

BOOK REVIEW OF

# RED STAR OVER TIBET

BY DAWA NORBU

A COMPILATION OF A SERIES OF PROGRAMS

ON

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BY WARREN W SMITH



## RED STAR OVER TIBET

Dawa Norbu was for many years the editor of *Tibetan Review*. He received a doctorate from the University of California at Berkeley and until his death in 2006 was a professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, India. He is the author of numerous books and articles on Tibetan history and politics. His last book, *China's Tibet Policy*, a comprehensive survey of Sino-Tibetan relations, was published in 2001.

*Red Star Over Tibet*, published in 1974, is Dawa Norbu's story of his childhood in the 1950s in Sakya and his family's escape from Tibet in late 1959. In 1999 he published an updated version, *Tibet: The Road Ahead*, that includes several new chapters on his life in exile, Tibet during the Cultural Revolution, Tibet after the end of the Maoist era, and his speculations on Tibet's future. There is also a chapter on the life of the 10th Panchen Lama.

This article is a synopsis of a series of programs broadcast in 2002 by Radio Free Asia's Tibetan Service based upon the updated version. Each program is based upon one chapter and uses the chapter titles of the updated version.

### The Life of a Missionary

Dawa Norbu begins his book with his first memories, in 1951, of his childhood in Sakya and of his father, who was essentially a missionary for the Sakya monastery. He and his family lived in a small house in the village of Tashigang, five miles outside Sakya. They were simple farmers who lived in a small one-story house. Dawa Norbu's parents had married when his mother, Akyi, who carried water to the local monastery, Chokhor Lungpo, and his father, Thubkye Choephal, a monk at the monastery, met and fell in love. Thubkye Choephal was so ashamed of having broken his vows of celibacy that he falsely confessed to the sin of having killed a cat and left the monastery for that reason rather than for the real reason. Having been a monk from a young age, Thubkye Choephal was little prepared to make a living outside the monastery.

Dawa Norbu wonders if his father regretted leaving the relatively easy and comfortable life of the monastery. However, he says that many monasteries had degenerated considerably since their pious beginnings. Many monks were possessive and materialistic, and their scholarship, if they were at all scholastic, benefited primarily only themselves. In Dawa Norbu's opinion it was better for his father to earn his own living than to remain as a monk.

Dawa Norbu's mother's family was prosperous enough to provide the new family with basic household implements, but Thubkye Choephal had little to contribute. Fortunately, Akyi's grandfather, who was a ngakpa [noncelibate tantric practitioner], the descendant of a famous family of ngakpa lamas, was a member of an annual mission from Sakya monastery that went to the Chang Thang [Northern Plain] to gather taxes and offerings from nomadic tribes (drokpa). As a member of the annual Sakya mission to the nomads, he had made his fortune, and he was able to include Thubkye Choephal as a member of the Sakya mission.

Dawa Norbu describes the Sakya monastery as one of the works of art and architecture that were the essence of Tibetan culture. Sakya had achieved its period of greatest influence in the thirteenth century, a time of remarkable intellectual and spiritual development in the history of Tibet. Sakya was filled with gold, silver, and bronze statues, lavishly decorated with precious jewels. Sakya and other Tibetan monasteries were the beneficiaries of the donations of the Tibetan people, who believed that their generosity to the Buddhist religion would affect their rebirth after death. The purpose of the missions to the northern nomads was to collect donations from them; another purpose was to provide religious instruction and rituals.

Dawa Norbu writes that his father went on eight Sakya missions to different parts of the Chang Thang. Each mission was composed of a contractor, a ngakpa lama and four servants. The contractor was required to seek donations, usually in the form of yak, sheep, butter, and salt, sufficient to satisfy the Sakya monastery's needs. The contractor could keep any amount over that required by the monastery. These excess donations tended to be large, and contractors often became wealthy. However, if the amount of donations collected from the nomads was insufficient, the contractor had to make up the shortfall. At one time, his father was returning to Sakya late in the year after a successful mission in which some 100 yak and 2000 sheep and goats had been collected. The mission was caught in an early snowfall in which almost all the animals died. The contractor therefore had to make another unscheduled mission to the nomads to collect Sakya's requirements.

Dawa Norbu describes the departure of one of these missions from Sakya in the early spring months. The mission would depart with some 30 yaks carrying provisions, gifts for the nomads, and items for trade. While on the mission, Dawa Norbu's grandfather would practice his ngakpa arts for the nomads' benefit. His father also became a ngakpa and practiced among the nomads. What the nomads wanted was protection from the fierce forces of nature, such as snowfall. The ngakpa also performed medical services for the nomads as well as for their animals. Dawa Norbu's grandfather and father also performed the rituals needed by the nomads, such as the necessary rituals at death and those needed to propitiate the local deities (kusang) and prolong the lives of the nomads (tsewang). Sometimes, besides having a ngakpa lama to perform the services and rituals preferred by the nomads, the mission would include a sutra-reading lama from Sakya monastery to read sutra and teach dharma. However, the Ngakpa lamas were always the most popular among the nomads.

The Sakya missions visited the Chang Thang for seven months of every year. They would report to the nomads that their offerings had been received by Sakya monastery and that any rituals requested by the nomads had been performed. Then they would appeal to the nomads to contribute to the monastery again not only for their own benefit but so that the monastery might continue to preserve and promote the Buddhist dharma. When a mission was successful it might return with as many as 70 yaks, five thousand sheep, and 15 horses. Each of the yaks would be loaded with butter and the sheep carried salt in packs. The contractor might keep as much as 70 percent of all the offerings made to Sakya. The ngakpa might keep as much as 3 yak, 50 sheep, and some butter and salt.

## My Father's Death

Dawa Norbu's family was greatly affected by the death of his father. He writes that trading was one of three usual ways for ordinary Tibetans to improve their lot. The first was to become an important lama, either by being recognized as a tulku [reincarnate lama] or by means of one's religious scholarship. The second was to become the trusted steward (nerpa) of an estate. The third, which his father chose, was to pursue private trade. In Sakya only three out of thirteen trading families were Tibetans; the rest were Nepali (Kachara) and Kashmiri Muslims (Kache). Most of the items for trade were made in India and carried to Tibet by large traders. Such items were then sold in local markets by small traders such as Dawa Norbu's family.

Dawa Norbu says that the trading business was profitable but also precarious due to the presence of bandits on the roads and because trade items usually had to be sold on credit and payment was often difficult to collect. As a child he was often sent out to collect small sums from his family's neighbors. His family also continued to farm their small plot. His mother displayed trade items for sale in Sakya along with a few other traders. The Sakya market was usually small and sleepy except on festival days when the population of Sakya would be increased by many times. He describes this period of his life as happy due to the prosperity of his family.

Festivals at Sakya were mostly religious; the only secular entertainments were the opera (lhamo) sponsored by one or another of the important Sakya families. All festivals were free, whether religious or secular. There were 12 or 13 major religious ceremonies at Sakya every year. Sakya's religious festivals were like village fairs, attended by villagers from the surrounding area and nomads from more distant areas. At these festivals the local villagers and nomads would barter their products for the mostly Indian-manufactured items available from traders such as Dawa Norbu's family. However, Dawa Norbu says that the commercial nature of these festivals was secondary to the religious. He describes a pious, happy, and contented crowd of Tibetan people who faithfully attended festivals at Sakya.

One such religious festival at Sakya was accompanied by a ferocious dust storm, which Tibetans consider auspicious because the storm was believed to carry away malevolent spirits. The storms were not auspicious for Dawa Norbu's family, however. His father, who had previously had problems with his eyes, got dust in his eyes that led to an infection. A lama was consulted who said that his father's life force was low. Rituals were performed, but without any apparent effect. A local doctor was also consulted, who prescribed medicines made of precious stones and herbs and who tried to scrape away some of the scabs that had formed around his father's eyes. This was also unsuccessful and he began to lose his eyesight. He also began to deteriorate physically and was distraught that he might die and leave his wife to take care of their seven children alone. After an illness of four months, his father died.

After Dawa Norbu's father's death the phowa ritual was done by his favorite lama and two monks read from the Bardo Thodol to guide his passage into another birth. These rituals were also intended to prevent his father's spirit trying to linger around his family because of attachment and a desire to accomplish what he had left undone in his life. In his father's case this was a particular concern since his father had been so distraught at leaving his mother to take care of seven children alone.

After these rituals had been done, the body was disposed of in the traditional Tibetan sky burial manner. The traditional 49 days of mourning rituals was also carried out.

Dawa Norbu's mother was distraught at her husband's death, but her suffering was not over. Within a few weeks both her two year-old daughter and four year-old son died from chicken pox. After this his mother was almost insane. She recovered only due to her strong faith in Buddhism. For these young children the same elaborate death rituals did not have to be carried out because it was considered that they had not been in this life sufficiently long to accumulate new sins.

### The Monks of Sakya

By the thirteenth century Sakya had become one of the most powerful and influential monasteries and sects of Tibetan Buddhism. The then abbot of Sakya, Kunga Gyaltsen, also known as Sakya Pandita, was invited by the Mongols to teach Buddhism to the Mongol people. Sakya Pandita and his nephew Pagspa did so, Sakya Pandita thus avoiding a Mongol invasion of Tibet and Pagspa becoming the spiritual adviser to Kubilai Khan, the founder and first emperor of the Yuan dynasty of China. Sakya thus became the most powerful sect in Tibet, the representative of Mongol power; but Sakya also became the means by which foreign powers gained political control over Tibet. Tibet's relations with the Mongols, and later the Manchu, who both became conquerors of China, form the basis for China's claim to sovereignty over Tibet.

Chinese influence varied in Tibet from time to time, varying according to whether the ruling dynasty was a foreign conquest dynasty like the Mongol Yuan [1271-1368] and Manchu Qing [1644-1912], or a domestic Chinese dynasty like the Ming [1368-1644]. The Mongol Yuan and Manchu Qing dynasties were from Inner Asia and had strong relations with Tibet, but the native Chinese Ming dynasty had almost no interest in and no influence in Tibet. By the middle of the 19th century, Chinese authority over Tibet had practically vanished. Dawa Norbu writes that between 1912, when the 13th Dalai Lama declared Tibetan independence, to 1950, when the Chinese Communists invaded Tibet, Tibet enjoyed independence even though China still claimed sovereignty over Tibet. For at least 38 years, Tibet enjoyed independence in fact, but failed to establish acknowledgement of that fact by China or internationally. Dawa Norbu credits that failure to both the conservatism of the monasteries and the irresponsibility of the aristocrats. The religious establishment was ignorant of the outside world and intolerant of any foreign influences, including all forms of modernization that threatened their privileged position. In particular, they opposed the creation of an army that might have defended Tibet against the Chinese and they managed to shut down all attempts to establish secular schools in Tibet. Dawa Norbu criticizes the aristocrats for pursuing their own interests and their own pleasure rather than the interests of Tibet.

Dawa Norbu cites two Tibetans, Tsepon Lungshar and Gendun Choephel, who had progressive ideas but who were repressed by the conservative religious and political establishment of Tibet. However, as he says, "I do not say that Lungshar or Gendun Choephel could have saved Tibet. However, I would assert that we Tibetans ourselves were responsible for our tragedy to a large extent. It would be unfair to condemn individual lamas, individual monasteries or individual aristocrats. The whole system was rotten to the core and could not stand twentieth century pressures. It was ready to fall, and it fell disastrously."

Nevertheless, Dawa Norbu rejects the idea that the faults of the Tibetan political and religious system provide any justification for China's takeover of Tibet or legitimization for China's claim to sovereignty over Tibet. As he writes, "Even more than international law and Tibetan history, it is the Tibetan people who convince me that Tibet belongs to them. My parents, my relatives, my family friends and acquaintances owed their entire allegiance, both political and spiritual, to the Dalai Lama. Some of them vaguely knew also that the Dalai Lamas in ancient times were the spiritual guides of the Chinese emperors, who venerated them as any disciple venerates his guru. When I tried to explain to Mother that the Chinese claimed sovereignty over Tibet, she replied with her usual common sense and simplicity: 'You cannot believe the Chinese. They tell lies with greater conviction than we Tibetans tell the truth.' When I asked her what difference it would make to ordinary Tibetans whether they were ruled by aristocrats and lamas or by the Chinese, she replied 'Tibetan rulers might be bad but the Chinese were always worse.' She said that it was always better to be ruled, or even misruled, by your own people than by foreigners. And, she added 'Chinese are Chinese and Tibetans are Tibetans'"

### The Law's Delays

Dawa Norbu writes that his father's untimely death left his mother vulnerable to false accusations from other people, a phenomenon he admits was fairly common in Tibetan society. There was a rash of petty thefts in Sakya that for a long time went unexplained. His mother assumed that their family was immune to theft since they had little worth stealing. However, one evening two large pieces of cloth were stolen from their house. A few weeks later a neighbor sewed a large tent from cloth identical to that stolen. The same man was also suspected in a theft from Sakya monastery. However, this man denied either theft and furthermore sued Dawa Norbu's mother for a false accusation. His mother was then in a precarious position in that the judges in such cases were more susceptible to bribery than to arguments about justice. However, his mother was able not only to pay bribes acceptable to the judges involved but also to adequately argue her case based upon her study of Tibetan law. She was proud of her acquired knowledge of the law and Dawa Norbu was proud of her ability to defend herself and her family.

Dawa Norbu uses his mother's case to illustrate the Tibetan system of law known as Trim Yig Shelche Chusum. This system of Tibetan law dates from the seventh century and had been little changed since that time. The first of the 13 decrees describes the duties of officials, who are advised to give up their own interests for the sake of the interests of others. This first decree also established the right of Tibetans to follow any religious sect that they wished without compulsion. The second decree dealt with the procedures for conducting criminal investigations. Unlike the Western legal system, Tibetan law required the judge to hear the case of the accuser and the accused separately, especially if they were of different social status and education. This provision, Dawa Norbu says, made the goal of Tibetan law a search for the truth rather than a contest between lawyers.

The third decree was about the severity of arrest and imprisonment for various sorts of crimes. The fourth set out punishments for various crimes, according to the social status of both the criminal and the victim. In Tibetan law the punishment for harm to an ordinary person was much less than for harm done to an aristocrat or lama. Similarly, if the criminal were of high status and the victim

of low status, the punishment was less. The fifth decree concerned the payment of fines for various offenses. Some fines were paid in money while others required religious offerings, such as a certain number of butter lamps or prostrations. The sixth defined the limits of tax collectors and travelling officials. Tax was not allowed to be imposed above a certain limit and officials were not allowed to abuse ula [free transport] privileges.

The seventh decree was again about varying punishments according to the status of the victim. The murder of persons of very high status had prescribed punishments in terms of fines that had to be paid. The eighth decree was about injuries caused by one party to another and punishments and fines according to the severity of the injury and whether the injury was intentional or accidental. The ninth decree allowed for extraordinary measures to be taken to discover the truth when all other methods failed. These involved various methods of divination. The tenth decree concerned fines for thievery; the eleventh was about divorce while the twelfth was about adultery. The thirteenth decree concerned harm done to others for a variety of reasons, such as abuse to an animal that one has borrowed or harm to a neighbor's field or home.

Dawa Norbu writes that the Tibetan system of law, Trim Yig Shelche Chusum, illustrates Tibet's own system of law and society that was self-sufficient and independent of all other nations and societies. As he says, "Tibet's self-sufficiency as a nation in every conceivable way never ceases to be a source of pride for me. Tibet had her own scheme of values, her own institutions, and other characteristics of a highly sophisticated civilization." He says that Tibetans were so deeply devoted to these values that they were unwilling to change them, which he says unfortunately contributed to the ultimate Tibetan tragedy.

### Shangri-la is Shattered

The first that the Tibetans of Sakya knew about the Chinese invasion of Tibet was through rumors that the Chinese had entered eastern Tibet and that they had destroyed monasteries and persecuted holy lamas. The Tibetans of Sakya thought of the Red Chinese as some kind of demons. The response of the Sakya monastery as well as the Tibetan Government in Lhasa to the threat was to increase the number of rituals intended to encourage Tibet's protective deities to stop the Chinese.

Dawa Norbu later learned that the Chinese entry into Kham in Eastern Tibet had actually been facilitated by some Khampa sympathizers. He says that this was because many Khampas disliked the Lhasa Tibetan government and thought that they could use the Chinese against Lhasa. The Red Chinese had made many promises to the Khampas that they would support Khampa independence from Lhasa control. What the Khampas did not realize was that the Chinese were simply using such promises to facilitate their entry into eastern Tibet in preparation for the invasion of central Tibet. As Dawa Norbu writes, "Unfortunately local and tribal interests in Kham took precedence over national Tibetan interests. It was not until about 1954 that the Khampas came to realize that the Chinese Communists were not liberators but oppressors and they then started the revolt which spread from Kham to Central Tibet."

One day in 1952 the first ten Chinese soldiers rode into Sakya on horseback. The Sakya Tibetans

thought they were demons and clapped their hands in the traditional ritual for expelling demons. The Chinese, however, thought that the Tibetans were expressing their pleasure at the arrival of the Chinese liberators in Sakya. These first Chinese to arrive at Sakya were very polite and diplomatic. They met with the Sakya lamas and impressed them with their knowledge of Sakya's historical role in relations with Yuan dynasty China. The Chinese said that they hoped that Sakya would play a similar role in the present time. The Chinese described their own hardships in having come to Tibet to liberate the Tibetans from the British and American imperialists, which mystified the Tibetans, none of whom had even seen an Englishman or American. The Chinese explained that they had come to Tibet to help the Tibetans and that as soon as the Tibetans could take care of themselves and govern themselves the Chinese would leave. In the meantime the Chinese promised that their soldiers would be completely self-sufficient in all their needs and they would take nothing from the Tibetan people.

Dawa Norbu writes that the arrival of the Chinese soldiers created an atmosphere of fear and suspicion in Sakya but that, at the same time, he and other youngsters were impressed with the PLA soldiers' uniformity and discipline. The Chinese soldiers grew much of their own food and paid well for supplies and services. They also began work on building roads and paid good wages for labor. The Chinese said that the roads were being built to benefit Tibetans but it was obvious that the primary purpose of the roads was to secure China's military control over Tibet. The Chinese soldiers also helped Tibetans in their tasks in very conspicuous ways, so conspicuous in fact that it was obvious that cultivating good relations was their primary motive. Many Tibetans, especially the elders, suspected the motives of everything the Chinese did; however, it was difficult to resist the temptation to make money by working with the Chinese on their various projects.

Young Tibetans were especially attracted to Chinese development projects and to propaganda that China would bring progress and development to Tibet. The Chinese did not at this time directly propagandize about class struggle and their plans for socialist reforms, but they did teach the young Tibetans songs about the new more progressive times in China and Tibet and they created the impression that China represented everything modern and progressive. Some young Tibetans were so impressed with Chinese plans and projects in Tibet that they became activists for the Chinese cause and collaborators with the Chinese soldiers and officials in Tibet.

Dawa Norbu writes that the Chinese could easily have conquered Tibet without any pretense of benefit for Tibetans but they chose to present their conquest of Tibet not as invasion but as peaceful liberation. This was due to the Chinese Communists' proletarian ideology but also because they wished to avoid international embarrassment about their intentions in Tibet. By their friendly treatment of Tibetans the Chinese were able to buy time until they were firmly established in Tibet and were strong enough to put down any Tibetan rebellion. Once Chinese control and their reforms of the Tibetan society and political system began to drive the Tibetans to revolt, the Chinese abandoned their pretense of courtesy and friendly treatment of Tibetans and adopted more forceful, coercive, and repressive methods.



## Schools Old and New

Dawa Norbu writes that in the early 1950s the Chinese built roads and airfields and cultivated the upper Tibetan classes, but did little to propagate their doctrines to the lower classes and did not do much to change traditional Tibetan society. He says that many Tibetan aristocrats cooperated with the Chinese because they promised them that if they did so they could retain their privileges. It was at this time that Dawa Norbu first began his schooling. Instead of entering a monastery, the normal route for scholarship in Tibet, he was sent to a secular school because his mother needed him to help support the family. He was to be taught by a minor Sakya official who taught a few students at his home. This was the typical Tibetan way of nonmonastic education. A few educated people would take in students who would pay whatever they were able. The main subjects were writing and grammar.

Early in his schooling the Chinese announced that they would organize a new school in Sakya. His mother was opposed to the new school, saying that she feared that her son would fall under Chinese influence. However, his teacher advised that he should join the new school. All of the aristocrats were sending their children to the new school, so his mother imagined that it must be all right. Most Tibetans believed that they had to adapt to the new regime whether they liked it or not, and that whoever adapted best would fare better under the Chinese. However, he says that the aristocrats had little understanding of Chinese plans for Tibet. They all rationalized that the Tibetan Government had agreed to cooperate with the Chinese; therefore, how could they as individuals disagree? What they did not know was that the Tibetan Government had been forced to sign the 17-Point Agreement and that Tibetan cooperation with the Chinese was not voluntary but coerced.

Dawa Norbu says that Tibetans trusted their government because it was based upon Buddhist principles. They also tended to naively believe the promises of the Chinese contained in the 17-Point Agreement, and were shocked as their ulterior motives were revealed. He says that most Tibetans had little understanding of the new terminology contained in the 17-Point Agreement and used by the Chinese, such as “imperialism,” “national minority,” “autonomy,” and “motherland” as used to refer to China. Few of them even bothered to read the Chinese publications about their ideologies and their plans for Tibet.

The curriculum in the new school included Tibetan writing and grammar as in the traditional schools, to which were added arithmetic, world geography, Marxism, and Chinese history. One of the new school’s teachers was a young Tibetan who had been instructed in Marxist and Chinese Communist ideology. He taught the young students that China was the greatest socialist society on earth and that Mao was the world’s greatest revolutionary leader. Communism was the only road to happiness and prosperity and all peoples in the world had to strive to reach the ultimate socialist utopia via the stages of history as prescribed by Marx. Tibet was at a lower stage of development than China and needed help to leap forward in order to catch up. The ultimate goal was a classless society (chitsog ringlung) in which there would be total equality within one huge family. Dawa Norbu says that many Tibetan youth, intellectuals, and even aristocrats, who had the most to lose in this new society, were enchanted by this vision of a socialist paradise. A few Tibetans were taken on tours of China that often sufficed to confirm their vision that China was the most progressive

and revolutionary society on earth.

Dawa Norbu joined the Young Pioneers, one of the first Chinese-organized social organizations. He was proud of himself but found that he was opposed by the traditionalists, especially monks, who tried to beat him up whenever they could catch him. Besides the monks, many ordinary people maintained their distrust of the Chinese and all their programs. Those who cooperated with the Chinese and joined their organizations were rewarded with gifts in the form of silver dayan [Da Yuan, or "Great Yuan," Chinese silver dollars minted with the image of Yuan Shih K'ai, the first president of the Chinese Republic (1912-1949)]. These rewards were hard to resist, since the Chinese distributed dayan liberally. There was even a song about the dayan: "From the revolutionary East showers of dayan rain over the land of snows. The mountains of dayan are higher than the snow peaks of Tibet." Dawa Norbu writes that the aristocrats of Sakya played mahjong and spent dayan freely. They attended meetings of new Chinese-inspired organizations and talked about the bright prospects for a new socialist Tibet.

### Limits of Indoctrination

One day in the early 1950s Dawa Norbu returned from school to find his whole family crying and moaning as if a family member had died. Instead, he found that his sister had been selected to go to school in China. This was regarded as a major tragedy, as his sister had no desire to be removed from her family or to attend school in China. Sakya was required to send eight children to China but no one had volunteered. Sakya officials then decided that families with six or more children would have to send one child. His family had six children but his mother vigorously protested and managed to get her daughter excluded because she was engaged to be married.

The Sakya government finally imposed what was called a "child tax" on eight families, whose children left for China in a ceremony that was as mournful as a funeral service. By the time that the second batch of children was scheduled to be selected there was less reluctance, mostly because of Chinese propagandizing about the advantages to be gained by schooling in China and because many aristocrats wanted their children to receive these advantages. Dawa Norbu himself was selected for the second batch but escaped when the plan was cancelled due to problems with the first batch, including the sickness and death of some of the Tibetan students.

The Chinese hoped to train a cadre of Tibetans as administrators who would be loyal to China and versed in Marxism and Chinese Communist ideology. However, the Chinese plan was not very successful, and was oftentimes even counterproductive. He writes that two of the first batch of eight students from Sakya, who had been returned to work in the Chinese administration in Sakya and who the Chinese thought were loyal, escaped into exile in India. These two Tibetans, who Dawa Norbu later met in India, said that many other Tibetans who had been educated in China would have escaped if they could. Many of those who remained and continued working for the Chinese did so only because they had no alternative. These two students, who had attended the Minority Nationalities Institute in Beijing, reported that many Tibetans resisted Chinese indoctrination and actually developed a greater sense of Tibetan national identity because they were grouped together in the alien environment of Beijing.

The two Tibetans who attended the National Minorities Institute said that Tibetans were treated well but were subjected to intense anti-Tibetan and pro-Chinese Communist indoctrination. Most courses were taught in Chinese, the most revolutionary language in the world according to the Chinese instructors. Tibetan was taught as a minor subject, but the number of hours of Tibetan instruction was gradually reduced. Tibetans were required to speak in Chinese and were punished if they were caught speaking Tibetan. Tibetans, strengthened by their sense of solidarity as a national group, resisted much of the Chinese program of indoctrination. One student related that Tibetan students who were far away from Tibet lost their petty regional differences and united against the challenge of Chinese indoctrination.

In one instance, in the spring of 1957 during the Hundred Flowers Campaign, Tibetan students organized a campaign about their grievances against Chinese indoctrination. Their complaints were threefold. First, was that Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai had made a speech in which he had said that Tibetans should follow the example of other minorities, such as the Manchu, who had lost their national and cultural identity and had become Chinese. The Tibetans said that this directly contradicted the promise of the 17-Point Agreement in which it was said that Tibetan culture would be preserved. Second, was that instruction in Tibetan had been greatly reduced. Third, was that a Chinese teacher had referred to the Potala as a landlord's house, with the implication that the Dalai Lama was a landlord. The Tibetan student protest was made with an awareness of increasing resistance to Chinese rule in eastern Tibet and a sense of China's colonialist role in Tibet. Since the entire group of Tibetan students was united, the Chinese were forced to promise to respect Tibetan culture and the provisions of the 17-Point Agreement. However, they immediately began to try to create divisions among the Tibetan students. In the subsequent anti-rightist and anti-local nationalist campaign of late 1957 the leaders of the Tibetan protest were investigated and punished.

After 1957, Tibetan students at the Minority Nationalities Institute were more restricted and the Tibetan cultural content of their education was even more diminished. However, this more restrictive regimen was not any more successful in eradicating Tibetans' sense of national identity or in inculcating in them a sense of Chinese national identity and loyalty to China. Many Tibetan students used their education in Marxist and Chinese Communist ideology to argue for the rights to autonomy and cultural survival promised by the Chinese themselves. Some of the Chinese teachers even complained that the more Tibetans were educated in Mao's philosophy the more reactionary they became. Tibetans said that by learning how the Chinese deceive others one can learn how to deceive them in the same way.

#### Thoughts of Escape.

Dawa Norbu begins this chapter in 1956 when there were some changes in Sakya due to the establishment of the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region. Tibetans in Sakya had little understanding of what this change implied except that a new cadres' training school was set up in Sakya and the small Sakya community therefore saw the addition of 60 young students from surrounding areas. However, at the end of 1956 the Chinese announced that reforms in Tibet would be delayed; many of their programs, including the cadre training school, were cancelled. Some young Tibetans, and those who were attracted to Chinese promises of progress, were

disappointed by the cancellation of all Chinese programs. Several Tibetans who had worked for the Chinese found themselves unemployed. However, most ordinary people and especially the monks were happy to see the Chinese presence in Tibet reduced.

The Chinese had to postpone their reforms because they found that the conditions in Tibet were not ready for communist-style changes. Also, the Chinese had to promise to delay reforms as part of their bargain to entice the Dalai Lama to return to Tibet from India, which he had visited in late 1956. In addition, revolt against reforms had begun in eastern Tibet outside the TAR. Dawa Norbu writes that the Chinese claimed that the Tibetan revolt had little popular support and that those ordinary people who did revolt had been deceived by the feudal lords into doing so. However, he says, this claim had no basis in fact. In fact the revolt in eastern Tibet and later in central Tibet was due to ordinary Tibetans' opposition to Chinese control over Tibet. The upper classes not only did not lead the revolt but were more likely to collaborate with the Chinese. However, the Chinese could not admit that the revolt against them was popular, since they claimed to be the liberators of the ordinary people.

Although reforms in Tibet were postponed and the numbers of Chinese cadres greatly reduced, the situation progressively deteriorated. Beginning in 1956 many Khampas from eastern Tibet arrived in Sakya. They had fled from eastern Tibet and claimed that they were still fighting the Chinese, but Dawa Norbu says that many were simply on their way into exile in India. Based upon their experience of Chinese reforms in eastern Tibet, they recommended to Sakya Tibetans that they sell their property and prepare to leave for India. However, the Sakya Tibetans were not ready to believe that all was lost. Their faith was shaken, however, when the Sakya Lama himself left for India. He tried to maintain the faith of the people he left behind by encouraging them to remain in Sakya, saying that his absence was only temporary. However, he never returned and his advice led many to remain in Tibet and resulted in their arrest and imprisonment after the 1959 revolt. The Chinese also tried to prevent Tibetans fleeing to India by sending out parties to arrest those who tried to leave and by propagandizing about how bad conditions were in India.

Even after the March 1959 revolt in Lhasa, few people fled from Sakya. The revolt had hardly affected Sakya. After the revolt the Chinese organized a public meeting at which they claimed that the suppression of the revolt was a glorious event for Tibetans. They also claimed that many Tibetans had supported the PLA in suppressing the revolt. However, although the Sakya Tibetans had not been present in Lhasa during the revolt, they knew that the Chinese claim that Tibetans had helped them suppress the revolt was a lie. Dawa Norbu says that, in fact, had the Tibetan people been properly led and informed by their government, all Tibetans would have participated in the revolt and the outcome might have been different. At least the Chinese would not have been able to brag about how easily the revolt was repressed and they would not be able to claim that Tibetans had helped them repress it.

Sometime after the revolt, some Sakya families began to try to escape to India. The Chinese sent out Tibetans who worked with the Chinese administration to try to stop them, but they were rarely successful. The reason was that they sympathized with those trying to escape; many of the Tibetans who worked for the Chinese also had plans to escape. Those Tibetans who were unsuccessful in their escape attempts were not punished by the Chinese, who adhered to their belief that they must have

been deceived by the upper classes. The Chinese continued to believe their own propaganda that they were there to liberate the Tibetans. They also intensified their propaganda about conditions in India, saying that those Tibetans who had escaped were probably already dead due to the heat and diseases of India. One Tibetan returned from India to confirm that conditions there were very difficult for Tibetan refugees. Dawa Norbu's mother wanted their family to escape but she was influenced by these stories. She therefore decided to remain at Sakya until she could see how the situation would develop.

### The Reactionaries Are Crushed

A few months after the March 1959 revolt, members of the upper classes of Sakya were called to attend what were described as study (lobjong) sessions. The aristocrats, former government officials and lamas came for this meeting without any idea of what the Chinese meant by lobjong. The members of the upper classes found themselves detained and subjected to indoctrination and harassment about their role in pre-revolt Tibet. The first task assigned to the imprisoned Tibetans was to write down what they thought their crimes of exploitation in the old society had been.

The imprisoned Tibetans were lectured by a Chinese Army officer who told them that the Chinese Communist Party was like the earth and the sky and that they were caught between the two without any chance of escape. They were told that they had exploited the Tibetan serfs, but that now their power had been taken from them by the Chinese Communist Party and transferred to those that they had previously exploited. Now they would have to suffer like those they had exploited. Those Tibetans whom the Chinese accused of having been the biggest exploiters were then subjected to thamzing ["struggle" sessions] in which they were accused by their assembled fellow Tibetans. These sessions were led by Tibetan activists who were collaborating with the Chinese, and were supervised by the Chinese themselves.

Dawa Norbu writes that most ordinary Tibetans thought of the aristocrats as exploiters but that no one thought of lamas as such. Most Sakya Tibetans were sympathetic with all the Tibetans who were detained by the Chinese, even the aristocrats. As Dawa Norbu says, "The common link between them and us was that we were all Tibetans. The difference between the Chinese and us was as great as between sheep and wolves. Mother would say, 'The Chinese first courteously came and then shamelessly robbed us of our country. Now they have the audacity to imprison our own people in our own land, like a street dog occupying your yard and then barking at you.'" The Chinese said that they were repressing the upper class exploiters on behalf of the liberated Tibetan people, but Tibetans suspected that they were doing it for themselves in order to realize the Chinese ambition to own Tibet.

When the highest remaining lama of Sakya was scheduled for thamzing many Tibetans tried to petition in the traditional way on his behalf. They brought katag [ceremonial offering scarves] to the thamzing session with the intention of pleading on the lama's behalf. However, the Chinese were rigid in their criteria of who had been exploitative and who must be repressed in the new supposedly liberated Tibet they had created. They refused to listen to any appeals on the lama's behalf and instead accused those who supported him of having reactionary minds. The leaders of the protest on behalf of the lama were accused of counterrevolutionary activities and were arrested.

The Chinese tried to find out who had supported the revolt by providing assistance to Khampa fighters or assisting the Sakya Lama to escape. All aristocrats and lamas were assumed by definition of having been exploiters and to be thus in need of repression. Many Tibetans, especially the elderly lamas, were completely dumbfounded at the Chinese attempt to overturn reality as they knew it. Several Sakya Tibetans were unable to handle the stress of thaming and committed suicide, including several Sakya lamas.

While under indoctrination and later under imprisonment the Tibetans were subjected to psychological tricks to force them to confess. They were told that others had already informed about their involvement and therefore there was no use to continue to deny that they supported the revolt or assisted the Khampas or the Sakya Lama. They were told that if they confessed they would be treated leniently, whereas if they did not they would suffer repression. They were forced to inform on each other with promises that if they revealed reactionaries they would be rewarded with reduced sentences. The prisoners were starved when they refused to cooperate and rewarded with food when they confessed or informed on others. These techniques destroyed all trust between Tibetans. Some Tibetans thought that those who had committed suicide were better off having escaped the sufferings inflicted by the Chinese. After undergoing imprisonment in Sakya, the upper-class Tibetans were deported to Shigatse or Lhasa and forced to perform hard labor on road or building projects. Even the elderly were not spared hard labor, and many did not survive their imprisonment under the Chinese regime.

### The Education of the Masses

Dawa Norbu writes that after the 1959 revolt the Chinese used young Tibetan progressives who had been educated at the Minority Nationalities Institutes to assist them in their programs for the transformation of Tibetan society. They also employed many of the lowest members of Tibetan society, including murderers and thieves, who could claim that their crimes had somehow been the fault of the old social and political system. However, Dawa Norbu says that those who the Chinese had raised to positions of power, many of whom were criminals or beggars, could never be respected by most Tibetans, and therefore Tibetans could not respect the new political order created by the Chinese. Tibetans recognized that the Tibetan collaborators were merely puppets of the Chinese and had absolutely no authority of their own.

Once they had cultivated Tibetan collaborators, mostly those who claimed to have been abused under the old society, the Chinese began to identify those who were the new “enemies of the people” who had to be repressed in order for Tibetans to be fully liberated. Those to be repressed were the lamas and monks, officials of the former government, and the aristocrats. Dawa Norbu says that Tibetans might agree that the aristocrats had been exploitative, but that they would never agree that monks had been exploiters and most did not even think that about the former government officials. He says that Tibetans had friendly relations that crossed class boundaries and that class relations were not as antagonistic as the Chinese imagined or wanted to believe.

Having identified those accused of being exploiters, the Chinese began the process of their repression. Public meetings were called at which the exploiters were to be denounced and humiliated. Tibetan

activists and collaborators instructed ordinary Tibetans in the process of thamzing. Thamzing began with the most easily identified members of the aristocracy and then expanded to any persons whom the Chinese wished to repress. Thamzing sessions became highly ritualized, with Tibetans often simply pretending to express their sufferings in the past at the hands of the accused. The Chinese were impressed by Tibetans pretensions until they discovered that they were simply acting. Thamzing was intended by the Chinese to be a process by which ordinary Tibetans identified their exploiters and denounced them and thus were liberated from the repression of the old system. However, much of the suffering that Tibetans had supposedly experienced in the past was imagined and invented by the Chinese to justify their own so-called liberation of Tibet. Tibetans played along with what the Chinese required, but rather than experiencing liberation through the process of thamzing, Tibetans felt repressed by the social divisions created by the Chinese and the need to denounce their friends, neighbors, and respected officials and lamas. Tibetans felt repressed by the atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust created by the Chinese.

Dawa Norbu writes that the type of accusations that were voiced during thamzing would be dismissed as false and without merit in any court of law anywhere in the world except in revolutionary China. In the so-called People's Courts set up by the Chinese the accusers were both judge and jury and conviction was automatic. Since the purpose of the process was to inculcate revolutionary consciousness, the accuracy of the accusations was not considered relevant. When there was a shortage of accusers the Chinese welcomed anyone with any false or fabricated charge. Thus the Chinese tried to create revolutionary consciousness but succeeded only in creating a system based upon falsity and repression. Their entire system was supposedly based upon the liberation of Tibetans but was actually based upon the false liberation of Tibetans as a justification for Chinese control over Tibet. Even those Chinese who imagined that Tibetans had actually suffered under the old system were simply trying to convince themselves that they were really the liberators of Tibet.

Once the most easily identifiable exploiters had been repressed during endless thamzing sessions, the Chinese began the process of making further class divisions in Tibetan society. These divisions were for the purpose of continual class struggle which the Chinese regarded as liberating but that Tibetans found simply turned Tibetans against each other to the benefit of the Chinese. As Dawa Norbu writes, "Our individual characters and identity were to be extinguished in the fire of revolution, and we were to create through collective living new uniform characters whose only object of worship would be an impersonal Motherland personified by a living deity, Chairman Mao."

## Democratic Reforms

As part of the process called Democratic Reforms the property of those identified as upper class reactionaries was confiscated. This property confiscation applied not only to the upper class but also to lamas and anyone who had been in any way supportive of the revolt. The houses of the upper class reactionaries were sealed and their property was inventoried, supposedly for future distribution to the Tibetan people. None of the people of Sakya had been directly involved in the revolt. Nevertheless, all lamas and aristocrats were accused of the crime of counterrevolutionary rebellion to separate Tibet from the Motherland. The lamas were considered guilty because they had performed the magdog ritual, intended to defeat the enemies of the Buddhist faith. Some of the

people of Sakya had assisted Khampa fighters and some others were accused of assisting the Sakya Lama to escape to India.

When the houses of the aristocrats were sealed, the families were forced to live in their own courtyards while Chinese officials and Tibetan activists inventoried their possessions. The Chinese promised that the wealth of the aristocrats would be redistributed to the ordinary Tibetans whom they said the aristocrats had exploited in order to gather such wealth. The great Sakya monastery was also closed and its enormous wealth put on display so that Tibetans could see how they had been exploited by the lamas. The redistribution of this wealth was soon done, but the Sakya Tibetans received only the least valuable clothes and household articles while the real valuables, the artworks, gold, and silver and precious stones were retained by the Chinese. The Chinese never explained what was done with these valuables, but Dawa Norbu and most Tibetans believed that all such wealth was trucked to China. After his escape Dawa Norbu learned that many Tibetan artworks had appeared on the international art markets. The Chinese admitted as much by saying to Tibetans that their valuables were sold in order to raise funds for the economic development of Tibet. Tibetans, however, did not see any of these funds, and most of the development of Tibet they witnessed appeared to be for the benefit of the Chinese.

Dawa Norbu writes that Tibetans were not fooled by the Chinese claim that the confiscation of the wealth of the upper class was meant to help the poor. They knew that the Chinese had kept the most valuable things for themselves. As one Tibetan said, "The Chinese have eaten the meat and left us the bones." To counter Tibetan discontent at the falsity of their promises, the Chinese mounted a campaign to try to convince Tibetans that the idea that gold and silver were valuable was just a deception of capitalism. They were told that gold was useless compared to a useful item such as a plow. However, Dawa Norbu says that Tibetans were not so stupid that they could not see the obvious theft of Tibet's wealth, both public and private, by the Chinese.

Soon after the confiscation of the wealth of the aristocrats and lamas, the small traders and shopkeepers of Sakya were required to deposit all their funds in the newly created People's Bank of Sakya. They were assured that the money was still theirs, but they were not allowed to take it out again once it had been deposited. The people of Sakya considered this as a polite way of confiscating all their money. By these means the Chinese were able to gain control over not only the territory of Tibet but over the personal property of Tibetans as well.

Confiscation of the wealth of village people and monasteries in Tibet was relatively easy compared with the difficulties that the Chinese faced in controlling the nomads. Dawa Norbu writes that even the Chinese Communist Party's efficient and ruthless administration was incapable of gaining complete control over the nomads. The nomads were, temporarily at least, not subjected to property confiscation or Democratic Reforms. However, their animals were carefully counted and herdsmen were allowed to slaughter only a small number per year. If they killed more animals for their own needs, they could be charged with anti-Motherland sabotage. They were also heavily taxed. Their dairy products and meat were collected by the Chinese, supposedly to be shared among Tibetans, but actually to be consumed by the People's Liberation Army men and Chinese officials in Tibet. In 1964, Dawa Norbu writes, the Chinese exchanged some 10,000 sheep for rice from Nepal. The sheep were confiscated from the nomads and the rice was consumed by the Chinese.



## Eat Less, Produce More

Sometime after Democratic Reforms and the redistribution of land and property, the emphasis of Chinese programs in Tibet was shifted to intensified labor for increased production. Tibetans were told that they had already seen the miracle that cooperation could produce when Tibetans had supposedly united to throw off the feudal serf system. Now they were instructed to unify their labor in order to increase production and build a socialist new Tibet and a strong and prosperous China. The new campaign was known as Thonpe Dronchung, which means “Eat less and produce more.”

The means to achieve intensified labor and increased production was through mutual aid teams, Rogre Tsogchung. Mutual aid teams were small cooperatives of some ten farmers. This scheme, Dawa Norbu says, had obvious administrative advantages for the Chinese. Through the mutual aid teams they gained control over Tibetans and their agricultural production. In addition, the mutual aid teams were led by Tibetan progressives who spied on all the other members. Soon everyone was compelled to spy on each other.

The leaders of each mutual aid team were appointed by the Chinese according to whoever was most cooperative with them. As Dawa Norbu writes, “through the cooperatives the Chinese Communists made us work, talk, eat, cry and sing as their almighty Party wanted. Our upper classes were in the inner prison and we were in the outer prison. Like the political prisoners we were subjected to hard labor and continual indoctrination. The Chinese exploited our labor to their own best advantage, and at the same time, indoctrinated us ever more effectively through their agents.”

The mutual aid teams and coerced labor were successful in increasing agricultural production. Tibetans were forced to dig irrigation ditches during which they were extremely overworked. Nevertheless, the increased water for irrigation did produce greater crops. As Dawa Norbu says, Tibetans were astonished at the results of cooperation and compulsion. Of course, they would have to wait until harvest time to see whether the innovations ordered by the Chinese were for Tibetans' benefit or for the Chinese. Besides being overworked during the day Tibetans were forced to attend indoctrination sessions every evening. There was also a campaign to force them to kill parasites, meaning flies, rats, mice, sparrows, and even dogs, both pets and strays. Tibetans were very affectionate toward their dogs and averse to killing any living being. They assumed that the Chinese campaign against parasites was intended to destroy Tibetans' belief in Buddhism.

Tibetans were overworked and repressed, but the Chinese nevertheless required them to sing new revolutionary songs while they worked or Tibetan traditional working songs, speeded up and with many of the words changed. In Tibet before the Chinese came, Tibetans worked hard but also had time for leisure and celebrations. Now they had neither but were still required to sing as if they were happy. Butter disappeared from their tea and chang [barley beer] was prohibited. They were also not provided with enough food to eat. Some Tibetans were starving but were not allowed any grain by the Chinese even though there was plenty of grain that had been confiscated from the aristocrats and the monasteries. When Tibetans asked about when they were to experience the happiness promised by the Chinese, they were told that their happiness would come with the increased harvest.

The harvest of 1959 was indeed large. But when the harvest was gathered, Tibetans were told that the grain would be weighed by Chinese officials. When the Chinese and their Tibetan collaborators weighed the harvest they first set aside enough grain for seed for the next year. Then a so-called “patriotic grain tax” was taken out, something the Tibetans had never heard of. Last, Tibetans were given the same insufficient ration they had been subsisting on all the previous year. Therefore, despite the increased harvest, Tibetans did not benefit at all. All grain left after these taxes and rations had been taken out was sold to the government and the money was theoretically deposited in the so-called People’s Bank to which Tibetans had no access.

In essence, everything but the seed grain and Tibetans’ rations was confiscated by the Chinese for their own consumption. Furthermore, the Chinese demanded that Tibetans should sign a pledge agreeing to double their production in the next year. When Tibetans explained that they could not predict next year’s harvest because it was dependent upon the weather, the Chinese accused them of having a defeatist and superstitious attitude. They were told that as long as they had enough patriotism for the Chinese Motherland they would be able to overcome any difficulties, even adverse weather conditions. As Dawa Norbu commented: “The Chinese regime, for all its revolutionary pretensions, was fundamentally colonial, inhuman and tyrannical. It was the most sophisticated and ingenious form of colonialism that has ever existed in history.”

### The Triumph of Materialism

In late 1959 the Chinese began an anti-religious campaign. Dawa Norbu remembers being in the barley fields with his work team just after the harvest when they were visited by a Chinese cadre and his Tibetan assistant. The Chinese cadre asked why a small bit of barley in the middle of the field had been left uncut. This bit of barley had been left according to Tibetan custom as an offering to the spirit of the field. The Chinese cadre went into a long explanation of how futile and wasteful this tradition was and then began to speak of all religion in the same terms. The Chinese cadre explained through his Tibetan interpreter that religion was the poison of the people and that Tibetans had for long been exploited by the monks who had amassed vast fortunes at the expense of the people. Tibetans were also ridiculed for believing that images of deities created by themselves had any special powers. Then each of the Tibetans in the work team was required to give his or her own thoughts on religion.

One Tibetan in the group said that every day she was accustomed to offer butter lamps to the deities at her household shrine. But every evening the butter was still there, the gods had not touched it and she felt foolish for wasting butter on the gods when she didn’t have any butter for her own tea. Others told similar stories illustrating their realizations about the futility of religious belief, because they knew that this was what was expected by the Chinese. However, one older Tibetan woman could not force herself to falsely criticize religion. She said that Tibetans knew that images were only symbols, not gods themselves, and that the gods were not expected to actually consume the butter offerings. Images of deities were but symbols for spiritual ideas. Also, that monks did not demand offerings but that they were given willingly. She also wondered why the anti-religious Chinese practically made a deity out of their leader, Chairman Mao.

This woman's views were mocked by the Chinese and the so-called progressive Tibetan activists. However, the woman was not punished for her views because the Chinese policy was that Tibetans now had freedom of religion. As Dawa Norbu says of the Chinese anti-religious campaign, "After they had ridiculed, mocked and scoffed at our faith, and after they had humiliated and condemned our holy monks, the Chinese ironically declared freedom of religion."

The Chinese concept of freedom of religion was that everyone was free to believe in religion or to not believe in religion. However, since the communists themselves were atheists, anyone could see which opinion would be favored under the new system. Dawa Norbu says that he now knows that the Chinese campaign against Tibetan religion was part of their attempt to destroy the basis of Tibetan civilization or anything that gave Tibetans a distinct identity of their own. After the Dalai Lama left Tibet for India, Tibetans were required to denounce all aspects of Tibet's former social system, including religion. As part of their anti-religious campaign, the Chinese made a list of the yearly requirements of Sakya monastery. All the people of Sakya were required to view this list.

Due to the anti-religious campaign most monks had left Sakya monastery. Some of the high lamas had been arrested after *thamzing*. Other monks were told that they could remain in the monastery but that they would have to support themselves. However, given the Chinese attitude toward religion, most monks knew that it was no longer safe to be a monk. Monks were also encouraged to give up their vows and to marry. About 100 monks who refused to give up their religious beliefs were imprisoned. By the end of 1959 only 36 aged monks remained out of the previous more than 500 in Sakya.

The few remaining aged monks could not look after and maintain the huge Sakya monastery or its subsidiary *lhakhangs* [temples], all of which began to fall into disrepair. While Dawa Norbu was in Sakya, until the end of 1959, the Chinese did not loot any monasteries or destroy any monastic buildings. However, he heard that after he and his family left, the Chinese began to take building materials from the run-down monasteries to build their own houses and offices. [Eventually, all of the approximately 108 smaller temples and monastic buildings on the north side of the stream running through Sakya were looted and destroyed.] Tibetans were also discouraged from performing any religious rituals either at the monasteries or in their homes. Dawa Norbu admits that only a few monks had been truly religious, while quite a few others were, like the communists said, only interested in living an easy life by exploiting the religious beliefs of the people. However, he says that Tibetan culture, traditions, and customs were derived from Buddhism, and therefore to deny religion was to uproot the Tibetan way of life.

## Flight to Freedom

At the end of 1959 Dawa Norbu's mother had become increasingly determined to escape Chinese rule over Tibet by fleeing to India. She complained most about the restrictions on religious freedom. As she said, the Chinese had graciously assured Tibetans that they had freedom of religion but then had cleverly and gradually deprived them of that right. She felt that she could not exist without being able to practice her religion. She felt that she knew from her experience of the first months of Chinese rule over Tibet that things would get progressively worse. Dawa Norbu's mother

as well as many Tibetans also complained about the lack of food. Previously there had been plenty of food for everyone in Tibet. There had been economic and social disparities before, but everyone had at least had enough tsampa [barley flour] to eat. Now, even the tsampa was rationed. She said that in the past there had been beggars in Tibet, but that now the Chinese had made all Tibetans beggars. As another Tibetan put it, in the past some Tibetans had been serfs but now all Tibetans were serfs of the Chinese.

Dawa Norbu's family, like many before him and many after, decided to escape from Tibet because their life there had become intolerable. They joined a group of nine families who planned to escape. The leader of the group was the second highest Tibetan official under the Chinese in Sakya, a man who was trusted by the Chinese. In fact, he was often sent to catch escaping Tibetans and therefore knew the escape route. Dawa Norbu's family first gathered the food and other supplies they would need for their escape. Then, on the appointed day, members of the family left their house at different times in order not to arouse suspicion. They met late in the day at a predetermined site outside Sakya and were joined by their guide and the other families. Their group was composed of a total of 32 people. They were able to travel only a short distance that night before they had to hide in a cave at daylight. They were very fearful of capture since they were still very close to Sakya.

There were only a few strong men in the group and all were unarmed, but they vowed to fight to the death rather than be captured and returned to Sakya. The next night was to be very important since they needed to travel a good distance so that they would be able to avoid any pursuers. Fortunately, they were able to travel a long distance the next night and thereafter they felt slightly more relaxed. Later, after they had reached India, they found out that a seven-man party on horses had been sent out to search for them. The search party had reached their second-day camp but had then turned back.

The escapees traveled every night for the next ten days until they sighted the Himalaya mountains in the distance. After this time they dared to travel during the daytime. On the fourteenth day they were close to the border. As they approached the border with India they became more careful since there were Chinese patrols in the area. Just one day from the border they spotted a Chinese patrol and feared that they would be captured. Fortunately, the patrol passed nearby but failed to spot them. After the Chinese patrol had passed they began their climb to the Sepubula pass, on the border with India.

Unlike some passes, the Sepubula was neither high nor steep. Nevertheless, they were met with wind and cold and had to stop temporarily. Some of the children and babies became dangerously cold but they were warmed by their companions. When the wind died down they continued their ascent. It was dark when they began the ascent to the pass, and they had hoped to reach the top by dawn, but when the sun rose they had still not reached the top. At last they reached the top of the pass and knew that they would reach freedom.

The group was elated to have escaped the Chinese as they turned to look back toward Tibet for the last time. They were happy to have escaped Chinese repression, but at the same time they were sad to leave Tibet. Dawa Norbu says that as he turned to look at Tibet, their country that had been stolen from them by the Chinese, it was one of the saddest moments of his life. The joy that they

were experiencing at the thought of escaping the Chinese faded when they contemplated the loss of their country. Dawa Norbu, then a boy of eleven, prayed that Tibet might regain its rightful independence soon. Then, he and the others turned and began their descent to India.

## Freedom in Exile

In late 1959 Dawa Norbu and his family found themselves in Sikkim, which then was not yet a part of India. As Dawa Norbu says, “we escaped from Tibet because we wanted to be masters in our own homes.” As his mother put it, “We wanted to be left alone to do our own worshipping and living.” Their family, along with most Tibetan refugees, decided to stay in Sikkim or in other places near the border with Tibet because they all thought that Tibet would soon regain its independence and they would then be able to return. This opinion was confirmed by a visit from a representative of the Dalai Lama who told them that the issue of Tibet had been brought up at the United Nations. Many countries were said to have supported Tibet’s rights, and therefore the official said that Tibet would soon regain its independence. Those who had left some members of their families behind to watch after their property were reassured by this, thinking that they had been wise to leave some family members in Tibet. Some people even began to buy supplies on the assumption that they would soon return to Tibet.

Dawa Norbu’s family soon moved to Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim. Sikkim’s defense was controlled by India and India was now fortifying its border with Tibet. India’s border with Tibet had long been undefended since Tibet had posed no threat to India. After the Chinese takeover of Tibet, however, and the failure of India’s attempt to achieve peaceful coexistence with China, India was forced to hurriedly fortify its border. Many Tibetans, Dawa Norbu’s family included, made their first wages in India by working on the roads that India was building along its border with Tibet. The Tibetan refugees working on the roads in India felt that they had escaped the oppressive demands of the Chinese in Tibet. In India there were many freedoms, but one of those was the freedom to starve.

After some time working on the roads, Dawa Norbu’s mother moved their family to Darjeeling. Darjeeling was a pleasant and prosperous town, but expensive, and the family had no means to support themselves. His mother was forced to sell her jewelry so that they would have food to eat. After some time they found work carrying firewood for a tea plantation. However, Dawa Norbu soon developed a fever that was feared to be malaria. In the meantime the Dalai Lama had secured Indian and international support for a school for Tibetans at Mussoorie. Later, schools were opened at Simla and Darjeeling. Dawa Norbu was eligible both because of his age and due to his illness, so he applied to the school in Darjeeling and was accepted. Thus began his academic career.

The school in Darjeeling was staffed by three Tibetan teachers and a variety of international volunteers. Dawa Norbu devoted himself to learning English, and in this he was helped by English and American volunteers. He was a good student and in 1963 he was sent to Dr. Graham’s school in Kalimpong. In 1968 he graduated and then went to Delhi University. His mother and sister remained in Darjeeling where they were still extremely poor. However, despite their poverty they always supported his education even though as the oldest son in India he ought to have worked to support his family. Dawa Norbu says that his mother was happy with her accomplishments in exile, first among which was having met the Dalai Lama, second was having made pilgrimages to

the Buddhist holy places in India and Nepal, and third was having seen her son receive a modern education.

The last Tibetans to have escaped from Sakya that he was aware of did so in 1964. Periodically, his family received appeals from inside Tibet to return. They were promised the restoration of their property and a full pardon for their flight from Tibet. Chinese propaganda about prosperity in Tibet was broadcast frequently on Radio Lhasa. Tibetans were encouraged to return. However, in contrast to Chinese propaganda about the good conditions under Chinese rule in Tibet, Tibetan refugees told a different story. Tibetan refugees invariably described a situation of unceasing suffering for Tibetans under Chinese rule. Since Dawa Norbu's escape, Tibet had been the scene of endless political campaigns, ceaseless purges, *thamzing*, and indoctrination. Food shortages were frequent. However, the sufferings of the Tibetan people during the first years of Chinese rule were small compared to what they were to experience later during the Cultural Revolution [1966-1976]. Dawa Norbu and his family, as well as almost all Tibetans who had escaped to India, felt that the hardships they had experienced in India were much preferable to what they would have experienced had they stayed in Tibet.

#### Cultural Revolution as Cultural Destruction

In 1983 Dawa Norbu's aunt arrived in India from Tibet. His aunt had been a nun until the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. When she arrived in India she appeared aged almost beyond recognition. She described the sufferings that she and other Tibetans had experienced under the Chinese. Dawa Norbu's aunt, Dechen Tsomo, had become a nun when she was twenty years old. She had been at Walung Gonpa, a Nyingmapa nunnery, near Sakya. Walung Gonpa was built in the 1930s.

Dawa Norbu writes that Tibetans had built many gonpas in the early half of the twentieth century before the Chinese came to Tibet. He emphasizes that most Tibetan gonpas were built after the 13th Century, not during the Tibetan Empire period of the seventh to ninth centuries as Tibetan mythology would suggest. Most monasteries were built by the people of Tibet for their own religious interests and purposes, not by the Tibetan Government. The same is true in exile where almost all monasteries have been built with private donations.

Dechen Tsomo had received eight major teachings at her nunnery. She was about to undertake the three year, three month retreat necessary to become a nun when the Chinese came to Tibet. Dechen Tsomo escaped to Nepal in 1959 but had returned to her nunnery in Tibet shortly thereafter because she missed it so much. She and the other nuns had managed to remain at their nunnery undisturbed until 1966 when the Cultural Revolution began. In July 1966 a group of Tibetans led by two Chinese came to her nunnery. All of the nuns were summoned and challenged to give up their superstitious religious life and start to earn their own living. The Chinese and Tibetan progressives (*yar thonpa*) said that the Cultural Revolution would sweep away all remnants of ghosts and spirits. After this short speech the crowd of people began the destruction of the nunnery. All statues and artworks and religious artifacts were destroyed. Even the nunnery buildings were destroyed. The nuns were forced to wear all of their religious artifacts and were ridiculed for their superstitious practices. The nuns were then taken to the nearby village and subjected to *thamzing*. All religious

artifacts in the village were also confiscated or destroyed.

This same process of humiliation of monks and nuns and of all religious persons took place all over Tibet during the Cultural Revolution. Whole monasteries were destroyed down to their foundations, with the building materials being taken away for private houses or Chinese administrative offices. However, before the destruction, the Chinese were very careful to identify and take away all valuable objects, including gold and silver, precious stones, and valuable artworks. All of the wealth and most valuable cultural artifacts of Tibet were taken away to China.

In Sakya all of the 108 lhakhangs except for the Lhakhang Chenmo were destroyed. Dawa Norbu emphasizes that the destruction was systematic, not chaotic. Not only did the Chinese carefully loot all the valuables from the monasteries before destruction, but they carefully preserved any religious monuments that had any connection with China, such as the Sakya Lhakhang Chenmo, while completely destroying any that were connected with Tibet's separate national identity, such as Ganden Gonpa [east of Lhasa]. Dawa Norbu writes that such well-planned destruction shows that the Chinese Red Guards in Tibet were not just ideological fanatics but also Chinese nationalists whose purpose was the Sinicization of Tibet and Tibetans.

During the Cultural Revolution all manifestations of religion were repressed. Tibetans were subjected to *thamzing* for the expression of any religious sentiments. They were required to worship Mao and memorize his slogans as if he were a new god. Tibetans were subjected to *thamzing* or even executed for any insult to Mao, even if entirely unintentional.

Dawa Norbu emphasizes that the Cultural Revolution in Tibet was not just about social revolution but about the destruction of Tibetan culture. The Red Guards' major project in Tibet was the destruction of the "four olds." The "four olds" were old ideas, old culture, old traditions, and old customs. Since the Chinese considered all aspects of Tibetan culture as feudal and reactionary, they targeted it all for destruction. In place of the destroyed Tibetan culture they intended to substitute China's so-called revolutionary socialist culture. What this meant in practice was the destruction of Tibetan cultural and national identity and the transformation of Tibetans into Chinese. Everything Tibetan was considered old and useless, while everything Chinese was regarded as modern and progressive. As Dawa Norbu says, Tibetan civilization that had taken a thousand years to build had been substantially destroyed in just three years of the Cultural Revolution. This was a great loss to human civilization, despite how feudal and reactionary Tibetan civilization may have appeared to the Chinese Red Guards.

## Reform and Resistance

This chapter is about the reform period in Tibet during the 1980s. In early 1980 the Chinese began to ease their policies in Tibet. Communes were disbanded. Political prisoners were released. Tibetans were once again allowed to practice their religion and to begin the restoration of the many monasteries destroyed before and during the Cultural Revolution. The Chinese announced a new liberal policy of allowance for Tibetan autonomy. Deng Xiaoping invited the Dalai Lama to send fact-finding delegations to Tibet to see for themselves how things had changed.

Despite the Chinese confidence that these Tibetan exile delegations would be impressed with the changes taking place in Tibet, their primary impression was of the vast destruction that had taken place, the continuing unhappiness of the Tibetan people, their non-acceptance of Chinese rule, and their continuing loyalty to and reverence for the Dalai Lama. Despite China's anti-religious indoctrination, Tibetans' religious faith remained unbroken; the majority still cherished the Dalai Lama and dreamt of an independent Tibet. These impressions were reinforced by the demonstrations that greeted the second delegation in 1980 in Lhasa. These demonstrations also revealed how out of touch the Chinese were with Tibetans' real feelings.

All the delegations reported that almost all monasteries and other religious sites had been destroyed. There was much new construction in Tibet, but most of it was occupied by Chinese. None of the people the delegations met had anything good to say about Chinese rule over Tibet. Almost all told tales of suffering. The delegates also personally observed the process of Sinicization of all aspects of Tibetan life. Everything Chinese was promoted as progressive, while everything Tibetan was condemned as backward.

Despite China's newly liberalized policies in Tibet, Tibetans participated in numerous anti-Chinese riots and demonstrations in Lhasa and other cities between 1987 and 1989. Dawa Norbu writes that despite Chinese expectations that liberalization of their policies in Tibet would be greeted with Tibetan gratitude, whenever the Chinese have reduced their repression in Tibet the Tibetans have taken the opportunity to revolt against Chinese rule. This was true after the liberalization of 1957, during the chaos of the Cultural Revolution, and during the 1980s. He says that if the Tibetans have not revolted more, it is not because they have not wanted to; rather it is because of the intense Chinese repression of all resistance in Tibet.

As Dawa Norbu writes, "The Maoists' basic goal has been to destroy traditional Tibetan society. They did so by fragmenting Tibetan society into units conducive to labor, indoctrination and surveillance. In this way civil society, where freedom, individuality and privacy prevailed, was replaced by a Communist Party that penetrated and pervaded society as an almighty social god. This Maoist totalitarianism violates the very spirit and structure of Tibetan society. Whenever the Party loosens or relaxes its grip over Tibetan society Tibetans tend to revolt, without regard to economic conditions."

This pattern of Tibetan revolt, he says, shows that the Tibetan people are not reconciled to Chinese rule, which they perceive as illegitimate and oppressive. He says that ordinary Tibetans may not have the political vocabulary, such as hegemony, colonialism, or imperialism, to describe what they feel about Chinese domination over Tibet. However, they know from their own experience that they are under non-Tibetan rule and that the alien rulers do not have any legitimacy to rule over them. As Dawa Norbu says, "According to the logic of ethnicity, a regime is legitimate if the ruling class and the ruled share the same culture, language, tradition and historical memories. This logic makes Chinese rule in Tibet illegitimate as far as the common people are concerned."

Dawa Norbu says that the Tibetan sense of legitimacy is closely connected with Tibetan Buddhist culture, which has shaped Tibetan identity, society, and history. The Dalai Lama is considered by almost all Tibetans to represent Tibetan Buddhism, Tibetan culture, and Tibetan national identity.



The Dalai Lama as a symbol of Tibetan identity is also a symbol of Tibetan resistance to Chinese rule. For this reason the Chinese are now trying to eliminate the Dalai Lama's presence in Tibetan life. Having realized his significance to Tibetans, the Chinese have also ceased their attempts to entice him to return to Tibet. Dawa Norbu indicates that while Dharamsala attempts to convince the Chinese that the Dalai Lama is willing to accept Chinese rule over Tibet, this is hampered by the popular Tibetan as well as Chinese perception that the Dalai Lama represents a non-Chinese Tibetan national identity. In addition, unlike the exile elites who are willing to accept autonomy under Chinese rule, the popular sentiment both within Tibet and in exile is that Tibet deserves full independence.

### The 10th Panchen Lama: A Microcosm of Tibet's Tragedy

Dawa Norbu writes that the 10th Panchen Lama's story is not only a microcosm of the tragedy of Tibet but also of the dilemma faced by all Tibetan lamas and aristocrats. That is, should the lamas and aristocrats not feel responsible for the sufferings of ordinary Tibetans under a ruthless Chinese domination? Should they have resisted Chinese rule and tried to alleviate Tibetan suffering under Chinese rule? The dilemma they faced is that if they tried to resist, they themselves risked everything, including their own lives. The 10th Panchen Lama did risk his own life for the benefit of all Tibetans. He was more able to do so, perhaps, because of his high-level position.

Dawa Norbu details the history of the origins of the Panchen Lama incarnation. The 5th Dalai Lama initiated the Panchen Lama incarnation line when he said that his teacher would reincarnate as the Panchen. Tashilhunpo was given as the Panchen Lama's seat, but the position had no political or regional power attached to it. However, in 1728 after the Dzungar invasion, the Qing emperor gave the Panchen Lama political authority over the southern district of Tsang. This was done to punish the Dalai Lama, who had sided with the Dzungar, and to divide the Dalai Lama's power. As Dawa Norbu says, this was the beginning of the Chinese policy of divide and rule in Tibet, which continues even to this day.

The regional and political division between the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama, and between Lhasa and Shigatse, were deepened in 1924 when the 9th Panchen Lama fled to China. The Thirteenth Dalai Lama had tried to reduce Tashilhunpo's independent authority, thus strengthening Tibetan national unity, and to persuade the Panchen Lama to pay more taxes toward the creation of a Tibetan Army. The Army was needed to defend Tibet against Chinese encroachments in the east. The Panchen Lama's refusal to pay taxes damaged Tibetan unity; his flight and residence in China allowed the Chinese to claim authority over Tibet.

The 10th Panchen Lama was equally controversial. His reincarnation was chosen in 1941 by his entourage, then resident at Kumbum monastery [in Amdo, outside the political authority of Lhasa]. This reincarnation was not recognized by Lhasa. In 1951 the Chinese Communists insisted that Lhasa recognize the Kumbum Panchen Lama, then 11 years old, because the boy Panchen had pledged his loyalty to the Chinese Communists and had appealed to Chairman Mao to "liberate" Tibet. Lhasa had to recognize the boy before the Chinese would begin negotiations about the 17-Point Agreement.

Chinese soldiers escorted the young Panchen Lama back to Tibet in 1952. He was immediately exploited by the Chinese to divide Tibet geographically and to reduce the political authority of Lhasa and the Tibetan Government. The Chinese maintained that Tashilhunpo had historically been a political entity independent of Lhasa, and they set up a separate administration for the Panchen equal to that of the Dalai Lama. In this way the Chinese pretended that Tibet had never been an independent and unified country at all but that the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama had been regional rulers both under the authority of China. The Chinese trained the Panchen Lama as their loyal representative in Tibet; however, they underestimated his loyalty to Tibet and his identity as a Tibetan.

After the 1959 revolt and the flight of the Dalai Lama to India, the Chinese tried to set up the Panchen Lama in his place. However, the Panchen Lama refused to assume the role of the Dalai Lama. In religious talks he gave in Lhasa in 1960 and 1961 the Panchen Lama expressed his wish that the Dalai Lama would return to Tibet. Such statements angered the Chinese. In 1962 the Panchen Lama wrote his famous 70,000-character petition to Chinese leaders about conditions in Tibet. The Panchen Lama described conditions in Tibet after the implementation of Democratic Reforms as dire, with many thousands of Tibetans having been wrongly persecuted and thousands having suffered starvation during the Great Leap famine. The Panchen Lama sought to bring these facts to the attention of the Chinese leaders, confident that they would act to alleviate these conditions. However, Mao and the Chinese leadership were intolerant of any criticism of their role in Tibet. They characterized the Panchen Lama's opinions as reflective of his upper class background. He was defined as an obstacle to progress in Tibet and subjected to public thamzing in Lhasa in 1964.

The Panchen Lama was then taken to Beijing and imprisoned until 1978. After his release he was rehabilitated and restored to his former political position. In this role he continued to support the preservation of Tibetan language, religion, and culture. He continued to do so until his death in Shigatse in 1989. The Panchen Lama's death then set off a dispute between Dharamsala and Beijing about which side had the authority to select the Panchen Lama's reincarnation.

The issue was of great political significance to both sides. The Dalai Lama is traditionally responsible for confirming the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama. However, as Dawa Norbu writes, China's claim to rule over Tibet is largely based upon the imperial tradition of conferring titles on high lamas and the imperial custom of sending ambans or other Chinese officials to be present at the recognition and enthronement ceremonies of high reincarnate lamas. This function was and is interpreted by the Chinese not just as the privilege to observe such ceremonies but as the authority to preside over them and to not only approve but to appoint high lamas.

The Chinese claim that this right dates to 1792 when the Chinese emperor presented a golden urn to Tibet that was to be used to select high lamas' reincarnations. However, Dawa Norbu points out that the tradition of choosing a name from a bowl predates the use of the golden urn, which was presented simply to replace the bowl that was usually used. In addition, the traditional means of selection of high lamas' reincarnations was according to Tibetan Buddhist tradition and had nothing to do with China's approval. In particular, the Dalai Lama's approval, not that of the Chinese emperor, was necessary for the confirmation of the Panchen Lama and other high lama reincarnations. The golden urn was sometimes used for the selection of Dalai Lamas but was rarely

used for selection of Panchen Lamas.

Despite this conflict of political interest between Beijing and Dharamsala, the controversy that ensued over the Panchen Lama's reincarnation was not inevitable. Both Beijing and the Dalai Lama had previously cooperated in the search for the reincarnation of another lama, the Karmapa, and they had both recognized the same boy as the reincarnation. They had similarly cooperated at the beginning of the search for the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama. The Tashilhunpo search committee had communicated with the Dalai Lama and asked for his assistance in the search. However, the Chinese authorities would not approve any actual participation by Dharamsala in the search, either by allowing a search team to come to Tibet from India or by sending the Tashilhunpo team to India for consultations.

Nevertheless, there was a possibility that both sides could have approved the same candidate. However, after the failure of Beijing to contact Dharamsala for several months about the boy, Gendun Choekyi Nyima, who was favored by both Dharamsala and the Tashilhunpo search committee, the Dalai Lama announced his confirmation of that boy as the reincarnation. The Dalai Lama explained his decision to unilaterally announce the selection as based upon divinations that indicated both that the boy was the right choice and the date that the announcement should be made. The Dalai Lama may have assumed that his announcement would force the Chinese to recognize the same boy since it was well known that the Tashilhunpo committee favored the same candidate. However, the Chinese interpreted the Dalai Lama's unilateral recognition as a challenge to Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. They removed Gendun Choekyi Nyima and his family to an undisclosed location and selected another boy as the reincarnation. This boy was then installed as the Panchen Lama but has failed to receive popular Tibetan approval.

Dawa Norbu criticizes the Dalai Lama's unilateral announcement of the reincarnation for its failure to achieve either his political or religious purpose. And the Dalai Lama's choice as Panchen Lama has now disappeared, making his selection ineffective. In addition, the Dalai Lama may have received much international media attention due to the controversy, but he failed to prevail in his political confrontation with Beijing. Tibet is thus left without a Panchen Lama who commands the loyalty of the Tibetan people or who might act on their behalf.

Dawa Norbu believes that Beijing would have eventually approved Gendun Choekyi Nyima as the reincarnation had the Dalai Lama not unilaterally announced his approval without coordinating with Beijing. To Beijing the issue was not who the authentic reincarnation was, but who had the authority to approve his selection. Dharamsala seems to have failed to anticipate that the Dalai Lama's unilateral announcement of the Panchen Lama's reincarnation would result in his disappearance and the selection of an entirely different boy. Dawa Norbu suggests that both Tibet's and Tibetan Buddhism's purpose would have been better served had the Dalai Lama's choice been smuggled out of China before being announced or had the Dalai Lama sought to cooperate further with the Chinese rather than unilaterally announcing his selection.

### Tibet's Future in Post-Deng China

Dawa Norbu says that the dialogue that Deng Xiaoping initiated with the Dalai Lama in December 1978 was perhaps the most significant development in post-1959 Sino-Tibetan politics.

He says that the primary Chinese motive was to persuade the Dalai Lama to return to the Motherland. In exile, the Dalai Lama is a constant embarrassment for the PRC. The Dalai Lama enjoys excellent relations with the international community and the international media. China fears that the Dalai Lama could be used by what it often calls “hostile foreign powers” for anti-China purposes. If the Dalai Lama could be persuaded to end his exile he would cease to be a source of embarrassment and potential threat to China. In addition, his return would serve to legitimize the Chinese regime in Tibet.

The Dalai Lama apparently came to the conclusion that he had no alternative but to negotiate for a greater degree of Tibetan autonomy under China. This shift in policy, from a demand for independence to an acceptance of autonomy, may have come about due to the abandonment of official American support for Tibet, along with the simultaneous rise in popular Western support. International supporters of Tibet tended to think that independence was impossible, whereas a greater autonomy was still feasible. The Dalai Lama provided an opening for Deng by stating in March 1978 that the issue of Tibet was not independence but the “happiness” of the Tibetan people. The Dalai Lama thus met the basic Chinese precondition that the issue of independence could not be discussed.

Deng responded in December 1978 to Gyalo Thondup [the Dalai Lama’s brother and unofficial envoy] by saying, “The basic question is whether Tibet is part of China or not. This should be kept as the criteria for testing the truth. So long as it is not accepted that Tibet is an integral part of China, there is nothing else to talk about.” Dawa Norbu says that the Tibetan side interpreted this as meaning that anything could be discussed except independence. However, what the Chinese leader apparently meant, judging from the subsequent negotiations, was that no issue of Tibet’s political status, including autonomy, could be discussed.

The Chinese conditions for negotiations were conveyed by Hu Yaobang to Gyalo Thondup. China said that the Dalai Lama could return, that he could resume his former political positions [assigned by the Chinese in the 1950s], and that no one would be punished for rebelling in 1959. The Dalai Lama rejected these conditions, saying, “instead of addressing the real issues facing the six million Tibetan people, China has attempted to reduce the question of Tibet to a discussion of my personal status.” In 1987 the Dalai Lama put forth his own proposal for a resolution of the Tibet issue, which called for Tibetan autonomy under China. The Chinese rejected the Dalai Lama’s proposal as being based upon the claim that Tibet was independent before 1950. The Dalai Lama was willing to accept the fact that Tibet had become a part of China in 1950, but not that it had always been a part of China, as the Chinese claimed. However, this was not enough for the Chinese, since if Tibet was independent before 1950, then China’s “peaceful liberation” was actually the same as imperialist aggression. All of the Dalai Lama’s proposals to negotiate about the status of Tibet or the issue of Tibet are seen by the Chinese as based upon this claim that Tibet was independent before 1950. What China wanted was the Dalai Lama’s public agreement that Tibet had always been part of China.

Dharamsala’s conditions for negotiations were that Tibet should be allowed true autonomy and that all Tibetan areas should be reunited in one greater Tibetan autonomous region. The Chinese refused to talk about any Tibetan political issues and tried to confine the talks to the issue of the Dalai

Lama's return and his subsequent role and status. The Chinese also insisted on negotiating with the Dalai Lama personally and refused to negotiate with representatives of the Tibetan Government in exile. As Dawa Norbu says, what the Chinese wanted was an unconditional return of the Dalai Lama to China so that he would stop working in exile for the independence of Tibet. The Chinese were unwilling to discuss any political issues about Tibet, since to do so would imply that there was some question about the legitimacy of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet or the legality of China's invasion of Tibet in 1950. Negotiations substantially came to an end when Chinese hard-liners accused the Dalai Lama of complicity in the demonstrations and riots of 1987 to 1989. Dharamsala had also sought international support, which further alienated the Chinese. International support for Tibet led to the Dalai Lama's Nobel Peace Prize but has so far failed to contribute to a resolution of the political issue of Tibet.

In this chapter Dawa Norbu also examines the possibilities for Tibetan autonomy under China or a federative status for Tibet within a Chinese Republic. He begins with the proposals put forward by Chinese democracy advocates in the period after the Tiananmen events in 1989. Some Chinese democracy activists advocated a federative status for Tibet in a Chinese Republic. They proposed that Tibet should make its own constitution and control almost all its own domestic and even foreign affairs. They also proposed that after 25 years a referendum should be conducted on Tibet's final status. Tibet would be allowed independence if that was the choice of the people of Tibet. Dawa Norbu praises this proposal while at the same time pointing out some problems. First is that the territorial extent of Tibet is not defined. He says that Kham and Amdo would have to be included in any autonomous Tibetan entity if it were to represent all Tibetans. Second, the vote after 25 years should be open only to Tibetans, not to all residents of Tibet, many of whom may be Chinese. If the Chinese were to constitute a majority of the residents of Tibet then they might well predominate in a vote to remain a part of China.

Finally, the Chinese exile democracy movement has split into many groups that fight with each other. The movement itself has decreased in influence as the possibilities of democracy in China have receded. Shortly after Tiananmen it seemed that the Chinese Communist Party might not last too much longer and that democracy in China was eventually inevitable. Since then, the CCP has proven its ability to survive and the potential for democracy in China, or a solution to the Tibet issue such as proposed by the Chinese democracy advocates, has receded into the distance.

Dawa Norbu writes that Tibet's history substantiates its claim to independence, or at least to autonomy. In Tibet's recorded history, Tibet was independent from the beginning of the Tibetan Empire period in 600 to the end of the empire in 842, and from 1911 to 1950, a total of 281 years. Tibet was neither a unified independent state nor was it a dependency of China from 842 to 1247 and from 1350 to 1642, a total of 497 years. Tibet was a dependency of the Mongol and Manchu empires from 1249 to 1358 and 1642 to 1911, a total of 378 years. Tibet was thus a dependency of China for only 378 of a total historical period of 1156 years. Even during its periods of dependency relations with China, Tibet enjoyed a high degree of genuine autonomy. Until 1950, Tibet's traditional relationship with China did not involve China's interference in Tibetan domestic affairs, a Chinese military presence in Tibet, Chinese colonization of Tibet, or the political integration of Tibet with China. Dawa Norbu writes that China's claim that Tibet has always been a part of China is invalid. He says that it is Tibet's history of cultural and political independence that constitutes the

psychological core of Tibetan opposition to China's annexation of Tibet.

Dawa Norbu ends his book with some hopeful proposals about how Tibet might achieve autonomy under Chinese rule. His main argument is based upon the need for Tibetan autonomy in order to prevent conflict between China and India. His argument attempts to revive China's traditional policy of allowing Tibetan self-rule under a loose form of Chinese supervision. He would also like to revive Tibet's role as a buffer between China and India. Dawa Norbu describes this as a necessity not only for a resolution of the Tibet issue but for peace between China and India.

However, some of Dawa Norbu's ideas rely upon China's return to its policies of a time when it had not yet gained full control over Tibet. His ideas for Tibetan autonomy are more appropriate for an earlier time when states did not have full control over their frontier territories and national borders were not as clearly defined as they are now. Dawa Norbu's book thus ends on a somewhat unsatisfactory note, but this is not his own fault. He, like anyone who tries to propose a resolution to the Tibet issue, has a difficult and almost impossible task. He should not be faulted for his failure to achieve a resolution to an issue that perhaps has no resolution.

Dawa Norbu's updated book, *Tibet: The Road Ahead*, may not actually provide a road ahead. However, in its original form as *Red Star Over Tibet* it does describe the remarkable life of an ordinary Tibetan boy born in Sakya, Tibet, who was later educated in India and the United States to become one of the most important scholars on Tibetan history and politics. He experienced the Chinese takeover of Tibet and the subsequent Democratic Reforms, after which he was able to escape Tibet and reveal to the world what really happened. His book is an important and conclusive refutation of Chinese propaganda about its so-called peaceful liberation of Tibet and its supposedly voluntarily imposed reforms. Dawa Norbu's book provides important information about the reality inside Tibet as well as accurate analysis about many aspects of Tibetan politics inside Tibet, in exile, and internationally.

Red Star Over Tibet book. Read reviews from world's largest community for readers. Goodreads helps you keep track of books you want to read. Start by marking Red Star Over Tibet as Want to Read: Want to Read saving! Want to Read. Currently Reading. Read. Red Star Over Tibet. by Dawa Norbu. Other editions. Red Star Over Tibet. Book. 13 people like this topic. Want to like this page? Sign up for Facebook to get started. Sign Up. It's free and anyone can join. IDR Blog. Red Star over Tibet. Please wait... Apparently the Nepal immigration mistook a Tibetan holding a US passport called Penpa Tsering arriving from the US, with his homonym the former Dalai Lama's Representative in the US; Nepali officials argued that the man was "on China's most-wanted list". In Dharamsala, the former Tibetan Representative observed: "It clearly shows that the Chinese government's pressure on Nepal is working." Nepal's Home Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa affirmed that the deportation was only an act of honouring the "One-China" policy.

Red Star Over Tibet book. Read reviews from world's largest community for readers. Goodreads helps you keep track of books you want to read. Start by marking Red Star Over Tibet as Want to Read: Want to Read saving! Want to Read. Currently Reading. Read. Red Star Over Tibet. by Dawa Norbu. Other editions. Red Star Over Tibet. Book. 13 people like this topic. Want to like this page? Sign up for Facebook to get started. Sign Up. It's free and anyone can join. The Red Guards were a fanatic student mass paramilitary social movement that were first mobilized between 25 May and 2 June 1966 in China. Soon after meetings were held in order to facilitate the expansion of the Cultural Revolution in Tibet and in August 1966 students began to form the Tibetan branch of the Red Guards. On August 8, 1966, the decision was issued to start the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The Red Guards were