

GENERAL HUANG MU-SUNG AT LHASA, 1934

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It seems timely to follow up Dr. Sinha's interesting article "The Simla Convention 1914 : a Chinese Puzzle" in the *Bulletin of Tibetology*, No. 1 (1977) with the story of an occasion when the Chinese were unwillingly reminded of the continuing effect of that document on Tibetan political thinking.

The Chinese Government was quick to take advantage of the death of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama by sending a mission to Lhasa under General Huang Mu-sung, a high-ranking official, on the pretext of offering condolences. Present at Lhasa during that visit was Rai Bahadur Norbhu Dhondup, Assistant Political Officer in Sikkim to whom the Indian Government owes much gratitude for the influence of his advice to the Tibetans and for the detailed information about the events of those six months which he was able to obtain through his long friendship with leading Tibetan officials. The negotiations which took place between the Chinese and the Tibetans have been summarized in my *Tibet and its History*, pp 141-143 and in *Tibet, a Political History* by Tsipon W.D. Shakabpa, pp 276, 277. Li Tieh-tseng in *The Historical Status of Tibet*, pp 168-177 gives a longer account but it re-arranges the sequence of events to some extent and uses terminology of a more technical western character than can be readily encompassed by the Tibetan vocabulary; it may be of interest, therefore, to put on record a fuller account of the exchanges derived from Tibetan sources.

The first problem to face the new and untried Tibetan administration still deeply in the throes of internal intrigues, was the arrival of a radio set sent ahead of the general. Objections by the Kashag to its installation were ignored, but the Tibetans did not make an issue of this.

When the mission arrived on 25th April Huang, who had sent in advance a proclamation that he was coming solely for religious purposes, was received with exceptional honours. He himself made a good impression by tireless and courteous diplomacy, by a display of reverence and piety in holy places and by lavish gifts and entertainments. His retinue proved less popular and offended Tibetan susceptibilities in many ways. They rode furiously through the streets of Lhasa, brawled among themselves and, surprisingly to the Tibetans, failed to show proper respect to their leader. They also complained about the playing of "British music"—probably including God Save the King!—by Tibetan military bands. The monks showed obvious dislike of the visitors and mocked and jostled Huang's escort so much that they had to be restrained by a special order.

Huang's first move was to offer a seal and a memorial tablet for the late Dalai Lama. The Tibetan Government at first refused on the ground that as the Dalai Lama was dead there was no need for a seal; but, under pressure and finding there was nothing compromising on the gifts, the Kashag after consulting the National Assembly agreed to accept them. Huang then asked that all the high officials should go to his headquarters to receive the objects; but eventually he went himself to the Potala to make the presentation.

No one believed that Huang had come without any political purpose but, although he had private discussions with the Regent and high officials, he shrewdly refrained from making any formal overture. So, after sometime a meeting of the National Assembly was held at which it was decided to broach the question of the frontier, making it clear that "while Tibet and China should be considered as two eyes", Tibet must remain independent. The Kashag accordingly raised the matter with Huang and also referred to their difficulties over the Panchen Lama. Huang told them that he had met the Panchen and was certain he had no intention of trying to return to Tibet by force. As for political matters he pretended that he had come solely on religious business and had no authority to enter any sort of negotiations. The Kashag pointed out that he had been described as second only to Ch'iang Kai-shek and must surely have some power.

Huang then unfolded his brief. The Tibetan Government should declare themselves part of China as one of the Five Races and should set up a republic. They should obey the instructions of the Central Government and in return they would be protected against all outsiders.

The National Assembly, which was consulted on all matters during Huang's visit, debated these proposals for two days and replied that Tibet had been ruled by thirteen Dalai Lamas and would never become a part of Chinese republic. They would defend their independence to the last man against any invader.

When the Kashag reported this to General Huang his urbanity was somewhat ruffled and he tried the effect of scarcely veiled threats. The Panchen Lama, he said, had joined the Chinese Republic and if he tried to return to Tibet by force the Chinese Government would do nothing to stop him. The Kashag were not impressed and reminded Huang of what he had told them a few days before. Nevertheless, the matter was again referred to the National Assembly which re-affirmed its stand and signed a paper to that effect.

Huang, obviously disappointed, telegraphed to Nanking for instructions and, although he was advised to return, he did not give up at once. In another meeting he watered down his demands, saying that membership of the Five Races did not necessarily mean adopting a republican government. The important thing was that Tibet should rely on China. He said that Great Britain in a treaty with Japan had acknowledged that Tibet was subject to China. The Tibetans replied that they knew of no such treaty and, if there were one, it would not affect them. As for China's ability to help, they asked what the Chinese had one for Mongolia and Manchuria. The National Assembly was consulted again. They bluntly rejected all Huang's proposals and stressed their friendship with the British Government whose treatment of them even after 1904 they described as fair. China was the only enemy they had to fear.

Huang, determined to persist but not willing to risk the further loss of face, then handed over the negotiations to Wu Min-yuan a member of his staff who had been born in Lhasa to a Tibetan mother. Wu visited the Kashag and explained that Huang was too severely disappointed to do any more but that he himself had some informal suggestions to make. It was believed in Lhasa that before Wu's approach large presents had been given to leading officials

and it was expected that the Kashag might give way but that the National Assembly would stand firm. Wu's proposals, which were made in writing, were debated for several days both by the Kashag and the National Assembly. The points raised and the opinion of each body on them are detailed below:

1. "Relations between the Central Government and the Tibetan Government should be those of benefactor and Lama".

The Kashag accepted this on condition that "Chinese Government" should be substituted for "Central Government". The National Assembly agreed.

2. "The Chinese Government should always regard Tibet as a holy and religious country". Agreed.

3. "Tibet has religion, men, and complete administrative arrangements, therefore China should consider Tibet to be independent and should not interfere in its internal administration". Agreed.

4. "No Chinese troops should be kept on Tibet's frontiers". Agreed.

5. "Five thousand troops should be selected from the Tibetan army as Frontier Guards. They should be posted on the various frontiers and China should pay, arm, and train the troops".

The Kashag said troops could be posted on the frontiers but there was no need for a specially named force; and no pay or arms were wanted from the Chinese Government. The Assembly said it was not necessary to post troops on the frontier unless an emergency arose.

6. "A Chinese Officer should be posted at Lhasa to advise the Tibetan Government. He should be given an escort out of the Frontier Force and should control the movements of the whole force".

The Kashag preferred that no Chinese officer should be posted at Lhasa. If one were appointed he should have nothing to do with the Tibetan army but he might have a small escort. The Simla agreement specified 300 men. The Assembly said that 25 servants should suffice for an escort and any Chinese officer should strictly observe the condition of non-interference in Tibetan internal affairs.

7. "The Tibetan Government should consult the Chinese Government before corresponding with other nations about external affairs".

The Kashag said that Tibet is independent and would deal with its external affairs without consulting the Chinese. The Assembly agreed, adding that the Tibetan Government would correspond with all nations, "headed by the British", whenever they wanted.

8. "The Chinese Government should be consulted about the appointment of officers of the rank of Shappé and above."

The Kashag refused but said that the Chinese Government could be informed after such appointments had been made. The Assembly agreed.

9. "China should recognize the boundary existing at the time of the Emperor Kuang Hsu". That apparently meant the frontier before the invasion by Chao Erh Feng in 1908-1910.

Both the Kashag and Assembly accepted that as favourable but demanded additional territory including Nyarong, Bathang, Lithang and the Golok country.

10. "China should fight or else mediate with any nations that try to invade Tibet".

The Kashag and Assembly replied that as Tibet is a religious country no one is likely to attack her. If anyone does, Tibet will deal with them without Chinese help. The question of mutual help could be considered if it arose.

11. "China should be informed when the incarnation of a Dalai Lama is discovered so that the Chinese Government can offer him a seal and a title".

The Kashag agreed. The National Assembly said that China should be informed only after the installation had taken place in order to avoid trouble such as was created in the case of the Sixth and Seventh Dalai Lamas.

12. "The Tibetan Government should invite the Panchen Lama to return at once, should restore to him his former powers, estates and property, and should guarantee that no harm should fall on him or his followers. If that were done the Chinese Government would take away his arms and munitions".

The Kashag and Assembly replied that the Panchen Lama being a religious person required no arms or ammunition; they would welcome him back and guarantee his personal safety if the Chinese took away his arms. They added that he should be asked to return via India in accordance with the wishes of the late Dalai Lama.

13. "All Tibetan officers in China should receive salaries from the Chinese Government".

The Kashag agreed. The Assembly said it was a matter of indifference to them but only officials appointed by the Tibetan Government should attend meetings.

14. "All half-Chinese in Tibet should be under the sole jurisdiction of the Chinese officer at Lhasa".

The Kashag and Assembly replied that when the Chinese were turned out of Tibet in 1912 the Tibetan Government asked all Chinese to return to China. Those born in Tibet sought permission to remain and signed an agreement to pay taxes and submit to Tibetan jurisdiction. This article was, therefore, unacceptable.

On receiving these replies Huang wrote to the Kashag asking that all of Wu Min-yuan's proposals should be accepted and laying particular stress on three demands: 1. that Tibet should admit subordination to China; 2. that all direct correspondence with outside nations should cease or, failing

that, China should be consulted before appointments were made to the post of Shappé or higher ranks.

After long deliberation the National Assembly decided 1. that Tibet might be considered subordinate to China to the extent and on the terms laid down in the Simla treaty; 2. that Tibet would correspond with all nations, headed by the British, and would not consult the Chinese Government on the subject; 3. in view of religious ties, Tibet would inform China after the appointment of officers of the rank of Shappé and above.

The National Assembly expressly desired that the British Government should be a party to any agreement reached between Tibet and China. Huang refused bluntly to consider this last proposal but referred the other replies to Nanking. He was then ordered to return to China for consultation and he left Lhasa towards the end of October.

I believe that to a generally accurate record of events between April and October 1934 and it is largely confirmed by the account of Li Tieh-tseng who admits in conclusion that the Tibetan authorities were not yet ready to place their trust and reliance on the Chinese Government of the day. The best success he can claim is that the Tibetans were willing in principle to resume full relationship once the overall differences were settled. The magnitude of those differences shown by repeated Tibetan assertions of their independence is something Mr. Li does not stress; and when in 1935 Mr. Williamson asked the Tibetan Government about their views on Chinese suzerainty they stated that the Simla Convention in exchange for territorial concessions from the Chinese they had definitely not accepted even the nominal suzerainty of China in their talks with General Huang.

Although, in the event, it was shown that the conditions of the Simla Convention remained the guiding principle of the Tibetan Government, the British Government realized that by consenting in 1933 to the Tibetans attempting to reach a direct agreement with China provided it did not prejudice their obligations to the British Government, they had allowed a departure from the Simla Convention which might have led to an agreement being reached from which they were excluded. The earliest opportunity was, therefore, taken of letting the Tibetan Government know that the British Government would expect to be represented at any further such negotiations.

The Chinese, moreover, had succeeded in making a small hole in the Simla agreements by leaving a small liaison mission at Lhasa; but by so doing they attracted a countervailing British Mission which continued in existence after August 1947 as the Indian Mission and in 1954 was converted into a Consulate-General.