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## "A STRUGGLE OF BLOOD AND FIRE"

### The Imposition of Martial Law in 1989 and the Lhasa Uprising in 1959

"At present the situation in our region is, on the whole, stable. The appearance of the stable situation came from a severe struggle of blood and fire, at great cost to the country and its people, and with the arduous efforts of the Party [...]"

- Xinhua statement on the order to lift martial law in Lhasa (30 April 1990)

#### CONTENTS

- **Martial Law - 8 March 1989**

[The Imposition of Martial Law in Lhasa](#)

[Eye-witness Accounts](#)

[Chinese Press on Martial Law](#)

[Chronology: Three years of dissent](#)

- **The Lhasa Uprising - March 1959**

[A Turning Point in Tibetan History](#)

[Eye-witness Account](#)

[Chinese Press on the Lhasa Uprising](#)

[Chronology: Resistance in Tibet 1954 - 1974](#)

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## MARTIAL LAW - March 1989

Order of the State Council on imposing martial law (jie yan) on Lhasa City, Tibet Autonomous Region:

In view of the fact that a handful of separatists have been constantly causing disturbances in Lhasa city, Tibet Autonomous Region, severely disrupting social stability, the state Council has decided, in line with the provisions in item 16 of article 89 of the Constitution, to impose martial law on Lhasa city with effect from 0000 on 8 March, to maintain public order, protect the citizen's personal safety and property and preserve public property. The martial law will be supervised and enforced by the Tibet Autonomous Regional people's government. Concrete measures will be taken in accordance with actual needs.

[Signed] Li Peng, Premier of the State Council, 7 March 1989

(Beijing Home Service 7/3/89; SWB 9/3/89)

## The Imposition of Martial Law in Lhasa

Martial law was officially declared in Lhasa for the first time in the history of the People's Republic of China at midnight on 7/8 March 1989. It was a harsh and unprecedented reaction by the authorities to three days of demonstrations that had been sparked by the shooting of Tibetans by security police in the Barkor.

The Tibetan authorities are well aware of the significance of the tenth anniversary of martial law next month, and they have warned Tibetans that there will be severe reprisals for any form of protest. "We must deal with splitting and sabotaging activities found anywhere and under any circumstance at their embryonic stage resolutely, rapidly and in a decisive manner," the Chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region, Legchog, announced at a meeting on 24 January. "There are more important festivals and sensitive occasions this year, and the task of safeguarding social and political stability is quite arduous."

At least 70 Tibetans were shot dead during the 5-7 March demonstrations and unofficial reports state that at least a thousand Tibetans were detained in the early hours of 8 March and the crackdown that followed. It is impossible to know the exact number of deaths and detentions because of the strict security in Lhasa at the time and the fluctuating population of the city. Many of the Khampas, beggars, traders and others who were visiting Lhasa at the time became involved in the protest.

The demonstrations began on 5 March, when a small group consisting of several monks and nuns began to shout pro-independence slogans while circumambulating the Barkor, the road around the Jokhang temple in the traditional centre of Lhasa. Lay people gradually began to join the procession. The protests were peaceful until, according to eye-witnesses, police provoked an escalation of the incident. A handful of police who were watching the protestors from the roof of a police station in the south-west Barkor area threw a couple of bottles down towards Tibetans. Some Tibetan children responded by throwing rocks at them, and the police on the roof then fired at the crowd. They had already been positioned on the roof ready to shoot, with their handguns resting on the parapet.

A young Tibetan who now lives in exile told TIN: "I didn't know anything about the protests until I saw dead bodies being carried through the streets from the hospital by Tibetans. I was so angry and upset about what the police had done that I joined the demonstration." Many other Tibetans felt the same and the demonstrations escalated. By the afternoon, approximately 1,500 Tibetans were involved, waving Tibetan flags and shouting pro-independence slogans. People's Armed Police (PAP) troops fired directly into the crowd while others beat protestors. Some Tibetans were even shot dead in their

houses by gunshot coming from the street; a young Tibetan girl died after being hit by a stray bullet while she was making tea in her home.

On the first two days of the protests, Tibetans raided Chinese and Hui Muslim shops in the area and set fire to their goods. Some Chinese people on the streets were also beaten up by protestors, although a Western observer noted that there was very little looting and beating by Tibetans. "The Tibetans enforced this themselves very strictly," he said.

Whole families became involved in the protests. A Western tourist watched young men throwing rocks at the police and old women carrying stones to them in their aprons. Young girls were bringing buckets of water to wipe the tear gas from their eyes. After the protests were over, Tibetans began to use an old phrase, meaning: "We are compatriots, we are brothers". When Tibetans were involved in a street fight or argument, they would sometimes make peace by remembering this phrase, which originated from the sense of solidarity engendered by participation in the March protests.

During the three days, the authorities made no attempt to take full control of the central Barkor area, where the protestors were based. Groups of People's Armed Police were sent in at intervals, firing at the crowd with automatic weapons, but when the demonstrators dispersed the police withdrew to the outskirts of the city. Snipers firing indiscriminately at Tibetans provoked further anger, and the protests were allowed to continue. On 7 March, the number of people taking to the streets of Lhasa dwindled to a few hundred and the atmosphere was tense, almost as if Tibetans were waiting for retribution, according to several reports.

Chinese television announced that night that martial law was to be imposed at midnight. One Tibetan recalls how he watched soldiers, wearing black sunglasses and immaculate white gloves, marching into the city. The soldiers were from the People's Liberation Army (PLA); many of them had fought in combat, and they seemed more experienced and to onlookers more ruthless, than the troops of the People's Armed Police. At midnight, soldiers marched into the Barkor and began to bang on doors with their rifle butts, shouting to the people inside to come out. There were screams and shouts as Tibetans were dragged into trucks and taken away.

The crackdown continued for 13 months. Within two days of the imposition of martial law, checkpoints were set up throughout Lhasa and on all major roads. Tibetans were unable to move freely around the city, and soon after the declaration of martial law, non-residents of Lhasa such as pilgrims or Khampas were expelled. Monks and nuns suspected of involvement in the protests were expelled from their monasteries and nunneries, and foreigners were forced to leave Lhasa on 9 March.

The security forces conducted house to house searches to seize those suspected of participating in the protests. According to an article in the Beijing Review dated 27 March 1989 100 people were seized by 700 People's Armed Police and officials during raids that took place between midnight and 7am on 8 March. There are several reports of informers being paid by the police to spy on other Tibetans. In the months following the demonstration many people were detained, often being held for a considerable amount of time without formal arrest or trial. One hundred and sixty-seven of the estimated 2,000 people detained were known to have been brought to trial by 1990. Martial law had provided an opportunity for the Tibetan authorities to root out dissent throughout the entire Tibetan population of Lhasa.

**Shift in security policy after martial law**

Martial law was officially lifted at midnight on 30 April 1990, but reports from Tibetans who left the country in the second half of 1990 indicated that security measures continued to be strict. Many described Lhasa at this time as being under "martial law without checkpoints". A trader from Lhasa, who was active in pro-independence activities and who escaped into exile in 1990, said that the atmosphere in Lhasa a month after the lifting of martial law was still tense. "It was like being in a flock of sheep waiting for slaughter, we do not know when we will be killed or arrested," he said. "The people were very frightened. They didn't know exactly when they were going to be arrested or who would be next." Other exile sources state that restrictions on religious activities were still in place after martial law was lifted and that house searches were still carried out to check for non-residents. The security presence in the city remained high, even as the People's Armed Police replaced the People's Liberation Army.

Official reports blamed the demonstrations on a "handful of splittists" instigated by the Dalai Lama and claimed that they did not have the support of the general population. Similar explanations had been used by the authorities for the previous demonstrations in 1987 and 1988 (see Chronology: Three Years of Dissent). The small number of tourists in Tibet at the time were also blamed. The Chinese press referred to "a foreigner with a big nose and blue eyes, in a red down jacket" seen among the demonstrators - the authorities also referred to the "international links" of these tourists with Russians, Taiwanese and Americans (Ming Pao, 9 March 1989).

The aftermath of the March uprising led to a marked shift in security policy. Security personnel were no longer focused simply on reacting to protests by shooting participants on sight. The aim was to uncover dissident networks through more sophisticated mechanisms of surveillance and screening with the intention of making any overt form of dissent impossible. Economic reform was also promoted as a means of achieving stability.

The Third Forum on Work in Tibet that was held in Beijing five years later entrenched security policies that were beginning to take hold after March 1989. The Forum also outlined the main political struggle that is still taking place in Tibet today - the struggle against separatism and the Dalai Lama. "As the saying goes, to kill a serpent, we must first chop off its head. If we don't do that, we cannot succeed in the struggle against separatism," stated a propaganda manual published by the TAR Propaganda Committee of the Tibet Autonomous Region Communist Party in 1994, referring to the threat to stability represented by the Dalai Lama.

Ten years after the imposition of martial law, official statements and speeches continue to express some frustration over continuing resistance to Chinese rule. Tibetan cadres and government workers are suspected of harbouring loyalty to the Dalai Lama, and hence nationalist sympathies, just as they were during the crackdown of 1989. Monks and nuns, a number of whom began the protests on 5 March, have since face increased surveillance and control and the "patriotic education" campaign forces them to denounce the Dalai Lama. Increasing numbers of monks and nuns are arriving in exile following the closure of some monasteries and nunneries. There is also increasing concern on the part of the Chinese authorities to prevent unrest in rural areas, where there have been incidents of dissent since the early 1990s, often centred around local monasteries, but also initiated by the lay community.

One of the most severe instances of repression since martial law occurred in Drapchi prison in May 1998, when at least ten Tibetan prisoners died following beatings and torture in response to their peaceful protest. The prisoners' determination to express dissent while knowing the consequences appears to indicate a desire on their part to prove that their "reform" by the authorities has not been

successful because they are still expressing support for the Dalai Lama and for the independence of Tibet. Many of those prisoners who took part in the demonstrations were initially arrested for expressing such sentiments on the streets of Lhasa in March 1989.

In November last year, an elderly Tibetan man stood outside the Jokhang in the Barkor Square and shouted a slogan in support of a free Tibet. A crowd of people gathered around the man, who was said to be in his sixties, and appeared to be trying to protect him in some way before he was led away to the police station on the Barkor Square. The area was cleared for a short period following the man's arrest. There were no more participants in the protest; no teargas, no shooting. But this solitary act, the demonstrations by prisoners in Drapchi, and the refusal of many monks and nuns to denounce the Dalai Lama indicate that there is a continuing determination among Tibetans to find ways of expressing dissent.

[Back to top](#)

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## EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNTS

A "dark and tense" city: resistance during martial law

The following account is by a young Tibetan who is now living in exile.

"On 5 March, I was going into the Barkor to visit a friend and hundreds of people were gathering there. The atmosphere was very tense. There was a group of People's Armed Police straight ahead. Some teenagers started throwing stones at the police. After a while the shooting started and I saw people coming towards me carrying dead bodies. I was really angry and so I joined the demonstration with the monks, nuns and laypeople. Later that day lots of Tibetans were looting Chinese shops. Many of us tried to stop them from stealing goods from the shops like TVs and radios - we told them we should burn these products, stealing them was not the right thing to do. There were rumours that there were plainclothes police among the crowd encouraging Tibetans to loot the shops.

The next day I went to the Barkor again and joined the demonstrations, circumambulating the Barkor and shouting slogans. There was a tremendous feeling of people being united and we all had strong nationalist feelings and pride in our country. The police who came into the Barkor to break up the protests were armed with pistols and automatic rifles; they also had sticks with nails sticking out of them - we called them "wolves teeth". They would use these sticks to beat Tibetans. When the shooting began that day there was a pilgrim behind me. He was wearing traditional dress. He had probably come to Lhasa to visit the Jokhang and then he got caught up with the protests. He was shot dead right behind me by a police sniper on the roof of a building. As the crowd dispersed other armed police began to chase me and some other Tibetans down the alleyways of the Barkor, they were firing wildly towards us as they did so. Two nuns were running in front of us and one of them stumbled on her robe. Two of us grabbed her and carried her round the corner where we ran through a big gate. We were immediately taken into the house by an old lady who lived there. We hid in the house for a short time, and the old lady gave us some food. During those days a lot of elderly Tibetans helped us, they told us they were so grateful to us that we were taking part in pro-independence protests.

At midnight on 7 March when martial law was imposed, I watched the soldiers marching into the city. They were mainly from Chengdu in Sichuan, and they looked really tough and experienced, much more so than the PAP. Some of them were commandoes in camouflage uniform. Truck after truck of troops came into the city. By the next day they had set up checkpoints in the street two or three metres apart. They wore black sunglasses to protect themselves from the high altitude glare of the sun and you couldn't see their eyes.

The mood was dark and tense in the city at that time and hundreds of people were being arrested, including some of my friends. When they came out of prison a few months later they were hailed as heroes at their school. They had been badly beaten and had a difficult time, but they had learnt a lot because they were in a cell with older Tibetans and monks, and there was a great sense of solidarity. I heard that four prisoners had their arms tattooed; one of them had the character for "ten", another for "zin" and the two others bore the marks of "gya" and "tso". This formed the name Tenzin Gyatso, the name of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. People showed their resistance in this sort of way in 1989; they were very conscious of their Tibetan identity."

### Foreigner witnesses suppression of Lhasa protests

Steve Marshall, an expert on Tibet and the co-author of the CD-Rom "Tibet Outside the TAR", had backpacked to Tibet for his fourth visit at the time of the demonstration.

"I was in Lhasa throughout the demonstrations, actually in the streets and alleys, for all three days, from 5 March until we were expelled on 9 March. I spoke some essential Tibetan, and knew my way around, so I managed to witness many of the key events.

It all started with the gathering of a handful of people, mostly young monks and a few nuns, on the Barkor's north side at midmorning on 5 March. There were rumours everywhere that there was going to be a demonstration. The group made their first pass around the Barkor and passed unchallenged by police. But I had seen several policemen standing on the roof of their station at the southeast corner of the Barkor. They were obviously expecting trouble and were armed. I got back to the station after the demonstrators were past it, and kept just a few steps off the Barkor, right underneath the station roof. The protestors came around for their second pass. They were mostly young men, in their teens and twenties, just a few older than that, and some young women, too. When I came back I'd seen that the police on the roof had positioned themselves to fire. They were leaning against the parapet, steadying their handguns on it. A couple of others held rifles of some sort. The crowd was up to 30 or 40 by that time. All they were doing was chanting slogans, but they were really intense, walking very fast as they neared the station. They would have seen, just as I had, the policemen on the roof, and their guns. I heard glass crashing on the street, right in front of the station. The sound was from street level, not from above. The police threw beer bottles down from the roof, into the middle of the protestors. Then some street kids threw stones back at the roof, and the police immediately opened fire. All hell broke loose. Everyone started running and people were shot.

After the shooting, more and more people joined the demonstrations. They were really angry, not just from the shooting that morning, but from 1988 and 1987. For the rest of the morning, and into the afternoon, the crowds built up. Police used a lot of teargas, and sometimes took up a position and did some firing. Mostly it was teargas, and they were even throwing rocks back at the Tibetans. I didn't see any Tibetans using anything other than rocks. It was a real neighbourhood affair, with whole families manning the barricades. Everybody had their own job. I watched young men hurling rocks at the police,

or using slings, while their old grannies were gathering rocks in their aprons and carrying them back to the boys. One old lady could hardly walk she was so old. She was hunched over and her hair was silvery white, but she still managed to carry some stones in her apron. Younger girls and mothers, some with their babies strapped onto their backs, were hauling big buckets of water so everyone could wash the teargas out of their eyes and noses. Most kept their mouths and noses covered with wet scarves and handkerchiefs. It was really something. There was such a sense of unity and purpose, with three or four generations trying to keep the stones moving.

In the middle of the day there were much larger protests around the Barkor during the periods when the police weren't firing weapons or teargas. The largest were, in my estimation, between one and two thousand people. They shouted slogans, and carried several Tibetan flags.

After the first few hours, when there was a lot of rock-throwing, teargas and a few outbreaks of police firing, it started to seem strange. At no point during the first two days did the armed police try to take control of the Tibetan area in the Barkor. Actually, they would take control, but then immediately abandon it. They would just race in with guns blazing, lots of automatic rifle fire. The first such assault was around four o'clock on the first day. People were killed by stray bullets; there was one girl in her house, not even taking part in the demonstrations, who was killed in this way. She was far from the window, but had been shot through the head. There was a lot of blood on the floor and the place was full of family and friends. Everybody was crying. Another man, rather old, gave me a bullet which he said had actually killed his friend. He said the two of them were standing in a gateway, just watching the troops come in. But the PAP suddenly shot his friend dead. The man said neither of them had done anything and of course he was very upset.

I saw two or three dead on 5 March, and a few others who had been wounded. There was also blood on the side of a building, beneath a window where a Chinese policeman had been video-taping the demonstration. Tibetans saw him and managed to hit him with a rock. He fell onto the broken glass. Several people told me about other Tibetans had been wounded, but nobody wanted to go to a hospital since they thought they would be turned over to police rather than treated.

Tibetans started destroying Chinese and Hui shops. But they didn't loot. Any Tibetan who tried to steal anything was prevented from keeping it by other Tibetans. Some tried to run off with something, but other Tibetans always stopped them. They wouldn't actually forcibly take anything away from the would-be looter. They'd talk to the person, and then march him back to a bonfire and make him throw whatever it was on the fire. They enforced this strictly. They burned at least 30 or 40 shops by the end of the second day, and destroyed everything inside them. They even burned a Hui bakery, and tried to destroy the big electric oven in a bonfire. Even bicycles were burned rather than stolen.

Later on the first day, around six o'clock, the PAP came in for their second sweep. It was like the first one. They came up Dekyi Shar Lam, shooting teargas ahead, then running up the street shooting wildly, just spraying weapons fire. The Tibetans had all run off to hide. There were only a very few who stayed back to toss a rock from an alley or from a roof top. I didn't see any Tibetans with guns. On that second assault on the 5th the PAP troops were really young, and lots of them were obviously frightened and confused. Their platoon leaders had a hard time keeping them organised. But even though they had no real opposition and had quickly taken control of the main streets, they stayed no more than an hour. They came in from one end of the street, and left via the other. Later, around nine, there was one more wave of PAP, just like the others. First tear gas, then foot platoons and firing, and then some vehicles. They didn't stay either and abandoned the neighbourhood for the evening. I

watched one incident from the window of my hotel on 5 March. About a dozen of those young PAP called a Tibetan man out onto the street who had been standing in the doorway of the restaurant next door. He looked frightened. He must have said something they didn't like because all of them suddenly started beating him. They kicked him, hit him and then held him still while one of them smashed his kneecaps as hard as he could with one of the long clubs they carry. The man fainted with pain, his head just tilted over backwards. They let him fall and then surrounded him, kicking him and stomping on him. They pulled him back up to his feet, held him still, and then smashed his knees again. The man delivering the blow would wind himself up and swing the club like a bat, just as hard and precisely as he could. They did this three times. He certainly must have been crippled from that, and it was obvious they intended to cripple him. Another tourist who saw this screamed and the PAP outside heard her. One came over to the window and pointed his gun at us. The hotel staff were frightened and wanted us to move away from the window, which we did only for a moment. But I knew the police weren't going to machine-gun foreign tourists through a hotel window. They were after Tibetans, not us, so we resumed our place.

By the time night fell on 5 March, after three attacks by the PAP, the streets were deserted. The same pattern was repeated the next day, on the 6th. By mid-morning, when the police and PAP didn't return, people gathered and began taking part in protests. The PAP did not attack in an organised way until the afternoon. The main difference was that most of the people on the streets were younger men; a lot of the older people, the mothers, fathers and grandparents, stayed at home. No one knew what was going to happen and Tibetans were very apprehensive by then. Everyone expected the PAP to storm in and take control, not just to shoot it up and then leave again. They all wondered what was going to happen.

On the 6th the PAP didn't come in until the afternoon. Earlier in the day, in the early afternoon, there had been a police sniper on the roof of the police station in the Kyire area. I heard firing several times during the afternoon and was told six people had been killed. The snipers couldn't see any demonstrations from that spot, so they could only fire at people who were in the alleys. I was even fired at, but since he missed me, and since I was close enough to see the two yellow police stripes on his sleeve, he might have fired as a warning.

Around the same time I saw a child dying from a beating. He was a young boy. His father was carrying him on his back. The boy's eyes were half open, but unconscious, glazed over. There were big swollen lumps on his head and his face was red, and turning bruised. He was still alive, but he couldn't have been so for long. He was bleeding out of his ears and nose. His dad seemed very collected in one way, trying to get his son back to their home, but he was crying, tears just dripping off his chin. He said his son had joined the older boys throwing stones at the police, but police had caught him. Several of them had beaten the boy.

When the PAP finally came in on the 6th, late in the afternoon, they seemed to have switched their platoons. The troops were older, certainly tougher-looking, and much better disciplined. They were more heavily armed, more rifles and fewer clubs, and most had AK-47's instead of lighter weapons. The destructive aspect of the demonstrations, like burning of non-Tibetan shops and stoning windows of government offices, was especially active on the 6th. But by that afternoon they seemed to have done most of what they intended to do, and there weren't many new attacks on shops or offices. The area directly affected by the demonstrations as such was really quite small, about 3/4 of a kilometre long and 1/2 a kilometre wide.



There were attacks on non-Tibetan people, too, especially on the 6th. Anybody who wasn't Tibetan was attacked. But most of the time when Tibetans would start beating a Chinese, other Tibetans would try to intervene. It was like burning the merchandise but not stealing it: some Tibetans would talk to the others doing the beating and try to persuade them to stop. They would use mild restraint, but they wanted to use reasoning, not force.

The next day, on the 7th, there was a meaner atmosphere and even fewer Tibetans were on the street. Again, demonstrations didn't start right away. It was assumed the police and PAP would take control, but they didn't, and so smaller groups of demonstrators started roaming around. There was a sense that everybody was waiting; they knew there would be some kind of punishment. It was a very strange situation since nothing was happening. The PAP would come, and then leave again. Even that didn't happen on the afternoon of the 7th. There was a story that circulated that if the streets weren't cleared by a certain time, anyone still out would be shot on sight. Everybody took that very seriously. By late afternoon, the streets were clear. Tibetans had insisted I shouldn't be out either, so I wasn't.

Then we heard that martial law was going to be imposed. It was on the Chinese TV national news. The news had started two minutes early to make the announcement, which was meant to signal the importance of it. I knew there hadn't been enough protest to justify martial law, especially since the protests had dwindled down to almost nothing during the third day. I still think today that the purpose of imposing martial law was not to re-establish control in Lhasa, but to make an example out of it. The government was really worried about dissent in those days, so a firm punishment in Lhasa would send a clear message to the rest of China. But since Lhasa was already under relatively tight control even before the demonstrations, the area of the city involved was small, and the event seemed to have run its course, hence I'm sure they didn't need martial law to regain control. The Tibetans knew something odd was happening, too, but nobody guessed it would be martial law.

That night, just before midnight of the 7th, I sneaked into the office of my hotel. Exactly on the stroke of midnight troops started to arrive on foot and in vehicles, moving very slowly down the main street. I could hear loudspeakers broadcasting propaganda or orders, and heavy footsteps of marching soldiers. Lights were shone onto buildings and into windows. It was unnerving. I quickly discovered that the PLA were very different to the PAP. They were professional soldiers, and seemed more like crack combat troops than peasant boys with guns. I tried to get a closer look at what was happening, peering out of a window. As my eyes adjusted, I suddenly realised I was looking straight into the face of a helmeted PLA soldier -and he was looking me right in the eyes, with his nose almost against the glass. He was completely expressionless. I scooted back to my room and managed to cross the courtyard before they started thumping on the gate and trying to shine their torches through splits made by gunfire.

For hours you could hear the banging of rifle butts on people's doors, and the shouting of soldiers. Sometimes you could hear people yelling or screaming as they were taken away. It seemed obvious the soldiers had received instructions about certain houses or compounds where they thought demonstrators might live.

We had to spend the first day of martial law, the 8th, in the hotel. Every foreigner had been instantly expelled as part of martial law. We were under house arrest but we could see, by daylight, that the police and PAP were back, and that the PLA must have pulled back. People were being carried away in substantial numbers. We saw several trucks and jeeps being loaded up with Tibetan suspects. Some

were so frightened they were almost hysterical, but if they couldn't walk they were carried out from the alleyways and put in vehicles to be carried away.

Long before sunrise the next morning, on the 9th, we were taken to the airport. The PLA were back and were in complete control. Every 100 feet or so our vehicle was stopped and inspected by sentries dressed in battle gear. The check points were so close that the driver hardly needed to shift gear until he got out of the city. They were making sure no Tibetans could slip away. The faces of the PLA were as hard as stone. These were really tough men. We felt desperately sorry for the Tibetans who had to stay behind while we could leave, even if our freedom had been handed to us at gunpoint in the form of an expulsion order."

[Back to top](#)

## Shop assistant receives seven year sentence

This testimony was given by a middle-aged shop assistant from Lhasa. She was arrested for her involvement in the 27 September and 1 October 1987 demonstrations in Lhasa, but was released after a warning. She continued to participate in demonstrations, including the 10 December 1988 protest. The following is a translation of her account of the March 1989 demonstrations and her subsequent arrest and imprisonment.

"When demonstrations took place successively on the 5, 6 and 7 of March 1989, through the Barkor, I joined the demonstrators on all the three days. I was there during the demonstrations at "Tsomonling", the "Victory Road" and in front of the Tibetan Medical Institute.

On 7 March, [1989] at about three in the afternoon, I met a Chinese cadre who was an acquaintance of mine. He passed us the information, "The decision has been taken that after 4pm, the Chinese Army could start shooting." At the time, there were several hundred people congregated in the east of Barkor who were still demonstrating. I warned them, "If we don't cease demonstrating, the Chinese Communist soldiers are going to start shooting after 4 p.m. today."

So the people heeded my warning and stopped the demonstrations and proceeded towards the Tromsikhang (market). After shouting a lot of slogans over there, we discussed and agreed that if we could continue the demonstrations on 8 and 9 March, we would be able to carry it through the 10 March, Martyr's Day. So, after everyone agreed to assemble at 11.00am on 9 March, people dispersed and went their own way.

However, to our utter shock, they started making arrests from the evening of 7 March onwards. They sent out teams in various directions to make the arrests. At the time, I was forced to seek the shelter of some friends elsewhere since I couldn't risk remaining at home. On the evening of 8 March, they came to my house to arrest me. Since I wasn't home, they conducted a cursory search of my room. After remaining in hiding for a few days, I returned to my home on 13 March 1989.

My return was discovered by the Party Committee. On the evening of the 15 March, two truck-loads of soldiers arrived, including people from the Travel Permit Bureau and the Public Security Bureau. They conducted a thorough search of all the rooms. During the searches, which lasted nearly three hours, they managed to break or damage quite a lot of my personal things. That day, they arrested me and left my 75-year old mother all alone at home, without any trace of pity or consideration.

After my arrest, I was taken to the Gutsa Detention Center where I was subjected to interrogations. During the initial phase of the interrogation, they asked things like, "You must tell us your reason and purpose of participating in the demonstrations on Lhasa. After you were found guilty of taking part in 27 September and 1 October [1987] demonstrations, you were let off because of the compassion we showed to your mother. Nevertheless, without any consideration of the consequences, you continued to participate in the demonstrations."

Then they started questioning me about the information that I had passed on to the demonstrators on 7 March 1989, warning of the policy decisions taken to allow the soldiers to fire after 4.00pm that day. They wanted to know who had given me that information. I replied, "I couldn't recognize him because he had his face covered with a scarf."

Then they started to act tough and questioned, "You've secret connections with [some] leaders of the Tibet Autonomous Region. You must tell us your contacts." They tried both persuasion and threats to make me talk.

Not being satisfied with my account of the events of 27 September and my refusal to divulge the source of information relating to the "orders to shoot", I was handcuffed and chained in Gutsa prison for three days. During these three days and nights, they beat me mercilessly. It was during these beatings that I sustained the injuries to my arms and legs.

I was detained for about a month with my hands shackled. From morning till evening and sometimes until midnight, they subjected me to interrogation sessions, using both persuasion and violence to try to extract information. All the while, I would be made to stand bare-footed on the cold cement floor.

On 6 October 1989, I was taken to the Intermediate People's Court of the TAR for a hearing of my case. However, when I arrived, I discovered that it was to be held in secret.

During the court proceedings, when the judge stated, "Tibet is not independent", I challenged him and gave many reasons to justify that Tibet was independent. I got sentenced to seven years imprisonment with my political rights revoked for two years.

I learnt later that it was proposed initially that I should be sentenced to two years in prison. However, because of the fact that I had shouted at the presiding judge and stubbornly insisted on the position that Tibet was an independent country invaded by the Chinese, my sentence was raised to seven years as a punishment.

On 17 November, I was transferred from Gutsa to Drapchi, the Number One Prison of the TAR. While in Drapchi prison, the prisoners observed Tibetan New Year in 1992 by wearing ordinary clothes, not prison uniforms. As a consequence, the prisoners in Unit Three got beaten up beyond anyone's imagination. I was hit in the face with an electric baton. I was knocked unconscious. Later, I was transferred to the isolation unit at the high security centre called Outritru with my hands in chains. During my eight days of detention there, I got beaten up so severely that I hovered between life and death. Then I was transferred back to Drapchi prison.

In short, during the course of stay at Drapchi, I did my best to get involved and support all the uprisings organized by the political prisoners.

Then we were required to sing the song titled, "Socialism is good!" I refused to sing it. Again, I got beaten up severely for not singing that song. At the time, when I tried to explain why I wouldn't sing that song, they charged me with inciting others to do the same and subjected me to particularly harsh treatment and severe beatings."

### Peaceful demonstrations and destruction of Chinese shops were "planned"

An exile Tibetan who was in Lhasa and witnessed the March 1989 demonstrations expresses some of his thoughts on the politics behind the declaration of martial law and the background of the demonstrations.

"The reason that the Chinese declared martial law could have been to clamp down on the unrest. They had faced unrest several times before and also must have been looking for an opportunity to crack down. I assume that it also had to do a lot with international politics. The Chinese authorities were not at all confident about what to do next in Tibet. During the 1980s, the period of temporary liberalisation, people had taken the opportunity to rebuild monasteries and monks and nuns returned; some private schools were allowed to operate and the Tibetan language was introduced in junior and middle schools. [The declaration of martial law] could have been a test by the Chinese government as to whether international pressure was really going [turn into] international action or not. It could also have been to counter the impact of the Nobel Peace prize. The Chinese may have suspected in March that it would be awarded to the Dalai Lama and must have planned to counter it.

It was the Sera monks who initiated the protest on 5 March. They had planned to carry it through from 5-10 March with 10 March supposed to be the largest demonstration - it was rumoured that the whole of Lhasa would be on the streets this day. The Chinese probably heard this and wanted to stop it. Maybe they found no other solution and imposed martial law. They were testing the situation as well as the Tibetans. It was planned from the very beginning to be a peaceful demonstration for five days. When the Chinese opened fire people got very aggravated and tried to resist the security forces.

The Tibetans set fire to the Lhasa City tax office. This was intentional. One of my friends was present and said that it was made clear that nobody should take anything. Everything was burned. There were a few incidents in which individuals ransacked Chinese shops and a few did take things. There were some videos taken by the Chinese of people getting inside shops and ransacking them. One of my friends saw the ransacking of a Chinese shop. In general I don't think that looting was the motive [behind attacks on Chinese shops]. The plan was to make Chinese peoples lives difficult. Many of my friends thought that if they did this then the Chinese businessmen would leave and others would not come. This had been discussed before the demonstration. It had been planned [before the demonstration] to burn Chinese shops to scare the Chinese. The Chinese government was encouraging Chinese businessmen to go to Tibet by showing them videos of how Chinese were making money [in Lhasa] setting up noodle stalls and so on. About two or three films on Tibet were being shown in China. A few of the Chinese did leave Lhasa [after the demonstrations], but later they came back."

### Death witnessed after shooting

The following is an extract from the testimony of a young Lhasa shopkeeper, now in exile, who was present during the demonstrations on 5 March 1989 and who witnessed her husband being killed.

"My husband was shot on 5 March 1989. I was there. Everybody was protesting that day. It was a riot, many Chinese shops and offices got attacked and burned. Most of the people participated in that. After the demonstration I came back to my house and he was not back. I went back and near the Banakshol [hotel] my husband and many others were burning Chinese things which they had taken out. There was a lot of smoke and we could not see each other properly and that time the Chinese came. They were police and, without warning, they fired indiscriminately straight into the crowd. Everybody ran and I ran into a side street near the Kyire hotel with two other friends; we were hiding and we had stones in our hands. One of our friends was hit in the leg. I told them, now let us go and hide somewhere and stop the bleeding. They will massacre us. I took them to another place. But the road was very small and everyone was panicking and trying to get away. At that instant when my husband came out of hiding again, shooting started and he was shot. He died on the spot.

Many people were shot and fell, this I saw. I saw one person being shot in the back while running, he also died on the spot. I saw more people. On that day the person who does the work of disposing the dead said that on 5 March alone he had to look after 22 corpses. Over the next few days there were so many killings. Later on so many died because of lack of treatment after being shot and because of beatings and torture."

#### Twelve year old girl arrested after demonstration

The following testimony was taken from a young girl from Lhasa, now in exile, who was only twelve when she was arrested for her involvement in the March 1989 demonstrations.

"In March 1989 I and my other friends took part in a demonstration in Lhasa that lasted three days. When the first demonstration on 5 March took place we heard about it in the weaving co-operative (nyamle). We took part only on the second day. There was a nun who had a Tibetan national flag in her hands. I followed the nun with all the ladies and shouted slogans. On that day [6 March] several times the Tibetans threw stones and so on. I tried to throw stones, but mostly I just shouted slogans.

We went around the Barkor and then to the police station, shouting slogans. Then the police used teargas so we couldn't see what was happening. But I saw that people were setting fire to the vehicles and motorcycles and people were throwing stones. The tear gas drove me away. As we were demonstrating many Chinese shops were set on fire along the way.

I was in the Tsomonling area when I saw a small child, about eight years old, that had been shot dead. When one of the Tibetans tried to pick up the child he was also shot and he also died. That was in the evening. At that time many were fleeing here and there, from one courtyard to another. I saw that the Gong an Ju (PSB) and Wujing (PAP) and army had come in and were lying on the ground and were shooting everywhere with machine guns. After this I hid in a courtyard and finally went home at night.

On the third day of the demonstration [7 March], in the morning, I went to the place where there were demonstrations taking place. In the evening I came back to my home. Later that night about seven policemen came to my house. My sister was still awake but I was sleeping. My sister said I was working at the co-operative (nyamle) all day and had not taken part in the demonstration. The police said that wasn't true; the neighbours had told [them] that I had been demonstrating and my photo was on video. So I was taken to the Barkor police station.

I was interrogated. They wanted to know who sent me. Was it the nyamle? My sister? My parents? Who led the procession? I said I went to the Barkor just to see what was going on and to go to the market. They said that wasn't true and that I had been seen demonstrating. They said that if I didn't tell the truth they would shoot me. They pointed their guns at me.

That first night we were kept in a place with no roof, but there was no way to get out. There was a Tibetan who interrogated us, asking: "Who instigated the demonstration? And who told us to take part?" We said noone had told us to come. We just went and it happened. They would kick me with their boots and pull my hair when they asked questions. They also threatened to shoot me if I didn't tell them the truth.

The next night we were transferred to Gutsa [detention centre]. I was interrogated again and tortured with the use of the electric baton on my body [shoulders, back of shoulder and back, including lower back are indicated]. Afterwards I couldn't stand properly for three or four days.

Chinese people used to come when we were being interrogated and speak in Chinese, so that we didn't understand what was being said. When I couldn't understand what the Chinese policeman was saying he would kick me in the back. When I was kneeling down he would kick me some more and then tell me to stand up.

After my release from Gutsa I spent all my time at my sister's house [in Lhasa], washing clothes and weaving carpets. I told my sister that I wanted to go to India because there was no hope for me [in Tibet] and I could no longer have any work [because of expulsion from the nyamle]. I made a carpet in my sister's home and got some money from that. I also got some money from my other relatives and fled secretly from Lhasa with my other friends."

[Back to top](#)

### Independence activist tortured

This extract is taken from the first-hand account of the arrest and subsequent interrogation of a layman from Lhasa. His father was a member of the "Four Rivers Six Ranges" resistance movement. His mother was arrested in 1962 when she was caught helping Tibetans write letters to their relatives and died in the same year. Expelled from school for shouting 'Long Live America' in 1965, he was arrested in Lhasa in 1975 for planning to escape from Tibet and was detained at Gutsa detention centre where he was kept in solitary isolation for over six months and tortured. He was sentenced in August 1975 to six years "shamo nagpo" [literally "black cap" i.e. heavy restrictions on movement and strict control], a sentence which was lifted in 1979 due to the central government's liberalisation policies. Having become involved in demonstrations again in 1987, he took an active part in the 1989 March demonstrations.

"[...] In 1989 I became more radical. I formed a small group and encouraged them to take part in the demonstration which was planned to take place in March. During the demonstration two of my friends were killed. One was shot on 6 March. The other was beaten to death on the street by military police (Wujing) on 5 March. My friend was arrested on 8 March, I was arrested one day later.

It was midnight when I was arrested at my own home. I was kicked and beaten with rifle butts. My hands were tied behind my back and I was taken to the police station. Again I was kicked and beaten,

especially in my face. After some time I was taken to another police station. Again I was beaten. I was asked to give the names of other people in my group. First I denied that I had taken part in the demonstration at all. When the police showed me pictures and videos of me participating in the demonstration I had to admit it. I insisted that I had only watched the demonstrators and that I had not really taken part. Then I was kicked very hard in my kidneys. Ever since my kidneys have given me trouble.

The interrogators applied the electric baton to my face, my neck and my hands. They used a kind of electric glove with which they pinched me in the face. This was very painful. I was dragged into a cell and left there lying on the ground, almost unconscious. Other prisoners helped me onto a bed. At around 4am I was taken to Outritru prison. There I was put in a cell outside the prison compound. I was given a mug and a pair of chopsticks. In the morning I got two hard dumplings (tingmo) and a cup of black tea. There was no lunch. In the evening of 12 March the prisoners in my cell did not get any food. I lost my temper and threw my chopsticks in the air. They hit my mug on the window sill. It fell down and made a lot of noise. My fellow prisoners felt encouraged and threw their chop sticks in the air as well. The guards came and soon found out that I had started this incident. I was beaten until I felt numb.

On 14 March I was taken to old Seitru prison. I was put in a cell with four others. I was left alone for one month, without being beaten or interrogated. Then three TAR officials came to interrogate me (one Chinese, one Tibetan woman and one Tibetan man). Again I was asked to give the names of my fellow demonstrators. On the first day of this interrogation I was not beaten. In the subsequent 17 days I was tortured every day. I was stripped naked and made to sit on my knees which were resting on a wooden stick. After some time my knees started to hurt very much. Two PSB men gave electric shocks on my genitals. After some days my health deteriorated rapidly.

One day a PSB man came into my cell with a stiletto [i.e. small dagger]. He threatened to kill me if I didn't give him any names of my "digtsu" (group). When I refused the PSB man stabbed me in my thighs, twice on the right and once on the left side. I was left without treatment for two days. I couldn't move my legs. My cellmates started appealing to the authorities to take me to hospital. Finally I was allowed to go the hospital which was situated within the prison compound.

Before my release I was taken to old Seitru where I stayed for seven days. Finally I was released without being sentenced. When I was released I went straight to my aunty's house. She had just died, being unable to cope with the alarming things she heard about me."

[Back to top](#)

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## CHINESE PRESS ON MARTIAL LAW

The following two articles, taken from the Chinese press, illustrate the official version of events in March 1989, depicting the demonstrators as a minority of trouble makers and the security forces as heroic figures, who were completely justified in their actions.

**"The Martial Law Photographic Exhibition was Opened Recently in the Autonomous Region's Mass Art Museum in Lhasa (Qun Yi Guan).**

Lhasa Evening Paper 7 August 1990

The photographic exhibition depicting martial law in Lhasa was opened on 31 July at the Autonomous Region's Mass Art Museum.

On 8 March 1989, the State Council proclaimed that those in command must impose martial law in Lhasa. The imposition lasted for 419 days and was lifted on 1 May this year. Under the leadership of the Central Authority, the State Council, the Central Military Committee and the Autonomous Region's Party Committee, the Lhasa martial law forces co-operated with the public security cadres, policemen and with the armed police force in order to smash the repeated disturbances of the splittists, both within and outside the country. They forcibly protected people's lives and the safety of their property. They effectively stabilised the situation in Tibet and fulfilled the aim of martial law in Lhasa.

There are altogether 200 photographs in this exhibition. The vivid pictures re-display the glorious achievement of officials and soldiers of the martial law forces in Lhasa. They reflect the fish and water relationship between the army and the people in Lhasa during those 419 days and nights. They establish the magnificent image of the Lhasa martial law forces as 'civilised, grand and victorious'.

In the morning of 31 July, the vice-party secretary of the Autonomous Region and the commander in chief of the Lhasa martial law forces cut the ribbon at the opening ceremony of the exhibition. The secretary of the Municipal Committee Qujia (Choegyul), the PLA army men in Lhasa and the armed police officials and soldiers all visited the exhibition."

"The State Council issued the order to lift martial law in Lhasa, Tibet Autonomous Region.

Xinhua 30 April 1990; Tibet Daily 1 May 1990

Since the situation in Lhasa, Tibet Autonomous Region, has settled down, and now the social system is in order, the task of martial law has been successfully completed. According to the 16th item of the 89th point of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, the State Council has decided that starting from 1 May 1990, martial law in Lhasa, Tibet Autonomous Region, will be lifted.

[Signed] Prime Minister Li Peng 30 April, 1990

## Commentary; May Stability Continues to Prevail

The State Council's order, issued by Prime Minister Li Peng, has decided that martial law in Lhasa will be lifted. This important decision signifies that we have achieved a great victory in our Region in the anti-separatist struggle; it also signifies that the situation is going to become more stable; moreover, it indicates the stability of the political situation in our country to the world.

Since September 1987, a handful of separatists have repeatedly created disturbances in Lhasa aimed at the "Independence of Tibet"; the law has been trampled on, the social stability destroyed and people's lives and property have been seriously damaged. Therefore, according to the 'Constitution', the State Council decided to impose martial law in Lhasa on 8th March last year. Since then, under the correct leadership of the Central Party, the State Council and the Central Military Committee, a co-operative effort has been made by the Party and the administrative and military bodies in our region to smash the activities of the separatists, which are frequently attempted, over the period of a year. They have



attacked their rampant arrogance, stabilised the situation and restored order. They have created a stable and comfortable surrounding for the people. This fact has forcibly proved that the imposition of martial law was necessary and thoroughly correct; it represented the fundamental interests of the people, fulfilled the wish of all nationalities, and was warmly approved and utterly supported by the masses of nationalities in our region.

During the period of martial law, the PLA force in Lhasa strictly carried out the details of the order issued by the State Council; it co-operated closely with the armed police and the Public Security police; it effectively guarded the unification of the motherland, preserved national unity and realised the task of stabilising the general situation. They have made immortal contributions to the motherland and to the people, they deserve the honourable name of the nation's guard, and the people's guard; they won the whole-hearted approval, love and support of the masses of all nationalities.

When the situation was basically stable, the State Council made a decision that, in time, martial law would be lifted in Lhasa. This decision was necessary, completely correct and significant. It will further extend the development of economic reforms, promote the consistent development of the economy in a stable and harmonious manner and help the progress of many activities in our region.

At present, the situation in our region is, on the whole, stable. The appearance of the stable situation came from a severe struggle of blood and fire, at great cost to the country and its people, and with the arduous efforts of the Party, administration, military, police and people. The stability did not come of its own accord; we must treasure it, and protect it. The country needs it and people desire it. When stability prevails, it represents the highest interest of the people of all nationalities. Without a stable social surrounding, further development of the reform is not possible; without a stable social surrounding, the realisation of the policies and the improvement of people's living standards will be seriously affected and interrupted. On the whole, it is not possible for the country to realise the grand goal of "the four modernisations" without stability. If Tibet is not stable, the new, socialist, civilised, rich and united Tibet will not be built. Therefore, Party and administrative leaders from different levels, and the masses of people from different nationalities, must all set up the prevailing idea of stability. Everything should be secondary to 'stability', all should obey 'stability', and all must be to the advantage of 'stability'. We must seriously criticise any words or actions, in whatever form, that threaten stability. As for the activities of a very few hostile forces, to split the motherland and destroy national solidarity, we must wage a tit-for-tat struggle.

To preserve and further develop the stable situation, the masses of people from different nationalities are the force that we must heavily rely on. We must firmly carry out the spirit of the Party's 6th Meeting of the 13th People's Congress and further strengthen the flesh and blood relationship between the Party and the masses of people. Although martial law has been lifted, the struggle with the splittists is not over. We must keep our heads clear and be alert; arouse the people and rely on them, in order to use the iron fist of the people's democratic dictatorship to severely attack those separatist elements, and other hostile elements, who are still enemies of the people. The basis for stability lies in the people, [words unidentifiable]."

[Back to top](#)

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## CHRONOLOGY

## Three years of dissent

The demonstrations in March 1989 that culminated in the declaration of martial law followed a series of demonstrations in Lhasa beginning in September 1987. The following chronology charts the developments in Lhasa leading to the authorities' declaration that the situation in Lhasa was no longer "unstable" on 25 October 1990 - six months after the lifting of martial law.

The protests listed are the major protests that took place during this period and the events leading up to the imposition of martial law. TIN has received reports of altogether 62 incidents during the period September 1987 to May 1990, as follows:

**Sept-Dec 1987:** 9 incidents: 8 confirmed; 1 unconfirmed;

**1988:** 17 incidents: 14 confirmed; 3 not ostensibly about independence

**1989:** 34 incidents: 18 confirmed; 9 unconfirmed; 7 not ostensibly about independence, of which 2 are unconfirmed

**Jan-May 1990:** 2 incidents not ostensibly about independence

### **;27 September 1987**

Twenty-one monks and 150 lay people stage a protest in the Barkor. At least 26 are arrested.

### **1 October 1987 (China's National Day)**

The anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. Thirty-four monks demonstrate in the Barkor and all are arrested. Monks from Sera, the Jokhang and Nechung monastery as well as lay Tibetans make circuits of the Barkor shouting slogans in response to the treatment of the monks. About 60 arrests are made and some violence is reported. Detainees are taken to the police station at the south-west corner of the Barkor. A crowd of between 2,000 and 3,000 people gathers outside demanding the release of the prisoners. The police try to make arrests and the crowd throws rocks at Chinese cameramen and police on the roof of the police station. Eight police vehicles in front of the building are overturned and set on fire. The crowd tries to smash down the door of the station and then sets the door on fire. Forty-nine year old monk Jampa Tenzin races inside the police station to rescue his detained companions; his body is severely burned. (Jampa Tenzin was initially arrested, then set free at the request of the Panchen Lama. He died on 22 February 1992 in mysterious circumstances). Fire engines and police reinforcements are forced back by stones thrown from the crowd. The police open fire at about 11 am, and are seen to be aiming into the crowd. At least eight people are shot dead. The crowd disperses into alleyways around the Barkor.

### **6 October 1987**

Between eighty and one hundred monks are arrested when they assemble outside Lhasa's government offices to protest against the maltreatment of protestors.

### **5 March 1988**

Just after the statue of Maitreya, the future Buddha, has been paraded around the Barkor, monks start shouting for the release of Yulu Dawa Tsering, a Buddhist philosopher and teacher and one of Tibet's most prominent political prisoners, arrested in December 1987 for talking about Tibetan independence to an Italian tourist. (Yulu Dawa Tsering was released in November 1994 and lives in Lhasa). Protestors mount the stage where government officials are sitting and manhandle them. One monk throws a stone at the officials and some Tibetans throw rocks at Chinese cameramen taping events. Some reports state that the bodyguard of one of the officials shot a Khampa dead. The crowd starts

making circuits of the Barkor, shouting independence slogans. Demonstrators clash with security forces, who are armed with riot shields, teargas, firearms and electric batons. Tibetans set fire to and damage several vehicles, shops and other buildings. One member of the PAP dies when he is thrown out of a second storey window. Monks inside the Jokhang are known to have received severe beatings. At least five people are killed.

### **9 December 1988**

Expecting a demonstration on December 10, Human Rights Day, security forces are deployed in and around the Barkor and groups of PAP regularly patrol the area.

### **10 December 1988 (International Human Rights Day)**

Monks and nuns approach the Barkor and are joined by lay Tibetans. The crowd, totalling about 150 demonstrators, divides into two groups each carrying a flag and shouting independence slogans, one walking clockwise around the Barkor, the other anti-clockwise. As the groups reach the front of the Jokhang the police open fire, killing at least two people and wounding several others.

### **11 December 1988**

The Chinese government announces that Wu Jinghua is to be replaced as secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in Tibet by Hu Jintao, a young reformer. Wu Jinghua is said to have been respected by Tibetans because he was thought to be sympathetic to their cultural aspirations. Some believe that his replacement was in response to the unrest in Lhasa since late 1987.

### **28 January 1989**

The 10th Panchen Lama dies of a heart attack. The Panchen Lama had been an outspoken critic of the regime. Rumours circulated that he was murdered.

### **7 February 1989**

A Tibetan flag is raised above the Jokhang on the day marking the Tibetan New Year; it is removed after several hours.

### **13 February 1989**

At about 7.30am four nuns demonstrate in the Barkor.

### **17 February 1989**

More than 1,000 PAP personnel are paraded past the People's Cultural Revolution Palace Memorial in Lhasa.

### **20 February 1989**

A demonstration takes place in the Barkor at 11 am.

### **20 February 1989**

A Tibetan flag appears again in front of the Jokhang and pamphlets are distributed; up to 300 nuns planning to hold a demonstration are turned back by police at the outskirts of the city.

### **22 February 1989**

Five people are arrested after nuns, as well as monks according to some reports, lead 50 people in a demonstration around the Barkor.

### **1 March 1989**

Shungseb nuns and three monks stage a demonstration in Lhasa, disappearing into the alleyways of the Barkor area before they can be arrested.

### **2 March 1989**

Thirty-seven nuns from Tsangkhung nunnery demonstrate in the Barkor.

### **4 March 1989**

Thirteen nuns demonstrate in the Barkor by carrying out a circuit and shouting slogans.

### **5 March 1989**

Late in the morning, a group of about 12 or 13 monks, nuns and lay youths start walking around the Barkor holding a hand-drawn paper Tibetan flag and shouting slogans, including "This is a peaceful demonstration, please do not use violence". Several Tibetans join the protest and hundreds look on. As they approach the police station, one or more policemen stationed on the roof of the building throws bottles at the small crowd. A Tibetan youth throws a stone in return that hits the wall. One policeman then immediately fires two shots into the air and then he and at least one other policeman fire directly at the crowd. Some Tibetans are wounded but nobody is killed. Tear gas canisters are fired at about 12.25pm and Tibetans throw stones. At about 2.30pm there is more shooting, the crowd disperses and a large group of protesters occupy a three-quarter kilometre section of Dekyi Shar Lam (Beijing Dong Lu), the main street of Lhasa, waving flags and shouting slogans. The crowd peaks at about 1500. Tibetans begin to break into Chinese owned shops and burn the contents. One source states that this was in retaliation to a number of Chinese security personnel breaking up and shooting their way out of a Tibetan restaurant. Although the Chinese press report looting, witnesses say this was minimal. Some Tibetans attack Chinese pedestrians and those on bicycles, although others try to stop them doing so. On three occasions during the afternoon groups of about 100 PAP advance down the main road indiscriminately firing automatic weapons at the crowd, at 3.25pm, 5.00pm and 6.50pm according to witnesses, the third instance taking place around the Tromsikhang market.

[Back to top](#)

### **6 March 1989**

Protesters gather in Dekyi Shar Lam at 10am or 11am, continuing the destruction of Chinese shops, chanting and carrying flags. The PAP make two advances into the area, firing into the crowd and then retreating and in separate incidents between five and eight people are shot dead. Lhasa radio broadcasts a Xizang Ribao (Tibet Daily) article warning that "Rioters will come to no good end. If the splittists continue to fly in the face of the people [...] the iron fist of the people's democratic dictatorship will certainly deal them a crushing blow! [...] There is a limit to our tolerance." (SWB 7/3/89)

### **7 March 1989**

The PAP make more sorties into the Barkor and the demonstrations continue, although on a smaller scale. Martial law is declared at midnight.

### **8 March 1989**

The city is sealed off from the outside world. All foreigners are ordered to leave Lhasa within 48 hours of the decree and military checkpoints are erected in and around the city. Tibetans are required to carry permits to move around Lhasa. There are reports in the Chinese press of continuing sporadic riots, including an incident in which "more than 30 lamas from the Potala Palace tried to take to the streets to

stir up trouble, but they were dissuaded by the police and returned", according to the Chinese news agency Zhongguo Xinwen She on 9 March.

### **10 March 1989**

Reliable sources report a major display of force by the military, with a reported 40 trucks, each carrying at least 20 armed soldiers, positioned in the Barkor and 12 trucks carrying rocket-launchers stationed in the Jokhang square pointing towards the temple.

### **10 March 1989**

Xinhua reports that members of the PAP have been stationed at more than 60 designated sites. The article, entitled "Lhasa soldiers and police receive 'thanks and goodwill'" states that PAP members "refrain from bothering the masses, sleep in the open and stick to their guard posts day and night [...] They have refused to leave the front because of minor wounds [...] Ebullient letters of goodwill have been passed through various channels to officers and men assigned to guard duty." The article also reports that many residents have taken to the streets to express their thanks. (SWB 14/3/89)

### **14 March 1989**

Xinhua reports that "Buddhist believers" are free to visit any of Lhasa's temples during martial law by showing their identity cards. (SWB 16/3/89)

### **15 March 1989**

A Tibet regional Party committee meeting is held in Lhasa to report on the situation in Lhasa since the imposition of martial law. Regional Party Committee deputy secretary Danzim (Tenzin in Tibetan) states that: "Although the situation in Lhasa is now quiet, the separatists are still active. The possibility of the separatists plotting and causing further riots cannot be ruled out." He also announces that the next stage of work is to carry out propaganda and education, "strengthening ethnic solidarity". (SWB 18/3/89)

### **20 March 1989**

The TAR government announces that in future all film and video shot inside Tibet by foreigners would need prior authorisation from the authorities, according to Lhasa radio. (SWB 24/3/89)

### **21 March 1989**

Laws are announced decreeing that all non-resident Tibetans in Lhasa who have failed to contribute to the economic and cultural life of the city are to be expelled or dealt with harshly. Lhasa is reported to have a floating population of 40,000, including pilgrims and traders from all over Tibet. (People's Daily 21/3/89)

### **21 March 1989**

Yan Ming Fu, director of China's United Front, alleges that the Dalai Lama had sent Tibetans into Tibet who were trained as terrorists in Japan. He states that Chinese foreknowledge of this was the reason for the implementation of martial law and that Europeans had been sent into Tibet in 1988 to organise riots. (Xinhua 21/03/89)

### **22 March 1989**

General Zhang Suoshang tells delegates to the National People's Congress (NPC) in Beijing that there have been 21 demonstrations or riots in Tibet since September 1987. The general (who was then Military Commissar of the TAR) says that during the March 1989 riots "more than 40 policemen were

killed or wounded by the rioters with guns". He also states that the riots lasting from 5-7 March caused more than 10m yuan (\$1.25m) in economic losses, according to Zhongguo Xinwen She. (SWB 30/3/89)

### **31 March 1989**

During a press conference, the Lhasa city mayor, Loga, announces that 300 arrests were made in the first three weeks of martial law and that 80% of the detainees are under 20 years old. (International Herald Tribune 1/4/89)

### **27 August 1989**

Ngabo Ngawang Jigme, China's top Tibetan official ("Uprising Marks Turning Point in Tibetan History"), says that "During the riots some policemen failed to obey discipline and prior instructions and opened fire on innocent people". (Tibet Daily 27/8/89)

### **October 1989**

A campaign is launched to conduct "screening and investigation" of Tibetans suspected of political dissent. A new department called the "Office for Stabilising the Situation" is set up to supervise the operation and the TAR Higher People's Court is reported to have created a special screening and investigation unit consisting of TAR police, the Lhasa city police, the Higher People's Court and the local neighbourhood police.

### **11 and 12 October 1989**

Several spontaneous gatherings take place in Lhasa to celebrate the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Dalai Lama. These involve the traditional burning of incense (sang sol) and throwing of tsampa (lha gyal), with up to 1000 people taking part. No overtly political demonstrations take place.

### **13 October 1989**

Meetings are held in all major government offices to denounce the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Dalai Lama and condemning the celebrations in Lhasa. Security forces are instructed to arrest tsampa throwers, whose activity is to be treated as "counter-revolutionary".

### **22 October 1989**

The BBC reports that earlier that week, Wang Naiwen, a spokesman for the Tibet regional PSB, told Reuters correspondent Guy Dinmore that over 400 Tibetans had been arrested following the March demonstrations: 320 had been released; 63 had been tried and sentenced; and about 20 nuns had been sent to labour camps without trial for up to three years.

### **25 October 1989**

More than 1,000 people, led by five monks, take to the streets of Lhasa. The five monks are arrested and sentenced without trial to three years re-education through labor. (Tibet Daily 18/1/90)

### **11 November 1989**

1,000 investigators are reported to have begun training for the screening and investigation operation at the Sunlight Hotel in Lhasa.

### **30 November 1989**

Ngawang Phulchung, the 30 year old leader of the group of Drepung monks who devised the "Drepung Constitution" is sentenced to 19 years in prison. The monks, who had produced one of the most

important political documents to come out of Tibet - setting forward a democratic constitution for Tibet - were described by the authorities as "the scum of religious circles".

#### **5 December 1989**

The ban on lha gyal (tsampa throwing) is renewed and the practice of sang sol (burning incense) is also banned.

[Back to top](#)

#### **4 March 1990**

Tanks are reportedly stationed in the Jokhang square to prevent unrest.

#### **April 1990**

Fifty-eight monks are expelled from Drepung, Sera and Ganden monasteries following the re-education and screening campaign for political activities and up to 150 nuns are believed to have been sent back to their villages. Most of them were imprisoned for between four and nine months after March 1989. Monks from Sera and Drepung stage walk-outs from their monasteries in sympathy.

#### **28 April 1990**

A public rally is held in Lhasa, officially described as "a worksite meeting to crush criminals". Forty-three Tibetans are publicly paraded, humiliated and lectured. (Lhasa Radio 29/4/90; Monitoring Section of the Tibetan government in exile)

#### **30 April 1990**

An unnamed Party official states that "the struggle between subversion and anti- subversion will not stop with the lifting of martial law". He says that the Party and the government must not slacken "its fighting will" adding: "We must deal with hostile elements with the iron fist of the people's democratic dictatorship." (Lhasa TV 30/4/90)

#### **30 April 1990**

Martial law is officially lifted at midnight on 30 April 1990.

#### **5 May 1990**

Lhasa TV broadcasts a Lhasa City PSB Public Notice, dated 30 April 1990, telling citizens that approval must be obtained from the relevant authorities for any kind of assembly and stating that "forceful measures" will be taken to put down any disturbances. The decree authorises the police to "resolutely crack down on activities that oppose the socialist system or are aimed at dividing the motherland and undermining the unity of nationalities". (SWB 7/5/90)

#### **18 May 1990**

A public announcement is made on Lhasa TV that two Tibetans, Migmar Tashi and Dawa, have been sentenced to death for trying to escape from prison. (SWB 22/5/90)

#### **25 May 1990**

A poster appears in Lhasa in response to the executions of Migmar Tashi and Dawa, threatening revenge, as follows:

"On 17th May, [the two] Tibetans Migmar Tashi and Dawa were executed. [...] The Tibetan people have watched this and past actions with forbearance because we have remembered the advice of His Holiness to be peaceful and not to harm others. But if the Chinese misunderstand this forbearance and if they directly or indirectly do anything to the life of Tibetan freedom fighters who are in their prisons, no Tibetan will be able to forsake his race, and Chinese in positions of authority will receive an eye for an eye treatment. The consequences will be the responsibility of you, the Chinese conquerors. Let this be a warning to you." Signed "From the Tibetan people: 25th May 1990." [TIN Doc1(GG)]

No other recent posters or pamphlets are known to have contained threats of violence.

#### **4-9 June 1990**

At a regional meeting on political science and law in Lhasa, Party secretary Hu Jintao says that the situation in Tibet is "good" but that the lifting of martial law in Lhasa does not mean the end to the struggle against separatism. "The task of preserving social stability after the lifting of martial law is even more arduous." (SWB 12/6/90)

#### **23 August 1990**

The Minister for State Security, Jia Chungwang, describes the situation in Tibet as "stable", adding that "it is necessary to note that the conspiratorial activities of [...] national splittists [...] are still very grave". (SWB 27/8/90)

#### **25 October 1990**

A Tibetan official, Jamphel Sherab, announces in a speech to the Lhasa branch of the CPPCC at the celebration of its third regional conference that Tibet is no longer "unstable". He states that "in particular the gradual return to peace after the lifting of martial law" had been achieved.

[Back to top](#)

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## **THE LHASA UPRISING - March 1959**

### **A Turning Point in Tibetan History**

The Lhasa Uprising on 10 March 1959 marked a turning point in modern Tibetan history. Thousands of Tibetans took to the streets in an unprecedented show of unity against the Chinese authorities, sparked by fears that the Dalai Lama might be captured by the Chinese. Crowds gathered around his residence, the Norbulingka Palace, in an attempt to protect him.

The uprising, which lasted for almost two weeks, brought to an end the attempt of the Chinese central government to win over the ruling elite in Tibet and bring about gradual socialist reform. On 23 March, the day after the People's Liberation Army regained control of Lhasa, the red flag of the People's Republic of China was raised above the Potala palace for the first time.

The Lhasa Uprising broke out on 10 March 1959. Five days earlier (5 March), after the Great Prayer Festival (smon lam chen mo) in Lhasa, the Dalai Lama had made the traditional move from his winter residence at the Potala to the Norbulingka. He was supposed to be attending a dance performance at the PLA military encampment on March 10, but had been told to attend without his usual retinue.



Junior officials, having failed to dissuade the Dalai Lama from attending the performance and worrying that the Chinese might attempt to remove him to Beijing, where he could be more easily manipulated, spread the rumour that the Chinese were going to abduct the Dalai Lama. There is no evidence to confirm that this is really what the Chinese had planned, but by the morning of 10 March huge crowds gathered at the Summer Palace with the intention of protecting their political and spiritual leader. Demonstrations in support of the Dalai Lama and for a free Tibet began in the Barkor and Tibetan and Chinese officials were attacked by the crowd. The gathering escalated into a mass protest throughout the city against Chinese rule in Tibet.

For over a week, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) made no attempt to quash the uprising, but on 17 March the army started shelling the city and some arrests were made. On 20 March, the order came for the PLA to retake Lhasa and on 22 March they gained control of the city. The next day, the flag of the People's Republic of China (PRC) was raised above the Potala palace. On 28 March the State Council announced the abolition of the local Tibetan government. Eighteen high ranking Tibetan officials who had fled with the Dalai Lama were dismissed from office. The Panchen Lama was appointed Chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region in the Dalai Lama's absence and Ngabo Ngawang Jigme, one of the signatories of the 17-point agreement, was selected as Vice-Chairman. (The now 89 year old Ngabo Ngawang Jigme still holds the honorary position of vice-chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference). Xinhua, the official Chinese news agency, reported in an article dated March 28 1959 that more than 4,000 "rebellious troops" were arrested following the uprising. By 1960, the PLA had secured complete control over central Tibet and the Tibetan areas of Kham and Amdo (now integrated into Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces).

Early in the morning of 17 March, two shells had landed in the vicinity of the Dalai Lama's residence. That evening, he escaped in disguise and made his way to the Khampa rebel base in Lhokha (Shannan) prefecture. On 30 March 1959, the Dalai Lama crossed the border into India. Many of the Khampa guerrillas also fled into exile, including the leader of the "Four Rivers, Six Ranges" pan-Khampa resistance movement, Gonbo Tashi, who left Tibet on 28 April 1959. Tibetan exiles continued resistance activities from a base in Mustang until 1974. More than 80,000 Tibetans have followed the Dalai Lama into exile since 17 March 1959.

Throughout the 1950s, the Chinese government had used pragmatic and persuasive methods to win over the Tibetan population and leaders. The Chinese leadership recognised that central Tibet (known traditionally as U-Tsang) should be dealt with differently from the rest of the PRC and had implemented a policy of gradual reform of Tibetan society and the Tibetan economy, making little change to the traditional Tibetan way of life. In 1951 the Chinese government and Tibetan officials, including Ngabo Ngawang Jigme, signed the 17-point agreement, guaranteeing Tibetan autonomy, protection of religion and the existing political system, but also legitimising Chinese rule in Tibet. Once this agreement was signed, the People's Liberation Army ceased the military advance into Tibet and set about gaining support from the ruling elite and constructing an infrastructure. The Chinese realised the importance of gaining the support of the Tibetan government and in particular the Dalai Lama as the key to winning over the population. In central Tibet a certain amount of diplomacy was attempted.

However, in the Tibetan areas of Amdo and Kham, Tibetans were subjected to more aggressive policies that directly threatened their traditional way of life and the traditional position that the monasteries held in Tibetan society. These regions fell outside the scope of the 17-point agreement and were therefore faced with a programme of reform in line with the rest of the fledgling PRC. In 1954,

five years after the formation of the People's Republic, the programme of land re-distribution was launched, threatening the economic base of Tibetan monasteries, and by 1955 measures were being taken to settle nomads. These policies sparked off uprisings in Kham and Amdo. News of the reforms taking place in these largely Tibetan areas spread into central Tibet and there was a huge influx of refugees escaping from Kham and Amdo into U-Tsang. Many of these refugees had gathered in Lhokha by 1958 and organised themselves into the "Four Rivers, Six Ranges" resistance movement. The Chinese government was cautious in dealing with the rebels in central Tibet, attempting to avoid challenging the authority of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government. By the beginning of 1959, despite a lack of unity amongst Tibetans from different regions, there was widespread anti-Chinese feeling throughout Tibet. Fears for the safety of the Dalai Lama acted as the catalyst in sparking off the revolt against Chinese rule in March 1959.

The Lhasa Uprising signalled the end of the gradualist policy of the Chinese in Tibet. The Dalai Lama and most of the Tibetan government had fled into exile and there was no longer a need to woo them. A pro-Chinese government was put in place and the central government, with the assistance of the People's Liberation Army, took firm control over the region. Thousands of people had died in the aftermath of the uprising, and thousands arrested and imprisoned without trial. Many Tibetans who now in exile testify to widespread maltreatment of prisoners, poor prison conditions and malnutrition, resulting in the deaths of many of those detained in prisons and labour camps. The Chinese claim that the destruction of Tibetan monasteries and artefacts came later and was a "mistake" that resulted from the extremism of the Cultural Revolution in 1966-76. Reliable reports from inside Tibet, however, claim that much of this destruction was wrought in the late 1950s and early 1960s as the Chinese put down the Lhasa rebellion and the Khampa guerrilla activities outside Lhasa.

A Tibetan from Lhokha, who was imprisoned for three years for participating in the uprising and sent for "labour reform" for 20 years in the Cultural Revolution, said that although the Chinese intention in coming to Tibet was to "liberate" its people, they had not done so. "The Chinese said that the country was very backward compared with others and they would improve it," he said. "However, Tibetan people were not so easy to deceive and we challenged the Chinese for nine years. When, at last, the Chinese learned that their policy was not enough to turn the people over to their side they used military force. After they killed all the people to be killed and imprisoned others the Chinese proclaimed what they called the 'peaceful liberation of Tibet'. In fact the peaceful liberation was achieved by bombs and military aeroplanes".

[Back to top](#)

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## EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNT

### Son of Tibetan Official Detained for 22 Years

*The following extracts are taken from the testimony of the son of a Tibetan official. He was arrested in 1959 at the age of fifteen and spent the next 22 years in prisons and labour camps.*

"On 19 March 1959 I was arrested from Shol (below the Potala Palace) in Lhasa. I was 15 years old at that time and was arrested along with my father, one of the delegates attending the National Assembly of the Tibetan Government. Along with over 1,000 Tibetans who were arrested at that time, we were

taken to the east of Lhasa Bhu-zhur, a building belonging to an aristocratic family. We were kept there for one night guarded on all sides by armed soldiers.

All the arrested Tibetans there numbered around 4,000. Along with over 2,000 other Tibetans, I was then taken to Norbulingka, the summer residence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, where we were detained in the quarters of the Palace Security guards. For the next 26 days I was detained there. We were interrogated about the Tibetan uprising and its events. The quarters were converted into prisons and the Chinese authorities would say, "if you tell us the truth, we will show leniency, so without hiding anything in your mind, you should tell us everything about the events".

All the prisoners hailing from Kham province were transferred to prisons in Kham region, while all those hailing from Lhasa and neighbouring areas were sent to Ngachen Lhogkhang (electricity-plant), 25kms to the east of Lhasa.

Normally, it was eight hours work a day, but in an emergency the prisoners were forced to work for 12 hours a day. During this work the Chinese authorities would purposely force the prisoners to compete with each other. The food situation there was not bad, three meals a day. The main work of the prisoners was to build canals and a dam to collect enough water from the Tsangpo river to generate electricity.

During this period, there were cases of Tibetan prisoners committing suicide by jumping into the Tsangpo river, because they could not face the hardship. I was injured in the back because of carrying countless straw-baskets of earth, and my hands were injured due to excessive effort digging up earth. On a few occasions, I also attempted to jump into the Tsangpo river. A few sections of the prisoners were assigned to dig out the rocky hills. On one occasion fourteen Tibetans were buried to death. I was a witness when nine Tibetans were buried to death by a falling rocky-hill. I was kept there for 11 months. During those 11 months, I would estimate that 30-35 Tibetans lost their lives while working for the plant or by committing suicide. Some Tibetan prisoners were paraded and humiliated in the "thamzing" or "struggle-sessions" and later went mad.

*[The interviewee was then transferred to a new unit for prisoners whose behaviour was not "favourable". He was there for seven months and was then transferred to the PSB prison in Lhasa (which has now been transferred to the East of Lhasa and is known as Gutsa detention centre) for one year.]*

Here many prisoners died of starvation. From 1961 the prisoners started suffering from inadequate diet. The diet was immediately changed into (gyadam or beans) tsampa, to which the Tibetan stomach is unaccustomed.

After at least six different interrogation sessions, finally the Chinese authorities once again asked me to "confess" everything truthfully. They said that this was the last chance they were giving me. They even promised access to a good school to educate me. After one week, I was called to the office of the prison, where the authorities had already decided to "sentence" me as I had nothing more to tell them. In the "sentence" document I was labelled as "inciting" the Tibetans, that the Communist Chinese policy is like a wet leather hat, which will tighten as it dries up. And, that I participated in the uprising calling for Tibetan independence. That I was one of the Tibetans who were stopping other Tibetans from surrendering after the fighting in Lhasa with the Chinese troops. And that I tried to escape Tibet but was stopped by the PLA troops and couldn't. "Therefore, though he is young and not capable, he is

worse than his father in having a counter-revolutionary mind. He is therefore, 'sentenced' to ten years in prison with hard- labour and is deprived of his political rights for four years", the document added.

*[After the interviewee was sentenced in 1961 he was transferred back to Ngachen where he found that many of the prisoners were weak from malnutrition. After four months he was moved to the Netang brick-making factory for one year, again finding that the prisoners were suffering from starvation.]*

Then, I was transferred to Phenpo Lung Chrang (agriculture unit) in Phenpo. Here I worked in the fields for the next five years. There were around 300 prisoners. Cultivating mostly "Dro" (Tibetan word for wheat) prisoners were given 1 gyama and 2 sang (approximately 650 grammes) of tsampa for one whole day and black tea. Some of the prisoners would eat the whole meal for breakfast and then remain without food for the rest of the day.

At all these labour camps the normal working day was eight hours, but sometimes in the name of emergency, we were forced to work for ten hours. After a whole day's work, the Chinese authorities would call meetings every night. These were indoctrination meetings where "counter-revolutionary elements" would be criticised.

The annual meeting would be feared by prisoners as worse than being forced to work. Because, during this annual meeting, prisoners would be executed, tortured, punished for their behaviour over the year. Those prisoners who had a "good name" with the authorities would see their "sentence" reduced. While prisoners not liked by the authorities would see their "sentence" being extended. This annual meeting would continue for a month or even a month and 15 days. During this period, prisoners are not allowed to possess any kind of belts, boot-laces and so on.

*[After the start of the Cultural Revolution he was transferred to Powo in south-west Kham (part of the TAR) and then in the summer of 1967 to Nyingtri (Lingzhi) in Kongpo), south Tibet at Phamo Chrang prison. He was formally released on 19 March 1969, but was retained in the work unit for four years because he was labelled a "black hat". He was arrested again in December 1973 for writing a letter criticising the authorities.]*

I was chained all over my body and on my naked body nylon ropes were tied all over. In this condition, my body would be stretched with ropes and tortured severely. For the next one year, I was subjected to numerous torture sessions at the Nyingtri prison. During this period I was mostly subjected to solitary confinement. Numerous interrogation and torture session were conducted on me. The nylon rope marks around my right shoulder are still visible.

At the end of December 1973 I was "released". But I was again kept in the work unit and detained there until 1981. During all these years, I was made to cut trees in the mountains of Nyingtri. There were around 600 prisoners at this unit.

Let me recollect the most horrible experience at the prison. There was one prisoner who was assigned to be the cook. He became so scared of the "thamzing" [struggle session] that he jumped in the boiling pot one day. He was accused of "misusing" a small quantity of butter. This happened in 1973 when I was being imprisoned for the second time. There have been many other cases of Tibetans committing suicide."

[Back to top](#)

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## CHINESE PRESS ON THE LHASA UPRISING

*The following document illustrates the official Chinese stance on the 1959 uprising. The full text of this report can be found in "A Poisoned Arrow: The Secret Report of the 10th Panchen Lama", Appendix B9, published by TIN in 1997.*

Communiqué on the Revolt Issued by the New China News Agency.

[NCNA, English, Peking, March 28, 1959]

"Violating the will of the Tibetan people and betraying the motherland, the Tibetan Local Government and the upper-strata reactionary clique colluded with imperialism, assembled rebellious bandits and launched armed attacks against the PLA Garrison in Lhasa during the night of 19 March. Acting on orders to put the rebellion down, the valiant units of the PLA stationed in Tibet completely smashed the rebellious bandits in the city of Lhasa on the 22nd. Now the units of the PLA, assisted by patriotic people of all sections, both religious and secular, are mopping up the rebellious bandits in other places in Tibet.

In order to safeguard the unification of the motherland and national unity, Premier Zhou Enlai of the State Council issued an order on 28 March which, in addition to ordering the Tibetan Military Area Command of the People's Liberation Army to stamp out the rebellion thoroughly, proclaimed that from that day the Tibetan Local Government which had instigated the rebellion was to be dissolved and the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region should exercise the functions and powers of the Tibetan Local Government.

The armed rebellion of the Tibetan Local Government and the reactionary clique of the upper-strata in Lhasa began on 10 March. The Dalai Lama had originally planned to attend a theatrical performance in the auditorium of the Tibetan Military Area Command of the People's Liberation Army on 10 March. The proposal was put forth by the Dalai Lama personally more than one month earlier and the date of 10 March was fixed by the Dalai Lama himself. On that day, however, the rebellious Tibetan clique spread wild rumours alleging that the army units of the Tibetan Military Area Command would detain the Dalai Lama and, using this rumour as a pretext, staged an armed rebellion, put the Dalai Lama under duress, raised such reactionary slogans as "Drive away the Han people" and "Independence for Tibet" and, at the same time, killed Kanchung Soanam Chiatso (Khunchug Sonam Gyamtso), a Tibetan official of the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region who opposed the rebellion, and wounded Sampo Tsewong-Rentzen (Sampho Tenzin Dhondup), the Tibetan Deputy Commander of the Tibetan Military Area Command, and others. The armed rebels at the same time surrounded the head-quarters of the Tibetan Military Area Command of the People's Liberation Army and the offices of the Central Government agencies in Lhasa.

[...] Between May and June last year, on the instructions of the Tibetan Local Government and the upper-strata reactionary clique, the rebel bandits intruded into Chamdo (Known as Qamdo in Chinese), Tengchen (Dinching), Nagchu (Naqu) and Lhokha (Shannan), destroyed communications, ravaged the people by plunder, rape, arson and murder, and attacked agencies and army units of the Central People's Government there. Guided by the spirit of national unity, the Central People's Government repeatedly enjoined the Local Government of Tibet to punish the rebel elements and maintain social

order. But the Local Government of Tibet and the upper-strata reactionary clique took the Central People's Government's attitude of maximum magnanimity as a sign of weakness [...] After concentrating considerable counter-revolutionary forces in Lhasa, they started their armed rebellion on 10 March, openly scrapping the 17- article agreement.

After the outbreak of the 10 March rebellion in Lhasa, the Dalai Lama wrote to the representative of the Central People's Government in Tibet on three occasions saying that he had been seized by the reactionaries and was making all possible efforts to deal with the illegal actions of the reactionary clique. In reply, the representative of the Central Government welcomed the attitude of the Dalai Lama and expressed the hope that the Local Government of Tibet would change its wrong attitude and do its duty to suppress the rebellion.

These reactionary elements, however, not only did not show the least sign of repentance but decided to extend the rebellion. They blatantly abducted the Dalai Lama from Lhasa and launched an all-out attack on the People's Liberation Army units stationed in Lhasa on the night of 19 March. The hope of a peaceful settlement was extinguished. The reactionary forces of Tibet finally chose the road to their own extinction.

At 10am on 20 March, the troops of the Tibetan Military Area Command of the Chinese People's Liberation Army were ordered to take punitive action against the clique of traitors who had committed monstrous crimes. With the aid of the patriotic Tibetan monks and laymen, the People's Liberation Army completely crushed the rebellion in the city of Lhasa after more than two days of fighting. A rough count shows that by the 23rd, more than 4,000 rebel troops were taken prisoner, and 8,000 small arms of different kinds, 81 light and heavy machine guns, 27 mortars, six mountain guns and ten million rounds of ammunition were captured. Encircled by our troops, many of the rebel troops surrendered in groups.

The rapid way in which the rebellion was put down in Lhasa showed that the Tibetan treacherous clique is certainly doomed and that the future of the Tibetan people is bright [...] The Central Government has instructed the People's Liberation Army Units in Tibet to unite broadly with all Tibetans who have not taken part in the rebellion, accept responsibility for protecting the business, political and religious circles in Tibet, respect the habits and customs of the local people and their religious beliefs, protect the lamaseries and cultural institutions and relics and safeguard the interests of the mass of the people and social order. As for those captured and enemies who have laid down their arms, it is not permissible to retaliate against, injure or humiliate them.

In order to wipe out the rebel bandits thoroughly, the State Council has ordered the units of the Chinese People's Liberation Army stationed in Tibet to assume military control in various places in Tibet. The tasks of the Military Control Committees are: to suppress the rebellion; to protect the people and the foreign nationals who observe the laws of China; with the authorisation from the Preparatory Committee for the Autonomous Region of Tibet and the Tibet Military Area Command of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, to set up administrative bodies at various levels in the Autonomous Region of Tibet, and organize self-defence armed forces of patriotic Tibetans to replace the old Tibetan Army of only a little more than 3,000 men who are rotten to the core, utterly useless in fighting and who have turned rebellious [...]

Since the Dalai Lama, Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region, is still held under duress by the rebels, the State Council has decided that the Panchen Erdeni (the 10th

Panchen Lama), Vice-Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the Autonomous Region of Tibet should assume the post of Acting Chairman during the period of the Dalai Lama's abduction. The State Council has also appointed as Vice-Chairmen, the living Buddha Pebala Choliehnamje (Phagpa-lha Gelek Namgyal) and Ngabo Ngawang Jigme, Standing Committee members of Tibetan Nationality of the Preparatory Committee of the Autonomous Region. Ngabo is concurrently secretary-general. As soon as order has been restored, local administrative bodies of the Autonomous Region of Tibet at all levels will be set up throughout Tibet and exercise the functions and powers of autonomy.

At present, autonomy and military control by the People's Liberation Army are simultaneously in force. Autonomy will gradually and completely replace military control when the rebellion is put down and peaceful order is established.

As the result of the rebellion by the reactionary forces in Tibet and the defeat of the rebellion, a new page is unfolding in Tibet's history. The conclusion can now be drawn that the imperialists and Tibet's reactionary forces entirely miscalculated the situation in Tibet. Contrary to their wishes, the rebellion started by them in Tibet has not led to a split in the motherland and retrogression in Tibet, but instead has strengthened the consolidation of national unification, accelerated the doom of the reactionary forces in Tibet, pushed forward democratisation in Tibet and promoted the new birth of the Tibetan people."

[Back to top](#)

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## CHRONOLOGY

### Resistance in Tibet 1954 - 1974

The following chronology charts the beginnings of the Tibetan resistance movement in the early 1950s leading to the dismantling of the Mustang guerrilla base in 1974.

#### **1954**

Redistribution of land in Kham and Amdo. Resistance to reforms towards the end of the year. Authorities attempt to confiscate arms, leading to more resistance.

#### **1955-6**

"High tide of collectivisation" in China. National minority areas are now to undergo the same socialist reforms as the rest of China [excluding central Tibet].

#### **1955**

Full-scale "democratic reforms" are launched in Amdo and Kham. Tentative measures to settle nomads in both areas.

#### **1955/6**

Sporadic uprisings lead to a major revolt in eastern Tibet. Authorities switch to a more coercive policy of reform. Attacks on Chinese cadres and workplaces. The "Kanding (Dartsedo) Rebellion" breaks out in Kham and is put down in 1956 by the siege and bombing of monasteries holding the rebels and

other refugees fleeing from the fighting. Revolt spreads throughout Eastern Tibet. Refugees start pouring into central Tibet and India.

## **1956**

Beginning of CIA involvement in Tibet

### **February - March 1956**

During the Great Prayer Festival (smon lam chen mo) in Lhasa wall posters and leaflets appear denouncing the Chinese.

## **1956**

The Dalai Lama goes to India for the Buddha's 2,500th birthday. The Chinese authorities fear that he may not return while some of the Tibetan exile community hope that he will stay in India and try to get support from international community, particularly the US, and denounce the 17-point agreement.

### **March 1957**

The Dalai Lama returns to Lhasa. The Chinese government postpones reforms and some Chinese leaders criticise the chauvinist attitude of Han leaders and cadres in Tibet.

### **May 1957**

A group of Khampa traders, including Gonbo Tashi, organise rituals for the long-life of the Dalai Lama, travelling to all parts of Tibet to collect contributions for a golden throne to offer the Dalai Lama.

### **July 1957**

A ceremony is held in the Norbulingka to offer the golden throne to the Dalai Lama. The ceremony is seen as having political as well as religious significance. The group becomes the focus of the resistance movement.

### **Late 1957**

Khampas start attacking Chinese garrisons and cadres working on road construction sites.

## **1957-8**

The Anti-Rightist Rectification Campaign that is implemented throughout China, attacks the more moderate officials in Tibet who earlier warned of "Great Hanism", accusing them of encouraging Tibetan Nationalism.

### **Early 1958**

More than 15,000 exile families seek refuge in Lhasa and the surrounding areas. Many move to the South-East and Lhokha where the pan-Khampa resistance movement "Four Rivers, Six Ranges" is organised, recognising Gonbo Tashi as its leader.

### **July 1958**

The first CIA arms drop for the Tibetan resistance movement.

### **Early 1959**

Anti-Chinese campaigns are initiated throughout Tibet.



### **February-March 1959**

The Great Prayer Festival (smon lam chen mo) during which the Dalai Lama takes his final Geshe exam (the final public monastic exam).

### **3 March 1959**

The Nechung oracle pronounces that the Dalai Lama should not venture outside.

### **5 March 1959**

The last day of Monlam. The Dalai Lama moves to the Summer Palace, the Norbulingka.

### **7 March 1959**

The Dalai Lama agrees to attend a dance show at PLA military encampment on 10 March.

### **9 March 1959**

The Dalai Lama announces that he will be attending the dance show. There is confusion over protocol and the Dalai Lama is instructed to attend without his bodyguard and without his usual retinue of ministers and officials. Junior officials, with the oracle's pronouncement in mind, are concerned that the Chinese may detain the Dalai Lama, perhaps to force him to attend the April National People's Congress meeting in Beijing. They fail to persuade the Dalai Lama not to attend the dance show and rumours are spread throughout Lhasa that the Dalai Lama will be abducted by the Chinese.

### **10 March 1959**

Several thousand Tibetans gather outside the Norbulingka by 10am, demanding to see the Dalai Lama. Tibetan officials believed to be pro-Chinese are attacked. Sampho, a signatory of the 17-point agreement and the highest ranking official in the Tibetan Military Commission is attacked when he appears at the Summer Palace wearing a PLA uniform. Khunchug Sonam Gyamtso, an official who is wearing Chinese clothes is beaten to death. The demonstrators move towards the centre of Lhasa, leaving a small group to guard the Norbulingka. Barricades are constructed by the crowd on the roads leading to the Summer Palace.

### **12 March 1959**

Nearly 50 Tibetan officials, supporters of the revolt, gather in Shol, the village below the Potala. They proclaim themselves the "People's Assembly". Women protesters march through Lhasa. The Kashag authorises the distribution of arms from government arsenals.

### **13 March 1959**

Thousands gather in Shol, the village below the Potala. Speakers denounce the Chinese and demand the restoration of Tibetan independence. The crowd denounces the 17-point agreement.

### **17 March 1959**

The Chinese army begins to shell some areas as an intimidatory tactic. In the morning two shells land near the Norbulingka. In the evening the Dalai Lama escapes unnoticed.

### **20 March 1959**

The PLA are ordered to retake the city.

### **20-22 March 1959**

Two days of fighting.

### **23 March 1959**

The Chinese flag is hoisted above the Potala. The Chinese media reports that "the Chinese National flag, symbol of light and happiness, flutters in the breeze over Lhasa, greeting the rebirth of this ancient city." [SWB, 1959 no.859: p.2]

### **28 March 1959**

The Chinese government issues a statement signed by the Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai stating that the rebellion had effectively "torn up" the seventeen-point agreement. The Tibetan local government is dissolved.

### **28 March 1959**

The Dalai Lama receives confirmation that the Government of India is prepared to grant him asylum. This decision, taken by the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, is against the advice of some Indian government officials.

### **30 March 1959**

The Dalai Lama crosses the border into India and exile.

### **28 April 1959**

Guerrilla leader Gonbo Tashi crosses the border into India and exile.

### **1960**

The PLA gains control throughout Tibet. The CIA aids the Tibetans in setting up a rebel base in Mustang.

### **1960-2**

Over 150 Tibetans are sent to America for training by the CIA.

### **1965**

The CIA tells the Tibetans that they will gradually reduce funding, withdrawing altogether in 1968.

### **1973**

The Nepalese government demands that the Tibetans surrender their arms and disband the Mustang base.

### **1974**

The Dalai Lama instructs the Mustang rebels to give up their arms, signalling the end of the guerrilla resistance.

[Back to top](#)

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