

October 23, 1951

**The Second Secretary at London (Marvin) to the
Department of State, 'Report of Indian Agent,
Lhasa, for Period July 16, August 15, 1951'**

Citation:

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Summary:

Reports from the Indian Mission in Lhasa for July-August 1951.

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PRIORITY

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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

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TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

October 23, 1951

DATE

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SUBJECT: Report of Indian Agent, Lhasa, for period July 16, August 15, 1951.

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Direction to DC/R

The Embassy has managed to obtain from the Foreign Office a copy of the report of the Indian Agent, Lhasa, for the period July 16 to August 15, 1951. A copy of the report, less a short part of the economic section, is enclosed herewith.

In releasing a copy of this report to the Embassy, the Foreign Office asked that the fact that the report had been made available should be held in strictest confidence, to avoid possible offence to the Indian Government.

The report covers the period of the arrival of General CHANG Ching-wu, and discusses at some length the impact of the General and the Tibetans upon each other. It also describes the interrogations to which the General subjected the Bhutanese and Nepalese representatives. Apparently the General has not made himself especially popular, but he is proceeding to take advantage of internal political squabbles in Lhasa to improve the Chinese position.

The report is also of interest in that it reveals the Indian Agent as being under no illusions concerning the Chinese Communists.

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.6

David K. Marvin

cc: New Delhi By HRM/AL Date 8/11/08 David K. Marvin
Second Secretary of Embassy

Enclosure: AM.

Report of the Indian Agent, Lhasa

Approved:

Arthur R. Ringwalt

Arthur R. Ringwalt
First Secretary of Embassy

DKM/rjt
REPORTER

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ACTION COPY — DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The action office must return this permanent record copy to DC/R files with an endorsement of action taken.

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C O P Y

DC/R Central Files
MONTHLY REPORT OF THE INDIAN MISSION, LHASA,
FOR THE PERIOD ENDING 15TH AUGUST, 1951

EXTERNAL RELATIONS:

Sino-Tibetan Relations:

✓ 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 extraordinary Lilliputian 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 "inindissoluble union" to the "big" Chinese family. But surely a theoretical explanation for this on communist lines would present no difficulty.

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.

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 Kashang 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

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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.

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.

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.

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.

One fear, universally shared by Tibetan officials, was that the General's reception would exceed in splendour the reception to be later accorded to the returning Dalai Lama. The Tibetans 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 organisations 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.

We have briefly mentioned how the General is collecting information. The matter deserved a little more space and may be discussed more fully. The General is naturally the centre of

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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.

The Nepalese Subba at Gyantse and the Bhutan Agent at Lhasa had, from their own accounts, to face gruelling 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, noting 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 Dhasa.

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.

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.

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.

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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.

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-Shape Kapshopa. It is suspected that Phunkhang Kung is giving support to this group of malcontents. 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 adept in the game and will not be undone easily by Kapshopa.

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 popularising these songs. What hand the officer from Chinghal 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.

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 Songston Gampso and the Buddhist Commandments.

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 Shapes for talks with the Dalai Lama outside earshot of the Chinese.

From another direction, Ngapho Shape 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

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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

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.

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.

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