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TIBETAN BULLETIN

The Official Journal of the Tibetan Administration

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“For hundreds of years it has been traditional for the Dalai Lama and the Government to consult Nechung”

— His Holiness the Dalai Lama, *Freedom in Exile*

Focus:

**Nechung —
The State
Oracle
of Tibet**





TIBETAN BULLETIN

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Tourists witness fresh demonstrations in Lhasa, more Tibetan unemployment

Two monks and three nuns were arrested on August 12 after they held an independence demonstration in Lhasa, a foreign tourist, who reached Dharamsala on August 20, told the *Tibetan Bulletin*.

The eyewitness, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of endangering the lives of the people she met in Tibet, said the Tibetans were arrested in the vicinity of the Jokhang (central cathedral) in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet.

The tourist who speaks Tibetan said the demonstrators shouted slogans like, "Free Tibet," and "Chinese go to China."

"The police as well as civilian dressed informers pounced upon them and within minutes took the Tibetans as prisoners," the eyewitness tourist said.

The tourist learned that the two arrested monks were Ngawang Lhundup, 20, and Dorjee, 19, from Gongkar Shedupling. The three arrested nuns, belonging to Chubsang nunnery could not be identified, but their ages ranged between 15 to 20 years.

The following day (August 13), which coincided with the 15th (full moon) day of the ongoing Tibetan month, the tourist heard that the Chinese authorities arrested three monks who had planned a demonstration in the Barkhor, the centre of Tibetan life in Lhasa. The monks could not be identified.

"On the opposite side of Jokhang, a police bus and a jeep are always seen stationed in order to suppress the demonstrators and take them away. The people in Lhasa told me that after every two weeks, independence demonstrations take place, especially around the full moon day," the tourist said.

The tourist and her group which reached Lhasa in the third week of July, said that because of the overwhelming number of Chinese settlers, the situation in Tibet was tense.

"The Chinese are everywhere. Most of the shops are owned by the Chinese. In Barkhor, even items like the Tibetan scarves are sold by the

by Tibetans before the visitors' arrival," the tourist added.

She said even beggars are locked up in a detention centre in Tsal Gunthang, near the Tibetan capital, when foreign dignitaries and government delegations visit Lhasa.

The tourists said Tibetans have to daily attend the weekly socialist "re-



Chinese. Tibetans are reduced to an object for tourist attraction," the tourist complained.

She said Tibetan youths in Lhasa are mostly seen in restaurants drinking and playing billiard or else begging and idling around the streets.

She blamed the Chinese influx, lack of motivation and less scope for skilled and educational qualifications, as reasons for the increase in the Tibetan rate of unemployment.

"Education and job opportunities are being given to the Chinese immigrants. For example, all the employees at the World Food Programme project in Lhasa are Chinese," she said.

"However, when a group of UN inspectors arrived in Lhasa on July 30 and visited the project area, all the Chinese employees had been replaced

education" meetings where Chinese authorities stress on birth-control and the consequences of taking part in independence demonstrations.

She said although the Tibetan language is officially accepted, in reality everything is done in Chinese. "The main spoken language in practice is Chinese."

The tourist said that Tibetans in Lhasa told her that under the pretext of resettling recent flood victims from Sichuan and Anhua regions of China, one million Chinese are being settled in Tibet.

Another 20,000 Chinese are expected in Emagang in Namling district, in central Tibet.

"As such, China's policy of sinicising Tibet by a massive population transfer seems to be thriving effectively," the tourist observed.

Monks, nuns flee as China mounts political campaign

Two monks and two nuns, who were among the 17 Tibetan refugees reaching the Nepalese border region of Khumbu Valley on July 22, said they escaped because "frequent Chinese political re-education campaigns and security checks made it impossible for us to pursue our religious studies in Tibet."

Monks Lobsang Sangay, 26, and Lobsang Thubten, 24, from Gaden monastery said the Chinese authorities have created an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty in their monastery. The police visited the monastery every now and then for "security checks."

"This disturbed our minds and disrupted the curriculum of the monastery. We could not concentrate on our studies in such an atmosphere," said Lobsang Sangay.

His colleague, Lobsang Thubten, said that if one visited the Drepung monastery during prayer congregations, one might see something like 480 monks. But this is not the actual number of monks allowed in Drepung by the Chinese authorities.

"Only about 90 monks have the permit to stay in the monastery. The rest of them do not have residence permits. They can be kicked out and even jailed for staying in the monastery," Lobsang Thubten said.

The young monks also said they witnessed a protest demonstration in Lhasa on July 17 by a group of 17 monks and nuns, including seven from Gaden monastery. Of the seven Gaden monks, three were arrested on the spot and severely beaten before being taken to jail. They were Dorjee, 24, born in Meldro, near Lhasa; Tseten Samdup, 17, born in Meldro Dongbu, near Lhasa; and Tsering Nyima, 17. They also reported that a nun, from the Tsang region of

southern Tibet, was arrested, beaten and taken to jail.

Nuns Kunsang, 19, and Dechen Chodon, 18, from Chubsang convent said the Chinese personnel frequently visited their convent for "socialist re-education" campaigns and security checks. Both the nuns were born in Meldro Gongkar, about 80 km east of Lhasa and left Tibet on June 24.

"They would give us long lectures on the 'evil ways of the old feudal system and the new socialist paradise' China had made of it," said Kunsang.

The nuns were also told that nothing will come out of their demonstrations of valour by one or two individuals, and warned that they would be killed if they ever tried to create further "disturbances."

"Men from Work Units insisted on taking up residence in the convent for 'security reasons,' making the 17-odd nuns feel extremely unsafe there," said Dechen Chodon.

The young nuns also reported that in mid-1991 the Chinese authorities arrested several nuns from their convent. Five of them were initially locked up in Gurtso prison, but were recently transferred to another prison in Chushor in Toelung district, west of Lhasa, where they are serving a three-year sentence.

They identified the five nuns as Tsultrim Sangmo, born in Meldro Gongkar, 80 km east of Lhasa; Gyaltzen Ngodup, born in Lhasa; Gyaltzen Dhanchoy, born in Reting, east of Lhasa; Tashi Dolkar, born in Toelung, west of Lhasa; and Phildorla, born in Nyethang, about 15 km west of Lhasa.

The young monks and the nuns said they now hope to receive blessings from His Holiness the Dalai Lama and continue their spiritual training in India.

By all accounts, it seems to appear that contrary to official Chinese claims, religious freedom in Tibet exists only on paper and for tourist consumption. The Chinese authorities even maintain that all the monasteries in Tibet were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution when China also suffered.

However, the Vice-Chairman of "TAR People's Government" had told a press attache of Germany's Chancellor Mr Helmut Kohl on July 17, 1987, that before (the Chinese occupation) 1959, there were 2,700 monasteries with 1,14,000 monks (in the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region). By 1966, when the Cultural Revolution began, only 440 monasteries with 6,000 monks remained. This account clearly proves that a large number of monasteries and monks in Tibet were wiped out before the Cultural Revolution. The Vice-Chairman of "TAR" also had said that in 1983 there were eight monasteries and 970 monks in the "Tibet Autonomous Region," which does not include the whole of Tibet.

Earthquake hits Tibet

According to *Radio Lhasa* broadcast on August 20, 340 households were affected by an earthquake which hit the village of Gyama Trikhong in Meldro Gongkar at 4.16am on August 17. The tremor measured 5.1 on the Richter scale, *Radio Lhasa* said.

The report said that "1190 rooms" were damaged, either partially or completely. The houses of seven families collapsed, injuring three people.

However, detailed reports of the damage suffered by the Tibetans were not available.

7 jailed for resisting socialist "re-education"

Gyama Trikhang, the home of clay-potteries and birthplace of the 7th century Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo, came alive once again on June 20 when seven Tibetans staged a demonstration against what the Chinese call "socialist re-education campaign," according to a delayed report reaching here from Lhasa.

Located in Meldro Gongkar county, some 80km to the east of Lhasa, Gyama Trikhang has been the scene of repeated Tibetan political protests against the Chinese rule.

"All the demonstrators were arrested," our source from Lhasa said, requesting anonymity for fear of reprisals by the Chinese authorities.

The report, however, did not specify when and where the demonstrators were arrested, but identified them as Thupten Yeshe, Samten Gyatso, Kunchok Lodro, Drugdrub and Sonam Rigzin from Dhashak village, and Lhaksam Dorjee and Sonam Dorje from Pana village. Both the villages are in Gyama Trikhang.

"Thupten Yeshe and Lhaksam Dorjee were taken to Meldro Gongkar Prison where they were severely beaten. The other five were taken to an unknown prison in Lhasa," the source reported.

The source said that the demonstration represented the general mood of resentment in Gyama against the socialist "re-education" campaign which China started in Tibet early this year. (see *Tibetan Bulletin*, March-April 1992).

"The Tibetan people are particularly incensed by the Chinese propaganda that Tibet was destined to remain under China forever," the source said.

Meanwhile, Tibet Information Network, a London-based independent information monitor, has

given a different version of the event and date of its occurrence.

It said that four Tibetan youths "were arrested in the village on 30th June after they disrupted an official meeting by shouting pro-independence slogans."

"An unconfirmed report said that three other people had been arrested for involvement in the incident (disrupting a re-education meeting) and were held in the Meldro Gongkar local jail," TIN added.

The names given in the TIN report matched four of the seven names sent to us from Lhasa, the only difference being that whereas one of the names given by the London-based news monitor is spelled as Sonam Rinchen, the report from Lhasa has spelled it as Sonam Rigzin.

The TIN report also said that "three farmers were arrested from their houses for 'counter-revolutionary activities' in March this year, and on 15th June three monks from the village were detained after staging a demonstration in Lhasa."

It could not be confirmed which of the two versions is more authentic. However, both the reports point to the fact that at least seven Tibetans were arrested in this village for resisting the Chinese socialist "re-education" campaign.

"The latest incident came at the end of several weeks of political re-education in the village... The *Gongzou Dui* or Work Team leading the re-education sessions held a further re-education meeting on the afternoon of 30th June, attended by several hundred villagers," the TIN report said.

It added, "As the afternoon meeting was coming to an end the four youths unfurled a Tibetan national flag and shouted slogans calling for Tibetan independence, for long life of

the Dalai Lama and for Chinese to go home."

Other members of the public joined in the slogans, TIN said, quoting "an unofficial source" as having said that the slogan shouting went on until the police appeared, armed with pistols and machine guns, ready to shoot.

"Another source said the local Party Secretary had drawn a pistol and had been about to fire into the air when he had been disarmed by villagers," the TIN report said. The Tibetan youths were reportedly transferred to Gurtso Prison in Lhasa.

The Socialist "re-education" campaign which China launched in Tibet sometime in the beginning of this year to strengthen its stranglehold on Tibet seems to have backfired in almost all the Tibetan villages and urban centres.

In January, the *Tibet Daily*, an official Chinese publication, reported that at the Tibet Communist Party meeting the authorities announced a decision to start from March a two-year programme to intensify socialist controls over Tibet.

However, the programme seems to have begun sometime in February as this would have had the added advantage of pre-empting possible independence demonstrations which in the past had tended to occur mainly around the time of Tibetan new year and the Tibetan National Uprising Day on March 10.

On February 18, *The Times*, London, reported that "China has launched a 'reeducation' campaign in rural Tibet in an attempt to crush the independence movement."

According to Ngawang Choephel, a human rights activist in Dharamsala, the Chinese have sent special units, like the Work Inspection Team and other Party-propaganda units to villages, towns and cities.

China steps up population transfer to Tibet

"Chinese Communist Party officials have called for Chinese to move to Tibet to participate in the recently announced economic opening," the International Campaign for Tibet recently reported.

The Washington, D.C.-based organisation quoted Chen Kuiyuan, deputy secretary of the "TAR Central Party Committee," as having said, "We should ... open our job market to all fellow countrymen."

Another Chinese Communist Party deputy secretary is reported to have gone on record for having called for "continuously inviting talented people (euphemism for Chinese immigrants) to work in the region." The region here means the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region, which only forms a part of Tibet.

According to Mr Norbu, a Tibetan who returned to Kathmandu after a recent visit to Tibet, "several hundred thousand Chinese immigrants are scheduled to arrive in Tibet before the end of this year."

Two other sources, requesting anonymity, confirmed that more than 100,000 Chinese settlers reached Tibet in June and July this year and that Lhoka, the site of Gongkar airport, and Kongpo, southern Tibet, are being prepared for the settlement of some one million "flood victims" from China.

Observers in Dharamsala say that to provide employment opportunities to the new settlers from China, the Chinese authorities may be putting the Kongpo region of Tibet on the top of the proposed tourist industry list.

Mr Norbu said that according to the Chinese government's 1992 plan, the new Chinese arrivals will be settled in rural areas of Tibet. During his recent visit to Lhasa, he observed that the Chinese population in the city outnumbered the Tibetans by ten to one.

"Since most of the business enterprises and job opportunities in urban centres are monopolised by Chinese immigrants, the Tibetan population is facing the problem of unemployment. This has the effect of forcing an increasing number of Tibetans to flee to India and Nepal. Unlike in the past, exit permits are issued more easily these days," Mr Norbu said.

Two Swiss-Tibetans, who reached Kathmandu on July 27 from Tibet, said large tracts of agricultural land in Changra-Shar and Yamathang in Phenpo, southern Tibet, are being prepared for the settlement of 300,000 Chinese immigrants.

They also said that they heard of a plan to settle many more Chinese in Tibet's rural areas.

"Besides, 10,000 immigrants will arrive in Meldro Gonkar, 80km east of Lhasa," one of them said.

Dhondup, a Tibetan resident of Boudhanath, who reached Kathmandu on July 31 from Tibet, said the Chinese will not arrive at one time, but in several batches and under different pretexts.

"The Chinese have also relaxed restrictions on Tibetans leaving Tibet. Permits to leave Tibet are issued more freely these days. Usually, the authorities do not refuse permission unless the applicants are thought to be potential sources of political embarrassment for China," he said.

Tibetans are worried about this alarming development of the Chinese population transfer to Tibet.

Mr Tsering Wangchuk, a long-time China watcher and former reporter of *Radio Lhasa* in Tibet, said, "China seems to be aiming at the proverbial Final Solution, which is to overwhelm the small Tibetan population with millions and millions of Chinese settlers."

The Tibetan China observer feels that it is in the context of these disturbing reports that one should look at the recent Chinese decision to open Tibet economically to foreign investments.

"The decision may sound sweet, but if one takes into consideration China's past development policies in Tibet, plus the recent reports from visitors to Tibet, one can clearly see that it is nothing more than a double-edged sword," he said.

He said that to the outside world, China can project a very good image of itself. They will say, "See, how benevolent we are being to the Tibetans."

"But in reality, this fits in very well with their scheme of things. This new economic policy will only increase job prospects for the Chinese in Tibet, facilitating their on-going policy of population transfer. Also because of their entrepreneurial skill, buttressed by support and incentives from the government, the new settlers are going to gobble up all the new opportunities, and much of those held by Tibetans at present. This will leave Tibetans with no choice, but move elsewhere to make a living," Mr Wangchuk said.

He said that by such a calculated move, the Chinese seem to be creating all the conditions necessary for the flight of the Tibetans from their own land.

"The net result of all these moves will be to turn Tibet into a veritable China, where the Tibetans are reduced to nothing more than a tiny and an insignificant minority, which they already are. Moreover, the Tibetans in occupied-Tibet are being used as an attractive bait for tourists and foreign investment," he said.

In the whole of Tibet, including "TAR," the Chinese outnumber Tibetans by 7.6 to 6.1 million.

Life in Chinese prison: Former prisoner speaks

Penpa, a wall painter in Lhasa, was 18 when the Chinese arrested him in the wake of the independence demonstrations in March 1989 which led to the imposition of martial law in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet. He has spent three years in prison. In this testimony, he recollects the horror of prison life in Chinese-occupied Tibet and speaks of vicious criminals being used to intimidate political prisoners.

It must have been around 1 or 2 pm when I was suddenly awakened out of sleep by a loud banging on my door. It was March 8, 1989. A few hours earlier, the Chinese authorities had declared martial law in Lhasa to quell three days of protest demonstrations by the Tibetans. I had participated in the independence demonstration and distributed the banned Tibetan national flag improvised on papers. And this was the reason for the mid-night knock on my door.

We hardly had time to get dressed when the police dragged my brother and me from our house. The next moment we found ourselves in the Public Security Bureau detention centre. It was already teeming with Tibetan prisoners. At the detention centre, we were severely beaten and prodded with electric batons.

A few hours later they took us to Drapchi Prison and locked us up for 15 days. Almost all the inmates of Drapchi were Tibetans, most being held for political reasons. Torture was commonplace there. Beating was routine and the prison guards followed this with bestial viciousness.

We were kicked, punched and hit with sticks, and fed with a miserly supply of food. In a day, we got two cups of black tea and one *ting-momo* (steamed bun).

We had no change of clothes and no bed clothes whatsoever. One day, the prisoners protested against the poor food and flung their cups on the ground saying, "What is the point of keeping empty cups when we cannot get food?" The Chinese reacted by

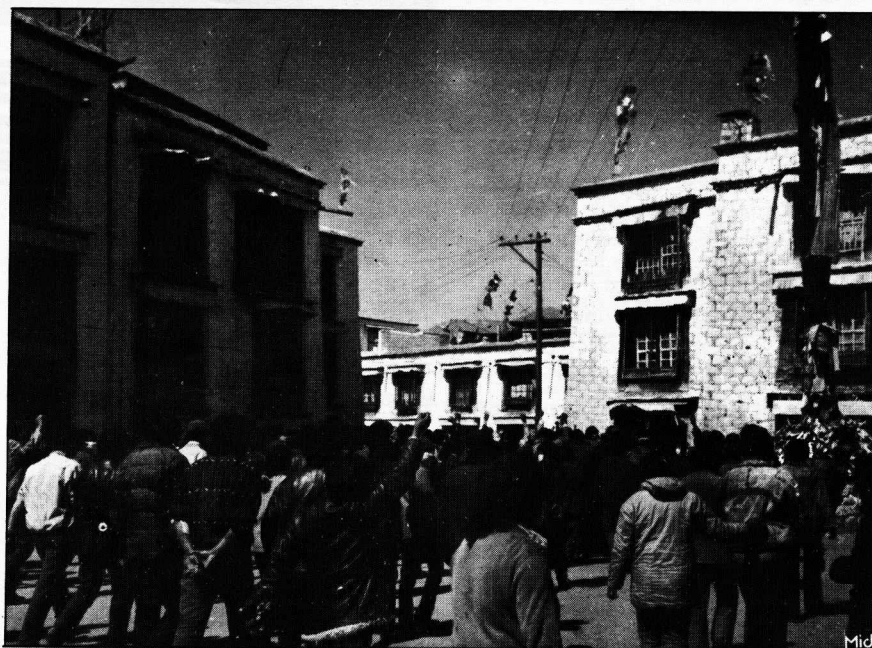
subjecting us to another round of beating. Unfortunately, I don't remember the date when this happened.

After Drapchi, I was sent to Sangyib Prison and detained in a section called "Old Truwu 4." The Old Truwu 4 consisted of six single-storeyed rectangular buildings, each having ten cells. The buildings were not of the same size, two were bigger. In the smaller buildings, there were five prisoners in each cell, while in the bigger ones there were about thirty in every cell.

As soon as we reached there, we were beaten with electric rods. We were made to run with cuffs put on our hands and ankles. Our arms and legs were pulled wide apart and tied so that

it made the movement painfully difficult. One of the most dreaded punishment was to make the prisoner hold a red hot electric metal tube which, apart from scaling the hand, gave such a big shock that the holder fainted as soon as he touched it.

Invariably, the torture sessions were accompanied by interrogations, led mainly by a Tibetan and a Chinese officer. Common questions were: Who were with you during the demonstration? What slogans did you raise? How can you prove that Tibet was ever an independent country? Does any historical record say so? Or has someone been telling you this? Who instigated you to demonstrate? How did you plan it? Whose backing



Tibetans demonstrating in the north-eastern part of Jokhang, March 5, 1989

did you have? From where did you get the courage to demonstrate?

On June 4, 1989, after about three months of captivity, the Chinese authorities formally labelled ten of us prisoners as if we had been free before that date. The nine other names announced were: Agar Dhondup, age 23, birthplace Lhasa; Choeden, age 29, birthplace Lhokha; Chungdak, age 23, birthplace Lhasa; Damdul, age 28, birthplace Lhasa; Pasang, age 26, birthplace Lhasa; Dawa, age 28, birthplace Lhasa; Tenzin, age 18,

international standard, our date of arrest should have been 8 rather than 7 March. However, for Tibetans every new date begins only with day break and not before that, and since we were taken in the night following March 7, we considered ourselves as being seized on that day.

In July they presented us in Lhasa People's Middle Court, which passed on us jail sentences ranging from one to three years. I got three years in the jail, followed by a year deprived of "political rights."

five or a group of political prisoners. About 90 inmates were singled out and put in this group. It was announced that the members of this group would face more stringent penalties. There was a Tibetan convict by the name of Tsering Dorjee whom the Chinese appointed as the man in-charge of the newly-formed group.

The decision to appoint Tsering Dorjee was a calculated move, aimed at striking terror in the hearts of the political prisoners. Apart from being a running dog of the Chinese, he had a

"Almost all the inmates of Drapchi were Tibetans, most being held for political reasons. Torture was commonplace there."

This photo of Drapchi Prison was taken by A. Poux for Menschenrechte, a bi-monthly journal of International Society for Human Rights in Germany.



birthplace Lhasa; Nyima, age 25; and Busang, age 24, birthplace Phenpo.

With this pronouncement, we were despatched to another section of Sangyib, called New Truwu 4. However, for some inconceivable reasons, they kept us there only for a night. The next day, we were sent back to the previous prison, where they subjected us to another round of torture session in order to force us to remove the date "March 7, 1989" which we had tattooed on our arms. We tattooed this date to show the date of our arrest. By

The ten of us were then shifted to Drapchi Prison. At that time, the prisoners in Drapchi were divided into four groups, and I was a part of group number two. It was in Drapchi that I had the privilege of meeting some of the heroes of Tibetan independence movement. I saw Venerable Yulu Dawa Tsering and Venerable Lob-sang Tenzin in group number one, and Venerable Sonam Wangdu (alias Shungden) in group number four.

In January 1990 they formed a new group. This was to be group number

brutal temperament. A former prison guard, Dorjee was jailed for having shot dead a fellow officer while in a state of drunkenness. Small wonder, he perpetrated acts of extreme cruelties on the prisoners under his charge.

To understand the general conditions of the Tibetan prisoners of conscience, it may be useful to study the fates of some of them.

Venerable Sonam Wangdu (Shungden) was beaten so severely that today he cannot walk without the help of crutches. They broke some-

thing near his waist or back, rendering the lower portion of his back completely useless. Frequently, the prison guards ridiculed and taunted him by pulling off his crutches. Sometimes, they would challenge him to walk without his crutches.

Venerable Lobsang Tenzin was made to run for about half a day with his hands and feet shackled and a heavy rock balanced on his back. Pretending it to be some form of physical exercise, they would push him while he is running. Because of the starvation-level diet and frail health, he collapsed every now and then. And every time he failed to get up, they would drag him in front of other inmates and beat him violently. They even shaved parts of his hair in a grotesque style for their amusement.

Food and other provisions allotted to each prisoner per month was worth RMB 35.00 (approx. US\$ 7.00). But the labour they extracted from each one of us, according to my estimate, was worth anything between RMB 12,600.00 (US\$ 2,520) to RMB 16,000.00. We had no alternative but to do their bidding. It was a penalty one could not evade in the prison.

Indeed, we owe our lives to our compatriots whose generosity saved us from death by starvation. They sent us food and other necessities whenever they managed to please the prison guards.

I had spent about a year in Draphchi, when on April 28, 1991 the Chinese authorities announced that five of us, including Venerable Lobsang Tenzin, Venerable Tenpa Wangdrak, Venerable Gyaldhar and Venerable Tenpa Phulchung, would have to go to Kongpo, southern Tibet. Escorted by 12 armed personnels, and the dreaded convict Tsering Dorjee, we were driven off in two vehicles. Our hands and legs were shackled.

Two days and one night of bone-shaking ride took us to Dhamchu

Prison. There are two big prisons in Tramo. Damshung Prison is called Prison Number Two, while Dzona Prison is Prison Number One. There were some 200 prisoners in Damshung and about 300 in Dzona. As soon as we reached Damshung, the Chinese threw Venerable Lobsang Tenzin and Venerable Tenzin Wangdrak separately into a tiny, dark, cubical cell. They did not even bother to remove their shackles. This was their second stint in such a cell. Earlier, on June 12, 1990, the two monks had suffered the same solidarity confinement in Draphchi Prison.

In a painful farewell message, the Tibetan freedom fighters and prisoners of conscience exhorted me to serve as their voice in the free world

Known as Jingchi Chui in Chinese, these cells are veritable dungeons, the only difference being they are overground. They hardly have enough room to fit one person. The remaining three of us prisoners were luckier. They put us together in a different cell, where there were five other political prisoners from Chamdo, one of the biggest towns in eastern Tibet.

The five Tibetans from Chamdo were held for distributing leaflets and posters advocating Tibetan independence. Lobsang Tashi was a monk of Lharong monastery and was condemned to five years of imprisonment. Gyatso Dzogang Khangsar was a businessman serving a five-year term. Jamyang was a road construction worker also serving a five-year term. Lobsang Nyima and Ajo, both monks of Chamdo monastery, were serving three years of jail sentence. Life in this prison was much more severe than the former two because it employed more

varieties of torture methods, some extremely brutal.

The food in this prison consisted of a small amount of *Tsampa* (roasted barley) filled with sands, and three rounds of one-cup black tea. Once in a while, they gave us small amounts of pork discarded by the prison guards. This was really a big treat.

Here, the prisoners had to work in the fields, from 8:30 in the morning until 9:00 in the evening. Sometimes, we had to work late into the night till around 1:00 am. Hard physical labour, coupled with poor food, wrecked the health of many prisoners. I particularly remember the case of one monk, Tenpa Wangdrak, who lost his eyesight due to malnutrition.

After three years of imprisonment, I was released on March 19, 1992. This was my first taste of freedom, however limited it may have been. In a painful farewell message, the Tibetan freedom fighters and prisoners of conscience exhorted me to serve as their voice in the free world. Thus, I decided to escape to India. I cannot but admire the courage and determination of my countrymen in the Chinese prisons. They are braving so much physical suffering to keep alive the cause of Tibet. If this story galvanizes even one individual into some kind of action for the cause of Tibet, it will serve as food for the spirits of those people, whose bodies are starving.

Prisoner suspended from ceiling

A Tibetan prisoner says he was hung from the ceiling of his cell for over a month after taking part in a prison protest last year, according to a personal statement received by TIN. The protest was in support of Tibetan independence.

"They chained my thumbs together and hung me up by my hands from the roof," said the monk, who is reported to be in mid-thirties.

Police threaten environmental protestors

Tibetans in occupied-Tibet have mounted a "widespread wall-poster campaign" to protest mineral exploration in Meldro Gongkar, according to an appeal sent to the Tibetan government in exile in Dharamsala.

The appeal in Tibetan, translated and released by the Human Rights Desk of the Department of Information and International Relations, states that the People's Armed Police were deployed "all over the village to take actions if we continued our protests."

The campaign occurred in the village of Gyama Trikhang in Meldro Gongkar, 80 km east of Lhasa, is believed to have taken place on April 28, 1992.

The appeal states that villagers are being forced to cut trees and that large-scale mining operations are depleting local water supplies.

It asserts that Tibetans are not allowed near the mining areas and calls upon the international community to intervene and protect their land from misuse and pressure China to put an immediate stop on the mineral exploration.

The following is an extract of their appeal:

When the Chinese authorities began preparing roads and other facilities for mineral exploration in our area, we, the people and leaders of the village, raised many objections against these Chinese intentions.

We even opposed these happenings by carrying out widespread wall poster campaigns against it. All these appeals went in vain.

However, the Chinese claim that they have all the rights... They further said that we had no right to stop or oppose their mineral explorations or extractions. Not finding these threats enough, they deployed Armed Police

Force all over the village to take actions if we continued our protests.

Every day 10 truck-loads of minerals are being taken away from our land. Due to these mineral explorations our water resources are drying.

In July 1988, an unusual hail-storm destroyed all our harvest which brought further hardship to our people.

Since 1959, the Chinese authorities have only brought suffering to the people of this remote village... there are no signs of improvement in the living standards of over 2,600 Tibetans in this village since the Chinese came.

Worst of all, today we are faced with problems of an emerging hot climate and drought.

These days, the Chinese use all kinds of method to bombard the mountains in their greed for diamond extraction... Lead and gold are the other minerals which are being extracted. The people of the village have never been allowed near these exploration sites.

So please, help us. With our prayers that "May we be Free from the hell of an alien occupation. May we see His Holiness as soon as possible."

Mining project in Tibet harming Tibetans

The following report has been contributed by Mr Kunga Tashi, research officer of the Research and Analysis Centre, Central Tibetan Administration, Dharamsala:

The expansion of a multi-mineral mine in Gyama Trikhang in Meldro Gongkar, near Lhasa, is the ninth of the 15 projects announced by the Chinese authorities for foreign investment in occupied Tibet.

This mine, according to Chinese geologists, holds the following minerals: copper, 372,600 tonnes; lead, 656,100 tonnes; zinc, 118,600 tonnes; and silver, 401,000 tonnes.

In 1990 the Chinese authorities

began building roads to transport the products of this mine.

The road building was completed in 1991 and since then small scale mining has been going on.

When the authorities first announced their plan to build the roads, the local Tibetans requested them to call off the project.

The Tibetans knew that mining would degenerate soil nutrition and affect their life style.

The authorities, however, spurned the Tibetan appeal, saying that it was the order of the Chinese Central Government.

The project dislocated the Lhamo Khangsar household, located behind the Tekhang household. Another household, Lhamo Khangsar, also located near the Tekhang, lost its grain-threshing ground.

This angered the Tibetans and some of them put up wall posters exhorting the Tibetans to fight for their freedom.

"The fact that we have no say on our own land is because we do not have freedom," the wall posters said. The Chinese authorities later tracked down the authors of these wall posters and arrested three Tibetans, Karma, Monlam, and Gyatso, on February 26, 1992.

The expansion of this mine, according to Chinese authorities, would cost RMB 50 million. It has also been reported that once completed, the mine will produce minerals worth RM 8.3 million per year.

The local Tibetans, however, feel that expansion of this mine will further affect their lives and the environment. Environment-conscious foreign investors, including overseas Chinese, are therefore requested, despite attractive concessions from China's side, to think carefully before making any commitment toward the expansion of this mine in the sacred land of Gyama Trikhang, the birthplace of Tibet's Dharma-king Songtsen Gampo.

No euphoria in Dharamsala over opening of Tibet

Tibetans welcome the Chinese decision to open Tibet's economy as "a step in the right direction," but fear that "China might use the opening up to speed up the population transfer of Chinese into Tibet," Kalon Tashi Wangdi, Minister for the Information and International Relations of the Tibetan Administration in exile, said in a press statement issued in Geneva on August 14.

"The principle issue is who the new policy is intended to benefit. If it is for the benefit of the Tibetan people, then it must be the Tibetans, and not the Chinese, who make decisions on economic development and foreign investment. Development projects must be in accord with the needs and wishes of Tibetans. The decision-making must be in the hands of Tibetans and the benefits of the economic development must be for the Tibetan population. Otherwise, China's move will be yet another instrument of colonial administration and exploitation," the Tibetan minister said.

He pointed out that "in the past, economic development projects in Tibet have been primarily for the benefit of Chinese settlers in Tibet and for the Central Chinese government in Beijing."

Kalon Tashi Wangdi also expressed the concern that "China will use the opening up to speed up the population transfer of Chinese into Tibet. We have long believed that China plans to resolve the Tibetan question finally by making Tibetans an insignificant minority in their own country. China literally hope to drown Tibetans in a sea of Chinese."

The Tibetan minister said that foreign investment may provide the infrastructure which Tibet lacked so far to absorb large-scale Chinese population transfer into Tibet.

Reporting on China's decision to open Tibet to foreign investment and technology, the official Chinese mouthpiece *Tibet Daily* on August 3 said foreigners would be able to buy land-use rights and take advantage of a new economic and technical development zone in Lhasa, which will offer incentives like those in China's open coastal areas.

Tibet Daily also reported that the Chinese government will link Gongkar airport with Peking, Hong Kong, and Chongqing in Sihuan.

At present, the airport is connected only to Kathmandu and Chengdu, the capital city of Sichuan.

Eulogising the decision to open Tibet's economy, an editorial in *Tibet Daily* said, "Earnestly implementing this decision has important significance for speeding up Tibet's economic development, maintaining the unity of the motherland, strengthening the unity of nationalities and further deepening the superiority of the socialist system."

Tashi Phuntsok, general secretary of Tibetan Youth Congress, however, said that economic development of the Tibetan people is not what the Chinese leadership has in mind, and added that they only want to advertise their economic liberalisation policy in China and show the world that China is not going the way of the erstwhile Soviet Union.

"Tibet, in any way, does not have the infrastructure necessary to support foreign investments and the Tibetan people do not have the education and skill necessary for this kind of enterprises. Naturally, the employment opportunities will go to new Chinese immigrants," he said. He further said that the need of the hour is to educate the Tibetans to become self-reliant and eventually absorb the foreign investment for the betterment

of the Tibetan people alone.

Kunga Tashi of the Research and Analysis Centre of the Tibetan Administration, however, feels that it is not exactly true to say that Tibetans will gain nothing from it.

"After all, China will have to show the world that they have done something for the Tibetans. And they can show this only by improving the lot, however limited it may be, of the urban Tibetans, who can easily be seen by foreigners," he said, adding that in rural areas the Chinese will make sure that the benefits go only to the Chinese. There they need not worry about prying foreign eyes."

Like other Tibetans, Kunga Tashi's main fear is that China may, indeed, succeed in softening the Tibetan nationalist sentiment.

"Improved economic opportunities do raise the possibility of sucking the Tibetans into the business of making-money," he said.

Meanwhile, some analysts predict that China may be preparing Tibet for the resettlement of over a million Chinese who will be displaced by the proposed Yangtze River Three Gorges Project. International environmentalists have described this as the worst of the world's 20 harmful projects. They say that once completed, this project may expel a further two or three million Chinese from their lands. "And where will they go?" "Only to Tibet," these analysts say.

In a recent testimony to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee on July 28, Sydney Jones, executive director of Asia Watch, said, "Chinese economic development policies are threatening the culture and ethnic identity of Tibetans, the way such policies virtually destroyed the social fabric of the Uighur population in Xinjiang and Mongol population in Inner Mongolia."

A million Chinese may settle in Gormo

The Chinese are going to exploit the rich mineral resources of Gormo in Amdo, located in the north-eastern part of the Tibetan Plateau, according to Tenzin P. Atisha, the environment officer of the Department of Information and International Relations.

More than 85 percent of the materials of Tibet are either stored here or transferred through the city to China, as this is the last terminal point in Tibet for the Chinese railway network, Mr Atisha recently told the *Tibetan Bulletin*.

Quoting a July-3, 1992 report in *Xinhua*, the official Chinese news agency, Mr Atisha said that the reserves of sodium, magnesium, potassium, lithium, strontium and other minerals in the Charhan Lake in the suburbs of Gormo rank first in China. The salt reserves in the lake are said to be more than 60 billion tonnes.

The *Xinhua* report said that, "Golmud (Tib: Gormo) in Qinghai(Amdo) province is to establish a Kunlun Economic Development Zone to focus on exploiting mineral resources..."

"In the name of development, thousands more, if not a million, Chinese will be forced to migrate to Gormo for permanent settlement," said Mr Atisha.

Is China dumping nuclear waste in Tibet?

The Environment Desk of the DIIR says that according to its information, there is little doubt that China is dumping its nuclear waste in Tibet.

But if this is not the case, the desk wonders where China is burying the wastes from the thermo-nuclear processing plant it has built in Tewa Zorge in Amdo in north-eastern Tibet. Moreover, it also says there are

a few other nuclear weapons factories in Tibet.

There have been reports in the Western media in the past that China had allowed countries like Germany and Switzerland to bury their nuclear wastes in Tibet to generate foreign exchange. Taiwan has reportedly dumped its nuclear waste in Tibet.

The Tibetan environment desk is of the opinion that if China is confident of its claim that "Tibet is a pure land without nuclear pollution," then it should agree to an International Monitoring Commission to investigate all incidents of nuclear waste disposal in Tibet.

On June 1, 1992, a Chinese newspaper in Hong Kong, however, reported an authoritative person as having disclosed in Peking that the Chinese have not buried nuclear waste in Tibet and that it had not approved a proposal of the "Tibet Autonomous Regional Government" for building a nuclear power station in Tibet.

In the past, the Chinese plan to build a nuclear power station in the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region was opposed by the late Panchen Lama. When the plan came up, the Panchen Lama on December 24, 1986, had said:

"To build a nuclear power station in Tibet, we have to deeply think from three different angles: finance, expertise and political. Before building such a nuclear power station, numerous investigation must be carried out. I do not see much reason in the argument put forward by the authorities that nuclear power station will bring great economic benefits. On the other hand, we have to closely study and consider the negative aspects of a nuclear power station. Tibetan region is different from other regions and is especially sensitive politically. What will happen tomorrow if the people demonstrate against it? This will become one issue which will be difficult to control..."

His Holiness' birthday celebrated in Lhasa

According to a recent report from Lhasa, about 10,000 Tibetans defied the Chinese ban and converged on Trunpla spot, about 10km to the east of Barkhor, to celebrate the birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Two nuns waved the Tibetan national flag and shouted Tibetan independence slogans, the report said.

The Tibetans gathered in the evening in the foreground of the Jokhang and held a grand *sangsol* (atmosphere purification ritual which involves burning of fir). They later danced and sang opera songs, the report said.

Days before the occasion, the authorities had ordered residents of Lhasa not to organise any kind of activity on July 6. Even the drivers had been ordered not to ferry anyone to Trunpla on that day.

Trunpla is the traditional site for celebrating the birthdays of the Dalai Lamas, which was banned since the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1959.

On July 6, 1986 about 20 Tibetans went to Trunpla for a secretive celebration of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's birthday, said Mr Kalsang Namgyal, a young Tibetan activist who escaped from Tibet in 1990. This was the first time since 1959 that His Holiness' birthday was celebrated at the traditional site.

In 1988 a larger celebration was held at Trunpla and a huge Tibetan flag was seen strung between two willow trees.

A very high-profile celebration was held by a mammoth gathering on the same day in 1989. Tibetan flag printed on papers was seen stuck up on electricity poles, willow trees and walls. Beneath the flag there was a tri-lingual text in Tibetan, English and Chinese, praying for the long life of His Holiness and exhorting the Tibetans to unite and stand up to the Chinese ruler.

"We have lost our country, but not our rationality"

Mr Jigme Ngapo is the research officer at the Washington, D.C.-based International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), and co-editor of Tibet Forum, an independently-funded Chinese language newsletter. He is the son of Ngapo Ngawang Jigme, 81, who, under duress from the invading Chinese forces, signed the so-called 17-Point Agreement on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet in 1951 and is presently the Vice-President of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and Chairman of the Standing Committee of the People's Congress of the "Tibet Autonomous Region."

Born in 1951 in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, Mr Jigme Ngapo received his early education in Lhasa and Beijing, the capital of China. In 1968, he was sent to the countryside in Inner Mongolia to receive "re-education" during the Cultural Revolution. He remained there for four years. He then attended the Inner Mongolia Normal University and the Central Institute of Nationalities, Beijing. Between 1975 and 1978, he taught at a high school and college in Lhasa.

Prior to his departure to India in 1985, Mr Jigme Ngapo was a research fellow in the Tibet Studies at the Central Institute of Nationalities. Later he left for the United States and in 1990 completed his graduation from the University of Virginia.

In the middle of July, Mr Jigme Ngapo paid a week-long visit to Dharamsala and agreed to speak extensively to the Tibetan Bulletin. Following are excerpts from the interview:

Tibetan Bulletin: Since when have you been working for the ICT and what is the nature of your work?

Jigme Ngapo: Basically, I work as a political analyst. I do some analysis work on the situation in China and in Tibet. Also in the United States, I try to reach out to the Chinese students and scholars. I am also one of the editors of *Tibet Forum*, a Chinese language newsletter, published quarterly with private donations.

TB: When was *Tibet Forum* started and what is its circulation and basic aims and objectives?

JN: *Tibet Forum* was started in 1988 after the demonstrations in Tibet. Being a student in the United States and a Tibetan who can read and write in Chinese, we read a lot about Tibet from the Chinese press in the United States. There were lots of ignorance and bias about Tibet.

We felt an urgent need to tell the real situation in Tibet to the Chinese readers. We hoped that through this large Chinese students community, more and more people in China will have a better understanding of the Tibetan issue.

Our readership is about 3,000. It is mostly distributed free of cost to Chinese students and scholars in the



United States. And although expensive, we even mail it to Beijing, Lhasa, Amdo (north eastern Tibet), Kham (eastern Tibet). We also mail every issue to Deng Xiaoping. But I don't know if he gets it.

TB: How do the Chinese students and scholars respond to *Tibet Forum*?

JN: There is a growing demand from the Chinese students. We really want to expand our readership and we want to reach out to as many people as possible. We receive letters from Tibet and China. We also receive many letters from the Chinese students in the

United States. Some time ago, we did a survey about their knowledge of Tibet. We had a very good response. Very soon we will be publishing the results of this survey. It's very interesting.

TB: From your experience, how do the Chinese students and scholars react to the issue of Tibet?

JN: This is a good question. I would say the attitude of the Chinese students towards the Tibetan issue is changing. Few years back it was very difficult to talk about Tibet with them because of the education they had in China, the government propaganda and some traditional Chinese concept of Tibet being a part of China.

However, since 1987 when independence demonstrations occurred in Lhasa, followed by martial law, and particularly after the Tiananmen massacre, there has been a tremendous awareness about the situation in Tibet among the Chinese students and scholars. They realised that something went wrong in Tibet and that the Chinese propaganda is not always right. But many of them are still ignorant about Tibet.

So we have a lot of work to do. We have to reach out to the Chinese stu-

dents and tell them about the truth of Tibet, its history, the relationship between Tibet and China - historically and currently. Presently, we are trying to raise a discussion among the Chinese students and scholars about Tibet's future and our future relationship with China. So generally speaking, there are a lot of changes and most of these are very positive.

TB: Do you think the Chinese movement for democracy being launched outside China has any chance of gaining control of the government in Beijing?

JN: This is hard to tell. Basically, I feel the main force for democracy is not outside China. It is the Chinese people living in China. For any change of government, the major role must be played by the people inside China. But the people outside China, such as those involved with the movement for democracy, should and can play an important role.

If you trace back the Chinese history, in early this century, when the Ching dynasty was overthrown, the revolution was actually led by Dr. Sun Yat Sen, who lived in Japan and Honolulu. Many of the Chinese revolutionaries launched their movement from outside China. But the main force was the Chinese people inside China.

I cannot say for sure which party or organisation will control China's future government. But I would say the future democratic government will be comprised of democratic elements from both inside and outside China.

TB: Should democracy triumph in China, do you think it will be much easier to resolve the issue of Tibet?

JN: Being the most populous country in the world, it will not be easy for China to enjoy full democracy. However, if there is some sort of a free democratic society in China, I think

the issue of Tibet is more likely to be resolved.

TB: How about chances of resolving the Tibetan issue under the present Chinese regime?

JN: Under the present regime, I really don't see any possibility of major changes in Tibet. These old guards are the people who founded the People's Republic of China, founded the party, the army. These so-called leaders of the people believe in "power out of the barrel of a gun." They actually planned, implemented and personally participated in the so-called Liberation of Tibet, the so-called Democratic Reforms in Tibet, the suppression of the Tibetan people, the so-called Cultural Revolution, and so on. So I cannot imagine any fundamental change of policy towards Tibet under the current Chinese leadership.

However, I think it is worthwhile for us to continue our dialogue with China - to tell the Chinese government and people about what we want, what we feel about our future. We must also let the world know of our sincerity in pursuing a peaceful resolution, and that we are a very reasonable people. We lost our country, we lost our freedom. But we have not lost our rationality.

At the moment, the Chinese authorities are bringing many changes in Tibet. Although most of these are focused on economic development and are politically motivated, but like it or not, a deep economic reform will ultimately lead to more political reforms which will run counter to what the Chinese authorities wish. This might open some opportunities for us to be engaged in the process of Tibet's future development, economically and politically from within Tibet.

So it is very important for us to carefully study the situation, explore the opportunities, get engaged in the process, try to lead it to a more positive

way, and at the same time not surrender our main goals. This is a tough task for all of us.

TB: As a China watcher and having studied in China for years, how would you describe the Chinese feeling towards the issue of Tibet during both the pre- and post-Tiananmen Square event?

JN: In 1959, when I was young, the Chinese government launched a very powerful campaign against the so-called old Tibet. It tried to portray old Tibet as extremely backward, barbarious, and reactionary. It tried to create a picture among the Chinese people of how old Tibet was a horrible hell in the world. And as a school boy in Beijing, we really felt discrimination against Tibetans. We were labelled as barbarians and were said to be "liberated" by an advanced nation.

So there was a lot of discrimination against the Tibetan culture, religion, history, and so on. By doing so, the Chinese government obviously wanted to justify its "Liberation of Tibet." And I would say to a great extent the Chinese people did believe what their government told them because they did not have any other information which was different from the official propaganda. So being a Tibetan at that time in Beijing was not very pleasant.

I left China in 1985. This was before the Tiananmen Square tragedy. At that time not many people were concerned about Tibet. They did not care. The majority of the Chinese people really did not know much about Tibet. The only thing they knew were what the government propaganda told them, the education they received from school.

But after Tiananmen, I do not know what the people inside China think about Tibet. However, we have some contact with Chinese students and scholars who came out of China after the Tiananmen. They say that the

massacre in Beijing took place just a few months after the Lhasa demonstrations, killings and the martial law. At the time when martial law was declared in Lhasa, they admitted that most of the Chinese students did not care. But a few months later when demonstrations took place in Beijing and martial law was imposed, they say even the language used by the Chinese government in its statements were similar to the language used to justify martial law in Lhasa. So after comparing these two very similar events, many people in China realised that the government's version of the situation in Tibet was not true.

TB: Currently, the Chinese government is launching the socialist "re-education" campaign in Tibet. Why do you think it is again enforcing such a programme? Will it succeed?

JN: The Chinese government feels that there is a real crisis — a decline in the peoples' faith in the government, the communist party, socialism, motherland. So it is trying to revitalise their loyalty. But I don't think they will succeed. The Tibetan people are tired of these sort of political campaigns.

TB: Will the Chinese government collapse and will there be chaos in China after the death of China's supreme leader Deng Xiaoping?

JN: It is hard to say. There is a possibility, however, that after the death of Deng Xiaoping, there may be some chaos, even civil war in China. I cannot totally rule out this possibility.

There is also a possibility that after Deng, a more pragmatic leadership will show up. Maybe this new leadership will be more responsive to the demands of the people and more sensitive to international pressure and the worldwide trend for change.

But it is very hard to predict about the future leadership in China. I think Li Peng does not have a very good chance of survival. He is not a very

popular figure in China. It is possible the military will take control of the government or Zhao Ziyang may make a come back. But generally speaking, it is the old guards who work behind the scene and control the communist party and the government. The frontline leaders like Li Peng and Jiang Zemin (Chinese Communist Party's general secretary) are politically very weak. They lack power base and owe their government positions to the old guards who want them to be there. However, after the old guards leave the world, or if there is a democratic system of elections, their replacement is imminent.

But presently, it is not only the leadership, the whole country is changing. The society in China is changing because of the rapid economic development in the recent years. People are earning more money. They are becoming more individualistic and materialistic. They are less interested in the party line and becoming more pragmatic. Also because of their education and more contact with the outside world, they are beginning to demand personal freedom. As such, despite the current communist government's efforts to impose a strict political control, the people are moving in a different direction.

So after the death of Deng Xiaoping even if there may be some hardliners controlling the country, it will be very difficult to find another man who is as powerful as Deng, and who can effectively rule the country. Also the local governments are now becoming more and more autonomous. And China as a highly centralised country, after Deng's death, I would say all these provinces will be demanding more autonomy. The central authority will no longer be able to impose its will on the local governments. Change in China is inevitable, no matter how much the government tries to stop.

TB: When such a change comes, what chances are there for regaining Tibet's independence?

JN: A democratic China does not necessarily mean an independent Tibet. Most of the people in the democratic movement are sympathetic to the Tibetan situation. But they may not agree to an independent Tibet. However, I think, a democratic China will provide a good opportunity for the Tibetan people to pursue goals like freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, freedom of religion.

Take the former Soviet Union. The republics there never had any chance under any of the authoritarian regimes, not to mention Stalin's period. Even under the Brezhnev period they had no chance, whatsoever, to pursue their nationalist movements. But when Gorbachev came to power, there was some sort of relaxation, some openness, glasnost. These republics were able to launch their movements. So I feel a free Tibet is more likely under a democratic China than under the current totalitarian regime.

TB: About your father, some people say he is a traitor. Others say he gave in to the Chinese because of the circumstances he found himself at the time. What is your opinion?

JN: Yes, I am aware of this. I think the whole issue is too simplified. The reason why some people call him a traitor is because he lost the battle of Chamdo, for instance. Secondly, he signed the 17-point agreement and I guess it is also because in 1959 he did not leave Tibet. However, I think the truth is not that simple.

In 1950 when the Chinese troops entered Tibet, the country was ill-prepared for an invasion. After gaining victory in China, the People's Liberation Army was at the height of its strength. They had just defeated the Kuomintang, they had a war with Japan for eight years. Before the

Japanese war, the Red Army went through the Long March and the new Republic was just founded.

On the other hand, in the wake of this rapid development, Tibet was not well prepared to face a powerful neighbour. Given that particular historical moment, when there were hundreds and thousands of Chinese troops surrounding Tibet, it was not possible for about 5,000 to 6,000 Tibetan troops to resist the powerful invading army. May be a very able general might have resisted for a few more days. But the ultimate failure was inevitable because the country was not prepared.

The reason why Tibet was not fully prepared is, as we all know, we missed many opportunities during the reign of the 13th Dalai Lama. After his passing away, there were numerous power struggles. The elites were only concerned about their well-being and basically, there were very strong conservative forces in the Tibetan society, who resisted and did not welcome any kind of democratic change or modernisation. So although Tibet was defeated by China in 1950, we really

need to think of what went wrong from our side.

It is much better to learn lessons from the past. Particularly, in this century, we lost so many opportunities. From 1911 to 1950, many countries in the world became independent. But the Tibetans did not work hard for a modern nation state and were rather preoccupied with a lot of internal problems. So we need to learn from these lessons and see what really went wrong from a historical perspective.

The 17-point agreement, as we know, was signed under duress. There was no other choice. The Chinese army anyway was ready to move into Tibet. The Chinese are very good at this. You will learn from history that they first defeat your army and then invite you for a talk. If you don't, they will walk in. The Chinese, in their culture, even have developed a specific term for this sort of strategy. It is called "Cheng Sha Tri Meng," and means the treaty signed under the walls of the city. In the old days many small kingdoms were surrounded by big walls and the invading Chinese army surrounded this whole place, the

whole wall, and then would force the ruler of that kingdom to sign a treaty, because if you don't sign they will walk in.

Q: Prior to the Chinese invasion, your father was one of the cabinet ministers of the Tibetan government. However, he has since been involved in making public statements like Tibet is "a part of China." Do you think he complies willingly or is he still under duress?

JN: I really don't know. Could be both. May be some willingly, some under duress.

Q: Do you agree with your father as far as his involvement with the Chinese authorities on the political issue of Tibet is concerned?

JN: No. I don't. On many fundamental issues, I have differences and disagreements with him. However, in some cases, given the circumstances, I also understand his difficulties. But since he is still there (in China), I don't want to talk in detail.

Meeting with His Holiness inspires Chinese editor and leaders

The following is an extract of a translated version of an editorial in the May issue of Pursuit, a journal of the Chinese Democracy Movement in Australia:

There is one man whose wisdom no one can fathom. This man is the Dalai Lama. All the campaigns of the Chinese communist regime against this man have become ineffective... the Dalai Lama has conducted his struggle on the moral plane of truth...

In 1989 the Dalai Lama took the Chinese world by surprise when he won the Nobel Peace Prize... One cannot but admire the fact that during the last thirty years the Dalai Lama has worked relentlessly for the restoration

of freedom and independence of his people...

For us, May 12, 1992 was a memorable day. On this day, I, as the editor of *Pursuit* had the opportunity to meet the Dalai Lama. I was accompanied by Zu Jou and Shen Wen, president and vice-president, respectively, of the Chinese Democracy Movement in New South Wales (Australia), and the head of our movement's foreign affairs... He treated us as his friends and showed us gentle compassion.

In every respect the Dalai Lama strikes you as a very genuine and spontaneous man...

The cause of the Dalai Lama and

that of the Tibetan people is a legitimate one. Democracy must ultimately lead to self-determination. The demoralising age for the Tibetans must come to an end, and the chapter of humiliation and suppression of them closed once and for all.

Linguistically, culturally and in terms of habits, the Tibetan people are completely different from us. Isn't it irrational to expect one group of people to meekly accept the domination of another people?

In 1990 the Dalai Lama wrote another book entitled, *Freedom In Exile*. This book should give us a further understanding of Tibet and Tibetans.

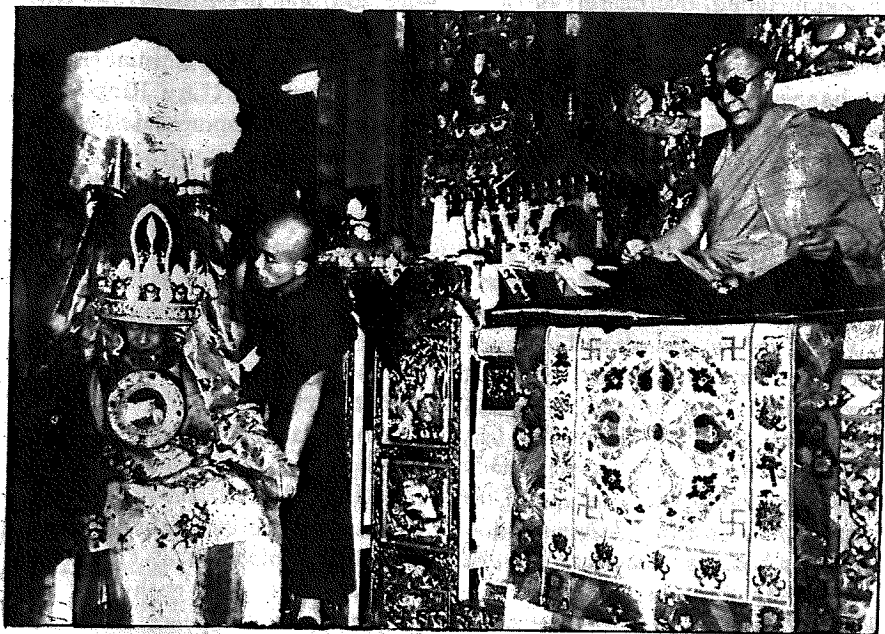
Nechung marks Padmasambhava's birth anniversary

Beginning on the 10th day of the fifth Tibetan month of the Water-Monkey year, corresponding to July 9, 1992, Nechung monastery in Dharamsala organised a three-day religious festivity to mark the birth anniversary celebration of Guru Padmasambhava, also known as Guru Rinpoche, a great Indian tantric master, who visited Tibet in the 8th century at the invitation of King Tri-Song Deu-Tsan.

This year's celebration assumes special significance because the event falls only after every 12 years. Guru Padmasambhava was born in the Monkey Month (fifth month of the Tibetan calendar). And according to Tibetan astrological calculations, this year's Monkey month coincides with the current Monkey Year which comes once in a cycle of 12 years. In Tibet, Nechung monastery and the rest of the country celebrated this day with great enthusiasm. In exile, the day was celebrated for the second time. The first took place 12 years ago at Drepung monastery in Mungod, south India.

The two oracles were followed by Youdron-Ma, a feminine protector, who although sitting outside among the general public, went into a spontaneous trance...

On day one (July 9) of the celebration in Dharamsala, His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Kyabje Minling Trichen Rinpoche presided over the morning's Guru Padmasambhava's *Tsog* offering ceremony at Thekchen Choeling or the main temple. Then in the presence of His Holiness, monks performed a *cham* (ritual dance) of the Eight Manifestations of Guru Pad-



July 9, 1992: Nechung Kuten in trance before His Holiness

masambhava. The performance was given by Nechung monks and a group of monks from Drag-Thok monastery in Ladakh.

In Tibet, the monks performed the ritual dance of *Ku-Nga* (Five Kings) and their entourage. The Vajra Acharya Thubten Phuntsok of Nechung monastery told the *Tibetan Bulletin* that they also hope to revive this tradition in exile. The *Ku-Nga* represents the five emanations of the five Buddhas, according to the seventh Dalai Lama, Kelsang Gyatso, who wrote: "The unobstructed self-illumination of the Five Buddhas and their Five Wisdoms are the Five Kings, empowered to be the Lord of Wrath. And to you, the lord of speech, Dorje Drakden (Nechung), in particular, we request your presence at this spot."

At 9 a.m. the Oracles of Nechung and Tsangpa in trance (See *Nechung - The State Oracle*) received blessings from His Holiness. The two oracles offered *Tsog* amidst rituals performed by Nechung monks ac-

cording to *Ka-Nen Rab-Jid* (Strict and Overwhelming Words) of Guru Padmasambhava. His Holiness recited this text to remind Nechung of the latter's oath accepted by Guru Padmasambhava to shoulder the dual responsibility of protecting Tibet and the Dharma. Later, while still in trance, Nechung and Tsangpa accompanied a ceremonial and a spectacular procession of Guru Padmasambhava's statue around the temple. (The statue was not the original one that existed in Tibet, but an image brought from Tibet by Dilgo Khentse Rinpoche and presented to His Holiness). The two oracles were followed by Youdron-Ma, a feminine protector, who although sitting outside among the general populace, went into a spontaneous trance and received blessings from His Holiness. During the procession, the Oracles greeted *Tsogs* placed at the four corners of the holy and circular path.

The procession was witnessed by hundreds of Tibetans and others, who

had lined up to greet and receive blessings from the oracles, whose entourage included, five bearers of victory banners depicting a tiger, monkey, vulture, jackal and a jewel. The banners collectively represented the spirit of the Dharma protector, Nechung, and the honour given to him by Guru Padmasambhava as the Principal Protector of Tibet's Dharma and sovereignty.

They were followed by five bearers of plain banners of different colours — white, yellow, red, deep blue and green — symbolising peace, growth, power, wrath and various activities, respectively. The entourage also included, a layman carrying a sword and a shield, a monk carrying a staff, a tantrik holding a ritual dagger and a laywoman holding a dark scarf.

After the procession was over, Nechung and Tsangpa went into the

temple where His Holiness and Kyabje Minling Trichen Rinpoche were still seated on their respective thrones. They joined the assembly of monks and senior government officials to continue Guru Rinpoche's *Tsog* offering ceremony based on *Rig-Zin Dung-Drub* text. The colourful ceremony of Guru Padmasambhava's birth anniversary ended around noon on an auspicious note. The heavy rain which poured as soon as the procession of the oracles were over, again stopped by the time the ceremonial rituals inside the temple was over.

The second day (July 10) celebration took place at Nechung monastery. Kyabje Minling Trichen Rinpoche presided over a Grand Prayer and a *Tsog* offering ceremony based on *Rig-Zin Dung-Drub* text of Guru Padmasambhava. The gathering also prayed for world peace. After this,

monks presented *cham* to the public on the ground in front of the Central Tibetan Secretariat. It was witnessed, among others, by Kyabje Minling Trichen Rinpoche, Ling Rinpoche, Nechung Kuten and Tibetan government officials.

On the final day, the Nechung State Oracle went into a trance in the morning of July 11 at Nechung monastery. The trance was performed for special invited guests of the monastery. However, the general public were also present. The Oracle in trance especially made private and secret predictions to Kyabje Minling Trichen Rinpoche. Later, the Oracle circumambulated the monastery and consecrated it and the newly-built stupa and, threw blessed grains, considered precious by devotees.

Nechung — The State Oracle of Tibet

Like many ancient civilizations of the world, the phenomenon of oracles remains an important part of the Tibetan way of life. Tibetans rely on oracles for various reasons. The purpose of the oracles is not just to foretell the future. They are called upon as protectors and sometimes used as healers. However, their primary function is to protect the Buddha Dharma and its practitioners.

In the Tibetan tradition, the word oracle is used for a spirit which enters those men and women who act as mediums between the natural and the spiritual realms. The mediums are, therefore, known as *kuten*, which literally means, "the physical basis."

In early times it is believed that there were hundreds of oracles throughout Tibet. Today, only a few survive, including those consulted by the Tibetan government. Of these, the principal one is the Nechung oracle. Through him manifests Dorje Drak-

den (Nechung), the principal protector divinity of the Tibetan government and the Dalai Lama (see *History of Nechung monastery*). It is because of this that Nechung Kuten is given the rank of a deputy minister in the exiled Tibetan government hierarchy.

In his autobiography, *Freedom in Exile*, His Holiness the Dalai Lama writes:

"For hundreds of years now, it has been traditional for the Dalai Lama, and the Government, to consult Nechung during the New Year festivals. In addition, he might well be called upon at other times if either have specific queries. I myself have dealings with him several times a year. This may sound far-fetched to twentieth-century western readers. Even some Tibetans, mostly those who consider themselves 'progressive', have misgivings about my continued use of this ancient method of intelligence gathering. But I do so for the simple

reason that as I look back over the many occasions when I have asked questions of the oracle, on each one of them time has proved that his answer was correct. This is not to say that I rely solely on the oracle's advice. I do not. I seek his opinion in the same way as I seek the opinion of my Cabinet and just as I seek the opinion of my own conscience. I consider the gods to be my 'upper house'. The *Kashag* constitutes my lower house. Like any other leader, I consult both before making a decision on affairs of state. And sometimes, in addition to Nechung's counsel, I also take into consideration certain prophecies.

"In one respect, the responsibility of Nechung and the responsibility of the Dalai Lama towards Tibet are the same, though we act in different ways. My task, that of leadership, is peaceful. His, in his capacity as protector and defender, is wrathful. However, although our functions are similar, my

relationship with Nechung is that of commander to lieutenant: I never bow down to him. It is for Nechung to bow to the Dalai Lama. Yet we are very close, friends almost. When I was small, it was touching. Nechung liked me a lot and always took great care of me. For example, if he noticed that I had dressed carelessly or improperly, he would come over and rearrange my shirt, adjust my robe and so on.

"Nechung has always shown respect for me. Even when his relations with the Government have deteriorated, as they did during the last few years of the Regency, he invariably responds enthusiastically whenever asked anything about me. At the same time, his replies to questions about government policy can be crushing. Sometimes he just responds with a burst of sarcastic laughter. I well remember a particular incident that occurred when I was about fourteen. Nechung was asked a question about China. Rather than answer it directly, the *kuten* turned towards the East and began bending forward violently. It was frightening to watch, knowing that this movement combined with the weight of the massive helmet he wore on his head would be enough to snap his neck. He did it at least fifteen times, leaving no one in any doubt about where the danger lay.

"Dealing with Nechung is by no means easy. It takes time and patience during each encounter before he will open up. He is very reserved and austere, just as you would imagine a grand old man of ancient times to be. Nor does he bother with minor matters: his interest is only in the larger issues, so it pays to frame questions accordingly. He also has definite likes and dislikes, but he does not show them very readily.

"Nechung has his own monastery in Dharamsala, but usually he comes to me. On formal occasions, the *kuten* is dressed in an elaborate costume consisting of several layers of clothing

topped by a highly ornate robe of golden silk brocade, which is covered with ancient designs in red and blue and green and yellow. On his chest he wears a circular mirror which is surrounded by clusters of turquoise and amethyst, its polished steel flashing with the Sanskrit *mantra* corresponding to Dorje Drakden. Before the proceedings begin, he also puts on a sort of harness, which supports four flags and three victory banners. Altogether, this outfit weighs more than seventy pounds and the medium, when not in trance, can hardly walk in it.

"I seek his (Nechung's) opinion in the same way as I seek the opinion of my Cabinet and just as I seek the opinion of my own conscience."

"The ceremony begins with chanted invocations and prayers, accompanied by the urgings of horns, cymbals and drums. After a short while, the *kuten* enters his trance, having been supported until then by his assistants, who now help him over to a small stool set before my throne. Then, as the first prayer cycle concludes and the second begins, his trance begins to deepen. At this point, a huge helmet is placed on his head. This item weighs approximately thirty pounds, though in former times it weighed over eighty

"Now the *kuten's* face transforms, becoming rather wild before puffing up to give him an altogether strange appearance, with bulging eyes and swollen cheeks. His breathing begins to shorten and he starts to hiss violently. Then, momentarily, his respiration stops. At this point the helmet is tied in place with a knot so tight that it would undoubtedly strangle the *kuten* if something very real were not hap-

pening. The possession is now complete and the mortal frame of the medium expands visibly.

"Next, he leaps up with a start and, grabbing a ritual sword from one of his attendants, begins to dance with slow, dignified, yet somehow menacing, steps. He then comes in front of me and either prostrates fully or bows deeply from the waist until his helmet touches the ground before springing back up, the weight of his regalia counting for nothing. The volcanic energy of the deity can barely be contained within the earthly frailty of the *kuten*, who moves and gestures as if his body were made of rubber and driven by a coiled spring of enormous power.

"There follows an interchange between Nechung and myself, where he makes ritual offerings to me. I then ask any personal questions I have for him. After replying, he returns to his stool and listens to questions put by members of the Government. Before giving answers to these the *kuten* begins to dance again, thrashing his sword above his head. He looks like a magnificent, fierce Tibetan warrior chieftain of old.

"As soon as Dorje Drakden has finished speaking, the *kuten* makes a final offering before collapsing, a rigid and lifeless form, signifying the end of the possession. Simultaneously, the knot holding his helmet in place is untied in a great hurry by his assistants, who then carry him out to recover whilst the ceremony continues.

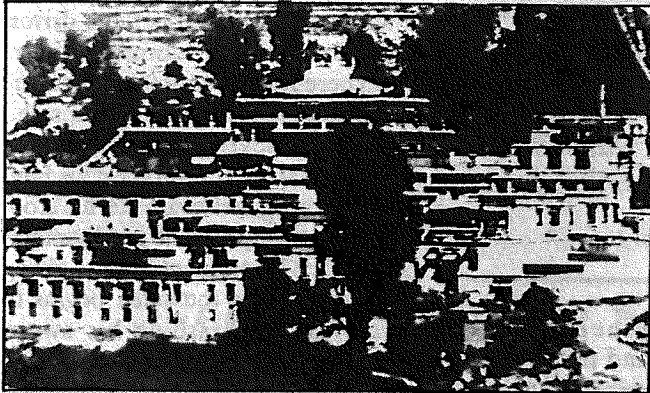
"Surprising as it may seem, the oracle's replies to questions are rarely vague. As in the case of my escape from Lhasa, he is often very specific. But I suppose that it would be difficult for any scientific investigation either to prove or disprove conclusively the validity of his pronouncements. The same would surely be true of other areas of Tibetan experience, for example the matter of *tulkus* (reincarnate lamas)."

History of Nechung monastery

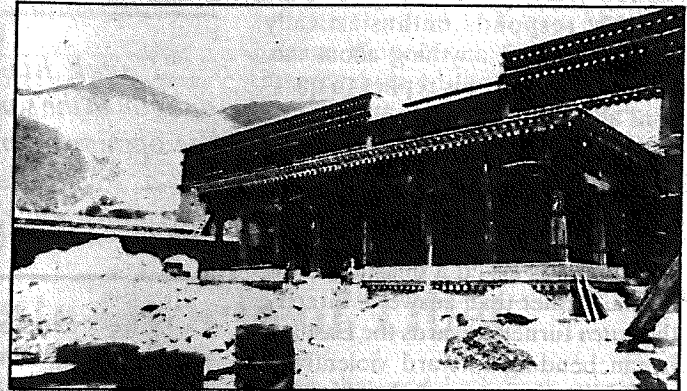
Nechung monastery has an important place in the history of Tibet. It is the seat of Nechung, Tibet's State Oracle. The oracle is the medium through whom Dorje Drakden (Nechung), the principal protector of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government, communicates with His Holiness and the Kashag (cabinet). Major decisions of the state are also made in consultation with the Nechung Oracle.

visited the smaller site, he envisioned a miracle connected to the *Drowa* tree and reported the incident to Guru Padmasambhava. He prophesied: "A monastery will be built on that site and, the nearby small lake and the tree are possessed by Pehar's spirit." (Pehar Gyalpo was bound to oath by Padmasambhava to head the entire hierarchy of protective spirits and Dorje Drakden, Nechung, was Pehar's principal emissary to Tibet).

Pa Tsondu Dakpa, a disciple of Lama Ongom Tsultrim Nyingpo lived. Originally, Pehar was the Dharma protector of this monastery. However, Lama Shang, in feud with Pehar, decided to abandon the spirit in Kyichu river performing an appeasement-rite and packed all his belongings in a box. Chog-Pa Jangchup Palden, a resident caretaker of the chapel on the site, where later Drepung monastery was to be estab-



Nechung monastery before 1959



After the "Cultural Revolution"

Nechung monastery in Tibet lies just below Drepung monastery, four miles west of Lhasa, the country's capital. Nechung originally came to Tibet with a descendant of the Indian sage Dharmapala. During the reign of King Tri-Song Deu-Tsan in the eighth century AD, he was appointed protector of Samye monastery by the Indian saint and tantric master Padmasambhava. At that time, Samye, Tibet's first monastic institute, was known as *Nechen* (the larger site) and *Nechung* (the smaller site).

Although there are different versions about the origin of Nechung monastery in Tibet, learned monks at the re-established monastery in exile in Dharamsala, maintain that once when the great translator Vairochana

With the aid of protective spirits, the task of spreading religion in Tibet was accelerated. Later, Mune Tsan-Po, son of King Tri-Song Deu-Tsan, built a small monastery and established a sangha community. Ba Pel-Yang became its first abbot and an image of goddess Tara was brought to the monastery from Samye. Consequently, this monastery came to be known as Nechung Yulo-ko and generations later, the tiny village of the seat of Nechung adopted the name of the monastery and was called Yulo-ko. The village still exists today and is known by the same name.

Another version says that there was a monastery known as Tsal Gung-Thang on the other side of Kyichu river, east of Lhasa, where Shang Tsal-

lished, happened to know through his clairvoyance that Lama Shang was in the process of abandoning Pehar in Kyichu river. He, therefore, advised his attendant to seize the box and bring it to him without opening it.

The next morning, when the attendant went to the river bank, he was astonished to find the box float toward him. He then carried the box on his back and set forth, until he sensed that it had become much heavier when he reached the place where Nechung was later to be established. He, therefore, took a rest. But wondering what could be in the box, he started to sneak stealthily through it, when suddenly a pigeon flew out of the box and disappeared into the *Drowa* tree. Startled as he was, he suddenly recollected his

master's instruction which he had transgressed, and exclaimed: "May the Lama know!" These words, later inscribed on the same rock where he unloaded the box, can be seen even today.

The attendant, however, proceeded regretfully to his master and reported the incident. His Lama, Chok-Pa Jangchup Palden, responded: "It shows that the location is too small to house this powerful spirit." It was here on the same location where Chok-Pa Jangchup Palden built a small monastery and organised a sangha community. This is how Nechung Monastery came into being about eight hundred years ago.

When the Great Fifth Dalai Lama gained temporal power in 1642, he instituted Pehar Gyalpo as the Protector of the Tibetan government.

The principal architect of Nechung Dorje Drayang Ling was the Great Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso (1617-1682). It was on his advice and guidance that the monastery was expanded during the regency of Desi Sangye Gyatso in honour of the Oracle in 1681 and completed in 1683.

The second Dalai Lama, Gedun Gyatso (1475-1542), had developed a close relationship with Nechung. When the Great Fifth Dalai Lama gained temporal power in 1642, he instituted Pehar Gyalpo as the Protector of the Tibetan government. To house this spirit, Nechung monastery was constructed around the original shrine. Thereafter, a number of the sacred vessels, through which Pehar Gyalpo could be contacted, were moved from Samye and the monastery was instituted as the official home of

the state oracle of Tibet.

Since then, it became the responsibility of the Tibetan government to oversee the development of Nechung monastery. It not only supported the monastery, but enlarged its maximum strength to 101 sangha members. The government, however, held Nechung monastery responsible for keeping intact daily link with Tibet's main spirit Protector, Pehar Gyalpo. Many traditions of rituals and practices, such as the Treasure Doctrine of Nyang Nyima Odzer, were practiced and preserved by the monastery. The Great Fifth Dalai Lama compiled a collection of liturgy text known as *Dra Yang-Ma* and incorporated this as one of the principal practices of Nechung monastery. Thereafter, the monastery was named Nechung Dorje Drayang Ling (The Immutable Island of Melodious Sound), by the regent, Desi Sangye Gyatso.

During the time of the Great Thirteenth Dalai Lama, Thupten Gyatso (1876-1933), with the admission of 14 additional monks by him, the number of monks in Nechung monastery was increased from 101 to 115. Since then, this was the standard strength of the monks residing in Nechung monastery.

However, following the 1949 Chinese invasion of Tibet, Nechung monastery, like the rest of other religious institutions in the country was completely destroyed. The Vajra Acharya Venerable Thupten Phuntsok of Nechung monastery in exile in Dharamsala, told the *Tibetan Bulletin* that according to their information, the partially-reconstructed monastery in Tibet now has about 16 monks. Most of the senior monks have died. The new monks have been able to memorise the texts of the rituals and are reportedly perfect in terms of their spirit, but have little opportunity to learn, study and receive teachings.

"So their training remains incomplete and hence, a drawback. Our

monks in Tibet have suffered tremendously under the Chinese rule. They still have difficulties because their freedom is limited and their future very insecure," says Venerable Thubten Phuntsok, who joined Nechung monastery in 1930 and until his escape from Tibet in 1959 had served under three Nechung *Kutens*.

It also has been reliably learned that at present the Chinese authorities in Tibet have especially laid strict vigilance to obstruct the re-establishment and growth of Nechung monastery in occupied-Tibet.

Spiritual traditions of Nechung monastery

Prior to the Great Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso (1617-1682), Nechung monastery used to practise *Ter-Chos Don-Chu-Ma* (Ten Topics of the Treasure Doctrine), a treasure doctrine of Ngadak Nyang, a great treasure master of the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism, and the rite of self-generation called *La-Ma Sang-Due* (Sublime Secret Assembly), a treasure doctrine of the treasure master Guru Choewang (1212-1270) as the daily practice of *sadhana* (self-generation).

Later, the Great Fifth Dalai Lama composed *Dra-Yang-Ma* (Melodic Chant), comprising a text of self-generation practice and an invocation rite of the Dharma protector. The text is based on *Thug-Drub Yang-Nying Due-Pa* (Essential Summary of Heart's Accomplishment) of treasure master Ratna Lingpa and *Trin-Ley Don-Chu* (Ten Enlightened Activities) of Ngadak Nyang. These are practiced at Nechung monastery even to this day. Likewise, *La-Ma Sang-Due* constitutes a primary practice of the monastery. The two treasure texts, *La-Ma Sang-Due* and *Thug-Drub Yang-Nying Due-Pa* are respectively

considered the mother and the son doctrine.

In addition to these, Nechung monastery monks are required to carry out a 500,000 times preliminary retreat on *Thug-Drub Yang-Nying Due-Pa*.

The principle meditational deity of the monastery is Hayagriva Yang-Sang La-Drub, which stands for the Hayagriva as apparent in *Thug-Drub Yang-Nying Due-Pa*. It is for this reason that the coming of Ogyen Thinley Choephel (Nechung Rinpoche) to Nechung monastery, as the incarnation of Ratna Lingpa, signifies a special connection to the above treasure doctrines. (After coming into exile in India, Nechung monastery has been able to preserve the entire cycle of *Thug-Drub Yang-Nying Due-Pa* initiations, which were bestowed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and later especially by Khamtrul Rinpoche at the monastery).

During the time of the Sixth Medium of Tibet's State Oracle, Ngawang Gyatso, the great meditation master Vidhyadhara Kalsang Pema Wangchuk Jigme Gocha Thubten Langtshoi-De of Dorjidrak monastery became the root guru of Nechung monastery. Subsequently, numerous cycles of rituals and rites belonging to *Jang-Ter* (Northern tradition), such as, the Arya Avalokiteshvara (Dro-Wa Kun-Drol) of the Outer Aspect, being the primary deity, were instituted in the liturgical tradition of the monastery. (In exile, the initiations and transmissions of these traditions were received from Taglung Tsetrul Rinpoche, the present holder of *Jang-Ter* tradition).

At the same time a great tantrika Pema Gyepa, also became the spiritual guide of the medium, Ngawang Gyatso, and the sangha of Nechung monastery. He instituted the treasure doctrine *Thugs-Drub Ye-She Nor-Bu* (Jewel of Heart's Ac-

complishment) as one of the primary traditions of the monastery. It was also during this time that the medium, Ngawang Gyatso, who himself was one of the realised disciples of Pema Gyepa, and the monastery's chant master Kunsang Pema Dodul, as well as the entire sangha of Nechung monastery, accepted both the Vidhyadhara Kalsang Pema Wangchuk and Pema Gyepa as their root guru. Thereafter, the retreat, the accomplishment and the ritual of *Srog-Khang Drub-Pa Chen-Mo* (Life Shelter), the complimentary fire ritual and the cross-thread rituals were instituted by the masters in the tradition of Nechung monastery.

The Thirteenth Dalai Lama for the first time instituted the grand practice and ritual of preparing sacred pills rite of Vajrakila Yang-Nying Pu-Tri at Nechung monastery.

And as a resource for carrying out *Srog-Khang* rituals, the Tibetan government, as grants to Nechung monastery, gave the Ram-Pa Nang-Ma Jing estate, Nga-Dha estate in the region of Dag-Po, as well as the Kha-Kor estate. As a resource for fire wood, the government provided land from the region of Nor-Tod Ling-Ga and Tsal-Bu Ling-Ga. Lha-Ri Zim-Phug also came under the administrative control of the monastery. In addition to these, the old Me-Ru monastery in Lhasa and others became a home for Nechung monks during the Great Prayer Festival in Tibet.

The Seventh Medium, Tsangyang Tamdin, introduced the practice of *Dag-Dun Bum-Sum* (Self-generation, Generation In-front and Vase-generation) of the Thirteen Deities of Yamantaka, as well as the grand con-

secration rite *Ge-Leg Char-Beb* (Auspicious Shower).

As a resource for performing these rituals, the government granted the Shar-Chog estate, Chag-Ruestate and Zhing-Mo-Che estate.

The Eighth Medium, Shakya Yarphe, was a contemporary of the Tenth Dalai Lama, Tsultrim Gyatso (1816-1837), and lived till the early phase of the life of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, Thubten Gyatso (1876-1933). The medium restored *Zhi-Sum* (Three Basic Traditions) – bi-monthly confession ceremony, the rainy season retreat and the lifting of the restrictions during the rainy season retreat of the monastic discipline. He also introduced the grand accomplishment rite of the Dharma guardian Je-Che.

As a resource for carrying out the above rituals, Khyi-Nang estate, otherwise known as Drung-Yig estate of Kongpo, and Long Tag-Dong estate and Neu-Nas-Sar estate were granted by the government to Nechung monastery.

The Thirteenth Dalai Lama, in accordance to his own wishes, for the first time instituted the grand practice and ritual of preparing sacred pills rite of *Vajrakila Yang-Nying Pu-Tri*, a treasure doctrine of Ogyen Lerab Lingpa at Nechung monastery.

Recently on July 20, 1990, at the re-established Nechung monastery in Dharamsala, the direct re-incarnation of Tertön Sogyal Rinpoche, whose predecessor transmitted and revealed this tradition of *Vajrakila*, gave an oral transmission of *Vajrakila Yang-Nying Pu-Tri Due-Pa*, a treasure doctrine discovered by him in accordance with the prediction of the Dharma protector. He also bestowed the initiation of *Vajrakila Gur-Khug-Ma*, a visionary doctrine of his own. It is believed that Rinpoche has given this initiation for the first time to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and then to Nechung monastery in his life time.

Mediums of Nechung

The earliest account of Nechung can be traced back to his relationship with the great Indian Spritual King Kunchog Bhang, who was an emanation of Arya Avalokiteshvara. In 750 AD, the Dharma protector had a special connection with the Tibetan King Tri-Song Deu-Tsan.

However, it was only in 1544 AD,

Tibet, and Kongpo Lobsang Gyatso succeeded the previous medium. It was during this period that Nechung monastery flourished extensively (see *History of Nechung monastery*).

The sixth medium, Ngawang Gyatso brought some major changes in the liturgical tradition of Nechung monastery. He instituted the entire

Sog-Khang Nam-Shad Lak-Pe Kun-Shay (Omniscience Through Reading the Commentary of the Life Shelter) and others.

The Seventh Medium, Tsangyang Tamdin, also known as Lobsang Tashi, instituted the rites of *Dag-Dun Bum-Sum* (Self-generation, Generation In-front and Vase-generation) of the Thirteen Deities of Yamantaka, as well as the grand consecration rite of *Ge-Leg Char-Beb* (Auspicious Shower).

Lhalungpa Shakya Yarphe became the eighth medium of Nechung during the reign of the Tenth Dalai Lama, Tsultrim Gyatso (1816-1837) and remained so, until the first part of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama's rule. During this time, Nechung monastery then had 115 monks. This medium of Tibet's State Oracle restored *Zhi Sum* (Three Basic Rites) of the monastic discipline. He also founded retreat cells on the hills of Lhalung, where there used to be a meditation cell belonging to Lhalung Pelgyi Dorjee, the Buddhist monk responsible for killing Lang Dharma, the anti-Buddhist king. The medium Lhalungpa Shakya Yarphe built Pehar Chog (chapel) at the old Me-Ru monastery. It was during his time that Nechung monastery received Dra-Chyis Phun-Rab estate and Min-Drug estate and others. Drapchi Phunrabpa Tsering Palden also voluntarily offered the exquisite golden roof placed atop Nechung monastery and the 21 gold-coated statues of Tara, a human-sized statue of Avalokiteshvara Sem-Nyid Ngal-So, as well as a silver cascade altar containing two statues made of *Sha-li* bronze and *Zhi-khim* bronze. For the assembly hall below, he offered a special Guru Nang-Srid Zil-Non statue, and a pair of gold butter lamp pots, known as *Kal-Zang Chod-Kong* (Auspicious Butter Lamp Pot)



The 13th Nechung Kuten in trance at Jokhang (Central Cathedral) in Lhasa on the 24th day of the first Tibetan month (1953)

that for the first time the spirit of Nechung was possessed in a human being. Thus, Drag Trang-Go-Wa Lobsang Palden became the first medium of Nechung. During the reign of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama, Gangkyi-Pa Tsewang Pelbar was recognised as the fourth medium of Nechung or Tibet's State Oracle. At that time, Nechung monastery had around 50 monks.

After the passing away of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama, the Regent Desi Sangye Gyatso (1653-1705) ruled

cycle of practices comprising of the retreat, the accomplishment, and the ritual tradition of *Sog-Khang Drub-Pa Chen-Mo* (Grand Immutible Life Shelter), a primary meditational retreat practice on Hayagriva and *Gyal-Po Ku-Nga* (Five Dharma Kings), and the complimentary ritual fire offering, invocation rite and the cross-thread rituals (*Doe*) and longevity rites, as are explained in *Shal-Treng Kar-Poi Gyud* (White Crystal Tantra). The medium also introduced

that could each retain about four kilograms of butter.

In short, Drapchi Phunrabpa Tsering Palden offered all his wealth, property and belongings to Nechung monastery as a resource for the conduct of future ceremonial activities.

After the passing away of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama, the Regent Desi Sangye Gyatso (1653-1705) ruled Tibet, and Kongpo Lobsang Gyatso succeeded the previous medium. It was during this period that Nechung monastery flourished extensively

During the same period, Bam-Rim monastery in Kongpo region also came under Nechung's administrative control. The general masses serving the government estates voluntarily offered a portion of their taxes to the government as offerings to Nechung monastery and requested the monastery to accept them as its subjects.

Besides, a small monastery known as Lha-Ri Zim-Bug or Pad-Me Zim-Bug of Phung-Po Ri-Bo-Che in the Tsang region and two nunneries located in Ki-Lung area of Phenpo also became branch monasteries of Nechung monastery.

Lobsang Sonam of Kham became the ninth medium of Tibet's Nechung Oracle, and Lhalungpa Gyaltsen Tharchin became the tenth medium. Lobsang Sonam was reinstalled as the eleventh medium. While he was in trance, the State Oracle pronounced a prayer for the speedy return of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama.

After the demise of the Great Thirteenth Dalai Lama, Lobsang

Namgyal (ca. 1935) of Derbag, near Nechung monastery, became the twelfth medium. He accompanied the Regent, Reting Rinpoche, to Samye monastery at the Samye restoration ceremony.

When the Tibetan government requested him to perform a trance in the presence of Guru Nga-Dra-Ma's statue, the oracle through him made prophesies regarding the search for the reincarnation of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. The oracle left a resource for the conduct of ceremonial rituals at Nechung monastery, especially for the conduct of Avalokiteshvara Dro-Wa Kun-Drol rituals.

In 1945, Lobsang Jigme of Lhasa was publicly proclaimed to be the new and the thirteenth medium of Tibet's State Oracle. He became the first Nechung *kuten* (medium) to rise from the ranks of Nechung monastery. His predecessors had all come from elsewhere.

In 1949, during a trance performed at *Tsom-Chen Nyi-Od* (Sunny Hall), the oracle gave clear prophesies concerning the spiritual and temporal issues relating to Tibet.

Likewise, during a trance performance at the main hall of Drepung monastery, it left clear-cut prophesies to remove obstacles and hindrances to the life of the present Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso.

The medium also offered costumes and built a special altar for the Thousand golden statues of the Buddha and the Twenty-one Taras housed in Nechung monastery's middle storey called *Zam-Ling Zim-Chung* (Universal Chamber).

During the 1959 Tibetan national uprising against China's invasion and occupation of Tibet, the State Oracle, Nechung, communicating through his medium Venerable Lobsang Jigme, left very clear prophesies about the escape route to be followed by His

Holiness the Dalai Lama into exile in India.

Venerable Losang Jigme, who also escaped to India, following the Chinese occupation of Tibet, continued to serve as the medium of Tibet's State Oracle until he passed away in Dharamsala on April 26, 1984. The present and the fourteenth medium of the State Oracle is Venerable Thubten Ngodup. Born in 1957 in Phari, Tibet, he and his family fled the country after the Chinese invasion. He came to Dharamsala in 1969 and joined Nechung monastery in 1971.

The first time Venerable Thubten Ngodup was possessed by Nechung's spirit was on March 31, 1987 (*see Interview*). After this, His Holiness the Dalai Lama privately had Venerable Thubten Ngodup perform a trance in his presence, during which His Holiness tested him in accordance with tradition.

In 1945 Venerable Lobsang Jigme became the first medium of the State Oracle of Tibet to rise from the ranks of Nechung monastery.

Later on, a number of trances were requested and he also went on a retreat of Hayagriva, the meditational deity Padma Wangchen and of Guru Rinpoche's *La-Drub* (Self-generation) practice.

On September 4, 1987, Venerable Thubten Ngodup was recognised by His Holiness the Dalai Lama as the new medium of the State Oracle of Tibet and an official ceremony to this effect was held at Nechung monastery in Dharamsala, the seat of the Tibetan government in exile.

"To become Nechung's Medium is not an ordinary duty"

The following interview with the Nechung Kuten, Venerable Thupten Ngodup (Medium of the State Oracle), took place at Nechung monastery in Dharamsala on August 14, and was jointly done by Lotsawa Tsepa Rinzin and Tsering Tashi:

Q: Would you tell us something about your background and childhood?

NK: I was born in Tibet on July 13, 1958 in Phari bordering Bhutan. My parents come from a peasant's family. In 1959, following Chinese occupation of Tibet, my parents having lost their freedom also experienced the same kind of hardship under the Chinese rule. Then in 1966, during the so-called Cultural Revolution, my parents escaped Tibet with me to Bhutan. I am the only child in the family but have a half-brother who is now living in Dharamsala. In Bhutan, we were temporarily resettled in a Tibetan refugee camp.

My father was a descendant of a wellknown *Ngag-pa* (tantric practitioner) family which belonged to the Khon lineage of the Sakya tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. My mother comes from the Nanyang district of Gyantse, and later got settled in Phari, where I was born. Unfortunately, both of them have passed away.

My father was a good *Chod* (Cut-ritual) practitioner, and after our arrival in Bhutan, he always told us about his personal interest to go to India to receive His Holiness the Dalai Lama's blessings and then leave this worldly life to become a hermit. Later, along with other Tibetan refugees, we left Bhutan for India to seek our second asylum in exile and arrived in Dharamsala in early 1969. My family found a home near the Tibetan Children's Village (TCV School). As the previous batches of Tibetan refugees had already reached Dharamsala since 1959,



we were like the present-day new arrivals from Tibet. The Tibetan government in exile, therefore, organised a new camp for our group and we worked as road construction labourers to earn our living. The road, above TCV, leading to the Indian village was constructed by us. Our camp leader was Gyagpon Tachoe-la. During the summer we moved to Kulu-Manali and Rohtang to construct roads. I also worked. At that time I was around 10-years-old. Actually, education opportunity was given to all Tibetan refugee children, but TCV accepted only orphans and my parents were reluctant to send me to a far away place. So for two years I worked as a coolie with my parents.

Q: What about your early education and monastic training?

NK: As a child I had a natural inclination to do anything religious. I even told my parents of my desire to become a monk. They too said it would be worthwhile to lead a life to be a monk. So in 1969, after our return to

Dharamsala from Kulu, I was initially admitted to Gadong monastery and remained there for a year. At that time, I knew nothing about Nechung monastery which was then temporarily located at Nazara Kothi (1 km below Gangchen Kyishong, the seat of the Tibetan government in exile). Everyday I had to go to Nechung for pujas and study, and return to Gadong the same evening. This is how I spent about a year at Gadong.

But to be frank, deep down in my heart I started feeling closer to Nechung, and my father knowing the trouble of my having to daily walk between Gadong and Nechung, suggested that it would be better for me to join Nechung as there is technically no difference between the two monasteries. So this is how I joined Nechung in 1971.

Since 1971 Nechung admitted more boys and I received all the basic religious training at the monastery. After completion of the basic training at Nechung, a monk could choose either of the two lines — *Sung-Zang* (the chant master's line) or *Chod-Zheng Ba* (the ritual master's line). Since I had a natural interest in the skills of creative arts and crafts, I joined the second group, and gradually was upgraded to the highest rank. Since 1981, I became *Cho-pon* (the ritual leader).

Q: How and when were you recognised as the Nechung Kuten or the Medium of the State Oracle?

NK: In 1984, after the passing away of the previous medium Venerable Lob-sang Jigme, for about three years there was no medium for the Nechung Oracle. His Holiness the Dalai Lama wrote a prayer for the speedy return of the medium and commissioned Nechung monastery and the Drepung monastery, with whom the oracle has

a special relationship, to recite the prayer.

Then on March 31, 1987, corresponding to the second day of the second Tibetan month, Drepung Lhatze (Day of Drepung's Summoning of the Oracle) was requested at Nechung monastery.

In Tibet, Drepung observed this day every month. But in exile, since Drepung is far away in South India, they observed the day by offering an invocation rite in front of Nechung's *thanka* (scroll painting) at their monastery. But occasionally Drepung would send their representatives to Dharamsala during the annual teaching programme of His Holiness the Dalai Lama at the main Thekchen Choeling temple and performed Drepung Lhatse at Nechung monastery when the previous medium of Nechung was alive.

Thus on March 31, 1987, a number of Lamas, Geshe and monks from Drepung came to Dharamsala to receive teachings from His Holiness and later, sought Nechung's blessings at Nechung monastery, as if, there was a trance going on, although there was no medium of the oracle. I was amongst the attendants holding incense pot in the hall. As the monks started reciting the text of the invocation, at an appropriate point and all of a sudden, I happened to be possessed by the spirit. This was the first time I was seized by the spirit of the Nechung.

This incident of the day was immediately brought to the notice of His Holiness the Dalai Lama by the abbots, officials and representatives of Drepung through the Department of Religion and Culture. After two days I was summoned by His Holiness and I went to Him with our *Lopon* (Vajra Acharya Venerable Thupten Phuntsok). His Holiness asked many questions to us and, particularly to me concerning various signs I had, such as in dreams and others. I reported every

single incident from the beginning. His Holiness then asked me to carry out a retreat on *Hayagriva Khamsum Zilnon*, and accordingly, I fulfilled the commitment.

Q: Briefly tell us about the dreams and other signs you experienced before being recognised as Nechung Kuten or the medium of the State Oracle?

NK: I personally consider that to become a medium is definitely a result of one's past karmic connections and prayers. Also, as a child I used to have very strong feeling of closeness with the Dharma protector, and I had a special faith and devotion in him. After the passing away of the previous medium, I dreamt of the Dharma protector in trance on several occasions. In those dreams, the person in trance was not me. It was somewhat like the previous medium and sometimes, it was even not clearly recognisable.

In 1985, during the *Kalachakra* (Wheel of Life) initiation in Bodhgaya, I bled a lot from my nose and mouth. The blood I swallowed was vomitted out. In between, I lost hope of survival, and started thinking that I have no special fear if I die. I also had a very special emotional experience, though I could not understand what it meant at that time. And as I began experiencing more and more unusual signs, I wondered what these emotional feelings could mean to me. But gradually, I recovered from the illness and, luckily, was able to attend the actual *Kalachakra* ceremony.

Then one night during the same occasion in Bodhgaya, I dreamt of a long staircase where a lot of monkeys accorded a ceremonial welcome. The monkeys were holding fruits in their hands, and one of them held my hand and lead me through the higher steps. Upon reaching a platform, I saw a big tree which had a hole into which I was lead. It is commonly believed that

seeing monkeys in one's dream signifies connection to the Dharma protector. But at that time, I did not have such a thought. Nevertheless, when I had this dream, I really experienced a pleasant feeling, so peaceful and gentle, a very unusual feeling. I also had other significant dreams. These dreams, no doubt, gave me a very pleasant and an ecstatic feeling. I felt full of peace and serenity in my heart.

However, a year later and a week or so before I was actually seized (March 31, 1987) by the spirit of the Dharma protector, I felt mentally very disturbed. At that time His Holiness the Dalai Lama was giving teachings on *lam-rim* (Graded Path) text. I involuntarily felt unpleasant to accompany the other Nechung monks to the temple for the teachings and stayed behind to go last and alone. Also I would leave the temple at the very end of all the fellow-monks. So this disturbed the state of my mind and it lingered in me for a few days and the unpleasant state of feeling started growing more intense as days passed by.

When I knew that in a few days time the Drepung monks were to perform the *Drepung Lhatse*, I felt so insecure and intense fear gripped me. A day earlier (March 30, 1987), before the Drepung Lhatse was to be performed, I had a severe headache but took courage to bear it because His Holiness the Dalai Lama was giving a public teaching on *Vipasana* (Special Insight) section. It was not the kind of headache I would normally suffer and I felt like walking closer towards His Holiness' presence, near His Holiness' throne. This feeling was so involuntarily overwhelming me. When everyone had a break, I still did not feel like taking a break but knew that I got up and stood in the corridor — almost in a lost thought. That day the emotional currents in me were extremely unusual. I wanted to move

towards His Holiness' presence. When friends sitting around me noticed this unusual behaviour, they asked me, "What was the problem." I said, "No, nothing, just a little headache." I sat bending my head down. I simply wanted the teaching session to finish earlier.

As soon as the session was over and His Holiness had left, I went inside the temple and prayed in the presence of Guru Rinpoche and Arya Avalokiteshvara. At that moment I had some doubt in my mind and was thinking if this meant I was going to be the medium of the Dharma protector. Hence, I prayed, "If I was going to be so, this would be a precious opportunity to be able to serve the Buddha Dharma. If it turns to be true, I shall serve the Dharma and Tibet to the best of my ability. May all the obstacles be removed." I was really doubtful at the time and it grew stronger and stronger.

Later I left the main temple behind the rest of the monks. When I reached our monastery, I found that Khamtrul Rinpoche had left a clay stupa for me to fix. The top-knot had fallen apart. So that night I spent quite sometime fixing it to be able to return it to Khamtrul Rinpoche the next day. This done, I felt a bit more comfortable that night.

But the same night in my dream I saw mushrooms everywhere on the lawn around Nechung monastery. It was early in the morning and the monks were about to perform the *Drepung Lhatse*. I saw myself walking on the roof of the temple from where I could see a rainbow wrapping the temple. I then happen to pluck mushrooms and collect them in my monastic *zan* (the maroon shawl worn by monks). This could be an auspicious coincidence connected to the Dharma protector.

Next morning (March 31) when I joined the religious gathering, everyone was busy. I felt extremely un-

pleasant, emotionally disturbed and short-tempered. When Vajra Acharya Venerable Thupten Phuntsok asked me to prepare a black tea set to be offered to the Dharma protector, I got agitated and replied, "When there is no medium to possess the spirit of the Dharma protector, to whom should we offer black tea?" The Acharya felt it was unnatural of me to respond in such a manner because normally I would never dare to answer him that way. I have always treated my elders with respect. The Acharya, however, told me, "Well, you are right, but let us think that the Dharma protector is in trance and simply imagine we are offering the black-tea, so what." He further advised me to distribute *Chag Ne* (blessed grains) to the public.

Normally, during *Drepung Lhatse*, the monks would first perform an ablution ceremony at the corridor of the temple before they entered the temple. So, when they were performing the oblution ceremony, I happened to go nearby and pick up the incense pot, though it was not necessary. I took it inside and left the pot near the Dharma protector's throne. I then turned to move out of the temple through the main door, but found it impossible. I felt as if there was some force that was dragging me to stay inside. My legs almost became numb and despite efforts, I felt I could not move. Finally, through the back door, I managed to go out and ran around the temple to join the monks at the corridor. By then the ablution ceremony was already over and the monks had assembled inside the temple for the invocation rite to be led by the Nechung monks.

When the rite began I rushed inside and picked up the incense pot. But as soon as I entered with the pot inside the inner chapel of the Dharma protector, I felt a sudden electric current in me. Then instantly my vision went blurred, and my body started trembling wildly. I had no control of

my own body. I looked around and saw Vajra Acharya Venerable Thupten Phuntsok. All I could remember was handing over the pot to him. Then, in a flip of a second, I was completely overwhelmed, as if caught in an electric shock. It was so swift that I could not remember anything that must have happened to me.

Q: How was the official ceremony of your recognition as the medium of the State Oracle conducted?

NK: The ceremony took place in the early hours of September 4, 1987, in Nechung monastery's hall. Tibetan government officials and Nechung monks greeted me with traditional scarves and offered the Three-fold Mandala. Then at 9 a.m., I went to receive blessings and advise from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Later, I went to Ling Rinpoche's residence, Serkong Rinpoche's residence and the Thekchen Choeling temple.

The abbot of Drepung and representatives of Nechung Dorji Drayang Ling Centre in Hawaii also attended the ceremony. Representatives of other monasteries, Tibetan government officials and the general public were also present to greet me.

As soon as I was seated on the throne, the members of the *Kashag* (Tibetan Cabinet) greeted me first with scarves. They were followed by representatives from Departments of Central Tibetan Administration, Namgyal monastery, Gadong monastery, Institute of Buddhist Dialectics, and organisations.

Q: What feelings did you have on being recognised as the *Nechung Kuten* and did this change your life?

NK: To become Nechung's medium is not an ordinary duty. It is a responsibility of national importance. I feel that if it is able to render good service, especially to the Buddha dharma and Tibet, then my personal life is insignificant.

After becoming the medium, I had to automatically resign from the post of the ritual master and, in accordance with our tradition, expected to look after the affairs of the monastery as its Head Lama, even though I am not a very learned person as I ought to be. I also have to study more and meet more people and attend official functions and ceremonies. Many people, including journalists, come to ask all sorts of questions regarding the Dharma protector and the medium.

It is a tradition of Nechung monastery that once you become the medium you automatically become the abbot of the monastery as well. Taking this post is not merely a question of receiving the title, but being able to actually preside and lead the ritual ceremonies, many of which are of wrathful nature connected to the Dharma protector's cycle of ritual traditions. These are of extreme significance.

In the past when we had Nechung Rinpoche, he would lead the ceremonies and the medium did not have to shoulder the responsibilities of leading the ceremonies. As I have been trained as a monk of this Sangha community since my childhood, I do not have much difficulties in joining the pujas and ceremonies. I may be lacking some qualifications by virtue of spiritual realisations, however, whenever I am bound to take the responsibility of leading a ritual ceremony, I sincerely pray from the depth of my heart and express the power of the truth or the ultimate reality.

On the other hand, since I became the medium, to some extent, I have lost my personal freedom of movement. When I want to go for a holiday, I should make sure that it coincides with the absence of His Holiness from the town. Also I seek permission from the Office of His Holiness the Dalai and inform the Tibetan government of

where I can be contacted. Then, in terms of my diet, I am required to observe certain dietary discipline. For instance, I am not supposed to eat fish, eggs and pork.

But basically, not much has changed. Although many advise me not to do ordinary work, I still do things that have interested me, and sometimes lead young monks in undertaking mundane tasks, like painting the monastery. I believe in dignity of labour.

Q: Before going into a trance, what levels of change do you experience?

NK: It depends on who requests the trance. Sometimes my inner feelings gets disturbed a day or two before the trance and sometimes, only a few hours before. For instance, if His Holiness or the *Kashag* (cabinet) commissions the trance to take place, then, it comes a day before and gets stronger as the time for the trance draws closer. The following morning and especially after I have worn the costumes and been seated amidst the call for trance by the monks chanting, the inner feeling becomes so intense that sometimes it is hard to imagine.

Q: Is the Nechung medium while in trance only possessed by Dorje Drakden?

NK: Normally when the invocation prayer is recited, it concerns *Ku-Nga*, the five forms of the Dharma King. But primarily, it is of Dorje Drakden. However, it is said that, "The manifestation of the Five Kings is not predetermined."

Dorje Drakden manifests as the minister of the Dharma Kings. Hence, he is called *Shung-Tan Dra-Lha* (Principal State Oracle). So I consider and believe that it is usually Dorje Drakden who comes through the medium.

Q: The prophecies have so far been given in Tibetan. In future, will

Nechung also give prophecies in other languages?

NK: Until now, Nechung has spoken only in Tibetan. As for the future, I have no comments. Our senior monks say that in the past, the prophecies were extremely poetic and difficult to understand. Gradually, the prophecies became more and more clear, and during my predecessor's time, and now, Nechung's prophecies have become even more clearer. But normally, it is spoken in the form of a poem in stanzas and prose style or a mixture of both. The language, however, is certainly not exactly like the common language. It is spoken with a tune, unique to Nechung.

Q: Do you recollect what has been said during a trance?

NK: No, certainly not. Just before the trance, I see and sense what is going around me. But gradually even my senses dissolve and then in a kind of sleep-state I become totally absorbed, and do not correctly remember what has happened and been said. Normally, when I am seated on the throne with my costumes on, I do my meditations while reciting the mantras of Hayagriva. Slowly, I get possessed through a deeper state of absorption, and then gradually feel distant from my own identity and surroundings. It is like having a dream and not remembering it the next morning. The same is the case with me before and after I come out of trance.

Q: How often does the Nechung medium go into a trance, and who can request for it and under what circumstances?

NK: In Tibet the Nechung is summoned to a trance on the tenth day of the first Tibetan month at old Meru monastery, near Tsuglag Khang (Central Cathedral) in Lhasa. This official celebration is presided over by the His Holiness the Dalai Lama and all the government officials. Besides this, a trance is performed occasional-

ly at the request of the Office of His Holiness, the Kashag, the Grand Lama's Estates, and monasteries. In between, a trance is performed for emergency matters.

After coming into exile, though there were trances of Nechung, they were not performed as often as it used to be in Tibet. But later, a schedule was observed. The trance on the 10th day of the first Tibetan month became a regular feature. Then, at times, Nechung monks were invited to Drepung in Mundgod, South India, for a special trance of the Dharma protector. In addition, there is the Summer Trance and the Winter Trance requested by the Kyabje Ling Rinpoche and other institutions.

In the past, except on the 10th of the first Tibetan month and the *Drepung Lhatse* at Mundgod, *Gye-Che* (the grand costume) is not worn. Later, on the advice of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, some relaxation was brought. The public could view some of the trance, take photos and interview the medium. However, except for the Kashag, the monastery ensures that other requests for trance are approved by the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Q: A news agency recently reported you as the spiritual adviser to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. What is your reaction to this?

NK: This is a misunderstanding on the part of the press. Perhaps, the reporter must have mentioned this to elevate the position of the Oracle or the medium. But unfortunately, he has made a mistake. I personally have not met any pressmen or others who raised this issue to me.

His Holiness does not need spiritual advice from the protector. If so, what about the interim period. From 1984 until I was recognised, there was no medium. However, His Holiness never failed to lead the Tibetan government and its people. Also it must be understood, and I

believe, that Nechung acts as a divine colleague in the conduct of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's spiritual and temporal responsibilities, and not as an adviser.

Q: Are you possessed by Nechung only when you are officially requested to perform a trance?

NK: No, not necessarily. There have been occasions, both in the past and present, when the Nechung medium went into a spontaneous trance. For instance, before I was officially recognized as the medium, I was possessed by the Dharma protector at Thekchen Choeling temple on one or two occasions. In the past, during the reign of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, when the then medium went for a bath to the river bank, he was suddenly possessed by the spirit of the oracle.

Q: What levels of prophecies does Nechung make — direct or indirect, definitive or interpretative, secret or open?

NK: I think various levels of prophecies are made in accordance with the weightage of the issues involved and the institution and person who requests for it, and so on. The general prophecies are not so uncommon. We all hear and read about them. But some prophecies of the State Oracle are so poetic and indirect that to understand them would take quite an effort and investigation by wise and experienced people.

Q: Is the Nechung Oracle there to serve only the Tibetan government headed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama or will the Dharma protector be always available and under all circumstances?

NK: Nechung is known as the Principal State Oracle. If you study the origin of the Dharma protector, he had connections with the Indian Religious King, Kunchok Bhang, an emanation of Arva Avalokiteshvara. Later, in Tibet, during the time of King Tri Song Deutsan in the eighth century, Samye was

built with assistance from Guru Padmasambhava and Shanta Rakshita.

At that time Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava) bound Nechung to oath to become the protector of Tibet's sovereignty and the Dharma. The rule of the Dalai Lama's began in 1642 during the Great Fifth Dalai Lama. This is the beginning of the formal connection between the Dharma protector and the Dalai Lamas. But being a protector of Tibet's sovereignty and Dharma, I think Nechung, to fulfill his commitments, and under all circumstances, will continue to serve Tibet's sovereignty and Dharma.

Q: What advice do you have for the Tibetan people?

NK: I would advise the Tibetans to realise that Arya Avalokiteshvara by virtue of his prayers has come in different manifestations to guide the Tibetan people. This is because of our karmic connections and prayers. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has always worked for our benefit and especially, since the Chinese invasion. The awareness of Tibet in the world is now growing. This does not merely come from political forces but from our religion, culture and people. They have appealed to a worldwide audience. We must not forget this, and every Tibetan, including government officials, must work hard and sincerely for our common cause.

His Holiness and the Dharma protector have said that in a few years time, a bright chance lies ahead for the people of Tibet. So this is what we must all concentrate on. Giving and receiving freedom will take only a day, but running a government and a nation is not an easy task. Let us, therefore, all work together. The Dharma protector on a number of occasion has said, "The achievement of Tibet's goal is the joint responsibility of both the people of Tibet and the protectors." So if the people work hard and sincerely, the protectors will always be enthusiastically with us.

Nechung Rinpoche and his lineage

Nechung Rinpoche Ogyen Thinley Choephel came from Mindrol-ling monastery to Nechung monastery in 1880's. His coming into Nechung was due to the unflagging grace of the great Dharma protector, and in particular his unique practice of the Treasured Doctrine. This happened during the time of the Eighth Medium, Shakya Yarphel. Rinpoche not only became the medium's spiritual guide, but also of Nechung's sangha, to whom he passed extensive transmission of the meditation practices on the energy channels, wind, and yantras (*Tsa-Lung Khrul-Khor*) of the generation and completion stage practices of the tantra.

In 1891, following the prophecies given by Nechung, and as instructed by the Tibetan government, he left for Do-Kham, eastern Tibet, to collect the heavily-blessed image of Guru Padmasambhava, a treasure object discovered by the great treasure master Ogyen Lerab Lingpa, from Zongsar Khyentse Rinpoche (1820-1892).

This image was later housed at the Tsuglag Khang in Tibet's capital Lhasa, so that the doctrine of the Buddha may flourish, and there will be timely rain, and especially that the great holders of the doctrine headed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama may live long, and that the dual polity of the Tibetan Government may be ever victorious. It was also to retain Jowo Shakyamuni's image (brought in the 7th century by the Chinese princess Wen-Cheng Kung-Chu as dowry for King Songtsen Gampo) on this universe so that it may not be taken away by the Nagas into their subterrrestrial realm.

Before Nechung Rinpoche actually headed for Doe-Kham, he requested for the advice of the Dharma protector, who said: "Initially there will be some pertinent problems.

However, if you were to open the *Ne-Ze* (grain-cascade) of Khentse Rinpoche and open the sealed scroll contained in it, you will find a Guru Yoga text, a treasure object discovered by the great treasure master Ogyen Larab Lingpa, otherwise known as Tertön Sogyal, and subsequently commission the sangha of Nechung to recite this text when they assemble, you will fulfill your mission."

Accordingly, Khentse Rinpoche also handed over the Guru Yoga text, alongwith the image of Guru Padmasambhava with great pleasure. Thus, on 22nd day of the ninth Tibetan month of the Iron-Hare Year, the day of the Buddha Shakyamuni's Descent from Heaven, the image was brought to Lhasa and housed in the Tsuglag Khang amidst a grand ceremonial welcome accorded by the Tibetan government.

On 10th of every Tibetan month, a group of eight Nechung monks are required to make a *Tsog* offering based on *Thug-Drub Drag-Po-Tzal* (Bestowal of Heart's Wrathful Accomplishment).

When Ogyen Thinley Choephel stayed at Mindrol-ling monastery, he was recognised as the incarnation of Langdro Kunchok Jungne, one of the 25 chief disciples of Guru Padmasambhava. Langdro Kunchok Jungne's reincarnation is recognised as the treasure master Ratna Lingpa (1403-1479) who is well-known in the history of Tibetan Buddhism. It is for this reason that Ogyen Thinley Choephel is considered the reincarnation of Ratna Lingpa.

After the demise of Ogyen Thinley Choephel Rinpoche, the Great Thirteenth Dalai Lama recognised Thupten Kunchok (1918-1982) as the reincarnation of Nechung Rinpoche. This incarnate Nechung Rinpoche be-

came a great realised master. He also studied Tibetan literature and astrology from a learned astrologer of Mindrol-ling monastery. From 1956 to 1959, he taught Tibetan language at China's Minority School in Beijing.

Following the Chinese occupation, he returned to Tibet, and was imprisoned for a few months. He ultimately escape from Tibet and reached India in 1962.

In accordance with his premonitions, Nechung Rinpoche was able to bring to Nechung monastery in India *Se-Bag Mug-Chung* (Precious Mask), one of the holiest and priceless belongings of the great Dharma protector, Nechung.

On December 2, 1964, Nechung Rinpoche became a professor at the Ladakh Buddhist Institute (Bodhi Vihar) in Delhi.

In 1974 he founded Nechung Dorjee Drayang Ling Buddhist Centre at Hawaii in the United States, for the study of Buddhist meditation and culture. He made a few visits to his main monastery in Dharamsala and during his stay passed numerous lineages of initiations, oral transmissions and commentaries on the practices unique to the traditions of Nechung monastery.

On August 31, 1982, Nechung Rinpoche "manifested the act of passing away into Parinirvana in order to reveal the transitoriness of human life." He remained in a state of absorbed meditation. But following the past tradition of Nechung monastery, he was released three days later from this state at the behest of Taglung Tsetrul Rinpoche.

Regarding the reincarnation of Nechung Rinpoche, so far there has been no official declaration. Meanwhile, his disciples in Dharamsala and elsewhere in the world are hopeful of his speedy return.

Nechung monastery in exile

Of the 115 monks of Nechung monastery, only six managed to escape Tibet after the country was occupied by Communist China. As such, it was not until 1984 before the seat of the State Oracle was fully re-constructed in Dharamsala in northern India.

"We built the monastery slowly, step by step," says the 72-year-old Venerable Thubten Phuntsok, one of the key players in the re-construction of Nechung monastery, and as the holder of the Vajra Acharya (*Lopon*) title, is the highest ranking monk after Nechung *Kuten* and Nechung Rinpoche.

Once temporarily operating from an old rented Indian house, the neatly built Nechung monastic complex near the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives is now one of the main attractions of Gangchen Kyishong, the seat of the Tibetan government in exile headed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Since then dozens of young monks have been ordained and, like in the past in Tibet, Dorje Drakden (Nechung) is daily invoked in their prayers. Tibetan refugees attribute much of their success in exile to the ongoing guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and their Protector.

The Vajra Acharya Venerable Thubten Phuntsok, too, gives credit for his monastery's accomplishments to the blessings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Dharma Protector. He also told the *Tibetan Bulletin* that the encouragement received from the previous Nechung *Kuten* and the late Nechung Rinpoche were extremely useful. Nevertheless, it is apparent that for all practical purposes, behind all the spiritual and moral forces, lies the human spirit and determination.

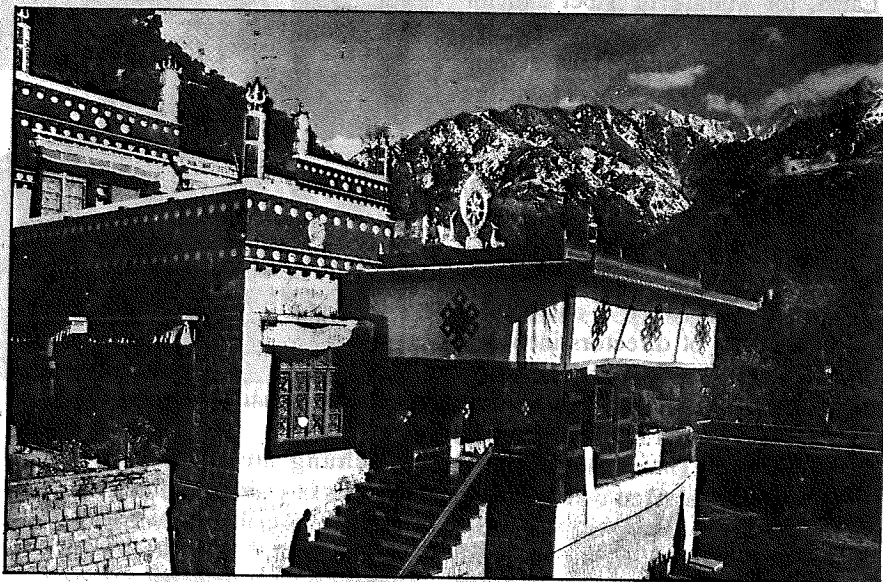
"I simply worked hard to teach the Chinese that human spirit cannot be

destroyed, no matter how hard they strive to destroy monasteries. Even the latter can be rebuilt. My friend, Kushok Thupten Sherab (Wangyal) and others have given full support," says Vajra Acharya Venerable Thubten Phuntsok.

The Nechung monastery in Tibet also was destroyed during the fatal "Cultural Revolution." Lately, the monastery, despite Chinese vigilance, has been voluntarily and partially rebuilt by Tibetans, including some former Nechung monks. It reportedly has about 16 monks only and little spiritual activity in sight (see *History of Nechung monastery*).

Dalai Lama, and statues, thankas, and religious scriptures — all systematically laid out. The monastery was formally inaugurated by His Holiness on March 31, 1985.

The monastery has 61 junior and senior monks, including five monks from the parent Nechung monastery who escaped Tibet in 1991. The daily schedule of the monks begins at 5:30 a.m. and ends at 9:45 p.m. Apart from daily prayer sessions, their study course include Buddhist philosophy, debate, training in chanting, preparation of ritual cakes and mandala creation, memorisation of religious texts, and classes in Tibetan literature and



Nechung monastery in Dharamsala

On the other hand, the scene at its counterpart in exile is a living culture for all to see. After receiving land from the Tibetan government, construction of a hostel for Nechung monks began in 1977 and was completed in 1979. The construction work on the monastery was started in May 1981. It was completed in March 1984 with a private chamber for His Holiness the

English. The monks also study various subjects of Buddhist sutra and tantra of both the Ancient and New traditions. Every Saturday, the monastery also organises a talk or a seminar, where the monks discuss and exchange views on various issues relating to Tibet and the Tibetan people. During these sessions, the monks are also invited to give suggestions for the

smooth functioning and improvement of the monastery. Sometimes Tibetan and foreign guest speakers are invited to address the monks.

In addition, Nechung monastery has an annual ritual calendar, which among other things, comprises of a regular practice of the invocation rite of the Dharma Protector, the Thirteen deity Yamantaka and Guru Padmasambhava's sadhana and self-generation of Hayagriva deity. Then on the 10th and 25th day of every Tibetan month, Guru Rinpoche and Daniki days are respectively observed with special prayers and ritual offerings. Whenever commissioned, the monastery also conducts special prayers and ritual ceremonies for the long life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, for welfare of Tibet and for world peace.

Under supervision of the Nechung *Kuten*, the Nechung Rinpoche and the Vajra Acharya, Nechung monastery is managed by a board of directors consisting of eight senior monks. Interestingly, except for the director, Venerable Thubten Sherab, who is 60 years old, the rest of the board members are aged between 25 and 38.

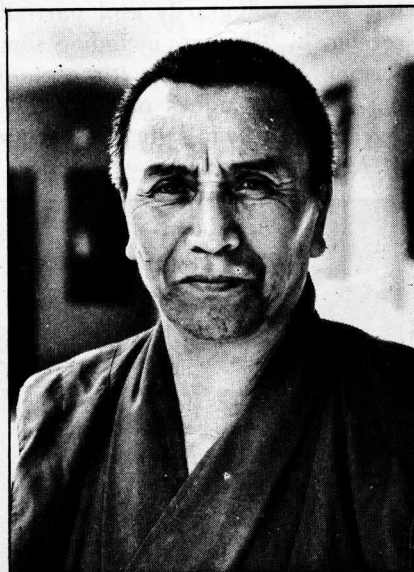
The board of directors include a director, secretary, manager, ritual master, chant master, disciplinarian and two additional members elected by the board. The board members themselves are elected on merit basis by the monks. However, the chant master, handpicked from a list of five nominees by the Nechung *Kuten* while he is in trance, was introduced in exile in 1989.

It is with such a fore-sighted arrangement that Vajra Acharya Venerable Thubten Phuntsok is confident of the future of Nechung monastery and its traditions, although there are only a couple of elder monks left to guide the younger generation.

"Responsibilities have already been handed over to the younger monks. They form a committee of

eight members, and I personally have nothing to do. They make the decision, and I stay away from it. However, on serious matters, when I feel there is the risk of running in the wrong direction, I interfere. Otherwise, I do not involve myself in the administration of the monastery. I know, I must prepare for my final departure from this world. I am happy that they are fully capable of shouldering the responsibilities," he says.

The Vajra Acharya Venerable Thubten Phuntsok also says that



Venerable Thubten Phuntsok

Nechung monks undergo many aspects of training, adding that, "Our hope is to make them a responsible, educated and wise citizens of a free Tibet."

During his spare time the Vajra Acharya has been writing books to keep the record straight and also for consultation by the younger generations of Nechung monks.

"Since the young monks have not seen how we conduct ceremonies and observe our traditions in Tibet, I have endeavoured to write down everything. The first chapter of my book concerns the monastery's annual official ceremonies. I have completed it

and it has filled around fifty folios. I have tried to explain with illustrations how each and every *Tor-Ma* (sacrificial cake) is made for the respective rituals; which deity is generated; and so on. In Tibet, we used to make *Tor-Ma* alone with 200 *khel* of butter. Similarly, I have recorded the history of Nechung, its traditions, liturgies, ceremonial costumes, and the monastic architecture, and so on. Up to now it is more than a hundred folios of manuscript. I have left everything in writing for the monks to learn and train," Vajra Acharya Venerable Thubten Phuntsok says.

He and his colleagues have also taken every care to revive and transmit all the lineages of practices unique to Nechung monastery to their younger generation of monks. "I am confident that they will certainly be able to take all the Nechung traditions alive back to Tibet, once Tibet becomes a free nation," he says.

"Now, they (younger Nechung monks) have fully caught with us in knowledge. Some of them know more than us. Especially because of His Holiness' blessings, they are learning Buddhist philosophy, tantra, and modern education, and so on. I have no fear at all now. Our future is intact," says Vajra Acharya Venerable Thubten Phuntsok with regard to Nechung monastery and its traditions.

For this focus on Nechung, the Tibetan Bulletin would like to acknowledge the cooperation of the monastery, and help provided by Mr Tsepak Rinzin, research and translation officer at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala.

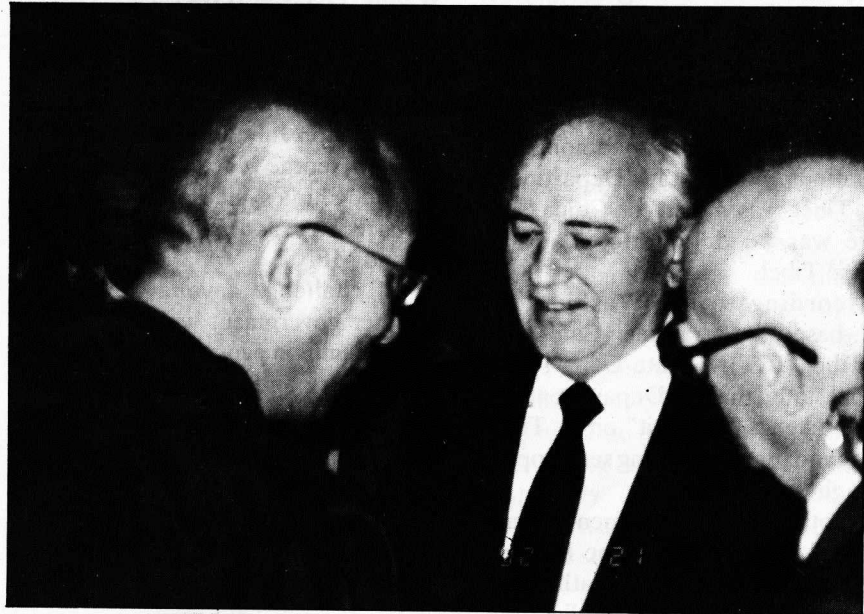
His Holiness meets Gorbachev in Moscow

His Holiness the Dalai Lama met Mr Mikhail Gorbachev in Moscow on August 20 during an international conference on "Facing Apocalypse III — The Charisma of Power and Holy War." The two prominent international personalities were the day's main speakers.

His Holiness told the leader of the erstwhile Soviet Union that he was very encouraged by the bloodless nature of the Russian revolution. He also presented a traditional Tibetan greeting scarf to Mr Gorbachev, a fellow Nobel laureate.

His Holiness was accompanied by his secretary Mr Tenzin Geyche and his representative for the Baltic States, the Common Wealth of Independent States, and Mongolia, Dr Ngawang Rabgyal.

Speaking on the subject, "A New Approach to Global Peace," His Holiness said that he was happy for being able to be in Moscow, a city which "has been at the centre of dramatic changes and the focus of the world's attention over the past year."



His Holiness with Mr Gorbachev at the international meet in Moscow

"The new-found freedoms have no doubt been widely celebrated," His Holiness said, while speaking on his approach to global peace and universal responsibility.

"In the context of our newly

emerging global community, all forms of violence, especially war, have become totally unacceptable as means of settling disputes," His Holiness said. "Good wishes are not sufficient; we must assume responsibility."

His Holiness receives warm welcome in Hungary, Austria

On June 23, His Holiness the Dalai Lama told the Hungarian Parliament how the destruction of environment and massive transfer of Chinese population into Tibet is having a negative effect on his homeland. He thanked Hungarians for their hospitality and sympathy for Tibet.

The President of the Hungarian Parliament Mr Gabor Fodor, in his welcome speech expressed their concern for human rights violations and sympathy for the Tibetans in Tibet.

The Tibetan leader was in Hungary from July 20 to 24 at the invitation of the Commemorative Committee of Korosi Csoma Sandor and Buddhist

organisations. His Holiness was also received by Gabor Demsky, the Lord Mayor of Budapest, the country's capital. He was accompanied by Special Assistant Mr Kelsang Gyaltzen, London representative Mrs Kesang Y. Takla and Hungary representative Mr Paljor Tsering.

On July 22, His Holiness was interviewed by singer Bob Geldof for Britain's TV Channel 4. The same afternoon, His Holiness blessed and consecrated a stupa in Tarr. After the welcome address by Lama Ngawang, Mr Attila Kalman, Cultural Ministry's Political State Secretary, expressed deep appreciation for His Holiness'

presence. Addressing an audience of more than 3000 people, His Holiness stressed the importance of stupa and compassion. Also present were leaders of different religious groups.

In Austria, His Holiness attended the Salzburg Festival, inaugurated by Federal President Dr Thomas Klestil on July 26. He was welcomed by Governor Dr Hans Katschthaler.

His Holiness said that compassion and universal responsibility were the key elements of happiness and peace. He said the world has become more interdependent and modern communication also has brought the Tibetan people closer to Austria.

US Senate challenges State Department's Tibet policy

In the first ever US Senate hearing on Tibet, held on July 28, Senators and other witnesses sharply admonished allegations by the State Department that Tibet was a part of China and there was no deliberate policy to sinicise Tibet.

According to the Washington, D.C.-based International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), a State Department official stated that the Department felt it had taken a "hard hit" on its Tibet policy and that the hearing sent ripples through the department.

Another State Department official said that most people in the Department feel much more sympathetic to Tibet than their policy implies, but that the policy is made at the highest levels.

The hearing was significant because it focussed on the occupation of Tibet and Tibet's right to self-determination, rather than human rights. Witnesses, including ICT President Mr Lodi G. Gyari, Actor Richard Gere, and Asia Watch's Executive Director Ms Sidney Jones, testified about the deteriorating situation in Tibet, like population transfer, environment, and political prisoners. The senators, however, concentrated on Tibet's political status.

Among others, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY) questioned Mr Desaix Anderson, who testified for the State Department, on the US adherence to the United Nations Charter which calls for self-determination for all people.

US House condition MFN status to China

On July 21, the US House of Representatives passed the bill (339 to 62) to condition the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to China. The bill,

sponsored by Congressman Donald Pease conditions MFN on improvements in human rights in China and Tibet.

The US Senate held its hearing on the MFN on July 30. Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-ME) discussed China's inhuman behaviour towards Tibet as a major reason not to extend MFN.

"I challenge anyone to identify another government which has murdered 1 million people of a neighbouring country and is in the process of committing cultural genocide in that country," he said.

According to ICT, the Senate will vote on the MFN bill when it convenes after the August recess.

British MPs express concern over Tibet

Several members of parliament raised a number of questions concerning Tibet in the British House of Commons during the months of June and July. The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, however, stuck to the same old position of "recognising China's special position in Tibet."

On July 13, the House of Commons issued a motion on Tibet signed by 12 MPs to express their concern over reports of Tibetan women being forcibly aborted and sterilised as a part of China's population control programme in Tibet.

The government informed the MPs that a British parliamentary delegation, led by Lord Howe, is scheduled to visit Tibet later this year.

Tibet's caged nightingales

"Tibet's caged nightingales" was the phrase used by the Canadian *Globe and Mail* to describe the 24 members of the officially sponsored "Tibetan Music and Dance Troupe

From China" which in June and July gave performances in several cities in Canada and the United States.

"Out of the dozen items presented by them, only four were authentic Tibetan. Two items were sung in Chinese and the rest were stylised, sinicized, balletic creations of what pass for folk music in Tibet," said Mr Thubten Samphel, editor of New York-based journal *News Tibet*.

Ironically, the Chinese officials accompanying the team were reported to be disgusted when they learned that the performances were being held only in poor Chinese localities.

STOP PRESS

One Tibetan was shot dead and two others wounded when Nepalese border guards fired at them August 26 at Namchey Bazaar in upper Khumbhu Valley in Nepal, according to a report reaching here from Kathmandu.

The dead man was identified as Rigzin Tsering, 18, from the Trago region of Kham, now incorporated into China's Sichuan Province.

The report said that a group of 18 Tibetan refugees, including three women, were apprehended by 20 Nepalese border guards, who started interrogating them. Fearing that they would be handed over to the Chinese police, the refugees ran away from the Nepalese guards. The guards immediately opened fire on them, the report said.

The remaining 17 refugees were detained for four days in Khumbu Valley before being driven to a prison in Kathmandu with their hands and ankles cuffed, the report said.

The Tibetans, however, were released on September 2, after the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in Kathmandu intervened.

Kalachakra held in Kinnaur

His Holiness the Dalai Lama bestowed the 16th *Kalachakra* (Wheel of Life) initiation at Kalpa in Kinnaur in the northern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh from August 11 to 13. It was given at the request of the Kinnaur Mahabodhi Society in order to revive the dying Buddhist culture in the region.

The initiation was received by more than 20,000 people, the vast majority of whom were people from the Kinnauri region. The rest included Tibetans, and Buddhists from Himalayan regions and the West.

The *Kalachakra* is one of the highest yoga tantras within the Tibetan Buddhist practice. Under the guidance of His Holiness, specially trained monks from Namgyal Monastery constructs a mandala throughout the days of the preparatory teachings and the initiation. The elaborate "Wheel of Time" mandala is crafted out of coloured sand.

The initiation lasts for three days. The first day is a day of preparation. The actual initiation occurs on the second and third days.

The ceremony concludes on the fourth day with a long life initiation. Participants are then allowed to view the completed mandala. The ritual concludes with the destruction of the mandala and its being poured into a river as a symbol of the transitory nature of existence.

His Holiness recognises the 17th Karmapa

As per tradition, His Holiness the Dalai Lama on June 30 granted his final seal of approval and recognition to Ugyen Thinley, a 8-year-old boy in Tibet, as the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa.

The 16th Gyalwa Karmapa whose seat in exile is the Rumtek monastery

in Sikkim, passed away in the United States on November 16, 1981.

On June 29, the regents of Rumtek — Tai Situ Rinpoche, Gyaltsap Rinpoche and Shamar Rinpoche called on His Holiness. The regents told the *Tibetan Bulletin* that the purpose of their visit to Dharamsala was to seek an audience with His Holiness regarding Gyalwa Karmapa's reincarnation.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama's formal letter of approval reads:

"The boy born to Mr Karma Dhondup and Mrs Lhoga on the Wood-Ox Year of Tibetan Calendar identifies with the sacred letter left by the late Karmapa and is hereby recognised as the reincarnation of the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa. With prayers for the success of his service to humankind."

Efforts are now being made to bring the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa from Chinese-occupied Tibet to Rumtek monastery.

New Tibetan monastery inaugurated in Shimla

His Holiness the Dalai Lama on August 1 inaugurated Thupten Dorjidak Aewam Chogkar Institute, a re-established Tibetan Nyingmapa monastery, at Kasumpti in Shimla.

Before the inauguration, His Holiness was given a grand traditional welcome by the monastery's Head Lama, Taglung Tsetrul Rinpoche, and the Tibetan Welfare Officer, Mr Jamyang Tsering.

According to Venerable Nyima Sangpo, former chairman of the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies, among others, the Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh, Mr Shanta Kumar, was also present for the ceremony as the guest of honour.

The Dorjidak monastery, one of the two great Nyingma seats of learning in the vicinity of Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, was originally established in 1610 by Ngari Panchen Pema Wangyal. Following the Chinese invasion

of Tibet, the monastery was completely destroyed during the "Cultural Revolution."

After the welcome and introductory address by Taglung Tsetrul Rinpoche, His Holiness gave a brief speech during which he stressed the importance of re-establishing the monastery. He also recalled the connections the Dalai Lamas had with the monastery in Tibet.

Mr Shanta Kumar said that the monastery symbolised the age-old cultural ties between India and Tibet and how it will now add to the history Shimla's beauty.

The same afternoon His Holiness lead a *Tsog* offering ceremony at the monastery. This was followed by a *cham* (ritual dance) of the Eight Manifestations of Guru Padmasambhava.

Later, His Holiness inaugurated a new building complex of the UCO bank at Kasumpti and then visited the Central School for Tibetans (CST) in Chotta Shimla, where he inaugurated the new school building.

While speaking to the students and staff, His Holiness thanked the government of India for its continuous assistance to the Tibetan people. The school children performed cultural dances in honour of Holiness' visit.

The next day, lead by Taglung Tsetrul Rinpoche, the Dorjidak monastery, the Tibetan community and schools made a long-life prayer offering to His Holiness.

In the afternoon His Holiness bestowed a Guru Rinpoche's initiation and then addressed the public. He spoke on the importance of education for a genuine democratic set-up of the Tibetan government and advised the Tibetans to remain prepared for a smooth transition in a free Tibet.

After his two-day stay in Shimla, His Holiness left for Kalpa to bestow the 16th *Kalachakra* (Wheel of Life) initiation organized by the Kinnaur Mahabodhi Society.

My position not to be sacrosanct, His Holiness

The third session of the 11th Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies proposed the withdrawal of two clauses in the *Charter of the Tibetans in Exiles* which empower the Assembly to allow the Council of Regency to exercise the executive functions of His Holiness and change or annul ordinances issued by him.

Article 31, Clause b states that the executive functions of His Holiness the Dalai Lama shall be exercised by the Council of Regency "when the Tibetan Assembly, by more than two-thirds of its total members in consultation with the Tibetan Supreme Justice Commission, decides" that it is in the highest interests of the Tibetan Administration and the Tibetan people.

Article 55, Clause 3 states, "Any ordinances, promulgated as such (by His Holiness when the Assembly is not in session) may be amended, altered or annulled by the Tibetan Assembly through deliberation during their subsequent session."

By proposing for the withdrawal of these two clauses, the Assembly said they were acting on the opinions expressed by the masses, both in and outside Tibet. "The people have been telling us that since these two clauses run counter to their hopes and aspirations, they must be amended if we want to be a true democracy."

His Holiness, however, rejected the Assembly's proposal and said that it only reflected a "narrow outlook" which would serve no particular purpose.

In his reply to the Assembly's proposal, His Holiness wrote:

"The first session of the Assembly also had asked me to withdraw these two clauses, but I insisted on their inclusion for important reasons. The two clauses exist not as decoration pieces for the Charter, but to drive

home the difference between the system which pays lip service to democracy while holding on firmly to power and the one which is serious about implementing democracy. It is also to chart out long-term course for our future."

Wishful Chinese prediction

"We have come across a recent Chinese official document which predicted the disintegration of the exile Tibetan set-up," said Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche, Chairman of Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies, in his address to the Tibetan people in Dharamsala on the occasion of the 57th birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on July 6 1992.

The document bases its contention, Rinpoche said, on the premise that the exile set-up is characterised by conflicting views, which have even spilled over into the Dalai Lama's family. He said the Chinese document has it that the inter-regional and inter-religious school chasms, "which have existed for a long time, are widening now."

The Chinese are saying this because they "cannot understand the dynamics of democracy like this (free expression of dissenting viewpoints) as their only experience so far has been with the system of centralised authoritarianism," Rinpoche said.

Fearless expression of dissenting opinions and ideologies, as happens in the exile set-up, goes to show that the Tibetan Administration is truly able to implement the values of democracy, he said.

The Chinese prediction is, of course, more of a political wish than anything else, Rinpoche said, reasoning that creating opportunities for the free expression of opinions and ideologies is an important feature of democracy and must be welcomed. "The greater the freedom of thought and expression, the greater will be our

unity and political strength."

"No doubt, we do come across minor cases of sectarianism, but this will not escalate to the point of disintegrating of our Administration. This is because we have the leadership of His Holiness and his guidance for ironing out such differences," he said.

The Assembly Chairman, however, warned that the Chinese wish may become a reality if the Tibetans fail to follow the advice of His Holiness.

Rinpoche declined to divulge the details of the alleged document, saying that it is confidential. He, however, told the *Tibetan Bulletin* that it is an authentic Chinese document.

Japan more aware, says Tibetan Minister

In a belated celebration of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's birthday in Tokyo on 11 July, Kalon Tashi Wangdi, Information and International Relations Minister of the Tibetan Administration in Dharamsala, met over 200 Japanese leaders and friends of Tibet, including members of foreign diplomatic community.

Greeting the guests, Kalon Wangdi thanked the government and people of Japan for their vote in favour of the Tibet motion at the 48th session of UN Commission on Human Rights in March in Geneva.

The celebration turned out to be fruitful in that it also provided a forum for the exchange of ideas between the Tibetans and the guests, Kalon Wangdi said.

Speaking about his impression there, Kalon Wangdi said there had been a marked increase in the awareness about Tibet, which he felt would result in greater Japanese support for the cause of Tibet.

Kalon Wangdi's visit was primarily to oversee the change of Representatives at the Office of Tibet in Tokyo.

Tibetan official speaks of his experience in Rio

"Our visit to Rio convinced us that truth is, indeed, cherished by a vast majority of people. We could not help but be moved by the phenomenal interest and sympathy people showed towards what we had to say and show. Tibet's cause, we felt, was very much alive. I thought the Tibetans could not afford to lose this opportunity... We really got to re-vitalise our efforts as the international climate seems to be favourable to our cause," said Mr Tempa Tsering, secretary of the Department of Information and International Relations.

Mr Tempa Tsering and Mr Tenzin P. Atisha represented the Tibetan Administration at the Global Forum meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. They were accompanied by Mr Sanjiv Prakash of Eco-Tibet, India.

There were over 600 exhibition booths in Flamengo Park, one of the most beautiful green areas in Rio de Janeiro. The Tibetans took two which, in the event, became the busiest booths.

"Fortunately, seven Brazilian volunteers were on hand to help us. Besides, there were representatives from Eco-Tibet, California, and International Campaign for Tibet, Washington, D.C. Otherwise, it would have been impossible for us to cope up with the unending streams of visitors we received. We had displayed reading materials and traditional Tibetan art and artefacts. Some of our reading materials were printed in the popular Spanish and Portuguese languages," Mr Tempa Tsering recently told Tibetan government officials.

Naturally, the Tibetans were curious to know what the Chinese had up their sleeves. They found that China had sent a 24-member strong contingent, including three Tibetans, to the Global Forum.

"Unfortunately, we came to know

about the first Chinese conference rather late. When Atisha and two American friends reached the conference hall, a Tibetan speaker had finished his talk," he said.

At the second Chinese conference, Mr Tempa Tsering took an unoccupied seat between two of the Tibetans from the Chinese team. He tried to engage them in a conversation, but they were apparently afraid to speak to him.

"We had a strong desire to meet the Tibetans. But they were always jealously guarded by the Chinese. Then we put up feelers through some foreign friends to see if they would be interested in meeting us. Obviously, the Chinese refused them the permission," Mr Tempa Tsering said.

Against five conferences by the Chinese, the Tibetans organised only two. The first one, held on June 3, disappointed the Tibetans as only about 30 people attended it.

"However, if we look at it from the other side, it could be considered a good turnout. For example, none of the Chinese conferences drew more than ten people, including two or three of us," he said.

The second one was a roaring success. There were speakers from India, Bangladesh and Nepal. The hall was packed and even the doors and windows were blocked with people.

"The Bangladeshi spoke very strongly on environmental degradations in Tibet, which he pointed out was causing floods and other ecological hazards in his country," he said.

In the afternoon of June 3, the Tibetans organised a press conference where they released Dharamsala's official report on Tibet's environment. The report was very well-received and widely covered by the Brazilian and the international media.

As a matter of fact, the Tibetan

participation received the most extensive media coverage, thanks to the Chinese threat to boycott the Earth Summit if invitation was extended to His Holiness, who also spoke at the Global Forum (*See Tibetan Bulletin, May-June 1992*).

"Our foreign friends were amazed by the amount of coverage we received. 'You must write a thank-you letter to the Chinese government,' joked a co-ordinator of the Global Forum," Mr Tempa Tsering said.

The Tibetans did not write a thank-you letter. But they did go to the Chinese embassy to deliver a message for Chinese Premier Li Peng: 15,000 signatures, collected by the ICT, protesting against the Yamdrok Yumtso hydro-electricity project.

The highlight of the Tibetan participation at the Global Forum was the visit of His Holiness. He gave three talks to the NGOs and the public. One of them was at the Global Forum's panel meeting. The text of the speech was distributed to the audience. His Holiness, however, decided to give an extempore speech and spoke for more than 45 minutes.

Summing up the reaction of the audience to His Holiness' speech, Mr Tempa Tsering said that at the end of the speech someone stood up and said something like this: *We have met here for about a month and found ourselves stalemated even on minor matters. But what Your Holiness said here today opened our eyes to the fact that there are solutions to all the issues. If Your Holiness would kindly consent to stay here for a week, we will be able to resolve all the issues in front of us.*

(From Rio de Janeiro, Mr Tempa Tsering visited United States, where he met members of Tibet support groups and international human rights organisations, as well as prominent American journalists.)

Kalon Gyalo Thondup resumes office

The Kashag (cabinet) Secretariat on August 31 announced that Kalon Gyalo Thondup has resumed his responsibilities as the Chairman of the Kashag.

Earlier on August 6, in a clarification to the press, the Department of Information and International Relations said that Mr Gyalo Thondup, after resigning temporarily from the post of kalon (minister), recently visited Peking because of overtures from the Chinese side. The Chinese ambassador in New Delhi had told him that so far China had been conservative in its stand on Tibet, and that it was ready to adopt a more flexible stand if the Tibetans assumed a realistic attitude to the whole issue.

The Tibetan Kashag gave its approval for Mr Thondup's visit to China as it was in keeping with the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies (ATPD) resolution which stipulated that the Tibetan Government would have no objection to a negotiation with China if such a proposal came from the Chinese side, either directly or through a third party.

The Kashag, however, instructed him to meet the Chinese leaders in his personal capacity and not as a representative of the Tibetan administration; and to listen to what the Chinese had to say and not to enter into any kind of negotiations.

New centre for Tibetan studies

A new centre for research, publication and dissemination of information and knowledge on the culture, literature, history, society and politics of the Tibetan people, with emphasis on the neglected, the contemporary and the lay aspects of these subjects, has been recently established in Dharamsala.

Mr Tashi Tsering, a research scholar at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, and one of the founding directors of the centre said at the June 28 inauguration ceremony that the primary aim of Amnye Machen Institute is to benefit the Tibetan people in and outside Tibet.

Kalon Kalsang Yeshe, Minister for Culture, Religion, and Health, said that one of the effective ways of making people understand Tibetan culture is through writing. He also said that it is important to have a definite sense of purpose and that those involved in the project have every potential to succeed.

Addressing Tibetan reporters, the founding directors of the institute said that within the next 12 to 18 months, the first phase of their work will include publication of a newsletter on Tibetan women; Tibetan translation of a booklet on democracy and freedom entitled, *Common Sense*; a booklet on the condition of Tibet's environment as observed by foreign visitors both before and after the invasion; making of a historically accurate Tibetan language commentary for *Lungta*, an English film on seven French women who followed the route of Alexander David-Neel to Tibet.

The forthcoming programmes of the centre has received encouragement from His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Kashag (cabinet), which announced a grant of Rs 500,000 over the next five years to get the centre going.

Amnye Machen is the name of a major mountain range in north-eastern Tibet. Other founding directors of the institute are Mr Pema Bhum, former associate professor of Tibetan literature at the North-West Institute for Minorities at Lanchow, China; Mr Lhasang Tsering, former president of the Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC); and Mr Jamyang Norbu, former director of the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (TIPA).

Dharamsala elects welfare officer

In accordance with guidelines laid down in the Charter of the Tibetan People, the Tibetans in Dharamsala on June 27, and for the first time, elected their Welfare Officer. Before this, welfare officers were appointed by the Tibetan Administration's Department of Home.

"I was a bit nervous, and although it is a difficult responsibility, I appreciate the people's confidence in me," the new Welfare Officer Mr Dawa Tsering recently told the *Tibetan Bulletin*. He won by a clear majority of votes out of four finalists, one of whom later withdrew from the election.

Mr Dawa Tsering, 38, is a wellknown social worker, whose achievements include the establishment and successful running of Yongling Creche and Kindergarden School in McLeod Ganj, Dharamsala. He also served the office of the Tibetan Youth Congress, and was until his election working at the Tibetan Medical Institute branch in McLeod Ganj.

"One of the things that I would like to achieve, besides attending to the welfare of needy Tibetans, is to further strengthen the friendly relationship between Tibetans and the local Indians," Mr Dawa Tsering said. On August 15, India's independence day was jointly marked by Tibetans and the local Indians by staging a joint cultural evening at the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts.

Mr Dawa Tsering said that despite his limitations, he has decided to shoulder the responsibilities entrusted to him because he does not want to belittle the people's confidence.

"I hope the people will continue to support me, just as they did in electing me," he said.

Mary Craig tells the Tibetan story

By Bhuchung K. Tsering

Tears Of Blood – A Cry For Tibet.
By Mary Craig (Harper Collins, London) 374 pages. Price: £ 17.95.

The travails and anguish undergone by the Jewish community under the Nazis are beyond our imagination. Their fate is known throughout the world on account of the tremendous exposures received through the medium of films, books, etc. While the information which the world received helped the international community understand the plights of the Jews, their strength and tenacity have been a source of encouragement to many oppressed people.

The reason why I am mentioning the above is because of the similarity of the experiences between the Jews and the Tibetans. We Tibetans have much to learn from the Jewish community not just in the matter of maintaining one's identity intact in the face of severe obstacles, but also in conveying our plight to the rest of the world.

The history of Tibet-China relations is a story of beguilement, deceit and misplaced trust. It is the story of a tiny nation whose naivety and innocence were taken advantage of by a bigger nation for its own interest. This Chinese exploitation of Tibetan weakness was further encouraged by the short-sighted vision of a section of the Tibetan leadership in the past. In their attempt to continue their authority, the leadership holding this point of view gradually instilled in the minds of the Tibetan laity, and more importantly in the clergy who had tremendous influence on the public opinion, the misguided view that isolationism was the only way to preserve our unique culture and tradition. Thus, the Chinese were allowed

to propagandise about their claims over Tibet throughout the world with there being little independent information coming out of Tibet to contradict it. Unlike the Jewish community, who, I believe, had the advantage of international exposure of Nazi misdeeds on them, we Tibetans lacked similar avenue in the initial stages of Chinese incursion. It is only recently that several books and films, including video footages, have been produced – revealing to the world the truth of the Tibetan situation. Mary Craig's *Tears of Blood – A cry for Tibet* is a welcome addition to this.

The book is a study of the developments in Tibet leading to the arrival of the Chinese and also details the post-occupation situation there. To a Tibetan who has experienced Chinese rule in Tibet, the book contains nothing new. It only explains what he already knows. However, to a non-Tibetan who knows little about the situation in Tibet and specially to those foreigners who have been fed with Chinese propaganda about Tibet, this book may be an eye-opener.

The author does not pretend to be non-partisan. I think she does not need to. A positive development of the period after the series of demonstrations in Tibet in 1987 and the post-Tiananmen Square massacre period is that the international community has become more willing to accept the Tibetan point of view. Earlier, the Chinese with their artful mixture of facts and fiction with regard to the past situation of Tibet were able to instil seeds of confusion in the minds of some people about the veracity of Tibetan claims. In a way, the book is an answer to some of the Chinese propaganda coming out in the name of non-Chinese writers.

When I say the author does not

pretend to be non-partisan, I do not mean that she is biased in favour of the Tibetans. No where in the book does the author glorify Tibet's past situation. In fact, through the statements of some of the people she interviewed, the author details how some ordinary Tibetans were mistreated by their masters. We will be telling a lie if we depict independent Tibet as a land of milk and honey. The society did have many weaknesses then. But, the fact of the matter was that the people enjoyed peace and freedom. Reforms were needed and the Tibetans were preparing for these. The blessing of the Chinese invasion and occupation, if I could term it, is that it forced the Tibetans to reform ourselves and relinquish our isolationist policy overnight. Left to ourselves, it may have taken us a few decades to reach the situation in which the Tibetan community in exile is today.

Tibet can contribute much to the development of world civilisation. Even under the limitations of his exile situation, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has become the torch bearer in inter-religious harmony. Under the initiative of His Holiness, Tibetan Buddhists have started exchanging experiences with followers of other religions. In the matter of philosophy, Buddhism is being accepted as an alternative solution to the ills of modernism. The very many Tibetan Buddhist centres throughout the world are a testimony to this fact. Taking these into consideration, it is in the interest of the world community to pay attention to the plight of the Tibetans and to take necessary steps to encourage a peaceful solution to the problem. I believe the book under review is one more attempt to place the Tibetan issue before the international community.