

A. TOM GRUNFELD

The Advantages and Perils of Globalization: The Case of Tibet

INTRODUCTION

A 2001 study conducted by Leiden University and the Washington DC-based Institute for International Mediation and Conflict Resolution identified 126 high-intensity conflicts (defined as large-scale armed conflicts causing more than 1000 deaths) from mid-1999 to mid-2000, 78 low intensity conflicts (100–1000 deaths) and 178 violent political conflicts (less than 100 deaths) (Bob 2002). Yet, except for – at best – a fleeting newspaper account, only a handful ever caught the world’s attention.

Historically an astonishing small number of insurgencies gained much notoriety and, even less, ultimately succeeded. Most were largely forgotten by all but the most diligent scholars and, of course, the participants and victims.

This lack of attention raises two interesting questions: why do some groups manage to gain international sympathy, publicity, access to opinion makers and politicians, and funding when so many others remain relatively obscure regardless of the righteousness of their causes and does international recognition help these groups achieve their goals?

Why was the struggle for East Timorese independence, to take but one obvious example, so well known and documented when similar undertakings in other parts of Indonesia (Aceh, the Moluccas and Irian Jaya come quickly to mind) remain largely invisible to the world community? Who succeeds in this “[...] harsh, Darwinian marketplace where legions of desperate groups vie for scarce attention, sympathy and money?” (Bob 2001:321)

Undoubtedly, the single most important element in the globalization of conflicts has been technology. The advent of cell phones, e-mail, the world-wide web, inexpensive and comprehensive air travel and instant media access have made global transportation, communications, international conferencing and visits to the conflict sites themselves easier than ever and, as a consequence, have transformed international political and social relations by breaking down geographic, cultural and political barriers (Kluver). Whether these developments have led to a

greater measure of success for political struggles is open to question but what we can be sure of is that more of these campaigns than ever before have made appearances in the world's media.

While violence will guarantee publicity and keep a cause in the public eye, it is not a very useful long-term strategy and few groups are willing to go that far. For non-violent (or semi-violent) groups the vehicle to recognition is often an international Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). NGOs created by the activists can render international legitimacy while established NGOs can provide public relations and organizational skills, connections to people who can generate interest and, especially, money; for it is money, above all else, that is the ineluctable component for publicity, media events, foreign lobbying trips, and mass campaigns.¹

The successes of a handful of social and political movements in using international support to either help achieve victory (the anti-apartheid movement, East Timor) or, at the very least, achieve a very high profile (Tibetan independence, Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico) have spurred others to try and replicate these endeavors. To that end some organizations have decided to become proactive in their pursuit of wider recognition for lesser known movements.

For example, the Hague-based Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), which champions several dozen indigenous peoples struggling for recognition and varying forms of sovereignty from native Hawaiians in the U.S. to Hungarians in Romania to the Ogoni in Nigeria, holds intensive week-long media and diplomacy training sessions replete with mock media interviews and role playing. The UNPO was established in 1991 by, among others, Michael van Walt van Praag and Lodi G. Gyari; both of whom had extensive experience marketing the Tibetan exile struggle for independence (Bob 2001).²

The key to a successful media campaign – whether it is intended to sell toothpaste or an insurgency – is marketing. As far as public relations goes, “marketing trumps justice.” Sadly, the righteousness of a cause seems to be of little import. Just look at the many famines that occur regularly without adequate response until – and if – the international media and NGOs become involved. One crucial caveat about marketing a political cause. Unlike a commercial product, marketing success is not the ultimate goal. Activists are not interested in acquiring personal fortunes or market share but solely to use marketing as a means to achieving their goals.

Marketing of a political cause requires some necessary ingredients to be successful: 1. a charismatic leader who can speak a western language, preferably

¹ There is a study to be done of national NGOs and their activities on behalf of local political movements. My case study, however, addresses international NGOs only.

² See further <http://www.unpo.org/>.

English (“major international NGOs,” observes one scholar of this phenomenon, “often look for a figure who neatly embodies their own ideals, meets the pragmatic requirements of a ‘test case,’ or fulfills romantic Western notions of rebellion – in short, a leader who seems to mirror their own central values.” (Bob 2002), 2. an easily understood and compelling narrative, 3. the demonization of one’s opponent, 4. unity among the people engaged in the struggle, and 5. international legitimacy.

No conflict has been as successful at this marketing strategy as the struggle of the Dalai Lama and his fellow Tibetan exiles for Tibetan independence. Even the most widely recognized conflicts such as East Timor, Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Palestine, etc. have not been able to generate the support and positive media attention that the Tibetans have realized. Their experience in achieving world-wide recognition and acclaim – even if they have not, and probably will not, succeed in achieving independence – will likely be a model to emulate for many years to come.

SOME TIBETAN HISTORY

Tibetans were in a unique position in that their history allowed for an easily constructed highly favorable narrative. Western fantasies about Tibet began as early as the 18th century when, in the midst of European exploration and colonization of the world, a few remote corners of the globe were spared European conquest and no inaccessible part of the world conjured up as much fantasy and mystery than did Tibet. The more isolated it seemed, the more cachet and intrigue it incurred³ and the more attempts were made to breach its defenses. Missionaries, diplomats, spies, adventurers and the spiritually inclined routinely attempted the journey and just as routinely failed.⁴ Geographic hurdles, the lack of colonization, Tibet’s peripheral status politically and economically and political constraints all kept Westerners out and created the mystique about Tibet that remains to this day. It is important to note that it was only Westerners who were barred; Asians frequented Tibet’s monasteries and bazaars in large numbers including merchants and pilgrims from western China, Mongolia, from northern India, Nepal and even as far away as Russia.

The Tibet of the Western imagination is, according to Orville Schell (2000:243), “the most powerful utopian myth of a largely dystopian century,”

³ “There was, indeed, something seductively perverse about the Promethean and very Western impulse to trespass where not welcomed.” (Schell 2000:148) After the British/Indian military reached Lhasa in 1904, the Indian Viceroy, Lord Curzon, wrote Sven Hedin, the explorer who had repeatedly failed to reach the fabled city, “I am almost ashamed of having destroyed the virginity of the bride to whom you aspired.” (Bishop 1993:36)

⁴ For a brief description of many of these hardy individuals see Schell 2000:1–40 or Meyer/Brysac 1999.

and, indeed, according to Laurie Hovell McMillan (2001:X), “[...] a dream from which the English-speaking West has not entirely awoken [...]”⁵ In the latter part of the nineteenth, and through the first half of the twentieth century, it was British diplomats and colonial officials who were most interested in Tibet for geopolitical reasons and their constructs of Tibet as a modern independent nation-state had considerable impact on the Western popular mind (McKay 1997). However, Tibet had a much larger impact at the time in the spiritual realm, leading to, in the words of Buddhist scholar Agehananda Bharati, a form of “pseudo-Orientalia” (Bharati 1974). Sometimes populizers of Tibetan Buddhism, such as Alexandra David-Neel (Foster et al. 1998), were genuinely interested and devoted to the religion but many were outright frauds such as Madame Blavatsky and Lobsang Rampa.⁶

The huge popularity of James Hilton’s *Lost Horizon*, the tale of an idyllic Western society utilizing secret Eastern knowledge secreted deep in the Himalayan mountains became a bestselling novel in the midst of the world-wide economic depression and its further popularization as a Frank Capra-directed Hollywood film played no small measure in the fantasization of a mythic place called Tibet. The arrival of Chinese troops on Tibet’s borders in May 1950 produced little interest in the West. The British officials had left when India gained independence in 1947 and to the spiritualists, so caught up in their fascination of Tibetan Buddhism, the fate of the land and the people were of little interest. Tibet was obscure and irrelevant and it became even more so when the Korean War broke out only weeks later drawing the world’s attention from smaller conflicts.

The government of the Dalai Lama tried to win diplomatic support for his efforts to maintain Tibet’s independence through talks with Indian, American and British diplomatic officials but there was no attempt at eliciting public opinion. Tibet, having cut itself off from the ways of the world, had no knowledge of what was required to promote their cause (Goldstein 1989). Little changed in that regard even after the abortive revolt in Lhasa in March 1959 and the flight of

⁵ For a selection of early American views about Tibet from *The New York Times*, see Miller 1988.

⁶ Rampa, an Irish blue-collar worker named Cyril Hoskins who moved to Toronto and died in 1981, fashioned himself a Tibetan monk although he never set foot in the place and his portrayals of Tibet are figments of his fertile imagination mixed with information from books he must have read. Nevertheless, his *The Third Eye* sold 300,000 copies in the first 18 months after its 1956 publication and went through 9 paperback printings in the UK in just 2 years (Lopez 1998a:97). It not only remains in print today but is an astonishing 10,338 on www.amazon.com as of September 2005. In total, Rampa currently has 16 books in print in English as well several in Spanish and French. All told there are about 15 million copies of Rampa’s books in print.

the Dalai Lama and tens of thousands of Tibetans into exile to India, Nepal and Bhutan. In the United States, the American Emergency Committee for Tibetan Refugees and, in the UK, the Tibet Society and Relief Fund of the UK, were established and although they had been constituted partly out of public concern for the plight of the Tibetans, in fact both were connected to, and covertly supported by, their respective governments (Grunfeld 1996:195–196).

During the 1960s the lack of interest in the plight of the exiled Tibetans continued and no nation ever recognized the Dalai Lama's exile administration. But at the time these were secondary matters as the Dalai Lama had his hands full settling refugees in their new homes and fighting a guerrilla war inside Tibet; although, officially, the Dalai Lama did not condone violence. Besides, covert support from the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) led Tibetans to assume that the world's most powerful country would allow them to achieve their objective of independence. The CIA had no such intention seeing the Tibetans as merely useful allies in their on-going Cold War harassment of the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) (Grunfeld 2003).

There was so little public interest in Tibet at that time that even appeals on human rights grounds went unheeded. When, in 1977, an American journalist gathered evidence from imprisoned Tibetan guerrillas in Nepal, including 300 pages of notes smuggled out of a Nepali prison, he could not arouse any interest in their plight from Amnesty International, the Jimmy Carter administration in the U.S., Chogyam Trungpa (the most prominent Tibetan Buddhist teacher in the US at the time), nor several anti-Chinese U.S. Senators (Long 1981).

Living in exile with a large number of his countrymen placed the Dalai Lama in a unique and complicated situation. In Lhasa he was the undisputed political leader of the government of central Tibet and the spiritual leader of the Gelugpa sect of Tibetan Buddhism. In exile he was called upon to expand his role as political leader of the entire refugee community, a community that included Tibetans from many regions including areas (Amdo and Kham) which had traditionally not recognized him as their political leader. In addition to having to overcome deep regional differences among the exiles, he also had to overcome religious differences between the various schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Monastic communities brought not only monks and their teachings into exile but also their monastic politics (Singer 2003; Gearing 2003). Today, almost half a century since coming into exile, these regional and religious differences still eat away at the unity of the 130,000–140,000 strong Tibetan exile community. The need for unity is crucial, not only for their marketing strategy, but, more importantly, to show a united opposition to Chinese rule in Tibet.

It's difficult to determine the nature of nationalist feelings among Tibetans prior to 1950. Tibetans had many ways of distinguishing themselves from non-Tibet-

ans of course; a common religion above all else, history, language, dress, jokes, social conventions, and the eating of tsampa (a high altitude barley indigenous to Tibet) – all perceived affinities which created a form of nationalism (Manz 2003). Political loyalties tended to be regional and spiritual loyalties were reserved for the nearest monastery although the Dalai Lama was accepted by all Tibetans as their most important spiritual leader.

Although there were attempts by the 13th Dalai Lama to create a modern conception of nationalism in the early decades of the 20th century, these efforts – a national flag, anthem, modern army, color guard, military bands, postage stamps, etc – did not penetrate very deep into the population (Klieger 1992:72–78).

But now in exile a modern sense of identity had to be created if the Tibetans were to be noticed in a world of nation-states so the Dalai Lama established a Western style “government” replete with a westernized constitution, a governmental bureaucracy, a parliament, “embassies” around the world, a judicial system, a security apparatus and a publications operation. His goal was to “invent [a] tradition of secular nationalism” (Ibid.:65).⁷ This effort included the official adoption of a national flag, the creation of a national day, national holidays (such as the Dalai Lama’s birthday), having all school children begin their day by singing a prayer song composed by the Dalai Lama, placing his photo in every classroom, teaching children to attribute all successes to the Dalai Lama as well as constructing a history of pre–1950 Tibet as an “idealized [...] spiritual Shangri-la.” All these activities have, for the first time, created a population of highly nationalistic Tibetans committed to independence (McLagan 1996:216).

One additional, and vital, aspect to the creation of a new form of Tibetan nationalism was the Dalai Lama’s commitment to preserve Tibetan culture in the fear that Chinese rule in Tibet would either irrevocably alter, or worse eradicate, it altogether. He rebuilt monasteries in exile, established the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, the Tibetan Medical Institute and the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts.

By the late 1960s the inability of the Tibetan rebels to mount an insurgency inside Tibet and the need for CIA personnel in the ever-expanding war in Southeast Asia led to the end of the U.S.-supported covert war. Soon after, President Richard Nixon, and his foreign policy advisor Henry Kissinger, fashioned a new relationship with the PRC terminating hostilities and all remaining covert operations targeted at China.

The Tibetan exiles needed a new plan for dealing with Beijing and this would be decided by events far beyond their control – or even imagination. In China, a

⁷ McLagan (1996:109) calls this a “diaspora nationalism”.

split in the leadership emerged culminating in the mysterious death of Lin Biao, Mao Zedong's heir apparent. Lin's death led to changes in government policies throughout the mainland, including Tibet. In 1976 Mao Zedong died, followed, soon after, by the arrest of a leadership group dubbed "the gang of four" and government policies were further moderated. A series of events were now set in motion which almost led to a compromise solution to the Tibetan issue.

China publicly admitted past policies to have been harmful, tourism was permitted, Tibetans were appointed to positions with at least a modicum of power and refugees were permitted to visit families in Tibet. In February 1978, the Panchen Lama, second only to the Dalai Lama in the Tibetan Buddhist hierarchy, was released from 14 years of house arrest and prison and in the 1980s became a public political champion of preserving Tibetan culture, especially religious freedom and the promotion of the Tibetan language. In December 1978, through the intervention of one of his older brothers, Gyalo Thondup, the Dalai Lama began a series of indirect negotiations with officials in Beijing. These talks resulted in an agreement to send several Tibetan-exile investigative delegations to Tibet.

The Dalai Lama responded positively to these changes and began to speak less of his hopes for achieving Tibetan independence and more about the economic well-being of Tibetans; "if the six million Tibetans in Tibet are really happy and prosperous as never before," he declared in 1978, "there is no reason for us to argue otherwise" (His Holiness the Dalai Lama 1982:51).

The talks were not universally welcomed in the Tibetan exile community, in fact there were demonstrations against them when they were first revealed. The propagating of Tibetan nationalism among the exiles had created illusions about the Chinese as being so evil that they were only capable of inducing destruction. The idea that they may be reasonable came as quite a shock. In 1980 Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leader Hu Yaobang traveled to Tibet and was stunned by how bad conditions were (allegedly telling CCP officials that Chinese rule was "colonial" in nature) and immediately ordered drastic changes. These changes (only partially implemented) and the acknowledgment that there were serious problems in Tibet, continued to set a climate for compromise.

Disappointingly though, in the second half of the 1980s, the talks began to stall. This presented a dilemma to the Dalai Lama who, until now, had exerted little energy in winning wide public and governmental support around the world calculating that as long as he could be at the table with Beijing there was no need for the intervention of a third force. However, if Beijing walked away from the table, how was the Dalai Lama to get them back? The answer was to promote the Tibetan cause in the hope of getting international (read, American) pressure to cajole the Chinese back to the table. So the decision was made to internationalize the Tibetan struggle.

THE INTERNALIZATION OF THE TIBETAN STRUGGLE

To that end, meetings of Tibet-supporters were held around the world and a plan was hatched to create what, colloquially, came to be known as the Tibet Lobby. Their objectives: internationalize the Tibet issue by recruiting lobbying and public relations firms, get media attention, generate popular support on moral grounds (independence, religious freedom, human rights and environmental issues – a subject never raised in exile publications prior to 1985) and hope that public pressure generated by these activities would force governments to pressure Beijing to negotiate with the Dalai Lama. In other words, to market the struggle internationally.

Unbeknownst to the Tibetan exiles this was an opportune time to launch such a campaign for a number of events occurred, almost simultaneously, in harmony with each other, to produce the most successful marketing of a political movement in history.

The Tibetan diaspora of 1959 had rekindled a wave of interest in all things spiritually Tibetan. As we have seen Lobsang Rampa became a best-selling author. The 1927 edition of W. Y. Evans-Wentz's, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* was adopted by the proponents of the drug LSD as an essential guide to understanding life while the academic study of Tibetan Buddhism was launched as exiled Tibetan Buddhist monks began arriving on American shores and the Library of Congress began the serious collection of Tibetan religious texts.

So Westerners, especially Americans fueled by their New Age dispositions to the spiritual bazaars of the day, were prepared to accept images of a benign, idyllic society practicing secret rituals based on occult knowledge ruled by multitudes of lamas guaranteeing the purity of the culture. This inclination made weaving an advantageous narrative that was easily understood and emotionally appealing remarkable easy since it fit so neatly into the images of an imaginary "Tibet" which were already figments of the Western imagination. To wit: Tibetans were a singularly happy, non-violent people devoted exclusively to the practice of Buddhism living in peaceful isolation in a remote and ecologically conscious land ruled by a string of enlightened, and always benevolent, god-kings, the Dalai Lamas. This peaceful Shangri-la was shattered with the arrival of the forces of evil, the godless Chinese, who were intent on destroying Tibetan culture and religion while attempting to commit genocide.⁸

So with a concerted effort to forge unity among the Tibetan exiles, the availability of a charismatic, English-speaking leader and an affirmative narrative in

⁸ "This is a compelling story, an enticing blend of the exotic, the spiritual, and the political. But it is a fantasy, ultimately detrimental to the cause of Tibetan independence." (Lopez 1998b)

place, the Chinese government was about to deliver a fourth component of the marketing strategy, its own demonization.

In June 1989 the Chinese government brutally suppressed demonstrating students and workers in Tian'anmen Square. These shocking events – seen live around the world as foreign journalists in large numbers witnessed them – led to a radical change in the world's view of China.

Having been seen in only the most positive light from the early 1970s when it began to slowly “open” itself to the world, China now came to be portrayed as villainous. The shock at Beijing's actions led directly to the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Dalai Lama, making him an international celebrity. This attitudinal change towards China made the glorification of Tibet that much easier (Peterson 1997).

Inside Tibet resentment against Chinese rule had been growing but kept hidden for justifiable fears of retaliation. However, in September 1987, while the Dalai Lama was proposing a compromise plan for Tibet in front of the U.S. Congress, demonstrations, the first in almost three decades, broke out in Lhasa leading to bloodshed. There is no proof that these events were instigated from outside of Tibet and Tibetan animosity over Chinese rule was real enough. However, news of the Dalai Lama's appearance in the U.S. Congress was available through the Voice of America and the BBC as well as from Chinese radio's denunciation of his activities. At the same time leaflets with the Dalai Lama's picture were clandestinely distributed in Lhasa. It seems safe to say that the Tibetan demonstrators were emboldened by the knowledge that the Dalai Lama was in Washington DC which to many, if not all, meant U.S. support for the Dalai Lama and, perhaps, even for Tibetan independence.

These demonstrations were not only significant in that they were the first in a long time but more to the point that they were witnessed and documented by foreigners (as were the events in Tian'anmen Square). The significance becomes evident when we look at a similar situation which had a very different outcome. In August 1988, a year before the events in Tian'anmen Square, 200,000 Burmese, mostly student and workers but monks as well, peacefully demonstrated against their dictatorial government. They were met with a barrage of gunfire from army units and deaths were estimated at anywhere from 3 – 10,000. Eight thousand students fled the country into exile. The circumstances surrounding these events are strikingly similar to the events in Beijing a year later except the number of deaths, injuries and exiles is far higher. Nevertheless, because not a single Western journalist was present, these developments were barely noticed outside the very small circle of those interested in Burmese affairs and since the Burmese dissidents lacked international recognition they, consequently, lacked international legitimacy.

In Lhasa, the foreigners' accounts galvanized the exile community and generated support among non-Tibetans. It helped immensely that these foreigners were professionals who had access to media outlets and influential institutions and that they were not only observers (as were the journalists in Tian'anmen Square) but also participants. Some foreigners gave medical assistance to the wounded, some gathered information to be taken out of the country, some banded together to support the demonstrators, etc (McLagan 1998:324). Indeed, some went on to establish NGOs in Washington and London and remain active in the Tibetan independence struggle to this day.

So all the elements for a successful marketing plan were in place: charismatic leader, easily understood narrative, unity among the refugees, international legitimacy and the demonization of the opponent. The plan for internationalization was straightforward: 1. the Dalai Lama would travel more and make the trips openly political, 2. support groups would be established around the world, especially in the United States, to lobby their governments on the Dalai Lama's behalf, 3. members of parliaments of major nations would be recruited with the eventual goal being official support from the governments of these nations, 4. peaceful civil disobedience inside Tibet would be encouraged, and 5. the Dalai Lama would continue to plead for talks offering flexible terms to Beijing.

Meanwhile, continued unrest inside Tibet had revitalized a policy debate in Beijing between moderates who wanted a compromise and the return of the Dalai Lama and hard liners who were just as happy breaking off ties to him and waiting for him to die. This latter group also argued for less freedoms for the traditional Tibetan way of life and greater efforts at assimilation.

Evidence of this political struggle could be read in the Chinese media. "We must deal resolute, accurate and rapid blows against the serious crimes of a small number of separatists," read an editorial in *Xizang Ribao* (Tibet Daily), on 13 March 1988, "[...] [they] are the cause of this earthquake and a cancer cell in society." The head of the Public Security apparatus, Qiao Shi, called for "the government [to] adopt a policy of merciless repression toward all rebels".

"There are people who think it necessary to strike down the lamas and destroy the monasteries," the Panchen Lama said of the hard liners, "We must not fall back to the errors of the past [...] I must seriously warn against people who have the idea of 'dealing merciless blows at the lamas and closing all the temples.'" Premier Zhao Ziyang was quoted as saying that while some of the unrest may be due to "splittists in foreign countries" there is the problem of "long-standing leftist policies in Tibet [...] [for example] a serious degree of sectarianism existed among Tibetan leaders. The work of addressing the wrongs was advanced very slowly. The Tibetan people's autonomous rights, the Tibetan language and the

customs and habits of this nationality were neglected and such mistakes were not properly and quickly corrected.”⁹

The Panchen Lama died suddenly in January 1989 and the Dalai Lama was invited to funerary ceremonies in Beijing even though he had not been in China for 30 years. We believe he was told informally that there would also be the opportunity to discuss political issues with high-level officials. It seemed the opening he was looking for direct talks with the Chinese leadership. But he and his advisors were cautious; the international campaign seemed to be going well, they believed, and would give them greater leverage if he went later when the support was greater. How would the Dalai Lama be treated in Beijing? Would he be permitted to visit Lhasa? So, in the end, he didn't go and some observers believe it was the gravest error of his political life.¹⁰

The 1980s had seen a sizable increase in the use of the Tibetan language, the rebuilding of religious buildings (in some regions there are now more than there were before 1951) and a general resurgence of Tibetan culture. Nevertheless, the inability of the moderates to produce the Dalai Lama and manage a deal, the continuing public protests in Tibet itself, the escalating China-bashing around the world all strengthened the hand of the hard liners who won the policy battle in Beijing. In March 1989 after yet another demonstration which resulted in more brutal Chinese suppression, martial law was declared in Tibet and was to last until May 1990.

Talks with China had now stopped altogether with both sides blaming each other for the breakdown. The Dalai Lama continued to travel extensively and the Tibet Lobby he created continued to grow expeditiously implementing its marketing and media strategy and utilizing public relations and influential lobbying firms in Washington DC which opened the doors to Congress and opinion makers in the American capital. As one public relations consultant observed: There is “difference between publicity and media strategy. Publicity is insignificant and useful only so far as it sells out events [whereas] a media strategy is meant to help an organization or movement to develop long-term relationships with then press which in turn can be used to further ongoing objectives.” (McLagan 1996:508)

⁹ Quoted from British Broadcasting Corporation, Summary of World Broadcasts [BBC-SWB], Part III, Far East, 16 March 1988 the South China Morning Post, 20 July 1988; Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS)-CHI-88-060, 29 March 1988; FBIS-CHI-88-066, 6 April 1988. The sudden and unexpected death of the Panchen Lama at the age of 50 in Shigatse in January 1989 removed from the scene an important player who could have contributed greatly to the solution of the Tibet problem. See Grunfeld 1988; SWB, Part III, Far East, FE/0169 - B2/1, 4 June 1988 *Ming Pao*, 2 June 1988. For an excellent description of events inside Tibet during the 1980s see Tseten 1992.

¹⁰ For an argument that it was not a major political error see Tashi/Tseten 2004. This is the best, and most thorough, history of the negotiations to date.

The world-wide media – newspapers, magazines, television, radio – have all played their unwitting part in this strategy by allowing only the voices of the Tibetan exile community to be heard. The Chinese voice is quickly dismissed as irrelevant but never does one hear the voices of Tibetans inside Tibet or China itself. There are many Tibetans in Beijing and Shanghai and Qinghai Province where foreign journalists can easily travel to, but the narrative of the exiled community is so deeply ingrained as the only acceptable one that no effort is made to see if there are others.

Most of the support groups were established after 1987. In 1990 the First International Contact Conference of Tibet Supporters – 231 supporters from 26 countries – met. In May 2000 Tibet support groups met in Berlin with 300 delegates from 52 countries and they created the International Tibet Support Network which consisted of 349 groups in 70 countries (McLagan 1996:1).¹¹

Meanwhile foreign tourism exploded as the PRC invested millions to promote it; \$215 million on tourist facilities in 1984 alone. The number of foreign visitors went from less than 2000 annually in the early 1980s to 4000 in 1984 to 15,000 in 1985 to 30,000 in 1986 (when they spent some \$40 million) (Xu 1997:1066) to a little over 100,000 in 1999 to 130,000 in 2002 (O’Callaghan 1985; Xinhua News Agency, 11/16/1984; 12/09/1999; 01/09/2003). The Chinese government saw foreign tourism as a source of much needed revenue but also as an antidote to the portrayals of Tibet dominant in the West. When people saw the material gains being made in Tibet and the natural and man-made wonders, Beijing believed, they would be less inclined to support the Dalai Lama’s “splittist” activities. But these hopes were divorced from the reality. Prepared to dislike the Chinese, foreigners arrive in Tibet already inclined to favor the Tibetan exile view. Moreover, given their inclinations to view Tibet as a place frozen in the Middle Ages, modernization, the destruction of the monasteries, the destruction of traditional Tibetan buildings and, most importantly, the negative attitude of most Tibetans towards the Chinese, often results in foreigners leaving Tibet even more inclined to hate Chinese rule than when they arrived.

Tourism and the freedom for Tibetan exiles to visit their homeland has also allowed for the free flow of information in the form of pictures of the Dalai Lama and his chosen Panchen Lama who, it is believed, remains under house arrest, cassette and video tapes of the Dalai Lama, pro-independence literature and anti-Chinese propaganda all of which easily make it across the less than secure frontier.

The success of the internationalization of Tibet can be seen in the immense growth of interest in all matters Tibetan. On the religious side, a 1979 survey found that in the United States there were 55 Tibetan Buddhist teachers/mission-

¹¹ See also <http://www.tibet.org.itsn/index.html>.

aries, 12 universities with Tibetan Buddhist programs and 16 dharma centers. A recent study found 1062 Buddhist teaching centers of one kind or another with an estimated 100,000 American born Buddhists (Kutcher 1982; Van Biema 1997). In 1973, the *Tibet Society Newsletter* listed only 223 members in North America, both academics and others, who were self-identified as having an interest in Tibet. In contrast, Students for Free Tibet began in 1994 with 45 chapters, had grown to 350 chapters by 1997, and to 650 chapters in 35 countries by 2004. Moreover, in recent years they have orchestrated annual Free Tibet! Action Camps to train organizers (Tibet Society 1973; Seager 1999:116–117).¹² The US-Tibet Committee boasts of a membership exceeding 10,000, as does the Tibetan Aid Project, with the International Campaign for Tibet claiming some 40,000.¹³ Whether these claims are accurate or fanciful there can be no doubt that the number of people interested in Tibet, as well as activists engaged in Tibetan related political activities, has gone from a few hundred at most to several tens of thousands in the United States alone.

In addition to support groups, various other types of organizations have sprung up such as the Milarepa Fund founded by musician Adam Yauch, Tibet House in New York City, established by Richard Gere and Robert Thurman in 1987, and four publishers who produce a steady flow of religious and lay texts as well as audio and video tapes to keep the market satiated: the general interest Shambala Publications founded in Berkeley in 1969; Dharma Publishing founded also in Berkeley in 1971, Wisdom Publications connected to the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition and founded in Boston in 1975 and, finally, Snow Lion Publications founded in Ithaca, NY in 1980.

But none of these activities created the stir raised by Hollywood when it discovered Tibet. This relationship began when some movie stars became enamored of the religion, particularly Richard Gere who has taken it upon himself to be the chief promoter of the religion and the Dalai Lama in the United States. Celebrities who have followed Gere into Buddhism, both Tibetan and otherwise include basketball coach Phil Jackson, singers Tina Turner and Melissa Manchester, musical groups such as Nirvana and musician Herbie Hancock, actors Sharon Stone, Goldie Hawn, Harrison Ford, Dennis Quad, and Steven Seagal. Seagal has even been recognized as the reincarnation of a prominent 17th century lama of the Nyingma School raising complaints that he “bought his recognition” (Parker 1997).

This high profile created by the growing American fascination in Buddhism, the political campaigns and the Hollywood spotlight has resulted in Tibet and the

¹² See also <http://www.studentsforafreetibet.org/>.

¹³ Gale's Ready Reference Publications, <http://galenet.gale.com/>. See <http://www.savetibet.org/>.

Dalai Lama becoming a part of the popular culture. “Tibet is hip and Buddhism is trendy,” declared *Newsweek* in 1997, “so Tibetan Buddhism is extra-cool” (Emerson/Power 1997; Fisher 1998). Tibet and Buddhism began popping up all over the popular cultural landscape from American television programs like “The Simpsons” to “Dharma and Greg,” to ads for IBM and Apple Computers which incorporated Buddhist themes, to the Lycos search engine which uses Himalayan Sherpas as “guides.” There is a makeup called Zen Blush and an Om perfume as well as a fruit juice container which says on its label; “Please recycle this bottle. It deserves to be reincarnated too.” And a product called Tibetan Root Beer which purports to contain “gently invigorating cardamom, and coriander in a Tibetan adaptation of Ayurvedic herbs (Van Biema 1997; Lopez 1998a:2).

In 1997 Hollywood released three major motion pictures designed to further the cause of Tibetan independence and further elevate the Dalai Lama to a god-like status in the realm of marketing. “Seven Years in Tibet” was based on the famous book of the same name by Austrian mountaineer and former Nazi Heinrich Harrer. Partially funded by Gere it seemed bound to be a major hit since it starred a current heartthrob, Brad Pitt (Schell 2000; Kennedy 1997). “Kundun”, “[...] a beautifully crafted piece of Dalaidolatry” (French 2003:101), was based on the Dalai Lama’s autobiography and directed by Martin Scorsese.¹⁴ And “Red Corner,” a Richard Gere vehicle, was intended to demonize all Chinese.

There was great hope placed in these films. In conjunction with their release the International Campaign for Tibet launched “Seven Days for Tibet” with 300,000 “action kits” to be handed out at theaters and protests organized in 34 states (Schell 2000:305–306). With all the publicity and all the attention it seemed to excite the imagination of the Tibetan exiles and their supporters. A Tibetan photographer was quoted as saying “Hollywood does have the tools and power and they’re really, in Asia and all over the world, they are considered very powerful and Hollywood can really save Tibet.” Former Tibetan monk and Buddhist scholar Robert Thurman was also hopeful, “So our hope is that these films and Hollywood will accelerate the process by which they will wake up to this misguided policy” (Kennedy 1997). The International Campaign for Tibet’s membership jumped from 2,000 in early 1997 to 16,000 by year’s end. Its Web site went from 5,000 hits a month to 50,000 a week at the Hollywood movies’ peak, and still got 35,000 weekly hits weeks after the movies finished their run (Said 1998).

As it turned out, all three films were flops. “Kundun” cost \$25–\$35 to produce and made only \$6 million in its four month run, “Seven Years in Tibet” cost \$60–\$70 million and returned only \$35 million to its backers while MGM wrote off a \$30 million loss on “Red Corner” (Schell 2000:314, Collins 1997). And while

¹⁴ For an astonishingly level-headed and thoughtful review see Jaehne (without year).

they may have been responsible for recruiting more members into the various NGOs, they had no discernable effect on U.S. policy or the situation in Tibet.

While the films failed to live up to the expectations of the activists they did further embed Tibet and the Dalai Lama in the popular mind; the Dalai Lama was a household name while at the same time he became a large business. His many books – those written by him and those with his name on the cover – had huge sales. His *The Art of Happiness* alone sold 1.2 million copies. A check of www.amazon.com has over 3000 listings for Dalai Lama (Business & Finance 09/25/2003).¹⁵

The Dalai Lama was even asked to be the guest editor of the December 1992/January 1993 issue of *Paris Vogue*, a periodical not previously noted for its interest in serious subjects. He was also on the cover. No one else had been so honored in the 23 year history of the publication as an editorial explained: “we can say that it is because in the midst of fanaticisms, [sic] he is a symbol of tolerance.” (Paris Vogue 1992)

In a more serious vein the U.S. Congress also became enamored of the Tibetans with several prominent members taking Tibet on as a personal cause. As a result Congress passed a number of legislative measures which had Tibet-related clauses added to them referring to it as an “independent country” and “an occupied sovereign country under international law”. It passed legislation granting \$500,000 to Tibetan refugees, providing thirty college scholarships (for \$1,000,000) in the U.S. for Tibetan exile students, prohibited defense goods being exported to China, urged the imposition of trade sanctions against China and began Tibetan language radio broadcasts on the Voice of America in spring 1991. In 1996 Congress authorized the creation of a federally funded Cold War-era, Radio Free Asia, to broadcast Washington’s official version of the news into regions of East Asia where governments were seen as hostile to U.S. interests, including Tibet. In 1997, bowing to public and Congressional pressure, President Bill Clinton created the post of Special Coordinator for Tibetan Affairs. This part-time Department of State position could have no influence over Tibetan affairs and was meant to be nothing more than a political sop to the president’s critics. The appointment is symbolic of official U.S. support for the Tibetan exiles which came about as a direct result of the pressure exerted by the Tibet Lobby: feel-good gestures but no serious policy initiatives which could bring about concrete results nor any change in U.S. policy on the issue.

¹⁵ It’s not only the Dalai Lama who has benefited from this interest in Buddhism. The Paris-based Vietnamese monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, has sold 100,000 hardcover copies of his *Living Buddha, Living Christ* (Van Biema 1997). For a story about financial malfeasance concerning a Dalai Lama extravaganza, see Vanderpool 2005.

Congressional and public pressure led to the Dalai Lama's meetings with members of both houses of Congress and visits to the White House meeting President George H. W. Bush and National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, President Bill Clinton and Vice-President Al Gore, as well as President George W. Bush and Vice-President Dick Cheney. Each time, US officials insisted that the visits were "private," that the Dalai Lama was invited as a spiritual leader and to demonstrate that he has never been formally invited to, nor allowed to sit in, rooms where state visitors are received.

Neither the U.S., nor any other government, has ever recognized the Dalai Lama's self-styled "government-in-exile." The official view is that "[...] the United States Government considers Tibet to be a part of China and does not in any way recognize the Tibetan government in exile that the Dalai Lama claims to head." (Department of State Bulletin 87-2129)¹⁶

The advantages of internationalization are obvious, the risks less so. First, there is Hollywood's famously short attention span. In years past Hollywood personalities have felt as strongly about Marxism, Hinduism, Scientology and Jewish Kabbala as they now do about Buddhism (Parker 1997; Dawson 1998).¹⁷ Tibetans also have to be wary of the uncertainty caused by the "[...] unstable life span of American celebrityhood" (Prothero 1997). As *Newsweek* magazine observed, "in the end, Hollywood's new Tibet chic will tell us more about Hollywood than about Tibet. And when filmdom is done with Tibet, a new season will usher in a new pet cause." (Emerson and Power 1997)

There is also the possibility that the mass marketing of the Dalai Lama could dilute his message and subject him to the same superficiality which is associated with his Hollywood friends. The "exigencies of global politics and celebrity culture" (French 2003:115) could lead to embarrassments such as CNN interviewer Larry King referring to him as a Muslim leader (CNN 12/31/1999). Or an infamous encounter with movie star Sharon Stone at a Hollywood benefit where, barefoot and wearing a feather boa, she introduced the 14th Dalai Lama as "Mr. please, please, please let me back into China" and "the hardest working man in spirituality" (Huffaker 2000).

The messages of the movement can also get confused. In another instance, after a benefit concert in Los Angeles the artists were on the stage with Tibetan monks but all the reporters' questions were for the artists. "Nobody seemed particularly

¹⁶ See also Sciolino 1987. For a more thorough examination of the history of U.S.-Tibet relations see Grunfeld 2005.

¹⁷ Earlier era New Agers, enamored of a different Asian religion, thought the same thing about their newly found faith. In the 1960s and 1970 Shri Guru Maharaji ji was all the rage as his highest official acknowledged, "In the world? About four million spread over 63 countries. It is catching on like wildfire." (Singh 1973)

interested in asking the monks questions about Tibet – and they were the ones most qualified to answer,” commented one journalist (Emerson and Power 1997).

A convergence of interest is evident as Western Tibet groupies have developed a “[...] nostalgia for the already lost secrets of Tibetan Buddhism,” observes Tibetologist Donald Lopez, “and there is a patronizing contempt for the exiled Tibetans as custodians unequal to the task of preserving their own culture without our help. That they were perceived as inadequate caretakers of that culture derives not so much from the difficult times in which they found themselves as from the fact that the culture they were charged to preserve was not of their making, but of ours.” (Lopez 1995:269; see, also, Peter Bishop 2000)

“The Tibetan movement has become a symbol of hope for those promoting a global political culture of non-violence and dialogue,” observes one Tibetan exile, “But the cost of remaining a moral example is too great for a growing number of Tibetans who simply want an end to the atrocities inflicted on their land and people. While the world fawns over romanticized images of a gentle Himalayan utopia, frustration simmers among Tibetans as they are forced to watch the real Tibet die before their eyes.” (Tsering 2000)

Foreign patronage has a price; loss of some independence over the movement – a not uncommon phenomenon for groups that have successfully marketed themselves and find the necessity to conform to the goals of their patrons in order to maintain support. The more dependent they become on wealthy people from the wealthy nations, the more they have to bend to their patron’s wishes (Bob 2002). This may explain why the Dalai Lama is more accessible to foreigners than to Tibetans who must overcome bureaucratic obstacles to see him (Klieger 1992:80).

Foreign patronage can also lead to conflicts. While the Milarepa Fund supports a boycott of Chinese goods, as do some exiled Tibetans, the Dalai Lama opposes such a strategy on political grounds (Fisher 1998). And there is conflict over proselytization as the Dalai Lama has said, “[...] in the West, I do not think it is advisable to follow Buddhism. Changing religions is not like changing professions. Excitement lessens over the years, and soon you are not excited, and then where are you? Homeless inside yourself.” (French 2003:21) Nevertheless the flow of Westerners into the ranks of Buddhism continues to grow. After all, it is not only the political movements but, also the religious community, which needs patronage from foreign donors, tourists and students (Klieger 1992:86, 99).

No one is exempt from the pressure to conform. For his best selling book, *Ethics for the New Millennium*, the Dalai Lama originally wrote: “I am a Buddhist and, for a Buddhist, a relationship between two men is wrong. Some sexual conduct in marriage is also wrong [...] For example using one’s mouth and the other hole.” However, his U.S. publisher thought this might offend readers and at their urging he removed it (French 2003:218).

Successfully marketing means that message has to be effective for the market at which it is aimed. To that end, “Over the years, the Western media’s desire for ‘atrocious stories’ has not diminished; in fact, the demand has grown exponentially. It is now commonplace to point out how images of mass suffering and atrocities are needed to mobilize governments and others into taking action in case of political disasters.” (McLagan 1996:179)¹⁸ In 1988, after a decade of futile attempts, I was finally given permission to visit Tibet and promised freedom to roam at will and the opportunity to interview officials. Prior to leaving the United States I inquired of several publications if they would be interested in any articles I may write based on my trip. *The New York Times Magazine* told me they would be most interested in “Chinese atrocious stories,” and only those stories. Anything else about Tibet was of no interest to them.¹⁹

According to the most prominent Tibetan polemicist, “the national struggle for an independent Tibet has been replaced by a squishy agenda of environmental, pacifistic, spiritual and ‘universal’ concerns that has little or nothing to do with Tibet’s real problems.” (Norbu 1998:21)

CHINA’S RESPONSE

Chinese response has been to publicly declare that its accusers have had no effect on domestic policies towards Tibet; that the West should mind its own business and not interfere with the internal affairs of the PRC. This may not sound plausible to Western ears but resonates inside China with its history of more than a century of foreign exploitation.

Despite its protestations to the contrary, the Tibet Lobby has indeed influenced policies in China. Tibetans and Tibet have a far higher profile than any of the other 55 official designated “ethnic minorities” in China. While there are academic institutions devoted to the study of all the minorities only Tibetans have had think tanks devoted exclusively to them.

Chinese media is satiated with programs concerning Tibet; on television, in movie theaters and frequent articles in the print media. If there is a single theme that ties these media ventures together it is the argument that the lengthy historical record proves Tibet has been a part of China for centuries and the vast majority

¹⁸ “[...] narratives of suffering play an important role in constructing Tibetans as a moral community and as a people.” (McLagan 1996:147)

¹⁹ It is in this light that one has to access the claim that 1.2 million Tibetans have lost their lives since 1950. It is a figure created “in response to demands from foreign supporters of the Tibetan cause” and “needed to impress Western legislators.” When an outside observer was allowed to see the documents upon which this figure was based, he found them largely implausible yet it continues to be cited universally (French 2003:279–281).

of Tibetans are grateful for the material progress they have made since 1950 and only possible under the leadership of the CCP.

One can only attribute all this attention to the activities of the Tibet Lobby. Tibetans are not very numerous in China; in fact, they rank only ninth in terms of population size behind the Zhuang, Manchu, Hui, Miao, Uygur, Yi, Tujia and Mongol minorities. Other minorities, Uygur, Kazak and Mongols, have expressed displeasure at being part of the Chinese state while terrorist activities such as bombs on buses and theaters have occurred in Xinjiang where they are attributed to separatist Uygurs. Yet Tibetans get all the money, publicity and attention.

Present-day Chinese have no legacy of Shangri-la fantasies about Tibet to build on. Since the 1950s official propaganda has portrayed Tibet as backward and unhealthy for Chinese, a feudal land of harsh realities for the majority of Tibetans who had to endure physical torture and considerable other unspeakable horrors. Officials assigned to work there considered it a punishment and frequently left their families home rather than subject them to the harsh conditions they envisioned. In other words, the Chinese had created a fantasy Tibet of their own; an inhospitable place inhabited by an inferior people.

Nevertheless, the recent considerable media attention has led to a fascination with all things Tibetan. The media spotlight, the attainment of disposable income, and the freedom to travel have led to the development of a Tibetan chic. To be sure many Chinese, particularly of an older generation, continue to view Tibetans as inferior, but there is a discernable change as tens of thousands of Chinese now live in Tibet voluntarily. Young Chinese artists flock to Tibet, reminiscent of an earlier generation of American artists who went to Paris for inspiration. Internal tourism has boomed. In 2002, 720,000 Chinese tourists visited Tibet, a 30% increase above 2001 (Douglas 2003). Tibetan Buddhism has also become popular as have religious pilgrimages by Chinese Buddhists.

As in the West commercial interests are using Tibetan themes to sell products. Tibetan beer is popular as is Tibetan Grass brand ginseng-berry juice, a sorghum liquor called Tibet Fragrant Spring and Tibetan Highland barley wine. Moreover, traditional Tibetan medicine has gained a huge following with 90% of the patients in the Tibetan Traditional Medicine Hospital in Beijing being Chinese. And there is the story of a struggling Chinese pop star named Zhu Zheqin who became famous only when she adopted a Tibetan stage name, Dadawa, and began singing songs like "Ballad of Lhasa". Her video showed her in Tibetan costume herding yaks and clowning with nomads in Tibet.²⁰

²⁰ Her CD was equally popular in Tibet until it was discovered that in the background a female voice could be heard praising the Dalai Lama in Tibetan. It was immediately withdrawn and edited and her videos were subsequently banned in Tibet (Forney 2001). In a book review of

There is no discernable opposition to the official view in China that Tibet has long been a part of China, that the material lives of Tibetans are getting inexorably better, that Tibetans are all happy to be citizens of the PRC and that all problems stem entirely from outside forces dedicated to weakening China or overthrowing its government. So for the Chinese government the propaganda challenge lays outside its boundaries where the Tibet Lobby has been so successful. In this battle for the hearts and minds of non-Chinese the Beijing authorities have failed miserably. For the PRC this is a long-standing problem with its propaganda organs, since 1949, demonstrating that they have a tin ear for what works in the West.

China's inability to adequately market itself is certainly not for lack of trying. During the Maoist era China's isolation made world opinion of little import. But now that China is an active participant in the world community international opinion can embarrass the Chinese government and they are acutely aware of it.

Beijing has responded to the Dalai Lama's media blitz in a number of ways. They have produced copious printed materials on Tibet in several languages for external consumption, began a magazine devoted specifically to Tibet, *China's Tibet*, and a corresponding website, www.tibetinfo.com. They sent Tibetan cultural troupes and scholars around the world. They arranged group visits to Tibet for foreign journalists and visiting heads of state.

The quantity of materials is impressive (and the Chinese authorities gauge success by the quantity of their work) but the quality is amateurishness (replete with grammatical errors) and lacks credibility. It goes beyond the media. There is not a single diplomat in any Chinese diplomatic mission in the West who understands Tibet nor knows how to effectively access the Western media. On the few occasions that Chinese diplomats have gone on camera to defend their government's position on Tibet they have been ridiculed. And the foreign visits to Tibet don't help either because they are so tightly scripted, limiting the movements of the visitors, that they did more to malign the hosts than to bring them much desired support (Tibetan Information Network 2001).

An excellent example of China's failed efforts can be seen in a 1997 major, big budget, motion picture entitled "Red River Valley," devised to counter Hollywood's efforts. The film received virtually no attention in the West and was, by Hollywood and professional standards, simply dreadful. It depicted the Tibetan attempt to counter the 1904 Anglo-Indian invasion and was intended to show Chi-

Sky Burial by Xinran (a "[...] novel by a Beijing journalist [which] plays into the fantasy of the region as a Wild West populated by noble savages with much to teach the cosmopolitan Chinese"), the reviewer observes that "in China these days, Tibet is all the rage: Beijing hipsters lounge in bars festooned with yak horns, pop divas sing ballads about Lhasa, and tourists mob the rooftop of the world" (The New Yorker 08/22/2005:75).

nese and Tibetans fighting heroically side-by-side against foreign aggression as they are, presumably, doing today in a different guise (Tibet Information Network 2001).²¹

Chinese authorities were alarmed enough by the successes of the Tibet Lobby to organize a series of fora in Beijing and Lhasa beginning in 1991 to discuss the nature of the Dalai Lama's internationalization of the Tibet issue and how to further their own propaganda efforts to counter it. From leaked documents it is clear that the Chinese authorities are adequately appraised of the situation they face.²² It is also clear that they have no idea how to effectively counter it nor do they seem to fully comprehend the nature of their problems in Tibet; blaming everything on external causes.²³

CONCLUSION

After the Dalai Lama's refusal to visit Beijing in 1989, the demonstrations in Lhasa and the attacks on China as a result of the Tibet Lobby's efforts, officials who had tried to negotiate a compromise with the Dalai Lama were transferred from doing Tibet work. In their place hard-liners were appointed, men who believed that restrictions on religious activities, Chinese immigration into Tibet, patriotic education campaigns and waiting for the Dalai Lama to die would solve all of Tibet's problems. Each success of the Tibet Lobby was held up as proof of the "imperialist" intentions of the Western nations who are committed to weakening China and preventing it from taking its rightful place in the world community.

In two decades or so the Tibet Lobby has achieved two very contradictory results. On the one hand, outside of Tibet it has made the Dalai Lama and Tibet household words and has monopolized a narrative about them to the exclusion

²¹ Also, see http://www.tibetinfo.com/tibetz/tfil_001.htm. See annotation in <http://www1.esc.edu/personalfac/tgrunfeld>.

²² International Relations vs. "Tibetan Issue" – China's Tibet, 10 September 2000 Symposium. See http://www.tibetinfo.com.cn/englisch/services/form/for_203.htm (August 25, 2002).

²³ www.caccp.org/conf/doc7.html. "The so-called issue of Tibet is the main pretext for western countries, including the United States, to westernize and split our country. Western countries, including the United States, want to topple our country and further the cause of their own social and value systems and national interests. In order to achieve this, they will never stop using the Tibet issue to westernize and split our country and weaken our power [...]" Zhao Qizheng, minister in charge of the Information Office of the State Council, at the meeting on national research in Tibetology and external propaganda on Tibet. "Tibet-related external propaganda and Tibetology work in the new era" 12 June 2000, International Campaign for Tibet, April 9, 2001. www.tibetinfo.co.uk/news-updates/west.pdf (August 28, 2003).

of all others²⁴ although it doesn't seem to have produced any tangible benefit to the majority of Tibetans in exile, except for those on Washington's payroll. But on the other hand, for the vast majority of Tibetans – those in China, the Tibet Lobby has done the opposite of what was intended, strengthening the power of hard-line officials whose policies have resulted in a serious long-term threat to Tibetan culture.

Patrick French quotes a Tibetan he spoke to as observing: "The exiled Tibetans in India and Nepal who talk about freedom are wasting their time. I say to them, if you want independence for Tibet, why don't you come here and make a protest and see how far it gets you? It may make them feel good, but for us, it makes life worse. It makes the Chinese create more controls over us." (French 2003:127)

In discussions with knowledgeable Chinese intellectuals in Beijing and Lhasa in 2001, I found them lamenting the demise of the officials who were willing to work with the Dalai Lama after his refusal to visit in 1989. They believed that the Tibet Lobby's efforts in the media, trying to embarrass top Chinese officials on trips overseas and getting foreign leaders to complain personally, had relegated Tibet to such an exalted status that only the top officials could make major decisions leaving almost no political space for officials and scholars to have any input.

It is not only Chinese intellectuals who feel that the activities of the Tibet Lobby have hindered a search for a possible solution rather than aiding it. Some Western scholars also believe that: "[...] The emigre myth is pervasive in the West and is an obstacle to a negotiated settlement of the Tibet question." (Sautman 2001:283)

Since 2002 the Dalai Lama and the Beijing authorities have held talks on four occasions and while Beijing has been publicly silent about these talks, the Dalai Lama's representatives have publicly characterized them in unusually positive terms. Indeed, in summer 2005, the head of the Dalai Lama's administration in Dharamsala referred to the talks as being at a "make or break" (World Tibet Network 2005) point. It is too early to know if the Tibet Lobby influenced these talks or whether it is a result of new leadership in Beijing or, even, if it is nothing more than a public relations ploy on Beijing's part in the run-up to the 2008 Olympics. Indisputably the Dalai Lama's major success has been his ability to create interest and fascination with himself, his cause and his religion around the world. This

²⁴ When Donald Lopez was asked to appear on National Public Radio's "Talk of the Nation" to discuss his book, *Prisoners of Shangri-la*, he was told there would also be someone "from the other side." He thought this meant someone from the PRC but it turned out to be someone from the International Campaign for Tibet as any criticism of Tibet had come to be seen as criticizing the whole endeavor (McMillan 2001:247–248, fn. 5).

fascination has led – not for the first time but never so widespread and with such intensity – to an infatuation with a romanticized and idealized Tibet. A highly successful campaign has propelled the Tibet Lobby to heights unimagined by its originators; Hollywood movies, rock concerts, celebrities practicing Buddhism, a compliant international media have all combined to make the Dalai Lama and Tibet household words. Ironically, there is a similar phenomena going on in China where the government’s attention to Tibet has resulted in a different sort of a fad; an infatuation with Tibetans as ‘noble savages’ with their exotic ways.

So for all of its success the Tibet Lobby may have achieved a Pyrrhic victory. Tibetans – real people, with a real history, with a real struggle, have been cartoonized by American (and Chinese) popular culture (Schell 2000; Stewart 2000).²⁵ As historian Tsering Shakya (1992:13) put it, “Tibet was being recreated and reformed into Western imaginations and enthused with psychedelic experiences.” And in the final analysis it may not have done any good for the millions of Tibetans in China.

A. Tom Grunfeld, Department of History, State University of New York Empire State College, New York

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²⁵ For a series of articles critical of the exile Tibetan view of Tibet see: www.members.tripod.com/~journeyeast/Tibet.html (August 28, 2002).

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