

TIBET

TODAY AND YESTERDAY

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INTRODUCTION

Since the March revolt in Lhasa, Tibet has become a household word in the United States. In a way, Tibet is now better known; but I am afraid it is still misunderstood in many of its aspects. The deep mystery enshrouding Tibet must be attributed not only to its remoteness and comparative inaccessibility, but also, and in a greater degree, to a lack of information, even to positive misinformation concerning this so-called hidden land in the snow mountains.

Even Tibet's boundaries cause confusion. In referring to popular sources of information such as *Information Please* (469,413 sq. mi.) and the *World Almanac* (475,000 sq. mi.) one would find a discrepancy of 5,587 square miles, while Chinese sources usually give Tibet's area, including the Chamdo District as 1,221,600 square kilometers. An accurate figure would be possible only after the frontier between India and Tibet has been entirely demarcated and the disputed territory settled. India's claim of the McMahon frontier, based on the alleged Simla Convention, is disputable and has been, in fact, repudiated by the Chinese National Government.¹

First of all a distinction has to be made between the Tibet of history and the area we call Tibet on our maps, which, unfortunately do not always demarcate the actual domain over which the Lhasa authority is exercised. Among the 2,775,622 Tibetans according to the census of 1953, only 1,273,969, that is, less than one half live in Tibet, while the rest form minority groups in neighboring provinces: Sikang, Szechwan, Ch'ing-hai, Kansu and Yünnan. The present Dalai Lama and the present Panch'en Lama both were born in Tibetan families in Ch'inghai beyond the jurisdiction of the Lhasa government. The Khamba tribesmen.

who are very much in the news nowadays because of their resistance to the Communist rule, belong to Sikang, not Tibet.²

For a time Tibet extended its control eastward over a part of Ch'inghai and Kansu, and most of Sikang, as well as some districts of Yünnan; and ruled the western frontier states of Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, and Kashmir's Ladakh, where even today Tibetans constitute an important part of the population and exercise a considerable cultural and religious influence. An ethnologist would draw the ethnic boundary of Tibet further east to the Chengtu plain in the heart of the province of Szechwan, and further west to the Zo-Gi-La pass, only a little more than thirty-five miles east of Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir.³

The boundary problem however appears simple by comparison with the complexities of the status of Tibet. In the first place, the status of a nation is not a matter of how that nation regards itself, or even how another nation regards it: status is to be found somewhere in the relations which obtain between the nation in question and all the other nations which may affect it and which it may affect. In the second place, the status of a nation is something which changes through a process of time in relation to each of the nations concerned with it, and the nations themselves are changing too. In the present study whenever the writer presents as a historical fact that Tibet has long been an integral part of China, it does not mean that he is of the opinion that it is only fair and just that Tibet continues in this status. By the same token, anyone who advocates independence for Tibet need not deny such a historical fact.

It is much to be regretted that throughout the manifesto attached to a letter addressed to the Indian Prime Minister and signed by Gyalo Thondup, a brother of the Dalai Lama living at Kalimpong, a copy of which the writer obtained while taking a study trip to the Far East last fall, there is denial of any existence of friendship between China and Tibet even in ancient times. The manifesto went so far as to say that King Sron-tsan Gampo obtained his Chinese bride, Princess Wên-ch'êng, "by force." Granted the non-existence of the record of the marriage in the *Documents de Touen-Houang* and the *T'ang shu*, and of the text of the Treaty of Amity inscribed on the 821 stone pillar which is

still standing in the Tibetan capital today, who would believe that at a time when the great T'ang Dynasty was at the zenith of its power, the Chinese Emperor could have been forced to give the Princess in marriage to the Tibetan king? The manifesto characterized Chao Erh-feng as "the butcher." But in Chapter III we find that his work was praised and favorably commented upon by such British authorities on Tibetan affairs as Sir Francis Young-husband, Sir Eric Teichman, and Brigadier-General M. E. Willoughby. On the question whether there ever existed any degree of friendship between China and Tibet and how the rule of Tibet by Peking Court was regarded by the Tibetan people, the readers are requested to refer to the conclusions of the American and the British authorities on Tibet, W. W. Rockhill and Sir Charles Bell, quoted in the following chapters, and to draw conclusions of their own.

As to Tibet's actual status, there is a prevailing misunderstanding. In some dispatches Tibet is even referred to as a republic. However, nothing is farther from the truth than assertions to the effect that Tibet has always been or was until recently an independent country with sovereign power. A factual answer to these assertions will be found in this book which deals, among other things, with such matters as how Tibetans regard themselves, whether there is evidence to show that they are able and willing to assume and fulfill international obligations—an essential criterion of statehood—and how Tibet is regarded by all powers concerned as shown in international treaties and in discussions in the United Nations.

As the scope of this book is confined to Tibet yesterday and today, no attempt should be made to hazard a conjecture concerning its tomorrow. But the abortive revolt and the flight of the Dalai Lama have definitely created an aftermath on the international scene. One can not help wondering if history is repeating itself and how far the parallel will go. The present Dalai Lama is living in exile in India as his immediate predecessor did forty-nine years ago, and the Panch'en Lama is being backed by Peking as was his immediate predecessor, with the only difference that this time it is a Communist Party that is in power on the Chinese mainland and India is no longer under the British rule.

As is related in some detail in Chapter V, India for a time attempted to assume the role in Tibet previously played by the British. Indian Prime Minister Mr. Nehru once said that geography is a compelling factor. He made it plain that his country's security is the primary consideration of the Indian Government in dealing with the Tibetan issue. On the other hand, the Chinese Communists who fought their way through the Tibetan borderland in their "Long March," and whose former capital, Yenan, is situated in China's "Wild West," where they have been putting a big effort into the development of oilfields, industrial construction, and the building of roads, railways, and airfields, must certainly realize, if only for defense considerations, how vital it is to keep the Tibetan plateau from being taken over by a foreign power.

Now, New Delhi and Peking have lately exchanged accusations. They have used stronger words than in their diplomatic duel in 1950 as cited in Chapter V. But there is still restraint shown on both sides. However, the situation is very delicate and fraught with danger. It remains to be seen if these two populous Asiatic Powers, who demonstrated a remarkable degree of solidarity and collaboration at the Bandung Conference, will again reach a harmonious understanding or this time come to an irreparable rupture in their relations. It is worth mentioning that Mr. Nehru, who had talked with King Mahendra of Nepal about the situation in Tibet at the border town of Bhimnagar on April 30th, paid a visit to the Napalese capital during the second week of June to confer with the King again and with Premier B. P. Koirala, the head of Nepal's first popularly elected Government, on international affairs including Tibet. He said at a news conference before leaving Katmandu that Communist China's suppression of the Tibetan revolt last March posed no threat to the Indian and Napalese frontiers.⁴

After all, Tibet's status will continue to be a factor in Indo-Chinese relations which may in turn greatly affect world politics. With a view to helping the reader appraise the present-day Tibetan situation in general and Tibetan status in particular—status as it is and as it should be—the writer ventures to present several aspects of the problem and, whenever necessary, to offer

his personal opinion.

First, besides being a defense issue for China, as mentioned above, the Tibetan problem is also a Chinese minority issue. Aside from Han nationality, which constitutes 93.94% of the Chinese population, there are scores of national minorities with a combined population of more than 35 million. Those national minorities with a population of one million or above each are as follows: Chuang, Uighur, Hui, Yi, Tibetan, Miao, Manchu, Mongol, Puyi and Korean. In other words, Tibetans rank fifth in numerical order among national minorities.

China for a century has lived under threat of being cut into slices like a melon. Russia from the north and Japan from the east, in addition to outright seizure of territories, set up so-called independent states in the name of the Mongols and the Manchus, while colonial powers from the West established concessions and settlements along the coast and created a buffer state in Tibet, all aiming at undermining the authority of the Chinese government. Outer Mongolia became legally ceded as a result of the secret agreements reached at the Yalta Conference without China's participation. The U.S.S.R. has played with the minority issue and backed the Uighurs to claim a so-called independent region of Ili in Sinkiang, which is no longer heard of since the establishment of the Communist regime on the entire Chinese mainland.

The Chinese, whether of Han nationality or of any minority group, have had enough bitter experience to learn that in unity there is strength. China should be dealt with as a whole. Any attempt to weaken China's position by backing one or more of her national minorities will prove futile in the long run.

Secondly, the Tibetan problem is not so much religious as social. Generally speaking, China has been tolerant toward the different religions professed by her people and throughout Chinese history we do not find such conflicts between state and church as are recorded in Europe. But under the theocratic form of government any event taking place in Tibet must have something to do with its religion. However, the Dalai Lama can not claim either that he is the state or that he is the church. The development of his office and authority is narrated in the chapters to follow. As pointed out by Professor George E. Taylor in a Foreword

written for Messrs. Tsung-lien Shen and Shen-chi Liu's book on *Tibet and the Tibetans*, "though the church controls the state the two are separate entities."

The present fourteenth Dalai Lama, age 24, is not a "Strong Man," but an influential symbol which any contestant for power in Tibet would like to have on his side. That is why the Communist China's People's Congress still retains his name as one of its Vice-Chairmen even after its election in April, when he had already been given asylum in India. He could have easily crossed the Indian frontier in 1950 when he fled Lhasa and stayed at the border town of Yatung, though this time his emergence safe and sound after a perilous fifteen-day trek over some of the world's most treacherous mountain area with Chinese Communist searching planes overhead has brought more joy to his well-wishers. In 1950 he chose to send a delegation to Peking, who signed a seventeen-article Agreement with the Chinese Communists the following year. This year he told the Indian Prime Minister at Mussoorie on April 24 that he had had "no definite idea" of leaving Lhasa before the fighting broke out in the capital on March 17. He admitted that the letter written to Communist China's chief political commissar in Tibet informing the latter of the threats of "reactionary evil elements," delivered on the eve of his departure, published later in Peking and questioned by many observers, was written by his hand. He also told Mr. Nehru that he had never opposed progressive reforms in Tibet and repeated his belief that Tibet was "very backward" socially and economically.⁵

While almost all media of communication here in America have been praising the Dalai Lama as a god-king leading his people heroically in anti-communist activities, the Panch'en Lama is often described as a puppet or stooge put up by the Peking regime. In fact, both the present Dalai Lama and the present Panch'en Lama were installed in solemn ceremonies officiated by the Chairman of the Commission for Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs of the Chinese National Government before the Chinese Communists founded their government in Peking.

The Dalai Lama and the Panch'en Lama are believed to be the reincarnations of two outstanding disciples of the great

reformer Tsong K'a-pa, called the Luther of Tibet, who established the Yellow Sect of Lamaism. The present Dalai Lama is the fourteenth generation, while the present Panch'en Lama is the tenth. Their predecessors throughout all these generations had at times been rivals for power, but for the most time they were on good terms serving as tutor and disciple to each other by turns.

More about the Panch'en Lama as an institution is given in Chapters III-V. Here are the words of Sir Charles Bell, a close friend of the thirteenth Dalai Lama, on the standing of the Panch'en Lama as compared with that of the Dalai Lama from a religious point of view: "It is, however, argued that as the Panch'en is the Incarnation of Ö-pa-me and the Dalai of Chen-re-zi, and as the former is the spiritual father of the latter, therefore the Panch'en must be the higher. . . . His worldly preoccupations, though not absent, are far less than those of the Dalai Lama, and his time for spiritual work is proportionately greater."⁶

In this connection, the words of Mr. Shen Tsung-lien, former director of the Office of the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission in Tibet, are worth noting: "The Communist government issued several proclamations to safeguard religious freedom, to protect lama monasteries, and to respect the existing customs of Tibet. The prestige of the Dalai Lama as the pillar of Lamaist Buddhism was counteracted greatly by that of the Panch'en Lama, the other pillar."⁷

Though their introduction of modern medical services to Tibet—where rampant malaria, smallpox and venereal disease took a heavy toll of lives annually, and where the people used to rely on prayers for their cure—and though their introduction of a modern Communist style educational system for Tibetan children and youth—who hitherto could only acquire some learning from monasteries—must have affected the position of the Lamas, the Chinese communists have left the church alone and no serious complaints have been reported from ecclesiastical circles except about the reduction of their income. What actually precipitated the March revolt, so far as the writer's knowledge goes, is social rather than religious.

We must bear in mind that the Tibetan social order is some-

what like the manorial system and chattel slavery of medieval Europe. The landed aristocrats and feudal lords used to monopolize trade making exorbitant profits which they have now been deprived of by the Communist state-owned trade organs. In an article written in May, 1958 on the seventh anniversary of the signing of the seventeen-article Agreement, the Dalai Lama declared that "good progress has been made in agriculture, live-stock breeding, forestry, the medical services, transportations and communications in Tibet," and that "power stations have been built and schools set up in many localities to promote Tibetan culture." Whether or not there has been good progress, we can gauge from the Dalai Lama's statement on the extent of the Communists' activities in Tibet and the effect of subverting the old society.

As indicated elsewhere in the book, to adjust a feudal society and a theocratic and aristocratic government to the Peking pattern would unavoidably cause serious friction. Chinese Communists hoped to avoid major trouble in Tibet by pronouncing at the end of 1956 a moratorium on changes in Tibet's political, economic and social structure, for the next six years. But Chang Kuo-hua, Vice-Chairman and Commander of the People's Liberation Army in Tibet made it clear at the twentieth meeting of the Standing Committee of the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region presided over by the Dalai Lama as chairman that, "This does not, however, imply that reforms will not be carried out in Tibet at all. It is definite that Tibet must take to the road of reforms but only when the conditions are mature for such reforms."

Accordingly, no revolutionary social or political changes have been openly decreed since the end of 1956. But the reforms have continuously been carried out as scheduled in the Tibetan districts in Szechwan and in Yünnan Provinces. To the landed aristocrats and feudal lords the handwriting on the wall must have been clear, for even if no further reforms were to be introduced in the distant future, two accomplished facts have already upset their social order: (1) the peaceful penetration of highways and (2) the continuous indoctrination of the Tibetan youth. No moratorium on changes could have made them rest assured.

By January 1957, more than six thousand kilometers of motor

roads had been opened to traffic there since the Chinese Communists took over the control of Tibet. The highways to eight Chichiao areas (i.e. administrative districts: Lhasa, Shigatse, Chamdo, Nagchuka, Takung, Shannan, Gyantse and Ari) had all been linked. With Lhasa as the hub of the highway network, there were five trunk highway lines, namely, Kanting-Tibet, Ch'inghai-Tibet, Nagchuka-Ari, Lhasa-Yatung, and Lhasa-Chitang. Another two highways from Nagchuka to Chamdo with a total length of 720 kilometers and from Bamda to Ningsin covering 280 kilometers were then under construction, and surveying of three other highways about 900 kilometers (1, from Shigatse to Nilam; 2, from a point on Kangting-Tibet highway to Chayu on the southeastern part of the Tibetan Plateau; 3, to connect Chushul with Gyantse which will shorten the distance between Lhasa and Gyantse by over 170 kilometers) was expected to be completed before the end of 1957.

As to their indoctrination program, Chinese Communists showed no less intensity. By April, 1957, Tibet had more than seventy primary schools with six thousand pupils, while a year before it had only twenty. The first secondary school was founded in Lhasa in the fall of the same year with the capacity of admitting two hundred students. It was reported in June, 1956, that five hundred youths left Tibet to take up studies in the Central Institute for Minorities in Peking and the Southwestern Institute for Minorities in Chengtu. There is a school in Hsien-yang, Shensi, for the exclusive training of Tibetan youth, which is said to have an enrollment of three thousand. The Chinese Communist Party Work Committee in Tibet and the Preparatory Committee for Tibet Autonomous Region have been training local Tibetan cadres in large numbers. Chamdo District was expected to recruit more than 3,300 before the end of 1956, while Lhasa was assigned to absorb no less than 5,100 during the same period. Thupten Tenthar, Secretary-General of the Lhasa Local Government, declared in May, 1958 that "in the past seven years, the Central Government trained about 5,000 Tibetans in the fields of administration, finance and economy, posts and telecommunications, public health, animal husbandry and veterinary, and other work."

The preceding information may be exaggerated.⁸ But whatever

discount the reader likes to give, the fact remains that the Tibetan problem is more social than religious. From now on, as Tilman Durdin commented in a special article to the *New York Times* (April 5), "the Tibetan rising may indeed force more direct Chinese intervention and hasten the overturn of the old society through communization."

Thirdly, the Tibetan problem has been accorded so much attention not because of Tibet's trade, nor even because of its natural resources, but rather because of its strategic position. The Earl of Rosebury who described Tibet as "a huge monastery inhabited by a nation of monks, with a subject population inhabiting the most inhospitable region in the world, in the worst climate which is habitable by human beings," told the House of Lords that "There is little or no commerce to be got out of Tibet."⁹ The American Consul at Bombay, Mr. Henry D. Baker, in reporting 1913 Indo-Tibetan trade figures to his government, added: "The statistics of land trade of British India with foreign countries published by the Commercial Intelligence Department of the Government of India, show that the trade between India and Tibet is extremely small, considering the vast area of Tibet, and is not even as large as such comparatively smaller states in the Himalaya Mountains as Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan."¹⁰

Alan Winnington, the first English journalist to have been allowed freedom of travel throughout Tibet since Chinese Communists took control of the land, in commenting on the Tibetan trade mission brought to Great Britain and the United States in 1947-48, wrote that the total volume of Tibetan trade at that time was less than 500,000 pounds yearly.¹¹

The earliest Chinese record of the mineral products of Tibet is the *Hsin T'ang shu* which mentions "gold, silver, copper and tin produced in Sifan." *Wei-tsang T'u shih* gives a list of products including minerals, found in different parts of ethnological Tibet west of Tach'ienlu. A Japanese writer by the name of Hatsuo Yamagata, gathered information on minerals and other products of Tibet, and devoted a chapter to them in his book giving a general review of Tibet.¹² According to W. W. Rockhill, besides gold,—silver, copper, and iron are all found and to some extent worked in south-eastern Tibet.¹³ Sir Charles Bell says that "it is

possible that Tibet is rich, perhaps very rich, in minerals," but adds: "Nothing definite can be said, until the ground has been prospected scientifically and with some approach to thoroughness."¹⁴ This he suggested accordingly in his seven-item proposal for formulating a new policy toward Tibet, presented to the Indian Government in 1921. Sir Henry Hayden, at one time Director General of the Geological Survey of India, was then chosen by the Foreign Secretary of the Indian Government to examine Tibet's mineral resources. He was generally recognized as a noted geologist, competent in his work. "His report was not favorable as regards commercial possibilities."¹⁵

One might argue that since motor traffic is now available between major cities and towns of Tibet where there was not a single highway up to 1951, consequently shortening the time in traversing tremendous distances (For example, it took two years to make a return trip from the east end of Tibet to its west end because snow-capped mountains and turbulent rivers blocked traffic; now it can be done in two months.), such improved communications and transport, not to count the air traffic which has already been inaugurated, should bring expanded trade, and should make possible the working at a profit of the natural resources. But up to now, it is neither its trade nor its natural resources that has earned the world-wide attention paid to Tibet.

It seems that it is its strategic position that counts. Yet heretofore, Tibet was always considered as a military backwater, for its road led nowhere.¹⁶ It was no less due to its lack of strategic value than to respect for its religious influence that it was often left alone in its secluded position. Even the Manchu expeditions and Dzungar and Gurkha invasions into Tibet were motivated not so much by strategic, as by religio-political considerations. Emperor Kao-tsung, known as Chien-lung the Great on account of his ten successful military campaigns, told his court ministers that to take military steps in Tibet was to "use the useful in a non-beneficial place" and therefore unnecessary.¹⁷ These words show clearly the absence of strategic value of Tibet itself in the eyes of the Emperor who was forced by the march of events to resort to force twice in Tibet during his long reign. But today the operation of air power has made warfare truly three-dimensional.

In a shrinking world divided into two hostile camps such an extended area as Tibet, situated on the roof of the world, has certainly new strategic importance. Amaury de Reincourt, speaking of the 1942 American expedition to Tibet headed by Lt. Col. Ilia Tolstoy, told us that the latter was "convinced . . . that its strategic importance was very great in an age of increasing air power."¹⁸ These quoted words were said before the A-bomb was made known. We can well imagine how much greater is its strategic importance in a nuclear age with H-bombs and guided missiles as main weapons.

Finally, the Tibetan problem presents the issue of Tibetan autonomy. Tibetans have enjoyed autonomy ever since the Mongolian Emperor of China, Kublai Khan, made Phagspa the first Priest-King of Tibet in the 1270's. Their autonomy is clearly provided in the seventeen-article Agreement mentioned above. The Constitution of the People's Republic of China contains provisions defining regional autonomy for the national minorities, while the Constitution of the Republic of China (Art. 120) specifically stipulates that "Tibet's autonomy shall be duly guaranteed."

The question is how to interpret the autonomy of Tibet. What the British wanted was that (to quote the words of the British Secretary of State for India) Tibet should remain in that state of isolation," but on condition that "British influence should be recognized at Lhasa in such a manner as to exclude that of any other power."¹⁹ The position of the British Government of India was made clear in its message of advice and farewell to the thirteenth Dalai Lama when he ended his exile in India and was about to return to Tibet: "The desire of the Government is to see the internal autonomy of Tibet under Chinese suzerainty maintained without Chinese interference so long as Treaty obligations are duly performed and cordial positions preserved between Tibet and India."²⁰

The position of the Government of China, on the other hand, has always been, since her first contact with the West, and still is, to claim sovereignty over Tibet and to regard what happens in Tibet as within her domestic jurisdiction.

Independent India in her communications with Peking stressed

the fact of Tibetan autonomy. But in view of the radical changes in the power position and in time and tide, and of the fact that India signed a pact with Communist China in May, 1954 accepting the principle that Tibet constitutes an integral part of China and pledging mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, the British version of Tibetan autonomy cannot be revived without upsetting the present world order. Mr. Nehru, a devoted socialist, who spent thirteen years in prison in his fight for India's independence and who has steered his country on a course of non-alignment, is in a unique position to influence Communist China's policy. His statesmanship is being put to test on this issue of preserving autonomy in the neighboring Tibet.

Sir Charles Bell told us what the thirteenth Dalai Lama wanted was to have Tibet manage its own internal affairs.²¹ The present Dalai Lama has not yet made his position clear. Among his retinue at Mussoorie, India, some are urging a proclamation of independence. Former American Ambassador to U.S.S.R. W. Averell Harriman and former American Ambassador to India Chester Bowles told the House Foreign Affairs Committee that the United States should not be the first to "rush" toward recognition of a Tibetan government-in-exile, should the Dalai Lama set one up. They both cautioned against efforts to give "a cold war twist" to the situation.²²

The writer has faith in Asian nationalism, but detests those who make all sorts of pretenses in the name of nationalism, while engaging in activities contrary to the national interest of their own country. Indeed, nationalism has broken and is still breaking colonial empires; but this does not mean that all multi-nationality countries should be divided into independent national states. The elevation of Alaska and Hawaii to the status of states in the United States shows another trend toward unity instead of division.

The writer believes in the words of President Wilson that "Self-determination . . . is an imperative principle of action." Tibet's independence should be, therefore, the Tibetan people's choice. But I do not think that those landed aristocrats and feudal lords of Tibet who took refuge in India can speak for the Tibetan people. Their number and rank are no doubt very impressive; but we must not lose sight of the fact that some noted landed