NECESSITY FOR THE FOURTEENTH DALAI LAMA TO ASSUME RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL AUTHORITY SUDDENLY

TRANSLATOR’S INTRODUCTION

With armies in the field, oracles were consulted in Lhasa, and it was determined that the young Dalai Lama ought to take over control of the government, despite being only fifteen years old. As the abbot of Kumbum Monastery, his older brother, Taktser Trülku Tupten Jikmé Norbu (b. 1922), had already seen how difficult things could become under the Communist government. He left Amdo for Lhasa so that he could warn his younger brother of the dangers posed by the Chinese. In the Dalai Lama’s own autobiography, he describes Taktser Rinpoche’s plight:

The Chinese endeavored to indoctrinate him in the new Communist way of thinking and to try to subvert him. They had a plan whereby they would set him free to go to Lhasa if he would undertake to persuade me to accept Chinese rule. If I resisted, he was to kill me. They would then reward him.

In November of 1950, as Taktser Rinpoche made plans to flee into permanent exile, the young Dalai Lama prepared for his enthronement.

Shakabpa conveyed a further appeal to the United Nations on December 3, 1950, asking for the United Nations to send a fact-finding mission to Tibet. Shakabpa blames the newly-independent Indian government and the British government for U.N. inaction because they both urged that the matter be set aside. Meanwhile, the Lhasa government attempted to open up dialogue with the Chinese, urging them to withdraw from Tibetan territory and to return to a state of peaceful relations. As the Tibetan government attempted to navigate the new situation, the Dalai Lama and his family temporarily moved to Dromo

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near the border with India, although they eventually felt safe enough to return to Lhasa by mid-summer of 1951.

In the spring of 1951, a delegation of Tibetan officials, led by Cabinet Minister Ngapö Ngawang Jikmé, traveled to Beijing for negotiations. According to Shakabpa’s account, a predetermined set of demands was foisted on the Tibetans, and even a request for clarification was met with anger. By May 23, Ngapö had been compelled to sign the so-called “Seventeen-Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet.” Chinese sources represent this as an agreement the two sides carefully negotiated with the involvement of Lhasa authorities, while Tibetan sources, including the Dalai Lama, assert that the first time they heard about it was when it was being broadcast over the radio from China. Those Tibetan sources depict the seventeen points as constituting a complete capitulation to Chinese demands. Notably, it assumes Tibet is an integral part of China, referring to the Tibetan authorities as the “local government.” The document promises broad autonomy for Tibetans, and it indicates that Chinese reforms in Tibet would not be compelled.

In July, 1951, the Dalai Lama’s party returned from the border town of Dromo, resigned that Tibet’s situation was so imperiled that he was needed in the capital. As the Chinese military and civilian authority began to spread throughout Tibet, Tsepon Shakabpa petitioned for and received leave to remain in India, where the Dalai Lama’s brother was already ensconced. From there, the two men, along with the Dalai Lama’s other older brother, Gyalo Thondup (b. 1928), were able to begin to lay the groundwork for the Dalai Lama’s permanent exile eight years later; in the intervening years, the three men performed many other services for the Tibetan government. Shakabpa and Gyalo Thondup founded the Committee for Tibetan Social Welfare in India, an organization that would become essential when one hundred thousand Tibetans followed the Dalai Lama into exile just a few years later.

See pp. 953–955 below.

For example, seven distinct rounds of negotiations are specified in the account provided in the anonymous source from the “Series of Basic Information of Tibet of China” called Tibetan History (Beijing: China Intercontinental Press, 2003), 145–153.