

From National Archives of India

*File: Monthly report of the Indian Mission Lhasa; Indian Missions; Lhasa Tibet,
1951; Progs., Nos. 4(6)-P, 1951*

From: The Officer in Charge,
Indian Mission, Lhasa.

To: The Political Officer in Sikkim,
Gangtok.

Memorandum No. 3(10)-L/51.

Dated, Lhasa, Tibet, the 16th August, 1951.

**Monthly Report of the Indian Mission, Lhasa
for the period ending 15th August, 1951**

I. EXTERNAL RELATIONS:

(a) Sino-Tibetan Relations:

- (i) By far the most outstanding event of the month is General Chang Ching-Wu's arrival in Lhasa. He has on his own admission come to survey conditions in Tibet and to report later to his Government at Peking. It is of some significance, therefore, that he entered Tibet by what the Chinese delight in calling the 'back-door', and that during his triumphal progress from Sikkim to Lhasa he interviewed a wide variety of people at Yatung, Gyantse and other halting stations, among whom were Tibetans of all classes and political affiliations, as well as Ladakhis, Bhutanese, and Nepalese who were one and all subjected to the closest inquiry. This formidable list includes one or two of our dakbungalow chowkidars Chang's report will doubtless

centre on foreign interests and influence in South and Central Tibet where Indian and allied interests predominate. It is believed that he would eventually depart, on the conclusion of his mission, by the 'front-door' to China.

(ii) This extraordinary Lillipution, who styles himself President Mao's Personal Representative in Tibet, and on that passport claims unusual privileges for himself, has, we think, suffered a few disconcerting shocks at his first encounter with Tibetan officials, which though minor in themselves, made the General fret and fume with indignation, while his Tibetan hosts remained cold beneath a mass of superficial courtesies. It was not surprising, therefore, to find the General a trifle disappointed with Tibetans for not being, as expected, overawed by his exalted status, and also for their singular lack of enthusiasm at the prospect of belonging 'in indissoluble union' to the 'big' Chinese family. But surely a theoretical explanation for this on communist lines would present no difficulty.

(iii) The man is communist enough to advertise his habit of eating (unhygienic in Tibet) with his cook, but with the crudeness of communist practice expects the highest Tibetan officials to be obsequious to him, while he like figures of the sadly perishing oriental potentates receives their homage with supreme unconcern. But he is beginning to learn.

(iv) However, he seems to have left a trail of bitter memories behind him during his recent journey from Gangtok to Lhasa. At Yatung, in particular, on grounds that scarcely supported his conduct, he lashed the Kashag with his fury, made those venerable gentlemen obey his commands, and give him a seat of equal eminence with His Holiness at a meeting between them. Elsewhere on the road, he urged the common people and the village headmen not to supply transport to officials at arbitrary rates but to demand only prevailing market rates,

although he himself without the slightest qualm enjoyed these very same privileges, and more, at no cost to himself.

(v) Even now he is smugly living on the fat of the land provided as tribute by the Tibetan Government, and indeed has the brass to ask for more and better things. For fairness' sake, it must be added that he upset the Tibetan Government's apple-cart with no mischievous intent, but through ignorance and a certain insolence which derives from a sense of power, of this, he has given sufficient evidence to visitors who pay him courtesy calls.

(vi) On the Tibetan side, it is regrettable that they were guided by established tradition in arranging a reception for General Chang at Yatung, which infuriated him. He is after all a resuscitated Chinese Amban.

(vii) The General's reputation preceded him to Lhasa, and forewarned Lhasa officials, anxious to avoid further scenes, carefully laid plans for his reception and stay in the capital. Two of the largest, if not the best, houses in town were requisitioned for the Chinese party, and furnished with some show of taste at the expense of prosperous Tibetans. Even cooking and other utensils for both establishments were provided by Tibetan officials.

(viii) One fear, universally shared by Tibetan officials, was that the General's reception would exceed in splendor the reception to be later accorded to the returning Dalai Lama. The Tibetan Government, therefore, openly frowned on Chinese preparations for a grand welcome to the General.

The reception itself, when the General arrived at midday on 8th August, was one of the largest and most spectacular ever seen in Lhasa. Over 3,000 curious spectators lined the route from Drepung to Lhasa. On behalf of the Tibetan Government, Lhalu (recently back from Giamda) and the Monk Shape and 40 other officials received the

General's party in a large tent at Kentse Lubting. Junior Tibetan officials received him bowing. A guard of honour was formed by 250 Trapchi soldiers and a band was in attendance. At several points on the road the General's party was stopped by representatives of various organizations who had gone to greet him. He was greeted in turn by the Nepalese, Ladakhis and the Bhutan Agent. The Chinese who had a tent to themselves served tea and refreshments to the party, and in return the General favoured them with a speech in which he promised to work wonders in Tibet.

(ix) We have briefly mentioned how the General is collecting information. The matter deserves a little more space and may be discussed more fully. The General is naturally the centre interest and curiosity, and he ruthlessly exploits public interest in him for his own purpose. Apart from this, his method is to summon unsuspecting common men and women to his presence, overpower them with a volley of questions, and later bestow on them, if deserved, a liberation badge just to leave no room for doubts that all Tibetans have been liberated. Chang is indeed a living questionnaire, but he is withal a man of some discernment. He knows his victim.

(x) The Nepalese Subba at Gyantse and the Bhutan Agent at Lhasa had, from their own accounts, to face grueling tests which they are not likely to forget soon. They were ushered into the Presence, like prisoners of war, and Chang began by reviewing their antecedents, nothing down such details as name, age and functions. Then he turned to questions of political and military import. The Nepalese was asked about the number of dzongs on the direct route from Shigatse to Nepal, the state of the frontier, importance and volume of trade that passes between Nepal and Tibet, Nepal's relations with India, his relations with I.T.A. Gyantse and the size of his escort. At the end, he assured the Subba that he (Chang) reserved the right of further cross-examining the Nepalese Officer in Lhasa.

(xi) The Bhutanese fared worse. He was asked about the disposition of Bhutanese troops on the Tibetan frontier and why they were quartered at certain places; why there were restrictions on Tibetan traders entering Bhutan, and reasons for the irregular supply of rice from Bhutan to Phari and Yatung.

(xii) In view of the unpleasant nature of their meetings with Chang, it would not be surprising if both the Nepalese and Bhutanese have concealed from us some essential details of their encounter. Our own Trade Agent seems to have had a similar experience when he met Chang at Yatung on 22nd July.

(xiii) I met Chang on 12th August at his own request and have reason to think that he took no liberties with me. He was happy not to ask any questions, kept no notes and winced at some of my own modest queries. He was polite, garrulous and modest; but then we spoke in Chinese and mostly on Buddhism.

(xiv) If foreign representatives in Tibet are treated so unceremoniously by Communist China's first envoy to Lhasa, it may well be imagined what the Tibetans have to undergo. There is a daily procession of visitors to Trimon House where Chang is staying, and by night hooded visitors said to be ex-Shapes (now fallen from grace) and other high officials call on Chang and have meetings in secret with him. Some of these contacts were earlier made in Lhasa by the officer from Chinghai, who has been here for almost six months now. His friends and allies are now intimately linked with the latest Chinese arrivals. It is likely that this man has been in touch with Tibetan affairs from his position of authority, and has also been kept informed of the Tawang question. It remains to be seen whether the Tibetan Government will be forced by this group of conspirators to exercise greater pressure on the Government of India and this Mission for the

return of Tawang. For the present, their policy (conceived by Chinese officers in Lhasa) does not seem to have received official approval of Peking.

(xv) The joint Prime Ministers at Lhasa preserved the sanctity of Tibetan tradition by inviting Chang to a party in the Cathedral which saved them from calling on him first.

(b) Indo-Tibetan Relations:

(i) We invited the Kashag to our summer party but the invitation was declined for reasons which are not difficult to understand. The Kashag, in fact, explained that our action in Tawang had caused misgivings in the minds of large sections of Tibetans who, in consequence, disapprove of any intimacy between the Kashag and the Mission. Later, however, after consultations with the Prime Ministers they changed their earlier decision and attended our party.

(ii) On 5th August, we met the Monk Shape and conveyed to him Government of India's desire for his Government's cooperation to check inflow of Kazaks into Indian territory, particularly in Ladakh. Thupten Rabyang, the Monk Shape, assured me that his Government would do all they could to check the Kazaks, though he felt that in certain areas this was beyond their power.

(i) At the same meeting, I drew the Shape's notice to the case of Tenzing Paljore, a pilgrim from Ladakh, who had bought a mule at Shigatse, which on his arrival at Lhasa was claimed and seized by a local Tibetan. The Shape was good enough to order the City Magistrates to summon both parties to court, and decide the case on its merits. The court took only half an hour to decide that the mule should be restored to Tenzing Paljore.

(c) **Nepal and Tibet**

Nepalese efforts to restore friendly relations with the Tibetan Government have not been successful. The Subba, who was sent to Yatung for this purpose by the Nepalese Officer, returned to Lhasa after an unsuccessful mission. As a result, the Nepalese are still unable to install their wireless in Lhasa.

It is unfortunate that the Nepalese Officer is in an unenviable state in Lhasa. He was advised by his Foreign office at Kathmandu, prior to the administrative changes there, to preserve the Treaty of 1856 against any Tibetan effort to nullify it. Indeed, this has added to his present embarrassments. I have suggested to him that he should not accept the Peking agreement until officially told to do so by his Government. If necessary, he should point out to the Chinese that Nepal's existing Treaty with Tibet is still valid as it has not been denounced by either party. He should do this without going into the details of that treaty. The Nepalese Officer met General Chang Ching-Wu on 13th August.

(d) Bhutan and Tibet.

Meetings between the Bhutan Agent in Lhasa and General Chang have led in effect to the establishment of direct relations between the Peking Government and the Government of Bhutan. This may have unpleasant consequences for India but no doubt the Government of India are prepared for any eventuality. It should, however, be appreciated that hereafter it would be difficult for us to convince the Chinese that Bhutan is within our sphere of influence.

I have already suggested that it would be advantageous both for India and Nepal to have a common policy in Tibet, and preferable for Bhutan to conduct her relations with the Chinese in Tibet through the Government of India.

I have already suggested that it would be advantageous both for India and Nepal to have a common policy in Tibet, and preferable for Bhutan to conduct her relations with the Chinese in Tibet through the Government of India.

II. Internal

The stage has now been set for the next act in this tragedy of Tibet. Chang Ching-Wu and his band of enthusiasts are sizing up their tasks, and appear to be already impatient with the slow mental and physical habits of the average Tibetan. Perhaps, Chang is even becoming aware that Tibetans are after all not Chinese.

(ii) Their immediate purpose seems to be the creation of a pro-Chinese faction in Lhasa, and this is rendered easy by the existence here of a disgruntled group. Of whom the most prominent and dangerous is ex-Shaps Kapshopa. It is suspected that Phunkhang Kung is giving support to this group of mal-contented. If this is so, it may be due to his wife's thirst for revenge and love of power. Kapshopa is as unscrupulous as he is ambitious, and for purely personal reasons he will stop at nothing to destroy ex-Regent Taktra and the Lungshar family. This is indeed an uneasy situation for Lhalu Shape, and may drive him also to bid for Chinese support. Lhalu is an adopt in the game and will not be undone easily by Kapshopa.

(iii) Lhasa is ringing with ribald songs whose venom is directed mainly against ex-Regent Taktra, Taktra Dzasa, Lhalu and the two acting Shapes. It is generally held that these songs come from the pen of Kapshopa who, whether through Chinese inspiration or otherwise, is clearly resorting to foul means to vilify his enemies. The common people are mere channels for popularizing these songs. What hand the officer from Chinghai has in this artful device of lowering the prestige of the ex-Regent and Lhalu Shape in the eyes of their own people is yet a matter of surmise.

(iv) The present situation in Lhasa is on the whole so unpleasant that the loyal followers of His Holiness again gathered in the Potala on the 24th July to renew their oath of loyalty to the Dalai Lama. This time the oath was taken in accordance with the laws of King Songtsen Gampo and the Buddhist Commandments.

(v) His Holiness and party are slowly trudging back to Lhasa almost with an air of reluctance. He reached Tshakur Lingka (7 miles from Lhasa) on 13th August, and visited the ex-Regent's Taktra monastery on the 14th. He will remain at Tshakur Lingka until as scheduled he returns to Lhasa on 17th August. Meanwhile, Tshakur Lingka has become a convenient meeting place for the joint Prime Ministers and the Shapas for talks with the Dalai Lama outside earshot of the Chinese.

(vi) From another direction, Ngapho Shapa is marching up to Lhasa with 400 Chinese in his train. Ngapho is increasingly becoming an enigmatic figure. It is likely that neither he, nor his Chinese friends, quite trust the Tibetans to treat him as a hero. On the other hand, the Tibetan Government to doubly assure him of their high regard for his past services have made an ad hoc grant of Rs. 30,000/- for his personal expenses. It is quite evident that the Tibetan Government themselves have a purpose. They still hope that with Ngapho's assistance it would be possible to reconsider and revise some of the clauses of the Peking agreement.

Military situation

(i) The Tibetan Government are gradually reducing the strength of their army. At least two regiments, Trongtra and Trukna, have in the past few days been disbanded.

According to reliable information, Chinese troops are mainly moving in the direction of the Assam- Tibet frontier for garrison duty. Each outpost on that frontier for garrison duty. Each outpost on that frontier is reported to have 200 soldiers. There are strong rumours that more troops estimated at 30,000 are on their way from Szechuan.

(ii) Chinese army magazines (pictorial) are in wide circulation in Kham, and some of them have been seen in Lhasa.

III. Economic situation.

The poor of Lhasa, who were expecting prices to tumble down with the arrival of the Chinese, have received a rude shock. Prices of all essential goods have in the last few weeks recorded a marked increase.

Following are some of the present market rates (wholesale) for essential supplies: -

Rice Rs. 125/- per maund.

Sugar Rs. 180/-per maund.

Flour (local) Rs. 48/-per maund.

Butter 75 Sangs per Khe (roughly Rs. 9/- a seer).

Oil Rs. 6/-a seer.

Tsampa (barley flour)- 45 Sangs per Khe (an increase of 15 Sangs over the rate last quoted. Vide our report for the month of May, 1951.

IV. Social and Personal

The following officials attended our summer parties: -

Dzasa Tsarong, Kandron George Taring and his wife, Shatra Se and his wife, the Kashag, the Chikyap Khempo, Phunkhang Kung and his family and the Nepalese officer.

We attended the Kundeling Dzasa's party.

Independence Day was celebrated in the usual manner.

(S. Sinha)

Officer in Charge.