



## NEW TIBET

### *Memoirs of a Graduate of the Peking Institute of National Minorities*

*New Tibet*, by Tsering Dorje Gashi, is the story of a Tibetan who was educated at the Beijing National Minorities Institute from 1956 to 1961. He was one of many Tibetans educated at the various minority nationality institutes, most of whom were sent back to Tibet after the 1959 revolt. These Tibetans were supposed to become the cadres who would pursue Tibet's "democratic reforms" and "socialist transformation," and would eventually become the administrators of an "autonomous" Tibet. He worked for the *Tibet Daily* newspaper for eight months in 1962 before becoming disillusioned. He was then sent back to his home town of Phari where he engaged in manual labor until escaping to India in September 1966.

Having been educated by the Chinese Communists in their ideologies and ideals, he was able to contrast those ideals with the reality in Tibet under Chinese Communist rule. The author says that he was better able to understand China's policies in Tibet than most Tibetans because of his previous education and that he therefore felt an obligation to explain those policies to the best of his ability to Tibetans and to the outside world.

Tsering Dorje writes that his book is based upon his 10 years of personal experience of China and its administration of Tibet, first in Beijing and then in Tibet. He particularly wanted to tell the story of Tibetans and other nationalities at the nationalities institute who resisted Chinese indoctrination and protested against Chinese policies at great personal risk to themselves. Because of his experience, he felt a responsibility to reveal the facts of Tibetan resistance to the Chinese control of their country both in Beijing and in Tibet. He wanted Tibetans and the world to know that even many of the Tibetan youth educated and indoctrinated by the Chinese were not fooled by Chinese propaganda, and that they retained their Tibetan identity and will to resist. Some, of course, also became unwitting tools of the Chinese in their destruction of Tibetan culture and national identity. He writes that it is difficult for Tibetans or the outside world to penetrate Chinese propaganda, but that he is in the position to be able to do so because he was trained in that same propaganda.

Tsering Dorje was born in 1941 in Phari, a small high-altitude village in the Chumbi valley that extends south from Tibet between Sikkim and Bhutan and forms the primary trade route from Tibet to India. He went to school in Phari until age 13 when he transferred to the Phari Richung Phothog, a traditional medical school. His teacher was a renowned traditional doctor named Palden Gyaltzen who was highly learned in medicine and astrology. He was at this school for only two years for reasons that he does not explain, perhaps due to his family's financial situation, and then returned to a small school in Phari. Perhaps it was due to this

disappointment that he became interested in educational opportunities then being offered by the Chinese.

He became aware of the opportunity in 1956 when a Chinese official came to his Phari school to talk about scholarships to study in China. The Chinese were at that time offering to send Tibetans to school in China with all expenses paid by the Chinese Government. Their purpose was to create a cadre of Tibetans to administer a future socialist Tibet. They were to be indoctrinated in Communist propaganda and immersed in Chinese culture with the ultimate goal of transforming them from backward Tibetans into progressive Chinese of the Tibetan minority nationality, or Tibetan Chinese. Tibetan families were under a lot of political pressure to send their children to China for study, and some were essentially coerced into doing so against their will.

Tsering Dorje was not at all coerced; in fact, he was eager to go and tried to persuade his family to allow him to go. He was enticed by the opportunity to see the world outside Tibet and to receive what he thought would be a modern education. He writes that he was young and longed for bigger and more exciting places, with lots of strange and new things to see. He finally persuaded his family that sending him to China for education was in his best interest. He was chosen along with six others from Phari. They joined another twenty youths from the Chumbi valley and were all given an elaborate send-off hosted by a local Chinese official.

The Chinese official told them that the Chinese Communist Party had great plans and great expectations for their futures, which were sure to be bright and secure. They would become pioneers in the socialist transformation of Tibet. They could also see the wonders and cities of China that they had previously only heard about. The students' parents were consoled by a promise that they would be sent back to Tibet after three years. The speech of the Chinese official upon their departure made it apparent that he expected that the simple Tibetans would be totally transformed by their experience and their education in China. The Chinese occupation of Tibet was fundamentally based upon the misconception that Tibetans would willingly abandon their backward feudal culture in favor of the more advanced Chinese socialist culture.

Tsering Dorje was chosen to go to the National Minorities Institute in Beijing in 1956 when he was 15 years old. At that time many Tibetan youth were sent for education at the various minority nationality institutes in the Chinese interior. The largest ones for Tibetans were at Sining in Qinghai, Xiangang near Xian in Shanxi, which was started as a school for children of the Tibetan lower classes, and another at Chengdu in Sichuan for Tibetans from the parts of Kham that had been absorbed into that province. Only a few of the top students were chosen for the main nationality institute in Beijing. Tsering Dorje was not only a good student but he had consciously chosen the opportunity for himself. He was intelligent and self-aware, which

contributed to his ability to withstand Chinese indoctrination and later to understand the fallacies of Chinese policies in Tibet.

Tsering Dorje and his group of 27 youths from the Chumbi valley travelled to Lhasa, where they were joined by students from other parts of Central Tibet until their number reached about 300. There were both male and female students, although he does not say how many there were of each. They spent two months in Lhasa undergoing medical tests before leaving for Beijing via the northern route through Qinghai.

Upon their arrival at the minorities institute in Beijing the students were greeted by the Tibetans already there, who had arrived in two previous groups in 1954 and 1955. The new students were served with hot water or weak tea and jokingly told that the clean water was better for them than the heavy milk and butter tea they were used to drinking in Tibet. He later came to realize that this was their way of carefully criticizing the scarcities in the diet at the institute. The Tibetan students found the climate in Beijing in the summer uncomfortably hot and humid and they tended to sweat profusely. In the winter it was cold, which Tibetans were used to, but again because of the high humidity the cold was so penetrating that even the Tibetans suffered. He mentions that some of the students went ice skating on a frozen pond within the grounds of the institute.

The minority nationalities institute was newly built; there were several mostly small buildings of two or three stories and about ten buildings of four or five stories. There were several dining halls and a large auditorium in the center of the campus where cultural programs were held, films shown, and meetings held. There were approximately 1,000 Tibetan students at the institute, along with youths from almost all of the PRC's designated national minorities. The largest groups of students were from Tibet and Xinjiang. The Xinjiang group included Uyghurs and Kazakhs (and perhaps Kyrgyz, another ethnic group from Xinjiang, although he does not mention them). He says that the students from Tibet and Xinjiang were the most proud of their cultures and most resistant to cultural assimilation. Many of those from Xinjiang retained their national costumes and traditions better than any of the other minorities, including Tibetans. He also mentions that there were large numbers of Mongols as well as some Han Chinese. The main subjects taught were Chinese language, mathematics, and politics. There were also sections of students from each nationality who specialized in dance and drama. Other subjects taught were history, science, geography, music, painting, and physical training.

Tsering Dorje writes that living conditions at the institute were fairly good until around 1958. Students were provided with school uniforms as well as their national dress. All other school supplies, including textbooks and personal items, were also supplied. Each student got an additional small monthly stipend for spending money. They could also get money from their

families. They had many school activities like dances and dramas and could take trips into Beijing for a variety of activities.

### Anti-Rightist and Anti-Local Nationalist Campaign

In mid-1957 the atmosphere and conditions at the nationality institute began to change for the worse with the advent of the Anti-Rightist campaign, which followed the Hundred Flowers campaign introduced by Mao in early 1957. Based upon his conviction that the CCP and its policies were popular and well-accepted, Mao invited criticism of the Party in order to correct its presumably few mistakes. The slogan of the campaign was “Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend.” Mao introduced the campaign with a speech on the contradictions still existent within Chinese society, dividing them into non-antagonistic, or those among the people, and antagonistic, or those between the people and their enemies. Only a few contradictions were categorized as antagonistic, such as those with reactionaries, while most were defined as non-antagonistic, including relations between the national minorities and the majority Han Chinese. Mao invited criticism of the Party with confidence that any such criticisms would be minor.

Mao was subsequently surprised by an outpouring of fundamental criticisms of not only the CCP’s policies but of the legitimacy of its one-party rule. National minority CCP cadres, particularly Uighurs and Tibetans, took advantage of the opportunity to question the legitimacy of Chinese administration, if not Chinese rule, over their areas. Some minority party members, primarily Uyghurs, called for administration of their areas by separate communist parties composed only of their own nationality.

So shocked was Mao at these criticisms that he characterized the Hundred Flowers that he himself had invoked as dangerous weeds that had to be cut down. He then instituted the anti-rightist campaign to repress all who had dared to criticize the Party. Minority nationalities that had been critical were included; the official title of the campaign was the Anti-Rightist and Anti-Local Nationalist Campaign. Minority nationality nationalism was defined as local nationalism, meaning a regional nationalism within China, which was meant to deny that there could be any sense of national identity among any of the current national minorities deriving from a history as a nation separate from the Chinese nation.

The attack on local nationalism, which had been expressed primarily by Uyghurs and Tibetans, hardened the CCP policies toward those minorities and changed the atmosphere for them and all students at the minority nationalities institute. Tsering Dorje writes that the principal and many of the administrators and teachers of the nationalities institute were categorized as rightists and dismissed from their posts. In addition, the institute itself was criticized for spending too much on the treatment of minority students, as well as its seeming

tolerance of what was characterized as some of their local nationalist sentiments. The standard of living for the students thereafter deteriorated, including their diet, clothing, and stipends.

The anti-local nationalist campaign at the institute was pursued by some of the students themselves. Some minority nationality students, as well as some Han Chinese students at the institute, became enthusiastic supporters of Chairman Mao's more leftist policies. Tsering Dorje writes that at the institute the anti-rightist and anti-local nationalist campaign took the form of a rectification campaign that sought to expose and criticize students with rightist or local nationalist attitudes. This soon became an attempt by the more leftist students to criticize and purge anyone less leftist or less doctrinaire than themselves in their ostentatious support for Chairman Mao. The same phenomenon would again occur during the Cultural Revolution with Red Guard groups competing to demonstrate which was more loyal to Mao.

At the nationality institute each student was required to write self-criticisms and to criticize others. Students came under tremendous pressure to appear more leftist than others. Since many Tibetan students came from what the Chinese considered a feudal and backward society, they had difficulty proving that they were in fact revolutionary and progressive. One way to do that was to excessively criticize their own cultural background and to criticize other Tibetan students as more backward than themselves. Thus, the atmosphere at the nationalities institute, as well as in Chinese society, degenerated into mutual criticism and distrust. Tibetans were indoctrinated into attitudes of contempt of their own supposedly backward societies that accorded with Chinese attitudes toward Tibetan society and culture. Being removed from Tibetan cultural influences and surrounded by an atmosphere of leftist intolerance of rightist or local nationalist attitudes, some Tibetans succumbed to a similar intolerance of the supposedly backward nature of traditional Tibetan society and culture.

Leftist student organizations put up big-character posters attacking students or teachers considered to have rightist attitudes. Since one's attitude was difficult to prove or disprove, many students, especially those from what the Chinese considered the more backward societies, like Tibetans, were unfairly victimized. The institute itself was attacked from outside because of the suspicion that many of the national minorities probably had local nationalist attitudes. Students were forced into a competition to prove themselves more loyal to China than to their own nationalities. Those with strong national identities, like Uyghurs and Tibetans, were no longer able to claim that it was possible to be loyal to both China and their own nationality. Students had to agitate for cuts in the institute's budget as well as their own living standards in order to disprove that minority students were being treated better than the average Chinese.

Among each nationality a few students were singled out by others of their own nationality as examples to be criticized. Mutual criticism and the enforcement of proletarian ideals inculcated the same sort of conformity among students as was then prevalent in Chinese

society. Students had to be frugal in all their lifestyle and personal habits, including use of items like paper and pencils as well as soap and toothpaste. Students had to wash their clothes without soap in order to demonstrate their frugality and proletarian attitudes.

Social life and cultural events at the institute were similarly curtailed. Traditional minority nationality song and dance performances were ended because they were characterized as backward and bourgeois. The culture and traditions of minorities were labeled as some of the poisonous weeds that needed to be rooted out in the anti-rightist and anti-local nationalist campaign.

### Anti-Religious Campaign

Another part of the anti-local nationalist campaign was to purge students of what the Chinese Communists considered bourgeois and reactionary religious beliefs. Paradoxically, this was called a religious freedom campaign. The CCP was an atheist political party but it claimed to allow freedom of religious belief. In fact, writes Tsering Dorje, religious practice was restricted and criticized. No one who retained any religious belief could be considered a progressive and a revolutionary, nor could they ever become a member of the CCP. Students at the nationality institute were challenged by teachers and their fellow students to examine their belief in spirits and gods and ghosts.

Tsering Dorje writes that before this anti-religious campaign began the students held many different religious beliefs, including Buddhism and Bonism among the Tibetans. There was no coercion to have or not have any religious beliefs. Before the religious freedom campaign there was actual religious freedom, he says, but after the campaign there was none. Tibetans in particular were criticized for their strong Buddhist beliefs and Uyghurs for their belief in Islam, and both came under intense pressure to abandon their religions in favor of the official atheism of the CCP.

The anti-religious campaign was conducted by the students themselves at meetings in their classrooms. Tsering Dorje writes that out of his study group of 46 Tibetan students there were three who had become or were trying to become Party members. The one who had already become a Party member led the first discussion on religion. He had obviously been instructed about what argument to take in regard to religious belief. He began by praising the progressive attitudes that most of the students had displayed in the Anti-Rightist and Anti-Local Nationalist campaign. They had helped to establish a progressive reputation for the nationalities institute that had countered criticism that nationality students and the institute itself were rightist and had local nationalist sentiments.

Now, he said, the time had come to debate the existence of gods and ghosts. He said that the debate was between backwardness and progressivism, between traditional and proletarian attitudes, between religious idealism and communist materialism. Those students who took a progressive attitude and abandoned their religious beliefs would be regarded as the best students, while those who lagged behind would be subjected to criticism by the more progressive. From this Tibetan CCP member Tsering Dorje first heard that the more backward students would be subjected to the Communist process called “struggle” by their more progressive fellow students and teachers. This is when he first heard the Tibetan word *thamzing*, which was to become so notorious in later political campaigns in Tibet.

The Tibetan CCP member explained that the Communist Party did not recognize non-materialist phenomena like spirits and gods and ghosts. He denounced religion as superstition promoted by the upper classes to keep the common people in ignorance so that they could exploit them. The exploiting classes fooled the masses with lies and falsehoods like the theory of karma, which explained that their low status was the result of their own past lives and thus could not be altered by their own actions in this life. However, the Communist Party sought to liberate the common people from these beliefs and thus free them from their exploitation by the upper classes. Therefore, progressives should not have religious faith because religion was used to exploit the masses.

He said that Tibetans who wished to join the Communist Youth League should not have religious faith. Since this was the first step to becoming a Communist Party member and an essential requirement to advancement within the Chinese Communist political system, there was great pressure on the Tibetan students to renounce their religious beliefs. The Tibetan Party member concluded by saying that the students should have a debate about religion and that they should remember that Lenin had said that religion was the opium of the masses, by which was meant that religion was the drug that the exploiting classes used to keep the common people in a docile and subservient state. At the same time, he said, anyone was free to have any religious belief, but the message that Tsering Dorje and the other students understood was that this freedom of religion was the freedom to be second-class citizens in the PRC and that those who had religious belief would be discriminated against and constantly propagandized and coerced to give up their beliefs.

Tsering Dorje describes the debate that followed this speech. Almost all of the Tibetan students were Buddhists and a few held to Bon beliefs. Only the Party member and two others who hoped to join the Party were atheists. They argued that religion provided nothing that anyone could eat or drink. On the contrary, Tibetans wasted tea and butter and *tsampa* on offerings to clay and metal images that represented their gods. However, some of the other Tibetan students argued that what the atheists criticized were only the superficial aspects of religion. The value of religion was that it helped people to bear their difficulties and sufferings in

life and it taught moral lessons like how to eradicate hatred, envy, and anger from one's mind. No one forced anyone to make offerings to deities or to lamas and monks and no one thought that such offerings were essential in order to gain the benefits of religion. Study and devotion as well as good works were also important.

Another Tibetan student who aspired to CCP membership attacked the view that religious belief was socially benign. He denied that any monks or lamas ever attained enlightenment. Instead, he said, they spent all their time thinking of how to exploit the masses so that they could continue their privileged lifestyles. Many of the lamas and monks were those most affected by the sins of lust, jealousy, and hatred, he said. The masses of people should work for their own material livelihood and stop supporting the parasitic lamas and monks. This was countered by another student who said that he had never heard of any lamas and monks demanding that they be supported. Instead, support was freely and voluntarily given to them because they were devoted to achieving the highest spiritual aspirations not only of themselves but of Tibetan society as a whole.

The debate continued for a few days until another meeting was called, at which a former Tashilhunpo Monastery monk argued forcefully in favor of religion. He said that there was no reason to blame religion for the erroneous actions of some monks and lamas. Any ideology, including Marxism, was likely to have those who would misuse it. He cited as an example the current anti-rightist campaign in which some CCP cadres were criticized for their erroneous actions while the ideology itself was still considered to be true. The rightists, he said, were likely to be those who had only a superficial understanding of Marxism. Similarly, exploitative or erroneous lamas and monks were likely to have only a superficial understanding of Buddhism. Neither Marx nor Buddha should be blamed for the mistakes of their followers. This student argued, as did the Dalai Lama himself, that Marxism and Buddhism were compatible in their beliefs in some ways.

The argument was ultimately ended by an angry outburst by a Chinese cadre who was present. He denounced religion as poison and said that only the progressive atheist students should be listened to. After this all further debate was prohibited and students were subjected to anti-religious propaganda, including big-character posters on walls around the campus. The result of the religious freedom campaign was that animosity and conflict was created between those who retained their religious faith and those who abandoned it.

The debate initiated among the students at the nationality institute about the reality or not of gods, ghosts, and spirits was not dissimilar to those that typically take place among college students anywhere in the world and at any time period. College students usually are confronted with ideas that may contradict those they were taught as children. Religion is always a favorite topic for debate and many students do indeed question their former religious beliefs and many do

indeed abandon religious faith. However, the difference in Communist China was that there was intense coercion to abandon religion, and an intolerance of religious belief. The so-called religious freedom campaign was thus characterized by a lack of freedom of choice. Students came under intense pressure to conform to the communists' ideology, and their futures were substantially dictated by whether they conformed or resisted.

### Underground Resistance

Tsering Dorje writes that the Chinese administrators and teachers promised open debate at the institute about religion and other subjects but shut down discussions when some students argued forcefully in favor of Tibetan culture and religion and against communist ideology. Tibetans thereafter continued their discussions, but only privately and in secret from the Chinese and their Tibetan converts. Soon an underground political opposition was formed that became known as the Ear Society. He says that the 100 or so members of the underground organization were the more nationalistic of the Tibetans and included some of the best students. They functioned under the cover of other student organizations like the football team and the musical band. The leader of the Ear Society was Nyetho Jigme of Gyantse.

There was another secret Tibetan group known as the Nose Society, which Tsering Dorje knew little about, indicating that they kept quiet about their activities even to other Tibetans. They were mostly students in the arts departments. Their leaders were not known to him until they were later exposed and subjected to public *thamzing*. Then he learned that they were Thangmey Kesang Dikiyi from Lhasa and Jampa Phuntsok. Lobsang Yeshe of Shigatse was also later revealed as one of their leaders when he took part in the Lhasa uprising and was killed at Ramagang Druku. He did not know the numbers of this group, given the secrecy involved, but assuming the two groups had similar numbers they could have represented as many as 15 to 20 percent of the 1,000 Tibetans students at the Minority Nationality Institute at that time. No doubt there were many more who were sympathizers.

Tsering Dorje writes that the Tibetan students who were members of the underground political organizations were those who cared the most for Tibet and its future and some who questioned why Tibet had fallen under the control of China. They were the students who were most interested in politics and they were the most politically conscious, but not in the way that the Chinese hoped. The more nationalistic Tibetan students reacted in a more negative way to Chinese political indoctrination and became more defensive of Tibetan culture and national identity precisely because of the Chinese attempt to assimilate them to Chinese culture and to denigrate Tibetan culture. They studied Tibetan history because of their interest in preserving that history. They rejected the Chinese narrative that Tibet had always been a part of China and had only a local history as a part of China, and no history or national identity as a state independent of China.

The main argument of the more nationalistic Tibetans was that Tibetans should be grateful for and could benefit from Chinese assistance, but that ultimately Tibet must be ruled by Tibetans. Although this was consistent with what the Chinese also said about how they had come to Tibet to assist Tibetans and would leave as soon as that was done, they were intolerant of this argument when it came from the Tibetan students.

The Tibetan students expressed their arguments by putting up wall posters at the institute in the middle of the night. Their posters were invariably torn down the next day by the Chinese administrators or students. Their posters carefully expressed gratitude for Chinese assistance but revealed some Tibetan skepticism about Chinese motives for helping Tibet. Some of the slogans put up on wall posters were listed by Tsering Dorje as follows:

The development assistance given by China to Tibet is welcome.

The friendship between China and Tibet will last for a thousand years.

The roads built by China into Tibet will increase trade.

Thanks to the Chinese people who, without even being asked, decided to help the Tibetans in the true spirit of proletarian internationalism.

Since Tibet must be ruled by Tibetans, they should do their best to study under the guidance of the Chinese.

For many centuries Tibet managed to stand alone. However, China is scientifically and technologically advanced, so its assistance to Tibet is welcome.

The main purpose of Tibetan students should be to implement in Tibet what they are learning in China.

The slogans were carefully worded, but some were rather cynical in their expression of appreciation for Chinese assistance. Most implied that Tibet in the future should be ruled by Tibetans. Even though the Chinese had promised autonomy in which Tibet would be administered by Tibetans, the students' slogans implied more Tibetan political control than the Chinese apparently intended. Also, the use by the students of the terminology about Chinese relations with Tibet implied that Tibetans were claiming that Tibet had in the past, and should have in the future, an identity as a country separate from China.

Tsering Dorje writes that the Chinese administrators of the institute interpreted the Tibetan students' relatively moderate slogans as a devious plot to separate Tibet from China.

They attempted to divide the nationalistic Tibetan students with promises of leniency for confessions of involvement with the posters or repression if one were found out without confession. At first they said that the wall posters were probably not put up by the Tibetan students but by some outside instigators, thus providing an excuse for any Tibetans who wanted to deny involvement. They then promised that any students who changed their attitude and expressed self-criticism would be forgiven. However, if the Tibetan students failed to change their attitudes, then they were threatened with unspecified action to be taken against them.

The students were thereafter subjected to continuous indoctrination meetings at which informers were present and the students were challenged on their beliefs. However, the attempts to intimidate the students did not stop them from putting up wall posters. The arguments on their posters evolved from merely claiming that Tibet was formerly independent and should be administered by Tibetans in the future, even if under Chinese sovereignty, into criticisms of current CCP policies. They had been lectured by their Chinese teachers about the benevolence of China in building roads to Tibet, but they replied with questions about whether the roads were for Tibetans or for enabling China to send military forces to Tibet. They were aware of Chinese repression of the revolt in eastern Tibet beginning in 1956 and escalating in 1958 due to the introduction of the Democratic Reform campaign, so they criticized the reforms and Chinese military repression in Tibet. And they began criticizing other Tibetan students at the institute who were informers for the Chinese.

One night one of the leaders of the underground group, Wangdu of Chamdo, was caught putting up wall posters. He was publicly arrested the next day in front of the other students and taken away. Nothing was heard about him for the next two years until finally it was learned that he had committed suicide in a prison labor camp. The school administrators held an exhibition of all the posters that had been put up by Tibetans as a warning to students of other nationalities not to engage in such activities. The students were told to inform on anyone who put up any such wall posters, and that if they failed to do so they themselves would be punished.

Even these attempts at intimidation did not stop some Tibetan students from speaking their minds in classes. Chinese teachers began confronting the more nationalistic students about their beliefs in order to identify those who needed to be repressed. One student, Yarphel from the Koko Nor area, was asked about his belief in regard to Tibet's former independence. He replied that whether Tibet was independent or not could be learned by studying Tibetan history. When confronted about whether or not he thought Tibet should be independent, he replied that every Tibetan would prefer that it be independent. Other Tibetan students also resisted Chinese attempts at indoctrination and intimidation. Several were subjected to *thamzing*, and all were forced to undergo intensified indoctrination and warnings against local nationalism. A few were made examples of the danger of opposing the Chinese. Yarphel was taken away and never heard of again.

## Thamzing

During the Hundred Flowers campaign Mao had made a distinction between contradictions among the people and contradictions between the people and their enemies. Since the CCP was supposed to be the representative of the people, any subsequent criticism of it was labeled as a contradiction between the people and their enemies. Tibetan “local nationalists” were labeled as enemies of the people and attacked during the anti-local nationalist campaign. They were subjected to repression, including public struggle sessions to make them confess to their crimes of opposing the revolution.

Struggle, or thamzing in Tibetan, was a political technique used by the Chinese Communists to identify opponents and repress them. All citizens were required to attend struggle sessions and enthusiastically participate. No one could remain silent lest they themselves fall under suspicion. The process was supposed to be cathartic in that those who had previously been exploited would realize the fact of their exploitation and participate in the denunciation and ostracism of their former oppressors. However, the actual effect was to instill an atmosphere of fear and conformity. Everyone had to demonstrate their loyalty to the revolution and the CCP, and each lived in fear of being denounced by others because they were under such pressure to show loyalty to the party by exposing its opponents, real or imaginary.

At the Minority Nationalities Institute the students were assembled and told by the president that a few bad elements had organized underground nationalist student groups and were trying to divide the big family of the motherland. He said that some students must be subject to struggle in order to reform their minds. What he meant was not that students who deviated from CCP ideology would be reformed but that they would be identified and persecuted in order to induce conformity in the rest. He warned that all students must participate in the struggle of others. If they tried to be neutral or to not participate, then they themselves would be subjected to struggle. This was an attempt to apply coercion to the students to get them to support the party and to identify and denounce its opponents lest they themselves be characterized as opponents.

The Chinese president of the Institute said that the purpose of the Anti-Local Nationalist Campaign and the struggle process was to separate those students who were local nationalists from those who were loyal to the great Chinese motherland. The local nationalists were accused of creating antagonism against the motherland and the Party. What this really meant was that the Party was accusing any minority students who harbored local nationalist views to be an enemy of the people. However, local nationalism was defined as practically any expression of respect for minority cultures and even any hope that their cultures might be preserved under any sort of autonomous administration of the minority nationalities themselves, as was in fact promised to them by the CCP.

The first Tibetan student to be subjected to *thamzing* was Amdo Gyakok, who had been exposed as one of the leaders of an underground nationalist student group. He was dragged before an assembly of about 1,000 students. They were worked up in advance by Chinese teachers and student activists into a frenzy of animosity toward Amdo Gyakok and his crime of local nationalism. Tsering Dorje writes that Gyakok appeared to have already been subjected to some physical abuse. The activists demanded that he confess his crimes. He admitted that he had been a leader of one of the nationalist student groups and that he was a local nationalist. However, he said that he was unsure whether or not his local nationalist views made him a reactionary. This was apparently his way of saying that his views of respecting Tibetan culture and expecting that the Party would honor its promise to allow local autonomy had previously been Party policy but were now denounced as being anti-Party and anti-China.

The Chinese and Tibetan activists demanded that Amdo Gyakok reveal the names of other members of the underground Tibetan student group. He named only Kesang Dekyi, who had already been exposed as one of the leaders. He refused to reveal any more names and was thus subjected to multiple *thamzing* sessions with shouts and intimidation and beatings over a period of almost a month. Tsering Dorje says that Gyakok appeared to be thoroughly intimidated and looked like a trapped animal. He submitted to the abuse without resistance and refused to defend himself. The Chinese teachers and activist students pretended to try to restrain the abuse heaped upon him by the students, but in fact it was they who had instructed the students in how to conduct a struggle session and incited them to make it as violent and intimidating as possible. However, even though Amdo Gyakok appeared totally defeated he still refused to name any more names or to repent his opinions. He was finally subjected to one final violently abusive *thamzing* session from which he had to be dragged out almost lifeless. This was the last time he was seen by any of the other students.

The *thamzing* of Amdo Gyakok was intended to intimidate the other Tibetan students, which it did, but they were also impressed by Amdo Gyakok's spirit of resistance. Tsering Dorje says that eventually some thirty Tibetan students were subjected to *thamzing* during the Anti-Local Nationalist Campaign. Many of them had been exposed as members of the nationalist student organizations. Despite this intimidating process, the Chinese had great difficulty in convincing Tibetans to denounce their own culture and religion and give up their belief that Tibet deserved an autonomous administration by Tibetans themselves.

Tsering Dorje writes that there were three different degrees of *thamzing*. The most severe was for those who had advocated local nationalism, while lesser degrees were for those who were thought to have been exposed to the poisonous weed of local nationalist thinking and those who were thought to be only somewhat sympathetic to such thinking. The most extreme form of *thamzing* was held before gatherings of as many as 1,000 students, while the lower degrees were

held before two or three hundred people, presumably mostly of the same nationality. The lowest degree was held in the classroom before only a few fellow students. Those subjected to the most severe form of *thamzing* were the students thought to have been the leaders of underground nationalistic organizations and those who had secretly put up wall posters advocating Tibetan independence or even just autonomy under Tibetan administration. Tsering Dorje says that about 30 Tibetan students were subjected to the most severe form of *thamzing*, while 60 percent of the several hundred Tibetan students at the Minority Institute at the time were subjected to lesser forms of *thamzing* or at least threatened with the process.

Other prominent Tibetan student victims of *thamzing* mentioned by Tsering Dorje were Kesang Dekyi and Gonpo Tsering from Lhasa and Wangchen from Chamdo. Kesang Dekyi was one of the first Tibetans identified as an underground organization leader. Her fate was unknown. Wangchen disappeared after his *thamzing* while Gonpo Tsering died under unexplained circumstances after being sent back to Tibet. An unnamed student from Gyantse was subjected to violent *thamzing* but survived and was sent back to Tibet after the revolt. However, he again ran afoul of the Chinese during the Cultural Revolution and was imprisoned. Another leader of the underground nationalist organization was Sampho Tsewang Samphel, whose health was damaged by beatings during *thamzing*. He later became one of the leaders of the Nyemo revolt in 1970 and was publicly executed.

Tsering Dorje writes that the many nationalistic Tibetan students came from all parts of Tibet. They were generally some of the best students, but their education in Chinese propaganda had the opposite effect from what the Chinese intended. Their political consciousness was raised by the education they received in Marxist political doctrine, which made them more aware of how the Chinese failed to live up to the Marxist ideal in practice. In particular, they found the Chinese lacking in their promise to respect, promote, and preserve minority nationality cultures or to allow any real nationality autonomy in practice.

The Tibetan students mostly argued about the issue of whether Tibet was independent in the past or was a part of China. The Tibetans who had adopted the communist ideology argued that history proved that Tibet was always a part of China. However, their arguments were countered by other Tibetans who had more actual knowledge of Tibetan history. The Chinese position that Tibet became a part of China during the Tibetan Empire period due to two marriage alliances was easily refuted by others who asked why then didn't Tibet also become a part of Nepal, with which there was also a marriage alliance. They also pointed out that the history of that period was one of almost constant conflict between Tibet and China and that the treaty that finally ended that conflict clearly established that Tibet and China were separate countries with defined borders.

The Tibetan communist students had to constantly refer to the Chinese teachers to get arguments to refute the more nationalistic students. Their arguments gradually degenerated into threats. They declared that anyone who favored Tibetan independence was nothing but a running dog of the upper class exploiters and their foreign imperialist supporters. That was countered by the question of whose running dogs were those who said that Tibet was an integral part of China. This was embarrassing to the communist Tibetans since they were obviously instructed in those arguments by the Chinese and whenever they ran out of arguments they had to refer back to the Chinese for instructions.

The position of some of the more nationalistic Tibetan students was that Tibet was independent in the past and should again be independent in the future. However, others took the safer position that Tibet should at least have the high level of autonomy that the Chinese Communists had themselves promised in the 17-Point Agreement and in their nationality autonomy doctrines. Even this position was now precarious since the Anti-Local Nationalist Campaign was intended to restrict minority nationality autonomy because many nationalities, especially Uyghurs and Tibetans, had proved insufficiently loyal to China.

The Chinese finally resorted to warnings that local nationalist ideas were simply the old feudalistic kind of thinking, which had to be eliminated if Tibet were to prosper as an integral part of China. Those who continued to hold local nationalistic ideas were warned that they should abandon such ideas or else be identified as opponents who must be repressed. A characteristic of this campaign was that critics of the Communist regime would no longer be tolerated but would be defined as enemies of the people and treated as such. Those Tibetans who continued to hold such ideas were thereafter subjected to *thamzing*, a process that served to identify all those who held such ideas and to subject them to repression.

In his analysis of the Anti-Local Nationalist campaign, Tsering Dorje writes that the term local nationalism was nothing but a Chinese attempt to negatively label any pro-independence ideas or activities among any minority nationality peoples. Such ideas came to include even the right supposedly guaranteed to minorities by the PRC's system of national regional autonomy to determine their own cultural affairs. In regard to Tibet, many of the provisions of the 17-Point Agreement, that Tibet should enjoy cultural and political autonomy essentially equivalent to that it had enjoyed in the past, came to be denounced as local nationalism. Tibetans and other minority nationalities had been promised that China was only interested in helping them and would leave the actual administration of their areas up to the minority nationalities themselves. However, they were now subjected to propaganda and pressure to politically integrate and culturally assimilate with China.

Tsering Dorje cites the address by the president of the Nationalities Institute to the whole student body in which the Anti-Local Nationalist campaign was initiated. The president

contrasted the policy of the CCP with that of Chinese regimes of the past that had exploited the minority nationalities. His speech reflected the typical Chinese view that minority nationality alienation from China was solely due to this mistreatment in the past. Since the policy of the CCP was for equal treatment of all nationalities, then all such alienation should automatically disappear. He, like many Chinese, had no conception of why any minorities would want to be culturally separate or politically independent of China. They imagined that the minorities were culturally backward and therefore could benefit from adapting the more advanced Chinese culture. And they imagined that the political independence of any nationalities, especially those on the frontiers like Tibetans, would only open them and China up to exploitation by foreign imperialists.

The Institute president said that equality of nationalities meant that any of the students he was addressing could one day become a leader of the PRC. However, some students still had old backward reactionary ideas about suspicion of China or even thought that they had been in the past, or should be in the future, independent of China. He said that some students at the Institute were joining secret nationalist organizations and pasting up wall posters advocating independence. He denounced these activities and said that any such debates should be conducted openly. He said that the Anti-Local Nationalist Campaign was intended to openly discuss these matters and to exchange ideas. However, he unintentionally revealed its true motive by saying that it was also intended to discover the political standpoint and viewpoint of every student.

As the later progress of this campaign was to prove, there was no open discussion of viewpoints or exchange of ideas. Any Tibetan students who tried to argue that Tibet had been independent in the past or should even have real autonomy in the future were subjected to *thamzing*. The leaders of the nationalist organizations at the Institute were subjected to often violent *thamzing* lasting many days and then disappeared into prisons or labor camps.

The Anti-Local Nationalist Campaign was a result of the realization by the CCP that the political integration and cultural assimilation of some minorities, particularly Uyghurs and Tibetans, was not going to be as easy as previously anticipated. Their cultures and national identities were far stronger than the Chinese had imagined. The proponents of local nationalism were thereafter put into the Maoist category of antagonistic contradictions, or contradictions between the people and their enemies. Local nationalists were no longer just ideological opponents who could be debated but were now political enemies who must be repressed.

## Revolt in Tibet and Great Leap Forward

Tsering Dorje was still at the Minority Nationalities Institute in Beijing in March 1959 when the revolt took place in Lhasa. He writes that he knew nothing of the revolt until the night of 18 March when the Tibetan students were awakened in the middle of the night and told to

assemble for a meeting. They were then told that there had been a revolt in Lhasa. A Chinese instructor said that certain upper class reactionaries in collusion with foreign imperialists had staged a revolt but that it had been quickly put down because it had no popular support. He said that the incident had begun when the rebels protested against the Dalai Lama going to a theater performance at the Chinese military headquarters. He claimed that the PLA had been very restrained and had not resorted to violence until they were attacked by the rebels. The rebels had been arrested or had fled to India.

He said that the revolt would actually turn out to be a good thing, since the defeat of the serf-owners would now allow for democratic reforms to be implemented in Tibet. He said that the Tibetan students must understand that the rebellion in Tibet was not a conflict between Tibetans and Chinese or between Tibet and China. Rather, it was a class rebellion of the serf-owners who did not want to give up their privileges and their exploitation of the Tibetan serfs. The students were told that they all must write letters to their families advising them against joining or sympathizing with the rebels. They were instructed to hand their letters over to the school authorities in unsealed envelopes. Accordingly, the students each had to write a letter to their families once a week. However, none of them ever got a reply to their letters. Therefore, they knew little about what had actually happened in Tibet or even about the fate of their families.

A few months after the Lhasa revolt the PLA military commander in Lhasa at the time of the revolt, Tan Kuan-san, came to Beijing. He had been the highest-level Chinese official in Lhasa in March and was thus not only knowledgeable about what happened but also responsible. He was the one who had invited the Dalai Lama for the theater performance at the PLA military camp.

Tan Kuan-san also visited the Minority Nationalities Institute and addressed the Tibetan students. He said that the result of the revolt was that the Tibetan people could begin their own people's revolution and democratic reforms. He appealed to the students to be leaders in the socialist revolution going on in Tibet. He reiterated that the PLA had been very patient and restrained and had taken action only after being provoked by the rebels. Tsering Dorje quotes Tan as saying that the revolt had transformed a situation of repression by the old serf owners into a new era of liberation and prosperity for all Tibetans. He called on the students to play a leading role in Tibet's future. It is clear that Tan assumed that the Tibetan students were all progressives, having been instructed in the communist ideology at the Institute, and that none could possibly be reactionaries or have any sympathy for the reactionaries. He reiterated the Chinese position that the revolt was about class and not nationality.

Tan said that he was certain that the Dalai Lama was not in sympathy with the rebels and that he had been abducted by them and taken to India. His evidence for that was the three letters

that the Dalai Lama had written to him just before the revolt. He said that the Dalai Lama's official positions were being held open for him in anticipation of his return.

From the end of 1959 until the end of 1960 three batches of students, a total of about 500, were sent back to Tibet. Most of them were employed as interpreters for Chinese officials, but there were also some who were given work as teachers or accountants. However, Tsering Dorje remained in Beijing until the end of 1961. He was assigned to work in the Institute's printing press. He said that after the revolt the remaining Tibetan students were given more practical education in subjects that might be useful in Tibet, like electricity, surveying, and agriculture, rather than the mostly ideological subjects taught before.

Tsering Dorje writes about the period of food shortages that began from the end of 1959. The students' grain ration was not enough to last the whole month even if one ate very little each day. When the grain rations ran out they had to search for other foods like spinach and even leaves of trees. They were constantly lectured on the sacrifices that they must make to achieve socialism like the revolutionary heroes of the past had done. They were told stories about the sufferings of those who went on the Long March through eastern Tibet during the mid-1930s. Of course, they were not told that one reason for the Chinese Communists' difficulties in eastern Tibet was that Tibetans refused to provide them with any food. Many Tibetans fled at the approach of the Red Army and took most of their livestock and as much of their food with them as they could.

They were told, falsely, that thanks to the CCP no one had died during the present famine. In fact, estimates of the number of Chinese who died of starvation during the Great Leap Forward of 1959-1962 range from 30 to 40 million people. They were also not told that the reason for the famine was the Great Leap Forward itself, and not adverse weather as the CCP claimed. The famine was directly caused by Mao's irrational agricultural and collectivization policies.

By the end of 1961 people in Beijing were actually fighting over the leaves from trees. Almost everyone was on the edge of starvation, without any physical energy and possessed of thoughts of nothing but food. Even cloth was rationed and no one had more than one set of clothes, which were usually worn and patched. However, he found that Beijing was relatively well-off compared to other parts of China. When his group of twenty students was sent to Tibet in December 1961 they travelled by train first to Chengdu, Sichuan. They were issued new clothes and grain ration coupons for the journey. In Chengdu they saw people literally starving in the streets. The train station was filled with starving people begging for food. During the two days they spent in Chengdu they were able to obtain steamed buns using their grain ration coupons but they had to guard them from starving people who would try to steal them.

They saw posters of many people whose faces were crossed out in red, which meant that they had been executed. They were told that many people were executed for stealing food, especially those who had stolen from government grain stores. They saw two children dying of starvation on the street with no one offering to help them. They were told that the father of the children had been executed for stealing grain and that their mother had died of starvation shortly thereafter. And they were told that it was better for the children to die since there was no one to help them. This situation made Tsering Dorje and the other Tibetan students wonder what kind of world had been created by the Chinese Communists.

## Return to Tibet

From Chengdu, Tsering Dorje and his group went by train to Liuyon on the unfinished railroad to Xinjiang, from where they went by bus to Dunhuang and then Golmud in the Tsaidam. When they crossed the Thongo La from Qinghai to Nagchuka, they experienced altitude sickness because they had spent so much time in China. Tsering Dorje thought that his weakened condition due to near starvation in China also contributed to his sensation of altitude sickness.

At Nagchuka he noticed that there were more Chinese, mostly well-armed PLA soldiers, than Tibetans. However, one of the PLA soldiers was a Tibetan, a former student at the Nationality Institute. He had been involved in hunting down Tibetan “bandits” in the Changtang. He revealed that the atmosphere was still tense, almost three years after the revolt, and that there was a prison in Nagchuka with 600 prisoners and a labor camp at Tsala Karpo, which was notorious for its harsh conditions. He was also told about the large labor camps at Kongpo. He realized for the first time that some of his relatives or friends might have been involved in the revolt, which created doubts about how they would regard him or how he should relate to them. He would soon discover that such doubts and suspicions were a predominant characteristic of the lives of most Tibetans after the revolt.

Tsering Dorje was assigned to work at the *Tibet Daily* newspaper, located at the Teykhang house at Shol at the foot of the Potala. He worked there for the next eight months. He was happy to be back in Lhasa, but he found that now the atmosphere was very different. There seemed to be more Chinese, mostly heavily armed soldiers, than Tibetans. Many of those who had participated in the revolt had been transported to faraway labor camps, but even in Lhasa many Tibetans were in prison and most others seemed to be engaged in forced labor projects. He estimated that there were as many as 5,000 Tibetan prisoners in Lhasa and he heard of but did not see the Nachen Trang hydroelectric project just east of Lhasa where many Lhasa Tibetans were engaged in forced labor. Tibetans had been given a variety of labels that designated their class status or political status. They were coerced to engage in constant class warfare with other classes, which led to a pervasive atmosphere of fear and suspicion among everyone.

Tsering Dorje writes that the Chinese treated Tibetans as their serfs and Tibet as a conquered country, as indeed it was. He said that Tibetans had lost their freedom and had literally become the serfs of the Chinese, despite all their propaganda about how they had liberated the Tibetan serfs from the Tibetan masters.

While in Lhasa he was able to hear a series of public sermons given by the Panchen Lama. Some two years after the revolt and after the famine that had resulted from Mao's Great Leap Forward, more moderate CCP leaders led by Liu Shao-chi instituted some slightly more liberal policies in Tibet. One of these was that Tibetans should be allowed more cultural and religious freedom. These policies were conveyed directly from CCP leaders to the Panchen Lama, who announced them in Lhasa. However, Tsering Dorje said that the reality was that there was hardly any liberalization and that the Panchen Lama was deceived by the Chinese.

The Panchen Lama described CCP policy as intended to eventually allow Tibetans to administer their own autonomous region. However, they must first complete democratic reforms. He said that he had been promised that the Chinese would leave when Tibetans could finally stand on their own feet and were able to pursue economic development on their own. The central government would provide financial assistance, but Tibetans would run their own region. Tibetans would also be able to preserve their own culture and religion, but they themselves would be responsible for doing so. He said that the Chinese were in Tibet only to help Tibet emerge from its feudal and backward past into a more modern future. Once this was achieved, there would be no reason for any Chinese to remain in Tibet.

The Panchen Lama then repeated the Chinese claim that the Dalai Lama had been abducted from Lhasa and taken to India. Up until this point in his talk the Panchen Lama had adhered strictly to Chinese policy. However, he then said that every Tibetan hoped that the Dalai Lama would be in good health, that he would live long and that he would eventually return to Tibet. Even though he had said nothing that really deviated from Chinese policy, the Panchen Lama was later criticized by the Chinese for praising the Dalai Lama and expressing hope for his return. They interpreted this to mean that the Panchen hoped for a restoration of the old society.

In subsequent talks the Panchen Lama spoke about the need to preserve Tibetan culture. He said that Tibetan culture must be modernized but that there was no need for cultural destruction in the name of reforms. There had already been extensive destruction of monasteries during Democratic Reforms, but he had been promised by CCP leaders that this would cease under newly liberalized policies. He said that there would be religious freedom and that those lamas who remained would not have to betray their religious tradition by denouncing the Dalai Lama. Even though the highest CCP leaders had made these promises of cultural and religious freedom to the Panchen Lama, his favorable statements about the Dalai Lama angered Chinese

cadres in Tibet, who considered the Dalai Lama a traitor. The Panchen's public talks in Lhasa made the Chinese begin to mistrust him. After this, they began planning to label him as a reactionary and to remove him from his political position in Tibet.

By this time the Chinese in Tibet had begun to realize that many Tibetans, even the most seemingly loyal cadres, could not be trusted. They realized that most Tibetans regarded the Chinese as oppressors, not liberators. Tibetans in Lhasa were restricted in their movements, and no one was allowed to be on the streets at night. He said that he heard gunfire during the night on at least two occasions, and later rumors that some Tibetans had killed some Chinese. He said that many development projects were completed during this time but that they were done with forced Tibetan labor and that they mostly benefitted the Chinese or increased their means of repressing Tibetans.

### Return to Phari

In 1962 the Chinese announced that due to the previous three years of famine some Tibetan cadres would be sent back to their home villages to help with agriculture. The Tibetan cadres were told that it was entirely voluntary whether they wanted to return to their villages, but Tsering Dorje says that this was not true, that the Tibetan cadres to be sent had already been selected. The Tibetans were coerced to volunteer to go back to their villages, but even if they did not volunteer they were sent anyway.

Tsering Dorje writes that he did not have any objection to going back to Phari, since he could visit with his family and relatives there and he had no objection to working in the fields. However, he spoke out openly against the program just to see if it was really voluntary. Even though he expressed objection to the program, he was in the first group to be sent. He says that the real criteria for selection were mostly political. Those Tibetans whose political loyalty was suspect were the first to be chosen to be sent back to their home villages.

Phari had changed tremendously in the seven years that he had been gone. Previously, Phari was not a wealthy place but it was moderately prosperous due to its location on the trade routes to India, Bhutan, and Sikkim. Phari was the highest town in Tibet, and probably in the whole world. Little agriculture was possible, but local pastures were rich and therefore animal products were plentiful. In addition, almost anything could be obtained in the local markets because of the international trade that passed through. There were several local monasteries nearby and Tibetans enjoyed complete religious freedom.

When he returned to Phari in 1962 the first thing he noticed was the lack of the previous commercial and social activity. Trade with the neighboring countries had been cut off. He could get food only with a ration card issued by the CCP. Everyone was restricted in how much grain

they could buy according to their work status. The best workers got the highest amount of grain, while the worst, including the young, the old, and the disabled, got barely sufficient for life. If their food rations ran out there was no recourse; they could get no more food. The Chinese Communist system had turned a formerly prosperous area into one of poverty.

Much of Phari was deserted, since many of the residents had fled to India or Bhutan. From 1959 to 1962 some 8,000 Tibetans fled Phari, mostly to Bhutan, leaving only about 1,700 people there. In addition, there were some 300 people from Phari in prisons in other parts of Tibet. Those who were left were put to work on public works and border defense projects. One project was called the Canal of Happiness, on which the people were made to work without any compensation. The only way to protest these hardships was to compose satiric songs that the Chinese could not understand.

The Chinese had done little more than to move their government offices into some of the abandoned houses of the formerly rich Tibetans. They had also constructed some fortifications along the border with India for the war that they were sure would happen. Despite Phari being a high-altitude area where barley had never before been grown, the Chinese insisted that they could conquer heaven by making barley grow in Phari. However, Tsering Dorje writes that no matter how hard they made the local Tibetans work to grow barley, most of it was destroyed by frost before it could ripen.

Tibetans of Phari had to supplement their grain rations with odd jobs like cutting firewood for the PLA, collecting herbs, and knitting sweaters with wool that they had to buy from the government. Even if they managed to collect some extra money, there were no longer any stores where they could buy food or any other items they needed. There were only two government stores where they could sell herbs or sweaters and buy whatever items were available. There were long waits at each place.

Tsering Dorje was not in Tibet during the period of Democratic Reforms after the 1959 revolt. However, he asked many questions about it while he was in Phari. The predominant stories he was told involved the confiscation of the property of the upper class and the monasteries and the uncompensated work on public projects required of everyone. Also particular to Phari due to its location near the border with India was the large number of people who had fled into exile.

He says that of the 3,000 houses in Phari, the property of some 500 families was confiscated during Democratic Reforms. These families were usually accused of having taken part in or having supported the revolt, or even only of having sympathized with the revolt because of their upper-class status. The property of almost all the upper class, even those formerly cooperating with the Chinese under the United Front policy, was confiscated. Many of

the upper class were arrested or fled into exile, which conveniently eliminated the nationalist opposition of this class to the imposition of direct Chinese rule over Tibet.

The residents of Phari reported that the confiscated properties included not only houses, livestock, and whole estates of the upper classes, but all of their material possessions as well, including clothes, carpets, furniture, jewelry, works of art, and religious items. The monasteries also had all of their religious artworks and relics confiscated. The property of the upper classes was supposed to be redistributed among the lower classes, but the Phari people reported that they received only items that the Chinese had no use for. Valuable articles like jewelry, statues, *thangkas*, other artworks, and religious items from both private homes and monasteries were confiscated and were presumed to have been taken to China. Tsering Dorje writes that the only democracy in what the Chinese called democratic reforms was that the Chinese assumed that they had the right to liberate Tibetans from their wealth, possessions, and religious artworks.

Tibetans had to attend lengthy political meetings, usually at night after long work days. The main Chinese propaganda theme at these meetings was called “speaking bitterness.” Tibetans were supposed to contrast the sufferings of the past during the feudal serf system with their happiness after liberation and democratic reforms. However, they described this as an exercise in falsity and deceit, since for most of them the old society had been better than the new. The Tibetans described Chinese indoctrination as an attempt to create shadows where there were no objects. They said that Chinese indoctrination mentally killed them and emptied their minds, which were then filled with Chinese lies. At least in old Tibet they had more personal freedoms and usually a more adequate living standard than in new Tibet under the Chinese.

Phari Tibetans were mobilized by the Chinese for border defense during the border war in late 1962 as well as in 1965 when there was another border dispute that the Chinese thought would result in war. Tsering Dorje describes the border war preparations in 1965 since he was not yet back in Phari in late 1962 and the 1962 conflict took place far to the east of Phari. In 1965, however, the dispute was nearby, at the traditional border trade route crossing in the Chumbi valley, near Phari.

Local Tibetans, or those few who remained, were loaded onto military trucks one evening when the Chinese expected war to break out soon. They were then kept for three months on the border doing compulsory labor without any compensation except inadequate rations. Meanwhile, back in Phari, the horses that the Chinese had brought would not eat the locally grown but unripened barley, so they were fed on barley imported from other parts of Tibet. Tibetans meanwhile had no barley at all except what they could pick out from the horses’ dung. Thus there arose the expression that life was better for Chinese horses than for Tibetans.

Tsering Dorje also writes about Chinese attempts in 1963 to entice exiled Tibetans to return. This was during the relatively liberalized period after the disastrous failure of Mao's Great Leap Forward. Mao's role in the government was reduced for a period of about two years during which other leaders like Chou En-lai and Liu Shao-chi tried to implement slightly less radical leftist policies. In Tibet they hoped to reduce their international embarrassment in regard to Tibet by enticing exiled Tibetans, perhaps even including the Dalai Lama, to return.

The CCP tried to convince Tibetans to return by making promises of no punishment for participation in the revolt, return of confiscated properties, freedom of religion, and employment given according to past rank or experience. A propaganda campaign was mounted that portrayed Tibetans inside Tibet as living in freedom and happiness while Tibetans in India were suffering from poverty and sickness. Tibetans were coerced to persuade their relatives to return with these promises but also with the implied threats that their families inside Tibet would suffer if their relatives did not return. Tsering Dorje writes that the Chinese promises would have been more convincing if they would implement for those Tibetans still in Tibet any of the promises that they offered to the exiles. Tibetans had none of the freedoms that the exiles were offered, and of course the exiles knew this, so few if any actually returned.

The failure of the Chinese attempt to entice Tibetans in exile to return was due to their misconceptions about the reality inside Tibet as well as in India. They tended to believe much of their own propaganda about how Tibetans were liberated from the abusive social and political system of the past and were now masters of their own fate. The reality for Tibetans was quite different. The Chinese also imagined that the exiles in India were suffering and could be enticed to return, but again the reality was quite different.

The period of relatively liberal policies did not last very long. Mao soon regained his political position and power and instituted the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, during which Tibetans enjoyed almost no freedoms, their culture was attacked, and more Tibetans were accused of disloyalty and repressed in a variety of ways.

### Escape into Exile

In 1966 Tsering Dorje and his family escaped to Bhutan. In the last chapter of his book he explains his reasons for fleeing his country, how he and many other Tibetans suffered under Chinese rule, and why they rejected China's justifications for its rule over Tibet.

He writes that his experience at the Beijing Minority Nationalities Institute had made him aware of the falsity of China's justifications for its rule over Tibet and its claim to have liberated Tibetans from their own misrule. When he returned to Tibet he had little desire to help the Chinese enforce their rule over Tibetans. He did not experience the 1959 revolt or the subsequent

Democratic Reforms, but he heard many horror stories about those events after he returned, first in Lhasa and then in Phari. He was of course also aware that many Tibetans had escaped into exile, especially from his hometown of Phari. He, like many Tibetans, hoped for freedom from Chinese oppression. By 1966 he felt that escape was the only way to live in freedom.

Tsering Dorje writes that the aspiration of every Tibetan was freedom from Chinese domination. The Chinese had tried to repress every manifestation of what they called Tibetan local nationalism. They had demonstrated a total intolerance of any Tibetan opposition to Chinese rule, including killing, imprisoning, and exiling tens of thousands of Tibetans. And they had used what they called democratic reforms to further identify and repress Tibetan opposition. During the Cultural Revolution they had tried to eradicate all aspects of Tibetan culture that distinguished Tibetans from Chinese. By means of communization they had attempted to control all aspects of Tibetans' lives. They had made much propaganda about how Tibetans had welcomed their liberation from feudalism and celebrated their achievement of self-rule by means of Democratic Reforms and the establishment of the TAR in 1965. However, he says that they were only fooling themselves if they thought that Tibetans preferred to be ruled by the Chinese rather than by themselves.

Tibetans were especially unhappy about how the Chinese had stolen much of the moveable property of Tibet while at the same time claiming to be selflessly helping Tibet with economic assistance. During Democratic Reforms they had confiscated most of the property not only of upper-class Tibetans but also of all traders and merchants. They had also confiscated all of the valuable metal and artworks from monasteries and private homes. Some of these, like thangka, printed religious texts, and clay statues they burned or destroyed, often making Tibetans do the actual work of destruction. Woodblocks were used for firewood or to make furniture; *mani* stones were made into walkways or outhouses so that Tibetans would be forced to defile their own sacred objects. The most precious artworks and metals disappeared and were taken away to China. The empty monasteries and temples were later destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, with the Chinese again making Tibetans do the actual destruction. By communization the Chinese even managed to steal from Tibetans their own food, grown with their own hands.

He writes that the Chinese created such oppression and exploitation of Tibetans that there was no difference between their so-called liberation and the earlier serfdom that they condemned and used as justification for their rule. The only country guilty of aggression against Tibet is China.

Many Phari Tibetans fled Tibet after the 1959 revolt, but thereafter the Chinese tightened border controls. From the time of the border war of 1962 until the later tensions of 1965, China maintained a large troop presence on the border. However, the tensions on the border had

decreased enough by 1966 so that a few people from Phari were able to escape. Tsering Dorje waited until he was sure that those who had escaped had reached exile safely. Then, in September, he and his wife, child, mother, and brother took their own opportunity to escape to Bhutan.