

The Cultural Revolution in Tibet

In 1966, Mao unleashed the Cultural Revolution to eliminate his enemies and reshape relations within the party. Unlike the standard Chinese Communist Party purges that took place entirely within the rarified air of the party itself, in the Cultural Revolution, the driving forces of the cleanup—Red Guards and revolutionary workers—were outside the party. Mao sought to mobilize the masses to discover and attack what he called bourgeois and capitalist elements who had insinuated themselves into the party and, in his view, were trying to subvert the revolution.¹

The Cultural Revolution is generally considered to have begun in 1966 when the Politburo issued Mao's so-called May 16th Notice. Widely called the first official document of the Cultural Revolution, it is described in a chronology of important events in the history of the Communist Party in Tibet:

The "Notice" . . . [declares] that "the representatives of the bourgeoisie who have sneaked into the party, government, army, and literary and art circles are counterrevolutionary revisionists. Once they obtain the opportunity, they will seize power and transform the proletarian dictatorship into a bourgeois dictatorship." The "Notice" requests people to "hold the red flag of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution high and completely expose the reactionary bourgeois position of those so-called academic authorities who oppose the party and socialism. We should completely criticize the reactionary bourgeois thought in academic circles, educational circles, press circles, literary-art circles, and publishing circles and seize the leading power in these areas. To do this, we must simultaneously criticize

the representatives of the bourgeoisie who sneaked into the party, government, army, and all cultural circles.”²

The first activists were young students called Red Guards, who began attacking their teachers and administrators, searching to uncover those who were following the capitalist road (ch. *zouzipai*) and had sneaked into the party. While they were creating chaos in their schools in inland China, in Lhasa the Party Committee of the Tibet Autonomous Region (ch. *dang gongwei*) (hereafter called the Regional Party Committee) followed Mao’s lead and launched the Cultural Revolution in Tibet.³ By the end of May, the Regional Party Committee had formed the Leading Team of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in Lhasa, appointing as its director Wang Qimei, a PLA commander who had come to Tibet with the advance force of the Eighteenth Army Corps in September 1951. The minister of the Propaganda Department, Zhang Zaiwang, was appointed vice-director.⁴ At this time, the most powerful figure in Tibet was Zhang Guohua, the military commander who had come to Tibet in October 1951 as the head of the main PLA military force, the Eighteenth Army Corps. He had remained there since then and in 1966 was in control of the three main organs of power: the Regional Party Committee, the People’s Assembly of the TAR, and the Tibet Military Region Headquarters.

Under Zhang Guohua’s leadership, the Regional Party Committee held an enlarged meeting in Nyingtri (in Kongpo) from 15 June to 5 July 1966 to discuss how to implement the Cultural Revolution. From the start, Zhang Guohua and the Regional Party Committee sought to manipulate the Cultural Revolution so that they, rather than local Red Guards or other revolutionary workers and cadres, would be in control of mass demonstrations and struggle sessions against the “holders of power” in the party. The Regional Party Committee, therefore, did not issue a call for the masses to mobilize and take the lead to search out capitalist-roaders. Rather, its members themselves decided who among the power holders were reactionaries, that is, whom to sacrifice. For example, at the meeting in Nyingtri, a few important party members such as Jin Sha (chief editor of the *Tibet Daily Newspaper* and deputy minister of TAR’s Propaganda Department)⁵ were accused and singled out to be examined and criticized by the masses. The meeting also instructed party members not to encourage large parades and demonstrations and to keep close control over all weapons. It similarly instructed the army to follow the instructions of the Regional Party Committee, not the revolutionary groups involved in the Cultural Revolution campaigns.⁶ Zhang Guohua’s idea

was for the Cultural Revolution to be played out under the close scrutiny of the Regional Party Committee according to a carefully scripted score.

Back in Beijing, the incipient chaos in schools in June and July prompted Liu Shaoqi to send work teams (tib. *leydön ruga*; ch. *gongzuo dui*) to “exercise leadership,” that is, to try to restrain the students and restore order.⁷ In Lhasa, a similar strategy was employed when the Regional Party Committee sent a work team to the *Tibet Daily* on 12 July to “lead” (ch. *lingdao*) the work of the Cultural Revolution there, in other words, to control what was to be written about the Cultural Revolution and the Regional Party Committee.⁸

Mao, however, disapproved of work teams constraining workers and students, that is, controlling the Cultural Revolution, labeling this as an act of “white terror” (ch. *baise kongbu*).⁹ Consequently, at the start of August he intervened to clarify the direction of the new campaign by publishing his famous “big-character poster” (ch. *dazi bao*),¹⁰ which said tersely and forcefully, “*Bombard the Headquarters*” (ch. *paoda silingbu*), that is, vigorously attack the party headquarters to uncover and criticize those in power who were taking China down the wrong road to capitalism. A few days later, on 8 August, the Eleventh Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee (over which Mao presided) promulgated its famous “Decision concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution,” in which Mao’s thinking was spelled out in more detail:

Although the bourgeoisie has been overthrown, it is still trying to use the old ideas, culture, customs, and habits of the exploiting classes to corrupt the masses, capture their minds, and endeavor to stage a comeback. The proletariat must do just the opposite: it must meet head-on every challenge of the bourgeoisie in the ideological field and use the new ideas, culture, customs, and habits of the proletariat to change the mental outlook of the whole of society. *At present, our objective is to struggle against and crush those persons in authority who are taking the capitalist road, to criticize and repudiate the reactionary bourgeois academic “authorities” and the ideology of the bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes and to transform education, literature and art.*¹¹

The implementation of the Cultural Revolution was now shifting to the masses in the persons of Red Guards, other young students, and workers operating outside the direct control of the party leadership in schools, factories, and offices. Mao’s approval of them carrying the so-called spearhead of the Cultural Revolution was symbolized by his presiding over massive meetings of as many as several million young Red Guards and masses from all over the country in Tiananmen Square. At the first of

these, on 18 August, Lin Biao addressed the gathering and explicitly called on the Red Guards to “destroy all the old thoughts, culture, customs, and habits of the exploitative class” and called on the people of the whole country to support the “proletarian revolutionary spirit of the Red Guards, who are the ones who dare to act, dare to break, dare to carry the revolution, and dare to rebel.”¹²

The next day, 19 August, Lin Biao, Mao’s wife, Jiang Qing, and other pro-Mao leftists met with Red Guards from the Second Middle School of Beijing and urged them to put up big-character posters to “wage a war against the old society.” The following day, 20 August, Red Guards in Beijing and other big cities went to the streets and started to “destroy the four olds and establish the four news.”¹³ Three days later, the *People’s Daily* published an editorial approving this, proclaiming in its title, “It is very good.”¹⁴ Mao’s Cultural Revolution ideology was now actively being implemented.

On 12 August, less than a week after the issuance of the Eleventh Plenum’s decision, the Tibet Autonomous Region’s Party Committee held a large meeting, which was attended by about fourteen hundred people who were active in the Cultural Revolution. At the meeting, Zhang Guohua called on all levels of cadres “to be brave enough to mobilize the masses, trust them, and depend on them to carry out the Great Cultural Revolution.” He also requested all organizations to establish Cultural Revolution leading teams and Cultural Revolution committees as soon as possible.¹⁵ On 18 August, an enlarged meeting of the Regional Party Committee issued its own decision on how to implement the Central Committee’s 8 August decision. An official chronology of important events in Tibet said of this:

Since May of this year, people both inside and outside the party in the whole region actively studied the important instructions from the Central Committee of the CCP and the decisions from the Southwest Bureau and the Regional Committee of the CCP. A new upsurge of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution appeared in the whole region. The “decisions” . . . suggested that in the future, if the members of the Cultural Revolution leading team, the Cultural Revolution Committee, or the Cultural Revolution Representative’s Congress were not well qualified for their posts, they should be suspended or transferred. Every piece of work in the whole region should be arranged with the Great Cultural Revolution being placed at the center. First, put emphasis on the Great Cultural Revolution in the party and political organizations of the TAR, in the prefectures, and in the education departments. The work at the county level should be combined with the “three educations” and “four removes.” All the factories, mines,

enterprises, farming and herding areas, towns, and counties with work teams should pay attention to fully mobilizing the masses to carry out the Great Cultural Revolution by themselves. The Cultural Revolution in the propaganda, culture, and school organizations of the army should be arranged by the Regional Party Committee according to the above spirit.¹⁶

All of this led students and teachers at the Lhasa Middle School and the Tibetan Teacher's College to organize their own Red Guard organizations. One of the Han teachers (who later became a top revolutionary leader in Gyenlo) recalled:

[I]n August 1966 the Red Guards were everywhere in the whole country, and Lhasa didn't want to be left behind. Therefore we formed our own Red Guard organizations. . . . Most of the students in my school were Tibetans. It was a concern that the Tibetan students might get into trouble, for they didn't know the right [ideological] direction. Therefore, the Party Branch at the Lhasa Middle School decided to select a few young teachers to join the Red Guards, working as leaders. I remember I used to lead students to "destroy the four olds."¹⁷

However, Zhang Guohua and the Regional Party Committee, despite their activist revolutionary rhetoric, were not enthusiastic about allowing the Red Guards and revolutionary masses to run rampant in Tibet. In Zhang's view, the TAR was just recovering from the uprising of 1959 and the implementation of Democratic Reforms, and a new wave of chaos could destabilize the region. This view, in a real sense, was an extension of the position of Mao and the Central Committee in the 1950s, when they opted to utilize a "gradualist" policy to incorporate Tibet into the PRC, because they felt the circumstances in Tibet were significantly different from those the PLA had encountered in the rest of China.¹⁸ Remnants of this gradualist view, in fact, continued to a degree even after the implementation of a new socialist political system in Tibet following the 1959 uprising. For example, in 1959, the top leaders of China were still concerned that moving forward too fast with socialism in Tibet could be counterproductive, so they decided to eschew starting socialist agriculture (collectives) in 1959 in favor of allowing rural Tibetans to enjoy a period of private farming. Phündra, a senior Tibetan translator at that time, recalled a key 1959 meeting among Zhou Enlai, Mao Zedong, the Panchen Lama, and Ngabö at which this issue came up.

At this time they were implementing communes in China, and in Tibet some said we should implement them there as well. Mao and Zhou Enlai

met then with Ngabö and the Panchen. I was the translator. Zhou Enlai spoke first, saying, "Do not implement communes in a hurry. First divide the land and give it to the peasants. Let them plant the land and get a taste of the profits of farming. In the past they had no land." Then Mao said, "Do not start communes too quickly. If you give land to those who had no land in the past and let them plant it, they will become very revolutionary in their thinking and production will increase."¹⁹

Zhang Guohua, of course, had been in charge of Tibet during the 1950s so not only understood how different Tibet was but also agreed with the view that it was important for all policies to take account of these differences. The new campaign in China, the Cultural Revolution, therefore, should also be implemented in keeping with the special situation in Tibet. There should be, in essence, a special, less volatile, "Cultural Revolution" in Tibet. Consequently, he supported preventing the more radical students and workers from bombarding the headquarters in an unsupervised manner, although he had no problem with their carrying out the campaign against the "four olds" and struggling violently against the class enemies of the old society. And within work units, the masses could accuse one another of having capitalist-roader views but not the top leadership. Consequently, more work teams were sent to offices and work units to maintain this control. As it had been in the 1950s, stability in the CCP in Tibet continued to be a priority for Zhang Guohua.²⁰

One of the important aspects of the Cultural Revolution in inland China was for Red Guards to travel to other parts of the country and "link up" (ch. *chuanlian*) with activists there to propagate Mao's thinking and exchange experiences. Tibet was not immune from this, so beginning in early September some Red Guards from the Tibetan Nationality Institute in Xianyang (ch. *xianyang xizang minyuan*) and Beijing began to arrive in Lhasa.²¹ Together with local Red Guards, they intensified the campaign against the "four olds" and class enemies, the latter including progressive former Tibetan officials who had been incorporated into the new administration after 1959. Not surprisingly, some of the young revolutionaries in Lhasa also wanted to follow Mao's instructions and attack the holders of power in their work units. However, such attempts were initially blocked by the leadership. For example, in August, when students at the Tibet Post and Telecommunications School vociferously targeted their school authorities, the leaders quickly diffused the situation by graduating the class early (to scatter the students). The following document written by these students a year later, in 1967, conveys

their frustration and anger at the Regional Party Committee, whom they felt was behind their early graduation:

The May 16th Notice clearly revealed that some work units were controlled by a handful of leaders who held the capitalist line. Those leaders were so afraid of their mistakes being exposed that they used many excuses to suppress the movement of the masses. They attempted to lead the mass movement in the wrong way by changing its aims and confounding right and wrong. When they felt that they were too isolated to carry out their evil plans, they relied on playing tricks and spreading rumors to confuse the concepts of revolution and counterrevolution and to suppress the revolutionary factions.

We graduated in mid-August last year. Why did they let us graduate at that particular time? It was the plot of the Regional Party Committee. Let us tell you the truth about it. At the very beginning of the Great Cultural Revolution, students struggled against one another for more than two months because the Regional Party Committee followed the policy of “discharging lots of arrows at the same time” (ch. *luan jian qi fang*).²² Many young students under eighteen years of age who were educated in the thought of Chairman Mao were considered to be counterrevolutionaries and were severely criticized.

On 8 August, the Central Committee of the CCP issued the decision of starting the Great Cultural Revolution. Students at our school pointed their spearhead at the school authorities. Our struggle frightened the leaders at the Regional Party Committee and the Party Committee of the Post and Communications Bureau. By kicking us out of school on 15 August, they temporarily realized their plot.

When we started to work at new work units, the Great Cultural Revolution began. We didn’t know anything about it. While other people were engaged in the Great Cultural Revolution, we could only watch them and were not able to provide any help.

From this we can see that the Regional Party Committee has always insisted on the reactionary capitalist line. They openly opposed the instructions from the Central Committee and tried to obstruct the Great Cultural Revolution. They tried to split the forces of the masses to reach their sinister goal. Let all the revolutionary proletarian factions be united and let us work together to completely smash the reactionary capitalist line of the Regional Party Committee. . . .

Lhasa Revolutionary Gyenlo Headquarters
“Driving Out Tigers” (ch. qu hu) United Operational Headquarters
“New Universe” (ch. xin yu) Fighting Team of Tibet Post
and Telecommunication School
 23 January 1967²³

Another famous example of such suppression had occurred on 24 August 1966 at the Forestry Company in Kongpo when some young revo-

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lutionary workers led by a doctor in the public health clinic put up a big-character poster attacking the company's party committee. The party leaders responded furiously, calling a mass meeting, at which they proclaimed, "This is the limit. Openly writing a large character poster to incite the masses to attack the party is a *counter-revolutionary* incident."²⁴ This was followed by a purge of 127 workers (about one-quarter of the total), who were labeled as reactionary "monsters and demons" (ch. *niugui sheshen*) and were paraded through the streets wearing paper hats and so forth. These workers also underwent beatings and severe political repression, which for some included placement in the company's own internal "reform through labor" camp. At least one died there.²⁵

Consequently, although the Regional Party Committee was able to keep the spearhead turned away from themselves and from the leadership in bureaus and offices and thereby keep the government and party functioning normally, beneath the surface anger was simmering among a segment of the revolutionary masses and Red Guards who felt that the Regional Party Committee was not adhering to Mao's clear instructions to ferret out the capitalist-roaders who had sneaked into the party. They wanted to do more than attack the "four olds," the feudal elite, and the lower-level employees in their work units.

On 19 September, the first crack in the wall the Regional Party Committee had erected around the Cultural Revolution occurred when a big-character poster openly advocated the bombardment of the Regional Party Committee itself. This poster was not only hung on the streets of Lhasa but also mailed to many different counties in Tibet. Written by Yue Zongming of the Cultural Items Preservation Office, the poster openly defied the Regional Party Committee and called for the revolutionary masses to point the spearhead at that committee, saying: "Bombard the party headquarters, set fire to the leadership of the Regional Party Committee, and seize the capitalist-roaders in authority."²⁶

Zhang Guohua and the party establishment realized the danger this posed and vigorously attacked the poster and its author, banning the poster from being shown in public or sent by post and labeling the author as a counterrevolutionary. On 25 September, for example, the Regional Party Committee's Propaganda Department wrote an amazing twenty thousand-character handbill titled, "It is not allowed to bombard our proletarian revolutionary headquarters." In this, the Propaganda Department laid out the Regional Party Committee's ideological rationalization for banning the 19 September poster, arguing that since the Regional Party Committee was a proletarian headquarters, anyone who

advocated bombarding it was a counterrevolutionary. Yue Zongming, therefore, was subjected to severe criticism at struggle sessions, where he and others involved were forced to recant and make self-confessions.²⁷

The following week (on 30 September), at an enlarged meeting of the Regional Party Committee, Zhang Guohua enunciated some of the reasons why he felt that the situation in Tibet required a different operationalization of the Cultural Revolution. The official summary of his comments reported:

Zhang Guohua talked about how to implement the spirit of the Central Committee's Eleventh Plenum. He said that the upsurge of the Cultural Revolution in Tibet had appeared and the current work was to welcome and promote the Cultural Revolution. [However] [i]n Tibet, individual [in contrast to collective] economy prevailed, and the struggles at the border were sharp and complicated. The problems of nationalities, especially the problems of religion, obviously existed. There are great differences among the organizations in the cities, counties, townships, and farming and herding areas, as well as the interior areas and the border areas. He said that we should firmly support the students in Tibet, *but* we should persuade them not to seize reactionaries among the troops or search the soldiers' quarters and should persuade the troops not to go out into the streets.²⁸

Despite the massive government response to the 19 September poster, a month later, on 21 October, a revolutionary group calling itself the Red Guard Combat Team wrote a big-character poster demanding that the Regional Party Committee call a public meeting to vindicate the 19 September poster and rehabilitate its authors.

The following week, on 28 October, the Red Rebels, a faction that later became part of Gyenlo, decided to attack Ngabö, the most important of the former progressive Tibetan aristocrats and a top official in the Tibet Autonomous Region government. They marched to the compound of the Tibet Autonomous Region and demanded that he come out and answer their questions, that is, defend himself before the revolutionary masses. One young activist who was involved in that event recalled:

One night, we were told to go the courtyard of the Tibet Autonomous Region. People said that Ngabö should come out to meet the masses. He came, and we were going to take away his position. As you know, he was one of the most powerful men in Tibet at that time. After some people took Ngabö to the mass meeting, those people who were standing at the front of the masses did lots of struggling against him. Of course we, the other people, shouted in support of our leaders. Then somebody took Ngabö back into the building. We stood there continuing to shout that Ngabö should be brought to the meeting of the masses.

While we were conducting this struggle session against Ngabö, somebody informed the central government. I think they told the central government that the masses were doing a struggle session against Ngabö and asked whether they should allow the masses to continue. . . . The next morning Ngabö was in inland China. He must have been sent from Lhasa [to Beijing] by the central government.

Q: When the masses were struggling against him, did he say anything?

A: He did. He said he had exploited the masses in the old society and was very sorry about that. When people were struggling against him, he had guards stay beside him so that people could not get close to him. I think those guards were told to take care of him. He had guards, so it was impossible for us to get to him, but we shouted lots at him. It was a stupid action. Ngabö recited the experiences of his life at the meeting, and then he left the meeting of the masses. . . . The next day, when we were going to continue the struggle session against him, we were told that he had gone to inland China.²⁹

The person who intervened on behalf of Ngabö was Zhang Guohua, who, ironically, had returned to Lhasa that same day from a stay of three weeks in Beijing. As soon as Ngabö was attacked, Zhang contacted Zhou Enlai, who arranged for a plane to take Ngabö immediately to safety in Beijing.³⁰ This action further inflamed the more radical revolutionary masses, solidifying their belief that the Regional Party Committee was trying to thwart Mao's call to cleanse the party and government leadership.

At this point, Zhang Guohua felt it was important to try to prevent more Red Guards, particularly Han Red Guards from Beijing, from coming to Tibet and further radicalizing the Cultural Revolution there, so he explicitly asked Zhou Enlai to order the various Cultural Revolution organizations not to allow Han Chinese Red Guards to come to Tibet.³¹ Zhou approved this, but the Red Guard groups from Beijing ignored the order, and in early November, Metropolitan Red Guards arrived from Beijing in three groups and set up the Blazing Prairie Combat Regiment (ch. *liaoyuan zhandou tuan*).

These Beijing Metropolitan Red Guards, who would become one of the core founding units of Gyenlo, were not as easy for the Regional Party Committee to manipulate as the Lhasa students and workers had been. As a result of this, the focus of the spearhead now started shifting in a serious way toward the party leadership, particularly the Regional Party Committee itself. The Cultural Revolution as experienced in Beijing was now about to start in Lhasa.³²

Between 7 and 11 November, the Blazing Prairie Combat Regiment, in conjunction with Tibetan Red Guards and other young revolutionaries in Lhasa, put up four hundred to five hundred posters criticizing the

Regional Party Committee and its head, Zhang Guohua. These posters said things such as “Completely criticize the reactionary capitalist line of the Regional Party Committee [in Tibet].” They also accused the Regional Party Committee of “waving a red flag to oppose the red flag,” that is, of pretending to adhere to Mao’s call to scrutinize the holders of power while actually trying to prevent that.³³

A week later, a group of ten revolutionary organizations launched a citywide debate on whether the Regional Party Committee had been implementing a bourgeois reactionary line. This was the first open clash between what would become Tibet’s two competing revolutionary organizations—Gyenlo and Nyamdre. More than ninety people spoke, the majority supporting the view that the Regional Party Committee was a true proletarian organization. Soon after this, they merged to form the Headquarters of Defending Mao Zedong’s Thoughts and then, a few months later, linked up with others such as the One Thousand Serf Fighters (ch. *nong mu zhan*) from the Xianyang Nationalities Institute, who had arrived in Lhasa in early December, forming the even larger revolutionary group called Nyamdre. A minority of the speakers that day attacked the Regional Party Committee and soon afterward formed Gyenlo Headquarters.³⁴

A Han revolutionary leader from the Lhasa Middle School recalled what his anti-Zhang Guohua organization was thinking at this time:

Our group had clear aims. We were trying to “turn the world upside down” [laughs] and “find all the ‘capitalist-roaders’ and knock them down and step on them” [laughs]. That was the language people used at that time. . . . Those people who were close to the leaders at the Regional Party Committee were later called “royalists.”³⁵ They [the revolutionaries close to the leaders] argued that the leaders were nice people and had been working hard for the local residents. However, we didn’t care about that. What we really cared about were the orders from the Central Committee [the Eleventh Plenum] that we knew we were supposed to follow. It was fine with us if none of the leaders were capitalist-roaders, but if there were any, we wanted to go ahead and struggle against them. . . . Actually, we were not sure who those capitalist-roaders were . . . but we thought we should see whether we could find followers of the capitalist road in Tibet.³⁶

Meanwhile, back in Beijing on 16 November, the State Council reiterated its instructions banning the exchange of revolutionary experiences in Tibet, but this too was ignored. Then on 4 December, the State Council announced specific new regulations requiring the Red Guards from inland China who were still in Lhasa to leave Tibet and return to their

own localities by 20 December. The Regional Party Committee was so eager to see them leave that they actually organized a “farewell meeting” for the departing Red Guards. However, they were thwarted in this, because the Beijing Red Guards in Lhasa had contacted the Central Cultural Revolution Group, headed by Mao’s wife, Jiang Qing, pleading to be allowed to remain because, in their view, their presence was critical to eliminating the bourgeois reactionary line that was present there. And their pleas succeeded. To the chagrin of Zhang Guohua, the powerful Central Great Cultural Revolution Group intervened and gave the Beijing Red Guards permission to remain.³⁷ The Cultural Revolution in Lhasa was now entering a new and much more radical phase.

A Lhasa Red Guard group at the broadcast station in Lhasa commented on this in December 1966:

Some major leaders of the Regional Party Committee were so afraid of the Red Guards from fighting units such as Blazing Prairie that they tried to obstruct the Red Guards before they came [from Beijing] and then sent people to surveil them after they arrived. After the notice was issued from the Central Committee to temporarily stop the great linking-up, they tried their best to drive the [inland Chinese] Red Guards out. They hurriedly held a “send-off meeting” [to send the Red Guards back] long before the time limit of the 21st, which was the date stipulated by the Central Committee. So why were you so afraid of the Red Guards? Does that mean that you were ashamed of what you have done? You were afraid because the Red Guards have complete revolutionary spirit and will never give up to the reactionary line. Comrades of our three fighting units in the broadcast station have discussed this problem with Comrade Zhang Zaiwang [vice-director of the Leading Team of the Cultural Revolution in Tibet]. However, Comrade Zhang Zaiwang did not accept our opinions and insisted on driving the Red Guards out. What is the result now? The team from the Central Great Cultural Revolution Group [in Beijing] has supported their staying in Tibet and carrying on the revolution with the local revolutionary masses. This was the clearest and loudest reply to those who insisted on driving the Red Guards out. We most strongly support this decision and enthusiastically welcome the Red Guards from fighting units like the Blazing Prairie to carry on the revolution together with us. Those who have abused the Blazing Prairie and tried to drive them out should shut up now.³⁸

By mid-December 1966, therefore, the conflict among different revolutionary factions was escalating over the status of the Regional Party Committee as well as other issues, such as whether the labeling of some workers and Red Guards as reactionaries and counterrevolutionaries should be abolished. Red Guards from inland China together with local groups

pushed to investigate and struggle against the top members of the Regional Party Committee, in particular Zhang Guohua, whom they derisively called the “indigenous emperor” (ch. *tuhuangdi*). The situation in Lhasa was on the brink of spinning out of control. Liu Shaoming, later the head of the more conservative revolutionary faction called Nyamdre, commented on how he and Zhang Guohua felt about these Red Guards:

We resented Red Guards from the inland areas at that time. Why do we need you to come to Tibet to fan the fires and tell us what to do with the Cultural Revolution? Why do we need you to be our savior and tell us what to do? Although I don't know much about Tibet, you are from the inland area, so what do you know about Tibet? Tibet is an ethnic region and has its own characteristics. Tibet is an ethnic as well as a border area, so how can it be treated the same way as the inland areas? Doing that will throw it into chaos. There is an ethnic issue in Tibet. What do you students from the inland areas know about it? We were secretaries [heads] in the government departments and not young students, and we worked with the Party Committee. We had different modes of thinking and needed to take these issues into consideration. We couldn't do whatever they wanted us to do. That's how the contradiction came into being.³⁹

The more radical revolutionary organizations convened a mass meeting in Lhasa on 19 December, at which Zhang Guohua was induced to make a self-criticizing speech on behalf of the Regional Party Committee in the hope that this would satisfy them and calm the situation. At this meeting, he vaguely admitted mistakes in the Regional Party Committee's political line, but things did not calm down.⁴⁰ A few days later, on 23 December, some revolutionary masses entered the compound of the Regional Party Committee, where they remained and carried out debates trying to uncover capitalist-roaders.

At this point, a number of the more radical revolutionary groups felt they could more effectively pressure the power holders if they joined forces, so on 22 December they inaugurated a new large revolutionary group under the leadership of the Beijing Red Guard's Blazing Prairie Combat Regiment. This new organization united thirty-five revolutionary organizations and was called the “general headquarters of the revolutionary rebels (Gyenlo) of Lhasa” (ch. *lasa geming zaofan zongbu*), commonly abbreviated as “Gyenlo Headquarters” (ch. *zaozong*) or just “Gyenlo” (ch. *zaofan*).⁴¹ At this time it had almost a thousand members, including workers, cadres, and students, organized into fifty-one combat regiments.

A Gyenlo leaflet published at the time of its creation spells out vividly its commitment to rebel against the party leadership:

In the new situation of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, surrounded by war drums repudiating the bourgeois reactionary line, the Lhasa Revolutionary Gyenlo Headquarters is born!

What is this Gyenlo Headquarters of ours doing? It is to hold high the great red banner of Mao Zedong's thought and to rebel by applying Mao Zedong's thought. We will rebel against the handful of persons in authority in the party who are taking the capitalist road! We will rebel against all the monsters and freaks! We will rebel against the bourgeois royalists! We, a group of lawless revolutionary rebels, will wield the iron sweepers and swing the mighty cudgels to sweep the old world into a mess and bash people into complete confusion. We will rebel against persons stubbornly persisting in the bourgeois reactionary line! We don't fear gales or storms or flying sand or moving rocks. We don't care if that handful of people in authority taking the capitalist road and the very few persons stubbornly persisting in the bourgeois reactionary line oppose us or fear us. We also don't care if the bourgeois royalists denounce us or curse us. We will resolutely make revolution and rebel. To rebel, to rebel, and to rebel through to the end in order to create a bright red proletarian new world.⁴²

A scathing publication dated 26 December 1966 further illustrates the intensity of those who opposed the more moderate views of the Regional Party Committee (and the other revolutionary organizations that they saw as sympathetic toward the Party Committee). This long statement, published as a leaflet, categorically rejected Zhang Guohua's arguments about the need for calm in Tibet and critically spelled out a number of actions the party leadership had taken to impede and prevent the revolutionary Red Guards from effectively "bombarding" the headquarters. The full text is presented in appendix 2:

1. During the Great Cultural Revolution in our region, the Regional Party Committee did not have just a few minor shortcomings or errors; it mistakenly carried out the reactionary bourgeois line and lost its direction.
2. We do not agree with the opinion of some comrades that "the Regional Party Committee carried out the reactionary bourgeois line *unconsciously*." We think that the Regional Committee of the CCP *completely and consciously* carried out the reactionary bourgeois line in the Great Cultural Revolution. It attempted to suppress the revolutionary masses and to protect a handful of leaders who held the capitalist line. The Regional Party Committee also tried to suppress the Great Cultural Revolution in our region.

3. Besides Guo Xilan, who has already been proved to oppose Mao Zedong, other leaders in our Regional Party Committee are still implementing the reactionary capitalist line. *We are determined to uncover these leaders no matter how much they have contributed to the party and no matter how high their current positions are. No one can protect them.*
4. We cannot treat the comrades in the Regional Party Committee alike. We will criticize those who have formulated and are still implementing the reactionary capitalist line in Tibet. We will overthrow those who stubbornly insist on the reactionary capitalist line and oppose the revolutionary line of Mao Zedong.
5. Some major leaders of the Regional Party Committee have not been truly implementing the instructions of Chairman Mao and the Central Committee and have not been working hard with the masses to criticize the reactionary line. On the contrary, they have been playing tricks and taking new measures to trick the masses as well as insisting on the reactionary capitalist line. There are indications that their following the reactionary line has become a more and more serious problem.

Allied headquarters (ch. *lianhe zuozhanbu*) of the broadcast station in Tibet (26 December 1966)⁴³

Less than a week later, on 28 December, in response to the establishment of Gyenlo, a number of the mass organizations supportive of the Regional Party Committee, such as the Serf Fighters from the Nationalities Institute, joined together and established the Headquarters of Defending Mao Zedong's Thoughts (ch. *hanwei mao zedong sixiang zhandou zongbu*) (abbreviated as "Headquarters of Defending") (ch. *han zong*).⁴⁴ In February 1967, this became the core of Nyamdre.

Mao's instructions to destroy the four olds and attack the bad classes were easy to fathom and operationalize, but his call to root out the revisionists and counterrevolutionaries in high places was more enigmatic and open to widely differing interpretations. Consequently, although all the revolutionary factions believed they were following Mao's instructions, they disagreed about which specific officials were bourgeois capitalist-roaders. Interfactional tension and conflict, therefore, now divided the revolutionary organizations and their followers into two discrete coalitions of factions, Nyamdre and Gyenlo, the former more conservative and latter more radical with regard to how far they should go in "bombarding" the headquarters of the Regional Party Committee—in other words, to what extent they should support Zhang Guohua's contention that, because the situation in Tibet was special, the Cultural Revolution had to be carried out carefully so as to not exacerbate existing tensions.

As this interfactional conflict intensified, intrafaction solidarity also intensified, creating powerful loyalties and allegiances among members of factions. A recollection of a Nyamdre activist about members in his group illustrates this well: "People had deep loyalty to one another. Everyone treated one another as if they were one's relative." And when he was asked what he felt when he met a stranger who claimed he was Nyamdre, he said, "I felt very happy. When I exchanged views on ideology with someone from our faction and talked about the greatness of our faction and the mistakes made by the Gyenlo faction, I was moved. The strength of the faction was really powerful."⁴⁵

Ren Rong, a strong supporter of Zhang Guohua and his emphasis on stability in the party and army in Tibet, spoke of a parallel split within the Regional Party Committee between Zhang Guohua and Deputy Party Secretary Zhou Renshan over how to conduct the Cultural Revolution.

The general leaders in the Military Region [Headquarters], including Zhang Guohua, Chen Mingyi, and me, had almost the same idea about this. We thought some actions during the Cultural Revolution were right, for example, eliminating superstition and the four olds. We all agreed with these points. I also thought it was right that people should correct their own mistakes, but I did not approve of criticizing and seizing cadres without any genuine evidence. And we all disapproved of seizing power from those people. Things happened like this at the beginning.

In all the offices/organizations (ch. *jiguan*) in the military region, a few people who were ultra-leftists (ch. *jizuo*) took actions frequently and intensely. They seized power, not only the power of offices, but also the power of the military region. During that time, these people did such things frequently. Some local people also did so. The people from both of the two factions supported the Cultural Revolution, but they did it in different ways after the Cultural Revolution began. One group arrested capitalist-roaders and criticized and denounced them, while the other group thought they should do everything after investigation and analysis and could not treat problems in general. At that time, the general orientation for carrying out the Cultural Revolution was to arrest those major leaders. . . . This was Zhou Renshan's point. He thought that no matter whether those people were capitalist-roaders or not, they should be arrested first.⁴⁶

Consequently, as 1966 ended, conflict in Lhasa was taking a major turn for the worse with the escalation and intensification of interfactional conflict and animosity. It would quickly transform Tibet into the chaos and anomie that Zhang Guohua and the party establishment had initially feared would happen if the evolution of the Cultural Revolution was not managed carefully.

On 6 January 1967, the Cultural Revolution's factional activism in inland China moved to a new level when Shanghai rebel factions launched the so-called January Storm (ch. *yiyue fengbao*), during which they seized the authority of the Shanghai Party Committee and the committee of the Shanghai People's Congress. This quickly spurred action in Lhasa, where on the evening of 10 January a group in the *Tibet Daily Newspaper* office called the Revolutionary Rebels of Red News (ch. *hongse xinwen zaofan tuan*) launched their own version of the January Storm, together with Gyenlo activists from other units in Lhasa, and struck at the heart of the Tibetan establishment by taking control of the *Tibet Daily Newspaper*. This was a direct attack on the Regional Party Committee, which had taken control of that office and seized its editor, Jin Sha, in July 1966. Gyenlo, however, felt the newspaper was not publicizing Mao's revolutionary calls to action correctly and was not covering Red Guard activities adequately, so felt it should rectify this by taking over the paper's operation. This meant that Gyenlo now controlled what would be published. This was followed by the seizure, one after another, of the Xinhua News Agency Office, the broadcast station, the Temporary Lhasa City Committee, and many other departments, bureaus, and offices.⁴⁷ One of the top leaders of Gyenlo recalled the event:

If you ask me—and I was there from the very beginning until the end—I would say we were closely following the instructions from the Central Committee. Whenever we got an order from the Central Committee, we acted immediately. That was the way we did it. There might have been mistakes in our understanding of the orders—for example, we didn't quite understand the January Storm—but the newspapers said that it was correct to take the power. . . . The Central Committee affirmed it. That movement had great impact on the entire country. It made us think about what we should do, and not long after that we took over the *Tibet Daily* [laughs]. . . . At that time we thought that the publishing house should be controlled by the proletariat, as ordered by Chairman Mao, and that we, as the representatives of the proletariat, should keep the publishing house in our control.⁴⁸

This takeover, however, was attacked by those at the Headquarters of Defending, who were more conservative and supported Zhang Guohua; they charged that the takeover and the first edition of the new *Tibet Daily* were reactionary, not revolutionary. In the ensuing weeks, chaos reigned as each side struggled to seize or keep control of the paper. The revolutionary rivals of Gyenlo saw this as Gyenlo trying to take control of the Cultural Revolution in Tibet. And, of course, they were correct.

In response to such attacks by the anti-Gyenlo factions, the following lengthy document was written by two of the main Beijing Red Guard factions in Gyenlo to justify Gyenlo's takeover. The different views about how to carry out the Cultural Revolution were now making interfaction conflict a top issue. Called "The Truth about the Struggle to Seize the Power of the *Tibet Daily Newspaper* Office," this statement gives an excellent feel for the intellectual and emotional intensity of the escalating conflict:

The primary concern of the revolution is political power. All power should belong to the revolutionary left.

The revolutionary left rebel groups of the *Tibet Daily Newspaper* started their fight to rebel and seized power on the night of 10 January. The "Revolutionary Rebels of Red News" were the main force among the leftist groups. However, after the incident, some people said that we had already seized control from Jin Sha, so after that the power was already in the hands of proletarian groups. Consequently, when the struggle to seize power was again carried out, weren't they [Gyenlo] attempting to seize power from the proletariat? Others, however, said that this rebellion was great, because after the struggle, the leading power was returned to the *real* revolutionary rebel groups. What is the truth? Why did a struggle of seizing power happen at the office of a newspaper? What was its process? What were its characteristics? These questions are the concerns of most of the people of Tibet right now. This incident has direct impact on the Great Cultural Revolution in Lhasa and [elsewhere] in Tibet. Therefore, according to the highest instructions, we, the soldiers of the Blazing Prairie Combat Regiment and the Red Flag (ch. *hong qi*) group from the Beijing Academy of Aviation, carried out investigations and found the truth. We believe this incident was a revolutionary one. The revolutionary leftists did a good job.

Without investigation, it is perfunctory to make conclusions. Only after careful examination can we get the points right.

One. Why did they seize power?

Chairman Mao told us that we should never accept wrong leadership, because it will do harm to the revolution. We should suppress those people who dare to attack Chairman Mao. We should not hesitate to reject any work that goes against the instructions of Chairman Mao. We should suppress those who dare to oppose Chairman Mao and also suppress all work that opposes the instructions of Chairman Mao. The leaders of some regions who are carrying out the bourgeois reactionary line that runs counter to the thoughts of Chairman Mao should be dismissed from office until they are able to carry out the line of Chairman Mao. Dismissing those leaders is a revolutionary action. Nobody should say no to it.

After this clear introduction, the document laid out Gyenlo's view that it was imperative to follow the instructions of Mao Zedong and Beijing, not the views of the leaders of the Regional Party Committee of the TAR.

Someone said that actions like this [taking control of the *Tibet Daily*] do not follow the leadership of the Communist Party. That is total nonsense. The leaders of the Central Committee, Chairman Mao, and the thoughts of Chairman Mao are the real leading powers of the Communist Party. As for Tibet, the leaders of the Regional Party Committee of the TAR are just leaders of the local area. They are not equal to the leaders of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. Those who believe that “the leaders of the Regional Party Committee of the TAR are as powerful as those of the Central Committee” are definitely wrong, and they will fail if they use this wrong idea to suppress the movement of the masses in Tibet.

Our most respected and beloved leader, Chairman Mao, launched this Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The Great Cultural Revolution touched everybody to his very soul. We should rebel against all things that run counter to thoughts of Chairman Mao in order to create a new bright red China and a new bright red world. *However, with the coming of the Great Cultural Revolution, some leaders of the Regional Party Committee of the TAR became very frightened. They started to use the publishing house of the Tibet Daily Newspaper, which they controlled, to serve the reactionary bourgeois line. They did not allow reports [to be published] about the spirit of rebellion of the revolutionary masses in the Great Cultural Revolution and the success of Chairman Mao’s Red Guards. On the contrary, they used the paper to spread the dark side of the Red Guards, exaggerating the Red Guards’ mistakes, slandering the Red Guards, creating a white terror, and blocking information about the Great Cultural Revolution in order to destroy it.*

Was it just a minor problem? No, it wasn’t. It was a matter of principle. The newspapers and periodicals of the Communist Party are tools of publicity for the proletarian class, and they should be used to publicize the ideas of Chairman Mao. Chairman Mao said, “We must always stick to the truth, and the truth must have a clear-cut stand.” Members of the Communist Party consider it wrong to conceal one’s own opinions. The publicity work of our Communist Party should be active, clear, and sharp. No hemming and hawing. However, the *Tibet Daily* became the propaganda tool of some leaders of the Regional Party Committee of the TAR in order to implement the reactionary line of the bourgeoisie. Was it all right? No, it should not have been done.

To rebel, we should resist the wrong leadership of some leaders of the Regional Party Committee of the TAR and completely refuse their ideas. The soldiers of the “Revolutionary Rebels of Red News” in the *Tibet Daily* started the rebellion under the instructions of Chairman Mao, who said, “It is justified to rebel.” They spread the revolutionary spirit of the *Wenhui Daily* (ch. *wenhui bao*) and the *Liberation Daily* (ch. *jiefang ribao*) [newspapers in Shanghai].

On 10 January, the members of “Revolutionary Rebels of Red News” started the struggle to seize power. On 11 January, they solemnly declared that they firmly support the leadership of the Central Committee of the

Communist Party, which is headed by Chairman Mao, and firmly resist the wrong leadership of some leaders of the Tibet Regional Party Committee. *They also said that from then on, all control of the publicity work would be taken away from some leaders of the Regional Party Committee. The power of control will not be given back to those leaders until the reactionary bourgeois line is completely criticized and those leaders of the Regional Party Committee of the TAR who persisted in the reactionary line are completely overthrown. This rebellion represented justice because it was to protect the revolutionary line of Chairman Mao and the thoughts of Chairman Mao. . . .*

Three. Was it “Very Good” or “Very Bad”?

After the incident of seizing power at the publishing house occurred, different opinions appeared. Some people said it was a very bad way of struggling. Were they correct? Of course not! This struggle to seize power was supported by the workers of the revolutionary rebels at the publishing house. The struggle was against the wrong direction of some leaders of the Regional Party Committee and their reactionary bourgeois line. *Those leaders did not allow us to publicize the spirit of rebellion of the revolutionary rebel masses, but we insisted on doing so. Those leaders wanted to propagate the dark side of Chairman Mao’s Red Guards, but we insisted in letting people know how the Red Guards have contributed to the Great Cultural Revolution under the instructions of Chairman Mao. Those leaders wanted to implement the reactionary bourgeois line, but we insisted on criticizing it and guarding the revolutionary line of Chairman Mao. How could someone say it was a very bad struggle? Actually it was extremely good. Someone said this incident was a “counterrevolutionary incident” and it was an “adverse current.” These were false rumors. [Slogans omitted.] Now just a few people still insist on holding this wrong opinion. They are separating themselves from the masses, and they are opposing the masses and the ideas of Chairman Mao. In the end they will fail. [Slogans omitted.] We believe “the struggle to seize power” was good, and it was the right direction. Those comrades who are not clearly aware of the facts will agree with us after they know the truth. We insist on supporting the workers of revolutionary rebel groups running the Tibet Daily Newspaper as the mouthpiece for the ideas of Chairman Mao. We welcome the new birth of the Tibet Daily Newspaper. . . . [See appendix 3 for the full text of this document.]⁴⁹*

Three weeks later, on 5 February, Gyenlo activists marched to the government offices of the TAR to further “seize power” in various offices, in essence paralyzing the party and government organizations.⁵⁰ Two days after that, they took control of the Public Security Bureau. At the same time they were also seizing, interrogating, and arresting members of the opposing revolutionaries, such as the Defenders of the Thoughts of Mao Zedong. A draft report favorable to the Regional Party Committee explained these events:

Once the Gyenlo Headquarters was established, especially after seizing power on 3 [*sic*, 5] February, its members pointed their struggle spearhead at the revolutionary organizations such as the Headquarters of Defending and the Headquarters of Nyamdre. . . . They regarded themselves as the natural-born “revolutionary and rebel faction.” They slandered whoever did not agree with their opinions and manners as people who are “protecting the emperor.” They threatened the members of the Headquarters of Defending, telling them to surrender to the Gyenlo Headquarters within two days or a “dictatorship” would be implemented over them. The members of Gyenlo Headquarters carried out activities that involved beating, smashing, arresting, and looting. At the same time they implemented the white terror.

According to the incomplete statistics compiled by four headquarters, including the Headquarters of Defending, Gyenlo Headquarters arrested 56 members of the masses, put 9 people under house arrest, interrogated 10 people illegally, surrounded and accused 46 people, and beat 116 people. (Among these 116 people, 16 were seriously injured, and 4 who were sent to the hospital were fatally injured.)

Gyenlo Headquarters also smashed [other] headquarters, including the Headquarters of Defending three times. They destroyed broadcast trucks and printing houses and so forth. After the members of Gyenlo Headquarters seized power, they established the so-called Dictatorship Committee (ch. *zhuanzheng weiyuanhui*) to further carry out their counterrevolutionary dictatorship against the revolutionary masses and cadres.⁵¹

This offensive by Gyenlo led directly to the merging of several opposing mass organizations, including the Headquarters of Defending, into a second, larger, and competing revolutionary coalition organization—Nyamdre.⁵² While still leftist and revolutionary in ideology, Nyamdre, like the Headquarters of Defending, was more conservative in supporting the more moderate views of most of the Regional Party Committee and Zhang Guohua regarding Tibet and the Cultural Revolution. Liu Shaoming, one of the top leaders of Nyamdre, explained in an interview (together with his wife) how this emerged out of the Gyenlo attacks on the Regional Party Committee compound on 5 February:

At that time, [the Gyenlo] people wanted to destroy the printing house and the archives of the Regional Party Committee. The combat team (ch. *bing tuan*) of the Regional Party Committee itself did not have enough manpower. So since the surrounding areas in Lhasa were also concerned about the Regional Party Committee, they [these areas] were organized to increase their [the committee’s] strength. Ten separate organizations [joined together].

[His wife interrupts.] At that time, the people of the Regional Party Committee were protecting the archives office. A whole row of rooms were used to store archives [records]. In addition, people of the Regional Party Committee protected the printing house. They were very under-

staffed, so many people from other work units volunteered to come inside and help us out. . . . I was in the courtyard at that time. They [Gyenlo] drove in with many vehicles, trying to take away the archives and destroy the printing press. The people opposing them were not clearly organized yet . . . [but] defended.

In addition, they [Gyenlo] wanted to drive out all the secretaries [leaders] and parade them around. . . . We needed to protect those small buildings, and obviously we didn't have enough hands. Therefore, many people from various organizations, such as workers' and peasants' organizations, volunteered to go to the Regional Party Committee to lend a hand. Later, they came together gradually and thought that they should be united.

[Liu]: Only when we united could we deal with them [Gyenlo].

[Wife]: There were the Headquarters of Defending, the combat team, and some [people from other] headquarters (ch. *silingbu*). A lot of them. The situation was like that. The seizure of power from the Regional Party Committee and the attempt to take away the archives became a catalyst and made them feel that they should unite.⁵³

Liu Shaoming commented more specifically about this action:

In the beginning, Gyenlo Headquarters and Red Guards from the inland areas were very powerful. They beat up people [cadres] who therefore had nowhere to stay [safely], not at the newspaper, not at the hospital. They had to leave. [Note: The officials had to move from one place to another to escape from the physical abuse of the Red Guards.] The Red Guards from the interior areas wanted to destroy the printing house of the Regional Party Committee—the printing house of the General Office (ch. *bangong ting*). It printed the publications of the Regional Party Committee at that time. The Red Guards thought the printing house was the black den of Zhang Guohua and wanted to destroy it, so the people of the General Office went in more than a dozen vehicles to protect the printing house. . . . At that time, the staff of the Regional Party Committee established combat teams in order to defend against Gyenlo. They were not organized in the beginning.

While this was happening, some young people of the Classified Documents Department (ch. *jiyao chu*) of the Regional Party Committee joined with Red Guards from the interior area and Gyenlo Headquarters and tried to get me to take files from the General Office so that they could write big-character posters about all the major leaders. I absolutely refused. That was out of the question. I was a secretary and knew the potential impact [of these files]. I heard that they later tried to break into the Archives Office (ch. *dangan shi*) of the Regional Party Committee. . . . At that time, the Archives Office was at the Regional Party Committee [headquarters]. When they tried to destroy the printing house, the cadres of the General Office were organized to defend it and the Archives Office. When [the attackers] went there, some cadres and their family members laid down at the gate and said, "Run over us if you want to get in." They didn't dare to do this.⁵⁴

For Gyenlo, therefore, Nyamdre was not a true representative of the views of Mao and the revolution but rather a pro-Zhang Guohua creature of the Regional Party Committee. A former top leader of Gyenlo conveyed his group's disdain when he sarcastically said of the new Nyamdre alliance, "The two factions were therefore formed. The Central Committee used to say that those people [in Nyamdre] had a deep love toward the Communist Party, so it was natural that they also loved the local Communist Party leaders [laughs]. Therefore, their stance of 'protecting the leaders' was understandable."⁵⁵

In December 1966, the two factions argued and debated under the rubric of the "free airing of views" (tib. *gyeshey gyeleng*; ch. *da ming da fang*), which meant that people should express their views without reservation. This was also referred to as "big debates" (tib. *tsöba chembo*; ch. *da bianlun*). By February 1967, however, putting up posters and debating turned physical, with violent struggles occurring in conjunction (tib. *thragbö thabdzö*), at first with slingshots and stones, then progressively with swords, iron rods, spears, bombs, and eventually guns. Initially, both factions were present in virtually all of the work units and neighborhoods; however, this changed after the physical fighting began between Gyenlo and Nyamdre and the two groups started raiding each other's sites, seizing locations, and beating up (struggling against) members from the other group. Gyenlo units seized places where only a small number of people from Nyamdre lived, and Nyamdre similarly seized places where not many people from Gyenlo lived. Therefore, some localities quickly became all one faction or the other. For example, the Potala-Shöl area was Nyamdre, but the nearby People's Hospital was Gyenlo. And at the "1 July" State Farm (opposite Drepung Monastery), everyone was Nyamdre, since the Gyenlo members who had been there had fled for safety to the Cement Factory, which was now completely Gyenlo. All of Lhasa became fragmented like that.

The army, ostensibly taking a stance of neutrality between the factions, was supposed to try to stop the violent fighting by placing its troops between the fighters to separate them peacefully. One Tibetan PLA soldier recalled this, explaining in an interview how his unit intervened to try to prevent serious outbreaks of interfactional violence:

They said that as soldiers we could not hold any ideology during the Cultural Revolution, the ideology of neither Nyamdre nor Gyenlo. Wherever fighting arose between the two factions, we were sent to mediate and stop them from fighting. . . . We stayed in the Potala Palace, where we used a

telescope to observe where the fighting was occurring. When we saw a fight, we had to call the Military Region Headquarters and inform them of this, and then they would send us to stop the fighting.

The main fighting in Lhasa was on the western and northern sides of city, and the worst was at the Second Guest House of the Tibet Autonomous Region (what used to be the Yabshi house). When the fighting was bad, we were sent to stop it. If it wasn't too bad, we stayed in the Potala Palace and watched what was happening through telescopes. This went on for four to five months in 1967–68.

Q: Did you see fighting every day?

A: Not every day. Sometimes there was and sometimes there wasn't. . . .

Q: How many people were with you observing from the Potala?

A: One platoon (ch. pai) that consisted of three squads (ch. ban). There were ten or eleven people in a squad. We had to watch from the Potala day and night.

Q: Could you see at night?

A: Not too clearly, but they usually threw bombs, and we could see them explode, so would call in and report that they were bombing at such and such.

Q: How many times did you go from the Potala to stop fighting?

A: Many times. More than I can count. We would go down via the road at the back of the Potala. If we went via the front, they would shoot at us from the Second Guest House.

Q: How did you stop the fighting?

A: We stood in the middle of the two factions and mediated, telling them not to fight. There was nothing else we could do.

Q: Did you advise both sides not to fight?

A: Yes. But they would not listen to us.

Q: Did you get hit?

A: Yes. I was hit many times. When we went to stop the fighting, they hit us with sticks saying, "You people are fake soldiers." . . . They beat us severely.

Q: Did you hit them back?

A: We were not allowed to hit back.

Q: Did you people have any ideology (tib. tawa)?

A: We had none at this time. Later our officers were Gyenlo, but we common soldiers had none. They told us we were not allowed to adhere to a faction. . . .

Q: When you went to stop the factional fighting, did you carry guns?

A: No, we weren't allowed to. They [the PLA leaders] had collected our weapons.

Q: What were you allowed to do when you went to stop the fighting?

A: Mostly we could only carry Mao's little red book in our hands. If Nyamdre came running to attack Gyenlo, we went into the middle and tried to stop them. And vice versa. So we soldiers got hit the most.

Q: *Were the soldiers in the middle mainly Tibetans?*

A: No. There were both Tibetans and Chinese.

Q: *Where you able to break them up?*

A: Yes, but we got hit a lot in the head by stones and sticks.⁵⁶

On 9 February, Gyenlo took another bold step to further secure its position by trying to neutralize the Tibet Military Region Headquarters. Led by the Beijing Metropolitan Red Guards, Gyenlo activists pushed their way into the Tibet Military Region Headquarters in collaboration with pro-Gyenlo PLA troops there who called themselves the Allied Combat Team of the military region (ch. *junqu lianhe bingtuan*). Ostensibly they were demanding that the leaders of Military Region Headquarters support the Gyenlo seizure of power on 5 February, but actually they were hoping to garner large-scale support from the troops and officers.⁵⁷

The following official description of Gyenlo's incursion into the military headquarters compound reveals the very negative view the government and army had of Gyenlo:

After the incident of 5 February, [when] Gyenlo Headquarters seized political and financial power from the Regional Party Committee of the TAR, they thought their position was still not secure without seizing military power. Therefore . . . they wanted to instigate rebellion within the army to stage a "military coup d'état." They openly instigated the army to "change their aim" and "turn their weapons around to strike." [On 9 February] [t]hey gathered the masses who were unaware of the truth to continuously attack the leading organs of the military region. They also colluded with a few reactionary members inside the military region to attempt to seize the military's power. They spread rumors to foment bad relations between the army and the masses. They abused the leading comrades of the military region for a long period of time and kidnapped and beat our army officials and soldiers many times. They grabbed the soldiers' collar badges, insignia, and their weapons. They openly shouted things such as "Commence a life-or-death fight to the end with the military region" and "Wash the highland city [Lhasa] with blood."⁵⁸

The specter of pro-Gyenlo combat teams within the army acting in concert with Gyenlo combat teams from Lhasa raised the frightening possibility of the army becoming split into two overtly competing revolutionary factions or, worse, becoming entirely loyal to Gyenlo. This prompted a quick and powerful response. The very next day, under instructions from the Central Military Committee in Beijing, the Tibet Military Headquarters moved to restore order by suspending the practice of the Cultural Revolution in the army, that is, by resuming normal operations

within the military in Tibet and by declaring martial law in the military headquarters compound.⁵⁹ At the same time, the army immediately suppressed the pro-Gyenlo Allied Combat Team, arresting its leaders. The following 13 February document, written by Gyenlo activists, defiantly describes the army's tough response:

To all the revolutionary comrades in Lhasa and Tibet:

The Great Cultural Revolution has come to a decisive battle to achieve complete success for the entire movement. As in the whole country, the masses in Lhasa and the entire Tibet region have already been fully mobilized. They have also seized power from a few party leaders who hold on to the reactionary capitalist line. The situation now is wonderful and ready for the decisive battle. However, let us take a look at how a few leaders of the Tibet Military Region Headquarters behaved and insisted on the reactionary capitalist line:

1. Troops representing the Military Region Headquarters had different opinions from those of the Allied Combat Team of the military region [the pro-Gyenlo army group]. . . .
3. On the night of 9 February, they used fascist savage ways to treat the Allied Combat Team of the military region. Thirteen revolutionary cadres were illegally detained. (More were detained secretly.) They surrounded about five hundred people of the Allied Combat Team for more than ten hours and did not allow them to study the works of Chairman Mao or use the bathroom. They even attempted to destroy completely the revolutionary rebel corps by taking away their freedom of speech. . . .
6. They recently transferred troops from other military regions to Tibet. Why did they do that?
7. They ordered troops to collect weapons and ammunition from every big work unit on the afternoon of 9 February. What was the purpose of doing that?
8. They suddenly blocked the roads to Lhasa and started to check all the vehicles going in and out of Lhasa. Vehicles were allowed to get into Lhasa but were not allowed to leave.
9. They cut communication between our region and the Central Committee. Why?
10. The place where the troops are stationed was full of heavily armed soldiers. Why?

Revolutionary comrades, we should rise up to smash all the schemes of the Party Committee of the Military Region Headquarters. [Slogans omitted here.]

*Lhasa Revolutionary Gyenlo Headquarters
Allied Operational Headquarters of the School
the Department of Transportation⁶⁰*

Is this correct?
no number
2 or 5 in the
numbered list.
Please advise.
MLG/ICS

Despite purging the pro-Gyenlo troops and taking these precautionary moves, the army did not immediately move to take control of the entire city at this moment. Instead, troops first tried peacefully to regain control of the *Tibet Daily*, that is, without having to storm the compound. With approval from the State Council and the Central Military Committee in Beijing, the army began discussions with Gyenlo's leaders about the evacuation of the compound. When Gyenlo resisted this, the army made plans to move on the compound on the morning of 26 February if Gyenlo still hadn't agreed by then. However, Gyenlo complicated matters by calling for its supporters to join them in the compound to help defend it. Many hundreds and perhaps as many as several thousand came. Gyenlo also sought support from Beijing, and, just as the army was preparing to attack, the Gyenlo leaders in the compound were informed that a telegram had arrived from the Central Committee in Beijing, clearly accepting them as a true revolutionary organization. This was a major victory for them, since they felt it meant that the army could not suppress them as counterrevolutionaries. The following comments of the head of Gyenlo in the newspaper compound, though obviously biased, give a glimpse into a revolutionary leader's thinking:

Well, actually, things were still complicated after we took the power [on 5 February]. The attempt to re seize power, the fighting among the people, and even fighting with weapons, all these problems eventually led to the Central Committee's order to institute military control.

We were simply following the orders of the Central Committee to take power and were not prepared for all the problems. We definitely had no idea [of their military plans] when the Tibet Military Region Headquarters came to take control from us. They had received permission from the Central Committee. I was then in charge of the publishing house and had to negotiate with the army. I told them that we would hand over power if they could show me their orders from the Central Committee. The army, to tell you the truth, favored the other side and deliberately refused my request. It could have been very simple—they show me what they have, and I give them what they want. However, they just didn't do it that way. [Laughs.] Well, I then said, "Fine, I believe that you have the okay from the Central Committee, and we'll get out of here immediately."⁶¹

However, as will be seen in the following continuation of the narrative, Gyenlo certainly did not agree to leave unconditionally.

Q: When did this happen?

A: It was in 1967, probably on 26 February. . . . [T]he person who negotiated with me was Wei Ke. He was utterly unreasonable. I told him that I believed him, and my men would leave right away. However, it was already too late.

Q: How many people did you have in the publishing house then?

A: About two thousand to three thousand.

Q: In the publishing house?

A: Yes. Well, how should I put it? . . . People came to the publishing house of their own will. They were there to protect the publishing house, to protect the fruit of the Great Cultural Revolution. [Laughs.]

Q: How long had you been there before the negotiations with the army? . . .

A: Well, I was in charge at the publishing house since we took the power. . . . Not that long. About twenty days or maybe just ten days. So it was getting complicated after we took the power. We mainly published information about the Cultural Revolution and some local news of course. We organized people to write for us, and I myself wrote for the paper. We couldn't leave blanks on the paper. [Laughs.] You can imagine, life was pretty hard for us. We had to find people for the Tibetan version of the paper. I don't know Tibetan, but those who were in charge of the Tibetan version always came to me when they had problems. . . . We hired some temporary workers for that. Most of them were Tibetan; a few were Han.

. . . It was on 11 January that we took the power, and the army came on the 26th. After the negotiations, the army did not let us go, and we were kept there till late that night when a telegraph was sent to us from the Central Committee. We had our people in the post office, and they read the telegraph first and then sent it to me. . . . We had a party to celebrate, because the telegraph was addressed clearly to "the revolutionary masses in Lhasa." The telegraph ordered us to establish the "revolutionary three connections" with Zhang Guohua, so we were being addressed as a revolutionary organization. We were very happy at that time, and we even had a parade inside the publishing house. Using the parade as an opportunity, we organized our people and were ready to leave. However, we were stopped. The army literally surrounded us.

It appears that once the telegram arrived, Gyenlo wanted a guarantee from the army that they would treat the faction as revolutionaries and not suppress them. The army, however, apparently did not agree but still wanted to avoid a massacre so surrounded the compound and did not let the Gyenlo people leave. The Gyenlo leader continued the narrative:

They didn't let us leave on 26, 27, 28 [February], 1 March, or on the 2nd. . . . [Finally] [o]n 2 March I said that we shouldn't let it go any further. First of all, [the army] didn't allow us to get food from the outside, and the food stored in the publishing house was limited. I could have only one steamed bun for a whole day. Second, our communications with the outside were cut.

Q: They didn't allow anyone to go out?

A: No, none of us could go out. However, they did allow people to come in, so more and more people gathered at the publishing house. We had

trouble providing food for all the people and couldn't reach any agreement with the army. So I decided on 2 March to surrender myself along with a few other leaders. Then when we went out, we were immediately seized by the army.

Q: Whose order was that?

A: It must have been the Military Region Headquarters. She Banqiao was the army's chief of staff. . . . [W]e knew each other. I thought I could find a way out by communicating with him. However, that guy was swollen with arrogance because he had the order from the Central Military Committee.⁶²

When the Gyenlo leaders finally agreed to leave unconditionally, they quickly learned that the army would not treat them as revolutionaries. To the contrary, it immediately detained almost one hundred of the Gyenlo activists. The Gyenlo leader explained:

We went outside and were immediately seized by the army. . . . They had actually assured us that if we left, we would be freed after being searched. [Laughs.]

Q: Nyamdre told you that?

A: No, the army did. They used their loudspeakers. . . . [Instead] [t]hey tied us up, . . . but they couldn't get anything [from me] after half a day's interrogations. They wanted me to say that we were being used by someone "backstage" and to tell them who exactly was using us. It was an easy question, and the answer was "those leaders [in the Regional Party Committee] who follow the capitalist road." [Laughs.] Actually I would have been happy if I could have named some backstage people and then have been set free. I just couldn't do that. Those people I worked with were not my backstage controllers. Most of the time they needed to consult me before making any decisions. [Laughs.] . . . We were first taken to the East Suburb Prison, where we spent about eleven days. Later we were transferred to a detention center. They talked pretty nice, saying, "We'll transfer you to a better place, since the conditions at the East Suburb Prison are terrible." [Laughs.] We were then put in the North Suburb. What they really wanted was more information from us.

Q: How long did you stay in the prison?

A: . . . Seventy-one days . . .

Q: Besides you, how many people were put into prison?

A: I can't recall the exact number now. Probably more than a hundred. The detention center was full. People like me were considered important criminals and should have been kept in private rooms [solitary confinement]. However, it was simply impossible. I shared a room with two other people.

Q: Did they beat you?

A: Not really. . . . There was no solid evidence of our "crimes." . . . They repeated to me that I would be freed if I could name one or two backstage supporters. [Laughs.] We thought at that time that the Central

Committee would rectify this for us. However, we can see now that that was a naive idea.

Before the incident at our publishing house, an incident occurred at the publishing house of the Qinghai Daily, where the army under Zhao Yongfu opened fire and killed more than one hundred people there. We didn't know exactly what happened in Qinghai, but we heard that the army had surrounded the Qinghai Daily. Zeng Yongya [a top leader in the Tibet military region] later teased me, "You were so brave! If the Central Committee had allowed the army to open fire, you would have lost your lives!" [Laughs.] It was Premier Zhou [Enlai] who said that bloody struggles like the one in Qinghai should not be allowed to happen in Tibet. That was why the army didn't fire at us. However, the army did scare people by shouting through their loudspeakers, accusing us of keeping weapons inside the publishing house. After we surrendered, they started to say that we were hiding the weapons in a well. Actually they later found out that we didn't have anything hidden there.⁶³

The Tibet military region also received approval from the State Council and the Central Military Committee to implement military control over key offices, such as the Public Security Bureau, the Procuratorial Bureau, and the Tibet People's Broadcasting Station.⁶⁴ At the same time the military also arrested many Gyenlo activists. Thus, from the beginning of March 1967, the army gradually established military control offices in Lhasa and in the other main cities and counties in Tibet.

For Gyenlo's leaders, the events of February and March were a stunning and unexpected defeat that led to the desertion of many of its own fighting units. From one thousand members at the start in December 1966, Gyenlo had grown to an organization of more than three hundred combat teams and more than fifteen thousand persons. (They themselves claimed they had thirty-five thousand members.) However, after their loss in February, one after another of the combat units left, and by 1 April they had declined to three thousand people. By contrast, Nyamdre had increased to about thirty-eight thousand members and became the more powerful faction in the continuing conflict between the two.⁶⁵

The extent of the army's repression of Gyenlo at this time can be seen in the written self-confession (dated 5 September 1967) titled "Preliminary Examination of the Mistakes I Made in Supporting the Left" (i.e., Nyamdre), by Yin Fatang, a top army leader and Nyamdre supporter:

After 5 February, . . . I regarded the contradiction among the people as one between the enemy and us. I regarded "Specially Attack," a [Gyenlo] revolutionary mass organization that included Red Guards and ordinary

cadres, as a “reactionary organization”⁶⁶ and regarded certain revolutionary actions of Gyenlo General Headquarters as “counter-revolutionary actions of a small handful of persons,” thus confounding right and wrong and black and white.

After 9 February . . . I suppressed and attacked the revolutionary masses and revolutionary cadres within the Army and placed some good comrades under arrest. After 26 February, I proceeded with suppression and attacks outside the Army, banned “Specially Attack,” and placed some revolutionary people, revolutionary cadres and revolutionary young fighters under arrest. They were beaten and thrown into prison. Mentally and physically they suffered great pains. The “oath-taking” rally held on 5 March put forward some wrong slogans and made some wrong approaches. In particular, it did not permit Gyenlo Headquarters to attend meetings. These methods had very bad consequences. Around that time, some wrong notations, open letters, and propaganda materials were put up and distributed. As the spearhead was directed against the wrong target, Gyenlo General Headquarters almost disintegrated. . . . The revolutionary masses of Gyenlo General Headquarters and the revolutionary cadres supporting Gyenlo General Headquarters were repressed.

The great “April” directive once again embodied Chairman Mao’s boundless trust and care of the revolutionary masses and revolutionary young fighters, showed the bearings of the movement, and gave us a change to correct our mistakes. But I obstinately adhered to error and failed to mend my ways. I maintained that the circumstances in Tibet were special, that the mainstream actions of February and March were good, and that everything would be all right if some things were corrected. The result was that the work of vindication [of Gyenlo] was delayed.

Further, for a long time I mistakenly regarded “Rebel General Headquarters” as a mass organization manipulated by the Party capitalist-roaders in authority. I thought that by calling it a revolutionary mass organization I would be treating it with favor. It was not until June and July [1967] that I recognized it as a revolutionary mass organization.⁶⁷

The violent purge of the pro-Gyenlo members in the army is vividly described by one worker in the Military Region Headquarters:

I am an ordinary member of the cultural workers’ group in the Tibet Military Region. . . . After getting up on the morning of 10 February, I found that the building housing the cultural workers’ group was almost empty, having only a few persons in it. Later in the lavatory I saw many armed fighters holding rifles and guarding the rear of the assembly hall. At that time I felt it was quite strange because such a sight had never been seen in large compounds in the Military Region. Then, when I went over to the parade ground, it gave me a great shock. There were 72 trucks neatly parked. Armed troops ready to charge with bayoneted rifles were everywhere in front of the meeting hall as well as on the parade ground. A tight cordon was posted around the meeting hall.

Not knowing what had happened inside it, I waited outside the hall. Suddenly, out of the main entrance came four fighters pushing and pulling a person who, when I got closer, gave me a fright. The person was none other than Comrade Lan Chikui of our Military Region's combined corps. He was bare-headed with both hands tied behind his back. Then more than ten people rushed up from both sides (they were all members of the headquarters of defending Mao Zedong's thought), surrounding Comrade Lan Chikui and giving him a savage beating. Some of them pulled his hair, some grabbed him by the neck and some struck his head violently with their pistols. Tens of fists landed on his head like a shower and hit his check and back. In a moment blood flowed straight down his face and he became a mass of flesh and blood. His clothes were torn to pieces and his face was swollen out of human shape.⁶⁸

This was the beginning of the deep enmity between Gyenlo and the army that would worsen in the next two years and play a significant role in the Nyemo incident. However, although weakened by the army's action, Gyenlo continued to compete with Nyamdre, and factional fighting did not stop in 1967–68. In Lhasa, the western and northern sections of the city came to be controlled by Gyenlo, whereas the center was mostly controlled by Nyamdre. Normal work and life in Lhasa were literally brought to a standstill.

A Han eyewitness who was the twelve-year-old son of a surgeon at the People's Hospital at this time recalled this period. He had been studying in Chengdu at a school for the children of cadres working in Tibet but was called home by his father when the Cultural Revolution fighting there became too dangerous. He returned to Lhasa in February 1967 and went to school in Lhasa for a month or so before things also became too dangerous in Lhasa. At that time serious fighting was going on between the Gyenlo-held People's Hospital and the Nyamdre-held Potala and the People's Daily Office, which were located, respectively, on the hospital's west and east sides. He recalled:

The doctors and staff in the hospital couldn't defend themselves from the Nyamdre combat units, which were located on both sides, so they brought lots of Gyenlo fighters from the Large Vehicle Repair Workshop (ch. *da xiu chang*), which was located to the north of the hospital, to come and live in the hospital.

Nyamdre shot down into the hospital compound from the buildings on the east side of the Potala, and [those at] the People's Daily shot at us from that side. They shot guns and fired homemade cannons. My family and I lived in a single-story building near the Potala side, so when I went out I had to run fast across an open area between my building and the hospital's outer wall, since until I reached the safety of [being close to]

the wall, there was a danger of being hit by gunfire coming down from the Potala.

On one occasion, when Nyamdre was shooting a lot of homemade cannon shells at the hospital, my mother was so afraid that one of them might hit and collapse the roof of our one-story house and injure me that she took me to stay in the three-story out-patient building, which she felt was safer. I had to sleep on a patient examination table on the first floor.⁶⁹

Military control was formalized on 11 May 1967, when the Central Committee established the Tibet Autonomous Region Military Control Commission and appointed Zhang Guohua as director, with Ren Rong and Chen Mingyi as deputy directors.⁷⁰ All were strongly anti-Gyenlo.

However, fighting between Gyenlo and Nyamdre continued and actually increased in the second half of 1967. Beginning in 1968, the situation further deteriorated when both factions began to use guns. These were ostensibly stolen from the army, but it appears that in reality supporters in the army turned a blind eye to such “thefts” by revolutionaries, if they didn’t actually aid in them. In addition to acquiring the military guns, the factions also started manufacturing bombs and other weapons in their workshops.

Beijing was concerned about the worsening situation in Lhasa and was eager to restore some semblance of calm there so that it could replace the Regional Party Committee with a new form of government that it called a Revolutionary Committee government (tib. *sarje uyön lhengang*; ch. *gemin weiyuanhui*). However, before it could do this, both revolutionary factions not only had to stop the violence but also had to agree to the membership of the new Revolutionary Committee government. Consequently, as early as February 1968, at Beijing’s behest, the Military Region Headquarters made an unexpected overture to Gyenlo to this end. A leader in Gyenlo recalled this event:

On 3 February 1968, the Military Region Headquarters decided to form the (Three-Way) Great Revolutionary Alliance (ch. *geming da lianhe*) with us.⁷¹ They came to talk with us, carrying the flag of the army. I was very surprised. I didn’t understand why those of the Military Region Headquarters changed their minds in such a short period of time. And even today, I still don’t understand this. Maybe history will give me an answer in the future. Of course, they said that they were sincerely supportive of us and that it was we who denied their support. Although I was the general leader of our faction at that time, I was not able to control the situation, and some Red Guards from Beijing made things worse by verbally attacking Yu Zhiquan, the deputy commander of the military region. He was the one talking with us. Vice-Commander Yu, as a military commander, was

not good at debating and almost dozed off at the meeting. Finally, the army men got up and angrily left the meeting, saying that we had humiliated the flag of the army. I didn't understand why they felt that. However, I knew that things were getting worse, for it was very rare to see the army men come out with their flag and then have the negotiation that day turn out to be such a failure.⁷²

As a result of this debacle, Beijing acted quickly and summoned the top leaders of Gyenlo and Nyamdre to Beijing at the end of February for a "study class," again to end the factional violence. More than three hundred cadres attended, including top leaders such as Tao Changsong of Gyenlo, Liu Shaoming of Nyamdre, and Ren Rong of the military region.⁷³

The rationale that leaders in Beijing presented to the delegates was simple. Times have changed, they said. At the beginning of the Great Cultural Revolution, everyone rose up to revolt against the capitalist-roaders, but since that time the capitalist-roaders have been exposed. Now is the time to establish revolutionary committees, which are the true tool for creating the dictatorship of the proletariat. Consequently, any further factional conflict would only serve to decentralize revolutionary power and weaken this effort as well as negatively impact Tibet's war readiness (against India). Thus, the assembled delegates were told that they had to agree to end factionalism, because if it were to continue, the revolution itself would be crippled.⁷⁴ However, achieving such an agreement meant bringing about a new positive relationship not only between the two revolutionary factions but also among them, the army, and the cadres. In particular, it meant establishing some agreement about who would hold what positions in the new revolutionary committee of the Tibet Autonomous Region.

On 5 May, Zhang Guohua, who was in Beijing, met with the representatives of Gyenlo and Nyamdre and told them that Zhou Enlai had just phoned, instructing that the delegates must send a report on the establishment of the new revolutionary committee within the next two weeks.⁷⁵ However, even pressure from this level did not work, because the two factions could not agree to compromise on this committee's membership.

A month later, there was still no agreement, so on 6 June 1968, China's top leaders, including Zhou Enlai, Jiang Qing, Chen Boda, and Kang Sheng, interviewed the top party committee members of the military region (Ren Rong, Chen Mingyi, Zeng Yongya, Wang Chenghan, Lu Yishan, Liao Buyun, and Yin Fatang) along with others in the Regional Party Committee, instructing them to come to an agreement about the formation of the new revolutionary committee. Their comments were the

same as those that Zhang Guohua had made to the representatives of the mass organizations, but they pointedly added that the army should not have been engaged in “supporting one faction and suppressing the other faction.”⁷⁶

However, despite Beijing’s continued pressure to push the representatives to reach an agreement in Beijing, the violent struggle continued in Lhasa throughout the first half of 1968. Gyenlo at this time also pushed to increase its strength outside Lhasa, where the PLA, which they felt tacitly supported Nyamdre, was not stationed in force. As a result, Gyenlo sought to proselytize in the countryside to increase its numbers and power. As we shall see, Nyemo was one of the counties where Gyenlo’s local leaders made a major attempt to increase its manpower and political control.

In the midst of both the chaotic revolutionary violence in Lhasa and the still ongoing study class in Beijing, a signal event took place on 7 June, the day after China’s leaders stated that the PLA should not have supported one faction and suppressed the other. In a major breach of the army’s neutrality, two Gyenlo strongholds in Lhasa—the Jokhang Temple, in the heart of Lhasa, and the Financial Compound (ch. *caijing dayuan*), near Gyenlo General Headquarters—were attacked by armed PLA troops.

At this time, Gyenlo activists physically occupied the top floor of the Jokhang Temple and had set up loudspeakers on the roof, making it a major platform for Gyenlo propaganda. The Financial Compound also had loudspeakers on its roof. The stream of derogatory and insulting broadcasts emanating from them infuriated Nyamdre and the army, who on 7 June launched a major military strike against both strongholds.

The Financial Compound was chosen as the site of the first army attack because of its strategic position, as one of the PLA commanders involved in the attack explained:

Before the incident of 7 June, Ding Yongtai told one of his trusted subordinates, “The Financial Compound is the transportation key spot of Gyenlo Headquarters. From there, they can go east to the second command office of Gyenlo, go north to the general office of Gyenlo Headquarters and to the suburbs, and they can also go to the installment team and the experimental primary school. The communications among those units is through the Financial Compound. If the Financial Compound can be captured, Gyenlo Headquarters will be isolated in Lhasa.”⁷⁷

The actual plan of attack was originally based on deceit. Gyenlo Headquarters was to be sent a letter saying several trucks were coming to deliver food, but when the trucks arrived and Gyenlo opened the gate to

receive the food, three companies of the 159th Regiment would rush into the compound. If this ruse did not work, the troops were under orders to tear down the compound's walls.⁷⁸

The attack, however, was unsuccessful in spite of the plans. The following report on the incident details the failure:

The soldiers first broke down the door and tore down the wall around the Financial Compound. They entered from different directions and started to beat members of the Gyenlo Headquarters with wooden sticks and gun butts.

Soldiers of the Ninth Company of the 136th Regiment were responsible for capturing the west blockhouse. Soldiers of the First Battalion of the 159th Regiment and the First Company of the 305th Regiment were added to help them. The 136th Regiment started the main attack while the other two companies blocked the masses from coming to join them [Gyenlo]. However, they could not capture the west blockhouse.

Shi Banjiao [the top military commander] then ordered Wu Zhihai, the commander of the troops attacking the west blockhouse, to add two squads from the Second Battalion of the 159th Regiment to the fight. These soldiers used implements such as shovels to dig out the doors and windows of the west blockhouse, trying to enter by force. At about noon, when Shi Banjiao called Ding Yongtai asking about the situation at the west blockhouse, Ding said, "The attack at the west blockhouse has not seen any progress yet, and the scaling ladders were all taken by the Gyenlo followers." Shi Banjiao told Ding, "You seemed like a capable guy, but now you are useless. I put so many soldiers under your control, and you are saying that you cannot get the blockhouse for me." Shi Banjiao then led an armed platoon of the 138th Regiment to the west blockhouse and started to command the attack himself. [However] [later that day, he was captured by the Gyenlo defenders.⁷⁹

A twenty-five-year-old Tibetan PLA soldier who was among those eventually captured by Gyenlo recalled what to him seemed like the "fog of war" that day:

The worst incident was] the fight at the Financial Compound. At this time the military headquarters tricked us. . . . They told us to take guns and go to the Financial Compound to fight with some bad elements who were there. . . . When we got there, [Gyenlo] severely beat us up, and we were unable to fire one shot.

Q: What happened?

A: After we got there, they [the military headquarters] ordered us to prepare to shoot. We did this, but the order to open fire never came. At this time the deputy chief of staff (ch. fu canmouzhang) was captured by Gyenlo. . . . We learned of this, and that's why we were sent to attack the Financial Compound. When we arrived there, the company commander

(ch. lianzhang) was also seized by Gyenlo. And they seized several Tibetan soldiers [including me]. I had a machine gun, which they took and beat me severely. I also had three hundred bullets, which they stole. They ripped my clothes off and left me completely naked. Then they took us to the Military Control Commission Office (ch. jun guan hui) within the Financial Compound. Actually the Military Control Commission was supposed to stop outbreaks of fighting within the unit. We lost our guns and were taken [into custody], as were our officers. . . . A fat Chinese was there. He said, "Don't seize the common soldiers, just the officers."

Q: Was it Gyenlo who seized you?

A: Yes, it was Gyenlo. That afternoon I didn't know how the battle at the Tsuglagang (Jokhang) had gone. I had been kicked a lot and was unable to walk well. They were not afraid to do this, even though we were soldiers. Then they suddenly said to us, "You lost your guns; now go back."

Q: How many soldiers were there [captured]?

A: More than ten soldiers. All our guns were taken. There were several Tibetans in our group. . . . [We were captured because] [a]fter we arrived there, we were ordered to lie prone on the ground. Then when the Gyenlo people came running toward us, we never got the order to fire. We just continued to lie there. If we had made our own decision to fire and if people had been killed, it wouldn't have been good. So the Gyenlo people grabbed our guns and beat us and took us into custody. That afternoon they told us to go, and we left. . . . They sent us back to the military garrison. At the garrison, they asked us where our guns were. When I said they took our guns, the team leader (ch. duizhang) had us all stand in a line and said to me, "You lost the People's Liberation Army's weapons." And then he slapped my face and kicked me. There was nothing I could do but stand there. Then he asked us who stole the guns? I said the revolutionary masses stole them. Then he beat me again because I used the term revolutionary masses.

Q: You weren't allowed to say that?

A: At this time we couldn't call the factions bad people, only revolutionary masses, so I used that term. [But he got angry because I didn't say bad people had stolen our guns.]

They confined all of us who had lost our weapons to the base. They said, "You can't go outside. If you have work, you have to ask permission to leave." Then one day the military headquarters held a big meeting. They told us to come. I was very afraid, because I thought they would put me in prison or execute me. However, they gave us new uniforms to put on, and we went. At the meeting they read my name first to stand up. At that moment I thought I would be executed. However, the officers were nice to us. The officer who slapped me now apologized and said, "Don't be angry with me for slapping you." Really, it isn't permitted for an officer to slap an "enlisted" soldier in the army.

Q: Were you very afraid?

A: There was nothing I could do. I had already lost the gun. So I went up

to the platform and was told to sit on the front of the platform facing the audience. Then they praised me a lot. They said, “You suffered a lot of beatings but didn’t fire your weapons. You are really brave men.”⁸⁰

On that same day, later in the afternoon, the more famous of the two army attacks occurred at the Jokhang (ch. *dazhao*) Temple. A detailed account of the battle follows:

Tang Shengying then gave the soldiers of the Fifth Company a case of bullets and six rocket shells, and Ding Yongtai encouraged them to occupy the commanding spots of the Dazhao Temple and seize the weapons that the masses of Gyenlo’s Fourth Headquarters were keeping there. Soldiers of the Fifth Company then ran [from the Financial Compound] to the Dazhao Temple, ready to start the fight against the Fourth Headquarters of Gyenlo.

. . . The Third Machine Gun Company and the Eighth Company went to the third floor from the connecting bridge in the north. One group of the Second Machine Gun Company and the Seventh Company took the stairs in the northeast corner to the top of the third floor. The military signal was “two whistles.” Five veterans guarded the stairs and the door to the second floor. The Fourth Company guarded the door of the Dazhao Temple. The Second Platoon was the backup force. Soldiers were told to tie a piece of white cloth or a white towel to their right arms in order to look different from the masses.

At 6:30 P.M., the soldiers started the fight. Before they started, the commander of the Third Platoon, Shao Guoqing, gave a brief speech. He said, “We have to capture the weapons the masses of Gyenlo Headquarters are keeping, but do not fire without my command. When the fight begins, we will try to assemble at the southwest corner. Do not fire submachine guns from a long distance. You can use machine guns, but do not use more than ten bullets.”

The soldiers set off with their bayonets attached and pointing outward. They shouted, “Kill! Kill!” [and] “Lay down your guns and we will spare your lives.” At that time more than sixty persons from Gyenlo’s Fourth Headquarters were having dinner and studying in the corridor.

All these people, with the exception of one person who was at the broadcast station, stood up when they heard the noise. They surrounded the armed soldiers, some of them waving the red book, some holding rakes. They shouted, “Long live Chairman Mao! Long live the Communist Party!” A few people pointed to their chests, shouting bravely, “Shoot me. Shoot me.”

The person at the broadcast unit then started broadcasting “Emergency! Emergency!” through the loudspeakers. Hearing that, the commander of the Third Platoon jumped to the platform and fired two shots into the air. The soldiers of each platoon then started to shoot at the members of Gyenlo Headquarters on the third and fourth floors with semiautomatic rifles, submachine guns, and cannons. Some soldiers of the

Second Platoon went upstairs and shot from there into the revolutionary masses. Five veterans shot at the loudspeakers on the fourth floor.

The gun battle lasted about two minutes. Three loudspeakers were destroyed, and sixty people of Gyenlo were killed or injured. Six soldiers were also killed or injured. More than one thousand bullets and nine hand grenades were used by the soldiers. The soldiers captured one semiautomatic rifle and some guns and hand grenades from the masses.⁸¹

A Gyenlo member who was just outside the Jokhang saw the attack start and remembered:

Those people went inside the Jokhang through the Shingra entrance, the place that was used for keeping firewood during the Mönlam Festival. Before that, the woman who was broadcasting from the roof of the Jokhang was shouting, “This is the red rebellion broadcast station (ch. *hongse zaofan guangbo zhan*).” . . . After those people went inside the Jokhang, no voice came from the broadcast station. Probably, they seized that woman.

At that point, I didn’t dare to go inside. Some people who had gone inside were saying, “You shouldn’t go inside, because when we went inside the people in the Jokhang had burned lice insecticide (tib. *shigmen*), and we felt that we were almost going to die from the fumes.” So I didn’t go inside, and I didn’t see anything. Then I went home.⁸²

Another Gyenlo fighter who was part of the group in the Jokhang recalled:

I was not in the Jokhang that morning. It was a fortunate coincidence that I had gone home. Otherwise I would have been killed. I heard that the soldiers climbed up to the temple of Lhamo and first shot a gun into the sky. Then they started shooting machine guns.

At that point, a girl called Tshamla was shot in the forehead, with the bullet coming out of the back of her head. And there was a boy called Sonam. First his leg was shot, and he fell down. Then the soldiers stabbed him with their bayonets. I had a friend called Kejöla; he was shot twelve or thirteen times. His whole body was riddled with bullets. All together, they killed twelve people in the Jokhang. Then the rest of the people were locked up in the Shingra that night. . . .

The next morning, the rest of the people [who had been injured from beatings with rifle butts] were made to pull a cart and take away the corpses.⁸³

The attack also involved Nyamdre fighters, one of whom recalled that the Nyamdre side also fought with insecticides:

At that time, they gave us the powder for killing lice. . . . [W]e were staying in the compound of the People’s Government (ch. *renmin weiyuanhui*) of the Autonomous Region. We were not in our work unit. In those days there was a broadcast station in the Jokhang that was said to be very powerful. So probably they told us that we had to take over that broadcast station.

We were given only the powder for killing lice. We didn't have other weapons. The insecticide was put in plastic. I remember I put that in my pocket. That night, when we climbed up a ladder, they [people in the Jokhang] stoned us. It was just like in the movies of the [early] Chinese Empire, where the people were stoned when they climbed up ladders to scale the walls of a fortress. That night . . . a lot of people were there. They climbed up to the place where the broadcast set was located. I reached the place where the loudspeaker was set up.

There were not many people from Gyenlo. They were hiding, covering their heads with their hands. Some people threw the insecticide at those who were hiding. I told somebody, "Don't throw that at the people who are not doing anything. Why are you throwing that at those people? You have to throw it at the people who are fighting."

I just threw some insecticide [at the people who were throwing stones at us] when I was climbing up. Otherwise, I didn't get any chance to throw it. I thought it would be useless to throw it at the people who were hiding.

Later, Nyamdre seized those [Gyenlo] people and brought them down. I didn't know where they took them. There were men and women; there were not many people. At that point Nyamdre had many more people.

Q: How many hours did they fight?

A: They didn't fight very long. After we gathered together and were brought to the Jokhang, we had to wait in the courtyard (tib. *khyamra*) for about an hour or half an hour. After that we started to climb upstairs. The [Gyenlo] people who were on the roof of Jokhang were all seized. Later, we went back to the People's Government compound.⁸⁴

These attacks on the Financial Compound and the Jokhang resulted in the death of 12 Gyenlo activists, the serious wounding of 13, and less serious injury to another 361. Two soldiers were killed, nine were seriously wounded, and six only slightly injured.⁸⁵

One of the heads of Gyenlo talked about the reasons for the attack as well as his role in it:

The army was not happy after the 18 January armed struggle,⁸⁶ in which they failed, and the 3 February [failed army negotiations]. And they considered our attacks on Zhang Guohua as the worst offense, so [I felt] they would seek revenge sooner or later. And they also had failed in other armed struggles, because our side had many workers who were a powerful force in armed struggles. Although [the army] had weapons, they still couldn't win. You know, sometimes during the fighting their weapons might end up in our hands. [Laughs.] And as I told you, our factories also made weapons. So finally the army decided to do it [attack us], although they still used the name of the Central Committee. At the Jokhang Temple, the broadcast station . . . [t]hey could have just taken the power from us, so why should they shoot at us? At the Jokhang Temple, if I'm not mistaken they killed ten of us. Some of those were

shot at the stomach, some in the head, and ten died right away. A few others were injured.

Q: Why did they want to take over power at the Jokhang?

A: . . . [T]hey said they were there to “take over military control.” . . . Of course, they didn’t like our broadcast station there. They shot at us without hesitation, not just at the Jokhang Temple, but also at the Financial Compound. I was in Beijing then [attending the study class], and Liu Shiyi phoned me immediately when this happened.⁸⁷ He asked me what we should do. I stayed cool when hearing this. I said, “Don’t fight back. Let them shoot.” I knew things would be even worse if we fought back. So I told Liu to let the army shoot and that it didn’t matter how many people we lost. Therefore, we lost ten people at the Jokhang Temple and two at the Financial Compound; there was a path linking the Financial Compound to the Second Guest House [the main headquarters of Gyenlo], and the two were killed there. Many others were injured. Ai Xuehua, a photographer, was trying to take pictures as evidence during the shooting and was shot at the back. He didn’t die but was paralyzed. . . .

The reason why this happened was that the other faction [Nyamdre] had been losing the game time and time again, and the army decided to help them. Anyhow . . . , we were proud that we properly dealt with the incident. Of course, some of us were very upset when this happened and were ready to fight against the army. I knew it was not right. A few people even suggested bombing the electricity factory in the northern suburb to leave the whole city of Lhasa in darkness. I said that was even more ridiculous, and we couldn’t do it. Liu Shiyi was very nervous when he phoned me and couldn’t even talk in complete sentences. After talking with Liu Shiyi over the phone, I said to the military leaders at the study class that it was not right for them to kill our people. Those leaders pretended not to know anything about it.⁸⁸

This attack clearly showed Gyenlo Headquarters that the army was now openly siding with Nyamdre, and, of course, it also put the Gyenlo faction on the defensive. Gyenlo, already at a disadvantage because it possessed fewer guns than its rival, was outraged by this blatant breach of rules by the army, which was supposed to maintain a neutral stance in revolutionary factional disputes, not shoot and bayonet members of the revolutionary masses. The already existing anger and enmity Gyenlo felt toward Nyamdre, the Regional Party Committee, and the army leadership now soared exponentially. However, despite the defeat, Gyenlo’s spirit was not broken, and its members became even more determined to fight back as best they could against their enemies.

Ironically, a few days after the killings, on 12 June 1968, an agreement between the factions was actually signed in Beijing by the participating delegates, who were still there at the study class. In theory the

agreement ended the factional conflict, saying, "Both sides guarantee that [henceforth] there will be no violence of any kind. Shooting guns and cannons will cease, and in the future both sides must not instigate violence or participate in violence on any pretext."⁸⁹

However, not surprisingly, the agreement was ignored once the Gyenlo leaders returned to Lhasa. In the ensuing months, the situation in Lhasa worsened substantially, and the central government convened another meeting in Beijing in late August 1968, at which the leaders of Gyenlo and Nyamdre were to meet the very top leaders of the central government and the Central Great Cultural Revolution Group, resolve the factional conflict, and agree to work together under the new Revolutionary Committee.⁹⁰ On 26 August in Beijing, the top leaders questioned the Gyenlo and Nyamdre representatives closely, and Premier Zhou Enlai tried to mollify Gyenlo by saying, "It was wrong to send in the army on 7 June. It was not approved by the Central Committee, and the Standing Committee of the Military Region has admitted its mistake."⁹¹ At the same meeting, a strong self-criticism written by the Party Committee of the Tibet Military Region was passed out, and the Gyenlo and Nyamdre representatives were told to read it overnight and discuss it the next morning.⁹² Addressed to the top leaders in China, it is a remarkably frank statement intended to placate Gyenlo, illustrating how intently Beijing wanted to settle the conflict.

THE WRITTEN SELF-CRITICISM ON THE MISTAKES MADE BY THE
STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE PARTY COMMITTEE OF THE TIBET
MILITARY REGION REGARDING THE WORK OF SUPPORTING THE
LEFT

To: Chairman Mao, Vice-Chairman Lin, the Central Committee, the Central Military Commission, and the Central Great Cultural Revolution Group:

First, we wish that our great esteemed and beloved Chairman Mao lives forever. We also wish that Chairman Mao's intimate comrade-in-arms, deputy general, and vice-chairman Lin stays healthy all the time.

At the key time of seizing the all-round success of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the leaders of the central government decided to invite the representatives of the two organizations of the revolutionary masses and the leading local cadres and cadres of the army to Beijing to study the thought of Chairman Mao. During the time of this study, our great leader Chairman Mao and Vice-Chairman Lin interviewed us several times.

This was the best care, the best education, the greatest encouragement, and the deepest motivation that Chairman Mao and Vice-Chairman Lin gave us. It was also our greatest honor and happiness. The leading cadres

of the central government separately interviewed the representatives of the cadres of the troops and the Standing Committee of the Tibet Military Region four times, on 18 September last year, and on 6 June, 17 August, and 26 August this year. And they gave very important instructions to us. They gave us a very profound education. And they gave us great encouragement. They further defined our orientation, made us recognize our mistakes, and strengthened our beliefs.

Since we joined the local Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, our PLA who are stationed in Tibet did a lot of work in the campaign of the “three supports” and “two troops,” using the guidance of Chairman Mao’s revolutionary line and the wise leadership and intimate care given by Chairman Mao, Vice-Chairman Lin, the Central Committee, the Central Military Commission, and the Central Great Cultural Revolution Group and the vigorous support and help of the broad revolutionary masses and the revolutionary young militants and cadres. We complied with the great leader Chairman Mao’s call to fight, which was, “The PLA should support the masses of the left.”

However, we still made a lot of mistakes in the work of supporting the left, because the members of our Standing Committee of the Party Committee of the Tibet Military Region did not fully understand the revolutionary line of Chairman Mao and did not carry it out completely. The main mistakes we made were that we “*supported one group and suppressed the other group*” and “*were close to one group and estranged from the other group.*”

At the end of January last year [1967], during the time we joined the local Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, it was also the critical moment that the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution entered the stage of seizing the power. The masses were mobilized. The situation was good. However, because we were lacking in mental preparation for this Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, we could not correctly deal with the masses. We could not distinguish the main current of the movement. We made wrong analyses of the situation. We confused two different kinds of contradictions. We mistakenly regarded the revolutionary mass organization Gyenlo Headquarters as the bad organization controlled by “a handful of counter-revolutionary elements.” We severely attacked and suppressed this organization. We arrested and interned some persons in charge, some members of the revolutionary masses, some revolutionary young militants, and revolutionary cadres of this organization. Some of them were suppressed as “counterrevolutionary elements.” We seriously dampened their revolutionary enthusiasm. At the same time, we made a series of mistakes in propagandizing inside and outside the army. We also put political labels on this organization, such as “antiparty, antisocialism, and anti-Mao Zedong thought.”

We did wrong deeds that were meant to disintegrate this organization. The revolutionary masses of Gyenlo Headquarters were severely hurt politically. Gyenlo Headquarters almost disintegrated. The most serious thing we did was that we also prepared for a second attack. We tried to ban several

fighting teams of Gyenlo Headquarters. We tried to arrest and intern more people. Our real purpose was to suppress Gyenlo Headquarters completely.

In February last year, during the time that the organs of the military region further developed “the four basic elements,” we did not trust the masses and had fears, so we mistakenly regarded the combat teams as bad organizations, and we attacked them. On 9 February, when the combat team attacked the Military Region [Headquarters], we mistakenly thought that the combat teams inside the army and outside colluded with each other. We thought they wanted to usurp the power and were trying to rebel. Under the influence of this wrong thinking, we sent a force to surround the revolutionary masses of the combat team, who were holding a rally at that time. We arrested some revolutionary comrades under the charge of being “reactionary and bad elements.” We made a series of wrong propaganda pronouncements. We held a so-called investigation and an exhibition of “evidences of a crime.” We also prepared to convict the combat team as a “reactionary organization.” In politics, we severely struck at the revolutionary masses of the combat team. They were discriminated against for a long time, in both their work and their lives.

In general, during February and March last year, we directed the spearhead at Gyenlo Headquarters and the revolutionary masses of the combat team among the troops. We violated the revolutionary line of Chairman Mao and made a mistake of orientation. We sidetracked the Great Cultural Revolution in the Tibet Region. We damaged the Great Cultural Revolution. We were a bad influence.

Chairman Mao has taught us, “If you make a mistake, you should admit it without any hesitation. You should correct your mistake as soon as possible. The more completely you correct it, the better it will be. You cannot be bashful and hesitate. Furthermore, you cannot persist in your mistake and make more mistakes.” After the instruction of 1 April by the Central Committee and the assignment of the “ten items” by the Central Military Commission, we should have corrected our mistakes quickly and completely. However, because we were self-assuming and opinionated, we did not analyze and inspect the mistakes.

We always thought that our mistakes were not so serious and always forgave ourselves. So it was only very late when we recognized our mistakes. We corrected them slowly and wrote a self-criticism very late because of our poor consciousness. We did not rehabilitate the revolutionary comrades who were arrested and interned. We let them be discriminated against in politics, in their work, and in their lives. Our attitude toward the comrades of Gyenlo Headquarters and the combat team did not change for a long time. We did not give them enough support in their revolutionary movement. We could not accept their correct opinions. We underestimated their contributions, and we overemphasized their problems. We violated Chairman Mao’s instructions on how to deal correctly with the masses. We seldom approached the revolutionary masses of Gyenlo Headquarters and the combat team. We estranged them, and the relationship between them and us was always very tense.

On 7 June this year, we put pressure on the revolutionary masses of Gyenlo Headquarters again. We mistakenly sent troops to the Financial Compound, where the Eleventh Headquarters of Gyenlo General Headquarters was stationed. We occupied the west blockhouse by force. We published the open letter and announced the proclamation of martial law. And we made the conflict between the revolutionary masses of Gyenlo Headquarters and us worse than before. As a result, the serious bloody incident happened. Some branches of the troops opened fire and killed and injured some members of the revolutionary masses of Gyenlo Headquarters. This deviated from the revolutionary line of Chairman Mao, violated the glorious tradition of our troops, worsened the relationship between the soldiers and the masses, disturbed the great strategic plan of Chairman Mao, and postponed the foundation of the Revolutionary Committee in the Tibet Autonomous Region. It had a very bad influence on the masses. We seriously damaged the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. We feel distressed about this, especially since this incident happened after receiving the new instructions of Chairman Mao, who said, "Whether to protect or to suppress the broad masses is the basic difference between the proletariat and the Guomindang. It is the basic difference between the dictatorship of the proletariat and the dictatorship of the Guomindang." So this mistake was really serious.

The [Jokhang] incident of 7 June did not happen by chance. It was our fault that it happened. It completely exposed our uncorrected mistakes of supporting one group and suppressing the other and being close to one group and estranged from the other. It completely exposed our lack of discipline. It happened because we did not correctly deal with the revolutionary masses of Gyenlo Headquarters. It was also the consequence of our failure to fulfill the instructions concerning the struggles between two lines in the troops. After the incident of 7 June happened, we did not recognize the gravity of our mistake. We did not deal with it very seriously. And that was more serious. . . . We, the leaders of the Military Region are responsible for the mistakes above. The broad commanders and soldiers have no responsibility.

The main reason we made mistakes in the work of supporting the left is that we did not grasp the essence of the works written by Chairman Mao. And we did not apply them very well. We did not understand well the revolutionary line of Chairman Mao. And we did not adhere to the important instructions of Chairman Mao, the Central Committee, and the Central Cultural Revolution Group. We thought that the 26 February telegram sent by the Central Cultural Revolution Group to Gyenlo Headquarters was just a telegram to the revolutionary masses and did not pay attention and study it. Consequently, we did not correct our mistakes in time. We did not learn well about the important instructions, such as [those issued on] 18 September last year and 6 June this year by the leaders of the Central Committee and the Central Cultural Revolution Group. We did not understand them completely and did not implement them well. In addition, we were not united in our understanding of these documents.

We did not recognize that some of the comrades of Gyenlo Headquarters were still oppressed. Some comrades did not admit that Gyenlo Headquarters was still oppressed after the instructions of 18 September were given. So the mistake of supporting one group and suppressing the other group and approaching one group and estranging the other were not corrected. This is evidence that we were not loyal to the proletarian headquarters led by Chairman Mao and Vice-Chairman Lin.

Chairman Mao had instructed us, "We should trust the masses. We should depend on the masses. We should respect the creative initiative of the masses. We should go all out to mobilize the masses. We should let the masses rise to revolution by themselves. Let them educate themselves. Let them manage themselves. Let them emancipate themselves." We deviated from this instruction of Chairman Mao.

Our attitude toward the masses was not appropriate. We were always afraid of many things. We did not trust the masses. And we even attacked and suppressed the revolutionary masses. We made big mistakes regarding our attitude toward the masses. As to fighting the enemies, our sense of their situation was not well developed. In some problems we dropped our guard. In our thought we were self-assuming and lacked self-criticism. We did not accept the criticism of the masses. We had serious bureaucracy in our leadership. We were far away from the masses and seldom communicated with them. We dealt with the problems according to old standards and rules. In the final analysis, the main reason we made mistakes was that we did not handle affairs according to the instructions of Chairman Mao and violated the revolutionary line of Chairman Mao. This was evidence that we were not loyal to Chairman Mao.

Our mistake is serious. The lesson is heavy. We did not accomplish the honorable mission given us by Chairman Mao. We are unworthy of the instruction and trust of our great leaders Chairman Mao and Vice-Chairman Lin. And we disappointed the trust and the expectations of the broad revolutionary masses. We are very sorry about that. We apologize to Chairman Mao and Vice-Chairman Lin. We apologize to the Central Committee and the Central Cultural Revolution Group. We apologize to all revolutionary masses.

Complying with the instructions of Chairman Mao to "correct a mistake when you make it, and the more quickly and more completely you correct it, the better it will be," we make a promise that we will completely rehabilitate the revolutionary masses, the revolutionary young militants, and the revolutionary cadres. To those revolutionary organizations that we oppressed and attacked, we apologize. We have decided to comply with the instructions of Chairman Mao. We have decided to obey the series of new instructions from Chairman Mao and [those] from 18 September last year and 6 June, 17 August, and 26 August this year issued by the leaders of the Central Committee and the Central Cultural Revolution Group. We have decided to completely correct the mistake of supporting one group and suppressing the other group and approaching one group and estranging the other group. And we welcome criticism from the revolutionary masses.

In our future work of supporting the left, we will obey the thought of Chairman Mao. We will work hard on the writings of Chairman Mao. We will regard “fight privatization, criticize revisionism” as our principle. We will try our best to run study classes on the thought of Chairman Mao. We will study hard and fulfill the new instructions of Chairman Mao. We will adhere to the great strategic plan of Chairman Mao. We will support and protect our broad revolutionary masses with our enthusiasm. We will correctly deal with the two revolutionary mass organizations in Tibet. We will further persist in developing revolutionary criticism. We will completely criticize a handful of capitalist-roaders in the Communist Party and their deputies, such as Zhou Renshan, Wang Qimei, and so on. We will deeply criticize them and fight them. We will clean the class ranks. We will uncover all the rebels, spies, and counterrevolutionary elements. We will attack all the class enemies steadily, accurately, and severely. We will uphold the movement of “support the army and love the people” more extensively to strengthen the solidarity between the army and the people and the solidarity among the nationalities. We will strengthen the instructions about the struggles between the [political] lines within the troops to try to heighten the sense of the discipline among them. We will try to enhance the solidarity inside the army. We will try to “manage revolution, promote production, advance work, and promote combat readiness.” We will smash the damage done by class enemies and their provocation both inside and outside our country.

At this time, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is in good shape all over our country. The situation in Tibet is good. We have decided to unite with one another more intensely around the proletarian headquarters led by Chairman Mao and Vice-Chairman Lin. We will unify our thoughts, steps, and behavior with the leadership of the proletarian headquarters. We will completely criticize the schism of right-deviation. We oppose the bad behavior of complying in public but opposing in private. We will try to achieve new success regarding the work of founding a revolutionary committee in the Tibet Autonomous Region and achieve complete success in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

*The Standing Committee of the Party Committee
of the Tibet Region Military Headquarters*

27 August 1968⁹³

With this statement in hand, the Gyenlo leaders in Beijing had no choice but to say they would end the fighting and agree to the membership composition of the Revolutionary Committee. Consequently, on 5 September 1968, the TAR’s Revolutionary Committee was formally established, with both factions and the army agreeing to cease all fighting.⁹⁴

However, in Lhasa, the animosity still ran deep, and the conflict did not end. One Nyamdre delegate and his wife recalled what happened when they returned to Lhasa from Beijing:

Husband: After we returned [from Beijing] they said there should be no factions and ideologies. . . . We went to speak to the members of Nyamdre and Gyenlo. I said you must come together, and we told them about the instructions from the leaders in Beijing. . . . We went from Beijing to Lhasa by airplane. When we arrived in Lhasa many people from both factions were waiting to welcome us back. They took us immediately to the military headquarters. I didn't even go home first. However, after we entered the gate of the military headquarters, the two factions started fighting.

Wife: It couldn't be stopped. When they [the delegates] first came back to Lhasa, [representatives from] all the offices and the masses were sent to welcome them in front of the Potala. We got up early to go, but they didn't arrive until noon. So we waited. Nyamdre and Gyenlo sat separately, singing songs back and forth, each side trying to sing more loudly than the other. The offices brought along drums and cymbals, and the two factions put their drums and cymbals together and banged them loudly. They [the delegates from Beijing] arrived at noon. We welcomed them, and then they left. At the time, the two factions were supposed to leave and go back to their factories. But they [the delegates] weren't even in the military headquarters when we started fighting. People took the flags and put them on their waists and starting fighting with the flag poles.⁹⁵

At the same time, in rural counties like Nyemo, the factional conflict escalated when Gyenlo, outnumbered in Lhasa, moved to gain control of the countryside, where only a few troops were stationed.⁹⁶ In chapter 2, the plans to mobilize the Nyemo peasant masses in 1968 are examined.