

Great Changes in Tibet



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Editor's Note

The Tibet Autonomous Region, situated on China's southwest border, is on the world's largest plateau with snow-capped mountains, at an average altitude of more than 4,000 metres above sea level. Its main inhabitants are people of Tibetan nationality which boasts a long history and is a component part of the Chinese nation.

Before liberation Tibet was a hell on earth, where the labouring people suffered for centuries under the darkest and most reactionary feudal serfdom. The three manorial lords — the Tibetan local governments, monasteries and nobility — owning all the land and other means of production, ruthlessly exploited and oppressed the labouring masses. Tibetan serfs and slaves were deprived of freedom of the person and lived worse than animals. Such savage feudal serfdom obstructed the development of social productive forces so that Tibet steadily declined politically, economically and culturally and its population dwindled. On top of all this, a century of aggression and enslavement in Tibet by imperialist forces plunged the Tibetan people into an abyss of dire misery.

In 1951 Tibet was liberated, and imperialist aggressive forces were driven out. This marked a great turning point in the historic development in Tibet. Since then Tibetan people have lived with China's other nationalities in the family of the great motherland on the basis of equality, unity, fraternity

and mutual help. The Tibetan people are revolutionary and patriotic. But the Dalai-led reactionary ruling clique of the Tibetan upper social strata, trying to maintain feudal serfdom, launched a counter-revolutionary armed rebellion in 1959 in collusion with imperialism and foreign reactionaries. The Tibetan serfs and slaves rose in great wrath, and with their co-operation the People's Liberation Army rapidly put down the rebellion. A dynamic Democratic Reform Movement ensued, which toppled the serf-owning class and criminal serfdom and liberated the million serfs. Since then Tibet has marched with vigorous strides in transition from feudal serfdom to a socialist society, bypassing several centuries of historical development.

Led by Chairman Mao and the Communist Party of China, a million Tibetan serfs have stood up and joined China's brother nationalities to become masters of the country. An earthshaking change has taken place in Tibet. Since the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the general situation in the autonomous region has become still better. People of various nationalities there have conscientiously studied Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought and their mental outlook has undergone profound changes. Constructive work goes ahead vigorously and the people's living standards rise steadily. A great number of Tibetan cadres are maturing rapidly and the dictatorship of the proletariat is being consolidated and strengthened. Now Tibet is a thriving scene of socialism.

This booklet contains eleven articles, presenting a general picture of Tibet's profound changes since liberation.

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New Look of the Tibetan Plateau

I was born in a slave's family in Konka County, Tibet. Under reactionary feudal serfdom, I was a slave for nine years and lived like a beast of burden. Chairman Mao and the Communist Party saved me from slavery and nurtured me to become a Communist and a responsible cadre. My mother gave birth to me, but it is the Party which saved me and invincible Mao Tsetung Thought which sustains me. I want to cheer again and again: "Long live Chairman Mao! A long, long life to him!"

October 1 of 1966 is the most unforgettable day of my life. As a representative of the minority nationalities, I met Chairman Mao, the great leader of the people of all China's nationalities, on the Tien An Men rostrum at the Peking National Day celebration rally. As I happily shook hands with the great teacher Chairman Mao, my heart pounded. There were so many things I wanted to say. With tears in my eyes, I said: "Chairman Mao, we the million emancipated Tibetan serfs are determined always to follow you in making revolution. We wish you a long, long life!"

¹ Vice-Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee of the Tibet Autonomous Region.

For generations my forefathers were slaves under the rule of the manorial lords — the reactionary Tibetan local governments, the nobility and the monasteries. We had mouths but no right to speak. We had legs but no freedom of movement. The manorial lord's cattle and horses were fed garden peas and parched *chingko* barley whereas we lived on wild herbs. When my mother and younger brother died of hunger, the manorial lord took my elder sister away as payment of "death tax" and forced me to become his slave. His agent said threateningly to my father: "Pasang is born our slave. If you dare to resist, we'll clap you into prison and drag her away tied to a horsetail."

I was nine when I was taken to the manorial lord's estate. I became the maid of his wife Choma and her daughter. They beat and abused me every day. If the butter-tea I served was too hot, the vicious Choma would throw it in my face. If it was cold, she would beat me with her boot. I was always beaten black and blue and it hurt me all over to lie down to sleep. I had only a thread-bare Tibetan robe for the severe winter. The few rags I mopped the floor with served as a mattress for the night. It was like sleeping on ice and I would tremble with cold. Every night Choma chanted sutras before she went to bed and I had to kneel behind her to massage her back. I was so tired I would sometimes doze off. Choma would take a big pin from her collar and poke it into my head. Blood streamed down my head and I felt dizzy. Nine years of enslavement brought me to the verge of death.

One summer day in 1956, I was beaten unconscious by Choma's daughter. A gust of cold evening wind woke

me up. My body covered with wounds and blood, I thought of our kinsmen the People's Liberation Army. (Tibet was peacefully liberated as early as 1951. But the Democratic Reform was not yet carried out in 1956 and the manorial lords continued to rule over the serfs.) I remembered a P.L.A. unit had been stationed in our village in 1954 and the armymen told us how the poor people rose to make revolution. But they soon left for another village. I was determined to escape from the manor and look for the P.L.A. at the risk of my life. That night the masters were having a drinking party and I took advantage of their merry-making and the departure of guests to run away from the lair. I ran by day in the mountains and only in the evening I came down to pick pea leaves in the field to eat. After five days and six nights I finally found the P.L.A. who saved me. . . .

That was my life's turning point. I began to see the sunshine and live a new life. At first I became a worker. In the autumn of 1957, I was given the opportunity to study at an inland institute for minority nationalities. I studied politics and the Tibetan and Han languages. I began to understand many things about revolution and my class consciousness gradually rose. In May 1959 I had the honour of being admitted into the Communist Party of China. For several days I was so excited that I could hardly sleep. I reviewed the road I had travelled and realized that I owed everything to the education given me by the Party organization. I said to myself: "Pasang, you are no longer an ordinary emancipated slave but a vanguard fighter of the proletariat. From now on you must redouble your effort to study Chairman Mao's works in the course of struggle and make revolution all your

life along Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line."

I returned to Tibet in summer 1959 to take part in the struggle to put down the rebellion of Tibet's reactionary ruling clique of the upper strata led by the Dalai, and in the Democratic Reform Movement to overthrow reactionary serfdom. All this was a profound education and tempering for me.

I became chairman of the Langhsien County women's association and later deputy county head. Being a leading cadre was no easy job for me, but I thought that so long as I remained loyal to Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line and acted according to Mao Tsetung Thought, I could overcome all difficulties, however great.

In enthusiastic response to Chairman Mao's great call "**Get organized!**", the poor peasants of Tengmu Township organized mutual-aid teams and co-operatives in 1963 and later wanted to organize a people's commune. Unreformed manorial lords and their agents made trouble in the village. They spread rumours and carried out disruptive activities. Class struggle was sharp. I went to the village with several comrades from the county to make an investigation. Resolutely implementing and defending Chairman Mao's revolutionary line, we supported the emancipated serfs in their revolutionary action and smashed the disruptive scheme of the handful of class enemies. The people's commune was organized. The once poverty-stricken Tengmu Township has undergone big changes. Formerly 80 per cent of the people in the township were dependent on state relief grain. Today the township is self-sufficient and has surplus grain to sell to the state.

In autumn 1965, not long after I became deputy head of Langhsien County, I was sent by the county Party committee to lead 1,500 people in building a highway. It was shock work. Following Chairman Mao's teaching, I persistently put proletarian politics in command of our work and the project went ahead quickly. Then we came upon a precipice when we were near the last stretch of the highway. Scores of people blasted the precipice for two weeks but progress was slow. It seemed that our work would lag behind schedule. I organized the road builders to make a conscientious study of Chairman Mao's brilliant article "The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains". The study heightened the people's morale. With greater determination, we became more resourceful. A shock brigade was organized. With concerted efforts and combining hard work with ingenious methods, we completed the work in four days.

For the past decade and more I have always kept in mind Chairman Mao's teaching **"We should be modest and prudent, guard against arrogance and rashness, and serve the Chinese people heart and soul. . ."** and tried to carry forward the Party's glorious tradition of hard struggle and close ties with the masses. During the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, I gained a deeper understanding of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line. I realize that political line determines everything and Chairman Mao's revolutionary line guarantees victory in our revolution. When the Revolutionary Committee of the Tibet Autonomous Region was set up in 1968 I was elected vice-chairman. I became concurrently chairman of the Langhsien County Revolutionary Committee when it was organized in 1970. I often remind myself:

Though my position has changed, I should not forsake the true qualities of the working people, but remain loyal to Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line and never waver in my determination to make revolution all my life.

The whole Tibetan Plateau has changed. There are many emancipated serfs or household slaves like me among the leading cadres at all levels in Tibet. Nurtured by Mao Tsetung Thought, they have matured politically. Yang Tsung, a former slave, was elected an alternate member of the Central Committee of the Party at the Party's Ninth National Congress. Tzujenlamu, another former slave, and Tutengnima, former slave and now a worker at the Lhasa Cement Plant, became vice-chairmen of the regional revolutionary committee. Tochi, a poor herdsman from the north Tibet grassland, became a member of the regional revolutionary committee. There are also emancipated serfs among those wielding power in organs of political power at the county level and below. Of the 15 members on the Langhsien County Revolutionary Committee, 9 are emancipated serfs, accounting for 60 per cent of the total. Emancipated Tibetan serfs and slaves are now chairmen of the revolutionary committees of the county's three districts and all the county's 26 townships.

In 1970, my 72-year-old father was elected a delegate to the Congress of Activists in the study of Mao Tsetung Thought in Loka Prefecture, where I come from. When we met, the first words he said were: "Daughter, you must fully arm yourself with Mao Tsetung Thought, and wield power well for the Tibetan people." I replied: "You are right, father, we mustn't forget the misery of

the past now that we have healed our wounds. We must never forget the days when power was not in the people's hands. I will use Mao Tsetung Thought to guide me in wielding power."

Chairman Mao teaches: **"The rights the people have won must never be lightly given up but must be defended by fighting."** We the million emancipated Tibetan serfs are determined to follow our great leader Chairman Mao's teaching, continue the revolution, always remain revolutionary, advance valiantly along the course charted by the Party's Ninth Congress, and struggle to strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat and build a new socialist Tibet!

Former Slave Becomes Master of Country
—Talk with a Tibetan Worker

One day right before the Tibetan New Year, a traditional festival, I visited Ahwangtochi, a Tibetan worker of the Tungfeng (The East Wind) Shoe and Hat Factory in Lhasa.

In festival dress, Ahwangtochi and his mother Tzu-jenlachen came out to welcome me. His mother prepared butter-tea. The family, eight all told, live in three spacious and tidy rooms which were allotted them after liberation. On the white-washed wall of the middle room is a portrait of Chairman Mao. Beneath it are certificates of commendation presented to Ahwangtochi and his younger brothers and sisters by their factories. Piled high on the beds were quilts and Tibetan blankets. In the eastern room are four big chests full of clothes distributed to the family during the Democratic Reform as well as new ones they bought later on. Sides of beef and mutton hung from the beams; butter and cakes and other eatables are in store.

The mother said with feeling: "Without Chairman Mao and the Party, how could we poor people enjoy the New Year as we do now! In the old society we were

vagrants without any hope of survival! . . .” Tears filled her eyes and she could hardly go on. There was a short silence. Ahwangtochi then continued what his mother had left unsaid and recounted the family’s suffering in the old and criminal society.

Before liberation, the family used to live in Nanmulin County of Shigatse Prefecture and had been blacksmith slaves for many generations. In the old days, a blacksmith was regarded by the serf-owners as “the lowest man” and led a life of humiliation and hunger. Unable to bear the harsh exploitation and oppression, Ahwangtochi’s father decided to escape with his family and begged all the way to Lhasa. The family thought that “Buddha” lived in Lhasa and that they could make a living there. But under reactionary serfdom, the whole of Tibet was a living hell. Within a month of their arrival in Lhasa, the grandfather, grandmother, and an uncle and aunt died of starvation and cold, one after another. His father could not support the family by working as a blacksmith. The back-breaking unpaid *ula* — corvée — made even bare existence impossible for the family. His father brought the family back to Nanmulin when Ahwangtochi was 12 years old. But they had neither house nor land. The family of eight huddled in a tent which did not protect them from summer rain or winter cold. Still, they had to pay the manorial lord a monthly tax of 2.5 yuan or be driven away. Both his parents were forced to do corvée labour, but for different manorial lords, and neither was entitled to any freedom. Unable to bear the cruelty any longer, the family fled to Nagchuka. But they were caught and brought back. Father was punished with three hundred lashes. Clench-

ing his hands, Ahwangtochi said: "My mother's heart almost broke when she saw how cruelly father had been beaten. There was no way in the old society for us poor people to live."

Ahwangtochi's three younger brothers and two younger sisters sat and listened. The family's history roused them to bitter hatred for the criminal old society.

"High as they are, the Himalayas have their summit; long as it is, the Yalutsangpo River has its sources; and poor as we Tibetan people were, we have finally seen the end to our misery. At last the spring thunder dispelled the dark clouds and the red sun rose," said Ahwangtochi with delight. "Chairman Mao sent the People's Liberation Army to Tibet in 1951. Under the leadership of Chairman Mao and the Communist Party, and with the help of the P.L.A., we eventually overthrew vicious feudal serfdom. Since then great changes have taken place in Tibet. The million serfs have become masters of the country and are today living a happy life."

The mother then said: "I had nine children. My heart almost broke when three of my daughters died of hunger and cold. Thanks to Chairman Mao, now we have a happy life. My eldest son and his wife, my two elder daughters and my third son are workers. They all study Chairman Mao's works hard and do their jobs well. Two of them have become Communist Party members and one, Communist Youth League member. My second son, now in the P.L.A., was elected as an activist in the study of Chairman Mao's works last year. I'm 53 but I don't want to sit idle. As a member of the

neighbourhood committee, I am doing my best to serve the people.”

Solangwangmu, the eldest daughter, who works in the Lhasa Farm Machinery Plant, cut in: “We poor people in the past didn’t have enough parched *chingko* barley to eat; now in addition to barley we have rice, flour, butter, beef and mutton. We had only ragged yak-hair clothes in the past and no shoes, even in the dead of winter. But now we have clothes of better material and also boots to wear. We had to serve *corvée* like beasts of burden under the manorial lords’ whip; but now we have become masters of the country, enthusiastically and selflessly working to build socialism. The monthly income of our family is more than enough to meet our needs. We have now watches and bicycles. We owe all this to Chairman Mao and the Communist Party of China.”

Ahwangtochi told me that the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution had helped raise their consciousness of class struggle and the struggle between the two lines — Chairman Mao’s proletarian revolutionary line and the bourgeois reactionary line. They often run Mao Tsetung Thought study classes in the family. They recall the past bitterness in contrast to their present happiness, criticize the revisionist line of the renegade, hidden traitor and scab Liu Shao-chi and his agents in Tibet and denounce the Dalai clique’s crimes of betraying the socialist motherland. He said with great feeling: “A person who gropes in the dark values the light and those who have suffered hunger and cold love the warmth of the sun. The sun is Chairman Mao; the sun is the Communist Party. We the million emancipated serfs will

never allow Liu Shao-chi and his agents in Tibet to vilify and attack our socialist system in an attempt to restore vicious feudal serfdom and make us suffer again.”

The story of Ahwangtochi sums up the life of thousands upon thousands of emancipated serfs in Tibet who are now living a happy life. The million former serfs in Tibet have embarked on the bright road of socialism. No one can block their advance. “Follow the road charted by the great leader Chairman Mao, fight the class enemy to the finish!” This is their will and determination.