in the Grasslands . . . . .  | 308 |
| Chapter 23 | Pasture Paths to Socialism . . . . . | 322 |

## REVOLUTION IN EDUCATION AND CULTURE

|            |   |     |
|------------|---|-----|
| Chapter 24 | Tibet's State Schools . . . . .                     | 334 |
| Chapter 25 | Schools by and for the People . . . . .             | 347 |
| Chapter 26 | Higher Education Comes to Tibet . . . . .           | 352 |
| Chapter 27 | Science on the World's Roof . . . . .               | 361 |
| Chapter 28 | Tibet's New Culture in Birth . . . . .              | 366 |
| Chapter 29 | Battle for Health — The Nationality Grows . . . . . | 386 |

## RELIGION

|             |  |     |
|-------------|--|-----|
| Chapter 30  | Religion and Politics in Tibet . . . . . | 402 |
| Chapter 31  | Reform in the Cloisters . . . . .        | 417 |
| Background: | Facts from History . . . . .             | 433 |

## Appendices

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| I. SLAVE AND SERF REVOLTS AND RESISTANCE IN OLD TIBET  | 481 |
| II. IMPORTANT CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY POLICY STATEMENTS AND NEW CHINA'S CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS CONCERNING NATIONALITIES [Excerpts]              | 486 |
| Mao Zedong: On Coalition Government (April 24, 1945)   | 486 |
| Common Programme of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, 1949   | 487 |
| The Agreement of the Central People's Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet (May 23, 1951) | 489 |
| Mao Zedong: On the Policies for Our Work in Tibet — Directive of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (April 6, 1952)             | 492 |
| Mao Zedong: Criticize Han Chauvinism (March 16, 1953)  | 496 |
| First Constitution of the People's Republic of China (1954)  | 497 |
| Mao Zedong: On the Ten Major Relationships (April 25, 1956)  | 500 |
| Mao Zedong: On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People (February 27, 1957)   | 502 |
| Concerning the Rebellion in Tibet (1959)   | 503 |
| Constitution of 1975   | 506 |
| Constitution of 1978   | 507 |
| Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People's Republic of China (June 27, 1981)                   | 509 |
| Draft Constitution of 1982   | 510 |
| III. TWO NOTES IN PASSING  | 517 |
| 1. How the <i>Greater Soviet Encyclopedia</i> Has Reversed Its Treatment of Tibet's Past and Present   | 517 |
| 2. The Revealing Perversities of Victor Louis  | 520 |
| <i>Notes</i>   | 523 |
| <i>Index</i>   | 545 |



# FOREWORD

As indicated throughout this book, it is based on three journeys to Tibet, in 1955, in 1965 and in 1976.

It is an eye-witness and ear-witness account, with the dimension of comparison from observations at ten-year intervals, given largely in the words of hundreds of people who were there all along — mainly Tibetans, within a frame of historical background from many sources, and of comment.

Now it is 1982. Additional important changes and readjustments have occurred. These I have not personally seen on the spot, though I hope to later. But I have tried to follow them in other ways.

Life moves faster than books can be written. In times of revolution — with advances, setbacks and corrections — this is all the more true. Books, particularly in such a situation, are mere stills, or segments, in the unfolding film of reality.

Nonetheless, I believe the reader will find this account a true reflection of the essential nature and historically-determined direction of the great and basic process of change that has occurred, and is continuing, in Tibet.

What are the key essentials in the light of many centuries and of today's realities?

First, despite all zigzags, there has been tremendous advance. The grim burdens of stagnation and suffering under which the masses of the Tibetan people lived for a thousand years have been thrown off. The 17-article Agreement of 1951, the peaceful liberation of Tibet, the isolation and defeat of the serfowner revolt of 1959, the subsequent revolutionary reforms which ended feudal serfdom under theocracy

and put Tibet on the socialist path — all these were profoundly emancipatory, physically and mentally, for the overwhelming majority of Tibetans.

Second, today as for many centuries past, Tibet is an organic part of the multinational polity of China, its woe and weal linked to that of the other areas and peoples of this vast land.

Third, within this larger entity, Tibet has its own strong distinct features — in historical, social, linguistic and cultural development — including its ancient and close interweaving of religion and custom.

Fourth, the logical conclusion from Tibet's particularities is not separatism, as history has proved again and again. The Tibetan separatism of modern times, from its very birth, has been concretely and demonstrably linked not with the needs of the region's progress and people but with the manoeuvres of imperialism (including, lately, Soviet social-imperialism). The common aim of such manoeuvres has been to weaken and partition China as a whole with the object of preventing all its peoples, including the Tibetans, from realizing their own deepest interests and desires. In the case of Tibet, the foreign encouragement of separatism has been linked not only with the economic-political-military gnawing at all China but with specific geopolitical drives to dominate the strategic "roof of the world" for global ends.

Fifth, in the context of the liberating Chinese revolution (which includes that of Tibet), there have been not only countrywide errors but specific ones in relation to the minority nationalities — the Tibetan among them.

In China as a whole for some years, the Leftist urge to undue speed of advance led economically to disregard of the proviso wisely adhered to by the Chinese Communist Party up to the middle 1950's that social change must be accompanied by year-to-year improvement of the people's livelihood. (It was this that made the land reform and subsequent collectivization in China, along with early industrialization, so much less costly, given the essential necessity of the process of socialist revolution and construction in both cases, than in the Soviet Union.) Politically, Leftism led, particularly in the 1960's and 1970's, to China-wide blurring of the meticulous dis-

tinctions between antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions, between those in the ranks of the people, and those with enemies, and between the conditions of different localities, that were such a signal contribution, so long as they were adhered to, of Mao Zedong Thought to the Marxist assessment and solution of problems.

In the case of the national regions, the same Leftism led additionally to the confusion of national contradictions, and even mere dissimilarities among nationalities, with antagonistic class contradictions, which were thus assumed even where they had ceased to play a major role. Hence the undue copying of methods and tactics which were suited to the majority nationality areas, or sometimes impetuous and inappropriate even there.

Some of the fundamental achievements made in Tibet, in consequence, were accompanied by shortcomings needing correction.

In agriculture, for instance, the amount of grain produced in Tibet increased more than threefold between 1952 and 1980. In the pastures, the head of livestock increased some 2.5 times. Industry grew many times. All these were advances which would have been unthinkable under the old regime. But the living standards of the people, after really leaping forward in the period between the suppression of the serfowner revolt in 1959 and the founding of the Autonomous Region in 1965, did not improve correspondingly afterwards, despite continued and even accelerated growth. Was this the result of any kind of colonial or class exploitation of the Tibetans? No, very large funds were put into the region with no profit taken out. The causes lay, rather, in imbalances between the efforts made and the actual possibilities and needs of the region (assortment of food grains, types of products, disproportions between input — including labour — and economic effect, including created purchasing power, etc).

National autonomy, in circumstances in which almost identical measures were taken in majority and non-majority areas, was also not sufficiently developed. That is not to say that Tibetan cadres — political and technical — did not increase in numbers. They did, very markedly, which was another long-term gain. But the nationalization of cadres was not accompanied by increased adaptation of measures to local circumstances. The Tibetan functionaries, consequently, tend-

ed to be judged, and to judge themselves, by how closely they followed extra-regional models. They often did not develop the initiatives that their closeness to their own people and local realities should have enabled them to take, within the framework of socialist principle, in ways that no one else could.

All these defects, in 1980-82, were being corrected. If there was retreat, it was not toward the old society but to the positions of the immediate post-rebellion and post-reform period, which Tibetans remember as the "golden age" of democratic and socialist advance. True there has been, as a result of confusions and zigzags, a certain revival of older-type thinking. But the aim is the rapid overcoming of imbalance, shortages and strains brought about by trying to do too much too fast, in preparation for sound and steady progress, with maximum unity and support, including that of most Tibetans now abroad. Such progress in the long run should be more uninterrupted, and faster, than any that went before.

As for the disadvantages to the socialist economy from such "retreat", none are apparent. For instance, although compulsory grain quota sales to the state were discontinued, Tibet's peasants actually sold to the government in 1980, voluntarily and without any requirement being set, more than in any year when sales were compulsory. At the same time, their retail purchases increased markedly as did also their savings which rose by 14 per cent in 1979-80.

Above the commune level, Tibetan cadres now number 36,000 — or over 60 per cent of the total. Among the region's qualified medical personnel more than half are Tibetans. Among teachers in the 6,500 primary schools in Tibet (thirty years ago there were less than ten schools) about nine-tenths are Tibetans; among the 1,170 middle school teachers, over a third; and among technicians of all kinds the proportion is also increasing. The creation of this force is of major importance. And, with today's more flexible policies, its role and opportunities for initiatives really suited to local conditions will be enhanced.

So "Tibet Transformed" is a title proper not only for the revolutionary events of the 1950's and after, but also for the adjustments and renewed advance of today and tomorrow.

## CHAPTER 1

# REINCARNATION

The Tibet Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China was inaugurated in 1965, a decade and a half ago. Its birth marked a new stage in socialist revolution and construction in Tibet, begun after the triumph of the previous, the democratic, revolution. In the democratic revolution, with the help of the People's Liberation Army, which entered the region in 1951 and smashed the imperialist-backed revolt of the secessionist serfowners in 1959, Tibet's million serfs and slaves rose to their feet. Step by step, they took the land and herds away from the feudal-theocratic rulers who for many centuries had held sway over their bodies and, even more crucially, over their minds. And they built up, from the village to the regional level, local organs of state power that could represent their own class interests and will. An irrevocable change had come to the "roof of the world".

Throughout the vast mainland of multinational China, with the creation of the Tibet Autonomous Region, the structure of worker-and-peasant-based government in provinces and nationality areas as specified by her Constitution was basically laid down. Only one province, the island of Taiwan, remained to be re-unified.

Within Tibet, following the proclamation of autonomy the process of change deepened and quickened. From medieval serf society to socialism — a leap over a thousand years in the space of twenty or

so. Such is the essence of Tibet's recent history counting from 1959, the overthrow of the old system.

Land reform was accomplished by 1962, about ten years after that elsewhere in China. And the transition of agricultural and stock-raising to communes became universal in 1975, fifteen years later than elsewhere.

In material development, there is still a considerable gap with the inland provinces. But the timetable from now on meshes in with that of the rest of China in the programme of the "four modernizations" on the basis of socialism — to bring agriculture, industry, science and technology and defence to comparatively modern levels by our century's end.

To sum up, Tibet's two revolutions have been feats of rebirth such as its old local rulers could never have envisioned. They turned their backs on them when he chose to flee abroad in 1959. There followed one of those mass-powered social leaps that the Chinese Communist Party has known so well how to prepare and spark. In the strategy involved, every major stage was initiated or directly approved by Mao Zedong, with Zhou Enlai guiding the actual work from the centre. The fuel was the bitterness stored through centuries of oppression in the breasts of Tibet's serfs and slaves. The ignition was the growth of their new consciousness. The reverse thrust pulverized the old serfowning society, and with proportionate power propelled Tibet into the new. The advance was steady, phase by phase, but dynamic throughout.

In this book I strive to give voice to some of the essential happenings, mainly through the self-told experience of people at the grass roots.

Swept into the past was the temporal rule of the "living gods", not only as a power structure but in its grip on the people's thinking. By their 1959 revolt, the die-hards among the monastic and aristocratic upper crust tried to frustrate the peaceful democratic reform to which they had committed themselves in the Agreement on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet in 1951.<sup>1</sup> By their own resort to reactionary violence, they made sure that the essential change would come

through revolutionary counter-violence and mass action — and that the past order would be swept into pre-history.

Mao Zedong had foreseen this. As early as 1952 along with other statements admonishing the cadres and troops sent into Tibet the utmost respect for its people's national (including religious) customs and non-interference in the region's social structure until the Tibetans themselves came to demand reform, he admonished the impatient in the Chinese Communist Party's own ranks:

Since they (*Tibet's feudal forces. — I.E.*) are unwilling to put the Agreement into effect, well then, we can leave it for the time being and wait. The longer the delay, the stronger will be our position and the weaker theirs. Delay will not do us much harm; on the contrary, it may be to our advantage. Let them go on with their insensate atrocities against the people, while we on our part concentrate on good deeds — production, trade, road-building, medical service and united front work (unity with the majority and patient education) so as to win over the masses and bide our time before taking up the question of the full implementation of the Agreement.<sup>2</sup>

He also said:

If the reactionaries of Tibet should dare to launch a general rebellion, then the working people there will win liberation all the faster. This is beyond doubt.

Both these predictions were borne out by events.

In 1956 the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region was organized. Its task was to fully implement the Agreement signed years before, including a start on consultations for reform. The Dalai Lama, expressing support, took up its chairmanship. But in action he and his local government, the *kashag*, went counter to these aims. They backed various reactionary organizations (some prettified by names such as the "people's conference"), helped stir up revolts on the periphery, and activised their ties with separatist exiles abroad and with imperialist and other foreign governments.

In that same year, the central government, continuing its policy

of patience, put off the starting date for reform by another six years, until 1962. The personnel sent in to prepare were withdrawn. The associated local training of cadres was suspended. The old forces miscalculating, made their own use of the leeway given them. They proceeded to the organization, before the time ran out, of an all-out rebellion. This they unleashed in March 1959, only to find themselves racing for the border within a few days — so thoroughly had they isolated themselves.

In the years following 1959, the Panchen Erdeni, Tibet's other "living god", at first declared himself for reform and was made acting chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the new Autonomous Region. But soon, pressed by the same class interests and forces as the Dalai Lama before him, he was drawn into opposing the reforms which the rebellion had attempted to abort in embryo. Removed from his main posts in 1964, he resumed public life in 1978, speaking in praise of the basic changes that had occurred in Tibet and calling on self-exiled upper-strata figures, who had at various times opposed them, to return and see for themselves. Included, specifically, was the Dalai Lama.

At various times from 1976 onward, the Dalai Lama from India, had himself begun to speak of coming back to the new Tibet and of renouncing separatism "if I find the people happy".

The idea was publicly welcomed, officially and unofficially, by Han and Tibetan personalities at many levels. They made it clear that he could return temporarily to look things over, or permanently if he wished. This still holds.

The sticking point, at the time of writing, was a familiar one. Would he come on the basis of the principles of the Agreement to which he long ago committed himself — unity of China's peoples and non-obstruction to essential reform (by now solidly accomplished) in Tibet? If so nothing stood in the way, including his adherence to the 1959 rebellion. Or would he want to do so as a symbol and spokesman of the separatist and retrogressive aims of the 1959 revolt? No such reversal of history was of course possible.

This reflects the wider reality. The victorious working people in Tibet and throughout China are willing to forego historical scores with

the serfowners, whether for their centuries of past oppression or for their foreign-backed resort to arms against the revolution. In 1978, the last persons serving penalties for this were freed — with citizenship rights. But the unity of the multinational socialist country, with nationalities enjoying autonomy within this framework, is not subject to bargaining.

Whatever the Dalai Lama finally does, the key factor is that the post-reform political and social struggles in Tibet have proved the strength of its new system.<sup>3</sup> The basis of that strength is the vast change in its people. In this fission of the social atom, the deepest oppression was turned into untold released energy and those who were most down-trodden turned into the strongest and most creative. As in all true revolutions, this explosion was joyful and invigorating for those liberated, and exhilarating and instructive for those privileged to see it.

In burning away the sanctified serfdom that battered on them for 1,200 years, the Tibetan working people also removed the basis of two centuries of imperialist penetration. Tibet, for the first time, can be theirs, providing scope for their passion and creative potentialities.

The fission is also a fusion. Through it, Tibet has become more firmly united to the rest of multinational China by the bonds of common revolution. Ancient links were already deep-rooted, but inevitably operated in terms of the various types of feudal organization then existing throughout China, including Tibet. Later they were strained by the penetration of colonialism into all areas, but at the same time strengthened by common resistance to it. The new unity with imperialism thrown out, feudalism toppled and a new future to build in common is incomparably stronger than any before.

\* \* \*

Some people still raise the question, "Is Tibet, after all, a part of China?" History says it is. Tibetan separatists in self-exile, and their foreign backers, deny it. A couple of years ago, when my own matter-of-fact affirmation of the fact was printed in a Seattle (U.S.A.) newspaper, one of these backers, Professor Turrell Wylie of the University of Washington, wrote an angry letter to that paper's

editor. He charged that the People's Republic of China had "annexed Tibet", and that to say Tibet is, and has been, a part of China is "the straight Chinese Communist line".<sup>4</sup>

What does history have to say?

Documented facts show that the process of Han-Tibetan interlocking and finally unification in one sovereign state began very long ago, and administrative union dates from long before Scotland came into the British state, and centuries before the U.S.A. or modern Italy or Germany appeared on the world scene. Was this "annexation by the Chinese Communists"? Hardly.

In the year 641 A.D., at the dawn of Tibet's reliably recorded history, King Songtsan Gambo, who first welded its disparate tribes into a monarchy based on the slave system, wed the Tang dynasty Princess Wencheng and accepted titles from the Tang emperor of China. In 710, one of his successors, King Tride Tsugten, married another Tang princess, Jincheng.

In 823 a famous pact was concluded proclaiming "Unity between Uncle and Nephew", its terms for the reigning Tang dynasty Emperor Mu Zong and the Tibetan King Ralpachen. The stone monument then erected, carved with the text, still stands before the Jokhang temple in Lhasa. In intervening centuries, even at times of strain between the nationalities, it has not been thrown down or defaced but has been treated with affection and respect by the Tibetans. The memory of the two princesses, Wencheng in particular, has all along been cherished in their folk tradition. This cannot just be a matter of the personal merits of those feudal ladies. It is explicable only by the circumstance that these royal marriages, which did not occur in a vacuum, added a desired political link to the already popular contact, economic and cultural, between the Tibetan people and China's majority, the Hans. Warmly remembered too are the accompanying transfers of knowledge and techniques in agriculture, handicrafts, building, medicine and other fields<sup>5</sup> which benefited the Tibetan nationality.

From the 9th century on, during Tibet's long and complex transition from the slave to the feudal system, the extensive local kingdom of the Songtsan Gambo ruling house broke up into kaleido-

scopic fragments. Almost concurrently, China as a whole fell into disunity following the collapse of the Tang empire. The next dynasty, the Song (860-1279), conferred posts and titles on various feudal lords and clerics in Tibet — even though there was no longer an overall centre of authority there.

In the 13th century, under the Yuan (Mongol) dynasty, the then already multinational realm of China was re-unified, with Tibet organically included. Kublai Khan, the noted Yuan emperor, appointed Phagspa, a leading Tibetan lama of the Sakya Sect, as regional ruler under the court of Beijing. A single system of administrative divisions, military garrisons and currency (including paper money) prevailed throughout China, including Tibet, where Yuan banknotes are still being found.

The following, Ming, dynasty which ruled China from 1368 to 1644, favoured the Kargyu (White) Lamaist Sect, to whose high clerics it gave political appointments. It is historically untrue that ties with the rest of China were severed under the Ming, a thesis avidly pushed by British writers in the 19th century and early 20th, and taken up since the 1960's by Soviet writers (in reversal of their own previous stand).<sup>6</sup> In both cases, the allegation that Tibet was linked only with the minority-nationality dynasties that ruled all China (the Mongol and Manchu) but not with China's majority nationality, became fashionable at particular times and places — when the disintegration of multinational China was pursued by the foreign power concerned in its own interest. This allegation does not conform with the facts. In the Ming period the appointments of Tibetan officials from China's capital continued. Tribute missions (particularly from the lamaseries) multiplied. Economic exchanges grew. Of all this one sees many proofs in museums and archives in Beijing and Lhasa. In Tibet the Kargyu local rulers, who rose with the Ming, also fell with the Ming. But the links did not break.

The Qing or Manchu dynasty (1644-1911) upheld another lamaist group, the Gelugpa, or Yellow Sect. It was then that the system of local rule by this sect's pontiff, the Dalai Lama, and later of his lay-clerical administration, the *kashag*, was affirmed and elaborated by instructions from Beijing — along lines it retained right up to 1959.

From the 18th century, in particular, the identity and functions of both the Dalai Lama and *kashag* members were subject to detailed regulation by China's central government, largely through the control by its high commissioners (*ambans*) resident in Lhasa.

When the first Chinese Republic was founded in 1911, its multinational character was stressed in the new flag of five stripes, one standing for Tibet. In the subsequent years, China became unprecedentedly weak, disunited and penetrated by various imperialisms. Internally, throughout her territory, imperialist-backed warlords, of whom Chiang Kai-shek was historically the last, ran riot. And it was then that the British imperialist rulers in India, seizing their advantage, became most vigorous in their promotion of separatism in Tibet. In fact Britain, in 1912, officially threatened to refuse to recognize the new Chinese Republic at all unless Tibet was excluded from its administration, military system and parliament. Two years later, at the time of the Simla "agreement" of 1914, which China neither signed nor ratified, a British-manipulated Tibetan "representative" put his name to the "McMahon Line", which placed some 90,000 square kilometres of southeastern Tibet within Britain's empire in India.

The Simla affair was disavowed by the local authorities in Lhasa as well as denounced by the central government in Beijing. It is therefore farcical to invoke it as a precedent for Tibetan "independence". And a tragicomedy when it is done not only by ex-serfowner separatists, and their old patrons, but by some present-day Soviet writers.<sup>7</sup>

It should be noted also that Simla and the McMahon Line, those heirlooms of colonial domination over India, much later became the cause of border conflicts between India and the new China, quite unwarranted by the interests of either the Indian or the Chinese people and therefore certain to be temporary.

In external affairs, however, even the foreign powers most active at various times in egging on secessionism in Tibet never went so far as to "recognize" it diplomatically. On the contrary, they felt compelled to re-affirm, sometimes straightforwardly and sometimes with verbal curlicues, that Tibet was part of Chinese territory, for to

do otherwise would be too flagrant a flouting of accepted international norms based on centuries of historical fact.

Here are examples of such affirmations from three governments in three different periods:

In 1903, the British Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon, who was then preparing the invasion of Tibet known as the Younghusband Expedition, tried to justify it by calling Tibet's link with China a "constitutional fiction". Curzon was rebuked for this by his superiors in London who declared that Tibet must be regarded "as a province of China".<sup>8</sup>

In the following year, the U.S. State Department instructed its ambassador in London, Joseph Choate, to remind the British government there that the latter itself "had three times (in 1879, 1886, and 1890) recognized Chinese *sovereignty* by negotiating with the Chinese government on questions regarding Tibet" and to stress that Washington regarded China as sovereign in the region.<sup>9</sup>

Four decades later, in 1943, British diplomacy again tried to dilute the status of Tibet as part of China, by terming the link merely one of "formal suzerainty". The U.S. State Department promptly told the British ambassador in Washington:

For its part, the Government of the United States has borne in mind that the Chinese government has long claimed suzerainty over Tibet and that the Chinese constitution lists Tibet *among areas constituting the territory of China*. *This Government has at no time raised a question regarding either of these claims.*<sup>10</sup>

Finally, to go forward into the post-World War II period, Prime Minister Nehru of India declared in the Lower House of her Parliament on May 15, 1954:

I am not aware that at any time during the last few hundred years, *Chinese sovereignty*, or if you like suzerainty was challenged by any outside country.<sup>11</sup>

To repeat, all these quotations (in which I have italicized key words and phrases) are from governments which have themselves dabbled in detaching Tibet from China — British penetration in the

19th and 20th centuries, American C.I.A. doings after World War II, and the support of some Indian quarters, at various times, for Tibetan secessionists are all documented by innumerable facts of which this book cites only a few.<sup>12</sup>

It is instructive that even these governments could not help citing the fact of Chinese sovereignty, however inconsistent this was with their current or later actions, and however much they liked to play with the rubber-like term “suzerainty”.

If we go by Professor Wylie of the University of Washington, an expert on Tibetan phonetics but clearly not on Tibetan history, all their statements were on “the straight Chinese Communist line” — including those made long before the Chinese Communist Party existed!

Here are other historical ironies.

One: The Dalai-plus-*kashag* system (clerical-aristocratic local government) was tailored in detail by the past feudal central government of China. Yet it has been presented by the serfowner rebels of 1959 and their foreign backers<sup>13</sup> as a purely national and almost sacrosanct Tibetan state form and an argument for separation from China. So much for their historical logic. In the real logic of real history, it was this same system that China’s people of all nationalities, including the Tibetan, overthrew when the old local rulers flouted their own pledges of reform. That act completed the work of ending feudalism throughout continental China and consolidated a united socialist state with autonomy for its minority peoples. Which was, of course, the people’s sovereign revolutionary right.

Two: Another argument for Tibetan “independence” is based on Shatra’s signature of the 1914 Simla “agreement” which no well-informed person can deny was a sell-out to imperialism and in no way valid. How can signing away the territory, rights and nationality be proof of independent status?

To affirm the historic unity of multinational China, of course, is not to deny that history has witnessed clashes between her nationalities, acts of national oppression and discrimination, and periods of disruption. All existed in the past.

In early times, they were the results of the feudal system with its divisive urges. A new cause was added in the last century by the drives of foreign powers for the partition of China, with emphasis on her minority-inhabited borderlands specially marked for acquisition. As Mao Zedong said of this phase at the reception to mark the signing of the Agreement on peaceful liberation in 1951:

For over a hundred years the various nationalities of China were not united. In particular, there was disunity between the Han people and the Tibetan people. This was the result of the rule of the reactionary Manchu government and the Chiang Kai-shek government as well as the result of imperialist provocation and sowing of dissension.<sup>14</sup>

However, over the long stretch, every period of disunity has turned out to be temporary. Many centuries have proved unity to be the main trend. How to explain the persistent cohesiveness of China's nationalities over the ages if not by the fact that their basic interests have drawn them together and their history has been made in common? Is there a better explanation? By contrast, where today are the realms of ancient Rome, or Charlemagne, or the Ottomans and Hapsburgs, or of Napoleon? Clearly what we have here is not a "claim by China that every place ever reached by her power is hers forever", as Moscow's publicists today like to gibe. As they should know best, there are many such places which China does not claim at all. For the solidarity of her constituent peoples today, there is a valid base forged not by pretensions but by life.

Some of China's peoples, in her long history, have actually merged — her majority nationality, the Han, is itself a product of such fusion. At times, too, groups from the majority have been absorbed into minorities. In some areas, the nationalities live intermixed. Others, like Tibet, consist almost entirely of one nationality. But whatever their distribution, all these peoples have been held together by multifold exchanges and a constantly strengthened common matrix.

The revolution in China, including Tibet, has swept away the material and social base of the old estrangements and injustices. Her

new social and political system accords with and promotes the common striving of the people of all her nationalities for unity and progress. Discrimination is prohibited by law. True, it cannot yet be said that remnants of old mutual prejudice — whether of the majority against the minorities or vice versa — have been swept from every mind. But such remnants are recessive, diminishing and contrary to policy and general feeling. Loopholes appear for them only where the policy is impaired. This occurred in some of China's national minority areas (less in Tibet than in others) under the influence of the "gang of four". The latter propagated the view, contrary to Marxist theory and to objective fact, that "nationalities need no longer exist in the socialist stage". They attacked national autonomy as "divisive", and wanted to do away with it. Behind their "left" talk they were ill-concealed exponents of Han chauvinism rooted in the feudal past, and saboteurs of true unity.

It is precisely such Han chauvinism that, in all key formulations of liberated China's policy on nationalities, has been targeted as the main tendency to guard against and overcome<sup>15</sup> (local chauvinism among the minorities, also to be opposed, is secondary). Since the gang was brought down there has been much renewed stress on this principle.

At the highest political level, comprehensive discussions on Tibet were held in the spring of 1980 by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, and summarized in a document it issued. Immediately afterwards its General Secretary, Hu Yaobang, with other senior officials, made an inspection tour of the region. Changes were made in the Tibet Party committee. Some members, held to have followed an ultra-Left line, were dropped. One of their errors, it was explained, had been to copy mechanically, without regard to local conditions, measures undertaken in other parts of China. Two specificities had been ignored — that of the minority regions as distinct from the majority (Han) regions of China, and that of Tibet even among minority regions (its rather special history, its relative homogeneity, mixture of religions and national elements, and so on). The socialist direction is the same; forms must be adaptable.

Emphasized now was a filling out of national autonomy, i.e.

the power of the Tibetan people to run the region's internal affairs. Tibetans were to hold all cadre posts at district level, 80 per cent of those at county level, and comprise two-thirds of all full-time functionaries. Han cadres, it was declared, had in many cases completed their mission, and would be transferred to other localities as they were replaced by Tibetan cadres, for whom by 1980 there was a major source in Tibet's 40,000 Party members and a large number of non-Party activists and allies.

Within the region, Tibetan would be the first language, with Han simultaneously used as needed, in administration, education and other public affairs.

The Autonomous Region, it was specified, had the right not to carry out, or to modify, enactments of the central government unsuited to Tibet's circumstances. It could also frame rules, regulations and judicial provisions suited to it, within the framework of the general principles of the Constitution and legal system of all China. In conformity with this, a decision to further institutionalize and guarantee the exercise of regional autonomy by China's minority peoples in their own areas and their equal rights in mixed communities, was taken in January 1981 by the Nationalities Committee of China's National People's Congress.<sup>16</sup> In 1982 these specific guarantees, along with others, were written into China's new draft constitution as applying to all China's national autonomous regions. Among them was the provision that the chairman of each such region should belong to the nationality involved (see Appendix).

Already at the end of 1979, a seven-member legislative affairs group was appointed by the Standing Committee of the Tibetan Regional People's Congress, to be headed by two of its vice-chairmen, Chen Jingpo and De-ge Gesang Wangdui, to immediately begin drafting regulations for the exercise of autonomy in Tibet in line with its own conditions.<sup>17</sup> Early in 1981, special modifications of China's Marriage Law and Law of Criminal Procedure to accord with Tibetan conditions were announced.<sup>18</sup>

While these political measures expressed the equality of status of China's different nationalities, which is the precondition for their unity, those in the economic sphere aimed at speeding the approach

of material equality. The goal was set to achieve the highest average living standards yet known in Tibet within five years, and a major rise in its economy and level of livelihood by 1990.

In this category, not only was central government aid to increase, but the region was to be exempted for some years from mandatory state purchases of farm and animal products — and for two years from taxes. Some prices for voluntary sales by producers were raised. Communes and their production brigades and teams could now make their own decisions without ratification by higher authority. The autonomous region, under overall leadership by the central government, could work out its own plans for economic development, and manage its finances, forests and pastures to a greater extent than a province. It was also given wide rights in local cross-border trade with neighbouring countries (Nepal, India, Sikkim, Bhutan and Burma). In May 1982, tax exemptions for Tibetan agriculture and stock-breeding was extended for three further years, and for collectively and privately owned industrial, handicraft and trading undertakings for one year. The total of remitted taxes in 1980-81 was reported as 13.75 million yuan; while average per capita annual income in Tibet rose by 57 per cent in the same period to some 200 yuan — approaching the general average for all China.

In cultural matters, great stress was laid on the preservation and development of Tibet's ancient cultural heritage — ultra-Left errors had been quite serious in this field. Work was begun on the establishment of a University of Tibetan Culture. Emphasized, too, was freedom of worship for the religions and the inclusion of senior clerics in the united front. At the same time, to promote modernization in all fields, Tibet branches of China's academies of natural and social sciences and of various technical and professional associations were organized.

Unity within the nationality, and the freedom of visit and return for Tibetans who have gone abroad, were given added attention.

\* \* \*

Looking back, and forward, many Hans and Tibetans today do not measure their relations by just when, in what ancient dynasty,

their unity began or was formalized. Rather, they see, as the common meaning of their overall and particular histories, all China's nationalities contributing, from the earliest times, to the formation and stability of the historically formed multinational entity. Its deep roots, they are aware, became ever firmer in the last century of common defence against imperialism.<sup>19</sup>

Firmerest of all is the unity based on common participation in overthrowing the old society and building a new one, free of oppression and exploitation whether national or class. It is a spirit that manifests itself strikingly at all levels, from the major political and economic undertakings of the state to the attitudes and actions of individuals, both Han and Tibetan. Of this the reader will find many instances as he proceeds.

## CHAPTER 2

# CONTRASTS

Specifically, and in the order of consecutive impressions, let me set down some contrasts seen on my three visits to Tibet.

First, in transport links with the rest of the country.

In 1955, the journey from Chengdu in Sichuan Province to Lhasa took a grinding twelve days by jeep and truck convoy. Even that seemed wonderful speed then. The spectacular and heroically built 2,413-kilometre roller-coaster highway zooming up from the plateau to heights over 5,000 metres, and diving down from it into the chasms of many great rivers, was newly completed and to tell the truth, bone-shaking. But historically it represented hitherto undreamed-of progress. For thousands of years in the past the only transport had been by yak or mule caravan — six months being considered good time for the trip. A friend who came in 1951 with a People's Army unit, no slow marchers, had taken pride in his record of "only" 104 days.

In 1965 we boarded a Chinese civil airlines plane in Chengdu, listened to the girl flight attendants' routine announcements, munched on the sweets and fruit they dispensed, and were on Lhasa's airfield in 2 1/2 hours. It was easy to forget how arduously and perilously, and how very recently this meteorologically perverse air route had been pioneered. First there had been only special flights, mostly by the veteran military pilots who had blazed the trail. Now regular civilian air transport had taken over, carrying both passengers and goods. While we were there, the best part of 2,000 delegates and

other visitors coming from all over China for the founding of the Autonomous Region were flown in within a few days.

By 1976 there were two scheduled air routes, from Chengdu and from Lanzhou in Gansu Province. We flew in one way and out the other, over some of the most spectacular and impassable mountains and deserts on earth. The aircraft were big, the flights daily, the passengers, both Han and Tibetan, as unconcerned as on a suburban bus. On our plane were geologists and weathermen, construction personnel, seasoned skilled workers and new trainees, Tibetan students from colleges in the interior provinces, cadres on business or on furlough. There was a new airport nearer the city, at a lower altitude and better equipped than the one in 1965. (By 1980 there were ten flights a week, six from Chengdu and four from Xian via Golmud in Qinghai Province — this line had replaced the interim Lanzhou route.)

On land, Tibet, which had no highways at all before its liberation in 1951, was served by 1955 by two great trunk roads, from Sichuan Province in the east stretching for 2,413 kilometres, and Qinghai in the north, 1,965 km. In 1957, a third was added from Xinjiang in the northwest, 1,179 km. By 1976 there was a fourth from Yunnan Province in the southeast, 716 km. Apart from these, there was an international route, from Lhasa to Katmandu in Nepal. Surfaces, grading, embankments, drainage and traffic capacity were improving constantly, though still very far from ideal. (In subsequent years the work continued. In 1980, it was reported that there were no more timber bridges on the Qinghai-Tibet highway — all 53 had been built in concrete; and of 256 bridges on the Sichuan-Tibet road 216 were by then of concrete.)

Within the vast region, virtually all 71 counties and numerous communes were linked by local motor roads, stretching for over 16,000 kilometres by the mid-1970's. (By 1981, the total length of motorable roads in Tibet was given as 21,000 km.) The greatly increased number of vehicles we saw in 1976 were mainly of Chinese make. Freight convoys, each of scores of trucks, laboured their way over the heights — an engine is even less adaptable to 4-6,000-metre altitudes than human hearts and lungs, its effective power is cut by a third or so. But this hardship too was not accepted as final. In a special

institute in Tibet itself, work was being done not only in high-altitude medicine but in getting engines to “breathe better” on the world’s roof-top.

We saw long lines of trucks, some of them 8-tonners (in this weight they were usually Japanese Isuzu models) loaded to the brim coming into the region but going out light or empty. Let those who allege “Peking exploitation” explain that.

Nonetheless, with the progressively increased input into the region, transport continued to be a bottleneck — and still is. One of the reasons for the 1980 decision to sharply reduce the number of Han personnel from the interior was to reduce its load — since the reverse aspect of the determination to reduce strain on the region’s resources by supplying these cadres entirely from China’s interior provinces meant that each such cadre required roughly a truckload a year of food and other necessities. (This was the economic reason: the political purpose was to hand over more and more cadre work to Tibetans.)

Aid by China’s central government to the Tibet Autonomous Region, to itemise only a part, included the following:

The region’s administrative expenses were covered by the central treasury. Appropriations for them had risen by an average 10 per cent annually in the preceding years. Yet tax rates in Tibet were only a fraction of those paid in China’s inner provinces, the agricultural tax running at about half. (Under the 1980 decision a general tax holiday was declared for a couple of years.)

Long-distance highway transport of goods to Tibet was centrally subsidized. So most retailed prices there were the same as at their points of origin. Tea, for example, was sold at only 40 per cent of its delivered cost to the central government. The annual volume of freight brought in had increased almost threefold since 1959. Supplies on the market were in Lhasa, at any rate, more varied than in some interior towns; some factories in China’s inner provinces were commissioned to produce goods specially for Tibet’s needs, with further increases later.

China’s central government bore all costs for personnel sent for

research and development in Tibet, and for students sent from Tibet to schools and colleges elsewhere in China.

Since 1959, state loans to Tibetan peasants, herdsmen and their collectives, given at low interest or none, had been used by them to buy tens of thousands of draught animals and hundreds of thousands of farm tools of different kinds.

Prices paid for the agricultural or pastoral products of Tibet's peasants and herdsmen, had been raised several times. In the 1970's they were from 20 to 75 per cent higher than those paid in 1959, depending on the category. The prices charged by state retail outlets in Tibet for articles of daily use, on the other hand, were 20 to 80 per cent lower than in 1959, and their total sales had risen six times. In 1980-81 central subsidies to the Tibet region totalled 1.04 billion yuan — some 98 per cent of its budget or about 612 yuan per inhabitant. Moreover, the state pledged a 10 per cent annual increase in subsidies for the following years.

All these were measures to help the Tibetan people proceed from formal equality, as specified by China's Constitution, to actual equality — which can come only with extensive development of material production, education and other fields. At that point, of course, they would begin to contribute to, as well as draw on, the wealth of the entire multinational state.

Needed, for really expanding Tibet's economy, is a railway. Its construction faces many obstacles, high mountains, broad rivers, morasses, shifting sands and permafrost. In operation and fuelling, there will also be knotty problems to solve. In 1979, railheads were already moving closer to Tibet — in the north they reached Golmud, in neighbouring Qinghai Province. A southern approach was being discussed. I hope to make a future trip by train.

Impressive beyond words were the changes in Lhasa itself between my three visits.

In 1955, in contrast to the democratic and socialist new look being assumed by the rest of China, the region's capital had been deeply feudal. Medievally flamboyant, the Potala Palace of the Dalai Lama, with its sun-lit roofs of sheet gold on top and its vaults for stored wealth and dank, scorpion-infested dungeons for dissenters below,

towered above unspeakable medieval squalor. A third of Lhasa's population then were beggars and vagrants. Outside the walls of the great lamaseries and park-encircled mansions, one could see them huddling in rotting hovels or tiny ragged tents, the starvation-doomed, the ill and the old contesting with stray dogs for filthy morsels amid excrement and fetid pools. Mounted aristocrat-officials clothed in brilliant brocade and choice wool, followed by retinues varying with their rank, clattered in pomp through the streets. Ragged, grime-besmeared and with eyes down (for it was brutally punishable insolence to look above a noble's or high lama's knees) serfs and slaves toiled unpaid for them in the dust. High and low, the belief had for centuries been enforced on the Tibetans that everyone's station was predetermined by *karma* or fate, by virtues to be rewarded or faults to be expiated from past lives. Hence, it was deemed senseless for the rich (even though minor charities were esteemed) to have qualms about the essential fact that they were sitting on the necks of the poor. And both criminal and blasphemous for the poor not to patiently bear the yoke.<sup>1</sup>

New China's five-star banner already flew over Lhasa. The first two of the great highways from the interior converged on it. The first modern hospital and lay primary school had been built. But in inner administration, in return for the public promises it had given to sever ties with imperialism and not to obstruct the reform (both ultimately dishonoured) the old Tibetan local government, upper lamas and lay aristocrats still held sway.

Unforgettably symbolic were the sights on October 1, 1955, National Day, the sixth anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, at the huge mass meeting held on the open ground before the Potala. Behind the rostrum was a giant portrait of Chairman Mao Zedong, flanked by those of the Dalai Lama, then pledged to the 1951 Agreement, and the Panchen Erdeni. On the reviewing stand were central government cadres in plain blue cloth uniforms, and members of the *kashag* in robes of gold brocade. While crimson banners fluttered overhead the old Lhasa police, still unreorganized, loped through the throng, their rifles left behind for the day but their whips slowly swinging. True, I did not see them hit anyone, it was

hardly the place or the time. But nothing illustrated more vividly the smouldering contradictions of those years, between the larger entity, the socialist state of which Tibet was a constituent part, and the still extant local serfowner control. Between the people and the red flag stood the whip. This had to change, by reform or by explosion, and in 1959 it did — by explosion.

Until the serfowner regime itself, by launching armed revolt, tore up the 1951 Agreement on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet, the central government carried out its own part. Under it, everything undertaken to help the people had to be done via the feudal local authorities or with their consent. But the latter thought mainly of how to frustrate the inevitable process of change.

The People's Government had introduced the innovation, for Tibet, of wages for work on public projects. But many of the serfs and slaves engaged had their wages taken away by master or headman. Their very persons were others' property, so by slaveholder logic their earnings were claimed as well.

Schools were beginning to be built. But while religious instruction was compulsory, by accommodation with the old local authorities the teaching of natural science was resisted by them as "contrary to the faith" — they would not accommodate in this respect. Nor could history be taught or anything about exploitation in a land where the labour of others was appropriated in the most naked way, without even the intermediacy of money (many serfs worked 300 days a year for lamaseries or nobles as *corvée*, and only the rest for "themselves" subject to heavy taxes).

Cadres from among the Tibetan masses were beginning to be trained, though in the teeth of much obstruction, both within Tibet and in nationalities institutes in other parts of China. Besides political and general education, they were learning many technical skills that Tibet needed. But how could they serve their people when, the moment they returned to their home villages or towns, they could be reclaimed by their owners as unfree menials, or even killed for so much as opening their mouths? Most, in fact, were unable to return until they did so for the democratic reform in 1959, usually as activists in it.<sup>2</sup>

That was how the contrast between the situation in Tibet and that in the rest of the multinational country became a sharp contradiction within Tibet itself, soluble only by revolution, a knot finally cut by the serfowner rebellion and its quick defeat.

So it will be seen that the previous period, beginning with the entry of the People's Liberation Army under the 1951 Agreement, was not static but one of inner movement. It was in those years that the new piled up its impetus for victory over the old. It was then that new ideas, confirmed by their own experience, took root among the masses. The revolution was not brought, holus-bolus, from outside Tibet.

Its causes were inherent in Tibet's society; for centuries there had been sporadic instances of serf-and-slave revolt and resistance.<sup>3</sup> The new environment in all China incubated these causes to critical heat and protected the smouldering flame, which at length became a region-wide blaze.

"The people observed for eight years, thought for eight years, compared for eight years," was one often-heard characterization. The grapes of wrath were ripening.

By the middle 1950's an increasing number of Tibet's oppressed had begun to ask, ever more sharply and explicitly, why their traditional rulers, while paying lip service to the progress of the nationality, opposed every improvement for the mass of its members. Why did they continue to flog and to mutilate — as described in our chapter "The Accusers"? Why did they hound the children of the poor who dared to go to the new free schools, and cruelly retaliate against their parents, as happened typically with Ngawang Gyatso (in Chapter 12)? Was this a defence of "nation and faith", as they unctuously claimed, or just self-interested defence of serfdom?

The policy of the Chinese Communist Party was to give the reactionaries all possible opportunities to adjust. If they would make terms with the inevitable progress and the interests of their own people, so much the better — and it would be made easy for them. But if they stuck blindly to medievalism, tried forcibly to resist history and displayed their incorrigibility to the increasingly aware majority by overt action, then that would be the time to hit them hard and decisively,

mobilize the already outraged people and sweep away the anachronistic oppression at one stroke.

The die-hard serfowners, who rebelled, thought that through the force of tradition, appeals to anti-Han prejudice and their own still fearsome local power, they had the Tibetan masses fast in their grip. They miscalculated. But when it temporized and when it took swift action, the Party placed its ultimate trust in the class awakening of the oppressed, in the brotherhood of the working people of all China's nationalities and in the solidarity of all other elements among them that saw the mutual advantages of unity for common progress. Events proved it right. Otherwise, the rebellion would never have been quelled with such speed in this mountain land, where guerrilla warfare could be waged endlessly in any popular cause. The vast majority of the Tibetans would not have opposed or refused aid to the rebels; as they in fact did, with many arming themselves in the process. And the democratic reform with the material and mental transformations it brought could never have taken place.

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The new Lhasa I saw on my second trip, in 1965, was the fruit of the post-1959 upsurge. The Potala, still there and resplendent, no longer awed the pilgrim as "built by the gods", or as the main wonder. The fresh marvel was the constructive leap of the previous few years and particularly the previous few months.

In front of the great palace, the just-finished Museum of the Tibetan Revolution, erected in record time by the famous Construction Team No. 4 of modern-styled Tibetan builders, presented hall after hall of exhibits which gave a better reason than "fate" for the past misery of one out of every ten Tibetans. The accumulated wealth of the successive Dalai Lamas — the furs, jewels and utensils of pure gold, brought for the first time from the Potala's chambers and vaults, matched in their opulent splendour those of the Czars of old Russia who had 160 million subjects to sweat while the Dalais had less than a million. Here too, one could learn how "fate" is reversed. The people had taken the power and the land and thrown off the exploitation which had robbed them of as much as 80 per cent of their

produce. Since then and for the producers' own use, Tibet's grain crop had increased by almost half, and the number of its cattle and sheep by over a third.

By 1976, the Tibetan countryside organized in communes was producing 2 1/2 times as much grain as in 1959 (regional self-sufficiency had been reached in 1974). The number of livestock had almost doubled, and was 26 per cent more than in 1965.

Evidence of the new life was already everywhere in 1965. Across the square, also freshly built, stood the headquarters of the Autonomous Region, newly built in Tibetan style. Beside it was the People's Palace of Culture, with 1,200 seats in its main hall — not bad for such a small city which had other theatres and halls, and packed night after night with men and women who had only recently lived in cattle-sheds. Nearby was a big new State Department Store, stocking a wide variety of goods from needles and thread to transistor radios, sewing-machines and bicycles. Many were being purchased by people who were themselves bought and sold before 1959.

Lhasa boasted several kilometres of new, brightly lit asphalted streets with underground drains (there had not been an inch of either in 1955). A women's pipe-laying team was installing the first mains for running water. No more living-skeleton beggars, stinking ditches or refuse-filled pools.

New buildings included an airline terminal and a long-distance bus station. From the latter, one could travel in motor coaches specially made for the high plateau in Shanghai and Jinan, well-heated and equipped with oxygen.

*Since the liberation, and particularly since the democratic reform, Lhasa has built ten times as much floor space (in dwellings, factories, offices, schools, hospitals, theatres, etc.) as in its previous 1,300 years.*

In pre-liberation Lhasa, electricity had been available only to the Dalai Lama and a few aristocrats, and that erratically, for the tiny British-built generating station was generally out of order. In 1955 there had not been much more. In 1965, nine-tenths of the city's homes had electricity, used not only for light but frequently for cooking.

*In 1976, Lhasa had three power stations, two hydroelectric and one thermal. Some factories were generating their own current. Solar*

*power was heating water in public baths.<sup>4</sup> A geothermal power plant was being built not far off. Not long afterwards an experimental installation began work along with additional conventional power stations (and by 1980 two additional geothermal ones were under construction). Small hydropower stations in Tibet by 1979 numbered over 500 and in 1981 some 800.*

Lhasa had no modern industry in 1955. By 1965, it had such essential plants as truck-repair and cement works, as well as some consumers' goods factories. By 1976 its products included farm machines, tractor parts, small turbine-generators and electric motors for rural use. In Tibet as a whole, factories grew from hardly any in 1955 to 67 in 1965, to 260 in 1976, and some 300 later. Industry accounted for a quarter of Tibet's gross output.

By then, one third of Lhasa's people were workers or employees (some of the rest were peasants in rural suburbs). Households with industrial workers of two generations, such as Lhadrup's, described in Chapter 22, were not uncommon. Interestingly, a section of the workers were former young lamas. In all Tibet, the working class, virtually non-existent in 1955, had grown to 25,000 in 1965, some 65,000 in 1976, and over 70,000 in 1978.

Modern buildings and facilities do not in themselves prove progress. If imperialism and not the Chinese revolution had triumphed in Tibet, it too might have added some towering edifices to Lhasa's skyline — a multi-storey Shangri-la Hotel run by some great international chain, perhaps, with oxygenated Potala-view luxury suites for those able to foot the bill. It would not be too far-fetched to imagine, among its features, a Reincarnation Dance Lounge with statues of many-armed Passion Buddhas engaged in ritual coitus unveiled each midnight to titillate the guests. Or a bar tastefully named the Slave Dungeon by some high-powered entrepreneur.<sup>5</sup> Or, in the city as a whole, a situation such as I once ran into in the southwestern U.S.A. with its Amerindian people so strikingly like the Tibetans.<sup>6</sup> There, in Taos, New Mexico, in the McCarthyite early 1950's the hotel proprietors had smelled a "Red plot" in the demand of younger Indians, returned World War II veterans, that elementary modern comforts be installed in their Pueblo, the oldest continuously inhabited structure on

what is now U.S. soil. Why? Because seekers of the exotic would hardly pay to look at the 11th century if the picture was "ruined" by such things as electric lights and running water. Just as some might think Lhasa "spoiled" by more Tibetans wearing overalls and operating turbines, and a smaller number twirling prayer wheels.

In 1976, when we were there, one writer-visitor did so react. He mourned, in *Time* magazine, "Traditional Tibet is the dying wonder of the world." That the emergence of the new Tibet is a newborn wonder seems to have escaped him. Yet such it is, even in the most literal sense of "newborn". As a result of the changes described, and with free medical care, there are now four Tibetans in the region for every three in 1959. Perhaps devotees of the past would prefer to travel to the old Lhasa by some sort of reverse levitation rather than to socialist Lhasa by airliner. It's too late for that.

To give him the benefit of a doubt, the "dying wonder" observer might have been influenced by some distortions that indeed existed in the 1970's — when in all China (not only Tibet) even the useful and legitimate features of the past were unhistorically and arbitrarily denounced under the baneful influence of the "gang of four". And when some customs whose future might have better been left to the progress of education and science and the voluntary choice of those concerned were unwarrantedly interfered with. But if those defects were all he saw, he plainly misunderstood the basic policies of the Chinese revolution, including those concerning nationalities, which have since inevitably reasserted themselves.

Under those policies, the best achievements of the past made by Tibet's warm, brave, talented and hard-working people over the centuries are being preserved and developed. There are such achievements, most worthy of esteem, in architecture, in early bridge buildings, medicine, arts and crafts, in the vigorous and beautiful songs, dances and drama forms of the Tibetans, and in their abundant and ancient literature except where it has been altogether vitiated by monastic obscurantism. All now belong to their creators, the Tibetan masses, not just to an enslaving minority. The same is true of the rich and ancient Tibetan language. In the old society, 95 per cent in Tibet were illiterate. Today the vast majority of school-age children

are learning to read and write in their own tongue, with a work fund being expanded to meet new needs but happily rid of such features as a servile vocabulary for fawning on "superiors", and a contemptuous one for talking down to "inferiors". The criticism may be made that much more could have been done in recent years in building a contemporary Tibetan-language culture. And justly so as there have been setbacks and delays. That is why new positive efforts are being rallied to that end. But no one can negate the basic progress already made, which has cleared the way and laid the indispensable groundwork for further advance.

On the "roof of the world", as elsewhere in China, the distortions of the decade in which the "gang of four" ran riot, and the effects of the ultra-Leftism they fed and fostered, had their negative effects. Some, as in the sphere of education, were part of the country-wide picture. Others, concerning national and religious matters, had to do with local problems. But in Tibet, due to direct attention by Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, the relative steadiness and continuity of the region's leading bodies, and the great distance which put it out of the range of much of the disruption, these effects were in general less than in other national autonomous regions.

Already in 1973 Mao Zedong called for a campaign for "re-education" in China's sound basic policy toward nationalities, to prevent its erosion, re-assert it and give it fuller play. In 1976, when we were there, such a campaign was under way. In 1980, the same stress was made in important new measures for the development of the Tibetan region.

Some of the fairly numerous correspondents of the major Western news media who made their first visits to Lhasa in the summer of 1979 registered surprise as the depth of respect in which the Party and Chairman Mao Zedong were held there. A few even termed it "anachronistic". If my own direct observations over 20 years are any guide, what was anachronistic was their own point of departure, since they were more than two decades behind on the main reasons why such feelings among the Tibetan people are not surprising but natural.

The Chinese Communist Party and Mao are indeed esteemed in

Tibet. And the Party since the days when it brought liberation to Tibet, has become internalized as the core of its progress. At its third regional congress, in 1977 (the first was held in 1971) Tibetans, predominantly of serf and slave origin, comprised three-fifths of the delegates who represented 55,000 members, including those in the PLA units guarding China's southwestern border. A quarter of the delegates were women. Of the seven regional secretaries elected, four were Tibetan (though the first secretary was not). There are Tibetans in the Central Committee of the Party for all China.

Different indeed from any colonial or semi-colonial path is the road of Tibet within socialist China. As we have seen from facts and figures, Tibet is massively assisted, and in no way exploited by the majority nationality. Economic errors were made, involving waste of labour and funds, which was true in other areas of China as well, but nothing was taken away from the Region and its people for the material benefit of anyone anywhere else.

Yet this has likewise been ignored by some briefly-visiting correspondents who seem to relish the word "colonial" in relation to Tibet, just as they have tended to ignore the social nature of the change there. One of them in 1979, even found it possible to write that for the Tibetan peasants life had become "more circumspect" and "duller" than under the old feudal order. "More circumspect" than when the serfowner could deprive them of life or limb for a glance or a word?

Even in such reports, however, the improvement in the Tibetans' lives was generally affirmed, a welcome contrast with the formerly standard tales of the Region being "stripped bare".

Also laid low for good were the old nonsensical tales of "genocide", the "swamping of Tibet by Han immigrants" and the like. Everyone now admits the great increase in the number of Tibetans. As for the non-Tibetan civil population of the region, at the end of the 1970's was about 7 per cent, mostly rotating and not permanent.

The time will come when the most basic shifts, the qualitative transformations, will also be more generally understood. Among these, the most important is that the former serfs and slaves of Tibet,

the main body of the nationality, having fought through from one world to another in their conditions, outlook and prospects, are increasingly equipped to face and solve with confidence the problems that still lie ahead.

Let us now meet some of the people.



# REVOLUTION IN THE MANORS

### CHAPTER 3

## SERFS AND SLAVES RULE KHAESUM MANOR

Politically, the serfowners' rule in old Tibet was centred in Lhasa. Its base, however, was in their rural estates. In the fertile Loka (Shannan) area, in 1965 and again in 1976, we visited Khaesum manor, ancestral seat and one of the many feudal holdings of Surkhang Wangching Galei, last head of the Dalai's *kashag* or local government, who in 1959 became a rebel and fled to India,<sup>1</sup> later moving to the U.S.A.

I had met Surkhang when he was still in office. Like many Lhasa nobles, he was silk-wrapped, soft-bodied and effete. In marked contrast to the working people of Tibet, whose frank faces so readily reveal their emotions, his white pasty visage, clouded eyes, soft mouth and sidelong smile were all concealment. Nowhere more than in Tibet, in fact, were the rich and the poor so much "two nations". Of this Surkhang was a vivid example.

When I first visited Lhasa in 1955, we journalists had lived in one of Surkhang's mansions there, though not as his guests — it had been rented from him as a hostel. It was Tibetan in architecture, but its interior fittings were mostly Western, imported through India. I remember in particular the exposed ceiling beams, which were of bridge-girder steel! Incongruously they had been painted in floral designs on a blue background as was traditional with wooden beams in

Tibet. Cut into one-metre lengths and transported by yak over the towering Himalayas, they were then riveted together again for Surkhang's domestic purposes (as was the fashion then among the Lhasa top crust). One can only imagine how many peasants or herdsmen, pressed into feudal transport service, had toiled and been frozen on the arduous journey over the windswept 5,000-metre high passes to bring them here.

Around Surkhang's house were broad English-type lawns, edged with tended beds of flamboyant dahlias and other flowers. Like a bit of Hampton Court. And outside the walls, Lhasa's homeless and starving poor were fighting with the dogs for scraps of food.

At Khaesum manor in 1965 we learned, as we could not have done ten years earlier, what lay behind Surkhang and his opulent way of life. Erected four hundred years ago, the building was rougher and more fortress-like than his Lhasa pleasance, and in fact had for decades been occupied by bailiffs, and not by the Surkhangs themselves who had long since become absentee landlords. But Khaesum was the root of their exploited wealth, the ancestral nest of their parasitism. As such it was of greater interest. For the places where riches are produced are much more instructive than those where they are consumed.

So proud had Surkhang Wangching Galei's forebears been of their first tall stone manor that they had chopped off the right hand of its serf architect to ensure he could never design another like it. So open had been their exploitation that they had named the house *kbae-sum* (meaning "three bounties") to record the fact, we were told, that it cost them nothing for labour, stone or timber, all exacted as tribute. Under the massive edifice, they had ordered buried alive, crouched, an eight-year-old boy slave, so that the mansion would "stand forever"<sup>2</sup> — on the bones and the backs of the oppressed, the dead and the living.

And stand on this basis it did, through three centuries of unalloyed feudal rule and a fourth when its lords, the Surkhangs, hooked up with imperialism as well. Surkhang Dzasa, father of Wangching Galei, was one of the British Indian Empire's prized helpers in its

century-old frontier “forward policy”, the so-called “Great Game”, which was aimed, among other things, at detaching Tibet from China. After World War II, when the United States inherited this objective in eleventh-hour manoeuvres against the Chinese revolution, Surkhang Dzasa called in Washington in talks with its emissaries for arms and finances for the Tibetan serfowners.

In his book *Out of This World* (1952), Lowell Thomas, Jr. wrote of a conversation with the two “Foreign Ministers” of the *kashag*, of whom Surkhang Dzasa was one:

. . . the Ministers, without any fancy camouflage, came to the point directly: “If the Communists strike Tibet, will America help? And to what extent?” . . . The most important requirement, of course, is skilful guerrilla forces. To create these, Tibet needs arms and advice, principally from the outside. Arms would include weapons especially adapted to guerrilla warfare. . . . The kind of advice needed is technical instruction in the proper use and maintenance of this modern equipment, and in the most advanced methods of guerrilla strategy.<sup>3</sup>

So much for the record of Surkhang the father. His sons carried it on. Wangching Galei, after studying in the British school at Gyangzê, became prominent in the acquisition of arms from Britain in 1941. Though China was then resisting Japanese imperialism, Britain, her nominal ally, was arming Tibetan separatists against China. Then, before the peaceful liberation of Tibet in 1951, Surkhang ran off to India. He returned later, on British and other advice, to sit in the *kashag*, as one of the time-bombs that went off in the 1959 revolt. His younger brother, Surkhang Lhawang-Dorje, who had studied at Darjeeling and received military training from the British army, went to the U.S. and Britain as a member of the Tibetan separatist “trade mission” in 1947 and, after 1951, established himself as one of the separatist contact men at Kalimpong, India.

Such were the ex-masters of Khaesum manor. But their reliance on imperialism, which was not only an individual but a class matter, failed to preserve their power over their bondsmen.

In 1965 we found the manor's many bedrooms occupied by Surkhang's former house-slaves, who had once slept with the animals in its sheepfolds and cow byres. In one of its halls members of the Young Communist League, who were their sons and daughters, held literacy and political classes and ran a reading room. Having driven out the bailiffs who robbed them, the people of the former feudal estate were tilling the land for their own benefit under leaders from their own ranks who had formerly shared their woe as they now shared their victory.

All this was not achieved overnight by the People's Liberation Army's suppression of the imperialist-backed 1959 feudal rebellion. Nor was it automatically accomplished by the subsequent order of the government of the People's Republic of China dissolving the *kashag* and depriving the Surkhangs and their like of official rank. These measures represented strong support by the hundreds of millions of people of China's other nationalities to the million Tibetan serfs and slaves. But the latter, led by the Party, including the area's own first Communists, still had to make the revolution for themselves. That was decisive. For the new life cannot come as a gift. Only the oppressed and exploited themselves can really uproot old tyrannies, and change, in that fight, into free men and women — masters of the land and their own fate.

Between 1959 and 1965, a whole series of mass struggles were waged by them. First came a preliminary campaign known as the "three againsts" (against the rebellion, personal servitude and corvée labour) and "two reductions" (of rent and interest). Then the serfs and slaves divided their former masters' estates. Still later they united into mutual-aid teams to raise production for themselves and all Tibet. Steadily, the Communist Party was built from their ranks and the new state power of the oppressed set up in every village. It was in these campaigns, aided materially and morally by the people of all China, that Tibetan cadres were trained, and the masses won their understanding of what had happened in the past and what had to be done in the future.

## THE OLD MANORIAL ECONOMY

Ngawang, who in 1965 was aged 42 and head of the village government, told us the story of the old and new Khaesum. Heavy-shouldered and strong-limbed, his broad weatherbeaten moustached face topped with a broad-brimmed "Anzac" felt hat, he had been Surkhang's serf. But even this status, he related grimly, had been hard to maintain. For he had had to hand over several sons and daughters to the manor for an even worse life as household slaves or *nangzan* (when a poor serf family had more than two or three children, this was often the only way it could hope to keep them alive). Ngawang had laboured on the estate under five different *si-dui*, or bailiffs. So his account of its former manorial economy, as well as of its current mutual-aid stage and plans for the socialist future, was concrete and informed.

In 1959, he told us, the Khaesum estate had 26 households of *tralpa* (regular serfs owing corvée to the old local government as well as to their masters' manors), and 32 of *duichun* ("irregular" serfs or cotters, some of them runaways from their original manors; these people were often poorer and had smaller allotments than the *tralpa*, and some worked as artisans). Besides, there were 72 *nangzan* slaves. The latter were counted as individuals, not households, for as slaves they had no more right to a family than did a horse.

All these oppressed folk together, numbering about 200, tilled 126 hectares of fields. The best land, about 40 per cent of the total, comprised Surkhang's "home farm", worked by slaves and by serfs on corvée labour. Another 29 per cent was allotted to serf households, 28 per cent was worked by *duichun* on a rental basis, and 3 per cent by other *duichun* who paid combined rent and feudal service.

The average yield then was 7.5 *khal*<sup>4</sup> of grain — equivalent to 625 kilogrammes (0.625 ton) of grain per hectare. On this basis, the *duichun*'s rent was fixed at 6 *khal*, or 80 per cent of the crop.

From the home farm and other receipts, Surkhang's bailiff, after providing for seed and other needs on the estate, sent (63.5 tons) of grain to his master in Lhasa each year.

Besides grain, Ngawang said, Surkhang took many other things

from the people of Khaesum. Its 26 serf families, as part of their rent in kind, had to deliver to him each year in food products 1,500 eggs, 24 big sacks of flour, 12 loads of vegetables, and special delicacies such as ham and garlic. Besides they had to hand over 35 sacks of wool, shorn from their own sheep.

Writing the section "Manor" in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (11th ed.) the lifelong scholar of feudalism Paul Vinogradoff noted, with regard to Europe, that the characteristic dualism of manorial life combined the working of a central home farm and of its economic satellites, providing services and contributions toward the formation of manorial stores. So also in Tibet.

For the serfs, the worst imposition was labour rent, or *corvée*. Their 26 families, totalling 104 persons, had to supply 45 able-bodied men, each to do 180 days of such tribute labour. And this generally meant that the best workers were constantly away from the family plot (and invariably so at the busy farm season) when most needed. A host of other services had to be performed for the lord and bailiff. One was to carry the grain due to Surkhang, while supplying their own food, all the way to Lhasa, a cross-mountain trip so hard that Ngawang recalled three men personally known to him being frozen to death on the route. Other required items of unpaid labour were:

- Ken-ge* — long distance carriage of goods generally to Lhasa;
- Tun-ge* — shorter distance carriage of goods or letters;
- Gumbe-gyantse* — transport of grains from Surkhang's lands and for milling;
- Ba-ge* — carriage of other goods and mail between Surkhang's estates;
- Sha-ji* — carriage of mail between stages.

The bailiff also had his special perquisite. He could require serfs to do milking, baby-minding and household chores for his own family.

· Again for comparison I quote below (condensing slightly) from the article on "Manor" in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* which describes the plight of the serf in medieval England:

The hardship of his condition lay in the services due from him. He paid for his holdings in money, labour and kind. In labour he paid more heavily. Week by week he had to come with his own plough and oxen to plough the lord's demesne; when ploughing was done he had to harrow, to reap the crops, to thresh or carry them or do whatever was required until his allotted number of days of labour in the year was done. Beyond this, the lord might request extra days in harvest or other seasons of emergency and could not be denied. Further, all the carriage of the manor was provided by the villeins, even to places as much as 100 miles away. Mending of ploughs, hedging, ditching, sheep shearing and other miscellaneous work also fell on him and it is sometimes hard to see what time remained to him to work on his own holdings. In kind, he generally rendered honey, eggs, chickens and perhaps a ploughshare.

Modern Tibetan serfdom, however, was even more onerous; in feudal England, apparently, the serf, as distinct from the slave, was not transferred from owner to owner, except as part of the land. But in Tibet the degradation of serfs to full slavery, with transfer or sale away from family and land, was quite common.

Such were the exactions of the manor itself. But the list did not end here.

Besides duties to the estate, the Khaesum serfs owed others to the *kashag*, the local government. They were compelled to pay it an annual levy of about 1.5 tons of grain with another tax in money, and perform free *ula* service for its travelling officials and couriers, a burden particularly feared and resented. It involved, among other things, having available at all times barley meal, vegetable oil and cushions for their entertainment and, for the couriers, a remount and a groom. The slightest neglect or tardiness was punished by savage whipping. Further obligations to the *kashag* included means of transport for its grain; peas as fodder for its horses; dyestuffs for its clothing workshops; the delivery of specified amounts of timber or wool; and the supply of harness bells. Finally, the *kashag* collected

the "ear tax" (for the earrings or pendants all Tibetans used to wear), a tax on every birth and another for every death.

Nor was this the end. For there was also the Lamaist church. Khaesum's tribute to the monasteries was set at half a ton of grain, the daily labour of three horses and the labour of one man for every 1.7 hectares of land on the estate — 74 men were thus liable. Besides there were payments for chanting the scriptures every time the lamas came round, with butter and oil required for the ceremonies and for the monks' food.<sup>5</sup>

Listening, I seemed to feel the weight of those endless burdens pressing down on my own back. And I realized why Ngawang, like other Tibetans who had begun to study Marxism, did not find it at all hard to understand the Marxist labour theory of value, which measures exploitation as unpaid labour time wrung from the worker. In capitalist society, this essence is obscured by wages, rents and prices in money. In feudal Tibet, the people experienced it in its direct raw form. So what Marx had to prove to Europeans by deep-going analysis seemed, even to the most unlettered, quite self-evident. Hence also the Tibetan serfs' invariably concrete reckoning of their political liberation in terms of freed labour power, freed from so-and-so many days of forced labour each year.

Usury, too, was a mountainous burden, which Ngawang described in furious and incisive detail.

Of the 58 serf and *duichun* families in old Khaesum, only one — that of a minor overseer — had been free of debt. The rest, up to 1959 had owed between them 79 tons of grain, about 1.4 tons for each family. On such debts to the lamaseries, borrowers had to pay back six measures for every five borrowed, that is, 20 per cent annual interest. On grain loans from the bailiff, the interest was 40 per cent. On those from the *kashag* which also lent grain, it was 25 per cent before 1951 (it was reduced to 10 per cent in the period between the arrival of the People's Liberation Army in 1951 and the democratic reform in 1959). For money debts, which averaged some 40 silver dollars per family in Khaesum, the rate was generally 25 per cent per annum.

Finally, Khaesum's serfs and *duichun* had had to pay seven per

cent annually on 16,000 silver dollars (about 285 dollars per family) which they had never borrowed at all! This sum had been advanced to Ganden monastery in Lhasa by the treasury of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, who had bestowed on Ganden the right to make Khaesum's toilers pay the interest. From then on, the Ganden lamas had turned up regularly each year to collect, and in case of default had the right to beat the delinquents to death or force them to work off the due sum in labour. This mortgage on the Khaesum people had weighed on them through all living memory.

The *duichun*, or cotters, had a bit more personal freedom than the serfs. But economically they could be even poorer, more exploited and more insecure. "Often," said Pema Thondhup, in 1965 the deputy head of Khaesum township who was himself of this class, "a family would have only one quilt to cover five or six people." Not recognized as belonging to the estate they had no customary right to an allotment in return for labour service. Instead, they were rented odd bits of land for whatever payment the lord or his bailiff chose to exact in kind, money or labour. They were allowed to build huts on such land, but at their own expense. Having no lord of their own to protect them (i.e., to claim the right to punish them but deny it to other aristocrats), they could be beaten or killed by any member of the top strata. And if their original lords traced and pursued them to their new location (many came as runaways) they could be seized as fugitives. In this case the retribution was dire; the best they could hope for, if the recapturing lord was more greedy than bloodthirsty, was to pay a special poll tax for as long as they remained away. In short, the "freedom" of the *duichun* was largely fictitious — if these "masterless people" did not quickly attach themselves to some estate they were destitute and everyman's prey.<sup>6</sup>

*Nangzan*, or slaves, had no personal freedom at all. True, they paid no rent or tribute. But this was simply because they had no property, being themselves property. Possessing no homes, they were driven in gangs to the fields at daylight, locked into the master's courtyard to prevent escape at night and fed like work-beasts with ladled-out swill. Those put to spinning or other tasks in the galleries around the inner courtyard sometimes had the hems of their gowns

sealed to the floor to prevent them from leaving unobserved. On no account could they break the seals before the overseer removed them at nightfall. If they needed to perform their natural functions, they did so where they stood, like tethered cattle. They lived with the animals, were worked harder and treated more cruelly.

Ngawang and others had seen, personally, six men and women flogged till they died, seven frozen or starved to death and sixteen crippled by torture. Not only slaves, but "recalcitrant" serfs were so treated. Such was the frightful public execution of Tseley Dorje, who had refused to do excessive corvée. First he was hung by the hair from a beam, then stripped naked, then had sharp wood slivers attached with small coloured pennants stuck through his fingers, then flogged till virtually not an inch of his skin was left whole, then submerged in boiling oil to put an end to his life. Later, his three brothers were similarly tormented and killed, allegedly for theft but actually to punish the entire household and frighten others into obedience.

Compare this with the savage punishments in a similar feudal situation in 10th century England:

A freeman guilty of theft was hanged, a woman of the same status flung from a cliff or drowned, but slaves were tortured or burnt. . . . The stealing of cattle followed by flight doubtless offered a chance of self liberation. In any case, (king) Aethelstan ordered that each of a group of 80 slaves were to pay three pence to the owner of the guilty slave; they were then to stone him to death if he were a man. . . . Women slaves were burnt at the stake. "If we relax this peace ordinance," the bishops and reeves who authorized similar penalties in London declared, "then we may expect that these thieves will have the upper hand even more than they did in the past."<sup>7</sup>

In Tibet, too, fear of self-liberating action by the oppressed, in any form, was the motive for the bestial mutilations and executions by the serfowner-slaveowner class, for why else would they destroy or cripple the labour-power that was the source of their own wealth?

The masters were deathly afraid of the slightest defiance, lest

the flame spread. In 1927, in Khaesum, the serfs and slaves rose in a body to drive out the bailiff. Some writers — apologists of serfdom — have said that the people in old Tibet were “contented with their lot” and hence not really oppressed. Others, while admitting or even condemning the oppression, considered it too heavy for anyone to dare resist. Both views were wrong. Resistance of one kind or another was constant, though due to sparse population, difficulties of contact and great distances between manors, the actions were often in one small locality at a time.

“I was a serf,” said Ngawang. “Our Party Secretary Nyima Tsering was a slave. Let him tell you about their life of the slaves.”

### KHAESUM'S PARTY SECRETARY

Nyima Tsering was a small, dark, restless man, with brooding eyes set deeply in a narrow face. At 32, he had lived through social changes that elsewhere take a thousand years. He had been slave to a lord, then slave to a serf, and had several times been bartered or given away. Never docile, he had been beaten half to death more times than he could remember. Active in the democratic reform after 1959, by 1965 he had become a Communist Party branch secretary and a deputy to the People's Congress of the Tibet Autonomous Region.

He was born, he said, a hereditary slave of the Surkhangs, the youngest of five children. When he was a year old, his father was manhandled by a bailiff, returned home vomiting blood, and soon died. His mother, despite her infant brood, had to go out to work all day, every day. With no one to look after them, the four older children perished. Two fell into the river and drowned. Two starved to death. “I don't know how I survived,” said Nyima Tsering. “Mother got no ration for me. She would bring me some of the food she was supposed to eat herself — in the bottom of her bowl. And sometimes the other slaves would spare a bit.”

At eight the boy was put to labour. Soon afterwards Surkhang bestowed him on a favourite upper serf, a woman named Tashi. She

herself was liable to *corvée*. So she sent the child to perform it in her stead. Self-willed and cruel, she would not let him see his own mother. She whipped him "at least twice a day".

"I suffered from the masters' children, too," Nyima Tsering recalled. "One day they wanted to beat me and I picked up a stone. The bailiff saw this and bashed me about for a whole day. When I staggered home, Tashi beat me again. 'You're too close to your mama here to work or behave properly,' she screamed, and sent me to be a slave to her relatives. There I had to herd a hundred sheep. One day I fell asleep and some of them wandered off. As punishment, I was shut up in the sheep pen without food. When I got hungry my new masters crammed my mouth with sheep-dung. I was only nine then."

In this place Nyima Tsering's clothes fell apart and he was given a worn-out nun's habit: all he had to wear, or cover himself with at night. "It was full of lice," he recalled, "and since nuns wear red, they stood out, so no one would come near me. When I fell ill and seemed about to die, they sent me back to Tashi. I had to walk or crawl the three-day journey. I looked and smelled so bad that when she saw me, Tashi yelled, 'Your fate is evil. You bring misfortune,' and drove me out. Only then did I dare go to Mother. First she thought I was some beggar on his last legs. Then she recognized me and fainted. Then she pressed me to her heart and our tears ran together.

"I was almost eaten up by those lice. They crawled from my mouth and nose. Mother begged some vegetable oil to help me vomit them up. She asked my step-father, who was a *ragya-pa*, one of the caste that disposes of the dead, to get me clothes from a corpse. Everyone else shunned such clothes, but how could we? She burned that lousy nun's dress. Slowly, I began to recover."

Tashi, hearing of this, sent a slave with orders, "If the boy Nyima still lives, he's mine and must come to work today." The mother implored, "We are all poor, please tell her he's still very ill." But the slave, frightened of her fierce mistress, took Nyima Tsering back.

It wasn't just that Tashi was cruel. She had her theories — those

of climbers in all societies who betray their own class and not only work, but think, for the oppressors on whose crumbs they live. Many times she told Nyima Tsering, "All you slaves are our enemies, if we aren't strict you'll rebel." Once her cows, which he was tending, wandered into a field on Surkhang's home farm and ate some of the crop. For this Nyima Tsering was flogged in the manor, then further tormented by Tashi who hung him up by the thumbs.

Instead of tea, slaves drank an infusion of bitter grass. Buttered tea is regarded as Tibet's customary beverage. But it was not for the likes of Nyima Tsering. "I'd seen it," he said, "but never tasted it."

Holidays when good eating was supposedly traditional could be even worse than ordinary times. "At the Ong-Kor (Harvest Expectation) Festival, the lords would say, 'Today you'll know what a better life's like.' But in fact we'd get only the scrapings of the skin bags in which butter had been stored, rancid and gritty. Rice was considered a great delicacy. Once Tashi brought us, as a 'favour', some that had been left over for five days, sour and sickening. We had to eat it under her eyes, and thank her, though it made us gag."

"It wasn't just Tashi who said my fate was evil. I believed it myself. My highest hope was to find a kinder master. But where? I'd never run into one. Escape? I'd seen runaways caught and tortured. Kill myself? The thought of Mother held me back. I hoped some illness would kill me. But though often sick I always recovered.

"When I was 20, I met a wandering beggar girl. We had a child. But I could only feed it in secret. Just as my mother had fed me."

From Nyima Tsering's words, and his look as he spoke them, I knew that it was among the poorest of the poor in Tibet, among the slaves who were permitted no family, that love burned highest and family feeling was most self-sacrificing. The aristocrats, by contrast, were insensate in their casual and self-indulgent amours, their carefully arranged marriages to accumulate estates and alliances, their mutual back-stabbing even among the closest relatives and their habitual rapes of serf and slave women.

“It wasn’t till March 1959, when I was 24,” Nyima Tsering said, “that I saw hope. The PLA suppressing the rebellion, came to our place. Seeing the slaves half-naked and hungry, they gave us their own clothes and food. So when the Communist Party led by Chairman Mao showed us the way forward, through the democratic reform, we trusted and followed it. Nothing could make us go back to the old life. Even the thought became intolerable. At last we dared to speak the words in our hearts, dared to stand up.

“But the old masters and their hangers-on didn’t give up so easily. They changed their tactics. Some who hadn’t fled in the revolt courted us poor. Just imagine. They came to me, even a slave like me, and said, ‘Don’t listen to those Hans, they’ll do you no good. And the Tibetan cadres are just their bootlickers.’ But I already knew that I should listen to the Party, to those who, though Hans, treated us as class brothers. I reported the provocations. Brushing away fear, I became active in the reform. The slaves and serfs elected me chairman of the peasant association.

“The reform gave me back my wife. We were reunited. We got our own rooms, seven sheep, a cow, 15.5 *kbal* of land,<sup>8</sup> implements to till it, new clothes, and a set of furniture. In September 1959, I was sent with other reform activists to tour the interior — Beijing, Wuhan, Nanjing, Tianjin, Shanghai and Anshan. I saw Chairman Mao. I saw a future to fight for here in Tibet. Socialism, not just property for ourselves, but a new kind of life. In 1960 I joined the Party.”

## KHAESUM’S ROAD FORWARD

From Nyima Tsering and other ex-serfs, slaves and “masterless people” who had become Khaesum’s cadres we learned what happened after 1959.

First they took us around the manor-house itself. Formerly, its 37 rooms had been occupied only by the bailiff, his sub-stewards and their families. Now they accommodated the ex-slaves. We visited one household living in four rooms, headed by a 46-year-old

blind woman, Drolkar Tsering. She had been born, she said, "under the cow's belly" among the cattle, and so had her children. Proudly she showed us her new quarters, the thick blankets on the beds, the new clothes in the cupboards, the barley meal and other foods stored by the kitchen stove. No one in her family had tasted tea or butter before 1959. Now each consumed 12 tea-bricks and 15 kg. of butter a year. The land they had received yielded not only their own food grain, but a surplus which they sold to the state at a price that left money for buying other necessities. They had been allotted two draught animals, a good plough, other tools and six sheep. Young and old looked well-fed and cheerful.

Chairman Ngawang described the division of means of production in Khaesum. First, its people poured out their bitterness against Surkhang, held struggle meetings against the bailiffs, and inventoried the manor property. Then they shared out its land, animals and agricultural tools. The first harvest that was their own, in the autumn of 1959, yielded about the same amount of grain as under Surkhang. "But there was a difference," said Ngawang. "We did not have to pay anything out, though we didn't yet sell any surplus. So we could eat more than ever before. But we were still poor. That is why, in November 1959 we responded to the Party's suggestion that we shift from individual farming to mutual aid."

This decision helped raise the average yield per hectare to about two tons by 1964 — a gain of 66 per cent in five years. Also, to acquire their first common property. By 1965, they had purchased 43 new implements and 92 draught animals. Khaesum's land, instead of being turned once a year as before, was being ploughed three times. A big year-by-year increase in yields followed.

Another benefit was irrigation. Under Surkhang the bailiffs had let water on to his home farm thrice a year, while most of the serf and *duichun* allotments got none. The ditches were very poorly kept up. As Ngawang put it, "Who of us wanted Surkhang to have more water?" But working together for themselves was different. Mutual-aid enabled them to build a reservoir and many new channels; in the spring of 1965, forty men worked for a week to extend these.

Because the cultivated area at Khaesum could not be extended,

its fields being tightly surrounded by those of other teams, the main effort was to raise the yield per unit. Besides, the land needed more manure. Under Surkhang, the only source was from animals on the estate. With the mutual-aid team, the labour saved by this form of organization and the new enthusiasm of the members made it possible to send men to collect manure on mountain pastures. A special road was built for this purpose in 1963. In 1965 the manure put on the land was 12 times that in 1959.

Yields were also improved through weeding, which in old Tibet had been rarely practised, and even considered "unlucky".

"It's not only the land that is better cultivated," Ngawang said. "Our people are, too. In 1959, the only literate here was the bailiff. Now 72 grown men and women have learned to read and write in night schools — including this Party Secretary of ours," he waved at Nyima Tsering. "And 62 children go to school. Our three teachers were trained right here, they're all ex-serfs and all young: Lhadrup is 25, Tsering 20, Lhunzing just 19."

"With mutual aid we can also take care of those who can't work any more. Udhup Tsomo, an old woman now 75, was Surkhang's slave from the age of eight. When she was 63 she went blind and Surkhang threw her out. For six years she slept on the edges of the fields, lucky to find a stray dog she could huddle up to for warmth. In the reform she got two *khal* of land. The government gives her two sets of clothes a year as relief. Her mutual-aid team cultivates her field. They don't charge for labour. They see her as a member of the family. They'd rather manure their own fields less than neglect hers. So the grain crop on her plot grew from 168 kg. in 1962 to 742 kg. in 1964, nearly 4.5 times. She lives pretty well."

By the summer of 1965, the Khaesum peasants' plans for further advance were beyond the powers of such a simple form of collective as the mutual-aid team. They had learned about co-operatives and communes elsewhere in China. The people who had been poorest, and most of the young, were most responsive to the idea. Technically, an immediate spur was the urge to electrification. Swift mountain streams are everywhere in Tibet as nature's gift. But small rural

power stations, the first of which had already appeared, could be built and operated only by collective ownership.

“We’re busy on ours now,” said Ngawang. “Twenty members are piling stones for the dam. The county government has brought in a generator. Some of our youngsters are in Lhasa learning to operate it. We’ll be using electric lights soon — even Surkhang didn’t have it here. And we’re laying the ground for a commune. Thirty young people have been trained as work-point recorders and six as accountants. Young and old are eager to get going. We have a grandpa of 72 here, Tsering Norbu, who keeps saying he wants to see a commune before he dies. Well, he will.

“Just after the democratic reform the people were so happy to get Surkhang off their backs that they didn’t want anything more. The Party had to urge them not to be satisfied, to widen their view. Now few need urging. However early you get out in the fields, someone’s always there first. Things will move faster and faster from now on.”

They did move faster. And old Tsering Norbu didn’t have to wait long for the founding of the Khaesum People’s Commune. It came that very same year.<sup>9</sup>

\* \* \*

In 1976, on my second visit to Khaesum, Nyima Tsering and Ngawang were still the leaders.

Once more we walked around the old manor, and every step revealed new sights.

While harvest teams were still cutting some fields, those already cleared were being re-ploughed with tractors (Khaesum had none in 1965, but now it had four). This re-ploughing was to prepare for the autumn sowing, also unknown here a few years earlier — when no over-wintering crops had as yet been successfully acclimatized in Tibet and, without machines, the work needed to grow them could not have been done on schedule.

On the threshing ground, where all the people had previously had to toil for whole months with flails, they were now feeding sheaves into a diesel-powered machine, hauling away the grain sacks

it filled and stacking the straw. The crop in 1976 was thrice that of 1965, off the same land.

At dusk, we sat down to talk in the new meeting hall lit by electricity from Khaesum's long-since completed power station. The transition from mutual-aid team to commune had been neither simple nor easy, Nyima Tsering and Ngawang told us. Immensely as land reform and mutual-aid had improved the general lot, both were still based on private property, so the inevitable trend was for a few to get richer, and others poorer. Families with fewer able-bodied members, weaker animals or less tools had to pay those better situated for help with cultivation, harvesting and draught animals. Gradually their benefits from the democratic reform were whittled away; some even had to sell their land and hire themselves out. As the other side of the coin, a minority began to exploit.

In short, now feudalism was done away with, a new question arose sharply. To take the road leading to enrichment for some and impoverishment for most? Or to collective prosperity? To capitalism or to socialism?

The poor, who found it hard to farm alone, were eager for socialism. The incipient rich tended the other way. Those in-between were undecided. The feudal remnants naturally tried to sharpen the divergences, and particularly to incite people against the Party. A former sub-steward invented two sayings, "Where there's meat, the eagle swoops," and "In the commune you'll need clothes and shoes of iron." The first insinuated that the gains of the past few years would be "taken away" by socialization. And the second implied that work on communal projects, such as irrigation and field construction, would leave people in rags.

So the new-born commune began with only part of the peasants, those with less animals and tools. It had to prove itself in competition with the better equipped hold-outs who continued on a mutual-aid basis.

Only when the commune had drawn ahead in yields, average income and new equipment bought with its collective reserve fund, did the hold-outs ask to join. They comprised 19 households of middle peasants, two well-to-do and two average.

By 1972 Khaesum commune was a socialist one. That is, all land and other means of production were collectively owned, all animals and tools invested by members had been paid for and there was no source of income other than from labour (except for pensioners).

By 1976, the commune had had seven successive good harvests. Already in 1973-74 the grain yield had exceeded the national standard for northern China (400 *jin* per *mu* — three tons per hectare). In 1975 it topped the standard for central China (3.6 tons per hectare). With common funds earned by selling grain and other produce to the state, the commune had bought:

- 4 tractors
- 3 diesel engines
- 9 threshing machines
- 4 winnowing machines
- 8 seed drills
- 9 horse carts with rubber tyres

Eighty per cent of the commune's children were in school. A clinic with three "barefoot" doctors was treating routine ailments.

After investing in such equipment and services, and paying for the labour of its members, the commune still retained a fund of 12,000 *yuan* for expanding production and over 21,000 *yuan* for welfare. After allocating grain for distribution to members, taxes and sales to the state, and necessary seed and fodder, it still had a collective food reserve of 40 tons. Every family kept several months' reserve of grain in its own bins, and 60 per cent had money in the bank. Not a few had been re-housed by the commune.

Before the democratic reform of 1959, under the serfowner local power, it had been impossible for Khaesum's people to join the Communist Party. By 1965 six were in the Party and six in the Youth League. In 1976 there were 19 Party and 37 Youth League members — a total of 56, all from the ranks of the serfs and slaves — a strong local core of leadership for socialist advance.

On the technical side, eight young people from serf and slave families had been trained to operate and repair agricultural machinery, others as accountants, electricians or teachers. Three were working

elsewhere as cadres. Seven had been transferred to Tibet's new factories as workers. Six were serving in the People's Liberation Army, and five studying in universities.

The old society seemed a thousand years in the past.

But it was not forgotten. The history of Khaesum under serfdom was vividly presented — with relics, facts and figures — in the Class Struggle Exhibition of Khaesum commune in 1976. As elsewhere in the region, scenes of the past were re-enacted in clay statuary. This art was highly developed in Tibet over centuries in the making of innumerable temple figures (when gods literally outnumbered the people). Now itself transformed, it spoke for the working folk.

The exhibit included records of popular revolt, notably the still vividly remembered rising of 1927.

One could see once more, in this context, the main purpose of the manorial jail, the tortures, its beatings to death. It was to forestall and suppress revolt that these barbarous penalties had supplemented the "commands of law and religion" that the oppressed be contented with their lot. That it continued in Tibet for centuries shows that the people's resistance, now smouldering, now bursting forth, was always there, always feared by the masters. What nonsense to say that their dissatisfaction was something recently "imported", or artificially implanted!

This is the endless theme of the outpourings abroad of Tibet's ex-rulers, as seen in the following classic quoted from a book by the Dalai's brother Thupten Jigme Norbu, with a Western co-author. "... In Tibet, the wealthy and powerful have never had a monopoly of contentment. It belonged to all of us."<sup>10</sup>

The economic and social role of the monasteries, to these authors, was that of "landowners helping the local farmers".<sup>11</sup>

And the author exclaims in conclusion, "I can imagine nothing more perfect than the Tibet I knew." Perfect for whom?!!

Or take an explanatory note which I saw as late as 1981 in the otherwise admirable collection of old Tibetan artifacts and scenes in the Museum of Natural History in New York. Placed in front of a large diorama depicting Tibetan aristocrats it read:

"The wealth of the nobility has rested on possession of cultivated

land and grazing grounds. Peasants worked on land granted them in exchange for taxes paid through labour. The relationship between peasant and landowner hinged on mutual need: subsistence for the peasant, peasant labour for the noblemen."

How sweetly it all hangs together — so long as one does not ask, "Where did the nobles get their wealth — if not from the peasants and herdsmen?"

The Khaesum exhibition recorded the people's triumph, resumption of ownership over their own bodies, land and labour, subsequent movement along the road to socialism, and self-emancipation from ignorance and superstition.

In ten years of the commune, the figures and models testified, ten new irrigation canals had been built and nine older ones rebuilt at Khaesum. And its cultivated land, once scattered in 1,400 small plots, had been consolidated into 41 big level fields.

The whole process was brought together in a display devoted to the life of one person, Pema Lhamo, a woman of 67.

She came to Khaesum about forty years ago from hundreds of kilometres away as a fugitive *duichun* accompanied by her three children. The manor at once seized her elder son as a slave. A heap of stones providing shelter from the wind was her home. The only warmth for her two smaller children was in her bosom.

In the democratic reform of 1959, Pema Lhamo and her family received over a hectare of land. That year it yielded some two tons of grain. Just over half was enough to feed the family, with 330 kg. for each person. The other half went for fodder, seed and sales to the state that provided cash for some furnishings, bedding and clothing (all shown).

In the mutual-aid team period (the 1960's) Pema Lhamo's livelihood improved somewhat, but not very much.

In the commune, in 1975, the household's share in the distribution was some four tons of grain and 324 *yuan* in cash, twice as much as before. Added to this were the earnings of members of the family working outside.

Pema Lhamo's family in Tibet's feudal-serf society had been penniless wanderers. The mother could look forward only to a

beggar's grave, the children to the living death of slavery. Now the old woman was retired and comfortable. Her elder son is a carter in the commune, the younger a soldier in the People's Liberation Army. Her daughter was a "barefoot doctor", her son-in-law the commander of the commune's militia. There are five grandchildren, all going to school.

Such were the changes in Khaesum — a picture of revolution. Paradise lost for the oppressors. A new life, a world gained for the oppressed.

## CHAPTER 4

# PALHA MANOR — A FOOTNOTE TO THE *BRITANNICA*

On my first trip to Tibet in 1955, the vast fiefs of the Palha family had a special interest for me because they figured prominently in the section on "Tibet" in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1951 edition) from which I had copied excerpts in preparation for the journey. How did they get into that standard work of reference? Probably for two reasons. Palha manor was accessibly near Gyangzê, where British India long maintained an agency, trading station, post office and even a prison. And the Palhas themselves were closely connected for almost a century with the forces of British imperial penetration, whose civil and military representatives, as I was later to see from many photographs in the manor, they often and sumptuously entertained.

Frequently appearing in these pictures was Sir Charles Bell, Britain's Political Agent in neighbouring Sikkim and later in Tibet itself, and over several decades a major figure in British schemes for Tibet and moulder of Western opinion about it. Of his ties with the Palhas, Bell once wrote:

As my guide, philosopher and friend, I had Kusho Pal-ha-se, a scion of one of the older families in the Tibetan nobility. I had attached him to my service before I entered Tibet. For seven successive generations, Pal-ha-se's ancestors had been on the Grand Council of Tibet, the highest honour to which a layman

could attain. The break came in the time of his father, who . . . aided an Indian who was subsequently proved to have been engaged in secret exploration in Tibet. Pal-ha subsequently entered the service of the Government (of British India — Ed.) in my Agency. . . . I owe much to this son of the Pal-ha house.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the Palhas' links with imperialism. Now for their status in feudalism.

Under the sub-heading "Nobility" the *Britannica's* account of Tibet said:

The Palha estates have 1,300 farms and 13 grazing grounds, each with 15-20 families of graziers.<sup>2</sup> The tenantry pay rent in service, grain and cash, of which the nobles pass on a proportion, in both cash and grain, to the government. They also pass peasant services on to the government, to provide transport to government-authorized travellers (*ula*), etc. . . .

Under "Peasants" (which should properly read "serfs and slaves"):

A peasant cannot leave the soil without making a petition for man-separation to landlords which is generally refused — and must pay a large sum to buy himself out if it is accepted.

The peasant must use a special vocabulary to address a landlord. . . . Large feudal proprietors have large staffs of servants who spin and weave both for their masters and for sale to traders.

Slaves move about freely<sup>3</sup> but must attend roll-call in the morning and evening.

And under "Herdsman" we read that the Palhas owned 20,000 sheep.

But despite the fact that our group of touring journalists did reach Gyangzê in 1955, we failed then to visit Palha manor. Probably it was as well. For while we might have been flattered by its lords, still in residence, we would hardly have had a chance to speak to its serfs. In 1955 the Palhas were presenting themselves as "progressive

members of the upper strata", loyal citizens of the People's Republic of China and sincere reformists, as in their "nursery" later.

Anyway, I did not get to Palha manor till 1965. By then its former owners had joined the 1959 rebellion, then fled to India, and the mouths of the serfs, who had become the masters, were unsealed. It was the best time to go — for there is no surer way of getting to the bottom of a thing than turning it upside down.

By 1965 the Palha home farm had become the centre of the 2nd Liberation Township of Gyangzê County. The manor house of its last master, Palha Thubten Wangden,<sup>4</sup> ex-chamberlain to the Dalai, housed the township government, with some rooms kept in their previous shape as a museum. The red flag flew overhead. The host who welcomed us at the gate was a former stableman who for years had slept with the horses, eaten the Palhas' leavings, and, when any of them wanted to ride, gone down on his hands and knees so they could use his back as a mounting block.

Seated on richly carpeted hassocks in their old masters' drawing room, a group of former serfs and slaves told us of the manor's past. Its 120 rooms had belonged to just two households, that of Palha Thubten Wangden, who was usually in Lhasa, and his younger brother, Palha Wangchuk, in permanent residence. To minister to them, there were ten upper servants and over a hundred *nangzan*, or house slaves. "The dogs were much better off than we," an ex-slave told us. "Palha Wangchuk kept four dogs, the three downstairs were each fed a kilogramme of good grain a day, while the one upstairs lived on the same food as the master. We slaves got only the poorest barley, often mouldy or adulterated with grass and served as gruel so thin you could see the bottom of the bowl."

Angrily, they described how the slaves were persecuted and humiliated — by "custom" and by the master's arbitrary rules for the estate. Women *nangzan* could not give birth in the manorhouse or its outbuildings, but only outdoors. If three days after childbirth they were not back at work, they were beaten or locked up in the Palhas' private jail. Sick slaves were "forbidden to die" on the mansion grounds, but had to crawl or be carried outside. The bodies of "trans-

gressors" of this rule were not to be taken out through a door, they had to be thrown over the wall.

Summary vengeance, we were told, had been enforced against any Palha slaves who dared mate with anyone but another Palha slave. Pema Lonyen, for taking a wife outside the estate, was jailed and flogged with 1,000 strokes. When no more flesh remained on the backs of his legs, he was turned face up and lashed on the other side. He survived, a cripple.

Nyima Tsandrub, who fell in love with a blacksmith who came to work in the manor and bore his child, was declared a "black bone" (member of the outcaste blacksmith stratum) and driven out to starve. She was not allowed to take her infant son. The Palhas, the ex-serfs recalled, kept him as a performing pet, like a monkey or dog. If he failed to learn the performance fast enough, he was punished by being dipped in scalding water or held against a hot stove. At eight, he was put to field work.

When Dawa Tsering was one year old, his serf mother died and the master declared all her property forfeit to himself.<sup>5</sup>

It was after the People's Liberation Army arrived that the Palha brothers decided to play at reform. On a visit to China's inland provinces, they saw day nurseries for the children of women workers. Returning, they announced that they would establish one on the estate. We saw its site, a small yard surrounded by what looked like pigsties. "There were about 60 little tots here," said the mutual-aid team chairman. "Half died of hunger, illness or eating bad food. In 1953 alone, 15 died. The real purpose was to get more work out of the women slaves, by separating them from their children by day. One feeble old woman was in charge. Even if she had cared, she couldn't have looked after them. The children lay about in their own excrement and even ate it."

The greed and power of the Palhas led to the ruin and destruction of whole families, even of comparatively well-to-do tenants if they had anything worth taking. Nampa Hansa, a cotter, planted a small grove. The Palhas appropriated it. In desperation, he went to Lhasa to complain in the Dalai's courts. But the Palhas had a strong voice there too. They scribbled a note and he was brought back. For

the next decade, he was left to rot in the dank dungeon beneath the manor. In 1958, not long before the rebellion and democratic reform, he died. Let us note that even so indulgent an apologist for the Tibetan serfowners as Bell wrote of such recourse to the Dalai: "The law prohibits all such direct appeals, and the petitioner is therefore immediately thrown into prison. But he may, later on, expect a favourable decision".<sup>6</sup> Nampa Hansa spent his last ten years "expecting". Compare this with the present Dalai Lama's bland assurance from his self-exile in India, in a book perhaps ghost-written, that under the Tibetan theocracy "the people felt that above all the officials of state there was a final appeal to a source of justice which they could absolutely trust; and in fact, no ruler with the traditions and training and religious grace of a Dalai Lama could possibly become an unjust tyrant."<sup>7</sup>

As regards property rights, this case makes it clear that in Tibet up to the mid-20th century the manorial serf's position was like that of his counterpart in 12th century feudal England under the doctrine *quicquid servus acquiritur domino acquiritur* (what the serf acquires the lord acquires) — and the serf "had no rights in the eyes of the law against his lord".<sup>8</sup>

From the supposed nursery we went to Palha's former private apartments. They exhibited the way of life of a feudal serfowner when Tibet had already become semi-colonial. With this change, the Palhas' need for cash to enjoy foreign luxuries and playthings, as well as the status these came to signify, aggravated their already crushing exploitation of the estate's serfs and slaves. The mansion contained only a part of their personal effects (many had already been shipped off to India in 1951 and again in 1959). Yet there was plenty left to see. In the wardrobes there were garments of rich brocade mingled with others of the most expensive English cloth, and official hats of the Dalai Lama's court with imported Stetsons. Women's adornments ranged from heavily jewelled Tibetan pendants to costly Swiss gold watches. For his own grooming and pleasures Palha had imported a silver-fitted dressing case of English leather, a variety of quality sports equipment (from saddlery to ice skates to badminton racquets) and Scotch whickey by the case. On the traditional side ritual objects

in the manor chapel included trumpets mounted in silver made from thighbones of young virgins, and cups for *chiang* (Tibetan beer) made of human skulls. All this wealth and pomp, amassed at home and abroad, had its origin in the toil and suffering of the poor and oppressed.

An interesting first-hand account of the love of the old Tibetan upper-crust for foreign (as well as domestic) luxuries in the period of imperialist penetration has been given by one of their number, Rinchen Dolma Taring, now abroad. She wrote that her ex-husband Tsarong, long the British-backed candidate for lay ruler of Tibet, was "very curious about anything new and liked to buy cutlery, radios, watches and cameras". He "collected jade ornaments and good furniture" and "sent a cook to India to learn how to cook Western dishes".<sup>9</sup> And to leave a name for piety "he ordered a tailor to make one hundred *chuba* (outer gowns) of good quality satin in different colours, one hundred silk blouses and fifty red silk belts", all of which were numbered and kept for distribution to clerics at his death.

Sitting down again with Palha's former serfs and slaves, who had in fact paid for all his wealth, we heard of changes in the manor since 1959. They compared past and present in short eloquent sentences: "We had no homes of our own. Now we have them. People went naked and hungry. Now no one does. We had no decent clothes. Now all have at least two suits. We worried about seeds and food. Not any more. Children used to die. Now they live and, what's more, go to school."

The former manor village in 1965 had 38 families. They were organized in three agricultural mutual-aid teams and farmed 77 hectares of land. In the old days, doing tribute labour for Palha, they had produced miserably low yields. By 1965, the yields were almost doubled. Under Palha the manor farm had had 15 plough oxen and 18 milch cows. At the time of our visit the number had risen to 27 and 43 respectively, all now owned by the ex-serfs and ex-slaves.

At the outset of the democratic reform, in 1959, the government had had to give relief to nine-tenths of the households. By 1965 hardly any needed such help.

For this progress, state aid (in loans, distribution of free farm

tools, etc.) helped create the conditions. But the main factor was the people's liberated initiative. In fields farmed under the whips of Palha's overseers, virtually no fertilizer had been used. More weeds had grown than crops, and insect pests were rife (to combat these, other than by prayers, was forbidden). With the peasants' minds, as well as energies freed by the democratic reform, weeding became careful and thorough. Insecticides replaced incantations. Throughout the township 280,000 pack loads of sand, fertile pond mud and wood ash were spread to improve the soil in the winter of 1964-65 alone. These measures, and the planting of tens of thousands of trees, were facilitated by better organization of manpower through mutual aid. Already the peasants were discussing the next step, the transition to co-operatives or even directly to the communes.

"The red seal is in the hands of the people." These words, frequently used in the new Tibet, we also heard from the former human chattels of Palha manor. The phrase was meaningful. In old Tibet the red seal, once the prerogative of aristocrats and high lamas, had been affixed to sentences of death or mutilation, requisitions of forced labour, and deeds for the sale of serfs and slaves. Now it appeared under the liberating enactments of the people's own government.

In this township in 1965, the local government (People's Council) was elected by the 23 deputies (chosen by secret ballot by the township's 548 voters). Five were women, 18 had been slaves and poor serfs and five "middle serfs". And, in accordance with united front policy, a former manorial steward who had taken no part in the rebellion of 1959 was invited to their deliberations as consultant.

The new officials were without pomp, and themselves worked in the fields. The poorer their constituents, the more attention they gave them. One council member skilled in building, we were told, had recently repaired the house of an aged ex-serf too weak to do so. Another had wrapped large stones in his own clothes to stop a hole in a dyke when the rising Nyang River threatened the barley fields.

Such was the situation we found in 1965 in Palha manor and its neighbourhood, which had become the 2nd Liberation Township of Gyangzê. Departing, we passed its new primary school. The shouts

of the small pupils, racing around the playground after the closing bell, long rang in our ears.

The "Tibet" item in the *Britannica* was long, long out of date.

1976

By 1976 the former Palha manor was part of the Bright Light Commune, set up on the basis of the mutual-aid teams and already almost a decade old.

The spur to form it, its leaders said, was much the same as at Khaesum, the struggle for and against, stemmed from the polarization into rich and poor inherent in private property, which mutual aid alone could not halt. Here, this polarization had been fast. One reason given was proximity to the old trading town of Gyangzê, where seeds of capitalism had been sown by long-continued imperialist penetration across the nearby Indian border.

After the estate's serfs and slaves shared out the land and animals in 1959, some soon found it harder to make use of them than others. The house-slaves had swept floors, tended gardens, fed their masters' dogs and spun yarn. They did not know how to farm. Though land was distributed per capita, families, with many old people or children or few able-bodied members, could not till it all. Some needing money urgently, sold their horses or oxen to better-off team members.

The latter used surplus animals so acquired for transport in the town, or rented them out for field work. Before long the fee they charged for a day's work by an ox had risen to the equivalent of four man days. In the free market of those days, the price of animals therefore rose, so they could not be bought back at anything like the earlier rate. For lack of them, the poor often had to leave their land unworked, or sell it and become hired labourers. Some sold even clothes and furniture distributed to them in the reform.

The newly rich moved in a different direction. There were cases in which they stopped cultivating their own plots, to say nothing of participating in joint labour. With less manpower on the land, pro-

duction did not rise as it should. The poor began to refer bitterly to the mutual-aid teams as "mutual aid without mutual benefit". They were the most eager for a more developed collective.

Bright Light Commune began like most others in Tibet. When organized in 1967 on the heels of mutual-aid teams, it was still like an elementary or semi-socialist co-operative in its economy. Land, animals and tools, though pooled for farming, still belonged to individuals who invested them as shares on which dividends were paid. But on the political side, the commune, like all others in China, at once became a basic unit of local government from the start. It took over the functions of 2nd Liberation Township which ceased to exist.

Polarization slowed down but, in this early stage of a commune, did not end yet. Some members who brought in more animals and tools got enough in dividends not to have to work, and still tended to seek easy money elsewhere. The poor ex-serfs and slaves, whose earnings were completely or mainly from labour, had to produce a surplus to pay off the dividends. They pressed for the next step, in which those who did not work would have no claim on what the others produced.

In 1970, the commune shifted to a fully socialist basis — common ownership as well as common operation. Land was pooled without compensation. Animals and tools were bought by the collective, usually on an instalment basis. They were no longer any "shares" or dividends. Current earnings came only from labour.

Of course, problems and struggles did not end with this. Socialist education had constantly to be carried on. The members of the commune also kept an eye on the new tactics adopted by the remnant feudal forces. "Their chief method is to try to corrupt our cadres," we were told. "In the past a slave was less than a dog in their eyes. Now they ask us to reorganize them as kith and kin. We stress loyalty to our class. This is crucial. Cadres must be as one with the masses in labour, life and study, seek no privileges, never stop being working people."

In the former Palha manor, there were no Communist Party members in 1959, and only five in 1965. By 1975 there were 27, the oldest 55 years of age and the youngest 20.

The figures, which we were given, for population and production in this team as well as for the whole commune showed growth in all respects.

|  | 1959 | 1966  | 1976  |
|--|------|-------|-------|
| <i>Families</i>                          |      |       |       |
| Team . . . . . ;                         | 31   | 35    | 42    |
| Commune . . . . . ;                      | 205  | 221   | 251   |
| <i>Persons</i>                           |      |       |       |
| Team . . . . .                           | 161  | 173   | 197   |
| Commune . . . . .                        | 985  | 1,015 | 1,315 |
| <i>Land (hectares)</i>                   |      |       |       |
| Team . . . . .                           | 86   | 89    | 90    |
| Commune . . . . .                        | 420  | 470   | 534   |
| <i>Grain yield</i><br>(tons per hectare) |      |       |       |
| Team . . . . .                           | 0.67 | 0.84  | 1.92  |
| Commune . . . . .                        | 0.60 | 8.77  | 1.74  |

The main factor in the increase of yields in the mid-1970's was, as elsewhere in Tibet, the introduction of winter wheat. (For some drawbacks of this shift see next page.) Both team and commune became self-sufficient in food grain in 1972. In 1975, the distribution per capita was about 224 kilogrammes. In that same year their respective sales of surplus grain to the state were:

|                   |            |
|-------------------|------------|
| Team . . . . .    | 17.5 tons  |
| Commune . . . . . | 207.5 tons |

Besides this, they stored in reserve (not counting seed):

|                   | Collective<br>Reserves | Household<br>Reserves |
|-------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Team . . . . .    | 1.8 tons               | 7.6 tons              |
| Commune . . . . . | 33 tons                | 50.2 tons             |

The commune had bought a walking tractor, diesel engines and other farm machines (threshers, winnowers, seed drills) and 14 horse

carts. Much work was being done in 1976 on field construction and levelling, to prepare for mechanized cultivation. An irrigation canal was under construction by the county. The poor, clayey soil was to be lightened with river sand, and pig raising developed to provide manure as well as meat. The yield target for 1980 was three tons per hectare.

In both team and commune over 90 per cent of the children were attending primary schools.

Sanmu, the 50-year-old head of the Commune Women's Association, said, "When I heard that Chairman Mao had left us, I was stunned, I didn't believe it. Before my mind rose the faces of our old serfowners. Then they were blotted out by the face of Chairman Mao. Chairman Mao saved us from that hell. The past must never return. The task of carrying on the revolution lies on our own shoulders."

In this commune, as in others in Tibet, subsequent reviews and re-examinations of policy were to reveal many errors along the "ultra-Left" line, some common to the whole of China, some of a local character. For instance, it had been wrong (provided the commune members concerned had made their required contribution to the labour of the collective) to curb or consider as "capitalist" any individual production, whether farming or pastoral, that they individually engaged in for sale on the market, without exploiting anyone else. In commune organization, some forms had been transferred wholesale from other areas of China without considering Tibet's particular conditions. In class policy, the re-classification of some ex-serfs into "rich peasants" as a stratum to be fought against, was held unjustified and reversed. In crop policy, the emphasis on winter wheat was criticized as a mistake. Though it resulted in an increased tonnage of grain, it did not really meet the needs of the people since such wheat, grown under Tibet's natural conditions (high altitude, high ultra-violet radiation, etc.) had a number of characteristics that made it difficult to mill into good flour. Moreover, the acreage and output of *qingko*, the traditional highland barley which had long been Tibet's staple, was reduced due to the over-stressing of wheat, so people could not get enough of their customary, and favourite, staple.

But with all such problems, and others that will without doubt appear in the future, one thing is certain. The former Palha manor and the rest of the high plateau will never revert to the past. The opportunity won to take the socialist road will be supplemented, as experience continues to teach, by ever growing ability to travel it in ways most conducive to rapid improvement in the life of the Tibetan people in their own circumstances.

## CHAPTER 5

# RECOLLECTIONS OF TWO BEGINNINGS

### FIRST COMMUNE TRY-OUT AT DONGGAR

The first experimental rural people's commune in Tibet was organized in July 1965, interestingly enough on a former ecclesiastical estate. Not because the lamaist church was particularly aimed at as a target of revolution, but because monastery holdings were often even more oppressive in their exploitation than the lay estates.

Here, too, the parallel with feudal Europe was striking.<sup>1</sup> In post-medieval England, the church estates were likewise the most tenacious in clinging to serfdom. The Abbey of Ramsey, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says, enforced obligatory service until the mid-15th century, long after it had disappeared from the majority of the holdings of lay aristocrats. As historian Marion Gibbs has written:

We cannot understand the feudal order without understanding the part the church played in it. Idealizing and sanctifying the relationships was the power of organized religion — the Catholicism of the Roman church. The church itself, as a landholding institution, was an inseparable part of the economic, social and political structure of feudal society . . . the priests, of course, taught different moralities to different classes, the rich

man could reach heaven by alms-giving and the poor man by patience and hard work.<sup>2</sup>

Resistance to a lay lord could be a crime or a sin, but to resist churchly power was seen as sacrilege. In theocratic Tibet, this was so all the more, and on a larger scale because its lamaseries directly owned 37 per cent of all the land.

People who have borne the heaviest burden, once they throw it off, are likely to be the most avid for progress. In Tibet, after ecclesiastical lands were divided in the democratic reform, their ex-serfs and slaves were in the van of the movement first to mutual-aid teams and then to communes.

This is what happened in Donggar township not far from Lhasa, which in the past had belonged, with 150 other estates, to the immense Drepung lamasery. Its 120 peasant households, comprising 470 people, had been serfs or slaves and it was characteristic of the place that the number of slaves had been increasing. Serf after serf would get hopelessly into debt to Drepung, which would then cancel his allotment and reduce him to a chattel — a human work-beast to be moved and used completely at its will. Some fled before this happened. Some, running away from a similar plight on other estates, came in to Donggar, leaving their families behind. Drepung lamasery, Donggar's owner, also shifted slaves, child and adult, arbitrarily among its own holdings. For all these reasons, many people at Donggar had lost track of parents or children, or in some cases had no clue to their parentage at all.

The tillage of this estate, totalling 167 hectares, was very poor. As compared with Khaesum manor in Loka, whose pre-reform average crop had been 1.59 tons per hectare, the yield seldom exceeded 0.84 ton per hectare. The soil was thin with stones very near the surface, and invested with a kind of weed, locally called *remba*, which grew thick and matted each year. This could not be got rid of without a great deal of labour which the serfs, burdened with compulsory services to the lamasery, could not give, especially at the times when it was most needed. So in bad years the serfs sometimes did not even recover their seed grain. And at every harvest time, "the fields turned

red", meaning that the red-robed Drepung monks swarmed over them to make sure that tribute to the lamasery was paid. Until this was done, all grain had to be sealed in sacks under the monks' supervision and the grower could not touch it. No wonder the saying ran among the people, "When the harvest is over, the serf is finished."

Nor could the serf recoup his loss by side-occupations. The grass, even on the verges of the fields, belonged to Drepung. No serf could graze an animal there without first presenting a *khatag* (silk scarf) to the lamasery and getting its permission.

The water belonged to Drepung. None could be taken for irrigation without permission and the "gift" of a *khatag* and eggs.

The mountains belonged to Drepung. Brushwood could be cut or collected there only by its leave.

The people went hungry and were clad in rags so scanty that "if the head was covered the legs stuck out bare and froze and if the legs were covered the head froze".

"These are just a few examples of our sorrows in the past," said commune Party secretary Sonam Tashi. "Why do I talk about them today? Because we here are determined never to forget! The memory strengthens our resolve to go the socialist way. If we waver from it there can't be prosperity for all, only a new division into rich and poor."

Donggar's decision to shift to a commune was based squarely on its own conditions. Here, as elsewhere, the democratic reform of 1959 had been followed by the move toward mutual aid, and yields had risen considerably. "But as we started on the many improvements needed," Sonam Tashi explained, "we noticed that mutual aid wasn't enough either. We were short of labour power and some of it was still being wasted because, though we worked jointly, the teams had to cultivate the fields of the members plot by plot — a contradiction that mutual aid can't escape. For good irrigation, it was necessary to build an embankment along the Todlung Dechhen River, which required labour on a larger scale than the team — another contradiction. We needed to build up the thin soil. Only a bigger collective could acquire and efficiently use the equipment required.

"Also, the individual economy breeds greedy and selfish feelings,

and mutual-aid teams are still based on the individual economy, so some people were bound to try and get more help from others while giving less themselves. Naturally, the more they were able to do so, the better off they became as compared to the others, and the further this process went, the more they were able to benefit from others' labour." Thus Sonam Tashi concluded his indictment. He said the mutual-aid teams, a big and essential advance earlier, had become an obstacle to the continuation of the advance that they had themselves sparked. It was time to go further.

"We were aware of this and discussed it," Sonam Tashi said. "Three of the teams, embracing a village of 23 families, organized themselves into an agricultural producers' co-operative as early as September 1964. This co-op was of the preliminary, semi-socialist type. That is, the land continued to be privately owned by members. They earned by their labour but also received payment commensurate with the amount of land they had put in. But as distinct from the mutual-aid team, it was managed, worked and improved as one farm, not in separate units, and new investment, too, was on this basis. New-type ploughs and seeders were acquired and efficiently employed. People's outlook became more collective. They saw the whole farm as a joint undertaking though each still retained the title to his own plot, and drew some rental for it as well as compensation for his labour.

"But for the building of the river embankment, which was an urgent matter for the improvement of yields, such co-ops were still not sufficiently large-scale and effective. 'One bundle of sticks,' said the people, 'doesn't make a big enough fire'."

"That's why," said Sonam Tashi, "our masses decided to go quickly over to the commune, which is the direction for the whole country. Of course, we haven't gone through all the stages that brought other places to the commune. But we believe that, in our circumstances, now is the time. And though we have no experience we have the leadership of the Party and Chairman Mao, so we are confident."

So began the commune at Donggar, whose inauguration was considered such an important event that Tibet's Party and government

leaders came from Lhasa to attend. The commune's administrative committee, at the time of our visit, had nine members, two of them women, and its class composition was: ex-slaves five; former poor serfs three; and one former "middle serf". There was also a supervisory committee of five members. The four natural villages in the township became the commune's production brigades, which were further split up into 14 teams. The team was the unit of book-keeping and distribution, and accountants and work-point recorders had been trained. Teams owned the bigger farm tools, such as horse-drawn seeders (formerly, in Tibet, all sowing was done by hand) and some of the new-type ploughs. The rest still belonged to individual households. But 35 new-type steel ploughs, just delivered by the state, while they were to be used by the teams, were owned by the commune.

But this commune also had important differences from those elsewhere. In most of its brigades and teams, land ownership was still on the level of the semi-socialist co-operative, i.e. though administration and labour were common, the title to each plot was still private, and payment for land shares continued. In other parts of China, the setting up of communes had come a year or more *after* the change-over to complete socialist collective ownership of land and tools. Here this change itself would be made later within the commune framework.

"Were there private plots?" a reporter asked. "While the title to all land is still private the question hardly exists," Sonam Tashi said. "At present the only distinction is between team-managed land and the gardens in which the owners themselves grow whatever they want near their houses. The crop there does not enter into the general distribution or accounts."

We were all impressed with the concreteness and sharp analysis of Sonam Tashi's explanation and we told him so. "We've all learned," was his comment. "We've done nothing without preparation. Our way of preparing was to arouse the masses and discuss everything thoroughly — that's why we are clear on the details."

"Though only two months old," Sonam Tashi went on, "our commune has already demonstrated benefits. Everyone is thinking in terms of bigger undertakings. For example, I'd never heard of com-

post of green manure, but now we are using it; with the commune the labour can be set aside without interfering with other work. Crops are better planned in relation to soil and get more care. None of our peasants, even the oldest, have ever seen them growing so well."

And once more the Party secretary returned to what was obviously his favourite theme, "spiritual progress", the "rising consciousness" among the new masters, the people. Warmly he praised Rasang, a carter who on an unusually cold night used his own quilt to cover a commune-owned horse under his care. Explaining this, Rasang had said, "If I'd caught cold it would affect only me; if the horse got sick it would be a loss to us all." When driving to Lhasa, Rasang refused to put in expense accounts for meals. "I have to eat wherever I am," he said.

"That's the kind of people we have now," Sonam Tashi said proudly.

The natural environment of Donggar was beautiful. The commune administration occupied an old villa of rose-coloured stone set deep in a green grove. In another solid and attractive building many of the members were quartered.

In an airy upstairs room, we met Tsering Yangzhom, a sturdy woman of 44 who lived there. When we remarked on its large window, she said, "So you noticed. This is where the bailiff sat to get a full view of the yard below where we slaves were working." Going to a corner, she picked up a heavy copper ladle with a foot-long handle. "Here's what we were fed with. Two scoops a day for each. And he used to hit people over the head with this ladle when displeased — sometimes cracking their skulls."

Leaving the room we noticed a copper prayer-wheel set into the wall.<sup>3</sup> "Do you ever turn it?" we asked. "Me? No," our hostess said laughing. "Not any more. These were the things that they used to turn the heads of us Tibetan people till we were dizzy. Now we know there isn't any born good or bad fate, like they used to tell us. If my fate was good, why was I a slave living in stables? And if it's bad, why do I live in such a fine place now?" No theologian, it was clear, could win an argument with this forthright Tibetan woman.

Vice-chairman Chunley, who lived next door, showed us the rags

he wore in the past, carefully preserved. A slave for twenty years, he told of how often he had been dragged to Drepung for flogging and of how, when he had tried to escape, he had been nailed into a cangue, a heavy wooden frame worn around the neck for punishment, and had heavy shackles forged around his legs. He spoke calmly, but suddenly we heard a loud, uncontrollable sobbing. It had burst from his schoolboy son, who stood unnoticed behind the door. Wearing a red Young Pioneer scarf, he wept as he re-lived his father's suffering.

On the orange-painted outer wall at the landing, a lot of figures had been chalked.

"What are these?" we asked.

"Oh, that's where the youngsters have been doing their sums practising to keep accounts for our commune. He's one of the best," said Chunley, smiling at us as he comforted his son, his arm around the boy's still shaking shoulders.

The past would never come back here. Never.

## BHUNDUI: WITH THE COMMUNE COMES ELECTRICITY

At Bhundui, a lurching four-hour drive from Lhasa in a Land Rover over rough mountain roads overhanging the Kyichu River, we inspected Tibet's second commune, set up on July 20, 1965, only two days after the one at Donggar. It was even more a portent of the future. For electric light bulbs were burning in every home in its three villages and in the meeting halls and schools its people had built. The power came from a small hydro-generator they were operating themselves.

Like Donggar, Bhundui had been an area of ecclesiastical estates. Most of its 201 hectares of cultivated land had belonged to the Potala itself, the seat of the Dalai Lama, the "god-king". In the democratic reform, this land was divided among 89 families (with 428 members) of slaves and serfs. They united into 11 mutual-aid teams. Later they were amalgamated into seven larger ones.

Before their merger into the commune, these teams had improved their average yield from 780 kg. to 1,155 kg. per hectare. They had also

increased their draught animals from 72 head to 121 and their milk-cattle from 167 to 226. Because all the benefits went to the people, free of the former exactions, family purchasing power by 1964 was six times that prior to the democratic reform in 1959.

Nonetheless, as in Donggar, it was recognized that mutual aid could not be the key to continuing prosperity for all, or this initial form of co-operation, while representing an absolutely necessary step in efficiency and mass experience, still carried the seeds of a new polarization into haves and have-nots. This arose from the contradiction, inherent in simple mutual aid, between individual economy and collective labour.

In Bhundui an example of the resulting "spontaneous growth of capitalism" was the household of Nyima Tsering.<sup>4</sup> In feudal times he had been degraded from serf to slave and become utterly destitute. After the reform, however, because he had a large family and land was divided on a per capita basis (including the small children) he came to own relatively large fields and many cattle. Consequently, in the mutual-aid team, the members of other families, with less land but more adult and able-bodied workers, were in fact exploited by Nyima Tsering. They laboured to cultivate the land of his children who were not yet able to work, and in doing so produced a surplus for him over and above what they were paid under the mutual-aid arrangement. And when others used his animals, they had to pay, and his profit grew. So he himself began to acquire an exploiter's ways, participating irregularly in team work, and simply staying away from any job he did not like. Only when he was reminded of his impoverished past did Nyima Tsering begin to pull his weight in collective labour. But he still had unearned income, because under that form of organization his initial advantages produced inequities that could only be reduced and not avoided.

Now take the other side. How a peasant in a group could fall into an exploited position was shown by the ex-slave, Gombo. His family position in respect to land ownership and labour was roughly the opposite of Nyima Tsering's. Hence, despite the fact that he was a hard worker, his economic position in the post-reform years — rela-

tive to that of other team members — tended to grow worse instead of better.

Over all, at Bhundui, after five years of mutual aid, about 25 per cent of the households had begun to go downgrade again. The income of most was stable or improved slowly. That of a few became disproportionately high.

So the question stood: which road? Forward to socialism or back to an exploiting society? The first alternative triumphed through the initiative and organization of the poor, led by the Party. At the same time every effort was made to win over to this road all those who could be won over.

One of the activists was Gombo, the ex-slave who was growing poorer. In 1965 he was one of the commune militia. Another was Tashi Drolma, also a former slave. Her life had improved consistently in the mutual-aid period but she did not forget the past. As soon as she saw the drift toward a new split into poor-and-rich, she opposed it strongly. This involved a struggle within her own family. Her husband thought mainly of individual money-making while she argued, "To me a better life means a better life for all." In 1965, Tashi Drolma was head of the supervisory committee of the commune. Her husband, finally persuaded, had also joined it as a member.

The commune at Bhundui was not formed at one swoop. In February 1965, twelve of the poorer households had set up a co-operative. During the ploughing, sowing, and early growing season, they proved the advantages of working the land as a unit. Meanwhile, sixteen other households, while they did not form a co-op, merged their two mutual-aid teams into a more tightly organized and developed one. They acquired, as joint property, a small mill for processing barley into *tsamba* (the roast barley flour that is Tibet's staple food), two draught animals and two new-type ploughs. Better labour allocation increased their earnings from sidelines, such as wood-cutting and pig-raising, which were run as a collective enterprise.

These examples persuaded more people. Letters advocating a commune went to the Party branch. Households without literate members asked others to write in their names. Tsomo Drolma's family, with five able-bodied workers, was one of those which had felt the

limitations of mutual aid. It plumped for membership unanimously and without hesitation. When 82 of the 89 families had applied, the commune was formed.

The Bhundui experiment, as compared to Donggar, was of a somewhat more advanced type economically. One of its three teams, centred on the former co-operative and consisting of 29 households which formed a fifth of the commune's cultivated area, had already gone over to socialist collective ownership of land, with income distributed on the basis of the labour put in by members, not land. All large implements, such as ploughs and harrows, had been bought from their previous owners. Most draught animals were still in private possession and stall-fed by their owners, who got rent for their use in farming or transport. Their purchase into collective ownership was under discussion. Privately owned sheep were grazed by the team shepherd; he was paid by the day and the team was given the right to all the manure and one out of every two lambs born. Thus a jointly-owned flock was being built up.

Another feature of Bhundui Commune was that its chairman was a woman, Tenzing, an ex-slave of 24 elected for her good work. The other committee members, too, were mainly ex-slaves as was the 38-year-old Party secretary, Tsewang Dorje. We visited the good stands of wheat and barley in the fields, one of the commune's three primary schools (65 pupils) with a department for adult classes in the evening, the reading room and the library. Tenzing told us that the young people had organized a field propaganda team with a repertoire of revolutionary songs and plays, and an armed militia unit of 27, which included ten girls.

Finally we saw the small power station. It was simple but effective, consisting of a 10-kilowatt turbine generator, a dammed stream with a sluice gate operated by a windlass and a control board with several switches. A bright bulb on a standard burned at the entrance. Wires strung on poles ran out to the three villages. The operators were two young Communist League members, both 21. They had learned to run the place in only three days, they said, from workers of Lhasa's Ngachen Power Plant who had installed the machinery. Bursting with good spirits, they explained eagerly how everything

worked and its effects. "It makes the nights shorter," said one, "we can read, we can do anything." With plenty of water power, the commune was looking forward to installing other generators, for electrically-run tools. Unquestionably, we were looking at a pioneer of rural electrification in all Tibet.

Without the commune there would be no power station for the Bhundui peasants.

Revisited in 1976, Bhundui had gone far forward. Its pioneer power station had increased its equipment and capacity. Harvesting was in progress — with yields much higher than before. And we were conducted with special pride through the orchards with a thousand or so heavily laden apple trees. In old Tibet, apples were only cultivated, a dozen or so trees at a time, in the parks of a few top aristocrats, almost as status symbols. No serf or slave had ever tasted an apple. Most had never seen one. Now grown in a great many places, they had become a kind of symbol of the new life.

All these crops were not just triumphs over nature in this area of only 160 frost-free days a year. They embodied the collective strength of the commune, and more particularly the revolutionary and scientific spirit that had won over the former outlook of submission to fate and adherence to rooted custom.

Basang, the stocky, swarthy young chairman of Bhundui's revolutionary committee, himself personified the great changes. Born here as a slave, he had spent three years as a child-lama. Freed in the democratic reform of 1959, he went to Bhundui's first people's primary school. By his teens he was an accountant in the co-operative around which the commune was formed. In 1966, at twenty, he joined the Party. In 1976, at thirty, besides his leading administrative post in the commune, he was in command of its militia and a member of its school board.

In 1976, learning from Dazhai (where Basang and several other activists had gone for a study-visit some years later), was a watchword. One of the features at Bhundui was that the commune's land, formerly fragmented into over a thousand tiny plots, had been consolidated by sustained all-out effort into less than 200 — and more levelling and clearing was proceeding. Nine-tenths had been brought under

irrigation. More manuring had raised fertility. Better seed (grown, selected, and in some cases hybridized on scientific plots run by its own young people) had improved output further.

In field construction and irrigation there was more than earth and rock to fight. There were also ancient taboos — this hillock was sacred and not to be levelled, that stream was holy and could not be diverted, that patch of grass had been decreed untouchable by the gods. Such ideas naturally were invoked by old forces hostile to socialism. But they also influenced people who were by no means reactionary but still had not got rid of old ways of thought.

“We fought back with revolution and science,” said Basang. “First we set up an exhibition of past and present. Within the memory of the old people, out of some 400 people who lived here in the old society, 24 had had to flee to avoid death from hunger, six were beaten to death by the serfowners and over 60 died in a short time in a smallpox epidemic. And we made clear the cause, exploitation. In Bhundui, the estate agent had been a lama who, wielding the authority of both the state and the gods, exacted the 361 kinds of feudal duties and tribute, ordered floggings and torture for violators, blessed the oppression, and milked the people of offerings for praying away bad weather. All this, too, went into the exhibition.

“Next, we illustrated the overthrow of feudalism in the democratic reform after the suppression of the serfowner rebellion in 1959. We reminded people of how the Party helped us to become masters of our own bodies, the land and the crops. Then Bhundui had taken the first step in heeding Chairman Mao’s call ‘Organize!’. Production had increased, but not as much as it could have because of the limitations of small proprietorship. Then came the organization of the commune. In short, we made clear by familiar facts the truth stated by Chairman Mao’s teaching ‘Only socialism can save China!’

“As a result, we began to work not only for ourselves but for the victory of socialism and the future of communism. We began larger-scale and more scientific farming. Now we have more people. Many former runaways have returned. Neither the young nor the old die of hunger or curable illness. But even though there are more mouths to feed, we no longer need relief grain, as we did even for a

time after the democratic reform. Instead, we are producing a surplus over our own needs. To go on from here, and we intend to, we must free our minds from reactionary ideas about 'fate' and from those in which selfishness predominates. All this the exhibition makes clear. It has been very effective."

Financially, where once state subsidies had kept it going, Bhundui reported a good situation. The accumulation of collective funds, which started soon after the commune was organized, had been proceeding faster since the last payments to members for implements and animals they had brought into the commune was made in 1973.

"While improving fields, irrigation, fertilizer and soil, the commune is also doing a lot to improve farm tools," Basang said. "Lack of labour power was a major contradiction holding back the development of production, as in all of Tibet. So a group for making better tools — consisting of eight craftsmen, peasants and cadres, has been set up. They have devised a triple-purpose harrow, which can level the earth, break clods and uproot weeds, a water-powered winnower and a horse-drawn ridge builder with which one person can do the work that once needed a dozen."

In 1976, Basang informed us, Bhundui was growing more than twice the grain it needed, and selling substantial amounts to the state.

Not long before, with its collective accumulation, it had bought a 75 h.p. tractor, with which most ploughing was done now, and a power drawn huller and winnower.<sup>5</sup>

Basang said with obvious joy that 90 per cent of the commune's children of seven to 12 were attending its people's primary school.<sup>6</sup> Over 100 had graduated and 113 were currently enrolled. When we were there it was harvest time as is usual in Tibet, school was in recess so the pupils could help — which we saw them doing, in the fields.

Nurseries and kindergartens, one in each of the commune's seven teams, were taking care of 108 pre-school children. There was a night school for adults, a troupe for amateur dramatics, a militia unit and commune clinic with "barefoot doctors" in the teams.

Bhundui's small industries included weaving of Tibet's traditional durable, waterproof woollen *pulo* cloth, and a tailoring group — such

units, like the schools, stopped work in the busy farm season to concentrate all effort on agriculture.

In addition to its original members, eight young demobilized People's Liberation Army men had just come, with their families, to join the Bhundui Commune.

"Whatever we've accomplished so far," Basang said, "is only the first step of a Long March."

## CHAPTER 6

# GYAEP A COMMUNE AND TSE RING LHAMO, PIONEER AMONG TIBETAN WOMEN

The growth of Gyaepa, another famous commune in the region, is inseparable from that of its woman leader, Tsering Lhamo, and from the whole change in women's status in the new Tibet.

Tsering Lhamo was born a slave. Between her childhood and her twenties, she was sold or given away to several successive owners. She was torn from her husband. Her children, born in cowsheds, did not remember their father. One of them, in infancy, was frozen to death on a bitter cold night, despite her pleas to the serfowner to be allowed to bring him indoors. Tsering Lhamo was reunited with her husband only after the democratic reform in 1959-60. Today he works in the commune. Her surviving son is in the People's Liberation Army. Her daughter is a "barefoot doctor" — a graduate of the Nyingchi School of Nursing in southeastern Tibet.

When I first saw her in 1965 Tsering Lhamo was 39, already one of Tibet's better known Communists, and Party secretary of the "Nangzan Mutual-Aid Team", a pioneer of the first stage of collective agriculture in Tibet. *Nangzan* means slave, and the team was so called because such was the former status of all its members. Also she was a deputy to the First People's Congress of the Tibet Autonomous Region, elected in that same year.

But none of these promotions showed in her manner. She looked, and was, a working woman to whom the liberation had restored the spring and bloom of youth, to whom the sufferings of the past had become a spur to tireless, aware effort in building the present and future. Vigorous of body, forthright in speech, with warm brown eyes and a ready smile frequently lighting up her clear-cut sun-browned face, she was an image of the freshly released potential of Tibet's womanhood.

In 1976, I met her once more in her active, mature early fifties. She was by now a vice-chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region, a member of its leading Party committee, and, on the scale of all China, of the National People's Congress. But she still walked with the solid gait of one who had never stopped working in the fields and wore country boots and the long, sleeveless sheepskin vest, fur turned inward, of her native place. This was also her dress when I saw her yet again, several months later, in Beijing where she had come for a national conference.

Nor had her regular place of work ever changed. It was still among her comrades of the ex-slave team, by now a part of the Gyaepa People's Commune, which Tsering Lhamo leads.

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Back in 1965, in Zetang in southern Tibet, Tsering Lhamo had introduced me to some of the leading members of the team.

They embodied its key characteristic — that, on the basis of the liberation, it had risen by its own efforts. Although the government stood ready to help, the members decided from the start to “use our hands to work, not stretch them out for gifts”. They exemplified what in all China was known as “the hard-bone spirit of the poor”, the class-based self-reliance on which, everywhere and in all stages of the Chinese revolution, Mao Zedong mainly relied. It was doubly striking in this Tibetan collective of former slaves, chiefly women.

“Our main method is to recall the old life to spur us in building the new,” said Tsering Lhamo. “Let the comrades here tell their own experience.”

What they began with brought to mind (if one was not to go back many centuries to early medieval Europe) the life of black slaves in the southern United States before the Civil War.

Thupten, the team chairman, was then 33. He was one of those Tibetans who in body build, skin colour and eagle-like features so strongly resemble the Native Americans of the U.S. Southwest.<sup>1</sup> He had been slave to the family of Shatra, the traitorous Tibetan aristocrat who in 1914 had put his name to the imperialist-dictated document that drew the "boundary" of China and British India deep within Tibet at the so-called "McMahon Line" (which no Chinese government nor the Tibetan local government itself had ever recognized).<sup>2</sup> Like Tsering Lhamo, his life was full of social and family tragedy, defiance and struggle. With a girl slave whom he loved and "illegally" married, he had tried to escape from the Shatras but been brought back, flogged and sold away from his wife. Now they were together again, with three children, one born prior to the democratic reform and two after their reunion.

Sonam Wangmu, a young woman of 28, had been "housed", before the democratic reform, in her master's dog kennels. She, too, had contracted a forbidden marriage. The bridegroom, in punishment, was stabbed with a dagger, locked into irons which lamed him for life, and exiled to haul heavy logs from the forests. Sonam Wangmu was pregnant at the time; under the double burden of sorrow and toil she had a miscarriage. By 1965, she was an activist in the team. Her husband, back with her, was a Communist Party member and head of Gyaepa township (which later became Gyaepa Commune).

Tenzing Phuti, another young woman, had been sundered from her husband by sale after two children were born. After the reform the couple had found each other, and become eager builders of the team.

Such were four of the eleven households which in 1961 set up this team. Of the six hectares of land allotted them, two-thirds was poor and low-yielding. They also received, between them, three plough-cattle and six donkeys for transport. Tools were few.

To add to their initial difficulties, the team members had been domestic menials or stable-hands, so they knew almost nothing of

farming. An unpromising beginning. Yet in the years 1961-64 they more than doubled the average yield of the soil, to about 2.5 tons of grain per hectare. On their best fields they were trying for over 5.25 tons per hectare, hitherto unheard of in Tibet and not bad even for China's rich lands south of the Changjiang (Yangtze River).<sup>3</sup> In their 1965 harvest, these ex-slaves who by the old Tibetan definition had been "born with nothing to die with nothing", gathered half a ton of grain for every man, woman and child, which meant that each of the team's households (there were 16 by 1965) had not only plenty of food but a substantial surplus for sale and the purchase of their other needs.

"We could go forward because we stuck together for the common good," explained Tsering Lhamo. "As we Tibetans say, 'Each strand of wool is thin and weak, but wound into a rope they can tie down a lion.' Also, we were determined. We've had difficulties and will have more. But what are they after all, compared to what we went through under the manor whips?"

"In 1961 three of us were already Party members. The Party and Chairman Mao had taught us — the poor *can* stand up, but only with organization, self-reliance and revolutionary drive. So we three Communists pledged ourselves to set an example by always sacrificing to help others and not seeking outside aid in anything we could do ourselves. Whenever one of us wavered, the others would say, 'Never forget what you were in the past. Don't soften up. A real Communist must do real things for the people. That's his only prestige and authority. If we can't put our all into helping our class brothers and sisters raise their understanding, rely on them and lead them forward, our political studies and meetings are a waste of time.'"

In this spirit, with which all the team members became inspired, obstacle after obstacle was overcome.

Before the first sowing, the team decided to increase the amount of manure put on the fields. But with only six donkeys, this would have taken 20 days — more time than they had. So they carried the manure on their backs as well. By 1965, the team had more than doubled the annual application of manure to its land.

Another problem was clearing the fields of stones, which are everywhere in Tibet. The team removed 750 basketfuls from each hectare.

In their first ploughing, the determined ex-slaves made up for their lack of equipment by sending members to work for neighbouring teams in return for the use of the latter's animals and tools. Not waiting for these to arrive, those who stayed behind attacked the still half-frozen earth with picks.

When it came to sowing, since none of them had any experience, they sent delegates out to learn how others did it; how much seed in a handful, how many steps to broadcast it, and the like.

For hoeing, too, a few "apprentices" went to learn, then returned to teach the rest, one working at the head of each row so those behind could imitate. A stubborn prejudice of old Tibet, that it was unpropitious for men to hoe and for women to plough, was overcome, so the team could better use its labour power.

That autumn, the members threw themselves into the final battle, the harvest. They reaped 50 per cent more grain than in the previous year, before mutual aid.

The second winter they did not relax, but built a stone embankment alongside the Yarlung Zangbo River and more irrigation channels. The third winter, they found new sources of earnings in haulage, cutting firewood for sale, broom-making, sewing clothes and raising pigs and poultry. The income was used not to replace, but to support, further expansion of grain-growing.

By 1965, the team had been enlarged by the entry of five more households with their land, and built up its stock of farm animals and implements. Of the latter, some were bought with the proceeds of the enlarged surplus grain sales, but a good many were produced on the spot — members who knew blacksmithing forged them from scrap metal collected by the others. By temporarily cutting down its own milk consumption, and laying in winter fodder, the team raised more calves.

Mental as well as physical obstacles were got rid of. It had been believed in Tibet that to fertilize fields after growth had begun would

“burn the crops”. Practice disproved this; the team top-dressed with urea, with good results.

Formerly, a certain grade of high-yielding white barley had been eaten only by the lords. For serfs or slaves to touch it, it was said, would “defy fate” and “cause men to die and pastures to wither”.

To break the taboo, Tsering Lhamo herself planted and tended the team’s first test-plot of this fine grain, achieved a record yield of 23 times the weight of the seed, and included it in her own family’s diet. The fact that they came to no harm was publicized. Thereafter, this white barley came to be grown and eaten not only in the mutual-aid team but throughout the township.

Housing, formerly tumbledown, was repaired. New homes were built for some members.

Up to 1959, no children in the team’s village had gone to school. By 1965, all those of proper age were attending. Some had acquired enough education to keep farm accounts.

Below are figures given us on the changes in the lives of these former slaves:

THE “NANGZAN” MUTUAL-AID TEAM, 1961-64

|                                   | 1961 | 1964 | Percentage<br>increase |
|-----------------------------------|------|------|------------------------|
| <i>People and Land:</i>           |      |      |                        |
| Member households                 | 11   | 16   | 45.5                   |
| Abie-bodied workers               | 19   | 31   | 63.1                   |
| Land (hectares)                   | 6    | 8.9  | 48.3                   |
| <i>Other Means of Production:</i> |      |      |                        |
| <i>Plough Animals:</i>            |      |      |                        |
| Draught cattle<br>(yak hybrids)   | 3    | 13   | 340.0                  |
| Horses and mules                  | 1    | 7    | 600.0                  |
| Total                             | 4    | 20   | 400.0                  |
| <i>Other Animals:</i>             |      |      |                        |
| Donkeys (for transport)           | 6    | 21   | 250.0                  |
| Milk cattle                       | —    | 7    |                        |
| Sheep                             | 60   | 130  | 116.6                  |
| <i>Implements:</i>                |      |      |                        |
| Ploughs                           | 2    | 33   | 1,550.0                |
| Hand farm tools                   | 90   | 500  | 456.4                  |
| <i>Manure Applied</i>             |      |      |                        |
| (kg. per hectare)                 | 270  | 525  | 94.4                   |

*Annual Crops:*

|                         |       |          |       |
|-------------------------|-------|----------|-------|
| Total crop (kg.)        | 8,820 | 23,362.5 | 164.9 |
| Yield per hectare (kg.) | 1,470 | 2,626    | 78.5  |
| Average per household   | 801.7 | 1,456.25 | 81.6  |

*Annual Consumption of Main Auxiliary Foods (Team Total)*

|              |    |     |         |
|--------------|----|-----|---------|
| Meat (kg.)   | 19 | 445 | 2,242.1 |
| Butter (kg.) | 11 | 160 | 1,345.5 |
| Tea (kg.)    | —  | 250 | —       |

*Clothing Owned*

|                                       |     |     |      |
|---------------------------------------|-----|-----|------|
| Garments in good condition<br>(total) | 270 | 500 | 85.1 |
|---------------------------------------|-----|-----|------|

It will be noted that animals, tools and members' consumption increased much more than the rise in output. This, of course, was due to the ending of the serfowners' exactions.

Figures on the team's 1965 harvest (obtained after our visit) showed a total crop of 26 tons, an average of three tons per hectare; and grain distribution to members of 1.6 tons per household, or 500 kg. per person. The number of animals increased to over 200.

Tsering Lhamo and her group, when we saw them, were talking of the next step to the commune.

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In September 1965, when the Autonomous Region was founded, the central government in Beijing sent a high-level delegation which consulted broadly with the Tibetan cadres and people. At a forum in Lhasa, Tsering Lhamo was asked her hopes. Like many others, she answered: "People's communes, soon, in Tibet."

Gyaepa Commune was set up in 1966. She became its Party secretary. Ten years later, in 1976, she talked to us for two afternoons about the intervening decade. With some details paralleling those in sister communes omitted, here is what she said.

\* \* \*

The mutual-aid teams were a big pace ahead, a seed of socialism. But they still allowed unearned income. So they couldn't block a new drifting apart into rich and poor. A commune is different. Those who work more earn more. But no one gets anything without work. That's more just. It gets rid of exploitation. It's the road to common prosperity which the Party points out to us.

Gyaepa's change to a commune came after its people got together to study Chairman Mao's statements and to build the idea of going forward together. It involved arguments and battles. People with more property wanted to leave things as they were. And class enemies spread rumours. One sneered, "Join the commune and you'll be left with nothing but chopsticks to eat with from the common bowl." Another rumbled: "In the commune, you'll have no freedom. Leaders, big and small, will be after you for more work all the time."

These persons had originally opposed the teams as well. But now they raised a slogan, "The mutual-aid teams forever!" Their real aim, which they couldn't state openly, was to backtrack from every kind of collective and climb back on the necks of the poor. They had to be exposed and fought. But many people who fell for their slogan weren't against socialism. With them, it was a question of friendly discussion. It was very, very important to make the difference.

The Regional Party Committee helped us at each stage. It launched the study of Chairman Mao's writings on co-operation in agriculture. By 1973, we were ready to make a real start on learning from Dazhai. This movement moved forward in Tibet after the first nationwide conference devoted to it in 1975. That was when we started to build up fields and irrigation facilities in a big way.

Naturally, the former serfowners and estate agents tried to wreck the effort. "These projects will bring you only toil and trouble," they said to the members. On the job they were slow, brought their worst tools and baskets, wanted sick leave all the time and wailed what they were being put upon. Those were their new forms of struggle, in contrast to the attitude of the ex-serfs and slaves who brought out their best equipment and worked hard and well.

There were also other obstacles, Tsering Lhamo told me when I met her a few months later in Beijing, after the downfall of the "gang of four".

In 1975, the commune was agog with new plans. Then came the cold water. The *Red Flag* magazine printed attacks on what it called "the pure productive forces theory". This made some cadres

uncertain. Would the advances in production and field construction on which we had decided put us on the “wrong line”?

We didn't know then that the reputed mouthpiece of the Party Central Committee had been seized by the gang. We couldn't understand. How could there be revolution, or anything else, without grain and other products? What would people eat? Slogans?

Some ex-selfowners and stewards could read, and after seeing those *Red Flag* articles, they mocked us: “That's all what your calls to ‘work all out for socialism’ are — ‘pure productive forces theory’, the wrong line being criticized now.” They and the “gang of four” were singing in harmony. We held a mass criticism meeting, as always when the enemy made trouble. In that way, we were fighting the gang as well, though we weren't clear about their role then.

\* \* \*

In 1976, having stuck to its guns, Gyaepa reaped a total crop of 868 tons of grain. The per-hectare yield was 6.18 tons, better than the 6-ton target set for the communes in the fertile provinces of China's interior south of the Changjiang (Yangtze) River. For Tibet it was a real feat.

This victory was in striking contrast to the situation four years earlier; in 1972 when the “gang of four” were riding high, the commune's total harvest had fallen to 288 tons and many households lacked grain. Then too, Tsering Lhamo led in turning the tide. Taking a manure basket, hoe and bag of *tsamba*, she went to the commune's first team — then so poor that it was compared to “a scraggy tail that doesn't even cover a sheep's behind”. She found many members not turning out in the commune fields at all but staying at home to till their private plots and spin woollen thread for sale. This was not because they were innately more selfish than anyone else, but because the line was confused. Though slogans were loud, no steps were taken to give down-to-earth socialist education. Tsering Lhamo succeeded in moving their thoughts once again toward agriculture and the collective, and in getting both the people and the horses and carts (many being used for personal gain) back to work in the fields.

By the next year, 1973, the first team had stopped buying market grain for food and was growing more than enough for its own needs. In that year's distribution every family acquired sufficient reserves, and there was a surplus for sale to the state not only in this team but throughout the commune.

In 1974, the commune did better than the grain yield target set by China's National Agricultural Programme for the northern provinces — three tons per hectare.

In 1975 it topped 3.75 tons, the target for the central provinces, south of the Huanghe (Yellow) River.

In 1976, having breasted the "gang of four's" new tide of disruption, it "crossed the Changjiang" by exceeding six tons per hectare.

In 1977 Gyaepa kept going forward and reaped 973 tons of grain; 20 per cent better than in 1976 in both total harvest and per-hectare yield.

\*                     \*                     \*

Here we resume the account in Tsering Lhamo's own words:

Compared with really advanced communes in Tibet we are still far behind. We are learning many things from them. Take the requirements for cadres worked out at Nyama Commune by its leader, Rendzin Wanggyal. We think his rejection of all special privileges for leaders of all grades, their wives and their children is correct. It is up to us here, too, to serve the people heart and soul, not to disappoint them, and to get rid of mistakes in our thinking and style of work. We've criticized two tendencies among the cadres: one to think we're out of the ordinary because we have rank, and two, that being a cadre is "too hard" and it is better to lay down the responsibility. Now our commune leaders go down regularly to the teams, frankly put their own flaws in outlook and action before the members, and ask them to supplement, analyse, criticize and advise. This has helped both leaders and masses to put greater demands on themselves and to be more alert against individualist and small proprietor thinking and ways.

At the same time, we don't rush headlong into steps that can

be effective only when we have advanced our economy further. For instance, we haven't merged or abolished the members' private plots. Formerly people tended to use the best manure and their freshest energies on their own plots, the collective land came second. But in 1975 we decided that the priority in all these respects must go to the team; now common concerns are in the lead over individual ones, but the latter aren't ignored either. That's the correct relationship.

*What part does the old ex-slaves' mutual-aid team play now?*

That's Team No. 2. It carries on in the old "pauper spirit". Before the commune was formed, this team alone hadn't differentiated into rich and poor. Now, it is still in the lead — in production, study and its contribution to the state. It's stuck to its style of hard work and thrift. It wastes no grain — since 1973 every household has had its own reserves.

*Women were very important in your team. What about Gyaepa Commune as a whole?*

The women stand out not only in farming but in animal husbandry and in the running of affairs.

In old Tibet, women weren't allowed to plough. Today they do, and also do other jobs which were traditionally for men. Also, they operate machines.

In the pastoral areas women used to be allowed to milk but not herd. Today there are seven women among the 13 animal herders in the commune, more than half.

Formerly, women weren't considered truly human, so naturally they had no part in councils; what they said or thought didn't count. Now half our commune's cadres above the team level are women: 12 out of 24. So are nine of our 29 Party members. If war comes and the men have to go to the front, there'll be no part of the work the women won't be able to carry on.

Chairman Mao said that women hold up half the sky, that women comrades can do what men can, and that the day when China's women are fully liberated will be the day of victory for the Chinese revolution. Our aim is to complete the tasks of the revolution together with the men comrades.

Women have played a big part in all Tibet's revolutionary advances. In the criticism of the theory of "fate" we took the lead. Everybody's fate had changed, but ours most of all. Because we suffered the most, our feeling for the revolution, our eagerness in it, is perhaps the greatest. In the past, even if women wanted to do something, we had no right. Now we have the right, so it's up to us to use it well.

## CHAPTER 7

# STATE FARMS — IN CLASS STRUGGLE, PRODUCTION AND SCIENCE

Charles Bell, the imperialist official and writer who was active in the British occupation of Tibet's Chumbi valley in 1904 and following years, wrote of the county of Phari there:

"At Phari, 14,300 feet above sea level . . . no crop ripens."

"No crop ripens in Phari" was also an old local maxim. Should such a thing happen, it was said, it would presage "disaster for all Tibet". The poverty-stricken people of this town, one of the highest in the world, lived by hazardous portorage for nobles and merchants over the Himalayas to and from India.

It was not only ancient tradition that branded Phari as hopeless for farming. Many modern agronomists said the same thing, considering 4,000 metres (13,124 feet) the upper limit for crops in Tibet. Phari has a mean annual temperature of only 1° C, and an average of 71 frost-free days per year (in some years only 46) while *qingke* barley, Tibet's staple, needs 100 days to mature.

Yet from 1960, this grain did in fact ripen in Phari, yielding up to 1.8 tons a hectare. By 1965 it was supplying half the local consumption. Potatoes, radishes and rapeseed were also being successfully grown there.

Moreover, far from presaging "disaster for all Tibet", this result

was achieved following the final calamity for the region's serf system — which was at the same time the salvation of its people. Tibet's peasants, unshackled from feudal bonds and at last organized for their own benefit, achieved the agrarian "impossible" — helped by bold scientific work by people of China's other nationalities. At Phari, after repeated experiments, a cold-resistant and early-ripening strain of barley was sown in mid-April, immediately after the first thaw. Fields were managed in new ways which included plentiful manuring, measures against sudden frosts now predictable by weather forecasts, and the digging of irrigation channels to bring down plentiful water from the mountain snow.

All this was an important experience for the whole of Tibet, where the development of high altitude farming is vital both to increasing yields and to the extending of the sown area. Later Phari's experience was put to use on the Ngari plateau, western Tibet. There, in 1965, many places above 4,000 metres were reporting yields of up to 2.25 tons of barley per hectare.

From the uplands let us shift to Tibet's lowest-lying area, Zayü in its southeastern corner, with a relatively warm annual mean temperature of 15.8° C. There, tea was being grown for the first time in Tibet's history. The tea trade was one of the main ways in which the Han ruling class and merchants of old China had exploited the Tibetans, with the local ruling class acting as middlemen and getting a share of the profits. It was also one way the imperialists tried to penetrate Tibet. After Britain seized Darjeeling from Sikkim in 1835, tea plantations were started there with the specific purpose of turning this trade from China's interior provinces toward Britain's Indian empire, to help tear Tibet from the former and attach it to the latter.

After the liberation, the solidarity of the peoples of multinational socialist China, including the Tibetan, removed exploitation from the tea trade. Not many years afterwards, Tibet began to grow its own supplies of tea, long an essential in the local diet.

In Lhasa in 1965, ordinary working people were eating fresh tomatoes and fruit unknown to them before. In Zayü, rice was being

cultivated. In old Tibet rice had been so rare that even the wealthy, when entertaining, only served it as a kind of after-meal titbit; the polite guest would confine himself to nibbling a few grains.

Maize, sesame, sugar cane and even bananas were also being grown in Zayü, finding a ready market.

Class struggle, the struggle for production and scientific experiment, said Mao Zedong, are the three major revolutionary movements in which mankind learns about and changes the world, and changes itself. All of these we found interwoven in the history of two state farms near Lhasa. One originally called "July 1" after the formal birthday of the Chinese Communist Party has more recently been known as the Tibet Region Agricultural Research Institute. The other was named "August 1" after the birthday of the People's Liberation Army.

## THE "JULY 1" INSTITUTE AND FARM

The "July 1" complex (institute and farm) was set up in 1952 under the 1951 Agreement on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet, which pledged:

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.

By 1965 it had built five research departments: plant breeding, farm tools, soil and fertilizers, horticulture and plant protection — and was testing and applying the results of research in actual production. One part of its work was to improve Tibet's traditional crops such as upland barley, rapeseed, wheat and turnips. Another was to introduce and disseminate new crops brought from other places or developed locally. These included:

*Food staples:* Heavy-bearing winter and spring wheat, a hardy wheat-rye hybrid, an over-wintering cross of wheat and *qingke* barley and potatoes;

*Industrial crops:* Sugar beets and jute;

*Vegetables:* Chilis, tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, melons, eggplant and squash;

*Fruit:* Apples, pears, peaches, cherries and plums.

In old Tibet most of these crops did not exist. Others were rare or, as in the case of fruit, rich men's playthings.

Important in the work at "July 1" has been the search for ways to overcome Tibet's natural disadvantages in agriculture, which could not be done in the social conditions of the past. These disadvantages include:

*High altitude:* Most crop lands lie at elevations of between 3,000 and 4,000 metres above sea level (that of the "July 1" farm is 3,654 metres).

*Low temperatures:* Mean annual average 7.9°C.

*Wide daily variations:* Even when days are warm, nights can be very cold.

*Short frost-free period:* 110-120 days of the year.

*Sparse rainfall:* Annual mean 400 mm.

"These are real difficulties," said farm director Zhang Taiying. "But we are dialectical materialists. So we not only take account of disadvantages but also seek and grasp advantages. There are many here." Among favourable factors he listed:

*Abundant sunlight:* Averaging 3,000 hours a year, twice as much as in Beijing, with rich solar radiation due to the altitude and the purity of the air.

*Wide daily variation of temperature:* From near-freezing at night to hot in the day during the growing season.

"You may wonder at my counting this variation as a good thing as well as a bad one," Director Zhang said. "Here's why. High day temperatures help plants to grow and absorb nutrients. Cold at night reduces transpiration and rests the plants, so that they put more energy into growth and can achieve great size. Turnips and cabbages here, as you've seen, can be as big as a man can carry.

"Faced with these pluses and minuses, our task is to evolve strains and methods that make full use of what's good while limiting what's bad, and finally after much experiment, to make a dialectical

analysis of Tibet's overall conditions for farming, grasp their objective laws, and thus turn the disadvantages into advantages. This is an application of Mao Zedong Thought. Acting on it, we have not only introduced new crops but achieved some China-wide records."

Some of the latter, as he gave them, were:

*Winter wheat*: Sown in the Lhasa area in October and harvested in August, yielded 8.73 tons per hectare on a small-scale experimental plot in 1965, as compared with the 3.75-ton average and 7.5-ton high in China's interior provinces. By 1976, Tibet's highest yield, in small experiments, was 12 tons per hectare, a record for all China. In actual production there were fields yielding 6 tons.<sup>1</sup>

*Cabbages*: 150 tons per hectare.

*Tomatoes*: 37.5 tons per hectare in cold frames.

*Apples, pears, peaches*: Most trees in 1965 were their first productive years, but the best were already bearing 75 kg. per tree. Peach trees, sensitive to cold, were trained to grow close to the ground, like sprawling vines.

The farm's tool department was popularizing new ploughs and horse-drawn sowers that had helped raise the sprouting rate of seed to 80 per cent, from as low as 30 per cent by the old hand methods. Crosses of local cattle with Friesians, and of local pigs and poultry, scrawny but climatically well-adapted, with outside varieties had produced useful new breeds.

Like everything else in the new Tibet, the "July 1" Farm grew up in struggle with separatist and feudal forces. The serfowner regime, anxious that it should show failure rather than efficacy, provided only 100 hectares of the worst land, thin, stone-strewn and overgrown with scrub. For this barren waste, it charged the central government 40,000 silver *yuan*. Yet it was here that the farm's workers and staff, political and scientific, gained the results enumerated above, quickly began to distribute improved seed to the surrounding people, and in production first grew their own food and then a substantial surplus. By 1965, the "July 1" Farm was supplying 1,500 tons of vegetables, 10,000 kg. of pork and some 20,000 kg. of milk annually to Lhasa markets.

Prior to the democratic reform, this state farm was limited in

its contacts within Tibet, so two-thirds of the experimental material consisted of plants and animals brought from elsewhere in China. After 1959, with the old political obstacles swept away, research not only grew in scope but changed fundamentally. By 1965, three-quarters of the experimentation was with Tibetan strains. Three-fifths of the personnel were widely scattered in out-stations among the peasants, learning from their experience and welding it with modern science to find solutions for urgent local problems.

There were two phases in this outreach — initially from the farm itself to other points in the Lhasa area, and later to prefectures to the south, west and north. In all these places, selected Tibetan mutual-aid teams (and later communes) doubled as demonstration units where much of the research was also done. There the scientific staff lived and worked with the liberated serfs and slaves.

Between my visits in 1955 and 1965, the staff and workers of the “July 1” Farm increased several fold, to a total of 346, including 49 scientists and farm technicians, 274 workers and 23 administrators. Many Tibetan ex-serfs and slaves, starting as workers, had become technicians. Some had done advanced study in the interior. Others had gone on to be cadres — including local government chairmen and Party secretaries of agricultural counties.

The general task of the farm, said Director Zhang, was to take advantage of the change in relations of production, achieved through the democratic reform and beginnings of collectivization, to help enlarge the productive forces in Tibet’s agriculture.

In 1976 my third visit to the “July 1” Farm, now known as the Tibet Autonomous Region Agricultural Research Institute, revealed that it had gone far forward along this path.

Two immediate impressions were:

First, while on both the past visits the briefing had come from Han agronomists, this time it was given by a Tibetan, a woman in her late thirties named Nyima. Her history? She had been trained politically and scientifically from among the once illiterate ex-serf teenagers who had come more than a decade earlier to the farm. What, then, were the Han scientists doing? Some of those I had

met in 1955 and 1965 were still there. But most were no longer superiors, either in administrative or professional rank. Rather they had become staff officers and advisers to the new responsible personnel, Tibetans who had once been their subordinates and pupils, and in whose advance they showed pride and enthusiasm.

Second, I was struck by Nyima's words as she took us around a special display of products of the farm. "All these did not exist in old Tibet. They were acclimatized through long experiments. Now they've settled down in our region and give high yields over large areas."

Thus, each of my three visits corresponded to a different stage. In 1955, much of the work here had been demonstrative, to awaken people to new possibilities. In 1965, these possibilities were already being developed under field conditions. In 1976, agricultural science had to a large extent "settled down" in Tibet — in terms of local personnel, mass participation and region-wide application in production.

The Institute, being the centre of a larger network in Tibet, was mainly engaged in trying out experimental strains, affirming them, and providing improved seed (and stud animals) for producing units.

As regards the way some new things were developed, we heard a very striking fact. It illustrated clearly the advantages to Tibet of being part of China's socialist multinational family. To increase the number of generations in a given time, the farm was flying seed by air freight to a sister institution in semi-tropical Hainan Island, thousands of kilometres away. There it maintained one of its own technicians on land specially allotted. Rapidly multiplied in conditions where two crops a year were possible, the seed was then flown back to Tibet.

Animal husbandry in Tibet is as important as crop-growing, or more so. In sheep-breeding, the Institute had helped cross Tibetan varieties with others from Xinjiang with marked success. Local sheep, though able to stand up to Tibet's climatic rigours, used to yield only a kilogramme or so of wool at each clipping. The cross-breeds, retaining their hardiness, provided 2.5 kilogrammes in the first generation and 5 kilogrammes or more by the third. A significant proportion of all sheep in Tibet had been thus improved. Ex-

periments were continuing for further progress. There was still a very long way to go, however, to catch up with top world standards, such as those achieved in New Zealand.

The Institute's dairy herd of 80 cows, by 1976, had twice the milk yield of a few years earlier. It also supplied breed bulls and sperm. Dutch cattle brought for propagation from the interior could not at first stand the altitude, often dying of heart trouble. This had been largely obviated by gradual acclimatization. First they spent some time at about 2,000 metres above sea level, then were brought by stages up to 3,600 metres (the elevation of the farm), then still higher.

Work was being done on breeding a heavier-milking yak (yak milk has very high fat-content but yield per yak-cow, or *dri*, is very small).

In pig-raising, 100 pedigree boars were being supplied each year to producing units.

The Institute, too, was the regional headquarters for the study of all types of soil in Tibet, and of methods of manuring and management suited to each. Communes with the requisite conditions were being used as research stations. Soil scientists worked in close conjunction with the masses.

In fertilizers, work was being done on humic acid, of which there are abundant sources in some of Tibet's boggy grasslands.

In plant protection, research concentrated on local insect pests and diseases, and on trials of pesticides and weed-killers. The cause of "white stalk" disease of wheat, peculiar to Tibet, had been found. A good rust-resistant strain of wheat had been developed in the Institute's out-station in Nyingchi County, where rains are abundant for Tibet, and rust frequently occurs.

The farm's horticulturists were continuing to adapt vegetables and fruits from other parts of China, and from abroad, to Tibetan conditions. Tomatoes and peppers, unknown in the region before the liberation and grown largely under glass when first introduced, were now cultivated in the open. Cucumbers when first transplanted to the high plateau did not bear seed, which had to be brought from the outside with every new sowing. Cabbages, on the contrary, tended to run to seed. Both flaws had been corrected. Eggplants, in early

experiments, grew small and "hard as stone". Today they are of normal consistency and very large, weighing from 0.5 to 2 kilos apiece.

In the striking increase in apple-growing the Institute (and its predecessor the "July 1" State Farm) played a key role from the start. The initial phase in which seedlings had to be shipped into Tibet by air, was ended by success in grafting to a native wild crabapple stock. As a result, the Institute's nursery by 1976 was supplying thirty to fifty thousand young trees to the Lhasa municipality each year. In one of Lhasa's counties, Doilungdêqên, every commune by the late 1970's, had its own orchard.

Besides apples, Bartlett pears had been successfully acclimatized and propagated.

Not long before our 1976 visit, the Institute had shifted most of its fruit work to the extensive state orchard at Nyingchi where growers from many places came for training in grafting, pruning and other techniques. "There is a big future for fruit in Tibet," we were repeatedly told.

Two-thirds of the Institute's scientific personnel, in 1976, were in the field at all times. Members of peasant agricultural science groups (all communes and many teams now had them) came in freely to use its facilities and exchange experience.

There was another and broader aspect, the throwing open of the doors of agricultural science to Tibet's rural toilers, and of specialized educational institutions to their sons and daughters. Among the children of the Institute's Tibetan workers, several were studying agriculture and allied subjects — including farm equipment, meteorology, forestry and water conservancy — in colleges in the interior.

## THE PLA AS FARM PIONEERS

"August 1", the army's farm, is a modern one of about 670 hectares (1,530 acres) with tractor park, trucks to carry its produce and other mechanized equipment.

In its office, hung with charts of the Long March and other

historic revolutionary battles and campaigns, and with specimens and diagrams of current production, we heard its striking history.

"In 1951 when the PLA arrived in Lhasa after crossing 'a thousand mountains and ten thousand streams,'" said its Political Commissar Chen, using a poetic Chinese expression, "grain was our life-and-death problem. There were no roads yet to bring it up from the rear. We had only what could be carried by pack animals. Under the 17-article Agreement, the local government was supposed to help us to buy food.<sup>2</sup> Instead it deliberately cornered all the grain on the market, driving up its price and that of all other goods, not only for us but for the people. We were forced to pay a silver *yuan* for a bundle of five small radishes, two *yuan* for a saucer-sized wheat-cake. Local inhabitants were stopped from selling us firewood and fodder. The *kashag* spread rumours like, 'The Hans have eaten up all the grain in the interior, and now they've come to gobble up everything here. You won't be able to eat the silver they pay, so don't deal with them.' A few of the more patriotic aristocrats sold us some food, and the people brought some yak-dung fuel, but that couldn't solve matters. But try as it might, the *kashag* wasn't able to drive out our working-class army nurtured by the Party. We stood our ground by following Chairman Mao's teachings, 'Move your own hands to produce.'

"When we asked the *kashag* for unused land, they clearly figured, 'What can you few hundred men do?' they mocked us openly. Their officials took us to an abandoned burial ground, all sand and thornbushes, and said, 'You can have for your farm just as much land as you can reclaim in three days.'

"Our troops and cadres, men and women, pitched in to work round the clock. It was cold. We had no shelter and few tools. Worst of all, we were weak from hunger. No roads had been built yet to bring up supplies. Our daily ration was 400 grams of broad beans and barley usually mouldy. Because the reactionaries would not lend us millstones, we had to eat it unground. Everyone was terribly constipated as well as underfed. We varied our diet as best as we could with wild roots, and the meat of marmots we flushed out of their holes. But we did not stop work, not for a minute, even to

sleep. That's how we changed the 'three days' given us into three days and three nights.

"While we worked, Lukhangwa, a high official of the local regime, came in his finest robes and gloated to our Political Commissar Wang Jimei, 'You're happy over your victories. But an empty stomach can be worse than defeat in the field.' He was frankly trying to starve us out.

"The poor serfs were different. When they saw us picking wild plants, some of which looked like edible ones in our home provinces but actually were poisonous, they helped tell us those that could be eaten safely from those that couldn't.

"Hardships are a test and a tempering for Communists. Party members had that spirit. We purposely came for meals late, and left early, to leave more for the others. We tried to work harder than anyone else. Morale was high. While wrestling with that land, everyone sang. The soldiers made up a rhyme:

*Hard as iron is the frozen ground,  
But the fighters' hearts are strong as steel,  
Today we water with our sweat and blood,  
Tomorrow's fields of vegetables and grain.*

"Labour is something all labouring people understand. The local poor began to crowd around us, with sympathy and suggestions. A ragged 80-year-old lama told us, 'You've been fooled. This place is even worse than it looks. It's flooded when the river rises and drought-stricken at low water.' The reactionaries were angered by our morale and by these contacts. They got Tibetan Army soldiers to point their guns at the reclaiming troops, hoping to cause a bloody clash. But because we stuck firmly to policy, we couldn't be provoked. We just kept on working, though on the alert. In those three days, we reclaimed our first 34 hectares of land.

"Most of us were peasants born and bred. But we had little idea of how to farm the high plateau. We had no fertilizer, so we went into Lhasa to collect human manure. We couldn't get baskets, so we took off our trousers, tied up the legs, and used those for containers. Thus, gradually, we enriched the sandy soil. That first year,

1951, we got 200 tons of barley and peas off it. Chairman Mao's ideas brought us victory in a complex fight with class enemies. When we won it, we remembered our friends, the poor. We sent that old lama a gift, a giant turnip from our first crop. It weighed 15 kilogrammes.

"Our good harvest encouraged all the PLA troops and central cadres then in Tibet — in Xigazê, Gyangzê and Yadong. One of our units at Nagarzê raised grain 4,500 metres above sea level — something the British and Indian writers on Tibet thought couldn't be done. Nearby inhabitants flocked in to learn how we'd managed it, and were soon repeating the feat."

All army farms were on previously untilled waste, Commissar Chen stressed. The interests of the people were not infringed on. If the army found a water source for irrigation, it gave the local peasants prior access. The same was true of source of fertilizer. As its work developed, "August 1" began to supply the entire vicinity with the best seed, carefully selected, in exchange for an equal amount of ordinary food grain. To the poor serfs, seed was offered free. The farm gave medical treatments to the nearby people and veterinary treatments to sick animals, also without charge. At harvest time it sent its carts to help transport the villagers' grain. They, in turn, helped the soldiers get in the crops, after they had gathered in their own.

From 1954, when the trunk highways into Tibet were completed, the army farms could get modern equipment (the first two tractors came in 1955). In 1959 came the crucial test. Besieged by rebel *kashag* troops, "August 1" successfully defended itself. After the rebellion was put down and the feudal system was ended, more waste land could be reclaimed. In 1960 alone, the farm brought under cultivation 1,330 hectares in four nearby counties. Half of this it turned over to the people. The rest, 670 hectares, it kept to farm for the army's self-support. Former barrens were made productive by deep ploughing with tractors, building up the soil, sowing good seed bred for local conditions, and chemical fertilizer. In 1964, on its 670 hectares, the farm produced 800 tons of grain, 610 tons of vegetables and 50 tons of rapeseed. It also grew 1,280 fruit trees and kept livestock — 1,000

horses, yaks and cows, 2,000 sheep, 50 pigs and a lot of poultry. It became independent financially and, with the units it supplied, self-sufficient in grain, edible oils, meat and fodder.

As on all PLA land projects, the continuing policy was "Reclamation, production and capital construction done simultaneously by self-reliance and hard work". Capital construction included digging 90 kilometres of canals and channels to ensure flood protection, irrigation and drainage. Half a million tons of earth and stone were moved in the process. Some 600,000 trees had been planted as shelter belts, windbreaks, and along the roads. The farm in 1965 looked prosperous and attractive.

By then it had nine tractors, seven trucks and many steel ploughs and other horse-drawn implements. Some of the latter were already being made in Tibet. Electricity from the Ngachen power station was used for lighting, flour milling, a sawmill and other subsidiary enterprises. The average wage for workers was 40 *yuan* a month.

Very important, too, was the farm's function as a school for local peasants. Up to 1965, it had trained 60 drivers on its nine tractors. Two of its Tibetan workers had become truck drivers, one a film projectionist. Eight occupied posts as leaders or vice-leaders of production teams, and political instructors or assistant instructors. Twelve had joined the Communist Party and 26 the Communist Youth League. It was of the schooling of revolutionaries with technical skills, not just of skilled personnel, that the farm was most proud.

What was achieved on the "August 1" and other army farms in Tibet was a strong stimulus to the people at large to move on from mutual aid to larger-scale organized socialist farming.

In 1976, the vice-director of the "August 1" State Farm who now met us was a stocky, middle-aged Tibetan PLA officer named Tsenben.

The Farm's area had been reduced to 173 hectares. It had handed over much of its previous land, as well as areas newly reclaimed, to nearby Tibetan communes.

The average wheat yield was about six tons per hectare, almost double that in 1965. Considerable quantities of vegetables and apples

were grown. Butter was another product, made not on the spot but in the Farm's pastures to the north and east, where it grazed 5,000 animals.

Nearly 80 per cent of the workers on the Farm and 40 per cent of the cadres were by then Tibetans.

## CHAPTER 8

# THE NEW STATE FARMS — MACHINES, IRRIGATION AND GRAIN

The “July 1” and “August 1” State Farms were pioneers in introducing new crops and farm techniques and in training personnel in Tibet for improving agriculture. The newer state farms, many times their size and founded in the 1960’s, have been pioneers in mechanization and extensive irrigation. They are large-scale grain producers.

In 1976, we spent some days in two of them, each several hours’ drive from Lhasa. Phampo State Farm had begun work in 1960, and Lhundrup State Farm in 1966.<sup>1</sup> Both were unprecedentedly well equipped for the region. Between them, they supplied enough staple grain (mainly wheat but also some barley) to feed Tibet’s entire population for two weeks. They raised other crops and pastured a variety of livestock mostly of improved breeds developed on the spot. They also ran some small factories and mines, and had their own schools and medical and other welfare facilities.

Driving from location to location along the farm’s well-surfaced roads, we saw things that had not existed in Tibet ten years earlier. On either side of us stretched undivided fields of golden grain.

Through them moved massive red combine harvesters, singly or in pairs, pouring cascades of grain into attending trucks. The background was Tibet's splendid natural setting of azure skies and serried peaks. Truly a scene of "purple mountain majesties above the fruited plain".

In some places, shimmering water gurgled through wide stone-lined channels running die-straight across the fields. It came from the reservoirs, among Tibet's first and biggest, built by these state farms in 1974-75.

As state farms, Phampo and Lhundrup were different from the communes, being under public, not collective, ownership. Hence, their system of distribution was different. Instead of members receiving a share of the annual income, their workers drew wages. Produce and profit went to the state. Losses, if any, were borne by the state. And the state supplied all investment and equipment, in both production and welfare.<sup>2</sup>

As elsewhere in Tibet, the investments were far in excess of locally available income, a circumstance pointed out as the policy of the Party and state toward minority nationalities, i.e. the assistance of the majority to the minority.

Another feature of this policy, the training and promotion of Tibetan nationality cadres, was apparent in these large-scale enterprises. In Phampo, the state farm's assistant Party secretary, 36-year-old Sonam Wangdui, was a Tibetan. So were the Party secretaries of all the brigades, and all but one of the operators and repair personnel of its farm machines (five of the tractor squads were composed entirely of Tibetan women). Out of 179 teachers in Phampo's schools, 71 were Tibetan. In its medical service, the director and 16 of the other doctors were Tibetans (some others were Hans) as were all its 77 veterinarians. In Lhundrup, the portion of Tibetan cadres was somewhat less, but still high.

An idea of the size and technical level of the two farms could be gleaned from the figures and facts given us:

|                                       | Phampo<br>State Farm | Lhundrup<br>State Farm   |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|--|
| Total population                      | 15,000               | 14,801   |
| Workers*                              | 6,400                | No figure, but proportion probably the same  |
| Farmland (hectares)                   | 7,350                | 5,130  |
| Land under wheat and barley**         | 4,400                | 4,000  |
| Wheat & barley crops 1975 (tons)      | 10,000               | 8,000  |
| Cattle and sheep                      | 65,000               | 80,000   |
| Tractors                              | 55                   | No figures, but 80% of ploughing, sowing, cultivating and threshing, and 20% of harvesting done by machines (as compared with Phampo's 95%). Harvesting 20% by machine (Phampo's mainly mechanized). |
| Combines                              | 12                   |  |
| Garden tractors                       | 20                   |  |
| Hulling machines                      | 22                   |  |
| Trucks for agricultural use           | 44                   | 37   |
| Reservoir capacity (cubic metres):*** |                      |  |
| Kartse Reservoir                      | 4 million            |  |
| Hutoushan Reservoir                   |                      | 1.2 million  |
| Percentage of land irrigated          | No figure            | 70%  |

Both farms had built their reservoirs and attendant channels mainly with their own work force during agricultural off-seasons. State help was given in the form of mechanized construction equipment with its operators, cement, etc. At Phampo, a thousand men and women worked for eight months. At Lhundrup, with less people, it took longer.

The growth of Phampo in cultivated area (mainly by reclamation), output and production was reported as follows:

\* Including 2,000 workers in small industries.

\*\* Rest of cultivated area under fodder and oil-bearing crops, sugar beet (Phampo only), etc.

\*\*\* Lhundrup had also built a 28-kilometre-long main irrigation canal and 4 smaller reservoirs at brigade level.

Phampo was building a second large reservoir.

|                             | 1960  | 1966  | 1975   | Percentage Increase<br>1966-75 |
|-----------------------------|-------|-------|--------|--------------------------------|
| Area under grain (hectares) | 2,000 | 4,000 | 4,400  | 120%                           |
| Grain output (tons)         | 1,700 | 7,000 | 10,000 | 488%                           |
| Per hectare yield (tons)    | 1.1   | 1.7   | 2.3    | 91%                            |

Between 1971 and 1975, Phampo's contributions to the state grew as follows:

|      | Grain<br>(tons) (% increase) |    | Money<br>(yuan) (% increase) |     |
|------|------------------------------|----|------------------------------|-----|
| 1971 | 3,000                        | —  | 220,000                      | —   |
| 1975 | 6,000                        | 50 | 860,000                      | 304 |

Lhundrup's output growth, we were told, was uneven in the first years, with a dip due to confusion of line (apparently the Lin Biao line) in 1968-70. But afterwards there was a steady and constantly accelerating upward trend listed as follows:

|                             | Output Growth<br>(tons) | Percentage Increase |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 1972                        | 5,000                   | —                   |
| 1973                        | 5,750                   | 15                  |
| 1974                        | 6,900                   | 20                  |
| 1975                        | 8,000                   | 16                  |
| Percentage increase 1972-75 |                         | 60                  |

Monthly wages on the farm were:

|                       | In Money<br>(yuan) | In Grain<br>(kg.) |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Agricultural workers  | 27                 | 18.5              |
| Stockbreeding workers | 45                 | —                 |
| Industrial workers    | 45                 | —                 |

Workers lived rent-free, paid nothing for electricity and enjoyed free medical service.

In the autumn of 1976 the two state farms were beginning to resettle their workers in improved housing. Phampo's planned to move four-fifths of its 3,000 or so families within two years. In the process, old villages occupying cultivable land were being moved to fringing slopes, to free more soil for crops. In the farm's Eighth Brigade, we saw 28 houses and a school recently erected on a new site. The homes, averaging 160 square metres of ground-floor space, were of traditional Tibetan design, with gaily coloured beams and small patios. In addition, for each person, there was an allotment for raising vegetables. Families, with less than three persons, could keep a cow, those with three to five could keep two, up to a maximum of three cows — to provide them with butter and other milk products. (The limitation on the number of private animals was removed in 1980.) If a cow went dry, the farm exchanged it for another. In this brigade, the farm also paid three men to pasture the workers' private cows, of which there were 300 (the brigade also grazed 5,000 head of state-owned livestock).

Lhundrup had a different plan for its building for work and home. Its Party Secretary, Zhang Lin, was a veteran of the Eighth Route Army's famous 359th Brigade which in the anti-Japanese war days had reclaimed the wild Nanniwan valley to ensure food supplies for the blockaded Yan'an area. There the troops — fighters, workers and farmers at the same time — had built themselves cave houses in the pattern common in northwestern China. Now in far-off Tibet, we saw their virtual replicas, but on a much more generous scale. Built of excellent stone from the nearby mountain, they were high-arched and spacious, their domed white-painted rooms bright with sunlight by day and electricity at night. Each arch-entrance opened to the south, its door surrounded by latticed windows to admit the maximum of sun. The woodwork was painted in the warm, bright colours the Tibetans love.

Before being adopted, we were told, this design had been discussed and approved by Tibetan cadres and workers. At their suggestion, besides the rooms for living, there were storerooms deep within each cave — for the family grain, wool for home spinning and weaving

and a vat for brewing *chiang*, or Tibetan beer. This was in accordance with time-honoured local custom.

Construction was still proceeding. The stone was trimmed on the spot and laid in place by Lhundrup's famous "iron girls" team of masons, famous partly because in old Tibet, women could carry stone, like beasts of burden, but not cut or lay it. These young women were unforgettable. Their black eyes and white teeth flashed in their sun-browned faces, beneath brightly-coloured headkerchiefs. The sound of their clinging hammers and lively work-songs rose into the measureless, deep blue Tibetan sky. Against it, the red flag of the team danced like a flame.

More than 1,300 years ago, the Princess Wencheng, coming from the Tang dynasty capital at Xi'an to marry the Tibetan King Songtsan Gampo, had brought with her Han builders who made an important contribution to subsequent Tibetan public architecture. Now not from Sian but from Yan'an, not from the feudal aristocracy of one nationality to that of another, but from liberated working people directly to their counterparts came another impetus, in a link far firmer. So I thought, visiting Lhundrup in the late 1970's and recalling Nanniwan which I had seen in the early 1940's.

"Here women hold up more than half the sky," said Pin Kang, the tall, quiet, weather-beaten director of the farm, a Tibetan from Batang in Sichuan who had joined the PLA in 1950, and still wore his army uniform.

Tsering Yangdzom, head of the "iron girls" team, was the farm's assistant political director. In Lhundrup, as in Phampo, women operated many of the agricultural machines. A Tibetan woman, an ex-serf, in charge of all the farm's irrigation, led us through the network of main and subsidiary channels.

One of the spin-offs from the construction of reservoirs and cisterns was Tibet's first try at raising the famous Peking ducks. We saw some of the initial batch of a thousand, just flown in by plane. Only one, we were told, had died from the effects of the long journey. They were not being bred for banquets. They are one of the best meat producers, in terms of feed consumed, in the entire animal world.

Their acceptability in Tibet is also a victory over old ideas, as the eating of poultry was frowned on by the old superstitions.

The welfare services of the farms included schools, hospitals, clinics, nurseries, retirement pay for the old.

As elsewhere, the people here had had a past of blood and tears in the old Tibet. In what is now Phampo's Fifth Brigade, 72 serf families, on top of the burden of their forced labour, had owed debts amounting to 40 tons of grain and 236,000 *yuan* in money, on which they would have had to pay interest for generations. In living memory, seven families there had died out entirely, 57 persons had been forced to flee, 16 had perished from cold and hunger and 11 had been slaughtered.

In the course of the democratic and socialist revolutions, these tragedies were repeatedly recalled. Whenever anyone showed serious selfishness or tried to take advantage of the labour of others, or lent money at interest, or attempted to turn rank into privilege, the reminder was given: "That was what the old rulers did in relation to us. We working people must never do as they did."

At the same time, ultra-Left impulses were rejected. In the discussion of "bourgeois right" in 1975, some of the workers had wanted to turn in their family land allotments and cattle. The leadership, while approving the sentiment, had opposed this as premature. Finally, it was decided to reduce the per capita allotment from 330 to 130 square metres. But all family cows were left in private possession, to provide the butter that is such an essential in the Tibetan diet.

The question of checking privileges, we were told, was tackled here not by equalitarian cutbacks but by steps to ensure that the cadres retained the qualities of the working people. Those at the state farm level were then required to do at least 100 days of field labour a year, those at brigade level 200 days.

Formerly, riding horses had been assigned to cadres of several ranks, who could use them at will. After discussion it was decided that if some habitually rode, while others walked, it would divorce them from the masses. In 1975 horses for individual use by cadres were revoked. Instead, they were to be supplied on occasions when work required their use. The change was made through discussion.

After it, the rank and file said of the cadres: "They ride less and work more. They issue orders less and investigate more."

The Party secretary at Phampo, an old soldier, was hard to be found in the office, easy to find in the fields. He became known as "the barefoot secretary".



**FROM THE DEPTHS OF HELL**

## CHAPTER 9

# THE ACCUSERS

This chapter was hard to write, and will be hard to read, for it is like a descent into hell. But it ends well. Because the inferno has ended.

It concerns seven men and a woman whom I met and interviewed in 1965, three in Lhasa and four in Xigazê. It quotes another young man whom I did not see. It touches on many people now dead, some of whose remains I viewed. Of its eight living subjects, two had had their eyes gouged out. One had a leg tendon sundered, crippling him forever. One had his arm shot away. One had a hand chopped off and one a foot. One was deafened and disfigured and one barely escaped being ritually buried alive.

The stories of the living and the dead, coming from their own mouths or revealed by the mute evidence of their bones, were an irrefutable indictment of the old Tibetan serf society.

## TASHI THE TANNER

How can I forget Tashi? A small man of 37, his fine-featured face saddened but not ravaged by constant pain, he walked into the room on crutches, supported by a girl interpreter. His left leg hung shrunken, swathed in bandages. For though seven years had passed since he was deliberately maimed, it was still festering.

## OPENING ROADS TO TIBET



Clearing a landslide on the Sichuan-Tibet highway, 1955.

Pack-yak caravan alongside the new road, 1955.





By air to Lhasa, 1965.

Qinghai-Tibet railway under construction, 1980.



# TIBET'S BRIDGES, ANCIENT AND MODERN



Traditional cantilever



Traditional suspension type.

Yarlung Zangbo River ferry, now replaced by bridge.





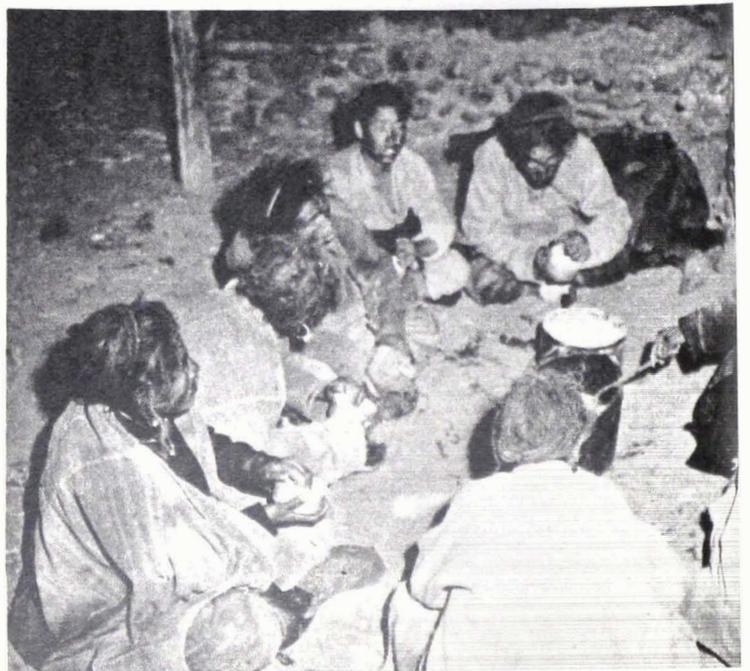
Since 1966 a handsome highway bridge has spanned the Yarlung Zangbo.



Tibetan nobles.

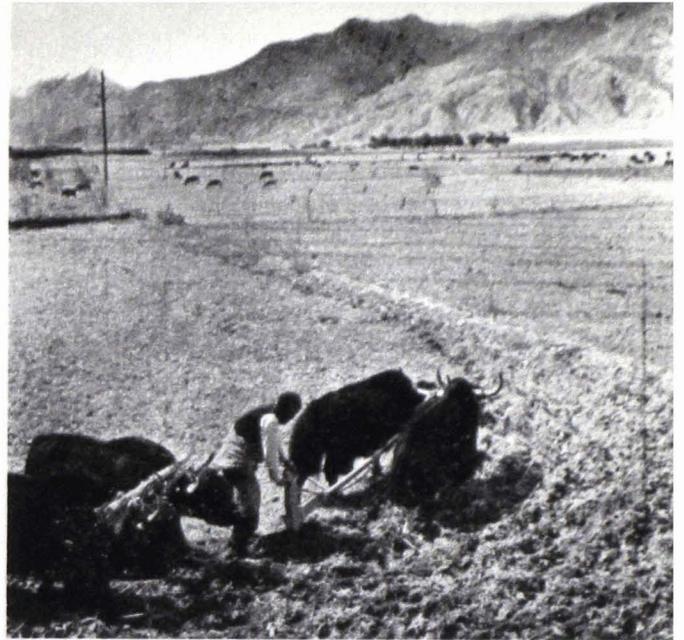
**"THE RICH MAN IN HIS PALACE,  
THE POOR MAN AT HIS GATE."**

Beggars in old Lhasa.



## CHANGED WAYS OF FARMING

Farming the old way, laboriously with wooden plough and yaks.



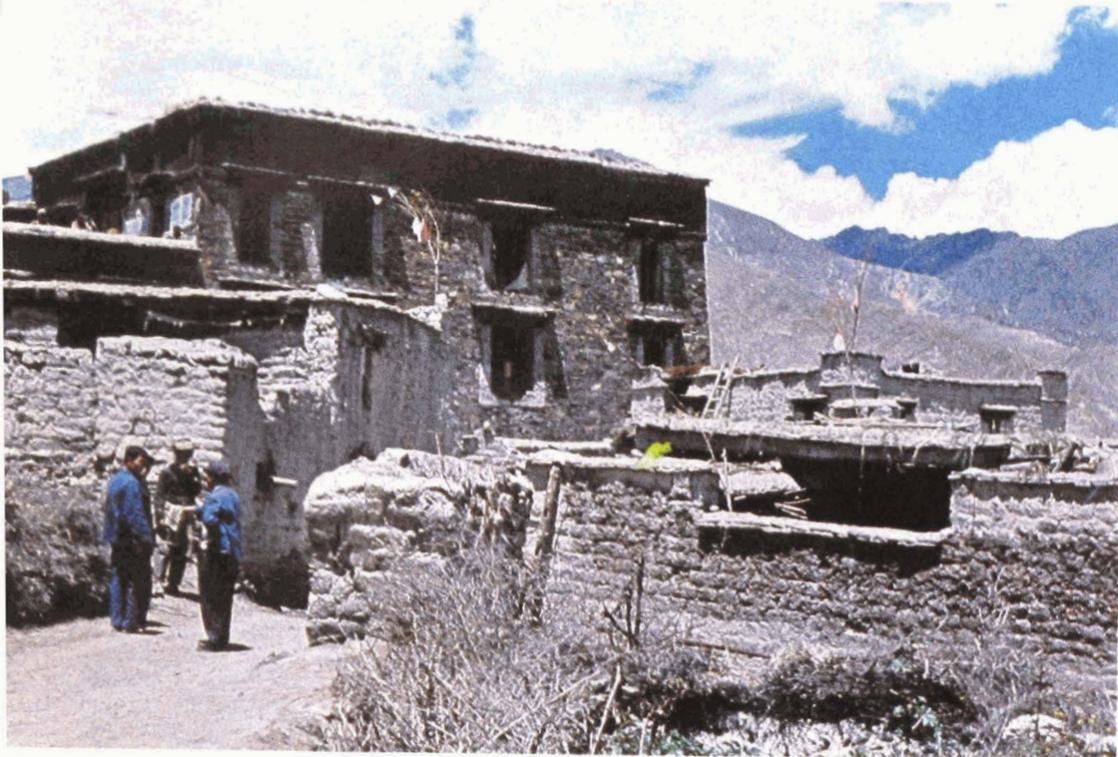
Tibetans near Lhasa are using Chinese-made tractors to till land.



By 1965, electrical-powered threshers were much in use around Lhasa.



## FROM MANORS TO COMMUNES

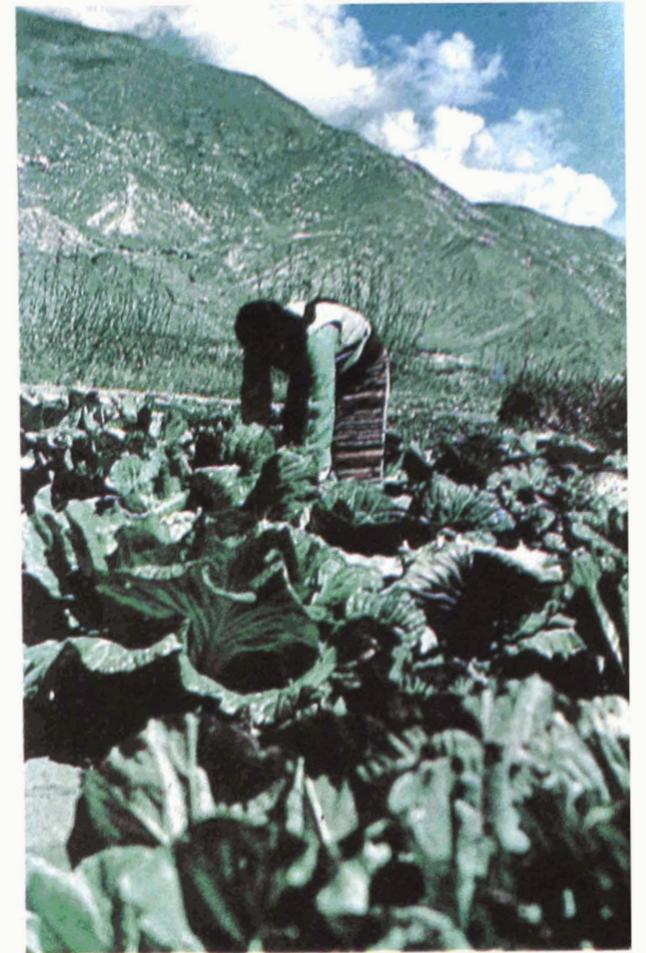


Khaesum Manor, built in the 17th century with a serf or slave boy buried alive under each cornerstone.



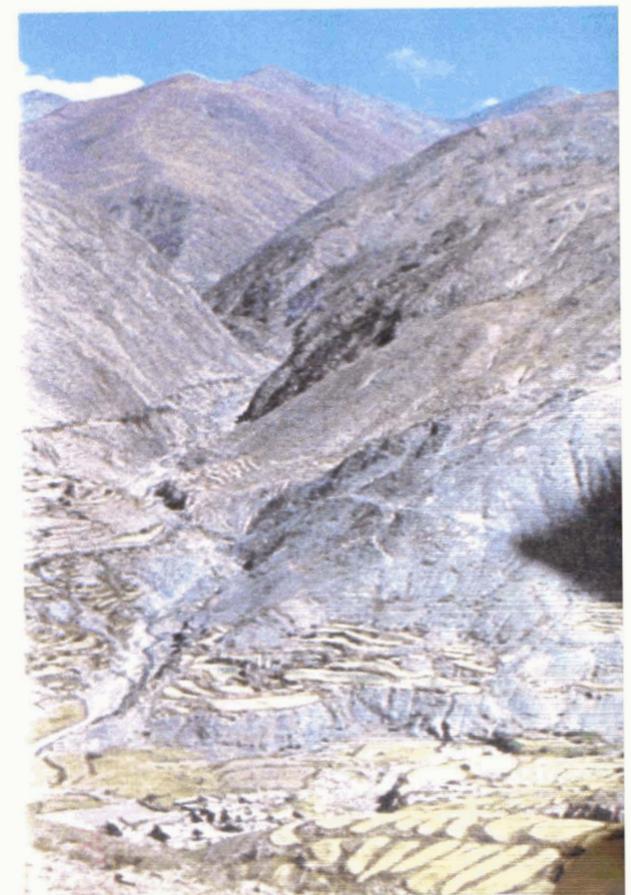
Ex-serfs and slaves who took over the estate and were running it as a mutual-aid team in 1965. Second from left, Nyima Tsering, ex-slave and Party secretary; centre, Pawang, ex-serf chairman of the team.

A bumper harvest of cabbages on the high plateau — a thing rare in the past.



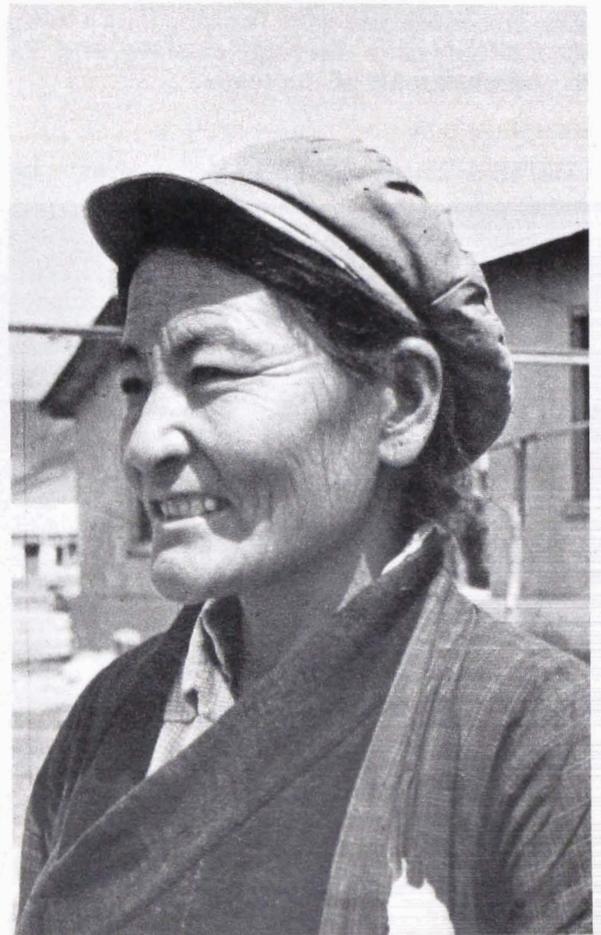
With mighty collective effort, fields like this one in Nyama commune were created in narrow gullies.

In 1979 Khaesum was part of a commune, with its own tractors (below left,) and power-threshers (right).





**Tsering Lhamo (right) with Thupten, chairman of the Gyaepa co-op in 1965, and ex-slave women committee members, before it became a commune.**

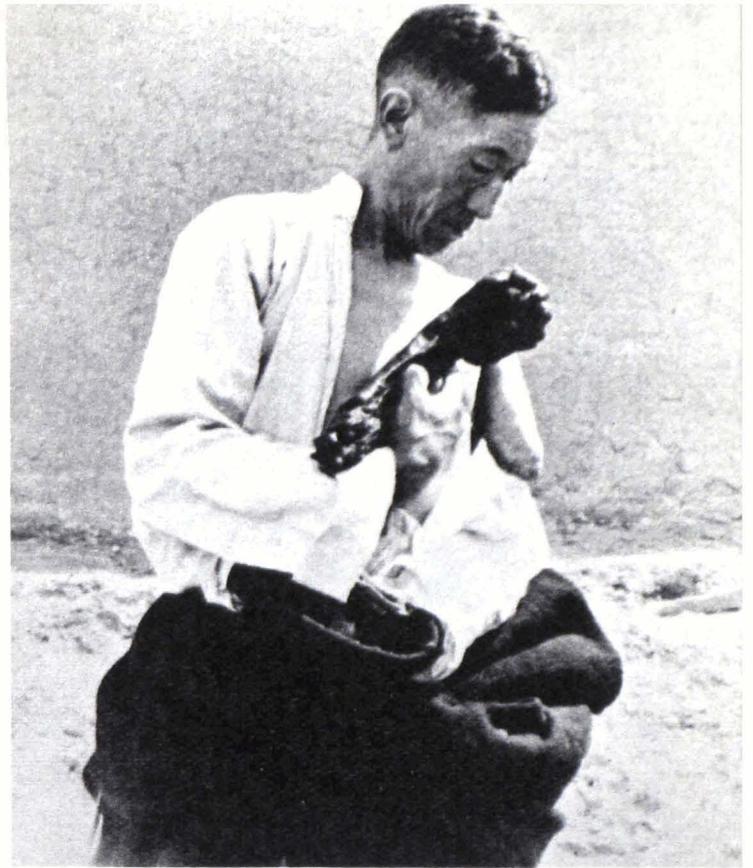


**Tsering Lhamo in 1976 when she was a member of the Tibet Party Committee and vice-chairperson of the Autonomous Region.**

## THE GRIM PAST



Sonam Tsering, herdsman, ex-serf of Sera lamasery tortured and blinded in 1951.



Do Dawa, holding the arm shot off by the young noble to whom he had been a personal slave.

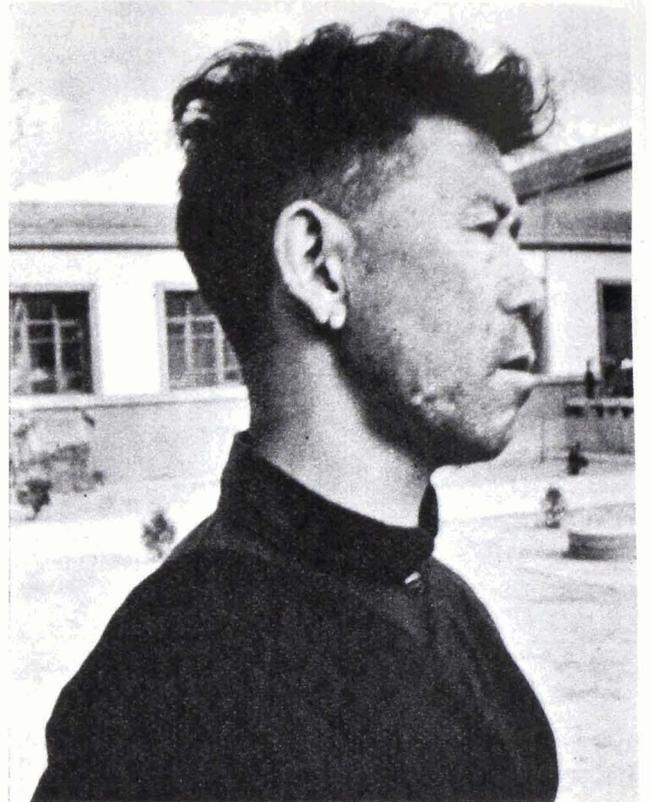


Tseden (hamstrung for debt) and Tsering Drolma (hand amputated for losing lambs) mutilated by serfowners in Xigazê.

The author with Tashi,  
the maimed tanner.

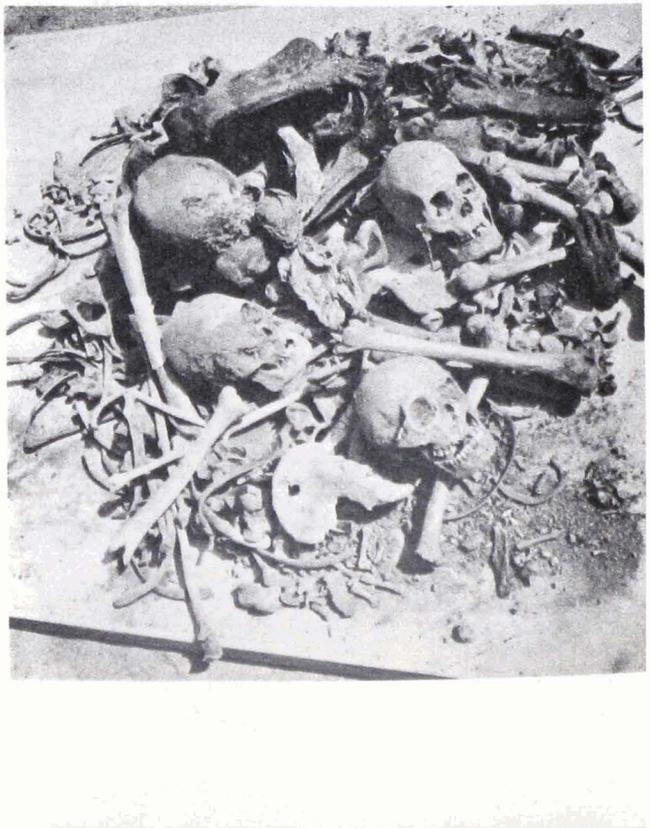


▼ Tashi Dawā (in fur hat) and Tandzin Wangbu, who escaped burial alive as “human cornerstones” when they were boy lamas in 1957, lived to become school teachers in the new society. Here they tell their story in the Tibet Revolutionary Museum.



Tenzing Wangchuk, disfigured and deafened when he was a serf tailor to a Lhasa aristocrat.

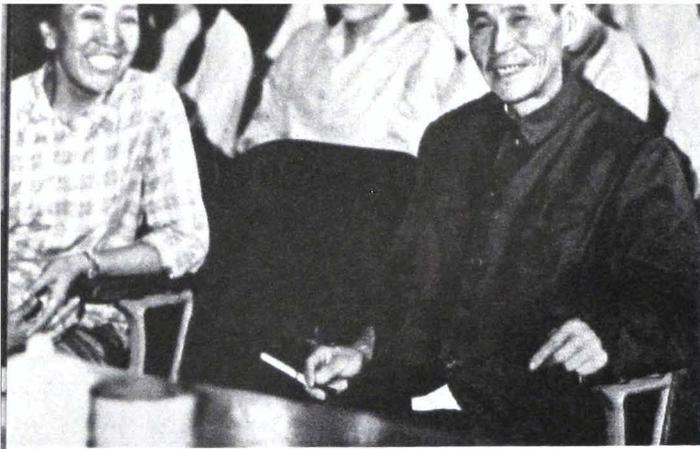
The evidence of the dead. Bones of serfs and slaves for ritual purposes.



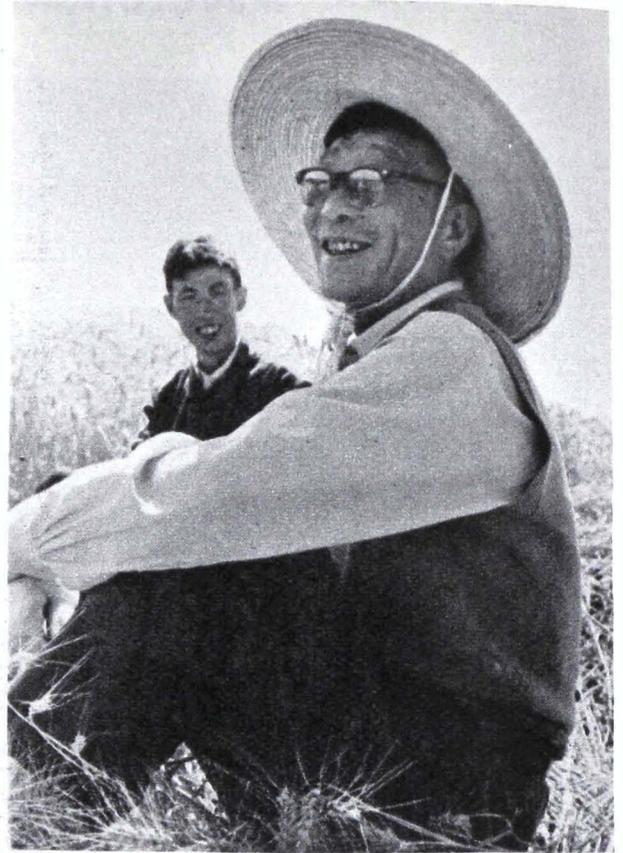
## REVOLUTIONARY CONTINUITY



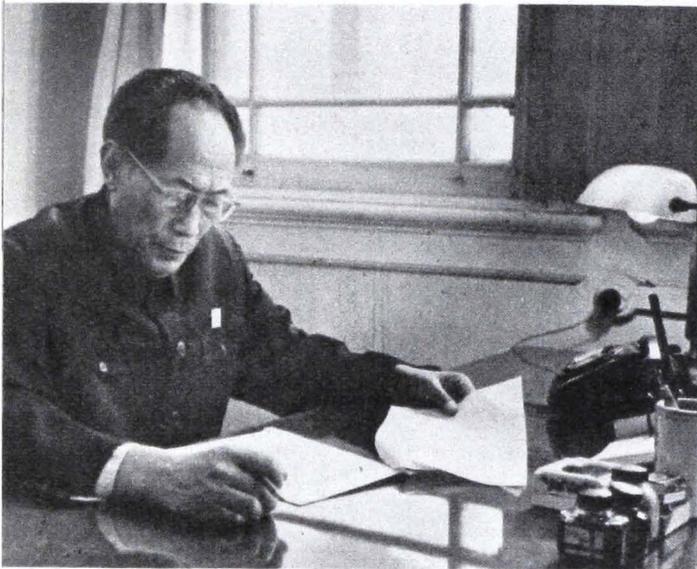
Young Tibetan Long Marchers in 1937 soon after their arrival in Yanan. (Left to right) Tashi Wangchuk; Tian Bao (Sanggye Yeshe); Yang Dongsheng (Shinrob Dondrup); unidentified and Sonam (Sha Nai).



**Yang Dongsheng, in 1980 chairman of Standing Committee of the Tibet Autonomous Region People's Congress, with Tsedan Drolma, a leader of the Tibet art troupe.**



**Tian Bao, until 1980, chairman of the Tibet regional government, member of the Central Committee of Chinese Communist Party.**



**Tashi Wangchuk, now chairman of the Qinghai provincial government.**

**Pasang (left) formerly a slave girl, in 1976 a secretary of the Tibet Party Committee. Chatting with her is Baoriledai, now a vice-chairperson of the Standing Committee of the People's Congress of Inner Mongolia.**



He had been a tanner, Tashi told me, a member of a once despised trade in Tibet (like that of the blacksmith, the butcher and the leather worker). His home was on the grasslands of Damxung where the tribe of herdsmen to which he belonged had been serfs en masse to Lhasa's huge Drepung lamasery (such collective serfdom by whole tribes was the typical feudal relationship in Tibet's pasturelands).

"We tanners used to go from place to place to find work and earn some grain," he began. "In 1958 I was returning with a sack of barley to my tribe when three well-dressed men rode up and accused me of looting their lord's field. They had no proof, for I had stolen nothing. Just the same they tied me up, kicked me black and blue, then dragged me to the *dzong* (county) jail where I was chained by the ankles to a pillar. They gave me no food for days. My mother heard where I was, but though she wept and implored, she wasn't allowed to bring any. Then the son of the *dzongpon* (county head) came with several retainers, and they questioned me, 'Why did you steal that barley?' They hung tools of torture round the room to scare me into talking."

When Tashi did not admit theft, he told me, they took off his fetters, carried him outside, and spreadeagled him face down on two boards. One of the men, with the knife all pastoral Tibetans carry in their belts, sawed through the tendon below his left knee.

"What passed through your mind?"

"I thought. . . . It's the end of me. But I'm innocent. Why do they do this? It's not as though I have something they needed. I have nothing! Why should I die so young, even before my father? What will happen to my old parents, my wife and children?"

"Did you think, while in jail, of getting word to the PLA for protection?"

"No. We weren't really liberated then,<sup>1</sup> and our minds were in darkness. First, how could I dare? The serfowners wouldn't let us go near the PLA without special permission. Second, I was confused. They kept telling us the PLA was bad, godless, irreligious."

"And afterwards?"

They left him, Tashi said, in the windswept yard. He lost a lot of blood. His mother begged that he be brought indoors, but

was refused. Only after ten days was she allowed, with neighbours, to carry him home. By then he was in a high fever, his leg swollen and pus-filled.

"You see how it is even now," said Tashi, pulling back his bandages. "I'm lucky to be alive. A month after it happened, Mother got word to a PLA medical team and a doctor came. He not only gave me medicine. When he saw how poorly we lived, he also brought food. We kept that quiet from the headman."

But with Tashi, its main worker incapacitated, the family was almost destroyed. "You have a cripple at home," the headman told Tashi's parents, "so you must work more to make up for what he can't do." Tashi's father was driven off to herd cattle. His mother had to do housework for the *dzongpon*, from dawn to dark. Once, accused of "loafing", she was tied up and not permitted to go home for four days. Tashi, still unable to move, was left in the house with his five-year-old youngest brother. "The fire went out," he said, "and I was in no shape to re-light it. And the child couldn't do it, though I told him how. He just sat there and cried 'I'm hungry! I'm cold!' I wept too. Not for myself but for Mother. Was she still alive? Had she been flogged? I hated myself, lying there, not able to help! What would happen to them all?"

"Those were the worst days," said Tashi. As things turned out, it was the blackest of night before the dawn.

Soon, on the heel of the serfowners' rebellion, the PLA arrived in force — followed by the armed work-group for the democratic reform. They rallied the people for what was called the "three againsts" and "the dual benefit movement".

The "three againsts", the first step of the democratic reform throughout Tibet, were: (1) Against the serfowner revolt; (2) Against personal servitude; and (3) Against corvée (unpaid feudal labour service). The "dual benefit", operating only in the pastoral areas, meant benefit to both herdsmen and herdowners — provided the latter had not rebelled, as the property of those who did was confiscated and distributed to the herdsmen. In agricultural areas, the "two reductions" (of rent and interest) took the place of the "dual benefit".

Fuller discussion of these policies, and of why they differed as

between pastoral and farm areas, is found elsewhere in this book.

When rebel property was divided, Tashi's family received nine yaks, six sheep and eleven goats. He himself, being disabled, was given a saddle horse.

The *dzongpon*, who had joined the rebellion, was held for investigation. But his family, when they saw their position tottering in the tide of class struggle, suddenly began to pose as friends of the poor. "After the PLA armed work-group arrived," said Tashi, "the *dzongpon*'s son Gombo turned up with gifts of meat, butter and wine. 'We've done you a wrong,' he said. 'I want to apologize for my father. He was drunk when he ordered you to be crippled, he didn't mean it. And we were drunk when we did it.' "

"Why don't you tell the truth?" Tashi challenged Gombo.

Gombo, perhaps even more shocked by this tone from a "born inferior" than he had been by the coming of the armed work-team, began to improve his explanations.

"Why did you tie up my mother?" Tashi cut him short. The victims were becoming masters.

But the revolution, even in its hot flood, was much more generous than the reaction had been.

"A mass struggle meeting was held against the *dzongpon*," said Tashi, "and despite his son's efforts to sweeten me I spoke up. No one had to ask me. How could I keep silent? Then Dotsamdui, the man who had actually cut through my tendon, said the *dzongpon* had forced him to do it — on pain of flogging. Gombo was a liar. But Dotsamdui spoke the truth. He was a herdsman seized as a personal retainer. When he wasn't beating people for his master, his master was beating him. We had all seen this. So when he said he'd never do such harm again, I believed and forgave him.

"But the serfowning system, I'll never forgive. It wasn't just that *dzongpon*. Behind him stood the *djisu*, the estate-managing department of the lamasery.<sup>2</sup> It had the final say. It had been the ruin of our family.

"Years before, we had some cattle, but when we fell into debt to the *djisu*, they took them all. They bound me, the strongest son, over to the Tibetan Army, first for corvée labour, then to be a soldier

in Lhasa. The scars on my neck are from army whips. As a soldier, I was still a slave, I toiled for the officers till I fell ill. Becoming useless to them, I was thrown out to die, and begged in Lhasa's streets for three months before I had the strength to return home. There the *dzongpon* punished me again, for staying away, and made me tend his cattle for nothing. He wasn't just the county head. He was also chief steward for the Drepung lamasery in our pastures. And he was the Drepung-appointed chief of our tribe. Often I didn't even know in which of these three capacities he was making me work, or punishing me.

"At that meeting, many people spoke up and accused the *dzongpon*. Some he had ordered to be blinded, some to have their hands or feet cut off, some to have their tendons severed.

"They wept and shouted, 'You killed my father!' 'You killed my mother!' 'You killed my son!' 'You crippled me!' Hearing all this, I grew hot all over, choked with anger and could not see for tears. But I was happy, too. For all that was finished. We ourselves were ending it."

"What happened to *dzongpon* Wanggyal?" I asked.

"He went to jail. He's still there, being reformed through labour."

"And his son Gombo?"

"He wasn't shut up. He's still in our pasture, tending cattle under mutual-aid team surveillance. But he's crooked. After the meeting, when he knew I couldn't be bribed or scared, he tried to persuade some herdsmen to kill me. He was too cowardly to act for himself. But he made a mistake. They refused, and reported him." Times had changed.

"Are you working as a tanner again?" I asked Tashi.

"How can I?" he said abruptly. "We trample the skins in the tanning bath. How can I, with one leg?"

"What do you do, then?"

"Light jobs like braiding ropes. Also I'm on the security committee of our team." Tashi now had a good deal to say, I realized, in what happened to Gombo. And Gombo was lucky that Tashi was not of his type.

"Do you still believe in lamaism?" I asked Tashi.

"Not I," he shot back. "I've seen men pray, then use knives and guns to kill us. All my woe came from Drepung monastery and its *djisu*. I've thought things through. I don't believe any more, though others may."

I extended my hand to say good-bye. Tashi held it for a moment. "All I've told you is the past," he said. "Now I live as a man, eat *tsamba* and butter. There isn't a thing I have on that I would have dreamt of wearing before. I get free treatment for my leg. In the old society, it would have killed me long ago, if I hadn't starved to death first. All this I owe to Chairman Mao, the Party, the PLA, the revolution."

"How is your mother now?" I asked, about to go.

Suddenly Tashi broke into sobs.

"Has something happened to her?" I said, alarmed.

"No!" Tashi got out through his tears. "No. She is well and happy. I'm thinking of all she had to suffer."

Solicitously the interpreter, a slim girl named Nyima Udhup, an ex-serf who had studied in Beijing, helped Tashi out of his chair and onto his crutch.

We walked together to the car waiting to take him back to the Autonomous Region Hospital, for the new operation which he hoped would remove the deep infection from his maimed leg.

\* \* \*

In 1976, in the Damxung pastures, I inquired about Tashi. His leg, they told me, was still infected and painful; treatment could only check, not cure, the damage. Nonetheless he was working actively as a cadre. And, though he had to be lifted into the saddle, he often went out on horseback to help herd his commune's yaks and sheep.

### SONAM TSERING, HERDSMAN

Sonam Tsering was 55, standing a rangy six feet, relaxed in rest and vigorous in motion. His strong frame seemed that of a man of 30. But he had no eyes.

A herdsman he came like Tashi from Damxung, where his tribe had belonged to another of the "big three" lamaseries, Sera. He had been a slave, not even a serf. But one could guess that this rock-like man would not yield easily to oppression, and so it proved from his story. Marked as insubordinate, he had been tormented again and again on a favourite pretext in such cases: alleged theft.

In 1948, the tribal chief accused him of stealing a bag of clothes and a female yak. He was given 600 strokes of the heavy cudgel, then hung from a beam by the thumbs. All this was meant to finish him off, as it would have a weaker man. Sonam Tsering survived, and was sent to penal labour on an estate where he toiled for three years in chains. Then the missing clothes were found among the effects of a habitual thief, who was killed while stealing something else. Since the whole tribe knew this, Sonam Tsering had to be unchained. He did not know then that his refusal to confess, and his very release, had made the oppressors the more determined to break him.

On his return to Damxung, in 1951, the Sera steward and the tribal chief flew at him. "All right, you didn't steal the clothes, but you must admit you took that yak, and pay for it."

"I didn't take it and I won't pay," Sonam Tsering said.

"You're an insolent slave," they shouted.

Here, in Sonam Tsering's words, is what followed.

"They piled on me and staked me out on the ground. They put a bag of stones on my chest and pressed on it till my eyes bulged. Tseba, one of their men, yanked them out with a twist, like pulling radishes. I knew what was happening but didn't faint. I was so furious that I remember no pain, only a tearing sound in my ears. When they left, I shouted for water. Blood gushed from my face. My family took me home."

He told of this calmly, circumstantially.

Within a month, his sockets healed, Sonam Tsering was up and around. "My sons had to lead me by the hand," he said. "I knew how to tan skins, and did so when there was work. When there wasn't any, I begged."

This was his life for eight years, till the rebellion and its suppres-

sion. Afterwards he spoke at the accusation meeting which his torturer Tseba was compelled to face.

"I charged him with his crimes. If I had gone just by personal feelings, I would have beaten him to death and even that wouldn't have appeased me. But since he himself hadn't rebelled, he was given a chance to reform, that's the Party's policy. Now he works under supervision."

In the democratic reform, Sonam Tsering, then totally without property, was allotted two horses and 18 yaks. By 1965, his family — he, his wife, son and daughter-in-law — had built their herd further. They had also reclaimed a bit of land, which they were farming.

"Only three of us are at home now," Sonam Tsering said at the end. "This spring, my son joined the PLA. That makes me happy. He'll defend our gains."

## TENZING WANGCHUK, TAILOR

Very different in appearance from these men of the pastures, Tenzing Wangchuk was a townsman, a small and nervous tailor of 40, who wept often as he recalled his sufferings. Judging by his story, if the serfowners and their agents in the high grasslands were fiercely brutal, the effete aristocrats in Lhasa outdid them in cold-blooded and inventive cruelty.

Tenzing Wangchuk's face was a mass of scar tissue from countless blows of a many-layered rawhide swatter known as "the leather palm", formerly used in Tibet as a tool of chastisement. He had lost most of his hearing. The edges of his ears were jagged, as though chewed.

"My father and my mother, a seamstress, worked for the aristocrat Doring," he said. "I was born his slave. From early boyhood I sewed in his house day and night. Once I scorched a brocade gown I was given to iron. He beat me personally, a hundred blows on each side of the face till it was a bloody pulp. When I didn't come back to work as soon as he expected, he had me tied to a pillar without food for 'shamming illness'. Another time, I ran out of thread

and stopped sewing for a moment. 'You're more trouble than you're worth,' he shouted, coming up just then. And he set one of his big dogs on me. That's how my ears got torn.

"Doring killed my mother. She was late to work once because she had to look after my father, who had fallen ill while on *corvée*. Doring pushed her to the floor and threw a heavy brazier at her head. Blood flowed from her eyes and she didn't move. Doring said, 'There's an unclean corpse in the house.' They had her thrown, unconscious, out of the second floor window into the street. There she died.

"Later Doring ordered my wife, Gyala, then six months pregnant, to cook a dish he liked, and when she went for fuel, accused her of leaving the house without asking. Stuffing a dirty cloth into her mouth, he called his dog, which bit her belly.

"The dog was one of eight in Doring's house, all fed on fine-ground barley with butter and sugar. His riding horses were just as pampered. We, who worked for him, had never tasted such food. We lived in the dark basement. To feed our families, we scavenged by the temple where bits of barley dough, offered to the goddess Drolma, were thrown out after the ceremonies. The ravens would be waiting to pounce on them. We had to fight them off.

"Once my wife was working in the yard with my small son clinging to her skirts. When Doring came by, the hungry child was silly enough to ask him for food. Doring sprinkled sugar on some dog dung that was lying there and pushed my son's face in it. 'You want sweets?' he said. 'Eat this!'

"Later, my son was sent to a lamasery as a novice monk. The high lamas were no better than the aristocrat. If the boy cried, or annoyed them in other ways, they would tie him into a leather bag which they hung up, pummelled and whirled around."

In the lamasery the boy once accepted some *jigjie*, medallion-like ceremonial wafers of pressed barley flour specially blessed by the high Lamas. How was he to know that for this favour, the recipient's family was supposed to provide a special soup for all the 500 monks in the lamasery? To pay for the soup Tenzing Wangchuk had to pawn his only intact woollen gown. When he finally got it back, it was hopelessly moth-eaten.

When the serfowner rebellion was put down, Tenzing Wangchuk was glad. He had already had some experience of the PLA and the Han cadres. In the middle 1950's, he and other tailors had been sent to make hassocks, used in Tibet as seats, for a central government reception house. To their joy and surprise, they received wages, several silver *yuan* a day for each man. But the feudal officials who had sent them took the money away. "They cheated not only us but the Han cadres, to whose insistence on paying us wages they had agreed," said Tenzing Wangchuk bitingly. "What's more, the aristocrat-official in charge of Lhasa tailors put extra burdens on me. 'If you can make hassocks for the Hans,' he said, 'you can make five pairs for me.' He wasn't going to pay me for work or materials. Just the opposite, when I couldn't do the work on time, I was fined 12 *dotse* (about 30 *yuan*)."

After the suppression of the rebellion came the democratic reform, when all things changed. Tenzing Wangchuk could not accuse his master Doring at a "speak bitterness" meeting, because Doring had fled to Gyangzê and died. The slave tailor and his family received their share of Doring's effects and were moved into rooms in his former mansion.

In 1965, Tenzing Wangchuk and his wife were working in a tailor's co-operative. His daughter had a job in a state trading organization. His son was long out of the lamasery. Said the father, "The serfowner had made him eat dog's dung. The revolution gave him a college education in the Tibetan Institute at Xianyang."

"The old system was supposed to be holy," Tenzing Wangchuk went on, "but under it, I never had a square meal, only endless pain. I was taught that my hardships in this life had to be borne because I had sinned in a past life. I myself believed that. Now I know it was a lie. Serfowner-class rule was the root of our bitterness. Now we, the working people, rule in Tibet."

## FIVE FROM XIGAZÊ

In Xigazê, old seat of the Panchen Lama, we met five other mutilees of the old society.

Do-Dawa, a slim, erect man of 47, had been a slave body-servant to Tsewang Dorje, a *si-bon* or estate agent of the Khempo Council.<sup>3</sup> One day in 1955, when he was stacking straw in the courtyard, his master's 16-year-old son Namgyal was playing with a gun. Do-Dawa said, "Be careful. It might go off." Namgyal said, "I mean it to. Stand still and be my target." He fired. The shot shattered Do-Dawa's left upper arm which was left hanging by a strip of skin. Later the arm fell off. "I dried it in the sun, to remind me and my children of our grievance," said Do-Dawa. Then, reaching into the folds of his gown he pulled the arm out, black and mummified and laid it before us.

"No, I hadn't angered the boy and it wasn't a punishment," Do-Dawa said in answer to my question. "They just thought they could do anything they liked with a serf or slave."

Tseden, a thoughtful-faced herdsman of 48 with a small moustache and long hair, had been hamstrung for not paying tribute in the time and form demanded. Originally, he had owned 20 yaks. But natural calamities reduced his livestock. So for three successive years he turned over no animals to the Khempo Council. In 1948, the third year, an official came to collect — still basing the tribute on 20 yaks. Not wishing to further deplete his herd, Tseden found money to buy wool to pay as a substitute, as was allowed by custom. But the official, displeased, charged Tseden with stealing the wool and ordered the tendon of his right leg to be cut.<sup>4</sup>

Tsewang, 49, was a farm worker with thickset body, seamed face, patient eyes and slow, unhurried speech. A serf on the *sika* (manor) of Damchen Gyalpo, he was charged with stealing barley and enticed to "confess" by the promise of being let off lightly if he did. But the next question was, "Where did you hide it?" Not having taken any, he could not say. For this "concealment", he was sentenced to lose his right foot. "The whole village was summoned to see," said Tsewang. "An open air fire was lit to boil butter. When my foot was off, the stump was plunged into it. Then my property was declared forfeit to the lord and I was pronounced no longer a *tralpa* (serf) but a *duichun* (masterless man) and driven out from the estate." This

was in 1953, two years after the peaceful liberation but six years before the democratic reform.

Shirob, a tall, strong man of 34, and his ex-wife, Tsering Drolma, a small wispy woman considerably older, told us a story that revealed how the feudal lords, even after the arrival of the People's Liberation Army, tried to keep their hold on the working people by both terror and lies. Serfs of a lamasery near Xigazê, the couple had lost 40 sheep in a drought and, fearing a fine and flogging, fled to another district. Later, they heard that the Liberation Army had abolished feudal service.<sup>5</sup> So in 1955, they came confidently back home. Immediately a Khempo Council official called together the whole village. In their presence Tseren Drolma's right hand was cut off and Shirob's eyes were gouged out. "Now, damn you, you can go look for the Communists," the official mocked.

Then the couple was driven off and, unable to stay together, they separated. Shirob kept himself alive as a wandering butcher, a despised trade. Tsering Drolma, with their daughter, went off to beg.

In 1965 both these victims of the old society lived as pensioners of the new. Though no longer husband and wife, they were clearly still good friends, as we could see by their warm, considerateness to each other. Their daughter had joined the ranks of the revolution in 1956. She studied at the Tibetan Institute in Xianyang and in 1965 was a cadre.

All these people we talked to ourselves. They are only a few of many. The inauguration of the Museum of the Tibetan Revolution, which now stands in front of the Potala in Lhasa and was opened at the time of the founding of the Tibet Autonomous Region in September 1965, was attended by over 50 such crippled "accusers" who told their stories to thousands of delegates and visitors. They, too, were only a tiny fraction of the whole.

## THE EVIDENCE OF THE DEAD

How many people the former system in Tibet killed, maimed and drove to early death, no statistician can count. It is a fact, however,

that the population there dropped by about three-fifths in a century and a half. In the reign of China's Emperor Qianlong (1736-95), it was officially estimated, in repeated and apparently quite thorough surveys for tax and administrative purposes, at around two million. In 1949, it was about 870,000.<sup>6</sup> That direct murder, as well as privation and disease, played no small part in this decline can be gathered indirectly from the fact that, of the hundreds of ex-serfs and slaves we spoke to about various matters, a majority told of parents (especially fathers) done to death by brutal punishments while in the prime of life. Hence the epithet "man-eating system" is not exaggerated.

In the Museum of the Tibetan Revolution the dead, too, speak.

We saw there piles of bones of serfs, slaves and poor monks, found on the grounds of the feudal estates and the lamaseries, with clear marks of death by violence — fractured limbs and shattered skulls.

We viewed, in a single showcase, ten trumpets used in lama rituals and each made, in accordance with set requirements, from the thigh-bone of a 16-year-old virgin.

We saw a case of 15 mounted, mummified human hands for ritual use as well as cups made of skulls, drums of two skulls fixed together and rosaries each of whose 108 beads came from a separate skull.

For specified rites, other parts of human bodies were utilized, and officially requisitioned. One document with the seal of the Dalai Lama ordered the delivery — "for the strengthening of the holy rule" — of human heads, blood, meat, fat, entrails and right hands, as well as of children's skins, widows' menstrual blood, and stones that had been used to crack human heads. In one set of ceremonial objects, we saw, wrapped in special paper and preserved for use in worship, the severed penises of young men.

Ecclesiastical enactments prescribed death for "witches" or "devils". We saw the charred, shrivelled corpse of a woman who, because she had borne triplets, was declared a witch and burned alive. It had been propped up in a sitting position, dressed in silk robes and a crown, and installed among the images in a lama temple.

As for the old Tibetan lay laws, applied in fact till 1959, they

not only allowed, but prescribed the class barbarities of serfdom.

If superiors killed inferiors, it was held a trifle. For the killing of people of the "lowest class" (beggars, butchers, blacksmiths), the sardonically prescribed compensation was "a piece of straw rope".

But if an inferior even dared to oppose a superior by word or deed, or a commoner dared rebel, then "his eyes shall be gouged out, his hamstrings cut, his tongue cut out or his head chopped off, or he shall be thrown down from a hill or into the water or killed on the spot".

Aristocrats and clergy were exempt from ordinary courts and from the most cruel and humiliating forms of punishment. Commoners could in practice be punished, including by death, by almost any aristocratic or clerical institution, high or low, as well as arbitrarily by their own lords or stewards.

This situation was much like that in Western Europe in the era of Charlemagne, of which an authority has written: "One of the most striking features of the first feudal age . . . was the multitude of petty chiefs thus provided with powers of life and death . . . all the great ecclesiastical authorities exercised judgment of blood, either on their own account or through their representatives." Officially, he went on, "high justice" was the concern of the central government or great lords and "low justice" of the locals, but in practice this distinction tended to disappear. Church bodies possessed immunity from the civil courts, but "themselves had power of life and death over their slaves". This power was gradually extended to serfs and all other commoners on their estates, so it could be asked, "Where, henceforth, among dependents, was the dividing line between freedom and slavery?"<sup>7</sup>

All these features of Europe in the 8th and 9th centuries were present in pre-1959 Tibet.

*This is confirmed in the writings of a separatist Tibetan who recently recalled: "Hot trial (flogging during the hearing of a case) was resorted to when there was no other way of getting at the truth. (sic) As a lad used to watch unfeelingly some criminal being whipped while the two law officials would interrogate him during the intervals of the lashing session." He also describes such things as "taking*

*out eyeballs, amputation of tongue or hand, throwing the criminal alive into water or from a precipice”.*

*And his comment? “The Decrees (traditional Tibetan law code) were formulated . . . at a certain period of history; nevertheless, the system sufficed even in the 1950’s. Tibet’s self-sufficiency as a nation never ceases to be a source of pride to me.”<sup>8</sup>*

*Since the writer, in many passages, strove to stress his modern outlook, one can see the limits of “modernity” in that camp.*

## LIVING BURIALS

Lamaist superstition also made it allowable, sometimes mandatory, to bury living boys beneath important buildings or images, so that they would “stand forever”. At Khaesum manor (see p. 43) we found an example from three centuries ago. An undated but more recent instance was described by Bell. He wrote of a tower in the Chumbi valley: “Inside it is a chörton or stupa, and inside this is a copper urn. When the building was under construction, many years ago, blood was poured into this urn, and in it were placed the corpses of a boy and girl, each eight years old, who had been slain for the purpose. The bodies were placed head downwards, the feet pointing toward the roof.”<sup>9</sup>

At the Museum of the Tibetan Revolution in 1965, we saw another example from within living memory, the huddled skeleton of one of four boys entombed beneath the manor house of the noble Thapa Anyang Chumpei in Loka.

And at that Exhibition’s opening in 1965 another boy told of how he himself barely escaped such entombment, in 1959, that is, eight years after the entry of the PLA and the promise of the serfowners to turn their faces toward reform and in the very year they launched their revolt to perpetuate the society they dominated.

Tashi Dawa, 19, former serf, now a teacher, stated verbally and in writing that while he was a novice in Chos-khor lamasery, Gyaca County, Tibet:

*. . . an elderly poor lama secretly told me that the shrine of the*

*goddess Pablden in Chos-khor lamasery had once collapsed. In the fear that some catastrophe would descend divination was conducted by the drawing of lots. In consequence, five 13-year-old boys were put in wooden boxes and buried alive under the four corners and in the middle of the shrine. The boys cried for help as they were being entombed.*

*In 1957 the shrine collapsed again and orders were given for five more boys to be sacrificed when it was rebuilt. In 1959, the Dalai Lama was due to come to our lamasery and the proctor decided to have the shrine repaired. The cornerstones were taken up and the wooden boxes unearthed. From the skeletons, it could be seen that the boys had died in a squatting position, their chins resting on their hands.*

*While the work was going on, a man came to find out who among the 50 novices were 13 years old. He learned that I was, and he measured my height and that of other boys of the same age.*

*Five days later a poor monk called me into his room and whispered that I had been chosen to be buried alive and that they had taken my measurements for a box. Tenzing Wangbu, another 13-year-old boy, was also to be buried.*

*We both managed to escape during a snowstorm to the banks of the Yarlung Zangbo. Our bare feet were bleeding. A friendly boatman ferried us across and gave us food and tea.*

*We got back to our home village just in time to see the rebellion crushed by the PLA. During the democratic reform, my family was given land, a draught animal and farm implements. . . . I went to primary school. Today I am an evening school teacher and a member of the security committee of Kosbi township in our county. Tenzing Wangbu is also an evening school teacher. At a recent conference he and I were elected models in our profession.*

## POSTSCRIPT

*Is There a Case for the Defence?* Despite all this, defenders of the cannibal system of old Tibet have continued to apologize for it.

Let us give them a hearing.

First, there are Tibet's rebel serfowners, some of whom deny that serfdom existed at all. Tsipon Shakabpa, one of their leading representatives in Kalimpong, India, submitted a memorandum to the "International Commission of Jurists" set up in those years as an instrument of the "cold war". Shakabpa argued:

. . . Serfdom does not exist in Tibet in any form whatsoever. As in other Asian countries, the land ultimately belongs to the State and has for long been granted, partly in large estates, to persons who rendered distinguished services to the State and to monasteries; and these in return pay revenue, mostly in kind, and also render services. The monasteries serve the State by prayers and religious ceremonies; the other landlords by acting as officials and conducting the administration. The largest portion of the land is, however, held by peasant proprietors who pay revenue direct to the government and have no other obligation of any kind. On the large estates of monasteries and landlords the tenants themselves hold separate lands for the support of their families. They either pay rent in kind to the landlord or place at his disposal the services of one member of the family either as a domestic servant or as an agricultural labourer. The other members of the family have complete freedom.<sup>10</sup>

This argument, as anyone can see, trips on its own self-contradictions. If the land belonged to the state, how were the peasants on this land "proprietors"? In fact, the local government was itself the serf-owner, one of Tibet's "big three" (local government, landlord aristocrats, lamaseries).

If serfdom did not exist, what was the "one member of the family" whose services were "at the disposal" of the landlord? And did the others really have "complete freedom"? At the turn of the century the Japanese monk Ekai Kawaguchi wrote in his "Three Years in Tibet" that "the lord of the manor . . . is an absolute master of his people both in regard to their rights and even their lives." What was this if not serfdom?

Finally, let us quote from an American academic who got his information about Tibet's old society from the 1959 rebels themselves.<sup>11</sup> His conclusion:

Tibet was characterized by a form of institutionalized inequality that can be called pervasive serfdom. . . . Demographically, with the exception of approximately 250-300 aristocratic families, the remainder of the key population were serfs. . . . There were no "free" peasants.

"Serfdom does not exist in any form"? Or "pervasive serfdom"? Anyone who looks at the facts can see which is accurate.

Of brutal penalties, Shakabpa said:

. . . It is also necessary to point out that the existing laws of Tibet do not recognize any cruel or inhuman punishment of criminals. In 1898 a law was enacted with the sanction of the 13th Dalai Lama which abolished capital punishment for criminals except in cases of treason. . . . There may have been cases of infringement of this law in the past, but these were very exceptional and all such infringements were severely dealt with by the central authorities of Lhasa.<sup>12</sup>

On this point, shall we believe Shakabpa or the serfs I met, who were not at all concerned to "prove" that their parents and relatives had been killed or maimed but told of these things matter-of-factly, in the course of other events of their past? Self-exiled aristocrats other than Shakabpa are just as matter of fact. Mrs. Rinchen Dolma Taring, a woman nostalgic for the old society and member of two of its ruling families (by birth and by marriage) writes of the *Ragyapa* caste that its functions included "putting out the eyes or chopping off the limbs of the few criminals who were punished in this manner" as well as "providing the monks with human skulls and thigh-bones for special rites".<sup>13</sup>

To go back to Shakabpa, were the mutilees I and many other visitors have seen and talked to punished for "treason"? Hardly.

Or fakes? Then where are their eyes, arms and legs? Did anyone “deal severely” with their tormentors? The people did, after the serf-owner rebellion, though not nearly as severely as they might have. As for the old Lhasa authorities whom Shakabpa praises, were not they themselves, and their appointees (*dzongpons*, etc.) the main killers and tormentors?

From the account by Shakabpa, who obviously thought serfdom so good a thing that he sounded offended at having to apologize for it at all, we pass to an imperialist account, also cited by the commission. It was by Hugh Richardson, formerly head of the British and, after 1947, Indian mission to Lhasa. His wording, in some places, parallels Shakabpa’s so closely that it seems to be from the same pen (from the typical civil-service language and style probably not Shakabpa’s). Richardson’s signed statement, however, is the more circumspect of the two, like that of a lawyer who knows how bad his case is. Below, I italicize some of the twists:

*In theory* all land in Tibet belonged to the State from which the noble landlords and great monasteries held large estates. . . .

On those great estates the peasants who held a stretch of land free of rent *had to cultivate the rest of the landlord’s farmland and also to provide various services — free transport, work on roads, a member of the family to serve in the army and so on.*

This version, unlike Shakabpa’s does not flatly deny serfdom in Tibet. It merely avoids the term, and strains to make the circumstances seem normal, even pleasant:

The land-owner was a kind of patriarchal head of a household, and, *in spite of the customary deference* paid him by his subordinates, there was no gulf fixed between them.<sup>14</sup>

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\* These, naturally, were cases of the 1970’s and the last decade of internal serfowner control — the 1950’s, not pre-1898 ones. As for the situation immediately following the alleged prohibition of 1898, Kawaguchi wrote (on page 384) of blinding and “amputation of the hands . . . chopped off at the wrists in public” as common punishments at the time of his visit. “Lhasa abounds in handless beggars minus their eyeballs.”

In such a society, the idea of payment by service was normal; . . . governed by custom. The guardian of custom was the Dalai Lama to whom every Tibetan had the right to appeal. *But it can be understood that the difficulty and expense of exercising that right, especially by someone who might live several weeks' journey from the capital, allowed the landlord considerable latitude.*<sup>15</sup>

The real nature of this "right" and what happened to those who tried to exercise it can be seen from the story of Nampa Hansa of Palha manor (on page 67 of this book) as well as from Bell's comment, quoted in connection with it.

To continue:

*. . . there was another factor which prevented the landlord from exceeding the dictates of custom. A constant shortage of labour gave the peasant the ultimate sanction of running away.*

Happy, patriarchal society! But why should an ordinary peasant, not a land-tied serf, need to "run away"?

Now hear Richardson on punishments:

*Formerly lawful punishments included mutilations such as the cutting off of a hand or foot and putting out the eyes. In 1898 all such penalties were forbidden by a decree of the XIIIth Dalai Lama except for the crime of treason. It is possible that in the more remote districts mutilation and torture were occasionally and illegally inflicted by district officials or by landlords, who enjoyed magisterial powers over the peasant; but the climate of Tibetan opinion, which advances, even though the progress may appear slow, has become increasingly averse from punishments of that sort.*

Here Richardson, in his own name, does only a gray-wash where Shakabpa uses plain whitewash.

Yet despite facts to which it had access, and which it coyly called "allegations" (e.g. published photographs from Tibet showing limbless serfs, with the victims' statements of how they had lost them) and despite Shakabpa and Richardson's obvious evasions and mutual and

self contradictions, this "International Commission of Jurists" declared in its wisdom that it would "... accept the statements by Mr. Shakabpa and the description by Mr. Richardson." Before it did so, one of its own members, Sir Hartley Shawcross of Britain, resigned, and an Indian member expressed strong dissatisfaction with the way the "evidence" was collected.

Prior to leaving the subject we will give space to two more "arguments for the defence" by Mr. Richardson:

The picture of Tibetan life that emerges may seem archaic to Western eyes but it deserves to be judged in its proper perspective. . . .

and

It must be concluded that the Tibetans accepted their long-established way of life and their social inequalities not merely with passivity but with active contentment.<sup>16</sup>

This argument, reduced to its essentials, is that we must judge a medieval-type serf society by medieval serfowner standards and self-portraits. Today, in the 20th century!

In fact, these apologists (whose views so long flooded the Western press) are far behind even the 13th century Pope Innocent III who, though he did nothing practical for the serfs of his day, at least did not hide their plight.

The serf serves; he is terrified with threats, wearied by forced services, afflicted with blows, despoiled of his possessions; for if he possesses nought he is compelled to earn; and if he possesses anything he is compelled to have it not; the lord's fault is the serf's punishment; the serf's fault is the lord's excuse for preying on him. . . . O extreme condition of bondage! Nature brought freemen to birth but fortune hath made bondmen. The serf must needs suffer, and no man is suffered to feel for him, he is compelled to mourn, and no man is permitted to mourn with him. He is not his own man, but no man is his.<sup>17</sup>

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By the late 1960's, be it said, history had pushed Mr. Richardson toward some realities. A book he co-authored said of Tibetan feudalism:

Tibet of the Middle Ages (approximately 10th to 15th century) bears many resemblances to the European Middle Ages. . . . The European Middle Ages ended in the Renaissance. . . . The Tibetans, on the other hand, experienced no such renaissance. . . .<sup>18</sup>

However, he still maintained that today's Tibetans are "so imbued and conditioned by their own special forms of culture that for them change is impossible" and hence would resist it.

Very comforting for advocates of medievalism. But wait! The same book describes the liberation (which it calls "Chinese occupation") as beneficial to "the have-nots and underlings who may not have had too happy a time under the *ancien regime*". And it informs us that since the 1959 rebellion only "a small minority of Tibetans, perhaps some five per cent, have sought refuge in India". Here, we have, however reluctantly, a clear admission that the 95 per cent ("the have-nots and underlings") suffered under the old order and welcome the new.

What of the unchangeability of Tibet's medieval serfdom? That question was settled long ago. The Tibetan people whom this genocidal system was destroying, sentenced it to death, executed the sentence and took a giant stride toward the future.

Facts, after all, are stubborn things. Even long-term defenders of the indefensible, in many cases, are bound to find that for them too change is not "impossible", and to "resist the new" is fruitless.

One cannot say, unfortunately, that the *Encyclopedia Britannica* has made much progress in this regard since the days when it glorified Palha manor.

Decades later, the article "Tibet" in its 15th edition (1980) continues to apologize for Tibetan serfdom and preach Tibetan separatism. It is signed, in its several parts, by TSWD, on administration and social conditions; HER, on history; and TVW, on some other aspects. The index identifies as the bearers of these initials our old acquaint-

tances Tsipon W.D. Shakabpa, Mr. Hugh E. Richardson and Prof. Turrell V. Wylie (one of whose peculiar viewpoints was examined on pp. 15-16 and 20 of this book).

The bibliography recommended by these authors is heavily weighted toward their common tendency, a very long-standing monopoly on information about Tibet by the forces and defenders of the past.

Readers who relied on this standard work of reference for objective and up-to-date material deserve something better than this backward-looking goulash.

\* \* \*

Also there are new defenders of the indefensible. Soviet writers of the Brezhnev era have become echoers of Shakabpa and Richardson.

Both men are flatteringly quoted in *People and Gods of the Land of Snows*, a volume on Tibet intended for popular audiences and published in Russian in 1975 under the auspices of the Academy of Sciences in Moscow. It recommends "books written by Tibetan emigrants in some cases in collaboration with British and American scholars" to the Soviet reader as "deserving of the closest attention" and containing "a wealth of material".

Moscow periodicals have gone further. In *New Times* on February 27, 1977, writer Eremei Parnov described his visit to a camp of rebels in India, and sentimentalized about "the sacred stones of Tibet, fragments of a lost homeland" brought by them from "the land where the beasts and birds had fed on the bodies of their ancestors". Then he proceeded to assail "the Maoists who are to blame for the sufferings of the Tibetan people". The old feudal system, which really "fed on the bodies" of the living and the dead in Tibet, was given no blame.

Parnov repeated virtually every tale spread by Tibetan separatists and their foreign echoers, including that of "20,000 children forcibly taken into China proper". He added others, some so outlandish that even the emigré Tibetan rebel publications, which reprinted most of his piece, cut them out as too embarrassing to reproduce.

Breathing hatred for socialist China, Parnov's piece dwelt fondly on a rebel fingering a religious charm while boasting of having killed

men of the People's Liberation Army. Its idealization of the rebels and their camps was complete; even their own publications have found dark spots there, but not Parnov. This "Soviet" writer was equally moved by interviews with high lamas, a temple built "just like in Tibet", and a mentally deficient deaf-mute monk whom he found serving as watchman in it. Whatever was obscurantist and medieval was good.

Revealing, too, was the *New Times* author's device of making his "sacred stones" communicate in Russian!

"In each stone," he intoned, "I read the unwritten word — the word Nikolai Roerich chose as the title of one of his Himalayan canvases — 'Remember'."

Nikolai Roerich, as some will indeed remember, was a mystically inclined aristocratic painter from old St. Petersburg who, after fleeing from the October Revolution, reconnoitred and made a fetish of the vast geographical expanse he christened "Altai-Himalaya". And today's Kremlin strategists, like the Czars before them, see the region between these two mountain ranges, which includes all Tibet, as destined to fall under Russia's aegis. So it is not for his bright blue eyes alone that they have rehabilitated Roerich as a patriot, promoted him to prophet, and make stones speak portents with his tongue.

Preludes to Afghanistan! — though there their banner is "anti-feudal" and "anti-obscurantist", once principles are thrown into the discard, and frontier-jumping becomes the aim, flags too become a matter of convenience.



# **LEADERS OF THEIR PEOPLE**

## CHAPTER 10

# TIBETAN CADRES: FROM THE LONG MARCH TO TODAY

### FIRST GENERATION: THE LONG MARCHERS

Anyone who has swallowed the fallacy that “China invaded Tibet” after the founding of the People’s Republic should ponder on two facts of history. One is the 1,300 and more years of association of the Hans, Tibetans and China’s other nationalities and their many centuries of common statehood. The other is the long participation of Tibetans in China’s multinational revolution led by her Chinese Communist Party.

This participation dates back to the world-famous Long March of the Chinese Red Army. One of the very first applications of the Party’s policy of autonomy for nationalities was the establishment during the Long March, in 1935, of the Bodh-pa (Tibetan) Soviet government at Garzê in the then province of Sikang (Western Kham). Today the Garzê area is one of the two Tibetan autonomous prefectures in Sichuan Province.

The earliest generation of Tibetan Communist cadres, who are still active, came from among the young people who joined the Long March. Initially, they were attracted by the Red Army’s example of unity and equality among the nationalities, and its opposition to oppression, national or social. Then they became fired with the idea of common struggle by China’s exploited and oppressed, of

whatever origin, to build a new, better society. From the 1930's on, some underwent intensive revolutionary training, and fought on far-flung fronts, for the liberation of the entire country. In the process they matured in political awareness and competence.

The geographical shifts of the struggle long separated these Tibetans from contact with their own people and areas. But always, they looked forward to returning. As preparation, by deliberate Party assignment, some worked among other minority nationalities, particularly in Inner Mongolia with its similar problems of interweaving of aristocratic feudal and lamasery rule. In 1949-51 they finally came back, first to their native Tibetan areas and then to Tibet itself. There they play an important role.

Sanggye Yeshe, better known as Tian Bao, the name he adopted during the Long March, was in 1976 a secretary of the Party committee of the Tibet Autonomous Region. So was another Tibetan Long Marcher, Yang Dongsheng (Shinrob Dondrup). In 1979, Tian Bao was appointed Chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region Government.<sup>1</sup>

In Lhasa, this veteran Tibetan Communist told us of how he had joined the Red Army as a young poor lama of 18, and some of his later experience. Here is what he said.

\* \* \*

Our Party has always stood for equality among all China's nationalities and practised it. Guangxi was the first province where members of a minority nationality, the Zhuangs, joined the revolution under its leadership. One of them was Wei Guoqing. Today he is a member of the Party's Political Bureau.

On the Long March, other nationalities came into contact with the Red Army. In Hunan and Guizhou provinces there were the Miaos. In Sichuan and Yunnan there were the Yis. Commander Liu Bocheng drank blood and wine with their chiefs in pledge of brotherhood, and many Yi working people entered its ranks. In Garzê and Ngawa (Aba) in Sichuan, there were Tibetans, like myself.

Why did we join the Red Army? Let me speak of my own Ngawa area. There, Tibetans and Hans had a tradition of joint anti-

feudal struggle, going back at least to the 18th century. More important, this new army treated us as brothers. It forbade the use of the old Han chauvinist term "manzi" (barbarians) in speaking of us. And the slogans it voiced were what we ourselves needed and wanted. "Down with the Han officials and Tibetan *tu-si!*"<sup>2</sup> "Divide the land and the cattle!" "Autonomy for the nationalities!"

Naturally we came to support the Chinese Su-wei-ai (Soviet) government. But at the start we didn't even know what Su-wei-ai was, whether it was a man or a group.

The Kuomintang had spread horror-stories about the Red Army, even that it ate children. So at first we fled, leaving only the old men and the grandmothers in our villages. I myself ran off, and so did some of my young friends. But soon we crept back to learn what was going on. What did we find? The Red Army was dividing the stored butter and fine clothes of the *tu-si* among the poor! Of course, we rushed home. And when the local Red Guard militia was organized, we joined at the first call.

This militia was highly "irregular". No uniforms of any kind, just waistbands of red cloth. We went about doing propaganda. "Red Army soldiers don't beat and curse like other troops! Support the Red Army! Down with the Han officials and Tibetan *tu-si!*" The working people nearby responded as readily as we had.

When the Red Army left Ngawa, many of us young people went along. Secretary Yang Dongsheng<sup>3</sup> was one. Hu Zonglin and Tashi Wangchuk<sup>4</sup> were others.

The army soon began to move erratically, back and forth, first one way, then another. What was it all about? Only later did we understand that it was because Zhang Guotao who headed the Fourth Red Army, had betrayed. He didn't want to march north to fight Japan. He ordered his troops to go west through Gansu and Xinjiang to, as he said, "open the international road" toward the Soviet Union. Actually it was a panic flight on his part. It caused us huge losses. Two thousand of us Tibetans were in the Fourth Red Army, and the majority were lost. If not for Zhang Guotao's opportunism, how many more old Tibetan cadres, veterans of the Long March, would be working today! Now only a few are left.

In Yan'an, after the March ended, the Party wanted us to study so that we could serve our own people later. The Red Army was poor, but it shared with us whatever it had. Though not yet Party members, we were sent to the Central Party School. The seventh class consisted of Tibetan, Yi and Miao Long Marchers. After 1937, during the anti-Japanese war, the new revolutionary bases spread to some Hui and Mongolian areas. More students came from there. A special Institute for Nationalities, the first in China, was set up in Yan'an, with the old Mongolian revolutionary Ulanhu (Ulanfu)<sup>4</sup> as its head. Some who enrolled then are leaders in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region today.

After 1945, when Japan surrendered, we Tibetans were deployed to Inner Mongolia. In the War of Liberation we fought on all fronts in China, north and south. In 1949, after Beijing was liberated, the Organization Department of the Party's Central Committee looked for us everywhere. Yang Dongsheng was located on the lower Chang-jiang (Yangtze), with the New Fourth Army in whose ranks some Tibetans had fought and given their lives. I myself was "discovered" in Beijing itself, among the delegates to the First People's Political Consultative Conference which set up the People's Republic of China.

Soon we Tibetan Long Marchers went with the PLA to Sichuan. Later some came to Tibet.

\* \* \*

Another Long Marcher was Sonam (also known as Sha Nai). I met him long ago, in 1955. He was then vice-chairman of the Garzê Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in western Sichuan Province (formerly known as Sikang, or Xikang in the Chinese phonetic alphabet). Short, round-faced, cheerful, and then only 37, he was a general in the PLA, second in command of the prefectural garrison force, and head of the PLA's first all-Tibetan regiment. His story, from the notes of our talk, follows.

\* \* \*

In 1935, I was 17 years old and herded sheep. My family were serfs. We paid tribute in grain and timber to a noble. The Red Army stayed in our village for 13 months. I'd never seen such good

people, such warm companions. In 1936, when they left, I went with them. I still didn't know much about politics.

Twenty or so other Tibetan youngsters from our village joined. We all came from rough country and had led hard lives. But conditions on that March were so gruelling that some collapsed and died, particularly in the uninhabited, swampy grasslands. We had no food there except wild roots. We even had to eat some army horses, badly needed to carry supplies, to have strength to go on.

At Mao'ergai, local Tibetans believed the Kuomintang lies and attacked our columns. Starved as we were, we had to fight our way through. Others lay in wait to intercept us near the strategic Lazikou Pass. We knew they were deceived, and put on our national dress to make them pause before firing on other Tibetans. They yelled at us from their ambush on the thickly forested slopes, "Keep away from those Hans! We're going to shoot." We had time to shout back, "Don't fire! This army doesn't want anything of yours. We're just passing on our way to resist Japan. Let us through!" So we helped both our army and our Tibetan brothers to avoid losses. Reaching Gansu and Shaanxi provinces, we found food and shelter. At Dingbian we caught up with Chairman Mao Zedong. It was like coming home. No more being led by the nose by Zhang Guotao.

Chairman Mao gave special care to us Tibetan Red Army men. I was sent to the Central Party School from 1936 to 1940. At the start it was hard for me, and even harder for my teachers. I couldn't speak Han, only Tibetan, and not standard Tibetan, just our local dialect. I couldn't read or write. Han characters were hard for me so I was taught in Latin letters. It helped me a lot. I've favoured Latinization ever since.

Then came five years of study in the Yan'an Institute for Nationalities (Economics Department). I was in charge of the mess-hall and purchasing — that was practical economics. Finally I went back to the Party School for a more advanced course.

In 1945, after Japan's surrender, I was assigned to economic jobs in Inner Mongolia, under Ulanhu, for two years. Then I did

mass work in the land reform there. That suited me better. My education was still spotty and I found economic work hard.

In 1947 came our general offensive against the Kuomintang in the War of Liberation. I went back to the army and in 1949 fought to liberate Tianjin. After another spell at the Party School I joined the final drive to south China. That was my training, from practice to schooling, then from school to practice, again and again.

In 1950, the liberation of Tibetan areas in Sichuan was about to begin. The Central Committee ordered my unit to transfer me post-haste to Beijing to prepare for work among my own nationality. By 1951 I was here in Garzê forming the Tibetan Regiment. It's the first Tibetan armed force in history under the command of the Communist Party.

You can call me an example of the long-range education the Party gives us minority cadres. I began as a serf-shepherd. Now I carry considerable responsibility. I always think: Though my abilities are poor, I must justify the Party's hopes. It hurts me that I've done too little to live up to them. Well, I'm only 37. I can go on learning and work for the people. For a long time.

Unfortunately he was not able to. In 1976 when I asked Tian Bao about Sonam, I learned that he had died, some years ago, of illness.

\* \* \*

A memorable photo, surviving from the mid-1930's soon after the arrival of the Chinese Red Army following the Long March, shows Tian Bao, Yang Dongsheng and Tashi Wangchuk in their youth in Yan'an. Taken there by Edgar Snow, it is printed on page 11 (photos).

\* \* \*

How can anyone say, in the light of such history, that the Communist Party is "alien" to the Tibetans, particularly the slaves and serfs. Long ago, during the Long March, their hearts turned toward it. Many lie in Red Army graves. Others died in the anti-Japanese and people's liberation wars. The Party educated them, and sent those who lived back to help liberate their own people from millennial oppression.

Alien to the Tibetans?

Equally wrong are those who have made the word "Khamba", the designation of the people of eastern Tibet and its fringes, a synonym for the reactionary rebellion of the late 1950's.

It was the diehards of the feudal ruling class, with their immediate hangers-on and such retainers as they could still deceive, who rebelled in a last effort to restore the evil and outlived past.

Most Tibetans who joined the Long March were Khambas. So was Sonam. And so are many who in later times followed in their footsteps — serving the revolution that has brought new life to the Tibetan people.

## SECOND GENERATION: WHO JOINED IN 1950-1951

The second generation of Tibetan cadres, not a few of whom hold upper and middle echelon posts in Tibet today, were still mainly from the Tibetan areas of the surrounding provinces. They came into contact with the People's Liberation Army and the Party in 1950-51 on the eve of the entry into Tibet itself. Their own previous plight and new experiences, as well as memories of the old Red Army, caused them to turn toward the revolution as their class and national hope.

Losang Tsechen, now a vice-chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region, is one of them. We spoke to him in Lhasa in 1976. Wiry in build, mobile in face and gesture, with flashing black eyes that changed at an instant from earnest to humorous, he radiated energy, physical and mental. His conversation, informal but precise, showed a grasp of the work of the region both in broad scope and in detail. He could tick off, area by area, without reference to a note, the overall figures of grain output and its potential, then give a close-up description of some one desolate pasture, tract, long considered uncultivable, where faint signs indicated that crops had been grown centuries before. He could talk of the region-wide progress of stock-breeding, then digress into just why the peasants preferred mules to horses, how cows reacted to high altitudes, and why a heavy-fleeced sheep from

outside the region, though seeming to adapt well to Tibet's climate and grass, still needed to be crossed with the local long-legged breed — because behind the shepherds' opinion that it was too "lazy" to seek forage on steep slopes was its insufficiency of leg. In passing he would mention how sheep from Tibet, Xinjiang and other parts of China compared in wool and meat yields with those of New Zealand. An engaging and impressive man.

His parents, Losang Tsechen told us, were serfs from Qamdo who had run from oppression to Tibetan-inhabited Batang in Sichuan. There he had been apprenticed at 15 as a carpenter, and spent six years making doors, windows and benches. The People's Liberation Army, coming to Batang in 1950, became a pole of attraction for working lads like himself. He was among those whom it offered a chance to study. But his parents did not agree, as he was a family breadwinner. Still superstitious, he consulted a fortune-teller who advised him to go — and this clinched the matter for his parents as well. The school he was sent to was in Kangding, where the 18th Army Corps of the PLA was preparing to enter Tibet.

In Kangding he was soon offered a chance — to go to the inland provinces for more study or join the march into Tibet. He chose the latter. "I'd still be among Tibetans, it would be more familiar, not so different, not so far away," he recalled. Only in 1963 did he study in Beijing for one and a half years at the Central Party School. By that time he was a Party member, steeled in many struggles.

All this he told with feeling, amusement and warmth. What this illiterate serf carpenter apprentice did afterwards, what kind of person the Party made of him, we have already described.

Zhen Ying, in 1976 the Party secretary and vice-chairman of the prefectural government of Xigazê, was a cadre of the same vintage. Massive, sunbrowned and deliberate, he was born in Garzê, the Tibetan autonomous prefecture of Sichuan, one of five sons of a debt-laden peasant. In 1950, at 17, he joined the PLA, coming to Tibet in its uniform. Demobilized in 1953, he was transferred to the Party's branch working committee in Gyangzê, in the difficult and complex conditions prior to the democratic reform. Before, during and after the serfowner rebellion, he was in the thick of struggles and changes. By the time

we met him, in Tibet's socialist period, he was a leading cadre with much experience in organizing farming — in which the Xigazê area has made striking progress.

The vice-chairman of the Revolutionary Committee of Loka Prefecture in 1976 was Dorje Ben, a Tibetan from Qinghai Province which was liberated in 1949. His family were semi-serf cotters like Tibet's *duichun*, held in peonage by a big owner of land and herds. "We tilled his fields in summer, herded his sheep in winter and ourselves were hungry at all seasons," Dorje Ben said. In Qinghai, the oppression of the working people was even more many-layered than in Tibet, coming from Kuomintang warlords and officials as well as the Tibetan upper crust, lay and clerical.

"As a child all I had to wear was one unlined sheepskin, whether in July or December," Dorje Ben went on. "Shoes I'd never worn at all. When I was ten, we borrowed three measures of barley from a lamasery. The interest mounted so quickly that our family's few cattle and goats were seized to pay it. Just before liberation, we hadn't a thing left, except that debt. The Party and army, led by Chairman Mao, saved us from the bitter sea. Our family, our whole people, began to live a human life only then."

"Before the liberation, I had had just one year of primary school. After it, the Party sent me to a Nationalities' Institute and cadre school in Qinghai for three years. That was my education. Now I am in a leading position. I must never forget my poor origin, never cut away from my roots."

A Tibetan industrial cadre in 1976 was Shirob Watsa, vice-head of the Regional Automotive Repair Works, one of Tibet's larger factories, with many hundreds of workers. After this quiet, slim, gray-ing man of 42 had given us an account of the plant and its work, we asked him about himself.

Our casual question produced an answer unexpectedly rich, even for Tibet with its dramas of past and present at every step. For Shirob Watsa was a living link between the second generation of Tibetan cadres in China's revolution and the first — the men of the Long March.

His home area was near western Sichuan's Dadu River, made

famous by the Chinese Red Army's heroic crossing at a key life-and-death juncture in China's revolution. He was born in 1935, the year of that feat. By the age of seven, he remembers, he was already hearing about the Red Army, in admiring, whispered recollections among the people. Some of its men had said before leaving, "In eight years or so, we'll be back." As the time neared, this was recalled. Afterwards there was disappointment. But in the end the Red Army did come back, in 1950, this time as the PLA, and for good.

"Actually," said Shirob Watsa, "a few Red Army men remained hidden in our area. They had been left behind, wounded or ill, and were sheltered through all the dark years, by the working folk. The rich and the Kuomintang never knew. Even I myself wasn't told till after the liberation. We had a meeting then, and at last they could reveal themselves."

In the meantime, Shirob Watsa himself had his fill of woe. When he was still small his father died while on forced labour building a Kuomintang airfield. An elder sister fed him till he was ten. From then on he worked as a shepherd.

"In 1950, when the PLA came we cheered ourselves hoarse. They told us the Chinese People's Volunteers were fighting in Korea. I wanted to sign up, but wasn't accepted, being too young and sickly. When I went back to my master, he beat me on the legs with a club for applying. Look, I'll show you!"

Shirob Watsa rolled up his trousers, revealing the scars and lumps where the blows had shattered his kneecaps.

"In 1953, a cadre of our township saw me hobbling along, put me on a packhorse and took me to the Party committee. There I got light work to do, enough food to eat, enough clothes to wear, and my first new ideas. After two years I went to Tibet. They'd wanted to send me to the Nationalities' Institute in Chengdu, but I decided that if I went anywhere it would be Lhasa. I was still religious. I wanted a prayer said in the Jokhang Temple for my dead father. But I hadn't reckoned that it took money to pay the lamas for the scriptural reading. Bitterly disappointed, I went on from Lhasa to Xigazê, where I was given a messenger's job in the Communist Youth League committee. There my mind gradually cleared. Early on, I remember, the

secretary asked me when he saw me praying, 'Have you ever seen a god?' I shot back angrily, 'Aren't you for freedom of religion?' He said calmly and warmly, 'Aren't there other ideals — for the people?' We talked a lot after that. I came to understand there were indeed other, more practical, beliefs. In 1956 I joined the Party.

"In 1957 I was sent to the Tibet Institute for Nationalities in Xianyang in Shaanxi, and in 1960, I was transferred to Beijing to learn to be a machinist. That's where my knees were repaired. My worker-teacher asked why I limped and was horrified when I told him. He arranged with the factory leaders to put me in the Jishuitan Orthopedic Hospital, one of China's best. They took out some bits of broken bone, and after 21 days I was back at work and well. This, too, I owe to the Party.

"In 1963 I went to work in the Motor Repair Works at Golmud, on the Qinghai-Tibet Highway, and in 1970 I came here."

There are hundreds of Tibetan cadres of this generation, with similar histories.

## THE THIRD GENERATION

Coming into prominence in Tibet in recent years have been its cadres of the "third generation" — the first to originate in Tibet itself.

Among them is the former slave girl Pasang. In the late 1970's she was not only a secretary of the Party Committee of the Autonomous Region and a vice-chairman of its government body. She had also, for some years, been a member of the Central Committee of the entire Chinese Communist Party.

Orphaned at 9, she began to toil as a slave from that time. In the middle 1950's, at 13, she could no longer stand mistreatment and torture (of which she still bears the scars) by her owner's wife, and sought refuge with the PLA. In 1957, the army sent her to school in the interior provinces. In 1959, after joining the Party there, she was one of the students who rushed back to Tibet to help suppress the rebellion and carry out the democratic reform. She began as a cadre in a county women's work department. Fairly soon, attracting atten-

tion by her devotion, ability and initiative, she was made assistant head of a county. In the decade that followed, she became a member of the Regional Party Committee and one of its secretaries. Later, besides her seat on the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party she has twice been elected a deputy to China's National People's Congress.

Youngest of the Tibetan cadres in senior positions in the Region is Raigdi, who like Pasang was a secretary of its Party Committee and a vice-chairman of its government. In 1959, at the time of the democratic reform, he was an illiterate serf herdsman just turned 21. In that transforming movement, his energies and courage were unleashed. Subsequently, his understanding and abilities were developed by Party education. In 1972, still in his early thirties, he was chosen as Party secretary of his native Nagqu Prefecture. In 1982 he was elected a member of the Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee.

Raigdi's story, furthermore, illustrates another process common in the region, that of a veteran Han functionary training a Tibetan subordinate to replace him. By 1976, Zhang Zhaoxian, his predecessor and mentor in Nagqu, was head of Tibet's bureau of trade. And Raigdi was his direct superior in the regional government structure.

Topgyal Tseyang, another regional Party committee member, a year younger than Raigdi, was in 1979 First Party Secretary of Xigazê Prefecture. That area, with 19 counties and 450,000 people, produces a quarter of Tibet's farm crops and a third of its livestock.

By then, all prefectures in Tibet were headed by Tibetans. So were more than sixty of its seventy counties.

Hungxin, a serf at the time of the democratic reform, leads pastoral Amdo County in the north. He has toured all its far-flung communes on foot and horseback, and done much to move its stockbreeding economy from its old poverty toward prosperity.

Lhadron, First Party Secretary of Bainang County, was a slave housemaid in an aristocrat's manor before the democratic reform.

Lhagba, since 1973 the Party Secretary of Burang County in remote Ngari (western Tibet), had helped end its reputation of being the most indigent and backward in the entire region.

There are many other such examples.

Of the subsequent generation of Tibetan cadres, those who were still children at the time of the democratic reform, I shall not write here. They have no pre-liberation past. Most of them have been literate since childhood. And an increasing number have had, or are now acquiring, technical training that will help them participate in the tasks of modernization.

\* \* \*

Note may be taken here of the harm to cadres done by the “gang of four”.

At the upper and middle levels they looked for cadres who through confusion, weak-kneed opportunism or careerist ambition would report and take instruction from them rather than through normal Party and state channels. These manoeuvres came to nought with their downfall.

At the grass roots, the main damage on cadre matters was by the ultra-Left line. It resulted in unjust removals of some commune and team functionaries who had come up in the suppression of the rebellion and in the democratic reform. Certain currency was given to the false idea that democratic revolutionaries, as a whole, could not go on to the socialist revolution. Through wrong re-definitions of people’s class status the scope of class struggle was exaggerated.

For instance, in a misjudgment later widely publicized so that a number of similar ones could be corrected, Badhup, a commune cadre, had been set aside and dropped from the Party after arbitrary re-classification as a serfowners’ agent — a class enemy category. In fact he had been a middle serf and some missteps he made should have been dealt with by routine criticism. After his removal, moreover, he had remained loyal to the new society and conscientiously done what work was given him. Now Badhup’s good name, Party membership and back-pay as a cadre have been restored. So have those of others in like situations.

This has not only undone injustices but re-activised many basically good cadres.

## CHAPTER 11

# NGAWANG GYATSO—STEELED IN THE HEART OF LHASA

Ngawang Gyatso, when I first met him in 1965, was only 24 but already a seasoned revolutionary. Born and brought up in Lhasa as a serf, he was vice-secretary of the Communist Party Committee of the Parkhor or “inner circle” section of the city, once the very heart of serfowner rule. There, on festivals, the panoply of the feudal local government had been flaunted amid the frightful surrounding poverty — pomp amidst rags.

Ngawang Gyatso’s father had been a blacksmith doing *corvée* labour for the *kashag*, the Dalai’s administration. When the People’s Liberation Army arrived in 1951 he was ill, so he went to the free clinic it set up. There he heard that a new primary school was to be started, the first modern lay school in all Tibet, a school that would not only teach needy students but feed and clothe them. In 1952 he took his 11-year-old son to its opening class.

But the serfowners, though forced by circumstances to agree to the establishment of the school, did not want it to teach the poor. They insisted on exacting unpaid forced labour, for a month of each term and on all vacations, from serf schoolchildren from the age of eight up. Just as they intended, the double strain of this toil and trying to keep up with studies compelled some pupils to drop out.

But young Ngawang Gyatso and others, helped and encouraged

by progressives among the teachers, did not give up. Also then, the first deep political lesson seared itself into the boy's heart. The Chinese Communist Party and the Central People's Government brought education to the oppressed, but Tibet's nobles tried to rob them of it.

In 1953 his father's illness got worse. The feudal officials, doubly pitiless with a serf who sent his son to school, would not let him miss a single day at the anvil. "Father was so weak that I had to carry his hammer to work," Ngawang Gyatso recalled. "There he had to swing it from dawn to dusk." Exhaustion hastened the smith's death. So another fact was graven on the boy's mind: the PLA doctors tried to cure his father but the serfowners robbed him of life.

Ngawang Gyatso's mother was required to do *corvée* in place of her dead husband. The boy himself, besides his own *corvée*, had to work off the labour-rent for the hovel in which they lived. The heavy stones he had carried rubbed his back into sores that would not heal. Adding humiliation to pain, noblemen's children on the Parkhor would order the boy to let them ride him like a horse. Because of their status he could not refuse. Sometimes they flung him a small copper coin in payment, sometimes not.

With the aid of the school, which besides feeding him sent barley flour and butter to the family, Ngawang Gyatso was able to go on to the Lhasa Middle School, founded in 1956. There his horizons widened. "Father had told me before he died to study, to improve myself, and avenge the family," he related. "Now I came to understand that we, the poor, must do more. We must gain knowledge to right the wrongs not just of one but of all working families. We studied really hard, not like many of the aristocrats' sons and daughters, who were lazy, thinking they'd rule over us whether they learned or not."

When Ngawang and his friends joined the Young Pioneers, the reactionaries, already enraged that serfs should be going to school at all, turned on them in murderous fury. "On our way home from classes we had to pass the Potala and the Parkhor," Ngawang recalled. "The old Tibetan army troops and serfowners' bullies who lounged there would catch us by the ends of our red scarves, and

threaten, 'We'll throttle you with these.' We were children, and naturally we were scared. But also we became angry and obstinate. We didn't take off our scarves."

*A pro-rebel Tibetan author, moved abroad by his parents as a boy after 1959, confirms such intimidation by recalling his own school-days in Lhasa. "One afternoon I was walking along the river bank proudly wearing my red scarf," he writes, "when I met a group of young lamas. At once they gave chase, caught me, pulled the scarf around my neck and almost strangled me to death with it."*<sup>1</sup>

On the eve of the 1959 rebellion, posters appeared saying that anyone who did not quit "the Han schools" would be killed. Rebels from other areas crowded into Lhasa, looting and raping. The old Tibetan army, supposed to keep order, openly sided with them. For 18-year-old Ngawang Gyatso and his serf fellow students, this was the test of tests. Instead of quitting the school or hiding behind its walls, they went out in propaganda groups to the street corners. They would start with songs and dances. When crowds gathered, one would speak against the impending rebellion.

Ngawang spoke often at the most dangerous spot, the Parkhor near the Jokhang Temple which housed part of the serfowners' local government. "We knew the Lhasa poor were with us in their hearts," he recalled. "They wanted serfdom smashed. They hoped the PLA would quell the reactionaries. But they were still afraid to speak out. Anyone openly taking our side could be hauled off, whipped, even killed. Just the same, the people made it difficult for the reactionaries to break up the meetings, 'Let them speak,' they'd mutter, crowding close to protect us. We could see by their eyes how carefully they were listening to us.

"Why did we brave these risks? We knew that if we students educated in new ideas showed fear, the people's hopes would fade. So when we talked, we put it straight. We and the Central Government were for reform, for the poor people's freedom and progress. The rebels were for keeping slavery and serfdom and opening the door to imperialism. We knew our duty was to stand up for the emancipation of the million serfs, our own class. If we did so, we would triumph. If the enemy killed some of us, others wouldn't flinch."

The reactionaries did try to kill Ngawang. One evening three men followed him into a dark street and knifed him. Fortunately, passers-by carried him promptly to hospital. Had they delayed, the doctors said, he would have bled to death. "As we expected, those diehards were willing to murder to preserve their rule," Ngawang Gyatso said, showing me the knife scar. "Well, they didn't kill our cause, or even me. They were overthrown, but I'm still here, doing revolutionary work."

The city poor of Lhasa, and even many of the upper class and the lamas, gave no aid or comfort to the rebellion when it flared up openly. Many helped the PLA.

Then came the democratic reform, in which the ex-serfs and slaves of the Lhasa area took the land, herds and political power into their own hands. Throughout 1960, Ngawang Gyatso, still weak from his wound, worked in the reform as a cadre. In 1962 he joined the Communist Party. By 1965 he was in charge of organization, production and education on the Parkhor, where enemies had tried to choke him with his red scarf, and where later he had dared to speak out in the face of their weapons. On the Parkhor many ex-beggars, formerly without a roof over their heads, had been moved into the houses of runaway reactionaries. Other residents were workers or handicraftsmen, increasingly combining in mutual-aid teams. Some were merchants, or aristocrats who had not rebelled.

Since the Parkhor runs around the Jokhang, the Lamaist holy of holies, I asked Ngawang about the pilgrims who in 1965 were still making their prayerful circuits around the shrine.

"I am a Marxist-Leninist, a Communist," he said. "It stands to reason that I no longer believe. But the people have an ancient tradition of faith. Centuries of habit are connected with it. These pilgrims are of all kinds and classes. In Tibet, many older people are still religious. Between age 30 and 35, some believe and some not. Most of the youth don't, especially if they've picked up a bit of science. We Communists don't promote religion, of course. But we do protect the freedom to believe, or not to believe, without interference. No compulsion will do in such matters. Only people's own experience and education can help them understand.

“We ex-serfs and slaves were once the ruled,” he went on. “Now we lead the people. We rely on those who were formerly the most oppressed, but we want to unite all who can be united to build our new socialist Tibet.”

“You still pass the Potala every day. What do you feel, looking at it?” I asked.

“For a long time, it continued to depress me. We working people had built it, so I admired it. But our oppressors still lived there and there were dungeons beneath, so I hated it. Today I see it with different eyes. We built it. Now it’s ours! But I still hate the serfdom and oppression it used to stand for. That must never come back.”

Such was Ngawang Gyatso, who so recently in time, yet already so long ago in the rush of history, had joined the first class of Tibet’s first primary school, and had been educated not only in the classroom but in social struggle. There were thousands of new cadres like him — courageous, modest, committed to the future — on the “roof of the world”.

### POSTSCRIPT: 1976

When I met Ngawang Gyatso again, an eventful decade had passed for Tibet, all China, the world, and of course for him. By then 35, he was browner, wirier and more mature — but with eyes as bright, emotions as ready, words tumbling out as fast, movements as energetic as before.

In 1976 he was Party secretary of the Tsaikungtang rural district of Lhasa municipality.

“In our Tibet,” he observed, “an important thing in the past years was the move from the democratic to the socialist revolution, and in particular the setting up of our people’s communes. We became self-sufficient in grain. Many town-bred people, like myself, went to the countryside to help lead the change in agriculture, which is basic in the economy. It was in 1974 that I left the Parkhor to become Party secretary of the Tsaikungtang rural district of Lhasa.”

This district, Ngawang Gyatso went on, stretches for 15 kilometres over three valleys, each organized as a commune. Describing the progress of its agriculture, the livelihood of its people and its contributions to the state, Ngawang Gyatso checked off on his fingers, the figures I have tabulated, below.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF PRODUCTS  
IN TSAIKUNGTANG DISTRICT, 1965-1975

|  | 1965  |      | 1975   |      | Increase<br>(times) |
|--|-------|------|--------|------|---------------------|
| <i>Grain</i>                           |       |      |        |      |                     |
| Yield (per hectare)                    | 1.5   | tons | 5.5    | tons | 3.6                 |
| Total crop                             | 350   | tons | 2,000  | tons | 5.9                 |
| Food grain distributed<br>(per capita) | 175   | kg.  | 280    | kg.  | 1.6                 |
| Surplus sold to state                  |       | none | 500    | tons |                     |
| <i>Cattle</i>                          |       |      |        |      |                     |
| Total                                  | 2,000 | head | 12,000 | head | 6                   |
| Average per person                     | 1     | head | 4      | head | 4                   |

Tsaikungtang, he said, had about 2,000 people in 500 households in 1959. By 1976 it had 3,500, in 760 households. There were more births with fewer deaths, some wanderers had returned. Some families had moved from the city to the country.

With more strong young people, and large-scale organization of labour, the cultivated area had been increased by more than half since 1965 and many irrigation channels had been dug.

The survival rate for young livestock, formerly low, had risen to 97 per cent, thanks not only to better care and fodder but also to seven "barefoot veterinarians" trained from among the peasants.

Farm machines ten years earlier were unknown in Tsaikungtang. Now it had six large tractors. Three were free gifts from the state, the other three were bought with the collective savings of the communes themselves (again with the state subsidizing half the price). There were also harvesters, threshers and winnowers. Larger equipment was owned by the communes, smaller items by their teams.

The three communes had laid by 150 tons of grain against the

possibility of bad harvests or war and 600,000 *yuan* to expand equipment and production.

With special feeling, recalling his own grim fight for education, Ngawang Gyatso spoke of the district's schools. It had had none before the liberation. Now there were nine, attended by virtually all the children of school age. Eleven young people, five of them girls, had been sent to study medicine, farm mechanization and other subjects in inland universities. In general, they were expected to return to the district, not go off to the cities.

Two hundred illiterate adults had learned to read and write. Scientific farming groups, which tilled experimental plots as well as learned from books, had 160 members.

Tsaikungtang, despite its closeness to Lhasa's well-equipped free hospitals, had set up a district medical station and a clinic in each commune, and trained 27 barefoot doctors in the teams. Eighteen creches and nurseries freed young mothers for farm work. Thirty-eight aged or incapacitated working people without families to care for them were supported by the communes. "In the old society," Ngawang Gyatso blazed, "they would have died of hunger and cold."

Close to Ngawang Gyatso's heart, too, was the increase in Tibetan cadres. The 17 district functionaries were all Tibetans. "There are no privileges of rank for us cadres, our wives or our children," he said. "Those at district level put in a minimum of 180 days of field labour a year, those at commune level 300 days."

"Besides being among the masses in work and study, we regularly invite poor and lower middle peasants to come to the office to give their views. The people speak out. They expect the cadres to act promptly to solve problems."

"Have you kept in touch with what has been happening in the Parkhor," I asked.

"Yes, some of my family still live there," he said, and spoke animatedly of the changes.

"Since I saw you last, the socialist transformation of handicrafts has taken place. The iron and wood craftsmen, tailors and builders have formed co-ops. The many new houses you've seen for yourself. A new free clinic gives both Western and Chinese-Tibetan treatments.

Two new public restaurants serve quick meals — Tibetan or Han style. The people's primary school on the Parkhor is still famous. Many who studied there have become cadres, skilled workers, soldiers in the PLA."

The Parkhor's new Party secretary, who took over from Ngawang Gyatso, was Tsering Drolma, a woman of 30. All the street's leading cadres were Tibetans.

"What about your own family?"

"Their past you know. Now they live quite well. Mother worked in one of the co-op restaurants and retired last year. She's still in good health. Two of my brothers have gone to college. One studied English and was appointed to the post office. The other is a meteorologist. My youngest sister helps in the Parkhor restaurant. My wife, who is from a rural slave family, does farm work here in the district. She's a Party member like me. My brothers and sisters are in the Youth League. We have four children, three boys and a girl, all in school."

## CHAPTER 12

# CHAMPA GYALTSSEN—SERF TAILOR TO COUNTY HEAD

Champa Gyaltzen, 27 years old, was the son of a serf tailor in Lhasa. In 1965, he was the newly elected head of Lhünze County, in Tibet's Loka Prefecture south of the Yarlung Zangbo River (which in the lower reaches becomes the Brahmaputra). Earlier he had worked with the serfs and slaves of Khaesum manor in taking it over and organizing its new life.

Here is how he told his story — typical of the training of one type of Tibetan revolutionary cadre.

\* \* \*

My family, as tailors, had to be *ula* for the local government, the aristocrats and the headmen — all three. Besides rent we had to pay labour service for the quarters we lived in, and a poll tax. The masters wore good clothes and ate and drank their fill, especially on holidays when they feasted themselves silly. But we, who dressed them, didn't have enough clothes or food. Most of the time our family could not even live together, as the sewing had to be done in the master's own houses.

Mother died when I was one year old. The full load of supporting us fell on Father. He went deep into debt. My elder brother was made a slave as part-payment. I myself, at 13, was sent away to Maizhokunggar County to serve a lay official named Sonam Dorje.

In 1955, driven wild by constant beatings from Sonam Dorje's bailiff, I ran back to Lhasa, bruised, ragged and covered with lice. The People's Liberation Army had been in Tibet four years, but I understood little about the Communists. I only knew that they treated the sick free of charge, and ran schools where the poor could go. So I looked up a neighbour, Phuntse Wangdup, who was one of the first to go to school and still a student — today he is deputy secretary for organization of the Communist Youth League in Tibet. Phuntse Wangdup introduced me to the Class for Social Education.<sup>1</sup>

Immediately, I felt the Party's special concern for us poor. I was sent to the Southwest Institute for Nationalities in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, where I stayed three and a half years, till April 1959. The warm understanding of the teachers and students, who came from a score of nationalities, opened my eyes to the fact that all were one family, striving together for a new life. When I realized that this was what we were studying for, I began to work truly hard, not even wasting the 10-minute break. Soon I joined the Communist Youth League.

In March 1959, the serfowners' revolt broke out. We Tibetan students volunteered at once to return. In April I was assigned to the Loka area, to lead the liberated serfs and slaves of Khaesum manor<sup>2</sup> in production on their newly won land. But I knew nothing about farming. So how could I lead? I took my anxiety to Chen Tao, the Han leader of our cadres' work team. He encouraged me, "Everything comes gradually. Everyone begins by not knowing. Learn by consulting with the people. Learn by doing."

In September that year, when the harvest was near, all the other cadres were called to a conference. I was left in charge. I remembered that Comrade Chen had told me, "When in difficulties, go to the masses." So I approached two old peasants, Sonam and Lhadup, for help.

But what helped me most was that I lived and worked with the peasants. All day, I was with them in the fields. At night, I listened to them talk, not only about present problems but about the past. It was education in farming, and also a class education. I thought I knew enough about class oppression from my own past suffering. But with everyday among them I learned more.

I remember Tsering, an ex-serf, saying, "Birds have wings and can fly freely. But we had legs and couldn't walk where we wanted. We couldn't even drink water from the snow mountains. The whole world belonged to the lords." I heard how many families had run away, and how many people had died. In a field where we worked together, one man suddenly said: "Right here, Mudhup Pintso, a serf, was beaten to death by Wangching, the bailiff. The earth stayed a different colour for a long time from his blood. His wife went out of her mind and ran off, nobody knows where, leaving three children. The smallest tried to take food from a stove. He didn't know about fire and burned his hand so badly that he was crippled. At eight, this boy began to do *ula* for the manor. At 14, when the rich were carousing at the New Year, he died in the cowshed, so eaten by lice that they came out of his mouth, nose and eyes. This happened to many children."

Slaves who survived to 60 in those days, and they weren't many, were declared "freed". Too feeble to be worked, they were simply thrown off the estate, homeless and with nothing to eat. Udhup Chomo went blind and was "freed" at 59. He begged on the roads for three years before the rebellion was quelled, and came back only afterwards. Now we give him a pension as a retired worker.

Tsering, a former slave, is head of one of our mutual-aid teams. Once he told me, weeping, about his daughter, Gesang, a beautiful and spirited girl whom all remembered. When she was 18, while delirious with a high fever, she drank water from the irrigation canal. The bailiff said she had "defiled the water" and beat her to death.

People were killed for picking up bits of horsehair and flogged when seen carrying empty baskets which was taken as an evidence of loafing on the job, or preparing to steal.

Such things happened to the *nangzan*, the slaves, and the *tralpa*, the serfs. The *duichun* or "black people", runaways and settlers from other places, were supposed to be masterless. They had to pay and pay. The saying was that they were taxed "even for looking at the sky". Even the sky belonged to the lords.

Among these people I realized that only one force in the whole world wanted to liberate them, the Communist Party. Only if led by

the Party could they stand up on their own feet. In August 1959, five months after coming to Khaesum, I became a Party member.

In December that year, I left Khaesum manor to become head of the local government of Changdup district. Promotion brought more worries. Fresh from school and still inexperienced, I didn't know what I should do.

But I believed that, with Party leadership and support, I could get a hold on the work. Comrade Yao, a Han, was the county Party secretary at that time. Just as Comrade Chen had, he encouraged and helped me, but he didn't want me to run to him on every problem. "You must study," he urged. "Start with Chairman Mao's *The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains*." From this text I understood that the entire Chinese people, like that old man, had started from scratch and persisted till they had overthrown three great mountains — imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism. So why couldn't I learn to be district head now, after liberation and with so much groundwork already done?

Since I had learned some Han language at the Chengdu Institute, I tried reading Chairman Mao in the original. Of course, I found many characters, many expressions and references which I didn't know. This made me want to increase my general education. I looked in dictionaries, asked other comrades for explanations, and came to know a bit more of the world.

I also read *Serve the People*, Chairman Mao's tribute to a model revolutionary. Who was he? Zhang Side, a plain man, an army guard who died while preparing charcoal to keep his comrades warm. This taught me: whatever you do to serve others is important but if you think only of yourself, however high your position or abilities, you're worth nothing. How to be a good district head? The answer was the same. See what the people need and serve them in those ways. My energy and confidence grew. I began to see what had to be done, what had to be learned.

In 1961, the problem was to raise soil fertility. We needed manure, but in our district, there were few sources for it. That winter I led people to dig mud out of old pits, and put it on the fields. My

feet were wet and cold from the freezing slush. But my heart was warm.

In 1962, our district got steel ploughs from the government, free of charge. The old Tibetan wooden iron-tipped plough had merely furrowed the earth, it couldn't turn it. Even so, despite all my persuasion, some peasants wouldn't agree to change over. They thought the new ploughs were heavy and would strain the oxen. Why wasn't I able to convince them? The Party advised me to be patient, to consult instead of haranguing, and to arrange field demonstrations to prove in practice that my arguments weren't just words. I did this, and the new ploughs came into general use in a few months, which increased production a lot. Everyone praises them now. The weeds they turn up die from sunning or freezing and enrich the soil. So in our district we didn't need to leave any land fallow this year, as was the old custom.

What's more, it turned out that the peasants weren't just being conservative or wrong in all the things they said. Those old wooden ploughs weren't "fit only for the museum", as I had said hot-headedly. We still use them effectively just before the sowing, and the new ones for the heavy ploughing in spring and autumn.

In 1963, I stopped being district head and became district Party secretary. Now I'm going back from Party to local government again, as head of the whole county. My predecessor was a Han comrade. Today most counties are led by Tibetans.

Not long before I was elected county head I had begun to think that the whole situation, and I myself, were pretty good. The people's life had improved. Production was higher. I had done fairly well at my post. I didn't say it all in those words, but comrades in a higher Party committee noticed my complacent mood. They warned me, "We Communists must avoid conceit, never stop studying and stick to the mass line." My first reaction was, "Who're you talking to? Whatever I may be, I'm not conceited." But, thinking it over, I realized I was beginning to mark time, to dwell on my own merits and others' lacks. So I got out of my county office chair and ploughed, weeded, manured and harvested with the mutual-aid teams. From their members I heard plenty of criticisms. This should be done but wasn't. That was

being done wrong. Here was how it could be done better. My complacency was punctured, and my work improved. Only by labouring side by side with the people, when what comes to mind is said at once heart-to-heart, can problems be quickly uncovered and solved.

In the 1964 harvest, we faced a contradiction. How to cut, sun and move the grain, glean the fields and get the autumn ploughing done — all before the first frosts? We had only 180 new ploughs. But our land had increased to over 800 hectares. Instead of trying to figure a way indoors, I went to work with a mutual-aid team of 17 members. Only four of them were men, and one of those was away. But was it impossible to get the work done? Not at all. The shortage could be counteracted by breaking with an ancient belief in Tibet, that it was ill-omened for women to plough, drive animals or bind sheaves. So long as this superstition bound us, if all our four men ploughed, there would be no one to do the other jobs that were “for men only”. Yet the belief was deep-rooted. Would people be willing to shift at one swoop, would even to bring it up lead to quarrels? I was worried, but I needn't have been. As soon as the point was raised, one woman spoke up: “These are ideas from the serf society. It didn't regard us women as people. We'll never get to socialism with such things in our heads. I'll be the first to bind the sheaves.” The others, men and women, agreed readily. So it was we cadres who had been hesitant in tackling this “national custom”. The people were ready to drop it. The team did so quickly. The whole district soon followed. Never underestimate the masses!

Another obstacle was the very small size of some of our first mutual-aid teams. I'd thought there would be many difficulties in merging them. It turned out not to be so hard.

So you see, the minute a cadre gets separated from the masses is the minute he starts being a bureaucrat, however well he may have done before. The people are prepared to go ahead, but such a person's mind is already in the past. The higher his post, the more serious this can be, the more he can hold things back. Whoever doesn't learn every day from the masses can't lead them. What use have they for such leaders?

That a serf tailor's son like me could become a responsible cadre isn't my merit at all. It's the Party's. It liberated and trained me. It got me back on the right track before I myself even knew I was off it.

All the cadres in our county are now Tibetans, trained in the same way as me. Nine are at district level. Forty hold posts as chairmen, vice-chairmen, Party secretaries and vice-secretaries of its townships.

## CHAPTER 13

# TSERING PHUNTSO—PEOPLE'S POLICEMAN IN LHASA

In 1955, when the serfowner local regime still held sway in Tibet, I had had a rather grim impression of the then Lhasa police — big, booted toughs standing about in broad-brimmed felt hats, turquoise pendant dangling from one ear, British rifle slung from the shoulder, rawhide whip in hand. Their very name, “Polis” from the Indian-English, reflected the job they had been created for: defence of imperialist-penetrated feudalism. When nobles or high lamas appeared, they struck attitudes of abject submission. Toward central government cadres, PLA men or us foreign journalists, they turned on oily smiles. But to the city poor, who edged carefully by them, their conduct was an unpredictable alternation of lounging contempt, quick savage blows, menacing glares and raucous curses.

So generally hated were these bullying flunkeys that even such an admirer of the old Tibetan ruling class as Lowell Thomas, Jr., supplied a photograph of one of them in his book<sup>1</sup> with the caption:

“A Lhasa policeman, distinguished by a floppy hat, Western style, and a single dangling earring. We were told that these officers of the law are about the only people ever to be murdered in the Tibetan capital.” The only ones? Not in Thomas’ count, apparently, were the almost everyday killings of serfs and slaves. But his remark on the old police is revealing.

In Lhasa again in 1965 after the revolt of the ruling serfowners had been crushed and the feudal system brought to an end by the democratic reform I walked the freshly asphalted streets where a new type of police were on point duty, unarmed, dressed in white cotton tunics and with red stars on their caps.

Frequently, one of them would wave at some pedestrian, driver or cyclist (townsman, peasant or shaggy-haired herdsman, Han or Tibetan uniformed cadre or PLA soldier — it did not seem to matter) and engage him in apparently easy conversation, with no sign of inequality on either side. They talked generally of traffic rules, for in Lhasa, these like the modern streets themselves, were brand-new. "Every one of our people's police is not only a Tibetan," my Tibetan cadre companion said with pride, "but an ex-slave or serf."

"Let's interview one," I suggested. But since that could hardly be done on point duty, it was on the next day that I talked with Tsering Phuntso — from noon to dusk in my guest-house room.

Twenty-five years old, of medium but sturdy build, with a nut-brown face, frank eyes, and thick, broad hands, Tsering Phuntso was a type seen in any land. If not for his uniform I would have guessed, "farm labourer" or "manual worker". But this was Tibet and when I asked, he replied, "I used to be a slave."

"When I was just eight," he explained slowly in response to my request for his story, "I was allotted as house-slave to an upper serf, an estate-bailiff, near Xigazê. My only food was rough black-pea meal, and never enough of that. I wore rags, not a piece of cloth the size of your palm in the lot. I had no shoes and in winter my bare feet opened in bloody cracks — they hurt terribly and never healed till the spring. My master did no physical work. Besides being his drudge at home I was sent out to do the labour-service he owed to the lord. Often I asked myself: 'Why are people so unequal, some never working but getting rich while others never rest but die poor?' The superstitious ideas that were in all our heads then gave an answer, 'Rich and poor are fixed by fate.' But I couldn't help thinking again, 'Aren't the poor human too?'"

*The room where we sat was bright with the rays of Lhasa's incomparable sun. But as Tsering Phuntso talked, gloom seemed to*

*descend. Through it came two voices, his and that of Tasbi Phuntso, the Tibetan-cadre interpreter. Just as their names were similar, so their speech seemed to blend, as did their brooding eyes and strong emotion. For Tasbi, too, was of the oppressed, a former serf. Often and strikingly, in Tibet, I would encounter this fusing flash of identity. Not only between Tibetan and Tibetan but between Tibetan and Han, based on the common class feeling of the once insulted and exploited.*

“In 1956 when I was 16,” Tsering Phuntso continued, “the local government was inviting some of the well-to-do Tibetans to enrol their children in a new school in Xigazê. One family didn’t want their son to go. So they fixed it with the *gombo* (local headman) to send me instead — just like getting a substitute for corvée labour except that this time the task was to go to school. There were also reactionaries who, to ingratiate themselves with the central government, would pretend to support the new schools, but to scare the people, would spread rumours that the Hans were plotting to send all young Tibetans to the interior provinces and then to kill all the old people — and even that the Hans ate human flesh. My own mother was fooled by these lies. Though half-starved, she went into debt to buy a gift for the headman and begged him on her knees, in tears, to let me off.”

“How did you yourself feel then?” I asked.

“I was scared,” Tsering Phuntso smiled again, “but also excited. I thought: Eight years I’ve been a slave, this can’t be worse. Maybe I’ll get a bit more to eat and not have to work so hard. Who’d ever heard of a slave studying before? I might even learn something useful. One thing I didn’t believe was that the Hans would kill or eat people. True, I’d never talk to a Han. My master would have punished me if I had. But I’d seen the People’s Liberation Army building a road, how they never yelled at serfs and slaves working alongside them, and how these people got wages, good food and shoes. So that was one rumour I didn’t swallow.”

“Almost as soon as I got to the school,” Tsering Phuntso said, his voice rising, “I felt as if the sun was shining for me for the first time. I didn’t set eyes on my tatters again. I was issued clothes, warm and comfortable, such as I’d never worn. I had a bath and a haircut. Can you believe it, I’d never even washed my face properly before.

At most I'd go to a stream, scoop up some water in my hands and wipe my face on my rags. Now I was given my own wash basin, towel, soap, paper, books, pen and pencils. I got a cotton quilt and a bed to myself; in my master's house I'd had to sleep on the ground, in the rags I wore day and night. As a slave, I hadn't been allowed to touch bed or bedding, much less use them.

“So that first night, I couldn't sleep, or say anything to my room-mates, or even think, I was so stunned. The Han teachers were warm and caring. It took me time to get into conversation with any of them, but from the first I felt as if a stone had dropped off my back. We and they slept in the same rooms, used the same things, ate the same food, they addressed us as equals, I could hardly believe it. For how had I lived with my master? In talking, he would shout a few words at me, usually curses, and I had to bow low, put my hands on my knees, stick out my tongue in respect, and answer only, '*Loseli, loseli* (Yes, yes)', but not too loud or he'd beat me for insolence. Sleeping? He bedded down early on rugs and cushions, and I after midnight on the cold mud floor. Waking? I was up at dawn to empty his pot and get things ready for him so he could breakfast in bed and loll in it till noon. Eating? I had to present his bowl to him with both hands, head down, and for the slightest mistake he'd dash the hot tea in my face. But I myself ate scraps in a corner. A slave was usually addressed as “idiot”, but to excuse yourself by saying you hadn't understood an order would only bring blows. The rule was: What the master even thinks, the slave has to do.”

“But while I was big-eyed with joy at these contrasts, and felt like a kitten moved to a warm spot, I didn't think at first of serving the people, only that good luck had at last touched even me! And I still had some leftover suspicions and fears. These were Hans, after all, why should they be kind? And would they stay that way? So however many times I was told I was equal, I still bowed to every cadre, Han or Tibetan, and put out my tongue, whispering '*Loseli*', as before. They would object, 'Don't do that, we're class brothers. We used to be oppressed, just like you.' But for almost a year, even after I began to understand, I still behaved as an inferior in Tibet was supposed to, so deep was my slave habit.

"Then I was transferred to the Tibetan Administrative Cadres School in Lhasa. Again I was worried. Would I be treated as well? I was — but there was a difference too. The Xigazê school had been a united front one, for Tibetans of all classes. This one was for the poor alone, and in it I gradually became class conscious. Till then, I'd believed what my master was always saying, 'We feed you, otherwise you'd die of hunger.' Now I began to think: the serfowners own all Tibet's land and riches. But who works, who produces? Then, one day it flashed through my head like fire. WHO FEEDS WHOM? It's we, the serfs and slaves, who feed the masters!"

As he said this, Tsering Phuntso reddened and his broad fists clenched. As Tashi interpreted, I saw that his hands too had closed into fists on his knees as he leaned forward.

"That was how," said Tsering Phuntso, "I got a new aim in life. Formerly I'd thought: Learn hard while you can, it'll bring you ease and comfort sometime. Now I said to myself: That's not what becoming a real man means. All our effort must be to serve the poor, to change things for the working people. Nothing else is worth while. Studying Chairman Mao's writings made new sense."

"Were your courses mainly on politics?" I inquired.

"Not mainly. We spent a lot of time learning to read and write Tibetan, and arithmetic."

"No Han language," I asked curious. "Not in that school," Tsering Phuntso replied. "I learned some only later, in my spare time."

"Our students included some of Lhasa's poor," he went on. "Some went back to their homes every night. The *kashag*, the old government, put all kinds of pressure on them to quit. Its men would insult them in the streets, 'You students are two-headed monsters who eat the shit of the Hans!'"

"On Sundays, when we all went into town, *kashag* officials, soldiers and members of the "Protect the Faith Army", a reactionary organization, would beat up any student they caught alone. They could tell us by our haircuts, and baited us, 'Whoever cuts his hair is a Han slave!'"

"In late 1958 and early 1959 the *kashag*, preparing its revolt, made

open propaganda for it in Lhasa. Threatening placards were stuck on walls! 'All who go to Han schools must withdraw or be killed.' Some students, mostly of the upper class, were influenced or got scared, and did pull out. I myself thought, 'You call us two-headed traitors. But that's what you are yourselves. You're so afraid the poor will stand up, you try to sell Tibet to the imperialists.' The *kashag* preached what it called 'independence'. But we students who stayed in schools explained to the masses, 'Tibet has been in the family of China's peoples for a thousand years. It was so in darkness, when all nationalities were oppressed. Now, just as we are all moving into the light, the old parasites want to split us apart, so they can keep on sitting on our heads. Nothing doing!'

"What we wanted to break was not our tie with China's other nationalities, but the man-eating serfdom in our own Tibet. The revolution was for all the nationalities. We were sure the future was ours.

"In Lhasa, the rebellion was smashed in three days. Though we asked to join in fighting against it, we weren't needed. Right after it was suppressed we left our classrooms to revolutionize Tibet's society — as we had hoped to do for years. For a month, I was on guard over captured rebels, dandified officers of the *kashag*'s 2nd Regiment who had always harassed our school. Formerly, when we saw these types, we poor had had to bow down or be beaten. Now they were overthrown and in our hands. We could hardly believe it. My first thought was, 'You used to kick me around. Well, you'll get to know me now.' But I took no private revenge. I didn't lay a finger on them. By then I knew that I was a representative of the labouring people. And there was a policy, devised in the people's interest, toward the defeated rebels: to punish those guilty of major crimes, to punish no one who had been cheated or frightened into joining, to reward anyone who repented and helped the people, even after capture and whatever his past. Each case would be decided by the facts. The Party trusted me to observe policy, and I trusted the Party."

"Some of these officers had been usurers," he went on. "People had had to flatter them to get a loan. Now they tried to flatter

and bribe me. I wasn't having any of that. 'We're smashing the old society and all that stuff with it,' I told them. 'Don't think we're like you.' Then they tried to make up to me in smaller ways, with offers of sweets and top-grade butter which their families brought them from home. Each time I'd criticize them. Each time they'd apologize, 'Really we're not accustomed yet to the new society. We're just trying to be courteous.' "

"Courteous to us? Why didn't they think of that when they were on top?" Tsering Phuntso asked, and his brown face puckered.

"It was after this that I was assigned to our newly organized people's police," he continued, "in the traffic section, you saw Lhasa before the reform so you know what it was like. A car could hardly pass. There were ruts, holes full of stinking water, stray dogs, garbage, filth. And beggars everywhere, some sick, some dying. Now, just see for yourself. There's building everywhere. Roads and sanitation are improving all the time.

"But then it was still hard to begin, and we in the new People's Police had no experience. First of all, we had to learn to see our tasks as important. They are to safeguard the people's lives, health and possessions. We are part of the people, we advance together with them. Before teaching anyone, we must learn.

"Take motor traffic. A few years ago there was very little in Lhasa. Now there's more and more. Young or old, the people need explanations on how to use the streets. Also a lot of people have bought bikes. They have to learn who has the right of way, and what the signals mean. People here had no earlier experience of these things. Neither did we. We had one or two instructors from the interior, but still we have to learn how best to direct traffic according to conditions right here. How do we solve problems? Mainly by mass work. We hold meetings with drivers and with the townsfolk. We fight speeding and overloading. We inspect cars — brake pressure, electrical systems and so on — every half year. That's one of my jobs. I've learned to drive and make the safety checks."

"How do the people regard you police?"

"That's the main test for every one of us," said Tsering Phuntso. "The answer shows whether we're serving the people. Let me tell you

about Losang Chujen, a 70-year-old woman with no family. She was a nun once, then a servant. One day she suddenly fell ill and we took her to hospital. Her room, I noticed, was damp. So I asked for her key and sunned her bedding while she was away. After she returned I visited her in my spare time to help her clean and cook. 'You're a good cadre of Chairman Mao,' she told me. 'You're like a son to me.' I bought her Chairman Mao's picture and one day, when I came in, I found her praying to it. That's like superstition, of course. We don't advocate it. But for this old woman, it was her way of showing her feeling for the new life. What it taught me is that we must live up to what the people hope and expect. On holidays now the old lady invites me with her other friends. I come early, to help her prepare beforehand. Last time I washed her window curtains."

"We are always reminded," he went on, "that our work is two-fold. First, each has his assigned task, his specialty. Second, we're all part of the people so we must help them in every hardship. In the summer, when the river rises, we roll up our trousers and work with them to prevent flooding. If a drain is blocked, we clear it ourselves, we don't leave the dirty jobs to others. In winter, we break the ice around the wells so people drawing water from them don't slip and fall."

"Do people compare you with the former police?"

"Oh yes, often. Just the other day an old man said to me, 'Look how different you are. When I used to pass an old *polis*, if he didn't hit me he'd kick my donkey. When nobles came along, he'd roar at us, *Banga! Padju!* Beggars! Out of the way!'"

"And now the kind of people who once had to beg *are* the police?"

"That's right," said Tsering Phuntsso.

"Tell me about the rest of your family," I asked.

"In 1956 when I was sent to school, my mother and sisters had no animals.<sup>1</sup> In the 1959 reform, they got a cow, two oxen and ten sheep. Before that they had no home of their own. Now they live in the two-storey house that belonged to the headman — he became a rebel so his property went to the people. They have furni-

ture, bedding, a butter churn and a copper water cauldron. And of course they got their share of land. My elder sister is in the township people's government, doing women's work. My uncle, once the headman's slave, heads the people's security committee in our village."

"And what about your old master?"

"He's still there. Nothing was taken away from him. Since he didn't rebel, by our policy he is an objective for the united front — someone to try to change and to persuade to join with the people. But I myself, when I went home, didn't look him up, just ran into him by chance, 'You've become a new man,' he said, embarrassed. Well, I thought I can't say the same for you, not yet.

"I spent my time with my own people, the former poor. That's where I was happy.

"Especially, it was a joy to be with my mother. She looked better and younger than when I left. She didn't even recognize me at first, after all those years away. Then she wept and so did I. Then she laughed, and I did too. I stayed a month and worked with the mutual-aid team in the fields. I also explained to them the Party's policy on mutual aid in agriculture, as far as I myself understood it; that was the big thing in the countryside then.

"In Lhasa I married, and we have a child. My wife's name is Chunda. Her people were originally beggars. But today she's better educated than I — she had a year at the Nationalities' Institute in Beijing. She's a cadre in a production department, a Communist Youth League member."

"I myself joined the League in 1960," Tsering Phuntso said. "In 1963 I was accepted into the Party. But I still have Youth League duties. Now we are discussing Chairman Mao's *In Memory of Norman Bethune*. What do we say about him? He was a Canadian. He gave all his strength, and finally his life, to help China's revolution. This is our own land. How can we read of him and not be ashamed if we don't do our best for the people here, and think of those in other lands?"

I seemed to see Bethune, whom I had met long years ago when he first came to China, standing vigour-filled beside us in that sunlit

room. How pleased he would have been to know that his tireless efforts, without thought of self or fame, was helping inspire a similar spirit among former serfs and slaves, made masters by revolution, in far-off Tibet.

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To my regret, I did not see Tsering Phuntso again when I returned in 1976. I learned that he was no longer in the city or in the police. Like Ngawang Gyatso and so many others of Tibet's energetic and devoted young functionaries, he had been shifted to agriculture as a Party cadre in a rural county.



**ARMS FREE THE PEOPLE;  
THE PEOPLE TAKE UP ARMS**

CHAPTER 14

THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION  
ARMY IN TIBET

1951-65

Lenin, a year or so after the October Revolution in Russia, discussed the character and impact of a proletarian army unforgettably and simply. He recalled a train trip on which he encountered an old woman talking animatedly to other passengers:

She was comparing the revolutionary soldiers to the old soldiers and saying that the former protected the poor whereas the latter used to protect the interests of the bourgeoisie and the landowners. Formely the poor man had to pay heavily for every stick of wood he took without permission, the old woman said. "But when you meet a soldier in the woods nowadays, he'll even give you a hand with your bundle of sticks. You don't have to fear the man with the gun any more," she said.

I think it would be hard to imagine any better tribute to the Red Army than that.<sup>1</sup>

Reading this passage about the new kind of "man with a gun," I was reminded of Hua Chenghe.

I had met this slightly built, quiet PLA rank-and-filer in 1955, in Zhamo in the great forests of Bomi (in eastern Tibet). He was

the son of a tenant-peasant family in central China, thousands of miles away, and had herded cattle for landlords since he was ten. During the War of Liberation he was conscripted into the Kuomintang army, but ran away with some fellow-villagers to the people's forces.

"Before we were re-enlisted," he told me, "we had a study course. The subject was, 'Why are we poor?' The men talked out of their own experience of being oppressed, as peasants and later as soldiers under the KMT. Many, as they spoke, broke into sobs of sorrow and anger. Soon we understood that rule by Chiang Kai-shek and imperialism was at the root of the working people's poverty and humiliations and that the cause had to be dug up to get rid of the effect. After that we became good fighters. We were afraid of nothing except a return to the old slavery."

In 1950, volunteers were called for to liberate the two parts of China still controlled by imperialism and reaction, Taiwan and Tibet. Hua Chenghe responded and was assigned to the Tibetan campaign. "We each carried all our gear, more than 40 kilogrammes, on our backs in the rarefied air. By foot we crossed eighteen great ranges, sometimes at a height of over 5,000 metres. Two things kept us going. One was remembering what we ourselves and our own parents and ancestors had suffered. The other was seeing how the Tibetan people still suffered. We didn't quarter ourselves on the Tibetans. Even when it was 30° C below zero we lived in our tents.

"Every item and service bought from the people was paid for. But some aristocrats tried a boycott. They threatened to punish the serfs who sold us things, or did anything for us. Also, they told lies about us, which many at first believed. We made allowances for this. These people had seen nothing but oppressors. They had to convince themselves that we were different through new experience. So we let our actions speak, carrying water for them and helping repair houses which were falling apart. As a result they began to invite us to stay in their homes, and it was only then we did so, paying rent even when they didn't want to accept it. We were drilled never to transgress their customs and feelings. We never fished in the streams even when hungry. We never entered a temple. We passed shrines only on the right as the Lamaist code of respect requires. If any

soldier was lax in these things we criticized him, and our unit leader would go to the Tibetans and apologize.

"In 1953-54 we were building the Sichuan-Tibet Highway. It was harder than a military campaign. What gave us energy was that we understood that we were laying a road that would protect the country, and link its peoples. How could a better life come to Tibet on the backs of pack-ponies or yaks?

"Of course the road couldn't be built without the people's help. I began to learn the language and became leader of a team of 40 Tibetan workers. Some had worn-out boots. I treated bits of yak-hide and made them new soles — I'd learned to do that in the army. We had an hour's lunch break on the job but I ate in 20 minutes, and spent the rest of the time cobbling. All our soldiers helped in such ways, doing whatever was needed."

"Everything had to go through the aristocrats in those days," Hua told me. "The clan headmen came out on the road and though they never touched pick or shovel we had to pay them, not for their work but by their rank. Some of them had conscripted serfs for the road as *ula*, and wanted to pocket their wages. But to this we said, 'No.' We put each man's wage into his own hands. The more timid serfs, of course, surrendered their money to the nobles, and we couldn't interfere. But many didn't. They went to our army co-op stores, and made purchases there.

"Some Tibetans were scared of us at first. No wonder. There was a long history of estrangement between the nationalities and we were not only Hans but soldiers — they'd seen the old reactionary Han troops and the Tibetan feudal army, both of which were brutal to the poor. At first their answer to whatever we said, even if they didn't understand it, was 'Yes, yes, it will be done.' Gradually we made it clear that we didn't want unquestioning obedience. If they didn't like anything, or thought it could be done better, they should speak up. When they began to, they helped us a lot more because they knew the place and we didn't.

"After the first strangeness disappeared, we all used to sit down after work to talk. It didn't take long for their bitter suffering to come out. Yeshe, a serf, told how he had been cruelly flogged, but

that we shouldn't repeat this, because the headman who'd beaten him was right there on the site. One day, a Tibetan road-worker burst out, 'Tell us how to get rid of oppression? We'll do it!' What could I answer? We were strictly observing the 17-article Agreement. All I could do was to say, 'I was just like you. Let me tell you my own story.' When I did they understood.

"One old Tibetan worker, Tashi Tsering, we all called *A-ba* (Daddy) because of his age. He liked that but said, 'You treat me better than my own sons!' When he collected his earnings, over a hundred *yuan*, more money than he'd ever seen in a lifetime of hard work, he wanted to buy us gifts. Other workers did too, but we refused. Instead when the job was finished, we had a farewell party to which they brought Tibetan sweets and cakes, and we brought the kind we Hans make. We sang songs for each other, and the old man came out with one he'd made up:

*In the sky are many stars,  
The Big Dipper is brightest;  
In my village there are many people,  
My own parents are dearest;  
In the world there are many men,  
The PLA are the best.*

He asked that we send it to Chairman Mao and we did."

All Tashi Tsering's family were working on the job, his wife and two sons as well as himself. When they left, Hua Chenghe said, they needed a yak to carry back the clothes they had bought in the army commissary, where things were sold without profit or any mark-up for the long, hard transport from the interior. When the Tibetans first came, they talked about "building the road for the army", but later they said, "The army is building the road for us". When Hua Chenghe mentioned this, he was so moved his voice trembled.

\* \* \*

Many other accounts of the PLA's spirit in tackling unprecedented difficulties, and of its "propaganda by example" and its effect on the people came to my ears in 1955.

Leaders of the highway construction described how some technicians had wanted to delay the project, saying "We still haven't enough data, equipment or materials. So how can we build such long roads at such high altitudes, something no one else in the world had yet done." But the Party Central Committee put the question on a political basis, "Before the highway is built we cannot say that the Tibetan people are liberated." This became the core of the soldier-builders' resolve.

The 2,271 kilometres from Sichuan Province to Lhasa and 2,100 km. from Qinghai Province to Lhasa<sup>2</sup> were built mainly with pickaxe and shovel, hammer and chisel, mostly at altitudes at which it was hard to breathe, and in the face of persistent sabotage by serfowners. Nonetheless the job was done. In the course of it Tibet's serfs and slaves gained their first knowledge of revolution and revolutionary troops, though the time when these seeds of knowledge would sprout in their hearts as their own motive for action still lay ahead. The process was to be long and through stages — the first acquaintance, the overcoming of bad memories and new slanders, then gratitude, then comparison with their own lives, then partial struggles and finally the class awakening.

The closer the highway came to Lhasa, the greater the obstruction the serfowners put up, I was told. It came from fear of loss of their political sway and of their economic exactions. On the Gongbo'gyamda stretch, they feared loss of their revenues from yak transport. So they tried to block construction by stopping food deliveries for Tibetan workers on the site. The PLA fighters countered by saving food from their own rations for the Tibetans, gathering wild fruit from the mountains, teaching the Tibetans the best use of the pick and shovel, enabling them to do more and get more wages, and selling them food at low prices. The Tibetan workers quickly understood who was their friend, and who not.

Labour, at that time, had to be recruited through the Tibetan feudal headmen. These insisted on collecting the men's wages and giving them only scraps of food. The army, as Hua Chenghe described, finally succeeded in introducing piece-work wages, paid to the workers direct — for which they could buy food and other things

directly from the commissary. After this, when the serfs had done their stint and returned to the estates, they boiled with resentment against turning over their earnings. "The lord didn't feed me, so why should I give him the money," they said. Some bought boots or clothing, wore them for a few days, and then bought another pair or two which they treated in the same way. When their masters asked, "Where's the money?" they pointed to these articles saying, "Here it is." Of course the serfowners would not wear anything "soiled" by inferiors. The idea of wages for work, to be kept by the worker, took root for the first time in the Tibetan people's minds.

Holidays were paid even though no work was done — another unheard of marvel for Tibet. Pregnant women helping with the road got a month's maternity leave with pay. If a Tibetan road-builder fell ill, soldiers carried him to the clinic on their shoulders for free treatment.

When a flash flood hit the route, 80 Tibetans were stranded in mortal danger. The PLA men chopped down trees and, standing almost neck-high in the turbulent water, supported the tree-trunks on their shoulders, making a bridge for the Tibetans to cross to safety. In their turn not a few Tibetans risked their lives to help PLA men in difficulties or peril.

In 1951-53 alone, army medics along the highway gave hundreds of thousands of free treatments to Tibetans, both road-builders and local inhabitants.

In 1954, millions of tons of glacier ice fell into a mountain lake feeding the Nyangqu River, and a wall of water, five metres high in some places, devastated all Gyangzê, parts of Xigazê and over a hundred villages. PLA units saved large numbers of victims and gave them emergency food, clothing and 20,000 metres of tenting canvas. Subsequently, with relief food, seed grain, materials and funds sent by the central authorities, the army helped the people set up their homes again, plant new crops and resume handicraft production, and also to earn money on special work-relief projects. In old Tibet, such a disaster might have led to the disappearance of Gyangzê, its third biggest town.

But when I saw Gyangzê a year later, in 1955, four-fifths of

the destroyed houses had been rebuilt. And the then brand-new Gyangzê-Xigazê Highway, together with a new irrigation system, testified to the fruitfulness of the rehabilitation effort, despite the fact that aristocrats and high lamas had tried hard to make the restoration benefit them alone, and even increased the people's burdens in rent and services to recoup their own losses. "It was hard to organize food, shelter and work," a political officer told us. "But that wasn't the essence. The real victory was to dispel shock and apathy, to awaken and maintain hope."

For acts such as these, slaves and serfs who came into contact with PLA men first dubbed them "the new Hans", to distinguish them from the "old Hans" of the days of national oppression. Then they began to call them *lha-ma gundro*, "gods of selflessness" or even "Buddha's army", to distinguish them from all other armies that they had known, although they knew these fighters were not believers. It became impossible for the reactionaries to isolate or expel the PLA by slander. And from the ranks of ordinary people awakened by observing the army and working with it came many of Tibet's first post-liberation cadres, as readers will see from this book.

There was, moreover, a reflex effect on the army. Working with the people, seeing both their poverty and their spirit its fighters overcame more thoroughly the remnants of the past in their own minds, such as lingering feelings of Han superiority or paternalistic attitudes of "doing favours to the poor and backward". Class education given them by the Party was concretized into class love and respect for the Tibetan oppressed.

These two converging processes of knowledge laid the groundwork for the isolation of the Tibetan reactionaries, for the suppression of their rebellion when it came, and for the subsequent democratic reform.

They were aspects of a complex class struggle. In the first instance, it involved dealings with the Tibetan serfowning class in its status of continuing local power. But from first to last its objective was to awaken the mass of the Tibetan people, so they could play the decisive role in the advance of their own nationality in solidarity with their class brothers of China's other nationalities.

In those years, the 17-article "Agreement of the Central People's Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet",<sup>3</sup> signed with the upper strata on May 23, 1951 played a positive part. The Agreement established the integrity of China's territory, paralyzed imperialist-backed separatist plotting, and, by taking this first essential step, made it possible to move gradually toward further transformation. Under it, the Tibetan rulers undertook, among other obligations, to "assist the People's Liberation Army in the purchase of food, fodder and other daily necessities". Having promised these things, they had to refrain from open opposition and in fact could not avoid issuing corresponding proclamations and orders in the name of the Dalai Lama to the local aristocrats, even though they connived at the latter's sabotage.

Article 4 of the Agreement read, "The central authorities will not alter the existing political system in Tibet." And article 13 provided: "The People's Liberation Army entering Tibet shall abide by all the above-mentioned policies and shall also be fair in all buying and selling and shall not arbitrarily take a needle or thread from the people."

Hence, while as a political army the PLA has the propagation of revolutionary ideas among its duties at all times, it initially made no direct propaganda against the system then dominating Tibet, speaking only of the unity of all China's regions against imperialism, and of the great changes taking place in other areas and provinces. Its influence in Tibet was exerted by its conduct.

Not only did the army take nothing from the Tibetans without pay, it went to the great lengths to avoid inconveniencing them in any way, and shouldered any burden this might involve. Even when hungry, the troops respected local prejudice against fishing and hunting. If buying would disturb markets or create shortages, they did not buy — often subsisting on wild vegetables, and on field rats for meat. After its entry, the army observed the rule that it would raise half its own grain on previously uncultivated land and bring in the rest from other provinces, so as not to take food available from the people. The state farms it established (described elsewhere in this book) gradually began to contribute to the people's supply as

well, and to making Tibet's own agriculture more productive.

As to what would happen further, the key was in the people and what was going on in their minds. Article 11 of the Agreement said that while in the matter of reforms in Tibet, there would be "no compulsion on the part of the central authorities", the local government was obligated to "carry out reforms on its own account, and when the people raise demands for reform, they shall be settled by means of consultation with the leading personalities in Tibet".

Ultimately the work-style of the army, which exercised no compulsion for reform, proved to be a factor that led the people to demand reform. The serfowners who would not consult when they could no longer dictate, but instead rose in rebellion, tried to kill the people's hope by armed compulsion. It was they who destroyed the Agreement by taking arms against the PLA. Then, and only then, did the PLA act as the people's own force of compulsion, remove the obstacles to reform and help to carry it out.

To do so the army, enriched by eight years of experience and many ties with the local people, organized 5,000 of its officers and men (formed into 50-man teams or individually lent to civilian units) for local work on five tasks.

1. To rally the working people;
2. Struggle for the democratic reform;
3. Set up the people's state power;
4. Build the Party and the Youth League and recruit for them (the serfowners had made this all but impossible in pre-rebellion Tibet); and
5. Train Tibetan cadres on a large scale.

Thus it at last unfolded in Tibet its full function as taught by Mao Zedong decades earlier in 1929:

The Red Army should certainly not confine itself to fighting; besides fighting to destroy the enemy's military strength, it should shoulder such important tasks as doing propaganda among the masses, organizing the masses, arming them, helping them to establish revolutionary political power and setting up Party organizations.<sup>4</sup>

All this was done under the overall leadership of the Working Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in Tibet, in co-ordination with its civilian personnel and with county Party organizations as they gradually grew.

\* \* \*

The PLA in Tibet in 1965, as before and after, maintained a mass work department in its headquarters and mass work groups in each company. Led by the Party and co-ordinating with the local government bodies and people's organizations, we were told, it was carrying forward, shoulder to shoulder with the people, the class struggle, struggle for production and scientific experimentation in the conditions of Tibet.

And here again, army political workers stressed to us, the significance was dual. It was not just one-way help given to Tibet's ex-slaves and serfs. Learning from the strong emotion and determined drive of these recently-oppressed Tibetan masses, the troops heightened their own class consciousness and practical effectiveness and welded themselves ever more closely with Tibet's working people.

Besides positive mass work, the army guarded against any act, by any of its members, which could hurt unity. If misunderstandings or incidents occurred, they were gone over earnestly, often three or four times, until a satisfactory solution could be found, and made into material for political education. This applied for example to any thoughtlessness toward national or religious feelings, even though piety by 1965 was already less universal. It applied, too, to any accident involving army vehicles and the people or their livestock. In such cases, the army-drivers responsible were punished, compensation was paid, and personal apologies were made by the comrades of the unit involved. If anyone was injured, army men went to the hospital with food and flowers. "The people know how different our troops are from any in the past," the director said. "They draw a comparison and say, 'You've paid the loss, don't punish the soldier. We are certain no PLA man could mean to hurt us.' Out of their class feeling, they are ready to forgive errors and shortcomings. But we, the army, take these very seriously."

1976

Tibet in 1976 was in a great many ways a changed place, but the spirit of the People's Liberation Army there had not changed. From a senior political officer of the military area command we got a rundown of its role and activities during the intervening years.

He gave it under five headings:

- How the army has carried out the threefold mission of the PLA: as a force for battle, for political work, and for economic construction and production;
- How the Tibetan people have helped the PLA;
- The recruitment and role of Tibetan soldiers;
- Building the People's Militia;
- Political and theoretical study.

And he filled them out, one by one, with the details given below:

### *The Army as a Fighting, Political and Labouring Force*

The military task is the defence of China's southwest frontier and overall preparation against war. In this respect the army functions as part of the entire national defence system.

The political task is a pivotal one and consists of mass work. Cadres and fighters are going in teams to the farming, agricultural, pastoral and border area to propagate Marxism, Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought and the Party's policies in various fields. They do so while joining in local tasks of revolution and construction. In these matters, they looked for leadership from the local Party committees.

The army's input into the building of Tibet's agriculture is very important. Its dimensions can be gauged from these figures for 1970-75:

|                             |                      |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Man-days worked             | 900,000 <sup>5</sup> |
| Dazhai-type fields built up | 6,200                |
| Irrigation canals dug       | 400 kilometres       |
| Manure moved to fields      | 16 million cartloads |
| Crops harvested on          | 6,330 hectares       |

Army medical units of the PLA continued their traditional free service to Tibetan civilians. In the same six years, they gave over 5.5 million examinations and treatments, and trained some 750 "barefoot" doctors from among the peasants and herdsmen. In the first half of 1976 alone, 53 touring medical teams went out for a total of 2,390 man-days,<sup>6</sup> in addition to the work of the army's hospitals and clinics.

In remote border areas, where inhabitants are few, the army was turning its hand to practically everything, from land reclamation to primary education. In some schools, qualified Tibetan PLA men were instructing the children in ordinary subjects, and Han soldiers taught that language.

Unchanged was the army's prompt, massive response to natural disasters. To fight a local drought in 1975, its soldiers worked 20,000 man-days, drove trucks on hundreds of trips and installed 65 pump-stations. In a flood in Gyaca County, they moved 580 tons of commune grain out of the path of the torrents, moved in relief supplies, and rebuilt the dam and canal that had been damaged.

When the lives of people and cattle were in peril it was often army men who saved them. Known everywhere in Tibet, and in some cases throughout China, were Phurbu Tashi, Pema, Lozang Dantzen and other Tibetan PLA heroes who risked or lost their own lives so that others might live.

The army continued to be taught not only to act as a model for the people but also to learn from them. This principle, laid down for it long ago by Mao Zedong, flowed from the character of the PLA. "Learn from the Tibetan people" was the Party's constant injunction to every PLA soldier and officer. Over the years, the methods of such learning had been developed into a system.

First, the army placed itself under supervision by the people. The local inhabitants and civilian cadres were regularly asked to comment on and criticize the army's work and behaviour.

Secondly, in line with the army's current tasks, and studies at different times, ex-serfs and slaves who had suffered most bitterly in the old society, or had become foremost in building the new, were invited to talk to the troops. For instance, a border unit heard of an old woman named Tsering who had been savagely oppressed under

the old order, and persisted in fighting for socialism even after reactionaries had murdered her daughter in revenge. The soldiers went 40 kilometres to ask her to their camp, to help them understand that class struggle was still there and be as firm as she was. The headquarters command in Lhasa invited another type of speaker — Zhang Zhenghong, a girl student from Nanjing who in defiance of ideas of ease and privilege, and her father's Han chauvinism, had left a comfortable home to become a commune member in the Tibetan countryside.

Thirdly, groups of soldiers and command personnel went out to labour alongside former ex-serfs and slaves, now commune members, in the rural movement to learn from Dazhai. In Loka Prefecture, 150 worked in Nyama Commune. Another group marched to Qonggyai County, to help build new fields and irrigation facilities. Virtually every army unit made such links with nearby communes.

Fourthly, units on route marches used stopovers to conduct social surveys, talking with the local people about their past and present. On their return to base, they would analyze and circulate the material to enliven and enrich the political studies of their units.

“In general,” said the political officer, “all of us, regardless of rank, have much to learn from the Tibetan working people. We can learn from their hatred of the oppressive past and the strength of their feeling for the Party, Chairman Mao and our army. Also their fearlessness of hardship, simplicity of life and tirelessness in labour are a constant example to us. The longer we stay here the more we respect them.”

### *How the People Help the PLA*

The working people of Tibet, having long compared the PLA with the armies they knew in the past and seen its actions in many instances, were aware that it was a new kind of armed force, sharing their class feelings and devoted to their interests. Hence any call to help the army met with ready response, and often they themselves took the initiative.

Many communes, teams, pastures, families and even individuals

constituted themselves "volunteer supporters of the army", offering to wash and mend for the troops wherever they appeared, which in turn educated and heartened the soldiers. In Yadong County, an old woman named Yangdzom appointed herself maintenance worker on an access road to a border post, keeping it always smooth and swept. When the local command thanked her, she said, "Our new life is safe today because the people's army guards the border. So naturally I do what I can."

Near another border checkpoint, in the Qamdo region, lived people of the Deng nationality whom the old Tibetan ruling class had called savages and had not allowed to settle outside the forests. After the PLA came, they were given land and houses. One summer, when soldiers of the post went off on protracted manoeuvres, the Dengs sent their best rice-growers to look after a plot the troops had planted. When the latter returned they found that their crops, instead of being lost, had been harvested, threshed and stored in an army barn by the Dengs.

High in the Himalayas a stream on which still another border squad depended for water went dry. A commune lower down broke the ice of a frozen lake to draw water and carry it up the mountain. It also sent 200 workers, led by its chairman, to solve the whole problem by building a storage pond to secure supply in the future.

In the patrolling of the borders, the people's militia worked jointly with the troops. Herders gladly put up these joint patrols in their yak-hair tents and organized pack transport for them.

### *The Recruitment of Tibetans into the Army and Their Role in It*

From 1970 to 1975, the number of Tibetans recruited annually into the PLA<sup>7</sup> was several hundred. In 1976, it exceeded a thousand. Virtually all young people from ex-serf and slave households wanted to serve, and their families were eager that they should. But the shortage of labour power in Tibet's economy — particularly in agriculture — had been such that few able-bodied young people could be spared. Now, with the beginning of farm mechanization, and the maturing of a new and healthy generation (youngsters born in 1959, at

the beginning of the democratic reform, were turning 18) there was somewhat more leeway, though it was still limited.

In 1976, virtually every company serving in the region had Tibetan soldiers, from as few as three or four to seven or eight or more, the proportion being highest in border guard units. Among the Tibetan troops, 38 per cent were members of the Communist Party, and 32 per cent of the Communist Youth League. Many had become key men in their units.

“The PLA’s Tibetan soldiers,” the political officer said, “are most directly linked with the masses. They help greatly to strengthen the unity between the army and people, and between the nationalities.”

Young people who had served in the PLA were an important source of Tibetan cadres — military cadres from among those remaining in the army, and civilian ones from among those demobilized. Many of the latter had become Party secretaries or held other leading posts in communes, production teams or factories and shops.

Actually, the first Tibetan armymen to develop into military cadres (officers) entered the ranks in the Tibetan areas of Sichuan and other provinces during the Long March. In 1950-51, in the same areas the process was repeated. In Tibet itself it really commenced in 1959, at the time of the suppression of the serfowner revolt and the democratic reform.

Some of the 1950-51 contingent had risen to divisional rank by 1976, and of the 1959 group, regimental rank. In fact, a complement of Tibetan-nationality officers at many levels had been built up in the PLA even before it began to recruit ordinary soldiers in the Autonomous Region. This was the application, in the military field, of Chairman Mao’s teaching:

Without a large number of Communist cadres of minority nationalities, it would be impossible to solve the national problem thoroughly and to isolate the minority-nationality reactionaries completely.

About 800 Tibetan officers were on active duty in the region. Two were serving at army level, and one or two in the headquarters

of each division. Two Tibetans were among the five officers sent by the regional command to study in the Political Department of the PLA College in Beijing, China's highest educational institution of its kind. In the regiments and below, Tibetan officers were numerous. Many, like Big Tashi,<sup>8</sup> had been detached to militia work in the people's armed forces departments of the counties. Of whatever rank, the vast majority were of serf or slave background or origin.

Great attention continued to be paid to unity between the Han and Tibetan cadres, and to full participation by the latter in army studies and activities. This involved, among other things, overcoming the language barrier — from both sides. Since the army was that of the whole country, Tibetan cadres (and soldiers) were helped to learn Han. For those who had not done so, interpreters were provided, and study texts translated as far as possible into Tibetan. Simultaneously, Han personnel in the region were urged to learn Tibetan, at least the spoken tongue. That their diligence and eagerness lagged behind that of the Tibetans in learning Han, said the political officer, was a shortcoming to be remedied.

“Our Tibetan fellow soldiers,” he concluded, “have proved a pillar of strength and acted as a bridge to the Tibetan masses. They have shown in practice their loyalty, determination, courage and diligence. This has been true in all branches of our work.”

### *The People's Militia*

The people's militia in Tibet, as elsewhere in China, is an essential part of the revolutionary armed forces. The PLA was devoting much attention to building it on the principle, laid down long ago by Mao Zedong, of turning the whole nation into potential fighters by combining field armies, local armed forces and militia, and integrating armed people with those not bearing arms.

Its beginnings went back to the “armed work teams” formed to put down the 1959 rebellion, guard the crops and animals acquired by the Tibetan working people in the democratic reform, and help the army in border defence.

On this basis a broader militia, composed mainly of Tibetans, was set up to fight against attempts at restoration of the old order

and aggression from abroad. Some 50,000 of them took part, mainly in support and transport duties, in repelling India's encroachments in 1962. In the border belt they continued on constant patrol, and were ready to fight, alongside the army, whenever required.

In society at large, co-operating with regular security personnel, they safeguarded revolutionary order.

On the production front, the militia were shock-workers in the communes and state farms. They were pacesetters in building new fields and irrigation projects, in scientific farming and in defying and disproving superstitions that once stood in the way.

Throughout the rural areas militia anti-aircraft units responded to hail warnings as they would to enemy attacks, shooting at the clouds with chemical shells and thus combining service to production with training in fast response and accurate gunnery.

Local Party committees took the building of the militia as one of their main tasks. The PLA sent personnel to help the people's armed work departments of the counties.

### *Marxist Theoretical Study*

Troops in Tibet, we were told, had put great energy into studying the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao Zedong. They read mainly from the texts themselves, rather than paraphrased or explanatory material. And they tried to apply the theory they learned to current tasks.

Commanders were expected to set a personal example in this. Personal familiarization with the classics was the main emphasis. Tutoring and discussion were auxiliary. Unit study organizers coordinated the two.

Concentrated study classes were also held, with special leave given, generally for two months. In 1970-76, over 2,000 cadres of regimental level and above had attended, in eleven relays. Each session aimed at mastering one or two of the six basic Marxist works recommended nationwide for intensive study,<sup>9</sup> laying a groundwork for better understanding of the others. Shorter-term classes served company and battalion cadres, with some rank-and-file soldiers par-

icipating. Returning to their units, the students helped others to learn.

“Study amid struggle” was undertaken with special reference to current domestic matters and problems of one’s own world outlook.

Texts were also selected in relation to the international situation. In 1976, the concentration was on understanding from current events the danger of war so long as imperialism exists, and the especially aggressive nature of the new social-imperialism.

During field training, the focus was on Mao Zedong’s military works and his strategic and tactical ideas.

Altogether, from 1970 to 1976, army studies in Tibet covered over twenty basic Marxist works.<sup>10</sup>

In the ten years from 1966 to 1976, over a thousand voluntary theoretical groups, outside the regular political studies, were set up in the army in Tibet. Eighty-five per cent of the members were private soldiers, and the rest platoon and company cadres.

\* \* \*

## WORK DONE FOR THE PEOPLE BY UNITS OF THE PLA IN TIBET IN 1973-77

### *LABOUR AND ITEMS SUPPLIED*

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Labour in production and construction (man days) . . . . .           | 1,264,471 |
| Fields ploughed and/or harvested (hectares) . . . . .                | 4,750     |
| Dazhai-type fields built or improved (hectares) . . . . .            | 1,220     |
| Manure collected and transported (tons) . . . . .                    | 598,000   |
| Trees planted . . . . .  | 310,487   |
| Army transport service to farming (truck trips) . . . . .            | 3,362     |
| Farm machinery left to communes (units) . . . . .                    | 2,164     |
| Farm machines repaired for communes (units) . . . . .                | 6,305     |
| Irrigation canals/channels dug with army help (kilometres) . . . . . | 516       |
| Cattle-sheds and sheepfolds built (units) . . . . .                  | 300       |
| Earth moved in construction (cubic metres) . . . . .                 | 77,547    |
| Petrol supplied to communes (litres) . . . . .                       | 27,070    |
| Dynamite, for construction jobs (kilogrammes) . . . . .              | 6,909     |
| Detonators (units) . . . . .   | 4,068     |
| Fuses (metres) . . . . .   | 1,660     |
| Chemical fertilizers (tons) . . . . .                                | 15        |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Cement (tons) . . . . .                        | 12 |
| Stud-boards for pig breeding (units) . . . . . | 46 |

*PERSONNEL ENGAGED*

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| PLA personnel sent to fight disasters . . . . .           | 2,993 |
| PLA personnel sent to political work teams . . . . .      | 1,104 |
| Medical personnel sent to serve population . . . . .      | 4,848 |
| Commune agro-technicians trained with army help . . . . . | 6,217 |
| "Barefoot doctors" trained with PLA help . . . . .        | 1,065 |
| Veterinarians trained, do . . . . .                       | 85    |

*SERVICES TO CIVILIANS*

|                                   |         |
|-----------------------------------|---------|
| Free medical treatments . . . . . | 954,341 |
| Free haircuts . . . . .           | 86,345  |

## CHAPTER 15

# THE OLD TIBETAN ARMY

Let us now look back by contrast to the old army of feudal-theocratic Tibet. Like all other institutions there, it was paid for by the exploited people and designed to keep them down.

The *kashag* local government set aside special estates, the *ma-kan*, to maintain this army. Eighty per cent of the fruits of their serfs' toil went to supply it each year with:<sup>1</sup>

|           |                       |
|-----------|-----------------------|
| 1,000,000 | <i>yuan</i> in silver |
| 1,500,000 | kg. of barley         |
| 81,000    | kg. of butter         |
| 13,000    | kg. of tea            |

These same serfs did most of the army's corvée labour and became its soldiers. One man was pressed into the ranks for every 40 or so hectares of the *ma-kan's* cultivated land.

The command system was a mirror of the social order. The army's top posts, like those in all Tibetan administration, were held not by individuals but by pairs, a monk and a layman. Both had to be of aristocratic birth. The heads of the five regiments, or *depons*, also had to be nobles. They were not professional soldiers but appointed from the established list of officials, who could be shuffled between civil and military posts. A regimental *depon*, for example, was often a former *dzongpon*, or county chief. Below him were the heads

of battalions, companies, platoons and squads. These were part of the standing force. Usually commoners, they were not allowed to rise to the ranks reserved for nobles.

Naturally such a force, while well adapted for keeping the people down, was too small and ill-based to be effective against British incursions from across the Indian border. Much earlier, in 1888 and subsequently against the Younghusband invasion of 1903-04, Tibetan local troops and levies had, indeed, resisted imperialism with outstanding heroic valour. Gyangzê Fort, where they fought heroically in the face of great odds, is now a national monument — in recognition of their service not only to the Tibetan people but to the integrity of China as a whole. Their final lack of success was due to no lack of spirit, but to their being outgunned and to the failure of the effete Qing dynasty court in Beijing to give them support. In the subsequent decade, however, the old Tibetan army was perverted from all defence purposes and re-shaped into a guarantor and tool of foreign penetration, not an obstacle to it.

More than fifty years ago, in 1924, an American author, Grover Clark, remarked that an agent of the British in India was the head, among other things, of Lhasa's military establishment:

This man not only is head of the police, but he is commander of the Tibetan forces and the dominant figure in the telegraph and postal services. His influence with the Dalai personally is also very great. . . . He was formerly in the police service in Darjeeling. He first met the Dalai when he was staying with Sir Charles Bell in India;<sup>2</sup> he visited Tibet with Sir Charles in 1919; he returned to Lhasa in November 1923. . . . Incidentally, Rinchen has recently asked for the despatch of some 600 British troops to Lhasa, nominally to act as bodyguard for the Dalai. It is a fact, for example, that the Tibetan soldiers are armed with British rifles of an old pattern, that within the past couple of years well over 6,000 rifles, a number of machineguns, several pieces of artillery and large supplies of ammunition have gone from India to Tibet, that Tibetans have been trained in the British army in India, that the ordinary maneuver commands of

the Tibetan army are given in English, not Tibetan, that the Tibetan army is fitted out with British-style uniforms.<sup>3</sup>

There could hardly be a more typical picture of an armed force already penetrated by colonialism in an area it intended to swallow.

Tibet's military manpower, moreover, was seen by British officials as potential cannon-fodder for their imperial purposes elsewhere. Bell himself wrote:

It is not impossible that later on it may be found desirable to recruit Tibetan soldiers for the Indian army on somewhat the same lines as Gurkhas are now recruited. A few have already served in the Gurkha regiments, enlisting under Nepalese names. One Tibetan of my acquaintance was employed in the Remount Department in South Africa during the Boer War. A scheme of this kind, confined within narrow limits, might prove advantageous to both India and Tibet. But it is premature to consider it . . . till the Sino-Tibetan dispute is settled. Tibet has but a scattered population and at present requires her spare men as a reserve for the defence of her *eastern frontier*.<sup>4</sup>

It did not embarrass Bell that he was writing of a part of China, recognized as such even by his own government. To him, Tibet was something the British could already dispose of, and its "spare men" were to be used first against the rest of China (that is what lies to the *east*), thus clearing the way for British domination of Tibet itself from India to the *south*, and later for using Tibetans to fight in Britain's colonial wars. Very plain.

A much later book, written retrospectively after the liberation and published in the U.S.A., said of the motley force which the British and their closest Tibetan upper class adherents had put together:

The Tibetan army, with its complete lack of modern equipment and poor leadership, is not taken seriously even by the Tibetans themselves. The monks detest it as an imported hybrid. The nobility distrusts it as a potential menace. And the common people fear it as a public scourge.<sup>5</sup>

It had, in fact, become little more than an imperialist instrument for the partition of China. For decades, Lhasa had used it not for external defence but for forays into neighbouring provinces.

In 1950, after the People's Republic of China was founded, this force attempted to give battle to the advancing PLA in Qamdo, then part of Sikang Province. As was its mission for so long, it was serving the interests both of Tibetan feudalism and of imperialism. Its arms were British, its radio communications were in the hands of British nationals, who did more than tap keys. One of them, Robert Ford, later wrote that he also provided such "advice" as "put some Bren guns in the hills and dynamite the bridges."<sup>6</sup> Writing of the murder by poisoning in Qamdo of Geda Lama, who wanted to avert the fighting and stood up for the unity of all China's peoples, including the Tibetan, Ford boasted, "I think I know who killed him. I hope he will never be found out."<sup>7</sup>

The chief of the British radio operators in Lhasa, Reginald Fox, ended by calling himself "Foreign Minister of Independent Tibet." He imagined himself Minister of War as well. On display at the Exhibition Hall of the Tibetan Revolution is his secret letter to "the Commander-in-Chief, Tibetan Army" dated January 17, 1950, urging "tough resistance" to the PLA to "mobilize world opinion" so that "the Americans will feel that they ought to give immediate and substantial military aid, possibly by air." Clearly voiced in it was his fear of Tibet's common people, in or out of uniform. Against them, Fox called for wholesale terror. "All loyal people to His Holiness," he recommended, "should be withdrawn... at least 20 miles for their security to avoid their defection by (*sic*) the Communists... there are a large number of communist agents and spies among them... they must be *rooted out without further delay, otherwise... they will continue to cause defection among the Tibetan troops.*"

The Qamdo fight, in October 1950, ended in the rout of the old Tibetan army. But the Central People's Government did not outlaw it, or maltreat its officers and men. Even Ford, in his account, wrote that the victorious PLA "made it clear that they had no quarrel with the Tibetan religion. Nor with the Tibetan people, who were treated

correctly. In spite of the tremendous supply problem the Chinese Army did not live off the country. . . . And the soldiers had strict orders to respect both the persons and property of civilians and make friends with them by all possible means." As for captured men of the Tibetan army (which as Ford himself described, had killed all PLA men who had fallen into its hands) the victors "simply had the Tibetan troops lined up and gave them all safe-conduct passes and money and told them to go back to Lhasa with their wives and children."

High commanders were not penalized either. Ngapo Ngawang Jigme, who was in political and military charge and a member of the Dalai's *kashag*, was captured and expected to be shot. Instead, the PLA explained its purposes to him. He saw that its actions suited its words. Years later, he told Anna Louise Strong:

The Qing dynasty<sup>8</sup> had left us with a bad impression. The Kuomintang was worse. At first we were very suspicious of this new government in Peking, because of rumours spread by foreigners and the Kuomintang. There were many agents of the Kuomintang and the imperialists in Tibet in 1950 and we did not know the facts about the policies of the Communists. So I led the resistance to the PLA. It was a short fight. I could not resist them. They took Qamdo. By the end of 1950 I began to learn their policies, that they stand for equality and unity of all the nationalities in the motherland. From then on, my suspicions began to disappear.

In Qamdo the people had suffered long centuries from feudal exploitation and many wars. After the victory of the PLA the people's burden lessened. They set up a committee representing all the local people, the nobles and the commoners, the clerical and the lay. They began to mediate the local tribal wars and feuds. They set up a hospital and a school. . . . I ceased to fear the new government. . . .<sup>9</sup>

From October 1950 until July 1951, the PLA did not advance from the Qamdo area into the areas traditionally under Lhasa's control. Instead, Ngapo received facilities to report the Central

People's Government's proposals to the Dalai Lama, who was then in Yadong near India, ready to flee into that country. The Dalai appointed Ngapo as commissioner to go to Beijing, with other officials sent from Lhasa. There the Agreement on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet was signed on May 23, 1951. Only after Lhasa's ratification did the PLA resume its march. It entered Tibet peacefully and in accord with the Agreement's provisions. There was no fighting within Tibet.

Subsequently, also under the Agreement (Article 15) the Tibetan Military Area Command of the PLA was set up. Ngapo, who remained a member of the *kashag*, was named its Deputy Commander-in-Chief. In 1956 he became Secretary-General of the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region. In 1965 he was elected the first chairman of the Autonomous Region Government, inaugurated in that year. By 1979 he was also vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of the entire People's Republic of China.

What happened to the Tibetan Army in the interim? The Agreement set down in Article 8:

The 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.

This provision the reactionary serfowners of Tibet never honoured. They held tight to their army as a last card to play against progress, which they ultimately did in the 1959 rebellion.

With the same motive, they reneged Article 15 which provided for the setting up of a "military and administrative committee" in Tibet, even though the Central People's Government had pledged to "absorb as many local Tibetan personnel as possible to take part in the work" including "patriotic elements from the local government of Tibet, various districts and leading monasteries." The People's Government did give Tibetans high military appointments in the Area Command. But the committee was never formed.

The reason for the sabotage was a class one. The serfowner regime hung on to the military force serving its exploitative privileges.

Its motive was not "national"; the issue was not one of excluding Tibetan participation in defence matters. What the serfowners really feared was the gradual introduction into posts of military authority of Tibetans of the oppressed classes.

But despite such obstruction, the policies of equality and common progress for the nationalities followed by the people's government and the PLA in the difficult years 1951-59 made their impact on the people. Moreover, they split the upper strata, even within the Tibetan army.

Some aristocrat-officers did not lend themselves unquestioningly to the desperate and externally-backed rebellion of 1959. Sampo Tsewang Rentzen, the commanding general, a *kashag* member at the time, was pulled out of his car by rebels while riding unarmed in the streets beaten over the head and left for dead. (Their intended victim, by some accounts, was Ngapo, who they thought was in the attacked car.) One of the five regimental *depons*, Nyima Mindup Dorje, did not participate in the revolt. In later years, he worked in the Lhasa educational bureau. That even their carefully preserved army did not join wholly was another sign of the real isolation of the diehards, which made it easy to swiftly crush the revolt.

Mao Zedong, showing patience and faith in the people, foresaw from the start that the diehards would so isolate themselves. In a Party directive as early as 1952 (not made public until 1977) he advised against haste in reorganizing the Tibetan troops and establishing the Military and Administrative Commission as the Agreement provided:

For the time being, leave everything as it is, let the situation drag on, and do not take up these questions until our army is able to meet its own needs through production and wins the support of the masses a year or two from now. In the meantime there are two possibilities.

One is that our united front policy toward the upper stratum, a policy of uniting with the many and isolating the few, will take effect and that the Tibetan people will gradually draw closer to us, so the bad elements and the Tibetan troops will not dare to rebel.

The other possibility is that the bad elements, thinking we are weak and can be bullied, may lead the Tibetan troops in rebellion and that our army will counter-attack in self-defence and deal them telling blows.

Either will be favourable for us.

As the top echelon in Tibet sees it, there is no sufficient reason now for implementing the Agreement in its entirety or for reorganizing the Tibetan troops. But things will be different in a few years. By then they will probably find that they have no choice but to carry out the Agreement to the full and to reorganize the Tibetan troops. If the Tibetan troops start one or even several rebellions and are repulsed by our army each time, we will be all the more justified in reorganizing them. . . .<sup>10</sup>

After the rebellion, the 17-article Agreement, which the *kashag* by its own act had torn up, ceased to operate.

By then the task, as most Tibetans had come to see, was no longer one of gradually reforming the feudal local administration and army, but of their revolutionary demolition. An order of the State Council of the People's Republic of China proclaimed on May 28, 1959, over Zhou Enlai's signature: "... as from today the Tibetan local government is dissolved and its functions and powers will be exercised by the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region." A communique issued on the same day stated that military control commissions would be set up and, as one of their tasks, "organize self-defence armed forces of patriotic Tibetans to replace the old Tibetan army of a little more than 3,000 men which was rotten to the core, utterly without fighting capabilities and has turned rebel."

Thus the old Tibetan army ceased to exist. Simultaneously, the people's militia of Tibet was born in the course of fighting the rebellion. And, as time went on, more and more Tibetans came to serve in the PLA itself.

The members of the old army, as individuals, received carefully differentiated treatment. Only hard-core participants in the rebel conspiracy were punished. Those who had merely acted on orders

were let free to go home. Soldiers who were serfs participated in the benefits of the democratic reform. Whoever contributed to the quick defeat of the rebellion was rewarded. In 1965, I found many former Tibetan army men of different ranks farming the land and working in handicraft co-operatives, while some, who were literate, were office personnel or teachers.

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Apart from the Tibetan soldiers who were disarmed, taken prisoner, or deserted, a number fled under the compulsion of rebel officers, or as a result of enticement or fear, across the border to India. There various foreign forces tried for years to weld them into an instrument for the reconquest of their power or influence in Tibet, or possible military use against China. This is attested by Western authors, including British friends of the rebels George Patterson.<sup>11</sup> But, the latter remarked ruefully in 1963, "the Tibetans were becoming more and more susceptible to Chinese propaganda..."<sup>12</sup> That is, they were homesick and beginning to feel they had been misled.

In subsequent years, some went home, not as invaders but as returning citizens. They were fed up with exile and attracted by what they heard of Tibet's new life.

In Loka in 1965, we met one of them, Phuntso Wangdui, a hefty and slow-spoken man of 36. "How did you get to be a soldier?" I asked him. He answered in specific detail. As serfs, his family of ten had always found life hard. In 1959, a bad crop year, the *ula* exactions had made things impossible for them, so he sold himself into the army — as a substitute for a better-off serf who was cultivating *ma-kan* land and therefore subject to military service. He gave the money from his self-sale to his wife, so she could feed their children.

In 1959, Phuntso Wangdui was garrisoning the Potala with the 2nd Regiment, which its officers ordered to rebel. Whatever high-flown words were used in public declarations, he recalled, the way the matter was put to the ranks revealed the aristocrats' contempt for the common soldiers. "The Tibetan government has kept you all

this time," they said. "Now show you haven't been eating their food for nothing!" Soon the remnants of the garrison were put to flight by the PLA. Many deserted on the way, but the officers urged on the rest, "Don't believe the Communists. They'll make all the young men into their soldiers, let the old starve, and ship the small children off to the interior." But the column kept shrinking as it neared the Indian border. Two men in Phuntso Wangdai's presence threw away their equipment and started for home. Intercepted by rearguard officers, they were beaten up and forced to march on unarmed. "When we crossed into India," said Phuntso Wangdai, "I thought, 'I'll never see my loved ones again.'"

They crossed in pelting rain. Many soldiers were near collapse from lack of food. Some were weeping. The officers said, "You're lucky to be abroad. If you had gone back, you'd have been killed." But the men said to one another, "What'll we do in India? We don't know the language or the habits. We have no land or homes there."

In India, said Phuntso Wangdai, the soldiers were told: "People are dying of hunger in Tibet, and you should be glad to be out." Here, interrupting his own narrative, he burst out, "Now I can see that was a lie. In the old society those who tilled the land hadn't enough food and those who wove had no cloth. Now the people have rights. They have land and houses. Before the reform there were only two well-to-do households in my village. Everyone else lacked grain and was overloaded with *ula*. My own family had one donkey, now we have six. We had 10 sheep, today we have 40 — and my wife has four milk cows. Even when I was a rebel abroad, she received her share. And when I came back, I got mine, and a loan to repair our house."

Then Phuntso Wangdai spoke more of his exile. Initially, his unit had gone to Mishmi in Assam. This was tropical jungle. In six weeks there some of the men, fresh from the cold high plateau, sickened and died. After clamouring to be sent to mountain country, the survivors were moved to Gantok in Sikkim, where they worked for two years building roads. No wages were paid them directly. The money went to Tibetan headmen, who passed only three annas a day on to the men. Serfs in Tibet, and portrayed as "freedom

fighters" in the Western press, these soldiers were still serfs abroad. When hurt in accidents, or ill, they received no treatment. "There is no money for doctors," they were told. Of 56 men in Phuntso Wangdui's road-gang, four died in those two years.

What Phuntso Wangdui told us I subsequently saw confirmed by one of the publications of the Tibetan rebels themselves. A newsletter, dated December 1965, bannered as "from the temporary headquarters of H. H. the Dalai Lama" and printed in New Delhi, complained of the conditions of Tibetans engaged in road-contract work in the mountainous regions of north India.

Here both men and women work on the roads, living a shifting, listless life in temporary roadside shelters which are often tents. Because of the heavy snowfalls in winter, roadwork is temporarily stopped for several months; the groups then move down to seek temporary jobs if possible. . . . Tibetans find the plains of India too hot. . . . Tibetans are aliens and are not free to move to any part of India without permission. . . . Like all hill people, Tibetans are very susceptible to infective diseases. . . .

"Later," Phuntso Wangdui continued his narrative, "there was a quick change. We were informed that the young, strong men should go to Siliguri for other work. We didn't stop there, however, but were taken on to Calcutta and then Darjeeling. There to our surprise we were issued uniforms. We had become Indian soldiers! The officers despised us Tibetans. 'You're beggars,' they taunted us. 'Without us, how would you live?' Afterwards we were sent to Agra, and trained with British *semi-automatic weapons*." These last two words Phuntso Wangdui pronounced in English. And he had a few more in his vocabulary. "We were taught *one, two, three, four. . . pull!* — that was when we were up in planes and made to jump with parachutes. The jump-master was an American in civilian clothes. We were scared up there, but that made no difference to him. When it was time, we were just pushed out, all we could do was to shut our eyes, say those words, and tear at the cord. Some men broke their legs in landing."

Finally, Phuntso Wangdui's unit was transferred to Ladakh. It

was near Tibet. They could listen to broadcasts from home. One night Phuntso Wangdui stole out of the camp, walked for 1½ days, dodged the check-points and gave himself up to a PLA border patrol.

Back in Lhasa, he was amazed. "I used to think Lhasa a great city," he told us. "But you could walk around it fairly quickly and it was very dirty. Now it was really big and clean with good roads, electric lights and schools. Before, when I used to go to Lhasa from our village on *ula*, it took several days. This time I got home in a few hours by bus. I saw new embankments along the rivers. We were always paying taxes to have those built before, but somehow they never were. What little was done only brought us more *ula* labour. The big estates got the benefit. Now people were doing it for themselves, and getting wages. I began to see how, in exile, things had been distorted to us."

Back with his family and friends, Phuntso Wangdui was made welcome. "Come over to my place and see how I live now," he invited us.

With little time, we had to decline. But we had heard enough to know that many former Tibetan soldiers abroad would yet return — not in the way planned by those who wanted them for cannon-fodder, but in the way chosen by Phuntso Wangdui.

In 1976, inquiring about Phuntso Wangdui, we heard he was considered a good worker in his commune.

\* \* \*

1976

In the years since my talk with Phuntso Wangdui, much has been revealed that confirms his story of the blind-alley nature of the attempt to preserve a reactionary Tibetan armed force, the cynical use made of it, and the tragedy it meant for the ordinary Tibetans hoodwinked into participating.

Concerning the Tibetan rebels in the Indian army, an informative report by the British journalist Chris Mullin was published in the

Hong Kong weekly, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, in its issue of September 5, 1975. The strength of the contingent was several thousand, which meant that several times that number had served through successive enlistments. Its training base was at Dehra Dun, not far from Delhi. Special parachute instructions were given, as Phuntso Wangdui said, by Americans at Agra. The force was, over years, used for border patrols. Recruits were told that they would ultimately "liberate" (i.e. invade) Tibet itself. Actually, they became all-purpose expendables. Mullin says they were thrown against Pakistan in the Indian army's operations preceding the creation of Bangladesh, in which about 40 of them were killed.

Alongside this force was another, a "secret army" run directly by the CIA, like the ones it set up in Laos and Kampuchea.

The first discussion of U.S. arms and instructors for military action to tear Tibet away from China, and in particular from the Chinese revolution, goes back to the visit of the Lowell Thomases, senior and junior in 1949. Returning to the U.S. in 1950, they met with President Truman who, after the debacle of U.S. intervention in the rest of China, gave no specific commitment though he expressed "sympathy" for the separatists.

Later, while the Dalai Lama was expressing loyalty to China's central government, holding high posts in it, contact with the U.S. was maintained by two of his brothers already abroad, Gyalo Thondup in Kalimpong and Thupten Norbu, later of New York. By 1957 his Kalimpong brother, Gyalo Thondup, had arranged for the training of Tibetan "guerrillas", first in Taiwan but very soon in the U.S. itself. In that same year, in an undercover operation, Tibetan recruits for such training by the CIA were picked up on a deserted road in east Pakistan by a car driven by the Dalai's other brother, Thupten Norbu, put into U.S. uniforms and flown out to U.S. bases. CIA men told them there, one later informed Mullin, that "China is our enemy also, so we will help you to fight. Our relationship will continue for a long time, not just two or three years".

In August 1957 two of the Tibetan CIA trainees' were secretly air-dropped near Lhasa with the aim of "organizing resistance." In

the Norbu Lingka, the Dalai Lama's summer palace, they had a clandestine interview with one of his officials, Palha Thubten,<sup>13</sup> which they reported by radio to the U.S. soon. Finding things too dangerous in Lhasa, they went off to Loka in the south. In 1958 U.S. arms were air-dropped to rebels there. In 1959 came the open rebellion in Lhasa itself, which was crushed within days. The Dalai Lama's party, fleeing toward India through Loka, was joined by one of the air-dropped agents. Along the rest of his escape route, he himself later told Mullin, there was radio contact with the CIA.

In 1959-62, says Mullin, the CIA sent 170 special selectees from among the rebel troops to Camp Hale, Colorado, U.S.A. Years later, a U.S. writer, David Wise, published details.<sup>14</sup> Camp Hale began to turn out "graduates" in 1958. Some were available to help get the Dalai Lama. Directly responsible was Richard Bissell, the CIA's head of secret operations, the same man who later arranged the abortive CIA-backed landing in the Bay of Pigs in Cuba. At the very top, President Eisenhower conferred at length with CIA director Allen Dulles on how to handle the "Tibet crisis".

Two things are clear.

First, the Camp Hale operation was both top secret and top level. Wise tells how a private flying school employee, accidentally seeing Tibetans coming off a transport plane at Peterson Field, Colorado in 1961, was held at gunpoint by U.S. soldiers, locked up in a hanger, and sworn to silence. Later, after a leak in local Colorado papers, the *New York Times* bureau in Washington, D.C. asked about them. U.S. Defence Secretary McNamara was on the phone within minutes to tell the *Times* to forget it, as disclosure would be "harmful to the security of the U.S.".

Second, the Camp Hale operation, like the 1959 serfowner revolt itself, crashed on the rocks of the Tibetan people's opposition.

Of 170 Colorado trainees in 1959-62, according to Mullin, most were dropped in Tibet in batches of six or so and "nine out of ten were never heard of again",<sup>15</sup> a "military disaster". The reason is inescapable. In Tibet's vast area, the PLA garrisons in only a few places were naturally avoided by the parachutists. Hence, the

latter could only have been caught by the liberated serfs and slaves, many bearing arms in the people's militia. This is confirmed by exhibits in the Tibet Revolutionary Museum in Lhasa, complete with the names, photographs and paraphernalia of the agents involved. The failure was not just that of one air drop. With the people awakened, the whole enterprise was hopeless.

In addition to the parachutists, the CIA was knocking together a ground "army". Its hard core, too, was trained at Camp Hale. Its forward base was set up in Nepal, in defiance of that country's government, in the isolated Mustang Valley inhabited by a Tibetan minority. The thousands of rebel troops there were supplied by air. The paymaster, with CIA-supplied cash, was Gyalo Thondup, the Dalai's brother. Initially, some shallow infiltrations were made into Tibet. But by 1963, says Mullin, such raids became "virtually impossible". The rest of the secret army's history was one of internal strife, mostly, as Mullin tells us, over CIA money that "disappeared into private pockets. Ordinary soldiers were lucky if they received anything more than their meagre rations". Whether in pre-liberation Tibet or in its half-life across the border, the old Tibetan society behaved according to its nature.

Mullin further informs us that after 1972, when President Nixon went to Beijing and the United States faced up to the reality of the People's Republic of China and the need of relations with it, the CIA lost interest in the "secret army". Thenceforward, the financing was from other sources and presumably reduced. In 1974 the Nepalese army moved into Mustang Valley to clean up the rebel remnants. Their leader, one of the very first U.S.-trained parachutists, was killed. Some survivors fled to India. With that, says Mullin, the "Khamba war" came to an end.

For the Tibetans abroad, the choice remained what it was from the start. Either to be oppressed and milked by diehards of the old clerical and lay ruling class,<sup>16</sup> remain captive to their reactionary ideas, and be used or abandoned at will by foreign powers. Or to return and help build the new socialist Tibet in the multinational People's Republic of China.

Making the latter choice they would have a friendly reception, regardless of their rank or past. The principle was, and remains, that "all patriots are welcome, whether early or late". They could rejoin their own people, making their own history in their own land.

Whatever the exiles might finally do, life had already proved that the revolution in Tibet could not be reversed.

## CHAPTER 16

# BIG TASHI—SOLDIER OF NEW TIBET

In 1951 the People's Liberation Army entered Tibet, shut the door to imperialism and brought to the region's people the promise of a new life. In 1959 it used its weapons to suppress the serfowners' armed rebellion, with the help of the serfs and slaves who, in the circumstances of the old society, had no armed force themselves. By 1965 many of these toilers of Tibet, their feudal shackles struck off, were serving in the PLA itself as soldiers and as officers. One, Gombo, was among the mountaineers who made the ascent of Qomolangma, the world's highest peak. Known throughout China, he had been elected a member of the National People's Congress. Another, Phurbu Tashi, had given his life trying to save herdsmen's cattle in a blizzard, and been accordingly commemorated throughout China alongside the young Han army heroes Lei Feng and Wang Jie, who had also died as heroes not in war but at workaday tasks. For the PLA is taught to be not only a fighting army but one that serves the people; it not only secures the frontiers of the multinational People's Republic but is itself multinational; it not only defends socialism but does some of the heaviest work in its construction.

One of its Tibetan members I met was Big Tashi, so called to distinguish him from the many other bearers of this very common Tibetan name. He was an assistant company political instructor and

thus of officer rank, and an elected deputy to the People's Congress of the Tibet Autonomous Region. Plain featured and shy, he was not at all "big" physically, most of his comrades towered over him. The adjective referred only to his age, 26, senior to the rest of the company's half-dozen Tashis. Hearing his story, however, we realized the real dimensions of the man and, above all, of the revolution that had produced him.

I made his acquaintance in Xigazê in 1965, in an all-Tibetan company<sup>1</sup> most of whose hundred or so men could list relatives murdered by the serfowners and, in the case of 37, by the clerical serfowners — the lamaseries.

Here is what he said, in a quiet voice that made the facts ring the louder:

\*                    \*                    \*

I come of a slave family. For generations we had belonged to Thupten lamasery near here. My grandfather, father, mother and elder sister were all flogged to death by its stewards. Mother ran away, taking me with her, and found work as a servant. We thought we had gone far enough to be safe, but they tracked us. When I turned eight, the age for feudal service, two lamas came to claim me. Mother beat her head on the ground and appealed to them, "Have compassion! Can't you put it off for a couple of years?" But they said, "It's written in the books. You're slaves. Do you dare break the law?" Kicking her aside, they dragged me off.

I was too small to work, and unwilling. Worst of all, I missed Mother. I kept screaming for her. The first night they locked me in a shed. I burrowed through the mud wall, and ran up the mountainside. It was freezing. I had only one garment. There were leopards up there, and I thought, "I'll die of cold or be eaten". Next morning my legs were so frozen I could hardly move them. Looking down, I saw the monks go to Mother's hut. I imagined them beating, maybe killing her and cried and cried. I got terribly thirsty but didn't dare go to the stream, so I drank my own urine. Next day, I couldn't stand any more and crept down. Mother huddled on the floor, bruised and bloody from her beating. The minute she

saw me she cried, "Run away quick! I'm finished. But you must live. Take a bag of *tsamba*. Go!"

"I won't," I wailed. "Let's die together."

"Get out!" she ordered me, weeping. "Now!"

How could I bear to leave her? That night I went back, helped her get ready and we slipped away together.

We had turned into *duichun*, runaways, anyone's prey. Mother hid in the hills and dug wild roots. I found work as a herd-boy. Soon a master more powerful than I grabbed me for himself. I changed hands several times. When things got too bad we'd run off again. This went on till I was 13. Then we met the PLA.

It happened while we were begging in a village. A unit was quartered nearby. Its political instructor saw us half naked, hungry and muddy. He spoke some Tibetan and asked our story. Hearing it, he gave us some of his own clothes: flannel underwear and an overcoat. The same day he talked to his comrades, and got us a place to live and a cow. "Stay here with us," he said.

We couldn't understand why he should be so good to us? He explained, "It's not just you Tibetans who're poor. There are poor people everywhere. We're the army of all the poor."

Later he told me, "I was a homeless boy like you. Then I found the Party. It taught me why we were hungry and ragged. Because the rich robbed us. It taught us to take up guns and fight them. That's how we Han people won our new life."

Though Mother and I still had to do some labour service for a local serfowner, we helped out in the army camp, and got paid for it. Life became easier. But what made us happiest was something new, hope. This army had come to free us. The political instructor talked to us a lot. Step by step, we learned about classes, class struggle, the Chinese revolution. Mother became gay and sang often, making up the words herself. I remember one song, "Chairman Mao and the Party are like the never setting sun for us slaves. The time will come. Soon, soon, it will come. By day we'll all have food and freedom. At night we'll sleep in warm beds, with warm hearts."

Though Mother had never learned to read or write, she was

wise. One day she said to me, "You must go into the PLA!" So I wouldn't forget she'd often take me by the chin, tug jokingly at my neck and say, laughing, "Grow more quickly, son. Then they'll accept you sooner."

In August 1957, when I was 18, I applied to enlist. Mother sat up nights telling me how our own family had suffered. "That's why you should follow Chairman Mao and become a good soldier for the people, like the political instructor," she said.

When the doctor said I was fit, I danced with joy. The day I got my uniform I kept looking in the mirror. The next day, when I was issued a rifle, couldn't let it out of my hands. I had lived up to Mother's hopes. I had a gun. I said to my gun, "With you in my hands, I'll take revenge on the serfowners who killed our dear ones."

My main idea was still to avenge our own family's wrongs. Many other Tibetan recruits felt the same. It was only gradually, through education, that we realized we must do more — avenge and put right the sufferings of all Tibet's labouring people and serve the oppressed everywhere.

After that I cherished my gun even more. It wasn't just mine, it was given to me by the Party to serve the greatest cause in the world. I slept with its strap looped around my wrist. Returning from drill or labour, I oiled and polished it. If we poor had no guns, I knew, our night would be everywhere, and last forever.

Then, I learned something more. A weapon in your hand isn't enough. More important is the weapon in your head. Only with Marxism, Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought in command could I always use my gun for its proper purpose.

Studying Chairman Mao's books made me work hard to learn the Tibetan alphabet, so I could read them for myself. That's how I started to be literate.

Suddenly, two months after entering the army, I heard that Mother was dead! Ngawang Tsering, a serfowner, had accused her of losing a calf from his herd. She was beaten till three of her ribs were broken and died from internal bleeding. Really, they were paying her back for putting me in the PLA.

Since then the Party has been my mother, our army unit my fami-

**ARMS AND THE MAN  
—NOW AND BEFORE**

Big Tashi, Tibetan  
P.L.A. man, trainer of  
the people in arms,  
Xigazê, 1976.



Women's trench mortar crew demonstrate their  
skill. One-tenth of Tibet's population are in the  
militia.



Tsering Phuntso—ex-slave people's  
policeman.





October 1, 1955 Potala with Tibetan local troops and officials in fore ground.

Tibetan local troops, 1955



Potala Square, Lhasa, Oct. 1, 1955. Riflemen and band of the army of the Tibetan local government.



## UNITED FRONT — ARISTOCRATS JOIN THE PEOPLE



Ngapo Ngawang-Jigme in 1965 and 1961 chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region government, and vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of China's National People's Congress, was formerly a *kalon* (local minister) in the feudal Tibetan administration of the Dalai.



Thuptan Thanthar, who as secretary of the Dalai was active in the 1959 rebellion, underwent reform, changed his stand, and is now a member of the PPCC in Tibet and the NPC in all China.



Dorge Phagmo of Samding, Tibet's only female Living Buddha, went abroad in 1959 but returned. She is now a vice-chairman of the Tibet PPCC and a member of China's NPC.

Pebala Cholie Namgyal (seated), former Living Buddha of Qamdo, one of the leading Tibetan united front figures in all China, with Jipu Phuntso Tsenden, a vice-chairman of the PPCC.





The Panchen Erdeni, now vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the NPC, studies Lamaist scriptural text. He is among those who have issued repeated calls to the Dalai Lama to return.



Lhalu Tsewang Dorge, who commanded the serfowner forces in the 1959 rebellion, is now a member of the Tibet Committee of the Chinese PPCC. He is talking with other prominent ex-rebels released in 1978

Major participants in the 1959 rebellion, freed in 1978, visit the Norbu Lingka Summer Palace (former summer residence of the Dalai Lama). Most were given positions appropriate to their abilities after their release.



## WORKERS AND INDUSTRY



Lhadrup (centre) with some of the members of his large family of three generations which gathers often at his Lhasa home. Taken in 1965



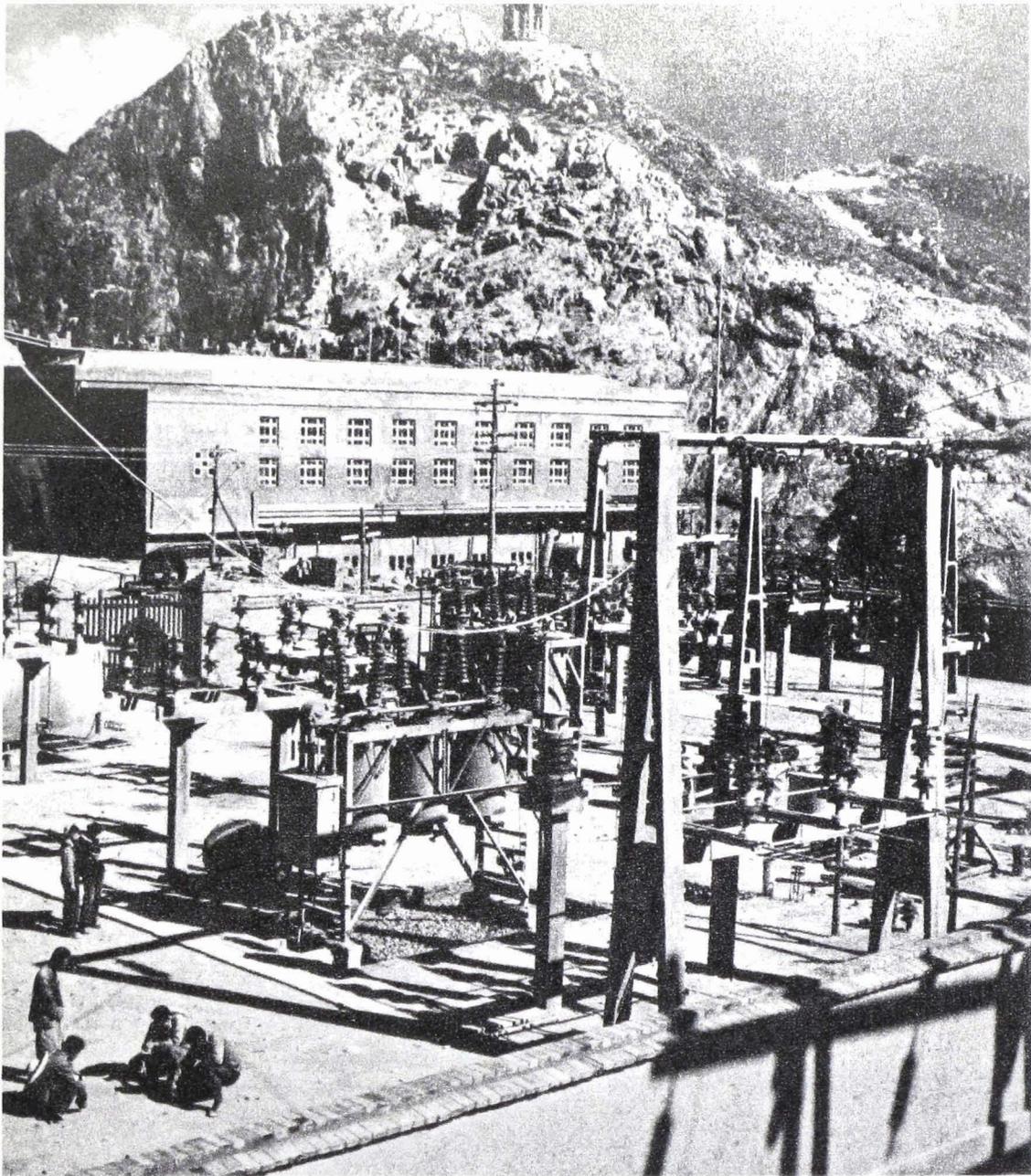
Gesang (front), her husband Tsangyang (rear) and Pasang (centre) repaint truck.



The two elder sons, Dawa (left) and Losang, then both electrical workers.



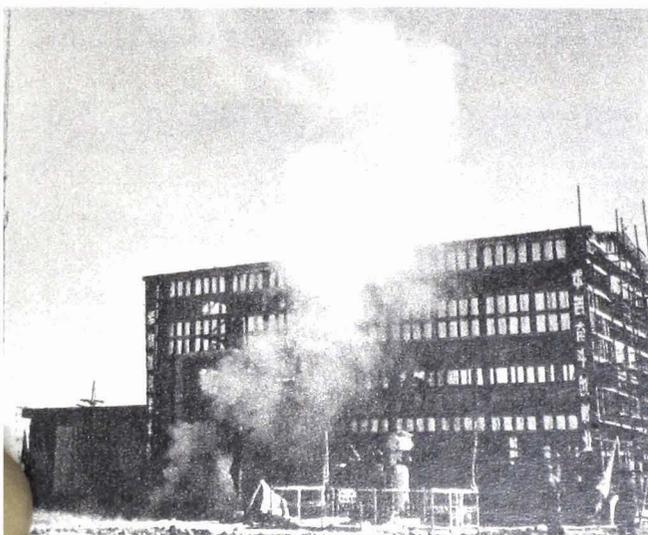
In the forging shop of the Lhasa Auto Repair Plant, Lhadrup (right) advises his third son Champa (left) and son-in-law Sanggye Gesang on straightening a chassis beam.

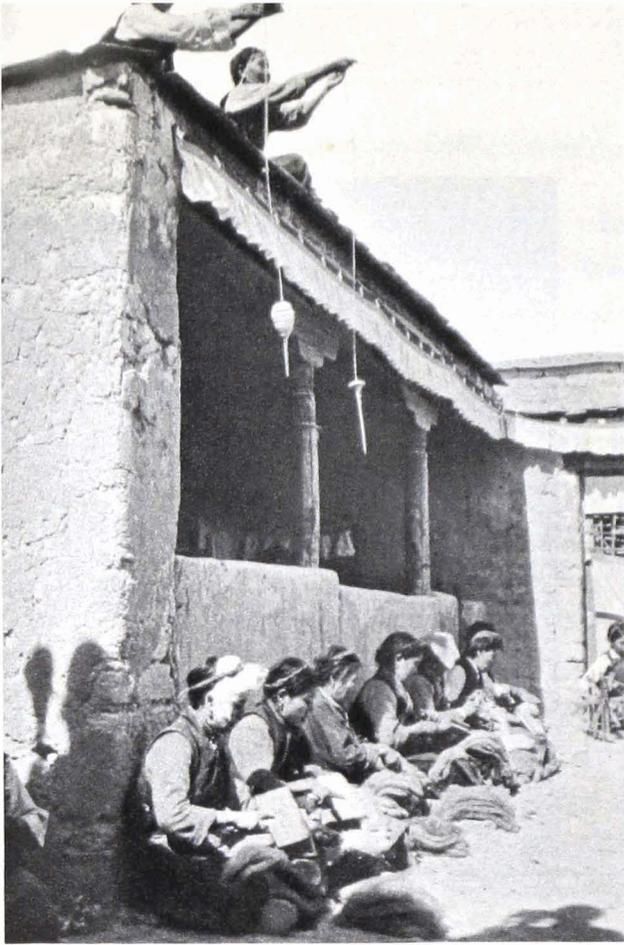


Ngachen Hydro-power Station  
in Lhasa, built in the 1960's

Experimental geothermal power station at  
Yangbajain, soon after commissioning in 1977.

Solar heat is increasingly used in Tibet.  
Collectors on roof provide hot water for a  
Lhasa hostel (left) and for a small bathhouse.





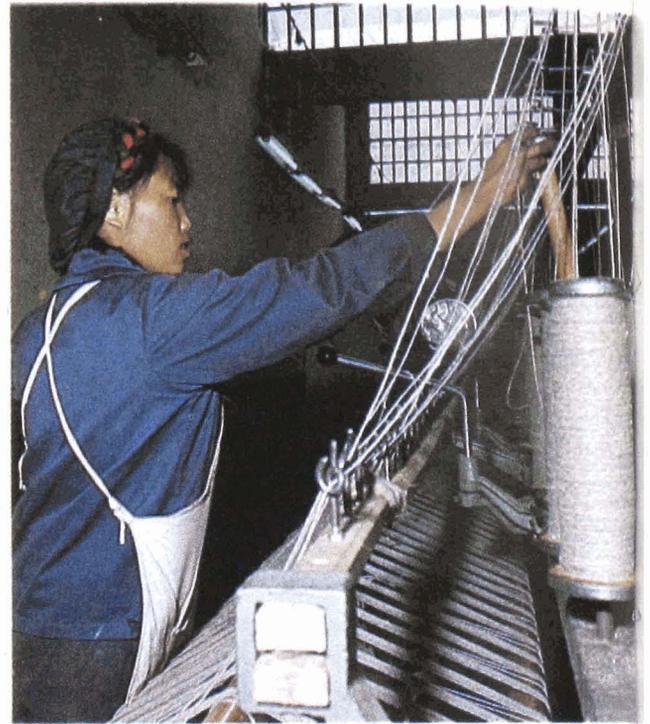
Ex-serfs craftswomen in wool textile mutual-aid team spinning in the ancient way by dropping bobbins from rooftop while those below carded wool by hand. Xigazê, 1965.

Weaving "Panda" brand blankets at Nyingchi Wool Mill, 1976.





Gyangzê carpets, a traditional craft.



With machinery brought from Shanghai, most of Tibet's wool began to be processed within the region.

Nyingchi Wool Mill, Tibet's largest.



ly, the whole country my home. In 1959, when the reactionary serf-owners rebelled, our company applied to be sent to fight them. But they were put down before we could even set off.

In 1961, we began to study Chairman Mao's works all over again. We started with *Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society*. I looked at the first words, "Who are our friends? Who are our enemies?" This is a key question in any revolution, in Tibet's too. I brought it right down to myself: Who were my friends? Who were my enemies? Who had oppressed me? Who liberated me? And why? I saw the answer. I'd heard about classes ever since the political instructor had talked to me as a boy. Now the idea connected up everything I had seen and learned since my childhood.

Ideas in your head are no use if they don't get your hands moving. And what your hands do may be meaningless or harmful without a main aim in your head to guide them. Take our production work. The land we troops farmed was dry. My job was to carry 100 buckets of water a day to the fields. I found it hard till I thought, "Look at it in class terms. It's we serfs and slaves who are fighting with water against drought. The serfowners never did that here, this land was barren. Even if they had, the water would have been for them, not us. If I can't stand fatigue for the working people, how will I face battle when I have to fight for them?" The hardships seemed to shrink in my eyes.

We studied Chairman Mao's *In Memory of Norman Bethune*. From it, I drew three lessons for myself. First: To Bethune the revolution, even in a country far from home, was dearer than his own life. So what must I do in our own revolution? Always put the general interest first and think of others before myself. Second: Bethune was a Party member, I too had joined the Party. What should I learn from him as a Communist? His internationalist spirit. Third: As a soldier what should I learn from him? Our country is still menaced. So many people in the world are still oppressed. Bethune constantly raised his medical skill for the people. I should improve my military skill for them.

In 1963, I was promoted to a cadre rank. Happy to be so trusted, I was also afraid. Could I, an ex-slave, without schooling, do respon-

sible work? This question became easier to solve when I thought: The task is given to me by the Party. It's we working people, poor and ignorant before, who are changing the world for ourselves. If I can't overcome difficulties in this cause, whatever I say about class or internationalism is just twaddle.

*Oppose Book Worship* helped me, too. In it Chairman Mao explained that knowledge doesn't start from books; what is in the books started from life. "Although your head may be empty before you go out of doors, it will be empty no longer when you return but will contain all sorts of material necessary for the solution of the problems, and that is how problems are solved." I'd just become an officer and was already scared. "Get up on your feet," I said to myself. "See what's to be done. Think it over. Do the thing, then think and study again."

That's how I faced my main contradiction then; between my poor preparation and doing a good job. Without contradictions there would be no world. Facing and solving contradictions is how things grow. That way I became bolder. I learned to see my own strong and weak points. The method: Go to reality. Chairman Mao says: Without investigation, no right to speak. So first investigate the facts; consult with the masses. I got to like the work more and more. I never let myself get far from the soldiers — I work, study, live and play among them — just as I did when I had no rank.

\*                     \*                     \*

From his comrades in the company, we heard many things about Tashi's work that he himself hadn't mentioned. "He wants everyone to stick to principle and does so himself," said one soldier. "When he quotes Chairman Mao's 'Modesty makes for progress; conceit makes one lag behind,' we know he means it. You never hear of the good things he does from his own lips."

Big Tashi, they told us, was being held up as a "model of how to study" for all the troops in Xigazê Prefecture. When still in the ranks, working as company cook, he would get up and read Mao Zedong's works by lamplight before dawn. As a cadre, with even

less time, he would read late at night. He had written more than 300 notes and comments on ideas he had garnered.

And he had applied them.

In 1962, while the unit was at Dagzhuka on the Yarlung Zangbo River, the water rose suddenly. Tashi saw newly-cut firewood, which the people had stacked on the banks, being washed away. He undressed, jumped into the stream, and saved several hundred kilogrammes. Then, for days, he worked at moving the entire woodpile to higher ground.

In 1963, while going off duty in a downpour after dark, he saw a poor woman dragging along a load of yak-dung fuel. Taking off his rain cape, he covered the fuel, and carried it to her house. She asked him to come in and dry his soaked clothing. He refused, fearing that she would have to build a fire and go to expense on his account.

The same year, encamped at Donggar, he spent every Sunday helping an old woman there churn butter-tea, do household chores, even wash and comb her hair. She had a small piece of land but no family. Tashi called his whole squad to till her land.

In 1964, he was among those invited to Beijing to witness the National Day Parade. This was a high honour. As a delegate, he could have travelled in comfort. But on the whole train journey from the railhead at Xining to the capital, three days and nights, he worked as a volunteer car-attendant, sweeping, carrying hot water and finding seats for the old and weak. Once he gave his own seat to a mother and baby. When he dandled the child on his lap, it wet and soiled him. The mother was very apologetic. Tashi said, "Forget it? I'm a soldier, the people's servant." He washed the child's diapers, then cleaned up his own uniform.

"No one in our company has ever heard Big Tashi say, I'm an officer," a soldier said. "He uses the same clothes and bedding as when he was a private. After a march, he carries water for us to wash our feet. When we're out on labour, he picks the tough jobs. If a soldier is ill, he brings him food and does his laundry. He's on the lookout for ways to serve the local people and teaches the whole company to do the same. Last spring, in a village near which we

encamped, we dug up all the latrines, prepared the manure, and took it to the peasants' fields. Tashi's idea.

"In Xigazê, the children know him. Two state schools, one middle and one primary, have invited him to be a spare-time instructor of their Young Pioneers. He tells them about the past, mostly from his own experience, and stories of the revolution. They come to our barracks, tell him their doings and get his opinion of what's right and wrong.

"He hasn't mentioned to you, we're sure, that he's one of our Xigazê deputies to the People's Congress of the Autonomous Region? Or that last year, in Beijing, he was photographed with Chairman Mao?

\* \* \*

Yang Yuting, a battalion political officer, gave us more information about Tashi's 2nd Company. Since 1960, it had been regularly cited as a "model of production" in the Xigazê garrison area and a "model in hygiene" for all PLA troops in Tibet.

"It's a national minority unit," said Yang. Nearly all its soldiers and cadres are Tibetans. Why has it done so well? We think it's because of class education.

"The past is very recent here in Tibet — not only its memories but its backwardness and bad habits still live. That's the bad side. But what's good is that these men hate the past, they suffered from it. As soon as they realize a thing is connected with the old oppression, directly or indirectly, they fight it in themselves.

"For instance, superstition was still strong among many recruits. But when the men exchanged stories of how lamaseries had behaved to them and their families, and how their own faith led to non-resistance, it didn't take them long to drop it. 'The high lamas killed my father,' one would say, and give the details. 'They taxed even the donkeys' ears and goats' horns, another would interrupt, and also give details. A third would recall how each *dzong* (county) had two heads, a lay-official and a lama-official called the East and West *dzong-pon*.

Thus both sides of the old machine of oppression gradually became clear.

“We tackled drunkenness in the same way. ‘The lords drank themselves silly while the people toiled and had no food. It’s a parasite’s habit. Are we going to do the same just because we have army pay in our pockets?’ a soldier said. ‘No,’ said the others, and the drinking grew less.

“In hygienic education, the talk would go something like this: ‘How could we be clean before? We wore the same rags for years. We lived with the animals. Our mothers bore us in cow-byres. We had to clean for the masters, but didn’t have the conditions to be clean ourselves.’ So the fight for cleanliness was illuminated by a class angle.”

We were told a lot about those self-educational and self-transforming sessions. How the serfs and slaves, turned soldiers, wept with sorrow as they voiced the hitherto unspoken woes of their families. How they broke into their first derisive laughter at the pretensions of their once-feared former rulers. How they felt their first anger at themselves for having borne it all so long, asked why, argued about the answers, examined all this experience from the angle of their political studies. How they analyzed the class structure of their own villages. How they went on to dissect the entire old Tibetan system of combined feudal-clerical rule, bringing up more memories in ever wider and clearer context.

The company had as many stories of the resulting transformation as it had soldiers.

Lozang was a young ex-serf, maltreated and rebellious in childhood, who had run away repeatedly only to be brutally punished each time. He had come to hate not only those who fattened themselves on the people’s labour but labour itself, for what sense did it make then? Joining the army he dreamed of battle, but had no use for systematic training and work, or for anything else except thoughts of revenge and strong drink. The Party gradually led him to study. In the section on vagabonds, or the *lumpen-proletariat*, in Mao Zedong’s *Analysis of Classes* he recognized himself.

They lead the most precarious existence of all. . . . One of China's difficult problems is how to handle these people. Brave fighters but apt to be destructive, they can become a revolutionary force if given proper guidance.<sup>2</sup>

"I want to be a revolutionary force, not a destroyer of our cause," he said at last. Step by step, he fought down one vagabond habit after another. In work, which he had despised as unfit for a soldier, he began to use not only his muscle but his quick mind. Building a light bridge for a ford uncrossable at high water, he suggested putting it on wheels so it could be moved wherever needed. Helped by others, he worked at the idea till success. By 1965, Losang, like Tashi, was an officer, with citations for both ideological and administrative work. The Xigazê troops had elected him their deputy to the City People's Congress.

Pema, another member of the company, was in charge of its horses. He regularly drove them through the village where his home was, but never looked in when on duty. When asked why, he said, "A revolutionary must be conscientious even when no one is overseeing him."

"What do you think of that?" Battalion Instructor Yang smiled. "Our ancient Han hero-king, the Great Yu, went down in legend for 3,000 years because when there was a flood to fight he passed his own door thrice without going in. Our Pema has done it many more times."

Squad-leader Lhundrup was a veteran in the company. When one of his young soldiers was promoted over his head to platoon commander, he was pleased. Some men asked, "Aren't you even a bit unhappy?" He said, "Yes, with myself for not training more good cadres." He called a meeting of the squad Party group to discuss how to help the new platoon commander. "If we don't bring up young forces the revolution will break off half way," he reminded them.

Yang Yuting talked of these Tibetan soldiers with the glowing warmth we met again and again among Han cadres on the high plateau. "Gombo, Phurbu, Tsering, Big Tashi, Losang — they are only a few examples of the transition, in a very few years, from serf

or slave to PLA fighter and then to revolutionary commander," he said.

\* \* \*

In 1976, I met Big Tashi again in Xigazê, still in plain cotton uniform, still youthfully warm, lively and open. No one could have guessed, looking at him, that since 1968 he had been a member of the Autonomous Region Revolutionary Committee (the regional government) and, in 1969, a delegate to the Ninth National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party.

In military rank, Tashi had risen from company to regimental political officer. Now he was on detached duty in the armed work department of nearby Namling County, concerned mainly with training its militia. In short, after having himself been transformed from a weaponless slave to a soldier of the PLA, he was engaged in one of its major tasks since its origin, the arming of the people. As had been explained by Mao Zedong more than 40 years earlier:

. . . the operations of the people's guerrillas and those of the main forces of the Red Army complement each other like a man's right arm and left arm, and if we had only the main forces of the Red Army without the people's guerrillas, we would be like a warrior with only one arm. In concrete terms . . . we mean that we have an armed people. That is the main reason why the enemy is afraid to approach our base areas.<sup>3</sup>

Only a month had elapsed since the passing of the most outstanding leader of China's revolution, and all over Tibet there were signs of poignant mourning. "Just think how long we serfs and slaves would have waited for awakening and liberation if not for Chairman Mao", Tashi said to me. "How could a half-starved, ignorant youngster like me have become a Party member, a People's Liberation Army fighter and cadre. Who knows, by now, where my bones would lie if not for him? He loved the poor, was close to us, put his faith in us."

"In Tibet, one of the things that happened between 1967 and 1969 was the organization of communes; that's when they were set up

here," Big Tashi said, "in the old society hunger was everywhere. I myself was hungry all the time. With the communes, and the more scientific farming which they made possible, we won self-sufficiency in grain."

Then Big Tashi told of his current work with the militia.

"Namling County is huge, but has far fewer people than those in the inner provinces; only about 48,000. In 1969, when I came, a thousand were in the militia. Now there are over 4,058 which is about one person in twelve. They are organized in battalions, platoons and squads, from the county town to the most out of the way hamlets.

"Almost a third, 1,277 to be exact, are women. In old Tibet they were looked upon as hardly human, as 'demons.' Now they're right up in front in politics, production and in weapons training as well. Who could have conceived it before? In militia education, we always criticize the old views on women.

"Older people are enthusiastic, too. Many just won't quit the militia at 40, as laid down, and if they're still fit we don't insist. Even grandparents in their 60's have asked to join. 'At your age, your health can't stand it,' we say. 'Chairman Mao says the whole people should take part in defence,' they insist. 'Aren't we people, too?' We regular soldiers can learn their spirit.

"The militia are also a shock force in farm work. Gongkar Commune in our county is a farming model. Its militia, a hundred or so, are largely responsible. Last year they were a very important factor in reaching the yield laid down in the National Agricultural Programme; three tons a hectare. They also meet twice a week for political study, do military training, and preserve revolutionary order. They're always among the masses.

"In basic construction, this militia company has built many terraced and levelled fields, a 7-kilometre irrigation canal and a bridge takes an 80-ton load. It replaced a chain bridge with narrow planks which had to be crossed in single file. Two bridges, two societies. Soldiers of the old Tibetan army used to guard the old one and collect a toll equal to five *yuan* today, for each crossing. Every day there were curses, blows, screams there. Sometimes people were shoved off and drowned. Now trucks, carts, pedestrians, cattle cross without trouble

or expense. Of our county's nine districts, you can now drive to six, thanks to the new bridge. We've kept the old one intact for comparison and class education.

"One enemy the militia fights is hail. This means fighting superstition, too. 'Hailstone Lamas' used to charge big fees in grain, butter and money, pray a bit, then spit in the direction of the threatening cloud to stop the hail. If it didn't fall, they claimed they had moved the hearts of the gods. If it did, they said the people's sins were too grave to forgive. Now the militia shoots at the hail clouds with special shells from anti-aircraft guns. This often changes the hail to rain."

"Is there much difference between working in the regular army and in the militia?" I asked.

"In purpose no. In detail a great deal. In the army things were simpler in some ways. Our military job was the main thing, with production on the side to lighten the people's burden. In militia work we're part of the masses, their daily life and labour. Each step touches on many policies, on agriculture, on nationalities, on everything. You can get nowhere by simply issuing orders. The people have to want to do it.

"Secondly, the army is highly organized and centralized. The troops are always together. Routines and duties are nailed down. It's very different with the militia, the masses scattered through distant mountains and valleys. They can't come to us. We have to go where they are.

"Thirdly, the army has its own Party organization. The general principle for all our armed forces is, 'The Party commands the gun, the gun must never be allowed to take control of the Party.' The militia, too, is part of the national defence forces, but politically it is led by the local civilian Party committees. Whatever we do, we can't act apart from the local Party unit.

"On the military side, our militia guards bridges, roads, warehouses, the fruits of the people's labour. Second, it prepares for a people's war in case of invasion. A people's war is the affair not just of the army but of the entire people.

"In ideology, we build the motive of service to the Chinese and world revolution among the young people."

“You’ve told me of your past,” I said, “Do you use it to educate the young militia members, as you did the young soldiers?”

“In the same way. All militiamen and women here have family histories of blood and tears. We contrast ourselves with the old serf-owner army. They bore arms for the cruel exploiters and oppressors. We do it for the people in Tibet, all China, the world. They kicked the people around. Our militia is educated, just as the PLA is, in the Three Main Rules of Discipline and the Eight Points for Attention.<sup>4</sup>

“Wherever it goes, the militia does good deeds for the people. In old Tibet, childless aged people who could no longer work just waited for death. Now the state, or the communes, provide them with grain. But there are still many things they need done, cooking their meals, hauling their firewood. These the militia take on. That’s an everyday way of carrying out the injunction, ‘Serve the people heart and soul.’ ”

“Just as you’ve done over many years,” I recalled.

“I haven’t done so much. Besides, just to do it yourself doesn’t settle the problem. To help spread it on a broad scale, that’s what counts. We’re a people’s army.”

Before we parted, Big Tashi returned to his key thought, the people in arms.

“Like me when I joined the PLA, our young militia boys and girls are overjoyed to get their guns. And the old people tell them, ‘The serf-owners used guns to oppress and murder us. Chairman Mao sent the PLA with guns to give us back our lives, to make us the masters. Now the gun is given into our own hands, in every village.’

“That guns kill people is something we serfs and slaves have always known. They were aimed at us. Now we understand that guns are a tool of class power. The power of the parasites or the power of us working people — that’s the alternative.

“To put an end to the gun, the people must take it into their own hands. That’s what Chairman Mao taught. That’s what we’ve done. We must hold it tight to resist any aggression, hold it tight until we reach communism.”

Big Tashi in 1976 was still under 40. But the social and mental change he exemplified in Tibet had leaped over a thousand years.

**UNITE ALL WHO CAN  
BE UNITED**

## CHAPTER 17

# UNITED FRONT — ALWAYS OPEN-ENDED

The mutually inseparable keys to victory for the Chinese revolution, Mao Zedong stressed in both its democratic and socialist stages, are the Communist Party and the army and united front under its leadership.

In the revolution in Tibet, this has been equally true. Of the role of Party and army, much has already been said. The united front involves groups and individuals from the upper levels of the old society who have been, or can be, won over to the new. In Tibet it was and is of even more than the usual importance. There it is interwoven with questions of nationality and religion and with the security of the borders of multinational China.

The Chinese Communist Party's united front work in Tibetan-inhabited areas goes back more than 40 years to the days of the Long March.

Tian Bao (Sanggye Yeshi), a secretary of the Tibet Party Committee,<sup>1</sup> and himself a Tibetan veteran of the Long March, told us in 1976 not only of the class base then laid among the labouring people but of the common ground simultaneously built with members of the upper strata whom the policy of national equality attracted to the side of the revolution.

*Here is what he said:*

Never before had we Tibetans seen an army that treated us as people, that represented the poor, that divided things among them. Relics of the Long March were preserved among the masses from the mid-1930s, right through to the liberation in 1949. Some peasants and herdsmen hid sick and wounded Red Army men who had to be left behind. Many asked each other, "When will the Red Army come again?"

At a higher level of Tibetan society in what was then Sikang Province, there was a young Living Buddha in a small temple whose name was Geda. He was won over by the united front work of the Red Army, and took a post in the autonomous revolutionary government of the Tibetan nationality then established. Commander-in-Chief Zhu De made friends with him. On departure he left a note saying that Geda and his lamasery had helped the Red Army and should be protected by any of its units who came by. That note is now in the Revolutionary Museum in Beijing.

How did it survive? Geda preserved it. While the Red Army was still operating in the vicinity, it was to his advantage. Through the fifteen years of rampant Kuomintang reaction that followed, its discovery could have cost him his life. Yet all that time he kept it, secretly pasted on the back of a temple image. In 1949, when most of the rest of China was already liberated, he sent four men by way of Gansu and Qinghai, a long and tough trip in those days, to see Comrade Zhu De in Beijing. Zhu De remembered, welcomed the emissaries warmly, had new clothes made for them, and sent them back with a reply to Geda saying that the PLA would soon be in Sikang on its way to liberate Tibet.

Geda answered, "Zhu De is a good man who doesn't forget." He volunteered, moreover, to go first to Lhasa to explain the Party's policy on nationalities. After the liberation of Sikang, Geda was made a vice-head of its new people's provincial government. But when about to start on his mission to Lhasa he was poisoned. From the persons implicated, including Robert Ford,<sup>2</sup> English radio operator in Lhasa's local army who has himself written that he knew how and by whom the deed was done, it was clear that the imperialists and

reactionaries, working in concert, would stop at nothing in their last efforts to sabotage the peaceful liberation of Tibet.

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The PLA on its part, resumed its united front work on a much larger scale than in the old Red Army days. The message Geda was unable to take to Lhasa was borne there by a newly won over personage, Ngapo Ngawang Jigme, who today is Chairman of Tibet Autonomous Region and Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of all China.<sup>3</sup>

Ngapo<sup>4</sup> had a very different initial history from Geda.

By origin, he was among the highest of Tibet's lay aristocrats, a descendant of its ancient kings, and inheritor of 400 square kilometres of land and 2,500 serfs. In official position, he had been a *kalon* or minister of the Dalai Lama's local government, the *kashag*. In attitude and actions immediately after the formation of the People's Republic of China, he had been a secessionist, heading the troops sent in 1950 to Qamdo to block the PLA's advance. Defeated and captured in the field, he became its prisoner.

But the People's Government did not treat him as such. Instead, it let him see what it was doing and help the people of newly-liberated Qamdo, explained its policies concerning minority nationalities, and set him free to report to the Dalai Lama. The latter finally appointed him as head of a delegation from Lhasa to negotiate the 17-article Agreement of 1951. Ngapo's was the first Tibetan signature on it.

In 1956, when the Dalai Lama was made chairman, and the Panchen Erdeni vice-chairman, of the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region, Ngapo became its secretary-general. After 1959, when the Dalai Lama went with the rebels, the Panchen Erdeni became acting chairman of the committee, and Ngapo a vice-chairman. As the democratic reform proceeded, the Panchen in his turn became the centre of the continued resistance of the exploiting classes to its completion. In 1964, he was criticized and unseated by the liberated serfs and slaves.<sup>5</sup> Ngapo, however, continued to stand by the unity of the nationalities and the reform. In 1965, when the Tibet Autonomous Region was formally inaugurated, he was elected its chairman.

In 1981, after changes in the “cultural revolution”, and subsequently, he was back in this post. He was also elected to the vice-chairmanship of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress — this position he kept throughout.

Having accepted the revolution, Ngapo did not turn back.

The same has been true of Pebala Cholie Namgyal, Living Buddha of Qamdo, a young man who in the old society had been the temporal and clerical chief of his area. He, too, came to occupy high posts in the Tibet Autonomous Region and the National People’s Congress.<sup>6</sup>

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On all my three visits to Tibet I talked about united front policy with leading functionaries concerned — in 1976 it was with Xu Hongsen of the United Front Department of the Regional Party Committee. A fresh-faced man still in his vigorous forties, Xu had come to Tibet in the PLA when it first entered in 1951. Like many of that first contingent, he had become thoroughly at home in the language and among the people. In his department, he worked in close co-ordination with a vice-director, Lhaba,<sup>7</sup> a 36-year-old Tibetan ex-slave from Nyingchi County.

“The united front,” Xu Hongsen explained, “is a class policy of the proletariat. You can call it a special form of class struggle. Its function is not to repel but to attract — to rally all possible allies to the revolution and isolate its diehard foes.

Two tendencies in such work would be erroneous. A Right-wing deviation in united front work would forego leadership by the proletarian party. It would obstruct the revolution from proceeding from stage to stage, from democratic tasks to socialism and communism, endangering our whole cause.

“A ‘Left’ deviation of the kind that denies the necessity for a united front, or narrows it unduly, would also abandon leadership by the Party and the working class. Without allies, whom would they lead? Elements that can be enlisted in the revolution, or its separate tasks, can instead be pushed into the enemy’s arms by ‘Leftist’ policies. That would isolate not the enemy but ourselves. Lin Biao who de-

clared that the united front was 'temporary' and 'outdated,' took this line."

The Tibet Autonomous Region, Xu said, was able to steer a relatively firm course in these matters (despite some disruption in the stormy late 1960's). This had been made possible because of constant and detailed attention by Chairman Mao Zedong and Premier Zhou Enlai. They, moreover, had blocked any wholesale "overthrow" of the seasoned and experienced leading bodies of the region. As I could see for myself, the responsible personnel at several levels, were largely the same in 1976 as on my previous visits in 1965 and even in 1955.

Just as the revolution had its stages, Xu continued, so had the united front. In Tibet it had gone through three.

The first stage was the period from 1951, the peaceful liberation, to 1959, the year of the serfowner revolt. The only criteria then were anti-imperialism, patriotism toward the multinational People's Republic of China and support for the 17-article Agreement on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet, which was also the general programme of the region's united front. Everyone who observed this programme whether in the administration headed by the Dalai Lama in Lhasa, or that of the Panchen Erdeni in Xigazê, or the ruling group in Qamdo to the east, counted as a friend. The objectives were to unite all patriotic forces, to isolate and strike at imperialism, and its reactionary-separatist catspaws.

On my own previous visits, from as early as 1955, I had seen that united front policy toward the old Tibetan ruling classes in action. It was definitely not one of sharpening their old and numerous inner conflicts for any "divide and rule" purpose. On the contrary, in the 1950's, the Central People's Government had done all it could to mediate and reconcile the historic estrangements between the Dalai and Panchen groups, and between the authorities in Lhasa and Qamdo. It had also worked to reconcile ancient tribal and clan feuds that divided the Tibetans living in Sichuan, Sikang, Qinghai and Yunnan provinces, with such success that these vendettas virtually disappeared within a few years.<sup>8</sup> Territorially, the Qamdo region, long incorporated in the province of Sikang (no longer existent) was

earmarked early for merging in the forthcoming Tibet Autonomous Region (this was done in 1965).

But a single new line of demarcation was drawn sharply, replacing the tangled strife of the past. Enemies were the supporters and agents of imperialism. Friends were those who, regardless of class or of any previous ties, were willing to break with imperialism and uphold the unity of nationalities in the People's Republic of China.

All united front work, though the upper strata were its objects, was done in the service of the Tibetan working people, to secure their prospects of social advance and ultimate leadership over society. If Tibet fell prey to imperialism, there could be no such hope. To the extent that the local rulers could be brought to give even verbal backing to unity within the new China, forces of the revolution from the rest of the country would be able to show, by their presence and conduct in Tibet, the possibility and promise of a new life. Thus, the united front "at the top" did not hamper the Tibetan revolution. On the contrary, it deepened and accelerated it, as was shown by the isolation and suppression of the serfowner revolt after eight years of such work.

After 1959, said Xu Hongsen, the united front was no longer only patriotic and anti-imperialist. It was a people's democratic front, directed against feudalism as well. For inclusion in its ranks, members of the upper strata had to accept the democratic reform.

By contrast with those who had been diehard at all times, and besides those who had taken themselves out of the united front when it entered its second stage, there were other members of the upper strata who proved capable of moving forward with the times. Moreover, there were persons who had joined the rebellion but through the continued united front efforts of the Party, even in the heat of the military struggle and the stormy reforms that followed, had been drawn back into the people's ranks.

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In 1976 we interviewed an early example, the aristocrat Tsemen Sonam Bianju. He had owned four manors (two agricultural and two

pastoral). In the Dalai Lama's administration he had served as a senior secretary in Lhasa and as local administrator in Yadong in the south and Ngari in the west. At times, in some of these positions, he had worked on good terms with the PLA and representatives of the central authorities. Nonetheless, he had joined the rebellion.

In 1959, he had attended the meeting at the Norbu Lingka Summer Palace that launched the revolt, and had signed the document drawn up there. The rebels had appointed him commandant of the Jokhang Temple, one of their most important strongholds militarily and symbolically. There he had fought against the PLA for two days and nights, holding on even after the Potala and Norbu Lingka capitulated. Afterwards he had fled — all the way to Nepal.

Within six months, however, he was back in Lhasa.

The complex and instructive story of his flight, as Tsemen related it, reflected the intricate inter-relations of the Tibetan aristocracy, lay and clerical. After slipping out of Lhasa, he had headed for pastoral northern Tibet to cover his real destination, then doubled back south to a lamasery at Phampo (near the present state farm) where the resident Living Buddha was his cousin. Together, they headed, making wide circles to avoid the PLA, for Nepal. There the Living Buddha's sister had married the Lo Gyalpo, a prince in an ethnically Tibetan area. On this complex odyssey, they had spent forty days in the saddle, covering over a thousand kilometres of hard country.

How did he come to return? Tsemen told us:

“At first I thought I couldn't go home again, that to do so would mean sure death. But soon my mother, wife and children in Lhasa, sent a servant to say that they were all right and I would be, too, if I came back. I loved and missed my family. But I was still afraid, so I sent back word that I would wait to decide. When I was already in Nepal, the servant came again, bringing a Military Control Commission pass to ensure my safe travel. Though still with some misgivings, I made up my mind and went home.

“Received in Lhasa by the PLA's Military Control Commission, I told them straight out what I had done during and after the revolt. They didn't pressure or denounce me. Instead, they explained the policy toward all rebels who voluntarily returned — not to arrest

them, kill them, or hold mass meetings to condemn them, and not to label them as 'reactionary'. What happened to me then and afterwards showed this to be true. My family was happy. So was I.

"I was put on the Lhasa Committee of the People's Political Consultative Conference, with a salary and full participation in its meetings and studies. My everyday job was in an office for the compilation of Tibetan historical documents, at first as a staff member, then with rank of adviser. I had always liked reading, particularly history, and understand the old texts. My new work suited my abilities and tastes."

What was his family doing?

"Tsering Dorje, my eldest son, is 26. After finishing middle school he worked in a veterinary station, then was sent to the Gansu Provincial Agricultural College, where he specialized in pastures. My second, Sonam Tsenden, now 24, went to the Tibet Nationalities' Institute branch college at Nyingchi; he works in construction. Two younger sons and a daughter are still in school.

"The policy that was applied to me will also apply to anyone who returns today, or does afterwards, however late. Abroad, many Tibetans don't know this, or doubt it, or still believe the contrary. Even so, I'm sure, they long for our own snow mountains and green valleys, our climate and our habits. This is home, after all. Many of them are in India. Hot and humid, physically it's no place for a Tibetan, and it's hard to earn a living. I know a lot of those people. Some were active rebels. Some weren't. Both would do well to come back."

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Of the upper strata personages, many had remained in Tibet by choice, from the start. The highest placed in the old society was Namdon Kunga Wangchuk, of ducal rank and nephew of the Thirteenth Dalai. Namdon was a *silon*, or regent in the local government, and his official rank-grade was higher than Ngapo's. Others at various levels include a *dzasa*, or a high official under the Panchen Erdeni, some Living Buddhas from major lamaseries such as Drepung

and Tashi Lhumpo and a regimental commander in the old Tibetan army.<sup>9</sup>

There were also notable later returns from abroad.

Dorje Phagmo, Tibet's only female Living Buddha and abbess of the famous Samding Temple on the shores of Yamdrok Lake, came back to Lhasa from Pakistan by way of Switzerland. Still a child when the People's Liberation Army first entered Tibet, she was influenced by the new life, and became homesick soon after she left. Now hardly out of her thirties, she too is a CPPCC vice-chairman in Tibet.

Pangta Yampel, senior member of one of Tibet's most important merchant families, the house of Pangta Chang, came back in 1963 after writing to Premier Zhou Enlai. Then over 70, he was made vice-chairman of the Tibet Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and remained so till his death.

Still another group were highly placed and active rebels who were imprisoned, changed during confinement, and were successively freed, with full citizenship rights. From having been enemies outside the scope of the united front, they were made into friends within it.

Thupten Thanthar, formerly a secretary of the Dalai, was one of the original signatories of the 17-article Agreement. Later he violated it by rebelling. Nonetheless, he was released in 1963 and given work and position.<sup>10</sup> In 1978, Thupten Thanthar was elected one of Tibet's deputies to the National People's Congress in Beijing.

Also released and brought into the ranks of people's unity was Lhalu Tsewang Dorje, a major rebel manorial lord, who in 1950 had headed a "trade mission" (really a quest for foreign backing of the serfowners' separatist schemes) to several Western countries. He was amnestied in 1965, removed from the classification of counter-revolutionary with its attendant curtailment of civic rights in 1977, and elected to the regional CPPCC in 1978.

Still others, mainly shunted aside or under attack during the cultural revolution, were restored or newly elected to this united front body at the same time. They included Tsuiko Dondrub Tsering, mayor of Lhasa under the Dalai Lama. Disabilities were also removed from Sampo Tsewang Rendzin, a former vice-commander of the old Tibetan army and Pangta Dorje, a big merchant and prominent

figure in the Khamba rebellion which preceded that of the Lhasa regime.

In 1979, Thupten Thanthar was one of the five vice-chairmen of the CPPCC in Tibet. Several other ex-nobles including Tsuiko, and high clerics of both the Yellow and Red Sects of Lamaism, were elected to its standing committee. So were Habib, the Imam of the Lhasa Mosque, and upper strata figures of smaller nationalities within Tibet.

In July 1980, a meeting was held in Lhasa to posthumously rehabilitate and honour three persons prominent in the united front until 1964 when they were, as it was now declared, wronged due to the influence of the 'Left' line. All had died of illness in the late 1970's. Two had been the Panchen Erdeni's close associates: Gyadong Jijigme, former director of the Panchen Kampo Lija, the traditional clerical-lay administration of the Xigazê area, and Nguchu Losang Choipel, the Panchen's scriptural teacher. The third was Tongyal Sonam Dorje, once a standing committee member of the CPPCC. Weight was lent to the meeting by the presence of Yang Jingren, China's Minister of Nationalities Affairs and Yin Fatang, head of the Tibet Regional Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. Presiding at it was Pebala Cholie Namgyal, vice-chairman of the Autonomous Region Government. Zhen Ying, head of united front work in Tibet, delivered a speech citing the three as patriots who had contributed to the peaceful liberation of Tibet and its socialist construction.

The Panchen Erdeni himself, since returning to public life in 1978, had moved from membership of the Standing Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference to its vice-chairmanship, and then to vice-chairmanship of the National People's Congress, China's highest organ of state power.

He also became honorary president of the Chinese Buddhist Association. In late 1980 and early 1981, in both his governmental and clerical capacities, he toured extensively the Tibetan-populated areas of Gansu and Qinghai provinces and was preparing to go to those in Sichuan. On his journeys, he heard reports from the provincial authorities and visited temples and monasteries. His statements, as

reported by Xinhua, urged all-round implementation of the Communist Party's policies on matters of nationality and religion (departures from which the cultural revolution he criticized). Equality among China's nationalities, and first of all political equality, he said, was the basis on which their unity rested. "China is the motherland of all our nationalities", he said. "Unity is strength. Five fingers clenched are stronger than any one finger."

Previously the Panchen Erdeni had visited Chengde (Jehol), some distance north of Beijing, once the summer residence of China's emperors, where he led prayers at a temple, modelled on the Tashi Lhumpo lamasery in Xigazê. This temple had been erected in 1780 by the emperor Qianlong to commemorate the sojourn at his court of the Sixth Panchen Erdeni. It was one of the many landmarks in other parts of China's nationalities in past centuries. In Beijing itself, with similar significance for Tibet, is an earlier one, the Huangsi (Yellow Temple), built in 1651 to mark the visit of allegiance of the Fifth Dalai Lama to the founding emperor of the Qing Dynasty, Shunzhi.

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"The aim of our united front is not only to mobilize all active forces, and isolate diehard enemies, but also to change negative or hostile elements, past or present, into positive ones," we were told in Lhasa.

"The serfowner class is the target — it is being eliminated. But do we want to wipe out its individual members? On the contrary, we try to win them to the unity of the People's Republic of China and of all its nationalities and to the work of socialist revolution and construction. We hope they can make contributions to the people. If any of them backslide, or engage in wrecking, the basis of unity is lost and we have to struggle. Even then, we do our utmost to win them back. To combine unity and struggle, to create a new basis for unity through struggle, is good for the consolidation of the proletarian dictatorship."

Party organizations at every level in Tibet were doing such work. The secretaries of the Regional Party Committee met personally with

the upper-strata figures. Many reports and political documents were open to them. They were given the opportunity to see things for themselves in Tibet and the rest of China. They were busy in many fields.

Tibet's archives include literally millions of papers civil and religious. The new atmosphere since the downfall of the "gang of four" has led to the expansion and acceleration of their study and use. A historical work reported in 1979 as being prepared for publication, was a political biography of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama (1876-1933), based on both archive material and the memories of contemporaries. Covering many crucial events and situations of the first third of our century, it should cast much new light on matters domestic and international. The compiler until his death was Namdon Gunga Wangchuk, a nephew of the Thirteenth Dalai. The latter had trained him for the post of *silon* (local prime minister) of Tibet, which Namdon had in fact held from 1926 to 1934.

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In the general sphere of adjusting class relations in Tibet, the united front department in 1978 ordered the rapid completion of all redemption payments still due to non-rebel ex-serfowners, whose feudal estates had been bought out, not confiscated outright as in the case of the rebels. The policy, laid down in 1959, had been to defray the purchase price by instalments over a number of years, on the same principle as the buying out of the industrial and commercial property of China's national capitalists. However, from 1967 on, in one of the distortions of the cultural revolution, such payments were discontinued all over the country. In Tibet, the balance due was about 7.7 million yuan, accruing to about 2,300 persons. Apart from monetary value, the reimbursement represented the kept promise of the working people and the socialist state to former exploiters who had observed their own undertaking not to oppose the revolution. In terms of class, the completion of payments terminated the status of the recipients as exploiters.

What about the children of persons from the upper strata? Some are attending universities. Some are cadres, teachers or workers. These young people have for some years not been classified as belong-

ing to the old ruling classes. Nor are they within the purview of united front work. Once they enter the work of society, they are on a par with other working people. It's not what their families were but who they are themselves that decides.

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The united front is open to all. As long ago as April 20, 1977, Ngapo Ngawang Jigme, speaking as Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China, said in an interview with a group of Japanese editors who had visited Tibet:

With regard to the Dalai Lama who escaped abroad during the 1959 rebellion and those who escaped with him, our Party's consistent policy is: All patriots are welcome, whether they come forward early or late. So long as they sincerely return to the embrace of the motherland and stand on the side of the people, the government and people will certainly make appropriate arrangements for their well-being.<sup>11</sup>

In 1978 and 1979 came many other invitations to the Dalai Lama to return. They came from Beijing and from Tibet. They were voiced by the former poor and oppressed who had risen to directing posts in the region like Tian Bao, Pasang, and by high clerics and others in the united front like the Panchen and Pebala.<sup>12</sup> He could come to stay if he wished, they said, or to visit, travel and decide afterwards if he wanted to remain or go back abroad.

The Dalai Lama himself has repeatedly indicated in recent years that he would not only return but abandon separatism if he was convinced that the people were "happy". On this point the Panchen Erdeni responded in December 1978: "I can assure you that the Tibetan people are . . . scores of times happier than in the old society."<sup>13</sup>

Some of the statements from Beijing and Lhasa also referred to difficulties made for the united front, under the influence of the "gang of four", and in particular its curtailments of constitutionally guaranteed religious freedoms. Such abuses, they said, would not recur.

The Dalai Lama, so far as can be judged from his own words

and acts, is feeling many pulls and considering various options. This reflects many changes in the objective situation. First, there are the firm new realities in Tibet. Second, there is ferment in the ranks of Tibetans abroad (for and against returning to their now socialist homeland). Third, the international environment is changing (with the improved relations of the People's Republic of China with the U.S.A., India and Britain, former backers of Tibetan separatism are no longer doing business at the old stand, or at any rate in the same way).

Throughout 1979-81, the self-exiled prelate continued to say, in essence, two things — yes, he was thinking of returning at some not necessarily distant time; but no, that time was not yet.

During that period, with his consent, Tibetans from the exile camp made at least three group journeys in 1978-80, besides which a number came as individuals, including two politically active brothers of the Dalai Lama — Gyalo Thondup and Thupten Norbu. They travelled to Tibet, to Tibetan areas in other provinces, and to Beijing. Their visits included not only much general observation but contacts with relatives and friends, down-to-earth discussion with leading personnel.

In other words, there is now contact with Tibetans abroad — which involves both moves toward unity and struggles along the way.

But separatist manoeuvres still go on in old and new forms and some of the latter seem to draw on new sources. Such was the formation of a "Tibetan Communist Party" based abroad and promptly recognized by the *kashag* in exile.

In 1979, the Dalai Lama, who had said previously that Soviet emissaries had been contacting him for a decade, travelled to an "Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace" convened in Ulan Bator, in the Mongolian People's Republic, and thereafter to the U.S.S.R. A major Indian newspaper, *The Hindu* of Madras, commented on May 20 that this showed Moscow's determination to prevent him from returning to China, and continued:

The Soviet attempt to exploit the Dalai Lama and involve him in its quarrel with China is considered a potentially

dangerous development in the sense that Moscow will not hesitate to take up the question of the status of Xinjiang and Tibet and encourage dissidence in these outer regions in the event of a wider confrontation with China.

This could have been a description of the imperialist policies of Czarist Russia (and of Britain and later the U.S.A.) earlier in the century — all of which, be it noted, had been condemned in their time by Lenin and by the Soviet Union, so long as it preserved Lenin's spirit.

And, also in 1979, came a confirmatory propaganda barrage from Moscow itself. Its most piquant example was a book entitled *The Coming Collapse of the Chinese Empire*, by Victor Louis, a Soviet journalist with reputed KGB links. It called explicitly for "a break-up of China along lines of nationality". (For other examples of this motif see Appendix III, pp. 516-520.)

In such world circumstances, the importance of the united front for Tibet's progress and for the sovereignty and integrity of multinational China stands out even more boldly. Clear too is the fact that both internally and internationally, despite the appearance of new instigators, the tide is running against Tibetan separatism. First, this separatism has never appeared in modern times outside the context of imperialist expansion and efforts to divide up China. Second, its new eggheads and backers have appeared when the governments hitherto foremost in the game have already found — albeit sometimes voluntarily and not without backsliding — that it does not pay. So, ultimately, will their belated imitators.

The united front, on the contrary, is solidly and realistically grounded. With the further progress in Tibet's advance and renewal, as part of all China's it is bound to grow and consolidate. Complexities and obstacles still beset its path. But already it has a broader base, is more many-sided and successful than ever before.

Many Tibetans now living abroad will undoubtedly return (the number of those doing so is growing). Many others, though continuing to live outside, are already visiting, not only in reported groups

but individually, to see their families (recent travellers have encountered them in shops, on public buses and so on). They can be expected to form closer ties with their homeland as it moves forward, whether they choose to stay or not.

While the Dalai Lama continues to ponder his future course, the invitation to him continues open. In the spring of 1982, when this book was going to press, it was again reiterated by Tibet Regional Party Secretary Yin Fatang.

Given the continuance of sound policies, separatism is bound to fade and unity to prevail. This is the tide of history, conforming to the interests of the Tibetans, as of all the other peoples of China. It conforms, also, to the interests of neighbouring countries. For so long as Tibet is a target of any superpower intrigue, they themselves run the peril of being used as stepping-stones and catspaws.

## CHAPTER 18

# NACHI: KHAMBA SERF TEACHER TO LHASA ARISTOCRATS

I came to meet Nachi through Anna Louise Strong. In 1959 when the veteran American writer first interviewed her she was a student in the Institute for Nationalities in Beijing, returning with others to Tibet to take part in the great transformation that followed the suppression of the serfowners' revolt. Visiting Lhasa some months later, Strong saw Nachi again. The young woman was working — an unheard of thing for her sex — in Jokhang Temple, the most revered in the land, helping the poor lamas there take over from the rebel higher clergy and organize their own democratic administration. Six years later in 1965, Anna Louise Strong urged me in Beijing: "If you can find Nachi in Lhasa be sure and look her up. Give her my regards, and find out what she has been doing since we last met."

I did, and I am glad, for it led me to another previously unimaginable but dialectically logical feature of Tibet transformed, the serfs, now the leading class, helping former aristocrats to find their place in the new life that belongs to the people.

Nachi's earlier story can be read in Miss Strong's books,<sup>1</sup> but I shall recapitulate it briefly here. Born a serf in Batang, Sichuan Province, she is a "Khamba" (eastern Tibetan). U.S. and British newspapers have long made the very word "Khamba" synonymous with "rebel", but that is partly ignorance and mostly mendacity. For in

fact, the Khambas were the first Tibetans to experience democratic reform, as well as attempted counter-revolution by the feudal lords and those they could drag with them. Khamba faced Khamba in complex class struggle and Khambas were trained as revolutionary cadres before other Tibetans. Nachi is an example.

The Lhasa area did not have local Communist Party organizations until 1959, after the end of serfdom. In Batang there were Tibetan Communists a decade earlier. They headed the people in driving out Kuomintang officials, and set up their own local administration. In 1950, when the PLA arrived, young Khambas joined it as fighters and auxiliaries. Nachi, at 18, began helping in a military hospital. She accompanied the PLA to the Qamdo battle in 1950 and on to Lhasa the next year. When Anna Louise Strong asked her if the march was not too tough for a girl so young, she replied: "When I was ten I had to carry my mistress on my back. No work the army gave me was as hard as that."

On that march she learned by experience the new brotherhood of China's nationalities. "When we camped in a swampy place and there was a small dry place," she said, "the Han fighters gave the dry place to their Tibetan helpers and themselves slept in the damp places. When it was a steep, rocky place and there was a small flat place, they gave the small flat place to us. I had never had even imagined people like that."

By the time she arrived in Lhasa, this ex-serf girl no longer took feudal oppression for granted. Her reaction to its horrors was indignant, beginning to be that of a revolutionary. "I saw old and sick people lying on the steps of the Potala Palace, begging food from passers-by," she recalled. "I saw packs of homeless dogs hunting food by day and night in the streets. At night, these old sick people would grasp a mangy dog and hold it to their bodies to keep them warm. But a noble would come into the streets in fine silks and furs and with many servants, one to carry his teapot and others to carry the other things he wanted. So I began to understand that the great misery of the people came from this class outrage, that a few nobles had everything while the people could not even stay alive."

Later, Nachi was sent to study in Beijing. After the rebellion

she returned, as she put it, "to work for Tibet's rebirth." The United Front Department of the Working Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in Tibet directed her to the Jokhang Temple.

"I was a little afraid at first," said Nachi, "for from childhood I had had an uncanny feeling about lamas and monasteries. Long ago I had believed that lamas were holy and had special powers. Now I myself was assigned to help lead these lamas out of dark oppression. But the second day . . . I was no longer afraid. I saw that the poor lamas had suffered very much like other poor people. They had had to work like slaves for the upper lamas. . . . They were flogged and tortured like serfs. Their life was no better than mine had been long ago when I ran away."

She worked for months among these monkish masses, those who had been inveigled into the rebellion and those who had not. She helped them to "speak out their bitterness" and to organize a democratic administration for their temple. She explained to them the new, strange words "freedom of person," and that they could stay in the monastic life or, if they wished, leave it. Some did so, going back to agriculture or becoming workers or school teachers. Not a few married and began to raise families.

The last thing Nachi said to Anna Louise Strong in 1959 was that, after her assignment in the Jokhang, she hoped to work among the ex-serfs in the division of the serfowners' land. But it was not to be. On the Party's instructions, she continued in united front work, which she has done ever since.

In the intervening years, she had married and had three children. When I met her, she was no longer the excited student but a mature, young woman nearing thirty, intelligent and articulate.

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After leaving the Jokhang, Nachi told me in 1965, she was made an organizer of studies for "upper strata friends", meaning nobles who had not joined the revolt.

"How did you feel about that?" I asked.

"At first I felt awful," she said. "They were exploiters and I wanted to be with our labouring people. But the Party explained why

the work was important. On the one hand, in the past, these nobles had done with us as they liked, just like those who had rebelled. But it was also a fact that they had not taken up arms and were not among those actively resisting reform. So now our duty was to bring them further along this other road, to help them alter and get rid of their exploiting habits, to help them to fit in with the people. I learned then that I must not be guided only by elemental class hatred but by our class task of transforming the world. That includes transforming human beings.

“Once people like me had been forbidden to look at these aristocrats. We had had to bow to them and obey their every whim. Now we were at the helm. If not for the Party and Chairman Mao would it be possible for me to lead them in study? I came to look on it as an honourable duty. I’m a Party member. We Communists understand class. We know it is difficult for such people to change their outlook, and to understand our Party’s ideas and policies. To move them forward, I would need to study a great deal. Our Party teaches, ‘In order to remould others, one must first remould oneself.’

“As you can imagine, it was hard for me, with so little education. Once, in studying current world events, some nobles began to talk of happenings and names I had no idea of. That night, I went home with a stone in my heart. ‘I’m not equipped for this. Send me to other work,’ I asked my department head. He said that I understood Party policies and the revolution, which was the key thing. The rest was a matter of information, which I could get by doing more reading, equipping myself as I went along.

“My mind cleared. This was a battle, too, to be met, not run away from. Of course, we ex-serfs, so long kept illiterate, could not be expected to know everything in the world right off. But we could learn. More, we *had* to learn, if we, the people, were to run Tibet. When some nobles in my study group tried to stump me with hard questions, I knew they were thinking, ‘Now let’s see if you beggars, who now try to be masters, really know anything?’ Well, I thought, let’s see about that. You try to mock us but you can’t. In the long run, there’s nothing the working people can’t learn.

“Our united front work is a class struggle of a special kind,

after our victory. It's easier than when the serfowners had power of life and death over us. But also it is more complex. We describe as friends the aristocrats who are law-abiding. While they remain so, we Communists must explain our principles and measures to them, and help them to see the future. Are they sincere? Not all. Not always. Often there is one thing on their lips and something different in their hearts and minds. But facts are strong things, after all. Facts persuade. At first, for example, few of them believed we would really differentiate between rebels and non-rebels. But gradually they came to see that we meant it. Whoever did not obstruct and was willing to do beneficial work got good treatment, politically and economically. They knew this was generous. They knew what they had done to us in the past. By degrees, many of them came closer to the Party.

"Most of the upper-strata people in my groups we classify as patriotic. They show happiness at the emergence of Tibet from its old backwardness. Before, they cared only for themselves and their own position. Now they know something of the harm that did to our nationality. The new progress amazes them. Some say, 'Who would ever believe Lhasa could change so fast? The *kashag* never repaired a single house. Even its own council rooms in the Jokhang were dark and smelly. They are shaken in their old idea that only they, the five per cent, the masters, have any ability. Now they see ex-serf cadres doing all sorts of jobs well, ex-serf actors and singers, all sorts of able people among those who were treated like cattle before 1959. So many of them are saying, 'What the Communists say they'll do, they actually do.' They're beginning to understand that history won't turn back. Of course, there are a few who shut their eyes and ears completely, and will be reconciled to the defeat of their rule. But most are beginning to trust the Party. In general, their everyday life is no worse than before. For some it is better. Some upper-strata youth, in particular, have acquired progressive attitudes and ideas."

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"What changes in Tibet impressed you, yourself, most in these years?" I asked Nachi.

For a moment she thought, then flushed as she said, "This year's elections.<sup>2</sup> At a meeting in our own ward in Lhasa, I got gooseflesh from excitement. Looking at the working people turning out in their best clothes, I suddenly recalled those scenes in the city when I first came. No decent clothes. No food fit for human beings. No rights even over their own bodies. Now they were choosing their own representatives. Ex-serfs and people of other classes, everyone had the vote, everyone except those guilty of counter-revolutionary acts.

"That was the most moving thing. Another was the 1962 meeting of the Autonomous Region People's Consultative Council — seeing the many poor sitting with the few ex-nobles. Delegate after delegate got up to say, 'I never dreamed of coming to Lhasa, never dreamed of sitting on such fine rugs, never dreamed of having my views heard on the future of all Tibet.'

"And the third thing, the construction. You've been to our big new Lhasa Department Store, seen all the people buying. There used to be nothing but stinking pools where it now stands, with beggars lying by them. It takes an effort, now, to remember what it was like. When I first went to the store I took along an old woman from my home town, Batang. She said to me, 'You remember, Nachi, when you came to Lhasa straight from school and we were still half-starved and you said, 'Just wait, there'll be buses, and shops and roads here and all for us.' Then I laughed at you and asked, 'Are you a fairy, or what, that you can see the future?' Well, now I know. You young folk *are* fairies.'

"That old woman also talked about the way the city is run — the cleanliness and the social order. 'The *kashag* with its whips and sticks couldn't keep order in Lhasa,' she said. 'There were crimes every day. Now you manage without whips or sticks, it's a marvel.'

"In villages around the city," Nachi went on, "the people are predicting, 'There'll be another bumper crop this year.' This summer there was hail, and we cadres were very worried. But the peasants said to us, 'No hail can get us down now.' They have become more confident than we. We cadres must learn from them."

"How does what happened since 1959 compare with what you expected when you left the Institute?"

“I had studied a bit, but did not have enough experience of struggle. Hearing of the rebellion when we were still in Beijing, we students were furious. Our idea was to rush back to Tibet, liberate it fully, and put it on the socialist road just like the rest of China in no time at all. When we came, the power was already in the people’s hands, but there were concrete problems such as we hadn’t imagined. The first thing was grain. There wasn’t enough in Tibet. Even today, all grain eaten in the army and offices comes from inland — which means the other nationalities grow it for us. To catch up with the interior isn’t so easy, there’s much hard work to be done. But once the proper base is laid, things move fast, as I’ve told you. From now on, they’ll move even more quickly.

“When I tell my three children that my own mother carried me naked next to her skin under her rags, they can hardly understand. I look at them and think ‘How could I have brought you up in the old society. Probably I would not have been in this world at all, but dead of disease or under the serfowner’s whip. Now we have good food and clothes. We have clean surroundings. We have the Party which means we’ll never stop going forward.

“I often sing at work. People say to me, ‘You’re a mother of three, not a youngster, what’s got into you?’ But I remember the time when, even if I had thought of singing, it wouldn’t have come out of my mouth. So I sing.”

*This conversation took place in 1965.*

# **INDUSTRY AND WORKERS**

## CHAPTER 19

# INDUSTRY — FROM NONE TO SOCIALIST

Tibet when liberated in 1951 had no machine industry, no working class. The only semblance of a factory was the Dalai's mint which struck silver and copper coins by hand-hammering on dies and had local government serfs as workers. A tiny electric light plant of 100 kws. or so, built by the British and serving only the aristocracy, was in disrepair; its serf electrician, I was told later by his son, was in jail for failure to fix it. Such was the profile of old Tibet's industrial and, more especially, social backwardness.

The social lag was responsible for the industrial. Handicraft skills, including metalwork, had existed from ancient times in Tibet. But blacksmiths were at the lowest level of society, social outcasts even among the serfs. Minerals were plentiful. But to dig deep for them was forbidden as "sacrilege" against the earth. The wheel, in old Tibet, was not used in transport. Yet prayer wheels, some twirled or pushed by hand, were so ingeniously made and well balanced that a mild shove would turn a half-ton monster. Some in fact were moved by water power. But the only lay application of water power was to turn grain mills, owned by manorial lords who charged heavily for their use.

Striking indeed were the changes since then. From prayer wheels to electric generator-and-motor sets made in Tibet. From dried yak-dung as the main fuel to coal-mining, test drilling for oil

and initial use of geothermal and solar power. From handcrafted metal to the manufacture of farm machinery. From home spinning and weaving to factory production of woollen fabrics. From scraping hides by hand and trampling them barefoot in the tanning bath to machine-processed leather and products. From paper made manually one sheet at a time to factories turning out giant rolls. From page-by-page printing of religious texts with inked woodblocks and hand rollers to rotary presses producing millions of newspapers and books mostly in Tibetan, each year. But the change that underlies all else is that of social relations in production. Scattered handicraftsmen working as serfs and slaves under feudalism have been succeeded not only by free artisans mainly grouped in co-operatives but also by a small but growing new working class, the vanguard of socialist society, growingly engaged in mechanized or semi-mechanized industry.

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In 1955, when I first went to Tibet, two of the great arterial highways stretching for thousands of kilometres from the interior of China were already completed. Motor transport had begun. But the industrial picture, like the social, remained largely unchanged. Lhasa's derelict old power station, though patched up, still had a generating capacity of only 125 kilowatts. Of new factories, so far as I remember, there were only two. The Dalai Lama, at his own request, had been presented with a small rug workshop using simple equipment made by People's Liberation Army mechanics. And the new four-page tabloid *Brief News*, Tibet's first newspaper, was running 3,000 copies per issue off a flat press, one of the first machines brought in by road.

China's central government, with Premier Zhou Enlai directly supervising, was studying how to advance productive techniques in Tibet. A small survey group of planners, engineers and technicians was looking into the region's hydraulic and geological resources. It was proposing, for a start, three new enterprises — a small hydroelectric plant to power small industries, a leather factory to process hides and a small iron works for hand farm tools — with only 500 workers in all. But even to such a tiny plan the social obstacles were formidable. Apart from the "untouchability" of blacksmiths and tanners

and the taboos against mining, the consent of the feudal local authorities had to be obtained for each undertaking, its location, and the recruitment of labour. On the new power station site at Dodi there were ten watermills operated by nobles who had to be persuaded and paid off. On the way were many cairns held to be sacred, around which access roads had to detour. For every project, the local government would appoint its own officials-in-charge. Only they were allowed to find Tibetan workers and to administer them, except in purely technical matters.

Wages, in themselves innovative in Tibet, were paid by the Central People's Government. On this, the latter had to insist. The local regime wanted the labour to be taken as feudal service to avoid any crack in the existing class relations. But even with wages the workers were still serfs in personal status. They could retain little of their pay. Most of it would end up in the hands of their masters and the officials.

Only after the democratic reform of 1959, which smashed the feudal shackles on both technology and people, did things really begin to move.

Subsequent growth can be seen from the tables that follow. It compares the situations in 1958, the last year before the democratic reform, 1965, the last year of the democratic revolution, and 1975-76, early in the socialist phase.

By 1977, industry accounted for 27 per cent of the total output (reckoned in money value) of agricultural, pastoral and industrial products in Tibet. The figure for the working class in Tibet was given as 74,642, of whom 36,745 were Tibetans or members of smaller nationalities within the region (by 1978, according to a trade union report, their number had risen to some 40,000). It did not include commune members working temporarily on construction sites and earning work-points instead of wages.

Before the democratic revolution new factories were manned mainly by Han workers brought from the interior, who were not subject to feudal control. As a result of the democratic revolution after 1959, Tibetan workers multiplied. And in the following decade their

## FACTORIES AND FACTORY WORKERS IN TIBET\*

| <i>Year</i>  | <i>Factories</i> | <i>All Workers</i> | <i>Tibetan Workers</i> |
|--|------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1958   | 23               | 4,050              | 600                    |
| 1965   | 67               | 7,000              | 3,100                  |
| 1975   | 250              | 21,000             | 11,000                 |
| 1976   | 265              | —                  | —                      |
| % increase in<br>democratic<br>reform years:<br>1959-65      | 105              | 70                 | 675                    |
| % increase in<br>socialist<br>construction years:<br>1965-76 | 207              | 200                | 275                    |

\* Workers here are only those in factories and mines. In 1975-76 there were as many again in transport (including highway construction, repair and maintenance as well as driving) and still others in power-station construction, geological surveying, non-agricultural co-operatives, etc.

PERCENTAGE OF INDUSTRY IN TOTAL OUTPUT  
(BY VALUE) OF TIBET'S ECONOMY

| <i>Year</i> | <i>Increase</i> |
|-------------|-----------------|
| 1958        | 8               |
| 1965        | 22              |
| 1976        | 25              |

number grew almost twice as fast as that of the Han labour force, which also increased substantially. Some larger factories, in branches of industry totally new for Tibet, were brought in bodily from Shanghai and elsewhere. In these, the proportion of Hans was at first high, but it dropped gradually as Tibetans were trained.

Initial growth in the variety of Tibet's industrial products is shown by the list below (*italics* indicate items already produced in 1965).

| <i>PRODUCTION GOODS</i>        | <i>CONSUMER GOODS</i>             |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Electric power                 | Leatherware (machine made)        |
| Coal                           | Carpets and rugs                  |
| Cement                         | Printed books                     |
| Processed timber               | Machine-made woollen cloth        |
| Small farm implements          | Knitting wool                     |
| Truck parts                    | Milk products (factory-processed) |
| Steel ploughs                  | Paper                             |
| Threshers, winnowers, etc.     | Ceramics (machine-made)           |
| Tractor parts                  | Medicinal drugs                   |
| Walking tractors               | Electric batteries                |
| Generators and electric motors | Matches                           |
| Electric sheep shears          | Soap                              |
| Chemical fertilizers           | Beet sugar                        |
| Insecticide (666)              | Processed foods                   |
| Hunting guns                   | Glass containers                  |

The list is still short. But for Tibet, where nothing at all was being made by machine before the middle 1950's, it represents a qualitative change. In size, all enterprises now operating in Tibet are still moderate. The largest has some 1,500 workers. Several have around 500, and the others less. Plants and mines requiring heavy equipment and bulk transport will only develop following the building of a trunk railway into the region.

In funding, Tibet's new industry is a virtual gift to its people, through the central government, from the people of the rest of the country. Among the factories we saw in 1976, only a handful were already returning profits to the state.

For consumers, all industrial products in Tibet, whether made locally or moved in, were kept low in price. For electric power, the charge to agricultural units was five *fen* (about three U.S. cents) per kilowatt hour, to industry seven *fen*, and to urban households 15 *fen*, all less than elsewhere in China.<sup>1</sup> Agricultural machines were supplied to communes and teams at about half their cost of production, and

sometimes as an outright gift. Consumer goods made outside the region retailed at the same price as in Beijing. The cost of transport over thousands of kilometres by road or air, as well as of any damage en route, was shouldered by the state.

The goal, however, was self-support, as already achieved elsewhere in China.

The priorities in industrial development, in 1976, were: electric-power, coal and other fuels, making and repairing machines for agriculture, construction materials and of course transport.

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Tibet has its own "energy crisis" to solve. Industries can't run on yak-dung or juniper bushes, the old local fuels. But there is water power potential in virtually every valley, in rivers or mountain streams. And, once highways were built, turbines could be brought in, though not large ones.

In 1956, the 660-kw. Dodi Power Station was started in Lhasa, mainly for lighting. Two years later, at Ngachen outside the city, another was begun, of 7,300-kw. designed capacity, mainly to help industry. But the local regime, though feigning consent, obstructed the effort. Only after the suppression of the 1959 rebellion did the construction, including a fair-sized dam to create a fall in the Lhasa river, really go forward. In April 1960, two of the six scheduled turbo-generators began work. It was a political as well as an economic victory. Premier Zhou Enlai sent special congratulations from abroad where he was on tour.

The pioneer stations also trained Tibetan workers and technicians from the ranks of former serfs, slaves and young lamas. By 1976 Dodi was headed by the Tibetan woman ex-slave, Drolma Yangdzom (whom I met as a newly-trained technician in 1965) and the bigger Ngachen Power Station by another, Tsuijin Ching.

By 1976, too, state-run electric power stations with a combined generating capacity of 25,000 kilowatts were operating at Lhasa, Xigazê, Loka, Nyingchi and other places. (By late 1982 these and newer ones on tributaries of the Yarlung Zangbo had a combined capacity of 36,200 kw.) Many factories were generating their own

power. Forty-four of the counties had their own more modest plants. Very small ones, run by communes and production teams, were far more numerous.

The latter are of inestimable importance, not only for production but culturally. By day they provide power for threshers, winnowers, fodder crushers and other farm machines. By night they give light for home use, meetings and reading rooms, political, literacy and technical classes and amateur dramatics. They also make possible local broadcasting, rediffusion, and film showings by visiting projection teams. For Tibet's rural life, these are profound transformations.

By the end of 1978 there were 500 such mini-power stations in the region, and by mid-1981 about 900 with more rapidly going up. They, together with larger ones, were supplying current to about 1,300 work teams (in Tibet the work team is the unit immediately below the commune), about a seventh of the regional total. Altogether, more than twice as much electricity was being generated in Tibet as in 1976, with new increases projected. The village-level "smalls" added about 10,000 kilowatts of capacity to the larger ones in county and prefectural towns, as well as in Lhasa. In 1981, the generating capacity of hydropower stations in the region was 76,900 kilowatts (as compared with some 10,000 in 1965). The actual electricity supplied in 1980 was 175 million kilowatt-hours (as compared with 30.4 million in 1965).

Because water power, though abundant, is not everywhere constant due to reduced flow in the winter, some new stations run on coal, others will use oil. At Yangbajain (a pastureland) north of Lhasa, an experimental geothermal installation with a generating capacity of 1,000 kw. was built in 1977, and a second, larger station (6,000 kw.) was under construction in 1981. The drilling team that pioneered this project, headed by a Tibetan worker named Sogyal, has won regional and China-wide awards for triumphing over great difficulties, including a blow-out of scalding steam. Exploration and drilling continues, and, with scores of geothermal sites already discovered, Tibet is likely to make widespread use of such power.

For future harnessing, as possibilities and needs expand, there

is the great Yarlung Zangbo. In power-potential, estimated at 200 million kilowatts, it is second in China only to the Changjiang, and in the front ranks of the world's great rivers.<sup>2</sup>

Helping to speed the building of rural power stations and agricultural mechanization in Tibet is the small but growing Regional Electrical Machinery Plant in Lhasa. Opened in 1972, by 1976 it had turned out more than 1,200 generators and small motors (5.5 horsepower for threshers, winnowing machines and irrigation pumps), was starting on rural small power station sets consisting of a 40 horsepower turbine and 20-kilowatt generators, and preparing to produce generators of up to 200 kilowatts and a range of transformers. An insulator factory was planned. In a few years it was hoped to have at least one local power station, with complementary machinery, in each of Tibet's 1,900 or so communes.

Coal, previously not known in Tibet, was found in the mid-1950's at Tumengala in the cold, treeless north. Extraction began after the democratic reform in 1959, with the aid of miners from the inland provinces. The first Tibetan miners in history were trained there. By 1976, coal was also being mined in Qamdo in the east, Donggar near Lhasa, Xigazê and Ngari in the west. Counties, state farms and other units were sinking their own small pits. However, the total number of regular miners, now mostly Tibetans, was only a thousand or so. In February 1978 the Xinhua News Agency reported a 26 per cent rise in coal output in a single year.

A snag is that Tibetan coal so far found is unsuitable for coking, and thus for the smelting of Tibet's iron ore, which is of a very high grade. However, it has found some industrial as well as household uses. It provides raw material for the Lhasa cement works. Concrete buildings, bridges, culverts and dams now use Tibet-made cement.

Coal miners include women. We found them not only working but managing a shaft, small but well ventilated and electrically lit, at Phampo state farm, about 4,000 metres above sea level. Banners in the mine office were embroidered with slogans, "Throw aside taboos!" and "Women comrades can do what men can!" And so they were — blasting, tunnelling, digging and transporting the coal. It was a striking sign of the new.

Reserves of oil have been located.

Solar energy has been in small-scale use for a decade in cooking devices and heating piped water. Other applications are being experimented with. Most areas in Tibet get some 3,000 hours of sunlight annually, more than double the amount in Beijing, itself a sunny city. The low level of air density, humidity and dust further add to the utilizable solar energy.<sup>3</sup> It will certainly be put to greater use.

In a region short of mineral and woody fuels, with big hydro-power projects still limited by lack of investment funds and infrastructure, small hydropower confined to valleys and geothermal sources rather scattered, solar heat, available even in extensive high pastures where the only fuel now in use is yak-dung, is marked for a great role. Experiments have shown that, under Tibetan conditions, a one square metre solar panel can heat five kilogrammes of water even on a clear winter day, and two square metres can bake 2.5 kg. of unleavened bread per hour in an oven heated to 240°C. Small portable combined ovens and water heaters, designed especially for rural use, can enable the Tibetan, wherever he is, to make his favourite beverage of butter-tea and keep himself and his clothes clean. Also successful experimentally are small solar generators for mountain-top army posts and electrified fences for sheep and yak-corrals in the pastures. Solar dwellings are being designed for villages and for hot-houses to grow vegetables during the long season of frosts. These things, in time, will make a great difference to Tibetan everyday life.

Wind power has also been harnessed experimentally in some places, offering another energy source for the future.

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Tibet's new communes, with greatly increased crops and other concerns straining their sparse manpower, are in particular need of labour-saving farm tools and machines.

Tibet in the late 1970's established a special local government department for expanding its farm equipment industry. Hundreds of machine-tools — lathes, planers, grinders, drills and metal presses and shears — have been supplied by the state to factories at regional,

municipal, prefectural and county levels. Scores of their workers go each year to colleges and cognate enterprises elsewhere in China, to be trained as farm-machine engineers and technicians. Besides the new Agricultural and Animal Husbandry College at Nyingchi, 17 industrial schools at the plant level give such courses. On the job, the skilled teach the unskilled. When any unit meets technical problems it cannot itself solve, it consults or temporarily exchanges personnel with others in the same field.

The Lhasa Farm Machinery Plant is Tibet's largest. As distinct from the few transplanted from the interior, it grew up step by step from local crafts in the course of the democratic and socialist revolution. In 1961, small mutual-aid teams of ex-serf craftsmen were combined into a city-wide Metal and Wood-working Co-operative with 140 members, making simple tools and household utensils. In 1970, the co-op combined with another, which had repaired bicycles, to become the present municipal factory.

In 1976, the plant had 167 workers, 70 per cent Tibetans. The others were Hans, some specially sent to help by a farm-machine plant in the far northern province of Heilongjiang, at the other end of China, plus school graduates who volunteered to help build the frontier regions. The latter, as novices, were apprenticed to Tibetan workers. The factory's five shops had Tibetan heads or vice-heads. Also Tibetan were the two vice-chairmen of the Factory Revolutionary Committee. One, Phuntso Tashi, aged 35, was the son of the serf electrician whom the serfowner regime had jailed for failure to repair the Dalai Lama's derelict British-built power plant, and the PLA had rescued. The other, Phuntso Dondrub, 48, an ex-slave from rural Loka, had made his first contact with the revolution as a road-builder, been sent inland to study and returned in 1959 to help suppress the serfowner revolt. The factory had 37 members of the Communist Party and 46 of the Communist Youth League; together comprising more than half the work force. Most were Tibetans.

The range of products had grown, in a few years, from hand or animal-drawn implements alone to power-driven threshers. Initial output in 1970 was 20 a month, by 1976 it was 60. Repairs to farm

machines, including tractors and diesel engines, were done in the factory and by technical teams sent out to communes in several counties. Seven workers had graduated from colleges in the interior and returned as technicians. Twenty-two were studying in the factory's own "July 21" college.

In Xigazê Prefecture, we found a plant with 135 workers whose 1976 output included 330 threshing and 70 winnowing machines, all power-driven, plus diesel engines, pumps and animal-powered water-wheels. In addition, its field teams had repaired over 10,000 items of farm equipment and trained 340 technicians for the communes and production teams.

It had grown from a handicraft co-op with 40 workers, mostly formerly oppressed and despised blacksmiths. Its site was right next to the famed Tashi Lhumpo Temple, traditional seat of the Panchen Lamas. Many of the workers had been boy monks there, until they left in the democratic reform. Among these was Urgyan, assistant chief of production, a heavy-shouldered man of 34 with deliberate movements and a ready smile. Urgyan looked an industrial worker born and bred — you would pick him as such in Chicago or Pittsburgh. But his history was very much that of a worker in Tibet, with quite different beginnings.

"I was given to the lamasery at six, because my father and mother couldn't feed me," he said. "I stayed in there till I was 17, sweeping floors, doing washing and carrying water. In 1960, in the reform, I returned to my parents and herded sheep. Then I came here. I started as a stoker, then learned machining. In the factory I learned to read and write — in the lamasery no one had taught me to do either. Now I have my own home, a wife and four children. In 1973 I entered the Party."

He introduced us to more ex-lamas from Tashi Lhumpo — a circular-saw operator in the wood-working shop and others.

In Loka Prefecture, south of Lhasa, we saw a similar farm machinery plant. There are others in Qamdo and Zhamo to the east.

In 1976, through co-operation among related factories, walking

tractors were being trial produced. Most of the parts, including some 70 per cent of engine components, were made in Tibet, we were told.

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The new and rapidly growing industrial centre of Tibet is Nyingchi (Linzhi in the Han pronunciation), about 400 kilometres east of Lhasa. It lies within Tibet's forest area, which ensures raw material for its sawmills and paper and match factory, as well as construction material and fuel. Through it runs the blue Nyang River, studded with dazzling-white pebbly shoals. Its swift waters provide Nyingchi's electric power. Flanking the valley are steep wooded slopes, those facing north dark with pine and fir, those on the south light green with many types of deciduous trees. Clouds are trapped here to create mild, humid weather, unusual in Tibet, and good for textile manufacture. The altitude of 2,800 metres, a thousand metres below the high-plateau average, makes easier conditions for builders, installers, technicians and workers coming from China's interior. The Sichuan-Tibet Highway, connecting the national transport network with the regional, brings production equipment from Han provinces and raw materials from the Tibetan hinterland.

Contrasting with many factories in Lhasa and Xigazê, which grew from handicraft co-ops formed during the democratic reform, most of those in Nyingchi were built during Tibet's socialist revolution. In fact the town as seen today came into existence only in 1966. In 1955, when I first passed through, the place had a few hundred people. Today it counts 15,000, mainly workers.

Here is located the Tibet Woollen Mill, now the region's largest, most modern factory. Its construction was a watershed, initiating the industrial processing within the region of one of its main resources. Historically, the trade in Tibetan wool<sup>4</sup> was long a microcosm of feudal-plus-imperialist exaction. The manorial lords, lay and clerical, secured wool from the herdsmen as feudal duty or by forced unequal exchange (for example, a few ounces of Indian candy for a fleece). Also as a feudal service, pastoral serfs had to transport wool to markets across the Himalayas. From all this, the Tibetan exploiters coined much wealth. Even so, the buyers from the industrial West, and

the Indian merchants who were the middlemen paid far less than the world price, with fat profits resulting. In reverse, the Tibetan aristocrats, who had begun to wear the most expensive British-made woollen textiles as a status symbol, bought these at prices which, by the time they reached Tibet over the Himalayas through many hands, had become astronomical. All the money involved, whether it flowed into the serfowners' coffers from wool exports, or flowed out again for imports of English cloth, was in the last analysis wrung from the pastoral serf — who walked in rags.

After the region's liberation, and in particular the opening of the highway to Sichuan in 1954, the price paid for Tibetan wool was put up and the price for goods from outside the region brought down. This was the policy of China's state trading organization which purchased wool at 1.70 yuan per kilogramme, 54 per cent more than had been obtained from buyers in India (about 1.10 yuan). After the democratic reform, the proceeds began to go directly to the ex-serf producers. The establishment of the Nyingchi plant ushered in a further change. Today the bulk of Tibet's wool is spun and woven on the spot into good, durable cloth and blankets for the working people, who have become a market. Hardly any raw wool leaves Tibet, but certain woollen products do. Apart from selling elsewhere in China, some go abroad through the twice-a-year Export Commodities Fair at Guangzhou (Canton).

In Tibet in 1955, I saw wool going down to India in long yak caravans belonging to the aristocrats, the trading departments of the big lamaseries and the semi-feudal merchant houses. Average annual export (not including the substantial amounts from Ngari in western Tibet) was 30,000 yak loads or about 1.8 million kilogrammes. In 1965, on my second visit, whatever wool was not woven in homes and handicraft co-ops within the region went for factory-processing to the interior provinces. In 1976, I saw towering truckloads of fleeces driven, scores at a time, toward the Nyingchi mill. In the first nine months of that year, it turned out 310,000 metres of woollen cloth and blankets, and 235,000 kilogrammes of knitting yarn. Much of the cloth was *pulo*, the tight-woven virtually wind and waterproof fabric suited to Tibetan customs and weather, and previously loomed only by hand.

Blanket brands included the all-wool "Panda", much liked throughout China. Among the export products was a very high grade overcoating — warm, light and silk-soft — woven from the underhair of the yak and eagerly sought on the world market.

Also a regional first is the Nyingchi Match Factory, set up in 1966. A decade later it was making two million boxes of matches a year. Elderly Tibetans could recall ten boxes of matches being exchanged for a sheep, and 20 for a slave. Middle-aged ones could remember matches from India selling at the equivalent of 40 cents (U.S.) per box, impossible for Tibetan working people to pay. Today, Nyingchi matches, well-made, attractively labelled in Tibetan and designed to strike and burn reliably even in the windy high pastures, cost one cent (U.S.) a box. The very name for matches has changed. Once known as *madza*, a corruption of the English word, they are now called *djagcha*.

This factory when we saw it still had a "frontier" air. While production was by machine, many of its 195 workers (half of them Tibetan) went out in winter, with diesel-powered chain saws, to fell trees for raw material in nearby forests.

The Regional Paper Mill at Nyingchi, built in 1970, raised output from 150 to 600 tons in its first six years. In 1976 it had 270 workers (two-thirds Tibetans, half of them women) and was supplying most of Tibet's writing and packaging paper — including extra-strong kraft bags for Lhasa cement. Newsprint paper, however, still came from outside. To develop its manufacture was the next task, involving a changeover from chemical to mechanical pulp.

Nyingchi also had what was at the time Tibet's most modern book-printing press, set up in 1970-71 (previously most regional book-printing had been done in the *Tibet Daily* plant in Lhasa).<sup>5</sup> Well-equipped shops did type-casting, type-setting, photogravure, printing and binding. In 1971-75 over 10 million books (372 titles) were printed here. About seven million were in Tibetan with school texts pre-dominating.

In 1979, in addition to wool and leather, Tibet's other great pastoral product, milk, began to be factory-processed. The first milk-

powder plant in the region, bound to be followed by more in time, started work in the grasslands of Nagqu Prefecture in April of that year with a daily capacity of 1,500 kilogrammes of milk powder and 700 kilogrammes of butter. It marked a small beginning with a big future, from which consumers within the region, elsewhere in China and later in export destinations would be bound to benefit.

In 1980, in line with new policies announced for Tibet, it became clear that the major stress would, for some years, be on light industry, and in particular on products consumed by the region's own population.

Tibet's light industry, in 1980, produced almost half as much again as in 1979, in terms of output value. State funds allocated to the making of fabrics, garments, household goods and ornaments used habitually by Tibetans were more than doubled. They comprised 72 per cent of the year's state investment in Tibet's light industry as a whole.

## A NOTE ON RECENTLY FOUND MINERAL RESOURCES

Two Xinhua News Agency dispatches from Lhasa, dated January 19 and February 15, 1979, are condensed below:

Over 40 types of minerals have been found on the "roof of the world" in Tibet, including already surveyed reserves of iron ore, petroleum and coal.

The Tibet Geological Bureau attributes this to hard work by Han and Tibetan geologists since the democratic reform 20 years ago.

In reserves of chromite, copper, boron, salt and geothermal heat, Tibet stands in the front ranks in China.

Hundreds of beds of high-grade chromite ore, rare elsewhere in China, have been found in eastern and northern Tibet. Also platinum.

A large bed of porphyry copper, with an estimated reserve of 6.4 million tons, has been prospected in Qamdo in the east. Close to the surface, it is suitable for strip mining. Other valuable elements accompany the copper.

Geothermal resources, including geysers and springs, have been located at about 100 sites.

The Tibetan plateau, averaging 4,200 metres above sea level, is the highest part of the earth. Unique in origin and complex in geological structure, it abounds in magmatic rock and both metallic and non-metallic ores.

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A third dispatch, on February 19, described the discoveries in Tibet as part of a larger whole — a multi-metallogenetic belt of at least 500,000 square kilometres along the junctures of Tibet, Yunnan, Sichuan and Qinghai.

Besides iron and copper, mining prospects are good for bauxite, zinc, tin, mercury, antimony, tungsten, molybdenum, nickel, potassium, platinoid and rare metals.

The iron-ore bearing layer extends for 300 to 400 kilometres in the south of the belt.

Copper is found in the central and northern part. Tin is mainly in the south. Lead-zinc ores are everywhere.

Non-metallic deposits include troilite, salt, mica, asbestos, gypsum, arsenic, magnesite and limestone.

Tectonically, the belt lies northeast of the suture line between the Indian and Asian plates, with conditions extremely favourable for mineralization.

Its resources are stated to be of great importance for the “four modernizations.”

\* \* \*

On May 28, 1980, Xinhua reported that diamonds had been found in two chromite ore deposits in Tibet — the first time Chinese geologists had found them in ultrabasic rocks (usually, as in South Africa and elsewhere, diamonds are found only in association with the mineral kimberlite).

## CHAPTER 20

# OLD CRAFTS IN NEW SOCIETY

Writing in the 1890's, the French author F. Grenard vividly described the state of handicrafts under Tibet's serf system, which was to remain basically unchanged till 1959.

Of wool weaving, the most important branch, he said:

The industry belongs to the government which obtains the necessary wool in the pastures of the north on the score of taxation and distributes it among the inhabitants of the midland districts with orders to weave it free of cost for the government. . . . The state sells a portion to the trade at a rate settled beforehand; it sells another portion to the population through the medium of special commissaries, who themselves usually hand over the retail transactions to local officials; in that case the government overcharges the prices in accordance with the needs of the treasury, the commissary adds his commission, the prefect allots himself a small profit, the head of the canton pays himself for his trouble and the rate-payer is charged twice as much for the wool as it is worth. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Of other major crafts, including blacksmithing and leather-working, he remarked: "A few useful trades are considered vile and are reserved for pariahs."

And of manufacture by lamasery serfs, he wrote:

These *gonyoks* are not only tillers of the soil and shepherds . . . they make the woollen stuffs, jewellery, pottery for their ecclesiastical masters; they are masons, carpenters, smiths, millers, caravaners. They are subject to the jurisdiction of the lamas and owe them all the labour which the latter choose to exact, without being entitled to any wages. Nevertheless, they do not entirely escape the authority of the Lhasa government; they pay taxes to the amount of two-thirds of those paid by its direct subjects. . . .

To complete the picture of dual lay-clerical exploitation he added that while the lamaseries had no material obligations at all to the lay authorities, their bondsmen had to serve the latter as well.

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In 1955, forty years after Grenard's testimony, I met Gadren Namgyal, a serf-rug-weaver in Xigazê. The compulsory services that weighed on him were many and onerous. As the best weaver of the household (always the one required to perform it as *corvée*), he was made to work eight months of the year for the feudal government for a nominal "fee" equal to about two American cents. Moreover, as one of the weavers who doubled as hereditary sedan-chair bearers for the Panchen Erdeni, his direct lord, he had to turn out for twenty days each year of practice, carrying dummies, plus five actual days of carrying the Panchen Erdeni himself.

Gadren Namgyal's services to the local government were imposed on him through the headman of the weavers. His freedom of movement was controlled by the head of sedan-chair bearers, without whose permission he could not leave town. Gadren Namgyal in his "free" three months, and the rest of his family for most of their time, could scrounge around for customers and "work for themselves". But even then, having no funds to buy wool, they had either to borrow and be exploited through usury, or hire themselves out to be exploited through wages.

Had this craftsman's lot improved at all after the coming of the PLA in 1951? He said it had, very much. Previously loans to buy wool, dyes and food had been hard to obtain and carried heavy in-

terest, 60 per cent annually, to a monastery. Now he could get loans from the People's Bank promptly and at low interest. By 1955, bank advances to Xigazê craftsmen already totalled 175,000 *yuan*. No wonder Gadren Namgyal spoke of them gratefully as *jingu madza* — liberation loans. But the improvement was still not fundamental, since the craftsmen remained serfs. Its most important aspect was that it implanted in them a growing dissatisfaction with serf status. This is what the Communist Party, most essentially, brought. Without such feelings, there could be no liberation.

Freedom came to Tibet's craftsmen in 1959. It was not the bourgeois kind on which Grenard had ruminated. "...If weaving were free, the prices would fall noticeably, while individual activity, at present fettered, would have an excellent opportunity..." Much as this would be an advance on serfdom, ultimately it would be simply freedom for the capitalist instead of the serfowner to profit. What arrived was much more — freedom of the serf craftsmen not only to work for themselves but to organize their first steps, free of all exploitation, on the road to socialism.

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Ten years passed. In 1965, we found in Xigazê 160 mutual-aid teams, comprising two-thirds of its craft households. And the number of such households had itself grown, from 1,000 to 2,500. The increase was due to several factors, including the return of runaways, abolition of feudal restrictions and training of former slaves and beggars. Important, too, was the appearance of new crafts, serving not the upper crust but the mass of former rural serfs. In 1964 alone a hundred thousand farm tools, including ploughs, were turned out by the craft teams. Their smiths and joiners went regularly to the countryside to make and repair tools on the spot.

I revisited Xigazê's "Liberation New Village," a government housing project begun in 1954 for the homeless from the big flood that year. Many of the same people still lived there, but the relief settlement was just a memory. In the village's 22 craft households (this was true also of its 26 other families), no able-bodied person was without work. A decade earlier illiteracy had been the rule. Now 30

of its younger generation were attending schools in Xigazê, 22 were studying elsewhere, and 33 were cadres, teachers or PLA soldiers.<sup>2</sup>

Dawa Dondrub, a bootmaker and a leader in the community, formerly owed labour service to two institutions, the local government and local troops, and to two individuals, a grain tax official and a nearby rural lord. For these he worked, all told, nine months of every year. He and his wife, who sewed the felt uppers while he did the leatherwork, had to bring their own tools and, using the masters' materials, complete the boots to their satisfaction, or be flogged. Corvée work had absolute priority over anything the couple did "for themselves". Failure to attend corvée, for any reason, brought bailiffs promptly to their door. The "compensation" on corvée was a cent or so (U.S. equivalent) a day. In "free" months they could make up boots for private customers, with the latter's leather and felt, at about 20 cents a pair for labour. But the family of six needed the equivalent of 50 cents a day for *tsamba* (barley meal), so it lived in debt and semi-starvation.

After 1951, according to Dawa Dondrub, the Xigazê poor began to think, "Now comes our chance to get out from under." But the rich and privileged poured cold water on these hopes. "The Hans may have come," they said, "but don't expect them to do you any real good." Forced services finally ended in 1959. After a few months of individual work, the artisans began in 1960 to form mutual aid teams — promoted and encouraged by the Communist Party.

"How is it better than being on your own?" I asked Dawa Dondrub.

"One man's strength is small," he answered. "When I worked by myself, if I was ill my earnings stopped. Now we're six in our team, and if one is unwell he still gets some pay. As individuals we sold mainly to merchants. Now we work for the state or direct for customers — no one makes profits in between."

Dawa Dondrub's daily earnings in 1965 were 1.20 *yuan* and his wife's 1.10 *yuan*.

His neighbour Tenzing, a tall blacksmith of 35, first came to Xigazê as a fugitive from excessive forced labour in Lhazê County. His job there had been to make daggers. Now he was making

ploughshares, shovels and sickles. In his home we saw carpets to sit and sleep on, boxes of clothes, thermoses for hot tea and chickens in the yard. In 1959, Tenzing said, he had owned only the tatters on his back, a broken cupboard and one worn-out cooking pot. What property had he received in the democratic reform? "I accepted only a new cook pot," he answered. "Everything else here has been earned with my own hands. I live by my craft."

Fifty-five mutual-aid teams in Xigazê were making *pulo* (Tibetan woollen cloth). Most of the members were women, who in the past had toiled at hand looms in serfowners' homes from dawn to dusk to finish the two metres of hand-woven cloth exacted from them each day. In 1965 production methods were still traditional. In one team of 64, we found spinners sitting along the roof-edges of a square of adobe sheds, pulling and twisting yarn from their distaffs while hanging stone bobbins whirled now up, now down, over the sunlit court below. Under the open sky, other women carded and reeled by hand. Indoors, in the sheds, the looms click-clacked.

But if techniques were still old, the spirit was new. Lilting songs gave rhythm to the work. Pay averaged 1.50 *yuan* a day.

Some workers were using their own tools but the main items of equipment were 30 hand-machines, a gift from the state to encourage collective organization, plus a few others bought with a state loan. All the machines were team property. Its products were bought by the State Trading Company, which distributed them to retail outlets.

The team was democratically run, with leaders elected and decisions made by discussion. Members attended classes, in literacy and politics. Paid sick-leave was provided. On the meeting-room wall, framed and draped with white silk *kbatag*, Tibet's scarf-like tokens of respect, were a portrait of Mao Zedong and the team's founding charter.

By 1976, in Xigazê, the handicraft teams had further combined to form factories, some co-operative and some under local public ownership. Many former blacksmiths were grouped into one making farm tools. *Pulo* cloth weavers were organized in another, rug weavers in still another. These factories had a good deal of power-driven machinery, though of the simpler kind. We saw no hand-spinners.

In 1975, the value of Xigazê prefecture's industrial output was 4 million *yuan*, 75 times that of 1958, the year before the democratic reform.

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Gyangzê, a carpet-making centre for centuries, had 300 households engaged in that craft in 1965. Some weavers told us of their pre-1959 plight, a living model of craft serfdom. Apprenticeship had been strictly regulated. Gifts had had to be made to teachers while training, and special, extra *corvée* to be performed for the chief of the craft, a non-working aristocrat who had the control over all Gyangzê's carpetry. This was on top of dues to the weavers' own serfowners and local government *corvée*, (the feudal authorities could require the craft chief to send whatever number of workers they needed for as many days as they ordered). Reputed customary limitations to such exactions were habitually violated. A common dodge was to deliberately give weavers on *corvée* some design they did not know, then fine them or force them to perform further tasks as a penalty for "errors". Women too weak after childbirth to sit at the looms had to work for a longer time later.

Weavers started training in early childhood, worked into old age, then were thrown out to starve. Many ran away from Gyangzê, but since hungry fugitives from other towns or rural estates also came to the town, replenishments were always at hand. Lhadron, in 1965 chairman of a Gyangzê weaving group, had begun as such a fugitive. His father, a serf, of the Panchen, had been beaten to death. His mother had run to the city with the boy to beg, and thought herself lucky to be able to apprentice him to the trade. "We carpet weavers never had our own rug to sit on then," Lhadon recalled, "just as the shoemakers went barefoot."

Now, with improvements in working methods (instructors had come from as far as the famous factories of Beijing and Tianjin) carpets were being woven in Gyangzê in two-thirds of the previous time. Wages were rising. Welfare was provided for. In Lhadron's group, eight looms were private and eleven owned in common. Capital included investment from the state. Apprentices, like regular workers, were on the wage system. Retired weavers got pensions.

What next? "A regular co-operative, then a factory," Lhadron told us.

Revisited in 1976, the mutual aid team had gone through both transformations. Instead of the old higgledy-piggledy premises we found an airy factory building with large windows and electric lighting. Much of the work, especially the weaving and sculpturing (many Gyangzê rugs are cut in low relief) was still done by hand in the traditional manner. But old taboos had been broken. Notably, the skilled weaving from designs, formerly done by men only, was now done mainly by women who received the same pay as men of equal skill. The Party Secretary, Pema Lhamo, was herself a woman in her middle forties, originally a handicraft slave.

Traditional technical limits had been transcended. Colours, while still mainly natural ones, mineral and vegetable of the freshness and brightness always associated with Gyangzê rugs, had increased from seven or eight to over 20 through new discoveries by the workers. Designs had grown from a dozen to over 40. There were 245 regular workers (200 of them women) while a hundred or so others, mainly spinners, worked at home. Output was 1,700 carpets and rugs a month, a considerable proportion of them for export. Wages ranged from 50 to 70 *yuan* a month. Since 1965 the minimum had doubled, from 25 *yuan*. But the maximum had remained the same, 70 *yuan*.

\*                     \*                     \*

Lhasa's new "People's Street" in 1965 had a fine, well-stocked shoe shop. Its show windows and shelves offered not only the traditional Tibetan boots with gaily dyed felt leggings, but also reversed cowhide army and work boots, and modern shoes of good finish and pattern for men, women and children. The latter, we thought at first, were from Shanghai. They turned out to be Lhasa-made. There was also much other leatherware. Turning back to my old notes on a talk with a Lhasa shoe and harness maker ten years before, I found that he himself, as well as his shop, had belonged to Sera lamasery. On corvée for aristocrats, he worked with imported leather from India. There were a hundred shoe, saddle and harness makers in Lhasa then. When I asked if they ever talked of the possibility of

using machines, he answered: "No. Who could use all the goods they could make? Harness makers are worried already. With motor traffic growing, their trade will die." Such ideas were spread by the serf-owners. That this craftsman voiced them showed that his mind, as well as his body, was still ruled by feudalism — as was common at the time.

By 1965, such inhibitions — and the conditions that gave rise to them — had gone. Lhasa's new regional leather factory, already five years old, was using machines for all processes (labour productivity had increased fourfold since 1960). It made goods not only for a new kind of consumer in Tibet — workers, peasants and herdsmen with money to spend — but also for industry. Machine-belts were an important product. Some of its goods were sold elsewhere in China and some, through the Guangzhou (Canton) Export Fair, in other countries. Whatever the product, output did not exceed demand, but fell far short of it.

By 1976, the regional leather factory, with over 500 workers, 120 machines and its own power plant, was producing about 3.5 million *yuan* worth of goods annually as compared to 1.2 million in 1965. Each year it processed some 220,000 skins and hides to make 70,000 leather items of various kinds. Average monthly wages, as compared with 1965, had risen from 58 *yuan* to 66 *yuan*. Some 15,000 square metres of housing had been built for the workers.

Apart from this regular factory, whose scale was previously undreamed of in Tibet, many leather goods were also made by Lhasa's mutual-aid teams. They, too, were gradually mechanizing.

In one such team we spent many memorable hours. Its 91 members, all former serf craftsmen, were turning out 13,000 pairs of shoes and boots a year. Its long whitewashed one-story buildings set around large open spaces, seethed with activity.

Some processes were still carried on as of yore. Outdoors, beneath an ancient pollarded willow that gave a spot of shade amid the newly-scraped hides drying in the hot sun, a muscular, bearded man — his arms resting on a horizontal bar his trousers rolled up to the knee — was trampling a ceaseless squish-squash in the tan-

ning bath. This he had done as a serf under merciless overseers for some twenty years. Now a co-operator among equals, he worked with good humour and, smiling at the team chairman — an ex-serf like himself — stopped for a moment to extend us his hard tanner's hand. Indoors, men and women were cutting, hand-stitching, and sewing on whirring machines.

“Had you ever used machines before 1959,” I asked.

“Used them? We'd never even seen them!” one woman retorted.

Chairman Mingyal introduced us to one after another of the workers:

“He is a member of our administrative committee.”

“She is a neighbourhood representative.”

“He's been elected to the district people's congress.”

These new masters of Tibet, not long before, had been not only serfs but pariahs — considered to be following a “low and unclean” craft. On *corvée* in nobles' houses, they had had to sleep with the animals or in latrines. In their stories, we heard now and then, like echoes out of darkness, the names of the old ecclesiastical and lay lords.

“I was bondsman to the *kashag*.”

“My master was the noble Ragashar.”

Ten years earlier Tibet had rung with these names, while the people were gagged. Now the people were speaking and the so recent past already seemed like ages ago.

The team, in its history and growth, was typical of the transformation of crafts between my first and second visit to Tibet. Here were some of its details.

*Founding:* In 1960, during the democratic reform, under the Party's policy of aiding and organizing craftsmen.

*Capital:* Started with a 7,400 *yuan* state loan. Accumulation in 1965, 64,000 *yuan*, free of debt.

*Production of footwear:* Rose from 8,371 pairs in 1961 to 13,000 pairs in 1964. Varieties increased from 6 to 83. Durability of products had doubled, as had productivity per worker. Prices to consumers were lower than before.

*Daily wage:* Minimum 1 yuan, maximum 2 yuan.

*Welfare:* 50% of wage in short illnesses; special subsidy in chronic illness. Free medical treatment.

*Education:* No literates at start. By 1965 six members were able to read, write and keep accounts. All except the elderly were attending classes.

*Ownership:* All four machines and most hand tools were owned collectively, some having been bought from members.

*Administration:* Members' general meeting the highest authority; elected team officers.

*Market:* Most output sold through State Trading Co. Direct sales to consumers and on-the-spot repairs were carried out by travelling sub-teams which went out to farm and pasture areas in busy seasons. There was also a direct retail outlet in Lhasa.

On our last evening in Lhasa, dropping in on the team to pick up some boots we had had made to our measurements, we found all its electric lights ablaze. Young members were lettering signboards and cloth banners. Their seniors were expertly packing boots and shoes into yak-hide saddle bags ("old-fashioned but they last 20 years," they told us). Mingyal explained the unusual night-time bustle. The next day was the Sholden Festival, with people from outlying areas coming to Lhasa to attend the theatricals and fair at the Dalai Lama's former summer palace, the Norbu Lingka. And the team was preparing to serve them there.

Re-visited eleven years later, this mutual aid team had gone through two further changes. In 1966 it had become a co-operative and in 1970 the Lhasa Shoe and Hat Factory, a municipal enterprise. The number of workers had more than doubled, from 91 to 197. But production had gone up more than tenfold, to 120,000 pairs of shoes and 70,000 fur hats. This was due to the shift from handwork to semi-mechanization. There were now 120 machines (mostly small, such as sewing machines, but also some larger ones). Archaic methods, such as tanning by trampling, had disappeared.

The old founders of the mutual aid team, now mostly members of the factory revolutionary committee or leaders in the trade union,

were still there. Among younger workers, some had been sent for technical studies to China's inland provinces. Everyone in this factory, workers, administrators, Party leaders was a Tibetan.

The wage system, and welfare benefits, including retirement provisions were like those in any state factories throughout China.

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Many larger enterprises, important in Tibet's regional economy, had also developed from groups of ex-serf artisans. Among them were the Lhasa Agricultural Machinery Works, and similar ones in several prefectures. Having now lost their craft character, they are dealt with in the chapter on industry.

Other undertakings developed from the crafts, especially those close to the daily needs of consumers, remained at the co-operative stage and would continue that way particularly in the neighbourhoods. In 1976, on Lhasa's famous Parkhor Street, craft co-ops were still numerous. Some were conglomerates of varied occupations. One was making a range of products from rugs to noodles, and had a construction team for house-building. Part of its work was on contract from the state, part done directly for shoppers. People could bring their wool to be woven, into *pulo* cloth or seat-carpets and their grain to be milled into flour, and so on.

Other co-ops made clothing, still others a variety of things needed both in households and for production, like wooden churns, pottery and sheet-metal containers, basketry and the like.

Art crafts, long loved and practised by the Tibetans, continued to exist. For example the making of saddle and harness ornaments, knives with fancy hilts, dyed or embroidered boots, women's aprons panelled in many colours and edged in brocade, and traditional musical instruments.

All co-operatives sold mainly to the state trading network or through co-operative outlets closely linked with state trade.

Old craftsmen were teaching apprentices, most of them young people with primary or secondary school education, who were paid wages on an established scale. In the Gyangzê Rug Factory, in rural

potteries and other places, we saw such teenagers in training, or already working on their own.

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In 1980, under the generally relaxed policies then adopted, the idea that all crafts should necessarily industrialize their methods and look forward to factories as the highest form of organization was criticized and, where proper, shelved. Craftsmen were given the option, according to the nature of their skill and local conditions, of combining in any form they preferred — or working as individuals (without hiring wage labour). All were given access to loans and raw materials, and exempted for a period from taxes. They could themselves market their products.

Almost immediately, traditional goods which had been in short supply came on to the markets in increasing quantities. They included hand-woven *pulo*, which many Tibetans prefer to any machine-made cloth, national-style garments tailored to the users' tastes, and some things pertaining to national customs which under the influence of the "ultra-Left" had been wrongly ruled out as backward. Among these were the turquoise personal ornaments for men and women long loved in Tibet, *khatag* scarves to be exchanged as tokens of friendship and respect and various articles associated with the celebration of folk festivals. Also resumed was the making of religious accessories, for those who continued to believe. More artisans than before were engaged on the restoration of historic sites. Not a few worked on costumes for the revived art of the ancient Tibetan opera.

All this enlivened economic and social life in Tibet and brought extra income to many. It ensured that, in socialist Tibet, no craft favoured by the people for use or beauty would die.

## CHAPTER 21

# FAMILY OF TIBET'S NEW WORKERS

Of all the great and rapid changes in Tibet, one of the most important has been the rise from the ranks of the former serfs and slaves of a working class which at the time of my first visit in 1955 was newly born and consisted of only a few hundred people, but in 1965 already numbered over 25,000, and by 1976 had further increased to over 65,000. Its beginnings are exemplified by the story of Lhadrup, once an enslaved member of the blacksmith caste, the most despised in old Tibet, and of his large family, whose acquaintance I first made in 1965.

I met Lhadrup, then aged 53, gnarled and bent by past toil and maltreatment yet unforgettably awakened, clear-minded and indomitable, in the forging shop of the Lhasa Automotive Repair Plant. I also talked to his sons Dawa and Losang, high-tension line maintenance men of the Lhasa Hydropower Station, and to his daughters Pasang and Gesang, their husbands, and another son, Champa, all of whom worked in the same plant as their father.

Some days later we had a reunion in Lhadrup's home in Lhasa allocated to him in the democratic reform of 1959, where 20 persons from three generations had gathered. Waving at them he said, "Without the Communist Party and Chairman Mao, this family would not

be as you see it. Most of us would have been dead of hunger or beating.”

One often hears such statements in today's Tibet. They are not a figure of speech but the sober truth.

Here, in their own words, is the story of this worker and his family, with its light on Tibet's past and present.

### LHADRUP, THE FATHER, AT 53

At 12 I was already doing my *corvée*, at the blacksmith's forge I got one *siogan* (about half a cent) a day, and many blows. At 15 an overseer picked up a thick board to hit me. My father, afraid that I might be maimed or killed, got between us to intercede. For this he himself was beaten so badly that he died.

At 20 I was handed over to the Lhasa Mint of the *kashag*, and there I stayed for 27 years. My task was to hand-stamp 8,000 coins a day. Even one short of that number meant a flogging. I worked from dawn to night, and the day's pay didn't amount to one coin. Soon I married and the children came in succession — nine of them. My wife and I couldn't buy enough *tsamba* for all, and had to dole it out to them in spoonfuls, while we ourselves often went without.

After the peaceful liberation of Tibet in 1951, *kashag* officials were left in local control. There was a condition — their promise not to obstruct reform. But they didn't mean it. Slavery continued. So did *corvée* — in 1956 they sent me to help build the Dalai Lama's new palace at Norbu Lingka park.

I was at my wits' end. How would the family eat while I did this unpaid labour? The Central People's Government was then building the Lhasa airfield, giving good wages. I begged for 15 days' leave from the *kashag* officials to earn some money there, so as to tide the wife and young ones over. The officials said all right, but though I returned on time they dragged me to trial. The charge: "He would rather work for the Hans than for the Dalai Lama." They threatened me with frightful punishment, having my skin split open from head to foot and peeled off.

Finally they threw me into the dank dungeon under the Nangtzesha courthouse. "For generations we've been oppressed," I thought there. "Now my health will break and I'll die. One thing I must do — see that life is different for the children." I managed to get word to my elder son Dawa to be brave and try, whatever the risk, to get work at a central government project being started: the building of the new power station. Fortunately he succeeded.

After 40 days in the pit I was let out, half dead, and sent right back to *corvée* at Norbu Lingka. You can see why, when the serf-owners rebelled in 1959, I didn't believe their words that it was for the sake of us Tibetans. I knew it was to preserve the old oppression which was killing us Tibetans, and had almost killed me. So I was against them. Once more they caught me. This time they were really going to flay me alive. But the PLA knocked them out quickly and I was saved. I determined to work for the revolution all my life.

I've been in this factory since then. Everything has changed. Formerly I ate the roughest food, too little of that, and often had stomach pains. Today I eat rice and flour, and the pains have gone. I used to wear the same clothes day and night, and couldn't dream of a clean change. Now I've plenty to wear, summer and winter — and good bedding. On the job, overalls and gloves are provided. Tibetans and Hans get the same pay for the same work. Factory leaders and we have the same food in the same mess hall. There's no distinction.

In the past our whole family had one tiny room, with a leaky roof. Today I have a room in the factory and a home in town. My children who work have their own places to live.

Recently the factory sent me to the forest sanatorium in Nyingchi for my health. The doctors were warm and polite. I'd never imagined anything like it. And it really helped me get better. In the old days, when ill, we were driven to work if we could still walk and left to die if we couldn't.

What I've always wanted for the children has come true. Three are in this factory. My girls Pasang and Gesang spray and paint car bodies. My third son Champa works with me at the forge. The eldest, Dawa, at the power plant, has five children of his own and is able

to feed and clothe them properly. Losang, my second, is a member of the Communist Youth League. The younger children are all in school. Chumpei, who is 16, is a leader of Young Pioneers.

And I myself have just been accepted into the Communist Party.

Lhadrup in 1965 looked far older than his years, a result of early sufferings. In 1976, he did not seem to have aged much more. His craggy face and sharp eyes were as I remembered them. Again, we met twice. The first time was at his work-bench at the factory. Though past the retirement age of 60 he had refused to quit or go on half-time. The second meeting was at his home, with the family now numbering over 30, including new in-laws and grandchildren. "Seven of us are members of the Party and five of the Communist Youth League," he said, introducing them. "Most are workers. Five are cadres. Three are doctors. The rest are studying."

### DAWA, THE ELDEST SON, AT 30

"Blacksmith's brat" was what I heard from tiny childhood. I could never figure out what was bad about blacksmiths. From building a house to making a knife, who could do without us? But in the old society we weren't looked on as human. Now, in the new society, we're key members of the leading class, the working class.

Of the nine children in our family, I was the eldest. Our bellies were always empty, our home wet and cold. I don't remember any of us wearing shoes or clothes without holes in them. When Mother sent us on errands, dogs often bit us. You had no right to beat off a dog in those days. It might belong to someone important and then it meant flogging or jail.

Father slaved away but couldn't feed us. Since labour had no value, the only way was to borrow from usurers. But even to ask for a loan, you had to bring gifts — a *kbatag* (ceremonial scarf), some mutton or tea. With nothing of our own, we had to borrow for those gifts, too. You couldn't even complain of life's bitterness. If Father had brought up our hardships to the Mint and asked for a day or two

off to earn something for the family at odd jobs, he would have risked being beaten up, and maybe crippled, even killed.

From nine years old, I was the one sent out to borrow. It was hateful. I'd only to show my face to be jeered and scolded. Often I thought, "I'd be better off dead. I can't stand this." So in my teens I left the family, agreeing with Father that I would shoulder half the old debts. But however hard I worked, I couldn't pay them off.

After I married, I had to take my wife and child back to my parents again and run from our creditors north to Nagquka. *Kashag* officers caught me there. I was made to kneel for hours while they yelled at me. Luckily nothing worse happened, or I mightn't have been here today.

When Father finally got permission to work for those two weeks at the airfield, it was a ray of hope. He was even able to give me something to buy clothes for my child. But then he was jailed. That's when he sent me to the power station. I'll never forget the day I was taken on. It was the first time in my life I felt free. Right off, the people's government gave me clothes, a washbasin, toothpaste and bedding. And when I told them of Father's plight they advanced me 100 *yuan* in cash. I took all the money home. Then there was food in the house and more to bring to Father in prison. We would all have starved if I hadn't got that job.

For the first time, I felt that the Party and Chairman Mao had liberated us — and that I was a human being. You think our old life was terrible? Almost everyone in Tibet was as badly off or worse. Working people couldn't lift their heads till the serfowners' rebellion was put down in 1959.

Earlier, if anyone even stretched out his hand for a bit of the new life, the reactionaries would smash him. A Tibetan army barracks stood opposite our power station. On the eve of the revolt, the soldiers would waylay us as we cycled into Lhasa and say, "Quit working for Hans, or we'll wipe out your families." But we Tibetan workers already knew that, with our Han class brothers, we were working for our common future. We decided, "If the Han comrades live, we live, and if they die, we die with them." We joined the militia and got ready to fight.

How does the present compare with the past? It's not only in what we eat and wear. None of our family had ever learned to read or write. Now my children study. Even we oldsters do too. I've learned to read Tibetan and a bit of Han. My wife Yangdzom was an illiterate slave girl at the Mint. Now she's a Party member and a cadre in the city government.

In the past when a *kashag* official or high lama came by, we had to bow low, never lift our eyes above the level of his knees, and above all never complain if we didn't want our bones broken. Now our plant leaders drop in and ask, "Have you any difficulties?" Even if we have some minor problem we don't want to bother anyone with, they often notice, and ask how they can help.

All Tibet is building up now and we're part of that. Formerly our lot was just to work, not to enjoy the fruits. Now what we workers build, we workers will use. The present progress is only a start. Come back in a few years and you'll see.

*In 1976, when I did come back and at the Ngachen power plant asked for Dawa, they told me that he had died the year before — of the hypertensive heart failure that is such a killer on the high plateau. They spoke of him with affection and respect. He had played his part in the substantial increase of efficiency in the plant and become a Party member.*

*In the family's Lhasa home, later, we met his daughter, also named Dawa. She was by then a young medical graduate working in the countryside, in Drongba County.*

## LOSANG, THE SECOND SON, AT 28

At least one boy in most Tibetan families had to be a monk, and in ours it was me. I was sent to Sera Monastery. But there were rich and poor there too. From eight years old I was a monk-slave.

Each novice was attached to a lama teacher. Mine was named Tenzing. In eleven years he didn't teach me a single letter of the Tibetan alphabet, or even how to pray. Instead, I worked day and

night as his servant. I had only cold water and stale mashed peas for food. In all seasons, I wore the same tattered robe.

When I didn't pasture Tenzing's cows to his satisfaction, he tied me to a pillar and whipped me till the blood came. When I woke him by snoring one winter night, he took me out to a well, stripped me, and poured water over me till it froze. One Tibetan New Year, when everyone is supposed to eat a little better, he ordered me to make tea, just for him, not me. When some of it boiled over, he took the red-hot yak-dung ash into which it had fallen and stuffed it into my mouth, saying, "Take that for your holiday treat."

"Your fate is evil," he kept telling me. But another thing he said, which he made a thousand times, showed the real reason for his spite: "What good is your blacksmith brood?" What he meant was that other families gave presents to their sons' teachers, while mine couldn't.

Besides serving Tenzing, I had to labour for the lamasery. All boy monks were supposed to, by its rules. But those from rich homes would do it for just one day, for form's sake, and never again. My labour never stopped, year in and year out.

Worst of all were the insults. Once the Dalai Lama was coming and my teacher said, "People are supposed to look well today. You 'black bones'<sup>1</sup> will disgrace both yourself and me." He took my clothes so I wouldn't be recognized as a monk and locked me out virtually naked in the cold night. Home was nearby but I didn't go there. When they gave me to the lamasery it was in the hope I would be fed and, maybe, taught. I didn't want Mother to know the truth, and add to her worries.

Tenzing died in 1958. By custom a teacher's things should have gone to his disciple. But the Sera high lamas gave me only a wooden bowl, a mat, a *tsamba* bag and an old robe. "You're different," they said. "Other families care for their sons' teachers. But what did you paupers contribute to Tenzing's property? All my labour, it seems, didn't count at all. They even confiscated my corner of the room. After that I slept under eaves and in corners.

During the 1959 revolt the higher lamas and those they thought they could rely on dashed up and down to Norbu Lingka with guns.

They didn't trust us poor monks, so they shut us up in the chanting house. "Pray!" they ordered. They'd never given us time to pray before. Many of us didn't know a single sutra.

When the rebellion was suppressed, a cadres' working group came to Sera and announced, "There's freedom of religious belief now. No more forced labour or feudal privilege. Nobody can force you to go on being monks. Nobody can forbid those who wish to remain monks to do so."

I asked to go back home. Since I had lived so long in darkness, hearing little of the outside, Father and Dawa had to explain many things to me. Father said, "The main thing is to work." I was introduced, with three other poor young monks from Sera, to the power station.

What impressed us most was that there was no difference between teachers and learners. The job was new, so naturally we made mistakes. Also there were misunderstandings of language. The skilled workers and technicians were nearly all Hans. But they never raised their voices, much less hit or threatened. They helped us even after work hours. They kept encouraging us, "You're young. You can certainly learn all these things."

Gradually I realized that this wasn't just a place to work, get good wages and be well treated — we were part of the making of a new world. In 1962 I applied to join the Communist Youth League.

I think our work in the power station is glorious. Before the liberation there was only one tiny generator in Lhasa, giving light just for the Dalai Lama and some top nobles. For the toilers, the nights were pitch dark. Now we supply light and power to nine-tenths of the city's homes. Ex-serfs and slaves too poor to pay get it free. We're working for our own kind of people.

In our plant, Tibetans run and repair complex machines. Many have been trained, both here and in the interior provinces. We ourselves train people for new rural power units. Every Thursday we have full-day technical classes at full pay. At other times we learn our own language — and politics to guide our self-liberation. For we are the working class, the front line force for completing the revolution in Tibet. Our whole family is in that class. It's an honour and a duty.

*In the intervening years Losang was sent to university — in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, to study water-power technology.*

*In 1976, he was the Party secretary and trade union leader of his section of the power plant.*

*I found him as quiet and intense, but no longer as youthfully diffident, as at our last meeting. Now he spoke with maturity and confidence. "The progress in Tibet is very great," he said. "We could talk for three days and three nights and not exhaust it. It is only the start, there is so much to do.*

*"Chairman Mao's death last month filled us with deep grief. But we will turn grief into strength to carry out his intentions and make greater contributions to the country and revolution. It wasn't easy to attain victory in China, including Tibet. Innumerable heroes gave their lives to accomplish it.*

*"We are determined to fulfil the tasks ahead. We are the workers. If we do not do this, how can we be said to stand at the head of the people!"*

## PASANG, THE ELDEST DAUGHTER, AT 26

At the age of eight or nine I used to collect yak-dung to sell for fuel to help the family. I had only one dress which got more ragged every year, and grew shorter as I grew taller. I wore it and I slept in it. Now I wear cotton next to my skin, have clothes of good gabardine and sleep under padded quilts. As a girl I had never touched such things, much less owned them.

I have a child, born in the Autonomous Region People's Hospital. The factory sent me there by car and I got 2.5 months paid maternity leave.<sup>2</sup> Under the serfowners, if a woman got two days off for childbirth it was a miracle. Generally they drove you to work the next day. Mother bore my eldest brother, Dawa, right at the place where she was doing *ula*. With nothing to wrap him in, she had to use her only underpants. My baby, Nyima, had new clothes and all sorts of things prepared before he was born. Father told me, "You are young and have never suffered like we older people. Don't forget the past."

Thinking of what the Party had done for us I insisted on returning to work before the end of my leave, but they said no.

I entered the factory on Father's introduction. First I boiled water for tea, then I became a sheet metal worker. Now I spray-paint car bodies. My husband, Sanggye Gesang, was a serf orphan who was given to Drepung lamasery. Once, when he was so hungry that he ate a bit of a sacrificial cake, they almost tortured him to death. He ran away but with no place to go, and had to go back and take more punishment. In 1959 he was active in the democratic reform in Drepung, then came out to become a worker. Now he is in the forging shop, with my Father and brother Champa. They think well of him on the job, and he studies Chairman Mao's works every night. "That's what I believe in now," he says.

#### GESANG, THE SECOND DAUGHTER, AT 24

I, too, from the time when I was tiny, had to do something to help us all keep alive. In garbage heaps I found old socks that people had thrown away, generally with the soles all gone. These I unravelled and reknit into things for the family. Later I was a nursemaid to children and in 1963 I came to this factory. I am in the sand-blasting, painting and spraying shop with Pasang. So is Tsangyang, my husband. His people were Tibetans from Ngawa (Apa) in Sichuan Province who came to Lhasa as pilgrims. He was a monk in Drepung till 1959. Today he is a model worker and a member of the militia.

#### CHAMPA, THE THIRD SON, AT 21

When all the elder members of the family were out on *ula* or earning food, I stayed with the smallest ones at home. In winter we all shivered. The only way I could get my feet warm was to go out and put them in fresh ashes thrown out from people's fires. Being

too little to know when to step out, I burned them, and still have the scars.

We lived not far from this factory, though none of us worked here then. I'd often come and stand by the mess hall. The Han workers understood. They always gave me something to eat, not only for myself but to take back home. I wanted to help the family all I could, so on festivals I would walk to Lhasa and beg around the Jokhang Temple.

After 1959, some comrades noticed that I could sing, and I got into a propaganda ensemble. In 1963, on Father's suggestion, I joined him at the forge. That's my history, from beggar boy to one of the workers, the leading class. Now I have a skill, good clothes, good food and my own bicycle. I like sports and help teach revolutionary songs and arrange programmes for our amateur troupe.

*In 1976, when I met Champa again he was still in the factory, a mature worker with a young family of his own.*

## CHUNPEI, THE FOURTH SON, AT 16

We met Chunpei not at the factory but in front of Lhasa's fine new People's Palace of Culture, at a rally of Young Pioneers. A fine, open-faced boy, he was leader of his school's Pioneer troupe and carried its red flag.

"What do you want to be?" I asked him.

"A worker like Father," he replied.

Later I told Lhadrup about it.

"He's right," he said, pleased. "When our family gathers every week I say to them, 'Don't ever forget the difference between the past and the present.' And how can we show that we remember? By advancing production. For who will build Tibet's socialist industry if not us?"

On the wall of Lhadrup's large living room when we re-assembled there in 1976 was an "Honoured Family" plaque, one of those issued all over China to households whose sons or daughters have died

for country and socialism in the People's Liberation Army. It stood for young Chunpei, who had lost his life during his military service a few years back.

Around it were many "Model Worker" and other certificates awarded to his father, brothers and sisters. Living and dead were united for the same aims.

"Father often calls family meetings to make sure we remember the pain of yesterday, prize our today and build our tomorrow," put in Losang. "Father is old but his spirit is young. His words are a lesson to us. His actions and his zest in work are even more so."

Once again, as eleven years earlier, young and old thronged the doorway as we left, warmly shaking our hands. And with almost the same parting words.

"Come back. In not too long. You'll see more big changes in our Tibet."



# **ANIMAL HUSBANDRY**

## CHAPTER 22

# NEW SUN IN THE GRASSLANDS

More than three quarters of Tibet is above the tree line and grows no crops, only grass. Tibet supports a dozen times as many animals — yaks, cattle, sheep, horses and donkeys — as it has inhabitants, a quarter of whom are occupied in their care.

Pastures and their utilization had improved between my journeys. From the abolition of serfdom in 1959 to the time of my second visit in 1965, the number of livestock had grown by 35 per cent, and by 1976 it was twice that in 1959. The great potential for related industries was beginning to be tapped. Tibet's wool, a good part of which used to be sent out raw, was being worked up in factories within the region. So was leather. People were talking of broad prospects for milk products and canned meat.

This was clearly important both to the region and to China's overall economy in which Tibet's stockbreeding had played a part since ancient times. From the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.), special "horse and tea markets" were set up at Kangding<sup>1</sup> and elsewhere, where Tibetan animals and animal products were traded for tea, silk and other goods from the Han provinces. But as both Han and Tibetan societies were then feudal, production and exchange were limited and bent to the purposes of national and social oppression.

After the 1840's, imperialism impinged on all China and made deep inroads in Tibet. As a result, internal trade links weakened and the working people were more cruelly exploited. On the one hand,

the influx of foreign goods ruined local crafts. On the other, the herdsmen were squeezed for more produce, particularly wool, because their feudal lords were avid to sell it abroad for funds to buy foreign luxuries. Whether in mountain-girt Tibet or in China's eastern plains, such added oppression was an inevitable result of the link-up of home reactionaries with the encroaching imperialists. In the coastal provinces of China the warlords, bureaucrat officials and compradors took to Cadillacs, Scotch whiskey and costly foreign colleges for their children. In Lhasa, the otherwise tradition-bound high nobles and clerics began to dress in expensive English cloth (instead of the local *pulo*), consume Australian butter and imported dried milk (in a region full of cattle), and sport gold-cased Parker pens and Rolex watches as new status symbols. Not a few set up second homes in India's Kalimpong or Darjeeling where they passed many months each year in extravagance and gambling. Consequently Tibet's poor, who paid the bill, grew even poorer.

As in many other parts of the world where townsmen and peasants have historically dwelt side by side with herdsmen, the latter fell into ever greater poverty and backwardness. Extreme as the old Lhasa was in its own contrasts of wealth and poverty, it towered as an exploiting and consuming centre over the pastoral masses, as did the trading cities of the old Arab world over the ragged Bedouins. High spending in the towns by the pastoral nobles, the richest of whom lived there permanently, further impoverished their bondsmen, who themselves went to Lhasa only on *corvée*, or as pilgrims — there to be doubly mulcted by the high clergy (who besides being lords over many pastures and their people, benefited too from religious offerings). Pastoral people were still organized into tribes and the continued subjection of dispersed and physically active herdsmen was ensured by public punishments of purposeful brutality.

Tibet's herdsmen, moreover, had long lost all the patriarchal independence existing for example in the Middle East, in which the tribal chief, while himself oppressing, would also defend his kinsmen against the feudal power of town and manor or lead them periodically to raid these centres of wealth. Its pastoral tribes had become the collective serfs of town-based aristocrats and in particular the lama-

series. Their headmen, changed each three years at the masters' will, were underlings whose own share in the proceeds of exploitation was conditioned on their guaranteeing tribal corvée and taxes to their overlords.<sup>2</sup>

The herdsmen, or *drok-pa*, lived in black yak-hair tents, and wore nothing but sheepskins which also served them as bedding. They moved between the hereditary summer and winter pastures which traditionally "belonged" to their tribes, but in fact had long since become mere subdivisions of pastoral estates. The yaks and sheep they tended belonged overwhelmingly to the lords.

Many worked under the *gyemei-shimeï* system, according to which herds and flocks originally "entrusted" to them, or to their ancestors, had to be kept unchanged in number, and any increase, after corvée and tax were met, was supposed to accrue to the herdsmen. But in fact, in old Tibet, less than one in five had any animals of his own. This was because many "entrusted" herds had in fact dwindled, or even had died out altogether. In such cases the deficit, or the entire value of the defunct herd, turned into crippling debt with interest so heavy that the sum doubled every few years reaching fantastic figures. Intentionally unrepayable, this burden reduced the debtors, the herdsman and all his descendants, to permanent slaves.

The depletion of livestock was the result not of neglect or improvidence by the herdsman but of the load of exploitation on his back. Required to turn in large quantities of butter for tribute, he had to use most of the milk for this purpose, robbing young calves of food. Mature animals were often lost in blizzards as there were no winter shelters, from disease as there were no veterinary services, or while doing transport corvée in which many fell to their deaths from icy mountain tracks or perished from fatigue. And every loss, regardless of circumstance, was debited to the herdsman.

He himself, with his family, lived in summer largely on whey and in winter on dried curds. Almost his only meat was from beasts that had perished from injury or illness. Grain, which had to be bought, was rare or absent in his diet; his substitute was indigestible grass-seed eaten as gruel or used to thicken, when that was available, a soup boiled down from cracked bones. Butter-tea, the nutritious "Tibetan

national drink" so suited to the high altitude, was beyond the pastoral serf's dreams. A noble or high cleric might consume 30-40 bowls a day of this rich brew. Most herdsmen simulated it by a decoction of wild leaves topped by a paper-thin film of butter which they blew aside carefully as they drank, to make it last.

Life was maximally insecure. For loss of animals, the pasture-dwellers faced not only fines but flogging, mutilation or death. Defencelessness against nature often made even ordinary illnesses or injuries fatal. Children died frequently. Old people were rare. Under the serf system, both people and herds decreased in the high grasslands.

In 1955, a wealthy Lhasa-dwelling herdowner aristocrat told me without reserve of his absentee exactions from his herdsmen, which seemed to him quite normal. He had not visited his pastures for years but collected tribute through bailiffs. Each of his pastoral serf households took care of 21 yaks and was responsible for churning the butter obtained from them. Four times a year, they had to load tribute butter on a pack train of 60 mules and provide, as unpaid *corvée*, drovers for the 15-day trek to Lhasa. Twenty tons of butter were thus annually delivered. They were kept in a warehouse attached to the aristocrat's town residence, and sold on the Lhasa market. ("It's best to sell at times of shortage, when prices are at peak," the noble explained with pride in his management). Stored in yak-hide bags, the butter was supposedly edible for 12 months, but sometimes deteriorated earlier. If so, it was disposed of at lower rates for use in butter lamps or for softening leather.

Besides direct seizure of their products and labour as tribute or for debt, Tibet's herdsmen were exploited through forced trade. The merchants were in fact the same lords of the pasture, with feudal power over their "customers." Herdsmen recalled to me how they were ordered to "buy" a handful of imported Indian sweets (15 pieces) and forced to pay a whole sheep for them the next season. For an aluminium cooking pot the price was a yak. A brick of pressed tea cost twice as much in the pastures as in Lhasa. A small loaf of sugar, bought cheaply in India, would be charged to the herdsmen at ten times the Lhasa price, or the equivalent of five lambskins. This was

not simply "exploitation of the pastures by the towns" as it has been somewhat abstractly described. More concretely, it was the exploitation of the serf herdsmen by the Tibetan ruling class, and in the case of export products like wool, by world capitalism as well. In such compulsory and unequal trade, even those herdsmen who had managed to acquire a few animals could quickly lose them.

\*                     \*                     \*

The herdsman's lot, like the peasant's, was bettered somewhat after the peaceful liberation year 1951. China's central government and the PLA paid fairly for work on the roads and for men and animals hired for transport. They never used *corvée*, though this was offered by the feudal local regime. They gave free medical and veterinary service, and interest-free or low-interest loans to the pastoral poor. Particularly after 1954, when the trunk highways came in, state trade opened up good markets for wool and hides, and provided low-priced consumer goods. But the Tibetan ruling class, controlling both local political power and the bulk of pastoral produce, was able to frustrate many of these measures, or turn them to its own profit. For the herdsmen, another aspect of the PLA's presence was far more important. It was the idea, conveyed silently and through example, that things could be different. Thus was implanted the desire to make them so.

Desire became reality in 1959, following the quelling of the serf-owner revolt. The democratic reform, as practised in the pastures, had some special features of its own.

The "three againsts" were the same as in Tibet's agricultural areas, that is, the reactionary rebellion, personal servitude and *corvée* labour were brought to an end. And rebels' herds and flocks, like their farming estates, were confiscated and parcelled out to the poor.

But where pastoral lords had not rebelled, instead of compensated distribution as with farmland, the policy adopted was "dual benefit to herdsmen and owners."

Politically, it was a united front policy. Economically, it took account of the fact that unlike land, which is purely a means of production, livestock are also a means of consumption. Land is indestruct-

ible. But a herd can be wiped out through slaughter or dispersal by one man in one day, even if that person is not basically hostile but only briefly confused by rumours or misunderstanding. Damaged fields can yield the next year. Destroyed herds annihilate both present sustenance and future production. Hence, in the interests of the people and the revolution, the transformation of the pastoral economy had to be accompanied by its conservation, or there would be nothing left to transform.

Under the "dual benefit" policy, the ownership of the livestock continued as before, and it was cared for by the same herdsmen (though grazing grounds were now public property). But the herd-owner no longer owned the herdsmen. He lost all feudal power over the man who, freed of old debts, was no longer liable for loss of animals through natural causes and, being no longer a serf, could demand a wage. Labour was now paid for — generally in animals, say half the newborn young, and by an agreed part of the products — milk, wool, and so on. Both worker and owner, in this new relationship, had a direct interest in the preservation and increase of the herds. This was facilitated by rapidly growing veterinary and other services.

Improvement of income and livelihood, moreover, was accelerated by the replacement of feudal by state trade, with higher prices paid for pastoral products and lower prices charged for goods brought in. In Tibet in 1965, I found that manufactures from the rest of China were priced much the same in Lhasa as in Beijing. And in the pastures, with a local inequality eliminated, they cost much the same as in Lhasa. For by then the new state-trade network, with more than 160 depots in the region, was supplemented by 800 supply and marketing co-operatives reaching down to villages and pastoral camps. They bought up local products, and sold those from elsewhere. Prices included a small handling charge enabling the trading units to meet local costs. But there was no middleman profiteering.

Thus, by 1965, the old relations in the grasslands had changed from feudal servitude to free individual herding, and in certain cases to the employment by some of the paid labour of others. Did this mean that even when socialist measures were adopted in urban and agricultural Tibet capitalism would proliferate in the pastures? No,

we were told, these were not the dynamics. Firstly, socialist state power, socialist trade and growing socialist awareness among the people blocked that road. Secondly, as animals grew in number, and those belonging to the once impoverished herdsmen increased more rapidly than those belonging to the old herdowners, an economic contradiction arose that propelled things in a different direction.

The former poor, helped by government loans, were forming herdsmen's mutual-aid teams. By 1965, there were 4,503 of these (1,581 year-round, the rest seasonal), embracing half of Tibet's stock-raisers. Their members no longer needed to work for the herdowners. Nor did they want to, as they had more and more of their own livestock to take care of. For example, a mutual-aid team in Nagqu, whose members had owned virtually no animals in 1959, began with per capita ownership of 12 animals in 1960 as a result of the division of rebels' herds. And this figure had increased to 28 animals per head in 1965.

By then, the herdowners were finding it ever more difficult to hire extra manpower. Instead, they were compelled to adapt to the growing collective sector of the economy. They could apply for membership in the teams, but could not dominate them since the Party exercised leadership and the poor herdsmen were increasingly organized and class conscious. Or they could arrange to pay the teams to care for their animals. This, however, was no longer an employer-employee relationship but a contractual one with an early stage collective. By 1965, it had almost entirely displaced direct employment of individual herdsmen by owners. And a team, unlike an individual, could not be pressed by poverty, or by past personal connection, to accept terms they deemed unfavourable.

Finally, there was a third alternative. Herdowners could ask to become participants in joint state-private stock-farms (investing their animals as shares). Here again, they could still have profit, but not control.

In all cases the socialist economy was in the superior position. It could get along without the owners, but not vice versa. If it allowed a certain gradualness in collectivization, this was for the people's long-range benefit, not because of the herdowners' strength.

In terms of class power, the decisive thing was that the state at all levels expressed the political supremacy of the ex-serfs and slaves, who supported the Communist Party's policies and were increasingly joining it as members. Socialist economic transformation, although gradual, was thus irresistible. In 1965, other parts of China, after similar steps, already had pastoral communes. In Tibet these came some years later.

In China as a whole, most pastoral areas are peopled by minority nationalities. Early impatience could have given the reactionaries within these ethnic groups a chance to exploit memories of past oppression by the Han ruling class, and thus sway middle elements, and even some labouring people, with specious appeals for "defending national tradition" (meaning their own exploitation). Even more care than elsewhere, therefore, was taken in pastoral Tibet to isolate and strike at only the main obstacles to progress at each period, and to win over the majority. Above all, work was done to help the former poor and oppressed, the indispensable main force, to realize through education and their own experience that *they* were the real body of each nationality and *their* interests, both national and class, lay in revolution, alongside China's other working folk.

\* \* \*

In Tibet's democratic revolution, its working herdsmen also came to realize that they could act boldly and effectively upon nature, once regarded as the domain of gods and demons.

An example was the fight against grassland pests. The prairie rat, one of Tibet's worst, used to be held in superstitious awe. To kill one, even accidentally, was to risk being reborn as an animal oneself. So these rodents multiplied by the million, both destroying grass and ruining underground drainage. By 1965 large-scale extermination drives, using poison and other means, were common and popular.

The rapid-breeding prairie caterpillar, another devastating pest which it had been considered "sinful" to crush, was being combated with insecticide sprayers instead of prayers. The People's Government provided special funds for this battle.

Cattle plague, anthrax, foot-and-mouth disease and other ailments of cattle and sheep, formerly "fought" largely by paying lamas for incantations, were being brought under control. Tibet by 1965 had research stations, vaccine factories and a network of veterinary centres and points reaching down from the region, through the 71 counties, down to the districts and subdistricts. In addition to graduate vets, herdsmen had been trained to give inoculations and take other measures of prevention and treatment. Nine million doses of vaccine were administered in that year (compared with 300,000 in the eight years 1951-59).

These measures were supplemented by better breeding, many-sided government help, Tibet's first cultivation of fodder crops and mutual aid in natural disasters. Sufferers from the latter, with their herds, were freely welcomed as guests in pastures once jealously held at gunpoint by each clan. The result of these changes was that livestock mortality ratio in Tibet fell by 70 per cent between 1959 and 1965.

\*             \*             \*

My talks with herdsmen in 1955 and 1965, ten years apart, gave a sense of two different social and mental worlds.

In 1955, at Yangbajain, north of Lhasa, the first skin-clad, tangled yak-herd we approached fled from the sight of us and our cameras. He feared the wrath of the lords, "Did you get permission from the headman?" was his first frightened question when we caught up with him. The presence with us of a *kashag* official complete with *gawu* (turquoise encrusted charm box worn as a headpiece by nobles) did not help matters. It was some time before we found another dweller in black tents, not one of the poorest, who after whispering with the official agreed to talk. Though he put as good a face on the situation as he could, he still revealed much. Grazing cattle for Drepung lamasery, to which his clan belonged, he had few of his own. The first money he had ever used came into his hands only with the building of the highway, when he began to sell an occasional animal to the workers and milk and butter to travellers. When driving yaks to Lhasa, a seven-day journey for him compared to the

four hours we had taken by jeep, he paid with meat and with yak-hair sacks woven by his family for his few purchases there. (He had not, for instance, bought any item of clothing for a year.) About conditions of servitude it was impossible to ask then.<sup>3</sup> Since he was clearly nervous, we could not talk long.

In 1965 we saw Yangbajain again. It was no longer just a group of scattered tents. A neat settlement of whitewashed buildings with gleaming metal roofs had sprung up, complete with road station inn, truck park and gasoline stores. Herdsmen came here to sell their products, buy their needs, get their animals treated free by vets, and sometimes a quick meal or glass of beer in the roadhouse.

Seventy kilometres on, in the pastures of Damxung, we came upon old Namgyal. Neither we nor our accompanying cadres embarrassed him in the least. After a few words, he waved us to sit down beside him on the short grass. His weatherbeaten look, and the sheepskin he wore, gave him an outer appearance not unlike that of the herders we had met in 1955. But very different was his manner, and the man himself.

Without a shade of obsequiousness, peering reflectively over his cigarette, Namgyal answered all the questions we put. He told us about the twelve corvée services and deliveries he had been bound to perform for Sera lamasery before the democratic reform, but no longer, about the debts he had owed that were now cancelled, and about his present consumption of tea, which in the old society he had never drunk. Before 1959, he had had no animals, and from the few yaks under his charge could take only some milk and hair. Now he owned several yaks and sheep. So did all the 26 households in his clan, 21 of them formerly propertyless like himself.

"Any other changes?" I asked. Namgyal gave a vigorous nod and counted them. "We can cut firewood on hillsides, which the lamas used to forbid as holy. Pastures are allotted fairly, we do that ourselves. There are no robbers or raiders any more. No animal has had anthrax for years."

But most of all, as he warmed up, the old man spoke of the gains of mutual aid.

"If a family looked after four kinds of stock in the old days, one

person was needed for each kind, even if it was just one animal. Now we put all the yaks together, and the sheep together, and pick the best men to take care of each lot. With no more *corvée*, there's time and labour to spare for sidelines. Our team earns money by cutting firewood, making *pulo* cloth and yak-hair rope, and doing transport. We've set apart 40 yaks, instead of the only six so used in our clan before, to transport salt from the northern lakes. All this means good earnings on top of what we get from butter sold to the state." (While he gave no figures we had heard elsewhere of a pastoral mutual-aid team which increased its per capita income from such sidelines eight-fold from 1960 to 1964.)

"In the herds," Namgyal continued, "we used to mix male and female animals at random. Now we separate them, breed from the the best, and put salt on the vaginas of cows and ewes to make sure they're mated. We have guns against the wolves; our young men have shot so many that they've become rare. Calves and lambs get much better care, someone stays with them day and night. We've built sheds for protection in blizzards."

An onrush of wind and cloud, typical of the sharp weather changes on the high plateau, suddenly darkened the sunny pasture and brought the temperature down by perhaps 20 degrees. Namgyal, with a habitual gesture, pulled his sheepskin over his bare chest and shoulders. We shivered. Noticing this, he invited us to go a short distance to the house he had received in the reform. A low structure of turf and stone, its inner walls coated with shiny black pitch deposited over years by smoke from the yak-dung fire, it was nevertheless orderly and neat. Presiding over it was his wife, a tall sturdy woman about his own age but rounded and ebullient by contrast with his spare, sinewy, and somewhat slow strength.

Around their hearth we learned that, though he wore the herdsman's traditional sheepskins over his bare body at work, Namgyal had purchased a thick winter coat and a Tibetan cloth gown and trousers for special occasions. "That's all I need for myself but I've bought quite a lot of cloth at the state stores for my wife, son and daughter-in-law," he said.

Soon the warming sun re-emerged after the brief squall. We made ready to go. When I photographed Namgyal and his wife at their door, his weatherbeaten face softened and he took her hand in his. Her smile was young. At an age when, as serfs, they would have been preparing for early and abandoned death, it was plain that they saw their life as a new beginning.

Then we jeeped straight over the grassland to a mountainside encampment. Black tents were scattered just below the rise. Sheep grazed around them, and on the slopes, sure-footed yaks were visible right up to the high peaks, some looking from afar like flies on the almost sheer mountain walls. Yaks, we were told, do not have to be rounded up. Scattering in ones, twos and threes, they have an old bull as leader and when he heads for home, the rest follow.

In the camp, the men wore only sheepskins as did most of the women whose faces were daubed with ochre or pitch, an old customary protection from over-exposure to the sun. Sheepskins lay in most of the tents for seats and bedding. But some contained carpets. Grandmas dandled infants. Old men twisted hair or wool ropes. Younger women did the milking, fed gruel to tiny lambs and calves from yak-horn flasks, and worked at gurgling butter churns. Small boys whirled wool slings over their heads, trying with round pebbles for distance and accuracy. At every tent entrance, whey dripped from wool bags containing cottage cheese for immediate consumption and curds to be dried for winter. The people looked cheerful and well fed. The animals were many and fat.

In my mind's eye as I watched them was another place, very far away but with both landscape and people strikingly similar (in physique, dances, designs, occupations) to those of Tibet. It was the high grassy plateau in the U.S. state of New Mexico, where in the late 1940's I had seen and talked to Navajo Indians. The U.S. at the time was dumping its agricultural surpluses to forestall revolutions in scores of foreign lands. But many old people and children, among the Navajos were sickening and dying of nutritional deficiencies. The government agency involved, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, had only one remedy to suggest. Since the Navajos' sheep and goats had increased beyond the grazing capacity of the scrubby

pastures to which their lands had been reduced, it recommended that they kill part of their stock to avoid ruining this narrow basis of their livelihood. Capitalism, from its beginning to its imperialist development, had brought first massacre, then confinement and finally a blind alley to these original Americans — in the world's richest country. Yet in Tibet the earliest step toward socialism — with the aid of the rest of China, in all parts still infinitely poorer than the U.S. — had already removed the social obstacles and disabilities of a pastoral minority, brought growth in place of diminution to their population and their herds and put them on the road forward.

In Tibet in 1965, the working people, equal as citizens of China, masters of their local affairs, were developing their own resources on their own land with aid from all her 800 million people.

Stan Steiner wrote in the *New York Nation* on May 22, 1964, just before my second visit to Tibet, that the U.S. Public Health Service counted U.S. Indian life-expectancy as 42 years, compared to 62 for the U.S. population as a whole (higher for whites alone) and infant mortality made up 21 per cent of Indian deaths, as compared to six per cent for all Americans. In Tibet, life expectancy was rapidly rising and infant mortality declining to approach the countrywide level. This was at a time of external slanders about "genocide" in Tibet!

In my mind's eye, too, were the pastures I had seen, only a few months earlier, in China's Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region, then completing its 18th year of national autonomy (set up under Communist leadership even before the liberation of the whole country). There, former nomads already had settled bases. Winter fodder was grown on tractor-ploughed farms, sheep were sheared by electricity, many pastures had artesian wells or other powered irrigation. Stock-raising counties and even districts had wool and hide processing factories and dried-milk plants. Inner Mongolians from pastoral homes worked at various levels in the region's huge iron and steel complex in Baotou, and the modern textile, farm and ranch machinery plants at Huhehot, and attended Inner Mongolia's Autonomous Region University. Herdsmen and shepherds in the broad open spaces sat on their horses listening to transistor radios and, having plenty of

time to think, discussed with us very perceptively the things they heard. Though the background was serfdom as in Tibet (but abolished some ten years earlier), the level of education and prosperity was already higher than in many provinces in inner China.

Here were some things pastoral Tibet could do as well.

## CHAPTER 23

# PASTURE PATHS TO SOCIALISM

In 1976 ninety per cent of Tibet's pastoral as well as agricultural people were organized in communes.

Going north from Lhasa, we stopped once again at Yangbajain. From the few tents of 1955 and the highway station and supply depot of 1965, it had turned into a busy small town. Its services to the grasslands and facilities for passing traffic had expanded (scores of trucks were parked by the station and we counted over a hundred others moving along the road) Tibet's first geothermal power plant was being built in Yangbajain.

We drove on, always in sight of the semi-encircling snow-capped rim of the Nyaingêntanglha range, to Damxung County — 12,000 square kilometres of mountains and pastures at a mean altitude of 4,200 metres above sea level. The population, which had grown by a third in a decade, was about 23,000; its density less than two persons (but more than 50 grazing livestock) to the square kilometre.

Socially there has been a further great change since that which old Namgyal had so graphically described in 1965. By then the enserfed tribes people under the Lhasa lamaseries had become individual-owner-herdsmen, politically and economically liberated, operating mainly in mutual-aid teams. By 1976, Damxung was subdivided into 29 far-flung communes, each with several teams as herding units. They pastured 620,000 animals,<sup>1</sup> almost thirty to each person, an increase of more than a half in the past ten years.

In 1955 and 1965, Damxung still had no industries to speak of. In 1976 these included a hydroelectric plant, farm machine factory, sulphur and peat mines run by the county. Communes and teams had set up wood and metal workshops, lime kilns and brickworks. Most of the herdspeople had acquired settled dwellings apart from their yak-hair tents. There were water-driven mills, potteries and handicraft groups that made basketry, pack-saddles and clothes.

Mechanization in animal husbandry was still embryonic. The 29 communes owned between them seven trucks and 12 tractors, a number that might be negligible elsewhere but was meaningful in pastoral Tibet. More widespread was the progress represented by the fact that almost every producing unit had large horse-carts with rubber-tired wheels running on ballbearings, hand-cranked cream separators and butter churns of stainless steel, of which the local supply station had sold hundreds in the previous year. In 1965 we had seen no carts and all churns were of the traditional wooden, plunger type.

The five pastoral production teams we visited were using electric power from small generators, sufficient for running small machines and for illumination.

All but three of Damxung's communes had access to motor roads, with public buses running to some. In 1965 we had seen motor traffic only on the trunk Qinghai-Tibet Highway.

Medical developments were quite striking. (The Damxung county hospital is described in the chapter "Battle for Health".)

The wide availability of veterinary service could be judged from a visit to one of the five district stations in Damxung. Under it were 65 of the county's 300 modern, traditional and "barefoot" vets. In 1975, this station alone, we were informed, had given 300,000 treatments, trained many herdsmen and herdswomen in elementary techniques, and sent some for further study in the county. Prevention and prophylaxis had virtually eliminated foot-and-mouth disease, rinderpest, anthrax and bovine pneumonia. Besides internationally used vaccines and drugs, traditional herbal draughts and acupuncture were widely employed. Vets, both professional and "barefoot", helped in the improvement of breeds by artificial insemination. As a result

of these many-sided efforts, the quality, rate of survival and health of livestock had greatly improved.

One of the county's two Party secretaries was himself a graduate veterinary surgeon. He was Gong Dasi, a Han who had come from Shanghai in 1959, had become fluent in the language, married a Tibetan wife and was affectionately known as Gong Tashi, a Tibetanized version of his name. Many other cadres in the pastures had various degrees of veterinary training. In spring when animal diseases were prevalent they carried veterinary kits with them wherever they went.

In education, in place of the formerly almost universal illiteracy, 73 per cent of Damxung's children were attending schools. Four of these were state schools run by the county, and 55 were "people's schools" run by communes and teams with governmental assistance. Some 10,000 people, about two-thirds of those above school age, were involved in adult education.

There were 132 small lending libraries and reading rooms in Damxung, and 120 newspaper groups in which those who could read relayed the news, often in work-breaks, to those who could not. Films were shown by seven mobile projection teams. There was a county broadcasting station with 16 wired broadcast units — which relayed the main programmes and filled in with their own local ones. Amateur theatrical and song-and-dance teams which wrote many of their own scripts, largely on current local themes, had over 600 members.

Tibetans held 60 per cent of county-grade cadre posts and 80 per cent of the district ones. Commune and team cadres were all Tibetans. Women office-holders included a deputy Party secretary and vice-head of the county revolutionary committee. Overall, however, only one-tenth of the cadres were women.

All the above figures were given us by Party secretary Gong Tashi.

The Revolutionary Committee vice-chairperson, Drolma, who was in her thirties described to us Damxung's transition from pastoral mutual-aid teams to communes.

The teams organized in the early 1960's were based on private property acquired by the herdsmen when the herds of rebel serfowners

(mainly the big lamaseries) were divided. A team had 30 households at most, sometimes as few as three. As in agriculture, mutual aid was an advance on the past, she said, but could not prevent renewed polarization — or the re-appearance of exploitation. Poorer herdsmen when short of grain borrowed it from still well-to-do herdowners, pledging their own cattle as security. Some, in this way, lost the animals shared out to them in the democratic reform.

In the face of this situation, the policy of “no division of non-rebel herdowner property, no definition of class” in the herding areas had been changed. Its original political purpose, uniting all possible forces against the rebellion and the serf system, was said to have outlived its day. Now the main struggle was seen as one between the road of socialism — the way to prosperity for the vast majority — and that of capitalism. Accordingly, a mass movement was launched, new class lines were drawn and corresponding action was taken.

Persons whose income came 75 per cent or more from exploitation were classed as herdowners; their animals were confiscated except for a number equivalent to the average holding of a poor herdsman.<sup>2</sup> If exploited income accounted for 20 to 75 per cent, they were defined as rich herdsmen; their animals were bought out, but they could re-purchase the average holding of a middle herdsman. If exploitation was under 30 per cent they were middle herdsmen; their property was not touched.

Poor herdsmen, those who lived entirely by their own labour, had everything to gain from socialism. They were taken as the moving force and mainstay of the subsequently organized communes. Middle herdsmen were equally entitled to membership, and every effort was made to unite them to the poor. Rich herdsmen could only be admitted individually if the poor consented, and could not hold leading positions. Ex-herdowners were admitted last, subject to similar approval, and without voting rights.<sup>3</sup> Their labour, however, was paid for like anyone else’s on the principle “to each according to his work.”

The communes, besides being collective economic units, were grass-roots organs of political power. In Tibet in 1976, to give effect to this dual function, each had its “Eight Big Organizations”, namely:

1. The Communist Party Committee, in overall leadership;
2. The Revolutionary Committee, the executive body;
3. The Poor Herdsmen's Association;
4. The Communist Youth League Committee;
5. The Women's Association;
6. The Militia;
7. The Security Committee; and
8. The Mediation Committee.

All cadres at the commune level and officers of the eight organizations were Tibetans overwhelmingly of serf or slave origins.

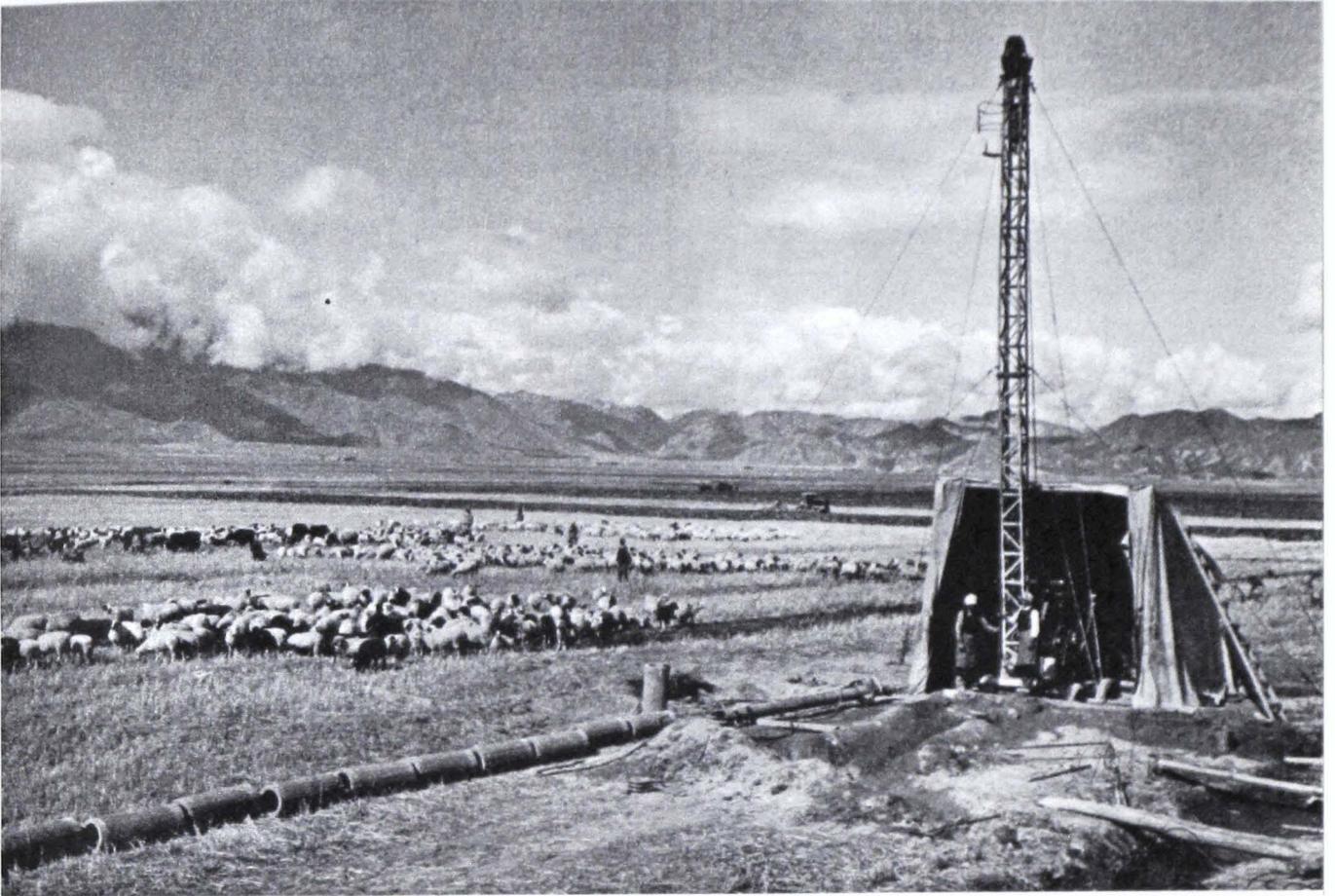
The point of lasting significance is that even without them the situation was already light-years removed from the situation up to 1959 when Damxung's herdsmen were serfs of their monastic lords, and could be whipped, crippled, flogged, skinned alive or killed outright by overseers and headmen; when there were only half as many animals, and 70 per cent belonged directly to the lords; and when the people were loaded with innumerable labour-service obligations and endless debts.

By 1976 all communes in Damxung were described as of the advanced type, in which pastures and cattle were collectively owned and managed. The collective ownership was on two levels, commune and team, with the latter as the basic accounting unit. The state was helping the communes with an annual grant of 750,000 *yuan*, plus 130,000 *yuan* from a special fund for "assistance to pastoral areas."

Instead of the old problem of too few animals, and those few monopolized by the manorial lords, a new one had arisen. Collective herds had increased so much that there was a shortage of grass, and more risk of disease because of greater density of animals, we were told.

From 1973, with the communes uniting their efforts, the Damxung people began to radically improve their pastures. The model at the time was the Wuchengchao pastoral commune in Inner Mongolia. In 1974-76 the county, with barely 23,000 people, put 2.1 million man-days into this undertaking, an average of about 93 days per head of the population. Over 200 kilometres of watercourses were built. Irrigated

## THE HIGH PASTURES



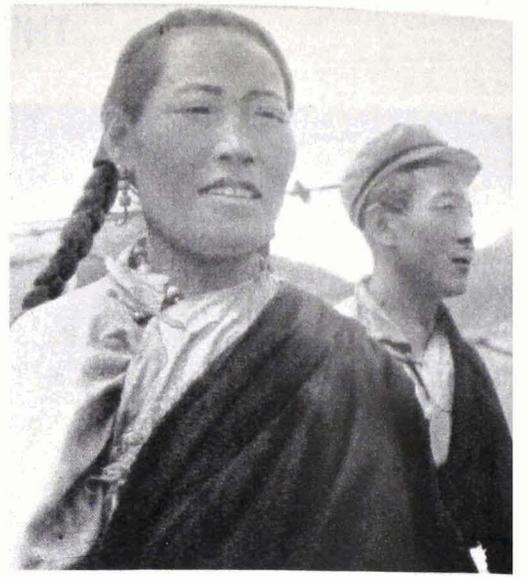
Artesian well irrigates pastures at Phampo State Farm.



Milk separators are replacing wooden churns in the grasslands.

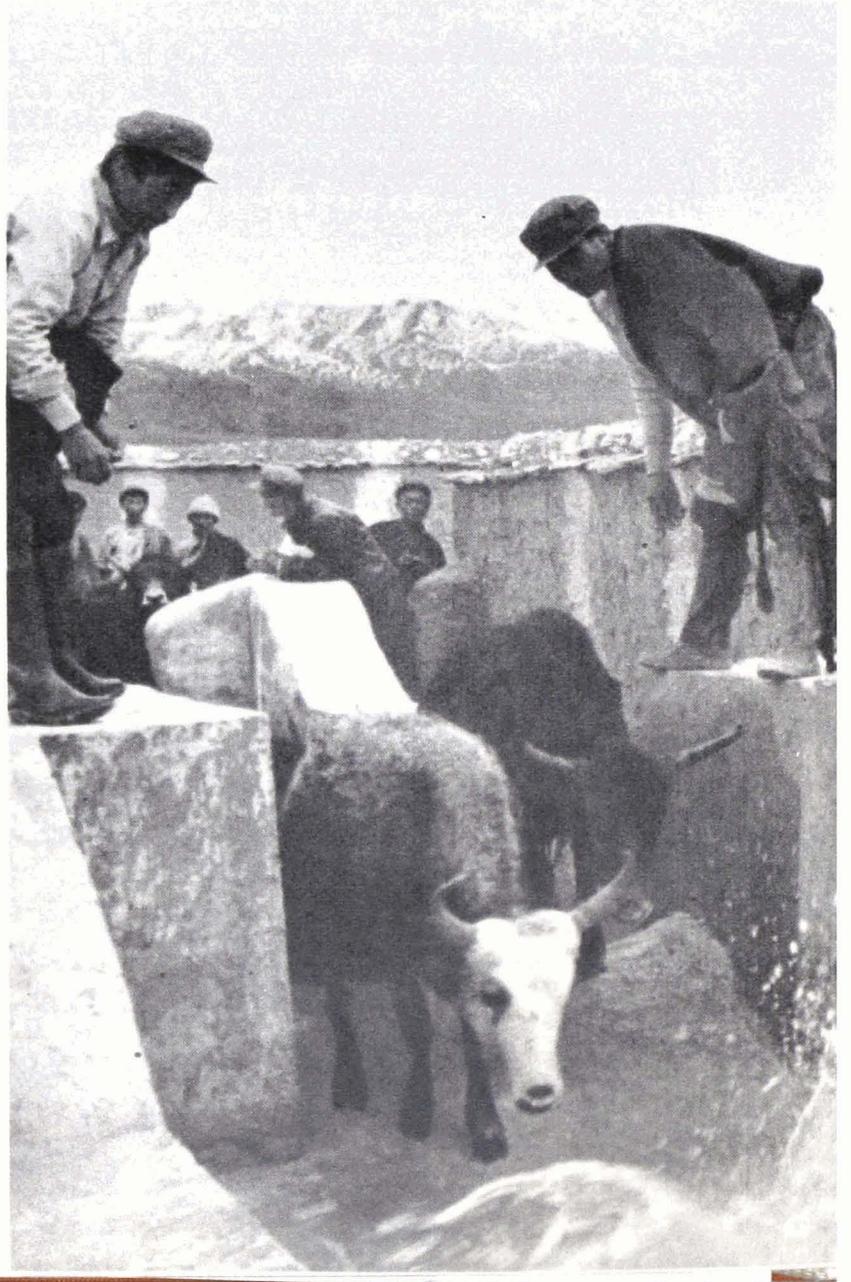


**A yak is milked.**



**Pastoral Tibetans resemble American Indians.**

**Medicinal dip for cattle,  
Damxung pasture, 1976.**

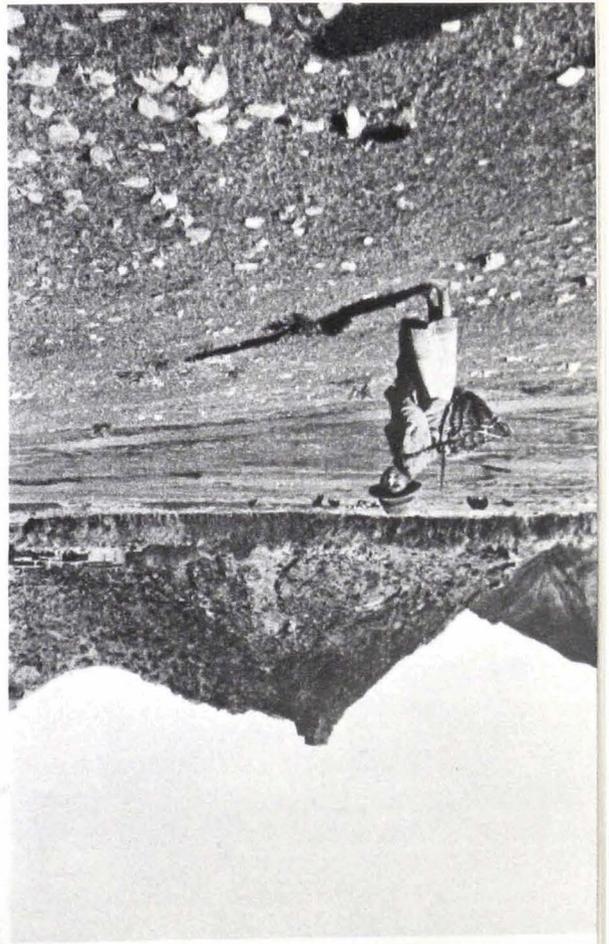
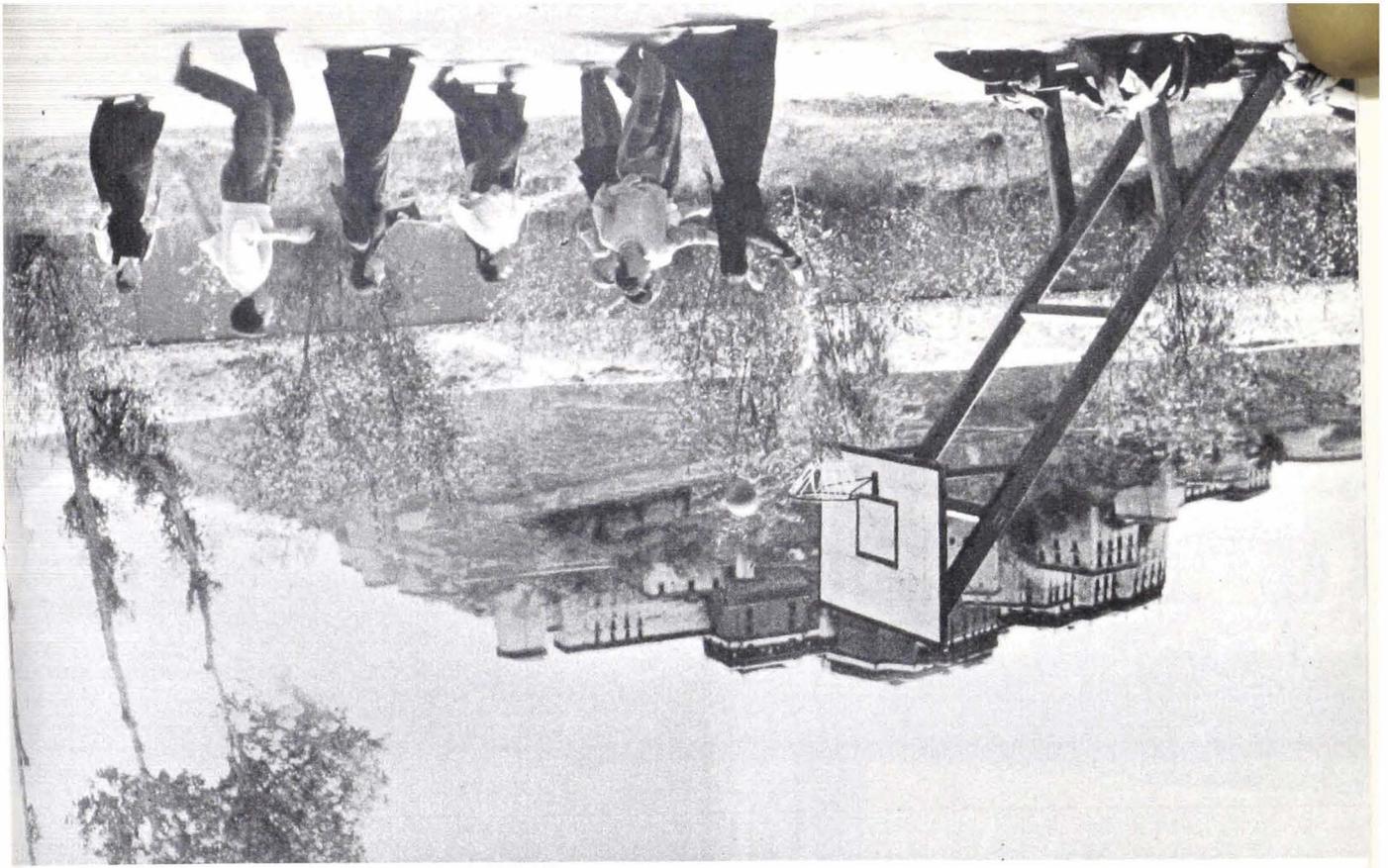




Pasture on Phampo State Farm.

Shearing by electricity.







In old Tibet, serf children worked like this and were never educated (upper left).

Lhasa Primary School, 1955 (upper centre).

First Lhasa Middle School, 1965 (below left).

Tibetan lesson, in primary school (upper right).

Child audience at rural fair (below right).



## ANCIENT ARTS

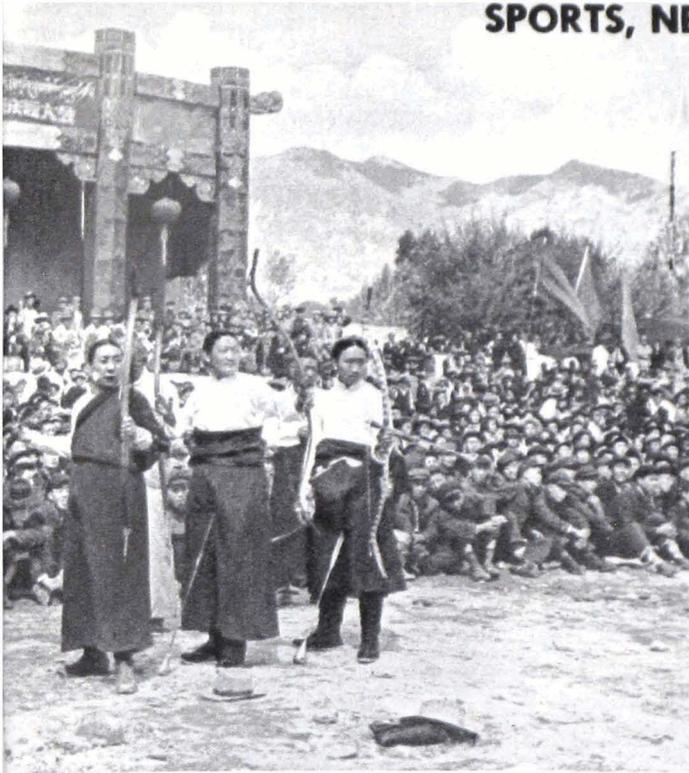


Traditional painter, 1955.

Carved wood supports, including sphinx-like figures with lions' heads.



**SPORTS, NEW AND OLD**

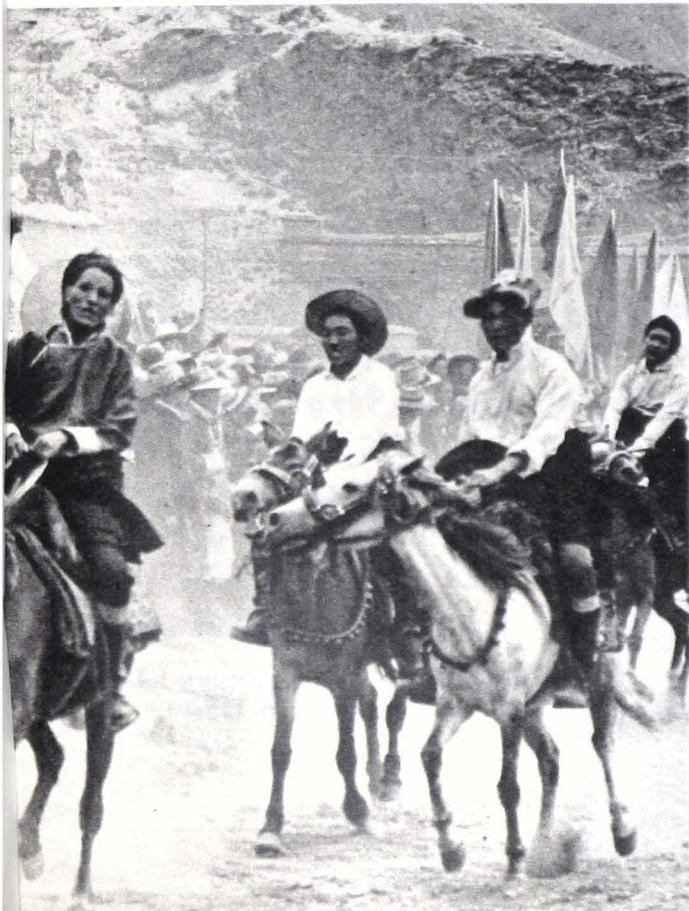


**Archers before the Potala in 1955 in ceremonial contest.**



**Farm worker highjumps at rural fair in 1965.**

**Ex-serf at end of horseback race — at pre-harvest festival fair, Loka prefecture, 1965.**



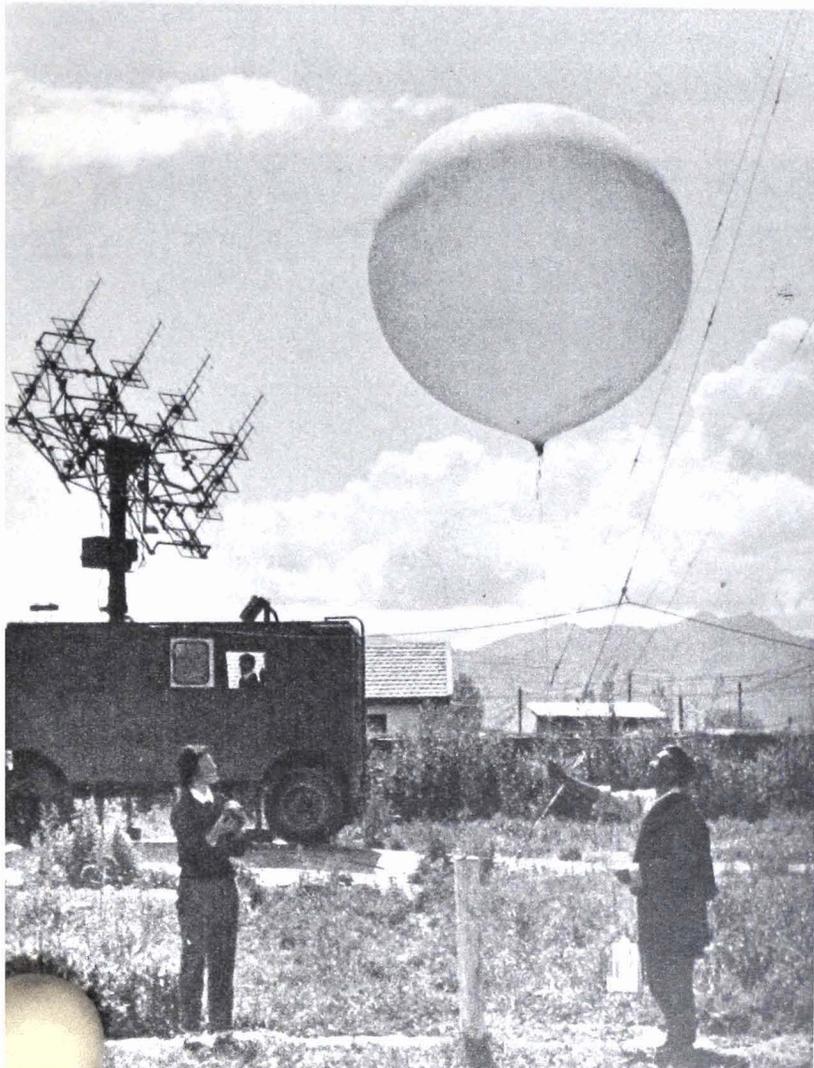
**Former slave at Ong-kor fair, 1965.**



**CULTURE AND SCIENCE**



**Yusi, Tibetan singer, on rural tour, 1965.**



**High-altitude meteorology is now well-developed in Tibet.**

pastures were extended by 13,300 hectares. Another 10,000 hectares were enclosed to improve and conserve grass for winter use (only female animals suckling their young were allowed to graze there). Thousands of brackish ponds were filled up. Though Damxung's short frost-free period limits the growing of grain for human consumption, it was planted on 430 hectares for use semi-ripe as nutritious silage.

Very important in these undertakings was the fight against superstition.

A big lake near Damxung had been personified in legend as the "concubine of the Nyainqëntanglha", the eerily beautiful slate-blue, snowcapped mountain range that fringes these grasslands on the north. The commune members decided to breach this lake to irrigate the pastures. Hostile elements started a whispering campaign "The Nyainqëntanglha will be angered and Damxung will be wiped out." Some people with old thinking wavered. But most of the herdsmen, after studying Mao Zedong's *The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains*, gained courage — and the job was done.

Another nearby lake, Nam Co, was full of fish traditionally not caught or eaten because they were reputedly "water gods". But one year when there was a shortage of grass, the Party called on the people to make fish-meal to nourish the weakened livestock. Again, there were prophets of doom. Again the result was success; the animals regained strength and put on flesh. Now Nam Co was fished regularly, by a team of women, another victory over the old thinking. Lagendo Commune, which we visited, prepared ten tons of fish meal in 1976.

Lagendo, in the past, had a "poison stream"; scores of animals that drank from it died each year. The monks told the people this was divine punishment for their sins. But in the movement to learn from Dazhai, the stream was put on the list of evils to be wiped out. Party members and activists had the water tested. It was found to contain mercury. In the spring of 1972, with some snow still on the ground, the battle began. Commune members, young and old, plunged thigh-deep into the ice-cold tainted stream. Outstanding among the workers was Namsey, assistant Party secretary of the commune, a small wiry man of around 50 who had once been a poor monk of Sera monastery. By removing large amounts of earth and rock, the stream was merged

with other waters, which diluted the mercury content to a harmless proportion.

Namsey looked much like old Namgyal the herdsman we had talked to in Damxung in 1965, but was more developed in his socialist thinking. A pastoral serf's son, he had been put in the temple because his parents were too poor to feed him. In 1959, returning to lay life he was allotted 18 yaks, a horse and furniture in the democratic reform. But Namsey did not choose to "go it alone". He joined a mutual-aid team, which chose him as head. Later he entered the Party and was among the first local herdsman to opt for a commune.

Gyatso, the vice-chairman, was only 34. His family, though beggars destitute of animals, had still been subject to corvée and poll tax — and obliged each year to deliver 29 sacks of dried yak manure, 20 loads of firewood and the price of one sheep in money, to the pasture lords. In the reform 12 yaks, a horse and other property were allotted to Gyatso. Attending night school for six years he became literate and politically active. He told us that one of his brothers, sent for five years to the Tibet Nationalities Institute at Xianyang, had returned to become a district Party secretary.

In Tibet, most pastoral communes were formed after the agricultural ones, mainly in the years 1970-72, and were like those we saw on our last visit to Damxung.

\*                     \*                     \*

Some of the economic and social measures of the 1970's — the acceleration of changes in relations of production before the forces of production had risen to the maximum under the arrangements of the 1960's and the political re-definition of friendly and hostile classes — were condemned as unnecessary and divisive, and hence repealed in the relaxation of policies in Tibet in 1980. What I describe here are the things seen and brought to our attention in 1976.

In the years since then, there has been a new emphasis on economic accounting and material reward for better-than-average work in the pastures of Tibet, as in the rest of China. In October 1978, one of Damxung's pastoral communes at Gyakundo was publicly praised for

sticking to a production responsibility system called "the five fixed quotas and one bonus".

The five fixed quotas covered: the number of persons assigned to each pastoral task, the number of animals taken care of by each team, the pasture area for each herd or flock, measure of pasturing management, targets for natural increase, and sales to the state. The bonus was given for overfulfilment.

Previously, under the influence of what was now seen as an "ultra-Left" trend, all such arrangements had been stigmatized as "bourgeois" or "putting material gain in command". In Gyakundo Commune this rejection had not been as total as in other areas but also had considerable effect. Gyakundo Commune had given way to the extent of abolishing the bonus. But it held tight to the five quotas and in 1975, even before the overthrow of the "gang of four", had restored the bonus as well.

By 1978 the system was being commended as a sound application of the socialist principle of "to each according to his labour". It was credited with the increase of Gyakundo Commune's animals by 43 per cent, and of its members' income by 87 per cent, in the eight years after its founding in 1970.

For the pastoral people of Damxung County as a whole, a 20 per cent increase of per capita income, from 114 *yuan* to 136 *yuan*, was reported for 1978 as compared to 1977. One factor was the increase in purchase prices paid by the state for pastoral products. For butter alone, this added 100,000 *yuan* to the receipts of Damxung's commune members. Also adding to income was the expansion of sideline occupations, mainly still handicraft, in the pastoral economy.

Amdo County in the north, with 1,180,000 animals in 1977, reported even better results than Damxung: a 26 per cent increase in the four years from 1973 to 1977, with an annual rate of 6.5 per cent.

All communes there were using carts, improved milk separators and butter churns operated by wind and water power. Some had bought hand tractors, film projectors, and small machinery for workshops.

It should be noted that stockbreeding in Tibet has benefited from

the preferential tax treatment given to national minority areas, in which most of China's pastures are located.

Exempted from all taxation are young animals, stud and draught animals, those used in scientific experiments, herdsmen's mounts, pack animals and all others legally kept by commune members for their own use — also domestic animals in farm households. (After 1980, the number of animals owned and cared for by individuals was no longer restricted.)

Pastoral communes and teams hit by natural calamities had long enjoyed tax reductions or exemptions depending on the degree of loss.

From 1980, under new policies for Tibet then adopted, *all* taxes on stockbreeding as well as farming were suspended for two years. Compulsory quotas for sales of their products to the state were lifted. Vehicles used in these branches of the economy were exempted from road tolls. Processing and sales of pastoral and farm products, whether by collectives or individuals, were freed from industrial and commercial taxes for the same period. For products voluntarily sold to it, the state raised its purchase prices, while those it charged for industrial goods were further reduced.

For the building of reservoirs and other public works, there were to be no mobilizations.

The government has made grants to stockbreeding areas to expand their herds and improve livelihood. Tibet receives many millions of *yuan* in such allocations each year, and it was recently decreed that they should be increased by 10 per cent each year up to 1985.

The state also helps bring science to the pastures. In Tibet, an integrated system of pasture irrigation, manuring, elimination of pests and poison grass, and the planting of improved strains is being worked out. In the late 1970's sheep had begun to be grouped in flocks of 500, each with winter shelters (including special sheds for lambs) and cattle in herds of 100, similarly provided. Each flock or herd under this arrangement was required to have a special enclosed pasture of 600 hectares. Each herding base was to build a guaranteed water supply and use some machinery. How these concrete provisions were affected by the relaxation of policies in 1980 was not yet clear to the author at the time of writing.

State investments in small factories in communes and production teams were increased. The regional government undertook to pay all expenses of primary and middle schools in communes and teams.

One general purpose of these relaxations, lifting of burdens and grants in aid, was to enliven all non-exploitative channels of rural-pastoral-handicrafts exchange, big or small, some of which had been blocked by "ultra-Left" policies or over-rigid planning, and thus to spur the initiative and prosperity of both collectives and individuals.

Finally, in Tibet, there was to be greater stress on stockbreeding than in the previous period — when increased cultivation of grain, and particularly of wheat, had been too one-sidedly emphasized. Tibet is primarily pastoral and even its farm areas are partly so — a pattern determined by its natural conditions. Animal products are an indispensable part of its food, clothing and shelter, its industrial raw material base, and its trade with the rest of China and with abroad. In its socialist modernization and the bettering of its people's livelihood, the pastoral economy is and will be a basic factor — a key potential for improvement and growth.

In the meantime, alongside the economic measures, technical and scientific aid to animal husbandry is being stepped up further.

Breeds are being improved. In 1977-78 Tibet bred 378,000 semi-fine wool sheep with fleeces 2.5 times the weight of those of the old coarse-wool sheep (still valuable mainly for carpet wool). To help in such work, 250 artificial insemination stations have been set up in the region, and a thousand technicians trained. According to a Xinhua News Agency dispatch in 1980, foreign breeds of sheep successfully adapted to Tibet's conditions included Australasia and New Zealand, Leicesters and Tsigai sheep from the Soviet Union.

In Qinghai Province, with high-plateau conditions similar to those in Tibet frozen semen from Hereford bulls has been used to impregnate yak cows, producing fine beef cattle endowed with the fast-growth characteristics of the sire stock and the endurance and ability to exist on coarse fare of the dam. Yak and yak-hybrid beef from Qinghai is already finding an appreciative market as far away as Hong Kong. This may augur a new day for Tibetan cattle-raising and

meat production. Directly adapted to Tibet were Simmenpal cattle from Switzerland.

Hybrid yaks, besides producing an average of 70 per cent more meat as compared with the pure stock, give from two to three times as much milk.

Favourable to the pastoral economy is the introduction of refrigerated meat storage in Tibet. A new facility in Lhasa, for instance, stores 3,400 tons, providing about 39 kg. per year for each of the 120,000 people in the city area.

On a China-wide scale, a conference on grassland ecosystems was held in April 1979 in Inner Mongolia, another of her major pastoral areas. Research bases were to be set up immediately to serve China's 200 million hectares of pastures. They would seek better ways to prevent degeneration, control harmful animals, birds and insects, and improve and utilize pastures. All this would help Tibet's pastoral areas, too, to advance.

**REVOLUTION IN EDUCATION  
AND CULTURE**

## CHAPTER 24

# TIBET'S STATE SCHOOLS

On July 23, 1965, the morning after arriving in Lhasa for the second time, I heard through my window a rustle and a medley of merry voices. It was the children, red scarved and apple-cheeked, going off to school along the freshly-asphalted People's Road which stretched between rows of new white shops, all the way from the gold-topped Jokhang Temple to the Potala. Early that same afternoon, the children were in evidence again. Behind drums and bugles and crimson flags, Young Pioneer units were marching to the Cultural Palace, also brand-new, to rehearse for the forthcoming anniversary of the founding of their organization (in 1955 there had been no Young Pioneers).

Two days later was a Sunday. With school out, it looked as if the 12, 13 and 14-year-olds had taken over all Lhasa. In the city department store and Xinhua Bookshop, they were behind counters helping the salespeople. On the main streets, with armbands and megaphones, cheerily strict boys and girls were acting as auxiliary traffic controllers. It was the crest of Lhasa's "big leap" in municipal construction, and most of the streets were full of electric linesmen, pipe-layers and tree planters — Sunday busier than any other day because a great many volunteers were taking a hand. Amid this bustle, the children's voices kept ringing out to passing pedestrians, "Old uncle, please don't wander all over the street just anywhere, the crossing is over there!" "Liberation Army comrades, that's no place to walk, get up on the sidewalks!"

We foreign newsmen, giving little thought to rules as we hopped about with our cameras, got our share of their admonitions. It didn't seem to bother these youngsters that in some places the "sidewalks" they shooed us onto hadn't yet been laid but were still dug-up obstacle courses along the edges of the new-paved streets. They had the future in their mind's eye. And not prematurely, for within a couple of days, sometimes even of hours, along would come a work squad and the projected sidewalk would materialize.

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In the Lhasa we had known ten years earlier, schoolchildren had been a rare part of the landscape, and half a dozen years before there were none. A small minority of the young monks were taught religious reading in the lamaseries. Among nobles' sons some got special instruction so they could become *kashag* officials, others were taught by tutors at home and a few, the very richest, were sent to a school maintained for some years by the British in Gyangzê, or to India and even to Britain. Whatever education there was served the interests of the feudal ruling class, or of the imperialists, who used it to gain influence in Tibet's "top families". Even at that, every start at modern secular education was soon choked off by feudal obscurantism, lay and clerical.<sup>1</sup>

Educated commoners were rare, and to find a woman among them was considered a freak of nature. "On the Parkhor, the central street in Lhasa," Chang-lo-chen, an old aristocrat-scholar, told me, "there was only one woman, a shopkeeper, who could write and keep accounts. People used to come a long way to gawk at this wonder. I did myself."

## LHASA'S NO. 1 PRIMARY SCHOOL

1955

Such was the situation when Tibet's first state primary school was established in Lhasa in 1952. The Central People's Government

put up the funds. But the serfowner local regime wanted the control. In 1955 we met the school board. Its majority consisted of the Dalai Lama's religious tutor, Tsrijong Losang Yeshi, a formidable obscurantist, later a major rebel, and other highly-placed medieval figures, monkish and mundane. In the minority were a more enlightened Tibetan aristocrat, Chang-lo-chen; a Tibetan Communist cadre from Kham, Dorje Tsenden; and a Han educator named Li Ancai. The dean was again a feudal official — a former regimental commander of the Tibetan army. Of the 19 teachers, ten were from the Tibetan nobility and clergy. A *kashag* police constable guarded the gate.

But even though enmeshed in the contradictions of the time, this school was the starting point of new education in Tibet. Texts, all in Tibetan, were adjusted versions of those used in the rest of China. Tuition and books were free. Of the 732 pupils in 1955, the school's fourth year of existence, a third were from the families of nobles, but the rest were of other origins, including the oppressed poor, among whom education had once been unknown and who still had very serious difficulties to contend with — despite state support. And more than half were girls.

In the curriculum, the central government conceded to the local authorities a daily period of religious instruction, a thing contrary to new China's general principle of separation of religion and education. In return they successfully insisted on some teaching of science. But other subjects, such as history, could not be taught at all due to a complete opposition of basic approach. The serfowner regime held that history's moving forces were gods and kings, the Communist Party that the masses of the people made history.

In form, the school was run by the central and local authorities in consultation. In essence, it was a field of struggle. The serfowner local power, keeping sharp watch through specially assigned officials, sought to use it only as a means of equipping servants of the feudal class with bits of modern knowledge useful to itself. The central government wanted it to prepare educated workers for the people. This aim finally won out. But only after the clash of arms in 1959.

In 1965, ten years later, many members of the first classes at the school, mainly but not entirely those from the ranks of the most

burdened poor, were among the first Tibetan students of university level. Many others were revolutionary cadres.

On my second visit, made in that year, I found the school very different — and no longer the only one in Lhasa. Flanking the entrance were the slogans governing education in all China. “Education serves proletarian politics! Education combined with productive labour!”

Of the 670 pupils, three quarters were from ex-serf and slave families. The curriculum was free of feudal trammels and there were three 45-minute periods of labour each week. First and Second graders cleaned their own classrooms. Grades Three to Six went to the hills to cut firewood which they took home to their families, and carried water and cooked meals for the disabled poor as an exercise in serving the people. On occasion, they also acted as ushers at film theatres and helped direct traffic in the streets. And they had worked in shifts to help build the Lhasa Children's Palace.

Of the 28 teachers, 18 were Tibetans and 10 were Hans. Tibetan was the general medium of instruction. Han was taught as a subject from Grade Three on. Teachers' assignments did not depend on their origin; if qualified, Hans could instruct in Tibetan or vice versa. Teachers of either nationality were studying each other's language. Administratively, there were two principals and two deans of studies, Tibetan and Han. The 35-year-old Tibetan dean, Tenzing Chunlei, though appointed to teach by the *kashag* in 1952, had refused to join it in rebellion. A former lama of Sera monastery, he had studied at the Potala school for officials, the *tse-trung*. But he was also an example of how such old intellectuals could move forward. The same was true of his wife, Tsering Dorje, another teacher. Daughter of a Tibetan doctor she began by studying at home. In the early 1950's she joined the united front Class for Social Education, and in 1956 the Lhasa Cadres' Class. The influx of new teachers, of serf and slave origin, was just beginning.

No tuition was charged. Pupils from wealthier families, however, paid for books — in the first two grades the charge was only half a *yuan*, but in the last two it mounted to six *yuan* (books printed in the inland provinces, being a central government contribution, were dis-

tributed free, but those produced in Tibet were priced, to avoid laying a burden on the region's own economy). Hard-up students got all books free, plus a monthly subsidy. For the poorest this amounted to nine *yuan*, which covered all their food at home. For some others it was five *yuan*, to cover roughly half.

Another 11 years passed.

In 1976, coming to this same school during the recess, we found seemingly countless youngsters noisily chasing footballs and leaping after basketballs in the spacious grounds. There were now 1,800 pupils of whom 1,007 were Tibetans, and 55 teachers, 29 Tibetan. And twice as many classrooms as before.

The Han pupils were a novelty. Earlier, children of Han cadres had generally attended different schools from the Tibetans, and studied in their own language. Now there were still two kinds of classes, but in the same school. Ordinary subjects were taught in Tibetan and Han respectively. But after the third grade Tibetan pupils began to learn Han as a second language and the Han pupils Tibetan. On the playground, as they ran about together they communicated in one tongue or the other, or a mixture of both. We found it hard to distinguish them by nationality.

In the higher grades — Four and Five — special political, agricultural and industrial lessons had been added. The school had its own farm, and links with nearby communes where pupils sometimes went to help with production.

Children also worked in, and themselves managed under teacher supervision, a printing and mimeographing shop where they turned out their own exercise books, and some texts. They took turns behind the chair in the school's barbershop; virtually no pupils went anywhere else for haircuts.

By 1976, several thousand students had finished Lhasa No. 1 Primary School. Most, we were told, had gone on to middle schools, and some to universities.

The majority of the teachers were now themselves Lhasa Primary's old pupils.

Bajan, the vice-director, a trim woman in her mid-thirties, was one of these. She had entered the first class of the school in 1952, as

a homeless orphan of nine (her father had been an unemployed wanderer, her mother a serf hand-loom weaver). Finishing in 1959, she went on to the Tibet Institute at Xianyang, then returned here to teach in 1965.

Ngawang, director of the Lhasa Teachers' Training School, the city's chief source of primary school instructors, was another graduate, we were proudly told.

Many former pupils of Lhasa No. 1 were now workers on factory and farm, as truck drivers, technicians, soldiers, cadres.

Things had changed a great deal from 1955 when I first visited this school, and over every conversation with child, teacher or cadre hung the richly robed figure and full-moon face of that guardian of feudal influence in education, the Living Buddha Tsrijong.

## LHASA MIDDLE SCHOOL

In 1955 Tibet had no secondary education. Lhasa's No. 1 Middle School, set up in 1956, was the pioneer. In 1965, when I visited it, the students numbered 340, of whom 269 were Tibetans; the rest were from five other Chinese nationalities and mainly from cadre families. It was the direct outgrowth of the primary school. Its foundation, the principal recalled, had been even less to the taste of the *kashag*. The grove and adjacent waste land allotted to it had lacked buildings, so teachers and boarders lived in tents. In those days, feudalists had already rebelled in Kham, while those in Lhasa were preparing for action. Progressive students were constantly being stoned, threatened and insulted.

*Kashag* appointees on the middle school board objected to physics and chemistry as "contrary to scripture." They resented and resisted the combination of education and labour. Some aristocratic students brought child-slaves to do their share of the physical work, and even to serve them buttered tea at their desks. Marxist teaching concerning social classes and exploitation was under a complete veto by the *kashag*.

So the socialist educational policy of all China could be applied

at the school only after the suppression of the rebellion in 1959.

In 1965, we found the policy being implemented. The aim of learning, it was stressed, was to serve the people. Marxism and revolution were not merely schoolroom subjects. Students went out annually to live with the ex-serfs and slaves and make local surveys of class relations, former and current. They heard talks by workers, peasants and veteran revolutionaries. Each quarter, and at other times determined by political events, special reports were made ranging over the home and international scene. In the spring of 1965, highlights were the Vietnamese people's war against U.S. imperialism and the current resistance of the Dominican people to the U.S. domination. "The boys and girls take a sharp interest in the whole world," said Principal Liu, "and particularly in the liberation movements of Asia, Africa and Latin America."

Communist morality, constantly inculcated, showed in the students' behaviour. We were told many instances of how they cared for public property, turned in lost objects they came across — trifling or valuable — and helped the working people without thought of return or praise. A few weeks earlier, some of them had met an old sick villager, loaded with bundles, looking for the People's Hospital. They carried his things there, helped him register and did not leave till he had settled into a ward. When asked their names, they replied, "We're Chairman Mao's students." The hospital informed the school, which praised their action on its bulletin board and public address systems. But no one came forward to take the credit — which was considered the most laudable of all.

Labour education, in the middle-school stage, was producing material as well as moral benefit. A 2.6 hectare farm run by teachers and students working in rotation — one day a week for everyone — produced all vegetables served in their canteen. Students had planted thousands of trees along the campus perimeter and walks, and ran its weather station. In industrial classes, they made their own chalk, desks, chairs and bookcases, repaired bicycles and did all the school's electric wiring. At sowing and harvest time, teams went out to help the peasants.

Science was by now prominent in the curriculum. Botanical,

biological, chemical and physical laboratories had been splendidly equipped by the central government. Even in Beijing and Shanghai, few middle schools were so well fitted out. There were microscopes, balances, spectrometers, radio-building kits and many other items not just for demonstration but in adequate numbers for all students to use in rotation. And many teaching models, working or dismantlable, of all sorts of industrial and metallurgical equipment.

We found some students taking their mathematics tests — algebra, geometry, trigonometry, calculus — Tibetans, said their teacher, had a flair for mathematics. Others were writing term-end essays in Tibetan and Han. Some subjects: "How We Can Beautify Our School by Our Labour," "Which Course Helped Me the Most" and "What I Hope to Do for the People When I Graduate."

Athletics included basketball, table tennis, volleyball and soccer. In the latter sport, the school's eleven was the Lhasa champion. Defence sports, keyed to patriotic and class motives, included militia drill, shooting, camping and mountaineering.

Three-fifths of the students were children of ex-slaves, serfs or the city poor. The rest, some 40 per cent, still came from the homes of former aristocrats, stewards or merchants. The view was that no one was responsible for having been born into this or that kind of family, and each should be judged by his or her own attitudes and actions. Most of these young people, growing up in the post-rebellion atmosphere, appeared to be making real efforts to throw off exploiting-class viewpoints and devote themselves to the people's service.

For the still relatively high proportion of such students, there were two reasons. One was the class composition of the population of Lhasa, the political centre of the former regime (the eldest sons of manorial families from most of Tibet had to reside there as officials). The other was the short time during which elementary education had been available to ex-serf or slave children. The proportion of the latter in the middle school, however, was rising from year to year. To remove material obstacles, the poor studied free of all fees, and were helped by subsidies ranging up to 18 *yuan* per month for full board. Better-off Tibetans paid for books. Tuition of four *yuan* a

month was charged only to Han students from the families of cadres coming from other parts of China.

The school was itself becoming a source of teachers. In 1965, it had sent 15 graduates to normal schools in the interior. It was also running its own special class which had trained 300 teachers for people's primary schools.

We also met its alumni as radio announcers, journalists, proof-readers and typesetters, skilled workers and technicians, Party and government cadres or interpreters.

Yet even in 1965 Tibet's secondary education was as yet in its infancy. The full six-year middle school course, junior and senior, was available in Lhasa alone. The other middle schools in the region — one each in Qamdo, Xigazê, Gyanzê, Loka and Lhünzê — still offered only a three-year junior course.

As compared to 1959, however, this was already signal progress. In that year the Lhasa school, then itself at junior level, had been the only one. In 1962-64 it graduated 384 students.

In 1965, total middle school enrolment in Tibet was 769, with 408 in senior middle school. In addition, over 3,000 Tibetans were studying in Nationalities Institutes in Beijing, Chengdu and Xian and the Tibet Institute in Xianyang, Shaanxi Province, where they did the equivalent of middle school work preparatory for other courses.

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By 1976, there were 49 middle schools in Tibet, a seven-fold jump for the whole region.<sup>2</sup>

Lhasa's No. 1 Middle School, now one of five in the city, had 1,400 students, almost thrice the number a decade earlier. Over nine-tenths were from labouring-class families. Students were both Tibetan and Han, about half and half (since this school, directly under the autonomous region, served also the children of incoming cadres). Instruction was in both tongues, depending on the students. For the Hans, Tibetan was taught as a second language, we were told.

There was very heavy emphasis on labour. Besides going to communes and factories for a period, the students had reclaimed land for grain and vegetable farms and worked in a school factory making

cement and reinforced concrete products. Their chalk workshop produced not only for themselves but for Lhasa's educational-goods market. All this, we were informed, had made the school self-supporting; it no longer took a cent from the state.

Many subjects, besides, were learned not in classroom or lab but in workshop or field. Each class, in each grade, concentrated on one or more practical specialities, as follows:

Junior 1: Barley and wheat cultivation; pig raising; making fermented fodder.

Junior 2: Agricultural meteorology and simple soil analysis; hot-house vegetable growing; preparation and application of compost and other fertilizers; chalk manufacture.

Junior 3: Farm machinery; farm accounting; elementary veterinary work; methane gas installation and use.

Senior 1: Farm machinery; farm electricity; "barefoot" medicine; household and farm use of solar energy; observation and prediction of earthquakes (frequent in Tibet).

Senior 2: Irrigation; building construction; intermediate veterinary training; rural broadcasting.

The overall curriculum, reduced from six years to five, had also been stripped down to a few headings: Politics, Han language, Tibetan language, mathematics, basic industrial and agricultural knowledge, and athletics.

We found few students indoors. Part of the campus had become a yard for concrete and cement work (slabs for bridges, telegraph poles, etc.). Mixers churned. Hammers clanged. In a nearby section, students were catching and castrating squealing pigs as their veterinary practice. In the vegetable garden other students were using an old tractor. Off-season, we were told, they took it apart, put it together again and practised repairs.

Most textbooks had been replaced by teaching notes and mimeographed sheets.

Some of this seemed a refreshing departure from too much academism. Some was an exaggeration, in part stemming from the "model" set up in the Chaoyang Agricultural College in northeast China under the influence of the "gang of four".

The Chaoyang formula turned "open door education", in itself a valid concept, into opening the door and throwing education out. Under it, productive labour did not supplement and implement class-room work, but virtually supplanted it. Moreover, it was linked with the out-of-hand rejection of the 17 years of education following China's liberation and prior to the "cultural revolution" as "bourgeois dictatorship", and the wrong equation of all intellectuals with exploiters.

Certainly, to my eyes, the charge of "bourgeois" had not applied to the way Lhasa No. 1 Middle School had functioned in 1965, prior to the "cultural revolution". It had clearly signified vast progress in education in Tibet. Its spirit had been in harmony with the democratic reform and with the socialist revolution. The concepts of politics in the lead and education combined with labour were appariant in its practice.

As for the school in 1976, what impressed me favourably then was the practicality and readiness to take their hands to problems that seemed to have become second nature to the students. But in broader fields, their studies were unwarrantedly narrowed and impoverished, as in the rest by China at the time.

The trouble lay not in the concept of a socialist educational revolution but in its distortion, so that all knowledge except that contained in simplified political slogans, and immediately applicable practical skills was, to various extents, denigrated.

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In 1979, according to late information, Lhasa's No. 1 Middle School had 1,700 students, of whom half were Tibetans, and things had again changed.

The subjects taught were based on the new China-wide scholastic programme, with the addition of the Tibetan language and local material. The period of secondary schooling earlier reduced to five years was back at six, though in China as a whole it remained at five. This was presumably due to the less complete preparation of students in the region, and the learning of two languages.

Of the 120 teachers, 40 were Hans from Beijing and from Sichuan and Liaoning provinces, doing three-year tours of duty in Tibet. The

stress was on making up for the academic gap created in the previous decade, and on training personnel for the "four modernizations".

While this gap was country-wide, in Tibet it was especially wide, because of the lower starting point. The proportion of students in the region who qualified in the 1978 university entrance examinations was far below that in inland provinces, even though the required marks were less.

Much emphasis was laid on science. The physics, chemistry and biology laboratories were once more busy and full, and had more equipment. The school library now had 20,000 books. The radio, seismic and meteorological groups were continued, but mainly in extra-curricular time.

By 1979, the graduates from Lhasa No. 1 Middle School since its founding in 1956 numbered over 4,000, of whom some 500 had gone on to college.<sup>3</sup> And since there were now many middle schools in Tibet, this was only a small part of the regional total.

Tibetan and Han friends returning from Lhasa expressed approval of the new turn. Their own children, they said, were now able to sit down and study, a habit they had lost. Previously, parents had worried lest the young people grow up semi-literate. Now there was no such danger. Nor had they turned into bookworms.

Young people still went to factories, farms and barracks to work with and learn from the workers, peasants and soldiers, but for shorter terms. Mao Zedong's principle that education should serve proletarian politics and be combined with productive labour continued to be stressed. And so was his injunction, for a time forgotten, that on the basis of this principle the main task of students was still to study.

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In the reforms instituted in Tibet in 1980 one emphasis in education, as in other fields, was to give increased attention to the specific national character of the region. In particular, there was to be an extension and strengthening of instruction in the Tibetan language.

This did not, however, mean the lessening of efforts to give the students a good knowledge of the Han language as well, especially in the higher grades. Not only because it was the main language of

multinational China but because, in local education itself, the use of Tibetan in teaching all subjects at all stages could not yet be expected. First, the range of textbooks in Tibetan, at middle school level and above, was still limited. For some branches of modern knowledge, due to historical reasons, not even a Tibetan vocabulary had come into being, much less a specialized literature — and the only available teachers were Hans. Moreover, to attend institutions of learning elsewhere in China, familiarity with Han was essential. Without it the educational horizons and opportunities of Tibetan youth would be greatly narrowed, and the necessary and desired progress toward more Tibetan texts and instruction would itself be slowed.

## CHAPTER 25

# SCHOOLS BY AND FOR THE PEOPLE

A totally new seed-bed of education in Tibet were its people's primary schools. In 1965 there were 1,596 of them, with a total of 48,755 pupils — outnumbering the 56 state-run primary schools which had 10,066 pupils.

They had arisen only after 1959. Generally, they consisted of the first four elementary grades alone, with the prospect of more being added when the children finished these, and when more teachers became available.

In 1965, we saw in Lhasa a relatively early example, the De-ge Road People's School. It was run, under the auspices of the neighbourhood committee, by a joint board of parents, teachers and local cadres, to whom the principal reported on studies and budgets twice a year. Relying on self-support supplemented by government aid, it charged a nominal tuition of 0.50 *yuan* a month, graded down to 0.10 *yuan* a month for those least able to pay. Its premises, made available from confiscated rebel property, cost it nothing. For upkeep and repairs, it relied on the teachers, pupils and parents. Carpenter fathers, for example, volunteered to fix desks and blackboards. And the school was used not only for the neighbourhood's children, but by many adults too, in evening literacy classes.

Children were taught in Tibetan but with Han added later, as

in the state schools. Besides language, arithmetic and politics, they were instructed in drawing, singing and sports. Labour took a day each week: the older pupils grew some crops, planted trees, and helped in neighbourhood improvement work.

Most of the nine teachers were street residents. Four of them were young people of serf and slave background fresh from the Lhasa No. 1 Primary School or its Junior Middle School. The oldest was 21 and the three others only 18. Three were former servants or slaves of aristocrats and senior clerics who had attended adult classes after the liberation. Two, including the 29-year-old principal, were former poor lamas, with some recent secular education. All kept in close touch with the state primary schools where they attended teachers' conferences and sometimes sat in at classes. Their pay ranged from 20 to 27 *yuan* a month.

\*                     \*                     \*

Of the rural people's schools, our 1965 journalists' group saw a striking example in Gyanshon village in the combined stock-breeding and farm district of Namgye-sie. To reach it, we drove uphill for two hours in lurching jeeps, their radiators boiling in the effort along a steep, rock-strewn country road branching from the Lhasa-Loka Highway. There, in a high valley between sheer mountain walls, with ruined ancient watchtowers dominating the approaches, we found something new in Tibet's education — adapted to even the most remote parts of the vast and sparsely peopled region.

In 1959, of the 130 households in this rugged place, only four had had enough to eat all year round. Among their 730 inhabitants only nine could read or write. The illiteracy of the people had both resulted from and aggravated their misery. Years ago, we were told, a serf named Namgyal had obtained a small loan from a manorial steward named Dorje Gyaltzen. The steward, who could write, faked the receipt to show a much larger amount than had been lent. With this "documentary evidence", all Namgyal's grain and cattle were seized for the alleged debt, but could not cover it. So, under the old provision that a defaulter must "pay with his body", he himself was

made a slave in the steward's house for the rest of his life. There were many such cases.

The 1959 democratic reform put an end to serfowner exactions. By 1965, the village's flocks of sheep and yaks had increased by about half. All its families had enough to eat and wear. And every one of their 137 children of suitable age was attending the people's primary school. Sixty had already learned enough to help the mutual-aid teams to which their parents belonged — by keeping work and crop records, or reading newspapers to those unable to do so. In addition, each had undertaken to teach a homebound mother or housewife. And ten pupils who already completed the four-year course were working as village or district cadres, school teachers and accountants. All this had brought a change in the entire aspect of the place. And all had been achieved by local effort. We asked, "How?"

Sonam Lhundrub, the slight, serious ex-serf school principal who had himself learned to read and write only a few years before, gave a circumstantial and moving answer. After gathering the first harvest that was their own in the revolutionary year 1959, he said, the village poor had decided they must have a school without delay. The earliest classes were held outdoors, sitting on the "green carpet" — the open grassland. In the meantime, the villagers worked for 26 days to erect neat whitewashed classrooms and build a "self-support field" for the school on formerly waste land. There we saw the pupils and teachers growing grain, potatoes, spinach, cabbage and some fruit, enough not only for the lunches of day-scholars and staff but also for all the meals of the boarders, whose homes were further away.

With the shortage of labour in the village, where many other improvements were being undertaken, even the presence of a school could not have ensured attendance if study times had not been adjusted to the needs of agriculture. So school year had been arranged accordingly. Classes were held every day in the late autumn and winter months when there was little field work; on alternate days in the summer when the growing crops need attention; and not at all during the sowing and harvest when all hands were needed outdoors.

The subjects were Tibetan, arithmetic, political knowledge, physical education and music — no Han language because none of the staff knew enough of it to teach. Special periods were devoted to mastering the abacus, for work-team calculations — of crops and work-points.

The abacus frames, with counting beads of baked clay, were made by the pupils themselves. So was all the ink they used, and their stout writing paper which was uneven in thickness but smooth on one side and suitable for writing in ink. In the pool below the school gate, young boys and girls were dipping up screens spread with the pulp of local plants and, when this compacted, setting the sheets out to dry in the sun.

I asked for a sheet to take home with me. I still have it, as a talisman of revolutionary self-reliance. It takes me back, despite the separating distance and the years that have since passed, to the marvel of that faraway village 4,300 metres above sea level.

And it takes me back still further, to Yan'an and the blockaded Communist-led liberated areas as I saw them during China's anti-Japanese war in the 1940's. There the thought of Mao Zedong, with its key conviction that the awakened poor could provide the strength to defeat all foes and obstacles, and with its down-to-earth attention to every concrete detail, had already produced the prototypes of what I encountered again in this remote Tibetan valley — similar self-support, similar joyful confidence among those involved, a similar sense of small beginnings of universal importance. This spirit had changed all China with its hundreds of millions of people. Leaving the cheerful pupils, teachers and villagers, we turned back along the mountain road. Behind us, high over the setting sun, flew the Red Flag.

Such schools were being formed not only in Tibet's farm villages but also in its grazing areas. The northern prefecture of Nagqu, which is largely pastoral, was educating 60 per cent of its children, twice the 1965 average for Tibet as a whole. There and in another high grassland county, Amdo, some migratory schools, with their

“teachers on horseback” were holding classes as they moved with the herds from pasture to pasture as the seasons required.

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The tradition of people’s schools has continued in Tibet. In the reform of 1980, as part of the effort to raise the general level of livelihood and remove the burden of extra expenditures from the people, the regional government (itself subsidized by the central government) undertook to cover all the costs of such schools in communes, production teams and urban neighbourhoods.

It was pointed out that in some cases, because of the continuing burden, schools that had begun well had later fallen off or even gone out of commission. And among individuals and families, scarcity of labour (since the number of working hands in a household was directly related to its income) had led older pupils and students to drop out before completing their courses, so that a school might start a year with almost full attendance but end it with half or less the number.

More state financing of schools, more subsidies to students, and more schools boarding the students to remove the strain on parents were some of the remedies advanced to stabilize and improve Tibet’s schools, on the basis already laid.

## CHAPTER 26

# HIGHER EDUCATION COMES TO TIBET

The Tibet Autonomous Region now has four college-grade institutions. This is striking for an area where, up to the liberation, there was no secular education even at primary level. Three of the colleges are sited within the region and the fourth — and oldest — elsewhere.

The Regional Teachers' College, in Lhasa, was established in 1975, on the basis of a teachers' training school dating from the 1950's.

The College of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry, in Nyingchi, was formally inaugurated in 1978. But in 1976, when we saw it, hundreds of students were already in classes, though the campus was still being built.

The Tibet Medical College, also in Nyingchi, opened officially in 1978.

The two last-named colleges were outgrowth of previous departments in the biggest and earliest, the Tibet Institute for Nationalities in Xianyang, Shaanxi Province, founded in 1957. Operated by the Autonomous Region, it was, in fact, the mother school of Tibet's higher education. The reasons for its location outside the region were historical ones, as will be explained.

In addition, many nationalities institutes, colleges and universities

in other parts of China have long accepted students from Tibet, and sent them back to work there after graduation.

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The Regional Teachers' College, we found in 1976, had its spacious campus in the grounds of a former aristocrat's mansion. It had 565 students, 232 of them women. All were Tibetans or from the smaller nationalities within Tibet: Loba, Monba, Sherpa and Naxi. About two-thirds were members of the Communist Party or Youth League.

Its function was to train teachers for Tibet's secondary schools, ordinary or vocational. The course took three years. For entrants with deficient earlier education, a two-year preparatory course was run.

All teaching was then grouped under two general departments, 1. Politics and Culture, and 2. Mathematics and Physical Sciences. Subjects included Tibetan language, Han language, literature, mathematics, physics, chemistry, agriculture and industrial knowledge. This was the curtailed curriculum of the 1970's.

Of the 114 teachers, 79 were Tibetan, 32 Han and the rest from other Chinese nationalities. Socially, the majority belonged to the former oppressed and exploited classes.

We met several members of the leading body, who reflected its composition:

Assistant Party Secretary Tsering Urgyan, Tibetan, was an ex-serf from Lhasa. Illiterate when he joined the revolution in 1956, he had been educated in the nationalities' institutes in the interior provinces.

Zhang Yun, a Han, member of the Revolutionary Committee, was a former poor peasant from the Tianjin area of north China, educated while serving in the army and later as a cadre.

Losang Dawa, Tibetan, of the mathematics and physics department, came from an upper class family in Garzê in Sichuan. He had joined the Party in 1950, and had gone several times to Beijing with delegations that were received by Mao Zedong and other leaders.

He Shaoxian, of the Naxi nationality in Yunnan Province,

belonged to the Han language department. Youngest of the leading group, he had grown up in the new society, moving from the Young Pioneers into the Communist Youth League and finally the Party. Hailing from an area where Naxis, Hans and Tibetans lived side by side, he knew all three languages. His education in nationalities' institutes in Kunming and Beijing was typical of the training received by new intellectuals from the ranks of China's minorities after the liberation but before they had colleges in their own areas (this period was not an educational blank, but one of active preparation).

The first thing that Regional Teachers' College students did on entry, we were told, was to get clears on the motive for learning — service to the working people and socialism. Former serfs and slaves most deeply wronged by the old society were invited to give talks to strengthen the students' determination to build up the new. The next question was *how* to learn.

Class work in 1976 was combined with much time spent off campus. Teachers and students went to villages and factories to conduct social surveys, participate in local political life, and for a month each year to do agricultural and industrial labour in designated communes in Dagzê County and the Farm Machinery Plant in Lhasa.

For vocational practice, students taught in relays in rural schools. This not only helped their training but reinforced the ranks of teachers in those areas.

In accordance with Mao Zedong's advocacy, dating back to Yan'an days, that education should as far as possible be self-supporting and not a burden on the state and people, the college had reclaimed land to help feed itself and built a factory to produce articles for its own use and for state-run trade.

A regional-scale institution, the college was built up on the basis of a former secondary-level Teacher's Training School, which continued to exist as a municipal one in Lhasa (there were others in the prefectures of Xigazê, Loka, Qamdo, Nagqu and Ngari).

In 1977 and 1978, as later reported, there were some changes in this college. The basic principles of China's socialist education (service to proletarian politics and combination with productive labour) persisted. At the same time, sharp correctives were introduced to rem-

edy distortions of these principles that had occurred here, too, during the cultural revolution. The acquisition of professional knowledge was given greater stress, and controlled by tests, to meet the crying need for teachers who were not only politically but technically competent. For without such teachers, the mass of the people would be deprived of adequate ordinary education, to say nothing of the technical and scientific know-how needed to raise up the national economy and of their own standards of living.

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The Tibet College of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry, in 1976, was still being born. Sited in an amphitheatre of wooded mountains, it faced Nyingchi's factory area across a new white stone bridge over the blue Nyang River. Newly completed one-story class-room blocks, teaching workshops and dormitories stood among many structures still being put up,<sup>1</sup> including an auditorium and administration building. The scene was motion — of bulldozers, cranes, people swarming up and down scaffoldings. The machinery was run by the state construction battalions that had put up the neighbouring factories. The manual labourers were the teachers and students, who did all the brickwork, pipe-laying and wiring on their own housing.

In autumn 1976 the number of regular students and pupils (including those of a college-attached school mainly for the children of the staff) was given as 839. There was also a rotating body of short-term trainees. Teaching and other personnel, with their families, came to about 400.

Students of the agricultural machinery department were manufacturing items that were both study assignments and contributions to Tibet's farm mechanization. Others were assembling drilling rigs and irrigation pumps. Among their instructors was a grizzled, bespectacled Han who had taught machine-shop practice in Xianyang for 17 years before volunteering to come with his Tibetan students to Nyingchi, almost 3,000 metres above sea level. A drastic move for a life-long plainsman of over 60, and evidence of his devotion.

In the veterinary department, a class of white-coated students

was following an outdoor demonstration of an acupuncture cure for a horse with colic. While modern science was studied, traditional roots were not severed.

It was not till September 1978 that the college was formally inaugurated, by authority of the State Council. It conformed by then, to the China-wide standard worked out after the downfall of the "gang of four." Five departments and nine faculties included agriculture, animal husbandry, veterinary medicine, forestry, farm mechanization,<sup>2</sup> rural hydroelectric power, farm and range administration and accounting. The student body, admitted by examination for a four-year course, numbered 524, and the teaching staff 120. Facilities included chemical, physical and biological laboratories, test farms and pastures and a forest base.

Pasang, secretary of the Tibet Party Committee, declared at the opening that the college should train well-qualified personnel for the agricultural and pastoral bases of Tibet's economy. The "gang of four" had tried to limit the scope and quality of teaching, and to smuggle in their "two estimates," which (1) denied all achievements made in the 17 years between the liberation and the cultural revolution, and (2) branded all graduates trained then or earlier as "bourgeois". Now the distortion and injustice would be remedied. The Party's policy toward intellectuals would be genuinely carried out.

To comply with the Party's call, made not long before, for raising the scientific and cultural level of the whole people, heightened academic training was essential, and the necessary time and other conditions were to be provided.

Much experience was represented in this college. Some of its leaders in 1976 were old soldiers of the People's Liberation Army who had entered Tibet in the early 1950's and had since been implementing the nationalities policy of the Party in various spheres. Others were Tibetan cadres, brought up under this policy. All had something of the old "Yan'an air". They were weather-beaten, labour-roughened, politically motivated, matter of fact about problems, approachable, energetic and optimistic. The young students we saw appeared completely at ease with these leaders.

Recruitment was from the whole of Tibet. Nyingchi County,

convenient to the site, was praised to us for its unselfishness in cutting down the 27 college places it had applied for in 1976 (one for each of its communes) to allow more students to come from further away. Some students we met came from the pastoral north, others from Tibet's western prefecture of Ngari, so remote that to get here they had to go first to Urümqi in Xinjiang.

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The Tibet Medical College also formally set up at Nyingchi in 1978, offered courses lasting five years, equivalent to those in the inland provinces, with stress on the requirements for practice in the region. Included were traditional Tibetan medicine, investigation and treatment of locally prevalent diseases, and research in high-altitude physiology and ailments. Both as a teaching institution and a scientific centre, this college is uniquely placed and one can expect to hear more of it, in China and worldwide, in times to come.

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The old Tibetan Institute at Xianyang, as the mother school of these two new colleges, could take pride in its offspring inside Tibet.

That its own work had had to start elsewhere was due to the tortuous course of events. In 1956, owing to the upper-class obstruction, the timetable of Tibet's democratic reform had been postponed. Even if the serfowner regime had consented to have the college set up within Tibet, control by it would cripple the curriculum. Even if students from among the working people could have been enrolled, they would still be serfs or slaves both during and after their studies (the *kashag* local government had insisted on them performing corvée for their lords in a sharp dispute at the time). A place was needed where studies could be freely carried on — even if the students had to go a long way. Xianyang was chosen as a location for two reasons, it was accessible by rail from Beijing and other important cities, as well as from Xining, on the Qinghai-Tibet Highway. Also it had suitable buildings, left by a university which had been evacuated there from Shanghai during the anti-Japanese war, then gone back after the victory.

Regional Secretary Pasang herself was trained in Xianyang —

as one of many thousands. Their histories and motives prove the dishonesty of the serfowners' taunt that "young people were herded out of the region for training". The students at Xianyang, seeking knowledge that would liberate and re-equip the Tibetan masses, went there because those same serfowners had prevented their learning at home. As soon as they could, they returned home to serve their own nationality.

If the siting of the Xianyang Institute in the 1950's reflected the complexity and difficulty of the democratic revolution, the later development of colleges in Tibet itself was in accord with the course and demands of the socialist revolution in the region.

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Some of the advantages of the move of several of Xianyang's departments to Tibet, as stated in 1976, were:

1. Instead of students having to go out of the region for higher education, they could now be enrolled and taught on the spot.
2. Since some Tibetan instructors had already been trained in the previous period, Tibetan language could be used more widely and directly in the classes.
3. Study in Tibet had the advantage of being in the milieu in which the students would work after graduation.

Texts and experiments to be supplemented by material closely linked to the Tibetan environment and tasks, and to incorporate local practice. In agriculture, for instance, they would deal with the soils, climate, plants and animals of the plateau, rather than those of parts of China with quite other conditions, or those of far-off and different foreign countries. In geology and hydraulics, Tibet's conditions, virtually unparalleled elsewhere, would receive concrete attention. In medicine, high-altitude diseases and health problems would be studied where they occurred.

The new colleges in Lhasa and Nyingchi and the Tibetan Institute at Xianyang (which continued to operate though some departments had moved) did not exhaust the access of Tibetans to higher education. In addition, the Institutes for Nationalities in Beijing, in Chengdu in Sichuan and Lanzhou in Gansu were allotting many places

to students from Tibet. Furthermore, in 1976, some 2,000 Tibetan students were being trained in different specialities in ordinary universities in the interior.

Tibet, like all other areas in China, could also draw for its development needs on the country-wide pool of university graduates of all nationalities. Hundreds were being allotted to work there each year, or came as volunteers.

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Subsequently, however, new problems surfaced and were frankly discussed.

During the "cultural revolution", a minimum of basic knowledge had been required of students — who spent their main time on politics and a rather narrow range of practical problems and were thus hardly distinguishable from persons without higher education.

After 1977, there was an abrupt over-correction; the automatic transference of China-wide standards and texts which often turned out to be too dull and difficult for national minority students.

Furthermore, by 1981 there was talk of the provisions for higher education in Tibet being over-extended in relation to secondary schooling, or viewing it from the other end, of the senior middle schools not providing enough qualified college entrants. Too many teachers, in the opinion of some local educators, were concentrated in the higher schools and not enough lower down, so their downward redistribution was necessary to provide a reliable foundation for future advance. (In fact, the senior middle schools themselves were not getting enough entrants, since some junior middle school leavers went straight to work and others into secondary-level technical schools.)

Attention was also again paid to the need for texts specially adapted to Tibetan students. But now there was an important difference from the cultural revolution approach. The need for basic scientific grounding was not neglected but stressed — the problem being to make it more accessible. Practical training was to be conducted not as an alternative to such grounding, but in close co-ordination with it.

Also there was increasing realization that technical subjects could not be effectively taught if general courses were insufficient. Complicating this was the fact that while the main language used in the region was Tibetan, that in the whole country was Han. Most college texts, particularly on scientific subjects, were in Han, requiring the upgrading of Tibetan students' ability to read and write it, alongside their own tongue.

For reasons of time and distance, I have not been able to follow this ongoing debate in detail, but enough has been said to indicate the complexity of the problems that must be faced for further advance.

## CHAPTER 27

# SCIENCE ON THE WORLD'S ROOF

Tibet in 1978 had nine regional scientific research institutes — covering agriculture, stockbreeding and veterinary science, geology, weather, communications and medicine. Persons professionally engaged in scientific work included some 2,600 former serfs and slaves.

Twenty-three counties (out of 70) had their own agricultural research centres. Experimental groups in farming and pastoral communes and teams numbered some 2,100.

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Scientific studies of Tibet have been extensive since the early 1950's when, following the peaceful liberation, the first expedition was sent there by the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

In 1973-77, a much larger Academy expedition — the sixth since liberation — worked continuously on a comprehensive survey of the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau. Its members studied the strata and inner structure of the earth's crust, ancient plants and animals, glaciation, geothermics, soil, forests, pastures, water resources and the division of Tibet into natural zones.

In 1980, China began publication of a 32-volume series on the survey's findings.<sup>1</sup>

*Mapping:* A new map of the plateau was printed in 1980 by the Chinese Cartographic Publishing House. Scaled 1:3,000,000, it corrects some inaccuracies on older maps such as over-stated or under-stated elevations, includes some mountains previously unmapped

(notably one that is the newly-ascertained source of the Changjiang or Yangtze River) and gives the correct positions and names of some important lakes. The map is clear in its geomorphic data and in its depiction of the gradual transition (conveyed in colour) from woodland in the southeast to grassy marshlands in the central area and desert in the southwest.<sup>2</sup>

*Origin of the Plateau:* Using the theory of plate tectonics, the scientists considered that the Himalayas and the Tibetan Plateau, the world's newest highlands, were lifted by the spreading of the Indian Ocean floor. The process pushed the plate bearing the South Asian sub-continent northward to collide with the Eurasian plate, causing the upthrust. The juncture of the two plates lies roughly along the Yarlung Zangbo River.

The "roof of the world" was once part of a vast ancient sea (the Tethys, or Ancient Mediterranean), as proved by its abundance of marine fossils, invertebrate and vertebrate, dating from hundreds of million to some 40 million years ago. Later some areas, such as the present-day Qamdo Prefecture, became hot moist lowlands in which huge dinosaurs flourished.

Certain fossils were very similar to those from India, southern Africa, Australasia, South America and Antarctica, providing valuable evidence for the theory of continental drift.

A portion of the material was obtained by scientific workers, Han and Tibetan, who participated in the first ascent of the north face of the world's highest peak, Mount Qomolangma,<sup>3</sup> known in the West as "Everest".

*Glaciation, Flora and Fauna:* Many scientists had previously thought that the plateau was covered by glaciers some 2.5 million years ago, i.e. in the quarternary period. Consequently, they assumed Tibet's ancient flora and fauna to have become extinct and the present variety to be narrow. The expedition, however, amassed more than 100,000 specimens of extant high plants, birds, animals, insects, fish and other aquatic life. It altered old concepts about Tibet's ancient and present range of plant and animal resources. It also found that Tibetan flora had origins similar to those of East Asia and North America, suggesting that the plateau was a centre of differen-

tiation and evolution of some major species in the north temperate belt.

A four-volume book, *Flora and Fauna of Ngari Prefecture* (in western Tibet) listed 349 species or sub-species of plants, 91 of birds, five of animals, two of fish, and two of reptiles. Previously only 50 species had been identified in all categories.<sup>4</sup>

*Water Resources:* The hydroelectric potential of the Yarlung Zangbo River was estimated at nearly 100,000,000 kilowatts.<sup>5</sup> Other rivers and lakes were studied for power, irrigation and industrial water supply.

*Metals and Minerals:* These are exceptionally abundant. For details, see "A Note on Newfound Mineral Resources," at the end of Chapter 19.

*Salt Lakes:* The plateau has more of these than any other part of the world. Tibetans have extracted borax from them, and traded it with other parts of China, since the sixth century. Fifty salt lakes, studied in northern and western Tibet at altitudes of over 4,500 metres, proved rich in deposits of sodium, potassium, boron, magnesium, lithium, rubidium, cesium, bromine and radioactive uranium and thorium. The scientists devised a way of producing boric acid directly from borax mines by using sulphur dioxide and an improved process for making potassic fertilizer. Both methods are now being applied in production.

*Geothermal Resources:* Geophysicists found the area north of the Himalayas and south of the Gangdisê range to be one of intense and varied geothermal activity, perhaps unmatched in the world. For Tibet's first geothermal power station, see p. 322.

*Permafrost Studies:* The plateau has areas of permafrost from 20 to 88 metres thick. One stretches for 600 kilometres, from Golmud in Qinghai Province to Nagqu in northern Tibet.<sup>6</sup> It is a problem to be overcome in building the Qinghai-Tibet Railway. This line, in 1979, reached Golmud, 834 kilometres from its starting point in Xining. (In 1979-80 more exhaustive data were obtained through satellite remote sensing and computation. The new techniques helped the making of glacial inventories, selection of routes for railways and highways and forecasting run-off from melting snow. Most of the instruments used were made in China.)<sup>7</sup>

*Timber Resources:* Tibet's forests are among the largest in China, exceeded only by those of the Xingan Mountains in north-eastern provinces and the Yunnan-Sichuan forest area in the southwest.

*Crop Origins:* Species of barley and wheat, wild and semi-wild, discovered in various parts of the plateau may shed new light on the origins of these crops in the world as a whole.

*Human Pre-history:* Sites of pre-historic man, located at 4,500 to 5,200 metres above sea level, prove that Tibet has been inhabited for a very long time, and that its stone age culture was in many respects akin to that of the Yellow River valley.

Neolithic remains found in Qamdo Prefecture in 1978 were dated about 3,500 B.C. by the Carbon 14 technique. They included three houses, one of which was very much like those in Tibet today, with rooms for people on the second floor, and for oxen and sheep below. Also found were stone artifacts, pottery and bone needles worked with rare precision and skill. Tibet's neolithic people were mainly herdsmen and hunters, but also did some farming. Some of the microliths and building techniques were of the type found in inland China. Cowrie shells suggested trade links with the shores of the Bay of Bengal or the Indian Ocean.

Earlier (paleolithic) remains found at several localities indicated extensive human activity at least 10,000 years ago. Some were similar to stone artifacts discovered near Beijing and in Ningxia, Hubei and Sichuan provinces. One discovery was at an elevation of 5,200 metres above sea level, the highest such site so far known anywhere in the world. It showed that natural conditions on the plateau (climate, water availability and grass) were then better, and its altitude was lower, casting light on the chronology of the rise of the Himalayas.

*1980 International Symposium:* In May and June 1980, an International Symposium on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau was held in Beijing, after which some of the Chinese and foreign participants (the latter numbered 70 from 15 countries) journeyed to Tibet. Presented were papers from the point of view of stratigraphic palaeontology, seismic geology, geo-chemistry, zoology and botany.

A group of Chinese geophysicists advanced the hypothesis (dif-

ferent to that previously held) that the Indian tectonic plate is thrusting northward *over*, and not under, the Eurasian plate.

Chinese scientists also proposed the division of the plateau into four stratigraphic regions and 11 sub-regions, divided by three deep fault zones from south to north. This was the first time such a division had been made. Foreign participants said they were impressed by the meticulous research and laboratory analyses presented in support of this important contention. The Chinese hosts, in their turn, expressed appreciation of foreign scientific work on Himalayan problems.

Worldwide academic interest in the theme is largely due to the fact that the "roof of the world" — unique in its geological, biological, climatic and geographical phenomena and abundant in natural resources — is seen as one of the earth's key areas for resolving theoretical problems in many fields.

*Cosmic Ray Research:* The world's highest-altitude emulsion chamber for the study of high-energy cosmic rays was built atop 5,500-metre Mount Gambala in Tibet in 1977, and doubled in size in 1981. Physicists working there have presented four papers to recent international conferences on cosmic rays. The second highest such chamber is in Bolivia.

*Sino-French Co-operation:* By an agreement between China and France, a joint study of the geological structure and upper mantle of the Himalayas was under way in Tibet from mid-1980, with the first group of 12 French scientists taking part.<sup>8</sup> (In the 1950's, Chinese and Soviet scientists had worked jointly on a number of problems concerning the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.)

## CHAPTER 28

# TIBET'S NEW CULTURE IN BIRTH

Since cultural renovation concerns every person's outlook, its manifestations in Tibet are touched upon throughout this book. Here we shall give a few examples from specific fields — the press and radio, language matters, theatre and film.

### PRESS AND RADIO

Tibet, like the rest of China, knew printing long before Europe. For over a thousand years its Buddhist canonical and other books had been hand-impressed from inked blocks of hardwood, each carved with a whole page, in the best cases with striking artistic effect. So had other types of works, which though almost always with a dominant clerical note, comprised a rich and ancient literature. But purely lay literature, including newspapers and periodicals, was printed only after 1954.<sup>1</sup> In that year the first (mimeographed) thrice-a-week news bulletin was produced. Significantly, after the completion of the new highways in 1954, flat presses and machines for casting the first Tibetan metal-type were among their first cargoes. Operators trained to handle this equipment were Tibet's first modern industrial workers. In 1955 the news-sheet grew into a printed journal.

In 1965, the *Tibet Daily* of Lhasa was already a well made-up modern newspaper of four to six large-size pages. In two separate editions, Tibetan and Han, each with its own editors and reporters,

it carried news and comments on events in the region, all China and the world (the content of the two editions overlapped but was not identical). During our visit, it featured a month-long series of daily full-page roundups of different spheres of activity in the new Tibet, compiled in preparation for the forthcoming inauguration of the autonomous region government. There were first-hand reports by the *Tibet Daily's* staff in Lhasa and branch offices in the sub-regions (Loka, Xigazê, Nagqu and Ngari). Of its editorial staff of 80, half were constantly out in the field, travelling not only by motor over Tibet's new roads but, when necessary, for days or weeks on horseback through still roadless areas.

The paper was produced on a Shanghai-made rotary press, the flat-beds of 1955 having been relegated to job printing. News poured in day and night by teleprinter. There was a good picture lab and instant two-way radiophoto connection with Beijing.

Both on the editorial and the technical side, the paper was a training ground for Tibetan journalistic personnel. And far more important than its enlargement and modernization, was the change in its approach and content. In 1955-59, while the handling of home and world news was progressive, and much important information was given, the coverage was limited, and so was the audience. Apart from the very few Tibetan cadres, subscribers and readers were mainly the aristocracy. In the circumstances of that time, the plight and struggles of Tibet's working people could not be reflected. Even so, the newspaper was hated by diehard reactionaries, and its offices were among the main objectives of rebel military attack in 1959. Only after the rebellion was quelled, and the serfs and slaves had stood up in fact, could the paper devote itself to writing unreservedly about and for them.

By 1976 the Tibetan edition of the paper had increased its printing over tenfold, the Han edition fivefold. Daily circulation compared to 1965 was:

|                 | 1965  | 1976   |
|-----------------|-------|--------|
| Tibetan edition | 3,489 | 40,000 |
| Han edition     | 5,578 | 26,000 |

Besides its professional staff, the paper had many volunteer correspondents throughout the region. Printing facilities had improved, with colour added from 1965. Illustrations were copious, make-up lively, distribution faster and better organized. As a help to the Tibetan people, a copy of the paper in Tibetan cost only 1 fen (half a cent, U.S.) as compared to 4 fen a copy in Han.

Tibet also had its own radio network. In 1955, this had been confined to brief wired broadcasts (rediffusion), and public loudspeakers could be erected only in places allowed by the *kashag*. By 1965, there were many hours of programmes. Besides access to rediffusion, many thousands of Tibetans had sets of their own. The transistor radio facilitated listening even in the far-off pastures.

Hearing the *Internationale* played from Lhasa each day at signing-off time one knew that Tibet was no longer "out of this world", but in the new world of revolution.

## THE LANGUAGE

The advent of press and radio accelerated a contradiction between old and new in the realm of language. Ancient and in some respects highly developed, the Tibetan tongue was trammled by the backward state of Tibetan society. Inequality was stamped into it: different forms of address and indeed a different set of common nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs were compulsory in talking to or of inferiors, equals and superiors. Any violation of the code was taken as an offence or insult, resulting, if committed by an inferior, in bodily punishment.

So the question stood, would the language be stretched to serve the people and new concepts, or continue as a matrix into which only old ideas would fit. The diehards were bent on the latter, hoping thus to block all new content. They charged "degradation of our tongue" whenever a popular expression was used in the papers or in broadcasts and argued "You can't say that in Tibetan" when any new term introduced, especially a revolutionary one.

Ordinary conservatism and force of habit also played their part,

and at some junctures the attempts at innovation were indeed inept. Among the mass of the people, however, there was a growing welcome for counting in the common ways of expression that sounded like the common speech, and also for new words for the new things in their lives and in the information reaching them from elsewhere. It was the Tibetans, not Hans, who spoke to us most feelingly about the need for their own language to catch up with, and serve, current reality.

And though the ancient canons of Buddhism were translated early and meticulously, there were no secular translations in old Tibet. But in 1951-65 (mainly in 1959-65), over 882,000 Tibetan books with new content were printed. Over the latter period, public libraries were set up in the main cities and smaller ones in schools, organizations, factories and farms. The translation of Mao Zedong's selected works (with editions totalling 64,000 up to 1965) was important not only politically but in extending the limits of the language. Works by Marx and Engels also appeared in Tibetan. The daily press, through its daily needs, helped create special terminologies in many fields, which scholars began to systematize. Han-Tibetan and Tibetan-Han dictionaries defining 50,000 words, many of them new, were being prepared.<sup>2</sup>

In 1965-75 the average number of Tibetan books printed in Tibet annually exceeded the total for the entire previous fifteen years. Altogether, 12 million copies of books and pamphlets were printed and 13 million (including some printed outside the region) were sold.

Here a misstatement needs to be refuted. Edward N. Luttwack, a professor of John Hopkins University, wrote in *Commentary* magazine, later to be quoted by Bernard Levin in *The Times* of London on May 18, 1977, that when in Lhasa in 1976 he found that "the literacy promoted by the regime was in Chinese and not in Tibetan. . . . In a surprisingly large bookstore in Lhasa all the books were in Chinese, except for the 'Little Red Book' of Mao's quotations. No Tibetan records or books were to be had, and the use of that ancient written language is now confined to the slogans on the walls and to some script on the locally produced matchboxes".

Mr. Luttwack's visit was in the same period as ours. I don't know where he went, or what he saw, but I saw scores of different

Tibetan titles in Lhasa's bookshops and bought some of them. A considerable portion were Tibetan-language texts for schools. The regional newspaper in Tibetan, already referred to, was rolling off the presses in tens of thousands of copies daily. Perhaps the professor only stopped at a Han-language book counter in the stores, and did not investigate further.

While Tibetan language publishing in 1976 was certainly limited in scope by the ultra-"Left" line then prevailing throughout China (Han-language publishing was, too) it was not, as Luttwack implied, extinct or confined to "The Little Red Books", matchboxes and slogans.

### NEW STAGE AND NEW ARTISTS

In Lhasa's fine cultural palace built in 1965, at a performance of the Autonomous Region Song and Dance Ensemble which had just returned from a successful tour of Nepal, we saw a number which epitomised the vast changes in the Tibetan theatre. Called *New Life for the Ral-pa*, it dealt with the changed status of that caste of beggar players, who once wandered like Gypsies over the vast plateau. On the roads, they were defenceless, being beaten or raped at will by passing nobles or their accompanying toughs. When called upon to perform, the *ral-pa* had instantly to submit, for the aristocrats, at their endless parties and picnics, considered music and dance to be an "essential to digestion after over-eating". The *ral-pa's* own stomachs were always empty. If the performance was found amusing, they were thrown a few scraps. If not, their fee was blows. Their new play started in dark despair with a group of these poor strollers freezing on a mountain trek, on which one of the women had to abandon her baby. It ended with elation, after they were saved, warmed and treated with respect by the PLA. Symbolic, it was also true to the facts of the time, as shown not only by the presence of the *ral-pa* on Tibet's main stage but by the fact that the male lead of the troupe was, in Tibet's new society, a deputy to the Autonomous Region People's Congress.

Almost equally oppressed in the past had been the actors who

played in quasi-religious dramas at the Shol-den or *Handing Out Sour Milk Festival* at the Drepung lamasery and at the Dalai Lama's Norbu Lingka Summer Palace at a fixed time each year. They were specially designated serfs, generally from near Xigazê, who had been obliged to rehearse and perform as part of their *ula* or forced labour service. In 1955, when the old system was still in force, Tashi Dondhrub, chief of the 107-member troupe, told our journalists' group that all of them had trained since the age of five and performed since they were seven or eight. They were not paid — only once, in Tashi Dondhrub's 31 years on the stage, had the Dalai Lama bestowed on them ten sacks of grain and some silver, as special alms because he noticed their gaunt, hungry look. The memories and physical resources of these players were strained to the limit by their repertory. Totally illiterate, they had learned by oral repetition the texts of dramas that took three days to perform. The operas, combining legend and the inevitable religion, ended with an invocation "to the coming of the Dalai Lama as god on earth and to the founding of the three lama-series". (Who says traditional art was not propagandist?)

There were also purely ritual players, monks who did the famed *Devil Dance* (once frequently seen also in the lama temples in Beijing, Mongolia and elsewhere). And finally there were the acrobats. Within living memory, they had provided what was practically a human sacrifice each year. Every New Year, some say as a traditional penance for a supposed work-error by certain builders from Tsang (now Xigazê Prefecture) when constructing the Potala, men from the offending area had to ride a sling down a rope from the palace's high roof, several hundred metres above the street, down to ground level. Fatal falls, or bad burns from friction on the rope, were the frequent end.

In 1965, Tibet's performing arts were on quite a different basis. It had five professional theatre companies of regional scale (song and dance, Tibetan opera, Tibetan spoken drama and two types of Han opera) and many others in the sub-regions. The artists (including Tseden Drolma, the ex-serf soprano now famous throughout China and known abroad) were in some cases trained locally, in others in drama academies or conservatories in Beijing and Shanghai sometimes

in both. Songs and dances were collected from among the people, and generally geared to new content. New full length plays included *Serfs*, which was produced as a drama as well as a film, *Heroic City*, dealing with the resistance of Tibetans in Gyangzê to the British invasion of 1904, and *Blood-Accusation*, about feudal oppression and its final revolutionary overthrow.

Membership of amateur groups had reached 10,000 in 1965. And the overall tendency was strongly toward mobile troupes, combining amateurs and professionals, of the *Ulanmuchi* type (the name, meaning "red cultural team," is Mongolian and comes from the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region where the form began). The difference between these new "strollers" and the old *ral-pa* was that between two societies — feudal and socialist. The actors, musicians and dancers of the *Ulanmuchi* were drawn from Tibet's new, progressive, confident youth. With each artist doubling as carter, caravaner or in some other practical capacity, they loaded their gear on carts and pack animals and went from village to village and pasture to pasture. Their repertoire was highly contemporary. Besides presenting prepared items, they listened to stories of current happenings in each place, often improvising them on the spot into one-act plays or songs. The best of the new numbers were processed into more finished pieces for incorporation into the regular repertoire. These quickly reached the stage in Lhasa, or even Beijing.

In the Loka sub-region in August 1965, at a country fair marking the traditional *Ong-kor* ("Expectation of Harvest" festival), we saw one such cultural team at work. Arriving early in the broad pasture that was to serve as the fair ground, its 28 members unhitched their carts, hobbled their horses for grazing and expertly pitched their tents. Soon thousands of mutual-aid team members, on foot and horseback, gaily dressed and caparisoned for the holiday and holding red banners, began to converge in long lines of bright colour running through the neighbouring fields of green wheat and barley. Many contingents carried portraits of Mao Zedong decked in scarlet bunting. By that time the young artists had unpacked their trunks and changed from the ski-suit fatigues in which they travelled into colourful national costumes. Performances opened simultaneously in three places on the

grounds, each surrounded by a tightly packed and appreciative circle of spectators, those in front seated, those at the back standing. Public address systems carried the songs and music far and wide. On the outskirts of the crowd I noticed a scene typical of the new Tibet. Small village boys had climbed to the top of an old watch-tower to investigate the workings of a loudspeaker horn that was mounted there, cheek by jowl with the traditional prayer flags. It was not hard to see which was the coming, and which the receding, aspect of this incongruous combination.

Some troupe members were running a stall which sold books, including prominently the works of Mao Zedong in Tibetan, which they were energetically recommending. Another set up a mobile photo exhibition nearby, dealing with the Chinese Red Army's Long March in 1934-35. Others dispensed simple remedies and treatments from a medical aid station. Several were wielding clippers and razors over open-air barber chairs. These attracted spectators as well as customers. For here, too, was drama, particularly when some herdsman strode up, and with an air of determination, asked to have his matted locks sheared for the first time in his life; or when a peasant decided to part with his long queue, which traditionally was worn wrapped around the head at work but in old Tibet had to be let down and brought forward over one shoulder in the presence of "superiors" (a sign of "respect" that also offered a handy grip for a "superior" beating the bearer). The atmosphere at the fair was easy and good-humoured. The tie between the people and the artists was obvious.

Among the troupers, first in dusty overalls and carrying a carter's whip, and later in the bright costumes in which she was more familiar to us, we spotted Yunsi. This remarkable 18-year-old ex-serf singer seemed to us is already an old friend. We had heard her at the All-China Amateur Festival of Nationalities in Beijing and also in the Norbu Lingka at Lhasa or over the radio and on records. Now here she was, among her own people, on her home ground, and none of us had ever heard her sing better.

Toward the end of the day, Dawa, the troupe's director, told us of its varied activities which included not only those we had seen but also public readings, expositions on current affairs and poli-

tics, film and slide projections, and help to villagers with farming and the repair of tools. (Some of the artists had originally been carpenters or smiths, and others had specially learned certain skills.) In the two months since leaving Lhasa, Dawa said, they had given 37 “live” and 23 film shows, to a total audience of 57,000. Their artistic activity was also constant exchange — for besides performing, they taught local amateurs, and themselves found new songs and new themes. To a constantly expanded programme called, “New People and New Things”, they had added several numbers in Loka — including one on the young people of the former Khaesum manor, another on the good work of a village teacher and a third, *Gesang’s Family*, based on the vivid tale told them by an old villager, met along the road, about his past and present.

“The people treat us as sons and daughters,” said Dawa. “The other day, a woman saw us with our two carts and brought out hay for the horses. We tried to refuse but she wouldn’t hear of it. Whenever we pack up to leave a village, they ask us to stay longer, or at least come back soon.”

All this, in 1965 represented the application in Tibet of the line of “art for the workers, peasants and soldiers,” propounded by Mao Zedong in 1942 in his famous “Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art”.

## FILM

The film is the most popular of the arts, but until the People’s Liberation Army arrived in 1951 the vast majority of Tibetans had never seen one. A veteran projectionist told me how in a pastoral area, during an early outdoor screening (which happened to be a war picture), the herdsmen did not dare approach, convinced that the fighting was real. But at dawn the next day they carefully scoured the grass for the brass cartridge cases which they expected to find in abundance after so much shooting!

By 1965, film-going had become a habit, even in remote places. In the first months of that year, a thousand shows were given for herdsmen high above the tree line in the northern prefecture of Nagqu

alone. The twelve projection teams operating there were composed largely of Tibetans, many themselves herdsmen's sons, and they took their equipment from one encampment to the other by mule, horse or yak. The attendance was 200,000. Films shown there were dubbed in Tibetan. Many of the documentaries and newsreel sequences were photographed in Tibet. A great favourite was the first full length Tibetan-acted feature on a Tibetan theme, the striking and powerful *Serfs*.

Even in Lhasa, before 1951, moving pictures had never been shown, except privately by the British (later Indian) mission and the few foreign transients to the Dalai Lama and high nobles whom they sought to influence. Elsewhere in Tibet they were unknown. On my first visit to Tibet in 1955, however, public filmings were already common; the first projection teams were active and had given 1,840 shows in the previous four years. A decade later, in the summer of 1965, permanent movie theatres were giving daily showings in every city, and in the countryside 121 mobile teams were on constant tour. Xigazê Prefecture, with 325,000 people, had piled up a film attendance of 1.9 million in the preceding 12 months.

## 1976 AND AFTER

"We've done what Premier Zhou Enlai told us to do. We've changed the proportion of Tibetans to Hans in the new-type professional performing troupes from 30-70 in the early years to 70-30 today. The amateurs are almost all Tibetans." Our informant in 1976 was Zhang Liuchu, a nationally known tenor from Shanghai who since 1960 had worked in Tibet and sang with equal facility in Han and Tibetan. He met us in the Cultural Bureau of the Autonomous Region. Among its concerns were theatres, films, exhibitions, the graphic arts and preservation of antiquities. It helped and guided related amateur activities.

Below are the growth figures he gave us for 1965-76 to which are added, in italics, new ones obtained for 1978.

|                            | 1965 | 1975  | 1978             |
|----------------------------|------|-------|------------------|
| Professional stage troupes | 5    | 11    | <i>unchanged</i> |
| Members                    | 420  | 820   | <i>unchanged</i> |
| Proportion of Tibetans     | 57%  | 70%   | <i>unchanged</i> |
| Amateur troupes            | 100  | 1,500 | 1,682*           |
| Film projection teams      | 115  | 429   | 601              |
| Projectionists             | 500  | 1,000 | 1,065            |
| Proportion of Tibetans     | —    | 80%   | 86%              |

\* With some 30,000 members.

The professional troupes were of region-wide or prefectural level. The great increase in amateur troupes had come when most of Tibet's newly-established people's communes, rural and pastoral, set up their own.

The number of monuments restored or maintained by the Bureau, and of permanent exhibitions under its jurisdiction, he said, had risen from 17 in 1965 to about 50 in 1976, with at least one exhibition in each prefecture and many county-run ones. Smaller ones in communes were not listed.

Zhang Liuchu said that, on the pretext of "better less, but better", under Lin Biao's influence, in the first years of the "cultural revolution", an attempt had been made to do away with five of Tibet's eleven main performing troupes. "If this had happened," he said, "cultural work in the region would have been wiped out."

As for the "gang of four", no open criticism was possible in mid-1976. But perhaps Zhang's stress on Premier Zhou's instructions was an indirect defiance, since the gang hated the late Premier as much as Tibet's cultural workers admired him.<sup>3</sup>

Two questions constantly in mind, Zhang Liuchu told us, were cultural exchange among China's nationalities and the development of revolutionary realism. The region's people were, in their great majority, Tibetan. How to make its arts serve them? There were many Hans, cadres or soldiers. How to meet their needs? And how

to transmit the new Tibetan culture and art to the rest of China's people, and bring their achievements back to Tibet?

Performances by the professional troupes were often bi-lingual, that is, the same items were staged in both languages. But this had not always been successful. Tibetan opera, for instance, did not come across well in Han. With other forms such as the spoken drama, there was no trouble and their impact was direct in both tongues.

In vocal music and stagecraft, Tibetan opera forms were being used and in the process transformed. And the opera forms themselves were being enriched from folk sources. Transformation of Han stage works into Tibetan operas helped to extend, in various ways, the range of the latter. In accompaniment, for instance, only drums had been used. Now wind and string instruments, both national and Western, were added. A contrary aspect was the attempt, in the "gang of four" period, to monopolize the stage for the "model revolutionary Peking operas" — as in all China. Tseden Drolma, famous Tibetan singer, was to complain years later that the need to sing in falsetto characteristic of Peking opera temporarily ruined her voice for the open-throated Tibetan style. (By then, in the 1980's Tseden Drolma herself had become head of the Tibet Cultural Bureau.)

To study and critically inherit the more developed of the old forms embodying centuries of experience the Regional Song and Dance Troupe and Tibetan Opera Troupe had sections for collection and research.

Choice and use were sometimes a simple matter, sometimes not. From the *ral-pa* drum dance, the optimistic and vigorous features could be readily adapted. Another genre, the *nang-ma*, was rich and beautiful, but there had been ultra-"Left" pressure to ban the whole mode because it had been palace music for the Dalai Lamas. Zhang Liuchu already said in 1976, however, that it was not right to reject it on that account. Research was under way to distil from it what could be of service today. Two other forms, *tod-zhai*, a tap dance, and *gor-zhai*, a round dance, had originated with the working people but also been put to feudal and superstitious purposes. The strands had to be untangled.

Here again the presentation we heard at the Tibet Cultural

Bureau was at odds with the position of the then still powerful “gang of four” which was bent on dismantling the “hundred flowers” policy originally laid down by Mao Zedong. Jiang Qing and her cohorts denied the national character of the arts of China’s minorities. They even contended that under socialism the nationalities themselves no longer existed, or should quickly cease to exist (something that Marxism says can happen only in the communist society of the far future). Behind their ultra-Left talk they were essentially chauvinists of the majority Han nationality. Jiang Qing herself could hardly stand to hear minority languages spoken, because they sounded “foreign” to her, and banned as “outlandish” some movements, gestures and melodies in minority songs and dances.

Following the Four’s downfall, many Tibetan works of art long under a cloud were performed again. One was the 800-year-old folk epic “Ge-sar Khan” (current also in Mongolia and Xinjiang and called by some “Asia’s Iliad”). Others were operas *The Maiden Nangsha*, *Losang*, *Princess Wencheng* and *Baima Wangbo*, based on historical and personal themes. *The Maiden Nangsha* received warm praise in Beijing as well, where it was performed in the 1980 Stage Festival of the Minority Nationalities — in itself an event of unprecedented scale.

In music, Tibet by 1976 had several professional ensembles and orchestras. The instruments were Tibetan, Han and Western (wind and strings, including the piano), used separately or in combination. There were good soloists in each category. Nine-tenths of them were Tibetans. Those in the main orchestras and troupes had been largely trained in musical colleges in Beijing, Shanghai or Chengdu.<sup>4</sup> Locally performing units ran their own classes. There had been some reform of Tibet’s traditional instruments to increase their range and volume without changing their distinct melodic characteristics.

“We cannot forever go on depending on the interior provinces for modern training,” we were told. A College of Arts, including music, was planned for Lhasa because it would be closer to sources of students and to Tibetan life. “Cultural cadres are still far too few. What may have seemed enough a couple of years ago is far from so today.”

In the drama, a large-scale effort is *Princess Wencheng* (distinct from the old opera on the same theme), by China's veteran playwright Tian Han. It was performed in the early 1960's by an all-Tibetan cast, but then put in cold storage, and its author unjustly condemned, when Jiang Qing lorded it over the arts. Now it has been revived. New plays, such as *No Right to Be Born*, on a serf revolt theme, also appeared in the late 1970's. In 1981-82, the long historical drama *Songtsan Gambo*, Tibetan-acted and with almost entirely Tibetan directing and production staff, was staged both in the Region and elsewhere in China. It dealt not with the marriage of Tibet's unifier-king with his Han princess, a very frequent theme in the past decades, but with Songtsan Gambo's earlier role in promoting the Tibetan script and introducing the first Tibetan law code in the years 633-636 A.D.

Probably the first-ever staging in Tibetan of a masterpiece of world drama was that of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, in April 1981. It was put on in Shanghai, by students from Tibet at the Theatrical Institute there, who were to take it back to the Lhasa stage.<sup>5</sup>

The advent of daily television in Tibet has led further to the writing of many locally written and locally produced TV plays and documentaries. Some were rebroadcast on China-wide TV, particularly during the 1982 national contest for the best artistic creations for this type from all parts of the multinational People's Republic.

In Lhasa, two new film theatres, each accommodating over a thousand spectators, had been added since 1965. In Zetang (Tzethang) a prefectural centre with a population of only 7,000, we saw a new cinema theatre seating 1,500, also used for indoor meetings and rallies. Many offices, factories, schools and military units had acquired projection equipment for use in their own assembly halls, often open for showings to the general public as well.

In the countryside, particularly in pastoral areas, people would sometimes travel a long way to see films, and avidly sit through two or three features plus one or more documentaries or newsreels at one stretch.

In the communes, a notable trend was the training of "barefoot" projectionists, from among their own young men and women. This

made many of them independent of professional personnel.

New films, shipped in by air, often opened in Lhasa at the same time as in Beijing. Dubbing in Tibetan had increased, and a special studio with a factory for reprinting was being built in the region, also a documentary film studio.

Television in 1976 was making its experimental debut in Tibet. Staff members for the forthcoming Lhasa station, including TV photographers and editors, were in training in the Central Television Station in Beijing.

Tibetan vocalists, most of them ex-serfs and slaves, are acclaimed all over China. Some are known internationally. Tseden Drolma,<sup>6</sup> a long-time favourite on China's stage, radio and TV, performed in Nepal, Rumania, Yugoslavia and the Scandinavian countries in the 1970's. She has retained her firm ties with the region's working people and their everyday life. When we met her in Lhasa in 1976, she was just back from several months in the agricultural and herding communes. Many fine younger singers, some still in their twenties, have appeared.

For Tibet's regular corps of artists, professionals and amateurs, its gifted working people are an inexhaustible wellspring. Returning from a concert in Lhasa we had an impromptu hour with the service personnel in our hotel, young men and girls mostly from the villages. One after the other, they repeated for us songs and dances we had just seen performed professionally, and fragments of others. Their musicality and grace would have done credit to many a stage. Such are the popular talents that find organized expression in a multitude of amateur troupes.

We saw one troupe, from Doilungdêqên County and largely from its Donggar Commune, perform on a quickly-erected outdoor stage. Their verve was infectious, their expertness impressive. Like many others, they were writing some of their own words and music. A couple of years earlier, in Beijing for a national amateur festival, they had attracted the attention of Premier Zhou Enlai. He asked them to stay longer in the capital and play not only in theatres but in factories and on National Day, in the public parks.

The major troupes, we found, were largely recruited from the

grass-roots ones. Contact between amateurs and professionals was constant and close. "They may learn formal stage skills from us," a well-known professional told us, "but we must never cease learning from them, in particular from their fresh sense of what the working people are feeling and thinking. We see them perform on their home grounds, get ideas from them, and pass on some of our experience. They drop in on us for advice or to borrow instruments or stage props."

Professional composers, choreographers, playwrights and song-writers, of whom Tibet now has an initial contingent, also come largely from the ranks of the amateurs.

Tibet's fourth regional conference on mass theatricals was held in Lhasa in May-June 1979. It was attended and addressed by Tian Bao, Pasang, Raigdi and other leaders. Over sixty performances, comprising 161 distinct items, were given before audiences totalling 67,000. Many forms which the "gang of four" had tried to stifle reappeared. Others, newly discovered among the people, were put on stage for the first time.

The result, as summarized in a review: "The hundred flowers have resumed unfolding."

## WRITING AND PUBLISHING

Writing and publishing of Tibetan literary works, new and old, greatly expanded from the late 1970's on.

Notable was the appearance of original works on contemporary themes, such as the novels *Survivors* by Yekei Dainzim and *Happiness* (Gesang Meido) by Jamgai Gyatso, the *Anthology of the Grassland* of the modern Tibetan poet Radjin Basang and others.

The quarterly *Tibet Literature*, previously published in the Han language, with content by writers of different nationalities in and about the region, was now appearing in Tibetan (that it did not do so earlier reflected previous anomalies in the situation).

Actively pursued was the re-printing of classical Tibetan works, including the 11th century poetry of Mi-la Repa and the love-lyrics

of the young Dalai Lama VI (1683-1706). The 800-year-old epic cycle *Ge-sar Khan*, the stage version of which has been mentioned earlier, was reprinted on a huge scale. In 1979-80, almost a million copies of a 14-volume edition came off Tibetan-language presses in Tibet, Gansu, Qinghai and Sichuan provinces, as did the first two volumes of a larger edition. The latter, which will run to 30 volumes, is based not only on earlier written versions but on additional material taken down on tape from memorized recitatives. Also republished were *The Biography of King Norsang* and *The Story of Young Damei*.

Much publishing in special fields will no doubt come out of the institute set up under the Autonomous Region to study archive material, dating back many centuries and including records of a historical, religious and scientific nature from the Potala in Lhasa, the Tashi Lhumpo lamasery in Xigazê and other repositories. Among notable discoveries now being systematized are documents bearing on Tibet's relations with the rest of China from ancient times, and on foreign encroachments. Also records of at least 30 past earthquakes, an important research report submitted to the Dalai Lama of a century ago on the origin and development of the Tibetan script, and a wide range of other material.

In the winter of 1981-82, the quarterly *Tibetan Studies*, issued by the preparatory committee of the Tibet Academy of Social Sciences began to appear. It is edited by the veteran educator Dorje Tsenden and has two editions, Tibetan and Han. Early articles included an analysis of linking the *Ge-sar* epic with real events in the Tibetan kingdom (7th to 9th centuries); a substantiated chronology of King Songtsan Gambo indicating that he was born in 568 and that his marriage to the Tang princess Wencheng in 641 took place in his old age rather than in his youth as portrayed in tradition; and a well-documented study of the Han-Tibetan markets for the exchange of tea for horse in the Song dynasty (10th to 13th centuries) with contemporary statistics and statements of purpose. The origin of the name Tu-bod (Tibet) was traced. A bibliography of several hundred Chinese sources on Tibetan history listed hundreds of titles dated over a period of some 1,200 years. Very important was an article on the plentiful earthquake data (some 80,000 references) gleaned from Tibetan rec-

ords over a similar period. This is of wide present-day relevance because of the geological importance of the region and an entire book on the subject is available. Modern subjects included problems of agriculture and livestock breeding in southern Tibet.

An editorial introduction to the quarterly stressed that the identification of ancient Tibetan studies with "restoration" under the "gang of four" was spurious and will not recur. The spirit of national equality is exemplified by references to Hans and Tibetans as two great and equal peoples. The energy now going into Tibetan studies, in the region itself where the material is so abundant, promises an early end to the century-old abnormal situation in which more such work was done abroad than in Tibet and the rest of China, and to measurelessly enrich the whole fields.

Output of textbooks and manuals of various kinds has increased. The traditional Tibetan almanac, useful in farming, has been brought up to date and is being re-issued each year.

In 1981, a record in Tibetan-language publishing in the Autonomous Region was reached with the printing of 30 new titles (as compared with 12 in 1980). In the same year, over two million books in Tibetan (under some 120 titles) were sold in the Region.

Growing, too, is the number of translated works from the Han, and from European languages. The latter, still few but exceeding any number in the past, range from the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin to selections from literature and technical and scientific books.

Of great aid to writing, journalism and publishing will be the new Tibetan typewriter invented in 1975 by Wang Shichen, a translator working for the *Tibet Daily*. This 46-key desk model, much simpler and handier than the previously used machine, has been trial-produced with the help of the Shanghai Typewriter Factory.

All these developments are indicative of the vigorous revival and expansion of Tibetan-language publishing since the downfall of the "gang of four". Moreover, they are seen as only beginning to satisfy the varied intellectual needs of the Tibetan nationality as it moves toward socialist modernization.

## GRAPHIC AND PLASTIC ARTS

In the graphic and plastic arts, Tibet has old painters and sculptors in the national style, formerly engaged mainly in religious art, as well as new forces from among the youth.

*Wrath of the Serfs*, a sculptural group with a large hall to itself in the Exhibition of the Tibetan Revolution in Lhasa, is very powerful and now almost as famous throughout China as the *Rent Collection Courtyard* of Sichuan Province. In photographic reproductions, it is also known abroad. Sculptors from various parts of the country worked on it in Tibet. Very effective likewise, and in the opinion of some more closely linked with the ancient Tibetan art of statuary, is a series done by former poor lama craftsmen in Sera monastery, recording past struggles there.

The old Nangtzesha courthouse prison and torture chamber in the centre of Lhasa has striking figure groups portraying the brutalities of which it was once the scene in real life. Many local history exhibits we saw in 1976 had their own sculptural displays. One in Zangchin temple near the Nyama Commune was remarkable for its rough strength and immediacy of impact. In Drepung lamasery an old lama painter was using and transmuting the representational techniques of the traditional religious murals to portray the new life of that monastic community.

Today, with the relaxation of the restrictions of the previous decade, older forms of graphic and plastic art are also being revived. Some like *tang-ka* painting and butter-sculpture are unique to Tibet.

## EXCHANGE AND MUTUAL INFLUENCE

Tibet's rich artistic exchanges with other parts of China go back many centuries, not only in architecture and formal (in the old Tibet mainly religious) painting, but also in the popular arts. The world-renowned Tang Dynasty murals in Dunhuang in Gansu Province (7th to 10th century) include spirited representations of Tibetan dancers, known throughout China in those times.

In the 17th century, when the Fifth Dalai Lama went to Beijing, his entourage brought back dances and melodies of the Han and other nationalities that can still be recognized in their assimilated Tibetan versions.

The influences were mutual. They are even more so today.

Noteworthy in this connection is the approach to the development and interaction of different national cultures in China taken at the Fourth National Congress of Chinese Writers and Artists which closed in November 1979. Its keynote report, by Zhou Yang, declared:

The areas peopled by the national minorities make up about 60 per cent of our territory. For generations they have been living and working on this vast land and, each with its own time-honoured cultural and historical tradition, have made tremendous contributions to the development of China's culture. We should make further great efforts to help develop the culture and art of respective fraternal nationality while strengthening cultural exchange among them. . . .

This includes: recording and collating fine oral literary works in a scientific way; developing performing art groups and research institutions connected with the literature and art of the minority peoples and cultivating their literary and artistic talents. We should carry forward the special features of literature and art of these nationalities, and should never substitute the culture and art of any one nationality for that of another. . . .

In 1980-82, a great deal of work was done in this spirit.

## CHAPTER 29

# BATTLE FOR HEALTH—THE NATIONALITY GROWS

The story of Tibet's new medical service is dramatic, and not just medically.

It is the story of a link in the revolution. Some of the first person-to-person contacts of the Communist Party and People's Liberation Army with the serfs and slaves in the early 1950's were made by doctors. The free treatment they gave to all in the face of obstruction by the old ruling class did more than heal bodies. It opened up minds.

The story is also one of the new birth of a nationality in the literal, physical sense. Under the feudal-theocratic system the population of Tibet fell from two million to 870,000<sup>1</sup> between 1795 and 1959, a decline of three-fifths in some 160 years. Then, in only 17 years, it grew by a full quarter. Plainly, if not for the liberation hundreds of thousands of Tibetans now alive would have been dead, or never been born. This is what the Tibetan aristocrats who fled abroad and the foreign backers and mouthpieces they found there have called "genocide". In fact, it is the fresh growth of a people that had been dying out.

Finally, the story embraces two successive changeovers. First, from virtual absence of medical service to general availability. Second,

from modern medical aid that at first came entirely from outside the region to a mainly local network of health care.

Under the old feudal regime a Tibetan doctor with modern training was virtually unheard of. Today a growing proportion of the region's graduate doctors and practically all its nurses, laboratory technicians and para-medics ("barefoot doctors") are Tibetan.

Not that there was no indigenous medical tradition. There was a rich one with a history of at least 1,300 years. Closely related to that of the majority nationality of China, and also to that of India, it also had its own outstanding characteristics.<sup>2</sup>

As early as the eighth century fairly accurate anatomical knowledge of the bones, muscles and organs of the human body had been obtained by dissection, as a result of the Tibetan burial custom of dismembering the corpses of the dead. Also known were the location of the main nerves (then called "white pulses"), their connection with the brain and the effect of nerve damage on limb function. Arteries and veins were clearly differentiated. The period of pregnancy was defined as 38 weeks. The human foetus, at successive stages of growth, was termed the "fish", "turtle" and "piglet". This showed perception, remarkable for the time, of the correspondence of human embryology to the evolution from fish to reptiles to mammals.

Diagnostic techniques, including meticulous pulse-taking, were chiefly similar to those of traditional Han medicine. But the Tibetan doctors also carefully examined the tongue for furriness, colour and humidity. And they tested the first morning urine of the patient — by odour and taste, by whipping in a bowl for observation of colour, bubbles, floating impurities and residue, and by the addition of precipitants and catalysers.

Treatments, by the 8th century, included blood-letting, enemas, hot and cold applications, draining of abdominal fluid by puncture, removal of cataracts with needles, catheterization, medicated and vapour baths, introduction of drugs into the body cavities, and rubbing in of oils. Yak-butter was used to check bleeding and *chiang* (Tibetan barley beer) to cleanse wounds. Local treatments for rheumatic

ailments and paralysis due to stroke, both common at high altitudes, were fairly effective.

In pharmacology, the 8th century "Four-Part Medical Classic"<sup>3</sup> compiled by Yutok Yonten Kongpo listed some 1,000 medicinals — plant, animal and mineral. Some were borrowed from Han medicine, and known by virtually the same names. Many were unique to the plateau and later became prized by Han, Mongolian and Indian physicians as well. The old Tibetan pharmacopoeia, repeatedly augmented and revised, grew constantly. By the 1840's it listed 2,294 items.<sup>4</sup>

Ancient pathology in Tibet, as elsewhere, had its share of guesswork and obscurantism. But also it had many valid views and insights. Anthrax of the skin and internal organs was recognized as the same disease, its symptoms were described and its sources were identified as contact with sick animals and consuming their flesh. In a pastoral area in which raw sun-dried meat was a common food, this was of clear practical importance. Congenital diseases of infants and children were attributed to illness or undernourishment of the pregnant mother. Much attention was paid to hygiene of drinking water: that from rain being considered purest, from snow drinkable and from brackish forest streams dangerous. In some of these matters, the old medicine of Tibet anticipated conclusions not reached elsewhere for centuries.

Medical teaching included a feature perhaps without parallel in its early history elsewhere — the use of detailed wall charts drawn in colour, which by the 17th century, had been systematized into a set of 79. They presented not only anatomy but also the cause, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of various ailments; points for acupuncture; and the raw materials, preparation and dosage of medicines. Interestingly, the final 17th century form, the medical artist Tungchi Norbu disputed and corrected some earlier inaccuracies derived from scriptural dogmas — for instance the placement of the heart, as the "ruling organ" at the centre of the body. He insisted on drawing all organs exactly where his eyes had seen them, regardless of what the holy books wrote.

But despite all this wealth of medical experience and knowledge,

at least 90 per cent of Tibet's people on the eve of the liberation had no hope of treatment in illness. The reasons, lying in the social system, were their serf status and attendant dire poverty.

The two traditional Tibetan medical institutions, the Temple of the God of Medicine on Lhasa's Chakpori Hill and the Mendzi Khang, or Bureau of Medicine and Calendar Calculation (of which more will be said later) catered only to the upper clergy, aristocracy and officers of the former Tibetan army. An even tinier minority had access to the sole modern treatment obtainable in old Lhasa, at the dispensary of the British (later Indian) Commissioner's Office. For ordinary folk, there were only lamas and wizards who claimed to cure by prayers and exorcisms, for an often ruinous fee. And the most prized and expensive "remedies" were small portions of the feces or urine of the Dalai Lama.

Epidemic diseases raged. Smallpox, the most dreaded, mowed down thousands. In 1794 an early form of vaccination had been proclaimed for Tibet by Emperor Qianlong. Though not practised for long, it appears to have helped so so much that, later, the stone carved with the decree, revered as the "Monument to Prevent Pestilence and Protect Infants", was imagined to have healing properties in itself. For a century and a half, people chipped away small bits to take in powder form. The upright slab, which its inscription almost obliterated, still stands in front of the Jokhang temple.

In 1927, smallpox brought 7,000 fatalities in Lhasa within a single year, at least one in every family. As late as 1951, we were told at the Bhundui Commune near the city, in the hundred or so families living in that place it killed 61 persons.

Syphilis and various parasitic infections were endemic in old Tibet.

Childbirth often meant death for both mother and infant. One reason was that to give birth in a house was regarded as "polluting". Women serfs and slaves bore their babies in stables, cowsheds, sheepfolds and even latrines.

Despite some sound traditional ideas of disease prevention in Tibet, sanitary conditions for the poor — the vast majority of its people — were execrable, as was inevitable in a society which saw them

as sub-human. In Lhasa in 1955, the streets and open places, including that fronting the stately Potala, were pitted with noxious pools and strewn with excrement.

In epidemic control, although there was some correct perception of the value of isolation, this too became a nightmare for the serfs and slaves. Take the boyhood experience, some 30 years ago, told by Champa, an ex-serf in Lhundrub County, today the site of a modern farm. When his village was struck by smallpox, the *dzong* (county) authorities drove the sick into a deserted valley. Champa went, too, to care for his younger brother. He found many people had already perished, some from disease, some from hunger and cold. After his brother died, Champa was barred from the village as a suspected disease carrier. He wandered off, homeless, returning only after the democratic reform. The rich, of course, could simply move to another of their estates, and return whenever they themselves thought it safe.

Champa's story is eloquent about Tibet's yesterday. That of Drolkar exemplifies its today. Born a slave in 1943, she became one of the first modern doctors of that class origin. In 1976, at age 34, she was vice-director of the whole region's medical service.

The day after her birth, Drolkar told us, her mother was driven to work by their master, an estate steward in Tsethang, and died of haemorrhage as a result. From an early age, Drolkar was forced to carry water, act as nursemaid, wash diapers, clean rooms and stables for the master's family. It was in a stable that she slept at night.

In 1954, when the PLA arrived in Tsethang, the 11-year-old Drolkar ran to it for refuge. First she was sheltered and given odd jobs. Then the army hospital took her on as a trainee-nurse.

In 1956, the central government, allowing more time for the local upper strata to make up their minds, temporarily delayed the schedule for reform in Tibet. Drolkar like many other young Tibetans already thirsting was then sent to school in the Han areas. She joined the Communist Youth League and studied obstetrics at the Northwest Institute of Nationalities in Lanzhou, Gansu Province.

In 1963 she returned to Tibet, where the democratic reform had in the meantime been completed, and was assigned to the Regional

Health Bureau. In 1966 she became a Party member. During the “cultural revolution” which began in that same year she went to the countryside near Xigazê to help organize the communes and at the same time practise medicine. In 1970 she was back in Lhasa, as a senior Health Bureau cadre. In 1975, as a member of the Chinese delegation she addressed a conference of the World Health Organization in Geneva.

Tibet’s new medical network was set up step by step.

When the People’s Liberation Army entered the region in 1951, it began, on express instructions from Chairman Mao Zedong, to give free medical care to all Tibetans.<sup>5</sup> Following the troops came civilian medical teams and hospitals, and the training of Tibetan personnel. By 1965 the medical units in Tibet (hospitals, clinics and mobile teams) numbered 196 with a total of 2,090 medical workers. Smallpox, venereal disease and bubonic plague, all previously common, no longer occurred.

Ten years later facilities and personnel had multiplied further. The growth was particularly striking in the rural areas, as seen below.

MEDICAL SERVICES IN TIBET  
GROWTH FROM 1965 TO 1975-76

(Figures marked by an asterisk are for 1976)

|   | 1965  | 1975   |
|---|-------|--------|
| Medical units   | 196   | 1,660* |
| In cities   | 121   | 155    |
| In countryside  | 72    | 1,446  |
| Hospital beds   |       | 3,830* |
| Medical service personnel   | 2,090 | 7,000* |
| Professional medical personnel — including those in 160 People’s Liberation Army medical teams serving the Tibetan population |       | 4,180* |

Among the professional personnel (doctors, medical assistants, nurses, laboratory and X-ray technicians) in 1976 were 1,300 Tibetans.

Over a thousand others were training in nine middle-level medical training schools in Lhasa and the prefectures.

Among many Tibetans qualified in medical colleges in the inland provinces in the 1950's and 1960's some were already in senior professional posts, like the chief surgeon of the Regional Hospital. A medical college was being established inside Tibet in the new industrial and university city of Nyingchi.<sup>6</sup>

(In 1979, according to a Xinhua News Agency report that did not cite specific figures, the number of medical establishments in Tibet had increased 16-fold, medical personnel 19-fold and hospital beds 23-fold since the democratic reform in 1959. In 1980, said another Xinhua report, the number of Tibetan doctors there was some 3,500, and over a thousand Tibetan medical undergraduates were studying in Beijing, Shanghai and other interior cities.)

A new feature was the large number of "barefoot doctors" in agricultural and pastoral communes. They were local young people, not salaried or divorced from production; generally they did some 200 days of field labour a year, for which they earned workpoints like other peasants and herdsmen, with supplementary points assigned for time spent in medical practice or training. "They have callouses on their hands, mud on their feet, medical kits on shoulders, and the needs of the working people in their hearts," said Dr. Drolkar.

Mobile medical teams from the army and the towns and counties continued on tour, but now devoted themselves mainly to treating more complicated cases and training "barefoot" personnel.<sup>7</sup> Ordinary ailments or injuries were handled by the latter.

In more and more places, routine health checks were made and records kept. Women in childbirth could get the help of trained midwives. Goitre, common in Tibet, was prevented by general distribution of iodine. "Barefoot doctors" doubled as public health personnel. They taught and organized environmental hygiene including control of latrines and wells, made sure that people and animals did not use the same sources of drinking water and helped to improve stoves (old Tibetan rural dwellings had no chimneys and were smoke-filled, which caused eye and respiratory troubles). They also

gave health guidance and preventive inoculations in schools and kindergartens.

In short, the national health policy of "prevention in the lead" was being carried out.

At all levels, the principle of combining modern with indigenous medicine was applied. The latter had been brought to new life, extending its benefits from the few to the many. In the pastoral Nagqu Prefecture, Tibetan remedies (in many cases refined by modern research and processing and sometimes given by injection instead of by mouth) comprised 60 per cent of all prescriptions.

An interesting local variant of China's rural co-operative medicine had begun to appear by 1976. Since all treatment in Tibet was free, there was no membership fee to pay. But such co-ops carried out the principle of mass self-help in health service in other forms. Local clinics were administered by committees of peasants or herdsmen. While Western-type medicines were provided by the state, traditional herbal ones were gathered and prepared by the co-operators themselves.

Regional and prefectural hospitals, increasing in number, were the rear bases and headquarters of the entire medical network.

The Tibet Autonomous Region Hospital — the very first — began in 1952 as the Lhasa People's Clinic with 60 medical workers and 50 beds.

Its history was closely associated with the entry of the PLA into Tibet in 1951. Personnel, drugs, operating room, X-ray and laboratory equipment were assembled beforehand in Beijing and accompanied the troops. Treatment was given to the people on the way. Since the highways were still unbuilt, the medics came thousands of kilometres on foot, and their supplies on pack train (along the route through Qinghai, by a 100-camel caravan). In 1953 further reinforcements were sent by the Ministry of Health. After 1954, when the roads came through, more and heavier equipment was brought in by truck. By 1955, on my first visit, the hospital had 90 medical personnel (plus 60 other staff and workers) and 100 beds. Smaller hospitals had also been set up in Xigazê, Qamdo and, under army auspices, in Dzamu.

Today, enlarged several times over, the hospital is one of five major ones in Lhasa. The others are the Workers' Hospital, Hospital of Tibetan Medicine, Army General Hospital and Municipal Hospital.

Despite free treatment, hospitalization and even free food for Tibetan in-patients, it was at first hard to get any to come. Wild rumours were spread by hostile aristocrats and clerics. "The Hans' medicine will bewitch your hearts," they said. "The Han doctors will tap your blood and drink it." "Treatment is free now but the Hans will make you pay later." Sometimes there was physical retaliation against Tibetans seeking treatment. And mental shackles were such that even the delousing of in-patients was a problem, since many considered it "sinful to kill" these insects. But reason began to prevail when the people saw the aristocrats and high lamas themselves, when prayers and local remedies had failed, going to the hospital and coming out cured.

The striking change in the minds of Tibet's poor and oppressed was exemplified by an early patient who came into the Regional Hospital with pneumonia, in pain and misery from much fluid in his lungs. When drainage was prescribed, he refused and went home, because "it's a sin to pierce the body". Later, he was brought back half-dead. With drainage plus penicillin, he soon recovered. "You've given me back my life," he said then. "It belongs to the hospital. I'll stay and work here forever." Only with difficulty was he persuaded to leave. So here was a contrast in attitudes. The reactionary aristocrats and high clerics wanted the benefits of modern medicine for themselves but tried to implant suspicion of it in others. The common people, once experience had washed away prejudice, wholeheartedly recognized their true friends.

In 1952, out-patient attendance in the hospital was some 80 a day. By 1955 hundreds were coming daily.

Another success was the united front gradually cemented with the traditional Tibetan doctors of the Mendzi Khang.<sup>8</sup> At first they were stand-offish, even hostile. Later, they came to consult about some patients of their own (all upper class) who needed surgery, recognizing that it could solve some problems they could not. The hospital received them with respect. "In internal medicine," its

director Jen Huali told us in 1955, "Tibetan doctors sometimes do better than we." By that time, the Mendzi Khang was sending over some of its own students for elementary surgical training. They could already perform appendectomies and similar operations. And the hospital, itself eager to learn, was dispensing some efficacious Tibetan drugs.

Ten years afterwards, in 1965, with the democratic reform accomplished and socialist transformation under way in Tibet, we found the much enlarged, better equipped and better housed Autonomous Region Hospital treating over a thousand out-patients a day. Its prestige was high — the interference and deliberately inculcated prejudice overcome. All services were still free for Tibetan patients. For those referred from outside Lhasa the state paid travel expenses as well. Equipment was wide-ranging. Operations of considerable complexity, including some chest surgery, were undertaken. There had been 119 successful removals of cysts of echinococcosis, a parasitic infestation contracted from animals, widespread in Tibet and fatal if long untreated. Eye surgeons were removing cataracts, also common here. In difficult deliveries brought to the hospital, 98 per cent had resulted in survival of mother and child. There were more departments than in 1955, but one had disappeared, that of venereal diseases. Syphilis had not been seen for some time. Many former sufferers were healthy again. One, middle-aged and previously childless, had become the father of three children since his cure, and had given them all names incorporating grateful reference to Chairman Mao.

On the hospital's professional staff were 40 or so Tibetans of serf and slave origin; some doctors, but in most cases nurses, pharmacists, X-ray and lab technicians. Altogether, it had trained 150 Tibetan medical personnel most of whom had gone to work in prefectures and counties outside Lhasa.

In 1976, my third visit, the proportion of Tibetan doctors was again much higher. The hospital leader who received us was himself a Tibetan, Dr. Ragya Tsering. Combined use of Western, Han and Tibetan medicine had developed further. Treatment and training

teams were constantly out on tour, or on temporary duty in rural health units.

In 1978-79, according to later reports, the hospital was making marked progress in the investigation and treatment of cardio-vascular diseases typical for high altitudes. It had performed 25 successful operations to correct exposure patency of the arterial duct in children, a condition rare on the plains but frequent on the "roof of the world", and four others to deal with stenosed myocarditis (constriction of the membrane round the heart). No cardio-vascular surgery had been attempted in Tibet earlier for lack of trained personnel and equipment, and out of fear that post-operative patients could not cope with the rarefied air. Today it can be done in Lhasa.<sup>9</sup>

Another 1978 triumph was the saving of a 3-day old Tibetan baby boy suffering from haemolytic disease of the newborn due to MN blood-type incompatibility complicated by kernicterus. An exchange transfusion was performed. The baby regained his health.

January 1979 saw the inauguration of the Tibet branches of the Chinese Medical Association and China's Pharmacological, Nursing, Traditional Medicine and Anti-Tuberculosis societies — all with their own publications. Besides maintaining and advancing standards, their specific task was to organize co-operation and exchange of knowledge between Western-type doctors and those of Han and Tibetan medicine in their respective fields. In 1980, according to the Xinhua News Agency, a conference for exchange of experience between traditional Han and Tibetan medics was held in Lhasa. Over a hundred persons attended, and 91 papers were read. Two dealt with successful herbal treatment of highland erythremia and chronic brucellosis.

The old Mendzi Khang, we found in 1976, had been reorganized into the Hospital of Tibetan Medicine. It had originally been founded in 1915 by the Tibetan local government as the Bureau of Medicine and Calendar Calculation, a link not accidental, as traditional concepts had connected the onset of disease or time for cures with celestial phenomena and astrological notions. In 1955, when some of these ideas still obtained, I was told there that all medicines had to be compounded during the waxing of the moon, on the theory that the

patient's strength would correspondingly grow. Valid elements were still mixed with mystical ones. And the service the Mendzi Khang gave (even to the local officials and military it served) was pitifully meagre. It had one clinic with three lama doctors, a pharmacy with two workers and a ward for 39 in-patients.

By 1976, this hospital had 75 doctors and 60 other personnel. Some 600 out-patients, mainly ex-serfs and slaves, were seen each day. There were only 20 beds, devoted to research. But in-patients were placed in the regular hospitals, where they could get the prescribed Tibetan treatments as well as modern ones. The annual output of medicine had increased over 200-fold since 1955, to about seven metric tons, distributed throughout the region and beyond. The traditional doctors, like their modern counterparts, went on rounds to the countryside. Together, they researched ancient Tibetan medical books and remedies. A Tibetan herbal handbook and some clinical manuals had been published for "barefoot doctors" — one concerned with gastric ulcers being much used. Instruction was being given to about 50 trainees.

Yeshe Drolma, a Tibetan woman in her thirties, was the hospital's Party secretary and a vice-director (formerly no women had worked there at all). She said she felt that the liberation had saved the old Tibetan medicine, first by extending its treatments to all the people, and second by assuring its further development. Its remedies and treatments (including physiotherapy procedures such as medicinal baths) were particularly effective with some locally prevalent diseases, especially chronic ones, including gastric and duodenal ulcers, rheumatism, arthritis and bronchitis. Good results had been achieved with types of paralysis which did not respond to other methods, attracting China-wide attention.

For diagnosis, in combination with its traditional methods, the hospital was now using X-rays, electrocardiography, and laboratory equipment. Trainees and research students, besides local people, included modern doctors from the Regional Hospital and Tibetan doctors from Yunnan and Sichuan; the Tibetan areas of Qinghai did their own research and publications, some of which we saw in the hospital library.

I inquired about the old Tibetan lama doctor Shinrob Norbu, who had been the Dalai Lama's personal physician and in charge of the Mendzi Khang<sup>10</sup> in 1955 — a massive old man of over 70 when I met him then. Yeshe Drolma said he had opposed the 1959 serfowner rebellion and continued his work until shortly before his death in 1962.

Interestingly, the hospital continued in charge of the calculation of the Tibetan calendar which, combining solar and lunar elements, is similar to, but not identical with that previously in use in other areas of China (and still used for the agricultural cycle).

In 1978, a four-story building in the Tibetan national style was added to house the expanded out-patient department, by then giving over a thousand treatments a day, and the newly-established Research Institute for Tibetan Medicine. It is one of the landmarks of today's Lhasa.

Elsewhere in Tibet, the six prefectural smaller hospitals set up before 1959 had rapidly expanded. And from 1960 on, local medical units had been set up in the 72 counties and their subordinate districts, and the score or so state farms. By the 1970's, the network had reached down into the 2,000 or so communes. Overall, the growth of the medical services had been accompanied by increasing Tibetani- zation.

Xigazê's 150-bed hospital, visited in 1976, was comparable in facilities to those in Lhasa. It had begun with a 21-member medical team, all Hans, in the early 1950's. By 1976 its staff numbered 150, including 52 Tibetans as compared with only six in 1959. The prefectural vice-director of medical services, Dawa, was a Tibetan woman just entering middle age. As a child she had been sold into slavery for five silver dollars, to repay a debt her serf-parents owed to a lamasery.

In the ten years 1966-75 the Xigazê Hospital had performed 1,880 surgical operations and treated over 2 million out-patients. It had sent 217 mobile groups to the prefecture's rural areas; one-third of its personnel were always on detached duty, on these rounds or in county hospitals and district or commune clinics. Hundreds of "barefoot" doctors and midwives have been trained for the localities.

Smallpox and syphilis having disappeared, the main diseases treated were arthritis, hypertension and its associated heart conditions, TB and goitre.

Loka's Prefectural Hospital, also seen, was similar in size, scope and function. Its administrative head was another Tibetan woman ex-slave, Dr. Nyima. She had graduated, like Drolkar, from Lanzhou Medical College in Gansu.

At county level, we saw a hospital in pastoral Damxung, in treeless grasslands nearly 5,000 metres above sea level. Under it were 14 local clinics, with some 300 beds. An old-type Tibetan doctor who had studied at the Mendzi Khang ran the traditional medicine section. He had trained 10 modern doctors, plus 70 "barefoot" ones in his special skills. An ambulance unit both brought patients to the hospital and took personnel around the far-flung county. Damxung had five smaller hospitals at district level, clinics in 25 of its 29 communes, and 1,200 "barefoot" health workers — about one to every 20 inhabitants.

In these high pastures, too, we found a medical team of specialists from the interior of China. Eleven of them, from the south-central province of Hunan, were working in Damxung. First coming in 1973, they had already been rotated twice, in two-year stints. Their task was to handle complicated cases and to continue training Tibetan personnel.

In Phampo State Farm near Lhasa, where some 15,000 people lived, we found a hospital of 50 beds, as many as the central hospital for all Tibet had had in 1952. Administration and permanent staff were entirely Tibetan. Sonam Norbu, the director, had done his training in Lhasa's Autonomous Regional Hospital. There were some members of a medical team from Hubei Province, rotated biennially. Facilities included two operating rooms with modern equipment, a laboratory, X-ray room and pharmacy which not only dispensed but prepared medicines in solution, tablet and ampoule form.

All the seven communes visited in 1976 had clinics with paramedical personnel and ready access to more complex service by county hospitals or touring teams. On the average, they reported one

“barefoot doctor” for every 30 or 40 families. Even in close proximity to towns, where hospitals were available, commune members praised these clinics which took care of many ailments and injuries on the spot, eliminating time-consuming journeys to and fro. Thus, the clinics avoided losses in collective and individual production and income. Virtually all of them also collected or grew medicinal herbs and made a variety of remedies, which meant further savings. They had sent “barefoot” personnel to county-run courses and, in some cases, to medical schools.

In short, from no medication for the vast majority of Tibet's people, the point has been reached where all can get elementary treatment at no expense. We heard many tributes to this socialist accomplishment, including a moving one from a woman who had lost every child she had borne before the liberation, but afterwards raised a new family, all robust.

# RELIGION

## CHAPTER 30

# RELIGION AND POLITICS IN TIBET

### 1. THE OLD TIE-UP

Tibet and religion — for a long time the two seemed synonymous. The reason: religion's political role. Not that this was unique to Tibet. China's emperors were called Sons of Heaven. Medieval Europe had its Holy Roman Empire — “neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire,” Marx once quipped. Spain's king was His Most Catholic Majesty. Britain's monarchs were held to reign “by the Grace of God” and titled Defender of the Faith. In the U.S., where capitalism dragged no feudal tail, the motto “In God We Trust” appears on all coinage.

In pre-liberation Tibet, religion's role was startlingly total, not only for the 20th century, but even by medieval norms. Its chief representative, the Dalai Lama, was also temporal ruler, as the Popes in feudal Europe might have become if they had decisively won their centuries-long tussles with its emperors and kings. But did religion in Tibet, then, take the lead over politics and not the other way round? To suppose so would be to mix form, secondary, with content, primary. What was primary was politics.

Tibet's priest rulers (much earlier there had been lay ones) were installed in the 13th century by the feudal emperors of all China, as a convenient form of local rule. Subsequently, their reincarnations were authenticated by drawing lots from a golden urn presented by

Emperor Qianlong (1736-96). Within Tibet itself, Dalai Lamas VI, VIII, XI and XII were all murdered, soon after or shortly before coming of age, usually by regents or other local power-holders who found them politically inconvenient. But the whole system of the Dalaiate did suit feudal serfowner rule. So it went right on, and new infant incarnations were found as instruments. Here too, politics was plainly in the lead.

Why can't politics do its own job? Why should religion, in different times and places, be its recurrent handmaid? Historically there is an explanation. Religion is an ideological form which began as an attempt to explain by fantasy the forces of nature which man's current knowledge could not yet find all reasons for (and later was prevented from finding, with all attempts to do so branded as sacrilege). In the sphere of social forces, whenever people of one class have come to be exploited by those of another, it has sanctioned that exploitation through irrational faith — providing a political myth to restrain the ruled from questioning and revolt. Was monarchy tyrannical? With the rulers called God's anointed, defiance became not only treasonable but blasphemous. And if a ruler was especially despotic and cruel, the humble subject could console himself with the thought that after death, the wicked potentate would roast in hell while he himself basked in paradise. Or, as in Lamaism that while an oppressor might be reincarnated as a worm, the subject might be reborn as king. But in all such concepts there was a pre-set condition. In *this* world the subject was required not to rebel but to virtuously bear the yoke.

At times in history when a new system and a new ruling class have sought to take over power, they, too, have reached for divine sanction, along with the secular means of authority. If the old faith wouldn't do, they set up another — as in Europe's Reformation, when the rising bourgeoisie challenged feudalism. In their eyes, now those of Protestants, the old Holy Catholic Church, long a part of feudal superstructure, became the "whore of Babylon". But once the bourgeoisie was firmly in the saddle, its revolutionary faith, too, turned conservative, to protect the new rule.

In different historical circumstances, there was a similar develop-

ment in Tibet. The form of Lamaism dominant in more recent centuries, the Gelugpa or Yellow Sect founded in the 15th century was originally a purist and ascetic reforming tendency against earlier monastic abuses. But after it assumed full power in a more developed feudalism than that of the past, it became the centre and mainstay of all types of ruling-class oppressions and abuses. The Japanese Buddhist Ekai Kawaguchi, after a stay in the region at the opening of our own century, encapsulated the religious-political connection in his report that, for the hierarchical government, "The holy religion is often its justification when it persecutes persons obnoxious to it, and when it has committed any wrong it seeks refuge under the same holy name." (*Three Years in Tibet*, 1909, p. 493.)

Exploiting systems need myths concerning this world, not just the next. Feudalism, with its almost impassable barriers between classes, required a social safety valve even if only symbolic — or "tokenist" as we say today. In medieval Christendom while noble birth was all-important in lay society, even a serf's son, if he went into the church could in theory rise to be high prelate or Pope and thus to earthly pomp and power as well. The fact that very few did so, and at the price of betraying their origins, often escaped the common man. In feudal China's old civil service, the poor, too, could theoretically reach the top by examinations in Confucian lore — but how often? In the capitalist U.S., under widely different conditions, similar purposes have been served by such myths as "from shirt sleeves to millions" or "from log cabin to White House." In Britain, have not many Labour Party leaders gratefully passed their last days as titled peers? Everyone has a ticket in the lottery — however long the chance. The ruling class gains needed new blood. The subject class remains subject.

In Tibet, the semblance of equal opportunity was provided entirely by religion, through divinely appointed rebirth — with accompanying worldly advantage. To serve as a body for a reincarnated living Buddha could happen — in myth — to any child. Indeed, because of the rivalry of high feudal families and the danger of upsetting their balance of power, Dalai Lamas were generally "found" in humbler, though not too humble, households. And the

prize was not just individual, but familial. The parents, brothers and sisters of each new Dalai Lama automatically became a ducal clan and received broad lands and many serfs. There was no other recognized escape hatch for commoners into the hereditary aristocracy of Tibet, though in practice the very rich bought titles. Sometimes, Kawaguchi wrote in his book, the relatives of boy-candidates bought the reincarnation itself. The oracle-priests "who take charge. . . are in most cases men who make it their business to blackmail every applicant. . . (and) are therefore extremely wealthy."

Lamaism was an ingenious political tool in other ways. Its inferno for transgressors was not final. Damned souls could be transmigrated to one or more hellish lives on earth — yet still hope for upward mobility. As with the predestination of Calvinism — earthly wealth was a sign of divine favour. And lowly poverty was the penalty of sin. Yet Lamaism's predestination was qualified — fail once, and you could try again. This, combined with the cruellest earthly punishment, kept the poor from being over-impatient.

In 1955, on my first visit to Tibet, I found such Lamaist beliefs in fairly full sway, although people had already encountered new facts that did not accord with them. At first, new experience itself was rationalized in religious terms. Serfs and slaves, astonished and gratified by the People's Liberation Army's free medical treatment, courteous behaviour and distribution of relief goods, called it Buddha's Army and thanked the gods for having sent it.

By 1965, things were already very different. Six years had passed since the feudal serf system, the basis of the old thinking, had been shattered. The altered position of religion in Tibet was a result of a new fact: the new social system being built there called for no supernatural sanction.

Politically, the working people were now foremost, so there was no further need to reconcile them to the existence and power of parasitic rulers. The feudal privileges of clerical, as of lay, exploiters had been abolished. Counter-revolutionary acts under the cloak of the faith were proscribed, like any other kind. But the clergy enjoyed full citizenship rights under the Constitution (unless deprived of them by law for rebellion or other offences, as laymen could be too). They

also had the duties of citizens — loyalty to the state, people and socialism.

In matters of outlook, Marxism, Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, which is materialist and dialectical, was moving into the lead. But since ideology is a matter of understanding, religious belief that continued among individuals could not be, and was not, suppressed. Anyone could practise a faith or stop doing so (a choice not given before). And since, under Tibetan conditions, the issue involved large masses of people, both ordinary laymen and clerics, the government helped with the upkeep of temples and the livelihood of their inmates.

Communists, and there were quite a few Tibetan Communists by then, were convinced that under the impact of class struggle, productive labour and science, religion was bound to fade, as in fact it was already doing.

## 2. THE NECESSARY DISENTANGLEMENT

The prime task was to disentangle the religious from the political.

In old Tibet, the supremacy of the serfowning class was exercised through a tight combination of religious-political rule. In this order, the feudal aristocracy was the main element, according to the class criterion; since class relations were feudal and high clerics were not only mainly aristocrats by birth but beneficiaries from feudal exploitation. As for the form of rule, the appearance, its unique feature was that the clerical side was senior to the lay.

In 1890, Lhasa's three great lamaseries were the direct feudal lords of 37 per cent of all land in Tibet and had 90,079 serfs. Other land was divided between the *kashag*, local government (38%) and the lay nobles (25%). By 1959, the eve of the democratic reform, their holdings had risen to about half the total, including 412 pastures. So much for the economic side. Corresponding was the political role of the lamaist hierarchy. Its head, the Dalai Lama was Tibet's lord of lords. All lands, including those of *kashag* and nobles, were held in fief from him and all other persons, regardless of rank or lack of it, owed him allegiance. He could revoke any fief, or grant new ones —

I saw a document of the 1940's by which the Dalai Lama bestowed on one aristocrat "for all time" 20 tribes of herdsmen, with all their animals.

Under the Dalai Lamas, the top layer of local government administration traditionally comprised 616 officials of or above county-chief (*dzongpon*) rank. Among these the majority, 333, were clerics, and a minority, 283, were laymen. The *kashag*, or Dalai Lama's council of ministers, was a mixture of both. But the Dalai Lama's seal, without which the enactments were invalid, was affixed by his secretariat, the *yiktsang*, consisting entirely of high ecclesiastics.

County chiefs were paired, a cleric and layman administering jointly. They were required to be in agreement. Actually, the monk was in the superior position. He could more readily get higher levels to support his viewpoint. He could veto on the spot any measure proposed by his lay colleague to which he objected.

No really major decision, moreover, could be taken without the corporate consent of Lhasa's three great lamaseries — Ganden (3,333 monks), Sera (5,555) and Drepung (7,777). Their seals validated the most important government orders. In fact, the monastic communities were old Tibet's greatest organized power bloc. Tibet counted 2,711 temples and lamaseries (and nunneries), big and small. Their inmates numbered about 120,000 (of whom 13,000 were nuns), one tenth of the entire population,<sup>1</sup> and perhaps a quarter of the adult males. They had a prior claim to feudal service; a serf, even a runaway, was no longer tied to his lay lord if he was accepted as a monk, though the previous obligation was revived if he was afterwards expelled or released from monkhood.

By the status of lamaseries, of course, is meant their position as institutions, not that of all the monks. For neither feudalism nor its class structure stopped at the monastery gate. Monks of lowly origin, the vast majority, were nothing but slaves within the monastic walls. They toiled for the small top hierarchy, and often did not even enjoy the right to study or pray. And though free from lay jurisdiction they could be whipped, immured in dungeons or killed by the disciplinary proctors. Most of them, to begin with, were not in the lamaseries of their own free will. In one of the *kbenchung* or colleges of Drepung,

229 out of 310 lamas had been forced in under corvée or as children (this number did not include some who, starving outside, had “volunteered” out of hunger).

Economically, however, the whole vast body of lamas was parasitic. For even the poor monks, who worked very hard to look after the buildings and their superiors' comfort, produced no wealth.

Biologically, the rule of celibacy in the main Yellow Sect (the largest) cut down population. But within celibacy too, there was exploitation. Poor monks were apt to be used homosexually by their superiors. In some lamaseries, female garments and wigs were kept to array them for the purpose.

Militarily, control over so many men gave the abbots great power. There were special bodies of soldier-monks, and the others could be ordered to fight as well. Since the lamaseries kept guns in store, they could field substantial strength. This happened for the last time during the 1959 rebellion.

Particularly heavy was the pressure of the three big lamaseries on Lhasa itself. Indeed, for three or four weeks each year, around the *Mon-lam* or Great Prayer Festival, they took command of the city. Regular administration was halted and the “Iron Bar” lamas or monastery police of Drepung lorded it over the entire population — and the masses of congregating pilgrims as well. The purpose was to fill the monastic coffers with money, the means mainly intimidation. Anyone failing to pay the numerous “festival fines” could be immediately knocked to the ground and brutally beaten, sometimes to death, by cassocked toughs. These fines, we were told, had been levied on:

All households if snow fell during the festival;

Persons wearing leather shoes;

Girls wearing their hair in double braids;

Households growing flowers;

Persons wearing scarves;

Occupants of houses against which a passer-by urinated (the urinator was whipped if caught);

People who kept horses, donkeys, dogs, cats or fish; or who hung bells on their animals;  
Those who sang or played instruments indoors at home;  
Buyers of cigarettes in shops; etc., etc.<sup>2</sup>

Kawaguchi, the Japanese Buddhist already cited, described these festival extortions as "not much better than the villainies of brigands and highwaymen." Of the Drepung "Iron Bar" proctors, he wrote that their one-year appointments were secured by heavy bribes. Hence, they would "lose no time in . . . recovering the sum, with interest; their aim being to loot enough in their brief tenure to keep them "in luxury the rest of their lives." They preyed not only on the laity "but also on their brother priests." Hence, they were universally detested, wrote Kawaguchi. Now much so was shown by a Tibetan anecdote in which the most horrible tortures in hell were reserved for deceased "Iron Bar" proctors of Drepung. "Such is the story told at the expense of these lama sharks. . . ." Kawaguchi commented.

Fiscally, the ecclesiastical establishment paid no taxes to the local government on any of its estates. By contrast, governmental holdings, along with those of lay nobles, were taxed doubly — not only for general administration but for the upkeep of religion.

Exploitation of serf labour on the clerical estates was even more severe than on lay ones.

In usury, Tibet's second greatest form of exploitation after forced labour, the lamaseries charged a higher rate of interest than the *kasbag* or the lay money lenders.

For their economic operations the monasteries had special departments, the *djisu*. These were, by custom, administered by lamas from noble or merchant families who had ample personal funds, ostensibly so that they could make restitution for speculation or mismanagement. The *djisu*, besides collecting rent and corvée from lamasery estates, engaged in trade, both local and cross border, especially with India. Its agents were allowed to wear lay clothing (generally carrying only prayer-beads to mark their monkhood), to lead caravans and deal in the markets.

The monk-merchants did much of their dealing with people who

were serfs to their own lamaseries on terms dictated by the threat both of physical force and of ritual curse. To higher clerics, the monastery trade was a personal convenience, securing for them whatever luxuries they desired. In the 1940's and 1950's, Rolex and Omega watches, Leica and Contax cameras and gold-cased Parker pens were favoured status symbols among both religious and lay dignitaries. The latter also liked White Horse whiskey, and black gilt-tipped Balkan Sobranje cigarettes. Transport cost nothing — it was exacted by *corvée*.

This is the process that, in the extensive and visually interesting Tibetan exhibit in the American Museum of Natural History in New York is still (1981) unfortunately explained under the title "The Ecology of Tibetan Trade" by the following inscription:

"[The pastoral nomades] make contact with the monasteries which are not only places of worship but centres of crafts and producers of grain. . . ." (The fact that the lamaseries' stores of grain and handicraft articles were produced by their serfs goes unmentioned.) "Thus the monasteries act as centres interrelating herding peoples, farming peoples and traders." (If "exploiting" were substituted for the bland "interrelating", and the past tense for the present, since the phenomena described now belong to the past, the public might be informed instead of bemused.)

Not only material goods were traded, but prayers to cover every purpose. Tillers of the land had the choice either of buying blessings on their crops, or of having them cursed (by the lamas planting prayer flags upside down in the fields). Sacred objects and amulets were lucrative items. "Cures" for illness were sold in the form of special chants, inscriptions, and pills compounded from the feces of Living Buddhas (a pill made of the Dalai Lama's could cost the equivalent of a year's income for an ordinary man).

Clerical authority was the most absolute of all. To disobey it was not only insubordination but defiance of divine will. Penalties for such impiety included:

Cutting off the nose;  
Tearing off the ears;  
Scalping (for women);

- Cutting off the hands;
- Burning out eyes;
- Having bamboo spikes driven under one's fingernails;
- Excision of kneecaps;
- Severing of the Achilles tendon;
- Being hung up with a stone attached to the legs and beaten with sticks;
- Quartering;
- Being thrown over a precipice with a rock tied to the chest;
- Being sewn into a wet leather bag which shrank and killed slowly as it dried;
- Cutting the heart from the living body;
- Skinning alive;
- "Riding the copper horse" (a specially-shaped stove to which the condemned person was secured after it was stoked to high heat);
- Dipping in melted butter to be burned as a "living torch".

Thus, on lamasery estates, theological terror supplemented ordinary feudal terror in exacting submission and forced labour.

The pressures were imposed not only from without. They were enforced from within the victims' minds, by the power of implanted ideas. This too yielded rich material fruits, in "voluntary" donations. The more miserable a Tibetan's life, the more he or she tried to placate fate so that the travail might end, if not in this incarnation then in the next. Runaways from oppression, instead of using their meagre resources for themselves, often exhausted them completely by pilgrimages to holy places — prostrating themselves at each step and sometimes so overtaxing their strength that they died on the way (to so die was considered a sure way to a better rebirth). In old age, many believers disposed of their entire effects, thus robbing their children, so that they might travel to Lhasa, make a gift to the temples and see the reigning reincarnation before their own deaths. They were among the beggars who starved in the Potala's shadow, even as the butter they had donated burned away slowly in the innumerable lamps around holy images. (Jokhang temple alone burned over a ton of

butter a day, and used about 75 tons of grain annually for the offertory barley-cake pyramids, a thousand of which had to be set out before each major image every ten days.) On occasion, as a prescribed penance or a last pious act, the hapless pilgrim offered every grain of food he possessed in a ceremonial meal to all the lamas in a big monastery.

It is in this light that we should read an argument by which the Dalai Lama himself, when he first reached India, tried to slur over the poverty of Tibet's common people, "Their shabby outward appearance does not necessarily prove that they are either poverty-stricken or are serfs," he explained. "There was an instance of a very shabbily-dressed person actually having made donations to a group of almost 20,000 monks."<sup>3</sup>

### 3. THE DALAIS AS CHIEF BENEFICIARIES

That the Dalai Lama should have been such an energetic apologist for this entire system, some of which evils he himself admits now that it is beyond recall, was not surprising. For, standing at the apex of the religio-political pyramid, he was its main beneficiary. An inventory of his private treasure (not counting the part taken out of the country) was displayed in 1965 in the Exhibition of the Tibetan Revolution. Listed among many other movable assets were:

110,328 ounces of gold;  
 5,000,000 *yuan* in silver;  
 20,331 jewels;  
 14,675 garments.

The above items alone represented a value of 98 million *yuan* (roughly 14.4 million Sterling or 41 million U.S. dollars at the then rates).

From his personal landed estates, he derived a net annual income (apart from labour service) of:

500,000 kg. of grain;  
 100,000 kg. in money;  
 30,000 kg. of butter;

175 bolts of *pulo* cloth;  
275 animals.

No one man, of course, could use up all this — hence the constant increase of the wealth attached to the office. But the direct consumption of a Dalai Lama, too, was of no mean order. His *gyasa* (monastic robes) were woven only from the softest wool, shorn from the throats of sheep, so it took great numbers of animals to provide each garment. The butter he ate could not be more than two days old. It was brought from Maizhokunggar County in all weathers, on the backs of serfs, with the containers officially stamped at each stage to certify the speed. Dried mutton for his winter table could come only from the fine Yamdrok Lake sheep. (Kawaguchi wrote of seeing “a place where yaks, sheep and goats are killed for the table of the Dalai Lama. . . . Lhasa is too near his palace . . . for the slaughter. . . . He desires to get his meat without being responsible for the order to kill the animals.”) The utensils he used — even his wash basins — were of gold, plain or studded with gems. Full sets were kept not only in his Potala and Norbu Lingka palaces but in the special apartments maintained for his visits in several big lamaseries.

Not only was the Dalai Lama so rich, but also his ennobled family. Their property (exclusive of his) was calculated as follows:

|              |       |
|--------------|-------|
| Manors       | 27    |
| Pastures     | 30    |
| Serfs        | 6,170 |
| House slaves | 102   |

The successive Dalai Lamas did not cease their conspicuous consumption even in death. Each “body occupied by the incarnation” was buried at stupendous cost to the people. In the Potala, the tomb of the Thirteenth Dalai alone is embellished with 300,000 ounces of gold, plus many jewels. Others were almost as lavish.

The upkeep of the successive Panchen Erdenis in Xigazê paralleled that of the Dalais.

#### 4. EMBALMING THE PUBLIC WEALTH — OR THE HIGH COST OF OBFUSCATION

Throughout Tibet, even more wealth was immobilized in the sheet-gold roof appointments of many religious structures (the Jokhang and the Potala, in Lhasa, the Tashi Lhumpo Temple in Xigazê and others) and the precious materials of their images. In terms of skill and talent practically the entire output of centuries of Tibetan art — the cast images which also took up much of the region's metal production, the paintings and huge tapestries and awnings, which used enough fabrics to clothe the entire population — was immured in places of worship, public or private. Single temple chambers, kept dark and cavernous to induce awe in the supplicant, might contain thousands, tens of thousands, and even in one case 100,000 small figurines — only a fraction of which could be seen in the stray beams of light penetrating from the outside or the weak flicker of the butter lamps. Only now with electric light in the shrines does the eye reveal all they contain. In old Tibet, it has been truly said, the gods far outnumbered the human inhabitants. In no other place had such a proportion of the people's substance, effort and talent been so completely withdrawn from material consumption not only by the toilers who created it but even by the exploiters.

But it served the exploiters just the same, in other ways. For feudalism, as exemplified by its medieval cathedrals in Europe as well as by the analogous structures in Tibet, does not stint itself on what might be called monumental propaganda, stupendous material structures to produce a mental effect — a sense of power in the rulers, and of humble awe in the ruled — for the sake of the continuance of the system.

Educationally, the Potala itself housed the training school for the *tsetrung*, or cadet clerical officials. And the three great lamaseries combined the functions of Eton and Harrow, Oxford and Cambridge in traditional England. The full power of monumental propaganda, in all these places, was used to shape masters for mastery, and the mastered for subjection and it was the people who bore the material cost of the spiritual saddles prepared for their backs.

Those who want to look more closely at the origin, and the historical dialectics, of Tibet's religious-political rule will find a summary elsewhere in this book.<sup>4</sup>

## 5. WAS TIBET'S THEOCRACY "NATIONAL"?

In discussing the religio-political system of Tibet, its apologists stress its national character. This, they contend, was the way of government and life the Tibetans themselves had chosen. So what business had the Chinese revolution to bring in different ideas and institutions?

Undoubtedly, in Tibet, the national and religious elements became very closely welded over the centuries. But no less undeniably, the emergence of clerical-lay rule was inseparable from the history of Tibet as part of the larger entity of China. Both the dual religio-political rule of the Dalai Lama, and under him the local administrative structure of the *kashag* that existed till the 1950's, had been deliberately worked out by China's emperors. They linked the Tibetan feudal ruling class on the periphery with Han feudalism at the centre, in a symbiosis of exploiters of both nationalities. At the same time they had some historically positive significance in helping to unite multinational China, under the conditions of the time, for common statehood and common defence.

Then, in the modern period, came the imperialists' attempt to partition all China, and to attach sections of her feudal ruling class to various foreign powers. One expression of this was the fighting among Han warlords in the 1920's and 1930's. In Tibet, its parallel was the adherence of part (but by no means all) of the local clerical and lay rulers to an imperialist-promoted separatism from China. Again, the phenomena were parts of the same process.

Finally there came the people's revolution in all China, overthrowing the old exploiters, expelling imperialism and uniting the entire multinational country more closely than ever before. But now its unity was no longer, at any level, a linkage between the exploiting classes. In essence it was the unity of the Han working masses,

already coming to power, with those of China's other nationalities. What followed, naturally and inevitably, was the maturing and accomplishment of revolutionary changes in the life of all China's peoples, the Tibetan included.

: In the People's Republic of China, in which the Tibetan people too were awakening, the old clerical-lay regime became the anachronistic last stronghold of local feudal power, a convenient handle for imperialist meddling, an anomaly and, most of all, an obstacle and a danger to the progress of the Tibetan nationality itself. Therefore, it became an inescapable necessity of national and social advance for the Tibetan people, side by side with the other peoples of China, to get rid of it. And this was done after its 1959 rebellion.

## CHAPTER 31

# REFORM IN THE CLOISTERS

Tibet's monasteries, after the events of 1959, were treated in much the same way as its lay lords. Their feudal privileges were abolished. Their serfs were freed and estates distributed. From those that had rebelled, including the three great lamaseries of Lhasa, among which Drepung alone had owned 151 estates and 540 pastures, the land and means of production were confiscated outright. Those that did not rebel were bought out. Among them the Tashi Lhumpo Temple of Xigazê, seat of the Panchen Erdeni, was paid some 9 million *yuan*, the biggest compensation to any non-rebel estate holder, ecclesiastical or civil.

Like the rebel *kashag*, the other big corporate serfowner, the lamaseries lost every attribute of political power. As religious communities they continued to exist, retaining the buildings used for worship and residence.

Internally, however, they underwent revolutionary democratization. Feudal power and personal servitude within lamasery walls was ended, as it had been outside. High lamas who were leading or obdurate rebels were denounced at public meetings and punished like other counter-revolutionaries: their accusers included not only lay serfs but poor lamas as well. Then, with the aid of special reform teams, democratic administrative committees were set up in the lamaseries. They had full powers in routine matters — economy, housing, food

and political study — and in their ranks the poor lamas predominated. But on the ritual side, the *geshi* (doctors of theology) and other holders of clerical office continued to have a directing role.

Lamas and nuns became personally free. No longer could their religious superiors command their labour or movements, or discipline them with prison and whip. Indeed, in Tibet freedom of religion meant largely freedom to get out of compulsory confinement in monastic institutions. It also included the right to remain in cloisters, with a voice in their running for the first time. Many monks, especially young ones, chose to leave and were trained for and given lay jobs. Whether they left or stayed, they enjoyed the voting and other rights of citizens, also for the first time. Some became teachers. Some joined their families in farming. Many, since the lamaseries were Tibet's greatest reserve of unused labour, became workers in Tibet's new industries. Not a few married and set up homes. Some gradually gave up religion; others, though they had retired from monastic life, continued devout.

Naturally the abolition of serfdom and feudal estates brought economic difficulties to the lamaseries; especially the ex-rebel ones which were not compensated. Rebel or not, they could no longer exact corvée labour, or collect tribute. But this was made up for in several ways. Firstly, the lamaseries in 1965 could accept voluntary gifts as before. Secondly, able-bodied monks and nuns could work for their own sustenance on land within monastery precincts, on tracts assigned them for reclamation, or on wage-earning jobs outside. Thirdly, those entrusted with the care and restoration of buildings and other historic relics within lamaseries received government wages. Fourthly, the government subsidized the monks and nuns with basic food and clothing (including monastic robes), and covered all living expenses for those who were old or unable to work.

Thus, not only was there freedom of belief, but monks and laity were assured the continuance and upkeep of places of worship.

Unforgettable to me is a small experience. On my first day in Lhasa in 1965 I saw two aged monks walking in the street. "Let's find out where they are going," I said to my Tibetan companion.

“Just enjoying the cool of the evening like other people,” he replied. “When you were last here they couldn’t have stepped out of the lamasery without the permission of the proctor. Now they come and go as they please.”

A small thing, one would think, but a sign of a very big change.

More changes took place between 1965 and 1976, in the socialist revolution. Below I describe what I learned of the entire process in three major religious institutions — the Jokhang Temple and Drepung lamasery in Lhasa, and at Tashi Lhumpo, the former seat of the Panchen in Xigazê.

## THE JOKHANG MINUS THE *KASHAG*

Lhasa’s gold-roofed 7th-century Jokhang Temple to Tibet’s Buddhists surpassed the Potala in religious significance. If the Potala was the palace, the Jokhang was the metropolitan cathedral and the goal of all pilgrimages. It contained the great Jo, the most prestigious image of Buddha in Tibet (originally brought by the Han princess, Wencheng, when she married Tibet’s founder-king Songtsan Gambo), the very sight of which was supposed to confer merit in the future life. Around the Jokhang, the devout made their thousand-fold repeated prostrations. Nonetheless, like the Potala, it was not a place purely devotional — but part and parcel of the combined clerical-lay power that kept the people in feudal chains.

For two centuries, one of its wings had been occupied by the *kashag*, or local government. There in 1955 we had been received and banqueted by Surkhang and other *kalons* (local ministers), who in a few years would be rebels. Ten years later, this whole regime was no more. And the seat of local state power had moved elsewhere, to the spacious new Autonomous Region Government building, which has no religious function.

In 1965, the *kashag*’s old chambers were occupied by the Jokhang Temple’s democratic administrative committee. There, its chairman,

Tsuchen Samten, once an ordinary lama, told us more of its background and its transformation.

"The *kashag*," he said, "had its finger in every aspect of our religious life. Layers of officials checked and re-checked all donations by pilgrims. Often embezzlers themselves, they were sure the temple lamas were, too. We lower monks had no freedom. Neither did the rank-and-file worshippers. They had to queue up and observe all sorts of queer rules with no religious meaning. For example, they couldn't enter if their plaits were not hanging down, or if they wore anything but Tibetan clothes made of Tibetan materials. But the aristocrats never stood in line, and marched straight in wearing imported cloths. Who could stop them?"

"Right in this holy place, the *kashag* housed its tax departments, which weighed so heavily on the people. It had a torture chamber. In this room where we are sitting, it plotted rebellion and the rebel *Mimang* ("People's Conference") was born. Many of the reactionary leaflets and rumours in the period from 1951 to 1959 originated from here.

"In the rebellion, the Jokhang was a command post. Lamas were ordered to put on lay clothes and fight. The temple was fortified. It was the starting place for the attempt to burn the *Tibet Daily* newspaper buildings, and the attacks on the Foreign Affairs Bureau, Construction Bureau and People's Hospital."

After the rebellion was crushed, Tsuchen Samten continued, "speak bitterness" meetings were held. At them, the poor lamas, citing their own experience, tore the mask of piety and mercy off some diehard high clerics. Then the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region, in consultation with the poor monks, adopted principles for the inner administration of the lamaseries and temples. Accordingly, the Jokhang elected its democratic administration, consisting mainly of poor lamas but including also patriotic upper clergy. Among its responsibilities were the preservation of the buildings and their treasures, running the temple's inner life, its economy and sanitation, and special festival events. Damage suffered by the Jokhang during the revolt was repaired with government aid.

The main damage was done by the rebels. All the responsibility

for it was theirs. The PLA, we were told more than once in Lhasa, held its artillery fire rather than smash such historic places as the Jokhang and Potala, even though its restraint cost the lives of some of its own men. If not for this, both monks and laymen said, the city today would be without many of its main monuments, which the reactionaries had picked as military strongholds. The Tibetan serf-owners, in fact, had never spared such places in their own feuds. Living Buddha Jaltsolin, who was former scripture reader to the Dalai but did not join the rebels, recalled that Sera lamasery was burned down four times, and the Jokhang and Drepung lamasery, among other sites, were repeatedly damaged by fire and looting in the course of past internal strife among ruling-class cliques.

“Poor lamas today have drawn a clear line between themselves and the enemy,” said Tsuchen Samten. “They stand with the people for the building of a new, socialist Tibet.”

### DREPUNG DEMOCRATIZED: 1965

Another visit was to Drepung, Tibet's biggest lamasery. A white stone-built city occupying an entire mountainside, with an authorized strength of 7,777 lamas (actually at times exceeding 10,000) it used to be the largest monastic institution in the world. It owned 151 agricultural manors and 540 pastures. Toiling for it were 20,000 serfs, who also owed it 140,000 tons of grain and 10 million *yuan* (then over U.S. \$ 5 million) in accumulated debt. Drepung was a fortress of the serfowner rebellion. Afterwards, it surrendered over 3,000 rifles and other firearms. As with all rebel units, its estates were confiscated.

With a history of 550 years, Drepung had long been an essential organ of the Tibetan clerical-aristocratic regime. Its governing Dajia Council was led by the *chbenpos* (ecclesiastical chancellors) designated by the *kashag*. Its two “Iron Bar Lamas” (proctors, or clerical chiefs of police) actually ruled Lhasa for a month each year. They were so important that their appointment had to be confirmed by the Dalai himself. The huge monastery was divided into four *djatsang*, or colleges, in which lamas from all over Tibet, from other Tibetan-in-

habited parts of China and from as far as Nepal, Bhutan, Ladakh, Mongolia and Siberia, were grouped by areas of origin. Under the colleges were 39 *kbenchung*, or halls, with members from smaller territorial units within the large ones, something like local guilds of lamas.

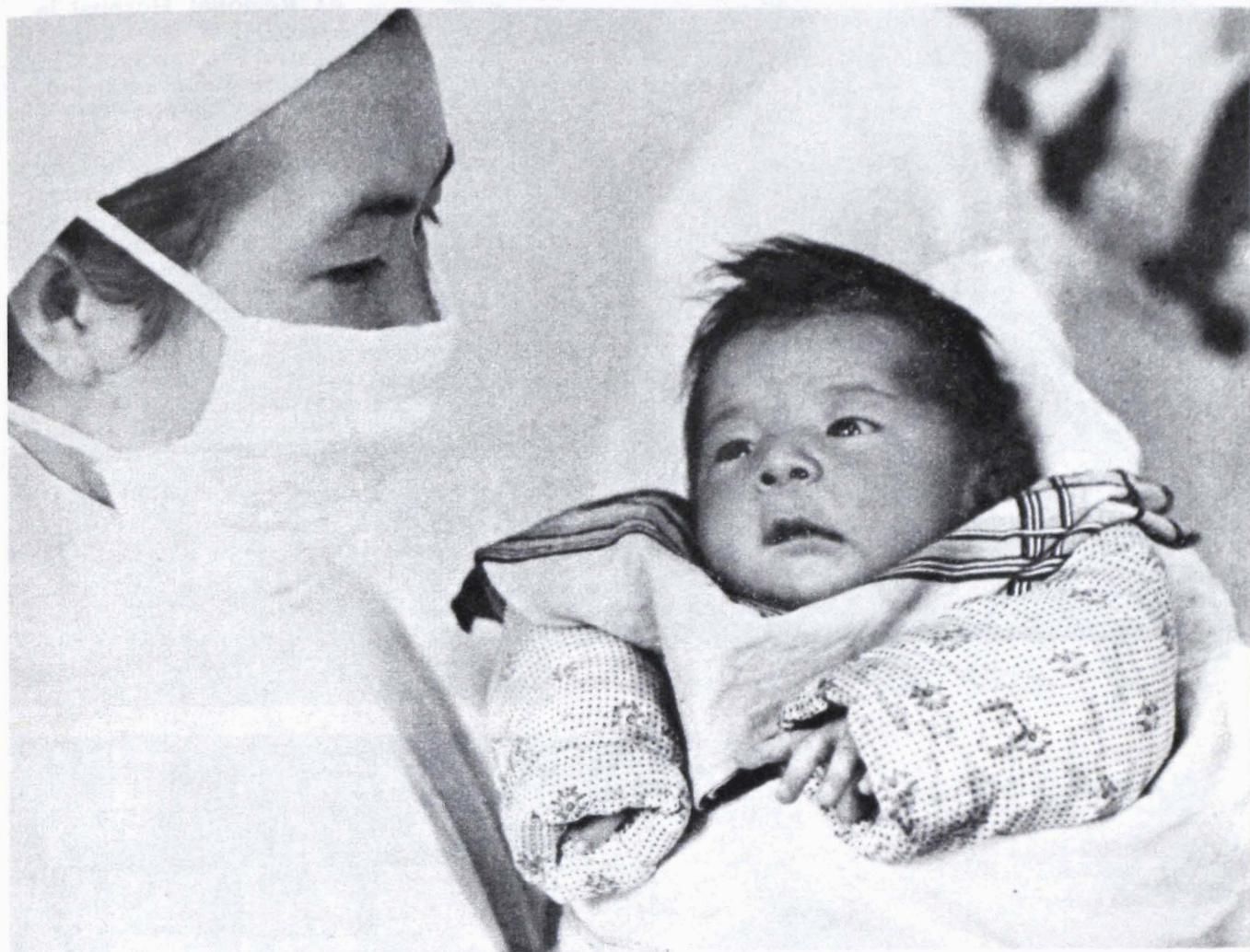
The wealth and pomp of power, which had always characterized Drepung, were both still in full evidence when I first saw it in 1955. The poverty and oppression that were their other side could not be probed then by a visitor for the old rulers still barred the way. But there was external evidence in the hordes of small, ragged boy novices who scurried away to huddle in doorways as our richly-robed high lama hosts escorted us along the flag-stoned paths, and in the apprehensive over-the-shoulder looks of ragged older monks as they carefully got out of our way. In 1965, by contrast, we were met by the democratic administration committee, composed of the former poor lamas, except for one *geshi*, or doctor of theology. From their stories and from what we were ourselves now able to see, we were able to learn much of the past.

Like other major lamaseries, Drepung kept a special apartment for the Dalai Lama. It is still preserved as it was,<sup>1</sup> carpeted and tapestried, with an abundance of gold and other valuables. Drepung's own high dignitaries, too, lived in luxury and ease. A step farther down were some lesser, but still well-appointed, habitations. But the vast majority of monks lived in filthy stalls, open in all weathers, in which even cattle would soon sicken. Kawaguchi decades earlier had written, "The priests of the higher class live very comfortably . . . build their own villas . . . keep from five or six to 70 or 80 servants. . . . The lower class of priests on the contrary live pitifully . . . no words can half describe their poor conditions. . . ." "Here I spent most of my life," said old Dorje Wangchuk, now a member of the democratic administration, pointing to one dark hole.

Before the democratic reform, he told us, not one of the present committeemen had ever set foot in Drepung's main reception room, where we had tea during our tour.

In 1965, Drepung had only 715 lamas in residence, 512 of them formerly of the poor class, and every one of them now decently housed. A new thing was electric light for all. "You can't know how

## HEALTH AND MEDICINE



Babies in Tibet, once born in cow-byres, are now well looked after medically. Lhasa Regional Hospital. 1965.



Xigazê Prefectural Hospital, 1976.



At Regional Hospital in Lhasa, 1979. Do Lhadrub (centre) had cancerous left shoulder removed and his arm was re-attached in Tibet's first such operation. Two months later the arm was functioning and could raise a 3 kg. weight. On Lhadrub's left is the Tibetan chief surgeon of the hospital, Dr. Ragya Tsering.

In the hospital of traditional Tibetan medicine in Lhasa, senior physician Thupten Tsering (with beard) studies ancient prescription with Dorje Phuntso, chief pharmacologist, 1979.



## RELIGION



Pilgrim with two prayer wheels in a Lhasa street.



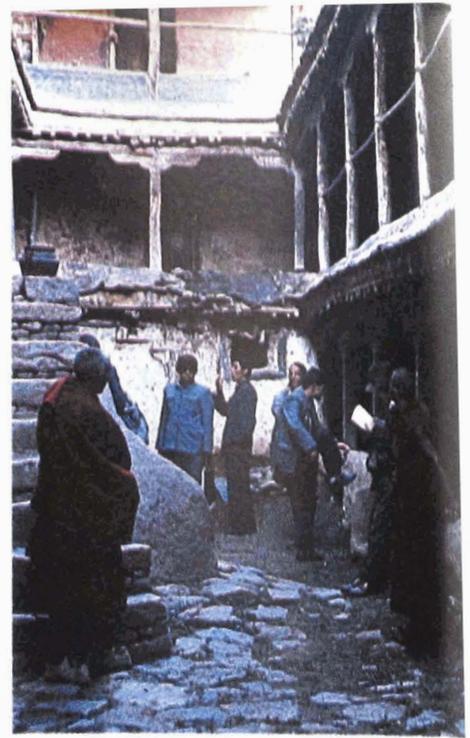
Boy acolytes at the Tashi Lhumpo Temple in Xigazê. (upper right)



In 1976, Urgyan, former boy monk of Tashi Lhumpo had become a skilled worker and production leader in the Xigazê Farm Machinery Plant.

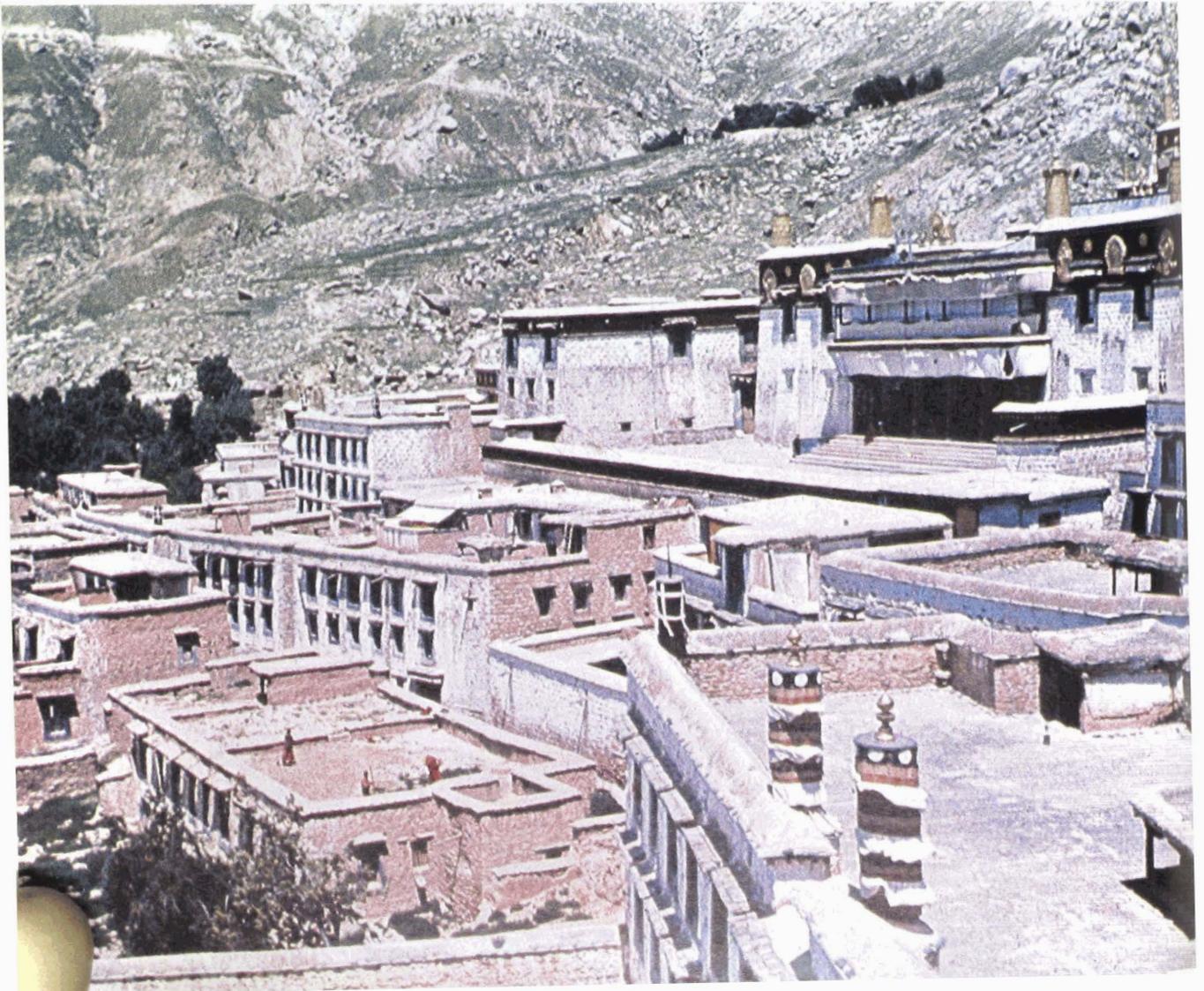


In the monasteries, too, class lines were sharp. Here is where the Dalai lived when he came to Drepung.



And here is where the poor lamas lived, in quarters like cattle stalls open to Tibet's severe weather.

A part of Drepung, once the largest monastery in the world.



## PART OF MULTINATIONAL CHINA



King Songtsan Gambo, unifier and national hero of Tibet.



Tang dynasty, 618-907: Princess Wencheng, married to King Songtsan Gambo in the year 641.

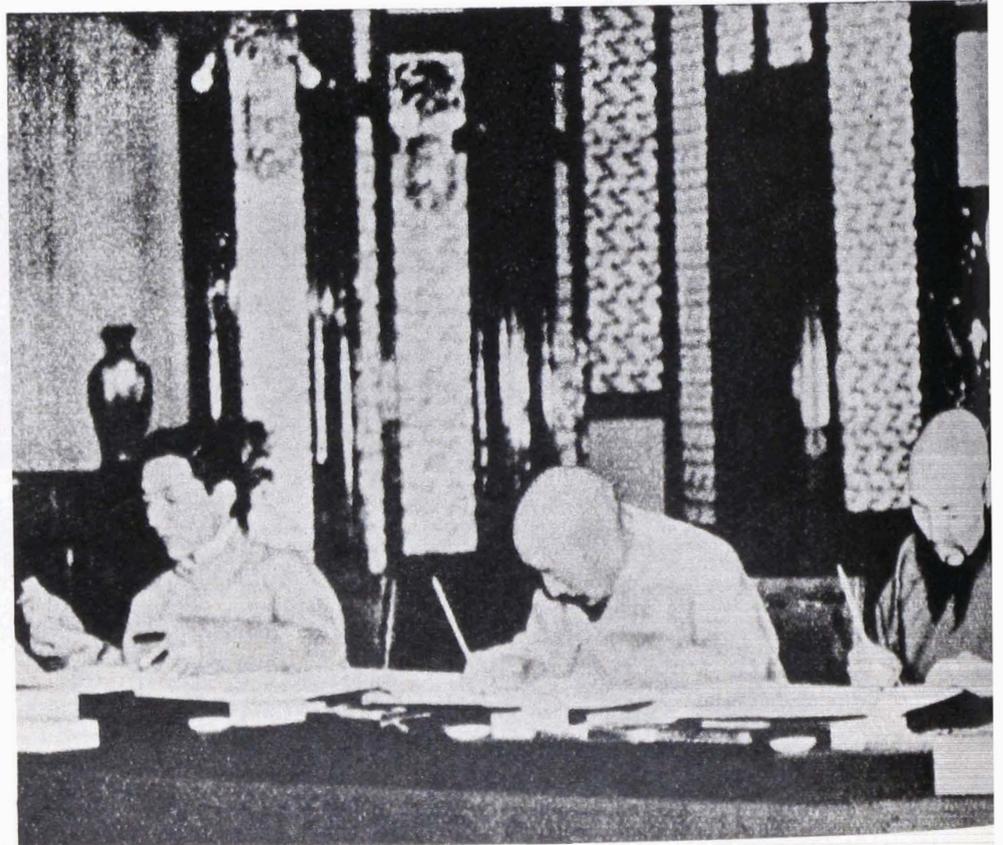


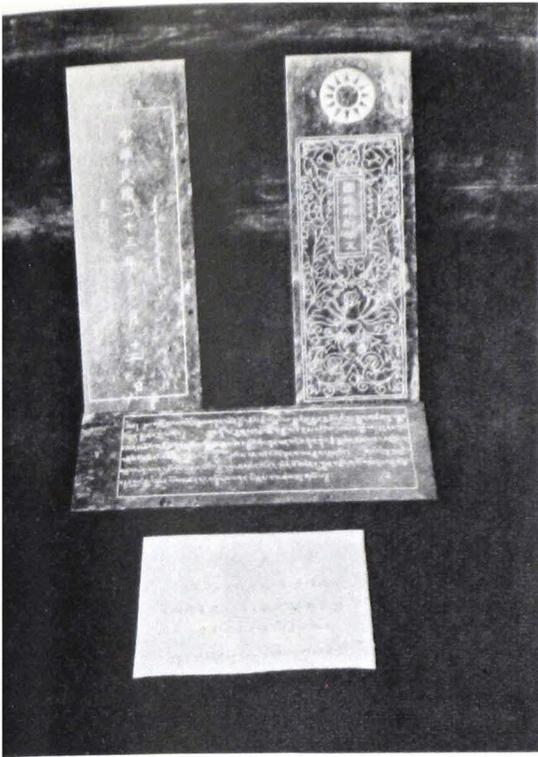
Ming dynasty, 1368-1644: Patent of the year 1418 appointing a Tibetan regional administrator with the title of "Wise and Powerful General".



Qing dynasty, 1644-1911:  
Mural in the Potala Palace  
shows Shunzhi, the first Qing  
emperor, granting an audi-  
ence to Dalai Lama V in 1652.

Signing the “Agreement of the Central People’s Government and the Local  
Government for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet” on May 23, 1951.





Bilingual document of the Kuomintang regime, dated 1934, conferring posthumous title on the Thirteenth Dalai Lama.



Sonan Biandju, a veteran of the defence of Gyantzê Fort against the British Younghusband expedition in 1904—photographed by author in 1955.





**Celebrating the 30th anniversary of the peaceful liberation of Tibet, Lhasa, 1981.**

much this means to us," said Dorje Wangchuk. "In the past, as soon as it was night, we were in pitch darkness. The high lamas had bright pressure-lamps brought from India. But we were allowed no light at all, and not even a wick in a bit of oil."

Most of Drepung's poor lamas had come involuntarily, and been treated as slaves. All bore scars from beatings. Many grew from boys to bent greybeards without even learning to read and write Tibetan.

"Our lives and bodies are safe now," one poor monk said. "Not like before, when there were frequent murders here, wild fights in which you could be killed even if you weren't in the original quarrel, and dungeons and whippings." Besides oppression and danger there had been vexing humiliations. "We lower monks weren't allowed to grow potted flowers on pain of beating," said a gentle oldster who was now cultivating fine dahlias which, like most Lhasans, he loved.

Chomei Rindzin, a wiry, keen-faced committeeman of 38, spoke of the products of the monks' collective labour. He was happy we had noticed that the brambly, weedy path of ten years ago had been replaced by a good, tree-lined road. "We built that ourselves," he said. He also told us that 60 hectares of land which Drepung's present population of monks had reclaimed, were yielding 60 tons of grain a year — about a third of what they consumed. The state provided another 125 tons of grain, plus clothing, butter and tea for each monk. More than 400 monks were earning wages, working part-time in Lhasa's urban construction. "Even the aged, who could just live on their pensions, want to do something for self-support," remarked Chomei Rindzin. "They say, 'Food you grow yourself tastes sweeter, and labour keeps you in better health.'" The farmer-lamas had their own mutual-aid team. They were paid, as in lay teams, by work-points converted into produce.

Of the hundreds of boy monks, who had once thronged Drepung and included even tiny tots, only 42 were left in 1965 — the youngest being 11 years old. They were mostly orphans, with no families to return to. A work-and-study primary school was run for them in the monastery. It taught the Tibetan language, arithmetic, and general and political knowledge.

The government had allotted 40,000 *yuan* for repairs to the lamasery from 1959 to 1965.

### DREPUNG IN 1976

Revisited eleven years later, Drepung had undergone another big change.

The number of monks had fallen to 306<sup>2</sup> (250 of them former poor monks). But this small community was still busy and alive.

In productive organization, it had passed over from a loose mutual aid team to an essentially self-supporting socialist-type collective with many features of a commune. Though the average age of the lamas was now over 45, over 200 took some part in agriculture and sideline occupations. They grew enough barley, wheat, peas and hothouse vegetables for their own needs; pastured 100 yaks and 1,000 sheep, and raised some pigs and chickens. They ran three water-powered flour mills, a blacksmith shop and a tailoring group. We were treated to crisp, sweet apples from their young orchard of 10,000 trees, the first of which had begun to yield in 1967. The fruit not only enriched their diet but earned funds. Talking of all this, they sounded more like enthusiastic farmers than monks.

Per capita personal income in the lamasery in the 1975 annual distribution averaged 450 *yuan*, four times what it had been in 1965 when the state had still been covering many of their needs with relief grants.

A few monks worked on salary from the governmental committee charged with the preservation of cultural monuments — Drepung having been so designated. Their job was maintenance and restoration for which the government provided 20,000 *yuan* a year.

Monks too old or ill for work were wholly supported by the state, some were still spending their days in prayer. But the monastery's rules no longer compelled this. Within its walls, as in Tibetan society in general, there was freedom to observe or not to observe, to believe or not. As for visitors from outside, some still came to pray, and many others for class education or as sightseers. The

lamasery had ceased to solicit contributions. In fact, it did not accept them if offered — its income from labour and from state grants covered all needs. (In subsequent years, donations from the devout were again accepted as a result of the correction of ultra-Left attitudes. But of course contributions could not be compelled directly or indirectly, as in the days of the old feudal set-up of Tibet.)

While the great majority of the monk inmates were still celibate a dozen or so had married; they were now as free to do so as those who had become laymen. "In the old days, many of the high lamas had unofficial wives and concubines, besides their goings-on with women they brought into their quarters," one man told us. "But we poor lamas were harshly punished, even on the rumour of having anything to do with women. Now all that's over."

"Just as Drepung was the biggest lamasery in Tibet," Champa Lieso told us, "the former society of Tibet showed one of its cruellest faces here. The rich lamas talked much of self-denial. But, in fact, when a yak was killed for meat, they ate it all, we poor lamas didn't see a hair. They exploited and oppressed, had power and women. We were menials, forced to be monks by the old law or family poverty. They talked a lot about compassion. But for us they had torture chambers and a prison and flogging. The whipping post was in front of one of the main prayer halls."

Soon afterwards, he showed us the post-hole, and the depressions gouged out in the flagstones where the victims had to place their feet. And next to it what had been the monastic jail.

Drepung, Champa Lieso said, was the lamasery that had owned the most serfs, and the main one joining the serfowners' rebellion. All monks from 18 to 60 were mobilized to fight for the preservation of feudal rule. There were preachments that to kill a PLA soldier would win as much merit in heaven as building a votive dagoba.

"In 1959, when the rebellion was put down, we poor lamas became masters here.<sup>3</sup> After political liberation, we began to be useful people, producers. Drepung is no longer a parasite. Now it is not only self-sufficient but contributes something to socialism. We poor monks had no rights at all. Now we have all those of the rest of the working people."

But the class struggle did not end in 1959. Champa Lieso described how on September 27, 1965, very soon after the Tibet Autonomous Region was inaugurated, a diehard high lama had "prophesied" that foreign nations would send troops to restore the old order in Tibet. A young and politically progressive lama challenged and exposed him. In revenge, he killed the latter. "When such reactionaries commit crimes, we hold struggle meetings against them and exercise the proletarian dictatorship over them," said Champa Lieso.

He spoke from deep personal feeling. His own father had been a serf of Drepung who, after an attempt at escape, had been flogged till his flesh hung in tatters. He himself, at eight, had been given away as a child monk, and worked like a slave until 1959, when in his twenties.

Champa Lieso also described the theoretical study classes in Marxism, Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought set up in the lamasery. They had started with only 10 members, most of them poor lamas but one or two with Buddhist doctoral (*geshi*) status. From this core they spread to greater numbers. "The main emphasis is to understand class exploitation and class power, and to make sure the old oppression never returns. For us poor lamas that's as vital as for the workers, peasants and herdsmen."

What were the thousands of lamas who had left Drepung doing now, we asked.

Many, he replied, had gone into industry. There were 60 in the Lhasa Cement Plant alone, including Sanggye Lhuntse and Dorje Wangdui, known throughout Lhasa as outstanding model workers. Others had become cadres. One, Gesang Tomei, was Party Secretary of Lhasa's biggest department store.

## TASHI LHUMPO REVISITED

At the giant Tashi Lhumpo Temple in Xigazê, traditional seat of the Panchen Erdeni, we saw a similar transformation. Gold-pinnacled Tashi Lhumpo was built in 1447. It has 300,000 square metres of floor space, and housed, at its height, some 4,000 lamas, besides con-

trolling another 9,000 in its more than 50 branches. It once ruled over five counties and owned 68 estates and 62 pastures, with some 33,000 serf households (over 160,000 people). This was some three-fifths of the entire population, before 1959, of present-day Xigazê Prefecture.

Tashi Lhumpo had a vast bureaucratic machine — 20 different offices to exact forced labour, collect taxes, lend out money at usurious rates and conduct other exploitation. It squeezed out of the people in tribute about 3,000 tons of grain and 124 tons of butter each year.

Its poor lamas were exploited and oppressed no less than its serfs. Each had seven or eight kinds of labour to perform and 300 rules to observe. If they did not please the upper lamas they were brutally beaten. As recently as 1958, one of them, Udhup Mudhup, was given 5,000 lashes, a thousand at a time for “offences against religion” (in fact insubordination toward his superiors). Then, half alive, he was carried off into exile.

The old oppression did not abate between the entry of the PLA in 1951 and the suppression of the serfowner revolt in 1959. One factor was the fear of the ruling class that the people might “get out of hand”. Another reason, specific to the Xigazê area, was heightened exploitation after the return of monastic and lay officials who had been deprived of their revenues and driven into Qinghai Province by the Thirteenth Dalai, and who wanted to make up for the 30 years of income they had lost.

Because the Panchen Erdeni and his group had not taken up an open part in the Dalai’s 1959 rebellion, their local power lasted longer, and the democratic reform in Tashi Lhumpo Temple came later than in Lhasa.

Before the reform, monks planted no crops and were forbidden to marry, Ngawang Nyima, chairman of the committee, told us in 1976. “Many of us had always wanted to live productive and normal lives. But we weren’t allowed to. If a poor monk did even a bit of farm work when visiting his peasant relatives, he was liable to punishment on his return. If you helped your own father or brother to plough, it had to be on the sly — when no one was looking.

“In the reform, the number of Tashi Lhumpo’s monks fell from

4,000 to 1,980, through voluntary withdrawals under the policy of religious freedom. Those that remained opened up some 20 hectares of waste land and grew over 15 tons of grain that same year. We also bought, for our own use and sustenance, 11 yaks, 55 draught oxen, 22 mules and horses and 298 sheep."

The poor began to live instead of just exist. In the feudal past, each monk was supposed to get one *khal* (14 kilogrammes) of grain each month, but in fact the poor only got nine kilos mixed with impurities, while the rich got up to 100 kilos or more. In money, the poor received six or seven *yuan* a year, and the higher-ups ten, twenty or even a hundred times as much, depending on rank. One type of exploitation was through forced loans — at interest so high that several times the principal sometimes had to be repaid. Also there were innumerable prohibitions — against drinking wine, eating eggs or onions, and of course consorting with women — all of which the rich could disregard with impunity while the poor caught in violations were punished by fines and beatings. Sometimes there was excommunication as well, and exile to which the victim was ridden, as a token of disgrace, mounted backwards on a yak. Here again, what I was told confirmed the old accounts of Kawaguchi (which I did not read till later.) "Priest nobles are generally supposed to have wives, though not legally married to them; most of them keep such women somewhere. He also wrote of much high-lama drinking, especially at Tashi Lhumpo. One law for the lowly, another for the mighty."

After the democratic reform the poor lamas received from the state each month 13 kilogrammes of grain, a kilo of butter, some tea and subsidiary foods and four *yuan* in cash. From 1961 to 1973, such grants totalled 370 tons of grain and 1,500,000 *yuan*.

In 1973 Tashi Lhumpo's monks began to run their economy like a commune. By 1974, on the six farms and one pasture-ground allotted to them, they were producing the grain they ate, as well as butter and other milk products. "We were happy not only because we were better off, but because we had lightened the people's burden," they told us.

In that year, tilling 110 hectares of land, they reaped 216 tons of grain, and earned 156,000 *yuan* from side occupations. The latter

included a small iron works, noodle factory, fruit orchard, four hot-houses for vegetables, and income from carpentry and building work. The average food grain distribution per monk was 249 kilos and of money 214 *yuan* (the highest was 275 kilos and 284 *yuan*, and the lowest 230 kilos and 165 *yuan*). Individual cash income did not include the four *yuan* a month all lamas were still granted by the state. One monk, impoverished all his life, had never before seen such a sum as in 1973 was handed to him on the principle of "to each according to his labour". He could not believe he had actually earned it and asked the accountant to check if there had been a mistake.

Moreover, the lamas have become interested in agricultural science. In 1976, each of their production teams had its experimental group. These had produced new seed-strains suited to their land, and some good results with vegetables, apples, dates, walnuts and grapes.

Tashi Lhumpo had acquired two regular and three small tractors, some diesel-powered pumps and other farm machines. The monks bought these with the proceeds of their own labour. The state, in addition, had given them two trucks, a small flour mill, a fodder cutter and a film projector, which they operated themselves.

The 104 aged monks who could not work were receiving support. Since Tashi Lhumpo, too, is a protected site, 18 others were on state salary as curators and restorers. We saw some of them expertly repairing or regilding weathered religious statues.

Among the united front figures, Champa Tseley recognized as an "incarnated" Living Buddha at the age of seven (he was now 37) was a skilled painter and restorer of faded murals. He was also a member of the Xigazê Prefectural Committee on Religion, which conducted studies of scriptural texts. "At the time of the democratic reform," he told us, "I had doubts and worries. Now I realize that the Constitution, on freedom to believe or not to do so, means just what it says. Those who want to stay in our temple can do so. Those who want to leave can do that. On the basis of common political direction, non-believers and believers can unite."

Also part of the united front at Tashi Lhumpo was Wangdai Trupa, in his late forties, a lama since the age of eight, and a member

of the Democratic Management Committee. A graduate scriptural scholar (*geshi*) he worked on preservation and restoration.

Here, as at Drepung, we asked what had happened to the young lamas who had joined in lay life. The answer was: 50 per cent were peasants, and 40 per cent workers and the rest in other occupations. We met some of the workers later that same afternoon in the Xigazê Agricultural Machinery Plant just over the wall from Tashi Lhumpo, (as described elsewhere in this book). An ex-lama from the temple, Nyima Trashi, was head of a famous bridge-construction team in Tibet.

Also, at Drepung, some ex-monks had become cadres. One was the vice-director of the Xigazê Prefectural Bureau of Trade.

### POSTSCRIPT: RELIGION IN 1979

In 1979, temples and monasteries in Lhasa were open for worship. About 4,000 people a day, it was reported, came there not only from the city and region but from Tibetan areas in other provinces. This did not mean that all who came did so to pray. There were also the historically-minded, and the curious.

It was strongly stated that, under the influence of the ultra-Left ideas pushed by the "gang of four", there had been violations of the Party's policies concerning religion, particularly in the late 1960's and early 1970's. In one of the worst, Red Guards had wrecked the third largest of the great lamaseries around Lhasa — Ganden — established by Tsong Kha-pa, founder of the Yellow Sect. (It should be noted, however, that this vandal act of wrong-headed ultra-Leftism was not one by Hans as opposed to Tibetans, as Tibetan Red Guards were equally active in the waves then whipped up country-wide.) Public symbols of faith, such as prayer wheels, had disappeared from the hands of older people in the streets, who had felt it prejudicial to use them.

In 1979, some prayer wheels were spinning again. Persons so inclined were doing the ritual circuit around the Jokhang, in a few cases even the old pious prostrations. Both practices, however, were

much rarer than in the early 1960's. Since that time science had gained much real ground over religion in the minds of Tibetans, particularly the young.

The main halls of the Ganden lamasery, by 1980, were being restored with a special fund of 500,000 *yuan* allocated from Beijing.

In the opinion of recent arrivals from Lhasa, what was happening was not a new surge of faith but an unworried coming into the open of what had been there all along. In the previous period, a believer who did not take his prayer wheel outdoors might have fingered a rosary, instead, within his sleeve. And a circuit pilgrim would walk around the Parkor as though "taking a stroll".

Tibetan Communists believed science would win its victories over blind faith more quickly and genuinely by reasoning than by any form of pressure. The latter could only reinforce religion among those who had not yet thought their own way out of it. It was a different matter if religion was used as a cloak for anti-socialist assaults, political or economic. Those would be fought, in whatever guise.

Infringement of the right of religious belief is contrary to China's Constitution. It is now, moreover, specifically punishable under Article 147 of China's Criminal Law, which came into force on January 1, 1980, and stipulates: "A state functionary who unlawfully deprives a citizen of his legitimate freedom of religious belief or violates the customs and folkways of a minority nationality, to a serious degree, shall be sentenced to imprisonment for not more than two years, or to detention." Not condoned, either, are attacks on the right not to believe. A wall poster in Lhasa early in 1979 declared, "Whoever doesn't believe in Buddhism is a class enemy." It was not removed but left where it was, for discussion and comment by the people. The great majority condemned it as provocative and divisive.

While to hold a religious faith is a right of the citizens, it is not compatible with membership in the Communist Party, in which materialism is a basic tenet. The Party advocates unity of believers and unbelievers in the cause of socialism and progress. But it does not mix two world-views in its own ranks.



## FACTS FROM HISTORY

Here, for the reader interested in more detail, are further facts on the history of Tibet's political and administrative ties with the rest of China and related developments — cultural, economic and on the international scene.

### TANG DYNASTY, 618-907 A.D.

Contacts and exchanges between the Han and Tibetan nationalities, and between their ancestors, antedate written history. Neolithic relics found in Tibet show the extension there, even in those early times, of some elements of the culture of the Yellow River basin. So far as political links are concerned, there are fairly detailed records from the Tang Dynasty on.

In 641, the Tang Emperor Tai Zong granted a princess of the imperial house named Wencheng as wife to the unifier of the hitherto separate tribes of Tibet, King Songtsan Gambo. The latter received the Tang titles of Imperial Son-in-Law (*fu-ma-du-wei*) and "Prince of the Western Ocean".

The political tie cemented the older economic and cultural links. Wencheng's huge bridal caravan brought not only silks and other manufactures, but books, scholars and artisans: woodworkers, masons, stone-carvers and others. Many of the tools and techniques they introduced took root in Tibet, and some are still used there.

Built under Songtsan Gambo were a palace on the Tang model

and the still-standing Jokhang Temple which laid the basis for ceremonial Tibetan architecture, culminating in such magnificent edifices as Lhasa's Potala and the Tashi Lhumpo lamasery in Xigazê. In this style, the main structures and distinctive windows are indigenous,<sup>1</sup> while the curved-eaved roofs are of the Han type.

This combination testifies to long and fruitful collaboration between Tibetan and Han craftsmen. It was evident in the building of the first Potala Palace in Tang times, and again, more than a thousand years later, in the erection of the Potala as it stands today — for which, in the 17th century, the Emperor Kangxi sent 114 master-builders from Beijing. Conversely, Tibetan architectural features can be seen in lamaist temples in Beijing, Chengde and other places in interior China.

Also recorded in Tibet's annals as having been introduced from interior China in Tang times were water-turned grain mills, the distillation of alcoholic spirits, raising of silkworms, the making of paper and ink, and the cultivation of some crops. Economic and technological borrowings are reflected in Han words absorbed into the Tibetan language — including the names for carpenter, mason, various builders' tools, and certain foods and household utensils such as the *caidao* (kitchen chopper). The Tibetan word for tea, *dza*, preserves the Tang pronunciation. Reciprocally from the Tibetans to the Hans came skills like the building of pre-industrial suspension and cantilever bridges, the preparation and use of some medicines and, in the arts, some dances.

The major barter trade between the Han and Tibetan areas — of tea for horses — likewise grew in the Tang era with fixed markets established. The city of Chengdu in Sichuan began to devote a special branch of its silk industry to fabrics for Tibet. These it still provides today, 1,300 years afterwards.

In education, Songtsan Gambo sent young nobles to study in the Tang capital (Chang'an, now Xi'an) and invited Han teachers to Tibet. In every day life, Tibetans still wear Tang-style gowns, draped in the original way. Until the 1950's male aristocrats dressed their hair in a top-knot,<sup>2</sup> also of Tang origin. In the organization of his armies,

recorded in Tang annals as numbering hundreds of thousands, he also borrowed from the Tang.

Buddhism came into Tibet from the Tang realm, as well as from India and Nepal. The oldest and most revered statue of Buddha in the region, still standing in the Jokhang, was brought by the Princess Wencheng.

Though there were military conflicts in the interim, relations were further cemented by the marriage of another Tang princess, Jincheng, to the Tibetan King Tride Tsugten in the year 710. She, too, besides religious and court objects, brought skilled workers with their equipment, musical instruments (displayed to our own day in the Jokhang) and medical books, and diagnostic and curative techniques (including acupuncture). In Tibetan medicine — which also contains Indian elements besides its indigenous core — many old Han terms continue to be used, much like Latin ones in the West.

In 823 a formal pact was concluded between the Tang emperor and the Tibetan King Ralpachen, therein referred to respectively as “Uncle and Nephew”, “who have conferred and agreed that their governments be as one and there be great harmony”. It was inscribed in Han and Tibetan on a memorial, which still stands in front of the Jokhang. That this stone was never tampered with, moved or defaced during the succeeding turbulent centuries is an impressive proof of the durability of the ties between the two nationalities.

Altogether in the Tang period, some two hundred missions are said to have travelled to and from Tibet, i.e. almost annually in the 213 years from 634, soon after the Tibetan kingdom was founded, to 846 when it broke up, and eight treaties were signed.

Despite intervening periods of warfare, largely over control of key points on the old Silk Road in modern Gansu and Xinjiang — in one of which Tibetan troops even broke into the Tang capital at Chang’an (Xi’an) and held it for 12 days in the year 763 — friendly contacts were always resumed and grew progressively closer.

Though the marriage of Songtsan Gambo and Wencheng was a ruling class link, it has ever since been lauded in Tibetan popular tales, theatricals and paintings. Along with the reverent preservation

of the "Uncle and Nephew" monument, this is not just a matter of honouring rulers, it reflects folk feeling about the importance and mutual benefits of unity between the two nationalities.

Even such an imperialist figure as Charles Bell, engaged for much of his life in striving to separate Tibet from the rest of China, and to rewrite its history in this spirit, could not help recording the depth of those early links. We also quote on page 466, his relevant comments.

### SONG (SUNG) DYNASTY, 960-1279

By the time of the Song Dynasty, the Tibetan kingdom had broken up. The Song emperors received tribute from, and extended protection to, some of the contending factions and tribes, appointed a number of their leaders as governors in their own regions, or gave them high posts at court. In the year 1060, further tea-horse markets were established in Shaanxi, Qinghai and Sichuan provinces. In 1155, through Ya'an in Sichuan alone, 13,000 horses were exchanged for tea, silks, etc. in a single year. Some eight hundred years later Ya'an was to become the starting point of the Sichuan-Tibet motor highway built after the liberation,<sup>3</sup> which follows the old caravan route.

It is thus untrue to say, as some foreign writers have, that the connection between Tibet and the rest of China lapsed under the Song. In fact, it continued and in some respects grew. The picture was to some extent obscured by protracted disunity both in Tibet (feudally fragmented for some three centuries after the downfall of slavery-based kingdom in 842) and in inner China (where in the latter half of the Song period, the northern and southern provinces came under different rulers and the dynasty itself had to shift its capital from the Yellow River city of Kaifeng to Hangzhou, south of the Changjiang (Yangtze River). In the long sweep of all China's history, however, this was merely one of the interludes of disruption followed by enhanced unity — which always reasserted itself as the mainstream.

## YUAN (MONGOL) DYNASTY, 1271-1368

Indeed, the unification of the whole of multinational China, north and south, including Tibet, quickly followed in the Yuan Dynasty, whose rulers were of the Mongol nationality.

Even before his enthronement, as the first Yuan emperor, Kublai Khan had brought Tibet under his rule. In 1260, he appointed Phagspa, a high cleric of the Sakya (Gray) Sect, as religious teacher to the Mongols, who were then adopting Lamaism. Then in 1275 Kublai made Phagspa the first priest-ruler of Tibet, governing 130,000 households under the imperial authority. The seal of office then conferred on this Tibetan prelate as "Great Treasure Divine King" — survives in the collection of Tibetan antiquities in the Norbu Lingka or Summer Palace in Lhasa.

Senior officials in Tibet were also appointed by Beijing. The region was administratively divided and run on the general Yuan system. Imperial garrisons were installed at key points. The monetary system of the Yuan Dynasty was introduced. Its unit, the silver ingot of standard weight, continued in use there for centuries. Recently found in Tibet, and displayed in Lhasa, too, are paper currency notes which circulated throughout China in the Yuan period. Under Yuan rule, three censuses were taken in Tibet, in 1260, 1268 and 1287. The Yuan systems of official promotions, rewards and punishments, laws and decrees were applied. In other words, there was full merger into Yuan Dynasty China.

Border security in those days was emerging as a factor for unity. In 1205, Ikhtiyar-ud-din, the Muslim conqueror of Bengal who had crushed the hitherto dominant Buddhist faith there, sent 10,000 horsemen over the Himalayas into Tibet. The Tibetans, using scorched-earth tactics, harried and defeated them till only a hundred survived. In 1337-38 Mohammed Tughlag of Mogul-ruled India launched an invasion ten times greater — with 100,000 men — which was likewise destroyed. These demonstrated threats to their region and faith caused the Tibetans to prize all the more their association with China's other nationalities. And it was equally valuable to the latter, as Mo-

ammed Tughlag's expedition had as its objective not only Tibet but through it a "gateway" to all China.<sup>4</sup>

### MING DYNASTY, 1368-1644

The first emperor of the next dynasty, the Ming, whose rulers were Hans, sent officials to Tibet two years after his accession. Continuing the priest-ruler arrangement, he conferred the title of "Imperial Tutor" and a jade seal, also still preserved, on the leader of the Kargyu (White) Sect, who in turn came to the Ming capital at Nanjing.

Sixty other dignitaries who had served under the Yuan Dynasty were reappointed on their own petition. A military force commanded by Wang Yu took over the old Yuan command posts at Wussutzang and Tokangtse (in present-day Qinghai). In 1406, it is recorded, emissaries of all Lamaist sects — Gray, White and Yellow (Gelugba) — went to the Ming court to pay tribute and receive ecclesiastic titles. Emperor Yongle (1403-1425), who transferred the capital from Nanjing (Nanking) to Beijing, had wooden printing-blocks carved with the Buddhist scriptures in Tibetan with the page numeration in Han. Sent to Lhasa, they are still kept in Sera lamasery. The Ming Emperor Wu Zong (reigned 1506-1522) studied the Tibetan language and Buddhist canons, and particularly favoured the lamas.

Monastic delegations from Tibet, sometimes numbering thousands in one caravan, were so numerous that contemporary accounts describe them as filling the roads and post-stations. Since their transport and victualling fell, as feudal service, on local villagers, there was popular dissatisfaction. And since the tribute they brought was recompensed by imperial gifts, the drain on the treasury was heavy. Hence the Ming authorities finally decreed that such caravans must come only once in three years, not be too large, and follow only specified routes. In traditional trade, regulations were passed to govern the old markets and new "tea sales offices" then set up. Of tea alone, some 300,000 kilogrammes was carried annually to Tibet. In return came not only horses but carpets and other articles. The

numerous monastic tribute missions, be it said, also bore the nature of trade (as often under feudal conditions, especially in Asia). So in the Ming Dynasty none of the old ties with the rest of China — political, cultural or economic — were sundered; and some developed further.

Not only Sichuan, but also the coastal provinces of China, now supplied silks and tapestries. In the Jokhang Temple in 1976, we saw huge specimens of the latter, loomed in Tibetan religious designs in Nanjing and Hangzhou and sent to Lhasa, as the woven-in Han language inscriptions record, in the Ming period. We also saw much Ming porcelain. Some of the most precious artifacts had come in the form of imperial gifts conferred in return for tribute.

These facts disprove all assertions that Han-Tibetan links had disappeared, turned tenuous, or at any rate lost their political content in Ming times.

There is a tendency, in foreign writing, to limit Tibet's close ties to the Chinese state to the periods when Mongol and Manchu emperors ruled, and to contend that there was no subordinate relationship to dynasties of Han nationality, such as the Ming. This is not only contrary to fact. It has often been a deliberate self-serving line taken by forces interested in the split-up of multinational China. Some confusion has also resulted from the fact that under the Ming, political links and appointments were not centred on one Tibetan ruling group (as with the Sakya lamas under the Yuan) but distributed over several regional and monastic groupings (a reflection of the situation in Tibet itself.) In fact, relations from Tang times on were with China's central government, regardless of which of her nationalities the dynastic sovereigns belonged to. That, besides Hans, these rulers were at various times Mongol or Manchu, did not make any of them "foreign" to one another. On the contrary, it reflected the continuing multinational character of China.

## QING (CHING, OR MANCHU) DYNASTY, 1644-1911

Developments under the Qing (Manchu) Dynasty fall into two distinct phases.

In the first phase, before the Opium War of 1840-42 (with which China's modern history began) the administration of Tibet by the central government became more direct. It was also then that the colonial empires of the West, and of Czarist Russia, began to close in on China as a whole, Tibet included. But China's feudal monarchy still had the capacity to fend off their pressure.

After the Opium War, however, this capacity lapsed. China was plunged not only into internal crisis, but into semi-colonial bondage. The imperialist powers began to vivisect her. Her feudal ruling class, rather than concede to the people, bowed to foreign foes. One of the regions the imperialists began to hack away was Tibet. But even as China's feudal monarchy decayed, a new, stronger and more vital bond grew among her nationalities — their mutual interest in beating off imperialism. Ultimately, in the new historic circumstances, they could do so only in common social revolution.

This trend developed unevenly, and did not mature till later, particularly in the non-Han areas. Nonetheless, it was irresistible, being rooted in the common experience and needs of all the nationalities, especially from the 1840's on.

But first we shall consider the earlier phase.

## DEVELOPMENT IN 1644-1840

It was in the 17th and 18th centuries that the features of Tibet's regional feudal government, as it continued into the 20th century, took their familiar shape. They included the local political and religious authority of the Dalai Lama (and the Panchen Erdeni) and the structure of the regional administration, the *kashag*. Both, it should be noted, developed in close connection with the policies of China's central government — the feudal monarchy — which defined and controlled them.

The *political* institution of the Dalai Lama (as distinct from the clerical title which had been used since 1588 by the head of the lamaist Yellow Sect) dates from 1643 when Gushi Khan of the Khoshote Mongols intervened in a conflict between Lhasa and Xigazê and conferred

temporal power on the Fifth Dalai Lama, who built the present-day Potala.

In the following year, 1644, the Qing (Manchu) Dynasty took over the Chinese throne. Thereupon both the Dalai Lama and his Mongol patron, Gushi Khan, pledged allegiance to the first Qing emperor, Shunzhi. In 1652, Dalai Lama V visited Beijing.

In 1720 the Emperor Kangxi (Kang Hsi) sent troops to Tibet to drive out a force of Dzungar Mongols headed by the separatist noble Tsewang Araptan who had Russian backing. The Dzungar forces had not only chased out the descendants of Gushi Khan, brevetted along with the Dalai Lama by the Qing emperors, but pillaged Lhasa and its temples, to the bitter resentment of the Tibetans. After driving away the Dzungars, Emperor Kangxi installed the *kashag* and the central commissioners appointed directly by Beijing. The latter, sometimes called Ambans, exercised powers over administration, military affairs, the judiciary, finance and appointments of Tibetan local officials. As agents of the central government, they alone had authority in foreign affairs.

These steps strengthened both the territorial unity of the multinational Chinese state and the defence of its borders. The threats to the latter, by now, came increasingly not from traditional neighbours but from the predatory colonial powers of Europe. In the 18th century, Britain was seizing India while Czarist Russia began to swallow up Inner Asia.

### *Early Feelers of Western Colonialism*

Even before Britain appeared in a leading role, earlier Western colonial forces, which had ensconced themselves in parts of India, had reached out into Tibet.

The Portuguese set themselves up in Goa in 1506, and the Dutch and French East India Companies were founded respectively in 1602 and 1664.

Among the Portuguese, in 1600-27 the merchant adventurer d'Almeida was active in Ladakh, the Jesuit d'Andrade founded a mission in western Tibet and the priests Cacella and Cabral got as

far as Xigazê. Van de Putte, a Dutch merchant, crossed Tibet twice in 1725 and 1735. The French clerics d'Orville (1661) and de Tours (1707) also travelled and founded missions in Tibet.

All this was contemporary with encroachments on multinational China from her other frontier along the sea coast as well. The Portuguese established their trading post in Macao; the Dutch, till expelled by the Chinese patriot Zheng Chenggong (Cheng Cheng-kung, known in Western literature as Koxinga), had their "Fort Hollandia" in Taiwan; and the French had begun to creep up from the Indo-China peninsula.

By land or sea, these developments were part of a world-wide process of colonial expansion by the West in the early period of capitalism, not only against China but against most of the peoples of Asia, Africa and the Americas.

### *Early Czarist Expansionism and Tibet*

From the north and west, in the same period, came early Russian colonialism. In 1668, Czar Alexei Mikhailovich, father of Peter I (the Great) supplied arms and gunsmiths to Galdan Khan, chief of the western Mongols in Dzungaria (northern Xinjiang). Galdan, with Russian encouragement, carved out a large kingdom for himself in Mongolia, Xinjiang and Tibet along with Qinghai and parts of Gansu Province. Before taking the title of Khan, Galdan had been a lama in Lhasa, and linked up with its temporal administrator Sanggye Gyatso who was in local control after the death of the Fifth Dalai.

Czarist Russia's involvement, like that of the other colonial powers, was typified by gnawing at China on more than one border. In the northeast (Manchuria) her encroachment was checked in 1689 when defeats by the troops of the Emperor Kangxi forced the dismantling of the Cossack fortress of Albazin and the signature of the Treaty of Nipchu (Nerchinsk). But in the west, Russian support of Galdan continued till his defeat and death in 1697. Peter I, who created the Czarist navy, dreamed not only of dominating the entire Central Asian land mass but through it of reaching the Indian Ocean. A major stumbling block to these plans was the proved ability of

China, at that time, to exercise central authority in her Mongolian and Tibetan regions.

At the end of the 18th century, under Catherine II, Czarist Russia took another long step. In 1796 she unleashed a campaign against Persia (now Iran) which, as a Russian bourgeois historian put it, was aimed not only at seizure of that country but ultimately of "the whole Middle East up to Tibet".<sup>5</sup>

This background is worth recalling today. First, it shows that Tibet began to figure in the expansionist schemes of the Czars a long time ago. Second, it makes clear that Russian designs on Tibet were part of the historical tide of aggression by a number of European powers into Asia. Third, it shows how, even at that early date, Russia resorted to the method of inciting and profiting from conflicts between and within China's many nationalities.

Fourth, and most important, those events already revealed that in every such nationality, there was strong opposition to separation from China. The majority of Mongolian leaders opposed Galdan. The majority of Tibetans were against his accomplice Sanggye Gyatso.

### *British Inroads from India*

In the meantime, there developed what was to be the most serious colonialist threat for more than a century and a half — that of the British Empire. With the Battle of Plassey in 1757, Britain began to dominate India, pushing out all rivals. By 1769, her troops pushed into Bhutan, adjacent and closely linked to Tibet. This brought a letter of protest from the Panchen Lama in Xigazê to Warren Hastings, soon to become British Governor-General of India. Hastings, noted for his craftiness, was undismayed by the protest. Instead he saw in it a chance of direct communication — looking further to penetration through Tibet into the western provinces of China's interior. The same Hastings, too, it will be recalled, forced the Indian peasants to grow opium, established in 1773 the British East India Company's monopoly of trade in this drug, and laid the basis for prying open China's sea door in the east. Here again, the colonial designs against Tibet and the rest of China were inseparable.

While Hastings saw a key to China's sea gate in opium, he saw the key to her Tibetan back door in tea. His idea was to grow it in India to turn Tibet's buying of tea, which was large scale, away from inner China and toward British India. His frankly stated political objective was to detach Tibet from the former and attaching it to the latter. Subsequently these were among the considerations that led to the planting of tea in Assam and Darjeeling, both closer to Tibet than China's own tea-growing provinces.

American readers can consider a link here with their own history. The shipment of tea from China's coastal provinces to western markets was already in the 1770's firmly monopolized by the British East India Company. Tea so shipped was exorbitantly taxed by the London government. This led to that crucial incident in America's developing revolution, the famous "Boston Tea Party" in which patriots dumped the taxed tea into the ocean. Not only was there a link of time and circumstance between the victimization of China through Tibet and the impositions against which America's independence fighters rose in arms. There was also a strong conscious connection in the mind of Warren Hastings. Soon after George Washington's decisive victory at the Battle of Saratoga, Hastings wrote: "If . . . British arms and influence have suffered so severe a shock in the Western world, it is the more incumbent upon those charged with the interests of Great Britain in the East to exert themselves for the retrieval of the national honour."<sup>6</sup>

But though the tea politics of the late 18th century associated China and the incipient United States as common victims of Britain, the subsequent politics of opium developed differently. No sooner had the United States won its independence than its merchants began to seek a part in the opium trade with China, in competition with the British East India Company. Profits from the opium traffic, in fact, comprised part of the investment in textile manufacture in the New England States that began the capitalist industrialization of the U.S.A.

From this digression, let us now return to Hastings' direct actions on China's Tibetan border. His next move, after those already described, was to ease the pressure on Bhutan, to put the Panchen Lama at ease, and to send an envoy, George Bogle, to Xi-

gazê in 1775 and again in 1779. Bogle's attempt to open Tibet to British trade and influence was foiled by opposition from both the Tibetans and the Qing Dynasty's commissioners. Hastings then concluded that the only place to negotiate trade and other contacts with Tibet was in Beijing itself, where the authority lay. His plan to send Bogle on a mission there, however, fell through. When Bogle died, Hastings dispatched to Xigazê another agent, Samuel Turner, who likewise was unsuccessful.

In 1790 Tibet was invaded by the Gurkhas from Nepal who despoiled the Panchen Lama's palace-monastery of Tashi Lhumpo in Xigazê. The Tibetans appealed for military aid to China's central government in Beijing. The latter promptly organized and sent, over the great intervening distance, an army which drove the invaders back almost to Katmandu but did not stay in Nepal.

The Emperor Qianlong (Chien Lung) saw in the Gurkha incursion the plain hand of the British who were rapidly subjugating the Indian sub-continent. This was one reason why, in 1793, he refused the various proposals for an embassy in Beijing and trade with China brought by King George III's emissary Lord Macartney. He also specifically rejected Britain's request to be allowed to send a mission on relations and trade to Tibet as a *quid pro quo* for having done China a good turn by "advising Nepal to surrender" (which had already in fact happened as a result of the military operations). Its vigilance aroused, Beijing then ordered that no Tibetan local authority should henceforth correspond, or make contact with any foreign official.

Blocked in Tibet, the British began to take over Nepal. In 1791 and 1792 they imposed "commercial treaties" on that country, in 1801 a "resident" (later expelled), and in 1815, by force of arms, the Treaty of Segauli in which Nepal was not only made a British protectorate but had to cede two important areas, Kumoan and Garwhal (Mussoorie), on the border of China.

The "closing of Tibet to foreign contacts" of which Western writers have ever since complained was in fact based on the common wish and interest of all China and of the Tibetans themselves. Undoubtedly, it helped Tibet to avoid the fate that successively befell

its neighbours. For India in the 18th century, and Nepal, Kashmir and Sikkim in the first half of the 19th, "trade relations" with the expanding British empire were the first step to loss of territory and ultimately to becoming protectorates or colonies.

In Tibet, after its closing, the British worked more and more through under-cover agents, often recruited from among the Gosains, traditional Indian traders with the region. One of these, who had been in Xigazê with Bogle and Turner managed to insinuate himself into the entourage of the Panchen Lama when the latter travelled to Beijing in 1780. He informed the British government of India of all he learned there and along the way.

By and large, however, so long as China was strong, outside encroachments and attacks could be repelled. This was shown by the events of 1790-93.

But after the Opium War of 1840-41 came a fateful change. The Qing Dynasty (and Chinese feudalism in general) failed to defend the country's borders either by sea or by land. And the peril of all China, marked for colonization and partition by the capitalist powers, became that of all its nationalities — including the Tibetans.

## LATER QING PERIOD, 1840-1911

### *British Incursions after the Opium War*

In 1841, immediately after Britain had defeated China along her coastline in the Opium War, a new attempt to conquer Tibet from the Indian subcontinent was launched by Ghulab Singh, ruler of Kashmir. His invading army was wiped out to a man by the Tibetans in the winter snows of the high plateau, following which both sides agreed to stay on their own side of the "old established frontier". With regard to direct joint resistance by Hans and Tibetans on the main fronts of the Opium War, there are records of the participation of Tibetan troops from Sichuan in battles against the British at Ningbo, Dinghai and other places along the coast of Zhejiang Province, in

which many, including two commanders of the thousand-strong contingent, gave their lives.\*

Five years later, Britain, by then already in control of Kashmir, moved to erode the inland frontier. She proposed to China, through official contacts in far-off Guangzhou (Canton), that the dividing line between Kashmir and Tibet be resurveyed and mapped. On the one hand, this approach was a clear recognition of Chinese sovereignty in Tibet. On the other, in a situation in which Guangzhou was open to re-occupation by Britain's recently victorious navy, it was a threat. However, British warships, dominant on the sea coast, could not sail to the heart of Asia. So the dynasty, though already cowed, declined on the grounds that the boundary involved was fixed and clear. The Tibetans on their part refused to act without Beijing's authority. Then Britain sent out surveyors unilaterally, and drew a line on her own maps with no pretence of consultation — practising "cartographic aggression".<sup>7</sup>

In the 1850's, there were anti-imperialist risings against the establishment of foreign (mainly Catholic) missions in Tibetan-populated areas in Sichuan, despite the capitulatory attitude of the Qing authorities. They were often linked to social struggles against Tibetan feudal chiefs as well.

In 1855-56, near the time of Britain's Second Opium War against China, came another Gurkha incursion into Tibet. By contrast with the events of 60 years earlier, there was no effective help from the imperial court in Beijing. Certain privileges were locally granted to Nepal, including the stationing of a mission in Lhasa with an armed guard attached and extra-territorial jurisdiction over Nepali residents. In return, Nepal undertook to help keep out other invaders. These events also spotlighted the growing weakness of the dynasty.<sup>8</sup>

In the third quarter of the 19th century, still unready to fight or bluster its way into Tibet, the British government of India set up a special service of "survey spies" to infiltrate and map it. Their trainer

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\* For this and other references to Tibetan participation in China-wide anti-imperialist struggles I am indebted to "Highlights of Tibetan History," by Wang Furen and Suo Wenqing (Sichuan People's Publishing House, Chengdu, 1980), an English translation of which is being prepared by New World Press, Beijing. — I.E.

and director, from 1866 on, was a Colonel Montgomery of the Indian Survey. The spies themselves were newly-baked British subjects from recently acquired border territories, some Tibetan in appearance and culture. Waddell described them as “thoroughly trained to survey work — to the use of the prismatic compass, to plot out routes, understand maps, read the sextant, recognize the fixed stars, use the boiling-point thermometer for altitudes”, and so on.<sup>9</sup>

One of their number, Nain Singh was sent into Tibet in 1866 and again in 1874, in the guise of a pious merchant-pilgrim from Ladakh. His constantly-fingered prayer beads doubled as a counting device for measuring off distances. The hollow of his prayer wheel held not the usual incantations but a compass and paper strips on which to record his observations.

Other agents were Krishna, code-named A-K, who crossed and re-crossed Tibet in the 1870's; the Sikkimese lama Ugyen Gyatso, and Sarat Chandra Das, who doubled as a linguist and compiled a Tibetan-English dictionary.<sup>10</sup>

Britain's empire-builders, in their expansionist heyday, were very proud of these spies. Waddell lauded their “wonderful courage and resource in evading and overcoming suspicion”.<sup>11</sup> Rudyard Kipling, bard of colonialism, featured them in the novel *Kim*, which glamourized the “great game” of frontier intelligence for teenage readers. Moreover, Waddell tells us, “British officials stationed on the frontier were forever seeking to open communications and trade. Missionaries on the border, also, were often acute observers and informers”.<sup>12</sup>

In 1876, the London government decided the time had come to “open Tibet” by direct pressure on Beijing. The pretext was the killing of a junior British diplomat name Margary, who had been reconnoitring routes from recently conquered Burma into China's Yunnan Province. The Chefoo Convention of that year, imposed on China in retaliation, obligated her to give passports and protection to a “mission of exploration by way of Beijing through Gansu and Kokonor (Qinghai), or by way of Sichuan, to Tibet and thence to India”, or from India by way of Tibet. Thus Margary dead was meant to open doors he had failed to when alive. But the actual despatch of

these missions was blocked by the strong popular opposition in Tibet and elsewhere in China.

### *First Armed Invasion by Britain*

Britain's next recourse, therefore, was to direct military action. In 1885, to "open Tibet to trade" she assembled troops in Sikkim, a step eased by the building, in 1879-81, of a railway from the Indian plains to Darjeeling, previously seized from Sikkim by the British. The menaced Tibetans hit back, causing a panic among British vacationers in Darjeeling, which apart from its strategic value had become a "hill station" for escaping India's summer heat. Two features of the short 1885 war were noteworthy.

One was the fierce courage with which the Tibetans fought, which drew tribute even from their enemies. The other was the upsurge of protest and resistance among all strata in Tibet which the section of the aristocracy already flirting with the invaders could not quell. This popular movement extended to the Tibetan-inhabited areas in Sichuan Province, who in 1887 burned down the Catholic mission in Litang and drove out its foreign priests.

This was tied up with similar struggles, armed and unarmed, elsewhere in China. Simultaneously, the Han and other nationalities were fighting an aggression by France (in the war of 1885 along China's southeast coast) and helping the neighbouring Vietnamese people fight against colonization. And the Tibetans' anti-missionary struggle in west Sichuan was itself one of a China-wide series prompted by realization of the joint role of the Bible and the sword in foreign invasion.

Meeting so much resistance locally, Britain again switched to pressure through Beijing. In 1890, she enforced upon the Qing Dynasty government the "Convention Relating to Sikkim and Tibet" signed at Calcutta by the Chinese resident commissioner in Lhasa and the British viceroy of India. This document stipulated Britain's "direct and exclusive control" over Sikkim, laid down a boundary and opened the way for "increased facilities for trade" across that boundary.

Like the Chefoo Convention of 1876, it was an extension of the unequal treaties previously imposed on China.

The fate of Sikkim showed what the Tibetans could themselves expect from further British expansion, and the lesson was not lost on them. Not unnaturally, they blocked the implementation of the Calcutta Convention in every way they could.

The pressure, however, kept on. In 1893, the Calcutta Convention was supplemented by trade regulations signed at Darjeeling. It granted the British unrestricted access from Sikkim to Yadong in Tibet, with extraterritorial rights in that town, and duty-free entry for their goods for five years. And after that period, the duty was to be kept low on Indian tea (mainly from Darjeeling)<sup>13</sup> which the British conquerors of India ever since Warren Hastings had wanted to use to weaken Tibet's economic link with inner China.

Nonetheless, even decades later, Bell was to write ruefully of the huge quantities of tea drunk in Tibet "all . . . except an insignificant fraction comes from China for the Tibetans do not like Indian tea".<sup>14</sup> Their aversion, one suspects, was not merely to one type of tea, but to colonization by Britain.

In the long range the British government aimed at connecting its Indian empire, through Tibet and Sichuan, with its new sphere of influence in the Changjiang (Yangtze) valley. Through Tibet, too, it hoped to open a northward route into Xinjiang and Mongolia, competing there with the rival colonialism of Czarist Russia. By the 1870's it already had political and economic footholds, with consular representation, both at Dajianlu (Kangding), the chief mart between Tibet and Sichuan, and at Kashgar, in southern Xinjiang.

### *Czarist Russia's Aggression*

The Czar's empire was, in the meantime, making a similar penetration and encirclement of China from the north and west. In 1858-60, when Britain was fighting the second Opium War, Russia had forced China, in unequal treaties then signed, to cede hundreds of thousands of square kilometres in what became the Amur and Maritime provinces of eastern Siberia. Further along the arc, they

pressed on Mongolia. Still further west, in 1872 they occupied China's Ili, in northern Xinjiang, from which the Dzungar Mongols had in the past irrupted into Tibet. All this was done from nearby territories they had already annexed. In much the same way as the British had swallowed Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim and Ladakh along the Himalayas, the Russians in Central Asia engulfed Tashkent in 1865, Samarkand in 1868, Bukhara in 1869, Khiva in 1873, and the Pamir region in 1895. Entirely spuriously, each of the two contending imperialisms tended to argue that it was "defending itself," or even "saving China" (including Tibet) from the designs of the other. In fact, both were equally predatory.

Like ambitions create like actions. Not surprisingly, from the 1860's to the 1880's Czarism had its own version of the "survey spies".

Many, like their British counterparts, were recruited from bought-off elements of conquered nationalities that had old religious or other contacts with Tibet. The Kalmuks and Buriat-Mongols, for example, had for centuries sent caravans there for pilgrimage and trade. Hundreds of their monks lived and studied in the great lamaseries in Lhasa and Xigazê. As early as 1741, the Russian government had received its first report specially devoted to Tibet from a Buriat named Zayayev.

In the wake of such minor "eyes" and in many cases using them as guides, came more direct and significant Czarist agents. Some had been previously active on other fronts of Russian expansion into China. An example was N. M. Przevalski,<sup>15</sup> billed as just a geographer but in fact a much-decorated colonel of army intelligence, outfitted by the Russian general staff and travelling with military subordinates and Cossack escorts.<sup>16</sup> Przevalski, in the 1860's and 70's, led expeditions to many areas of China, these ranging from her north-eastern coast in Manchuria to landlocked Mongolia, Xinjiang, Qinghai (Kokonor), and the Qaidam (Tsaidam) depression down to Tibet in central Asia. Like all the Czarist military caste at the time (again resembling its British counterpart) Przevalski was an open racist. His writings on the Mongols were studded with subheads such as "Uncleanliness, Gluttony, Indolent Habits", on the Tanguts and Tibetans "Dirt, Avarice, Cowardice", and on the Han and Uygur

nationalities with wording no more felicitous. In 1884, in China's Qinghai (Kokonor) area, his Cossack retinue shot down a number of Tibetans.

Serving in one of Przevalski's expeditions was a Buriat named Ngawang Dorje (Russified into Dorjiev) who subsequently became the Czar's most highly-placed operator in Tibet. Around 1880, in the capacity of a lama, he had studied in the biggest Lhasa monastery, Drepung, and risen to become one of the tutors to the still young Thirteenth Dalai Lama. As a politician, he served the Czar's interests, clothing them in religious terms. As a theologian, he argued from lamaist scriptures that Russia was in fact "North Shambala", a holy kingdom in an old prophecy. In line with specific propaganda among the Mongols, he also presented the Czar as the Tsagan (White) Khan, heir to the domain of Genghis Khan, conqueror of much of Asia and Europe. Thus, when the British made war on Tibet in 1888, Dorjiev was able to promote the idea that, with the Qing court too feeble to repel the British, Lhasa should rely instead on the Czar, who was no less voracious.

In 1898, a peak year of the inter-imperialist race for the partition of all China, Dorjiev journeyed to St. Petersburg. He returned to Lhasa with rich gifts and an invitation to the Dalai Lama to visit the Czar (declined, because of local opposition). In these dealings, Russia acted behind the back of the Chinese government. While assuring Beijing of "support" against the depredations of other powers she herself grabbed Chinese territory in all the places where it suited her interest — as in the case of "Port Arthur" (Lushun) and "Dalny" (Dalian or Dairen) along the coast.

In 1900, the armies of eight different foreign powers (including Britain and Russia) were occupying and looting Beijing after the suppression of the anti-imperialist Yihetuan ("Boxer") Uprising. In the meantime, Dorjiev, a Russian subject, was being received as "representative of the Dalai Lama" by the Czar Nicholas II.<sup>17</sup> In June 1901, following the imposition on China of the onerous and humiliating "Boxer Protocol", he turned up in Odessa as head of an eight-man "Tibetan mission" with, according to a newspaper there, letters from the Dalai Lama to the Czar. The paper argued that "at present,

Tibet . . . is under the protectorate of China but the conditions of this protectorate have never been clearly defined", and stated that "the establishment at St. Petersburg of a permanent Tibetan mission" would be sought.<sup>18</sup> On June 21, at Peterhof Palace, the entire group was received by the Czar and in November by the Czarina.<sup>19</sup> Not long afterwards, Russia's Minister of War, General A. N. Kuropatkin, wrote that Czar Nicholas II was not only planning "to annex Manchuria and Korea" but "dreaming of bringing Tibet under his dominion".<sup>20</sup>

How close were the British and Russian colonialist rationalizations for the game both were then playing with regard to Tibet and other border regions of China can be seen from the following pronouncements, one by Lord Curzon, Viceroy of British India, and the other by Prince Gorchakov, Foreign Minister of the Czar.<sup>21</sup>

#### *Britain's Curzon*

. . . India is like a fortress, with the vast moat of the sea on two of her faces and with mountains for her walls on the remainder: but beyond these walls, which are sometimes of by no means insuperable height, and admit of being easily penetrated, extends a glacis of varying breadth and dimensions. We do not want to occupy it, but we also cannot afford to see it occupied by our foes . . . we are compelled to intervene because a danger would thereby grow up which might one day menace our security. . . . He would be a short-sighted commander who merely manned his ramparts in India and did not look beyond.

#### *Russia's Gorchakov*

. . . Russia had found herself brought into contact with a number of semi-savage tribes, who proved a constant menace to the security and well-being of the empire. Under these circumstances, the only possible means of maintaining order on the Russian frontier was to bring these tribes into subjection; but as soon as this had been accomplished it was found that the new converts to civilization had in turn become exposed to the attacks of the more distant tribes. And so it became necessary to establish fortified posts among the outlying peoples, and by a display of force to bring them into submission.

Both, to put it plainly, advanced “security” for territories already stolen as an excuse for stealing more.

In Russia, as in Britain, the utmost effort was made to glamourize its spies and trail-blazers for conquest in public opinion. To this day a town in Russian Kirghizstan near the Chinese border boasts the name of Przevalski.

In recent years, Moscow writers have been busy reviving and turning the old Czars’ expansionists into heroes for Soviet youth. V. P. Leontiev, in his *Foreign Expansion in Tibet*<sup>22</sup> lauded Przevalski as one of Russia’s “noted travellers and Orientalists.” The Soviet popular weekly *Ogonyok* (1975, No. 15) found the heading “For the Glory of the Fatherland” appropriate for an article that called him “the Columbus of Tibet”. Such is reborn great-Russian chauvinism. A sad note is its penetration into the virtually official *History of the Mongolian People’s Republic*<sup>23</sup> issued in that country, which says Przevalski “opened a new shining chapter in the annals of Central Asian studies” and “acquainted broad sections of Russian readers with the life of the Mongolian people.” Yet contemporary Mongolians were victims not only of Przevalski’s service to Czarist aggression but of his racist insults as well.

Lenin wrote in 1900, “If we are to call things by their right names, we must say that the European governments (the Russian government among the very first) have already started to partition China. However, they have not begun this partitioning openly, but stealthily, like thieves. They began to rob China as ghouls rob corpses . . .”<sup>24</sup>

And during World War I he commented both on the rivalries of the imperialists and on their common urge to enslave colonies: “The fact is that tsarism *and* all the Russian reactionaries *and* the ‘progressive bourgeoisie’ . . . *want the same thing*: rob Germany, Austria and Turkey in Europe, and defeat England in Asia (so as to take the whole of Persia, Mongolia, Tibet, etc.) . . .”<sup>25</sup>

What a contrast to those who today do their best to prove Czarist policy to have been purely defensive, concerned with protecting China (and Tibet) from the depredations of British imperialism and so on.

These latter-day apologies for Czarism are an example of what Lenin defined long ago as “socialism in words, imperialism in deeds”.

*Major British Invasion — The “Younghusband Expedition” and Tibetan Resistance*

We now return to British actions in Tibet from the opening of the present century. By 1904 China's growing weakness, and developments on the international scene, had set the stage for Britain's open invasion of Tibet.

Known as the “Younghusband Expedition”, this attack was launched (to no one's surprise) on the convenient pretext of blocking Russian influence. In fact, as usual, China was its target. Several factors had created the temptation. First, China lay virtually prostrate. Second, Britain in 1902 had allied herself with Japan. Third, Japan had been emboldened by these two circumstances to fight Russia in China's Northeast (Manchuria) for colonial control of that territory. Fourth, with Russia pre-occupied with the 1904-05 war with Japan, which she was soon to lose, Tibet became an irresistible “target of opportunity” for London.

Colonel Francis Younghusband, an exponent of the British “forward school”, was in direct charge of the invasion. We have his views from his own pen: “An opportunity should never be lost. A frontier agent should be as alert as a hawk to snatch it . . . failure to seize it may mean years of ponderous effort for Government.”<sup>26</sup>

Behind Younghusband stood a higher-powered expansionist, Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India. For years Curzon had been trying to separate Tibet from China by entering into official relations with the Tibetan local authorities. In 1899, Lhasa had returned his letters unopened on the ground that foreign affairs could be handled only through Beijing. Hence, Curzon swerved to political-theoretical preparation for armed action. On January 8, 1903, he declared that it was a “constitutional fiction” to regard Tibet as part of China. This brought him a rebuke from Britain's Secretary of State for India, Lord Hamilton, who ruled that Tibet must be “regarded as a province of China,” while in the House of Lords a former Governor of Bombay, Lord Reay, branded Curzon's dictum as “extremely impolitic,” because China's position in Tibet was one “which our government had always recognized, which is founded on law, history and tradi-

tion. . . .”<sup>27</sup> But Curzon continued to act on his own thesis. And he combined with it a plea of offended dignity — that the Tibetan action in returning his letters did not accord “with proximity to the territories of a great civilized power” (i.e. Britain).

What proximity to such civilization really meant was demonstrated to the Tibetans when Younghusband’s<sup>28</sup> expedition got under way. In March, 1904, hundreds of Tibetan troops who had been lured out of their defence works, ostensibly to parley, were treacherously massacred at Guru. “There was no hope of their regarding the British as a formidable power, and a force to be reckoned with,” wrote a British correspondent frank in his imperialist logic, “until we had killed several thousand of their men.” (Edmund Candler, in *The Unveiling of Lhasa*, 1905.)

The Tibetans, as we know from contemporary sources, were clear about what was at stake. For a century and a half they had watched the British conquer and colonize neighbouring India and they were determined not to undergo a similar fate. Hence, they resisted with dauntless courage. The citadel of Gyangzê fell only after an artillery bombardment had battered down what the British themselves described as an incredibly gallant stand by the primitively-armed defenders. Afterwards, Younghusband pushed on to Lhasa. There, with his guns trained on the Potala, he dictated the so-called Lhasa Convention. By its terms the Tibetans had to pay the costs of the campaign waged against them; sanction British occupation of the strategic Chumbi Valley until the money was handed over; allow “free right of access” to British traders and officials; “raze all forts and fortifications and remove all armaments” between the frontier and Lhasa; and close the region to the representatives and investment of all other foreign powers except “by previous consent of the British government.”

The humiliation, pain and anger of the Tibetan people were sharpened by the fact that, while they had fought bravely for their own region and the sovereign rights of all China, the Qing Dynasty government at Beijing — which was responsible for the border defence — had skulked and done nothing to help. The dynasty was now at its most supine, fearing and relying on the imperialists. It

had already surrendered many important places inhabited by the majority Han nationality, parts of the ancestral home of its emperors' own Manchu nationality, and finally in 1900, effective control of its capital Beijing. After failing in its duty to resist the invasion of Tibet, although it first refused to sign the "Lhasa Convention", it later acceded to many of its terms in another, the 1906 Peking (Beijing) Convention with Britain.

Historically, the courageous resistance of the local troops and people of Tibet in 1904 stands alongside that of the peasant Yihetuan ("Boxers") in northern China, who were mainly Hans, in 1900. Both were part and parcel of the anti-imperialist struggle of all nationalities in China for their common homeland. Both stood in vivid contrast to the treason of the Qing monarchy and of sections of the feudal forces within each nationality (including the Tibetan). And though crushed by the force of heavier weaponry, the Tibetan resistance, like that of the Yihetuan, had the effect of making the imperialists chary of renewed armed adventures lest they ignite conflagrations too fierce to be quenched. Hugh Richardson, an apologist for the Younghusband invasion, wrote wishfully many years later: "It has been suggested that force might have been avoided by using Indian Buddhist agents, with lavish presents, to win Tibetan opinion."

But this suggestion, he went on regretfully, did not take account of the extent to which fear of British designs had intensified the feelings of the Tibetans whose religion and whose existence were threatened from the outside.<sup>29</sup>

On the attitude of the Tibetans as the 20th century dawned one can cite the contemporary evidence of the Japanese monk (and intelligence gatherer) Ekai Kawaguchi, who in 1900-1903 lived and travelled clandestinely on the high plateau and recorded his impressions of every aspect of its life in a 600-page book, *Three Years in Tibet*.\*

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\* English translation by the Theosophical Society, London and Benares, 1909. Citations are based on this edition, especially pp. 297, 504 and 514.

The general feeling, he wrote, was illustrated by a 25,000-strong service of prayers "for the victory of China" in the Yihetuan (Boxer) War. And while duly recording the local disappointment and dissatisfaction with the Qing dynasty's impotence in the face of imperialism, Kawaguchi stressed, "It must be remembered that the sentiment of the common people toward China still retains its old force, even though they know that the power of their old patron has declined. . . ."

With regard to Czarist wooing of Dalai Lama XIII, he commented further that "the position which China still occupies in the niches of their hearts can hardly be supplanted by Russia."

As for Britain, Kawaguchi found the Tibetans "prejudiced against England on account of her subjugation of India. . . ." "England is singled out as an object of abhorrence — she tried to coerce Tibet. . . ." And her alternative policy, of "indirectly winning the favour of the Tibetans," seemed to him to have failed to enlist any genuine response. Though there were pro-British (as well as pro-Russian) persons in Lhasa ruling circles, it was simply because "these greedy Tibetan officials offer their friendship to the highest bidder."

Such was the first-hand report of this Japanese observer, despite the fact that he himself was well inclined toward the British, as his own government was, and had received help from them on his mission.

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On the heels of the 1904 bloodshed came more inter-imperialist deals. The Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902 was re-phrased and renewed in 1905, after Russia's defeat by Japan and the British invasion of Tibet. It became a mutual insurance pact for aggression. First, it guaranteed "the maintenance of territorial rights of the High Contracting Parties in the regions of Eastern Asia and India". Second, Japan was assigned the "right" to "guidance, control and protection of Korea", paving the way to the extinction of the latter's independence. Third, Britain was to be supported in similar encroachments "in the proximity" of the Indian frontier (i.e. Tibet and any other part of southwest China that could be considered proximate).

*Britain and Russia; Imperialist Collusion and Contention*

It was in the next year, 1906, that Britain forced on China the Beijing Convention reiterating most of the conditions Younghusband had dictated in Lhasa, and extorting the further privilege of operating telegraph lines in Tibet. This document had a dual character. On the one hand, it was a new encroachment. On the other, it showed that the London government had failed in its attempt to treat Tibet as separate from China and recognized that only in Beijing could concessions affecting the region be "legitimized".

And the year after that, 1907, came a new deal between the British and Czarist empire in which Russia agreed to Britain's gains under the 1906 Beijing Convention, but both governments piously pledged respect for "China's suzerain rights" and "the territorial integrity of Tibet". The document also covered Afghanistan and Persia (the latter was carved up into spheres of influence). In general, it was part of an effort to allay the sharp Anglo-Russian rivalries in Asia. In the global politics of the time, its purpose was to draw Russia, with France, into an alliance with England against the rising power of Germany. The line-up for World War I was taking shape. And both the collusions and contentions of the imperialist states concerned, were at the expense of Asian and other lands and peoples.

Czarism was compelled to cede to Britain the primacy of access to Tibet (which did not belong to either of them), but did not regard this accommodation as other than temporary. This was shown by her continued energetic wooing of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. Earlier, when he had fled from Lhasa during the Younghusband invasion, the ever-active Dorjiev had organized for him a special body-guard of 70 Buriats, Russian subjects, who escorted him to Urga (now Ulan Bator) in Outer Mongolia, a place under Russian influence. The Czar dispatched his envoy in Beijing, Pokotilov, with rich gifts, to confer with the Dalai Lama in Urga.

In 1909 the Qing Dynasty sent an army into Tibet to reassert the sovereignty which the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 and the Tibet Regulations concluded between Britain and China in 1908 had pledged to respect. An outcry against this action was voiced not only

by Britain but also by Russia, whose envoy in Beijing officially deplored it as a "departure from precedent". And when the Dalai Lama, after a brief return to Lhasa where he colluded with his late foes the British, was declared deposed by Beijing and fled again, this time to India, the Czar contacted him there<sup>30</sup> and Russia even proposed a joint intervention with Britain in Tibet. London, however, declined seeing no reason to let its rival in on the game. In 1912, the Republican government that replaced the Qing Dynasty declared the Dalai Lama reinstated, but he did not return to Lhasa till 1913 and then under British auspices.

This brings us to the end of the Manchu Dynasty. As regards Tibet, the British then held the trump cards. But Russia, too, was not idle. Nor did her doings bear any resemblance to the legend that some Soviet historians are now peddling — that she stood for Chinese sovereignty, protected it from the British and so on. In fact, both imperialisms were jostling each other at the trough.

A contributory cause of the double penetration was, of course, the decay of the Qing monarchy. Itself the vehicle of the change of all China to a semi-feudal and semi-colonial status, it could not, even when it suddenly felt the need, restore a workable unity or national defence. The Sichuan provincial troops, under Zhao Erfeng, which it sent into the Tibetan areas in its last years to avert partition, became a warlord-like scourge to the inhabitants while still far from where they could confront any foreign foe. All this provided opportunities for the British expansionists, and for the agents they had cultivated in a section of Tibet's upper strata, to provoke conflicts between the central government in Beijing and the local authorities in Lhasa. In earlier periods, when the dynasty had still been capable of safeguarding China's borders in Tibet against invasion, there had never been any differences between Beijing and Lhasa on defence matters. Now, as elsewhere in China, internal oppression deepened while imperialists found it more and more convenient to penetrate, an overall impasse from which a general revolution, involving the ethnic majority and minority alike, was the only way out. The beginning of that revolution was now near, but its victory was still more than three decades away. And only such victory, sweeping imperialism and

feudalism away from China's soil, could eliminate the common danger to all her nationalities and the dissensions among them that weakened and obstructed their progress.

## AFTER THE REVOLUTION OF 1911

The 1911 Revolution overthrew the Qing Dynasty and with it China's ancient monarchic system. The founders of the new Republic of China wanted it to be strong to defend the country's borders and independence against the gnawings of foreign powers. They wanted it to bring economic and social progress, and more solid unity among China's nationalities. The Republic's newly adopted flag directly symbolized the historic multinational character of the Chinese state. Its five stripes, equal in width, stood for the Hans, Manchus, Mongolians, Muslims (Huis and Uygurs) and Tibetans.

But the 1911 Revolution was aborted, and the new republic robbed of its potential when Yuan Shikai, a representative of the feudal landlord and merchant class of old China, purloined the presidency from its revolutionary founder Sun Yat-sen. Yuan's real ambition was to restore the monarchy and himself mount the throne with the support of the imperialist powers, for long his patrons. Hence he was even more subservient to them than the Qing Dynasty in its last days. Internally, he intensified both the class oppression of China's people of all nationalities and the national oppression of the minorities.

Seizing their chance, the "great powers" of the time became more active than ever in their intrigues to tear China apart, especially along her borders. "The point is," Lenin wrote in 1913, "that the Chinese revolution did not evoke among the European bourgeoisie any enthusiasm for freedom and democracy . . . it gave rise to the urge to *plunder* China, partition her and take away some of her territories."<sup>31</sup> A theory was specially devised to facilitate this: that the links between China's nationalities derived only from the allegiance of their aristocrats to the Qing emperors, and were dissolved by its fall. In 1912 Russia on this basis engineered what she called "Autonomy" (in fact it was a Czarist-dominated buffer status) for Outer Mongolia.

Britain held that what her rival was doing in Mongolia entitled her to do the same in Tibet.

*Britain's Simla Conference and McMahon Line — And Czarist Russia's New Thrust*

On August 17, 1912, Sir John Jordan, the British Minister in Beijing, declared that his government would not recognize the Republic of China if it sent garrisons or administrators to Tibet or gave it parliamentary representation. Britain, his memorandum specified, conceded Chinese "suzerainty" but not sovereignty in Tibet, and wanted a special conference held on the matter, pending which she would block all transit of goods and personnel between Tibet and the rest of China by way of India.<sup>32</sup> Yuan Shikai's government publicly protested that the step was virtually an act of war by "friendly" Britain. But in fact, it weakly agreed to talk. Thus was hatched the notorious Simla Conference of 1913-14, through which British empire-builders wanted not only to tear Tibet from China, but also to annex a large segment of southeastern Tibet to their Indian domain.

At Simla, the British representative, Sir Arthur Henry McMahon,<sup>33</sup> demanded the creation and delimitation of an "Outer Tibet" as virtually a separate entity (copying what Czarist Russia had already done in Outer Mongolia), and an "Inner Tibet" (comprising parts of Chinese provinces inhabited by Tibetans as well as other nationalities) where China was to be allowed to retain administrative rights. Strong pressure to bring this about was applied in the Simla talks themselves, and also in Beijing. There the British Minister declared that "The patience of His Majesty's Government is exhausted and . . . unless the Simla Convention is signed . . . H. M. G. will hold themselves free to sign separately with Tibet."

Even the Yuan Shikai regime could not stomach such terms, mainly for fear of the people. On July 3 and 7, 1914, it declared both at Simla and through its minister in London that China rejected the Convention and any separate arrangements Britain might sign with anyone in Tibet would be regarded as null and void.

In fact, already in March 1914 McMahon had induced Shatra, a

representative of the Tibetan local administration, to sign at Delhi, secretly and apart from the open Simla talks, a map which placed several of Tibet's southeastern counties within the Britain's Indian empire. So was born the "McMahon Line." Its birth was well rehearsed. For three months before the conference, Shatra had lived with and been coached by one of the British delegates, Sir Charles Bell, the political officer in charge of Sikkim and a major theoretician and practitioner of frontier expansion. So at Simla the British were, in reality, negotiating with themselves.

Not only was this whole business hatched privily from the Chinese central government. Shatra's action was condemned and repudiated by the Lhasa authorities, who continued to collect taxes and perform other administrative functions in the counties concerned. For this reason, the British did not publish the McMahon-Shatra correspondence until 15 years afterwards, in 1929. And they did not venture to inscribe the "McMahon Line" as a "border" on an official map until 1936, when China was pressed by imminent Japanese invasion. The Chiang Kai-shek government of that time also refused to accept the line, after which it disappeared again for some years, even from many British Indian maps.

Hence, neither the Simla Convention nor the McMahon Line were in any sense valid or legal.

The same year, 1914, saw the concoction of a very similar pact far to the north, which Lenin summarized in his "Notebooks on Imperialism" in a few trenchant words: "Treaty" between Russia and "independent" Mongolia (Mongolia plundered).<sup>34</sup>

Czarist Russia at once tried to use her Mongolian puppet, the Living Buddha of Urga, to pull Tibet toward her own sphere through a "Mongolian-Tibetan Treaty of Alliance". It was signed on behalf of "Tibet" and the Dalai Lama by the Czar's old multi-purpose instrument, Dorjiev. Just as the Simla Convention was contrived between the British and their puppet Shatra, the "Mongolian-Tibetan Treaty" was signed by the Czar's clients on both sides.

Such a tactic was probably first employed by the United States, during its seizure of the Panama Canal Zone in 1903. In fact, an American publication in Shanghai, the *Far Eastern Review*, cited this

priority as the reason for the embarrassed official silence of the U.S. government in the face of Russia's depredations on China in Mongolia. It wrote:

When the United States finally withdrew from the protracted and unsuccessful negotiations with the Republic of Columbia (Colombia) for the purchase of the Panama Canal strip, the state of Panama revolted and seceded from Columbia. . . . America immediately recognized the new government and then opened the negotiations which resulted in the purchase of the present Canal zone. . . . It would seem that Russia, profiting by the lesson taught by America had gone her one better, and when she found that it was impossible to obtain from the Chinese Government the coveted railway, mining and commercial rights in Mongolia, she availed herself of the situation caused by the general (Chinese) revolution by indirectly aiding counter-revolution in Mongolia and recognizing the independence of the latter dependency. . . . Whatever concessions are secured from the Mongolian government in Urga must therefore hold good.<sup>35</sup>

The British plan with regard to Tibet was much the same. Such manoeuvres were forms of colonial expansion, having nothing to do with "independence" for anyone.

### *The British in Tibet After World War I*

In 1918-23, in the period of warlord contention that tore China after Yuan Shikai's fall, Britain strove for ever greater control of what she called "outer Tibet". Of this the American journalist Grover Clark wrote in 1924:

The British have sold to the Tibetan authorities fairly large quantities of arms and ammunition. They have, at the Dalai's request, trained a number of Tibetans in the Indian army so that these men might go back and act as drill-masters for the Tibetan troops. They have sold many British uniforms to the Tibetans. . . .

The British have allowed a former British official — an Indian who is a British subject — to be put in charge of the Tibetan police. . . . He formerly was in the police service in Darjeeling. He first met the Dalai when the latter was staying with Sir Charles Bell in India; he visited Tibet with Sir Charles in 1919. . . . In March 1924 he was formally appointed head of the Tibetan police. This is, officially, his only post. . . . In actual practice, however, he is one of the two or three closest to the Dalai and is practically the head of the Tibetan army as well as of the postal and telegraph services. . . .

Many Indian and a few British merchants are now residing in Gyantsê. . . . A small guard of British troops is kept at Gyantsê for the protection of the British Trade Agent. . . .

The context and purpose of all this, to Clark, was quite obvious:

. . . there is no question that the British have close connections with the present Tibetan authorities, that they have reasonably full information as to the topography, resources, etc. . . . The way certainly is open to make these connections gradually more close until a British protectorate over Tibet is established.<sup>36</sup>

Control over “Outer Tibet” was intended to help penetration into “Inner Tibet” as well. This would bring the influence of the British into Sichuan Province and serve their wider and long-cherished purpose — domination over a land link all the way from British India to the valley of the Changjiang (Yangtze), already commanded by Britain’s warships and commerce.

Two different tactics were employed. The first, the military one, was to help the Dalai’s forces to move initially to Qamdo which they did in 1919, then across the Upper Changjiang (the Jinsha or Golden Sand River) to Dajianlu,<sup>37</sup> the old trading link between Tibet and Sichuan and between the Tibetan and Han-inhabited areas in general. In this matter, the British-supplied Lhasa troops were to perform the same role of fronting for imperialism as Han warlords were playing in the power-struggle for the rest of China.

The second, the diplomatic lever, was an offer to “mediate”

between the advancing Tibetans, armed and backed by Britain, and the Beijing Government. The proposed mediator was a British diplomat sent to Dajianlu, Eric Teichman. In Beijing, the pressure was applied directly by the British minister, Sir John Jordan. In Lhasa, to no one's surprise, the ubiquitous Sir Charles Bell took up residence to manipulate the Thirteenth Dalai Lama and orchestrate the process from that end.

By then, the old contest in colonialism between Britain and Czarist Russia had ceased. The latter had been overthrown by the October Revolution. The roadblock for Britain was no longer a rival imperialist power. It was the rising tide of anti-imperialism. The people's movement was mounting to unprecedented heights in China as a whole. Local anti-British sentiment in Tibet was growing. The influence radiating from the Russian revolution was making itself felt throughout colonial Asia. In India, the movement for independence was surging as ever before.<sup>38</sup>

All these factors could be seen in action. In 1920 the dispatch of Bell to Tibet as resident British representative led to many protest meetings in different parts of China. In 1921, in Lhasa itself, thousands of lamas of the huge Drepung monastery rose in arms — to be put down by Tibetan troops equipped and trained by the British. In India, patriotic newspapers condemned the extension of British colonialism to Tibet and expressed solidarity with the protests in Tibet and all China.

Bell himself, moving in Lhasa under armed escort to save him from popular wrath, had to conclude that “the Tibetans do not, it would appear, desire a complete severance of their long standing political connection with China”, and that “there is undoubtedly a pro-Chinese party in Tibet among the officials, the priests, and the people. The pro-Chinese element in Tibet should not be underestimated.”<sup>39</sup>

Considering who the writer was, and that Tibet was superficially under secessionist control, this was striking testimony to the viability of Tibet's ties of politics and feeling with the rest of China. In fact, later in the same book, Bell apparently felt he had to contradict himself and say that “the (Chinese) trade connection is the only strong

connection that Tibet as a whole desires". The two careful qualifiers in one phrase, "strong" and "as a whole", were signs of his discomfort. But even were he right, the British policy of the time would stand convicted because it sought to weaken even this "generally desired" link of trade and switch it toward India. Under British pressure, the separatists in Lhasa reduced the export tax on wool sold to foreign buyers to some four per cent. At the same time they raised by ten per cent the tax on tea from interior China, important in Tibet's staple diet.

Actually, the separatists among Tibet's local rulers were nervous about their position. On the eve of the Washington Conference of 1921 (by which the imperialists victorious in World War I sought to adjust and consolidate their resulting relationship of strength in the Far East) they took a revealing action. Fearful that the Conference would have to give at least lip-service to China's sovereignty, they declared that they would oppose any discussion on Tibet "unless Sir Charles Bell was present". So much for the "independence" they allegedly sought for Tibet. Similarly revealing were the claims the British government was simultaneously urging on the Chinese Legation in London. They included "complete control" by the Lhasa separatist clique over Tibet's "foreign affairs", "absolute independence" for Tibet in internal administration, and, poking through the veil, the building of a British railway from India to Tibet.<sup>40</sup>

Imperialism had not changed after World War I. Nor had the puppet show that went by the name of "Tibetan independence".

### *Deepening Struggle*

Time now to take a hard look at a political myth, spread worldwide by Western backers and promoters of Tibetan separatism (and parroted since the late 1960's by Soviet writers who earlier used to refute and ridicule it). This myth says that all ties with China were broken by Tibet in 1911 and for forty years afterwards remained broken, and that this represented the united will of Tibetans both high and low. Parallel to it ran the dreamland concept that all within the region was piety and quiet in those years. Its fictional reflection was

James Hilton's "Shangri-la". More recently Noel Barber, not a romancer like Hilton but a journalist and so with less excuse, penned a book called "The Land of Lost Content".

In fact, the period 1911-51 in Tibet was tumultuous, division-rife and bloody. The separatists, while in the saddle in Lhasa, never won overall support among the people or even the upper strata. Their opponents, repeatedly repressed, were never downed. The basic trend toward unity with the rest of China remained and kept resurfacing. Even elements inclined to separatism found its accompanying imperialist pressure so onerous that they often moved the other way. Charles Bell himself, when he wrote the life of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, entitled one of the final chapters (dealing with the later 1920's and early 1930's): "Dalai Lama Moves Toward China".<sup>41</sup> As for tranquillity, even the secessionist Shakabpa in writing of the years after that Dalai Lama's death (1934 to the post-World War II period) used the chapter-heading, "Whirlwind of Political Strife".<sup>42</sup>

The post-1911 period opened with the separatists' first strong bid for power. But this did not go unresisted. Bell gave an imposing list of its opponents (persons and institutions he called variously "pro-Chinese" and "anti-British"). So did Shakabpa. Here are examples:

The Panchen (Erdeni) Lama opposed the use of force to expel Chinese central government troops then in Tibet.

The important Tengyeling lamasery in Lhasa gave shelter to the attacked Chinese garrison, fought beside it and made available to it some six months' stores of provisions. In reprisal the separatists abolished the monastery, punished its leaders, and exiled and scattered its monks. In the Drepung monastery, the largest in Tibet, the Loseling College was penalized for similar reasons.

All the *kalons* or ministers of the *kashag*, the local government, were placed under arrest. The *kalon* Tsarong, along with his son and the *kashag's* secretary Kardrung Tsashagpa, were shot for "close connections with the Chinese". Phunraba, a secretary-general, Mondrong, a treasurer, and Lozang Dorje, a monk-official, were executed for "being on friendly terms with the monks from Tengyeling monastery".<sup>43</sup>

There being no local government at this point, the power in Lha-

sa, Shakabpa explains, was taken by "the war department and the Tsongdu".

The "war department" was an ad hoc body of officers with British-armed units. Foremost among them was Dazang Dadul. His appointment as commander-in-chief of the Tibetan local forces was made by the separatists from Kalimpong in India. Historically, he was a Tibetan variant of the new type of imperialist-backed warlord politicians who, after the aborted 1911 Revolution, became a divisive scourge in most other parts of China. There was also a local, archaic, twist to his rise. His reward for preparing the return of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama from Calcutta under British auspices was not confined to the lands of the slaughtered Tsarongs, father and son. He went on to appropriate as wives the daughter of the first and the widow of the second, and himself assumed the Tsarong surname. Such was the man who was favoured for years afterwards by the British authorities and press as "Tsarong, the strong man of Tibet" and by some even as the future "King of Tibet". This was their option, to be taken in case the old theocracy, and the Dalai Lama himself, should prove less useful instruments.

In 1914, at around the time of the capitulationist and invalid "Simla Treaty" for which he helped pave the way, this new "Tsarong" was made a *kalon*, adding political weight to military. Soon thereafter his foreign-equipped troops pushed into Tibetan-inhabited areas of Sichuan and Qinghai provinces.

The Tsongdu, the body coupled with the "war department", was often described in pro-separatist writings in English as the "National Assembly" of Tibet, or even, in Bell's euphemism, as its "parliament". Actually far from either, it consisted entirely of appointed officials, lay and clerical, below the *kashag* rank, and had nothing to do with the people as a whole.

Although the situation created in 1911-14 lasted into the middle 1920's, it cannot be said that "all ties" with China's central authorities were broken even then. On the Thirteenth Dalai Lama's return to Lhasa in 1913 he exchanged telegrams with Yuan Shikai, then ruling in Beijing, who re-confirmed his appointment. His pro-

nouncements did not expressly claim "independence" but mainly contended for local jurisdiction over adjacent areas.

In 1918 and again in 1921, the Thirteenth Dalai sent ecclesiastics from Lhasa to officiate in the Yunghegong Lama Temple in Beijing, another sign that not "all ties with China" were severed.

In 1923, the Panchen Erdeni Lama of the time (the Ninth Panchen) left his seat in Xigazê in Tibet for the neighbouring province of Qinghai. The chief reason was his anti-secessionism, though other factors were also involved (including disputes with the Dalai Lama over tributary areas and levies).

By 1925, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama himself seemed to be tiring of the increasing domination of Britain (and of Tsarong) in Tibetan affairs. This was the "turn to China" referred to by Bell. It was expressed in a number of actions, to wit:

Tsarong was removed first from the command of the Tibetan local forces (being replaced by Lungshar) and later from his *kalon* rank in the local government. Laden-la, the Sikkimese British subject who had been installed as chief of the Lhasa police was kicked out.

A British school opened in Gyangzê (Gyantse) in 1923 was closed in 1926.

Various proposals by Britain aimed at further expanding her influence, including one for a mail motor route within Tibet, were turned down in Lhasa.

In this same period in China's inner provinces, the mounting victories of the First Revolutionary Civil War of 1924-27 were rapidly advancing the cause of anti-warlord, anti-imperialist unification. Had this aim been reached, instead of being drowned in blood by Chiang Kai-shek who betrayed it as Yuan Shikai had betrayed the anti-monarchic revolution of 1911, the integrity of all China, including Tibet, might have been quickly restored on a truly solid foundation. With imperialism expelled and feudalism eliminated both the external and inner root causes of discord and inequality among her nationalities would have been removed.

Such results, of course, could not be expected from the regime established by Chiang Kai-shek in Nanjing in 1927, which fought against the people and leaned on imperialism. Nonetheless, after the

preceding chaotic contention among many warlords, this regime did present the semblance of a central government of China. Some Tibetans looked to it for help to prevent their region from becoming a "second India". That hope was expressed, writes Li Tieh-tseng, by the Panchen Lama to the Nanjing government in 1928.<sup>44</sup> And by the Thirteenth Dalai himself to Nanjing emissaries in 1930.<sup>45</sup>

The diehard separatists, with the usual outside backing, reacted by stepping up military attacks on provinces adjoining Tibet. Particularly serious was a clash in Garzê (Kanze) in the then Sikang Province (today the town is in Sichuan). The Chiang Kai-shek regime protested the British arming of the Tibetan troops engaged. But it took no action.

The Japanese invasion of Northeast China in 1931 contributed further to Nanjing vacillations and the Tibetan separatists' attempts to regain their supremacy in Lhasa.

In 1933, the Thirteenth Dalai died in Lhasa.

Rating Rimpoche,<sup>46</sup> a high cleric, was chosen in accordance with Tibetan custom to act as regent (until the coming of age of the next Dalai Lama). He asked China's central government to confirm him in the post, which was a return to the traditional practice.

The resumption may well have been intended by the Thirteenth Da'ai Lama. This is suggested by a testament he prepared and had publicly printed during an illness in 1931 which he thought might be his last. Recalling his own assumption of office at the age of 18 in accordance with Tibetan custom, he noted that "the great Manchu emperor, appointed by Heaven, gave me a similar order which I placed on my head", a clear indication that he deemed approval from China's head of state to be an essential legitimization of his office. He also recalled that during the British invasion by Younghusband in 1904, rather than remain in Tibet under foreign domination, he had gone "to Golden Peking, where the Sovereigns, mother and son,<sup>47</sup> treated me well beyond measure". That he chose, 30 years afterwards, to make such references clearly had contemporary significance.

In 1934, the then central government of China sent a mission headed by General Huang Musong to participate in the memorial

obsequies for the Thirteenth Dalai. Matters of China's sovereignty and the extent of Tibetan autonomy were discussed, so was the future return of the Panchen Erdeni. Huang Musong left behind him, in Lhasa, a liaison office of the central government with its own radio communications. All these steps were a challenge to the separatists and their foreign backers. But the latter managed to frustrate further such moves. Sir Charles Bell, aging and long officially retired, had a direct part in this, of which he later boasted, "I was on a private visit to Tibet. . . . I tendered certain advice, and soon afterwards Huang Musong and his chief assistants left with their purpose unfulfilled."<sup>48</sup>

The British government, moreover, demanded officially that either the Chinese central government representative and radio station must be withdrawn, or Britain must be given equal privileges in Lhasa.<sup>49</sup> As to the return of the Panchen, the Thirteenth Dalai himself had come to desire it, but Britain's envoy to China, Sir Alexander Cadogan, raised objections in Nanjing. The Panchen, who had received several appointments from the Chinese government, was to be accompanied by an escort of about 500 troops. This, Cadogan protested, would constitute "military penetration". In Lhasa, meanwhile, a mission under Sir Basil Gould, who had succeeded Bell as Britain's political officer in Sikkim, and chief handler of Tibetan affairs, also worked to block the Panchen's return. Concurrently, he groomed the separatists represented by Tsarong for a comeback.

Britain, in short, was demanding at least an equal say with China in Tibet, and actually trying to exercise the only say.

This caused new sanguinary convulsions in Lhasa itself. Within days of the Thirteenth Dalai's death, Lungshar, who had succeeded Tsarong as local army head,<sup>50</sup> was seized on a charge of conspiracy, had his eyes put out and was thrown into jail for life. He had come to feel that too much was being conceded to imperialism — and paid the penalty.

The Ninth Panchen, as a result of the shifts, never did get back to Tibet.

## THE PRE-LIBERATION DECADES

After 1937, China was subjected to full-scale Japanese invasion. The Tibetan local government, led by Rating, ordered prayers for China's victory and sent a gift of 10,000 sheepskins for the troops fighting Japan. Japan did not take a direct hand in the region, which was out of her reach. But as usual when China was invaded by one of the imperialist powers, others took the chance to increase their own penetration and influence. Britain did so in Tibet.

In 1940, a ceremony to install the present (Fourteenth) Dalai Lama, then a boy of four, was held in Lhasa. The new "incarnation" had been found in Qinghai Province and reported by Rating, as traditionally required, to the central government of China in its wartime capital Chongqing. Wu Zhongxin, chairman of its Commission on Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs was sent to officiate. Wu planned to travel to Tibet by way of India, but British authorities, as usual abetting the separatists, delayed his visa for months. Finally, arriving for the ceremony, Wu was seated alongside the main figures — including the new Dalai Lama. Basil Gould, as British representative, was assigned only a guest place. Dissatisfied, he did not attend.

Wu, while in Lhasa, arranged to convert the mission left by Huang Musong into a permanent one of the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission of China's then central government.

In other words, the struggle for and against Chinese sovereignty continued and links, though strained, were not severed.

The Kuomintang government at the time paid little attention to resisting Japan. It concentrated instead on internal repression and civil war preparations against the Communist-led forces, the backbone of national resistance. Tibet's secessionists and their backers made use of this. In 1941, they forced the regent Rating to resign, replacing him with their instrument, Taktra. In 1943 they established in Lhasa an "office of foreign affairs" through which they unsuccessfully tried to make the Chinese central government mission conduct its dealings. The intention, never achieved, was to put China in the position of a foreign state.

At World War II's end, in 1945, the secessionists in the *kashag* in

Lhasa organized a travelling group to congratulate the Allies on their victory. Again, the tune was called by the British. Hugh Richardson, their man in Lhasa, declared that "if the group should attend the National Assembly in China, the government of Tibet would be violating the Simla Convention of 1914".<sup>51</sup> From the outset of the century to its middle, from Bell to Gould to Richardson, the Tibetan secessionists were never without their foreign instigators.

In 1947, when Britain withdrew from India, Hugh Richardson stayed on in Lhasa as head of the Indian (ex-British) mission. This was only part of a wider legacy — the sanctification of the illegal Simla Convention and McMahon Line, and all the other imperialist baggage which was to make so much needless trouble between the new China and the new India.

The post-war situation in Asia was unprecedentedly complex. Its focus was the Chinese revolution's march to victory. Imperialist actions to retain and extend control of China were no longer simply a matter of cumulative acquisition. They were a last-ditch effort to prevent China, in all her regions, from throwing off all the old shackles and puppets, and being socially reborn. The moves to tear strategically-located Tibet away from such a new China had aims far more basic than the former territorial nibbling and buffer-building.

Mainly involved now in intervention, from China's coast to Tibet, was the U.S.A. But Britain's century-old contacts among the Tibetan upper class still made her a factor, even when about to leave India. As for the new Indian government, it saw itself as heir to all lands and privileges seized by the old British Raj in Tibet.

U.S. policy makers, who thought the "American century" had arrived, saw in Tibet a strategic platform for airforce and rocket installations to dominate China, the U.S.S.R. and India.<sup>52</sup> This idea had sprouted as early as 1943, when Captain Ilya Tolstoy and another officer of the OSS<sup>53</sup> had gone to Lhasa. Their immediate purpose had been to initiate a new supply route from India to the anti-Japanese fronts in China via Tibet. But they, also had more far-reaching objectives.

As since revealed,<sup>54</sup> official Chinese complaints were then made to the U.S. State Department that "Tolstoy had promised U.S. sup-

port for Tibetan separatism". And OSS chief Gen. William Donovan himself was advocating, in the midst of World War II, that radio and other equipment requested by the separatists be supplied, to "open the Tibet region . . . which will be strategically valuable in the future".<sup>55</sup> These projections were not adopted at the time, but they were to materialize later.

In 1947, when revolution and counter-revolution in all China were locked in decisive battle, the Tibetan secessionists, with their new set of backers, became desperately active. They dragged the ex-regent Rating from monastic retirement to an "investigation" he did not survive. Without religious scruple, they used artillery against the huge Sera lamasery, second largest in Tibet, which rose against this deed. Hundreds of clerics and lay adherents of unity with China lost their lives.

Also in 1947, on a wider arena, the secessionists made use of a non-governmental but officially sponsored "Asian Relations Conference" in India to project Tibet as a separate country. A big wall-map depicted it as such. A secessionist delegation arrived with its own flag. Chinese Embassy protests in Delhi were brushed aside. A web of intrigue was woven from Kalimpong and other Indian border towns.

In 1948, Britain and the U.S. admitted a "Tibetan trade delegation" (headed by Shakabpa). Its members went first to the Kuomintang capital Nanjing, but did not take out Chinese passports for travel abroad. Instead, in connivance with several foreign embassies, they obtained visas on a travel letter (handwritten in Tibetan and typed in English) issued by the *kashag*. On their journeys they thought political contacts in the U.S., in Britain (where it was received by Prime Minister Clement Attlee), and in other countries. The Chiang Kai-shek government, though already tottering, again protested.

On July 8, 1949, with foreign support, the secessionists in Lhasa told Kuomintang government personnel to shut their offices and leave. The pretext was that there were "Communists" among them. The real intent was to break the continuity of Chinese sovereignty and leave not even a toehold for any new Chinese government. It

was a last-minute move to prevent the people's revolution in China from spreading over all her national territory.

Just then, two U.S. radio commentators, the Lowell Thomases, father and son, turned up in Lhasa, ostensibly on a journalists' trip. As they revealed later, they had been briefed by General MacArthur who commanded the U.S. forces in the Far East from Tokyo, by Gen. Willoughby who headed his intelligence, and by Loy Henderson, the U.S. ambassador to India. They returned from Tibet proclaiming the urgency of sending in "modern weapons and advisers to instruct in their use". After seeing President Truman in Washington, they transmitted confidentially to the *kashag* his "hope to organize the moral forces of the world against the immoral". They passed on a proposal from U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson that a high U.S. official enter Tibet disguised as "merely another traveller" to survey the field for "a definite programme of support".<sup>56</sup> And by their own writings and broadcasts they sparked a wave of pro-separatist propaganda in the Western media.

All these manifold foreign schemes were checkmated by the People's Liberation Army's announcement that no force could stop it from freeing all China. Its subsequent advance toward and into Tibet was co-ordinated with political steps. The story of this campaign, and the consequent failure of the secessionists, is told elsewhere.<sup>57</sup> Here we will note only that external influences worked, on many levels, to frustrate peaceful unification.

The British government, in contrast to the alacrity with which the path of the separatist "trade mission" to the West had been smoothed in 1948, held up Hong Kong transit visas for Lhasa delegates who decided to go to Beijing to negotiate, thus delaying the talks.

India which had recognized the new government of China, tried to talk it into a voluntary surrender of sovereignty in Tibet. In a series of notes to Beijing, she declared that the entry of the People's Liberation Army would "give powerful support to those who are opposed to the admission of the People's Government to the United Nations" and even cause "a drift toward general war".<sup>58</sup> While voicing these dark forebodings as to what would happen if China

freed her own land, the Delhi government, having taken advantage of China's civil war, sent its army even further than the British had done in the area of the "McMahon Line".

The new China, however, was very different from the old. She made it clear that she could never be argued, or frightened, out of her own territory. Particularly she rejected the suggestion that she buy her way into her own rightful seat in the United Nations by such surrenders. The UN, at that time, was still a captive and one-sided organization. At the very moment of the Indian notes, the UN flag was flying over U.S. troops approaching China through Korea. The "drift to war", China knew, would become a reality not if she asserted and protected her sovereignty but if she wavered in doing so. For then the vast Tibetan plateau would become a place for foreign plot-spinning and base-building for coming global clashes.

## LIBERATION: THE NEW START

In not abandoning Tibet, China's Communists considered that they were performing not only their patriotic duty but also their class duty. Over more than a century, past Chinese governments had failed to defend Tibet and other minority regions from imperialist incursions. Internally, they had subjected them to national oppression and feudal exploitation. How could anyone expect the Chinese people, accomplishing at last their revolution against imperialism and feudalism to desert any nationality in the country by leaving it a prey to these forces?

Firm steps taken by the newborn People's Republic of China opened the way to solution of many previously intractable problems.

The Agreement of the Central People's Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet<sup>59</sup> was signed on May 23, 1951. It affirmed the long association of the two nationalities within multinational China. It placed the responsibility for the deepening misfortunes of the Tibetan people over the past century squarely on imperialist penetration, the reactionary policies of the old governments of China and the collusion

with imperialism of the Tibetan local authorities. It also proclaimed that the victory of the revolution, which toppled reaction in China and made her impervious to imperialist aggression, was now, at last, enabling all her nationalities, to unite as equals and stand together against their common enemies and for their common progress. It announced the right of national minorities to regional autonomy under the newly-formed Central People's Government. It obligated the local government of Tibet to work for unity and against imperialism within China's multinational family and to assist the PLA to enter Tibet to defend the borders. As a later step, the Tibetan local army was to be reorganized to become part of the PLA.

On these conditions, the Agreement declared, the central authorities would not alter the existing political system within Tibet, the status of the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Erdeni, or the positions of local functionaries. This would apply equally to formerly pro-imperialist or pro-Kuomintang officials provided they severed their old connections and refrained from opposing and undermining the Agreement.

Furthermore, freedom of religious belief would be protected. Education, the economy and people's livelihood in Tibet would be developed. The central government would not compel reforms, but the local government was pledged to carry them out on the demand of the people and in consultation with the upper strata.

Other provisions set concrete measures of implementation.

The next year the Panchen Erdeni came back to Tibet. His predecessor had left the region in 1923, never to return despite many efforts. Thus an old rift between two highest Tibetans, a split long exploited by imperialism, was bridged in the new situation.

In 1954 the Dalai Lama and Panchen Erdeni both came to Beijing and assumed posts at the highest level of China's government.

A later consequence of the Agreement was the abolition of the previous Sikang Province and the incorporation of its extensive Qamdo area in the Tibet Region.

Although there were many vicissitudes still to come, and the separatist section of the serfowners finally broke their undertakings and rebelled, the Agreement laid the foundation for true progress.

Internationally, conditions were created for finally getting rid of the legacy of past imperialist incursions into Tibet. An important step was the Sino-Indian Agreement on Trade and Intercourse Between the Tibet Region of China and India, signed on April 29, 1954, with its accompanying exchange of notes. India agreed to withdraw military escorts, implanted in British times, from Yadong and Gyangzê in Tibet; to sell to China the postal, telegraph and telephone services and equipment it had controlled in the area; and to restore lands acquired outside its trade agency at Yadong. The trade agencies of India in the Tibet region (at Yadong, Gyangzê and Gar) and of China in India (at New Delhi, Calcutta and Kalimpong) were to enjoy equal status and facilities, doing away with the unilateral privilege of British times.

Of much more than bilateral significance were the famous Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence first enunciated in this agreement; 1. Mutual respect for territory and sovereignty; 2. Mutual non-aggression; 3. Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs; 4. Equality and mutual benefit; and 5. Peaceful co-existence. A year later, these principles were to be adopted by the historic Bandung Conference of 1955, the first great gathering of the Third World. They have since become a yardstick by which all relations between states, whether of the same or of different social systems, are increasingly measured.

One legacy of imperialism, the border question between China and India (i.e. relating to the seizures mainly under British rule of areas in Tibet south of the "McMahon Line" and in other places) was not yet eliminated. It was to lead, years later, to military clashes which need not have taken place if India had followed through in the spirit of the agreement. Instead, ill-advisedly, she not only stood pat on the imperialist annexations but tried to extend them by arms with the support of both superpowers. The matters in dispute could have been resolved peaceably, as between two countries that had shaken off colonialism for good. Similar inherited problems on China's frontiers with Burma, Pakistan and Nepal were, in fact, later thus solved, acceptably to both sides, with the Five Principles as guide. Unfortunately, some Indian quarters at the time took a different stand,

seeing themselves as inheritors not only of the fruits of old British policy of frontier expansion. But this was a hiccup of the past. There is no doubt that the border problems with India will, ultimately, be solved on the same basis, a friendly and reciprocal one not relying on imperialist precedents or barking on the support of the super-powers of to-day (in their own interests and not anyone else's). It is the only way, in the interests of both countries and peoples, and therefore inevitable.

As a result of Tibet's liberation from imperialism and later from serfdom, its people leaped forward a thousand years. Alongside China's other nationalities, they started on the socialist road of revival and progress after their overlong feudal night.

As another result, Tibet ceased to be, as for a century past, a field for penetration by foreign powers, in collusion or in conflict. All this was, and is, good for international cooperation and peace.

Interim developments, of course, have involved many twists, turns and struggles. But historic progress has been made as told, in many aspects in this book.

## SLAVE AND SERF REVOLTS AND RESISTANCE IN OLD TIBET

In legends about the old “contented” Tibet, its people have been presented as traditionally satisfied and even happy with their social lot, until “stirred up by the Communists”.

Nothing could be more false.

A great landmark of Tibet’s early history was the wave of slave revolts that swept it in the ninth century. It played a decisive role in destroying the old slavery-based Tibetan monarchy, which monk chroniclers later idealized as “the age of the religious kings”, and in clearing the way for the succeeding (feudal) mode of production.

The first major slave uprising, led by Dba’s Kho-bzherlegs-steng flared up in 869 A.D. in the east near Qamdo, then moved west to the centre of royal power in Lhasa. A second, under Dba’s-lo-pholo-chung, occurred in the Lhasa area itself. A third, headed by Shud-pu-steg-rtse, began in 877 in the present Chonggyae County and went on for two decades. Its participants not only defied the reigning kings but dug up and destroyed the tombs of previous ones. “Wherever one bird took to the air a whole flock arose”, the intimidated representatives of the old aristocracy wrote of this chain-reaction of revolts. Everywhere, the big slave-owners were pursued and killed, and their castles demolished. So fierce was the final explosion of the contradictions of the old slave system, and so deep was the hatred of the slaves toward their oppressors.

Alongside these struggles, deep conflicts also arose between the remnants of the old ruling groups, and between social forces arrayed

under different religious labels. It was the combination of all three factors that brought the end of the old Tibetan monarchy.

Slave rebels killed one son of Od-srung, last ruler of the Lhasa line, and drove another into exile. Never again, after that, was there a united Tibetan kingdom. For a time there were two, one in the Lhasa area and the other in Ngari in the far west. Then came the break-up and gradual disappearance of these vestiges, and the gradual rise to power of the lamaseries.

In the feudal period that followed, the previous key contradiction in Tibet's society, between the slaves and the masters, gave place to that between the serfs and the manorial lords, whether clerical or lay. The struggles between them never ceased, though as a rule they were local and scattered, occurring now in one estate or district, now in another. At the same time, written history became more and more ecclesiastical. Its authors recorded meticulously the ceremonies attended, or grants made to religious bodies, by various potentates. But they were not interested in immortalising popular acts of defiance, but rather in consigning them to oblivion, which with the monopoly of literacy in so few hands, they were able to do.

During the last part of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th, the serfowners came into contact with imperialism and its markets. Both lay lords and lamaseries enriched themselves through the export abroad of wool requisitioned from the herdsmen. They became greedier for dues and taxes paid in money, which they needed for spending on foreign-made luxuries. Hence, their exploitation of the serfs deepened. Hence, too, the latter's resistance grew.

Here are some instances in the memory of people still living.

A local revolt took place in 1918 in the "39 tribes" pastoral area of northern Tibet which paid feudal tribute directly to the *kashag* (local government). It produced the popular heroine Hor Lhamo, today commemorated as a main figure in the famous monumental group sculpture, "Wrath of the Serfs." Hor Lhamo had gone with a delegation from 150 households to petition the *dzongpon* of Khrido County (part of present-day Dengqen), against onerous increases of corvée and taxes. When the plea was rejected, she returned to her tribe and organized and led a surprise night attack on the county seat.

In it the *dzongpon* was killed and the entire post of 45 Tibetan army soldiers disarmed. A larger military force sent to subdue the tribe, subjected it to slaughter and rapine. Hor Lhamo herself was barbarously done to death. But news of the revolt, spreading to virtually every area of Tibet, put new heart into the serfs. "Do they want to end up like the *dzongpon* of Khri-rdo?" they would say threateningly of oppressive officials.

In 1931 in Lhunzê County in the southern prefecture of Loka, an aristocrat named Tsai-pa was killed by the agricultural serfs at Byastod manor. This estate, with 300 serf families, had originally been tributary to the *kashag*. Tsai-pa, by influence and bribery, managed to have it transferred to him, with feudal obligations to himself piled on top of others still due to the *kashag*. The serfs raised the cry, "No horse can carry two saddles." They ambushed and slew Tsai-pa, beat off attacks by his followers and by local troops, then took to the mountains where they remained for a year. Their resistance continued in different forms for two decades till the peaceful liberation in 1951. Then the Lhasa authorities had to rescind the transfer and the double burden.

In June 1940, in the Nagqu pastoral area to the north, the two *dzongpons* (clerical and lay) ordered the seizure and flogging of serf-tribesmen from Amdo County who had come for traditional festival horse races. Members of eight other Amdo tribes, also there for the occasion, broke into the county castle, released the victims, and beat up the two *dzongpons*. Their leader was a serf herdsman named Anpei. Their slogan was, "Beat all wearers of yellow robes" (i.e. upper officials). They took over the running of the horse race and paraded the two *dzongpons* in public disgrace, sparing their lives only on the intercession of a temple.

In 1942, in Xigazê prefecture, serfs assembled to work on the autumn harvest on a big estate beat its steward to death after he had one of them flogged.

In 1948, the head steward under the *dzongpon* of Nagqu imposed added burdens on the Rdo-ring Ru-ba tribe. Petitioners sent to complain were tied up and whipped. Coming back in greater num-

bers, the tribesmen dragged the steward from his own house and beat him severely.

In 1949, the *dzongpon* of Medog County had a serf named Lo-sang detained and tortured. Other serfs, in a large angry crowd, forced his release. The local government, to allay a threatening situation, had to replace this *dzongpon*.

In May 1951, in Tibet's far west, Sonam Rinchen, *dzongpon* of Burang County in Ngari Prefecture, put pressure on the people to pay a tax on tea before its due time. Several protesters were jailed. In September, after they had been held for four months, a furious assemblage forced their release.

In the Exhibition of the Tibetan Revolution in Lhasa, there is a tabulation of scores of such sharp clashes. They were only a small proportion of the total.

Resistance by serfs also included slowdowns in work and evasions of rents, corvée and taxes. Serfs bound to perform work on the estate-owners' home farms neglected or botched it as much as they could. In the pastures, herdsmen on forced labour would shear twenty sheep a day; while with animals of their own, they could shear sixty. For corvée of all kinds, efforts were made to send the weakest and poorest workers.

Religious corvée, i.e. the forcing of people to become monks, was also frequently sabotaged. In 1948, pastoral tribes in Nagqu were ordered to provide 60 men and boys for under-strength lama-series. Acting jointly, they created delays and finally sent only 25 novices. Most of these, moreover, ran off within a short period.

Barley and wool exacted as feudal dues, or bought up by compulsion at low prices, were adulterated in every possible way. In 1929, when the local government stepped up methods to get control of all wool to be exported through India, admixtures ranging from pebbles to dead dogs were found in the bales.

In the feudal circumstances of Tibet, a major form of serf resistance was escape. Sometimes the exodus was almost complete. One group of four villages in the Bomi area in eastern Tibet had 221 households in 1927, but by 1952 only 44 remained. In the years following lib-

eration, and in particular the democratic reform, many people who had deserted their native places came back.

Between 1951 and 1955, when the PLA was already in Tibet but the local serf system still continued, the instances of resistance to the latter multiplied, as did the variety of methods.

The centuries-old resistance of Tibet's serfs and slaves came to its climax in the great finale — their active support for the crushing of the reactionary rebellion, and their mass participation in the democratic reform, i.e. the revolution that extinguished feudalism in Tibet.

IMPORTANT CHINESE COMMUNIST  
PARTY POLICY STATEMENTS AND NEW  
CHINA'S CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS  
CONCERNING NATIONALITIES

(Arranged Chronologically)

[Excerpts]

ON COALITION GOVERNMENT\*

Mao Zedong

April 24, 1945

IV. THE POLICY OF THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY:  
OUR SPECIFIC PROGRAMME

9. The Problem of the Minority Nationalities.

The anti-popular clique of the Kuomintang denies that many nationalities exist in China, and labels all excepting the Han nationality as "tribes". It has taken over the reactionary policy of the governments of the Qing Dynasty and of the Northern warlords in relation to the minority nationalities, oppressing and exploiting them in every possible way. Clear cases in point are the massacre of Mongolians of the Ikhchao League in 1943, the armed suppression of the minority nationalities in Xinjiang since 1944 and the massacres of the

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\* This was the political report made to the Seventh National Congress of the Communist Party of China. Text from *Selected Works of Mao Tsetung*, Vol. III (Beijing, 1965), pp. 205-68.

Hui people in Gansu Province in recent years. These are manifestations of a wrong Han-chauvinistic ideology and policy.

In 1924 Dr. Sun Yat-sen wrote in the Manifesto of the First National Congress of the Kuomintang that "the Kuomintang's Principle of Nationalism has a twofold meaning, first, the liberation of the Chinese nation, and second, the equality of all the nationalities in China" and that "the Kuomintang solemnly declares that it recognizes the right to self-determination of all the nationalities in China and that a free and united republic of China (a free union of all the nationalities) will be established when the anti-imperialist and anti-warlord revolution is victorious".

The Communist Party of China is in full agreement with Dr. Sun's policy on nationalities as stated here. Communists must actively help the people of all the minority nationalities to fight for it, and help them, including all their leaders who have ties with the masses, to fight for their political, economic and cultural emancipation and development and to establish their own armies which will safeguard the people's interests. Their spoken and written languages, their manners and customs and their religious beliefs must be respected.

The attitude which the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region and the Liberated Areas in northern China have for years adopted towards the Mongolian and Hui nationalities is correct, and the work they have done has been fruitful.

## COMMON PROGRAMME OF THE CHINESE PEOPLE'S POLITICAL CONSULTATIVE CONFERENCE, 1949\*

### Chapter VI: POLICY TOWARD NATIONALITIES

#### Article 50

All nationalities within the boundaries of the People's Republic of China are equal. Unity and mutual help shall be effected among

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\* Until 1954, the Common Programme served as the provisional constitution of the People's Republic of China.

them to oppose imperialism and the public enemies within these nationalities, so that the People's Republic of China will become a big fraternal and co-operative family of all nationalities. Greater Han nationalism and chauvinism shall be opposed. Acts of discrimination, oppression, and splitting the unity of the various nationalities shall be prohibited.

#### Article 51

Regional autonomy shall be carried out in areas where national minorities are aggregated and autonomous organs of the various nationalities shall be set up according to their respective population and size of the region. The various nationalities shall have an appropriate number of representatives in the local organs of state power in places where various nationalities live together and in the autonomous areas of national minorities.

#### Article 52

The nationalities within the boundaries of the People's Republic of China have the right to join the People's Liberation Army and organize local people's public security forces in accordance with the unified military system of the State.

#### Article 53

All national minorities have the right freely to develop their dialects and languages and to preserve or reform their customs, habits, and religious beliefs. The People's Government shall help the masses of the people of all national minorities to develop their political, economic, cultural and educational construction work.

THE AGREEMENT OF  
THE CENTRAL PEOPLE'S GOVERNMENT AND  
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF TIBET ON MEASURES  
FOR THE PEACEFUL LIBERATION OF TIBET

*Signed in Beijing on May 23, 1951*

(Preamble omitted)

1. The Tibetan people shall unite and drive out imperialist aggressive forces from Tibet; the Tibetan people shall return to the big 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 nationalities laid down in the Common Programme of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the Tibetan people have the right of exercising 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 ranks shall hold office as usual.

5. The established status, functions and powers of the Panchen Erdeni shall be maintained.

6. By the established status, functions and powers of the Dalai Lama and of the Panchen Erdeni are meant the status, functions and powers of the 13th Dalai Lama and of the 9th Panchen Erdeni when they were in friendly and amicable relations with each other.

7. The policy of freedom of religious belief laid down in the Common Programme of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference shall be carried out. The religious beliefs, customs and 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 should carry out reforms of its own accord, and when the people raise demands for reform, they shall be settled by means of consultation with the leading personnel of Tibet.

12. In so far 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 all 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 the area of Tibet; and there will be peaceful co-existence with neighbouring countries and 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 and sealed by:

Delegates with full powers of the Central People's Government:

Chief Delegate:

Li Weihan

Delegates:

Zhang Jingwu

Zhang Guohua

Sun Zhiyuan

Delegates with full powers of the Local Government of Tibet:

Chief Delegate:

Kaloon Ngapo Ngawang Jigme

Delegates:

Dzasak Khemey Sonam Wangdi

Khentrung Thupten Thanthar

Khenchung Thupten Lekmuun

Rimshi Samposey Tenzin Thundup

Beijing, May 23, 1951.

ON THE POLICIES FOR OUR WORK IN TIBET —  
DIRECTIVE OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF  
THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA\*

Mao Zedong

*April 6, 1952*

The Central Committee essentially approves the instructions which the Southwest Bureau and the Southwest Military Area cabled on April 2 to the Working Committee and Military Area in Tibet. It holds that the basic policies (except the point about reorganizing the Tibetan troops) and the various specific steps set forth in the telegram are correct. Only by following them can our army establish itself in an invulnerable position in Tibet.

Conditions in Tibet are different from those in Xinjiang. Tibet compares poorly with Xinjiang, whether politically or economically. But even in Xinjiang, the first thing the army units under Wang Zhen did when they got there was to pay the utmost attention to strict budgeting, self-reliance and production for their own needs. They have now gained a firm foothold and won the warm support of the minority nationalities. They are carrying out the reduction of rent and interest and will proceed to agrarian reform this winter, and by then we can be sure of even greater support from the masses. Xinjiang is well connected with the heartland of the country by motor roads, and this is of great help in improving the material welfare of the minority nationalities.

As for Tibet, neither rent reduction nor agrarian reform can start for at least two or three years. While several hundred thousand Han

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\* Text from *Selected Works of Mao Tsetung*, Vol. V (Beijing, 1977), pp. 73-76 (with some of the longer paragraphs divided for easier reading.)

This was an inner-Party directive drafted for the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party which was sent to the Southwest Bureau and the Working Committee in Tibet and communicated to the Northwest Bureau and the Xinjiang Sub-Bureau.

people live in Xinjiang, there are hardly any in Tibet, where our army finds itself in a totally different minority nationality area. We depend solely on two basic policies to win over the masses and put ourselves in an invulnerable position.

The first is strict budgeting coupled with production for the army's own needs, and thus the exertion of influence on the masses; this is the key link. Even when highways are built, we cannot count on moving large quantities of grain over them. India will probably agree to send grain and other goods to Tibet on the basis of exchange, but the stand we must take is that our army should be able to carry on even if India stops sending them some day. We must do our best and take proper steps to win over the Dalai and the majority of his top echelon and to isolate the handful of bad elements in order to achieve a gradual, bloodless transformation of the Tibetan economic and political system over a number of years; on the other hand, we must be prepared for the eventuality of the bad elements leading the Tibetan troops in rebellion and attacking us, so that in this contingency our army could still carry on and hold out in Tibet. It all depends on strict budgeting and production for the army's own needs. Only with this fundamental policy as the cornerstone of our work can we achieve our aim.

The second policy, which can and must be put into effect, is to establish trade relations with India and with the heartland of our country and to attain a general balance in supplies to and from Tibet so that the standard of living of the Tibetan people will in no way fall because of our army's presence but will improve through our efforts.

If we cannot solve the two problems of production and trade, we shall lose the material base for our presence, the bad elements will cash in and will not let a single day pass without inciting the backward elements among the people and the Tibetan troops to oppose us, and our policy of uniting with the many and isolating the few will become ineffectual and fail.

Of all the views set forth in the Southwest Bureau's telegram of April 2 there is only one that calls for further consideration; what I refer to is the feasibility and advisability of reorganizing the Tibetan

troops and setting up a military and administrative commission fairly soon.

It is our opinion that the Tibetan troops should not be reorganized at present, nor should formal military sub-areas or a military and administrative commission be established. For the time being leave everything as it is, let this situation drag on, and do not take up these questions until our army is able to meet its own needs through production and wins the support of the masses a year or two from now. In the meantime there are two possibilities. One is that our united front policy towards the upper stratum, a policy of uniting with the many and isolating the few, will take effect and that the Tibetan people will gradually draw closer to us, so the bad elements and the Tibetan troops will not dare to rebel. The other possibility is that the bad elements, thinking we are weak and can be bullied, may lead the Tibetan troops in rebellion and that our army will counter-attack in self-defence and deal them telling blows. Either will be favourable for us.

As the top echelon in Tibet sees it, there is no sufficient reason now for implementing the Agreement<sup>1</sup> in its entirety or for reorganizing the Tibetan troops. But things will be different in a few years. By then they will probably find that they have no choice but to carry out the Agreement to the full and to reorganize the Tibetan troops. If the Tibetan troops start one or even several rebellions and are repulsed by our army each time, we will be all the more justified in reorganizing them.

Apparently not only the two Silons<sup>2</sup> but also the Dalai and most of his clique were reluctant to accept the Agreement and are unwilling to carry it out. As yet we don't have a material base for this purpose in terms of support among the masses or in the upper stratum. To force its implementation will do more harm than good. Since they

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<sup>1</sup>This refers to the "Agreement Between the Central People's Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet", May 23, 1951.

<sup>2</sup>The "Silons" were the highest ranking administrative officials under the Dalai Lama. The two Silons referred to here were the reactionary serfowners Lukhangwa and Lozang Tashi.

are unwilling to put the Agreement into effect, well then, we can leave it for the time being and wait.

The longer the delay, the stronger will be our position and the weaker theirs. Delay will not do us much harm; on the contrary, it may be to our advantage. Let them go on with their insensate atrocities against the people, while we on our part concentrate on good deeds — production, trade, road-building, medical services and united front work (unity with the majority and patient education) so as to win over the masses and bide our time before taking up the question of the full implementation of the Agreement. If they are not in favour of the setting up of primary schools, that can stop too.

The recent demonstration in Lhasa should be viewed not merely as the work of the two Silons and other bad elements but as a signal to us from the majority of the Dalai clique. Their petition is very tactful because it indicates not a wish for a break with us but only a wish for concessions from us. One of the terms gives the hint that the practice of the Qing Dynasty should be restored, in other words, that no Liberation Army units should be stationed in Tibet, but this is not what they are really after. They know fully well that this is impossible; their attempt is to trade this term for other terms. The Fourteenth Dalai is criticized in the petition so as to absolve him from any political responsibility for the demonstration. They pose as protectors of the interests of the Tibetan nationality, being aware that while they are inferior to us in military strength, they have an advantage over us in social influence. We should accept this petition in substance (not in form) and put off the full implementation of the Agreement.

The timing of the demonstration to take place before the Panchen's arrival in Lhasa was deliberate. After his arrival they will probably go all out to work on him to join their clique. If on our part we do our work well and the Panchen does not fall into their trap but reaches Xigazê safe and sound, the situation will then become more favourable to us.

Nevertheless, since neither our lack of a material base nor their advantage over us in social influence will change for the time being, neither will the unwillingness of the Dalai clique to carry out the Agreement fully. At present, in appearance we should take the offen-

sive and should censure the demonstration and the petition for being unjustifiable (for undermining the Agreement), but in reality we should be prepared to make concessions and to go over to the offensive in the future (i.e., put the Agreement into force) when conditions are ripe.

What are your views? Please consider and wire your reply.

### CRITICIZE HAN CHAUVINISM\*

Mao Zedong

*March 16, 1953*

In some places the relations between nationalities are far from normal. For Communists this is an intolerable situation. We must go to the root and criticize the Han chauvinist ideas which exist to a serious degree among many Party members and cadres, namely, the reactionary ideas of the landlord class and the bourgeoisie, or the ideas characteristic of the Kuomintang, which are manifested in the relations between nationalities. Mistakes in this respect must be corrected at once. Delegations led by comrades who are familiar with our nationality policy and full of sympathy for our minority nationality compatriots still suffering from discrimination should be sent to visit the areas where there are minority nationalities, make a serious effort at investigation and study and help Party and government organizations in the localities discover and solve problems. The visits should not be those of "looking at flowers on horseback".

Judging from the mass of information on hand, the Central Committee holds that wherever there are minority nationalities the general

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\* Text from *Selected Works*, Vol. V, pp. 87-88.

This was an inner-Party directive drafted for the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party.

rule is that there are problems calling for solution, and in some cases very serious ones. On the surface all is quiet, but actually there are some very serious problems. What has come to light in various places in the last two or three years shows that Han chauvinism exists almost everywhere. It will be very dangerous if we fail now to give timely education and resolutely overcome Han chauvinism in the Party and among the people. The problem in the relations between nationalities which reveals itself in the Party and among the people in many places is the existence of Han chauvinism to a serious degree and not just a matter of its vestiges. In other words, bourgeois ideas dominate the minds of those comrades and people who have no Marxist education and have not grasped the nationality policy of the Central Committee. Therefore, education must be assiduously carried out so that this problem can be solved step by step. Moreover, the newspapers should publish more articles based on specific facts to criticize Han chauvinism openly and educate the Party members and the people.

## FIRST CONSTITUTION OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA 1954

### PREAMBLE

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All nationalities of our country are united in one great family of free and equal nationalities. This unity of China's nationalities will continue to gain in strength, founded as it is on ever-growing friendship and mutual aid among themselves, and on the struggle against imperialism, against public enemies of the people within the nationalities, and against both dominant-nation chauvinism and local nationalism. In the course of economic and cultural development, the state will concern itself with the needs of the different nationalities, and,

in the matter of socialist transformation, pay full attention to the special characteristics in the development of each.

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## CHAPTER I GENERAL PRINCIPLES

### Article 3

The People's Republic of China is a single multinational state.

All the nationalities are equal. Discrimination against, or oppression of, any nationality, and acts which undermine the unity of the nationalities are prohibited.

All the nationalities have freedom to use and foster the growth of their spoken and written languages, and to preserve or reform their own customs or ways.

Regional autonomy applies in areas where people of national minorities live in compact communities. National autonomous areas are inalienable parts of the People's Republic of China.

## CHAPTER II THE STATE STRUCTURE

### Article 23

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The number of deputies to the National People's Congress, including those representing national minorities, and the manner of their election, are prescribed by electoral law.

### Article 34

The National People's Congress establishes a Nationalities Committee, a Bills Committee, a Budget Committee, a Credentials Committee and other necessary committees.

The Nationalities Committee and the Bills Committee are under the direction of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress when the National People's Congress is not in session.

#### Article 49

The State Council exercises the following functions and powers:  
(Paragraphs 1 to 9 omitted)

#### Article 53

The administrative division of the People's Republic of China is as follows:

(1) The country is divided into provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities directly under the central authority;

(2) Provinces and autonomous regions are divided into autonomous zhou, counties, autonomous counties, and municipalities; and

(3) Counties and autonomous counties are divided into xiang, nationality xiang, and towns.

Municipalities directly under the central authority and other large municipalities are divided into districts. Autonomous zhou are divided into counties, autonomous counties, and municipalities.

Autonomous regions, autonomous zhou and autonomous counties are all national autonomous areas.

#### Article 60

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The people's congresses of nationality xiang may, within the limits of the authority prescribed by law, take specific measures appropriate to the characteristics of the nationalities concerned.

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#### Article 71

In performing their duties, organs of self-government of all autonomous regions, autonomous zhou and autonomous counties employ

the spoken and written language or languages commonly used in the locality.

### Article 72

The higher organs of state should fully safeguard the right of organs of self-government of all autonomous regions, autonomous zhou and autonomous counties to exercise autonomy, and should assist the various national minorities in their political, economic and cultural development.

### Article 77

Citizens of all nationalities have the right to use their own spoken and written languages in court proceedings. The people's courts are to provide interpretation for any party unacquainted with the spoken or written language commonly used in the locality.

## ON THE TEN MAJOR RELATIONSHIPS\*

Mao Zedong

*April 25, 1956*

### VI. The Relationship Between the Han Nationality and the Minority Nationalities

Comparatively speaking, our policy on the relationship between the Han nationality and the minority nationalities is sound and has won the favour of the minority nationalities. We put the emphasis on

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\* Text from *Selected Works*, Vol. V, pp. 284-306.

This was a speech at an enlarged meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party.

opposing Han chauvinism. Local-nationality chauvinism must be opposed too, but generally that is not where our emphasis lies.

The population of the minority nationalities in our country is small, but the area they inhabit is large. The Han people comprise 94 per cent of the total population, an overwhelming majority. If they practised Han chauvinism and discriminated against the minority peoples, that would be very bad. And who has more land? The minority nationalities, who occupy 50 to 60 per cent of the territory. We say China is a country vast in territory, rich in resources and large in population; as a matter of fact, it is the Han nationality whose population is large and the minority nationalities whose territory is vast and whose resources are rich, or at least in all probability their resources under the soil are rich.

The minority nationalities have all contributed to the making of China's history. The huge Han population is the result of the intermingling of many nationalities over a long time. All through the ages, the reactionary rulers, chiefly from the Han nationality, sowed feelings of estrangement among our various nationalities and bullied the minority peoples. Even among the working people it is not easy to eliminate the resultant influences in a short time. So we have to make extensive and sustained efforts to educate both the cadres and the masses in our proletarian nationality policy and make a point of frequently reviewing the relationship between the Han nationality and the minority nationalities. One such review was made two years ago and there should be another now. If the relationship is found to be abnormal, then we must deal with it in earnest and not just in words.

We need to make a thorough study of what systems of economic management and finance will suit the minority nationality areas.

We must sincerely and actively help the minority nationalities to develop their economy and culture. In the Soviet Union the relationship between the Russian nationality and the minority nationalities is very abnormal; we should draw lessons from this. The air in the atmosphere, the forests on the earth and the riches under the soil are all important factors needed for the building of socialism, but no material factor can be exploited and utilized without the human factor. We must foster good relations between the Han nationality

and the minority nationalities and strengthen the unity of all the nationalities in the common endeavour to build our great socialist motherland.

## ON THE CORRECT HANDLING OF CONTRADICTIONS AMONG THE PEOPLE\*

Mao Zedong

*February 27, 1957*

### VI. THE QUESTION OF THE MINORITY NATIONALITIES

The minority nationalities in our country number more than thirty million. Although they constitute only 6 per cent of the total population, they inhabit extensive regions which comprise 50 to 60 per cent of China's total area. It is thus imperative to foster good relations between the Han people and the minority nationalities. The key to this question lies in overcoming Han chauvinism. At the same time, efforts should also be made to overcome local-nationality chauvinism, wherever it exists among the minority nationalities. Both Han chauvinism and local-nationality chauvinism are harmful to the unity of the nationalities; they represent one kind of contradiction among the people which should be resolved. We have already done some work to this end. In most of the areas inhabited by minority nationalities, there has been considerable improvement in the relations between the nationalities, but a number of problems remain to be solved. In some areas, both Han chauvinism and local-nationality chauvinism still exist to a serious degree, and this demands full attention. As a

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\* Text from *Selected Works*, Vol. V, pp. 384-412.

This was a speech at the Eleventh Session (Enlarged) of the Supreme State Conference

result of the efforts of the people of all nationalities over the last few years, democratic reforms and socialist transformation have in the main been completed in most of the minority nationality areas. Democratic reforms have not yet been carried out in Tibet because conditions are not ripe. According to the seventeen-article agreement reached between the Central People's Government and the local government of Tibet, the reform of the social system must be carried out, but the timing can only be decided when the great majority of the people of Tibet and the local leading public figures consider it opportune, and one should not be impatient. It has now been decided not to proceed with democratic reforms in Tibet during the period of the Second Five-Year Plan [1958-62 — *Ed.*]. Whether to proceed with them in the period of the Third Five-Year Plan can only be decided in the light of the situation at the time.

CONCERNING THE REBELLION IN TIBET\*  
Excerpts from Premier Zhou Enlai's Report on the Work  
of the Government to the  
First Session of the National People's Congress

*April 18, 1959*

The recent armed rebellion of the former local government of Tibet and the reactionary clique of the upper social strata in Tibet, aimed at betraying the motherland and disrupting unity, has already met with ignominious defeat. The government has ordered the dissolution of the former local government of Tibet (the *kashag*) and enjoined the Preparatory Committee for the Autonomous Region of Tibet to assume the functions and exercise the powers of local government so that local national autonomy may be speedily realized and

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\* Heading added for this book. — I.E.

democratic reforms instituted step by step in Tibet. This measure is warmly welcomed by the broad mass of patriotic people in Tibet, both clerics and laymen. This is a great victory for our policy of national unity. . . .

The policy of the Central People's Government in regard to the Tibet region has always been clear. In accordance with the stipulations of the Constitution, we have always adhered to the principle of the unity of all the nationalities of our country and the unity of the Tibetan people themselves, and have stood for the institution of local autonomy in Tibet. The People's Government has always adhered to the policy of respecting freedom of religious belief and has taken various positive measures to help the economic and cultural development of the Tibet Region. . . .

According to the 17-article agreement on the peaceful liberation of Tibet in 1951, the local government of Tibet should unite the people and drive the aggressive forces of imperialism out of Tibet; and the backward social system of Tibet must be reformed. In view of the state of mind of people of the upper social strata in Tibet, we agreed that the reforms there could be put off a bit so as to allow time for the former local government of Tibet and people of the upper social strata to give full consideration to the question. But the former local government and the reactionary clique of the upper social strata continued their collusion with the imperialists, the Chiang Kai-shek gang and foreign reactionaries on whose forces they attempted to rely in order to split the motherland, restore the imperialist aggressive forces in Tibet, and preserve the backward, dark and cruel serfdom in Tibet. They did not at all want to put into effect democratic local autonomy with the participation of the people, but persistently obstructed the progress of preparatory work for setting up the Tibetan Autonomous Region.

Their activities gravely violated the interests of the Tibetan people and the common interests of all the nationalities throughout the country. That is why their rebellion was instantly and firmly opposed by the people of all nationalities throughout the country, and first and foremost by the broad mass of the Tibetan people, including many patriotic and progressive people of the upper strata. The reactionaries

were totally mistaken in their appraisal of the situation. They failed to see that the days have long since passed when the imperialists could manipulate China's internal affairs as they pleased.

The situation in Tibet is now completely under control by the Tibetan Military Area Command of the PLA and the Preparatory Committee for the Autonomous Region of Tibet. . . . The Preparatory Committee has begun to assume the functions and powers of local government. As for future social reforms in Tibet, the Central Government will conduct full consultations with patriotic people of the upper and middle social strata and the masses in all walks of life to decide on the time, steps and measures. In any case, the reforms will be carried out step by step with full regard for the specific conditions in Tibet, and in the course of the reforms the religious beliefs and customs and habits of the Tibetan people will be fully respected and the fine aspects of Tibetan culture will be upheld and developed. Although the Dalai Lama has been abducted to India, we still hope he will be able to free himself from the grip of the rebels and return to the motherland. . . .

There are now some people abroad who are harping on their sympathy for the Tibetans. But they do not make clear which section of the Tibetans they sympathize with — the working people and the progressives who demand and support reform and the middle-of-the-roaders who can be won over amounting to over 1,100,000 people — or the handful of reactionaries. We hope that all well-intentioned friends — I refer to those who are willing to persist in practising the five principles of peaceful co-existence with our country and have declared for non-interference in China's internal affairs — will in the first place note this clear distinction between the overwhelming majority and the small handful. . . .

Tibet is China's territory and the rebellion of the Tibetan reactionaries and its suppression are China's internal affair. Even the imperialists bent on carrying out aggression against Tibet cannot deny these facts. . . .

Friendship has existed for well over 2,000 years between China

and India which, moreover, are the initiators of the five principles of peaceful co-existence. There is no reason at all why either of our two countries should let a handful of Tibetan rebels shake our mutual friendship and the principles in foreign relations jointly adhered to by our two countries. It is true that, before the defeat of the rebellion in Tibet, the Tibetan reactionaries and certain foreign reactionaries made use of certain areas on the Sino-Indian border to carry out activities designed to disrupt the unity of our country and undermine Sino-Indian friendship. The plans of these reactionaries, however, have already fallen through. It is our hope that with the suppression of the rebellion in Tibet and through the joint efforts of China and India, we will lay an even firmer foundation for, and secure an even more flourishing development of, friendly relations between our two great peace-loving countries in Asia with their populations totalling more than 1,000 million people. All the vicious provocations of those who are deliberately seeking to disrupt Sino-Indian friendship will come to naught.

## CONSTITUTION OF 1975

### CHAPTER I GENERAL PRINCIPLES

#### Article 4

The People's Republic of China is a unitary multinational state. The areas where regional national autonomy is exercised are all inalienable parts of the People's Republic of China.

All the nationalities are equal. Big-nationality chauvinism and local-nationality chauvinism must be opposed.

All the nationalities have the freedom to use their own spoken and written languages.

#### SECTION IV THE ORGANS OF SELF-GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL AUTONOMOUS AREAS

##### Article 24

The autonomous regions, autonomous prefectures and autonomous counties are all national autonomous areas; their organs of self-government are people's congresses and revolutionary committees.

The organs of self-government of national autonomous areas, apart from exercising the functions and powers of local organs of state as specified in Chapter Two, Section III of the Constitution, may exercise autonomy within the limits of their authority as prescribed by law.

The higher organs of state shall fully safeguard the exercise of autonomy by the organs of self-government of national autonomous areas and actively support the minority nationalities in carrying out the socialist revolution and socialist construction.

#### CHAPTER III THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF CITIZENS

##### Article 28

Citizens enjoy . . . freedom to believe in religion and freedom not to believe in religion and to propagate atheism.

### CONSTITUTION OF 1978

#### CHAPTER I GENERAL PRINCIPLES

##### Article 4

The People's Republic of China is a unitary multinational state. All the nationalities are equal. There should be unity and frater-

nal love among the nationalities and they should help and learn from each other. Discrimination against, or oppression of, any nationality, and acts which undermine the unity of the nationalities are prohibited. Big-nationality chauvinism and local-nationality chauvinism must be opposed.

All the nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages, and to preserve or reform their own customs and ways.

Regional autonomy applies in an area where a minority nationality lives in a compact community. All the national autonomous areas are inalienable parts of the People's Republic of China.

#### SECTION IV THE ORGANS OF SELF-GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL AUTONOMOUS AREAS

##### Article 39

The organs of self-government of national autonomous areas exercise autonomy within the limits of their authority as prescribed by law, in addition to exercising the function and powers of local organs of state as specified by the Constitution.

The organs of self-government of national autonomous areas may, in the light of the political, economic and cultural characteristics of the nationality or nationalities in a given area, make regulations on the exercise of autonomy and also specific regulations and submit them to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress for approval.

In performing their functions, the organs of self-government of national autonomous areas employ the spoken and written language or languages commonly used by the nationality or nationalities in the locality.

##### Article 40

The higher organs of state shall fully safeguard the exercise of autonomy by the organs of self-government of national autonomous

areas, take into full consideration the characteristics and needs of the various minority nationalities, make a major effort to train cadres of the minority nationalities, and actively support and assist all the minority nationalities in their socialist revolution and construction and thus advance their socialist economic and cultural development.

### CHAPTER III THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF CITIZENS

#### Article 46

Citizens enjoy freedom to believe in religion and freedom not to believe in religion and to propagate atheism.

### RESOLUTION ON CERTAIN QUESTIONS IN THE HISTORY OF OUR PARTY SINCE THE FOUNDING OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

June 27, 1981

*(Adopted by the 6th Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China)*

#### Section 5

The victorious Chinese revolution put an end to the rule of a handful of exploiters over the masses of the working people and to the enslavement of the Chinese people of all nationalities by the imperialists and colonialists. The working people have become the masters of the state and the new society. . . .

#### Section 35, para. 7

It is of profound significance to our multinational country to improve and promote socialist relations among our various nationalities

and strengthen national unity. In the past, particularly during the “cultural revolution”, we committed, on the question of nationalities, the grave mistake of widening the scope of class struggle and wronged a large number of cadres and masses of the minority nationalities. In our work among them, we did not show due respect for their right to autonomy. We must never forget this lesson. We must have a clear understanding that relations among our nationalities today are, in the main, relations among the working people of the various nationalities. It is necessary to persist in their regional autonomy and enact laws and regulations to ensure their autonomy and their decision-making power in applying Party and government policies according to the actual conditions in their regions. We must take effective measures to assist economic and cultural development in regions inhabited by minority nationalities, actively train and promote cadres from among them and resolutely oppose all words and deeds undermining national unity and equality. It is imperative to continue to implement the policy of freedom of religious belief. To uphold the four fundamental principles [the socialist road, the people’s democratic dictatorship (i.e. the dictatorship of the proletariat), the leadership of the Communist Party, Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought. — *Ed.*] does not mean that religious believers should renounce their faith but that they must not engage in propaganda against Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought and that they must not interfere with politics and education in their religious activities.

## DRAFT CONSTITUTION OF 1982

### PREAMBLE

... The people of all nationalities in China have jointly created a splendid culture and a glorious revolutionary tradition.

... The People's Republic of China is a unitary multinational state built up jointly by the people of all nationalities. Socialist relations of equality, unity and mutual assistance have been established among them and will continue to be strengthened. In the struggle to safeguard the unity of the nationalities, it is necessary to combat big-nation chauvinism, mainly Han chauvinism. The state does its utmost to promote the common prosperity of all nationalities in the country.

... The people of all China's nationalities, all state organs, and armed forces, all political parties and public organizations and all enterprises and undertakings in the country must take the Constitution as the basic norm of conduct and they have the duty to uphold the dignity of the Constitution and ensure its implementation.

#### Article 4

All nationalities in the People's Republic of China are equal. The state protects the lawful rights and interests of the minority nationalities and upholds and develops the relationship of equality, unity and mutual assistance among all of China's nationalities. Discrimination against or oppression of any nationality, and acts which undermine the unity between them are prohibited; big-nationality chauvinism and local-nationality chauvinism must be opposed.

Regional autonomy is practised in areas where people of minority nationalities live in compact communities; in these areas organs of self-government are established for the exercise of the right of autonomy. All the national autonomous areas are inalienable parts of the People's Republic of China.

The people of all nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages, and to preserve or reform their own ways and customs.

#### Article 29

All autonomous regions, autonomous prefectures and autonomous counties are national autonomous areas.

### Article 33

Citizens of the People's Republic of China who have reached the age of eighteen, with the exception of persons deprived of political rights by law, have the right to vote and stand for election irrespective of their nationality, race, sex, occupation, family origin, religious belief, education, property status, or length of residence.

### Article 35

Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief.

No organs of state, public organizations or individuals shall compel citizens to believe in religion or disbelieve in religion, nor shall they discriminate against citizens who believe, or do not believe, in religion.

The state protects legitimate religious activities. No one may use religion to carry out counter-revolutionary activities or activities that disrupt public order, harm the health of citizens or obstruct the educational system of the state.

### Article 56

The National People's Congress is composed of deputies elected by the provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government, and by the armed forces. All the minority nationalities are entitled to appropriate representation.

### Article 63

Minority nationalities are entitled to appropriate representation on the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress.

### Article 67

The chairman or a vice-chairman of the standing committee of the people's congress of each province, autonomous region and municipality directly under the Central Government attends the sessions of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress.

## Article 98

Organs of self-government are established in autonomous regions, autonomous prefectures and autonomous counties. The organization and work of organs of self-government are specified in Section VI of Chapter Three of the Constitution.

## Article 102

The people's congresses of nationality townships may, within the limits of their authority as prescribed by law, take specific measures suited to the characteristics of the nationalities concerned.

SECTION VI THE ORGANS OF SELF-GOVERNMENT OF  
NATIONAL AUTONOMOUS AREAS

## Article 114

The organs of self-government of national autonomous areas are the people's congresses and people's governments of autonomous regions, autonomous prefectures and autonomous counties.

The organization of the organs of self-government of national autonomous areas shall conform to the basic principles governing the organization of local organs of state as specified in Section V of Chapter Three of the Constitution.

## Article 115

In addition to the deputies of the nationality or nationalities exercising regional autonomy in a given administrative area, the other nationalities inhabiting the same area are entitled to appropriate representation in people's congresses of autonomous regions, autonomous prefectures and autonomous counties, and the number of deputies of the nationalities concerned is specified by statutes governing the exercise of autonomy in the national autonomous areas.

## Article 116

The chairman of autonomous regions, heads of autonomous prefectures and heads of autonomous counties shall be persons of the

nationality or nationalities exercising regional autonomy in those areas.

#### Article 117

The organs of self-government of autonomous regions, autonomous prefectures and autonomous counties exercise the right of national autonomy within the limits of their authority as prescribed by the Constitution, the law of regional national autonomy and other laws; and at the same time they exercise the functions and powers of local organs of state as specified in Section V of Chapter Three of the Constitution.

#### Article 118

People's congresses of national autonomous areas have the power to draw up statutes governing the exercise of autonomy as well as separate regulations, in the light of the political, economic and cultural characteristics of the nationality or nationalities in a given area. The statutes governing the exercise of autonomy and the separate regulations drawn up by autonomous regions shall be submitted to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress for approval before they become effective. The statutes governing the exercise of autonomy and the separate regulations drawn up by autonomous prefectures and autonomous counties shall be submitted to the standing committees of the people's congresses of provinces or autonomous regions for approval before they become effective, and they should be reported to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress for record.

#### Article 119

The organs of self-government of national autonomous areas have autonomous powers in administering the finances of their areas. All revenues accruing to the national autonomous areas under the financial system of the state shall be used according to the arrangements made independently by the organs of self-government of those areas.

## Article 120

The organs of self-government of national autonomous areas independently administer the economic construction of their areas under the guidance of the state plans.

In developing natural resources and building enterprises in the national autonomous areas, the state should give due consideration to the interests of those national autonomous areas.

## Article 121

The organs of self-government of national autonomous areas independently administer the education, science, culture, public health and physical culture in their respective areas, take charge of and protect the national cultural heritage, develop the good cultures of the nationalities and help them to flourish.

## Article 122

The organs of self-government of national autonomous areas may, in accordance with the military system of the state and the actual local needs, and with the approval of the State Council, organize their local public security forces for the maintenance of public order.

## Article 123

In performing their functions, the organs of self-government of national autonomous areas employ the spoken and written language or languages commonly used by the nationality or nationalities in a given area, according to the statutes governing the exercise of autonomy in the given national autonomous area.

## Article 124

The state safeguards the right of national autonomy of the organs of self-government of national autonomous areas in the implementation of the laws and policies of the state according to the actual local

situation; it gives financial, material and technical assistance to minority nationalities to accelerate their economic and cultural development.

The state helps the national autonomous areas to train large numbers of cadres, specialized personnel and skilled workers from among the nationality or nationalities in the given area.

## TWO NOTES IN PASSING

### I. HOW THE *GREATER SOVIET ENCYCLOPAEDIA* HAS REVERSED ITS TREATMENT OF TIBET'S PAST AND PRESENT

Below, comparison is made between the articles on Tibet in two editions of the *Greater Soviet Encyclopaedia* — the Second (Vol. 42, dated 1956) and the Third (Vol. 25, dated 1976).

1956 — “*Tibet*. A national area within the Chinese People’s Republic.” (No equivocation).

1976 — “*Tibet*. A region of Central Asia . . . divided into the Tibetan Autonomous Region and neighbouring provinces of the Chinese People’s Republic, where several autonomous prefectures and counties have been set up.” (Tibet’s basic status is undefined. It is described both as “divided” and as including some Chinese provinces. This echoes the “Greater Tibet” claims of the serfowner separatists, and the former emphasis of British imperialism on “Inner” and “Outer” Tibet.)

\* \* \*

1956 — Tibet’s historical and cultural connection with China was stressed, with particular emphasis on links in the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.).

1976 — “In the 13th century Tibet fell into dependence on the Mongol Yuan Dynasty . . .” (Echoing the separatist thesis that Tibet’s link has not been with the Hans, China’s majority nationality, but only with other minorities, i.e. the Mongols and Manchus.)

\* \* \*

1956 — In the 18th century “China repeatedly defended her sovereignty” in Tibet, — in 1725 by driving out the Oirat Mongols (who themselves were in revolt against China’s central authorities) and subsequently by setting up the office of commissioners (*ambans*) appointed from Beijing, by the Qing Dynasty.

1976 — “In the middle of the 18th century the northern and eastern sections of Tibet (on the territory of the present provinces of Qinghai, Sichuan and Gansu) were incorporated in the Qing empire,” followed in 1792 by the incorporation of all Tibet. (Thus the 3rd edition, by a stroke of the pen, simply abolishes the Chinese sovereignty, the defence of which, several decades before 1792, the 2nd edition had explicitly described.)

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1956 — On separatist intrigues in the first half of the 20th century, the 2nd edition had this to say. In 1911, the Dalai Lama “staged a declaration of ‘independence’ on the instructions of the British imperialists.” In 1949, “the imperialists staged a declaration of ‘independence’ in Lhasa. Through their agents among the Tibetan reactionaries they worked for a complete split between the Tibetan nationality and its fraternal nationalities in China, first of all with the Han nationality.”

1976 — The 3rd edition says baldly that in 1911 the Dalai Lama “declared severance of all relations with Beijing.” And in 1949, “the Tibetan authorities broke off all contacts with the Kuomintang government, . . . on November 4, 1949 the Great Assembly declared independence. In 1950, after conflicts, the Tibetan government accepted the proposal of the government of the Chinese People’s Republic” and the 17-article Agreement was signed.

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1956 — Dealing with friction between the British and Czarist Russian governments over Tibet in the early 20th century, the 2nd edition called it a contradiction between two imperialisms — a clear-cut Marxist approach.

1976 — “The penetration by Britain into Tibet was resisted by the Russian government.” Here only imperialist Britain penetrates,

the Russian government, not even described as Czarist, much less as imperialist, seems to be motivated only by justice — clearly a white-washing of Czarist policies. Note the diametrical contrast with Lenin's sharp analysis, made at the time of these events, that "Czarism *and* all the Russian reactionaries *and* the 'progressive bourgeoisie' want to "defeat England in Asia (so as to take the whole of Persia, Mongolia, Tibet, etc.)".<sup>1</sup>

1956 — Dealing with the then current situation, the 2nd edition wrote in details of the initial post-liberation improvements in Tibet, help by China's central government, preparations for regional autonomy, prospect of further reforms, etc.

1976 — In the 3rd edition, whether under "Tibet" or under "Tibetan Autonomous Region," a separate heading, no improvements or reforms are mentioned at all. The Soviet reader gets only the bare statement that after the defeat of the 1959 rebellion (its character undefined) "a system of military control committees" was established. Nothing else is even hinted at. There is nothing about the abolition of serfdom and slavery or the land reform, the subsequent socialist transformation, the temporary nature of military control, the establishment of the Autonomous Region itself in 1965, or the advances in agriculture, industry and education. Between 1959 and 1976, when the 3rd edition appeared, Tibet apparently had no history whatsoever. A truly unique silence for an encyclopaedia.

As for sources, the 1976 edition of the encyclopaedia gives as its only non-Russian reference Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa's, *Tibet: A Political History* (New Haven, 1967). The aristocrat Shakabpa was one of the chief leaders and ideologues of imperialist-backed Tibetan separatism, before and after the revolt.

The reasons for all these reversals need no labouring. They may fitly be summarized in the words applied by the 2nd (1956) edition to earlier imperialists who, for their own ends, "worked for a complete split between the Tibetan nationality and its fraternal nationalities in China, first of all with the Han nationality."

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin, *Collected Works*, English ed. (Moscow, 1964), Vol. 23, p. 129. The passage occurs in the article, "A Separate Peace", written in 1916.

## II. THE REVEALING PERVERSITIES OF VICTOR LOUIS

In confirmation of the reasons for this reversal of positions, note the appearance in 1979 of a book called *The Coming Decline of the Chinese Empire* by Victor Louis, a Soviet journalist of some notoriety, much favoured as a flier of trial balloons.

Louis calls specifically for break-up of multinational China along ethnic lines, to be followed, he hopes, by the incorporation of some of her minority regions into a "united Central Asia" under Soviet sponsorship.

Below are some excerpts from the "disserting introduction" to this book by Harrison E. Salisbury, also of the *New York Times*, which published the volume in English.

"What confronts us here is political perversity seldom seen. It demands attention not because of what the author says but because of his very special credentials. Although he has denied it, the author has long been known for his KGB connections. It is a book of spurious content, dubious logic, flagrant untruth. Like *Mein Kampf* we read it not because we trust the author or believe what he writes, but because Victor Louis, as a KGB man, is presenting a rationale intended to justify a 'war of liberation' — God help us — against the People's Republic of China . . . .

"The author hints that the Soviet Union may feel compelled to undertake a liberating mission on behalf of the Manchus as well as the Tibetans, the Mongols, the Uighurs and other minorities which, he repeatedly stresses, now occupy more than 60 per cent of the territory of the People's Republic of China. He neglects to mention that all of China's minorities put together constitute only 5 per cent of her population. . . .

"Instead of the reality of two hundred years of consistent Russian expansionism at the expense of China, he presents a picture of a consistently expansionist, exploitative China. . . . Louis's arguments are a kind of reverse image of reality. He paints a picture of an aggressive China and uses it to camouflage the historical pattern of Russian aggression. . . ."

Louis's purpose, in Salisbury's view, is "to lay a foundation, however dubious it may be, on which the Soviet Union could justify launching an attack on the People's Republic." And the strategic motivation: "Just as the Soviet Union is protected on its western frontiers by satellite states, so it would be protected in the east by a network of Manchuria (or would they revive Manchoukuo?), greater Mongolia, Free Tibet under the Dalai Lama, an independent Uighuria or whatever name the Russians might give to the Sinkiang vastness. . . . It seems like poppycock — a perverse assortment of untruths, half truths and plain lies but there it is. . . . a pseudo-historical, pseudo-political framework for whatever aggression the Kremlin decides upon."

Salisbury also points out that this farrago came in the context of an extraordinary preoccupation with China in the Soviet Union — with 20 or 30 separate works appearing each year, "some propaganda, some a mixture of scholarship and propaganda, and some genuine scholarship." Its particular function, he judges from its having been written in English for publication in the U.S.A., might be to "confuse American ideas about the Soviet-China clash, to alarm and disturb the Chinese, to put them off balance" as well as, ultimately, "to serve as a chapbook for Moscow propagandists to quote when, as and if the Kremlin deems the moment ripe for war with China" — which might or might not eventuate.

A reviewer<sup>2</sup> says of Louis and his book:

"The author's real preoccupations are not with the welfare and cultural survival of the minorities but with the use they can be put to in carving huge tracts of land off China's borders, and setting up Soviet dominated 'republics' in Central Asia."

"Louis himself has long been involved in intrigues against China. In 1969, he floated in a London newspaper the idea of a (joint Soviet-U.S.) pre-emptive nuclear strike against China — an idea which fortunately the United States sat on very hard. And he has visited Taiwan at least twice, quite openly, apparently to foster the impression that Moscow might be preparing to adopt a 'two Chinas' policy."

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<sup>2</sup> In *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Hong Kong, Nov. 23, 1979.



# NOTES

## CHAPTER 1: REINCARNATION

<sup>1</sup> For text of Agreement see Appendix II on p. 489. The question of reform is dealt with in Article II.

<sup>2</sup> Mao Zedong, "On the Policies for Our Work in Tibet — Directive of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China". For context see Appendix II, on p. 492.

<sup>3</sup> The theory and practice of the policy toward members of the old upper strata of Tibet, including the Dalai and Panchen, is dealt with in more detail in Chapter 17 of this book, "The United Front — Always Open-Ended."

<sup>4</sup> Prof. Wylie wrote a laudatory foreword to *Tibet, A Political History* (New Haven, 1967) a book embodying the serfowner separatists' view of the subject and composed by one of their long-time activists, W. D. Shakabpa. The author, in turn, thanked Prof. Wylie for editing his manuscript and enriching it with suggestions.

<sup>5</sup> Even such an author as Charles Bell, a British imperial official who strove for most of his life to wrench Tibet from the rest of China and to re-write its history accordingly, could not but affirm in his book, *Tibet Past and Present* (Oxford, 1924):

"We may in fact say that the present civilization of Tibet is taken mainly from China and only to a lesser degree from India. The general appliances of civilization, apart from religion — and to a lesser degree religion also — have come from China." As to religious matters "in the early days Indian influence was considerable, but during the last six or seven centuries, that of China and Mongolia predominated."

<sup>6</sup> For a comparison of how Tibet is treated in the *Greater Soviet Encyclopaedia* in its second edition (1956) and its third edition (1976) see Appendix III.

<sup>7</sup> For instance, E. I. Kuichanov and L. S. Savitsky, in *Lyudi i bogi strany snegov* (Men and Gods of the Land of Snows) published under the auspices of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR in 1975 as a popular "outline of Tibet's history and culture," on p. 112.

<sup>8</sup> Letter to Curzon from the Secretary of State for India, Lord Hamilton, Jan. 3, 1903.

<sup>9</sup> *Department of State Archives, Great Britain, Instructions*, (Secretary of State) Hay to Choate, June 3, 1904.

<sup>10</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, China*, p. 630.

<sup>11</sup> Proceedings of the Lok Sabha for that date.

<sup>12</sup> See "The Old Tibetan Army" and other chapters.

<sup>13</sup> With the convenient omission, of course, of the central controls and commissionerships interwoven with it.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted from supplement to *People's China*, Beijing, June 16, 1951.

<sup>15</sup> See Appendix II, p. 496.

<sup>16</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Beijing, January 30, 1981.

<sup>17</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Lhasa, November 20, 1980. Chen Jingpo is a veteran Han cadre in Tibet whom I had met in various capacities in 1955, 1965 and 1976, and at all times found to be deeply imbued with respect and admiration for its people. Dege Gesang Wangdui, a major united front figure in Tibet, was a former prince of the pre-liberation fief of Dege, in what is now the Kanze (Karze) Autonomous Tibetan Prefecture in Sichuan Province.

<sup>18</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Lhasa, April 30, 1981.

<sup>19</sup> A more systematic and detailed treatment of this process is given in the concluding historical section of this book.

## CHAPTER 2: CONTRASTS

<sup>1</sup> In old Tibet, riding on the poor was literal. On precipitous trails and across streams, the rich were carried piggy-back on serfs or slaves. And, crouching on all fours, the latter were used as mounting-blocks for the masters to get on their horses.

<sup>2</sup> Usually, not invariably, because in the early years considerable numbers of those sent inland to study were from exploiter families. But many of the latter, too, stayed faithful to progress.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 1, List of Main Peasant Uprisings.

<sup>4</sup> In 1979 a new hotel in Lhasa had a large solar-panel roof. Journalist visitors reported a long-range plan for solar heating of the whole city.

<sup>5</sup> For comparison, a specially-decorated and expensive bar in a big foreign-owned hotel in Hong Kong was for a time, with exquisite tastelessness, called "The Opium Den." Later, under the impact of protest by Hong Kong's Chinese people, it was re-named "The Den."

<sup>6</sup> The resemblance is not coincidental. It has long been clear that the Amerindians came from Asia. More recently, U.S. scholars have unearthed evidence that a relatively recent major migration, about 3,000 years ago, was of herdsmen originating from the Central Asian region where Tibet (along with Xinjiang and western Mongolia) is located. Among the present-day descendants of these migrants are the Indian tribes of Arizona and New Mexico. The relatively late date of their shift would account for the similarities not only in physique but in the arts and crafts (woven designs, etc.). Linguistic affinities with Central Asian tongues have also been noted, particularly in the case of the Navajo and Apache Indians.

## CHAPTER 3: SERFS AND SLAVES RULE KHAESUM MANOR

<sup>1</sup> A 1971 journal referred to him as "W. G. Surkhang, . . . who is writing a history of modern Tibet at the University of Washington."

<sup>2</sup> Such live burials persisted till the last days of the Tibetan serf system in 1959. I met an intended victim who, as a boy, had run away when designated for such a fate.

<sup>3</sup> Returning to Washington, the Thomases forwarded these ideas to high U.S. officials, but the time was late. Of this they wrote:

If the United States offers any kind of military assistance to Tibet, our country must assume the responsibility of maintaining Tibetan independence. But if the Chinese Reds called our bluff, how could we move an army over the Himalayas? How could we supply it?

The bluff was indeed called — by the People's Liberation Army's entry into Tibet. After it, Washington supplied arms and agents to the serfowner rebellion in 1959, which proved a fiasco.

And still later CIA efforts in Tibet, over more than 20 years, were exposed in detail in Congressional and journalistic rake-overs in the 1970's. David Wise's *The Politics of Lying* (New York, 1973), Chap. 8, tells of the "super-secret" training of Tibetan rebels at Camp Hale, Colorado; Chris Mullin's article, "The C. I. A., Tibetan Conspiracy," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Hong Kong, September 5, 1975, gives facts over the whole period.

<sup>4</sup> I use metric measures (often with English equivalent) for the convenience of readers. Actually, Tibetans speak in terms of *kbal* (often transliterated *ke* from the Han pronunciation), an interesting unit used to measure both grain and sown area. A *kbal* of grain is about 14 kg. (30 lb.). A *kbal* of land is the conventional area sown with a *kbal* of grain as seed, and is roughly but not always equal to the *mu* in the rest of China (about one-fifteenth of a hectare or one-sixth of an acre). Per unit yield expressed in *kbal* is the number of *kbal* of grain harvested from one *kbal* of land, i.e., a simple multiple of the amount of seed sown to get it. A *kbal* of dry land (sown thinly) was considerably larger than one of well-watered land (sown more thickly).

<sup>5</sup> The church in Saxon England in the 10th and 11th centuries (according to Dorothy Whitelock, *The Beginnings of English Society* (London, 1952) also collected many fees from manors, including plough-alm, a penny for every working team, tithe of the fruits of the earth, Peter's pence every St. Peter's Day, Church-scot (a load of the best grain from each "hide" of land), a tax on lights payable thrice yearly, and a burial fee (best paid at the open grave).

At Khaesum the death tax went to the lay authorities but lamas were paid for scripture-reading.

<sup>6</sup> The status of Tibet's *duichun* had its counterpart in medieval Europe, among the *lidiles* in the manors of Charlamagne's empire for example. In France, a manorial serf or dependent who managed to get away to seek a living elsewhere

was subjected to poll-tax (chevage) by his original master. Fugitive serfs existed wherever serfdom did.

<sup>7</sup> Marion Gibbs, *Feudal Order* (London, 1949).

<sup>8</sup> Just over a hectare.

<sup>9</sup> In Tibet, as distinct from most other parts of China, there was generally no intervening stage — of agricultural cooperatives — between the mutual-aid team and the commune. There the transition from individual to semi-socialist and then fully socialist ownership took place within the commune form.

<sup>10</sup> Thubten Jigme Norbu and Colin Turnbull, *Tibet* (London, 1972), pp. 320-21.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 347.

## CHAPTER 4: PALHA MANOR — A FOOTNOTE TO THE BRITANNICA

<sup>1</sup> Charles Bell, *Tibet, Past and Present* (Oxford, 1924), p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> Bell adds another testimonial to the Palhas' wealth. "The granary at Palha, near Gyantse (Gyangzê), which I found by measurement to be capable of holding over 10,000 cubic feet of grain, was only one of several belonging to the Pal-ha family." (*Ibid.* p. 43)

<sup>3</sup> "Move about freely" was not true, as between the roll-calls, Tibetan slaves were under constant supervision and sometimes literally could not move about at all, as we have seen from slaves sealed to the floors of their workplaces in Khaesum.

<sup>4</sup> Palha Thubten Wangden, according to Christopher Mullin writing in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* of September 5, 1975, was chosen for contact by CIA-trained parachutists dropped into Tibet shortly before the 1959 revolt. Timid about the prospects of success in rebellion, he is described as having recommended in desperation that the U.S. drop atom bombs on Tibet and be done with it. Here again, the Palhas' bone-deep tradition of collusion with imperialism showed itself. So did their complete disregard for their own people, the falsity of their brief "progressive" pretence (during which the hob-nobbing with the CIA took place), and the generally inevitable connection of Tibetan separatism with imperialism.

<sup>5</sup> Seizure of the serf's inheritance had also existed in European feudalism, e.g. in 11th century France, where "the *main morte* of rustic tenants meant that they had no goods of their own but held movable property on sufferance without the right of passing it on to their successors." And when serf's children did in fact inherit, they "paid a heavy fine for entering into possession, or gave up a horse, an ox or some other especially valuable piece of property." (Article on "Manor," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed.) Both practices had close parallels in pre-1959 Tibet.

<sup>6</sup> Bell, *The Religion of Tibet* (Oxford, 1931), p. 182.

<sup>7</sup> *Autobiography of His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet; My Country and My People* (London, 1964), p. 61.

<sup>8</sup> Article "Serfdom," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed.

<sup>9</sup> Rinchen Dolma Taring, in her book *Daughter of Tibet* (London, 1970).

## CHAPTER 5: RECOLLECTIONS OF TWO BEGINNINGS

<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th edition, article on "Villinage."

<sup>2</sup> Marion Gibbs, *Feudal Society*, London, 1979.

<sup>3</sup> Prayer wheels, which used to be everywhere in Tibet, were metal cylinders of all sizes, from huge ones much taller than a man to small ones held in the hand, stuffed with papers on which prayers were inscribed. Anyone turning them was credited with having said all the prayers they contained, which would supposedly help him to be reborn with a better fate. Cleverly made and balanced to be whirled easily, and sometimes even turned by water power, they were the only "mechanization" that existed in old Tibet, where even wheeled vehicles were not used.

<sup>4</sup> Not to be confused with the person of the same name, but entirely different character, the Party secretary at Khaesum.

<sup>5</sup> Other commune acquisitions, as listed for us, included 55 steel walking ploughs, 8 seven-row seeders and 13 horse carts. A small forest of 100,000 timber trees had been planted and communal and school buildings, totalling 25 rooms, put up. After this, 40,000 yuan still remain in reserve for the expansion of production. For a small Tibetan commune of 600 or so people, this is considerable.

<sup>6</sup> Community-run and built but with teachers' pay and some other expenses covered by the state, as distinct from those which the state runs and finances entirely.

## CHAPTER 6: GYAEPÄ COMMUNE AND TSEHING LHAMO, PIONEER AMONG TIBETAN WOMEN

<sup>1</sup> This similarity is not only physical. One sees in it also in woven designs, and apparently common background in shamanistic belief. It suggests strongly that in the remote past, the tribes of Inner Asia spread out, some to wander to the Tibetan plateau and others to cross the north of Asia and the ancient land or ice bridge over the Bering Strait.

<sup>2</sup> See historical appendix to this book, pp. 462-463.

<sup>3</sup> In the "Agricultural Programme" for all China, the aim for southern provinces, by no means generally attained at that time, was six tons per hectare.

## CHAPTER 7: STATE FARMS — IN CLASS STRUGGLE, PRODUCTION AND SCIENCE

<sup>1</sup> For drawbacks of winter wheat see p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> Art. 16. "... The local government of Tibet will assist the People's Liberation Army in the purchase and transport of food, fodder and other daily necessities" (the funds to be provided by the Central People's Government).

## CHAPTER 8: THE NEW STATE FARMS — MACHINES, IRRIGATION AND GRAIN

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes referred to, from the Han transcription, as Pengpo and Linchou State Farms.

<sup>2</sup> By 1980, the rules of operation of China's state farms had changed. They were allowed to market direct a part of their produce (in excess of state delivery quotas), keep a considerable portion of their own profits, buy machinery (previously all allocated by the government), and decide themselves on the assignment of available funds for processing workshops, sales outlets and welfare. How and to what extent this was implemented at Phampo and Lhundrup is not yet clear to the writer. But at a countrywide exposition of state farms from all provinces and autonomous regions in Beijing in that year, products from those in Tibet were also displayed and placed on sale.

<sup>3</sup> The 359th brigade was commanded by Wang Zhen, originally a railway worker, who after liberation became China's Minister of Reclamation and State Farms, and later a vice-premier. Nanniwan veterans are still to be found wherever large-scale state farms are built. Many are in Xinjiang and some in Tibet.

## CHAPTER 9: THE ACCUSERS

<sup>1</sup> The peaceful liberation of Tibet is the term used for the entry of the PLA in 1951, as part of the liberation of all China from imperialism. The social liberation of Tibet's working people, as the reader can see from many events described in this book, came later, in 1959, with the suppression of the serfowners' revolt and final destruction of feudalism by the democratic reform. Tibet's serfs and slaves when they say "liberation" are talking of this.

<sup>2</sup> All lamaseries had djisu departments which ran their estates, exacted tribute from the people, carried on trade, etc. for the benefit ostensibly of all the lamas, but actually only of their top crust.

<sup>3</sup> Also called the Panchen Khampo Lija with its seat at Xigazê, the former administration under the Panchen Lama.

<sup>4</sup> Do-Dawa's case was not unique. Earlier, in the Institute for Nationalities in Chengdu, the student Yeshe, a Khamba from eastern Tibet, told me that his elder brother Losang, while a slave, had had to hold targets in his hands for his masters at pistol practice. Losang, who survived, became a Communist Party member and a leader of the People's Militia near his native Qamdo. The power of arms had passed to the serfs.

<sup>5</sup> In the Xigazê region there was talk of reform earlier than in Lhasa, but it did not take place. Shirob and his wife were misinformed. The army, indeed, had refused any feudal service for itself from the first day it came into Tibet, but local authorities still claimed it till the 1959 rebellion.

<sup>6</sup> These two figures refer to the old administrative Tibet composed of *U* (frontal Tibet with its centre at Lhasa) and *Tsang* (rear Tibet with Xigazê as its chief city). Today the Tibet Autonomous Region also includes the Qamdo area (Kham), which for many years was part of Sikang, a province abolished in 1955. The Qamdo area's population, as given me there ten years ago, in 1955, was 300,000. So the population of present-day Tibet in 1949, was under 1,200,000. In 1965 the population of Tibet (not counting people of other nationalities) was 1,310,000, showing a net increase (as a result mainly of the decline in the death rate and rise in the birth rate) of 110,000 or over 9 per cent since 1949. Most of this occurred after 1959. This makes a much higher annual average in recent years than the total figure indicates.

In 1976 it was 1,700,000, an increase of almost 500,000 (over 40%) over 1949 and of 390,000 (about 23%) over 1965, indicating an annual average growth of about 2.1%. The proportion of the Han population, 7.4% in 1976, was not very different from that in 1965.

<sup>7</sup> Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, English edition (London, 1961) pp. 365-70.

<sup>8</sup> Dawa Norbu, *Red Star over Tibet* (London, 1974), pp. 76-80.

<sup>9</sup> Bell, *Tibet Past and Present* (Oxford, 1924), p. 78.

<sup>10</sup> *Tibet and the Chinese People's Republic, a Report to the International Commission of Jurists by Its Legal Inquiry Committee on Tibet*, Geneva, 1960, p. 316.

<sup>11</sup> Mervyn C. Goldstein, "Serfdom and Mobility: An Examination of the Institution of 'Human Lease' in Tibetan Society," *Journal of Asian Studies* of the University of Michigan, May 1971, pp. 521-22 and 539. Goldstein, Associate Professor of Anthropology at Case Western Reserve University, U.S.A., was married to the daughter of the ex-*kalon* Surkhang Wangching-Galei.

<sup>12</sup> Shakabpa, *op. cit.*, p. 317.

<sup>13</sup> Rinchen Dolma Taring, *Daughter of Tibet* (London, 1970), p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> Readers can judge this by the serfs' own accounts in this book. Recall also Goldstein's already cited statement, "Tibet was . . . institutionalized inequality."

<sup>15</sup> Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75. This is a constant theme with apologists for Tibetan feudalism. One, Noel Barber, even called his book "The Land of Lost Content." (New York, 1970).

<sup>17</sup> Quoted from A. L. Morton, *People's History of England* (London, 1951), p. 71.

<sup>18</sup> David Snellgrove and Hugh Richardson, *A Cultural History of Tibet* (New York and London, 1968), pp. 16 and 267-68.

## CHAPTER 10: TIBETAN CADRES: FROM THE LONG MARCH TO TODAY

<sup>1</sup> In 1981 Tian Bao was succeeded in the chairmanship of the regional government by Ngapo Ngawang Jigme. He himself became a secretary of the Party committee of his native Sichuan Province, in which two large Tibetan autonomous prefectures comprise most of the western part.

<sup>2</sup> The *tu-si* were tributary local chiefs of Tibetan or other nationality under the old imperial monarchy of China, and later under the first Republic and the Kuomintang regime.

<sup>3</sup> Yang Dongsheng (Shinrob Dondrup) in 1976 was a secretary of the Tibet Regional Party Committee, a vice-minister of the State Nationalities Commission in 1978, and in 1981 was, at the age of 63, elected by the Tibet Regional People's Congress to be chairman of its Standing Committee.

<sup>4</sup> Tashi Wangchuk, who in the late 1970's did leading work in the State Nationalities Commission, was in 1981 chairman of the provincial government of Qinghai, in which Tibetans form an important component of the population.

## CHAPTER 11: NGAWANG GYATSO — STEELED IN THE HEART OF LHASA

<sup>1</sup> Dawa Norbu, in *Red Star over Tibet* (London, 1974), p. 131.

## CHAPTER 12: CHAMPA GYALTSSEN — SERF TAILOR TO COUNTY HEAD

<sup>1</sup> Class for Social Education: In the 1950's, a form of adult training class, for young members of various strata of Tibetan society, including the upper, in which stress was laid on the common interest of all China's nationalities in resisting imperialism and building the country together.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 3.

## CHAPTER 13: TSERING PHUNTSO — PEOPLE'S POLICEMAN IN LHASA

<sup>1</sup> Lowell Thomas, Jr., *Out of This World* (New York, 1950).

## CHAPTER 14: THE PLA IN TIBET — 1955-65

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Speech on Red Officers' Day," November 24, 1918. *Works*, Moscow English edition, Vol. 28, p. 195.

<sup>2</sup> These figures represent the actual distances at that time. Later, with alterations of designated starting points or shortening of routes the highway lengths were given as 2,413 km. for the Sichuan-Tibet and 1,965 km. for the Qinghai-Tibet roads.

<sup>3</sup> For text of Agreement, see Appendix II.

<sup>4</sup> Mao Zedong: "On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party", December 1929, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 106.

<sup>5</sup> Equivalent to roughly a year of labour by the entire civilian working population of Tibet, and considerably more by the farm population alone.

<sup>6</sup> For another set of figures, brought up to 1977, see table at end of this chapter.

<sup>7</sup> Reference here is only to those entering the ranks in Tibet, not including recruits of Tibetan nationality from other provinces.

<sup>8</sup> See Chapter 16, "Big Tashi — Soldier of New Tibet."

<sup>9</sup> Marx and Engels: *The Communist Manifesto, Critique of the Gotha Programme* and *Anti-Dühring*; Lenin: *State and Revolution, Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* and *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. All have been translated into Tibetan.

<sup>10</sup> Besides the six already listed, they included: Marx: *The Civil War in France* and *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*; Lenin: *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, The Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky, "Left-Wing" Communism, an Infantile Disorder, The Great Beginning, Economics and Politics in the Era of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat* and *On Marx*; Stalin: *On Lenin*; Mao Zedong: *The People's Democratic Dictatorship, Report to the Second Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee, On Practice, On Contradiction, On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People, Speech at the National Conference on Propaganda Work, Where Do People's Correct Ideas Come From?* and a number of instructions issued during the Cultural Revolution.

Cadres at regimental level and above studied Marx's *Capital*.

## CHAPTER 15: THE OLD TIBETAN ARMY

<sup>1</sup> The original requirements were stated in terms of the old local coinage and weights. Here, for convenience, they are calculated in metric units used throughout this book.

<sup>2</sup> Grover Clark: *Tibet, China and Great Britain* (Peking Leader Press, Peking, 1924).

<sup>3</sup> Bell, in his *Tibet Past and Present* (London, 1924), refers to this person as "an old friend, Sardar Bahadur Laden La, a Sikkimese in the Bengal Police who on

my behalf looked after the Dalai Lama and his ministers during their stay in India from 1910 to 1912." p. 184.

<sup>4</sup> Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 268. (The italics are mine. — I.E.)

<sup>5</sup> Shen Tsung-lien and Liu Shen-chiu, *Tibet and the Tibetans* (Stanford, 1953) p. 115. The authors had been Kuomintang officials in Tibet.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Ford, *Captured in Tibet* (London, 1958) p. 51. As the title indicates, Ford was taken prisoner by the PLA. The book was written after his release.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>8</sup> The Qing (Manchu) Dynasty ruled all China, including Tibet, from 1644 to 1911.

<sup>9</sup> Anna Louise Strong, *Tibetan Interviews* (Beijing, 1959) p. 44.

<sup>10</sup> This directive, drafted for the Party's Central Committee and sent to its Southwest Bureau and Working Committee in Tibet, was first published in *Selected Works of Mao Tsetung*, Vol. V. In the English edition it appears on pp. 73-76 under the title, "On the Policies for Our Work in Tibet — Directive of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, April 6, 1952." (I have divided it into short paragraphs for easier reading. — I.E.)

<sup>11</sup> & <sup>12</sup> George Patterson, *Peking Vs. Delhi* (London, 1963), pp. 165-66.

<sup>13</sup> For more about the Palhas, one of the big serfowning families of Tibet, involved for generations with the British penetration of Tibet, see Ch. 4 of this book, "Palha Manor — a Footnote to the *Britannica*."

<sup>14</sup> David Wise, *The Politics of Lying* (New York, 1973), Ch. VIII, "The Case of the Colorado Tibetans," pp. 239-52.

<sup>15</sup> This is no longer true. The Colorado Tibetan trainees were again heard from in November 1978, when the last of those air-dropped and captured in Tibet was released from prison there. Early in 1979, a Xinhua News Agency feature reported several as working in the Lhasa Auto Repair Works. One was Tsunyi Yeshi, former house-slave of Andrutsang Gombo Tashi, a chief of the Khampa rebels, who took him to India and later sent him abroad (apparently to Camp Hale) to learn "espionage, including map-making, telecommunication, hand-to-hand fighting and recruiting agents." Air-dropped in Tibet twice, he slipped out the first time and was caught the second time. Initially, fearing execution, he refused to own up. "But in prison I was never maltreated. Comparing this with torture in Tibet's old prisons, which I myself had seen, I began to regret my crimes." On release, he revisited his home village. "My mother is still alive, my two brothers are commune members. The grain yield is about five times what it was."

Of ten agents freed with Tsunyi Yeshi, nine stayed in Tibet, but one whose family was abroad took the option, allowed by the amnesty, of rejoining them — with papers and travel funds provided by the People's Government.

<sup>16</sup> Concerning the persistence of many features of the old rule in Tibetan exile camps in India, the American Professor Mervyn C. Goldstein, who himself married into the Tibetan aristocracy, has given special details based on first-hand study in the late 1960's. In these camps, he wrote, after ten years of exile the old-type officials still exercised "the political patterns of authority and hierarchy characteristic of the traditional Tibetan political system . . . the camp leader plays a role analogous to that of . . . estate steward in Tibet . . . settlers jokingly refer (to some camp du-

ties) . . . by the name used for corvée taxes (ula) in Tibet." Moreover, there is "virtual monopolization of . . . information input to the settlers . . . opposition and disagreement is considered traitorous . . . dissident groups have little success in obtaining funds . . . political opponents find that their children do not receive scholarships . . . or jobs in government related activities," etc. (Goldstein: "Tibetan Refugees in South India," *Tibet Society Bulletin* (Bloomington, 1975, Vol. 9, pp. 12-29).

## CHAPTER 16: BIG TASHI — SOLDIER OF NEW TIBET

<sup>1</sup> In the later 1960's the practice of separate Tibetan units was discontinued, and Hans, Tibetans and soldiers of other nationalities were integrated in the same units.

<sup>2</sup> Mao, *Selected Works*, Vol. I, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Mao, *Selected Works*, Vol. I, p. 238.

<sup>4</sup> *The Three Main Rules of Discipline and the Eight Points for Attention* were enforced in the Red Army since 1928. The standard version, reissued by the General Headquarters of the People's Liberation Army in 1947, is as follows: *Three Main Rules of Discipline*: 1. Obey orders in all your actions; 2. Don't take a single needle or piece of thread from the masses; and 3. Turn in everything captured. *Eight Points for Attention*: 1. Speak politely; 2. Pay fairly for what you buy; 3. Return everything you borrow; 4. Pay for anything you damage; 5. Don't hit or swear at people; 6. Don't damage crops; 7. Don't take liberties with women; and 8. Don't ill-treat captives.

## CHAPTER 17: UNITED FRONT — ALWAYS OPEN-ENDED

<sup>1</sup> Tian Bao in 1979 became Chairman of the People's Government of the Tibet Autonomous Region.

<sup>2</sup> For more on Ford, see p. 214, text and note.

<sup>3</sup> And since 1979, Chairman of its Committee on Nationalities.

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 15, "The Old Tibetan Army."

<sup>5</sup> He returned to public life only in 1978 as described elsewhere.

<sup>6</sup> Pebala's brother, Pebala Khenchung, in 1959 a member of the Preparatory Committee for the Tibetan Autonomous Region, likewise did not turn back from the road of progress and was murdered by the rebels. The united front has had its martyrs, among whom Geda was by no means the last.

<sup>7</sup> Also known as Wei Dong.

<sup>8</sup> So patient was the policy in the early years that we heard in 1955 of a noble in Kham who had rebelled, was defeated, and freed without loss of status, no less than 17 times! Whether there was an 18th time, in the later and wider serfowner rebellion, and what happened to him then, I do not know.

<sup>9</sup> Some names are Lami Yeshi Tsuchen, *dzasa* of the Panchen Kampo Lija at Xigazê; Sanchey Lozang Djiendzan, Living Buddha of Tashi Lhumpo; Landrup Tokay, a Kampo of Drepung and De-ge Gesang Wangdui, ex-prince of Dêgê in Kham and *depon* or regimental commander in the Dalai's army.

<sup>10</sup> Other fairly early releases included Remba, an official of *dzasa* rank, and Karna, another *depon* of the Tibetan army.

<sup>11</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Beijing, April 10, 1977.

<sup>12</sup> Pebala, in February 1979, became Chairman of the new "Reception Committee for Returning and Visiting Tibetan Compatriots" set up in Lhasa.

<sup>13</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Beijing, December 31, 1978.

## CHAPTER 18: UNITED FRONT: NACHI, KHAMPA SERF TEACHER TO LHASA ARISTOCRATS

<sup>1</sup> See Anna Louise Strong, *Tibetan Interviews*, 1959, pp. 22-30 (where she is called "Lachi") and *When Serfs Stood Up in Tibet* (2nd edition, 1965), Chap. VII, "Nachi in the Djokang," pp. 114-32. Both books published in Beijing and the second also in San Francisco, 1976.

<sup>2</sup> For the First People's Congress of the Tibet Autonomous Region in 1965.

## CHAPTER 19: INDUSTRY — FROM NONE TO SOCIALIST

<sup>1</sup> Initially, until their income grew, ex-serf and slave households in Lhasa were supplied free. This was the case up to 1965.

<sup>2</sup> This estimate, by the Chinese Academy of Sciences, was reported by the Xinhua News Agency on June 23, 1977. The Yarlung Zangbo is 2,000 kilometres long, has a total drop of 5,000 metres (over 2 metres per kilometre) and in places runs through deep valleys, convenient for power-station dams.

<sup>3</sup> On the Tanggula range at the centre of the plateau, according to a three-year survey conducted by Han and Tibetan meteorologists, a net solar radiation of 1.44 calories per square centimetre was recorded in the summer months, with a total radiation of 2.30 cal. In the coldest period of winter, there were still heat emissions. These observations were made at an altitude of 4,500 metres, where the mass of the atmosphere was only half that at sea level. The meteorologists' conclusion: "There are great prospects for the utilization of solar energy on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau where direct and total radiation are strong while diffuse solar radiation is small." (Xinhua News Agency, Nov. 27, 1978).

<sup>4</sup> This includes the luxurious "cashmere," which comes mainly from Tibet but got its name because it reached foreign markets by way of Kashmir.

<sup>5</sup> Books in Tibetan were also mass-produced outside the region. The Nationalities Press in Beijing in 1976 was printing Marxist classics, the works of Mao Zedong, and Tibetan versions of national magazines such as *Red Flag*, the Party's

theoretical monthly, and the *China Pictorial*; matrices were in some cases flown to Tibet for additional printings there. Autonomous areas of the Tibetan nationality in Sichuan, Qinghai and other provinces have their own presses. Among the Qinghai prints are a widely used handbook of Tibetan herbal medicine for barefoot doctors and a variety of multi-colour wall maps of China and the world in Tibetan, which we saw used in Lhasa schools. In succeeding years many works of traditional Tibetan literature were also reprinted, in large editions, by these presses.

## CHAPTER 20: OLD CRAFTS IN NEW SOCIETY

<sup>1</sup> F. Grenard, *Tibet and the Tibetans* (London, 1895).

<sup>2</sup> In 1976, after another 11 years, we heard a briefing in Lhasa on the communes throughout Tibet by one of the region's agricultural leaders, Nyima, a slim, modest young man of 35. He turned out to be the son of one of the homeless refugees originally re-settled in "Liberation New Village." According to other cadres, he had probably been to more communes in Tibet than any other one person.

## CHAPTER 21: FAMILY OF TIBET'S NEW WORKERS

<sup>1</sup> Derogatory name for the blacksmith caste.

<sup>2</sup> In China as a whole it is 56 days, but in the Tibet region it is 75 because of added difficulties for mother and child in the high altitudes.

## CHAPTER 22: NEW SUN IN THE GRASSLANDS

<sup>1</sup> Formerly called Dajianlu and in Tibetan, Dartsendo.

<sup>2</sup> This was the prevailing situation in the region administered from Lhasa. In other Tibetan-inhabited parts of China (Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu, etc.) the degree of tribal autonomy was sometimes greater and the Gologs of Qinghai, for example, were traditional warriors and raiders.

<sup>3</sup> More on the plight of herdsmen at the time can be found in the Chapter "The Accusers."

## CHAPTER 23: PASTURE PATHS TO SOCIALISM

<sup>1</sup> In terms of sheep (reckoning a yak as 6 sheep, a horse as 25 and a goat as 1/2) the county average was 71 per person. It was over 100 per capita in 14 of the teams.

<sup>2</sup> Later, such confiscation was considered a "Leftist" error. The policy of buying out herdowners, so long as they were non-rebels, was restored. In practice it meant that they received money instalments still due them, not their cattle back.

<sup>3</sup>The statutory limitations and disabilities imposed on former rich herdsmen and ex-herdowners were removed in the late 1970's — provided they were not guilty of anti-socialist acts. Just the same, it would still be unlikely that they would be placed in any position of authority in a commune, in which the organized ex-poor were the real power. Their children, however, were to be treated exactly like all other commune members — on their merits, admissible to all spheres, including the Communist Party, if they showed themselves fit.

## CHAPTER 24: TIBET'S STATE SCHOOLS

<sup>1</sup>For the story of one such pupil, see Chap. 12, "Ngawang Gyatso, Steeled in the Heart of Lhasa."

<sup>2</sup>In 1978 the regional total was 57, including ordinary middle schools and vocational schools of the same level. (Ren Rong at People's Congress)

<sup>3</sup>*Xinhua*, Lhasa, March 23, 1979.

## CHAPTER 26: HIGHER EDUCATION COMES TO TIBET

<sup>1</sup>Construction had begun in 1973. The total planned floor space was over 31,000 sq. m. About half was finished, a quarter was under construction and a portion not yet begun.

<sup>2</sup>In 1978, in addition to the Nyingchi College, a special School of Agricultural and Pastoral Mechanization was set up in Lhasa.

## CHAPTER 27: SCIENCE ON THE WORLD'S ROOF

<sup>1</sup>*Xinhua*, Beijing, May 27, 1980.

<sup>2</sup>*Xinhua*, Beijing, June 21, 1980.

<sup>3</sup>Findings associated with the Qomolangma climb are published in Chinese in the 9-volume "Report of the Scientific Expedition on Mt. Qomolangma, 1966-68," with 3.5 million words and numerous photographs, drawings and charts.

<sup>4</sup>*Xinhua*, Xining, Jan. 2, 1980.

<sup>5</sup>*Xinhua*, Lhasa, May 27, 1979.

<sup>6</sup>*Xinhua*, Xining, May 3, 1978.

<sup>7</sup>*Xinhua*, Lanzhou, Apr. 23, 1980.

<sup>8</sup>*Xinhua*, Beijing, July 29, 1980.

## CHAPTER 28: TIBET'S NEW CULTURE IN BIRTH

<sup>1</sup> There had very briefly been a newspaper in Lhasa at the end of the Qing Dynasty, published under its auspices.

<sup>2</sup> Lexicography was later set back by the events of the cultural revolution. After it, new projects were set afoot. One, initiated following a conference in Chengdu of editors and translators from Tibet and Sichuan, Gansu and Qinghai provinces, was for a comprehensive classical dictionary of 60,000 entries to "help the study of the history, culture and language of the Tibetan people and promote cultural exchanges between the Tibetan and Han nationalities." (*Xinhua*, Chengdu dispatch, June 28, 1978).

<sup>3</sup> Among the memorial articles that appeared after Zhou Enlai's death, and on subsequent anniversaries, were moving ones by Tibetan artists. He had made a point of seeing their performances, talking with them and encouraging them whenever they came to Beijing. The famous singer Tsenden Drolma recalled that the late Premier had personally introduced her to Chairman Mao, repeatedly inquired after her health when she was ill for a time in the capital, and in October 1975 when himself in hospital with terminal cancer, had sent word of how glad he was, after hearing her sing on TV, that she was still in good voice.

<sup>4</sup> Music and other art courses had long been given in the Institutes for Nationalities in various places and in the Lhasa Teachers' College. The latter, however, trained music instructors for the ordinary schools rather than performers.

<sup>5</sup> This first Tibetan performance of a Shakespeare play was seen and praised in Shanghai by Sir Kenneth Clark, former Lord Mayor of London and manager of Britain's Royal Shakespearian Theatre, according to the *Xinhua*, April 25, 1981.

<sup>6</sup> A deputy to China's National People's Congress.

## CHAPTER 29: BATTLE FOR HEALTH — THE NATIONALITY GROWS

<sup>1</sup> These figures do not include the Qamdo region which was for many years a part of China's Sikang Province (now abolished, it was incorporated in the Tibet Autonomous Region at the latter's founding in 1965). Qamdo's original population was about 300,000. Counting these, the population of the present Tibet Autonomous Region in 1959 was about one million. In 1976 it was nearly 1.7 million, of whom Tibetans comprised over 90 per cent. In 1981, it was about 1.8 million.

<sup>2</sup> The paragraphs that follow are condensed from "Successes of Tibetan Medicine," a chapter in the compendium *Achievements of China's Ancient Science* brought for the National Scientific Conference in 1978 by the Youth Publishing House, Beijing.

<sup>3</sup>In the process of reprinting, in 1979, by the Research Institute of Tibetan Medicine in Lhasa, together with a standard commentary by another famous doctor of old Tibet, Desa Sanggye Gyatso, written in 1688.

<sup>4</sup>Reprinted in the 1970's in Qinghai Province. Also published there was a 3-volume illustrated encyclopaedia of plants and substances used in Tibetan medicine. Labelled in Tibetan, Han and Latin, it covered their collection, botanical classification, pharmaceutical properties and the compounding of tested prescriptions.

Such work gained impetus from Premier Zhou Enlai's 1972 call for the publication of records of the traditional medicine of all China's nationalities, and in particular for the study of that of Tibet.

<sup>5</sup>This was special consideration for minority nationalities. To this day, treatment and medicine are free for Tibet's entire population — although in Han areas there is free service only for factory workers, the army, students and government personnel, with others paying some small charge, or a group insurance fee (as in the rural medical co-ops).

<sup>6</sup>It was formally set up in 1978.

<sup>7</sup>In addition, such training was given in hospitals at the prefectural and regional level.

<sup>8</sup>This medical united front in Tibet was the result of Chairman Mao Zedong's insistence, dating from the Yan'an days of the 1940's, on prizing and using the resources of China's traditional medicine, and of the Communist Party's policy of treating all China's nationalities, and their valid heritage in all fields, as equal.

<sup>9</sup>The first breakthrough was made in Qinghai Province, also on the high plateau, with a mean altitude of 3,000 metres. There hereditary and pulmonary heart diseases common in such an environment had been studied for some years. Incidentally, it was found there that not all the effects of high altitude on the heart are bad. Myocardial obstruction is lower than elsewhere, perhaps because the pastoral diet is richer in proteins and fats. As for high blood pressure, above a certain altitude there are actually more cases of low blood pressure than of high.

<sup>10</sup>For an account of the Mendzi Khang as it was in 1955, see A. Winnington, *Tibet*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1957.

## CHAPTER 30: RELIGION AND POLITICS IN TIBET

<sup>1</sup>Including the Qamdo area, formerly part of the now abolished province of Sikang, which has become part of the Tibet Autonomous Region.

<sup>2</sup>Even that admirer of Tibetan feudalism, Charles Bell, wrote in his *The Religion of Tibet*, of the "heavy fines they (the Iron Bar Lamas) extracted from the unfortunate inhabitants" at this time.

<sup>3</sup>"Oral Answers by the Dalai Lama to Questions Put by the Legal Inquiry Committee," Missoori, India, Nov. 14, 1959.

<sup>4</sup>Buddhism came to Tibet before the 7th century. But it did not by any means immediately give rise to church-government. Lay monarchs reigned over

the then slave-owning kingdom. Some like Songtsan Gambo (mid-7th century) and Titsong Detsen (755-97) favoured Buddhism. Others like Lang Darma (838-42) suppressed it. Then, in the 9th and 10th centuries, effective royal power broke down under the impact of slave rebellion. Feudalism developed amid confused internecine wars among nobles. In their course, as in Europe in comparable circumstances, the monasteries acquired lands, vassals and serfs. In the bitter and ceaseless wars, smaller and weaker manorial lords, who could not stand on their own, sought protection and safety by joining their estates, through fealty and merging, to those of the relatively immune and stable church.

All this set the scene for the local theocratic system, which was formally consolidated when Phagspa, head of the Sakya Sect, was appointed the first priest-king of Tibet ("King of the Land") in 1275 by Emperor Shi Zu (Kublai Khan) of the Yuan (Mongol) Dynasty, then ruling in Beijing (known at the time as Dadu, in Han, or Khanbaliq, in Mongol.) It was from that time on that the ties between Tibet and China, which had grown for centuries in the past, merged the two within a single political entity. So, far from being a form of national political separation, Tibet's priest-rule itself became the form of its political welding into the structure of feudal China.

Subsequent Chinese sovereigns issued patents to Tibet's ecclesiastical rulers, who in return sent tribute missions. This was the case with the high lamas of the Kargyu Sect under the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and with the Dalai Lamas, leaders of the Yellow Sect, in the Qing (Manchu) Dynasty (1644-1911). From 1724 onward the Qing emperors stationed two Ambans or governor-generals in Tibet; it was they who drew the names of prospective Dalai Lamas from the emperor's golden urn and approved their investiture. The *kashag* or local government, with its system of monkish and civil *kalons*, or local Ministers, was established by decree of Emperor Qianlong in 1750, as was the organization of Tibet's local army in 1792.

So to surround any of these institutions with a "Tibetan national" aura is not a serious historical approach. They were not so much national as feudal. Originating as specific forms of administration in feudal Tibet within feudal China, they could not long outlive the feudal period.

## CHAPTER 31: REFORM IN THE CLOISTERS

<sup>1</sup> This was true in 1965 and in 1976 as well.

<sup>2</sup> By 1979, according to a Xinhua News Agency dispatch from Lhasa dated March 20, the number was down to 240.

<sup>3</sup> A vivid account of this is given in Anna Louise Strong's *When Serfs Stood Up in Tibet*, Beijing, 1959 and San Francisco, 1976.

## BACKGROUND: FACTS FROM HISTORY

<sup>1</sup>The inward slant of both walls and windows, also a feature of ancient buildings of Sumer, Babylon, Egypt, Mycenaean Crete and Greece, and of the Mayas and Aztecs in pre-Columbian America, was dictated by the earliest materials used, wood-reinforced adobe or tamped clay. In all cases this form was afterwards traditionally preserved in buildings of stone and brick, though no longer structurally required.

A useful and ingenious device of Tibetan architecture is the use of tight-packed twigs for the upper part of the wall, under the roof. This not only lightens the structure but preserves it, acting as a damp course. Seen in virtually all religious structures, including the Potala, it is commonly coloured and protected by a dark purplish-red dye and so adds a unique note of beauty.

<sup>2</sup>The heavy overcoats worn in Tibet (*tuba*) came later from the Yuan Dynasty, and the "official hats" of functionaries from the Qing.

<sup>3</sup>Today the eastern terminus of the highway is placed at Chengdu.

<sup>4</sup>Recounted in the *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. III, pp. 49-50. For more on this and related matters see Li Tieh-tseng, *Tibet Today and Yesterday*, New York, U.S.A. (an earlier edition, 1952, was entitled *The Political Status of Tibet*.)

<sup>5</sup>George Vernadsky, *Political and Diplomatic History of Russia* (New York, 1936), p. 227.

<sup>6</sup>The historian Macaulay has scathingly described Hastings as "prone to the error of mistaking his malevolence for public virtue."

<sup>7</sup>A detailed account of border intrigues of the 19th century, and of their present-day consequences, can be found in Neville Maxwell, *India's China War* (New York, 1972), Chapter I.

<sup>8</sup>The special privileges of Nepal were ended by amicable negotiation with the People's Republic of China, when the Nepalese mission became a consulate-general.

<sup>9</sup>L. A. Waddell, *Lhasa and Its Mysteries* (London, 1905), p. 5.

<sup>10</sup>Waddell, *op. cit.* pp. 6-8.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup>Hugh Richardson, *Tibet and Its History* (Oxford, 1962), Chap. V.

<sup>13</sup>It should be remembered that both Darjeeling and Kalimpong which have remained for a century centres of intrigue for the penetration of Tibet were both originally Tibetan in population and culture. Darjeeling was seized by the British in India from Sikkim, and Kalimpong from Bhutan.

<sup>14</sup>Charles Bell, *Tibet Past and Present* (London, 1924), p. 219.

<sup>15</sup>In English, his name is also variously spelled as Przhevalsky and Perejevalsky. In a preface to the translation of one of his works, *Mongolia, the Tangut Country and the Solitudes of Northern Tibet*, Sampson Long, London, 1876, he described his expedition as undertaken "at the suggestion of the Imperial Geographical Society, warmly seconded by the Minister of War." (p. XII).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* Vol. I, Contents, Chap. II.

<sup>17</sup> *St. Petersburg Journal*, October 2, 1900.

<sup>18</sup> *Odesskie Novosti*, June 12, 1901.

<sup>19</sup> *St. Petersburg Gazette* (official), June 21 and December 1, 1901.

<sup>20</sup> Entry for March 1, 1903, in *Kuropatkin's Diary* published after the revolution in the Soviet historical magazine, *Krasnyi Arkhiv*.

<sup>21</sup> For these quotations I am indebted to Neville Maxwell's *India's China War* (New York, 1972), pp. 6-7.

<sup>22</sup> V. P. Leontiev, *Inostrannaya Ekspansiya v Tibete* (Moscow, 1956), p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> *Istoriya Mongol'skoi Narodnoi Respubliki* (Russian ed.) jointly issued by the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. and the Committee of Sciences of the Mongolian People's Republic, (Moscow, 1954), pp. 26 and 190.

<sup>24</sup> "The War in China," Dec. 1900, in Lenin, *Collected Works*, (Moscow, English ed.) Vol. 4, pp. 372-77. For Lenin's class analysis of Czarist policy in China, and the common interest of the Chinese and Russian people in combating it, this article should be read as a whole.

<sup>25</sup> "A Separate Peace," Nov. 6, 1916, in Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 23, p. 129.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted from George Saver, *Francis Younghusband* (London, 1952).

<sup>27</sup> The British government, in actual fact, did not respect China's sovereignty in Tibet. Rather, it sought to misuse it. Having extorted immense privileges elsewhere in China, it wished to extend these to Tibet automatically. For instance, a memorandum handed to the Tibetans during the Younghusband Expedition proclaimed, "elsewhere within the Chinese Empire, British subjects are allowed to carry on trade without further obstruction; Tibet as a dependency of the Empire has been the only place that made obstacles to trade ever since 1886." (Li Tieh-tseng, *Tibet Yesterday and Today*, New York, 1960, p. 83.) Depending on the situation, Britain wanted to use either of two keys to Tibet, on the spot or by way of the Beijing court.

<sup>28</sup> Younghusband was the political leader of what was ostensibly a mission to negotiate trade and other matters. The accompanying brigade of British and Indian troops to ensure its "safe passage" was under Gen. J. R. L. MacDonald. MacDonald in 1893-97 had conquered Uganda in East Africa, beginning with a "peaceful railway building mission." In the shooting invasion which soon followed, he assumed command. Two variations, same tune.

<sup>29</sup> Richardson, *Tibet and Its History* (Oxford, 1962).

<sup>30</sup> In one of these contacts, at least, care was taken to inform the British, to show that Russia was still adhering to the 1907 deal between the two powers.

<sup>31</sup> Lenin, "Big Achievement of the Chinese Republic," March 22, 1913, in *Collected Works*, Vol. 19, p. 29.

<sup>32</sup> The device of taking advantage of Tibet's difficult communications to obstruct more convenient contact with the rest of China was once more to appear in 1950, soon after China's liberation. Then delays in India and the non-granting of a visa through the British colony of Hong Kong held back for several months a

Lhasa delegation bound for Beijing. Reference to this was made in the Chinese note to India dated November 16, 1950.

<sup>33</sup> This same McMahon, as High Commissioner of Egypt when it was a British protectorate, later pledged independence to Arab countries in return for support given to the Allies against Germany and Turkey in World War I. But, after the war, as the British representative on the Middle East Commission of the Paris Peace Conference, he helped carve up the Arab lands into "protectorates" and "mandates" for the victorious Allies. Iraq, Jordan and Palestine went to Britain and Syria and Lebanon to France. Such was this colonialist "friend of independence."

<sup>34</sup> Lenin, *Collected Works*, Moscow English ed., Vol. 39, p. 687.

<sup>35</sup> *Far Eastern Review*, Vol. IX, p. 175.

<sup>36</sup> *Tibet, China and Great Britain*, a pamphlet by Grover Clark (Beijing, 1924).

<sup>37</sup> Now Kangding.

<sup>38</sup> Grover Clark, already quoted, wrote that Britain had "serious trouble on her hands" inside India, and any move to annex Tibet outright would add another movement against colonization on the other side of the border.

<sup>39</sup> Bell, *Tibet Past and Present* (Oxford, 1924) p. 214.

<sup>40</sup> Li Tieh-tseng, *Tibet Today and Yesterday* (New York, 1956), pp. 146 ff.

<sup>41</sup> Bell, *Portrait of the Dalai Lama*, Collins (London, 1946), pp. 366-72.

<sup>42</sup> W. D. Shakabpa, *Tibet, A Political History*, Yale University Press, (New Haven, 1967), Chap. 17, pp. 274-99.

<sup>43</sup> Shakabpa, *op. cit.*, pp. 241-42.

<sup>44</sup> Li, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>46</sup> Also spelled, in various English renderings, Radreng or Rabchen.

<sup>47</sup> Referring to the Empress Dowager Cixi (Tse Hsi) and the nominally ruling Emperor Guangxu (Kuang Hsu), in fact not her son but her nephew.

<sup>48</sup> Bell, *op. cit.* p. 394.

<sup>49</sup> It is here that Richardson first appeared in history. As British trade agent in Gyangzê, he was the man who proposed a radio link in Lhasa.

<sup>50</sup> Bell described Tsarong as "very pro-British" and Lungshar as "anti-British."

<sup>51</sup> Li, *op. cit.* p. 290. In actual fact, these emissaries did attend the "National Assembly" called by the Kuomintang regime.

<sup>52</sup> This idea is explicitly propagated in Amaury de Riencourt's *Roof of the World, Key to Asia*, (New York, 1950).

<sup>53</sup> The U.S. Office of Strategic Services, a wartime organization, was the precursor of the CIA.

<sup>54</sup> They were published only 14 years later in *Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers, 1943, China* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957), p. 636.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 626.

<sup>56</sup> The signed letter by Lowell Thomas, Jr. to Lhasa which passed on this information later fell into the hands of the People's Liberation Army and was long displayed in exhibitions in Lhasa itself and in the Palace of Nationalities in Beijing.

<sup>57</sup> See chapter on "The Old Tibetan Army."

<sup>58</sup> *Indian Notes to China*, October 20 and 28 and November 1, 1950.

<sup>59</sup> Reproduced in Appendix II to this book, p. 489.



# INDEX

## A

- Aba, area, *see* Ngawa
- Acheson, Dean, U.S. Secretary of State, 476
- Aethelstan, 51
- Afghanistan, 149, 459
- Agra, 221, 223
- Agreement (1951) of the Central People's Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet, (17-Article Agreement) 7, 12, 30-32; and agricultural development, 104; and Dalai Lama, 14; Mao Zedong on, 13, 21; and old Tibetan army, 216-218; on Party policies for Tibet, 492-496, 504; and PLA, 111, 195, 199; reactionary obstruction of, 12-13, 494-496; and reforms, 200, 503; signatories of, 244, 250; summarized, 477-478; text of the 17 points, 489-491; and united front, 246
- agriculture; education in, 58, 85; agricultural farm machine production and use, 274-276, 292, 354, 430; communes and electricity, 82, 85; communes, agricultural, *q.v.*; mutual aid teams, agricultural, *q.v.*; national programme, 99, 238; reforms and production in, 34, 169-171, 176-178, 209-210, 355; state farms, *q.v.*; *see also* animal husbandry
- Aid to Tibet, by central government, 10, 24, 28-29, 31, 38, 270
- air communications, 27
- Albazin, Cossack fortress, 442
- Alexei Mikhailovich, Czar, 442
- "Altai-Himalaya", (Roerich), 149
- Ambans, 18, 441
- Amdo, county, 163, 329, 350, serf revolt in, 483
- Amerindians, resemblances and contrasts with Tibetans, 92, 319-320, 525
- Amur (Heilongjiang), river, 450 *see also* Heilongjiang
- Analysis of Classes, in Chinese Society* (Mao Zedong), 235
- Andrutsang Gombo Tashi, 1959 rebel, 530
- Anglo-Japanese alliance, 1902 and 1905, and Tibet 458
- Anglo-Russian Convention (1907), 459
- animal husbandry, 308-332, 355; communes, animal husbandry, *q.v.*, veterinary services and pest control, 316; Wuchengchao (Inner Mongolia), enclosed pasture system, 326
- Anpei, 483
- Anshan, 55
- Anthology of the Grassland*, (Radjin Basang, etc.), 381
- Anti-Japanese War, China's, *see* wars
- archaeological finds, 364
- Arizona, 522,
- Arts, *see* Literature and Arts
- "Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace", 255
- "Asian Relations Conference", New De'hi (1947), 475
- Assam, 220, 444
- Attlee, Clement, British prime minister, 475
- Australasia, 331, 362
- Austria, 454
- Army, Chinese Red, 237, 244, 373; Living Buddha Geda helps, 243; Mao Zedong on functions of, 200; Tibet-

ans in, during Long March, 152-158;  
Tibetans recall, 160-162  
Army, Eighth Route, 120, Tibetans in,  
120-156  
Army, New Fourth, Tibetans in, 155  
army, old Chinese, 445, 460  
Army, People's Liberation, (PLA),  
67, 89, 131, 140, 149, 180-181, 222,  
224, 390, 488, 491; and 17-Article  
Agreement, 32, 199, 216-218, 477; in  
disaster relief, 197, 203; disciplined to  
respect Tibetan customs, 192-193, 199,  
201; in education, 356; entry into  
Tibet, 214-218, 224, 227, 243-245, 250,  
393, 427, 476; farming for self-sup-  
port, 104, 110-115, 121, 202; in highway  
building, 194-197; and industry, 267,  
275; Mao Zedong on tasks of, 200;  
medical services free for people, 128,  
203, 386, 391, 393-394, 405; and Party  
membership in Tibet, 38; pays for  
services, 312; people's help to, 204-  
205; and people's militia, 207-208, 237-  
241; people of Tibet to be learned  
from by, 203-204; political study in,  
208-209, 231-233, 234-236, 529; and rev-  
olution in Tibet, 11; and stage and  
film, 370, 374; and serfs, 127-129, 135,  
137, 182, 192-197, 229-230, 259, 283; and  
suppression of 1959 rebellion and dem-  
ocratic reform, 45, 49, 55, 128-129, 141,  
165-168, 200, 218-220, 248, 296, 421, 505;  
Tibetans in, 61, 63, 90, 133, 172, 202,  
205-207, 227-241, 285, 305; in Tibetan  
cadres' history, 158-159, 161, 162, 165-  
168, 174; Tibetan regiment in Sichuan,  
155; work in production, 209-210  
army, old Tibetan, 17-Article Agreement  
and, 216, 218; British at first resisted  
by, 212, 455; later British domination  
over, 212-213, 464-465, 469; used by  
British against China, 465-466, 471;  
defeat by PLA at Qamdo, 214-215;  
dissolution of, 218; financing and  
command, 211; impressment into, 129;  
lamasery rising suppressed by, 466;  
some officers oppose 1959 rebellion,  
217; provoked against PLA, 112; in  
1959 rebellion, 167; remnants in India,

219-220; reorganization question, 490,  
493-494; ex-soldier's return to Tibet,  
219-222

## B

Badhup, commune cadre, 164  
*Baima Wangbo*, Tibetan opera, 378  
*Ba-ge*, (form of *corvée*), 47  
Bainang, county, 163  
Bandung Conference (1955), 479  
Bajan, educator, 338  
Bangladesh (Bengal), 223, 437  
Banqen Erdeni, *see* Panchen  
Barber, Noel, author, 466, 527  
Basang, chairman, Bhundui revolu-  
tionary committee, 86-89  
Baotou, 320  
Batang, 121, 159, 258, 259, 263  
Bay of Pigs, Cuba, 224  
Beijing (Peking), Agreement for Peace-  
ful Liberation signed in, 489; cadres  
visit, 55, 91; convention with Britain,  
457; Dalai, 5th, in, 385, 441; Dalai  
13th, in, 470; Dalai, 14th, in, 478; Dalai  
14th, from exile, sends brothers to  
visit in, 255; Kublai Khan appoints  
Viceroy for Tibet, 17, 437; in Ming  
dynasty and Tibet, 438; Panchen 6th,  
in, 446; "Simla Agreement" denounc-  
ed by, 18; Tibetan artists perform in,  
371-373, 378, 380; Tibetan Buddhist  
temples in, 252, 434; Tibetan ex-serf,  
Tibetan students in, 131, 159, 162, 188,  
207, 259, 342, 392; teachers from, in  
Tibet, 344, 354;  
Bell, Sir Charles, British political agent,  
102, 145; burials alive, 140, 527; on  
Dalai Lama as court of appeal, 68,  
524; and nobility of Tibet, 64; separa-  
tist intrigues of, 465-470, 472, 474,  
529; and Simla Conference and  
McMahon Line, 463  
Bethune, Dr. Norman, 188, 231  
Bhutan, 24, 422, 443, 444, 451, 538  
"Big Tashi", Tibetan PLA man, 207,  
227-240

- Bissell, Richard, 224  
 Bloch, Marc, author, 524  
*Blood-Accusation*, play, 372  
 Boer war, 213  
 Bodh-pa, (Tibetan) Soviet Government (1935), 152  
 Bogle, George, British agent, 444-446  
 Bomi, 192, 484  
 "Boston Tea Party", 444  
 Brahmaputra, river, 173  
 Brezhnev, Leonid, 148  
*Brief News*, Lhasa newspaper, 267  
 Britain, 146, 255, 404, 441; Chinese sovereignty officially affirmed by, 19; expansion into Tibet from India, 256, 443-450, 453-454; and 1914 "McMahon Line", 18, 462-464; military encroachments, 449, 455-457; and Russia, 452-460, 517-518; school in Gyanze, 335; and 1914 Simla Conference, 18, 462-463; "survey spies", 447-448; and Tibetan separatism, 18, 44, 461-463, 465-476; and Tibet's old army, 464-466; and 1904 Younghusband Expedition, 19  
 Bukhara, 451  
 Burang, county, 163, 484  
 Bureau of Medicine and Calendar Calculation, *see* Mendzi Khang  
 Buriat-Mongols, 451, 452  
 Burma, 24, 479
- C**
- Cabral, Portuguese priest, 441  
 Cacella, Portuguese priest, 441  
 Cadogan, Sir Alexander, 472  
 cadres, Tibetan, 9-10, 23, 31, 38, 46, 52-55, 56, 58, 70, 74, 78, 85, 86, 90-92, 107-108, 114-115, 117, 120, 152-189, 206-207, 242, 356  
 Camp Hale, Colorado, CIA trains Tibetam parachutists at, 224, 225; some captured and later released, 530  
 Candler, Edmund, author, 456  
 Canton, *see* Guangzhou  
*Captured in Tibet*, (Ford), 530  
 Catherine II, Russian empress (1762-1796), 443  
 Catholic church, 76  
 Chakpori, hill, 389  
 Champa, auto worker, son of Lhadrup, 294, 296, 303  
 Champa, ex-serf, 390  
 Champa Gyaltsen, ex-serf, tailor, county head, 173-179  
 Champa Lieso, of Drepung, 425, 426  
 Champa Tseley, Living Buddha, 429  
 Chang Chao-hsien, *see* Zhang Zhaoxian  
 Chang Chingwu, *see* Zhang Jingwu  
 Chang Kuohua *see* Zhang Guohua  
 Chang'an, Tang capital, (now Xi'an), 434  
 Changdup, 176  
 Changjiang (Yangtze) River, 93, 98, 99, 155, 273, 362, 436, 450, 465  
 Chang-lo-chen, 335, 336  
 Charlemagne, 21, 139  
 Chen Jingpo 23, 522  
 Chen Tao, 174  
 Chengde (Jehol), 252, 434  
 Chengdu, 26, 27, 161, 174, 302, 342, 358, 378, 434  
*Chbenpos* (ecclesiastical chancellors), 421  
*chiang* (Tibetan barley beer), 69, 121, 387  
 Chiang Kai-shek, 18, 193, 470, 471, 504  
 Chien Lung, emperor, *see* Qianlong  
 China, old central governments of, and Tibet; imperial dynasties, *see* Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing; post-1911 Republican and northern warlord, 18, 460, 461, 468, 486; post-1927 Kuomintang, *see* Kuomintang; *see also* Commission for Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs  
 China, Central People's Government and Tibet, 26-29, 30, 166-167, 214-216, 244, 246, 267, 269, 295, 312, 335, 478, 490; *see also* Agreement for Peaceful Liberation, Communist Party of China, Chinese People's Political Consultative Council, Mao Zedong and National People's Congress  
 Chinese Academy of Sciences, 361  
 Chinese Buddhist Association, 251

- Chinese Communist Party, *see* Communist Party, Chinese
- Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (C. P. P. C. C.), 155; Tibet committee, 249, 250, 263; Standing Committee, 251; Common programme, 1949, on nationalities, (text), 487-488
- Chinese People's Volunteers, in Korea, 161
- Chinese Red Army *see* Army, Chinese Red
- Choate, Joseph, 19, 521
- Chomei Rindzin, of Drepung, 423
- Chonggyae County, *see* Qonggai
- Chongqing, 473
- Chos-khor, lamasery, 140, 141
- Chou En-lai *see* Zhou Enlai
- Chumbi valley, 102, 140, 456
- Chumpei, Lhadrup's younger son, 297
- Chunda, 188
- Chunley, Donggar commune, 81, 82
- Chunpei, 304, 305
- C.I.A. (U.S. Central Intelligence Agency), *see* U.S.A.
- Clark, Grover, author, 212, 464, 465, 529, 540
- Class for Social Education, Lhasa, 337, 528
- Columbia, 464
- The Coming Collapse of the Chinese Empire* (Louis), 256, 519-520
- Commentary*, magazine, 369
- Commission on Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs, 473
- communes, agricultural, 35, 58-61, 71-75, 76, 79-81, 83-85, 87-89, 90, 91, 96-101; Bhundui (former manor), 82-89, 389; Bright Light, (former Pahla Manor), 71-72; Donggar (former manor), 76-83, 85, 233, 273, 380; Gongkar, 238; Gyaepa, 90-101; Khaesum (former manor), 42-63, 71, 77, 140, 173, 174, 176, 374; Nyama, 99, 204, 384 communes, animal husbandry, 325; Gyakundo, 328; Lagendo, 327; dual benefit policy, 128, 313; Gyemei-shimei herding system, 310; pastoral camp impressions, 319; pastoral prices and income, 329
- Communist Party, Chinese, in Tibet, 8, 12, 20, 93, 166, 196, 237, 297; cadres, Tibetan, *q.v.*; Central Committee, 1980 decisions of, on Tibet, 22-24; commune branches of, 52; earliest Tibetan contacts, 152-158, 160-161, 242-244; policies in Tibet in 1950s, 8, 12, 13, 20, 32, 45, 492-496; policies concerning nationalities, 486-487, 496-497, 500-503, 509-510; Tibet regional committee, 91, 153, 162, 163, 251, 252, 257, 356; Tibet regional congress of, 37-38; Tibet Working Committee, 201, 260; Tibetan members of Central Committee, 162, 163; and united front in Tibet, *q.v.*
- Communist Youth League, 45, 114, 161, 174, 188, 206, 275, 297, 301, 326, 354, 390
- Constitution, Chinese, of 1954, provisions on nationalities and autonomy (text), 497-500; of 1957, *ditto*, 506-507; of 1978, *ditto*, 507-509; draft, of 1982, *ditto*, 510-515
- Construction Bureau, Tibet, 420
- corvée*, unpaid obligatory labour in old Tibet, *see ba-ge, gumbé-gyantse, ken-ge, sha-ji and ula*
- cosmic ray research, 365
- crop origins, in Tibet, 364
- Cuba, 224
- Cultural History of Tibet* (Snellgrove and Richardson), 528
- "cultural revolution", 344, 376, 391
- Curzon, Lord, British Viceroy of India, 19, 453; 455, 521

## D

- Dadu River, 160
- Dagze, county, 354
- Dagzhuka, 223
- Dajianlu (Kangding), 449, 464, 533
- Dalai Lama (as local ruler), 20, 29, 42, 66-67, 291; appeals to, 69, 145; and clerical cruelty, 138, 141; and feudal *corvée*, 82, 295, 413; income and

- wealth of, 33, 412, 413; and lamaseries, 300, 422; medical powers attributed to, 389, 410; origin of rule, 17-18; religious-political rule of, 402, 406-407; succession by reincarnation, 404-405
- Dalai Lama, 5th, 13; in Beijing and Beijing Court, 252, 385, 441, 442
- Dalai Lama, 6th, love lyrics of, 382; murdered, 402-403
- Dalai Lama, 8th, murdered, 402-403
- Dalai Lama, 11th, murdered, 402-403
- Dalai Lama, 12th, murdered, 402-403
- Dalai Lama, 13th, 249, 517; and British in India, 212, 466; and capital punishment, 143, 145; and lamasery tribute, 50; and ninth Panchen, 427; and Beijing central government, 468-469; and Russia, Czarist, 452, 458, 459; writings of political biography of, 253
- Dalai Lama, 14th, 24, 66, 223, 397; and Agreement on Peaceful Liberation, 199, 216, 244, 246; Ghairs Autonomous Region Preparatory Committee, 13, 244; and drama and film, 371, 375, 377; and early industry, 267, 275, 301; flight to India, 224; in India, 14, 221, 254; ex-officials remaining in Lhasa, 248, 250, 421; post-liberation policy toward, 30, 489, 493-495; prospects of return to China, 14, 15, 254, 255, 257; U.S. intrigues, concerning, 224 ff.; U.S.S.R. intrigues, concerning, 255-256
- d'Almeida, Portuguese Jesuit, 441
- Damchen Gyalpo, estate, 136
- Damxung, 127, 131, 132, 317, 322-324, 326-329, 399
- d'Andrade, Portuguese Jesuit, 441
- Darjeeling, 44, 103, 212, 221, 309, 444, 449, 465, 538
- Das, Sarat Chandra, Linguist British "survey spy", 448
- Dartsendo, *see* Dajianlu
- Daughter of Tibet* (Taring), 69, 143, 525, 527
- Dawa, woman vice-director of medical services, 398
- Dawa, electrical worker, son of Lhadrup, 294, 296-299, 301, 302
- Dawa, medical graduate, granddaughter of Lhadrup, 299
- Dawa, theatre troupe director, 373, 374
- Dawa Dondrub, bootmaker, 285
- Dawa Tsering, serf child, 67
- Dazang Dadul, later "Tsarong" *q.v.*, 469
- Dazhai, 86, 97, 204, 209, 327
- de Tours, French priest, 442
- De-ge Gesang Wangdui 23, 522
- Dehra Dun, 223
- Delhi, 21, 223, 463, 477
- Deng, nationality, 205
- Devil Dance*, 371
- dictionary, classical Tibetan-Han, work on, 535
- Dingbian, 156
- djatsang* (colleges), 421
- djisu*, estate-managing department of lamaseries, 129, 131, 409, 526
- Do-Dawa, maimed slave, 136, 527
- Dodi Power Station, Lhasa, 268, 271
- Doilungdêgên, 110, 380
- Donggar manor, 76-83, 85, 273
- Donovan, William, Gen, 475
- Doring, 133-135
- Dorje Ben, cadre, 160
- Dorje Gyaltzen, steward, 348
- Dorje Phagmo, female Living Buddha, United Front figure, 250
- Dorje Tsenden, educator 336, 382
- Dorje Wangchuk, monk, 422, 423
- Dorje Wangdui, ex-lama, worker, 426
- Dorjiev, Ngawang, Russian agent, 452, 459, 463
- d'Orville, French priest, in Tibet (1661), 442
- Dotsamdui, herdsman, 129
- dotse*, Tibetan monetary unit, 135
- Drepung lamasery, 131, 249, 419, 430, 468; annual month-long control of Lhasa, 408-409; anti-British revolt of 1921 in, 466; child monks in, 303; democratic reform in, 422-445; Dorjiev in, 452; manorial estates of, 77-78, 417; monks change to lay life, 426; mural painters' in new themes, 384; pastoral tribe enserfed to, 127, 130.

316; penalties for serfs, 82; political power of, 407; previous pomp and social contrasts of, 421-422; in 1959 rebellion, 425; religious dramas in, 371; usury practiced by, 77  
*drok-pa* (herdsmen), 310  
 Drolkar, woman doctor, 390, 392, 399  
 Drolkar Tsering, ex-serf, 56  
 Drolma, goddess, 134  
 Drolma, woman leader, Damxung County, 324  
 Drolma Yangdzom, Dodi Power Station director, 271  
 Drongba, 299  
*duichun*, ("masterless men", cotters), 46, 49, 50, 56, 62, 67-68, 136, 145, 160, 175, 229; equivalents in feudal Europe, 523  
 Dulles, Allen, 224  
 Dunhuang, grotto art, 384  
 Dzasak Khemey Sonam Wangdi, 491  
 Dzamu, 393  
*dzasa* (high official under Panchen Erdeni), 249  
*dzong* (county), 127, 234  
*dzong-pon* (county head), of Damxung, 127-130, 144, 211, 234, 407, of Khirido, 482, and of Nagqu, 483, of Medgog, 484, of Burang, 484  
 Dzungaria and Dzungar Mongols, 441, 442, 451

## E

East India Company, British, 443, 444; French, Dutch, 441  
 education, 334-336, 341-347, 352-360; contrasts of new and old, 28-32, 33-39; higher and specialized, 352-360; Institute of Nationalities, *q.v.*; schools, government-run, 334-346; schools, people's, 347-351; schools, primary, 60, 85, 87, 89, 171-172, 174, 176, 184, 376; schools, secondary, 166, 339-346, 348; teachers and their training, 140, 337-339, 347, 349, 352-354  
 Eisenhower, Dwight, U.S. President, 224

electric power, *see* energy  
 Electrical Machinery Plant, Lhasa, 273  
*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., on serfdom in medieval England, 47, 524; 14th ed. (1951), on Tibet, 64, 65, 71, 76; 15th ed. (1980), on Tibet, 147  
*Encyclopaedia, Greater Soviet*, on Tibet, 516-518 energy (installations and resources), electric power, 34, 85, 114, 268-271, 299, 363, 532; geo-thermal, 35, 267, 272, 274, 361, 363; solar, 35, 267, 274, 522; wind, 274  
 Engels, Friedrich, 208, 369, 383, 529  
 Europe, 47, 139, 147, 366, 402, 414, 441, 452, 454  
 Exhibition of the Tibetan Revolution, *see* Museum of Tibetan Revolution  
 Export Commodities Fair, Guangzhou, Tibetan products at, 278, 289

## F

*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 223, 520  
*Far Eastern Review*, 463  
 Festivals, Tibetan, *see* *Mon-lam*, *Ongkor* and *Shol-den*  
 feudal manors, serfs and slaves, 42-43, 46-54, 61-62, 64-69, 76-78, 81-82, 126-149, 159, 162-164, 173-174, 181-182, 211-212, 228-229, 234-236, 282-283, 294-298, 309-311, 316-318; pastoral, 337, 341, 349  
*Feudal Order* (Gibbs), 74, 524-525  
 feudalism, Tibetan and English compared, 47, 48, 51, 68, 76  
 Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence, 479  
*Flora and Fauna of Ngari Prefecture*, 363  
 Ford, Robert, British agent, *see also* *Captured in Tibet*, 214, 215, 243, 530  
*Foreign Expansion in Tibet*, (Leontiev), 454  
*Four-Part Medical Classic* (Yutok Yonten Kongpo), 388  
 Fox, Reginald, British agent, 214  
 France, 365, 449, 459  
*Francis Youngusband* (Saver), 454, 539

## G

- Gadren Namgyal, serf, 283, 284  
 Galdan Khan, 442, 443  
 Ganden, Lamasery, 50, 407, 430, 431  
 Gangdisê, Mountains, 363  
 "gang of four", 253, 329; cadres harmed by, 164; cultural work, 376-378; and education, 37, 343, 356; and farm production, 97-99; and national minorities, 22, 36; and Tibetan studies, 383; and united front work and religion, 254, 430  
 Gansu (Kansu) Province, 27, 151, 154, 156, 243, 246, 249, 358, 382, 384, 390, 339, 435, 448  
 Gar, 479  
 Garwhal (Mussoorie), 444  
 Garzê (Kanze), 152, 153, 157, 159, 353, 471  
*gawu* (head ornament), 316  
*Ge-sar Khan*, *see* *Kesar Khan*  
 Geda, lama, 214, 243, 244, 531  
 Gelugpa, *see* Yellow Sect of Lamaism  
 Geneva, 391  
 Genghis Khan; 452  
 George III, British King, 444  
 Geothermal, resources and power, *see* energy  
 Germany, 454, 459  
 Gesang, young woman, Lhunze County, 175  
*Gesang's Family*, play, 374  
 Gesang, auto worker, daughter of Lhadrup, 294, 296, 303  
 Gesang Tomei, ex-lama, Party Secretary, 426  
*geshi*. (doctor of religion), 418, 422, 426, 430  
 Ghulab Singh, of Kashmir, 446-447  
 Gibbs, Marion, author, 76, 524-525  
 glaciation, 362  
 Goa, 441  
 Golden Sand River, *see* Jinsha River  
 Goldstein, Mervyn C., author, 527, 530-531  
 Gologs, tribe, 533  
 Golmud, 27, 29, 162, 363  
 Gombo, ex-slave, 83, 84  
 Gombo, dzongpon's son, 129, 130  
 Gombo, PLA soldier, 236  
 Gombo, mountaineer, 227  
*gombo* (headman), 182  
 Gong Dasi, Damxung Party Secretary, 324  
 Gong Tashi, *see* Gong Dasi  
*gonyoks* (serf handicraftsmen), 283  
 Gosains, 446  
*gor-zhai*, dance, 377  
 Gorchakov, Prince, Russian Foreign Minister, 453  
 Gould, Sir Basil, British political officer, 472-474  
 Gray (Sakya) Sect, of Lamaism, 438  
 Grenard, F., author, 282-284, 533  
 Guangxi, province, 153  
 Guangzhou (Canton), 278, 447  
 Guizhou, province, 153  
*Gumbe-gyantse* (*corvée* form), 47  
 Gurkhas, (1790), 213, 445  
 Guru, massacre at, 456  
 Gushi Khan, 440, 441  
 Gyaca, county, 140, 203  
 Gyadong Jijigme, Panchen official, 251  
 Gyala, woman serf, 134  
 Gyalo Thondup, 223, 225  
 Gyangzê 65, 71, 113, 135, 159, 342; British (later Indian) installations at, 64, 465, 467, 479; British 1904 invasion resisted in, 212, 372, 456; British school at, 44, 335, 470; carpet making in, 287-288, 292; flood relief in, 197  
 Gyangzê-Xigazê Highway, 198  
 Gyanshon, 348  
*gyasa* (monastic robes), 413  
 Gyatso, commune, 328

## H

- Habib, Imam of Lhasa Mosque, 251  
 Hamilton, Lord, on status of Tibet, 455  
 Han chauvinism, Communist Party criticisms of, 22, 486, 488, Mao Zedong's 1953 directive against, 497, 501-502, 511

handicrafts, 282-293; mutual-aid and co-operatives in, 275, 284-285, 266-267; wages in, 285, 291; workers in old Tibet, 133-135, 287-288

Hangzhou, 436, 439

*Happiness* (Gesang Meido), Tibetan novel, 381

Hapsburg, empire, 21

Harvest Expectation Festival, *see Ongkor*

Hastings, Warren, 443-445, 450

He Shaoxian, 353

Heilongjiang, 275

"Hailstone Lamas", 239

Henderson, Loy, 476

*Heroic City*, film in Tibetan, 372

Highways, Sichuan-Tibet, 27, 194, 277, 278, 436; Qinghai-Tibet, 27, 162, 323, 357; Xinjiang-Tibet, 27; to Nepal, 27; Lhasa-Loka, 348

Hilton, James, 466-467

Himalayas, 43, 102, 205, 278, 362, 364, 365, 437, 451

*Hindu*, newspaper, Madras, 255

*History of the Mongolian People's Republic*, 454

Hong Kong, 223, 331, 476, 522

hospitals and clinics, Autonomous Region, Lhasa, 131, 302, 340, 392-395, 397, 399; commune clinics, 399-400; county hospital, Damxung, 399; General (Army) Hospital, Lhasa, 394; Lhasa Municipal Hospital, 394; Lhasa People's H., 340; Lhasa Workers' H., 393; prefectural at Xigazê and Loka, 398, 399; Tibetan Traditional Hospital, (Mendzi Khang), Lhasa, 389, 394-397

*The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains* (Mao Zedong), 176, 327

Hu Yaobang, 22

Hu Zonglin, 154

Hua Zhenghe, PLA soldier, 193-196

Huang Musong, (1937), 471-473

Huanghe River, 99, 433, 436

Huangsi (Yellow Temple), Beijing, 252

Hubei, 364, 399

Huhehot, 320

Hui, nationality, 155, 461

Hunan, 153, 399

Hungxin, commune cadre, 163

## I

Ikhtiyar-ud-din, (1205), 437

Ili, 451

*In Memory of Norman Bethune* (Mao Zedong), 188, 231

India (ancient), 362, 435, 437

India (British ruled): 43, 69, 102, 441, 458, 462; ambitions in Tibet, 443-444, 446, 448-450, 453; Dalai 13th in, 460, 465, 469; education of Tibetan nobles in, 460, 465, 469; Indian patriots in, oppose British expansionism, 466; installations in Gyangzê, 64; and invasions of Tibet, 19, 455-456; obstructs Chinese envoys, 473-474; Simla and McMahon Line, 463; and Tibetan separatism, 18, 212, 213, 475; unequal trade with Tibet, 278, 279, 311, 467

India (independent), 42, 44, 216, 288; affirms Chinese sovereignty, 19; Agreement (1954) with China, 479; border trade with, 24; conflicts on border with, 208; Dalai Lama, 14th, in, 14, 221, 224, 254; conflicts and need for rapprochement, 479-480; policy in 1949-1951, 476; relations with China improve, 255; Tibet's trade with, 493; Tibetans in, 66, 142, 148, 219-225, 249, 255, 309, 412; Zhou Enlai's call for friendship with, 506, 541

India, Cambridge History of, 538

*India's China War* (Maxwell), 538

Indians, American, *see Amerindians*

industry, 34-35, 266-280; agricultural machinery, 275, 292; automobile repair, 162, 294; coal mining, 273; electric power, 268, 271, 273, 294, 363; increase in output, 268; increase in variety, 270; matches, 279; new centre at Nyingchi, 277 ff.; paper-making, 279; wool and textiles, 277-280, *see also Handicrafts, and*

Workers, industrial  
 Inner Mongolia, 153, 155, 156, 320, 326, 332, 372  
 "Inner Tibet", in British scheme, 465  
 Innocent III, Pope on serfdom, 146  
 Institutes for Nationalities: Central, in Beijing, 188, 258, 342, 358; Northwest, in Lanzhou, 390; in Qinghai, 160; Southwest, in Chengdu, 161, 174, 176; Tibetan, in Xianyang, 135, 137, 162, 249, 328, 339, 342, 352, 357, 358; in Yanan (1937-1945), 155, 156  
 "International Commission of Jurists", 142, 146  
 International Scientific Symposium on Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, 364  
 Iran, *see* Persia  
 "Iron Bar" Lamas (monastery proctors), 408, 409, 421  
 "iron girls", 121

## J

Jaltsolin, Living Buddha, 421  
 Jamgai Gyatso, Tibetan novelist, 381  
 Japan, 154-156, 404, 455, 458, 473  
 Japanese invasion, 463, 471, 473  
 Jen Huali, hospital director, 394  
 Jiang Qing, 378, 379  
*jigjie*, sacrificial wafers, 134  
 Jinan, 34  
 Jincheng, Tang princess, 16, 435  
 Jinsha River, 465  
 Johns Hopkins University, 369  
 Jokhang, temple, 161, 167, 168, 304, 334, 389, 411, 414, 430; democratic reform in, 258, 260, 419-421; historic Han-Tibetan links and, 16, 434, 435, 439  
 Jordan, Sir John, 462, 466

## K

Kangding, 159, 308  
 Kangxi, emperor, 434, 441, 442  
 Kansu, *see* Gansu  
 Kanze, *see* Garzê  
 Kardrung Tsashagpa, *kashag* secretary, shot, 468  
 Kargyu (white) Sect. of Lamaism, 17, 438  
*kashag* (Tibetan local government), 30, 42, 160, 185, 262, 263, 298, 299, 316, 368, 469, 491; Agreement on Peaceful Liberation, *q.v.*; Agreement sabotaged by, 13, 111; bureaucracy, 407; dissolved after 1959 Rebellion, 45, 218; and education, 335-337, 339, 357; established from Beijing in 18th century, 17-18, 20, 419, 440-441; in exile, 255; "Foreign Affairs Bureau", 420; *kalons*, ministers, 244, 419, 468-470, 491; and lamaseries and temples, 417, 419-421; Lhasa mint of, 295; as manor lord, 406, 417; Ngapo as member of, 216, 244; non-rebel members and officers, 216-217; pressure on students, 184; and 1959 rebellion, 44, 113; separatism, foreign-backed, 473-476; and serfdom, 48, 290, 357, 482; special estates to maintain troops, 211; tribute, levies and punishments imposed by, 48, 49; usury by, 49, 409  
 Kawaguchi, Ekai, author, 142, 144, 404, 405, 409, 457, 458  
 Kashmir, 446, 447  
 Katmandu, 27, 445  
*ken-ge*, 47  
 "Kesar Khan" (Gesar Khan), Tibetan epic, 378, 382  
 KGB, 256, 519  
*kbal*, Tibetan measure, 46, 55, 57, 428, 523  
 Kham, 336, 339, 531  
 "Khamba", 158, 258, 259  
 "Khampa war", 225  
*khatag* (ceremonial scarf), 78, 286, 293, 297  
 Khempo, Council, 136, 137  
 Khenchung Thupten Lekmuun, 491  
 Khiva, 451  
 Khoshote Mongols, 440  
 Kipling, Rudyard, 448

Kalimpong, 44, 142, 223, 309, 469, 475, 479, 538  
 Kalmuks, 451  
*Kalons* (local ministers), *see* *kashag*

Kokonor, *see* Qinghai  
 Korea, 161, 453, 458, 477  
 Koshi, township, 141  
 Krishna (code-named A-K), 448  
 Kublai Khan, 17, 437  
 Kuichanov, E. I., author, 148, 521  
 Kumoon, 445  
 Kunming, 354  
 Kuomintang (and Kuomintang government), 154, 157, 161, 193, 470, 487, 490; and British influence in Lhasa, 471-475; McMahan Line, never recognized by, 463; personnel expelled by successionists, 475; Sun Yat-sen's behest to, on nationalities, 486-487; and Tibetan areas, 21, 160, 215, 243, 259  
 Kuropatkin, A.N., Russian War Minister, 453  
 Kyichu, (Lhasa) River, 82

## L

Ladakh, 221, 422, 441, 448, 451  
 Laden-la, police chief, removed, 470, 529  
 Lamaism, Red sect 251; Gray, 17, 428 438  
*Land of Lost Content* (Barber), 468, 527  
 Lamaseries and temples, *see* Drepung, Sera, Ganden, Jokhang, Tashi Lhumpo, Tengyeling, Chos-Khor, Thupten, etc.  
 Lanzhou, 27, 358, 390  
 Laos, 223  
 Latin America, 340  
 Lazikou Pass, battle, (1935), 156  
 Lei Feng, 227  
 Lenin, V. I., 192, 208, 256, 383, 529, 540  
 Leontiev, V. P., author, 454  
 Levin, Bernard, 369  
 Lhaba, 245  
 Lhadron, of Gyangzê weaving group, 287, 288  
 Lhadron, county Party secretary, 163  
 Lhadrup, ex-serf, auto worker, 35, 294-305  
 Lhagba, county Party secretary, 163  
 Lhalu Tsewang Dorje, ex-rebel, 250  
 Lhasa, 50, 67, 77, 80-82, 96, 103-104, 111-112, 116, 130, 143, 153, 161, 173, 174, 204, 213, 216, 243, 244, 246, 254, 258, 280, 283, 316, 322, 358, 382, 399, 413, 414, 449, 498, 460, 463; absentee manor lords in, 46, 47, 66, 311; *ambans* in, 18; Bell and separatists in, 465-467; British agencies and agents in, 214; old British-Indian mission in, 144; British invasion of, 455-457; Chinese central government office in, 471-473; CIA parachutists in, 223-224; contrasted wealth and poverty in old, 42, 43, 259, 309; contrasts on three visits, 27-30, 33-37; crop improvement near, 106-107; department store in, 263; district cadres in, 165-172; education, higher in, 352-354; electricians trained for communes in, 58, 85; film theatres in, 374, 379, 380; and early Han-Tibetan unity, 16-17, 438-439; highways reach, 196; imposition of 1904 "Lhasa Convention", 457; industries in and near, 267, 271-275, 279, 288-292, 332; lamas from Russia in, 451-452; lamaseries and temples of, 406-411, 430, 431, 438, 439, 466, 468; museum of Tibetan revolution, 137-138; and Nepal, 447; new sculptures in, 334; newspaper and radio, 366-368; OSS wartime agents in, 474, 475; police, old and new in, 180-189; prices in, 313; rebellion of 1959 in, 185, 217, 248, 300-301, 421; ex-rebels return to, 222, 250-252; schools and children in, 334-348; serf tailor's plight in, 133-135; serf victims interviewed, 126-135; stage and actors in, 370-372; struggle between patriots and imperialist-backed separatists in, 465-476; television comes to, 380; Lowell Thomases in, 476  
 Lhasa airfield, 295  
 Lhasa Cadres' Class, 337  
 Lhasa Children's Palace, 337  
 Lhasa Convention, *see* "Treaties"  
 Lhasa Mint, 295

- Lhasa and Its Mysteries* (Waddell), 448, 538  
 Lhasa-Loka Highway, 348  
 Lhasa People's Palace of Culture, 34, 304  
 Lhazê, county, 285  
 Lhoba, 353  
 Lhundrup, Tibetan PLA man, 236  
 Lhünzê, county, 173, 342, 483  
 Lhunzing, teacher, 57  
 Li Ancai, 336  
 Li Tieh-tseung, author, 471, 538, 540  
 Li Weihai, 491  
 Liaoning, province, 345  
 Lin Biao, 119, 245, 376  
 Litang, 449  
 literature and arts: drama and opera, modern, 372, 374, 379; drama and opera, traditional and revivals of, 370, 371, 378; film, 372, 374, 375; literature, classical in new editions, 378, 382; literature, modern, 381; performers and troupes, figures on, 376; Tibet Cultural Bureau, 375, 377-378  
 Liu Bocheng, 153  
 Liu Shenchiu, author, 213, 530  
 Lo Gyalpo, 248  
 Loka, prefecture, 42, 77, 140, 160, 173, 174, 204, 219, 224, 271, 276, 342, 354, 367, 372, 374  
 Long March, and Tibetan cadres, 152-158, 160, 206, 242, 243, 373  
 Losang, electrical worker, 294, 297, 299-302, 305  
 Losang, PLA soldier, 235, 236  
*Losang*, Tibetan opera, 378  
 Losang Chujen, bereft old woman, 187  
 Losang Dawa, Tibetan Teachers' College, 353  
 Losang Tsechen, Tibetan senior cadre, 158, 159  
 Loseling college, 468  
 Louis, Victor, author, 256, 519-520  
 Lozang Dantzen, Tibetan PLA man, 203  
 Lozang Dorje, monk official, 468  
 Lozang Tashi *ex-silon* 494  
 Lungshar, old Tibetan army head, 470, 472  
 Lukhangwa, *ex-silon*, 112, 494  
 Lushun, 452  
 Luttwack, Edward, 369, 370
- M**
- ma-kan*, old army-support estates, 211, 219  
 Macao, 442  
 MacArthur, Gen. Douglas, 476  
 Macartney, Lord, British envoy, 445  
 Madras, 255  
*Maiden Nangsha*, Tibetan opera, 378  
 Maizhokunggar, county, 173  
 Manchus, 457, 461  
 Manchuria, 451, 453  
 Mao Zedong, 13, 30, 55, 91, 104, 106, 113, 195, 203, 234, 240, 350, 353, 372, 378; and commune formation, 97; and education, 345, 354; against Han chauvinism, 1953 directive (text), 493-497; literary and art principles, 374; medical care given free to Tibetans, 391; and militia, 207, 237-238; mourning for, 302; on nationalities' past disunity, 21; on nationalities policy (1945 text), 486-487; nationalities' relations among, (1956 text), 500-502; on nationalities question (text), 502-503, 529, 530, 531; and peasant organization, 87, 93; and PLA functions, 111, 200, 202; strategy and foresight, 13; study of works, 176, 184, 188, 208, 209, 231-232, 235, 369, 373; and Tibet, concern with policy in, 12, 37, 246; and Tibetans on Long March, 156; and united front, 242; and women, 100  
 Maoergai, 156  
 Margary, R. A., British diplomat, 448  
 Marx, Karl, 49, 208, 369, 383, 402, 529  
 Marxism, 339, 340  
 McMahon, Arthur Henry, 462, 540  
 "McMahon Line", 18, 92, 461, 463, 474, 477, 479  
 McMahon-Shatra correspondence, 463  
 McNamara, Robert S., U.S. Defence Secretary, 224

- medicine and health, 90, 386-400; army medical services to the people, 128, 194, 203, 386, 391, 393-394, 405; barefoot doctors and paramedics, 399; hospitals and clinics, *q.v.*; Medical College, Lanzhou, trains Tibetans, 390, 399; Medical College, Regional, Nyingchi, 352, 357; medical societies, Tibetan branches, 396; Nursing, Nyching School of, 90; services and personnel, growth of, 391; and population growth, 386
- medicine, Tibetan traditional, achievements and lacks, 387-390; Mendzi Khang, 389, 394-397, 399; Research Institute for, 398
- Mediterranean Sea, ancient, *see* Tethys
- Medog, county, 484
- Miao, nationality, 153
- Middle East, 309, 443
- Mi-la Repa, poet, 381
- Military and Administrative Commission, 217
- Military Control Committee, PLA, in Tibet, 248
- Militia, People's, 207-208, 237-241
- Mimang* ("People's Conference"), 420
- Minerals, resources and mining, 266, 273, 280-281, 363
- Ming Dynasty, 17, 438, 439
- Mingyal, Chairman, leather goods mutual-aid team, 290, 291
- Mishmi, 220
- Mohammed Tughlag, 437
- Moinba, nationality, 353
- Mondrong, executed by secessionists, 468
- Monasteries, *see* Lamaseries
- Mongolia, 371, 378, 422, 442, 450, 451, 454, 461-464
- Mongolia the Tangut Country and... Northern Tibet* (Przevalski), 452-454, 538
- Mongols, nationality, 155, 519
- Mongolian People's Republic, 255
- "Mongolian-Tibetan Treaty of Alliance" engineered by Czarism, 463
- Mongols, Khoshote, 440
- Mon-lam*, Great Prayer Festival, 408
- Montgomery, Colonel, of Indian Survey, 447
- Morton, A. L., author, 527
- Mu Zong, emperor, Tang Dynasty, 16
- Mudhup Dintso, serf, 175
- Mullin, Chris, author, 222-225
- Museum, Revolutionary, Beijing, 243
- Museum of Natural History, New York, 61, 410
- Museum of the Tibetan Revolution, Lhasa, 33, 137, 138, 140, 214, 225, 384, 412
- Mustang Valley, Nepal, 225
- mutual-aid teams, agricultural, 69-71, 78-79, 92-95, 324-325

## N

- Nachi, woman ex-serf, 258-264
- Nagarze, 113
- Nagqu, prefecture (Nagquka), 163, 279, 298, 314, 350, 354, 363, 367, 375, 393, 483, 484
- Nam Co, lake, 327
- Nain Singh, British "survey spy", 448
- Namdon Gunga Wangchuk, (*ex-silon*), 249, 253
- Namgyal, young aristocrat, 136
- Namgyal, herdsman, 317-319, 322, 328
- Namgyal, serf debtor, 348
- Namgye-sie, 348
- Namling, county, 237, 238
- Nampa Hansa, cotter, 67, 68, 145
- Namsey, commune cadre, 327, 328
- Nang-ma*, Tibetan music, 377
- Nangtzesha, courthouse and prison, 296, 384
- nangzan* (household slaves), 46, 50, 66, 175
- Nangzan Mutual-Aid Team, 90-107
- Nanjing, 55, 204, 439, 472, 475; Ming capital, 438
- Nanniwan Valley, 120, 121; veterans in Tibet, 526
- Nation*, magazine, 320
- "National Assembly", 469, 474
- National People's Congress, 91, 163, 227,

- 245, 250, 251; Nationalities Committee, 23; Standing Committee, 216, 244, 245, 254
- Navajo, Indians, 319
- Naxi, nationality, 353, 354
- Nehru, Jawaharlal, 19
- Nepal, 24, 27, 225, 248, 370, 380, 422, 435, 445-447, 451, 479, 539
- New Delhi, 221, 479
- New Mexico, U.S.A., 35, 319, 522
- New Life for the Ral-pa*, play, 370
- New Times*, Moscow, 148, 149
- New York Times*, 224
- New Zealand, 109, 159, 331
- Ngapo Ngawang Jigme, (former *Kalon*)  
Chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region, 215-217, 244, 245, 249, 254, 491
- Ngapoi Ngawang Jigmi, *see* Ngapo
- Ngari, prefecture, 103, 163, 248, 278, 354, 357, 367; coal in, 273; old kingdom in, 482
- Ngawa (Aba), in Sichuan, 153, 154, 303
- Ngawang, ex-serf, cadre at Khaesum, 46-52, 56-59
- Ngawang, educator, 339
- Ngawang Dorje, *see* Dorjiev
- Ngawang Gyatso, Lhasa cadre, 32, 165-172, 189
- Ngawang Nyima, Tashi Lhumpo monk, 427
- Ngawang Tsering, serfowner, 230
- Nguchu Losang Choipel, high cleric, 251
- Nicholas II, Czar, and Tibet, 452, 453, 459, 463
- Ningpo (Ningbo), 446
- Ningxia, 364
- Nixon, Richard M., U.S. president, 225
- No Right to Be Born*, play, 379
- Norbu Linka, Dalai Lama's Summer Palace, new public park, 224, 248, 291, 295, 296, 300, 371, 373, 413, 437
- Norsang, King*, Tibetan classic, re-published, 382
- "North Shambala", 452
- Northern warlord government, 486
- Notebooks on Imperialism*, (Lenin), 463
- Nyaingentanglha, mountain range, 322, 327
- Nyang, river, 70, 197, 277, 355
- Nyima, woman agronomist, "July 1" State Farm, 107, 108
- Nyima, woman, doctor, 399
- Nyima Mindup Dorje, regimental head, 217
- Nyima Trash, ex-lama, worker, 430
- Nyima Tsendrup, slave, 67
- Nyima Tsering, ex-lama, Party secretary, 52-59
- Nyima Tsering, mutual-aid team member, 83
- Nyima Udhup, interpreter, 131
- Nyingchi, county, 109, 110, 245, 249, 275, 279, 296, 352, 355, 357, 358, 392; electric power in, 271; new industrial centre at, 277 ff.

## O

- October Revolution, Russian, 192, 466
- Odessa, 452
- Od-srung, king, 482
- Ogonyok*, Soviet weekly, (1975, No. 15), 454
- Ong-kor*, (Harvest Expectation) festival, 54, 372
- Opera Troupe, Tibetan, 377
- Opium Wars, *see* Wars
- Oppose Book Worship* (Mao Zedong), 232
- OSS, *see* U.S. Office of Strategic Services, *see* under U.S.A.
- Out of This World* (Lowell Thomas), 44
- Outer Mongolia, Czarist Russia engineers protectorate, 459, 461, 462
- "Outer Tibet", in British scheme, 465

## P

- Pagbalha Geleg Namgyai, *see* Pebala
- Pahiden Lhamo, goddess, 141
- Pakistan, 223, 250, 479

- Palha family and manor, 64-75, 145, 524;  
Palha-se, Kusho, 64; Palha, Thubten  
Wangden, ex-chamberlain to Dalai  
Lama, 66, 224, 524; Palha Wanchuk,  
younger brother of P. Thubten Wang-  
den, 66; private jail, 66
- Pamir region, 451
- Panama Canal Zone, 463, 464
- Panchen Erdeni, 10th, 30, 135, 249, 251,  
276, 283, 287, 413, 417, 419, 426, 445,  
489; and reforms, 14, 427; posts held,  
14, 244; invites Dalai Lama to re-  
turn, 14, 254; and united front, 246
- Panchen Erdeni, 6th, 444; visits Beijing  
in 1780, 252; and early British pene-  
tration, 443-444, 446
- Panchen Erdeni, 9th, opposes separa-  
tism, 468, 471; in 1923 forced out of  
Tibet, 470; British obstruct return of,  
472; status preserved by 17-Article  
Agreement, 478
- Panchen Kampo Lija (Khenpo Council),  
251, 526
- Pangta Chang, Tibetan merchant firm,  
250
- Pangta Dorje, big Tibetan merchant,  
250
- Pangta Yampel, 250
- Parkhor, street, Lhasa, 165-169, 172, 292,  
335, 431
- Parnov, Ereimei, 148, 149
- Pasang, Tibetan woman, Party Central  
Committee member, 162, 163, 254,  
356, 357, 381
- Pasang, auto worker, daughter of  
Lhadrup, 294, 296, 302, 303
- Patterson, George, author, 219, 530
- Pebala Cholie Namgyal, Living Buddha  
of Qamdo, people's government of-  
ficial, 245, 251, 254, 532
- Pebala Khenchung, brother of above,  
killed in 1959 rebellion, 531
- Peking, *see* Beijing
- Pema, Tibetan PLA man, 203, 236
- Pema Lhamo, ex-serf, 62
- Pema Lhamo, weaving group Party  
secretary, 288
- Pema Lonyen, slave, 67
- Pema Thondhup, township head, 50
- People and Gods of the Land of Snows*,  
(Kuichanov and Savitsky), in Russian,  
148
- People's Liberation Army, *see* Army,  
People's Liberation (PLA)
- People's Bank, 284
- People's History of England* (Morton),  
527
- Persia (Iran), 443, 454, 459
- Peter I, Czar, 442
- Phagspa, Sakya Sect Lama, viceroy of  
Tibet, 17, 437
- Phunrapa, executed by secessionists,  
468
- Phuntse Wangdup, cadre, 174
- Phuntso Dondrub, ex-slave, commit-  
teeman, 275
- Phuntso Tashi, ex-serf, factory com-  
mitteeman, 275
- Phuntso Wangdui, returned rebel, 219-  
223
- Phurbu Tashi, Tibetan PLA man, 203,  
227, 236
- Phari, county, 102
- Pin Kang, Tibetan PLA officer, state-  
farm director, 121
- Pokotilov, D. D., Russian envoy, and  
Dalai Lama, 13th, 459
- Politics of Lying* (Wise), 224, 530
- Political Status of Tibet* (Li Tieh-tseng),  
*see* "Tibet Today and Yesterday"
- Poor Herdsmen's Association, 326
- Portuguese, early travelers, in Tibet,  
441, 442
- Potala Palace, 30, 137, 166; architec-  
tural style, 434, 441; British troops  
dictate 1904 "Lhasa Convention" in,  
456; Dalai Lama's living quarters,  
413; in Lhasa, old; 29, 259, 390, 411;  
in Lhasa, new, 33, 334; as lord's man-  
or, 82; and performances, 371; polit-  
ical and religious status of, 419; and  
1959 rebellion, 219, 421; records, 382;  
ex-serf's feeling about, 169; wealth,  
images and education in, 414
- Population, 38, 138, 286, 386, 391, 527
- PPCC, *see* Chinese People's Political  
Consultative Conference
- Princess Wencheng*, Tibetan opera, 379

- "Protect the Faith Army", 184  
 Przevalski, N. M., Czarist intelligence colonel, expeditions to Tibet, 451, 452, 454, 538  
 publishing, book and periodical, 369, 381-384  
*pulo (phuru)*, Tibetan, cloth, 35, 278, 286, 292, 293, 309, 318, 412
- Q**
- Qaidam (Tsaidam), 451  
 Qamdo, prefecture, 159, 205, 214, 215, 244-246, 259, 276, 280, 342, 354, 362, 364, 393, 465, 478, 481; Battle, 214; coal in, 273  
 Qianlong (Chien Lung), Qing emperor, 138, 252, 389, 402, 445  
 Qing (Manchu) Dynasty, 17, 212, 215, 252, 439, 441, 445-447, 449, 452, 456-461, 486  
 Qinghai (Kokonor), province, 27, 29, 160, 196, 243, 246, 251, 281, 331, 363, 382, 393, 397, 428, 436, 438, 442, 448, 451, 452, 469, 470, 473  
 Qinghai-Tibet Railway, *see* railways  
 Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau, 365; geotectonic origins, 362; comprehensive survey, 361; International Scientific Symposium on, Beijing (1980), 364  
 qingko barley and *tsamba* (Tibetan staple), 74, 84, 98, 102, 131, 229, 285, 295, 300  
 Qomolangma, Mt., 227, 362, 534  
 Qonggyai, county, 204, 481
- R**
- Radjin Basang, Tibetan poet 381  
 Ragashar, aristocrat, 290  
*ragya-pa*, caste, 53, 143  
 Raigdi, Tibetan senior cadre, 163, 381  
 Railway, Qinghai-Tibet, 363  
*ral-pa*, traditional *corvée* actors, 370, 372, 377  
 Ralpachen, Tibetan king, 16, 435  
 Rasang, carter, 81  
 Rating Rimpoche, regent 1933-, 471, 473, 475  
 Rolo-ring Ru-ta tribe, 483  
 Reagya Tsering, Tibetan doctor, 395  
 Reay, Lord, on Tibet (1903), 455  
 Rebellion (revolt), of 1959, 7, 14, 45, 55, 66, 128, 185, 187, 207, 216, 224, 300, 312, 398, 408, 417, 427, 486; in 1952, foreseen by Mao, 494; Zhou Enlai reports on, 503-506  
 Red Army, Chinese, *see* Army, Chinese Red  
*Red Flag (Hongqi)*, magazine, 97, 98  
 Red Guards, during the cultural revolution, 430  
 Red Sect, of Lamaism, 251  
*Red Star Over Tibet* (Dawa Norbu), 527, 528  
 reforms, democratic in agriculture, 45, 55-59, 69-70, 128-131, 185; in pastures, 312-315; in lamaseries, 417-419, 420-421, 427-428  
 religion, 20, 21, 161-162, 402-431; policy of freedom of belief, 161, 488, 489, 504, 509, 512, 536-537; *see also* lamaseries  
*The Religion of Tibet* (Bell), 524  
 Rendzin Wanggyal, commune Party secretary, 99  
 Richardson, Hugh, E., British-Indian official, author, 144-148, 457, 474, 528, 538  
 Rimshi Samposey Tenzin Thundup, 491  
 Rinchen, British agent, 212  
 Roerich, Nikolai, author, 149  
*Romeo and Juliet*, in Tibetan, 379  
*Roof of the World, Key to Asia* (de Riencourt), 540  
 Rumania, 380  
 Russia (Czarist), 33, 149, 192, 256, 440, 441, 450, 466; ambitions in Tibet, 442-443, 452-455, 517-518; versus Britain in Tibet, 459-464, 517-518; and Dalai Lama, 13th, 458  
 Russia (Soviet Union), recent apologies for Czarist policies in Tibet, 460, 467, 517-518; recent flirtations with Tibetan separatism, 148, 255, 256.

- 516-518; recent writings on Simla Conference, 18; October Revolution's impact on Tibet, 466; and U.S. strategy in Tibet, 474
- Russia, Political and Diplomatic History of* (Vernadsky), 443, 538
- S**
- Sa'gya Sect, *see* Sakya
- Sakya, Gray Sect of Lamaism, 17, 438, 439
- Salisbury, Harrison E., 519-520
- Salt Lakes, in Tibet, chemical resources, 363
- Samarkand, 451
- Sanding Temple, 250
- Sampo Tsewang Rentzen, *kashag* member, did not join rebellion, 217, 250
- Sanggye Gesang, ex-monk and auto worker, 303
- Sanggye Gyatso, regent, 442, 443
- Sanggye Lhuntse, ex-lama, worker, 426
- Sanggye Yeshe (Tian Bao), Tibetan Long Marcher, senior cadre, 153-155, 157, 242, 254, 381, 528, 531
- Sanmu, commune woman, 74
- Sarat Chandra Das, *see* Das
- Saratoga, Battle of, 444
- Saver, George, author, 539
- Savitsky, L. S., author, 148, 521
- Scandinavia, 380
- Science and research, 330-332, 361-365
- Schools, *see* education
- Sera lamasery, and its serfs, 132, 317; and *corvée* craftsmen, 288; boy monks in, 299-301; ex-monks in lay life, 327, 337; new statues in, 384; political power of, 407; burned in past factional strife, 421; Ming printing blocks in, 438; in 1947 shelled by separatists, 475
- serfs, *see* feudal manors, serfs and slaves
- Serfs*, film in Tibetan, 372, 375
- Serve the People*, Mao Zedong, 176
- Shaanxi, province, 156, 162, 342, 352, 436
- sha-ji*, (form of *corvée*), 47
- Shakabpa, Tsipon W. D., separatist, 142-148, 468, 469, 475, 518
- Shakespeare, 379
- Shanghai, 34, 55, 269, 288, 324, 341, 357, 367, 371, 375, 378, 379, 392, 463
- Shatra, Lonchen, British-manipulated Tibetan official, 20, 92, 462, 463
- Shawcross, Sir Hartley, 146
- Shen Tsung-lien, author, 213, 530
- Sherpa, nationality, 353
- Shinrob Dondrup, *see* Yang Dongsheng
- Shinrob Norbu, Tibetan traditional doctor, 397
- Shirob, blinded serf, 137, 527
- Shirob Watsa, factory manager, 160, 161
- Sbol-den* Festival, 291, 371
- Shunzhi, Qing emperor, 252, 441
- Sian, *see* Xi'an
- Siberia, 422, 450
- Si-bon*, (estate agent), 136
- Sichuan, province, 26, 27, 206, 246, 258, 281, 302, 344, 353, 358, 397; Institute of Nationalities in, 174; Tibetan autonomous prefectures in, 152, 153, 155, 157, 159, 251, 303, 446-450; Tibetan separatists' British-backed invasions of, 465, 469, 471
- si-dui*, (bailiff), 46
- sika* (manor), 136
- Sikang (former province), 152, 155, 214, 243, 246, 471, 478
- Sikkim, 24, 64, 103, 220, 466, 449-451, 463, 470, 472, 538
- Siliguri, 221
- Silk Road, 435
- Silon* (local prime minister), 249, 253, 494-495
- Simla, "Convention" and "Treaty", 18, 20, 462, 463, 469, 474
- siogan* (Tibetan coin), 295
- slaves, *see* feudal manors, serfs and slaves
- slave and serf revolts, 32, 481-485
- Snellgrove, David, author, 528
- Snow, Edgar, 157
- Sogyal, geothermal drilling team leader, 272
- solar energy, 522

- Sonam (Sha Nai), Tibetan Long Marcher, later general, 155-157
- Sonam, peasant, Lhunze County, 174
- Sonam Dorje, ex-official, 173, 174
- Sonam Lhundrup, ex-serf, school principal, 349
- Sonam Norbu, hospital director, 399
- Sonam Tashi, 78-81
- Sonam Tsering, blinded herdsman, 131-133
- Sonam Wangdui, assistant Party secretary, 117
- Sonam Wangmu, woman ex-slave, commune memebre, 92
- Song Dynasty, 17, 382, 436
- Songtsan Gambo, Tibetan king, 16, 121, 379, 419, 433, 434, 435.
- Songzain Ganbo, *see* Songtsan Gambo
- Soviet Union, *see* Russia (Soviet Union)
- Stalin J.V., 208
- state farms, 102-123; "August 1st", 104, 110-115; "July 1st" Institute and Farm, 104-110, 116; Lhundrup, 116-123; Phampo, 116-123, 248, 273, 399
- St. Petersburg, 149, 452, 453
- Story of Young Damei*, Tibetan classic, republished, 382
- Strong, Anna Louise, author, 215, 258-260, 530, 532
- Sun Yat-sen, 461; on nationalities, 486
- Surkhang, family, 45
- Surkhang, Dzasa, 43, 44; Surkhang, Lhawang Dorje, 44; Surkhang Wangching Galei, head of *Kashag* (local government), 42-47, 52, 56-58, 419; "W.G. Surkhang", 523
- Survivors*, Tibetan novel, by Yekei Daindzim, 381
- Switzerland, 250, 332
- T**
- Tai Zong, Tang Dynasty emperor, 433
- Taiwan, 11, 193; Tibetan "guerrillas" trained in, 223, 442, 520
- Taktra, ex-regent, 473
- Talks at the Yanan Forum on Literature and Art* (Mao Zedong), 374
- tang-ka*, traditional paintings, 384
- Tang Dynasty, (618-907), 16, 17, 121, 308, 384, 433-435, 439
- Tanguts, 451
- Taos, New Mexico, 35
- Taring, Rinchen Dolma, author, 69, 143, 525, 527
- Tashi, upper serf, 52-54
- Tashi, maimed tanner, 126-132
- Tashi Dawa, intended human sacrifice, teacher, 140
- Tashi Dondhrub, actor, 371
- Tashi Drolma, of Bhundui Commune, 84
- Tashi Lhumpo, lamasery, 250, 252, 276, 382, 414, 417, 419 426-430, 434, 445
- Tashi Phuntso, interpreter, 182, 184
- Tashi Tsering, serf, roadbuilder, 195
- Tashi Wangchuk, Tibetan Long Marcher, senior cadre, 154, 157, 528
- Tashkent, 451
- Tea, trade, 103, 434, 436, 444, 449; now grown in Tibet, 449
- Teichman, Eric, "mediation", 466
- Tengyeling lamasery, 468
- Tenzing, woman chairman, Bhundui Commune, 85
- Tenzing, blacksmith, 285
- Tenzing, Sera monk, 299, 300
- Tenzing Chunlei, primary school dean, 337
- Tenzing Phuti, woman commune member, 92
- Tenzing Wangbu, intended human sacrifice, teacher, 141
- Tenzing Wangchuk, maimed tailor, 133-135
- Tethys (ancient Mediterranean), 362
- Thapa Anyang Chumpei, manor lord, 140
- Theatrical Institute, the, 379
- Thomas, Lowell, Sr. and Jr., 44, 180, 223, 476, 523, 528, 541
- "three againsts", in Tibet's democratic reform, 45, 128, 312
- Three Years in Tibet*, (Kawaguchi), 142, 404, 457
- Thupten, team chairman, 92

- Thupten, lamasery, 228
- Thupten Jigme Norbu, brother of 14th Dalai Lama, 61, 223, 255
- Thupten Thanthar, ex-secretary of Dalai Lama, united front figure 250, 490
- Tian Bao, *see* Sanggye Yeshe
- Tian Han, author, 379
- Tianjin, 55, 157, 287, 353
- Tibet Autonomous Region, 11, 23, 28, 137, 158, 244-247, 352, 426, 489; government (and revolutionary committee), 153, 216, 237, 489; Party committee, 153, 163, 251, 356; and United Front Department of, 245; People's Congress of, 23, 52, 91, 228, 234, 370
- Tibet Autonomous Region, Preparatory Committee, founded (1956), 13, 14, 218, 244, 420; in 1959 takes over from *kashag*, 503; *see also under* Communist Party, Chinese; Tibet Working Committee of
- Tibet*, (Norbu and Turnbull), 524
- Tibet*, (Winnington), 536
- Tibet, autonomy, laws adapted to, 23
- Tibet, China and Great Britain*, (Clark), 529, 540
- Tibet Daily*, the, 279, 366, 367, 383, 420
- Tibet Geological Bureau, 280
- Tibet and Its History*, (Richardson), 538, 539
- Tibet Literature*, quarterly, 381
- Tibet, Past and Present*, (Bell), 524, 529
- Tibet, a Political History*, (Shakabepa), 540
- Tibet Trade Regulations, 459
- Tibet and the Tibetans*, (Shen Tounghien, and Liu Shen-chiu), 213, 530
- Tibet and the Tibetans*, (Grenard), 282-284, 533
- Tibet Today and Yesterday*, formerly *Political Status of Tibet*, (Li Tieh-Tseng), 467, 471, 474, 538, 540
- Tibet Administrative Cadres School, 184
- Tibetan Army, old, *see* Army, old Tibetan
- Tibetan Interviews*, (Strong), 215, 258 530, ff., 532
- Tibetan local government, old, *see Kashag*
- Tibetan Refugees in South India*, article, (Goldstein), 531
- Tibetan Studies*, quarterly, 382
- "Tibetan trade delegation," 475
- Tibetans, a nationality and as organic component of multi-national China, 8-25, 30, 52, 384-385, 437-441, 457, 461-462, 468-480
- Tibetans, in self-exile, return welcomed, 219-222, 225, 247-248, 250, 254-255, 257
- timber resources, in Tibet, 364
- Time*, magazine, 36
- Times*, London, 369
- Todlung Dechhen, river, 78
- tod-zhai*, tap dance, 377
- Tolstoy, Capt, Ilya (OSS), 474
- Tongyal Sonam Dorje, rehabilitated, 251
- Topgyal Tseyang, senior cadre, 163
- tralpa* (serfs), 46, 136, 175
- Treaties (equal): Sino-Indian Agreement of 1954, on Trade and Inter-course Between the Tibet Region of China and India, 480; Sino-Russian Treaty (of 1689) of Nipchu (Nerchinsk), 16, 89, 442
- Treaties and Conventions (unequal and inter-imperialist): Anglo-Japanese alliance (of 1902 and 1905), and Tibet, 458; Anglo-Russian Convention (Of 1907) concerning Tibet, Afghanistan and Persia, 459; Anglo-Chinese, Peking (Beijing) Convention (of 1906), 459; Anglo-Chinese Calcutta Convention (of 1890) relating to Sikkim and Tibet, 221, 449, 450, 469, 479; Anglo-Chinese Chefoo (Yantai) Convention (of 1876), and Tibet, 448, 450; Anglo-Chinese (Darjeeling) Tibet Trade Regulations (of 1908), 459; Lhasa Convention (of 1904) dictated by Britain, 456, 457; Treaty of Segauli (of 1815) imposed by Britain on Nepal, 445
- "Treaties" and "Conventions" of no

- validity: "Lhasa Convention" (of 1904), 456-457; "Simla Convention" (of 1914), 18, 20, 462, 463, 469, 474; "Mongolian-Tibetan Treaty of Alliance", engineered by Czarist Russia, 463
- "Thirty-Nine Tribes" area, serf revolt in, 482
- Tride Tugtsen, Tibetan king (704-755), 16, 435
- Truman, Harry S., U.S. president, 223, 476
- Tsaikungtang, rural district, 169-171
- Tsaipa, 483
- Tsang (now Xigazê Prefecture), 377
- Tsangyang, ex-monk, auto worker, 303
- Tsarong, (formerly Dazang Dadu), 69, 540
- Tsarong, *Kalon*, murdered by secessionists, 468-470, 472
- tse-trung*, (officials), 337
- Tseba, tortured ex-serf, 132, 133
- Tseden, maimed herdsman, 136
- Tseden Drolma, soprano, 371, 377, 380
- Tseley Dorje, executed, 51
- Tsemen Sonam Bianju, ex-rebel, serf, 247, 248
- Tsenben, Tibetan PLA officer, state farm cadre, 114
- Tsering, ex-serf, teacher, 57
- Tsering, mutual-aid team head, 175
- Tsering, ex-serf, Lhuntze County, 175
- Tsering, old woman, on border, 203
- Tsering, Tibetan PLA soldier, 236
- Tsering Dorje, teacher, 337
- Tsering Drolma, maimed ex-serf, 137
- Tsering Drolma, woman cadre, 172
- Tsering Lhamo, woman commune Party secretary, senior cadre, 90-101
- Tsering Phuntso, ex-slave, Lhasa policeman, 180-189
- Tsering Urgyan, Tibet Teachers' College, 353
- Tsering Yangzhom, woman commune member, 81
- Tsering Yangzhom, "iron girl", 121
- Tsethang, *see* Zetang
- Tsetrung*, (cadet clerical officials), 414
- Tsewang, maimed ex-serf, 136
- Tsewang Araptan, 441
- Tsewang Dorje, commune Party secretary, 85
- Tsewang Dorje, estate agent, 136
- Tsomo Drolma, woman commune member, 84
- Tsong Kha-pa, founder of Yellow Sect, 430
- Tsrijong Losang Yeshe, Living Buddha, later rebel, 336, 339
- Tsuchen Samten, of Jokhang Temple, 420, 421
- Tsunyi Yeshe, freed CIA parachutist, 530
- Tsuijin Ching, ex-serf woman, power station director, 271
- Tsuiko Dondrub Tsering, ex-mayor of Lhasa, 250, 251
- Tu-bod* (Tibet), 382
- Tumengala, coal mine, 273
- Tungchi Norbu, 388
- tun-ge*, (form of *corvée*), 47
- Turner, Samuel, British agent, 445, 446
- tu-si*, appointed national-minority chiefs in old China, 154, 528
- Tzethang, *see* Zetang

## U

- Udhup Chomo, pensioner, 175
- Udhup Mudhup, poor lama, 427
- Udhup Tsomo, ex-slave, 57
- Ugyen Gyatso, British "survcy-spy", 448
- Uighurs, *see* Uygurs
- ula* (transport *corvée*), 48, 173, 175, 194, 219, 220, 222, 302, 303, 371. *see also* *corvée*
- Ulan Bator, 255, *also see* Urga
- Ulanhu (Ulanfu, Yun Tse), Inner Mongolian revolutionary, leader in Chinese Communist Party, 155, 156
- Ulanmuchi*, mobile cultural team, 372
- "Uncle and Nephew Monument", 435, 436
- United Front, in Tibet, 242-264; Mao Zedong on, 288, *see also* Chinese People's Political Consultative Con-

- ference  
 United Nations, 476, 477  
*Unveiling of Lhasa*, (Candler), 456  
 University of Tibetan Culture, 24  
 Urga (now Ulan Bator) 459, 463, 464  
 Uryyan, ex-monk, farm machinery worker, 276  
 Uygurs (Uighurs), 451, 461, 519  
 Urümqi, 357  
 U.S.A., 35, 42, 92, 213, 255, 256, 319-320, 340, 402, 444, 463, 464; of 73 affirms China's sovereignty in Tibet, 19; C.I.A., (and O.S.S.), 223-225, 523 and separatism, 20, 44, 474, 477;  
 U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS), 474-475  
 U.S.S.R. *see* Russia (Soviet Union)
- V**
- Van de Putte, early Dutch merchant in Tibet, 442  
 Vernadstry, George, author, 422, 538  
 Vietnam War, 340  
 Vinogradoff, Sir Paul, 47
- W**
- Waddell J. Augustine, author, 448, 538  
 Wang Jimei, PLA Political Commissar, 112  
 Wang Shichen, invents new Tibetan typewriter, 383  
 Wang Zhen, 492, 526  
 Wang Ching, bailiff, 175  
 Wangdui Trupa, *geshi*, 429  
 Wanggyal, *dzongpon* of Damxung, 130  
 War of 1885, Sino-French, *see* Wars  
 War of Liberation, Chinese, *see* Wars  
 Wars: Anti-Japanese, 120, 155, 157, 350, 357; British-Tibetan, 1886 hostilities, 449; British "Younghusband Expedition", 1906 invasion of Tibet, 19, 212, 372, 455-457, 459, 471, 529; of Liberation, 155, 157, 193; Opium Wars; First, 440, 446; and Second, 447, 450; Russo-Japanese, 458; Sino-French, 449; World War, First, 454, 459, 464, 467; and Second, 19, 20, 35, 44, 468, 473, 475; Yihetuan ("Boxer"), 452, 457, 458  
 Washington, George, 444  
 Washington Conference (1921), and Tibet, 466  
 Wei Guoqing, 153  
 Wencheng, Tang Dynasty princess, married Tibetan King Songtsan Gampo, (641), 16, 121, 378, 383, 419, 433, 435  
*When Serfs Stood up in Tibet* (Strong), 258 ff., 532, 534  
 Whitelock, Dorothy, *The Beginnings of English Society*, 523  
 White Sect, of Lamaism, *see* Kargyu  
 Willoughby Gen, U.S. Intelligence officer, 476  
 Winnington, Alan, author, 536  
 Wise, David, author, 224, 530  
 Women, Tibetan in agriculture (communes and state farms), 81, 90-92; in animal husbandry, 319; aristocrats, 69, 143; in arts, 371, 373, 377, 380; cadres (commune and local), 84, 85, 258-264; in industry, 121, 271-273, 287-288, 294, 296, 303; a "Living Buddha", 250; in medicine, 299, 390, 397-399; a Party Central Committee member, *see* Pasang; Party Regional Committee members, *see* Pasang and Tsering Lhamo; position of, 100-101; serfs and slaves (or formerly so) not listed under other heads, 56, 74, 92, 134, 137, 138, 175, 203, 205, 299, 390; women's associations, in communes, 326  
 wool, trade and manufacture, 277-280, 288, 309  
 workers, industrial, 85, 268-269, 294-305; increase in number, 268; a family of, 294-305  
 World Health Organization (WHO), 391  
 World Wars, I and II, *see* Wars  
*Wrath of the Serfs*, sculptural group, 384

Wu Zhongxin, central (KMT) government representative, 473  
 Wu Zong, Ming Dynasty emperor, studied Tibetan, 438  
 Wussutzang, in present-day Qinghai, 438  
 Wylie, Prof. Turrel V. (TVW), 15, 20, 147, 148, 521

## X

Xi'an (Sian), 121, 342  
 Xianyang, 135, 137, 162, 339, 352, 355, 357, 358  
 Xigazê, (town and prefecture), 246, 367, 371, 440, 443; British colonialism and, 443-446; cadres, Tibetan, in, 159-161, 163; flood relief in, 197, 198; film attendance in, 375; handicrafts in, 283-287; industry and workers in, 271, 273, 276, 277, 430; Jesuits in, 442; "Liberation New Village" in, 284; medical services in, 393, 398; monks, from Russia, in, 451; Panchen IX leaves, 470; PLA men, Tibetan, in, 228, 230-240; religious affairs committee in, 429; serfs and slaves in, 135-137, 181, 228-230, 283; schools in, 182, 184, 342, 354; Tashi Lhumpo, 276, 382, 414, 417, 419, 426-430, 434, 445  
 Xing'an Mountains, 364  
 Xinhua Bookshop, Lhasa, 334  
 Xining, 233, 357, 363  
 Xinjiang, 27, 108, 154, 159, 255, 357, 378, 435, 442, 450, 451, 492  
 Xu Hongsen, 245-247

## Y

Yadong, county, 113, 205, 216, 248, 450, 479  
 Yamdrok (Yamzho) Lake, 250, 413  
 Yanan, 120, 121, 155, 157, 350, 354, 436  
 Yang Dongsheng (Shinrob Dondrup), Tibetan Long Marcher, senior cadre, 153, 155, 157, 528  
 Yang Jingren, Nationalities Affairs

Minister, 251  
 Yang Yuting, PLA political officer, 234, 236  
 Yangbajain, 316, 317, 322; geothermal power plant at, 272  
 Yangdzom, woman ex-slave, municipal cadre, 299  
 Yangdzom, old woman on border, 205  
 Yangtze River, *see* Changjiang  
 Yarlung Zangbo River, 94, 141, 173, 233, 362; electric power potential, 271, 272, 332  
 Yekei Daindzim, Tibetan novelist, 381  
 Yellow River, *see* Huanghe  
 Yellow Sect of Lamaism (Gelugpa), 17, 251, 404, 408, 430, 438, 440  
 Yeshi, serf, road builder, 194  
 Yeshi Drolma, woman hospital Party secretary, 397, 398  
 Yi, nationality, 153  
 Yihetuan ("Boxer") Uprising, and war, *see* Wars  
 Yiktsang, 407  
 Yin Fatang, of Tibet Regional Party Committee of, 251, 257  
 Yongle, Ming emperor, 438  
 Young Pioneers, 166, 234, 297, 334, 354  
 Younghusband, Col. Francis, 455, 456, 459  
 "Younghusband Expedition" (1904 invasion), *see* Wars  
 Yuan (Mongol) Dynasty, 17, 437, 438; banknotes current in Tibet, 17  
 Yuan Shikai, 461, 462, 464, 469, 470  
 Yugoslavia, 380  
 Yunghegong Lama Temple, Beijing, 470  
 Yunnan, province, 27, 153, 246, 281, 353, 364, 397, 448  
 Yunshi, ex-serf, singer, 373  
 Yutok Yonten Kongpo, *see* *Four-Part Medical Classic*

## Z

Zhaipung, *see* Drepung  
 Zangchin Temple, 384

- Zayayev, early Russian agent, 451  
 Zayu, 103, 104  
 Zetang (Tzethang), 91, 379, 390  
 Zhamo, 192, 276  
 Zhang Guohua, 491  
 Zhang Guotao, 154, 156  
 Zhang Jingwu, 491  
 Zhang Lin, Party secretary, Lhundrup State Farm, 120  
 Zhang Liuchu, tenor, Tibet cultural cadre, 375-377  
 Zhang Side, Eighth Route Army hero, 176  
 Zhang Taiying, director, "July 1" State Farm, 105, 107  
 Zhang Yun, of Tibet Teacher's College, 353  
 Zhang Zhaoxian, 163  
 Zhang Zhenghong, girl volunteer, 204  
 Zhaxilhunbu Temple, *see* Tashi Lhum-po  
 Zhao Erfeng, 460  
 Zhejiang, province, 446  
 Zhen Ying, Party secretary, Xigaze Prefecture, 159; head of united front work in Tibet, 251  
 Zheng Chenggong, ("Koxinga"), 442  
 Zhou Enlai (Chou En-lai), 12, 37, 218, 246, 250, 267, 271, 375, 376, 380, 503; in 1959, report on rebellion, 503-506 (excerpts); and Sino-Indian friendship, 507, 535, 536  
 Zhou Yang, on minority literature, 385  
 Zhu De, 243  
 Zhuangs, nationality, 153  
 Zuglakang Temple, *see* Jokhang





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