

BOOK REVIEW  
OF  
*ORPHANS OF THE COLD WAR:*  
*AMERICA AND THE TIBETAN STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL*  
BY  
JOHN KENNETH KNAUS

A COMPILATION OF A SERIES OF PROGRAMS  
ON  
RADIO FREE ASIA  
TIBETAN SERVICE  
BY  
WARREN W. SMITH

*ORPHANS OF THE COLD WAR:  
AMERICA AND THE TIBETAN STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL*

By John Kenneth Knaus

*Orphans of the Cold War* is a history of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) support for the Tibetan Resistance against China. The author, John Kenneth Knaus, was one of the CIA officers responsible for the Tibet operation. He was the political officer of the operation and operated mostly out of Washington, but also travelled to the CIA training site at Camp Hale in Colorado where he attempted to instruct Tibetans in anti-communist political propaganda techniques. He found that Tibetans were less interested in political strategies than in fighting against the Chinese invasion of their homeland. He became an advocate of the Tibetan cause and is also the author of *Beyond Shangri-La: America and Tibet's Move into the Twenty-First Century*, a history of U.S.-Tibet relations from the first encounter between an American diplomat and the 13th Dalai Lama in 1908 up to the present. Ken Knaus died in 2016.

This article uses Knaus' chapter titles as section headings. Spellings of personal and place name are as in the original.

*Mission to Shangri-la*

Ken Knaus begins his book with a history of American involvement in Tibet prior to the CIA operation. The first American interest in Tibet came during the Second World War. The U.S. was helping China fight against the Japanese. U.S. troops in China were being supplied by air from India and by road from Burma. The U.S. also proposed to move supplies across Tibet to China. China agreed with this plan, but the Tibetan Government refused to allow war supplies to cross the territory of Tibet because Tibet was a Buddhist country. This was the first time that the U.S. became aware that Tibet did not accept Chinese claims to sovereignty or Chinese authority to make decisions on behalf of Tibet.

In order to persuade the Tibetans to allow war supplies to transit their country, the U.S. sent a two-man mission to Tibet in 1942. The mission was also intended to find out more about Tibet, and in particular the nature of Tibet's relations with China. The U.S. mission was under the auspices of the new American secret intelligence organization, the Office of Strategic Services, which later became the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

The two men of the American mission, Ilya Tolstoy and Brooke Dolan, went to India in order to seek British assistance in securing permission from the Tibetan Government to travel to Tibet. The Tibetan Government had already refused permission for their visit when it had been requested by the Chinese Government. However, the

Tibetan Government granted the request when it came from the British Government of India.

The American mission traveled from India to Lhasa where, in December 1942, they met with the then seven-year-old Dalai Lama. The mission exchanged presents with the Dalai Lama and gave him a letter from U.S. President Roosevelt. After three months in Lhasa, Tolstoy and Dolan set off for China via Amdo. They received permission from the Tibetan Government to travel to China via Amdo even though their original permission had specified that they would return to India. Reportedly, the Tibetan Government gave them permission to cross Tibet to China because they had expressed sympathy for Tibet's desire for independence and had promised to present Tibet's case to the U.S. Government. They had also suggested that the U.S. might support Tibet's right to attend a post-war peace conference at which the issue of Tibetan independence would be discussed. In the end, Tolstoy and Dolan promised too much, but their sympathy for Tibetans and for Tibetans' desires for independence was to characterize later American relations with Tibet. Another result of the mission was that the Americans became more knowledgeable about Tibet.

After the 1942 mission, Tibetan relations with the U.S. did not resume for another five years. In the meantime, the conditions had been created that would make Tibet what Knaus characterized as an orphan of the Cold War. In Lhasa, the Tibetan Government was aware of the changed international conditions after the Second World War. China had been forced to recognize the independence of Mongolia and Chiang Kai-shek had made a vague promise of self-determination for Tibet. When it became apparent that the Chinese Communists might win the civil war with the Kuomintang and that Tibet's independence was insecure, the Tibetan Government made efforts to establish international relations and international recognition as an independent country. At the same time, the U.S. Government was becoming more interested in Tibet. After the end of the Second World War, American rivalry with the Soviet Union degenerated into what would become known as the Cold War. The United States began to look at Tibet as a country that might stop the advance of communism in Asia, because Tibet was both anti-communist and anti-Chinese.

After the end of the Second World War the Tibetan Government sent a Victory Congratulations Mission to India and China. In New Delhi the mission visited the embassies of Britain and the United States. In China, the Tibetan mission found the Chinese unwilling to discuss Chiang Kai-shek's proposal on Tibetan self-determination. Instead, the Tibetans found themselves attending a Chinese Constitutional convention. The Chinese had deceived the Tibetans with the promise that the convention would discuss Tibet's political status; instead, the Chinese claimed that their attendance signified Tibet's willing participation in the convention as a part of China.

In 1947 the Tibetan Government sent a Trade Mission, led by Tsepon Shakabpa, to India, China, the United States, and Britain. The mission traveled on Tibetan passports to all of these countries except China. The Chinese tried to insist that the Tibetan mission use Chinese passports but, except for their travel in China, the Tibetans refused. The

Chinese also attempted to have the Tibetan mission be accompanied by Chinese diplomats during their visit to Britain and the United States, but the Tibetans refused to be accompanied by Chinese officials or to accept any Chinese authority over their mission. In the United States the mission established relations with American officials and made known to American government officials and to the American people that Tibet was not a part of China and that Tibet was an independent country. On its return to India the mission met with the American ambassador, Loy Henderson, who was to become an ardent supporter of Tibet. In view of the imminent communist victory in China, Henderson began to formulate plans for American assistance to Tibet, including the sending of a U.S. mission to Tibet. In the end, only Lowell Thomas, a prominent private U.S. citizen, was able to travel to Tibet, but he did much to publicize Tibet's desire for independence. The result of Tibetan-American contacts before the Chinese invasion was that the U.S. acquired both a political interest in Tibet and sympathy for Tibetan desires for independence.

### *The Invasion of Tibet*

In early 1950 the Chinese Communists announced their intention to "liberate" Tibet. The Tibetan Government responded that it was an independent country that had no need to be liberated by China. The Tibetan Government also sent messages to the Indian, British, and American governments requesting assistance against Chinese aggression. However, India, Britain, and the U.S. all advised the Tibetan Government that it would be impossible for them to aid Tibet against a Chinese invasion. They advised Tibet to avoid taking any actions that might provoke China, in the absence of which China might allow Tibet to continue to enjoy its traditional autonomy.

India, at the same time, continued to supply Tibet with arms and ammunition. The Americans also began to study the feasibility of supporting Tibetan resistance against the Chinese Communists. In June 1950 North Korea invaded South Korea. The North Korean invasion, supported by the Soviet Union and China, was resisted by the United Nations led by the United States. Chinese forces entered the war in October after U.N. forces pushed the North Koreans almost to the border with China and seemed about to prevail in the conflict. The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency was thereafter authorized to conduct intelligence operations against China. This led to renewed American interest in supporting Tibetan resistance against China. However, what the Chinese Communists regarded as American aggression in Korea led them to accelerate their plans for the invasion of Tibet in order to forestall any American attempt to detach Tibet from China.

The Chinese Communists began to move troops into Kham in early 1950 in preparation for the invasion of Tibet. By September 1950 their troops were positioned along the *Dri Chu*, or upper Yangtze River, awaiting orders to begin the invasion of Central Tibet. On 7 October 1950 the Chinese invasion began. The Tibetan army was able to put up a resistance for only a short time after which it was forced to surrender. The Chinese army advanced to Giamda, a town on the border of what the KMT had claimed as the province of Sikang<sup>1</sup>, after which they called upon the Tibetans to negotiate. Tibet appealed to the United Nations to stop the Chinese invasion, but the U.N.

took no action, based upon the advice of the Indian ambassador that China had promised that the issue could still be peacefully resolved. Despite the fact that the Chinese army had already invaded Tibet, China claimed that it had not invaded Tibet at all but had simply advanced up to the border of the Chinese province of Sikang. China then called upon Tibet to negotiate its peaceful liberation. Because of India's ignorance about the actual borders of Tibet, the Indian Government accepted China's assurances that it had not invaded Tibet and that it intended to peacefully resolve the issue.

After the Chinese invasion the Dalai Lama assumed full governing powers and, shortly thereafter, he and the Tibetan Government withdrew to the town of Yatung on the border with India. Having received no response from its appeal to the United Nations, the Tibetan Government was forced to send representatives to China to negotiate with the Chinese. However, the Tibetan representatives were not given the authority to conclude any agreement without approval from the Tibetan Government. In the meantime, the U.S. Government had made a study of Tibet's political status that had determined that Tibet was an independent state in fact, even though it had not received international recognition of its independence. The study also determined that Tibet was deserving of the right of self-determination. The Americans began to make plans for assistance for Tibet, including support for United Nations action on Tibet and support for the Dalai Lama should he decide to seek asylum in India. The American ambassador to India sent a letter to the Dalai Lama at Yatung encouraging him to resist Chinese aggression, to refuse to sign any agreement with China that gave up Tibet's independence, and to seek asylum in India rather than accept Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. The ambassador promised political, economic, and even military support for Tibet if the Dalai Lama should seek asylum in India.

Before the Dalai Lama had received these American offers of assistance he was surprised to hear, on 26 May 1951, a Chinese Government announcement of an agreement with Tibetan representatives for the "peaceful liberation" of Tibet. The Tibetan representatives in Beijing had been forced to sign an agreement by threats from the Chinese that, if they refused to sign, Tibet would be liberated by force. They thought it better to sign an agreement that guaranteed Tibet some rights rather than allow the Chinese to continue their invasion of Tibet. In any case, they knew that the seals that they used to sign the agreement were not official Tibetan Government seals and that, therefore, the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government could still refuse to accept the agreement. The Dalai Lama was thus faced with a dilemma. If he accepted the 17-Point Agreement and returned to Lhasa he would acknowledge the end of Tibet's independence but he would be able to protect his people from the Chinese. If he rejected the agreement he might preserve Tibet's claim to independence, but he would be forced into exile and the Tibetan people would be abandoned to Chinese control.

The Americans, for their part, thought that he should reject the agreement in order to preserve Tibet's claim to independence. They devoted their efforts to convincing him to reject the 17-Point Agreement and to seek asylum in India. The United States was at that time in conflict with China in Korea and was in favor of assistance to Tibet as a part of its campaign against China and against communism. However, the author emphasizes

that there was a broad-based and genuine support within the U.S. Government for the Tibetans' rights to independence and self-determination.

### *The Dalai Lama's Dilemma*

The 17-Point Agreement was signed in Beijing on 24 May 1951. However, because the Tibetan delegation did not have authority to conclude any agreement on behalf of the Tibetan Government, the approval of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government was still required. The Dalai Lama indicated that he did not approve of the agreement and intended to reject it, especially if he could count on support from the Americans. The Dalai Lama sent a letter with his brother, Taktser Rinpoche, requesting U.S. assistance. However, if no support from the U.S. or any other country were available, the Dalai Lama feared that Tibet would have no alternative but to accept the 17-Point Agreement.

American officials tried to assure the Dalai Lama of American support should he repudiate the agreement and seek exile. However, U.S. offers of military assistance were dependent upon Indian cooperation, which did not seem likely, and the offers of diplomatic and political support were conditioned by U.S. recognition of Tibetan autonomy, but not independence. American promises to support Tibetan self-determination were hampered by the reluctance to support Tibetan independence. The U.S. was unable to recognize Tibetan independence because of its support for the Chinese Nationalists on Taiwan, who, like the Chinese Communists, claimed sovereignty over Tibet.

The Tibetan debate about the 17-Point Agreement considered the uncertainties of American and other countries' support for Tibet as well as how much actual control the Chinese intended to impose upon Tibet. Many Tibetan officials argued that the 17-Point Agreement eliminated Tibetan independence; therefore, it had to be repudiated. They also argued that the interpretation and implementation of the 17-Point Agreement was entirely up to the Chinese and, once they had control over Tibet, they could ignore all promises and guarantees about Tibetan autonomy. Other officials, particularly monastic officials, argued that the 17-Point Agreement guaranteed Tibetan autonomy, including that the Tibetan Government and the monastic system would remain unchanged and that the Dalai Lama would remain the head of the Tibetan Government. They argued that Tibet had survived under some degree of Chinese control during the Qing Dynasty and that the 17-Point Agreement guaranteed a similar degree of Tibetan autonomy as in the past. The monastic officials were generally less aware of the outside world than those who opposed the 17-Point Agreement, and they failed to understand the difference between the Buddhist Qing Dynasty rulers and the anti-religious Chinese Communists. Nevertheless, they argued, if the Dalai Lama left Tibet, Tibetans would be unprotected from the Chinese and it was therefore the Dalai Lama's responsibility to remain in Tibet. This argument finally prevailed and the Dalai Lama made the decision to return to Lhasa.

However, the Dalai Lama's reluctance to return was indicated by his consultation with the Nechung<sup>2</sup> oracle. During the first trance, the oracle indicated that the Dalai Lama

should return. The Dalai Lama requested a second session to be sure that the advice was accurate, but the oracle again said that the Dalai Lama should return. The Dalai Lama later explained his decision to return as also having been based upon more pragmatic considerations. Despite American offers of assistance, he knew that America was far away while China was close. China would inevitably impose its will in Tibet even if it had to do so by force, and Tibetans would be the ones who would suffer. The Dalai Lama had to accept the argument that Chinese control over Tibet was inevitable and that only he could mediate between the Chinese and the Tibetan people. In addition, the Americans' offers had always been on a secret and therefore unofficial basis; American letters to the Dalai Lama had never been signed by any U.S. Government official out of fear of revealing U.S. involvement with Tibet to the Chinese. The Dalai Lama also thought that he could expect little support from India should he seek asylum there. India at that time was attempting to preserve good relations with China and was therefore anxious to accept China's promises that it would respect Tibetan autonomy.

The Americans made further efforts to convince the Dalai Lama to seek exile even after he had begun his return to Tibet. They sent further letters, still unsigned. Hints of more extensive support were also made, including recognition of Tibetan independence, but these offers were vague and always contingent upon U.S. relations with Taiwan. It seems that the U.S. might have recognized Tibetan independence if the Communists had managed to eliminate the Nationalists on Taiwan. However, unless this happened, which did not seem likely, the U.S. would still be reluctant to recognize Tibetan independence. In the end, Tibetans knew that the U.S. had political interests in supporting Tibet against China and that they had some sympathy for Tibet's right to self-determination. However, they were not joined in their offers of support by any other allies, particularly Britain and India. In addition, the Americans were willing to support Tibetan autonomy but not independence and to help Tibet to resist the Chinese Communists but not the Chinese Nationalists, whose claim to sovereignty over Tibet they still recognized.

### *Occupied Tibet*

The Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government officials left Yatung on 17 August 1951 to return to Lhasa. They arrived in Lhasa in September simultaneous with the first Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) officers and soldiers. Soon the number of Chinese in Lhasa increased until they began to create shortages and cause inflation in prices for food and other essentials. Some of the Tibetan upper class profited from the influx of Chinese, however, by renting or selling their houses in Lhasa and selling food supplies from their estates. The Tibetan Government and the major monasteries were also required to sell their food supplies to the Chinese. For all these things the Chinese paid very well, in Chinese silver dollars (*Dayuan*), leading Tibetans to describe the Chinese influx into Tibet as being accompanied by a "rain of Dayuan."

Lhasa Tibetans responded to the disruptions caused by the influx of Chinese by forming a *Mimang Tsongdu*, or "Peoples' Assembly," to protect Tibetans' rights. The *Mimang Tsongdu* demanded that the number of Chinese in Tibet be limited and that the

Chinese not interfere with Tibetan society or the Tibetan Government. The Chinese were particularly threatened by the Mimang Tsongdu since they claimed that the Chinese Communist Party was the only legitimate representative of the Tibetan people's interests. They thus demanded that the Mimang Tsongdu be disbanded and its leaders arrested, which the Tibetan Government was forced to do. Other instances of Tibetan opposition were invariably met with Chinese threats to eliminate opponents by force if the Tibetan Government were unwilling or unable to do so. Finally, the Chinese demanded that the two Tibetan Prime Ministers, Lukhangwa and Lobsang Tashi, be dismissed because the Chinese suspected that they held anti-Chinese opinions and were obstructing the implementation of Chinese authority in Tibet. The Dalai Lama was reluctantly forced to dismiss his two Prime Ministers, which essentially eliminated official Tibetan Government opposition to the Chinese.

After the Dalai Lama's return to Lhasa in 1951, his brother, Gyalo Thondup, also returned with a plan to initiate some reforms of Tibetan society so that Tibetans, not Chinese, would be the leaders of reform in Tibet. Gyalo had been educated in Sichuan, where he was befriended by the Chinese Republican President Ch'iang Kai-shek. Gyalo had also been a guest of Ch'iang in Taiwan after the Kuomintang had fled there. Gyalo's plan was to initiate reforms of the political and social system in Tibet by doing so first on the estates belonging to the Dalai Lama and his family. Gyalo intended to eliminate many old loans and to distribute the lands of his family's estates to the people working on them. His reforms were somewhat reluctantly supported by the Chinese, who were suspicious of Gyalo and preferred that all reforms should be carried out only by themselves so that they could take the credit. Gyalo was able to institute reforms on most of the Dalai Lama's estates, but his reforms were resisted by much of the traditional Tibetan bureaucracy and aristocracy. Because the Chinese were also trying to co-opt him, Gyalo decided to organize Tibetan resistance to the Chinese from India. Therefore, in May 1952 he and his assistant Lhamo Tsering escaped to India.

In India, Gyalo Thondup soon made contact with the Americans, who had retained interest in assisting Tibetan resistance against Chinese control. Gyalo proposed the creation and support of Tibetan resistance inside Tibet and in India. However, at this time, the Americans saw little potential for organized Tibetan resistance and were therefore content to simply collect any information that Gyalo received about conditions within Tibet. Gyalo organized a small group of Tibetans in Kalimpong, the small town near the Indian border with Tibet that, along with nearby Darjeeling, were the traditional trading ports between India and Tibet. The group included Tsepon Shakabpa, Yutok Shape, and Khenchung Lobsang Gyaltzen. Kukula, daughter of the Maharaja of Sikkim, Thonden Rinpoche, and Thupten Sangpo also joined the group. Later, Phala, the chief of the Dalai Lama's personal staff, sent two monastic officials from Lhasa, Thubten Ninje and Champa Wangdu, to join them. This group soon attracted the attention of the Indians as well as the Chinese. The Chinese attempted to entice Gyalo Thondup to return to Tibet. The Indians offered to permit Gyalo and his group to continue their activities in Kalimpong, but only if they would share all their information with the Indians.

The Tibetan Government was meanwhile enjoying a period of uneasy coexistence with the Chinese. In 1954 the Chinese invited the Dalai Lama and most of the Tibetan Government to visit Peking for the first meeting of the National People's Congress, at which the Constitution of the People's Republic of China was to be adopted. In Peking the Chinese also mediated reconciliation between the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama. Both were to serve within a new governmental creation of the Chinese, the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region. On his return to Tibet the Dalai Lama observed that in Eastern Tibet the Chinese had already begun to implement the kind of reforms that they eventually intended for Central Tibet as well. The Dalai Lama found that the reforms had already begun to arouse resistance in Eastern Tibet, but that the Chinese ignored Tibetans' protests and implemented their reforms against their will. This, he believed, was the beginning of the popular Tibetan revolt against the Chinese.

### *The Tibetan Revolt*

The Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa in 1955 after his visit to Peking. Shortly thereafter the Chinese sent a delegation to Lhasa to inaugurate the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region (PCTAR). The Dalai Lama complained that the Preparatory Committee, composed mostly of Tibetans and ostensibly intended to exercise Tibetan autonomy, was actually only a meaningless front behind which the Chinese made all the decisions. He had realized that the Chinese had made him chairman of the committee only in order to create the appearance of Tibetan autonomy.

Although the Preparatory Committee significantly altered the political system in Central Tibet, and therefore was criticized by Tibetans as a violation of the 17-Point Agreement, the Chinese did not begin any social reforms, at least within what was to become the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). In Eastern Tibet, outside the proposed TAR, however, the Chinese began implementing their "democratic reforms."<sup>3</sup> The people of Kham and Amdo, the eastern provinces of Traditional Tibet, resisted the Chinese social and economic transformation campaign, leading to armed clashes between Tibetans and the Chinese. The first armed clashes occurred at Dzachuka Monastery in Golok, Amdo, and at Lithang Monastery in Kham in 1956, during which both monasteries were destroyed by Chinese PLA Air Force aerial bombardment. These rebellions spread until almost all of Eastern Tibet was in revolt against the Chinese. Reports of the revolt in Eastern Tibet reached the outside world, but the Chinese claimed that the revolt was not in Tibet at all, or what they called Tibet, meaning the TAR, but rather in an area of Sichuan bordering Tibet.

In the summer of 1956 the Dalai Lama received an invitation from the Maharaja of Sikkim to attend the 2500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Sakyamuni Buddha in India.<sup>4</sup> The Dalai Lama wanted to go to India for the ceremony so that he could confer with Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru about the situation in Tibet. The Chinese did not want to let him go but were reluctant to appear to be holding him prisoner within Tibet. The Chinese finally allowed the Dalai Lama to travel to India, but they insisted that the Panchen Lama should also be invited and that he should be treated as equal in status to the Dalai Lama. While in India the Dalai Lama spoke with Nehru and informed him that

China was violating its promises made to Tibetans as well as to India to refrain from imposing reforms in Tibet against the will of the Tibetans. The Dalai Lama informed Nehru that he was considering seeking asylum in India. Nehru, however, advised the Dalai Lama that he had no alternative to trying to get along with the Chinese and that he should therefore return to Tibet.

While in India the Dalai Lama also met with Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, who had made an unscheduled stop in India during an international trip to other countries when he heard that the Dalai Lama was considering asking for asylum in India. Zhou promised the Dalai Lama that China would implement a “no reform” policy in Tibet for the next five years or for any length of time until the Tibetans were ready. Indian Prime Minister Nehru offered to visit Tibet in the following year to make sure that the Chinese lived up to their promise not to forcibly institute reforms. Based upon the assurances of both Zhou Enlai and Nehru, the Dalai Lama decided to return to Tibet.

On his way back to Tibet the Dalai Lama went to Kalimpong where he met his two brothers Taktser Rinpoche and Gyalo Thondup. Both advised him to remain in India. They had been in contact with the Americans who once again promised assistance if the Dalai Lama chose to seek asylum in India. A debate ensued similar to the one that had taken place in 1951 about whether or not to seek asylum in India or to return to Tibet to try, once again, to cooperate with the Chinese. The same arguments prevailed this time as before and the Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa. However, he later said that he thought that his visit to India and the desire that he had expressed to remain in India had turned the Chinese against him. Upon his return to Tibet he found the Chinese increasingly uncompromising despite their announced “no reform” policy. In addition, despite the Dalai Lama’s understanding that Kham and Amdo would also be immune from reforms, the Chinese continued their reforms in Eastern Tibet. The revolt in Eastern Tibet also continued.

### *The CIA Joins the War*

The Dalai Lama’s visit to India and the revolt in Eastern Tibet combined to revive American interest in Tibet. Since the revolt seemed to be broad-based and likely to continue, the Americans thought this was a resistance movement worthy of support. In addition, the Dalai Lama’s visit to India and his expressed frustration with Chinese policies in Tibet led the Americans to believe that the Dalai Lama as well as most Tibetans were increasingly opposed to cooperation with the Chinese. Even after the Dalai Lama returned to Tibet the Americans continued their contacts with Taktser Rinpoche and Gyalo Thondup. These talks soon led to active American involvement in support of Tibetan resistance to the Chinese.

The initial American involvement had actually already begun in the summer of 1956, even before the Dalai Lama’s visit to India. In meetings with Taktser Rinpoche and Gyalo Thondup the CIA had agreed to train six Tibetans in military operations and radio communications. These six were intended to be parachuted back into Tibet so that they could provide information about the resistance against the Chinese. On the basis of these

reports the CIA would decide if further assistance was justified. If they found groups of Tibetans actively resisting the Chinese then the CIA would attempt to provide assistance in the form of arms and ammunition. In addition, more Tibetans would be trained in resistance operations.

The formation and successes of the Tibetan Resistance, *Chushi Gangdruk*,<sup>5</sup> against the PLA in Tibet in late 1958 and early 1959 encouraged the CIA to increase its support. The CIA made plans to increase training of Tibetans and to begin airdrops of arms and ammunition within Tibet. The author emphasizes that the Tibetan operation received almost universal support within the U.S. Government. Many Americans, including many within the government, were sympathetic to Tibetans' desires for freedom and independence. The CIA began with the insertion by air of a few of the Tibetans it had trained on the Pacific island of Saipan, whose role was mostly to ascertain the situation. Two of those airdropped within Tibet were to proceed to Lhasa and request that the Dalai Lama should ask for American assistance, which was a CIA requirement before it could support any insurgency anywhere in the world. The Dalai Lama was unable to do so since he was pledged to try to cooperate with the Chinese, but some of his assistants indicated to the agents that he was sympathetic to the resistance and was aware of and appreciative of CIA support. This was sufficient for the CIA, so training was intensified and airdrops of arms were planned. However, only two airdrops were made before March 1959, which was insufficient to affect the situation within Tibet.

In Lhasa the Dalai Lama was immersed in preparation for his studies for the final examination for the *Geshe*<sup>6</sup> degree. He did, however, refuse a Chinese request that he order the still-existent Tibetan Army to put down the revolt, saying that if he did so the Tibetan Army would undoubtedly join the resistance. The Dalai Lama later remarked that despite his successful passing of the Geshe degree exam and the celebration of Monlam<sup>7</sup> there was an air of tension and apprehension in Lhasa. The culmination of tension occurred on March 10 when thousands of Tibetans surrounded the Norbulingka<sup>8</sup> to prevent the Dalai Lama going to a theatre performance at the Chinese military camp. Because the Dalai Lama had been instructed to come without his usual bodyguard, the people of Lhasa feared that he would be kidnapped by the Chinese. The crowd at the Norbulingka formed an impromptu Mimang Tsongdu and declared Tibetan independence, precipitating a Chinese reaction and the flight of the Dalai Lama.

### *The Dalai Lama Leaves Tibet*

On the evening of March 17 the Dalai Lama left the Norbulingka in disguise, crossed the Kyi Chu (Lhasa River) and was met by Chushi Gangdruk resistance fighters who led him and his party to the south to Lhoka, south of the Tsangpo River, which was controlled by the Resistance. Somewhere south of Lhasa two CIA-trained Tibetans met the Dalai Lama's party. These two Tibetans established radio contact with the CIA, informing them of the Dalai Lama's escape. The author emphasizes that this was the only role that the CIA played in the Dalai Lama's escape. In Lhuntse Dzong, a small town near the Indian border the Dalai Lama declared his rejection of the 17-Point Agreement and the establishment of an independent Tibetan Government. The ceremony of the

establishment of an independent Tibetan Government was filmed by one of the CIA-trained Tibetans and provided to the international media. The Dalai Lama intended to negotiate with the Chinese from Lhuntse Dzong, but when Chinese troops approached, he and his advisers decided that he must seek asylum in India.

Before leaving Lhasa, the minister Phala had informed the Indian consular officer there that the Dalai Lama was fleeing and would request asylum in India. The Indian Government was thus informed that the Dalai Lama would be arriving in India. Gyalo Thondup also spoke with Indian Prime Minister Nehru and requested asylum for the Dalai Lama, to which Nehru readily agreed. The CIA-trained Tibetans also sent a message to Washington about the Dalai Lama's intention to seek asylum in India. U.S. Government officials also requested that the Indian Government provide asylum to the Dalai Lama. Prime Minister Nehru immediately replied that he would grant asylum. On March 31 the Dalai Lama and his party crossed the border into India.

Although India readily granted asylum to the Dalai Lama, his exile to India along with thousands of Tibetans caused considerable political difficulties for India and for Indian Prime Minister Nehru. Nehru adhered to a policy of friendship with China in the belief that India and China together as post-colonial states could guarantee peace in Asia. However, China's repression in Tibet threatened to upset that policy. India had not challenged the Chinese invasion of Tibet and had recognized Chinese sovereignty over Tibet in 1954, but with the understanding that China would preserve Tibet's autonomy. Zhou Enlai had personally promised Nehru that China would respect Tibetan autonomy, and upon this basis Nehru had recommended to the Dalai Lama that he should return to Tibet in 1956. However, China's actions had belied all its promises and Nehru was left with a shattered policy, as well as the personification of the failure of his China policy in the person of the Dalai Lama, now a refugee in India.

The revolt in Tibet and the flight of the Dalai Lama brought international attention to the situation in Tibet. Although India attempted to restrict the Dalai Lama's subsequent statement to the press to an appeal to China to restore Tibet's autonomy, the Dalai Lama was determined to reject autonomy in favor of Tibetan independence. The Dalai Lama reportedly felt that he had been deceived by Chinese promises of autonomy in 1951 and by Nehru's and Zhou Enlai's assurances in 1956 that China would respect Tibetan autonomy. In his first press statement, therefore, the Dalai Lama renounced the idea that Tibet could survive under Chinese control and he demanded the restoration of Tibetan independence. The Dalai Lama said that Tibet had been independent before the Chinese invasion of 1950, that the 17-Point Agreement had been imposed upon Tibet by force, and that China had violated all its provisions in regard to Tibetan autonomy. He said that he and his government had not been opposed to reforms of the Tibetan social and political systems but that the Chinese had opposed his reforms in favor of their own. The Dalai Lama recognized, that because of its relations with China, India could not recognize a Tibetan Government in exile as the legal government of Tibet, but, he said, "Wherever I go the Tibetan people will recognize me as the government of Tibet."

*Washington Reacts to the Revolt*

The Dalai Lama's flight in 1959 changed the political situation in regard to U.S. assistance for Tibet. Previously, with the Dalai Lama still within Tibet and still pursuing a policy of cooperation with the Chinese, American aid had been covert and limited. However, with the Dalai Lama now in exile, having renounced the 17-Point Agreement and having asked for international assistance, American support could be more open and could be expanded to include diplomatic and political assistance. The first result of this support was that the U.S. announced that it supported the Tibetan right to self-determination. The U.S. statement in regard to Tibet's right to self-determination came after the government of Nationalist China on Taiwan made a similar statement.

The CIA was now willing to provide more support for the resistance within Tibet. Many more Tibetans trained by the CIA in Colorado in the U.S. were now ready to be sent into Tibet. However, after the Lhasa revolt and the flight of the Dalai Lama to India, the resistance within Tibet had suffered several reverses. The Chinese had introduced large numbers of troops and were using aircraft to locate and attack Tibetan resistance forces. By April the Chushi Gangdruk base in Lhoka was lost to the Chinese, and shortly thereafter Gompo Tashi, the Tibetan Resistance leader, and most of the fighters were forced to follow the Dalai Lama into exile in India. Because of the collapse of resistance inside Tibet the CIA was forced to put its covert assistance program on hold. However, American diplomatic efforts on Tibet's behalf increased. The author emphasizes that there was almost unanimous support within the U.S. Government for both covert military assistance and overt diplomatic assistance. This was due not only to American opposition to the Chinese Communists but also because of American sympathy for Tibetans.

### *Tibet in International Diplomacy*

American diplomatic assistance to Tibet was hampered by Tibet's lack of international recognition as an independent state and the reluctance of most countries to offend China. The U.S. attempted to organize international support for a Tibetan appeal to the United Nations but found the countries most knowledgeable about or most involved in the situation to be the most reluctant to get involved. Britain deferred to India as the country most directly involved. The British maintained that their responsibilities in regard to Tibet had been inherited by the Government of India. Indian policy, like that of British India before it, was that Tibet was an autonomous part of China. However, as the British had previously admitted, their policy had little real meaning. Indian Prime Minister Nehru had illusions that good relations with China were possible if India did not criticize China too much over Tibet. Nehru also maintained the hope that China would respect Tibetan autonomy. The U.S. attempted to convince other Asian countries to sponsor a Tibetan appeal to the U.N. but most were reluctant to do so for fear of offending China.

In the end, Ireland and Malaysia agreed to sponsor a Tibetan appeal to the United Nations. However, the appeal addressed only human rights violations by the Chinese in Tibet rather than the issue of the Chinese invasion and occupation of Tibet. The reason that the fundamental political issue of China's claim to sovereignty over Tibet was not

addressed was because Tibet was not internationally recognized as an independent country. Most countries had recognized China's sovereignty and could therefore not support a U.N. resolution challenging China's sovereignty over Tibet. In addition, the sponsors of the Tibetan U.N. appeal, including the U.S., thought it more likely that the Tibetan appeal would receive other countries' support if it addressed only the human rights issue and avoided the issue of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. Tibetan representatives involved in the appeal to the U.N, Gyalo Thondup and Tsepon Shakabpa, were reluctant to abandon the Tibetan claim that China had violated Tibet's independence. However they were forced to do so by the realities of international politics and the difficulty of achieving support at the U.N. for a resolution that addressed the issue of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet.

In late 1959 the U.N. General Assembly voted to debate the Question of Tibet. A resolution condemning China for its human rights violations and calling upon China to respect Tibetan autonomy was adopted by the U.N shortly thereafter. While the Tibet resolution was being debated at the U.N., the U.S. Government issued a statement supporting Tibetan self-determination. This was the most significant statement ever made by the U.S. Government in support of Tibet. While the statement did not address the issue of Tibetan independence or Chinese sovereignty over Tibet, it did call upon China to respect Tibetans' rights to decide for themselves such fundamental issues as independence or autonomy. In addition, U.S. sympathy for Tibet at this time was in favor of continuing support for Tibetan resistance to Chinese control over Tibet. The Tibetan resistance was henceforth to be relocated to Mustang (Lho Mantang) in Nepal, from where operations would be carried out inside Tibet.

### *Operations at High Altitudes*

During the time that the Tibetan Resistance was being forced to flee from Tibet in March and April 1959, training of Tibetans by the CIA continued in Colorado, USA. The training base in Colorado, known to Tibetans as *Dumra*, or "Garden," was chosen because of its similarity to Tibet. The Tibetan trainees described the camp as something like a military monastery. Small groups of Tibetans were trained at this camp by CIA veterans of other secret operations. The American trainers were known only by their first names and the Tibetans were given American nicknames. The author emphasizes the devotion of Tibetans to recover their homeland from the Chinese and the camaraderie that grew up between the Tibetans and their American trainers. The Tibetans were trained in radio operations, map reading, small arms operations, military tactics, and parachuting.

By the time the Tibetans trained in Colorado were ready to be parachuted back into Tibet, the main Tibetan resistance had already fled to India. (All of those who were inserted into Tibet before the revolt were trained at a camp on Saipan.) However, there were thought to be small groups of Tibetans still resisting the Chinese in some areas of western Kham and in Central Tibet in Nagchu. In September 1959 nine Tibetans were airdropped near Nam Tsho. This group found that Tibetan resistance in that area had already been eliminated, so they had no alternative but to escape from Tibet. These nine men made their way to Mustang (Lho Mantang) in Nepal.

Another group of 18 men was airdropped at Pembar in Shotalasum in western Kham where Gampo Tashi and the Chushi Gangdruk had previously operated. The Chinese had not penetrated this area, so it was a good place to attempt to support resistance operations. Altogether six airdrops of arms and ammunition were made to Pembar between November 1959 and January 1960. Unfortunately, this concentration of arms supplies caused a concentration of Tibetan resistance fighters there, along with their families and their animals. In accordance with CIA training and instructions, the CIA-trained Tibetans attempted to convince the resistance fighters to disperse into small groups. This, however, was hard to do and therefore the Chinese were able to locate and eliminate the resistance in Pembar.

A few of the Tibetans airdropped into Pembar were instructed to move to Nira Tsogeng just south of Tangula. Eight airdrops of arms and ammunition were made here, but the same thing happened as at Pembar. The concentration of Tibetans at the airdrop site attracted the attention of the Chinese, who surrounded the site and mounted an operation to eliminate the resistance there. Within six months the Tibetan resistance at Nira Tsogeng had been scattered or eliminated.

A final group of seven Tibetans was airdropped into Markham in the early spring of 1961. This group found that there was a small group of Tibetan resistance fighters still existing in the area but that there were also many Chinese, and that they controlled all the towns. They fought several battles with the Chinese but were finally surrounded. All but one of the resistance fighters was killed. The one CIA-trained Tibetan not killed was arrested by the Chinese and imprisoned until 1979.

The elimination of the Markham group marked the end of the CIA airdrops into Tibet and the end of organized resistance within Tibet. Altogether, three airdrops were made before March 1959 and sixteen after. A total of 49 Tibetans were airdropped into Tibet before and after the revolt. Thirty-seven were killed, ten escaped to India or Nepal, and two were captured. One of the worst problems that the operation faced was the difficulty in convincing Tibetans to undertake resistance operations in small groups. Most of the resistance fighters were accompanied by their families and all their animals. The concentration of airdrops of arms also contributed to the resistance fighters remaining in large groups and staying in one area. In addition, the Chinese controlled most of the roads, they were more mobile and they were able to use aircraft to locate the resistance groups. To their credit, the Tibetan resistance put up a good fight against overwhelming odds. A Chinese document captured by the resistance complained that it took twenty bullets for a Chinese soldier to kill one Tibetan resistance fighter while it took only one bullet for the Tibetans to kill one Chinese.

In retrospect, the CIA may have miscalculated the possibility of maintaining Tibetan resistance operations within Tibet. Nevertheless, this was the time of Mao's disastrous Great Leap Forward when the CCP's control in China and Chinese control in Tibet seemed most precarious. Therefore, despite the failure of resistance operations within Tibet, the CIA was determined to continue to support the Tibetan resistance.

Shortly after the collapse of resistance within Tibet, the CIA operation was moved to the Mustang area of Nepal.

### *Mustang and Washington*

Despite the failure of the Tibetan Resistance to continue operations within Tibet, the CIA felt that it was still worthy of support. This belief derived from the obvious willingness of the Tibetans to continue resistance against Chinese control over Tibet but also because of the perceived weaknesses of the Chinese Communist regime. Mao's Great Leap Forward had resulted in the deaths by starvation of many Chinese (later estimated at 30-40 million) and a serious diminution of Mao's authority. In addition, China's hold over Tibet was thought to be still tenuous. Since resistance operations inside Tibet were no longer considered possible without a safe base area outside Tibet, in early 1960 Gyalo Thondup suggested that operations inside Tibet could be supported from the ethnic Tibetan area of Lho Mantang, which was inside Nepal but on the border with Tibet.

Lho Mantang had formerly been part of Tibet; it became part of Nepal only in 1850 and the government of Nepal still exercised little authority there. Nevertheless, the U.S. Government was reluctant to support covert resistance operations from Nepalese territory without permission from the Nepal Government. Since such permission was unlikely to be obtained it was decided to organize a small force that it was hoped would escape the notice of the Nepal Government.<sup>9</sup>

Tibetans were recruited for the Mustang operation in Kalimpong and Darjeeling and from other parts of India where many were working on road-building gangs. Once the word got out that resistance to Chinese control over Tibet was being organized in Nepal, many Tibetan refugees volunteered for the Lho Mantang force or simply traveled there on their own. Soon, despite the CIA's plan to keep the operation small and covert, over 2,000 men were gathered in Lho Mantang, after which the chances of keeping the operation secret were diminished. In addition, the Tibetans were unable to operate inside Tibet for any length of time. Since the CIA had planned to supply only 300 men at a time in Mustang while the rest were supposed to be able to support themselves inside Tibet, the permanent presence of 2,000 men in Lho Mantang posed a political and logistical problem. Not only did the presence of such a large force on Nepalese territory pose a political problem with Nepal, but the U.S. Government had never agreed to maintain such a large force within Nepal.

The Tibetan resistance operation based in Lho Mantang had to be supplied by air, just as had been the case with operations inside Tibet. The idea was that supplies would be dropped to resistance fighters in different areas inside Tibet after they had become established there. Since Nepal had not given its permission, flights could not be made over Nepalese territory, nor did the CIA want to make airdrops in Lho Mantang within Nepalese territory. A CIA requirement for the support of resistance forces anywhere in the world was that they should be able to establish themselves inside the country in question. Therefore, the CIA wanted to make airdrops inside Tibet rather than in Nepal.

All flights in support of the resistance in Lho Mantang had to take off from Thailand and travel along the Himalaya to a point inside Tibet just north of Lho Mantang. These flights began early in 1961, but instead of recovering the supplies and then remaining in Tibet, the Tibetans went from Nepal to recover the supplies from Tibet and then returned to Lho Mantang. Small groups of resistance fighters went into Tibet to raid Chinese camps or convoys but they always immediately returned to Nepal. The CIA insisted that the resistance must establish itself within Tibet, but the Tibetans were reluctant to give up their sanctuary inside Nepal. This was to be a continual source of dispute between the Tibetans and their CIA sponsors.

Nevertheless, some of the raids undertaken inside Tibet from the Lho Mantang base were quite successful. One raid in particular resulted in the capture of important Chinese documents. In October 1961 a raiding party attacked a small Chinese military convoy on the Xinjiang-Tibet road that ran along the Tsangpo River just north of the border with Nepal. The convoy was carrying a Chinese PLA regimental commander, who was killed. The Tibetans collected the documents that the PLA officer was discovered to be carrying. These documents were then provided to the CIA, which discovered that they contained important information about the military and political situations in Tibet and China. Some of the documents were official PLA reports that revealed that the Great Leap had caused morale problems among Chinese troops in Tibet due to the starvation that their families were suffering in the Chinese interior. The documents also revealed the extent of Chinese repression of Tibetan resistance within Tibet and the fact that the Chinese did trust Tibetans' loyalty to China.

This success convinced the CIA to continue its support of the Lho Mantang operation. An additional airdrop of supplies was made to the resistance fighters inside Tibet. However, even with these additional weapons only about one half of the Tibetans at Lho Mantang were armed. This level of support was sufficient only to permit small raids to harass the Chinese inside Tibet but not enough to seriously affect the situation there. The effectiveness of the raids from Lho Mantang was further reduced when the Chinese moved the Xinjiang-Tibet road north onto the northern plateau, the Changtang, out of range of the Tibetan resistance operating from Nepal.

### *The Indians Join the Fight*

By early 1962, tensions between India and China had increased due to disputes about the Tibet border. India claimed that China had occupied Indian territory in the Aksai Chin area of Ngari, in far western Tibet, while China claimed the Tawang area, east of Bhutan, due to its having previously been part of Tibet. The ultimate source of the border disputes was China's occupation of Tibet. Since China and India had never before had an actual border, they were both uncertain as to the border alignment. China claimed all territory that had been part of Tibet, whereas India's claims were based upon agreements between Tibet and British India made at the 1914 Simla Conference. Once both China and India had made their respective border claims, each was reluctant to back down.

The first clashes between Indian and Chinese border patrols took place in Ngari. However, the first serious armed conflict was in the east near Tawang. India had established a border post in territory that China claimed as part of Tibet. India refused to remove the post, so the Chinese attacked it. The Indians struck back but were overwhelmed by Chinese forces in much greater numbers. The Chinese continued their advance into Indian territory, after which they voluntarily withdrew.

India was both frightened and humiliated by its defeat and asked for assistance from foreign countries, including the United States. The U.S. rapidly provided assistance to India, after which India and the U.S. agreed to cooperate in defense against China. One area in which India and the U.S. agreed to cooperate was in assistance for the Tibetan Resistance. The Tibetan Resistance operation in Lho Mantang, which had been criticized as ineffective, was now regarded as more important. India, which previously had not been involved or even informed about the Lho Mantang operation, now became involved in support, including allowing the transport of supplies overland through India and Nepal. In addition, India created a Tibetan unit within the Indian Army that was to be part of India's border defense forces.

The Tibetan unit in the Indian Army was known as the Special Frontier Force, or Unit 22. The Tibetan unit was originally formed with 6,000 Tibetans, both men and women, but it eventually grew to as many as 12,000. In the aftermath of the Sino-Indian border war the Tibetan force was conceived as a possible vanguard of the Indian Army in a war with China. In such a situation the Tibetan force would be sent into Tibet to combat Chinese troops there. The Tibetan understanding of the purpose of this force was that it was intended for the eventual liberation of Tibet. However, because India and China never again engaged in armed conflict, the Tibetan unit in the Indian Army became devoted solely to Indian border defense, and in one instance in Bangladesh in 1972, it was used internally in India. Nevertheless, given its original mission to operate within Tibet, training of the Tibetans in Unit 22 was similar to that given to the Tibetans trained by the CIA. This training consisted of operations behind enemy lines, sabotage, use of explosives, and parachuting. The Tibetan troops were first stationed along the Indian border with Tibet, often at high altitudes where they were much better adapted to the conditions than ordinary Indian troops would have been. Knaus claims that the Tibetan troops also conducted reconnaissance operations within Tibet, placing sensors for detecting Chinese nuclear and missile tests and devices for intercepting Chinese military communications.

The CIA also provided some arms and instructors for the Tibetan force within the Indian Army. India similarly cooperated with the CIA-sponsored operation in Lho Mantang. When the CIA attempted to revive the Lho Mantang operation, it encountered the same problems as before. The CIA insisted that it could fully supply the Tibetan resistance fighters only once they had established themselves inside Tibet. The Tibetans contended that they could not possibly establish themselves inside Tibet until they were fully armed and supplied. The Tibetans finally agreed to attempt to establish bases within Tibet while retaining their base in Lho Mantang. In May 1965 the CIA made one airdrop of arms and ammunition inside Nepal at Lho Mantang. Finally all of the 1,800 Tibetans

in Lho Mantang were armed. However, in the end they were unable to establish permanent bases within Tibet and were confined to small operations into Tibet conducted from their base in Lho Mantang.

Given the inability to establish a permanent base of operations within Tibet, the CIA redefined the purpose of the operation as confined to the gathering of intelligence about conditions inside Tibet. Small groups were sent into Tibet both from Lho Mantang and also from India. These groups sometimes provided useful intelligence about Chinese military and political operations. However, they were generally unable to exist for long periods inside Tibet. Food was difficult to come by and Tibetans within Tibet were fearful of offering assistance due to Chinese reprisals. The intelligence missions were also intended to ascertain the potential for resistance within Tibet, but they determined that resistance was impossible due to Tibetan fear of the Chinese. Tibetans informed the intelligence missions that if they could provide support sufficient to defeat the Chinese then all Tibetans would join in. If they could not, however, then it was too dangerous for Tibetans to assist the resistance fighters even to the extent of offering them food

### *Operations in a New Era*

In addition its support for covert military operations, the CIA continued to support the Dalai Lama and Tibetan refugees within India, and the U.S. Government continued diplomatic support for Tibet internationally and at the United Nations. Its relations with China having deteriorated after the 1962 border war, India allowed the Dalai Lama to promulgate a new democratic constitution for an independent Tibet. The CIA assisted the Tibetans Government in exile in setting up representative offices in New York and Geneva. The CIA also supported a training program for Tibetans at Cornell University in New York. Altogether 23 Tibetans were trained at Cornell in English language, political science, and international relations. The CIA also financed the setting up of a small museum of Tibetan culture in New Delhi, India, and the purchase of Tibetan *thangkas*, statues, and other works of art. Tibet House, which has a semi-political status as an official Tibetan presence in New Delhi, still exists as a Tibetan academic and cultural center in India.

In 1965 the United Nations passed its third resolution on Tibet, calling upon China to respect Tibetans' human rights and fundamental freedoms. India, which had abstained on the previous two resolutions on Tibet, finally voted in favor of the third resolution. Following India's lead, Britain also voted in favor. This was to be the last of the U.N.'s resolutions on Tibet.

### *The U.S. Government Withdraws*

The Tibetan Resistance operation in Lho Mantang continued to exist throughout the 1960s. However, the resistance was increasingly unable to mount operations inside Tibet. The Tibetan resistance was also split into different factions that hampered its effectiveness. Efforts by the CIA, Gyalo Thondup, and Lhamo Tsering to resolve the differences among the Tibetans in Lho Mantang were unsuccessful. In addition, the

Americans were beginning to question the utility of the force in Lho Mantang. The Tibetan Resistance was ineffective in operations inside Tibet and it was causing increasing friction with Nepalese citizens and the Government of Nepal.

In 1969 the decision was made to terminate CIA support for the Lho Mantang operation. Although it is generally believed that the Lho Mantang operation was terminated because of the U.S. attempt to create better relations with China, the author emphasizes that this was not the case. He points out that CIA support for the Lho Mantang operation was terminated early in 1969, whereas the U.S. did not improve relations with China until 1972. He says that CIA support for the Lho Mantang operation was terminated for operational, not political reasons. In other words, it was terminated because the operation was no longer effective. The author also emphasizes that termination of the Lho Mantang operation was not negotiated between China and the U.S, either in 1969 or 1972.

The author says that the Lho Mantang operation had proven infeasible in conception; in other words, that it had never been possible to maintain resistance operations inside Tibet, even when supported from Nepal. In any case, the Tibetan unit in the Indian Army had received the most emphasis since it had been created while the Lho Mantang operation had been neglected. The Tibetan unit in the Indian Army was more important, at least as far as India was concerned, and therefore received the most support.

Even after CIA support was discontinued, however, the Tibetan Resistance fighters remained in Lho Mantang, and to some extent the operation continued. This was because the Tibetans in charge of the operation, Lhamo Tsering in particular, were reluctant to tell the Tibetans in Lho Mantang that CIA assistance had been terminated. At the same time, Lhamo Tsering and the commander in Lho Mantang at the time, Wangdu, began to reduce the size of the force by sending some men to join the Tibetan unit in the Indian Army and retiring and resettling others. Some of the retired Tibetans from Lho Mantang set up carpet making or other businesses in Nepal. However, despite efforts to reduce the number of men in Lho Mantang, a sizeable number remained and the force continued to exist until late 1984. At the end of 1974 the Nepalese Government began putting pressure on the remaining Tibetans in Lho Mantang to disband. The Nepalese were insistent that the Lho Mantang operation should cease to exist before the coronation of the Nepalese King Birendra, scheduled for February 1975.

The Nepalese Government issued an ultimatum to the remaining Tibetans in Lho Mantang that they surrender to the Nepalese Army. This, most of the Tibetans were unwilling to do, but the Dalai Lama intervened and ordered them to do so. All but a few surrendered to the Nepalese. Only Wangdu, the commander, and a few others refused to surrender. They fled to the west in an attempt to reach India but were intercepted by Nepalese troops transported to the spot by helicopter. Wangdu was killed while some of the rest were able to escape to India.

*In Retrospect*

The author writes that he met with the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala in 1995. His question to the Dalai Lama was whether the CIA-sponsored Tibetan resistance operation had been worthwhile. The Dalai Lama replied that he had never been able to give his approval to the resistance operation because of his fundamental opposition to the use of violence. However, he said that violence may sometimes be justified if the cause is good. The cause of Tibetan freedom then would obviously justify the use of violence. The Dalai Lama pointed out that he had been able to escape from Tibet because the resistance fighters provided him protection. On the other hand, resistance also led to the deaths of many Tibetans. He said that U.S. support for Tibet was based partly upon sympathy for Tibet and partly upon a policy of opposition to communism. Current U.S. support for Tibet, in contrast, he believed to be more genuine because it was based purely upon sympathy and compassion for Tibet and was contrary to the U.S. policy of maintaining good relations with China.

The author also interviewed Gyalo Thondup in 1998, who felt that the U.S had betrayed Tibet to some extent because it had not fully supported Tibetan independence. He also faulted India for not supporting Tibet and specifically for persuading the Dalai Lama to return to Tibet after his visit to India in 1956. Gyalo Thondup also addressed the issue of whether fewer Tibetans would have died had he not approached the American CIA and had they not provided assistance. However, he concluded that Tibetans would have resisted the Chinese with whatever means were available to them. They had asked that he seek foreign assistance and he had done so. He felt that he had a duty to try to find assistance for the Tibetan independence struggle and that he had no right to deny Tibetans' requests that he seek foreign assistance. He continued to hope that some political compromise might be found with the Chinese that would allow his brother the Dalai Lama to return to Tibet.

The Tibetan resistance leader Lhamo Tsering told the author that he felt that Tibetans had the will and the desire to resist the Chinese occupation of Tibet and that the CIA had merely provided them assistance to do so. He felt that CIA support had been a good thing. The Tibetan resistance had shown the world that Tibetans did not willingly accept Chinese rule. This demonstration of Tibetan rejection of Chinese rule was still important in order to get support for Tibet today. Lhamo Tsering did not feel that the CIA had betrayed Tibet by failing to fully support Tibetan independence. In fact, he said, it was amazing that the U.S., alone of all the countries in the world, had been willing to support Tibet at all.

The author also interviewed several Tibetan survivors of the resistance operation. Most expressed the wish that CIA support had lasted longer but none questioned whether the CIA should have supported the Tibetan resistance or whether the resistance should have requested or accepted U.S. support. Several expressed the opinion that the CIA had supplied the resistance with weapons on the understanding that the resistance would establish a permanent presence within Tibet. When the resistance failed to do so then the CIA was justified in terminating its support. U.S. support had also encouraged the Tibetans with the feeling that they were not alone in their struggle. They were particularly impressed by those Americans who had risked their lives to deliver supplies

to the resistance within Tibet. Many also credited the resistance and its U.S. support with facilitating the Dalai Lama's escape and therefore the preservation of the Tibetan cause and Tibetan culture in exile. Almost all the resistance veterans expressed a sense of fondness, respect, and gratitude for the American CIA officers with whom they operated.

In regard to the U.S. government's support for Tibet, the author emphasizes that the U.S. did not support Tibet solely in order to oppose the Chinese Communists. He says that there was always an idealistic element to U.S. policy on Tibet that believed that Tibetans, like all peoples, have the right to be free of foreign domination. U.S. policy on Tibet was to support the Tibetans' right to self-determination. This did not commit the U.S. to recognize Tibetan independence, only to support Tibetans' right to seek independence by all means available. The U.S. supported and promoted Tibet's right to self-determination at the United Nations. The author says that Tibetan resistance to Chinese control, supported by the CIA, was useful in the diplomatic pursuit of Tibet's rights at the U.N. As long as there was active resistance within Tibet, Tibetans could argue that the U.N. should address the Tibet issue.

In conclusion, the author says that the CIA certainly overestimated the potential for a resistance operation to survive in Tibet, and it underestimated China's ability to crush the resistance. Neither the Americans nor many of the Tibetans involved knew much about some of the regions of Tibet, mainly in western Kham, where resistance was active and where arms drops were made. The concentration of the resistance around airdrop sites also contributed to China's ability to locate and destroy them. CIA support, which began in earnest only after the 1959 revolt, also obviously came too late to have much effect. In the final analysis there was little that the U.S. could do to help Tibet in the face of China's determination to impose its rule there. In the end the U.S. withdrew military support because it was ineffective. It withdrew political support, in 1972, when the U.S. wished to improve relations with China. Thus the Tibetans became orphans of the Cold War, as this book's title describes them. Nevertheless, the author says that despite its lack of success the U.S. assistance to the Tibetans in their struggle for freedom was a noble endeavor. It formed the legacy for continuing U.S. support for Tibet to this day. Thus, the author says that he feels pride in have been a part of the CIA Tibet operation.

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<sup>1</sup> Sikang was the result of the Chinese invasion of Eastern Tibet after and in response to the British invasion of 1904. It existed as an actual administrative region only from 1905 to 1911, when the Qing Dynasty fell. The KMT officially declared it a province in 1934, to become effective in 1939, but it had long since ceased to exist in reality. Its theoretical existence served only to rationalize that the 1951 invasion of the Chamdo region of Tibet was not an invasion of Tibet because the area was already part of a Chinese province.

<sup>2</sup> The Nechung Monastery oracle was the official state oracle who was consulted on matters of national importance.

<sup>3</sup> The Chinese Communists' Democratic Reforms Campaign included land reform and redistribution of wealth. It also involved the purge and persecution of local political and religious leaders, which aroused Tibetan resistance. In Eastern Tibet, the Democratic Reforms campaign was simultaneous with precipitous collectivization and communization, which, along with the confiscation of all weapons, was intolerable for many Tibetans.

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<sup>4</sup> The celebration was held in India, but the birthplace of Sakyamuni Buddha was actually in Lumbini, Nepal, near the border with India.

<sup>5</sup> The name means “Four Rivers, Six Ranges,” a traditional name for the Kham region of Tibet where the Resistance was aroused and organized and from where many of its fighters originated.

<sup>6</sup> Equivalent to a Western Doctor of Divinity degree.

<sup>7</sup> The traditional Great Prayer Festival, in the first Tibetan month (usually February) when monks essentially take over Lhasa and hold religious ceremonies and teachings for a full month and also control the administration of the city.

<sup>8</sup> The “Jewel Park,” or Summer Palace, in Lhasa, to which the Dalai Lama repairs from the Potala during the summer months.

<sup>9</sup> Knaus is perhaps unaware that the U.S. very likely did secure a secret agreement with Nepal to allow the CIA Mustang operation. Perhaps not coincidentally, U.S. Agency for International Development assistance to Nepal greatly increased at the time. Crown Prince Birendra traveled to Mustang where he publicly greeted the Tibetan resistance fighters and was photographed with them. More likely, the author had to deny any agreement with Nepal in order to pass CIA censors. His book was certainly vetted by the CIA, which would have to deny that Nepal was aware of the Mustang operation. The CIA never intentionally reveals the names of its collaborators, whether individuals or governments, no matter how much time has passed. Even the State Department follows this policy. State Department documents about U.S. involvement with Tibet from the early 1950s, before the CIA got involved, carefully black out the names of individual Tibetan contacts and collaborators, presumably for their own protection, even if they are long deceased.