

The Karmapa controversy

A compilation of information

Foreword

This work fills a requirement: to provide all meaningful information for a good understanding about the Karmapa controversy which, since 1992, shakes up the Karma Kagyu lineage.

While web surfing, one can notice the huge information unbalance between the two differing sides: on Situ Rinpoche's side, there is plenty of documentation, while that on Shamar Rinpoche's side is sparse.

On Situ Rinpoche's side, many websites give out information, with some, dedicated to this task, having almost daily updates.

By comparison, Shamar Rinpoche side does not even provide the minimum information sufficient to understand its point of view.

Now, complete information easily found is essential for everyone to make up one's opinion. To limit oneself to only one version of the facts does not allow for a full understanding and leads to all extremes, which we have sorely witnessed since 1992.

Studying this controversy, one is surprised by the distressing level of disinformation and ignorance surrounding it. Few people know truly the circumstances and the unfolding of all these events which profoundly shook our lineage. Most contented themselves with adopting the view point of their entourage, siding either way, bringing up real quarrels and polemics between disciples of the same masters. It even came up to murders and monasteries attacks !

And yet, without going for any debate or confrontation, simply acquainting oneself with information provided by each side, allows us to stand back, to grasp the ins and outs in a more objective way and finally to reach a valid opinion in this matter.

So this website intends to fill the lack of communication from Shamar Rinpoche's side. It provides a compilation of information which back up its line of argument (books, articles, interviews, testimonies, ...) (*) sorted by chronological order. But it also provides a summary of Situ Rinpoche's side opposing viewpoint, with links to its websites.

All data presented in this compilation can be checked thru other proofs. It will be a further work to list all those proofs in this site.

(*) This compilation brings together books such as **"the Karmapa Papers"**, published in 1992, the report about the **"International Karma Kagyu Conference"** held in 1996 at New Delhi, **"Siege of Karmapa"** written by Rumtek monks, **"The Buddha cries, Karmapa conumdrum"** work of an Indian journalist Anil Maheswari, a few excerpts from **"Rogues in Robes"** by Tomek Lehnert, as well as numerous e-mails, newspapers items, books excerpts, and sections found on the internet.

Introduction to controversy about Karmapas

Politics and religion ("Karmapa Papers" introduction)

A religious life, the search for ultimate truth and the development of spiritual qualities, is often considered the opposite to an involvement in politics, a so-called worldly matter. If we look at the life of Milarepa, he exemplifies this point of view. He left behind all social complexities, led a completely independent life, set up no organisation and communicated the dharma in a very direct way. Generally, however, we cannot separate religion from the society in which it is practiced.

With the spread of Buddhism in Tibet, politics and religious matters became linked. Kings and noble families were often active sponsors of monasteries and teachers, which led to wide dependency. Over time, the monasteries grew in wealth and power and, in addition to their religious importance, they became socio-political factors throughout Tibet.

Thus lineage-holders like the Karmapas have had two different roles: on the one hand they represent the highest of spirituality, giving guidance to countless students. On the other hand they are the heads of influential schools of Buddhism.

Knowing well the propensity of Tibetans to mix dharma and politics and as a strong warning to his Western disciples, the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa repeatedly and strongly told his students: "No politics in my centres". Throughout history several of his incarnations avoided entanglement in politics to the point of becoming simple travelling monks when worldly matters were too much.

But willingly or not, great teachers sometimes became involved in political affairs. It was good when they could use their influence to help the people and to mediate in conflicts. We find examples of this in the lives of all Karmapas. On the other hand, there have always been people who tried to use the great lamas for their own political interests. Sometimes this even resulted in war.

One example was during the time of H. H. the 5th Dalai Lama and H. H. the 10th Karmapa, Choying Dorje: One of the Karmapa's supporters, the King of Tsang in Southern Tibet, discriminated against the Gelugpas during his reign. The Karmapa never sanctioned this in any way. The Gelugpas asked the Mongol Chief Gushri Khan for military help, so he led a big army into Tibet. Karmapa tried everything to avoid a war. Also the Dalai Lama lost control of events and fighting broke out between the Mongols backed by the Gelugpas and the King of Tsang. The Mongols won the battle. The King of Tsang was captured, many were killed and thousands were wounded. Although the Karmapa informed the Dalai Lama's government that he had no interest, in harming the Gelugpas and would gladly prove his sincerity on this point, forces were sent to attack Tsurphu Monastery. Many were killed, but Karmapa escaped, left Tibet and did not return until thirty years had passed.

Later the 10th Shamarpa became the target of violent politics. A quote from "Karmapa the Black Hat Lama of Tibet" puts it like this: "... While he (Shamarpa) was in Nepal fighting broke out between that country and Tibet. In Lhasa an influential Gelugpa Minister, Tagtsag Tenpe Gonpo, became aware of the political opportunity and claimed that Shamar Tulku was instigating the fighting from Nepal. He seized the great Yangchen Monastery of the Shamarpa and government order was passed that all monasteries of Shamar Tulku must become Gelugpa and that he must never reincarnate again. His ceremonial Red Hat was buried under the floor of Shamarpa's temple in Lhasa and the building was turned into a court house. In fact, Shamar Tulku was at that time trying to make peace with the Nepalese and had visited the country only for reasons of pilgrimage..."

The law to stop the lineage of the Shamarpas forbade the recognition of any of his incarnations. He was no longer allowed to reside in Tibet.

In "Karmapa the Black Hat Lama of Tibet" H. H. the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa comments on the period like this: "Merit was becoming less and less. There was much political interference. Black was becoming white. The real was becoming unreal. At that time it was not practicable to have any Shamarpa recognized or enthroned. Everything was kept secret. The incarnations (of Shamar Rinpoche) appeared, but were not revealed."

It was only in 1964, that is to say after nearly 200 years, that this case was resolved completely. At that time, after meditation and dreams, H. H. the 14th Dalai Lama formally allowed the reinstatement of the Sharmapas. In addition to clashes between the different spiritual traditions, disputes sometimes arose within one lineage such as the Karma Kagyu.

The autobiography of Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye shows that there was a period where he had to leave the monastery of Palpung, the seat of the Tai Situpas. In 1873 the King of Derge visited Palpung. While he was there, a great number of monks gave him an indictment which accused Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche and Bontrul Rinpoche. Khyentse Rinpoche advised the king not to pay attention to the matter. He said that this would greatly harm the buddhist teachings in Eastern Tibet, but the young Situ Tulku, Pema Kunsang, insisted on a judicial investigation. It was done, with the effect that most of the accusations were proved to be invalid. However, Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche and Bontrul Rinpoche had to leave Palpung. The latter died shortly thereafter and Jamgon Rinpoche did not come back to Palpung until the death of Situ Pema Kunsang 14 years later.

From this and the above mentioned examples we can see that even though great bodhisattvas and teachers may be beyond worldly selfish concerns they can nevertheless get involved in conflicts. Thus they can become victims of political intrigues and sometimes the outer circumstances leave them little space to act for the benefit of others.

Also the tulku-system, which is of great use in the continuous and authentic transmission of the dharma was sometimes affected by political interests. The recognition of a tulku was not always motivated by religious views. As it became a mark of social honor for a family to have a son in a high religious position such as an abbot, sons of rich and influential families who sponsored a monastery were sometimes recognized as tulkus. But there have also been other reasons for the recognition of incarnate teachers. For example the great Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye, prophesized by Buddha Shakyamuni himself, was recognized as a Karma Kagyu tulku not only because of his spiritual qualities, but also to avoid him from being taken away from Palpung by Derge officials who wanted him as a secretary.

Since some of the key figures in Tibetan politics were incarnate teachers their recognition was also a highly political act. This becomes very clear when one considers the institution of the Dalai Lama.

Whoever sees the recognition of the Karmapa in this light understands how many-faceted and important this matter is.

Considering the present status of the Tibetan community in exile and the continuing turmoil and suffering in Tibet itself, disturbances like the recent ones are to be expected. Strong political forces would certainly come into action to influence the selection of one of Tibet most well known spiritual leaders, the Gyalwa Karmapa. One must furthermore anticipate that the political wishes of the Tibetan community, the spiritual needs of Tibetan disciples and the idealistic expectations of Western students cannot all be satisfied.

Fortunately the manifestations of the Karmapa in our world are very unusual and transcend all worldly limitations. There is a freshness and grandeur which forgives and forgets, which shows the play of little minds to be exactly what it is.

Introduction of "The Buddha Cries, Karmapa Conundrum", by Anil Maheshwari

This is the chronicle of rogues in robes, and it has the ingredients of a racy pot-boiler depicting the seamy, uncompromising struggle in which the protagonists - high-ranking and respected Tibetan Buddhist lamas - are embroiled in clashes, machinations and mud-slinging that would better suit the temporal world of crooked politics than the spiritual world to which the top echelons of religious institutions profess to belong.

The study unfolds an uninterrupted chain of events and circumstances starting several centuries ago and leading to the present-day Tibetan camps and monasteries in the Himalayas of Nepal and India, Tibet, China as well as to modern Tibetan Buddhist centres in the West.

Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya and Gelug are the four orders of Tibetan Buddhism. The Dalai Lama enjoys the status of the temporal leader of Tibet. His religious writs run only in his own Gelug order.

The Karma-Kagyu lineage

Strength-wise, among the four orders, Kagyu has the largest following in the West. The number of its non-Tibetan followers all over the world is over three hundred thousand as per a conservative estimate. Besides, the number of followers of this order in Tibet under Chinese occupation is estimated at one million.

The head of the Kagyu order is the Karmapa. On 5 November 1981, the 16th Karmapa died of cancer in Chicago, USA, leaving a network of more than 430 centres world wide, and a money-spinning machine where donations pour in incessantly.

Only a reincarnation of the Karmapa can inherit the title. The issue of reincarnation of the Karmapa has the main regents of the Kagyu order at loggerheads. They are divided into separate camps and, at the moment, at least two candidates have vied for the title.

One is Urgyen Trinley who 'escaped' from Chinese captivity in January 2000. Shamar Rinpoche, the senior regent of the Kagyu order, has described the escape of Urgyen Trinley Dorje as a Chinese ploy to claim the property of the Karmapa. Situ and Gyaltshab Rinpoches have investigated his antecedents. The Dalai Lama too has put the seal of approval on him. Trinley is supported by several lamas within the school and has been accepted by a section of the disciples of the late Karmapa. Curiously also, though avowed atheists, the Chinese too made a conciliatory gesture towards the faithful in Tibet by recognising Urgyen Trinley. It was the first such endorsement by China since the abortive Tibetan revolt of 1959 against the Chinese Communists.

However, the announcement by China stressed that the Karmapas had regularly paid tribute to the (Chinese) emperors of the Yuan (1271-1368), Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties and had received imperial titles many times. Thus, on the one hand, while China shows a facade of tolerance towards religious tradition, on the other, it is obsessed with creating new evidence of its ancient sovereignty over Tibet and therefore pays special attention to Kagyu matters.

The Kagyu order predates the Gelug, the order of the Dalai Lama, by about 300 years. (See Appendix C for more details.) A tame Karmapa under Beijing's control would be a boon for China, as it would allow it to dominate his followers. With the young Karmapa 's acquiescence, China would, at a stroke, legitimise its current claim of rule over Tibet dating back to the twelfth or thirteenth century. It was a near take-over by Communist China of the Kagyu order by proxy in which Chinese political expediency saw fit to create a unanimity of views with the Dalai Lama though the fact remains that the confirmation by the Dalai Lama of Urgyen Trinley as the reincarnation of the 16th Karmapa came a full three weeks before the Chinese approval'.

The Dalai Lama's coterie was already itching to settle scores with the Kagyu order. It was also deluding itself with hopes of getting concessions from China regarding the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, the second in hierarchy in the ruling Gelug order of the Dalai Lama. To the disappointment of the coterie, China did not oblige.

The only Buddhist lama who side stepped the Chinese trap was Shamar Rinpoche, the senior regent in the Kagyu order. Brushing aside all overtures of the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi, he searched Trinley Thaye Dorje, a Tibet-born boy and, before declaring him as the reincarnation of the Karmapa, he smuggled the boy along with his parents into India. Trinley Thaye Dorje has been approved by several teachers within the Kagyu order and by a sizeable section of the students of the 16th Karmapa in western countries.

India, a secular country, does not interfere in sacerdotal traditions. However, it could not remain aloof from this controversy. The headquarters of the Kagyu order is at Rumtek in Sikkim, a state bordering China, and China till date refuses to recognise Sikkim as an integral part of India. Were the 'Karmapa' recognised by China to be allowed access to Rumtek, the headquarters of the Karmapa in Sikkim (India), the decision would certainly have political repercussions for India. Understandably, India is covertly siding with Shamar Rinpoche while the Sikkim politicians, despite their differences by and large, are kowtowing to Situ Rinpoche, the number three in the hierarchy of the Kagyu order.

Tibet's historic background

Isolation has been a distinctive feature of Tibet for centuries. The country's geographical inaccessibility and the genuine desire of its inhabitants to have few contacts with outsiders created an ideal situation for seclusion. However, the asylum of Tibetans in India, Nepal, Europe and America was crucial for the survival of Tibetan culture. Considering that the Tibetans fleeing Tibet had little experience of the outside world, they managed the transition from obscurity to modernism well. But in exile they had to work hard to protect their culture from that of the host countries. This problem was exacerbated by the very success Tibetan Buddhism achieved outside Tibet. Tibetan Buddhism did not isolate itself in exile. Instead, by the late 1960s, it emerged as an active proselytising movement in the West. For people with spiritual inclinations in the West who were not drawn towards the institutionally less embedded Hindu gurus and were more fascinated with 'miracles', Tibetan Buddhism appeared as an authentic and authoritative Asian religious alternative.

The present-day loyalties, rivalries, and hostilities among the Himalayan lamas have a direct connection with what happened inside Tibet and also China during the last several hundred years. The Tibetan history presents a tangled web of religion, politics, myths and miracles. It is critical to separate these threads to distinguish facts from fiction.

Little wonder, actions and thoughts of majority of Tibetans are governed, to a large extent, by episodes from the past. Tibetologists say that the intervening period between the death of a high lama heading a monastic order and confirmation of his reincarnation has almost always been marked by rivalries, struggles and intrigues - and also, machinations. The whole process of reincarnation of lamas and the metaphysical transmission of religious and temporal authority in a Tibetan monastic order possibly has political undertones.

The tulku institution

The social fabric of old Tibet was very much determined by the institution of the tulku, the tradition of recognising a lama's consecutive rebirths. The idea of reincarnation is a unique Tibetan religio-political institution dating back to the twelfth century in the Kagyu order. It was borrowed by the Gelug order. The Nyingma order faced competing reincarnations in 1992. The Dalai Lama backed one nominee as the reincarnation of Dujom Rinpoche, the highest Nyingma lama. On the other hand, Nyingma Chadrrel Rinpoche recognised another candidate, and all Nyingma disciples followed their own order's choice.

The head of Sakya has always been a tantric practitioner, like the Nyingma lamas. He is allowed to marry and keep his plait of hair. As a true follower of tantric doctrine, he is believed to be a voluntary impotent for he does not discharge semen. However, if he feels it necessary to have a successor, he invites the soul of a dead holy person to enter into the womb of his wife. The present reigning lama Ngawang Kunga Theckchen Rinpoche (Sakya Tridzen) is from the House of Dolma Phodrang. He stays at Dehra Dun in India. Two other lamas from the House of Phuntsok Phodrang work in Seattle, USA. Sakya Lama's priesthood is hereditary. The head of the Gelug order hands over his Ganden throne to a successor chosen by him before his death. The tradition continues till today. The 99th successor of the Ganden throne and the religious head of the Gelug order is Yeshe Dhondup. He lives in exile at the Kaden monastery in Karnataka (India).

The main secular function of tulku was to institutionalise the charisma of some individual lamas with extraordinary achievements. The idea is based on the Buddhist (or Hindu) concept of rebirth, which all persons are supposed to undergo after death. However, bodhisattvas, whose reincarnations most of the high lamas claim, are superior beings who are on the threshold of enlightenment but who have deliberately postponed it in order to be present in the world and help the suffering human beings to become enlightened.

What has set Tibet apart from the rest of the world is the fact that the country was able to continue the unbroken and living transmission of the teachings of the Buddha. These include the highest instructions about the ultimate nature of reality along with methods of its realisation. And while the average Tibetan goes about his or her business without giving much thought to the highest truth - leaving all such exalted matters to the attention of their lamas and institutions - a small number of individuals use the unique techniques available and achieve better results. Out of a few million people, a precious handful of lamas and yogis are able to fulfil, generation after generation, the highest potential of the human mind.

As such, Tibetans believe that such high lamas have a certain degree of freedom over death and rebirth, especially when it comes to when and where to be reborn. It is this mysterious jigsaw puzzle that lamas try to solve after the death of every high lama through dreams and visions, oracles and divinations, mysterious signs and close observations.

The Karmapa has kept coming back in an unbroken sequence of embodiments that has spanned 900 years till now. Similarly, other highly realised lamas started to reincarnate consciously and were then recognised by their accomplished disciples. Life after life, a lama's enlightened qualities came into contact with his students. Hundreds of different tulku lines manifested throughout Tibet and the whole system served as a unique mechanism for preserving an unbroken transmission of the Buddha's teachings.

Over the centuries, however, monasteries and their tulkus have grown in wealth and wield considerable influence over the social and political life of the country. A number of tulkus have assumed the role of political figures augmenting their role as religious teachers. To locate and deliver the new reincarnation of a prominent tulku to his old monastery means gain of power. Since in many cases the criteria according to which reincarnates are recognised leave much room for manoeuvre, the process becomes an instrument for political infighting. The traditional method of scrutiny whereby the young hopefuls have to identify objects belonging to the predecessors is often bypassed. Outstanding masters are not always consulted. Political influence, money or the edge of the sword have become the decisive factors instead, and the rank of authentic tulkus has begun to dwindle.

It is not at all uncommon to have two or more candidates - each backed by a powerful faction - openly and violently challenging a well-known tulku seat. While the young aspirants may have little idea about the fray that goes on behind their backs, their mighty patrons are even ready to go to war to see their choice prevail

Once the throne of a tulku for a contestant is won, his education begins, strictly in accordance with the role he has to play in his mature years. Surrounded by an all-male entourage of hereditary tutors and servants, the young reincarnate is generally subjected to severe discipline and left exclusively in the custody of his circle of zealous attendants. This is to enable the tulku to receive a transmission of the Buddha's teachings in its purest form, as much as it is to guard him as the monastery's most valuable possession. More often than not, consequently, the seclusion results in the tulkus somewhat vague knowledge about life outside his monastery's walls. At the same time, those around him play a far more dominant role than the benefit of his seat would require, pursuing sometimes their vested interests over the head of their master. Such a state of affairs is, of course, fertile ground for foreign interference.

With foreign as well as domestic meddling close at hand, the religious choice for a tulku has, over the centuries, become an exception rather than the rule. Authentic lamas have, of course, manifested. Tibetan history is rich in examples of highly accomplished tulku lines and, in theory, the whole system is geared towards bringing forward and taking care of such things. Yet, the same system, after centuries of abuse, has allowed a great number of reincarnates to become political puppets or absolute princes. They become instruments in the hands of their households whose members, while fervently guarding access to the former's ears, scheme their own intrigues. Reincarnates often behave like politicians and remain accountable to none. Advised by whosoever has gained their favour, they plunge often unprepared into the choppy waters of political passion. As a consequence, a throng of inept individuals often governs the affairs though their only qualification is the possession of a title or affiliation to a name.

The narrative that follows is to be perceived against this particular setting. The inflammable mixture of a touch of personal animosity, hostility and, eventually, hatred has added spice to an otherwise dry historical process.

The emerald-green mountains and the snow-white clouds above the Rumtek monastery turn dark gray as sunlight dissolves, in the distant horizon. The deepening darkness renders the base murky. The bells toll a sombre note and the traditional ornate gongs resound at a slow and graceful pace. The multi-hued prayer pennants flutter in the gentle breeze that whiffs around the majestic monastery nestling on the mountain. An air of oriental mysticism pervades the place and spontaneously evokes feelings of deep devotion and awe. Tibetan ascetics and their disciples are there. So are the murals, tapestries and thankas (scroll paintings) embroidered with traditional and religious motifs. But, the pristine serene atmosphere of the gompa has soured to the extent that it seems to be beyond redemption. The canker has set in and, like gangrene, inch by inch, the flesh is putrefying though the spirit is ever so willing.

A few historical points

Summary of Tibet's history

Isolation had been a distinctive feature of Tibet for centuries. The country's geographical inaccessibility and the genuine desire of its inhabitants to have few contacts with outsiders created an ideal situation for seclusion. When the succeeding Chinese dynasties claimed sovereignty over their distant neighbor and pressured Lhasa into submission and acceptance of their graceful patronage, Tibetans didn't give in. Despite Peking's forceful advances, the Himalayan nation managed to go largely undisturbed and forgotten by the outside world. The savage Mongol hordes that laid waste to so much of the country in the middle of the 17th century were more an instrument in the hands of a political faction eager to subdue their domestic rivals than a true foreign aggressor—an instrument that went out of control but still only an instrument consciously imported by politicians in their struggle for power. Thus, throughout Tibetan history, invaders were an unusual sight, and the country remained as secluded at the start of the 20th century as it had been during the time when Buddhism made its first inroads into the Himalayan kingdom around the year 750. Given such enclosed conditions, Tibetans were able to preserve for over a millennium what the successive Muslim invasions meticulously destroyed in northern India about a thousand years ago: the complete teachings of the Buddha.

The first contacts with the West occurred in the 19th century when the Russian and British empires, distrustful of each other's intentions, began to compete for influence in this remote region. European explorers brought home stories of mystic religious systems, of holy lamas and gigantic monasteries. British soldiers had less magical tales to share. Leading, in 1904, an expedition to conquer Lhasa, Colonel Younghusband and his handful of men wiped out nearly the entire Tibetan government army. The military might of the Tibetans was clearly lagging behind their spiritual powers.

After the first connection, a blend of spiritualists, theosophists, and the like immediately took up the subject of the holy kingdom. From the turn of the 20th century, the European public was fed exotic accounts of levitating yogis and had to digest treatises on murky spiritual doctrines that allegedly had their origin in the Land of Snows. The narratives making the rounds fueled the imagination of the readers but had little to do with the real treasures Tibet was guarding. The country was exploited as a source of the mystical and soon became synonymous with everything supernatural.

At about the same time, a number of renowned Orientologists from Scandinavia and imperial Russia managed to make their way into the forbidden city of Lhasa. They met a rich culture supported by a unique religious system. For the first time, the West came into contact with Buddha's complete methods for working with the mind. The scientists' findings, however, remained the exclusive domain of elite universities, and their research did not venture beyond the sphere of intellectual and scientific speculation. For a more extensive and practical impact, Europe had to wait another five decades. It wasn't until 1959, when the Tibetans were brutally forced out of their cocoon by the Communist barbarians, that a true and lasting contact with their culture became possible.

The time for a breakthrough came during the late sixties. The young idealists were on their third journey to the Nepali capital to bring back "substances" that could alter the consciousness of humankind. They firmly believed that drugs could open man's "doors of perception" and show humanity an ultimate truth. Once in Asia, some of them had the great chance to meet lamas as the 16th Karmapa or the others lamas and to change radically way to turn to the internal research lauded by the Buddhism.

This unusual encounter soon gave way to an intense period of apprenticeship in the eastern Himalayas. They were eventually going to fulfil their vision from the sixties. Some returned in West by pursuing their spiritual practice, , passing on Buddhism's great wisdom to the West. The driving force behind the fulfillment of this dream was their devotion for their lama, a devotion that was initially extended to everything Tibetan. Anyone with origins in the Land of Snows was celebrated as highly spiritual, every Tibetan was believed to be a master yogi, and every shaved head in robes half-enlightened. It was this pure vision that helped inspire the idealistic West with the idea that Shangri-La—the pursuit of the sixties' generation—was within reach.

Others, who jumped on the Tibetan bandwagon in the following years, sustained the holy vision with even greater enthusiasm and lesser doses of criticism, making up in zeal what they lacked in knowledge and

real transmission. The old Tibet, in particular, was held in great reverence as a heaven on earth. Anything from before the Chinese invasion that bore a Tibetan stamp was devotedly worshipped and idealized. It was a noble response to Communist atrocities and hysterical Chinese propaganda that depicted the conquered country as a feudal, backward, and oppressive society. As a result, the notion that everything Tibetan was holy became the unanimous rallying cry of a first generation of Tibetan Buddhists in the West. The young hopefuls embraced Tibetan Buddhism as much as they embraced the country of Tibet. Nobody wanted to side with the Communist aggressors, and the Tibetans, having experienced in a time of need the disregard of the world's politicians, began for a change to experience the overwhelming attention of Western idealists.

After decades of official indifference, in the end, the champions of the Tibetan cause saw their struggle vindicated. With the Dalai Lama winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, the Western mass media took up the Tibetan agenda, bringing the horrors of Chinese occupation to full light. Celebrities rallied around the Dalai Lama who, becoming a celebrity himself, took to globe-trotting in his semi-official capacity as leader of Tibet. At the same time, the advocates of a free Tibet, riding on the crest of the wave, allowed the uncritical belief in the holy Himalayan kingdom to grow unhindered.

Did the harmonious picture differ much from reality? Was the old Tibet indeed a nation of truth seekers and pious men solely devoted to the support of their lamas and monasteries? Was it truly a land of milk and honey whose people dwelled in peace with their brethren, strictly observing the noble guidelines of Buddhism?

Historical facts speak against this heavenly image. Tibet, for all the aura of mysticism surrounding its history and culture, was a feudal society, perhaps more human, certainly happier than other feudal societies, but by no means an idyllic place.

The landscape of the old Tibet was dotted with wars, political intrigue, and bloody feuds. For centuries, two old, "red-hat" Buddhist schools, the Sakya and the Kagyu, held, one after the other, undisputed sway over the country. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, a new power had emerged and began to threaten the political *status quo*: the Gelugs, or Virtuous Ones, a "yellow-hat," reformed Buddhist order, founded around 1410 by a disciple of the 4th Karmapa. Led by the mighty 5th Dalai Lama and his authoritative ministers, the Gelugs invited Gushri Khan, the Mongolian warlord, into Tibet in 1638. Their design was to break the power of the Kagyus, take over the government, and secure a hold on Kham in the east and the rebellious Tsang in the south of the country. Given free rein, the ferocious Mongol hordes razed to the ground or converted to the Gelugpa tradition a large number of Nyingma monasteries. The 10th Karmapa had to flee into a thirty-year exile after his camp was attacked by an army operating on orders from the Dalai Lama's ministers. The school of the Virtuous Ones imposed their political hegemony with sword and fire.

The highly fragmented political scene was then subdivided into two main groups. The first group, closely associated with the Gelugs, comprised central as well as southern and western Tibet and was the dominion of the government in Lhasa. The other, a loose configuration of kingdoms each with a chieftain at its helm, extended over eastern Tibet and maintained at all costs its independence from the capital together with its devotion to the Kagyu and the Nyingma, another old, "red-hat" Buddhist school.

Much of the effort of the Gelugpa dominated central government was to bring the free-spirited Khampas of eastern Tibet under the direct authority of Lhasa and thereby convert them to the "yellow-hat" order. To secure this end, the Gelugpa hierarchy spared no efforts, leaving a legacy of treachery, intimidation, and conquest.

After banding together with the Mongols and defeating the Kagyu ruler, the Dalai Lama's administration imposed strict control over the other three Buddhist schools. Karmapa and the Kagyus became the targets of harsh laws and discriminatory taxes. All but a handful of Kagyu monasteries in the vicinity of Lhasa were converted to the Gelug rite. Two intricate directives, "*put pressure on the star!*" and "*milk the female yak!*" were inserted into the country's laws and invoked, time and again, in official edicts. It was a well-guarded secret, handed down from one senior minister to his successor, that the enigmatic "star" was, in actual fact, Karmapa, while the "female yak" were the Drikung, a branch of the Kagyu lineage. Having thus brought the old schools to their knees and yet fearful of a possible Kagyu revolt, the powerful 5th Dalai offered himself and his kingdom to the protection of the Ching emperor of China. He was received with open arms; not only did the emperor bestow his generous guardianship but also introduced in Tibet a rotating system of two monarchs: the Dalai and the Panchen Lamas. In the Kagyus' eyes, such

submission to the Chinese throne was tantamount to treason. They have not forgiven the Dalai Lama his breach of trust to this day.

Another infamous example of Gelug coercion was the activity of Phawankapa in the 19th century. A luminary to some within his lineage and a hideous personality to others, this crusader of the Gelug cause launched an all-out campaign against the Nyingma tradition. He managed to wreak so much havoc within the ranks of the old, red-hat school that the "diamond-cutter" and other valuable transmissions nearly completely disappeared.

The Karmapa and the Karma Kagyu lineage

Who is Karmapa?

In the Lankavatara sutra Buddha declares :

"In the northern country will appear the one who increases virtue, the supreme spiritual friend. The one who possesses the greatest enlightened power, who has the greatest ascetic ability, who many will listen to. He will carry the name of "the knower of the three times" or "the holder of all the Buddhas' activity: Karmapa." Whoever sees his face, be it only once, will be freed from their obscuring veils, as it is prophesied that simply seeing him brings liberation."

The Karmapa's enlightened activity:

Since 12th century, Karmapas are the most important holders of the teachings from the Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. The 1st Karmapa, Tusum Kyenpa (1110-1193), was recognized as one of the foremost lamas of his times. Before his death, he had told disciples where in Tibet he would be reborn.

The 2nd Karmapa, Karma Pakshi (1204_1283), was then recognized as the first lama in Tibet to have consciously chosen his reincarnation. Since then, the Karmapas have reincarnated in Tibet: they are known in buddhist chronicles as the "Black Hat Karmapas", because they wear a black and gold hat. Every and each one of the reincarnations has stated very clearly he was the Karmapa and manifested it by his doings, beyond any doubt. That reincarnation was then entrusted to the care of one of the most enlightened disciples of the previous Karmapa.

Karmapas are recognized as great bodhisattvas, beings who keep coming back for everyone's well being, and point the path toward Enlightenment. To this day, seventeen incarnations have contributed largely to preserving authentic Buddhist teachings in Tibet. The 16th Karmapa, Ranjung Rigpai Dorje (1923-1981), who had to flee into exile to India in 1959, was a main proponent for spreading Buddhist teachings in the West.

Karmapas manifest uncommon qualities devoted to a large and incessant activity for all sentient beings. Very few are those masters who have brought forward such a Buddha activity in this world. The very name "Gyalwa Karmapa" shows he is a different being. Gyalwa means Buddha, a fully enlightened being.

Within the Kagyu lineage, only two masters are called this way: Karmapa himself, and a second emanation, Shamarpa. Karmapa means "Master of enlightened activity". He is what is called a tulku, the conscious rebirth of an already realized being.

But Karmapa differs from other tulkus, inasmuch as he has reached total realization. He is an emanation of Tchenrezi (Avalokitesvara in sanskrit), the Compassion Buddha. So, he is seen as a living Buddha who does not have to fulfill anymore a path toward liberation. He will emanate himself in this world through pure compassion, as long as beings will need help.

Recognizing Karmapas in the past

(Extract of Karmapas Papers)

The Karmapa is the first Tibetan Buddhist master who has continually reincarnated in an unbroken line since the year 1110.

The 1st Karmapa was Dusum Khyenpa. He left three short oral instructions indicating his next reincarnation as Karma Pakshi with three disciples. In addition, Karma Pakshi himself declared that he was the reincarnation of Dusum Khyenpa. Also his teacher Pomdragpa had a vision of Dusum Khyenpa declaring that he was in fact reborn as Karma Pakshi.

Karma Pakshi said that he would return in an area of Northern Tibet called Lato. He did not leave any written instructions indicating his next incarnation.

It was the 3rd Karmapa Rangjung Dorje himself who stated that he was the reincarnation of Karma Pakshi.

Through these life-examples of the Karmapas it becomes clear that they don't always leave written instructions indicating the details of their next rebirth. Even when a written message was left behind, it was the reincarnations themselves who always proved their own authenticity.

The 4th Karmapa Rolpe Dorje could be heard reciting the mantra of Chenrezig while he was still in the womb of his mother. It was reported that directly after birth he declared himself to be the Karmapa. At the age of three he told his mother that he was Karma Pakshi and said what he would do in his life. When taken to Dagla Gampo, he pointed to the statues of previous Karmapas there and declared: "That is me". He told his teacher, the lineage-holder Yongtonpa, stories about his previous life and full of devotion the latter prostrated at his young student's feet. In similar ways, the other Karmapas also showed extraordinary abilities and convinced people by their unusual behaviour and statements.

The 6th Karmapa was a good example of this. When asked by a student of the 5th Karmapa to reveal his true identity, he replied: "I am the unborn, free from all names and places. I am the glory of all that lives and shall lead many to liberation".

Up until the 8th Karmapa, Mikyo Dorje, there seemed to be no difficulties in identifying the reincarnations. At the time of Mikyo Dorje a scholar called Amdo Lama announced his son was 7th Karmapa Chodrag Gyamtso's reincarnation. His birth was marked by unusual signs. Amdo Lama gave offerings to Tashi Namgyal, the then Gyaltsab Tulku and to the monks and administrators of Tsurphu who supported his claim. At the same time, in Eastern Tibet near Karma Gon, another boy proclaimed himself to be the Karmapa. This child then five years old announced that he was the reincarnation of the 7th Karmapa, Chodrag Gyamtso. He further stated, that the other candidate at Tsurphu was the reincarnation of a lama from Surmang Monastery. Both children were brought together and an investigation was made. They were confronted with possessions of the previous Karmapa, to check which one would recognize them. It then became evident that the boy from Karma Gon was the true reincarnation.

The recognition and finding of the 16th Karmapa, Rangjung Rigpe Dorje also brought some difficulties. The 15th Karmapa had given a letter predicting his reincarnation to his close disciple Jampal Tsultrim, who at first did not disclose this information. After the death of the 15th Karmapa a very powerful Gelugpa minister got his son recognized as the reincarnation of the 15th Karmapa. This was even confirmed by H. I. the 13th Dalai Lama. For this reason the people from Tsurphu had to accept the child. After some time, however, the boy fell from the monastery's roof and died. A few years later the genuine letter was presented which led to the recognition of the true 16th Karmapa.

As these examples show, there have been earlier disputes concerning the Karmapa's reincarnations. However the true one has always proved himself beyond any doubt. There exist extraordinary qualities which only an unsurpassable bodhisattva like the Karmapa can manifest.

In another article, Khenpo Tcheudrak summarizes the history of the various recognitions of Karmapa in the following way:

- 7 of the previous Karmapas left written instructions behind.
- 5 of them left oral instructions with a disciple of their choice.
- 4 of them left neither written nor oral instructions. The reincarnation in those cases themselves made clear who they were. So there wasn't a procedure of finding them on the basis of any written or oral instructions left behind.

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Furthermore, among the previous Karmapas:

- 3 were identified by 3 of the previous Shamarpas.
- 2 were identified by one of the heads of the Drugpa Kagyu School of Tibetan Buddhism.
- 1 was identified by a Nyingma master. The head of the Drugpa Kagyu and the Nyingma master were assisted, in their quest, by various Kagyu lamas, such as one of the Situpas, one of the Jamgon reincarnation and one of the Khyentse reincarnation.

So the identification in those cases were made on the basis of the combined effort of these people whereas in the case of the Shamarpas, it was done without the assistance of other Buddhist masters.

For example, the 13th Karmapa was identified by a Nyingma master Khathok Rinzin Zherwang Lodrop. He approached the then Situpa and informed him of his thoughts then in combined effort they identified the 13th Karmapa on the basis of this Nyingma master's findings.

Then there is the 14th Karmapa, who was identified mainly on the basis of the effort of the then head of the Drugpa Kagyu School of Tibetan Buddhism Kunzig Chokyi Namwar. However he consulted Situ Pema Nyingche, the 9 Situ reincarnation, so in combined effort they made public their findings. However it was mainly based on the effort of the then Drugpa Kagyu head that the 14th Karmapa was identified.

Then we have the 15th Karmapa, who was mainly identified again by the then head of the Drugpa Kagyu School of Tibetan Buddhism, Kunzig Mingyur Wangyi Dorje. However he did consult Jamgon Lodro Thaye and Khyentse Wangpo and one of the Pawo Tulkus, so it was again a combined effort.

Short history of Karma Kagyu lineage

by Mr. Topga Rinpoche

After the 1st Karmapa's appearance in the world, the Karma Kagyu lineage evolved rapidly, and by the 12th century A.D. the Karma Kagyu tradition was spreading quickly and was widely practiced throughout Tibet. This was a time of political upheaval characterised by the rapid decline of the dynasties of kings which had formerly ruled. Many prominent political figures emerged who vied for power, but no individual leader was able to establish sovereignty over the nation because no one had a unified following.

The Karmapas were never interested or involved in the struggles of the various political factions, and in fact were forced to actively resist involvement since they were in Particularly vulnerable positions, in that they were targets of those who were politically ambitious, because they held tremendous spiritual authority. Also, their religious followers encouraged them to assume positions of Power because they felt that they had the required qualities to lead the people.

It was during this turbulent period, sometime in the 13th or 14th century, that the Sakyapas began ruling Tibet, with the support of the Mongol Emperor Kublai Khan. Then came Ganges Khan, He was Tibet's first political -religious leader, and for the first time since the disappearance of the kings, Tibet was unified under the direction of a single leader. At this time, powerful rulers from Mongolia and Tibet, seeing the sway that the high lamas held over the Tibetan people, adopted a strategy of forming allegiances by plying the Lamas with gifts, extending invitations to their kingdoms and conveying lengthy titles upon them. The motivation behind these gestures was often largely political rather than religious.

During the Ming Dynasty of the 14th century the 5th Karmapa, Teshin Shekpa, was invited to China by the "Yunglo", the Emperor of the Ming Dynasty, who received many instructions from him. During his visit the Karmapa demonstrated many miraculous feats, which the Emperor ordered his artists to record daily by depicting them on approximately 20 large scroll paintings. (A few of these were still preserved in Tsurphu Monastery in Tibet up until the invasion of 1950). The Yunglo was so moved by these events, and developed such deep faith in the Karmapa that he proposed the enactment of a plan to convert all the other religious sects of Tibet to Karma Kagyu. In accordance with his philosophy, Teshin Shekpa absolutely refused to go along with this proposal, and instead gave a discourse on the importance of respecting diverse schools of thought by understanding that different traditions are necessary in order to accommodate the array of particular inclinations found in the whole of humanity.

Despite the politics of the times, however, the period from the 13th to the 17th century A.D. was a time of generally favourable circumstances for the Karma Kagyu tradition. As the teachings spread, and the number of followers increased, the leaders of the lineage became more and more prominent figures, and in fact, this period in the history of Tibet could be termed "the Kagyu Era".

At this time a dramatic change occurred in the power structure of the country, which was being crushed between the forces of domestic strife, power struggles and outer political influences. The central government headed by Desi Tsangpa, a stout supporter of the Karmapa, was overthrown by the Mongol leader Goshir Khan, and the 5th Dalai Lama became the leader of Tibet as a whole.

The 10th Karmapa, Choying Dorje, became a victim of these political events, and had to leave Tibet in the mid-17th century A.D., for Jang, a province of China. After this the following of the Kagyu lineage decreased, and continued to do so until the 18th century when, under the 13th Karmapa Dudul Dorje, Situ Chogyi Jungne led the lineage towards a period of growth and renewal in which it began to flourish again. At this time, in particular, lamas of the lineage produced many eminent philosophical texts and works relating to grammar, Sanskrit and astrology that benefited Tibet's literary tradition, and the Tibetan people as a whole.

In the present century, during the lifetime of H.H. the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa, the most recent incarnation of the Karmapa, many dharma centres were established throughout the world in order to provide the opportunity for people to study and practice the Buddha's teachings, including this institute itself. Following his departure from Tibet in 1959, he was able to reconstruct his main seat by creating a monastery in Rumtek, Sikkim, which is known as the Dharma Chakra Centre, as well as a monastic college, a retreat center and a primary school for monks.

Like his predecessors, the late 16th Karmapa was primarily a spiritual figure and so was not involved in propagating the cause of Tibetan freedom, and instead has made efforts in keeping the spiritual tradition of Tibet intact, and in this way has helped to preserve the identity of Tibet as a unique and individual culture. At the same time he never forgot the existence of the very capable and profound spiritual leader, H.H. the Dalai Lama, who is also the leader of the Tibetan nation and has all the requisite qualities that such a position demands, as well as the fact that serving under him there is a large organisation of people who are very much involved in truly relevant and significant political movements for the benefit of the Tibetan people.

As stated, all of the establishments created by H.H. Gyalwa Karmapa have been designed with intention of keeping the tradition and culture intact, and providing the teachings of the Buddha to people of all nationalities who feel that they can benefit from the insight and wisdom of the Buddha.

Kagyupa dignitaries listed by standing

Signed and sealed by H.H. 16th Karmapa, Rangjung Rigpe Dorje in 1967
The list below gives the status of religious dignitaries of the Kagyu School in the order of their importance. It has been written on the fifteenth day of the twelve-month of the Fire Sheep Year according to the Tsurphu Calendar.

I have listed below the names according to the importance of the status of the reincarnated masters that have been able to leave Tibet for India.

I - Heads of the Kagyu School of Tibetan Buddhism

1. Kunzig **Shamar Rinpoche**
2. Khyenzig Drugchen Rinpoche¹
3. Tsungme Jamgon **Situ Rinpoche**
4. Tsungme Chogtrul Taglung Rinpoche²

II - The second ranking religious dignitaries of the Kagyu School

1. Chogtrul **Jamgon Rinpoche**
2. Chogtrul **Gyaltsab Rinpoche**
3. Chogtrul Pawo Rinpoche

III - The third ranking religious dignitaries of the Kagyu school

¹ [Translator's note](#) : At that time the head of the Dringung Kagyu and the head of the Taglung Kagyu had not been able to come to India. For that reason, they are not included in the list given below.

² [Translator's note](#) : Drukchen Rinpoche and Taldung Rinpoche are the Supreme Heads of the Drukpa Kagyu School and the Taklung Kagyu School. As a matter of courtesy the status 'spiritual leader of Karma Kagyu' was offered to them

1. Chogtrul Joe Won Ponlop Rinpoche
2. Chogtrul Palpung Khyentse Rinpoche
3. Chogtrul Drungsar Khyentse Rinpoche
4. Chogtrul Surmang Rinpoche
5. Chogtrul Palpung Ongen Rinpoche
6. Chogtrul Sangye Nyenpa Rinpoche
7. Chogtrul Traleg Rinpoche
8. Chogtrul Surmang Trungpa Rinpoche
9. Chogtrul Decho Yangdzin Rinpoche
10. Chogtrul Dilyag Dabsang Rinpoche

11. Garchen Tripa Dorje Lopon (however, the Garchen Tripa Dorje Lopon can also be included within the group of second ranking religious dignitaries, because in the same way as the Garchen Tripa in the Gelug School is the status of the head of the main seat of that school, likewise Garchen Tripa Dorje Lopon is the head of the main seat of the Kagyu school.)

IV - The fourth ranking religious dignitaries of the Kagyu school

1. Khentrul Thrangu Rinpoche
2. Bagyo Tuiku Rinpoche
3. Drupon Tulku Rinpoche
4. Dilyag Urgen Rinpoche
5. Dilyag Sabchu Rinpoche
6. Tulku Ongen Mingyur Rinpoche
7. Chogling Tulku Rinpoche
8. Gyalse Thiku Rinpoche

V - The fifth ranking religious dignitaries of the Kagyu school

1. Salche Tulku
2. Tenga Thiku
3. Palme Tulku
4. Bardo Tulku
5. Drung Thiku
6. Tragar Thiku
7. Yoldrag Thiku

There are many more lower reincarnations.

Signed and sealed by H.H. 16th Karmapa, Rangjung Rigpe Dorje in 1967

Short history for Karmapa-Shamarpa lineages

(Written by a group of Khenpos at KIBI.)

The Karma Kagyupa Lineage of Tibetan Buddhism has enjoyed a distinguished 900-year history that is intertwined at various points with the Gelugpa School to which the Dalai Lama belongs. Central to the transmission of the Kagyupa Lineage are the alternating reincarnations of the Karmapa and the Shamarpa. This brief history discusses some of the highlights of this cycle and its points of intersection with the Gelugpa School and the Dalai Lama.

The 1st Karmapa, Dusum Khyenpa (1110-1193), founded the Karma Kagyupa Lineage. The Sakyapa School developed about the same time, and before his lifetime the Nyingmapa Tradition (the Old School) and Atisha School had already taken root in Tibet. The Gelugpa School was not founded until the time of Tsongkapa (1357-1413) who coincided with the 5th Karmapa. The 1st Dalai Lama (Gendun Drub) did not appear until the 15th century during the lifetime of the 6th Karmapa (1416-1453).

Before he died, the 1st Karmapa predicted his own reincarnation as the 2nd Karmapa, Karma Pakshi (1206-1283). With this prediction, the 1st Karmapa started the lineage system of incarnate lamas in Tibet and Karma Pakshi became the first incarnate lama of Tibet. Before he died, Karma Pakshi predicted in his diary that he would be reborn as two lamas. They would reincarnate one after the other, alternately as guru and disciple, in order to preserve and continue his lineage without interruption.

In the same year (1283) that the 2nd Karmapa passed away, Drakpa Sengye, who later became known as the 1st Shamarpa, was born. In the following year the 3rd Karmapa (1284-1339) was born and at the age of eight confirmed himself as the Karmapa. Drakpa Sengye was the chief disciple of the 3rd Karmapa, who confirmed him as the second emanation of the 2nd Karmapa.

Thus, in Tibetan Buddhism, the 1st Shamarpa was the second incarnate lama. Because his name means "red hat" (sha, hat; mar, red), he is sometimes called the Red Hat Lama, whereas the Karmapa is referred to as the Black Hat Lama, but not for reasons having to do with his name.

Since then the successive Karmapas and Shamarpas have worked jointly to spread the Dharma. Indeed, as a result of their leadership the Karma Kagyu Lineage was the most prominent school of Tibetan Buddhism until the time of the 10th Karmapa, Choying Dorje (1604-1674), when it was repressed and suffered a long decline.

During the centuries of the decline, the successively reborn Karmapas and Shamarpas brought about brief revivals of the Karma Kagyu Lineage and transmitted its teachings and traditions.

Before the 5th Dalai Lama (1617-1682), the Kagyupa Lineage ruled Tibet. Two events in the 1630s, however, precipitated the end of the Karma Kagyu Lineage's political power and the decline of its religious influence. First, the death of the 6th Shamarpa (1584-1630), whom the 5th Dalai Lama and many others in Tibet respected, weakened the Lineage's prestige. Then, in 1639, with the assistance of Mongol troops invited into Tibet from Sinjiang by the 5th Dalai Lama, the Kagyupa ruling government was defeated. The 10th Karmapa and his followers were also attacked, but he managed to escape by flying into the sky. For the next forty years, penniless and with only one attendant, the 10th Karmapa wandered into exile from north-eastern India to Yunnan in China.

Without its two leaders, the Karma Kagyu Lineage was defenceless in Tibet. Twenty-seven monasteries belonging to the Karmapa and twenty monasteries of the Shamarpa were forcibly converted to the Gelugpa School. Only the Tsurphu and Yangpachen monasteries, the seats of the Karmapas and Shamarpas respectively, and a few others of lesser importance were allowed to continue practicing the Karma Kagyu tradition. However, they existed under harsh restrictions, especially Tsurphu and Yangpachen, which were near Lhasa and thus under the government's careful watch.

The early 18th century saw a brief revival of the Karma Kagyupa Lineage due to the constant Dharma activities of the 12th Karmapa, Jangchub Dorje (1703-1732) and the 8th Shamarpa, Chokyi Thondrub (1695-1732). They travelled together throughout Tibet and prevented the Lineage from slipping into extinction.

During the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, the Dalai Lamas enjoyed the patronage of the Ch'ing Dynasty emperors of China, some of whom were under the tutelage of a series of reincarnated Gelugpa lamas representing the Dalai Lama in Beijing. Nevertheless, the fame of the 12th Karmapa and the 8th Shamarpa was so great during the reign of Emperor Yung Cheng that he decided to invite them to his court in 1732. Unfortunately, one day after their arrival in Beijing, they both died of smallpox. In their autobiographies, the two Gelugpa Hutogatu (Hutogatu is an official title bestowed by the Ch'ing Dynasty emperors on certain Gelugpa lamas in Beijing) lamas Kyangkya and Thudka explained the deaths of Karmapa and Shamarpa as follows:

The emperor had invited the Karmapa and Shamarpa to Beijing. We were of the opinion that the emperor would follow them and therefore that Gelugpa power would be greatly affected. We consequently started to do black-magic pujas day and night. Within a day of their arrival in Beijing, both of them died from smallpox. So it can be said that our black magic succeeded.

After the death of the 12th Karmapa and the 8th Shamarpa, the Karma Kagyupa Lineage suffered another period of decline in central Tibet. Also contributing to its decline were a complicated series of developments beginning during the time of the 13th Karmapa, Dudul Dorje (1733-1797), in the reign of the Chinese Emperor Ch'ien Lung. The powerful 6th Panchen Lama, Palden Yeshe, and the 10th Shamarpa, Chodrub Gyaltso (1742-1792), were brothers. Because of his kinship with the Panchen Lama, who after the Dalai Lama was the highest lama in the Gelugpa School, the 10th Shamarpa hoped that the Tibetan government would reinstate his monasteries that had been forcibly converted to the Gelugpa sect in the preceding century. However, before this could happen, the Panchen Lama died of smallpox in Beijing where he had been invited by the emperor.

Out of deep respect for the Panchen Lama who was his teacher, the emperor offered a large quantity of gold coins to the Panchen Lama's brothers and sisters. However, the Drungpa Hutogatu of Tashi Lungpo Monastery, which was the seat of the Panchen Lama, did not give the 10th Shamarpa his fair share. When the administration of the Yangpachen Monastery complained, Drungpa Hutogatu replied that all the gold belonged to the Tashi Lungpo Monastery. He also slandered the 10th Shamarpa, claiming that he had plotted a rebellion against the Tibetan government in order to regain his monasteries. As a result, the government, which was under the power of two regents in the absence of the Dalai Lama, became hostile to the Shamarpa. In 1784 he fled Tibet for the safety of neighbouring Nepal.

In the late 18th century, counterfeit Nepalese currency was so rampant in Tibet that it even caused high inflation in Nepal itself. When the 10th Shamarpa sought refuge in Nepal, the Nepalese King Bahadur Shah thought he could take advantage of this and use the Shamarpa to negotiate a solution to the currency problem with the Tibetan government. The negotiations failed and the Tibetan delegation that had come to Nepal was taken prisoner. King Bahadur dispatched his troops to Tibet where they captured much territory. The Chinese sent troops to repel the invading Nepalese, and a peace was finally negotiated in 1792. The Tibetan government blamed the Shamarpa for the political and military debacle and in retaliation banned the enthronement of reincarnated Shamarpas and confiscated the Yangpachen Monastery, converting it to Gelugpa.

In 1792 the 10th Shamarpa died of jaundice, but rumours were rife that he committed suicide by poison. A Tibetan minister named Gazhi Dhoringpa, whom the Nepalese troops had earlier taken prisoner, wrote: "I was released after the peace was settled. The Shamarpa had died, and I was taken to see his funeral. I did not respect this Shamarpa. His corpse even smelled so I believed he actually committed suicide. But during his cremation, I saw with my own eyes five arching rainbows joined together in the shape of a dome right above the crematory at Bodhanath, Kathmandu."

In spite of the official ban against the enthronement and official recognition of the Shamarpa, Shamarpas continued to be reborn as bodhisattvas. Hence, the 11th Shamarpa, Chowang Rinpoche of Tsurphu Monastery and the lineage-holder of the Mahakala Tantra, was reborn as the brother of the 14th Karmapa (1797- ca.1845) who kept his recognition secret. The 11th Shamarpa transmitted the entire Mahakala Tantra to the 15th Karmapa, Khachab Dorje (1871-1922). The 12th Shamarpa took rebirth as the son of the 15th Karmapa. He was first a monk, then practiced as a yogi with a consort, but he frequently was able to visit and teach at the Yangpachen Monastery where he was highly respected. The 13th Shamarpa (1949-1951) was recognized by the 16th Karmapa, Rangjung Rigpe Dorje (1924-1981) in Tsurphu but lived less than two years and was never officially enthroned.

Born in 1952, Mipham Chokyi Lodro is the current and 14th Shamarpa.

Historical specifics about Karmapa-Shamarpa relationship

The second Karmapa, Karma Pakshi, predicted that "future Karmapas will manifest in two forms." This statement was clarified later by the 4th Karmapa, Rolpe Dorje, when he designated the Shamarpa reincarnates as the second manifestation.

Rangjung Dorje, the third Karmapa, presented his principal disciple, Khaydrup Dragpa Senge, with a ruby red crown conferring the title Shamarpa (Holder of the Red Crown) on him. This Red Crown is an exact replica of the Black Crown worn by the Karmapas and exemplifies the close relationship that exists between these two lines of reincarnates.

Tibetan historical records speak of the Karmapa as Karma Shanakpa (Karmapa the Black Crown Holder) and the Shamarpa as Karma Shamarpa (Karmapa the Red Crown Holder). They are referred to as such in the historical texts of Golo Shonnu Pal (1392-1481), Pawo Tsuglag Trengwa (1504-1516), the fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lozang Gyamtso (1617-1682), and the eighth Situpa, Chokyi Jungnay (1700-1774).

The Eight Situpa, Situ Chokyi Jungnay says in his autobiography "The Clear Crystal Mirror" (page 32, line 3 in the edition of Dr. Lokesh Chandra) that the Karmapa and the Shamarpa are of equal status and that this is indicated by the fact that their throne-like seats are of the same height.

The 14th Shamarpa, Mipam Chokyi Lodreu

He was born in 1952. Just as the 5th Shamarpa had foretold, the 14th Shamarpa manifested as the nephew of the 16th Karmapa. In Tibetan poetical term, a nephew is a brother-like relative. Long before the Shamarpa was born, there was a stir of anticipation in the monastic communities; for it was widely circulated that there was soon to be an auspicious birth in the Karmapa's family. From the Karmapa, Black Pills were sent to his sister-in-law, with which, was a special protective cord for the baby yet unborn. It was at a time, when no one was even aware that she was an expectant mother.

At the age of six, the child Rinpoche saw some Yangpachen lamas at a distance coming towards Tsurphu Monastery. He was delighted, "They are from my monastery" he remarked. Indeed they were, for the Dechen Yangpachen Monastery was a Shamarpa monastery. This spontaneous out-burst of recognition had prompted his lamas to plead for a formal recognition of their Rinpoche, in readiness for future enthronement. For political reasons, the Karmapa did not think it prudent to do so.

1956 was the year of the pilgrimage to India, when most of the great Tibetan lamas were invited by the Indian Mahabodhi Society. The Karmapa and the Shamarpa, on their return, visited the Dechen Yangpachen Monastery; in the main temple of which, were the statues of all the previous Shamarpas. The child-Rinpoche came up to them; from the first to the tenth, he needed no prompting to identify them. Playfully he took their crowns to try them on, saying: "These are my hats." He was only four years old, at the time.

Another four years had passed. The political situation in Tibet, uncertain for sometime, further deteriorated. The 16th Gyalwa Karmapa with the eight-year-old Shamarpa left Tibet to settle in Sikkim. Finally when permission was sought, for the official recognition of the Kunzig Shamarpa, it was granted by H.H. the 14th Dalai Lama. The enthronement took place in 1964 at Rumtek Monastery, Sikkim. With the solemn occasion over, the Shamarpa remained in the monastery until 1979 for some very serious studies. He received all the instructions of the Kagyu Lineage from the Karmapa. The traditional arts and sciences, the sutras and the tantras, he studied mainly under Trangu Rinpoche. He also took some teachings from Kalu Rinpoche. By any standard, those were very hard years for the Tibetan exiles. And for this student- Rinpoche, no special privileges, accorded to a great reincarnate, were expected; and none was given. Under very inclement conditions, and under the vigilant eyes of his gurus, the special qualities of a true mahayana teacher was brought to the fullest maturity. In 1979, his studies completed, he left for Nepal to take up residence as the Chief Representative of the Kagyu Teachings. In 1981, His Holiness the Gyalwa Karmapa passed away. Among his other monastic obligations, the Shamarpa, undertook to complete his far reaching project of building a large institute of Buddhist studies in New Delhi. It was inaugurated in February 1990 by the President of India, Mr. Venkataraman. In accordance with the wishes of His Holiness the Gyalwa Karmapa that the Karmapa International Buddhist Institute is to serve as an establishment of higher learning to further universal wisdom and compassion, based on

the correct study and translation of the great treatises of Buddhism -A wish expressed is to be a wish fulfilled - as always.

As for the Shamarpa himself, he has in his vision, the revival of the true spirit of the Mahamudra; the energy and the essence of which have been sadly dissipated through the gradual unmindfulness of preceding generations. He has been in the process of retracing its roots through the ages, by collecting, revising and researching into the important works of many mahasiddhis, culminating in "The Treasures of Mahamudra" by the 7th Karmapa. His vision includes the setting up of a teaching centre with special emphasis on Mahamudra, that future generations may not be deprived of something, which is the very essence of Buddhism, and uniquely Kagyu in lineage.

Shamar Rinpoche speaks out about religion and politics separation

In 1988, H.H. the 14th Dalai Lama called for a meeting with all the leading Tibetan lamas at Varanasi, India. It was to be the summoning of a consorted effort among the leading lamas, towards a better future for Tibetans. In the history of Tibet, lamas have long been the ruling class. Any changes brought about, both temporarily and ecclesiastically, have always been innovated by lamas. This form of social structure had given the country enduring stability and order; and unity too, to a certain extent. It was made possible only by the unswerving loyalty of the people to their spiritual leaders and unquestioning faith in their political judgements.

However, in face of injustice, there was sometimes little redress; where there was discontent, the voices were too feeble and unorganized to be heard. It was left entirely to the benevolence and the practical sense of the rulers to see to their every need. The responsibility must have, at times, been overwhelming. The Shamarpa saw the basic weakness in the infrastructure of the Tibetan society. Religion and politics are mutually stifling. The logical solution to it, would be the segregation of the two, with the religious leaders continue to see to the spiritual needs of the people, leaving the running of the state in the hands of the social-minded lay men. The religious leaders thus far responsible for the general wellbeing of the people, must now feel responsible to affect some fundamental and drastic changes, adapting to the changing needs of the people, in accordance with changing times. The Kunzig Shamarpa is of the firm belief that a better future for the Tibetans, lies in the carrying out of these social and political restructuring. It was truly a test of moral courage to give voice to these convictions before the gathering in Varanasi; to some of whom, the thought of relinquishing temporal power must have been as new as it was painful.

All lineage holders of all the tibetan buddhist schools attended this meeting in Benares. Speaking one after the other from the platform, they all tried to outdo each other in forced praise for the Dalaï Lama and his policies. When Shamar Rinpoche had finished his address, he walked back to his seat amid an heavy silence, under the dumbfounded gaze of all, and murmurs began about his speech being "a revolt against the Dalaï Lama". In this address he gave, he took major risks. An audio cassette record exists with this speech given in tibetan.

Exile in India

China invades Tibet

The People's Republic of China is proclaimed during October 1949. Right away, Beijing Radio states that Tibet is part of China and announces that "The People's Liberation Army has been ordered to free Tibet from foreign imperialism" . On Oct. 7th 1950, chinese troops invade Eastern Tibet.

The Dalaï Lama, being only 16 years old, assumes power in Tibet on Nov. 17th 1950. The small tibetan army is routed fast and, during 1951, Lhasa sends a tibetan party for negotiations in Beijing.

Year after year, life is getting tougher in Tibet, and Khampas revolt in 1956. Reprisals are awful, monasteries are destroyed and monks killed. In 1958, tibetan opposition unites under the name "Tchouchi kangdrouk" "Four rivers and six mountains".

Things are getting worse in the capital city, and on March 17th 1959, in the greatest secrecy, the Dalaï Lama flees into exile, soon to be followed by some one hundred thousands Tibetans.

An interview about Rumtek with Lama Jigme Rinpoche

Dhagpo Kagyu Ling, Dordogne, France - February 2nd 2000

Question : How did the Karmapa arrive in Rumtek ?

Lama Jigme Rinpoche : It was just after the Lossar, at the beginning of the year, that His Holiness decided to leave Tsurphu through the border of Buthan. The decision was taken very quickly, but we can imagine that everything was decided long before and was kept secret. The departure occurred very early, around one or two o'clock in the morning at Tsurphu's monastery. Surrounding the Karmapa, there were about a hundred people, lamas and close relations. We travelled by horse and on foot. It was a very normal journey, in the sense that in the daytime we travelled and we rested in the evening. In each village, lots of people came to receive blessings from His Holiness who also gave ordinations. We crossed the border from Tibet to Buthan, but His Holiness didn't want to stay there because of the lack of security. After having stayed some weeks in the country, the government of Buthan sent the Karmapa directly to India. Part of the group stayed in Buthan to rest, some lamas were quite old, and the rest followed the Karmapa. The Indian government was prepared to invite the Karmapa in Dharamsala. At that time Sikkim was independent and the king of the country immediately sent some people to greet the Karmapa and invited him to come to Sikkim.

The king offered to the Karmapa to choose between several places he was ready to give him, so that he could stay in the country. Karmapa chose Rumtek. It was an old monastery built by the disciples of the ninth Karmapa, who himself never went there. At that time there were two others important monasteries which were built in Sikkim by the disciples of the ninth Karmapa : Bordon and Ralan. In Rumtek, it a small and old monastery, and it was quite simple for the sixteenth Karmapa and a few lamas to settle there. The rest of the people built small houses all around and settled there. All this occurred in 1959.

Question : Why was a new monastery built in Rumtek ?

Lama Jigme Rinpoche : The king gave some land to the Karmapa, in order to help him to extend his activities. The monastery which was on this land belonged to lay people who had Genyen vows. They practiced there. But it was necessary to think about moving from the place because the inhabitants, still present, were the owners, and also, it was quite small. In 1962 the construction of a new monastery started. So, in Rumtek, there were to be two monasteries. Therefore, the monastery of Rumtek we know about today is not the original one. There were just a few kilometers in between the two places.

Karmapa decided to rebuild a monastery, to save the culture and re-educate all the young people. When the Karmapa was in Rumtek, he invited many lamas and reorganized the teachings and the traditional Karma Kagyu style of organization. During this time there were people like Tobga Rinpoche, Trangu Rinpoche, Tenga Rinpoche, who were young lamas and who started their training in Rumtek at that time.

There were older lamas like : Sangye Nyenpa Rinpoche, Trungpa Rinpoche who gave the transmissions during this time. Everyone had time to practice and to rebuild the life they had in Tsurphu. The presence of the two generations allowed the younger ones to learn. Step by step Karmapa organized our generation : at the beginning there were a few of us like Shamar Rinpoche, Jamgon Rinpoche, Situ Rinpoche and Gyaltsab Rinpoche, many rinpoches and lamas were gathered in order to receive teachings. The construction of the new monastery in Rumtek was finished around 1965.

Question : Why was it necessary to re-establish the Karma Kagyu tradition in India ?

Lama Jigme Rinpoche : The lamas focused on the practice. It means that all the yidams were practiced during seven days. It was a very concentrated way of practicing in fact. Every month there were two weeks during which a yidam was practiced by all the monks, who participated and learned the pujas. Slowly Karmapa built up the program of a three years retreat for the lamas. During this time, around 1961, the monks received the important transmission, loungs and initiations from the Karmapa Kagyu tradition. The buildings having been constructed, life had the same kind of quality then in Tsurphu. There were around two hundred monks living there. Lay people lived around and joined a village down in the valley. There were more and more young people who came and who were educated there. For instead, Umze Nyeden arrived very young. His Holiness brought lots of objects of practice from Tsurphu into Rumtek. The place became one of the main examples of Karma Kagyu tradition in India and in all Asia. From 1959 to 1977 there was no communication what so ever between Tibet and India. Sangyé Nienpa, Dilgo Khyenzé Rinpoche, and a few other younger lamas Tobga Rinpoche, Tenga Rinpoche, Shamar Rinpoche, Situ Rinpoche, Gyaltsab Rinpoche, Traleg Rinpoche where all around the Karmapa in 1961.

All the texts and the printings were made out of wood blocks, there were several thousands of blocks in fact. About twenty to thirty people came and helped in this field during 10 years. We could not bring the wood blocks or make copies of the texts we had in Tibet, so we had to remake everything. All the texts were recopied, and we also used a publisher in Delhi at one point to continue this job. This is a very important activity because after that we had almost everything, there were only a few copies missing, most of them were left in Tibet, but we didn't loose anything. The activity in Rumtek was only spiritual, it was kept completely separated from the Tibet political activity. There were no political function, only the spiritual activity and the preservation of the Karma Kagyu tradition. Everybody was engaged in this.

It was a very quiet place. Lots of people came from everywhere to visit, local people from India, from Westerner countries, they came to listen to the teachings of the Karmapa, and also for pilgrimage. The monks were practicing. It's important to know what kind of activities the lamas were doing every month. Every two weeks there were pujas going on. It was called dumcheu, which means the offering of the practice, cheupa means offering of the practice. For instance at the end of the year, for one week Mahakala goes on, from 22 to 29 of the month. The first day, the practice would last sixteen or seventeen hours, almost twenty hours ! The first day, the ritual would begin at 9AM and finish at 7PM, and then, at 9PM they would start again until 7AM. It means lots of time to practice, they would stop only for four hours. Each day they would do one hour less. There would be the practices of Dordje Pamo, Gyalwa Gyamtso, Korlo Demcho, two different Taras, Tcheu, Guru Rinpoche on one year and Vadjra Kilaya on the next year, many others like : Kunrik, Mitrukpa, Kalachakra, hevajra. Each year they added some practices. At the beginning the people couldn't practice everything, then they had more time to learn and they could put the tantra teachings into practice.

Question : Why is it so important to practice ?

Lama Jigme Rinpoche : It is important to practice for the people and also in order not to loose the quality of the teachings. One important aspect in the preservation. By practicing we are sure not to loose the essence of the teachings. Then, individually people will develop and choose there own practice. It is good to practice for the whole environment also and for all the beings. The main aspect is that the way to practice and what to practice doesn't disappear. It is good for everybody. When Karmapa made the shedra in Rumtek, he asked each Karma Kagyu monastery in Nepal and in Bhutan to choose three persons and to send them to Rumtek. Then, they would go back and be able to lead the proper teachings after a training of qualified teachers. In this way all the monasteries would have the same kind of qualified teachers. The training should last ten to twelve years.

Question : What happened after the cremation of the 16th Karmapa ?

Lama Jigme Rinpoche : Until the 16th Karmapa passed away in 1981, everything was quite smooth. After his death, the rinpoches gathered to discuss how to run Rumtek. Khempos and Oumzes were present at that meeting. During the meeting, they divided the responsibility between four rinpoches. Karmapa had always emphasized how much having four rinpoches is important. They decided that each rinpoche would take care of Rumtek during three years. These rinpoches had no responsibilities until then, they were young and studying and also they had nothing to do in particular since the older rinpoches and lamas were taking care of everything. After the death of Karmapa the young rinpoches, called the regents had to assume the responsibility of Rumtek during three years. They got some help from other lamas, but they held the greatest responsibilities. To begin with, Shamar Rinpoche was to take care of Rumtek for three years, then it was the turn of Situ Rinpoche, then Jamgon Rinpoche for three years and finally

Gyaltsab Rinpoche. They made arrangements so that this could occur. Shamar Rinpoche having done his three years, Situ Rinpoche declared he had no time to take care of Rumtek. He asked Shamar Rinpoche to take his place. Situ Rinpoche had an important activity concerning peace in the world. (He tried to obtain the Nobel Prize.) Then, the next three years it was Jamgon Rinpoche who took care of Rumtek. And so it continued like this for eleven years. And then Gyaltsab Rinpoche did two or three years. Progressively, things began to change in Rumtek. When they were responsible of Rumtek, the rinpoches had to check that everything was going alright, they had to find money for the monks, so that they would have enough food. After the death of Karmapa, they planed to build a shedra which was one of the important wishes of the Karmapa. There were almost 700 people living in Rumtek.

Karmapa's wishes

Before passing away in the autumn of 1981, Karmapa expressed a strong wish that three vital projects be completed:

- the Nalanda Institute for Higher Buddhist Studies in Rumtek,
- the Dharma Chakra Center in New Delhi,
- the printing of 500 sets of the Tengyur, an extensive collection of commentaries to the Buddha's teachings.

The first of these projects came under the supervision of Jamgon Rinpoche, while the undertaking in Delhi, which later became known as Karmapa International Buddhist Institute, became the domain of Shamar Rinpoche. The printing of the Tengyur, a tedious and meticulously long process, was also to be finalized in Delhi.

The Karne Shri Nalanda Institute

Here follow a few excerpts from a letter by Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, dated June 23rd, 1983

His Holiness's dream

For a long time before his departure from Tibet, His Holiness the sixteenth Gyalwa Karmapa had the project to establish an Institute to promote the detailed study of Buddhism. When he was in Tibet, His Holiness had a premonitory dream according to which, if he established such an Institute, thirteen embodiments of an Indian Grand Master of the 11th century, Bimalamitra, would be among the students. Bimalamitra, scholar and Mahasiddha was one of the pioneers of the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet. In 1980, His Holiness inaugurated the construction of the Institute Karne Shri Nalanda for the advanced study of Buddhism in his head office, the centre Dharma Chakra, Rumtek, Sikkim's monastery, India. His Holiness gave a big importance to the establishment of this new institute and one of his last wishes was that this one become quickly functional. On November 18, 1981 ("Lha-Bab Duchon"), in accordance with the original plan of His Holiness, the Institute was officially opened for studies.

The purpose of the Institute

The Institute was founded with the aim of protecting and propagating the noble teachings of the Buddha, and more particularly the tradition Kagyu of Buddhism mahayana, so that the nectar of Dharma can reach all and each. So, having considered the immediate needs, we have included all the subjects related to these studies - the main being Soutras and Tantras - as well as the study of the English language. Gradually, the study of Sanscrit and the Hindi will be added.

We should thus create conditions and a convenient environment, to offer to the promising students, correct working conditions allowing them to follow an extensive training on these subjects. In parallel to these studies, they will be guided in their meditative method to acquire the necessary mastery allowing them to direct intelligently Dharma followers into the mazes of theory and practices of Buddhists teachings. By means of the linguistic studies, they will be capable of having a dialogue and of teaching directly in English.

The Nalanda institute in 1983

His Holiness, recognizing the difficulty of the insufficient number of lamas and assistants qualified and knowledgeable about Dharma, made the decision to send the graduates of the Institute to centres worldwide, as authorities and spiritual guides residents. His Holiness wished to collect 500 students, or least 108, representatives all the Kagyu monasteries of India, Nepal and Bouthan. He envisaged their studies here and their participation in the big task of carrying the banner of the "Lineage of Fulfillment" to the four corners of the Earth for the biggest good of all beings.

Having begun with 55 students, according to the wish of Its Holiness, the institute includes 78 today. New demands for registration arrive constantly. These student monks, among whom one accounts eleven Tulkous are from 13 to 35 years old. They came from the Kagyu lineage and from several other traditions to study Buddhist philosophy, Tibetan literature, the art of the oratorical debate and English. They have already studied a large number of texts and follow daily a rigorous curriculum beginning from 4a.m in the morning and ending at 10p.m.

This letter drafted by Jamgueun Kontrul Rinpoché, continues in the form of a demand for help on behalf of all the centres. It is dated June 23, 1983.

Activities in Rumtek monastery before 1992

By Khenpo Choedrak Rinpoche from the Kagyu conference in Delhi 1996

The Shedra

First I would like to talk about how the Shedra functioned. I am speaking from my own experience as I worked in the Shedra for twelve years.

As regards the early years of His Holiness's life, it is said that at the age of about 17 or 18 already he expressed the wish to establish an institute for Buddhist studies. I am referring now to the time after his arrival in Sikkim. First, in 1978, His Holiness established a school called "Karme Jamyang Khang" which offered the students a three-year study programme. The students in each year had three classes per day. Then, in 1981, after the sixteenth Karmapa passed away, it was possible to embark on the Karma Shri Nalanda Institute for Higher Buddhist Studies in Rumtek.

The curriculum comprised nine years of studies in the sutra aspect of the Buddha's teachings. In addition, plans had been made to provide another two years of studies in Vajrayana, in Buddhist tantra. Classes were held six days a week, with only one day off. The institute's course programme started at 4 am and continued until about 10 p.m., and the daily schedule was the following: from 4-5 am the students did a group recitation together. From 5-6 am they had to clean the shrine room and their private rooms. From 6-7.30 am there were classes. Breakfast was at 7.30 am. From 8.30-11.30 am there were again classes, followed by lunch. Classes continued at 1.30 pm and went on until 4 p.m. At 4 p.m. there was a tea break. From 5-6 p.m. there was another class. At 6 p.m. they had dinner. After dinner was the Mahakala puja, which everybody attended. And after the Mahakala puja, there was yet another class for debating. The debate classes sometimes lasted until 10 p.m. or even 10.30 p.m., depending on how lively the debates were. Normally they would last until 10 p.m.. This was the daily schedule of the Shedra. There were twenty-eight graduates who completed these nine years of studies. Some of them now themselves hold positions of responsibility and are teaching in India as well as abroad.

The studies at the Nalanda Institute focused mainly on the so-called eight great treatises, a tradition which goes back to the eighth Karmapa, Mikyö Dorje. These studies comprise the following subjects: 1) Madhyamaka, 2) Prajnaparamita, 3) Vinaya, and 4) Abhidharma (Abhidharmakosha); in addition 5) the Buddhist Theory of Perception and also 6) a text called "The Deep Inner Meaning", "Sab Mo Nang Gi Don" in Tibetan, 7) the Hevajra-Tantra, and 8) the Mahayana Uttara-Tantra-Shastra. The basic study course covered these eight fields.

For all those years, until 1992, the Nalanda Institute functioned very well. Every year our students went for six weeks to three major Gelugpa Institutes of Learning, Sera, Drepung and Ganden, in order to debate and exchange views. The Nalanda Institute in Rumtek had a very good reputation as a centre for higher Buddhist studies.

The Buddha's teachings comprise two aspects: learning and practising. The great Buddhist master Vasubandhu, for example, once said that the Buddha's teachings comprise learning and practising and nothing else. For this one needs capabilities, and the capability to study Buddhism is provided at Institutes of Learning. It is a matter of fact that the Institute for Buddhist Studies in Rumtek has now been completely destroyed.

The 3-years retreat center

As for the facility for practising meditation: Rumtek had a retreat centre for three-year retreats called "Samten Yi Wang Ling". It functioned perfectly well until 1992. It was established during the lifetime of His Holiness the sixteenth Karmapa. Each group consisted of sixteen or seventeen monks. After completing the retreat these practitioners also went abroad to teach. The retreat schedule was strict; the practitioners went through the whole process of recitations and meditation practice.

They did not just enjoy themselves there. The students' day started at 3 am and went on until 11 p.m., with one and a half hours' break at noon. Their whole day was dedicated to meditation practice. First they went through the preliminary practices. That was followed by the full practice of Dorje Pamo: the outer, the inner and the secret aspect of this meditation. After that they went through the Yidam practice of Khorlo Demchog and Gyalwa Gyamtso. During these three years the Lamas consistently applied the two aspects of practice familiar in our tradition: the "Path of Liberation" in which one focuses directly on Mahamudra, and the "Path of Methods" which incorporates the six practices of Naropa. All in all the retreat centre worked very well until 1992, at which point it was closed. No one is practising there any more. Just go there and see what it looks like now! It is like an empty bird's nest.

The KIBI

Karmapa International Buddhist Institute is a 4 year college of Buddhist Studies which offers introductory to advanced level courses designed to provide interested students with the traditional education of a monastic college through a curriculum modified to meet the needs of international practitioners most effectively. The courses in traditional philosophy, taught by well-educated Buddhist monks and prominent lamas, are translated into English in order to make the Buddha's teachings accessible to as broad an audience as possible. Special review classes are offered for those who struggle with English because it is their second language. Classes in Tibetan language, taught by native speakers, are also offered at beginning, intermediate and advanced levels, and cover topics ranging from conversational Tibetan to the scriptural language of the dharma.

One advantage that the Institute has to offer is that it provides a setting for people to study in a serious way, and at the same time to study living Buddhism. because all of the instructors are themselves practicing Buddhists. The chief lecturer is Khenpo Chodrak Tenpel Rinpoche.

Born in eastern Tibet, Khenpo Chodrak has studied since childhood with the 16th Karmapa in Rumtek . Because of his excellent results, he belonged to an advanced class together with the four regents. So he received the same teachings and initiations as these high lamas, including instructions from the Karmapa. He largely practiced meditation as well. In 1981, he was chosen as Khenpo for the Nalanda Institute in Rumtek, and later, when KIBI started in fall 1990, as main instructor there.

He is accompanied by two graduates of Nalanda Institute, who, having finished in the first division of their class, hold the degree of Junior Khenpo. They assist in teaching Buddhist Science of Cognition (Buddhist Psychology), and have give public lectures twice weekly on the "Jewel Ornament of Liberation" by Gampopa. They are also the instructors for beginning and intermediate level Tibetan classes.

Topga Yulgyal (Rinpoche), the general secretary of the Institute, aside from his administrative functions, and contributions to the design of the curriculum, has composed the textbooks used in the Tibetan language classes.

Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche is the school's chairman. Although Shamar Rinpoche has spent several years planning, organizing, building and developing this college, it was originally the project of H.H. Karmapa. During several trips abroad in the late 70's and 1980, H.H. met many people who were intensely interested in studying Buddhism, but discovered that they were prevented from doing so because of various difficulties, such as lack of sufficient time, family pressures, work pressures, and so on. Due to this he felt that it was necessary to create an environment conducive to study. In addition, he felt that the creation of a Buddhist Institute of higher studies would enable many individuals to practice the Buddhist path in an unmistakable way, through the completion of a systematic program of education which could provide a firm foundation for life long practice. Viewing the existent need, he decided' to build a traditional Buddhist learning center for people of all nationalities, using the English language as the medium of instruction, and predicted that it would be of great benefit to it's students, and would be of tremendous significance for the entire lineage.

The idea first arose in 1976, and in 1979 the Indian Government donated some initial funding and a building site. Following this the land was consecrated and a Bodhi tree was planted in one corner of the property. H.H. Karmapa attended the opening ceremony, although he was grievously ill at the time, and had to go through tremendous difficulty in order to come. Later, just as the basement of the building was completed, H.H. Karmapa passed away, and responsibility for the Institute fell on the shoulders of Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche, who has done his best to fulfill H.H. Karmapa's wishes.

The Buddha's teachings fall into two categories: the scriptures (dating back from Buddha), and the various teachings due to levels of realization of spiritual masters. In order to generate genuine realization, one must have the basis of proper education in the scriptures, through which one is able to acquire unmistakable understanding of the teachings, as characterised by the three pitakas: vinaya, abhidharma

and the sutras. Furthermore, he considers that Buddhism is not simply a tradition one follows through blind faith, nor is it a tradition of practice designed to bring about immediate but non-ultimate results. And as the Buddha's teachings are extremely profound, one must begin by studying their content and meaning. It is for this purpose that the Institute was created

The curriculum consists of three mandatory subjects: Buddhist philosophy; Buddhist psychology, (which focuses on theories of cognition, and various views of the nature of phenomena); and courses in the Tibetan language.

Tibetan government dealings

As it later turned out, the total ruin of their country wasn't affliction enough to bend the collective tendency of the nation to quarrel. No sooner had the dust from the disaster settled, than the feuds from the old days revived with much of their former fervour. The old Lhasa regime, disguised behind a new name, "Tibetan Government in Exile," and operating from its new seat in Dharamsala in the western Himalayas, inherited the old agenda of hostility towards the other Buddhist schools. The members of this illustrious body took up, with the same misguided enthusiasm, the prejudices, rivalries, and fights of the past. The Khampas, in particular, were considered a serious threat to the newest ambition of the Gelugpa administration: that of representing and controlling all Tibetans in exile.

In 1964, the government-in-exile of the Dalai Lama wanted to introduce social, economic and religious reforms to the recently evicted Tibetans. Gyalo Thondrub, the Dalai Lama's audacious brother, decided that the best answer to Mao's invasion and destruction of their country was to adapt Tibet and Tibetan policy in exile to the new Communist realities. He boldly proposed to abolish the old Buddhist schools, to do away with the rich, religious show, and thus bring the high lamas to the ground. "No more thrones, rituals, or gold brocades," he was rumoured to have uttered. The spiritual hierarchies of the Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya and the corollary sub-orders fell victim to slander and reproach. His words struck fear into the lamas' hearts. As more details of the elaborate plan began to emerge, it became clear that a coup against three of the schools was being hatched. The new religious body that would replace the traditional lineages was to be controlled by the Gelugpa hierarchy. The worried lamas rushed to Karmapa for help.

The Karmapa's staunch stance

Even though Karmapa shunned with determination Tibetan politics, he was a voice to be reckoned with in the affairs of the region. Highly honoured by various Himalayan nations, his word was law when it came to the Khampas. The warlike eastern Tibetans and a number of high lamas, coming under pressure from the exiled government, gathered at his side for support and assistance. Dharamsala's latest initiative to merge all schools into one body was a threat to the schools' self-rule. If carried out, such a move would signify the end of many unique Buddhist practices that each lineage had preserved as their speciality for centuries. Not in the least disposed to be swallowed up by big brother, thirteen large Tibetan settlements - mainly refugees from Kham - formed a political alliance and chose Karmapa as their spiritual leader.

The leaders of 13 large Tibetan settlements created an alliance called 'Thirteen Settlements'. Another large camp from Nepal, led by General Bava Yeshe, joined them, thus becoming 'Fourteen Settlements'. Khamtrul and Chokling Rinpoches were appointed president and general secretary, respectively. In addition, all the high Nyingma and Kagyu lamas - especially the Situ, Gyaltsab, Trungpa, Dhazang, Sachu, Kalu, Thrangu, Bokar and Tenga Rinpoches - followed the Karmapa without question because of his leadership of the Karma Kagyu. Ultimately they prepared to face the Gelug challenge. The stalemate continued for about a decade until the Dharamsala coterie cried it off in 1973. However, for years to come, the Tibetans in exile continued to be polarised into two main groups. Chagrined at not being able to subdue the other orders, the Dharamsala supporters planned to launch a lethal strike. According to the plans, a handful of dissidents were to be eradicated.

A powerful and opposite pole to the Dalai Lama and the official line of Dharamsala came into existence. The new coalition fought successfully against the idea of doing away with Tibet's religious diversity, and, in the end, the misguided plan had to be abandoned. But the government could not forgive Karmapa his uncompromising stance in the dispute and his defiance of the Dalai Lama's authority, and the Kagyus became the targets of unsavoury attacks.

When in 1976, Gungthang Tsultrim, the political head of the alliance, was murdered and the assassin confessed to operate on orders from the Tibetan cabinet. Hired for the job, he was paid rupees three hundred thousand by the Tibetan government-in-exile in Dharamsala. The Tibetan government-in-exile had also offered him more money for eliminating the 16th Karmapa, he confessed.

Thereafter, matters stayed low-key but the incident was a watershed for many Tibetans. It was obvious that even in exile, the newly installed bureau had brought with it the same old ways of repression, divisive designs and sectarian persecution.

On its part, the Dharamsala coterie would not forgive the Karmapa's uncompromising stance in the dispute and his defiance of the Dalai Lama's authority. Consequently, Kagyus became the targets of unsavoury attacks. The renewed friendship between the Dalai Lama and the Karmapa was strangled by burgeoning hostilities generated by the unsavoury power struggle. And the painful realities made it impossible for either side to forgive or forget.

In light of Karmapa's independent position, ministers in the Tibetan administration came to regret the Dalai Lama's change of policy concerning Shamarpa. Although the lifting of the ban was, to a large extent, an empty gesture-neither the Dalai Lama nor his government held jurisdiction in India, and Shamarpa didn't require the Tibetan leader's permission to go public on foreign soil-the decision brought an outcry. For centuries, both Karmapa and Shamarpa had remained unpopular figures within the government circles, and Lhasa's action from two hundred years ago had been hailed a victory against the mutinous Kagyus. Today, Karmapa's high profile and his main student's sudden re-emergence were declared a threat to the Gelugpa's political aims. The head of the Kagyus and his senior disciple turned into Dharamsala's bitter enemies.

The Dalai Lama's difficult position

The Dalai Lama, as nominal ruler of all Tibetans, was expected to keep above such scheming and unhealthy reasoning. Surrounded by players with a serious bent for conspiracy and trying to accommodate all parties, he had only the reputation of his name left at his disposal. To halt the advances of the less rational members of his cabinet, he would periodically declare himself to be the last incarnation in the line of the Dalai Lamas. The strategy would work for a time, until his politicians reassumed their confrontational tactics and continued conspiring against the other three Buddhist schools.

Rivalries between Kagyu tulkus

However, the clashes among Tibetans were not confined to the Gelugpas' harassment of their rivals. Opposition to Shamarpa's reinstatement emerged, unexpectedly, from far more immediate quarters than the government houses in Dharamsala.

Every tulku in Tibet was surrounded and groomed from cradle to grave by a retinue of professional advisers and servants. Life after life their families held the same functions around their lama. This group grew in prominence and size until it became a *de facto* court, tightly besetting their master. Personal ambitions here meant a great deal more than one would expect from people in the service of a spiritual teacher.

The incarnations of Karmapa and his close disciples each maintained such an entourage whose members jealously guarded their place in the hierarchy of the lineage. When Shamarpa and his household were banned from the public scene, the groups surrounding other eminent Kagyu lamas moved, together with their Rinpoches, one notch higher in the pecking order.

Shamarpa's sudden return brought an end to that cosy state of affairs. As he reclaimed his place as senior student to Karmapa, the retinue of Situ Rinpoche was forced one place down in the power system. Even more displeased were the followers of Gyaltsab Rinpoche. They shared several buildings with Karmapa's administration in Tsurphu, His Holiness' main seat in Tibet, and had been filing lawsuits for centuries to contest the property. Now, due to Shamarpa's reappearance and after the 16th Karmapa inserted Jamgon Kongtrul as the fourth in the lineage, they had to live with the fifth position.

Such events were dynamite in traditional Asian societies. After two hundred years of enjoying high status, the protective families that surrounded Tai Situ and Goshir Gyaltsab were unwilling to accept this latest sad twist in their fortunes. Shamarpa stood in their way, and so the government in Dharamsala gained an unforeseen ally in challenging the senior Kagyu lineage holder. It was generally assumed, though not always proven, that the Rinpoches themselves were above these Machiavellian calculations.

While Karmapa was alive, he remained the undisputed leader of the Kagyu lineage. He personally took over the education of many of the Kagyu high incarnates and envisioned Rumtek as a center of learning, meditation, and ritual-the best shield against the disappearance of the teachings. From an early age on, his four close disciples grew under Karmapa's supervision, receiving instructions and empowerment into the treasures of the Kagyu transmission. The common upbringing was to strengthen the links between the young tulkus as well as to forge a united leadership of the lineage for the inevitable time when Karmapa would pass away.

Were there, at this early stage, any signs of the coming rupture between the Shamar and Situ Rinpoches? Did one bear a secret grudge against the other already during the early days in Rumtek? In truth, even though growing together under Karmapa's watch, they did not associate with each other. Once the eminent party of refugees had established itself on Sikkimese soil, the young Tai Situ—a powerful figure in eastern Tibet in his previous life—was immediately besieged by his now diminished administration. The poor but still avid attendants, afraid their adolescent master might fall for the glitter of the modern world, had offered him every kind of material comfort but kept him under lock and key in his quarters. From a young age, the juvenile tulku ate alone, played alone, and sat down—apparently with little enthusiasm—to his books alone. On top of this, the fact that Shamarpa and Situpa claimed origin from opposite backgrounds didn't help to bridge the differences either. The former enjoyed the luster of aristocratic descent with links to Karmapa's family. The latter, proud and imperious in his last incarnation, now bore the stigma of the son of a blacksmith—a profession close to that of mole hunter or butcher in the old Tibet.

If his fine ancestry had given Shamarpa reasons for celebration, his present circumstances put him at a disadvantage to his brethren. While the three tulkus were reborn, as it were, into their old retinues of advisers and servants, Shamarpa, during his two hundred years of official banishment, all but lost his loyal circle of assistants. The situation gave him a good deal of freedom and was not exceptionally worrisome as long as Karmapa was there to fend off any offensive against his principal student. Once alone, should a conflict arise—his position of senior disciple notwithstanding—Shamarpa was undoubtedly more vulnerable to political attack than his three peers. The members of Situpa's close circle had already begun to weave their own designs in the new haven. They banded together with one Gyaton tulku—a lama sent to Sikkim years before by Karmapa who now opposed His Holiness' presence in the enclave—and tried, however unsuccessfully, to create their own power base in the capital Gangtok.

About Gyathon Tulku

(Extracts from "Siege of Karmapa")

As the communist troops advanced into Tibet, tens of thousands of Tibetans began the mass departure from their country. His Holiness Gyalwa Karmapa left for Sikkim and settled in Rumtek. Simultaneously, the Situ and Gyaltsab administrations decided to establish themselves in Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim. At the time, the monarch of Sikkim was Tashi Namgyal. A religious man, he always extended support to the Tibetan Lamas and was especially keen on the masters of the Kagyu tradition.

Gyathon Tulku, who was originally from Situ Rinpoche's Palpung monastery, was firmly established in Sikkim by the time Gyalwa Karmapa's entourage arrived. It is worthwhile mentioning that the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa first invited Gyathon Tulku to Sikkim in 1954. This was during one of several visits Karmapa made to the region. Gyathon Tulku was instructed to stay behind by Karmapa, to be Master of Rituals for the King.

In 1962, following the death of his father, Thondup Namgyal ascended to the Royal Throne of Sikkim. By that time, Gyathon Tulku had managed to weigh a considerable influence over the Royal Family and had become particularly close to the Queen Mother. Aware of the fact that the Queen Mother was not fond of Karmapa, Gyathon Tulku together with Situ's administration approached her with a very personal request: They wanted to have the Gyalwa Karmapa expelled from Sikkim forever!

Their motive was very clear. The old Gyathon Tulku wanted Situ Rinpoche to become the Guru of the King. The only obstacle to this was Karmapa's presence in the area. The plan was not new, for already an eminent Nyingma Lama, the late Dujorn Rinpoche, had become a victim of slander and religious feuds. The Queen Mother made sure that he was not seen in or around Sikkim again.

The scheme to oust Karmapa was as shortsighted as it was difficult. Not only were the monarch and his government devoted to him, but most of the Sikkimese population had faith in their holy Lama, Gyalwa Karmapa. A firm stand was required to stop the plan being implemented. With little time to spare, the King, his minister Densapa and an influential secretary, Trating Sherab Gyaltzen, frustrated the plot to banish Gyalwa Karmapa from Sikkim.

Once the situation was brought under control, the administration of Rumtek went on to quieten down the infamous Gyathon. As a result, in 1967 before passing away, the old Tulku himself declared

publicly that he would be the last incarnation of the Gyathon line. His Holiness Gyalwa Karmapa also confirmed there would be no reincarnation. Despite this, in 1983, 2 years after the 16th Karmapa died and 12 years after the last Gyathon had died, Situ Rinpoche declared that the "new" Gyathon incarnation had been found. The alleged incarnation had been born into the politically powerful Martang Topden family of Sikkim. This was immediately rejected by Rumtek's General Secretary, Topga Rinpoche.

On another front, Sikkim was again witness to a dispute. Gyaltsab Rinpoche and his small body of administrators were residing in Gangtok. Gyaltsab's hosts were the Lharipas, an influential family of painters. This family later became one of the four families involved in the infamous "Joint Action Committee". Gyaltsab Rinpoche's administration became involved in a heated dispute with Gyaltsab's father over antiques brought from their monastery in Tibet. Consequently, his father gave these items to the Queen Mother to protect them from the administration.

At this point, Gyaltsab Rinpoche's administration pretended to surrender past animosity and approached the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa. They asked him to intercede in the dispute, as they wanted the items returned, to which Karmapa agreed. While the dispute ensued, Gyalwa Karmapa brought Gyaltsab Rinpoche to Rumtek and even provided rooms for his administration. The Queen Mother did not release the disputed property until 1978. During this time Gyaltsab Rinpoche and his administration stayed at Rumtek with Karmapa, as they needed his support.

Meanwhile, Situ's administration tried in vain to build power and influence in Gangtok. After all, in his hey day, Situ Rinpoche and his administration enjoyed a comfortable stand in the eastern region of Tibet. Therefore his administration was not willing to merge with or be influenced by that of Gyalwa Karmapa.

H.H. the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa trusted everyone. He was always the least interested in disputes and would usually be the first to put the past behind him when it came to rancour between individuals. He happily offered education to Tulkus and young monks in order to revive and maintain the lineage. That was the intention behind persuading the Situ administration to permit Situ Rinpoche to receive his education at Rumtek monastery. The Situ administration finally agreed, making it clear that Situ Rinpoche should have separate accommodations and kitchen facilities from that of Rumtek monastery. Situ Rinpoche's side considered this offer to be satisfactory. After all, Situ Rinpoche, himself a high ranking Lama within the Kagyu Lineage, would receive teachings from Gyalwa Karmapa. This could only benefit Situ Rinpoche and his administration in many ways. However, at the time, the old staff of Karmapa's administration in Rumtek were concerned about the prospect of having to deal with the haunting past that Situ Rinpoche's entourage brought with them.

At this time, Shamar and Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoches were already living at Rumtek. There was no history of conflict between these two and Gyalwa Karmapa.

Rumtek during the 16th Karmapa's times

Specifics about the Karmapa Charitable Trust

A group of settlers, coming from Tibet, had collected a sum of about Roupies. 251 000 (publisher's note: about € 6,600, or US\$ 6,000) . This amount formed the corpus of the Karmapa Charitable Trust in 1961. The income, profit 'or any reasonable portion of it was meant to be spent for the benefit of the Karmapa's followers.

Sikkim had not merged with India at that time. Therefore, the deed of the trust was signed in the Indian residency, i.e. office of the political officer for India at Gangtok in Sikkim. At that time, the registered office of the trust was at 142, Rashbehari Avenue, Calcutta (India), which was perhaps the residence of Ashok Chand Burman, an Indian industrialist and a close confidant of the 16th Karmapa. Burman had also been named as one of the trustees by the 16th Karmapa.

The 16th Karmapa was the sole trustee. The deed of the trust specifically mentioned:

And it is hereby declared that in case of the mahānirvāna (death) of the trustee, i.e. His Holiness the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa, as stated herein above, his successors in office, i.e. His Holiness the next Karmapa, i.e. the 17th Karmapa, shall become the trustee. During the intervening period of the mahānirvāna of H.H. the 16th Karmapa and the reincarnation of the next Karmapa, i.e. the 17th Karmapa when reincarnated, and if he is below the age of 21 years, then till the time when His Holiness the 17th Karmapa attains the age of 21 years, the seven persons named below and, in case of their death or refusal to act as trustees, their heirs, legal representatives or successors in *office*, as the case may be and as provided hereinafter, shall become the trustees for the management of the 'Karmapa Charitable Trust' with all the power of the trustees as vested by this deed of trust.

The seven persons in the trust were: Rai Bahadur Tashi Dadul Densapa, Ashok Chand Burman, Gyan Jyoti Kansakar, Sherab Gyaltshen, Dhamchoe Youngdu, Jewon Takpoo (Dragpa) Yulgyal (Topga Rinpoche) and Gyonpu Namgyal.

The deed of the trust further specified:

It is also provided that in case of the death of any of the future trustees No. 1 to 4 named herein above dying before or after the mahānirvāna of His Holiness, i.e. the 16th Karmapa, and before His Holiness the next Karmapa, i.e. His Holiness the 17th Karmapa is reincarnated and attains the age of 21 years, then their legal male heirs by the principle of primogeniture shall hereditarily become the trustees in place of the deceased trustees.

If it is further declared hereby that in the case of the death of any of the trustees named from Nos. 5 to 7 herein above representing the Karmapa sect (order), before or after mahānirvāna of His Holiness the 16th Karmapa and/or before His Holiness the next Karmapa, i.e. His Holiness the 17th Karmapa is reincarnated and takes charge of the 'Karmapa Charitable Trust' after attaining the age of 21 years, the members of the Karmapa sect of Tibetan Buddhism will elect the required member or members of their sect as vacancy may arise (amongst the trustees Nos. 5 to 7) to act as trustees in place of the deceased trustees.

Rai Bahadur Tashi Dadul Densapa has been succeeded by his son Jigdral Tashi Densapa (he resigned but his resignation letter was not accepted),

Ashok Chand Burman resigned; Shamar Rinpoche was adopted by the rest of trustees to replace him;

Gyan Jyoti is living in Nepal

Sherab Gyaltshen is living at Gangtok

.After the death of Dhamchoe Youngdu in December 1982, Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche was adopted as trustee. In 1993, Jamgon Kongtrul too died in an accident.

Jewon Takpoo Yulgyal, son of the sister of the 16th Karmapa, and general secretary of the Rumtek administration as well as the trust, died in 1997.

Gyonpu Namgyal died. He was replaced by Situ Rinpoche.

The present composition of the trust is: Gyan Jyoti Kansakar (Nepal), Sherab Gyaltshen (Gangtok), Shamar Rinpoche and Situ Rinpoche. Three seats (Nos. 5 to 7) are vacant.

At present, Situ Rinpoche is banned from entering Sikkim and Darjeeling in West Bengal while the Sikkim government has imposed restrictions on the visit of Shamar Rinpoche to the Rumtek monastery.

Topga Rinpoche admitted in 1996 that during the lifetime of the 16th Karmapa and for the immediate years after his death, the trust had remained inactive and widely forgotten. The Karmapa was the sole trustee. Therefore, there was no need to activate the trust.

It was only after the death of Dhamchoe Youngdu, the old General Secretary, in 1983, with the financial crisis looming over Rumtek that the new administration had dug out the corresponding documents, and consequently, the trust's seven-member board, as per the deed of the trust, came to life.

In April 1984, the first meeting of the trust after the death of the 16th Karmapa was held at the Rumtek monastery. The meeting resolved that the Rumtek monastery affairs would be conducted on the basis of the deed of the Karmapa Charitable Trust.

Generally, the trustees were to meet twice a year. Funds were provided liberally by Shamar Rinpoche. He and Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche contributed greatly to accomplish the intentions of the 16th Karmapa. During the same period, Situ and Gyaltshab Rinpoches devoted themselves to construct their own monasteries.

How much did Rumtek cost, and who paid for it ?

In a letter sent in June 99 to " Chief Minister " of Sikkim, Pawan Chamling Kumar, Shamarpa makes the list of the possessions belonging to Rumtek by mentioning who financed them. (...) Extracts:

1. The main monastery built by the late 16th Karmapa in the early 1960's together with the monk's new living quarters that were constructed with money donated by Tobga Rinpoche (Rs. 1.5 million) (publisher's note: about € 38,000 or US\$ 35,000\$), myself (Rs. 800,000) (publisher's note: about € 19,000 or US\$ 17,000), and a German Buddhist foundation (DM 40,000) (publisher's note: about € 20,000 or US\$ 18,000) of which I am president.
2. The retreat drubdra built by Tobga Rinpoche and his wife Ashi Chokyi.
3. The two-story building consisting of a kitchen, canteen and dormitories built by myself in the early 1980's.
4. The multi-story shedra and dormitory building commissioned by the late general secretary Damcho Yongdu in 1982 under the instructions of the late 16th Gyalwa Karmapa one-year prior to his death.
5. The new shedra that sits in the late 16th Karmapa's summer garden built by the late Jamgon Kontrul Rinpoche in the 1980's.
6. The late 16th Karmapa's private residence.
7. The junior monks' school built outside the main gate by Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche.
8. The guest houses Tashi Deluge and Kunga Deluge outside the monastery.
9. The infirmary that is located one kilometre from the monastery and that was built by a Swiss foundation established by Ven. Lama Teunzang from France; and a nunnery temple donated by an American woman in Seattle.

10. Some large sacred objects which include: I) a golden Buddha statue, a Manjushri statue, and a clay statue of the 16th Karmapa, all of which are located in the new shedra and were commissioned by Jamgon Rinpoche; II) a golden Buddha statue in the main temple commissioned by myself in 1992; and III) a golden stupa that contains the 16th Karmapa's relics commissioned by his late general secretary. (...)

Shamarpa adds (in his description of the general situation in 1999):

“ You will note that the list above does not mention Gyaltsab Rinpoche or Tai Situpa. They have never built or developed anything at the Rumtek monastery. ”

Years 1980 Through 1990

The 16th Karmapa's heart incident

The first signs of a conflict brewing within the lineage appeared directly after Karmapa passed away in 1981. Forty-five days later, on the December 20, 1981, the official cremation ceremony brought several thousand of Karmapa's followers to his headquarters. During this significant event, while His Holiness' body-which had shrunk to the size of a baby-was consumed by the shooting flames, suddenly a "blue-black ball" rolled out of an opening in the pyre. It came to rest on the northern side of the cremation place, towards Tibet, where Lopon Chechoo-Karmapa's confidant-and two other lamas were standing. The unusual phenomenon created a good deal of excitement and speculation.

Nobody knew exactly what to make of the mysterious object, and the puzzled lamas ran for advice to Kalu Rinpoche, the oldest and by assumption the wisest in the gathering. After carefully examining the intricate "ball," the senior Kalu nodded in knowledgeable approval but remained as perplexed as the rest of the illustrious assembly. Everybody exchanged bewildered glances and helplessly waited for some answer. By now people thought the object resembled a human organ, so Lopon Chechoo had it placed high on the side of the Stupa.

At that moment, Situ Rinpoche emerged from the adjacent room with offerings to be burnt in the fire. He noticed the commotion but obviously had no clue as to what was happening. Seeing the baffled faces around him and the round lump high on a steel plate, he took the plate in his hands and, amid much pomp and circumstance, disappeared with his new possession into the main shrine room. Later that night, operating on a less ceremonial note, he quietly transferred the object to his private quarters where he kept it closeted away.

Three days later, a big Kagyu conference took place in Rumtek. As senior lamas of the lineage sat next to each other in the hall of the institute, Situ Rinpoche rose from his chair and addressed the distinguished gathering of traditional Tibetan Rinpoches in English. He first disclosed that what he had secured in his room was, in actual fact, Karmapa's heart. "The heart flew from the north door of the cremation pyre and landed in my palm," he proudly confessed, exposing, for everyone to admire, his right palm. "It now belongs to me," he concluded. He then announced he would build a two-to-three-foot stupa of solid gold in Sherab Ling, his monastery in the western Himalayas, to house the precious relic. The lamas looked impassively at Situpa talking to them in English, unable to make out a single word of his speech. The few Westerners present gaped at the speaker in astonishment. With satisfaction, Tai Situ scanned the silent assembly and sat back in his seat, not showing the slightest inclination to render his historic message into Tibetan.

"Rinpoche, you should speak in Tibetan," Shamarpa's voice resounded in the packed hall. Not informed about the meeting, Shamar tulku had arrived halfway through his peer's sermon, just in time to hear how the heart had sailed from the pyre into Situpa's palm. He must have at once realized that Tai Situ was planning to carry away the precious relic to Sherab Ling and nobody was going to stop him. The elderly lamas, having been offered an explanation in a foreign tongue, were kept nicely in the dark. With no time to lose, Shamarpa kindly invited his peer to repeat in Tibetan what he had stated only a moment before in English. Visibly ill at ease, Tai Situ rose for the second time. "Shamar Rinpoche has rightly reminded me that I forgot the Tibetan," he acknowledged and recounted the story in his native dialect.

Enter Damcho Yongdu, the combative, Rumtek's old general secretary. Situpa's sudden rise to custodian of Karmapa's heart was as much news to him as it clearly was to the rest of the assemblage. Less than impressed by the biased version of events from the cremation ceremony, and in no mood to let the unusual relic slip out of Rumtek, Damcho Yongdu boldly declared that the heart had not flown into anybody's palm, definitely not into Situpa's. He then rallied his forces to challenge Sherab Ling's bid. Speaking on behalf of the Rumtek administration, he pledged funds to erect-if need be-a five-foot gold stupa. As caretaker of Karmapa's seat, he firmly demanded that all items that have to do with the welfare and future prosperity of the lineage be left, in keeping with His Holiness' wishes, in Rumtek. Without waiting for any more surprises, the old man led a procession to Situpa's room and quickly removed the relic from the shelf. His resolute action, clear reasoning, and decisive outbidding of Situpa's offer carried the day. Karmapa's heart was allowed to remain in Rumtek, awaiting the promised gold stupa to house it.

As it later turned out, Damcho Yongdu made good on his promise. Today, a stupa of solid gold-though only a foot high-rules over Rumtek from the first floor of the monastery.

What was disturbing about the whole incident was not so much the tug of war over Karmapa's heart-this was understandable in view of the extraordinary nature of the relic-but the conscious distortion of facts adopted by a venerable lineage holder. Situ Rinpoche's version of how the relic came into his hands was, at best, a vague and murky rendering of the truth and had certainly stretched the goodwill and imagination of the participants in the ceremony to the limit. For as eyewitnesses put it years later, the only reason why the heart came into Situpa's hands was simply because he snatched it from the side of the stupa and scooted off with it unchallenged. . At that time, however, nobody dared confront a high lama with a lie. It was not yet possible.

Even more disturbing was the fact that Situpa's backers allowed this visible deceit to grow unhindered. After years of intense campaigning and agitation, the story of Situpa prophetically receiving and carrying away the relic would achieve the status of holy proof that he was indeed the senior peer of the lineage, selected by Karmapa himself to bring forth his next incarnation.

Having failed to get hold of Karmapa's heart, Situ Rinpoche requested to take possession of Karmapa's practice book instead. He reasoned that his monastery needed a special blessing from his teacher and a book that Karmapa used to read every day was just the thing he had been looking for. This time, the old secretary was on full guard. As years later Shamar Rinpoche would disclose in an interview with the author of this book, Damcho Yongdu strongly confronted Situpa's new fancy. "Rinpoche, don't give him the book," the old man argued to Shamarpa. "He is going to produce a false prediction letter about the next Karmapa out of it." The charge sounded largely overdone, if not totally insane, but, nonetheless, Tai Situ got nowhere with his lobbying and, eventually, had to leave Rumtek empty-handed. Karmapa's belongings stayed at his seat.

The immediate months and years that succeeded Karmapa's death brought a sense of profound grief and loss to his students. At the same time, their teacher's departure became a source of great energy and self-reliance for some in the West. On the eastern front, however, despite the pervading feeling of sorrow, several of the Rinpoches began, slowly and cautiously, to break ranks with Rumtek. Although they owed their fame outside Tibet to Karmapa, the longing for their old country proved a stronger force than reason and loyalty to their teacher. When looking back, they could still recall how every high tulku-absolute master of his monastery-used to hold sway over neighbouring valleys and often reigned undisputed over whole regions of the country. Their present condition was but a shadow of their former splendor. Following the urge to revive such small kingdoms, the émigré lamas started to lay plans for their own hierarchical organizations in exile. Those designs must have been born as much out of a desperate yearning for the old order as out of a basic ignorance about the new realities outside Tibet.

High and low, young and old, most Tibetan lamas displayed this blind tendency to duplicate their former power structures in the new, foreign environment. At the same time, they showed an irrepressible appetite for portions of each other's work. Case in point here were the ill-devised attempts of several Kagyu teachers to cut a piece out of Karmapa's cake while ardently claiming to work in his name. This was first exemplified by the learned Thrangu Rinpoche who established his own Thrangu-Ling groups in Hong Kong and Malaysia.

Creation of a group Regency

On December 21, 1981, at the big Kagyu meeting after Karmapa's cremation, Damcho Yongdu, the old general secretary, proposed that Kunzig Shamarpa, (historically the second most important dignitary in the lineage after Karmapa), as well as Tai Situpa, Jamgon Kongtrul and Goshir Gyaltsab, close disciples of the 16th Karmapa, stand together, in Karmapa's absence, at the helm of the lineage. These four Regents are then chosen as the group regency, or individually, as a regent. He entrusted them with the task of finding and delivering Karmapa's seventeenth incarnation. From the historical point of view, this new scheme was a total innovation. A group regency had never existed in the tradition of the Karma Kagyu. Also, a four-person body in charge of Karmapa's recognition was a curious novelty. The Rinpoches, however, accepted the proposal, expressing their sincere desire to fulfill the 16th Karmapa's wishes.

Rumtek general secretary's succession

Tobgala's difficulties

In 1982, Damcho Yongdu, the general secretary of Rumtek, passed away. A colorful personality and clear embodiment of the old order-his autocratic style and stormy temper won him few followers even when it came to the most die-hard and conservative Khampas. In Karmapa's absence, few amongst the Kagyus were better equipped to bring the school in line with the standards of the 20th century than Topga Yulgyal, a master of meditation trained in his skills during the days in Tsurphu. Appointed in 1968 by the 16th Karmapa as the next general secretary and already savoring the bitter taste of public office, he formally took the reins of governor after the death of Damcho Yongdu.

The state of affairs left behind in Rumtek was little short of chaotic. Accountable to none and wielding absolute power, Damcho Yongdu had reigned like the king that he was, with little regard for the opinion of fellow officials and even less concern for the voice of Karmapa's followers. Modern norms of governing, which incorporate a high dose of control over those exercising authority, were alien concepts to his medieval mentality. Displaying an aversion to public records, he eluded even the most remote type of accounting and kept all financial matters away from the eyes of the monastery's patrons.

When the incoming team approached the old secretary's family to take over Rumtek's assets and inspect its financial records, a major scandal erupted. Topga Yulgyal, flanked by his assistants, presented himself at the door of his predecessor's imposing house with the intention of assuming control of the treasury. The new team was anxious to have a look at Karmapa's funds that the late secretary had so far managed alone. Rumtek had grown, over the years, into a large institution, and each day it needed a handsome injection of cash to stay afloat. The present administration had no time to spare-the money was essential. After ten long minutes of waiting, eventually, the late secretary's widow emerged from the residence and solemnly handed over a tiny but expensive looking box. As more minutes elapsed and it became clear that nothing else would follow the intricate item, the new governors peeked inside the box and, to their complete surprise, discovered a "staggering" amount of ... thirty thousand Indian Rupees (publisher's note: about € 760 or US\$ 700). The situation bordered on absurdity. That was all there was, the honorable relatives claimed. Not a single rupee more. The coffers were otherwise empty. Damcho Yongdu's widow professed ignorance and little understanding. Not at all convinced, the shocked administrators gaped at the handful of notes and suddenly realized that Rumtek was on the verge of bankruptcy. With the monastery's reserves totalling thirty thousand rupees and a little box, they could probably run the place for another couple of hours. The big project in Delhi, which was just getting off the ground, also required a serious infusion of funds. Huge bills were piling up. On top of this, the Indian government was threatening to collect taxes due on Karmapa's properties both in Delhi and Sikkim. Exactly at this crucial moment, His Holiness' financial resources seemed to have vanished into thin air. Although short of accusing his predecessor of looting the treasury, the new secretary launched an investigation into the missing capital. In his zeal to serve Karmapa, the old man must have merged his private purse with the public one, unfortunately, to the painful disadvantage of the latter. Thus Damcho Yongdu's son, the young Pönlop Rinpoche, and the whole family became the subject of an official inquiry. With a view to one day leaving all practical matters that concerned the functioning of the lineage in the hands of a charitable organization, the 16th Karmapa had established, back in 1961, the Karmapa Charitable Trust. This body had been registered on Indian soil and was to be fully operational under

Indian laws. With Karmapa's death and until his seventeenth incarnation reached the age of 21, the Karmapa Charitable Trust had automatically turned into the highest legal authority representing the lineage, just as specified in the deed of the Trust. However, few in Sikkim remembered the existence of the Trust. After His Holiness died, Rumtek continued to be run by the lax and murky standards from old Tibet. Karmapa's supervisory foundation remained a noble idea on paper only.

Now, with the old secretary gone and with the financial crisis looming both in Rumtek and Delhi, the succeeding administration suddenly recalled the dormant Trust. Bringing the non-profit organization to life would relieve the lineage of the impending Indian taxes and safeguard it against another swindle. But, as a consequence, Rumtek could no longer be managed like a private dominion where neglect of public records and contempt for a supervisory body were the norm. Financial policy had to be brought in line with modern rules governing charitable institutions. To comply with such rules, the new administrators had to account for every rupee spent. Hence, the sudden disappearance of Rumtek's funds not only brought the place to the brink of insolvency but also threatened to start a showdown with the Indian bureaucrats.

Topga's inquiry into what suspiciously looked like fraud and his efforts to recover the lost assets did not sit well with the family of the late secretary. It wasn't totally clear if the powerful relatives were protecting the deceased man's good name or also hiding away the missing fortune. But from the very outset they stonewalled the investigation and were downright hostile to the whole idea of rescuing Karmapa's money. Soon after Topga Rinpoche launched his inquest, the forceful widow-leader of the clan vanished from the scene altogether. When she unexpectedly reappeared in Woodstock, Karmapa's center north of New York, married to her old friend and lover, Tenzin Chonyi, the case against her relatives had to be dropped. Karmapa's assets were nowhere to be found. The mighty family, however, would not forgive Topgala his rigorous stance. The new secretary turned into their sworn enemy, and his good name was subsequently dragged through the mud both in Asia and America.

Shamar Rinpoche about Topgala

Extracts from an interview with Shamarpa August 1992

I think the reason that Topga Rinpoche has been the focus of so many attacks has to do with his function. According to Tibetan tradition, the General Secretary of a monastery has a very important position. He is the General Secretary of the so called Thsurphu (or Rumtek) Labrang, the separate body of the monastery responsible for its administration. In a way the power is in his hands.

Topga Rinpoche is a direct nephew of His Holiness Karmapa, so we are cousins. In 1967 Topga Rinpoche married a princess of Bhutan and until 1982 he did not live in the Tibetan community nor Rumtek. He lived in Bhutan and I did not have much contact with him. His Holiness gave him the title of General Secretary but he was not working as such, until after H. H. Gyalwa Karmapa passed away. The late General Secretary Yongdu Damcho took on the responsibility of this function, then when he passed away in 1982, Topga Rinpoche assumed this position in Rumtek.

It was then that I got to know him. He does not have any special loyalty to his Tibetan relatives, as- he does not believe this to be important. He treated me as a boss because I was the active regent of His Holiness. He is an idealist and an intellectual. He is, known as a learned person, well versed in topics like grammar, poetry, astrology and history. He is especially praised for his poetry and considered a capable historian.. His strong concern, that the wellknown historical tradition of the "Black and Red hat Karmapa" be carried on, maybe gives people the impression that he will block the other Rinpoches from being the Guru Of Karmapa. That he will insist on the Shamar Rinpoche for that function. Actually a Karmapa always himself chooses whom he wants as his main teacher, and it is not necessarily one among the previous lineage holders.

As far as concerns his activity for the Rumtek administration, Topga Rinpoche is a big sponsor. Yearly he offers about 200000 Rupees to the monastery, and he just gave 1.500000 Rupees for the construction of the monks quarters. This money comes from his own pocket, not from fund raising as when we collect money for. different projects. He is, as mentioned before, married into the Bhutanese royal family, but his wife has only a title. She depends on her private economy not on the kingdoms property. The money comes from their common business and allows him to. -be a sponsor to the monastery. Topga Rinpoche does not take even 1 cent from the monastery - no salary, nothing.

First splits between Regents

The Rinchen Terdzö Initiation incident

In the summer of 1983, Kalu Rinpoche agreed to give the Rinchen Terdzö empowerment, a transmission of the jewel of Guru Rinpoche's teachings. Empowerments served as a unique method for preserving the continuity of the teaching in Tibet. It is a ceremony during which a disciple is introduced to a certain Buddha aspect. An accomplished master would grant it to aspiring students, who would then become holders of the practice with the potential to, one day, fully realize it and pass it on to others.

Since, in the old days, certain popular empowerments could attract a throng of several thousand people, it wasn't uncommon that a monastery would encourage its head lama to obtain and later perform the highly sought after initiations. After all, even a few-hundred-strong army of pilgrims was a potent source of income for a cloister. Such practical reasoning wasn't entirely lost when Tibetans established themselves on Indian soil. The life of refugees brought with itself new, unknown hardships, and often a group of destitute monks, thrown into a hostile environment, depended solely on the spiritual skills of their master for survival.

In 1983, nearly twenty-five years after fleeing Tibet, basic survival wasn't an issue for most Tibetans anymore. With the recent arrival on the scene of affluent patrons from Chinese South East Asia, suddenly, the high Rinpoches and their households sensed big fortunes lying ahead. Not surprisingly, when the rich Chinese devotees showed a penchant for elaborate initiations, a number of lamas and their enterprising assistants went out of their way to satisfy such tastes. An empowerment resurfaced as a hot commodity that could buy influence and bring wealth.

Determined to open the young tulkus' eyes to such practical realities, a Lama Paljur, formerly from Palpung in eastern Tibet, gathered the Shamar, Jamgon, and Gyaltsab Rinpoches and offered them a dose of what he considered conventional guru wisdom. "You should think about the future," he began patronizingly to the Rinpoches. "Soon you will need funds to run your monasteries," he prudently disclosed. "You should request and learn the popular empowerments. Consider the thousands that would come when you, the high tulkus, grant your initiations. All those people, the whole mass, would become your disciples," Paljur tempted his listeners. "Kalu Rinpoche is a great master. You must ask him for the Rinchen Terdzö, an empowerment in highest demand," the lama summed up his arguments.

Today, Shamarpa still remembers how the two other regents greeted Paljur's words with unusual fervor. Without delay they petitioned Kalu Rinpoche to offer the invaluable Rinchen Terdzö, and, when the distinguished lama acceded, they engaged the local Kagyu world in energetic preparations. Shamarpa himself was lukewarm to the idea. For one thing, he had little enthusiasm for grand religious services and tried to perform his duties in a more casual way. Also, he couldn't help thinking that his peers' motivation behind a request of this nature was at best dubious. However, his refusal to join the function would have been an offence to the old Kalu, and so, reluctantly, he went along with the others and got ready for six months of lengthy ceremonies.

Shamarpa's tepid endorsement of his peers' efforts didn't go unnoticed. Also, the years of malicious gossip coming from the high lamas' circles started to bear their undesirable fruit. The three Rinpoches, it seemed, had finally lent an ear to the disruptive talk and themselves began to ponder the idea of removing Shamar tulku from the top of the newly created group regency. As it happened, they didn't have to plan for long. Evidence of a serious fraud involving Shamarpa fell, unexpectedly, into their hands. It was a golden opportunity to rid the lineage of a manipulator who happened to surface after two centuries of exclusion. The three lineage holders must have figured that soon they would see the last of Shamarpa.

Shamarpa is summoned in court

Lea Terhune-former clerk at Rumtek and current Western adviser and right-hand to Situ Rinpoche-had been dismissed from Karmapa's seat by the new general secretary for her snooping manners. While still in Rumtek she had spent a good part of her time ploughing through the monastery's archives. Her diligence seemed to have been well rewarded as she thought she had managed to dig out a series of documents that looked like proof of Shamarpa's fallen ethics. Now, eager to please Situpa, her new benefactor, and still fuming after her unceremonious removal from Rumtek, Miss Terhune announced

that Karmapa's land for the institute in New Delhi had become the object of Shamarpa's voracious appetite. The senior regent, she claimed, was after Karmapa's possession. Situ Rinpoche was offered a batch of documents that allegedly implicated Shamar tulku in transferring Karmapa's property to his own name.

What should have sounded the alarm and forced Situ Rinpoche to pursue a fair inquiry into a fantastic allegation became the sought after excuse to deliver a secret blow to his rival. As Situpa made the rounds with his newly obtained "documentation of guilt." the Eminences-dodging further research-gracefully passed on their verdict. Without so much as looking into the matter, they simply decided to take the senior regent to court.

And so, as lamas and students gathered in the rainy, eastern Himalayan village of Sonada to receive the two thousand empowerments, three venerable regents got ready to deliver a masterstroke of their own making. On a misty Sonada morning, nearly halfway through the initiations, Shamarpa received a startling letter from lawyers representing the three lineage holders. In solemn tones, the solicitors delivered their harsh message: Shamarpa should brace himself for a battle in court. The unbelievable was happening-three of Karmapa's heart sons intended to officially charge their senior peer with stealing Karmapa's property. The blow was as hard as it was unexpected. Shamarpa could not possibly conceive that the regents, rather than checking the allegation, chose to sneak behind his back and tried to indict him with theft.

Shamarpa senses an intrigue

Adding insult to injury, the Eminences had schemed to expand their *coup* one notch higher. Shamarpa found out they had approached Kalu Rinpoche with an intricate request. At the completion of the ceremonies, the eminent lama was to publicly ask the four regents to place the future 17th Karmapa in Tsurphu, in occupied Tibet, rather than at his new seat in Rumtek. The learned Thrangu Rinpoche and his advisers were pressing for such a solution for the sake of the old cloister, it was explained. Confining the next Karmapa to Chinese controlled Tibet felt like an odd gambit of unclear benefits, and even today Shamarpa swallows with discomfort at the perfidy of such a plan. It struck him that the whole idea-hidden behind the benevolent desire to rebuild Tsurphu-was nothing less than a maneuver to seize control of the Kagyu school.

Once they managed to deposit Karmapa in the Communists' grip, the powerful lamas could remain at the helm of the lineage and do as they pleased. If, unawares, Kalu Rinpoche came down after the empowerments with this peculiar request, Shamarpa would have to agree to his appeal. After receiving the precious initiations from the old master, Tibetan etiquette left him no other choice but to satisfy the teacher's wish-no matter how eccentric this was.

Disgusted with such intrigues and bent on avoiding a showdown during the ceremonies as well as the prospect of the 17th Karmapa becoming a citizen of Red China, Shamar Rinpoche decided to leave Sonada. After excusing himself with the old Kalu, he arrived in Delhi to supervise the first steps in the construction of Karmapa Institute. In Sonada, his seat remained conspicuously empty during the last three months of ceremonies.

Everywhere else it would have been a social snub, but for the Tibetans the senior regent's abrupt departure was an earthquake. To avoid further embarrassment, Beru Kyentse Rinpoche, another prominent Kagyu lama, was rushed in as a replacement. Shamarpa's enemies immediately used his sudden exit as yet another example of arrogance and haughty manners. Seeing their design to establish the next Karmapa in Tibet go to pieces, the three tulkus must have become convinced that the main regent was a crafty player-his abrupt withdrawal from Sonada attested to that. Now, there was little doubt that he removed himself to Delhi to take final possession of Karmapa's land.

Shamarpa wins in court

Despite their claim to have caught a shrewd thief red-handed, the three lineage holders didn't get their day in court. Lawyers hired by the general secretary proved the absurdity of their charge. The piece of land in question had been donated to the 16th Karmapa by the then Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. For several reasons-political and others-the Indian government chose to give the land on a ninety-nine-year lease. To evidence this, one rupee had been payable annually as a nominal fee. This meant that the real owner of the property was the Indian government and not Karmapa. The whole allegation that the

land had been taken away from His Holiness and transferred to somebody else's name was therefore ludicrous.

When the 16th Karmapa had died, it became necessary to correctly formulate the documents pertaining to the place. There were several errors in the existing, original records. Thus, a legal signatory, that represented the 16th Karmapa, was needed. All this happened after the group regency of the four Rinpoches had been established and during Shamar Rinpoche's tenure, while he acted on behalf of the school. At that time, the Karmapa Charitable Trust had not yet been rediscovered, and so Shamarpa became the logical choice as the signatory of the corrected deed of lease. This amended document was what Lea Terhune dug out and was the basis of her conclusion that Shamar Rinpoche's signature at the bottom of the new lease was tantamount to his taking over the property.

Group Regency ends

Now, it was Shamarpa's turn to threaten his peers with legal action. Having lost trust in the three regents' ability to stand for the lineage, he proposed to drop his planned lawsuit against the three if they, in turn, conceded to dissolve the group regency. With relief, Jamgon and Gyaltsab seized the occasion to cover their backs and readily signed the corresponding declaration. And so, after merely a few years of unsteady course, the common leadership of the Kagyu lineage ceased to exist.

Within Karmapa's own administration, Kunzig Shamarpa, according to historical custom, assumed the role of His Holiness' representative but only to officiate and attend formal ceremonies on his behalf. The four Rinpoches still remained, as agreed beforehand, in joint control of the process of recognition of the 17th Karmapa.

Unlike his two peers, Jamgon Kongtrul tried to mend his ways. Having realized the injustice done to Shamarpa, he admitted his mistake and sought to establish a new relationship based on trust and respect for the main regent's position.

About the notion of “Regents-group”

Open letter from the Association of Abbots of the Karma Kagyu Sebool of Tibetan Buddhism

We would hereby like to clarify the procedures of our lineage as a number of errors have arisen concerning the traditions that accord with the history of the Karma Kagyu School..

In 1981, after the passing away of the 16th Karmapa His Holiness, Rangjung Rigpai Dorje, Supreme Head of the Karma Kagyu School, the then General Secretary to the Karmapa, the late Damcho Yongdu, requested that a "regent-group" be formed. He, in collaboration with Mr. Tenzin Namgyal, the then Deputy Secretary of Rumtek Monastery's Administration, pushed through the agenda of a group of "regents" to find the reincarnation of the Karmapa and to disseminate the Karma Kagyu teachings. At the time this structure was put in place even though such an arrangement had never before been used in the history of our school. (E d. note: and was never asked by the 16th Karmapa)

It is because of this arrangement that today we have frequent mention of "the Four Regents of the Karma Kagyu School". In fact, this group was dissolved in 1984 on the initiative of His Holiness Shamar Rinpoche. All four members of this group - Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche, Situ Rinpoche, Jamgon Rinpoche and Gyaltsab Rinpoche - signed the legal document resulting in the dissolution of this arrangement.

It was primarily with the assistance of Jamgon Rinpoche that Shamar Rinpoche was able to achieve this. The reasons for this course of action are :

- an arrangement of this type is not a tradition of the Karma -Kagyu School ;
- the late Karmapa had not expressed any intention whatsoever 'in this respect nor had be given any such instructions;
- the then General Secretary the late Damcho Yongddu did not have the authority to initiate the forming of this group

- this arrangement had invited undesirable effects such as political involvement and schemes.

His Holiness the 16th Karmapa authored a [document](#) where he set forth the ranks of religious dignitaries of the Karma Kagyu School. There he establishes that Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche and Situ Rinpoche have the status of "Spiritual Leader" in that order of importance. He also sets forth that the Jamgon reincarnations and the Gyaltsab reincarnations are not included in that category.

We, the undersigned, hereby request that references to The "four regents" no longer be used, as that group has been dissolved and as it contradicts proper procedure as well as having become the source of the present controversy. The Joint Action Committee of Sikkim has claimed another order of these ranks. In order to substantiate that the same Committee must produce evidence, that is, a document authored by His Holiness the 16th Karmapa where he sets forth such an order of ranks. In the absence of such a document that claim cannot be seen as legitimate.

Sitou Rinpoche and his suite

Situpa, a tulku finder

The great revelation, which he relentlessly trumpeted around Rumtek, was that Situ Rinpoche had just found the new Trungpa Tulku in eastern Tibet. The news was certainly explosive but, in light of Trungpa's own prediction about his future return, looked dubious. A few years before passing away, the tulku had declared that he would come back as an ordinary Japanese worker.

Trungpa's sudden re-emergence, bearing Situpa's seal of approval, left us with a feeling that the great Tai Situ was simply making overtures to what was left of Trungpa's powerful Dharmadhatu organization. As to the regent's general performance, rumor had it he had recently recognized no fewer than three hundred tulkus. Such high productivity was certainly impressive, but the fact that most of the candidates happened to come from one area bordering Palpung monastery-Situpa's main seat in Tibet-cast a shadow on the veracity of his choices. Also finding the astronomical number of several hundred tulkus in the space of just a few years went beyond anything even the 16th Karmapa had achieved.

Who is Akong Tulku ?

It was generally assumed that the person who brokered the agreement between Situpa and the Communist Chinese for this massive recognition to be allowed to happen in occupied Tibet was Akong Tulku. Akong arrived in England in the middle of the sixties as part of a contingent of four tulkus from a high profile school for incarnates in the western Himalayas. The idea to send the young hopefuls to Europe originated with Gelongma Palm, a traditional and well-connected Buddhist nun. She used her influence and power of persuasion to convince Karmapa that this early entry of a group of educated Tibetans into Europe would create a lasting bridge between Tibet and the West.

Akong clearly lacked Trungpa's charisma and attracted neither glamour nor attention. His lectures were rather flat and uninspiring-one couldn't escape the feeling that teaching Buddhism must have constituted a serious test for his intellect. He would customarily lighten up at the end of his marathon presentations when allowed to ponder his cherished subject of Buddhist politics. Small but of powerful build, with a bulldog-like head perched directly atop a corpulent body, Akong possessed one quality that eclipsed all other streaks in his heavy character: patience and perseverance to achieve his long-term objectives.

Soon after arriving in England, the young tulku must have set his ambitious goals. He first sent his brother-married to the same woman as himself-into closed retreat. Then came the time to act. Having little disposition for the lavish and excessive lifestyle that would bring Trungpa's downfall, Akong's aim was less extravagant and more concrete: control over the growing Karma Kagyu house in Europe. He set out to conquer the infant European Buddhist scene. But his clumsy manners and raw ambitions infuriated just about everybody on the continent. The French centers refused to receive him as part of Karmapa's entourage during His Holiness' first visit to Europe in 1974. In the end, Karmapa himself had to stop his plans for expansion. Having only the Belgians on his side, Akong Tulku had no other choice but to return to Samye Ling where, for the next years, he remained forgotten but unable to forget.

In fact, Akong does not belong to the Kagyu order. The first Akong had been a black magician and caretaker of a temple in a village in eastern Tibet. When he died, the villagers requested a visiting lama to recognise his successor. He recognised a child and declared him the incarnation of Akong, i.e. the second Akong. In exile in India, the child was patronised by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche. Trungpa Rinpoche is a Kagyu tulku, and that is how Akong came close to the Kagyu tradition.

With the sharp eye of a tactician, Akong must have seen his moment coming after Karmapa's death, when the division between the two regents, Situpa and Shamarpa, began to manifest. It was sometime during the early eighties that he must have decided to throw his weight and his center in Scotland behind Situpa. Having signed Samye Ling over to Tai Situ, Akong assumed the role of adviser, grey eminence, and finally emissary to the Communist Chinese. How he managed to win China's confidence was not entirely clear, but soon after appearing at Situpa's side, he was rubbing shoulders with top men in Beijing. He was also rumored to be lavishing large chunks of money on his contacts in the Chinese capital. In the end, the idea of hosting one of Karmapa's regents must have appealed to the Communists' secret aims, and Akong was allowed to organize Situ Rinpoche's visits to eastern Tibet-visits that came only a few years after Dalai Lama's brother arrived in 1979 on a historic mission to Lhasa in an attempt to open a dialogue and win concessions from Red China. And although more emissaries with more elaborate proposals from Dharamsala followed, little came of the Dalai Lama's overtures. The Chinese remained as canny and inflexible as ever, and the only ones who ended up making concessions were again the Tibetans.

Situpa doings in Tibet and China

Situpa, on the other hand, seemed to be achieving the impossible. In 1985, he was allowed to enter the off-limits Kham and for a time basked in the newly found role of protector of Buddhism in his occupied country. His journeys through the eastern part of Tibet, the first such venture of a high Tibetan lama since the Chinese invasion, were perceived as an enormous success. They were hailed as a victory against the Communists and glorified as the first step to restoring Buddhism in the Land of Snows. The picture of Rinpoche meeting and blessing hundreds of Khampas and recognizing just as many tulkus in his native Kham was indeed touching. It must have made a deep impression and raised high expectations among Tibetans in exile at a time when lama activity was all but forbidden in their ruined country.

The regent's emergence in his oppressed land was a consequence of a new and greatly refined policy adopted by the Chinese Politburo sometime after Mao's death. With the rise of Deng Xiaoping, pragmatism became the official line. The Communist leadership concluded that the only way to control the unruly Tibetan nation was to restore some of their monasteries and at once place them under strict government rule. To achieve that end, the heads of the cloisters would have to be chosen directly from Beijing. Showing a remarkably pragmatic face, the Communists then simply reinstated Emperor 7th Ching Lu's decree which commanded that Tibetan tulkus were to be selected by means of a lottery. The foresighted monarch of the late Ching dynasty had also dictated that the candidates for such a draw were to be appointees of the emperor's council. And so, invoking tradition and a historical edict, Red China reserved for herself the sole right to appoint and recognize the incarnations of lamas in Tibet.

The Chinese hunt for a suitable target that could be exploited to tame the Tibetans coupled opportunely with Situ Rinpoche's lust for power leading him to the Chinese side. His sudden tremendous fecundity in recognising tulkus in an area around his old seat in eastern Tibet helped him in creating a power base for the future. And, in him, China found an unusually flexible negotiator, a loyal partner, and also a dutiful messenger.

Little did people know that the triumphant visits had grave conditions attached. It is not entirely clear if Situpa was fully aware of the price during his jubilant entry into Kham. One could give him the benefit of the doubt and assume that he had been fooled into believing that the Chinese had experienced a genuine change of heart concerning the religious freedom of his fellow Tibetans; that out of decency and good will the Communists decided to simply rebuild what they had so meticulously destroyed only two decades earlier. Such a notion would neither speak very highly of his intellect nor of his political instincts but at least would make him look honest, if somewhat naïve and half-witted. But his shrewd adviser, Akong Tulku, must have been alert to the serious consequences of entering into a partnership with Communist China. Beijing was certainly in no mood to let Tibet off the hook, and whatever concessions it was ready to make were merely tactical maneuvers. For every favor done, China was going to demand and certain to extract ten favors in return. As Situpa and Akong were going to find out fairly soon, their initially successful dealings with the Communists carried a heavy price tag for Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism. The coming conflict that would shake the Kagyu lineage was a direct result of the unfortunate involvement of one of the Kagyu regents with the occupiers of his country.

Also, Situpa's giant effort in recognizing hundreds of tulkus, though very impressive in numbers, looked somewhat ambiguous in substance. His sudden tremendous fecundity in this field looked more as though Tai Situ was creating a power base for some future unspecified cause rather than picking up genuine incarnates.

Unmoved by the ideological contradictions and impatient to bring Lu's bygone order to life, the Chinese leaders began their hunt for a suitable target that could be exploited to tame the Tibetans. The Panchen Lama, second in command within the Gelugpa hierarchy, was still alive and in fact nicely toeing the government line from his new seat in Beijing. The search then zeroed in on Karmapa, who had just passed away in 1981. Probably with Akong's help, Situ Rinpoche was invited to the Chinese capital, first in 1982 and later in 1984. It seemed that he proved an unusually flexible negotiator and eventually a loyal partner, also a dutiful messenger. Shamarpa remembers well how Tai Situ approached him with an intricate offer to visit Beijing for talks with the Chinese leadership. The Kagyu senior regent politely declined, leaving-unwisely perhaps-such distinction in his peer's hands. The pact Situpa must have then sealed with the Communists-either out of ignorance or a more malicious lust for power-soon bore its first fruit. In 1985, Tibet's locked doors were generously opened for the young regent. However, for the real results of his obscure deal, the Himalayas and the rest of the world would have to wait nearly a decade.

Year 1992

Events leading to march 19th, 1992

Dabzang Rinpoche dies

(...) In the beginning of 92, Dabzang Rinpoche, a high Kagyu lama from Nepal, had suddenly died in Hong Kong. The details were rather bizarre. Rinpoche's Chinese students had arranged a heart operation for him. Dabsang-just as every Tibetan his age who indulged in butter tea-suffered from high blood pressure, but an operation wasn't quite necessary. However, his disciples insisted, painting a picture of highest hygiene and great efficiency within the medical field in the then British colony. To dispel any doubts, Situpa-Dabsang's disciple-was also consulted. The young regent came down with a clear-cut divination: lama Dabsang should go under the knife. It wasn't totally clear if Dabsang Rinpoche wanted a break from the heavy stench of Kathmandu or if, in his great compassion, he did not want to disappoint his health-oriented students. Maybe he did not feel like contradicting Tai Situ either. The result was that he ended up on an operating table, undergoing heart surgery he didn't really need.

The operation seemed to have gone well except for a minor detail. The surgeon, in his zeal to quickly complete the task, left a pair of scissors inside Dabsang's chest. It was a rather unexpected development. After hours of strenuous doctoring, the whole procedure had to be repeated, and Rinpoche's chest was once again cut open, this time to remove the good doctor's instrument. The additional dissection proved a bit too heavy for his, by then, weakened heart, and when the surgeon and his medics finished sowing the lama up for the second time, Dabsang was dead.

Jamgon Kongtrul was shocked and almost in despair. He kept muttering that this death should never have happened and that the loss was an enormous catastrophe. It was, of course, a most unfortunate and sad incident, but Kongtrul's reaction seemed quite out of proportion. After all, we were talking about a high lama who had certainly mastered the process of death. Being one of the highest incarnates himself, Jamgon Kongtrul needn't have grieved in such categorical terms. It felt much too extreme, and the exchange left us with a sense of trouble to come.

The Regents are scheduled to meet in Rumtek

(...) We learned that the four lineage holders would meet in Rumtek on the 16th March. The last time the four lineage holders had converged in Rumtek was as far back as 1986, when a declaration about Karmapa's prediction letter had been released. Since that celebrated announcement, a suspicious wall of silence had fallen, and the Eminences did not meet again until 1990. Considering the significance of their business, their contacts must have appeared unnaturally scarce and erratic. After all, the four had been entrusted with the enormous task of finding Karmapa's next incarnation. One could expect that such a weighty assignment would require more regular communication. The regents were finally coming down from their high horses and had settled on a gathering in Rumtek.

What brought about the meeting, however, was far more mixed than just the desire to jointly solve the Karmapa issue. In 1989 Situ Rinpoche informed the other three regents that he was in possession of "good news similar to the joyful cries of peacocks." It was indeed a most optimistic claim, but later Situpa must have concluded that the news was too joyful for his peers to appreciate, and he simply held it back from the regents at their meeting in Delhi in 1990. After another inconclusive gathering in Delhi, it took them two more years to force each other to meet face to face again. And although Shamarpa intended all along to question his rival about the great "peacocks," their mutual communication was breaking down at every turn. When Topgala stepped in and called upon the regents to streamline their efforts, he was largely ignored by Situpa. In the end Tai Situ conceded to see the other lineage holders on March 16th in Rumtek.

(...)The running dispute between the Rinpoches was a well-hidden secret. No one suspected that some of the venerable regents were actually bitter rivals, and the Kagyu Western world lived under the illusion of great harmony. The veil covering the lamas' lives was still dense enough to conceal the truth (...).

The crying Buddha

Shamar and Jamgon Rinpoche had sponsored the construction of a Buddha statue for Rumtek monastery's main assembly hall. Painted in gold, the precious form stood a majestic fourteen feet high in

the lofty chamber. During the consecration ceremony, a rather unusual sign appeared. Suddenly, a liquid started dripping from the body of the statue. To the modern and sceptical ear, such extraordinary phenomena appear highly suspicious and one would rather not hear about them, certainly not mention them as the great and ultimate proof to Buddhism's uniqueness. For Tibetans and most Asians, these miraculous tales are their daily bread and butter. If the statue in question really started to shed water, this remains still to be proven. In Rumtek, however, there was little doubt—a sign of this kind was believed to be highly inauspicious. The last time a statue "cried" was in Lhasa before the Chinese invasion, as if anticipating the catastrophic event. It became obvious to everyone that major obstacles were on the way. As if confirming this fact, another statue of the Wisdom Buddha Manjushri from the institute above the monastery inexplicably dropped its sword. Without waiting for more dreary omens, the two regents began performing pujas to dispel the mounting obstacles. A picture taken in those days reveals the anxiety they must have felt. Shamarpa and Jamgon Kongtrul are seated in their meditation boxes, one next to the other, passively staring into the lenses of the camera, looking completely pallid and grief stricken; their ashen, ghost-like faces and blank expressions speak volumes of the trouble lying ahead.

Jamgon Kongtrul bad health

During his last journey to Tibet, Kongtrul's health had seriously deteriorated. When we had met him at the Tibetan New Year festivities, he had looked ill and feeble. Sometime after our departure from Rumtek, he developed a blood infection from a small cut on his finger. Hardly able to move, his body struck with high fever, he had to leave for Kathmandu to help with Lama Dabsang's funeral. Situpa, Dabsang's closest disciple, who was supposed to be in charge of the preparations, had not bothered to appear in time. It had been Tai Situ's positive divination that persuaded Dabsang to go under the knife. Understandably, after the disastrous surgery, the young regent did not feel like showing up at his teacher's cremation. The lengthy rituals were then unloaded onto Jamgon Kongtrul's frail shoulders. Rinpoche was devastated and seemed overpowered by the circumstances. He sounded much too heartbroken for the high lama that he was.

The letter from Derge Committee

Beginning March 1992, all the Kagyu centers worldwide were being flooded with a mysterious letter. A group of Tibetan traders from Nepal, operating under the name of Derge Association, called upon Karmapa's students to *de facto* rebel against the collective leadership of the four lineage holders and to ignore Karmapa's senior regent. The harshest tones in the letter were, in fact, reserved for Shamarpa and General Secretary Topgala, who were blamed for purposefully delaying the process of recognition. In sharp contrast to his peers, Situpa was described as the only one capable of bringing forth Karmapa's 17th incarnation. The blunt words struck hard. Was this really a call for a coup d'état? Was somebody trying to shake up the Kagyu hierarchy and place Situpa at the helm of the lineage?

The founder of this group is said to be Mr. T.N. Gyuchen, who formerly served for many years as minister of the Tibetan Exile Government, during which time he is said to have been in opposition to H H the 16th Karmapa. He worked in different departments such as public relations, religion and education, and later on he became a senior minister. After resigning from this function, he and members of several families from Derge in Eastern Tibet started the Derge Association in Kathmandu, Nepal. Many of the founding members were known to be business people who traded religious objects and carpets. The main sponsor of the group is said to be Karge, who serves as Situ Rinpoche's right-hand man.

Events witnessed by Rumtek monks

("Siege of Karmapa")

In February, Situ Rinpoche visited China for a few days. Thereafter, via Hong Kong and Delhi he went to see the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala. He was there for two days before returning to his monastery.

Also in March, we were witnesses to Situ and Gyaltsab Rinpoche's associations. They held a meeting at Rumtek with the Sikkim Sangram Parishad Party. Mr. Kunzang Sherab and Mr. Karma Topden, both powerful and influential members of this party, attended. At this meeting, Situ Rinpoche formed the "Joint Action Committee". After the meeting was over, Mr. Shera Tarchin, came out to explain to us that, "This committee is now being specially formed to fulfill the interest of three governments." Later we learned that the 'three governments' referred to the governments of Sikkim State, the Dalai Lama and China.

The famous day march 19th, 1992

General atmosphere

The long scheduled meeting to be held on March 16th, was to be postponed until March 19th. When in the early morning of March 19th, 1992, the four lineage holders got together for their meeting in Rumtek, to his astonishment, Shamarpa noticed a large and noisy congregation of Khampas boldly positioned outside the room as if trying to put pressure on the regents. Such a colorful gathering waiting outdoors was certainly a novelty, and it was difficult to understand how the Tibetans-some of whom seemed to have shuffled all the way from Kathmandu-got wind of this meeting. Shamarpa even spotted Akong in the thick crowd-as though popping in from Scotland to call on the regents at Rumtek in the eastern Himalayas was a most natural occurrence in those days. Other prominent guests who had evidently journeyed from America made themselves visible: Lama Norlha from New York and Tenzin, Woodstock's administrator. Somebody had obviously been busy extending invitations to all such notables. The mood was festive but growing aggressive. "You must decide now!" was the last thing Shamarpa had heard before disappearing into the conference room.

Sitou Rinpoche produces a letter

Situ Rinpoche began, first by asking each regent if he was in possession or had knowledge of Karmapa's holy instructions. When he satisfied himself that nobody could produce anything new, Situpa took a white scarf, bowed down in front of the altar, and solemnly announced the long awaited news: yes, he had His Holiness' prediction letter.

The three regents were shown an envelope which had something red written on it. Immediately Gyaltsab Rinpoche and also Jamgon Kongtrul expressed their approval. The former, with tears in his eyes, even prostrated himself fully on the ground. Shamarpa though, remained unimpressed and eyed the whole show with some doubt. But when the letter was extracted from its cover, he stood at once on full guard; what had been placed on the table in front of him looked very much like a forgery.

The letter looks suspicious

First the handwriting-it seemed unstable and spread all over the page as if coming from under a shaky and insecure hand. It was a sharp contrast to the elegant, firm, and very tasteful presentations of the 16th Karmapa. Second, the text bore no resemblance to Karmapa's literary style. Being familiar with the character of His Holiness' poems, Shamarpa couldn't mask his disappointment. The sentences were clumsily put together; they lacked the warmth and insight that he so much admired. Moreover, there were several striking contradictions. The seventh sentence read: "*He will be born in the Earth-Ox-Year.*" Shamar Rinpoche immediately realized this was a sheer impossibility. Had the child announced in the letter been born in the Earth-Ox year, he would have been either thirty-two when the 16th Karmapa died in 1981 or he would be born twenty-six years after Karmapa's death. There were only two such striking possibilities with Earth-Ox. Finally, the signature! It was clear somebody tried to imitate Karmapa's distinctive inscription, but the imitation came out rather poorly. Although it was covered by a large red stamp, anyone could see the uncertain, almost broken line and the blurred ends that pretended to define His Holiness' name, a far cry from Karmapa's swift and nearly vibrant personal signing. It was as though in his most important document, the distinguished lama had all but forgotten about calligraphy and good taste and just casually scribbled the crucial words, totally indifferent to form and not clear about the content.

Without waiting for Situpa to bless them with another one of his productions, Shamarpa quickly moved on to question his rival. He first admitted to be unable to accept this document as Karmapa's genuine testament and wanted to know how Situ Rinpoche got hold of such a dubious piece. Now, also Jamgon Kongtrul began to express some doubts. The fuzzy signature and awkward handwriting seemed to have overextended even his good will and conciliatory nature. Only Gyaltsab Rinpoche embraced unconditionally the weighty news and, hardly glancing at the letter, nodded his heavy head in full agreement whenever Situpa happened to open his mouth-which was often enough during the lengthy meeting-and to whatever happened to come out of that mouth. Finally, with Shamarpa's critical gaze fixed on him, Situ Rinpoche went on to recount his story.

He had received the letter shortly before His Holiness passed away in 1981, with no indication whatsoever of its historic content. He didn't even know it was a letter. Wrapped in silk, the package was given as protection. For the next years he devotedly wore it around his neck, totally unaware he was walking around with the lineage's future hanging on his chest. Well, he didn't have to walk forever. On a

hot summer evening at the end of 1989, Situ Rinpoche prudently decided that the time had come to exchange the worn out fabric that had protected his talisman. He disposed of the old material and peeking inside, instead of the expected relics, he discovered a sealed document. "Open in the Iron Horse Year," was the solemn sentence that greeted his hopeful eyes.

It wasn't entirely clear if Tai Situ indeed waited for the prescribed year to break the letter's seal. What was clear, however, was that he didn't invite the regents to join him in the procedure. Once acquainted with the document's significant content, he dutifully informed his peers that he was in possession of news similar to the "joyful cries of peacocks" but somehow failed to spill out the reasons why the peacocks were suddenly so joyful. Having raised expectations, Situpa suddenly experienced a change of heart and for the next two years painstakingly avoided meeting the three lineage holders. Twice, when circumstances brought them together in Delhi in 1990, he simply kept his mouth shut. Today he calmly announced that to show the letter in Delhi would have been inappropriate.

Shamar Rinpoche asks for scientific test

If they couldn't smell foul play, then the venerable lineage holders needed a new set of noses. Shamarpa's nose, however, seemed to function fairly well. The senior regent was left highly suspicious and unconvinced by Situpa's performance. He wanted to know why the envelope looked less used than its contents. He also boldly demanded that the letter be put to a forensic test and announced that without such scientific expertise he wasn't going to accept this piece of paper as Karmapa's spiritual testament. With his back against the wall and obviously more and more ill at ease, Tai Situ embarked on a detailed account of how much the extravagant test would cost. He enlightened his peers with the disclosure that the only place to perform such a test was London and added that it would take years for the results to come in. They certainly didn't have years to spare. How and where Situpa obtained his information was quite a mystery but nobody asked. For the moment he seemed to have impressed upon the regents the ridiculous idea that a forensic test was as complex a scientific operation as, say, nuclear fusion under laboratory conditions. But not for long! Before the meeting was over, Shamarpa's detective's nose took over, and he managed to secure a photocopy of the disputed letter.

Jamgon Kongtrul will travel to Tibet and check

When Tai Situ completed his monologue, the regents settled to the monotonous task of analyzing the intricate text word by word. It turned out that the content was just as elusive as the form was unrefined. Although the names of the child and parents and other details were all there, it felt as if somebody had forced these particulars into an unrelated wording. Hours of tedious reading and far reaching interpretations brought no conclusive result, and as the day wore on, the four lamas struck a compromise. During his imminent visit to Tibet, Jamgon Kongtrul would try to sniff things out by himself. He was to make contact with the boy on the basis of the description from the letter. Jamgon Rinpoche seemed the ideal choice. Acceptable to all, he was the candidate sitting in the middle. At that time, they did not know that he felt his middle seat to be rather hot and greatly uncomfortable.

Topgala challenges the letter authenticity

Topgala, Rumtek's general secretary and chairman of Karmapa's Trust, was called in. The Eminences greeted him with the good news: Karmapa's spiritual testament had been finally located. The general secretary was offered the celebrated letter. However, after examining the text, Topgala began to look every bit as distressed and disappointed as Shamarpa. The more he stared at the letter, the less he liked it, and in the end he became convinced that the regents wrote it themselves. Having found a candidate but unable to find the written instructions, they simply composed a suitable document. Unluckily, the document looked quite unsuitable, and Topgala, appalled by what he was witnessing, voiced his concern. Much to Situ Rinpoche's growing embarrassment, he stated that he didn't think these were Karmapa's authentic instructions. He appealed to the regents to come forward with the real incarnation and pointed out to Jamgon Kongtrul that there was little wisdom in pursuing a clearly false lead.

Sitou Rinpoche discloses the secret

The meeting ended in the early evening. The four lineage holders agreed to keep their discord confidential and not to rush out with any disclosures. They were to meet again in June after Kongtrul's return from Tibet. When leaving the room they ran into the noisy crowd that had taken position right outside the door to their conference. Immediately Gyaltsab Rinpoche seized the occasion and flashed the

envelope from a distance, calmly stating that these were His Holiness' holy words. Situpa extracted the letter from its cover and held it up for all to admire, thus laying their secret agreement out in the open. The long negotiated deal lasted no more than a few minutes. Encouraged by the sight of the document, the quick tempered Tibetans began to shout in approval of Situpa's gesture but demanded quicker results from the others. A tumultuous ovation to honor Situ Rinpoche followed, and for a moment Shamarpa wondered if he hadn't, by some chance, stepped into a marketplace. He might also have admitted that some of his fellow regents belonged very nicely in that marketplace. The next day, as if the pact he had sealed with his brethren meant nothing, Situpa would speed to Dharamsala to disclose all details to the Dalai Lama. A few days later, he would defiantly inform all Dharma centers in Nepal about the search party being formed. Obviously, in his eyes, agreements were made to be breached.

Analysis of Situ Rinpoche's prediction letter

“ Karmapa papers ”

Analysis of Situ Rinpoche's prediction letter

« Karmapa papers »

As mentioned earlier, there have been doubts expressed about the letter presented by Situ Rinpoche on March 19, 1992.

Is it the authentic testimonial letter of H. H. the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa?

Unfortunately, we only had a copy of the letter, not the original. Nevertheless we examined the copy to see what might have brought about these doubts. Some seem to suspect Situ Rinpoche of having written the letter himself, so we included in our analysis those of his letters available to us.

Copy of this letter



General remarks about the letter

in several places the text seems to be damaged by humidity. Traces of a vertical fold can be seen in the middle of the paper. Horizontally the letter seems to have been folded in at least three places: below the third and the eighth line of the text and above the seal. This last fold can also be deduced because traces of the seal are found above it.

Although the writing in the part above the seal is blurred to such an extent as to be illegible, there seem to be no traces of ink on the seal itself.

Fortunately, we had more than 30 letters handwritten by H. H. the 16th Karmapa dating from the 1970's to 1981, shortly before he passed away. We asked several Tibetans for comparison who confirmed that the letter, at first sight, looked as if it were written by His Holiness. But this impression seemed to vanish the more they went into details especially for people very familiar with H.H. the 16th Karmapa's handwriting. What follows are comparisons as to:

- 1°) the signature,
- 2°) the handwriting and spelling,
- 3°) the letterhead.

1) Signature:

The signature on the letter is almost entirely covered by the seal. From what little was visible on our copy, the signature might be different from those we found on H.H. the 16th Karmapa's letters. This impression is strengthened when the signatures are, superimposed by computer.



Signature on
the prediction letter



Exemples of Karmapa's signature as found on his letters

2) Handwriting and Spelling.

Only a forensic test of the original letter could definitely prove whether the handwriting on the letter is that of H. H. the 16th Karmapa or not.

- Nevertheless we compared the handwriting of the letter with that of Karmapa and Situ Rinpoche: There seem to be differences between the script in the letter and the handwriting in Karmapa's letters we had. On the other hand, one could find similarities when comparing the letter's script with Situ Rinpoche's handwriting (see two examples in the tables below; the syllables used for comparison are marked in the respective letters),

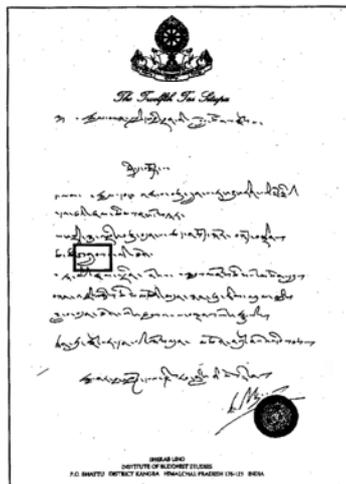
- For differences in the spelling of the word, "drub" see table below in line #6 of the letter, this word is written with the second postscript "sa". We did not find this misspelling in any of H.H. Karmapa's letters, whereas it is to be found in a letter by Situ Rinpoche (see Doc T5)

The above examples were taken from the letters below

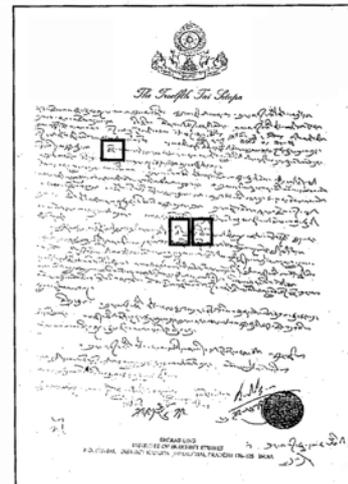
| | as written by H.H. the 16th Karmapa | as written by Situ Rinpoche | as written in "the letter" |
|----------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| the syllable "phyogs" | | | |
| two examples of the vocal "e" | | | |
| the syllable "drub" | | | |



Doc T 20 "the letter"



Doc T 5 two letters of Situ Rinpoche



Doc T 15

3) The Letterhead:

We found different letterheads on H. H. the Gyalwa Karmapa's letters available to us. On several examples the emblem in the middle (two antelopes and the dharma wheel) was the same as the document Doc T27. In some cases, it was multicoloured, in others monochrome red. On most of the letters however, one could see the more elaborate emblem also used in the letter. Sometimes the words His Holiness the Gyalwa Karmapa' were written in italics as shown in Doc T27. in other cases, these

words and the address were lightly italicised as shown below in example III, In few instances the words 'His Holiness the Gyalwa Karmapa' were written in the middle of the page, just below the emblem. None of Karmapa's letters available to us had a letterhead identical to the one on the letter, even though the more elaborate emblem shown there was often used:

- In no case did we find the words 'His Holiness the Gyalwa Karmapa' printed as in the letter, where the distance between the words is unusually big.

- In our copy of The letter the words "His" and 'the' are not in line with the rest of the text. Perhaps this was just a problem with the photocopier.

The characters themselves in the letter are different from those in the Karmapa's original letters. Especially the letters 'S' as in 'Holiness' and 'P' its in Karmapa' are broader in the letter's letterhead than in any of Karmapa's letterheads available to its. As a matter of fact, only in some of the International Kagyu Headquarters' letterheads (see example IV below) did we find the exact same script as in the letter.

Letterhead of the prediction letter

I

HIS HOLINESS
THE GYALWA KARMAPA



DHARMA CHAKRA CENTRE
RUMTEK
GANGTOK
SIKKIM
INDIA

II

HIS HOLINESS
GYALWA KARMAPA



DHARMA CHAKRA CENTRE
RUMTEK
GANGTOK
SIKKIM
(INDIA)

*His Holiness
The Gyalwa Karmapa*



III

*Dharma Chakra Centre
Rumtek
Gangtok
Sikkim*

Two examples of letterheads of H.H. the 16th Karmapa

Letterhead of the international Kagyu Headquarter

IV

INTERNATIONAL
KAGYU HEADQUARTERS
OF
HIS HOLINESS
THE GYALWA KARMAPA



DHARMA CHAKRA CENTRE
P. O. RUMTEK 737 136
GANGTOK, SIKKIM,
INDIA.
CABLE : DHARMA CHAKRA, SIKKIM, INDIA.
PHONE : 363 GANGTOK.

Khenpo Choedrak's commentaries about Situ Rinpoche's letter

Kagyu Conference Delhi 1996

Translation of the original letter

This is the letter presented by Situ Rinpoche in 1992 as H. H. the 16th Karmapa's letter containing the instructions about his 17th reincarnation:

Emaho. Self-awareness is always bliss;
The dharmadhatu has no center nor edge.
From here to the north (in) the east of (the land) of snow
Is a country where divine thunder spontaneously blazes.
(In) a beautiful nomad's place with the sign of a cow,
The method is Dondrup and the wisdom is Lolaga.
(Born in) the year of the one used for the earth
(With) the miraculous, far-reaching sound of the white one:
(This) is the one known as Karmapa.
He is sustained by Lord Amoghasiddhi,
Being non-sectarian, he pervades all directions;
Not staying close to some and distant from others,
he is the protector of all beings:

the sun of the Buddha's Dharma that benefits others always blazes.

Translation of the rectified letter

This is the rectified version of this letter as broadcast by the National Tibetan Radio in 1993:

The changes were marked with *

* Emaho, our country is a very pleasant place.

* The. Dharmadhatu is devoid of artificial light.

* That is the southern part of the east in the snowy north.

is a country where divine thunder spontaneously blazes.

*I have seen a beautiful garden in the land of nomads.

* Mind accomplishes everything and the wisdom-mind is white.

* The good year that enjoys the earth

With the miraculous, far-reaching sound of the white one:

(This) is the one known as Karmapa.

* A man who accomplishes things well will be the guide.

Being non-sectarian, he pervades all directions;

Not staying close to some and distant from others,

He is the protector of all beings:

The sun of the Buddha's Dharma that benefits others always blazes.

Analysis excerpts

(...) However, the authenticity of this letter, as you all know, has not yet been established. Topga Rinpoche in his speech earlier today spoke of doubts. I'd also like to say a few words about it. For example, the seventh sentence in this "prediction letter" says: "We will be born in the Earth-Ox- Year ". If Ugyen Trinley had been born in the year of the Earth-Ox, it means that either he would have to be thirty-two years old when the late Karmapa passed away, or he would be born twenty-six years after the death of His Holiness, the late Karmapa. These are the only two possibilities. For a person who knows the Tibetan calendar, this is obvious. If the "prediction letter" is claimed to be authentic, the predictions couldn't pertain to Ugyen Trinley.

If we go on to look at the geography of Tibet in relation to the instructions in this "prediction letter", it says: "From here to the North... " ("From here " presumably refers to India) "... in the East of the Land of Snow... (Tibet). Ugyen Trinley's birthplace is not in the far eastern part of Tibet but in the south-east. To those involved in the events surrounding the appointment of Ugyen Trinley, it became evident that these instructions did not tally with reality.

In 1993, therefore, National Tibetan Radio broadcast a new version in which these mistakes have been rectified. The "prediction letter" broadcast on Tibetan Radio said that Ugyen Trinley was born in the south eastern part of Tibet and not in east Tibet.

The radio commentator went on to say that he was born in "the good Earth year", as part of the new version of the "prediction letter", leaving out the astrological sign of that year's animal because of the discrepancy.

Moreover, scrutiny of the first sentence in the so called "prediction letter" in the light of the different schools of thought in Buddhism again raised certain questions. This sentence reads: "Self-awareness is at all times a blissful state". Does this self-awareness refer to the Sautrantika school of Buddhism or the Mind Only school of Buddhism, or is it the self-awareness that the Madhyamaka school of Buddhism refutes? The second sentence speaks of a state free from mental fabrication, free from reference points. These two sentences contradict one another. The first sentence asserts the existence of a blissful state of mind, self-awareness; the second sentence speaks of freedom from mental fabrications (positing the existence of self-awareness is a mental fabrication). If one considers the contents of the alleged "prediction letter" from these different points of view, it becomes rather difficult to believe that the letter is authentic. Furthermore, analysis of the letter's composition shows it to be quite unconvincing: the composition is very poor from a linguistic view point. This issue has been discussed at length in a publication entitled The Karmapa Papers.

However, it's always a good idea to carry out an investigation. What is more, the Karmapa's seal and his signature are smudged. Situ Rinpoche claims that this is because he's been wearing the piece of paper around his neck for a number of years and the sweat of his body has caused the smudging. However, other parts on the same piece of paper are not smudged. Moreover, the envelope in which it was kept bears no traces at all of the sweat.

Even a simple investigation of the purported "prediction letter" will probably bring to light clear evidence that it cannot be authentic. It would be rather odd if a letter inside an envelope has been partially soaked by the sweat of somebody's body but the envelope hasn't been soiled.

Jamgon Kongtrul dies

Announcing the death

As it had been agreed during the regent's meeting on the 19th of March, Jamgon Kongtrul was to travel to Tibet on what we all assumed was a highly sensitive assignment. A week before his departure, an extravagant gift arrived for Rinpoche in Rumtek: a brand new BMW 525. Kongtrul, all at once, fell in love with his new toy and, without giving the whole thing much thought, came upon the rather eccentric idea of going to Tibet in his state-of-the-art car. Provided it is in experienced hands, a BMW is a most potent asset on the free speed, solid German *autobahn*. It becomes, however, a lavish and rather useless item on the badly potholed Indian and Nepali roads, crowded with auto rikshaws, carts, buses, villagers, and domestic animals. What would happen to such a vehicle and its intrepid, if not somewhat foolish, driver on the sixteen thousand foot passes and treacherous mountain gravel roads of Tibet, we could only guess at, as few had probably tried to undertake such a ridiculous endeavor. Rinpoche was going to be the first one to test a luxurious BMW under the extreme and inhospitable conditions of the high Tibetan Plateau.

If, on top of this, Jamgon Kongtrul was going to Tibet on a secret mission to contact the 17th Karmapa, then choosing a latest BMW 525 model as his means of transportation was at best a rather imprudent if not a totally foolhardy move. One didn't need much imagination to figure out that all eyes in the country-Tibetan and Chinese alike-would be fixed, at all times, on such a technical marvel on wheels, not seen before in the Land of Snows. Rinpoche's progress would be followed by thousands, making him and his car an instant celebrity. To perform anything remotely secret under such star-like conditions would have been next to miraculous. If Rinpoche harbored any illusions about a covert operation in his native Tibet while driving around in a white BMW, he was certainly deceiving himself. It is difficult, though, to imagine that he was so naïve and inexperienced as to not notice the absurdity of executing the plan he had in mind from the inside of his conspicuous vehicle. Unluckily, Jamgon Kongtrul never got a chance to show what his clandestine business was to have been. He didn't get a chance to test his BMW in Tibet either.

The day before his planned departure, Kongtrul Rinpoche had decided to try his new possession on the more familiar Sikkimese and north Bengali roads. He set out for a day's outing to neighboring Kalimpong, to visit his mother and test-drive the car. A BMW mechanic was also expected from Delhi to perform a final check on the vehicle. Together, they were to drive towards Siliguri, past the large Buddhist stupa that had been erected outside this highly disordered and crowded city, and eventually head towards Kathmandu. In the early morning of April 26, Kongtrul's party received a message that the day's flights from Delhi had been delayed and might even be cancelled. The BMW specialist was running late. Impatient to hit the road, Jamgon Kongtrul decided to leave without him. His two attendants piled onto the back seat, and Kalimpong disappeared from view.

As the story was later recounted by Tenzin Dorje, the lone survivor, Kongtrul's BMW sped along the narrow, slightly wet, asphalt road towards Siliguri. Suddenly a few black birds appeared on the road, right in front of the car. The driver, in a desperate attempt to save the birds, swerved the car violently, throwing the vehicle at once into a wild skid. If he ever had the time or skill to steer it back on course remained a mystery. The heavy car fish-tailed at full speed for thirty to forty yards until it inevitably hit, with tremendous force, one of the many huge trees that grew on the side of the road. It all took only seconds, but the impact was devastating. Everybody was thrown out of the car by the sheer force of the collision. Rinpoche died instantly. One of Rinpoche's assistants and the driver died from heavy injuries later in hospital. Tenzin Dorje, Kongtrul's secretary, was thrown out of the rear window and landed in the fields beside the road. He suffered only minor injuries. The needle of the speedometer had stopped at 110 mph.

Shamarpa immediately rushed to the scene of the accident and took care of Rinpoche's body. Gyaltsabpa, struck with extreme grief, was said to have suffered a mild heart attack. It was decided that there wouldn't be a cremation but that Jamgon Kongtrul's body would be preserved, and the traditional forty-nine-day rituals began that very same evening.

The shock - Why Jamgon Kongtrul ?

The dark question hanging over our heads was, of course, "Why Jamgon Kongtrul?" "How could this ever happen to him?" At that time most of us still believed that high, realized yogis have total control over not only their mental processes but also over most incidents in their lives. Certainly they could freely decide on when and how to leave their bodies. The best example was the 16th Karmapa's death. Why then, did Jamgon Kongtrul choose to exit the scene at such an unexpected and apparently premature moment? The puzzle of the 17th Karmapa recognition was far from being solved, and when finally, after eleven years of uncertainty, a ray of hope had manifested, Jamgon Rinpoche simply washed his hands of the whole thing and split. Now, with one regent missing, could the remaining three come up with a satisfactory solution? All such doubts were swirling in people's heads, giving everybody a lot to think about. There was no end to the speculation.

(...) Some Lamas stated that the disciples' actions might have an influence on their lama's life span. They stressed that if the lama tolerated examples of bad conduct, giving high initiations to all such people at the same time, this could actually shorten his life. Students who broke their bonds might be the biggest hindrance to a Bodhisattva's activity in this world. Slowly, the notion that even high incarnates made mistakes began to settle in people's minds. It was a rather surprising discovery, but it brought the impeccable lamas a notch lower, onto a more manageable and human level.

However, most people didn't know that, apart from being a tragic incident, Rinpoche's death set the Karma Kagyu on an immediate collision course.

After the futile attempt to bring Shamarpa to court in 1983, Jamgon Kongtrul became the lubricant that somehow kept the upper part of the machinery moving. Having apologized to Shamarpa for the blunder with the court case, he moved closer to the senior regent, forging, in the end, if not an intimate friendship, then at least a workable relationship. He was, at the same time, a confidant to Gyaltsabpa, and the only one to whom the reclusive Gyaltsab Rinpoche could really open up. A messenger between two parties, he continued smiling at all and agreeing with everyone. His activity kept the illusion of harmony and won the Kagyu lineage a few more years.

Shamarpa is accused of killing Jamgon Kongtrul

While Rinpoche's body was still warm, Shamarpa's and Topgala's enemies staged the initial assault. The accusations that were leveled were so absurd that any critical person would laugh at them, putting aside all such stories as the product of an unhealthy imagination. Ordinary Tibetans were, however, a far cry from critical, and the cloak-and-dagger conspiracy that was propagated made an impression on their rustic, country bumpkin minds. The general secretary and also the chief regent were being accused of having planted a bomb in Jamgon's car. Kongtrul Rinpoche allegedly stood in their way to crowning a puppet as the 17th Karmapa, and the malicious pair simply decided to kill him. Another rumor had it that the above two villains secretly sneaked in under the cover of the Himalayan night and poured salt or sugar into the BMW's petrol tank, thus causing the engine to seize and catapult itself at high speed out of the car.

Anybody with even a remote understanding of mechanics and a fair dose of common sense and good will would refuse to heed such obvious nonsense. A car's engine tainted with sugar would simply slow down and eventually bring a vehicle to a complete and unquestionable halt; it would, under no circumstances, accelerate the car to the rather extraordinary velocity of 110 mph, and would certainly defy the laws of gravity if it were to suddenly eject itself out of the body of the car.

As to the mysterious bomb, Tenzin Dorje's, the lone survivor's, detailed account of the dramatic event contradicted this grotesque claim. The driver swerved the car at high speed in order to avoid hitting a flock of birds on the road and thus threw the potent and heavy vehicle into a wild skid. The rest was already history. Finally a BMW expert was called in to put a decisive end to the ongoing tongue wagging. His clear-cut testimony should have closed the issue once and for all. Unluckily, "there are none so blind as those who will not see," and despite scientific evidence and witnesses' statements to the contrary, the slander against Shamarpa and Topgala continued unabated, drawing increasingly wider circles.

Events during may and june 1992

Situ and Gyaltsap launch the search for Karmapa

On May 17, taking everybody by surprise, Situ and Gyaltsab had publicly announced that their representatives had been dispatched to Tibet to look for Karmapa's seventeenth incarnation. They expressed their regret and concern that Shamarpa wasn't available at this point for discussions, but

unable to wait any longer for the main regent's return, they were forced to proceed with their duty. Akong Tulku representing Situpa and Sherab Tharchin representing Gyaltsabpa were already well on their way. People in Rumtek held their breath. "Will they bring His Holiness?" "How long will it take?"

Three days later, Situpa, feeling he had to deliver some more action for the participants in the prayers for Jamgon Kongtrul, staged his coup. Early in the afternoon, on the 20th of May, to the applause of members of the Sikkimese government and prominent local families like the Martangs, and to the good wishes of Poenlop and Sangye Nyenpa Rinpoches-high Rumtek lamas-the prediction letter was opened and shown to Sakya Tridzin, leader of the Sakya school.

It was, in fact, a hollow gesture. Except for being Buddhist and Tibetan, Sakya Tridzin, head of the Sakyapas and a widely respected lama and learned scholar, had no role whatsoever in the process of Karmapa's recognition. The pope would have been just as fitting. The long list of eminent names, however, was making an impression in India. Names and titles went a long way in this part of the world, and a show spiced up with drums and horns and presided over by local dignitaries appealed to the provincial appetite of the Tibetans. Conspicuously absent from the event were two key figures in the delicate procedure: the main regent Kunzig Shamarpa and the general secretary Topgala. None of the eminent lamas that crowded the Rumtek courtyard seemed to have recognized, let alone protested, their exclusion. It was as if the two had ceased to exist.

Slanders from Situ Rinpoche

Taking advantage of Poenlop's and Sangye Nyenpa's tolerant and careless moods, Situ Rinpoche set his slandering machinery going for another round of defamation. Not only were Shamarpa and Topgala the two conspirators, responsible for Kongtrul's death, but now they were also the two rotten characters accused of exactly the things Situ Rinpoche seemed to be indulging in. It was general knowledge in the East that Tai Situ travelled with an extensive entourage of assistants, servants, and the like. His taste for imperial suites at five-star hotels and exclusive country clubs earned him the epithet of "last emperor" in Hong Kong-a "distinction" that no other Buddhist monk could claim. Now, ironically, Shamarpa was being portrayed as an arrogant master who put the luxurious life of an eastern prince above his duties in the monastery. Topgala, as an ambitious and calculating criminal, who was waiting in the dark to empty Rumtek's coffers in order to expand his private fortune. They were both a stumbling block on the 17th Karmapa's way to Tsurphu and should be chased away from Rumtek altogether.

Situation getting clearer

The pieces of the puzzle began to fall into place. It suddenly became clear why since 1989 Situpa had avoided a formal meeting of the four regents. He must have somehow pulled the wool over Gyaltsabpa's eyes, who had obviously come under his corrupt influence, and now, with Jamgon Kongtrul gone, his hands were free. He was going to recognize some boy he must have chosen during his numerous visits to Tibet as the 17th Karmapa.

Akong and Sherab Tharchin, the shadowy emissaries, were already well on their way. His cozy overtures to the Communist Chinese and his ceaseless activity in Kham made much sense in the light of such an intention. Also the well-orchestrated tirades against Shamarpa and Topgala and the persistent rumors pointed to a carefully devised plan.

Faced with such happenings, many questions arise:

Why the two regents could not wait for Shamarpa ?

Why such an unprecedented hurry ?

Why do they proclaim everywhere Karmapa is in Tibet, without trying first to get him out and thus putting him at chinese mercy ?

Why Akong, mistrusted by the 16th Karmapa, was suddenly in charge of looking for the 17th Karmapa ?

Shamarpa looking for forensic experts

The real reason behind the hasty departure of Shamar Rinpoche to America was the disputed letter. Not so easily fooled by Situpa's assurances that a forensic test was a decade-long and fortune-costing enterprise, Shamarpa had snatched a photocopy of the document at the March meeting and was ready to submit it to a scientific analysis. He saw his chance in May during the long weeks of prayers for the late Jamgon Kongtrul. Few friends were promptly dispatched to the US to make contact with a suitable institution. Dead certain that Situpa would find it inappropriate to make a move during the holy

observances, Rinpoche ventured away from Rumtek, officially to deliver a speech at some congress in California. The speech was most certainly a successful and much talked about event, but his attempt to extract some results from the forensic community turned out to be a big flop. Although Hannah Nydahl managed a few amiable chats with several experts in the field, the distinguished gentlemen opened her eyes to the fact that for a reliable, scientific inspection, a copy, no matter how good, was definitely not enough.

Akong finds Karmapa in Tibet

At the same time, on the west coast of the U.S., Shamar Rinpoche had just heard that Akong and Sherab Tarchin were about to reach Tsurphu, Karmapa's main seat in Tibet, to introduce the child from the letter as the 17th Karmapa. Events had definitely run ahead of him. The main regent began to suspect that his venerable brothers had cast him aside. If he was ever to have a say in the recognition of the 17th Karmapa and in the future of the lineage, then, Shamar Rinpoche admitted, he had better hurry home.

Shamarpa hurries back to Rumtek

Without wasting any more time with forensic experts, the senior regent booked a flight to Frankfurt. Once in Germany he met, unexpectedly, a government minister from Gangtok, and the next day the two were seated together on a plane bound for Delhi. At Bagdogra airport they ran into the Chief Minister of Sikkim, N.B. Bhandari. A powerful and feared figure in Sikkimese politics, Bhandari had ruled the autonomous region for over a decade. His iron hand and dictatorial style allowed for no dissent or opposition. Chattering agreeably with the famous politician in the VIP lounge of the airport, Shamarpa had little idea that the Chief Minister was already seriously involved in the Karmapa dispute. Befriended by Situpa and his people, he was now believed to be sitting in their pockets.

Situ Rinpoche's long stays in Taiwan had a more practical purpose than just the desire to teach the Dharma to the local Chinese Buddhist community. It was rumored that each time the prominent lama left the island, his attendants had to haul a few extra boxes onto the plane. People in Sikkim said that if a devoted student had expected Rinpoche to ferry only precious Dharma texts in his luggage, he might have been greatly surprised to also discover crisp hundred dollar notes neatly stacked up inside the bulky cases. Apparently, the rich Chinese had to pay their way to enlightenment in cash.

Unaware of all these rumors, Shamarpa shared his thoughts with the Chief Minister. Before leaving for America, he had requested his official help to guard the prediction letter. The request was granted, and soldiers were posted outside the room where the document had been deposited. Now, the regent admitted, he was unable to accept the letter as genuine. His attempt to scientifically test a copy in the United States had failed. Since the paper in question was under the Minister and his government's protection, he was then asking the politician's assistance in procuring the original text to perform a forensic examination. Bhandari, looking quite uncomfortable, forced a smile and politely explained that he had handed over the responsibility for the prediction letter to a Mr. Karma Tobden, member of the Parliament in New Delhi. It was no longer his business. He then rose and quickly excused himself. He had important meetings that couldn't wait. The exchange left the regent with a strange feeling that N.B. Bhandari, Chief Minister of Sikkim, wasn't telling the whole truth.

Finally on the 7th of June Shamar Rinpoche returned to Rumtek. He had been away for nearly a month, but it felt like years. He intended at once to question the two regents, but inexplicably the pair had vanished. That very morning his servant had seen them leaving the monastery in haste. It was said they were expecting an audience with the Dalai Lama in his main quarters in Dharamsala. With satisfaction Shamarpa thought that their audience was going to be a very brief one. Tibet's political leader and half his government were in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, attending an environmental conference, and Dharamsala stood rather empty those days. But the picture of his two peers shuttling across the Himalayas on some secret mission did not set his mind at ease. Tired of reacting to their erratic and unfriendly deeds, Shamarpa decided to move ahead. He called a meeting of all Tibetans in the Nalanda Institute in Rumtek for the next day. The time had come to speak out.

Situ and Gyaltsap petition the Dalai Lama

In the meantime, Tai Situ and Goshir Gyaltsap decided the time had come to pay their respects to the Dalai Lama and to petition the Buddhist leader with their request: the recognition of the 17th Karmapa. And so, on the morning of May 7, the two had set out on the long journey to the western Himalayas. Coming to Dharamsala, to their disappointment they discovered that His Holiness was in Brazil attending the Earth Summit of "green" activists. Having recruited the help of his secretary, they settled to the

lengthy process of getting through to Brazil from India. It was late in the night when they got the Tibetan leader on the phone. At once they declared that they had located the genuine letter left by the 16th Karmapa and that with one-pointed devotion all Kagyu Rinpoches, lamas, and monks agreed with the enclosed instructions. The Dalai Lama expressed the wish to see the letter, so the Rinpoches faxed him a photocopy of the document to Rio de Janeiro. They also included all other details they thought were necessary.

The Dalai Lama reacts

Speaking on the phone a few hours later, the Dalai Lama stated that since the information they had relayed to him matched the instructions in the letter of prediction he had received by fax, and since with unanimous faith and one-pointed aspiration all Rinpoches and lamas had agreed, then he would confirm the incarnation as that of the 17th Karmapa. Next day the Dalai Lama's office in Dharamsala issued a document verifying his words.

Shamar Rinpoche challenges Situpa's choice

Shamarpa's address in Rumtek

On the 8th of June, Shamar Rinpoche had gathered all the Tibetans in the main hall of the Nalanda Institute and put everything out in the open. He recounted the events from the March meeting, his serious doubts about a letter Situ Rinpoche had shown them, and their agreement to keep the discord secret. He recalled how Jamgon Rinpoche was to go Tibet to contact a child but stressed that nothing was certain. Now, as the two regents had broken their agreement, he had to speak out. He had heard that, here in Rumtek, they had shown a letter to Sakya Tridzin. He had heard they had sent Akong and Sherab Tharchin to Tibet and that the Communists had been helping them. He had heard many things. He wanted to talk to the two Rinpoches, but they had gone away. There was also another letter, he stressed—the one the four Rinpoches had found in Karmapa's relic box in 1986. This letter was difficult to interpret, but when the time was right, its meaning would become clear. He was placing his trust in the people of Rumtek, in the lamas, monks, and all others. He requested that the Tibetans look for the truth, to insist that Situ Rinpoche's letter be checked.

When Shamarpa closed his short speech, an unpleasant silence descended upon the monastery and village. Even the notorious Rumtek dogs kept quiet. The discord among the lineage holders had become public knowledge. Every Tibetan community is a breeding ground for uncontrollable gossip, but during the long minutes that followed his last words, the most active tongues had nothing to wag about. Shamar Rinpoche did what he felt was necessary and would now wait for the other two regents to come back to him.

Shamarpa reveals an informer about Karmapa

Next day the regent assembled all Westerners and repeated his talk in English. He also disclosed a few more things. There was a close disciple of the 16th Karmapa, a most trustworthy person, who had approached him with the news that he possessed direct instructions from the last Karmapa. This man, highly respected by all, wouldn't come forward publicly. Not yet! He had been told by Karmapa himself when to reveal his knowledge, and the time was not ripe yet. Shamarpa was fully confident that the man carried the right information and that he would offer himself when the time was suitable. The regent finished, stating rather somberly, that he would resign his seat and title if his trust in the man proved wrong. He also requested the practitioners not to speculate about who the real Karmapa was but to show confidence in the Dharma and to practice instead.

Strained atmosphere in Rumtek

After Shamarpa's Tibetan and English talks, the atmosphere in Rumtek was strained. Although the prayer ceremonies proceeded according to schedule, everyone had their eyes set somewhere else. The Tibetans from the village, quick in making up their minds, began to cast their lot with one or the other regent. Those that backed Situpa were becoming increasingly aggressive, loudly forcing their choice on whoever happened to cross their path. Like an invading army, the sixty monks who had arrived with Situ Rinpoche to take part in the rituals, rained down on the monastery, pushing the rightful inhabitants to the side. They threw their weight around as though the place already belonged to them. There was no end to quarrels and complaints, which left the administrators rather exasperated. On top of this, Situ Rinpoche's

people developed the irritating habit of letting everybody know how many days were left before the 17th Karmapa arrived in Tsurphu. Needless to say, not everyone in Rumtek cared to listen to such calculations, and tempers were short.

Shamarpa refutes in letter Situpa's actions

On the 11th of June, Shamarpa issued an official statement where he put on paper his doubts about the authenticity of the letter. He distanced himself from the regents' present maneuvers in Tibet and from Akong and Sherab's efforts to find the 17th Karmapa on the basis of the information from the disputed letter. As long as the document in question remained unchecked, he would not advise anybody to "rush into any kind of action." It was a carefully worded note which definitely fell short of fully condemning the two Rinpoches' acts. Shamarpa was leaving the door open.

The June 12th incident

Situpa speaks out

In the early afternoon of the 12th of June, as the tense mood in Rumtek built up, horns resounded from the roof of the temple. Situ and Gyaltsab Rinpoche had returned from their five-day travels. Thrones were erected and loudspeakers installed in the monastery's courtyard; the regents' servants and assistants were busy ushering people in and out. Everybody was told that the two lineage holders were going to make an important announcement. Conspicuously absent from the courtyard was a seat for Shamar Rinpoche, as if the main regent didn't count anymore.

When the monks, lay people from the village, Westerners, and a large number of strangers gathered in front of the monastery, Situpa and Gyaltsabpa appeared from the side door. Without a single remark that the senior regent was missing, Situ Rinpoche cleared his throat and launched into an hour-long speech in Tibetan. When he finished, his last words were greeted with a disorderly round of applause. The noisy acclaim came especially from the numerous guests that kept popping out from nowhere. Gyaltsab delivered a few sentences of his own, and before long Situ Rinpoche was back with a microphone in hand, this time talking in English.

He backtracks about the prediction letters found in 86

He began that both of them-Gyaltsab and himself-had seriously considered whether or not they should disclose this, but since Shamarpa Rinpoche had already done so, then they felt they were breaking no vows by saying it again now. Ever since His Holiness passed away in 1981, the four Rinpoches had been devotedly searching for their guru's written instructions about his next incarnation. They firmly believed that Karmapa had left such a letter and tirelessly looked for it in all possible places. As the years went by and the letter didn't appear, they became anxious as to what to tell the people. One day they came across a special gau -a relic box- that belonged to His Holiness; they fixed it on the altar and calmly stated that they had found the prediction letter inside it. Feeling a bit guilty that people would prostrate to an empty box, they decided to place one of Karmapa's texts, a poem or something spiritual in the gau. Gyaltsab Rinpoche knew a four-verse meditation prayer that His Holiness had composed at his request. Jamgon Kongtrul wrote it down and the four put it in the relic case.

Situ Rinpoche paused to allow for the implications of his words to sink in. The Europeans looked at each other with disbelief. So this was Karmapa's famous letter that, with much pomp, the regents announced they had located in 1986. They had simply recalled a poem, copied it, and placed it in a box. As some people well remembered, the lineage holders claimed to have discovered two letters, one inside the other, a "pregnant creation," as Situ Rinpoche had smartly called it at that time. Subsequently, they had engaged the whole Kagyu world in scrupulous rites and infinite mantras to allow for the second letter to be opened. However, it was all a product of their fantasy. The first and the second letter didn't exist. Instead, all these years they had just been hiding away a piece of paper with Jamgon Kongtrul's neat handwriting on it. Today, Situ Rinpoche brushed it off as a highly motivated, if slightly irresponsible act, a result of their frustration with the search for the real text and of their desire to calm Karmapa's devotees. At that moment, Karmapa's devotees were far from being calm and were soon going to demand a more convincing explanation. Situ's assurances sounded quite empty to them, and the shocked Westerners had no idea whom and what to believe anymore.

He talks about the other letter he found

Indifferent to the baffled faces around him, Situpa continued with his speech. He went on to describe the days in 1989, when he realized that for eight long years he had been carrying Karmapa's genuine instructions close to his body. He recollected his unceasing efforts in trying to organize a meeting with the other three Rinpoches and how he finally secured their presence in Delhi. The busy Indian capital, though, seemed an unsuitable location. With a heavy heart, he felt he had to remain silent. He trusted that Rumtek was the proper place to reveal such important news and thus embarked on a plan to bring the four of them together at Karmapa's seat. Respectfully, he informed the other three regents that he would arrive in Sikkim on the 19th of March and requested them to be ready at his side. Situpa shared then with the audience the details from their March meeting. With a broad smile he divulged how the Rinpoches rejoiced at seeing the holy letter, how, with tears in their eyes, Gyaltsab and the late Jamgon Kongtrul interpreted again and again the details from the text. They agreed that Jamgon Rinpoche would be in charge of the search. They also decided to remove the four-line prayer that they had secretly placed in the relic case six years before. Since Gyaltsab Rinpoche came up with the verses, he was then to have them back.

Except for Situpa's students, most Westerners couldn't hide their discomfort. Not only was there not a single mention of Shamar Rinpoche, but also the eminent speaker was obviously giving himself all the credit for the great success he thought he was achieving. He pretentiously implied that all these years he was the only one who had pressed for a meeting of the four. His account of their March conference was remarkably different from what Shamarpa had told them only a few days before. If one was to believe Situpa's words, the senior regent must have lost his tongue during their crucial encounter, and, if he happened to be present at all, then he was probably hiding away in the cupboard, for he completely disappeared from Situ's story. There wasn't so much as the tiniest hint that two of the regents and the general secretary had, in actual fact, objected to the prediction letter.

Not in the least disturbed by all such contradictions, Situ Rinpoche ploughed ahead with his story. He had arrived in Rumtek to pray for the late Jamgon Kongtrul on the 5th of May. His plan was to confer with the two Rinpoches about their future course of action. Situ Rinpoche humbly confessed that the Shamarpa's dharma obligations overseas presented a serious setback to their plans, but he respected his peer's call of duty and, together with Gyaltsab Rinpoche, took the responsibility of bringing forward the 17th Karmapa upon his already burdened shoulders. Being unable to wait for the main regent's return, they were forced to move on without him. Now, due to his and Gyaltsab's heroic efforts, their representatives, Akong Rinpoche and Sherab Tharchin, were about to bring His Holiness' incarnation to Tsurphu.

Again people couldn't escape the impression that somehow Situpa was not being truthful at all. His claim that he couldn't wait for Shamarpa to come back from his journey carried the implication that the senior regent was more interested in his extensive travels than in bringing forward the next Karmapa. Everybody wondered why he simply hadn't tried to phone him. Although maybe still a rarity, phones certainly existed in India, and even Rumtek was now linked to the world by telephone lines. His exclusion of the main regent in the announcement that followed in Rumtek and in the search that was launched in Tibet, looked like a consciously devised plan rather than the result of adverse circumstances. Watching Tai Situ, with a carefully rehearsed and polished smile on his face, some people asked themselves if this was indeed an honest confession and not, by any chance, a calculated, cold performance.

In the meantime, an anxious looking servant, hauling a solid chair, appeared in the yard. Sweating profusely, he entered the thick multitude and with difficulty made his way up to the front. Once he reached the Rinpoches' thrones, he placed, with relief, the piece of furniture on the ground and whispered a few words into Situpa's ear. For a moment Tai Situ seemed hesitant but immediately composed himself and stared with aplomb at the crowd. It was clear that a prominent visitor had just been announced. Since only one crucial figure was absent from the ad hoc event, it didn't take much to figure out that the chair had been brought for Kunzig Shamarpa.

Situpa breaks speech upon Shamarpa's arrival

A commotion was heard at the entrance to the monastery's yard. With his head defiantly up, Shamarpa briskly strode into the square. A monk running ahead of him was clearing a passage in the thick crowd. Suddenly a jeep full of soldiers drove at high speed through the gates of the courtyard and came to a screeching halt right before a group of visitors. Six armed men jumped out and without paying much attention to the loud protests of the spectators, followed Shamarpa into the throng.

When Situ and Gyaltsab noticed the senior regent with six conscripts trotting obediently behind him, they turned white, hopped down from their thrones, and unceremoniously scooted off towards the monastery. The unusual spectacle of the obviously terrified high eminencies holding up their robes and running away from their senior regent and a party of Indian soldiers was indeed amusing, but nobody felt like laughing.

People realized that what they were seeing was something more dramatic than the lamas' daily jog. The inexplicable race, all at once threw the Khampas into a combative mood. As if waiting for an excuse, the group that had arrived in Rumtek a few hours before began to yell at Shamarpa.

Having reached the safety of the cloister, the Rinpoches zoomed past their bewildered attendants at a rather staggering pace and without a single word of clarification, made for their respective rooms. Bolting the doors, they remained inside. Shamarpa was as astonished as the two regents seemed scared. He followed them, at a more dignified step, into the building and arriving at their doors, loudly called for their names. The rooms remained solidly locked, and not a single sound came out; one could almost hear a pin drop.

By now the servants had manifested and ostensibly blocked the way to the Rinpoches' quarters. Shamarpa concluded that the fast sprint must have left his peers fully indisposed for the talks he had planned, and as more hostile characters kept pouring into the corridors, he wisely opted for the exit. Loyally, the soldiers strode out after him.

Disorders in Rumtek monastery

In the meantime, the atmosphere outside was turning ugly. The tension from the last days had finally exploded. People were screaming and running in all directions. Scuffles between Situpa's and the Rumtek monks erupted.

The riotous group of Tibetans, clearly bussed into Rumtek for the occasion, was aggressively advocating finishing off all of Karmapa's enemies. The Westerners, some visibly shaken, were asking the Tibetans to come to reason. Tsultrim Namgyal, the 16th Karmapa's loyal servant, was sitting on the steps to the temple, bleeding from his head. In the end, the soldiers began to restore order. The more undisciplined Khampas were frog-marched to their buses parked outside the courtyard and firmly given to understand that if they didn't calm down, they would not be able to enjoy the comfort of the buses that night. After a while an ominous silence sunk in.

People impassively stared at each other, unable to understand what had really happened.

Shamarpa's version concerning his arrival in Rumtek

Shamar Rinpoche's failed attempt to join the gathering and to talk to the two regents met with holy outrage in Sikkim. Situpa's backers went on the attack. Their more far-fetched stories portrayed a mad Shamarpa leading a division of the Indian Army in a brutal assault on the monastery. Witnesses came forward claiming to have seen the senior regent wildly charging at the two Rinpoches, giving orders to his soldiers to raze the temple to the ground. It was only due to the calm but firm response of Tai Situ and Gyaltsabpa that a tragedy had been averted. With wide open mouths, Tibetans from Sikkim and Kathmandu repeated such sheer nonsense until they all came to believe that the main regent was a bully determined to chase everybody out of Rumtek.

The truth, though, was less spectacular. On the night of June 11, the night before Situpa and Gyaltsabpa returned from Dharamsala, Shamar Rinpoche received a call from the local Indian Army headquarters. The Colonel in command informed the regent that busloads of drunk Tibetans coming from Kathmandu had just crossed the border into India at Kakarvita and were believed to be heading towards Rumtek. He then volunteered the army's protection in case the Khampas were contemplating some violent action. Shamarpa thought it sensible to accept the Colonel's offer. He knew well the types described by the officer and could almost picture the scene in Kathmandu. Having roused their spirits with a good amount of beer, the brave Khampas climbed, in an exaggerated and loud manner, into their buses and, encouraged by warlike shouts, drove away towards the border, ready to conquer the world. Usually little came of the grand pledges, and the never-to-be heroes would just settle down to a sound and healthy sleep, but they could still create a disturbance.

The soldiers arrived in Rumtek the very same night. There were only a handful of men; in worn out uniforms and with rifles tied to their belts as prevention against losing them in flight, they were a far cry from anything even remotely threatening. It remained a mystery, however, why regulars of the Indian Army and not men of the local Sikkimese police force were sent to Rumtek. In the future, this fact was to be exploited against Shamarpa by his enemies. Being an autonomous region within India, Gangtok and not Delhi held political and military jurisdiction over Rumtek, and it was Sikkimese troops who ought to have been deployed at Karmapa's seat.

When the two regents returned from Dharamsala on the 12th of June, they found Rumtek in a state of agitation. Shamarpa was back from America, and their hard-achieved success was being menaced. They had to strike back immediately. Their best weapon was the Dalai Lama's letter of approval. They felt confident that, having the valuable document in their hands, nothing could go wrong.

Sitting in his house about half a mile away from the monastery, Shamarpa heard the horns, the buses, and the noise. Soon members of the Rumtek administration came running to plead with him. Situpa was talking to the people in the courtyard of the temple. He announced that the Dalai Lama had accepted his

Karmapa. "Rinpoche, you must come," they argued. The senior regent wanted to avoid a public confrontation. In his speech and in his statement from the previous days, he had left the door open. He still had hopes for a quiet solution. After all, they couldn't just completely ignore his word. It looked, though, that this was exactly what the two regents were doing. Reluctantly, he climbed into his Land Rover and ordered his driver to go. At once, the soldiers followed in their own jeep. They were under strict orders not to leave the senior regent alone

Situ Rinpoche's version

Shamar Rinpoche arrived with a group of fully armed soldiers purporting to be of (the) Kumaon Regiment of the Indian Army, to intimidate Gyaltshab Rinpoche and me and those present there. Some senior officials of the Sikkim government, such as the Resident Commissioner of Sikkim at New Delhi, even reasoned with these soldiers and requested them not to enter the shrine hall of the monastery with their shoes and arms, but they ignored these pleas, and stormed a place of worship against a completely unarmed public, without any provocation or reason.

This resulted in a serious breach of peace, and severe injuries to the innocent public. The Sikkim government had to post police and the CRPF (a para-military force) at the monastery in order to maintain law and order. It is incomprehensible that Shamar Rinpoche, a foreigner, was being allowed to lead armed troops into a monastery, without the sanction and/or the knowledge of the concerned state government, and that too in Sikkim.

Indian Army presence is explained

In fact, sensing trouble, Topga Yulgyal had told his wife (aunt of the King of Bhutan) about the eventuality of threat to the life of Shamar Rinpoche in the wake of presence of aggressive Khampas, who had been called in a sizable number from Nepal. Topga's wife requested her nephew (the King of Bhutan) to help. The King, with a history of the Karmapa-supporting ancestors, in turn, made a request to the Indian Ambassador in Bhutan. The Government of India conceded the request of the King of Bhutan. Due to paucity of time, however, the nearest Army contingent was ordered to rush to help Shamar Rinpoche. The Sikkim government was not taken into confidence because it was blatantly taking sides in the dispute.

Moreover, the Government of India could not remain a mere spectator to the sordid drama taking place at the behest of China which way back in 1962 had occupied Indian territories in army action.

Consequences from the indian intervention in Rumtek

In the next days Rumtek settled down to an uneasy stalemate. The Indian Army regulars were withdrawn, and Sikkimese police took their place. The monastery's monks continued with the rituals for Jamgon Kongtrul. Situpa's monks continued behaving as though Karmapa's seat was just an extension of Sherab Ling, their monastery in the western Himalayas.

The administrators and Tsultrim Namgyal with his family stood firmly behind the senior regent but increasingly saw the ground disappearing from under their feet. Topgala, having received threats to his life, had to leave Sikkim altogether, as the government of Chief Minister Bhandari declared they couldn't guarantee his safety. Poenlop and Sangye Nyenpa, two prominent Rumtek lamas, began to treat their senior regent with hostile indifference. The village and city of Gangtok resonated with wild gossip. Shamar Rinpoche was on everybody's lips.

The absurd rumors played into Sikkimese pride. It was Indian not Sikkimese soldiers that had appeared with Shamarpa at the gathering. Exploiting that fact, Bhandari's ruling party called an all-out strike, bringing normal life in the Himalayan enclave to a total halt. The official Gangtok press had a field day. "Rumtek high cleric and Indian Army take over monastery," announced the headlines. The Chief Minister didn't remain idle. Expressing his shock, he vowed to thoroughly investigate this gross violation of religious freedoms. "Law and order will be restored," he pledged. With the minister's active help, Situ Rinpoche's campaign against his rival was reaching national prominence.

The two regents, still nursing themselves after the encounter with Shamarpa and his soldiers, were each lying in bed indisposed. One could only wonder why the two had shamefully run away at the sight of Kunzig Shamarpa ahead of a party of Indian recruits. It was an unusual reaction, and it made them look quite suspicious, as though the two felt guilty about something. After all, soldiers at official events were a fairly common affair in India. It was also hard to imagine that the usually chaotic, far from combative, Indian regulars could pose a threat to one's security during a formal ceremony, especially if one happened to be presiding over such a ceremony.

It turned out, though, that the sight of men in uniform had made the Rinpoches jumpy and unnaturally nervous. The façade of self-assurance that they had maintained at the meeting went disgracefully up in smoke.

After the Sikkimese strike on June 13th

On the 14th of June, two days after the violent confrontation in Rumtek, the general strike in Sikkim to protest the Indian Army presence in the autonomous region was called off. Roads were cleared, public services restored, and a large assembly of lamas that had been held up at the Sikkimese borders was allowed to proceed. They were all coming for the last days of ceremonies for the late Jamgon Kongtrul. The most prominent Kagyu Rinpoches gathered at Karmapa's seat: Beru Kyentse, Bokar, Thrangu, and others. Trying not to provoke any more friction, Shamarpa prudently stayed inside his house. The senior regent was blamed for every single misfortune that had beset their small enclave since the place had been founded in 1961. People refused to see that actually he was the victim. Tsultrim Namgyal was recovering from his head wounds at home. One of his brothers hadn't shown Shamarpa's restraint and sent both assailants to the hospital. That very night, he himself had ended up in jail. The Rumtek monks tried to stay neutral but were coming under intense psychological, and soon physical, pressure from Situpa and his people to recognize their Karmapa.

On the 15th of June, Jamgon Kongtrul's Kudung-mummified body was brought from the monastery to the main hall in the institute and, amid much push and shove, the usual Tibetan way, the final ceremonies began. The next day Situpa and Gyaltsab went on the offensive again.

June 16th and 17th , 1992

Petition campaign led by Situpa

During the pujas on the 16th of June, while all the Rinpoches were seated in long rows reciting their prayers, two letters were sent down the aisles. The first one, addressed to all lamas and followers of the lineage, was an unconditional acceptance of the prediction letter.¹¹ It acknowledged that the 17th Karmapa had been recognized in accordance with the instructions from the sacred testament, had been confirmed by the Dalai Lama, and that he would be brought to Tsurphu and some time later installed on his throne in Rumtek. The letter also referred to some holy vision that the Dalai Lama had, yet further proof of the authenticity of the choice. The second letter was an expression of deepest gratitude to the supreme Tibetan leader for having confirmed Karmapa's seventeenth incarnation. After having placed their signatures on both documents, Situpa and Gyaltsabpa passed them over to the other Rinpoches. It was clear that every one of the eminent lamas was expected to sign without so much as a blink.

No Tibetan would ever dare go against their highest political leader, and the two regents knew very well that, having secured the Dalai Lama's confirmation, the rest would follow automatically. Also, when they chose to collect the signatures during the main pujas for the late Jamgon Kongtrul, the regents were in fact exercising a form of collective pressure on the Rinpoches. It was difficult to imagine that in the middle of the holy ceremony some lamas would boldly stand up and refuse to sign, even if they harbored doubts about Situpa's choice. They would certainly not rebel, especially after having watched their neighbor obediently put his name on the circulating paper. If they envisioned, for a moment, the slightest show of defiance, then the thought of the Dalai Lama giving his blessing to the whole enterprise would certainly calm their tempers. After all, these most venerable monks were no men-at-arms and would much rather trot behind power and titles than fight for some uncertain principles.

The unusual act of gathering signatures in order to certify the Karmapa's authenticity was also a dubious innovation. The two lineage holders could have collected thousands of names, no matter how famous, and this would not make a candidate for Karmapa any more genuine. So far the procedures to identify a reincarnation had never called for people's signatures to determine the accuracy of a given choice. Doubtless, the regents must have felt themselves standing on shaky ground and needed the long titles to give credence and support to their claim.

What the lamas themselves really thought was not entirely clear. If unable to see through the pair's machinations, they would eventually come down as honest but rather feeble-minded, completely lacking judgement. If, on the other hand, they were casting their vote while aware of or suspecting fraud, this would make them into either opportunists or weaklings who were not able to take a stand for the truth.

Once the letters had been crowned with the distinguished names, Situpa's attendant pocketed the documents and at once vanished from the shrine room. The eminent Kagyu teachers' autographs were neatly lined up at the bottom of each page: Situ Rinpoche, Gyaltsab Rinpoche, Beru Kyentse Rinpoche, Bokar Tulku, Thrangu Rinpoche, Poenlop Rinpoche, Sangye Nyenpa Rinpoche, Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche, and many others. Conspicuously absent were two signatures that should have been at the very top of any official statement coming out of Karmapa's headquarters: Shamarpa's and Topgala's.

There was, however, a small detail that seemed to have escaped Situpa's attention, since he didn't bother to mention it to the illustrious gathering. The Dalai Lama's zealously promoted acceptance was in fact no more than just an informal recollection of his words spoken on the phone from Brazil and hurriedly put on paper late at night in Dharamsala by his secretary. It fell short of a formal recognition, which would

not happen until the 29th of June. A corresponding document would eventually be issued on the 3rd of July by the Tibetan Government Foreign Office. The Rinpoches, whether knowingly or not, were bowing down to a useless piece of paper.

Karmapa's arrival in Tsurphu is announced

That same evening Situpa and Gyaltsab announced that Urgyen Trinley the 17th Karmapa had arrived the previous day in Tsurphu, His Holiness' main seat in Tibet. The Rumtek monks and ritual masters were ordered to play the horns and get ready to carry out an official ceremony the next morning. Everybody else was told to be present at sunrise to offer white scarves on Karmapa's throne.

Unlike the high Rinpoches, the simple monks appeared to have more sense in their young heads. The elated news that the two regents were trumpeting around was somehow lacking in luster. People were being intimidated, forced to sign petitions; some had been beaten. Was that the way His Holiness would choose to come? When they asked Shamarpa for advice, he told them to follow their hearts. Late that night, the monastery's senior staff secretly left Rumtek. Trying not to be party to the dispute, they took shelter in Gangtok. Situpa would have to make do without their horns and drums; they would not blindly follow his commands.

The next morning, people found out that the main ritual experts had simply vanished. Eventually, after much confusion, the ceremonies began; it was a rickety start, though, hardly an auspicious sign for Urgyen Trinley.

Orgyen tulku mediates between Shamarpa and Situpa

On the day before the pujas, on June 15th, Urgyen Tulku and Lopen Chechoo arrived from Kathmandu to mediate in the dispute between the regents.

They were highly regarded by all concerned, both having been very close to the 16th Karmapa. Urgyen Tulku was also teacher to the four lineage holders. The high lamas sitting in Rumtek wanted at all costs to patch up the disagreement, but unable to take a clear stand, they couldn't do much.

Urgyen Tulku conferred first with the two lineage holders. Several hours elapsed before he emerged from their quarters and at once directed his steps to Shamarpa's house. He then proceeded to press the regent to surrender. "Rinpoche must accept the letter and withdraw his insistence on a test," he pleaded. The elderly lama painted a gruesome picture of blood being spilled in Tibet and Kathmandu if the regent stuck to his guns. Besides, His Holiness the Dalai Lama had already given his recognition. They couldn't oppose the Dalai Lama. When in the end, the distinguished Rinpoche, with tears in his eyes, fully prostrated himself in front of the regent, imploring him to come to reason, Shamarpa could hardly bear the sight. After all, Urgyen Tulku was his senior and his teacher.

The next day the venerable lama returned with more ammunition. Situ Rinpoche was sitting in his room distressed, crying. As Shamarpa later admitted in France, it was the thought of his peer, alone in his quarters, shedding tears, more than any vision of a holy war among Tibetans, that broke his resolve. Also he began to fear that if the letter were put to a forensic test, Tai Situpa would end up in jail for forgery. He then finally gave in and agreed to Urgyen Tulku's supplications.

How honest Situpa's tears were, Kunzig Shamarpa was to find out fairly soon. Urgyen Tulku brokered a meeting between the two for the 17th of June in Karmapa's private quarters on the first floor of the monastery. Shamarpa insisted that Gyaltsab Rinpoche should not be present. The senior regent recalled with a great deal of discomfort the distasteful epithets Gyaltsab had hurled at the Dalai Lama at the time when a division between the Tibetan political leader and the 16th Karmapa had manifested. The young Gyaltsabpa became in those days the Dalai Lama's loudest and most passionate critic, but his insulting style did Rumtek little good. Everyone just wished that Gyaltsab Rinpoche would keep his noisy mouth shut. Now, in an abrupt change of heart, the same Gyaltsab was very conveniently hiding behind the Dalai Lama's holy name. Instinctively, Shamarpa shied away from such lack of integrity.

Shamarpa and Situpa meeting

As he climbed the steps of the temple, Shamar Rinpoche again noticed a large gathering of Khampas and Sherab Ling monks defiantly positioned in the corridor. Their aggressive pose and unpleasant remarks were by then becoming a common occurrence in Rumtek. He quickly forced his way through groups of hostile individuals and arrived, unmolested, in Karmapa's room. Tai Situ was already in place. The two lineage holders locked themselves inside, but the windows were left open. They could clearly hear the noisy gathering outside. Shamar Rinpoche spilled it all out: the eleven years of rumors and defame, the campaign of hatred against Topgala and himself, the failed attempt to take him to court, and the recent illegal proceedings. Surprisingly, Situpa seemed to agree with his peer's reasoning.

Shamarpa recognizes in writing Situpa's Karmapa

Eventually, after Shamarpa exhausted his sorrows, the time had come to sign. Urgyen Tulku was called in as witness. However, when the senior regent was about to give his written acceptance of Urgyen Trinley, suddenly, a former Dharamsala minister burst inside. In the old days, when the 16th Karmapa was still alive, the gentleman in question had made himself famous for actively opposing His Holiness. Now, in a new role, he came to lecture Shamar Rinpoche on the senior regent's lukewarm devotion to his guru and on the consequences of his foolish acts. Whatever the minister intended to achieve, his words at once achieved the opposite. Shamarpa put away his pen, grabbed the document, and was about to tear it up, when he met Urgyen Tulku's eyes. The old lama pleaded with him to stop. Also Situpa, his hands in full prayer, asked humbly, "Please, Rinpoche, don't." The senior regent placed the paper down and, as if trying to put an end to the embarrassing scene, with one frenzied stroke of his pen recognized-in accordance with the Dalai Lama's decision-Urgyen Trinley as the 17th Karmapa. Hence, he suspended his demand for a forensic test of the letter.

About this letter signed by Shamarpa, written in tibetan, an unofficial version made by Situ Rinpoche's followers, has been sent around to all dharma centers, thus creating an incorrect impression of what Shamar Rinpoche actually said in his statement. Here is the english translation of both versions :

1 Situ's followers translation of Shamar Rinpoche's letter of acceptance

Translated by Michele Martin, Situpa's translator

—On March 19, 1992, Tai Situ Rinpoche, Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, Gyaltsab Rinpoche and I held a meeting in which Tai Situ Rinpoche presented us with His Holiness' handwritten letter of prophesy, the sacred testament, which was found in Situ Rinpoche's protection talisman. At that time, a little doubt arose in my mind, but now I have attained complete confidence in Situ Rinpoche, and the contents of this letter, according to which the reincarnation has definitely been discovered and further confirmed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama as the incarnation of His Holiness the Gyalwang Karmapa I offer my willing acceptance and henceforth, I will no longer pursue the matter of examining the sacred testament, etc.
Shamar Chokyi Lodro
Witnessed by Tulku Urgyen

2 authorized translation of Shamar Rinpoche's letter of acceptance

This translation from tibetan by Anne Ekselius is authorized by Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche

On March 19th, 1992, at a meeting with Jamgon Rinpoche, Gyaltsab Rinpoche and myself, Situ Rinpoche presented a handwritten prediction letter from his protection pouch, claiming it was the written instructions of H.H. the 16th Karmapa (indicating his reincarnation). I had some doubts (about the letter's authenticity).
At this point, I rely on Situ Rinpoche (giving me correct information about H. H. the Dalai Lama's decision). Relying on our confidential discussion, I go along with the decision made by H. H. the Dalai Lama that a reincarnation has certainly been found as reincarnation of H. H. the Gyalwa Karmapa.
Hence, I suspend my demands such as having the handwritten prediction letter being subjected to a (forensic) test.
June 17th, 1992
Shamar Chokyi Lodro
Witnessed by Tulku Urgyen

Shamar Rinpoche is asked about Dalai Lama's actions

How do you read H.H. Dalai Lama's actions in this story ?

Shamar Rinpoche: upon the time when I myself agreed to this incarnation (Ed.note: Orgyen Tulku), Situ Rinpoche had me to believe the Dalai Lama had given his full agreement, based on his own visions. Out of respect to the Dalai Lama, I agreed to it.

A long time afterwards, I came to realize the Dalai Lama in his turn had been led to believe all kagyü Rinpoches, both inside and outside Tibet, were petitioning him for his agreement.

Furthermore, he was told the child had been found in Tibet based upon the letter. But he was not told it was not quite the same letter we had been talking about for some years.

They did not waste time. Even before the Dalai Lama came back from attending the conference in Rio, Brazil, the child had already been led to Tsurphu in Tibet, and officially recognized by China. Given these facts, one can understand why the Dalai Lama gave his informal recognition on June 7th. Later on, his only choice was to give his formal recognition. At that point, he could no longer say his assistant had made a blunder, or retract.

When I met with the Dalai Lama by the end of June, I told him understood and acknowledged his stand. In the same time, I told him I would nevertheless follow upon leads given by a very close disciple of Gyalwa Karmapa, as I have been doing up to this day. The meeting went fine.

Situation calms down

In Rumtek, after Shamarpa had signed his recognition, an uneasy truce took hold of the place. On the surface, to quote Ugyen Tulku's words from his speech on June 18, "The regents had reached a compromise and obstacles had been overcome." In reality though, the compromise was an acceptance extracted from Shamarpa; Situ and Gyaltsab Rinpoches didn't give an inch. The letter remained unchecked, locked on the first floor of the monastery, under the guard of the Sikkimese police.

Many questions arise about the political implications of having a Karmapa in occupied Tibet. It was obvious that in no time the boy would become a pawn or even hostage to the Communist Chinese. The government in Beijing would try to pit him against the Dalai Lama and against other Tibetan interests. Having in haste put their trust with their Communist enemies, the two regents would soon lose control of their candidate. What would happen if an officially chosen Karmapa would request, out of his own free will or prodded by the Chinese, that the Black Crown and other relics be returned to Tibet. How would we delay or refuse such a request.

Propaganda campaign

Disparagement led by Lea Terhune, Situpa's secretary

At this time, two documents turned up in the West, proof that the rumor campaign was still in motion. Lea Terhune, Situpa's secretary, who had already made a name for herself in 1983 in the failed attempt to take Shamarpa to court, had sent a letter to all Kagyu centers. "A faction composed of members of the previous Karmapa's family," as she called Shamarpa and Topgala, "had come out in the open." She disclosed that the above two notables had actively opposed the recognition of the 17th Karmapa for years and implied that the pair may have been involved in the tragic death of Jamgon Kongtrul. Again the same allegation about Kongtrul's car crash, but this time coming from a Westerner.

As to the fatal accident, an interesting detail emerged. It was Jamgon Rinpoche himself who drove the BMW, his driver sitting passively in the front seat beside him. Hardly able to drive, with no driver's license, and not in the least familiar with the powerful machine, he simply pushed on the accelerator, and in no time the vehicle was speeding at 110 mph. All this on a narrow, bumpy Indian road! What followed next was probably difficult to avoid with an inexperienced person behind the wheel. Tibetans, however, kept their mouths shut, for it would have been highly improper to disclose that a Rinpoche drove a car.

Wrong translation for the 5th Karmapa's predictions

The second piece was a translation of an excerpt from a prophecy by the 5th Karmapa. The poem described some difficult times in the future and pointed to a negative individual by the name of *Na-tha*, who would bring much havoc to the lineage. Erroneously implying that *na-tha* was Tibetan for nephew, Michell Martin, Situpa's Tibetan translator, immediately jumped to the conclusion that the evil *Na-tha* was none other than Topgala—the general secretary who was related to the 16th Karmapa. She conveniently admitted that it could also be Kunzig Shamarpa, who belonged to the same family. In reality though, the word *na-tha* does not exist in Tibetan. Its meaning of nephew was simply the product of the translator's dishonest imagination, used in this case to discredit Situpa's political enemies. Moreover, while the prophecy talks of the time in east Tibet during the 15th Karmapa's life, Michell Martin, omitting parts of

the original text, concluded that it was present-day Rumtek the author had in mind. And so, fingers were pointed and defaming letters were posted, engaging, this time, the supreme authority of the head of the lineage.

About Chogyur Lingpa's prophecy

Chogyur Dechen Lingpa was a great tertön ("discoverer of spiritual treasures") in the 19th century. While visiting Karma monastery, he had a vision of the succeeding twenty one incarnations of Karmapa. A while later, he described what he had seen to the Karma monastery abbot, who afterwards faithfully painted it on a silk scroll. This painting, carefully kept for over a century, details the prophetic vision as it was laid down in handwriting by Chogyur Lingpa's closest disciples.

Up to this day, Situ Rinpoche's followers will cite this prophecy again and again to ascertain their choice of Ugyen Trinley as the authentic Karmapa.

During Spring 2000, a U.S. center will go as far as publishing a glossy book with many pictures of kagyü lineage holders.. The storybook follows closely the predictions of this great saint of the past, to conclude that Ugyen Trinley is the true Karmapa, giving as an extra proof, the tibetan text and its translation.

Excerpt of a "book review":

(...) Foremost among the extraordinary details given out in the prophecies, is the description of the 17th Karmapa studying with his teacher, the 12th Tai Situpa. As described in the book Karmapa, since long, succeeding incarnations of Karmapas and Situpas have acted as teacher toward each other, preserving and transmitting the most sacred teachings of the Kagyu lineage. Now the seventeenth Karmapa and Tai Situpa have been reunited in India, where Karmapa will finish up with his studies as predicted by Chogyur Lingpa, and a new chapter of Karmapa's history will unfold (...)

Shamar Rinpoche comments on Chogyur Lingpa's predictions

One of Chogyur Lingpa's visions described in his biography predicts the extraordinary activities of the future Karmapas. I consider this to be a genuine vision and have no objection to its content.

This prophecy clearly states that the 17th Karmapa meets with Khentin Tai Situ Rinpoche, that "...their minds. mix as one", etc.

It is, however, not mentioned that Tai Situ Rinpoche would recognise the incarnation of Gyalwa Karmapa, and it is therefore not acceptable to use this prophetic vision in this sense. The text also does not specify which incarnation of Situ Rinpoche is meant or whether he is the 17th Karmapa's Guru or disciple.

The only one who can fulfill the conditions of such a vision is the Gyalwa Karmapa himself. It is not a correct procedure to first create circumstances so that they accord with the description given in the prophecy, and to then use the prophecy as a proof that the circumstances are authentic.

If the vision describes the activity of the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa together with Tai Situ Rinpoche it is something that will happen in the future, only after the Gyalwa Karmapa unquestionably reveals himself. The 16th Gyalwa Karmapa, Rangjung Rigpai Dorje and the 11th Situ Rinpoche, Pema Wangchuk Gyalpo, had a close teacher-disciple relationship, but this is not mentioned in Chogyur Lingpa's words predicting the activity of the 16th Karmapa.

The 16th Karmapa and the 11th Situ Rinpoche once met in Litang, East Tibet, at the Mahakala lake with nearby pinetrees and rocky mountains. There they exchanged the Mahamoudra view - their minds mixed as one. Then His Holiness left footprints on the rocks. Both the 16th Karmapa and the 11th Situ Rinpoche confirmed this event as fulfilling the conditions of Chogyur Lingpa's prophecy, thus counting Rangjung Rigpai Dorje as the 17th Karmapa.

It is important to point out that technically the 16th incarnation of the Karmapa can be counted as either the 16th or the 17th : one Karmapa incarnation between the 14th , Thegchog Dorje, and the 15th , Khakhyab Dorje, died very young and is therefore not always counted. This fact is even mentioned in the

biography of Chogyur Lingpa. In the prophecy of the 5th Karmapa, the 16th Karmapa is also referred to as either the 16th or the 17th .

This leaves the prophecy open for interpretation. it could refer to the previous Situ Rinpoche, it could refer to the present Situ Rinpoche or it could even be the next. This is not specified. Only the future unfolding of events will indicate this. But first and most important, doubts about the Karmapa incarnation have to be clarified and dispelled.

Orgyen Trinley, the Situ Rinpoche's Karmapa

Orgyen Trinley arrives in Tsurphu

On June 15, the 17th Karmapa's entry into Tsurphu. Brought in a convoy of seven cars, the child looked rather disoriented. There was an accident on the way and two people had been killed. Chinese officials seemed to be calling the shots. Immediately, they became suspicious of the Westerners present. Some two thousand Tibetans paraded before the tulku to receive his blessing.

Two days later the boy's public appearances were abruptly cancelled. Now one could only get a blessing through a glass panel.

Akong's statements in Lhasa

Akong and Sherab were in Lhasa and that they wanted to talk to the Westerners. Akong informed them of the events in Rumtek, about the disagreement among the lineage holders. He showed them a copy of the prediction letter. He also told them that Shamar Rinpoche wanted to install another boy as Karmapa and that the regent had entered Rumtek monastery at the head of a contingent of Indian soldiers. He then admitted that he had given the order to shield Karmapa.

Next, Akong disclosed that there were many doubts concerning Jamgon Rinpoche's death. Witnesses saw the brake marks, the engine lying on the road, and the badly damaged, brand new car crashed against a tree. There were mysterious phone calls the morning of the accident, and a departure too early for a mechanic to check the car. Akong definitely suspected sabotage. It would have been easy to destroy the car by simply adding sugar or salt to the motor. The engine would seize and then catapult itself, at high speed, out of the vehicle.

The unbelievable declaration of Drubpön Dechen Rinpoche

Who is Drubpoen Dechen Rinpoche

The latest hot piece was an unexpected disclosure made by Drubpön Dechen Rinpoche, the head lama in Tsurphu and one of the main figures in bringing Ugyen Trinley to Karmapa's seat. Years before, Drubpön Dechen had approached the 16th Karmapa with an offer to travel secretly to Tibet and help rebuild the old monastery. Despite the lama's fervor, the idea did not seem to have struck an enthusiastic chord with His Holiness. Without opposing the design, Karmapa acknowledged that, frankly, he saw no future for the place. In the end, after His Holiness had died, Drubpön Dechen went to Tibet on Situpa's orders. His subsequent claims to have been sent to Tsurphu by the 16th Karmapa were definitely an exaggeration.

The revelation

In an interview with the Tsurphu Foundation, Drubpön Dechen admitted that the search party for His Holiness the 17th Karmapa, headed by his assistant, a Lama Dholmo, and armed with a copy of the prediction letter, had actually left Tsurphu as early as April 8.

The group was dispatched despite the fact that, as had been agreed among the four Rinpoches, no such mission should have taken place before Jamgon Kongtrul reported his initial contacts.

The four regents had decided that not Lama Dholmo but Jamgon Kongtrul was to make the first approach. How a local lama got hold of a copy of the then top secret document and why he was usurping Kongtrul's place more than two weeks before Kongtrul's tragic death was rather unclear.

Drubpön Dechen disclosed that Akong and Sherab, the two regents' emissaries, personally handed over the copy of the letter to him. At that time, though, the two couriers had no business in Tsurphu and were not supposed to be roaming the distant stretches of their country, certainly not with a duplicate of the letter of prophecy in their pockets.

In the same interview, Drubpön Dechen described the different wonders that had occurred during the time of the child's birth: among others, the sound of musical instruments had been heard for two hours in the valley and four suns had appeared in the sky. In his address to the Tibetans on June 12, Situ Rinpoche had mentioned only three suns. When speaking to the Westerners minutes later, he forgot about the suns altogether.

Would Situpa have known Urgyen Trinley since 1991 ?

It was very interesting to hear what Drubpön Rinpoche had to say about the discovery of the boy. He acknowledged that in 1991 Tai Situ had visited the monastery where Urgyen Trinley was a monk. It was difficult to imagine then, that Situpa, who in 1991 alone had recognized the rather extravagant number of a hundred and sixty incarnations in eastern Tibet, would not have been informed about a boy whose birth had been accompanied by such miraculous signs. After all, four suns in the sky were not a daily occurrence, not even in Tibet.

Furthermore, the boy was believed to have taken part in one-and-a-half months of initiations that Situpa had given in Palpung that same year 1991.

It all looked like Situ Rinpoche had fixed his eyes on the child long before he sat with his peers to interpret the instructions concerning the whereabouts of this child.

On April 24, a picture of the boy was taken, and a pick up party was being organized to bring the tulku to Tsurphu; all this again still prior to Jamgon Kongtrul's death.

On May 17, the two regents declared publicly in Rumtek that, since Shamar Rinpoche was away, they had to act alone and were therefore sending Akong and Sherab on a search mission to Tibet. The two emissaries arrived in Tsurphu in the second half of May, and a group of sixteen was promptly sent to Kham. It was announced that Urgyen Trinley, the 17th Karmapa, would arrive in Tsurphu on June 20. He arrived on the 15th.

If the group of sixteen had indeed been the initial discovery team, then they had been given at best twenty days to complete a round-trip journey from central to eastern Tibet, to locate the boy in the large, nomad area of Kham, and to negotiate with the parents for his delivery to Tsurphu.

All travel was on the one-lane, treacherous, gravel roads of the high Tibetan Plateau. It was a technically impossible task. Although the interpretation of the prediction letter was clear as to the name of the family and the general region in the east of the country, this was, of course, no address. There must have existed at least one earlier search team, which was exactly what Drupoen Dechen had carelessly disclosed in his interview. More than that, Lama Dholmo's group, which had set off on April 8, was probably looking for somebody Situ Rinpoche knew fairly well, as he seemed to have met the child at least in 1991, if not before. The group that was dispatched from Tsurphu at the end of May was merely a welcoming committee. They were well aware of where to go to collect the boy.

Another thing also became clear, Situpa, Gyaltsab, Akong, and the others were going hand-in-hand with the Communist Chinese. Their secret plan to exclude Shamarpa and install their candidate in Tsurphu without his knowledge was no secret to the Beijing government. They couldn't have accomplished such a mission without the Communists' official blessing and active help; the two regents had a lot to thank the Politburo for.

Urgyen Trinley is said to go to Rumtek

From the very moment he had announced his discovery of the child, Situ Rinpoche had been promising his followers that Karmapa would be, in no time, officially installed in Rumtek. His departure for India was said to be only a matter of days, maybe weeks. After some time, however, with no sign of Urgyen Trinley outside Tibet, the weeks extended into months and later the months became years. Today, unable to deny the obvious, Tai Situ and his followers are discretely admitting that Urgyen Trinley will have to remain a guest in China for a somewhat more extended period of time.

All these assurances were wishful thinking. Having such a prize in their hands, the Communists would not even dream of letting the boy out. It was a precious opportunity to weaken the Dalai Lama and once again split the Tibetans at the time when the Panchen Lama was not available to perform this historical role. Situ Rinpoche was deceiving himself if he imagined that the Chinese would simply deliver the child to freedom in Rumtek so he could perform his religious duties. It was astonishing that he could not see that his candidate was to remain a prisoner in a golden cage. Unless, of course, the regent's disguised objective was to keep Karmapa locked in occupied Tibet.

Whatever the truth, expectations seemed to be running high with Situpa's people. Woodstock monastery had already started to collect funds for His Holiness' visit to the United States, which was announced as imminent. As for the boy himself, he had probably little idea what was really happening. But even if he

had been allowed to speak, most likely his opinion would have meant little, as obviously he was just a pawn in other people's games.

The Dalai Lama officially recognizes Urgyen Trinley

On June 29, the Dalai Lama had given his formal recognition of Urgyen Trinley as the 17th Karmapa. Only days after he had given his verbal approval in Rio, he was fully conscious that the Kagyu teachers were not speaking with such a unanimous voice as Tai Situ and Gyaltsab had pretended. But once he had given his consent, no matter how informal, His Holiness wouldn't retreat. It would have been impossible for him to claim that his secretary made a mistake or, even worse, to admit that he himself had maybe erred. The Dalai Lama couldn't be wrong!

And so, everybody else acceded because the Dalai Lama had done so, which he did because he was told that everybody else had agreed—a true riddle for logicians.

(...) About the Dalai Lama's formal recognition, the document issued on July 3 by the Dharamsala Foreign Office read as if the three regents, the Shamar, Situ, and Gyaltsab Rinpoches, had been together on June 29 at the same audience with the Dalai Lama and apprised the Tibetan leader of the details concerning the incarnation. His Holiness then issued the formal confirmation letter. His words were quoted in full. The document was signed by Tashi Wangdi, a minister.

In reality, though, the two regents had called on the Dalai Lama in the morning, and Shamar Rinpoche had done so in the afternoon of the same day. They also probably had very different things to say.

Shamarpa disclosed that he had other clues as to the identity of the 17th Karmapa and requested His Holiness to examine these clues when the time was ripe. According to an interview for the *Tibetan Review* that the senior regent would give in August, the Dalai Lama consented to his request.

Dalai Lama's vision

Another peculiarity, which had been distributed as unmistakable proof that the process was legitimate, was the Dalai Lama's vision of Karmapa's rebirth. The Tibetan leader was said to have shared his experience with Situ Rinpoche, and the latter mentioned it during his talk to the Westerners in Rumtek on June. In his vision, His Holiness saw a beautiful place with no trees, surrounded by mountains. Streams were flowing on both sides, and there were no people and no animals either. He heard the sound "Karmapa" in the air and was very happy when he woke up. While nobody would dispute the auspicious fact that the Dalai Lama had indeed had such a vision, his description was only evidence that what he saw was most certainly located in his native Tibet. Ninety percent of the country could very well fit such a picture. However, this was no confirmation that Urgyen Trinley was the 17th Karmapa. Most Tibetan children were born in surroundings similar to those described by the Dalai Lama, and Urgyen Trinley was no exception.

Urgyen Trinley is enthroned

On the 27th of September, Urgyen Trinley was officially installed in Tsurphu as the 17th Karmapa. Members of Rumtek monastery and members of the Karmapa Charitable Trust did not approve of the procedure. Kunzig Shamarpa, historically second after the Karmapa in the Kagyu spiritual hierarchy, did not attend the ceremonies.

Beijing had officially recognized Karmapa two months before, on the 29th of June, bestowing the title of "Living Buddha" on him. The Chinese recognition coincided with the Dalai Lama's formal approval, which happened in Dharamsala on the same day. The title itself was a Communist synonym for cooperating lama.

Akong tulku also joined the ranks of living Buddhas, a fact that was tactfully disclosed in the *Tibetan Review*, a Chinese propaganda periodical offered free at their embassies around the world. The same magazine informed its readers that the living Buddha from Scotland had been appointed to the government of the Tibetan Autonomous Region or TAR, as the Chinese smartly call it. The Communist propaganda machine didn't fail to mention that the 17th Karmapa would become an individual loyal to his socialist motherland.

The widely announced instalment in Rumtek did not happen. As it became clear that Urgyen Trinley would not be allowed out of Tibet, at least not for now, the two regents had to settle for Tsurphu instead.

Watching the ceremony from a videocassette officially distributed by China, we were at once taken aback by the high profile of the Chinese officials. The actual enthronement was in fact preceded by their speeches, a presentation of a letter from Beijing—the government's seal of approval on the incarnation and the enthronement—and by the exchanges of the traditional white scarves and gifts. The two Rinpoches seemed to be going out of their way to accommodate their Beijing visitors. The four Chinese

gentlemen, neatly attired in dark suits, didn't so much as cast a glance upon the child they were recognizing. To say they showed a distant interest in what was going on would be an overstatement. Their main concern was to bring their government's document to everybody's attention. A less informed spectator might have been excused for thinking that maybe this was the famous prediction letter, for the paper was being continually exhibited.

The shrine room was overflowing with visitors from all over Tibet. The Tibetans, working for the Chinese-backed government in Lhasa, arrived in full force. There were many important Kagyu Rinpoches from Nepal and India and also the occasional Westerner, mainly from the U.S.

The child himself looked quite distracted, just as a seven-year-old would be under such circumstances. He couldn't sit still for more than a moment, obviously had no clue as to what was happening-as he was constantly being whispered to whenever the ceremony required even a minimal level of his participation-and towards the end got clearly irritated. Again probably nothing unusual for a boy his age coming from a nomad family. Sherab Ling's newsletter's claim that "the young Karmapa conducted himself with solemn dignity and tolerance" was in itself very generous. There was certainly a lot of tolerance of the young boy's behavior; his solemn dignity seemed to be missing altogether.

The picture of the child that emerged from other film clips was even more disturbing. Looking rather out of place on his throne and in his gold brocades, clearly uncomfortable with the rituals being performed around him, he also displayed an intolerant character streak. Quickly annoyed, he would perpetually throw things at whomever entered his room. The grimaces on his face showed plain anger rather than a boyish desire to tease his elders. The happy family reunion filmed on the roof of the monastery was abruptly brought to an end when the young boy dismissed his parents and many siblings with a proud gesture. If this was the new Karmapa's official image that was being projected for the outside world, we were appearing as a peculiar religious group, who worshipped a badly behaved seven-year-old-and all this under the patronage of Communist China.

The following day, according to the bulletin from Sherab Ling, "30,000 people filed by in an orderly fashion to receive blessings from the 17th Karmapa." *China's Tibet*, a quarterly review coming out of Beijing, put the number slightly higher, at 40,000. Having seen the child on film, we harbored no uncertainty that the task of blessing even thirty individuals would have constituted a serious challenge to his concentration. As to the colossal number of thirty or even forty thousand that were said to have paraded before Karmapa, without any prejudice, we honestly couldn't imagine how the seven-year-old could have possibly managed that. Maybe the editors of the above periodicals got slightly carried away and added a few zeros in their reports.

Lobsang Geleg Rinpoche's strange tale

A curious account was sent to all the centers in those days. Of unclear origin, the name of Lobsang Geleg Rinpoche, who signed the two-page release, was unknown to all. But even though he hadn't quite achieved fame yet, the venerable Lobsang Geleg had, without fail, a lot of interesting things to share.

According to his written statement, the important ceremony in Tsurphu was in fact preceded by rather inauspicious events both in Rumtek and in Tibet. During the time when Ugyen Trinley had officially been brought to his seat, a golden banner had fallen down from the protector's shrine in Rumtek. Also one of the cars in his entourage had skidded and turned over on the dangerous road, killing two passengers. At the enthronement ceremony itself, some people waiting outside had been injured by a boulder that had rolled down from a mountain slope beside the monastery. Situ Rinpoche's younger brother, having started a scuffle with the police, had been arrested and held for several hours. Finally, the monks, in an attempt to manage the crowd, began fighting with the other participants, and a rather chaotic atmosphere seemed to have set in.

All such happenings were not what one would expect to accompany Karmapa's recognition and enthronement. Of course, we had yet to see who the knowledgeable Lobsang Geleg was before we could fully accept his words. But the events described were also being confirmed by others, eye witnesses in Tibet, and it became clear that the ceremony in Tsurphu wasn't as dignified a function as was officially maintained.

November and December 1992 situation

Situation for the Rumtek monks

After the happenings in June '92, Rumtek was not the same place any more. Situpa and Gyaltsab behaved like victorious generals ready to assume full control of the lineage. Shamarpa, probably sick and tired of his peers' cunning methods, left the scene of the battle altogether and flew for a time to France, for the European Kagyu meeting in Dordogne.

The Rumtek monks' main concern was to carry out the instructions of their Lama, the 16th Karmapa. They pledged to continue with their duties in the monastery and made a strong commitment not to let the place fall into the hands of outsiders. Consequently, in order to prevent the possible removal of Karmapa's possessions, they locked up and sealed all of His Holiness' belongings. Confronted with the sharp division at the top, they decided neither to follow nor to oppose any of the regents. They were still confident that the three would manage to come to an understanding and in the end would unanimously bring forward an authentic Karmapa.

Such tepid support of their candidate fell far short of satisfying Situpa's and Gyaltsabpa's expectations. Their claim that all Kagyu monasteries in Nepal, India, and Tibet stood solidly behind Ugyen Trinley felt slightly overdone in face of the stance at Rumtek. This was, after all, Karmapa's main center, and the whole Kagyu world was tuned in and acutely sensitive to the tiniest motion coming out of the place.

The two regents must have then resolved to boost the monks' enthusiasm for their candidate, and so the cloister's legitimate inhabitants became first the targets of insults, then intimidation, and finally physical violence. The task of re-educating the unmoved monks was implemented by an unruly group of guests that Situpa had already brought with him during the ceremonies for the late Jamgon Kongtrul. About sixty individuals from the Sherab Ling and Bir monasteries in the western Himalayas and others from eastern Bhutan and Kathmandu had taken up residence in Rumtek and began to systematically interfere in the monastic administration and harass the legitimate caretakers.

Who will run the monastery ?

At the beginning of November '92, Kunzig Shamarpa and the Rumtek monks together with members of the administration and a group of trustees held a meeting at Karmapa's headquarters.

The room was jammed full. Everybody sensed that a significant decision would follow. Shamar Rinpoche began by repeating his assertion from June. He had knowledge of a trustworthy person who had been holding the 16th Karmapa's instructions concerning the 17th incarnation. The time had come for Rinpoche to devote his full attention to the fulfillment of these instructions. Shamarpa solemnly declared that until His Holiness was found in accordance with such a genuine mandate, he would be unable to perform his duties at Rumtek. He was, for the moment, giving up his commitments in the monastery. His words were greeted with uncomfortable silence.

It was an unexpected about-turn. Rumtek monastery and Nalanda Institute would be left exclusively in the custody of the monks and the Karmapa Charitable Trust. Situ Rinpoche had, of course, no business at the Kagyu headquarters. His seat, Sherab Ling, lay over a thousand miles to the west. During the years after Karmapa's death in 1981, Situpa had shown scant interest in the affairs of Rumtek and hadn't contributed a rupee to its coffers. His present bid for leadership of the lineage's headquarters was ill earned and had no legitimate basis whatsoever. Gyaltsab Rinpoche, although a resident at Rumtek, hadn't offered much support either. He had devoted most of his time to the construction of his own place, Ralang Ling.

Karmapa's main seat had been, in actual fact, managed and financially supported by General Secretary Topgala and his administration. Shamar and Jamgon Rinpoche had actively assisted him in this task. Now, with Topga unable to stay in Sikkim and perform his function - as the sikkimese government could not as yet guarantee his safety - and with Shamarpa soon gone, the management would come to rest on the monks' shoulders. The honorable trustees remained the legal caretakers, but one could hardly expect the distinguished gentlemen to travel daily to Rumtek and share the duties with the monks. If Situ and Gyaltsab Rinpoche attempted, by force or other means, to assume control of the place, the monks would have no one to help them to confront the eminent lamas and their associates.

Shamarpa's words also carried other implications. The senior regent left little doubt that from now on he would take active steps to ensure that the 16th Karmapa's genuine instructions be implemented. To put it in plain language, it simply meant that the regent would now try to deliver the right Karmapa. Should the monastery come under threat from the outside, Shamar Rinpoche encouraged the monks to seek help from Chief Minister Bhandari.

There was full agreement among the participants as to who the threatening "outside" was. Bhandari though, seemed an unlikely ally. Shamar Rinpoche had, of course, no delusions about the politician's stand in the dispute, and if push came to shove, he certainly didn't expect him to rally in support of the helpless monks. After all, Bhandari's administration had openly supported Situpa during the confrontation in June. The truth was, however, that Rinpoche had nobody else to turn to for assistance. Rumtek was under Sikkimese jurisdiction, and Shamarpa still shuddered at the memory of the episode with the Indian Army showing up in the monastery's grounds. The mere presence in Rumtek of six shabby Indian soldiers had brought life in Sikkim to a standstill. Under such political realities, there was little choice but to entrust Karmapa's seat to the protection of the Gangtok government.

Shamarpa's statement

On the 17th of November, Rinpoche issued an official statement.

He declared that he would not object to the Chinese government's decision to recognize Ugyen Trinley as Karmapa. He had no jurisdiction in China and was completely unable to stop their action. The regent disclosed that his agreement to the Dalai Lama's recognition was delivered only out of respect to His Holiness. He pledged that he would hold firmly to the tradition of Gyalwa Karmapa by following only his genuine instructions.

Shamar Rinpoche then took senior monks and staff to Gangtok to meet the Chief Minister of Sikkim, Nar Bahadur Bhandari. He asked the Chief Minister to help protect the monk community and gave him a letter to this effect. Shamar Rinpoche then made it very clear to the Chief Minister that there was a rumour involving Rumtek monastery. This rumour was that Situ Rinpoche was secretly organising a large group to ambush Rumtek. Shamar Rinpoche then informed the Chief Minister that he had to leave the next day for a teaching programme in America. The Chief Minister said that he would help us but he actually went on to harm us badly.

Later in November, a series of regrettable developments occurred. A secretary of the Sikkim Government arrived at Rumtek accompanied by police officers. As the office was closed, he forced Lekshey Dayang, the Deputy Secretary of the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa, to open it for him. He demanded to know why rooms of the monastery were locked when Situ Rinpoche was coming to Rumtek. When Dayang asked what business this was of his, the secretary pointed to him and threatened him. The secretary said that he was sent by the Government and that he should do as he was told. Dayang then informed him that before Situ Rinpoche had left the monastery he had been provided with his own room. When he came to Rumtek he was still allowed to use this. The secretary said, "NO! Situ Rinpoche must be given Gyalwa Karmapa's own room next to where the Black Crown is. These are the direct orders of the Chief Minister of Sikkim, Nar Bahadur Bhandari." The secretary again threatened Dayang and told him that he had 10 minutes to think about it. Then, with the police, they went to the room and he was given no choice but to open it. Situ Rinpoche would make Gyalwa Karmapa's private room his own for almost a year.

Preparation for the "Kagyu International Assembly"

The next morning, Situ and Gyaltsab Rinpoches returned to the monastery. Accompanying them were a number of young men, primarily from the local market of Gangtok, commonly known as "Lal Bazaar". These delinquents were recruited initially by the Chief Minister as muscle men and thus they were locally known as the "Lal Bazaar Batrus".

Upon arriving at Rumtek they immediately circulated a letter saying that they were going to have an "International Kagyu Meeting" from November 30th to December 3rd. The monk body and administration of Rumtek then circulated a letter objecting to this conference

On the 25th of November, the Sikkimese police entered Rumtek and took up positions around the monastery. They were to ensure that no fighting broke out when the other party arrived for their planned assembly.

On the 26th of November, Tsechokling Rinpoche, a government official from Gangtok, presented himself in the nearly deserted Rumtek. He demanded that the doors to the monastery be immediately opened. He was carrying the Chief Minister's orders to make the place accessible for the planned conference. "Make haste," he charged at the lone staff member who showed up to receive him. Seeing a Sikkimese dignitary waving a bunch of documents in front of his face, the poor fellow couldn't think of any appropriate reply and, after extracting the keys from his pocket, quietly unlocked the gates. That was all it

took; one official proudly insisting to enter the cloister. Obviously, since Rumtek had been left under the care of just a few individuals, nobody should have been surprised that Situpa's group had no difficulties in entering the monastery and setting up their meeting. It all went much easier than they had expected.

Hectic preparations for the planned conference continued for the next three days, and the monastery's legal custodians were ignored. The handful of administrators present travelled daily to Gangtok to petition the Chief Minister for action against this illegal entry to their cloister. They were informed that Bhandari was in Delhi and his office had no power to act. Unable to stop the aggression, the monk and nun community, the Nalanada Institute, and the Rumtek administration resorted to the last weapon available. On the 29th of November their representatives issued one more written statement.

The monks, nuns, and staff members declared that they didn't refuse to accept Tai Situ and Gyaltsab Rinpoche's claim to have located Karmapa's true incarnation on the basis of authentic instructions. Neither did they decline to accept Shamar Rinpoche's assertion of the existence of genuine instructions indicating a true incarnation. However, they could only follow decisions made by the Karmapa Charitable Trust and under no circumstances would they accept resolutions made by lamas, their administrations, and other political groups. The legal custodians of Karmapa's main seat could do no more than that.

Crowds invade monastery

Although a group of forty Khampas was held up at the border and not allowed into Sikkim, the other participants smoothly crossed the frontier and arrived in full force at Rumtek. Situ Rinpoche was gathering supporters from all possible quarters.

Attending this meeting were monks from Sonada monastery and Situ Rinpoche's own monastery in Himachal Pradesh. Monks had also been recruited from Kathmandu. (Perhaps these people were the "International" contingent at the meeting?) In addition, there was an assortment of non-Kagyü people from Gangtok. Strangely enough, Kunga. Yonten, a member of the Sakyapa order from Dharamsala, was one of the "Chairmen" of this phoney "International Kagyü Meeting". Many of the visitors were Tibetans working for the Dharamsala administration. There were members of the Tibetan Youth Congress, Tibetan Women's Association, and the Association for the Independence of Tibet-no doubt distinguished institutions with an impeccable record of service to their communities. But what all these illustrious activists had to do with the issue of Karmapa's recognition was a question nobody raised. The two regents needed a thick, preferably noisy crowd.

More of Situpa's backers arrived individually during the following days-representatives of some prominent Kagyü monasteries from India and Nepal as well as Tibetans from different centers in the U.S. The inseparable pair from Woodstock, Bardo Tulku and Tenzin Chonyi, did not, of course, miss the occasion. The name itself implied a worldwide participation of Karmapa's disciples. This was highly misleading. Barely a global gathering, the conference was in fact confined to just one race. Unless, of course, one would consider Tibetans living in exile in India and Nepal and in a few places in the U.S. to be legitimate delegates from the nearly forty countries where Kagyü centers had been established. With the exception of Woodstock, none of these centers was represented. The few lamas that journeyed from America, claimed to speak for the Kagyü worldwide.

The guests behaved as though Rumtek were a public place explicitly designed to hold political gatherings.

The "Kagyü International Assembly" on november 30th, 1992

Despite protests from Rumtek monks, on the 30th of November the "Kagyü International Assembly," took off to a loud start.

Needless to say, not a single center of Shamarpa's side was even informed of, let alone invited to, the event. Unmoved by all such contradictions, Situ and Gyaltsab Rinpoche pushed ahead with the proceedings.

The Karmapa Charitable Trust was a painful thorn in the regents' side. Although a trustee himself, Tai Situ stood as a single minority within the board. Coming from well known and largely respected Sikkimese families and having held the reins of power in Gangtok in the past, the honorable directors of the board were accustomed to taking their time before arriving at a decision. They were certainly not used to being hurried, let alone ordered around. In this case, they were not going to put Karmapa's interests and the reputation of their names at stake and rush into an endorsement of Tai Situ's candidate. The whole picture was rather cloudy, and the two regents would have to wait for an official sanction of their act.

This wasn't exactly the message that Situ Rinpoche wanted to hear. His so far impeccable plan was hitting a snag. To complicate matters, the General Secretary of the Trust, Topgala, didn't seem to exercise his fellow trustees' restraint and was in fact moving with full steam against the two regents. Situpa feared that Topgala's bellicose mood was having a bad influence on the other board members who might soon contemplate a more aggressive course of action. The dangerous situation had to be dealt with immediately.

Hence, in his opening address, Situ Rinpoche proposed that the present board of directors be dismissed and a new group of individuals be appointed to the governing body of the Karmapa Charitable Trust. The trust had come under the negative authority of Topgala and as such was exerting an undesirable influence on Rumtek and other Kagyu places in the world. Its members had to be discharged. The monastery and all of Karmapa's property was not safe until they had a new, healthy foundation. The colorful assembly of lamas, politicians, and activists that Situpa and Gyaltsab had carefully collected for the occasion seemed to fully agree with the reasoning.

A few voices of dissent were unexpectedly heard in the room. Some people argued that the trustees had been personally selected by the 16th Karmapa, and to dismiss them would be to go against His Holiness' wishes. This fact didn't appear to bother the venerable regents presiding over the meeting. Tai Situ casually remarked that, yes, they could do that, they could fire the notorious troublemakers and appoint good trustees in their stead. They could also establish a new trust. Such a scenario felt much too biased to a couple of delegates from Gangtok, and so, feeling they were suddenly skating on thin ice, the two rose and quickly left the room. Surprisingly, one of them was Tsechokling Rinpoche, the very one who, a few days earlier, had the monastery doors forced open in the sikkimese government's name.

The proceedings were promptly restored, and the rest of the illustrious crowd, showing few misgivings about the legality of their action and clearly undisturbed by the fact that they were going against the 16th Karmapa's legacy, passed the controversial resolution. The present Board of Trustees of the Karmapa Charitable Trust was then dissolved with immediate effect and seven persons were appointed as the new trustees. In addition, Topga Rinpoche was relieved of his function as General Secretary of the Trust with immediate effect, and a Tenzin Namgyal was unanimously elected in his place.

Were the delegates of this "Kagyu International Assembly" aware, though, that their decision didn't carry even the minimum of legality? The Karmapa Charitable Trust was a foundation operating strictly under Indian laws, and only the trustees or Karmapa himself, once he reached the age of 21 as specified in the Trust's deed, had the power to alter the composition of the board of directors. Whoever held the illusion that a group of casually assembled individuals could freely dismiss and appoint the secretary and the members of the board was either totally ignorant of some basic norms of functioning in a modern society or was simply a swindler.

It was astonishing to hear that some of the more ardent supporters assured Situpa that if challenged they could successfully fight their case in court. Did the regents truly believe they could get away with their ploy? They clearly wanted to copy their success from May and June. This time, however, it wasn't such a smooth ride. Altering a country's laws was more difficult than adjusting a historic tradition and forging a religious document.

The legal issue aside, how much validity the decision held for the lineage itself was, of course, a totally different matter. The crowd that converged in Rumtek was hardly representative of the Karma Kagyu school. Many key figures were missing, while others took places that definitely didn't belong to them. All Dharamsala activists, Gangtok officials, and Kalu Rinpoche monks had no business at a Karma Kagyu meeting. The regents might as well have invited the local football team from Gangtok and their ballot would have been just as binding. Also, the act of calling in a group of randomly chosen lamas and trying to constrain the whole lineage by their decrees was a suspicious novelty. The only legal body that represented the entire school at that time was the Karmapa Charitable Trust. All other assemblies, no matter how illustrious, could only speak for those attending and could not, by any measure, force all Kagyus to obey their ruling.

Firing Topgala from his post within the Trust apparently didn't fully satisfy the organizers' wish to bury their rival. And so the assembly was also invited to denounce, in most severe terms, the now "ex-General Secretary." The Kagyu international delegates were happy to comply. Having listed all his malicious deeds, the participants unanimously stated that Mr. Topga Yugal "had been causing destruction to the dharma and therefore the assembly condemns his actions."²⁶ In the lengthy resolution, Topga Rinpoche was accused of having sold for a price His Holiness the 16th Karmapa's property in eastern Bhutan, of having caused friction between dharma teachers and disciples at Karmapa's main institutions, and of having led armed soldiers into the seat of the Karmapa. The assembly then proceeded to dismiss him from his post of Treasurer and General Secretary of the Karma Kagyu institutions, meaning, in this case, Rumtek itself.

On the 3rd of December, the conference's last day, a final declaration was passed. Neatly printed on Rumtek's official stationery, the text read as following: "We, the followers of the Kagyu Lineage . . . pledge with one pointed faith and reverence to confront anyone who may plan negative and destructive

actions concerning this non-controversial issue. We pledge never to acknowledge any other person who may be falsely given this title."²⁷ In a letter to the Chief Minister of Sikkim, the delegates went one notch further and dramatically stated, "We take oath that we can never accept and will fully confront if there is any other candidate for Karmapa."

Although many irrelevant names were huddled together on the small page, one could at once discern the prominent Kagyu Rinpoches' autographs. After Tai Situ and Gyaltsab Rinpoche followed Poenlop and Bokar Rinpoche, then Bardo Tulku, and the many Kalu Rinpoche lamas, among others Dorje from Santa Cruz and Norlha from New York. We also noticed a representative from Tenga Rinpoche right below a Kunga Trinley signing on behalf of the Dalai Lama.

Two monks, moving at a slow pace, would go from one Rinpoche to the next and firmly deliver the paper into the lama's hands. Other more determined looking types would nicely position themselves behind the lama's back and observe, with an unflinching gaze, his progress. Their penetrating stare left little doubt as to what might actually happen if the lama in question would suddenly contemplate a little defiance and not sign the letters with sufficient fervor.

Lamas and Rinpoches who attended this meeting were forced to sign a paper endorsing the Chinese Candidate. One Rinpoche told us that he had been threatened with immediate arrest if he had not done this. Later, they apologised to Shamar Rinpoche and retracted their signatures.

One minor resolution was also passed on the last day of the meeting. The delegates, having condemned Topga Rinpoche, decided to keep on condemning other enemies of the lineage but being in short supply of fallen characters, set their eyes on *The Karmapa Papers* instead. The edition was denounced as a heap of "fabrications, misinformation, and outright lies, and not even a paragraph of truth to be found in this corrupted and false publication."

The claim that every single paragraph was a collection of lies was slightly overdone, even by the loose standards adopted at the gathering. Opening the book on let's say page 42, one comes across the Dalai Lama's official letter of recognition of Ugyen Trinley. The eminent deputies couldn't dispute that fact and certainly couldn't call it a fabrication or, even worse, a lie. We wondered how many participants had actually read through the text they were so categorically rejecting. The situation reminded of the official censors in the Communist world, who would ban a work that the politburo rendered unfit for the socialist mind. But while delivering their curses, they wouldn't risk so much as a casual glance at the denounced piece. In the end, everybody simply yelled against something nobody had dared examine.

Probably aware that the dissolution of the Trust might pose some legal complications, the "new trustees" began to consider other means to put pressure on the dismissed governors. But having little lawful choice, they opted then for a direct confrontation.

Trustees under pressure

Tenzin Chonyi, Woodstock manager and freshly appointed member of the new Trust, presented himself at the Gangtok residences of two of the legitimate trustees, Mr. Densapa and Mr. Sherab Gyaltsen. In an aggressive and loud manner, Tenzin demanded that the two directors sign an acceptance of the assembly's resolutions. It seemed that a raised voice was a standard mode of communication in Woodstock. It certainly wasn't in Gangtok, at least not for the two former Sikkimese ministers. The distinguished men let the agitated Tenzin know that they had been entrusted by the 16th Karmapa to assume, with five others, the administrative authority of the lineage from the time of his death until his 17th incarnation became 21 years old. In no way did the two intend to give up their duty and would, under no circumstances, consider handing over their responsibility to anyone but the 17th Karmapa himself. In particular, they refused to accept the illegal and disrespectful way things had been managed lately.

Seeing he was getting nowhere with his shouts, Tenzin Chonyi decided to apply more concrete pressure. He warned the two trustees that if they did not deliver their agreement, they would be immediately forced to resign from the Trust. It was, of course, a hollow threat. Nobody had the power "to force" the two trustees to resign except the other trustees and Karmapa himself once he reached the age of 21. Unless Tenzin Chonyi was contemplating less tactful measures, he and his associates had no powers to extract a retirement from any of the directors of Karmapa's board. However, if the two had signed their acceptance of the "international Kagyu meeting," they would have, in actual fact, automatically submitted their resignations and removed themselves from the stage of events. The most important edict passed by the gathering was the dismissal of all of the trustees and the appointment of another group in their place. As expected, the two politicians were not members of the "new Trust." Mr. Sherab Gyaltsen and Mr. Densapa, each in a restrained manner, simply asked their guest to leave.

Attempt to build a new Karmapa Charitable Trust

An extraordinary meeting of the "Settlers of the Karmapa Charitable Trust" held on Saturday, 12 December 1992, at the registered office of the trust at Rumtek was presided over by Lodro Tharchin, teacher of Situ Rinpoche. No-confidence was expressed in Jewon Takpoo Yulgyal, a trustee and general secretary of the trust for not recognising the candidate (of Situ Rinpoche) as the reincarnation of the Karmapa. It was also decided to reconstitute the board of trustees. A resolution said:

Resolved that the present board of trustees be and is hereby dissolved with immediate effect and the following persons are appointed as the new trustees with immediate effect: 1. Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche, 2. Kenting Tai Situ Rinpoche 3. The Goshir Gyaltsab Rinpoche, 4. Bokar Rinpoche, 5. Tenzin Namgyal, 6. Tenzin Chonyi and 7. Kunzang Sherab.

It was also resolved that the reconstituted board of trustees would have the same powers and duties and would be governed by the same deed of trust dated 23 August 1961 as the outgoing board. Through a resolution, the assembly treated a letter from Topga Rinpoche to Situ Rinpoche refusing to recognise the latter's candidate as the Karmapa as the former's resignation letter.

Another resolution said:

Resolved that Jewon Takpoo Yulgyal ceases to remain general secretary of the trust with immediate effect and that Tenzin Namgyal has been unanimously elected general secretary of the Karmapa Charitable Trust with immediate effect.

The third and the last resolution stated:

Resolved that all the bank accounts of the Karmapa Charitable Trust shall hereinafter be operated by (any two of) the trustees as under: (1) Tenzin Namgyal, (2) Kunzang Sherab and (3) Goshir Gyaltsab Rinpoche. If any of the above have to go out of station for any period of time, he may authorise any of the other trustees to operate the bank accounts on his behalf during the period of his absence.

After two days, on 14 December the copy of the said resolutions was sent to the secretary, land revenue department of the government of Sikkim for the purpose of record-keeping.

Meanwhile, letters of query about the new trust started pouring from various towns in Europe in the office of the government of Sikkim as well as to the trustees, as per the deed of the trust.

Panic swept the Buddhist world. On 18 January 1993, the said Lodro Tharchin, wrote another letter to the land revenue department, withdrawing his earlier letter and the copy of the resolutions. He further requested for the return of the submitted papers. The government decided not to process the case for registration but pleaded its inability to return the submitted papers as they were now part of the official records.

On 1 March 1993, the commissioner-cum-secretary of the land revenue department wrote to Herbert Giller of West Germany and admitted that a request had been made by certain parties for a change in the existing trust. But the parties concerned subsequently withdrew their request for registration of change of the trust. "In view of the withdrawal, the state government has not registered any new trust nor recognised any change in the original trust existing as the Karmapa Charitable Trust," the government official added.

Some information about Sikkim

Internal situation in Sikkim

Historical data

The Bhutia and Lepcha community is formed of different clannish groups. Among the most prominent are the Kazis, or landowners, traditionally the noble families of Sikkim. For centuries, the Kazis exerted a great deal of influence in the region during the centuries-old dynasty of the Choegyals (Rajas of Sikkim). Leaning more to the middle class, are the Babus (clerks), a clan of usually educated members but traditionally subordinate to the Kazis. The next class of Lepcha and Bhutia are traditionally the farmers. They are usually the uneducated segment of the community and, more often than not, manipulated by politicians. Finally come the Nepali labourers who outnumber the Bhutia and Lepcha by 300,000 to 95,000.

Following a revolt by the Nepali labourers, Sikkim was integrated into the union-state of India. This occurred in 1975 and, with the advent of democracy, Sikkim entered into the political stream of the Republic. The State Government of Sikkim was established with a 32 seat Legislative Assembly. In order to secure and protect the Sikkimese minority, 13 seats were reserved for the Bhutias and Lepchas. These seats constitute more than one third of the Assembly, and- thus whoever is to bid for power, must gain their endorsement.

Over a period of 15 years, the Babus raked support from the commoners and pushed the Kazis, sometimes literally, from power. Nar Bhadur Bhandari, the Chief Minister of Sikkim, at the helm of the Sikkim Sangram Parishad Party, ruled over the minute state with an iron fist for nearly two decades.

Four powerful families in Sikkim

Among the most conspicuous members of this SSP Party were Karma Topden and Kunzang Sherab. They exerted a great deal of influence and power in both their party and the State. Gradually their family members and close friends took over jobs in important and influential areas.

Topden and Sherab belonged to four politically powerful families who contributed members to Situ Rinpoche's "Joint Action Committee". The Joint Action Committee is comprised of the Lharipa, Martang Topden, Kunzang Sherab and Pasang Namgyal families. As previously stated in Chapter One, the Lharipa family hosted Gyaltsab when he first came to Gangtok.

Topden and Sherab had managed to snare the 13 seats reserved for the Bhutias and Lepchas. They allotted them to people who were part of or otherwise subservient to the interests of this group of four families. The Chief Minister and the influential families made a deal: He gave State contracts worth a fortune to the four families in return for the support of the 13 seats.

Back in 1983, the Martang Topden family turned into sworn enemies of the Rumtek administration. Situ Rinpoche, recognised" the new Gyathon Tulku within their family and, banking on this, approached Karma Topden asking for assistance.

However, the General Secretary, Topga Rinpoche, closed Rumtek's doors to Situ Rinpoche's crafty choice. According to Topga Rinpoche, there was no reason to contradict the words of the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa. Nor did he need to overlook what the old Gyathon himself had announced fifteen years earlier, that he was "The last incarnation in the line of the Gyathons".

The Joint Action Committee (JAC)

Creation of the Joint Action Committee

Karma Topden would not forgive the General Secretary for the humiliation and perceived lack of etiquette. When the time arrived to settle the score, Topden advised Situ Rinpoche on how to buy support from the three other families and the Chief Minister. Since Situ Rinpoche did not lack the funds to convince them of the advantages of having a common goal, a coalition was born. A few years later this would prove to be lethal to Rumtek monastery and its monks. The attack on Rumtek Monastery on August 2nd 1993, was backed by the Joint Action Committee. It is also with the backing of this committee that Rumtek monastery has been forcibly occupied till today.

In the winter of 1994, the Joint Action Committee abandoned the Sangram Parishad and joined the Congress (1) Party instead. Recently, Kunzang Sherab has resigned as the president of the nefarious group due to health problems. Sonam. Topden, the brother of Karma Topden, is now at the helm of the association.

The joint Action Committee is apparently financed by another infamous group based in Kathmandu. This group, called the "Derge Association", was established by IN. Gyuchen in 1990. He formally served as a minister in the Exiled Tibetan Government and during his time in office, he was opposed to H.H. the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa. The main financial sponsor is said to be Karge who serves as a close ally to Situ Rinpoche. The steering committee of this group are Mr. Dhonyod Gyago, President, based in Himachal Pradesh; Kelzang Chimi, VicePresident, from Lhasa and now based in Kathmandu; and as General Secretary stands Mr Karge, originally from Bir, Himachal Pradesh, now residing in Kathmandu.

The families comprising the Joint Action Committee are not naive; they are not motivated to work with Situ and Gyaltsab Rinpoches through faith in their candidate for Gyalwa Karmapa. As has been shown, for one of the families, revenge against the Rumtek administration is the driving force. For the others, money is the objective.

For a better understanding of JAC's interests

We found a document which is a press release from the du Department of Information & Public Relations - Government of Sikkim Gangtok dated 6th september 1993, document n° 41/IPR/1993-94, signed by P. Thondup, joint secretary :

Mr. Karma Topden(*), M.P. has requested in a letter written to the Prime Minister, M. P.V. Narasimha Rao to discuss with the Chinese authorities the question of soliciting the visit of H.H. the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa from Tsurphu (Tibet) to his centre at Rumtek at soonest possible. The letter written on the eye of the visit of the Prime Minister to China states that the devotees of His Holiness, both within and outside Sikkim, are very anxious to see the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa come to Rumtek so they may receive his blessing there (...)

The more interesting ...

In the same letter M. Tobden has urged the Prime Minister to take up with the Chinese authorities the question of opening border trade between India and China through the Sikkim – Tibet border. He has expressed his confidence that this border trade, if restarted from this traditional route, would help to boost the economy of the State of Sikkim which in the present day trend of market economy and liberalisation suffer from locational disadvantages. It may be recalled that Mr. Karma Topden has on several occasions in the past written to Prime Minister stressing on the need to open the border trade between Sikkim and Tibet, where at one time a flourishing trade existed.

(*Karma Topden is a JAC's member.

Following unrest in the area, Sikkim was annexed to India in 1975. In the past, it had always had continuous ties with Tibet and other himalayan countries (Nepal, Bhutan). JAC members' intent would be to renew these ties with Tibet (meaning China), whence the motivation to build a relationship with the Chinese.

Rumtek - ending 1992, beginning 1993

Rumtek's internal situation

A new administration in Rumtek

The situation in Rumtek was more complex. Evidently, since the reconstructed board of trustees had no legal power, all resolutions adopted by this body and the assembly itself, such as the resolution removing Topga Rinpoche from his office in Rumtek, were null and void. However, Tai Situ and Gyaltsab felt that the courts and laws were one thing, but here in Rumtek they needn't worry about such trivialities. Indifferent to the fact that they were breaking the country's law, they set about installing their new administrators. The government in Gangtok, no doubt fully aware of the proceedings, did not react to this obvious breach of their civil code and the violation of the monks' rights.

The immediate consequence of the assembly's resolutions for the monastery was then the removal by Situpa's party of the old team that had run Rumtek since 1982. The new management was composed of characters that had been dismissed from Karmapa's seat either by Topga Rinpoche or by Karmapa himself. The new secretary, Tenzin Namgyal, had been relieved from his official duties within the administration in 1988. The newly appointed assistant secretary, Lodro Tharchin, had been personally asked to leave Rumtek by His Holiness in 1971. He had then taken up a job with the Dharamsala government where he did not hide his animosity towards his former benefactors.

The Nectar of Dharma, a newsletter that was published out of Rumtek from January 1983, would run, in its first issue, a detailed account of the international assembly. It would also include two stories on the life achievements of the above civil servants, the new "governors in Rumtek." Tactfully, it would omit their former removal from the place. The title of the publication was, in fact, a direct copy of a circular that had been coming out of Karmapa's main center since 1981. Slowly, the new administration began to take over Rumtek's good name and its resources.

Two administrations compete in Rumtek

The Rumtek monks, however, were unmoved and refused to accept Topgala's dismissal. Since the resolutions had not been approved by the Karmapa Charitable Trust, they did not hand over the keys to the monastery's office. As a result, Rumtek settled into the reality of having two administrations.

The legal one, composed of Topgala's team, kept on performing the daily duties and the task of running the place. It lacked a head though, as the General Secretary was still strongly discouraged by the government from entering Sikkim and had been lately turned away from the Sikkimese border and sent back to Bhutan. And then the new group, composed of the appointed secretary and his two assistants, who kept themselves busy holding meetings and writing petitions, trying their best to obstruct the work of the lawful custodians.

The effort to bring Urgyen Trinley to Rumtek, at least on the surface, hadn't been abandoned. The two regents insisted that preparations in Tibet were in full swing and that they were holding constructive talks with the Chinese government on the issue. An "Organizing Committee for Enthronement of H.H. the 17th Karmapa" established itself in a woman's house in the village. In no time, the place became the nest of illicit activity directed against the monastery. Having no access to Rumtek's office, the new secretary, assisted by his two deputies, set up quarters on the "Committee's" premises. They somehow got hold of Karmapa's legal stationary and began posting letters to all Kagyu centers world-wide, giving the wrong impression that Rumtek had finally recognized the child in Tsurphu. Very appropriately, Karmapa's monks named that particular residence "The Chinese Embassy."

Three months later, on the 21st of March '93, in order to clarify the issue of the "second administration," Kunzig Shamarpa would distribute an official statement. In a letter sent to the Kagyu centers, the regent stressed that Rumtek continued to function as before. The Karmapa Charitable Trust was the lawful body representing the lineage, and the monk community followed decisions made by the Trust alone. The illicit effort to dissolve the Trust as a means to claim Rumtek and Karmapa's property failed. Rinpoche asked all disciples to be aware of the above and for future contacts with Rumtek to continue writing to the Karmapa Trust. This was one more open letter that Shamar Rinpoche would release during the years of the crisis, and we certainly welcomed his ever-bolder words.

The next immediate concern was the fate of the Black Crown and the whereabouts of the lineage's relics which the 16th Karmapa had managed to bring out of Tibet. If Tai Situ and Gyaltsab Rinpoche were to have their say, they would probably carry the relics back to Tsurphu. That would, of course, mean the

loss of these unique articles. The Communists would never again let them slip out of their hands. We had to make sure the lineage's possessions remained in Rumtek. For the moment they seemed to be kept under lock and key by the monks. But the arrangement was far from secure. Since Tai Situ's present bid to take over Rumtek and Karmapa's property had failed, it's possible that the regent, further pressed to deliver the relics to Tibet, would not hesitate to use less refined methods to do so.

Life in Rumtek monastery at that time

By Khenpo Choedrak Rinpoche

Extract of the Kagyu conference Delhi 96

(...) Even in 1992, when the troubles erupted, the Junior Khenpos and myself strenuously tried to improve the situation and to carry on work at the Nalanda Institute. The Shedra's chairman during this period was Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche. He told us that, as far as the Karmapa issue was concerned, politics was involved and that the principal Rinpoches would have to sort this problem out. He said that we, on the other hand, were in charge of Buddhist studies. The teachers' job was to teach the Buddhist texts, and the students' job was to study. That was all. Shamar Rinpoche said that we should not take sides, but simply run the Institute. He also said that he would continue to provide us with food.

In accordance with Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche's advice, we carried on with our work. Even though we tried to do our best, the Institute wasn't running as successfully as before. Things became more and more difficult. One reason was that some of the students were receiving money from the other side; with the result that they didn't attend the classes any more, didn't keep proper discipline and didn't listen when we tried to talk to them. Nevertheless, we carried on with our work at the Institute and managed to cope with the situation in 1992.

In 1993, however, the other side systematically divided the monks in the Shedra and the monks in the Monastery. They created friction between them. This was one issue. On top of that they threatened the Shedra teachers who wished to continue, intimidating them by distributing sheets of paper saying for example: "We'll kill you! We'll beat you up!". I am not making this up - these things really happened. As the monks told us yesterday, one of the Institute's teachers was even stabbed.

Then, in 1993, on the birthday of Ugyen Trinley, Gyaltsab Rinpoche came to the Shedra and organised a party. He said that from now on it would be enough for the monks just to wear their robes. He told the monks that from now on they could do whatever they wanted. From that point on, discipline at the Institute collapsed: many of the students didn't study any more and didn't abide by the rules.

At that stage there were two kinds of people in the Institute: those students who really wished to continue with their studies, and those who didn't study any longer. There were many who were hanging around and disturbing the classes. To make matters worse, in 1993 about 32 new students were recruited. The point is that these new "students" did not study, did not follow any monastic discipline and in fact were not even able to lead a normal life in the world. They were brought in from Bhutan and other countries, and most of them had some kind of criminal background.

These new "students" wore monks' robes, but that was all. They were fake monks. They were told that they didn't need to bother about any rules, they didn't need to study. They were told that they would be provided with food and with a pleasant place to live. They were also paid for staying there. So the tensions mounted, with the result that those students who wished to continue their studies simply left. They couldn't stay any more, because life in the Shedra had become extremely difficult. Some of them are staying here in K.I.B.I. and continuing their studies here, while others joined the Shedra of Penor Rinpoche. Moreover, where the teaching staff was concerned, there were several qualified teachers who had been asked to teach at the Nalanda Institute by the Karmapa Charitable Trust. Most of these Khenpos had to leave as well. It was impossible for them to stay on.

Hence, among the student body only those without the slightest interest in studying stayed. As for the teachers, suddenly students who had been unable to reach the required standards and had failed and had to repeat classes were installed as teachers. They were simply given the title of a teacher. It was just like a stage play. Evidently they are not qualified teachers. I am not making this up. It really happened, and my colleagues, all of the young Khenpos present here, are aware of it. They know what those who now act as teachers were like as students. The Shedra is not functioning any more at all. It is true to say that the Shedra is a fake; the other side is merely pretending to run the Shedra.

Samdup Tsering's letter about dealings in Rumtek

Most of the so-called letters of protest that reached our centers were distasteful attacks against "Shamarpa and his gang." This one, however, was in unusual contrast to the streams of abuse pouring from Tai Situ's side. The author, Samdup Tsering, was a newcomer to the scene. His name and rather

chaotic style pointed to a Tibetan, although the letters had been nicely copied on white paper and sent out from Europe.

His words were a rebuke of Tai Situ and Gyaltsab Rinpoche's illicit actions against the Rumtek monks and The Karmapa Charitable Trust. Now, Tsering sharpened his pen and was back with another summary from Asia. His article made interesting reading, and witness confirmed many of the assertions.

Situ Rinpoche was apparently still fooling himself and others that Ugyen Trinley's arrival in Rumtek was just a matter of weeks away. If at that time the lama continued to believe in his own claims, Tsering couldn't really say, but he could definitely certify that Rinpoche, on tour through Southeast Asia, had managed to raise considerable funds towards that purpose. His attendant, though, was said to have been cheated out of a good part of that money in a black market transaction in Delhi; the dollar figure mentioned was six digit. Another rumor had it that Rinpoche lost even more on a land purchase operation in Delhi. On top of this, his financial backers from Nepal were said to be trading in tiger bones and antelope hair, both endangered species close to extinction.

Shamarpa's letter concerning Tenga Rinpoche

It was now important to clarify Tenga Rinpoche's stand to the European students. This time, Shamar Rinpoche took the task of defining the intricate behavior of a fellow Tibetan lama to a Western audience. Shamarpa's letter made it to our groups in central Europe.

Rinpoche presented the situation in allegorical terms. He quoted the Tibetan fable of the lion and the elephant, which illustrated very well the election process of the 17th Karmapa.

The lion and the elephant both wanted to be king of the animals. The lion declared that the elephant's eyes were too small for such a serious task. He roared and showed his big teeth. Only he could protect the animals. Obviously, they needed witnesses to settle the issue. They summoned the tiger, who at once agreed that the lion was by far the best suited to the job. But then, somebody had to be witness for the tiger. And so the buffalo was called in and witnessed for the tiger, and the pig witnessed for the buffalo, and in this fashion down to the tiniest flea. The final decision that the lion was to be king of the animals was then made by a flea.

In similar style, "Situ Rinpoche proceeded to create his own verification. His actions were supported by Gyaltsab Rinpoche. Situ Rinpoche and Gyaltsab Rinpoche were both supported by Bokar Rinpoche and other lamas. Their actions were again supported and given credence by their students. So, in fact, Gyalwa Karmapa is now being recognized by ordinary followers."

The issue is not how many Rinpoches declared the letter to be true, Shamarpa argued. As if the letter would become any more genuine if, for instance, Jamgon Rinpoche had given his approval, as Tai Situ claimed. Such reasoning knocked the whole thing off track. The core of the problem was whether the signature was authentic or not.

As a Tibetan, the senior regent knew well the situation of the lamas. He understood that they had to act in accordance with the political status quo of the region. Having monasteries in Tibet, they were responsible for their people in the occupied country. If they wanted to visit their old places and preserve their positions, they had no choice but to follow the Chinese line. Such points might be difficult to accept for people with a free, democratic background, Shamarpa admitted, but the lamas were bound by traditional, Asian rules and the current political realities.

Regarding the authenticity of Karmapa's present incarnation, Shamar Rinpoche pledged that he himself would rely only on the genuine instructions left by His Holiness. The important point was to patiently wait for the emergence of these instructions. Soliciting approval from other lamas, however many they might be, would prove nothing. Shamar Rinpoche left little doubt that he would only follow Karmapa's real commands and that he certainly didn't consider the letter, presented by Tai Situ, to fall into this noble category.

Situ Rinpoche's legal problems

Excerpts from "Siege of Karmapa", testimony brought forth by Rumtek's monks

(...)The bizarre developments continued. In February 1993, a white maruti-suzuki car with three people on board made a surreptitious entrance to Rumtek monastery. Situ Rinpoche appeared from the car and looked somewhat disgruntled. To our surprise, for several days he remained in Rumtek without contacting anyone and in the evenings he would be seen looking out from the roof of the monastery.

As we later found out, Situ Rinpoche had flown from Hong Kong to Calcutta, carrying 25 kilograms of gold. When the customs Officers discovered the smuggled gold at the airport, Situ Rinpoche displayed his Bhutanese diplomatic passport. He claimed the gold belonged to the Royal Government of Bhutan, however the customs officers wanted a more convincing explanation. Situ Rinpoche then asked to see

the Bhutanese customs officer and convinced him to believe the phoney story. He also claimed that the bag was actually his attendant's and quickly left for Sikkim.

One of his attendants was left behind with the bag to act as guarantor. Later on, we heard the issue was settled with Situ Rinpoche having to give up the gold. In spite of this, for years he was successful at smuggling million dollar quantities of gold. With this he bribed and purchased favours from politicians, officers and friends in Sikkim.

After a long time, we discovered additional information about the incident at Calcutta Airport. Apparently the Bhutanese customs officer was unsure of what to do. He contacted the General Secretary, Topga Rinpoche, who was staying in Calcutta at the time. For reasons unknown to us, Topga Rinpoche told them to help Situ Rinpoche. If he had not done this, Situ Rinpoche would have been in jail. We were very disappointed to hear this as we felt that his imprisonment would have helped to prevent the attack on Rumtek in August 1993.

Year 1993 - the situation in Rumtek deteriorate

Months preceding august 2th, 1993

"Siege of Karmapa" (...)

Among Situ and Gyaltsab Rinpoche's most loyal friends stood the Sikkim "Joint Action Committee". The two Rinpoches managed to rake relentless support from this weighty group of politicians. As will be shown, this powerful group was able to step up pressure on the Chief Minister of Sikkim. This was due to their control of thirteen seats in the legislative assembly of the State. Aware of this fact, the Joint Action Committee called on the Chief Minister to help them take over Rumtek Monastery.

For that purpose, the infamous group of politicians expropriated the "Kunga Delek Guest House" just across from the monastery. Here they set up an illegal office cum meeting place where free food handouts were offered to visitors. Once here, the visitor would also be fed with information about how corrupt the administration was and how everyone should just listen to Situ and Gyaltsab Rinpoches. Frequent guests were 42 new students from Bhutan. We later discovered that these students had been hired by Situ and Gyaltsab Rinpoches to join the monastery's Nalanda Institute. Also at this place, the outside "guests" of the two Rinpoches would wine and dine at their pleasure. Later on they would be seen in the monastery shoving around the monks and residents of the Rumtek village.

We could now see what plan had been laid out. The Chief Minister was prepared to help in a coup to overtake Rumtek. However, he needed an excuse so that the police could "intervene" and chase us out. A big fight would have provided the perfect excuse and a public function was the perfect environment for this. As the winter Lama Dances loomed, the Rumtek monk community decided to cancel the public function. We only held a small ceremony outside the old Rumtek monastery. Despite this fact, during the ceremony as the procession was ending, 8 vehicles filled with members of the Lal-Bazaar gang arrived. They were carrying knives and iron-chains and tried to disrupt the ceremony. Some of the Rumtek village boys fought back.

After this incident, it was reported that the Chief Minister said that such a fight was "not good enough" to take over the monastery. However, he had no choice but to respond to the pressure stepped up by the powerful "committee". For the monks of Rumtek monastery, a storm ready to unleash its destructive power seemed imminent.

In June 1993, Shamar Rinpoche was still the Principal of Karmae Shri Nalanda Institute, the college at Rumtek. While Shamar Rinpoche was in residence at his bungalow, Gyaltsab Rinpoche took to inciting students. Through talks he encouraged them to break the discipline of the Institute. As a result, a dance party was thrown in the college, to celebrate the Chinese candidate's birthday. At the insistence of Shamar Rinpoche, the police were called in the next day.

Shamar Rinpoche then gave a lecture to the college students reminding them that they were not monks of Rumtek and therefore they should not interfere in any monastery matters. He said they were here to study and enjoy the facilities that were provided to them for free. A police officer, Mr. Sundar, also scolded the students by telling them to behave. (Not long after, Mr Sundar was transferred, evidencing the active interest being taken by the government of Mr Bhandari at the time) After the lecture, Shamar Rinpoche asked the students to sign papers whereby they either agreed to uphold the college rules or not. It was discovered that the 42 new Bhutanese students had signed the paper refusing to uphold the rules.

Shamar Rinpoche sent this list of signatures to the Minister of Education in Bhutan asking him to remove these offenders from the college. The Bhutanese Minister said that the government could not recall them as the students were now in India and beyond their jurisdiction. Ironically, he then thanked Shamar Rinpoche for the list, as the whereabouts of these people was now known. He admitted that a number of these "students" were convicted criminals and some had escaped from Bhutan.

As some students still continued to misbehave, neglect studies, quarrel and create chaos in general, classes were cancelled. To our horror, Trinley Dorje, a student from Sonada monastery, stabbed Sonam Tsering, a junior Khenpo who had the courage to reprimand him. Although a FIR was lodged with the police, no legal action was taken against him. He was granted bail on surety provided by Kunzang Sherab, President of the Joint Action committee. Kunzang Sherab took Trinley Dorje to his residence and kept him there. This student was later seen moving around Gangtok freely.

The situation seemed out of control by July 1993. The Nalanda Institute was declared closed by its director, Shamar Rinpoche, and the students were instructed to leave for their homes before August 1st. On July 22nd, Shamar Rinpoche left for Europe to visit his seriously ill mother. Rumours were then heard

of a fight being organised against the Rumtek monks. By this stage some of the college students had left but the 42 troublemakers remained.

Neither Shamar Rinpoche nor the monks wanted to go ahead with the Summer Retreat because of the plan being hatched. However, as we knew that Situ and Gyaltsab Rinpoches had decided to go ahead with it, we had no choice but to remain in the monastery. We prayed for the ordeal to finish. Unfortunately, as we were to realise, the worst was yet to come. On July 25, Lodro Tharchin, a resident of Dharamsala who had come to Rumtek to help Situ and Gyaltsab Rinpoches, returned to his home. The rumour was that he had gone to Dharamsala to bring Situ Rinpoche to Rumtek for something. On the 30th, Situ Rinpoche arrived.

On August 2nd, 1993, Rumtek is attacked

“ Siege of Karmapa ”

On August 2nd 1993, the ceremony of "Yarne" (oath taking day for the summer retreat) was being held. Throughout this ceremony, four monks at a time take the oath from the Abbot and it must be completed by midday. During Yarne, only those taking the monk's oath are allowed to be present in the monastery, as this is a very sacred event.

Situ and Gyaltsab Rinpoches wanted to make Yarne a public programme. They had organised a very large group of people to come to the monastery. When the first groups started arriving, the monks committee decided the function would not be held in the prayer hall. We then locked the doors of the main prayer hall. With the active participation of the Sikkim police, the large group marched into the monastery with the intention of seizing it. As the thugs from Lal-Bazaar arrived, they demanded to know why the prayer hall was closed, as they wanted to enter it. When our senior monks told Situ Rinpoche's invitees to leave the monastery, they became hostile. They and members of the crowd made rampant false allegations, physically assaulted us and demanded the keys to the prayer hall.

When the keys were not given, Ngedon Tenzin, Master of Rituals, had his robe tied around his neck. His arms were stretched and while they tightened the robe, he began to choke. The mob then dragged him mercilessly through the courtyard of the monastery. Unable to bear it any longer, the monks who had the keys were forced to surrender them. They were then cruelly beaten. Even our young monks were threatened at gunpoint and slapped by the police officers and the ruthless crowd. Some of our monks had chilli powder thrown into their eyes. The police said they would take our injured monks to hospital. What they actually did was take them to Gangtok and throw them into prison.

Simultaneously, Situ and Gyaltsab Rinpoches, donning ceremonial yellow robes, were seated in front of the main door of the prayer hall. They chanted peacefully, apparently oblivious to their pious followers who were beating and assaulting us. The Chief Secretary of the Government of Sikkim, Mr. Sonam Wangdi, then illegally confiscated the key to the prayer hall.

When the doors were opened, with folded hands and wet eyes, Situ and Gyaltsab Rinpoches led the procession and paid obeisance to the holy images inside the temple.

Since the events of August 2nd, we, the legitimate monks of Rumtek have been living away from the monastery. We were forced out of Gyalwa Karmapa's monastery and have been living under difficult conditions at Shamar Rinpoche's bungalow. To this day we have not been able to return to our monastery.

On reflection, Situ and Gyaltsab Rinpoches had obviously been prepared to ruin this sacred event in order to take over the monastery. The day that they summoned the public to the monastery was absurd. As stated, traditionally no one except the monks participating in the Yarne ceremony are allowed on the premises. Therefore, the posters they had placed in Gangtok advertising a public programme, were totally against monastery protocol. The conflict that occurred on Yarne was just the excuse the Government of Sikkim required to support Situ and Gyaltsab Rinpoches' takeover of the monastery.

The chaos that ensued on this day is a terrible blight on Buddha's tradition and these high Lamas who are supposed to represent it.

Following days after August 2nd, 1993...

The following day, while the remaining monks were dining in the hall, followers of Tai Situ and Gyaltsabpa, accompanied by policemen, burst into the room and put a picture of Urgyen Trinley high on a shelf. The monks were ordered at gunpoint to bow down to the photograph and swear an oath that the boy was the true Karmapa. They were told that anyone who dared deny that fact would face legal consequences. Thereafter, the policemen collected a wide assortment of kitchen knives and wood cutting tools and, laying the utensils on a table, ordered the monks to stand next to it. An officer proceeded to

take pictures of the scene. Such assembled evidence would later be used against the monastery and its legitimate caretakers as proof of their aggressive schemes.

In the wake of the events from August 2, the monastery's inhabitants were chased away from their quarters, their possessions were stolen, and their rooms were locked or taken over by outsiders. They were no longer allowed to enter the temple. Having no other place to go, they took shelter in Kunzig Shamarpa's residence. Over one hundred and seventy monks, nearly the whole Rumtek monastic community, fled to Rinpoche's house a mile away from the cloister itself. At that time Shamarpa did not know of their plight. The conditions were difficult. The place obviously wasn't made to accommodate such a large number of individuals. They were lacking the basic facilities and there was little hope of continuing with their studies and monastic duties. Their long ordeal of being outcasts from their own monastery had begun.

Complicities in Sikkim

Situpa and Gyaltsab had again managed to deliver a coup. While the whole Sikkimese political establishment looked appropriately the other way, the two regents had brutally and illegally assumed control of Karmapa's property. The Martangs, not able to forget the exclusion of Gyaton, their dubious tulku son, from Rumtek in 1983 and still nourishing the hope that their offspring might be sitting one day high on a Rumtek throne, readily lent Tai Situ a helping hand. There was little doubt anymore that Gangtok's highest politicians were also involved. Chief Minister Bhandari, who had ruled the Himalayan enclave with an iron fist for the past fourteen years, put his unlimited resources at the two Rinpoches' disposal. The local police, rather than protecting the victims, took it upon themselves to harass and in some cases even physically maltreat the helpless monks. One could have been excused for thinking that the regents were, in actual fact, the new police commissioners, for the officers only responded to their orders. It was a well-known secret in Sikkim, that Bhandari and his cronies had been handsomely rewarded for their services.

During the next days, Tai Situ and his party launched a full scale campaign to portray themselves as the victims of the monks' aggression and the sole defenders of Karmapa's legacy.

Shamarpa was being depicted as the main instigator of the violence. A letter addressed to the senior regent and signed by a large collection of individuals from all walks of life in Sikkim accused him of bringing disgrace to everything from Buddhist robes to the holy Buddhist scriptures. The incensed citizens also condemned the regent for having managed to make them, "the gentle people of Sikkim," write such a letter.

The Gangtok press, controlled by the Bhandari regime, went along with the assailants. "Cops Quell Querulous Clergy," claimed a prominent headline in *The Courier of Sikkim*. The querulous clergy were, as to be expected, the Rumtek monks. Photographs of a stockpile of bricks, weapons, and other implements were freely used in these editions. The Delhi newspapers, giving the incident a certain amount of attention, were fairly objective in their assessment. "Pro-China Coup in Gangtok Monastery," read an article in *The Hindustan Times*. Sharing a border with Chinese-controlled Tibet, Sikkim was a strategically sensitive region for India, and the slightest hint of Red China gaining a foothold in the enclave was cause for immediate alarm in the Indian capital. Whether knowingly or not, Situ Rinpoche was walking a thin line, and his flirtation with Beijing would soon come to haunt him.

To legitimize their occupation of Rumtek, the regents enlisted the help of a variety of organizations from Gangtok. In their resolution from August 13, the Sikkim Tribal Youth Association, the Sikkim Tribal Women Association, and other such societies strongly condemned what they defined as a "sabotage of religious functions" by a "handful of monks." According to the document signed by a total of eight groups, "a large number of devotees" had been prevented on the 2nd of August by a small gang of monks from receiving a blessing. One also learned that the law enforcement agencies later discovered a stash of lethal weapons that the same handful of monks had stored with the intention of causing harm to the devotees. The outraged activists were of course strongly condemning such actions as "being mischievous, unwarranted, and with ulterior motive." They also disclosed that the above acts were inspired by "foreign elements" with "vested interests" and called upon the State Government to confiscate all property of the foreigners involved. This was seen as pointing to Topga Rinpoche who was holding a Bhutanese passport. However, the participants were seemingly not aware that both Situ and Gyaltsab travelled on diplomatic documents issued by the same country. Finally, the delegates resolved to confront all the foreign inspired manipulators and formed an Action Committee for that purpose.

The Action Committee became a noisy group that would apply pressure in a most distasteful way on anyone who would dare dispute Situpa's letter and his candidate. Soon after its formation, the committee members staged a loud protest in front of Gangtok High Court against a petition filed by a group of distinguished Sikkimese men, followers of the 16th Karmapa, to have the contested letter scientifically examined. As tempers rose, the crowd got somewhat out of hand and proceeded en masse to the home of one of the trustees of the Karmapa Charitable Trust, Mr. Sherab Gyaltsen. In the ensuing riotous

demonstration, windows were broken and the family abused. On the way to Rumtek, the aroused protesters called on the home of one of the signatories of the petition. More incidents of slogan shouting and stone pelting followed.

Rumtek monks testimony

For many years, we, the official and original monks of the Dharma Chakra Centre of the Karma Kagyu lineage in Sikkim, India, did our very best to fulfil the wishes and instructions of H.H. the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa. Either by prayers, meditation retreats, pursuing studies or serving His Holiness in general, we devoted our lives to carrying out his aspirations to the best of our ability. We continue to do this, because we have come to a clear conviction: To follow the Dharma is the ultimate refuge and the final goal to which all beings should aspire.

After H.H. the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa passed away, we continued pursuing our duties as followers and monks of Gyalwa Karmapa. At all times we respected and trusted Shamar, Situ, Jarong Kongtrul and Gyaltsab Rinpoches as traditional spiritual leaders. To find the true incarnation of H.H. the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa was the responsibility of these Rinpoches. The duty of everybody was to practice the Dharma and pray for his swift return.

Even when the polarization amongst the principal Rinpoches occurred, we took an impartial stand. We are the monks of His Holiness Gyalwa Karmapa, not Situ and Gyaltsab Rinpoches. However, after 1992 we were astonished to be pushed aside and evicted from our own monastery by very hostile people invited by Situ and Gyaltsab Rinpoches. As a consequence, the administration and the Sangha Duche (the monk community of Rumtek) tried in vain to protect Rumtek Monastery as His Holiness' main seat.

As monks, we had little to do with worldly matters. When the conflict broke out we could not understand the politician's motives for our monastery. Since they held high positions, we thought they would behave in a proper manner. We were not practiced in lying, slandering or blackmailing. We had not experienced the cold damp of a jail cell and knew nothing about gang fights or murder. The painstaking procedures of a court case, accusing others and being accused, were also unfamiliar to us. However, we all knew that what was happening was totally wrong.

After our forcible ouster, we made numerous appeals for assistance. We asked the people of the Himalayas, the Karma Kagyu monasteries in the region and Dharma centres around the world, to assist us in returning to our monastery. Unfortunately, despite efforts of the legal Rumtek administration and many others, the appeals have so far failed. To date this issue does not get the attention it deserves.

Bullies in Rumtek

After the take-over, Rumtek had changed beyond recognition. Hiding in Shamarpa's house, the resident monks were banned from the monastery's grounds. A number of suspicious characters dressed in robes were brought to the cloister to take their place. The ritual, chant, and discipline masters were all dismissed, but the new appointees had obvious difficulties in applying their skills. How many of the fresh arrivals were genuine monks was a question that nobody in the village dared or cared to ask. People were forced to sign pledges of loyalty, petitions, and denunciations. A minority who tried to stay merely neutral was blacklisted and immediately harassed by the police. The local officers in the nearby station in Ranipool saw it as their holy duty to re-educate the less enthusiastic supporters of Ugyen Trinley. The Namgyals and a handful of other families who openly stayed loyal to Kunzig Shamarpa were persecuted.

Geo-political motives around Situpa

As for Tai Situ, his secret involvement with Communist China was no secret in India anymore. The regent's alliance with Beijing and his aggressive campaign to bring Ugyen Trinley to Sikkim were viewed with a good deal of concern at the highest governmental level in Delhi. Probably at Situpa's urging, Bhandari himself took up the matter of the Tsurphu boy with the Indian ministers, but his request to allow the child to enter Sikkim, even for a brief visit, was firmly turned down. China was the only nation that hadn't recognized India's sovereignty over Sikkim, and the mere thought of having a Communist appointed Karmapa, a Chinese citizen, residing in Rumtek or shuttling between Tsurphu and Gangtok made the Indian politicians shudder with discomfort. At that point, he would be drawing dangerously close to claiming his property in Sikkim as Chinese. Situpa's amateurish overtures with Beijing and his dabbling in the delicate Sikkimese politics had raised eyebrows more than once in the Indian capital. Now, Delhi was getting seriously tired of their restless guest.

To add to Situpa's troubles, Beijing wasn't in the least disposed to let their Karmapa out of the country. Having won a powerful asset in their design to split the Tibetans, the Communists lost interest in Situ

Rinpoche. He would soon discover the once friendly doors in the Chinese capital to be closed. Blind to the political realities, the regent wouldn't give up.

Following his assurances, enterprising committees from Woodstock in the U.S. to Samye Ling in Scotland and Gangtok in Sikkim were busy urging devotees to furnish the soon-to-happen official enthronement of Ugyen Trinley outside China. A letter by Tenzin Chonyi to the "dear dharma friends" explained that all shared the joy of the recognition and that most likely in early 1994 His Holiness would grace Woodstock with his presence. A total of two hundred thousand dollars was necessary to prepare the visit. Tenzin's "vision" was that everybody should contribute a mere thousand dollars.

"Tulkus and Samaya", interview with Khenpo Chodrak Rinpoche

KIBI, March 20, 1994

Khenpo Chodrak Tenphel received his education under the direct guidance of The 16th Karmapa. He is one of the main teachers at the Nalanda University of Rumtek Monastery and at The Karmapa International Buddhist Institute (KIBI) in New Delhi which is under the direction of Shamarr Rinpoche.

Question : How can one understand the obvious discrepancy between the qualities of a tulku (consciously reborn being) as described in the texts, and the behavior of some tulkus during this current controversy of the recognition of Karmapa?

Khenpo Chodrak : The way the Dhanna was spread in the West -especially the style of practice and people's opinion about the Dharma - is based on how it was presented in the beginning. It gave the impression that tulkus did not have any disturbing feelings and that they were always on one of the bodhisattva levels. People also think that bodhisattvas and tulkus cannot make any mistakes. But actually it is very difficult to be a true bodhisattva, and I think that not all tulkus are real bodhisattvas.

In different sutras, and also in connection with the Vajrayana, the Buddha emphasized again and again how important it is to check the character and the qualities of a lama. It might be that among the lamas who teach and have taught in the West, there are many who are true bodhisattvas and many who are not.

Those who travel around and teach, but who are not real bodhisattvas, have to "sell" themselves. When one has a product, one has to advertise in order to attract a buyer. When one pretends to be a bodhisattva without really being one, he has to do a lot of things in order to attract people. For example, there has been a lot of talk that someone is an emanation of Chenrezi, Manjushri or other Buddhas in order to give them a stronger standing. It is especially important for people who start practicing Dharma to have a close look at their teacher and to check his qualities, which is quite simple.

If it is obvious that the main motivations of the teacher are to make money and to have a good reputation, then it is better to keep distance, even if one has already received teachings from him. But one should also not speak badly about him. Concerning this, one should not get too extreme, because a teacher is a human being, like everybody else, and has to make a living. One should stay away when it is obvious that the teacher's craving for money and status is unusually high.

Many lamas have to support various projects, monasteries and the people in those monasteries, and therefore receive donations. If one sees that the donations, on the other hand, are only used for selfish purposes, this is another reason to keep a distance.

One's orientation should simply be on the meaning of the word: bodhisattva. To be a bodhisattva means to serve mankind. If one does not do that, one cannot be called a true bodhisattva.

Question : What about the great bodhisattvas, like Situ Rinpoche, who were acknowledged and confirmed by Karmapa, and who had been bodhisattvas in their former lives? How can their current way of acting be understood? Shouldn't there exist a kind of "guarantee" by Karmapa's acknowledgment?

Khenpo Chodrak : It is for certain that Karmapa is never wrong and that he acknowledged Situ Rinpoche as a bodhisattva. When one looks at Situ Rinpoche and at what he is currently doing, then it is also clear that his actions concerning this matter are not in line with the Dharma. The way he acts contributed to the fact that Rumtek monastery was more or less damaged and destroyed. Thus, he caused damage to his own root-lama's monastery. One can look at this from every possible angle - it is not in correspondence with the Dharma.

This question can also be answered by referring to the Diamond Way: Vajrayana is a very delicate matter because it has such huge potential. When this potential is used in the right way, this is very positive. But if it is misused, it can be very dangerous. It is comparable to nuclear energy: utilized for peaceful purposes, it is useful, but as a nuclear bomb it is a disaster.

The dangers of the Diamond Way lie in the samayas, the Vajrayana vows. Once one receives them - for example in connection with an empowerment - one has to keep them. Certainly Situ Rinpoche received empowerments from Karmapa and, as he was a very close student, he probably also received the samayas that are connected with them. After Karmapa's death, Situ Rinpoche spent a lot of time with people who had broken their bonds with Karmapa and had always been working against him. Lodro Tarchin, who Situ Rinpoche installed as the secretary in Rumtek, is known to have broken his connection with Karmapa long ago. Another case: the Nyerpa, treasurer of Gyaltsap Rinpoche, started a lawsuit against Karmapa at that time in Tibet.

Especially the activity for the benefit of all beings does not function anymore. If an atom bomb explodes, the whole country is destroyed. It is similar with the Diamond Way if one does not have the right conduct.

Question : You explained before, that from the first bodhisattva level on, one is not able to break the samayas connected with empowerments anymore. For a great Bodhisattva like Tai Situ Rinpoche, isn't that the case?

Khenpo Chodrak : If the influence of people who broke their samayas is very strong, it can influence a bodhisattva to the extent that it affects his own realization. This morning I read the life story of Doe Khyentse Yeshe Dorje. He once had visions of dakinis and of Guru Rinpoche who told him to practice in a certain cave in East Tibet. And by doing this, he would realize the rainbow body within one lifetime. He then started with his travel arrangements.

Two of his servants kept their vows, a third one did not. It was obvious to Doe Khyentse, that the third servant should not travel with him, and he tried everything possible to hold him back. He gave him presents and told him it would be better for him if he stayed at home. But the servant could not be convinced and wanted to practice there under all circumstances. It is said that Doe Khyentse Yeshe Dorje, who is regarded as the emanation of the great Kunzig Jigme Lingpa, did not attain the appropriate realization because of that person who disturbed his development.

Question : Can a bodhisattva, through broken Vajrayana samayas, lose the qualities that he has developed in former lives?

Khenpo Chodrak : The realization cannot be lost, however, further development is impaired.

Question : Why can something like that not happen to Karmapa himself

Khenpo Chodrak : Because Karmapa's realization exceeds everybody's and he is above it all. In a text of the first Pawo Rinpoche, a meeting with a Mahasiddha is reported in which the Mahasiddha tells that Karmapa and he once developed the enlightened mind together. But the difference between the two is that Karmapa has been acting exclusively for the benefit of all beings. The Mahasiddha did all sorts of different things - like using Diamond Way practices for his own benefit. Karmapa, on the other hand, never made a single mistake since then. Nevertheless, when Karmapa's students break their samayas, it can impair Karmapa's activity. The 15th Karmapa, Khakyab Dorje, prophesized that he would become 84 years old, but he died at the age of 52 due to the broken samayas of his students.

Question : If a tulku is not a bodhisattva, what does the title "tulku" mean?

Khenpo Chodrak : Political tulkus are not bodhisattvas. (Rinpoche laughs.) There are many cases in Tibet where tulku titles were awarded and do not mean anything. The boy in Tsurphu holds the title "Karmapa" because he was installed as such.

The present situation in Tibet and China is nothing new. The Chinese had already selected certain children for political reasons and granted them high tulku titles. Therefore, they [the Chinese] gained influence, the people trusted the lamas and the Chinese government could control the Tibetans.

In the time of the Chinese Emperor Ching Long, a tradition existed in which a golden vase was shaken with the names of the adequate children inside. One or two were picked, and those were installed as tulkus.

The 17th Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje

Recognizing Karmapa Thaye Dorje - as related by Shamarpa

Years later, in 1996 at an international Karma Kagyu conference in KIBI, New Delhi, Shamar Rinpoche would disclose the events that led to the finding and recognition of the 17th Karmapa. The question was on everyone's lips. How did it happen that the young Karmapa, living in virtual anonymity in occupied Tibet, caught the eye of his senior disciple? After all, Shamarpa, residing thousands of miles away in northern India, had little access to and no influence in Tibet and, unlike Situ Rinpoche, remained out of favor with the Chinese, the true masters in Lhasa. Karmapa's authentic instructions about his future return, provided these existed, were not available to the senior regent either.

The answer that Shamarpa gave carried us back to the turbulent years that followed the 16th Karmapa's death in 1981. As the reader must have realized, mistrust and animosity got the better of the Rinpoches charged with the future of the Kagyu school. During that unstable period, the process of identifying the next Karmapa, a solely spiritual task, became hostage to mundane gains. A number of lamas went after money and power. Forced to operate in a worldly-minded environment, and probably convinced that his chief rival, Situpa, was pursuing an agenda over the head of Karmapa's interests, Shamar Rinpoche chose to go it alone. His story from the conference revealed the extent of the friction that had appeared at the top of the lineage well before the clash in 1992. It also provided us with an insight into the intricate manner in which the seventeenth incarnation decided to manifest.

Chobgye Tri Rinpoche contacts Shamarpa

In 1986, while staying in Delhi to supervise the construction of KIBI, Shamarpa received an unexpected visitor. Chobgye Tri Rinpoche, a highly qualified Sakya lama who had been held in greatest esteem by the 16th Karmapa, had an urgent message to convey to the senior Kagyu regent.

"Shortly before the late Karmapa passed away, I had had a dream," Chobgye Tri started enigmatically. "His Holiness went around a stupa wearing his usual Dharma robes. He appeared to be sad. In my dream, I too felt sad and shed tears. Soon after my dream, Karmapa died. Then, just a few days before coming here, I had yet another dream. This time, His Holiness was clad in a yellow robe, while again he walked around a stupa. The color of his vestment was radiant, and his mood was cheerful. At noon the same day, a relative who had arrived from Lhasa visited me. He brought a photograph of a young child who was well-known in the area my relative came from. People there knew that the child had on several occasions said that he was Karmapa."

When he heard this, Chobgye Tri Rinpoche felt he had to communicate the news to Shamarpa. And so, cutting short a visit to his monastery, he presented himself without delay in Delhi. "You must not make a decision on the basis of what I have told you," Chobgye Tri concluded gravely. "Your judgment must be based on the instructions left behind by the late Karmapa, as well as on the visions and experiences of qualified masters of the lineage."

The child in the photograph looked very young. Shamarpa guessed he was barely three years old. Impressed by what he had heard, the Kagyu regent must have decided to keep the incident to himself, for he failed to mention it to his three peers. He also must have concluded that the matter was well worth further investigation.

Lopen Chechoo Rinpoche brings back information

An opportunity came into his hands in early 1987 when Lopen Chechoo Rinpoche, representing the Nepal Buddhist Association, was dispatched to Lhasa. Shamarpa asked him to discreetly approach the child and to make sure that nobody discovered the real purpose of his mission. The child's family was living at that time in the Bakhor district of Lhasa. His father was Mipham Rinpoche, a well-known Nyingma master.

Lopen Chechoo Rinpoche returned to Nepal with plenty of information. He learned the parents' names, their history, and the birth dates and places of their two sons. Chechoo Rinpoche also discovered that the father was in possession of a good number of religious objects and letters that had belonged to the previous Mipham. One such letter caught Lopen Chechoo's attention. The document stated that in his

next incarnation, Mipham would beget a son by the name of Rigpe Yeshey Dorje. Shamarpa must have immediately realized that the Rigpe Dorje portion of the name bore a reference to the late Karmapa's own name: Ranjung Rigpe Dorje. The clue was very encouraging.

Another emissary to Lhasa

In order to obtain further details, Shamarpa sent yet another emissary to Tibet. This second person came back with more exciting news. One account, in particular, must have put the Kagyu regent on the alert. One day the young child went to the Jokhang temple of Lhasa accompanied by his father's friend. While the two walked around the building, they noticed a large crowd that had gathered at the entrance. Following the group inside, they saw a heavy set lama applying gold paint to the face of a Buddha statue. When the child spotted the lama, he ran up to him and asked, "Do you recognize me?" The lama replied, "No." Later, the father's friend recounted the incident to the parents. Curious, they decided to talk to the lama. After making inquiries, they found out that it was Gyaltsab Rinpoche. However, as they were getting ready to meet the prominent Rinpoche, their son stopped them. "I don't want to see him because he doesn't recognize me," the child exclaimed and refused to see the lama.

A mysterious 16th Karmapa's devotee shows up

According to Shamarpa's testimony from the Kagyu conference, at about that time a well-respected person, devotee of the 16th Karmapa, approached the senior regent with a momentous disclosure. The highly regarded individual claimed to be in possession of Karmapa's instructions that indicated His Holiness' succeeding incarnation. He claimed to have obtained the information directly from Karmapa but, bound by his guru's command, was unable to reveal it as of yet.

The more signals Shamarpa received about Karmapa's next rebirth, the less he seemed inclined to share these reports with the three Rinpoches. He attended the few inconclusive meetings the four held in Delhi but told the Rinpoches precisely nothing. His trust in his peers must have hit rock bottom in those days.

A final emissary to Lhasa is uncovered

Secretly pursuing his investigation, Shamar Rinpoche decided to send a third courier to Lhasa. The child's father, a known lama, was in a special position. He would frequently be asked to assist people in spiritual and worldly matters. The family kept their home open; anybody could drop in to request a blessing or advice from the lama. Shamarpa's directives to his envoy were to contact the family on the pretext of seeking business guidance. The emissary was then to return daily with the hidden purpose of observing the child. The clandestine plan, though, didn't quite work as expected. No sooner had Shamarpa's man entered the house than he thought it prudent to withdraw in haste. A young boy of fair complexion met him inside and calmly declared, "You've come to look for me." That was enough. The man stayed for a few more days in Lhasa and promptly returned to Nepal. But the story he brought was further proof of the child's exceptional qualities. The research was gathering pace.

Shamarpa enters a meditation retreat

To be able to arrive at a decision about who the child was, Shamarpa chose to do a meditation retreat. This was a method traditionally used by lamas to verify their choice of reincarnation. In the absence of authentic instructions, the only reliable signs could be obtained through meditation. On the morning of the seventh day of the retreat, Shamar Rinpoche had a singular dream. The 16th Karmapa was performing a ritual on behalf of a deceased person. Upon completing his prayers, Karmapa declared, "Now I can come to wherever you want me to come." The next day, yet another dream followed. There, Shamarpa saw a golden Buddha statue of enormous proportions. As he started to throw rice grains towards the Buddha, the rice turned into rain that fell on the statue. Light started radiating in all directions from a very large butter lamp that was filled with nectar.

Shamarpa decides to meet the child and travels to Lhasa

In the face of such auspicious visions, The Kagyu regent must have become convinced that the child in Lhasa was the genuine reincarnation. Excitedly, he made arrangements to travel to Tibet in order to secretly examine the child. His design was to appear in the Tibetan capital disguised as a businessman, enter the family's house with an excuse to consult the father, and then check the young boy. The plot, such as it was, felt easy enough, and so Shamarpa embarked on his covert mission, probably confident that soon he would set his eyes on the young Karmapa.

As it happened, the only people he continuously had to set his eyes on while in Tibet were Tibetan traders from Kathmandu on a business visit to Lhasa. The exquisite plan misfired badly. Since he had never been to Lhasa before, Shamarpa imagined that the Bakhor district, where the family lived, was a large area where one could disappear undetected. In actual fact, the Bakhor turned out to be a crowded, tiny locality—a few narrow streets that led to the Jokhang temple—a lot like the enclosure of a small monastery. Much to his disappointment, the regent realized that he couldn't mingle incognito with the people. On top of this, the streets were filled with Tibetan merchants from Nepal—some of them his neighbors in Kathmandu—who might find it at best peculiar if not totally bizarre to see the Kagyu senior regent running around Lhasa in a business suit. Chances were that if he ventured anywhere near the family's home, he would be exposed at once.

The Chinese authorities were no fools either and had probably sniffed out the fact that Shamar Rinpoche had entered Tibet and was at the moment playing tourist in the Tibetan capital. Confined to the security of his hotel room, Shamarpa must have understood that he was under surveillance. Any attempt to enter the family's house under such inhospitable conditions might have had grave consequences. There was no choice but to abort the mission. To confuse the Chinese police, the regent opted for an excursion to Namtso, a tourist area in the north of the country. When he returned to Lhasa, he quickly took the next flight back to Kathmandu.

Shamarpa resorts to a last method

Once in Kathmandu, Shamar Rinpoche resorted to a last method to confirm his presumption. In Tibet, a person looking for signs about a reincarnation would traditionally write down the various possibilities on paper, then roll the pieces of paper into balls of dough, and throw them into a vessel. He would thereafter journey to a holy site and meditate that the paper with the correct indication would fall out when the vessel was turned over. Determined to verify what, by that time, must have been a near certainty that he was on the right track, the regent sent his senior adviser, Lama Tsultrim Dawa, to a few sacred places in and around Kathmandu with the instruction to perform the customary ritual. One such place, Parphing, was highly popular with pilgrims, and since in those days Nepal was awash with speculation about the 17th Karmapa's true identity, rather than go himself, Shamar Rinpoche chose to dispatch his learned lama. The spectacle of the Kagyu regent engaged in a future-seeking ceremony might have given birth to yet another bout of uncontrolled gossip.

Two scraps of paper were put in a basket: one read that Mipham Rinpoche's son was the reincarnation of the 16th Karmapa, the other stated that he wasn't. Lama Tsultrim Dawa repeated the ritual four times at four different locations, and each time the paper asserting that the boy was the 17th Karmapa fell out. In the regent's eyes, the evidence was overwhelming. Having amassed his proof, Shamar Rinpoche contacted the person who had confessed to be in possession of the late Karmapa's directions. After hearing Shamarpa's report about the unique child and the fact-finding missions to Lhasa, the man affirmed that he held no objections to the course Shamar tulku had taken. But he stressed that he could not, at this point, reveal his information. The time to do so had not come yet.

Although he had obtained a set of assurances, Shamarpa kept his mouth sealed. He did not even vaguely suggest to the three Rinpoches that, in fact, he believed he had discovered the authentic reincarnation. The reason for his secrecy must have been the rather unpleasant conclusion that his peers, whether intentionally or not, would hinder Karmapa's activity once they were allowed to encircle him. Perhaps Shamarpa also suspected that Situ Rinpoche, if given a chance, would happily keep the young Holiness shut away in occupied Tibet. Situ's alliance with the Communist Chinese was, at that time, an open secret.

Shamar Rinpoche gives more details

The 17th Gyalwa Karmapa, Trinley Thaye Dorje, was born in 1983 in the Year of the Pig. He is the first-born of the 3rd Mipham Rinpoche of the Nyingmapa School of Buddhism.

The 17th Karmapa's father is the third reincarnation of the 1st Mipham Rinpoche, the head of 13 Nyingma monasteries in Kham, Tibet, and a descendant from many generations of doctors and learned medical scholars. His mother, Dechen Wangmo, is the daughter of a noble family descended from King Gaesar of Ling. In his youth the 3rd Mipham Rinpoche escaped the fate that befell many Tibetan people unable to practice their religion under Chinese communist rule. His teacher found a hiding place in the mountains where they were able to practice the Dharma continuously ever since his early childhood. In 1982, after a general relaxation of government restrictions on religious practice, Mipham Rinpoche went to Lhasa to take part in the reconstruction of Buddhist institutions and practice. Due to his good connection with the Panchen Lama, his activities were particularly successful.

In the early 1980s, Mipham Rinpoche's *yidam* (a personal deity in Vajrayana Buddhism) predicted to him that if he took a consort that he would produce several sons who would be great bodhisattvas. The next day a group of pilgrims from Kham arrived to see him; among them was Dechen Wangmo. He realized that she was humble and gentle and an accomplished Chakrasambhara practitioner. When he proposed marriage, she immediately accepted.

As man and wife, Mipham Rinpoche and Dechen Wangmo settled in an apartment rented from an old lady in the Bakor area of Lhasa on the same street that circled three-quarters around the famous Jokhang Temple. A son was born in wedlock in the year 1983. At the age of two and a half, the little boy started to tell people that he was the Karmapa. The landlady happened to be a distant relative of the late 16th Karmapa and had met him before he escaped from Tibet in 1959. He told her once, "Before you die, you will meet me again." Due to the exceptional behavior of the boy, she was convinced that he was the Karmapa himself. Out of strong devotion, she offered the use of her apartment to the family for free. However, Mipham Rinpoche remained silent about his son while hoping that he might turn out to be the reincarnation of the great Nyingma master Katog Situ Rinpoche.

One day in early 1985, when Ngorpa Lagen, a humble old Sakya lama, was circumambulating the Jokhang Temple in the circular street, he noticed the gleaming white face of a little boy peering out of the window of a private house. Drawn by curiosity, he walked towards the window, and the little boy said, "Don't you know that I am the Karmapa?" Without pondering the seriousness behind these simple words, Ngorpa Lagen replied, "If you are, then give me a blessing." The boy stretched out his arm and touched the lama. According to the lama, he instantly felt something akin to the post-meditative experience of deep calm and expansiveness that prevails over all forms of gross emotions.

A few days after this blessing, the Sakya lama, together with a group of pilgrims who had arrived from his homeland, went to Mipham Rinpoche for a prediction as to where their next pilgrimage should be. He noticed the little boy who previously had blessed him playing in a corner by himself. Mipham Rinpoche asked the group of visitors how many families they were. When they answered, "seven," the little boy rang out from the corner and said, "Eight!" All of them were obliged to count again. When they realized that the boy was right, the lama reported that his hair stood on end and that his shock and excitement were so great that it was difficult to hide his reaction completely.

Further along his pilgrimage in late 1985, Ngorpa Lagen went to Kathmandu, Nepal, and joined a large annual prayer and recitation gathering led by Lama Sherab Rinpoche, a disciple of the late Karmapa. The two soon became acquainted, and Ngorpa Lagen began telling Lama Sherab Rinpoche about his encounter with the little boy in Bakor. After this, Lama Sherab Rinpoche and his attendant Chopel Zangpo left for the Tsurphu Monastery but first stopped to visit Mipham Rinpoche in Lhasa. The boy was not with his father when they arrived, so Lama Sherab Rinpoche asked if he could nevertheless see the boy. When he was brought in, he sat next to his father quietly, but from time to time would eye the guests and smile with obvious amusement. When Lama Sherab Rinpoche inquired about the wife of Mipham Rinpoche, he replied she was doing a Chakrasambhara retreat. During the course of the conversation, Lama Sherab Rinpoche reported that he started to tremble and was unable to stop. As soon as they left, his attendant immediately told him that something very strange had happened to him while they were talking, which was exactly what Lama Sherab Rinpoche himself had felt.

The above story was first recounted to me in 1987 by Lama Sherab Rinpoche. The circumstances of the story matched those of an earlier report brought to me from Lhasa. In October 1986, Chobje Tri Rinpoche had alerted me about Mipham Rinpoche's son and showed me a photograph of the young boy.

Shamarpa asks disciples to pray the 17th Karmapa for his long life

In spite of my personal conviction about the identity of the Karmapa, the time still had not come to make a formal declaration. However, in early 1991, at the inauguration of the Karma Kagyu monastery built by Shangpa Rinpoche at Phokhara which was attended by Dhazang Rinpoche, Shachu Rinpoche and hundreds of lamas plus more than four thousand Tibetans, I announced: 1) Tibet probably would be the country of the Karmapa's next reincarnation; 2) The supplication to the 16th Karmapa for his early rebirth should be changed to supplication to the 17th Karmapa for his long life; 3) The name of the 17th Karmapa that I had decided on was Thaye Dorje. The obvious conclusion to be drawn from this announcement was that I had in effect confirmed the reincarnation of the 17th Karmapa.

The 17th Karmapa's name fits predictions

Karma Pakshi, the 2nd Karmapa, in his esoteric works (*sangwei namthar*) called *Dugpa Tsarchod* predicted the rebirths of 21 Karmapas and gave or predicted the name of each rebirth. The name of the 18th Karmapa is Thaye Dorje. However, the 5th Karmapa also predicted, "My lineage weakens, at the time of the 16th or 17th Karmapa." On the surface Karma Pakshi's prediction seems inconsistent with my recognition and naming of the 17th Karmapa as Thaye Dorje. The apparent inconsistency can be readily explained, though. As is well known, the reincarnation of the 14th Karmapa only lived for three years and was never enthroned; so official protocol does not count the fifteenth rebirth as the 15th Karmapa. Thus, it follows that the sixteenth rebirth of the Karmapa becomes the 15th Karmapa upon enthronement and so forth. In other words, the predictions of Karma Pakshi and the 5th Karmapa are not ambiguous but actually correct. The 5th Karmapa's prediction of the weakening of the lineage at the time of the 16th or 17th Karmapas actually refers to the discrepancy between the number of rebirths and the number of enthronements caused by the early death of the fifteenth reincarnation. Karma Pakshi's predicted bestowal of the name Thaye Dorje for the 18th Karmapa is actually correct since the 17th Karmapa to be enthroned is the 18th by rebirth.

A poem received from Lobpon Kunzang Rinpoche

My announcement at Pokhara no doubt caused much excitement but also provoked many comments. It also stimulated Lama Sherab Rinpoche to come to me immediately in Kathmandu and show me a poem written on a piece of paper. A very hold saint named Lobpon Kunzang Rinpoche, who had already passed away before 1991, had given the paper to Lama Sherab Rinpoche in 1983 in strict confidence on one of his many visits to Lobpon Kunzang Rinpoche's retreat in the Rinag mountains in Sikkim. The exact literary origin of the poem is still being ascertained. According to Sherab Gyaltzen Rinpoche, the spiritual leader of the Manang tribal community of Nepal, Lobpon Kunzang Rinpoche said there are two possible sources. One is the old text called *The Treasures of Yogi Zilon Lingpa* (Zilon Lingpa belonged to the Nyingma School of Buddhism). The other possible source for the poem is the late Dudjom Rinpoche when he was performing a special Guru Padmasambhara puja in Kalimpong in the 1960's. The poem contains the following four verses:

DZA YI YUL DU
The area of Dza

KI YI DRONG KHYER NA
The town Ki (is)

LHAMO NORBU DZIN PE
Goddess Devi, Norbu Dzinma (holder)

SER NGAL DU
(in her) golden womb (of) the wish-fulfilling jewel)

KHAILASH YI CHUD LY
By nourishment of (Mt.) Khailash

YONG SMIN PE
fully (it will) ripen

THAYE DORJE
Thaye Dorje

DROWE PAL DU SHAR
(for the) welfare of living beings (will) arise

The meaning of the poem is by and large self-evident. The references in the first verse to Dza and Ki refer to the birth places of the 3rd Mipham Rinpoche and Dechen Wangmo, his consort and the mother of the 17th Karmapa. The allusion to Mount Khailash refers to Dechen Wangmo who is a Tantric adept.

The Chakrasambhara Tantra is her main practice, and Mount Khailash is, in the Tantric universe, the mandala of Chakrasambhara.

Reading this account of facts, it must be clear that the identification and recognition I have done about the 17th Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dordje, happened according to the centuries-old Karma Kagyu tradition. As such, these acts were spiritually pure.

After Situpa's "coup"

As if following a malicious story line, at the regents' crucial meeting in March 1992, Shamarpa's darkest suspicions became reality. Situ Rinpoche's "prediction letter" was, to the best of Shamarpa's knowledge, nothing but an inept forgery. He refused to accept the letter as having come from Karmapa's pen; however, he did not mention his own breakthrough either. Instead, he insisted on a forensic test of the document. A confrontation became inevitable.

After the Situ and Gyaltsab Rinpoches swiftly executed their scheme and, with the Dalai Lama's formal approval and Chinese support, brought forward and recognized their choice for Karmapa, Shamar tulku was left behind helpless. With few options left, he once more requested the advice of the person guarding the 16th Karmapa's mandate. Shamarpa wanted to know if the letter was genuine and how to proceed in light of the latest, disgraceful incidents. Without wavering, the man declared that Situpa's "prediction letter" was false, but as nothing else could be done at that moment, he recommended that the senior regent let the others finish what they had so deviously started. Thus, for the next year and a half, the Kagyu regent waited patiently for his hour, sometimes not sure what to do, but always staying in touch with the mysterious custodian, fully convinced that the boy in Lhasa was the right Karmapa.

Shamarpa has the child come to India

Eventually, towards the end of 1993, Shamarpa must have determined that the time had come to act. Also, every additional day of delay carried the risk that the Chinese would get wind of the regent's true intentions and track down the child in Lhasa. A few Tibetans would, no doubt, lend a helpful hand to such an operation. As a final step before moving ahead, Shamarpa informed his secret confidant that he planned to invite the child and his family to Delhi. Nobody, of course, knew that this particular boy was Shamar Rinpoche's pick for the 17th Karmapa, and the regent must have felt satisfied that the boy's legal exit out of China could be arranged. Shamarpa admitted that once the boy arrived in India, he meant to go public with his conviction and introduce the child as the authentic Karmapa. The man did not object to such a scenario. "You are the Shamar incarnation; I cannot see anything improper in your course of action," he proclaimed thoughtfully. However, he added that he still could not reveal Karmapa's instructions. He insisted on doing things exactly as he had been told, and the time was not ripe to disclose the message he had been entrusted to protect.

Meanwhile, in Tibet, the clock was ticking. The child and his relatives had lately become the objects of official harassment. The hardships imposed bore no relation to the still hidden fact that Shamar Rinpoche had his gaze fixed on the family's junior offspring. But the regent knew very well that it was only a matter of months, perhaps even weeks, before the Chinese connected the boy's growing fame within his community with the Kagyu regent's clandestine research in Lhasa. So, in January 1994, the young boy and his parents applied for a permission to visit Kathmandu and upon receiving their passports, immediately set out on the overland journey to Nepal. It was a legal coup. The Communists didn't realize until it was too late that they had allowed the 17th Karmapa out of controlled Tibet. The Mipham clan slipped legally through the tight net that enclosed their country and arrived undetected first in Nepal and later in Delhi. The news was as jubilant for us as it must have been devastating for Beijing.

In January, 1994, the young Karmapa had come to Delhi. His family name was Tenzin Khyentse. The fact was known at the moment only to a handful of closest players. Nobody at KIBI suspected that the head of the lineage was being hosted at a secret location in the Indian capital. Shamar Rinpoche wanted to wait a few weeks before officially introducing him. Obviously, the dangers were still enormous. It was difficult to foresee how China and Situpa's party would react to our stunt, but one could expect a confrontation, maybe even a violent attack on KIBI. Karmapa's official introduction in KIBI was planned for the middle of March.

On January 27, an urgent message arrived from KIBI. Shamar Rinpoche had proclaimed in New Delhi that Karmapa's 17th incarnation had been discovered. His terse statement left no doubt, "I hereby announce that the authentic reincarnation of the 16th Karmapa Ranjung Rigpe Dorje has been found. H.H. the 17th Karmapa is presently in India. Details regarding the traditional procedures for his installation will be made known in the near future." The historic fact became public knowledge. He also disclosed that His Holiness would be accessible for public ceremonies in Delhi in March.

The young Holiness' whereabouts still had to be kept confidential. Shamar Rinpoche had only divulged that the boy was in India. Few expected that in reality the child was staying in a comfortable villa in New Delhi. We were awaiting Situpa's reaction. His people were probably digesting, with a certain degree of apprehension, the news that now they had a challenger to their tulku; even worse, they must have begun to fear that Shamarpa's nominee could prove more capable than theirs.

What China herself was contemplating was difficult to anticipate. The Communists were left with few legal means to trouble the young Karmapa in India. After all, unawares, they had legally let the whole family out of the country. Besides, the Indian government would probably feel no obligation to reply to a Chinese complaint that Delhi was hosting, against Beijing's wishes, a candidate for Karmapa, who, in Beijing's eyes, was a Chinese citizen. The two countries were sworn enemies, and the Indian government would no doubt welcome the opportunity to see their rival ridiculed. Yet, we harbored no illusions that, if necessary, China would take a less gentle course than just an official protest, thus the hush-hush scenario.

The first response to Shamarpa's announcement had appeared. In a formal letter addressed to the Dalai Lama, representatives from various Kagyu monasteries in India and Nepal stated that they disagreed with Shamarpa's illegal decision. They emphasized that there could only be one Karmapa and reminded the Dalai Lama of his approval of Ugyen Trinley. Karmapa did not need anybody's consent to manifest in the world. He definitely did not require the votes of lamas, no matter how renowned. "He will express Karmapa's unique qualities regardless of what others think."

Year 1994

Karmapa welcomed in KIBI

At the end of February 1994, Shamar Rinpoche announced that Trinle Thaye Dorje, the new Karmapa, would be officially introduced to his disciples on the 17th of March in KIBI, New Delhi. People were invited to come to Delhi to take part in the event.

Unknown to many, however, was the fact that, for people, the gathering in India was to become no less dangerous than it was to be inspiring. Having no one else to turn to for help, Shamar Rinpoche asked Ole Nydahl and his disciples to protect the young Karmapa and the Institute during the welcome ceremony in March. He had received word that Situpa's supporters were gearing up for a violent confrontation. Much as he wished to, Rinpoche could not take such reports as empty threats intended to dishearten him from his course of action, especially not since the denunciations pouring in from Situ Rinpoche's quarters were delivered in an ever more menacing tone. And so, at Shamarpa's request, people in Europe addressed themselves to the task of shielding Karmapa during the meeting in KIBI.

Mars 17, 1994 - KIBI under attack and Thaye Dordje intronized

Shamarpa's plan for the morning of March 17 called for the child to be quietly driven from his hidden abode to the Institute where the welcome rituals were to take place. Shamar tulku hoped that eventually reason would win and that, despite his rivals' combative mood, a direct clash could be averted. The signals reaching KIBI were mixed though. Situ Rinpoche's supporters had shown up in great force in the Indian capital, certainly not to bid welcome to Karmapa. Shamarpa's nosiest opponents among the prominent Kagyu lamas had also manifested. Rumor had it, they were to petition the Dalai Lama-who happened to be attending a human rights conference in New Delhi-to condemn Shamarpa and reject Thaye Dorje.

Would they try to march on the Institute and attempt to break up our meeting? The nearly seven hundred guests that had travelled to KIBI to attend the ceremony were busy mulling over the possible scenarios for the crucial day. As the 17th of March was approaching, tempers on both sides kept rising.

On the evening of March 16, the day before the planned ceremony, Shamar Rinpoche must have become aware that the following day Situpa's people would try, at all costs, to stage a demonstration in front of KIBI. Under such circumstances, Rinpoche's original idea to bring Thaye Dorje to the institute in the early hours of March 17 was turning into a dangerous enterprise. The young boy might have to be escorted through a thick throng of hostile individuals before he reached the safety of his new residence. Such a prospect was at best risky, if not life threatening. It was impossible to predict how an adverse and agitated crowd might react if it realized that the "false" Karmapa was within its grasp. Shamarpa was not disposed to find out.

The only reasonable solution, then, was to fetch the child under the cover of the night before the protesters began to gather at the entrance to the Institute. Hannah Nydahl proposed that the next morning an empty car should be sent anyway, as if dispatched to bring the young Holiness to KIBI. With little time to waste, Shamar Rinpoche put the plan into action, and within a few hours the young Karmapa was safely delivered to the Institute. Not even the KIBI residents suspected that their main teacher was enjoying the comfort of the academy that bore his name.

The next day, in the early hours, a large crowd began to assemble at the gates to KIBI. The hundreds of visitors who were there to attend the historic function, one by one were searched by our people before being allowed to proceed inside. The Westerners were taking no chances, and a few potential troublemakers were kindly but no less firmly asked to leave. Situpa's monks and a number of visibly aroused individuals had been ferried in buses and, once the guests disappeared in the building, took a defiant position on the pot-holed street that ran parallel to the Institute. They had come armed with a large variety of banners that not only denounced Shamarpa and Topgala but also promised to confront the pairs' "puppet Karmapa." Surprisingly, a few slogans maintained that the rally enjoyed the Dalai Lama's support.

While the group outside continued to grow, a black Mercedes inched out of KIBI's driveway and sped off to an unknown destination. The mysterious vehicle immediately caught the protesters' attention. They shifted their focus from the building to the street and from the street to the vanishing car. The leaders of the mob concluded that the limousine would soon return with the "fake" Karmapa. Rinpoche, and Hannah's trick proved as skillful as it was timely. While Situpa's men flexed their muscles and blocked the street in an effort to prevent Thaye Dorje's ingress to KIBI, Shamar Rinpoche signalled that the ceremony could commence.

Preceded by Kunzig Shamarpa and sheltered by the traditional umbrella, Trinle Thaye Dorje, the 17th Karmapa, entered KIBI's main shrine and slowly walked towards the Buddha statue that dominated the lofty room. The blow of horns and the jingle of cymbals filled the air. The hall was packed to bursting point. Karmapa's monks, together with several hundred European and a few Chinese visitors from South East Asia, were seated on the floor facing the altar. As the boy moved through the hall, everyone rose to catch a glimpse of the new Kagyu leader.

With elegance, the young Karmapa prostrated himself in front of the Buddha statue and climbed, for the first time in public, on his throne. Nendo Tulku, the master of ceremony at Rumtek, offered him a symbolic replica of the black hat and put a brocade robe around his shoulders. The blare of the horns and the beat of the drums heightened; Karmapa, fully concentrated, placed the black hat on his head. The official puja began.

A few hours later as the religious function was drawing to an end, the twinkle of bells was suddenly drowned by the smashing of windowpanes. Wild screams reached those in the hall. KIBI's guests exchanged curious and increasingly bewildered looks. The protestors, having closed the street and waited in vain to intercept the "false" Karmapa, must have finally noticed that Karmapa's welcome ceremony had got under way hours before and was now all but over. Furious for failing to stop the loathed event, a pack of monks rushed toward the entrance of the academy. Without so much as a word of objection, let alone an effort to check the onset, the Indian soldiers manning the entry unlocked the gate and, in an orderly fashion, took to their heels. Equipped with stones and clubs, the assailants stormed forward.

The moment the first windows in the shrine room were shattered, Westerners taking part in the rites dashed out of the building. A hail of bricks and bottles descended on them outside. Some twenty of Situpa's monks, well past the gate, were charging ahead, trying to get into the hall. They were detained by a barrage of stones coming from the KIBI side and had to pull back to the street, beyond the Institute's premises. The Westerners attempted to lock the gate but soon gave it up, as rocks were flying thick and fast. Juliusz lay unconscious on the ground, bleeding from his head; a few others suffered less serious injuries. The attackers, though, were kept at bay.

The hall resembled a bastion under siege. Most windows were gone. Mad yells coming from the courtyard pierced the air. The sound of bricks hitting the walls mixed with the menacing slogans of the assailants. Those trapped in the shrine room had ample reason for concern if not full-scale alarm, but hardly anyone dropped the stiff upper lip. An old Tibetan lady broke out in tears, but hers was a painful sob rather than a fearful cry. Karmapa appeared completely relaxed; accompanied by Shamar Rinpoche, he stayed behind a curtain next to the altar. After the mob had been driven away, the boy was quietly escorted to his quarters on KIBI's third floor where he could safely watch the developing situation.

Defenders were asked to exercise restraint -in no way were they to resort to violence; on no account were they to further the unrest. Alas, even though Westerners showed remarkable discipline, right after the incident, Situ Rinpoche's backers publicly accused "Nydahl's German troops of setting upon the peaceful demonstrators with electroshock devices."

Hard as they pushed, the rioters did not manage to re-enter KIBI. Our men closed ranks and succeeded in locking the gate. The raving horde was kept at a decent distance from the entrance. Although constantly provoked, the Westerners refused to be dragged into direct skirmishes with the demonstrators. They would not jeopardize KIBI and Karmapa's good name. Stones were still flying over the guests' heads, but the aggressors seemed to be losing momentum. Indeed, their chances of overrunning the Institute were getting as slim as their fervor was turning weak. When the Indian police eventually manifested, it took them a mere ten minutes to curb the unruly crowd. Once order was restored, one by one, the Indian soldiers that had been posted to guard the place made themselves available, eager to confront the offenders. Such an unusual act of bravado drew discrete and ironic smiles in the Institute.

When the last of the protestors had left the area, the KIBI staff and guests rolled up their sleeves and began to clean up the mess. While the main building had escaped serious damage, all the windows in the Institute had been smashed, the walkway leading to the hall had been destroyed, the rails and posts making up the fence had been ripped apart, and the sentinel box housing the Indian guards had been ravaged. The courtyard, strewn with stones, broken glass, and other objects that had been used as missiles during the attack, resembled a battlefield. Once they assessed the costs, the KIBI administrators felt very much like sending the bill to Situpa. Some of the more sensitive and less informed visitors found it difficult to come to terms with the show of brute force supplied by the Sherab Ling fraternity. Neither were they particularly astonished when, during the following days, various Tibetan luminaries behaved as though the assault on Karmapa's residence was merely a peaceful exercise of the citizens' right to demonstrate. History was simply repeating itself.

In their zeal to confront Thaye Dorje, the protestors also claimed to speak-or perhaps to shout-on the Dalai Lama's behalf. To what extent, if at all, the Tibetan exiled leader wished to be represented by such a dubious crowd was not entirely clear. However, even though he spoke at a human rights congress at exactly the time the attackers were charging KIBI, he failed to distance himself from the aggressors.

More than that, the next day he did not neglect to receive Situ Rinpoche, who had arrived in the Indian capital at the head of a contingent of Kagyu lamas opposed to Thaye Dorje. Some foreign delegates questioning on what basis he planned to discuss the Chinese human rights policy in Tibet when his own people in India had no respect for the freedom of religion in the world at large. Indeed, it was an ironic twist that while defending the rights of Tibetans at home-for which labor he could only be admired-he was turning a blind eye to the excesses of his fellow Tibetans in New Delhi. Such a stance was as incomprehensible as it was irksome, and our friends in KIBI wanted to close the chapter on this deplorable incident as fast as they could.

Two persons from the Chinese embassy were spotted outside KIBI. One of them was equipped with a still camera and another with a video, clicking away the demonstration. It irked South Block.

Benza Guru's assassination

On 4 May 1994, a group of people was engaged in damaging the garden of the late Karmapa. Benza Guru, the caretaker of the Karmapa's residence and a close attendant for more than a quarter of a century, challenged the miscreants. The group left the place shouting that the reprimand would be retaliated.

Early next morning the mangled body of Benza Guru was found on one of the pathways leading to the Karmapa's residence. He had died under mysterious circumstances. Gyaltsab Rinpoche said that he had fallen from the roof while the body was found about 30 metres from the building.

Ten days later the grand-nephew of Benza Guru, Sherab Mangyal, was beaten up by miscreants at the main gate of the monastery. After a few days, Apa Tswang, an elderly attendant of the former general secretary, was severely beaten up and left unconscious.

India bannishes Situ Rinpoche

In August 1994, the Government of India banned the entry of Situ Rinpoche from India. He was virtually declared persona non grata.

As expected, his case was taken up by Tashi Wangdi kalon in-charge of health in the bureau of the Dalai Lama. He wrote a letter to Arvind Verma, then Special Secretary in the Ministry of Home, Government of India, in this regard. The joint action committee, too, sent a memorandum to the then Union Home Minister S.B.Chavan urging revocation of the order. S.M. Limboo, a minister in Sikkim, also wrote to the home minister in this regard. Virbhadra Singh, the then Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh, pitched in with a request to Indrajit Gupta, the Union Home Minister, on 17 December, 1996. At the prompting of Pinto Narboo, a former Jammu & Kashmir state minister, Dr Farooq Abdullah, Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, wrote to Indrajit Gupta. Phunchog Rai, Himachal Pradesh Minister of State for Tribal Development, also wrote to Indrajit Gupta.

A memorandum was sent to the Prime Minister by Karma Topden, an M.P. from Sikkim, Lama Lobzang, member of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, P.K. Thungan, former union minister, and Lochen Rinpoche, Head Lama of Lahul and Spiti. They also wrote a letter to then Union Home Secretary K. Padmanabhaiah. Karma Topden and Lama Lobzang wrote a joint letter to Indrajit Gupta. A joint letter was sent to I.K. Gujral, Prime Minister of India, by P. Namgyal, member of the Lok Sabha, Sushil Barongpa, member of the Rajya Sabha, and Karma Topden, member of the Rajya Sabha. The most steadfast supporter of Situ Rinpoche, Ram Jethmalani, wrote to Rajesh Pilot and Indrajit Gupta, the successive union home ministers and even went to describe the conduct of the Deve Gowda government for not lifting the ban on the entry of Situ Rinpoche as 'irrational' and 'anti-national'.

Confidential report by Sikkimese Chief secretary

Report's foreword

K. Sreedhar Rao, the then Chief Secretary of Sikkim, sent a detailed assessment report on the Rumtek affairs to the union cabinet secretary in May 1997.

The 14-page report, marked secret on every page, forms the annexure of a one-para covering letter, sent by the then chief secretary from his camp office in Delhi to the then cabinet secretary. The letter stated:

I had sent a brief report to you on the Rumtek situation on 18 December 1996. Taking into account certain recent developments I have carried out a more detailed assessment outlining possible options before us. I am sending herewith this assessment for your kind perusal. I am endorsing copies of this (report) both to the DIB (Director of the Intelligence Bureau) and the Chairman JIC (Joint Intelligence Committee) with whom I have discussed this matter.

The report continued:

Given the fact that Sikkim occupies a strategic position, it would be most undesirable to have a situation where a Tibetan reincarnation, who is basically a Chinese national recognised by the Chinese, occupies a position in a monastery in Sikkim. The reincarnation of the Karmapa, if at all brought into Sikkim, will not come alone and may be accompanied by a very substantial entourage. Such an event can lead to consequences quite unpredictable, and may affect the security interests of the country very substantially. Clearly, we cannot allow a situation where a Tibetan reincarnate is brought into Sikkim, however vociferous such a demand may become.

... about Dalai Lama

Regarding the role of the Dalai Lama in the controversy, the chief secretary said:

In a hurried manner and that also without evidence and proper verification, the Dalai Lama recognised the candidate of Situ Rinpoche. It is possible that a small coterie around the Dalai Lama had been influenced by the Chinese. The belief is reinforced by the fact that this small group has influenced His Holiness (Dalai Lama) to continue to support the Situ group even though the Dalai Lama himself has been briefed about the controversy and the lack of unanimity among the regents with respect to reincarnation.

The second explanation could be that the Dalai Lama was at that point of time carrying on delicate negotiations with the Chinese with respect to Tibet and he was influenced to think that such a recognition may go in his favour during his further discussions with the Chinese.

A third explanation put forth by the religiously inclined is that the Dalai Lama heads the Gelug order which is not favourably inclined towards the Kagyu order, particularly because of the growing influence of the latter. (After the establishment of the Dharma Chakra Centre in Rumtek in the early 1960s, the Kagyu order has opened no less than 600 centres all over the world.)

The fourth explanation is that the recognition given by the Dalai Lama is not religious recognition but basically a temporal act placing the Karmapa in a hierarchy next to the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama. It is an act which need not be given any religious significance.

While this matter needs to be studied in more detail, what is important to note is that following the recognition of the Karmapa in Tibet and its approval by the Dalai Lama, China put its seal of approval on the reincarnation. This is, perhaps, the first time that the People's Republic of China has given such an approval and is possibly calculated to demonstrate to the world the decisive say that China has in the affairs of Tibet, both spiritual and temporal.

... about Situpa

Since then Situ Rinpoche has been influencing local opinion in Sikkim to continuously pressurise the authorities for bringing the Karmapa reincarnate to Rumtek and formally install him in the monastery.

Situ Rinpoche had wittingly or unwittingly played into the hands of the Chinese. Reports indicate that Situ Rinpoche, a Tibetan national, had been visiting Tibet on and off and in 1984-85 he travelled extensively and drafted a programme for so-called development in the country (Tibet). He records that 'at the end of 1984 and beginning of 1985 I visited for four months my country (meaning China) after 26 years abroad

and travelled the areas of Sitron Tsongol, Gangsheo Yunnan and Shingkiang. The development programme includes education, health care, culture, handicrafts, increase in income and living standards etc.'

What is noteworthy is that throughout his report he talks about friendly connections between the Chinese and the people of other countries, study of the Chinese language and study of Chinese medicine. He talks about Chinese in the friendliest terms, referring to the Chinese as Chinese brothers. He talks about Chinese brothers living abroad as well. He talks about the autonomous region of Tibet and indicates that his plan has the honest intention to benefit the people of China, and, in particular, the autonomous regions of Tibet, Sitron, Yunnan, Gangshuo, etc. He profusely thanks the two leaders of China, namely, Hu Yao Ban and Deng Niao Peng, as well as other leaders for their excellent political stance. His report is addressed to the director of the Chinese Communist government. All this indicates that Situ Rinpoche has built up a good relationship with the Chinese possibly from 1984.

... about China

It would be appropriate to consider the Chinese interest in the entire matter at this stage. From the time of Chinese occupation, and indeed, after the departure of the Dalai Lama from Tibet, the Chinese have been strengthening their control over Tibet in a variety of ways. Apart from the well established efforts to reduce the religious influence of the Dalai Lama and changing the demographic composition of Tibet by large scale influx of Han Chinese into Tibet, it would appear that the Chinese having got their own Panchen Lama, have, by formally recognising the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa, extended their control over the religious reincarnations of the Tibetans. It is also very much possible that the Chinese are preparing to get themselves into a position of strength in the post-Dalai Lama Tibet. It is not inconceivable that having established their right to recognise the reincarnates, the Chinese would not hesitate to identify the successor of the present Dalai Lama when the time comes. This would complete their hold on the religious consciousness of the Tibetans both within and outside Tibet. The Chinese may not attach too great an importance to the declaration by the Dalai Lama that there will be no more reincarnation of His Holiness. It is important from our point of view to take note of this.

It is also important to note that along the entire Himalayan belt, right from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh, the influence of Tibetan Lamaistic Buddhism is extensive, with a string of monasteries. It is reported that the Chinese have been making efforts to penetrate into these monasteries and, as of now, no less than eleven monasteries are headed by lamas who can be considered proteges of China. It would be most undesirable to allow the Chinese to extend their influence in this manner and it is in this context that the present situation in Rumtek needs to be carefully viewed.

He drew attention to the fact that the Chinese were out to expand their influence on the religious consciousness of not only Tibetans but also of the population in the entire Himalayan region. He said that the monastery itself had to be cleansed of all unruly elements and of offensive material which could be used to prevent anyone entering the monastery or otherwise creating an ugly law and order situation,

He added:

Taking into account the fact that the Chinese government is actively interested in the Rumtek affairs and the emerging situation there, it would be necessary to anticipate events and consider a possible course of action. The Sikkim government right now would be hesitant to act because of the belief that a large proportion of the Bhutia/Lepcha population is inclined to accept the Tibetan reincarnation, primarily because of the blessing given by the Dalai Lama and would not like to do anything which can be construed as offending the sentiments of Bhutias/Lepchas.

He concluded with the remarks that while keeping India's security interests in mind we should recognise the fact that the legitimate trustees have been disallowed from functioning from the monastery by an act of the state government and that within the next few years both the regents and the trustees would lose their status as religious and temporal authorities of Rumtek once the Karmapa reincarnate attains the age of 21.

Controversy: opposing viewpoints

How did people decide who was right ?

One interesting point is to analyze how the concerned people have made up their mind in this matter. When talking about "concerned people", we mean not only Tibetans, but buddhism practicing Westerners as well.

In 1992, when Situ Rinpoche reveals his letter, Shamar Rinpoche does not accept it. From Situ Rinpoche's side, it is a well planned job: not only does he possess "the letter" everyone has been looking for those past eleven years, but the Dalai Lama is on his side, and furthermore, he gets Shamarpa's signature recognizing Ugyen Trinley.

On the face of it, people at large have all reasons to trust Situpa. He was one of the four Regents, he has fulfilled his duty, and he is the one who received the 16th Karmapa's heart during his cremation: he is quite the right one for finding the new incarnation. Propaganda coming from the "Derge Committee" worked perfectly, and keeps on working to this day. People trust him, Karmapa has been found, no more questions are needed, and so whatever problem there was is answered.

Moreover, Ugyen Trinley, the chosen child, displays a huge charisma. He is beautiful, shows a great strength of character, and most important, looks like the previous Karmapa. Many pictures of the late Karmapa showed him with an eye more opened than the other. Surprise! The newly found child has the same feature! This will convince many people. One will find across Internet, some photomontages where the picture of the 16th Karmapa evolves to a perfect fit into Ugyen Trinley's. So, the latter would have the same face, although their parents had no family links! This legend will endure. When Thaye Dorje is found, many find his picture disappointing: he looks rather puny, pale, ... and wears glasses!

Let's turn back to 1992. Then, Shamar Rinpoche stands isolated, helped only by his disciples and those who trust him. He disagrees, but he has very few elements of proof: he could not get a forensic study of the "prediction" letter, and his signature recognizing Ugyen Trinley makes things harder. Truly, many can not get why he now rejects the child he himself accepted earlier. In all sincerity, they think he is driven by bad motives.

It is a fact Shamar Rinpoche does not try to make people follow him. Those who will act to reach him, in order to know more about his position, telling they themselves are not sure about who and what to trust, will hear him answering that he does not try to turn anyone's mind, that everyone has to analyze the current situation in all honesty, and that things will clear up gradually. He simply does not try to convince anyone.

In these times, many people (better informed than public at large) prefer to remain neutral. Some breaches had happened: recognition from the Dalai Lama, hurry surrounding that event, intronisation under chinese control and with chinese blessings, Shamarpa's doubts ...

During the two following years (1992 and 1993), those previously hesitant people, relatively well informed, will gradually shift into a firm backing of Shamarpa's position, under one main motive: inadmissible acts from Situ Rinpoche's followers. Even then, Shamarpa does not provide any alternative for Ugyen Trinley. But his opponent's doings speak for themselves: attempt to take over the "Karmapa Charitable Trust" in november 1992, brutalities laid upon Rumtek monks, political collusion, and, as a final stroke, attack against Rumtek during August 1993.

We are deliberately saying "relatively well informed people", because people in general had accepted Situpa's letter and saw no need to reject this well settled fact. In fact, the Dalai Lama keeps reiterating his recognition and, all facts and events are distorted by propaganda from Situ Rinpoche's side, not only in Tibet, but in India as well. For instance, during the attack against Rumtek, defending monks have been blamed with aggression against "peaceful strollers" accompanying Situ Rinpoche.

The "Karmapa Papers" publication brings forth a new light on these numerous distortions. What had been shrouded now becomes very clear. Henceforth, it becomes obvious Situ Rinpoche had forged the letter. Now, one understands why Situ Rinpoche has stubbornly refused a forensic analysis of this letter. Why? The only choice is: either the letter is authentic, analysis proves it, and all questions stop; or it is forged ... which would fit with this systematic refusal.

Then, during spring 1994, Shamar Rinpoche announces at last the fruit of his search: the new Karmapa has been found, and as soon as feasible, is presented. Shamar Rinpoche gives out a detailed account of the whole search process, which lasted a full eight years.

One interesting point in that process, Shamar Rinpoche does not bring out material and undisputable proof. Yes, this child has stated several times "I am Karmapa", there has been an authentic recognition process, but there is no letter or unmistakable message coming down from the 16th Karmapa, as

everyone was expecting it. Truly, there is this mysterious 16th Karmapa's devotee who seems to act as a guide in this search, but Shamarpa will not identify him. Is he real or not ? No one knows ...

What has convinced previously wary disciples, is the way Shamarpa acts. Contrary to his peer, he proceeds with caution. He does not dirty himself with any political maneuver or any embezzlement, he does not put the slightest pressure to convince anyone, he stands with patience and tolerance in front of all affronts and irregularities made to him, in short, he acts as an authentic spiritual master, worthy of recognizing Karmapa.

To sum it up, in these times, and until Thaye Dorje is revealed, agreeing with Shamar Rinpoche's position means firstly disagreeing with Situ Rinpoche's acts.

Ignorance and Disinformation

This controversy feeds upon complete ignorance of succeeding events as well as nicely conducted disinformation.

Reading the stories about all the dramatic events from 1992 to 1994, one can not help but wonder how possibly some people have backed Situ Rinpoche, compromised in such dealings. One is eager to hear what kind of thinking props up such behavior.

In truth, all violent acts from this period have been either fully ignored or fully distorted. All information from Situ Rinpoche's side is idyllic: the previous Karmapa had written a letter, it was found in 1992 and the Dalaï Lama confirmed it. The remainder of their story is but allegoric embroidery about miracles occurring for the child's birth and subsequent prodigies.

We are in a system where trust and confidence towards spiritual masters are paramount. But a lot of confusion about what these mean may lead to naivety bordering blindness. So, in this rather complex story, most people would rather agree with their own master, without exercising the smallest amount of critical judgement and without looking for more information.

From Shamarpa's side, there is no information. One example stands for many: Shamarpa has asked to put online a site dealing with the Karmapa controversy. There, one finds sparse information amounting to some ten news items. Nowhere on internet can be found an analysis of the "prediction" letter, or on the events since 1992, besides a few isolated statements. This fits exactly with Shamarpa's thinking: up to Thaye Dorje's arrival in India, he never tried to give a lot of information. These dharma centers backing him up, remained silent and waiting for a very long time. As a rare exception, Ole Nydahl's disciples in Europe have issued a very well researched, but very partisan book, mixing the controversy unfolding with an allegorical story of activities by Ole Nydahl. Its title meaningful enough "Rogues in Robes", sets the tone for this book which has had a limited success, Ole being somewhat a controversial person, most notably in France.

When did the controversy start ?

One has to consider the context back then, and to clearly grasp a few major points which will lead to future events.

Up to 1992, when Situ Rinpoche unveils his so-called "prediction" letter, everything was going fine within the large Kagyu family. The four Rinpoches are there, everybody trust them, although some criticism begin to air about their slowness for finding the 17th Karmapa. Testimony from Rumtek monks (refer to the forewords of "Siege of Karmapa") shows this well: everyone trust them without the slightest doubt.

Then, suddenly, a clash looms: Jamgön Kongtrul dies abruptly in a car accident. He clearly was the preferred one within kagyu lineage. Very smart, diplomat, he was the one everybody trusted. He was binding the other Rinpoches. For Shamarpa seemed haughty and no diplomat, Situ Rinpoche independant and political, Gyaltshab Rinpoche wavering and less charismatic.

These other three Rinpoche will then tear each other apart about recognizing Karmapa. It is where the ones' temperament and the others' dealings will make the difference.

Opposing sides

Shamar Rinpoche

He does not do a lot for his public image. He is a straight character, with high integrity, not caring about pleasing anyone. He is simple and dislikes all the pomp due to his rank. Few know him in the Tibetan world, because his lineage was banned by the Dalai Lama for two centuries. Older generations did not know him and he does not try to patch this over. When he dislikes something, he walks away. In 1983, during the now famous Rinchen Terzö initiation, he suddenly leaves the ongoing ceremony without a single word of explanation to the public. The many persons attending the ceremonies have no idea of his real motives for this hasty departure, and will indulge in fancy explanations. Most of them are Kalu Rinpoche's devotees. They see this as a lack of respect towards their master who gives the initiation and see Shamar Rinpoche as an angry and unsociable character. This opinion matters, for Kalu Rinpoche's followers, upon the 1992 clash, will naturally trust Situ Rinpoche more.

Situ Rinpoche

He is a well-known lama among Tibetans. In earlier days, he was the head of the powerful Palpung monastery in Kham. His predecessor the 11th Situpa was the preceptor for the 16th Karmapa. He is a charming person and knows how to be appreciated.

His deceptions:

- with the fable about the heart of the 16th Karmapa, never challenged until 1992, he scored a decisive point in his disciples' mind. For many, he is the one chosen by the 16th Karmapa. This assertion was aired by the "Derge Committee" back in 1992. It became an unbeatable argument, very widely repeated by those dharma centers backing Situpa. For them, there is no doubt Situ Rinpoche is right because the 16th Karmapa recognized him as his spiritual heir.
- The so-called "prediction" letter fulfills what everyone has been waiting for during eleven years
- Situ Rinpoche has recognized main tulkus of the kagyü lineage, and so, these masters' disciples are grateful to him. This is the case most notably for Kalu Rinpoche, Trungpa Rinpoche. He had Urgyen Trinley recognize as well Jamgön Rinpoche and Pao Rinpoche.
- But the main ace for Situ Rinpoche is the recognition for Urgyen Trinley he obtains from the Dalai Lama. This recognition is essential, for it legitimizes Urgyen Trinley, and there is no need to give further consideration to the "prediction" letter.

What the pro-Situ say about the controversy

For most people recognizing Urgyen Trinley as Karmapa, there is no longer any doubt: the whole recognition process has been accomplished and all participants are perfectly sincere about it. Furthermore, they have the backing of the Dalai Lama. They do not understand why there should be a forensic analysis of the letter, are ignorant of its doubtful qualities. For them, Shamarpa's behavior is incomprehensible. He seems to be malicious and jealous. All administrative hassle sustained by their side

(Situpa's banishment, long wait for Urgyen Trinley's refugee status) will appear to them as secret maneuvers from Shamarpa working with the Indian Army and Secret Service

Situ Rinpoche behaves as someone whose acts are quite legitimate, not trying and seeing no need to provide justifications: he is right, that is the way things are, ... and that is it. In fact, he tells it to the Asiaweek reporter he meets in October 2000, about Urgyen Trinley: "There is nothing to prove, it is already proven." (...) "Karmapa is Karmapa, Buddha is Buddha, Dalai Lama is Dalai Lama. We are believers. That is it."

In the Sherab Ling Newsletter dated Dec. 1992, Situ Rinpoche gives his opinion about the controversy:

"Following some incidents that happened during the announcement of the 17th Karmapa and some things that are still happening, mostly in Germany and France, where a few people are questioning the authenticity of His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa, I have this to say. We are Buddhist, and we can pray for the people involved in spreading confusion, be compassionate towards them, and that is all we can do. We should not be discouraged by what is happening. We should know that when Buddha was

alive there were many people who did not believe in him, including his own brother. If this happened 2500 years ago with the Buddha, then why not now with His Holiness Karmapa? It should not happen. If it did not happen it would have been much better, but it has happened. So, the way Buddha treated the situation was with compassion. We don't need to do anything nor concede to misguided people in any way, because that will contribute to their bad karma. We pray for them, we dedicate merit for them, that they will stop accumulating negative karma and get some wisdom.

All the monasteries, Rinpoches and lamas are satisfied and confident. Now our lineage has a head. We survived without our lineage head for almost a dozen years, and now we have him back, so I am sure all of us have a very bright future. You must know we are not here to convert people, we are not here to coerce others and force our beliefs upon them in any way. Our most important responsibility is the preservation of our teaching, our tradition, our lineage, so that when people who are interested come to us, we have something to give. If we do not preserve what we have, we have nothing to give. If we have nothing, then we must pretend we have something to give and that is a lie. Our job is to preserve the teachings. Propagation comes if there is something to propagate.

There are a few people who say they do not believe in Karmapa, so what can we do? They do not believe. We cannot destroy our lineage, we cannot destroy everything we have because somebody does not believe in it. If we preserve and practice the teachings, then others will see the quality. But we are not here to win anybody's faith. That is not our motivation. How many people on this earth know somebody called Buddha existed? If some people do not know, that does not make Buddha less than what he is. When their good karma ripens, people will wake up. If it does not happen in this life, then it might happen in the next life."

What about a forensic analysis of the letter from Situ Rinpoche ?

In an interview, Thrangu Rinpoche, a learned and important lama from the Kagyu lineage answers this question, and summarizes well what Situ Rinpoche's followers think about it:

« I personally think it is unnecessary, because the documents on reincarnation left by the past 15 Karmapas had never been subjected to forensic examination. Whenever there was a controversy, the disciples would finally resolve it with their faith in the Karmapa and his blessings. Similarly, in the present case, there is no need to have the documents examined by forensic experts. As a matter of fact, many high ranked monks and practitioners have through their compassion and wisdom pointed out clearly who is the Karmapa. All we need to do is to abide by what they say. Furthermore, forensic examination is used against criminals. The documents of prediction left behind by Karmapas are not only sacred but also blessed. Examining them as though they are documents left behind by criminals is rather strange from the religious point of view. On the basis of these two reasons, forensic examination of the documents is unnecessary. »

Situ Rinpoche's side consider such an analysis would deface a sacred object. Moreover, very few people know exactly why Shamarpa insists for this expert advice. The devastating analysis , printed in the "Karmapa Papers" has not been spread and very few have read it.

There is a complete explanation of why a forensic analysis would be useless on the website of Nalandabodhi <http://www.nalandabodhi.org/news.html>, which is the main site dealing with the controversy and managed by Ugyen Trinley's supporters.

How about attacking and expelling Rumtek monks in 1992 ?

This is how "Sherab Ling Newsletter" autumn/winter 1993, describes this event :

Tai Situpa Rinpoche, at the request of the Rumtek administrative committee and the Nalanda Institute for Higher Studies, went to Rumtek in late July. One of his first activities was to open the traditional Yarney, or "rainy season" retreat, on August 2nd. The Yarney retreat has been an annual observance at Rumtek since the Monastery's beginning. The custom dates back to the time of the Buddha, who spent a period in prayer and meditation with his disciples each summer during monsoon. Many of these rainy season

retreats were spent in Vaishali, now located in the Indian State of Uttar Pradesh. The ceremonies beginning Yarney are preparatory prayers for the month long period of study and prayer.

This year there was an attempt to disrupt the celebration of the yarney ceremonies by a small dissident faction of monks who oppose the coming visit of the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa. Monks locked the shrine room door early in the morning hoping to prevent the ceremonies and stop the retreat. However, Tai Situpa and Gyaltsap Rinpoche, along with the monks from the institute of higher studies and monastery monks, proceeded with the prayers seated on the pavement outside the locked shrine room door. The miscreant monks barricaded themselves in the dining hall. When asked to return the keys so that the temple could be opened they shouted abuse and later hurled stones and bricks at people. Some present sustained minor injuries. Sikkimese Police and a state government official who were present attempted to quell the disturbance through discussion. More police were called. It was finally resolved in the evening when the monks relinquished the keys. A stockpile of bricks and other implements were later discovered in the dining room.

Through all of this the ceremonies went forward, and the Yarney retreat began according to schedule, although a White Tara Empowerment which had been requested by a local family had to be postponed. After the unfortunate incident a letter of protest to Shamar Rinpoche was drafted and signed by 220 local monastery patrons, all of whom witnessed the incident. This letter describes the events in detail, and contradicts a scurrilous fax that was circulated, presumably by the same faction, that made numerous false allegations about the events and some of the senior lamas. A Joint Action Committee has been formed by concerned Sikkimese Buddhists to counter such incidents at the monastery in future.

Here is the letter from the " 220 local monastery patrons "

To His Eminence Shamar Rinpoche Rumtek, Sikkim - August 1st, 1993.

Rinpoche,

We the undersigned have been the devoted sponsors of His Holiness the Karmapa. As you know, we have been also the devoted sponsors of yourself and the other three regents, as well as of other Rinpoches and the monk body. You will recall that each of us, here undersigned, have contributed our share, physically as well as financially, each according to our abilities since 1959 when His Holiness the XVIth Gyalwa Karmapa escaped, from Tibet. At that time we were only very joyous when His Holiness chose to take asylum in Sikkim. During these difficult years of the early 60's it was we, the Sikkimese sponsors, who helped to establish the Rumtek Dharma Chakra Centre. Those who could made offerings in cash, others in kind, such as rice and vegetables, while some of us actually carried stones, soil, cement and rods. All of this you are aware of.

Yesterday, on 2nd of August, we came to Rumtek Dharma Chakra Centre to offer our prayers on the holy occasion of Yarney (summer retreat session) and to take blessing from the two regents, their eminences Tai Situ Rinpoche and Goshir Gyaltsap Rinpoche. Upon arrival we found the Monastery dukhang (main shrine) locked and the two regents with the monks from the shedra (Nalanda Institute) seated on the cold floor outside the monastery and conducting the Yarney ceremonies there. The monks from the monastery had barricaded themselves inside the kitchen dining hall. When we, the sponsors, requested them to open the doors, they hurled bricks and logs at us. Some of them were even carrying knives and meat choppers. Let it be clearly noted that we had nothing in our hands except white scarves. Let it also be clearly noted that the Sikkim Home Secretary, the Ecclesiastical Secretary and police officers were all witnesses to it. When these monks hurled stones, bricks, etc, at us there were children and babies amongst us. One further point to be noted clearly is that amongst the monks who barricaded themselves inside were thirty to forty monks below the age of ten years who were forced to indulge in these unlawful activities. No doubt if we had also retaliated these monks would have been injured and sacrificed to cater to the wishes of the troublemaking monks.

It is clear to us that this whole trouble took place because of the decision you made which was biased. The monks from the monastery took such action because you have planted the seeds of discord and then vanished, You didn't try to bring harmony between the shed[r]a monks and the monastery monks. You threatened to fail the monks of the shed[r]a and then summarily dismissed them on the pretext of holiday while you know full well that in the constitution of the Nalanda Institute, on Page 5, it is clearly written, according to the wishes of the XVIth Karmapa that the monks of the shedra and the monks of the monastery will attend the Yarney summer retreat session together.

If you have advised not to hold the summer retreat for both the monks of the shedra and monastery it would have been a more impartial act. By victimizing the monks of Nalanda Institute, you have shown yourself to be unworthy and biased. Furthermore, the m[o]nks of the monastery closed down the monastery in order to prevent the shed[r]a monks from attending the summer retreat. Subsequently, the Nalanda monks began their retreat, which has never to date been canceled or unattended. Even the two

regents along with the monks of the shed[r]a sat on the cold floor to begin the proceedings of the summer retreat while the monks of the monastery did not take part. This is like cutting one's nose to spite the face. We hold you responsible for this break in this annual summer retreat ceremony. Thus you have actually disobeyed the instructions of your Root His Holiness the XVIth Karmapa. You have also failed to obey your Root Guru by not handing over the keys and the tiles of the Nalanda institute to his eminence Tai Situ Rinpoche when your term of Chief Principal expired. According to the instructions of His Holiness, the four regents were to take turns for three years each as the Chief Principal.

We have also witnessed the monastery monks all the time loitering between your residence and the monastery, while no prayers were conducted in the main Dukhang. You have instigated and abetted them in acts of violence, bringing much more disgrace since they wear the robes of the Buddha.

During the Tibetan New Year too, there was disharmony. You have in all these years rarely attended the Mahakala Puja, which is an important event in the Rumtek calendar. Under your instructions even the most important ritual dance of Mahakala was canceled, [th]us breaking all norms and traditions of the monastery,

We are aware of all the lies that have been fed to the innocent Westerners by you and your people, You actually brought the army, fully armed, into the monastery last year and then tried to blame others for it, We Sikkimese are gentle people by nature. Until now we have maintained patience because we have been ashamed to proclaim to the world that one of our high lamas has gone berserk seeking power. As we have seen the monastery literally crumbling before us our patience has become exhausted. We remind you that you are in Sikkim only as our guest tolerated by us only because we respect robes, even when they are worn by an ambitious person.

We are for Karmapa and only for Karmapa, As far as we are concerned, Karmapa is already in his principal seat in Tibet and when the time comes we, the Sikkimese people will bring him to his seat in Rumtek, All your efforts to cause disharmony in Sikkim are useless. The Rumtek Dharma Chakra Centre does not belong to you and we do not acknowledge your pretence to authority here. That you have managed to make us, the gentle people of Sikkim write such a letter to you is an indication of the shame we feel in witnessing your activity that has brought ridicule to the Karma Kamtsang tradition in particular and to Buddhist Dharma in general.

Yours undersigned,

(217 signatures of members of the Sikkim Buddhist community were appended)

How about the KIBI attack in 1996 ?

From "Sherab Ling Newsletter" vol. 10 n°1, winter 1994, written by Lea Terhune :

A controversy that has been fueled over the last two years by a faction dissenting the recognition of the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa came to a head in March when Shamarpa - who, along with his cousin, the former General Secretary of Rumtek, Topga Yugyal, has spearheaded the fraction - presented a boy he claims to be the Karmapa at the Karmapa International Buddhist Institute in Delhi. Shamarpa had threatened to present a candidate for several years, and had mentioned several possible boys before settling on the one he produced on March 17.

A protest demonstration against Shamarpa's action by lay and religious members of the Tibetan Buddhist community from New Delhi, Sikkim, Ladakh, Himachal, Pradesh, and other areas turned violent when both sides began throwing bricks and bottles. The melee continued for half an hour before sufficient police arrived to contain it. Several hundred Tibetans took part in the protest. A number of people were injured. Inside, elaborate security precautions had been taken by the faction, who had prepared staves and stockpiled bricks and bottles. Of the crowd attending the meeting, about two-thirds were European disciples of Danish teacher Ole Nydahl and Shamarpa.

Shortly after the demonstration, the Kashag, the Dalai Lama's cabinet of ministers, issued a statement reiterating the authenticity of the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa who was enthroned at his ancient seat, Tsurphu Monastery in Tibet, in September 1992. On March 29th a delegation that included most of the elders of the Karma Kagyu lineage was received by His Holiness Dalai Lama in Dharamsala. His Holiness reaffirmed in no uncertain terms that there can be only one enthroned Karmapa, and he is Ugyen Trinley Dorje, who is currently at Tsurphu in Tibet. His Holiness, concerned about uninformed media reports instructed his cabinet to issue a statement of clarification, which they did on the 31st of March.

Addressing the press conference at the Meridien Hotel in New Delhi on April 4th were Tai Situpa, Goshir Gyaltsap Rinpoche, Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, Bokar Rinpoche, Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche, Drupon Rinpoche, Khenpo Lodoe of Sonada, Lama Gyaltsen, father of Kalu Rinpoche, and Mr. Tenzin Namgyal, General Secretary of Rumtek Monastery. The press conference was well attended by foreign and Indian press, although the newspaper where most of the distorted stories about Rumtek and the Karmapa have appeared did not send a representative.

A statement released by the Karma Kagyu representatives read, in part " On behalf of all members of the Kagyu community we collectively appeal to all followers and especially the followers of our dear and respected colleague Shamar Rinpoche to honor the sacred incarnation of the revered Karmapa. We earnestly appeal to all followers of the Kagyu order so that we can stand together and ensure that no external interests can break our unity and we can all work together for truth, peace and harmony which is our message to the world in these troubled times." This set the tone for the meeting.

Tibetans in general seem to be satisfied with the decision made by the Dalai Lama two years ago. The majority of the faction opposing the 17th Karmapa appears to consist of Western disciples of Ole Nydahl and Shamarpa from Austria, Germany, France and Denmark.

About a so-called Karmapa/Dalai-Lama partnership

Excerpts of an interesting commentary found on the website <http://www.nalandabodhi.org/> , which was an answer to the "Asiaweek" article, printed in October 2000. As customary on this site, the author is anonymous, but he comments everyday on information about Karmapa.

The Partnership Of The Dalai Lama And Karmapa As A Counterweight To Tibetan Factionalism

(...) Since the 1950's, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has been the great unifying force towering above this infighting and calming rivalries among these factions. Now he has been joined in this activity of pacification by His Holiness the Seventeenth Karmapa, who not only stands for a rapprochement between the two great rivalries of the Gelug and the Kagyu in the exile community, but within Tibet itself. It is not surprising that factions within these centuries old rivalries may be uncomfortable with this threat to their continuing vitality.

(...) In a world where Tibet's main religious leaders have been forced into exile, Tibet's survival depends on finding a way to stop these centuries-old stresses from undermining the future of Tibetan Buddhism itself. The future of Tibet cannot simply rest on the shoulders of His Holiness Dalai Lama or of His Holiness Karmapa, by themselves, or upon any single lineage tradition. But the future of Tibet can rest on the shoulders of united Tibetan peoples, and there is no better exemplar of what such unity might mean than the developing connection between the Dalai Lama and the Karmapa. Simple cooperation is enough. Maybe this is what the future of Tibetan Buddhism is about, politically and spiritually.

Thrangu Rinpoche's article on the controversy

This interview summarizes well the position of Situ Rinpoche's followers..

From the "United Karma Kagyu Federation Malaysia".
http://www.geocities.com/ukkfmy/karmapa/Thrangu_View.html

The Venerable 9th Thrangu Rinpoche speaks about the Karmapa controversy in Singapore, on Mai 24th 2000:

"But in the course of my lineage practice, I constantly prayed to the 16th Karmapa for his help to enable me to know clearly and deeply in my mind who is the real 17th Karmapa. Praying with pure motivation and with the blessings of the 16th Karmapa, I have concluded with absolute certainty that Ugyen Trinley Dorje from Tibet is the 17th Karmapa. I have reached this conclusion from my own practice and the blessings of the Karmapa, H.H. the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Ugyen Trinley Drodul Dorje Rinpoche".

This interview with Thrangu Rinpoche on the Karmapa controversy was translated to English Language by TDSPJ Translation Team which was originally in Chinese prepared by For You Information magazine. The interview was arranged by Karma Choying Kunyab Ling and given to the Chief Editor of For You Information magazine, Venerable Guang Chao at Karma Choying Kunyab Ling, on 24th May 2000.

Thrangu Rinpoche, the 17th Karmapa, and Tai Situpa Rinpoche

There is this controversy on the identification of the 17th Karmapa within the Kagyu Lineage. Two senior disciples of the 16th Karmapa have identified two different boys as the reincarnation of the 16th Karmapa. Tai Situ Rinpoche has identified Ugyen Trinley Dorje from Tibet whereas Shamar Rinpoche has identified Thaye Dorje from India. As a result, there now appears to be two 17th Karmapas. This has given rise to much confusion amongst the disciples. What is worse is that when the Khenpos and Rinpoches of the Kagyu Lineage were asked to clarify the situation by their disciples, they mostly said they recognised both of them. But Tai Situ Rinpoche and Shamar Rinpoche do not recognise each other's

choice as the reincarnation of the 16th Karmapa. I think controversial matter of this kind should be clarified by religious elders of the Kagyu Tradition. Recently, I was honoured with an opportunity to interview Thrangu Rinpoche. Not only is he a religious elder, he was also a religious teacher of Situ Rinpoche and Shamar Rinpoche. I think he is the best qualified Kagyu religious elder to clarify and inform us the truth.

Q. Has there ever been such a problem within the Karmapa Lineage?

A. H.H. The Karmapa is the first to reincarnate in the history of mankind. (A reincarnation is known as a Tulku in Tibetan) His Holiness has the longest lineage and the present Karmapa is the 17th reincarnation. Upon his passing, every Karmapa will go to the pure land and then in keeping with his aspirations, he will return to this world. There were questions as to who was the real Karmapa during the 8th, 10th and 12th reincarnations. However, by relying on their faith in the Karmapa and their determination to support and protect His Holiness, the disciples were able to resolve the matter on all the three different occasions. In the end, none of the incidents became a big problem.

Q. Why were there controversies and why did they not become problems? What were the reasons?

A. Usually, at the beginning of such a problem, there are two groups of people. Those in the first group do not have the capability and the psychic ability to identify the reincarnation of the Karmapa. Neither do they have the wisdom. What they rely on is their gift of the gab and mundane skill. So they doubt and question who really is the Karmapa. Those in the other group are true practitioners with accomplishment. Their wisdom enables them to know very clearly who is the real Karmapa. The moment there are these two different groups of people, there will be disagreement. The Karmapa is the embodiment of Sakyamuni Buddha and all the Boddhisattvas and their spiritual activities and accomplishment. Therefore, he is supra-mundane and is not at all disturbed by such disagreements. Consequently, none of them ever became a problem.

Q. According to Rinpoche, the controversy will eventually be resolved owing to the quality and merits of the Karmapa. But before that, disciples of the Karmapa are thrown into a state of disarray and confusion. Therefore, it is hoped that religious elders of the Kagyu Tradition, like Rinpoche, will enlighten the Kagyu followers. From Rinpoche's point of view, how do they ascertain exactly who is the real Karmapa? If they do not know how to do it, they may not know their real Karmapa for the rest of their life.

A. This is an important matter. It is a matter concerning the lineage of the whole tradition. I would like to use a simple analogy as an illustration. Assuming that there are two apples on the table, one of them is a real apple and the other, a fake. Should we be hungry for food, it would be good if we picked the real apple and threw away the fake. If we had done otherwise, we would go hungry. It is the same with the case of ascertaining correctly who is the real Karmapa and who is not. The consequences of a mistake are grave. Who has the ability to identify the real Karmapa and to teach the disciples how to differentiate? It is my duty and also the duty of the religious elders and senior Rinpoches within the Kagyu Lineage. I want to take up this responsibility now. I want to inform all my disciples unambiguously who is the real Karmapa and who is the Karmapa they must follow in their Dharma practice.

At the moment, two Karmapas have surfaced, one from India and the other from Tibet. In terms of worldly affairs, I have nothing to do with them. I am in Nepal. But in the course of my lineage practice, I constantly prayed to the 16th Karmapa for his help to enable me to know clearly and deeply in my mind who is the real 17th Karmapa. Praying with pure motivation and with the blessings of the 16th Karmapa, I have concluded with absolute certainty that Ugyen Trinley Dorje from Tibet is the 17th Karmapa. I have reached this conclusion from my own practice and the blessings of the Karmapa. We could also determine who is the real 17th Karmapa from the following:

First, there was a great Tibetan terton by the name of Chogyur Lingpa. In the record of his vision of the prophecies revealed to him, there are clear descriptions of various events in the life of the 1st to the 21st Karmapa. These descriptions include place of birth of the Karmapas and the names of their respective parents. According to this record of prophecies, Ugyen Trinley Dorje of Tsurphu Monastery is the real Karmapa.

Secondly, when I was with the 16th Karmapa, he wrote a prediction letter about his reincarnation when he was on his way to India from Tibet. After he arrived at Rumtek Monastery in Sikkim, he also wrote a letter in poetic form predicting his reincarnation. I had read both the letters myself. The first of the two letters stated clearly that Ugyen Trinley Dorje of Tibet is the 17th Karmapa. The second letter written in Rumtek, which I had read, again stated clearly that Ugyen Trinley Dorje of Tibet is the 17th Karmapa.

Thirdly, all the highly realized monks of the Vajrayana Buddhism, like H.H. the Dalai Lama, H.H. Sakya Trizin and many other compassionate religious practitioners, have in their wisdom said that Ugyen Trinley Dorje of Tibet is the 17th Karmapa.

I feel very fortunate to have obtained so much pure evidence; to have found the 17th Karmapa; to be able to prostrate to him. I hope all of you will generate pure motivation and also hope all of you will know that Ugyen Trinley Dorje is the 17th Karmapa.

Consciously discard the fake apple. Reach for the real one. You will reap tremendous benefit.

Q. Rinpoche said that the great terton master Chogyur Lingpa had written down prophecies about the 1st to the 21st Karmapa. What had he written about the prophecy for the 17th Karmapa?

A. Chogyur Lingpa was a contemporary of the 13th Karmapa. The predictions were really for the 14th through to the 21st reincarnations. On the prediction about the 17th Karmapa, not much was written. Nevertheless, several important points were recorded. The first important point in the record mentions that the Karmapa was together with Tai Situ Rinpoche on a mountain with plenty of rocks and lush trees. Their minds are inseparably joined as one. On the 15th Karmapa, the record states that he achieved great accomplishment in his yoga practice of meditating on the bindus. The fact that the 15th Karmapa had dakinis with him showed that he did engage in the yoga practice mentioned in the prediction. The prediction on the 16th Karmapa was rather special. The record mentions a double storey building. The 16th Karmapa, Rangjung Rigpe Dorje was seated on the ground floor and a statue of Sakyamuni Buddha was placed on the first floor. This illustration clearly shows that the 16th Karmapa was a very pure bikkhu. It also shows that the 16th Karmapa had many pure bikkhu disciples. The description that the 17th Karmapa is together with Tai Situ Rinpoche is meant to show there is disagreement in this reincarnation and the mind of the 17th Karmapa and the mind of Tai Situ Rinpoche are inseparable from each other.

Q. On the basis of the predictions made by Chogyur Lingpa, Rinpoche has concluded that Ugyen Trinley Dorje, who is together with Tai Situ Rinpoche, is the real Karmapa. In addition, Rinpoche has mentioned that you had read the two letters written by the 16th Karmapa. Could Rinpoche kindly tell us in detail the contents of these two letters?

A. The first letter consisting of two pages was written by the 16th Karmapa when he was in Tibet. After his arrival in Sikkim, he asked a printing company called Camata to print quite a number of copies. Many had the chance to read this letter. The second letter was written in Rumtek, Sikkim. Again many had the chance to read it. After reading it himself, the Abbot of the Rumtek Monastery asked the Karmapa for permission to have the second letter printed for wider circulation. Not agreeing to have too many copies around, the Karmapa allowed only 50 copies to be made. The common salient point in these two letters was the mention of the return of the 16th reincarnation to Tibet. In particular, the first letter said, "I am now in India, but I will return to Tibet very soon". The second letter also mentioned he would return to Tibet very soon. However, in his conversation with his disciples, he usually said, "I will not go back to Tibet". But in both his letters, he said, "I will return to Tibet very soon". Later on, his disciples realized that the main reason for him to say he would return to Tibet soon was to state his prediction that he would be enthroned in Tibet.

Q. Rinpoche has given such invaluable information and insights to prove that Ugyen Trinley Dorje is the real Karmapa. Since it has been proven as such, how is Shamarpa able to oppose it? As he is a former student of Rinpoche, what reasons does he have to oppose and insist on different views from his former teacher?

A. Before the 17th Karmapa was identified, I had spoken to Shamar Rinpoche regarding identifying the reincarnation. I had advised him not to do it (carrying out a different identification); not to create problem. For the sake of our master and for the sake of making a decision on this important matter, I hope all involved will disregard their own views and self-interest. But his relative (who has since passed away) was adamantly against my suggestion. Shamar Rinpoche did not accept my advice any more. Owing to those factors, I do not feel I should advise him again after that. This is because a practitioner of any Vajrayana method has no need to argue with anyone in his search for his master and refuge. This is very important.

Q. I heard that Shamar Rinpoche had wanted to have the letter written by the 16th Karmapa examined by scientific methods. What was his reason that prompted him to make such a demand?

A. The two letters mentioned earlier were not the prediction documents that Shamar Rinpoche wanted examined. Regarding forensic examination of the prediction documents, I personally think it is unnecessary, because the documents on reincarnation left by the past 15 Karmapas had never been subjected to forensic examination. Whenever there was a controversy, the disciples would finally resolve it with their faith in the Karmapa and his blessings. Similarly, in the present case, there is no need to have the documents examined by forensic experts. As a matter of fact, many high ranked monks and practitioners have through their compassion and wisdom pointed out clearly who is the Karmapa. All we need to do is to abide by what they say. Furthermore, forensic examination is used against criminals. The documents of prediction left behind by Karmapas are not only sacred but also blessed. Examining them as though they are documents left behind by criminals is rather strange from the religious point of view. On the basis of these two reasons, forensic examination of the documents is unnecessary.

Q. Now there are two Karmapas in India. One of them is real and the other is not. Has Rinpoche considered enthroning Ugyen Trinley Dorje, wearing the black hat, at Rumtek Monastery in a ceremony attended by Their Holinesses, Rinpoches and Khenpos invited from the various schools of the Vajrayana Tradition in order to obtain their recognition? Is there such a plan?

A. On the crowning with the black hat, it will be accomplished in due course, irrespective of whether we work hard towards it or we do not. Why? Because of his compassion and his aspiration to carry on with his Dharma activities to liberate all sentient beings, the Karmapa has returned to our fold of his own free will. With the power of such blessing, all Dharma activities of this nature will naturally come to fruition. There is no need for us to worry.

Q. Quite a number of Karma Kagyu disciples are followers of Shamarpa. If after hearing your teaching, and they believe Ugyen Trinley Dorje is the real Karmapa, how are they going to face their teacher Shamarpa?

A. The crux of the matter is the Karmapa lineage. It has to do with the purity of the whole Kagyu Lineage. This is because of the fact that in the Kagyu Lineage, the continuous transmission of all the blessing, Dharma practice, method, initiation, oral transmission, mantra and teaching come from the unbroken lineage of the Karmapas. In other words, if the Karmapa Lineage from the first to the 17th reincarnation is pure, then we will receive pure blessing in our practice. We can thus see that purity in the lineage is extremely important. This is the reason why we want to follow Karmapa Ugyen Trinley Dorje. If disciples of Shamarpa Rinpoche realise that the person chosen by him is not the real Karmapa and still think it is fine for them for as long as they follow Shamar Rinpoche because the issue of the real and fake Karmapa is immaterial to them, then their thinking is very wrong. As a matter of fact, they are cheating themselves. If you believe Ugyen Trinley Dorje is the Karmapa, your faith and the blessing of your master will quite naturally take you close to Karmapa Ugyen Trinley Dorje. In such a situation, you will naturally leave Shamar Rinpoche. At this juncture, I must clarify that I am not giving this teaching from the side of Tai Situ Rinpoche. I am not saying all this to show support for Tai Situ Rinpoche or Gyaltsab Rinpoche. Neither am I trying to criticize Shamar Rinpoche or negate his stand. The real purpose of this discussion today is to explain clearly that in Vajrayana practice, in whom we take refuge is the most important matter. The person/image to whom we express our aspiration and say our prayer must be a clear and pure one. This is very important. A clear and pure person/image will be of tremendous help to the practitioners. If the person in whom we take refuge and to whom we say our prayer is a wrong one, then there will not be much good result in our practice. This point is what I want to stress very strongly today. My purpose is to let Karma Kagyu practitioners know where their true refuge is. I hope all of you understand clearly the purpose of today's discussion is about true refuge. This topic is being discussed from the angle of Dharma practice.

Q. According to Rinpoche's teaching, Karma Kagyu practitioners take refuge in the Karmapa and visualize him as their Root Guru. If they take Shamarpa as their master and also believe Thaye Dorje as the Karmapa, then there should not be any problem. In the case of Karma Kagyu disciples who do not believe in Thaye Dorje but believe in Ugyen Trinley Dorje as the Karmapa, are they then betraying their master? How should they resolve this in their practice?

A. I do not take side, but I want to tell Kagyu disciples they must determine the correct spiritual path they want to follow in their Dharma practice. This is the most important thing to do. If we are Shamarpa's disciples on the one hand and are doubtful about his ways on the other, we still have no need to criticize him. There is also no need for us to stay put and continue to learn Dharma from him. If you have faith in Ugyen Trinley Dorje, you will immediately and naturally turn to him for Dharma teaching.

Q. If disciples of Shamar Rinpoche take refuge in Ugyen Trinley Dorje in their Dharma practice, from which Khenpos and Rinpoches should they learn Dharma?

A. There is no need for them to criticise Shamar Rinpoche, but they can learn Dharma from many Rinpoches of Ugyen Trinley Rinpoche. How does one find a new guru? In order to find a guru, one must keep on observing. When the speech, conduct and Dharma teaching of a teacher make you feel that his lineage is pure, you will develop the confidence to learn Dharma from him. If a Rinpoche says, "come, be my disciple", then something is not quite right with that Rinpoche. If one is not able to tell who is the real Karmapa and who is not, can one visualize both of them as Karmapas in one's practice? There is a Tibetan saying: "one cannot succeed with two minds; one cannot sew with two needles". Two minds means the absence of single-mindedness; one therefore cannot hope to achieve much. It is the same with visualizing Karmapa in Dharma practice. There are two types of people who visualise two Karmapas. The first type is made up of people who have no faith in either one, but have the belief that one of the two is the real Karmapa. As a result, their motivation for practice is only 50%. Their result reaped in the future will not be complete. Those in the second type are people who practiced under the 16th Karmapa. They are not sure if the 16th Karmapa has reincarnated and returned to the human realm. They think that whatever the situation is, it is best for them to follow the 16th Karmapa. Since he already passed away, they now visualize two 17th Karmapas and seek refuge under both. Their thinking is very erroneous. Nobody should visualize seeking refuge with a muddled head. There must be clear conviction in only one Karmapa and also in his return. In the 17th Karmapa one should take refuge. I am Thrangu Tulku. Whether my reincarnation is one or many does not affect the Karma Kagyu Tradition very much. In the case of Karmapa, all along there is only one reincarnation at any one time. This is what the disciples must firmly believe.

Q. Assuming that every disciple of the 16th Karmapa feels that since he took refuge in the 16th Karmapa and received the methods and Sadhanas from him, so he does not need to care who is the 17th Karmapa and in his practice, he just follows everything the 16th Karmapa taught him, can he do that?

A. This is illogical. Take an example. I had faith in my father when I was of the age of 1 to 30. From 30 to 40 years old, I did not have faith in him. Then you tell me I still have faith in my father! Maybe. In the case of the Karmapa Lineage, Karmapa's disciples must have sincere faith in the first Karmapa and in all his reincarnations, as well as the firm belief that the lineage is continuous and unbroken.

Q. Rinpoche has repeatedly said that there is only one Karmapa. But I have heard recently that Karmapa could have body, speech, and mind reincarnations. There could be many Karmapa reincarnations. Is there only one Karmapa (at any one time) or are there many? In the Karmapa history, were there cases of a Karmapa giving rise to many reincarnations after he passed away?

A. When some lamas took rebirth, they manifested body, speech, and mind reincarnations in order to expand their work of liberating all sentient beings wider. As for Karmapa, there is only one reincarnation at a time.

Q. Lastly, there have been many Khenpos and Rinpoches who come to Singapore to spread the dharma. When asked who is the real Karmapa, they will as a rule not say whom they support. The reason is that they are on good terms with Shamar Rinpoche and do not wish to offend anybody. What are Rinpoche's views on these lamas?

A. There are indeed many Karma Kagyu lamas who give people the impression that they are neutral, not offending either parties. Lamas of this category do not really care for the practice of their disciples. They also do not really want to teach their disciples the correct Dharma. When you tell your disciples a

particular Dharma teaching is correct, you cannot tell them in an ambiguous manner. You cannot have hesitation and reservation. Personally, I am not bothered by people's criticism that I am always for the protection of Ugyen Trinley Dorje. My genuine concern is whether every of my disciples can follow a pure lineage and from this pure lineage, develop bodhicita and compassion for the attainment of enlightenment. My aspiration in giving Dharma teaching is to look after and care for every sentient being.

Relationship between Shamar Rinpoche and Dalai Lama

Differing points of view about Karmapa between Shamar Rinpoche and Dalai Lama

In a recently published article in "Bouddhisme Actualites" (Bouddhist News) - a French weekly - Shamar Rinpoche talks about his relationship with the Dalai Lama. Having first expressed his respect towards the religious master, he explains: " The Dalai Lama heads a government-in-exile . So he applies a policy. In this context, it is better for him to have the Kagyu school under his rule, and it is my duty to oppose it. Previously, His Holiness the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa disagreed with him on these matters, for the very same reasons. Back then, Karmapa had reminded him that the Kagyu school had always been independant and that he did not want to associate the spiritual realm of Buddhism with the mundane realm of tibetan politics.

Today, this is the point about which we are still opposed . However, we do have a mutual understanding of our reciprocal position."

In his various press releases, the Dalai Lama does not hide his political views. His central concern is always the tibetan's people interest.

Interviewed about Urgyen Trinley, he answers : "Karmapa Rinpoche (Ed. note: meaning Urgyen Trinley) was fully aware of what was happening in his country, religious suppression, prison, tortures, environment destruction, genocide through sterilization of tibetan women, voluntary drug availability and emergence of behaviors meant to demean people." Further, the Dalai Lama says: "One can say there is an obvious connexion between Karmapa Rinpoche's arrival (Ed, note. in India) and the preservation of tibetan culture." "Actually, the true reason why Karmapa Rinpoche fled, is there is no freedom in Tibet. That is why he could not stay." "Now, he has stayed in India since several months, and he shows great determination in his fight for the tibetan people and religion." These words from the Dalai Lama are quoted from "La legende du Karmapa" (Karmapa's Legend) written by Ann Riquier, and published in France by Editions Plon.

There is such a political use of Karmapa's name on the Dalai Lama side, that now international media start citing Karmapa Urgyen Trinley a possible successor to the Dalai Lama, what he denies.

The (scarce) speeches from Urgyen Trinley are quite amazing for anyone who knew the 16th Karmapa. The later's words were always totally uninvolved with partisan discourses. He never supported more the tibetan cause than that of any people, and was greatly suspicious towards the tibetan government. He forbade his entourage to deal in politics and firmly expelled from Rumtek any who would depart from this rule.

Let us recall what was the 16th Karmapa's view for Tibet's future. In his work "Le livre bouddhiste de la sagesse et de l'amour" (The bouddhist book of wisdom and love), (Michel Lafon, publisher) author Gilles Grasdorff interviews the 17th Karmapa Trinlay Thaye Dordje and reminds us of the predictions the 16th Karmapa said to Guendun Rinpoche: " Moreover, it will be very difficult for Tibet to be independant again, and even in this case, we surely could not go back there. We will remain here, in India. There will come a time when difficulties will arise for some disciples who will have no place to go ...(...) In Tibet, there will come a time when Dharma will be restored and people will again be able to practice, but to a lesser degree, certainly not like before, when Tibetan could devote their lives to practice. .. In Bhutan, where the situation is stable now, there is no guarantee it will remain such ... In Sikkim, as well, everything is fine now, but it may change overnight ... As for Rumtek , sadly, matters will not remain as they are..." These excerpts show how little concerned with going back to Tibet the 16th Karmapa was. To him, it was past history, and his works in India showed he was completely occupied with India and the West. The wishes he asked his disciples to fulfill after his death, concerned these countries only. Building Tsurphu again was no priority to him. What mattered to him was Dharma , whatever the country .

The Dalai Lama, as a political leader, can but only work for going back to Tibet: it is his country, and most Tibetans live there. And so there are two coherent views colliding in this 17th Karmapa controversy:

- the political view from the Dalai Lama, who uses these events for what he perceives as the Tibetan people's interest

- the spiritual view from Shamarpa who seeks only to find again his spiritual master, so that the transmission of Buddhist teachings within the Kagyu school can go on

Shamarpa's position about Ugyen Trinley

Shama Rinpoche never fought against Ugyen Trinley, recognized by China and the Tibetan government. He can but accept this fait accompli.

As a practical viewpoint, Ugyen Trinley's presence in Tibet is not a bad thing. China backs Dharma, Tsurphu monastery is being rebuilt and enlarged, the Kagyu lineage is in the forefront and receives subsidies from Beijing, Tibetans have a lama, religious activities are promoted. All this brings about a renewal for Dharma. Shamarpa considers that this Karmapa has a political role, that he is a puppet for Chinese and other interest groups. He can not prevent this state of affairs, which, after all, might have some usefulness.

Nevertheless, he has recognized the authentic Karmapa and proposes to all (China, Dalai Lama, JAC from Sikkim) to recognize two Karmapas. Karmapa Ugyen Trinley for the Tsurphu seat, and Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje for the Rumtek seat in Sikkim.

Having two Karmapas never bothered him, because this would be a good mean to stop controversy within the Kagyu lineage. This is what he proposes in June 2000 to the Dalai Lama when they meet in Washington. This idea can not be accepted by Situ Rinpoche who recognizes only one Karmapa, his own.

Shamar Rinpoche met the Dalai Lama several times, in 1992 and most notably, in 1997 and July 2000. Shamar Rinpoche informed the Dalai Lama he does not recognize Ugyen Trinley as the authentic Karmapa, but that he knows a disciple of the 16th Karmapa who would have information about this reincarnation. The Dalai Lama encourages him to proceed with his search.

On the face of it, each meeting between the two lamas is very cordial. Nevertheless, various mails sent as follow-ups by the private office of the Dalai Lama often give a distorted version of the exchanges during these meetings, as can be seen below.

Mail exchange between Shamar Rinpoche and the Dalai Lama Office

From Dalai Lama Office to Shamar Rinpoche

Holder of the Karma Kagyu Lineage.

I hereby send you our response to the points you raised at your meeting on the 3rd of January 1997 with H.H. the Dalai Lama. (List of the points you mentioned during the meeting:)

You expressed the desire that H.H. the Dalai Lama meets with and gives the novice-vows of monastic ordination to the young reincarnate of H. H. the 16th Karmapa (who you have recognised) and that the young reincarnate's parents also meet with H. H. the Dalai Lama.

You said that Chobgye Tri Rinpoche also recognises the same reincarnate.

You also requested the Dalai Lama's permission that Ugyen Trinley be the Throne-Holder of the Karmapa's seat in Tibet Tsurphu Monastery and that the reincarnate that you have recognised be the Holder of the Karmapa's seat in India, Rumtek Monastery.

Our response:

In the past you've repeatedly informed H. H. the Dalai Lama that the late Karmapa left instructions regarding the circumstances of his future reincarnation with a bhikshu who has adhered to the moral ethics of monastic tradition in a very pure manner and that when the time is right you would inform H. H. the Dalai Lama of the contents of these instructions. H. H. the Dalai Lama responded that if there is an authentic source regarding these instructions, a second Karmapa-reincarnation is a possibility. However, at His Holiness's recent meeting with you, when analysing the implications of what you said, it seems to us that the older bhikshu you have spoken of is Chobgye Tri Rinpoche.

We, on the 18th of January 1997, through our representative in New Delhi, gave you a copy of a letter from Chobgye Tri Rinpoche addressed to H. H. the Dalai Lama. In 1996 our representative in Nepal approached Chobgye Tri Rinpoche to ask how he had recognised the reincarnate that you have put forth. Chobgye Tri Rinpoche, in response, wrote to H. H. the Dalai Lama that he hadn't made the recognition. This letter made it clear that you don't have an authentic source for your claim. Thus, there is no possibility of a second Karmapa-reincarnation.

There can be just one head of the Tsurphu and Rumtek Monasteries. There is no possibility of two heads. H. H. the Dalai Lama has clearly & comprehensively recognised the Karmapa-reincarnation residing in Tibet. Regarding this there is no room for change. Also you, at a previous meeting with our representative of the Department of Religious Affairs and representatives of the various Tibetan Religious Lineages, said that you have no intention of creating disturbance regarding the position associated with the traditional seat of the Karmapas.

Regarding H. H. the Dalai Lama's meeting with and giving monastic ordination to the reincarnate, we said that it is very important to consult with and clarify all details with the Situ and Gyaltsab Rinpoches as well as their associates. Your response was that this can be done, that it can be done through the Department of Religious Affairs. Thus the Department of Religious Affairs has sent the minutes of your meeting with H. H. the Dalai Lama to you and the individuals associated with this issue.

On the 29th of January Gyaltsab Rinpoche, Trangu Rinpoche, a representative of Situ Rinpoche, two Kagyu-representatives, the treasurer of the Black Hat tradition, the president of the small Zung Drel Association, the president of the Sikkim Hla-De Association, the vice-president of the Himalaya Association, representatives of nineteen centers in eight countries, seventy-nine representatives of thirty-two monasteries in India and Nepal called on the Ministers of the Tibetan Government in exile on the 29th of January. They also called on H. H. the Dalai Lama on the 30th of January. In brief they discussed what is outlined below. The people meeting with H.H. the Dalai Lama told him that as to the history of the Karmapas and associated predictions there has, up till now, never been, at the same time, a number of reincarnations, such as reincarnations of body, speech and mind. Also, if His Holiness gives an audience and monastic vows to the young reincarnate, problems and arguments in the Kamtsang Kagyu Lineage will never come to an end. Therefore, the individuals present insisted, it isn't feasible to recognise the young reincarnate as a body, speech or mind incarnation of the Karmapa or to give an audience and monastic vows.

Therefore, for the sake of preventing further problems and for the sake of reconciliation, H. H. the Dalai Lama can not give an audience or monastic vows to the young reincarnate for the time being. Please keep this in mind.

The Office of His Holiness The Dalai Lama
The 3rd of February 1997
Mr Lojin

Letter of reply from Shamar Rinpoche

To The Private Office of the Dalai Lama. Dharamsala
Feb. 7, 1997

I have received your letter dated the 3rd of Feb. 1997, where you informed me of H. H. the Dalai Lama's decision concerning the topics I discussed with him on the 3rd of Jan. 1997. What was decided then has, according to your letter, changed. There are, in your letter of the 3rd of Feb., points you did not discuss at the meeting. It may be that you forgot to mention those points while we were talking face to face. It seems that you after our meeting remembered those points, points that are far removed from the truth, and that you then wanted to communicate them. I have stated my response to each of your points below.

Chobgye Tri Rinpoche is a Lama that I have respect for and faith in. Therefore, what he told me in private about the late Karmapa's reincarnation I regard as the auspicious words of a holy man. However, I took his indication to be one source among others and to be investigated. Fundamentally, it is on the basis of my own efforts that I have arrived at my decision. I have pursued many avenues, until there were absolutely no doubts in my mind. I have, in using traditional methods, supplicated enlightened deities in order to receive their indications. I have no need for requesting the assistance of Chobgye Tri Rinpoche

or any other individual. H. H. the 16th Karmapa Rigpa'i Dorje recognised me to be the Shamar reincarnation. It is over thirty years ago that he enthroned me and established this. In the Karma Kamtsang Lineage the Shamarpas are the authority adjoining that of the Karmapas. Thus there is no individual to succeed a Shamarpa in taking the decision who is the authentic reincarnation of a Karmapa. However, I do not insist upon tradition for the sake of forcing others to comply with my decision. It is up to the Karma Kamtsang follower whether or not he desires to respect tradition or chooses another approach.

During our recent meeting we just touched on the subject of Chobgye Tri Rinpoche and the associated issue. I have, during the Karma Kagyu Conference in New Delhi 1996, clearly explained each and every detail of my encounter with him and the tape-recordings of the Conference are available everywhere. I'm aware of that Chobgye Tri Rinpoche was approached by your representative in Nepal and that Chobgye Tri Rinpoche gave his response in a letter to H. H. the Dalai Lama. He wrote me too and I have enclosed a copy of his letter. Thus it is clear that the details I disclosed at the Karma Kagyu Conference ten months ago accord with the truth. As you mentioned in your letter, at my recent meeting with H. H. the Dalai Lama I did not go into these details. This is because I presumed that H. H. the Dalai Lama has knowledge of them as the resolutions of the same Conference are common knowledge. However, you pretend that I implied that Chobgye Tri Rinpoche is the person I have knowledge of as the individual who is in possession of H. H. the Karmapa Rigpa'i Dorje's instructions as to his reincarnation. In fact, I did not utter one word in this direction to H. H. the Dalai Lama. I also did not say that the person in question is a bhikshu upholding moral ethics in a very pure manner. What I did say was that this individual is a disciple of the late Karmapa, a disciple who has kept his relationship with the Karmapa pure and who the late Karmapa held in high esteem. In 1994 when I met with H. H. the Dalai Lama at the Centaur Hotel close to New Delhi's Airport he said, that the person in question would be a bhikshu upholding pure moral ethics. At the time I immediately responded that this is not the case. At our recent meeting H. H. the Dalai Lama stated the same thing again, but as I thought it quite unimportant I did not attempt to correct him which I now apologise for. However, your mention of a bhikshu's moral ethics also apply to the discipline of a bodhisattva, so in fact it is not necessary to correct your words.

It was for the sake of showing respect to H. H. the Dalai Lama that I requested an audience with His Holiness on behalf of the young incarnate of the late Karmapa. It is common knowledge that during the later part of the late Karmapa's life, H. H. the Dalai Lama and H. H. the Karmapa were in constant opposition. For the sake of discontinuing this trend I did my best to establish an auspicious connection when requesting that H. H. the Dalai Lama gives monastic vows to the late Karmapa's reincarnation, who I have recognised. I never requested that His Holiness acknowledge the young incarnate as a body, speech or mind incarnation. I have no need at all for such an acknowledgement because H. H. the Karmapa is not obliged to request permission to take rebirth in this world. The claim that he needs a visa to enter this world is laughable to each and every individual in the three realms that make up our universe. China's new political trend has allowed the recognitions of the Karmapa and the Panchen. In this situation the Private Office of the Dalai Lama's political response was inadequate. The Office made public that China's choice of the Karmapa's reincarnation is authentic but it rejected China's choice of the Panchen's reincarnation for its own gain. I, the Shamar reincarnation, have put an end to the attempts to drag the Lineage of the Karmapas in the dirt. This, to prevent politics from entering the ways of religion, is of benefit not just to the Kagyu School of Tibetan Buddhism, but to all schools that are based in a lineage of successive reincarnated masters. To prevent this is extremely beneficial in terms of remaining self-governing. The Private Office of the Dalai Lama stated, among other things, that it would merely consider to allow a body, speech or mind reincarnation of the late Karmapa on the basis of a reliable letter of instruction by the late Karmapa. This amounts to a medieval dictatorial command and I understand that this is the approach that you desire. But it is completely unacceptable to me. Our Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje is completely beyond the trap of such deceptive political schemes. As is known throughout the world he is fully established as one of the twenty-one Karmapas in accordance with the prophecy of the fifth Karmapa Dösum Khyenpa. There is no need whatsoever to request a reconfirmation of this fact in the disguise of a body, speech or mind reincarnation. Such a reconfirmation has never before, from the time of the first Karmapa Düsum Khyenpa, been required. So why would it be necessary today?

Similarly, with respect to Rumtek Monastery, the then Dharma King of Sikkim offered that property to H. H. the Gyalwa Karmapa Rigpa'i Dorje who constructed his seat there. As H. H. the Dalai Lama, from the time of H. H. the Gyalwa Karmapa Rigpa'i Dorje, has never had any right of influence there, there is absolutely no need for his permission to allow or not to allow a Karmapa to take possession of his rightful seat. However, Situ bribed the previous Chief Minister of Sikkim Mr. Nar Bhadrur Bhandari who, using the local armed forces, took over the Monastery by force. But Mr. Bhandari lost the election. Now, Rumtek Monastery is subject to litigation in the Indian courts. This legal dispute is the only circumstance that hinders the young incarnate from going there. His going there does not depend on a permission from H. H. the Dalai Lama. All of us are the same in that we are refugees. Why bother to request permission to enter Sikkim from a fellow refugee? The fact that H. H. the Dalai Lama does not have the authority to

prevent the supreme Karmapa Thaye Dorje to occupy his throne, to take possession of his monastery in New Delhi, clearly demonstrates that he also has no right of influence over Rumtek Monastery. Rumtek Monastery is situated in India, because of that and for many other reasons I, out of concern, insisted on requesting H. H. the Dalai Lama that this kind of immoderate course of action that can not achieve its aim be given up. I did say that we will not attempt to obtain influence over the Tsurphu seat of Karmapa Ugyen Trinley. Similarly, as Rumtek Monastery is situated in India, neither the Government of China nor Gyalwa Karmapa Ugyen Trinley have laid claim to Rumtek Monastery. All Monasteries and Institutions in India that belonged to the late Gyalwa Karmapa Rigpa'i Dorje, the Rumtek Monastery: the Karmapa Institute in New Delhi and other branches in India the late Karmapa, who was the legal possessor, transferred to the Karmapa Charitable Trust. Therefore, if the Private Office of the Dalai Lama makes a lot of inadmissible claims as to property that does not belong to it, the rumours that the Tibetan Government in Exile is up to placating the Government of China for its own purposes, that the Tibetan Government in Exile tries to make out that Sikkim is part of Tibet will be proven to be true. Thus, both the name of the Dalai Lama and his aims will be negatively affected.

Furthermore, regarding the great Gyalwa Karmapa obtaining an audience with H. H. the Dalai Lama, you spoke of difficulties, that you among other things, must request the permission of Situ Rinpoche. This is clearly stated in your letter. Just so, it is satisfactory for us if the present decision to not grant an audience is maintained for as long as the Karmapa is not yet an adult as our primary concern regards his education. Another reason for why an audience is not desirable at this point is that we have lost our country and we have taken refuge in India. Situ and Gyaltsab can not meet here in India because Situ is barred from entering the country and Gyaltsab is barred from leaving the country as both of them have transgressed the laws of India. It is simply because of the kindness of the Indian Government, the fact that this country's policies are peace-loving, that they at this point have not been imprisoned. Personally, I have not fallen into the abyss of having to ask for permission from two of the most discredited individuals among us refugees.

Our Karmapa, the supreme Trinley Thaye Dorje, resides in India where the government shows respect and veneration for him. India is a country of great consequence for Tibet and the Tibetans. It is the source of Tibetan Buddhism and it is the country that gave shelter and protection to the Tibetans who fled Tibet in 1959. India has showed us Tibetans great kindness. Two of the most powerful nations in Asia are India and China, and as I mentioned above, the Indian Government holds Karmapa Thaye Dorje in high esteem. To attempt to gain circumstances better than those would amount to discarding with a diamond in order to obtain a semi-precious stone. We are perfectly satisfied with the present state of affairs, our joy is comparable to the joy of samadhi (meditative absorption) at the highest level. As you know, all of us are dependent on the Government of India for our welfare, there are no other options. With respect to our Lineage it is up to us, who are part of that lineage, to achieve its aims. Right now, except for the situation at Rumtek Monastery, our aims have been accomplished. The Rumtek Monastery property, its land and its movable assets are protected as a result of my efforts. Regarding the difficulties of the monk-body, the Sikkim Police Force is charged with keeping order. These difficulties are to be resolved by the court, that is how law abiding individuals go about solving disputes. Therefore, we're simply waiting for the court's ruling.

H. H. the Dalai Lama, in terms of his responsibilities, has until now, again and again, advised the Tibetans in exile to be prepared to go back to Tibet, that they shouldn't set up their permanent homes outside Tibet, that they shouldn't even set up furniture in their homes. To make efforts toward going back to Tibet is His Holiness's responsibility, but the Rumtek Monastery is not. Therefore, my final request to the Private Office of the Dalai Lama is that it does not involve His Holiness's name in this problematic issue because Rumtek Monastery is a Sikkim Monastery and as such there is no possibility of bringing it with one to Tibet. In your letter of the 3rd of Feb. you clearly stated that if our young reincarnate is granted an audience with H. H. the Dalai Lama there would be endless problems. If this is your true viewpoint why did you then from the very beginning act as the very people who added fuel to this fire of problems. The consequence of this course of action is that the people of Sikkim have come to suffer the most. Would it be of any benefit if H. H. the Dalai Lama appears as the individual who has created disturbance in one of the states in India? I request you to apply a more far-seeing approach. You ought to be cautious in your undertakings! The blazing fire of political schemes ignited by Situ and Gyaltsab who used the Karmapa reincarnation as a pretext was, on the basis of peaceful means, put out by me before it had consumed everything. Documents relating to the course of events, from the beginning to the end, prove this. But is it not the case that H. H. the Dalai Lama, in that he has accepted the Nobel Peace Prize, should act on the basis of methods that bring about peace and happiness, methods that are a hundred times more peace-loving than my own. Recently, a group of people associated with Situ and Gyaltsab obtained an audience in Dharamsala with H. H. the Dalai Lama. They made out that they represent a large number of monasteries and Buddhist Centres in many countries. But we know very well who they are. Previously, Situ and his associates bribed the then Chief Minister of Sikkim, Mr. Nar Bhadur Bhandari who by then had become dictatorial. In consequence, they destroyed their root-Guru's

seat, which is an extremely evil deed. At the time Mr. Kunzang Sherab, who, I was told, is in the present under investigation by CBI (the Central Bureau of Investigation), and his associates, among others a group of juvenile delinquents from Lal Bazaar, Gangtok, gave gifts of food and clothing to a number of crazed Sikkim subjects. Thus, they were able to bring these individuals to Rumtek. The resulting gathering they referred to as 'The International Kagyu Meeting'. At this 'Meeting' resolutions that are blatant distortions of the truth were made. The resolutions they then submitted to the Land Revenue Office of Gangtok. The Office came to know that the 'Meeting' had no legal authority to take the decisions it had taken, that it in fact was illegal. Therefore, the Office did not accept the resolutions. It is these very individuals who had an audience with H. H. the Dalai Lama. But as we are not children, we are far from being impressed either by these people or their number. If, hypothetically, these people were who they pretend to be, as I mentioned earlier, they are still associated with two of the most discredited people in our community, that is, they are followers of lawless individuals. Therefore, we are not at all impressed. Furthermore, I was told that H. H. the Karmapa's General Secretary was among this group of people during their audience with H. H. the Dalai Lama. Regarding this, the late Karmapa Rigpa'i Dorje appointed two General Secretaries. The older General Secretary passed away many years ago. The younger General Secretary, Tragpa Yongdu, nephew of the late Karmapa, is still alive and well. Therefore we enquired at the Embassy of China if the Tibetan Karmapa Ugyen Trinley had dispatched a General Secretary to H. H. the Dalai Lama's residence in Dharamsala. The answer was that this is not the case, that not a single person has been sent to Dharamsala. So, be aware of that the 'General Secretary' who came to His Holiness' residence is an impostor.

H. H. The Shamarpa Chokyi Lodrö
The Karmapa Monastery
New Delhi Feb. 7, 1997

Shamar Rinpoche and Dalai Lama meet in Washington, June 20th, 2000

Statement of Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche Concerning His Meeting with H.H. the Dalai Lama On June 20, 2000

On June 20, 2000, I had the privilege of meeting with H.H. the Dalai Lama in Washington, D.C. I feel fortunate to have enjoyed a frank, cordial and thorough exchange of views with him about the issues surrounding the Karmapa problem. H.H. the Dalai Lama informed me that he will insure that Ugyen Trinley is not emeshed in the controversy between Situ Rinpoche and me. I greatly respect him for taking this position, and I wholeheartedly support it.

Regarding the disagreement between Situ Rinpoche and me, H.H. the Dalai Lama requested that we try to settle our differences and develop an amicable relationship. In deference to His Holiness and for the sake of harmony within the Kagyu community, I am open to this possibility. Since the start of our discord, I have only reacted passively and defensively to Situ Rinpoche's claims, accusations and overtly hostile actions. If his coalition stops its aggressive maneuvering, the problem will naturally dissolve.

In spite of inadequate evidence and proper religious procedure, I concurred that Ugyen Trinley Dorje be a Karmapa and the seat holder of Tsurphu monastery in Tibet. I fully appreciate the reasons behind His Holiness's initial consent to naming Ugyen Trinley as a Karmapa: the government of China, in collusion with some Kagyu lamas, had already recognized him as Karmapa. If the Karmapa Ugyen Trinley's flight from China in late 1999 was indeed for the genuine purpose of gaining religious freedom, I congratulate H.H. the Dalai Lama and our Tibetan Government in Exile over this development.

During my discussion with H.H. the Dalai Lama, I clearly reiterated my unwavering position that the Karmapas and Shamarpas always have shared equal authority within the Karma Kagyu Lineage. Throughout the disagreement with Situ Rinpoche and his followers, my primary concern has been to protect the spiritual integrity and pure lineage of the Karma Kagyu. As historically is the role of the Shamarpa and according to accepted Karma Kagyu practices, I managed to find the genuine reincarnation of the late 16th Karmapa Rigpe Dorje. The 17th Karmapa Thaye Dorje alone is, and always will be, the spiritual Karmapa of the Karma Kagyu.

Karmapa Thaye Dorje is proving himself an exceptional religious leader by manifesting many spiritual qualities. From an early age, he has steadfastly displayed a compassionate and gentle nature. In the past year as he has traveled throughout the world and offered blessings and teachings to countless people, they have experienced him as a Bodhisattva and accepted his authenticity.

I am very grateful that H.H. the Dalai Lama was willing to meet the Karmapa Thaye Dorje in 1997. Although this could not occur due to a threat of violence from Situ Rinpoche's party, I deeply appreciate His Holiness's kind intentions. I am also pleased to have had the fruitful meeting with H.H. the Dalai Lama last month in Washington, and I look forward to a continuing, cordial dialogue with him.

July 10, 2000

From Shamar Rinpoche to Tenzin Geshe Tethong

Private secretary to H.H. the Dalai-Lama
Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, India.

Tenzin Geyche Tethong
Office of H. H. the Dalai Lama
Dharamsala, H. P. India

July 29, 2000

Dear Mr. Tenzin G. Tethong,

Thank you for your letter of July 14, 2000. I would like to clarify an apparent misunderstanding contained in it.

When I met with H. H. the Dalai Lama on January 3, 1997, I did not identify Chogye Trichen Rinpoche as the person who has the Sixteenth Karmapa's instructions regarding the rebirth of the Seventeenth Karmapa Thaye Dorje. I also did not request any recognition for Thaye Dorje to be Karmapa, nor did I request permission for him to be the seat holder of Rumtek Dharma Chakra Center.

During my visit with His Holiness I requested that he grant an audience to the Karmapa Thaye Dorje who had been independently recognised and enthroned according to traditional Karma Kagyu methods. H. H. the Dalai Lama happily agreed to this, but unfortunately the audience could not take place at the appointed time because of threats of violence made by Situ Rinpoche's party.

Regarding the matter of how I recognised the Karmapa Thaye Dorje, I informed H. H. the Dalai Lama that I started the investigation of the baby boy after hearing the auspicious indications that Chogye Trichen Rinpoche reported to me. This has been my consistent position from the beginning, which I stated publicly and in writing at the International Karma Karma Kagyu Conference *ten months before* my meeting with H. H. the Dalai Lama.

After my meeting with His Holiness I again clarified this point. A letter to me from the office of H. H. the Dalai Lama dated February 3, 1997, with an enclosed copy of Chogye Trichen Rinpoche's letter to the Tibetan Government in Exile dated July 29, 1996, refers to this issue.

Chogye Trichen Rinpoche's letter verifies that he had indications. However, it does not refer in any way to a request by the Office of the Tibetan Government in Exile regarding the Sixteenth Karmapa's instructions. In my reply to the Tibetan Government in Exile, I again tried to clarify this point, and stated that Chogye Trichen Rinpoche is *not* the person who has the instructions of the Sixteenth Karmapa.

During my most recent meeting on June 20, 2000, with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, he again casually referred to Chogye Trichen Rinpoche as having the instructions of the Sixteenth Karmapa. Out of respect for His Holiness I did not argue this point directly, but told him that I have a copy of the letter mentioned above.

I will not respond to other issues raised in your letter at this time, however I feel that I must mention the actual role of Chogye Trichen Rinpoche so that the record is clear and correct. I fully understand that because of your busy schedule and many responsibilities it is difficult for you to check all of these details. However, if you trace the past records the chronology will become clear.

With regards,
Shamar Rinpoche

A quick glance at events from years 1995 to 1999

Rumtek monks go on hunger strike

On 8 August, 1995, Topga Yulgyal and the Kagyu monks marched peacefully towards Rumtek to regain their place of worship. Situ Rinpoche alleged that Topga Yulgyal brought a convoy of about eight trucks, crammed with about 200 men to take over the Rumtek monastery by force. The intruders preceded their attack by cutting off all the telephone lines in the monastery. They were met with force and denied entry to their cloister.

Situ Rinpoche has a different tale to tell. According to him, when the men brought by Topga entered about 500 yards into the compound of the monastery, the residents realised what was going on. The Rumtek residents lined both sides of the road and stood in front of the attackers, singing prayers. Then the Sikkim police intervened and did not allow them to proceed to the monastery. In order to protest against the continuing occupation of Rumtek, the monks started an indefinite hunger strike at the gates to the temple. Two months later, with no prospects of winning the place back, the strike was called off.

On the night of 11 September, three monks suddenly appeared at a secluded place while Tsewang Chorden, representative of the laity in Rumtek, in his sixties, was returning home. He had served the 16th Karmapa and his family. Three monks shouted, "It is him, it is him" and attacked him. He fainted. When he regained consciousness, he found himself lying in the ditch next to the road with multiple injuries. He was taken to the hospital where he remained for a fortnight. The old man recognised one of the assailants known as Patru.

Rumtek today remains in the hands of outsiders while the monks, living the lives of refugees, are still prevented from returning to their homes.

In March of 1996 an International Karma Kagyu Conference took place in KIBI, New Delhi. The conference was convened at the request of the Rumtek monastic community. Representatives from a few Kagyu monasteries in the region as well as from numerous Kagyu centres around the world participated in the meeting. Shamar Rinpoche acquainted the guests with the background of his recognition of Thaye Dorje as the 17th incarnation of Karmapa.

See records for this meeting (yellow book entitled : " International Karma Kagyu Conference). Large excerpts from these have been used in this document.

In December of 1996 Thaye Dorje presided over the Monlam Chenmo, great aspiration prayers, in Bodh Gaya, the place of the Buddha's enlightenment. For the first time in history a Karmapa had his hair cut in Bodh Gaya - a ceremony that formally initiated his activity in the world. Over 6000 monks and nuns, as well as a large number of lamas from the Himalayan region, attended the event. Today Thaye Dorje resides in Kalimpong, in the eastern Himalayas, only a few hours' drive away from Rumtek itself. He receives an increasing number of local and overseas disciples and well-wishers.

In September 1997, Topga Rinpoche died of liver cancer. Later, at his cremation in Thimphu (Bhutan), Trinley Thaye Dorje was officially welcomed by the Bhutanese royal family as the 17th Karmapa.

A 79-member delegation comprising activists of the joint action committee led by Situ and Gyaltsab Rinpoches met the Dalai Lama and the kashag (cabinet) of the Tibetan government in-exile at Dharamsala on 29 and 30 January in 1997. The delegation expressed its reservation to an audience promised to Shamar Rinpoche by the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama conceded the request and did not grant an audience to Shamar Rinpoche. A letter in this regard was sent to Shamar Rinpoche by the office of the Dalai Lama on 3 February. However, Shamar Rinpoche says he still holds the Dalai Lama in high esteem but in the same breadth adds that the process of the reincarnation of the Karmapa does not need the seal of approval of the Dalai Lama.

In November 1997, Ugyen Trinley, the candidate of Situ Rinpoche as the Karmapa, recognised a four-year-old boy from Chushul near Lhasa as the reincarnation of Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche. Situ Rinpoche and his secretary Ngoche Kargay smuggled the purported reincarnation to Kalimpong in Darjeeling district of India and installed him at the retreat centre of the monastery of Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche at Lava near Kalimpong. On the other hand, Trinley Thaye Dorje, the candidate of Shamar

Rinpoche as the Karmapa, recognised the son of Beru Khyentse Rinpoche in 1996 as the reincarnation of Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche. This boy is studying in the monastery of his father.

Situ Rinpoche too searched for the reincarnation of Kalu Rinpoche. The reincarnation is the son of Gyaltshen, who was the secretary of the previous Kalu Rinpoche. The Dalai Lama too recognised this reincarnation. In April 1993, when the Dalai Lama consecrated Kalu Rinpoche's stupa at Salugara on the outskirts of Siliguri, he performed the hair-cutting ceremony for Kalu Rinpoche's reincarnation and also attended another ceremony in the monastery of Kalu Rinpoche at Sonada.

The daughter of Beru Kyentse Rinpoche is the reincarnation of the nun Gelongma Pag-Mo .

The succession war again hotted up in January 2000.

Situpa's banishment is lifted

The right wing Bharatiya Janata Party-led alliance government lifted the ban on the entry of Situ Rinpoche in 1998. Ram Jethmalani, a minister in the Government of India, pleaded his case. Dugo Bhutia, a former MLA of Sikkim, filed a special leave petition in the Supreme Court of India challenging the revocation of the ban order. Earlier, a writ petition in this regard in Delhi High Court had been dismissed by 26 August, 1998 with the observations that as the matter concerned the policy of the Government of India in relation to the neighbouring country, it was not appropriate for the high court to entertain the public interest litigation.

The Supreme Court too dismissed the petition and observed that in all questions like this where the Government of India decided not to allow a person to enter this country, it was not appropriate for any court to decide otherwise or to interfere in such a decision.

Basis for Situ Rinpoche's banishment

N. D. George, Director in the Home Ministry, in a counter affidavit on behalf of the Government of India, admitted that the situation in Sikkim had become fragile and capable of being exploited by anti-national elements as also by the external agencies with possibilities of attempts to divide communities and groups. The situation was extremely delicate and sensitive, involving imminent danger of breach of peace and public order as there were frequent clashes between the two rival groups.

In 1994, Situ Rinpoche went abroad without intimation to the Government of India. Even in the past he had frequently visited foreign countries including Nepal and China without intimation and without seeking permission of the government. Under the existing rules, Tibetan refugees in India are required to obtain a 'No Objection to Return to India Certificate' before

proceeding to any foreign country. At the same time, complaints were received about Situ's involvement in a deal of land measuring 534 *bighas* in Gurgaon in Haryana without permission from the Reserve Bank of India and in violation of the provisions of FERA. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) began investigation into the case. Situ Rinpoche was also reported to be in possession of a Bhutanese diplomatic passport.

After considering his frequent visits to Nepal and Tibet (China) without prior intimation or permission of the Government of India, and his role in the discovery of reincarnation of the Karmapa with suspected active assistance of Chinese authorities coupled with the possession of a Bhutanese diplomatic passport, making him liable to lose his Tibetan refugee status, the Government of India decided to put Situ Rinpoche in the 'suspect list'. The warning circular 28/94 dated 2 August, 1994 placing him in the 'prior-reference category' stated that he should not be allowed visa (entry, transit or tourist) without prior reference to the Government of India.

The Government of India admitted receiving a number of representations and communications for review of the restrictions. The matter was periodically reviewed in interdepartmental meetings at various levels. The matter was finally considered at the level of the home secretary where it was noted that the intelligence agencies had opposed revocation of the warning circular, as it would result in serious law and order situation in Sikkim in case Situ Rinpoche went there.

However, he is still debarred from entering Jammu & Kashmir, north-eastern states and Sikkim. A lookout circular has been issued in place of warning circular. The order gave the reasons as (1) CBI inquiry regarding purchase of land, (2) anti India activities.

N. D. George said the reasons were given inadvertently as the orders were issued by a different division of the home ministry. The correct reason was "apprehension of law and order problem". The two orders were released on 5 August and 31 August, 1998, respectively. They prohibited Situ Rinpoche from leaving India without prior clearance from the CBI. It was also mentioned in the last circular that he should not be allowed to enter Darjeeling district of West Bengal besides the other states mentioned.

Situ Rinpoche returns to India

Situ Rinpoche returned to India on 25 August, 1998. He was received at the Indira Gandhi airport in New Delhi by a crowd of his supporters. A reception was held in his honour by the Himalayan Buddhists Cultural Association at the India Habitat Centre next day. The Dalai Lama welcomed him back on 3 September. After eight days, the Dalai Lama gave him a certificate, putting aside all doubts about his anti-Indian activities.

Situ Rinpoche denied his involvement in the land deal. He said that no land had been purchased either by him or any one on his behalf; that no document had been executed either by him or any one on his behalf and, therefore, the question of violation of any law did not arise. However, he admitted that there was a proposal. There is still a proposal to purchase land for constructing a retreat for monks, he said. This retreat would be part of the Palpung Foundation just as the Sherab Ling Institute of Buddhist Studies forms the part of the same foundation. The foundation is of Indian origin and has nothing to do with the Chinese government at all, he claimed. However, he admitted that he had received a questionnaire from Interpol in this regard.

Pawan Kumar Chamling, Chief Minister of Sikkim

Soon after his return to India, Situ Rinpoche met Pawan Kumar Chamling, Chief Minister of Sikkim, in New Delhi. He reportedly told the chief minister that he came to India when he was barely six-year-old and since then he had always regarded India as his own country. He added that branding him as anti India or pro-Chinese was only a design by certain vested interests to tarnish his image among his followers. The Dalai Lama too vouched in September 1998 that Situ Rinpoche was not an instrument of Chinese political intrigue.

Situ Rinpoche requested the chief minister of Sikkim to use his good offices in bringing the 16th Karmapa (reincarnate) to India and thus resolve the vexed issue. He apprised the chief minister that the Dalai Lama had also urged the then Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao for the same. The chief minister told him that the role of the state government was confined to maintaining law and order, which it was doing in a fair and

impartial manner. As for bringing the 16th Karmapa to India, the chief minister advised that nobody should seek to extract capital out of religion and all political parties in Sikkim should unitedly request the union government to bring the 16th Karmapa to India.

Chamling later requested the prime minister to acknowledge Situ's candidate as the 16th Karmapa of the Kagyu order. In a letter to the prime minister, Chamling pointed out that the reincarnate of the 16th Karmapa was recognised by the Dalai Lama way back in 1992. He said that immediate steps in this regard would clear doubts in the minds of devotees and followers of the sect within and outside the country, besides putting an end once and for all to the decade-old controversy laden with international ramifications. He also requested the government of India to assist in bringing the 16th Karmapa to the Rumtek monastery in Sikkim from Tibet. However, he reiterated that notwithstanding the succession of the Gyalwa Karmapa, the state government had maintained a clear and transparent policy confined to maintaining law and order at the Rumtek monastery in a fair and impartial manner.

The chief minister has also demanded lifting of the ban on the entry of Situ Rinpoche into Sikkim. He said, "by no stretch of imagination can Situ Rinpoche be branded as an 'agent' of the Chinese government." In his three-page letter, the chief minister explained the background of the controversy over the reincarnation of the 16th Karmapa.

Open letter from Shamarpa to all Kagyus

October 14, 1999

In my capacity as the Shamarpa, traditionally the second highest Karma Kagyu spiritual leader, I write to explain some of the circumstances surrounding the reincarnation of His Holiness the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa. Following the centuries-old spiritual practices of the Karma Kagyu school, I recognised Trinley Thaye Dorje as the genuine reincarnation. He took birth in 1983 as the first son of the 3rd Mipham Rinpoche as his father and Dechen Wangmo as his mother who are from Dzakhog in eastern Tibet. After he and his parents escaped from Tibet in March 1994, I formally recognised him as the 17th Karmapa in a welcoming ceremony in New Delhi.

Since the death of the 16th Karmapa in 1981 until my recognition of the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje, many lamentable and unnecessary obstacles have arisen in the recognition process. In essence, they have been of a political, not a spiritual nature. I have long advocated the separation of politics and religion in Tibetan culture. The intrusion of politics, on both a human and a national level, can only lead to the corruption of spiritual values and traditions. History has repeatedly proven this to be true.

In my humble opinion, the root cause of the turmoil surrounding the identification of the reincarnation of the late Karmapa ultimately can be traced back to his relentless challenge to the policy of His Holiness Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government in Exile to unify all the different religious schools of Tibet. While agreeing with the policies for political and ethnic unification, the late Karmapa, and many other Tibetan religious leaders, however, feared that the religious policy would extinguish the rich, meaningful diversity of Tibetan spiritual life. The late Karmapa's leadership role in opposing this policy subjected the Dalai Lama to considerable pressure.

As a result, it is understandable that the Tibetan Government in Exile would want to use the recognition of the 17th Karmapa for its political benefit to avoid any possible future challenge from a strong, independent spiritual leader like the 16th Karmapa. Without going into the complicated details behind the competing and fraudulent claims for Urgyen Trinley in Tibet as the reincarnated Karmapa, I regret to inform you that since 1990 Mr. Juchen Thubten, Senior Minister in the Tibetan Government in Exile, together with several Karma Kagyu lamas, especially Situ Rinpoche, conspired with the government of China to identify a reincarnated Karmapa in Tibet. In this way, the new Karmapa would be under Chinese control and hence pose no possible threat to the Tibetan Government in Exile while at the same time allowing Situ Rinpoche to be in a dominant position in the Karma Kagyu sect outside Tibet. The intention of these actions was to deprive the Buddhist communities in the Himalayas from access to the Gyalwa Karmapa and also to undermine the administration of the late Gyalwa Karmapa in Rumtek, Sikkim. I can understand the Government in Exile's actions against the administration of the late Gyalwa Karmapa. However, I cannot understand why several Rinpoches from the Kagyu Lineage who supported the late Gyalwa Karmapa while he was alive, betrayed his policies and religious ideals after his death.

I ascribe pure intentions to the Dalai Lama and so cannot believe he was behind Mr. Juchen Thubten's actions. However, he did publicly consent to the recognition of Urgyen Trinley, all the while realizing that he would be under the control of the Chinese government. I find this an ironic contradiction, since the Dalai Lama opposes the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama in Tibet who like Urgyen Trinley is subject to Chinese authority.

Since the parinirvana of the 16th Karmapa until now, I have avoided trying to provoke a feud with the Dalai Lama, and I went out of my way - now in retrospect, perhaps too far out of my way - to cooperate in the search for the reincarnated Karmapa. Indeed, in May 1992, on Tulku Ugen Rinpoche's request and out of respect for the Dalai Lama, I gave my initial consent in favor of Urgyen Trinley.

After the Karmapa controversy began in May 1992, I met His Holiness the Dalai Lama several times and requested him not to get involved and to remain neutral. He gave me a favorable response, but the politicians below him were not so accommodating. I hold His Holiness the Dalai Lama in high regard, but not so some of his officials.

In the interest of maintaining harmony within the Karma Kagyu school, not only did I give my initial consent in favor of Urgyen Trinley, but I also abandoned my demands for a forensic test of the handwritten prediction letter that Situ Rinpoche desperately produced in March 1992, claiming that the late 16th Karmapa had written it to convey instructions for identifying his reincarnation. I did so on the condition that Situ Rinpoche would not cause any further trouble. Although he did not fulfill his promise to keep the peace in the Dharma community, I have kept my promise until now.

I harbor no ill will toward Urgyen Trinley and, indeed, offer him support and prayers that his efforts to spread the Dharma will benefit his nation and all sentient beings. Nevertheless, I cannot and will not sacrifice our Karma Kagyu spiritual tradition and values by not appointing and recognizing the true Karma Kagyu spiritual leader. Furthermore, I will not be party to contaminating the pure tradition of the Karma Kagyu by deceiving followers through forgery and misinterpreting our sacred history.

I have recognized Trinley Thaye Dorje as the genuine reincarnation of the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa. This is in keeping with the Karma Kagyu tradition and the spiritual authority it has invested in the Shamarpa over many generations. The Shamarpa's previous roles in recognizing the Karmapa can be corroborated in the Golden Lineage History of Karma Kagyu written by the 8th Tai Situpa Choeki Jungney, copies of which can be found in China, Tibet and other libraries all over the world. Situ Rinpoche's Palpung Monastery even has the original wood blocks for printing this famous text.

My deepest prayers are to the Triple Gems in order to wipe out the evil attacks during recent years that were aimed at destroying the Karma Kagyu tradition through money, power and malicious methods. I also fervently hope and pray that the Karma Kagyu tradition is restored along with peace, that politics be divorced from religion, and that selflessness replace some lamas' greed for offerings. Only in such an atmosphere will the genuine teachings of the great Buddha flourish.

My special prayer is to eliminate all contradiction and bitter tension that has occurred between the late Karmapa's side and His Holiness the Dalai Lama's side. We must work to rebuild a genuine friendship and to unite dharmically for the spread of Buddhism and the betterment of all sentient beings.

I remain yours faithfully in the practice and spread of Dharma.
Shamar Rinpoche

Details given by Khenpo Choedrak Tenphel

As per the claim that that most Tibetans do not accept Thaye Dorje as Karmapa, it should be pointed out that only a small proportion of Tibetans are Kagyupas. When it comes to recognizing a Karmapa, most are therefore neutral and are respectful towards both candidates, wishing to avoid politics and for the controversy to end. This doesn't include, of course, the more militant Tibetan Youth Congress, whose members support Ugyen Trinley temporarily as Karmapa in order to support His Holiness the Dalai Lama's policy. Your claim that Karmapa Thaye Dorje is not respected by Tibetans is simply not true. For instance, when he entered the monkhood in Bodh Gaya in 1996, over 12 000 Tibetans came to pay him respect, as the widely circulated video of the event can confirm. In fact, many thousands of Buddhists in Nepal and Bhutan follow him. This is not to say that Tibetans who openly support Karmapa Thaye Dorje have it easy. In fact, many Tibetan refugees have reported that Situ Rinpoche's group routinely stone the homes of people who openly display Thaye Dorje's photograph. In response to this, Shamar Rinpoche advises people not to keep these photographs, as devotion is in the heart anyways. It must also be pointed out that what is important is to have a genuine Karmapa, something which is not established by counting the number of people who come to him.

These words come from an interview with Khenpo Choedrak Tenphel.

Year 2000

Urgyen Trinley arrives in Dharamsala

Situ Rinpoche again staged a coup of sorts. Lama Urgyen Trinley Dorje, a 14-year-old boy, who was recognised by Situ Rinpoche as the 16th Karmapa, arrived at McLeodganj Dharamsala in Himachal Pradesh (India), on 5 January, 2000 around 10.30 a.m. Within two hours, he was granted an audience with the Dalai Lama, who was in the winter retreat. The lama boy was accompanied by his mentor Situ Rinpoche, whose monastery, Sherab Ling in Baijnath district of Himachal Pradesh, was about 60 km from McLeodganj. The presence of Situ Rinpoche at McLeodganj smacked of his successful manoeuvring. A few days later Situ Rinpoche realised his mistake and denied that he accompanied the lama boy. He claimed that he reached McLeodganj around 2.30 p.m. after getting the news of the arrival of the lama boy.

A call was made from McLeodganj to the office of the Daily Telegraph, London, which broke the story of how the lama had "feared for his life" in Tibet. The Dalai Lama's government-in-exile seemed ready to cooperate and information was voluntarily provided. The lama, referred to as the Karmapa, could be photographed fairly easily, though he was not available for interviews. The task of publicising achieved the desired result. The British media, giving a lead to Indian papers, grabbed the news. But for the intervention by Shamar Rinpoche on 8 January, claiming that the arrival of the lama boy was a Chinese ploy, meant to grab the Vaira Mukut and other valuable relics from the Rumtek monastery, the newspapers and magazines continued to refer to the lama boy as the Karmapa. Shamar Rinpoche told newspapers at New Delhi on 8 January that "Urgyen Trinley is an innocent boy who should not be used for political purposes. I do not believe he escaped or came without permission from China. The flight was designed to divert attention from Thaye Dorje, who was recognised according to our sacred traditions."

Significantly, Kuensel, Bhutan's only newspaper, reported guardedly. Its story heading is quite clear:

"In what is described as the most significant defection from Chinese-ruled Tibet in decades, a 15-year-old lama, recognised by a section of Tibetan Buddhists as the 17th Karmapa, arrived in India."

Robbie Barnett, a Tibet scholar at Columbia University in New York, said the lama left the 800-year-old Tsurphu monastery on 28 December with a handful of attendants and walked over to India, arriving on Wednesday (5 January) in Dharamsala. International reports point out that Lama Urgyen Trinley has not officially sought political asylum in India. Meanwhile, other Buddhists recognise another lama residing in India, Lama Thaye Dorje, as the real Karmapa.

The Tibetan government-in-exile made arrangements for the stay of the lama boy at Chonor lodge of the Norbulingka Institute. A week later, he was moved to the Gyuto monastery of the Gelug bordering Siddhabari, about 15 km from McLeodganj. From 9 January, the lama boy went incommunicado and was perennially 'tired and resting'. He again met the Dalai Lama on 8 and 14 January, though the latter was supposed to observe silence during the period of retreat.

His arrival was greeted almost like the coming of a messiah and potential successor to the aging Dalai Lama, who would be 65 this coming July.

Differing versions of Urgyen Trinley's escape

There were exotic stories doing the rounds in McLeodganj of how the lama escaped from the Chinese captivity. The crux of the stories was the same. The lama boy opened his bedroom window on the sixth floor at 11 p.m. on a cold wintry 28 December, 1999 at the Tsurphu monastery in Tibet. The escape plan was drawn up meticulously. The lama consulted the oracles before escaping. He said he was going into retreat. His personal staff went about their duties as usual. Food was cooked, served and other everyday routines were undertaken normally.

A look-alike even impersonated for the lama who had actually left the monastery. The lama had left a letter declaring that he was going to India to retrieve some religious artefacts. He said the Chinese authorities had rejected an earlier request for his travel to India. He was thus left with no recourse but to go without permission.

When a Chinese official went to meet him on New Year's Day, the lama had disappeared. Five days later he surfaced at Dharamsala. It is surprising that the Chinese authorities did not raise an alarm and tried to increase surveillance on the border. It is difficult to believe that the lama's entourage, during its 11-day trek of about 900 km across frozen terrain from Tibet, managed to dodge the heavy Chinese security presence in Tibet.

He was accompanied by Ngodup Palzon, his sister, 10 years older, and five male attendants. The lama and his followers changed into civilian clothes. He wore a denim jacket and trousers and his sister a loose robe. The party ate only tsampa. From the Tsurphu monastery, the group set out in two jeeps. Before every checkpost, the lama and his entourage would get off and head for the mountains. After the jeeps crossed the checkpoints, the lama and his companions would join the vehicles. This they did nearly 20 times till they reached west Nepal through Nyichung in Mustang region. He thought it better to flee in winter for two reasons. First, the Chinese guards are not as alert and the checks not that stringent. Second, most of the mountain lakes are frozen and can be crossed on foot. Escape from the guards in Tibet is possible only in the cold months, by daredevils who have the will and the stamina to face the hazards before the weather 'opens up'.

Another account puts it altogether differently. The lama left Tsurphu in a Toyota Land-cruiser and another car, travelling for 36 hours. When the mountain terrain became unmotorable, he began a trek. His team walked for 12 hours, entering Nepal. The border was fairly easy to cross. It was only a few hours' journey by train from Gorakhpur to Lucknow from where the seven-member group reached Dharamsala via Delhi in two taxis. The Dalai Lama's office was informed by telephone on arrival.

The travel account treads the fine line between the happenstance and coincidence. It rather smells of a deliberate action. As if to divorce the lama from Chinese links, there are stories doing the rounds in McLeodganj of how he called Tsurphu on reaching Nepal, how the phone was answered by a Chinese voice, how the 'Karmapa' heard the sounds and shrieks of searching and interrogation in the background. Intriguingly, the lama boy surfaced at Dharamsala and met the Dalai Lama instead of going to the traditional seat of the Karmapa at the Rumtek monastery in Sikkim, which could be easier for him and his entourage to travel than going to Dharamsala.

Urgyen Trinley's escape, as given on Situ's Rinpoche official website

Foreword

Site address: <http://www.nalandabodhi.org>

A number of stories have appeared in the press about His Holiness Karmapa's journey to freedom in India. Much of the reporting seems accurate, but there is also conflicting information in different reports. Accordingly, we have undertaken to verify the information in the press by consulting sources close to His Holiness Karmapa, Orgyen Drodul Trinley Dorje. Based on our investigation, we have pieced together the following facts which we believe to be reliable.

The route for His Holiness the Seventeenth Gyalwang Karmapa's journey to India appears to have taken him to the western border of Tibet, through Nepal and into India. As best we can determine, His Holiness traveled through western Tibet and crossed the border of Nepal into Mustang.

The route required the party to trek for more than 30 hours over Nepalese territory, after which they were able to travel part of the way using public transport. His Holiness apparently crossed the Indian border near the Birganj-Raxaul Bazaar crossing point through Bihar and then Uttar Pradesh and then travelled through the cities of Gorakhpur, Lucknow and Delhi, ending his journey in Dharamsala.

Press article "The drama of Lamas" by Susan Cheung

This is a story as yet untold and a story that the West doesn't want to hear. For the first time -- and in a Sunday Review exclusive -- we reveal the details -- such as apparent American involvement -- about the mysterious flight of the Karmapa, the 'living Buddha' Karmapa Lama from Tibet to India in January 2000. Susanna Cheung Chui-Yung spent two weeks retracing the boy lama's dramatic journey through the Himalayas

- Susanna Cheung is a fellow with the Journalism and Media Studies Centre at The University of Hong Kong and BBC World Service Chinese Section freelance correspondent in Asia. She has also reported on the Kosovo conflict and East Timor crisis. She contributed this article to Sunday Review.

23/04/2000, Straits Times of Singapore

Seeking The Truth

In the sweltering heat of Hyderabad, southern India, US President Bill Clinton's cavalcade sped past a crowd of Tibetans waving American flags.

While his visit to South Asia last month focused on nuclear arms control and the clashes in Kashmir between India and Pakistan, the Tibetan greeting served as a reminder of a much wider conflict looming in the Himalayan region.

The great escape to India of the Tibetan spiritual leader, the 17th Karmapa, two months earlier than the Clinton visit, has intensified the tension between India and China, whose borders meet at the Himalayas. The reality behind the superficial reasons for the escape -- human rights and religious freedom -- is the background political struggle by Tibetan militants and between contending factions in Tibetan Buddhism. The involvement of Americans in the Tibetan struggle remains a mystery, but our investigative reporting throws light on it.

Given the significance of the flight of the boy lama Ugyen Trinley Dorje, veteran Nepali environment reporter Prakash Khanal and I recently retraced the Karmapa's route over two weeks. It started from the Tibet/Nepal border and crossed Nepal all the way down to the Nepal/India border.

We tried to find out the different forces behind the escape and its implication to security in the region.

Our findings contradict mainstream Western reports.

We discovered the boy lama's flight had been meticulously planned to throw Nepali police and journalists off the track. It was aided by an American-owned helicopter operator and an extensive network of the Tibetan exile community closely linked with Dharamsala.

Suspensions of an organised plot thickened when the Tibetan community in Pokhara, Nepal, disclosed the Karmapa's sister had appeared in Pokhara three weeks before him.

The escape route he took is an indirect route to India, through forbidding Mustang, in remote north Nepal, the stronghold of Tibetan guerillas and a CIA base until the 1970s.

Our team picked up the Karmapa's trail in Pokhara, a resort at the foot of the Annapurna range. There, a well-known Nepali businessman from Mustang helped us retrace the escape route, based on his in-depth debriefing of the pony drivers who assisted the Karmapa.

As the Karmapa and three aides approached the border in two Landcruisers on New Year's Eve, they were chased by Chinese police cars. They abandoned the vehicles and escaped on foot into Nepal.

As revellers around the world rang in a new millennium, the boy lama slipped out of Tibet. Right inside the Nepali border, along the bank of the Mustang Kholra river, a tall, bearded Westerner was waiting. He had hired local guides and eight ponies for the journey across the northern half of Mustang, where there are no roads for motor vehicles.

The pony caravan pushed ahead for two days non-stop in sub-zero temperatures through the lunar landscape of Mustang, once the Kingdom of Lo.

By morning, the Tibetan party was on the trail to Jomsom, the Mustang state capital, connected by a paved road to Pokhara and then India. Instead of going to Jomsom, the pony caravan headed east onto a trailhead below Muhila Peak, north-west of the monastery in Muktinath. They made the gruelling climb to the 5,416-m-high summit of Thorang La pass.

They took this dangerous route as the Nepali Government Headquarters for Mustang is in Jomsom, where Nepali police were waiting to deport them to Tibet.

After crossing Thorang La, the Tibetan Karmapa's party descended towards villages near the foot of Annapurna, at 8,091 m the second-highest peak in the Himalayas. The entourage spent the night of Jan 2 in the village of Manang Pedi, altitude 3,535 m.

At about 11 am the next day, the Tibetans and their guides spotted an Ecureuil air-rescue helicopter, painted blue and alpine white, was approaching from the south-east in a wide arc around sacred Machapuchre Peak (Fishtail Peak).

Our source in Mustang said two Americans and two lamas clambered out to greet the Karmapa. With the human cargo safely aboard, the helicopter blades whirled like a prayer wheel, levitating the Tsurphu Karmapa into the clouds above the Annapurna range headed for Pokhara.

Missing flight records

At Pokhara Airport, a control-tower officer showed us flight records for Jan 3. A hand-written report showed Fishtail Air was the only local service to dispatch a helicopter.

The air-control officer explained: "There was no other helicopter flights recorded except for Fishtail company. On Jan 3, Fishtail sent two helicopter flights out. They claimed one flight was for sightseeing and the other for rescue purposes."

The first flight departed at about 11 am and returned to Pokhara Airport at noon; the second at 12:45 pm and returned an hour later. At US\$ 3,000 (around € 3,300) for a round-trip, the Ecureils are more

expensive than by ordinary tourist-class Kawasaki helicopters. Fishtail Air is an American-Nepali joint venture and the only one in Nepal with foreign ownership.

The plot thickened when we queried Fishtail Air head office in Kathmandu. The staff told us the flight record for Jan 3 was missing. They had records for every other day in the month.

All Western news accounts have failed to mention the role of Fishtail Air in this escapade. Only a report in ABC.com mentions that a Westerner was involved in the trek through Mustang. A source in the Nepali government, who asked for anonymity, said a US State Department official deeply involved in the Kosovo and East Timor interventions, okayed the plan in October.

A Tibetan monk in Pokhara said the Karmapa spent a few hours in the compound of the Hotel Annapurna, built by the Tibetan guerillas with CIA funds in the early 1970s and now operated by the exile government. The Karmapa did not linger long.

From Pokhara, the Karmapa was taken on a five-hour drive south to Lumbini, the birthplace of the Buddha. A professional people-smuggling group took the Karmapa to the Indian side, from where a car whisked him off to Gorakhpur, then Lucknow.

The following night, another American -- a staff member of an NGO group controlled by a leading US Democratic Party donor -- led the teen to a waiting private car that whisked him off to Dharamsala.

Tinderbox for political unrest

The boy lama left a note in his monastery saying he was going to Rumtek monastery, the Kagyupa seat-in-exile in Sikkim, northern India.

But his entourage turned up in Dharamsala, home of Tibet's exile government.

Our source said the rumour about his escape was spread around in the Kagyupa (Karmapa sect) community in Taiwan. Chen Li On, the former head of the Control Yuan of Taiwan, told his followers in November the 17th Karmapa would be out of Tibet very soon.

A few days before the public appearance of the boy lama, the news was leaked to one of the major dailies in Taiwan, China Times, but it just missed the chance of breaking the story. Chen's role in the Karmapa's flight is unknown

.The sealed vault of Rumtek contains the Black Crown, the chief symbol of authority for the Kagyupa school. A fight over the seizure of the crown has split the Kagyupa sect into two bitterly opposing factions, one led by Tai Situ Rinpoche, the mentor of the Tibetan boy, and the other headed by the second-ranking monk, the Shamarpa.

This sectarian feud makes Sikkim a tinderbox for Asia's nuclear powers. Sikkim was a Buddhist kingdom before India annexed it in 1975. Powerful Sikkimese clans, however, have never accepted Indian rule and tend to turn to China and Taiwan for support. Neither recognises Indian sovereignty over Sikkim.

The appearance of the Tibetan Karmapa in Rumtek would have too much significant symbolic meaning, because 80 per cent of Sikkim's population follow the pro-Tai Situ Kagyupa sect. Taiwanese Buddhists provided huge donations to Tai Situ Rinpoche, say sources in the Kagyupa school.

"Sikkim could quickly turn into another Kashmir," said the former abbot Khenpo, who was evicted from Rumtek in 1992 by armed supporters of Tai Situ Rinpoche.

Ethnic violence in Sikkim, involving Tibetan refugees, would attract international calls for a Western-led humanitarian intervention.

In Dharamsala, the rising of the militant movement starts to catch the attention of South Asia watchers. They say there is always a reason for hardliners in Dharamsala, who strongly favour Tibet's independence, to back Tai Situ Rinpoche's plans for Sikkim. With India and China drawing closer, the exile government's days in Dharamsala seem numbered. An independent Sikkim would give Tibetan militants a new base along the border.

In my last interview with the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala in 1994, he revealed his worries about the growing radicalism among the young Tibetans in exile.

The Shamarpa, who supports a different candidate for the title 17th Karmapa and is in constant conflict with Tai Situ in India, says the boy lama has ended up in captivity. The senior Kagyupa monk concluded: "The poor boy is a guitar, and whoever has him can play their own tune."

Battlefield of the 21st century

On the other hand, a secret Indian police report of 1997 says the Tai Situ side tried to smuggle the Karmapa out of Tibet as early as 1997.

The report said: "It is suspected that Urgyen Trinley (12), Tai Situ's candidate, who has been recognised by the Chinese authorities as well as the Dalai Lama, may be smuggled into the country. It is, therefore, requested that all ICPs under your jurisdiction may please be alerted accordingly. If traced, may please be informed by quickest possible means quoting memo no. 28/0/97 (35) dated 26.06.97 under the intimation to us."

Furthermore, the confidential cabinet report of May 24, 1997 shows the Indian cabinet has also been on high alert about the Tai Situ side as a consequence of their attempt to take control of Rumtek monastery in 1996 and their increasingly violent actions against the Shamarpa side.

The Indian government has deep concern over the split in Tibetan Buddhism in its territory, which may lead to more violence. The presence of the boy lama in India could well indicate the succession struggle.

"After Tai Situ Rinpoche was banned by India and then kept out of Lhasa by China, his influence was greatly diminished," said Lama Kalsan of the Sangue Choling monastery.

"The escape of the Karmapa to India may have been Situ Rinpoche's way of showing muscle to both countries."

If this was the motive behind the escape, then the collaboration between Situ Rinpoche and the Dharamsala militants has started a high-risk gamble for the Tibetan exile movement.

India is now nervous about any such moves, however, because the Tibetan exiles represent an irritating source of tension with China, which has not taken sides on the Kashmir issue.

Himachal Pradesh, the state where Dharamsala is located, is next door to Kashmir, where Indian security forces have been fighting Islamic insurgents backed by Pakistan, a traditional ally of China.

What has complicated the situation is the involvement of the US in this ethnic and geopolitical tinderbox.

The US Congress provides US\$ 2 million (about € 2.2 million) a year to the Tibetan exile government and is stepping up its rhetoric on the Tibet issue.

This year, the US military has extended its presence in Nepal through a United Nations training programme for South Asian peacekeepers.

As the meeting point of Asia's three nuclear powers, the Himalayan region could easily explode.

With our long journey at its end in Buddha's birthplace, we marvelled at all the deceptions that litter the Tibetan teen's trail and the false reports by the Western media.

The tolling of bronze Buddhist bells resonated across the dusty plains of Lumbini, reminding us of the Buddha's Eightfold Path, which instructs his followers never to deceive others in this world of appearances and to always speak the truth.

The writer speaks:

"The issue of Tibet has been the ideological as well as the diplomatic battlefield between China and the West, in particular the United States of America. The tension is manifest in the major mainstream media of both sides, and as a consequence, the truth sometimes becomes the victim.

The massive Western media reports on the recent escape of the Tibetan Karmapa Lama further blurred the facts behind the story, while their counterpart, the mainland Chinese media, chose to remain low profile and banned all news relating to the Karmapa.

The Dalai Lama was reportedly taken completely by surprise when his protegee, the 14-year-old Tibetan boy lama, appeared at a hotel in Dharamala on Jan 5.

The international news media, quoting sources in the Karmapa's entourage and in the Tibetan Exile Government, reported that the lama had escaped on foot to India all the way from the Tsurphu monastery Lhasa, a veritable Tibetan odyssey reenacting the Dalai Lama's three-week passage to exile in 1959.

The news agencies accepted without challenge the account of the boy lama, who claimed to have walked 1,440 km in eight days over the Himalayas. But a miracle it would have been for anyone to have walked an average of 180 km per day, not counting the twists and turns of the mountain roads.

The correction was made later, but in spite of the inconsistency of the information provided by the pro-Dharamsala lamas, the Western media still relied on the single source from Dharamsala with the tendency of romanticising the whole event that took place over the snow-capped Himalayas. With their own bias, they believed that the reason for the flight of the Karmapa was solely a struggle for human rights and religious freedom.

I determined to trek through the escape route of the Karmapa with a Nepali reporter to collect first-hand data on the ground. It was with the hope that, based on the fact-finding, a larger picture could be painted for the complicated Tibetan issue which had been misreported to a certain extent.

All the newspapers I sent this article to have refused to publish it."

Western newsgroups reactions

As told above by Susan Cheung, press agencies have accepted without any critical judgement, nor any checking, the story from the teenage boy. It is quite incredible to read european newspapers repeating

without a flinch, the fantastic journey of a teenager walking across the Himalaya, fleeing Chinese dictatorship, on his way to freedom, to meet up his mentor the Dalai Lama ! All necessary ingredients are brought together to thrill the idealistic fiber of Westerners: Ugyen Trinley assuming the David role defeating the Chinese Goliath. This hymn to the battle for human rights and religious freedom has been taken up by all western media.

The Dhagpo Kagyu Ling Center, in Dordogne, France, subscribed to "Argus de la Presse", a press clipping service, for January 2000. Press clippings for this one month amounted to several archive boxes.

Indian newsgroups reactions

Altogether, Indian newsgroups have been more skeptical about this event seen mainly through its geopolitical impact. Chinese reaction is taken seriously, and circumstances surrounding the teenager's escape remain doubtful for part of Indian media.

Mystery of the runaway monk (By Rajesh Ramachandran)

Sunday, January 16, 2000, New Delhi

The Buddha must be frowning.

For, the mysterious appearance in Dharamshala on January 5 of the boy who the faithful believe is his reincarnation has sent shockwaves from Lhasa to Washington, Beijing to New Delhi.

The 14-year-old Karmapa Lama's mysterious, 900-mile winter trek across the Himalayas has impacted on the power struggle between the two factions of the Karma Kagyu order which he heads; the Dalai Lama's 50-year movement to regain Tibet; India's already sensitive relations with China; and US interests in Tibet.

No wonder. Ugyen Trinley Dorje, to give the boy his real name, is the only Tibetan high priest who is recognised by both the Dalai Lama and China. The Dalai Lama accepted him as the 17th Karmapa in June 1992, and after some thought, the Chinese followed suit. That was seen as an attempt to build bridges. There was talk then of his coming to India, and his arrival now could become a climactic episode in the relationship between the Dalai Lama and China, who, some observers believe, might even have colluded in the boy's escape.

Publicly, the Tibetan government-in-exile claims the Karmapa Lama fled Chinese oppression, and that he wants Delhi to grant him asylum. Beijing says he is visiting India to bring back symbols of his authority such as the "black hat" from Sikkim's Rumtek monastery. India is "cautiously studying the issue." And Washington wants China to talk directly to the Dalai Lama to preserve "Tibet's unique religious, cultural and ethnic heritage."

China's game

But there's more than meets the eye. Considering the tight Chinese security around Tibetan monasteries, how could the boy escape and trek 120 miles a day unnoticed? Did the Chinese deliberately let him go?

But what could be the Chinese interest?

One, if he wins the factional battle and returns with the black hat as well as acceptance from the Tibetan diaspora, it will only strengthen Beijing's grip over Buddhists in Tibet, for its candidate would have gained legitimacy.

Two, the institution of Karmapa wields considerable influence in Sikkim, whose merger with India is not acknowledged by China. Analysts believe that if the Chinese-recognised Karmapa visits there, it would give China a handle in the state.

Three and most important, China has been keen to resolve its two festering irritants —Tibet and Taiwan — which give the West undue leverage over it. Delivering the young Karmapa Lama to the Dalai Lama could be the first step to striking a deal with the latter.

Who is Tai Situ?

Suspicious about China's complicity in a Dalai Lama plot are bolstered by the role of Tai Situ Rinpoche, one of the four high priests of the Karma Kagyu order. All reports suggest he was the key person behind the boy's escape. Tai Situ was persona non grata in India till August 1998, when the 1994 expulsion order against him was mysteriously rescinded. India had then branded him anti-national, implying he was pro-Chinese.

Interestingly, Tai Situ was the priest who had identified Dorje as the 17th Karmapa, driving a wedge in the Karma Kagyu sect in doing so. Travelling several times to Tibet and China, he was instrumental in persuading the Chinese to recognise the boy, and forging a link between China and the Dalai Lama. Tai Situ has several court cases pending against him, including one by the CBI for producing a fake residency certificate to buy 500 acres of land in Gurgaon. His legal advisor has been an influential member of the Union Cabinet since 1998, and is said to have lobbied with the home ministry to lift the ban on him (he is still barred from nine Indian states, including Sikkim). The Dalai Lama also has informal access to a senior Union Cabinet minister with whom he met recently.

Historical and geopolitical facts

The other question Tibetan factions in Delhi ask is, if the boy's escape was genuine, why did he go to Dharamshala instead of Rumtek, which has been the Karmapa's seat since the 16th reincarnate fled Tibet? Also, why did the Dalai Lama receive the boy? The Karmapa and the Dalai Lama have distinct beliefs and lineages, and do not have to pay obeisance to each other. Officials at the Dalai Lama's Delhi office say "any Tibetan refugee can meet the Dalai Lama, particularly someone seeking spiritual teaching." But the Dalai Lama was in retreat, and surely would not have received any other refugee during this period.

Khenpo Rinpoche, the priest who was ousted from Rumtek by Tai Situ, cites what he believes is the "vital" evidence linking the Tibetan government-in-exile with the boy's escape: "The pro-China Tai Situ's associate, Karzang Chime, was appointed by the Tibetan government-in-exile to its Kathmandu office in October. It was for this specific purpose."

What is the Dalai Lama's motive? Since the negotiations which began after China recognised the Karmapa failed, the 64-year-old Dalai, insiders say, has been worried about the future of Tibet and its exiles. He wants the problem to be resolved during his lifetime, and is fearful of going down in history as the Dalai Lama who lost his kingdom and died in exile — a fear exacerbated by a recent road accident.

The Karmapa's seeking refuge at Dharamshala thus reinforces the Dalai Lama's vision of a unified Tibetan community under his leadership. The previous Karmapa, keen to retain the distinct identity of his order, had not been willing to pay such obeisance.

Moreover, the Karma Kagyu order has been more popular in the West (the Dalai Lama emerged as a spiritual icon in the US only in the late Seventies), and commands vast wealth (its assets are valued at \$ 1.2 billion, around € 1.3 billion), influence and following. These could come under the Dalai Lama's control if the young Karmapa Lama accepts his supremacy.

Then, the Gelug and Kagyu orders together comprise the bulk of Tibetan Buddhists. This enables the Dalai Lama to become the spokesman for most Tibetans.

As for Washington, within days of the Karmapa's "escape" becoming known, US special coordinator for Tibet Julia Taft was in Dharamshala. Two days after her visit, the state department spokesperson mentioned the need for a dialogue between China and the Dalai Lama. US intervention could help the two open a new chapter of negotiations. If all goes well, the Dalai Lama can quell his fears and China can remove an irritant.

And that leaves only a very nervous India to do some tightrope walking.

The four main Tibetan Buddhist orders or lineages:

*Gelugpa: Founded in the 14th century. Headed by the Dalai Lama. The Panchen Lama is its next most important leader. Exile headquarters at Dharamshala.

*Kagyupa: Founded in the 11th century. Headed by Gyalwe Karmapa, who is head of the sub-order Karma Kagyu. Exile headquarters at Rumtek, Sikkim.

*Sakyapa: Founded in the same period as Kagyupa. Headed by the current hereditary successor, Sakya Trinzin. Exile headquarters in Dehradun. The only school whose leader marries and produces an heir.

*Nyingmapa: The oldest school, which was universally accepted in Tibet till the 11th century. It has no designated head.

There is no hierarchy of importance among the heads of the various sects. The Dalai Lama, by virtue of being the political leader, however, does have more influence over the others. The first Lama ruler of Tibet was from the Sakya school, who in 1244 captured power with the help of the Mongol Khans. This line retained power till 1369. Since then, Beijing has always played a role in Tibetan politics.

During 1369-1642, it was the Kagyu period when the Kamarpas' representatives ruled. They were violently overthrown by the Gelugpa, who enthroned the fifth Dalai Lama. The present Dalai Lama is the 14th.

Mystery Monk

[India Today issue dated February 7, 2000] By Sayantan Chakravarty

Tai Situ can cut deals with Beijing and have an entry ban lifted in Delhi. He is also the power behind the runaway Karmapa.

It was very early into the new year when Orgyen Trinley Dorje, 17th Karmapa of the Karma Kagyu sect of Tibetan Buddhism, finally left his monastery and entered Nepal. Waiting to receive him was Tai Situ Rimpoche, one of the 16th Karmapa's four regents the late monk's senior disciples, appointed to take care of his legacy, till the next Karmapa was found and enthroned.

Having met the runaway Dorje, Tai Situ escorted him to Mcleodganj, seat of the Tibetan government in exile. In the days to come, he was identified in the media, and by the world at large, as the boy Karmapa's mentor, preceptor and closest confidant. He has been amazingly busy for a man who was banned from entering India till a year and a half ago. Deftly avoiding serious questioning by the press, Tai Situ only found time to express his happiness at the Karmapa having arrived amid suggestions that he would be happy if the young monk took control of the Kagyu sect's headquarters the monastery in Rumtek, Sikkim.

In Rumtek itself, the Joint Action Committee (JAC) a conglomeration of Tibetan religio-political entities actually articulated the demand for the Karmapa's arrival. It would be a momentous occasion, for he who controls Rumtek controls the Kagyu's 350 (some intelligence reports say 600) monasteries worldwide and its billion-dollar wealth.

The monastery of Rumtek exercises great influence over Sikkim right from the days of the Chogyal, who gave the 16th Karmapa sanctuary in 1958. Sikkim, of course, acceded to India in 1975, in a merger China doesn't recognise. As such a pro-China tilt at the Rumtek monastery is a potential security risk.

This is the precise point being made by Shamar Rimpoche, once a fellow regent of Rumtek with Tai Situ but now a sworn enemy. In 1993, Shamar found his own Karmapa, Thai Trinley, rejecting Dorje as a pretender and a front for a China-Tai Situ conspiracy. After all, Dorje's ceremonial recognition as the Karmapa in 1992 was facilitated by Beijing.

In 1984, a quarter century after he fled Tibet crying against communist suppression, Tai Situ began visiting China. He met many important politicians there, including, say intelligence officials, Deng Xiaoping. He even presented a development plan for Tibet that advocated greater interaction with China.

Tai Situ also became a good friend of Nar Bahadur Bhandari, the then chief minister of Sikkim given to provocative views. The JAC was formed with Bhandari's support at a time when the Union government was very alive to growing Chinese influence in the region.

In 1993, Chen Li An, the prime minister of Taiwan, paid a secret visit to Sikkim as a guest of Tai Situ and Bhandari. They discussed bringing Dorje to Rumtek. Alarmed not the least because India had no diplomatic relations with Taiwan the Centre put Tai Situ on the watch list.

Backed by well-connected friends like Ram Jethmalani, Tai Situ sought to have the ban revoked. Finally, on August 5, 1998, the Union home secretary allowed Tai Situ entry into India but warned him against visiting Jammu and Kashmir, Sikkim and the Northeast and against getting embroiled in affairs of the Rumtek monastery, including the installation of the new Karmapa. In the past few weeks, Tai Situ seems to have violated at least that final clause. Following the Karmapa's arrival, two streams emerge within the Indian establishment.

Broadly speaking, the Shamar line is the logical conclusion of the thinking of intelligence and internal security agencies, such as IB and RAW.

Going soft on Tai Situ may be the line of a pro-China group within the Ministry of External Affairs, which seems reconciled to Beijing's suzerainty over Lhasa.

The only piece that doesn't fit is the Dalai Lama overtly anti-China but ready to recognise Dorje, a Beijing nominee, as the Karmapa. The key to this mystery may lie in a report sent on May 24, 1997 by K. Sreedhar Rao, then chief secretary of Sikkim, to T.S.R. Subramaniam, then cabinet secretary: "The reason as to why the Dalai Lama approved the reincarnation without adequate evidence and proper verification needs to be analysed. It is possible that a small coterie around him had been influenced by the Chinese."

Rao's letter warns that "along the entire Himalayan belt right from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh the influence of Tibetan Lamaistic Buddhism is extensive with a string of monasteries. As of now no less than 11 monasteries are headed by lamas who can be considered proteges of China". The installation of a "Chinese national" as the Karmapa suggests that Beijing is preparing itself for the "post-Dalai Lama situation" and the "demand for installation of the Tibetan Karmapa in Rumtek can become more strident as time goes by".

Rebuttal of the so-called wealth of the Kagyu lineage

March 23, 2000

Today we the Trustees of the Karmapa Charitable Trust resolved to take immediate legal action against any individual party that assert that the Trust holds a net worth of US\$ 1.2 billion (about € 1.3 billion).

This figure is patently false, baseless and defamatory.

The late 16 Karmapa Rangjung Rigpe Dorje himself never requested an assesment of his Trust's net worth, nor did he ask the Trustees to conduct such an assesment. Furthermore, the Trust never evaluated its net worth after the 16 Karmapa's death.

At no time during the Trust existence –either in the past or present – has it possessed a net worth even remotely equaling US\$ 1.2 billion. In fact, the holy religious antiques under the Trust's custody are priceless. No dollar figure could ever be assigned to the Black Crown an the other antiqities. Furthermore, the Trsut has never and will never sell these religious relics, as has been wrongly claimed by numerous individuals and parties.

Therefore, we as any individual or party to immediatly cease ans desist in falsery spreading the baseless US\$ 1.2 billion figure. Otherwise, we will to seek legal remedy to this mischievous and pantantly wrongful act.

Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche

Gyan Jyoti

T.S. Gyaltzen

Urgyen Trinley might be adult !

Hindi Newspaper: Amar Ujala (Immortal Shine) At Chandigarh, April 14,2000, by Dr. Upendra Hindi Newspaper clipping

... So Karmapa is an adult! In fact, the 17th Karmapa Urgyen Trinley Dorji is an adult, not a 14 year-old boy as have been said by the China Government or the Tibetan Government in Exile.

The other canditate

The consensus proof has come out after the thorough examination of the X-ray of his chest, electron-cardiogram, kidney, liver, various parts of stomach by ultrasound, and examination of his blood together with haemoglobin etc in P.G.I. (Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research) that Karmapa Dorji is a fully grown up man.

A member of the specialist panel who has been treating Shri Karmapa in P.G.I, declares that after the thorough examination and review, it is proved that Karmapa can't be less than 24 years old by all means, let alone 14 or 15 years old. "According to the measurement data prescribed in medical text and the vein, thymus, thyroid and the whole structure of his body, it is verified that he is a fully grown up man." Professor S. K. Sharma, director of P.G.I told Amar Ujala. He accepts that Orgyen Dorje is a fully grown up man, Although he didn't mention whether he is 24 or 27, he just told "I could only say according to the medical report that Karmapa has crossed 21 years old. He can't by all means be said as a minor".

Professor Sharma so admits that there can be slight difference of half or 1 year found in medical report due to different diet. However, after the thorough examination, one can't say that Karmapa is a minor.

Since the medical report has proved that Karmapa is an adult, the China government can not claim politically to the Indian government to send Karmapa back to Tibet by saying that he is a minor of 14 years old. Indian government has lots of concrete sources to prove that Kamarpa Urgyen Trinley Dodi in fact is more than 21 years old. He has come to India according to his own wish. As an adult he can think of himself properly what is good or bad.

Urgyen Trinley might in fact be Kalep Tulku from Kham

Chodrag Namgyal, in an article " Treachery at its best ", published on the web <http://www.karmapa-issue.org/>.

The boy Urgyen Trinley had already been recognized as Kalep Tulku by Khamtrul Rinpoche prior to being recognized as the Karmapa. This Lama in his previous life was the uncle of Urgyen Trinley's father. This is a fact that has always been hidden. If he was the Karmapa, then there should have been incidences of self-recognition as in the case of the previous Karmapas as well as Thaye Dorje. How could the Karmapa be confused with an ordinary monk like the Kalep Lama.

This changing of Urgyen Trinley into the reincarnation of the Karmapa from Kalep Lama was solely political. In retrospect, this came about when the Chinese government wanted to install the Panchen Lama. But prior to this they wanted to start with the Karmapa. So, pressure was mounted on Situ Rinpoche with the lure of personal benefits to install a Karmapa as soon as possible. Situ recommended Urgyen Trinley to become the Karmapa since he had the eyes similar to that of the previous Karmapa. Not only that he was always looking for a child from a low family that would match the status of the family

that Situ came from. Hence, Situ Rinpoche and his associates along with the Chinese Government recognized him as the Karmapa. All the details of this incident are available with the Chinese. The monastery of Khamtrul Rinpoche was forced to accept this change by the Government of China. This was treachery at its best from the part of Situ Rinpoche.

International Kagyu Conference in Dharamsala

Urgyen Trinley Dorje endorsed as 17th Karmapa

Story by Time of India on August 20th, 2000

DHARAMSALA: The third international Kagyu Dharma conference at Gyuto monastery near here unanimously endorsed Urgyen Trinley Dorje as the 17th Karmapa on Saturday.

The conference, which was being attended by delegates from different countries, expressed concern over the controversy raised by Shamar Rinpoche and a few others causing harm to the Kagyu sect and called for immediate steps to end it.

The copies of the letter written by Shamar Rinpoche to the Dalai Lama, stating that Urgyen Trinley Dorje was selected by Situ Rinpoche with Chinese help and the selection of Thaye Dorje, a real Karmapa, was made by him and both the Karmapas should be accepted, were also distributed at the conference.

The Dalai Lama rejected the theory of two Karmapas and asserted that Rumtek monastery was the real seat of the Karmapa and as such Urgyen Trinley Dorje should be handed over charge of the monastery.

The speakers asserted that under these circumstances there was no confusion about the real Karmapa.

The conference also decided to move a resolution reposing faith in Urgyen Trinley Dorje as the real Karmapa and making an appeal to the Indian government to grant him political asylum.

Notice to all International Journalists from International Karma Kagyu Forum

On August 18th, 2000 there will be an International Karma Kagyu meeting-taking place in Dharamsala, India. This is to inform you that 22 high Karma Kagyu Rinpoches, 19 Karma Kagyu Khenpos (abbots), 85 Karma Kagyu retreat masters, over 2000 Karma Kagyu monks and nuns from 35 monasteries and 300 Karma Kagyu centers will not be participating in this "international" meeting. The above-listed Rinpoches, Khenpos, retreat masters, monastic and centers all unanimously support Trinley Thaye Dorje as the 17th Karmapa and respect Shamarpa as the leader of the Karma Kagyu Lineage next in authority to the Karmapa.

This is not an unofficial, rebellious group. In fact we are committed to preserving and protecting the 900 year-old tradition and identity of the lineage – a tradition which has been independent of any authority outside the lineage.

We ask that in all references to the upcoming meeting in Dharamsala that you mention, in the interest of accurate reporting, the vast number of Rinpoches, Khenpos, monks, nuns and practitioners who are not participating.

Attached please find the list of names and signatures of 22 Rinpoches and highly teaches of the Karma Kagyu traditions that support Karmapa Thaye Dorje and will not be attending the upcoming meeting. All of these Rinpoches and teachers are living outside of China-controlled Tibet.

Karma Kagyu followers reaction, published in news media.

Asian age

Karma Kagyu followers oppose Dharamsala meet

By Rajeev Khanna New Delhi, Aug. 19

The followers of the Karma Kagyu tradition have expressed their opposition to the International Karma Kagyu Meeting being held in Dharamsala describing it to be an attempt to pressure the Indian

government to send Urgyen Trinley Dorje, who was recognised as the 17th Karmapa by China, to Rumtek in Sikkim.

Many international organisations following the Karma Kagyu tradition are learnt to have written hundreds of letters to Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee not to allow the boy to be sent to Rumtek. Referring to the Dharamsala meeting, head khempo of the Khempo Society of the Karma Kagyu Tradition, Chodrag Tenphel Rinpoche said: "The so called International Karma Kagyu Meeting is merely a gathering of certain factions of Kagyu followers in support of Urgyen Trinley. In fact, they do not have any legal authority to decide on matters concerning the Karma Kagyu tradition. All decisions have to be taken by the Karmapa Charitable Trust, the legal body of the Karma Kagyu Tradition of India." He said the decisions taken by this faction cannot be accepted.

A standing member of the International Karma Kagyu Forum, Mr Yeshey Jungney told The Asian Age, "We are upset that such a meeting is allowed to take place in Dharamsala which is the seat of the Tibetan government in exile and the Dalai Lama. Never before has such a conference taken place in Dharamsala under the umbrella of Tibetan government in exile. Even in erstwhile Tibet, such conferences were never heard of.

Holding of the meeting in Dharamsala assumes significance in the context of the two Karmapa controversy." Mr Jungney said, "We condemn the so called meeting which is designed to mislead the government and the true disciples of Gyalwa Karmapa the world over.

Rumtek situation today

Extrait The Straits Times (Singapore)
May 7, 2000 - RUMTEK (Sikkim) Nirmal Ghosh
Sanctuary Under Siege

(...) On the roof of the monastery, an armed policeman -- one of 20 assigned to Rumtek -- has a bird's eye view of the narrow road that twists down the mountain to the monastery gate and further, through a scattering of houses. Just below him sit two Tibetan women fingering their prayer beads, also eyeing the road. The policeman says, "Do you see those women? They sit there all day keeping an eye on the road, because they can recognise the other Lamas. We can't." He continues, "If one of the other Lamas comes up, they warn us."

The "other Lamas" are the rival faction of Tibetan Buddhism's Kagyu sect, headed by Shamar Rinpoche who, in 1994 in New Delhi, installed 11-year-old Trinley Thaye Dorje as his version of the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa.

He was forced to do so in New Delhi because, in an incident in 1993 which shook the world's image of Tibetan Buddhism, Rumtek monastery saw a full-scale riot with monks savagely attacking one another. The faction led by Gyaltsab Rinpoche and Situ Rinpoche emerged victorious and Shamar Rinpoche's group was forced to retire to his residence about a kilometre below the monastery, which is at an altitude of about 1,500 metres in tropical eastern Himalaya, some 100 kms from the India-Tibet border.

The situation is a far cry from the romantic view many Westerners -- and Asians -- have of Tibetan Buddhism. Under contemporary pressures and with big powers always watching from the wings, the future of institutionalised Tibetan Buddhism is in question. (...)

Struggle for Tibet's Soul , "Asiaweek", Oct. 2000

In October 2000, an in-depth analysis is published in "AsiaWeek", a well known magazine in Hong Kong. This analysis was written by a journalist who researched the story for several months. This was the first occurrence of a media describing and analyzing the controversy in such a clear and balanced way. This analysis was reproduced by the french weekly "Courrier International" in its January 2001 issue.

JULIAN GEARING Asiaweek october 2000

Lhasa and Dharamsala

While Tibetan exiles fight to determine who is the real incarnate of a high lama, Beijing affixes its seal on the whole process. Will Chinese pick up the next Dalai-Lama ?

Urgyen Trinley can still manage a smile, but his patience is wearing thin. The earlier whirlwind of media attention has given way to boredom as he waits, the days drifting into months. Under gilded-cage captivity at the Gyuto Monastery down the hill from the Dalai Lama's residence in exile in Dharamsala, the 15-year-old Karmapa Lama offers fleeting audiences to Buddhist pilgrims, accepting prayer scarves and handing out red ribbons. An enigma, Urgyen Trinley is guarded by soldiers and barred from giving interviews. His fate is largely in the hands of Indian authorities, who must decide whether to risk China's wrath by allowing him to assume the Karmapa's exile throne at Rumtek Monastery in Sikkim. They were surprised and embarrassed by his sudden arrival on Indian soil nine months ago.

Back then, the Tibetan exile community and international journalists had listened excitedly to the tale of the tall, handsome Karmapa Lama braving snowbound mountain passes and border guards to flee his Chinese-controlled homeland. The young lama's flight echoed that of the Dalai Lama himself in 1959. Many people have since wondered: Could this charismatic boy succeed the aging 14th Dalai Lama as leader of the Tibetan diaspora? The question takes on added urgency as overseas Tibetans are increasingly troubled by internal rifts as well as a lack of progress in efforts to open a dialogue with Beijing about the future of Tibet.

But who is Urgyen Trinley? And is he the real 17th Karmapa Lama, Tibet's No. 3 spiritual leader after the Dalai and Panchen lamas?

Plucked from a nomad's tent at age seven, he was installed X with Beijing's blessing X in Tibet's Tsurphu Monastery as head of the 900-year-old Karma Kagyu school, one of the region's four main Buddhist sects. But serious allegations of fraud and political skulduggery on the part of his supporters have since hung over his recognition, resulting in the emergence of a rival Karmapa in 1994. Since Urgyen Trinley's arrival in Dharamsala, seat of the Tibetan government-in-exile, the controversy has intensified. His exit from China has not only widened the divisions within his Karma Kagyu sect, but also focuses attention on the thinly veiled feud between it and the Dalai Lama's dominant Geluk sect.

More important, the Karmapa controversy has highlighted Beijing's growing involvement in the selection of top Tibetan lamas. If the Chinese can determine who gets recognized as the next Dalai, Panchen and Karmapa lamas, their control over Tibet will be sealed as the top lamas are revered by their deeply pious people. For Tibetan exiles, that is an increasingly vivid nightmare. The Dalai Lama, widely regarded as the only figure with the authority to hold the Tibetan exile movement together, is now 65. "When he dies, there will be danger here," says Thupten Rikey, editor of the Dharamsala-based Tibet Journal. Fears about the Dalai Lama's mortality have been heightened by a recent car crash. "If he dies and Beijing can influence or name his reincarnation, the exiles will really be in trouble," says a Tibet specialist in Hong Kong. "Much could depend on how the Karmapa affair plays out."

The man responsible for Urgyen Trinley's recognition and enthronement is Tai Situ Rinpoche, 45. One of four regents charged with safeguarding the Karma Kagyu lineage, he commands reverence from Tibetan and Western followers alike. From Taipei to New York, hundreds of thousands laud his efforts to spread Buddhist dharma, or teachings. They also put their faith in his judgment on key matters, such as recognition of the Karmapa Lama.

Sitting in his spacious new monastery at Sherabling, a two-hour drive away from his charge, Tai Situ is soft-spoken and affable. Urgyen Trinley, he insists, is the true reincarnation of the late, much-respected 16th Karmapa Lama. "There is no such thing as proving, it is proved already," the regent told Asiaweek. "The Karmapa is the Karmapa, Buddha is Buddha, the Dalai Lama is the Dalai Lama. We are believers. That's it."

The short, bespectacled monk has influence, power, certainly money. As a group of Western followers wait patiently for a blessing, Bhutanese artists put the final touches to a huge Buddha statue in the main prayer hall of this modern monastery set in 47 acres of wooded hillside. One of 200 monks cleans and polishes the large photograph of Urgyen Trinley placed on the main throne. With its efficient reception, outdoor café and four-wheel-drive vehicles parked out front, the establishment is a far cry from the dark, rat-infested chambers of Tibet's medieval monasteries. Western pop music plays on a ghetto-blasters in one of the monks' bright living quarters. Only the cavernous prayer hall is reminiscent of traditional Tibet.

The search for the Karmapa, says Tai Situ, "was conducted according to the previous Karmapa's instructions," which came in the form of a letter he says was written by Urgyen Trinley's predecessor. The Karma Kagyu sect started the Tibetan practice of finding reincarnated high lamas nine centuries ago. Tibetans believe that advanced lamas can use letters, dreams, meditation and signs to identify tulku, or enlightened beings. Tai Situ is a tulku.

But to his critics, the regent has another side. They accuse him of forgery, violence, intimidation, hoodwinking the Dalai Lama and doing deals with Beijing X all in a bid to assume control of the Karma

Kagyü. Also concerned about Tai Situ is the Indian government, which last month received a warning from China against granting Ugyen Trinley asylum in Sikkim. The regent, banned from India in 1994-98 for alleged anti-India and "criminal" activities, is currently prohibited from entering Sikkim. The Indians also worry about law and order, following brawls between Tai Situ's monks and followers of rival Karma Kagyü regent Shamarpa Rinpoche. Shamarpa has produced a competing claimant, Thaye Dorje, to the Karmapa throne.

While Ugyen Trinley is stuck in Dharamsala, the 17-year-old Thaye Dorje - quietly spirited out of Tibet six years ago - is free to roam the world giving teachings. "People should be reassured about him being the Karmapa because he has been recognized according to the Karma Kagyü's traditions," the gruff-faced Shamarpa told Asiaweek. Six years ago, he relied on a dream, meditation and auspicious signs to find Thaye Dorje, then living in Lhasa's Jokhang Temple. "The 16th Karmapa reaffirmed my position as the Shamarpa, the second-highest rank in our sect," he adds. "The Shamarpa has historically been empowered to identify and recognize Karmapas."

The deadlock means that both claimants are in limbo, awaiting official enthronement and the donning of the sacred Black Hat, a ceremony supposed to take place on the Karmapa's 21st birthday. Never has there been such a crisis in the history of Tibetan spiritual succession. Competing candidates, yes, but with only one recognized. Now there are two recognized Karmapas.

Tai Situ is dismissive of his rivals. "We feel sad that something like this has happened," he says. "There are a lot of people who don't know the name of Buddha, who misrepresent Buddhism. We can't get stressed by these things." Sitting on a throne in his guest room, Tai Situ does not look stressed. He holds the high ground in the propaganda war for a simple reason: The Dalai Lama backs Ugyen Trinley. That means so do most Tibetans. Tai Situ has even been able to win over the normally skeptical international press. Ugyen Trinley is the Karmapa, journalists write. No question.

Even so, now that the search for the reincarnations of high lamas has come out of the closed ramparts of the Himalaya, more questions are being asked. Given the growing international appeal of Tibetan Buddhism - even Hollywood stars like Richard Gere and Pierce Brosnan are admirers - the issue is drawing more attention than ever. It is the subject of independent investigations, books and even debates on the Internet. Has the unique process been subject to abuse? Indeed, are its keepers making a mockery of it in personal bids for power and wealth?

The answers are rooted in the recent vicissitudes of a medieval religion. At 18 months, Tai Situ was recognized as the 12th reincarnation in a line of spiritual teachers who had worked alongside the Karmapa Lama. But he was living in an occupied land. Four years before, the Chinese army had completed its "peaceful liberation" of Tibet. The act was sealed by the 17-Point Agreement, signed between Beijing and Tibetan representative Ngabo Ngawang Jigme (see interview page 73). Among Tibetans, Ngabo is reviled to this day for the move.

When the 16th Karmapa Lama fled Tibet on the eve of the 1959 revolt against Beijing, Tai Situ followed him. The Dalai Lama left soon afterward. Chinese depredations in Tibet climaxed during the 1966-76 Cultural Revolution, which saw the devastation of over 6,000 monasteries and the killing, imprisonment and dispersal of tens of thousands of monks and nuns. When Deng Xiaoping came to power in the late 1970s, he tried to repair some of the damage. Beijing allowed some monasteries to be rebuilt and limited religious practice. But having failed to crush Tibetan opposition by force, Communist authorities were looking for the chance to influence the selection of top lamas. The opportunity was not long in coming.

With the death of the 16th Karmapa Lama in 1981 at the age of 56, a daunting challenge faced Tai Situ, Shamarpa, Gyaltsab Rinpoche and Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, the young regents entrusted with the search for their master's reincarnation. The 16th Karmapa had proved a gifted, charismatic leader. From his seat in exile at Rumtek, he had built a spiritual and worldly empire with millions of followers and extensive assets. He had also long been at odds with the Dalai Lama, his Sikkim monastery an alternative power base to the latter's government-in-exile in Dharamsala.

Leading the search for the next Karmapa Lama was a task that traditionally alternated between the contemporary incarnations of Tai Situ and Shamarpa. The Shamarpa had been banished for 200 years by previous Dalai Lamas, but was reinstated by the 14th in 1963 in a bid to unite Tibetans. But in the feudal Karma Kagyü hierarchy, Shamarpa's reinstatement as No. 2 behind the Karmapa shunted Tai Situ and his followers down a rung. The scene was set for trouble.

The bad blood helped stall the search for the 17th Karmapa Lama. At the same time, the regents saw opportunity in the growing vista of popular and lucrative dharma centers being set up in Asia and the West. Tai Situ began teaching tours abroad, which grew into a lucrative circuit that would see him dubbed "The Last Emperor" in Hong Kong because of his penchant for expensive hotel suites. In Scotland, he befriended Akong Tulku Rinpoche, who helped found the Samye Ling Buddhist center. It was Akong who saw the opportunity offered by China's new open-door policy.

In an attempt to woo back some Tibetan exiles, Beijing began allowing exile government "fact-finding" missions and private visits. After trips to both Tibet and China's capital, Akong launched a series of humanitarian projects under his charity, Rokpa (Service). He also became Tai Situ's representative to the

Chinese government. The regent himself got clearance for a four-month visit to Tibet, during which he proposed measures for education and health care as well as the preservation and propagation of Buddhist culture. "From the Dalai Lama down to every Tibetan in exile, we try to work with everybody in Tibet, that is our duty," says Tai Situ. Like other exiled lamas, he and Akong were ostensibly trying to help their people and rebuilding the damaged religious infrastructure. For that, Beijing declared Akong a "Living Buddha."

The delay in finding the 17th Karmapa Lama led to recriminations. Tai Situ's supporters started a campaign of letters and faxes, blaming Shamarpa. They launched - and lost - a court case claiming he tried to steal the Karmapa's assets. On March 19, 1992, Tai Situ showed his three fellow regents an A4-sized letter, purportedly written by the 16th Karmapa, directing them to where his reincarnation would be found. Shamarpa was shocked. "The letter was obviously fake," he says. "I examined it word for word, and realized the handwriting was not the 16th Karmapa's, but seemed more like Tai Situ's. But Tai Situ steadfastly refused to have the letter tested forensically."

Tai Situ then faxed a copy of the missive to the Dalai Lama and told him that all the regents had agreed on its authenticity (though Shamarpa had not). On that basis, the Dalai Lama accepted the findings. It was a political coup for Tai Situ. He had manipulated the Dalai Lama's intervention in the most important affair of another Buddhist sect. Shamarpa was appalled. "It was not the Dalai Lama's role to get involved," he says. "All past Karmapas have been recognized within the Karma Kagyu lineage."

Urgyen Trinley was said to have been identified from instructions laid out in the letter. But Tai Situ's critics allege that even before securing the Dalai Lama's acceptance, the regent had been to Tibet, found his Karmapa and cleared his choice with Beijing. In 1991, Tai Situ purportedly gave Urgyen Trinley a Buddhist empowerment in Tibet. The same year, says a Chinese government source, Beijing issued an internal directive allowing the monks at Tsurphu monastery to start searching for the new Karmapa "on the basis on the 16th Karmapa's will." Notes a Tibetan source: "This indicates Tai Situ was likely involved with the Chinese since only he had the prediction letter." (The regent's response echoes the words of his friend, Akong Rinpoche: "We try to work with everyone inside Tibet. That is our duty.") In a lavish 1992 ceremony attended by thousands, Urgyen Trinley, dubbed "the Chinese Karmapa," was installed in Tibet's Tsurphu Monastery. The episode marked the first time Chinese Communist authorities had participated in the recognition of a top Tibetan Lama.

Sectarian conflicts worsened among the Tibetan exiles. In 1993, Tai Situ's followers violently ousted Shamarpa and his supporters from the Rumtek Monastery. The next year, Urgyen Trinley was invited to Tiananmen Square and the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. He was congratulated by Chinese President Jiang Zemin and told to work for the good of the motherland and the Communist Party.

Cheered by their successful intervention in installing a Karmapa Lama, the Chinese moved again before long. The 10th Panchen Lama had died in 1989 and no reincarnation had been recognized. At a secret 1993 meeting between senior Chinese and Tibetan officials, a plan was hatched to wrest control over the recognition of Tibet's spiritual leaders from the Dalai Lama. When the Dalai announced in 1995 his discovery of 5-year-old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as the new Panchen Lama, the Chinese arrested the boy. They feted Gyaltzen Norbu, the 5-year-old son of a Communist cadre, as the 11th Panchen Lama. That had distressing implications for the Dalai Lama. As he and the Panchen both belong to the Geluk sect, the latter can recognize his reincarnation. And the Chinese had their hands on both Panchens.

Within the exile community, the Dalai Lama's troubles grew. He was criticized for "prematurely" announcing his acceptance of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, resulting in the boy's capture. His banning in 1996 of the worship of the Geluk sect's traditional Shugden deity created more tensions. Such worship, explains the Dalai Lama, "is detrimental to the Tibetan government and people." The proscription sparked protests by Geluk members against him in India and the West. "The Dalai Lama is denying us our religious practice, our human rights," complains Geshe Kalsang Gyatso, who heads Britain's cult-like Manjushri Center. The bloody murder of Lobsang Gyatso, a respected Dalai associate, and two of his students in 1997 raised fears about a bid on the Dalai Lama's life. It all made good fodder for Beijing's propaganda machine. The Chinese were also said to be funding anti-Dalai groups.

Long-uneasy relations between the Geluk and Karma Kagyu sects were further strained by the Dalai Lama's intervention in the recognition of the Karmapa Lama. It revived bitter memories of the 1960s, when the Dalai's brother Gyalo Thondup tried to bring all Tibetan sects under Geluk control or by force if necessary. When 14 exile settlements united to fight his plan, unrest erupted within the community. In March 1977, settlements leader Gungthang Tsultrim was shot several times at point-blank range. The murderer said he received 300,000 rupees from the Tibetan government-in-exile. He claimed it offered to pay him even more to kill the 16th Karmapa Lama.

When the Dalai Lama embraced Urgyen Trinley after his flight from Tibet in January this year, hopes grew of a reconciliation between the Geluk and Karma Kagyu. That the fugitive went to Dharamsala rather than the Karmapa's traditional seat at Rumtek in Sikkim suggested he was coming under the

protection of the Geluk. That squared with the sect's ambitions to unite the exile spiritual lineages under its umbrella.

It also helped boost Geluk morale, given the sect's raft of anxieties. With the Dalai Lama's advancing age and inability to open a dialogue with Beijing, demands are growing louder for a more radical, possibly violent approach to Tibet's future. Fearing chaos and the rise of "an angrier form of Tibetan nationalism," Dharamsala recently urged the Chinese to negotiate with the Dalai Lama. Without his "moderating influence," said the government-in-exile in a 45-page report, "different factions would start taking different actions."

Urgyen Trinley's arrival helped Tai Situ as well. The regent had slipped up. Putting the Karmapa in Chinese hands had backfired. Once Beijing had its "Living Buddha," Tai Situ was no longer needed. He watched in dismay as Thaye Dorje was installed as a rival Karmapa. At the 1994 enthronement ceremony in Delhi's Karmapa International Buddhist Institute, Tai Situ's followers hurled rocks and abuse, shouting: "The Karmapa is a fake, a political choice!" Windows were broken and dozens injured in the hour-long melée before Indian police restored order. And as Urgyen Trinley languished in Tibet, his sponsor despaired as Thaye Dorje kept winning converts and donations on the international teaching circuit. Says a Karma Kagyu follower in Munich: "Tai Situ saw the crowds Thaye Dorje attracted when he came to Germany, and the similar response in Taiwan. It was undermining his influence. He had to act, to get Urgyen Trinley out of Tibet in order to compete."

How do the rival Karmapas measure up? In August, Thaye Dorje seemed in his element as he gave teachings and blessings to a 1,000-strong gathering of followers in the Dordogne hills in France. His responses to their theological questions show that he is no dunce. He is versed not only in Buddhist scriptures, but also in more earthly matters such as cricket, computers, the Internet and the music of the Spice Girls. Thaye Dorje also likes Hawaiian pizza, computer games and the Star Wars video. "Time will tell how this [Karmapa rivalry] works out," he told Asiaweek. And what if he were to meet Urgyen Trinley? "That would be fine," says Thaye Dorje. "It would be interesting."

The intense, six-foot Urgyen Trinley is harder to fathom. Asiaweek had an audience but was unable to interview him, such is the paranoia surrounding the "bird in a cage," as an aide has grumbled. Indian guards were doubled last month when intelligence agents got whiff of an attempt to escape, possibly to Rumtek Monastery, the coveted Karmapa seat. The Dalai Lama talks of an exquisite poem the young lama is said to have written for him. "I see great potential regarding his spirituality," he says. "Spectacular," is how one Western follower describes Urgyen Trinley. Yet others speak of temper tantrums and low I.Q.

Politics will decide who eventually sits on the Karmapa's throne. In the past two months, Urgyen Trinley's supporters have stepped up pressure on India to allow him to take the Karmapa's seat in the Rumtek Monastery. From around the world, hundreds of them descended on Dharamsala in August to hold a conference on the issue. Their e-mails speculate on impending asylum status. But New Delhi is wary. "The Indian government, in effect, has given recognition to Thaye Dorje by hosting him in Delhi," says a Western Karma Kagyu member. "And it has long recognized Shamarpa Rinpoche as the paramount regent of our lineage."

Rightly or wrongly, New Delhi also fears that Beijing may be playing a double game. China is unlikely, as some Indian officials suggest, to have actually engineered Urgyen Trinley's escape from Tibet (most sources believe Dharamsala, and perhaps Tai Situ, had a role). But the Chinese may benefit if they were able, in the future, to hold negotiations with him as a representative of the Tibetan exile community.

That is why the question of whether Urgyen Trinley might succeed the 14th Dalai Lama as Tibetans' top leader is crucial. The scenario is "not possible," insists Sonam Topgyal, cabinet chairman of the government-in-exile. "The Karmapa will be like any other lama, giving teachings." But others disagree, noting that while the Geluk sect is now dominant, other factions - including the Karma Kagyu - had ruled in the past. "A lot of people have it fixed in their minds that the Dalai Lama rules, but that is not necessary," Akong Rinpoche told Asiaweek. "Another school could step in." Even Sonam acknowledges: "There are many other lamas [than the Dalai]. The Tibetans may even decide to elect a non-religious person."

For its part, Beijing is waiting for the Dalai Lama to die. It believes that would signal the end of the five-decade-old "Tibet question." But some Tibetans argue it could be just when Beijing's real troubles begin. "When the Dalai Lama dies, there will be chaos," secretary general Pema Lhundup of the Tibetan Youth Congress told Asiaweek in July. "The pent-up frustration against the Chinese occupation is barely being held in check by His Holiness. His demise could be the spark that ignites an uprising." (Lhundup's words could prove eerily on the mark. The outspoken political player died weeks after the interview, having fallen from a building in what Indian police say was an accident.) An uprising would not drive Chinese soldiers out of Tibet and would probably be violently suppressed. But it would be a colossal headache for Beijing, just when it is striving to open its economy wider and improve its image internationally.

In Tibet itself, Chinese authorities seem to have tightened up. "Perhaps for the first time since the Cultural Revolution, even simple acts of religious observance place a person under suspicion," says Ronald

Schwartz, author of *Circle of Protest*, a book on Tibetan politics. "This goes beyond the Dalai Lama and perceives Tibetan Buddhism itself as potentially threatening to Chinese rule. It is not inconceivable it will be treated the same way as Falungong and other so-called cults that challenge Communist Party power." To avoid the more violent scenarios, Beijing hopes to win the battle for Tibet by controlling the reincarnation of top lamas. The Dalai Lama's death will almost certainly see the China-anointed Panchen Lama recognizing the Dalai's successor. The Chinese announced last year that the next Dalai Lama would be born in Tibet X and thus under their control. They discount the Dalai's own assertion that he would be reborn in exile, quipping if he did that he would return as a blue-eyed Westerner. Never mind that most Tibetans will reject China's choice. If having two Karmapa Lamas has already produced such stress within the Tibetan diaspora, dueling Dalais would create even more tensions. "The Chinese see our splits over religion and ideology and seek to exploit them to destroy the exile community," says Dharamsala's Sonam.

That is why the Karmapa saga has been so devastating for the Tibetans. It has paralyzed a powerful sect, the Karma Kagyu, and it opened the door to Chinese involvement in Tibet's politics of reincarnation. Whoever prevails in the race for the Karmapa Lama's throne and lifts the sacred Black Hat onto his head will find a lineage torn apart. The winner will need to hang on extra-tight to his hat. The loser could be Tibet and the Tibetan people.

Year 2001

Indian government grants refugee status to Ugyen Trinley

Karmapa issue far from resolved

Hindustan Times Friday, February 9, 2001, New Delhi

Udayan Namboodiri - (New Delhi, February 8)

The government's decision to formally recognise Lama Ugyen Trinley Dorjee as a "registered Tibetan refugee" comes after months of back channel diplomacy. The decision was taken during former Chinese premier Li Peng's last month visit.

The principal of equal disadvantage prevailed eventually as both India and China were left half satisfied. New Delhi has refused to recognise the 14-year-old as the Karmapa of the Karma Kagyu sect. He will continue to live in Dharamsala, the headquarters of the Tibetan government in exile. His movements within and outside the country will be restricted. Most importantly, he might never be allowed to go to Sikkim where his followers want him to take charge of the Rumtek monastery.

The arrival of the Lama was not good news for New Delhi as it was seen as a deliberate move on China's part to drive a wedge between the followers of "their" Karmapa and "ours".

Seventeen-year-old Thaye Dorjee, who lives in Kalimpong under Indian intelligence cover but not allowed to enter Sikkim, is "Karmapa" to his own flock.

Here the role of the Dalai Lama, supreme spiritual head of Tibet in who is reposed the power to arbitrate, is curious.

His holiness continues to oscillate between accepting the "Chinese Karmapa" as the 16th Karmapa of the Rangjung Rigpe Dorje sect and the two Karmapa theory.

This comes in handy for Beijing, and sometimes Kathmandu, resulting in diplomatic pressure on India to put an end to the debate and accept, by extension, Beijing's man as head of a universally pro-Indian people.

During his stay in Delhi, Li Peng tried to hustle India on the issue. But India stood firm on its resolve to further the status quo. China has another backer in the Pawan Chamling government of Sikkim. The time is also ticking away. The "Kalimpong Karmapa" will be 21 in four years time and may very well decide, on the backing of his estimated 50,000 followers, to lay claim to the coveted "Black Hat". A communal explosion, degenerating into a diplomatic face-off with China may result. Those who urged New Delhi in January last to send the 14-year-old packing may have offered the best solution.

Karmapa's status a security risk?

Article published in "Hindu" 8 février 2001

By Atul Aneja

New Delhi, Feb. 7.

By granting the teenage monk, Ugyen Trinley Dorji, "refugee" status last week, the Government may have exposed itself to a security risk with far-reaching consequences.

Highly-placed sources in the Government said his "refugee" status could lead the 17th Karmapa to the powerful Rumtek monastery in Sikkim, "headquarters" of the five million strong Kagyu sect of Tibetan Buddhism, and to which he belongs. With an estimated following of five million in 300 monasteries across the globe, the sect has a large following in Sikkim too.

Sources here are concerned about the security implications of granting refugee status as they cannot rule out a Chinese hand in the Karmapa affair. Suspicions about a larger international involvement in the episode have been aroused by the manner of the boy monk's arrival in India.

A section of the Government feels the Karmapa could not have arrived without the prior knowledge and assistance from China. According to them, the Karmapa, lodged on the third or fourth floor of the Tsurphu monastery near Lhasa, "escaped" and supposedly travelled by jeep along a single pothole-ridden road leading out. Seven bridges were crossed by the party which included six others, besides the Karmapa, before the border with Nepal was crossed early last year. The defectors, it is believed, then entered India

from Nepal in the vicinity of Gorakhpur before arriving in Dharamsala. It is highly improbable that they managed to elude the Chinese vigilance machinery throughout the journey.

Initial reports about the monk's arrival here, however, negated this view saying the Lama and his entourage, in peak winter, trekked 1,450 km before reaching Dharamsala.

While suspecting a Chinese hand, sources here do not rule out the U.S. involvement either. The presence of the U.S. special coordinator on Tibet in Dharamsala, a day after the Karmapa's arrival there, may not have been coincidental.

The Karmapa's presence in India has been matched by pressures on shifting him to Rumtek. Tai Situ Rinpoche - a U.S- educated monk and one of the four regents involved in the selection of the 17th Karmapa after the death of the 16th Karmapa, has been seeking his presence in Rumtek. Others in the sects, however, have opposed him. Shamar Rinpoche, another regent involved in selecting the 17th Karmapa, has objected to bringing Ugyen Trinley Dorji to Rumtek. In fact, he has challenged Dorji's status as the 17th Karmapa and has instead chosen Trinley Thaye Dorje the real representative of the Kagyu sect.

In case the Karmapa, who may have tacit Chinese support, reaches Rumtek, it could have several negative security implications for India. The monastery is highly influential and its rulings can greatly influence public opinion in Sikkim. It also houses the black hat, symbol of ultimate authority in the sect.

The monastery has tremendous wealth and resources and houses the treasures brought by the 16th Karmapa, who escaped with the Dalai Lama in 1959. India has granted Ugyen Trinley Dorji refugee status, but has not given him permission to visit Rumtek. Asked whether Dorji could visit Sikkim, a Foreign Office spokesman said: "Not as yet." The Karmapa, the spokesman said, was "free to move subject to rules and regulations imposed from time to time."

The Crossing

20 March 2001 in The Time Of India Editorial, by *Rai Singh, New Delhi*

Apropos of Bisheshwar Mishra's news report "Is the Karmapa a security risk?" (Mar 7), I feel China has achieved a major foreign policy objective by successfully appointing the 14-year old, Lama Ugyen Trinley, as the 17th Karmapa. Lama Trinley is now the rightful successor and head priest of the Rumtek Monastery following the death of Gyalwa Karmapa, whom I happened to know personally while serving in Gangtok.

During the recently held Sino-Indian talks, the issue regarding the status of 14-year-old Chinese-sponsored Lama Ugyen Trinley as the successor to the Karmapa of the Rumtek monastery in Sikkim also came up for discussion. It may be recalled that during his visit to India in January this year, Mr Li Peng had tried to convince India to accept his candidate Lama Trinley's claim as the rightful successor of Gyalwa Karmapa. This time too he reiterated this. Realising the security implications of the Chinese move, India has so far declined to accept the Chinese claim.

By granting the teenage monk, Ugyen Trinley Dorji, permanent refugee status, India has exposed itself to a grave security risk. The government knows his refugee status will eventually lead to his becoming the 17th Karmapa of the powerful Rumtek monastery in Sikkim, which is the headquarter of the five-million strong Kagyu sect of Tibetan Buddhism.

The sect has a large following in Sikkim too. The Chinese are hand-in-glove in the Karmapa affair. They are suspicious about a larger international involvement in the episode.

Karma Kagyu International Conference in Kathmandu on March 16 and 17, 2001

A Karma Kagyu International Conference took place on the 16th and 17th of March 2001, in Kathmandu, Nepal with H. H. Shamar Rinpoche, Khempo Tchödrak Rinpoche and Nyendo Rinpoche leading the meeting. The conference gathered many tulkus, lamas, monks and lay people who came from 23 countries and represented more than 500 centers and monasteries around the world. This gathering fostered a closer relationship among the members of the Kakyupa community and took place in a warm, sociable atmosphere.

Public statement by the monks community of h.h. Gyalwa karmapa

Venerable Rinpoches, Respected Khenpos, Dear members of the Karma Kagyu Sangha, Very distinguished guests,

We, the monk-community of Rumtek Dharma Chakra Centre extend our sincere welcome to all of you and thank you for attending this conference. We have decided to hold this conference mainly because of specific extraordinary recent developments which have to be urgently discussed, considered and resolved by the entire Karma Kagyu Organisation. Thank you for your presence, which we highly appreciate.

During the last centuries there always existed 4 main separate and independent schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Even after 1959 they succeeded to exercise and to maintain their spiritual and also legal independence in exile. Recently however H.H. the Dalai Lama has seriously endangered this long established good tradition to protect and preserve the rich diversity of the Tibetan Buddhist Faith.

The late 16th Karmapa Rangjung Rigpe Dorje, the undisputed spiritual leader of the Karma Kagyu School, repeatedly had to defend the special qualities of the teachings of his school against frequent interferences of H.H. the Dalai Lama. At the end of the day these attacks were in vain and unsuccessful. But as a direct consequence H.H. probably began to develop an unsurpressable animosity against both, the independently minded 16th Karmapa and the Karma Kagyu School. Regretably the Dalai Lama continued and even increased his subversive activities against the Karma Kagyu School after Karmapa had passed away in 1981.

At first we only experienced very harmful activities of a certain high Kagyu Rinpoche, who obviously had totally discarded his loyalty and respect for his own School. This Situ Rinpoche misguided many honest people, bribed numerous officials and closely associated himself with thieves and gangsters who committed serious crimes including murder. We, therefore, never had a choice but had to defend our school against these malicious attacks. We did so by rejecting all political and nonreligious influences and strictly confined ourselves to the pure practice of our religion. We actively avoided all potentially harmful confrontations and always worked hard to further improve the good image of Tibetan Buddhism in our world. This compassionate and peaceful reaction to the sometimes rather vicious attacks of Situ Rinpoche and his associates served us very well until now. Therefore it is not surprising at all that the international community, political leaders, human rights groups and the international media, did not even know about our very existence in the past. We considered the stated problem to be an extremely unfortunate and highly regrettable but internal issue of our Karma Kagyu School into which outsiders should not get involved. Recently we discovered however that H.H. the Dalai Lama, who is not a member of our school, had actively directed the said activities of Situ Rinpoche from the very beginning. This shocking discovery is the reason for this public statement.

In close cooperation with Situ Rinpoche H.H. the Dalai Lama secretly directed the false recognition and enthronement of a Karmapa in China, thus successfully creating a split in the Karma Kagyu School. Since ancient times shrewd politicians always tried to divide and rule their opponents and potential competitors. In this respect H. H. is no exception.

Until recently we always wondered why H.H. the Dalai Lama never publicly condemned the violent and hostile take-over of Rumtek monastery in Sikkim in August 1993. At that time Situ Rinpoche had successfully bribed some powerful officials of the Sikkimese administration, who in return gratefully organised the violent take-over of the monastery and expelled all Karmapa's loyal monks by force. Immediately afterwards they handed the control of the monastery over to Situ Rinpoche.

Meanwhile we analysed H.H.'s activities towards our school and resolved that he is motivated by his deep disappointment and dislike of the late Karmapa, who always strongly resisted H.H.'s numerous attempts to bring the Karma Kagyu School under his control. He had this basic disagreement with the Karmapa, who strongly upheld the spiritual freedom and independence of his school.

We are now making this public statement, although we are aware of the Dalai Lama's excellent reputation in the western world. Many honest private persons, great teachers, politicians and eminent statesmen have been genuinely impressed by the unusual strong personality of this "simple monk". Also due to the Dalai Lama's religious activities the pure buddhist teachings of nonviolence, compassion and love are becoming more and more popular in our today's world. In this respect we sincerely acknowledge the most outstanding contributions of H.H. the Dalai Lama. At the same time we realize however, that many admirers of H.H. the Dalai Lama either do not or do not wish to distinguish between his pure religious teachings and his political activities. Many supporters of H.H. have not noticed the subtle influence of Hollywood's frequent presentations of Tibet as a spiritual paradise and of the Dalai Lama as an absolutely faultless, holy man. On this background his long, political fight against the legal communist government of China even enhanced his carefully crafted image as a galant defender of democracy, freedom and human rights. In particular the media in many western countries such as the USA,

Germany, France and others often just follow the popular, well established trends and opinions without making their own proper investigations and judgements of the complicated underlying realities of Tibetan affairs.

Due to his deep-rooted opposition to the late 16th Karmapa H.H. the Dalai Lama searched and found a small number of unhappy Rinpoches within the Karma Kagyu School who were willing to secretly support his ambitions. Thus the traitorous Situ Rinpoche and his men became willing participants of H.H.'s scheme to divide and conquer the Karma Kagyu School. H.H. took a great risk by openly disclosing his previously secret leadership of Situ Rinpoche's group now. But obviously he had to make that disclosure now because he finally noticed that Situ Rinpoche alone had no realistic chance of success with his destructive schemes against us.

We wish to emphasize that we never had and do not have any intention whatsoever to tarnish the reputation of H.H. the Dalai Lama as a religious leader. In that capacity we do respect him very, very much. But after H.H. openly disclosed his leading role in Situ Rinpoche's group we are forced to take a firm stand. His close association with the highly questionable Situ Rinpoche, who had happily enjoyed a very special relationship with China and who was banned to enter India for good reasons in the past, is most deplorable indeed. As we sincerely respect our own spiritual leader, the Karmapa, our first duty is to protect and preserve the authentic, special teachings of our Karma Kagyu School. Therefore we cannot agree at all to H.H.'s preposterous claim to be the authorized person to enthrone the Karmapa.

The conference is scheduled to debate this issue and to resolve this delicate problem in the most effective way, if possible. At the same time the conference will also serve all interested parties as a valuable source of information regarding Tibetan and Himalayan Buddhism in general.

Khenpo Choedrak Tenphel

Ngendo Rinpoche

Speech of His Holiness Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche

Venerable Rinpoches, Respected Khenpos, dear members of the Karma Kagyu Sangha, very distinguished guests.

We have reached a crossroads in our effort to preserve the authentic transmission of the Karma Kagyu lineage. The individuals behind the secret design to split and ultimately take over the Karma Kagyu lineage have today emerged at the forefront of the controversy.

In my meeting with H.H. the Dalai Lama in Washington in June, 2000, I emphasized that the Karmapa and the Shamarpa had for centuries exercised authority over the Karma Kagyu. I declared that in 1994, I alone had identified and recognized Thaye Dorje as the 17th Karmapa in accordance with our traditional methods.

H.H. the Dalai Lama had previously involved himself in the Karmapa matter and he appeared to have taken a side. He also mentioned that there could be more than one Karmapa. I accepted his position and asked him to reveal it publicly. Since Urgyen Trinley was installed in Tsurphu, I proposed that Tsurphu naturally continued to be his seat. Thus, he would be the Karmapa for China and Tibet. In return, Thaye Dorje would be supported as the Karmapa for India and as the head of the Kagyu monasteries there.

I put forward this compromise in my genuine desire to solve the conflict which had split the Karma Kagyu lineage in half. However, the Dalai Lama rejected my offer. I was informed in writing that, in fact His Holiness had recognized Urgyen Trinley as the authentic Karmapa. The Dalai Lama's recognition was carried out not only on the basis of Situ Rinpoche's so called "prediction letter" but also because of his own private indications. This was a total departure from the Karma Kagyu practice and tradition. The Dalai Lama was forcing himself into a position of religious arbiter, endowed with spiritual powers and authority to deliver the Karmapas. A move was set afoot to convert the Kagyu school to the Gelugpa order!

I could not accede to such a scenario!

I then came forward with yet another compromise, that, if implemented, could have won us back the unity of the lineage and installed a Karmapa all his followers could accept. I proposed that the issue of the Karmapa be solved by the Karmapas themselves. Accompanied only by their parents, Urgyen Trinley and Thaye Dorje would meet and themselves arrive at a satisfactory solution. I could have no possible personal gain from any such offer and had only the lineage's benefit in view. I was also convinced that my proposal would best serve the boys' interests. Again my offer was not appreciated, this time by the Dalai Lamas favorite political group in Sikkim (Joint Action Committee).

What logical conclusion can one draw from these constant rejections? The answer which comes to mind is that His Holiness the Dalai Lama is against the growth of Karmapa's activity and has engaged in a "divide and conquer" policy. How else to interpret the broken promises, behind the scenes plotting, the infringing upon our centuries old tradition, the creation of new religious customs.

I am sharing this information with considerable concern and much regret. Is the Dalai Lama still driven by his old personal animosity to the late 16th Karmapa and to the then Rumtek administration? The late 16th Karmapa, undisputed leader of the Karma Kagyu school, confronted Dharamsala's ambition regarding the four schools. By creating a successful counterbalance to Dharamsala's policy, H.H. the 16th Karmapa gained no friends within the exiled government. It seems that old rivalries die hard and today the Karma Kagyu school has come under fire at its most vital point.

We have reached a turning point. If we lose the right to recognize the Karmapa, our lineage will cease to function as an autonomous transmission that has been preserved for nine centuries. I am asking your opinion and seeking your advice. Do we fight for our independence? Or do we submit to another lineage? If we should fight, what is there to fight for? What constitutes the uniqueness of the Karma Kagyu school that is now in imminent danger of disappearing?

Is it Rumtek monastery that lies at the centre of the Kagyu legacy? The answer is no. According to the Buddhist sutras, a place where the Sangha have been split and have engaged in a fight – described in the sutras is one of the five limitless negative actions (Tsam Meapa Nga) – loses its blessing, is devoid of spiritual merit and, in fact, becomes spiritually polluted. To restore its unequalled qualities, the warring sides must be brought together and fully reconciled; moreover, a Yen-Dum (conciliation) Stupa must be erected on the site, else no spiritual activity there is possible. If Rumtek is to once again function as a Buddhist place, if a practitioner is ever to develop and accumulate merit there, whoever resides at Rumtek has to bring the Sangha together as well as construct the conciliation Stupa.

Furthermore, Rumtek - or any other monastery for that matter - is only a building designed to accommodate the monk community so they can perform the necessary rituals and practices. The late 16th Karmapa chose Rumtek for his headquarters and the cloister had well served that purpose until the 2nd of August, 1993 when it came under attack from and was subsequently occupied by Situ and Gyaltshab Rinpoche's supporters going hand in hand with the Sikkimese armed forces on orders from bribed officers. The attackers committed one of the five limitless negative actions described in the sutras.

Furthermore, for all its beauty and auspicious location, a building alone cannot aspire to the spiritual status of the Kagyu's unique heritage. In spite of this, every effort is still under way to recover Rumtek and return it to its rightful occupants.

The holy relics stored at Rumtek carry the blessing of the lineage. However, those are moveable artifacts which, luckily, had been placed under lock and key as early as August 1992 by the farseeing Rumtek monk community. They were later sealed on order issued by the District Magistrate and can be recovered once the court comes down with a ruling. Even Karmapa's famous black crown – adorned with precious ruby – is not indispensable for the functioning of the lineage. The crown was offered to the 5th Karmapa by the Ming Dynasty's Yung Lo emperor of China. However, our lineage had flourished no less successfully without the crown's presence than when it was endowed with its physical existence. Besides, neither Urgyen Trinley nor Thaye Dorje may be able to obtain the black crown unless they reach a mutual agreement.

What then constitutes the Karma Kagyu's unequalled transmission which should be preserved at all costs? First and foremost, our right to recognize the Karmapa, the undisputed spiritual leader of our lineage. The Dalai Lama's attempts to force the Kagyu school into the Gelugpa order must be stopped in its tracks. Regrettably, Situ Rinpoche together with Thrangu Rinpoche, closely followed by Gyaltshab and Bokar Rinpoche gave in to the Dalai Lama's intrusion and in doing so they have created a crisis of unprecedented proportions in Karma Kagyu history. Their short-sighted and self-serving deals with the Communist Chinese and their sheepish submission to the Gelugpa school's authority put the independence of the lineage in total jeopardy.

Second, we must preserve the teachings and methods written and handed down by the Karmapas and the Kagyu masters which make up the uniqueness of this school. The main source of the lineage are the founding fathers: Marpa, Milarepa and Gampopa. The transmission encompasses profound Vajrayana teachings such as the essential instruction given by Dusum Khyenpa; the Six Yogas of Naropa, taught for the first time in written form by the 2nd Shamarpa; the profound commentaries to the tantras, extensively given by the 3rd and 8th Karmapas along with the 4th Shamarpa. The Kagyu transmission also encompasses the vastness of the sutras such as the Madhyamaka, the Abhidharma, the Prajnaparamita, the Vinaya and the Tsema explained in complete detail by the 7th and 8th Karmapas. Finally the transmission contains both Sutra and Tantra within the profoundness of the Mahamudra, written, explained and taught by the 9th Karmapa and others. Additionally, the Karma Kagyu transmission includes the Nyingma teachings, called Karma Nyingtik, incorporated into the lineage by the 3rd Karmapa as well as the Termas of Jatson Nyingpo and Karma Chagme.

We are at a turning point in our history. Indeed, it would be a great loss to the Buddhist world if our transmission were to disappear in favor of another ambitiously expanding lineage. I am once again asking you the crucial question: Do we fight for our lineage, or do we surrender? We must come down with a binding decision during this conference. If we yield, we will lose the treasure of the Karma Kagyu

transmission. If we wish to continue our struggle, we have no choice but to oppose the Dalai Lama. It is his interference and his "divide and conquer" strategy that is the primary threat to the integrity of our Karma Kagyu today.

If we together decide to defend the lineage, we would need everybody's help and support. It is our common house we are protecting. We are struggling for the very survival of the Karma Kagyu blessing; our aim is to preserve the Buddha's unparalleled methods for helping beings achieve enlightenment. They must not disappear today due to corruption from within and aggression from without.

In order to function as an efficient body, under today's challenging circumstances I would propose the following: The establishment of our Karma Kagyu headquarters in New Delhi, India and the set up of two administrative centres, one in Washington, DC, USA for the West and one in Hong Kong for the East.

Shamar Rinpoche

Resolutions passed by the International Karma Kagyu Conference

During the two days of discussions, work groups were organized, and several actions were taken and resolutions passed:

1) The International Karma Kagyu Organization (IKKO) was created, with headquarters in New Delhi, India. It is in charge of coordinating the circulation of information among the various Karma Kagyu centers, and of coordinating decisions involving the whole school. Under the authority of H.H. Shamar Rinpoche, the IKKO will act in the name of all the centers and monasteries claiming to belong to it.

2) The delegates reaffirmed the independence of the Karma Kagyu lineage and their opposition to any external intervention in the internal affairs of the lineage. An open letter to H.H. the Dalai Lama was written with this intention.

3) A request concerning the recognition of the 17th Karmapa was presented to H.H. Shamar Rinpoche. Specifically, delegates encouraged H. H. Shamar Rinpoche to continue his effort to have the alleged "prediction letter" from Situ Rinpoche submitted to an independent and official test of its authenticity.

4) The members of the conference expressed their sincere and unanimous gratitude to H. H. Shamar Rinpoche as well as support for his past and present activity devoted to preserving the authenticity of the Karma Kagyu school. They passed a resolution requesting him personally to give His Holiness the Gyalwa Karmapa, Trinley Thaye Dordje the authentic and pure transmissions, initiations, and teachings of the Karma Kagyu lineage. Delegates from the various centers will be invited to participate in this transmission.

Open letter to the Dalai Lama

This letter has been sent by all the participants in the International Karma Kagyu Conference
Kathmandu, 17th March 2001

Your Holiness,

An International Karma Kagyu Conference was held in Kathmandu, Nepal, on 16th and 17th of March, 2001. Delegates representing over five hundred monasteries and centers of the Karma Kagyu Lineage from around the world attended. The conference was expressly convened to address the present crisis within the Karma Kagyu lineage. A unanimous resolution was passed to declare our school's determination to reject any interference from outside the Karma Kagyu lineage regarding the process of recognition and enthronement of the Karmapas and to protect the authentic transmission of the Karma Kagyu Lineage.

At the heart of the Karma Kagyu lineage's existence lies its own fundamental right to recognize the Karmapa, the spiritual leader of the lineage. This must be done in accordance with the genuine, spiritual custom of the Karma Kagyu lineage and without interference from outside the lineage. Traditionally the Black-Hat and the Red-Hat Karmapas have recognized and enthroned each other's incarnations.

History shows that the present crisis is rooted in the past. For centuries, the Gelugpa lineage of the Dalai Lamas and the Karma Kagyu lineage of the Gyalwa Karmapas have been locked in a struggle.

The conflict started as early as the fifteenth century, at the time of the Seventh Karmapa and Fourth Shamarpa. This coincided with a period during which the Tibetan government was controlled by the Kagyupas.

Hostilities peaked in 1638 when the Fifth Dalai Lama invited the Mongolian army under Goshir Khan to invade Tibet. The Gelugpa and Mongol alliance was subsequently responsible for the death by decapitation of virtually all abbots from one thousand Karma Kagyu monasteries. All these monasteries

were converted to the Gelugpa order by force. The Tenth Karmapa's camp came under attack and over seven thousand of his monks were slaughtered. Only Karmapa and his attendant managed to escape. The Karmapa was forced to stay in exile for the next forty years.

Two centuries later the struggle escalated further during the regency period between the Seventh and Eighth Dalai Lamas. Tenpai Goenpo, a Gelugpa minister, took the opportunity to permanently remove the Shamar Rinpoche from the religious scene in Tibet. In spite of having mediated in the war between Nepal and Tibet-China, the Ching-Emperor of China declared him a traitor and all his monasteries were forcibly converted to the Gelugpa order. An edict banning Shamarpa's future incarnations was proclaimed.

In 1959 came the demise of Tibet at the hands of the Communists. Unfortunately Tibet's destruction seemed not to have been disaster enough to reign in the long-standing and unjustified aggression of the Gelugpa School towards the Karmapa and his Karma Kagyu order.

In 1961 the Tibetan government in exile proposed to merge the four Tibetan schools into one religious body headed by Your Holiness. This policy inflicted serious spiritual suffering on much of the Tibetan exile community. Rallying behind Karmapa's authority, thirteen Tibetan settlements challenged the Exile Government's plan and as a consequence the whole scheme was abandoned. Later in the seventies Karmapa came under blame because he had chosen to defend the autonomy of the three other lineages. The aggressive atmosphere which had been fomented during that period triggered joyful celebrations at the Tibetan camps in Ladakh when H.H. the 16th Karmapa died in 1981. This painful incident further inflamed the mistrust between the two schools.

Even before the 16th Karmapa's death, members of Your Holiness' circle had already approached certain high Kagyu lamas with an offer of collaboration in the search and recognition of the 17th Karmapa. In close cooperation with this traitorous Kagyu group, Your Holiness succeeded in dividing our school for the first time in its history. This scheme brought about the subsequent enthronement of a false Karmapa in China.

In 1992 and 1993 Your Holiness deliberately endorsed the wrongful claims and actions of this group of corrupt Kagyu lamas. This interference is absolutely unacceptable to the Karma Kagyu School.

In July 2000, Your Holiness' involvement in the matter went even further. Your Holiness informed H.H. Shamar Rinpoche in writing that even if an authentic prediction from the 16th Karmapa was found and presented, it would not sway your insistence that Urgyen Trinley is the Throneholder-Karmapa. By doing so Your Holiness would retrospectively deprive the undisputed 16th Karmapa of his right to determine his own reincarnation. Such a preposterous claim goes against the Karma Kagyu tradition and sets the stage for a take-over of the Karma Kagyu School by Your Holiness' School and Government.

Up until Your Holiness' interference in 1992, no other Dalai Lama has ever played a role in the recognition of a genuine Karmapa. As Your Holiness well knows, the Karmapa incarnations precede the Dalai Lama line by over three hundred years. There is no historical precedent for Your Holiness' current involvement.

We highly respect and support Your Holiness' struggle for the welfare and freedom of the Tibetan people. We therefore request you to apply the same goodwill in the case of the Karmapa controversy. For the sake of the integrity of our lineage, we urge Your Holiness to gracefully bow out of this internal conflict of the Karma Kagyu School. We also ask for Your Holiness' support regarding our view that the whole world will benefit by preserving the rich diversity of all four schools, including the Karma Kagyu. We sincerely make wishes for Your Holiness' long life and continued health.

Most respectfully, for and on behalf of all delegates to the International Karma Kagyu Conference
H.H. Luehrs (Chairman)

The Kamapa Controversy: Chronology of Events

An overview of the main events surrounding the controversy over the 17th incarnation of Gyalwa Karmapa of Tibet (from Nov. 1981 till Dec. 1996)

1981

On **Nov. 5, 1981**, Rangjung Rigpe Dorje, the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa, head of the Karma Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, passed away in Zion, USA. Since then, followers of the lineage have waited for Karmapa's next incarnation. Historically, two necessary components were involved in the delicate process of recognizing the next Karmapa: the deeds of the young incarnation, and the oral or written directions left by the predecessor.

On **Dec. 20, 1981**, Karmapa's cremation ceremony, attended by Indian dignitaries and several thousands of his disciples, took place in Rumtek, Karmapa's main seat outside Tibet.

On **Dec. 21, 1981** a general Karma Kagyu meeting was held in Rumtek . Mr. Dhamchoe Yongdu, the then General Secretary to the 16th Karmapa, requested Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche, historically second after Karmapa in the spiritual hierarchy of the lineage as well as Tai Situ Rinpoche, Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, and Goshir Gyaltsab Rinpoche, close disciples of the 16th Karmapa, to take joint responsibility for the affairs of the Karma Kagyu lineage. He also asked them to locate Karmapa's instructions concerning his next rebirth and thus bring forward his next incarnation. Although a four-person body in charge of Karmapa's recognition was a historical novelty, the four Rinpoches accepted the task and expressed their sincere desire to fulfil the wishes of the 16th Karmapa.

1983

On **Jan. 21, 1983**, at another general Karma Kagyu meeting in Rumtek, it was decided that Topga Yulgyal, who the 16th Karmapa had appointed as Mr. Yongdu's successor, would commence as General Secretary of the Karmapa Charitable Trust . The Trust, founded by the 16th Karmapa in 1961, was to provide care and management for the Kagyu lineage during the intermediate period after the 16th Karmapa passed away and before the 17th Karmapa attained the age of twenty-one years.

Since **1983**, rumors about the 16th Karmapa's reincarnation began to emerge. .

1986

On **Feb. 9, 1986**, in order to put an end to speculation about the different Karmapa candidates, Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche sent a letter to the Kagyu lamas and monasteries pointing out that the 17th Karmapa would reveal himself in the traditional way .

On **Feb. 23, 1986**, the four Rinpoches met in Rumtek. After their meeting, they issued a statement declaring that two letters by the 16th Karmapa regarding his reincarnation had been found: an "outer" and an "inner" one. They also disclosed that the inner letter was supposed to be opened at an unspecified date in the future, after a certain number of religious ceremonies, described in the outer letter, had been performed . In fact, as they would later admit, the four Rinpoches had not found any letters of instruction from the 16th Karmapa.

On **April 18, 1986**, Topga Rinpoche, General Secretary of the Karmapa Charitable Trust informed the dharma-centers world-wide of the discovery of the letters of instructions, which he believed to be true .

1988

On **May 4, 1988**, the Rumtek staff announced that all rituals specified in the outer letter had been performed, thus the obstacles to open the final testament had been removed. Over the years, the four Rinpoches assured the followers of the Kagyu lineage that the 16th Karmapa's reincarnation would be found very soon.

1989

In **1989** - as he would later claim - Situ Rinpoche discovered by accident Karmapa's "prediction letter." Supposedly, he had received the letter shortly before His Holiness passed away in 1981, with no

indication whatsoever as to its momentous content. Wrapped in silk, a package was given to him as a protector. He didn't even know it contained a letter. When in 1989 Situ Rinpoche decided to exchange the worn out fabric that had protected his talisman, instead of the expected relics he found the "prediction letter".

At the end of **1989** Situ Rinpoche informed the other three regents that he was in possession of „good news similar to the joyful cries of peacocks" .

1990

On **March 14, 1990**, the four Rinpoches met in New Delhi. However, during the meeting, Situ Rinpoche neither mentioned nor presented his "prediction letter" which, according to his own words, he had discovered in 1989. Later, in his talk on June 12, 1992, Situ Rinpoche claimed that he did not want to show the letter at that time because the meeting did not take place in Rumtek but in his hotel in New Delhi. After their meeting, the four Rinpoches wrote a letter to the Karmapa Charitable Trust saying: "We must remain firm in all circumstances, until we arrive at the appropriate time", indicating that everything would still take some time.

From **Aug. 1990 until Oct. 1990**, the "Chushi Gangdrug Committee" and the "Derge Association", two political groups operating from Kathmandu, Nepal , wrote letters to the four Rinpoches and the trustees of The Karmapa Charitable Trust accusing them of neglecting their duty in the search for Karmapa's reincarnation.

On **Nov. 25, 1990**, the four Rinpoches met again in Delhi. In the statement they issued afterwards they rejected the accusations. During this meeting Situ Rinpoche again did not present his "prediction letter" [10].

1991

In 1991, Situ Rinpoche spent several months in Tibet, performing empowerments at Palpung Monastery, his seat in Eastern Tibet, and recognizing hundreds of tulkus. Lama Amdo Palden, the abbot of Kalek Monastery in Tibet where a boy Urgyen Trinley had been accepted as a monk, recounted that at that time Situ Rinpoche had given refuge to the boy in Palpung. After leaving for Beijing, Rinpoche sent a mala to Urgyen Trinley as a special protector.

1992

On **March 5, 1992**, the Derge Association sent a letter to the Kagyu dharma centers worldwide. In this letter Situ Rinpoche was presented as being the only person responsible for finding the Karmapa [11]. The other three Rinpoches as well as the General Secretary of the Karmapa Charitable Trust were accused of delaying the procedures.

On **March 19, 1992**, a meeting of the four Rinpoches took place in Rumtek. Situ Rinpoche presented his "prediction letter" which contained detailed information regarding Karmapa's 17th reincarnation. Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche and also, to some extent, Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche expressed doubts as to the authenticity of the handwriting and signature in the letter [12]. Shamar Rinpoche wanted the "prediction letter" to be tested forensically. After hours of discussion the four Rinpoches decided to keep their disagreement secret, to solve the problems among themselves and to meet seven weeks later for further consultations. Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, whom they all trusted and who was soon to travel to Tibet, was requested to make an initial contact with the child on the basis of the instructions from the letter. He was to report his findings to the other three Rinpoches after his return from Tibet.

On **March 26, 1992**, despite the agreement, Situ Rinpoche sent a letter to various Dharma centers in the East declaring that the search party for the 17th Karmapa was in place and ready to proceed [13]. His letter was followed by a similar message from the Derge Association.

On **April 8, 1992**, the Tsurphu administration sent a search party for the 17th Karmapa to Kham in Eastern Tibet, (Tsurphu is Karmapa's main seat in Tibet). Even though the content of Situ Rinpoche's "prediction letter" was supposed to be kept secret among the four Rinpoches, and despite the fact that only Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche had been appointed to contact the child, a Lama Tomo from Tsurphu set out at the head of a party of five to look for the new Karmapa in Kham.

On **April 24, 1992**, a picture of the boy Urgyen Trinley was taken and a pick-up party was organized from Tsurphu [14]. Everything seemed pre-arranged and had the permission of the Communist Chinese authorities.

On **April 26, 1992**, shortly before he was to set out for his journey to Tibet, Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche died in a car accident. During the 49 days that followed his death, rituals were performed at Rumtek Monastery.

On **May 10, 1992**, Shamar Rinpoche left Rumtek for a scheduled dharma program abroad. It was generally assumed that out of respect for the late Jamgon Kongtrul no further steps in connection with Karmapa's recognition would be taken during the 49 days of ceremonies.

On **May 17, 1992**, a week after Shamar Rinpoche's departure, Situ Rinpoche and Gyaltsab Rinpoche delivered a public speech in Rumtek. Breaking their March agreement, they announced that they had sent their own representatives to Tibet to search for the 17th Karmapa [15]. They expressed their regret and concern that Shamarpa wasn't available at this point for discussion, but unable to wait any longer for the main regent's return, they were forced to proceed with their duty. In fact, the search in Tibet was by then over. The boy had already been "found" by the Tsurphu search party in collaboration with the Communist Chinese authorities.

On **May 20, 1992**, Situ Rinpoche and Gyaltsab Rinpoche publicly opened their "prediction letter" in Rumtek and, to gain legitimacy, showed it to Sakya Trinzin, leader of the Sakya School of Tibetan Buddhism. Most people were unaware that although Sakya Trinzin was a highly learned and widely respected lama, he had no role whatsoever in the process of Karmapa's recognition.

On **June 6, 1992**, Situ Rinpoche and Gyaltsab Rinpoche traveled to Dharamsala to meet H.H. the Dalai Lama. Shamar Rinpoche, carrying on his Dharma program in the West, heard rumors that a boy, supposedly the 16th Karmapa's reincarnation, was being brought to Tsurphu.

On **June 7, 1992**, Shamar Rinpoche, cutting short his stay in the US, returned to Rumtek and learned that the other two Rinpoches had left for Dharamsala.

On **June 8, 1992**, Shamar Rinpoche gave a talk to the monks of Rumtek Monastery. As the steps undertaken by Situ Rinpoche and Gyaltsab Rinpoche had violated their earlier agreements, he publicly declared his position and his doubts regarding the authenticity of Situ Rinpoche's "prediction letter". He also stated that he knew of a close and trustworthy disciple of the 16th Karmapa who was in possession of direct instructions concerning Karmapa's 17th incarnation.

On **June 9, 1992**, Situ Rinpoche and Gyaltsab Rinpoche contacted the Dalai Lama, who was in Brazil, by phone and fax. They told him that all the Kagyu lamas unanimously requested his confirmation of Ugyen Trinley in Tsurphu as being the 17th Karmapa. Consequently an informal confirmation was issued from the Dalai Lama's private office in Dharamsala. Evidently the Dalai Lama had not been informed about the controversy among the highest Kagyu lamas.

On **June 11, 1992**, Shamar Rinpoche sent a letter to the Karma Kagyu followers, expressing his doubts about Situ Rinpoche's "prediction letter".

On **June 11, 1992**, around 11 p.m., Shamar Rinpoche received a phone call from an Indian Army General informing him that a party of soldiers was being dispatched to Rumtek to protect him and the monastery. The army had received information that two buses with Tibetans from Kathmandu were on their way to Rumtek to put pressure on Shamar Rinpoche and the monastery. The soldiers arrived in the middle of the night.

On **June 12, 1992**, Situ Rinpoche and Gyaltsab Rinpoche returned from Dharamsala. At once they called a meeting of the Rumtek monk and lay communities. In their speeches delivered in the monastery yard, the two presented a "fait accompli": the 17th Karmapa would come to Tsurphu in a few days, and the Dalai Lama had given his approval. Shamar Rinpoche was informed about the gathering while it was already in progress. When Rinpoche went from his house to the monastery to talk to the two lineage holders, he was followed by the soldiers who had orders to protect him. Seeing him enter the monastery yard at the head of a group of soldiers, Situ Rinpoche and Gyaltsab Rinpoche jumped from their thrones, ran into the main building, locked themselves in and had guards posted in front of the doors.

On **June 15, 1992**, Ugyen Trinley arrived in Tsurphu in a convoy of about seven vehicles. A car accident took place on their way to Tsurphu and two people were killed. Chinese officials took part in the welcoming ceremony and were among the principal guests. No representatives from Rumtek were present.

On **June 16, 1992**, signatures were collected from the Lamas and Tulkus attending the final rituals for the late Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche in Rumtek. Two letters were being passed around for signing. In the first one, the undersigned declared that they "accepted the unmistakable prediction letter"; in the second one they expressed their gratitude to the Dalai Lama for his confirmation.

On **June 16, 1992**, Tulku Ugyen from Nepal, a senior lama and teacher to the Rinpoches, came to Rumtek to mediate. After talking to Situ Rinpoche he held a meeting with Shamar Rinpoche. He urged Shamarpa to give his agreement because the Dalai Lama had already given his approval. He also reasoned that China had acknowledged the child and would never withdraw from this position.

On **June 17, 1992**, Shamar Rinpoche and Situ Rinpoche met. Out of respect for the Dalai Lama, Shamar Rinpoche suspended his demand that the letter of prediction be tested forensically.

On **June 22, 1992**, Situ Rinpoche and Gyaltsab Rinpoche sent a letter to the followers of the lineage declaring that the 17th Karmapa had been found, that the Dalai Lama had confirmed him, and that all the disagreements had been resolved

On **June 29, 1992**, Beijing officially recognized Ugyen Trinley as the 17th Karmapa, bestowing the title of "Living Buddha" upon him. A series of reports were published. For example, one official Tibetan newspaper declared that "the 17th Karmapa ... will become an individual loyal to his socialist motherland...". The fact that the communist government used the installation of a "Living Buddha" for its own political purposes became more and more apparent.

On **June 29, 1992**, Situ Rinpoche and Gyaltsab Rinpoche had a personal audience with the Dalai Lama to receive his official approval of Ugyen Trinley as the 17th Karmapa. A few hours later, Shamar Rinpoche also called on the Tibetan leader and presented his position.

On **July 3, 1992**, the Department of Information and International Relations of the Tibetan Government in Exile sent a statement with the official approval of Ugyen Trinley by the Dalai Lama. At this point, it should be clearly stated that the recognition of the Karmapa does not lie in the hands of the Tibetan Government, or of the Dalai Lama. The Karmapa's reincarnations date back to the 12th century, whereas the Dalai Lama's line of reincarnation started 300 years later. The confirmation of a reincarnation is a purely spiritual matter of the respective lineage. However, Situ Rinpoche and Gyaltsab Rinpoche tried to strengthen their position by gaining the approval of the Dalai Lama. To achieve this, they claimed that a consensus existed among all Kagyu Lamas.

On **Aug. 3, 1992**, the General Secretary of the Karmapa Charitable Trust wrote a letter to the Board of Trustees expressing his concern regarding the Karmapa issue and asking the Trustees to secure the wishes of the late 16th Karmapa. During this time, Situ Rinpoche and Gyaltsab Rinpoche made announcements in Kathmandu and again asked people to sign various letters to show their agreement that Ugyen Trinley was the 17th Karmapa [32]. They rectified their previous assurances and explained that the boy would not immediately come out of Tibet, but would be first enthroned in Tsurphu and would visit India and Nepal soon after.

On **Sept. 27, 1992**, the official enthronement of Ugyen Trinley took place in Tsurphu. Even though Situ Rinpoche and Gyaltsab Rinpoche insisted that all problems had been solved, the members of Rumtek Monastery, the members of the Karmapa Charitable Trust, and the representatives of the major Kagyu centers in the West did not approve of this procedure. Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche, historically second after the Karmapa in the spiritual hierarchy of the Karma Kagyu lineage, did not take part in the ceremonies. Some weeks after the Tsurphu enthronement a report by Lobsang Gelek Rinpoche revealed that many inauspicious events occurred at that time.

In **October 1992**, a book called "The Karmapa Papers" shed light on the background of the ongoing Karmapa issue. The publication presented a chronology of events since Karmapa's death in 1981, the translation of a large number of letters exchanged among the four Rinpoches and between the Rinpoches and the Karmapa Charitable Trust since 1983, an analysis of Situ Rinpoche's "prediction letter" and the transcription of the speeches given by the Rinpoches in Rumtek, in June 1992 at the outcome of the crisis.

In the **autumn of 1992**, Drubpoen Dechen, sent letters to the monks, the administration, and the lay community of Rumtek Monastery trying to intimidate them and to persuade them to accept Ugyen Trinley as the 17th Karmapa.

At the **beginning of November 1992**, Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche and the Rumtek monks held a meeting in Rumtek. As he had already done in his talk in June 1992, Shamar Rinpoche again stated that he knew of a person, a widely respected and trustworthy disciple of the 16th Karmapa, who claimed to be in possession of the genuine instructions from the previous Karmapa. Rinpoche pointed out that the 16th Karmapa's authentic reincarnation would manifest according to the unique quality of the Karmapas. He also told the monks and trust members to take full responsibility for the monastery and the Nalanda Institute in Rumtek.

On **Nov. 17, 1992**, Shamar Rinpoche wrote a letter to the monks of Rumtek Monastery. He stated that he would not object to the Chinese government's decision, that his agreement with the Dalai Lama's decision had only been given out of his respect for the Dalai Lama, and that he would hold firm to the sacred tradition and follow the genuine instructions of the 16th Karmapa. He asked the monks that, following the wishes of the 16th Karmapa, Rumtek Monastery be held jointly by Rumtek's monks and the Trustees of the Karmapa Charitable Trust.

In **November 1992**, Gyaltsab Rinpoche's people invited representatives from monasteries in Nepal to Rumtek, where they were planning a meeting. During this time, people from Nepal informed Rumtek that Situ Rinpoche and Gyaltsab Rinpoche were secretly preparing a take-over of Rumtek Monastery.

On **Nov. 20, 1992**, the Rumtek monks and Shamar Rinpoche held another gathering. After the meeting, the monks informed the Sikkimese Chief Minister Bandari that together with the Trustees of The Karmapa Charitable Trust, they would take full responsibility for the affairs of Rumtek Monastery, and that it was

the Trust's responsibility to subject Situ Rinpoche's "prediction letter" to a scientific test. They also declared that the administration of Rumtek monastery was solely the responsibility of Rumtek's monks and The Karmapa Charitable Trust, and that they would accept no other spiritual authority. Their letter was followed by a number of similar statements made by the khenpos (head monks), the Rumtek administration, the Nalanda Institute, and the Rumtek Nunnery. They all declared that they would only follow the decisions made by the Karmapa Charitable Trust, whose Trustees were appointed by the 16th Karmapa himself and that they would not accept any other decisions made by Lamas or political groups.

On **Nov. 29, 1992**, representatives of the Rumtek Monk Community, the Rumtek administration, the Nalanda Institute and the Rumtek Nunnery stated that until a clear agreement among the Rinpoches was reached they would only follow the decisions of the Karmapa Charitable Trust with Topga Rinpoche as the General Secretary.

On **Nov. 30, 1992**, against the wish of the Rumtek community, a meeting organized by Situ Rinpoche and Gyaltsab Rinpoche took place in Rumtek. It was called the "Kagyü International Assembly" and claimed to consist of representatives from all Kagyü monasteries and centers from around the world. In fact, there were only Tibetans present. A number of resolutions, such as an oath to never accept any other Karmapa than Ugyen Trinley, were passed. Topga Rinpoche, the General Secretary of the Karmapa Charitable Trust, was accused of serious offences and strongly condemned. A series of illegal decisions were taken, such as the dismissal of the General Secretary. The other trustees were threatened that if they did not support Ugyen Trinley, they would be forced to resign from their posts. The Assembly did not have any legal authority to interfere with the matters of the Karmapa Charitable Trust and its decisions had no legal value. However, the participants went so far as to replace the Karmapa Charitable Trust with a new body. The new trust was formed with Gyaltsab Rinpoche as the official administrator and a Drungyig Tenzin as the new General Secretary. The documents to register the trust in Sikkim were sent to the authorities, but the petition was dismissed. In Jan. 1993, Situ Rinpoche's and Gyaltsab Rinpoche's party requested the withdrawal of the copies of Registration of Resolutions from the Land Revenue Department in Sikkim.

In **Dec. 1992**, Kagyü centers worldwide sent letters of support to the legal trustees of the Karmapa Charitable Trust. The trustees were encouraged to continue with their responsibility of managing Karmapa's institutions, a task that was personally entrusted to them by the 16th Karmapa.

1993

In the **beginning of 1993**, the followers of Ugyen Trinley announced that the 17th Karmapa would soon leave China and travel to the West. A number of petitions and letters, requesting permission for Ugyen Trinley to enter India, were sent to the Indian Government. Today, despite years of intense campaigning, it is evident that the boy will never be allowed to leave occupied Tibet.

In **1993**, some Sikkimese followers of the 16th Karmapa filed a petition at the High Court of Sikkim in Gangtok. Because of their suspicion of forgery, they demanded a forensic test of Situ Rinpoche's "prediction letter" - the basis upon which Ugyen Trinley was officially acknowledged as the 17th Karmapa.

In **Jan. 1993**, Situ Rinpoche and Gyaltsab Rinpoche's party published an edition of the Kagyü magazine "The Nectar of Dharma". The "Nectar of Dharma" had first come out in Rumtek in the '80s. The 1993 edition reported mainly on the "Kagyü International Assembly" that had taken place in Rumtek between Nov. 30 and Dec. 3, 1992, hailing its illegal resolutions.

In **May 1993**, confidential information pertaining to Communist China's political aims in Tibet became publicly known. The Chinese authorities decided on a "final solution" to break the Tibetan resistance. They planned to continue "manipulating religious persons in Tibet for propaganda purposes".

In **May 1993**, Tenzin Choenyi of the Buddhist center KTD-Woodstock, USA, mailed a letter to the Karma Kagyü institutions world-wide in which he announced that Ugyen Trinley would come to KTD-Woodstock in 1994 and that funds, amounting to US-\$ 200,000 should be collected for his visit.

On **June 17, 1993**, at a United Nations Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, Austria, the Chinese delegates announced "that the Karmapa, the future successor of the Dalai Lama, was preparing for his tasks in Tibet".

In **July 1993**, the legal administration of Rumtek published a "Rumtek Newsletter", where the activities of the Rumtek administration and the events surrounding the Karmapa controversy were presented.

On **July 26, 1993**, Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche left Rumtek for Dharma events scheduled abroad. Shortly after his departure Situ Rinpoche arrived at Rumtek.

On **Aug. 2, 1993**, Rumtek Monastery was illegally and forcibly taken over by Situ Rinpoche and Gyaltsab Rinpoche's supporters, many of whom were hired criminals disguised as monks. The genuine Rumtek monks were threatened at gunpoint, harassed, and beaten up. One of the 16th Karmapa's monks, the chanting master Umze Ngedon, who was in possession of the keys to the main hall of the monastery,

was dragged around the monastery yard with his robes tied around his neck. The police present in the monastery did nothing to stop the attack and even supported the intruders. Some of Rumtek's genuine monks were arrested and later imprisoned in Ranipool. The resident monks had to flee the monastery. They sought shelter in Shamar Rinpoche's residence where they continued their monastic routine in cramped conditions. The genuine monks sent a letter to Situ Rinpoche asking him to leave Rumtek, since he had caused such disruption at Karmapa's headquarters. There were rumors that Situ Rinpoche's and Gyaltsab Rinpoche's party planned to remove Karmapa's Black Crown and other relics from the monastery and take them to China. During the following days, Tai Situ and his party launched a full scale campaign to portray themselves as the victims of the monks' aggression and the sole defenders of Karmapa's legacy.

On **Aug 4, 1993**, Shamar Rinpoche gave an interview to the German Karma Kagyu Association about the attack on Rumtek. He expressed his great concern for the monks, who had been intimidated, beaten and forced to leave the monastery, and in general for the situation in the monastery. The same day people from Situ Rinpoche's party signed an open letter in Gangtok, Sikkim containing serious accusations against Shamar Rinpoche.

On **Aug. 13, 1993**, a variety of organizations from Gangtok, Sikkim formed „The Action Committee“, a group that would apply pressure on anyone who disputed Situpa's letter and his candidate. A few days later the Committee members staged a violent protest in front of the Sikkimese Supreme Court and in front of the home of Mr. Sherab Gyaltsen, a trustee of the Karmapa Charitable Trust.

On **Aug. 22, 1993**, a letter was mailed from Samye Ling, Akong Rinpoche's center in Scotland, announcing that Urygen Trinley would come to Europe and America in 1994 and requesting funds as extensive financial resources were needed for Urygen Trinley's journey.

On **Sept. 12, 1993**, Shamar Rinpoche sent an open letter to Situ Rinpoche to inform him that he disapproved of Situ Rinpoche's activities and that he would try to reverse, by legal means, all the latest changes that Situ Rinpoche had made to the status and peace of Rumtek Monastery.

1994

On **Jan. 25, 1994**, Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche made an announcement in Tibetan and in English that the 16th Karmapa's authentic reincarnation had been found. Thereupon, Situ Rinpoche's and Gyaltsab Rinpoche's party held secret meetings to plan a "confrontation" between the two Karmapas including one in Kathmandu, Nepal with many prominent followers of Situ Rinpoche: Thrangu Rinpoche, Mr. Juchen Thubten, Drungyig Tenzin, Jinpa Lodro, and others.

On **Feb. 9, 1994**, representatives from various monasteries addressed a letter to the Dalai Lama in which they referred to Shamar Rinpoche's announcement. They reminded the Dalai Lama of his approval of Urygen Trinley, said that there can be only one Karmapa and emphasized that they disagreed with Shamar Rinpoche.

On **March 17, 1994**, Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche welcomed Tenzin Chyentse (Trinley Thaye Dorje) as the genuine reincarnation of the 16th Karmapa at the Karmapa International Buddhist Institute (KIBI) in New Delhi. Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje had been living in Tibet until early 1994 when, together with his family, he left for India. After the ceremony, a group of monks and laymen organized by Situ Rinpoche and Gyaltsab Rinpoche's party gathered in front of KIBI and demonstrated against Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje. They shouted slogans, threw stones at the Institute, at the monks and the visitors, and tried to storm the premises. Several people, among them Western followers of the Karmapa who had come to attend the welcoming ceremony, were injured and had to be hospitalized. The violent incident was witnessed by almost 500 people and recorded on videotape. The protesters, accusing Shamar Rinpoche and Topga Rinpoche of presenting a fake Karmapa, shouted that they would never accept their choice and that the two Rinpoches were going against the Dalai Lama. They also claimed that the boy was a member of Shamar Rinpoche's family, which was not true.

On **March 19, 1994**, Shamar Rinpoche gave a public talk at KIBI. He stated that he would reveal the details about the finding of the 17th Karmapa when the appropriate time came. He said that he didn't object to anyone, who accepted the Chinese installed boy, but that he would disagree if someone forced him to follow that "Karmapa." He emphasized that he wanted a spiritually, and not a politically, appointed Karmapa and welcomed everybody who wished to follow him. He pointed out that the Karmapa's reincarnations did not require the acceptance of a government.

On **March 31, 1994**, Shamar Rinpoche wrote a letter to the board of trustees of the Karmapa Charitable Trust in which he gave a summary of his activities since 1981. He stated that he would reveal the authentic instructions of the previous Karmapa at the appropriate time.

In **March 1994**, letters of protest were sent from various Kagyu lamas such as Thrangu Tulku, Sangye Nyenpa Tulku and Tenga Tulku. They all objected to Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje. At the same time, several Kagyu Rinpoches came secretly to Delhi to meet Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje.

On **April 3, 1994**, Shamar Rinpoche wrote an account of the discovery of the 17th Karmapa. He recounted how, beginning in 1986, he had received reports of the special qualities of a boy Trinley Thaye Dorje. He described how he had sent emissaries to Tibet to contact and check the child and how the Karmapa had revealed himself as the genuine reincarnation. In 1988, the person who claimed to have received the genuine instructions from the 16th Karmapa had contacted Kunzig Shamarpa.

On **April 6, 1994**, some Indian newspapers reported the news of Bhandari's prosecution by the Sikkimese Supreme Court on corruption charges. Bhandari, the Chief Minister of Sikkim, had supported Situ Rinpoche in his activities regarding the Karmapa reincarnation.

On **April 23, 1994**, a meeting between the Dalai Lama's administration and the legal Rumtek administration took place. Shamar Rinpoche's position, as well as the position of Rumtek's genuine monks was clarified.

On **May 16, 1994**, the Tibetan Radio in Tibet broadcast the "prediction letter" presented by Situ Rinpoche. A written version was published as well. The wording was quite different from the original version shown by Situ Rinpoche in 1992. Awkward and grammatically incorrect passages had been rewritten.

On **June 14, 1994**, the Sikkimese Monks' Union passed a resolution in which they declared that they only wanted a genuine Karmapa based on authentic instructions. They also complained about the bad treatment they had received from the Sikkimese government.

On **July 12, 1994**, Rumtek's genuine monks addressed a letter to the Chief Secretary in Sikkim. They complained of the illegal removal of numerous precious articles of religious worship from Rumtek Monastery. They listed the missing items, and expressed their concern that Karmapa's Black Hat and Situ Rinpoche's "prediction letter" might have been also removed.

On **Aug. 2, 1994**, the Ministry of Home Affairs of the Government of India, declared that Situ Rinpoche was officially banned from entering India due to his anti-India activities. On Sept. 18, 1994, the World Tibet Network reported Situ Rinpoche's ban from India.

On **Sept. 22, 1994**, the World Tibet Network broadcast a report about Ugyen Trinley, the ten-year-old "Living Buddha". The report stated that the boy had set out on a pilgrimage to Beijing. This was followed by a series of articles on Ugyen Trinley's visit to his Chinese "Motherland".

In **Nov. 1994**, having been banned from India, Situ Rinpoche set out on a lecture tour in Europe. Enclosed in the promotion for Rinpoche's talks was a fundraising letter that emphasized Situ Rinpoche's great need for money.

In **1994**, an ugly incident took place in Rumtek: Benza Guru, a 51-year-old housekeeper of the late 16th Karmapa was murdered by individuals illegally occupying Rumtek Monastery. He had refused to leave the monastery and had been repeatedly threatened by the occupants. Even though his murder was reported to the local police, no one has been arrested to this day.

In **Dec. 1994**, elections were held in Sikkim. The ruling party suffered a severe defeat. This marked the end of Chief Minister Bhandari's rule. While in power, he had actively supported Situ Rinpoche and Gyaltsab Rinpoche. Police under his command had harassed the Rumtek monks as well as all of Shamar Rinpoche's supporters in Rumtek.

1995

On **Feb. 17, 1995**, members of the Rumtek monks' community, such as Nendo Rinpoche, Chultrimpa and others, addressed a letter to the new Chief Minister of Sikkim, Pawan Kumar Chamling. They stated that people associated with Situ Rinpoche continued his anti-national activities, that the original monks in Rumtek were still heavily suppressed, that the monastery was still in the hands of Situ Rinpoche's and Gyaltsab Rinpoche's side, and that the police still supported the illegal occupation. The Chief Minister was requested to take action so that law and order would be restored in Rumtek.

In the **spring of 1995**, there were many reports distributed by official Chinese news agencies about Ugyen Trinley in Tsurphu,. The reports disclosed, for example, that the boy promised "always to follow the Communist Party of China".

In **April 1995**, after the change of government in Sikkim, Topga Yulgal, the legal General Secretary of the Karmapan Charitable Trust, was able to return to Sikkim in order to assume his functions. His entry had been blocked by the former government.

On **May 8, 1995**, Lurnyuk, a local Sikkimese newspaper, published an article about Topga Rinpoche, the General Secretary of the Karmapa Charitable Trust, and his strong support in Sikkim.

In **May 1995**, the Panchen Lama issue was discussed worldwide on the Internet and in the news media. The course of events clearly showed how Communist China continued to use the so-called "Living Buddhas" for her own political aims.

On **August 8, 1995**, Topga Rinpoche and the Karmapa's original monks peacefully - with flowers in their hands - marched to Rumtek monastery in order to return to their rightful home and place of worship.

However, they were brutally stopped and denied access to their temple by the illegal occupants of the cloister. The monks started then an indefinite hunger strike in front of the gates to their monastery as protest against the continuing, illegal occupation of Rumtek. In addition to the monks, the nuns, and lay people from Rumtek, as well as the Sikkimese people joined in the hunger strike.

On **Aug. 8, 1995**, Situ Rinpoche and Gyaltshab Rinpoche's side issued articles on the Internet in which the Rumtek monks were accused of having violently attacked the monastery.

On **Aug. 9, 1995**, a press release by the monk community of Rumtek Monastery and eyewitnesses' reports presented the monks' version of their march on Rumtek and subsequent hunger strike.

At the end of **September 1995**, after nearly two months, the 16th Karmapa's monks had to abandon their hunger strike. Rumtek Monastery, Karmapa's main seat outside Tibet, is today still in the hands of intruders.

1996

During **March 1996** an International Karma Kagyu Conference took place in KIBI, New Delhi, India. The conference was convened at the request of the original monastic community of Rumtek Monastery. Representatives from Karma Kagyu Monasteries and Dharma Centers in the Himalayan region as well as from Dharma Centers from twenty-four countries from around the world attended. Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche presented the background of his recognition of Karmapa Thaye Dorje as the 17th incarnation of Gyalwa Karmapa. The Karmapa resident monks reported on the course of events at Rumtek Monastery related to the Karmapa issue.

In Dec. 1996, the 17th Karmapa Thaye Dorje presided over the Monlam Chenmo, great aspiration prayers, in Bodh Gaya, India, and the place of Buddha's enlightenment. Also, for the first time in history a Karmapa had his hair cut in Bodh Gaya - a ceremony that officially initiated his activity in the world. Over 6.000 monks and nuns as well as a large number of Rinpoches and lamas from the Himalayan region attended the event.

1997

In **september 1997** Togba Rinpoche dies from liver cancer

1998

Situpa's banishment from India is rescinded

1999

On **Dec. 28, 1999** Orgyen Trinley leaves secretly Tsurphu monastery in Tibet

2000

On **Jan 5, 2000** around 10:30 A.M., Orgyen Trinley arrives safe and sound in Dharamsala, India

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Many articles from this website were found on numerous other websites: we give an incomplete list below. The quality of these informative sites differs quite widely. The *Nalandabodhi* site by pro-Situ Rinpoche people, has become the official site for informations about Urgyen Trinley. It is very well kept, very active, with many informations updated practically on a daily basis.

On the other hand, the pro-Shamar Rinpoche sites are poor: the site *Karmapa-issue* , set up on purpose to inform about the controversy, has but a few articles, with sparse updates.

Sites pro-Shamar Rinpoche :

<http://www.karmapa-issue.org/>

<http://www.dhagpo-kagyu.org/>

<http://www.diamondway-buddhism.org>

<http://www.bodhipath-santabarbara.org/worthy.htm>

Sites pro-Sitou Rinpoche :

<http://www.nalandabodhi.org/news.html>

Take notice of a canadian site which sides with Dharamsala and Situ Rinpoche. It proposes a daily mailing list. It provides a real worldwide press service about Tibet. Many news articles come from these mailing lists.

listserv@lists.mcgill.ca

You may find many articles about the controversy in media websites, mainly indian ones

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/>

<http://www.timesofindia.com/>

<http://www.outlookindia.com/20000124/coverstory.htm>

<http://www.sikkiminfo.com/>

and so on ...

An excellent indian internet portal provides a complete listing of all indian newspapers websites:

<http://www.samachar.com/>

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