

Chapter Six



The Dalai Lama and the Future

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he Dalai Lama is, for many Tibetans and Westerners alike, the epitome of nonviolence and peace. He is a living example of the message of both Buddha and Christ to have compassion for one's enemies and learn from them. He has persistently preached nonviolence in dealing with the Tibetan-Chinese conflict and has won a Nobel Peace Prize. He is currently one of the most popular human beings on Earth, and continues to inspire millions. In this chapter I will look closer at the views of the Dalai Lama, and those elements in Tibetan activism that disagree with him. I will also look at protests in exile, the applications of Buddhism in politics and what the future of Tibet may hold.

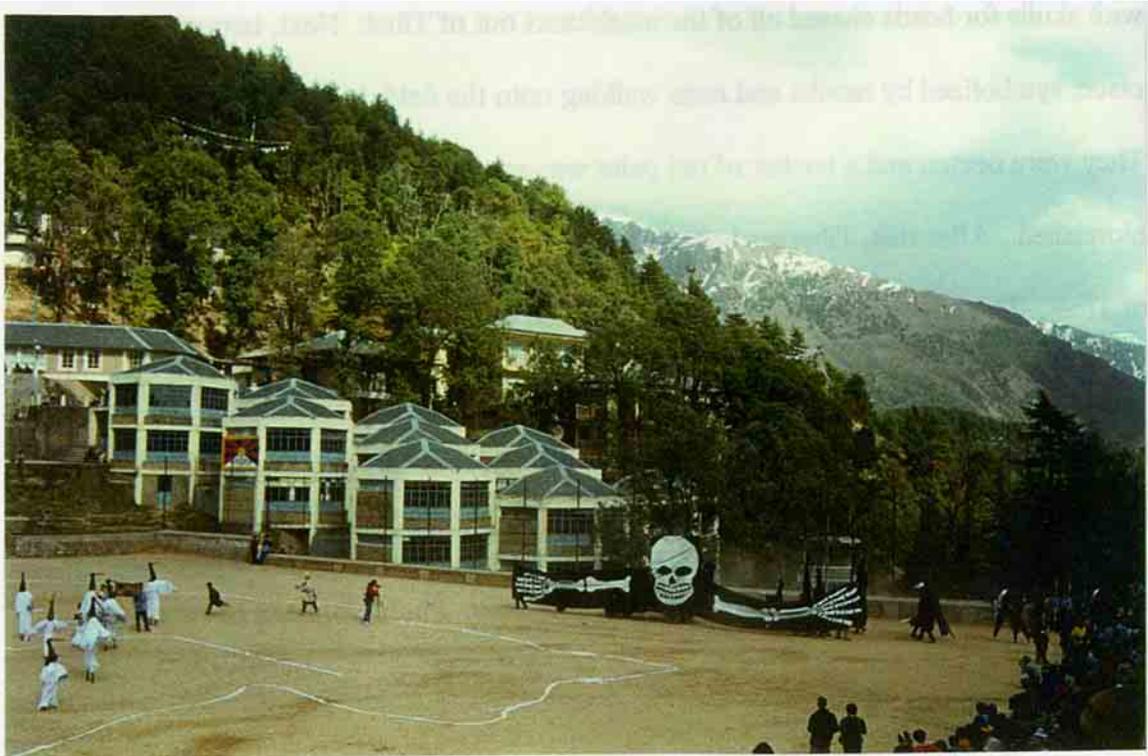
On March 11th, 2000, I was fortunate enough to attend a performance put on by the Tibetan Children's Village in Dharamsala. It was very inspiring and a remarkable accomplishment. I will begin this chapter by narrating the story they created. The play took place on a soccer field with an enormous chalk-outline of Tibet as the stage. The play was entitled "Black-Necked Crane" and the opening scene played serene flute music as children dressed up as cranes slowly danced on stilts. Nomads then came in from the hills, set up a tent and lit a fire. Other children held banners of different animals native to Tibet as a few little boy nomads walked around with their goats. It was a very peaceful scene.

Then a jeep with a skull and two bone-arms attached to it crept in as dramatic music sounded. The cranes and nomads scattered about in panic as men dressed in black

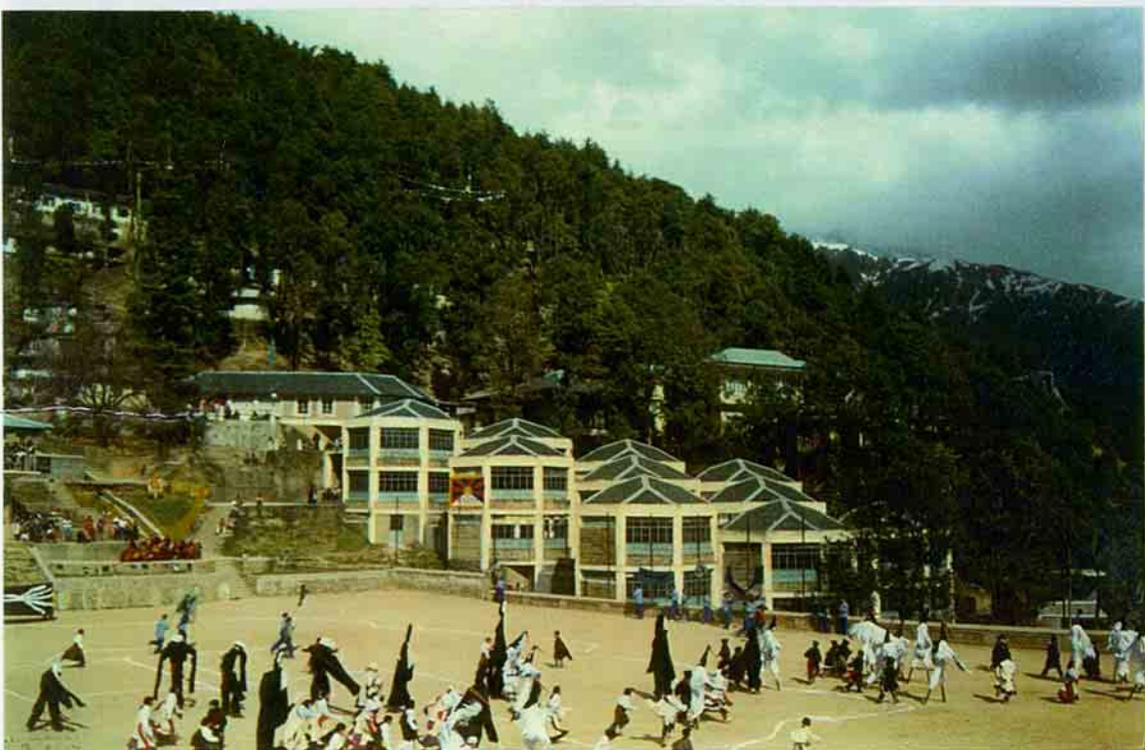
with skulls for heads chased all of the inhabitants out of Tibet. Next, two protests took place, symbolized by monks and nuns walking onto the field, holding a Tibetan flag. They were beaten and a bucket of red paint was splattered on the ground, representing bloodshed. After this, Tibetans began to unite and joined hands around the chalk outline of Tibet. The huge skull and bone-arms attached to the jeep moved out of Tibet and was subsequently set on fire. The final scene is a huge Tibetan flag being returned to the center of Tibet, with the black-necked cranes flying peacefully again to the flute music. The children had been working on this play for several weeks, and it was one of the most creative and emotional performances I have ever seen. Photographs of the scenes I have described follow.



A sublime and peaceful Tibet, filled with hard-working nomads and dancing birds.



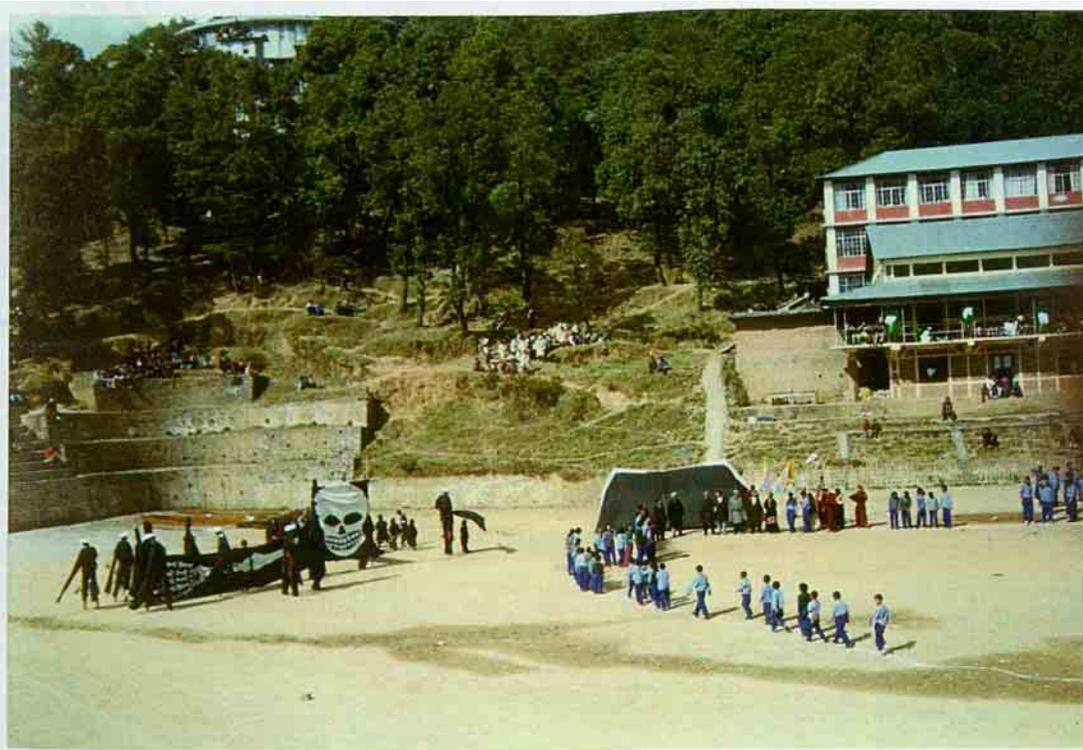
The Chinese invade.



The nomads and black-necked cranes are attacked and driven out of Tibet.



A monk and nun protest as blood is spilled.



The Tibetans began to unite and the Chinese leave Tibet.



The Chinese Communist skeleton is set on fire.



The black-necked cranes return as Tibet is again ruled by the Tibetans.

The printed program for the performance, called "Black-Necked Crane Magazine," proved to be just as interesting as the play itself. The front page quotes the 13th Dalai Lama in this 1901 decree,

"Nobody will hunt, let alone kill the birds of the air, the animals of the hills and forests, or the fish and otters of the water...in fact any animals dry (land) or wet (land), no matter how big or small. Nobody however noble or humble, should do violence to them or harm them."

Inside the magazine there are essays written by the children who partook in the performance. An anonymous child writes in an essay called "Magic Gun,"

"To regain our country as a zone of peace, we should give a good education to all the children, making them into great people, especially scientists. By making a magic gun by one of these scientists, the bullets fall upon those persons who are following the ideology of Mao Tse-Tung. Then naturally we will gain our country back under the support of 100 nations and His Holiness the Dalai Lama."

A sixteen-year-old named Samfen prophesizes the future of Tibet,

"UNO declares Tibet a free nation and the Chinese are asked to go back to their own country. UNO sends a Peacekeeping Force into Tibet to get rid of the Chinese, as they had not agreed with the decision of the UNO. That is why the UNO is compelled to send troops to Tibet for global peace. The Chinese troops are defeated by the Peacekeeping Force and they have to surrender. Tibet once again becomes a free nation and a Zone of Peace."

Tashi Phuntsok, sixteen, writes,

"If we walk through violence: we need an educated and skilled army and scientists to make bombs and weapons. We will need highly skilled doctors to cure the injured people. We will need people to deal with the foreign countries to ask for help. All of these people are from today's children of Tibet."

Dawa Tsering writes,

"To get our freedom back with peace, we will get the help of other countries. All the Tibetans will be united. We will do a peace march from Delhi to Tibet. Please don't forget our culture and the religion of our free nation."

An anonymous child prophesizes,

"At the beginning of the 21st century, China becomes a democratic country. Because most of the people of China and the brilliant students of China know the advantage of a democratic government, it will benefit us. Through talking with the democratic government of China we will easily get back our country. People of Tibet in exile and its friends will go back and live in Tibet with unity and strength. Through peace and harmony they will rule their country thoroughly and the Dalai Lama will be the spiritual leader of the country of Tibet."

Dicki Dolkar, fourteen, writes, "I think that Tibet will be a free nation if and only when 50,000 Tibetans and friends of Tibet walk back into Tibet with no weapons but television coverage." Tashi Wangdu, fifteen, writes, "In the future I will guard His Holiness the Dalai Lama because some bad people will try to kill him." Pashang Tashi, fifteen, writes, "If we get our freedom, my aim is to be a soldier. I want to be a soldier because I can help our country. If another country should harm our country we can fight that country. We will make all the countries afraid of our country of Tibet."

The ideas these children had about regaining their homeland through either violent or nonviolent means were fascinating to me. A high school student from the Bylacopy Refugee Camp named Tenzin Dhongak writes in his essay on Mohandas Gandhi,

"He was the most prominent freedom fighter who adapted a virtuous path of non-violence to achieve his goal, relentlessly for many years. As a result of his hard work, he ultimately was able to free his country from imperialist rule, and the country once again enjoyed the right to live in its own way. May the young citizens of Tibet follow his gracious path."⁴¹

From all indications, the Tibetan youth are as concerned and active in the Tibetan struggle as they have ever been. On March 10th, 1998, the Tibetan Youth Congress organized a fast-to-the-death protest in New Delhi to put pressure on the United Nations to keep discussion of the Tibetan issue alive. *Time* Magazine came to India to cover the story, and interviewed Dawa Gyalpo, who was one of the fasters. The article relates,

“ ‘The U.N. has solved problems in every country where there has been fighting and killing,’ (Gyalpo) whispers weakly. ‘But why not Tibet? Because we don’t harm anything. Now everything is finished in Tibet.’ The Dalai Lama responded, ‘I consider hunger strike unto death as a kind of violence. However, I cannot offer them suggestions for an alternative method. I don’t know what to do.’ Few Tibetans would dare disobey the Dalai Lama openly, but many like these protesters are clearly frustrated by their leader’s middle path of negotiation and dialogue, which they believe the Chinese simply ignore.”⁴²

The three demands of TYC for this hunger strike were: “to revive a debate on Tibet in the UN General Assembly, to appoint a special investigator on human rights abuses against Tibetans and to promote a settlement between the Dalai Lama and the Chinese.”⁴² The Dalai Lama, at a TYC conference that year, said, “As much as I appreciate the youth body’s dedication to the cause and welcome its contradictory stand on my policy, I stand fully committed to my middle-way approach in solving the Tibetan issue.” Both sides respect each other, but show no hesitancy in voicing their views. The Dalai Lama notes,

“Quite often (the critics) say ‘The Chinese know only force.’ It’s not a generational matter. There are many, many elder Tibetans who think violence is the ultimate answer, too. Sometimes, perhaps, I think among the younger generation there is more attraction toward Yasser Arafat or the Moujahedeen in Afghanistan. They often tell me, ‘Oh, look at them. Through violence, there is more publicity, more support from the outside world.’ First, my fundamental belief is that human nature lies in gentleness. Human nature is compassionate, is affectionate. Therefore, through violence, you may solve one problem. But you sow the seeds for another.

“Then there’s our case. Tibetans and Chinese have to live side by side in the future. In the past, we lived like that. So in order to live in a friendly, peaceful and neighborly way, while we are carrying out this freedom struggle, we must pursue nonviolence, so that our struggle will not affect our long, long friendship.

“Lastly, I ask the hotheads, let them visualize this. If we follow violent methods, a few hundred guns will not be effective. At least we need several thousand, at least a few thousands... around 100,000. Now, from where will we get those weapons? Is there some country willing to supply us with them?”⁴³

Although the Dalai Lama tolerates the opinions of the TYC and other groups that do not strictly adhere to his nonviolence approach, he threatens,

“I will resign if any violence takes place. First of all where will they get the weapons? Even if they get them, how will they transfer the weapons into Tibet? Finally, even if half a million Tibetans took up arms against the Chinese, it would be suicidal. A large portion of our support is because of our nonviolence.”⁴⁴

Violence thoroughly saturates American culture. With weekly school shootings and government-supported bombing campaigns, homicide the central plot of the majority of television shows and video games, a nonviolent example like that of the Dalai Lama is crucial and welcomed by many. A flyer made by the American organization Milarepa Fund entitled Non-Violence, Tibet and Youth Activism, writes,

“More than ever, violence is shaping the lives of young people. Violence is in our streets, our entertainment, our homes, and our advertising. It's in the way our corporations behave, and in the way our leaders attempt to solve problems. As young people, we crave examples of nonviolent conflict resolution in order to counter the overwhelming presence of violence in our surroundings. The universal message which the Dalai Lama brings to the crisis in Tibet has implications that reach far beyond that Himalayan nation's borders.”

Some young people are drawn towards a peaceful approach, but a substantial portion of the younger Tibetan generation today entertains thoughts of forcing the Chinese out of their country using violent means. It is natural to lack the patience and wisdom of the Dalai Lama at a young age in this regard, and most Tibetans develop a more conservative view as they age. One Tibetan who has continued to lobby for a violent approach is Jamyang Norbu. Based in Dharamsala, this widely published author, newspaper editor, intellectual and activist is the number one opponent of the Tibetan Government in Exile. I will dedicate the next several pages to his views.

The following is taken from Jamyang's TYC brochure called “Illusion and Reality,” which is a collection of articles he wrote in the 1980's. First, he discusses the

“Fact Finding Mission” by Tibetan Government representatives who went to Tibet in 1980 to find out some truths of what conditions were actually like under Chinese occupation. Jamyang accuses the government representatives of selling out, by making unacceptable compromises in an effort to bring about Tibetan-Chinese dialogues. He felt that the Chinese, who hosted the representatives, were giving them sugarcoated poison pills and that the representatives were swallowing them. His fury rings out, “Churchill in his *History of English Speaking People*, said, ‘It is the primary right of men to die and kill for the land they live in, and to punish with exceptional severity all members of their own race who have warmed their hands at the invader's hearth.’”⁴⁵

Jamyang punished the representatives by writing an article in the Tibetan Review, from which the following is taken. A photograph was published by the Government in Exile of the representatives kneeling in front of the “three prominent Tibetans in Peking” including a fervent communist, the Panchen Lama, and Ngabo Ngawang Jigme, a famous Tibetan sellout. Jamyang was very angry that the Tibetan Government in Exile representatives would stoop so low as to kneel in front of these cowards and have their picture taken with them. The Panchen Lama escapes Jamyang’s fury, but Jigme doesn’t.

“Ngabo Ngawang Jigme was the commander of the Tibetan forces in Chamdo when the Chinese attacked on October 7th, 1950. Disobeying specific orders, he retreated from Chamdo without firing a shot, and later surrendered to Chinese troops. His conduct, even by the laws of an enlightened nation, was sufficiently disgraceful to warrant a court-martial and at least a dishonorable discharge. Instead he was appointed to head the delegation to Peking to discuss the 17-Point treaty which he and his colleagues, without the authorization of the Tibetan government, blithely proceeded to sign. An excuse was later made for this scandalous behavior on the grounds that the delegates had signed under 'duress.' Yet it is certain that the Chinese had not tortured these people or even threatened them with death. After all, those were the good days when the Communists were as keen as boy-scouts to make a good impression and be helpful. Most probably a little judicious bluster was sufficient to make Ngabo and his fellow delegates sign. Have I exaggerated the lowness of their behavior? I really don't think so. **Even**

now this sort of miserable cowardice is more the rule than the exception among Tibetan officials.”

Ngawang Jigme, whose character is featured in the film Seven Years in Tibet and portrayed in a similarly negative light, later came to be a major supporter of the Chinese occupation. Jamyang discusses the “Four Rivers, Six Ranges,”

“The Khampa guerillas, the defenders of the Norbu Linka, the hundreds of lone agents dropped on suicide missions inside occupied Tibet—those and many others fought and died for certain ideals: and I do not think it would be wrong to say they fought and died for Liberty, for Buddhism and maybe even for the Democracy that the Dalai Lama promised to them in the future.”⁴⁶

Norbu believes that the Government in Exile tries to prevent information about the successes of the guerrilla fighters from being released so as to give the illusion that nonviolence was used to resist the Chinese and that Tibetans are committed to nonviolence. He writes,

“Such lack of information on the Tibetan Revolt has enabled the Tibetan leadership successfully to rewrite history, playing down the role of the armed revolt and fostering the fiction that the popular resistance was nonviolent. Though unhesitatingly subscribed to by many friends of Tibet, this story is patently untrue. There was never a nonviolent campaign against the Chinese. Even the few public demonstrations before the uprising of March 10, 1959 were not a display of the public’s commitment to nonviolence; quite the reverse. They were a signal to the Chinese that the Tibetans were prepared to act violently to protect their leader and their religion.”⁴⁷

Jamyang’s strategy, which involves the use of violence, does not differ that much from that of Pema, the President of the Tibetan Youth Congress. Jamyang elaborates his idea of small-scale violent acts in order to harm the tourism economy in Tibet,

“This idea, I must admit, came to me when American tourists stopped going to Europe after Reagan's bombing of Tripoli. Even though, consequently, Gadaffi didn't really start shooting and bombing Americans in Europe as he had threatened to do, his rhetoric was sufficient to change the travel plans of most Europe-bound Americans.

"I am, of course, in no way advocating that we start shooting tourists or even make threats to that effect. What I feel is that if enough political instability is created in Tibet, tourists will automatically avoid the country. We must bear in mind that even at the best of times touring in Tibet is a difficult and trying venture; with the remoteness of the country, the altitude, the bad roads, the hit or miss transportation system, the surly and loutish hotel staff, the xenophobic bureaucracy, the bad food and primitive medical facilities. If to these inconveniences we could add, let us say, bomb explosions in Chinese shops and buildings, buses that refuse to move because of sugar in their gas tanks, collapsing bridges and so on, I am sure that even the self-possession of the seasoned traveler would be considerably ruffled. The Chinese reaction would certainly help. The curfews, the army on the streets, the searches, and the general atmosphere of uncertainty and hostility would surely convince any tourist that a visit to the Taj Mahal would be a more prudent alternative.

“Such a situation would not be impossible to create. We have the men, we have the know-how, and the necessary equipment and material would not be too difficult to acquire. What would be difficult would be the absolute commitment required of every participant to carry out such a course of action to its proper conclusion. I therefore appeal to all Tibetans, especially the young and able to seriously consider this proposal.

“Every society has the right to defend itself against extinction, especially when every peaceful means to avert it has not only failed, but has dangerously compromised the will of the people to defend their society. We are here simply extending an individual's basic and legitimate right to self-defense, to the larger sphere of his existence, namely his society and his race. **And when that society does not have the means to defend itself by conventional military means, it must resort to unconventional ones.**

“In the last resort we fight because we must, not because we are provided iron-clad guarantees of success if we do so. The cornered rat springs at his tormentor not because he is assured victory by doing so, but because a basic instinct tells him that he has a slight—one in a thousand—chance of survival if he fights, but that he will most certainly die if he does nothing. Not all the sophistries of the 'better notters' and the mushy sermons of the tear-in-the-eye pacifists can give a rat, or for that matter, anyone, a better alternative.

“I am convinced of the moral rectitude of this course of action. It is not as if the Tibetan had a number of viable choices, but through sheer wickedness chose violence. The only choice left to the Tibetan now is either of cowardly surrender to the Chinese, or, if in exile, of cravenly ignoring events in Tibet and stifling the efforts of others to publicize or remedy them. The third choice is, of course, to fight. I know the devil can quote scriptures for his own purpose, but in this case I feel no sense of iniquity or even hesitation in reproducing a passage from an

article by Mahatma Gandhi. I quote from a man who, though an ‘apostle of non-violence,’ was above all a fighter. I quote his words to establish when it is not only permissible but imperative for a man to make the third choice: ‘I do believe that where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I could advise violence. I would rather have India resort to arms than she should become a helpless witness to her own dishonor.’⁴⁸

Seeing the monks and nuns in Tibet passionately rebel against Chinese occupation in the 1987 demonstrations, Jamyang was encouraged. He remarks, “Being one of those ‘militants’ or ‘extremists’ as the Tibetan ruling class and the international media have quite indiscriminately labeled any Tibetan who has objected to the causal surrendering of his country's sovereignty, the events in China have buoyed my hopes for Tibet's future.”^{48a}

Some of Jamyang’s other articles had downright nasty insults to the Kashag members. He never directly insulted the Dalai Lama, but was clearly disgusted by the overall policy of the Tibetan Government of appeasement and viewed nonviolence as cowardice. Hlasang Tsering claims some ruffians representing the Government in Exile beat Jamyang up badly for his comments. Before countering with the Dalai Lama’s viewpoint, I will give some excerpts from a book written in 1994 by a Frenchman named Pierre-Anoine Donnet called Tibet, Survival in Question. Donnet is one of those Western journalists who has tried to create a lot of drama using conflict between the nonviolent and violent approaches. He accurately states, “The Dalai Lama’s position is bitterly rejected by the radical fringe among the Tibetans in exile, who consider that no solution is acceptable other than full independence.”⁴⁹ But then grossly exaggerates, “his message of peace has divided the exile community.”⁵⁰

He continues,

“How many Tibetans reject the Dalai Lama’s proposal and want to continue fighting for independence? Tashi Namgyal’s forceful reply is 90 percent—perhaps more. The leader of the Tibetan Youth Congress (at the time) speaks curtly when discussing violence as a tool in the struggle: ‘The Dalai Lama’s proposal is bad. He says he is the Buddha of Compassion. Well, I’m not. The Dalai Lama wants happiness, not only for the Tibetan people, but for all beings. He talks about a world without borders and without passports, without police. He believes in that sort of thing. But we just can’t see things in the same way. Let’s be quite frank. We can’t say: since the Dalai Lama doesn’t hate the Chinese, we won’t either. We simply cannot. On the contrary, we hate the Chinese. They invaded our country. Why should we let them sleep in peace? We don’t believe in killing innocent people. Our motivation is shaped by our objective: the total independence of Tibet. If we kill Chinese, no one should accuse us of being terrorists; no Chinese who comes to Tibet is innocent.’

“Even the Dalai Lama’s younger brother sides with those who advocate violence to expel the Chinese from the Land of Snow. Tenzin Chogyal Rinpoche said, ‘It is extremely unlikely that the Chinese will simply move back out. Unless we use this (he gestures as though firing a gun). So you see, we have to bring some pressure to bear on them, and the only pressure they recognize is violence. We will have to make blood flow. Whatever the Dalai Lama does, as far as we are concerned, we have to wield the stick. Otherwise they will not understand.’

“He continues, ‘There are things we have to do without the knowledge of the Dalai Lama. He must not be told. He is above violence. But as you know, we live in a sad world. I hit you, you hit me; we both feel pain. That is what it takes to get the message across. It seems to me that the Chinese only understand the language of violence. Didn’t they say that power comes out of the barrel of a gun? Very well then. Let us confront each other at that level. The problem is that we don’t have any weapons. Will the Americans give us any? Don’t think the Chinese army is so very powerful, either. It can be overcome. The troops in today’s army are not the Long March veterans, you know.’

“Phuntsog Wangyal, a former representative of the Dalai Lama, says, ‘China has already passed the death sentence on us: the Tibetan nation must die. The only question that remains is whether it is to die quickly or slowly. That is why I think that whatever the cost, Tibetans must fight for full independence. Winning independence is not easy. Our warriors for peace will have to persevere for generations. We must continue.’ He adds, ‘We have to be realistic. People always say terrorism is a very bad thing. Killing is very wrong. But nobody tries to find out why a person has been led to become a terrorist. What reasons impel him to resort to violence? You must ask yourself this question. When the causes vanish, the violence will vanish as well. Let me tell you that the Chinese will not leave voluntarily... The Dalai Lama is harmless. He is not likely to cause any problems. So there is no need (for the Chinese) to worry about him.’”⁵¹

Donnet admits, “For the Dalai Lama, violence is always a sign of weakness, never of strength.”⁵⁰ The Dalai Lama, at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, responds to those Tibetans who believe in violence,

“How can humans be so attracted to blood? I have always felt violence is unnatural. Furthermore, I feel that while it is certainly possible to achieve results by means of violence, that achievement will not be a lasting one. Very often, instead of eliminating one problem, violence creates more problems. Look at us: there are six million of us and over a thousand million of them! To plan on using violence would be stupid. When I explain this to young Tibetans, they sometimes start to cry. They can’t contain their emotions. But they must accept the facts. Whether they like it or not, that is the reality.”⁵²

The idea that Buddhism and its ideals are useful in the area of politics is not just a crazy notion of the Dalai Lama. It is shared by several Indian intellectuals. Dr. Ambedkar, an Indian legend who fought the caste system with his brand of Buddhist activism, writes, “Buddhism was a democratic movement, which upheld democracy in religion, democracy in society, and democracy in politics.”⁵³ Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, responds, “The question that inevitably suggests itself is how far can the great message of the Buddha apply to the present-day world? Perhaps it may apply, perhaps it may not; but if we follow the principles enunciated by the Buddha, we will ultimately win peace and tranquility for the world.”⁵⁴

Although the Dalai Lama has support, he is aware that his method is not that of the dominant paradigm. Even the most “civilized” countries in the world, the United States for example, use violence for the great majority of international conflicts they approach. The Dalai Lama declared during his 1988 Tibetan Uprising Day speech,

“The struggle of our people is, unlike many, a nonviolent one. This may have made it more difficult to convince the world of the depth of our misery and the earnestness of our resolve. It may even have encouraged governments to ignore our just cause. It is indeed a sad reflection of the state of the world that violence seems to be required for the international community to pay attention. Given the

global concern for terrorism and other forms of violence, would it not be in everyone's interest to support the nonviolent pursuit of just causes?

“I have always felt that violence breeds violence. It contributes little to the resolution of conflicts. I, therefore, renew my appeal to all freedom-loving peoples to support our nonviolent struggle for the survival of our national identity, our culture and our spiritual tradition, and to persuade the Chinese Government to abandon its oppressive policies.”⁵⁵

Here, the Dalai Lama admits that a violent approach would get the issue more international attention, but he still firmly stands by his policy. He hopes that his approach will become more popular and that “because of the lessons we have begun to learn, the next century will be friendlier, more harmonious and less harmful. (If this happens,) compassion, the seeds of peace, will be able to flourish.”⁵⁶ He acknowledges that some of his own people disagree with him. “My own people inside Tibet as well as outside, especially younger people, criticize my stand of nonviolent methods. But I believe this is the proper way; violence is against human nature—it is inhuman.”⁵⁷ He adds, “I still believe that violence is not the proper way. Especially in our case, violence is suicidal.”⁵⁸

He is aware of the weakness that creeps into the mentality of those Tibetans that began to contemplate violence, but is quick to remind them of the right path, as he did after winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, “If Tibet took up arms, followed the violent course, that’s almost like suicide. I understand that there are desperate feelings (but) I always believe that nonviolence is something important. The best way to solve human conflict is through understanding, not fighting. Patience.”⁵⁹ He is also aware of the strength it takes to use nonviolence, and congratulates those of his people who have done so during a speech in Dharamsala on March 10th, 1992,

“The indomitable courage and determination of our people in Tibet has been the strength of our movement. The unique feature of our struggle has been its non-violent nature. While we continue to strive for our legitimate rights, we must not deviate from the path of nonviolence. I have no doubt that one day our people, as well as the peoples of Inner Mongolia and East Turkistan, will be reunited in full freedom in their respective countries.”⁶⁰

He adds,

“In Tibet, many people have been sacrificing their lives in the struggle for Tibetan independence which, in their minds is associated with the Buddhist Dharma.”^{60a}

Then in 1987, the Dalai Lama introduced his “Five Point Peace Plan” to the U.S.

Congress, as a proposed solution to the Tibetan-Chinese conflict. He writes,

“In order for there to be true stability and lasting peace throughout the world, violence must be eliminated. I have always believed this. In the Five Point Peace Plan which I proposed to China in 1987, I emphasized that Tibet must be completely demilitarized and restored to its previous status as a zone of peace and *ahimsa*. Elimination of violence is not as difficult a task as it may initially appear. Only a small proportion of the world's five billion people are engaged in acts of violence. The overwhelming majority are engaged in acts of loving, caring and sharing. It is thus my belief that in the human mind the dominant force is not violence, but on the contrary, compassion and peacefulness.”⁶¹

I will focus now on the aspect of the “Five Point Peace Plan” related to turning Tibet into a “Zone of Peace.” The Dalai Lama states,

“I propose the whole of Tibet be transformed into a zone of “*ahimsa*,” a Hindi term used to mean a state of peace and nonviolence. The establishment of such a zone would be in keeping with Tibet’s historical role as a peaceful and neutral Buddhist nation and buffer state separating the continent’s great powers. It would also be in keeping with Nepal’s proposal to proclaim Nepal a peace zone and with China’s declared support for such a proclamation.”⁶²

He explains this proposal in detail,

“I would like to take this opportunity to explain the Zone of Ahimsa or peace sanctuary concept, which is the central element of the Five Point Peace Plan. I am convinced that it is of great importance not only for Tibet, but for peace and stability in Asia.

“It is my dream that the entire Tibetan plateau should become a free refuge where humanity and nature can live in peace and in harmonious balance. It would be a

place where people from all over the world could come to seek the true meaning of peace within themselves, away from the tensions and pressures of much of the rest of the world. Tibet could indeed become a creative center for the promotion and development of peace.

“The following are key elements of the proposed Zone of Ahimsa:

—the entire Tibetan plateau would be demilitarized.

—the manufacture, testing and stockpiling of nuclear weapons and other armaments on the Tibetan plateau would be prohibited.

—the Tibetan plateau would be transformed into the world's largest natural park or biosphere. Strict laws would be enforced to protect wildlife and plant life; the exploitation of natural resources would be carefully regulated so as not to damage relevant ecosystems; and a policy of sustainable development would be adopted in populated areas.

—the manufacture and use of nuclear power and other technologies which produce hazardous waste would be prohibited.

—national resources and policy would be directed towards the active promotion of peace and environmental protection. Organizations dedicated to the furtherance of peace and to the protection of all forms of life would find a hospitable home in Tibet.

—the establishment of international and regional organizations for the promotion and protection of human rights would be encouraged in Tibet.

“Tibet's height and size as well as its unique history and profound spiritual heritage make it ideally suited to fulfill the role of a sanctuary of peace in the strategic heart of Asia. It would also be in keeping with Tibet's historical role of a peaceful Buddhist nation and buffer region separating the Asian continent's great and often rival powers.

“In order to reduce existing tension in Asia, the President of the Soviet Union, Mr. Gorbachev, proposed the demilitarization of Soviet borders and their transformation into 'a frontier of peace and good-neighborliness.' The Nepal government had earlier proposed that the Himalayan country of Nepal, bordering on Tibet, should become a zone of peace, although that proposal did not include demilitarization of the country.

“For the stability and peace of Asia, it is essential to create peace zones to separate the continent's biggest powers and potential adversaries. President Gorbachev's proposal, which also included a complete Soviet troop withdrawal from Mongolia, would help to reduce tension and the potential for confrontation

between the Soviet Union and China. A true peace zone must, clearly, also be created to separate the world's two most populous states, China and India.

“The establishment of the Zone of Ahimsa would require the withdrawal of troops and military installations from Tibet, which would enable India and Nepal also to withdraw military installations from the Himalayan regions bordering Tibet. This would have to be achieved by international agreements. It would be in the best interest of all states in Asia, particularly China and India, as it would enhance their security, while reducing the economic burden of maintaining high troop concentration in remote areas.”⁶³

At his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, the Dalai Lama’s understanding of peace seems more sophisticated and less idealistic. He stated,

“Peace, in the sense of absence of war, is of little value to the common man who is dying of hunger or cold. It will not remove the pain or torture inflicted on a prisoner of conscience. It does not comfort those who have lost their loved ones in floods caused by senseless deforestation in a neighboring country. Peace can only last where human rights are respected, where the people are fed, and where individuals and nations are free. True peace with oneself and with the world around us can only be achieved through the development of mental peace. The other phenomena mentioned above are similarly interrelated. Thus, for example, we see that a clean environment, wealth or democracy mean little in the face of war, especially nuclear war, and that material development is not sufficient to ensure human happiness.”⁶⁴

He concludes,

“The awarding of the Nobel Prize to me, a simple monk from far away Tibet, here in Norway, also fills us Tibetans with hope. It means that, despite the fact that we have not drawn attention to our plight by means of violence, we have not been forgotten.”⁶⁵

Later in the year, he reiterated,

“Tibet in the future must be demilitarized. It must be a zone of peace—at least as far as I am concerned. For war—violence in its worst form—causes the greatest amount of human suffering. And violence is against the Buddhist concept of compassion. Above all, I believe it is against the basic nature of human beings. I have therefore not only spoken about peace and nonviolence for all of humanity but have also made earnest and genuine attempts to put them into action in our struggle for freedom. I am naturally encouraged by the recognition that the Nobel Peace Committee has given to my attempts.”⁶⁶

The Dalai Lama has made many efforts to democratize the Tibetan Government in Exile, including writing a constitution, setting up a judicial system, and declaring that upon returning to Tibet, the Tibetan people will hold a common election to elect a new political leader. He writes,

“As opposed to other democracies, our democracy will have nonviolence and peace at its roots, which means we will have a government based on, as we often say, the combination of spiritual and temporal values.”⁶⁷

The Dalai Lama is also hoping for and working toward democracy in China. He writes,

“Democracy in China will have important consequences for Tibet. Many of the leaders of the Chinese democracy movement recognize that Tibetans have been ill-treated by Beijing and believe that such injustice should be redressed. Many of them openly state that Tibetans should be granted the opportunity to express and implement their right to self-determination.”⁶⁸

The Dalai Lama is well known for his attitude toward the Chinese, the supposed enemy of the Tibetan people. He writes,

“Our most valuable teachers are our enemies. Not only is this a fundamental Buddhist teaching, it is a demonstrated fact of life. While our friends can help us in many ways, only our enemies can provide us the challenge we need to develop tolerance, patience and compassion. These three virtues are essential for building character, developing peace of mind, and bringing us true happiness.”⁶⁹

How Western intellectuals view the Dalai Lama is quite interesting as well.

Colman McCarthy writes,

“The intellectual shallowness of the Pope (During WW II) ignores what the Dalai Lama has understood for three decades: that nonviolent resistance is for the strong willed and the principled who refuse to rely on the illogic of stopping the enemy’s bad violence with my good violence.”⁷⁰

McCarthy also notes,

“The spiritual leader of Tibet cosigned and fervently endorsed the Universal Declaration of Nonviolence, a document stating that, ‘All forms of violence,

especially war, are totally unacceptable as a means to settle disputes between and among nations, groups and persons.' ”⁷¹

The Tibetan Review writes a good analysis of the Dalai Lama's political philosophy in its November 1999 issue,

"The Dalai Lama does not aim to create a revolution for its own sake. To him revolution means training the human mind for a wider goal: the creation of a just and humane world order. The movements of enlightened individuals could have a wide and enduring impact on society. The Dalai Lama has been well trained in the method of nonviolence since his early childhood. Previously nonviolence was considered as a means for personal emancipation and achieving salvation. But when he came to India and knew Gandhi and his methods of unarmed resistance, he realized that the methods of truth and nonviolence could be used as a political weapon as well in achieving freedom for Tibet and thereby contributing to world peace.

"The independence movement of Tibet under the leadership of the Dalai Lama is based on the ideals of Buddhist and Gandhian truth and nonviolence. His is the only minority movement in the world that does not resort to violent means. On the contrary, he emphasizes the meditative transformation of the mind and the practice of love, compassion, tolerance, peace and freedom.

"For the Dalai Lama, peace can only last where individual rights are respected, where no one is hungry and where individuals and nations enjoy freedom. Compassion can be the cornerstone for peace in any society. He has developed his philosophy of peace and harmony from Buddhist teachings of love for all living beings. He was conferred the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 for coming forward with constructive and nonviolent proposals for the solution of international conflicts and human rights issues. Like the Buddha and Gandhi, he emphasizes the need for every individual's cool and calm abiding mind irrespective of religious and national barriers. Though hatred, anger and fear are some of the obstacles that disturb the human mind, he believes all of these can be overcome by cultivating indiscriminating compassion.

"The Dalai Lama believes that the problems of today, for example, violent conflicts, moral degradation, environmental destruction, poverty, hunger, etc. are by-products of people's excessive focus on material acquisition. People run after material happiness, but true peace remains very far off for them. This is because real happiness comes from peace of mind. The Dalai Lama thus explains: 'True happiness comes from a sense of inner peace and contentment, which in turn must be achieved through the cultivation of altruism, of love and compassion and elimination of ignorance, selfishness and greed.'

"Peace does not mean the mere absence of war. On the contrary, it means the achievement of positive conditions in the form of material and spiritual progress. In this respect, he is in agreement with the Gandhian notion that peace should not be the peace of a graveyard. He is totally opposed to the idea of peace brought about by coercive or dictatorial methods. In his opinion, material progress well-balanced with spiritual development can bring permanent peace in society.

"The Dalai Lama considers three pre-requisites as necessary for bringing true peace and harmony in society: 1) national and individual freedom, 2) respect for human rights, and 3) equitable distribution of material things. The first and foremost condition for bringing peace is freedom of thought and expression which can be attained by mutual trust, mutual understanding and absence of fear. This translates into a need to eliminate mutual fear and suspicion between China and Tibet if the problem between them is to be resolved.

"The Dalai Lama believes that mental as well as external peace can be achieved if we have a strong desire to follow the principles of spiritual traditions such as Buddhism. He uses the principles of Buddhism for its scientific appeals and for its effectiveness in bringing about world peace and harmony. It was for this reason that statesmen like Jawaharlal Nehru endeavored to extend to the spirit of Buddhism by applying compassion and fraternity in the domain of international relations.

"The Dalai Lama thus believes that peace and harmony in society can be attained on the Buddhist foundations of goodwill, kindness and compassion. It can be achieved by serving and caring for others. Whatever be the color, race, belief or religious tradition of a person, this human ability can easily be shared. The great need of the hour is to feel one's responsibility for fellow beings. The Dalai Lama believes that universal responsibility and compassion together can provide the basis for harmony and peace within and among nations. In fact he is working continuously to generate the feeling of universal responsibility among all human beings through the method of the Middle Path.

"The Dalai Lama believes that the Buddhist method of the Middle Path can bring mental as well as outer peace. He feels that the solution to all human problems lies in attaining the status of Buddhahood through the application of six qualities of the Middle Path: generosity, morality, patience, perseverance, meditation and penetrative insight. According to Buddhist philosophy, training the human mind to attain the stage of Buddhahood involves three steps. Firstly, worldly things distract the mind. The mind should be freed from these distractions. The next step is to check the ongoing dialogues in our minds. With the attainment of the first two steps, we should concentrate our minds towards peace; that is, complete silence. Therein lies the solution to inner and outer conflicts, leading the way to the attainment of true and genuine peace and harmony.

"The Dalai Lama therefore directs his teachings not merely to achieving peace and harmony in Tibet but also to the achievement of a greater goal of a non-violent and peaceful world order, a civilization of *ahimsa* based on justice and equality where the possibility of conflict and war would be minimal."⁷²

Buddhism is continually mentioned as an influence for the Dalai Lama's political philosophy. What is the basis for this? Samdong Rinpoche explains.

"The elementary discipline common to the lay people deals with moral discipline which prohibits the ten evil deeds and stresses nonviolence to sentient beings. In the Hinayana discipline, violence to any sentient being is strictly prohibited. Violence is the root cause of all social disturbance and misery, and the elimination of violence at the individual level automatically builds up the growth of the social structure.

"In Vajrayana it becomes part of the duty of Bodhisattvas to perform violent acts so as to eliminate anti-social elements, uncontrollable by nonviolent means."⁷³

This last part is important. Samdong Rinpoche uses the story of the Buddha in the ship. The Buddha uses his clairvoyance to predict that one of the sailors on a ship he is on is about to kill everyone aboard. In order to save the sailors from being killed and the potential killer from accumulating enormous demerit, through the Buddha's kindness, he kills the potential killer and saves everyone aboard. It is with that kind of motivation that a highly qualified Bodhisattva could kill out of kindness. This idea is obviously not to be exploited, however. Rinpoche continues,

"The importance of safeguarding the individual's rights and the maintenance of social harmony in the Hinayana rules of conduct puts focus on warding off violence. In addition to these, the rules of conduct for the Mahayana Bodhisattva are not limited to nonviolence, but included the duty of bestowing happiness and benefit to others."⁷⁴

This is the idea Geshe Gopal talked about, which would allow the Dalai Lama to use violence against the Chinese as an act of compassion. The Dalai Lama has found neither need nor opportunity for that, and so has not used that option that Buddhist doctrine would allow him. Rinpoche continues,

"The text sheds important light on how to act in the event of war. The Buddha recommends that the war situation should be approached through three stages and three wise efforts. At the first stage the first effort is aimed at bringing about a compromise between the contending or belligerent parties without bloodshed, even though both sides may have to give up some of their interests. If the war remains unsubdued by friendly approach, compensation of wealth, or ultimatum, only then can the state begin hostilities.

"At the second stage an effort should be applied to face the battle. It is explained thus: the citizens of the state are under the danger of foreign occupation, so the self is compelled to undergo a sin, and with a view to saving the people at large, a few persons should be ready to bear the results of the sinful acts.

"At the third stage, the effort calls for application of skill and bravery in the war operations with a defensive purpose. As we see the object of war has never been reckoned as destruction or the fame of victory; it has been calculated to aim at the protection of the people's interests and rights. This lightens the result of the sin in the normal sense. Further, not only in Mahayana *sutras* but in the "Sarvastivadi Sutra" also, the Buddha did not oppose wars that were based upon the interests of the state. There are instances like the one in which King Prasenajit or Kosala are engaged in a war for a long duration. The Buddha sent some *Bhikkhus* to the king's camp to preach to the king and the soldiers at the request of the king. This shows that if Buddha opposed war he would not have sent any monks to the kings' military camp for their military support. The king was very much under the influence of the Buddha, who could have easily stopped the king from war. But this should not be misunderstood as encouraging violence for self-centered ends. For the purpose of one's own interests, the Buddha never allowed violence to be inflicted upon living beings, even in defense of one's life. Similarly, monks are prohibited from violent acts under any circumstances."⁷⁵

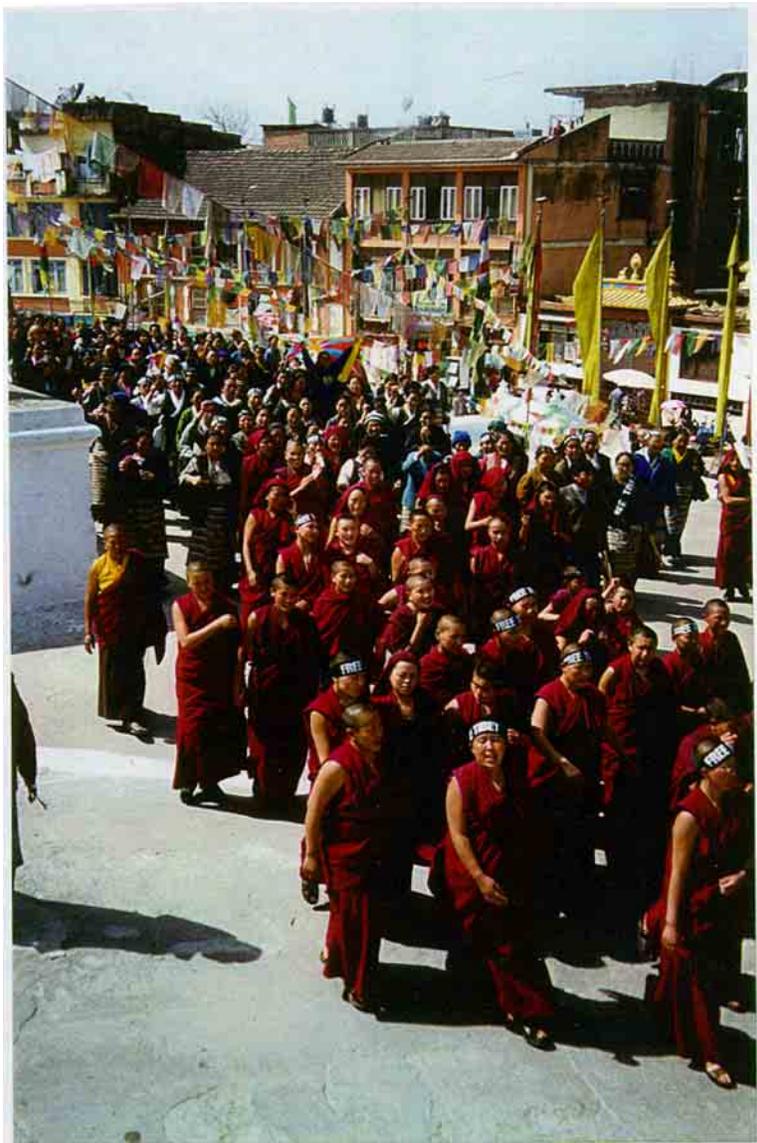
By Samdong Rinpoche's accounts, depending on one's perspective, the Khampa guerrilla resistance against Chinese occupation in defense of the country of Tibet and of its Buddhist heritage would not have been a big Buddhist sin. If one saw the 17-Point Agreement as a type of compromise, and the violation of that compromise as an automatic propulsion of the conflict into the second and third stages the Buddha lays out, then it would have been a relatively righteous battle. If, however, as the Dalai Lama might contend, the avenues of dialogue, compromise and negotiation had not yet been closed, than the war was premature and the sin involved was not nearly as muted.

What about the protests of today? There is a mix of violent and nonviolent approaches. On the one hand, there are large, peaceful protests happening in all major Indian, Nepali, European and American cities, led by Tibetan refugees and their supporters. Small percentages of agricultural and sales income from India's Tibetan Refugee Camps are given to local Tibetan Freedom Organizations, which write letters, stage hunger strikes, compose petitions and organize marches. On the other hand, the emotion and frustrations Tibetans feel toward being refugees can cause some protests to enter the realm of violence. A perfect example is this year's Tibetan Uprising Day protest in Kathmandu, Nepal on March 10th.

I was in Dharamsala at the time, but heard all about it and will use fellow student Mike McPhate's photographs to illustrate the story. It started as a peaceful protest around the Boudha Stupa. Tibetans gathered in large numbers, wearing "Free Tibet" headbands and shouting slogans. There was a lot of energy, but it was contained. Then, some of the chant leaders got the idea of marching to the Chinese Embassy. It was a logical enough idea, but not possible in Nepal. Nepal receives aid from China, and to prevent offending China, the Nepalese Government has banned confrontational protest against the Chinese occupation of Tibet. Marching to the Chinese Embassy was not within these legal boundaries. Therefore, police lined the entrances of Boudha Stupa to prevent such a demonstration from taking place.

Some of the monks leading the protests asked police to let them out of the Stupa so they could march down Boudha road. The police refused, and efforts to calm the monks down were unsuccessful. The monks charged and the cops started swinging their sticks. The Tibetan protestors began to throw rocks and bricks at the police and a full-

scale riot broke out. Tear gas was sprayed, heads were bloodied, and a peaceful protest turned into an embarrassment for the Tibetan community. A young child was near death after getting hit in the head with a flying brick. The relationship between the Nepalese government and the Tibetan exile community in Nepal considerably worsened. By all accounts, nothing good came out of the violent transformation of the protest, but it was still a fascinating development. Photographs of the unfolding riot follow.



The demonstration starts peacefully, although the Stupa area is very crowded and the energy-level is high.



Lay people shout slogans and get fiery for Tibetan freedom



Nuns get animated in a rare chance to vent frustration.



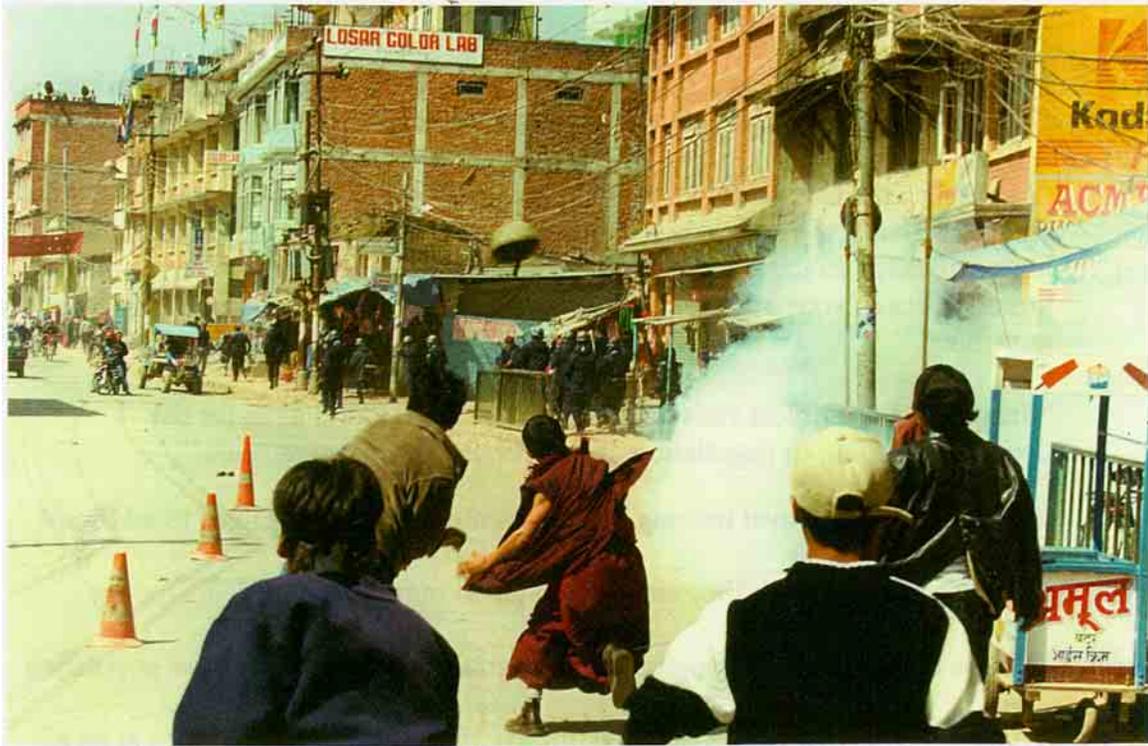
Monks demand to march to the Chinese Embassy.



A confrontation turns into a fight and police swing their sticks.



A monk tries to overpower a policeman



A full scale riot breaks out on the normally peaceful streets of Boudha.

The relationship between Nepal and the Tibetan refugees is very interesting. Nepali police who catch them sneaking in through the northern border shoot at them and arrest them. The Dalai Lama and other members of the Tibetan Government in Exile are forbidden to enter Nepal. Still, Nepal houses a large Tibetan community and maintaining good relations with the government is very important for the Tibetan refugees as a whole. The fact that many of the monks threw bricks shows a fundamental lack of discipline and understanding of how effective nonviolent resistance is carried out. John Ackerly writes to the Tibetan Review,

“King and Gandhi continually created situations where violence was a predictable and inevitable result. Yet their confrontational strategies resulted in violence not by them, but against them by the police. In this way violence became an integral part of many nonviolent campaigns. In this year’s March 10th statement, the Dalai

Lama commented that it is indeed a sad reflection of the state of the world that violence seems to be required for the international community to pay attention.

“One of Gandhi and King’s most valuable lessons is that violence used against you can be much more effective in promoting change than violence used by you.

“As soon as the new uprisings in Tibet are perceived as using terrorist or overtly violent methods, the uprisings will be betrayed and crushed, domestically and internationally. In this context, nonviolence means consistently rejecting the brutal tactics of your opponent and ensuring that your own tactics remain nonviolent.

“Imaginative nonviolent resistance will cultivate the moral basis for the oppressor, leading to negotiations, compromise and improvements.”⁷⁶

Tibetans need continued training in nonviolent techniques and need to add some discipline to their approaches if they are to continue to pursue a nonviolent strategy against Chinese occupation. Although there is a certain sector of the Tibetan population who entertain thoughts of a violent solution, loyalty to the Dalai Lama remains at an all-time high. He is certainly the kingpin in the movement and without him the idea of Tibetan freedom collapses altogether.

However, it has been forty-one years since the Dalai Lama first started working to liberate his country from Chinese occupation, and some inside of Tibet are tired of waiting. An organization in Tibet called the Lion-Tiger Youth Association, writes in their literature:

“The world should not be surprised or shocked if we resort to inhumane methods in the course of our struggle to regain freedom, which may even turn Tibet and China into a pool of blood once more. We know it is against our religion and beliefs, but we are not afraid of doing this. Our main aim is to drive the Chinese from Tibet by any means. Our leader, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, will never authorize us to carry out inhumane acts, but we have no option. Our patience has been taken as a sign of weakness. The Chinese are bent on stamping out our identity, but the world does not seem in the least bothered. Our nonviolent methods have been taken as a sign of weakness. We are determined to gain our freedom and the recent UN vote clearly shows us that without bloodshed, sabotage and aggressive acts, we will not gain public sympathy and support...

Therefore, if no action is taken against the Chinese promptly by the U.N., we will not hesitate to go ahead with modern destructive measures.”

Although direct political support is lacking on a governmental level, the general public in many Western countries has become at least partially aware of the Tibetan issue, and Tibetan Freedom Organizations have sprung up everywhere. I recently got a ride from a man in rural Maryland who taxis hikers to sections of the Appalachian Trail. He was in his mid-eighties and hadn't been out of his backwoods region since World War II. Still, as I mentioned to him that I had studied Tibetan culture, he broke into a long rant about how Tibetans should get their country back and how much the refugees must be suffering and what a great man the Dalai Lama was. I was truly astounded that the Tibetan cause had seeped so deeply into the West, that even in the most rural parts of America people were aware.

My local newspaper thoroughly covers the Tibetan issue, and even had an article on the occasion of the Karmapa's birthday. It is quite obvious from talking to people, however, that American people really don't have much say in their governmental proceedings. I have not met a single American aware of the Tibetan issue who was not in favor of Tibetan autonomy. Yet, due to the complex political and economic relationship between the U.S. and Chinese Governments, putting real pressure on China to bring about a solution in Tibet doesn't seem likely in the near future. Still, many Tibetan refugees swear that “the great land of America will help to free Tibet.”

What does the future hold for Tibet? Padmasambhava, who introduced Buddhism to Tibet in the eighth century, prophesized that in the Year of the Ox (1949), the dragon (Chinese) would come like a horse (militarily invade) and Buddhism would diminish in the East and gradually flourish in the West. Chatal Rinpoche left Tibet for India in 1958

without any harassment at all by Chinese authorities. He believed in one of Padmasambhava's prophecies that warned of the 1959 revolt. So, it appears that Padmasambhava's predictions are coming true. Tibetan Buddhism is flourishing in the West. Many high lamas are either living or traveling in Europe and America, trying to firmly implant Tibetan Buddhism outside of Tibet and strengthen Tibetan exile communities.

From conducting this research, I did not feel any genuine optimism from Tibetans about regaining Tibetan independence, or even autonomy under Chinese dominion. My stance is that helping to manifest Padmasambhava's prophesy by working to strengthen Tibetan culture and religion in exile is really all that can be done. Sporadic violence is not going to help. The posters in most Tibetan houses that say "Tibet—Zone of Peace" below the Dalai Lama's smiling face, rainbows and snow mountains, provide a nice idea, but not a realistic outcome.

Geopolitical forces are largely beyond the control of even the most dedicated activist. So, I see the awareness and appreciation of Tibetan culture in the West as a very positive development and the firm Communist control over Tibet as a reality that should be sadly accepted. Energies funneled into the black hole of regaining Tibetan independence by Westerners would be more useful if applied to the preservation of Tibetan culture and religion. That is what I took away from this research, and what I feel many Tibetans have begun to realize. In a July, 2000 speech given by the Dalai Lama to a crowd of thousands at The National Mall in Washington D.C., the message of love and kindness dominated and no references were made to the Chinese occupation.

Still, the Tibetans provide a wonderful example of how a nonviolent and peaceful approach will gain you worldwide appreciation. The sad fact that very few governments take their cause seriously is not a result of the emphasis placed on nonviolence, but a geopolitical reality that goes beyond the issue of what approach they are taking. Violence used against the Chinese will not cause the world to take their issue more seriously. It will only harm the Tibetan reputation and diminish the profound influence their leader gives today's violent era. May the Dalai Lama's message be applied, the Tibetan culture continue to thrive in exile and peace reign on earth.



The Tibetan Flag

Conclusion

This has been a wonderful experience and, I hope, a mostly successful first attempt at composing a research project. I am very grateful for the opportunity and for the kindness of the two-dozen or so people I interviewed and the countless others I met who helped me every step of the way. Conducting this fieldwork project taught me that experiential education is much more valuable than hearing about other cultures from a Caucasian lecturer or a book. It was a tremendous learning experience and I hope the research that I did is in some way useful to those who read it.

Tibetans are fascinating people and I believe that by learning their language, living with them, experiencing and asking about their culture, I have been able to get a small glimpse into how they view nonviolence. I hope that others will pursue their interests in studying where their heart lies as I have attempted here. Fusing my interests of animal rights, Buddhism and political activism into one fieldwork project was not easy, but as a result I have learned more than I ever thought possible about the topic of “Nonviolence in Tibetan Culture.”

Compassion and kindness are practical virtues that can have immediate effects on all levels of human, environmental and spiritual interactions. I urge all people to pursue a lifestyle of nonviolence in order to obtain the ultimate levels of joy and understanding. May Tibetan Buddhism prosper, the Dalai Lama live a long and healthy life, and the world realize the virtues of kindness. May all living beings, through the truths they find, reside in peace and happiness.

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