

20 Years of My Life in China's Death Camp

By Tenpa Soepa

Tenpa Soepa was born in 1934 in Taktse Dzong, a short distance east of Lhasa. When he was nine years old he was sent to the Nyangsar School in Lhasa. At age 16 he was selected to the Tse School, a Tibetan government school that educated future government officials. Upon graduation in 1953 he was made an official of the Taxation Office. He served in that office until the revolt of March 1959 when he was arrested. He suffered twenty years in Chinese prison camps. He was released in 1978 and in 1980 went to Nepal and then to Dharamsala in India. He says that he debated whether to tell his story or to try to forget it and get on with his life. He was encouraged to write this book by His Holiness the Dalai Lama who said in His March 10th Commemoration in 1988 that Tibetans should tell the world what had happened to them in order to inform Tibetans and the whole world about the reality of Tibet under Chinese rule.

Tenpa Soepa's family was the Gurma Khangsar of Phagmo Shol in Taktse Dzong. His family had eight members who, along with employees from four other families, farmed land that produced 700 *khel* of grain.¹ They also had many domestic animals, including horses. His father taught him to read and write for two years when he was small; then he was sent to the Nyangsar School in Lhasa along with a sister and brother. Nyangsar was a private school of about 100 students. Some small gifts were expected for the teachers at admission, such as tea and rice, as well as a great feast for all the students, but thereafter there were no fees. The teachers were well qualified and the discipline was strict.

When he was 16 he was selected to attend the prestigious Tse (Peak) School. Selections were made by the three great monasteries of Lhasa: Ganden, Drepung, and Sera. He was selected as a student by the Gomang Draktsang of Drepung and entered the Tse School in 1951. Students were traditionally selected from monasteries around Lhasa or from families of government officials. Tse School was intended to train civil servants for the Tibetan Government. The school was established in 1754 by the Seventh Dalai Lama, Kalsang Gyatso. Tibetan writing was the main subject while poetry, composition, grammar, astronomy, and astrology were also taught.

In 1954 when he was 20 he was made an official of the Taxation Office and was sent to eastern Tibet to pay workers constructing a telegraph line. He disbursed 24 bags of silver coins and 30,000 *khel* of grain to the workers in Taktse, Maldro, and Olmo counties.

Later in 1954 the Dalai Lama was invited by the Chinese to attend the first meeting of the National People's Congress in Beijing. The Tibetan people did not want him to go because they

¹ One *khel* is approximately 30 pounds of grain.

feared that he would be kept in Beijing and not allowed to return. However, His Holiness said that he was compelled to visit China but promised that he would return within one year. The more than 100 member entourage was composed of four representatives from the Tibetan Government, three from the Panchen Lama, and three from the Chamdo Liberation Committee.² There were also the two tutors of the Dalai Lama, members of the Yabshi (Dalai Lama's) family, the Kashag, Ganden, Drepung, and Sera and other high lamas as well as interpreters and servants. Tenpa Soepa was selected to be part of the organizing committee under Kundeling Dzasak Oser Gyaltsen that included five officials and some of His Holiness' personal bodyguards.

When the Dalai Lama and his entourage departed Lhasa the road was filled with people praying for his speedy return. They also pleaded with the members of the entourage to make sure that the Dalai Lama returned and did not fall into the hands of the Chinese. Many Tibetans were distraught at the Dalai Lama's departure and fearful for the future. Tenpa Soepa admits that he was filled with emotion and apprehension.

The first part of the journey was the most treacherous. The Chinese were constructing a motor road along the route. Their construction was not finished but it had already disrupted the old traditional route. Therefore, the going was very precarious in places where the old route was dug up or the new route was under construction. Even the horses had a difficult time and many became mired in mud or fell from the roadside. Everyone was forced to walk, including the Dalai Lama himself. Tenpa was impressed that His Holiness did not complain. After several days the party reached the completed road in Powo and from there travelled in jeeps and trucks.

The Chinese General Tang Chin Wu, the military commander in Tibet, also accompanied the entourage. He was said to be a man of quick temper and coarse character who was verbally abusive and sometimes slapped subordinates when they angered him. He insisted that he be treated with the same status as the Dalai Lama on the journey and even demanded that his tent be adorned with curtains like those of the Dalai Lama's tent. The Tibetan entourage had arranged camping sites all along the way so that everything was ready when they arrived. However, the Chinese general insisted on changing the stopping points at a few places, supposedly for security reasons, so that the Tibetans had to prepare a camp when they arrived. In this case the Dalai Lama helped set up his own tent, which greatly impressed Tenpa. In places where there was a Chinese camp or garrison of troops the Chinese insisted that the Dalai Lama stay there rather than close to Tibetans or at local monasteries. At Tau, where there was a Chinese camp and a large monastery, the Chinese insisted that the Dalai Lama stay at their camp, which greatly disappointed the local Tibetan monks.

² Both the Panchen Lama's separate government in Shigatse and the Chamdo Liberation Committee were created by the Chinese and were under their control for the purpose of dividing political authority in Tibet.

Tenpa next describes the return journey, saying nothing about the visit to China, which lasted for about one year. On the return the road had been completed so that the entire journey was made by vehicles. On the return the Chinese only sent a security guard without the Chinese General, so the atmosphere was more relaxed. The Dalai Lama was able to meet with Tibetans in every place that he stopped. In Minyak Tenpa was sent to find out about a rumor that smallpox was present before the Dalai Lama would meet with people from that area. He went in the disguise of the local people but was immediately discovered just because his clothing was new and clean compared to the locals. They thought that he was a Chinese in disguise. After he convinced them that he was a Tibetan they told him about how much they hated the Chinese.

Between Derge and Chamdo the vehicles were held up because of a snowstorm on the Chamdo Tagma pass. In Powo the vehicles were delayed because a bridge had collapsed. When the Dalai Lama and his entourage arrived back in Lhasa there was much celebration by Tibetans who were relieved that the Dalai Lama had returned without harm. Tenpa Soepa's account of this journey describes only his own experiences and says little about those of the Dalai Lama, and nothing at all about his or the Dalai Lama's experiences in China.

From 1956 Tenpa Soepa was a lower-level member of the Social Reform Committee, which was set up by the Dalai Lama in 1952, was composed entirely of Tibetans, and was intended to reform some of Tibet's traditional social traditions. A reform plan was announced at the beginning of 1954 that would establish salaries for all government officials in order to reduce bribes, eliminate the *ulag* requirement for villagers to provide transport to government officials, forgive unrecoverable loans made by the government and monasteries, reduce unpaid taxes for those who could not pay and audits of the finances of government estates.

Tenpa Soepa was a member of the organizing committee for the Dalai Lama's 1956 visit to India but did not accompany him. He was attached to the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region from its beginning in 1956 until 1957 when the Chinese decided to delay their social reforms in Tibet. From then he reverted to being a Tibetan official in the Taxation Office.

On March 9 1959 Tenpa heard the rumor that the Dalai Lama had been invited to the Chinese military camp for a theatre performance and that the people of Lhasa were very agitated because they feared that he would be kidnapped and taken to Beijing. The Dalai Lama had been invited to the National People's Congress meeting but had not yet agreed to attend, though the Chinese officials in Lhasa had promised Beijing that he would attend.

The next day, as he was going to work at the Norbulingka he saw that almost the whole population of Lhasa was gathered there to prevent the Dalai Lama going to the theatre performance. He was able to enter the Norbulinka because he was a government official, but the

guards were trying to prevent anyone else from entering. The rest of the day on March 10th he spent guarding the gates of the Norbulingka.

On the next day, March 11, Tenpa Soepa attended the meeting called by the people of Lhasa that declared that Tibet was an independent country and demanded that the Chinese leave Tibet. He signed the petition stating that Tibet was independent. He was issued with a rifle and a pistol to defend the Norbulingka and the Dalai Lama. On 14 March he and the others at Norbulingka observed a large convoy of Chinese military vehicles passing on the road north of the Norbulingka from a military camp west of Lhasa to the main camp within Lhasa. It appeared as if the Chinese were preparing for a battle.

On 16 March Tenpa was summoned by Kundeling Dzasak, his relative and the manager of Kundeling Monastery, and told that he was to be given an important responsibility. Kundeling had been designated by his friend, the Lord Chamberlain Phala, to arrange horses for the Dalai Lama's escape. Tenpa was told that the Dalai Lama would be leaving Lhasa but had not yet set a date. He was supposed to find a saddle for the Dalai Lama. He found a fine saddle and saddle blanket and then was told to get several horses and saddles from the houses of various people in Lhasa. Finally he was assigned to get a fine white horse for the Dalai Lama himself. He was supposed to take the horses to a place where they would be picked up by members of the Dalai Lama's entourage who would then meet with the Dalai Lama after he left the Norbulingka and had crossed the Kyi Chu.

Tenpa Soepa followed the Dalai Lama when he left the Norbulingka and crossed the Kyi Chu after him with a small body of the Dalai Lama's entourage, Tibetan Government officials, and Tibetan Army soldiers. However, once they reached Neu Dzong, Kundeling Dzasak asked him to return to Lhasa with a letter from the Dalai Lama to Kungo Tara, the highest ranking Tibetan Government official left in Lhasa. Before he left, a friend, Tsanshab Lobsang Yeshe, one of the Tensung Dangling Mag resistance fighters, asked him to get some arms and ammunition from the Norbulingka for the resistance fighters. When he and his assistant reached the Kyi Chu opposite the Norbulingka they had to wait for a boat. Tenpa feared that if he went back into Lhasa he would be apprehended by the Chinese and would not be able to escape. He therefore resolved to send his assistant with the letter and wait for him on the south side of the Kyi Chu. However, while waiting for the boat, he read the Dalai Lama's letter since the envelope was unsealed.

The Dalai Lama's letter said that he would remain at Lhuntse Dzong near the border with India. He directed his representatives left in Lhasa to continue negotiations with the Chinese. Realizing the importance of the letter, Tenpa Soepa decided that he should deliver it himself. He crossed the Kyi Chu and reached the Norbulinka where he delivered the Dalai Lama's letter to

Kungo Tara. Then he got some 20 rifles and 23 boxes of ammunition, which he delivered to a representative of Lobsang Yeshe who arrived with 20 mules for transport.

Tenpa stayed at the Norbulingka the night of 19 March. Other Tibetan officials asked him if the Dalai Lama had escaped, but he could not tell them the secret. On the morning of the 20th the first Chinese shell landed in the Norbulingka. Tenpa and some others went toward the Chinese vehicle station to the north from where the shell had apparently come. They fired their pistols and rifles at the Chinese military station for several hours without being able to take it. Ten Tibetans died during the process. He thought it was useless to continue firing small arms at the station and decided that it would be better to fire larger guns from the summit of the nearby Chakpori. However, the Norbulingka was now under constant artillery bombardment by the Chinese and it was impossible to go out or to organize any other resistance.

Tenpa Soepa spent the rest of the day trying to organize resistance within the Norbulingka. However, shells were constantly exploding and killing many people. Finally he decided that he must try to escape as everyone else was also trying to get away from the shelling. However, he had delayed for too long because he was reluctant to run away and neglect his duty to the Dalai Lama to defend the Norbulingka. He managed to get one of the last horses available from the stable but then was informed that the Chinese had captured Chakpori and were coming close to the gate of the Norbulingka. Therefore he and a few others decided that they would wait until nightfall to try to escape.

However, before nightfall he was injured in the leg by an exploding shell. He was momentarily unconscious, and when he came to he found that he could not walk. He tried to seek shelter in a nearby house but that house was also hit by a shell and the roof collapsed. Now shells were exploding all around and he saw many Tibetans hit and killed. Realizing that he could neither escape nor fight the Chinese in his condition he decided to commit suicide. He tried to drown himself in a small pond but was unable to do so. He pulled himself from the pond and then crawled into a nearby house and passed out until after dark. When he came to he found that the Chinese were already inside the Norbulingka. As he had no weapon he lay with some dead Tibetans and pretended to be dead himself.

He was arrested the next day. The Chinese separated Tibetan Government officials from ordinary Tibetans among those they arrested at the Norbulingka. Most Tibetans were retained at Norbulingka while the Tibetan Government officials were taken to temporary prisons in Lhasa. Since Tenpa was seriously wounded he was taken to the People's Hospital.

Tenpa's leg had been badly shattered by the exploding artillery shell. The Chinese doctor who treated him tried to set the bones together without anesthesia while complaining that he and other Chinese had come to Tibet to help the Tibetans but that Tibetans had no appreciation. The

doctor wanted to amputate the leg but Tenpa refused to let him. The doctor therefore repeatedly tried to manipulate the broken bones of the leg without any anesthesia. Finally, a more sympathetic Chinese doctor took over Tenpa's treatment. After being fed nothing but very poor quality *tsampa* (roasted barley flour) by Chinese nurses, two Tibetan nurses began caring for him and provided him with better food.

Five days after he entered the hospital two Chinese officials came to interrogate him about his role in the uprising. One of them was familiar to him because he had met him on the Dalai Lama's visit to China in 1954. He suspected that the Chinese official had been assigned to watch over him from as long ago as 1954. Tenpa told his interrogators that he was a minor official in charge of tea preparation at Norbulingka and knew nothing about the Dalai Lama's escape. He said nothing about his role in securing horses or the fact that he himself had actually escaped before being sent back. They tried to threaten him by placing a pistol on a table and telling him that his execution would mean nothing more to them than the cost of the bullet. They also said that his family would suffer if he did not confess. However, he continued to profess his innocence of any knowledge about the revolt or any role in it.

After about two months he was transferred to Siling Buk military prison. Most of the prisoners were former Tibetan Government officials. Except for those prisoners who still had injuries, like Tenpa Soepa, all of the other prisoners were made to do daily labor. All prisoners were also subjected to indoctrination and struggle sessions (*thamzing*). The Chinese demanded that each prisoner confess to his role in the uprising. They promised leniency for full confession and severe punishment for those who refused to confess. They also claimed to already know everything about each prisoner, from confessions of others, although this was usually just a subterfuge to get the Tibetans to confess.

Many Tibetan prisoners naively confessed to their roles since they believed the Chinese promises of leniency. However, none of them were released. Since so many made confessions and many of them had been at the Norbulingka and knew of Tenpa's role, he decided that he too should confess. He then revealed his role in procuring horses and saddles for the Dalai Lama's escape party but he denied that he knew anything about those who organized the Dalai Lama's escape, who went with him, and about Kundeling Dzasa's role. He also continued to conceal the fact that he had also escaped but had come back to organize resistance.

The Chinese interrogators praised him for his confession but continued to insist that he must know more and should confess everything. The regimen in the prison was very strict and the prisoners were watched constantly. Prisoners were subjected to *thamzings* and torture. Tenpa observed the *thamzing* and beating of Dr. Tenzin Choedak, the Dalai Lama's personal physician, who was beaten so badly that he almost died.

Many of the Tibetan prisoners participated in the *thamzing* and beatings of others, because they feared being subjected to the same process themselves and because they had been indoctrinated with the idea that they would be treated more leniently if they cooperated with the Chinese authorities. Also, anyone could see that resistance was futile, as the Chinese constantly reiterated. Those who refused to confess to any so-called crimes, which often meant just any opposition to the Chinese, were subjected to repression and torture. They usually did not survive their prison terms and many of them committed suicide. They, however, were considered heroes by the others. Those who confessed did not receive any of the leniency promised by the Chinese while at the same time they lost their own self-respect and the respect of others. Many of the prisoners became so fearful of repression that they even refused to talk to any other prisoners for fear that they would be informed upon for anything that they said.

In October 1959 Tenpa Soepa and some of the other prisoners at Siling Buk were taken to the Norbulingka. There were about 1000 Tibetans there. At a gathering of all the prisoners the names of about 300 were read out and they were separated from the others. All of them were former officials or personal attendants of the Dalai Lama. They were told that they would be sent to Gansu Province where they would have to reform themselves through hard labor.

The 300 Tibetan prisoners were given two days to allow for their relatives to meet with them and give them warm clothes. Their families were warned not to say anything to the prisoners. They were given only 5 minutes to say goodbye to their relatives. Tenpa describes this day as the saddest day of his life. He describes the scene of their departure to prison as an example of the suffering of all Tibetans under the Chinese occupation.

The Tibetan prisoners were loaded onto trucks for the journey to Gansu. There were 30 Tibetans in each truck accompanied by two Chinese soldiers and more soldiers in jeeps. They went through Nagchu to Gormu and then north through Dunhuang to the railroad at Liuyuan in western Gansu near Xinjiang.

Throughout the journey the prisoners were able to see the landscape through the open tops of the trucks. In their desperate situation many of them thought they saw auspicious signs in the snow along the route. One elderly Tibetan, named Pelgong Chagzod, said that these signs meant that they would be alright and that nothing bad would happen to them. He was later subjected to continuous *thamzing* in prison for having spread rumors leading others to have false hopes.

At Liuyuan the prisoners were put into train cars and they travelled overnight. The next day when they arrived at their destination Tenpa Soepa's car was alone, all the others having been sent to separate camps. The remaining prisoners were then loaded into trucks and they travelled for another three hours to a small camp that he assumed was only a temporary stopping

place. However, it turned out that this place, named Chiu Chon, was to be where he would stay. They saw a few emaciated Chinese prisoners there and assumed that it was a hospital, but it was not. The Chinese prisoners were in that condition due to starvation and overwork.

The first day the Tibetans were given a black broth that they all declined because it was so unappetizing. They assumed that there would be some other food provided, but there was none. The prisoners were divided into work groups and Tenpa asked for some lighter work since his leg had still not fully healed. He was sent to the infirmary where the Chinese doctor asked him how his leg was injured. When he said that it was during the revolt in Lhasa the Chinese doctor became so angry that he refused to give Tenpa any permission to do lighter work and he even refused to treat the wound.

Tenpa gives the full name of the camp as Chiu Chon Chang Chao Lung Tang. It was under the jurisdiction of Chiu Chon city in the western part of Gansu Province near the border with Xinjiang. It was a walled compound with armed Chinese soldiers stationed on the walls. The prison had eight rows of barracks with six cells in each row. There were about 15 prisoners in each cell in double tier beds. There were about 1000 Chinese prisoners and only 78 Tibetans. Some of the Chinese were former KMT soldiers but most were hard-core criminals who had broken out of other prisons and therefore were sent to this isolated prison from which it would be hard to escape. Many were sentenced for life. The Tibetans ranged in age from 17 to 70 and were mostly former Tibetan Government officials or staff.

The sun was so hot in the summertime that they got intense sunburn and could hardly work in the sun or even sit on the ground because of the intense heat. In the winter it was extremely cold with heavy snowfall. The roofs of the barracks were made of bricks topped with dirt and grass. When the snow melted the water leaked into the cells. In the winter the roofs had icicles hanging inside. They had very poor clothing and bedding and therefore suffered intensely from the cold. In the winter there was a constant icy wind that made conditions even worse.

The food in the prison was a thin, black, watery gruel with a piece of bread and a piece of vegetable for lunch. In the evening there was nothing but the leftover gruel. On Chinese holidays there was sometimes some meat, usually from an animal that had died and that was so thin and emaciated that it had little meat. There was a hospital with one doctor but without any medicine. Prisoners sent to the hospital either got well on their own or they died.

Prisoners were forced to work from dawn to dusk throughout the year. Each prisoner had a quota of work to do and failure to complete the quota led to thumping and beatings or even an increase in the prisoner's sentence. Prisoners were supposed to get one day of rest per month but prison authorities accused the prisoners of being behind in their work quotas and made them work without any days off.

Prisoners were made to plow the land using only their bare hands and sticks because they had no tools. They had to gather grass from long distances and bring it to the camp to store as winter fodder for horses and cattle. They had a quota for the number of bundles of grass they had to collect. In the winter they had to collect sand from about 5 kilometers away and bring it to the camp.

Indoctrination sessions were concentrated in the winter and early spring months when the days were short and there was more time at night. The evening indoctrination sessions lasted from after dinner until midnight. There was indoctrination in the communist philosophy of socialism versus capitalism. However, most of the time was taken with individual confessions for one's past behavior as well as behavior in the camp. Each evening a few prisoners were targeted for criticism and self-criticism with thamzings and beatings for those who failed to confess their past crimes or bad attitudes in prison.

The prisoners were divided into groups of 15 or 20 each. Each group held separate confession and criticism sessions during which they had to stand up one by one and speak about their thoughts and their activities during the most recent past. The other prisoners were set against them to point out their mistakes, their poor performance, or their bad attitude toward work or reform. Occasionally when a prisoner was accused of some particular crime from the past or in the camp, or a bad attitude toward reform, he was struggled by a gathering of all the prisoners.

Tenpa describes the struggle sessions as a perfect opportunity for the Chinese to set the Tibetans against each other. They exploited past animosities and petty complaints to divide the Tibetans. In order to receive better treatment one had to inform upon others. Those who refused to do so were punished with increased quotas or labor hours or with increased sentences.

Prison officials occasionally summarized the mistakes and performance of each prisoner, including their attitude toward reform. Everything was recorded in each prisoner's record. It was at this time that cooperative prisoners were rewarded with better treatment and uncooperative prisoners were punished.

Tenpa describes the living conditions at the camp. In the morning the prisoners were given a mug of a thin, black, watery gruel. After that they had to gather in the yard for a roll call. Even sick prisoners had to make the roll call and they had to work. Sometimes the weak and sick prisoners died while at work. Only the prison guards had the authority to send a prisoner to the hospital. The prison doctor did not have the authority to excuse a prisoner from work. At noon the prisoners were given a mug of hot water, a small cup of boiled wild vegetable gathered locally, and a bite-sized piece of steamed bread. The bread was black in color and the size of an apricot. In the evening there was again a mug of the thin black gruel. Both the bread and gruel

were black because they were made from husks and roots and wild vegetables that had originally been gathered as feed for pigs. The pigs had already been eaten and therefore the rotten vegetable originally meant as pig food was given to the prisoners. The Tibetan prisoners had to protect their food from the Chinese prisoners, who would steal it from them.

Tenpa says that hunger was the constant companion of all the prisoners. They thought of nothing but food. The workload was never altered no matter how little food there was or how weak or sick the prisoners were. When working, the prisoners were constantly looking for roots or insects to eat. However, they had to stay within demarcated lines or else they would be shot without warning by the guards. When there was a tree within the work site the prisoners would fight over the leaves and bark. They also gathered grass and roots and any wild plants that they thought were not poisonous. They ate any dried bones they found without knowing if they were animal or human.

The prisoners timed their lives from autumn to autumn. That was when the prison camp harvested the wheat it had grown, wheat that was not meant for the prisoners. The prisoners would organize themselves into groups of four, two of whom would harvest the wheat while one would look out for the guards and the other would collect grains of wheat that had fallen on the ground. They would surreptitiously eat these fallen grains and only by doing so could they possibly survive the winter and summer until the next autumn. Even sick prisoners wanted to work during the harvest because this was the only way that they could possibly survive the winter. Those who were unable to partake of the meager stolen wheat from the harvest often did not survive until the next year. Tenpa says that it was a daily occurrence that two or three prisoners died.

Tenpa's leg that had been injured by a Chinese shell at the Norbulingka had still not healed properly. He had great difficulty getting to the work sites every day and carrying loads of sand or manure or dirt. His fellow Tibetan prisoners helped him out by supporting him while walking with loads. They let him do the digging while others carried the loads whenever possible. They also carried part of his load when they could. The Chinese guards made no allowances for the conditions of the prisoners. Everyone was required to fulfill their quota of work every day. A sick or invalid prisoner either had others to help him or he deteriorated until he died.

After a few years at the camp they ate their own belts and leather shoes. They also ate the skin of sheepskin jackets they had brought from Tibet even though they might freeze from the cold in the winter. Many prisoners died every day and some prisoners resorted to eating the flesh of the dead.

By 1961 Tenpa was so emaciated from hunger that he couldn't even get up from his bed. He and many of the Tibetans at the camp were confined to their beds for about six months because they literally could not rise. The Chinese prison camp administrators could not force the prisoners to work because they couldn't acquire sufficient food for them to make them able to work. Tenpa was not aware of it but this was the time of massive starvation all over China due to Mao's misguided collectivization policies during the Great Leap Forward. By July 1962 conditions had improved to the extent that he and his fellow prisoners could at least prop themselves up in their beds and talk to each other. When one of the prisoners sang a traditional song it revived their memories of Tibet and raised their spirits somewhat.

Tenpa says that the Tibetans never lost their patriotism for Tibet and their belief in its future. They never lost their belief that Tibetans would once again regain their freedom and Tibet would regain its independence. They were willing to sacrifice their lives for their country if necessary. He says that because of their hope for the future very few of the Tibetan prisoners were lost to hopelessness or suffered mental trauma. In fact, because of their love for Tibet many of the older or weaker prisoners gave up a portion of their meager food to the younger and stronger so that they might survive and carry on the struggle for the independence of Tibet. He cites this fact as evidence of the patriotism of the Tibetans because it is more common and more expected in prisons that the younger and healthier give up their food for their sicker and weaker comrades. However, in this situation many of the older and weaker Tibetans knew that they would not survive and therefore preferred to give up some of their food so that others might survive. Indeed, Tenpa reveals that from 1959 to 1962, 53 of the original 76 Tibetans at his camp died due to starvation.

Tenpa also details the discrimination against the Tibetans at the camp by the Chinese officials and the Chinese prisoners. The Chinese imagined that the Tibetans had lived almost like animals in Tibet because that was what their government propaganda had taught them. Tibetans were always given the hardest work and they were blamed for any shortfalls even when it was the Chinese prisoners who were responsible. Whenever there was any disturbance in the Tibetan barracks the Chinese guards rushed in and beat all the prisoners. Similar disturbances in the Chinese barracks were ignored.

In October 1962 the surviving 23 Tibetan prisoners were told that they would be taken back to Tibet. They did not know where in Tibet they would be sent but they were happy that they would be able to eat tsampa and speak in Tibetan. When their trucks approached Lhasa they were glad to be back there since most of them were originally from Lhasa. One of the prisoners who was very sick and was not expected to survive the journey said that he had a vision that he would live to see Lhasa again. He died one day after reaching the city.

Tenpa and the rest of the Tibetan prisoners were taken to Drapchi prison to the north of Lhasa. It had only recently been converted from the former headquarters of the Tibetan Army into a prison. Drapchi had only two sections at that time. There was an inner section for prisoners and an outer section for those sentenced to reform through labor. Tenpa and the rest of those who had returned from Gansu were in the inner section. They were all sentenced to prison terms due to their involvement in the 1959 revolt or because they were former high-ranking officials. There were about 200 prisoners in the inner section, almost all of whom were Tibetans. Only the reform through labor prisoners were required to work. The prisoners in the inner section were confined to their cells almost all of the time except for being allowed to sit in the sun for about an hour once in a while. They were not allowed to talk to each other during that time. Tenpa was once interrogated and punished simply for smiling at one of his fellow Tibetan prisoners during their time outside.

They were allowed to leave the cell only once a day to go to the toilet. They received a small cup of tsampa in the morning and a cup of black tea. At lunch they had black tea with a small steamed bread and sometimes some watery vegetables. In the evening there was again a small cup of tsampa. Every fifth day they were given a little meat and some sweet tea. This was far better than what they had eaten in the camp in Gansu. In addition, they were allowed to write to their relatives in Lhasa, who were allowed to bring them food packages once a month. The Chinese did not inform the relatives of those prisoners who had died that their relatives were dead, so those Tibetans also brought food packages to the prison. These packages were shared with the surviving prisoners. Many were unable to digest the meat, butter, and tsampa because they had stomach problems from their time in Gansu.

The prisoners had to undergo political indoctrination every day. Each day one prisoner read to the others from the *Tibet Daily* newspaper, which was in Tibetan but was only translations of articles written in Chinese by Chinese propagandists. They were required to discuss the contents of the newspaper and everyone was required to express his opinion. Each cell had a leader who wrote down the opinions of each inmate and submitted his notes to the prison officials.

Tenpa reports that *Tibet Daily* sometimes carried news that was unintentionally encouraging to the Tibetans. It reported about the Dalai Lama's formation of a government in exile and the creation of a democratic constitution. *Tibet Daily* said that such things were like a daydream that would never come true and were not favored by the Tibetan people or in their interests anyway. However, for Tenpa and the other prisoners this news was very encouraging because it meant that the Dalai Lama was fighting for Tibet from exile and that the cause of Tibetan freedom was not dead.

At the end of 1962 *Tibet Daily* reported on the border war with India. At first the Tibetan prisoners were optimistic that India would defeat China and even that India might support Tibet. The Chinese increased their security forces around the prison at that time because they knew that the Tibetans were hoping that the war would give them a chance to escape. However, the war went in China's favor and the Tibetans had to give up hope that the war would provide them or Tibet any relief. They had many discussions among themselves at this time. Later, during the Cultural Revolution, someone informed Tenpa about what he had said at the time about the 1962 border war. This caused him much suffering.

In 1964 a new Drapchi prison was built. It had double fences and seven separate compounds. Two compounds were for the hospital and kitchen and five compounds were cells for prisoners. Prisoners were shifted to the new prison in August 1965. The first prisoner compound held 160 prisoners who were sentenced to death or life in prison. The second compound of 180 prisoners was for those sentenced to 15 years or less. The third compound had 150 women prisoners. The fourth compound had about 160 prisoners with sentences of between 15 and 20 years. The fifth compound of about 150 prisoners was for those who, like Tenpa, were former Tibetan government officials, aristocrats, military officers, and abbots of monasteries who had sentences of various numbers of years. Almost all the prisoners were Tibetans. These numbers reveal that the Chinese had continued to arrest and sentence Tibetans from 1959 to 1965. From October 1965 the prisoners were made to do forced labor.

In February 1966 Tenpa Soepa finally received his official sentence of 20 years, although he had been imprisoned for the past 7 years. The Chinese had continued to investigate his involvement in the 1959 revolt all this time and had continued their interrogation of him. This thoroughness reveals the intent to criminalize all Tibetan resistance to Chinese rule over Tibet. The Chinese portrayed Tibetan patriotism as treason against China as if Tibet had always been a part of China.

Tenpa was summoned to the prison office where there were two Chinese officials and a Tibetan interpreter. He was told that his crimes were so serious that the only possible sentence was execution. However, since he had been young at the time of his crimes, and presumably deceived by the reactionaries, and because the Chinese Communist Party now had a relaxed and compassionate policy, he would receive a sentence of only 20 years. The seven years he had already served would count toward that sentence. He was told that he should be grateful for that lenient sentence and that he should endeavor to reform his attitude and accumulate merit through labor.

He was handed a written account of all his crimes, which included his involvement in the Dalai Lama's escape. It specified that he had helped arrange horses for the Dalai Lama and his party and had escaped himself until sent back to the Norbulingka by Kundeling Dzasa with a

letter from the Dalai Lama to Kungo Tara instructing him to continue trying to negotiate with the Chinese. The account also mentioned that he had delivered twenty rifles and twenty boxes of ammunition to one of the resistance fighters and that he had signed the declaration of Tibet's independence.

Tenpa writes that he had been mentally prepared for the sentence since he had already been in prison for seven years and knew the Chinese were not likely to release him. He had also seen some Chinese in prison who had received very harsh sentences and he thought that Tibetans were not likely to be treated any more leniently. He had also been repeatedly interrogated for the past seven years and had confessed to some of his activities at the time of the revolt because he realized that others would have already implicated him.

The last thing he had confessed to was his carrying of the letter from the Dalai Lama to Kungo Tara. He had thought that no one would know about that since Kundeling Dzasa had escaped to India as had Kungo Tara, and that no one else was likely to know. However, at one time he was interrogated by a Tibetan who indicated that he knew about the letter. Tenpa Soepa then confessed to this as well, after which all his interrogations ended. Tenpa writes that he thereafter had no hope of any leniency or any freedom as long as the Chinese ruled over Tibet. His only hope and that of all Tibetans was that Tibet might somehow get free of Chinese control.

Tenpa Soepa was in the part of the prison reserved for former Tibetan Government officials, aristocrats, and Tibetan Army officers, high tulkus, and abbots of large monasteries. They were supposed to receive slightly better rations of 25 kilo of tsampa, one kilo of butter, and 250 grams of meat each month. However, he says that their rations were stolen by the Chinese official who was responsible for the distribution of their food. He stole their rations and used them to feed 200 pigs, 100 chickens, and 500 rabbits, the meat from which was used to feed the prison officials. If any prisoner complained that their food was being stolen they were subjected to *thamzing*, accused of having a reactionary or counterrevolutionary attitude, or sometimes had their sentence increased.

The few Chinese in the prison actually received the best treatment. They were given pork, wheat, vegetables, and rice because it was said that they were not used to Tibetan tsampa. They were always put in supervisory positions while the Tibetans were made to do the hard labor. The labor consisted of breaking stones, construction, farming, and brick making and was usually done by the younger and stronger prisoners. Women prisoners were forced to make bricks and do tailoring. Labor outside the prison went on for ten hours a day, after which indoctrination went on until 11 at night. Labor inside the prison, which included tailoring and woodcarving, was lighter but went on from five in the morning until 10 at night. Each prisoner had a quota that had to be fulfilled and failure to do so always resulted in punishment.

Tenpa worked in the tailoring section for 7 years and describes the conditions. Work was done on an assembly line basis. Each worker had a sewing machine but did only one part of the process. Each line of machines moved at a rapid pace so that no one prisoner could slow down without the work piling up at his station. The pressure was such that the prisoners could not even go to the toilet. He found that because of the pressure and fear of punishments he and the other prisoners became so proficient that they could turn out hundreds of pants and shirts per day. Tenpa says that he learned that if human beings were pressured under inhumane conditions their material production could be increased to almost unbelievable levels.

Each of the Tibetan prisoners did their own job and never changed jobs. The prison officials made sure that none of the Tibetans was allowed to learn the whole process or to become proficient at any other job. The Chinese did not want the Tibetans to learn any useful skills. If they showed any interest in learning any new skills they were accused of counterrevolutionary ideas. Whenever a sewing machine would break down it was repaired by a Chinese mechanic who would not even allow any Tibetans to observe how he made the repairs so that they would not learn how to do it. However, he says, despite the efforts of the Chinese to keep the Tibetans ignorant, they managed to learn almost all of the aspects of tailoring and many other jobs.

Political indoctrination also continued all of the time that he was in Drapchi. The Chinese seemed to have great confidence that political indoctrination was effective in making loyal Chinese citizens out of the Tibetans. The most essential characteristic of the political culture that the Chinese intended to inculcate in Tibetans was conformity to the ideology of Chinese Communism and absolute loyalty to the dictates of the CCP and its leaders.

Political indoctrination included lessons on the thoughts of Mao, discussion of the articles in *Tibet Daily*, confession of one's crimes, and mutual criticism and self-criticism. Prison officials could also designate current topics for discussion. Everyone had to participate in the discussion. Anyone who was reluctant to do so was subjected to *thamzing*. Anyone who expressed incorrect thoughts or opinions was accused of trying to bring back the old society and was subjected to *thamzing*. Some prisoners were designated as provocateurs in order to make the discussions more contentious and even violent. Every comment of every prisoner was written down and brought up again in the future in interrogations. Any opinion that differed from the Chinese Communists' ideology was denounced as reactionary or counterrevolutionary. There was no escape available in silence and no refuge in honesty since failure to adhere to the communists' orthodoxy was condemned as reactionary.

Tenpa relates an instance in 1969 during the Cultural Revolution. He tried to avoid saying anything during an indoctrination session but was finally forced to speak. He said that he thought that the Cultural Revolution was nothing but a political power struggle between Mao and

his enemies in the CCP. He said that the struggle among the Chinese was irrelevant to Tibetans like himself, since no matter which side won, he and other Tibetans would not be allowed any freedom. The Chinese were aghast at his statement. They accused him of having completely failed to reform his reactionary thoughts and behavior. He was accused of having failed to take advantage of the opportunity the Communist Party had given him, despite all his crimes, to reform and follow the socialist path. The Chinese said that he would not have been given such a generous opportunity under any capitalist system. He was then subjected to repeated struggle sessions and warned that he must reform and conform or else he would be executed.

Tenpa writes that he was first allowed to see his relatives in 1963. The visit was for only 10 minutes and he was not allowed to say anything about prison conditions and his relatives could not say anything about their own conditions. His relatives were allowed to deliver food packages to him every month but were allowed personal visits, always for only 10 minutes, only once a year or sometimes only once every two or three years at the whim of the prison officials. After he was finally released he learned that during the Cultural Revolution Tibetans outside the prison were subjected to the same sort of political indoctrination and struggle sessions as those inside the prison, such that all Tibet was like one giant prison.

In early 1979 Tenpa Soepa and three others were called into the prison office and told that they would be released. This was at the time after Mao's death in 1976 when Deng Xiaoping had finally consolidated control over the CCP and had begun liberalizing former policies. Tenpa and the three others were then allowed to go into Lhasa for three days to celebrate Losar. Tenpa found his father and sister in a small house along with a niece. They formerly had a large house in Dekyi Lingka, because he had been a Tibetan Government official, but that house had been confiscated. He later found that almost all of the houses of the former aristocracy and government servants had been confiscated. His father insisted on celebrating Losar with Tenpa and found a small bag of rice that he had been saving for many years for the occasion. His sister who was only 24 years old and thus had been only four years old in 1959 did not know how to make any of the traditional Tibetan dishes, even Tibetan butter tea. She said that all such Tibetan food had been prohibited and one could be subjected to *thamzing* just for making butter tea. She worried even then that the public security police might find out and come to arrest them. She had been so repressed and indoctrinated that she knew almost nothing about traditional Tibetan culture.

Tenpa spent these three days talking with his relatives and friends who came to see him. They shared their experiences of the past 20 years, which he says were invariably of pain, torture, repression, discrimination, forced labor, hunger, and lack of human compassion and values. He was also invited to the houses of some other Tibetans who enjoyed slightly better conditions and who could afford butter tea and even meat. However, Tenpa found that his stomach was too weak from his prison starvation diet to digest any such rich food. After three

days he was required to report back to the prison even though he was theoretically released. Under the Chinese system, released prisoners still had to live at the prison and work there at the same jobs they had before. They were paid a small salary, almost all of which was taken for prison expenses, and were allowed to occasionally go into the city. The Chinese called this a released prisoner status but it differed little from being an actual prisoner. One reason that the Chinese did this was that the prisons had grown into small industries and the prison officials did not want to lose their involuntary labor force.

In March 1979 the rest of the prisoners arrested during the 1959 revolt were finally released but, like Tenpa, only to released prisoner status. There were 114 prisoners from Drapchi prison and 170 from Sangyip and Autretu prisons who were released. Only seven of the 76 Tibetans who were with Tenpa in Gansu and the 23 who came back to Lhasa were still alive.

Tenpa was asked to attend a ceremony at which the prisoners would be released but he made an excuse to be absent because he knew that the released prisoners, and he himself, would be made to recite statements praising the CCP for reforming them, even though they didn't deserve it, and thanking the CCP for its compassion in finally releasing them. All of these released prisoners were formerly Tibetan Government officials and aristocrats and thus they were the most highly educated. However, they were confined even after release to the most menial jobs, such as construction, unskilled labor, agricultural labor, and shepherding.

Tenpa describes his impressions of Lhasa in 1979 after he and the other released prisoners were allowed to go into the city. He says that the most glaring impression they got was of the ruins of Lhasa's monasteries left behind after the chaos of the Cultural Revolution and twenty years of brutal Chinese policies. He saw that the ancient and holy monasteries of Ramoche, Gyutoe, Gyume, Meru, Shide, Kundeling, and others had been turned into ruins. The precious relics that used to be contained in those monasteries had been trucked to China, according to local Tibetans. The formerly peaceful sight of thousands of monks in their maroon robes was now gone. Tibetans were dressed in the rags of their old *chubas* or they wore the same clothes as the Chinese. The local Tibetans looked as lifeless and worn as their clothes.

The Lhasa Jokhang had survived mostly intact and at this time was open. Tenpa went to the Jokhang where he found most of the relics and statues intact but dusty from years of neglect. There were no monks at the Jokhang and almost no pilgrims, since Tibetans had been taught for many years about the evils of religion and were still prohibited from exercising their religious traditions.

The old mansions of the former aristocrats were either destroyed or used as Chinese offices. Shops around the Barkor were closed. There were no private shops or restaurants in Lhasa. Some of the other released prisoners who went into Lhasa with Tenpa had no more

relatives left there. They had all been killed or had fled into exile. They had nothing to do when they went into Lhasa and not even a tea shop where they could rest, so they just went back to Drapchi.

Tenpa found that he had difficulty finding his way around Lhasa because all of the street names had been changed to new Chinese revolutionary names. Local Tibetans had already forgotten the old traditional Tibetan names because the Chinese required that the new names be used and they prohibited the old names. Many of the old Tibetans had died and the young Tibetans knew nothing of the traditional culture. The youth were taught so many lies about the old culture that they not only had no reverence for it but they thought it was something so bad that it should not be remembered. Tibetans all appeared poverty stricken because the communist system did not provide for any who could not work. Even children and youths had to work because otherwise they and their families would starve. Many had to sell their blood to survive.

Tenpa observed that the Chinese had come to Tibet proclaiming that they wanted to liberate the Tibetans from feudal oppression and serfdom. However, Tibetans had lived peaceful, self-sufficient and contented lives prior to the Chinese occupation. Now, under the Chinese Tibetans were beaten down by Chinese cultural and political repression and were forced to sell their own blood in order to survive.

In June 1979 the Drapchi Prison authorities called a meeting at which they announced that a delegation from the Dalai Lama would be coming to Lhasa soon. The delegates were the Dalai Lama's brother Lobsang Samten, Tashi Phuntsok Taklha, Juchen Thupten Namgyal, Lobsang Dhargyal and Tashi Topgyal. The delegation was already in Amdo where they had received a tumultuous welcome from the local Tibetans, who did not refrain from telling them of their sufferings since 1959. The local Chinese officials there were very surprised and embarrassed because they thought that Tibetans were now loyal to China and even that they had accepted Chinese propaganda about the evils of the old system. The Chinese even imagined that Tibetans would not welcome the delegates from exile because they represented the old system and some of them were the actual aristocrats that the Chinese accused of having exploited ordinary Tibetans in the past.

The Drapchi Prison authorities warned Tenpa and the other former prisoners to politely welcome the delegation from exile but to treat them as equals without showing any deference or too much respect. They were told to refrain from spitting on them or throwing stones, as the Chinese imagined they might do as they represented the old political system under which Tibetans had supposedly suffered. The suffering of Tibetans under the old feudal system was a major component of Chinese propaganda about Tibet and one that the Chinese themselves believed and that they thought they had convinced Tibetans to believe. However, Tenpa thought that they secretly hoped that Tibetans would interpret the message about spitting and throwing

stones as a suggestion that they should spit and throw stones. In the event, Lhasa Tibetans welcomed the delegation with a joyous celebration and they also poured out stories to them of their suffering under the Chinese.

One of the delegation members, Tashi Topgyal, brought a letter for Tenpa from his relative Kundeling Dzasak. He sent a message to Drapchi Prison for Tenpa to pick up the letter. Tenpa was not even sure that the Chinese would allow him to receive the letter so he asked for permission from the prison authorities to go get the letter. He first asked for permission from a Tibetan woman prison official, who could not make the decision without asking one of the Chinese who was officially her inferior but in reality made all the decisions. Since the Chinese had adopted a policy of cultivating relations with the Tibetans in exile, they had to allow Tenpa to receive the letter. The reason for their new policy was that they hoped to finally resolve the political issue of Tibet by convincing the Tibetans in exile, including the Dalai Lama, to return to Tibet.

When Tenpa went to see Tashi Topgyal to receive his letter he was told that Kundeling Dzasak wished to invite him to come to India for a visit. He was afraid that if he told Tashi Topgyal that he wanted to leave Tibet the Chinese would find out and would punish him. The Chinese had cultivated such a regime of fear and suspicion that Tenpa was reluctant to believe that the Chinese had really changed their policies and would allow him or anyone else to leave Tibet. He suspected that it must be some sort of a trap to catch “reactionaries and counterrevolutionaries.” However, the Chinese now wanted to be nice to the Tibetans in exile, especially such an important person as Kundeling. The Drapchi Prison officials began to treat Tenpa much better, now that they knew he had important relatives in exile, and they allowed him to submit an application to visit India. Finally, after several months of processing his application, and further letters from Kundeling, he was given permission to travel to India.

Before Tenpa departed he had a meeting with a Chinese official who asked him about his attitude toward the current situation in Tibet and what he intended to say while he was in Nepal and India. The Chinese official emphasized that under the current liberalized policy all the mistakes of the past had been corrected and now the situation was relaxed and Tibetans enjoyed complete freedom, the evidence of which was that he, a former prisoner, was allowed to leave the country to visit his relatives in exile.

Tenpa knew what sort of rhetoric the Chinese official expected to hear so he repeated for him the current propaganda line. He said that all mistakes of the past were the fault of the Gang of Four, who had now been eliminated and thus the CCP was once again correct in all its policies. He said that the CCP had brought about great progress in Tibet and the people were now happy and prosperous.

The Chinese official was pleased with this response and told Tenpa that he could leave on the bus for Nepal on 25 July 1980. He told him to tell any of his relatives, particularly Kundeling, that if they wished to return to Tibet, whether for a visit or permanently, they would be welcomed and all arrangements would be made for them. They could expect that they would receive good jobs or government pensions and that there would be no repercussions for their having participated in the 1959 revolt and having fled into exile. Their livelihood would be guaranteed and their former possessions, even their estates and manor houses, if still existing, would be returned to them.

Tenpa attributed this favorable treatment to the fact that he was a relative of Kundeling, a former Tibetan Government official and now an official of the Government in Exile, whom the Chinese wished to entice to return. They also were no doubt fearful that he might decide to stay in India and of what he might say about the reality of conditions in Tibet and about his own sufferings in Chinese prison. They hoped that their favorable treatment of him while still in Tibet might convince him to return and bring his relatives with him. They thought that the very fact that they were allowing him to travel to India would be strong evidence that all the old repressive policies of the past had been corrected and that now a new period of liberalized policies had begun that allowed freedom for Tibetans, even the freedom to travel abroad.

Even after receiving permission to leave Tibet, Tenpa remained suspicious of Chinese motives for letting him leave. These suspicions, he says, were the result of the atmosphere of fear and distrust built up by years of Chinese repression of Tibetan freedoms. Tenpa was afraid that if he carried any letters from Tibetans to their relatives that he would be arrested at the border with Nepal, the letters would be examined for anti-Chinese statements, and he would be returned to prison. Even during the journey to the border he feared that at any moment he would be stopped and rearrested. He even fashioned a knife that he resolved to use on anyone who tried to stop him or on himself rather than be returned to prison. His suspicions were fueled by many stories of Tibetans who had been fooled by the Chinese into returning to Tibet and then arrested. Many of those he talked to before leaving warned him that the Chinese must have planned a trap for him since it was impossible that he would really be allowed to leave.

Tenpa could not relax until he crossed the border from Tibet to Nepal. Then he felt an immense sense of relief to have escaped the constant suspicion, fear, and surveillance prevalent in Tibet. In Nepal he felt a sense of personal freedom and a relaxed atmosphere in contrast to the constant tension and frantic activity created by the Chinese in Tibet. In Tibet the society was regimented and constantly harassed, while in Nepal everyone, including the many Tibetan refugees he met, were obviously enjoying much greater personal freedoms. In Tibet everyone wore the same military style clothes, whereas in Nepal both Nepalese and Tibetans wore their traditional dress or whatever they liked. Tenpa thought about the psychological damage the Chinese occupation and repression of Tibetans had caused. He could feel the damage to himself,

especially upon arrival in a free country, but he wondered if the collective damage to Tibetans could ever be comprehended by those affected.

In Nepal Tenpa had to secure a permit to go from there to India. His immediate purpose was only to visit Kundeling in Rajpur and have an audience with the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala. He eventually met with the Dalai Lama for several hours during which he tried to convey what it was like in Tibet. He was asked if he intended to remain in India or return to Tibet and he requested the Dalai Lama to advise him what to do. The Dalai Lama told him that if he decided to stay in India that he could have a job with the Government in Exile. Tenpa contemplated that if he returned to Tibet the Chinese would be very satisfied and would treat him and his family very well. He would no doubt be given a government job. However, he would become a tool of the Chinese repression in Tibet. If he decided to stay in India as an official of the Tibetan Government in Exile he could contribute to the struggle of the Tibetan people for independence, and he could serve the Dalai Lama. Therefore, he decided to stay in India.

Tenpa Soepa was the subject and the victim of 20 years of Chinese repression of his freedom and relentless coercion to convert his loyalty from the Dalai Lama and Tibet to Mao, the CCP, and China. However, unlike some younger Tibetans who were less grounded in Tibetan tradition and culture, Tenpa's loyalty could not be altered by the crude and simplistic Chinese propaganda about how they had come to liberate Tibet from its own misrule. The results of Chinese control over Tibet were too obviously the repression of all resistance and of all those who most represented Tibetan culture and national identity. Despite their promises to allow Tibetan cultural autonomy, the Chinese Communists were intent upon eradicating everything that made Tibet different and distinct from China. The only way to make Tibet a part of China, as the Chinese claimed it had always been, was to eliminate Tibetan identity, individually and collectively. However, Tibetan identity in certain individuals like Tenpa Soepa was too strong to be so easily transformed into Chinese identity. Tenpa Soepa resisted Chinese repression and indoctrination until the time when an opportunity arose to escape. After some debate and hesitation, mostly due to concerns about others in his family, he joined other Tibetans in exile who refused to accept the legitimacy of Chinese rule over Tibet.