

# **Tibet Oral History Project**

**Interview #6B – Lobsang (alias)  
December 23, 2013**

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# TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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## INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #6B
2. Interviewee: Lobsang (alias)
3. Age: 78
4. Date of Birth: 1935
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Karze
7. Province: Dhotoe (Kham)
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1958
9. Date of Interview: December 23, 2013
10. Place of Interview: Private residence, Old Camp 4, Bylakuppe, Mysore District, Karnataka, India
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 40 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter: Tenzin Yangchen
14. Videographer: Pema Tashi
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

### **Biographical Information:**

Lobsang is from the Karze region in Kham Province. His family owned land which they farmed. Lobsang was sent to Lhasa at the age of 19 to avoid being taken to China for “re-education” after the Chinese invasion. Lobsang then moved to Kalimpong, India before the Chinese occupied Lhasa. He had a keen desire to join the *Chushi Gangdrug* Defend Tibet Volunteer Force in Lhoka in the south of Tibet to defend his country but was turned down due to his young age.

Lobsang contacted Gyalo Thondup [His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s older brother] and requested again to join the resistance army. This led to various clandestine adventures in India and then his transportation to Colorado in the United States for secret combat training. Lobsang explains about the various types of warfare training given to the group of young Tibetan men for around 9-10 months. Then he talks about being air dropped in Chara Penpa, Tibet and fighting many encounters with Chinese soldiers.

Ultimately the operation failed on account of the Chinese army’s numerous air strikes and being hopelessly outnumbered. Finally, they were forced to flee and out of 13-14 men, only five of them managed to escape to India. He once again joined the fight at Mustang and then served as a wireless radio operator at Walung for nine years.

### **Topics Discussed:**

Kham, CIA training, Chushi Gangdrug guerrillas, invasion by Chinese army, escape experiences, guerrillas in Mustang, life as a refugee in India.

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## Interview #6B

**Interviewee: Lobsang [alias]**

**Age: 78, Sex: Male**

**Interviewer: Marcella Adamski**

**Interview Date: December 13, 2013**

Question: *Apo-la* ‘respectful term for an older brother,’ what kind of work did your family do? You were born in Tibet and what kind of livelihood did your parents have?

00:00:26

**Interviewee #6B: [My] parents loved me very much as I was the youngest and [I] did not have much to do. However, our main livelihood was farming. Except for fieldwork, there were not machines or different kinds of work in my village. It was just working hard in the fields.**

Q: How many people were in your family?

**#6B: At the time of my leaving home there were the parents, four sisters and a brother, and none else.**

Q: Why did you leave your home?

**#6B: The reason for leaving home then was that we were in the *sadhak* ‘land owners’ [class] and the parents were afraid that the Chinese would ask me to be sent to school in China. Once taken to China, there would be no news about the son’s whereabouts. So [I] was sent to India, [I] mean sent to Lhasa. And from Lhasa I came to India.**

Q: What age were you when your parents sent you to Lhasa and how did you get there?

00:02:41

**#6B: I was aged 18 or 19 then, must have been 19, maybe a little over 19.**

Q: How did [you] get there, from the village to Lhasa?

**#6B: I left to go to Lhasa from the village. The Chinese were not stopping anyone then. [I] came by a Chinese vehicle.**

Q: Really.

**#6B: [Speaks before interpreter] Both the parents desired to send [me].**

Q: You mean even at 19 you would've been sent to China for an education, at age 19 not younger?

**#6B: They took [such children] because we were *sadhak* and our minds had to be transformed to their way of thinking. They were going to educate in such a way that it ensconced into our minds and transformed it: they were doing something like this.**

Q: Did you remember any other young men in your area that were sent to China before you left for Lhasa?

00:04:34

**#6B: Many from our village went to join the Chinese army wearing Chinese uniforms. Later, when a few skirmishes took place between Tibetans and Chinese in Nyarong, it was heard that there were Tibetans in Chinese army fatigues taking part. I do not know for certain because I did not take much notice then.**

Q: What happened when you got to Lhasa? Where did you go and what did you do?

**#6B: My older sibling was in Lhasa. [We] had received a letter in [my] hometown saying that he had arrived in Lhasa after a pilgrimage to India. [I] went to him in Lhasa. [I] stayed with him and told him, “[We] cannot go back to the village. The Chinese are not treating well and it is better to go to India.” He had some merchandise that was sold in Lhasa and then both of us left for India, sibling and I.**

Q: So at age 19, you and your brother went to India, and let's see what year was that...1935 and you were 18...okay, so that was in 1953.

00:07:04

**#6B: '53? [I] wonder when it was?**

Q: Had you come to India before the occupation of Tibet?

**#6B: [We] were in India before the occupation of Tibet. Tibet was not lost then.**

Q: Around how many years?

**#6B: I do not know exactly. [We] were in India for a year or two and then Tibet was lost and there was the Tibetan army and the *Chushi Gangdrug* [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force] in Lhoka. People were going there from India. It was like that and I wanted to join then but could not because of my young age.**

Q: Why did you want to join?

00:08:10

**#6B: [I] could not get an education living in India, in Kalimpong [West Bengal] and even if [I] wished to there was no money. I heard that the *Chushi Gangdrug* was in Lhoka and if I**

**joined the force, it was for my country and it did not matter if [I] died. Hence, I wished to join but was not taken along.**

Q: Did you find a group to join when you said “They didn’t take me along”? Were there *Chushi Gangdrug* in Kalimpong?

**#6B: There were nearly 20 men from Kalimpong, perhaps between 15 and 20 and the main person was called Sandho Lo Nyendak who was from Dhargay Gonpa. Sandho was renowned and a very wealthy man in Kalimpong. The family of Sandho was renowned. There were 15-20 men hailing from our village but even if [they] wished to join, they did not have money to buy khaki attire or for horses and saddles. So Sandho Lo Nyendak took them along as his attendants and paid for their horses, saddles, clothes and all expenses. I wished to go along but [Sandho Lo Nyendak] said I was too young to go and thus did not take [me] along.**

Q: Why wouldn’t they take you?

00:10:27

**#6B: He said, “You are too young, too young to take part in war.” He asked [me] to live in his cottage in Kalimpong and assist his wife and two children. [I] stayed there.**

Q: How long did you stay there and what happened to you?

**#6B: I stayed for around 3-4 months with the Sandhotsang [family] and then did not feel like continuing. Then I...Is it okay to carry on? Then I went to Darjeeling, went from Kalimpong to Darjeeling, to see Sey ‘Prince’ Gyalo Thondup [His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s older brother] in Darjeeling. I requested Sey Gyalo Thondup, “Please deploy me into the *Chushi Gangdrug* at Lhoka. I do not feel like living here and have a desire to join the war.” Gyalo Thondup asked, “Are you certain you want to join the war?” [I] replied, “I am certain and wish to go.”[He] said he would deploy [me].**

**Then one day I was asked to come. A letter had been sent [to me]. When the letter came I left for Darjeeling from Kalimpong. “If you are ready...” Then I was taken to Shinglamari to a cottage in a forest a little further away from Darjeeling. There were 15-20 boys that were being taught Tibetan script. I was asked if I knew Tibetan script. [I] replied that I did a little bit and was asked to learn. I was there for around a month studying Tibetan script. It was nearly two months, and then was taken away one night.**

Q: These young boys who were learning Tibetan, were they not Tibetan boys? Why did they need to learn Tibetan?

00:13:19

**#6B: [They] were all Tibetans.**

Q: Were they learning Tibetan script?

**#6B: [They] were learning the Tibetan characters. Like me [they] knew very little Tibetan and were learning Tibetan script and mathematics. There were two interpreters at that time with us. They had studied in a Darjeeling school and excelled in English.**

Q: Did you join that group and how long did you stay with them?

**#6B: [I was with them] for around 3-4 months. [I] must have stayed there for three months.**

Q: And then?

**#6B: After three months [we] were told, “[You] have to leave tonight. [You] have to leave tonight. Do not bring any of your things. Come as you are.” We had no idea where to go. Around dusk we walked to the road where a vehicle was parked. Sey Gyalo Thondup had come driving this vehicle. [We] were dropped in Siliguri [West Bengal] in this vehicle. There was a guide in Siliguri to escort us, about which I spoke earlier [during pre-interview]. Leaving us there with the guide Sey Gyalo Thondup left.**

**We were in Siliguri that night and slept under a bridge at the railway station. The police arrested us when dawn broke the next morning. We stopped at a teashop to drink some tea. Perhaps the guide made a telephone call because around this time in the evening Sey Gyalo Thondup drove through the bazaar. [He] did not glance at us but drove away in the vehicle. Half an hour later the police had been informed to release us. Then we were released and went to Darjeeling.**

Q: Back to Darjeeling?

**#6B: [We] returned to Darjeeling.**

Q: Then what happened to you in Darjeeling?

00:16:46

**#6B: [We] stayed around a month in Darjeeling and then were informed that [we] would have to leave again. Once again [we] were driven in Gyalo Thondup’s vehicle. [He] had brought along the earlier guide. We were taken to Siliguri, right to the end of the fields in the night. [We] got down amidst the fields and was escorted by the guide while Gyalo Thondup went back.**

**We were led through fields the whole night and around dawn crossed a large river. There were many Indian soldiers on the other side of the bank. The soldiers caught us and said, “Where are you going?” “[We] are going to Calcutta to look for jobs.” [We] were taken to the chief and frisked but we had nothing. The leader ordered the other soldiers to leave. All the soldiers went out. Derge Sey Dhonyoe was there. [I] wonder how he managed but [he] carried a sum of 400 Indian *rupees* in the pocket. He took out the 400 Indian *rupees* and gave it to the leader.**

Then the leader asked us to follow [him]. We did not have any belongings with us and the soldiers had been instructed to go away. After leading us to a distance of around a mile, perhaps from here to the monastery, there was an area with bushes. [The chief] said, “Go through that area.” [We] did and found a big vehicle parked under a tree. The guide led us to that vehicle. We climbed in not knowing anything. The vehicle was driven for some time and then [we] arrived at a large house where [we] were asked to stay. While there, initially we were afraid wondering where [we] would be taken. There were numerous soldiers armed with guns everywhere.

00:18:57

In this house [we] were provided with good quality cigarettes, nice fruit and treated very well. However, though treated well, [we] were not happy wondering where [we] would be taken. That evening a goat was killed and we were served fine food. After the dinner [we] spent the night there and in the morning saw that two vehicles had arrived. [We] were divided into two groups and driven in the two vehicles with two armed soldiers seated at the front and two at the back holding guns like this [indicates guns raised]. [We] journeyed during the day and passed through villages and large cities. The citizens believed that prisoners were being escorted, for they [armed soldiers] were escorting us as though we were prisoners.

[We] were escorted in that way for a day and then we arrived near a large river. Across it was an airport. We got down there. Oh yes, before that [we took] a train journey. [We] were two men each in a first class coach accompanied by a guard. Around evening the train stopped at a station and [we] were instructed to get down and follow a route at the end of which was an airport. [We] were taken to the airport.

Q: What happened at the airport?

#6B: At the airport...there were our two translators also. Some American trainers had come there, who had been trainers during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. They were trainers of such caliber that it can be said that we had got them only because of our great fortune. There were two or three trainers that were waiting. After spending a night at the airport, [we] were in the plane the next morning. Each of us was covered with a blanket and provided with a book and a pencil. “Do you know the numbers? Learn the numbers,” [we] were told. [We] studied the numbers as the plane flew. [We] could not comprehend anything.

After flying for a long while, [the plane] landed and [we] spent a night resting and then was airborne again. [We] passed through regions that were not revealed to us; for the doors remained closed. At times [we] landed in places one could look out from the windows. [We] continued in this way for many days. At times nights seem to continue into the next day and it was strange. [We] passed through regions where one saw large water bodies—they were oceans—and regions where there were forests stretching on both sides of water bodies. The trainers [jokingly] lied to us, “We have reached Tibet. That is your country.”

Q: Continue please.



00:25:22

**#6B:** Then we travelled for [I] do not know how many days and nights...[I] think it was Taiwan for [I heard] something like Formosa. I knew a little bit of English. The women wore pants and sported short haircut. [We] were taken to such a country. The place where we were to live was a house by the ocean. One could not see the house from afar but one had to go close and walk down some steps to reach it. We were to stay there, stay there for 8-9 days. They cut our hair, made them short.

Q: Did [you] have long hair?

**#6B:** We had Tibetan style hair that people in Kalimpong and Darjeeling sport. They [trainers] used blades and cut them short and then they distributed army fatigues. Each person was given a name and the name [badge] pinned here [indicates left chest]. Such [things] were done here. Then one day [we] were taken to a large hospital in the city where all the men were examined. It seems everyone passed the examination for everyone was taken on to a plane.

We flew a long distance but [I] cannot remember how long. During the flight [we] passed over huge cities where lights were burning. After landing we were ferried in vehicles that had all the windows covered with tarpaulin to prevent [us] from looking outside. However, when the driver was not looking we moved the tarpaulin and saw a large city with big shops. Then we reached an open ground and were told to answer nature's call. And then we were taken to the venue of the training that looked similar to Tibet with forests and rocky mountains. There was a house that was heated while it was very cold outside with snow. The trainers took [us] here.

Q: You're having quite an adventure. I'd like to go back and ask what was it like to even get on an airplane for the first time in your life and look out and see the world below. How was that experience like for you?

00:30:00

**#6B:** [We] were in a place that looked similar to Tibet. When we were in the plane, the trainers informed us that we were going to the United States to train. "You have to train and then go to Tibet. You have to return to Tibet for the cause of your country." "What have [I] got into?" There was fear when [I] heard about going to Tibet. [I] was afraid but there was no way to refuse. There was such fear.

Q: Did you know any of the other young men...How many in the group, 16,17?

**#6B:** There were 12 or 13 with me. [I] have forgotten, perhaps 12.

Q: Did you know any of them?

**#6B:** [We] came to know each other only on reaching there. I was the only one from the region of Karze. There were two or three each from other regions. The majority hailed from Lithang.

Q: You said you were given a name along with army fatigues. What was the name that you were given, the American name?

[Discontinuity in video]

00:32:11

**#6B: It was D-O-U-G.**

Q: D-O...?

**#6B: ...U-G. They said something like Doug. We could not pronounce and it sounded like the word dog.**

Q: Oh, Doug, Doug.

**#6B: Doug.**

Q: Doug. Yes, that's an American name.

**#6B: [Laughs]**

Q: When you were leaving India and you said, "I want to belong to the *Chushi Gangdrug*," did you think you were going to go back to Tibet? You were, okay, "I want to go and die for my country" and now what made it more scary this time because you said you wanted to go and now they told you you were going to go.

00:33:16

**#6B: Even though there was an element of fear, I was the lone man from my region. We Tibetans say something like *kha phoru* 'bringing shame due to lack of courage.' People will say, "He is scared and has no courage to go." So in order to avoid it [I] acted as if I was not scared and went wherever [I] was led. One was naturally scared of returning to Tibet. My sibling was in India and he had not been informed. [I] had told [him] that I was going to school and nothing otherwise. I felt that should I die there would be no one to make offering of butter lamps that we normally do in Tibet for the dead. Except for the thought that there would be no one to do prayers, there was no longer any fear.**

**[I] felt [I] should not bring disgrace to my region.**

Q: To be brave is to act even when you're afraid. So what was the...Did you learn the name of the mountains where you were or the name of that part of America?

**#6B: We called it Dura.**

Q: Yes?

**#6B: Dura was the name of the place.**

Q: The name of the place?

**#6B: It was Dura. We were told to call it Dura. Later it was called Colorado.**

Q: What did you think of these American trainers?

00:36:04

**#6B: The trainers were incredibly good. The trainers treated us extremely well. [We] were provided with good food, smokers were given cigarettes and every requirement was fulfilled. [They] cared a lot [for us]. The food was good and so were the place and clothes washing facilities.**

Q: What was the training like? What did you learn?

**#6B: Some were given training in wireless operation. Some were given training in treating gunshot wounds and carrying away the injured. Some were taught to read maps and to move from one place to another by following something but I have forgotten the name now. What is it called, the thing with which one can find the directions of east, south, west and north?**

Q: Compass?

**#6B: The arrow points to a particular direction and one follows it. Some were taught this. It was things like these. Some were taught to treat the sick, how to treat a wound and carry away the injured. And taught about warfare.**

Q: And what was your training?

00:38:05

**#6B: I learned wireless operation.**

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about what did you have to learn about the wireless?

**#6B: The lessons on wireless operation were very well taught. We were divided into groups and left in a room. Then they send [the message] through a machine and we had to write it down, the numbers. The training was given like this. After this was written, then if we needed to send a message, say for instance, from here to Mysore [India], one had to refer the book and write it down. It was difficult.**

Q: Sounds very challenging.

**#6B: Yes, it was.**

Q: Were you told what you were going to be doing with this wireless training?

**#6B: We were divided into groups of 4-5 men and told, "You will be dropped into Tibet. Once in Tibet, one group must go here and the other there. Then you have to talk to us**

**over the wireless about where there is military presence and where there is not.” That is how the training went.**

Q: When they said “dropped into Tibet” did you understand what they meant and what training did you have?

00:40:34

**#6B: When told that [we] would be dropped in Tibet [I] felt, “My sibling will never know if I die and there will be no one to offer prayers and butter lamps for me. [I] am going to die with no one being aware of it.” I was a little bit sad on account of this. There were no other thoughts other than this.**

Q: How long did the training last, *apo-la*?

**#6B: The training lasted for 9-10 months. Training was imparted day and night because of the urgency to send [us] to Tibet. [We] were taken to the forest and taught warfare in the night and returned home only around midnight.**

Q: Did the Americans tell you why you were...why they were helping you?

**#6B: We did not know about that. Gyalo Thondup must have talked about it. Gyalo Thondup came frequently where the training was being given. [I] suppose [he] asked for updates about the training. Then they gave a report to Gyalo Thondup about how we were doing. He visited once in 3-4 months.**

Q: Did the Americans describe any attitude that they had about the Chinese because they were training you to fight the Chinese? So did the Americans have any thoughts or feelings that they expressed to you?

00:43:20

**#6B: [The trainers] did not express anything on that matter. [They] said, “When you are in Tibet you should utilize well what we have taught. We will be happy to receive messages sent over the wireless realizing that our students have greatly benefitted from the training. We will be happy that you are doing well.”**

**[They] also said, “Your going there is extremely dangerous. The risk is grave that you may lose your life than escape. There is the risk of dying but it is a sacrifice for your country.” They explained that many men have died in battles in different countries and that, “Should you die it will be for your country. There is the risk of death, a very great risk,” like that [they] said.**

Q: If you talked among yourselves, your fellow Tibetans, did you have any idea how large China was? How large their forces were compared to what the Tibetan forces had, any sense of the percentage of proportion?

**#6B: Right from the beginning we trainees did not have any such talks, except “[We] have to train and then will be dropped there.” There were none that commented, “We are**

**certain to die, so we dare not go.” Everyone was determined. When we arrived there were already around 12 men. They completed [their] training 3-4 after our arrival and were dropped—wherever it was. We were dropped after that.**

Q: Let me see if I understand. There was a group ahead of you that went into Tibet.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: After they reached, 3-4 months later this group was taken away. They'd finished their training.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: So they went to Tibet to fight?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yes.

Q: And you were the next group. Was there a group behind you? Like how many groups were there that kept coming? Do you have any idea?

00:47:02

**#6B: We were the next batch and there was another that followed us.**

Q: Around how many?

**#6B: They do not talk about how many came or not. It was a secret. We were taken on different routes and not allowed to meet.**

Q: [You] didn't meet?

**#6B: No, those that were going for training classes and those of us that had completed the classes were led on different routes. [The trainers] did not talk about this. [We] were not made aware of each other.**

Q: How did [you] know about the 12 men that completed training in 3-4 months?

**#6B: Yes?**

Q: There were the 12 men there ahead of you. How did you know about this?

**#6B: When we arrived there we all stayed in the same house.**

Q: But [you] didn't meet.

00:47:49

**#6B: [We] met. [We] did meet on such occasions. However, [we] did not meet along the way during training lessons.**

Q: Which way?

**#6B: For instance, if the training is to be held in Mysore and if [one group] is being taken through Periyapatna [a village 10 miles from Bylakuppe], our group that has completed classes would be taken through another town. The trainees shared the same residence and there were many from [my] region. They finished training and were deployed but one does not know where. However, it was in Tibet but one has no knowledge of the area in Tibet. After we returned from training, another group was taken but [the two groups] never met. They stayed in different houses.**

Q: And then a group followed.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yes.

Q: So after you said...How many weeks was it your training? How many months?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: 9-10 months.

Q: Nine to 10 months. How did they prepare you to be dropped, that is to parachute I assume out of an airplane? Did you have practice jumps for parachuting?

**#6B: In order to train us to jump from planes, a high wooden platform had been erected.**

Q: Yes?

00:49:36

**#6B: There was a high wooden structure that had to be climbed using a ladder from where one jumped. Saw dust that one obtains when carpenters cut wood was spread below. The initial training was to jump from the wooden platform.**

**Then [we] were taken in the night and dropped from planes. After one had jumped from it [wooden platform] and learned to do it, then one was actually taken on a plane in the night and dropped. They had a large place to parachute. Many of their [American] soldiers were training there.**

Q: What was that like to jump out of an airplane for the first time?

**#6B: There was fear at first during the jump wondering what it would be like. The plane door was left open and the parachute was hooked to the plane. When you stood near the door, the wind blew and looking down on the ground made you dizzy. A trainer stood on either side of the door and when a red light flashed, [they] said, "Go, go." Then [we] jumped one by one. There was not time for any thought but once the chute opened, one felt happy.**

Q: How was your first landing? Did you land on the ground or on a tree? How did it go?

00:52:30

**#6B: [I] did not land on a tree. [I] managed to land on the ground correctly. However, when I was folding the chute after landing, there was a gust of wind and it dragged the chute. So this arm [indicates left shoulder] dislocated; it was pulled backwards.**

Q: The arm?

**#6B: It got dislocated here [points to left shoulder]. The wind dragged the chute and the rope entangled and dislocated the shoulder. However, they set it right immediately.**

**Some colleagues, after the chutes had opened came down singing songs from our region and yelling. Yet one colleague could not open the chute. There are two chutes, one at the back and one in front. The one at the back is hooked to the plane. If the one hooked to the plane does not open, you have to pull the one in front. Should you fail to do that, you hit the ground and die. The colleague pulled the front one and came down. However, the front one is a small chute and one came down swiftly and directly. [He] hit the ground and hurt his head. There was a little bit of bleeding from the nose. They took [him] to the hospital and [he] was okay.**

Q: Did he survive?

**#6B: [He] survived.**

00:54:49

**#6B: Can I go to the washroom?**

[Discontinuity in video]

Q: Maybe we can begin by asking about your own experience now that you are trained to parachute out of an airplane. How soon after that did you go back to Tibet?

**#6B: [We] were trained there for 9-10 months. After training in wireless operation, treating the injured and everything they told us, "You have to leave soon." Then we were taken in a plane to a place, I think it was Taiwan because [they] were saying Formosa. There was a house in the forest by the ocean. [We] were housed there and not in the one used during the earlier journey. This was a house in a forest and [we] were in it for 6-7 days. Their plane seemed to be flying to Tibet. "Do not be in a hurry. There is a strong gale in Tibet. You cannot go." Then a few days later they said, "There is still a gale. You cannot go." Then one day [we] were told, "Now there is no gale. You can go." Then [we] were on the plane.**

00:56:29

**[We] were airborne for a long while and then reached a large airport where there was a house. We deplaned at this airport, entered the house and were told, "Now you should eat and have a good sleep. This evening you will leave for Tibet at 5 o'clock. You will reach Tibet at 12." But [I] was uneasy and could not get any sleep for [we] had been informed about leaving that night. [I] lay down but could not sleep. We tried to get some sleep and**

then were called to the airport at 5. The trainers and interpreters were assembled there. Then we were inside the airplane. The trainers shook [our] hands and patted [us] on the back, saying, “You must do well. There is a great risk of your dying but you must not feel sad, as this is for the sake of your country. One does not get independence without sacrificing many lives.” We were also determined to die.

Some of the trainers shed tears, I swear, because [we] had come to know each other for a long time. There were some among us that shed tears too. The plane became airborne at 5 o’clock. [We] lay down in the plane without knowing how [we] were being taken. At night a trainer shook [us]. I looked out and saw a strong wind and white chutes. Down below it was a dark jungle. [We] were taken to such a region and this was Tibet. Then [we] circled—we did not know [the plane] was circling but those on the ground said so. And then were dropped.

00:58:28

After being dropped, I and a colleague fell in a field behind a house. It was wintertime and [I] crashed hard onto the ground. There were many animals tethered in front of the house. They [residents of the house] drove the animals and fled in the night saying, “The Chinese have come.” Some colleagues fell across the river on a nomad’s tent. The nomads started crying and screaming, “We are Chinese.” They thought we were Chinese and never believed that we could be Tibetans. [The nomads] screamed to our colleagues, “We love the Chinese. [We] are Chinese.” Then after being dropped in the night, each of us had to locate the others but one could not call aloud. They [trainers had taught us to] pick up two stones and *thak, thak, thak* [indicates hitting the stones against each other]. If the other made a similar sound, we knew [he] was one of the colleagues. In this way, [we] moved towards each other and became a group.

Q: Continue, please.

#6B: Yes?

Q: And then what happened?

#6B: We had been dropped in two groups. We were dropped first and then after circling another [group] was dropped. A man from the latter group fell on a cliff and injured [his] leg. [He] was in pain for a few days. There was a steep cliff and the chute caught on a rock and [he] could not land. Then we were able to regroup. There were many Tibetan soldiers [resistance group] in that region. What should [they] be called, escapees or soldiers? Escapees. A large number of them came in the morning. “Please come forward, we are here to help you,” [we] said. [They] did not dare come forward and fled. They pursued us and then ran away. A large number of men went across the river and assaulted them [the air-dropped men] and seized all the things.

Q: Who?



01:03:06

**#6B: By the soldiers there. There were our companions that had been dropped from the plane. [The large number of men] seized their things and assaulted them believing [they] were Chinese spies. There was a lot of discussion and by daylight the one called Chagoe Sey [also known as Derge Sey Dhonyoe] with us knew people in the resistance group. He explained that he was from Derge and the prince of Chagoe. “Oh, that is good. We are from Derge and our Sey Dhonyoe is here.” They were happy and we joined together. Then we burned all the things from the plane like parachutes and carried the wireless kits. At daylight we went up the mountain, went to the mountain and did not remain in the village. We stayed on the mountain for five or six days, as we had to send messages to America informing where we were.**

**After 8-9 days we could no longer stay on the mountain due to the extreme cold. [We] moved to the monastery of Penpa. It is mentioned in the book. [We] stayed in the monastery where there were resistance men. The monastery [monks] and the resistance men treated us incredibly well. In the beginning the resistance men had said, “It is better to douse a flame when it is small. These men [air-dropped men] have definitely something to do with the Chinese and it is better to kill [them].” There were many that felt so. However, some senior leaders had said, “That is not so. [They] cannot be killed at once. There are many people who know them and that is good.”**

01:04:46

**We remained in the monastery and they provided us with food and fodder for the horses—we had bought horses—provided fodder and treated [us] incredibly well. For around a month we kept in contact through wireless and then [the Americans] dropped loads of arms from planes. There were guns and then they [resistance fighters] were filled with joy. They were short of guns and bullets. If one possessed a gun, there were only five or ten bullets. We distributed guns along with 200-300 bullets each to the men, which pleased them very much. Weapons were dropped in this way two or three times and everyone received a share.**

**Finally, one of our groups was instructed to move to the north, one group towards Chamdo and one group was to remain in Chara Penpa. Then a large number of bigger weapons were dropped from planes in the night and by daylight three Chinese airplanes flew overhead. The Chinese started firing from cannons, shells of this size [indicates size of around three inches]. Then [they] dropped rocks, large riverside rocks like this [forms a circle with arms] that dropped directly down from above. Then there were bombs. There was one type of bomb that exploded immediately, another kind that exploded around an hour later and one that exploded a day after it was dropped. This brought on some destruction. We lost only two men here.**

01:06:30

**Then from the sky [firing] continued from the planes and the infantry surrounded [us] on the ground rendering it impossible for us to hold on. We fought numerous times prior to that; fought 8-9 times and we were winning. It looks like they [Chinese] were not yet prepared then, as we were not fired upon. Finally when we were surrounded, we fled and suffered immensely.**

Q: How many men were airdropped altogether?

**#6B: There were 12 men...12, 13, 14. There were 14.**

Q: Where did you escape to?

**#6B: After we were dropped there and had relayed messages, the weapons were dropped. The instructions we received from America was, "One group must go towards the north, another group towards Chamdo and one group should remain where you are at Chara Penpa. [We] will airdrop heavy weapons. Those moving away should take along a large number of men and the weapons." Chinese planes began to fly following the weapons drop and we were unable to gather all the weapons. What could be gathered was collected in a house that we bombed, set fire to because [we] were now losing to the Chinese. [The weapons] were stocked in a house—we had large quantities of bombs that had been airdropped. These were like dough that had to be made into bombs by...[not discernible] leather and when the string is pulled and flung, it could blow up a house. We loaded the guns and such on 15-16 horses and cattle and left in the night.**

01:12:04

**As we journeyed through the night, the Chinese had come down from the snow-covered pass on to the road below. [We] could not see in the dark and as one drove the animals, [they] were being driven back. [We] asked, "Who is that? Who is that?" [They] were Chinese but did not fire. [We] lost all the things there. Then we trekked for two days with nothing to eat and there was no fodder for the horses. [We] were sleepy yet travelling through the night such that one fell from the horse. We could no longer carry the heavy weapons and buried them in the snow.**

**There were many people from Derge that were put up at Zagay. We arrived in Zagay at night and the Chinese attacked through the night. Flares turned the sky into daylight and the region was flooded in gunfire. While [we] were crossing over from the pass, the Chinese appeared and killed five of our men, five of the best men. A few Chinese were also killed. [We] continued to fight but could not overcome the Chinese due to their great number. Though they were killed, more Chinese kept arriving.**

**Then [we] went up the pass, boiled some tea and drank it. [We] went down into the valley where there were some bushes. Tethered in it were 8-9 fully laden yaks. [We] commented, "Now we have found something to eat. Wonder who left them here?" [We] camped near the yaks and once again boiled some tea. However, before the tea was ready, they started firing and the entire sky became bright as daylight.**

Q: The Chinese?

01:13:52

**#6B: By the Chinese. Then [the Chinese] rained gunfire. We had no time for discussion and each one fled wherever possible. Some went up the pass. There were many groups and except for five of us, the rest were scattered. Numerous men were killed. We had with us 8-**

**9 men that served as helpers and many horses and mules that were killed at this spot. Then as we made tea on the pass [the Chinese] started shelling in which two of our men were killed. The tea pot was smeared in blood from the shelling. The horses, wireless kit, everything was left there. [We] fired upon the wireless sets and rendered them useless. And then there was no horse to ride, nothing. [We] walked with nothing to eat and journeyed for many days in this condition. [We] stole animals from the nomads and ate them.**

Q: This was a very desperate situation. How did you survive it?

**#6B: As I said we lost all the horses and wireless sets to the Chinese, though we had rendered the wireless sets useless by shooting [at them]. Then we walked towards India. In the beginning we were 70-80 people, including resistance fighters and others. By the time [we] reached the Indian border we were reduced to just 13 or 14; the rest were killed along the journey.**

**When [we] encountered the Chinese, for instance if we encountered them at Camp Number 4 here and put up a fight and then fled, the Chinese at Camp Number 4 didn't pursue us but it seems they telephoned and Chinese were waiting at Camp Number 2 [a distance of 2 miles]. If [we] managed to evade those at Camp Number 2, they did not pursue but [another Chinese unit] was waiting at Camp Number 1 [a distance of 1 mile] and after Camp Number 1 [they] waited at Bylakuppe [2 miles away]. The Chinese waited in that fashion and their presence was everywhere. Perhaps the message was relayed that [resistance fighters] were on the route.**

01:19:42

**And then we traveled at night and slept in forests during the day. If there were snow available, [we] boiled the snow to make tea. That is how [we] journeyed. At Powo [we] managed to get two men to act as guides along the way. [We] stole animals from shepherds and ate them and arrived in India in that manner. When [we] reached India there were only five of us from the 14.**

Q: What was it like for you to lose so many colleagues on this journey?

**#6B: Well, five of us were able to escape and the rest, poor things, [I] do feel for them since [we] had been together a lot. However, nothing can be done because it is for your country that you died. In our case too though death did not come upon us and we survived, yet [we] have not come here intentionally but just that [we] were not destined to die and thus managed to escape. I feel for those that were killed for we had spent a lot of time together. Later [I] heard that two of them were in Lhasa.**

Q: They escaped somehow. What happens to you next after you reached the Indian border, is that where we are?

**#6B: Yes, at Missamari [Assam].**

Q: And then?

01:22:33

**#6B:** Initially [we] arrived in Pemakoe, which is Tibetan territory. After crossing over a pass, a signboard indicated that this was the border between India and Tibet. Below that was an Indian post. The Indian troops seem to know about our mission in Chara Penpa and asked us, “Are you the ones from Chara Penpa that distributed weapons?” “No, we are not. There is a lama from whom we received [arms] and know nothing else. We are servants and go wherever they lead [us]. We are fighters and know nothing.”

They had observed that we were of similar age and sported wristwatches that had been given by the Americans. Hence, [they] were suspicious. Nevertheless, [we] were immediately taken to Missamari in a plane. At Missamari the Indian soldiers said, “You should stay here. You are soldiers of the Dalai Lama and we are Indian soldiers. We will provide you with arms, clothes and food and treat you equally. Stay back.” “Okay,” [we] replied. And escaped in the night to Darjeeling.

Q: What made you run away? What were you afraid of?

**#6B:** The Indians were not issuing [us] any documents to proceed and [we] would be forced to once again live as soldiers there. We had been deployed from Darjeeling and must report to Darjeeling about our activities. Besides, [I] did not wish to live in Missamari because it was very hot, with inadequate food and numerous sick people. All the Tibetans there were sick.

Q: What happened when you got to Darjeeling?

01:25:50

**#6B:** After spending a month in Darjeeling, we were told to go to the United States and be dropped into Tibet once again. Chago Dhonyoe’s family was well off in Darjeeling. So [he] sought to be excused. We were four men that refused to go there, refused to go there again. Then in Darjeeling we were separated and I was sent to the *Chushi Gangdrug* [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force] in Mustang. There were three of us. [I] was in Mustang for little over a year giving combat training. There was insufficient food and other facilities in Mustang. So [I] requested leave and then was deployed to Walung.

In the past Walung was a part of the Tibetan territory but had been captured by Nepal. It is at the border. I was in Walung for nine years and 10 months. I worked as a wireless operator while in Walung, receiving news from Tibet. There were information gatherers in Tibet that sent wireless messages. There were Tibetans that were perhaps paid by the Tibetan Government who gathered information that was relayed to us by a wireless operator, which we sent to the United States. [We] assumed it was the United States but do not know actually where it was being received.

Q: Nine years, that was a long tour of duty.

**#6B:** Yes, around nine years and 10 months. The coworkers left and I too sought leave to go to Darjeeling on a holiday. Then I came to the settlement in Mysore [Bylakuppe] to meet

**relatives and have been here since. Then [I] met [my] wife who is now ill and I have grown old.**

Q: From Darjeeling [you] came here to Bylakuppe?

**#6B: Yes, Bylakuppe.**

Q: You've been here ever since.

01:29:47

**#6B: I had relatives here in the Bylakuppe Settlement. [I] came to see them and have been here since then.**

Q: What was the importance or the reason for the information you were relaying to the American government? Was it about activities in Tibet and what do you think was the reason they needed that information?

Interpreter interprets as: While you were in Walung, [you] relayed information to America...?

**#6B: [I] did not send information while in Walung. While in Walung the fighters...oh, Walung, right, right.**

Q: You were relaying information while in Walung. What was the information about that the Americans needed it?

**#6B: The information was regarding the [Chinese] army whereabouts, what activity was going on, what was being transported by the soldiers moving to and fro, such were the information. Otherwise, there was not any special information as such but where the military had set up camps and the number of such camps.**

Q: Was this information coming from Tibetans inside of Tibet to you and you were giving it to the Americans? Were the Americans still helping the Tibetans against the Chinese?

01:31:521

**#6B: Yes, [the information was regarding Chinese troops' movements in Tibet].**

Q: Were the Americans extending help then?

**#6B: [The Americans] must be extending help at that time. We were not paid much, just a small monthly salary. [The information] must be of benefit to the government. Initially, [the Americans] helped greatly by providing huge quantities of arms.**

Q: What did you feel when the United States withdrew it's support of Tibet?

**#6B: About not extending...many groups similar to ours were dropped into Tibet in different regions. None of them survived, either having been captured or killed by the Chinese. Almost every man dropped did not make it. Then there were no longer anyone**

**willing to go nor was there any support. There should be fighters there [in Tibet] in order to lend support but there were none. Besides, all those that were trained by them and sent there were mostly slain. Except for a few of us, none survived. So, in order to extend support there were no longer any one left. So [I] suppose [help] was withdrawn. That is what I think.**

Q: When you look back on your life, how do you feel about the effort that you made and the risk that you took to try to help save Tibet? How do you...what do you think about the effort that you made?

01:34:28

**#6B: Right from a young age I have struggled. Well, for one, it is for the cause of your country and secondly, it is the advice of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the cause of the people of Tibet. [I] struggled without caring about what would happen [to me]. I made great effort believing that if Tibet regained independence my effort would not have been in vain. Now [I] am old and not in a position to make any effort. [My] wife is ill and earning a livelihood has become difficult. [I] have become incapable, unable to do anything.**

Q: Have you had contact with any other Tibetan men who joined that kind of force and were trained by Americans? Do you know of any other here in Bylakuppe or anywhere else?

**#6B: Me?**

Q: Are there any other men you have contact with?

**#6B: Other men? Those that were with me are dead. [I] would not know about others because they [Americans] kept it a secret. If there were two men that received training, [they] tried to make these two men unknown to each other. There is no custom of sending men that were trained together. One did not know the other.**

Q: What are your wishes for Tibet? What do you hope happens to the country of Tibet?

01:36:52

**#6B: [I] wish to be able to go to Tibet before [my] death. [I] have struggled a lot and going to my hometown would mean meeting my sisters that are there. [I] have grown old and wish to meet them and be able to see [my] village. [I] hope for independence but it seems difficult. [I] have no other thoughts other than that now.**

Q: What advice would you give to the children of Tibet?

**#6B: [I] will not be able to advice. It is very difficult to give advice to the Tibetan children. They will not listen if someone like me were to advise [them]. They do not have any knowledge about Tibet having been born in India. They may say [the word] Tibet but do not know what the country is like. So they will not accept if someone like me were to give advice.**

Q: Well *apo-la*, I want to thank you very much for this interview and I want to just once ask one more question again and that's if this interview was shown in Tibet or China, now that you've given this interview, would this be a problem for you?

**#6B: [I] do not know about the present situation but in the past my family was one of the well-off in the village. Hence, [my family] was given the [symbolic] hat by the Chinese that restricts one from having any interaction with others. If everyone was moving on this route, we had to go the other way. In the case of animals, if the village people drove their animals this way [indicates left], we had to drive our animals this way [indicates right]. In this manner the hat remained for many years. Presently everybody is equal.**

**Should this be known...I am in India but [I] would not know if [my family] in the village might come to harm. Other than this worry there is nothing else. I wish to go to [my] hometown but it seems impossible. It is difficult with the leg pain, as [I] can hardly walk.**

Q: Thank you very much for sharing your story with us. We learned a great deal about Tibet from you.

**#6B: Okay.**

END OF INTERVIEW