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The Struggle for Autonomy
In the Forbidden Country
of Tibet

by

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I. The Tibetan Way of Life in the 20th Century

The Tibetan way of life is unique. Travel in Tibet is difficult but not necessarily impossible. Caravans from India and China visit Lhasa and other Tibetan cities regularly. Often the pack animals are mules, horses, or yaks.

Before reaching Lhasa, travelers must traverse the Tsangpo River. They are usually ferried across in small vessels of a willow-branch framework and yak skin. In order to transport animals and heavy equipment or supplies sturdier vessels are needed. Often on trips like this, animals and people alike are forced to wade to shore.

Ponies, mules, horses and domesticated yaks are of critical importance to Tibetans. They are virtually the only means of land transportation for rich and poor alike. The Thirteenth Dalai Lama was given cars as gifts and they were used for a short period of time for official excursions around Lhasa. The Tibetans however, had no idea how to repair them and decided to store them away as curiosities. The serious business of Tibet is dependent on pack animals trained to the rugged mountain trails. Wealthy families own large stables of both work and saddle animals, and employ stablemen and grooms. (Rosemary Tung, p.89)

Trade in Tibet is carried about in the age-old manner. Tibetans go to a central market in town to buy what they
need and to sell their wares. Gyantse, a city that is the center of the Tibetan wool trade has an especially busy and elaborate market. The market here is held within a monastery's walls. There is nothing necessary to the Tibetan life that one could not buy in the stalls of a market like Gyantse's. An example would be butter churns - a necessity in the making of Tibetan tea, which is an essential. Tibetans traditionally brew black tea imported from China and mix it with yak butter, soda, and salt. Some Tibetans have been known to drink as much as 40 cups a day. Also on sale is the tea itself and the pot to brew it in. The black Chinese tea the Tibetans drink is unusual in a number of ways. First of all, it doesn't look like most other tea. It is pressed into hard blocks, sometimes embossed with Chinese landscapes. Pieces are broken off and boiled to make the tea. Until recently the tea had been used as currency in Tibet.

If someone doesn't own a yak, they can purchase yak butter, already churned. The butter or sale of yak butter is one of the main economic support of the herding nomads. There is also cloth of all kinds in the Gyantse market: imported silks from India and China and local woolens.

In Lhasa shopping is even more varied. Lhasa's central market is actually a street of stalls and shops
that circle the city's central temple, the Jokhang. Because Lhasa is the capital it attracts goods from beyond the boundaries of Tibet in great quantities. In one of life's great ironies, it is possible to see an occasional Tibetan hat on the streets of Western cities like London and New York, where they have recently become very fashionable!

Food in Tibet is an entirely unique experience itself. Although Buddhist, Tibetans eat a diet that is based heavily on meat. The reason is a practical one. Tibetans are largely herders and wool producers, leaving very little available land for growing vegetables and fruit.

The Tibetan's way around the Buddhist prohibition on killing animals is relatively simple. The butchers of Tibet are called "Porus" and are generally Muslims. In certain ways they are considered a caste of their own.

All Tibetans frown upon the killing of small animals, such as fish or birds. They feel that killing large animals for food minimizes the number of deaths needed to feed the nation. A much larger quantity of smaller animals would have to be killed to provide such a significant food supply. In addition, the Buddhist veneration for all life is the central doctrine of reincarnation, and they believe that life progresses from lower animal
levels towards the human level, and that humans encompass all lower life forms.

The staples of the Tibetan diet are barley, barley flour, milk, butter, yogurt, and cheese, in addition to meat. Tibetan meals are all home-cooked since there are no restaurants in Tibet. One of the mainstays of the Tibetan diet is tsampa, which is roasted barley mixed into Tibetan yak-buttered tea, forming a paste which is rolled into balls and eaten with the fingers.

Although Tibet had long been rumored to be a sterile wasteland, it was far from it. Farming and the wool business are extremely important to Tibetan existence! Wool and herds are key to everything that happens in the Tibetan Economy. The Tibetans export sheep’s wool and yak wool to many countries. The Tibetan yak is extremely useful. There is no part of the yak that Tibetans do not know how to use or consume. Before the advent of synthetics, the white beards worn by Santa Clauses in American department stores were made of yak tails.

In the richer farming areas, fields were carefully divided and marked by adobe walls or stone walls. Control was very important here. Tibet had a medieval landholding system. A great part of farmland was held by the monasteries or the nobility. Many peasants worked as tenant farmers, though they might be given small plots of land for their
own use. They were not serfs, however. If a peasant wished to move on or go into a trade they were free to do so. There were also peasants in Tibet who owned their own land and farmed it for themselves. The family of the Dalai Lama were independent farmers.

Under the Thirteenth Dalai Lama some changes were made, and before the present Dalai Lama went into exile, plans had been made for further reforms of this landholding system. (Tung, pp. 96-97)

In Tibet women were partners to men in most matters. The limitations in their lives is more by social and economic class than by gender. In a country that is medieval in many ways, Tibet is unique to Asia in their attitudes about the role of women.

In Tibet both marriage and divorce are considered personal matters. Tibetan Buddhism does not place a seal on marriage, in fact, it is thought to be unlucky if a monk is present when a couple announce their intentions. Essentially most marriages are arranged. Divorce is not an infrequent occurrence. The rules concerning marriage and divorce are not just a privilege of the aristocracy. However, it is less usual to find peasant couples marrying and divorcing frequently, since the marriages are closely bound by a working relationship. Polyandry is practiced by the nomads.
The nomadic peoples of Tibet comprise 48 percent of the population of Tibet. There are seven tribal groups of nomads and most lead peaceful lives, except for the few who live as thieves. Like most nomads, the Tibetan nomads are herdsmen who usually live in black yak-hair tents and tend to their yaks, cattle, and sheep, moving seasonally. They move to higher pastures in the summer, and lower altitudes in the winter. They may move as many as three to eight times a year. They live principally in the more remote, harsher areas of the country, making special adaptations to the land they inhabit. (Tung, p. 105)
II. Early History of Tibet: Years Until 1950

Tibet's story is that of an ancient nation hurled into the twentieth century by a loss of its own sovereignty yet given a slim chance to regain its freedom and to remake its destiny. In order to reach the predicament where Tibet finds itself today we must look at the rich history of the country and the deep ties and intermingling with its neighbor to the north and east - China.

In front of the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa, Tibet, is a stone monument commemorating a treaty concluded between Tibet and China in 821-22 A.D., in which both parties agreed to stay for the next 10,000 years in their respective countries: "Tibetans shall be happy in the land of Tibet, and Chinese shall be happy in the land of China." (L. Petech, p. 18)

Unfortunately this statement did not remain true. There exist two completely divergent versions of what happened in the subsequent millennium, the years of the complex Sino-Tibetan relations.

The government of China maintains that for more than 700 years the central government of China has continuously exercised sovereignty over Tibet, and that Tibet has never been its own independent state. For justification of this declaration the Chinese reach back to the Tang-Tubo Alliance where a Tibetan king had married a Han Chinese
princess and proclaimed at the Jokhang Monastery in writing, "The two sovereigns, ... having come to agreement that their territories be united as one, have signed this alliance of great peace to last for eternity! May God and humanity bear witness thereto so that it may be praised from generation to generation." (Beijing Review, p. 10)

They further maintain, that in the mid-thirteenth century Tibet was officially incorporated into the territory of the Yuan Dynasty of China. Although China has experienced several dynastic changes, Tibet has remained under the jurisdiction of the central government. (Beijing Review, p. 10)

China maintains that it has occupied the country of Tibet off and on for over the past 700 years. They point out that in the early fifteenth century the third emperor of the Ming Dynasty saw the advantage of combined Buddhist religion and political power in Tibet and the rivalry between sects occupying different areas. He thereby conferred honorary titles on the religious leaders of Buddhism in various parts of Tibet, such as the "Prince of Dharma". Succession to such princedoms needed the approval of the emperor, and has ever since then. Then in 1653 and 171, the Qing emperors granted honorific titles to the Dalai Lama and Bainqen Erdeni and sanctioned their political and religious status in Tibet.
It is because of these ties to Tibet's religious and political actions that China believes their sanctioning will be required for a long time and why Tibet is by a sort of divine right, part of sovereign China.

Tibetans, while acknowledging the marriage of King Tubo to Princess Tang, see it as little more than a marriage and of no political significance. Some blame the fifth Dalai Lama - the "Great Fifth", who built the Potala (shrine) - for renewing the dormant patron-priest relationship with Beijing established in the days of Kublai Khan, and thus placing Tibet under Chinese suzerainty.

At the time, Central Asia had been one of the great breeding grounds. It had brought forth most of the world's conquering empires - the Tibetan Empire of the first millennium; the Mongols, whose empire had been the biggest in world history; the Ottomans, who were descended from the Uighurs of East Turkestan, immediately to the north of Tibet. Therefore, the Lamas of Tibet were well aware of the military nature of China.

In the seventeenth century the Oriat Mongos, who were 20 million strong, spread to the Black Sea, and they tried to win the Great Fifth to their vision of Pan-Tibetan-Mongolian bloc that would stand up to the Manchus, who were taking over China. However, the Fifth realized that a Mongol alliance would keep Tibet in the
medieval pattern of a highly militaristic feudal mobility and a monastic elite, and he didn't want that. Therefore the Great Fifth decided on a loose hegemony with their farthest away neighbors, who almost never came to Tibet; the Manchus would keep the peace in Central Asia.

By doing this the Great Fifth bought Tibet three centuries to practice the dharma in peace, and Tibet went on to develop from an ethnocentric, war-like, imperialistic national culture to a universally Buddhicized spiritual peaceful culture.

The Great Fifth had created an extraordinary social experiment: a state with zero population growth due to the voluntary celibacy of 20 percent of the males, no military budget, and a completely harmonious relationship with its wildlife, its environment, and its neighbors. The only problem was that the great Fifth also set things in motion for a society that couldn't defend itself. Whether he foresaw the destruction of the Buddhist state or whether he intended for Tibet to self-destruct on China can not be known.

The important point of all this history, as Tibetans point out, is that in all the centuries that the Chinese claimed Tibet as part of their empire they never actually occupied the region.

The first serious attempt to take possession of
Tibet didn't happen until 1910, when an army sent by the Manchus took Lhasa, committing atrocities that seem now only a brief glimpse of what was in store for the Tibetan People. A year later the Manchus were overthrown by the Nationalists, and Tibet was left more or less to itself until 1948, when the civil war in China ended with the Nationalists departing the mainland.

Perhaps the best known quality of Tibet in the recent past has been its deliberate isolation. Lhasa has often been called the Forbidden City. There are two reasons for this withdrawal from the world. The first is that Tibet is naturally isolated due to the fact that it is embedded in the Himalayas. The second is that Tibetans have naturally isolated themselves by allowing the fewest possible foreigners into their country.

This isolationism ended during the reign of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, during the late 19th Century, when the British government in India began to want to establish trade with Tibet. The British government had to decide whether to negotiate these matters with Tibet itself or China. Except for a single document signed in 1247, nothing had been signed between Tibet and China since 822. The Chinese, however, set off a trading boundary and gave the British certain rights. When the boundary marks were erected by British and Chinese commissioners,
the Tibetans waited until they had gone and simply took the marks away. Then when the British applied for trade concessions, the Tibetan government told them the convention had only been signed by China and had no force in Tibet whatsoever. (Dalai Lama, p. 74) The British became angered over their lack of influence and through a series of events, marched on Tibet, fought with the Tibetan army, and soundly defeated them. After laying claim to certain rights in Tibet, the British marched out and never returned. They went on to confer back to the Chinese all rights over Tibet. This relationship between the Chinese and Tibet can most closely be described as a suzerainty. However, as the Dalai Lama has said, suzerainty is a typically western political term which cannot be equally applied to eastern relations. (Dalai Lama, p. 75) The word does not take into account what was a reciprocal spiritual relationship between the Dalai Lamas and the Manchu emperors. (Ibid)

An unfortunate side effect of the British presence in Tibet was that it had aroused in the Chinese feelings that their own power had disappeared. When the British withdrew, after having decimated the Tibetan army, they left Tibet with very little defense against anything the Chinese might do.

The Chinese decided to invade and Thirteenth Dalai
Lama fled. However, the Manchu empire was falling fast. In 1912 Tibet drove the Chinese out. During the expulsion the Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa and officially proclaimed the independence of Tibet. During the Dalai Lama's time abroad he learned of many of the West's advances, which he brought to Tibet with him. During the Thirteenth Dalai Lama's incarnation; the first banknotes appeared; a modest army appeared; a telegraph line was constructed; a hydroelectric plant was built in Lhasa; a small police force was organized; and in 1924 an English school was opened. (Claude Levenson, p.41) It seems that despite declaring independence of China, the Dalai Lama knew that their futures would be forever tied.

For the first 22 years of "official" Tibetan independence, there were no Chinese officials of any kind in Tibet. This was until 1934, when the Thirteenth Dalai Lama died. A Chinese delegation came to Lhasa to present religious offerings. The Chinese, after offering worship and helping in the search for the fourteenth reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, decided to stay in Lhasa on the grounds that they wanted to complete some talks on the Sino-Tibetan border. The Tibetans stubbornly refused China's presence and forced the Chinese out.

Throughout the bitter civil war between the Communists and Nationalists during the 1930's and 40's, and in spite
of periodic clashes and localized confrontations. Tibet went on living more or less on the fringe of the world's development, though not without certain upheavals. The great upheaval was to come in 1950.

As can be seen, the importance of religion, Buddhism, and its sacred manifestations are key and probably the most important element to Tibet's history and future. Therefore an explanation is called for.

Every Tibetan wants, more than anything else to go to Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, to see the Potala, the sumptuous 1,200 room palace where the fifth until the fourteenth Dalai Lama lived. They also wish to encircle the Jokhang, the great central temple in the city's heart, built by Songsten Gampo, the seventh century king who adopted Buddhism. In the early eighties the Chinese lifted their ban on public worship in Tibet. They had no idea that religion was as strong as ever, with virtually 100 percent of the population within the faith, numbers higher than that of the country of its origin, India.

Before Buddhism was brought from India, the Bön religion was practiced. However, when Buddhism arrived it virtually replaced this ancient, rural religion.

Although there are certain difference between the Buddhism practiced in India and that in Tibet, it is basically the same as when it was transported there 1,000
Tibetans tend to transmit the appearance of contentment and untroubled clarity, most probably because of their practice of the Buddhist system for overcoming the suffering of existence that a Hindu prince named Siddhartha worked out 2,500 years ago after years of ascetic ordeals, and finally becoming a Buddha, or enlightened being. (Dalai Lama, p. 239) Tibetan Buddhism is not so much a religion, but a manner of living. The Tibetans deal with the mind in a very profound way. They are the masters of one-pointedness and interiorization, which means to allow the brain to focus on one singular thing without allowing distractions to interfere. However, one of the main teachings of the Buddha is that outward appearances are illusory and therefore it is quite possible that while the people in Lhasa, while outwardly all smiles and laughter, are raging inside, that what the monks and worshippers who are encircling the Jokhang are chanting softly is not "The Jewel in the Lotus," (the most basic Buddhist chant), but "Chinese Go Home!"
III. The Occupation: Period from 1950 to 1987

There are three things Mao Zedong wanted very badly: Taiwan, Korea, and Tibet. All Mao got was Tibet. In order to comprehend how Mao won Tibet the immediate years and events preceding 1950 should be examined. (June Teufal, p. 282)

In 1947 the sovereignty of Tibet sent delegates to the Asian Conference organized by the Indian Congress Party. They had talks with Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, but how could either of these two great leaders have much time to spare trying to figure out the future of Tibet, when the issue of Indian independence from the British rule was foremost in their minds. (Levenson, p. 67)

Meanwhile in Lhasa, the Tibetans were becoming more and more aware of the difficulties that were being put upon them by the Chinese. Slowly the Tibetan authorities saw the scale of what they were facing and the need for urgent action. They resorted to action and sent a trade delegation to India, Great Britain, the United States, and to China in October of 1947, barely two months after Indian independence. The four members of this delegation travelled on Tibetan passports and were received as representatives of a sovereign nation. (Levenson, p. 68) When they visited Beijing they met with Chiang Kai-Shek.
At about this same time in 1948 Lhasa witnessed some very strange omens of the impending doom. For some weeks there had been a comet visible in the night. The older inhabitants recalled a similar sighting had occurred on the eve of the Chinese invasion in 1910. An ancient stone column dating back to the year 763 A.D. somehow broke loose and crashed at the foot of the Potala.

By July of 1949 the Tibetan government had become completely suspicious of the Chinese "mission" to Lhasa and instruct them to leave the country's area. However, as soon as the Communists had control of mainland China, in October of 1949, Beijing Radio announced that Tibet was part of China and that the People's Liberation Army had been ordered to "liberate Tibet from foreign imperialism." (Levenson, p. 69)

Lhasa immediately rejected this Chinese claim of ownership, but unfortunately no one paid heed to their words. In January of 1950, India recognized the new Chinese regime and their ownership of Tibet. India was later to say that they had hoped to influence the Chinese attitude towards Tibet. India's very real fear of China is the more likely cause of their declaration. Since Tibet and Nepal are two of the countries separating India from China it is easy to understand India's willingness to give China any area it wanted, as long as it was not
Indian territory. It is this fear that would later cause India to decide it would be better to have the Chinese out of Tibet altogether rather than have them so close to the Indian border.

Since there were only a handful of foreigners in Tibet in 1950, the Chinese claim of liberating Tibet from "foreign imperialists" is totally unfounded and an obvious ruse. The Chinese linked this imperialism to the United States this time.

Around the end of 1949, Lowell Thomas, an American journalist in Tibet, wrote for a U.S. paper that, "The United States is ready to recognize Tibet as an independent and free country." (Beijing Review, p.18) In the first half of 1950, the United States sent weapons to Tibetan forces, through Calcutta to help them in their resistance to the Chinese forces. On November 1 of that same year Dean Acheson, U.S. Secretary of State, called what China termed a "liberation" actually an invasion. During that same month the U.S. urged other countries to propose a motion at the United Nations for intervention in Tibet. (Beijing Review, p. 18)

The U.S.'s stand on Tibet, while never very clearly defined, dramatically altered in the 1970's. Initially the United States decided to support Tibet in their battle against Communist China. The time was the 1950's and
the "Red Scare" was being felt in every government office. Tibet was seen as another "domino", ready to fall, even though the Tibetans had no real political leanings either way at the time. These feelings changed for the most part in the 1970's when the Nixon administration thought it best to become friendly with China in order to work together against the Communist Russians. Thoughts of intervention in Tibet ceased and have remained dormant in the government up into the Bush administration. During the 1950's however, the U.S. was extremely active in Tibet by recruiting Tibetan freedom fighters and flying them to Camp Hale in Colorado where they were trained by the CIA, under the utmost of secrecy, in the techniques of guerilla warfare, armed with the latest sophisticated equipment, and flown back to Tibet. All of this expense was futile since the U.S. never wholeheartedly and publicly backed Tibet, and then decided the gradually taper off support. It may be said that Tibet is another example of failed U.S. intervention policy.

On October 7, 1950, the forces of Mao Zedong launched their attack on Tibet. In the words of Mao, he sent his forces to "liberate the oppressed and exploited Tibetans and reunite them with the great motherland." (Svenson, p. 71)

This oppression that Mao spoke of is what China
China viewed as imposed Feudalism. China tried to present to the public that they were freeing the Tibetan people from centuries of dictatorship under upper class monks and nobles. The Dalai Lama himself, has admitted that all things were not right with monastic life and its system at the time in Tibet, but in no way was there an organized feudalistic system.

At the center of this great juncture in Tibetan history was a young man who the rest of Tibet would look to for leadership. The critical role that this young man would play from 1952 to present day would decide the course of Tibetan history.

The Dalai Lama was not born to great wealth and position. Lhamo Dondrub, as he was originally named, was born in 1935 to a Tibetan peasant family who farmed in a small town called Takster in a Chinese occupied province called Amdo. However, in the Tibetan way of looking at things, this simple child who was born in Takster was, in fact, the living incarnation of the great Bodhisattua Avalokitesvara, who always chose to incarnate as the person who would lead the Gelupka sect in Tibet.

In the seventeenth century the Great Fifth became Tibet's political as well as religious leader when he declared himself the incarnation of Avalokitesvara. By Tibetan belief, a being with the rank of Bodhisattua
could choose when and where to be reborn. Knowing this, they leave indications before their actual earthly deaths as to where they will reincarnate. By his own command made before his death, the body of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama was put on his throne in the Norbulingka Palace. Gradually the dead Dalai Lama's head was observed to turn eastward, indicating that he would be reborn to the east of Lhasa. Also, a star-shaped fungus grew on a pillar to the east of the dead man's throne. When the high lamas met to plan their search for the new Dalai Lama, they had to gather further information. The late Oracle had seen a vision of a village where there was a monastery with a peculiar kind of green tiled roof. The country's regent saw a vision of a house with unusual gutter spouts. These and other clues set the lamas on their way in search of the new incarnation. (Rosemary Tung, p. 64)

The lamas who were sent to Takster to search out their new ruler disguised themselves as traveling merchants. Under disguise the lamas presented to the the three-year old Lhamo Dondrub various things that had belonged to the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. The purpose of this was to see if the child would recognize these things of his former incarnation. A rosary which had belonged to the Thirteenth was presented and the child instantly recognized
it. The child forcefully said to them in a Lhasa dialect that the rosary was his. The child went through test with other objects and after having completed the oral examination satisfactorily, the lamas decided that at the age of three, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama had been found. For years the Dalai Lama was taught in the ways of a lama and earned his geshé degree, which is the Tibetan equivalent of a doctorate. In 1950 the Dalai Lama was forced to end his education and become the leader he had been prepared all his life to be.

At the age of only fourteen in 1950, the Dalai Lama fled to the Indian border, taking with him more than a thousand pack animals laden with treasure. But a few months later he was persuaded by his spiritual advisors, including the State Oracle (who often goes into a trance when an important decision has to be made), to return to Lhasa and try to work things out with Mao. The two leaders did not end up meeting until 1954. The Dalai Lama had once seen the possibilities for combining Buddhism and Marxism in a complex way, but after meeting with Mao, in China, he decided that Mao was an enemy of the dharma and of the Tibetan people.

When he returned to Lhasa, the Dalai Lama found that the liberation had taken a very ugly turn for the worse. The Chinese army and the Tibetan people they
had recruited, were relieving people of their arms, livestock, and other possessions. Everything in the country was being collectivized. Prominent families were being bound and dragged to village squares for "thamzing", or "struggle sessions", and were being forced to confess to their "crimes against the people", and those who did not give a satisfactory performance were executed on the spot. The Khampa went on the warpath, and the Dalai Lama, who wanted to emulate Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence, despaired. The great Dalai Lama realized he had lost control of his country.

In 1959 there was a major insurrection in Lhasa. Tens of thousands of Tibetans surrounded the Norbulingka Palace to protect the Dalai Lama from the Chinese, whose program was now very clear to them. A Chinese general had invited the Dalai Lama to his barracks. In the words of the Dalai Lama, from his book, My Land, My People here is the course of events:

"There was also an even more somber suspicion in the people's minds. It was widely known in Tibet that in four different places in the eastern provinces, high lamas had been invited to parties by the Chinese army commanders and had never been seen again: three had been killed, and one imprisoned. It seemed that this method of luring people away from anyone who might try to protect them was a Chinese custom.

The mental stress of that morning was something I had not experience before during
the brief period of my leadership of the people of Tibet. I felt as if I was standing between two volcanoes, each likely to erupt at any moment. On one side there was the vehement, unequivocal, unanimous protest of my people against the Chinese regime; on the other, there was the armed might of a powerful and aggressive occupation force. If there was a clash between the two, the result was a forgone conclusion. The Lhasa people would be ruthlessly massacred in the thousands, and Lhasa and the rest of Tibet would see a full-scale military rule with all its persecution and tyranny."

The Chinese plans were apparent to all. The commander had summoned the Dalai Lama to his barracks, but he was to come alone, without his guards. Under the cover of night and in a disguise of a soldier, the Dalai Lama and his family fled south again, with the People's Liberation Army following closely behind. He barely made it across the Indian border. A hundred thousand Tibetans, including the cream of society and the Lamaist hierarchy followed, and at least 87,000 of those who stayed behind were slaughtered.

Three months later, in India, the Dalai Lama gave his first press conference, in which he claimed that China's true aim was, "the extermination of the religion and culture and even the absorption of the Tibetan race."

(Dalai Lama, p. 220) Refugees continued to arrive during summer and autumn of 1959, the Dalai Lama pushed forward his effort to obtain international support for Tibet. Respond-
ing to his call for an impartial inquiry, the International
Commission of Jurists launched an investigation into
accounts of Chinese atrocities as well as Tibet's inter-
national legal status. A year later the commission concluded
that, despite the ambiguity shrouding its legal status,
Tibet had been a fully sovereign state, independent in
both fact and law, of Chinese dominion. Regarding human
rights violations, the commission determined that China
was guilty of genocide.

An old British hill station in Himchal Pradesh,
India, 125 miles from the Tibetan border, where the viceroy
and his entourage summered in the heyday of the Raj.
Dharamsala is now the seat of the Tibetan government
in exile. Many who have come to learn from the Dalai
Lama have never left.

That there is a Tibetan exile government that handles
the problems of the refugees and is ready to return at
a moment's notice should China collapse and the "liberators"
leave is truly impressive. The seed money for the exile
government came from the treasure brought out by the
thousand-plus pack animals in 1950, stashed in a stable
in Sikkim, and cashed for - accounts vary - one million
or eight million dollars. All Tibetan exiles everywhere
send contributions. (Deborah Sontag, p.B5)

The atrocities which began in 1957 reached a peak
during the Cultural Revolution years, from 1966 to 1977. Entire villages were obliterated, their residents crucified or disemboweled, burned, or dragged from the backs of horses. All but 40 of the country's 6,254 monasteries were gutted, and their treasure, $80 billion worth of ancient thankas and gold and silver, were shipped back in endless truck convoys to the motherland where it made its way through Hong Kong to European auction houses and private collectors. Thousands of bundles of woodblock-printed scripture - 1,200 years of research on the inner workings of the mind - were burned. In the monasteries that weren't razed, huge portraits of Chairman Mao were put up. Tens of thousand of Tibetans were marched off to a growing string of labor camps in the North, South, and East, that made a the Gulags look good.

There are incredible stories of this period: high tulkas, recognized incarnations of perfection - stage adepts, under torture stopping to inhale and shooting their consciousness out of their body and into their next manifestations. (John Avedon, p. 223)

At the same time, there was an all-out onslaught on every other form of life in the country. Untold millions of sentient beings were liberated from their temporary consciousness housings. Cats, caged birds, and golden Lhasa Apsos were exterminated for being parasites and
that horrible mistakes had been made in the way Tibet had been treated. By the early Eighties it became clear that Beijing was not going to break the back of Tibetan culture. The Old Guard had died and the cultural lobotomy was aborted. The new policy was to be: You can have your religion and your dogs. We won't bother you too much, but we won't give you decent jobs or a good education. As long as you accept your lower status everything will be fine, but if you demonstrate, if you start to clamor for Tibetan independence, you will be cracked down on severely.

The Chinese have continued the genocide by absorption. Han Chinese were given generous incentives to settle in Xizang and were rewarded for marrying Tibetan women. Presently the Han-Tibetan ratio on the plateau is estimated to be around 7.5 million Chinese to 6 million Tibetans.
IV. Tibet's Current Situation: 1987 to Present Day

In September of 1987, anti-Chinese riots broke out in Tibet's capital city of Lhasa. They were easily suppressed, but have recurred periodically - 21 riots, five of them serious. In early March of 1989 - a full two months before tanks rolled into Tiananmen Square - the Armed Police Force, on direct orders from Beijing, used provocateurs to stimulate a riot among a crowd demonstrating for Tibetan independence in Lhasa's main square. The victims were mowed down by machine guns. There were 450 dead, 700 injured, and 2,100 arrested. In June of 1989, martial law was in full force.

The massive outbreak of hostilities may have surprised the Chinese as well as foreign observers. The central government had come to believe that it was making progress with their effort to redress past mistakes. In 1980, China's State Council issued a decree abolishing communes. They admitted that their policy of forcing Tibetans to raise wheat rather than barley, which Tibetans preferred, had not only been a cultural mistake but an ecological one as well. A new policy of religious freedom made it possible for Lamaist Buddhists to make the pilgrimage to Lhasa again. Monasteries and temples which they had destroyed earlier were being rebuilt.

Tibet was opened up for tourism in the early eighties,
and the Chinese set up the Tibetan Development Fund in order to capitalize on Westerner's fascination with Tibet. This fund was headed by two prominent Tibetans who had long been loyal to the Beijing government - the Panchen Lama, and an aristocrat named Ngapo Jigme. The fund had been set up to provide a means in which foreigners could contribute to the future prosperity of Tibet. The Dalai Lama himself praised all these new policies. While tourism brought money to certain cities, mainly Lhasa, there was a widespread feeling that it was the Han Chinese, and not the locals, who profited from this tourism.

The status of the Tibetan language was another grievance local people held against the Beijing government. Since Tibet had the status of an autonomous region, official and business dealings should have been conducted in Tibetan as well as Chinese. It rarely ever worked out this way. The Panchen Lama, who was normally complacent, complained in 1988 that "for the past 30 or more years, no importance has been attached to the use of the Tibetan language." (June Teuful, p. 282) The Beijing government had issued repeated directives to the Chinese in Tibet to learn the Tibetan language but in most cases these memos were ignored.

The language barrier had important consequences
in the employment arena. Officials and factory managers who spoke only Chinese tended to prefer employees who could speak Chinese and this excluded many Tibetans. In addition, many of the Han Chinese were paid more than Tibetans who worked alongside them.

Tibetan dissatisfaction and anger were aired in a series of demonstrations the Tibetans held. Groups of pilgrims, including monks and nuns, traverse the Barkhor in performing their devotion. At an agreed upon time some pilgrims would raise banners calling for independence, and hoist their banned flag, that of a Tibetan snow mountain and lion. At the demonstrations in March of 1989, shops belonging to Han Chinese were burned and looted.

What is most distressing to the Chinese is the presence of foreigners in the demonstrations. The government is concerned with the international perception of their human rights record, which has always been poor and is the cause for many cover-ups by the Chinese.

What seems to be the most advantageous solution to China's dilemma with Tibet would be an agreement with the Dalai Lama. Negotiations between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama have continued since his exile, some open, some semi-secret. Shortly before his death in 1989, the Panchen Lama revealed that he had been in communication with the Dalai Lama for a period of years. Major issues
have included the administrative status of Tibet and the Dalai Lama's status after he returns to Tibet. The Chinese have refused to consider any form of independence or alter the status of Tibet. Regarding the Dalai Lama's return to Tibet, China has said that the Dalai Lama may return to Tibet as spiritual head of the Lamaist faith, but not as a secular leader. While the Dalai Lama does not seem to object to this, many Tibetans do. When the Dalai Lama offered in May of 1989 to step down as political leader of the Tibetan Parliament in exile, in order to broaden the democratic process by creating the position of Prime Minister, the offer was rejected by the delegates.

In June, 1988, in an address to the European Parliament, the Dalai Lama outlined a framework for a Hong Kong-style settlement. The key points were: 1. Beijing would be responsible for Tibet's foreign policy; 2. Tibet would be governed by its own constitution or basic law; 3. The Tibetan government would comprise a popularly elected chief executive, a bicameral legislature, and an independent legal system; 4. Tibet would become a demilitarized zone, but with China's right to maintain military installations in Tibet for defense purposes only, until neutrality is established. (Teufal, p. 288) Many outside observers found this new agenda to be constructive since it is the first time that the Dalai Lama had not
asked for total independence. China however, felt that this proposal was tantamount to a declaration of independence for Tibet, which would definitely not be acceptable.

Another factor that made it difficult to reach an agreement over Tibet's status has been the rise of a new generation of militant Tibetans within Tibet itself, but also in the exile communities.

There are 120 New York-area Tibetans, the biggest Tibetan community in the United States. They get together several times a year, especially for Tibetan National Day on March 10, when they demonstrate for Tibetan independence at the United Nations, and for the Dalai Lama's birthday on July 6. The U.S., unlike India, Nepal, Canada, and Switzerland, does not allow Tibetans into this country as refugees. Technically it is because they are coming through another country - Nepal or India - willing to grant them residency. Politically, it seems more likely that the U.S. Government is unwilling to offend the Chinese by acknowledging that Tibetans could have a "well-founded fear of persecution," as refugees must under Federal law. (Deborah Sontag, p. B5)

Tibetans now are being let in as "qualified displaced Tibetans." The Tibetan U.S. Resettlement Project, based in New York City, is working to establish 19 communities
of Tibetans across the country in cities like Minneapolis, San Francisco, Salt Lake City, Ithaca, N.Y., Portland, and Amherst, Massachusetts. (Ibid)

It is easy to imagine that the Dalai Lama could have spent the rest of his life living comfortably in the South of France, receiving the occasional visitor for tea. But instead he has been working tirelessly for his people, indeed, for all mankind. In 1989, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, the only Asian to have won it on his own. The Chinese called the award "preposterous." Congratulations from the White House were not forthcoming.

The Dalai Lama's message of Universal Responsibility, derived from the Buddhist kinship with all "sentient beings," contains the seeds for the salvation of the planet. He advocates a politics of compassion, not of chess—the old Machiavellian-Kissinger approach, which has brought us to the brink of self-immolation. The only problem is, is there anybody in power to listen? What will be the Dalai Lama's role in this new world order?

With the publication of the White Paper this past year by China one thing is certain. China does not intend to end up like their Communist neighbor, the former Soviet Union. They do not want to be broken up into many different territories and also intend to be the last great bastion
of Communism. No, China remains firm in its resolute commitment to keep all territories in the republic.

Even though China has suffered from the embarrassment of human rights violations, it is unlikely that they will stop anytime soon. If they decide to offer Tibet a deal similar to Hong Kong’s, with an internal self-government, it will be up to the Dalai Lama to convince his people that this may be a first step. In the meantime, whatever little negotiations there are, will go on.
V. Epilogue

"There is no way you can oppress people forever or keep down their aspirations for freedom," George Bush told a group of Cuban exiles last year. Except sometimes. When it comes to the people of Tibet, whose fight for independence continues despite more than 40 years of occupation by China, Bush stands on the side of the oppressor. By refusing to acknowledge Tibet's status as an occupied country or to even condemn Chinese abuses there, Bush not only has perpetuated an injustice; he has insured the continuation of brutality that has claimed more than a million lives.

The only way to help Tibetans is to address the issue of Tibet directly. With the new President-elect Bill Clinton, perhaps change can come about. Governor Clinton could be the first man in the White House to meet with the Nobel Prize-winning Dalai Lama. This would be a major step. The U.S. does not need to risk a full-scale military confrontation with China over this. Perhaps some aid in stepping up negotiations, or some recognition of the absolute sovereignty of Tibet and the human rights abuses by China. This way Tibetans will know they have not been forgotten, and we will not lose sight of the situation. In this manner, Tibet may no longer be, the Forbidden Country.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


