

THE THIRTEENTH DALAI LAMA

—LOBSANG RAPGAY

Jetsun Ngawang Lobsang Thubten Gyatso was born at Dhakpa Langdun on the fifth day of the fifth month of the Fire-Mouse year (May 27, 1876). His father Kunga Rinchen was from Gonk-kar Lugtod and his mother Lobsang Dolma was a descendant of Bagsam Ku-ke, an incarnate of Gampo. When the 12th Dalai Lama passed away in 1875, the Tibetan National Assembly deputed a search party consisting of Gyumed Khensur Lobsang Thargye Chogda and others who visited the sacred lake of Lamoi Latso at Chokhorgyal about ninety miles south-east of Lhasa and saw visions of the future Dalai Lama's birthplace. When the Nechung State Oracle was consulted, he confirmed the discovery of the boy of Dhakpa Langdun to be the next Dalai Lama.

On the fifteenth of the ninth month of the Fire-Ox year (1877) the Tibetan Government officially confirmed the discovery of the 13th Dalai Lama. The child was brought to Gungthung, four miles east of Lhasa and there at the monastery he was initiated into celibacy by the Panchen Lama who gave him the name Thubten Gyatso. At Lhasa, the capital city of Tibet, the whole population, men and women, thronged together to welcome the Dalai Lama. The procession led to the Potala where the ceremony of Sitringasol (Consecration on the Golden Throne) was performed. The next days were heavily scheduled for the young Dalai Lama as he had to make the customary visits to the major monastic universities and Nechung in Lhasa. The Dalai Lama formally began his studies in religion and philosophy under five special assistant tutors. When he was 14, he attended the annual Monlam (The Great Prayer) Festival which begins on the fifth of the first month of the new year.

In 1886 the Regent Choskyi Gyaltzen Kundeling, after 12 years of national service, passed away. Since the Dalai Lama was still a minor, the Tibetan National Assembly met to elect a new Regent. Demo Trinley Rapgay was appointed to the high post. Even during his early years the Dalai Lama indirectly experienced some of the problems of state which he was to directly confront later. Though he was engrossed in his religious and spiritual studies, he attended important state and religious ceremonies and meetings.

In 1894 an unprecedented change was effected in the formation of the cabinet; a monk official was introduced for the first time. In the past the monastic interest was always fairly represented, as the members of the cabinet were all lay people. Besides this, the introduction of additional secretaries at the lower level of the administration made room for smooth and efficient functioning of the government.

On the eighth day of the eighth month of the Wood-Sheep Year (1895) His Holiness assumed secular and temporal power over Tibet. When His Holiness was 20, he was fully ordained by His Tutors, Purchog Lobsang

27th May 1976 marked the centenary of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama's birth. Since the *Bulletin* was then defunct, notice of the event is made now.

Tsultrim and Lingtul Lobsang Lungtog. Two years later he completed the highest examination in Dharma-Darsana by successfully appearing before senior examiners of the three major monastic universities.

Assumption of temporal power was not easy. The new Dalai Lama found opposition from the ex-Regent Demo Trinley Rabgay. The Government unearthed a plot to kill the Dalai Lama. Norbu Tsering and Lobsang Dondon, brothers of the ex-Regent were the backbone of the plot and were responsible for the participation of the ex-Regent and Pal Ri Tulku and Nag Tulku in the plot. They were found guilty of conspiracy against His Holiness and thereby sentenced to life imprisonment.

A few years later His Holiness made the customary visit to Chokyangyal, and a pilgrimage to Southern Tibet. While visiting Samye, he caught small-pox but recovered within two weeks, and then returned to Lhasa. Meanwhile border and trade problems with British Empire in India were mounting and the relation between the two countries gradually deteriorated.

The British resorted to force, and in 1903 Colonel Younghusband invaded Tibet. Many Tibetans were killed as the British marched toward the capital, Lhasa. Even after the British army had reached Gyantse, the Tibetan commanders made a vain attempt to resist the British force. When the British were only 35 miles from Lhasa, the Tibetan National Assembly convened an emergency meeting and decided that it was not safe for the Dalai Lama to remain in Lhasa. Interrupting his 3 year meditation, His Holiness appointed the Ganden Tripa Lobsang Gyaltzen as Regent during his absence and gave him clear directives on how to deal with the British.

At dawn of the fifteenth of the sixth month of the Wood-Dragon Year (July 30, 1904) His Holiness, with a small escort left Lhasa and headed north. After three months of arduous journey he reached Mongolia. He was received by Jetsun Dampa Lama, the ruler of Outer Mongolia and other chieftains with great pomp and ceremony. Wherever he went people thronged in huge numbers to pay their respects and homage. His years in Mongolia were spent mainly in giving religious discourses to the people who came from all over Mongolia to hear him. This popularity consequently made Jetsun Dampa envious and consequently the relations between the two were strained.

In the following year there was a terrible drought in Mongolia which caused untold hardship to the people. The people approached His Holiness the Dalai Lama to use his spiritual influence to alleviate their suffering. His Holiness performed special prayers and the appropriate rites and, not long after, there was rain in the country.

Meanwhile the situation in Tibet called for the return of His Holiness. The Tibetan government sent a delegation consisting of Tsechog Lobsang Kachog and two other officials to request His Holiness to return to Lhasa. A month later an escort arrived to accompany His Holiness back to Tibet. But it took several months before he reached Lhasa.

In 1906 on his way back, he visited Kokonor where he was received by many dignitaries and head lamas. In Kumbum, Amdo, he received scriptural teachings from Lama Dorji Chang Tenzin Gyatso called Shvamarpa (Red Hat).

The Czar of Russia sent his Internal Minister, Honser, with presents and a request asking His Holiness to bless him with a son. His Holiness accepted the presents and assured the Minister that the Czar's request would be met. Prayers and rites were performed, and a few months later, a son was born to the Czar. This increased the faith of the Czar in the Dalai Lama so much so that he permitted Buddhists to build temples and also form a Sangha in Russia. This prince was known as "The (Spiritual) Son of the Dalai Lama".

In 1908 His Holiness paid a short visit to China in order to bring an understanding between Tibet and China regarding the growing border tensions. He was received with great respects and ceremony and he stayed at the Yellow Palace, originally built for the Great Fifth (Dalai Lama). The Mayor of Peking and the Internal and External Ministers of the Chinese Court were there to receive him at the railway station. During His stay, he visited various places and monasteries of importance in Peking. His Holiness met the Empress Dowager Tzu-hsi, and had talks with her on the relations between the two countries. In 1908 the young Emperor passed away, and after the proper rituals were performed a cousin was enthroned. The Dalai Lama was present at the enthronement.

In 1909 he arrived at Nagchuka where he was received by the Panchen Lama and the representatives of the Ganden Tri Rimpoche and the Manchu Ambans. At Phurbu Chok he was met by the 3 Lonchens (Senior Ministers) and Lama dignitaries. A few months later he entered Lhasa. He was presented with a new seal on behalf of the people. The inscription on it read "By the prophecy of the Lord, Buddha, the Dalai Lama is the Holder of the Buddhist Faith on the face of the Earth". The seal was symbolic of the Tibetan people's defiance against Chinese interference in their affairs.

When His Holiness was 35, fresh trouble with the Chinese broke out. The Chinese commander, Erh-feng, at the instigation of the Ambans attacked Bah-li, Tsalho, Tso-sang and killed many monks. Monasteries were razed to the ground and religious scriptures and statues were desecrated and burnt. Erh-feng in his success continued committing atrocities while the Tibetan Government looked for a way of peace and reconciliation. The Amban added to the problem, by refusing to hand over a letter from the Regent and the Tibetan cabinet to the Manchu Emperor. In 1909 the Tibetan Government learnt that a large Chinese force was being sent to Tibet to police the trade marts as provided under the Trade Regulations signed in Calcutta in April 1908. In Lhasa the Chinese garrison was reinforced with 6,000 soldiers. The Tibetan Government's numerous protests went unheeded and the several telegrams that were sent to Peking for the withdrawal of the Chinese troops were ignored. On the third day of the first Tibetan month of the Iron-Dog Year (1910) the Chinese army marched through Lhasa, firing indiscriminately upon the Lhasa police. They also fired at the Potala.

The Dalai Lama immediately appointed a new Regent, Tri Rimpoche Ngawang Lobsang Tsemoling. He told his officials that he was going to Yatung and from there he would instruct them in dealing with the Chinese. The Chinese sent soldiers to pursue the fleeing Dalai Lama and his group. Consequently His Holiness had no choice but to cross into India, contrary to his earlier plans.

Before he left Yatung, the Dalai Lama left a letter with David Macdonald, the British Trade Agent in Yatung, to be forwarded to the British Government in India. The Dalai Lama arrived in Kalimpong where he was the guest of Raja Kazi Ugen of Bhutan who made his house available to His Holiness. After a week in Darjeeling, the Dalai Lama left for Calcutta where he received a seventeen gun salute in his honour and was escorted in a regal carriage to Hastings House. On March 14, 1910 His Holiness met the Viceroy Lord Minto and gave him an account of the recent happenings in Tibet and why he was forced to leave Tibet. The Viceroy questioned His Holiness carefully though he did not commit himself to anything. His Holiness used the opportunity to clarify the issue of Dorjjeff, the Buriat Mongol of Russia. His Holiness pointed out that Dorjjeff was now in his own country and even when he held a place of honour in Tibet it was only as a spiritual adviser.

The Chinese meanwhile realised their mistake in declaring the Dalai Lama deposed. Lo-Ti-tai was sent by the Amban to Darjeeling to offer the Dalai Lama the restoration of his title and to request him to return to Tibet. The Dalai Lama did not fall for the trap. He sent a guarded reply saying that the relations between China and Tibet could never be the same again, and the only way to solve the present crisis would be the good offices of a third party. The British, His Holiness suggested, should participate in any discussion between the two countries.

But in the meantime China was passing through the revolution led by Sun Yat-sen, and the Expulsion of the Manchu led to confusion among the Chinese troops in Tibet. Erh-feng returned to Szechuan. Fighting broke out between the Chinese and the Tibetans in various parts of Tibet. The Dalai Lama kept close watch over the developments, and instructed his officials to organize a War Department and to prepare for military action. The fighting in Tibet grew more fierce and the Sera monks and the Banashol Khampas took active part in them. The Dalai Lama finally decided to leave India and return to Tibet. He thanked the British Government for the hospitality they had shown to him during his stay, and conveyed his desire for improving the relations between the two countries. He also requested the British to participate in the reconciliation between the Chinese and the Tibetans. The Dalai Lama reached Yatung and spent the week there, and blessed Tibetans all over the country in continuing their fight against the Chinese. An escort of 200 monks along with Khampa soldiers volunteered to bring His Holiness safely to Lhasa.

In the meantime the British Government protested to the Chinese Government against the presence of Chinese troops in Tibet. The Chinese troops themselves were facing many problems. Supplies were dwindling; and reinforcements were not coming. Finally they decided to surrender to the Tibetans, and asked the Nepalese Representative in Tibet to intercede on their behalf. The Tibetan soldiers triumphantly escorted the Chinese out of Tibet. On the 16th day of the 12th month of the Water-Mouse year (January 1913) the Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa. Shortly after his return to Lhasa, he issued a proclamation to all his officials and subjects declaring the independence of Tibet, and affirming his own office and title to Lord Buddha's Command. He further entered into a treaty with Mongolia (Urga : January 1913). Both countries declared their independence from Manchu rule and affirmed their sovereignty. They stressed the importance of strengthening the ties between the two Buddhist countries.

The Dalai Lama took all necessary steps to preserve the independence of Tibet. He led the country towards full national development and integration. For the first time in Tibet's history paper currency was introduced. The paper was hand-made and their designs were traditional. Two students were sent to Calcutta to study printing of currency. Postage stamps were introduced.

Kyibuk Wangdhu Norbu was sent abroad for training in telegraphy. In 1918, Mondong Khenrab Kunsang was sent to England for training in mining. Gokar Sonam Gonpo was sent for military training and Rikhang Rigsen Dorji on electrical works.

His Holiness realised how important it was to have a strong army if a country was to defend its freedom. He renovated the Tibetan army. He hired a Japanese military expert, Jasujiro Yajima, who trained a special group of the Tibetan army in Japanese method of warfare. His Holiness increased army recruitment and imported military equipment from abroad. He also strengthened the authority of the Tibetan Government all over the country. For the first time a Kalon (Minister) was sent to Kham as Governor, with overall civil and military authority.

While applying military resistance on the Chinese as and when needed, the Dalai Lama constantly sought for a tripartite conference to solve the differences honourably. When the tripartite conference materialised (1913), His Holiness made it certain that Tibet was attending the meeting on equal footing as the Chinese. Therefore, when the Chinese sent their representative, Ivan Chen, they had in effect accorded equal status to the Tibetan representative and thus recognised the treaty-making powers of Tibet. In early 1914 a Tripartite Convention between the British, Chinese and Tibetan was agreed upon. In spite of the agreement the Chinese continued to talk of suzerainty over Tibet and claims on eastern borders of Tibet. In an attempt to resolve the irreconcilable stand taken by the Chinese, the Tibetan Government signed a treaty with the British (Simla, 3 July 1914).

During the First World War and till his passing away (1933), Tibet was treated by other countries as a fully independent state. His Holiness the Dalai Lama was responsible for much of this recognition given by other countries. He took active interest in every aspect of the Tibetan people. His vision of the future events and his awareness of the great past were reflected in the national testament he gave to the people of Tibet.

In 1916 His Holiness established the Central Medical College at Lhasa. He appointed Khenrab Norbu as the principal and selected students on a geographic representative basis. He introduced primary schools all over the country and much improvement of the Potala Secretariat School was carried out. However, not all the reforms the Dalai Lama introduced to improve the conditions of the Tibetan people, were welcomed. When he had an English school started at Dekyi-Lingka at Lhasa, the Abbots of the three major monastic universities objected and soon after the school was closed.

In the ecclesiastical field, His Holiness came down with a heavy hand upon the monastic institutions. He had their discipline improved and emphasised their academic development. He introduced the graded academic curriculum leading to the Geyshe degree. In spite of his busy schedule, he

found time to examine monks in the Norbulingka annuals and himself adjudicated their dialectical debates. He further examined them during the Monlam annual examinations for the highest Geyshe degree.

He was the first Dalai Lama to realise fully the importance of social and economic development of the country. He introduced quite a number of humanitarian and progressive reforms. He abolished capital punishment and amputation except in the cases of those who plotted against the Government. He made regulations to prevent exploitation of peasants by the upper classes. Every official was required to wear traditional Tibetan dress and identify himself with the people.

In November 1933 the Dalai Lama caught cold; he suddenly passed away on the thirteenth day of the eleventh month of the Water Bird Year (December 17, 1933). Peoples of all sects and all regions mourned the loss of the Father of the Nation.
