

Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #46 – Khenrab Dakpa
June 25, 2007

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #46
2. Interviewee: Khenrab Dakpa
3. Age: 80
4. Date of Birth: 1927
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Boompa
7. Province: Dhotoe (Kham)
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1958
9. Date of Interview: June 25, 2007
10. Place of Interview: House No. 37, Old Camp No. 4, Lugsung Samdupling Settlement, Bylakuppe, Mysore District, Karnataka, India
11. Length of Interview: 2 hr 13 min
12. Interviewer: Rebecca Novick
13. Interpreter: Tsering Dorjee
14. Videographer: Ronny Novick
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

Biographical Information:

Khenrab Dakpa belonged to a farming family from the village of Boompa where nearly 300 families lived. He earned a living as a mule driver, traveling to China, India and Lhasa transporting goods. He and other traders witnessed the Communist Chinese mistreating the Kuomintang Chinese during travel to China and they anticipated the same fate for the Tibetans. Villagers began preparing by trading sheep for guns, while others were doubtful that the Chinese would harm them.

Khenrab Dakpa was captured by the Chinese when he was 31 because the Chinese considered travelers like him to be troublemakers. He was sent to labor camp and interrogated frequently. After escaping from prison after six months, Khenrab Dakpa joined the *Chushi Gangdrug* Resistance Force. He estimates there were 3,000 people at the guerrilla camp in Lhoka.

Khenrab Dakpa discusses the courage and sacrifice of the Force's members. He makes special mention of Andrug Gonpo Tashi, founder of the *Chushi Gangdrug*, who is also known as Jindha 'Sponsor' for his offerings to the great monasteries of Tibet. Khenrab Dakpa also praises Lukhangwa, who was the representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, for his heroism and loyalty to the Tibetan people.

Topics Discussed:

Childhood memories, trade, invasion by Chinese army, resistance fighters, Chushi Gangdrug guerrillas, imprisonment, forced labor, escape experience.

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[Questions are asked by either interviewer or interpreter. In Interview #46, the interviewer directs questions to the interpreter, who then asks the questions of the interviewee.]

Question: First of all can he describe, as much as he can, his life, his childhood, his family life growing up in Tibet?

Interviewee #46: I was born around the year 1927. Now I am 80 years old. We were farmers. In our village, the majority of the people depended on raising animals. The village was known as Boompa. There were about 300 families. In the early days, the 300 families were a part of Ba [a region in Kham, eastern Tibet]. In ancient times, they were Bapas [people of Ba]. In the latter years, based on the Drichu [Yangtse] River's course, the Chinese stated that the area on one side of the river would remain with Ba and the other side was grouped with Markham. So we are now a part of Markham.

Q: Can he describe what his village looked like?

#46: There was a river flowing in the center [of the village]. It was not a big river. You could build a bridge and cross it. There were families on either side. The whole valley was full of families.

Q: About his family, how many brothers and sisters did he have?

#46: We were five siblings in the family, two sisters and three brothers.

Q: What were his most vivid memories of growing up in the village, strong memories?

#46: Earlier when I was younger, I did not miss my village. I used to like other places. For example, when I went to Lhasa, I thought it was a happy place and liked it. I considered my village as poor. Now when I think of it, I miss my village. On the hilltops, there were many areas where the nomads went. There were no trees; it was pastureland. If there were woods, they were not tall trees but short ones. So it was mostly pastureland where the nomads went and there were many flowers.

Q: Did he have a happy childhood there?

#46: At that time I was very happy. We had meat and butter to eat. Even a middle class family owned about a hundred sheep. From the hundred sheep, after subtracting the dead and those that you used, there would still be an increase of 25 sheep in a year. If you take the example of 50 *dri* 'female yaks,' there would be an increase of 20 *dri* after deducting the dead. So in one year, you added 20 *dri* and 25 sheep [to your flock]. In this way, every year you enhanced your animal stock. You looked after them and grazed them. You didn't have to feed them grass or water; they grazed in the hills and drank water there. You had to protect them from predators and take them to graze where there was good grass. The flock increased, you had plenty to eat, and that was not hard work for the people. So people reared animals and used their products. That was how we led our lives.

Q: What kind of predators?

#46: The predator was wolves. Except for wolves, we did not have many predators like we do here.

Q: Does he remember any festivals/celebrations there?

#46: I do not remember anything like that. I remember the animals and hills very much. I also remember the crops in the fields.

Q: Please remind him that we find this very interesting. Especially for the new generation who has never seen Tibet; it's very nice for them to know what it's like because they have never seen it.

#46: [Nods.]

Q: When did he first notice or how did he first notice the Chinese presence in Tibet? How did he first experience himself?

#46: I learned about it when I was 23 years old. When I was 23, the Chinese arrived in our village. I'd heard that the Chinese would be coming when I was about 15 years old. The elders would be talking about it. When the Chinese stepped on our soil, I was 23 years old.

Q: Does he remember the first time he saw Chinese coming into his village? What was that like? What did he see?

#46: At that time I was much older and I went to Lhasa driving my mules along. I had 10 mules and I brought them to Lhasa. On my way back, I encountered the Chinese on the road. When the Chinese had first arrived in my village, there had been clashes and people died, but I do not have anything to say about that because at that time I was in Lhasa.

Q: When the Chinese arrived, he was in Lhasa?

#46: I was in Lhasa. After I returned, within one month they [the Chinese] had reached Lhasa. After crossing over the Drichu River, the Chinese had immediately set off for Lhasa. They went through three directions and converged in Lhasa within one month.

Q: What were they doing when he saw them? What were they actually doing? Were they marching into his village? What were they doing exactly when he saw them?

#46: I first encountered the Chinese on the road when I was on my way [back to my village] and they were coming from the other direction. Initially we were scared that the Chinese might do something bad to us. We encountered them all of a sudden on the road and there was no way we could run away. They asked us where we were from. We told them the name of our village. They asked us where we'd been and we replied that we'd been to Lhasa and that we were returning. They told us to carry straight on and that nothing would happen. The place was called Waphopari and the encounter spot was on the Ayi Bridge.

Q: So at that time he was transporting mules? Was that his job?

#46: We transported things on the mules and drove them.

Q: That was how he was making his living at that time?

#46: I used to go along with the mules. I used to drive the horses and mules. Since the age of 23 years, I was driving the mules.

Q: For trade?

#46: Yes, for trade. We transported tea, *phing* 'noodles,' and *phoram* 'brown sugar candy.'

Q: How long was the journey?

#46: It took 66 days if you went driving the animals along; two months and six days.

Q: What changes did he notice in his village from the influence of the Chinese presence there?

#46: When they [the Chinese] first came, there was no change at all. They were being very good. If they bought even one piece of radish from a family, they paid extra for that. They never ill-treated us. The cause for the tension which crept in our hearts was that when we drove the mules towards China—to places like Sadham and Gyaldham, we knew that they were inflicting sufferings on the people there. We saw that and felt that they would do the same to us. Therefore, though they were not doing anything to us then, we felt in our hearts that they were the enemy. At that time, for a few years, they were very good. The tea and *phing* were not produced in our village. We had to go in the direction of China to procure them and bring them back to our village. We spent a month or two in making preparations and then left for Lhasa.

Q: Who were they ill-treating?

#46: They were ill-treating the people of those regions.

Q: What did he actually see?

#46: Those that were ill-treated were also Chinese, but they were the Kuomintang Chinese. Those [Kuomintang] Chinese were governing a country and they [the Communist Chinese] arrested and imprisoned the people who were working there, which we saw. If there was a high-class family, they prosecuted and destroyed them completely. We saw an influential man being imprisoned and punished.

Q: Those that were tormented were the Kuomintang?

#46: Yes, they tormented the Kuomintang and the people who lived near Chinese territory. Then they gradually moved further and further in causing suffering on the people. First they would be good and then slowly worsen.

Q: Going back to the torture that he saw, what exactly did he see? Can he describe what he saw? Torture is a very general term, so what exactly did he see?

#46: They targeted the people who used to work for the previous Kuomintang government and those that had documents stating that they worked for that government. They inflicted suffering on the people who had worked for the previous government. Likewise those that lived on the border, though they were Tibetans, but if they lived and worked for that country—for example, we live in India and if we worked for the Indian government, on that pretext, we would be troubled.

Q: The question is, how were they tortured?

#46: When they came to capture a person, they came in the night at around 12 or one o'clock. They would capture the man and then he was never seen again. His family did not see him; nor did anyone else. At times, maybe around three, four or five years later, he might be released. There were some who were never seen again.

Q: Did he actually describe anything he saw with his own eyes?

#46: That was what I had seen.

Q: So he didn't say how? Did he see anyone being beaten?

#46: No, I did not particularly see that. But I have not yet come to the story of our country. That was what was happening in another country. Though I do not have the full story, I will explain about the suffering caused by them when they arrived on Tibetan territory. We are yet to come to that part of the story.

Q: But he didn't actually see Chinese people being butchered himself?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: No.

Q: Did he try to warn the people of his village about this because he was worried that this was going to happen to the Tibetans? Did he try to warn people that this is happening in China and prepare yourselves for this?

#46: Yes, I did say that they [the Chinese] were not good, that it would be no good if we became friends with them. That was why the heads of the families, if they could sell their sheep, they did and bought or exchanged them for guns. So preparations were being made.

Q: They did that because you explained to them . . . ?

#46: Yes. It was not just me, because in our village at least 25 percent of the families were engaged in this [trade with China]. Many people in and around Kham were engaged in driving the mules back and forth. We went to the border of China and transported goods to Lhasa, and from Lhasa we went to Kalimpong and spent our whole life doing that.

Q: Was it hard for people to believe this?

#46: It was not difficult. [Though] there were some people who said, "What would the Chinese do to us when we have done nothing wrong?" There were some who were in doubt. There were different types [of thoughts among the people].

Q: What did he do? Did he join the resistance there or did he go back to Lhasa? What did he do at this time?

#46: At that time I thought I should not stay back in my village but instead go to Lhasa. Even if I bought a gun, I would get only 10 bullets or at the most 20 bullets. There was no way to challenge the Chinese with 10 or 20 bullets. The Chinese had different types of weapons. I thought I should go to Lhasa because there were many people and I would be among them. So I set off for Lhasa. I was 28 years old when I left for Lhasa.

Q: Why was he going to Lhasa? To get guns?

#46: I went to Lhasa driving my mules. I went to Kalimpong, Lhasa, and sometimes to Phari. That was my livelihood.

Q: At the age of 28 he went to Lhasa. Why did he go to Lhasa?

#46: I went to Lhasa for trade. One must do something to earn a livelihood. So I went to trade there.

Q: Was he trying to get money for more weapons?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: It was his business for survival.

Q: But before he said he was trying to get guns and he did not have enough money and enough bullets.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: He said, "Even if I buy guns, I cannot challenge."

Q: Oh, he just thought it was pointless to try and challenge.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: He said, "Even if I buy guns, I will only get 10 or twenty bullets. It will not be sufficient to resist the Chinese."

Q: Was it difficult for him to continue his business at this time? What was that like to do his business?

#46: So I set out when I was 28 and the Chinese captured me when I was 31 years old. We [traders] were arrested by the Chinese. They said, "Such people who travel up and down are bad people. They go to one place and talk. Then they go to another place and talk. They are troublemakers. They are not law-abiding citizens of the country. They are liars and cheaters." So we were arrested by the Chinese.

Q: Can he talk about more, about that incidence?

#46: Yes, I can, of whatever I remember. But if we keep going from one topic to the other, I cannot remember and I am also not able to narrate the story. If we go in an orderly way, I have a little more to say. In my village, all the men went to the hills with their guns. In some families it was the father and son, while in some it was two sons and the father. They moved to wherever the Chinese were and into the forests. Sometimes when they didn't have anything to eat, they went to villages where they found two or three families living who gave them *tsampa* 'flour made from roasted barley.' They then returned to the hills.

Q: Did you hear of these when you were captured?

#46: We were in Lhasa at that time. They were doing that in the village. They were continuously doing that and their bullets were exhausted. Then they climbed atop the hills where there were motor roads at the lower part, collected huge stones, cut trees, and made logs of this size [shows a width of about 3 feet]; and they stayed atop the hills. When the Chinese vehicles passed by, they rolled down the logs and stones. In this way, they destroyed many vehicles. They destroyed many Chinese.

Q: If he can just continue to tell the story?

#46: That was happening in my village, but such things were not happening in Lhasa then. [Traditionally], the Khampas [people of Kham, a province in eastern Tibet] did not pierce holes in their ears. Among the Utsang [province of Central Tibet], there wasn't anyone without holes pierced in their ears. They pierced holes in order to wear gold earrings. The

monks did not pierce holes in their ears. At that time the most important person in the Tibetan government was Lukhangwa. The Chinese leader told Lukhangwa, "You should capture all the people who do not have holes pierced in their ears. They should not be allowed to live in this place. They should be made to go back to wherever they belong. You have to try to do that." So I was six months in the Chinese prison. For one month, they put us in a room and did not allow us even to talk. Then they took us to Shigatse and made us construction workers. Later, they took us to Lhasa and we were made to work at the power plant construction.

Q: Where in Lhasa?

#46: They were building a huge electricity plant at Nachen Thang. They asked us if we wanted to work there and we replied that we did. Then they asked, "Why do you think you want to work?" We replied, "This will help the entire public. We do not have electricity and use an oil lamp. Now you are bringing electricity, so we are very happy and wish to go to work." They said that was good.

Q: Was he given any kind of a trial?

#46: They tied me up as a punishment. It was a long rope with a knot at my back. They looped the rope on both my arms and then tied it behind my back. When it was tightened I could hardly breathe and they kept me in this condition for one day.

Q: Was that in the court?

#46: It was on the way when we were being led from Domo to Shigatse. That was a day's journey. It was a day's journey by vehicle. That was a punishment.

Q: Was there a trial at a court?

#46: No, there was never one.

Q: Can he describe what conditions were like in the prison, the first six months in prison? Was he talking about the pain he was in? How they were making it tighter and tighter?

#46: Yes, they tied me up that way for one day. My arms were swollen and the ropes cut into me. When we reached Shigatse, they untied us and took us to the army camp. When I wanted to answer nature's call, I could not use my hands to undo my pants. I had to relieve myself in my pants.

Q: Can he tell us what it was like in the jail? Where was he in jail?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: It was in Lhasa. He was taken here and there during those six months.

Q: Can he describe the conditions in prison?

#46: It was not so bad in prison. They just made us work. We were made to work all the time. Even at night we had to work for two hours. We worked for an hour before daylight began. It was very cold and we did not have proper clothes. We only had what we had on when we became prisoners. We felt very cold and that was about the extent of our difficulties. Where work was concerned, there was a limit that they set and we worked hard to complete that.

Q: And for one month he was in solitary?

#46: Yes, I was put in one room. We were not allowed to talk to each other.

Q: So they can see each other, but were not allowed to talk to one another? Were they being interrogated during this time?

#46: Yes, they questioned us. They questioned us three times a day about the “hows” and the “whys.” If we didn't have anything to say, they would give us cigarettes. They too smoked and relaxed. We were made to sit and smoke. Then they called us and asked, "Have you thought it over? Do you have something new to say?" We had nothing new to say.

Q: What did he say to them?

#46: For farmers they asked, "How much is the input and how much is the output?" For nomads, "How many *gyama* [measurement similar to kilograms] of butter do you get? How many animals do you own? What type is your house? How many pillars does your house have and how many doors?" They asked questions like, "Talk about those men who are fighting in the hills. Who is the leader? Who organized it? Who did it?"

Q: What kind of answers did he give?

#46: If they asked me about my house, I described it. When they asked me about the input in the fields, I replied, "I do not know because I am young. My parents take care of that. They know how much seeds are used and how much is the produce."

Q: What about the movements of the resistance? Did he know about that?

#46: When they asked me about that, I replied, "I do not know. It has been many years since I came here [to Lhasa]. I am just a servant engaged in traveling with the mules. I am just a simple man who works for food. I am not one who knows anything about politics or movements of the army. I do not understand."

Q: Did he actually know quite a bit about the movement of the resistance?

#46: I knew a little about that. They were people I had faith in and I too joined them. The leader was known as Andrug Gonpo Tashi. Andrug Gonpo Tashi was from Lithang. He

did not belong to a rich family or a poor family. He came from a middle-class family. Where finance was concerned, he had shops in all the larger places, from Dhartsedho to Kalimpong. He had shops at Lhasa, Shigatse, Gyantse and Phari. Likewise, he had many other shops. He took an account once in a year from the shopkeepers. Whatever profits he had earned, he would make an offering of it during the Monlam Festival in Lhasa when all the monks from the Sera, Ganden, and Drepung Monasteries and other monasteries assembled. He offered it to the monks during the Monlam Festival. That was why he was called Jindha ‘Sponsor.’

Q: It was Andrug Jindha who started the movement?

#46: Yes, he was the one. He was not the one who led the movement in my village but they were in communication. So the resistance was there in my village as well as in Lhasa. He [Andrug Gonpo Tashi] was a very kind-hearted man. He did not speak badly to other people. He was a very steadfast man. Lukhangwa [a minister in the Tibetan-government] knew him. If you take Lhasa for example, it was Lukhangwa who knew that the Chinese would be no good.

In Lhasa, the leadership was said to consist of 180 *dungko* ‘lay officials’ and 180 *tsedung* ‘monastic officials.’ Among them Lukhangwa was someone who did not like the Chinese. When he looked for a determined person who could lead and influence people, he called Andrug Gonpo Tashi. He told Andrug Jindha that he should be the leader. He [Andrug Gonpo Tashi] was then sent to Lhoka to start the resistance camp. When people heard of this [resistance camp], then all the good and the bad went towards Lhoka. So a lot of people gathered at Lhoka and the leader was Andrug Jindha.

Q: Is Andrug Jindha the same person as Andrug Gonpo Tashi?

#46: Yes. The name of the family was Andrugtsang. The name of the person was Gonpo Tashi. So he was called Andrug Gonpo Tashi. He came to be called Jindha because he made offerings to the monks during the Monlam Festival.

Q: Did he personally meet Gonpo Tashi?

#46: I've seen him.

Q: Let's go from when he was at the electric plant. So he was at the electric plant and then maybe he can tell us more about his life from there.

#46: First the Chinese tried to advise us, "You should not think badly in your heart. What we think is that you should become good people, which is why we have given you food and kept you here for five to six months. You should do good work. You should think about the country and work for it. If you do that, nothing bad will come to you. If we thought of you as bad, we could have shot and killed you. That will take just one bullet. One bullet will not cost the country anything. We didn't kill you but cared for you. If you were pigs, we would

feed you and later kill you for the army to eat you. We didn't think that way. We have done everything keeping in mind your welfare. You should not do anything bad.

We are going to bring about liberation in Tibet. So during the liberation process, you, on behalf of the country, should think about leading it. If you bow your head and think that you would not get food to eat if it were not for your superiors, that is a very lowly thought. Look up around you and you will see the road, the villages, the hills and the waters. You can think and look at the world. So look up and walk. When we bring about liberation in Tibet, it will be for those people of the Tibetan government who have whips hung on their doors. Those who live at the top of three storied houses, verbally abusing the people, with brocades as bed sheets, drinking sweet tea—those people will be annihilated. Nothing will be done to you. The [liberation] process is for your benefit. Once we have liberated the whole of Tibet and everything is well, the Chinese will go back to China. You can live and relax."

Q: During the interrogation or brainwashing sessions, did the Chinese ever mention the Dalai Lama?

#46: They did not mention the name of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. When we were on our way to work, they asked us what the Potala Palace was. We could see it and they asked us what that was. When we told them that that was the palace of His Holiness, they did not like it. That was asked by senior army officials and not the ordinary troops.

Q: When they were asking these questions, were they hurting him in anyway?

#46: They did not beat us. Our friends from Lhasa brought us things and food. We told them, "Don't bring us anything. The people in Lhasa should not think of their wealth and possessions. Just try to escape with your life." They [the Chinese] said that we would be released one day, but we didn't listen to them and fled one night. There were five of us. The five of us got up at night and escaped. The Chinese saw us. Where we were kept, there were five tiers of barbed wire fencing around and we jumped over that and fled. They flashed their flashlights but did not shoot. We were seen by the Chinese and so we jumped into the river, the Tsangpo in Lhasa. All five of us held hands, called out to the gods and crossed the river.

When the water was this high [stomach level], there was a lot of panic, but when the water reached this high [neck level] there was absolutely no panic. We could have been carried away or drowned and there was no feeling. Once we were on the other side, we called out to each other and everyone was there. We were still holding hands. Then we started running away from there. There was no time to put on shoes and waste time. We had been seen and they [the Chinese] might come chasing us. They had vehicles and the motor road was close by.

The clothes we had on had frozen. The upper portion [of our body] hadn't frozen but mud and stones stuck to our feet. Once we reached the hills, we removed them and wore our shoes. In the night we climbed up the mountain. We saw a nomad camp on the mountain

pass. We rushed inside and asked him to give us tea and *tsampa*. After drinking something hot, we crossed over the mountain pass and into Lhoka where the army of Andrug Gonpo Tashi was. We reached there.

Q: Can he talk about that and continue. I would very much like to know about his first meeting with Gonpo Tashi. Can he describe it and what did they talk about? What was that like and his impression of him as a person?

#46: When I reached Lhoka, I did not meet Andrug Gonpo Tashi. In the army, there were many divisions and each one had to go to the division he belonged. We were accepted into our particular division and they provided us with food, clothes etc.

Q: Did he become a member of the *Chushi Gangdrug*? Did he join them?

#46: Yes, I joined it.

Q: Can he describe what it was like in Lhoka? Can he describe the scene, what it looked like?

#46: From the whole of Tibet, Lhoka was a place where crops grew in abundance. Even if it was the same land size, in Lhoka the yield was twice as much. Crops grew very well. In Lhoka, they never ate things that were produced in other countries like India or China. They lived on their own produce; whether it was meat or butter, grains or wheat, everything was in plenty. The region had everything.

Q: Can he describe the camps, particularly the resistance army? Can he describe the camps and the soldiers in the camps? Were there men, women, and children? Did they have lots of weapons? What did they look like? What conditions were they in? What it was like to be there in the camp?

#46: Because people knew there was an army camp there [in Lhoka], people came from everywhere to that place. Some of those that came had nothing with them. In terms of money, they did not even have one *rupee*, and as for *tsampa* not even a spoonful. People simply came there and said they wanted to be a *Chushi Gangdrug* soldier. For shelter, tents were put up in an open ground called Diguthang. So people stayed there and ate there in the tents. Daily 100, 200, 300 or 400 people came and so thousands collected there.

Lukhangwa helped to feed the people. At that time Lukhangwa was the representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In the region of Lhoka, there were 18 districts. He issued a notice to all the districts saying, "You should supply them [the *Chushi Gangdrug* guerrillas] with food and whatever they require. They are the ones who are ready to give up their lives. Whatever they take from you, make a note of it. If Tibet is in a better situation, we will repay you with interest. If such a situation does not arise in Tibet, then the Chinese will gobble up everything. So instead of being gobbled up by the Chinese, it is better that our Tibetan brothers consume it. They are the ones who are ready to give up their lives, whether they are able to succeed [in their mission] or not. If they are the ones to consume it, it is worth giving them."

So because he issued the notice, everyone supplied whatever was needed. However much we asked for, they provided us the food in plenty. Besides that, there were the thieves, bandits and all the bad elements that had also collected there. These people robbed and committed such crimes in the surrounding villages but the villagers bore all these.

Q: When he escaped from jail, how many were with him? There were five people with him. Did they all come to Lhoka and did they all join the resistance movement?

#46: All the five joined the *Chushi Gangdrug*.

Q: I know it is difficult to estimate, can he take an estimation of how many people he thinks were there when he was there at the camp?

#46: It is difficult to estimate. They were there right in the depths of Kham at Tsawagong where they were pursued by the Chinese.

Q: At Lhoka?

#46: At Lhoka perhaps there were about 3,000.

Q: This was in 1958?

#46: It was in 1958.

Q: So if you just continue his story about what happened when he joined? Just continue to talk about that.

#46: In my heart, the people who were like my parents and whom I had belief in were Lukhangwa and Andrug Gonpo Tashi. I have their pictures in my house and every morning I light incense and pray that they are reborn as human beings. Even to this day, I believe that they were the best of men.

What Lukhangwa did was, he gave an armory which was in Shang Gaden Chokhor in Tsang region [to the *Chushi Gangdrug* Resistance Force]. Nobody else, not even Andrug Gonpo Tashi, knew that the Tibetan government had an armory at Shang Gaden Chokhor. The Chinese told Lukhangwa that he should have a Chinese flag flying along with the flag that the Tibetan government had atop the house. Lukhangwa refused and replied that two people could not sit on one chair.

Q: He was a very strong person.

#46: When he [Lukhangwa] said that two people could not sit on one chair, the Chinese officer immediately pointed his pistol on Lukhangwa's chest. Lukhangwa said, "You can shoot. You can shoot me with your gun and kill me. That would be just one bullet for you. However my dying would have helped the cause of the Tibetan people. I would be happy if

you killed me. If you didn't kill me, I would not have accomplished my cause. You do not allow me to do what I think. You want me to do what you think. There is no way we can succeed as we oppose each other. Therefore if you kill me, my death would be an accomplishment for the people of Tibet. So kill me." The Chinese put back his pistol. When he spoke thus, that was the reason I had full faith in him from the depth of my heart. Otherwise, Lukhangwa was a minister and I was a common man and there was no contact whatsoever [between us]. I have never had tea nor dined with him, nor have I ever spoken to him. I have full faith that it was because of this man that His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people could come to India. Once we reached this country, there were people who claimed, "I am *Chushi Gangdrug*. I have fought [in the war]. I have accomplished this or that." But I do not fear such people. I am one who goes with the majority of the people of Tibet.

Q: The feeling among the resistance, was there a feeling of hope, of confidence that they could win against the Chinese? Was there a feeling of optimism?

#46: That was difficult because we did not have weapons. If we were here [location of interview], the Chinese were in Camp Number 1 [a distance of 2 miles]. When they fired from Camp Number 1, it reached us here. We couldn't see the Chinese but the bullets fell here. It was not aimed at one person; it was raining [bullets]. It was just that our destiny to die had not arrived, due to which we could escape. Otherwise there was no place to hide, nowhere to enter, nothing at all.

We could not see the Chinese. On the day we fled, we saw the Chinese from afar. When they arrived, they were in the thousands. A thousand in front and a thousand behind; they came in rows. The first thousand came rushing forward and dived on the ground and fired from their guns..."rat, tat, tat, tat, tat." Then the next thousand came and rushed past them. When they dived on the ground, the next thousand followed and in this way they covered the ground. We didn't have many bullets. We had to wait for a vital moment before firing. We couldn't fire like them.

Q: Can he describe the battles that he was involved in?

#46: At that time we could see the Chinese when they came in that manner. In our army, we had a leader, a Chatingpa called Kowa Tenpa Gyaltzen. There was a fort which looked as if it were five stories high. He climbed up there and fired a mortar. It looked like the highest ranking Chinese officer was killed then because the Chinese stopped shooting. It was very quiet and calm. Then when we escaped, we didn't face any problems on the way.

Q: I want to ask him about the feeling in him and the fellow soldiers and what was the morale like amongst the Tibetan resistance soldiers? Did they feel optimistic at all that they had any chance of beating the Chinese? Were they desperate? How was their feeling about the chances?

#46: The livelihood at that time, as I told you, was plentiful but at times scarce.

Q: Not the livelihood but the feelings in your heart? [The Tibetan word for livelihood and feeling (*tsowa*) sound the same, thus the mistake.]

#46: At that time I was young and I did not ponder much. I thought that I would ultimately die at the hands of the Chinese. I never ever had thoughts about going to India. When the more knowledgeable people started escaping, I just followed them. I was not killed and was able to come here. I personally had no thoughts and no plans.

Q: When they were fighting the enemy, did the soldiers think that they would win the battle?

#46: There was a slight hope because we'd heard that there was aid coming from abroad, that the United States was helping us. We were given grenades, which they said had the mark of the United States, and that they had come from the United States, and it used to give us courage. Otherwise, we were outnumbered and our weapons couldn't compare with theirs and there was no way we could win.

Q: Would he be able to just say that again? There was a lot of noise and it was hard to hear him. So if he could just say that one more time about the Americans and there was hope.

#46: The reason we thought we could win and had the courage to fight the enemy was—though in actual fact we knew that in terms of manpower and weapons, we were no match—we were told that there was help coming from abroad. If any article had USA on it, Tibetans said it was from the United States of America. And America was very renowned as one which could fly in the sky and [crawl] in the ground. Even as a child of this size [gestures] I had heard about it. So with such support and help, we found the courage that we might be able to resist them.

Q: Can he describe a little bit more about his life in the resistance? Did he see combat face to face? Can he describe his life in the resistance?

#46: I do not have much to say because I couldn't kill even one Chinese. I did shoot, but I did not feel that any Chinese fell dead due to these shots. I just followed what other people did. It was in the 11th Lunar month when I escaped from the jail. I could stay in the army camp for only three months. Then we lost our country and I had to come to India.

Q: Can he describe the kind of people, like his comrades were? Can he describe the kind of people they were? Were they brave, what kind of men were they?

#46: There was one Chatingpa, called Yongbey Tsumtim, who was a trader of the Trijang Ladang. It was said that the Chinese were there at the crook of a hill and nearby were several houses. One had to cross a mountain pass to get there [where the Chinese were]. A lot was drawn and it fell upon some people to go there first. The villagers told them that the area was full of Chinese. When they heard this, those people [on whom the lot fell] retreated. Then Yongbey Tsumtrim told them, "If you are running away from the Chinese, why didn't you stay back in Lhasa? You came to fight the Chinese. You must go there." They said, "We are all here with the same intention of fighting the Chinese. So you can go."

So Yongbey Tsultim took 36 men with him and went right in there. From the 36 men, not one could return. Later we heard from the villagers that five vehicles were filled with Chinese corpses. He [Yongbey Tsultrim] was one of the great achievers. He also didn't return; he was killed.

Q: Was he afraid of death?

#46: At that time, I did not have fear of death. Though the Chinese spoke very kindly, I never liked them nor did I feel that we were the same [as Tibetans].

Q: What happened to his four friends that he escaped from prison with?

#46: One of my companions lives in Dharamsala, where he is a driver. All the rest are dead. One of them died on the way from Tibet.

Q: Has he seen the man from Dharamsala since he's been in India?

#46: I met him once when I went to Dharamsala.

Q: What was it like to see him again?

#46: He was happy to see me. The other two are dead. One died last year and the other, the previous year. They were both living in Darjeeling.

Q: Does he have anything more to say about his life in the resistance?

#46: I don't have anything else.

Q: Did he ever meet Gonpo Tashi face to face? If so, could he describe that meeting?

#46: No. Gonpo Tashi was from Lithang while I was from this side [of the Driчу River]. There was a distance of four days' journey between us.

Q: So when he escaped into India, which route did he take? And also his decision to escape, did he feel that it was hopeless? Why did he decide to come to India first of all?

#46: That was because of the Chinese. What we Tibetans have is religion. There is a big difference between how others practice their religion and how we practice it. The Tibetans accept religion and are believers of the Buddha dharma. The Tibetan Buddhists' basic prayer is not derived from the Indian, Chinese or Nepalese languages. We have accepted the faith from Lord Buddha, similar to how in the earlier generations His Holiness the Dalai Lama has accepted to be a representative of the Tibetan people.

They [the Chinese] say that religion is poison. The first principle of the Chinese is that they do not accept religion. They do not accept their parents and relatives. They do not accept good friendship. Similar to the four-point vows the monks took [to become a monk], a

Chinese, in order to become an official, had to take an oath not to accept religion and one's parents, not to recognize people who were from your own region. So we realize that they are enemies because for us, since we were little children our nature was not that. Therefore we consider them as real enemies. Our food, drink and lifestyles are different. They ate the meat of snakes, frogs, horses and donkeys. Tibetans do not eat insects, which they do. That is why deep within us we feel that China and Tibet are separate.

Q: Can he describe his journey? Was it dangerous coming into India?

#46: When we were coming from Tibet, we faced difficulties due to the scarcity of food. We came through regions where there were no roads and just dashed down the hills haphazardly. At times we came across violent waters and at times upon rocks, and we didn't know how to go. I had a horse and couldn't lead it. We cut logs and put them across to cross rivers. So I faced such problems as well as the scarcity of food. Other than that, there were no problems.

Q: So where did he actually enter India? Did he enter Nepal or from which place did he cross?

#46: We came through Assam.

Q: Did he go to a camp or did he go to Buxa?

#46: From Assam, we came directly here [to Bylakuppe]. I came here in '61.

Q: Did you come here direct from Assam?

#46: From Assam I went to Balapur, which was very close by. We moved two places and then came here in '61.

Q: How does he feel towards the Chinese now?

#46: The Chinese are becoming more and more renowned while we are in a pathetic situation. When I think about it, I feel sad that most probably I will die in this country. I feel sad that my whole life will be spent here. I do not have [hope] that I will go back.

Q: Does his spiritual practice help him come to terms with what happened to Tibet and his experiences? Does his spiritual practice help him?

#46: Yes, that is there. Now I practice religion and think about the dharma. One's body, mind and spirit have suffered. The suffering is there in the body and I think about dharma to remove these sufferings. I am 80 years old and there is nothing else but to think of the dharma. That is the end of my story.

I would like to tell them [interviewer and videographer] thank you for interviewing me today and I have spoken about what I remember. You have interviewed me because there is a reason, as nobody will ask [questions] if there is no reason. Whether it is an

organization or personal, I would like to say that if you help the Tibetans, we do not need money. There is no need for financial help. But please support the “non-violent approach” of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Q: Please tell him thank you very much from our side and that we are doing our best to support Tibet and this interview that will be seen by the next generation of Tibetans would help them understand their history and will help the cause of Tibet. And also by *enjis* ‘Tibetan term for for white people’ who will see it also.

#46: Thank you.

Q: What advice does he have for the next generation of Tibetans who have never seen Tibet and all they know about Tibet is what their elders tell them. What advice does he have for them?

#46: There should be a Tibet. Take for example, India. They celebrate their Republic Day and Independence Day. However our youngsters do not give much thought even though they see these things. They want to go abroad, do manual labor and earn some dollars. When they are able to earn that, they are very proud. What is a dollar? A dollar is a piece of paper. What is our cause? In actual fact, if we dip it in water, it does not freeze; if it is placed under the ground, it does not rot; that is our cause for which they give no thought. If we tell them that this is like this or that they shouldn't do like this and that—it is important to think about their future, they do not listen. We are old and they are young, so the young do not listen. It is difficult. Even if we feel in our heart, we have to suppress it because there is no one to talk to. So in such desperate times, I request that you—I do not know whether the non-violent approach is good or bad, but it is advocated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and so it must be good—I request both of you to support it.

Q: What advice do you have for the children?

#46: The children will not listen to any advice. If I talk to my own children, they do not listen. So how would others' children listen?

Q: I want to tell Khenrab that I've never met an 80 year old man in America who could sit like this for two hours. [Interviewee sat cross-legged on the chair during the whole interview.]

#46: [Smiles.]

END OF INTERVIEW