

# The Historical Status of China's Tibet

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## Chapter VII

### **The Founding of the People's Republic of China and the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet**

The People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded on October 1, 1949, and the Central People's Government under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC) became the sole legitimate government of China. This government immediately won extensive recognition from many countries, and won the natural qualification to exercise sovereignty over the whole of the Chinese territory.

From the winter of 1949 to the spring of 1950, the Central People's Government planned the peaceful liberation of Tibet. In the spring and summer of 1950, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) marched toward Tibet. After having overcome foreign obstructions, put to rout the resistance by Tibetan separatists and beaten the harsh highland environment, the PLA advance troops arrived in Lhasa and various major towns and border areas in 1951. China's five-star red flag fluttered over the Himalayas. China thus succeeded in the peaceful liberation of Tibet, completing the holy task of unifying the mainland. From then on, Tibet no longer operated under the yoke of foreign forces, and returned to the big family of the motherland known for its national unity and fraternity.

The peaceful liberation of Tibet is a joyful historic event for the Tibetans and peoples of other nationalities in China. Xagabba and Van Praag, however, term the move "aggression." They even create the "theory of Chinese Communist invasion of Tibet" to shock the world.

"Aggression" or "invasion" has strict meaning and cannot be applied indiscriminately. It involves standards concerning military behavior of various countries in the world as well as

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many political issues in the international community. The UN resolution on the meaning of invasion, adopted at the 29<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly in December 1974, stipulates that invasion refers to a country which violates, with military forces, another country's sovereignty, territorial integrity or political independence, or uses other forms of military forces which do not conform with the UN Constitution as contained in this resolution. The resolution specifies seven types of behavior: invading, attacking, occupying, annexing, bombing, blockading, stationing troops and other forms of military behavior. This should be the most authoritative explanation on invasion or aggression.

The above shows the word aggression or invasion contains two fundamental points: First, the invasion or aggression is possible only when the military move takes place between two countries and when one country takes action against another. No action taken on home soil can be termed invasion or aggression; second, the invasion or aggression is possible only when the military move aims at plundering and enslaving the other country, an action which infringes upon territorial integrity and sovereignty of another country.

World history shows many actions constitute invasion, which are aimed at another country's territory and sovereignty and geared to plunder and enslave people of another country. They include the British invasion of India in 1767, the British invasion of China in 1840, the Eight-Power invasion of China in 1900, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, the Japanese invasion of China in 1937, the German invasion of Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland in 1938-39, the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, and the US invasion of Panama in 1989. All these actions constitute one country's encroachment upon another country's territory and sovereignty, and plundering and enslaving of people of another country.

Civil armed conflicts taking place within the same country, though varied in forms, do not fall into the category of invasion. They include conflicts between the Central Government and local government, between various regions, between various nationalities, between various religious factions and between various political groups.

Tibet is a part of Chinese territory. Conflicts, including armed conflicts, between Tibet and fraternal regions in China or between the Central Government and the local government of Tibet are the internal affairs of China. Examples include the Qing imperial army sent to suppress the Zungar invasions in Tibet in 1718 and 1720. As the Qing imperial court exercised jurisdiction over Tibet, no one in the world called the two military moves "aggression" or "invasion."

In the early days of the People's Republic of China, PLA advance troops were sent into Tibet to drive imperialist forces out of the region for consolidated national defense and the defense of China's own territory. This constituted the Chinese government's exercise of jurisdiction over Tibet. It was a domestic, instead of an international behavior, hence legal from beginning to end.

Xagabba and Van Praag say nothing of the British military invasion of Tibet in 1888 and 1904. However, they forcibly termed the PLA move in Tibet “aggression.” They did so with a view to fundamentally refuting the legality, reasonability and justice of China’s peaceful liberation of Tibet. Facts slap them in the face.

In the summer and autumn of 1949, when the liberation war gained much ground in China and was approaching China’s Tibetan areas, Britain, the United States and some other countries plotted actively for “Tibetan independence.”

In April 1949, US Secretary of State Dean Acheson sent a cable to the American Embassy in India: Washington wishes to see Tibet’s military resistance capability secretly beefed up. (A. Tom Grunfeld [Canada]: *The Making of Modern Tibet*.p.143-144, translated by Wu Kunmin and others) In July, the Tibet Office of the Commission for Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs under the Kuomintang Government was expelled from Tibet by the Gaxag government. In August, Xagabba managed to have Lowell Thomas, a commentator with the Columbia Radio Station of the United States, enter Tibet together with his son. The Gaxag government attempted to stir up an opinion for “Tibetan independence” by relying on the American radio station. (Heinrich Harrer [Germany]: *Seven Years in Tibet*.p.252, translated by Yuan Shipo) During their stay in Lhasa, they held secret talks with the Prince Dagzha and Hugh Richardson, and met with high Tibetan officials, urging the Tibetan side to organize trained guerrillas to stem the PLA advance troops. In September, the Gaxag government decided to expand its army by 10,000 and reinforce Qamdo and Nagqu, Lowell Thomas and his son called Tibet as “country” and appealed to the US government to offer military aid to Tibet and send diplomatic missions to Lhasa. Upon their return to the United States, they called for the United States to shoulder responsibility for the Defense of Tibet.

Reginald Fox, a British spy, plotted construction of the Qamdo Radio Station for Tibet. In July 1949, Robert Ford had it built in Qamdo, and started collecting information concerning the Communist Party of China and the PLA’s liberation war. Information thus collected from Xikang and Qinghai was supplied to Lowell Thomas, his son and the Gaxag government. Hugh Richardson and Regional Fox were responsible for re-sending the information to Britain. At the instigation of Hugh Richardson and some others, the “foreign affairs bureau” of the Gaxag government sent a cable to Chairman Mao Zedong in November 1949: “Please do not send troops to cross the border into Tibet.” At the suggestion of Hugh Richardson, Prince Regent Dagzha ordered the Gaxag government to draft a “Tibetan independence declaration” which was revised and turned into English by Hugh Richardson. The English version was brought to the United Nations by Xagabba and Gyalo Toinzhub to seek UN support. Through repeated discussions, Hugh Richardson Lowell Thomas and his son, and Prince Regent Dagzha sent a “goodwill mission” composed of Tibetan officials to the United States, Britain, India and Nepal in early 1950 seeking their aid and support for “Tibetan independence.”

On January 17, Reginald Fox sent a letter to the headquarters of the Tibetan army, making suggestions for its resistance against the PLA advance troops:

“It should be extremely difficult for the Communist Party to send troops into Tibet. In order to slow down the advance of the Communist army, various official routes, highways and bridges should be damaged thoroughly. Mines should be planted at various strategically important positions, places where the Communist troops may be ambushed, major rivers with no bridges and mountain entries. Some communist spies are highly likely to be sent into Tibet to confuse border residents by creating rumors and saying something which will make them change their mind. They will also collect and send information concerning deployment of Tibetan troops to the Communist Party.

“In order to check the possible spread of Communism among residents who are loyal to the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, and in order to stabilize various parts of Tibet, they should be told immediately to prepare for a retreat of at least 20 miles. This is a point of extreme importance. The troops should be deployed in places where the Communist army can hardly cut their escape route and besiege them. Decisions concerning defense matters should be made immediately.”

On January 19, the commander-in-chief of the Tibetan army sent a reply to Reginald Fox, expressing sincere thanks for his good suggestion, which he said would “lie embedded in the mind for ever.”

Thereafter, the Tibetan army operated basically in accordance with the suggestion made by Reginald Fox.

The above facts show how much efforts the British and American forces had made for the control of the Gaxag government. They also show the necessity and urgency for the People's Republic of China to exercise jurisdiction over Tibet.

Patriotic Tibetans, however, ardently demanded and supported the PLA advance troops' entry into Tibet.

On October 1, 1949, the 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Erdeni sent a cable to Chairman Mao Zedong and Commander-in-Chief Zhu De: “Northwest China has been liberated and the Central People's Government has been formed. All people who are full of sap feel encouraged. There is hope for the people to lead a happy life and for the country to rejuvenate. Tibet is expected to be liberated at an early date.” *Selected Materials on the History of Tibet*, p.376)

On December 2, 1949, Kampus Yexei Curchen, who was close to the former Prince Regent Living Buddha Razheng, murdered by the pro-British elements in the upper echelon of Tibet ruling class in 1947, went to the PLA troops in Xining, Qinghai, condemning imperialist crimes

in instigating hatred for the Han and sabotaging internal unity of Tibet. He demanded immediate liberation of Tibet.

At mass rally in Lanzhou on January 26, 1950, the Tibetans protested against foreign forces in their plot to invade Tibet, opposed the “goodwill missions” sent by the Gaxag government of Tibet to preach “Tibetan independence” in foreign countries, and expressed resolute support for the PLA advance troops to march into Tibet. Huang Zhenqing, a famous Tibetan in Gannan, said: “We will mobilize the Tibetan people to welcome with broad arms and support the PLA advance troops in their march into Tibet.” (*People's Daily*, January 28, 1950)

In February, the Living Buddha Geda with the Baili Monastery in Garze, Dege Headman Xage Daodain, and Wanggyai, representative of Kangnan merchant Bangda Doje, and other famous Tibetan figures in Xiking Province went to Beijing to tell the Central People's Government that they would support the PLA advance troops to march into Tibet just like what the Boba Soviet government did in supporting the Red Army to resist the Japanese aggressors in the past.

### **(1) The Chinese Communist Party's Policy for Nationalities and Policy for Peaceful Liberation of Tibet**

From October to November 1949, the CPC Central Committee instructed on several occasions the Southwest and Northwest Bureaus and the No. 1 and No.2 Field Armies to take into consideration matters related to the liberation of Tibet. On January 2, 1950, Mao Zedong decided that “the Southwest Bureau should assume the task of sending troops to and managing the affairs of Tibet.” (*Works of Mao Zedong After the Founding of the People's Republic of China*. Vol.1. p.208) Given the mounting activities for “Tibetan independence” by British and US imperialists, Mao Zedong also instructed that troops be sent to Tibet “earlier rather than Late.”

On January 10, 1950, Mao Zedong approved the 18<sup>th</sup> Army led by Zhang Guohua to shoulder the task of advancing into Tibet. (*CPC Chronicles on Tibet 1949-1966*. p.2) A CPC Tibet Work Committee was formed. It was composed of seven members, including Zhang Guohua (army commander), Tan Guansan (political commissar), Wang Qimei (deputy political commissar), Chang Binggui (deputy army commander), Chen Mingyi (chief of staff), Liu Zhenguo (director of the political department), and Tian Bao (Tibetan and representative of the local people's political consultative conference). Zhang Guohua served as the Party secretary and Tan Guansan, deputy Party secretary. The CPC Military Commission also adopted suggestions made by Liu Bochend and Deng Xiaoping: While the 18<sup>th</sup> Army moves into Tibet as the main force, troops which have already entered Qinghai, Xinjiang and Yunnan should send detachments to Tibet in a coordinated way.

The proletarian nature and the goal of serving the people of the Communist Party of China

involve relations between various nationalities in the country. Its consistent stand finds its way into the Common Program of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference adopted on September 29, 1949. Highlights of the Common Program are as the follows:

“Article 50. All nationalities in the People's Republic of China are equal, follow the principle of unity and mutual aid, and oppose imperialism and the public enemy with various nationalities to make the People's Republic of China the big family where various nationalities enjoy fraternity and cooperation. Big national chauvinism and narrow nationalism are opposed, and national discrimination, oppression and splittism are banned.

“Article 51. Areas where various minority nationalities are concentrated should follow the policy of national regional autonomy. Various national regional autonomous organs should be set up in response to the size of population and area. In areas where peoples of different nationalities live together and areas which follow the national regional autonomy, people of various nationalities should have their own representatives in the local political power organs.

“Article 53. All minority nationalities enjoy the right to develop their own language and writing, and keep or reform their own customs and religious belief. The People's Government should help various nationalities to develop their political, economic, cultural and educational construction.”

In accordance with the Party's policies for nationalities and the stipulations of the Common Program, the Southwest Bureau, the Southwest Military Area and the No. 2 Field Army issued the Political Mobilization Decree for Marching to Liberate Tibet on February 15, 1950. The decree called for efforts to “closely unite with the people of Xikang and Tibet, and assist them to emancipate themselves from the plight of oppression and backwardness; faithfully implement the nationality policy characteristic of unity, fraternity and mutual aid set forth in the Common Program, and respect the religious belief and customs and habits of minority nationalities...conduct investigation and study in a deep way, do publicity work, learn local dialect, become acquainted with local people's life, care for local people and actively assist them to relieve themselves from poverty and bitterness.”

The Chinese Communists love peace and have always stood for peaceful means to settle domestic and international issues. As early as the Second Plenary Session of the 7<sup>th</sup> CPC National Congress held in March 1949, Mao Zedong expounded the possibility and necessity for following the Beiping and Suiyuan examples to settle problems in various provinces in a peaceful way during the nationwide maneuvers of the PLA. Out of the need for national unity and the unification of the motherland, the CPC Central Committee seriously studied how to settle the Tibetan issue, Deng Xiaoping, first secretary of the CPC Southwest Bureau, proposed on January 15, 1950: “Liberating Tibet involves military affairs. A given number of military forces are needed. A comparison of military and political means, however, shows that the political

means is the most important.” (*CPC Chronicles on Tibet 1949-1966*. p.3) On February 25, the CPC Central Committee instructed the CPC Southwest and Northwest Bureaus: “The plan to send out troops into Tibet will be implemented in a resolute way, but all possible means may be resorted to negotiate with the Dalai clique.” (*CPC Chronicles on Tibet 1949-1966*. p.6) This specifies the principle for peaceful settlement of the Tibetan issue. The CPC Central Committee pointed out: If the local government of Tibet refuses to come for negotiation and even sends troops to obstruct the PLA in its march towards Tibet, preparations should be made to fight forced battles. This constituted the whole content of the policy of the CPC Central Committee for the peaceful liberation of Tibet.

## **(2) PLA Troops Who Serve the Tibetans Whole-Heartedly**

It was really an extremely hard task to perform for the PLA to advance into the remote, desolate and sparsely populated Tibetan areas, solely for the peaceful liberation of Tibet.

When the 18<sup>th</sup> Army and detachments from PLA advance troops in Qinghai, Xinjiang and Yunnan entered the Tibetan areas, they worked hard to eradicate national estrangements left behind from history and improve national unity. These Tibetan areas surrounding Tibet emerged as the basis for the PLA advance troops to be sent to Tibet.

### **A. Strictly Implementing the Party's Policies and Observing Discipline to Win Over the Masses.**

The PLA advance troops conscientiously implemented the Party's policies for nationalities and religion while on their way to Tibet or at camping areas. They showed full respect for the customs and habits and the religious belief of Tibetans. When they were close to a lamasery, they never went hunting or fishing in its vicinity. Acting in accordance with the Buddhist rule, they stayed outside the lamaseries. Even in the midst of the cold winter, they lived in chilly tents. The PLA advance troops also did their best to protect sutra streamers and Mani stone mounds. In dealing with Tibetans, the PLA advance troops observed “the three main rules of discipline and the eight points for attention.” When they were hungry, they took no food from the Tibetans; when it was raining, they stayed soaked in rain and would not go into Tibetan houses. When any objects they had borrowed from the Tibetans got lost or were damaged, they would make compensation according to the cost; when they bought firewood from the Tibetans, they would pay silver dollar at a reasonable rate. Both officers and men fetched drinking water, cleaned courtyards, and fetched firewood and grazing grass for the Tibetan folks. Medical orderlies of the PLA advance troops offered free medical treatment to the sick. From what the PLA men did, the Tibetans came to understand that they were utterly different from the troops of the Qing Dynasty and the Kuomintang Government. As a result, the Tibetans greeted them as “new Han.” An old Tibetan in Garze told everyone he encountered: “I saw the troops of Zhao Erfeng and the 24<sup>th</sup> Army of Liu Wenhui. They lived on our Tibetans and even ransacked our houses. Only the PLA

is an army which helps us Tibetans.” Tibetans, who had long been fed up with gangster-like armies, did have suspicion about the PLA advance troops. Gradually, however, they developed a fond feeling for them and, finally, were so touched by their behavior that they called the PLA advance troops. “soldiers sent by Buddha.”

What the PLA advance troops did in the Tibetan areas revealed as lies the rumors against the CPC and the PLA created by domestic and foreign reactionaries. Harmonious ties between the PLA advance troops and the Tibetans gradually expanded into unity between the Han and Tibetan nationalities. As a result, national estrangement left behind by history and deepened by imperialists and Tibetan separatists were eliminated. For the first time in history, utter equality and unity between the Tibetan and Han peoples reigned in the Tibetan areas.

### **B. United Front Work for the Upper Ruling Class**

The upper ruling class, while working for exploitation of the Tibetans maintained close contacts with them in the protracted struggle against imperialism and national chauvinism. The PLA advance troops in Tibetan areas did their best to unite with people with the upper ruling class and press ahead with their work through them. During their stay, the PLA advance troops strove to do a good job of the united front work.

Influential headmen in the upper ruling class in the Tibetan area in Xikang Province included Jamyang Baimo (female) of Dege, Lincang of Dengke, Kongsang and Mashu of Garze, and Xage Daodain of Yulung; businessman Bangda Doje; abbots and Living Buddhas with the Garze, Babang and Baiyu monasteries. On December 24, 1949, they sent a joint cable to Chairman Mao Zedong and Commander-in-Chief Zhu De to salute the PLA's victories. When Kangding and some other places were liberated in March 1950, Xage Duodain and Bangda Doje were appointed deputy directors of the Kangding Military Control Committee. When the PLA advanced troops entered the Tibetan area in Xikang Province, they took the initiative to visit the Tibetan people of the upper ruling class, acquainting them with the Communist Party's policies for nationalities and religions, and the Central Government principle on peaceful liberation. The PLA representatives talked to them sincerely and equally. Whenever the PLA representatives came across any matters that had to be handled, they came to these people for their opinion, which was always respected. People of the upper ruling class were greatly moved, and finally took the initiative to get close to the PLA advance troops and voiced support for the Communist Party's policy for the peaceful liberation of Tibet. They also expressed willingness to exert efforts for the peaceful liberation of Tibet.

The PLA advance troops, which entered other Tibetan areas, worked hard to win over local qianhu (1,000-household) and baihu (100-household) officials, headmen and the Living Buddhas.



### **C. Stress Laid on Investigation and Formulation of Concrete Policies.**

Before the PLA advance troops were sent into Tibet, they lacked a good understanding of Tibetan society and history. Gaining a good understanding of Tibet and formulating policies which conformed with the Tibetan situation constituted one of the prime tasks confronting the PLA advance troops. For the purpose, the 18<sup>th</sup> Army set up a policy Research Office in February 1950, which was composed also of scholars steeped in the Tibetan situation. Before long, the Office staff worked out the *Trend for the British Imperialists to Intervene with Tibetan Issue and Our Counter-Measures, Matters of Attention and Preparations that should be made for the PLA Troops to Enter the Tibetan Areas in Xikang*, and some other materials proved useful in formulating policies.

On the basis of thorough investigation and study, the Office compiled the *Initial Opinion on Policies to Be Formulated for Tibet, Manuals for Advancing PLA Troops, and Manuals for PLA Troops to Enter Cities*. All these materials embodied the real situation of Tibet, showed full respect for the Tibetan nation, directed the spearhead of the struggle against imperialist forces and an extremely small handful of tie-hard separatists, and aimed at uniting with the majority of Tibetans. They were used by the PLA officers and men as a guide to their work in the Tibetan areas.

### **D. Admitting Young Tibetans into the PLA.**

With the elimination of national estrangement, the Tibetans gained trust in the PLA advance troops.

There were young Tibetans who wanted to join the PLA. In the summer and fall of 1950, the 18<sup>th</sup> Army enrolled more than 200 young Tibetans in the Tibetan area in Xikang Province. The same period saw dozens of Tibetans attending a Tibetan class of the Beijing-based Central Nationalities Affairs Commission transferred to work in the Tibetan area in Xikang Province. Their presence proved to be very helpful for the work of the PLA advance troops. In Qinghai, Gansu and Yunnan there were also young Tibetans who joined the PLA. Thanks to the special care and training provided, they later cut a brilliant figure in work.

Careful and painstaking work led to constantly strengthened unity between various nationalities in Tibetan areas in Xikang, Yunnan and Qinghai. The CPC and the PLA were also able to expand their influence from the eastern to western bank of the Jinshajiang River. Tibetans living on both banks of the river developed a fond feeling for the PLA troops, whose determination to contribute to the Tibet's liberation received reinforcement from their profound sympathy for the plight of the Tibetans.

**(3) The Local Government of Tibet Refused Peace Talks and PLA Was Forced to Fight the Qamdo Battle**

On May 29, 1950, the CPC Central Committee approved the 10 terms proposed by the CPC Southwest Bureau for peace negotiations with the local government of Tibet. The 10 terms are as follows:

1. The Tibetan people unite to drive the British and US imperialist forces out of Tibet, and return to the big family of the motherland—the People's Republic of China.
2. Practicing national regional autonomy in Tibet.
3. Various existing political systems in Tibet remain unchanged; there will be no change with regard to the position and power of the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama and officials at various levels remain in their original office.
4. Practicing religious freedom, protecting lamaseries, and respecting the Tibetan people's religious belief and their habits.
5. Effecting no changes to the existing military system of Tibet whose army becomes part of the PRC national defense armed forces.
6. Developing Tibet's national language and writing, and school education.
7. Developing Tibet's agriculture, animal husbandry, industry and commerce, and improving the life of the people.
8. The Tibetan people and Tibetan leaders consult to decide on various kinds of reforms in Tibet in the light of the will of the Tibetan people.
9. All officials who were pro-British, pro-US and pro-Kuomintang in the past continue to remain in their original office and their past behavior will be forgiven, so long as they stop having ties with the British and US imperialists, and the Kuomintang, and engage in no sabotage and resistance.
10. The PLA enters Tibet to consolidate national defense. The PLA observes the above policies and their expenses will be covered totally by the Central People's Government. The PLA pays fairly for what they buy.

The 10-point policy gained a strong response among people of the upper ruling class in the Tibetan areas in related provinces. Xage Daodain held that this policy was absolutely correct and vowed to make explanations among Tibetans living on the western bank of the Jinshajiang River. Tibetans in Xikang and Qinghai voiced support for the 10-point policy, but there were some who

deemed this policy was too lenient. Deng Xiaoping said at the plenary session of the Military and Government Committee in Southwest China on July 21: "There should indeed be leniency," and this policy "shall be implemented genuinely." (*Selected Works by Deng Xianping 1931-1965*. p. 163)

Acting in accordance with the CPC Central Committee's instruction to urge the local government of Tibet to send people to Beijing for negotiations, the PLA advance troops conducted necessary political works.

When the 18<sup>th</sup> Army advance troops had entered Garze, the Living Buddha Geda who came to know Commander-in-Chief Zhu De and Commander Liu Bocheng, made a special trip from his residence monastery of Baili to Garze to visit the commanders of the advance troops. He told them he was willing to go to Tibet in the capacity of a peace envoy if there was the need. The CPC Southwest Bureau filed a report with the CPC Central Committee, which approved the request. The Living Buddha Geda then left his Baili Monastery and went westward on July 10. He crossed the Jinshajiang River and entered the areas controlled by the Tibetan army. In spite of all obstacles put up by the Tibetan army, the Living Buddha Geda did his best to publicize the 10-point policy and tell how the PLA officers and men respected the religious freedom and customs of the Tibetans. He asked local headmen and the Tibetan army officers and men not to be enemies of the PLA. The Living Buddha Geda finally reached Qamdo on July 24.

While the Living Buddha Geda went to Tibet, the 18<sup>th</sup> Army advance troops managed to win over, through other channels, Lhalu, the Qamdo manager of the Tibetan government, and the 9<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the Tibetan army.

In early May, the CPC Northwest Bureau organized a delegation composed of the Living Buddha Dangcai, elder brother of the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, the Living Buddha Xarcang and others from the upper ruling class in the Tibetan area in Qinghai. The delegation left Xining for Tibet on a peace mission in July.

Departments of the Central Government, under the direct leadership of the CPC Central Committee, Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, worked hard for the peaceful liberation of Tibet. The Central People's Radio Station publicized the Central Government's attitude and policy for the peaceful liberation of Tibet, and invited Xirab Gyamco, and influential religious figure in the Tibetan areas in Qinghai, to make radio broadcasts and write letters to the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama. The Chinese Embassy in India also worked on Xagabba and other Tibetan officials delegated to return to Tibet.

With the influence of the CPC and the PLA gradually expanding into Tibet, and thanks to efforts made by the CPC Central Committee to bring Tibetan government officials to the negotiation table, the upper ruling class in Tibet was split into peace and war factions.

From July to September 1950, the local government of Tibet under control of the war faction, obeyed the "advice" of the high-powered British officials in India "not to negotiate with China." Turning a deaf ear to the demand of the Central People's Government, it delayed in sending representatives for negotiation. In the meantime, it rushed reinforcements to Qamdo and Jingshajiang areas. It was determined to stop the PLA's entry into Tibet by force. When the Living Buddha Geda reached Qamdo and demanded to be allowed to visit the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama in Lhasa, the local government placed him under house arrest in accordance with the suggestions made by British special agents Reginald Fox and Robert Ford. Under the instigation of Robert Ford, these pro-British elements poisoned the Living Buddha Geda on August 22. In his "materials on Geda event" which he wrote after he was taken prisoner, Robert Ford admitted that "Lama Geda was murdered in Qamdo" with the purpose that he would not be able to "raise the Communist Party's conditions on the peaceful liberation of Tibet when he reached Lhasa." (*Archives on Robert Ford's Poisoning of Geda*) Murdering the Living Buddha Geda and closing the door to peace talks was therefore the decision made by the local government of Tibet in accordance with the plot engineered by the British.

Since the local government of Tibet had closed the door to peace talks and Tibet had to be liberated, the Central People's Government was forced to decide to take military means to promote talks.

Mao Zedong cabled the CPC Southwest and Northwest Bureaus on August 23: "If our army can capture Qamdo in October, this will urge the Tibetan delegation to come to Beijing for negotiation for peaceful settlement." (*CPC Chronicles on Tibet 1949-1966*.P.13) This clearly shows that fighting the Qamdo battle was aimed at winning the possibility for the peaceful negotiation for the settlement of the Tibetan issues.

On September 23, Yuan Zhongxian, Chinese Ambassador in India, told Xagabba: The PLA troops on way to Tibet will operate in accordance with the set plan. If the Tibetan authorities continue to delay negotiations with the Central Government, it will have to bear the results thus incurred thereafter. Premier Zhou Enlai pointed out solemnly at the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) on September 30: The PLA is determined to liberate Tibet. We are willing to achieve this by peaceful means. We hope the Tibetan authorities will no longer hesitate. The local government of Tibet, however, turned a deaf ear to this advice.

When all the efforts made by the Central People's Government failed to have any effect, and when the local government of Tibet continued to uphold the policy of armed resistance, the PLA troops launched the Qamdo battle on October 6 and pressed ahead smoothly. On October 12, Deboin Dege Galsang Wangdui led his 9<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the Tibetan army in revolt and crossed over in Mangkam. The PLA advance detachment captured Qamdo on October 19, forcing the Qamdo officials and Tibetan troops, totaling 2,700, into the Chugesi Gully. Newly-appointed

Qamdo chief manager Ngapoi Ngawang Jigmei sent people to contact the PLA troops for negotiation. Shortly after, Ngapoi ordered the Tibetan army to lay down their arms and hand over the British special agent Robert Ford. The Qamdo battle thus came to a victorious end on October 24, with 114 PLA soldiers and 180 Tibetan troops killed or wounded.

During the Qamdo battle, the broad masses of the Tibetans in the Kam areas went all out to support the PLA troops. Before the battle was fought, Dege Headman Xage Daodain and Headwoman Jamyang Baimo generously produced more than 10,000 yaks for transportation for the PLA troops. A Tibetan supply station in Dengke supplied 255,000 kg of firewood and horse fodder in 20 days. Tibetans in Shiqu gathered 2,500 leather bags for the transportation of food grain. Tibetans in Batang made 19 wooden boats and 41 yak hide rafts to ferry the PLA soldiers across the Jinshajiang River. Tibetans in Chuqing, Dege County, gathered 35,000 kg of horse fodder and more than 50,000 kg of firewood. During the battle, there were Tibetans who braved bullets to transport with Yak hide rafts the PLA team across the river at the Gamtog Ferry. On the battlefields, Tibetans were often seen to carry wounded PLA soldiers back to field clinics. On the long-distance transport line, Tibetans in their hundreds strong transported food grain and other materials for the PLA troops. It should be said that the PLA won the Qamdo battle with the help of Tibetans.

Patriotic Tibetans felt happy with the victorious Qamdo battle, Jijigmei, Sandain Gyamco and some other. Tibetans then in Beijing held a discussion meeting to celebrate the victory. The 40 Tibetan students with the Lanzhou Northwest Institute for Nationalities wrote a letter of thanks to the PLA in Tibet. Xage Daodain said in Kangding: The positive support for the PLA from the Tibetans living on both banks of the Jingshajiang River shows how the Tibetans love their own troops.

#### **(4) The Signing of the 17-Article Agreement and the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet**

The liberation of the Qamdo area sent shockwaves across the rest of Tibet and hastened the separation of the upper ruling class of Tibet. The faction supporting war found itself in a quagmire, with the pro-British Prince Regent Dagzha forced to step down, making way at an earlier date for the 16-year-old 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama. The 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama and major Gaxag government officials, frightened by the prospect of the possible westward advance of the PLA troops, went to the border town of Yadong, Lukangwa and Lobsang Zhaxi, the two Sicab officials of the Tibetan government, were left to handle the day-to-day overnment affairs in Lhasa.

The Qamdo Work Committee headed by Wang Qimei and the Advance Office of the 18<sup>th</sup> Army in Qamdo continued to work politically. Wang Qimei managed to have a sincere talk with Ngapoi Ngawang Jigmei, explaining painstakingly the sincerity of the Central People's Government in seeking the peaceful liberation of Tibet and related CPC principles and policies.

Tibetan captives were given special care, with the wounded and the sick given due treatment. When released, they were given money to cover their travel home. Many of their articles lost during the battles were recovered and returned.

Winter arrived soon after the liberation of Qamdo. The commanders of the 18<sup>th</sup> Army lived together with Ngapoi Ngawang Jigmei, Cuike, and other Tibet officials in a compound formerly owned by the Qamdo chief manager. Ngapoi and Cuike lived in the best rooms in the compound, while Wang Qimei and others stayed in tents. These arrangements made by Wang Qimei touched the hearts of the Tibetan army officers and men, sending many of them to tears.

Heinrich Harrer, a German who was in Lhasa at the time, described the situation in this way: "This Communist troops are disciplined and showed leniency and kindness. The Tibetan soldiers they have released have all said they received good treatment." (Heinrich Harrer {Germany}: *Seven Years in Tibet*, p. 351, translated by Yuan Shipo) On November 9, Ngapoi and some 40 Tibetan officials sent a joint letter to the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, telling him their personal experience in Qamdo and explaining the Communist Party's policies. They pleaded with the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, telling him their personal experience in Qamdo and explaining the Communist Party's policies. They pleaded with the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama to send representatives to Beijing to take part in peace negotiations. They sent a second letter a few days later, suggesting the Gaxag government send representatives to negotiate with the representatives of the Central People's Government.

The US, British and Indian expansionists were not sitting on folded hands. The United States issued a statement, protesting the "most unfortunate and serious events." India sent one protest note after another to the Chinese government. The United States and Britain encouraged El Salvador to submit a motion to the United Nations. After the Chinese government sternly refuted all claims of wrongdoing, these detractors fell silent.

The *People's Daily* issued an editorial on November 17, 1950. The editorial, entitled *The Chinese People's Liberation of the Tibet Brooks No intervention*, pointed out: "it is utterly wrong for the Indian government to attempt to set the PLA's advance on Tibet against the Central People's government's desire for the peaceful liberation of Tibet. The peaceful settlement of the Tibetan issue will not stop the PLA's advance on Tibet, and must have the acceptance of the PLA's peaceful advance on Tibet as a prerequisite."

With the approval of the Central People's Government, the Qamdo People's Liberation Committee was set up toward the end of 1950. At the inauguration ceremony, the participants decided on the formation of the Committee for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet. The committee, to be composed of monks and lay people in Qamdo, had Ngapoi Ngawang Jigmei as its director.

Seeing the PLA troops which featured formidable military might and political leniency, were gaining increasing popularity in the Kam area, the local government of Tibet, which felt

impotent in seeking foreign aid, was compelled to consider contact with the Central People's Government. The 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai lama wrote a letter on January 18, 1951, reporting on his coming to power and expressing his wish for a peaceful settlement of issues. The Gaxag government sent messengers to deliver the letter to Chinese Ambassador Yuan Zhongxian in New Delhi on January 27, asking Yuan to forward it to the Central People's Government. The Central People's Government replied on January 29, congratulating the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama on his coming to power and welcoming him to send representatives to Beijing to negotiate a peace settlement. Urged by the faction supporting peace talks the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama decided on February 12<sup>th</sup> to send a Tibetan government delegation to Beijing.

The delegation, headed by Ngapoi Ngawang Jigmei, was composed of five fully empowered delegates: Ngapoi Ngawang Jigmei, Kemo Soinam Wangdui, Tudain Dainda, Tubdain Laimoin and Sangpo Toinzin Toinzhol. When they arrived in Beijing in late April, Premier Zhou Enlai met them at the Beijing Railway Station.

The fully empowered Central Government delegates, including Li Weihan, Zhang Jinwu, Zhang Guohua and Sun Zhiyuan, met for more than 20 days with the Tibetans. The painstaking, sincere and extensive talks finally led to the signing of the Agreement of the Central People's Government and the Local government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet, also known as the 17-Article Agreement.

The 17-Article Agreement was identical with 10-point policy adopted by the CPC Central Committee in May 1950. Highlights of the agreement include: expelling the imperialist forces from Tibet, and returning the Tibetan people to the big family of the motherland – the People's Republic of China: the Central Government takes charge of national defense and foreign affairs in Tibet, assists Tibet in its development of agriculture, animal husbandry, industry, commerce, education and other undertakings, and Tibet practices national and regional autonomy; there will be no changes with Tibet's internal political system and the inherent position and power of the Dalai Lama, and various government officials will remain in their office; reform in Tibet will be conducted by the Tibetans themselves in accordance with methods taken through consultations between the Tibetan people and the Tibetan government leaders, while the Central Government shall not force Tibet to conduct reform; the inherent position and power the 9<sup>th</sup> Panchen Erdeni enjoyed during the days when he maintained good terms with the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama shall be maintained; funds needed for the PLA troops in Tibet shall be covered by the Central People's Government.

Such a lenient agreement signed between a militarily powerful Central Government and a local government that has been far from patriotic during negotiations is truly rare.

The whole nation rejoiced at the signing of the 17-Article Agreement. In the Tibetan areas, the patriotic Tibetans supported the agreement. Sanggyai Yuxei (Tian Bao), Ngawang Gyamco

and Lobsang. Toinba cabled the Central People's Government and Chairman Mao Zedong, expressing warm support for the agreement and rejoicing at the peaceful liberation of Tibet. The Panchen Kampus Assembly issued a statement, stating that "the agreement fully conforms to the interests of the peoples of various nationalities in China, especially the interests of the peoples of various nationalities in Tibet." and vowing to "exert efforts for the correct implementation of the agreement, for the unity between the Tibetan race and other nationalities in China, and for the unity of the Tibetan race itself." The 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Erdeni also sent a cable to the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama expressing his willingness for sincere unity between the two leaders and for thorough implementation of the 17-Article Agreement.

Tibetan government officials in Yadong were locked in a heated debate upon learning of the signing of the agreement. Chigyain Lobsang Yexei, Soikang Wangqen Geleg, Palha Tubdain Weidain, Namseling Benjor Jigmei and others opposed the agreement and urged the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama to flee to India. Chung'yigqenbo Bentang Qunbe Tubdain, Zeqag Soikang Toinzhol Doje and others upheld the terms of the agreement as basically good for Tibet and said they should be observed. When they met at a conference, a resolution was adopted in support of the 17-Article Agreement and to ask the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama to return to Lhasa. It was under this situation that the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama made up his mind to leave Yadong for Lhasa. Zhang Jinwu, the Central Government representative in Tibet, went to Yadong, via India, to meet with the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, bringing him the text of the 17-Article Agreement and personal letter from Chairman Mao Zedong. Soon after, the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama set out for Lhasa.

Soon after the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama arrived in Lhasa, Ngapoi Ngawang Jigmei and others also reached the city. At the conference of Tibetan monks and lay officials, they reported on the signing of the agreement and repeated lies and rumors then being spread in Lhasa. The conference discussed and adopted a report to the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama that read in part: "The 17-Article Agreement is of great benefit for the grand cause of the Dalai and the Buddhist doctrine, politics and economics of Tibet. The unprecedented agreement naturally should be implemented." When the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama read the document, he cabled Chairman Mao on October 24, 1951 saying the 17-Article Agreement: "has the uniform support of the local government of Tibet and the Tibetan monks and lay people. They will, under the leadership of Chairman Mao and the Central People's Government, actively assist the PLA troops in entering Tibet to consolidate the national defense." (Tubdain Dainda: *The Agreement on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet: Before and After It was Signed*, Vol, Chinese edition p.44, Tibetan edition pp.116-117. *Selected Materials on the History of Tibet*)

The signing of the 17-Article Agreement marked the successful implementation of the principle of the Central People's Government for the peaceful liberation of Tibet. From that point on, Tibet would be free from the yoke of imperialism forever. The historic event pushed the unity between the Han and the Tibetan and the unification of the motherland to a new historical stage. It



opened a grand vista for the Tibetan race to achieve self-development. As was pointed out by Ngapoi Ngawang Jigmei: "In this multi-national and unified country founded jointly by various nationalities, various nationalities have formed a relationship in the protracted long history, characteristic of inseparably mutual dependence. They take the road to common development and common prosperity, which has become an irreversible historical trend. The 17-Article Agreement was signed to follow this historical trend for development." (Ngapoi Ngawang Jigmei: *Great Turn for the Development of Tibetan History—In Memory of the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Signing of the Agreement on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet*, issue No.1, 1991, Chinese edition p.20, Tibetan edition p.12, China Tibetology)

In accordance with instructions from the Central Military Commission, Wang Qimei led the detachment of the 18<sup>th</sup> Army out of Qamdo on July 24 and reached Lhasa on September 9. Closely following on their heels, Zhang Guohua and Tan Guanshan led the headquarters of the 18<sup>th</sup> Army and the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> squads formed by the crack forces of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Division out of Qamdo. The 1<sup>st</sup> squad entered Lhasa on October 25 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> squad reached Taizhao (Gongbo'gyamda) in November.

Chen Minyi led the service section of the 18<sup>th</sup> Army troops in constructing the Xikang-Tibet Highway and organized the transportation of food and materials to the areas west of Garze and east of Qamdo.

The Independent Detachment of the 18<sup>th</sup> Army, led by Fan Ming and Mu Shengzhong and composed of some, 1,100 men, departed from Xiangride, Qinghai, on August 27, and reached Nagqu on November 14 and Lhasa on December 1.

Part of the Xinjiang Independent Cavalry Division set out from Yutian in May and reached Burang in Ngari on June 29 and Gartog on August 3.

The 126<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the 14<sup>th</sup> Yunnan Army left Menjiang on September 10 and was on stationed in Zayu by October 1.

Thus, the grand move to peacefully liberate Tibet and unify China's mainland came to a successful end.

In the long march on Tibet, the PLA troops encountered great difficulty in the supply of military materials. To avoid possible price hikes (on grain in particular) in Tibet with the influx of the PLA troops, which would mean more difficulties for the Tibetans in daily life, Mao Zedong instructed the PLA troops not to live on local supplies.

The PLA troops contacted members of the upper echelon of the local ruling class. On the premise that the lives of the Tibetan locals were not affected, the PLA troops purchased only a

small amount of highland barley, mutton, beef and butter locally. The bulk of grain, non-staple foods and other military materials were shipped from the hinterland. At that time, no highway had been built to link Tibet with the hinterland. Beasts of burden were the chief means of transport. Tibetans from various Tibetan areas came to the rescue driving their own yaks and mules. They crossed snowy mountains and icy rivers to transport food and materials station by station both night and daytime. When a handful of Tibetans from the ruling class learned of the food shortages plaguing the PLA troops, they sold their surplus grain to the troops without hesitation. For example, when Wang Qimei's advance detachment reached Taizhao (Gongbo'gyamda), they were suffering from near starvation. Ngapoi Ngawang Jigmei gathered more than 5,000kg of *zanba* (roasted highland barley) from his manor near Taizhao to help ease the shortage. When Zhang Guohua and Tan Guanshan and their 18th Army headquarters took up station around Lhasa, they were also confronted with food shortages. Lhalu Cewang Doje came to their rescue by selling them close to 10,000 ke (one ke equals to 14 kg) of highland barley and bushels of grass roots to be used as fuel.

Energetic support from the Tibetans helped make up the material deficiencies confronting the PLA troops stationed in Tibet. Without the support and aid of the Tibetans, it would have been very hard for the PLA troops to complete their advance on Tibet.

On October 26, 1951, Army Commander Zhang Guohua and Political Commissar Tan Guanshan led their troops into the city of Lhasa, Galoons, Chung'yigqenbo and Zeboin officials of the Tibetan government, the Living Buddhas and the leading Kampus with the three major monasteries in Lhasa and more than 20,000 temporal and secular people from various walks of life lined the streets to greet them in a grand way. A welcoming ceremony was held in honor of the troops.

In his welcome speech, Lhalu Cewang Doje said: "In the past, when the Qing imperial troops, the British troops and the Kuomintang troops came to Tibet, we didn't hold ceremonies in their honor. Only the PLA troops in Lhasa have earned our warm welcome. This is because the PLA troops are an army of the people. (Lhalu Cewang Doje: *When the PLA Troops Entered Lhasa*, Vol.1, Chinese edition p.212, Tibetan edition p.344. *Selected Materials on the History of Tibet*) That day featured fluttering red flags and *hada scarves*, beating drums and blowing horns, songs and dances in celebration. These were followed by a feast held to mark the peaceful liberation of Tibet and to celebrate the unity between the Han and the Tibetan. It was attended by leaders of the 18<sup>th</sup> Army and major officials of the local government of Tibet, such as Galoons Ranba, Ngapoi, Raogexag, Xaisur and Lhalu. On November 5, the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama sent Jikyabkainbo Ngawang Namgyai to the encampment of the PLA troops in Lhasa. On November 19, the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama held a feast to entertain senior PLA officers in Lhasa. On December 1, when the 18<sup>th</sup> Army's Independent Detachment led by Commander Fan Ming and Political Commissar Mu Shengzhong entered Lhasa, some 10,000 Tibetan soldiers and civilians lined

their route to welcome them.

We have no idea as to how Xagabba and Van Praag would describe these events. But we are convinced the careful reader will wonder why, if the PLA troops were sent to invade an independent Tibet, the Tibetans offered them such grand welcome? Why would the officials of the local government wine and dine the troops of an aggressor army? For what reason did the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama send high-ranking officials to salute the army which came to invade Tibet? Xagabba and Van Praag omit these events because their version of history simply cannot explain the facts as they happened.

History cannot be altered. The entry of the PLA troops into Tibet in the early 1950s is a history of peaceful liberation in an utterly legal, reasonable and just manner.

The British attempted to invade and control China's Tibet for more than half a century. In his book, however, Van Pragg never uses the terms "aggression" or "invasion" to describe the British military campaigns in Tibet. Even in the winter of 1950, Britain was still following its aggressor policy. As part of this policy, Robert Ford, a British agent, was smuggled into Qamdo in the winter of 1950, where he was captured by the PLA troops during the battle at Qamdo. The PLA cameramen recorded his ugly performance. This episode clearly demonstrates the fact that the PLA troops marching to Tibet were actually fighting the foreign aggressors. Obviously, Van Pragg has tried to tamper with the truth and the meaning of the words "aggression" and "counter-aggression."