

Tibet Oral History Project

**Interview #3C – Thinley Paljor Shasok
May 3, 2013**

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #3C
2. Interviewee: Thinley Paljor Shasok
3. Age: 71
4. Date of Birth: 1943
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Shigatse
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1952
9. Date of Interview: May 3, 2013
10. Place of Interview: TANC Community Center, Richmond, California, USA
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 52 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter:
14. Videographer: Jeddadiah Emanuel
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

Biographical Information:

Thinley Paljor Shasok belonged to a middle class family living in Shigatse, one of the main trading centers between India and Tibet. His father and elder brother were merchants buying wool from Changthang in western Tibet, selling them in Kalimpong, India and bringing goods from India to be sold in Tibet. Thinley Paljor was one among the very small group of Tibetans who went to school. He recounts attending a private school in Tibet and later his elder brother enrolled him in an international school in Kalimpong where he learned English.

Thinley Paljor lost contact with his family in Tibet after the Chinese invasion in 1959. Around that time he was persuaded by Mr. Gyalo Thondup, brother of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, to act as an interpreter for a very secret mission and help the Tibetans fight against the Chinese. He explains how he was temporarily stationed with a small group of Tibetans in Saipan and then Okinawa before finally being transported to Camp Hale in Colorado.

The CIA provided military to train the Tibetans in guerrilla warfare, weapons and intelligence gathering. Thinley Paljor served as an interpreter for the trainees. He shares his views on why the Americans helped the Tibetans and also why the support abruptly ended. Thinley Paljor talks about his role as a translator during the training and what this operation meant to him as a Tibetan. He explains how the trainees were returned to Tibet and Mustang, Nepal to fight.

Topics Discussed:

Utsang, childhood memories, trade, education, invasion by Chinese army, CIA training, resistance fighters, guerrillas in Mustang.

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Interview #3C

Interviewee: Thinley Paljor Shasok

Age: 71, Sex: Male

Interviewer: Marcella Adamski

Interview Date: May 3, 2013

[Interviewee speaks in English. No interpreter required.]

Question: Please tell us your name.

00:00:12

Interviewee #3C: My name is Thinley Paljor.

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?

#3C: Yes, I certainly will.

Q: Thank you very much for offering to share your story with us.

#3C: Thank you. Thank you.

Q: During this interview if you wish to take a break or stop at anytime, please let me know.

#3C: Alright.

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

#3C: Alright.

Q: So we are very honored to record your story and appreciate your participation in this project.

#3C: [Nods]

Q: Thinley-*la*, please tell me where were you born in Tibet and what year?

00:01:09

#3C: Well, I was born in the western part of Tibet, which is known as Utsang, Utsang, [in] a place called Shigatse, which is the second biggest town next to Lhasa.

Q: What year were you born?

#3C: I was born in 1943. In a way I am 71 years old right now.

Q: How many people were in your family, Thinley-la?

#3C: I have about eight in my family, yes.

Q: 18?

#3C: Eight. Eight in the family of which two died when I was small, young, and I still have about four sisters, living sisters still in Tibet.

Q: What part of Tibet are they in?

00:02:07

#3C: They moved to Lhasa now.

Q: They are in Lhasa, I see.

#3C: Yes.

Q: What did your parents do for a livelihood?

#3C: My parents used to be a...We are a middle class family doing... My father used to do business. My father and elder brother used to do business in, small trader...They are traders, you know, merchants buying wool, you know the wool?

Q: Yes.

#3C: Buy the wool from this Changthang 'Northern Plateau' area where the nomads live. Then we collect those wool and sell, go to India to sell this wool, to Kalimpong [West Bengal] area. That is how my elder brother used to travel every year, once every...twice a year to come to India for this business, to sell this merchandise, then buy some commodities from India, go back to Shigatse again...

Q: What were the kinds of items that your family wanted brought back from India? What did they bring?

00:03:14

#3C: From India, like, we buy lot of this, like different garments, like clothing, different clothing, yes. Especially like clothing for Tibetan women, women are fond of clothing made from wool materials, woolen materials. They are very, very hard to get and very expensive and in those days in India you can purchase British-made woolen materials. So they are very expensive. We call those clothing *gyather*, *gyather*. *Gyather* means it is one of the superior materials, woolen materials.

Q: The wool actually came from Great Britain?

#3C: Tibet.

Q: Oh, it came from Tibet. It was taken to India and then what did they do with it in India? Did they send...

#3C: We sell it to the Indian merchants. They in turn ship it to England. This is how the...

Q: Did you ever go on any of these trading missions with your relatives?

00:04:29

#3C: With my brother one time during one of my holidays, during my school break I went with my brother to Calcutta to get contacts with the merchants who buy these wool. So, I went there as a like a kind of interpreter on behalf of my brother. [Smiles]

Q: Why were you able to interpret for him?

#3C: I was in school. I was living in boarding school since 9 years old. So, that was in 1952.

Q: Where was the boarding school?

#3C: That is in Kalimpong; you know this place called Kalimpong in Darjeeling District.

Q: How long of a journey would it be from Shigatse to Kalimpong and how did you go?

#3C: Those days there were no drivable roads; we used to go by horse. So it took us around 7-10 days to reach up to Sikkim. We came via Sikkim through the very high pass called Nathula. From there as soon as you reached Nathula, you come down and you reach Sikkim in a day's time.

Q: Your family decided to send you to school at an early age, at 7?

00:05:52

#3C: When I was about 9 years, 8 to 9.

Q: Was that typical for the people in your area in Shigatse that you would be sent to school?

#3C: No, not very typical but my brother, elder brother who was...who used to be in charge of the...looks after the family...take responsibility for the family...And he has been travelling a lot to India. So he has a very wide, you know more foresight...so what is good for the kids, for the children, so he thought that...at one trip he said, "Let's go. I will take you to India so that you can get some education." In that way it will help him too, he said. I will be able to speak the language in India or in English language whichever is necessary. That helped him to translate. That was the main purpose, I think [laughs] at that time.

Q: Before you went to school, can you tell us a little bit about what your life was like from up to the time 9 years old when you left, when you were 4, 5, 6, 7? Can you recall any memories of what your family life was like?

#3C: When I was a young kid around 5-6 years old, my parents used to send me to a school, a nearby school. Those days in Shigatse area, I clearly remember we have three private schools. There is no government or public schools as such at that time. The three schools...My parents asked me to choose out of the three schools, which I wanted to go.

I chose one school called Guretsang. It is a very well run school. And one is called Karkhang and one is called Jaotang. These are the three private schools. So all you have to do is...in those days there was no fee system also as such. All you do is when you admit...when the parents ask for admission, they give some gifts, you know to the teacher. That is all. That is the end of it. There is no monthly fee or anything as such.

Q: Was that school run by a private enterprise or the government?

00:08:22

#3C: No, it is a family run school. And the students, the guardians of the students used to normally try to, you know present lots of gifts and you know because there is no fee system in the school. So in order to get a good education, the parents would try to please the school, you know the family of the school.

Q: When you attended that school, did you come home every night and what was your family life like at home? What happened at home?

#3C: Well, I get up early in the morning. Just before the sunrise we go to school and once you reach the school there, we do some prayers there in those days. Even when we were small, we have to do some prayers, you know, half an hour prayer. After prayers...then we each bring our own tiffin, a small tiffin, breakfast tiffin...after doing our prayers we have to eat our breakfast. After breakfast then there will be normal class, which last until about 12 p.m. and there is a break in between. Then in the afternoon the school finishes at around 3 o'clock. Then we come back home and then play until late at night.

Q: You were how old when you went to that school?

#3C: Six years, I was 5-6 years.

Q: Did you like school?

00:10:04

#3C: Yes, we used to like school. The school used to teach us...emphasis on how to improve your writing. Tibetan writing was done on a slate board, you know. We are taught on slate board, not on paper like here. Slate board and we have to use...for pen, we have to use bamboo, small bamboo sticks. You cut it and sharpen it, make it into...shape it into like a pen nib. The nib of a pen and with that for ink we used to use some of this mixture of glue, sugar and some...with this mixture mix the ink set on the sticks...stays on the board, on the slate board. They teach us how to write first, you know through this.

Q: You said you liked school. Do you have any favorite memories of those early school days before you went off to India?

#3C: School days, mostly...We used to pray a lot those days. Small kids not much teaching but mostly we do a lot of prayer in the morning.

Q: What were some of the kinds of prayers you would say at that time?

00:11:37

#3C: Those days...like just very simple...every kid can do, *Lama la kyap su cheo*, *Sangay la kyap su cheo*...‘Hail to the three jewels of the lotus.’ These are the three simple prayers... every kid learns this.

Q: Can you tell us what the three jewels represent?

#3C: I am not very...[Laughs]

Q: But what did it mean to you the three jewels in your own words?

#3C: When we say *Lama la kyap su cheo*, it means we take refuge, shelter in the arms of the lamas, gurus, you know. *Sangay la kyap su cheo*. Sangay means the Buddha; we take refuge in the Buddha. *Choe la kyap su cheo*, in the dharma...we take refuge in the dharma. *Gedun la khap su cheo* in the *sangha*; *sangha*, the monks. So these are the things, yeah. This is the basic tenet of Buddhism.

Q: Were there any other teachings that you remember learning early on that you still keep with you? What moved you as a young child or that you found very valuable to hold on to the rest of your life?

00:13:00

#3C: That I can't really...Well, what I remember most is that we used to play lot of games, just like a marble, yeah. We don't have a marble in those days but marbles made out of knuckles, you know [points to knuckles on right hand]. Yes, with knuckles of different...knuckle in sizes and what we used to do is...we used to skin them out very...and we used to...on a rough surface we used to make it gravel so that the top stays very smooth. Then the kids...we used to play with these marbles and try to see who can topple the other first. This was one of my favorite games those days.

Q: Sounds like a fun game.

#3C: Yes, a fun game.

Q: And you made your own toys too.

#3C: Yes.

Q: Thinley-la, would you please describe your memories as a youngster, maybe 8, 9, 10 what was the town, the city of Shigatse like in Tibet?

00:14:18

#3C: Those days you know, it was in 1952 I remember. Before that the Chinese came in 1951 to Lhasa. Then at the end of that very year '52, a division of Chinese army came to Shigatse at that time. They moved to Shigatse but at that time we did not really care much about who they were. At that time it seemed to me that they were just...very poor and they were very polite with everybody, you know.

Q: These were the Chinese soldiers?

#3C: Chinese soldiers who had come.

Q: What were they wearing?

#3C: They were wearing the army uniform, you know. Those...

Q: What color?

#3C: Those, what you call...khaki colored.

Q: Khaki colored?

#3C: Khaki colored, yeah.

Q: I see. And what was the town like? Were there lots of shops and stores?

00:15:27

#3C: The town used to be a very, very busy town, small town. Right in the middle of Shigatse, we have this big fort, Shigatse *chizong*. *Chizong* means, it's a fort, you know. Fort...fortress up there, which is...whereby every three years/four years, a government service...a civil servant from Lhasa comes over to Shigatse to supervise over the administration. Just next to that right in the middle of the city, we have an open area that used to be a marketplace called "market place." People are very busy selling different wares.

Q: What are some of the things that you...if we could take you back in time and look at that marketplace, what are some of the things that were there might not exist right now or might be finished or gone? What are some of the items?

#3C: The marketplace is not like we have here these days. It's just on open area and everything is laid out in haphazard manner. There is no specific spot for any individual as such.

Q: Were there any items that were very interesting to look at in the marketplace?

00:16:49

#3C: Well, those days I used to only look for something kids like to play, you know [laughs], anything like small cars. Sometimes these merchants bring small things for the kids, you know.

Q: Was the town very prosperous? Was there enough food for people, enough work for people?

#3C: Oh, there's no food...there's no problem those days...food gets...we do have many beggars but the beggars do their jobs early in the morning. They go to different families and each and every...they are never sent off without some of the families giving something. After midday the beggars are very happy and they just lie down in the sun.

Q: What made them beggars?

#3C: Well, they don't like to work, like everybody, you know. [Laughs]

Q: But the people of the town felt a kindness to them.

00:17:54

#3C: It's very kind. This is Buddhist teaching, doctrine. It says to help others.

Q: Can you tell me more about that doctrine? What does that mean?

#3C: If you help others, you will benefit in turn.

Q: How do you benefit?

#3C: Benefit, you feel very happy in your heart, contentment, satisfaction, that is the most important thing.

Q: Why is it good to help other people besides it makes you feel good? How did you regard these beggars in your town?

#3C: Beggars are very friendly beggars, you know. They are openly...they are beggars but nobody consider them as beggars. They go but they sing, they dance, they play music, this is their life.

Q: So you are supportive of them?

00:18:55

#3C: Yeah, the general public. This is not only confined in my town but in other towns as well, all over. The beggars are plentiful but people are still very, very generous, you know with these people.

Q: In the town of Shigatse, was there a major temple?

#3C: Yes, the biggest temple is the Tashi Lhunpo.

Q: Can you tell us...?

#3C: ...which is the seat of the Panchen Lama.

Q: Who is the Panchen Lama?

#3C: Panchen Lama is the second highest, next to the Dalai Lama, yes.

Q: Was he there at the time?

#3C: His monastery is in Tashi Lhunpo.

Q: Did you ever see him?

00:19:39

#3C: I have seen. I have seen 13th ...no, the 9th Panchen Lama, I think. One time I think from far away. I have seen him but in 1935 or '40, he went to China and he died on the way I believe. This is what the story is.

Q: So we can hear all of your story maybe we should move on to, you left your local school your private school and you said that you went to this other school...

#3C: Yes, my brother took me to...

Q: Your brother took you there.

#3C: ...India.

Q: Yes. What was the...Can you tell us a little bit about that school? You were 9 years old...?

#3C: Yes, that was in 1952, in early '52. I was about 9 years old. My brother used to travel every year to Kalimpong and he knew some of the schools in Kalimpong area. In the beginning I went to a local school, which is run by...It is called Kalimpong High School, which is a locally run school. It does not teach you English or anything like that.

I went there for about eight months there. It is very close to my house where we stayed. What that school taught me, I learned the language, local language also very fast. Playing with the kids learned the local language very fast. At the same time the teachers used to teach us...I was put into a...They call it, in those days they call it *doonga* class.

00:21:37

***Doonga* class means like, it is like equal to kindergarten. *Doonga* class, *doonga* means stones. You play with only stones, you know. *Doonga* class, this in school there in high school but at that time even though we play with stones like, instead of pen we used stones**

to calculate, you know. That is why they used to teach us the math, division, multiplication, addition, all these three principles at that school we used to.

Since then I got that, you know little bit of that technique of learning the math than when later on I was admitted to a boarding school. It is an English boarding school. I was quite comfortable because they said since although I did not know English, they said, “Okay. It is all right. You look very smart. We will give you a special class for...like foreigners.” There were not only me, there were a number of foreign students from Bhutan and some other parts of...you know students here.

And they said, “Okay, we will give special class for you. So I was given a special English class for about a year or so. Then once I got that, at the same time the special class they teach you English also other subjects, of course. But gradually they said, “Okay, now your English is pretty good. Now next year you can join Class 3.” They said Standard 3. That was quite a jump, you know. [Laughs]

Q: You were a bright little boy.

00:23:28

#3C: Yes, I thought so [laughs].

Q: And they thought so too.

#3C: They thought so and they put me in Class 3.

Q: Wonderful and how long were you...this is the school in Kalimpong, right?

#3C: Kalimpong I was until 1959. That was the year I completed my Senior Cambridge. We call it in those days Senior Cambridge. It is called School Leaving Certificate. That is high school level.

Q: High school level. You were 11 years old.

#3C: No, by the time I finished that I was 17-18.

Q: You were born in 19...

#3C: ...'43.

Q: '43 okay. This was in...you graduated in 1952?

#3C: No, no. '52 I went to study. I came to Kalimpong, yeah.

Q: Were you happy in that school overall? Was it hard? Was it fun? Was it easy? What was it like?

00:24:39

#3C: Very, very much. I like the school because the school, those days it's a...Dr. Graham's School is founded by one of very, very, very revered doctor, Reverend Grahams they called him. He's a Baptist; you know a Christian and he has founded this school in 1900. He had a lot of volunteers coming from all over New Zealand, Australia, England, Scotland...teachers as volunteers every one or two years. Because those days India had just got freedom from British rule, so still British influence is still there very much. British influence is there. So, all these teachers used to come as a volunteer for one or two years. As a result they used to teach us...very dedicated teachers. It was a really good training.

Q: Wonderful.

#3C: And we used to...I used to live in a hostel. We have a guardian who looks after we called Uncle/Aunty. In school we have one guardian. They are also foreigners and they used to give us really good teaching. They help us with our homework at home, in the hostel. We used to live in small cottages, you know. We had about altogether 18...25 different cottages spread out.

Q: Wonderful. You had a very fine educational opportunity. Were there other Tibetans in that school or were you the only one?

00:26:33

#3C: Oh yes, we had. I had three Tibetans with me, one who had arrived before me. His father was a well-known Khampa. Maybe Tsedup-la knows him, Alo Chonzey. Alo Chonzey, he is from Lithang area and his son was also with me in the same school.

Q: Thinley-la, can you please tell us what happened when you left school, when you finished that wonderful education and how old were you and where did you go?

#3C: Well, that was in '59 when I had just completed my Senior Cambridge, just waiting for the result. At that time there was also school break in between. Then all of a sudden that very same year we had this Tibetan revolution in Lhasa and I lost contact with my parents. My brother who used to come every year but he couldn't come also all of a sudden. So completely disconnected, no contact with my parents. So I was just like lost in the wilderness, you know.

Q: How were you feeling about that?

00:28:00

#3C: But fortunately the school principal was a very, very generous and compassionate man. He knew about the background story about what's happened in Tibet, all the Chinese takeover, many coming. He knew that story. I was in a very depressive mood at that time. He called me to his office and he told me, "Thinley, you don't worry. Nothing is going to happen. We hope that your parents are safe. But in the meanwhile don't worry, you concentrate on your studies." Then I told him, "Okay, it is very kind of you to that, tell me that but now who is going to pay the school fee now?" He said, "Don't worry about that.

Forget about that. I'll take care of you. I will see that you get through, whatever you want to do." He was very, very kind. His name is Mr. Duncan. He's English; he's from Scotland.

Q: And tell me the name of the school again.

#3C: Dr. Graham's Homes.

Q: Dr. Graham's Homes.

#3C: Yes, that is in Kalimpong, one of the best schools in Kalimpong, English school.

Q: You only heard by information coming to you that there was an uprising in Lhasa. You didn't know if your family was okay or not...

00:29:54

#3C: I knew about that. There was such a big rumor in Kalimpong those days. Kalimpong is a place where a lot of Tibetans are settled there for many years. So they knew the news there was trouble in Lhasa and everything was broken down. They knew everything.

Q: So, what did you do next then?

#3C: Then next...he said, "It is holiday time but you just keep...If there is any problem, anything you need, you just come to me but don't worry." So, in the meanwhile I went to the Kalimpong town where my brother used to live. So I was living...I lived there.

Then one day when I was moving around the town, Mr. Gyalo Thondup's representative contacted me. He was Lhamo Tsering. He's the right-hand man of Mr. Thondup [second eldest brother of His Holiness the Dalai Lama]. He contacted me. He told me what am I doing. I said, "Oh, this..." I told him the situation, the story. He said, "Don't you worry but now what we can do is. You may continue your studies in the future but in the meanwhile we are in a very dire need of interpreters, translators for our...it's a very, very confidential work we have. I have been going around trying to find but I have found you, one of the most...I feel that we can do something with you," he said.

00:31:52

Then I said, "What is it? What do I have to do?" He said, "Okay, you...I will arrange a meeting with Mr. Thondup in Darjeeling. He lives in Darjeeling. He will tell you the details but I am not allowed to reveal what it is." He told me. So, he arranged a trip to Darjeeling and I met him. I met Mr. Thondup at his residence. He asked me and he said, "You look very young. We know you have your own problems but here we as Tibetans...I have a big responsibility on my shoulder now." Mr. Thondup told me at that time. What it is?

He said, "Now China has taken over our country, occupied our country. Now we need to fight back. We need to fight back the Chinese. The only way to fight back is I have already recruited. There are many, many volunteers who are willing to go on training and go back to fight again for Tibet. So, what I want..." He told me, "What I want is if you would be

willing to go on a trip but I will not tell you where it is...but will you go on a trip and act as a translator/interpreter on their behalf?"

Then I said, "What do I have to translate? Where do I have to go?" I told him all these questions. He said, "That is very top secret but you will be in good hands. All those trainees will be taught by a foreigner, special trainings and all you have to do is interpret on their behalf."

Q: What did you feel when you had such a very mysterious invitation of adventure?

00:34:19

#3C: I said, "This is something...why?" I also felt little bit...I said...I thought maybe they are sending me back to Tibet or something like that. Those days there are rumors that a lot of Tibetans are going to Taiwan you know, Formosa for training. At that time Tibetans were not on very good relation with the Nationalist China in Taiwan, at that time. So I was also thinking whether they were going to...I said, "Is it...?" I told Mr. Thondup, "Is this going to be...am I going to go to Tibet?" Seriously I told him. He said, "No, no, not Tibet. Not you." He did not say that others are going to go back. He said, "Not you."

Q: Were you...

#3C: "You are going to a place...it is very...You will be well looked after. Maybe you have to for one or two years, you may have to translate and then you come back and again if you like to go on further studies, you can continue your studies. You are young and you can still continue."

Q: Did you want to go?

00:35:31

#3C: So I thought again and said, "Let me think about it." At that time...you see, by the way I forgot to tell you. I had my small sister also, my younger sister who came over to India in 1956, the year when Dalai Lama went on a pilgrimage to India that time, Lord Buddha's 2,500th Birth Centenary. He was invited and a lot of Tibetans came. My whole family came at that time in '56. At the end of the pilgrimage my families went back. That was '56. There was no problem about the Chinese.

My brother thought that...he was also very, very thoughtful about the future of the kids. So he thought that my younger sister, "She should also stay with you here". There is a small convent school, convent school. It is a Jesuit school. "She should study there. There are some Tibetans from Sikkim there and I think she will be more comfortable there." So he left her also that time.

So she was there and then in '59 when I was asked by Mr. Thondup to go, I said, "Who is going to look after my sister here?" He said, "We will take care of her. Don't worry." And exactly that is how I volunteered and that is how I got in contact. I was more or less recruited by Mr. Thondup [laughs] to join the resistance group.

Q: Did you have any political feelings at that time about you wanted to help Tibet or fight the Chinese or were you neutral? What...Where were you?

00:37:40

#3C: That time I was very raw kid in that sense you know, knew nothing about the politics, nothing about the Tibetan what you say...nothing about nation or...but later on when I studied...no, not studied...when I was in training with the Tibetan guerrillas, with the warriors from different parts of Tibet coming, when I was translating for them, many periods of time...like there were long deep briefing meetings. During those days I really...left a very, very, very deep impact on my life. Listening to the stories of these warriors and listening to their briefing and they used to say, the instructors, the CIA instructors used to call them one by one, maybe a group of two or three at a time.

During those training days, the Tibetans were formed into different groups like you know, A Group, B Group, C Group, there are different names. Each Group has a different assignment. There is one group, which concentrates completely on sending, transmitting radio messages, learning how to transmit and how to receive. There is one group simply learning...political action group. There is one group only simply learning how to...guerrilla warfare, tactics.

So there were different groups and when I learned these stories from them...The instructors used to ask them at the end of the training. They used to call them, “Now your training is about to end. Now is the time that you have to go back to...you’ve to go back to your home. What do you think about it? Do you still want to go back and fight the Chinese or what do you think?” The instructors used to ask them.

00:40:14

Each and every trainee, those warriors, they said, “Oh, if it is for the sake of Tibetan dharma and for the sake of the Tibetan culture, and for the dharma, we are willing to go, no matter where. We have no particular choice of place. Wherever you think it is better, we are willing to go.” They all said that, you know. “Because we want to go back and fight once more. With your support, I’ a sure we will achieve our goals.” This is the spirit they had, you know. Very, very highly motivated.

Q: How did their spirit affect you?

#3C: That spirit affect me and as a result whole my life I have served the Tibetan community. I served the Tibetan Government for 33 years until I retired in 1992, until 1992. I was retired after 35 years of service to the community. So because of that it has made me...Otherwise, I would have become a very rich man, a businessman in fact in Nepal. It is such a place for...business opportunities are there. There are many, many Tibetan entrepreneurs work in different carpet factories. I also worked in a carpet factory but I worked for the government. So there was no, you know what we would call *kangpa nyitsuk* means standing on two feet, one feet here, one feet there so that you know... This is some clever people, you know. [Laughs] I said I never put two feet. Just stand in one... I served the Tibetan Government until I got honorably, you know, left the job. So, that is how that motivated me, yes.

Q: Why don't we go back to the beginning of how this motivation started? So, you were telling us here you were Mr. Thondup was asking you to do this incredible translation work, a little bit of a mystery. You didn't know where or how you were going to do it but after you found out your sister was going to be okay, you agreed to go. Can you tell us what happened then? What happened next?

00:43:02

#3C: Next is then Mr. Thondup told me that after meeting him...

[Discontinuity in video]

00:43:09

#3C: After I volunteered to go provided he looks after my sister's...

[Discontinuity in video]

00:43:16

#3C: Then he said he will get in contact me. "Please be ready but please don't reveal this to anybody, to a soul, even to your sister." I went back to Kalimpong and my sister was asking me, "Where have you been?" I said, "I just went to see a friend. He called me and I have come back." But then one day I got a message from Mr. Thondup saying that "You have to go today immediately. There are people waiting with transportation." Asked if I am ready and I said, "I am ready." So I had to leave without letting my sister know. One of our family members, an elderly lady who used to look after both of us looked after my sister. We did not let any of...two of them know. I just went there.

Q: Where?

#3C: Disappeared. [Laughs]

Q: Can you tell us where?

#3C: I went to Darjeeling and Darjeeling that very night I went there, there was a group of Tibetans. We were asked to stay in a safe house in Darjeeling first. In those days...Mr. Thondup has a very...he's got a lot of experience in clandestine activities.

Q: Let us continue with the story.

#3C: Fine.

Q: What happened when you left Darjeeling?

00:45:00

#3C: When I, after leaving Darjeeling, we were with a group of 15 men. Fifteen men, all are not very old, all in the early thirties those days, yeah.

Q: Tibetan men?

#3C: Tibetan, yeah. About 15 of them, the first stop...we went at nighttime from Darjeeling. Mr. Thondup, he's a dedicated man. He himself drove the big Land Rover. He had a big Land Rover. He himself drove the Land Rover and dropped us at the, near the, at the end of...in Siliguri, it's a place called in the plains you know, very close to Pakistan. Those days it was Pakistan but now it's called Bangladesh. Those days it's called East Pakistan. He dropped us at a certain place at night and there was one guide, one guide who used to guide us. He's been there before. So, he took us at night. It was in the open field, you know, in the open like...rice field. It was rice field. The water was up to here [gestures off camera]. We used to go through the swamp. Whole night we went there.

What we were asked was that we would, as soon as we reached the Pakistani border, there will be an infra light signal coming from there every once in a while. "So when you see that signal, you just follow that direction." That is what we were told and nothing else. So we just went blindly at night. Dogs are barking in the villages. So again we had to hide there and stay half an hour. At one time during those walking in the field, this deep water, one time I fell down and I lost one of my shoes there in the swamp. I lost one shoe and by the time I reached East Pakistan, I had one shoe missing. [Laughs]

00:47:44

Once we got there, the Pakistani soldiers were there, waiting for us and they escorted us to a safe house. Then they said, "American will come over and see you." So we sat in that safe house for a while but then later on he told me, "The American is not coming here. He will be there. You meet him in another place. So in the meanwhile you have to come with us." We had refreshments and this and that, and then he took us, escorted us in a truck, in a military truck for about 2-3 hours we drove from that border place, border town.

Then we reached a place, a railway station, out of nowhere it's a railway station. There were few locals going up and down but what we were told by the soldiers, "Okay, you have to act like you are prisoners. Otherwise, the people, locals will get suspicious. They will report it to the authorities. So, what you have to do is..." They said they will...you know with a gun pointed at us and we had to walk to the railway station. The train was waiting for us there and the soldiers were with a gun pointed at us. We walked like prisoners. [Laughs] The locals on the platform at the station were looking at us. They must have thought there is another smuggler or some you know...

Q: Criminal.

#3C: Yeah, criminals they caught. So, we were put into the train. Once we were in the compartment, in the train compartment they said, "Okay, now you can relax." They told us, "Now you are in good hands. We will go to Dhaka, the capital." We went whole night until next morning. Again we stopped at another place and from there it was a short distance by truck to the airport, you know Dhaka airport.

Q: In Pakistan?

00:50:14

#3C: In Pakistan, yes. Those days it was Pakistan. There at the airport itself, the American...one huge American plane was parked there on the ground and two Americans came over. They looked so huge, big. We have never seen, you know Americans so huge human beings, you know. We were all just staring at him. [Laughs] Everybody was staring at him and they said, "Okay."

Then he introduced himself. He said, "Now you are...you have to stay here. Change your clothes." They completely changed our clothes, you know put this different army fatigues, you know military clothes. They gave us military clothes. "That's the plane we are going to go there." It was an unmarked U.S. aircraft, huge, big one. Then we didn't know where we were going but...

Then at night they took us in the plane and the next thing we know we were in another island from there. We didn't know at that time where we were. It was a very hot place, very, very hot, humid. It's very hot there and it's deserted, nothing there. The place where we parked and where we were staying, it's a completely isolated place. Of course, later we learned that the place is called Saipan. It's an island. It's during the 2nd World War I think that many, many, many Japanese were killed. Some committed suicide from the cliffs.

00:52:25

So during those training days in...we stayed there for five months. Five of us were trained there, especially...no, not five, ten of them were trained specially in the intelligence work, intelligence-gathering, tradecraft you know. We were given training in this. That was my first experience as a translator.

Q: Were you given the training or were you just translating for the Americans and the Tibetans? What were you doing?

#3C: During the training period I translate as well as, simultaneously I also participate there, like you know all these, like when we go on a night...sometimes we go on a nighttime, nighttime walking, you know. I also do the same thing.

Q: Who was training you? The Americans?

#3C: Yes, there was a teacher called Mr. Zik. Zik, he is a very huge, big guy. He used to be a...later we learned that he was a very good footballer, American footballer during his college days.

Q: Football player?

00:53:58

#3C: He's a football player. Very huge guy, big, very scary, you know. He looks at you and we [laughs, action of being scared] but he's very gentle by nature, very nice. He doesn't speak much but we all like him. He doesn't speak much but because his nature is such that he looks very, very serious, you know.

Q: Tell me at that point in time what was your understanding of why the Americans were helping you Tibetans? Why were they doing that?

#3C: Well, the reason is that basically...

Q: ...that you knew at that time.

#3C: Firstly, I got little idea from Mr. Thondup. Mr. Thondup told me the reason why the Americans were helping because he also came to visit us at that time. He said one of the main reasons was that we are...these people who have volunteered here, the teachers and all the instructors are very, very selected, you know not from any...from the marines or anything but very selected officers, trainers.

Q: Why? Why did the Americans want to help the Tibetans?

00:55:36

#3C: They said...they thought that...when we told them...First I didn't know why they wanted to help us but during the interview period they said that "Your story, what you have been through...your enemy is our enemy. It's the same thing. We are also completely against Chinese Communism. Since you are fighting against Communists, we are for you. Therefore, our cause is same." This is what they made us to understand.... yeah because of that, yeah. And in fact they were really, really sincere. We had about all in all around 13...12 or 13 instructors there. All very, very experienced marines in active duty, like you know many...some had been...they were in Laos; they were in Korea; they were in Vietnam; all veterans during the cold war.

Q: There were 10 people that were being trained and you were in that group and also being trained...

#3C: Yes, those...

Q: Can you tell me what some of that training involved?

00:57:09

#3C: The training in those days at Saipan, the island, we were not so much of guerrilla warfare tactics, not that training. Mostly those days we were asked to...how to organize clandestine organization, secret...collecting of secret intelligence, intelligence gathering, technique of different observation, how to make observation, how to elicit information from different people, all these different ways of getting intelligence, different...

Q: Can you give us an example of one technique?

#3C: [Laughs] After so many years, [I] don't remember really.

Q: So, how long...?

#3C: One example is like they used to tell us that okay...What struck me most was there was one special language they use. It's very important as a secret agent you have to have compartmentation. It's called need-to-know principle. You only ask what you need. You don't ask every question like that. So, that principle really stuck to me, you know. It's only need-to-know principle. It's very, very valid. [Laughs]

Q: Were these other people with you, did you know any of them from Tibet or were they all new to you and where did they come from?

00:59:00

#3C: I was a small kid when I came from Tibet but some of them I knew, they knew my family. Two of them I knew and mostly those trainees, those first with whom I have trained...I went as interpreter on their behalf who went to this place called Saipan they went back to Darjeeling to set up a clandestine organization. That is the, you know, sending agents on the border area, gathering information and sending radio teams, get information from there and try to analyze these information. These are the tradecrafts, you know but they also teach us how to use different types of weapons, that is right but not guerrilla warfare tactic, which we learned in Colorado.

Q: That was later.

#3C: Yeah, that was later.

Q: Okay, we'll get to that. So this school, this training lasts for five months, I believe you said?

#3C: Yes, five months.

Q: And then what happens to the...What happens to you? Tell us your story. Where do you go next and what are you feeling as you serve as a translator and a member of this intelligence training team? What are you feeling about doing this?

01:00:34

#3C: Well, after learning some of these as a young kid getting together, living with them for so long period, day in and day out and you get to know them personally and some of their motives when you learn them and their patriotism. When I learned that then I said, "I think what I have been choosing to do it's the right course." This is what I felt honestly because their motivation is such high that is how I learned to be a very, very good...try to be a good Tibetan [laughs], very sincere Tibetan in that sense, honest Tibetan.

Q: So, they selected you because of your ability to translate. Were these other people selected to be part of the team because they came from different parts of Tibet?

#3C: From different...all...there are so many volunteers. When they heard this news that there was...the CIA was secretly recruiting people from Kham areas who have just come over. So, when they heard this rumors in India, many people volunteered to come to Darjeeling. More than...

Q: More than they needed.

#3C: More than they needed, yes. Oh, well in excess.

Q: So they came from Kham. Did they come from Utsang and Amdo?

01:02:15

#3C: Yes, yes, definitely. From Amdo, from Golok area, we had people from Golok. There were men from Golok. From Amdo, Golok, Utsang and from way up in the Porang area, Thoe, western part of Tibet, from all five regions of Tibet.

Q: Those 10 trainees were from all over Tibet?

#3C: Yes, he tried to select from...those 10, Mr. Thondup tried to select people from all regions. There is no bias or discrimination...anyone who would volunteer as long as they are able-bodied, they are young, strong and eager, you are there.

Q: Then what happened to this young, strong, eager man? What happened?

#3C: I ended up in Okinawa. [Laughs] After the training they were escorted up to Pakistan in the same way I came through. From there they again went through the same way as I had come, you know went to Darjeeling and they set up an office, the secret clandestine office there.

Those days India was not very, very cooperative with the Tibetan cause. India at that time were...the so-called principle of India-China Brothers. India-China *bhai bhai* means they are brothers. They had this policy of India-China Brotherhood. So with that policy, India was reluctant to give us support openly.

So, we had to keep that time...for those so long period until about 1962 when the Chinese invaded through border. Then they realized. Then things became open. India was ready to get involved along with the CIA and after that they wanted to train more Tibetans in the military. So, that's how we established the Special Frontier Force in India, which was supported by India completely and trained by the CIA.

Q: So, that's a little way off. Let's back up in the story to your...you go to Okinawa. What happens to you next?

01:04:50

#3C: Okay, from Okinawa...then I waited. I was asked to wait there and wait for another group. The second group consists about 23. They were called...the instructors used to tell me, "This is a special group. They are all..." They called it the leadership group. They were being given a special training, as a leadership they were being given special training in Colorado in America, in the United States. And the United States...they will go back to...some will go back to Tibet or some will go back to Nepal or India wherever they are needed. So, that's how these 24 trainees came later on. Then with them I was...it was in the early 60's I think. I went to Colorado, yeah.

Q: You went to Colorado with them. So, when that new group...23 members of that new group, they were a leadership group, were they from all over Tibet and then...were they from all over Tibet?

#3C: Exactly from all over Tibet, very, very well selected group. This was pre-planned I think because I don't know the details. Along with our leaders and along with the CIA, they planned this way long before. So, there were people selected from all different parts of Tibet because ultimately this leadership group was going to go back to Tibet. They are going to drop, so in the place where they are more familiar, you know place where they are familiar.

Q: So, what happens when you...? Where did you go with them? Where did the group go...to Colorado?

01:06:58

#3C: Yeah, Colorado. Colorado at that time was well established.

Q: Did you go?

#3C: Yeah, I went there.

Q: Can you tell us about where it was and what happened to you while you...and how long were you there? What happened and how long?

#3C: I was there for two years in Colorado, two years yes, until 1961 end.

Q: So 1959 to '61?

#3C: '59 to '61, yes.

Q: Can you tell us where was this place in Colorado and what was going on there?

#3C: When we were...we were not told those days because everything was so top secret, you know everything so confidential. None of the instructors told us where we were going. They said we were going to go to some place in the States but we ended up, we ended up...When we got to an airport, this was, later on it was Denver, Colorado. But when we went there we were taken by a car, military truck to about 4-5 hours to Camp Hale.

Q: What was it like?

01:08:19

#3C: Ah, it was so beautiful; yes it was in a valley. We are high up in the mountain. It was like a kind of wintertime when I was there. There was snow all over the mountains, you know, and the valley is so beautiful there. There were lots of trees, forested area all over. Many of the trainees thought that, "Oh, we are back in Tibet!" I didn't know but many said, you know, "They must have dropped us into Tibet somehow." It looks so much, very

much, very much like Tibet because the altitude of the place Camp Hale is above 10,000 feet.

Q: What was your role in that organization?

#3C: My role as usual, as an interpreter. I was a translator for them, you know. When we first reached Okinawa, when they arrived, we had all those trainees; special group they were given 3-4 days of...they had a full medical check up at Okinawa itself. There was a military hospital there. They took each and everyone.

If there's anyone who has some kind of disease or like that, there were instances of cases like one or two who couldn't pass the medical test. They had to remain back in Okinawa until the next group who goes back to India, you know. They are sent back. This happened like that. Fortunately the group, which was with 24-men group, they all passed medical tests.

So after testing and medical pass, each was given a code name, so that you can't call them you know...by Tibetan name; it's very difficult for the Americans to remember. Each man has a name and with a thing [touches left part of chest] stuck. So that later on that name stuck with us and we forgot the real name also, the Tibetan name.

Q: Did you have a code name and what was it?

01:11:00

#3C: Yes, my name was Rocky. [Laughs]

Q: How did you get Rocky?

#3C: That was what I was telling you, one Mr. Zik, the huge guy I said. He said, "Rocky for you."

Q: Did he tell you what Rocky was or who?

#3C: No, I didn't know. I heard there are people named Rocky but it sounds like very easy to remember.

Q: Did you like it?

#3C: Yes, I liked it. I used to hear about a very famous boxer called Rocky Mishano.

Q: That's right.

#3C: So... [Laughs]

Q: I think you were named after him.

#3C: [Laughs]

Q: So, tell us what was...That's a long period. You were there two years. Tell us some of the activities. You translated but what were they doing that you translated? What activities?

01:12:03

#3C: What activities? Activities would include, there are so many activities like different...trainees were divided into different groups, you know, like different groups and some were given...At that time we had three interpreters at that time. I was the one most called upon to these things, you know. That time I could do some [laughs]...

So activities are mainly like they teach you how to...we have a like...they show you different weapons. One activity is like all different types of weapons, how to assemble different weapons, how to disassemble them. Then after your learning all the assembling and disassembling of these weapons, then one day they would ask you to blindfold yourself, you know. We have to blindfold and then automatically we have to, you know assemble these weapons. That's to show in Tibet you may not...you might have to, your work might be nighttime work. So this is one of the reasons the instructors emphasize that we have to do weapons. And we tested lots of different weapons, shooting range...

Q: Did you actually do some of those activities?

#3C: Oh, I...same. [Laughs] I went through the same training.

Q: Same training.

#3C: Yes, same training. When we are translating we have to do. Even the instructors also go through the same motion.

Q: I see.

#3C: So, it's a...

Q: What was the attitude of yourself? First of all what were you feeling about the Americans helping you like this? What did it leave you feeling or thinking?

01:14:04

#3C: Well, I felt that they were...what the Americans were doing was very, very sincere, very sincere for the Tibetan cause. They were really sincere, especially the instructors. Not one or two but all our instructors were so dedicated, you know. When one or two instructors had to be transferred, they had to leave for another assignment, they used to call us, and especially I remember one called Thomas, you know. We called him Mr. Tom, Tom. He was with us from very beginning and he had to go for another assignment. He's a marine guy. When he went there, all the trainees were crying, weeping and he was also weeping at the same time. He was really reluctant and he was also very sad to leave.

Q: And what was the aim of what they were training you to do?

#3C: They said our aim was to have a...set up a, you know guerrilla tactic, guerrilla warfare, hit and run tactics. This is emphasis was that, "We are going to teach you guerrilla warfare, which involves hit and run, in small groups and not in big groups but in small groups, how to lay an ambush, how to lay an ambush and how to make a bomb to sabotage Chinese vehicles, motor vehicles." All these things, yes.

Q: I see. Did the men and yourself feel confident that these techniques would help you hold the Chinese off or fight them back?

01:16:03

#3C: Oh, yes definitely. They all felt that. Many of the trainees, they were veteran fighters. They just came over when the Chinese took over. There were still guerrilla groups there in their area, in Kham area but they are not very well organized, scattered so. So the main objective of the 24 special leadership group was to go back to Tibet and reorganize the whole guerrilla force and train them properly. So, this was the main idea because in Tibet...not in a bunch but just in small, small groups.

Q: When you are talking about 1959...'61 you are there, right? 1959-61.

#3C: Yes.

Q: Are you getting news about what's happening in Tibet at that time? Are you hearing what's happening?

#3C: Those days there were...what we were told was that there were...We used to have a secret contact there. The CIA used to have contact there because in 19...as early as 1957 when the first 6-man group was dropped into Tibet, all were trained in the transmission of radio, radio operators, transmitting. When as early as that...those days they knew that there are still guerrilla activities going on there. They felt that it was high time that we organized this group into a more, what shall I say, more...

Q: Effective?

#3C: Yeah, more effective group, more sustainable.

Q: At that time in 1959 the Dalai Lama left.

#3C: Yes.

Q: You are in Colorado. Does the news reach you and what...?

01:18:18

#3C: No, in 1959 when the Dalai Lama came to India, I was in India at that time. Yes.

[Someone off camera: He was in school.]

Q: I know that was the first time. I'm talking about when Lhasa was attacked in 1959...

#3C: '59 March.

Q: The uprising in March. You were in Colorado.

#3C: No, no, no. I was in Colorado around September-October that time. Before that in May-June I was in Saipan, the place called.

Q: So the team felt that they were going to be able to go back and really train other members to fight and hold off the Chinese. Is that right?

#3C: Yes, that was the main idea behind.

Q: What happens then next with this team? Can you tell us how the story develops?

01:19:20

#3C: Well, this team, they were given a 6-month training in all aspects of...you know different...like training not only guerrilla tactics or ambushing or this but also clandestine work also, collection of information, intelligence gathering, all these different...all different, there are so many...such a vast subject there, you know.

Q: And then what did they do after...when the training was over, what happened?

#3C: One group was then...by that time '61 we had already set up a military camp in Mustang. That was in '60, already there, existing. They were a group of guerrillas; veteran guerrillas were already there. This special 24-men group was to go back to Mustang and give these remaining guerrillas up there, soldiers, training in this guerrilla warfare tactics.

They were asked to go from Nepal, go to Tibet, go and attack, ambush Chinese and come back. Go back, come back, that was the main idea. They said not to just...the instructors used to tell us, "The main idea is not to go and fight hand [combat] like what you used to do, what you used to before but this is a tactic you have to...hit, hurt, the Chinese hurt. Hit where it hurts most." So that is the only way to hit where the Chinese hurts. So the ambushing convoys, trucks coming over, you know, on the roads, militaries coming over. This way they have been going for number of years.

Q: Did you go with them to Mustang?

01:21:39

#3C: No, not me. I [not discernible] Mustang but I wasn't there because that time that was in 1969 when I went to Nepal, but I wasn't directly involved with the Mustang program. But I knew much about Mustang program because before I was transferred to Nepal,

I was in Delhi working in the Joint Operations Centre, we call it. It consists of the...Indians were involved, Indian Secret Service, we call it RAW, Research and Analysis Wing of the Indian Secret Service and there was a Tibetan Government [representative] from the

Security Department were involved and the Americans of course. American representatives were there. So with joint operation, we call it that.

[Discontinuity in video]

01:22:43

#3C: ...was established with the cooperation of India. So, I worked there for...'64 I think...from '67 to '69.

Q: What were some of the accomplishments of the group of men that you sent to Mustang? Do you know some of their success stories?

#3C: Oh, their success has been many until the Mustang was disarmed in 1974 because of the change in political thing in China, India, Nepal: there's a change and American policy as a whole changed then. Those trainees have established very well and set network of guerrillas, you know. They were, all the guerrillas can handle...

[Discontinuity in video]

#3C: ...well but they didn't know how to go on a guerrilla warfare...guerrilla warfare tactics, so this was taught by this leadership group.

Q: Did the...?

#3C: Along with them, they had radio teams attached to them. They were also sent to Mustang. From Mustang they were in the different parts of...between Tibet and Nepal border. They set up there different radio teams to get information. These are the things and...

Q: So, the group that you worked with in Colorado in the end went to Mustang and supported that effort.

#3C: Yes, yes.

Q: Were there earlier groups from Colorado that were actually sent back into Tibet and...

01:24:50

#3C: Yes, there were different, many, many, many groups going to Tibet; they were dropped. Before '59, there were groups [that] were dropped directly into Tibet. Even in '59 before my group, before this group, there was another group who was dropped directly into Tibet.

Q: Do you know what happened to the men in that group?

#3C: Well, later on we learned that many, you know number of them survived but many, unfortunately didn't survive because once they reach the target area, when they reach

target, in some cases the Chinese were already waiting for them. Because they were being dropped from the airplane, the Chinese were waiting and set up an ambush for them.

So especially one incident, when I was there we learned a very sad case of one group who was dropped into Markham area, in Kham area. One particular group [member] I remember he's very, very...he's young and very energetic and very well motivated. His father was in Markham area. He used to tell us, he says that he's still fighting the Chinese with a group he has. He wanted go back and join his father's group but finally when he went there, when he was dropped there he found out that his father had already been killed.

His is a very famous family, Phurpapon, Markham Phurpapon and the son's name is, in the training his name is Tim, TIM but his Tibetan name is Yeshe Wangyal. He is a very intelligent guy. Among the trainees I found him one of the most intelligent guys. He's very, very much highly educated in Tibetan writing and he knows some English too. On his own he's learned.

Q: Did you feel that or believe that the Americans could have given more support to the Tibetan freedom fighters that they were training in Colorado and dropping into Tibet? Do you believe or think there could have been more support from the Americans?

01:27:38

#3C: When we were in training we automatically...It's always thought that the Americans [were] already with us. So come what may Americans will never abandon us. This is how we were feeling then.

Q: And then did that feeling change?

#3C: That feeling afterwards when Americans stopped the Mustang program...

Q: Why do you think they stopped it?

01:28:07

#3C: Well, we thought it was...like I felt very much disheartened because we had such a high hope on the American government like...At one time I said also in one of the earlier interviews in the Shadow Circus [?]. I said my experience then was that even the highest authority in the United States, like the President of the United States, General Eisenhower - we had a huge picture of, portrait of Eisenhower in our...in the camp in a games room where we used to play different games, pools and ping-pong and all these different games, indoor games, and he said, "To my fellow Tibetans. This is from Eisenhower with love." So with that stuck to me, you know I said that no matter how, America will never abandon us. This is what my feeling [was]. When things changed in the late '60s, then you know...[Shakes head]

Q: What do you think changed in the late '60s that made Americans be less interested in helping Tibet? What do you think caused that?

#3C: The change I think it is political change, situation changes. Like at that time there was a...I think during the Kissinger when he was the Secretary of State, he was the...Nixon's Kissinger period, that was the period when China and the United States started this relationship, you know friendship.

Q: Did you personally feel deceived or led on and then let down by the Americans?

01:30:08

#3C: I felt little let down at that time, yes. I didn't at that time realize; didn't know the background story, of course you know but what the background story was...

Q: What do you think the background story was?

#3C: The Americans also have to see its own interest, you know. It's understandable. Like many of our ex-trainees, they feel no bad feelings against America as such, especially the instructors. We have a very high respect, regard for all of the instructors. As a result they still remain very loyal and many books have been written by them also [about] their experience.

Q: So what do you think was the American interest that led them to turn their support and attention from Tibet? What do you think they were trying to make happen instead of supporting Tibet?

01:31:13

#3C: I think it's like...at that time like in Mustang area we had an army. America initially planned for a very small group of anywhere up to 300-500, very strong group which they were willing to support. But finally everybody was so eager, Tibetans are so very enthusiastic and very eager to fight the Chinese one time at least, so there were more than...the Americans didn't expect. All of a sudden we had 3,000 up in Mustang.

Q: America didn't expect...

#3C: ...didn't expect that. Their instruction at that time to our leaders were to just about a maximum 300-500, a well-knit group with well-trained arms and their job was to go back to Tibet and, you know.

Q: Some authors have suggested that the Americans were actually wanting to support the Tibetans to sort of be a thorn in the side, to kind of annoy the Chinese, but what you are telling me now is the Americans were actually a little bit shocked that so many Tibetans were there and could possibly really cause a lot of damage to the Chinese and the Americans maybe didn't seem to want that as much because you had all of a sudden there were thousands of volunteers ready to attack or...

01:33:00

#3C: Yeah, then later on...I think initially the Americans weren't ready for to support such a huge number of ...

Q: Why? Why weren't they?

#3C: ...but later on they were obliged to do that because the people were already there. Even if they [do] not, somehow the Tibetans are going to survive, somehow. Many survived by eating the shoelaces, you know.

Q: I know.

#3C: There was no food, no nothing.

Q: Tell us about conditions that you knew about in Mustang because many people had been there.

01:33:33

#3C: Number of years, number of them was, you know there were no arms, no...arm-less and many were using sticks and knives, swords. These were the only weapons they had...

Q: To fight the Chinese?

#3C: And food was so scarce. Mustang is a very, very remote area up in the mountains. Things don't grow much. There's not much of cultivation there. People are normally more or less like nomad type there, you know.

Q: Why were the Chinese coming into such a desolate area then?

#3C: Because of the...you know the guerrilla force was established there. That's why there was such a big Chinese pressure on the Nepalese Government, on the King to disarm those illegal immigrants, you know. They are not real refugees.

Q: So the Chinese Government was pressuring the Nepalese Government.

01:34:39

#3C: Nepalese, yes. This is how in 1974 when things were dismantled, the Nepalese sent tens of thousands of armies to dismantle the thing but the guerrillas were not ready to give up.

Q: So what did they do?

#3C: They were not ready but finally the case came up to His Holiness' private secretary. When His Holiness heard this story and His Holiness is such a...he's not just a...he thinks widely on long-term basis. He said, "Maybe the Nepali army could be stopped for maybe 5-6 months"—because Tibetans were well armed there. They have a very well equipped, weapons given by America—"but what's the use?" This is what His Holiness said, told, send in his statement record because, "Okay, you maybe able to fight the Nepalese for maybe 6-7 months. Okay, fine but what happens to the rest of the Tibetans who are living in the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal area? There are 20,000 Tibetans there. So what happens to them? Who will help them then?"

The Nepalese will come down on them, so when you think, he gave them a beautiful advice. To give up, to surrender your weapons and come and the Nepalese were willing to—provided if you surrender—they were willing to rehabilitate the guerrillas to the place wherever they want to go.

Q: What was the reaction of the guerrillas when His Holiness told them to give up their weapons?

01:36:50

#3C: I think it was a very emotional time. In a way His Holiness' message was there but in another way people were so...they couldn't disobey. It's not in them to disobey His Holiness' advice. So many committed suicide. This is what I heard. Some of the trainees I know also; they committed suicide. "Rather than disappoint His Holiness or rather give up my weapons, I would rather commit suicide." Some jumped into rivers; some slit their throats. This way, there are cases have happened.

So one group led by Gen Yeshe—not Gen Yeshe—rather Gyato Wangdu was the General there. He decided to fight it out [smiles] when the Chinese...but he said, "I would rather go to either Tibet or to India." So he took his group and rode but on the way he was ambushed from the...from the China side the Chinese soldiers were on that side. From this side the Nepalese soldiers were coming with a helicopter in-between. So there was no way they can, you know, escape.

Q: They wanted to die fighting.

#3C: Yes, they wanted to die fighting.

Q: You know I'm going to make a very big leap now because of some important questions that have to do with today and the Tibetans and I know we're going to have to end this...at least this part of the interview now. Could you please tell us what are your thoughts and feelings about the Tibetans who are immolating themselves in protest of the Chinese oppression? Can you talk about that from your years of experience and understanding? What do you think about that form of protest?

01:39:12

#3C: Well, this protest is expressing. I personally feel that the Tibetans are expressing their unhappiness, the dissatisfaction with the regime there, going underway. They are not in a way, not going against His Holiness' advice. They are not firing. They are not being violent. They are being non-violent; non-violently they are sacrificing themselves, not harming anybody else. So which I think is in a way not violent. Chinese...it's a violent thing but it's not violent. They are not happy. They want freedom. They want His Holiness back where he belongs.

Thirteenth Dalai Lama at one time fled to India and after two years he went back. He was able to go back. So in this way Tibetan historically, people think that...those in Tibet think that it's high time that the Dalai Lama should [return]. So I think this is my point.

Q: What after your years of experience...what are your feelings about the Chinese now and if you could talk to them yourself, what would you like to tell them?

01:40:50

#3C: I think like...I am a non-violent man, you know. [Laughs] I am a follower of the Middle-Way path like, you know...many of our youngsters are now...they go for full independence.

Q: Tell us so people can understand what do you understand by the Middle Way path?

#3C: The Middle Way path is I think most effective one. His Holiness has recently, as recently as in April, he gave a speech in...public speech in...what do you call, this place called Sikkim. He said that there are people in the world and even within our community who may not agree with my approach...His Holiness' Middle Way approach. But he said, "I still believe, firmly believe in the Middle Way approach because..."

Q: And what is that?

#3C: Many people say that Middle Way approach is not successful; it's a failure. I said no. I said, "Middle Way approach has been very, very successful for many reasons because first of all the international community has been made aware about the approach," the policy which His Holiness has declaring, stating it's most genuine policy which even the Chinese cannot deny.

Q: What is the policy?

01:42:54

#3C: Non-violence, through Middle Way approach, give and take, give and take. This is the policy, give and take.

Q: What words would you say to the Chinese if you could tell them what you would like from them as a Tibetan? What would you like from the Chinese people or the Chinese Government as well?

#3C: Well, I would tell them that, "Okay, give us freedom, free to worship, free to movement, freedom to speech. This is the basic human value, which we have, you know and freedom to practice our own religion, freedom to practice our culture. These are the things all we ask but this is not a too much thing to ask the Chinese if you are reasonable. I think in that way Tibetans would be very, very happy.

I mean at the moment self immolations are going on because of dissatisfaction of the Tibetans there with the Chinese are treating them, you know. So I would tell them that. I would tell them again if...[Laughs] I think that is the most practical way. Personally, I have been thinking on that a lot of time because in my some 40 plus years I have been in contact with the guerrillas; I have been with violent things but at the same time after so many

years, it has mellowed me a little bit. You know, the peaceful way is the international now. That is the only way for everybody.

Q: What would you advise the next generation of Tibetans to hold on to? What would be important?

01:45:00

#3C: I would advise the young generation to never forget to maintain Tibetan identity and Tibetan culture. These are the two combined things, which keep Tibetan culture alive, which make us Tibetans.

Q: What do you think is the most important thing about the Tibetan culture for the people of the world?

#3C: Tibetan culture, I think that teaches us to be...think others before yourself. See if you help others, so this I think, others rather than self, that is the, I think the basic Buddhist teaching also. And this is also deep down in my heart. My advice to the youngsters would be the same thing. Yes, to maintain these are the two things.

Q: And lastly what do you think is the value of us doing interviews with the Tibetan elders from Tibet? Why do you think this is useful or what do you think about it?

01:46:14

#3C: Well, I think this is, personally it's very useful because we are aging, gradually we phase out; we are out of this world one day but our records will be left intact, yeah, for the future generations to see, you know and learn something from it, whether positive or negative. But at least that's the part of my personal history. [Laughs]

Q: What was it like to tell your personal history today?

#3C: It's...my personal history I have already told you. [Laughs]

Q: How was it to tell, to share it with us? How did that feel?

#3C: I feel it is very satisfying. I think I feel it is going to help not only my children but my grandchildren would also see that, "Okay, my grandpa has done this work. He has been very active in the Tibetan community." So in that way I think this will generate sense of, you know...what do you say?

Q: [Whispering]

#3C: Yeah.

Q: What?

#3C: [Laughs]

Q: A sense of patriotism?

01:47:36

#3C: Sense of patriotism, sense of belonging, you know.

Q: We are now going to go back and ask you the question we asked you earlier but I guess one last question for you. *Thinley-la*, is there anything that you can think of right now that you wish you had told us or some story or some final thoughts that you might have for this interview? Anything that you think, “Oh, I want to...” because we can do some more later but is there anything that you think of right now that you would like to say as we conclude this interview today?

#3C: Well, one thing I forgot to mention, which I feel is relevant is my personally knowing Gonpo Tashi, very famous Tibetan warrior who was the one who founded the Tibetan guerrilla warfare. So I was fortunate, I was fortunate enough to get in contact with him when he was here in India, able to meet him and fortunately though I didn’t know him personally how I got contact but he learned from others that I was from this family.

My family is known as Shasok family in Shigatse area and Gonpo Tashi is a very, very famous, a very rich merchant in Shigatse area. Shigatse area is one of the main trading centers between India and Tibet. So that is why we have a trade mart in Shigatse. Gonpo Tashi also has a very...his house in Shigatse set up and he sends his merchants to every year for business trips to... So he happened to know my family, especially my elder brother. They were pretty good friends.

So later on when I was in India I learned about him and one day when Mr. Thondup asked me, “Could you come to...?” That was in 1962. “Go and help translate. Be a translator for Gonpo Tashi. He is sick. He is hospitalized in Calcutta and the doctors feel that he needs very good care” and if I could translate for him and sit with him. Then I said, “Yes, I will go.” Then when I met him, Gonpo Tashi wasn’t that sick then. He could talk; he could speak. He told me that...he asked me about my background and I told him roughly that [I was] from Shigatse area, this and that. He said, “Oh, you are from Shasok family. Then I have a very close relation with your family. We used to have a very good business contact there. With your brother I used to go to Kalimpong, India every year. We have been several times,” he said. “You are very good that I came to know you. You are my interpreter.” That was like in a way...I think it is a...I would call it a blessing in disguise.

Q: For people who don’t know who he is, tell us who he is.

01:51:26

#3C: Gonpo Tashi is a very famous merchant. He is very rich. All his wealth, he has been contributing to the Tibetan monasteries. Every year he made huge contributions. He is well known all over Tibet, Andrug Gonpo Tashi. But his wealth...because his contribution somehow he is still rich, never ends. He is such a generous man.

Q: Wonderful. Well thank you for mentioning that story. Again we are very honored to record your story and really appreciate your participation today.

END OF INTERVIEW