The 14th Dalai Lama

Lhamo Dondrub was born on 6 July 1935 to a farming and horse trading family. He was one of seven siblings to survive birth. Lhamo Thondup was recognised formally as the reincarnated Dalai Lama and renamed **Jetsun Jamphel Ngawang Lobsang Yeshe Tenzin Gyatso** (*Holy Lord, Gentle Glory, Compassionate, Defender of the Faith, Ocean of Wisdom*) although he was not formally enthroned as the temporal ruler of Tibet until the age of 15. The 15-year-old Dalai Lama found himself the undisputed leader of six million people facing the threat of a full-scale war against the Chinese. The next nine years saw His Holiness trying to evade a full-scale military takeover of Tibet by China on one hand and placating the growing resentment among Tibetan resistance fighters against the Chinese aggressors on the other. His Holiness made a historic visit to China from July 1954 to June 1955 for peace talks and met with Mao Zadong and other Chinese leaders, including Chou En-lai, Chu Teh and Deng Xiaoping. From November 1956 to March 1957 His Holiness visited India to participate in the 2500th Buddha Jayanti celebrations. But disheartening reports of increasing brutality towards his own people continued to pour throughout the winter of 1958/59. On 17 March 1959 during a consultation with Nechung Oracle, His Holiness was given an explicit instruction to leave the country. The odds against making a successful break seemed terrifyingly high. A few minutes before ten o'clock His Holiness, now disguised as a common soldier, slipped past the massive throng of people along with a small escort and proceeded towards Kyichu river, where He was joined by the rest of the entourage, including his immediate family members. “On this first occasion, I stressed the need for my people to take a long-term view of the situation in Tibet. For those of us in exile, I said that our priority must be resettlement and the continuity of our cultural traditions. As to the future, I stated my belief that, with Truth, Justice and Courage as our weapons, we Tibetans would eventually prevail in regaining freedom for Tibet.” Said the Holy man himself in a speech given almost a month after his escape from Tibet and China.