

THARCHIN'S ONE MAN WAR WITH MAO*

ISRUN ENGELHARDT

Beginning in 1925 and over a period of some thirty years, *Yul phyogs so so'i gsar gyur me long*, or *The Mirror of News from All Sides of the World* (later known as *The Tibet Mirror*),¹ was the only newspaper published in the Tibetan language.² Its editor was the Christian catechist Dorje Tharchin and it was published in the border town of Kalimpong in West Bengal.

In the late 1940s Tharchin began to alert Tibet of the imminent danger of Chinese invasion.

This paper will examine Tharchin's tireless efforts to publish his newspaper against great adversity. Allowing the sources to speak for themselves wherever possible, it offers an overview of Tharchin's ever increasing efforts to do battle with the Chinese, armed only with a pen until the *Tibet Mirror* ceased publication in 1963.

THARCHIN

Gergan Dorje Tharchin (1890-1976), affectionately called Tharchin Babu (*Mthar phyin sba bu*) was an exceptional personality. Although a Christian from Poo in Kinnaur, near the Indian border with Tibet, he identified wholly with the Tibetan cause and made it his life's work. He was baptized by the Moravian missionary Theodor Schreve (1860-1930) and was educated by the Moravians. In the 1920s after having been trained as a schoolteacher, he came to Kalimpong, the town on the border of Sikkim and "the hub of Indo-Tibetan trade," and worked for the Church of Scotland.³ This is how he was described in the early 1950s by Sangharakshita

1 I'll refer to it as the *Melong* and the *Tibet Mirror*.

2 Still in 1953 on the front cover of the second edition of Tharchin's *The Tibetan Second Book*, he proudly called himself as „editor and publisher of the only Tibetan newspaper.“

3 For a voluminous biography of Tharchin, see: H. Louis Fader: *Called from Obscurity: The Life and Times of a True Son of Tibet, God's Humble Servant from Poo Gergan Dorje Tharchin. With Particular Attention Given to his Good Friend and Illustrious Co-Laborer in the Gospel Sadhu Sundar Singh of India.* 3 vols. Kalimpong: Tibet Mirror Press 2002-2009. See also Paul G. Hackett: "Kalimpong, Gergan Dorje Tharchin, and his Mirror Newspaper." http://library.columbia.edu/content/dam/libraryweb/libraries/eastasian/Mirror_Hackett.pdf

Tashi Tsering: "The Life of Rev. G. Tharchin: Missionary and Pioneer." In: *Lungta* 11 (1998), 9-10. René von Nebesky-Wojkowitz: *Where the Gods are Mountains: Three Years among the People of the Himalayas.* London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson: 1956; Dawa Norbu:

* The online version of this article contains additional materials not included in the printed version.

(Dennis Lingwood), a British Buddhist monk, who lived in Kalimpong for fourteen years:

....The colourful and contradictory Mr Tharchin. He had been born not in Tibet but in Ladakh, and was not a Buddhist but a Christian-in fact, a Scottish Presbyterian. Nonetheless, he had an excellent knowledge of Tibetan, both colloquial and classical, and was in great demand as a teacher, especially among the growing number of Western scholars who came to Kalimpong in order to pursue their researches into Tibetan Buddhism. His principal claim to celebrity, however, was the fact that he was the editor, proprietor, printer, and publisher of the *Tibet Mirror*, which proudly proclaimed itself to be the only Tibetan language newspaper in the world, and which was read from the monastic colleges of Lhasa to the oriental departments of major Western universities, not to mention the foreign offices of Washington, Peking, London, and Moscow, and the Ministry of Home Affairs in New Delhi. The reason it was so widely read was that Mr Tharchin was violently anti-Communist and anti-Chinese, and denounced Chairman Mao and all his works with unsparing vigour in every issue of his paper. Not that the *Tibet Mirror* came out very frequently. It was certainly not a daily; it was not even a weekly or a monthly. The truth was, it came out whenever Mr Tharchin had the time - and the money - to write, print, publish, and distribute the shiny tabloid sheets. There had been periods in its history, indeed, when the *Tibet Mirror* did not appear for months together, or even for a year or two. When the paper did appear, therefore, it was quite an event in the Tibetan-speaking world, both inside and outside Tibet, even though only four or five hundred copies were printed, and even though some of these took weeks to reach their destination. Now that China had invaded Tibet, however, and Communist troops occupied Lhasa, Mr Tharchin had redoubled his efforts. At least two issues of the *Tibet Mirror* had appeared in recent months, and Chairman Mao had been denounced more vigorously than ever. For Mr Tharchin his paper was now no less than the voice of Free Tibet, a fact which was not without political significance, especially so far as relations between India and China were concerned.⁴

“G. Tharchin: Pioneer and Patriot. An Interview with Tharchin Babu.” In: *Tibetan Review* 10 (December 1975), 18-20. Anonym.: “Tharchin passes away.” *Tibetan Review* 11 (April 1976), 13. Hisao Kimura. 1990. *Japanese Agent in Tibet: My Ten Years of Disguise*. London: Serindia, 135-136.

4 Sangharakshita (D.P.E. Lingwood): *Facing Mount Kanchenjunga: An English Buddhist in the Eastern Himalayas*. Birmingham: Windhorse Publications 1991, 177-178. The Austrian



Tharchin in ca. 1959.⁵

According to the Tibetan historian Tsering Shakya, “There is no doubt Tharchin regarded the paper as his attempt to bring Tibet into the modern world as he saw it...The *Tibet Mirror* was influential in the formation of new thinking among the Tibetans...”⁶

As Sangharakshita suggests, it was in fact read in the United States. In an article in the December 1962 issue of the *Melong*, Tharchin reports that an American newspaper wrote about his efforts in an article entitled “One Man War With Mao” (from which the title of this essay is drawn).⁷

anthropologist René von Nebesky-Wojkowitz also provided a vivid description of the content of the *Tibet Mirror*. René von Nebesky-Wojkowitz: *Where the Gods are Mountains*, 73-75.

5 GettyImages 3322132.

6 Tsering Shakya: *The Emergence of Modern Tibetan Literature—gsar rtsom*. London: School of Oriental and African Studies Ph.D. thesis 2004, 21. I am very grateful to Tsering Shakya for generously allowing me to quote from his as yet unpublished dissertation. See also his interview in Luc Schaedler: *Angry Monk: Reflections on Tibet*. Literary, Historical, and Oral Sources for a Documentary Film. Zürich: University of Zürich Ph.D. thesis 2007, 297-298. See also Isrun Engelhardt: “Tharchin’s Melong.” In: Hartmut Walravens (ed.): *The First Tibetan Serial: August Hermann Francke’s La-dvags-kyi-ag-bâr (1904-1907)*. Facsimile of a unique set in the archives of the Evangelische Brüderunität, Herrnhut. Berlin: Staatsbibliothek 2010, 1-22.

7 Despite much efforts, I have been unable to locate the original article Tharchin himself writes in his late autobiography: “A copy of this newspaper cutting from the *Globe* had been sent to Tharchin many years ago. He gave it to a Tibetan official who never gave it back.” Tharchin Autobiography II (unpublished manuscript, dictated at the end of his life, fol. 30. Tharchin Collection Columbia University.

Although the article is written in the third person, referring to Tharchin as “the old man,” it is translated here in the first person.

Recently, the world’s enemy, Red Chinese Communist bandits crossed the Indian border from Tibet like thieves. On this matter I had already in former times fervently fought the Communist Chinese by the means of my newspaper. Twelve years ago I saw and read in a foreign newspaper an article entitled ‘One Man War With Mao’. In this article someone wrote about me, the newspaper, and the much related news.

However, now I am overjoyed, because I am no longer alone; more than 400 million Indians are fully determined to strongly oppose Mao. Due to my old age, I cannot take part in the war, although I thought of carrying my gun on my back and facing the enemy. So I have to fight the Communist Chinese again by taking up my pen and writing in the newspaper.⁸

In the late 1940s Tharchin began to alert the Tibetans to the imminent danger of Chinese invasion. To strengthen his early warnings, and as he wrote “to incite the Tibetans” he used the authority of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama and repeatedly reprinted his so called “Political Testament” from 1932,⁹ which includes the following:

In particular, we must guard ourselves against the barbaric red communists, who carry terror and destruction with them, wherever they go. They are the worst of the worst... It will not long before we find the red onslaught at our own front door. It is only a matter of time before we come into a direct confrontation with it ... either from within our own ranks or else as a threat from an external [communist] nation. And when that happens we must be ready to defend ourselves. Otherwise our spiritual and cultural traditions will be completely eradicated.¹⁰

METHOD AND STYLE

Due to the range and diversity of his reporting, Tharchin’s newspaper became the chief source of national and international news for the Tibetan speaking people. The

8 *Melong* XXVII, 12, December 1962, 10.

9 *Melong* XV, 4-5, February-March 1946. 1; XVII, 6, March 1949, 1; XXIII, 2, January 1955, 12; XXV, 4 July-August 1958, 2-3.

10 Glenn H. Mullin: *Path of the Bodhisattva Warrior. The Life and Teachings of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama*. Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Pub. 1988, 111-112. See also further translations by Lobsang Rabgay in K. Dhondup: *The Water Bird and Other Years*. New Delhi: Rangwang Pub. 1986, 143-146; Lobsang Lhalungpa in Franz Michael: *Rule by Incarnation: Tibetan Buddhism and its Role in Society and State*. Boulder: Westview 1982, 171-174.

vast majority of the reports were factual news reports of varying length on the approach of the Chinese toward Tibet. These occasionally ended in urgent personal appeals. Tharchin attempted to collect and print as much information as possible about the progress of the Chinese conquest and the situation in Tibet. For this reason, it is surprising that the *Tibet Mirror* has received so little attention as a contemporary historical source.

When Chinese crossed the Indian border in 1959, the *Tibet Mirror* reported not only on the Chinese in Tibet but also on the attacks on Indian territory, providing a detailed chronology of the Chinese border invasions with geographical details in each case.¹¹

He published the statement by the Dalai Lama in Tezpur on 18 April 1959¹² and his appeal to the United Nations on 9th September 1959.¹³ The publication of the Dalai Lama's first press conference after his arrival in India, held in Mussoorie on 20 June 1959, is, as far as I am aware, the only complete record of the entire press conference with its eighty-nine questions and answers.¹⁴ Tharchin also printed the 1954 exchange of correspondence between Mao and the Dalai Lama in his January 1955 issue, even adding an English translation.¹⁵ He also printed Indian newspaper articles generally drawn from the Calcutta *Statesman* as well as articles from Taiwan and Hong Kong.¹⁶

Tharchin always framed his thoughts in a wider international context and did not regard the conflict between China and Tibet as an internal affair. He thus paid particular attention to the 17-Point Treaty of 23 May 1951 between China and Tibet, which he not only printed several times, but also compared to the Treaty of Simla of 1914.¹⁷ In 1963, the final year of the *Tibet Mirror* he published an eight-part series on the Treaty of Simla. In addition, he translated into Tibetan the "Panch Shila (Panchsheel) Agreement" of 29 April 1954 between India and China; no Tibetan version existed despite the concession by the Indian side that Tibet was under Chinese rule.¹⁸ Furthermore, in the June 1954 issue he compared the Agreement with the treaties of 1908 and 1914, printing them side by side.¹⁹ In a rousing appeal covering

11 See for example *Melong* XXVI, 4-5, September-October 1959; XXVIII, 2, February 1963, 3-6; XVIII, 3, March 1963, 3-4.

12 *Melong* XXVI, 1, June 1959, 1-3.

13 *Melong* XXVI, 4-5, September-October 1959, 1-2.

14 *Melong* XXVI, 2-3, July-August 1959, 2-6 and 11-12.

15 *Melong* XXIII, 2, January 1955, 3-4.

16 Tharchin distinguished between levels of reliability in his sources. Whenever possible he indicated the precise date and origins of his source, e.g. Radio Delhi, Lhasa, the *Statesman* journal, Calcutta, eye witnesses or educated scholars. Where reports were only based on rumours, hearsay or gossip, he also indicated this: *go thos gnas tshul*.

17 See *Melong* issues XIX, 3, June 1951, 5; XIX, 4, July 1951, 4; XIX, 5, August 1951, 4-5; XIX, 6, September 1951, 7.

18 *Melong* XXII, 1, April-May 1954, 5; also again in XXII, 2, June 1954, 3-4.

19 *Melong* XXII, 2, June 1954, 5-9.

several pages, he argued vehemently against the Agreement.²⁰ From a typewritten paper in the Tharchin collection, it appears as if Tharchin had received this appeal from Kundheu, a Tibetan from Phari, who urged him to publish it in *Melong*.²¹ Tharchin also seems to have translated this appeal, which the missionary George Patterson published in his *Tibet in Revolt*:

To Leaders, Officials, Monks, Soldiers, Traders, Craftsmen, Agriculturists, Nomads – the People of Tibet.

This is to alert you to the great danger threatening our common cause, the independence of Tibet, regarding which I feel compelled to speak a few words.

- 1) The last edition of the Tibet Mirror carried translations of articles from Indian papers of a trade pact signed at Peking between India and China regarding Tibet. There was a statement that “discussion in Peking related only to procedural matters and not to the substance of the issue”. Neither was there any mention of which particular treaty formed the basis of the talks. Further, no full copy of the agreement was made public.
- 2) Were the talks based on the Trade Regulations of 1893 or of 1908, both of which were mentioned in regard to the Peking Trade Agreement? If so, it is a violation of the Simla Convention of 1914 whereby both of those Trade Regulations are declared revoked in Clause 7.
- 3) The Peking Trade Pact refers to Tibet as ‘an integral part of China’, and there are many mentions of the ‘Tibet region of China’, these being terms unprecedented in the history of Tibet and also another violation of the terms of the Simla Convention.

Clauses 3 and 9 of which first of all recognized the mutual independence of Tibet inasmuch as the Tibetan Government kept her existing rights, which until the time of the recent invasion of Tibet included the management of her external affairs; secondly, guaranteed the non-violation of Tibetan territory, Great Britain and China agreeing to abstain from sending their troops, stationing civil and military officers, or establishing colonies in Central Tibet.

- 4) The Simla Convention was signed by the fully empowered representatives of the three Governments of Tibet, India and China, whereas the Peking Pact was concluded between India and China,

²⁰ *Melong* XXII, 2, June 1954, 10-15 with further appeals.

²¹ Rough translation from the Tibetan Newspaper vol. XXII, No. 2, dated 1st June 1954: To most learned Tharchin la, Printer and Publisher of World News. Columbia University Tharchin Collection.

the wishes of the Government and people of Tibet being completely ignored. This makes it clear that China wishes not only to absorb Tibet but to destroy our culture, religion and eventually our race by intermarriage, as is shown by their moves to try to get in, in addition to the two hundred and twenty thousand in the Liberation Army already in Tibet, a further two million Chinese for the so-called economic development of our country. It is only too obvious how our two neighbours are willing to come to private arrangements in favour of aggression so as to serve their own inter-Asian imperialist policies.

- 5) Please read carefully the second Independent Treaty signed at Simla between Tibet and the British Government in India, on the same day, and immediately after, the Tripartite Simla Convention, as it recognized not the autonomy but the complete independence of Tibet.²²

Patterson notes that the protest, circulating in Tibetan inside a closed Tibet, evoked no sympathy or response either in India or the outside world.

Tharchin seems to have believed that more could be achieved with emotion than with facts. Even before the majority of Tibetans became aware of the imminent disaster, Tharchin anticipated the growing danger and published an urgent warning as early as the November 1950 edition, when the Chinese had already conquered Chamdo:

There is not enough ink and paper to translate and publish all of the news. One person with but short arms and long sleeves and with no help cannot accomplish all the work. In other countries, the newspapers are highly valued and supported, and they distribute hundreds of thousands of papers. But, for this Tibetan newspaper, some even see it as a negative thing. Today, the Chinese are using the power of newspapers to lure the Tibetan people.

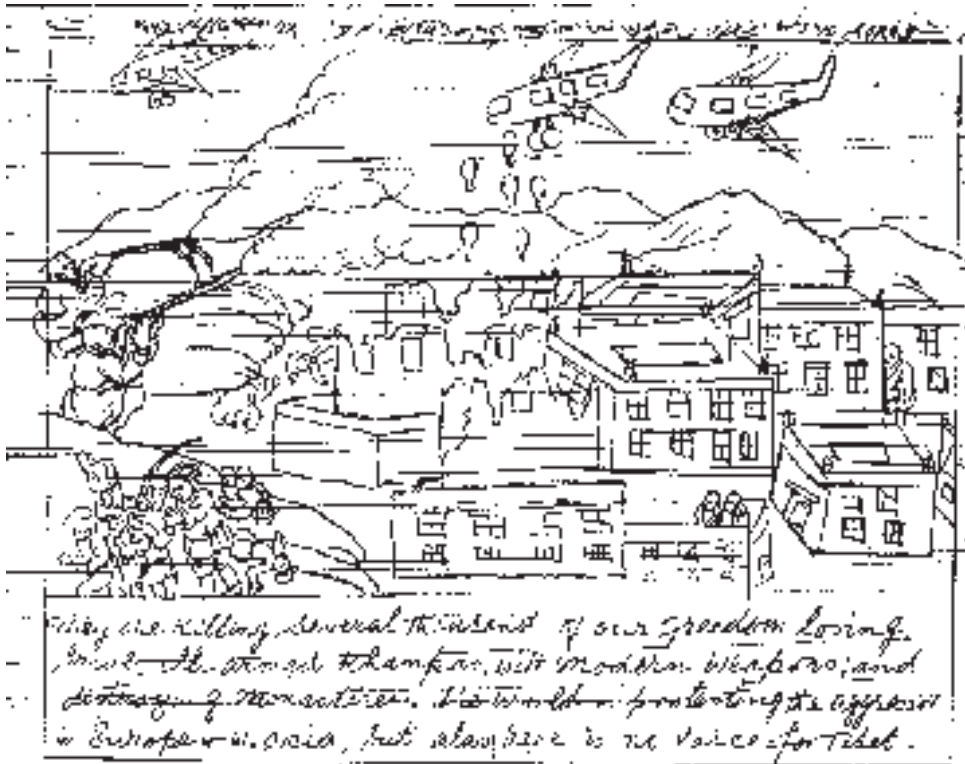
This is the desperate voice of the person who has published this newspaper for 19 years (over a twenty-five year period). I apologize if it bothers anyone..."

At the end he appeals "to contact other nations through wire and wireless means to let them know that our country has a long history of being an independent nation."²³

22 George N. Patterson: *Tibet in Revolt*. London: Faber and Faber 1960, 104-105.

23 *Melong* XVIII, 10, November 1950, 4. Translation from Carole McGrahanan: *Arrested Histories: Between Empire and Exile in 20th Century Tibet*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Ph.D. thesis 2001, 246.

The *Tibet Mirror* supplied the first and most detailed Tibetan news of events in Kham and the destruction of the monasteries there.²⁴ The first drawings of the destruction of monasteries appeared in November 1956.



Destruction of Kham monasteries.²⁵

Tharchin was profoundly interested in language, as his various published books demonstrate. He was also involved in linguistic innovation, as many new terms appeared in the *Tibet Mirror* evidently appeared there for the first time.²⁶ He was particularly fond of using poetry as a stylistic device. Almost every issue from this period contains at least a short poem on *rang dbang* (freedom) and/or *rang btsan* (independence),²⁷ such as the following:

24 Carole McGrahanan: *Arrested Histories*, 243.

25 *Melong* XXIII, 11, November 1956, 4.

26 Jamyang Norbu: "Newspeak and New Tibet: The Myth of China's Modernization of Tibet and the Tibetan Language." www.phayul.com/news/article.aspx?id=10009&t=1 Part II-V on 17 and 28 June, 9 July 2005. Id.: "'NEUSPRECH' und das Neue Tibet: Der Mythos von der Modernisierung Tibets und der tibetischen Sprache durch China." In: *Tibet-Forum*, 2005, 66-96.

27 See for example *Melong* XX, 2-3, May-June 1952, 10; XXII,3, July 1954, 1; XXIII,5, February

“There is no pleasure like independence.
 There is no pain like being controlled by another.
 The happiness of others seeks the happiness of both oneself and others;
 The happiness of oneself brings about the suffering of oneself and others.”²⁸

Or

“Some celebrate their independence.
 Some suffer under oppression.
 There is no happiness like independence and freedom.
 There is no suffering like servitude and oppression.
 The happiness of independence and the suffering of being controlled by another
 Make samsara turn like a wheel.”²⁹

A number of acrostics, some in reverse alphabetical order, by Tharchin and other authors (*mkyen ldan zhig*), were also published.³⁰ Tharchin was fond of proverbs (*gtam dpe*) like this one: “Remember! That the power of dominions will turn around like a wheel.”³¹ In the period 1951-1953, he published a number of satirical Lhasa street songs condemning Chinese oppression,³² though very few attacking Mao directly, such as this from January 1952:

“In the religious city of Lhasa this year
 Chinese soldiers have arrived like hail,
 Whether as liberators it is in doubt,
 Or to tie the throats of the poor.

They speak sweetly
 But what are the sticks in their hands
 If not to exterminate
 Lord Buddha's doctrine and Tibetan people?

1956, 1; XXVII, 11, September 1961, 9; XXVII, 12, December 1962, 12; XXVIII, 3, February-March 1963, 1; XXVIII, 7, October 1963, 1-2.

28 *Melong* XXIII, 3 October 1955, 8, kindly translated in the appropriate style by Donald Lopez.

29 *Melong* XXIV, 5 September 1957, 2, also kindly translated in the appropriate style by Donald Lopez.

30 See for example *Melong* XXIII, 1, December 1954, 8; XXIV, 12, April 1958, 2; XXV, 1, May 1958, 2.

31 *Melong* XVII, 3, December 1948, 19: *rgyal khab rnams kyi dbang shugs rnams / 'khor lo bzhin du 'khor bar 'gyur / zhes pa yid dran mdzod //*

32 See for example: *Melong* XIX, 5, August 1951, 5 (translation in Melvyn C. Goldstein: *A History of Modern Tibet*, vol. 2, Berkeley: University of California Press 2007, 170-171); XIX, 11, February 1952, 2 and 6; XX, 1, April 1952, 7; XX, 2-3, May-June 1952, 3 and 8; XX, 10, January-March 1953, 4.

Rise, young men, be bold of heart!
 And young maidens, unite together
 That happiness may come
 And misery depart!”³³

Or
 Liberation Song
 “Arise! Tibetan Brothers
 Living under occupation
 Work unceasingly
 To revolt in a united way
 To liberate the Tibetans from suffering
 One should sacrifice one’s life
 Arise! All the Tibetan brothers
 Living under forcible occupation
 To regain freedom and prosperity
 We must fight together
 Arise! Arise! Arise! Tibetan brothers
 Arise! Arise! Arise!”³⁴

Although Tharchin praised the policy of the Indian government of accepting Tibetan refugees, he repeatedly bemoaned Nehru’s failure to provide the Tibetans with military support and unrealistic dreams of friendship with Mao:

Panch Shila Agreement
 “In the foothills of the Himalayas,
 In order to bring peace to the world,
 In order to bring about peace between China and India,
 The supreme Nehru, Shiva of the Noble Land,
 Drunk on bliss of meditation,
 Practices the meditation of pañcaśīla,
 Consigning Tibet to hell.
 In order to go to heaven, practice meditation.”³⁵

33 *Melong* XIX, 10, January 1952, 7. Translation without a name in: Michael Choukas: *Propaganda Comes of Age*. Washington D.C. Public Affairs Press 1965, 244 and n. 21 with reference to *The New York Times* from 20 January 1952.

34 *Melong* XIX, 8 November 1951, 4, translated by Riika Virtanen, In: Luc Schaedler: *Angry Monk*, 520.

35 *Melong* XXVI, 3 July-August 1959, 14, also kindly translated in the appropriate style by Donald Lopez.



Tharchin's tone did not change until the Indian government had been taken by surprise by the Chinese attacks on Indian soil and Indian government policy changed accordingly.

Hoping to reach a wider audience, he tried to publish news in English at the end of 1958:

With the enclosed pamphlet as the first of its series I intend to publish a monthly Circular mainly to inform you of the situation now prevailing in the neighbouring country – Tibet. Since this vast Himalayan state had been subverted by the Communists from China, it has suffered uninterruptedly the iron sway of the invader's armed forces. There is nothing of an organ of information to the outside world except the propaganda material of the Communists themselves.

For the last eight years the patriotic elements in Tibet resisted quite strongly the expansionist policy of the Chinese over-lords. The partisans tried their utmost to persuade the Chinese not to interfere in the affairs of their country and the result was an armed conflict between the patriots and the Chinese invaders. This continued struggle of the Tibetans against the Chinese and the recent armed resistance by the patriotic National Defence Army came very scantily to the notice of the world outside. My purpose in acquainting of these developments in Tibet is to give an idea of the situation in the context of world events. Tibet is not

a small region to be ignored by the world at large, and the impact of events in that land will definitely influence the world situation as a whole. Tibet has a contiguous frontier with some of the world powers and its immediate borders touch conveniently the Communist world.

This newspaper has served the neighbouring state for the last 33 years and it has always stood for the cultural and political integrity of Tibet. It has always served our neighbour with all the important news from outside. But today, with Tibet itself under the yoke of a ruthless communist neighbour and having no outlet for the day to day happenings inside their own country. The Mirror, stands alone to give you a glimpse of the world behind the nearest iron curtain. This pamphlet is being published from the bordering town of Kalimpong in the Himalayas and as such it deserves more than any other to serve the cause of the freedom loving people of Tibet. This spontaneous movement of the vast masses of Tibet is a living proof of their determination to fight for their faith and freedom. For the last eight years they were only dependent on their own resources, human or otherwise, and no helping hand from any quarter had been extended for this splendid cause. International situation during the last few years proved rather unhelpful for their cause and even now with all the odds these simple, freedom loving and brave people of our great neighbour are fighting hard in spite of the fact that not a single country in the free world helping or even giving a moral support to their noble cause.

In the light of the above facts and in return to my this humble attempt to extend a helping hand to the great cause of the people of Tibet, I can only expect of your interest in the affairs of a country inhabited by a deeply religious and peace loving people. Their country is virtually under the process of Communist indoctrination. It invokes your sympathy and moral support for the victims of a naked aggression.³⁶

36 "The Mirror: Editor's Note," type-written ms., Columbia University Tharchin Collection.

CARTOONS

As he had during World War II, Tharchin made use of political cartoons.³⁷



“Revealing the secret meaning of the East
The policy of arrest and suppression by the Chinese.”³⁸

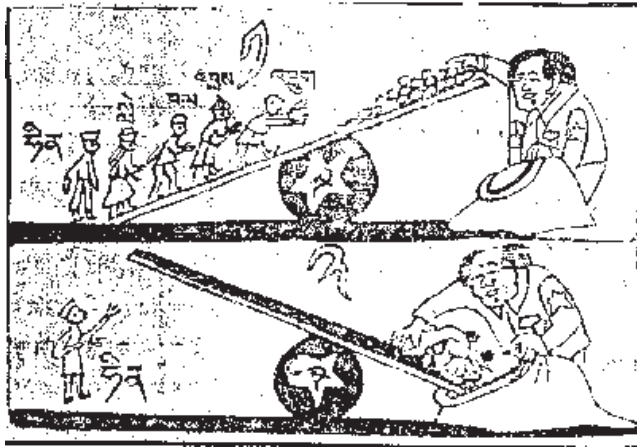


“Peaceful Alliance”³⁹

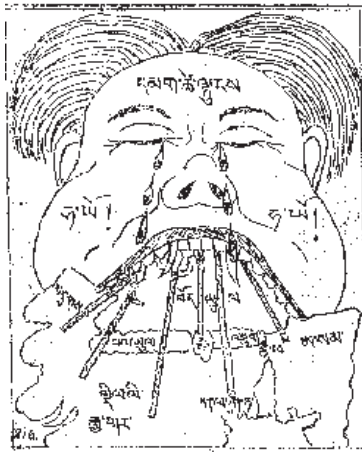
37 Despite extensive efforts I have only been able to identify one of the artists for the drawings and cartoons in the 1950s, although some are signed with initials. This was the Mongolian scholar Rigzin Wangpo, a nephew of Tharchin's wife and the first Tibetan teacher at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. (R.K. Sprigg: “Obituary: Gelong Rigzin Wangpo (rig-'dzin dbang-po), 1920-1985.” In: *The Tibet Journal* 12 (3) (1987), 77-82. See also Isrun Engelhardt: “Reflections in the *Tibet Mirror*: News of the World, 1937-1946.” In: Gray Tuttle (ed.): *Mapping the Modern in Tibet*. [PIATS 2006: Proceedings of the Eleventh Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies. Königswinter 2006] Andiastr/Switzerland: International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies (IITBS) 2011, 205-264.

38 *Melong* XXVI, 1, June 1959, 7.

39 *Melong* XXVI, 4-5, September-October 1959, 9.



“In the first picture, the minority peoples who live in the Himalaya range (Hind, Ladakh, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan), are being tricked by the red female demon from the East with money and sweet talk. When they have all been deceived, as the second picture shows, there is no doubt that their life breath will be collected in the demon’s sack; the present situation in Tibet shows how this happens.”⁴⁰

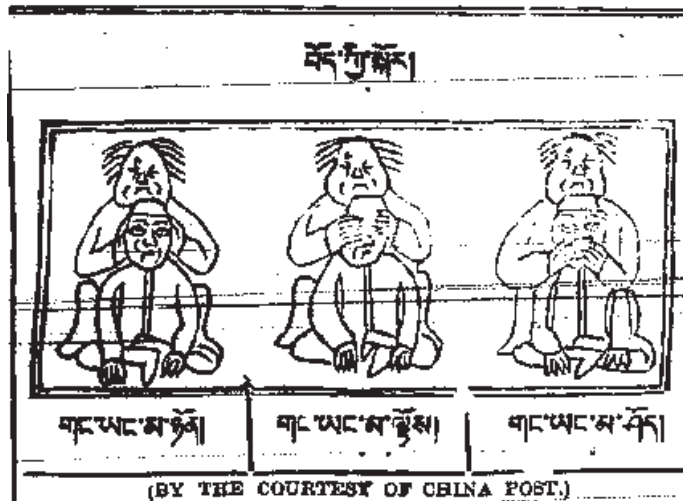


“The picture above shows the Chinese Communist bandit leader (Mao) *dmag tshe ltung*. In his mouth are those kingdoms of the Himalaya and India, which were forcefully eaten. But the solidarity of all Indian states stabbed his mouth with spears and so he cannot not close his mouth. Now it is time for us all to come under the leadership of Indian government and drive him away.”⁴¹

40 *Melong* XXVII, 8-9, May-June 1961, 2.

41 *Melong* XXVII, 12, December 1962, 8.

However, Tharchin's criticism was not restricted to the Red Chinese and Mao. He also criticized the narrow-minded policies of the Tibetan government:



“Hear nothing, see nothing, say nothing.”⁴²

PERSONAL COURAGE

Tharchin was fearless both in print and in person. In Kalimpong in July 1951 there was a reception for the Chinese general Chang Ching-wu:

A few days ago, further Chinese plenipotentiaries who will run the Chinese administration in Lhasa arrived in this town (i.e. Kalimpong) on their way to the capital. At a public reception the Chinese chief delegate made a speech from notes, which he had prepared in advance. When the audience was told that it might put questions, no one decided to avail himself of the privilege. Then an elderly Tibetan was asked to make a speech, a pleasant duty, which he found it expedient to accept. He said that Tibet had always stood on her own feet and that it would be a wise course to her to remain virtually independent, lest terrible misfortunes befall those who try to interfere with purely Tibetan affairs...⁴³

⁴² *Melong* XXVI, 1, June 1959, 6.

⁴³ T.I.: “Tibet Today.” In: *The World Today* 8 (1952), 202-209, here 209; see also *Melong* XIX, 4, July 1951, 5.

In Tharchin's own words: "We all believe that the world is round and it is really so. In Tibetan we have a proverb meaning everything is changing. There is happiness and then there is also sorrow. Everything is turning like a wheel. It seems this is true..."

His attitude did not change:

After two or three years attempts were made by the Chinese to win me over to their side by promising to purchase an unusually great number of Tibetan newspapers presuming that for the sake of financial gain I might relent my attacks against the Chinese Communists and in this way the general public would be won also toward the Chinese cause. But their calculations went completely awry. Their attempts to buy me off proved a colossal failure. It was a big fiasco. On the other hand, it boomeranged, as I went on publishing article after article about the Chinese Communists, which embarrassed them no end.⁴⁴

This is at odds with what Fraser Wilkins, the First Secretary of the US embassy in Delhi, reported in 1951: "[George] Patterson told me that he no longer had any money as Tibet had recently discontinued its subsidy and that Tharchin had told him that if the Chinese offered to subsidize him he would accept. Patterson added, however, that Tharchin was no Communist and that these views were undoubtedly dictated by financial necessity."⁴⁵

The author Lois Long-Sims asked him in 1959, "why it was that he alone of the Tibetans I had met in India appeared to be unafraid and unembarrassed. 'I am a Christian,' said Mr Tharchin, as if the explanation were obvious. I wondered, and have many times wondered since, how far he was justified in replying to my question with this simple statement."⁴⁶

STRENGTHENING TIBETANNESS AND TIBETAN UNITY

As Tsering Shakya has stated, "The construction of the *Tibet Mirror* attempted to appeal to the pan-Tibetan region"⁴⁷ and thus "focused on the unity of Tibet. Because of the vastness of Tibet, it was never really focused as one place. So what you see in the newspaper is, that Tharchin tries to place all the Tibetan speaking population, the whole Tibetan world, in one place, through his newspaper: you have news from

44 Tharchin Autobiography II, fol. 30.

45 U.S. National Archives, 611.93B./5-245, 1. Memorandum of conversation between Fraser Wilkins and George Patterson on relations between Tibet and the United States on May 12, 1951. Enclosure Nr. 3 to Secret Despatch 2891 May 24, 1951.

46 Lois Lang-Sims: *The Presence of Tibet*. London: The Cresset Press 1963, 70.

47 Tsering Shakya: *The Emergence of Modern Tibetan Literature*, 21.

Kham [East], news from Sikkim [South], news from Bhutan [Southeast], news from Ladakh [West],⁴⁸ news from Amdo [Northeast], news from U-Tsang [Center]. You have all the Tibetans speaking people being presented as one in that newspaper.”⁴⁹ Therefore, Tharchin was committed to the view of Tibet as a united country. To emphasize Tibetanness he appealed to the Tibetans and including himself as “We, the tsampa eaters ...”⁵⁰

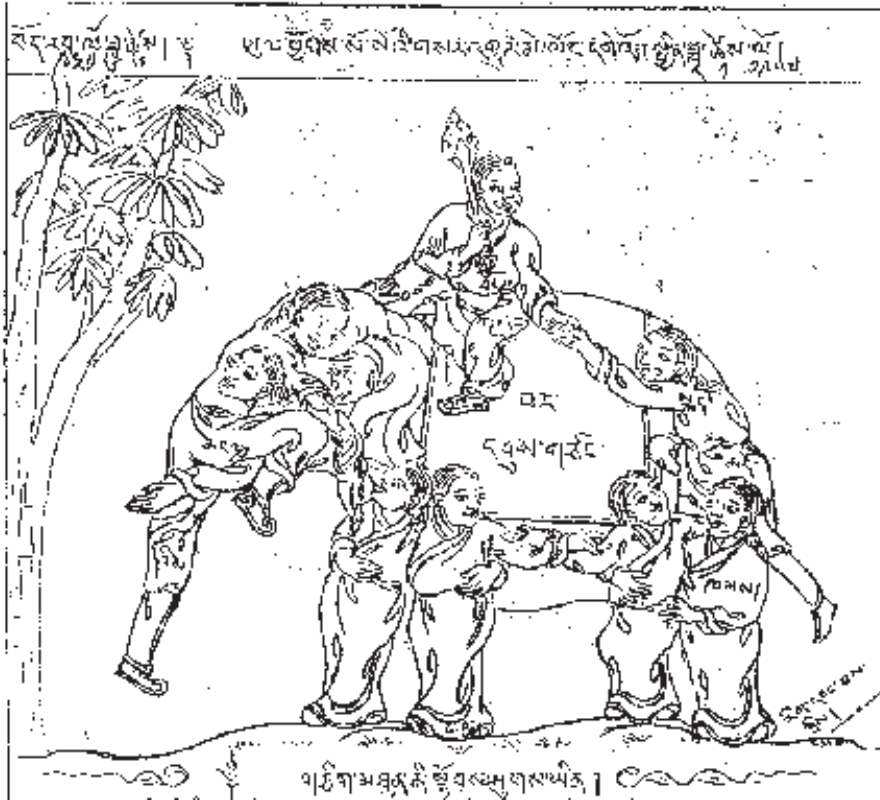
In repeated appeals, he urged the Tibetans to cease their internal wrangling. For example in a long urgent and passionate appeal to the Tibetans in exile in 1961, he wrote: “For the sake of Tibetan religion and politics as well as reviving its independence and inexhaustible happiness, everyone should give up personal benefit and personal grudge and strive to establish a harmonious society.”⁵¹

48 See for example the Ladakhi Buddhist scholar Yeshe Dondup, who composed in ten issues an abridged Ladakh *rgyal rabs* in *Melong* XV, 8, June 1947- XVI, 2, December 1947; XXI, 1, April-June 1953 XXI, 3.

49 Tsering Shakya interview in: Luc Schaedler: *Angry Monk: Reflections on Tibet*, 297-298.

50 See for example *Melong* XX, 7, October 1952, p. 8; XXIII, 10 October 1956, 4; XXIV, 3, July 1957, 5. See for translations in Carole McGrahanan: *Arrested Histories*, 2001, 247-248. Id.: *Arrested Histories: Tibet, the CIA, and Memories of a Forgotten War*. Durham: Duke University Press 2010, 70. See also Tsering Shakya: “Whither the Tsampa Eaters?” In: *Himal* September/October 1993, 8-11; Jamyang Norbu: “In Defence of Tibetan Cooking.” Part I. In: www.jamyangnorbu.com/blog/2011/02/07/in-defence-of-tibetan-cooking-part-i. Perhaps he might have been influenced by songs of Baba Phuntsog Wangyal. At least the song in the *Melong* of October 1956, seems similar to one of his songs. See *Melong* XXIII, 10 October 1956, 4 (*mkyen ldan zhig nas*). Phuntsog Wangyal together with his friend Ngawang Kesang had visited Tharchin in the end of 1944, where they have sung songs together with Tharchin, Phuntsog Wangyal playing the organ. Some time before in Lhasa, he had already sung Surkhang a song with the following refrain: “Rise up, rise up, rise up Tsampa eaters rise up...” See Melvyn C. Goldstein, Dawei Sherab, William R. Siebenschuh: *A Tibetan Revolutionary: The Political Life and Times of Baba Phüntso Wangye*. Berkeley: University of California Press 2004, 75 “*longs shog longs shog longs shog / rtsam pa bza'mkhan rnams longs shog...*” And according to Phuntsog Wangyal, Tharchin must have also published some songs of him in those *Melong* issues in 1945, before Gendün Chöphel had left Kalimpong for Lhasa in the end of 1945. See Goldstein, *A Tibetan Revolutionary*, 253 where Phuntsog Wangyal reports that GC had told him that Tharchin had published some songs in his newspaper. It is unfortunately not possible yet to check the songs as these *Melong* issues are still missing.

51 *Melong* XXVII, 6, February-March 1961, supplement. 1-2.



UNITY IS STRENGTH

In this picture by Rigzin Wangpo seven [in fact, eight] people form an elephant through their combined efforts and joined hands. Thus if we Tibetans demonstrate solidarity, we can develop the strength of an elephant and establish a strong and independent government. We can also able defeat the forces of the opposing nation that represses Tibet.

United we stand, divided we fall. I therefore appeal to everyone to rely upon the strength of solidarity.

“Particles of dust became Mount Meru;
Drops of water became the sea.
Over time, may the united Tibetan people
Create a steadfast independent state.”⁵²

⁵² *Melong XXIV*, 4 August 1957, 3. *sa rdul lam ni ri rabs dang / chu rdul lam ni rgya mtsho bzhin / bod rigs gcig mthun 'dus gyur nas / rang dbang rgyal khab brtan par shog* // Kindly translated in the appropriate style by Donald Lopez.

Contacts with Americans in the early 1950s

There are many documents in the U.S. National Archives on the "Relations between the United States and Tibet," from the 1950-52, when U.S. officials were in Kalimpong trying to gather intelligence about the situation in Tibet and seeking ways to help the Tibetans.

Fraser Wilkins, First Secretary of the US embassy in Delhi, New Delhi, reports a conversation with Tharchin and George Patterson:

As I had not seen Tharchin on my previous visit to Kalimpong I called on him this morning in company with George Patterson who lives in Kalimpong and has known Tharchin for some time.

By chance, Tharchin was supervising the operation of a small hand press in a small stone workshop, which is situated on the roads which passes Pandatshang's villa and the Dorje property. Tharchin and two Tibetan workmen were just commencing the printing of the forthcoming edition of his paper. The front page was devoted to the presentation of some relics to the Dalai Lama.

When questioned regarding the Sino-Tibetan agreement, Tharchin said that he was publishing the text of the 17 points as broadcast by Peiping radio and received by press service from Hong Kong and London. Tharchin planned to include no editorial comment on the agreement in the current issue. Tharchin remarked however, that the agreement reminded him of an old Tibetan proverb to the effect that it was all wool with a hard stone in the center....

Tharchin discoursed at length on his penurious condition. It seems that in the old days he had been subsidised at varying intervals by the Tibetans, the British and the Indians. In the beginning he used to receive fairly frequent stipends from the previous Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government. During the war the British financed the operation of his press and procured his present hand press for him at a cost of 14 500 Indian rupees on which Tharchin hopes to conclude repayment in 1954. Thereafter the Indian Government, which assumed all the rights and privileges of the British in India, assisted Tharchin but in recent years has discontinued its help. More recently, the present Dalai Lama manifested an interest in the continuance of Tharchin's activities and sent him the sum of 300 Indian rupees. Tharchin was not optimistic but believed he might be able to continue this hand-to-mouth existence.

Tharchin's paper is about 11 1/2" by 17" and is usually printed in an edition of 500 copies. It comes out once a month, finance permitting, although an edition of 1000 copies could be produced. It starts off on white glazed paper but sometimes ends up on orange paper. Tharchin said he never had enough paper and it is increasingly difficult and

expensive to find. The paper is sold for 12 annas (about 15 US cents) although free copies are sent to Tibetan authorities in Lhasa. It carries many cuts, which come out clearly and are a constant delight to well-known Tibetans. Tharchin said that in the good old days the British political officers used to require that a notice regarding the issuance of all wool export licenses, with names and dates, be published in that all wool dealers buy so many copies. This practice prevented the re-selling of licenses and maintained Tharchin's circulation. The present Indian political officer discontinued this practice.

Tharchin has one complete set of Tibetan type, enough for a page and a half of his paper. He has matrices for two other sizes but has never been able to have more type cast. He picked up some of this material in the bazaars of Calcutta by chance. Several years ago, a friend of his told him that a large font of Tibetan type, formerly at Darjeeling and subsequently moved to Calcutta, was about to be melted by the Indian Government. Tharchin wrote asking if he could purchase. The reply was that the type would not be melted but could not be sold for the time being. There the matter continues to rest although Tharchin renews his request from time to time...⁵³

Loyd V. Steere from the American Embassy in New Delhi later reported:

... It is understood that Tharchin's paper is the only Tibetan newspaper circulated in Tibet although there have been recent reports that the Communist Chinese are publishing material in Chamdo. In any event it seems likely that Tharchin's newspaper is the only one, which represents a western point of view with respect to current international developments.

It is accordingly the Embassy's opinion, as stated in Despatch 2891 of May 24, that we should give consideration to ways and means of providing the Tibetan authorities with information through USIE [U.S. Information and Education Service], and of assisting Tharchin in the publication of his newspaper. The Embassy is currently studying this matter. Meanwhile, it is hoped that the Department may wish to offer suggestions.⁵⁴

53 U.S. National Archives: Memorandum of conversation, between Fraser Wilkins, Tharchin and George Patterson on recent developments in Tibet and allied subjects on June 7, 1951. Enclosure Nr. 1 to Despatch 3030, June 1951, New Delhi: TOP SECRET [still classified in 1984 and withdrawn from the file on the microfilm]. I am very grateful to Jackie Hiltz providing me with this document.

54 U.S. National Archives: 611.93B./6-1451, Despatch 3030. Loyd V. Steere, American Embassy, New Delhi to the Department of State, Washington, June 14, 1951 on relations between the United States and Tibet.

It is unknown whether Tharchin ever received support from the United States. In 1952 a young Foreign Office staff member Judith Laikin Elkin had been sent to Southern Asia to collect as much foreign-language material of any political relevance as possible. In Kalimpong, she met Tharchin, who “saw things differently, and told me of Chinese massacres of civilian populations, the starving out of monasteries ‘by siege, and the building of military highways and airports,’ which he thought should be of especial interest to the Americans. I thought so too. Our sources on Tibet were preternaturally thin.”

Thus she placed three subscriptions to the *Tibet Mirror*. However, back in the US in 1954, she wrote: “That was an error on my part, because nobody in Washington was interested in him. When I mentioned the Tibetan newspaper and its editor, I was met by a deep freeze. In fact, each time I tried to discuss any possible source of intelligence on the communist side of the bamboo curtain, my interlocutors changed the subject.” And it was even objectionable to deal with the impending danger of Communism. “In Washington in 1954 the anti-communist crusade of Senator Joe McCarthy was in full cry...”⁵⁵

DIFFICULTIES WITH THE CHINESE AND INDIAN GOVERNMENTS

It is not surprising that, despite the *Tibet Mirror*'s low circulation and irregular publication, it was evidently carefully monitored by both the Chinese and Indian governments, as is clearly shown by the protest note issued by the Foreign Office of China to the Counsellor of India on 10 July 1958:

“There is openly published in Kalimpong the *Tibetan Mirror* a reactionary newspaper hostile to the Chinese Government and people. The Tibetan reactionaries and the organisations under their control also printed various reactionary leaflets and other propaganda materials and smuggled them into Tibet...”⁵⁶

The Indian Ministry of External Affairs responded to the Chinese Embassy in India on 2 August 1958.

The Government of the People's Republic of China refer to a newspaper named the *Tibetan Mirror*. There is no daily and weekly newspaper of that name published in Kalimpong. A monthly periodical called the *Tibetan Mirror* is published there. The editor of this newspaper is not a Chinese but an Indian national. The Government of India have noted with displeasure that some of the articles published in this periodical are objectionable and calculated to affect the friendly relations between India and China...

55 Judith Laikin Elkin: *Krishna Smiled: Assignment in Southeast Asia*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press 1972, 194.

56 Daljit Sen Adel: *China and Her Neighbours: A Review of Chinese Foreign Policy*. Delhi: Deep & Deep 1984, Appendix II, 288.

However the Government of India are most anxious that an unimportant magazine like the

Tibetan Mirror should not adversely affect the relations between our two friendly countries and are directing their local officers to administer a severe warning to this periodical. If it continues to create mischief, the Government of India will take whatever other action is feasible.⁵⁷

LACK OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Despite its wide recognition, Tharchin struggled to finance the newspaper. As “The ‘Mirror of World Events,’ the only widely read Tibetan periodical, described as an ‘iron wall against the infiltration of subversive teachings’, was left practically on the verge of bankruptcy, while Communists lost no time in establishing their own newspapers.”⁵⁸

Appeals to the Indian government circle, like this early letter of Tharchin to Nehru (?) on 14 May 1948, were unsuccessful:

... With a great hope of improving a little the relation between India and Tibet, I my humble self, have been publishing a Tibetan newspaper since 1925 when the country of Tibet had no idea about the value of newspaper like the foreign countries. The circulation of the paper is still not so satisfactory. However, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, His Serenity the Regent Lama, high officials, Lamas, monks & leading traders are taking interest in the paper. I will ever remain grateful if through the good office of Your Excellency the Indian Government be gracious enough to extend succour to run the paper as here-to-fore...⁵⁹

This picture and article ten years later suggests that Melong in fact “was eagerly awaited and read by all Tibetans.”

⁵⁷ Ibid., 291-292.

⁵⁸ T.I.: “Tibet Today,” 205.

⁵⁹ *Melong* XVI, 11, August 1948, 4-5, letter dated from 14 May 1948.



“Look at the above photo depicting the interest of all the people, old and young in the Tibetan news. For many years ago, almost thirty-three years, the news of Tibet has been published and distributed. During that time, because the Tibetan people did not understand the importance of news, it was distributed freely.

However, due to the gap between income and expenditure, which caused an interruption of the monthly printed issues, there are only twenty-five years of continuing volumes up to the present. Gradually people became more aware of the news, and although even Tibetans blocked their ears, eyes, and mouth, many Tibetan showed great interest and concern about the news. Therefore, I thank them. According to the Thirteenth Dalai Lama’s wishes, I Tharchin have been doing this printing work till now. I request everyone, who cares about this newspaper to send an annual subscription of ten rupees after having received this issue of the newspaper.”⁶⁰

Tharchin clearly had difficulties in maintaining publication of his paper because

60 *Melong* XXV, 2, June 1958, 1.

many readers failed to pay for their subscriptions. In a letter to Hugh Richardson, Tharchin wrote:

I am trying to continue my Tibetan news paper inspite of the Chinese Communists objections to read it, but still the paper goes and now the Tibetan public knows the value of the paper and I am getting many letters to be published in my paper, but they never send the subscription and they are still thinking to get it freely as they use to get during war time. I am under great difficulties getting on, but do not know how long I can do so.⁶¹

EXILE TIBETANS' NEWSPAPERS

To further exacerbate the situation for Tharchin, Gyalo Dondup, the brother of the Dalai Lama, evidently launched a new paper in Darjeeling as early as 1960 and called it "Tibetan Freedom" (*bod mi'i rang dbang*). This caused Tharchin further problems:

"Since last December I could not bring out my newspaper due to bad health as well as lack of funds. Besides now there are several papers [which] are published in Tibetan. But I got many enquiries and asked to continue it, as they like my paper better than others. I am trying to bring it out again."⁶²

Although it had been Gyalo Thondup who had persuaded him even attempting to publish the *Melong* weekly, called the *gza' khor ri'i yul phyogs so so'i gsar 'gyur me long*, with the additional English title *The Weekly Tibet Mirror*. "So I am trying and to write and duplicate from 1/9/54 and try for some time how it works."⁶³ However, this only worked until January 1955 and it may have been too ambitious; the next issue after that did not appear until October 1955.⁶⁴

Tharchin's difficulties were also confirmed in a letter by Marco Pallis to Richardson from 10 March 1964: "The emergence of other Tibetan printers, local papers has gradually deprived him of a good part of his former work, nor does he get orders from Government as he used to do."⁶⁵

When the new newspaper *Rangwang* (*bod mi'i rang dbang*) appeared in March

61 Tharchin to Hugh Richardson, Bodleian Library, MS. Or. Richardson 41, 12 July 1954, fol. 202v.

62 Tharchin to Richardson, 3 August 1964, fol. 226v.

63 Tharchin to Richardson on August 23, 1954, Bodleian Library, MS. Or. Richardson 41, fol. 203v.

64 See also Isrun Engelhardt: "Reflections in the *Tibet Mirror*," 210. This gap might have also occurred due to the illness and death of Tharchin's beloved first wife.

65 Marco Pallis to Hugh Richardson, Bodleian Library, MS. Or. Richardson 41, 10 March 1964, fol. 223,1.

1960 in Darjeeling, Tharchin immediately published an article about it and congratulated the editor Lhawang on the launch of the new newspaper. But then he became more critical: "It would have been a great benefit if such a newspaper would have been published during the time Tibet was still independent. It is very sad that is bit a late now. It is like building a barrier after the flood has occurred." He goes on to complain:

From the beginning I was less fortunate to have such resources although I have been attached to Tibet, and the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Dalai Lama issued their decrees one after another, as well as the Kashag. In keeping with those decrees, I have been publishing the newspaper for almost thirty-five years. Now because of the condition of my age and gap of income and expenditure, it is difficult to publish an issue each month continuously. Your publishing of a new newspaper called "*Tibetan Freedom*" at this time is like a rising moon when sun is setting.⁶⁶

Although he wished the best for the new newspaper, he sarcastically remarked – according to Dawa Norbu – in one of the last *Melong* issues:

“When there was rangwang
There was no “Rangwang”
When there is no rangwang
There is “Rangwang”!”⁶⁷

In August 1963 Tharchin congratulated Amdo Jigme, whom he assumed was the editor, of another new newspaper *Rangwang Sungkyab* (*rang dbang srung skyob*) in Darjeeling, which was supposed to be the organ of the “Chushi Gangdruk.” However, like the *Rangwang* newspaper it was funded by Gyalo Thondup.⁶⁸

Herbert Louis Fader quotes Tharchin’s last annual report from Kalimpong to India’s Registrar of Newspapers in July of 1966:

... I wish to state ... here [that] the reasons for cessation of my publication [are] chiefly due

- 1) to ill health
- 2) to lack of finance, and
- 3) to competition from other papers. Formerly, my paper was the only

⁶⁶ *Melong* XXVI, 10, March 1960, 3; see also *Melong* XXVII, 10, Aug. 1961, 2-3.

⁶⁷ Dawa Norbu: G. “Tharchin: Pioneer and Patriot.” An Interview with Tharchin Babu. In: *Tibetan Review* 10 (December) 1975, 18-20.

⁶⁸ *Melong* XXVIII, 6, August 1963, 5-6.

Tibetan newspaper, but now the Government of India publishes a daily bulletin from Gangtok, Sikkim, which is freely distributed. There is as well a daily newspaper entitled Freedom, published in Darjeeling ... [and which] gets funds from various sources [supporting] the refugees. There is another paper entitled Central Weekly News published in Calcutta by the KMT; and so, all these publishers have funds and means, whereas no funds [for me] is the second reason.⁶⁹

Despite health problems and financial difficulties, the ageing and ailing Tharchin strove to increase his endeavours to produce one of the last *Melong* issues, in June 1963, announcing in that issue:

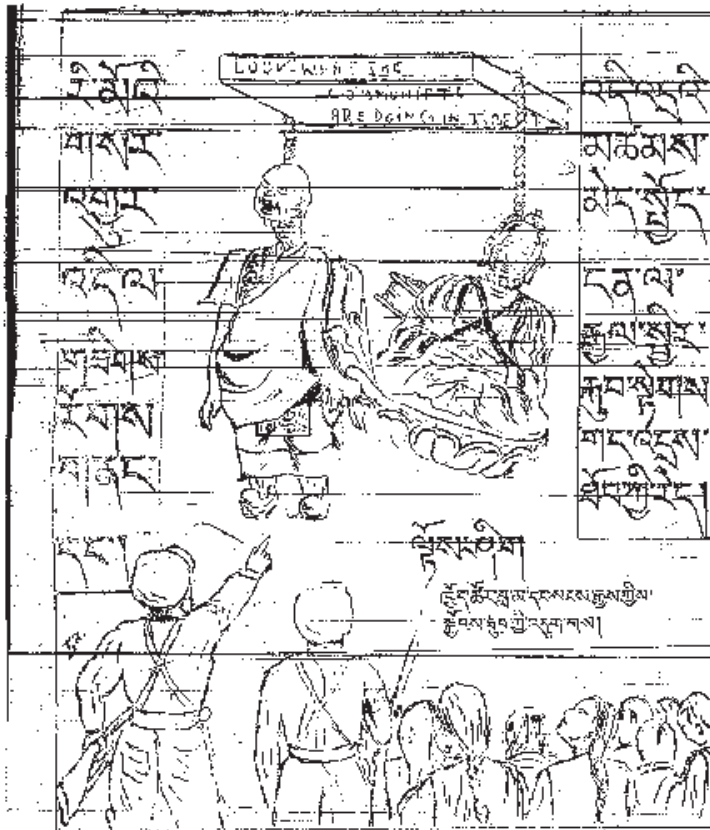
“The Editor has started to bring out from this month a News Letter from abroad in English, as a supplement to the “YUL-CHOG-SOSOI-SARGYUR-MELONG” (*Tibet Mirror*).

It is hoped that the English-knowing subscribers may appreciate it.”⁷⁰

However, the *Tibet Mirror* ceased publication after the final issue in November 1963, featuring an extensive eighteen pages and with this desperate and haunting cartoon.

69 H. Louis Fader: *Called from Obscurity*, vol. 3, 223: Tharchin to Office of the Registrar of Newspapers for India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Press Villa, Simla, Kalimpong, 4 July 1966, ThPaK.

70 *Melong*, XXVIII, 5, June 1963, Supplement, 1.



- “1. Please look at this cartoon.
 2. How can those who commit such heinous sins, get a seat at the UN?
 3. Look! Can the lama and Buddha save you?
 4. This is what the Red Chinese bandits call ‘religious freedom.’ However in reality they are eradicating religion. In the monasteries of Kham chains are wrapped around the necks of the great statues and the necks of the lamas and they are hanged to death ...”⁷¹

In conclusion, Dawa Norbu wrote this about Tharchin:

“It is no exaggeration to say that if the ruling classes in Lhasa and New Delhi had heeded what Tharchin Babu was saying, Tibet’s modern fate might have been different.”⁷²

⁷¹ *Melong* XXVIII, 8, November 1963, 14.

⁷² Dawa Norbu in his introduction to H. Louis Fader: *Called from Obscurity*, vol. 1, XI.

ADDENDUM:

Only after the article was printed did I discover Anna Sawerthal's MA thesis¹ at the website of the Tharchin Collection at Columbia University. The thesis gives a brief quotation from a newspaper article which may have been the original of Tharchin's One Man War with Mao. However, Tharchin's memory was only correct with respect to the year of publication, 1950. The article did not appear in an issue of *Globe Magazine* in the USA, but in *The Singapore Free Press*. The title also differs from that recalled by Tharchin.

The article, which I append in full given its interesting details, was written by Russel Spurr, the well-known China and Far Eastern correspondent and deputy editor of the Hong Kong-based *Far Eastern Economic Review*.

It is remarkable that the article was published at such an early date and that at that time the Chinese were already wary of the Melong because of its critical stance on China. Permanently short of money, Tharchin would probably have been only too happy to share in the proceeds from the costly black market for his newspaper.

“A Lone Battle with Mao”

By Russel Spurr

The Singapore Free Press, 7 September 1950, p. 2

“A small Tibetan with a sharp tongue, a ready smile and a love of freedom is fighting a one-man war with Communism.

He is G. Tharchin, former school teacher in Tibet and now the editor of the only newspaper circulated on the wind-swept Himalayan plateau.

Every month copies of his *Yulchog Sosol*[sic] *Sangyur*[sic] *Melong* (Tibetan Mirror) are bundled on to pack mules and yaks at Kalimpong, India's frontier post in the Himalayan foothills, on the start of their long journey towards the lines of the icy peaks which are all the outside world ever sees of Tibet.

The caravans file through Sikkim, the tiny buffer State on the Tibetan border, past the armed frontier guards and their ancient fort towards the town of Gyantse, where the papers are unpacked for wider distribution.

Caravan leaders and travelling pedlars take some of the bundles, but official couriers in fur-lined caps and coats dash off with many copies along the mountain tracks to Lhasa, the big feudal estates and most of the larger monasteries. Even then circulation is painfully, slow and papers may be six months old before they reach the more remote corners of the plateau.

1 Anna Sawerthal: *The Melong: An Example of the Formation of a Tibetan Language Press*, p. 75 http://library.columbia.edu/indiv/eastasian/special_collections/tibetan-rare-books---special-collections/tharchin.html

A few seep over the border into Communist China, where they are eagerly bought – at high black market rates – by news-starved Tibetans.

The abbot of the one big monastery in Chinese territory recently wrote to Mr. Tharchin, thanking him for ‘word of the free world’ and saying he regularly posted a copy on the monastery gates. The letter took eight months to arrive, dirty and crumpled in the pocket of a roving entertainer. By that time the abbot had been ‘liquidated.’

‘You have no idea of the sad stories that come through to me,’ said Mr. Tharchin. ‘The Chinese are terrorising the Tibetan people along the border. But they promise to respect our ancient tradition and government when they take over the country and simple peasants who don’t know about these things are liable to believe them. That’s why I’m telling them the truth about the Communists.’

The Chinese Reds already know and fear the diminutive Tibetan Mirror. Anyone in the border areas found with a copy is liable to be shot. But Tharchin’s friendly articles are still passed from hand to hand.

‘Listen friends,’ says one of them, ‘I’ll tell you what happened in a place called Budapest. It is two hundred days march beyond the Home of the Celestial Angels (Lhasa). The Chief Lama there was resisting the Communists. His name was Mindszenty...’

Similar stories in the simplest terms expose Red actions in all parts of the world and draw the closest parallels with the Chinese threat to Tibet.

Mr. Tharchin knows the situation is grave and works night and day to bolster Tibetan morale.

‘Be of good faith,’ he says, ‘no foreigner can liberate you, unless you wish it. Prepare to smash the face of the intruder and chase him back through the mountain snows.’

The Tibetan Mirror is not the only literature Mr. Tharchin sends over the mountain passes. He prints books.

He founded the paper in 1925, using an aged duplicator. It was so popular that he acquired a creaking litho press, which was supplanted after the war by a small automatic press similar to those used by the British printers for stationary and letter-heads.

‘It’s enabled me to do quite a lot of commercial work’, he says, ‘and that kept the wolf from the door. But even if it hadn’t I would still warn my people of the dangers at their gates.’”