

# **Tibet Oral History Project**

Interview #17C – Tsering Norbu  
May 10, 2014

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# TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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## INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #17C
2. Interviewee: Tsering Norbu
3. Age: 81
4. Date of Birth: 1935
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Khambu Chutsen
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: May 10, 2014
10. Place of Interview: Northwest Tibetan Cultural Association Community Center,  
Portland, Oregon, USA
11. Length of Interview: 2 hr 03 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter: Tenzin Yangchen (of Portland)
14. Videographer: Tony Sondag
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen (of Bylakuppe)

### **Biographical Information:**

Tsering Norbu was born in 1935 in Khambu Chutsen in Utsang, which shares a border with Sikkim in India. He belonged to a middle class family that farmed during wintertime and herded animals in the mountains during summer. He talks in length about the *chutsen* 'hot springs' that abound, which many people visited to seek cures for various types of illnesses.

Tsering Norbu was sent to live with a childless aunt in the large trading town of Phari. He recalls the first appearance of Chinese there, how initially Tibetans were deceived by their sweet and humble behavior and insistence that they would leave after helping the Tibetans. As many Tibetans fled from deeper within Tibet and passed through Phari, Tsering Norbu began to hear of the Chinese lies and suffering they imposed on the Tibetans. He gives an elaborate account of transporting weapons from India to the Volunteer Army established at Diguthang.

Tsering Norbu later enlisted in the army, but was told to help establish a new army base. They selected Nyero Dhuktsu for the location and he describes the process of recruitment of all men ages 18-60. He provides an account of an encounter with the Chinese army, which was too big to defeat, and finally the arduous escape journey to Bhutan. He tells about his lucky reunion with his wife and daughter and his father's imprisonment by the Chinese for more than 20 years.

### **Topics Discussed:**

Utsang, childhood memories, nomadic life, customs/traditions, first appearance of Chinese, Chushi Gangdrug guerrillas, resistance, escape experiences.



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## Interview #17C

**Interviewee: Tsering Norbu**

**Age: 81, Sex: Male**

**Interviewer: Marcella Adamski**

**Interview Date: May 10, 2014**

Question: *Pa-la* 'respectful term for father,' please tell us your name.

00:00:10

**Interviewee #17C: Tsering Norbu. Tsering Norbu.**

Q: His Holiness the Dalai Lama asked us to record your experiences, so that we can share your memories with many generations of Tibetans, the Chinese and the rest of the world. Your memories will help us to document the true history, culture and beliefs of the Tibetan people. Do you give your permission for the Tibet Oral History Project to use this interview?

**#17C: Yes, this is very good. We are very grateful that His Holiness the Dalai Lama's wishes are being fulfilled. Thank you.**

Q: Thank you for offering to share your story with us. During this interview if you wish to take a break or stop at anytime, please let me know.

**#17C: Yes, of course.**

Q: If you do not wish to answer a question or talk about something, let me know.

**#17C: Okay.**

Q: If this interview was shown in Tibet or China would this be a problem for you?

**#17C: There will be no problem, none at all. [You] can show it anywhere. Please show it in China.**

Q: Tsering Norbu-*la*, where were you born?

00:02:09

**#17C: Khambu Chutsen. Khambu Chutsen.**

Q: And what province is that in?

**#17C: It is in U and shares a border with Gangtok, Sikkim and same as Kalimpong.**

Q: Was there any large temple or monastery nearby?

**#17C: There is no large monastery but two small ones, two small ones. One consists of monks and it's called Dima Gonpa.**

Q: Dima Gonpa?

**#17C: Dima Gonpa. There were around 10 monks but they were not *dhomtsang* 'celibate.'**

Q: What does *dhomtsang* mean?

**#17C: [The monks] were not without women. [Those] with wives are different. One that does not take a wife is called *dhomtsang*. [Monks of this monastery] were not celibate. They assembled once a year on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tibetan lunar month. They assembled for three days and held prayers in the mornings. In the afternoons they drank *chang* 'home-brewed beer,' sang songs and danced.**

00:04:20

**In case of deaths in the village, the monks of this monastery came and performed the prayers and rituals. Others were not allowed to do and also there were none that did it. [They] did it.**

Q: From Dima Gonpa?

**#17C: Yes, from Dima Gonpa.**

Q: *Pa-la*, what year were you born and how old are you today?

**#17C: [I] was born on 4<sup>th</sup> April of '35. [I am] 81 years old now.**

Q: How many people were in your immediate family when you were born?

**#17C: There were eight people: five sons, a daughter and parents.**

Q: What were your parents' names?

**#17C: Father's name was Pasang and mother Shilo.**

Q: If there were five sons, where were you in that lineup of sons?

**#17C: I am the third in line.**

Q: *Pa-la*, can you tell us something about your family, your parents? What did they do for a living?

**#17C: The livelihood was like this. [Parents were] *samadok*, nomads in summer and farmed during wintertime. *Samadok*.**

Q: When you were doing farming, were there many other homes in your village? Was it a small village? Can you describe it, what it looked like to me?

00:07:24

**#17C: It was a small family. The region was very large with around 150 families spread about.**

Q: Could you say what level of economic status your family was? Were they poor, middle class, very wealthy?

**#17C: My family was middle class. There were not the rich or the poor; the majority were similar. [They] were middle class.**

Q: *Pa-la*, do you have any favorite memories of your childhood that you think about fondly?

**#17C: Yes, [I] have such. [I] was a nomad as a child and took the animals up [the mountain] to graze, milked and drank milk, made butter. It was a lot of fun. Farmland was fertile and [we] could grow grains and every type of food. The region was very good. In general the region was beautiful with hills and green grass. Flowers grew naturally and there was sweet smell as one walked by. It was an extremely happy place.**

Q: How did you spend your days?

00:09:54

**#17C: Oh, days were spent solely on work because at around the age of 8, 9, 10 and 11, I went to the hills during summertime to graze the animals, the hills to graze animals. Once you came down in the winter, it was time to cultivate the fields. Grains, potatoes and various vegetables were grown. It was all work.**

Q: So in the winter the animals came down to graze?

**#17C: Yes, [the animals] came down.**

Q: When you would take them up to graze in the summer, how long would you be away from your home?

**#17C: Around three months, from the 6<sup>th</sup> month...[calculates]. [We] stayed around three months.**

Q: Really? Three months?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yeah, starting from the 6<sup>th</sup> month, then 6, 7, 8 until about the 9<sup>th</sup> month.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: The 9<sup>th</sup> month in Tibetan calendar. What's that exact in...?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Usually the 1<sup>st</sup> month in the Tibetan calendar comes between February-March.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Oh, okay. This would be July, August, September, October.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yeah.

**#17C: [Nods]**

Q: Three months at a time. Who would go up into the mountains with you to graze the animals?

**#17C: Another person would come. Sometimes father would come and at times another person. My older brother also came.**

[Interpreter interprets as: Sometimes my father would come with me. Sometimes just some other people and sometimes my eldest son would also come with me.]

Q: Eldest son?

[Interviewer to interpreter]: His eldest son?

**#17C: The oldest one.**

Q: Your oldest child?

**#17C: No, not mine.**

Q: Then?

00:12:06

**#17C: My father's child.**

[Interpreter interprets as: Oh, my eldest brother.]

Q: Yes, because he was not married yet. He was still a little boy.

**#17C: [Laughs] It wasn't far from home. One could return in the morning and leave in the evening. It was quite close.**

Q: Oh, [you] left in the morning and returned in the evening?

**#17C: No, in case one needed to come [home] sometimes. Otherwise, one stayed there, herded the animals, did the milking, churned milk, made butter, made cheese; there was a lot of work to do. Then one grazed [the animals] here and grazed [them] there.**

Q: What did you do with the butter after you churned it?

**#17C: The butter's taken to Phari and sold. Butter and cheese were taken to Phari and sold.**

**[The butter and cheese] were sold in return for tea, sugar, salt and such.**

Q: How far from where you were in the mountains grazing and then churning the milk into butter...how far was that place from Phari?

00:13:37

**#17C: It's close, hardly a day's journey, about eight hours or perhaps six hours.**

Q: On foot?

**#17C: On foot and on horseback.**

Q: What do you remember about Phari? Can you describe the town?

**#17C: Please wait. We will get to Phari later. We forgot something about Khambu. You know, Khambu Chutsen. *Chutsen* 'hot spring'...**

Q: By *chutsen* you mean where there's hot water?

**#17C: Where hot water comes out of the earth in the mountains.**

Q: Yes, yes.

**#17C: There are 12 different hot springs. They are said to have occurred during the time of Guru Padmasambhava but I don't know the story. Anyway, there are 12 different hot springs. The 12 hot springs can cure all types of illnesses.**

**Illnesses the hot springs cure are nervous disorder, hypertension, hypertension and then those who suffer from sinus, sinus. Then it cures wounds that normally fail to heal. Then if one has broken bones, it cures bone fractures. And then there is...there is one more.**

Q: Was this right near where you lived? Is that what we're saying or up in the hills?

00:15:52

**#17C: It is in the village close to where we lived.**

Q: Did many people come?

**#17C: People came from many other places during autumn in the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> [Tibetan lunar] months.**

**Then there is one hot spring called *bheda*, which is known as TB [tuberculosis] here. It is called TB here.**

Q: The disease TB?

**#17C: Yes, TB. We call it *bheda*, *bheda*. This hot spring is called Bhegen Zing, Bhegen Zing, Bhegen Zing.**

Q: Bhegen Zing?

**#17C: *Zing*, water body.**

Q: *Zing*, water body.

**#17C: This has a lot of stories. Only those suffering from this illness visited there. Even if others did go, it did not cure. For instance, if I were suffering from that illness, [I] would go there, drink a mug of the water in the morning, eat breakfast; drink a mugful at noon, bathe and eat; drink a mugful in the evening, eat and sleep. One must do this for one week. If the person was going to be cured, in one week he ate better and felt better. The cure worked in one week. If there was not any improvement in a week and [the patient] got worse, then there was no cure and it was better to go back. There is a saying when one has to return. *Bhegen mukchoe nana dugyuji* ‘If afflicted with tuberculosis, prepare to depart.’ *Bhegen mukpo*, *bhegen mukpo* is the worst type [of TB].**

Q: Is *mukpo* the worst type?

00:17:27

**#17C: Yes, it means that one afflicted by this should prepare to die, prepare to depart. *Rangpon dalangna dugyuji* ‘If in enmity with the leader, prepare to depart.’ If you do not get along with the leader of your village, you should prepare to depart else you would be expelled. There is such a story.**

Q: Is *bhegen* or *bheda* the disease TB?

**#17C: It is the disease TB.**

Q: You can’t do anything about it.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: If that hot spring doesn’t cure you, then there’s nothing else you can do about it.

Q: Did you ever go to this hot spring?

**#17C: Of course, [I] miss the hot springs these days but cannot go. [We] visited the hot springs once during springtime and once in the fall. [People] went in springtime at the time grass began to sprout. It was suitable to go there when all the grass and flowers bloomed. One went there once again in the fall when the grass dried.**

Q: Can you describe what it looked like that you saw with your eyes?

**#17C: The hot springs?**

Q: Yes, when [you] visited the hot springs.

00:19:30

**#17C: At the hot spring you went and bathed in the water. You were cured of any problems you had. It is like that. There are many types of hot springs if you felt a little unwell. I had problems with the nerves. The water helped.**

Q: What month is that? Which are the spring months? The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> months?

**#17C: It's the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> months.**

Q: The 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tibetan lunar months?

**#17C: Yes.**

Q: Is the spring water coming out of a rock or is it a pool? What...can you describe what it looks like?

**#17C: It is not a pool. There is a very big mountain, a big mountain and at about this height [points in front] a piece of wood is inserted through which water comes out. Then a structure has been built [moves arms to indicate around the water source] with the roof open to the sky at the water source to let out the steam. All around were structures for people to sit. Everybody bathed in the water there.**

Q: Is the structure like a house?

**#17C: Yes, it is a circular house with a sort of porch where people could sit. Each person made a partition and sat there. A wall is constructed around the water source.**

Q: Did people go into the water?

**#17C: [Nods]**

Q: Like up to your neck or...?

**#17C: It is up to here [indicates neck] and the water is hot.**

Q: Did people take off their clothes or did they wear their clothes in?

**#17C: Clothes were off except for underwear.**

Q: How hot was the water?

00:22:06

**#17C: It is quite hot.**

Q: Did it have any smell like sulphur?

[Interpreter interprets as: What's the smell like?]

**#17C: You know we have *musi* 'sulphur'? What is it called?**

Q: What's the smell like? For instance, is it salty or what kind of smell?

**#17C: It is smells like a chemical.**

Q: Chemical?

**#17C: What do we call it? It has a certain smell.**

Q: Can you remember anything that it smelt like?

**#17C: [I] cannot remember anything. The substance...it smells like a chemical...**

Q: Is the smell bad?

**#17C: Yes, somewhat pungent. The water is very good. It really helps. We take the treatment for broken bones. Otherwise, there are not any hospitals. It was just the water for all of us. Everybody relied on the water. If [the hot springs] were in America presently, one can make a lot of money. One did not [in Tibet] and led a god-fearing life. Now the Chinese have developed it greatly and are making a lot of money.**

Q: No longer the isolated pristine thing.

[Interpreter interprets question as: Were there many? Did [you] mention that there were 12?]

**#17C: There were 12.**

Q: Twelve of them? Were they...was each one for some different illness?

00:24:05

**#17C: Each one was for a different illness. There are a lot of stories but I am able to recount only so much. There are many tales about the origin a long time ago and of the Guru Padmasambhava's aspirations but I can only relate so much. I was young then.**

Q: I was going to ask.

[Interpreter interprets part of above statement: But I don't know much about it.]

Q: People have been coming to these springs for many generations, hundreds of years?

**#17C: Yes, the hot springs existed since long ago. People used to come. People always arrived in the fall and in springtime. More came in the fall. There were Bhutanese, from Kalimpong in India, from Dromo, Toe, Shigatse, Gyangtse. There were those that suffered from nerve disorder and were brought in baskets. After bathing in the hot spring, [they] could walk. I witnessed it.**

Q: A good healing spa.

**#17C: Yes.**

Q: Please have something to drink. We need to move on and we'll try to understand...*Pa-la*, can you please tell us when did things start to change in your childhood? Was there anything noticeable that happened?

00:26:20

**#17C: The change...at that time people in Khambu were very good. I am talking about Khambu. The older people were god-fearing, playful, jolly and not much literate. If money was to be given, no appointments were made nor receipts prepared. Everybody was god-fearing and extremely harmonious.**

**There was unhappiness once the Chinese appeared. Now I have left Khambu and arrived in Phari. Now I will move on to Phari. Perhaps [I] was 12 or 13 years old. There were five sons in the family, many sons. A paternal aunt of mine lived in Phari. Paternal aunt was childless, so I was given to her as a son.**

Q: What was she like?

**#17C: Paternal aunt was good. [She] scolded a lot but was good of heart. I lived at home until the age of 18 and attended school for a year or two.**

Q: Was that...was it...were you happy to go to such an interesting place like Phari or did you miss your family or both?

**#17C: [I] missed [my] family and had a very difficult time. Looking at the road that led to my village made [me] happy and I loved meeting visitors from my village. They would give me money and [I] was overjoyed.**

Q: Why do you think your parents wanted you to go and live with...it was an aunt? Was that your mother's sister or your father's sister?

[Interpreter interprets question as: Is the paternal aunt your father's sister?]

00:29:45

**#17C: Yes, my father's.**

Q: Was she your father's sister? A paternal aunt is father's sister, right?

**#17C: Father's sister. So she is my paternal aunt.**

Q: Why did your parents send [you] to live with paternal aunt?

**#17C: There [at home] were many children while here paternal aunt did not have any children. So [she] constantly asked for a child and [I] was given. That was how [I] was given. It was five or six years before [I] turned 18 and there were duties at home. There were a *dzo* 'male animal bred from a yak and cow' and three or four *dzomo* 'female animal bred from a yak and a cow.'**

Q: *Dzo* is [a mixture] of yak and...?

**#17C: Yak and...**

Q: Were there three?

**#17C: There were around three *dzomo*. [I] milked them, sold the milk, cleaned the home and cooked until the age of 18. At 18 I got married.**

Q: How was the marriage arranged?

**#17C: They arranged [the marriage].**

Q: By your father and mother?

**#17C: Yes, father and mother, the stepfather and stepmother.**

Q: Oh, by paternal aunt?

**#17C: Yes, paternal aunt.**

Q: Were there the paternal aunt and her husband?

**#17C: There was the husband.**

Q: The one you were living with?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yes.

00:31:42

**#17C: They arranged and [I] got married.**

Q: Really? Did you see the bride before?

**#17C: [Shakes head] [I] never did. That is the custom in Tibet. In a way this Tibetan custom seems stupid. Not having seen [the bride] seems stupid. In another way, it is very stable because if a bride was needed three or four [girls] were selected. Names of four or**

**five girls having a stable family background, good people, good-natured were taken. Then my birth sign was compared with the girls' to find out which matched. Then a divination was consulted, astrological calculations done and the best one's hand was sought. That is how it was done.**

Q: I see, a lot. Before you got married you mentioned that you went to school for a little while in Phari. Where did you go to school and for how long?

**#17C: The school was called...there weren't any special government schools as such. It was a private family called Lhakang Dungyi-la.**

Q: Was Lhakang Dungyi the name of the school?

**#17C: Lhakang was the family and Dungyi was the head of the family that was an accomplished clerk. He was kind enough to teach any child that was brought.**

Q: But you know we're talking at that point as you said you were just a young man at 12 and what was Phari like? It was supposed to be a very unusual trading city, right? So that would be about 1942. What was Phari like?

00:35:05

**#17C: Initially [I] felt totally lost as it was a large town. [I] did not know where to go and was sort of lost. Then [I] attended school and became familiar. It was a nice place once you became accustomed. [Phari] is very large.**

Q: What kind of things was the town famous for?

**#17C: Phari is a place that is centrally located for trade. For instance, this [gestures off camera] is Phari right in the middle. The Bhutanese came through there and all the goods from India were brought there. Then goods from everywhere like Lhasa, Shigatse, Gyangtse, Thoe were transported there. Trading was excellent. We did not know how to trade those days. Looking back now, [the place] was commercially excellent, excellent business. Those going to India left from there. That was the route towards Gangtok and Kalimpong in India. Wool and many other things were transported.**

**Wool's produced in Tibet and annually around 10,000 bales of wool were transported.**

Q: From Tibet?

**#17C: From Tibet to Phari and from Phari to India. Ten thousand.**

Q: Ten thousand bales?

**#17C: Bales. Around 7, 8, 9 or 10,000, a great number was transported. Later the Chinese arrived and a whole lot of *dhayen* 'Chinese silver coins,' many thousands flowed.**

Q: Is *dhayen* the Chinese silver?

**#17C: The round coin.**

00:37:55

**Now [I] will begin [the story] about the appearance of Chinese. When the Chinese initially appeared in Phari, there were 50 Chinese, 50. Ten of the Chinese stayed in our home.**

Q: Ten Chinese?

**#17C: Ten.**

Q: Were these soldiers?

**#17C: [They] were Chinese soldiers. When the 50 Chinese arrived, 10 stayed with us, and 10 each in other better-placed houses. The Chinese were very humble then; humble and...what to say? They stayed in our house and cooked there. The Chinese cleaned up and were extremely humble. While leaving they said, "You have been 'bound'." We did not know what "bound" meant. "We have come to liberate. Once that is done and you are happy and good, we will leave and not remain." [The Chinese] said that and we did not understand what "bound" was.**

**[The Chinese] said that. Five, six or seven months after they had left, a great number of Chinese arrived. The biggest business people in Phari were the Sandhotsang and Pondhatsang. They owned nice houses where the soldiers stayed. A little further away was Dromo...**

Q: Yes, Dromo.

**#17C: Dromo Shasimha. A military garrison was established there and here as well. The route to Dromo ran between mountains and was narrow. Vehicles could not pass through except for horses and mules. They [Chinese soldiers] worked day and night cutting away rocks to create a road.**

00:40:59

**A large number of soldiers had come. There were very good forests in Dromo, dense forests. They freely cut them and transported in trucks for years. [The Chinese] constructed roads and such. Then our army called Tensung Dhanglang Maga 'National Volunteer Defense Army' was established at Diguthang. Perhaps it was around the beginning of 1958. Anyway, an army was established.**

Q: Where is that?

**#17C: Diguthang is towards Lhoka.**

Q: Towards Lhoka.

**#17C: It's somewhere in Lhoka called Diguthang.**

Q: Diwuthang?

**#17C: Yes, Diguthang.**

Q: Diguthang?

**#17C: Yes. The area is said to resemble a *di* ‘knife’ and it is a *thang* ‘plain.’ [The army] was established there. After losing their territory in Kham and Amdo all the people had fled and were living in Lhasa. Many of them held discussions and decided to establish an army there and then the unit was started.**

Q: Before we get into that, can we just go back to the very beginning when the Chinese first came? They stayed, you said about 10 of them moved into your house with your aunt and you and her husband. What were your thoughts? You are a young man and here are 10 strangers living in your house from another country. They don’t speak Tibetan. What did you think? What did you see with your own eyes and what did you think about it?

00:44:06

**#17C: They had an interpreter.**

Q: And your feelings?

**#17C: There was not any feeling as such because I was quite young then. [I] wondered about it. However, the older people seemed scared and called [the Chinese] *gungten* ‘Communist’ or some such thing. [They] feared the *gungten* and did not trust [them]. They said, “These *gungten* are not good.” I did not take much notice. They were nice; sweet tongued and gave presents like treats. [We] were happy.**

**There was not anything then. [The Chinese] paid good money, whatever the price quoted for anything that was sold, even if the price was doubled.**

**That is how it was.**

Q: And then they left and even more Chinese moved in with the more wealthier families. Did you hear in your own family, were they getting nervous about this happening?

**#17C: Oh yes, there was [nervousness] then. By then people knew fairly well and said, “This is not good.” However, except for talking about it there was not anything to do. [People] spoke about it saying this was not good, but except for saying that it was not good—what to say—the government administrators were there in Lhasa and for us, the subjects there was nothing but to live in fear. One went about doing business and...**

00:46:22

**Then there were the traders from whom they [Chinese] ordered requirements from India and paid heavily. So the traders became engrossed in [their] business. Then the Chinese gave money to poor families and bad people and they turned into some sort of sycophants.**

**[The sycophants] sneaked about this and that and created misunderstandings. So such things took place.**

Q: So you were at that time...are we like... is this around 1958 or early 50s? What time are we talking about?

**#17C: Which one?**

Q: The time when the Chinese came?

**#17C: It was around '48 or the '50s.**

Q: '48 or '50?

**#17C: Yes, the first time [the Chinese appeared]. Then [they] gradually continued to make roads as more soldiers arrived. They spoke of one thing and did another. They are real liars.**

Q: You weren't 18 yet. You weren't ready to get married. This is more like when you were 14.

00:48:15

**#17C: I married at 19.**

Q: How old were you when the Chinese appeared?

**#17C: Perhaps I was around 18 or 19 then.**

Q: Were [you] already married?

**#17C: [I] cannot say exactly.**

Q: So then you mentioned that a volunteer army was established. What did you know about it? How did you hear about that volunteer army?

**#17C: It was said, "An army is being established there. Anybody wishing to enlist as a soldier should come." From Utsang...many single Tibetans...it was one's wish and everyone that desired to went there. Everybody was there.**

Q: How was the message to enlist relayed?

**#17C: It was relayed from one person to another, "I am also going and you should. Do not stay back. This is for the cause of the Buddha dharma and we should go." In that way [people] gathered there. We were living in Phari then, the army was there and in Kalimpong—you know Kalimpong? It's in India – there were our representatives. The representatives were some Kungo 'Your Presence, title of address for government officials,' named Jampa Tsondu, Thupten Nyechay-la and then who else? Thupten**

**Nyechay-la and then Jampa Tsondu-la, Thupten Nyechay-la... Who else was there? [Refers to notes and laughs] [I] cannot remember. And then...[continues to refer to notes]**

[Interpreter to interviewee]: *Pa-la*, look up the notes while I interpret the earlier part to her.

**#17C: Go ahead.**

00:50:58

**In Kalimpong was an organization of the Tibetan Government and officials working there were [reads from note] Gyalo Thondup-la, then Shakapa Wangchuk Dhonden...**

Q: Shakapa?

**#17C: Yes, Shakapa.**

Q: Is it Wangchuk Dhonden?

**#17C: Wangchuk Dhonden. It is Wangchuk Dhonden or some such thing. It is Shakapa Wangchuk-la...**

Q: It should be okay to mention as Wangchuk-la.

**#17C: Then Jamyang Khenchung...**

Q: Jamyang Khenchung?

**#17C: Yes. Lobsang Gyaltsen...**

Q: Lobsang Gyaltsen.

**#17C: Yes. Tsidung Thupten Nyechay...**

Q: Thupten Nyechay.

**#17C: Jampa Tsondue. Jampa Wangdu.**

Q: Jampa Wangdu?

**#17C: Yes, they were the ones working there.**

Q: I see.

**#17C: They were working there and had talks with the army in Diguthang, which [I] do not know about. Items and letters to and fro used to get sent to Phari and in Phari we received them.**

Q: What was the purpose of this army getting started?

00:52:45

**#17C: There were many reasons and what I heard was that they [Chinese] had already liberated and killed and done everything in Kham and Amdo. [The people] had escaped and were in Phari. There were a large number of people and the Chinese said this to the Tibetan Government, “Lhasa has become very dirty. There are lots of maggots in Lhasa and these must be destroyed.” The maggots referred to the Kham and Amdo people. They were many and “must be destroyed.” That was one. Secondly, it was the government’s future plan—it was obvious that Tibet would be lost—to create a passage to India through Diguthang by subduing the Chinese.**

Q: For His Holiness the Dalai Lama to pass?

**#17C: Yes, for [His Holiness’s] passage by the Tibetan Government in the event of losing [Tibet]. It was planning for the far future. Those were the objectives.**

Q: These were what you heard, right?

**#17C: Yes, [I] heard. These people, the maggots would avoid capture by the Chinese by establishing an army there and the plan for the future was to create a route for His Holiness the Dalai Lama without Chinese presence. These are political strategies.**

Q: Yes, so the Chinese, if I follow you, said that there are a lot of maggots, worms that we have to get rid of that are coming into Lhasa from Kham and Amdo.

00:55:42

**#17C: [The Chinese] were hinting. That is correct. People of Kham and Amdo were being arrested later, prior to the attack. There were many instances in my area.**

**The army was there [in Diguthang], the representative office in Kalimpong and we in Phari. The representative office would send letters and weapons—weapons like guns. It was not possible to send large guns but small ones and bullets. You have the *matin* [butter-like grease], *matin*...**

Q: Butter tin?

**#17C: You have those big tin containers. [The guns and bullets] were packed and lined with cotton at the top and then topped with *matin*. The *matin*’s on top but below it were the guns and bullets. We [handled] many such loads. They send from Kalimpong to us in Phari, we received and dispatched to Khangmar and from Khangmar to Nangatse where it was sent to the army base.**

Q: And the weapons were to defend the Tibetan men who were going to be arrested or attacked by the Chinese?

00:57:45

**#17C: A military base was established in Diguthang to fight the Chinese. [The guns and bullets] were for that purpose.**

Q: The army, the Khampas in Kham?

**#17C: The people were from Kham.**

Q: The people were Khampa but the military camp was at Diguthang?

**#17C: Yes, at Diguthang, which is in Utsang.**

Q: It's in Utsang. So they were actually getting weapons for the military base for the Tibetan volunteer army. Who...was it the Tibetan Government? Who started that volunteer army, the Dalai Lama's office or part of the government?

**#17C: It was the Tibetan Government but done in secrecy, secretly without the knowledge of the Chinese. [The Tibetan Government] pretended not to be involved because they would greatly... There was the Tibetan Government, and then there was Andrug Gonpo Tashi. Andrug Gonpo Tashi.**

Q: He wasn't a Tibetan government official?

00:58:56

**#17C: [He] was not an official but from Kham. Andrug Gonpo Tashi and Amdo Jinpa. It was Amdo Jinpa for Amdo and from Kham it was Andrug Gonpo Tashi. The planning was done secretly and it was announced that a golden throne would be offered to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and called for people to come and make donations that moved everybody. Once [the people] came it was revealed, "Come there [Diguthang] as [we] have made such plans. Let's move there." So everybody went there. Otherwise, it was not possible to hold a gathering.**

Q: But *pa-la*, can you please tell me like where were you—this is an important Tibetan history but I need to know where you were—while this was going on and what you were doing and what you saw? Can you tell us from your own experience about this part like were you helping to transport the guns or were you joining the army? What were you doing?

**#17C: I was right in Phari because the things that came from there [Kalimpong, India] were taken delivery of in Phari. There were many of us, in secret. We were 10 clandestine people and I was doing the job. The 10 were...those among the 10 people were Dawa-la, who was a clerk of the Pondhatsang, Apo Lobsang or some such person of Sandhotsang, Khenrab Tenzin of Tsatutsang...**

Q: Sherab Tenzin?

**#17C: Khenrab.**

Q: Khenrab Tenzin.

**#17C: Khenrab Tenzin and then Apo Chonga from Dayab, then Apo Lobsang Jinpa or some such person, then... There were 10 people. Then...what is the name? [I] forget. How many people is it?**

Q: Six including you.

**#17C: It is six? [I] cannot recall four people.**

Q: It's all right if [you] cannot remember.

**#17C: [I] cannot remember. Anyway, these were the people. There was the Chushi Gangdrug, the Volunteer Army from where letters came and we would hold discussions. I was asked to do the job and I did it. In case of emergencies we were to send messages clandestinely. I had to take delivery of the things and forward them. I would take delivery of letters and things and continue to forward them. This was done two or three times. [We] could not do more as it was extremely difficult.**

Q: *Pa-la*, what made you get involved? What were you feeling in your heart that would want you to take this kind of dangerous risk?

01:04:06

**#17C: I was young then and had no fear. That is one and secondly, the older people used to say, "Fighting the Chinese..." War is different now from what it was long ago. They said it was not a big deal. Secondly, the army establishment had been formed and this was our duty. It was everyone's responsibility. Some engaging in and some doing nothing...[We] worked clandestinely and if exposed that was it. One worked clandestinely and kept quiet and there was nothing. [I] do not know but there was no fear.**

Q: Did your aunt know what you were doing?

**#17C: [She] knew, the family members. Our family members knew but we had to remain silent.**

Q: I know I'm jumping ahead but when you look back now, do you realize what a big thing it was that the Chinese came into Tibet? I mean, you said the older people thought it was no big deal to fight the Chinese but when you look back now, what do you think?

**#17C: A lot happened to me around those times. There was not any fear then. We used to listen to news over the radio then in Phari. News used to be broadcast from Delhi then. The news broadcaster from Delhi was Lobsang something—[I] forget the name. [I] used to listen to the news everyday. One day it said, "The Dalai Lama has arrived in Mon Tawang [India]. There has been no problem and [he] has reached Indian Territory." [I] heard that.**

01:06:49

**[I] heard that. [I] heard that and did not much...but the elders [shows expression of shock] "oh" as it was so sudden. It had been quiet for there were no telephones; [we] were stupid.**

**They were suddenly filled with fear. The very next day the Chinese summoned us for a meeting, called a meeting. What the Chinese said at the meeting was, “Rebels have abducted the Dalai Lama. Do not fear for we will escort [him] back. You need not worry. However, from this day onwards the name of the Tibetan Government and the three great monasteries cannot be mentioned. The Tibetan Government no longer exists. What exists is the day of happiness that dawns for you from tomorrow under the leadership of the Communist Party. From tomorrow onwards...we will not investigate into [your] involvement with the rebels up until now, but from tomorrow onwards if anyone associates with the rebels, the whole family will be annihilated. The Communist Party laws will be made known in a week and we will talk about it.”**

**That was stated. After hearing that all the people dispersed. We were not too...but the elders were shocked and speechless. Everybody was stunned. Now one could no longer remain as it were. What to do now? There were the likeminded, the 10 of us [who decided], “We can no longer remain. Let’s go join the army.” Earlier more soldiers were to arrive for which we had made many preparations but [they] could not. Then we decided and went to the military base. I possessed three horses and mules and we were three people with five guns and 500 bullets. Likewise, all the others had brought whatever each one possessed.**

Q: With your 10 friends [to join the army]?

01:10:44

**#17C: Together. Some of them came and some did not but there were other people that joined.**

Q: Where did you go?

**#17C: Went to the military base.**

Q: Diguthang?

**#17C: Yes, towards Diguthang but did not reach Diguthang. There was the meeting and then [we] planned to go. However, we normally consult the protective deities and I suggested [we] evaluate [our] dreams that night. [Laughs]**

**[Closes eyes] “Now this is the situation I am in. It is an emergency. Is it better to go to the military base or India?” India is two days away, close; it is close. It is easy to go. It is just five or 10 minutes to Bhutan. It is easy to go. “Which is a better place to go? Please, Protective Deity and Triple Gem, give me guidance because I do not know,” I said. When I woke up in the morning...[I] had dreamed of going away on a white horse. Oh, it is better to go there and this was decided.**

Q: Where’s there?

**#17C: To the military base.**

**Then we went with the horses towards—what is the name of the place? Nyero, Nyero Dakton. Nyero Dakton.**

Q: Nyero Dakton. What happened there?

01:13:02

**#17C: There was a government office or a district administration. We went there and then our names were sent to the army. An application was dispatched informing of our arrival and to please enlist us in the record books of the army. The military was based at Dhuwazong.**

Q: Dhuwazong.

**#17C: Dhuwazong, the main army.**

Q: This isn't the one at Diguthang?

**#17C: It is not Diguthang. [The application] was sent to Dhuwazong.**

**And then a reply came from there, “Your letter’s been received. Do not come here. A unit has to be established there [where you are]. So you should stay there.” A messenger called Dewa-*la*, a junior soldier was dispatched from there. He arrived [with the message] “You should remain there and set up a unit. We will dispatch 500 cavalrymen to help you.” [We] were told this.**

01:14:33

**So we stayed at Nyero and then had to discuss about where to establish the army base, and after its formation there was requirement of food, drink and everything. [People of] the district will not obey if we asked them, as it was the Administrator who had to issue orders. We discussed and reached a decision on three points. The first point was establishing the unit at Nyero Dhuktsu, Nyero Dhuktsu, be established at Nyero Dhuktsu. Then the people were to be requested to donate whatever food, *tsampa* ‘flour made from roasted barley,’ butter, etc. to the army. Then the third issue was the 18-60 [law].**

**In Tibet there was the [law called] 18-60 in times of war that meant those above 18 and below 60 should join the army. So we formulated a letter to the 18-60, those that were between 18 and 60, “One day we will send out a message and when that message is given although there are no guns, you are to rush armed with stick and rocks to destroy bridges or whatever needs to be done.” The decision was taken on three points.**

**We established the military base there. Later there were 150 soldiers. Our military base was close to Gyangtse, close to Gyangtse, and at Gyangtse was a big Chinese garrison. Then we formed spies that would observe what the soldiers did and information came each day, “Nothing is happening today. [The Chinese soldiers] are just there.”**

**One day in addition to the usual, another letter came later that said, “You should make preparations. The garrison in Gyangtse has decided to attack.” There are three valleys, a**

road leading to Khangmar, a road that led to where we were based of which [I] cannot remember the name, and another on the other side—what is it, [I] forget the name—Lungmar Shikha. It is called Lungmar Shikha.

Q: Lungmar?

01:17:37

**#17C: Lungmar Shikha. There are three valleys.**

Q: Roads?

**#17C: Roads, three valleys. “The soldiers will leave at 1 o’clock tonight. The cavalrymen will lead the army, cavalrymen: those riding horses; the second will be the foot soldiers...”**

Q: The Tibetan soldiers...

**#17C: Chinese, Chinese.**

Q: Oh, the Chinese soldiers...

**#17C: These are all Chinese.**

Q: First the cavalrymen...

**#17C: “...the cavalrymen. The second [group] will be the foot soldiers, the third will be arms and ammunitions like guns and bullets, the fourth [group] will be those that will take the injured and the bodies.” [I] think the fifth is rations or something. “So make preparations.”**

Q: Does rations mean food?

**#17C: Food. “This is it. So make preparations.” Such a letter came.**

Q: Wow, interesting. *Pa-la*, continue to tell us what happened next.

01:19:42

**#17C: The message was received at around 12 o’clock at night. Everybody assembled. There were many army units. We were at [Nyeru] Dhuktsu, then at Ralung, Nangatse, Paytse, Talung, The main army base was at Dhuwazong, the main at Dhuwazong. Then we fought at Lungmar Shikha; called Lungmar Shikha, Lungmar Shikha. The cavalrymen arrived [at Lungmar Shikha] and we, the soldiers arrived there [too]. There was a military unit already based there, so its soldiers had fought earlier. Initially cavalrymen fought cavalrymen and the entire cavalrymen lost.**

Q: Tibetan cavalrymen?

**#17C: Yes, Tibetans. A large number of Chinese were also killed. Cavalrymen and then foot soldiers arrived and the Chinese were like this [moves all fingers to indicate great number]. We were there but did not have many weapons. Those that possessed weapons fought but those without just watched saying, “What to do? What to do?” Gunshots rang close by [indicates front] and there was artillery firing from there [indicates back]. Gunshots rang out close by and the sound of *tsa, tsa, tsa* [gunfire] all around.**

**Then I became afraid. That was the time [I] got really scared. “[I] am certain to die,” [I] thought. “The children and wife are left at home. Alas, everything is finished! Had [I] gone to India [I] would not face this problem. With no weapons here [I] am certain to die. Wish [I] die a quick death.” [I] was stunned and very scared.**

Q: What exactly was happening, *pa-la*? Had the Chinese actually left their base and were they attacking you? Were you in a fight with them?

01:22:43

**#17C: Yes, [the Chinese] had left their base almost 40 or 50 miles away. Now it was a proper encounter. Our soldiers were there and then fought.**

Q: And you were in the army?

**#17C: [I] was among the fighting troops. I was at the rear of the group. Being young I was right at the back. The younger ones stayed in the rear taking care of the things. The older ones went ahead and many perished. [I] cannot even talk about it. Many people perished. [I] cannot even talk about it. It is pointless. [I] was terrified. And then nothing was left.**

**Then a commander, a Tibetan commander came there who said, “There are no more soldiers. Our older and good soldiers, those in possession have exhausted the bullets or died. Everything is over. Whereas, there is no end to the Chinese. Now we have to flee. Unless [we] flee, should we lose one soldier, that is one gone; should two be lost, that is two gone. There is no supplement for the loss of bullets. It is a difficult situation for us. We must flee.” Then [I] fled.**

Q: Where did this battle take place, *pa-la*?

**#17C: It was Lungmar Shikha.**

Q: Lungmar Shikha?

**#17C: Lungmar Shikha.**

Q: Shikha means a place, right?

01:24:53

**#17C: Shikha is the place.**

Q: Was there some sort of a meadow?

**#17C: It is a gentle hill.**

Q: It's a hill?

**#17C: It is gentle, not very steep.**

Q: Is it like between Shigatse and Phari?

**#17C: Gyangtse.**

Q: Gyangtse.

**#17C: Gyangtse, close to Gyangtse.**

**Nearby was a Tibetan military garrison in Ralung.**

Q: Close to the Chinese military base in Gyangtse was the [Tibetan] military unit in Ralung?

**#17C: Yes, the military unit in Ralung. The encounter took place near the military unit in Ralung.**

Q: I see. What kind of weapons did the Chinese have?

**#17C: Oh, they possessed a lot.**

Q: A lot of weapons, superior.

01:25:54

**The Chinese fight in a different manner. The Chinese Army moves forward as planned and there is no retreating. In the case of Indians they fight as planned if [they] are winning and if not, pull back. There is no retreating for the Chinese but moving straight ahead.**

Q: What was the Tibetan technique?

**#17C: I have not seen the Tibetan Army fighting though [they] did brag. [I] do not know. I did not see.**

Q: The Tibetans did fight the Chinese.

**#17C: Yes, yes.**

Q: Did the Tibetans make any plans at that time?

**#17C: There were no strategies as such. It was done randomly; everyone just fought. [They] just fought with knives. If there were no guns it was knives; there was not anything else.**

Q: Were they on horseback or on foot?

01:27:13

**#17C: Horses, horses, initially on horses.**

Q: Horses. Some had horses, the Tibetans.

**#17C: The first [group] was on horseback and the latter were foot soldiers.**

Q: The Tibetan horse soldiers?

**#17C: Yes, [the Tibetans] had horses but not everyone did.**

Q: Were any Tibetans captured? If they weren't killed, were they captured?

**#17C: Of course, [they] were captured. Not just soldiers but the civilians were made to suffer a lot. [They] underwent a lot.**

Q: Were the local civilians helping in the battle?

**#17C: [Speaks before question is interpreted] Because the civilians helped us, the Tensung Dhanglang Maga. [The Chinese accused them] saying, "You have helped them." People were captured and treated badly.**

Q: But the fight was actually out of doors. It wasn't in a town or a village area.

01:28:36

**#17C: It was an empty place, a valley with hills; the hills were not very high, sort of medium height. The [Chinese] soldiers arrived from there [moves left arm] and our Tibetan soldiers from here [moves right arm] and then...[connects fist to fist].**

**At that time the Chinese dispatched troops in every directions, everywhere at the same time. Then when we fled it was such a tough time. Going this side meant encountering Chinese, going that side meant encountering Chinese. [We] had a tough time escaping and underwent great difficulties. For 6-7 days and night there was not any food; sleep was out of question. Then the bad thing was the sandy pass.**

Q: Sand?

**#17C: Sandy pass. With no escape route [we] were stranded on a sandy pass for one whole day having to drive the horses and mules across.**

Q: Sand?

01:29:37

**#17C: Sandy pass, a hill. There was no route. [We] could not drive the horses and mules across and then spread mats on the sand. Then the horses and mules took one step and then another. There were 4-5 horses and mules and it took us an entire day to drive them across. It was incredibly difficult.**

**Many people have suffered and many have perished. It is pointless talking.**

Q: Can we...I need just to make sure what year are we talking about? Has the Dalai Lama left?

**#17C: [His Holiness] has left. His Holiness left in March or something.**

Q: In the year '59.

**#17C: Yes, this is in the year '59. It's the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> month of '59. 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> [month], it is the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup>.**

Q: After he left, after he escaped.

**#17C: [Nods]**

Q: And about...even a general idea like how many Chinese soldiers and how many Tibetans?

01:31:28

**#17C: Oh, the Chinese were countless; it was a huge number. As for the Tibetans, there were around 100 soldiers in each unit. We were around 150 but the others did not have that many. There were 6-7 military bases and all together how many would there be? There might be 700-800 or perhaps 1,000.**

Q: [The Chinese army was] much larger.

**#17C: Oh, yes.**

Q: So what happened to you? What did you do next, *pa-la*?

**#17C: Oh, there is a lot from then on. [We] went to Dhuwazong, to the military base at Dhuwazong.**

Q: Were [you] fleeing?

**#17C: The soldiers were fleeing and reached Dhuwazong. At Dhuwazong was someone I knew who hailed from Dhargaygon. [I] met him and he asked, "Where are you going? Why have you come here instead of going away? Lhasa is lost and everybody is fleeing. Why did [you] come?" We explained but [he] said, "No. The Chinese are close by and will come here tomorrow. [They] are behind the pass and will arrive here tomorrow. You are young. Run. Do not die. Remaining here means death. Run. It is better to run." Then we fled. We fled towards Bhutan. Let's leave out the details.**

01:33:32

**[We] crossed the pass called Monla Gachung. Monla Gachung is the border between Tibet and Bhutan. Crossing that [we] arrived in Tsamba in Bhutan. There were over a thousand people that had reached there.**

Q: Tibetans?

**#17C: Tibetans; Monks, lamas and all. It is a small place in a forest. [We] did not have food and underwent great difficulties.**

Q: Where was your wife at that point?

**#17C: [She] was back home, at home. There is a long story. It is endless. I have struggled a lot.**

**Later [I] went to get [her].**

Q: Did [you] go back to get [her]?

01:34:35

**#17C: [I] went to get [her].**

Q: When?

**#17C: Yes?**

Q: When did [you] go back to get [your] wife and children?

**#17C: That very year. [I] reached there and...let's leave out all these [details].**

Q: Did you return to Tibet to get [them] after reaching Bhutan?

**#17C: Not from Bhutan, from India. [I] arrived in Kalimpong in India.**

Q: Reached India from Bhutan...

**#17C: Arrived in Kalimpong. A few *telpa* 'muleteers' plied between Gangtok [Sikkim] and Phari then. [I] enquired from the muleteers and [they] said that [my wife] was not captured then but that the house was sealed.**

Q: What's *telpa*?

**#17C: *Telpa* are those that transport goods on horses and mules. I was familiar with [with the regions] Lachen and Lachung [Sikkim]. Then I prepared a letter informing that I would arrive on such and such date and time and would knock on the window and [wife] was to be alert. [I] sent a letter.**

Q: And how did you do it?

01:36:04

**#17C: And then I left. When the letter arrived home [my] wife was terrified believing that I would be arrested, which was true if noticed. [My] wife, her sister, a child and another sister; four of them loaded a few things on a yak belonging to a tenant and escaped. They took flight and I was going there and we met on the way.**

**And a child, there was a daughter.**

Q: Was that your daughter?

**#17C: Yes. That is god's grace.**

Q: Very fortunate. My goodness, where did you meet, in the mountains or in the city?

**#17C: It was in Lachen Lachung in Gangtok.**

Q: Met in Gangtok?

**#17C: Lachen Lachung is the border of Tibet. One would arrive in Tibetan Territory about half a day's journey from there. That was where [we] met. They were coming and I was going and [we] met there.**

Q: You just happened to be in Gangtok?

[Interpreter interprets as: You were on the way to get [them]??]

**#17C: Yes, [I] was.**

Q: Through Gangtok.

01:37:51

**#17C: Through Gangtok and [I] was to go directly to Phari.**

Q: Did you see them with your eyes? How did you find them?

[Interpreter adds: You had no idea they were coming.]

**#17C: No, [I] did not have any idea. There was a nomad. It is a long story to go into details. There was a nomad. [I] bought some milk from the nomad and drank it. It was late and [I] wondered whether to spend the night there or not. I asked the nomad, "Are there any refugees coming from Tibet these days?" [He] replied, "It has been 10-15 days since any escapees arrived. However, today there is someone driving a yak from that mountain. Otherwise, there are none." [I] was certain it was a Tibetan I would know. [I] was certain and wanted to go and make some enquiries. Then I went to ask and they were there.**

Q: What did she say? What did your wife say?

**#17C: [She] was overjoyed, poor thing, very happy.**

Q: Oh, my goodness. That sounds like a beautiful story that the Buddha was protecting you.

**#17C: That is the Triple Gem. It is a long story but there is no time.**

01:39:58

**We, the soldiers arrived in Assam, India and the Indians said, “Why have you come? The Chinese are good and will not cause you suffering.”**

Q: Who said that? The Indians?

**#17C: Yes, the Indians. [They] said, “*Hindu-Chini bhai bhai* ‘Indians and Chinese are brothers.’” This used to be said earlier. “[The Chinese] will never do that.” “We were subjected to such suffering.” “Where are the children?” “The children got left behind. A person goes alone to fight. How can one take children?” Still [they] did not believe.**

**Then in the year '62 India and China were at war in Bomdila, which the Indians lost badly. Then there was no longer *Hindu-Chini bhai bhai*. And then [the Indians] realized how bad the Chinese were.**

**No more brothers.**

Q: No more. That's the end of that.

01:41:30

**#17C: At that time the older people did this, you know the roll of thunder? There is the thunderclap *ta, ta, ta*. One can observe a lot from thunder. It is true. It is said that celestial beings go to war before a [human] war, celestial war. It seemed so because it went *ta, ta, ta* for almost an hour. [Thunder] rolled that side and this side. “Just watch. I understand this,” said [an older person]. After a while the Indians lost. The sound became softer this side and louder on the other side. Then India lost. One can read a lot and it is true.**

Q: How old were your children that came with your wife? You had two children?

[Interpreter interprets question as: You had only one child then?]

**#17C: Only one.**

Q: Oh, just one?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: One daughter.

Q: How old?

**#17C: The daughter was 5 or 6 years old.**

Q: *Pa-la*, so you have your wife and you are now in India. Is there something else about your own family that you wanted to tell us? Did any...what happened to your parents and your relatives?

01:43:08

**#17C: Yes, [I] do have [something to say]. My real father... The other was a stepfather who arrived in India and passed away in India. Both of them [stepfather and aunt/stepmother] passed away in India.**

Q: Sure, please.

**#17C: This is what happened to my real father: he was some sort of a leader among the people of Khambu; something like a group leader that you have here. [He] was that and secondly, I had joined the army; the Tensung Dhanglang Maga, which angered [the Chinese]. "You have send your child to the Tensung Dhanglang Maga. We consider you one of the reactionaries." He was imprisoned in Phari and then sent to Lhasa. There was a trial in Lhasa and finally [he] was sentenced to life imprisonment and sent to Tindu.**

Q: To Tindu?

**#17C: Yes. A 170 were sentenced to life in prison and sent together.**

**Yes, [father] was sent there.**

Q: What was the second place? Tindu? That's where the prison was?

**#17C: Yes.**

Q: Tindu. Is it outside of Lhasa or near Phari or...?

01:45:08

**#17C: Way away in China. China.**

Q: In China?

**#17C: Tindu, China.**

Q: Tindu, China.

**#17C: It is the border.**

Q: In China? A 170 people?

**#17C: No, no 370.**

Q: Three hundred and seventy.

**#17C: They were sentenced to life in prison and remained there. There was no food, hardly any and had to work. Some died of starvation and some that raised their voice disappeared the next day.**

Q: What happened then?

Q: What happened after that?

**#17C: Was it '82 that there was some sort of a leniency policy? During that period they were awarded leniency. When they returned after the leniency policy there were 37 people. All the rest had passed away.**

**[Father] was released from there and Lhasa...[he] could not go home because there was no one; all the children had fled. So [he] stayed in Lhasa. There was an Old People's Home in Nyetsang, managed by the Chinese where [he] was left.**

Q: Is it close to Lhasa?

**#17C: Yes, close to Lhasa.**

[Interpreter ends interpretation of above statement as: So they put him there.]

Q: Who was they?

**#17C: The Chinese.**

Q: Did you ever see him again?

01:47:23

**#17C: Yes, there is a lot more story. I searched and searched and was told [he] was in Nyetsang. Then we got connected. I planned to go to get [him] but was advised against it. Perhaps it was something to do with politics. I have an older brother who lives in the Settlement in Mysore [India]. [He] lives in the Mysore Settlement. During the leniency period one must of course, apply for a Chinese pass. One cannot go without applying for a pass.**

**It was complicated to go to Delhi to apply for a pass and so [we] sent older brother without one and said, "Go straight to Dam in Nepal. Show the address in Dam and say, 'My father is there. I am going to get him. Please let [me] through.'" The Chinese said, "That is not possible without a pass." "I do not know about applying for a pass. Where should I apply? [My father] has been awarded leniency and asked [me] to come. I am going for that and have no other business. [I] do not know about applying for a pass. I am a farmer and have not applied." Saying so [he] stayed there for 15 days.**

Q: At Dam?

**#17C: Yes. And then the Chinese let [him] through saying, “[You] can stay for two months only.”**

Q: Two months?

**#17C: Yes. “Go and meet father for two months.” [He] was let through.**

Q: Great.

01:50:00

**There [he] met father and brought him back. [Father] was taken to Dharamsala to see His Holiness the Dalai Lama and met all the children in Mysore. [He] lived around two years and then passed away at the age of 83.**

Q: So he got out at around 81. He was 81, your age.

**#17C: Yes.**

Q: How many years had he been in prison?

**#17C: How long in prison? How many years is it? [He] went in in '59 and was released in '82. How many is that?**

Q: Was he captured in '59?

**#17C: Yes, captured in '59.**

Q: Around 23 years.

**#17C: Yes, around that many.**

Q: So he was captured right after. You know, you were involved in the army fighting against the Chinese. He was labeled right away because he was a village leader too, I think.

**#17C: Yes, [he] was captured, captured immediately. Many people were captured, many people, not just our father. Many were arrested.**

Q: I know, a lot of people. I know. I heard about that. Did your father describe conditions in prison that you can remember or can tell us about?

01:52:03

**#17C: I asked father but [he] would not tell much. “If [I] recount you will not believe. It is too much to relate.” Anyway, [he] said there was one meal a day, some sort of watery gruel and that was it. Then [the prisoners] had to work, dig the earth. [The Chinese] marked the ground assigning the area to be dug. Failing to complete the task would mean no food. One**

must complete the digging. Then [prisoners] ate the worms that emerged. Should they find a bone, it was washed and boiled to make soup. [They] used to do such things. All the people died of starvation.

When [he] said all people died of starvation I asked, “What happened to you?” [He] replied that he had a colleague, a cellmate who was from Amdo. He was an Amdo. The Amdo received some butter, *tsampa* and meat before the end of every month, just about enough to last a month. [Father] washed his clothes and served him well. So he shared the food and father survived. Otherwise, [father] would have died.

Q: He got a little bit of the food and that little bit helped, helped him survive.

#17C: [Nods]

Q: Another blessing.

#17C: Yes, saved by god. [Laughs]

Q: Little miracles.

01:54:47

#17C: Yes, that is right. It is god’s grace. Father said, “The Chinese told us every day that the rebels went to a foreign country and are undergoing a lot of difficulties, dying of starvation, dying from the heat and a lot of other things.” Older brother said that father would not believe [the real situation] and refused to come to India. “It is very good in India. Due to the benevolence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama there are settlements, schools and hospitals.” “No, it cannot be. [The Chinese] said everyday how horrible it is.”

After father came and saw everything, he was surprised, “Oh, it is like this. The Chinese are liars. The Chinese are very bad. It is so nice here. [I] am so happy.” [He] was overjoyed.

Q: It sounds like we’ve come to a very nice ending point for this story because we have another interview. So what if we, *pa-la*, ask you, is there anything in the dharma, in the Buddhist teachings that have helped you to survive all these experiences in your life, your losses of your country and your father and you know, almost getting killed, loss of many friends? Are there any teachings of the Buddha that you find helpful to you in your life?

01:57:47

#17C: That is up to one’s mind. The most important thing is to be honest, honest and to help other people and not cause any harm. Being kind will generate blessings and then one should have faith in the dharma all the time. Practicing it will bring realization. Without faith, even on another person, there will be no trust. If you have faith in God and your protective deity, they bestow help. Things happen and fall in place. It cannot be seen but there is something behind it. It is present because we have full faith and confidence. That is it and nothing more.

**There is nothing else to do. Have faith and then you have to go [die] one day. Do not harm others; be helpful, pray well, have full faith and confidence. That is about it, as one cannot practice much.**

**This is our rented dwelling. This domain we are living in is nothing but a rented dwelling.**

Q: You were very happy to share your story. Why do you think it's important that we record these stories?

02:00:05

**#17C: Of course, this is important. We have to take our country back and we have the truth in order to get it. There is truth and the Chinese—what to say—there are many evidences to prove that Tibet was independent. However, because of China's might we do not have the chance to talk about it now. Even if [we] do talk about it there is hardly any real support forthcoming. So many people are dying in Tibet and lots of demonstrations are held, but the United Nations or the Human Rights Commission do nothing. The Chinese have free reign. What we have to do now is to preserve these stories and later, much later when interest arises and if someone looks it up, [he/she] will remark, "Oh, this region was like this. This was so in the past. Oh, this was like this." Otherwise, if we are gone it is finished. Unless someone familiar is alive or it is recorded in books, it is finished.**

**My whole story is recorded in Tibetan and is with the government. But the government keeps it and it is not broadcast. This is in English and I am very happy, as it will be known everywhere. This is a real story and not a lie. [I] am speaking the truth. We have hope that we will get our country back one day. So [such stories] must be preserved and if the next generation deliberate over it, there is definitely hope of getting [the country] back. If there is no enthusiasm nothing can be done.**

Q: Thank you. We're very happy to...I'm going to conclude with just one more question, just to repeat. If this interview was shown in Tibet or China, would this be a problem for you?

**#17C: No, there will be no problems.**

Q: Can we use your real name for this project?

**#17C: Yes, it can be used. There is nothing [problematic].**

Q: Thank you for sharing your story with us.

02:03:14

**#17C: [I] am very happy today that this could be recorded whether it benefits the public or not. [I] hope it will be useful in the future. [I] am very happy. Thank you. We are very happy that you are doing this for the cause of Tibet. It is very good. Thank you.**

Q: It is our honor and our privilege. Thank you.

**#17C: Thank you. It has been very good. Thank you.**

END OF INTERVIEW