

CHAPTER 21

The “One Smash and Three Antis” Campaign

THE NEW ORDINANCE called for the urgent propagation of the “One Smash and Three Antis” campaign (*gCig brdungs gsum rgol*). During the period of factional fighting, there had been political revolts of various kinds against the central government and the state economic system had been disrupted; with the breakdown of the state-managed supply of essential commodities, some people had been indulging in practices such as speculative hoarding, violating stable commodity prices, which was one of the tenets of socialism, so the purpose of this campaign was to rectify these problems. “One Smash” meant smashing present-day counterrevolutionaries, and the “Three Antis” were antiprofitteering, anticorruption, and antispeculative hoarding.

The definition of “present-day counterrevolutionaries” differed from one region to the next, and in Tibet the main target was anyone struggling for the Tibetan cause. During the chaos of the Cultural Revolution there had been violent uprisings in support of the Tibetan cause in Nyémo county in Lhasa prefecture, Pelbar county in Chamdo prefecture, Biru county in Nakchu prefecture, and so on. In Nyémo, what had apparently begun as a revolt by a local Gyenlok faction turned into a full-fledged popular uprising against Chinese rule that was bloodily suppressed by the army. Many were killed, and those who survived were imprisoned, along with anyone associated with them. There was a hunt for people connected with that movement in other parts of the country, and in many places, including Lhasa, they discovered posters with slogans calling for Tibet’s independence, wishing for His Holiness to live for 10,000 years and for the Chinese invaders to be driven out, as well as pictures of Mao Zedong with the face crossed out or with horns drawn on the head.

In one of the more amusing incidents, a picture of Mao smeared with excrement was thrown into the street in the main Tromsi-khang market in Lhasa one night. The street sweeper who came across it next morning immediately informed the Public Security Office, which considered it a most serious offense and called in an investigation team. They concluded that the person responsible for defaming the chairman's portrait had eaten chilis and turnips the day before. When posters were discovered they used to take handwriting samples from the "class enemies" in each district, but on that occasion they investigated what the "class enemies" had eaten the day before.

Political incidents were regarded as the most serious, and while the authorities put strong pressure on government departments and the general public to report them, there were nightly meetings for "class enemies" to "confess their own crimes" and tell whatever they had "seen, heard, or suspected" of others. They came down particularly hard on neighborhoods or offices where posters had come to light, leading to some serious incidents, as happened in one of the stone-quarrying units in the TAR construction company when a FREE TIBET poster was put up on the wall of the toilet. After all the workers had been interrogated, a young man living in the Samding house in number 3 neighborhood committee in north Lhasa was identified, and when he eventually confessed and they grilled him on his objectives in putting up the poster, whether he was part of a secret group, and who his friends were, he had to give the names of many other young people. With another underground organization among the workers at the Lhasa cement factory, and one other Lhasa youth organization, there were three major cases of underground groups involving young people, all of whose members were arrested. There were struggle meetings every night in all areas of the city for those accused of any political discussion against socialism and the government, defaming Mao or in support of His Holiness and the exile government, or about plans to escape, and all you heard people talk about was who had been arrested that day.

At that time, an official from the Public Security Office came to address our meeting group of "class enemies" in the Banak-shöl neighborhood committee. He repeatedly threatened, "Unless those few among you who have committed crimes confess, you will be isolated." There was no way of telling whether he was just bluffing or a few of us were implicated in something, but we were all told to think it over, and although I personally knew nothing of any underground group, I was concerned that someone could bring up something I had said among friends concerning the hope for Tibetan freedom or against the Chinese government and Mao Zedong.

The most serious concern was that about a year earlier, I had asked to borrow a small booklet of His Holiness's collected speeches and another small booklet about the "Future Constitution of Tibet" from a friend of mine.

He told me, "I promised the owner that I would only read them at home and not lend them to anyone else, so you can look at them, but you can't take them home with you. However, we have a duty to make the speeches of His Holiness and the documents of the exile government available to concerned Tibetans, so I could copy them, and you could help me," to which I agreed, and whenever we had spare time I helped copy them. Not long after, when I went to an army camp to make adobe bricks, one of my fellow workers told me that the Chinese had found out about those booklets. When I asked him whether they had found out what my friend had done with them, and in particular that it was I who had copied them, he said, "What they found out about is the books you copied, and the person who told them has also been arrested. But that person doesn't know that you copied them, and as soon as this thing happened he managed to burn everything, so you don't have anything to worry about."

Nonetheless, it had become a serious matter, and the person who had told the authorities about it was still in custody. Although that person had no connection to me and the books had been burned, in the circumstances of the ongoing campaign, the story was liable to be blown up into something bigger under repeated examination and could end up implicating me. In view of the seriousness of the case, it was not just a matter of being arrested; more worryingly, it would not be sufficient [for my friend] to admit that he had copied the booklet, for they would demand to know where he had gotten the original and many other things. If he refused to tell they would inflict unbearable torture on him, and in order not to suffer that, he would have no choice but to inform on many others, including me.

At that time, political charges as minor as disrespect for Mao brought the death sentence at public rallies. To give one example, there was an old woman in the Banak-shöl neighborhood who belonged to the "poor" class category; she was about seventy, lived alone, and was so poor that she used to wear a hat like a stove lid, so people called her Grandma Stove Lid. For a time she was given the name Chief of the Poor, and during the launch of political campaigns when the work teams toured each district, she was the person of "pure" class origin with whom they stayed, following the Communist practice of "eating and living alongside the poor." Later on, when that title was given to someone else instead, it is said that she got angry and cursed Mao, for which she was arrested, and after a couple of months, she

was executed at a mass rally. By those standards, if any question of my involvement with copying the booklet had arisen, my head would have been very close indeed to hitting the ground, and so the threats issued by the Public Security official were a cause of great anxiety for me. However, those threats turned out to be a warning to two others in our group of "class enemies," Namling Chökyi-la and Trin-pun-la, and not long after they were arrested for other matters and imprisoned for about ten years, but I never had any trouble over the things I had been worrying about.

Also at that time, there were periodic waves of house searches all over the city by fully armed soldiers looking for undercover spies, weapons, secret telegraph communications, and so on. They would come and search without warning during the night, guided by Public Security or those in charge of local neighborhood security. Even tougher, they used to send troops into the city around midnight to impose a blockade lasting three or four hours, and during that time anyone moving around the city, male or female, with or without a legitimate reason, would be seized, and it was said they had the power to shoot anyone who failed to respond when addressed.

The business of checking people's residence papers (*Them tho*) took half an hour, while they searched every household in the courtyard. Soldiers wearing white armbands for identification would suddenly pound violently on the main entrance door to the courtyard and push their way in. In courtyards where the doorkeepers took their time in coming or were unable to open the door quickly enough, they would break it down, or sometimes come in over the rooftops. In any case, twenty-plus Chinese soldiers would enter the courtyard and then split into groups of two or three to check each household and the residential papers of the occupants. Anyone inside not listed on the residence papers or registered as a visitor would be taken away, and if any listed member of the household was absent they would demand to know why. They would look over every corner of the house, groping or kicking at any object they considered suspicious.

Each time they conducted these inspections, they would find between 50 and 100 people who had not registered as visitors at the relevant sectional office, who would be detained at that office there and then, without being given an opportunity to explain themselves. About 80 percent of the unregistered people detained on these occasions were from rural areas and had come to Lhasa seeking medical treatment for ailments so severe that they had no time to apply for permission to travel from their local authority, and without such permission there was no way for them to register when they got to Lhasa. Even though it was quite obvious that they were invalids, the

regulations required them to be taken in; those unable to walk had to be pulled in handcarts or carried on the backs of their hosts or companions, and on those nights the sectional offices took on the appearance of emergency battlefield sick bays for wounded soldiers. Because of the fear and the trauma of being moved back and forth, many of these invalids who had come to the city for medical treatment became worse. Some of the unregistered visitors were children (registered elsewhere) who happened to be staying with their parents, or parents staying with their children and so on, but in the case of the Tibetans, even if they were suffering from life-threatening illnesses or were members of the same immediate family, it was not considered a good enough reason and they were treated as criminals. In the case of the Chinese, however, most of their households in Lhasa at that time claiming residential grain rations had illegal members with no residence papers, but they were not checked at all and were free to stay there as they wished. Doesn't this show how very unequally the Tibetans and the Chinese were treated in every respect?

Anyway, One Smash and Three Antis was the most vicious political campaign of its kind so far, and until it came to an end, fully expecting to go back to prison, I exchanged promises and words of encouragement with trusted friends, destroyed any papers or possessions that could be considered suspicious, and remained in a state of heightened apprehension. And although no harm befell me during that campaign, many of my comrades who were patriotic and committed Tibetans did come to grief, and in particular, many, like the people of Nyémo and the young people of Lhasa, were executed at mass rallies.