Political History Collection
Interview H.0004.01 : Tape 1

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Gender: Male
Age: 74
Date of Birth: 1919

Abstract

Alo Chöndze [Tib. a lo chos mdzad] was a major leader of the People's Association in Tibet and India in the 1950s. In this interview, he discusses trade, monasteries and politics as a major leader of the People's Association. He briefly explains his experiences as a monk, differentiates between some types of monks and also discusses Sera Je's decision to fight the Tibetan government. He describes the different stages of the People's Association, including the Lhasa People's Association, the Tibetan People's Association, and Chushigandru. Finally, he talks about his arrest and the petition presented to UNO for Tibetan independence that he helped draft.

Tape 1

A: I lost my celibacy and left the monastery as a youth. Actually, I should have been playing and reading pecha [scriptures], but from a young age I was aware of other things. In Drepung, there were two kinds of monks, the pechawa (scholar monks) and the lagyüba (non scholar monks). Within the lagyüba there were three kinds. One was those who could perform the religious prayer services and rites. Another kind was the dobdo. I was in the Dobdo Association, the Dobdo Kyidu, both in Sera and in Drepung. So I know the dobdo customs. The third type was the monastic officials, the lene. I also know about the abbots and how the shengo [disciplinary officer) would oversee the discipline in the monastery, and especially (I know details) on the Mönlam Festival, and about the geyog, the shanggo shingnyer and the cook assistants or thabyog. I can tell you a lot about these things because I have experienced [with] them from my childhood, and I saw how the thabyog would steal things like butter and tea, and how geyog and the shanggo shingnyer would bully the Lhasa people during the 21 days. During the Mönlam, the Tshogchen Shengo of Drepung was the most powerful one for religion and politics. So there were people complaining about the Shengo. But if they didn't supsress things like this, it would have been impossible to look over the discipline of the Mönlam where 20-30,000 monks would be gathered. Because the law was so strict, during the Mönlam, hygiene was very good and there were not many law cases. Nowadays, when they hold the new Mönlam, the Chinese are extremely scared, and they call the soldiers and are not to be blamed. In the past, we gave alms to the Mönlam, [and] the Chinese were very much scared. And they were suspicious on four points. They said, "If you hold the Mönlam, there will not be peace and tranquility, and you will have problems with your livelihood." The main Chinese official didn't give permission, so I told them the four points one by one, and said that there would be no problem and that these four points were very beneficial to them. So later the Mönlam was held.

Q: At that time, they [shengo] were very militant, right?

A: Yes, even the Sawang (Kashag ministers) were afraid of them. For example, Surkhang Sawang came with seven servants and the Gagpa (bodyguard) riding horses right up to the gate of the Kashag. And the highest Sawang was the Kalön Lama, a monk wearing the long yellow satin robe. During the Mönlam, let alone the Kalön Lama, even the Sakya Gongma [Tib. sa skya gong ma], Gyawa Karmapa [Tib. rgyal ba kar ma pa], and all the lamas and the monks were not allowed to wear garments with sleeves during the Mönlam. If they found out that some monks were wearing sleeves, they would catch them and beat them up. The Kalön Lama would take off the garment with sleeves and wrap it in a cloth, and let his servants carry it. And they would also not ride horses on the Barkor Street. When he entered the Kashag, then he would wear his garment with sleeves. There were many kudrak, but they didn't join these things.

Q: In 1951, when the Chinese came, were you in Lhasa?

A: My parents were from Litang and I was born in Lhasa. In 1949 and 1950 I was in Lhasa. Sometimes I went to the north, Chang,

to trade, and sometimes to India. Otherwise, I was in Lhasa. I was a trader and had nothing to do with politics. But in 1947, at the time of the civil war with Sera, the masses were very sad. This was the start of the Tibetan People's Association [Tib. bod rigs mi dmangs tshogs pa]. We heard that the Communists would come, but they hadn't come then. A few early ones came, like Phüntso Wangye [Tib. phun tshogs dbang rgyal], who were Chinese spies and they cooperated [Tib. lag 'brel] with the kudrak, but we didn't know [about that] in detail. When they were about to make war against Sera, the Tibetan government's [officials] came to the Trapchi Legung (Office). All of the four regiments were staying in Lhasa permanently. The other regiments had been discharged, but at that time, they called up these regiments from Tö and those places. We thought that it was too bad to do that against a monastery. And the Ganden Tripa, who was the owner of the Buddhist [faith], was also disappointed. So we started a traders group to act as mediators in the Sera War. First we made preparations, and then we really started the group of the People's Association, and there weren't any kudrak in it.

Q: What year was that?

A: It was in 1947.

Q: Who were the traders then?

A: At that time, we couldn't go to Sera. The government had a plan for destroying the monastery and the Sera monks had the idea to fight the government, but the monks could not come down. At the same time, we summoned some monk leaders to the sandy area, the Cherag [Tib. bye rag], for talks. We told them not to fight because it was useless to fight. Before that, the Tibetan government had made the Sera monks suffer, as they held a grudge because of the matter of Trunyichemmo Chömpel Thubden [Tib. chos 'phel thub bstan]. So the Sera monks were also not to be blamed and the Reting event also happened. Then some of the Sera monks came down. All of our documents are in the private office of the Dalai Lama after we came to India in 1956. Gyalo Thondup, Shakabpa and Lobsang Gyentsen all know this. I had a big fight with Shakabpa in India when they held the meeting in Dharamsala on Surkhang and Yuthok.

We told the Sera monks, "Don't fight the government. You will lose because they have many troops and the government has called the [other] soldiers here. Lhalu and those were the leaders and they will make war. Please listen to us and we will act as the mediators. In the future, you can say that this time, we listened to the talk because the People's Association mediated. Otherwise, we could have fought with the government and the monks would [then] have had a good reputation." Then the Sera representative called Gen Bulama [Tib. rgan bu bla ma], who was about 70 years old, said, "We are familiar with the Tibetan government. You should bring Reting Rimpoche right away and then we will talk. Otherwise, we will not listen." Then we said, "We will meet tomorrow. First go back to the monastery and talk with the monks, and we are also going to tell the government not to do that." Since I was close to Gen Bulama and I knew the Sera dobdos, they finally said, "We will tell the monks what you said and will give [you] an answer tomorrow." The next day we met again. They said, "Last night we held a meeting consisting of all the monks of Sera Je from the abbots to the small young monks. [And we] have decided to fight the government. We [will] have no regrets even if it means the complete destruction of Sera Je [Tib. byes] so there will be just an empty place left that used to be Sera Je here." We told them, "Please don't say that." At that time, they put gun powder into wooden churns and fired them [like cannons]. It was said that Tsenya [Tib. rtse nya] Trülku asked the oracle to go into a trance with the protective deity Nyare Gyelchen [Tib. myang ral rgyal chen], and the deity gave the prophecy, "Do not lose your courage. Go ahead and fight. I will support you [Tib. dpa' ma chung/ rgyag kyang byed/ grogs dang 'phrin las yod]." Therefore, they were encouraged, and made that decision and said that. So we left and went to Trapchi and met the Kashag there. We told them, "It is not the whole Sera [monastery], but it is just Sera Je. They are not to be blamed because the Tibetan government had tortured the Sera monks. Please do not treat them badly and do not destroy the tratsang (college)." Kapshöba was there and he wouldn't tell us the internal things, but he said, "If the monks don't stay still, we don't have any choice [but to fight] because you people mediated and we also have been tolerating [them] till now." I was living on the Barkor because I built the new house. On the next day, all people were watching through binoculars from the rooftops. The monks had taken possession of the hill on top of Sera, and the government made all kinds of preparations. At around 8-9 a.m., the government issued the order. The government was very active in attacking their own people and the small amount of monks, but against the Chinese, they were useless. Then around 9 a.m., the government soldiers went up the front and the back side of the hill, and captured the Sera monks who were on the hilltop. I heard that they brought them down to the monastery. Then the soldiers were told to enter the monastery. At around 2 p.m., Gen Bulama and Tsenya Rimpoche were brought down to the prison with their hands tied behind their backs. Because of this, the People's Association was first thinking that Buddhism was the most precious thing. At that time, we didn't know much about Tibetan independence, we were just concerned with protecting Buddhism. I heard that Communists were coming and we were saying that that would be best. It was only then that the people changed their minds.

Q: Why would they say that it was good for the Communists to come?

A: The people thought that there would be an improvement if the Communists came after that bad Sera event happened.

Q: And?

A: So in 1947-1949 they did those things like killing Reting and the people were very disappointed. In 1949, the formal People's Association started. We got together then. In 1947, our thoughts were that because of the Sera War, killing Reting and destroying the monastery, we thought if the communists came, it couldn't be worse than that. So in 1949 when we heard the communists were going to come, we really formed the People's Association.

Q: But in the beginning you thought that it would be good, right?

A: This was what the masses thought. During the Reting War, very bad things happened in Tibet, like destroying monasteries and the temples in Reting and Sera. And they even searched the pecha (scriptures) saying the monks would keep their money in the pecha books. They even treated the humble monks poorly. So the people thought that the Communists would not have anything worse to do than this.

But the communists really came. It was said that communists had the communism. We all knew of the 13th Dalai Lama's prophecy that the Communists would come, and if they did, then Tibet would fall under the Red Communists. In 1949, the formal People's Association was started and we called ourselves the Lhasa People's Association. At this time, we met your father (Surkhang) often. He would call us the Lhasa People's Association. This was the name the government called us. We said, "We aren't the Lhasa People's Association because there are Amdos and Khambas [with us]. We should be called the Tibetan People's Association." In our group we didn't think to destroy the kudrak and divide their property among [the] people. Farmers had to pay the taxes. We were interested not in our own benefit, but for the religion and the politics of Tibet in general, and it was really good. The traders and the monks were thinking that way. But the farmers had suffered under the kudraks. For example, we didn't have to pay taxes so I did some trading and played mahjong with Ngabö.

Q: What was the goal of the People's Association?

A: It was to prevent the [Chinese] Communists from coming to Tibet.

Q: How old were you then?

A: About 28-29 years old. I wasn't good at Tibetan. I knew just enough to read and write trader's letter. I didn't go to school, so I needed a teacher. When I was small in the monastery, I read the 13th Dalai Lama's prophecy. That's why I was attentive of politics and the monks and I thought now it has come to the time where religion would be eliminated in Tibet. After this, I thought that the Russians, [Chinese] Communists and the barbarian systems would come to Tibet. So I thought I should start a People's Association to prevent that. I used to tell all the people, "You should read this prophecy and see what he said. If they had implemented what he said, there would not be this situation. Before they implemented it, this situation came into being. If we can do well now, we can be happy and the people will admire us [Tib. mi smon rang skyid]. Even if you do not believe me, this was what he [the Dalai Lama] said."

At that time, there were many rich people, and Pandatsang and Sandutsang, who weren't kudrak, were big traders. My mind was quite quick. Among the kudraks, if you asked who did most of the work, it was their chandzö (managers/stewards), like Wangdü Dorje [Tib. dbang 'dus rdo rje] was your [Surkhang's] servant, right? So I told their chandzö that the 13th Dalai Lama's prophecy said this. I did a lot of propagandizing, calling all the chandzö and telling them, "You are all the people [Tib. mi dmangs] and they are the kudrak." I called all the chandzö into our association and they were all very active. Later, in 1956, the People's Association held a meeting and they asked the oracle to go into a trance with Nechung, and some said that we should stay still.

Q: Did you formally start the Association in 1949?

A: The Lhasa People's Association was started in 1949 where the Khambas and the Amdos who were in Lhasa attended.

Q: But you called that the Tibetan People's Association, right?

A: After that, after having relations everywhere, all of the representatives came to Lhasa. For example, the people in Lhatse [Tib. lha rtse], Ngamring [Tib. ngam ring] and Phuntsoling [Tib. phun tshogs gling] were the miser of the Panchen Lama, but they also sent their representatives and brought the letters saying that they were the same as the Tibetan People's Association.

Q: Was this the time of Jayan Dawa [Tib. 'jam dbyangs zla ba]?

A: Yes. He was with us in the Lhasa People's Association. Later, the Association became larger and I made connections everywhere. Many representatives appointed by the people came from Kham and Amdo. I was the leader. All the documents are in the private office of the Dalai Lama.

Q: This was after the Communists came, right?

A: Yes, this was in 1953. Until that time, the Lhasa People's Association was holding the movement and some of the representatives were imprisoned.

Q: Was this when you were arrested?

A: No. I was arrested in 1956.

Q: At that time, who was the main person in the Lhasa People's Association?

A: I was the main person and the leader from the beginning when we prepared [started] it when the Sera War took place. At that time, we were not called the People's Association. We were called the traders [Tib. tshong rigs khag]. I started the movement and we were talking about religion and politics. When the Chinese Communists came in 1949, we started the Lhasa People's Association. If I say that I was the main person, people might not agree to it, but there were many document proving [this] from the Dalai Lama and the Kashag.

Q: In 1949 you held the meeting and submitted the petition to the Kashag, right?

A: Yes, we submitted the petition and representatives were imprisoned.

Q: Were they arrested?

A: Yes. I was arrested by the Kashag twice.

Q: Who was arrested at that time?

A: I can't tell you the details of the names right away. This was in my first book. Among the second association there were Jayang Dawa and Tsomönling [Tib. tshe smon gling] Chandzö. In the third, the representatives of the Ütsang and the Kham, and myself were there. This was in 1956 and I was arrested the third [time]. Since the third People's Association became strong and didn't listen to the Kashag, the Dalai Lama issued a bugdam edict. After this bugdam was issued, since this was an order from the Dalai Lama, it would not be proper to disobey the order, so the People's Association was disbanded. If we didn't obey this, the Chinese would get what they wanted and would insult us and make fun of us, saying that, "They call for Tibetan independence and the Tibetan government, but when the Dalai Lama gives them an order they don't obey it."

Q: Was this in 1953?

A: It was in 1956. After the Dalai Lama's bugdam, we changed our name and made it smaller. When we call it the Tibetan People's Association, this included all of the Tibetans, and you couldn't say that you were Amdo or Khamba, or you were a kudrak. In the Association there were people from all over, but the Dalai lama had issued the bugdam, so we called it Dokham [Tib. mdo khams] Chushigandru. It was to seem like it was a Khamba and Amdo organization.

Q: Why did you do that?

A: Many people were attacking me, calling me someone who was creating trouble between Tibetans and Chinese, and the Dalai Lama issued the bugdam.

Q: What did he refute [Tib. dgag pa] in this bugdam?

A: He refuted us and it was so long, and it was said like, "Alo Chöndze is the one who is the root of the instigation between Tibetans and the Chinese." So we gave it the name Chushigandru, but in reality, there were still people from all over as before. In fact, it was the same.

Q: Was Andru Gombo Tashi [Tib. a 'brug mgon po bkra shis] there?

A: Yes, he was and there were the leaders of the Chushigandru. I came back in 1956 and we made an internal oath that if we couldn't work [things] out through peaceful means, we would fight the Chinese. At this time the Chinese knew about this, and we, the representatives, were arrested. I was with Gombo Tashi and the meetings were held in my house. The office of the Tibetan People's Association and Chushigandru were both held in my house. After we were arrested, I thought that I couldn't accomplish the work for Tibet in Tibet, and that it would be better to go to India and work from there and submit a petition to the UNO. It would be best to launch a movement in foreign countries. When we were in the prison, we sent all the documents through Amdo Gyetong. He has written it in his autobiography. He wrapped all the documents in yak tails and took them to India. We prepared a petition to be presented to the UNO.

Q: Who prepared it?

A: It was mainly three people. Me [as] the representative of Kham and Amdo, Lhabju [Tib. lha phyug], who was the representative of Tsang [Tib. gtsang], and Bumtang Trunyi [Tib. 'bum thang drung yig], who was the representative of Ü [Tib. dbus]. It was in Tibetan, and we wrote the petition in the prison and we signed it. At that time, we trusted Gyalo Thondup.

Q: What was the content?

A: "Tibet is a completely independent country, but the Chinese Communist, the enemy of Buddhism, annexed it [Tib. btsan zos]. We have no power to do anything, so would the UNO please help us to achieve independence." In signing this, I was the representative of Kham and Amdo, Lhabju was for Tsang, Tö and Yadong, and the representative of Ü was Bumtang Trunyi.

Q: Did you write the petition in the prison?

A: Yes. We said that we couldn't get out of this and that he must go there and contact Shakabpa, Gyalo Thondup and Khenjung Lobsang Gyentsen [Jenkhensisum]. They were in India, and they were great and would help us. The idea was to have the Tibetan translated into English. At that time, we trusted Gyalo Thondup, Shakabpa, the Khenjung and the Jenkhentsisum 100 percent. After it was translated it was to be sent to the UNO. We sent it via Amdo Gyetong, who was a representative, and we prayed and burnt incense. He took it in the seam of the waist of his pants and we sewed it in there. We submitted the petition to the UNO in 1956.

Q: Did you show this first to Phala?

A: No. At that time, we didn't show these internal secret things to him. In general, people like Phala and Surkhang supported us and gave us good instructions [Tib. bka' slob]. But this was all secret and we didn't discuss such things in detail with them. The Tibetan government's kudrak, like the Drönyerchemmo, let alone giving us a gun, didn't even give us a bullet. I used to tell them, "Why are you kudrak so ineffectual [Tib. thabs skyo po]?" They would say, "It is very hard [Tib. re ba mi 'dug]." There were many things like this.

Q: Did you meet Phala often? And Namseling [Tib. rnam sras gling] and Tashi Bera [Tib. bkra shis dpal rab]?

A: I used to meet Phala often. Namseling had great enthusiasm [for Tibetan independence]. And the main person was Phala, and there was also the Tseja, Khenjung Gyentsen la [Tib. mkhan chung rgyal mtshan lags], [who] was good. And there was a Khamba tsidrung who was a tsendrön in the past and later became a khenjung.

Q: Was he called Kelsang Ngawang [Tib. skal bzang ngag dbang] or Lodrö Kelsang [Tib. blo gros skal bzang]?

A: He was called Kelsang Ngawang, and then there was Namseling and Tashi Bera, and the people from the kudrak side. We told the real things about the People's Association to the drönyerchemmo after I was released from the prison, and it was internally decided to go to India. We really showed him the secret documents and told him the secrets of the People's Association and the plans. Under him was the crooked eyed one Tseja Gyentsen la. The two of them were very close. At that time, it was difficult to meet the drönyerchemmo. Tseja Gyentsenla had a rank, but he was just wearing a common monk's robe rather than wearing the kudrak's robe, and he would come to my house. Namseling and Tashi Bera were below him.

Q: Do you mean the plan for you to go to India?

A: Yes, and about the future work of the Chushigandru. There were two main points that Andru Gombo Tashi and I took an oath on. First I told him, "I am going to India to send a petition to the UNO, and if it works out quite well, do not make war before that. Do whatever you can through peaceful means. Just wait for something to happen from India." I also did the same thing in Litang and started the war in Dome [Tib. mdo smad] in Litang. I told them, "In case we would find out that there is no way to achieve the Tibetan issue in the UNO, I will give you a signal and then [you should] fight against the Chinese."

Q: Was this after you were released?

A: Yes. When I was imprisoned, the Tibetan People's Association became very discouraged because I was the leader. When the general [Tib. dmag dpon] is arrested, the soldiers are discouraged. So we held an internal meeting saying that we couldn't accomplish our work in Tibet. The People's Association had three sets of documents. One was the oath taken by all the representatives of the People's Association. Then there was a second oath and also a third one. The first two are in the Dalai Lama's office. The third, I gave to Andrutsang. In this, we had made a very big oath. All of the documents were already sent.

Q: How many (people) were in the third oath?

A: In the third there were about 13-14. They were all people who were committed to the death. Also, in the second there were those who were in it to the death, but if we couldn't keep the secrets of the People's Association, you know how the Communist Chinese were, right? They would not leak out the secret at first and they were good people, but when they became friendly, they might have leaked it out. I will tell you an example. Namseling and Tashi Bera were kudrak. Namseling is a person like this [probably showing his thumbs up to indicate good], but he is a little bit outspoken. So we thought that he might tell other people about the talks that he had with friends, like we [have] talked today. Therefore, we didn't tell him the secrets. They would only talk with Drönyerchemmo and me. All the members on the first, second and the third were good, but some of them were kind of humble or meek [Tib. sems chung]. So it was decided that if we couldn't accomplish independence from India, then we would send a message and start fighting against the Chinese and go to Lhoka. That's why they moved to Lhoka. At that time in jail, Bumtang Trunyi and I discussed the place in Lhoka. We sent the letter and Chushigandru went to Lhoka.

Q: What kind of letter did you send?

A: We purposely sent a letter through aa messenger who was one of the representatives who had taken the oath.

Q: You mean to Lhoka?

A: At first we sent him to Lhasa. The letter said, "There is no way of achieving Tibetan independence from India, let alone doing anything here. And the Dalai Lama has returned to Tibet. There is no hope for independence from here. So you should do that from there." At that time, your father [Surkhang] had also taken the oath. As soon as they got the message, Chushigandru made the preparations. At that time, Gyalo Thondup was making some movements with us here, but he was using me and Shakabpa. Gyalo Thondup and Shakabpa were also making some movements. The reason I couldn't come to America was because of their plot. From that time, I had the wish of going to America and the Americans liked the Tibetan people. But they blocked all of my way. Later Gyalo Thondup made a connection with America. It was said that Gyalo Thondup was good at English and Shakabpa was good at Tibetan. Gyalo Thondup needed some people to be dropped into Kham and Ü. So four were sent to Kham. One was a Baba and three were from Litang. Two were sent to Ü, one was Athar and one Lhotse. The ones in Ü stayed in Gemphel Utse [Tib. dge 'phel dbu rtse] [the top of the hill above Depung]. The message I sent was to move to Lhoka and food, guns and clothes would be provided by America. We also had a secret document. In this was the list of leaders who took the oath from the different areas. At that time, the Americans and Gyalo Thondup had connections, and he would say that he had done everything. In 1956, Gyalo Thondup gave the order and launched the war in Kham and Amdo, and picked up some of our Litang people. When I came here in 1956, I knew that Gyalo Thondup was false.

Q: First, please tell us the history before you came to India.

A: The reason why Gombo Tashi could do that with enthusiasm was because we sent people [to Lhasa] saying, "The US is supporting us . If you can just go to Lhoka with a sword, it doesn't matter even if you don't have a gun. There will be no problems once you reach Lhoka." Then we knew that he [Athar] was going and we had some hopes, and he met Gombo Tashi and Drönyerchemmo. Athar [met with the] two of them. The ones who went to Kham did very well and they were dropped in Litang. When they took the oath, the leaders of all the groups took the oath. The duty of the leaders was to give notice to the masses. When we sent the message that everything would be okay if people would come to Lhoka, all of a sudden, several hundreds of the people gathered there. At this time, the US duped us a little . When the American officers came to Delhi, I told their secretaries about this. Andrutsang was the general and the leader of the Chushigandru. We had a relationship with him. If I were to tell you about the starting of Chushigandru, I wouldn't finish it in ten days, but it is in my book.

Q: Was this all in the document?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you have the petition that you had submitted to the government?

A: The original is in the hands of the Chinese [the 1956 petition], the copy is with the Kashag and the Yigtsang.

Q: Didn't you make a copy? I heard that you submitted copies to the Kashag, the Yigtsang and the three great monasteries, right?

A: Yes, we did.

Q: This was the petition you people wrote, right?

A: Yes, the copy of this is with the Dalai Lama. I was arguing about this very much. The document is in the Private Office and since now it is a democracy, it is the time when we need this, but they didn't give it to me. As for what I did after I came back, I have that in my own documents.

Q: I heard there were six points in the document, do you remember them?

A: They are in my book.

Q: I couldn't find them.

A: In it we didn't say strongly about independence because if we did, we wouldn't have had a way to go through. We said, "We don't want or need the Tibet Autonomous Region. We have our old government offices and these are good." We also didn't want the Panchen Lama and the Dalai Lama to be of the same rank.

Q: It was to oppose the Tibet Autonomous Region, right?

A: Yes, and it was also said that people should not have dinner with the Dalai Lama.

Q: Was there anything about that we should go to Beijing to submit the petition?

A: No. Not at all.

Q: Did you write one petition or more?

A: Only one in my time.

Q: The first was stopped, right?

A: Our plan was to raise another one if the former was stopped. Even now, the organization is like this. If we go along at once, all of us will be arrested and it is finished.

Q: Your time was from 1953-56, and at that time there was only one petition, right?

A: Yes.

Q: There was one in Tibet and one to UNO? These two were the main ones, right?

A: Yes. The start of the revolt in eastern Tibet was when the Dalai Lama went to China.

Q: First let's talk about Lhasa. In 1955 Panda Raga la [Tib. spom mda' rab dga' lags] came to Lhasa. Did you have any relations with him? A book says you did.

A: Absolutely not. He didn't even get to Lhasa, he was in Kalimpong.

Q: No, he was expelled to Kham from India and then made his way to Lhasa. A book says he made a connection in Lhasa with the People's Association.

A: Absolutely not. We had relations with Abo Tobgye [Tib. a pho stobs rgyas] and Yambe [Tib. yar 'phel], who later became a Rimshi. I knew Abo Raga when I was a trader. The People's Association didn't like Abo Raga because he was good at Chinese and he had translated Sun Yatsen's book.

Q: You threw leaflets at the Mönlam and you were arrested. The leaflets came from Jenkhentsisum, right? Please say a little about your relations with Jenkhentsisum and how you were thinking. The Mönlam leaflets were before the bugdam edict or after?

A: After the bugdam. We started Chushigandru and the People's Association was not there. The leaflets thrown were printed and made by 3 tsidrung (monk officials who fled to India), and they were distributed through the people among the People's Association.

Q: Was this ordered by Jenkhentsisum?

A: Yes, but I don't know about this in detail.

Q: Did Phala know of this?

A: I don't know about this in detail. The leaflets were thrown on the 17th [later says 15th]. Phala probably knew about this

internally. They didn't tell me about this.

Q: Gyetong says he gave the leaflets to Phala.

A: Probably to Shakabpa. Phala didn't even see this. Gyetong was an honest person, but he gave them to a bad person [He means Shakabpa].

Q: No, I mean the leaflets thrown at the Mönlam.

A: At that time, Gyetong wasn't there. He was in India. So he couldn't have given them to Phala. I don't know clearly who did this or how it was done.

Q: He didn't come back, right?

A: Yes. Gyetong took the documents of the People's Association to India, this is true. He didn't take the letters to Lhasa.

Q: So how did the leaflets arrive in Tibet?

A: I don't know clearly about this. The leaflets were thrown on the 15th.

Q: How did you get the leaflets?

A: I don't know clearly. There were many leaflets, they were distributed on the morning of 15th. On the 16th, some Chinese came to my house and they were scared of making arrests because the People's Association was powerful. On the 17th, I was playing mahjong with Depön and his wife Tsering Drolma la [Tib. tshe ring sgrol ma lags], in the Yabshi house. Tsipön Namseling came there and said, "I swear by the three jewels there has been much talk today. You are here playing mahjong and seem to be enjoying yourself, but the Chinese have told the Kashag that they are going to arrest Alo Chöndze. So you are really bold [Tib. rdzab chen], sitting here playing mahjong." I answered, "There is nothing for me. I don't care whether the Chinese or the Kashag arrest me. Long ago I gave up my life. So I am not afraid. Let's play mahjong." So I continued playing and won Phüntso Tashi's motorcycle. I took the motorcycle and went home. My new house was next to Surkhang's. Then the following day, on the 19th, they arrested me.

Q: Didn't you live near the Kyabying [Tib. skyabs dbyings] House?

A: Yes, we were neighbors. I built all of those houses. I thought even if they arrested me, I had fulfilled my duty. We were talking a lot about sacrificing our lives for independence, but you had to make an actual sacrifice. On the morning of the 19th, I knew about that a little bit and when we were having breakfast, Kyabying [Tib. skyabs dbyings] Chöndze and his wife Pema la were with me. I was upstairs talking with Kyabying and saw out of the window that the hunchback, Rupön Gurgur la [Tib. sgur sgur lags], and some police were coming. He came in and took off his hat as a salute [Tib. phyag 'bul], and said that today he came to meet me. "Please, the Kashag want you to come to the Kashag briefly. We came to accompany you." I replied, "If the Kashag want to see me, they can send a letter. Why send you?" Before that, I would go to the Kashag. Then I told them. "Come in. It doesn't matter." There were rupön and gyagpön, and the rupön said, "The depön is also here, but Depön Jünba [Tib. 'jun pa] sent us first in case there was trouble. If there was none, he planned to come." The depön might have been hiding somewhere and planned to come in if the situation was okay. Then the depön came in and he also took off his hat, though he was the kudrak and the fourth rank . There was no such custom. Then I said, "One shouldn't talk without eating first [Tib. kha stong par gros ma byed]. Today you have come to arrest me. You don't have to be afraid. I am not going to do anything to you. Our view is the same. If I was going to shoot you, I would have already," and I took out a gun from my dress' pouch. "Should I bring the gun or leave it." They said to please leave it.

At this time, I was constructing a house. I then called my wife and told her to look after the construction. I said I had to go to the site and tell them that they should listen to my wife Yangdzom [Tib. g.yang 'dzoms], and to work well. Then after that, I asked Jünba to let the master carpenter and mason come to the jail to discuss things about the house with me. Jünba said they weren't there to arrest me, just to take me to the Kashag for a short time. I said, "No, no. I know you are here to arrest me." When we went to the construction site, the workers were crying, but I told them, "From tomorrow [on], you should laugh and continue to work real hard. This is the real service." When I went out, I saw that there were actually about 20-30 soldiers around my house, and all the houses around, like Surkhang's and Yuthok's, were surrounded by Chinese trucks with guns and cannons. I heard that later on. I think if there was trouble between the People's Association and Tibetan soldiers, then the Chinese troops would have intervened. Then as we were walking they said internally, "First, let's stop at the police station and then we will go on to Kashag. You have to stay here for the time being. We will arrange a better place for you to stay." They vacated a quarter of the office and I was told to stay in there. Bumtang Trunyi and Lhabju were brought to the station many days later by the Chinese. The first plan was for the Chinese to take me, but the Kashag talked with the Chinese and Surkhang said, "We will take him and we will guarantee that he will cause no more trouble." Surkhang was pleased with them and said that this was for the best, and that if the Chinese tried to take him, it would only lead to greater trouble. I stayed almost seven months.

Q: It was like house arrest, right?

A: Yes.

Q: Did the master masons and the carpenters come to see you since you were doing the construction?

A: For a couple of days they didn't come, but later they came to see me. Since we and the soldiers were close to each other, they didn't have any choice but to do that outwardly. So I used to go home at night and make the arrangements and come back in the morning . The Kashag put forward a smart idea for the Tibetans to arrest me. It was great. If it had been the Chinese, I would have been finished. Surkhang used to play mahjong with me as we were neighbors, and he would give me the signal, and just before I

was arrested, he didn't come. He told me, "Do you know about this? I am not going to come to you very much because there are always Chinese spies around your house. You be careful." There was indeed a sweets and cigarettes seller on the road who was not there in the past. Surkhang told me, "This is the spy. You should plan to leave and I have also sold my house." I thought he meant that he was going to flee to India and I should also. But how could I flee to India before making an end to the movement? Later, I had no choice but to leave.

Q: What arrangements were made for throwing the leaflets in the Mönlam. Was it your representative or the monks? Who threw them?

A: I don't have much to say about the arrangement. Externally people said that the People's Association threw the leaflets, but in reality, it was probably Phala.

Q: Gyetong said that since he was a trader, he brought the leaflets before you were imprisoned.

A: No, not at all. He was always staying there in India. He was a very honest and sincere person, but since Shakabpa later became his sponsor, he was most grateful to Shakabpa and he didn't like me. But, there are a lot of reasons to tell about in Shakabpa's book.

Q: Did your second People's Association exchange letters with Jenkhentsisum until you were imprisoned?

A: No. Not at all. Once in Songra [his Barkor house], Tsidrung Champa Tsündrü [Tib. byams pa brtson 'grus] came. He said, "If you stay in Tibet there is no point. The Khenjung and them say that you should go to India. Preparations have been made for a house, et,cetera." I had already learned my lesson from them. I knew that Shakabpa was false from the Reting War, but I thought he might be okay on this issue, and I trusted Gyalo Thondup very much. The Khenjung was also not regarded badly. So they said I must go to India and that they had a lot of internal things to talk about.

Q: When was this?

A: This was in 1955, before I was arrested. I told him, "Our People's Association was not incited by anyone. It was started by us alone. So we will do whatever we can and there is no reason to go abroad." I didn't say whether I would or would not go to him.

The next day I met Namseling. I told him about the visit of Champa Tsündrü. He said, "It would be great if you can go. You can believe them [in India], but I will go to ask brother Jola Chemmo [Phala]."

Q: Was he his brother?

A: I don't know, it was a way of talking for Kudraks. [Anyway,] the next day I went to see Phala and told him about Champa Tsündrü. He said, "If you can go it would be good. If you can't, it would be good to send a few representatives." Phala liked it. Since Phala liked it and said this, I had more confidence that their movement might be okay. So I thought that I should send them a letter in India.

Q: Did they tell you to send the representatives from different areas?

A: They said that, but I didn't send them. Phala said it would be good, but I didn't.

Q: Why?

A: The reason was that if I sent people, they wouldn't know the language and the writing, so it wouldn't be useful. But later we had no hope [of fighting and winning] in Kham or Ü, and the government had no hope because they didn't give us a single bullet. So it was useless to stay there. Till now, Gyalo Thondup and Shakabpa had contradictions with me on this political matter. Otherwise, I had a very close relations with Yabshi, mostly through playing mahjong. I had no connection with Shakabpa. I never even spoke to him. The distance between me and Shakabpa was over the general welfare of Tibet. And Amdo Gyetong was really a good person who was completely devoted to opposing the Communists. He very much liked to make connections with Taiwan and he also knew Chinese a little bit. But since Shakabpa was his sponsor, he followed him, and I can tell you how Shakabpa supported him. When the democratic Tibetan government was set up, and many offices were set up they got rid of Surkhang and Yuthok, and Alo Chöndze was left on the corner. As for Amdo Gyetong, let alone writing things, he didn't even [know] how to write his signature. He was appointed as the Assistant Kalön. Since those people were like the proverb, "Having the disease caused by the same demon [Tib. gdon gcig zin gyi na tsha]," how could they accomplish the common cause of the Tibetan issue? All of the intellectuals were expelled. Gyetong was appointed as the Assistant Kalön because he was Shakabpa's trader. Now everything had become a mess [Tib. sbo lug].