

## **A British appreciation: can Tibet be defended?**

One often hears in Indian military circles that the 'next war' with Pakistan will be on Pakistani territory, though unfortunately, the 'next' one with China will be on Indian soil.

With the successful launch of Agni V, it might now not be entirely true; the Chinese immediately realize the change.

Soon after the test, the Chinese Government realized that the game might be different hereafter. *The Global Times* elaborated: "It seems India's path for boosting its military strength has not met too many obstacles. India is still poor and lags behind in infrastructure construction, but its society is highly supportive of developing nuclear power and the West chooses to overlook India's disregard of nuclear and missile control treaties."

Beijing then threatened: "India should not overestimate its strength. Even if it has missiles that could reach most parts of China that does not mean it will gain anything from being arrogant during disputes with China. India should be clear that China's nuclear power is stronger and more reliable. For the foreseeable future, India would stand no chance in an overall arms race with China."

The point is that for the first time, India had the capacity to carry out a war on the territory of China.

Was it the first time?

No, as we will show in this paper based on the British Archives.

But let us look first at the historical background.

A few months before India's Independence, not only was Tibet a de facto independent State and the British wanted it to remain so, but they were ready to carry out a military action to protect Tibet's status.

For this, a detailed military intervention plan was prepared by the General Staff of the British Army.

In early 1946, in a Top Secret Memo<sup>1</sup>, the General Staff sent an “Appreciation of the scale of direct military assistance which could be provided in support of Tibet”<sup>2</sup>.

### **The Objectives**

The purpose of the Memo was to find a solution in case of “domination of Tibet by a potentially hostile major power [which] would constitute a direct threat to the security of India.”

India’s objectives were clearly expressed: “The Government of India are therefore, vitally interested in maintaining friendly relations with Tibet and in preserving for Tibet at least that measure of autonomy she now enjoys.”

The objectives of the study was unambiguous, London (and Delhi) did not want to have a new neighbour on its borders, particularly not the Soviet Union or China.

Once again the ‘autonomy’ envisaged by the Government of India was different from the one mentioned by Chiang Kaishek in his speech in the Chinese Assembly<sup>3</sup>. The Memo thus defines the British perception: “The

---

<sup>1</sup> Top secret, 6904/94/1801, General Staff Appreciation of the scale of direct military assistance which could be provided in support of Tibet.

<sup>2</sup> Document available: *Tibet, Government of India policy; military aid to Tibet, Sep 1945-May 1946* Original File no: L/WS/1/1042 File WS.17058 54p map.

<sup>3</sup> Another British Note stated: “On August 24<sup>th</sup>, 1945 Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek made a statement of policy concerning Tibet which appears to indicate a considerable change in the attitude of the Chinese Government. After declaring China’s desire to allow the ‘frontier racial groups’ to attain independence if capable of doing so, he said: “I solemnly declare that if the Tibetans should at this time express a wish for self-government our Government would, in conformity with our sincere traditions, accord it a very high degree of autonomy. If in the future, they fulfill economic requirement of independence, the nation’s Government will, as in the case of Outer Mongolia, help them to attain this status”. There would seem to be nothing irreconcilable between this offer of “a very high degree of autonomy” and the attitude of His Majesty’s Government. It is clear however, from conversations which took

basis of Tibetan autonomy must rest in strong diplomatic support by HMG [His Majesty Government] and by India so that the Tibetans will not be subjected to pressure by any potential hostile power."

The British Government did not think only in terms of an armed invasion (by Russia or China), but also about 'infiltrations'. As recently witnessed in Nepal, where local elements have encouraged a slow take-over of the country by the People's Republic of China, infiltration has been a method recurrently used by successive Chinese leaders.

London thought that it could be a source of real danger for Tibet as some elements in the monasteries were not against a renewed 'special' relation with China to replace the defunct *Choe-Yon* (Priest-Patron) partnership.

The Memo states: "In particular Tibet must be supported against the methods of 'peaceful penetration' subversion which have been employed so successfully by Russia in Northern Persia and which China is very likely to employ against her [Tibet]."

### **From Two Directions**

It is interesting to note that one year before India's independence and a few months after the end of World War II, the British saw the threats coming from two directions, two former allies during the War, Russia and China.

The Memo affirms: "Neither Russia nor China must be allowed to violate Tibetan autonomy by such methods, since it would then be possible for them to build roads and airfields to their own advantage, which would vitally affect India's strategic position."

Then the Memo comes to the crunch of the issue: "Should it prove impossible to preserve Tibetan autonomy by diplomatic methods alone or

---

place between British and Chinese representatives in Lhasa in 1944 that with regard to Tibet, there is a considerable difference between the British and the Chinese conceptions of the word 'autonomy'.

should Russia or China attack Tibet, it might be necessary for the Govt [Government] of India to provide direct military aid to Tibet which would involve war. The purpose of this paper is to study the extent and manner of direct military aid that could be given to Tibet in pursuance of the political object."

The objectives of the military plan to defend Tibet make interesting reading. Over the centuries, Tibet had never been a military or strategic threat to India's borders and this, for several reasons; the first one being that Tibetans were peaceful people and did not strive to acquire any large military means. The Land of Snows contented itself with basic means to defend itself.

The Memo asserts: "The object of military aid is to prevent a hostile power establishing itself in areas from which it can threaten India. In practice this means preventing the enemy from occupying those parts of Tibet from which air attack or rocket missiles can be launched on India."

### **Five years later: a letter from Sardar Patel**

This is what would happen soon after the entry of Chinese troops in Lhasa in September 1951, with disastrous consequences for India. Most of the leaders of independent India (with perhaps the exception of Patel) were too blind to see the menace looming above the Indian borders.

In this context, it is interesting to quote from the well-known letter sent by Sardar Patel to Jawaharlal Nehru on November 7, 1950'. The Deputy Prime Minister told Nehru:

We have to consider what new situation now faces us as a result of the disappearance of Tibet as we knew it and the expansion of China almost up to our gates. Throughout history we have seldom been worried about our North-East frontier. The Himalayas have been

regarded as an impenetrable barrier against any threat from the North. We had friendly Tibet which gave us no trouble.

It was a good analysis, although was already too late for Tibet<sup>4</sup>. The People's Liberation Army had already 'liberated' Tibet.

On November 1, 1950, a few weeks after Tibet was invaded, in an interview with United Press, Jawaharlal Nehru, the Indian Prime Minister declared:

"India has neither the resources nor the inclination to send armed assistance to Tibet.<sup>5</sup> He cited the case of the Dogra War when the Sikhs of Zorawar Singh were decimated during the winter in Tibet.

The same day Nehru cabled B.N. Rau:<sup>6</sup> "Chinese military operations against Tibet have undoubtedly affected our friendly relations with China. But these developments do not affect our general policy or even our policy regarding admission of new China in United Nations."<sup>7</sup>

This was 4 years after the earlier quoted Memo was written; Nehru did not probably know about its existence. The Appreciation/Memo continues: "The maintenance over these routes of hostile forces in Tibet will present grave difficulties, and will limit the size of the forces that can be deployed."

### **A Buffer to protect British India; drawing a Line**

London drew a line passing by Chamdo<sup>8</sup>-Nagchuka<sup>9</sup>-Garyarsa<sup>10</sup>-Leh<sup>11</sup>. Any invasion or infiltration, south of this line was considered as dangerous for the defence of India's borders by the General Staff.

---

<sup>4</sup> In any case, Sardar Patel passed away a month later.

<sup>5</sup> SWJN, Series II, Vol. 15 (2), p. 335. Tibetans Free to Appeal to the United Nations.

<sup>6</sup> Sir Benegal N. Rau, the Indian Representative to the UN.

<sup>7</sup> SWJN, Series II, Vol. 15 (2), p. 339.

<sup>8</sup> Traditional capital of Kham province of Eastern Tibet.

<sup>9</sup> Nagchuka is a small town in northern Tibet approximately 250 kilometers north-east of the capital Lhasa.

<sup>10</sup> In Western Tibet, near the Indian Trade Mart of Gartok, north-east of Ladakh.

The appreciation adds an important point; the Tibetans should contribute and participate in the defence of their own country: "Military aid must depend upon the goodwill of the Tibetans, and confidence in us both now and when direct military assistance is sent to them. It will therefore be essential to protect the capital and the wealthier provinces of the country." This raises a serious issue: was Tibet ready or willing to defend itself against an outside attack or even 'incursions', during the time of the Minority<sup>12</sup> of the Dalai Lama?

It is difficult to answer this question as between the will to protect its borders and the implementation of any plan, there was more than often a large gap. In the Tibetan system of governance, between an old Regent, a conservative National Assembly and a practically powerless Kashag<sup>13</sup>, chances to take Churchillian decisions were minute.

For the British Government, the 'Military Object' of the plan was defined after considering the geographical and other factors: "To prevent the enemy establishing himself south of general line Chamdo-Nagchuka-Garyarsa-Leh". It thus created a de facto buffer zone between the two expansionist powers (Russia and China) and India.

## **The Operations**

Then follows the detailed study of possible military operations on the Roof of the World, as: "direct military aid is most likely to be required by Tibet at a time when a major war is imminent or in progress. Therefore only a small part of the resources of India and the Empire would be available to give aid to Tibet."

---

<sup>11</sup> Capital of Ladakh in Jammu & Kashmir State.

<sup>12</sup> British notes often speak of the 'Minority' to indicate the period of the minority of the Dalai Lama during which no decision could be taken by the Tibetan government in Lhasa.

<sup>13</sup> Cabinet of ministers

The Memo starts by a study of geography and ethnology of Tibet, pointing to different issues such as the “overall sparcity of population, groups and animals; the comparative wealth of South Eastern Tibet<sup>14</sup> [Kham province or Xikang for the Chinese], the unique historical and religious importance of Lhasa, the non-existence of any roads for wheeled traffic, and the remoteness of the country from all possible enemy bases.”

All this had to be taken into account for preparing defence plans.

The Memo acknowledges the military importance of Nagchuka and Chamdo while: “the height and breadth of the mountains surrounding Tibet, and the height and character of the country: airborne operations will be hazardous and comparatively difficult; the present types of aircraft could only be operated from Tibetan airfields by the most experienced pilots, and even then the risks involved would be extremely high; gliders cannot be used with present equipment it is not possible to use para troops at these heights.”

### **Strategic Changes due to new inventions**

Another Memorandum<sup>15</sup> from the War Department’s Joint Secretary to the External Affairs Department in Delhi explains:

In the past the physical difficulties of Tibet’s mountains and high altitude plateau have given India a valuable buffer against aggression. This however cannot be regarded as immutable. In the present war, the jungles on the N.E. [North East] Frontier and the deserts of Libya, previously considered to be military barriers have been overcome by modern equipment and modern inventions. We are faced with the increasingly rapid development of inventions such as rockets and jet-propelled bombs and also of rapid methods of road construction, air transportation and so on. These may reduce the value of the physical

---

<sup>14</sup> The closest to India’s North-eastern border.

<sup>15</sup> No.6904/I/MDI, dated the 18<sup>th</sup> May 1945.

buffer: and make it all the more important to maintain as far as possible a political buffer. We do not think, therefore, that this is the moment to suggest giving up a hitherto useful barrier, still less let it fall into the hands of another nation capable of developing it into an off give base in its own time.

An autonomous and backward Tibet will serve to keep potential aggressors at a distance from a large part of India's northern frontier. If a hostile power invaded Tibet, the undeveloped nature of the country would impose delay upon the aggressor, and so give India valuable time in which to make dispositions to meet the threat.

Despite many technical objections or hurdles that such a military exercise could face, the Army headquarters believed that all technical difficulties could be eventually overcome "if it is decided that preparation must be made to drop paratroops in Tibet."

As for the people of Tibet, the Memo describes them as "naturally brave and tough, though by religion pacifist and unmilitary. They are wholly untrained and unequipped to oppose even the smallest of modern forces, and have never seen modern weapons and equipment, though this could be overcome by training and arousing interest in military matters."

Though Tibet has no manufacturing resources to enable it to equip its own forces, "the smallness of the forces that can be put into Tibet by possible enemies, and the inefficiency of the Chinese<sup>16</sup>, the training and equipping of a small Tibetan force on modern lines would have an effect on any campaign out of all proportion to the size of the force."

---

<sup>16</sup> Since the beginning of the 1980's, there has been a sea of changes in China and Beijing despite its 'peaceful rise' published intentions, now has a formidable modern Army, Navy and Air Force to which should be added its ballistic capabilities.



This is an interesting consideration in any study of the 1962 War, though in the case of the Sino-Indian War, it was India which had not the will or the wisdom to be ready to defend itself and use its Air Force.

The Memo also points out to another factor: "there is considerable scope for the activities of guerilla bands, preferably led by trained British or Indian officers, in some parts of the country e.g. the sparsely populated North and West."

### **Postscript: British disagreements**

After being accepted in first instance, the detailed memo to defend Tibet was rejected by some Air Force Officer.

In a Top Secret letter<sup>17</sup>, Brig R.W. McLeod wrote on March 2, 1946 to Maj. Gen. C. S. Sugden, Director of Military Operations (DMO) at the War Office in Whitehall:

I said that our paper on Tibet would be with you shortly. Unfortunately there has been a held-up. The original paper was written in full consultation with Air HQ India, and on the assumption that we should always have at least seven transport squadrons of aircrafts. When our paper, which had previously been approved by A.H.Q. (I) [Air Head Quarters India] was considered by the AOC-in-C [Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief] as one of the Chiefs of Staff, he disagreed (or rather his staff disagreed) with the conclusions regarding air maintenance and air support which had been reached by previous Air Advisors.

As a result the appreciation "was thrown back to the J.P.C. for revision and the Air Staff consider that are too busy on other matters to pay much attention to Tibet, and wish the whole question to be postponed for six

---

<sup>17</sup> Top Secret Letter DO 2505/196/151 from the General Headquarters, General Staff Branch of the India Command.

months. Personally, I do not agree with this view since I consider that the paper can be amended very slightly and it will then meet the requirements of the new Air Staff," said Brig McLeod.

According to him, the main points were the fact that the Air Headquarters objected "we shall not have seven squadrons of transport aircraft and therefore the plan is unsound". McLeod answered: "This may be so, but I say that if we do not have seven squadrons, we cannot go to Tibet at all, and that therefore if we have to consider operations in Tibet they should be based on our plan and additional aircraft from outside India must be placed at India's disposal if she has to meet the Russians or China in Tibet."

The second point was about the impossibility to drop parachutists over 5,000 feet. The General Staff's officer said: "I entirely agree with this, but I am convinced that it is not an impossible technical problem to drop them at altitude of 12,000 feet. It is in fact simply a question of a larger canopy which is merely a matter of mathematical calculation. If the air is so much thinner, then for any given weight there must be an increased area of canopy in order that the rate of descent is slower. I discussed this question with Raymond Quilter who makes parachutes, when I was commanding the S.A.S. troops in England, and I am sure I am right."

The last objection was about the technical difficulty of landing and taking off from strips at the height of the Tibetan plateau. Brig McLeod who had a great experience in "Special Operations" commented: "I fully appreciate that this will entail larger strips of increased skills, but I feel certain that the question of length of strips can be overcome by technical developments such as a rocket assisted take off and the converse of rocket acceleration."

His recommendations were: "I therefore consider that with minor rewording the paper can stand as it is but I am having some difficulty in persuading the Air Staff of this. We have, however, delayed so long that I am sending you a copy of the paper in its present form in order that you

may see the general conclusions at which we have arrived and that you will agree that although some alterations may be required to meet the Air Staff the majority of the paper can remain unaltered."

Despite of the Air Force objections, the paper was accepted by the Commander-in-Chief with some restrictions, as it was impracticable "until such time as the Russians or the Chinese have such aircrafts or rockets it would be extremely difficult for them to operate from Tibet against India."

The conclusion was therefore: "From a short term point of view the Committee do not consider that there is any practicable means of aiding Tibet against a major enemy or that there is any real threat to India from that direction."

It however added: "When and if it becomes possible to operate aircraft to and from Tibet, the Committee consider that a plan of the nature of the one under consideration would seem to be the only method by which Aid to Tibet could be given."

The situation was soon evolving very fast in the subcontinent. On 2 September 1946, an Interim Government of India was formed from the newly elected Constituent Assembly of India; its task was to assist the transition to complete independence.

This council of ministers had most of the powers of a government a prime minister (Jawaharlal Nehru) designated as the Vice president of the Council. But the mood had changed.

Let us remember the reaction of the Prime Minister when the first paper on the threats to India's security was prepared by the Chief of Staff.

The paper contained recommendations for dealing with the newly independent nation's security and asked for a government directive on defence policy. When General Sir Robert Lokhart, the Commander-in-Chief took this paper to the Indian Prime Minister, Nehru remarked: "Rubbish. Total Rubbish. We don't need a defence plan. Our policy is non-violence. We

foresee no military threats. Scrap the Army. The police are good enough to meet our security needs.”

The new Indian government had decided to be the champion of non-violence; Nehru thought he could prove to the world that problems and crises could be solved without recourse to force. The first casualty would be Kashmir, the second was Tibet.

### **Postscript: after India's Independence**

Ten years later, the guerrilla warfare started in Eastern Tibet, with the support of the CIA. But by that time, the Government of India was not ready to get involved in a full-fledged military operation in Tibet.

However, in the summer of 1949, the Chief of Army Staff sent a young intelligence officer to survey the eventual routes that could be used to bring troops and ammunition in the event of a 'political' decision to defend Tibet. The fact that this covert mission took place and this with the knowledge of K.P.S. Menon, the Foreign Secretary, is proof that in the summer of 1949, the Government of India was still keeping all its options open. In the words of this officer who later became one of the most decorated Generals of the Indian army: “My mission was very simple. It was to see the routes in these areas. In the Army, we always prepared for eventualities. The Army does not decide to go anywhere, but when we are asked to go anywhere, we must know where the routes are.”<sup>18</sup>

He made his recommendations, nothing was impossible, after all Younghusband had done it 45 years earlier under much more compelling conditions, but it was a 'political' choice.

Following the visit to Tibet of the young Army officer, a meeting was held in the Foreign Secretary's Office. We have only the report of B.N. Mullick, the Director of the Intelligence Bureau. Though Mullick has a tendency to rewrite

---

<sup>18</sup> Personal Interview.

history in a manner favorable to his image, in this case, his version is probably accurate. He recalls:

I was present at a meeting held in 1950 by the Foreign Secretary, at which K.M. Panikkar, our Ambassador in China, and the Chief of the Army Staff, General Cariappa, were present. At this meeting Panikkar gave a long dissertation on Chinese suzerainty over Tibet and tried to make out that it really meant no more than acknowledging the titular overlordship of China but did not in any way interfere with the practical independence and internal autonomy of Tibet. No one else at the meeting was convinced by the argument. We accepted that the Indian Government as a successor government had to recognise Chinese suzerainty over Tibet, and there could be at this stage no going back on that position. But whilst Great Britain earlier and now India were talking of Chinese suzerainty and Tibetan autonomy, the Chinese had always claimed sovereignty and were doing so now. Moreover, 'liberation' in Communist language meant nothing but conquest and depriving Tibet of her status by force.

The fact that Pannikar, the Indian Ambassador to China participated in this meeting, could only prevent a decision to be taken.

A few months later, Sardar Patel had written: "I have tried to peruse this correspondence as favorably to our Ambassador and the Chinese Government as possible, but I regret to say that neither of them comes out well as a result of this study.<sup>19</sup>"

---

<sup>19</sup> In Patel's earlier quoted letter said: "The Chinese Government has tried to delude us by professions of peaceful intention. My own feeling is that at a crucial period they manage to instill into our Ambassador a false sense of confidence in their so called desire to settle the Tibetan problem by peaceful means. There can be no doubt that during the period covered by this correspondence the Chinese must have been concentrating for an onslaught on Tibet. The rival action of the Chinese, in my judgement, is little short of perfidy The tragedy of it is that the Tibetans put faith in us; they choose to be guided by us; and we have been

The Intelligence Bureau Chief continues:

The question then was asked as to what should be done to prevent the Chinese from pressing their claim of sovereignty by armed invasion. On the question of India sending troops to stop the Chinese, Panikkar explained that legally India's action would be indefensible. However, when the question was put to General Cariappa, he quite categorically said that he could not spare any troops or could spare no more than a battalion for Tibet, so hard-pressed was he with his commitments on the Pakistan front and with the internal troubles raised both by communal and Communist forces. He was also clear that this battalion could not go much farther than Yatung or at the most might be able to place a company at Gyantse. Moreover, he explained that the Indian army was not equipped or trained to operate at such heights and would be at a serious disadvantage against the Chinese army which had much better training and experience in fighting in these extremely cold plateau and were even better armed, having acquired the arms which the USA had poured into China to bolster the KMT army.

Mullick pretends that he was disappointed by Cariappa, but it is probably an after-thought. In any case he does not mention the British plan or any similar scheme to extensively use the Air Force to airlift troops in Tibetan plateau. Mullick affirms:

What Cariappa said at that time was indeed very discouraging and disappointing because I had also favoured military intervention in Tibet to save it from China. But the General gave the correct and realistic position, the sum total of which was that India was in no position whatsoever at that time to intervene militarily in Tibet to prevent

---

unable to get them out of the meshes of Chinese diplomacy or Chinese malevolence. From the latest position, it appears that we shall be not be able to rescue the Dalai Lama. Our Ambassador has been at great pain to find an explanation or justification for Chinese policy and actions."

Chinese aggression. And he was right. It would have been suicidal for India to send a couple of battalions-and that was all that could have been spared which were then neither trained nor equipped for operations at such heights against the vast battle-poised Chinese army of two and a half millions, larger than even the Russian and the American armies put together.

Then, the intelligence officer mentions historical precedents. Obviously, Mullick has not gone into the British appreciations and the technological changes which had occurred since Younghusband marched into Tibet and particularly the advent of aviation. His narrative continues thus:

Critics who cite the example of the Younghusband expedition to argue what India should have done, forget that when on the heels of Younghusband's withdrawal, the Chinese Army under the Manchu General, Chao Erh-feng, attacked Tibet, in spite of the repeated appeals of the Dalai Lama, the mighty British Government of those days did not raise a finger to stop the Chinese invasion and for the first time in its history, in 1908, Tibet was militarily conquered by the Chinese and reduced to the position of a Chinese province. The British even had to accept the dismissal of those Tibetan ministers who had negotiated the treaty with Younghusband and tolerate the presence of Chinese Officers at Phari and Yatung and deal with them in all trade matters. Except for giving the thirteenth Dalai Lama shelter in Indian territory, the British refused to give him any other assistance. And as mentioned earlier Great Britain was then the mightiest power in the world. Again, in 1919, and also in 1931, when the Chinese attacked Inner Tibet and took away parts of that territory from the Dalai Lama's control, the British did not intervene physically and even the meagre arms supply to the Dalai Lama was made most reluctantly and was conditional on Tibet not taking the offensive.

It is strange that General Cariappa does not seem to be aware of the British plans to militarily defend Tibet and of the possibility of using airborne troops. Around that time, while the Governments of the US and UK discussed the strategic considerations regarding an attack on Tibet, their main concern seems to have been the tendency on the part of Government of India to “throw up its hands and say nothing could be done and retire to its own frontiers.” The Western diplomats felt that there was “too much of a tendency in that direction” on India’s part.<sup>20</sup>

According to the US Archives, a few months later, the American *Chargé d’Affaires* was told by San Jevi [T.G. Sanjeevi Pillai, Director, IB], an Indian intelligence official that at an “interdepartmental meeting held to discuss Tibet it was decided [that the] most GOI could do was send moderate supply [of] small arms plus a few officers to instruct Tibetans how to use them.” India was not ready to “become involved in any military adventures in Tibet.”<sup>21</sup> It was understandable and in conformity with the logic of Nehru’s philosophy of non-violence.

### **Guerrilla warfare in Tibet**

Though the memo had mentioned the importance to organize a guerilla movement within Tibet, it took a few years for the Tibetans to organize such a force. It happened in the mid-1950 under the Chushi-Gangdruk (Four Rivers, Six Ranges) outfit which fought against Chinese rule and played a key role in the Dalai Lama's escape to India in March 1959.

A few years ago, we interviewed Ratuk Ngawang who commanded the Tibetan secret regiment, known as the Special Frontier Forces, based in Uttar Pradesh. In the 1950’s, he was one of the Commanders of the Tibetan

---

<sup>20</sup> USFR, Telegram 893.00 Tibet/11- 2249 from The Chargé in India (Donovan) to the Secretary of State New Delhi, November 22, 1949.

<sup>21</sup> USFR, Telegram 893.00/11-2149 from The Chargé in India (Donovan) to the Secretary of State, New Delhi, November 21, 1949.



Force. When we asked him how the guerilla force came into existence. He explained the situation in Kham province in 1954/1955: "The situation became bad and dangerous at that time. For the initial two/three years, the Chinese were good and accepted whatever we asked of them. Our demands were approved, even sometime with a signature from Mao Zedong. They had promised religious freedom and also agreed not to break any laws of the land. But in 1954, the Chinese decided to establish a school for the poor. They began to assemble all poor and needy people and spend a lot of money on teaching them farming, nomadic works and other skills. They would also give them and their family money. But soon, these poor Tibetans were told that lamas were yellow robbers and monks were red thieves. The situation began to turn from bad to worse."

It is then that the population from Eastern Tibet started to rebel.

Ngawang recalled: "From 1955, the Chinese began to brainwash the poor Tibetans. They told them that it was meaningless to offer money to 'yellow robbers and the red thieves'. The Chinese told them that their poverty was the result of their offerings to the religious community. This was the beginning of the so-called 'Democratic Reforms'. The well-off families, who had guns and knives, were ordered to hand-over their weapons to the Chinese authorities."

The guerilla warfare continued even after the Dalai Lama took refuge in India in 1959, though the military operations planned by the General Staff and the Air Headquarters never took place.

The Air Force was not used even during the 1962 operations for the foolish reason that China could have bombarded Kolkata in retaliation.