

The 1959 Tibetan Rebellion: An Interpretation

Dawa Norbu

Tibet in 1950 was an isolated, working theocracy,¹ possibly unique among the various political systems of the modern world. She might earlier have been colonized by Britain had the prospect been economically attractive. Instead she was doomed as a result of conflicting British, Chinese and Russian imperialist interests in Central Asia and the manoeuvrings arising therefrom to a virtually complete isolation, reinforcing the natural mountain-bound isolation of her geography. Both the Anglo-Tibetan Convention of 1904 and the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 were basically aimed at making Tibet an area free from any struggle for spheres of influence and colonization.² In so doing, they indirectly denied Tibet any alternative source of social change.

If Britain were interested in policing Tibet and thereby enhancing Tibet's internal independence, China was opposed to any British presence in the region. It appears that the Chinese feared that while they were busy with revolution, Britain might colonize Tibet or encourage nationalistic Tibetans to modernize and "nationalize" their country. In other words, China was also interested in preventing any exogenous source of change coming into Tibet.

Although Britain did not think it worthwhile economically to colonize Tibet, it appears that she had no objection to a limited modernization carried on by Tibetans themselves as long as it was under British auspices. The 13th Dalai Lama (1876–1933) was interested in this, thanks to his eye-opening flights to India and Mongolia, but the conservative monastic community was totally opposed. This situation was skilfully exploited by the Chinese to their national advantage: they bribed and instigated the powerful abbots in Lhasa. It was customary for China as patron of Tibetan Buddhism to express concern over any anti-Buddhist (i.e., Christian) influence entering the holy land.³

1. I use "theocracy" as the nearest western equivalent of the Buddhist society that existed in Tibet. Although Tibetologists and Tibetans are likely to object to the term, I use it as a political and social concept within the western political science. The conceptual framework for this analysis of the Tibetan revolt derives from the social systems theory of social change put forward by Chalmers A. Johnson in his book *Revolutionary Change* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1966).

2. See the full document in Chanakya Sen (ed.), *Tibet Disappears* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1960), p. 48.

3. When an English-type school was opened in Tibet as a first step towards modernization, it is said that Chinese bribed the abbots of Drepung, Sera and Ganden Monasteries in Lhasa to force the Tibetan Government to close down the school.

There was also something in the Tibetan social history between 1912–48 that encouraged complacency. The simple minded Tibetans saw their easy expulsion of the Chinese troops from Tibet, which was really made possible by the 1911 Revolution following the speedy departure of the Younghusband Expedition in 1904, as simply the work of their faith. This interpretation reaffirmed their belief in the existing value system and shut the door to any exogenous source of change.

The absence of an exogenous source of change is not by itself an indication of the well-functioning of a society. It may at best prolong a slow decline if the social structure is disequilibrated and the value system has ceased to be sacred. But such was not the case in Tibet by 1950. This fact is easily proven by a number of books,⁴ especially those written by westerners who spent several years in the country when the term “Tibet” was not a subject of political controversy. The French weekly *L'Express* asked a French Tibetologist a similar question about the Tibet in to which we are trying to inquire. His reply was: “Tibet is not only an ethnic group but a civilization. The Tibetans stand distinctly from the Chinese with whom they have nothing in common. Tibet was also one of those rare nations of the world that developed its own culture *till the twentieth century*, in complete isolation from external influences. It was a country where literacy was high, and where until 1959 many dozens of new books, on voyages, poems, and biographies were being published each year. It was a *religiously active* country where they were still constructing monasteries. Every member of the nobility had a library and artists were brought into their homes, at high prices. It was a civilization in *no way* on the decline, but on the contrary, having escaped colonialism, it continued to develop along its own lines.”⁵

Indeed, the historical development in Tibet was almost the reverse of the familiar patterns of Europe or elsewhere. Up to the 8th century AD, Tibet was a powerful monarchy in which the native belief system called Bön did not have the kind of hold over the State that Buddhism subsequently exerted. Four centuries later, however, the Buddhist revolution in Inner Asia had clearly succeeded; a lamaist “theocracy” had replaced the lay monarchy and Buddhism increasingly dominated both State and society. The separation of “Church” and State, so vital in Europe in breaking the clergy’s monopoly of power and authority, did not occur in Buddhist Tibet until 1950.

Tibet differed fundamentally from the old China and even more so from the new China. The Chinese imperial tragedy in Tibet had been that despite her repeated attempts at domination, Confucian China had not

4. I have in mind books such as *Seven Years in Tibet*, by Heinrich Harrer; *Tibet and Its History* by H. E. Richardson, *My Journey to Lhasa*, by Alexander David-Neil, and well-known books by Sir Charles Bell, Professor Giuseppe Tucci, and George Patterson, all of whom visited Tibet on several occasions.

5. See the English translation in *Tibetan Review*, May–June, 1973, pp. 10–11. For a more cautious and scholarly treatment of the subject, see D. L. Snellgrove and H. E. Richardson, *A Cultural History of Tibet* (New York: Praeger, 1968).

been able to influence the course of cultural developments in Tibet. If Tibet shared a Confucian culture, the Communists would have faced fewer problems in “liberating” and might even have avoided the Revolt altogether. Those who advocate the “tribute system” as the basis of universal inter-state relations in the pre-modern East Asia have considerable difficulties in accommodating the peculiar Sino-Tibetan relations in the Chinese world order.⁶ For Sino-centrism by definition pre-supposes a universally-shared culture, without which its operation becomes problematic. Thus, China’s relations with Korea, Japan or even Vietnam were orderly in comparison with those with Tibet.

Since we are not concerned here with the legalities of the complex Sino-Tibetan relationship, we can safely assume that for all practical purposes Tibet was functioning independently of China. The relations that existed between China and Tibet before the Chinese Revolution as expressed in the priest-patron relationship (*bhikshu-danapati*) were confined to the dynasties and ruling Lamas, Peking and Lhasa. It was a formal, ceremonial and above all a loose structure which meant little or nothing to the majority of Tibetans. “Our sense of independence was based more on the independence of our life and culture which was more real to the unlettered masses than on law or history, canons by which the non-Tibetans decide the fate of Tibet.”⁷

The wall that separated China and Tibet was experienced not only by the Tibetans when the Communists entered their country but also by the Chinese Communists when they passed through Eastern Tibet during the Long March in 1935. A participant in that March recalled, “I remember when we came out of the grasslands (Eastern Tibet) and broke through enemy lines into Kansu and saw Chinese peasants. They thought we were crazy. We touched their houses and the (Chinese) earth, we embraced them, and we danced and sang and cried.”⁸ And Dick Wilson comments, “Some small part of the tragedy of Communist China’s role in Tibet during the 1950s and 1960s may be owed to these experiences in 1935 when Tibetan hostility made the difference between death and survival for many comrades of soldiers who survived to take high positions in the Chinese Government and armed forces after 1949.”⁹

Thanks to such encounters which Mao himself experienced, the Communists were able to recognize the facts of the situation in Outer Tibet, at least, and this recognition was clearly reflected in the Chinese policy towards Tibet between 1951 and 1958. The Chinese Revolution, first of all, was “a purely Chinese affair” and failed to produce any impact on Tibet before 1950. As George Moseley writes, “In contrast to

6. See Chusei Suzuki’s article, “China’s relations with Inner Asia,” in John F. Fairbank (ed.), *The Chinese World Order* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), pp. 180–97.

7. Dawa Norbu, “The Tibetan response to Chinese Liberation,” in *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 62 (October 1975), p. 266.

8. Dick Wilson, *The Long March 1935* (New York: Viking Press, 1971), p. 221.

9. *Ibid.* p. 221.

the Russian Revolution in which peoples other than the Great Russians played a significant role, the revolution in China was a purely Han Chinese affair. To employ a crude but useful distinction, it took place in 'inner' China, for 'outer' China (Mongolia, Sinkiang and Tibet) had already drifted beyond the reach of the Chinese Government by the time the CCP came into being."¹⁰

It was not because the Communists did not try to introduce revolution into Tibet earlier. When the Communists passed through Eastern Tibet during the Long March in 1935, they at once established a "people's government" there; they even managed to recruit two or three young Tibetans into the Red Army who later became high-ranking officials.¹¹ But, in Edgar Snow's words, "the Reds for the first time faced a populace united in its hostility to them,"¹² and this made revolution impossible unless imposed from above, and with force. The absence of a peasant rebellion in Tibetan history is in stark contrast with China's turbulent history, especially since the 19th century. While it does not prove that the Tibetans were happy and prosperous, it does suggest that their value system and social structure were in a working condition. Communists of course can say that it was the "opiate of the people" that kept the peasants docile and contented, but the function of ideology is precisely that: the definition of the situation.

As we have observed earlier it was perhaps due to their experience during the Long March that the communist leadership was able to take into consideration all the three points we have been discussing in their policy towards Tibet: (1) that the Tibetan theocracy was functioning; (2) that Tibetan society including its value system was fundamentally different from that of China; (3) that the Chinese Revolution did not touch Tibet at all until 1950. As long as these basic points were kept in mind by those responsible for the execution of the Chinese policy in Tibet, there was far less likelihood of revolt.

Volume V of Mao's *Selected Works* proves beyond doubt that the late chairman was the architect of the Chinese policy towards Tibet. In a policy directive dated 6 April 1952 and addressed to the generals who were leading the PLA forces into Tibet, Mao instructed:

"Make every possible effort to use all suitable means to win over the Dalai Lama and majority of the upper strata and isolate the minority of bad elements in order to achieve long-term goals of transforming Tibetan economy and polity gradually without spilling blood."

Mao realistically warned that Tibetans were "completely different people" and that the situation in Tibet was "worse than that we face in Sinkiang where we have at least some support," namely from Han

10. George Moseley, "China's fresh approach to the national minority question," *The China Quarterly*, No. 24 (October–December 1965), pp. 16–17.

11. See T. N. Takla's interesting article, "Notes on some early Tibetan Communists," *Tibetan Review*, June–July 1969, pp. 7–9.

12. Quoted by Wilson, *The Long March 1935*, p. 220.

settlers. Mao summed up the situation in Tibet when he said, “ We have no material base in Tibet. In terms of *social power* they are stronger than us, which for the moment will not change.”¹³

How was this policy translated into action? June Dreyer in her study shows how this policy was conceived and implemented generally for all national minorities. Specifically in the case of Tibet, I have written on this elsewhere and since no one else has so far dealt with this aspect, I may be permitted to repeat it here:

Under the so-called “ Peaceful liberation ” policy, extending from 1951 to 1959, the Chinese Communists made no direct contact with the masses. This is surprising, as one would normally expect the Communists to urge the proletariat to “ shake off their yokes.” But the only contacts that the common Tibetans had with the Communists were at the road camps and on journeys. The Chinese used the Tibetan people intelligently for their military preparation in Tibet. The blue-uniformed comrades encouraged the Tibetans to work industriously on the roads, but they made no effort to indoctrinate them. They seemed to know that the Tibetans were stubborn and conservative, and that they would not exchange their own worst vices for the best Chinese virtues. They were deeply rooted in Tibet and in anything that was Tibetan. The majority were quite unreceptive to new ideas, especially to communism, which directly opposed the spirit of their way of life. Admittedly there were a few Tibetans who responded to the Chinese call; in Sakya about six young beggars and orphans became “ Chinese.”¹⁴

The 1951 agreement between China and Tibet signed in Peking¹⁵ never mentioned a word about socialism. It hesitated even to use the word “ democratic ” to qualify the “ various reforms ” to be introduced. Instead it guaranteed that (1) the existing political system, including the power and the position of the traditional ruling elite, would function as before; (2) neither the income nor power of the “ Church ” would be reduced and religious freedom would be protected; (3) with regard to the unspecified “ various reforms,” there would be “ no compulsion on the part of the central authorities.” As far as policy implementation was concerned, the Chinese local authorities tried to adhere to the terms of the agreement to a degree that earned them the wrath of the radicals during the Cultural Revolution. “ Why did Teng Hsiao-p’ing, as the general secretary of the Central Committee, try so hard to please, care for and support the former Tibetan local government headed by the Dalai? ”¹⁶

13. *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Vol. V* (Peking, 1977), p. 64. I am grateful to my friend Jeremy Partial for translating this important document from Chinese.

14. Dawa Norbu, *Red Star Over Tibet* (London: Collins, 1974), pp. 116–17. For the general policy toward national minorities as such, see June T. Dreyer, “ Traditional minorities elites and the CPR elite engaged in minority nationalities work,” in Robert A. Scalapino (ed.), *Elites in the People’s Republic of China* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1972), pp. 416–50.

15. See the full document in Sen, *Tibet Disappears*, pp. 78–81.

16. See the most interesting revelation by a group of Red Guards, “ How the revolt in Tibet broke out,” *Tibet 1950–1967* (Hong Kong: Union Research Institute, 1968), p. 690.

For the majority of the ruling class there was no reason why formal co-operation would be unacceptable, as the following passage explains:

As far as education and natural ability went, they were still miles ahead of the masses, having generations of learning to their advantage. Consequently, if they studied Communism and sent their children to school, they would undoubtedly occupy the best positions even in the new society. Names and titles might vanish, but in substance they would continue to enjoy the same privileges.¹⁷

If the Chinese demonstrated such flexibility and responsiveness to the situational demands in Tibet, we might ask what caused the Tibetan Rebellion of 1959.

The overall Chinese policy towards political Tibet was undoubtedly realistic and imaginative, perhaps based on the United Front strategy. But with regard to ethnic Tibet the Chinese policy was based on a rigid legality and lack of realism: treat the ethnic Tibetans living in China and twice as numerous as those under the Dalai Lama as both *de jure* and *de facto* Chinese, since they were not under the jurisdiction of Lhasa. This was one of the fundamental flaws in the Chinese policy in Tibet and a basic cause of the revolt. It was a great error to base policy on such a sensitive issue on such rigid apparent legality so far removed from the actual situation. For the fact was in the 1950s that no matter how far these Eastern Tibetans were away from Lhasa or even how relatively close they were to the Chinese provinces, they behaved and acted like any other Tibetan. And this fact should have been taken into consideration.¹⁸

This legalistic distinction actually has an important political and legal implication that China was probably unaware of at the time and would not hear of now: China recognized political Tibet, i.e., territory under the effective political control of the Tibetan Government, as a separate, if not independent, political entity. "The recovery or restoration of a lost province may necessitate a treaty with a third country who had aided the rebel province but it would not require a treaty with the rebel province itself."¹⁹ Since this agreement was signed between the Chinese Government and the Dalai Lama's Government, its terms, most of which as we have observed were favourable to the traditional elite, were applicable only to that part of Tibet ruled by the Dalai Lama. This means that about two-thirds of the Tibetan-speaking population were subjected to a radical policy similar to the one pursued in the rest of China, and which proved eminently unsuitable.

Legally Chinese policy was perfectly correct. Well before the Communists came to power, a large part of Eastern Tibet, or what the British called "Inner Tibet" comprising Kham and Amdo, was

17. Norbu, *Red Star Over Tibet*, p. 125.

18. The Chinese imaginative policy between 1951–59 is still little known to the world outside. I have attempted to show this policy in operation in my book. See Chaps. 6–9, *Red Star Over Tibet*.

19. Nirmal C. Sinha, "Seventeen-point agreement: vindication and liquidation of Tibet's independence," *Tibetan Review*, September 1974, p. 21.

gradually annexed and incorporated into the neighbouring Chinese provinces of Tsinghai, Szechwan and Yunnan. As the Chinese central government was unstable for the last 100 years or so, Tibetans living in Eastern Tibet or what the Tibetans call Kham, which was considered *de jure* Chinese territory, enjoyed an incredible degree of independence both from Peking and Lhasa. While these Khambas, as they are called, were hostile to the Tibetan Government and in particular to the lay aristocratic ruling elites, their loyalty to the Dalai Lama as an incarnation of the Buddha of Compassion, and as supreme pontiff of Tibetan Buddhism which was operative throughout Buddhist Central Asia, was unquestionable. This fact should have been the basis of Chinese policy in "Inner Tibet" as it was in "Outer Tibet," and it is directly related to the etiology of the Tibetan Rebellion.

Since the Khambas and Amdowas who were to become the core of the Tibetan Revolt, were considered legally Chinese rather than Tibetan, various social, economic and political changes ("democratic reforms") in Kham and Amdo were attempted more or less at the same time as in other Chinese provinces such as Tsinghai and Szechwan, around 1952–53. While "Outer Tibet" was granted an extension of six more years of no-reform period, the Chinese tried to force social changes into a segment of a whole functioning Tibetan Buddhist society, separated only by an artificial legality.²⁰ In terms of a revolutionary situation Kham was no more ready than Outer Tibet was for social change. The Dalai Lama was still considered by the population as the *real* incarnation of Avalokitesvara. The Buddha, Buddhism and *Sangha* (monastic community) together constituted the Tibetan equivalent of God, which was still sacred. The definition of the social situation provided by such a value system was still considered valid, simply because of the lack of an exogenous source of change that could have undermined such beliefs prior to the Chinese coming and the suddenness of the Chinese "democratic reforms" which had no time to upset the division of labour and to undermine the traditional value system.

The Tibetan Revolt was caused fundamentally by the inevitable clash of two diametrically opposed value systems. The "democratic reforms" affected not only the property relations but, more important as far as the Tibetans living at that point of time (early 1950s) were concerned, their value system. This calls for an insight into the Tibetan social structure and political institutions, all of which were premised and based on Tibetan Buddhism. Thus, religion penetrated and permeated both the state and society. This inseparability of religion from the social

20. Take for example Dergue which was halved into Chinese and Tibetan territories separated by the Drichu river. Juchen Thubten who was one of the chiefs at Dergue and who now lives at Dharmasala told me in an interview in 1976, "Once you have crossed the Drichu, you are in Tibetan territory and you can do anything you like: including kill Chinese and get away with that." Thubten was sent twice to Lhasa in the mid-1950s to plead with the Dalai Lama and Tibetan Government that they persuade the Chinese to extend the same liberal policy to Kham as well. His missions were in vain.

system empirically means that there could be no social change without touching or undermining the religious foundation. In simple terms it would appear from all the evidence that, given the choice, Tibetan traditionalists opted for their value system that provided the definition of the social situation and sanctioned a political system which the Chinese Communists felt was unjust. The revolt was an expression of this choice. This is not to imply any value judgment, nor any notion of justice, political or economic, but merely to analyse the Tibetan Revolt in factual and functional terms.

Given the basic functioning and equilibrated condition of the Tibetan society as a whole including "Inner Tibet," and in particular its value system throughout the Tibetan world, any revolt against the system itself was ruled out. Such an un-Buddhist, if not anti-Buddhist act was almost inconceivable as far as the Tibetans living at that point of time were concerned, since Buddhism had an absolute ideological monopoly. Thus there was no natural cause, either necessary or sufficient, for an indigenous revolt against the system. But when a social system, and in particular the value system is functioning, we can have a revolt not against that system, no matter how unjust others might think it to be, but in defence of that very system, when any power, external or internal, tries to tamper with it, no matter with what good intentions. The whole history of the development of the Tibetan Rebellion testifies to this.

As long as the Chinese did not tamper with the objectively functioning social system and the value systems still considered sacred by the members of that society, as happened in Outer Tibet, there was no revolt, although the unprecedented Chinese presence in the country caused great resentment and anxiety. But the moment the Chinese tried to alter the functioning and sacred social system in Inner Tibet which they considered *de jure* China proper, the revolt began. Let there be no doubt about this: the Tibetan Rebellion was in defence of Tibetan Buddhist values, and the political and sacred institutions founded upon such values. "The Khamba uprisings were concentrated in those regions where 'democratic reforms' were most widespread. These comprised the areas of Liangshan, Apha, and Kanze, and Peking was forced to admit that large populations of Khambas, Amdas and Goluks were involved in the rebellion."²¹

It appears that democratic reforms were carried out in certain parts of Kham such as Gyalthang as early as 1953. The hero of the Khamba revolt, Gombo Tashi Andrugtsang, described the hasty changes introduced by the Chinese and Khamba resentment against them in the following terms:

In the area of Gyalthang Anthena Kham, the following year (1953), the local population was divided into five strata and a terror campaign of selective arrests (was) launched by the Chinese. People belonging to the first three strata were

21. Dr Gopal Singh (ed.), *National Integration: Tibet Issue* (published by the editor in New Delhi, 1964), p. 18.

either publicly humiliated or condemned to the firing squad. . . . This . . . alarming development reached such a state that the Chinese had destroyed thousands of monasteries in the areas of Bathang, Lithang, Gyalthang, Dergue and many places in Amdo. . . . Many Lamas and monks were imprisoned without reason, others subjected to various ignominies or condemned to death after a farcical trial. . . . When the people began to learn how the Chinese were foisting their authority and their own system of government on the country, the simmering discontent against them, nurtured by the stories of atrocities in the east, grew into open resentment and hostility.²²

If the revolt was in defence of the value system, it was against the reforms that the Chinese were trying to introduce. This gives credence to the Chinese official interpretation of the revolt as one by the “upper strata reactionary clique”²³ to perpetuate their position, although the matter seems much more complicated than this. Suffice it to say that most of the upper strata was formally co-opted by the Chinese and the class composition of those who participated in the revolt cut along religious more than on economic lines. The Tibetans, no matter to which class they belonged, were all united in their religious beliefs and supported the existing value system; they were more concerned with the latter than with economics. When the Chinese attempted to implement “democratic reforms” and asked the Tibetan peasants if they would like “land reform,” which would necessarily involve taking away land from the monasteries which owned about 37 per cent of land in Tibet, the Tibetans’ answer was “No.” It must be added that this was their reply then. It should also be noted that although there was an acute shortage of grain soon after the arrival of about 40,000 Chinese troops into Tibet, there was no revolt, only resentment. Nor was there any known peasant rebellion against the unjust economic disparity that prevailed under the old order.

People often tend to forget that the 1959 revolt was only the culmination of a revolt that started in Eastern Tibet in 1952–53, when “widespread fighting broke out in Kham and Amdo.” According to George Patterson, who perhaps knew more than did anyone else about the revolt, over 80,000 rebels were involved in the initial rebellion, out of which “some” 12,000 were deserters from the Kuomintang. The revolt however died down with “no immediate help forthcoming from either India or America, and because the Chinese, at the persuasion of East Tibetan leaders, relaxed their policy of immediate land reforms.”²⁴ But by 1953 a “large number of activists including ordinary people joined hands with the guerrillas” and the following year the revolt spread

22. Gampo Tashi Andrugtsang, *Four Rivers, Six Ranges* (Dharmasala, India: Information and Publicity Office of HH The Dalai Lama, 1973), pp. 37–39.

23. For the Chinese accounts and views of the revolt, see *Concerning the Question of Tibet* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1959).

24. George N. Patterson, “China and Tibet: background to the revolt,” *The China Quarterly*, No. 1, January–March 1960, p. 96.

gradually “all over eastern and north-eastern Tibet.”²⁵ The *New York Times* of 28 August 1954 reported, quoting Taiwanese sources, that “40,000 farmers took part in an uprising in East Tibet, which was suppressed by the 18th Chinese Army.”²⁶

But by far the most significant revolt in Kham was what has been termed “the Kanting Rebellion,” 1955–56. The Chinese central authorities issued an order that “every possible means should be put into action to weed out the Tibetan reactionaries and exterminate the rebels.” Anna L. Strong writes:

The Kanting rebellion broke out in the winter of 1955–56 and took the form of murdering Central Government officials and Han citizens, there being no PLA in the area. As soon as the PLA arrived, they easily put down the rebels, but these fled into deeper hills and eventually into Chando. Arms were easy to get, for at least fifty thousand muskets and rifles had been left in the area from the warlords’ battles between Tibetan and Szechwan warlords. . . . The Szechwan-Chando rebellion was basically repressed by the end of 1956, though isolated groups would remain as bandits as long as any monastery or until ‘local people’s control’ was organized. The bulk of the defeated rebels moved into Tibet. They were the Khambas, Sikan troops, cavalry, wild and undisciplined, accustomed to living by loot.²⁷

Nor did China deny her armed suppression of the Khamba uprising. When the Dalai Lama’s first press statement in exile charged the Chinese with heavy-handed military suppression of the Kanting rebellion in violation of the 17-point agreement, China only defended her strong military action on rigid legal grounds, i.e., that it was within *de jure* Chinese territory. China was evidently enraged at the Dalai Lama’s “interference in China’s internal affairs.” The New China News Agency replied as follows:

In the so-called “statement of the Dalai Lama” of April 18 (1959) the “Khamba rebellion” was mentioned in an attempt to prove that the Central People’s Government had violated the 17-article agreement on the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet. But the so-called “Khamba rebellion” [Khamba is a Tibetan word] refers to areas around Kantse, Szechwan Province, in the eastern Sikang-Tibet Plateau, inhabited by the Tibetan minority nationality. The Sikang area was not even a part of Tibet. Formerly it was Sikang Province and later became part of Szechwan Province.²⁸

Although China’s stand was legally sound (and although such a stand strongly implied the recognition of a Tibet apart from China), it was a great error to base her policy and actions on apparent legality rather than on the facts of the situation. In reality Tibetans in “Inner Tibet” were no different from those in “Outer Tibet”; there was the objective need

25. The last piece of information is from *The Guardian*, 2 September 1954.

26. *New York Times*, 28 August 1954.

27. Anna Louise Strong, *When Serfs Stood Up in Tibet* (Peking: New World Press, 1960), pp. 65–66.

28. *Tibet 1950–1967*, p. 359. See also p. 381 of the same book.

for equal policy treatment. No matter wherever the Tibetans were, in China or India, they were all united in one common objective during the 1950s: “ we would rather live for one day and die under the Buddha than live for a hundred years in an abundance of food and clothing under atheist rule.”²⁹

Thus, sporadic uprisings were widespread in most parts of Eastern Tibet by the mid-1950s, fighting against one common enemy but in separate uncoordinated pockets “ for their homes, for their faith, and for their very race.”

And, indeed, forgetting their blood feuds and old disputes, all the tribes of Kham rose united against the Chinese; the ten clans of Nangchen, those of Nakchu and Rakshi Gumpa, the Horpas of Kandze, the Chengtreng herders of the south and the dozen tribes of Markham. Even beyond Kham, in Chinghai to the north the twenty thousand horsemen of the much-feared Goloks of Khangsar, Tsangkor, Khangring and Butsang, rose up in arms.³⁰

A series of major uprisings started in Kham in 1956–57, moved to Amdo in 1958, and finally swept into Lhasa in 1959. Most fierce fighting broke out in Lithang, Bathang, Dergue, Chamdo, Kanze, etc., places where the major monasteries of Eastern Tibet were located. Perhaps the most fighting took place in Lithang Monastery, lasting for 64 days.³¹ What all this demonstrated was that Chinese Communism faced strong ideological opposition from the traditional Tibetan ideology, Buddhism. By early 1956 Chamdo, Lithang, Bathang and Kanze were “ temporarily over-run by Khamba irregulars ” who numbered about 6,000.³²

The Chinese determination and ruthlessness to suppress the Khamba uprisings in Eastern Tibet by military actions, which starkly contrast with their sweet reasonableness in Tibet proper (except during the 1959 Lhasa Revolt) cannot be underestimated.³³ Apart from the apparent legal premises on which they acted, the strong military action in Eastern Tibet was necessitated by China’s high political stakes in Central Asia. If the Khamba revolt could not be controlled and contained in Kham and prevented at all cost from spreading to Outer Tibet, China could not afford to have fighting in an extremely strategic border region where already an explosive situation existed. It appears that what China most feared at the time was foreign intervention; and if no decisive military action were to be taken, danger to the new regime indeed appeared real and threatening. It would not only be a big embarrassment to the new regime but it would question the whole validity and viability of the People’s Republic that claimed to have been founded on the perfect equality and unity of all nationalities in China. Thus, “ over 40

29. Quoted by NCNA, *Tibet 1950–1967*, p. 368.

30. Michel Peissel, *Cavaliers of Kham* (London: Heinemann, 1972), p. 67.

31. *Ibid.* p. 82.

32. Andrugtsang, *Four Rivers*, p. 47.

33. I have heard numerous tales of ruthless Chinese military action in Eastern Tibet from Khambas in exile which indeed contrast starkly with what I have experienced in Western Tibet.

thousand " Chinese soldiers along with " 29,000 trained militia from Chinese-operated communes " evidently from the neighbouring Chinese provinces, were deployed to suppress the Khamba rebellion.³⁴

But if the PLA was able to end the fighting in Eastern Tibet, it was unable to " exterminate " the rebels. As the PLA carried on its extensive suppression campaigns all over Eastern Tibet, most Khamba rebels who survived began to march slowly towards Central Tibet and

looked to Lhasa, crying out with the blood of Tibet to the capital, to the holy city, to the Dalai Lama, to the very epicentre of the world and of the values for which they fought, asking Central Tibet to join in their crusade. But once more they encountered only obstruction and indifference.³⁵

By 1958 over 15,000 families, all rebels and/or refugees from Eastern Tibet, pitched their tents in Lhasa.³⁶ This intensified further the already-tense situation in Lhasa.

If the " rebellions in Eastern Tibet were a result of local dissatisfaction with communist policies," as the chairman of the Chinese Buddhist Association declared, the Lhasa Rebellion of 1959 was precipitated by a series of careless Chinese actions in 1958.³⁷ When Lhasa was swamped with refugees from Kham, the Chinese authorities tried to deport them back home. First, all the Chinese refugees numbering about 1,500 were deported to China³⁸; next, an official census of Khambas who had sought refuge in Lhasa was taken followed by an announcement that no Khamba without a Chinese identity card would be permitted to live in Lhasa.³⁹ These thoughtless measures frightened the Khambas and drove them to an area south of Lhasa called Lhoka, where they began to organize themselves for a nationalist resistance movement. So far the Khamba resistance had not been organized under a single centralized command: about 23 separate groups fought against the Chinese, defending their own villages and local monasteries. Now literally driven together by the Chinese measures, and inspired by what Peissel calls the " epicentre " of Tibetan civilization, the Tibetans who were by tradition notoriously allergic to organization of any kind began to organize themselves and to try to co-ordinate their tribal fighting units into a single organization called *Chushi Gangdruk*, meaning " Four Rivers and Six Ranges," an ancient name for Kham in Lhodrak (Dha[r]ma Dzong) on 16 June 1958. About 5,000 Khamba rebels including 300 " volunteers from various parts of Tibet," were organized under the command of Gombo Tashi Andrugtsang.⁴⁰

Despite their attempt at organization, some of the Khamba chiefs

34. Peissel, *Cavaliers of Kham*, p. 68.

35. *Ibid.* p. 90.

36. *Ibid.* p. 112.

37. *Ibid.* p. 109.

38. Andrugtsang, *Four Rivers*, p. 55.

39. *Ibid.* p. 58.

40. *Ibid.* p. 62.

deserted and “ their lawless activities caused great resentment among the people and brought shame and disgrace to the volunteer force.”⁴¹ What is interesting, however, was the way in which Chinese attempted to portray all Khamba rebels as robbers. According to Andrugtsang,

The Chinese administration fully appreciated the potential of the bandit menace for creating animosity and distrust between the freedom fighters and the local populace. They took advantage of a few disloyal Tibetans and exploited them to raid and pillage the countryside, masquerading as freedom fighters.⁴²

As the Khambas moved their theatre of operation nearer Lhasa, the simmering discontent of the local people in Central Tibet grew into open resentment and hostility against the Chinese. Under such a tense situation, the Dalai Lama and his government, whom the Chinese had so far used as an unconscious agent of their designs in Tibet, were under increasing pressures from all sides. They were in an acute dilemma. By 1957 the traditional ruling elite in Lhasa was split between those who sided with Ngapo Ngawang Jigme and the Dalai Lama, both of whom realistically thought that Tibet's future lay in collaborating with China, and those who felt, on the contrary, that Communist China and Buddhist Tibet had irreconcilable ideals.⁴³ The Dalai Lama in particular was in a terrible dilemma because he had to oppose openly the very people who were trying to “ defend ” him and fight for all that he symbolized to them. He did so out of realism and his non-violent moral convictions, and no less under Chinese pressure and persuasion.⁴⁴

Both George Patterson and Michel Peissel, the two leading experts on the Khambas, have condemned the Dalai Lama and the ruling elite for their collaboration with the Chinese when Tibet was in revolt. In particular, Peissel's criticism is unequivocal.

A word from the Dalai Lama, one single proclamation and all Tibet would undoubtedly have stood up and faced the Chinese. The Dalai Lama's failure to understand this, his failure to act, to speak and to lead his people to war, is perhaps the greatest tragedy of Tibet's long history.⁴⁵

However, the Dalai Lama seemed to have realized the futility of the Khamba rebellion against the Chinese; it was like “ jumping off a cliff when you have eyes to see.”⁴⁶ To China he was the weapon next only to the PLA which she reserved as last resort against Tibetan nationalist activities, regarded as anti-Chinese. Thus he had officially to sanction most of the “ anti-Tibetan policies,” dismiss his prime minister,

41. *Ibid.* p. 90; see also p. 88.

42. *Ibid.* p. 66.

43. Peissel, *Cavaliers of Kham*, p. 96.

44. For the Dalai Lama's views, see his memoirs, *My Land and My People* (London: Panther Books, 1964), in particular Chaps. 7 and 9.

45. Peissel, *Cavaliers of Kham*, p. 90. For George Patterson's view, see his *Tibetan Revolt* (London: Faber and Faber, 1960).

46. In an interview with the author at Dharmasala in 1973.

Lukhangwa, condemn the Khambas as “reactionaries” and “order” them to lay down their arms, and outlaw the “Mimang Tsongdu.”⁴⁷

While the Khamba rebellion has been over romanticized in recent years, a genuinely popular rebellion called *Mimang Tsongdu* (literally People’s meetings), remains almost unknown to the world outside. The movement began as early as 1954. George Patterson has written: “A powerful underground anti-Chinese group known as the Mimang Tsongdu (People’s Party) came into public prominence with demonstrations, placarding of walls, denunciations of Chinese interference with the Dalai Lama’s power and the customs and religion of Tibet.”⁴⁸

Mimang Tsongdu openly criticized Chinese policies, declaring outright that as “representative of the Tibetan peoples they wanted the Chinese to leave Tibet.”⁴⁹ Seeing the real danger, the Chinese dissolved the Mimang Tsongdu and imprisoned its ringleaders, one of whom died in prison in Lhasa. Thus in 1957 the Dalai Lama and his government issued official edicts banning the Mimang Tsongdu and depriving those Tibetans in exile suspected of anti-Chinese activities of Tibetan nationality.⁵⁰ The Tibetan government as a rule completely dissociated itself from the Rebellion, though a few individual officials such as Surkhang and Phala had clandestine contacts with the rebels. Thus, as the Khambas were fighting in Lhoka, the Dalai Lama and his government sent several delegations asking the Khambas to lay down arms. The ruling elite on the whole co-operated with the Chinese, some willingly, while others reluctantly, as Michel Peissel explains:

Apart from the leaders of the Mimang, who came to place their own clandestine operations at the disposal of the Khambas, it would be fair to say that the majority of the influential personalities of Lhasa were jealous of the Khambas and afraid of losing to them their personal power and prestige. They preferred, along with the traitorous minister Ngabo, a certain collusion with the Chinese who had so cunningly maintained them in a place of privilege that they could never have hoped to keep under a free Tibet led by the rugged warriors from the east.⁵¹

Despite the Khambas’ boastful accounts of fighting in Lhoka, they were continually chased, from the start, by the PLA troops. Between August 1958 and March 1959, Khambas engaged in a total of 14 skirmishes in the Lhoka area. (See the Appendix for details.) There seems to be no end either to tragedy or to irony. All the Tibetan “scouting troops” were trapped by the PLA units upon whom they were supposed to spy. It was really a series of battles between seasoned Maoist guerrillas and medieval crusaders, and the result was a foregone

47. Peissel, *Cavaliers of Kham*, p. 100.

48. Patterson, “China and Tibet,” p. 96.

49. Peissel, *Cavaliers of Kham*, p. 101.

50. *Ibid.* p. 102.

51. *Ibid.* p. 114.

conclusion despite the Tibetan determination and courage inspired by their unshakeable faith.⁵²

Being encircled in Lhoka, the Khamba rebel leader, Gompo Tashi Andrugtsang, with the remaining few hundred Khambas in the hope of recuperating and gaining fresh recruits, went back to Kham taking the route across the uninhabited Chang Thang. “Our most urgent task was to rejoin the main force at Lhoka, but this was not easy as the Chinese kept us constantly under fire and ambushed us frequently.”⁵³

Meanwhile the popular anti-Chinese feelings in Lhasa had reached a boiling point. Since the early summer of 1958 with the arrival of increasing numbers of Khambas and in particular when fighting was going on in Lhoka, barely 40 or 50 miles away from Lhasa, the situation in the city deteriorated progressively. The enraged public went beyond the control of even the Dalai Lama whom they were trying to protect, defend and fight for. From all contemporary accounts it would appear that the whole atmosphere in Lhasa and Central Tibet was charged with anger, fear, suspense and suspicion. Between 13 February and 25 March 1959, momentous events and silly episodes took place in Lhasa, a blow-by-blow account of which has been written by a British journalist.⁵⁴ What was needed to set the smouldering situation on fire was a petty incident or a slight provocation, and that was provided by a Chinese invitation to the Dalai Lama to attend a theatrical show at the PLA Headquarters on 10 March 1959, a date indeed, as the Chinese had repeatedly claimed, personally chosen by the Dalai Lama himself a month earlier.⁵⁵ The Tibetan suspicions were supposedly aroused by the timing of the invitation, which coincided with the Great Prayer Festival (Monlam Chenmo) in Lhasa, and by the Chinese insistence that the Dalai Lama and his entourage come unescorted by Tibetan troops to the PLA Headquarters (where the drama was being staged) – again a practice perfectly precedented.⁵⁶ What enraged the Tibetan public and created most suspicion were the insistent reminders which the Chinese General sent to the Dalai Lama when the latter was taking part in a public ritual widely attended by Tibetans from all over Tibet. The immediate cause of the Lhasa Revolt was therefore trivial and “subjective.” But, as Noel Barber remarks, it was not so trivial to the Tibetans then;

To western eyes, the reaction of Tibetans to these infractions of protocol may seem exaggerated (though one can imagine the hullabaloo in London if an invited diplomat chose to boycott the State Opening of Parliament). But one has

52. For detail, see Andrugtsang, *Four Rivers*, Chaps. 7–10.

53. *Ibid.* p. 95.

54. Noel Barber, *From the Land of Lost Content* (London: Collins, 1969).

55. Leoshe Thubtentarpa, who was most active in Sino-Tibetan politics in the 1950s and who visited China on several occasions, told me this in an interview at Dharmasala in July 1976.

56. Leoshe Thubtentarpa.

to remember that Tibetans had been smarting under occupation for eight years, and if their emotions were exaggerated, then that is what happens when simple, devoutly religious people feel they have been affronted.⁵⁷

Tibetans under the circumstances saw the invitation as a Chinese trick to kidnap the Dalai Lama and try to stage a *coup d'état*. But it is clear from my own findings that Tibetan fears and suspicions were unfounded, and that the Chinese had no such intentions.⁵⁸ They planned a series of more subtle *coups* in separate instalments.

Word spread around Lhasa like wildfire and by 10 March 1959, an estimated 30,000 Tibetans from all walks of life had gathered around what they regarded as the symbol and essence of Tibetan civilization and Tibet, the Dalai Lama, to “protect,” defend and fight for all that he symbolized to the Tibetans. He was their faith and their country personified and rolled into one. Hence, the revolt symbolically took the form of surrounding, not the Chinese Army Headquarters, but the Dalai Lama’s palace to “protect” and prevent him from visiting the military theatre. It is also clear from my own inquiries that the Dalai Lama was personally against this angry demonstration which he thought was the shortest way to self-destruction.⁵⁹ But the enraged public slipped out of his control.

What was so striking beneath this strange medieval, religious and folkish behaviour was a resolute and fanatical sense of anti-Chinese and anti-communist feelings.⁶⁰ The slogans that were shouted had strong overtones of nationalism. “Drive away Chinese,” “Independence for Tibet,” etc.⁶¹ The NCNA communiqué on the revolt scornfully commented: “The spirit of these reactionaries soared to the clouds and they were ready to take over the whole universe.”⁶² On 17 March the Tibetan rebels sent a “secret” telegram, which the Chinese intercepted, to their nationalist organization that had been operating in Kalimpong in India since the early 1950s. The message read in part:

The independent country of Tibet was formed on the first day of the second month of the Tibet calendar [that is 10 March of universal calendar, the day on which the rebellion started – NCNA editor]. Please announce this to all. . . .⁶³

What triggered violence was an incident that further suggests the anti-Chinese character of the rebellion. Some in the anxious crowd that gathered around the Dalai Lama’s palace on 10 March sighted a Tibetan aristocrat-official who was well-known as a Chinese collaborator, and

57. Noel Barber, *From the Land of Lost Content*, p. 71.

58. Leoshe Thubtentarpa.

59. For personal reasons I would not like to quote this source.

60. It is important to note that the Tibetans were both anti-Chinese and anti-communist at the time of the revolt. Ordinarily, however, they tend to distinguish between *Gya-mi Nyingpa* (Old Chinese) and *Gya-mi Sarpa* (New Chinese, i.e. communist).

61. NCNA, *Tibet 1950–1967*, p. 348.

62. *Ibid.* p. 351.

63. *Ibid.* p. 366.

the angry crowd shouted at once: "Chinese spy! Chinese spy!" He was stoned to death. A little later a member of the Kashak (Dalai Lama's Cabinet) arrived in a Chinese jeep with Chinese escorts. The enraged public started at once pelting stones at the high Tibetan official, but he managed to escape death, thanks to the Chinese jeep.⁶⁴

H. E. Richardson, who spent several years in Lhasa first as the British and then as Indian Resident, writes that one of the most popular ways of expressing public opinion was in songs that the people sang.⁶⁵ In Lhasa maids who fetched water for the aristocrat-official class often sang lampoons about the latest follies of their masters. In the late 1950s the most popular song throughout Tibet was the anonymous verse:

We would rather have the Dalai Lama than Mao Tse-tung;
We would rather have the *Kashak*⁶⁶ than *Uyon Lhan-khang*⁶⁷;
We would rather have Buddhism than Communism;
We would rather have *Ten-sung Mag-mi*⁶⁸ than the PLA;
We would rather use our own (wooden) bowls than (Chinese) mugs.

Chinese official interpretation of all this was conveyed in the following cryptic remark: "What is meant by independence here is in fact to turn Tibet into a colony or protectorate of a foreign country."⁶⁹

Hence, at 10.00 a.m. on 20 March 1959, the PLA command in Tibet was "ordered to take punitive action against the clique of traitors who had committed monstrous crimes." The rebellion was suppressed after "more than two days of fighting." A NCNA "rough count" showed that by 23 March, more than 4,000 "rebel troops were taken prisoner, and 8,000 small arms, 81 light and heavy machine guns, 27 mortars, six mountain guns and 10 million rounds of ammunition were captured." Considering Tibet's total population of 1.2 million, China thought the rebellion by "20,000 people, mostly people who were deceived and intimidated to join"⁷⁰ was not all that significant. But the extent of the popular participation in the rebellion may perhaps be better gauged by the following PLA proclamation which appeals and "hopes" that Tibetan public would not help the rebels:

We *hope* that all the people in Tibet, lamas and laity, will energetically help our army in the campaign to put down the rebellion and *not shelter the bandits, supply the enemy or provide the rebellious bandits with information* [emphasis added].⁷¹

64. Revealing eye-witness accounts are to be found in *Tibetan Review*, March 1969, pp. 3–9.

65. H. E. Richardson, *Tibet and Its History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).

66. Tibet's traditional cabinet.

67. Uyon Lhan-khang, "The Preparatory Committee for Tibet Autonomous Region," office set up to gradually replace the Tibetan Government.

68. Literally, "Soldiers/Defenders of Faith," e.g. Tibetan Army.

69. *Tibet 1950–1967*, p. 384.

70. *Ibid.* p. 352.

71. *Ibid.* p. 355.

To a large extent religion was the basic cause of the revolt. This feature leads some scholars to regard the 1959 revolt as essentially “anachronistic,” which, from a 20th-century perspective, it is. And yet if we keep in mind the kind of pre-modern society that existed in Tibet before 1950 or even before 1959, we could not expect anything else.

The Tibetans did not perceive the Chinese “invasion” so much as a threat to the territorial integrity of Tibet, although Tibet had assumed a distinct geographical entity as a separate country since the 7th or 8th century. It was seen more as a threat to their faith. The Chinese liberators were called *tendra* – enemies of the faith; the Khamba guerrillas who led the Tibetan nationalists movement were popularly called *ten-sung* – defenders of the faith; and the main aim of the movement was the defence of Tibetan Buddhism as personified by the Dalai Lama.

The religious nature of the revolt was further reinforced by those who led it; they were devoutly religious. Take, for example, the hero of the 1959 revolt. The Dalai Lama in a foreword to the chief rebel’s memoirs published posthumously in India writes:

The Andrugsang family for several generations has been acknowledged for its immense reverence and deep devotion to the *Dharma* (i.e. Buddhism). Every Tibetan knows the almost legendary story of how the late Gompo Tashi sacrificed his wealth and life for the *Dharma* and the national freedom of Tibet.⁷²

The Rebellion was undoubtedly initiated and led by Khambas, Tibet’s warrior class, but had other participants too, including most of the “Tibetan army of only a little more than 3,000 men,”⁷³ most of Lhasa’s 20,000 monks,⁷⁴ a great number of the 10–30,000 public⁷⁵ that surrounded the Dalai Lama’s palace and of course, the 10,000 Khambas⁷⁶ who had fled to Lhasa by 1959. Michel Peissel’s estimate of “over 80,000 well-organized guerillas in the NVDA” (National Volunteer Defence Army) seems inflated.

The scope of the revolt, however, was limited by the lack of modern organization and communications in a vast and mountainous Tibet whose scanty population is rather scattered. Given the popular cause, *ten-sung* (defend faith), the rebels enjoyed popular public support and sympathy. The fact that they were able to sustain their fighting against the most heavy odds for about six years was a testimony to the public support. The revolt, therefore, was only “national in the sense that the sentiment of the majority of people of Tibet were involved.”⁷⁷

72. Andrugsang, *Four Rivers*, pp. 52–53. The Dalai Lama’s foreword, p. 6.

73. *Tibet 1950–1967*, p. 353.

74. *New York Times*, 19 September 1976.

75. Estimates of the crowds that gathered around the Dalai Lama’s palace and led demonstrations against the Chinese in early March 1959, range between 10,000 to 30,000.

76. Andrugsang, *Four Rivers*, p. 48.

77. Phuntsog Wangyal, *Political Development in Tibet, 1950–1959*. A thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1974, p. 82.

The vast majority of the 23 Khamba leaders of the Tibet Revolt were merchants who had made their fortune since the “liberation,” as China kept pouring silver coins called *dao-yuan* into Tibet to pay the Tibetan ruling class and road workers. But instead of making more money or running away to India safely with their silver fortunes, Khambas spent the Chinese money for the purchase of arms and ammunition for the revolt:

Thousands of mules laden with Chinese silver dollars were sent by this route (lonely trails running southwards across the Brahmaputra) to Assam (India) to collect sealed cargoes of rifles and ammunitions purchased in great secrecy under the very nose of the Indian officials.⁷⁸

Another controversial issue in the revolt has been the charge that the Central Intelligence Agency had had some hand in it.⁷⁹ All available evidence suggests that although the rebels received one or two air-drops of weapons of American make which were said to have been routed through Taiwan, their military aid, American or Taiwanese, did not make any significant difference to the cause and character of the revolt. The arms and ammunition for the revolt were obtained in various ways. Khambas as warrior class used to be extremely fond of guns, most of which were bought during the Japanese invasion and civil war in China. They forced open several Tibetan Government armouries in Eastern, Central and Southern Tibet. As Peissel points out there was a booming gun trade in the 1950s across the Tibet-Assam (India) borders, all for the Khambas. In Kham and Southern Tibet there were a few airdrops of modern weapons. And they managed to capture some PLA weapons.⁸⁰

What political sense can be made out of this apparently baffling revolt? In order to have a revolt against the Tibetan “theocracy” as such, Tibetans must become, as a minimum condition, secularized; and to have an indigenous revolution, Tibetans must become anti-Buddhist. The whole value system must lose its meaning and sanctity. And the Dalai Lama must be proven to be a man, not a Buddha. As we have seen, the situation was far from being what the Chinese Communists would like it to have been. To impose revolution on a functioning society is like burying a man alive. In such a case one man’s conception of revolution inevitably becomes another man’s destruction. Hence, the Tibetan Rebellion.*

78. Peissel, *Cavaliers of Kham*, p. 78.

79. Most detailed report is one by Chris Mullin in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 89, No. 39 (5 September 1975).

80. Andrugtsang, *Four Rivers*, *passim*.

* I am grateful to Leo Rose, Lowell Dittmer and John Dolfin for their comments on my first draft, and also to the Ford Foundation for its grant.

Appendix: Details of PLA-Khamba Skirmishes between August 1958 and April 1959 as Recorded in the Khamba Leader's Memoirs, *Four Rivers, Six Ranges*

<i>Date</i>	<i>Arena</i>	<i>No. of Khambas</i>	<i>Casualties</i>	<i>Nature of Combat</i>
Aug. 1958	Nyemo Dukhak Sumdo	150	200 Chinese killed and more wounded. 40 Tibetans killed and 68 wounded.	Tibetan scouting troops ambushed by Chinese.
1958	Marjangla		None	Chinese ambushed Tibetans.
1958	Uyug Zomthang	100	16 Chinese trucks destroyed.	Tibetans attack Chinese.
1958	Nyemo River	20–70	700 Chinese killed.	Tibetan scouts encounter Chinese troops.
1958	Karkhang	150	200-plus Chinese killed. 1 Tibetan killed.	Tibetans attack Chinese.
1958	Jhang Yangpa Ching (Chen)	150 (?)	4 Chinese jeeps destroyed, 1 officer killed and several Chinese killed.	Tibetans on horseback attack Chinese.
1958	Dhamshung	150 (?)	All Chinese guards killed.	Tibetans attack Chinese supply depot.
1958	Dugong Lungsher	300	50 Chinese guards and 8 Tibetans killed.	Tibetans attack Chinese.
1958	Dhamshung	200	2 Tibetans killed, 21 wounded.	Chinese encircle Tibetans.
1958	Kongtsela		15 Tibetans killed and wounded, 100 Tibetans captured by Chinese; 176 Chinese killed.	Chinese ambushed and trapped Tibetans.
1958	Japhojakey	18	Several Chinese killed.	Tibetans attack Chinese camp.
1958	Po Tamo	400	550 Chinese and 20 Tibetans killed, 9 Tibetans injured.	Tibetans attack Chinese camp.
1958	Po Tamo	400 plus 29	Several Chinese and 20 Tibetans killed.	Chinese bomb.
Jan. 1959	Tengchen	130		Tibetans overrun Chinese camp.

Note: On 14 April 1959, Tsona, the Khamba base in southern Tibet fell and ended the rebellion.