

December 15, 1951

**The US Consul General at Calcutta (Wilson) to the
Department of State, 'Transmitting Report of Indian
Mission at Lhasa for Month Ending October 15,
1951'**

Citation:

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Summary:

Report of the Indian Mission in Lhasa for October 1951.

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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

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December 15, 1951
DATE

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

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REF : Consulate General's Secret Despatch No. 492 of April 23, 1951.

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For Dept.

SUBJECT: Transmitting Report of Indian Mission at Lhasa for Month Ending October 15, 1951.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR EAST ASIAN AFFAIRS
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There is enclosed the monthly report of the Indian Mission, Lhasa, for the period ending October 15, 1951, which has just been made available to this office by the Deputy High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in Calcutta. This is the first of these reports to have been received since that for the period ending March 15, 1951, which was transmitted with the Consulate General's despatch under reference.

In the attached report, Mr. Sinha, the officer in charge of the Indian Mission, makes the following points:

(1). The Chinese are going about the task of winning the confidence of the Tibetans with "patience and delicacy", and the Tibetans are gradually, in spite of several "incidents", losing much of their previous feeling of hostility towards the Chinese.

(2). General Wang Ching-ming has been especially subtle and successful in his approach. In calling on the Dalai Lama on September 17, he was careful to observe all formalities and to take "valuable presents of silk and jade".

(3). Chinese troops are arriving daily in Lhasa and "there is cause for alarm" (presumably for the GOI) at the rate they are building up their forces. Their numbers have caused an acute housing shortage as well as serious inflation in Lhasa.

(4). At several sessions of the Kashag (the Cabinet), Ngapho Shape, leader of the delegation which went to Peiping last May, urged the Government to accept the Sino-Tibetan Agreement on the basis of verbal assurances given him by the Chinese to the effect that they would not interfere in the internal affairs of Tibet. (This contrasts with reports received from several sources to the effect that Ngapho was going to urge the rejection of the Agreement, but Mr. Sinha's version is probably correct.)

Evan M. Wilson
Evan M. Wilson
American Consul General

Enclosure: *at*
Monthly Report of the Indian Mission, Lhasa, for the period ending October 15, 1951.

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Enclosure to despatch No.280 from Amconsul, Calcutta, December 15, 1951.

MONTHLY REPORT OF THE INDIAN MISSION, LHASA,
FOR THE PERIOD ENDING 15 OCTOBER, 1951.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Sino-Tibetan Relations

Except for the daily arrivals of fresh Chinese troops from over the mountains of North-Eastern Tibet, the period just over introduced no significant change in the political scene. The Chinese with infallible judgment chose not to interfere in Tibetan affairs, but to leave the Tibetans undisturbed a little longer with their hopes, fears, and ceremonies. This is significant inasmuch as it served in disarming those suspicions and fears which had gripped Tibetan minds in consequence of lurid reports of Communist activities from sources in the neighboring provinces of Chinghai and Sikang. One year after the liberation campaign began in October, 1950, the Tibetans look back with evident amusement at the unnatural and exaggerated fears that seized them all in the critical days of a year ago, when they saw Communist troops arriving in the stillness of the night to surprise the capital and arrest the Dalai Lama. On closer acquaintance with the Communists, they have shed these fears, and have acquired confidence for the future.

Credit is due to the Chinese who with patience and delicacy are handling the problem of leading Tibet into the fold. They had struck terror into the hearts of Tibetans, when the offensive began, and it was then essential to pulverize resistance and gain victory, but it also deprived them of the confidence of the people. Victory alone without the willing co-operation of the people in the tasks ahead could be of no significance. The struggle has begun for the mind and soul of Tibet in ways that are subtle and hardly perceptible.

The man who is working hard to bring about the subtle change is General Wang Ching-ming. He is quiet, unobtrusive, discerning, and withal a modest man. He has the glamorous reputation of having captured Ngapho in bed at Drukho Gompa in the early hours of the 16th October, 1950. It is said that when his distinguished prisoner was brought to his presence he rose to embrace him with tears in his eyes. He wept over the fate which had drawn brothers in a fratricidal war through the wiles of imperialists. That story artfully embellished has gone round Tibetan homes, stolen Tibetan hearts and has won General Wang Ching-ming a place in them. The good-will thus created has been reinforced by Wang's later conduct.

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In contrast to the crudeness of his colleagues, Wang's insight into Tibetan character and intimate knowledge of the affairs of this country are valuable assets to the occupation authorities. On 17th September he marched at the head of a detachment of Chinese troops to present his respects to the Dalai Lama, not forgetting, however, to carry with him valuable presents of silk and jade, and also a brass band to add to the splendor of the occasion. Unlike Chang Ching-wu, he sought no special favor, not even a private audience, but stoically went through the prescribed routine for the occasion. His men lined up in front of the Palace in an impressive array, and the Dalai Lama took the salute from his balcony.

Wang followed up his call on the Dalai Lama with formal visits to the important monasteries of Drepung, Sera, and Talungtra, where he gave large donations and propitiated the dieties, abbots and monks with gifts both in cash and kind. With singular aptitude he showed deep interest in the images at the temples and made special enquiries about an image brought to Tibet by the Chinese consort of King Songtsen Gampo. The lamas were flattered and pleased.

Wang did not, of course, limit his attention only to the Dalai Lama and the monasteries. He paid his respects at the doors of all the high dignitaries of the land. He made personal calls on each one of the Prime Ministers, Shapes, and other high officials, distributing generously gifts which are highly valued by them. In Surkhang Shape's absence, he called on Surkhang's mother and loaded her with presents-- a procedure which in Tibetan eyes is a little unorthodox though nonetheless pleasing. Despite their noble spiritual heritage, Tibetans have their fair share of common human frailties; their favor and goodwill are sold for cash and presents.

Wang capped his performance with a move of singular importance, the subtlety of which, we fear, totally escaped the Tibetans, who saw in it but another gesture of fraternal feeling which the Chinese have never-failed to profess. On the plea that he is a soldier, Wang expressed his interest in the living conditions and training of Tibetan troops, and desired to inspect their regimental quarters. When his visit was officially arranged on the 25th September, he saw the practical advantage of sending his assistants and chosen members of the P.L.A. to deputize for him. What followed was a fraternal meeting of Chinese and Tibetan soldiers in an atmosphere free from restraint, where greetings were exchanged with warm cordiality on both sides. To seal the bond of friendship, a pot of Chinese tea was bestowed on each soldier of the Kusung, Trukna and Trongtra regiments, and on each policeman of the Police Headquarters.

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This deliberate policy of humoring the people and courting their favor is gradually weaning them away from an attitude of hostility and distrust to calm acquiescence in the Chinese connection. But it was not until certain incidents had taken place, and the Chinese deceived in their expectations of a popular uprising in their favor, that they resorted to these subtler methods to gain their ends.

These incidents of a minor nature occurred between stray soldiers of the P.L.A. and certain unruly elements among the Tibetans, mostly young hot-blooded monks, who seized the former while loitering in town and belabored and dispossessed them of their arms. On 12th September, at Ngapho's reception the Chinese were treated to an ugly demonstration of the smouldering hatred of Tibetan rowdies for the liberation forces. On that day Chinese soldiers, who formed a guard of honor, were rudely pushed, abused and derided by a crowd of Tibetan on-lookers. The soldiers of the P.L.A. made no attempt to retaliate; they faced the provocation with uncommon discipline and patience. General Wang Ching-ming was present on the occasion.

Over General Chang Ching-wu, the impatient pro-Consul from Peking, there has come a change which is all the more remarkable as it is in marked contrast to his earlier bearing, and least expected. Chang is not idle. He is busy in daily conferences with his colleagues, and with Tibetans who are summoned to assist in their deliberations. On General Chan Kuo-hua's arrival here, he will discuss the situation in Kham and the progress made by the occupation authorities there. That over, he intends to wind up his affairs in Lhasa and "return by the warmer clime of India".

On 28th September, General Chang formally called on the Dalai Lama when he handed over a number of gift-articles from President Mao to His Holiness. There was the usual pomp and ceremony, which feature on these occasions, in addition to a parade of the presents through the main thoroughfares leading to Norbulingka. On this occasion Chang behaved with some dignity and decorum. After the ceremony he had a private interview with the Dalai Lama.

Not a day but some troops of the liberation army entered Lhasa. This nonstop flow of soldiers in irregular formations, sometimes more and sometimes less, has increased the total strength of Chinese troops now stationed in Lhasa to over 2,000 men. These troops are either staying in the barracks of Maga Sapa, or parked in small, low tents in the adjoining fields. The entire area where they are quartered is under close guard.

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More troops are converging on Lhasa. About 2,000 are in the environs of Lhasa, at Medu Kongkar, awaiting clearance to enter the town. Had not the Tibetan Government pleaded with the Chinese to stop their further progress towards Lhasa, where food and shelter are already scarce, these troops would have swelled the population of the over-crowded town.

Another force of 1,000 mounted troops have reached Nagchuka en route to Lhasa. On arrival here, they will be despatched in smaller parties for service at Gyantse, Shigatse and perhaps Yatung.

Meanwhile, General Chan Kuo-hua is rapidly advancing towards Lhasa with a party of 2,000/3,000 men, of whom some are stage artists, others technicians, while the main body are troops. His arrival is eagerly awaited here, where preparations are on foot for a reception, and a public meeting to welcome him. General Chan appears to be a senior commander of the P.L.A., and ranks equal, if not higher, to Chang Ching-wu. It appears his progress towards Lhasa was held up by heavy snows on the passes which prevented him from taking the Changlam route.

Meanwhile, the harrassed Tibetan authorities accorded their approval to the Chinese plan of air-dropping supplies in Lhasa, although they suggested the advisability of dropping the loads at Tshe Gungtan, 10 miles east of Lhasa. First supplies, we understand, were dropped at Pemba Go.

There is cause for alarm at the rate the Chinese are building up their forces in Lhasa. While the Government is worried, their critics blame them for intransigence and delaying tactics, which, they say, led the Chinese to increase the strength of their garrison. But need there be any doubt that the Chinese will build up a force of sufficient strength, before which Tibetan opposition will wither away, in advance of other measures to follow.

In the first week of October, the Chinese started a recruiting campaign in Lhasa. Posters were put up inviting Tibetans to join the P.L.A. at a salary of Rs.3/8/- a day. But the response has not been enthusiastic, for Tibetans seem to be appalled by the living conditions of Chinese soldiers. Indeed, the rations and quarters of the P.L.A. in Lhasa can hardly be regarded as attractive even by Tibetan standards.

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Lhasa is now facing an acute housing shortage. The problem is how and where to accommodate the large influx of Chinese officials and soldiers before winter sets in in all its fury. Pressed by the Chinese, Tibetan Government has requisitioned certain buildings for General Chan and his party. The Chinese have either already purchased, or will shortly purchase, Sadutshang's house, and will occupy provisionally certain other houses which are temporarily vacant in Lhasa.

On the 2nd October the Chinese held a reception for the abbots and high lamas of Lhasa. On the following day there was a party exclusively for Tibetan ladies of distinguished families.

Indo-Tibetan Relations

The Rudok Dzungpon's extremely audacious conduct at Leh brought on him the censure of Tibetan officials whom we acquainted with the problem of Kazak fugitives, and the state in which some of them arrived in India. Tibetans know fully well that these seasonal intrusions into Indian territory, particularly Leh, are unwelcome to the Government of India.

We do not quite know what part the Chinese are playing behind the scenes in this matter, but they have lately started taking the Tibetan Government into their confidence regarding present operations against Kazaks who are in Western Tibet.

INTERNAL

The great public debate of the month was on two separate reports submitted by Ngapho Shape (a) on his surrender to Chinese forces, and (b) on the signing of the Peking Agreement. Ngapho had several sessions with the Kashag, of which he is a member, when he answered queries and explained the terms of the Agreement clause by clause. He urged his Government to accept the Agreement and to trust in the assurances verbally given to him by the Chinese. These assurances are that the Chinese will not interfere in the internal affairs of the country, and that their administrative and military offices in Lhasa will supervise only Chinese interests in Tibet and control the disposition and administration of Chinese troops stationed in the country. Rather than engage in further futile bickerings, Tibetan Government has decided not to ask for the reopening of talks for the revision of the Agreement, but to seek official assurance from China

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that Ngapho's interpretation of the Agreement accords with their own. If they receive a satisfactory reply, they intend to convey their formal acceptance of the Agreement to the Peking Government, who has been reminding them to do so.

The Dalai Lama, although outside the turmoil of political life, is closely following the trends. The manner in which he has been receiving and blessing crowds of Tibetans suggests that he is drawing his people closer to him in devotion and worship. He has asked us for the loan of a microphone, amplifier and loud-speaker to preach to a gathering of 20,000 people sometime this month.

ECONOMIC

Too much money has been chasing too few goods in Lhasa, and the inevitable result is an inflationary spiral with increased prices and harder living for the people. The Chinese are scattering their Dayangs (silver dollars) with princely liberality, and paying whatever is demanded of them for goods and supplies. Their demand for Yak-meat and mutton is so great that meat is both scarce and expensive in Lhasa. Conditions are expected to worsen this winter if supplies fail to reach Lhasa from the neighboring areas.

Following are prevailing market rates for essential supplies:

Butter	80 Sangs per Khe (about Rs.9/- a seer)
Sugar	Rs. 163/- a maund
Rice	Rs. 123/4/- a maund (425 Sangs per bag of 25/30 seers)
Oil	Rs. 6 a seer
Tsampa (Barley flour)	60 Sangs per Khe (Rs.39/- per maund)
Flour (local)	Rs. 60/- a maund

Mutton and Yak-meat are being sold at prices 50% higher than a month ago.

The rate of exchange now is 4 Sangs and 6 Shokangs to the Rupee.

(S. Sinha)
Officer in Charge

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