

## **Interview with Kasur Thubten Juchen Namgyal**

*(Former Chief Kalon of the Tibetan Cabinet)*

Gangchen Kyishong, Dharamsala

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*(Claude: Explains the purpose and the subject of his research and proposed book.)*

Thubten Juchen Namgyal: I am curious to know what you already know [about Tibet].

As I have been thrice part of different delegations, this interview will deal with the credibility of the delegations and the legal position of Tibet vis-à-vis China, therefore I want to find the best way to deal with your questions.

*Claude: I was keen to interview you because I was told that you were the only person with Gyalo Dhondup-la who knew about the negotiations.*

TJN: Did you know that I have been to Tibet on 3 occasions.

*Claude: Yes, I knew*

TJN: So, how do you want me to go about?

*Claude: I want to know first: before 1978, it seems that there was not much contact [with the Chinese]. The first contact was made by Gyalo Dhondup when he met Deng Xiaoping. This meeting resulted in the four fact-finding delegations and the 2 rounds of negotiations.*

*I want to know the background of this first meeting? Did the process started with Gyalo Dhondup's meeting with Deng Xiaoping or had it started before?*

TJN: The circumstances under which Gyalo Dhondup's visit to Deng Xiaoping took place is this: Gyalo Dhondup was staying in Hong Kong at that time. Here there was a journalist with whom Gyalo Dhondup had some contact. This journalist was representing the Chinese news agency (Xinhua) and at the same time he was representing the Chinese Government. It was the first official that Gyalo Dhondup met in Hong Kong. This resulted in Gyalo Dhondup's visit to Beijing in 1979.

The first contact took place in 1978 in Hong Kong. But the visit to Beijing took place only in 1979.

When he was in Beijing, Gyalo Dhondup met Deng Xiaoping who expressed his wish to initiate some negotiation between the Tibetan and the Chinese sides. One condition was laid, that the Tibetans should not utter a word about independence.

Deng Xiaoping also said that he was ready to invite delegations from the Tibetan Government side to 'inspect' Tibet.

These were the circumstances under which the negotiations started.

*Claude: Was the visit connected with Gyalo Dhondup's wife? Through her contact with the Chinese Government?*

TJN: No, it is not. It is not true at all.

*Claude: Was it a personal initiative of Deng Xiaoping just 2 years after he had been rehabilitated. Was there unanimity in the Chinese Government for this move?*

TJN: As I said before, the initial meeting between the journalist and Gyalo Dhondup resulted in the meeting with Deng Xiaoping. It was not a personal move from Deng Xiaoping: it was a move decided by the Chinese Government, it was a move of the Politburo.

*Claude: The only condition was not to speak about independence. What about the question of Inner and Outer Tibet?*

TJN: No, No. Deng Xiaoping said that he was ready to discuss a solution with the Tibetans if the Tibetans can state that they are not interested in independence. It is because [earlier] the Tibetan Government and the Tibetan people have been striving for independence for 20 years. They had been struggling for complete independence and the Chinese knew that. The Tibetans wanted complete independence, so the Chinese wanted us to come down [on our demand]. It was a compromise for us.

*Claude: Was it during this meeting that it was decided to send a first delegation?*

TJN: The main reason to send a first delegation to Tibet, was [to make] an inspection tour; it was an inspection team. It is decided that the Chinese will allow the Tibetans to come from Amdo side and see 'first hand' what was happening in Tibet. What was the situation in Tibet? The Tibetans had not seen Tibet for 20 years. It was just to see what was actually happening inside Tibet.

*Claude: Which year was it, 1979 or 1980?*

TJN: In 1979.

*Claude: Was it before or after that His Holiness wrote to Deng Xiaoping?*

TJN: The delegation went to Tibet before His Holiness wrote to Deng Xiaoping, His Holiness wrote in 1981. The first delegations went in 1979/81.

*Claude: How long did you stay?*

TJN: It took four months. We left India on August 24 [1979] and came back on December 24.

*Claude: Via Hong Kong and Beijing?*

TJN: Yes, from India to Hong Kong and Kowloon and then to Beijing and Tibet.

*Claude: Did you held any talks in Beijing with the Chinese officials?*

Claude: The first delegation had meetings with the Chinese officials on many occasions. They exchanged ideas, they discussed but nothing concrete was agreed upon.

*Claude: Which level of officials? High level?*

TJN: The delegation was received by two parties, the Reception Party and the United Front. The highest level of officials we met was Li Shenye, he was the person with most authority.

*Claude: Did you meet Hu Yaobang??*

TJN: No, Li Shenyue was also in the Politburo. He was ranking Four in the Politburo. At that time there were 6 members [in the Standing Committee of the Politburo].

*Claude: Was he in charge of the minorities?*

TJN: No, he was just in the Politburo, he was not in charge of the United Front.

*Claude: So, there was no real negotiation? Did you meet the Panchen Lama, Ngabo Ngawang Jigme or Bapa Phuntsok Wangyal?*

TJN: Yes, we met not only the Panchen Lama, and Phuntsok Wangyal, but also Ngabo. Ngabo and Panchen Lama had very high authority at that time. They were designated as *Hu Yantan*: it was a very high designation. Phuntsok Wangyal was working at an administrative level, he was not very powerful.

*Claude: Now, before your meeting with Ngabo and the Panchen Lama, they were often considered as 'traitors' by the Tibetan society. Did you change your mind when you met them? Did it change the mind of the Kashag and the community in general after the meeting they had with the delegation?*

TJN: As regard to the fact that Ngabo and the Panchen Lama are considered 'collaborators': the fact is that Ngabo and the Panchen Lama had high designation in the Chinese administrative hierarchy. They worked for the Chinese government, their job was given by the Chinese Government, but in actual fact we knew that they were Tibetans. It is just that they were in this [particular] position, nothing else should be read [in their position].

How these two people are perceived by the people in general, depends on the level of the people themselves. Some people who are ignorant and have no knowledge, might perceive them as 'traitors'. They do not know what they are doing; they just know that they are in Tibet working for the Chinese. They will not know more than that.

For those people who are more intellectually aware, they will share my opinion. Besides this, in their hearts [the Panchen Lama and others] are Tibetans. Apart from that the Panchen Lama has been working for uplifting the social cause of the Tibetans in Tibet. This we have seen.

*Claude: Did the visit make a change? Did your perception change? For example, the fact which was not so well known that he wrote a petition, did the visit help? [The Panchen Lama was considered as missing or dead for many years].*

TJN: You are right. During my years there was no contact with these two people [The Panchen Lama and Ngabo]. Myself I have often been wondering what these two people were thinking about Tibet.

The Panchen Lama had the highest in authority (in China) while Ngabo was the highest Tibetan in the administrative setup. I was wondering what their feelings towards Tibet were. After I met with these two people, I became very happy. The thinking of the Panchen Lama was not very hard to guess, it was clear like a mirror. After the first meeting with him, I could see who was the Panchen Lama, what were his feelings, it made me very happy.

*Claude: Were you alone, or did you have Chinese translators?*

TJN: The Chinese would normally leave and left us alone with the Panchen Lama.

*Claude: Did your visit correspond with the Spring of Beijing? When Wei Jingsheng wrote his famous posters on the Wall of Democracy in Beijing?*

TJN: The delegation knew about it and they witnessed this movement. When the delegation was in Beijing, I saw the banner and the Wall Posters which were on the wall. The Wall was one kilometre long. But I did not know how to read Chinese, but I knew what was going on.

*Claude: Was any member of the Tibetan delegation speaking Chinese?*

TJN: Yes, PT Takhla

*Claude: Did you witness a similar movement in Tibet? Was there a Wall of Democracy in Lhasa or elsewhere in Tibet? Was there similar freedom for the ordinary people to express themselves?*

TJN: When I was in Beijing I witnessed the pro-democracy movement, with long letters on the walls as I told you earlier. They were not asking for a separate identity, but they were criticising the Government for the wrong doing that they have been inflicted on the Chinese people; the corruption in the Chinese Government; the poverty; the social welfare.

In Tibet, I did not witness any such movement because the Tibetan people had fewer facilities and were more scared. Though the Tibetans did not do that, at the same time, I saw in their eyes and

in their hearts, the same desire. At some point of time the Tibetans began talking which was not so frequent [earlier].

*Claude: Did you visit the 3 provinces?*

TJN: Yes, the 3 provinces.

*Claude: Could you talk to me about the conditions in Tibet?*

TJN: First the delegation went from Beijing to Landow, then to Labrang Tashikyil, then we went back to Landow, then to Sining and Rekong. From Sining we went to Kumbum which is 7 or 8 km from Sining. The delegation went for one day to Kumbum and then to Takser.

Then we went to the South of Kokonor Lake, then to Golok, then Jyekundo and then back to Landow.

Since I am not from Amdo and we visited mainly Amdo, I could not say how it was before and I did not have so much the feeling of a difference.

*Claude: What about Lobsang Samten?*

TJN: We went to PT Takhla's house in Amdo.

*Claude: Did you see a lot of destruction?*

TJN: About the destruction, I saw more in the monasteries, though I had not see Kumbum before, I could see that it has been destroyed extensively. I can not describe with words the destruction that the Chinese have inflicted on the monasteries and that I witnessed.

One change that I felt was in Sining. I had been earlier in Sining, I knew Sining. During 54/55, there were only 50,000 people, when we went in 1979, after twenty years, they were 8,00,000. This much extra people had migrated to Tibet.

*Claude: Han or Muslims?*

TJN: In 54/55, most of the people were Muslims, but in 1979, most of them were Hans.

When we were South of Kokonor, there were 3,3 lakhs people, their nationalities was like that 1,3 lakh were Tibetans, 70000/80000 Muslims and 1,30 lakh were Chinese. I met many people who were from the Southern province of China, from near the ocean. They had come all the way; they had been forced to come as far as Tibet. When I talked with these people they said that they first faced difficulties being rehabilitated in Tibet, but now they had got used to it. This shows the amount of people coming from China.

Then from Landow, we flew directly to Lhasa. When we are talking about the people's reaction, we can not distinguish between responses of Lhasa people and the other people, the response was the same. The Tibetans were so excited and so ecstatic to see the Tibetan delegation sent by the Dalai Lama. In fact, when we were travelling in Amdo, we were travelling in jeep and all a sudden thousands of Tibetan people surrounded us and though the Chinese police was trying to disperse them by beating them, people wanted shake hands with the delegation, so the police used canes for dispersing them, but people would not relent. So, finally the police got tired and they gave up.

It was the same situation everywhere. People would be so excited that they would flock.

*Claude: Mr Kundeling told me that after their car had passed, the Tibetans ate the dust of the tyre prints as a blessing.*

TJN: What Mr Kundeling said is true, when we were in Tibet, we were treated as very important persons, like very venerated or reincarnated lamas. Wherever we went, we were asked to consecrate bridges, houses or give blessings. People wanted our hairs for amulets.

We had to try to convince people that we were ordinary human beings and not venerated lamas. The people would reply even if you are mere human beings, by the fact that you are sent by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, it is so special that we do not see any difference between us and a reincarnation.

That was the kind of love and response that we witnessed.

*Claude: Did the Chinese realise that this was going to happen, when they decided to invite the Tibetan delegation to visit Tibet? Did they expect this type of reaction?*

TJN: The Chinese definitively did not expect that the Representative of the Dalai Lama would be received with so much enthusiasm. They were bewildered. During the 20 years of absence of His Holiness and the twenty years of Chinese administration, they had tried their best to denounce and put down the Dalai Lama. They wanted people to lose their faith in the Dalai Lama. During all this time, whatever the Chinese derogatory statements against the Dalai Lama they would pronounce, the people would say "yes, yes". At that time, the Chinese might have thought that the people might spit at the representative and throw stones at them. The Chinese had in fact forbidden the people to spit at the Representatives or to throw stones at them or do anything bad against them. When they saw what was happening, they were completely bewildered.

In fact the people had been told by the Chinese that a delegation was coming to facilitate a better relation between China and Tibet. The Chinese were completely taken aback.

*Claude: Even in nomads remote areas? How did they get the information that a Delegation was coming?*

TJN: I do not know for all the places, but most of the places inside Tibet, warnings and instructions had been issued to the Tibetan people not to throw stones, sand dust, etc ... at the Representative. When the delegation reached Lhasa, the next day the delegation went to Jokhang. We went to the terrace and from there we saw thousand of people gathered around the Jokhang. They were very enthusiastic, so we went down and tried to meet them, but we were not allowed by the police who had barricaded us inside the Jokhang to cut us from the people.

In fact, there was a building in front the Jokhang from where the Chinese were peering and watching what was happening on Jokhang.

When they saw that the Tibetan people prostrating in front of the delegates and trying to get whatever [Representative's] hands they could grab; folding their hands in prayers, the Chinese people in the Jokhang became really hungry. They even remarked: "Here is the result of all our efforts for these people for 20 years."

The Chinese were so nervous that some stamped their feet and even cried. In fact they were very disappointed.

From these anecdotes, you can see that the Chinese were not expecting that.

*Claude: In Lhasa, did you notice a lot of destruction. For example: Jowo statue? Or in the Potala, in Ganden, in Drepung?*

TJN: The destruction in Jokhang was very consequent. For example in the Jokhang, the Song Tsen-gompo's chamber and Jowo statue were intact, but all other chambers were extensively damaged.

*Claude: Did the Chinese do some repairs before your visit?*

TJN: The delegation saw the damage in the monasteries, but we were not very surprised because all the Tibetans knew already that the Chinese had damaged many things in Tibet. When we went to Jokhang, and saw all these chambers destroyed, we were not shocked because we knew that most of the things had been destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. The only thing we could do was to note: this part is damaged, this part is intact.

The Chinese themselves knew that the Tibetan knew what they had done in Tibet, so they were not making any effort to cover it up. The Communist Chinese tried to blame everything on the Gang of Four. They would tell us: these bad things have been done the Gang of Four, but now that we are in power, everything will be fine.

*Claude: The Panchen Lama's 70,000 characters petition which has just been published show that many of this destruction occurred before the Cultural Revolution.*

TJN: I have not read the text of the 70,000 character petition of the Panchen Lama, but when I met the Panchen Lama he told me that he did not want the 1959 uprising to happen. He also said that he was sad that it happened. Later a revolt took place and there was some clash between the Tibetans and the Chinese, it was like a little war. The Panchen Lama did not want this 'war' to happen. The Tibetan people lost and this loss was painful for the Tibetan people. Loosing a war is the worst and most painful loss that one can experienced.

But the sufferings of the Tibetan people did not stop with the 'war'. The Tibetan people were constantly subjected to repression; they suffered in the hands of the Chinese. In order to record these sufferings and [painful] experiences, the Panchen Lama wrote the petition and brought it to Chinese leadership's attention.

It was the 70,000 characters petition which was forwarded to the Chinese authorities.

The Panchen Lama also said that in 1965 he was taken into custody and sent to jail. He was charged of three offences: interfering in the Tibetan people's affairs and sending the petition to the Chinese authorities. Basically he was charged for having created a rift between the Tibetan people and the Chinese.

The second offence, under which the Panchen Lama was charged, was for having interfered in the affairs of the Khampas and the people of Amdo. At that time the Panchen Lama was staying at the Tashi Lhunpo.

The third offence was that in 1964, at the conclusion of the Monlam festival in Lhasa at that session, it was during last session there was a mantra recitation and the Panchen Lama had prayed for the Long Life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and it was the immediate reason for his arrest in 1965.

*Claude: One clarification about this petition. I recently read on Internet a note from Lodi Gyari Rinpoche, saying that after the Panchen Lama had directly written to Zhou Enlai, some Committees were formed to look into the points raised by the Panchen Lama. But at one point, the Committees were dissolved and the Panchen Lama was arrested; Lodi Gyari says that it is Deng Xiaoping who took the decision.*

TJN: It was not Deng Xiaoping, it was Mao Zedong

I do not know about what Lodi Gyari said on Internet about Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, but what I can say is that Mao Zedong cannot deny the role that he played to get the Panchen Lama imprisoned. It is definitively not Deng Xiaoping. At that time Mao Zedong was much higher in the hierarchy. I am not even sure but perhaps Deng Xiaoping was not even in the [Standing Committee of the] Politburo during these events.

*Claude: I think he must have been 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> in the hierarchy at that time. Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, Zu De, Chen Yi, he comes only after.*

TJN: Only Mao Zedong was responsible for sending the Panchen Lama to prison. The Panchen Lama even told me when I met him, if Zhou Enlai was not there I would have die long before. He was grateful to Zhou Enlai to be still alive and have been able to survive through these times.

*Claude: What is the over all political analysis of the first Delegation? Gains? Loss?*

TJN: At that time I felt very optimistic about the immediate future, because when we discussed the Tibetan issue with the Chinese, they said that they were ready to discuss anything except independence. When we, the members discussed certain issues not specifically related with independence, some other issues, the Chinese were very keen and ready to reciprocate. That made me very optimistic. They felt that the time to resolve the Tibetan issue had come, we really believed that the problem could be solved soon. We tried to discuss as openly and pragmatically as possible and take the advantage of the opportunity.

The Chinese themselves also said that they were ready to discuss anything, but independence. And they even said that they were ready to built Tibet again and do all repairs and renovations. They even promised to do it in the 10 next years. They also blamed the Gang of Four for all the mistakes and destruction that the Tibetan people had to suffer. The Chinese said that the Gang of Four not only had made the people of Tibet suffer, but also the people of China.

*Claude: Was the reunification of 'Inner' and 'Outer' Tibet discussed? Did you discuss the reunification of all the provinces of Tibet, now under Sichuan, Qinghai, Yunnan and Gansu Chinese province?*

TJN: At that time, we were in fact walking on a tight rope and we did not discuss the question of 'Inner and Outer Tibet'. Outwardly our official mission was to inspect what was happening in Tibet, Inwardly we had this huge responsibility, we had the difficulty to keep this balance between the aspiration of the Tibetan people for independence and on the other side, we could not frustrate the Chinese and make them cut the contact with us.

This is a very tight rope.

At that time I personally felt that the Chinese had the time on their side. On my side, I was in a hurry to discuss the issue as soon as possible. And I was in fact hopeful.

Another reason for which I was hopeful was that during this period, Russia and China were at opposing ends. Things were not going very well between the two and Chinese feared that the Tibetans might collaborate with the Russians. Taking this situation into account, I personally felt the things were on our side and that things could be resolved as soon as possible.

*Claude: Was the visit of Hu Yaobang's visit to Tibet a consequence of your visit?*

TJN: Yes, I think that the visit of Hu Yaobang to Tibet is the result of the 1st Delegation's visit. During the 1st Delegation's tour, many Chinese officials were a delegation on their own rights. They were accompanying us from the Chinese Government's side. They had come with the Tibetan Delegation, to access the situation inside Tibet. In fact they had come for the 1st time, they witnessed the situation inside Tibet for the 1st time. When we were there, we met the officials who for the 1st time presented a report of the [situation] inside Tibet.

For all these years they had never been to Tibet, they never heard anything about Tibet; they had not care to keep in touch with the situation. They might have felt guilty, that is why Hu Yaobang made his visit.

*Claude: In his petition, the Panchen Lama's made a similar report of the happenings in Tibet, but most probably very few Chinese officials read it?*

TJN: We have not come to the question as yet, but here is a small example of the report that I gave.

*Claude: You gave this report to the Kashag or to the Chinese?*

TJN: We had to give a report to the Chinese authorities, to the Politburo. I gave the report to the Li Chenyi.

[To give you an example of the issue] if some Chinese people arrive today in Tibet by tomorrow they will get a permit to buy meat. For a Tibetan who is born in Tibet, who always lived in Tibet, it is even very difficult to get this permit to even buy grains.

I had a relative who wanted to get this permit and I tried to get the permit, but I failed. That is a small instance, but it explains the problem.

Not only that, in Tibet, the Tibetan language is not much in use. In order to speak to communicate, to relate, you have to use Chinese language.

For example I met an old Tibetan woman in her late sixties, I met her and greeted her and began discussing. I asked her about her health and she answered me to in Chinese "thank you, I am fine". I felt very bad.

I made it clear in the report that the Tibetan people should use their own language in their own country. They are segregated and they do not have access to any privilege in their own country.

Another example, I also met some Chinese officials who had been posted in Tibet for some twenty years and who had not learn any words of Tibetan.

That speaks about the efforts to sinisise the whole Tibet!

I wrote all this in the report. Another issue that I brought up is that there is a [certain] measure for the grain. Now, in Beijing, a person is entitled 26 units of a particular gain, in Tibet the same person is entitled to 16 units of the same grain. There is not only the lack of food, it is also the lack of access to grain because of the permit system. Because of the inflation and the consequent low purchasing power, it is difficult for the Tibetans to survive well.

The housing facilities were also very poor.

All this is related with your question on Hu Yaobang's visit to Tibet. Through the 20 years the Chinese have been thinking that they are doing quite a lot for the Tibetans and that the Tibetans were doing well in Tibet.

They had this presumption in their mind and were confident. They thought that they could invite people to visit Tibet, that they could show them the situation inside Tibet, but when the Chinese officials

saw the suffering of the people inside Tibet, they were really taken aback.

In fact when Hu Yaobang went to Tibet, he was so furious, so upset, and it is why he made this remark. The Chinese Government has been spending so much money for the Tibetan people, so much money and when I come here I do not see anything that has been done for the Tibetan people. At one point he even asked the officials if they had thrown the money into the water.

After that he made a rule that 35% of the Chinese officials should return to China, it actually happened. For 25% of the Chinese who settled in Tibet, they should learn Tibetan language and be able to speak in Tibetan.

For the next four years, many changes happened, many good things, even construction of houses, bridges, etc was undertaken.

*Claude: But most of the money coming for Tibet was used by the PLA, for example to built strategic roads?*

TJN: The Chinese would not have sent the money in one time to the Tibetans and then the PLA would have taken it. No, it is not like that. The money for the Tibetan people and for the PLA was going separately.

All the enterprises in the world do business for profit, but for the Chinese, their way of doing profit is quite weird and strange. For example I know a factory in the TAR, this factory is manufacturing tractors. It produces from 300 to 600 tractors per year. Many people are employed the all year long in the factory. But nobody could use these 300 or 600 tractors, nobody buys would them, as a result the money was wasted: lack of market and surplus of production.

*Claude: Recently I read an article in a Chinese magazine, the Chinese government has decided to start an industry of mineral water. Lakhs of mineral water bottles are bottled every day, but they are not used on the spot as Tibet has pure water and transport to China is too expensive.*

TJN: I know a factory in Lithang which is supposed to produce sugar. They have an innovative way to produce sugar from carrots. At the beginning they needed a lot of investment for the infrastructure and for getting the carrots, so when they first started operating, they had this big pile of carrots from different parts of the country, but after three months their stock was finished, they run out of carrots and the production had to stop. But the people were hired for the job. So, they became jobless.

*Claude: Dr Tenzin Choedrak was freed because of your visit?*

TJN: I do not know.

*Claude: I think that Lobsang Samten asked specifically the Chinese for his liberation.*

TJN: Yes, Yes, it is true

*Claude: Now, let us speak of your 1982 visit.*

TJN: There are two distinct things: one is the 'inspection' teams, (the four delegations) they went on a fact-finding visit to Tibet. I went for the first time with the 1st delegation in 1979, it was an inspection. The delegations (inspection team) went from 1979 to 1984 (with Tenzin Tethong, Jetsun Pema and Kundeling as leaders) I headed the 1st delegation. But in 1982, it was a negotiation team.

*Claude: What was the basis on which the negotiations started?  
Were the negotiations a direct result of the delegation's visits?*

TJN: I can not say that were the consequence of the visit inspection teams was the negotiations. Inspection was just inspection. Negotiations are negotiations.

*Claude: How did it start? Did Gyalo Dhondup had any more contacts after his meeting with Deng Xioping? What were the circumstances under which it started?*

TJN: The inspection was a first step to access (if the Chinese were serious). The 1982 visit was to see, to access if there was a possibility to bring a solution to this issue. That was the reasoning.

*Claude: Who were the members?*

TJN: Phuntsok Tashi Takhla, Lodi Gyari and myself.

*Claude: Was it held in Beijing?*

TJN: Yes

*Claude: What was the level of the negotiations?*

TJN: Basically, we discussed with Qi Tu Chi (?) [three Chinese names]

These three Chinese officials were quite high in the [Party] hierarchy. For example, if you would compare with today hierarchy, one of the officials would be subordinate to Jiang Zemin only. The others were subordinate to him, just below.

There were also the United Front main executive people. They were also engaged in the negotiations.

We discussed earlier the letter that His Holiness sent to Deng Xiaoping in 1981, in which he says time is ripe for the Tibetans and the Chinese to find an agreement. From the Chinese side, there was no response to this letter. In fact Gyalo Dhondup had gone once to China [to follow up on the letter], but there was no response. In order to continue the follow-up, the first negotiation delegation 1982 went to Beijing.

*Claude: Up to what point the delegation was ready to go? They were supposed to discuss everything except independence.*

TJN: The four delegations went to Tibet was based on the statement of Deng Xiaoping, they had chosen to go and there was no illusion at that time that we can not discuss independence.

This was the exiled Tibetan Government policy.

I would like to be precise. The result of the 4 Tibetan delegations was the result of the policy of the Tibetan Government in exile.

The time was running out and an opportunity had come, we were therefore keen to grab the opportunity at that time.

In 1982, when our delegation went to Beijing to discuss with the Chinese, we discussed about the nine-point offer from the Communists to the Guomintang regime (Taiwan). The Communist Chinese had agreed that three important portfolios could be kept by the Guomintang regime: Politics (non-communist), Finance and Defence. All the rest would have to be shared.

*Claude: What about foreign affairs?*

TJN: There is no mention of foreign affairs.

Only Politics, Finance and Defence.

Politics means the system of governance (non-communist), the Finance (capitalist) and Defence. This would be left untouched; there would be no interference from the Chinese side. This shows that the Chinese did not want the Taiwanese to change their way, to force them to become communists.

If the Taiwanese people were granted so much by the Communists regime (due to the fact that they were themselves Chinese), we asked for more liberties for the people of Tibet and the Tibetans. We made more demands. The reason for this was that Tibetans are different from Chinese, we are different in terms of race, culture, religion, even our customs are different, our language is different, our natural habitat, our history is different. Taking this into account, [it is normal that] we should be entitled to more liberty that Taiwan was offered by China. We did not ask for less (than the Taiwan proposal) but for more for our country.

Now, we requested the Chinese Government to give us a certain status for which they would find a name (like 'autonomous'). The name should not be empty; not an empty big name, we did not want the name only, but also the authority, the meaning behind the name.

*Claude: Did you speak on behalf for the three provinces of Tibet?*

TJN: In our delegation the 3 provinces were represented?

*Claude: During the negotiations, the Chinese spoke in terms of the Tibetan Autonomous Region or also of Kham and Amdo?*

TJN: During the meeting in Beijing, I made the point very clear to the Chinese officials, that the way of thinking and acting of the Communist government of China was not correct. This I am saying because the TAR has 1,700,000 people and in Kantze in Kham

(outside TAR) there are 800,000 people. They have been forced to join with the Chinese who are about 1 billion people. This is not correct, because the Tibetan people are pole apart from the Chinese. They are totally different and where they stay together like in Sichuan, they sometimes need a third person to communicate together, just because they shared nothing. This was totally unjust and immoral [to have divided the Tibetans in different provinces]. When I said that this, I did not mention any name of the provinces, but the Chinese knew that I was speaking for the three provinces.

*Claude: Was there an opening from the Chinese side?*

TJN: I mentioned to you what I told the Chinese, now this is what the Chinese answered: "Taiwan has to be liberated, you can not argue for yourself in taking the case of Taiwan. Tibet has already been liberated 33 years ago and decisions have already been made. Because Taiwan is not liberated that is the reason why we presented these nine-point offer. It is not the case for Tibet." About the injustice to incorporate the Kham Province into the main land, their argument was that from the Guomintang days it was like that and the Communist government tried only to improve the situation to make it better. They said: "You should not to speak from outside, you should bring His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet, he should come to Tibet and talks should be held."

*Claude: How long did the negotiations last? What was the end result?*

TJN: It lasted very long time. More than one month, a bit more. At the end the Chinese asked me one question. Are you saying these things to us because you are a Representative of the Dalai Lama or are you doing this because you are a Representative of the

Tibetan Government in exile? If you are saying all this because you are a Representative of the Tibetan Government in exile, we have nothing to say to you?

*Claude: They did not recognise the Kashag?*

TJN: No, they wanted to put the problem on a personal level. For the Chinese, there was no Kashag, no Tibetan Government only the Dalai Lama in his personal capacity of the leader of the Tibetan people.

*Claude: Did they decide for another round of discussion later?*

TJN: I replied to the Chinese that what I am discussing this not for the Dalai Lama as a person and it should not be. I was in a very difficult situation because on one hand, the issue was not only the issue of the Dalai Lama, on the other hand if I was to insist that the Chinese recognise the Tibetan Government, the Chinese would not even talk.

So, I say it is for the general public. I am voicing the aspiration of the ordinary Tibetan people. I told them that I have not decided (and I can't) anything right now. I will report what ever I have learned, whatever response I have got from you, I will report to His Holiness in India.

*Claude: Did Ngabo and Panchen Lama were involved in the negotiations at any point in time?*

TJN: No, no

*Claude: Now, can you speak to me about your third visit, in 1984?*

TJN: In 1982 after almost one month, the delegation returned to India.

In 1984, the Dalai Lama expressed his wish to visit Tibet in 1985. The delegation went back to Beijing in 1984.

The 1984 delegation was a sort of follow up of 1982's visit. The reasons were to assess the situation and see if a visit of His Holiness was possible or not.

During the visit we asked that the Tibetan people should be given the right of self determination because Tibetan people enjoy all the qualifications for a nation to get self determination. The Chinese themselves have passed a resolution at a Party meeting in 1931, the resolution said that all minority people specially the Mongolian and the Tibetan should have the right either to stay with the Chinese or to self determination or to secede and get independence. Our delegation said that you have passed this resolution why don't you give us the right to do that. In 1946, Mao Zedong repeated against the same point. Based on these two points, we insisted for self determination for Tibet.

*Claude: What was the result?*

TJN: For the first point, about the visit of the Dalai Lama in Tibet, the Chinese said that the Dalai Lama is most welcome to visit Tibet, but no foreign press people should accompany him.

They did not want to invite His Holiness in 1985 itself. They said it was difficult for them to receive the Dalai Lama in 1985 because there was a lot of construction going on inside Tibet at that time. They said that there were 42 sectors of construction in 6 districts and they were too busy to receive the Dalai Lama. In a way, they refused the visit.

About self-determination, they said it is true that they had passed a resolution in 1931, but it was only when the Communist Party was a

small child and now they have grown up. At that time, they had to do certain things!

The Communist Chinese said that what they did in 1931 was done under certain pressure: but the decision is clear now. They said that this has already been decided (rights of the minorities to secede). The Communists had come to legitimate power in 1949. The matter was decided in 1957 in front of some Tibetan delegates. There was a large Congress meeting in Shitao near Nanjing to discuss the problems of the minorities. Tibetan representatives like Abo Alo from Amdo were there.

The matter was discussed in front of all delegates. It was discussed also [which parts] should be given the TAR, if the right of self-determination should be given.

Our delegation explained to the Chinese, that what we discussed had nothing to do with the status of His Holiness, it is totally different issue. We voiced the aspiration of the Tibetan people, not the sole view of the Dalai Lama.

The issue that we raised has nothing to do with the status, role or position of the Dalai Lama. It is about the people of Tibet and the status of Tibet.

To conclude, we told the Chinese that the issue is not the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama himself said time and again that the happiness of the people inside Tibet is the most important factor. If they are happy being with the Chinese let them be!

But we can see today that the people are not happy and you have not done a lot to improve their condition. You have not taken care of their aspiration. You have failed.

[Finally] they reiterated that it was not right for the Dalai Lama to visit Tibet at that time. After that we left back for India.

*Claude: Was the overall negotiation and inspection delegations' visit positive?*

TJN: If I was to evaluate, I would say that there is no loss at all. If you want to look at the benefit side, there is no real concrete benefit, because no agreement was made.

We can say that there were some loss and some benefit. From a personal view point, there has been more benefit, because there has been many foreign countries, many international supporters who told His Holiness and the Tibetan Government that if we were ready to forsake independence, they will be ready to help us. There has been also a very strong Tibetan support for Tibetan cause.

The most fruitful thing for the Tibetan people would be to have face to face negotiations between the Chinese and the Tibetans. If this does not happen, our too much reliance on international pressure is not good.

Until and unless, we open negotiation, nothing is going to help. We heard many talks of foreign country coming and helping us, but even when resolutions were passed for example in the European Parliament, nobody really came forward.

It is for the Tibetan and the Chinese people to come face to face and negotiate.

We had discussed in 1984 (and also before), but today in 1997, thirteen years after, what benefit did we get, in the context of getting our independence.

There is a lot of respect for His Holiness the Dalai Lama, there is a lot of support from many countries, but at the same time, no country or combination of countries is confident enough to stand to the Chinese.

*Claude: Do you think that India has a role to play in this context?*

TJN: It is very unlikely that India would do something for Tibet, for India to recognise our claim for freedom is like pushing the Chinese out of their patience. So the answer is no.

For the past 38 years, I have been living in exile in India. The Government of India has been very good with the Tibetan people and we are very grateful to the government to have given us asylum. This is one point.

Another point is that we do not have any illusion that the Indian government will come to our help on the Tibetan issue. No, I personally believe that they will not do it.

I can say as a fact, from 1962 to 1973, India and China were the bitterest enemies and even at that time, India did not change her stand on Tibet. There still accepted that Tibet was a part of China.

*Claude: Lal Bahadur Shastri was going to recognise the Tibetan Government in exile in 1966?*

TJN: This is possible. I have also heard that Shastri was a strong supporter of the Tibetan cause right from the beginning.

It is true that he has said this, but at the same time from 1962 to 1973 India and China were very against each other and nothing happened.

Today, they are closer. And the policy remains the same.

We have no illusion that India will change her stand vis-à-vis the Tibetan question.

Now I have a question for you.

You are writing a historical record based on policies of countries like China, India and Tibet, it is based on the crucial events in these countries. To do this study you need a faculty called mind. This is most important and crucial faculty of man. Therefore I shared with

you all the past experiences of mine, now you have learned and you know.

Using your mind you will judge what was right and what was wrong. So you can judge where we went wrong, and where we were right.

*Claude: More I study, more I personally believe (this morning I mentioned it to His Holiness when I met him) that there is a karmic factor which is behind everything and we generally do not mention when we study history.*

*It is difficult to understand or even discuss because these events seems karmic consequences of past actions.*

*The details of this event or the fact that this official said this or that are outer factors. I am very interested by this other side.*

TJN: This is our way of thinking, our typically way of thinking. When you are driven to an edge where you can do nothing, this way of thinking is helping.

*Claude: Even if you just look at facts with your mind, at historical facts. In 1950, there was a balance between Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel. Patel was down to earth and Nehru dreamt of a better world. At this crucial point, Patel passed away. Later in 1966, Shastri was going to recognise the Tibetan Government in exile and he died in Tashkent. In 1977, again Jayaprakash Narayan who was the guru of the Janata government and the strongest supporter of Tibet, passed away after his Party had come to power. Of course you can call it bad luck, but it seems to me that there is another factor.*

TJN: You are right in your judgement.

And it is at least a consolation, if we have tried our very best, if it has not work, it is a consolation to think that it is do to some negative actions of the past lives.

In a way it helps and your judgement is correct.

What I feel that India should become confident in herself. She should stand on her feet and be able to rub shoulders with the other [big] nations of the world. But so many destructive things have happened in India that in a way or in another I feel discourage.

*Claude: I think things are going to change in India.*

*India has followed only one policy, the Nehruvian, after Nehru, Indira, after Rajiv.*

TJN: That is right! There is a good hope.

*Claude: Thank you!*