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Interviewed by: Paljor Tsarong
Name: Lhalungpa Lobsang Phüntso [Tib. lha lung pa blo bzang phun tshogs]
Gender: Male
Age: ca. 68
Date of Birth: ca. 1926

Abstract

Lhalungpa [Tib. lha lung pa] was a well-known Tibetan who had lived in Kalimpong, India since 1947. In this phone interview, he discusses his involvement with Jenkhentsisum and his trip with Lukhangwa to meet Prime Minister Nehru in Delhi. He also talks about his role in contacting Indian leaders to communicate about Tibetan issues and on internal differences between the "people" [People's Association] and Jenkhentsisum in the exile community.

Tape 1

Q: Hello, I am Paljor Tsarong. How are you?

A: I am fine thank you.

Q: Can I ask you some things about Kalimpong?

A: Yes.

Q: In the past in Kalimpong, there was an organization called Jenkhentsisum [Tib. gcen mkhan rtsis gsum]. What was that organization for and who was in the organization?

A: Since 1947, I stayed around Kalimpong. I think in 1953-1954, there were the following people in the organization, the Kungö [Tib. sku ngo] Shakabpa [Tib. zhwa sgab pa]. Gyalola and we were saying that we have to do some secret work for Tibet and we were meeting together frequently and we were working on it. At that time, we didn't make a formal document regarding having a name for the organization because that was secret work. At that time, India and China were very friendly and the Indians were watching us very carefully. Therefore, we were holding meetings at night. We didn't name the organization. [The people involved were] Yabshi Kungö [Tib. yab gzhis sku ngo] [Gyalo Thondup], Tshipön [Shakabpa], Khenjung Lobsang Gyentsen [Tib. mkhan chung blo bsang rgyal mtsan], Phünkang Lhajang [Tib. phun khang lha lcam], Phünkang Kungö [Tib. phun khang sku ngo] and me and Thando Rimpoche [Tib. dar mdo rin po che].

Later, three monk officials came and we let them join with us. The name of the three monks were Thubden Nyinji [Tib. thub bstan nyin byed], Champa Wangdü [Tib. byams pa dbang 'dus], and Champa Tsündrö [Tib. byams pa brtson 'grus]. In 1956, the Dalai Lama went for pilgrimage to India. After that, the people's representatives of Tibet were set up by people like Alo Chöndze and Lobsang Dorje [Tib. blo bsang rdo rje].

Q: Lobsang Dorje [Tib. blo bzang rdo rje] was known as Shelkar Chandzö [Tib. shel dkar phyag mdzod], right?

A: Yes. He was the person with a crooked eye. We were calling them to join with us in the meetings because they came from Tibet and the meeting was about Tibet. At that time, the Indians didn't let us write about the Tibetan issue in the newspapers because the government of India wouldn't let us do it. At that time, the Chinese were more powerful and the two prime ministers [sitsab] had to resign and there were lot of problems. So we were saying that we have to make some publicity in foreign countries. My job was to contact the press secretly. We paid some wages and requested them to write about our Tibetan issue in the newspapers. At that time in Kalimpong there was a Tibetan newspaper call Sargyur Melong [Tib. gsar 'gyur me long] published by Tharchinla [Tib. thar phyin lags]. I talked with him about writing about Tibetan issues in the newspaper and that we have to send the newspaper to Tibet. I did the editing. I think we worked on that for about one year.

At that time, in Kalimpong, the Chinese set up the Trade Mission and the Chinese were treating the local people very tactfully. They called them to the office and gave them gifts. The Chinese were doing this in order to divide the Tibetans. Therefore, we were saying that we have to help the local people. So we called some local people's representatives. In Kalimpong there was no school for Tibetans and there were just a few people who could send their children to the Convent School. There was a Chinese school that was set up by the Guomindang and later when the Communists came they took over the school and sent some of their people there. At that time, the Communists were very powerful. All the Tibetan children were going there. When Tibetan children went to the school, the Communists were indoctrinating the Tibetans with the views of communism. So we were saying that if the Communists keep on doing this, it would be very harmful for the Tibetans. Therefore, Thando Rimpoche and I set up the Indo-Tibetan Cultural Institute. I worked in that institute. At that time, Thando Rimpoche was the director and I was the secretary and the organizer. There was an old house which used to be the palace of 13th Dalai Lama. So that belonged to the Bhutanese and they rented us the house for the school. Later, many children who were going to the Chinese School came to our school. So the Chinese were very agitated. Regarding this matter, there were a lot of local politics and the school is still there. When the Tibetan refugees came to India, the students who graduated from our school were able to be the interpreters and it was useful.

Q: When the Dalai Lama was in India in 1956, before he went back to Tibet, Yuthok Sawangchemmo [Tib. g.yu thog sa dbang chen mo] and Drunychemmo Angula [Tib. am gug lags] came to receive the Dalai Lama [return to Tibet]. But they decided to stay in Kalimpong and do some work. Did Yuthok Sawangchemmo and Angula work in the organization after 1957?

A: Actually they didn't join the organization. Although we didn't have any doubts about them, since they came from Tibet, just Kungö Tshipön contacted with Yuthok and Angula. They didn't come to the organization to work.

Q: At that time, Kungö Sitsab [Tib. srid tshab] [Lukhangwa] was there, right?

A: We sought advice from Kungö Sitsab and he was also very powerful. One time, I remember that Kungö Sitsab said, "We have to report to the Indian Government about the issue of Tibet because there are many issues." So the preparation was done by the group and Sitsab and I went to Delhi to see Pandit Nehru. We talked about Tibetan history for about 2 hours. Nehru listened to our report carefully. Nehru said, "I understand the entire situation. You said Tibet is independent in history, so it certainly may be independent. But from the point of current international law, nobody has accepted Tibet as an independent [country]. So it is a little hard on the legal side. But there is nothing much to argue about, because the Chinese have already taken over Tibet. So now the most important thing is that you should do local work. The Chinese are saying that they are going to let you do work in administration [of Tibet]. It is very important to do the internal struggle tactfully. You should do it through non-violence. If you go through violence, the Chinese will eliminate the Tibetans. We are not planning to give you any military support. If you do it through peacefully means, we will help you on all aspects." At that time, India knew that it was quite hard for India because Tibet was lost and the Indians also saw very strongly that it was harmful for them because the Chinese had taken over Tibet. So Pandit Nehru said, "Now there is not much to do. We have to make our own defenses stronger and we have to have strong relations with the Tibetans."

We were saying that we have to set up a new radio broadcasting station in Delhi and we have to broadcast to the Tibetans and let the Tibetans know about India and about the foreign countries. Since there were many Tibetans living in Kalimpong and Darjeeling, we have to make contact with them and make stronger relations regarding culture and we have to publish many Tibetan Journals and write about India and the relations between Tibet and India. We should send these materials inside Tibet. At that time, in the India House in Sikkim, Dr. N. Sinha, the representative of India, was staying there. So the Indian Government gave him a budget on Tibetan Culture and they set up an office. There was a small book written by Pandit Nehru called, "Latest from a father to his daughter." In that book, he wrote about Indian history and there were also things that Gandhi said. We were saying that we have to translate these books and send them to Tibet. I translated Nehru's speech and the Government of India published it. These were their program on Tibet and they also told us that we should make stronger relations with the people inside Tibet.

Q: You said that the three monk officials came to Kalimpong, so how did they come to Kalimpong?

A: The three monk officials came to Kalimpong and they said, "The Chinese have oppressed the Tibetan Government very severely so we came to report the situation of Tibet to the Indian Government and to seek the support from the foreign countries." They had escaped to India.

Q: Did they escape voluntarily?

A: Yes, I think they all came together voluntarily. I remember we prepared the house where they stayed and we also went to take care of them and helped them.

Q: They were not sent by Phala Drönyerchemmo, right?

A: To tell you the inner situation, at that time, since Phala was the Lord Chamberlain, he had the contact [with the Dalai Lama] everyday. So probably, there was an internal instruction for them to go to make contact with the foreign countries.

Q: I heard this in a few interviews.

A: Yes. Phala told me that we have to make contact with foreign countries.

Q: I heard that the wife of Phünkang and Alo Chöndze worked together, but later they didn't get along well and split up [with Jenkhentsisum]?

A: At that time, they didn't really get separated, but later the people came and gave them pressure. The "people" were saying that they have to do the publicity strongly and quickly. Between the "people" [Tib. mi dmangs tshogs pa] and the leaders of the

organization like Gyalola and Kungö Tshipön, they had a disagreement on the policy. Gyalola and some of them were saying we can't act like dummies and insist on things strongly; we have to work tactfully. But the "people" were saying that we have to use all of our energy to do publicity. At that time, we couldn't do that much publicity because the Indian Government was supervising us. The head of the spies came to see us and said, "You people should not do anything that causes problems between India and China. Now the relations between India and China is good, so whatever you do, you should do it tactfully. He warned us like this.

Q: Gyalola has talked on the tape and I think I also asked Yabshi Trunyila [Tib. yab gzhis drung yig lags] that according to the formal policy of the government of India they were having relations with the Chinese, but did they have relation with the Tibetans through the Intelligence Agency?

A: Our base for making cultural contact was that the Intelligence Agency said that we have to make the Tibetan people like the Indians. That was the policy. If the Tibetans have their own land that also helps India. Later, as for the internal policy, they let the Tibetans join their army. The Indian Government helped in sending Khambas to Mustang. If they didn't help us on that, it would have been hard when we received the money from the US CIA. The ordinary members of our organization didn't know about the sending of Khambas [to Mustang] because they kept that secret from us.

Q: That is about all for today. Do you have any kind of documents or notes about that?

A: No.

Q: Last time, I interviewed Amdo Lekshey [Tib. a mdo legs bshad] and I am also going to interview Gyalola. If I have further questions I will call you.

A: I started my radio work in 1956. So I couldn't attend the meetings that were held frequently [after that]. My duty was to contact the Indian officers and mainly the party leaders and tell them clearly about the Tibetan situation. So I contacted Radra Krishna and Miss Gandhi and other leaders of the congress and the leaders of the Hindu Janasam. At that time, in Delhi, there was the Socialist Party called Praja Socialist which was a People's Socialist Party. They were the most powerful in helping the Tibetans. The best thing was that there were several national leaders like Ashoka Mega and Ganga Sorasingh. We had a very good relations with them and they even called us when they had some internal parties and talked about the Tibetans. They set up a party called Sotantri led by the Minu Masani, and they were supporting the Tibetans very strongly. Since I was in Delhi, they asked me about Tibet and I also told them about Tibet.

Q: Thank you, Kungö.

A: Sure.