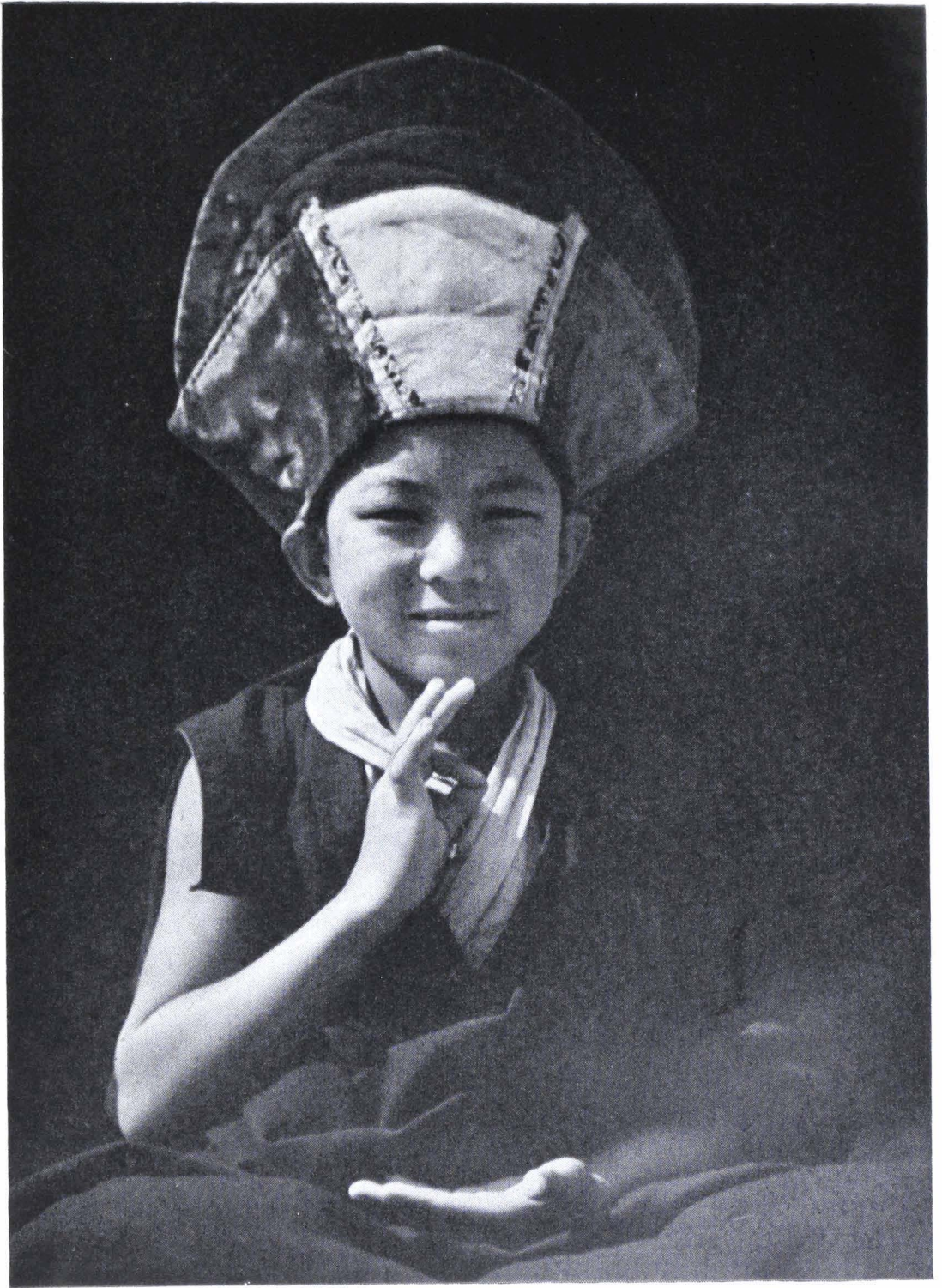


The Presence of Tibet

Lois Lang-Sims



The Youngest Lama at the Home School

LOIS LANG-SIMS

The Presence of Tibet

THE CRESSET PRESS

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Published in Great Britain by The Cresset Press, 11 Fitzroy Square,
London, W.1

First published 1963

Printed in Great Britain by
The Shenval Press, London, Hertford and Harlow

TO CHATTIE AND MICHEL

Acknowledgments

I am indebted to Messrs Collins for permission to quote passages from *The Portrait of the Dalai Lama* by Sir Charles Bell.

For the loan of blocks and photographs, and for permission to reproduce illustrations I am grateful to the following: The Tibet Society, Mr Michael Le Marchant, Mr Christmas Humphreys, The Buddhist Society, Mrs Freda Bedi and Lieut-Col A. F. Bell.

L. S.

The Tibet Society of the United Kingdom should not be associated with all the views expressed in this book.

L. S.

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Chapter 1 · CHILDREN OF CHENREZIG

TOWARDS the end of November 1958 I sat on a steep scrubby slope a little way from one of the corkscrewing roads which lead out of Darjeeling, gazing at a mountain and wondering whether I should go to Nepal or stay where I was for the purpose of continuing to gaze at it. The mountain was Kanchenjunga, the 'everlasting summit of the five treasure-houses of snow', second in height only to Chomalungma itself, which, according to the scale of such beings, is just across the way, as it were, within shouting distance. So holy is Kanchenjunga that in 1955, when it was successfully climbed for the first time by a British party led by Charles Evans, the victorious climbers deliberately stopped within a few feet of the summit, this abstention from an act of sacrilege being the result of communications from the Indian, Sikkimese and Nepalese governments pointing out what would be the feelings of the local population in the event of this sanctuary of a divine one being violated by human boots. For me, almost from the beginning of the forty-two years before I set eyes upon the actuality of it, the word 'Kanchenjunga' had been a purveyor of the numinous—ever since my mother had first spoken it to me, telling me of the 'highest mountain in the world' and the 'second highest', guarding the entrance to the land of Tibet. Unhesitatingly I had fixed my imagination upon the 'second highest', the very syllables of its name seeming to indicate its superiority in every respect; since my mother had, of course, referred to Chomalungma by the prosaic name bestowed upon it by the British.

It was partly on account of Kanchenjunga that I had come to India. I had fostered a dream of India all my life, particularly of the sacred city of Benares, Kanchenjunga and the regions

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adjoining Tibet. In 1958, being terrified by the whole process of travelling in all its aspects, I sought the assistance of Messrs Thomas Cook and arranged a short tour for myself. Leaving England in October, I went by sea to Bombay and then by air to New Delhi, Agra, Benares, Calcutta, and on to Bagdogra airport from whence one makes the fifty miles journey up the mountain-side to Darjeeling, which stands at a height of 7,000 feet. I had reckoned to stay in Darjeeling a fortnight, returning to Bombay in early December to board a homing ship.

But what, rhetorically inquired Dr Fawcett, did I imagine that I was going to do with myself in Darjeeling for a fortnight? There was nothing to see in Darjeeling except the mountain and once you had seen the mountain . . . I wanted to say that it wasn't a question of *once* I had seen the mountain: I wanted to see it twice, three times, four times, every day and all day for a fortnight. But I was overcome by Dr Fawcett's eloquence. He and his wife were my fellow guests at the Hotel Mount Everest. They had just arrived in Darjeeling from Katmandu and were ecstatic in their praises of the 'fairytale' country of Nepal which had just been opened to tourists. So unspoiled were these Nepali peasants that they even permitted themselves to be photographed without demanding 'baksheesh'. Why should I not cut short my stay in Darjeeling in order to spend a few days in this primitive paradise? Carried away by enthusiasm and the passion to order other people's lives for their own good, Dr Fawcett proceeded to explain in detail the necessary travel arrangements; I had difficulty in restraining him from actually setting them in motion on my behalf. 'Dear,' frequently interposed Mrs Fawcett, 'you must allow Miss Sims to do as *she* wants. Perhaps she doesn't . . .'

And it so happened that she was right: I didn't. I wanted to stay in Darjeeling and sit every day on the slope near the roadside below the Windamere Hotel, looking at the mountain until every line and shadow of it, every visible snowdrift, had sunk into my mind and there established itself; I wanted to see the mountain at dawn and in the full morning, in the afternoon and at sunset; on

a clear day, drawn in the sky as if by a Chinese artist; on a day of mist, half hidden; luminous beneath a full moon and, as the moon waned, becoming no more than the suggestion of a tidal wave rising in the dark. I did not attempt, however, to explain all this to Dr Fawcett. I became obstinate and cross, chiefly because I was doubting myself. Sitting with my eyes upon the mountain, I told myself that I was being foolish and that, after all, the real motive behind my resistance was compounded of laziness, lack of enterprise and an inherent distaste for doing anything which had not been planned beforehand for weeks. Yet still I remained in Darjeeling and when the Fawcetts moved to Kalimpong I was glad to be relieved of their accusing presence.

It was a perpetual wonder to me that the mountain was so unlike the picture of it which my imagination had originally built up. I had expected it to be stupendous and dramatic and it was nothing of the sort. Poised in the sky, its foothills submerged in a calm sea of blueness, it appeared to be weightless; in the full morning sunlight it was a clearly defined, two-dimensional ghost. Forty-six miles away, it struck upon the eyes as clear and as precisely stated as a theorem of Pythagoras. From left to right and from right to left the mind swept across the wave of it and discovered movement in stillness. On the other side of that mountain, I thought, is Tibet . . . Tibet, the country invested by my mother in my child-mind with an aura of magic-cum-holiness (a peculiar, almost wicked holiness associated with alien gods), had emerged of late out of the world of once-upon-a-time into the columns of the daily press. Looking at the ice-blue skies above the mountain and thinking of the secret land now in the hands of the Communists, I entertained an image of snows stained with blood, a dream more poignant than that of Shangri-la itself. Really I knew next to nothing about Tibet, past or present.

This was the origin of the Tibetan race:

Once upon a time the Lord of Mercy, whose name is Chenrezig, descended from the celestial realms and dwelt as a monkey in a

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cave in the centre of the world, that is to say in the land which was afterwards called Tibet. This saintly monkey, absorbed in his meditations, was tormented by a she-demon who blackmailed him to this effect: 'Lord Monkey, I am consumed by lust for you. If you will not lie with me, I will lie instead with a demon and people the earth with fiends who will prey upon all living creatures.' So the Lord Chenrezig, out of compassion, lay with the she-demon and in due course they had many children. These children inherited the virtues of their father and the vices of their mother and they multiplied exceedingly so that in all the land of Tibet there was not enough for them to eat. Then the Lord Chenrezig fed them upon sacred grain and when they had eaten the grain their tails fell off. . . .

The Lord Chenrezig, Tibet's patron divinity and the Father of the Tibetan people, is that great Bodhisattva of Mahayana Buddhism who is known as Avalokitesvara in Sanskrit, one of the five Dhyani Bodhisattvas emanating from the five Dhyani Buddhas (Buddhas of Meditation) who exist in the celestial realms as aspects of the supreme Buddhahood. Leaving aside any attempt to embark upon the subtleties of Mahayana metaphysical speculation, the term 'Bodhisattva' may be taken to indicate a being of divine nature who has taken a vow to dedicate himself to the liberation of all beings 'down to the smallest blade of grass', and to this end descends from heaven to dwell in the six realms of time-ridden existence presided over by Karma or the law of cause and effect—one of which is the world of men, another the world of beasts, and all six of which gyrate unceasingly upon the remorseless Wheel of Life from which the individual cannot escape until he attains Enlightenment. The Divine Chenrezig is the type of the perfect Bodhisattva: the Lord of Mercy, the Compassionate One, the Good Shepherd. Countless ages ago, say the Tibetan scriptures, looking down upon our world and its sorrows, he was so filled with compassion that his head burst into innumerable fragments while from his body sprang innumerable helping arms and

hands, on the palm of each hand an eye since his love is not blind but illumined with divine wisdom and swift to discriminate. Then the Lord Chenrezig went to his Father, the Dhyani Buddha Opagmed, and asked leave to take the Bodhisattva vow and go down into the six realms, incarnating in the forms of men and of beasts. Thus did he come as a monkey and beget the Tibetan race. Thus did he come again in the seventh century after Christ in the form of the King named Srongsten-Gampo who was responsible for the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet.

Before the reign of Srongsten-Gampo the people practised a form of Shamanism, a strange soup of debased esoteric knowledge, demon-propitiation and nature-worship. They lived in tents, smeared their bodies with red earth and sacrificed numerous animals, sometimes even human beings, to their demons and gods. Despite all this, in the year 613 when Srongsten-Gampo ascended the throne, the nation was already unified, strong and independent. The King was in a position to choose as his brides a Nepalese and a Chinese princess; and, according to tradition, it was these two princesses who were responsible for the conversion of the King to the Buddhist faith. Indeed what else could be expected of them if they were, as Tibetans believe, the incarnations respectively of the White and the Green Aspects of Dolma, the Mother Goddess, who is venerated, together with Chenrezig, under the symbol of the perfect flower, the pure lotus?

The next King of Tibet to be renowned for his activities as defender of the faith was Trisong-Detsen, who, in the eighth century, invited to his country a singular personality, of whom it was afterwards said that he was one of the gods and who was to exert an extraordinary influence upon the form of monasticism which dominated Tibetan life in all its aspects—economic, cultural and religious—from that time until the invasion of Tibet in 1950 by the Chinese Communists. This was Padma Sambhava, the 'Lotus born', the 'Precious Teacher', who came, it is said, from the Buddhist University of Nalanda and whose task it

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became to establish the doctrine of the Buddha in Tibet. Or was it indeed the doctrine of the Buddha that he established? Padma Sambhava was a Tantric Buddhist priest. The Tantric school of Buddhism is, of all the schools of Buddhism, in its metaphysical system, its psychology and its ritual practice, the most subtle, complex and open to abuse. Its constant use of sexual imagery has certainly resulted in its being widely misunderstood; however, there is no doubt that the most curious psycho-physical exercises for the attainment of extraordinary states of mind were practised within its framework and that it was a repository of esoteric knowledge often weirdly and repulsively expressed. Padma Sambhava was a magician as well as a mystic, the embodiment of the popular western dream of Tibet as a land of fantasy, spells, third eyes and freakish displays of psycho-physical prowess. His greatest achievement in the eyes of future generations of Tibetans was the subjugation of a host of demons, the 'gods' of the earlier religion, who thereafter became the servants of Buddhism, a convenient arrangement by which they immediately reverted to the status of gods, thus ensuring the continuation of the old rites within the framework of the new faith.

Padma Sambhava was the St Benedict of Tibet in that it was he who created the basis of the Tibetan monastic system, although this system has been several times and fairly drastically reformed since. The 'Red Hat' Orders, which still claim a large proportion of the (relative to the total population) enormous number of Tibetan monks, still look to him as their founder and the origin of a supernatural power which flows down to them through the centuries; this idea of a transmission of power being of enormous importance in the spiritual life of a Tibetan monk, at least if he aspires to pass through the training necessary in order to become an initiate. In the Tibetan monastic system, the process of initiation into the 'mysteries' of the hidden wisdom is of central significance but it is by no means all the monks who participate in this. Padma Sambhava himself is the type of the supreme Initiate. From innumerable altars and sacred banners, portrayed each time

in a traditional pose and in accordance with certain traditionally prescribed measurements, he looks down upon us with a secretive smile expressing a subtle mingling of wisdom, cunning and amusement. In the history of Tibetan monasticism, the only figure of equal eminence is the fourteenth-century reformer, Tsong Khapa, founder of the Gelugpa Order (or 'Yellow Hats'), who was, in a certain sense, the spiritual ancestor of the Dalai Lamas, the priest-kings of Tibet. It was Tsong Khapa's chosen disciple, Ganden Truppa, founder of the great monastery of Drepung, near Lhasa, who was later to be regarded as the first Dalai Lama, although he never received this title and was not recognized in his lifetime as being anything more than a powerful abbot. According to the monks of Drepung, however, shortly after his death his spirit returned to them in the body of another Lama who became their second Abbot; and it was the third of this line (the third yet still the first) who was given the title 'Dalai' ('Boundless Ocean') by a Mongol chief. But it was not until the seventeenth century that the Great Fifth Dalai Lama (who would be regarded as the Third by a less unworldly logic) assumed the temporal power, becoming king of a once more united Tibet, and declared himself to be the fifth incarnation not only of the Abbot of Drepung but of the Divine Chenrezig.

The doctrine of the incarnation of Chenrezig in the Dalai Lama is variously interpreted and one would be hard put to it to say which of the many interpretations is 'correct'. Popularly, the Dalai Lama is regarded simply as being himself the god: the apparent 'bodies' of the successive holders of the office being no more than illusory forms assumed by the Lord of Mercy in order that his people may enjoy the benefits of his Presence. Sophisticated versions of the doctrine insist that the Dalai Lama is the 'vehicle' or 'instrument' of a spiritual force, while leaving the problem of his *person* severely alone, as if it were non-existent—as indeed, theoretically and apart from the inevitable promptings of human nature, it is non-existent to a Buddhist. Thus the worship of a fallible human being as a god can never be officially authorized

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or doctrinally correct. The Dalai Lama is a 'Tulku' or 'Phantom Body': one of the many thousands of 'Phantom Bodies' who have been appearing through the centuries, ever since the time of the Great Fifth, who brought the idea into fashion, all over Tibet. Each Lama Tulku belongs, as the Dalai Lama does, to a line of Tulkus; each is the reincarnation of a sainted predecessor, a few of celestial spirits. Surpassing all others in importance are the Dalai Lama and the Panchen, the latter office having been raised to this eminence by the Great Fifth when he declared its then occupant to be an incarnation of the Buddha Opagmed.

It was no doubt convenient for the Great Fifth that these matters should be made clear at a time when he was engaged in establishing his position and, with it, following the long period of disintegration which had resulted from the collapse of the original dynasty in 842, a new period of Tibetan independence. For his successor, however, these arrangements were less felicitous. The Great Fifth Dalai Lama died at a time when those around him deemed it expedient to conceal the fact of his death; hence, although his successor was discovered, by the now established processes of divination and testing, while still a child, he remained in the world until he was grown to be a young man and had acquired a taste for things incompatible with the monastic life. So it was that the Sixth Incarnation of Chenrezig became not only the cause of hair-splitting metaphysical argument down the centuries as to how a Dalai Lama could *appear* to be in a very disreputable district of Lhasa, while in fact his true body remained in a posture of meditation enclosed within the Potala Palace, but Tibet's only memorable writer of love-lyrics.

'I dwell apart in Potala
A god on earth am I . . .'

. . . mused this sad young man; and then, trying perhaps to instil a little courage into himself:

‘Lo, the Serpent gods and demons
 Lurk behind me stern and mighty;
 Sweet the apple grows before me;
 Fear leads nowhere; I must pluck it.’

And pluck it he did; many times, if we are to credit centuries-old gossip. The fear caught up with him, however. Victim of a network of intrigue, he was kidnapped and murdered, although not before he had prophesied the place from whence would come the next Incarnation of the Lord of Tibet.

‘The time has come for me to go away.
 Lend me your wings, O swift white crane!
 I am going no further than Litang
 And shall soon return from thence.’

In fact the Seventh Incarnation was discovered in Litang by a search party who objected to the candidate put forward by their political opponents and quoted the well-known poem as evidence that their own must be the correct choice. Thus was it demonstrated that the Sixth Dalai Lama was indeed Chenrezig and knew his own business. But the Lord of Mercy was destined for over a century to pop in and out like a veritable jack-in-the-box. One after another, as the result of intrigues between the Chinese and the Tibetan Regents, the Dalai Lamas were poisoned in childhood or early youth before they could assume the temporal headship of the State. From the time of the Ninth Dalai Lama onwards, the first to break this precedent was the one who was afterwards to be known as the Great Thirteenth, the ugly, pock-marked little man who was to personify as none other had ever done, perhaps as none other will ever do, the Tibetan spirit.

‘I was not identified,’ wrote the Great Thirteenth Dalai Lama in his Political Testament, ‘in accordance with the previous custom of the golden urn. It was judged unnecessary, for from the prophesies and divinations it was clear that I was the true Incarnation. And so I was enthroned.’

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The custom of the golden urn had been instituted by the Chinese Emperor. The names of three or four candidates for the office of Dalai Lama were placed in a golden urn and the Chinese representative in Lhasa drew one of them with a pair of chopsticks, the name drawn being accepted as that of the new Incarnation in accordance with the will of the divine providence which had guided the chopsticks. The Great Thirteenth, however, seems to have asserted his independence even in the moment of establishing himself in office. Later, when he was about to come of age and assume the temporal power, at which stage in his career the Dalai Lama must visit a chapel belonging to the fearful goddess Palden Lhamo and speak to her face to face—an ordeal which had several times proved fatal despite the provision of a restorative pill to counteract the evil magic—the Great Thirteenth survived the occasion without incident. It is even said that he omitted to swallow the pill, which he regarded as superfluous.

The blue-skinned, long-fanged goddess Palden Lhamo is one of the more formidable of the fierce divinities of Tibet. She is generally depicted riding upon a mule across a sea of churning blood, her brow crowned with skulls and round her neck a garland of severed heads. During the early years of the reign of the Great Thirteenth it was believed by Tibetans that this goddess had been incarnated in the great, long-lived Queen who ruled over India and far-away England and that during the lifetime of this Queen there would be no war between England and Tibet. And indeed, no sooner had the widow of Windsor released the spirit of the blue-skinned goddess, than a British expedition marched against the land of the Dalai Lama and the Great Thirteenth fled to China in a vain attempt to enlist the Emperor's help. The British withdrew after imposing a treaty upon the Tibetans; but the Dalai Lama was scarcely back in the Potala Palace before the Chinese themselves attacked his country, forcing him to leave Tibet for the second time and seek sanctuary in the Indian border district. He returned in 1913 with the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty and declared Tibet's independence. For almost two

hundred years Tibet had been under the suzerainty of the Manchu Emperors of China; from 1913 until the Chinese invasion in 1950, she was an independent nation, ruled over until 1933 by a wise and benevolent despot.

‘From that year (1913), the year of the Water Bull to this present Water Monkey year,’ the Dalai Lama declared in his Political Testament, addressed to his people in 1932 when he was already conscious of his approaching death, ‘this land of Tibet has become completely happy and prosperous; it is like a land made new. All the people are at ease and happy. . . . I have been very merciful in all things. Consider this and understand it, all ye people. Do not make your desires great. Make them small. Understand that what has been done is excellent. If the work that has been performed is of advantage to Tibet, harmonize your minds with it, and know that your desires have been fulfilled. I do not say that I have performed all this. I do not recount these matters in any hope that people will say that the Dalai Lama has done this work; of that my hope is less than a single seed of sesame.’

From a photograph taken shortly before his death, he gazes intently at us, large peasant’s hands spread on broad knees, stocky, uncomely, an expression in the protruding eyes as if he were striving to convey to us the urgency of the prophetic message which he bequeathed to Tibet:

‘. . . It may happen that here in the centre of Tibet the Religion and the secular administration may be attacked both from the outside and from the inside. Unless we can guard our country, it may now happen that the Dalai and Panchen Lamas, the Father and the Son, the Holders of the Faith, the glorious Rebirths, will be broken down and left without a name. As regards the monasteries and the priesthood, their lands and other properties will be destroyed. . . . All beings will be sunk in great hardship and in overpowering fear; the days and the nights will drag on slowly in suffering.’

In face of these dangers, which he declared would arise from ‘the way of working of the red people’ (the Communists), the Dalai Lama exhorted the Tibetans:

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‘Do not be traitors to Church and State by working for another country against your own. . . . High officials, low officials and peasants must all act in harmony to bring happiness to Tibet: one person alone cannot lift a heavy carpet; several must unite to do so.’

At the end of his Testament he wrote: ‘It is of great importance that day and night, in your four actions (walking, standing, sitting, sleeping), you should deliberate carefully on what I have written, and that without error you should reject what is evil and follow what is good.’

So, in 1933, the Lord of Mercy departed yet again to the Honourable Field. Never before had he acted and spoken by so obedient an instrument. There was a prophecy that he would not return: that the Thirteenth Dalai Lama would be the last Incarnation of the Lord of Tibet.

It is to Chinese rather than to Tibetan sources that we owe the greater part of our fragmentary knowledge of the external events of Tibetan history, as distinct from those mythical and doctrinal elements which appear to a Tibetan as embodying exactly the same kind of literal truth. Naturally the Chinese have always been closely concerned and intimately involved with the affairs of Tibet. Throughout the rule of the Manchu dynasty Tibet was part of the Imperial domain; the Dalai Lama owed a loose kind of fealty to the Emperor and the two Chinese residents in Lhasa exercised considerable power and influence. If it is true to say that from 1913 until 1950 Tibet enjoyed a *de facto* independence which was recognized in practice by the British Government, the Chinese Government at no time conceded this point. As for the outside world, the world that lay beyond the frontiers of her immediate neighbours, China, Mongolia, Russia and British-ruled India, Tibet had no dealings with it. The Dalai Lama never sought to establish his country’s position in an international context; in consequence of which omission Tibet’s legal status has never been defined, still less become an object of general agreement. In

October 1950, when the armies of the newly-established People's Republic of China entered Tibet, the Chinese replied to a note of protest from the Indian Government: 'Tibet is an integral part of Chinese territory and the problem of Tibet is entirely a domestic problem of China.' A babel of words, assisted by a vast unearthing of files and a load of expert knowledge, has not yet succeeded in either proving or refuting this bald statement.

In reviving their claim upon Tibet, which had lain dormant throughout the reign of the Great Thirteenth and for seventeen years after his death, the Chinese (in the above-mentioned exchange of notes with India) declared that the People's Liberation Army 'must enter Tibet to liberate the Tibetan people and defend the frontiers of China'. Since there was no foreign power from whom the Tibetan people required to be liberated and nothing in the existing situation to threaten the frontiers of China, whether the said frontiers be regarded as dividing India from Tibet or according to the rather more obvious point of view of the Dalai Lama and his Government, this declaration seems more than a little curious: however, it cannot be dismissed as a mere screen for some sinister and unspoken purpose. It is clear from the evidence available that the Chinese people, since they fell under the domination of Communism, have been possessed by a colossal fantasy which includes the unification of their nation to incorporate every territory to which they have ever supposed themselves to be entitled, its liberation from capitalist oppression and its defence against imperialist threats. In seeking for the motives behind the 1950 invasion of Tibet, there seems no reason why we should look further than this nation-wide neurosis.

In 1940 Tibet had enthroned her Fourteenth Dalai Lama. In 1950 he was fifteen years old, the spiritual head but not yet the temporal ruler of Tibet, an untried boy with a taste for cameras and a disposition to spontaneous merriment. As Chinese troops advanced towards Lhasa and the United Nations Assembly rejected an appeal from the Tibetan Government, he fled with his entourage to Yatung, on the Indo-Tibetan border, not far from

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the Indian town of Kalimpong, having been hastily invested with the temporal power in consideration of the national crisis. Normally it is not until he is eighteen years old that the Dalai Lama takes over this power from the Regent. However, it might be argued that on this occasion he took over nothing at all; since by that time there was not a vestige of power in Tibet which did not belong to the Chinese People's Republic.

The Dalai Lama did not remain for long in Yatung. He returned to Lhasa after submitting to the imposition of a seventeen point 'Agreement' by China upon Tibet. It was stated in this document that the Tibetan people should 'return to the big family of the Motherland'; the local Government of Tibet should 'actively assist the People's Liberation Army to enter Tibet and consolidate the national defences'; and thereafter a Military and Administrative Committee and a Military Area Headquarters should be set up in Tibet 'to ensure the implementation of this agreement'. On these conditions, 'under the unified leadership of the Chinese People's Government', the right of exercising national regional autonomy was to be enjoyed by Tibet; the central authorities promised to respect the existing political system, the status, functions and powers of the Dalai and Panchen Lamas and the religious beliefs, customs and habits of the people of Tibet. Probably the Tibetans consoled themselves that a treaty so enforced upon them might have been a great deal worse. It might . . . but in 1951 it was, anyhow, no more than a document. The future of Tibet hung upon the question of how far the Chinese intended to abide by the promises they had made in it.

The representative of the Merciful Lord was sixteen years old when he returned to the Potala Palace. The Chinese Communists were committed, as their subsequent actions were to prove, to a policy aimed at the eradication of Tibetan Buddhism, the gradual obliteration of the very names of the Lord Buddha and the Lord Chenrezig. The gentle-faced boy, whose extraordinary beauty was not the sole point of unlikeness between him and his predecessor in the sacred office, regarding his captors

with his habitual composure and cheerfulness, knew nothing of this.

The Fawcetts returned to the Hotel Mount Everest a week before I was due to leave it. They could talk of nothing now but the hotel at Kalimpong, which they described as being like some story-tale inn where host and travellers gathered in the evenings over mugs of beer (Tibetan millet beer in this case) to regale one another with tales from the four corners of the earth. In Kalimpong, declared Dr and Mrs Fawcett, there were no tourists: their fellow-guests at the hotel had been one archaeologist and two newspaper correspondents. The more interesting of these two had been a certain George Patterson, a red-bearded Scot who had been for three years an independent missionary in Tibet, sharing the fiercely adventurous life of the Khamba tribes and only leaving them when the Voice of the Lord addressed him in the night telling him to make the dangerous journey to India and personally warn Mr Nehru of the approaching invasion of Tibet by the Chinese Communists. This unusual individual had his home in Darjeeling and was the local correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*. The Fawcetts had invited him to come one morning to the Mount Everest to relate a further instalment of the dramatic tales which he gathered from his Tibetan friends in Kalimpong concerning the fighting which was reported to be going on in Tibet. If I cared to be around, they suggested, I could be introduced to Mr Patterson and hear these things for myself. And since by that time even I, in the backwater of the Mount Everest Hotel, had heard some of the rumours which were circulating in the neighbourhood, I was impatient for the opportunity to get some first-hand information on the subject which everyone was talking and speculating about. I felt a particular sympathy with and concern for the Tibetans because I had always understood them to be a deeply religious people, living according to traditional ways without caring at all for the twentieth-century world—and now they had been subdued for eight years by the

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representatives of an inhuman political system which I held in abhorrence. So on the morning in question I did not go far from the hotel, only hurrying out for a few minutes to the shops—and accidentally meeting George Patterson on the way to his appointment.

There was no doubt in my mind that the striking-looking individual with the red beard and tartan cap and trews, walking with long strides and accompanied by a bumbling dog, must be George Patterson. I turned round and followed him back to the hotel, but when I slipped quietly into the smaller lounge he was already surrounded by an admiring circle, composed of the Fawcetts and two of their friends, and was discoursing volubly in a broad Scots accent on the subject of Tibet. His dog, I noticed, was fast asleep.

The small lounge of the Mount Everest Hotel is so designed as to have two fireplaces jutting out into the room, so that one may sit in front of one of them and hear what is being said in front of the other, while remaining out of sight. Darjeeling in December is very cold and that morning there were two fires. I sat down and listened for the first time to the story of what had been happening during the eight years of the Chinese occupation of Tibet.

Rather in the manner of an epic bard, Patterson was deep in a recital of the heroic deeds of the Khamba rebellion, telling how the rage of these tribes from eastern Tibet against their oppressors had spread beyond their own region, coming into explosive contact with other small centres of revolt until the whole country was in a ferment. Since 1956, according to Patterson, 40,000 Chinese and 15,000 Tibetans had been killed and every day the Chinese were pouring in more and more troops. In the mountains of Kham the native tribes enjoyed an obvious advantage over the Chinese soldiers, who were unaccustomed to the great altitudes and unfamiliar with the wild and dangerous terrain of eastern Tibet. This advantage accounted for the fact that more Chinese than Tibetans had lost their lives; but it was, of course, a hope-

lessly inadequate guarantee of sustained success, considering the vast superiority of numbers and weapons on the side of the Chinese Communists. Meanwhile, declared Patterson, towns, villages and encampments were being attacked with high explosive, while three million Chinese were occupied in the colonization of Tibet, systematically taking over the villages and districts and forcing the people not only to feed and house them but to mate with them in order to achieve a merging of the Han with the Tibetan race.

And what part, someone asked, was the Dalai Lama playing in all this? The Dalai Lama, responded Patterson, was surrounded by a collection of dishonest and self-seeking Tibetan officials but he himself was a good lad, his heart was in the right place. When the Chinese had demanded of him that he should send his own picked troops to assist in quelling the uprising in Kham, he had stalled, protesting that his troops could not be relied upon to fight their own countrymen. Now he was virtually a prisoner in his own palace, while all over Tibet the monasteries and temples of Tibetan Buddhism were being desecrated and their inhabitants put to death.

The Scots accent seemed to become broader the more obviously Patterson was enjoying himself. The Fawcetts had forgotten my existence, and as they were leaving the hotel the same morning I realized that if I was to have any conversation with this surprising man I must use my own initiative in making his acquaintance. And conversation with him I was determined to have: I had made up my mind to obtain from him all the facts and statistics I could in order to write letters on behalf of the Tibetans to the British Press. Patterson himself had mentioned that, apart from his own articles in the *Daily Telegraph*, the subject had received no publicity in England; and I wanted to pursue this matter and see if there was anything which an ordinary person such as myself, who was neither author nor journalist, could do to help. I looked for Patterson's name and address in the telephone book without success. However, Darjeeling is a small place in which everyone

is perpetually running into everyone else. The following morning I was walking as usual past the little shops in the direction of the main square, which is known as the Chowrasta, when I saw coming towards me Patterson and his wife and the bumbling dog.

I went up to him and introduced myself. It was unembarrassing to explain that I had been listening to his conversation in the hotel lounge because one could not but know that here was someone who was always delighted to extend his audience. I was intensely interested, I explained, and anxious to do what little I could to publicize the facts: would it be possible for us to have a talk? Patterson responded amiably, introduced me to his wife and invited me to have tea that afternoon at his house.

This was the first time I had been invited to a private house in India. Although I had contrived to wander about in some odd corners of Bombay and Benares which would have surprised the guides provided for me by Messrs Thomas Cook, my visit so far had been an affair of Western-style hotels and either guided or solitary walks without any social contacts. Therefore this invitation from the Pattersons represented for me a break-through; how momentous a one I could hardly have guessed, although I did experience an unusual excitement as I toiled up and down the mountainside in search of their house. In Darjeeling, unless one keeps to the main road at the top of the town between the Chowrasta and the Mount Everest or to the Lebong Cart Road at the very bottom, below the market, even the slightest walk is liable to become a tough climb, at least from the point of view of a person of sedentary habits. To be uncertain of the way generally involves a series of expeditions up and down steep flights of steps or slithery slopes, past a succession of wafted stinks which are all the more trying when one is gasping for breath; moreover inquiries are worse than useless since no native of the place would be so impolite as to suggest that one could be on the wrong path. However, after wandering disconsolately for some time in the neighbourhood of a public urinal which was poised a little way above the Planters Club, wondering why it was deemed necessary

to provide such places where the more popular alternative was so much less unhygienic, I came at last to the house and was welcomed by the dog and by Patterson himself.

The room into which Patterson took me was comfortably furnished in Western style but with a number of heavy, brightly coloured Tibetan rugs not only on the floor but covering the chairs and sofa, so that it was on one of these that I seated myself. There was a generous tea spread on a table, a roaring log fire and an attentive Tibetan servant. Having heard a mysterious story from the Fawcetts to the effect that Patterson depended upon miraculous gifts from the Lord for his worldly support, I decided that if this were indeed the arrangement he was doing remarkably well on it. Patterson immediately launched into a dramatic relation of the events which had led up to his present interest in the affairs of Tibet. He told me how he had been brought up within the fold of the Plymouth Brethren and how, in his youth, when he was about to become a medical student he had resolved to put himself—and the Lord—to a test by ridding himself in one sweep of all his worldly assets and henceforth relying solely upon the Lord for support. Calmly informing the Lord of this decision, he had proceeded to carry it out; whereupon, as occasion required, the money appeared, neither more nor less than the exact amount. Total strangers sent him unsolicited gifts, sometimes with an accompanying note explaining that 'the Lord instructed me to send you this'. The persons concerned were seldom, according to his own grateful admission, in a position to part with their money in this way except at considerable sacrifice. It seemed a little hard on them perhaps; but in the result Patterson was housed, clothed, fed and trained by the Lord, who spoke to him familiarly in the night and finally instructed him, again providing the necessary funds, to go to Tibet.

I did not disbelieve this story at the time and I have never since exactly disbelieved it. It seemed to me that there must be some explanation which fell between the two extremes of dismissing

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the whole affair as ridiculous and accepting it as evidence of a special relationship existing between the Almighty and my host. I sensed in Patterson a certain kind of psychic power which is seldom properly handled or understood by those who possess it, but which enables them to manipulate circumstances by the exertion of unconscious will to an extent which can produce some very odd and surprising results. This peculiarity of his make-up may even have had something to do with his attraction towards Tibet, where such feats of will-power have for long been practised consciously and as a matter of course. He himself, however, was obviously sincere in declaring that his journey to Tibet, and his subsequent journey to India to report the attempts made by the Chinese to seduce the Khamba chieftains into providing them with arms and assistance against the Lhasa Government, were undertaken in obedience to a Divine Voice. Like Joan of Arc, he heard this Voice addressing him in accents which were not, apparently, recognizably his own; like Joan he obeyed and like Joan he supposed himself to be called upon to fulfil some tremendous public purpose. I saw no reason to suppose that he was any less sincere in his convictions than she was. His effectualness was more questionable. Amongst other divergences from the example set by Joan, he had embraced domestic responsibilities of a kind likely to interfere with a messianic mission to save Asia from the Communists. His wife, Meg, a quiet, charming woman, who was in charge of the Planters Hospital in Darjeeling and had a wide reputation as a highly-skilled surgeon, came into the room as he was describing to me his attempts in the early part of 1950 to convince the Indian authorities of the facts concerning the Chinese advance into Tibet. It was clear that her attitude towards her husband was one of unquestioning allegiance. Patterson said grace over the ample feast; we sat down to eat and he passed from his own life history into an account of the Tibetan resistance similar to that with which he had regaled the Fawcetts. I listened in silence; then I asked him whether, on my return to England, I might feel free to quote his name in any letters or articles that I

might write, giving the substance of his information and the relevant statistics. As to quoting his name, replied Patterson, I was free to do so at any time; he was already in trouble with the Indian authorities, who regarded him as a suspicious character and a general nuisance; nothing I wrote was likely to make very much difference. Actually I was in no doubt that he was immensely enjoying it all and would have been positively hurt if the police had ceased to keep a check upon his movements, supposing he could have brought himself to believe in the possibility of such an insult.

‘The Dalai Lama’s brother,’ continued Patterson, ‘seems to have been warned about his associates. He’s still very pleasant when we meet, mind you. But he hasn’t been up here since August.’

‘The Dalai Lama’s brother? Does he live in Darjeeling?’

‘Oh, yes, he lives here with his wife and children. A nice young man. We used to play tennis. But I think he’s been warned off.’

I made a note: ‘D.L.’s brother warned’, and got up. I should have liked to stay longer; but I hoped, as I wrote my name in the Pattersons’ visitors’ book, that I had made an acquaintance which could be taken up again at some future date. It would never surprise me, I thought, if Patterson were to receive an abrupt command to return to Scotland either from the Lord or from the police. Meanwhile, amused and intrigued as I was by this new friend, I was far less concerned with the man himself than with the subject which had suddenly been pushed into the forefront of my awareness: Tibet.

During the short time left to me in Darjeeling after this meeting with Patterson, I surveyed the Tibetan inhabitants of the town, and the numerous itinerant characters who looked as if they had only recently wandered in from Tibet itself, with greatly heightened interest. They seemed to fall very roughly into two main types: those with pronounced mongoloid features and a smaller number who were almost Western in appearance although their

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bony, distinguished faces had a beauty rarely seen today in the West. The purest example of the latter type is the Khamba tribesman from eastern Tibet. The Tibetan layman is generally to be seen wearing a brown knee-length robe (called a chuba) with long sleeves which in warmer weather he knots loosely round the waist, leaving the upper part of his body clothed in a white shirt. Occasionally, when he finds that he has risen somewhat in the social scale—in other words when he has to some degree ‘Westernized’ himself—he will wear an incongruous pair of European trousers beneath the brown robe, with shoes in keeping with this garment; otherwise he will have the traditional knee-length embroidered boots. In either case he is likely to be somewhat whimsically crowned with a European felt hat, a fashion which entered Lhasa before the recent floodtide of Western influence and became so firmly established that one can almost think of it now as part of the legitimate tradition of Tibet. The women wear a longer robe which varies in colour, bright hued blouses and gaudily striped aprons made of three pieces of material sewn together in such a way that the stripes do not exactly meet, a device which adds greatly to the decorative effect. In Tibet itself there are varying types of women’s headdress but in the Indian borderlands these are rarely to be seen; the women for the most part wear their shining black hair in a single plait interwoven with coloured braid and carried round the head. Finally, the monks and Lamas wear maroon-coloured robes and yellow tunics, generally leaving their shaven heads bare, although there are numerous types of headdress which are worn as occasion requires for the various rites. These monks and such of the layfolk as persist in the ancient ways without trying to create an impression of having ‘got on in life’ and acquired the stamp of ‘progress’, stride up and down the steep streets twirling their prayer wheels at a great rate, secure in the knowledge that each revolution of the wheel releases countless repetitions of the great mantra of Tibet—OM MANE PADME HUM—that untranslatable prayer which both honours the Lord Chenrezig and calls down his blessing upon the one who

sends it forth. This is, of course, the national habit: the Tibetan revolves his wheel as the Indian chews betel nut or the American gum, as the Italian picks his teeth and the Englishman smokes. The one obvious difference consists in the fact that the Tibetan habit is based upon a constant awareness of the spiritual world and its importance while the others are more or less harmless forms of self-indulgence. This being so, it has always struck me as odd that the prayer wheel should be so constantly referred to by Europeans as if it were a picturesque symbol of 'backwardness' and ignorance.

In order the better to observe these things, although I had no hope of making a detailed study of them since I was about to return to England, I made arrangements to spend a day in Kalimpong, the little half-Tibetan town situated at the starting-point of the trade routes from India into Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet. This town was originally within the territory of Bhutan, part of a strip of country ceded in 1864 to the British. To reach it from Darjeeling one travels by Landrover, a two and a half hour drive along narrow mountain roads over-shadowed for most of the way by dense forests. Waterfalls pour down the mountainside; lolloping brown monkeys watch from the trees or crouch by the side of the road; far away on the opposite side the mountains of Sikkim rise above valleys full of cloud; and one turns away one's eyes as the wheels of the car all but touch an unguarded precipice. I was constantly twisting my head as we left behind us some crude wayside shrine consisting of figures scraped out of the rock. Rudely fashioned and daubed with the ubiquitous red ochre, these divinities have that slightly sinister look which so often characterizes the artistic productions of children and peasants. Like the dolls of a conscientious child, they are regularly tended with solicitous forethought. A bit of a garland of marigolds, a dish of rice and wrapped sweets, a dyed offering-cake: always there is some indication that someone has remembered the bond between man and his gods and recalled, moreover, that no god likes to sit all day by the wayside with nothing to eat.

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This road from Darjeeling to Kalimpong winds for a long way down the mountainside; the air becomes hotter and one's ears pop; until the well-known landmark is reached at which the Rangit and the Teesta rivers meet and marry one another—a legend celebrated annually with joyful rites of encouragement gravely frowned upon by the local missionaries of the Scots Presbyterian Church—and one's car passes over the Teesta bridge. Here there is a village consisting of one street: children, goats and hungry dogs have to be dispersed before a car can pass; on either side is a blaze of the little bright oranges which are to be seen in this locality in great abundance; while below, in the background, can be glimpsed and heard the brown, swift-flowing river alongside which another road branches off in the direction of Sikkim's capital, Gangtok. Now the road climbs up once more to a height of between 4,000 feet and 5,000 feet; and here is Kalimpong, a ramshackle, tinny little town with a public relay service for the latest pop-music which wails between the hills in ceaseless discord and complaint. The town is built partly upon the two hills of Deolo and Rinchenpong; overshadowing it are the mountains of Sikkim; beyond them Kanchenjunga, half hidden by the lower slopes. At the foot of Rinchenpong stands the town's one 'Western-style' hotel, although this is not an altogether accurate description of Kalimpong's most remarkable establishment and certainly does it less than justice. I was anxious to make the acquaintance of the Macdonald family, owners of this hotel, from whom, according to Patterson and the Fawcetts, it was possible, if one gained their confidence, to get first-hand news out of Tibet. Not that I was hoping, in the space of a few hours, to gain anyone's confidence. I was filled with regrets that only now, when it was too late to pursue it to any purpose, had I found in India a definite and potentially absorbing interest. It did not, however, occur to me to prolong my visit. After six weeks in India, my desire to learn about Tibet was as nothing compared with the longing I felt for my own small Canterbury basement. I wanted to be in England for Christmas.

It was market day in Kalimpong: in the big market place vendors squatted by their booths and a motley collection of people, Nepali, Lepcha, Bhutanese, Chinese, Tibetan, thronged the narrow passageways between the displays of goods. It seemed to me, as I made my way into the midst of the crowd, followed by a bevy of small children with baskets who were hopefully anticipating employment, that I had never before seen so many miscellaneous objects gathered together in one place. Here were expensive ear-rings, nose-rings, bracelets, innumerable trinkets; here were penknives, old razor blades, worn-out watches, pins, bicycle lamps and sets of false teeth. Here were frayed Hollywood magazines, prayer wheels, tintacks, altar lamps, live cocks and hens, penny whistles, pornography and school arithmetic books. Glossy pictures of Pandit Nehru shone down at us, flanked by others of St Antony, the Lord Krishna and Prince Philip. Here on the ground were marrows, pumpkins, gourds, pomeloes, mangoes, paprikas, tiny green and red tomatoes, flaming oranges, piles of grain in which were deposited clusters of very small eggs, heaps of rice and dried fish, stacks of golden pastries and home-made sweets. And here, unmistakably, were the authentic people of Tibet: tall, sturdy and independent, wearing on their faces that curious Tibetan smile which struck me when I first observed it as being slightly loony and abnormally intelligent, both at once. At every step I was arrested by some face: typical and yet individual, the expression of the soul of a people and yet equally of a single life in its liberty to be alone with itself. The flat faces of the women were handsome rather than beautiful; their bodies strong and sufficient rather than graceful or sensuous. Suddenly I stopped in amazement, held by the spectacle of a mendicant Lama who resembled nothing so much as the White Knight in *Alice*. Hung about his person I counted several strings of holy beads, a prayer wheel, a pair of clappers, several holy pictures, shells, bones, a bell, a long trumpet and an amulet-box.

Resisting the attentions of the children with baskets, I bought nothing but a tiny golden egg of polished amber to remind me of

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the people of Tibet. Then I went to the hotel in search of the Macdonald family—and lunch.

‘Daddy’ Macdonald, owner of the Himalayan Hotel and former British Trade Agent at Gyantze in central Tibet, is half Lepcha and half Scot. His large family by a Nepali wife includes three daughters—Annie, Vicky and Vera—who live with him and run the hotel, which is their own home turned into an informal guest-house. I arrived there at the same time as an American couple, also from Darjeeling: we were slightly surprised because there was no reception desk and apparently no servant. However, after firmly marching through the hall and dining-room and out of the back door, I discovered the kitchen regions and a gently smiling Nepali bearer who served us lunch. The dining-room of the hotel is one half of a large room, of which the other half could be described as the lounge if this appellation were not, somehow, both an unmerited compliment and a gross insult. Nothing was ever less like an ordinary hotel lounge than this dark, friendly, dingy, beautiful room, its walls hung with faded t’ankas and an odd assortment of photographs. The t’ankas so enspelled me that I was in danger of remaining in the dining-room gazing at them until it was time to start back if we were to avoid the early-falling darkness. The t’anka is an art-form peculiarly characteristic of Tibet. It is a religious banner painted on linen or cloth and mounted on silk, with multi-coloured ribbons hanging down on either side and a silk curtain which is generally gathered into folds at the top but can be let down if necessary to hide the holy picture from the gaze of the curious. The divinities of Tibetan Buddhism must be depicted in accordance with certain exact measurements; there is a sacred geometry to be learned by every Tibetan religious artist. Only in such and such a pose may he depict the Lord Chenrezig; only precisely thus may the length of one hand of the Merciful One compare with the length from the eyes to the mouth. The colours are likewise prescribed; as are the symbols which may appear together with a particular pose or gesture on the part of the god. In the result it is difficult for anyone but an

expert to recognize the age, within several centuries, of a t'anka from Tibet, so rigid and unbroken has been the artistic tradition from which they emanate.

Tearing myself away from the t'ankas, I went in search of Annie Perry, the eldest Macdonald daughter and the official proprietress. Directed by the bearer to a long bungalow on a slope at the back of the hotel, from which it was hidden by a flamboyant flowering shrub and an elaborately ornamented Tibetan tent, I negotiated the kitchen drain and, having climbed a steep path, approached the door of Mrs Perry's room and knocked on it. It opened and revealed the lady of the house, garbed in a floppy shirt over a pair of old blue slacks and smoking a cigarette.

I perceived her at once as an oddity; I was never to think of her as an eccentric. It is, in any case, impossible to be an eccentric in Kalimpong unless perhaps one is the kind of person who looks normal in the Canterbury High Street. Kalimpong breeds, attracts, holds on to and generally encourages individuals who would be regarded anywhere else as the wildest eccentrics; but Annie is not of their number; Annie is simply a person in the fullest sense, with a personality so great in its own right that she has no need to underline it. I was slightly disconcerted at first by the abrupt manner of her greeting and by her peculiar ugliness—which turned to beauty the instant she smiled, such was the charm of her face when the light sprang up in it. She was a small, rotund woman, in the late fifties I thought. Her straight black hair was pulled back from a round, flat, yellowish face in which the eyes were very dark. When she spoke it was with an odd accent, neither Anglo-Indian nor British. We talked for perhaps ten minutes but there was very little just then to be said between us and Annie did not give herself away to strangers at a moment's notice. I went away feeling a little sad, as if I had looked through a chink in the door and seen—but I scarcely knew what I had seen, so narrow had been the chink.

A little way down the mountainside from Darjeeling is the village

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of Ghoom, where there is a famous monastery of Tibetan 'Yellow Hat' monks. The Gelugpa Order (sometimes referred to as the 'Yellow Hats' on account of their distinctive headdress) was founded by Tsong Khapa, spiritual ancestor to the Dalai Lamas, and is roughly equivalent to a State Church. Distinct from, although in no sense in opposition to it, are the 'Red Hat' Orders, the old 'unreformed' sects whose monks are permitted to marry whereas the Gelugpas are celibate.

From my fellow guests at the hotel who had made expeditions to this monastery I received the unanimous verdict that it was dirty, tawdry and without interest. It was clear to me, however, that my tastes were not the same as theirs, particularly in the matter of Oriental religious establishments ('I guess I've *had* temples', was the superbly economical statement of one lady at breakfast). Independently of the attraction I felt towards Tibet, I had become seriously interested in Buddhism as a result of reading two books by men who were later to become my friends: Bhikshu Sangharakshita's *Survey of Buddhism* and *Peaks and Lamas* by Marco Pallis. The latter is an account of the author's mountaineering expeditions in the Himalayas and his travels in the province of Ladakh, which is, in all but a legal sense, a part of Tibet. It is neither an ordinary travel book nor a scholarly treatise on Tibetan Buddhism from the point of view of the 'Tibetologist', but an elucidation of Buddhist doctrine as this is interpreted in Tibet and as it was imparted to the author by the Lamas and observed by him in the daily lives of monks and peasants. The teachings thus expounded attracted me immediately by the manner in which they indicated the incomprehensible and non-stateable by means of the most subtle and lucid metaphysical statements. This paradoxical combination of mystery and clear-cut definition my previous training as a Catholic enabled me to appreciate. I found it again in that great book *Survey of Buddhism* by Bhikshu Sangharakshita, the English monk who, living in Kalimpong, has dedicated himself to the renewal of Buddhism in India and to work amongst the former 'untouch-

ables' who have found in the Buddhist doctrine a new hope.

It was after reading these two books that I joined the Buddhist Society in London, although I never regarded myself or wished to be regarded as a Buddhist. As for Tibetan Buddhism, at the time of my first visit to India I knew it only from Marco Pallis; and his was certainly a rarefied—I am almost tempted to say an edited—version of it. Chiefly I was attracted by its emphasis upon the idea of apparently conflicting but ultimately reconcilable pairs of opposites which finds expression in the symbolism of the benign and fearful aspects of the higher gods. The same idea is to be found, of course, in Hinduism: the spouse of Shiva who is at once the fair and beautiful Parvati and Kali, the black goddess, presents an obvious example of it. Christianity has plumbed its depths and defined its ultimate implications; but this is a subject too vast to be discussed in the present context. On the psychological level Jung has familiarized us with the concept of the integration of the personality by means of the unification into a single whole of its good and evil elements—a truth which was unconsciously accepted by us all when we first delighted in *Beauty and the Beast*. In the context of Tibetan Buddhism, the Fearful Aspects, corresponding to the Beast of the fairy tale whose Benign Aspect is the Prince, have become inextricably confused with a host of demons who are simply the gods of the original shamanistic religion who have passed (as previously described) through a double transformation process. Cast out, with the advent of Buddhism, as enemies of the faith, they were conquered and reclaimed by Padma Sambhava, who reinstated them as demon-gods, all the more important for being so ancient and so fierce. It was these formidable spirits who became the tutelary divinities of monasteries and temples all over Tibet, fulfilling a role analogous to that of the patron saints of the Catholic Church.

I arrived at the monastery of Ghoom late one afternoon in a swirling mountain mist. The monastery stands by itself on an unprotected ridge exposed to all the weather these regions can produce: a little pagoda-like building, its upper storey perched in the

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centre of a flat roof giving it the appearance of a card-house. The ceremonial gateway through which one approaches it is decorated with painted stucco dragons and has a somewhat fairy-tale appearance. At the four corners of the monastery temple are the tall flag-poles which surround every Tibetan home and religious establishment, lifting up to the winds the faded and tattered prayer flags that the prayers inscribed thereon may blow away and be carried to the land of the gods. I could hardly have arrived at a better moment. When I entered the temple, escorted by an old monk whose friendly smiles made up for the fact that we had no common language in which to communicate, I found the whole community seated in rows on the floor chanting their equivalent of the daily office.

The old monk beckoned to me as if he would have taken me on a conducted tour of the temple; but I shook my head and remained standing where I was until he drifted away and left me to myself. I was spellbound by the enormous Buddha which confronted me on the further side of an elaborate altar-throne in front of which were rows of butter-lamps and paper prayer-wheels revolving in the rising heat. This image was constructed of clay, gaudily painted and dressed in elaborate ceremonial garments. The slanty, half-closed eyes were a vivid blue against the flat golden face, the head supported a fantastic crown, and the curving golden hands held between long female fingers a once-white ceremonial scarf such as Tibetans present to their gods or to one another as tokens of respect or reverence. From the neck of the image hung a long garland of paper flowers; and more paper flowers stood in vases on either side, above a line of butter-lamps. The obviously unusual feature of this Buddha was the typically Western posture, seated as if on a chair rather than in the lotus position, the reason being that this was one of the rare representations of the Maitreya Buddha (called by Tibetans Jampa), the Buddha who is to come and of whom it is said that he will come from the west to save the world in a time of darkness. It is, of course, a universal tenet of Buddhism that Gotama was only one of a long line of Buddhas or

Enlightened Ones, each one of whom presides over a single age in the history of the world, giving place to a successor who will manifest himself when the times are reverting to chaos. Of Gotama it is said that he was the Lord of Compassion, of Maitreya, that he will be the Lord of Love: a curious distinction, I used to think, for a Buddhist to make, implying as it does that in the Maitreya alone will be seen and worshipped Buddhism's ultimate fulfilment.

I began to walk slowly round the little temple, up to the feet of the image and back and up the other side, watched in a friendly fashion by the maroon robed, chanting monks. The walls were full of shelves containing ancient scriptural documents; on either side of the image were glass cupboards in which were displayed a motley collection of smaller gods. As all the light in the building came from the doorway and the butter-lamps, I had to peer hard into the murky depths of these cabinets in order to make out the figures within and recognize the Lord Chenrezig himself with a train of lesser divinities, a community of dolls in ragged garments representing one small fraction of the vast pantheon of Tibet. More fascinating even than these were the wall frescoes, depicting a swarming horde of celestial creatures, weird and terrible forms cast out, as it were, from the inner mind into the outer environment. On the right, as one came through the main door, was the tutelary divinity of the monastery, Palden Lhamo, the blue-skinned goddess, she who was incarnated in the great Queen herself, astride a demonic mule and hung all over with an inextricable tangle of skulls, serpents, monsters and green human heads. Perhaps for the duration of the ceremony which was being performed in the temple, the veil which would normally have shrouded her was drawn aside, enabling me to take the risk (which for the unbeliever is regarded as considerable) of gazing upon her exposed face.

Turning away from a prolonged contemplation of this goddess, I came upon the image of another god. This Personage, who was obviously of considerable importance, sat by himself in a corner

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of the temple, honoured by a row of butter-lamps, the face of him painted in gold and crimson to create the impression of flowing blood, the head lolling forward beneath a crown of skulls, the expression evil and witless. I approached him with a wary reverence. He was hung about with dirty, tattered robes and his feet were enclosed in a dilapidated pair of old boots. The Lamas, I thought, treated the wardrobes of their gods with a masculine casualness.

At this point a junior monk entered the building, carrying an enormous teapot. Without leaving their places, the seated monks produced from the depths of their robes little shallow bowls which were duly filled with the steaming butter tea which is drunk almost continuously throughout the day in Tibet. When all had been served, the teapot was placed near the altar to await the need for replenishments. It was a pleasantly domestic scene, against the background of turning prayer-wheels and flickering butter-lamps, at the feet of the Buddha of Love.

Two days before my departure from Darjeeling I nerved myself to send a note to the Dalai Lama's brother, Gyalo Thondup, asking, as a great favour, if I might call on him and talk about Tibet. As an excuse for this intrusion, happily unaware of the effect which such an admission was likely to produce upon any well-known Tibetan at that precise moment, I explained that I wished to write an article on the subject. In reply I received a brief note written in the oddly endearing English which is one of Gyalo's more profitable, if unintentional, accomplishments, inviting me to come on the following morning to his house.

I was not a little nervous at the prospect of this meeting which I had brought upon myself. I knew that in Tibet all the members of the 'Yapshi' family of the Dalai Lama are treated with the utmost reverence. When the Fourteenth Dalai Lama was recognized in his babyhood, according to the signs believed to indicate the new Incarnation, his family were raised from being small peasant farmers to a position superior to the highest nobility

of Tibet, never to be approached without a humble obeisance. What etiquette should I be expected to observe in meeting this brother of a god? I wondered whether I should curtsy to him, for instance. Certainly he lived in a wholly unpretentious-looking house above a small shop selling rolls, sweets and cigarettes. I climbed the stone steps to the side of this establishment and rang the bell, without having the least notion of the kind of person I was about to confront. George Patterson had mentioned his playing tennis. The idea seemed incongruous.

A servant answered the door and directed me to find my own way up the stairs; as I did so, a tall, unassuming man wearing an impeccably correct grey suit emerged from a room and greeted me with the words: 'How do you do? I am Gyalo Thondup.' There was something even in his manner of introducing himself which implied that no more ordinary individual could possibly be in existence.

He took me into a small room, simply furnished, with nothing in it to suggest the East except the very low tables and seats, and offered me a cigarette. I could not have been more spellbound had I been transported into a scene out of the *Arabian Nights*. Attached to the gentle, thoroughly Westernized young man who was now my host was the whole fairytale world of the Potala Palace, of the little boy whose birth had been heralded by a rainbow and whose presence was discovered by means of a vision in a holy lake. I longed to ask Gyalo Thondup whether he had been present on the famous occasion when his two-year-old brother ran to greet the high dignitaries who had come in search of him, crying out: 'Lama! Lama!' although they were disguised as laymen; but there could be no doubt that even to introduce such a subject would be indelicate. I sensed the fact that for this half-sophisticated, half-innocent young man torn between two worlds which might meet in him but would never mingle or even live side by side in comfort, the mysterious aura surrounding his family could never be anything but an embarrassment. For me, the legends of the rainbow and the holy lake and the marvellous

child might have a reality of their own, bestowing upon them a kind of truth just as important as the truth that I was seated, here and now, in front of an actual and tangible Gyalo Thondup—but for him the tension was too great; too many questions demanded to be asked and, once they were asked, the answers could only seem like a total violation of a once apparently inviolable faith. Even I, while I had pictured Gyalo Thondup as being present at that extraordinary scene in his parents' house, while I had seen it all so vividly before the eyes of the mind that I had actually wanted to hear him describe it himself, when I asked myself: 'Do I seriously believe that this actually happened, just in that way, in this everyday world of clock-time and three-dimensional space?' the answer could only be that I did not believe it.

Yapshi Gyalo Thondup was senior by some eight years or so to his twenty-three-year-old brother, the Dalai Lama. He was a heavily-built young man who moved, none the less, with a surprising grace and lightness (all Tibetans, I noticed, had something of the pliancy and light-footedness of mooning apes: it was not for nothing that they claimed descent from the Monkey-god). Gyalo's features were mongoloid, like his brother's (the present Yapshi family comes from Amdo, one of the semi-Chinese border provinces of what is known, misleadingly, as 'Inner Tibet'; consequently they all have this markedly Mongolian appearance) and his skin was unusually fair even for a Tibetan, although most of them are relatively fair-skinned compared with other peoples of the East: it is perhaps one reason why they slide with such alarming facility into the Western way of life.

The predominant impression which came to me in the first few moments of meeting Gyalo Thondup was that here was a person who had not altogether lost the kind of primitive, transparent innocence which in the West has been stamped out of existence so that only small children, and of these only a limited number, are capable of manifesting it. Had I been told that he was already inextricably involved in the intrigues and jealousies of Tibetan politics and that he was shortly to become the most important

influence in Tibetan affairs as principal adviser to and representative of His Holiness, the knowledge might have surprised me a good deal, but it could not have altered that first impression or caused me to disbelieve in it. The character of the Dalai Lama's brother can only be understood in relation to the most fundamental problem of Tibet itself; seen in that relation it becomes not only comprehensible but highly significant. Gyalo is the symbol of his people as they are in this twentieth century present. Therefore it is not inappropriate that the first qualities I saw in him were gentleness and innocence, these being the first qualities that I saw in the people of Tibet before the vision with which I fell in love gave way to the two-sided face of truth. It was like a physical pain to me to imagine such a person being exposed to the machinations of the Chinese Communists. Patterson had declared that any Tibetan living in India who committed an act of indiscretion which might annoy the Chinese Government was liable to be extradited and forced to return to Tibet and certain death. Patterson was inclined to be melodramatic; but I could believe it. Meanwhile my host was apologizing for his cold, which seemed to be causing him acute anxiety lest he should be so inhospitable as to give it to a guest. It was certainly a dreadful cold. I was seized by an impulse to assure him that I wouldn't in the least mind catching it—but as this seemed unlikely to convince I declared, with equal untruthfulness, that I never caught colds, adding with great concern that I was afraid he must be finding it very unpleasant. Poor man, I thought, watching him snuffle and gasp into a pocket handkerchief, and how remarkable it was that even this preposterous cold did not detract from the grace of his personality but only made his courteous manners the more evident.

Tentatively and with apologies, Gyalo Thondup inquired whether I were a journalist; when I assured him that I had no connection with the Press I sensed his relief. Perhaps, I suggested, he would prefer not to discuss politics? Oh no, he was glad to discuss anything I wished; only I must understand that he knew

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very little and was not of the slightest importance. For a long time, he added sorrowfully, he had received no news either of his mother or of the Dalai Lama. As for the reports that came through, they were rumours and were not to be believed. How could we know what was the truth?

A servant came in with tea and little floury cakes. Mrs Thondup was not in evidence; but a number of children hovered outside the door, smiling at me and obviously wanting to be introduced. One small boy, who turned out to be a neighbour's child, slipped into the room demanding to have a toy fixed up. It struck me that Gyalo was fond of children and at home with them; and as he continued to talk, in his halting English, seeming to be struggling with the unfamiliar words in order to express something complicated and painful which he hardly understood himself, I felt that here was someone who desired nothing except to live as an ordinary law-abiding citizen and found himself against his will involved in the intrigues of politics and pushed into the limelight. Unlike Patterson, who made no attempt to disguise the fact that he gloried in such involvements and deliberately steered himself into the centre of important events, the Dalai Lama's brother was at pains to make me understand that he was appalled to find himself conspicuous. 'People think,' he went on, 'that because of my brother I am important. But I am not important at all. I know very little. It is very difficult.' Then he began to speak of the sufferings of his people and his longing for them to find peace so that they might have a chance, with the assistance of the Chinese, to lift themselves out of their primitive ignorance. If the Chinese could only be persuaded to allow them their freedom . . . if the Chinese could be reasoned with . . .

'But do you believe,' I asked, 'that Communists will listen to reason?'

He put his head on one side and smiled at me with a look of bewildered sadness.

'What to do? We have no alternative. We are desperate.'

Looking back upon this conversation from the vantage point of

a wider and deeper knowledge than I had then of the problems which we can scarcely be said to have discussed but about which we spoke—problems of which at that time I knew next to nothing and Gyalo knew very much more than he wished me to think—I can see how I extracted from it one point which embedded itself in my mind and which I did not forget, and how this was the very point which in the time to come was to seem to me of paramount importance. It struck me then, as I considered the attitude towards the occupation of his country which was being expressed by Gyalo Thondup, that the Tibetans, even those who were to some extent educated and able to speak English—I glanced, as we talked, at a row of books in English on subjects connected with history and politics—were not in a position to see Communism in its worldwide context and understand its true aims and significance. Whatever atrocities the Chinese might commit against them, they would see those atrocities as the actions of individuals rather than as the inevitable outcome of a religious discipline committed to the destruction of all other forms of religious belief. For this reason there would always be the danger that even the more intelligent Tibetans might be tricked, again and again, into ‘agreements’ with the Chinese Government.

‘The Communists,’ I said, ‘will try to destroy your people’s religion. And surely your people are very religious?’

‘You are right. My people are religious. My people are so pure and innocent. They do not want to fight but fighting is forced upon them. Our religion teaches us to hurt nothing, not even an insect.’

When I suggested that India was to blame for her lack of sympathy with Tibet’s struggle for independence, he would not have it.

‘Please, from whom have you received this impression that India does not sympathize with us?’

I could not avoid so direct a question. ‘From Mr Patterson.’

‘Mr Patterson . . .’, he paused as if his English were hopelessly inadequate to express his mixed feelings towards our common acquaintance. ‘No, it is not true. It is nonsense.’

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Suddenly, recalling all that Patterson had told me concerning the possibility that Thondup might be forced to return to Tibet and not certain even that he might not himself choose eventually to go back, I was overcome by a sensation of fear, as if at some horrible vision of a monstrous evil creeping up upon the simple, ordinary things of human life, such as this home of Gyalo Thondup's.

'But—*you will stay here?*' I asked. 'You will not go back?'

'I do not know. I long very much to be with my own people.'

'Your brother, the Dalai Lama—they keep him a prisoner?'

He smiled at me sadly and said: 'Everyone is a prisoner in Tibet.'

Later, speaking of his brother, he said gently: 'He was so little when they came—so little. What could he do? He did not know enough.'

'And now,' I suggested, 'he is the symbol for your people of their freedom, their religion—everything?'

But he shook his head as if this were indeed beyond the powers of his English or indeed of any other language to express.

'You *cannot* understand this . . . no one but a Tibetan can understand it.'

On a shelf close to his chair there was a framed photograph. 'Is that your family?' I asked.

'That is my family. My mother and brothers and sisters. All of us.' He handed me the photograph. Eight smiling people stood in a line, evidently in order of seniority: the mother on the extreme right; then a sister; a Lama brother; Gyalo himself; another monk; the Dalai Lama; a younger sister; and lastly a little boy in Lama's robes whom I guessed to be Ngari Rimpoche, the child who had been born in Lhasa some time after his brother's enthronement. I looked intently at the figure of the priest-king of Tibet. The Precious Protector, the Inmost One, the All Embracing Lama was screwing up his eyes behind a conspicuous pair of horn-rimmed spectacles as if in friendly bewilderment at the odd world in which he found himself.

I returned the photograph and, since my host was still drinking tea and pressing me to finish the little white cakes, I felt that it was time to change the subject. Had he been to England? Yes, to London. I remarked that I lived in Canterbury and, opening my bag, took out a packet of postcards and photographs.

'This,' I said, putting them into his hand, 'is the greatest and most beautiful cathedral in England.'

He looked through them with what appeared to be an unfeigned interest although it may have been no more than his immense politeness. I explained them to him in detail and then said, as he made a gesture of returning the packet: 'Keep them, please, if they interest you.' It pleased me to think that perhaps, if only to display an association with the West, he would put a postcard of Canterbury Cathedral on his mantelpiece.

It was for a long time a puzzle to me that a photograph could have been taken of the united family of the Dalai Lama at so late a date that he himself appeared in it as an adult. The explanation is involved but is perhaps worth inserting at this point. The occasion was in 1956 at the time of the Dalai Lama's visit to India to attend an important Buddhist celebration as the guest of the Indian Government. With him had come his mother and the eldest and youngest of the family—Mrs Tsering Dolma and Ngari Rimpoche—who were still living in Tibet. Gyalo Thondup was already in Darjeeling and had taken charge of his younger sister who was being educated at the Catholic school; while Thupten Norbu (the former Abbot of Kum-bum) and the third brother, Lobsang Samten, both of whom had previously escaped to the United States, had returned to India on a short visit.

The Dalai Lama's father, who seems to have remained to the end a gruff, rather fierce-tempered peasant, had not lived to see the Communist occupation of Tibet. The fact that his wife, a strong and healthy woman who was at no time in circumstances of grievous poverty or want, lost as many children as she succeeded in rearing beyond babyhood, is seldom mentioned by

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Tibetans—not, apparently, from motives of reticence but because such an experience was regarded as normal in a land which knew nothing of medical science until it was introduced by the Communists.

Chapter 2 · FLOWER IN A TEACUP

I WAS back in the Cathedral for Christmas. At the evening service I was in the Deanery pew beside the family of the Dean of Canterbury, the 'Red Dean', whom I regarded with so deep an affection and whose wife I valued so greatly as a friend that I forced myself, day after day, to defy the inevitable and postpone the disintegration of an untenable relationship. I watched the Dean as he progressed past us toward the high altar in his red robes, the crucifix presented to him by the Russian Patriarch glinting above the old hands folded against his breast. Still my eyes followed him as he first received the enormous offertory plate and then, having laid it on the altar, turned round to face us. The congregation sank to its knees awaiting the Blessing. Intermittently for nineteen years I had participated in 'the Dean's' Evensong on Sundays and festivals and always omitted to bow my head when he lifted his hand in benediction over us, because I liked to watch and afterwards to remember him in this particular moment.

'May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you his peace. . . .'

I was in no fit state to receive the blessing of the Lord's peace that Christmas. Now that I had returned to England I found that my thoughts were fixed upon Tibet. After combing every scrap of news that I could out of the daily press, I gathered that the fighting had become more serious and the general situation, concerning which the published reports were maddeningly brief and indefinite, had reached a point of tension at which there were widespread fears for the Dalai Lama's life. The Dalai Lama was, of course, in a position of extreme helplessness. Despite the undertaking given in the 1950 seventeen-point Agreement that

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his 'established status, functions and power' would not be interfered with by the Central Government, he had been reduced immediately upon his return to the status of a puppet while all his former authority and that of his cabinet passed into the hands of Chinese officials supported by Chinese troops. What his experience can have been during those nine years of his subjection is probably unimaginable for anyone who cannot enter into a Tibetan mind: at the time when I first gave thought to the matter I simply supposed that he must be enduring the kind of personal anguish and battles of conscience which would be suffered in a similar situation by an individual from the twentieth-century West. And yet I was only interested in the Dalai Lama because he belonged neither to the West nor to the present; because he represented my imagination's dream of Tibet, which would otherwise have remained abstract and indistinct. In this way do we clothe individuals with dreams so that we may thereafter see the dream in a human form and so lay hold upon it.

Paradoxically, however, the person whom I chiefly associated with my dream of Communism—which was a nightmare containing every element of horror that I was capable of dragging into consciousness—was the 'Red Dean' whom I loved and in whose hospitable home I was frequently a guest. It was partly as a result of this association with the Dean that I found myself in the curious position of belonging to a circle of friends in my home city all of whom, apart from myself, were Communists. I am far from wishing to imply that Canterbury is a city rife with Communism; but it happens to be a city in which, generally speaking, the people who are the more pleasant to know are the members of the Party and their fellow-travelling contingent.

In March 1959, after two months of brooding over Tibet, reading every book that I could find on the subject and waiting in vain for replies to the agitated appeals for news with which I continually pestered George Patterson, Annie Perry and Gyalo Thondup, I was called to the Deanery to cope with a domestic crisis. There was a nation-wide 'flu epidemic; the Dean, his wife, one of

their young daughters and the Deanery cook had all gone down with it. I became a kind of general domestic 'help', cooking, carrying trays and going backwards and forwards to the shops. The Dean was seriously ill; and remained so after the younger members of the family had recovered sufficiently to get up. As a patient he was unfailingly gentle and considerate, full of gratitude for the slightest service and never on a single occasion, for all his pain and discomfort, uttering a word of complaint. Between him and myself a cobwebby veil seemed to disintegrate. I saw him once again as he had been during the war years, in the days when his wife and children were evacuated to Wales and my mother and I, living in the Precincts, were personally upheld through days and nights of fear and sleeplessness by the spectacle of his courage and faith. A particularly large bomb exploding on the front doorstep had reduced the Deanery to a mysterious shambles in the depths of which, prowling with a torch and in constant fear that something might collapse either overhead or underfoot, one came upon the few rooms in which the Dean and his guests (for he threw open what remained of his house to those who had lost their own) endeavoured to preserve the essentials of a civilized existence. I used to remember these things when the courtesies of the war gave way to the returning tide of normal life and the *élite* of Canterbury, those who sailed as by right into the best pews for the Sunday morning service and had not been there to see what was happening during the years when fifteen high explosive bombs fell within a few yards of the Dean's residence, took it upon themselves to look the other way when the Dean passed them in the street.

There was only one respect in which the Dean was not an ideal patient. He was so determined not to be ill that, defying his eighty-odd years and the fact that he was recovering from pneumonia after severe 'flu, he insisted upon getting up too soon and I would find him in the kitchen at half-past seven, black gaiters and all complete, cooking his own breakfast. Moreover, although Easter was only a fortnight ahead, he declared his in-

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tion of preaching his customary Easter sermon from the Cathedral pulpit.

I was still at the Deanery and likely to be so for several weeks when the first news appeared of the crisis in Tibet. Fighting had broken out in the streets of Lhasa. The Dalai Lama with his family and his chief ministers had escaped and no one knew their whereabouts. What had in fact happened was that an explosion of popular feeling had been provoked when the Chinese Commander in Lhasa had invited the Dalai Lama to come to the Military Area Headquarters on March 10 to attend a 'cultural' display, stipulating that he should come without his usual Lama bodyguard and official entourage, as a result of which oddly worded invitation suspicions had been aroused that the Dalai Lama would be kidnapped. Whether or not this was indeed the Chinese intention may never be known but there seems to be a strong likelihood that Tibetan fears were not baseless. The Chinese had learned by now that the Dalai Lama was unobtrusively withholding from them the enormous moral support which it was within his power to bestow and which was urgently needed by the new rulers. After nine years of continuous indoctrination, brought to its highest pitch of intensity during the 1954 visit of the Dalai and Panchen Lamas to Peking, they had failed to turn the most influential figure in Tibet into a reliable Communist. The Panchen Lama, who was several years younger and had never been outside the sphere of Chinese influence, had become a model puppet; but the Panchen did not command the same devotion from the people as the Dalai Lama; moreover this particular Panchen was not generally regarded as being the true Incarnation since his discovery had been largely a political matter and his right to the sacred office, as against that of a more popular rival claimant, had never been subjected to the traditional tests. However, it seems probable that the Chinese were already planning to install him, as they have since tried to do, in the Potala Palace. Their plan, if they had one, was forestalled when, on March 10, the date upon which the Dalai Lama was due to attend the dis-

play, an enormous crowd of Tibetans surrounded his summer palace in the Jewel Park and physically prevented him from leaving it. At the same time fighting and demonstrations broke out in the streets; and on March 12, 5,000 Tibetan women marched to the consulates of India, Bhutan and Nepal to seek the intervention of these neighbouring States and their witness to a manifesto denouncing the seventeen-point treaty and demanding the withdrawal of the Chinese from Tibet. This manifesto was finally signed in the Jewel Park by the Tibetan Kashag or cabinet. A week later, to quote *The Times* of March 25, 'the fighting began in earnest, the small Tibetan army declaring for independence, monasteries handing out to the people stores of hidden arms, and the Khamba guerrilla bands doubtless moving in from their hiding places outside the city to join in. But by this time the Dalai Lama had probably been out of the city for two days. Since then there has been total silence about his whereabouts . . . and this silence may well remain unbroken for days or weeks.'

On March 17, the Dalai Lama, acting upon the advice of his ministers, had disguised himself, removed his conspicuous spectacles and walked out into the midst of the crowd surrounding the Jewel Park. At a pre-arranged place he had been joined by his family and a small entourage, including his Lama tutors and the members of the cabinet, and had commenced his extraordinary trek to safety across Tibet. The world was not to hear of him again until March 31.

The Chinese lost no time in broadcasting claims to the effect that the Dalai Lama had been 'abducted under duress', in support of which statement they published the text of a correspondence alleged to have passed between the Dalai Lama and the Chinese Commander-in-Chief during the time when the former was confined within the Jewel Park. No one, outside the Communist world, not even Pandit Nehru, believed in the authenticity of this correspondence, at least the Dalai Lama's side of it. '. . . Reactionary evil elements,' he was said to have written to the Chinese

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General, 'are carrying out activities against me, endangering me, under the pretext of protecting my safety. If you have any internal directives for me, please tell me frankly through this messenger.' In another letter he had referred to 'the illegal people's conference', and finally on March 16 he was alleged to have informed the Chinese that he was about to make his way secretly to the Military Command Area 'when there are enough forces that I can trust'. Therefore, proceeded the Chinese claim, it was clear that the Dalai Lama had not wished to leave Lhasa and had been willing to co-operate with the Chinese against the 'reactionary evil elements'. However, to the vast majority of sympathizers with the cause of Tibet, including myself, all that seemed to be clear was the inauthenticity of the correspondence. As I read these letters for the first time, hastily, before it was necessary to send up the papers with the Dean's breakfast, I simply dismissed them as nonsense.

I had been prepared, of course, for news of a crisis. What I had never been led to suppose, even by Patterson in his more dramatic moments, was that the slightest possibility existed of the Dalai Lama's escape from Communist Tibet. This extraordinary development filled me with mingled joy and fear; for I knew that the Dalai Lama was the focus of the people's faith and that it was a plain fact and no romantic word-spinning that if he were killed the spirit of Tibet would be withdrawn and this would become apparent in the most tangible manner almost at once. It is not for nothing that the Dalai Lama is called by Tibetans: Kundun, the Presence. His function in the eyes of his people is not primarily either to teach or even to rule but simply to be *present*. They believe that by his Presence the protective power of the Lord of Mercy is made active in their midst. And now this Presence was somewhere in the wild mountain regions of Tibet, pursued by Chinese troops.

A few days before Easter, as the news became progressively worse, I sent a telegram to the Hotel Mount Everest, tentatively booking a room for myself: it was in my mind that, provided the

cook returned and the Dean became no worse, I would fly to India in Easter week. I knew that I was acting on a crazy impulse and that what I was doing was unlikely to be of the slightest use. Vaguely in my mind was the idea of discovering, as a result of talking to the refugees and to the various Tibetan officials to whom I hoped to be introduced by Gyalo Thondup, what could be done in England to help Tibet. I had a hazy notion that I might return and look for some suitable persons, since I myself could scarcely have been more unsuitable, to found a society for assisting the refugees and publicizing the cause of Tibet's independence.

Easter day was sunny and cold. The Dean was to preach at the morning service. Greatly to my relief, since I was extremely nervous on his account, fearing that he could not afford so great a tax upon his strength, I could not go to this service because it was necessary for someone to stay behind to cook the lunch. My first action on Easter morning was to go downstairs in my dressing gown and pull the *Observer* out of the letterbox. The whole of its front page was given up to Tibet. A long report from Darjeeling described the anguish of Tibetans in India as they waited for news and included a pathetic interview with Gyalo Thondup, who had declared, as he had done to me, 'Tibet is desperate'. His mother, sister and youngest brother were all with the Dalai Lama and I was not surprised to learn from the *Observer's* correspondent that 'acute personal anxiety makes the Dalai Lama's brother in Darjeeling fear the worst'.

None of us enjoyed our Easter breakfast. The family were tense with anxiety for the Dean and I was aware of nothing but the *Observer* glaring up at us from the table while we tried to eat. For the first time I did not care how the Dean fared with his sermon. What was I doing in this house amongst people who were active supporters of the enemies of Tibet? And why should I care if the Dean broke down in a pulpit from which, when I looked at the matter from a public rather than a personal standpoint, I never doubted that he had no right to preach?

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The necessity of cooking the dinner obliged me to calm myself. The Dalai Lama was in mortal danger but there was still the little matter of the Deanery joint which had to be put into a tin with sufficient lard and shut into the oven at the right moment. Nowell Johnson came into the kitchen, dressed for church, looking strained and anxious. She said: 'Hewlett is just coming down. I must go across.' I looked at her and thought, as I had so often done before, that on those occasions when she appeared in the Cathedral in smart conventional attire as the Dean's wife, holding her own against her husband's critics, she was so beautiful and gracious that she outshone, even by their own standards, the whole female contingent of that petty, snobbish little society which blossomed outwards from the Cathedral and its Precincts. Not one of them, as they watched the Dean that morning, hating him for his Communism because his Communism threatened their closed-in world of privilege and comfort, had anything approaching her charm or her looks, let alone her goodness. It occurred to me suddenly that I had not seen the Dean to give him my greetings for the feast. I left the joint and went to the foot of the little winding stairs which led from his room at the top of the house. Within a few minutes he came down them, wearing his red robes and black skull cap and the conspicuous Russian crucifix; and looking, with his genial smile, not so very different from the Dean of nineteen years ago whom I used to approach with all the shy hero-worship of the prophet typical of the days when so many of the young dreamed of a Soviet Utopia and imagined themselves Communists. Thus attired (save for the crucifix) the Dean had been, for me, an image constantly moving on the screen of my bewildered youth, through years of danger and great fear, of wildly joyful friendships, of romantic unrequited loves, years of such intensity of living that the memory of them could still be sufficiently potent to drown the thought of the present. I put my arms round his neck and kissed him on both cheeks.

The Dean preached his Easter sermon and returned triumphant.

The joint was burnt but he declared that he liked it burnt and appeared not to notice that I had absent-mindedly mashed the potatoes with sweet condensed milk. Everyone was happy because the Dean was no worse. The *Observer* had disappeared from the table if not altogether from my thoughts.

That evening, as I sat with Nowell while she did the family ironing in the kitchen, a conversation ensued between us which I have remembered ever since as summing up the essence of the conflict between public issues and private relationships. I had not intended to discuss any very serious subject. Instead I began talking rather vaguely about the possibility that I would soon have to give up my flat.

‘If you are really going to do that, Loïs, perhaps we could find you a room in this house. It would be nice to have you about. You fit in so wonderfully with us.’

I stared at the kitchen table and forced myself to reply to this as I felt that I must reply if a shred of truthfulness were to be preserved between us.

‘In so many ways,’ I said, ‘I am happier here than anywhere else. I love being with you all. And yet it makes me sad too. I wonder if you realize how much I *mind* the barrier between us. I mean—because of politics.’

Nowell put down her iron and looked up. ‘Loïs, my dear, indeed I didn’t. I had no idea you minded so much.’

‘I hate to make issues about things,’ I stumbingly went on, ‘and so I try to avoid talking about it. But I can never forget it for a moment.’

‘But, Loïs, *why*? Why can’t you just accept that we think differently about it? I don’t mind that you disagree with us. I’m sorry, of course; but I don’t understand why it should affect our friendship.’

An old friend of mine and of theirs had said exactly the same thing to me earlier that year in the Deanery drawing-room. To him I had replied: ‘Tell me: if I had been a supporter of the Nazis before the war, would it not have “affected our friendship”?’

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Then, as he stared at me in horrified astonishment: 'You see, my dear, I hate what you believe just as bitterly as we all of us hated Nazi-ism once and as I would hate it again, of course, if there were any question of it. That is what you *must* understand when I tell you that I find our relationship difficult.'

To Nowell, however, I said something a little, although not substantially, different—because we were two women and so a more personal and perhaps emotional approach to the matter was natural between us.

'For me,' I said, 'and surely for you too, this is not just a matter of disagreement. This thing in which you believe will go on, and the people like me who hate it will die rather than allow it to triumph. And you—you will be willing to die in order to bring it about. And probably it will triumph. You see, I even believe that. But there will be a terrific struggle and in that struggle you and I will be on opposite sides. One of us may even be responsible for the other's death.'

Nowell said quietly: 'I believe that it will triumph. But gradually, without bloodshed. I don't believe that in England the kind of thing will happen that you are thinking of.'

'And then,' I said, 'what do you suppose will happen to people like myself?'

'I think that people will learn gradually to understand and accept it.'

'There are some of us,' I said, 'who will never accept it. We shall die rather than allow this to happen in England. You must believe that even if you can't understand it.'

Nowell looked at me with an expression of gentle sadness. 'Do you think you feel so bitterly about it *because* you believe it will triumph?'

'Perhaps. One doesn't mind so much about things which hold no menace. But I know that I shall never feel differently about this. And to me, as to you, it is almost more important than anything else.'

At the end of our talk, as we parted for the night, Nowell

looked at me with the direct expression in her eyes which was one of the things I valued in her so much, and said: 'Even if we should find ourselves actually fighting each other, we should know that we were fighting for what we believed and it would make no difference.'

That, it seems to me, is the most (and surely it is very much) that one person can say to another when they find themselves in this not unusual relationship.

The news that the Dalai Lama had crossed safely into India and was somewhere in the wilds of the north-east frontier region was two days old by the time I left England. Gyalo Thondup, who had been in New Delhi with a Tibetan delegation, had left the capital 'in a hurry' according to the *Daily Telegraph*. I wondered what I should do if there was no one left in Darjeeling to whom I could turn for assistance. The idea of trekking through tiger-infested jungles in search of the Dalai Lama and his relations did not appeal to me as it apparently did to a number of enthusiastic newspaper correspondents. At the BOAC terminal, as I waited for the airport bus, I drank tea and read all the evening papers, which were so full of the Dalai Lama's escape that they scarcely had room to spare for any other subject. Old photographs of the 'God-King', as the press had decided to miscall him, raked out of dusty little shops in the border district, met my eye from bookstalls and from cast-off evening papers left on forsaken seats. Everything around me was so dream-like that elaborate planning and forethought seemed irrelevant: I should go where my dream carried me; and meanwhile I went on drinking tea and watching the clock. Some time later there was the black river with the lights of the embankment dodging in the blackness; I was in the airport bus going in the direction of Beaufort Street. Piled on my lap were two bags and a cardboard box. The box was labelled St Ivel's Lactic Cheese and contained an eighteenth-century Crown Derby cup and saucer which I had bought at a Canterbury antique shop as a present for His Holiness.

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Later still, after an interval of timelessness and fear, in the middle of another night, I found myself crossing the tarmac through an almost tangible barrier of heat and climbing into another bus. It was a long drive into the centre of Calcutta from the airport; outside the windows of the bus were the soft confusing lights of pavement fires and lamps hanging in open shops, illumining the faces of men and beasts. I was back in India. And tired and lonely as I felt, revolting as were the smells, squalid as were the sights of that city of poverty and hopelessness, I sighed in an instant of pure delight, realizing how I had craved to return, how impossible it would be for me ever to cease to long for this strange bewitchment. For India had entered into me in a manner that was spiritual and physical, both at once, as it must be with a land where the emanation of holiness rises with the stench of excrement and the spirit is inseparable from the flesh.

At five in the morning I roused myself from stupor in a closed room which smelt as if it had not been aired since the hotel was built. Being nervous of malarial mosquitoes, I had made no attempt to open the windows with the result that I had almost suffocated in the course of the short night. I bathed my face in tepid water, drank a cup of tea and made my way back to the airport. There, as I waited for the plane to Bagdogra, I bought a Communist paper called *Blitz* with a front page article on Kalimpong, scattered with references to Gyalo Thondup. According to the writer of this article the Dalai Lama's brother was the secret leader of the Tibetan resistance movement. His Chinese wife (I had not known that she was Chinese) was an ardent supporter of Chiang Kai-shek and the two of them were busy enlisting Kuo-mintang support. Both were close friends of 'that fishy character' George Patterson. A short while ago, continued the article, Thondup had published a statement in which he declared that the Dalai Lama was a stooge of the Communists. One was left with the impression that the towns of Darjeeling and Kalimpong were crowded with ex-noblemen from Lhasa who did no work, lived

on funds from the United States and whiled away their time plotting against the Chinese Government.

As the familiar little Dakota bumped above the hot plain, I pondered these statements. This was my first introduction to the atmosphere of accusation and counter-accusation, mud-slinging and innuendo, deliberate putting together of truth and nonsense in a manner designed to do the maximum amount of mischief, with which I was to become so familiar that I was often to wonder how I could have reached the age of forty-two and remained so innocent. I was troubled by this article and too exhausted from lack of sleep to be able to analyse my own reactions to it. I put it away and began to wonder whether Gyalo would be more or less willing to talk than he had been when I saw him last; and what I should do if he were not in Darjeeling at all and I found myself stranded there with no means of contacting influential Tibetans and no hope of setting eyes upon His Holiness. Everything was hazy with mist and heat as we dropped down over Bagdogra airport. In the airport building an Indian security officer took my name and address and inquired whether I was visiting India as a 'tourist' or 'on business'. I replied that I was a 'tourist', feeling that this description was unpleasantly close to the truth.

The morning after my arrival in Darjeeling, having ascertained that Mr and Mrs Thondup were at home, I telephoned Gyalo and made an appointment for two o'clock. As before, the servant showed me upstairs; but this time a very small woman like a fluttering butterfly appeared in the passage and whirled me into one of the rooms without pausing to explain who she was, as if she were anxious that I should not collide with someone else. Then, having closed the door, she explained politely that her husband had a visitor and would not be able to see me at once. Would I mind waiting for a few minutes?

I said: 'You are Mrs Thondup?'

The little butterfly lady seemed out of breath. 'Yes. Yes, I am Mrs Thondup.' I held out my hand and she smiled, a large

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Chinese smile in a tiny face, and pointed to a chair drawn up to a small table covered with her needlework. We seated ourselves and she said gravely, in careful English:

‘You are so kind to be so interested in our country and to come and see us.’

I noticed that she was wearing Tibetan dress. She was sitting straight upright, her little head poised like a flower on its stalk, her large, slanty eyes looking at me across a ball of blue wool and some blue knitting which she did not pick up.

‘It is such wonderful news,’ I said, ‘that the Dalai Lama and all your family are safe. You must be so very glad, you and Mr Thondup?’

‘Yes,’ she said, ‘we are glad.’ Then, after a slight pause: ‘This is your second visit to us? You like Darjeeling, I hope?’

‘Indeed I like it. Very much.’

‘We have been here nine years now. We like it. It is so quiet.’

‘How many children have you?’ I asked.

‘We have three children. There is the photograph.’

It was a tinted photograph of a little girl and two small boys, both of whom were so like Gyalo Thondup as to prompt the reflection that his face could scarcely have altered since he was that age himself. I got up and looked at it and then took a small box out of my handbag and pushed it across the table to Mrs Thondup.

‘I have brought some shells for the children. I picked them up on one of our Channel Islands. Tell them to put them in water to make the colours show up.’

She looked, I thought, more distressed than pleased by the gift; although it was, I knew, the custom among Tibetans to give numerous presents, especially when paying visits.

‘Oh, please, why do you do this? Why do you take the trouble for us?’

We were interrupted at that moment by the entrance of Gyalo Thondup, who greeted me with courtesy and friendliness although I sensed immediately that he did not welcome my reappearance.

He took me to the small room in which we had drunk tea and eaten the little floury cakes. This time there was no tea, an omission which I noticed as significant since it is a rigid rule of courtesy among Tibetans to offer a guest refreshment just as it is a rigid rule of courtesy to accept whatever refreshment is produced. As we sat down, I repeated my remarks on the subject of the Dalai Lama's escape.

'Yes, we are glad. But we do not know where he is.'

'Surely,' I said, 'they must tell *you*? I can understand that you do not wish to talk of it and I certainly will not ask. But . . .'

'No. No, I do not know. They tell me nothing at all. I do not know where he is.'

I did not believe this. However, since I had no thought of trying to discover such secrets, it seemed unimportant. I took a packet out of my bag and held it out.

'Before anything else, here is eight hundred rupees to use for Tibet. Please take it and use it for refugees or for anything else.'

I was bewildered by the look of horror which appeared on his face.

'No, no, please. Take it back. There is still no organization for this. Take it back and later when there is an organization you shall give it.'

'But,' I protested, 'I may not be in India for more than a few weeks. Won't you take it?'

'No, please. I cannot take it. Please take it back.'

I replaced the envelope. Innocent as I was, I realized dimly what it was that he feared, although I could not bring myself to formulate so hateful a thought. What I had offered him was a great deal more than I could easily afford and instead of gratitude I had received an implied insult. At the same time I saw that he was intensely distressed and did not know himself whether he should have accepted the money or not.

'I do not wish,' I said, 'to ask you about anything that you do not wish to discuss. It is my intention to return to England and work for the cause of Tibet and for this it is necessary for me to

understand the Tibetan viewpoint. I want to know what things the Tibetans themselves wish to make public.'

'You are very kind. . . . When the Dalai Lama comes we shall know what it is that he wants. It is for him to say. He is the King. People ask me but what can I tell them? It is very difficult.'

'I'm afraid,' I said, 'you must be horribly troubled by journalists.'

'They come even in the middle of the night. They ask me about the Dalai Lama. They want to take photographs. But I do not, you see, want to be photographed.'

'I am not a journalist,' I said, 'and I shall not ask you about the Dalai Lama. No one has the right to do that. It is a great impertinence.'

'You are very kind. It is not their fault. It is their job that they do. I understand that.'

'Please,' I said, 'you must trust me. I know that I could quite easily be a spy. But I am not.'

He laughed, but not with amusement. I felt as if I had uttered some unspeakable frankness in a drawing-room full of maiden aunts. He said:

'It is the Government which thinks always about spies. I do not.' Then he added: 'When the delegation comes back from Delhi, you can meet some of our people and they will tell you better than I can about Tibet.'

This was a reference to the deputation of important Tibetans who had presented an appeal to Pandit Nehru the previous week. The press reports of their activities had contained several references to Gyalo Thondup.

'You were in Delhi, too, of course?'

'No. No, I was not.'

'You were not in Delhi? But . . .'

'The papers said so? Yes, they say these things. But I was not there. I was in Bombay on my business.'

I handed him the copy of *Blitz*, remarking that I had bought it

by chance and thought he might wish to see what was being written about him by the Communists.

Gyalo Thondup laughed. 'They are very fond of me, this paper.' He began to read the article aloud in his laborious English. When he came to the part about the Dalai Lama being a Communist stooge he stopped halfway through the sentence. 'Surely,' I said, 'you never wrote anything like that?' When he did not reply, I repeated: '*Surely* you didn't?'

He looked up then. 'Do you think I would say such a thing about the Dalai Lama? How could I say it?'

To reassure him, I remarked: 'They are all liars, these Communists.'

'Not all. No. But sometimes they say what is not the truth.'

Realizing that now I must go, I asked him if he would give me some introductions to Tibetans in Kalimpong. He produced a slip of paper and wrote two addresses on it.

'This one, Mr Pheunkhang, is the husband of the Maharaj Kumari, Princess Kukula, of Sikkim. This one, Mr Shakabpa, is the former Finance Minister of Tibet.'

'Put that in brackets,' I suggested, 'in case I forget it.'

'No. No, it is better I do not put it.'

As I got up to go, I handed him a small replica of one of the ancient pilgrim tokens from Canterbury, stamped with a medieval portrait of Becket.

'Please. Please, you should not do this. Why do you take so much trouble for us?'

'Because I like to do it. I care about your family and about Tibet.'

'You are so kind,' said Gyalo Thondup.

I made arrangements to remain in Darjeeling for three days and then go on to Kalimpong: during those three days I amused myself, as I had done before, by strolling up and down the main street, watching the people and trying to understand a little of their character and their way of life. The town seemed normal in

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spite of the crisis; but there did not seem to be a great many Tibetans in it. A few monks twirled their prayer-wheels; small groups of women in striped aprons put their heads together in obviously anxious gossip; but no one appeared to be violently excited or upset. The weather was misty and cool; it was only in the early morning that Kanchenjunga became visible in the sky above a flat sea of heavy mist.

George Patterson had left Darjeeling and set out on a hazardous expedition into the jungles of the north-east frontier region with the object of waylaying the Dalai Lama and obtaining information from him before he could be silenced by the Indian Government, which was nothing if not embarrassed by the approaching Presence. I could sympathize with the Indians, who were striving to keep the peace with their menacing neighbours and yet could not refuse sanctuary to the Dalai Lama in his present predicament. According to Meg Patterson, with whom I had lunch, Pandit Nehru himself had a particularly strong reason to feel responsible for the safety of His Holiness. An article by Patterson was due to appear that week in an Indian magazine, making public for the first time the story of Nehru's secret interview with the Dalai Lama and Chou-En-Lai on the occasion of the former's visit to India in 1956. This story Patterson had obtained in confidence. His wife told me, and he himself was to declare repeatedly afterwards, that he had sought and obtained full permission from the person concerned to publish it; this same person denied absolutely that he had given such permission: as for what really happened, one wonders if either party would have been entirely willing to release a tape-recording of it. The story itself is now generally known, having been admitted by Nehru, who had, after all, no great reason to be ashamed of it. The Dalai Lama had approached him privately with a request to be allowed to remain in India, since his people were being oppressed by the Chinese and he himself was powerless to help them so long as he was virtually a prisoner in Tibet. Nehru then sent for Chou-En-Lai, who was likewise in India on a visit; and a meeting was held at which the

Indian Prime Minister endeavoured to arbitrate between the Chinese general and the nominal ruler of Tibet. As a result, Chou-En-Lai gave an undertaking that the greater part of the Chinese troops in Tibet would be withdrawn and that Nehru would be invited to Lhasa to see for himself that this promise had been carried out; the Dalai Lama agreed to return and Nehru no doubt breathed a sigh of thankfulness: a short-lived thankfulness, lasting only until the following year when his reminders of the promised invitation met with no response. The promise, of course, had not been carried out.

On the road between Darjeeling and Ghoom a new Tibetan monastery was being built. I had noticed it each time I passed that way on my previous visit; this time, catching a glimpse of it as part of the dream of my return, I had been left with a hazy impression that it was a good deal further advanced; and the day before I left for Kalimpong I paid it a visit.

The building was, in fact, complete. It stood a little way down the mountainside from the road so that I had to scramble down a rather hazardous track. In front of it a group of Tibetans were squatting on the ground, cooking something and engaged in lively gossip. I approached them and indicated that I would like to go inside; whereupon one of them jumped up and escorted me, as usual, with the utmost friendliness. As we entered the building I was welcomed by a smiling monk, exceedingly dirty and obviously engaged upon the work himself. Straight in front of me the rough clay form of a huge Buddha rose as high as the roof, headless and handless; a monk, standing on scaffolding, intently at work upon it. I felt completely at ease and at home. This was a place which, so far, had not been visited by a tourist. I was just an unexpected guest, to be entertained with all the courtesy incumbent upon good Buddhists. The little temple was littered with paints, workmen's tools, images, lamps and various religious objects, all naturally smothered in dirt and dust. I wondered why it was considered necessary to bring all these things into the building before the process of painting and decorating it was halfway finished.

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After I had watched the work which was being done on the principal image, my guide led me upstairs to a gallery which ran along the four sides of the building and led to the cells which would belong to the monks. In one of these a monk was working upon the clay face of the Buddha; another monk, in the next cell, bent over a tray, shaping the long fingers with the oval-shaped fingernails which would be curved in a blessing attitude, perhaps dangling a ceremonial scarf. Both these monks smiled gently at me and seemed pleased to show me their handiwork. I was learning how utterly impossible it is to a Tibetan to make another person feel embarrassed or self-conscious. My presence was accepted by them all without the least suggestion of surprise, amusement or unfriendliness, simply as a pleasure and a matter of course.

Negotiating a twisting flight of steps at the heels of my guide, I went out on to the roof and examined the painted symbol of the Wheel flanked by two deer, which decorates every Tibetan temple and represents the turning of the Wheel of the Law in the deer park at Sarnath. Then, as this seemed to complete the tour, I descended to ground level, presented a small offering to the monk and produced the usual 'baksheesh', which my guide refused to accept. By this time a small group of monks and workmen had collected and were smiling at me and making gestures of friendliness. No one could speak a word of English; so, wishing to establish a point of contact, I took out of my notecase a newspaper photograph of the Dalai Lama and held it out.

There came from them all a gentle gasp and then a stillness fell upon the group. The workman-monk who had greeted me first leaned a little forward and put out his hands as if to touch the photograph. I gave it to him and he took it carefully by the edges, raising it to his forehead in a gesture of obeisance. His face was transfigured by a tender devotion in which a curious kind of compunction seemed to mingle with awed worship. The whole group bowed their heads. Then another monk took the photograph and repeated the obeisance. One of them, looking at me anxiously, asked: 'Dalai Lama? . . . Lhasa? . . . India? . . .', as if I might be

able to explain to him events too bewildering for the comprehension of a simple monk; but of course I could explain nothing since he knew no English. I gazed at them, that tiny group of dishevelled men against a sunless background of vast mountains and white seas of chilly looking mist, worshipping a newspaper photograph. Then, as they handed it back, I deliberately kissed it myself.

I went to the Himalayan Hotel and was welcomed, somewhat gruffly, by its proprietress. The hotel struck me, when I found myself actually staying there, as being more than a little inconvenient, until I realized that it was not in essence an hotel at all but a family home in which one stayed as a paying guest: a situation which, once accepted, made it seem natural that there should be no bells, no hotel desk and no recognized method of getting hold of anything or anyone at short notice. One did not give orders in Annie's house. One appreciated the hospitality or one put up with it. Those (and they were few) who did not appreciate it, did not return and were not missed.

I talked to Annie that first evening, telling her why I had come and seeking her advice. She was clearly very much touched; her dark, slightly slanting eyes smiled and filled with tears and she talked to me earnestly about Tibet, a subject with which everyone in the house seemed to be obsessed. Annie's old father, 'Daddy' Macdonald, who was so deaf that it was impossible for him to hold more than a one-sided conversation with any of the guests, had been a personal friend of the Great Thirteenth Dalai Lama and was consequently devoted to his successor, whom he obviously regarded in his heart, good Scots churchman as he was, as being the same person under a new appearance. When the Dalai Lama was reported to have vanished from Lhasa, 'Daddy' Macdonald had collapsed and his daughters had feared for his life; however, when the news was brought to him that His Holiness was safe in India, he exclaimed instantly: 'Now I am well!' and jumped out of bed to prove the truth of his statement.

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Annie assured me that it was useless and unfair to expect the Tibetans to discuss politics. Without committing herself to any criticisms of the Indian Government she admitted that all the influential exiles were living under the threat of extradition if they embarrassed their Indian hosts by engaging in propaganda for the cause of Tibet. Her own hotel was already under suspicion. She threw it open to all Tibetans, allowing them to meet there whenever they found it convenient. It was no wonder, declared Annie, smiling at me with gentle tolerance, that Gyalo Thondup had been embarrassed by my sudden reappearance. I could go to see Mr Shakabpa and Mr Pheunkhang, of course, but they would probably be equally embarrassed. . . .

After this talk with Annie I left the hotel and walked down the road in the dark. There was a bench under some trees from which one could see right across the town. I sat down and gazed into the spangle of lights, wondering what purpose there was in remaining in India if I might not discuss politics. The refugee problem was likely to become acute; but as yet nothing was known about it in Kalimpong beyond wild rumours that hundreds of Tibetans were coming over the passes in the wake of His Holiness. I wondered, by no means for the first time, if Kalimpong were really the centre of a secret resistance movement. If so, it could not be a very effectual one, since the geography of the place would make it all but impossible to smuggle arms into Tibet without the knowledge of the Indian Government. In any case I had not the slightest hope of discovering such secrets. I sat for a long time in the warm darkness, sensing a tremendous potency, the nature of which I could not define, which seemed to be rising up all around me like a tangible substance. No other place that I had visited in India, not even Benares, had affected me like this. But then Benares *was* India, the very essence of India; whereas this was not really India at all; this was the nearest that I should ever get to Tibet. Flashes of distant lightning caused the huge shapes of the foothills to appear and disappear again and again; a grumble of thunder mingled with the continuous loud chirring of insects

and the thin, tinny wailing of music being relayed in the main street. At least I am *here*, I thought. Whatever happened and however useless I proved to be, I did not want to be anywhere else.

I had some difficulty in finding Shakabpa House, the home of the former Finance Minister of Tibet; and when I did find it I received nothing from Mr Shakabpa except formal courtesy and a typescript copy of the memorandum which had been prepared some months previously by leading Tibetans in India, setting forth their grievances and appealing for world support. Mr Shakabpa understood very little English and probably affected to understand even less; after a short and unproductive conversation, he left me to Mrs Shakabpa, who entertained me with tea and biscuits. Mrs Shakabpa was a typical Tibetan lady of the aristocratic class. She was tall and strong, with rosy cheeks, smooth skin and shining black hair fastened in the usual coil round her fine head. In the Shakabpa household, according to the custom among educated, 'Westernized' Tibetans, the national dress was retained only by the wife. In her sleek, twentieth-century drawing-room, furnished to resemble an English 'lounge', Mrs Shakabpa glowed in her multi-coloured apron and startling magenta sash. How did they dare to wear these magenta sashes beneath their rosy cheeks? And yet how beautiful it looked. . . .

As for Mr Pheunkhang, I did not pursue the introduction. My courage failed me and I told myself that it was senseless to expose yet another Tibetan to unnecessary embarrassment.

Was there anyone, I wondered, who really knew what was going on inside Tibet? Every Tibetan in Kalimpong who had relatives in Lhasa had by now received the same telegram of reassurance. 'All well,' it said, over and over again, with typical Communist humourlessness, until one exasperated recipient had telegraphed back: 'Not well at all. Come at once.' But gradually, of course, news had been leaking out. Already many of the Tibetan families in India knew of some personal bereavement. 'But, you know,'

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Annie assured me, 'even their own wives and children mean less to them than the life of His Holiness. They will be satisfied so long as he is safe.'

All day long jeeps and landrovers were arriving at the hotel to unload either Tibetans or newspaper correspondents. The former generally disappeared into the privacy of the bungalow at the back of the hotel, from which the Macdonald family seldom emerged, so that I imagined them all sitting there, hour after hour, engaged in earnest talk. Meanwhile I sat by myself on the lawn gazing at the mist-blurred hills and the glory of a deep pink hibiscus. About teatime, two days after my arrival in Kalimpong, after spending the whole afternoon watching the arriving and departing jeeps, I wandered down a steep path between smothers of multi-coloured flowers and, finding a private place, seated myself on a stone and wept.

Afterwards, drying my tears, I returned to the head of the path and saw Annie bending over the rock-garden, a cigarette drooping, as usual, precariously out of the side of her mouth. I went up to her nerving myself. I was afraid that I might weep again if I attempted to speak.

'Mrs Perry,' I said, 'I think if it's not inconvenient to you, I'll go tomorrow.'

Annie Perry straightened herself, without removing the cigarette. 'No,' she said abruptly, 'it makes no difference.'

'I've decided,' I went on, 'that there's no point in my trying to meet anyone else. It isn't fair to ask them questions and this isn't a time for just friendly visits. So I think I'll go back to Darjeeling and go home almost at once. It only upsets me to be here and feel so useless.'

'You tried,' Annie said gently. 'And that can't be useless. You did your best. I know how you feel because I feel the same myself. There are tears at the back of my eyes all day because I can do nothing to help Tibet. But you did what you could.'

Then she added: 'Why not stay for the week you promised yourself?'

I thought for a moment, looking at the flowers and feeling better because of her kindness. 'Very well,' I said, 'I'll stay. Perhaps when we know where His Holiness is going to be I could go there and try to see him. Of course I couldn't expect a private audience. But he might hold a darshan perhaps.'

'You deserve to see him,' Annie said. 'I think you should try even if it means disappointment.'

I did not tell Annie about the contents of the cardboard cheese-box. But presently, going to my room, I opened it and looked at the Crown Derby teacup.

'There is nothing I can do for my country,' the former Prime Minister of Tibet, an old man with the long ear-ring which denotes nobility dangling from his left ear, told the newspaper correspondents, 'except to pray for it.' Mr Lukhangwa had been driven out of Tibet in the early days of the Chinese rule because of his attitude of open defiance. The Dalai Lama himself had been compelled to give the order for this. Now the old man was living in Kalimpong, frail and useless, faithful to the old ways and the traditional dress, not troubling to learn English. It was through Annie that he made his brief statement to the group of journalists; and through Annie, when she told him about her English guest 'who had come out to India to help Tibet', he sent a message requesting me 'to tell the English people that our religion is being destroyed and that is why we have risen in revolt'.

I was beginning to realize at last that I was not the only person who felt useless. Mr Lukhangwa, Annie Perry, Pandit Nehru, the Dalai Lama himself, were as helpless as I was. Only the prayer-wheels turning round and round and the prayer-flags fluttering on their long poles from end to end of Kalimpong and Mr Lukhangwa's own words, suggested to me that something still remained to be done. I went down to the little Roman Catholic mission church and prayed for Tibet.

Meanwhile the hotel was alive with the comings and goings of newspaper correspondents. These frustrated individuals were

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chasing the possibility of news from Delhi to Tezpur to Darjeeling to Kalimpong to Gangtok, hiring planes, bribing guides, typing into the small hours of the morning with nothing to type beyond a smattering of probably inaccurate gossip.

'The Dalai Lama's brother,' remarked the correspondent of *Time*, who had just come from Darjeeling, 'wasn't going to talk. But he did tell me how old the Dalai Lama was. That was the one thing he said. I've had to write an article on it.'

'The Dalai Lama is twenty-four,' Annie informed the company, without removing her cigarette.

'Twenty-five,' corrected the *Time* correspondent. 'His brother told me so himself. It was the one thing——'

Annie removed the cigarette.

'Daddy!' she bellowed in her father's ear. 'How old is the Dalai Lama?'

'Twenty-four,' came the old man's verdict. The *Time* correspondent began to look harassed. 'But I've *sent* the article,' he expostulated, as if this crucial act must somehow rearrange the face of truth.

Annie went into the hall and telephoned a former member of the Tibetan cabinet. 'He's twenty-four,' she announced when she came back; and then, as her sister entered the room: 'Vicky, we were discussing the age of His Holiness.'

'His age? Why, twenty-three, of course. But remember their method of reckoning age is different, so a Tibetan will probably be a year younger than the age he tells us.'

'I wish,' said the *Time* correspondent, 'I were a dentist.'

When the news was made public that the hill station of Mussoorie was to be the final destination of the Dalai Lama, 'Daddy' Macdonald muttered gently to himself: 'I am an old man. I cannot go to him. But I can send a letter and a *Khada*. All day long I am thinking about His Holiness.'

In the bazaar I tried to purchase a *Khada* or ceremonial scarf which would be suitable for me to present with the Crown Derby

teacup. The ordinary *Khada* is a flimsy butter-muslin affair which practically melts if one attempts to wash it—an experiment, by the way, which is viewed with scandalized astonishment, although these *Khadas* remain in circulation or dangle from the pictures of the gods until they fall to bits. For the Dalai Lama I knew that it was necessary to have a broad white scarf of the finest silk, at least if one were in a position to be able to afford such a present. All Tibetan social customs are regulated by rigid and exact rules relating to class distinction and hierarchical 'status'. Even the precise measurements of a scarf are laid down according to the rank of the recipient; but in this matter, I felt, the letter might safely give way to the spirit. Having gone through the bazaar, I searched in the market and here, while I found no suitable scarf, I did find a Dalai Lama brooch, an odd little trinket consisting of a round tinted photograph in a gaudy setting of gilt rays set with glass gems, unmistakably inspired by Woolworths, which was to be my passport to innumerable friendships at a later date. The market was held on two mornings in the week and I never got tired of it; although the sights which I witnessed there were often far from pleasant. I loved it because it epitomized for me the whole of human life in its beauty and ugliness, squalor, dirt, dignity, degradation, tragedy and mirth. I was particularly attached to a side-show consisting of a kind of Punch and Judy act by two contortionists. While her male partner beat the drum, an astonishingly nimble young woman would go through a series of tricks and acrobatics to the accompaniment of much jangling of her numerous ornaments. Then it would be his turn, but not before his lady had given him a resounding thwack on the bottom or the crown of the head with a formidable looking stick. The victim would ostentatiously rub the assaulted spot to the accompaniment of uproarious guffaws from the audience; and, of course, his revenge would be taken at the end of his own act. These sturdy whackings, from which neither party seemed to suffer any real discomfort, were the highlights of the entertainment and created an atmosphere of general goodwill and cheerfulness.

Before leaving Kalimpong I visited the monastery of Tirpai on Deolo, which was larger than the one at Ghoom and housed a larger community of monks. When I arrived at the temple entrance and peered into the gloom through the main door, I could see the monks seated in rows on the floor being served with food and the usual butter-tea out of an enormous tea-pot. This repast was being carried across the courtyard from an almost pitch-dark little kitchen with a red fire glowing inside it, mysterious as the witch's den in some old story book. A small group of Tibetans was standing with me in the entrance; but a monk, emerging from within, motioned to us to wait until the meal was finished. I went out into the courtyard and wandered about in the sun, watching the people circumnambulating the temple, twirling the wooden prayer-wheels, each about the size of a man, which lined the sides and back of it, in a manner pleasantly reminiscent of a child trailing a stick along the bars of a fence. Such prayer-wheels must be turned clockwise and with the right hand. To offend against either of these rules is to ally oneself with the practitioners of black magic. I was a little shy about joining in but after a while, shutting my parasol, I approached the first wheel and gave it a flip. Then, in the wake of a Tibetan woman, I walked all round the temple, praying for Tibet.

By the time I was back at the entrance the monks had finished their meal and we were allowed inside. The Tibetans were prostrating themselves before the Buddha and performing various small rites which I was anxious to watch; but I found myself adopted by one of the monks who beckoned me to follow him on a tour of the interior of the temple, conducted far too quickly for my liking as I could cheerfully have spent hours in the place, examining every object within it. However, when I paused and kept him waiting, he merely smiled and showed no sign of impatience. I saw that he and several of the other monks were stealing glances at my Dalai Lama brooch.

The temple was the usual glory-hole of painted images, peeling frescoes, faded t'ankas, grubby scarves and flickering butter-



I Kanchenjunga
‘ . . . the everlasting summit of the five treasure houses of snow’



II Tibetans in India greet the exiled Dalai Lama

Marilyn Silverstone

lamps. Stacks of sacred writings occupied the walls; and, in its usual place to the right of the central Buddha, I saw the same photograph that I wore in my brooch, hung with scarves and honoured by a dish of offerings which consisted chiefly of rice, small coins and wrapped assorted sweets. I watched the Tibetans as they filed before this picture and the various other objects of worship. It seemed to be the custom to add a coin to the offerings and then pick up a little rice and allow it to fall back into the dish. I longed to do as they did, but feared to make a mistake and become conspicuous; so instead I gave an offering to the monk and wrote my name in the visitor's book. However, I could not bring myself to leave at once: when my guide had completed our little tour I left him and walked round again by myself.

In the doorway, as I put on my shoes, the monk asked, still looking at my brooch: 'American?' 'No, English.' 'English Buddhist?' I shook my head and smiled. 'No, Christian. But——' There seemed to be no word or phrase which would convey what I wanted to express and stand the least chance of being understood. I touched the brooch. 'Dalai Lama,' I said. 'Good. Good.' The answering smile was radiant.

At Annie's suggestion, on the morning of my last day in Kalimpong, I went to see Mr Tharchin, who was the editor of the only Tibetan newspaper in India, the *Tibet Mirror Press*, and one of the ministers of the local church. He was an old man and I found him recovering from an illness, having got out of bed in a dressing-gown to welcome his guest. It had been my hope that in this fragile old Tibetan, whose reputation for simple goodness extended throughout the neighbourhood and whose newspaper was the one existing publication to carry to the Tibetans in India news of their country's struggle for independence, I might find someone at last who could suggest to me how I could be of use. But Mr Tharchin had no suggestion to make. 'What can one do? One can pray. There is nothing else.' I asked him why it was that he alone of the Tibetans I had met in India appeared to be un-

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afraid and unembarrassed. 'I am a Christian,' said Mr Tharchin, as if the explanation were obvious. I wondered, and have many times wondered since, how far he was justified in replying to my question with this simple statement. Intensely as I learnt to disapprove of the missionary activities of the Christians in the border district, it is probably true to say that the teachings of Christianity provide for the ordinary man and woman a far more positive weapon against fear than is available to their Buddhist equivalents. In fact I believe it to be true that Buddhism is essentially a limited religion, intended exclusively for the Sangha or community of monks, who alone are the true Buddhists—and that this is why in Tibet the idea grew up that the laymen were totally dependent upon the Lama priests. The question would require a book to itself if one were to attempt to deal adequately with it: I intend no more here than to suggest a possible justification for Mr Tharchin's claim that his courage was a direct product of his Christian allegiance.

That afternoon I said goodbye to Annie Perry and returned to Darjeeling by the public jeep. In the one street of the village above the Teesta bridge we waited for an old Lama who was drinking from a mug of tea, seated on a bench in front of one of the tumbledown little open shops. There was some good-natured expostulation and argument from which it was not difficult to deduce that the old man was finding his tea too hot and could not contemplate the thought of leaving it half finished. He was a very dirty old man with an enchanting smile and a pigtail down his back, protruding from beneath the woollen cap which is frequently worn by Tibetans, both laymen and monks. Absurdly this pigtail reminded me suddenly of my old nurse and the coil of hair which she used to remove when she undressed. Our prospective passenger smiled disarmingly at us all, happily sipping his tea, until the driver of the jeep, abandoning the argument, lit a cigarette and strolled into one of the shops. Time passed . . . but what is time? There used to be a saying in Lhasa that time was invented by the English. At last the tea was finished; the

driver returned; the old Lama was given a front seat in the jeep, wedged between the driver and myself. I noticed that he was wearing a very dirty pair of blue-striped pyjamas beneath his Lama's robe and a Rolex wrist-watch.

As we bumped and swung along the narrow road alongside the unguarded precipice, I reflected that the strength of the attraction which was drawing me towards the Tibetans could be measured by the fact that I was perfectly happy to sit for two hours squeezed against this unwashed old Lama, although, as a rule, I reacted so violently to physical contacts that I shrank from the proximity of a stranger in an English bus. Another Tibetan was fast asleep behind me, his black head swinging against mine with every lurch of the jeep. Clouds of mist swirled up and engulfed us; then drifted away again, bequeathing us a bloom of chilly wetness. At intervals the sleeping Tibetan would be shaken by his companions and made to apologize for bumping my head; he would laugh and be contrite and fall asleep again the next instant. The old Lama sat perfectly still throughout the drive, smiling quietly to himself.

In Darjeeling I went straight to the Indian Airlines office. There were no available bookings for the journey to Mussoorie within the next fortnight; but I succeeded in getting reservations by plane and train which would get me there by the end of the month, about ten days after the arrival of the Dalai Lama at Birla House. Meanwhile, having nothing in particular to do, I walked about Darjeeling and sat for hours reading on the lawn of the Mount Everest. In the Chowrasta bookshop I picked up one of the rare second-hand copies of Sir Charles Bell's biography of the Great Thirteenth and a book entitled *The Historical Status of Tibet* by a Chinese, Dr Tieh-Tseng-Li, writing in the United States. The latter, which has since been brought up to date under the title *Tibet: Today and Yesterday*, has been accused of a strong pro-Chinese bias: to me, however, it conveyed (and still conveys) an impression of relative objectivity and detachment. The argument

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could (indeed does) fill numerous books; but I realized once and for all when I read this dry and yet absorbing history, during that very long fortnight which I spent in Darjeeling, that the question of Tibet's legal status must always seem to me to be unimportant, even beside the point, in any discussion of the occupation of that country by the armies of the Chinese People's Republic. The reality of the situation, as distinct from the pure abstractions represented by the legal argument, is that Tibet has been occupied by a people newly-intoxicated with a creed which bids them destroy not only every spiritual and traditional but equally every personal and individual element in human life and so reduce humanity to an undifferentiated mass. It was because I believed (as I still believe) that Communism, at least in its pure form, aims at the destruction of the human personality and so of all tenderness, humour, courtesy and simple ordinary happiness, that I raged against its violent imposition upon Tibet. I used to reflect then, as I have very often reflected since, that, had the Chinese Government been other than Communist, far more good than harm might have resulted from the re-assertion of its ancient claims; since the Tibetan people could have profited a great deal from the beneficent influence of a civilization so much older and at such a far more advanced stage of intellectual and cultural development.

Before I had finished this illuminating book, I was obliged to lend it to an interesting fellow-guest, whom I had noticed for some time before I discovered who he was. He was Sirdar D. K. Sen, a prominent lawyer, who had accepted the responsibility of acting as political adviser to the Dalai Lama and assisting him in the wording of his official statements. The Sirdar was a middle-aged Bengali, about whose person there was a delicate aura of charm, sophistication and elegance. He was always impeccably dressed in the national high-collared jacket which is so very much more becoming to the Indian than a Western suit; and I had noticed him first, during the few days before I left Darjeeling for Kalimpong, strolling every morning in front of the Mount

Everest, a thin cane in one hand and in the other a Turkish cigarette, in the company of his English wife. Neither of them appeared at meals so it was evident that they had a private suite. I decided that he was a Maharajah; probably the ruler of the entire neighbourhood. His actual identity and his connection with Tibet might never have been made known to me at all had it not been for the fact that on a certain evening there was to be chicken for dinner at the Mount Everest. I happened to be alone in the small lounge when a bedlam of hideous screeches and squalls called me to a tiny window overlooking the shed where the victims were being done to death. Unhappily I had forgotten, if I ever knew, that a chicken can be surprisingly animated for some time after its decease: I tore down to the hotel desk and roused the entire management, declaring that chickens were being tortured in the back premises and someone must put a stop to it that instant. When I was finally pacified, the hotel hostess took charge of me and soothed me in my room with tea and small talk. Our conversation came round to Tibet and it was then that she informed me, to my astonishment, that the beautiful Bengali gentleman had some official connection with the Dalai Lama himself. That evening, at my urgent request, she introduced me to Mr Sen; and on the following morning I drank coffee on the lawn with him and his wife and tried, as best I could, to explain myself. The Sirdar was nothing if not courteous; but his delicate probes into the matter of what had actually brought me out to India and what I was hoping to accomplish by my visit indicated his suspicion that I was less innocent than I was trying to look.

‘There is nothing *at present* that other countries can do to help Tibet. For God’s sake don’t interfere. It can only make matters worse.’ This was the Sirdar’s uncompromising advice to me, apart from which he said very little, although he conveyed an impression of friendliness which I decided was partly his natural manner and partly designed to win my confidence and discover, if possible, what I was about and what organization was behind my efforts. I liked the Sirdar. Perhaps this immediate liking was due

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principally to the fact that I found him extraordinarily beautiful to look at; but it was also on account of his obviously sincere concern for Tibet. On the subject of his own position in relation to the Dalai Lama, he was, not surprisingly, reticent; and since I had nothing to do except think and allow my imagination to wander about, I began to form theories about this almost at once.

By this time the Dalai Lama was in Mussoorie, installed at Birla House, the villa which had been lent to him by the Indian Government. Immediately on his arrival at Tezpur (that is to say, when he first emerged from jungle country and faced the world's press correspondents) he had issued a long statement which, while leaving the way clear for possible future negotiations with the Chinese, established the fact that he had left Tibet of his own free will and firmly accused China of having broken the seventeen-point Agreement and established a tyrannical regime in Tibet. My own interest, at the time, had been centred less upon this statement, the main points of which had been easy enough to predict, than upon the strangely carefree face which had looked out at us from those first photographs. After the hardships and dangers of the long journey; the ordeal of the last days in Lhasa; the years of desperate endeavour to live at peace with the Chinese for the sake of Tibet: after all this and in a situation which seemed to be almost hopeless, the Dalai Lama smiled and even laughed as if he had no cares upon earth. A message had preceded him that he needed a bunch of flowers for his morning rites. While newspaper correspondents scribbled and surged and Tibetans threw scarves and wept, a small bunch of lilies and daisies had been hastily produced. Afterwards, according to the newspaper reports, His Holiness had consumed fried eggs and bacon with a hearty appetite.

Gyalo Thondup, meanwhile, had been appearing and disappearing with characteristic elusiveness. A few days after my return from Kalimpong and before the Dalai Lama's arrival at Tezpur, I had encountered little Mrs Thondup outside her own house and been pleasurably surprised at first by her friendliness.

She had come swiftly towards me, a moving flower of diminutive size, and taken both my hands, her welcoming smile almost swallowing up the tiny Chinese face. So I was back in Darjeeling! Where was I staying? Had I met many people in Kalimpong? She was so friendly that I even found the courage to suggest that she should come up to the hotel for a meal or for coffee one evening before I left. Then I asked after Gyalo Thondup.

'Mr Thondup is well, I hope? He has gone to see the Dalai Lama?' Having read this in all the newspapers I felt that there could be no harm in mentioning it; especially as it was, after all, an entirely natural move on his part. The pause, although almost imperceptible, was bottomless: our friendly contact fell straight down into it. 'My husband is in Tezpur,' said Mrs Thondup with slight emphasis. I knew that Gyalo was not in Tezpur. He had been there and had left almost at once, escorted by two Government officials who had whisked him away in a jeep in the direction of the Dalai Lama's camp.

From the time of this incident, I had received a distinct impression that I was being avoided by Mrs Thondup. There was no suggestion of animosity in this avoidance: it was rather, I felt, that she did not wish to appear discourteous and yet felt herself to be under the necessity of refusing my overtures of friendship; so she would turn aside into a shop whenever we should otherwise have met face to face. Gyalo Thondup had reappeared in Tezpur immediately before the Dalai Lama's arrival and the release of the official statement. Now, recalling these things and trying to link them up with the fact that Sen was obviously on terms of close acquaintance with Gyalo Thondup, whose name had been mentioned several times in the course of our talk, the thought struck me that it was probably Gyalo himself who had been entrusted with the statement, which must somehow have been conveyed to the Dalai Lama *before* his arrival at Tezpur and *after* it had been approved by the high officials of the Government. Who, I wondered, had actually composed it? Sen? Gyalo Thondup? Pandit Nehru himself? I remembered the mysterious visitor of

whom I had not been permitted a glimpse. I remembered how, one evening, the Thondups had come to the Mount Everest evidently with the purpose of visiting one of the guests. Gradually I evolved the notion that Gyalo and the Sirdar were engaged in a kind of conspiracy with the Indian authorities to keep His Holiness in order and prevent him from saying too much and provoking a further crisis. It was a theory which did less than justice to them both. The Sirdar, while he was certainly working in co-operation with Gyalo and had certainly had a great deal to do with the Dalai Lama's statement, was not acting on behalf of the Indian Government and was perfectly prepared, if necessary, to make himself unpopular with his own countrymen, although he was wise enough to realize that India's policy of 'sitting on the fence' was not one to be lightly defied since there was a certain amount of good reason for it. In fact the attitude of India towards the Tibetan question, sorely as it has tried the patience of people throughout the world who are angered by obvious and ruthless displays of cruelty and injustice, has been based not only upon fear but upon the certain knowledge that anything which is said or done to enrage the Chinese can only have the effect of increasing the sufferings of the Tibetans without producing any other tangible result.

Meanwhile, at his polite request, I lent the Sirdar my copy of Tieh-Tseng-Li's book. And every morning as I passed under the window of his room, he would drop down his air-mail copy of *The Times*, in what seemed to be a gesture of pure friendliness, no matter how puzzled he may have been by my unconvincing account of myself.

I made friends with a Scots eye specialist who was staying at the Planters Club and enjoyed relating to me the local gossip as we sat drinking coffee on the terrace overlooking the main street and the road leading down to the market. With his assistance and from this vantage point, I learnt at last to distinguish all the varied types of people belonging to the district. There are very few

Indians in Darjeeling except in the purely legal sense: the population is Nepali, Lepcha and Tibetan, with some Indians and Chinese, a certain number of British who come up regularly from Calcutta and from the nearby tea plantations, and a smattering of American tourists. In Kalimpong there are practically no tourists and many more Tibetans. A long-established English-Tibetan phrase book, obtainable in Darjeeling, contains the classic comparison between the two towns: 'Which is cleaner, Darjeeling or Kalimpong? Darjeeling is cleaner.' This, I am informed, was true in the days when Darjeeling was the favourite hill-station of the British. Nowadays, however, its smells are actually worse; because, all else being now equal, the fact that Darjeeling is built in terraces on a steep slope ensures a perpetual cascade of waterfall-drains which pour down from street to street and stir up an all-pervading stink. Apart from this disadvantage, to which I have never been able to acclimatize myself although the resident British appear to become impervious to it, the town of Darjeeling is, in my eyes, a concentration of pure enchantment; although the tin-roofed houses are, for the most part, slummy-looking, unbeautiful and undistinguished; in fact, as Dr Fawcett remarked: 'Once you have seen the mountain . . .', and, he might have added, once you have introduced yourself to Sherpa Tensing of Everest and obtained his autograph, there is nothing left in the place to interest the tourist. However, if one lingers there, one begins gradually to savour the atmosphere of the town and how it is odd and comical and sad and beautiful all at once; and one begins to expect to see the most unexpected things at any moment. From the balcony of the Planters Club I watched the Tibetans lounging on the balustrade in the sun, in their brown tunics and high boots, laughing and picking their noses and spitting happily into the road beneath; and I watched the eighty-year-old Sherpa woman in her dirty striped apron, her basket strapped to her back, taking orders from the Nepali and Tibetan ladies and the few mem-sahibs and going down to the market to return with vegetables, eggs and fruit. I watched the retired Gurkha officer, Colonel Andrew

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Mercer, one day to be my friend, that pukka sahib, so very British and yet unable to tear himself out of India, striding down the hill and stopping to chat with every other beggar, trader and loungee in his path; and Gyalo Thondup's little boy forcefully pulling his ayah; and the neat, uniformed schoolchildren from St Andrew's and St Paul's and the Roman Catholic Convent. Then, suddenly, there would be a small procession: children carrying boughs and flowers; men blowing trumpets; a little girl with a long trident. Or a Tibetan nobleman would canter by on a gaily caparisoned horse, wearing a long silken robe and a pin-cushion hat, the earring swinging from his left ear. . . . Where was he going? What celebration was in progress? . . . From far below would come the chuffing and chugging sound of Darjeeling's toy-train, which snorts and shrills and clatters its way up the mountainside twice a day, making more noise than the Flying Scotsman in full spate and with two men on a small platform in front of the engine throwing grit on to the rails in case the wheels should slip. Altogether Darjeeling is a gentler place than Kalimpong and contains a stronger element of the tenderly ludicrous. Kalimpong is frightening in the potency of its magic: Kalimpong is indeed the ante-chamber of Tibet. The magic of Dorje-Ling, the 'Place of the Thunderbolt', was tempered and held in check once and for all by the British: its Colonel Andrew Mercers, while appreciating such things in their proper time and place, subjected them to an alien discipline and shrouded them with the soft veils of English humour and sentiment.

On April 24, at an important press conference, Pandit Nehru explicitly stated that the Dalai Lama had admitted the authenticity of the correspondence which was said to have passed between him and the Chinese Commander-in-Chief.* The confused and ineffectual manner in which (if the press reports were accurate) the Prime Minister endeavoured to excuse the Dalai Lama on this occasion, reflected his own embarrassment and betrayed the fact that his emotions, if nothing else, were on the side of his guest.

* See page 45.

The Dalai Lama, according to Pandit Nehru, had written these letters 'because he was passing through a highly troubled time, trying to avoid a break with the Chinese and to bring about some settlement'. The fact remained, however, that the letters had denied and denounced the heroism of the very people who were at that moment dying for the sake of Tibet and in order to save the Dalai Lama's life. Such explicit denunciations could only be explained away on the grounds that they were written without the slightest intention on the part of the writer ever again to co-operate with the recipient—merely, that is to say, as a time-saving device—and such an interpretation was ruled out by the rest of Mr Nehru's statement:

'I do think—he told me so—that up till 4 p.m. on March 17 they had no definite idea of leaving; they left at 10, only six hours later. So it seems they were still hoping for a settlement; but when those shells fell near the palace—whatever the reason—it had a powerful effect on their minds and they left almost at once.'

The admission by Pandit Nehru that the Dalai Lama had written the letters represented a tremendous saving of 'face' for the Chinese, who had been generally disbelieved even when they published the correspondence in photostat. Equally it represented a tragic blow to the Dalai Lama's reputation, since few people were likely to make the imaginative effort which is necessary in order to withhold judgment. What happened, as a result of Pandit Nehru's statement, was the shattering of a romantic dream which a great many people had just begun to cherish. For a few weeks it had been possible to believe that we had witnessed a simple act of heroic defiance, the courage of the good confronting the malevolence of the bad with all the easy obviousness of the kind of novel or film which long ago ceased to convince us. And it seems to be the case that the more difficulty we experience in believing in such things as straightforward courage and simple goodness, the more bitterly we resent being deprived of our romantic moments. On such occasions, whether public or private, no one says a great deal or admits the extent of his disillusionment; the

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subject is simply dropped: and this, it has always seemed to me, is what happened to the subject of Tibet from the day when it was learned that the Dalai Lama had written the letters and had left Tibet because four shells had fallen in the Jewel Park.

For myself, I went to bed for a day and the bitterness of disillusionment passed over me so that I got up more determined than ever that I would not return to England carrying the St Ivel cheese-box. In the few days before I left Darjeeling I made a final effort to woo Mrs Thondup by sending her a note suggesting that if she cared to come up to the hotel to watch some Tibetan dancing which was taking place that evening, we could have coffee together and discuss subjects other than politics. And could she tell me, I added, where Mr Thondup stayed in Mussoorie if not at Birla House?

Mrs Thondup's reply to my letter was worded with her usual friendliness. I was so very kind to take such an interest in their country. She was afraid she did not know where her husband stayed in Mussoorie. I could inquire at Birla House perhaps. . . . The Tibetan dancing was the occasion of a large gathering at the Mount Everest; but Mrs Thondup was not present.

On the morning of my departure I was leaning on the balustrade in front of the hotel, waiting for the taxi which was to take me to the airport and looking at the summit of Kanchenjunga which was just visible above the mist, when the Sirdar appeared beside me, offering me a Turkish cigarette. I took one and smiled as pleasantly as I could; but I felt unable to respond either to his friendliness or to his obvious wish to beguile me into talking about myself. I could not even bring myself to discuss with him the affair of the letters although I realized that he might have been able to offer me a little enlightenment. So we stood and smiled at each other; then he caught sight of Tess-La, the wife of Jigme Dorje, Prime Minister of Bhutan, going up the hotel steps; whereupon he said goodbye hastily and hurried off. I watched their meeting. Tess-La was a very beautiful woman, one of the daughters by his numerous wives of the famous Tsarong Shapé,

favourite of the Great Thirteenth, who was perhaps the most picturesque character in pre-Communist Tibet and was shortly to be murdered by the Chinese after having his tongue cut out (or so the story was to be told until we all believed it to be the truth). There, greeting one another, were two people who were as unquestionably 'in' as I was unquestionably 'out'. And now I must go, having accomplished nothing and with nothing in particular ahead of me to be accomplished. I followed the coolies down the steps, clasping the St Ivel cheese-box.

The temperature, when I descended to the plains, was soaring high into the hundreds; and the little Dakotas in which I made the flight from Calcutta to Lucknow in four hops were not air-conditioned and did not rise to a great height, so that the heat inside them was only a little less dreadful than the fiery blast which met us each time we emerged on to the tarmac. At Lucknow station I collapsed on to the platform, half in a genuine faint, half in a raging protest against the inefficiency and indifference of the railway officials which had resulted in my not getting a reserved seat although I had booked one a fortnight in advance. It was no doubt the element of deliberation in this performance which preserved the Crown Derby teacup from being smashed to bits: in any case a suitable impression was made and I was escorted to a waiting room, refreshed with a cup of tea and assured that I would be accommodated in a first-class sleeping berth.

I spent an hour in this waiting room, alternately drinking tea and tepid orange squash while reflecting upon what had happened with half-ashamed amusement. The very dirty old woman who was in charge played with an equally dirty child while the child's mother slept, outstretched upon a wooden bench. Then a group of female missionaries came in and, after a long and conversational grace, fell upon plates full of uneatable-looking fried eggs. I contemplated them with interest. They were cheerful and plain and firm of purpose. They were indeed admirable and not one

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of them would have demanded a first-class sleeping berth, still less collapsed upon a platform if this had not been instantly produced. But I wondered, not for the first time, why it was that those who elected to spread the Gospel in far-off lands should be recognizable on sight simply by the fact that they had deprived themselves of their own womanliness. How had it come about that the religion, which alone of all the great world faiths is based upon the idea of passionate love, was being preached by an army of women who were blatantly sexless? Depressed by these cogitations, I retreated to the platform and sat on my suitcase.

It was now about seven o'clock and, although the heat was still terrific, I no longer felt as if I were in the proximity of a furnace. Having satisfactorily put behind me one of my periodic battles with India in the shape of her preposterously unco-operative and ill-mannered desk clerks, not one of whom seems to be capable of an obliging act save in expectation of baksheesh or fear of some nameless retribution when the mem-sahib elects to faint, I took a deep breath and realized all over again how incurably in love with India I really was. Even the violence of my exasperation against India, which caused me to see in every petty official and taxi-driver who happened to irritate me the whole vast enraging vision of Mother India herself in all her inextricable confusion of corruption and holiness, was not unrelated to a feeling of worship. In fact, while the emotions which were aroused in me by India and the Indians were as far removed as could be from the uncomplicated attraction which I felt towards the people of Tibet, they were just as strong and would be, I felt, at least as powerful in drawing me back.

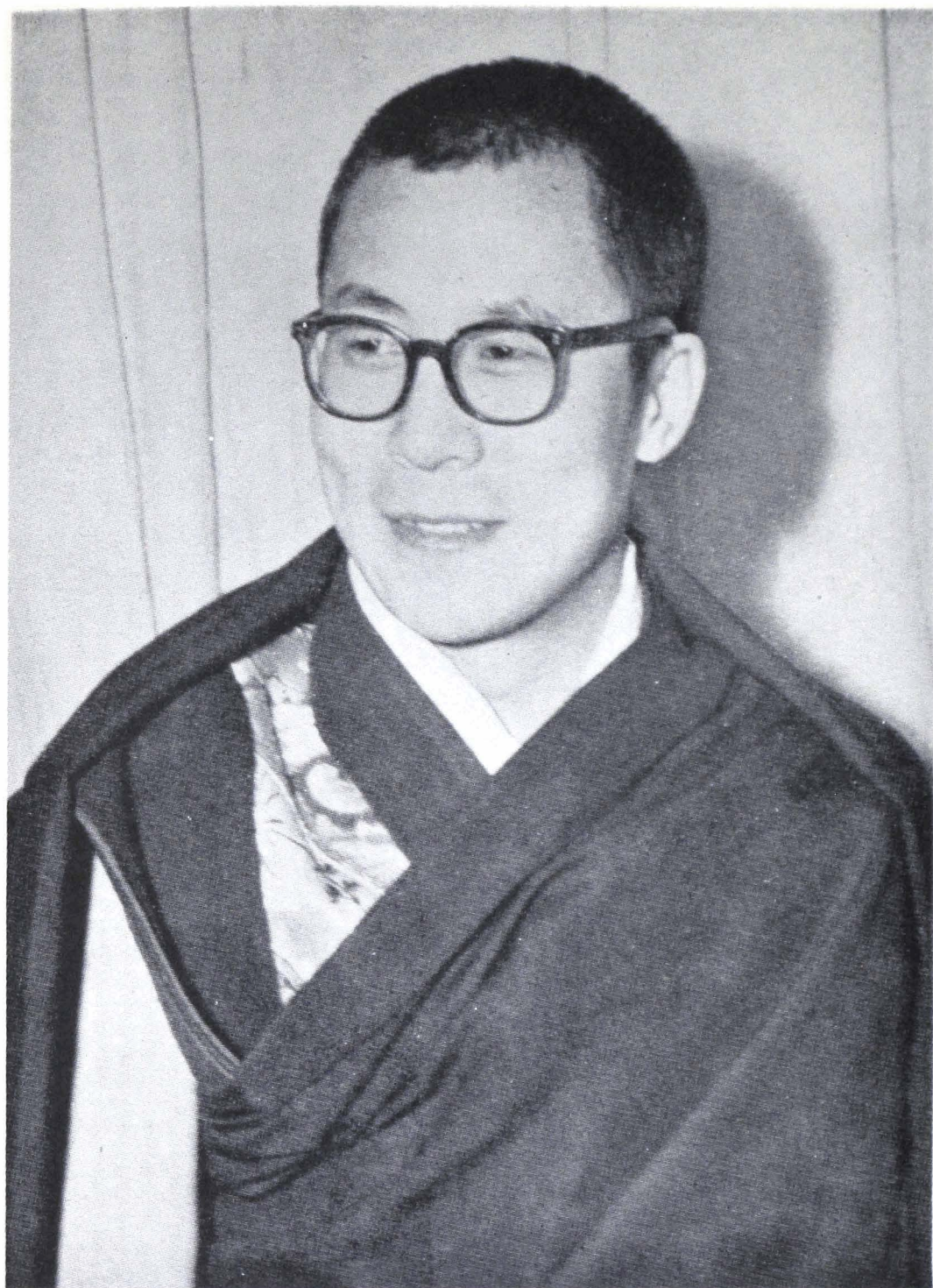
And where, I asked myself, could one see India better than on a crowded station platform after a day of stupefying heat? All around me the smells rose: the cooking smell and the urine smell and the smell of refuse. The platform was aswarm with humanity and goats and half-starved pi-dogs. Bodies lay sprawled asleep. High voices cried out and chattered; throats emitted sounds as if

their owner's lungs were being torn out of their chests. Reposing on banana leaves were strange foods, fiery to the mouth and beautiful to contemplate. Booklets were being sold: pornography and the *Gita*, the inevitable partnership. Beggars crawled on crooked, emaciated legs. Holy men wandered through the crowd, their great eyes gentle and vacant, their hair done up in enormous topknots. Everywhere and on everything there was dust, dust, dust. . . .

When an Indian train comes in, it is as if all the passions which are supposed to keep in motion the Wheel of Life are suddenly released. Everyone present leaps upon the train, uttering cries and yells so ear-splitting that no one can possibly hear a word that is being yelled by anyone else. Lithe bodies are everywhere: they wriggle in and out of windows, spring on and off compartment roofs, and almost never, by the perpetual miracle which preserves human life in India out of all proportion to the risks into which it is ceaselessly flinging itself, seem to meet with any serious accident. Doors swing; trunks, cases, bags, baskets, bedding rolls, are flung into still-moving compartments. Any Westerner with the preconceived notion that the Indians are a gentle, passive, uncompetitive race is likely to be amazed by such a scene and hastily rearrange his thoughts. And yet . . . if he looks again, he may perceive that in all the yells and the leaping and the apparently frenzied desire on the part of everyone to be either inside or on top of the train before anyone else, there is not one flicker of positive aggressiveness or even of positive effort. Like a wave they break upon the train; like the watery particles of a wave they invade it, settle upon it, fill it. All the noise, all the agitation, is simply their natural reaction to its sudden appearance. When the storm subsides each will rediscover himself in that place to which the Karma of all his past lives has cast him by its irresistible force. For myself, working by different methods and under the disadvantage of an entirely different outlook, it took a great deal of trouble and an alarming amount of baksheesh before I found myself in my first-class sleeping compartment.

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I found myself rocking through the night towards Dehra Dun in a four-berth compartment with no bedding and nothing to eat. My three companions were men, only one of whom could speak English. They all three undressed almost completely and then climbed into their bedding-rolls without embarrassment; in fact the atmosphere was entirely friendly and pleasant. Having no bedding-roll myself, I lay down on my berth and rested my head on my rolled-up coat. Indian trains seldom have corridors; each carriage being a compartment to itself into which its occupants lock themselves by all manner of bars and bolts as a protection against train bandits. I used to wonder at first how bandits were expected to attack a fast-moving train; until I learnt that in India no one thinks anything of swarming about on the outside of trains for purposes either lawful or illegitimate—and, in fact, train murders are not infrequent. The main-line trains are large and long and they rock and clank and emit all manner of sounds as they hurtle through the darkness. There are a great many stops which are disturbing to one's sleep but enable one to eat and drink. On the station platforms vendors offer curried food on banana leaves, chappatties, cups of tea, coca-cola and orange squash. In the early part of the night, my three companions having feasted off banana leaves all over the compartment, the one who spoke English inquired politely whether I did not also wish to eat, adding that he would be pleased to purchase for me whatever I wished. I replied truthfully that, although I longed to eat their delicious-looking food, I was not used to it and found it too hot. Perhaps then I would like one of his hard-boiled eggs and some bread? And without more ado, since I could not refuse such kindness, he produced from beneath his sleeping-berth a very dirty and much-used bath towel from which, having unravelled it, he began to extract various edibles which he arranged for me on a large plate. There was a chunk of unwrapped bread straight from contact with the bath-towel, melted butter in a tin and two small eggs. These proved to be soft-boiled and after cooking gently in the bath-towel had reached blood-heat: the yolks were orange-



III Kundun

His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama



IV Young Lamas' Home School

red, whether from age or by nature I could not decide, since I was unfamiliar with that type of egg and could only connect them in my mind with the Old Laid Eggs in Alison Uttley's stories of Grey Rabbit. I swallowed them with a smile, recalling the scene on the platform and reflecting that, after all, I was not lacking in self-control when I chose to exercise it. Then I drank cool water out of a beautiful earthenware jar which stood in a corner of the compartment. The water was unboiled but, after the bath towel, this did not seem to matter very much. Once more we all lay down and my companions, to judge from their snores, soon slept. Black grime poured through the barred windows, smothering me from head to foot as I lay sprawled on my sleeping berth. There was grime in my hair, grime in my eyes and my nose, grime grating on the floor when I stood up, grime all over the St Ivel cheese-box. At intervals I was obliged to sit up and scratch myself on account of nameless parasites. Oddly enough, I was enormously enjoying myself. That night journey to Dehra Dun was to be the one occasion, in the course of three visits to India, when for some reason I found the actual process of travelling entirely pleasant. I cannot imagine why; since I am not usually capable of detachment in relation to even the slightest degree of physical discomfort.

In the early morning I roused myself and sat cross-legged on my sleeping berth, looking out. The flat, soft countryside was all gentle greens and splashes of blue; wherever I looked there seemed to be straying cattle, flitting, brightly coloured birds, and peasants squatting in the fields engaged upon a morning exercise which I had always thought of as being performed in private. We reached Dehra Dun about nine o'clock.

There was a group of Tibetans on the train: large, simple-faced men, wearing the brown chuba and knee-length boots, with long knives at their waists and a mildly bewildered look as if this were the first time they had been out of Tibet. I had noticed them at Lucknow and again, at intervals, when the train stopped; and, since it was unusual to see pure Tibetans on a train so far from

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the border district, I assumed they were bound for Mussoorie, as I was myself. Therefore I was determined that I would not set off in a taxi from Dehra Dun until I had persuaded these gentlemen to allow me to give them a lift. It seemed unlikely, from the look of them, that they had sufficient money to pay for their own transport and they would certainly be unable to speak either Hindi or English. So, at Dehra Dun, having secured a car for myself, I plunged back into the human soup and eventually found my Tibetans sitting contentedly, some on the ground and some on a bench, waiting for something to turn up. There were eight of them and each one was the size of any two Indians within sight. I gestured vaguely in the direction of the hills or heaven and said 'Dalai Lama' several times, which produced delighted smiles without achieving any practical result. Then I moved away and beckoned to them but they refused to leave the bench. I was about to seize one of them by his brown robe when an Indian official, looking hot and harassed, emerged from the crowd and at once assumed responsibility for the whole group.

I was slightly disconcerted by this unexpected development, but I did not intend to be defeated by it. Appealing to the new arrival, I obtained permission from him to take two of the Tibetans in my taxi while he took charge of the rest and followed in another taxi behind us. I did not at first take in the fact that he was a Security Officer who had been deputed to meet my little contingent, escort them to their destination and pay for their transport, so that all my efforts on their behalf were superfluous and must have appeared senseless. The really curious aspect of the affair was that I should have been allowed, despite the rigid security measures then in force and the ludicrous nervousness of the Indians whose job it was to carry them out, to go off in a car with two Tibetans and no one to overhear what we talked about. The fact that, of course, I could not talk to them at all was scarcely relevant; since, as I was soon to learn, the Indian Security Officers concerned with the refugees in Mussoorie were under a general impression that any stranger who glanced at any Tibetan was

likely to be a Chinese agent, having either a secret knowledge of the language or his own mysterious system of communication worked out and ready for use. I can only assume that this particular Security Officer was heartily sick of the whole business.

The driver of my car, a haughty-looking Sikh, accepted the two extra passengers with a look of disdainful astonishment and we drove off. One of the Tibetans brought out from the depths of his tunic a square of multi-coloured striped felt which might have been cut from his wife's apron, gazed thoughtfully at it, spat into it quietly several times and then picked his nose into it. The car began to swing, screeching, up the mountain slopes. After about an hour's drive a town appeared in the distance. 'Mussoorie?' inquired one of the Tibetans, gazing at it with a look of tender devotion and then looking at me as if I could appreciate the significance of this moment. I smiled at him. 'Yes, Mussoorie.' I knew that, for him, Mussoorie was now the centre of the earth.

For me, after Darjeeling and Kalimpong, the centre of the earth seemed unexpectedly dull and characterless. The mountain scenery was like a picture postcard; the natives seemed sad and lifeless; and the place was infested with grossly fat and indolent-looking rich Indians who had come up from Delhi to escape the heat. At the hotel, I tried unsuccessfully to discover the whereabouts of Birla House; then I had a bath and went for a walk. I walked down the main street of the town, past an hotel with a long balcony upon which was seated George Patterson, writing furiously in a notebook. As I stopped and stared, he looked up and I was obliged to give a tentative wave, although I was convinced by this time that no one was likely to welcome my appearance. Patterson, however, waved energetically and called out to me to join him, without a trace of inhibition or embarrassment.

From Patterson I learned the full extent of the difficulties in the way of anyone who wished for an audience with His Holiness. A crowd of newspaper correspondents, including Patterson himself and Heinrich Harrer, author of *Seven Years in Tibet*, had been waiting in Mussoorie since the arrival of the Dalai Lama, writing

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letters, applying at the gate of Birla House, telephoning the security police, all to no purpose. Neither Patterson nor Harrer had been permitted to speak to old friends of theirs from Tibet who were among the Dalai Lama's party and whom they had several times passed in the street. No Tibetan was allowed to leave Birla House or the camp immediately outside it without being accompanied by one of the security police; and the few high-ranking Tibetans from Darjeeling and Kalimpong who had been allowed to see the Dalai Lama had been removed from their hotels and compelled to stay at Birla House, in case they should pass on any information to a newspaper correspondent. As a result of this situation, most of the correspondents had left, swallowing what must have been considerable disappointment in view of the fabulous sums which had been promised them in return for 'exclusive interviews' with His Holiness. Patterson himself seemed to be genuinely unconcerned with the financial aspect of his quest: he was essentially an adventurer, I thought, a man with an immense fantasy concerning himself and yet with a sincere love for the Tibetans and desire to help Tibet. Caution of any kind was alien to his temperament: the probability of getting himself into serious trouble seemed to provide him with food for amusement; even the possibility of danger was no more to him than an added stimulus to his immense zest for life. The fact that he was being followed everywhere by disguised members of the security police he regarded as nothing but a huge joke, an estimate with which I began to agree when he actually pointed one out to me strolling nonchalantly past the hotel in the guise of a saffron-robed Buddhist abbot.

I wrote a letter to the Dalai Lama in language approximating as closely as possible, given my limited knowledge of the subject, to Tibetan honorific speech. It was fortunate for me that my feelings towards His Holiness were such that I found it perfectly natural to express them in the exaggerated ceremonial forms prescribed by the rigid conventions of old Tibet. It may be that some of the

senior Lamas appreciated my efforts, if my letter ever got beyond the hands of the security police; it is doubtful, however, whether my literary style would have appealed to His Holiness. In any case, this was not a practical method of seeking an audience; since the Dalai Lama did not see more than a fraction of his enormous correspondence and was only permitted to grant interviews to such persons as were passed by a certain Mr Menon who had been appointed by the Government to be liaison officer at Birla House. The correct procedure would have been to ring up this gentleman; at the same time no proceeding could have been more useless since the principal function of Mr Menon was precisely to refuse all such requests and to stand as an impassable barrier between the Dalai Lama and the public.

I took my letter to Birla House, enclosed in another addressed to the Chief Secretary of His Holiness, since I knew that it was not in accordance with Tibetan etiquette to address the Dalai Lama except through an official of his court. Birla House was invisible from the road. The entrance to the drive was at the end of a steeply descending lane which formed a cul-de-sac; outside this entrance was a large tent sheltering about half a dozen security police. I approached these gentlemen not so much in trepidation as in acute embarrassment. They conveyed to me the impression that I was being mocked.

A police officer seated behind a table accepted my letter and then instructed me to sit down and supply particulars about myself. Where was I from? Was I a newspaper correspondent? How long had I been in India and when was I proposing to return to England? Why was I interested in Tibet? The answers to these and many other questions were written down in a large volume euphemistically described as a 'Visitors' Book'. Meanwhile the telephone rang continually and my interrogator broke off to answer it in the usual official tones of surly impatience. His colleagues lolled about the tent, reading newspapers and smoking cigarettes. They wore khaki shirts and drill shorts, which became them better than the robes of Buddhist abbots.

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An Indian, whom I took to be a plain clothes agent, seated himself beside me and conversationally remarked:

‘You were in Darjeeling last week?’

‘How did you know?’ I asked.

‘I was told. You are a friend of Mr Patterson?’

‘I know him . . . yes.’

‘You have seen him here?’

‘Yes.’

‘Today?’

‘No, not today. Yesterday, as a matter of fact.’

‘Has he finished his article yet?’

‘I don’t know,’ I said, and got up. ‘May I go now?’

Frustrated and miserable as I was, I felt unable to endure this smiling mockery another moment. My one conscious desire was to crack my new acquaintance over the head with the ‘Visitors’ Book’.

I received no answer to my request to see the Dalai Lama; indeed I had scarcely expected to receive one; and now I could think of no other way of seeking an audience that was likely to produce a positive result. So I lingered in Mussoorie, irritable and depressed, enduring the ceaseless bombardment of invitations from rickshaw coolies, fruit vendors, tailors, shoemakers, newspaper boys, fortune tellers, trinket sellers and silk merchants, all of whom seemed to pursue me wherever I went. Only one of these traders never annoyed me and became my friend: a beautiful, up-standing Tibetan woman wearing a richly coloured chuba and striped apron, who came up to the hotel on several mornings in the week to display her Tibetan goods. From her I bought an inexpensive ring, on the wordless understanding that, honour being satisfied by this purchase, she would not try to induce me to buy anything else. Instead I became her unofficial agent, suggesting to the Americans who came to the hotel that her wares were superior to those of anyone else, that from her they could purchase a genuine prayer-wheel, a superb beggar’s-necklace, a

beautifully chased teacup. Then, when I next met her in the town, I would let her know if the moment were auspicious. Our conversation, for instance, might proceed thus: 'Guests today? Rich?' 'Two American. Very rich. Want necklace.'

This woman was not, of course, a refugee or she would not have been allowed to come to the hotel or to speak to me in the street and she would not have known even those few words of English. She was a fairly affluent trader from New Delhi, whose base was one of the luxurious hotels in the diplomatic enclave, where the American tourists flow in and out and will seldom turn aside from such exotic trophies as oddments from Tibet. Like me, she was waiting for an opportunity to receive the Blessing of His Holiness.

In the town the huge, mooning Tibetans, many of them warrior tribesmen from the province of Kham, explored the shops, always in pairs and accompanied by a member of the Indian police force. These Khamba Tibetans are renowned for their wild fearlessness and for so great a devotion to their freedom that they have resisted being governed by Chinese, Tibetans or anyone else. It is said by those who have good cause to know that the Khamba tribes, who had the distinction of being the first to rise against the Chinese and proved themselves the most formidable and persistent of all the freedom-fighters of Tibet, were planning an uprising against the corrupt and indolent Lhasa Government at the very time when Tibet was invaded by the Chinese Communists. It is further said that the Chinese sent messages to the leaders of Kham, making them soft promises and encouraging them to persist with their plans, concerning which the Chinese were doubtless well-informed and which they naturally supposed could be turned to their own use. The Chinese, it would seem, suffered a remarkable disappointment. And during the Dalai Lama's escape across Tibet, it was the Khamba warriors who met him and formed a bodyguard about his person until the journey was accomplished. Photographs taken on that journey, betokening the fact that no danger has been too appalling to dis-

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tract His Holiness and his entourage from their ciné-cameras and kodaks, show the young ruler of Tibet, his slim figure almost lost in a heavy sack-like garment, surrounded on all sides by enormous gentle-faced bandits—those same men upon whom I gazed a few weeks later in the Mussoorie streets.

Patterson returned to Darjeeling. Mr Shakabpa arrived at my hotel and almost immediately left for Birla House, although not before I had encountered him in the dining-room and he had made it abundantly clear that he did not wish to renew our brief acquaintance. The Maharaj Kumar, the Crown Prince of Sikkim, whom I was later to regard as a friend, arrived and departed in similar fashion; but all I saw of him was a huge, glistening car and a positive infestation of the hotel grounds by security police.

In the evening coolness I used to go for long walks. The roads leading out of Mussoorie are not, as in Darjeeling, too steep for walking; they beguiled me on and on, turning and turning so that I wanted to see what was round the next bend and the next. . . . On one side of the road would be the towering, tree-covered mountain slope, on the other a great wide view, with the snowy summit of Nanda Devi rising in the far distance. I was enchanted by the monkeys, tribes of which inhabited these slopes, graceful, bounding creatures, the size of men, white-bodied and brown-faced. Occasionally, however, when I was alone and some way from the town, I would feel suddenly alarmed at the size and number of these beasts, as they crashed in the trees overhead and then paused, all together, to gaze intently down at the small solitary figure of myself. Even more than the monkeys I liked the birds: multitudes of birds there seemed to be and of varieties which I had seen nowhere else. There were little fluttering chaffinch-like birds, making a chirring sound like grasshoppers on a hot afternoon; and tiny adorable birds which reminded me of wrens except for their less perky tails and the fact that they flew in numbers instead of alone, diving silently like wrens into the depths of a bush and then flitting swiftly away as I crept up to look. And then, suddenly, one evening, I stood perfectly still,

held in stillness. Out of a tree just below me had flown a blue bird, entirely blue as if it had fallen out of the depths of the sky and were made of its light.

On the morning of May 7, a message was sent to the hotel that the Dalai Lama was holding a public audience and that anyone who wished to receive 'darshan' (an almost untranslatable Indian expression, signifying the blessing of being in a great man's presence) should arrive at Birla House shortly after ten o'clock. Everyone was preparing to go, although there was probably no one at the hotel, apart from myself, for whom the 'darshan' of the Dalai Lama represented anything more than an intriguing experience. I changed hastily into my best blouse and skirt, snatched up the long silk scarf with which I had provided myself and hailed a rickshaw, conscious of nothing but the urgency of not being late. It would not, I felt, be practicable, on this occasion, to present the Crown Derby teacup.

About fifty people, almost all from the Savoy Hotel, as no one else seemed to have been informed of what was taking place, congregated in the police tent and there was a great taking down of names and particulars for the 'Visitors' Book'. We were informed that we should not be allowed to speak to His Holiness or to take photographs. We must file past him and bow to receive his Blessing, not attempting to shake hands since this would not be according to the custom of Tibet. We must remember that the Dalai Lama was a sacred personage and approach him with reverence. In fact, although I did not realize this at the time, the Indian authorities were far more concerned with the proper respect due to the Dalai Lama than he was himself.

Having been thus instructed, we were shepherded through the gates, up the drive and on to the front lawn of Birla House. It was a cool green lawn, shaded by trees. In the centre of it was a flimsy wooden platform and on this had been placed a low armchair over which had been flung a length of saffron silk. The whole contraption looked as if it might topple over at any moment.

There were a number of Tibetans on the lawn and some of the

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Indian officials whose faces were familiar to me from the newspaper photographs. There was a great deal of fuss and talk and then, suddenly, perfect silence. No murmur of interest greeted the Dalai Lama as he came out of the house, only this complete stillness. No one could mistake the Dalai Lama, partly because there was some indefinable element in his personality which set him apart from everyone else and partly because of the horn-rimmed spectacles which seemed to be half the size of his face. These spectacles emphasized an aspect of his appearance which, in my eyes at least, was of enormous significance. The Fourteenth Dalai Lama resembled almost exactly what he was supposed to be: the Monkey-God. Almost but not completely, since there was in his face, besides the angelic quality and the peculiar monkeyishness, something that was essentially human and defenceless. The horn-rimmed spectacles somehow drew attention to this. After all, spectacles are not worn by a monkey or by a god, only by a human being subject to human weakness. The Dalai Lama presented the strangest paradox imaginable of unearthliness combined with pathos.

He crossed the lawn quickly, with a curious, weightless walk, looking up at the sky and smiling at it, as if he found the sight of it wonderfully pleasant. Then he mounted the platform and seated himself. He was wearing the usual maroon-coloured Lama's robe, with one arm left bare and no adornments. The most remarkable of his physical features were his hands, which were very large and long, with long, curving fingers like the fingers of the Buddharupas. As the people began to file past him, he leaned forward, holding out one of these strange hands and gently touching each person on the side of the head as he or she made a deep obeisance. The line approached him from the side, according to the Tibetan custom by which all sacred persons and objects must be passed on the left with the right side turned towards them as a mark of reverence.

When I reached the foot of the throne, I put my hands together and bowed, to receive the Blessing; then I looked up and held out

my long silk scarf. The Dalai Lama took it and swiftly, in a single movement, put it round my neck. This, again, I knew to be the custom. I bowed once more and walked away, turning when I was a little distance off so that I might watch as the end of the line filed past. The Dalai Lama was bending over the heads of the people, his elbow on his knee and his hand held out. The slight smile on the flat, mongoloid, almost fair-skinned face seemed to arise from simple, unalloyed happiness. There came to my mind, as I watched, the title by which he is most generally known in Tibet and which is used in addressing him by the members of his family and other intimates: Kundun—the Presence.

As with everything connected with the Dalai Lama, there is an elaborate set of rules governing the manner in which one should offer him a present. I was only vaguely acquainted with these rules but I knew that any such gift should be accompanied by a scarf and either wrapped or tied up in some yellow material, yellow being the sacred colour of the priesthood. So I bought a fruit basket for a few annas in the market, two yards of saffron ribbon and another silk scarf almost identical with the one which I had already presented and with which I was disinclined to part because the Dalai Lama had himself hung it round my neck. Having tied the ribbon in two bows on the handle of the basket, I unpacked the St Ivel cheese-box, transferred the Crown Derby cup and saucer, swathed them in the scarf and added a card with a suitable inscription and an explanation of the gift. One thing remained to be done. Tibetans believe that to present anyone with an open vessel with nothing inside it is inauspicious. So I searched by the wayside till I found a tiny yellow flower with five petals, the sacred number and the sacred colour of Tibet, and put it inside the teacup. Then I took the basket to Birla House.

The police officer in the tent inquired after my health in a manner which made me feel like the teenager who turns up at the stage door after each performance. I had better wait, he remarked, in case I was allowed to present my gift to His Holiness myself.

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I attached the scantiest value to this suggestion, even suspecting that the police officer was deliberately amusing himself at my expense; but I sat down and relaxed, after giving my name for the third time to be entered in the 'Visitors' Book'. Another official went up to the house with my basket. I sat for two hours, swotting flies and watching the comings and goings of Tibetans, most of whom were living in tents and bungalows outside the gates of Birla House. A tap by the roadside trickled incessantly, making a pleasant sound; and, since I was entirely resigned to not seeing the Dalai Lama, if it had not been for the flies I should have enjoyed myself. At intervals some hopeful applicant would appear, wishing to see His Holiness. The police officer, not wishing to detain several victims at once, dealt with these persons in a manner which afforded me rich entertainment. To the leader of a large party who seemed disposed to picnic in front of the tent he remarked: 'The Dalai Lama is praying and cannot be disturbed. He is God and he is in communion with God.' There being no reply to this, the whole party hastily left. At the end of two hours the police officer looked up at me, as if he had just recollected my presence, although I had been sitting facing him since my arrival at the tent. 'You can go now,' he calmly remarked. 'Your articles have been sent up.'

I received a letter of acknowledgment from Birla House written in a fine Tibetan script. I took it to my Tibetan friend but she was unable to read it; and so for several days it remained unread, until one evening I encountered in the town a certain Tibetan gentleman whose photograph had been in all the newspapers, showing him in constant attendance upon His Holiness. This gentleman was not a refugee. He was evidently one of the high-ranking Tibetans living in India; and I concluded that he had been appointed to some post in the service of the Dalai Lama by the Indian Government; therefore it seemed likely that he would be able to speak English. I approached him, holding out my letter, and asked whether he would be so kind as to translate it.

The letter was signed by the Chief Secretary to the Dalai Lama. It read as follows: 'Miss Lois Lang-Sims has presented to His Holiness an ancient English teacup. His Holiness is very very grateful (this repetition is one of the courtesy conventions of Tibetan correspondence) and thanks her very very much.' With a beaming smile the Tibetan gentleman handed it back. 'You sent to His Holiness an ancient teacup? How very nice.'

Meanwhile I had by no means lost sight of the plain clothes agent who had accosted me in the police tent. I was frequently meeting this individual in the course of my walks and each time we met he made a great show of friendliness and questioned me in detail about my arrangements. When was I returning to England? Had I seen the Dalai Lama? When was I next going to Birla House? Was I a member of the Buddhist Society? Had I sent the Dalai Lama a present? I was soon able to reassure him that I was about to return to England; in a few days I was going to New Delhi and then on to Bombay to board a homeward bound ship.

In New Delhi I was hoping to see the Secretary of the Central Relief Committee for Tibetans which had been started by a number of prominent Indians with the approval and backing of the Indian Government. I had seen the address of this committee in a newspaper and written to it, receiving in reply a letter of gratitude and encouragement. So far, the Secretary wrote, there had been no offers of help from England, although a committee had already been formed in the United States. Meanwhile the refugees were beginning to arrive in large numbers and were desperately in need of assistance. It would be useful if I could visit the committee's office to discuss ways in which I might be able to help.

Before I left Mussoorie I was able to attend one more public audience at Birla House. Afterwards, until he moved from Mussoorie to Dharamsala, the Dalai Lama was to hold these audiences once a week and they were to become a regular 'attraction' for holiday-makers and tourists, to the consternation

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of those who were concerned for the dignity of His Holiness and the tireless delight of His Holiness himself, who never wearied of making new friends, seeing new faces and signing fresh autograph books. On the occasion of this second audience, however, a large number of Tibetans had come on foot from many parts of India to receive the Blessing and prostrate themselves before the Presence. When I arrived, with the other non-Tibetan visitors, at the police tent, it was to find about sixty of them seated on the ground, perfectly at home, turning their prayer-wheels and cooking their breakfast. It was very hot and, apart from the Tibetans, everyone was pushing and jostling everyone else, while police officers shouted and fussed, creating further disturbance. At last a queue was formed, the Tibetans naturally being given precedence over the rest of us. While the Indians argued and shoved one another, the Tibetans lined up quietly in a solemn procession, carrying their scarves and incense sticks and their offerings of flowers and fruit. There were pineapples, gourds, oranges and melons in round shallow baskets, strewn with wild flowers already withered in the heat. Many of the women carried babies on their backs; one man pick-a-backed an old woman who was too feeble to walk. One and all, their faces were radiant with joy; some of them glanced at my scarf and beamed at me in what seemed like an overflow of happiness. My own eyes were burning with tears: I could not help seeing in imagination the great ceremonies of Lhasa, when the whole population prostrated themselves in the streets at the sight of the litter bearing the Kundun, and comparing this mental picture with the small, dignified procession which was to be its substitute. The Tibetans, I knew, were oblivious of such contrasts. To them only one thing was important: Kundun—the Presence.

The procession moved and the rest of us followed slowly up to the lawn, where we stood, in silence now, awaiting His Holiness. The Tibetans were lined up in two long rows facing the throne. When the Dalai Lama appeared they prostrated themselves three times on the ground and then began to file in front of him, their

faces so transfigured by love and worship that I turned away in tears, unable to look. The scarves and the flowers and the baskets of fruit were being piled up near the throne in a great heap. I dropped my own scarf on the pile as I passed; although it was the one I had wished to keep, I could not make myself different from these people who were too humble to offer their scarves directly to the Dalai Lama himself.

Three weeks later I was back in London. A society to be known as the Tibet Society of the United Kingdom had been started in my absence and I found myself a member of its working committee before I had time to return to Canterbury and pull up the weeds in my garden in preparation for leaving it.

Chapter 3 · 'TIBET WILL LIVE'

I GAVE up my Canterbury flat and went to live with my aunt and uncle and cousins in Sussex. From this new home I came up frequently to London to attend committee meetings of the Tibet Society and discuss Tibetan affairs with the various persons who were beginning to come together in pursuit of this common interest.

The Tibet Society of the United Kingdom, formed as the result of a letter from its future chairman to *The Times*, in which he called upon all those whose sense of justice had been outraged by the recent events in Tibet to join together in protest, had commenced its existence in a manner which struck me as being wholly admirable: almost from nothing, with practically no knowledge of Tibet or even of the existing situation beyond such facts as were glaringly obvious, and with no motive behind its inauguration beyond the humane and decent instincts of a miscellaneous collection of people who had no particular wish to be associated with one another and only the vaguest notion of what they intended to accomplish. This, it seems to me, is the way in which a society should start. It is only sad that no society, from the Church downwards, seems to be able to retain either the contact with simple human realities or the atmosphere of humility and faith which probably graced its first moments.

In June I was invited to give a talk on 'The Dalai Lama' at a meeting of the China Society at which the principal speaker was the President of the Buddhist Society, Mr Christmas Humphreys, who had met the Dalai Lama in India in 1956. My second attempt at public speaking was in Caxton Hall on the occasion of the first public meeting of the Tibet Society when I was abashed to find myself endeavouring to propound the teaching concerning

the Incarnation of Chenrezig in the presence of so great an authority on the subject as Marco Pallis. Marco, however, approved. When he wrote to me, after the meeting: ‘Few Europeans could (or would) have put the matter so clearly’, I was content and scarcely asked myself what impression I had made upon anyone else.

By this time, in addition to the President of the Buddhist Society, we had two first-class experts on Tibet to advise us in our work: one was Marco Pallis, the other was Hugh E. Richardson, who was British representative in Lhasa for a number of years and then took charge of the Indian mission which replaced the British from the time of Independence until the Chinese invasion of Tibet. Meanwhile we were experiencing difficulty in establishing satisfactory lines of communication with the Tibetans. The secretariat of the Dalai Lama was still, not unnaturally, in a highly disorganized state; the Central Relief Committee sent us statistics of the influx of refugees into India; but only George Patterson, in long, racy letters which were not only interesting but a constant source of entertainment, told us the kind of things which I, at least, felt to be important: who was influencing the Dalai Lama; who was and who was not popular among the Tibetans; what part was being played by this person and that person; what factors in the present situation were most likely to influence its future course. All this gossip I brooded over, re-reading Patterson’s letters in the course of long committee meetings when I should have been attending to matters of more immediate moment; and from it all I received one predominating impression, not particularly intended by Patterson himself: the Dalai Lama, it seemed to me, was showing himself far too ready to abandon the traditions and ceremonies surrounding his own person in deference to what he supposed to be the ideas of the twentieth-century West. My own views at the time were so uncompromisingly traditionalist that I begrudged His Holiness so much as a comfortable pair of shoes or a wristwatch.

By the good offices of George Patterson we were able to obtain

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a tape-recording of the Dalai Lama's first press conference, which the Indian authorities at last permitted to be held on June 20. I listened to this in the company of the honorary secretary of the Tibet Society in the studio of his Chelsea house. John was the only one of the officers of the Society with whom I had anything approaching a personal friendship. He was a highly sensitive, intuitive and charming person, with a streak of cynicism in his make-up not implanted by nature but acquired in self-defence which caused him to lecture me continually on my so-called unworldliness; although, in fact, we were too alike for comfort: when we were later compelled to work in close association with one another the society did not profit from the battles which were fought between us. On this particular occasion, while John was greatly impressed by the Dalai Lama's performance, I felt that his answers were ineffectual and far too obviously dictated by someone else. His accusations against the Chinese sounded stereotyped, and, although I had no doubt of the truth of his statements, not one of them was accompanied by a vestige of proof. To obtain verifiable proofs of Chinese atrocities in Tibet was, of course, almost hopelessly difficult; therefore I felt it to be of great importance that the Dalai Lama should be left free to speak from the heart and produce an impression by means of his personal sincerity and goodness without regard to the niceties of politics. I had yet to learn that this apparently simple and even obvious suggestion was far too unorthodox to be taken seriously by anyone in a position of influence: the Dalai Lama himself would scarcely, I think, have known how to carry it out.

Meanwhile it appeared from the brief snippets of news which were coming out of Tibet that the Chinese had quelled the rebellion and, abolishing even the pretence of an autonomous Tibetan government, established a military dictatorship. Stories of the mass-murder of Lamas and monks by Chinese troops were spreading in India as the refugees, already numbering 10,000, continued to stream into the border districts. The Panchen Lama

was variously reported as having been murdered, abducted to Peking and enthroned in the Potala Palace.

One morning towards the end of August I was surprised and delighted to receive a letter in the beautiful, almost totally illegible handwriting, suggesting to me the tracks of some delicate insect performing an exotic dance, of Sirdar D. K. Sen, who had just arrived in London. The Sirdar had seen a letter of mine which had been published in the *Guardian* on the subject of Tibet and wrote to inquire how and where I was.

My immediate response was to go up to London. Sen had a flat in Kensington, hung with flaming t’ankas for which I could scarcely spare a glance as I sipped sherry and gazed at the mercurial little Bengali while he talked. To my great relief he was prepared to be more communicative than he had been at the Mount Everest, and he referred with friendly amusement to the suspicions which he had entertained concerning myself. ‘But I never thought you were a spy,’ he added, with a wide grin; and when I exclaimed: ‘Did anyone?’—‘Oh, certainly, yes.’

I deduced from this conversation that in concluding that Gyalo Thondup had been acting as a confidential go-between from Sen to the Dalai Lama I had chanced upon the truth; but I was likewise fairly certain that neither of them had been acting either in collaboration with or without the knowledge of Pandit Nehru and his Government. In any case it was clear that Sen had by now assumed an open role in relation to His Holiness and was working with all the energy and enthusiasm of the Bengali temperament to enlist the sympathy of the British Government and people on behalf of Tibet. From him, as from Patterson, although there was no similarity between their respective side-comments, I gathered that Gyalo Thondup was assuming a position of unique importance amongst the officials surrounding His Holiness.

The Sirdar remained in England for three more weeks, during which time I put him in touch with the Tibet Society to the great advantage of its work, and then returned to India for further con-

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sultations with the Dalai Lama, pending the presentation of the Tibetan case to the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York. Shortly afterwards we had another interesting visitor: the Dalai Lama's eldest brother, Thupten Norbu, who, as Tagtsel Rimpoche, had been Abbot of the famous monastery of Kumbum and a Lama Incarnate. In 1950, as a prisoner of the advancing Chinese, he was sent to Lhasa with instructions to convince his younger brother of the good intentions of the Chinese Communists. On his arrival in the capital, however, he had described to the Dalai Lama and his cabinet the treatment which he had already seen meted out to his own monks; and, after accompanying them to Yatung, had proceeded over the Indian border and escaped by plane to the United States. Like Gyalo Thondup, but a little less successfully perhaps, he had made determined efforts to educate and Westernize himself. He had dropped the title of 'Rimpoche', which may be translated approximately as 'Precious' and is applicable only to the Lama Incarnates, and reverted to the names by which he was known in childhood before he entered the monastic life.

I received a telephone call from John telling me that Mr Norbu had arrived in England and was to hold a press conference. This took place at the Hyde Park Hotel and was afterwards said to have been a success; although, as to that, I was dubious. It seemed to me that whatever might be the proper function of Mr Norbu in Tibetan affairs, it did not involve embroiling himself in politics. Whether or not he chose to accept himself as he was, there was a quality in his personality of lamb-like innocence which, combined with a peculiar suggestion of immateriality and physical weightlessness which is often the result of the spiritual exercises practised in the monasteries of Tibet, conveyed the impression that he was set apart from worldly affairs and surrounded by a kind of spiritual shell which, in his case, was less a positive radiance than an infolding defence. In features he resembled his younger brother; but there was no trace in his personality of the Kundun's extraordinary gaiety and liveliness: he was like the palest of pale

reflections of the startling apparition that was the ruler of Tibet. At the same time, he lacked the sophisticated poise and suavity of Gyalo Thondup.

I was invited by the Chairman and John to a small luncheon party for Mr Norbu after the press conference. Finding myself seated next to our guest of honour, I took the opportunity to probe his views on the desirability or otherwise of the Tibetan exiles falling to any considerable extent under Western influence. Mr Norbu was noncommittal and I could not press him too hard on so obviously delicate a subject. I wondered what solution there was for him, lost as he seemed to be between a world in which he had no part and a vocation to which I could only assume that he had never given his inward consent.

Months later, when I heard that he had married a Tibetan girl in the United States, I rejoiced that he had found a little normal human happiness.

Our next visitor was Gyalo Thondup himself, accompanied by Sirdar Sen and Mr Shakabpa, on his way to the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York. Since he was visiting England as the official representative of His Holiness, the Tibet Society organized for him a round of formal calls and interviews, deputing suitable persons to accompany him to appropriate embassies and to the Foreign Office. It was, I suppose, as a result of these efforts that the Tibetans began to realize that the Society meant business. At the end of the programme there were to be two formal luncheons: the first given by the Society for the delegation, following a press conference; the second given by the delegation for us, as a gesture of appreciation before they left. I was informed by John over the telephone that, at the special request of Gyalo Thondup, I had been invited to both.

I was suddenly very angry with Gyalo Thondup. Only when I heard that he was in London did I realize how deeply I had been hurt by his recent attitude towards me and, above all, by his obvious suspicion that, in offering him money, I was trying to

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bribe him into being indiscreet. Even to be assured by John that Gyalo understood the situation now because it had been explained to him by Sen and by John himself was no great comfort. My pride was sore; and I could not see why I should have had to depend upon either Sen or John to vouch for my sincerity and disinterestedness. However, there was nothing for it but to accept the luncheon invitations and go to the press conference.

At the Hyde Park Hotel I tried to lose myself in the rows of waiting journalists. When Gyalo entered the room, accompanied by the Sirdar, Mr Shakabpa, John and the Chairman, my first thought was that, as usual, he was superbly poised and impeccably dressed. Once indeed I had seen that poise disturbed but even then the disturbance had been just beneath the surface; it had not affected his smooth, unruffled appearance. He seated himself, apparently at ease, in the pose which he seemed invariably to adopt, leaning forward, his knees slightly apart and his large hands clasped. Suddenly he caught sight of me and a charming smile turned up the corners of his mouth as he raised his hands in salutation after the fashion of the East. The questions began, with Gyalo speaking through an interpreter, and I sensed at once that they were going to be difficult. As they proceeded, I was confirmed in my first instinctive conviction that the only effectual method of dealing with the Tibetan problem was to abandon the diplomatic approach and encourage everyone concerned to utter his real thoughts and speak out of his personal experience. Failing this, I thought, it would have been better not to hold a press conference. Besides having no convincing proof of Chinese atrocities in Tibet, the Tibetans had no authority from the Dalai Lama to describe in detail the events leading up to his escape and no answer to the inevitable demand for an explanation of the letters sent by him to the Chinese Commander-in-Chief. By concentrating upon a calculated evasion of these embarrassments rather than upon the unalterable fact that, in spite of them, his cause was just and there was nothing to fear provided he spoke the truth, Gyalo could not avoid antagonizing a gathering of hard-

boiled newspaper correspondents who were not to be deceived by such expedients. As for the perpetually recurring question of the letters, I felt that the time had come for some definite statement to be issued on the subject by His Holiness: a point which I had already urged upon Sen without eliciting any positive response beyond a vague reassurance.

When the conference was over I approached Gyalo Thondup. He took my hand and said earnestly, his head on one side:

‘It is so nice, so nice to see you. . . . Yes, thank you, my wife is well. She is in Darjeeling.’ He hesitated, with an expression of obvious distress, and then said:

‘I have heard all that you do for our country. Please, we owe you an apology. When you came to us in Darjeeling, we were very much afraid of people . . . even of you. We did not know who you were. Please forgive us.’

‘How *could* you know who I was? Of course I understand. Of course.’

But he continued to look mournfully at me and said again: ‘Please forgive us.’ I touched his sleeve and said, meaning it from my heart: ‘There is nothing to forgive.’ Then I turned away and shook hands warmly with Mr Shakabpa, who beamed ingratiatingly to compensate for his lack of English. I inquired after Mrs Shakabpa, reminding him of how she had entertained me to tea at their house. This seemed a pleasanter memory to revive than that of my last meeting with Mr Shakabpa himself.

I had a further opportunity of talking to Gyalo before lunch. We talked of Darjeeling, of which he spoke with nostalgic affection as if he would gladly have remained there instead of plunging into the risks and embarrassments of public life and the intrigues of international politics. I still believed, although no one else seemed to share my opinion, that I had been right in my original interpretation of him as an essentially ordinary young man who longed to be left alone to enjoy a quiet domestic happiness. However, in the eyes of everyone else it seemed that he must be either a ‘born statesman’ or a ‘weak and slippery character’—two ex-

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pressions which had been used to me in describing him by common acquaintances of us both.

‘How is His Holiness?’ I asked.

‘He is well, thank you. He is at Birla House.’

‘And your mother?’

‘Yes. She is in Darjeeling, staying with my wife. She wanted so much to see our children.’

‘It must be wonderful for her,’ I said, ‘to have you all together, with her, at last.’

Gyalo smiled and a look of gentleness came into his face.

‘Yes. Yes, she is glad. It was very bad for her and for all of us. We did not know of each other—how do you call?—where we all was.’

At the end of October I agreed to go up to London and become the Organizing Secretary of the Tibet Society, working in John’s studio and living in a bed-sitting room in Pont Street. I had no previous experience of such work but the Society was not yet in a position to engage a secretary at the ordinary rates and the need was urgent: when I arrived at John’s studio I found the grand piano piled high with unanswered letters and unfiled documents, some of which had been lying there for months. John was away on his honeymoon. I was alone in the house and the rain was hammering on the roof. I seized all the papers in my arms and cast them on the floor; after which initial effort I divided them under whatever headings occurred to me as I worked; then I answered all the letters personally and often at considerable length. There was never anything official or impersonal about the way in which I dealt with the Society’s correspondence. When John came home and requested that all important letters should be written by me and signed by himself, I stared at him in astonishment, not because I wished to have a monopoly in writing the Society’s letters but because I felt that a letter, even from the secretary of a society, should contain a personal element if it were to have any effect beyond the bare communication of a matter of business.

It rained and rained and rained. Through the rain I made my way to the Kensington hotel where Gyalo and Mr Shakabpa were staying as they passed through London again on their return from New York. At the General Assembly of the United Nations a moderately worded resolution sponsored by Malaya and the Irish Republic, deploring the recent violation of human rights in Tibet without even naming the Chinese (who were, of course, absent), had been passed by 46 votes to 9 with 26 abstentions, these latter including both the Indian representative and the British. The Tibetans were naturally disappointed that the British had followed India's lead, particularly in view of the British Government's former relations with Tibet. It was a fact not appreciated by many people in England that the British responsibility towards Tibet in this crisis was unique in that, apart from China herself, Great Britain alone had maintained constant dealings with Tibet throughout the reign of the Great Thirteenth: hence the records which could have proved the *de facto* independence of Tibet during this period were presumably buried in the files of the British Foreign Office.

Under somewhat erratic supervision from John, I took upon myself at that time practically the whole responsibility for the Society's external contacts. I spent my time alternately writing letters and interviewing editors, printers, journalists, secretaries of other societies, who always seemed to belong to a peculiar species which did not include myself, and well-wishers of all sorts. By this time the Society had started a fund for refugee relief; and news was beginning to trickle across to us of such projects as the school for Tibetan children in Mussoorie and the handicrafts centre in Darjeeling started by Mrs Gyalo Thondup. Meanwhile the aims of the Society had to be clearly defined and this was done in a printed leaflet, designed and composed by myself, on the outside of which was a photograph of the Dalai Lama and the words: ‘TIBET WILL LIVE’ quoted from an interview given by His Holiness to a newspaper correspondent on June 6. The full context of this quotation appeared on the back of the leaflet:

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‘He (the Dalai Lama) further said that both the Tibetans who had remained behind and those who had come away were suffering equally, the first physically and the second mentally.

‘ “But we both feel the same pain. Those who are left behind are being subjected to unbearable tortures day and night.” He ended by saying: “Despite all these difficulties, and come what may, our spirit will never die. Tibet will live. One day our beloved country will arrive at journey’s end, when truth shall triumph.” ’

I could not help wondering, as I copied out this passage, whether the Dalai Lama had really expressed himself in Tibetan in phrases that were even remotely equivalent to this rather sentimental and meaningless English; but I was beginning, in spite of myself, to acquire the point of view which comes to those who run societies, according to which any cliché is good enough if it is likely to produce the desired result. The objects of the Society I defined on the inside of the leaflet:

1. By non-party political action to promote the cause of Tibetan independence and bring before the world the sufferings of the oppressed people of Tibet.
2. To assist the ever-increasing number of refugees who are arriving in India in flight from the horrors being perpetrated by the Chinese Communists.
3. To promote understanding of Tibetan history, culture and religion—both on account of the great intrinsic value which such studies have for the West and that we may the more effectually befriend the exiled people of Tibet.

On this subject of ‘Tibetan history, culture and religion’ I was doing some hard thinking myself, partly with the assistance of Marco Pallis, by whose traditionalist views I was profoundly influenced, corresponding as they did to my own inclinations and my extreme bias against the twentieth-century way of life, and partly on my own account without communicating my thoughts to anyone else.

The key to my own interest in Tibet, in so far as this interest could be reduced to a rational explanation at all, lay in the fact that it had been a traditional society based upon a formal religion, with an emphasis, on the one hand, upon the principles of monasticism and, on the other, upon simple, ordinary human happiness divorced from the pursuit of worldly success. There used to be a saying in Tibet: ‘We work a little and play a little, and practise religion.’ This seemed to me an excellent summing up of the good life: for some the total dedication of themselves to the search for pure truth; for the rest the elemental things: birth, sex, death—intertwined with affection, laughter, sadness, work and rest. What more, I thought, could anyone want? The fact that in Tibet an enormously high proportion of the lay population had been illiterate left me indifferent. On the other hand, I was not indifferent to the fact that surgery was unknown in Tibet and the most popular medicine was a high Lama’s excrement. And from here my thoughts ran on. . . . Was it true that punishments for crime frequently involved the putting out of eyes and the cutting off of hands and feet? Was it true that the rich landowners frequently flogged their servants? To what extent did the system of ‘forced labour’, or as Marco and Hugh Richardson preferred to call it, ‘obligatory service’, which included the provision of free lodging, food and transport for all travelling dignitaries and officials of the Government, involve a grievous burden upon the peasants? To such questions Marco and Hugh Richardson made firmly reassuring replies; and, after all, Marco and Hugh Richardson had lived in Tibet; moreover I had the utmost respect for them both. Nonetheless, comparing their evidence with that of other travellers whose accounts had been published, I could not help wondering if their vision of this land which they both so passionately loved had not been a little biased. These were the thoughts which I kept to myself.

Above all, I suspected that there had been too many monks in Tibet. Tibetan society was based upon the idea that the Lamas and monks were engaged upon that work for the sake of which

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the community existed and carried on its daily tasks: Tibet was regarded by its people as a holy land dedicated to the pursuit of truth; and any Tibetan, however worldly might be his own manner of life, would assume as a matter of course that in this aim alone lay the justification of the social order to which he belonged and ultimately of his own individual existence. For this reason it was considered natural for the lay folk to labour in support of the monastic establishments, while the monks were forbidden to do any manual work. The vocation of the whole people was regarded as being fulfilled in the fruits of those religious exercises of meditation and contemplation in which every peasant, through his labour, could be said to participate. This was all very well. But a quarter of the male population of Tibet were monks and, of those, over a thousand were regarded as being 'Tulkus' or Lama Incarnates. Common sense does not permit one to believe that so large a proportion of men in any human community can be genuinely fitted to pursue a vocation involving the renunciation of work, family responsibilities and sex; and yet, for those who were not so fitted, who had given no inward consent to the life to which they had been dedicated as small children by their parents, there could be no meaning for themselves in such an existence and no just reason why they should live at the expense of other people's work. In such a situation, especially where there is an almost universal passive acceptance of it, a society will become gradually corrupt through the stagnation of its vital force, whether this force be regarded as a spiritual power or as the activity of sex or as that perpetually renewed and renewing stream of life which is the union of both.

In March 1960, five months after taking up my work as Organizing Secretary of the Tibet Society, I resigned the post and returned to my home in Sussex. I did this for a number of reasons. One of those reasons was that I was hoping for a more dramatic and exciting job which would have entailed returning to India and working in close association with the Dalai Lama himself: this

hope, however, ended in a disappointment. But, apart from immediate reasons, the relinquishment of my work to someone more experienced was an inevitable and right development now that the Society was enlarging its scope and required a larger and more efficiently run office with an assistant typist. However, in the autumn of the same year I returned—for an even briefer period than before—in a new capacity as ‘Appeals Assistant’. It was now my job to persuade other organizations and groups to invite me to give talks on the subject of Tibet with the object of raising funds to assist the Society’s work. When I could think of no more organizations to approach, I wrote ‘appeal articles’ to church magazines and long personal letters to clergymen and the superiors of convents. It was a curious job, created by myself and, since I had no funds at my disposal, necessarily limited in scope; but I succeeded in raising a sufficient sum of money to justify the small salary which I was obliged to accept.

By this time the Society was established in a large basement office. The walls of this office were hung with modern Chinese watercolours inherited from the previous tenants and one Tibetan Mandala which had been lent to us. The officers and staff of the Tibet Society disliked this Mandala, which presented a violent contrast to the watercolours and somehow succeeded in dominating the room no matter where they hung it, and despite the fact that it was relatively small and by no means conspicuous; so I took it with a clear conscience and hung it above the table at which I worked. It was three hundred years old and its beauty was fathomless, a mystery of measurement. Marco declared that if it were his he would not part with it for all the paintings in Europe; but he would not allow that anyone could understand a Tibetan Mandala who had not been instructed in its meaning by a qualified initiate. Not having had this experience I could not argue the point, but it has always seemed to me that there are so many levels upon which a Mandala may be approached, and so many ways of interpreting it, that there is probably no one in the world who can be said to understand such an object and no one who could not

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understand something of it if he would only take the trouble to look. The fact (which may be verified by anyone who has the opportunity to study both) that the Taj Mahal is simply a Mandala constructed in three dimensions rather than laid out upon a flat surface indicates that the significance of this design is not a secret belonging exclusively to the Lama priests.

The Tibetan Mandala is a two-dimensional construction of squares and circles symbolizing the cosmos, which may take the form of a painting or be made with different coloured powders or sands for some temporary purpose. The basic design and proportions are laid down by tradition and must be carried out with great accuracy as if by the finest geometrical instruments. Superimposed upon this design are the figures of divinities with their appropriate symbols and ornaments, each Mandala deriving its particular significance from the divinity who occupies the central position in it. This presiding figure, which may be that of the Lord Chenrezig or any other divine being shown in either a benign or a fearful aspect, represents in this particular context Indivisible Buddahood or Absolute Truth. Other divinities, aspects of the One, are depicted emanating like the petals of a flower outwards towards the circumference. The particular Mandala which we had in the office had as its central figure a many-armed divinity of fearful aspect with his Shakti or consort. Such representations of male and female divinities clasped together in the act of love are exceedingly common in Tibet and are derived originally from Tantric Hinduism: the Lamas will tell one that they represent the union of Wisdom and Method, a concept which is roughly equivalent to that of Contemplation and Action in the Catholic Church. Certain authorities on Tibetan Buddhism refer to the sexual symbolism of these figures as if it were no more than a convenient veil for a meaning which is essentially unrelated to sex; rather as many Christians produce a mystical interpretation of the Song of Solomon which totally disregards its actual subject. This kind of unrealism is even further removed from a true understanding of the meaning of

sexual symbolism in religion than the prudishness which shrinks from an image of coupling gods, but at least recognizes it for what it is instead of seeing it wholly in terms of something else.

The Tibetan Mandala is sometimes confused by visitors to the border districts with the popular symbol known as the Wheel of Existence, which consists of a circle clasped within the four claws of a demon-god. This divinity represents the Karmic law by which the individual is condemned by his own deeds, arising from ignorance, to be reborn again and again into the ‘six realms’ until he attains Enlightenment and is released into Nirvana or the state of Buddhahood. The ‘six realms’ are depicted as segments of the circle so that the whole figure has the appearance of a wheel with six spokes: they are, respectively, heaven or the realm of the gods; hell or the realm of demons; and between these two the realms of Titans, men, beasts and suffering ghosts. The figure of the Lord of Mercy, the Divine Chenrezig, will generally be depicted in each of these realms, encouraging and blessing its inhabitants, thus underlining to the Christian the extraordinary parallel between this figure and that of Christ. A further parallel with Christian teaching is to be found in the idea that it is only in the world of men that the individual can make an act of free choice and so achieve Enlightenment: the other five realms correspond to the Christian purgatory, as this is defined by the Catholic Church, which is governed in a similar manner by unalterable law and in which a certain allotted time must be spent. It is, of course, impossible in a short space to elaborate these correspondences sufficiently to convince anyone who is disposed to doubt their existence: neither will they reveal themselves to those who imagine that the patterns of words and symbols evolved within their own religion have an absolute character and are therefore in themselves irreplaceable and sacrosanct.

The Wheel of Existence is depicted in the entrance or forecourt of every Tibetan temple: a position appropriate to a symbol which is popular rather than esoteric, designed to impress upon the lay mind the fundamental tenets of the faith. The Mandala, on the

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other hand, is the most esoteric symbol known to Buddhism and is used in the initiation ceremonies concerning which little is known outside the closed circle of initiates symbolized by the outer circle of the Mandala itself. These initiations, which form the inmost core of the religious life of Tibet, are received in a series of degrees not to be confused with the more frequently discussed academic degrees leading up to the title of 'Geshe' and achieved by means of examinations which take the form of metaphysical disputes. The present Dalai Lama achieved the degree of 'Geshe' in a public examination in the presence of a huge audience of monks within a few days of the crisis which culminated in his flight from Tibet—after he had received the strangely worded invitation which suggested that he was about to be either murdered or kidnapped. A film which was made of the occasion and has since been shown on BBC television shows him taking part in the disputations with his habitual serenity and cheerfulness. But concerning the initiations which he may have received we know nothing, such matters being regarded as secret. Mme Alexandra David-Neel, who is perhaps the greatest living authority on Tibetan Buddhism, has suggested the curious theory that the Sixth Dalai Lama, notorious in Tibetan history for his dissipated life and beloved by the Tibetan people for his touching love-lyrics, was a high-grade initiate whose psychophysical exercises, being of a sexual nature, were mistaken by his contemporaries for ordinary licentiousness.* In any case, no Lama Incarnate, not even the Dalai Lama, can be automatically assumed to have received advanced initiations or to have passed the approved examinations in theology and metaphysics. The veneration in which he is held depends in no way upon himself.

In December 1960, when I resigned the post of 'Appeals Assistant' and left the office, Marco bought the Mandala and removed it to his own house.

* *Initiates and Initiations in Tibet* by Alexandra David-Neel. Rider, 1958 ed. pages 123-5.

I was glad to be left free to respond to the numerous invitations I was receiving to lecture to schools on the subject of Tibet. This was a field of activity which I had been obliged to neglect because it brought in no financial assistance; yet I felt it to be of far greater value than the kind of public speaking on behalf of a ‘cause’ which inevitably involves a degree of insincerity even when the speaker succeeds in concealing this both from himself and from his audience.

In the summer of 1961 I decided to return to India. The Committee of the Tibet Society, when I informed them of my plans, presented me with a generous grant on the understanding that I should send them regular reports, discuss certain urgent matters with His Holiness on their behalf and endeavour to bring back some first-hand information from the refugees relating to the situation inside Tibet. I planned to go first to New Delhi to stay with an Englishwoman, Mrs Freda Bedi, who had been closely connected with the Tibetan refugee relief work, and then to visit Dharamsala, the little hill station on the borders of the Punjab which was now the headquarters of His Holiness. Here there was a children’s camp run by the Dalai Lama’s sister, to which the Tibet Society had already sent some financial assistance. There were, of course, by this time, a great many refugee schools and camps; but I did not propose to visit more than a few, knowing myself to be limited in my powers of endurance. I would go back, I thought, to the border district. Besides Darjeeling and Kalimpong, I would visit Gangtok where the family of the Maharajah of Sikkim were engaged in organizing extensive relief work. Most important of all, I would visit the young Lama who had been allotted to me under a scheme run by Freda Bedi to provide the young refugee Lamas with pen-friends who would become their adopted ‘parents’. My principal aim was not to collect information, certainly not to obtain material for propaganda, but to enter into personal relationships. I wanted to meet the Tibetans at last and, in meeting them, to find for myself a tiny scrap of truth about Tibet.

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I sailed into the lights of Bombay on the night of October 13, seated on the prow of a passenger-cargo ship, with a soft wind blowing the smell of India into my face.

Chapter 4 · FLICKERING LAMPS

(1) *New Delhi*

A TALL, fair-haired Englishwoman, with a face that was both soft and strong, looking remarkably Anglo-Saxon despite the rumpled sari which she wore as if she had never known any other kind of dress, stood in the doorway of the ground-floor flat to which I had found my way at last. She was smiling warmly in welcome and saying: 'Why, it's Lois! Come in and join us!' I went in, feeling a little dazed and thinking of nothing but the possibility of a cup of tea and the chance to wash. I was smothered in grime from the train; my eyes were sore and my head ached.

There seemed to be a great many people in the room in which I found myself. They were all seated round a low table on the floor, with the exception of an elderly Tibetan monk who was sitting apart from the rest on a raised seat. Two of those on the floor were young monks; and there were several other Tibetans, another fair-haired woman in a sari, an Indian whom I guessed to be Freda Bedi's husband, and a little woman like an insect, of indeterminate nationality, swathed in a jumble of dirty shawls and petticoats with her hair done up like a holy man's in an enormous topknot.

Assuring Freda, quite truthfully, that I liked sitting on the floor, I took a place in the circle and was handed a plateful of dahl and rice. The time was half-past ten in the evening but I could see that the working day had only just finished. I began to look round the room which had a dingy beauty of its own, in startling contrast to the bourgeois Indian flat in Bombay which I had just left and which had been cluttered from end to end with Victorian marble statuary and knick-knacks like an old-fashioned seaside boarding-house. There were no chairs in this room, only cushions and mats and the hard bed-seat, covered by a Tibetan rug, which

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was occupied by the old monk. In one corner of the room was a Tibetan shrine glowing with lighted butter-lamps. As my eyes turned to the level of the ground I saw a large brown rat sidling along by the wall on soft feet.

Freda, meanwhile, had launched into an animated conversation about the relief work. I perceived that no one of these people would be likely to understand my secret preoccupation with thoughts of a bed and a hot bath, or to realize that after thirty hours in an Indian train one might feel too tired to talk. Freda was telling me about her experiences in the refugee camps, about the nursery school at Dharamsala and the Home School for young Lamas which was to be opened here in New Delhi within the week, having been planned and brought into being entirely by Freda herself. The two Lamas who were seated with us on the floor would be the senior pupils in the new school and were both 'Rimpoches' or Lama Incarnates. The old monk in the corner was not an Incarnate; but since he was a 'Geshe' or teacher, everyone, including the two young Rimpoches, treated him with particular respect. It was for this reason that he was expected to eat by himself.

After the meal there were cups of tea and further talk, Freda and I seated Indian-wise amongst cushions on the bed-seat. At last I was shown the place where I was to sleep and the tap under which I was expected to wash. I gazed at it with what was beginning to be a familiar sensation of helplessness. After a week in an Indian household I was still defeated by the sight of a cold tap splashing water on to a stone floor, a mug by means of which I now realized that I was expected to douche myself, nowhere to lay my clothes and no inch of floor-space that was either dry or clean beneath my bare feet. The bed was of wood with no mattress; but to this I had become accustomed so that I even liked it. As a concession to my foreign habits I had been given a pair of sheets although, in fact, when there is no way of tucking anything in the most obstinate Westerner is soon reduced to rolling himself round in a blanket. I was sharing a room with an American

woman while the other members of Freda's large household disposed themselves to sleep either on the hard bed-seats or on the floor all over the rest of the flat.

It was not difficult for me, at first, to create the impression that I was suited to the Indian way of life; since I genuinely found it both natural and pleasant to sit on the floor and to walk about the house with bare feet. In fact, however, a chair would have been provided for me had I wished and I could have worn my shoes whenever I liked, at least in Freda's establishment; what could not be provided for me were familiar washing arrangements and the kind of privacy to which I had become almost fanatically attached. The room in which I slept was in use for meditation classes throughout the day and for part of the night, so that I felt unable to enter it even to change my shoes or fetch a handkerchief. In the early mornings it was a public passage and was used as such even while I dressed. The Indian mind, I was discovering, has no conception of the emotions which can be aroused in a European simply by this kind of total obliviousness of what he or she regards as the right to perform certain actions in private. I am not, myself, unduly modest, but I never ceased to be outraged when a succession of miscellaneous persons wandered unannounced into or through the room in which I slept; just as I was outraged when I saw my notebook or my tube of toothpaste being picked up and casually examined as a matter of course by whoever happened to be about. I used frequently to reflect that I was to blame in that I could not get used to these customs or even accept them with a good grace as a normal part of the discipline of being a foreign guest.

In Freda, at least, I had an example of an Englishwoman who had successfully Indianized herself. But for the first week of my acquaintance with Freda, before the move to the new school, I could not get behind the barrier of her total self-dedication, her all-pervading sense of social responsibility, her blind indifference to her own comfort and convenience, and discover the human

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weaknesses and pathos which later drew me towards her in affection and friendship. I knew at once, however, that here was a person whom I could entirely trust and whom the Tibet Society should certainly assist. Besides having toured all the camps, staying in many of them for long periods in conditions of acute physical privation and discomfort, she had herself originated two schemes: the school which was about to be opened; and the Tibetan Friendship Group for providing the young Lamas with pen-friendships. The latter was already so successful that Freda was hardly able to deal with all the correspondence arising out of it.

The Home School for young Lamas was being started with the purpose of educating the young Lama 'Tulkus' in Hindi and English and assisting them to adapt themselves to the modern world while continuing the traditional studies proper to the religious life. Freda explained to me that she was greatly concerned lest the new generation of Lamas should lose touch entirely with the lay folk who were now receiving a modern education and acquiring many of the customs and attitudes of the West. Her school was designed as a small effort towards preventing this cleavage from becoming so deep as to result in the total break-up of the former pattern of Tibetan life, depending, as it had done for centuries, upon a religious tradition entirely upheld by Lamistic teaching and influence. Freda herself was a devout Buddhist and had studied under the Lamas in Sikkim where there is an important monastery belonging to the Red Hat Sect. From this monastery, which had sheltered them when they crossed the border in flight from the Chinese Communists, had come the two young Lamas whom I had already met. These two had been living with Freda for a year and had become like adopted sons, the elder in particular being a young man of outstanding gifts and already proficient in English. The school, which was to be housed in a newly built-up area known as 'Green Park', would receive about twelve pupils at a time for a six months' course.

'Rimpoche,' I said to the elder of the two young Tulkus, as

we stood before the shrine, with its array of images and photographs, 'who is that?' I was indicating (without actually pointing, since in Tibet no one points with a finger at a sacred person or object) the photograph of a solemn-faced little boy of perhaps three years old, dressed in ceremonial robes and wearing an elaborate headdress.

'That is my Teacher,' was the unexpected reponse; and then in explanation: 'In his last incarnation he taught me when I was a child. Now I take care of him since he came back to us.' This was said with the utmost simplicity and without a trace of self-consciousness; obviously the young man was describing a situation which, to him, was both entirely real and quite ordinary, of no great interest to anyone except the little boy and himself. Later, in one of the many conversations which I had with Freda on the subject of the Lama Incarnates, I mentioned this incident and she told me that the child had been a highly revered Tulku in Tsungpa Tulku's monastery in Tibet and had accompanied him to Sikkim when he escaped from the Chinese Communists. There was, she said, an extraordinary bond between them of spiritual respect and love; but this was, of course, a common relationship; there was nothing unusual in it. The friendship between Tsungpa Tulku and Jetsung Tulku, the other young Lama, was of a similar kind, in that their respective monasteries had been situated only a short distance apart and the former Abbots—that is to say, themselves in a former existence—were known to have had a close spiritual relationship. This, added Freda, had been an important factor in producing the atmosphere of peace and co-operation which I had remarked upon in the household which she had already built up in preparation for the school itself.

Tsungpa and Jetsung Tulku were deputed by Freda to escort me in a taxi to the headquarters of Mr Shakabpa, officially known as the Central Bureau of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, where Mr Shakabpa, like a spider in the centre of a web so fine as to be visible to no one but itself, presided over Tibetan affairs in a capacity which was no doubt of considerable importance, al-

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though I could never induce anyone to define it and I suspected that no one could. From Mr Shakabpa I obtained a list of the refugee schools and camps together with comments and statistics. The administration of Tibetan refugee relief in India is in the hands of the Ministry of External Affairs supported by a Central Relief Committee which is run by Indians with the co-operation of the Tibetan administration set up by His Holiness. The function of this Committee is to receive and co-ordinate the funds sent by voluntary agencies from all over the non-Communist world and most notably from the United States, purchasing, by means of these funds, supplies which are then sent out directly to the schools and camps: in this way there is, in theory although certainly not in practice, no wastage of either money or effort. In so far as I was able to sort out the exceedingly complicated situation and assess it, I concluded that something more elusive than lack of funds was behind the innumerable hold-ups and consequent hardships. Voluntary agencies in the United States had poured money into India to help the refugees and various Christian organizations elsewhere had been almost equally generous. The practical problem for the Tibet Society lay in the fact that any relatively small contribution added to these large sums would be so swamped that, in the somewhat unsatisfactory circumstances, one could not help wondering whether it would make any difference in terms of such tangible realities as bowls of rice or bales of blankets. My own view, which I communicated to the Society, was that it would be more efficacious for us to 'adopt' some relatively small project which was not an integral part of the official set-up. I was thinking particularly, of course, of Freda's school, for which I was determined to get the Society's support. In fact, I would have been delighted had we presented all our funds directly to Freda to use as she thought fit; since I could see for myself that the Lama school and the Friendship scheme were by no means the only demands which she was being obliged to meet. At the suggestion of Hugh Richardson, who had lately been in India, reinforced by certain observations which I had made on

my own account, I inquired of Mr Shakabpa what was being done for the innumerable stray refugees who seemed to find their way to Delhi and wander about the streets, unattached to any officially recognized 'category' or 'project'. Mr Shakabpa gave me to understand that nothing was being done; such persons should have remained in the camps; their wanderings did not meet with the approval either of the Indian authorities or of His Holiness. I knew, however, that these refugees came straggling down from the camps chiefly because they were not provided with proper medical treatment; and I knew that they were appearing regularly on Freda's doorstep, without money, food or decent clothes and frequently in an advanced stage of sickness. Freda, being less concerned with categories than with individuals, never turned away a single Tibetan who came to her for help.

I was given to understand that I was to move with Freda and the rest of the household to the new school; in fact most of the furniture was going with us and only my American room-mate would be left behind in the flat with one servant. Being still unduly and shamefully preoccupied with my own comfort, my first reaction was to wonder whether, under the new arrangements, I should find it a little easier to sleep. At Freda's flat I was kept awake for most of the night by other people's activities, lights, snores, spiritual exercises and campaigns against bed-bugs. The latter were undertaken by the American with my heartfelt approval although I was too tired to get up and offer to help. Neither of us had any sympathy with the Buddhist rule against destroying even the most revolting parasites.

Immediately before the opening of the school two contingents of young Lamas arrived at the flat. All were refugees and in sore need of the new robes with which Freda intended to provide each one as a welcome-present. Several were no more than children; but the behaviour even of these was strangely adult. They sat smiling and talking quietly in Tibetan, accepting everything that was done for them with perfect courtesy and no trace of anxiety

or fuss. When the time came for the move they piled into the taxis together with all the furniture, crates, boxes, bedding-rolls and miscellaneous oddments, their gentle gaiety as undisturbed as if they were off on a picnic. I had tentatively requested of Freda that I might be allowed to take a taxi on my own account, filling it with some extra care in consideration of my own very fragile suitcases which were liable to break; but, as I had foreseen, no attention was paid to this eccentricity on my part; and I found myself pinioned into a front seat, in a posture as if I were giving birth, beneath a random pile of cases, baskets, Buddhas and slop-buckets, aware that somewhere in the midst of this medley were my own suitcases and an English monk, whose voice reached me through a gap made by a pair of table-legs. The English monk was cheerfully relating to me the story of Tsungpa Tulku's discovery and enthronement. He too seemed to be in the mood for a picnic.

The site of the new school was exceptionally pleasant: it stood on raised ground surrounded by a great expanse of sky and a green, scrubby wasteland, haunted by pariah dogs. The house was newly built: its stone floors were strewn with sawdust and the plumbing arrangements had been left unfinished. When I asked Lobsang Jivaka, the English monk, what he supposed that twenty of us were going to do with a few useless because unflushable water-closets he replied cheerfully that we should have to use the wasteland 'like everyone else'. I looked at the wasteland and perceived that it was bare to the view of the entire neighbourhood, boasting not so much as a flowering shrub.

Meanwhile Freda was still at the flat and would remain there for two hours, having been forbidden by a dapper little Canadian astrologer who had been called in at the last moment to enter the new house until after four o'clock. Soon after four she arrived, sailing into the midst of chaos, dignified, beautiful, exhausted, obviously imbuing everyone but myself with her own confidence. In the interval before she came I had made a decision; I was going to leave Freda and go to the YWCA hostel that very night, before

it became necessary to come to terms with the plumbing arrangements. I did not deceive myself into supposing that my relative uselessness in the present situation, where there were plenty of hands to help and all that was needed was the ability to direct their efforts, was an adequate excuse for extricating myself from it. Freda would be hurt: and this knowledge alone was sufficient to make me feel ashamed of myself. But I told myself that, shame or no shame, I could not stand this kind of thing for another night. There was now, so far as I could see, nowhere at all to wash; nowhere to sleep; probably nothing to eat . . . and all this seemed insignificant when I looked at the wasteland and remembered Lobsang Jivaka's casual forecast. It was two hours before I felt able to approach Freda and explain to her that I intended to move: when I did so at last she accepted the information with what seemed to be a kind of troubled bewilderment. I knew that she could never understand the reactions of a person like myself; she would only feel sad because, somehow, in some inexplicable way, she had failed to make me comfortable in her house.

With some difficulty, the YWCA being already full, I found accommodation in a hotel just inside the old city gates. It was an expensive hotel but it was run on the basis of charging separately for all food, including breakfast, so I reckoned that if I lived mainly on biscuits, oranges and vitamin tablets, I could stay in it. Nothing seemed to matter very much so long as I had a clean bed, quiet nights and a hot bath.

In a mood of self-accusation and remorse I had written in my notebook that I loved neither the Tibetans nor Tibet; I loved only myself and my own comfort. At least I was glad to feel that I was learning to accept a little truth: this was my sole recompense for the distressing vision which had appeared to me of my own selfishness. However, when I returned shamefacedly two days later to visit the school, a bevy of young Lamas called out and waved to me from the flat roof; and the next moment Freda herself came out of the house with hands outstretched in affectionate

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warmth. Obviously I was not to be received with the slightest suggestion of reproach.

I followed Freda into the house and gazed about me in astonishment. The disorder was cleared away; everything was in its place even to the t'ankas on the walls; there was an atmosphere of peace. I remembered the plumbing and glanced at a large pool of water in the vicinity of the wash-place. Something had overflowed but at least there was water to flow: tentative inquiries revealed that somehow, I never quite knew how, crisis had been averted and the wasteland had not been used for any untoward purpose. In fact, suggested Freda, since everything was really quite all right now, wouldn't I like to come back? . . .

As we talked, the Lamas had come down from the roof and presently the sound reached us of the peculiar, monotonous Tibetan chant. Freda took my hand and led me into the larger of the two principal rooms; and there, to my amazement, was a beautiful shrine, taking up the whole of one wall, a thing of wonder and yet made out of nothing but the simplest oddments, an ordered profusion of colours and shapes seeming as if it had fallen into a pattern of itself. There were a few small images; a number of crude prints and tinted photographs; scarves; ribbons; bits of coloured materials; rows of offering cakes (called 'tormas'); bowls containing water and offerings of seeds, sweets and rice; and, of course, the lighted butter-lamps. My attention rested in particular upon the expertly moulded offering cakes. These are usually made of flour, designed in a conical shape and dyed in some lugubrious shade of red or pink. I was astonished by the sure craftsmanship with which all kinds of symbolic designs had been moulded upon these curious-looking objects which would be fed to the birds after being offered to the gods. Meanwhile, seated on mats on the floor, Freda's young pupils were chanting their morning office, each one crouched low over his 'book'. A Tibetan sacred book consists of a collection of loose printed sheets, held together by two boards when not in use. As the Lamas chanted, they rocked their bodies to and fro with a rhythmical movement. They were

neither chanting nor rocking in unison; yet the effect was as rhythmic and monotonous as the beating and sucking back of waves on a smooth beach. I sat down on the floor, as I was to do many times during the next fortnight, and surrendered myself to the chant, thought blotted out, my eyes wandering from the solemn face of a little boy to the flickering flame of a butter-lamp.

The boys, on Freda's instructions but left entirely to themselves, had produced this shrine in a day by their own unaided imagination and efforts. They were all working hard; although, of course, they did not expect to be asked to perform 'menial' tasks: the actual work of the house was done entirely by Freda's servants and the servant-monks. However, during the short time which I spent in contact with these Tulkus, I began to notice an insidious change in their attitude; a touching willingness, for instance, to carry one's suitcase or one's shopping basket which must have been clean contrary to the rigid conditioning which had taught them that they were above all tasks not directly connected with the religious life. Freda herself was cautious in this respect and it seemed to me at times that she was almost upholding the traditional viewpoint, while realizing that it must be modified to some extent; but then Freda was (I felt) an Indian; whereas I had never before felt myself to be so English. I was far from being shocked by the concept of an hierarchical pattern dividing the community according to function and prescribing such forms and ceremonies as are appropriate in a society of this type; on the contrary, I accepted this as an integral part of what I would have described as the traditional way of life. What I could not accept was the corollary that any form of manual work is inherently degrading and only to be performed by members of a 'lower class': I could not understand why the dignity attaching to 'menial tasks' should not be rated as high as the dignity attaching to kingship or the priesthood. In fact, I would have had dustmen and kings, with an equal degree of human (as distinct from ceremonial) respect accorded to kingship and dustmanship. This, indeed, is still my point of view; but if I learnt one lesson during

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my third visit to India it was that such an ideal is rarely, if ever, sustained in practice and that, in failing to admit this, I had failed to understand the evil which had destroyed Tibet. For Tibet was destroyed from within before it fell into the hands of the Communists by its own corporate forgetfulness of the honour due to the human being in his own right and to manual work. It seems doubtful whether, in the whole land, in the period immediately preceding its invasion by the armies of the Chinese People's Republic, there could have been found one person who would have understood the beliefs implied in the behaviour of a recent mayor of Canterbury (to take one, of course, highly typical instance) who would attend the Cathedral in solemn state wearing his ceremonial chain of office and return immediately to the back of the counter of his own small sweet shop.

Now that I had an available telephone it became a great deal easier for me to make appointments with the numerous persons whom I wished to meet. During my last fortnight in Delhi I seemed to be perpetually dashing either across the city or by the ring road around it in one of the aggressive little taxis which are used by the Sikh drivers as an outlet for their traditional instincts in the performance of continuous antics on the edge of death. I visited the Indian secretary of the Central Relief Committee in his office, obtaining further lists of statistics from the camps; and had a long discussion with the under-secretary in charge of Tibetan refugee relief at the Ministry of External Affairs, in the course of which that gentleman gave me clearly, though politely, to understand that it was not the business of visitors from abroad to inspect the Tibetan camps with a view to making complaints. There had been, I gathered, some unfortunate incidents. A member of the Tibet Society, Mr Patterson . . . I hastened to exonerate the Society from any responsibility for the words or deeds of Mr Patterson and to reassure the officials of the Ministry concerning myself, making it plain that I at least had no intention of engaging in fisticuffs with any camp commandant because I disapproved

of the arrangements. In fact, I had no intention of making a tour of the camps: cowardice and a sense of futility alike held me back from such a project. As for 'Pat', the Tibet Society could not be expected to assume responsibility for his outbursts. He was responsible to the Lord—and to himself.

More personal contacts which I was able to make at this time were those with Mr Kundeling, the Tibetan official in charge of education, with whom I had an unproductive conversation through an interpreter, leaving me with the now familiar sensation of having encountered the very essence of elusiveness; Mr Lobsang Phuntzog, who had been appointed by the Dalai Lama to be in charge of an Institute for 'the preservation of the culture and traditions of Tibet'; and Mrs Purshottam Trikamdas. Mr Purshottam Trikamdas, who was away from New Delhi at the time of my visit, had been Chairman of the Legal Inquiry Committee appointed in 1959 by the International Commission of Jurists to investigate the question of Tibet. I found his house in a strangely quiet, tree-lined road known as Sundar Nagar, one of those secluded retreats of the influential rich such as may be calculated to display in merciless focus all those small spectacles of misery which from time to time impinge upon their peace; for, this being India, where nothing may be for long concealed, such intrusions do occur, even in Sundar Nagar, as an ageless beggar drags a twisted foot or a famished dog sits with quivering tail and deprecatory smile praying for the casual scrap which will almost never be thrown to it of deliberate purpose. Perhaps, I thought, passing such a beggar and such a dog, as I walked the length of the road looking for the house of Shri Purshottam Trikamdas—perhaps it is, after all, in this kind of district, this rich man's India, rather than in the back streets and the markets, that one is apt to be most disconcertingly overtaken by truth in such a form that one's whole being revolts. However, I could hardly blame Mrs Trikamdas or, at least, no more than I blamed myself. It was not entirely (or was it?) her fault or mine that we could sit together on a low sofa in a cool, dim drawing-room, drinking tea

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and eating little cakes while the beggar and the pi-dog rushed headlong towards death only a few yards away from us. Meanwhile we discussed the Report of the International Commission of Jurists.

Shortly before my departure from England I had been presented by Marco with the task of writing a summary of the evidence relating to the question of religious persecution and the violation of human rights in Tibet as contained in this Report, with the object of including such a summary in a booklet to be published by the Tibet Society as a kind of general 'hand-out'. I carried out this in itself somewhat distressing task with certain misgivings which at the time I suppressed with firmness. The International Commission of Jurists describes itself as 'a non-governmental organization which has consultative status, Category "B", within the United Nations Economic and Social Council. The Commission seeks to foster understanding of and respect for the Rule of Law.' Its members are legal experts drawn from all over the non-Communist world: their qualifications and credentials could scarcely be more adequate. The Legal Inquiry Committee appointed by this Commission under the chairmanship of Mr Trikamdass examined the statements of a great number of Tibetan refugees and carefully sifted them, retaining only those which they regarded as constituting valid evidence—those upon which, in fact, they based their most important findings which were that 'acts of genocide had been committed in Tibet in an attempt to destroy the Tibetans as a religious group', and that the Chinese in Tibet had violated sixteen of the rights listed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These statements, numbering fifty-five in all, were published in the Report entitled 'Tibet and the Chinese People's Republic'.

The summary which I produced and which was eventually published laid stress upon the religious martyrdoms, in particular 'the Chinese method of assembling large numbers of terrorized persons to witness the torturings and executions (of Lamas) and to *take part in them*, either actively or by an expression of

acquiescence, under threat of receiving the same treatment', and the large-scale deportations of babies and young children to China against the wishes of their parents. I believed, and I still believe, that such things were done in Tibet; and yet, in my heart, I disliked the task of publicizing this kind of evidence because of what I felt to be the extreme and inevitable unreliability of any given statement from which one might choose to quote. In general I do not believe that 'atrocities stories' tend towards the service of truth. The one immediately obvious exception to this rule only, in my view, helps to establish it. The very fact that the 'atrocities stories' of the Nazi persecution of the Jews were so clearly and unquestionably true as to convince anyone who was not inwardly refusing to be convinced in itself raises the question: 'What is it that constitutes the ring of authenticity in such accounts?' The answer is elusive but the yardstick is there for us. I have never been able to find this peculiar 'ring of authenticity' in the stories which have reached us from Tibet: taken collectively they convince me as being, in general and to a great extent, true; and yet I remain, against my own will, faintly doubtful of each individual statement. This uneasiness, already present when I produced my impassioned contribution to Marco's 'hand-out', was to increase when, in the course of my third visit to India, I myself had to collect 'stories' from the refugees and failed to obtain one which I could conscientiously pigeon-hole as 'authentic'. I learned by experience how impossible it is, when talking through an interpreter (as the members of the Inquiry Committee presumably had to do in each instance), to assess by all those subtle means which are so vastly important whether or not one's informant is describing something which actually happened to himself. The ordinary Tibetan is by nature truthful and honest. But to rely upon this unquestionable fact without, at the same time, recognizing that his view of 'truth' bears no relation to what the West would regard as valid evidence, is dangerous. The Tibetan peasant has been accustomed from his cradle to accepting legend and fairytale as literal truth.

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Having said so much, one naturally pauses in fear that one may have been unjust. Many thousands of Tibetans have suffered and died: that fact is beyond dispute and one would not minimize their anguish. But I prefer to take my evidence for the behaviour of the Chinese in Tibet not from 'atrocious stories' but from the shameless accounts published under the auspices of Peking by Communist and fellow-travelling journalists (such as Anna Louise Strong's *When Serfs Stood Up in Tibet*), which give ample proof, not of atrocious tortures perhaps but of the systematic eradication of Tibetan Buddhism by methods which are an outrage against the dignity and freedom of the human person and of the deliberate fostering of evil passions, fantastic lies and insane arrogance. Such things, being of the very essence of Communism itself, are more relevant to the Tibetan problem than any 'atrocious story', however grievous.

Lobsang Phuntzog Ljalungpa was a friend of Marco's and the latter had particularly urged me to get in touch with him and obtain the fullest possible information about his work. I met him first at the official opening ceremony at the young Lama's Home School; later he came to see me at my hotel and our third meeting was at his own home where I was entertained to an excellent Tibetan dinner by his charming wife. I liked Lobsang and slipped into a friendly, informal relationship with him far more quickly than was normal in my dealings with the Tibetan official class, calling him 'Lobsang-La' at our second meeting, a familiarity such as I would never have contemplated towards Mr Shakabpa or even Gyalo Thondup. Yet Lobsang was no insignificant official; he was simply one of the very few who, following the example of the Dalai Lama himself, seemed to have freed themselves from an obsessive awareness of 'status' and the formalities attaching to it. His Institute 'for the preservation of the culture and traditions of Tibet' had been started at the request of His Holiness and had as its aims nothing less sweeping than its name suggests. Lobsang, however, was a sensible and practically-minded person and was

feeling his way gradually, printing Tibetan text-books for the refugee schools and copies of such ancient scriptures as had been brought into India by the refugee monks; to which end the Tibet Society had presented him with a small printing press.

Lobsang's present activities might be on a small scale, but the potentialities of his work were, of course, enormous. I wrote to the Tibet Society suggesting that a special sub-committee might be set up to deal with the whole question of Tibetan culture and explore the possibilities of interesting larger organizations in Lobsang's efforts. I had opposed the gift of the printing press, believing that, in the circumstances, our funds should be used exclusively for the relief of the destitute; but I was nonetheless anxious to secure for Lobsang the fullest possible measure of support from organizations more directly concerned with cultural interests. A niggling suspicion that the very title of his Institute was ironic, since it is doubtful whether any culture or tradition can be preserved as anything more than a museum piece when the moment arrives for an Institute to be set up for this purpose, did not prevent me from respecting his work and acknowledging its worth. He himself was well aware of the difference between an artificially preserved culture and one which is a living force; his own conception of his work was of an effort directed towards the protection and cherishing of a vulnerable flame of life which might otherwise die out. I did not ask Lobsang the questions which I asked myself. But I had an occasional fantasy of that elusive thing which we call life as a flickering genie laughing merrily at the mere thought that it could be confined within a bottle called an Institute.

Freda had promised to introduce me to Pandit Nehru at one of the gatherings which took place every morning at his house before he left it. Anyone who could produce a valid introduction and reasonable credentials could attend these gatherings and shake hands with the Prime Minister: the opportunity was used both by those who had some definite request to make and by the merely

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interested or curious. I had half hoped to obtain for myself a private interview with Nehru, who is known to be generous in giving his time to people who have no claim whatsoever upon it; but I took no initiative in the matter, as I had intended to do, because Freda had taken it into her own hands and I felt that it would be wiser to submit to her advice. Both Nehru and Gandhi had been her personal friends and the new school could not have been started without the Prime Minister's encouragement. Therefore Freda had some reason to wish to see Pandit Nehru herself so that she might inform him of the official opening of the school and thank him for his assistance.

Whereas I would have been only very slightly nervous had I found myself confronted by Nehru across the top of a desk, the prospect of meeting him at a social occasion, in the presence of others, filled me with real alarm and I had no hope of being daring enough to open my mouth; at the same time I was excited by the thought of coming into even momentary contact with a personality concerning whom I felt enormously curious. In the mid-1930s I had attended a political meeting at the Albert Hall at which the principal speaker had been the striking-looking Indian whom I thought of in those days only as a follower of Gandhi and the author of a history book; this image, however, had faded almost completely from my mind and been replaced by the legendary one of the innumerable photographs—'Pandiji'—India's idol, who disapproved of idols; India's god who did not believe in gods. The familiar face was so ubiquitous that one might well have ceased to be aware of it: it looked down from the wall in every shop, office, public room and private house; it was there in the market; it watched over one at the airport. In fact, I seldom failed to notice it, finding it so beautiful and strange that it could always hold my attention for at least a moment. From time to time, since I had begun to interest myself in Tibetan affairs, I had found myself, along with many others, criticizing India's Prime Minister for a vacillating attitude towards the Tibetan problem amounting to moral cowardice: I had heard him

compared glibly with Pontius Pilate and indeed the comparison is almost tiresomely obvious. But in my saner moments I was ashamed of myself for having been ready to pass this kind of facile moral judgment upon the man who for over a decade had carried a burden of responsibility so unimaginably great. For anyone who has visited India, most certainly for anyone who has looked into the eyes of the beggars and holy men of Benares and watched the swarming bodies spilling over the ghats into the sacred river in the dawn sunlight and received a momentary vision of the meaning of India in relation to the basic realities of holiness and starvation and dirt and death, even a few moments' consideration of what it must mean to be the living symbol of that land, the guardian of its people and the object of their worship, in a world situation such as the present, must be a sobering experience. Moreover it should never be forgotten that Nehru, unlike Gandhi, is rent apart by his Western education and his Brahmin inheritance. The reactions to his country's problems of the little mahatma, who was neither a Brahmin nor a twentieth-century agnostic, must have been, compared with those of his most famous disciple, straightforwardness itself.

I was considering these things on the eve of my own brief contact with Nehru as I wandered in search of some eatable-looking fruit in the vicinity of the Kashmiri gate just before sunset. There had been a spectacular thunderstorm with heavy rain the day before and the streets were running in filth. I picked my way amongst the muddy cows, the reckless bicycles and the ox-drawn carts just outside the gate, bought some oranges and bananas at a stall and then went into a grubby little chemist shop to buy the disinfectant in a solution of which the fruit must be washed. As I turned back towards the old city I was confronted by a large poster depicting a smiling Prime Minister exhorting the people of India to be courteous to their foreign guests. Ahead of me the evening sky shone with the peculiar orange glow which seems to be a reflection from the yellow walls and the red dust. A large monkey shinned silently up a drainpipe. I turned into a public

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park and seated myself on a bench, listening to the ranting course of crows and watching the little striped chipmunks. Sometimes I used to wonder if I were the only European in India who lingered in public parks and wandered about the streets with no particular purpose. In general, it seemed to me that the Europeans and Americans in India could be fairly neatly divided into those who lived in a world of their own, never venturing out except in cars which transported them from one to another disinfected oasis; tourists who worked through the 'sights' and then vanished; and those heroic beings, missionaries and social workers of various kinds, who plunged far deeper into the realities of India than I had the courage to do but had neither the time nor the inclination to lounge on seats or stroll along pavements. For me, there were no other moments so precious as those which I spent in this apparently aimless form of self-indulgence: this was my only means of communication with India; when I sat alone in the evening in some dusty public garden amongst the crows and the chipmunks and watched the workers from shops and offices come in and stretch themselves on the scrubby grass with that perfect relaxation at which a Westerner can only gaze in humble astonishment, then India entered into me in a manner which provoked no resistance; all the anger and exasperation died and I remembered only the awe and the worship. In such moods, I no longer criticized India; rather I criticized myself and felt almost ashamed of my own existence. The impact of India, when it does not arouse one to rage, can have the effect of making one appear so small in one's own sight, so trivial and ridiculous, that one feels on the verge of being extinguished. On that particular evening, watching a chipmunk as it paused, glinting-eyed, almost at my feet and then shot up the nearest tree-trunk, I remembered suddenly how people at home would say to me: 'Do you like India?' and it struck me that one might as well be asked whether one liked God or disliked death.

At eight o'clock the following morning I went with Freda and Tsungpa Tulku to the Prime Minister's house. After numerous

formalities we were admitted to a large reception hall where a number of other people were waiting and seated ourselves on a sofa near a row of signed photographs in which Mr Krushchev kept company with the Queen and Prince Philip. After about half an hour Nehru appeared. We were sitting close to a narrow staircase framed by a small arch; suddenly, as I happened to glance in that direction, I saw Nehru coming down, stepping like a cat. He was wearing his usual uniform, the white Gandhi cap and high tunic with the dark red rose tucked into it. The rose arrested my attention as it had not done in the photographs: it seemed to intensify the total impression which I received of a great physical beauty and attractiveness turned inwards upon itself. The personality of Pandit Nehru seemed so withdrawn as to be scarcely present. As he approached Freda his heavy-lidded eyes registered no expression, although he must have recognized her; he smiled faintly and raised his hands in the Indian greeting; then, as she introduced me, he gave me his hand in such a limp handshake that I scarcely knew what to do with it. Freda expressed her gratitude for his encouragement and assistance in her school project: suddenly he really smiled, seeming to wake out of his dream, and said teasingly, in a very low, quiet voice: 'It was not for *you* I did it.' Then he half closed his eyes and appeared almost to go to sleep. There was complete silence throughout the hall. I did not know whether or not I was supposed to say something at this point; possibly he was simply waiting to be addressed. But who was I to interrupt such a silence? I could not possibly have opened my mouth. However, in those few seconds before he simply drifted away from us, I received an impression of his personality which could scarcely have been more clearly defined after the most prolonged personal contact. As he stood beside us with his head bent and his eyes almost closed, I was aware of an enormous sadness and tiredness, as if all the sorrow of India had projected itself upon him and his energies had been sucked up into India's insatiable soul until there was nothing left but that mysterious capacity to be and to remain the tangible personification of the

nation's coherence. At the same time, strangely mingled with the sensitivity and suffering in his face, was an imprisoning vanity, a colossal egotism turning ever round and round in circles upon itself. The agnostic was not wholly averse to being worshipped.

A sari-ed lady, said to be the Minister of Food, darted forward and swooped to touch his feet; then a succession of people approached him; one excited-looking gentleman seemed to be reading a dissertation into his ear; and all the time he looked wrapped away in his dream, gentle and benevolent but deliberately remote from us. He looked older than his seventy-two years, I thought. Freda had said that he was 'good for another five years'. And after that? Who was there who could continue to provide a focus for India's dawning self-consciousness? Gandhiji . . . Pandiji . . . one could not imagine a third who would be capable of giving substance to the myth.

'I was expecting you to say something,' Freda remarked, as we drove away from the house. I was horrified. 'Why, what ought I to have said?' 'Oh, nothing, unless you wanted to, of course.'

It was several hours before I roused myself from the thoughts induced by this brief experience. Perhaps the strongest impression which remained was of the myth itself: the identity between Nehru and India of which no Indian crowd, no swooping lady Minister of Food, could have been more conscious than I was. The conflicts of purpose, the sheer contradictions, of a land immersed in such a past as India's and reaching out for salvation to the science and techniques of the present are summed up in the divided being of Nehru as they never were in Gandhi's relatively simple character and philosophy of life. Nehru is not a religious man; his beliefs are those of the humanist. Yet he is a kind of saint and creates about himself an aura which seems to belong to an Eastern holy man rather than to a modern statesman after the pattern of the West. Beneath the sophisticated surface, he is soaked in the very essence of India; as if, because of the place he occupies, India has caught up with him and swamped him, defeating his original purpose which was to save her from herself.

The dark red rose, so different from the cigars and umbrellas which are its Western equivalent, pitting its fragile perfume against India's gigantic stench, symbolizes the inadequacy of his defences against his inheritance.

The time came for me to say goodbye to Freda. Mr Shakabpa had arranged for me to spend four days at Dharamsala as the guest of the Dalai Lama, staying at the children's camp.

On the eve of my departure from Delhi I arrived about tea-time at the young Lama's School to find the child-tulkus playing on the flat roof. Cheerful cries greeted me as I approached the door; then they came running down, caught me by both my hands and pulled me up the stairs to join in their game of sliding down the sloping side of a concrete block. Once again I marvelled at these children. It seemed to me that whatever I said or wrote of them when I returned to England must be inadequate to describe the strange conjunction in them of an unconscious dignity and poise with pure childishness; the manner in which they combined an unfailing consideration for others with the expression of normal boyish high spirits. In their monkish robes and heavy boots they clattered, laughing, up and down their slide, holding out their long, slim-fingered hands to pull me up or help me down; until a bell rang for lessons or prayers, when they proudly called out 'Goodbye', and disappeared down the stairs as if promptness in obedience were a matter of course. How was it, I asked myself, that with such children as these safely in India I could not feel more hope for the future of Tibet? For surely these young ones, who were believed to carry within them the virtues of bygone saints, were indeed the vehicles of that spirit which had created and informed the old Tibet, making of its people a living community with its own unique culture and indwelling genius? But I could not rid myself of a conviction that the flame of this spirit was dying out. The marvel of these young Tulkus lay in the fact that, in them, against the background of their elemental purity, it could still be seen, bright and untarnished, in the last moments

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of its manifestation before it finally withdrew itself. Freda would not, of course, have agreed with this judgment; and, apart from my own intuition, I had at that time no basis for it.

Now I was alone on the roof. The daylight was hovering in a final brightness before the moment when it would suddenly vanish, as I looked out over the wasteland and the great sweep of red-brown earth beyond, broken up by the blue pools left over from the rains, and saw a little procession of workmen padding across the scrub on bare feet, carrying their tools and baskets. They passed in front of the fat brown Muslim tombs which stood close to the house and were alive at this hour with crows and parrots. The women, in the red-brown, looped-up saris worn by the peasants, carried the heavier weights; one man had a tiny child on his back; all were perfectly silent. They looked so undisturbed, so empty of the superfluous that it was as if they were created out of a meeting between the pale golden sunlight and the red earth.

When they were gone, I noticed the little black-and-tan pi-dog who had attached himself to the house. He was turning round and round in preparation for settling himself comfortably on a heap of sand where he would scratch his fleas and sleep, not wondering obsessively as I did from whence would come his next mouthful of scraps. I could not reconcile myself to the indifference with which the barest needs of this animal were treated by the inhabitants of the school, including Freda herself. Although, as so frequently happens in India where it is good manners to pile one's neighbour's plate far beyond what he wishes to eat, there was a constant wastage of rice and other scraps, no one took the trouble to feed this dog; he was left to nose out his own food from the refuse heaps. Again and again I had furtively raided the kitchen or taken out half of my own meal, until the dog had come to know me and to jump up and try to lick my face, an attention which I could not wholeheartedly appreciate. Once I had given him food on a plate, incurring from Freda a fully justified rebuke, such a practice being obviously dangerous; yet I could not understand

why people who were scandalized by the thought of destroying a bed-bug could not take the trouble to keep a separate plate for a famished dog and occasionally offer it a little friendliness. And yet I knew that to adopt one of these stray dogs in India would be to adopt an endlessly increasing throng until the situation would become as tragic as it would be ludicrous. In fact, there is but one solution to this problem: merciful destruction and the institution of a public refuse service.

Meanwhile there are brief moments when the sun shines without being too hot and even fleas fall asleep. Contemplating one dog in one such moment, stretched out in the sunlight, as perfectly relaxed as every other living being native to India's sub-continent, I perceived that he was probably happier than I was.

(2) *Dharamsala*

I travelled overnight to Patankot where I was met by two Tibetans and driven in the Dalai Lama's car, a well-worn and unostentatious-looking vehicle, the fifty miles up to the Dharamsala children's camp. Leaving behind us the busy, grubby, tinselly little town of Lower Dharamsala, we drove on and on, swinging above ever steeper and giddier heights, until the road changed to a broken track over which I felt that it would be injudicious to drive anything but a tank. Still we went on, lurching over great heaps of jagged stones on the edge of the precipice; then the car stopped and we got out and walked. By this time I had a splitting headache and was in no mood for negotiating mountain streams and scrambling up slithery slopes in the depths of a forest; I was immensely relieved when we came within sight of the camp and were met by a welcoming party composed of the Dalai Lama's sister, the principal of the school with one of his assistants, and an interpreter from the Dalai Lama's household who had come up for a few hours so that we could all talk to one another during lunch. Unfortunately, however, I was by now feeling so sick that I could neither eat nor talk. I wanted nothing in the world except to lie down in a dark room, an impossible luxury where there is

no space in which to be private for a moment. In fact, my bed was in the one living-room where a meal had already been laid for us and there was no alternative other than to sit down with everyone else.

The Dalai Lama's elder sister, Mrs Tsering Dolma, who had escaped with him from Tibet and was now living in his house, was a dignified, motherly-looking woman with the large flat face and mongolian features typical of the Amdo district. Being the eldest of the family, she was already in her late forties and her own children were grown up. Now she was responsible for more than five hundred children: this number including the shifting population of the children's transit camp, euphemistically described as the 'Nursery School'; the twenty or thirty young orphans who acted as ayahs and servants; and the more settled occupants of the babies' crèche which formed a kind of annexe. In theory, at least, the children in the camp were being sent on, at about the age of eight, to one or other of the refugee schools which were in the process of being set up; meanwhile scarcely a day would pass without one or two new arrivals, children who wandered up by themselves or were brought by their refugee parents in the unshakable faith that at Dharamsala they would be cared for by His Holiness. The task of Mrs Tsering Dolma had thus become one which called for organizational abilities and experience such as she could scarcely be expected to possess. The 'Nursery School' was assisted by the Central Relief Committee and financed by the Dalai Lama out of the funds which he had succeeded in bringing out of Tibet; but the ordering and administration of the whole concern were in her hands alone and, although there was a Tibetan 'principal' with several assistants, so rigid were the hierarchical conventions dominating the Tibetan point of view that, in fact, she wielded the powers of a despot.

After lunch I went out to the children. They rushed upon me with welcoming cries, twenty or thirty of them at once, in the instant that I appeared round the corner of the house. Their own living quarters, consisting of two rooms in which they slept five or

six to a bed, stood back to back with the room from which I had just come and in which I was to sleep. Here, at the back of the house, was a large compound where classes were held in Tibetan, Hindi and English: since there was no indoor living-room for the children they had an outdoor school, commanding a great, sweeping view of uninterrupted forests and, in the distance, tremendous snow-covered mountain peaks. Sunshine poured down and the air was icy cool; but the beauty of the scene was marred by a horrible stench rising from the open drains and the huge refuse pit. I was soon to discover that the children used these drains (which would normally have been kept clean) in preference to the latrines which were some way off; in consequence of this habit and as most of them were suffering from a minor dysentery which seemed to be more or less chronic, the state of the compound was an ever-present danger to health. Moreover, they were permitted to play amongst the refuse.

I could not at all wonder that the children preferred the drains, or indeed any other alternative, to the row of non-flush water-closets which I eventually discovered on the other side of a slippery bank. My own preference was for the woods, into the depths of which I took frequent walks. The problem was acute in that there was a water shortage in the camp; but I could not help wondering whether some entirely different system might not have been devised which would have been less horribly unhygienic. One could hardly expect the children to learn civilized habits in conditions which drove me into abandoning such habits myself.

The children, meanwhile, dirty and defaced by sores and boils, their heads full of lice, were lively, affectionate and courteous, clinging to my arms and hands, pulling me along with them while they laughed and danced and hopped about. I was amazed by their obvious happiness, so pitiful and sickly as they looked. Such happiness, under the most adverse conditions is, however, a Tibetan characteristic. Tibetan children will laugh in circumstances in which one would suppose that no child could laugh;

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and when suffering does at last defeat their laughter they are endlessly, silently patient until one feels that in them one has seen the very meaning of patience. All this, in due course, I was to see for myself: meanwhile I listened to the accounts of two English girls, a teacher and a nurse, who had come out to Dharamsala under the auspices of the International Voluntary Service. Diana and Valerie were two people who possessed the exceptional gift of combining courage with lightness of spirit. They were immensely gay in conditions which tested my own sense of humour to the utmost; although I had the prospect of speedy release, whereas they could look forward to a freezing winter and anticipate with a fair degree of certainty the succession of death-dealing epidemics which did, in fact, overtake the camp.

That night, soon after I lay down on a very damp mattress, rats began to bump and slither amongst the furniture in the large room and to scurry across the ceiling, close to a hole directly over my head from which I expected one or more of them to descend at any moment. But these trials seemed negligible compared with the blinking of a butter-lamp which burned perpetually on the mantelpiece before a photograph of His Holiness. I was suffering from a migraine headache and the flickering of this lamp, on and off, on and off, caused me severe pain and sickness; yet I could not bring myself to commit the sacrilege of putting it out. Half-way through the night I bound a scarf round my eyes and so slept a little to wake in a pale mixture of morning and lamplight, feeling worse. The hour before sunrise was icily cold, and, although I had all my clothes on, I shivered in my one blanket. However, a cheerful little nun in a brown robe brought me a cup of tea, with the aid of which I took several aspirins in preparation for the day's interview with His Holiness; then I got up and went out. Against the grey wash of the sky, mountains and forest were drawn with the finest brush-point strokes, as if an ancient scroll painting had been unrolled in a circle about us; gathered around a tap, a group of children waited to be 'washed'. This process, which I watched with astonishment, consisted of stripping off their meagre clothes,

regardless of the cold, and tipping water over them out of a bucket. It left them, of course, no whit cleaner than before; but they appeared to enjoy the experience and meanwhile the notion of washing had at least been introduced.

After breakfast, which I was unable to eat, lessons commenced. These were conducted by Diana, two Tibetan teachers and a young Englishman who was spending six weeks at the camp. The children sat on the ground in groups in front of the teachers; those in front of a Tibetan teacher seeming to devote their time to a loud sing-song chanting of prayers and other lessons memorized by rote. The two English classes were listening with bright, wide-open eyes and obvious enjoyment. If these children had been taught the Buddhist doctrine, illustrated in the Wheel of Existence, to the effect that life is a relentless round of grief they showed no sign of being impressed. In fact, however, it seemed unlikely that they had been taught either this or any other tenet of their faith. The religious instruction of children in Tibet scarcely needed to be systematic or even deliberate; since, for a Tibetan, religion was so much a part of his daily life that its forms and teachings would gradually impress themselves upon a child in the same way as the forms and peculiarities of his outward environment; a spiritual geography to be learnt, like the physical one, in terms of experience. Every important stage of a man's daily work, every crisis of human life in Tibet, was marked by a ceremony and related to a religious belief; as in medieval Europe, the metaphysical ideas underlying the social organization were disseminated amongst the people not by preaching or the use of books but by the whole colour and flavour and pattern of life itself. Therefore it is difficult for a Tibetan to understand that, in the new and very different circumstances of exile, which at the same time have separated the children from their natural environment and exposed them to a chaos of alien influence from the West, some very thorough system of religious instruction will have to be evolved if the entire structure of Tibetan tradition is not to collapse.

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My first audience with the Dalai Lama was to be in the nature of an introduction, to be followed the next day by a longer interview in which, so I was given to understand, we should discuss the work of the Tibet Society and any other matters that I wished to raise with His Holiness. With my two Tibetan guides I climbed the steep mountain road which led to his house and the inevitable police tent, where I was delayed because I had failed to bring my passport; then we proceeded to the house itself, a well-kept bungalow, not very large, with a pleasant garden full of marigolds and prayer-flags, and found Mrs Tsering Dolma waiting to greet us. She took me immediately into her own small apartments, which were spotlessly clean, with modern plumbing and new paint; here she entertained me to tea while I waited to be summoned to the audience. I had brought with me a long white silk scarf and two books of colour-photographs of England to serve as the customary gift.

After a short interval the interpreter appeared, together with the Chief Secretary to His Holiness. I was led across the garden to a veranda where a number of officials, wearing Tibetan dress, stood in a group awaiting my appearance. I felt as if I were being subjected to a crucial test, as was indeed the case since every foreigner is measured in Tibetan eyes by the manner in which he reacts to this supreme moment. A pair of open french windows led from the veranda into a small, cool room. Within, after the bright sunlight outside, it looked almost dark; but I could see the Dalai Lama standing there, waiting for me, by himself. I walked quickly up to the windows and then stopped and made a deep formal obeisance. The Kundun stood quite still, smiling a very small shy smile; when I handed him my scarf he took it and passed it to an official who had followed me into the room, in one scarcely perceptible movement. Then he took my hand, not in a handshake but in a gentle, welcoming clasp. The most startling characteristic of the Dalai Lama, that which separates him from others and causes even the slightest encounter with him to be a moving and awe-inspiring experience, is the combination in his

every movement of power with lightness; the way in which his touch and his gestures, having the near-imperceptibility of drifting thistledown, the precision of geometry and the grace of a flower on its stalk, yet convey an impression of being derived from some enormous reservoir of primitive vitality and animal strength. It is said that even the toughest of his subjects returns exhausted after a mountain walk with His Holiness.

The Dalai Lama, having taken my hand, slightly drew me towards a low sofa, upon which he seated himself. I sat down beside him, with the interpreter on my other side and a robed secretary facing us, taking notes. All this time the Dalai Lama had not said a word and it struck me that he was not behaving in the friendly, spontaneous manner so often described by welfare workers and journalists, but seemed almost phenomenally subdued and sunk in thought. A long time seemed to elapse before anyone spoke; then he uttered some formality of welcome to which I made a suitable response; and silence again descended upon us. By this time I realized that I had come insufficiently prepared for this audience. As with the Prime Minister, I had made the mistake of assuming that it is correct to wait for an important personage to speak first, whereas both Nehru and the Dalai Lama were evidently accustomed to waiting silently until they were addressed: an attitude which is, after all, implied in the word 'audience'. Having grasped this point, however, I was still at a loss. I had received instructions to the effect that the first interview must be short, as His Holiness had other engagements: therefore I hesitated to introduce any serious subject, while at the same time I did not know what else to talk about. So, willy nilly, I continued to wait upon His Holiness, who did, eventually, begin to talk, slowly and with long pauses during which he sat with head bent and shoulders stooped. It was impossible, despite minor embarrassments, to feel seriously nervous: that gentle, humble manner was the very antithesis of Nehru's, which had seemed almost calculated to make one feel insignificant. As we talked the Dalai Lama's eyes seldom left the upturned palms of his hands,

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which lay upon his knees, so close to me that I found myself studying the strongly engraved lines which drive across them in deep, firm sweeps. When he did lift his gaze from these hands and turn it upon myself, I saw through the spectacles, which take up so large a part of his face, that his eyes were so weak as to be scarcely able to bear the daylight. They appeared to be full of tears and, although I dismissed this idea in favour of an explanation more directly physical and prosaic, the effect was to bestow upon his serenely bewildered countenance an added pathos.

His actual words to me were of no importance. He spoke briefly of the Tibet Society, the sufferings of the refugees, his disappointment with the British Government. Only at the end came a remark which lodged itself in my mind, although I suspected that in the original Tibetan it was no more than a formula of polite speech. Referring to our next meeting, he expressed the wish that we should have a full and open talk. 'His Holiness says,' explained the interpreter, 'that although you have only met one day, it must be as if you had known each other from ancient times.' I looked into the narrowed eyes behind the spectacles and nodded my assent to this. 'It shall be like that, Your Holiness.' I found that if I spoke slowly, choosing my words, he was perfectly capable of understanding English. And, although I was very sure that he would not speak to me as if we had known each other from ancient times, I was pleased with the suggestion that we might have had some previous acquaintance.

When I presented my gift of the two books of photographs, the Dalai Lama looked thoughtfully at the sealed packet and then handed it to the Secretary without any comment. The audience was eventually terminated by this dignitary at a glance from His Holiness. We stood up and, as the Kundun took my hand, I said firmly, in my determination to treat him with all the reverence and devotion which I actually felt rather than in the way he seemed to expect: 'Will Your Holiness give me your blessing?' Then I bowed my head and felt his fingers touch it. He gave me, I think, the Blessing with two hands which was once considered

to be the greatest possible honour to be bestowed in Tibet, given to no woman save only the Thunderbolt Sow who is the most holy of all female Incarnates. The Fourteenth Dalai Lama is as unconventional as he is generous. With him, whether it be a matter of blessings or of autographs, protocol shrivels away and love streams forth. Twenty years back I should have felt the tap of a dangling tassel on the side of my head; no woman (again excepting the Sow) being deemed worthy to be touched by the sacred fingertips.

I backed out of the french windows, bowed again and withdrew myself.

As I came out from my audience with the Dalai Lama I was greeted by what was to me an unfamiliar spectacle: a throng of pilgrims from Ladakh, more unkempt and primitive in appearance than any Tibetans I had seen up till that moment. These people were refugees employed on road works who had taken advantage of a slack period to come to Dharamsala to receive the blessing of His Holiness. I gazed in astonishment at the enormous quantities of black hair, twisted into innumerable braids, which the women arranged by means of frames in fantastically unwieldy-looking erections upon their small heads, and at the quantities of ornaments and charms with which they were all bedecked. By this time I was being politely urged into Mrs Tsering Dolma's apartments; but I lingered in the doorway, waiting to see what would happen when the Kundun came out. He must have stepped on to the veranda, which was not visible from where I stood, for suddenly the eyes of every man and woman were riveted upon it and the next moment they were all on their knees, their foreheads pressed against the gravel path. They were the dirtiest, wildest-looking people I had ever seen; but their faces, when they raised them, shone with tenderness and love: it was the old story; no one else in the world, neither husband nor wife nor child nor parent, could be, to one of these people, so precious as that sacred Presence through whom divinity itself was

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present. Somehow I felt ashamed to stand there any longer watching them as one might watch some interesting dramatic performance. I turned round and went into Mrs Tsering Dolma's flat.

Later in the afternoon I was taken to call upon the Senior Tutor of His Holiness. This old Lama, who lived in a small house at the top of another steep drive, was recovering from an illness; therefore I was instructed that my visit must be short. I found him a kindly old man, with a lively interest in the peculiarities of the British climate; as I left he promised to pray for me, 'especially that I might have a long life'. Since I have always hoped to live into old age, having a great affection for life against all the dictates of reason which point out to me its vast unpleasantness, I was particularly grateful for this promise. The gift of longevity has always been highly valued in Tibet, a fact which accounts for the popularity of the name 'Tsering' or 'Long-Life', which Tibetans lavish upon their children in the belief that a name carries the virtue of that which it designates. Probably the Lamas would rationalize this point of view by arguing that a long life provides the best chance of reforming one's character, acquiring a good Karma and eventually escaping from the Wheel of Existence; but it is far more likely to be the result of temperament. Tibetans are obstinate in their immense capacity for happiness.

In the evenings I sat on a bed in the room where Diana and Valerie slept and conducted their daily clinic. To this the children would come of their own accord, pointing at various parts of their bodies to indicate their ailments. Mostly they suffered from boils, sores, stomach and bowel disorders and chronic coughs. The medical supplies were miserably inadequate and the water supply was insufficient. Nonetheless a great deal of the illness and distress amongst the children could have been avoided had they been disciplined into cleaner habits. Such training would, of course, have had to begin with the ayahs and servants; and it would have had to be accompanied by a lavish use of disinfectants in the latrines and drains since these could not be properly sluiced. In fact, however,

when supplies of disinfectant were sent to the camp, they were not put to use; and any suggestions put forward by Europeans for improving the general conditions and rendering them even a little less unhygienic, were apt to give offence. I observed for myself that the two English girls, despite the generosity and courage with which they dedicated themselves to their work, were treated with a surprising lack of consideration and respect, whereas I was shown every possible kindness and deference. As I was being entirely useless and had several times succumbed to nausea and headache, thus causing my hosts great embarrassment, it struck me that this discrimination as between these two indispensable and tireless girls and myself required some analysis. The conclusion which I finally reached may have been unjust; certainly it was not to the credit of my Tibetan hosts. I decided that the preferential treatment accorded to me was due less to the fact that I was representing the Tibet Society and was therefore a possible source of financial assistance, although no doubt such considerations played a part in it, as to an unconscious but deeply fixed idea that anyone who did not work and obviously expected certain standards of comfort was inherently superior to those who worked hard, obeyed orders, stained their hands with dirt and accepted the hardest conditions without even an implied complaint.

Meanwhile I struggled to conceal the extent of my own discomfort. At least, on my second night at the camp, the lamp of perpetual adoration mercifully flickered out and I slept in peace, regardless of the rats who, of course, emerged in full force when they found themselves in darkness. The next day a new wick was put in and the lamp was relit; but by this time I had recovered from my headache and was actually enjoying myself. There was compensation even for the stench and the rats and the dirt in those moments, shortly after waking up, when I went outside to find the sun rising over the mountains, the air clear and cold, and perhaps eight or nine of the children running to meet me, intent upon our morning rites. These consisted in marching round and

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round the compound, the children clinging to every available portion of my person and garments, while I repeated in a toneless sing-song the one nursery-rhyme which occurred to me as embodying some of the words they knew, since they were all learning to count in English:

One-two-three-four-five,
I caught a fish a-live!
Why did you let him go?
Because he bit my fin-ger so!
Which fin-ger did he bite?
The lit-tle fin-ger on the right.

We must have tramped a long way to this accompaniment.

My second audience with the Dalai Lama lasted for two hours, taking place in the same room and under the same conditions as the first. By this time I realized that I was expected to take the lead in the conversation, and so I was fully prepared with a list of questions to ask and matters to discuss. From the point of view of the Tibet Society the most important subject which I had to raise was that of the sixteen Tibetan children who were supposed to be coming to England under the auspices of certain persons and organizations who appeared to be incapable of co-operating to produce a workable arrangement. Into this lamentable affair the Tibet Society had entered as an interested party at a fairly late stage and without any intention of playing a prominent part in it; I was anxious, therefore, both to do what I could to remove the state of deadlock which had now been reached and to impress upon the Dalai Lama the fact that the Tibet Society was not responsible for it. In fact, I was not enthusiastic about the basic principles underlying this project. I disliked the idea of removing Tibetans from a mental and spiritual climate which had at least some affinities with their own, the forms of Tibetan Buddhism having been moulded to an enormous extent by Indian influence, and transplanting them to the totally different environment of the

West. On the other hand, I was beginning to see that the Tibetans had no place in India. India has her own problems which are fearful beyond the imagination of the comfortable citizens of a welfare state, and cannot be expected to provide adequate educational facilities for an influx of refugees, who are in any case a political embarrassment. By the time I came to discuss this matter with His Holiness I realized that the Tibetan officials were, almost without exception, bent upon sending children and young students to be educated in the West; and I realized, moreover, that many young, semi-educated Tibetans were avid to go and waiting, restless and distressed, for some opportunity to present itself. The situation was, and is, seriously complicated by the fact that in the mind of His Holiness and his officials such arrangements would be temporary, culminating in the return of the young people to India to use their acquired knowledge and skills in the service of their own people, even (such is their hope) in Tibet itself; moreover, it is probably only on such conditions that permits could be obtained from the countries concerned to admit such children and students; on the other hand, the likelihood of their wishing to return, after a number of years which would have thoroughly accustomed them to the more comfortable living conditions of the West, seems remote.

I felt obliged to point out to His Holiness that many of us were anxious lest the children sent to England should fall so completely under Western influence as to lose their Tibetan culture and characteristics. To this he replied that careful thought had been given to this danger, and it was for this reason that no group of children had been, or would be, sent abroad without an accompanying Lama to instruct them in their own faith. I did not say what I thought, which was that the Lama himself might forget his prayers while he sat enspelled in front of the television set; but I did remark that for one man to ensure that a group of young people would not lose touch with their own traditions in conditions so unpropitious and so unfamiliar to himself, would be a formidable task. The West, I insisted, was materially affluent but

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spiritually impoverished. Did not His Holiness feel that to send Tibetan children into a world so dedicated to material comforts and worldly success and so empty of religion, would be to subject them to an evil influence?

I realized, at this point, that the Dalai Lama, when he has made up his mind on a particular question, does not wish to hear contrary arguments. There was, of course, no reason why he should have allowed himself to be swayed by my remarks, since I was not a person of the least importance. At the same time, I felt that a truly wise ruler, finding himself in a situation which he could not possibly expect to assess for himself, would have seized every opportunity of encouraging others to assist him in understanding it; and since I came from this unknown world into which he was proposing to send his young people and children, I would have expected him to listen carefully to what I had to say about its less attractive characteristics: in fact, however, he did not wish to hear such evidence. The Dalai Lama is, I believe, intoxicated by his own idea of 'scientific progress'. At the age of fifteen his imagination was inflamed by his contact with Heinrich Harrer, as the latter has described in his book *Seven Years in Tibet*, and the shining daydream in which the young boy indulged and in which he was encouraged by his exciting new friend, seems to have remained with him ever since. His dream of the West is the equivalent of my own dream of Tibet.

The Dalai Lama has unconsciously acquired his own method of passive resistance. He laughs: a charming, disarming laugh, free of the least suggestion of discourtesy, terminating the possibility of argument. It is as if he suddenly vanishes, leaving nothing behind but an appearance, an illusory ghost. I changed the subject and we passed on to a discussion of the Chinese treatment of Tibetans inside Tibet. The Dalai Lama emphasized to me that he attached no blame to the Chinese people either for the cruelties which were being perpetrated by their troops or for the seizure of Tibet itself. 'His Holiness says that the Chinese are not to blame for all this.'

I looked intently at the Dalai Lama, who was gazing, as usual, at his own upturned hands, as if he were turned inwards upon some difficult thought. 'The Chinese,' I said slowly, so that he should understand every word, 'are a great people with a great history. Does not Your Holiness think that it is Communism itself which is to blame for what has happened in Tibet?'

After a pause the Dalai Lama replied to this; and the interpreter said: 'His Holiness says that perhaps this is the case.'

I wondered whether the Dalai Lama could have any notion of Communism either as a political system or as a philosophy by which to live. Although I had myself introduced this concept, I felt that it was too abstract for whatever kind of mind lodged behind that brooding countenance. I did not believe that the Kundun ascribed the tragedy of his country to the expansion of Communism; although it was difficult to understand to what or to whom he did ascribe it. He would not blame the Chinese people and I had been told that he was equally unwilling to condemn their government. I wondered whether the word 'blame' had an exact Tibetan equivalent and the Kundun had really used it. Even if he had, I suspected that he scarcely knew what it meant, so completely did he seem to personify the spirit of forgiveness. His charity was the more startling for being totally unself-conscious. 'Charity,' I was reminded, 'vaunteth not itself. . . .' Yet I could not but recall how the eight eyes on the palms of the eight hands of the Divine Chenrezig indicate that his mercy (the helping hand) is allied to a clear-eyed judgment. I doubted whether the Kundun had a true understanding of the evil to which he had opposed himself. Not for the first time I wondered: would he ever be persuaded to return to a Communist-dominated Tibet?

Tea was brought in, accompanied by small doughy biscuits. Courtesy obliging me to partake of these refreshments, I chewed remorselessly while trying to address His Holiness in a normal voice. The Tibetan taste for solid dough is one to which I was never able to acclimatize myself: it upset both my digestion and my conversational efforts. The Dalai Lama nibbled his own

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biscuit with the delicacy appropriate to the Monkey-god. We discussed the distribution of the Society's funds and the constitution of the exiled Tibetan Government. His Holiness dictated to me the names of the members of his cabinet together with their particular responsibilities and spheres of influence. With a little gentle prompting on my part, he spoke at length of his good relations with the Government of India, his gratitude to Pandit Nehru and his anxiety not to embarrass his Indian hosts. We must present to the world the truth about Tibet without 'shouting it twenty-four hours in the day' and thereby causing trouble for the Indian Government. All this struck me as being spoken from the heart. It was when he turned to the question of the Tibetans in India, assuring me that 'complete unity' now prevailed amongst them, that I began to doubt his frankness. Since I could not expect to be treated by the Dalai Lama 'as if we had known each other from ancient times' (in which case he might have told me that the whole Tibetan community in India was torn by jealousies and conflicting interests) I would have preferred to be left to judge this matter for myself.

But in fact what we talked about, the words that we said to one another, were of no more importance to me in my contact with the Dalai Lama than the tea and biscuits. The impression of his personality, which was made upon me while we talked, was so clear and definite and I was so deeply engaged with it that it was difficult to concentrate at the same time upon a succession of tedious subjects and stereotyped comments. In the person of the Dalai Lama I could see and feel the anguish of that contradiction which is at the heart of the problem of Tibet. Watching him, as he sat by my side, wrapped in that in-turned meditation which seemed to have no relation to the subjects we discussed, although I had no doubt that his surface mind was entirely bent upon those subjects, I could feel the tension of the conflict between the two aspects of his dual conception of himself: the fantasy of becoming the leader of an emancipated people, the dream of 'progress'; and the faith which was instilled into his living tissues as he grew that

he is the Great Fifth Dalai Lama and the Great Thirteenth and the vehicle of the Presence. I perceived, moreover, as never before, how the essence of this conflict, which is itself the tragic drama of the destiny of Tibet, consists in the fact that it is not (as I had once been inclined to suppose) a simple opposition between a false dream and a profound truth, the first to be rejected and the second preserved at all costs, but a paradox to be resolved, a fearful equation demanding to be understood. For there can be no serious doubt that Tibetans must adapt themselves to and even embrace the world of the present; no doubt that they must reject the enormous element of superstition in their ancient faith and re-think their former beliefs: and the Fourteenth Dalai Lama has seen this truth. No one who criticizes him (as I used so often to do) for doubting his own function, abolishing too freely the ceremonies surrounding his sacred office, displaying a disproportionate interest in cameras and wireless sets, should forget that he has turned his face in the only direction which can be followed now by those who tread the Buddhist path towards Enlightenment. The Dalai Lama has taken refuge neither in a dream of the past nor in the false visions held out to him by the Communists. If (as I believe) his own vision is clouded by fantasies of a world which does not exist and by his personal delight and aptitude in tinkering with mechanical gadgets, a large share of the responsibility lies with the Lama teachers who, with hundreds of years of sacred tradition behind their efforts, could not arm their young Dalai Lama with a power of discrimination equal to any demands which might be made upon it.

Suddenly the Kundun laughed. It was an ecstatic laugh, abandoned yet controlled, a paroxysm of pure mirth. Why? Because I had made a disrespectful comment upon a certain famous Englishman, whose name, no doubt, I had been expected to utter in tones of reverence. In that gay laughter I saw the dancing flame of a free spirit. The Kundun laughed, unconscious of anything except his own amusement, because he had seen for an instant the very walls of the Potala disintegrate. He had heard the name of a

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great man, a symbol of England, one whom the Tibetans would undoubtedly have termed a high Incarnate, referred to in mildly affectionate disparagement by one of the least of his compatriots.

I left the Dalai Lama's villa, accompanied by a Tibetan escort and cherishing a voluminous silk scarf, so thin as to be almost weightless. Tied round my neck was a wisp of red bandage material which had been knotted by the Dalai Lama and rubbed between the palms of his hands in my presence. These customary tokens, for one of which I had tentatively asked, otherwise I should not have received it, since it would not be assumed that a Westerner would attach any value to such an object, are regarded by Tibetans as infinitely precious. At a public audience held by the Dalai Lama they are distributed by one of his Lama ministers and are not likely to have been knotted or blessed by His Holiness. It is when he performs this ceremony himself, as he sometimes does at a private audience, that one is considered to have received, in that tiny scrap of material, a treasure beyond the value of all the gold in Tibet. This was a view which I was able to share; otherwise I would not have requested such a privilege for myself.

I had been invited, with Diana and Valerie and the young Englishman, to attend a performance of Tibetan Dance Drama by the refugee Drama Group at a house about a mile distant from that of His Holiness. So instead of returning to the children's camp I found myself setting out on a mountain walk. On the other side of the valley the sun was going down, throwing icy cold shadows from the trees which lined our path. My companion could speak a little English so I questioned him about the Drama Group. There were, at that time, two such groups in India, formed by the refugees for the purpose of preserving the traditional plays of Tibet, which consist of a mixture of dance, mime and more or less *ex tempore* speech. From the inevitably unsatisfactory replies to my questions which I received from a succession of Tibetans, who could speak only a very little English, I was unable to discover who had 'written' the particular play which I saw

that evening, and which concerned the arrival of Padma Sambhava in Tibet and his conquest of the evil spirits. On the one hand, I was informed that the play was 'very old' and the author had lived 'many years ago'; on the other, that the author was a member of the present troupe. From this I deduced that the spoken words were unimportant: in Tibet, after all, where a large proportion of the population is illiterate, they would not have been memorized from a script.

Arriving at the house, I was conducted to the tiny outdoor theatre which had been erected for the occasion, and taken to join Diana, Valerie and Michael in the front seats. Behind us were perhaps a hundred or so refugee Tibetans, all of whom were living in the district. Exactly where they lived, still less how they contrived to support themselves in existence, I never discovered, although I was constantly asking questions on the subject. Valerie and Diana, who had frequently to walk for miles to give nursing care to a sick refugee, generally without having received any indication of the nature of the illness, declared simply that they lived 'all over the place'. On this occasion, the four of us were greatly perturbed because we had been given chairs in such a position that we entirely blocked the view of the rest of the audience which was seated on the ground behind us. We pointed this out to the Tibetan official who seemed to be responsible for the arrangements and who spoke a little English. 'It does not matter,' was the response. 'But,' we insisted, 'none of these people can see at all. We are right in their way. Surely we can move to some other place.' The official seemed baffled by such inexplicable persistence. Our chairs were moved; but not before the point had been made amply clear to us that the convenience of the lower orders was not a matter in which anyone was expected to take an interest.

We were now seated sideways on to both stage and audience. When I looked to my left I saw the play, the Tibetan troupe in full traditional regalia performing the ancient ceremonies in front of a crudely painted backdrop of the Potala Palace; when I turned

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my head, there was the crowd of close-packed Tibetan faces, gazing out from the darkness of the compound behind, the light from the stage falling upon them—men, women and children, every one a refugee from the world which was being re-enacted before them—sensitively beautiful and individual faces, each with its own peculiar character, all of them marked with the same qualities of dignity, gentleness and strength. On the chair by my side was a little boy. He was scarcely more than three years old, with immense dark eyes and a fur hat two sizes larger than his face. For the first hour he sat perfectly still, gazing at the stage; then his overweighted head drooped forward until, towards the end, I had to hold him while he slept.

We walked back to the village, after the play, in a long winding procession down the mountainside, lit by torches and starlight. The sky was so packed with stars that one could barely have put a finger between them: they reminded me of the 'whispering puddings' of my childhood, so called when there were so many currants that they need only whisper in order to communicate. The four of us linked arms and sang. At the tops of our tuneless voices we sang: 'Oh, come all ye faithful', 'The foggy foggy dew' and 'Good King Wenceslas'.

Diana, Valerie and I were invited to a formal luncheon with the members of the Kashag or Cabinet. By this time I had received a copy of what was known as the 'draft constitution' for the new Tibet. This consisted of a preamble by the Dalai Lama and a statement of the principles which would underlie the new constitution when the latter was fully developed, together with a broad outline of the future organs of government: the whole occupying four pages of typescript. It was, as may be easily imagined, a most pathetic document. 'The Government,' it declared, 'will have the form of a constitutional democracy based on the tenets of Buddhism.' Authority would be vested in an Executive consisting of the Dalai Lama and his Cabinet; a Legislature, consisting of one democratically elected House; and

an independent Judiciary appointed by the Dalai Lama, whose own position was defined as 'the Chief Executive of the Government and the religious leader of the Tibetan people . . . subject to the deprivation of his powers in the highest interests of the State . . .' This latter phrase was the only one from beginning to end which seemed to contain any real significance: it was indeed so startling as to create the impression that everything else was so much padding surrounding it. The agitation which it produced amongst the ordinary refugee Tibetans was tremendous and I was frequently to wonder whether the Dalai Lama had anticipated this or whether he was so remote from the feelings of his own people as to have been unaware of the inevitability of it. The effect was the more devastating in that the idea being put forward was couched in the form of so brief and unadorned a statement. The object (one assumes) was to create the necessary distinction between Church and State by dividing the spiritual and temporal functions of the Dalai Lama and subjecting the former to a democratic rather than a theocratic system of government. Before the Chinese invasion Tibet was a theocracy in the most absolute sense: the temporal power of the Dalai Lama was bound up with his spiritual power and regarded as being derived from it. Both temporal and spiritual power had descended upon him from the celestial realms; rather, they had descended *with* him, since he was himself the Lord Chenrezig and must therefore be obeyed in all matters, both secular and religious. And, indeed, if the doctrine of the Incarnation of Chenrezig in the Dalai Lama is to remain intact, the rest follows from it: this is but one aspect of the total impasse in which the Tibetan community now finds itself. It is a problem totally beyond the scope of the simple monk and peasant, who can only be appalled by the obvious threat to the very foundations of their faith. Is there, indeed, anyone, in the East or in the West, who can solve it? It is the problem of the age which is being born; and no one of us can see as yet what it is that will be born; we can only submit to the necessity of that birth and await it with patience. Yet the Dalai Lama, like an innocent child,

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suddenly faces his people with this fearful paradox, as if the whole matter were perfectly simple and obvious. There it is in black and white, to be read to every one of the 70,000 refugee Tibetans: ' . . . subject to the deprivation of his powers in the highest interests of the State . . . ' The Lord Chenrezig himself . . .

I speculated continually and, of course, without hope of final enlightenment, as to who was behind the whole of this curious document; who had originated the idea of producing it and who had worded its statements. I was inclined to see, in the passage concerning the Dalai Lama, the personal inclinations of the Kundun, flinging away his ancient rights with a reckless humility which would be entirely characteristic. If this is so, it is a significant comment upon the assertion, which I was to hear again and again, that the Dalai Lama is ruled by an 'official clique', who are said to be using him for the furtherance of their own interests. One would not suppose that the undermining of the position of the Dalai Lama, assuming him to be in a subordinate position in relation to themselves, would be in the interests of such a clique. Again, both in the language used and in the ideas expressed, there are curious and unmistakable traces of Communist influence: a point which would not be surprising if the document sprang either directly from the Dalai Lama, who has assuredly been strongly influenced by the Chinese Communists, or from such persons as have access to him and are themselves semi-Communists, of whom I could name at least three out of my own circle of acquaintance. One would not, however, expect such leanings from an 'official clique', who would surely adopt a more conservative approach. All this is merely speculation: but these points should be kept in mind as a corrective to the stories which are common currency concerning the subordination of the Dalai Lama to unnamed persons and vaguely defined 'interests'.

Meanwhile in Dharamsala there has been set up a Tibetan administration consisting of five departments (Home Affairs; Foreign Affairs; Religion; Education; Finance) under the direc-

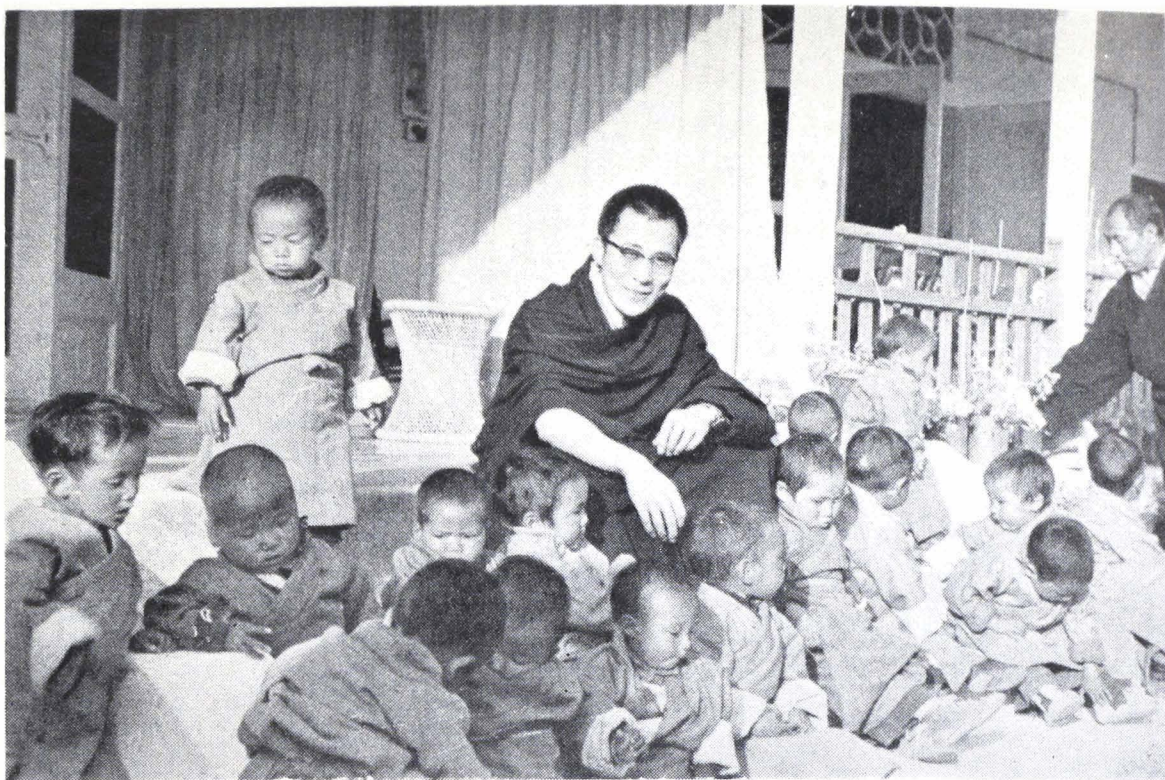


v(a)
Water shortage at
Dharamsala Camp

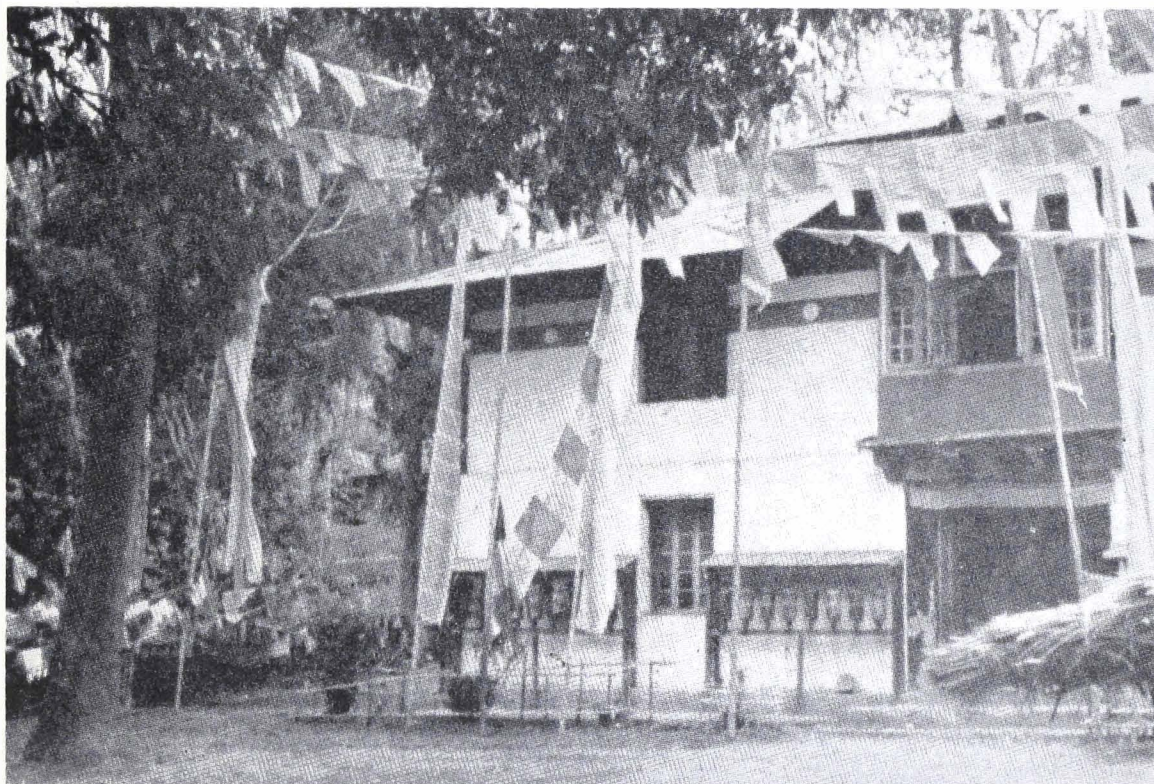


v(b) Exiles in India

CARE Photo



vi(a) The Dalai Lama at the Dharamsala Crèche



vi(b) Tirpai Gompa

tion of the five members of the Dalai Lama's Cabinet. It was with these notables that we were bidden to lunch at a house about a mile from the children's camp.

Accompanied by Mrs Tsering Dolma, who was to be the principal guest, the three of us set off along a path through the forest. Amid the overflowing beauty which surrounded us, the pale gold touching the snows, the intense blueness of the sky, the radiance of pink cherry blossom, we ourselves were depressed and the presence of the Second Lady of Tibet did nothing to raise our spirits. A distressing scene had just taken place in the camp. Three adolescent girls from among the orphan servants had appeared in the compound weeping at the tops of their voices, having been suddenly told to leave for Delhi without any explanation as to where they were eventually going, for how long or for what purpose. We did not doubt that these girls were being sent away for their own benefit; probably they were being sent to Adyar, where a nurses' training scheme was in operation under the auspices of the Theosophists, in which case they would be very much better off than they had been up to the present. It was not the action in itself which shocked us but the manner of it. We felt that these three girls were being treated like so many inanimate objects with no human rights. However, when Valerie ventured to ask Mrs Tsering Dolma why the girls had not been told where they were going and given a little reassurance, that lady replied in a tone of authority which closed the subject: 'In Delhi for them no hardship.' The point that we were trying to make had not even been understood.

Our destination proved to be another large bungalow, presumably belonging to one or more of the members of the Cabinet. These gentlemen, superb in their sashed robes, welcomed us with that charming mixture of formality and friendliness peculiar to official Tibet; and we were conducted to the dining-room where a long table was laid for lunch. About twelve of us, including two interpreters, sat down to a six-course Chinese meal, eaten with chopsticks. The friendly and elaborately polite conversation pro-

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vided long gaps in which the august members of the Kashag could be heard enthusiastically sucking up noodles and soup.

On the morning of my departure I was drinking tea with the members of the staff, Tibetan and English, when the Tibetan lady who was Mrs Tsering Dolma's chief assistant entered the room and inquired whether 'some of the servants' might come and speak to me before I left, adding that she would interpret for me what they said. I was wondering what to expect, thinking that perhaps some of them wished to make me a polite farewell speech, when to my amazement about thirty people trooped quietly into the room and stood before me in motionless, unsmiling silence. There were old men and women amongst them and boys and girls in early adolescence. All were Tibetans of the poorest class—kitchen boys, ayahs and the older orphan children who performed various tasks about the camp. They were dirty, poorly clad, unkempt; pitifully destitute in appearance; with the gentle faces and dignified bearing which are invariable in Tibetans of this class. Their spokesman, a tall, shaggy-haired man, stepped forward and began to speak; I watched his face while the words poured from his lips. As he paused, the Tibetan lady started to interpret. These people, she said, had heard that I was an English lady who had come to visit His Holiness. They were begging me to return to England and ask the English people to help Tibet. They themselves, they said, were well cared for; but they could not forget their friends and families who were being starved and killed. Would I, they prayed me, ask the people in England to help them to get their country back? The speech went on and clearly the interpreter was baffled by such an outpouring of words: but I did not need words to tell me what was in these people's hearts, their grief, their trust and their desperate hope. Suddenly, to my horror, the speaker prostrated himself at my feet and broke into sobs. At this the whole party burst into bitter tears; old women and young girls sobbed and cried; even the men had tears streaming down their cheeks. On a blind impulse I went to them and

put my arms round as many of them as I could get hold of at once. I had no notion what to say or do and, oddly enough, no inclination to weep myself. Through her own tears my interpreter tried to disentangle for me the individual tales of grief. I had four dark heads on my two shoulders and my blouse must have been wet. By this time Diana and Valerie had joined the group, murmuring distracted words of comfort; but still the crying went on undiminished. A little nun-servant, who had been one of the last to leave Tibet, was describing to me, as she clung to my hand, how she had seen the people being forced to work on the roads with nothing to eat; when they fell down they were beaten so that many died and the bodies were strung up in a public place. Would I, she begged me, tell the people in England this?

I realized by now that it was necessary for me to do or say something to control this storm of grief. I could not have even attempted to make a speech: the paradox of the situation was that to be equal to it would have been outrageous; and yet I had to be equal to it. In this impasse I looked up and saw, above the lamp on the mantelpiece, the familiar photograph. Turning to the interpreter, I asked her to tell the people that I had been talking to His Holiness; that His Holiness had written to their friends in England; that His Holiness would let us know of ways in which we could help. And, as I had foreseen, the repetition of that name calmed them; they stopped crying and we were able to shepherd them out of the room without any further disturbance.

Many times since I left Dharamsala I have searched my conscience, wondering whether the judgments which I formed during the two hours which I spent with the Dalai Lama bore any resemblance to the truth. In all the meetings which I had with Tibetans I was compelled to form opinions rather by intuition than by a process of reasoning out of experience. The latter method requires a long acquaintance in varied circumstances; indeed the acquaintance is never sufficiently long or the circum-

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stances varied enough; something can always happen to reduce one's theories to nought. In such matters intuition is more sure than reason: thus if a subsequent happening, appraised on a purely rational basis, appears to contradict an intuitional judgment, the apparent contradiction is itself suspect. On the other hand, intuition is apt to be clouded by emotion to such an extent as to become a useless instrument.

Numerous persons better qualified than I am to form an opinion have unstintingly praised the Dalai Lama's wisdom, strength of character and intellectual independence. No one of my acquaintance who has had prolonged and intimate contact with him since his arrival in India shares my fear that he might still, in certain circumstances, be open to Communist influence. Moreover, his own autobiography contains numerous strongly-worded accusations against the Chinese Communists.

My own impressions of him, by which I abide, were formed by intuition and blurred by an emotional conflict: on the one hand, I was touched to the heart by the spectacle of a human being so startlingly and mysteriously beautiful in both a spiritual and a physical sense (and this is a reaction not peculiar to myself but felt by everyone, so far as I know, who has ever set eyes upon His Holiness; in fact, I suspect that it has interfered with many an otherwise 'rational' judgment); on the other, I had been deeply shaken by the episode of his letters to the Chinese Commander-in-Chief. However, when I consider the facts of the situation from a purely rational standpoint they do not appear to conflict with my own judgments but rather to bear them out.

It cannot reasonably be denied that during the period of the Chinese occupation prior to the 1951 revolt, the Dalai Lama played the part of what we in the West have learnt to call a 'collaborationist'. He has stated in his autobiography that he adopted this policy basically on religious grounds, as a disciple of non-violence, and also because he believed that only so could he save his people from destruction and leave an opportunity open for the situation to better itself. The first part of this argument

leaves out of account the fact that the true pacifist, if we may take the disciples of Gandhi as the pattern of such, is prepared to adopt a policy of passive resistance regardless of the consequences either to himself or to anyone else: it is in so far as the pacifist ceases to be the passive resister that he becomes the 'collaborationist'. The second part of the argument is, of course, the collaborationist's invariable defence and it is a far stronger one than we care to admit; in fact, it has the full force of pure reason behind it. If, by smiles and compliments and the concealment of all that we truly believe and think, we can save others from harm and even perhaps bring about some future good, why not? The truth, it might justly be maintained, can remain in our hearts and minds intact while we deny it with our lips. And while the twentieth-century Westerner is apt to feel that the immorality of this argument is self-evident, the oriental, equally in possession of his own clearly defined and emotionally-coloured conceptions of honour and courage and truthfulness, would not share in the particular emotional reaction which we experience at this point.

There is, however, a practical flaw in this policy of total non-resistance which gradually reveals itself: it is exceedingly hard to carry it out. The Dalai Lama provides an instance of this flaw in that he was a collaborationist *who did not collaborate enough*. His mind remained at least partially free, despite all the efforts which were made to possess it. His words and actions were never so wholeheartedly on the side of the Chinese as to satisfy their requirements. So all his attempted co-operation came to nought and he himself came within a hairsbreadth of death. The Panchen Lama, who has become a puppet of the Communists, may yet make the discovery that even his abject submission has been insufficient to save his life: repeated rumours that he has been murdered by the Chinese, even if untrue, point towards the possibility of this. The tragedy of the Panchen may well be that he will be called upon to die, having earned the contempt of every man and woman in Tibet. The Dalai Lama, having retained

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throughout a far greater degree of independence, escaped with no more than a pursuing question mark.

It should further be remembered, as a complicating factor in an already complicated situation, that a policy of co-operation in circumstances of this kind is seldom undertaken in the coldest of cold blood: few 'collaborators' have the courage to preserve intact their secret thoughts. Therefore, despite the present attitude of the Dalai Lama, it cannot be assumed that he himself was not at one time strongly influenced by the ideas which were being propagated by the Communists; indeed the available evidence points to the conclusion that he was so influenced. It could hardly be otherwise in view of his youth and his lively, inquisitive temperament. Perhaps it is the more remarkable that, without having closed his mind to Communism, he was nonetheless able to remain to a great extent detached from it, without ever surrendering his individuality or his religious beliefs.

This is an analysis of the facts in so far as it is possible to ascertain them in circumstances which render the search for truth even more than usually difficult. Apart from any impressions or intuitions of mine, these facts do not suggest that the Dalai Lama is certain to remain invulnerable to overtures from the Chinese if the latter should attempt at any time to woo him back to Tibet. His attitude today may be firm enough; but those who adopt a policy of deceptive co-operation for the sake of the public good suffer the inconvenience that they cannot be wholeheartedly believed when they reverse their statements. No one, however, no matter what views he may hold, can suggest that the Dalai Lama has ever considered his own safety or his own interests. His personal courage and self-effacement are as indisputable as the serene happiness which shines in his face and bears constant witness to his steadfast goodness. This is perhaps the final word that should be spoken of the Dalai Lama: he is good.

(3) *Nalanda*

From Dharamsala I returned to Delhi and then flew to Patna on

my way to Nalanda in Bihar. The village of Nalanda is famous for the ruins of the ancient Buddhist University where it is said that Padma Sambhava studied before going to preach in Tibet. Close to these ruins there is now a modern theological college known as the Mahavira Institute; it was here that I had been invited to stay by the young Lama, Atsa Tulku, with whom I had been corresponding under Freda's scheme for providing the young Tulkus with pen-friendships. Together with another Tulku and six ordinary monks, Atsa had been granted a scholarship to this Institute. The eight of them were subsisting on a relatively generous but quite inadequate allowance from the Indian Government, out of which they were expected to provide for all their needs, including their food, which they bought and cooked, Tibetan fashion, separately from that of the other students.

I drove the fifty miles to Nalanda from Patna airport and arrived in the late afternoon to be greeted by Atsa Tulku and one of the servants. The guest room into which I was shown seemed like a little house by itself; it was part of the building in which the students lodged but faced away from it and was only connected with it by one door which was permanently locked. There was a large table in the room and two wooden beds, each covered by a dirty blanket. Glass doors led on to a flight of stone steps: facing these doors, across a strip of garden and surrounded on three sides by paddy fields and swamps, was the main building of the Institute.

Atsa Tulku was twenty-two years old, tall and sturdily built, with the mongoloid features of the Amdo district. He was wearing layman's clothes; when I inquired tentatively from one of the students, who was trying to translate Atsa's Hindi into English, what had become of his monastic robes, I received a confused reply from which I gathered that he had been temporarily deprived of his Lama's status because he had taken an active part in the fighting in Tibet. Exactly what had happened I never knew; for fear of paining him I did not reopen the subject. There is certainly a monastic rule against the taking of life; although it

would surely have been a little hard to apply it so severely in such a case. On the other hand, I became convinced that Atsa, despite his declarations to the contrary, had no real desire to dedicate himself permanently to religion and was far more suited to adopt some lay pursuit. His joy in seeing me touched my heart. Having declared that I was his mother, he consistently treated me as such and, when I learnt that his own parents had been left behind in Tibet, I perceived that I must accept this role and fulfil it as best I could, if need be for the rest of my life. I was not displeased with my adopted son, seeing in him all the qualities which had first drawn me to his people and glad that he was of peasant stock—although, being a Lama, he was not illiterate. It seemed to me that he was intelligent and his strength and vitality were obviously tremendous; yet he was quiet and considerate, his huge black eyes fixing themselves upon me in a look which seemed to say that he placed himself entirely at my service, asking nothing in return except that I should not forget his existence or withdraw from my own part in it. Although I had from time to time sent him financial help and had naturally, on this occasion, brought him a present, nothing seemed to be further from his thoughts than to use me as a source of material assistance. Yet he must have regarded me as being almost infinitely affluent, while he himself was practically destitute.

I spent the night rolled up in the dirty blanket, sometimes sleeping, more often lying awake listening to the chirring of insects and the movements of a rat which used one of the draining holes for the purpose of entering and leaving my establishment. I thought of the paddy fields outside, stretching away for miles into the darkness. Mosquitoes hummed piercingly round the net which Atsa had somehow managed to produce at my anxious insistence, malaria being rife in this humid, swampy district. In the morning I was wakened by Atsa with a cup of tea. Tibetan butter-tea, which some Europeans find delicious, is made in a churn with butter and soda and salt and tastes to my mind like some singularly horrible and greasy kind of soup.

Later in the morning I was called upon by the eight Tibetan monks together with a Japanese student who could interpret their faltering Hindi into excellent English. Each monk, bowing low with joined hands, presented me with a flower and in addition to these gifts they had brought me, from their tiny store, two ceremonial scarves. None of them was more than twenty-two years old: all of them could have been my sons and all of them had decided that this was to be the relationship between us. Formally and yet with warm affection they invited me to their living quarters, which proved to be a bare stone hall furnished with a few mats upon which they sat and the mattresses upon which they slept, each wrapped in a single blanket. Against the wall facing the main entrance was an improvised shrine upon which they had arranged the usual crudely-coloured pictures and a small Buddha-image which Atsa had found by the side of the road as he trekked out of Tibet. A chair was brought in and, while my hosts seated themselves on mats on the floor, it was indicated that I was expected to sit in lonely eminence. With grateful protestations I declined and, firmly removing my shoes, sat down upon a mat like everyone else. Tea and biscuits appeared, produced out of their meagre supplies; and it was not until after we had partaken of these refreshments and conducted a little friendly conversation that my young hosts made me a formal request: would I write to the Central Relief Committee and ask for a little extra food for them, since their allowance was inadequate and they did not have sufficient to eat? Clearly they all believed me to be a person of enormous influence. It struck me as remarkable that their habit of courtesy had prevented them from raising this subject, urgent as it was, until I had been properly welcomed and suitably entertained; moreover the request itself was simple, reasonable and definite; they never, by the smallest hint, extended it. Unhappily, however, I knew that the Central Relief Committee would consider them to be relatively well off, as indeed they were, compared with the refugees in the camps.

For the rest of that day until the evening a kind of perpetual

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tea-party was held in my room while I sat on one of the wooden beds and on the other, facing me, sat a group of monks and other students, dispensing tea of various kinds and trying to make themselves understood with varying degrees of success. We drank Indian tea, Chinese tea, Tibetan butter-tea, Japanese green tea brewed by Nagasaki, the Japanese student, and Cambodian tea brought round in a large teapot by a beaming, yellow-robed Cambodian monk.

When mealtimes came Atsa cooked me Tibetan food. Most of this I was compelled to dispose of, when he was out of the room, to a couple of pi-dogs who lived permanently on the guest room steps. I knew that in order to feed me he must be going short himself, but nothing could persuade him either to allow me to pay for my own food or to reduce the amount of it within the limits of my appetite. Fourteen meat dumplings, each one weighing like a stone, seemed to him a normal meal, to be followed of course by cups of butter-tea continually replenished. Surreptitiously I fed these dumplings to the two dogs, who subsisted at other times on nothing at all except refuse.

In the evening, Atsa, Nagasaki and I went for a walk. We walked through the deep green paddy fields and between the swamps in the pale orange-gold of the sunset. In the water small dark heads shot along like miniature speedboats; when I asked what they were, Nagasaki replied that they were snakes.

Atsa and Nagasaki took me to see the ruins of the great University which flourished in Nalanda in the days when Buddhism in India was a tremendous and living force. We started off together shortly after breakfast and went first into the village itself because I wanted to see it and the little Jain temple which was still in use, the gilded roof of which rose above the huddled huts into the morning sunlight, far more than to be taken on a suitable sight-seeing expedition according to the notions of my two conscientious hosts.

Wending our way through the higgledy-piggledy of children

and cows, between huts which seemed to be shared on equal terms by human beings and their beasts, our feet sliding in the refuse, we came to the gates of the temple and were met by a Jain priest. The Jain religion bears a strong resemblance to Buddhism and is similarly tolerant; there is no rule to prevent outsiders from entering their places of worship. We penetrated into the inner shrine where there were six Buddha images, described by the priest as 'very old', of black stone with gleaming jewelled eyes imparting to them the appearance of hiding some precious secret. Their faces wore an expression that was infinitely serene and yet suggestive of an almost wicked amusement. Apart from these images, which occupied low-set niches in the walls, the little shrine was bare and seemed as if it were seldom entered or touched, although someone had strewn flower-petals over the Buddhas, making daubs of colour against the blackness. The petals were already shrivelled but the Buddhas seemed to be alive; I fancied that a virtue flowed out of them when I touched them with my fingertips. Heavy and still as they were, they made an impression upon me as if they were in movement; as if each one were a tiny cosmos swirling around its own secret heart with a speed greater than that of time itself.

The ruins of the monastic University have been enclosed within a park and present to the uninitiated visitor an incomprehensible confusion of broken images, shrines, stupas, steps and labyrinths. Possessing no key to the original pattern of it all, I did my best to display a proper degree of interest; when my spirits flagged I sat down on a wall with Atsa beside me and asked Nagasaki to take our photograph. Nagasaki was a sophisticated and intelligent young man who was at the same time unassuming, sensitive and sympathetic: he was the ideal interpreter between Atsa and myself. Throughout the walks which the three of us took together we talked mostly of England, which represented the goal upon which Atsa's mind was set. For him, Tibet was the vanished past; England the longed-for future; slipped between the two was the totally unacceptable present—India—the hateful, lonely, un-

rewarding land where he would never make a life for himself. It would have been useless and cruel to attempt to shatter his dream of the West. But I felt obliged to explain to him carefully and at length the practical difficulties which stood in the way of his coming to England—difficulties which I myself had no power to surmount. Had I seen a way of fulfilling his dream I would have taken it. Although I knew it to be a dream, I would have given it to him that he might take it and fashion reality out of it as best he could; just as I myself was trying to fashion reality out of my dream of Tibet. Better anything, I thought, than to leave him here to break his heart. It seemed to me nothing short of ludicrous that he should have been given a scholarship for three years to an institute of traditional learning where he could study nothing but Sanskrit, when all that he wanted was to learn English and make an active future for himself. Atsa was not by temperament a monk but a lively, energetic young man with normal ambitions and instincts, an affectionate disposition and exceptional physical strength. But I could not imagine how to extricate him from his predicament.

I was never able to bring myself to ask detailed questions about Atsa's life in Tibet; it was the kind of subject which at all times I hesitated to raise with Tibetans, thus losing innumerable opportunities of learning about matters in which I took an enormous interest. This was not, I felt, a suitable moment in which to pursue researches on one's own account. In fact my conversation with Atsa, easy and friendly as it somehow contrived to be, was desultory and to very little purpose beyond the cementing of our friendship. I could not even comfort him in words and the only occasion upon which I tried to do so left me looking foolish. I told him that he must continue to be brave and patient and that people in other countries were feeling a tremendous admiration for Tibetans on account of their great courage which everyone had read about. To this pocket-sermon Atsa replied in a doleful voice. 'He says,' interpreted Nagasaki, 'that he is only a boy.' And he means, I thought, that he doesn't want to be

admired in terms of heroics; he wants the chance to prove himself in the normal ways of human life. Besides, what he said was heart-breakingly true; he was very young and, although in some respects he seemed wiser and more responsible than most adults, in others he was positively childish.

On our way back to the Institute we stopped before one of the wooden pulleys to be seen all over rural India, by means of which the water for the irrigation of the fields is drawn up in buckets and then swilled out. To operate this pulley two men stand on a wooden platform pulling on ropes and singing in a monotonous hum as they work. 'All day long,' said Nagasaki disparagingly, 'they make the same movement.' 'Yes,' I said. 'But in factories in England people all day long make the same movement. And it is not so good a movement. Also instead of singing they listen to very loud radio music.'

As we approached the Institute the two pi-dogs came running to meet us. They wagged their tails and smiled, showing their rotting teeth. 'Your friends,' Atsa said in English.

In the afternoon a small party of wandering Tibetans came up to the Institute. From whence they came and where they intended to go I was unable to learn; in fact I was seldom able to extract such details, being exceedingly unwilling to probe into other people's affairs with the necessary persistence. However, it was not unusual to find stray Tibetans wandering the roads of India, going from one sacred shrine of Buddhism to the next, ragged and unkempt in appearance but without any visible sign of being in distress. They were not of necessity refugees: in some cases they were simply following the twofold instinct of any Tibetan to wander from place to place and to perform pious acts for the acquisition of merit in a future life.

It came as a faint shock to me to realize that it was solely for the purpose of receiving the blessing of my adopted son that these pilgrims had come up to the Institute. They stood on the steps of the students' living quarters until he came out to them; then

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they bowed almost to the ground, protruding their tongues in token of reverence. Atsa stood on the top step and gently touched the head of each: to him it was a matter of course; yet there was nothing perfunctory or indifferent in his manner of bestowing the grace of which he still believed himself to be the instrument. Standing there in his brown chuba and grey flannel trousers, crowned by the inevitable felt hat, he seemed for an instant to become something greater than his small personal self. For these ragged pilgrims he was a holy Incarnate; a single manifestation of one of those innumerable divinities all of whom are Aspects of the Spirit of Tibet who is himself an Aspect of the Spirit who presides over this planet; thus by stages was my adopted son referred back before my eyes to the Absolute God.

Having been told by Nagasaki that there was a harijan village about two miles away across the fields, I expressed a wish to see it. The word 'harijan', meaning 'God's children', was bestowed by Gandhi upon India's untouchables and has somewhat ironically fallen into common use. Atsa, Nagasaki and I set out for this village in the late afternoon of the last day of my visit. Gnats and mosquitoes were hovering in the sunshine over the red-brown mud and the air was full of the soft sounds of birds and insects and splashing snakes.

On our way we were joined by an Indian. This individual simply attached himself to us and kept up a flow of talk: as we plunged further and further into the fields his presence increased my growing apprehensiveness. Although I had wanted to see these people, I had no wish to appear to be looking at them: I had visualized the three of us walking casually down a village street; but now we had an Indian companion whose behaviour was unpredictable and there were certainly no streets; there was nothing whatsoever within sight except green rice and red mud and blue swamps. Then, as we scrambled to the top of a slithery bank, Nagasaki hoisting me behind and Atsa pulling me up, there was the village ahead of us.

I realized then how far removed from reality had been my notion of a street. The village was no more than a collection of hovels made of dried mud, huddled close together in a bed of dusty earth. As we approached it, the inhabitants emerged and stood in a small crowd watching us, motionless and in silence. Their whole bodies, from head to foot, together with their tattered garments, were so smothered in dust that they seemed to be a part of India's soil and in their silent regard the eyes of India herself were turned upon us in reproach. I went on; chiefly, I think, because it was difficult to change my mind in the space of a moment.

As we entered the village the people continued to stand perfectly still, gazing at us. I laid my hands together in salutation but they made no response. They were small dark people, descendants of the old Dravidians, the conquered race. Looking at them, I knew that I had come face to face at last with the holy and beautiful land that I worshipped. These were the true Indians; part of that vast whole which contained within itself the orange skies and the bright green fields and the red mud and the sliding snakes. When our self-appointed guide took it upon himself to address them on our behalf in tones of patronizing insolence it was his own earth and his own skies that he was choosing to insult; and it was for the sake of his own land that I regarded him and all his kind with contempt. 'We have come to look at you harijans' he was saying to them. On our way back, after we had shaken him off, Nagasaki repeated these words to me in a low, shocked voice.

The harijans made no movement and no comment. Not knowing what to do, I turned instinctively to a tiny child; tentatively I touched the hand of a naked babe, its face smothered in dribble and dust, its eyes stuck up. The girl-child who held it drew back a step and for the first time the headman of the village spoke. 'He says,' murmured Nagasaki, 'that you should not touch the child because it has some illness.'

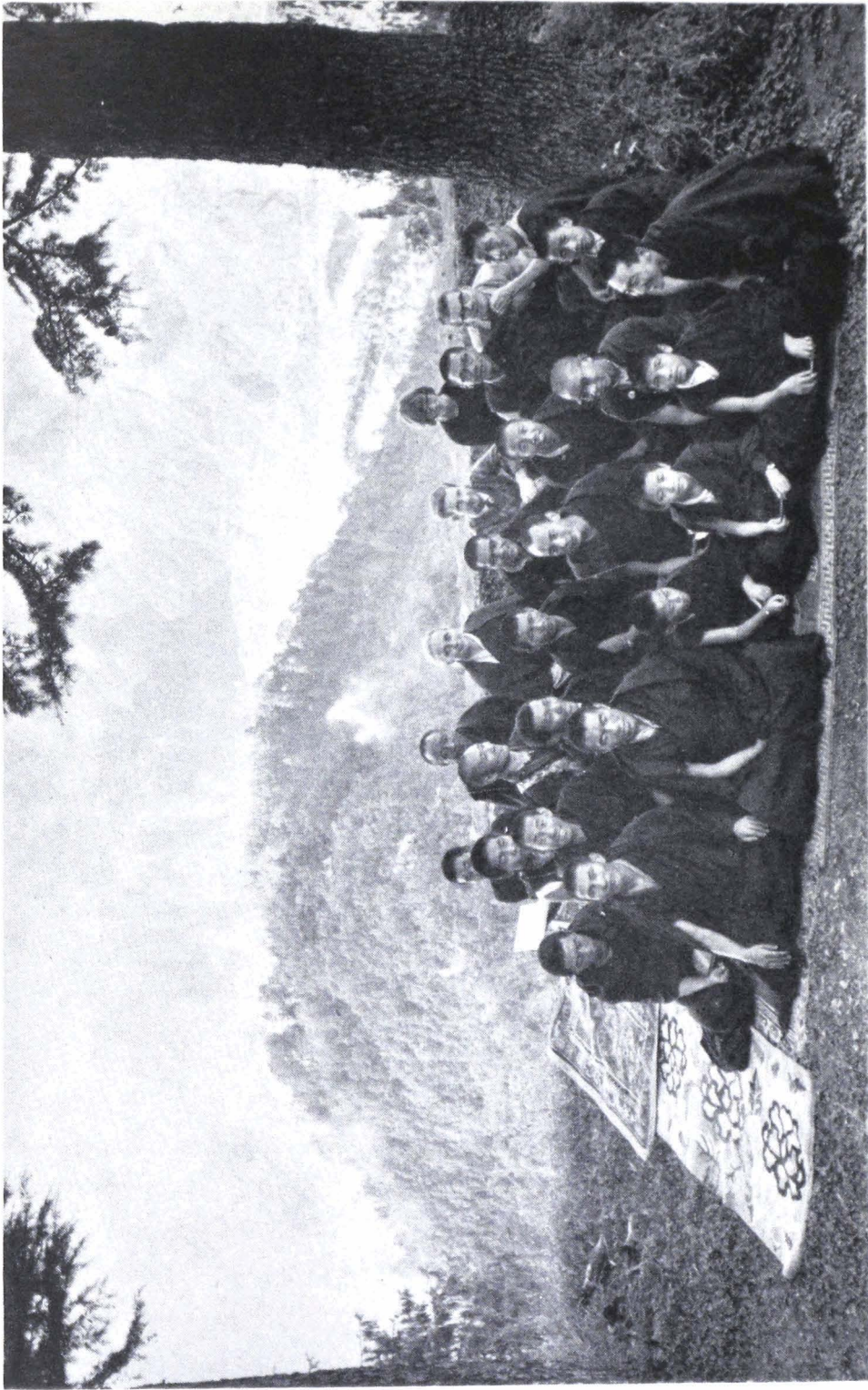
I turned away from them and plunged into the dust-hole from

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which they had emerged at our approach. A few children were lying there, too sickly to move; and an old woman, wrapped in a few rags, sat outside one of the hovels, her eyes closed, so deathly still that she might have been a corpse. I went on and the little crowd followed behind. Glancing into one of the mud-huts, I could see nothing but a tiny fire glowing on the ground in the semi-darkness. I noticed a few cooking-pots but no other articles of domestic use. A number of tattered hens, outcast creatures kept only by the outcast, flapped away from our feet. Because there was no sanitation at all, only the open fields, the evil smells which I was beginning to take as a matter of course were entirely absent.

I felt a gentle touch in the small of my back. The headman was standing behind me, holding a child; I smiled at it and it smiled back at me, drooling spittle out of the side of its mouth, its eyes dull and enormous. As I took the limp little hand, I realized what a great curiosity must have been needed to raise it even for a moment. The old woman seemed not to have moved enough to stir one particle of the dust which lay upon her eyelids and lips.

I had learnt one word in Tibetan: 'To-de-che', which means 'Thank you'. This is the one word which I feel absolutely obliged to know in any country where I happen to find myself. Amongst the Tibetans I used it again and again; the very frequency with which this word was on my lips emphasized to me the extent to which these people, poor as they were, loved to give without any thought of material recompense. Hospitality, courtesy, scarves, flowers: out of their poverty they heaped upon me all these things; and no words in any language could have expressed the gratitude that I felt. Early in the morning, as I was preparing to set out on the long drive to the airport, Atsa came to me with a small yellow-covered Tibetan sacred book, which he presented to me as a parting gift. It must have been one of his very few treasured possessions but it was his wish that I should have it and so I took



VII Freda Bedi with the young Lamas of the Home School



VIII The Great Thirteenth Dalai Lama
'... believed himself to be the Presence of Tibet'

it, raising it to my forehead in the customary gesture of reverence. Atsa was dressed up that morning in his best blue suit. It was a rather rakish blue and, crowned by the felt hat, produced a heart-rendingly comical effect. Thus attired, he was determined to accompany me for the first part of my journey to the airport. When I inquired anxiously how he proposed to return, he replied that he meant to walk and flatly refused my offers of assistance in case he became involved in some expense: after all, he reminded me, he had walked to India from Tibet.

Through Nagasaki I inquired the cost of my stay at the Institute. Nagasaki, looking embarrassed, assured me that Atsa himself was determined to pay for this. 'But,' I persisted, in horror, 'how much is it?' 'Six rupees.' A rupee is worth one and sixpence. Six rupees would be roughly the cost of Atsa's food for a week. I told Nagasaki that of course I could not allow this; it was absolute nonsense. Nagasaki smiled sadly at me as if my protests were not likely to be of the slightest use; then he turned to Atsa and interpreted what I had said, while I took the six rupees out of my handbag and held them out. The car was at the door; there were only a few minutes left.

Atsa turned to me, the palms of his hands pressed together, and spoke in an urgent beseeching voice, bowing slightly from the waist. Nagasaki said: 'He asks you please to let him do it.'

'But,' I cried, 'I *can't* . . .'

'He says it is the one thing he can do for you.'

I looked at Nagasaki and he looked back at me; I knew that he understood my distress and sympathized with it and felt helpless.

'Does he *really* want to do it?'

'I think yes, he really wants it.'

I put the six rupees back in my handbag and because I did not wish to cry in front of Atsa I turned away and shut myself into the wash-place. I knew that I too was making a gift; I was giving Atsa the opportunity to give something to a loved person, than which nothing is more precious; and it cost me more than any gift I had ever bestowed up till that moment.

Chapter 5 · DEATH OF A YEAR

TOWARDS the end of the long, wildly swinging drive up to Darjeeling, I looked down to the left and saw the now completed temple where I had stood with a little group of monks worshipping a newspaper photograph. The words SAMTEN CHOLING were displayed right across the building for the benefit of passers-by on the road above in a manner reminiscent of a railway advertisement. Several monks were to be seen on the roof; a path had been made down the steep bank.

My arrival in Darjeeling was blurred by the effects of two days' travelling and a sore throat and I was not encouraged, just before turning the bend which brings into sight the corrugated rooftops beneath the whole sweep of the Kanchenjunga range, by the spectacle of a small crowd of people gazing dispassionately over the side of the precipice in the direction of a vanished jeep. My driver stopped and we both got out. I could just see the jeep, caught up by a bush, its passengers having been thrown out of sight. I noticed that I did not react at all as I would have done at home towards a similar incident. In the painful process of adapting oneself to India, one acquires a habit of detachment towards such casual encounters with death which in England would be indistinguishable from sheer callousness.

A few minutes later we turned the bend and I saw the long, flowing line of Kanchenjunga's insubstantial peaks. In so far as I was capable of experiencing the sensation of homecoming in India I did so then; and the mood was still with me when I left the hotel and walked through the Chowrasta and down the road as far as the post office, while the mountain mist came rolling into the town like the chilly suds of some wastefully used detergent. In Darjeeling in winter the days are warm with sunshine, but when the sun disappears the air stings with the cold of the snows and dark-

ness falls suddenly around four o'clock. As no one in the town dreams of conducting any business before half-past ten in the morning or after dark, the time which may be devoted to practical affairs is absurdly short.

The refugee problem in Darjeeling and Kalimpong was naturally serious and had become doubly so on account of a disastrous clash of wills between the refugees and the Indian Government. The Government was not unnaturally bent upon diverting this new influx of Tibetans as quickly as possible away from the inflammable border district; while the refugees themselves were determined to remain, no matter how grievously they might suffer in consequence. As a result of this impasse, while thousands of refugees were swarming over the small area of the 'three towns'—Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Gangtok—the Indian authorities refused to establish an official camp, cut the rations to a minimum and pursued a policy of general discouragement. Every one of these refugees had the option of going to Mysore where the Government, assisted by the relief organizations, had inaugurated an agricultural settlement. The one flaw in this otherwise excellent solution was that they did not intend to go: they intended to remain within sight of the passes leading over the Kanchenjunga range; within sight of the blue Tibetan sky which is like no other sky in all the world; amongst their own people in a land which, although not Tibet, was yet their own, a land dotted with their own temples, fluttering with prayer flags and echoing to the roar of the long trumpets blown by their own monks. No doubt even Pandit Nehru himself could understand and sympathize with this impassioned homesickness. It did not, however, alter the fact that the border district was a notorious trouble spot where Chinese spies, American spies, members of the Tibetan active resistance movement and shady intriguers of all sorts bobbed in and out like evasive noodles in a murky soup.

In Darjeeling the one person to intervene and do something positive and effectual to ease this unhappy situation had been Mrs Gyalo Thondup. The little butterfly lady, with more energy and

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initiative within the confines of her diminutive frame than seemed to be contained elsewhere in the whole town, had inaugurated and developed a scheme whereby several hundred Tibetans were formed into a community for the purpose of practising the traditional crafts of Tibet in the hope of marketing their productions and so becoming independent. Greatly to my disappointment, both the Thondups were away from Darjeeling at the time of my visit. Gyalo was again representing the Dalai Lama at the United Nations Assembly in New York while his wife was said to be touring the United States in search of markets for the handicrafts.

I had booked a room at the Windamere Hotel, which is owned by a wealthy Tibetan family, the Tenduf-Las, and is situated on Observatory Hill, close to the place where I had once sat looking at the mountain and debating whether to stay where I was or follow the advice of the Fawcetts. Revisiting this spot on my first morning in Darjeeling, immediately after breakfast, I found it to be the site of a new Tibetan school—one of the three schools (the other two being, respectively, at Mussoorie and Simla) which had been set up by the Dalai Lama in co-operation with the Indian Government. From the point of view of natural beauty the place could not have been surpassed; an advantage offset by the fact that the school was immersed for most of the day in the deep shade of the mountainside upon which it stood—a point which can only be appreciated by someone who has felt the difference in temperature between sun and shade in the border district. The building itself was a gloomy-looking barn, dark, dilapidated and damp; however, the young Tibetan principal of the school, with whom I was conversing in English within half an hour of my discovery of it, assured me that a new building had been promised by the Government and was to be erected within the next few months. I was to hear a number of variations upon this theme during my stay in the Darjeeling-Kalimpong district. Whenever I ventured to hint that conditions in this or that particular place were in need of improvement and attempted to extract from the

persons in charge some business-like details which would have enabled the Tibet Society to send them a little help, I was met by this monotonous refrain: 'The Government has promised . . . within the next few months.'

Having learnt from the principal that the elderly couple who had been chosen by the Dalai Lama to accompany the sixteen children to England in the capacity of 'house-parents' were living in Darjeeling, I went straight to call upon them, hoping that I should find someone who would be able to interpret. The Shabsur family occupied a flat in the basement of a large block: there were two sons, both of whom attended the Catholic school, and a fifteen-year-old daughter who spoke halting English. The parents themselves spoke only Tibetan and seemed to have remained untouched by Western influence. Mr Shabsur, clad in the brown chuba and close-fitting embroidered boots, was seated bolt upright on a low wooden bed spread with woven rugs from Tibet, reading from one of the Tibetan sacred books. His wife, making me courteously welcome, produced butter-tea and a plateful of cardboard-like biscuits.

Two facts, either of which alone would have been disquieting enough, emerged from our talk. Firstly, it appeared that the Shabsur family were making arrangements to give up their home preparatory to leaving for England as if the affair of the children were conclusively settled; whereas I knew that this was far from being the case. Secondly, supposing that the arrangements were finally carried through, it was clear that this particular couple were hopelessly ill-equipped for the task which they had been ordered to undertake and which now represented to them the divine will of His Holiness. As house-parents, they would be expected to take a large share of responsibility for the running of the new establishment; yet it was apparent that no one had considered the question of how they were to do this, knowing nothing of the West and without a word of English; neither, it seemed, had any advice been sought from England before making the appointment. I was appalled by a mental picture of the Shabsurs

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set down in the wilderness of outer London together with sixteen children from the Dharamsala camp.

For the remainder of that morning I sat at the table in the dark little room, forcibly suppressing my imagination and trying to show a sympathetic interest in these unfelicitous arrangements, while the butter-tea flowed into my cup from an apparently inexhaustible source. Like the monks at Nalanda, the Shabsurs had instantly adopted me as their counsellor and friend; and I could not but accept this role, although I was feeling more than ever inadequate and helpless. What could I say to this old man, who sat before me, his rosary twined about his wrist, telling me through his daughter that he was too old now to learn English? Should I advise him to appeal to the Dalai Lama so that he would not, after all, be required to go? Such a notion was inconceivable. His Holiness had chosen them; they themselves could wish for no greater happiness than that of simple obedience. At least their devotion to the religion would be a good influence upon the children; although I doubted whether anyone without the least knowledge of twentieth-century ways of life or modes of thought could be expected to hold the confidence of young minds beyond a certain stage of their development.

The following afternoon the whole Shabsur family appeared on the terrace of the Windamere Hotel, formally returning my call and bringing me a basket of fruit. It was the beginning of a necessarily brief but very real friendship. During the ten days before they left for Delhi to await the summons to go to England, I called upon them several times and through the child, Ngwang Durga, we had long and even intimate talks, although I came no nearer to finding out whether or not they really wished to be forcibly transplanted to the West. 'My father says he wants because Holiness wants,' was Durga's final explanation in answer to my persistence.

The little kingdom of Sikkim, situated between India and Tibet, is inhabited by a mixture of peoples: Nepalis, Lepchas and Tibetans

—but the royal family are of pure Tibetan stock and it is laid down that the heir to the throne must marry a Tibetan lady of noble birth. The present Drenjongi Gyalpo (King of Sikkim), who is generally known by the title of Maharajah, a concession to Indian usage which seems altogether inappropriate, is an old man and has retired from politics, leaving the government of the country to his eldest son, Prince Thondup. At the time of my visit to India this prince was thirty-seven years old, a widower with three young children, of whom two were boys, by a Tibetan wife—a lady of whom it was said that she had been exceedingly beautiful and universally beloved. While I was still at Darjeeling, making my own arrangements to visit Sikkim, the engagement was announced between the Crown Prince and an American girl, Miss Hope Cooke, who was staying at the Windamere Hotel and occupied the room across the passage from my own in a small annexe. Miss Cooke was very pretty and very young with a great deal of soft fair hair and enormous eyes heavily accentuated by make-up. I wondered how she was going to fare as the wife of the ruling prince of a land which until a few years ago was practically unknown to and untouched by the West. The Crown Prince frequently visited his fiancée at the hotel and I found myself observing him and comparing him in my mind with Gyalo Thondup: the comparison seemed natural because he had the same kind of unostentatious dignity and the same Tibetan gentleness; but his personality was less striking than Gyalo's and suggested a character less calculating and cautious. I felt that here was a person with whom it might be possible to have a conversation that was not altogether fruitless.

My own arrangements to visit Sikkim were completed when Princess Kukula, sister of the Crown Prince, came to the hotel at the commencement of a journey to Europe. Princess Kukula organized the relief work in Sikkim from a central office in Gangtok; besides the inevitable slanders which were heaped upon her, as upon everyone else connected with the affairs of Tibet, there were rather more convincing rumours that she had been

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working day and night to the detriment of her health, in consequence of which she was now being forced to take a rest. I had corresponded with the princess but had never seen her: I was looking forward to doing so, having heard so many accounts of her exceptional beauty and intelligence. She was reputed to be the most beautiful woman in the border district; and when I first set eyes on her I was fully convinced that this must be the case: in fact I could not imagine how any woman in existence could be more beautiful than she was.

I was sitting on the terrace waiting for her, having been invited to join her for breakfast. There was no mistaking her when she appeared: she was the personification of the 'real princess' of the story books, although unlike Hans Andersen's version of this character she somehow conveyed the impression that beneath the flower-like exterior she was as strong as a yak. She came towards me, her small head, weighted with jet black hair, held slightly to one side; her pale, perfectly oval face touched with make-up; wearing a long, high-necked Chinese robe, silver-grey and clasped with a broad red belt at the waist. Kukula never wears the *pangden* or Tibetan apron: it is not suited to her appearance, and her rejection of it, in itself so beautiful a garment, is part of her enormous dress sense.

We went into the dining-room for breakfast during which the princess gave me a clear summary of the relief work in Sikkim, which had been organized by herself and the Crown Prince. For two years she had been carrying on the most arduous and complicated office work without a single qualified assistant, not even a typist, fulfilling the dual role of head organizer and office clerk. Sikkim is, of course, relatively easy to reach from Tibet and thousands of refugees had come by this way, over the Natu La pass and down to Gangtok. The majority of these had by now been segregated into camps and employed upon road work; but the aged and sick and many of the children were still directly under the care of the princess in Gangtok itself.

I went up to Mrs Thondup's Handicraft Centre escorted by Colonel Andrew Mercer, retired officer of a Gurkha regiment and a well-known character in the neighbourhood. Colonel Mercer occupied a flat in the same block as the Shabsurs but not in the basement: from the windows of his small drawing-room one could gaze into Sikkim and Nepal and watch the lights of sunrise and sunset on the five peaks. Colonel Mercer displayed this view, and, whenever he could make the opportunity to do so, every other view and feature of the district, to his guests, with the pride of ownership. Nothing could have been more British than Colonel Mercer. He was the 'pukka sahib' whom every Indian respected and still respects; for, whether or not this type was rare in the days of the British Raj, it did exist and because of it the strange union between England and India held elements of poetry and was a queer kind of love affair as well as a matter of power politics. Colonel Mercer seemed to be on terms of friendly acquaintance with every man, woman and child in the border district. Princes, beggars, thieves, traders, monks and peasants all alike were drawn into the aura of his kindness: he liked them all, respected them all, greeting each in turn as he strode up and down the steep streets. Not for the world would Colonel Mercer have left India for England. Such an uprooting would have been only a degree less inconceivable than that he should cease to think of himself as totally and proudly British. Darjeeling could offer me no pleasanter entertainment than that of being invited to the flat of this courteous and tolerant gentleman to listen to the local gossip and drink milk punch.

The Tibetan Handicraft Centre is situated on the mountainside above the Lebong Cart Road, on the site of the villa which was occupied by the Great Thirteenth Dalai Lama when an earlier Chinese invasion of Tibet drove him to seek the protection of the British. This coincidence is not unimportant: to the Tibetan mind it holds a deep significance and is a constant reminder of their hopes. The Great Thirteenth returned to Tibet.

The centre appeared to be a flourishing community, with a

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school for the children and a dispensary for treating the sick. Colonel Mercer showed me round, stopping to chat with the men and women as they worked. Tibetan craftsmen work hard and painstakingly, for the most part in an easy, relaxed silence, pausing as one passes them to smile broadly and make gestures of welcome and politeness. The principal craft of this centre is the weaving of carpets. For these carpets there are very beautiful traditional designs and the colours used to be determined by the natural dyes available in Tibet. Now, however, efforts are being made to introduce all kinds of new effects, including great splashes of a harsh magenta pink, with the result that one of the foremost crafts of old Tibet is being destroyed by the very hands which labour to preserve it.

From Colonel Mercer, who was a Roman Catholic, I sought information concerning the Dalai Lama's youngest brother, who was being educated in Darjeeling at the well-known Catholic school and was the cause of considerable anxiety amongst those who feared that he might forget his vocation as a Lama Incarnate. Colonel Mercer spoke of the matter with a kindly twinkle of amusement; but I could not easily erase from my mind the indignation with which I had greeted the first news of this arrangement; although I realized by now that a policy of separating all the Lama Incarnates from the common life would be totally unrealistic and impossible to carry out. One would have wished the boy to be educated at a Buddhist school; but where was such a school to be found that would give him an adequate education according to the standards set by the West? I still wanted to argue that, since the boy was a Lama, this kind of education would be, for him, unnecessary and irrelevant. But the voice of my recent experiences whispered to me that perhaps, after all, the boy did not desire so weighty an inheritance. For a lively adolescent, he had more than his fair share perhaps; for he was the reincarnation not only of a holy Abbot but of an elder brother who had died while still an infant. I wondered whether the brother had also been the Abbot.

My perplexities were by no means eased by a long discussion on the subject with the Father Rector of St Joseph's. The Father Rector assured me cheerfully that the boy was happy and doing well at the school and had already forgotten all that nonsense about being an Incarnate; in any case, he pointed out, such things no longer meant anything to the Tibetan upper class. Besides the young brother of His Holiness there were a number of other Tibetan boys at St Joseph's School. It was the boast of the Fathers that no attempt was made to 'convert' the non-Catholics; on the other hand, it must have been difficult in such an atmosphere for a young boy to remain a good Buddhist: one could not, therefore, escape the conclusion that a large proportion of the pupils were being abandoned to spiritual and intellectual chaos. It was enough, I thought, to turn them all into hard-boiled little grabbers after material rewards and worldly success.

Before I left the school the Father Rector, having entertained me to tea, took me to the boys' living quarters where the tabernacle of the Blessed Sacrament stood upon an altar painted in traditional Tibetan style by a local artist. There were three panels depicting respectively the Nativity, Christ in the garden and the Resurrection. The artist, explained the Father Rector, was an old man named Peme Wangchuk: he had been told the stories, presented with a Tibetan translation of the New Testament and shown some reproductions of Fra Angelico's paintings of the same subjects. I gazed in wonder at the result. The paintings were exceedingly beautiful, not only in colour and design, but as deeply religious works of art. In style they were purely Tibetan, without a trace that I could discern of Fra Angelico's influence, save perhaps in the physical features of the Christ, which were obviously derived from a Western source. The point which instantly struck me was the perfect combination in them of a Buddhist and a Catholic spirit; so that one was made aware, in contemplating them, of the deep affinity between these two superficially irreconcilable faiths. I wondered whether the Fathers of

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St Joseph's appreciated the silent lesson which was being preached to them by Peme Wangchuk.

A milk distribution organized by a local missionary group with supplies obtained from the United States took place twice a week. Here I met hundreds of destitute refugees who came from all directions, trailing up the mountainside behind the Hotel Mount Everest, carrying old tin kettles, jars, plastic bags, petrol cans, whatever they could obtain that would hold the precious milk. This was distributed to them in liquid form to prevent them from selling the milk powder in the market as they did the tins of pork. Tibetans are natural traders and even when half-starving will cheerfully sell their food if they see any prospect of making a profit on it. The distribution took place in a dilapidated shed, and was as unhygienic a procedure as I ever witnessed: a point of negligible importance no doubt in circumstances where a few germs more or less could make no difference. While the missionaries distributed milk I distributed a kind of darshan with my Dalai Lama brooch. Broadly smiling, filthy, lousy, gentle people swarmed about me, holding out their hands, pressing the sacred object to their foreheads, passing it from one to another, gazing at it in wondering love. Even the milk was forgotten as they crowded together to catch one flickering ray from the light of the Presence.

My Dalai Lama brooch was indeed my passport. I used it again when I went down one afternoon to visit the Sikkimese temple in Bhutia Busty, where I had been told there were a number of refugee monks. Down, down the mountainside I walked, in search of this temple, past a whitewashed stupa, past a wayside shrine and an old praying monk, past a grubby little village with gurgling drains and a line of tiny shops displaying pastries and sweetmeats beneath glossy, coloured pictures of the gods. The temple stood below the village and was approached by means of a double avenue of tattered prayer flags: I was careful to walk down the left-hand lane, guessing that to do otherwise would be in-

auspicious. The temple looked forsaken and disused and the main door was locked; but a shaven-headed Tibetan and some ragged children were hanging over the balcony overhead, so I called out to them and made signs and they beckoned to me to come up. On this floor I found a central shrine-room inhabited by a large painted Buddha, an old monk of the 'Red Hat' Sect and a lady whom I took to be his wife (since the 'Red Hat' monks are not celibate), all three of them in a condition of appalling dilapidation and dirt. The floor was littered with old rags, bits of sacking, chipped images, rusty tins, broken crockery and innumerable ritual objects. There was a fearful smell which I traced to a very old side of bacon occupying a place of honour at the feet of divinity and surrounded by silver bowls of water and rice and what appeared to be sour milk. I displayed the brooch and friendship was established. The old monk and his wife were obviously delighted to welcome me to their makeshift establishment and I was able to examine what was left of the wall frescoes for as long as I could endure the stench. Then I presented my host with an offering, hoping that he would use it to buy a meal for himself and not for the tempting of a good Buddhist god with any more meat.

Every day I became more conscious of my own uselessness. Although I could write home and make recommendations, I had no funds to distribute and there was practically no one whom I could wholeheartedly trust. In fact, my reports contained more warnings than appeals for help, it being clearly useless to send money unless one could be certain that it would be used for a good purpose. I would far rather have assisted such miserable odds and ends of humanity as this old monk and his wife than the various projects already being capably handled by Kukula and Mrs Gyalo Thondup. But, although I made numerous inquiries concerning the Sikkimese temple and its inhabitants, I learned very little and no one seemed to regard the matter as being of the smallest importance. A local committee was responsible for the upkeep of the temple. And what did a local committee, including

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several wealthy Tibetans, care about a couple of stinking old monks who probably had no business there in any case?

To comfort myself, I took a landrover and drove down to the new temple of Samten Choling, where the great Buddha-image which I had seen while it was still headless and handless was now complete. On either side of it were images respectively of Padma Sambhava and Tsong Khapa, those two saints of Tibet who have achieved practically divine status: the figures were startlingly crude and without any artistic merit. In the upper storey shrine I admired one thousand identical images of Tsong Khapa in a glass case.

A small group of friendly monks followed me round the temple, making desperate efforts to be understood by means of their few words of English. Was I a Buddhist? 'No,' I said. 'Christian. Jesus.' Then, lest there should be any misunderstanding, I turned towards the Buddha and made an obeisance. The monks beamed. 'You like Buddhist religion?' I made a gesture with two fingers travelling towards a single point. 'Buddhist religion. Christian religion. One God.' The position was understood and our relations established on this basis. Now they took me into their confidence. Through their chief spokesman they inquired of me whether there was a school in India where they could learn English.

'Go England,' explained the monk, cheerfully indicating the whole group.

I shook my head at them.

'Better here. For Buddhist monk not good in England.'

The monks stared at me in astonishment; then they all laughed. Obviously I was making an absurd joke.

'In England no Buddhist monastery,' I explained to them. 'In India Buddhist monastery. India better for Buddhist.'

Again they all laughed. And suddenly I was aware of the slanty pastel-blue eyes looking down at us. It is as hard to preach beneath the humour of the Buddha as it is beneath the sorrow of the Crucifix. I gave in and laughed myself.

I rang up Annie and arranged to stay at the Himalayan Hotel for a month, breaking my visit to spend four days in Gangtok. My life in Darjeeling was superficially pleasant: Colonel Mercer introduced me to a number of his friends, Tibetan and English, escorting me to tea with Tibetan families where several brothers lived in conjugal felicity with a single wife and inviting me to music evenings at which Indian, Anglo-Indian and British gathered round the upright piano in his drawing-room and warbled old-fashioned songs from sheets of faded music between an enormous English tea and a final session of milk punch. The social life of Darjeeling could scarcely have changed, I thought, since the days of the old Queen herself.

I seldom left Colonel Mercer's flat without a visit to the basement where old Mr Shabsur would be engaged upon a form of evening amusement which was immensely popular in old Tibet. Still seated bolt upright on the wooden bed, I would find him, the holy scriptures cleared away, playing mah-jong with his cronies for what seemed to me enormous stakes. Ten rupee notes would be spread in glorious profusion all over the table in this bare and dingy little establishment. Butter-tea would appear and, when I had partaken of the three cups which courtesy demands, Mrs Shabsur and Durga would escort me back to the hotel in the chilly darkness: and since we could laugh together about nothing at all, we would laugh all the way to the bottom of the long flight of steps.

On the day of their departure for New Delhi I talked to the Shabsurs with earnest emphasis about the kind of world in which they would find themselves and their sixteen foster-children if their future plans developed according to their hopes. Greatly as I disliked this rather portentous role in which I sometimes felt obliged to cast myself, I could not part from the Shabsurs without trying to explain to them the immense difference in spiritual climate between old Tibet and the twentieth-century West. In old Tibet ordinary life and the practices of religion were not separate. Religion was all and the events of birth and death and

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all that came between were seen as contained within the unifying pattern of an everlasting truth. Thus had the Shabsurs lived and they could not be expected to realize that there were other and very different ways of life in other parts of the earth. I had never seen Mr Shabsur otherwise engaged than in reading the scriptures or playing mah-jong, and these two activities of his seemed to be related to one another within a satisfying whole as, no doubt, were all the other matters with which he concerned himself. But in the West, I told them, only a few people cared about religion and many people cared only about worldly success and material comforts. I was conscious even as I spoke that I was maligning the West and that I could hardly avoid doing so because I was embarking upon a subject which could not be explained to them in terms which they understood. How could I explain to a Tibetan that it was not money or worldly position which really mattered to the people of my own world but an abstract notion only to be described as 'getting on in life'. How could I explain to them that it was not the television set that was important, but something elusive and scarcely understood that was symbolized by the possession of it? The Tibetan mind is exceedingly concrete: the insubstantial dreams which we pursue are totally incomprehensible to it. So I was driven back to saying simply: 'In the West people are no longer religious.'

The Shabsur family received this information with deep seriousness. 'My father says,' interpreted Durga, 'that it is good advice that you give us.' I did not feel that I had given them any positive advice; and I felt more than ever humbled and inadequate. Durga went on: 'My father says would it be good thing if we take our religious pictures and such thing with us?'

I said: 'Yes, that would be a very good thing. Take them all with you. This will help the children to be good Buddhists.'

Mr Shabsur drew out of the folds of his chuba a small engraved medallion and held it out. I felt that I was being granted a privilege in being permitted to see it. The engraving was one of the goddess Tara who is named Dolma in Tibet.

‘Dolma,’ I said.

Mr Shabsur gave me a searching look and then spoke. ‘My father say many Tibetans do not know this name and you know it. My father wish you should see the t’anka of the dark goddess.’

There was a small t’anka on the wall, hidden by a veil, according to the custom by which the fierce divinities of Tibet are shrouded from the eyes of the curious. Mr Shabsur leaned forward and raised the veil: it revealed a painting of Palden Lhamo on her fearful mule, against a black background which threw into startling emphasis the red blood and the green severed heads. It is from motives of consideration that such pictures are kept veiled, so that those who do not believe may be preserved from the evil consequences which would follow from gazing upon them without due reverence. I contemplated the goddess and remembered her connection with the Royal House.

‘Take it to England,’ I said. ‘It will help.’

I sat writing to Marco in the lounge of the Himalayan Hotel, one small lamp casting an aura of light, the rest of the big room left in a half-darkness through which I could faintly discern the soft colours and outlines of a t’anka of the Lord Chenrezig in his eleven-headed aspect. That morning, immediately on my arrival, I had gone in search of Annie and seen her coming towards me down the bank at the back of the hotel in an old black jumper and black slacks, a cigarette in her mouth. We had embraced one another warmly and now I knew that there was no one else in India, excepting only the Kundun, who could compare with Annie in my esteem or receive so great a share of my heart. It was no coincidence that she had been the one person to believe that I came to India the second time without any hidden purpose and without any financial backing which I was choosing to keep secret. She could credit other people with simplicity and disinterestedness because she was supremely simple and disinterested herself. She was the most completely human person I met in India; hence I valued her above those whose thoughts were more

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profound and who were more reliable in their judgment. Her heart was on her sleeve and her thoughts were on her lips; she had all kinds of obvious faults if one felt disposed to weigh her up in terms of virtues and faults. She occupied a place in my life which can never be impinged upon by anyone else.

I was still writing my letter when Annie and Vicky and Vera and their sister-in-law Alice, who was Nepali and had maintained down the years with awe-inspiring obstinacy and untruthfulness that she did not understand a word of English, sat down to the evening game of cards in which no guest, however favoured, might participate. One guest included in one game of cards and, Kalimpong being the sink of malice and evil-speaking that it was, the hotel would have been branded as a gambling den overnight. So Annie was firm on this point.

Other guests came in and there were drinks on the house and a great deal of talk. Somehow, in a manner that I was never able to define, talk in the evenings in the lounge of Annie's hotel became invariably a mode of communication, a medium of relationship. The stamp of reality lay upon everything that Annie touched and upon everything that was said in her presence.

I stayed only two nights at the hotel before going on to Gangtok. Nothing in the house itself had changed since my previous visit; on the lawn there were white camellias instead of pink hibiscus and against a background of Tibetan blue sky (one can only call it that: there is no other blue to compare with it) and brown humped mountains shading off into a softer blue and then into the bluish-whiteness of the snows on Kanchenjunga's summit, the garden was a splashing mix-up of greens daubed with the bright blood-red of the huge poinsettias which twined themselves on every bush.

'You've been invited to stay at the Palace Guest House,' said Annie in tones of menace, as I climbed into the jeep. 'See that you go to the Palace Guest House and stand no nonsense!'

The drive from Kalimpong to Gangtok takes four hours and

carries one into a wild, sparsely inhabited wonderland where jungle forests seem to be dripping down the mountainsides and torrents of water pour down the great ravines with a tremendous roaring noise, which is sometimes audible even above the rattling of a jeep. All this time I was clinging for dear life to a bar above my head, there being no door between myself and the precipice. The road is narrow and subject to landslides which transform it, at frequent intervals, into a shifting slope of broken stones over which the local drivers negotiate their jeeps and the Crown Prince of Sikkim cheerfully drives a large and expensive-looking car from the United States. I was thankful when we arrived at last at the little mountain town of Gangtok.

The capital of Sikkim is perched upon a ridge and seems to command a view of the world from the ramparts of a fairy kingdom: in fact it is a fairytale town, dominated by a royal palace bedecked with painted dragons and no larger than a small English country house. By the time I got there, which was only a few years after the country was officially opened to any tourist who chose to endure the trouble and discomforts involved in visiting it, the West had barely breathed upon its precipitous streets; but already there was talk of a 'Western-style' hotel to be built on the initiative of the enterprising Crown Prince. No doubt the country's economy is in need of tourists but I am glad to have seen it in the last moments before the magic dies out. I would have been glad too of that 'Western-style' hotel when I found myself being ejected from the Palace Guest House by a beautiful and bewildered Tibetan servant.

The Palace Guest House was a cream-coloured bungalow with a pale green curved roof: within it was a place of delectable beauty and serenity combined with superb comfort, with a manservant who resembled the Archangel Gabriel, could not speak a word of English and had never heard of me in his life. When at last I succeeded in communicating by telephone with the palace secretary, I was informed without ceremony that the Guest House was full and that 'some gentlemen' would come up to

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fetch me and escort me to the Dak Bungalow where accommodation had been booked. Princess Kukula was abroad; the Crown Prince was away and I was not personally acquainted with him in any case. I was therefore at the mercy of this totally unco-operative gentleman who, despite the fact that a room had been requested for me by Kukula three weeks in advance, despite the letters and telegrams I had sent him on her instructions explaining that I was her guest and asking him to arrange my programme during my stay in Gangtok, turned me out without a word of apology and sent me to one of the most notoriously uncomfortable Dak Bungalows in the border district. Moreover it transpired that he had arranged no programme, and since I was cut off from all communication save with two Tibetans from Kukula's office who could barely speak any English, it was more than a little difficult for me to arrange one for myself. The first two days of my stay in Gangtok were not conducive to a quiet mind in either my Tibetan escorts or myself.

I had one day in which to pay a courtesy call upon the Maharajah and visit the refugee school and camp. The two days following would be entirely taken up by the Lama dances in the grounds of the palace. Consequently it was essential that I should start early and know before I left the bungalow at what time I was expected to call upon His Highness. All this I tried to impress upon my two Tibetans who promised to call for me shortly after breakfast. At midday they arrived, having just succeeded in wringing out of the palace secretary the information that I was expected to make my courtesy call at one o'clock. Leaping into a jeep, we drove at top speed to the refugee school while I punctuated my expressions of exasperation with soothing pats on the broad backs of the Tibetans and the reiterated reassurance: 'It is not your fault. You are very kind, very good.'

While I was being shown over the school, which was housed in a disused temple, a message arrived to say that I was expected at the palace at half-past three, thus cutting in half the afternoon which I had intended to spend at the camp. 'You are very kind,'

I said again and again. 'It is not your fault. To-de-che, to-de-che.' And indeed, quite clearly, it was not their fault; officially they were not supposed to be in charge of my arrangements. Or were they? Whose guest was I supposed to be? By this time I did not know and neither, apparently, did anyone else. All I knew was that the palace secretary was trying my patience. In the Alice-in-Wonderland atmosphere of this little kingdom I felt like sending in a recommendation that he should have his head chopped off.

Meanwhile we were speeding in the jeep in the direction of the refugee camp; and there, when we arrived, I found an end to petty annoyance; the frettings and fussings of my self-concern were silenced; an overwhelming pity arrested my undisciplined mind and held it in an inward stillness—pity for the degradation of the human form and the affliction of the human spirit. I was standing in the 'hospital' shed reserved for the old and sick. This shed was bare, rotting with damp, full of holes and almost completely dark. The sick people lay rolled up in filthy rags either on raised boards or on the floor itself. Not one of them had any bedding, even a mattress. All around them were heaps of rags and scraps of rotten food, including putrid meat. Some of these people were very old and all seemed very ill; but only those whose eyes were shut failed to smile and greet me either Tibetan-fashion with the tongue politely stuck out or with the Indian salutation that I used myself. I scarcely knew what I did during the next few minutes. I moved round in a dream, grasping and clinging to human hands which seemed to grope out at me from a heap of human refuse. Afterwards—for one does not remember quotations in times of crisis—I could never think of that scene without recalling how Blake had said that 'the human form divine' was the image of Love itself. To this had the image of Love been reduced by the hatred and indifference of those, including myself, who bore it likewise in their own flesh: a bundle of rags dying on a damp floor amongst bits of rotting meat.

I was conducted up a rickety flight of steps to the floor above, where there were more sick people, mothers with new babies and,

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to my horror, a number of children who were not ill themselves but belonged to the people who were sick, and apparently remained all day listlessly sitting by their parents. There was the same indescribable mess of rags and bits of food; the same stench of meat. On this floor, where the patients were less seriously ill, many of them had made lines with string across the walls and hung up pieces of raw meat which they intended to dry and then eat. This practice of drying meat is universal in Tibet where the air is so pure that meat can be kept for many months. I was told repeatedly by those concerned with the refugee relief work that it was quite impossible to persuade the simple, illiterate Tibetan that he must not continue this practice in the very different climate of India and even of the border district. To him his string of meat was a part of that whole which contained in harmonious relationship his butter-tea, his barley meal, his prayers, his lice, his gods, himself. One could not snatch from him too soon one single ingredient in that precious tiny world so desperately cherished, carried with him out of Tibet as he carried the rosary twined round his wrist. He had to be left for a little while with his stinking meat. Perhaps, I thought, he might one day be daunted himself by the fearfulness of the stink.

I took a tiny baby from the arms of one of the women and stood rocking it and kissing it; there was nothing else that I could do; I was totally useless and superfluous. I felt as if I loved that baby more than any other human being in existence; rather perhaps it had become for me every human being and the whole of existence. It was 'the human form divine' that I held in my arms, cherishing it for a moment before the life flickered out and it returned to the formless elements. It seemed likely that the child would be dead within the next few weeks.

Leaving the hospital, we scrambled down the mountain slope in the direction of the main 'village' of tents and huts. This was inhabited by refugees who were somehow contriving to earn their own livelihood and were even the possessors of a few bedraggled-looking goats. As we approached it, a messenger arrived to say

that I was now expected at the palace at three o'clock. I replied slowly, picking my words so as to be clearly understood: 'I would be very sorry indeed to show discourtesy to His Highness. But I have to see this camp. And if I am late it is not my fault.' Then I went on, without glancing at my watch. I was far from being indifferent to the rights of a king in relation to his guests and I certainly did not wish to be discourteous. But I felt nonetheless that I had a few rights myself. Moreover it was not the Maharajah but his secretary who was ordering me about.

My Tibetan friends, perceiving that no matter what happened I intended to go on, led me to the opening of a large tent and I found myself confronted by a Khamba chief. He was a tall, dignified man with the beautiful aquiline features typical of the people of Kham, wearing the traditional fur-lined hat, brown chuba and high embroidered boots, with a rosary and various unidentifiable objects hanging round his neck. This man and his younger brother, who was also present, shared a family of considerable size produced for them by their common wife. As he welcomed me, the younger children gathered round; in the background a Lama was beating a monotonous spell-binding rhythm on a small gong as he recited from a holy book. Speaking through an interpreter, I explained who I was and asked if my host would be so very kind as to explain to me, for the benefit of the people in England, why he left Tibet and what was going on in his part of the country at the time that he left. A terrible tale resulted from this request. The chieftain described to me with tragic emotion how Lamas and landowners in Kham had been buried up to the waist and then killed by having boiling water thrown over their heads; how others had been disembowelled, others burned, suffocated with scarves, murdered by having nails driven into their bodies, beheaded, roped up and thrown to drown; how servants had been forced to spit upon and humiliate their masters, and masters had been forced to grovel before their servants. As he spoke I was watching his face. It was a noble face, the cheekbones clearly pronounced, the mouth strong and yet delicate: to

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me he seemed the personification of all the great and wise and simple people of the earth—he might have been an Eskimo or an American Indian almost as well as a man from Tibet—relating with quiet dignity the wrongs which are suffered by such at the hands of the powerful and arrogant, so that his story did not seem like a description of specific, personally witnessed incidents, but as if it were a cry of judgment against the world's wickedness. I had no doubt whatsoever that he was speaking the truth. And if I could not afterwards have produced one of those stories and written it up and published it in a pamphlet as valid evidence, this was not because I doubted the total integrity of the man but because of the very nature of the case. What he was telling me was a far greater thing than a string of particular episodes witnessed by himself. Perhaps he had witnessed everything of which he spoke; he did not make this clear and would not have understood that it was of any importance provided that he was, as he knew himself to be, speaking the truth. All this time his children were standing round him listening to his words, the smallest of them pressed trustingly against one of his boots. The beat of the Lama's melodious little gong made a continuous background, falling upon the walls of the mind as if it would have broken them apart to force an entry for some mysterious god.

Fortunately I have an odd sense of time which generally causes me to be half an hour early for any appointment; accordingly, since I was expecting to be half an hour late, we arrived in front of the Royal Palace of Sikkim at three o'clock exactly to the minute.

I looked up at a neat, pretty little palace adorned with painted dragons and other beasts. A few minutes passed, then the Maharajah appeared on the veranda at the top of the long flight of steps, a tiny, fragile figure, wearing a long robe of gold brocade and an embroidered cap. My Tibetan friend instantly ducked to the ground, his felt hat remaining surprisingly in place throughout this practised performance. I bowed low and walked up the steps.

The Maharajah was very gentle and quiet voiced. He shook hands with me and then conducted me to an exceedingly beautiful room hung all round with ancient t'ankas depicting legends of the former lives of the Buddha, which were part of his considerable collection of Tibetan works of art. Tea was served and we drank it to the accompaniment of subdued conversation in an atmosphere of deep politeness. I recalled that the Maharajah lived in retirement, absorbed in religious and cultural pursuits; so, as he seemed old and tired and at a loss for topics, I turned the conversation to the t'ankas and various other objects of fine craftsmanship which were displayed about us. This seemed to please him and the subject occupied us until he rose and preceded me back to the veranda and the steps, at the foot of which waited my escort. Again the Maharajah took my hand; I curtsied and the little episode concluded itself. It left me with the impression of a wise old man whose thoughts were of more significance than his courteous and precise speech.

The sound of a temple gong reached us from the 'gompa' attached to the palace. Attracted in this direction, I found myself in front of a square one-storied building resembling (as usual) a card-house, before which a number of sturdy Lamas were rehearsing for tomorrow's dance. Within the temple other Lamas were performing *puja* in connection with the same event. My Tibetan friend, looking bored but resigned to my determination to investigate, marched inside without removing his boots.

The royal temple at Gangtok is served by monks of the Ningmapa sect, which is the oldest branch of the 'Red Hats' and notorious for the practice of magic. As I entered it, I was held by the music. A group of monks were seated on the ground; one of them, a young boy, was beating rhythmically upon a gong with about as much reverence as the normal English choirboy brings to an equivalent performance, while two others were in charge of the long ceremonial trumpets. I stood still, aware of a frenzied conglomeration of twining flowers, writhing dragons and twisting ornament and of the infinitely strange and wonderful music. With

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all my body I listened to the monotonous beat interrupted at intervals by the moaning of the great horns, the mouths of which rested upon the ground yards away from the trumpeter monks. It was the simplest rhythm in the world and yet I doubted whether any Westerner, presented with the same gong, could have copied it. Between the beats there were silences, like the silences between the waves of the sea, containing peace.

I stepped to the left with careful correctness and was arrested by a newly-made altar crowned by a pyramid of mysterious objects, which had been concocted for purposes of ceremonial magic in connection with the New Year rites. The whole erection, built upon a Mandala of coloured sands, rose almost to the roof and surpassed in fantasy the wildest dreams of a Bosch, the weirdest eccentricities of a surrealist. Fat, blackberry-pink tormas moulded out of wax into symbolic shapes; blue and red manikins, like the gingerbread men of the fairytales, some amusing, some demonic; separate faces with round eyes such as children make out of dough (some of them actually made out of the tsampa, or dough, which is formed by mixing tea with barley flour and is the staple food of Tibet); a smother of dyed feathers; coloured rags and sticks of incense; paper parasols; innumerable fantastic cut-outs: and in front of this array, rows and rows of burning butter-lamps together with bowls of water and rice and milk. Not even the unconcealed boredom of my escort could penetrate the spell which encompassed me as my eyes wandered from one to another of these dream-like objects. And I asked myself: where, if anywhere, lies the boundary line between religion and magic? What is the difference between this thing and the cribs and Easter gardens of the Christian Church?

Turning aside at last, I faced the great images which dominated the temple and seemed the visual counterpart of the timeless music. In the centre Padma Sambhava; on his right a deity whom I did not know; on his left Dolma, the Mother Goddess. All three were painted gold and wore towering crowns, gaudy robes and numerous ornaments. Padma Sambhava grasped the dorje, most

mysterious and exciting of all Tibetan ritual objects. This thing, which is explained to the merely curious as being a formal representation of a thunderbolt, is shaped like an hour glass, with spokes emerging in two directions from the waist and meeting like the enclosing petals of a lotus. In fact it is intended to be an indication of a many-dimensional object, a suggestion of the shape of the cosmos. It is also a male symbol and its female partner is the bell which is generally held in the left hand when the dorje is held in the right. Sometimes it will be described as a sceptre, using this word in the sense of a wand of power associated with magic rites, and particularly with the subduing of evil spirits.

I paused for some time before the image of the Mother Goddess. It is said of Dolma, as of Mary, that to her the simple and uninitiated may speak as to a divine mother and she will intercede for them with her son, the Lord Chenrezig; and so it is to her, as to Mary, that people turn with their humble, human requests. Again I asked myself: where is the boundary line between religion and magic? What exactly is the difference between that which I feel now, the impulse to utter in her presence my heart's desire, and the whim that all of us experience to wish upon the first fruits and the cuckoo's first notes? And what, after all, is prayer but the desire of the heart?

Behind the beating of the gong I became aware—or did I imagine it?—of the slightly impatient creaking of Tibetan boots, reminding me that the feelings of my Tibetan friend were probably similar to those which I should have experienced myself had it been my task to show him round the parish church and wait while he contemplated the rows of Ancient and Modern hymn-books. I took pity on him and bowed my farewell to the Mother Goddess.

The Lama dances in celebration of the Sikkimese New Year (which occurs early in December) are among the two or three most important annual ceremonies associated with the religion of Tibet. Their meaning is esoteric and it is advisable to pay scant

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attention to the interpretations which are offered to the uninitiated inquirer from the West. In general they are a ritual for the banishment of evil spirits. The entire ceremony, lasting for two days, is held in honour of Kanchenjunga, the mountain god, and is designed to secure good fortune for the Kingdom of Sikkim during the year which is about to commence.

The dancing takes place upon a lawn between the royal temple and a painted pavilion where the Lama orchestra is gathered with its cymbals, gongs and trumpets. In a delightfully ornamented tent the Maharajah sits with his family and guests, his presence being an integral part of the rite, since he represents the kingdom which will benefit by its performance. The royal standard of Sikkim flies from a tall flagpole around which the Lamas dance to the beat of their monotonous music. There are five main types of costume: the warriors; the skeletons; the 'Black Hats', decked with skulls and peacocks' feathers; the masks of demonic beings and the masks of mythical beasts. Of these, the last, and above all the gaudy and mournful stag-masks, are the most beautiful and mysterious. There are separate dances for each of these five types, although the formula scarcely varies and consists of a single movement: a slow gyration, round and then back, bowing and waving the arms as in a scarf dance. Performing this movement, the dancers circumnambulate the pole, the whole performance being strongly suggestive of the motions of the planets, an idea which is likewise conveyed by the music. When I saw these dances the spectacle was enhanced by the two younger children of the Crown Prince, dressed in the gold brocade which may only be worn by members of the royal house, standing by the low rail and playing with blue and red balloons which they patted into the ring and received back from the two clowns whose antics were a continuous foil to the solemnity of the rite.

I was by this time established as the Maharajah's guest, having been discovered by a palace official sitting disconsolately on the ground without an invitation card and without a notion of where I ought to be, at what time I should have arrived or whether I was

to be offered any lunch. The official in question, apparently realizing at last that something had gone wrong with the arrangements for my visit, hurried me guiltily into the royal tent and introduced me to the Maharajah's second daughter, the Princess Pema Choki, who is the wife of a Tibetan nobleman named Yutok. This princess spoke perfect English and was almost as beautiful as Kukulá herself. We drank tea and were reciprocally polite. Later I was introduced to the Dewan, the Indian Prime Minister of Sikkim who is appointed by the Indian Government. The Dewan was a large and jovial figure, towering over the little Maharajah, the regality of whose personality was not, however, one whit diminished by his Lilliputian appearance.

In the tent, where a large crowd of people congregated for lunch, I was surprised by a familiar face. There before me, wearing a long brocade robe and delicately spooning up noodles and soup, was the gentleman whom I had accosted in a Mussoorie bookshop with the request that he should translate my letter from His Holiness. The face looked at me quizzically and smiled; its owner advanced. I said: 'We have met before.' 'Yes. But where?' 'In Mussoorie.' 'Mussoorie? . . . I was wondering where . . . but . . . you are surely the lady who presented the ancient teacup?' It transpired that my former acquaintance was Atuk Tsering, a Tibetan official of some importance to whom I was carrying an introduction from Marco Pallis. I was amazed that he should remember what I would have supposed to be, from his point of view, so small an incident. Perhaps, after all, people did not often present ancient English teacups to His Holiness. My mind strayed back nostalgically to the St Ivel cheese-box.

The last dance on the first day was different from all those which had preceded it, more elaborate and with a more complicated dramatic content. A little black effigy was laid upon the ground at the foot of the pole and there entered a single figure, wearing a stag-mask, who performed a long and solemn dance expressing pain and weariness, mocked by the two clowns who had suddenly assumed an important function in the rite. Whom

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or what did this figure represent? 'Perhaps . . .', murmured Pema Choki, 'it is supposed to be . . . well, perhaps, you see . . . God.' Gradually, dancing in ever smaller circles around the pole, it came to the central place and reeled to its knees in exhaustion and weakness. Before it lay the effigy and feebly it struck at the horrid thing with a short sword—but it was too weak; the sword dropped to the ground and the clowns, laughing and deriding, pounced upon it. Again and again they offered the sword to the stag-god, mocking its weary efforts, snatching the weapon back and again offering it. As I watched, I found myself identifying the scene with the rite of the Passion in the Christian Church. The central pole became the Cross—an easy transition since both are examples of the universal symbol of the axial Tree at the centre of the earth—the stag-god, feeble and mocked, falling to its knees in weakness, was the Christ. Caught up as I was into the meaning of what was being done, I perceived this dance to be a form of the Mass. It ended, as I had known that it must end, with the exhausted being seizing the sword and smiting with a sudden fearful strength. The effigy was slain, the pieces scattered; now the demons entered as the subjects of the god, whom they bedecked with a ceremonial scarf.

Meanwhile the Crown Prince, meeting me in the luncheon tent, had expressed his regret that I was not in the Palace Guest House and offered to send a car to convey me there immediately after the performance. I was half sorry to go, having developed an affection for the very dirty Kashmiri chowkidar of the Dak Bungalow, whose gentle kindness had alleviated both my physical and my spiritual discomforts. I was inclined, in strange places, to be overcome by irrational sensations of fear and loneliness and to grasp for support in the direction of anyone in whom I sensed an innate capacity for human sympathy and warmth. Such a one had been this Kashmiri servant, who spoke only a few words of English. How could I convey to him the extent of my gratitude for his kindness, which he would certainly never guess for himself? Obviously I could not and I must always feel a little sad in consequence.

My room in the Palace Guest House had big wide-opening windows overlooking the mountains and forests. There was nothing at all to be seen or heard beyond the wild untouched beauty which was exactly as it must have been when the mountains first clothed themselves in trees and the birds first came there to call across the valleys on a high piercing note. Day and night I could hear the continuous gentle rushing of a mountain torrent. It was perfect beauty, perfect peace; and within the little house there was an ordered serenity and comeliness which enabled one to turn from its windows without any consciousness of a jerk back into everyday life. To me it seemed the most enchanting place in which I had ever set foot. The sitting-room was furnished, Chinese style, in soft greens, orange and rust-red, with low divans and little redwood tables and one Chinese scroll-painting over the fireplace. Huge log fires burned in all the rooms, emitting a smell straight from the forest and tended assiduously by the Tibetan man-servant of whom I decided that no more beautiful member of the human race could possibly be in existence. With his long blue robe and bare feet he resembled a figure in one of Botticelli's crowds and had little in his appearance to suggest the Orient; in fact he was a pure Khamba type although, when I questioned him through a fellow-guest who was able to interpret, he denied that his family came from Tibet. He was 'Sikkimese' he told us, nothing else; but since this means of necessity either Lepcha, Nepali or Tibetan, I stuck to my original opinion on the subject.

The New Year celebrations were concluded on the second day towards sunset with the burning of the tormas, which were first carried in procession out of the palace gates. This was done to the accompaniment of a fearful din designed to scare away the evil spirits. Trumpets roared, cymbals clashed and everyone in the following crowd made his or her contribution in the form of ear-splitting whoops and shrieks. I left the sedate party in the royal tent and walked with this jubilant throng, shoulder to shoulder

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with a Lama gorgeously arrayed in ceremonial dress and a huge-brimmed black hat adorned with peacocks' feathers, who was performing on a police whistle obviously with the idea that he had come into possession of a very superior instrument.

That evening the Crown Prince called upon me at the guest house; we sat by a log fire and discussed the refugee situation in Sikkim and the enormous difficulties in the way of the relief work. By this time I was only too well aware of the pitfalls surrounding those who accepted any responsibility even remotely associated with Tibet. Of Prince Thondup and his sister I had heard sufficient slander to provide any lawyer with a year's employment. I had believed scarcely one word of it, and as I talked to the Prince I came to the conclusion that his major disadvantage in the present situation lay in the fact that he was too open, human and vehement an individual to be able to worm himself successfully through the labyrinthine ways of Indo-Tibetan politics. I liked him very much better than any other Tibetan of the upper class whom I had so far met, simply because he was the only one with whom I could enter into a direct and straightforward relationship without the sensation, so wearisomely familiar in the East, of chasing the soap. And it was, after all, by my personal likes and dislikes that I was forced to make judgments.

Chapter 6 · BLACK GODDESS

THE King of Ling, a sad, dignified figure, rose from his seat in Annie's tent and bowed to me as I came up to help with the weekly distribution of milk. He was served with his ration first and apart from the rest, in consideration of his rank: not because Annie set store by such things but because, being sensitive, she realized that he would have felt it an indignity to be the recipient of doled-out milk in a long queue of people such as would ordinarily have been his servants. The Kings of Ling are chieftains of Kham; they claim descent from the adopted son of Gesar of Ling, the legendary hero of Tibet whose marvellous deeds are related in the national epic which is recited by wandering bards and has been passed on through the centuries by word of mouth.

Annie had become, as a matter of course, the dominant influence among the rather curious assortment of people who were responsible for the relief work in Kalimpong and its neighbourhood. Soon after my return from Gangtok she took me to see the old disused 'gompa' which, under her directions, had been transformed into a home for several families of refugee monks of the 'Red Hat' sect and was a model of order and cleanliness, for no other reason than that she insisted upon certain elementary rules being observed in it. Not even Annie, however, could solve the problem of the crowds of refugees who were living in disused go-downs, tumble-down shacks, any odd corner where they could find a resting-place, rather than leave Kalimpong and go to the Mysore settlement. These refugees received from the Indian authorities their basic rations and nothing else. Little notice was taken of them; little encouragement given to the local people to initiate schemes for the improvement of their miserable state: it was the official policy to make them so desperately uncomfortable that they would eventually succumb and relieve the

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neighbourhood of their embarrassing presence. Two political murders and a sensational kidnapping incident within a few months had, not unnaturally, stiffened the authorities both in their efforts to get rid of the refugees and their suspicious attitude towards such visitors as myself, who were obviously concerned with Tibetan interests. It was not long before I became aware that my correspondence was being opened and a check was being kept upon me by the local police.

There were four Tibetan schools in Kalimpong: one which had been established for many years and accepted only the children of the local inhabitants; a small primary school attached to the Tirpai Monastery, which had taken a proportion of refugees in addition to local children; the official refugee school; and the school belonging to the well-known Lama, Dardo Rimpoche, which, like Tirpai, accepted children of both categories and endeavoured to give them an education which would not separate them from their traditional roots. It was this last school which I felt most inclined to recommend for support. The principles upon which it was run seemed to represent a positive attempt to deal with the basic problems of the refugees in addition to alleviating their material hardships; moreover, it was in the hands of a man who struck me as being intelligent and kind, able to radiate a calming influence in the midst of that discordant bedlam of lies and gossip which had practically obliterated the possibility of co-operation between persons ostensibly working for a common purpose. In so foul an atmosphere it was not good that children should remain at all; since many of them were compelled to remain in it, nothing was more necessary than that they should be in the care of someone who was capable of a certain detachment. Such a one was Dardo Rimpoche, whose clear vision, wise understanding and merciful capacity for quiet amusement were apparent to me at our first meeting although we had no common language in which to communicate.

I visited the Rimpoche in the company of Bhikshu Sangharakshita, the English monk whose *Survey of Buddhism* had provided

one of my earliest contacts with the religions of the East. The Bhikshu was a somewhat enigmatical figure, always seeming to be a centre of controversy, the target of every possible variety of malicious gossip, a man of brilliant mind and profound insight with a tart humour which was doubtless his most reliable weapon of defence. In Kalimpong his forceful personality, allied to the sharp bird-like features of his pale English face, stood out in unavoidable prominence; and his influence extended far beyond the little world of the border district. It was no wonder that he had found it necessary to create for himself a retreat of beauty and peace in which, for part of the year at least, he could live in retirement, pursuing his studies and meditations and writing his books. To this small ashram, perched on the mountainside at some distance from the road about a mile out of the town, I betook myself whenever I felt in need of the kind of talk which is both a relaxation and a stimulant.

I spent a great deal of time during my stay in Kalimpong in walking and strolling along the mountain roads, finding company in the people who passed, in the innumerable children, in the fruit vendors who were to be found squatting on the ground wherever there were a few houses or shops, and from whom I bought the little bright oranges which were cool and refreshing to eat as one walked. All these people were ready with friendly smiles and they all had a gay sense of humour, and loved to be included in a joke. As I stared beyond the tall, bowing bamboos, across the valleys in the direction of Tibet, and up the slopes into the wild confusion of red and green where the huge poinsettias ran like flames from bush to bush, I forgot the spiteful tongues and remembered only the endless beauty in which the little town was engulfed like a pebble in the bottom of a lake. There was even, I fancied, some connection between the spellbinding quality of the country surrounding Kalimpong and the peculiarities of its inhabitants. Someone—I forget who—remarked to me once that in Kalimpong the good people became more good, the bad more bad; mildly dishonest persons became thieves; the aggressive

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became murderers; the pious became saints. Everything, in fact, was a little larger than life.

An impulse took me one morning to the Tirpai Monastery, where I had once twirled the prayer-wheels and been taken for a Buddhist. I arrived there in a jeep and found myself in the midst of a throng which seemed to include every Tibetan from Kalimpong and the surrounding neighbourhood, all wearing their national dress. Sending away the jeep, I looked round for someone who could give me an explanation of what was afoot and almost immediately saw two people I knew: a young woman known as Gaye-la, who was a cousin of the Dalai Lama, and the Abbot himself. Both these acquaintances of mine could speak a little English: between them they explained to me that a *puja* was about to be performed in honour of His Holiness. Gaye-la then took charge of me and guided me up a flight of steps to a small room where I was served with butter-tea by an enormous monk. After this repast, which I naturally accepted as the essential first stage of my entertainment, we went down into the courtyard where a big square had been marked out with chalk. In the centre of this square were two piles of pinewood; on the edge of it, opposite the main door of the temple, was an altar upon which had been placed bowls of tea and rice, a bell and dorje, a small wooden drum and a sacred book. On the ground were several immense cooking-pots filled with tsampa, tiny oranges, pieces of cheese, sweets, radishes and a kind of cereal which looked like puffed rice. Gaye-la explained to me that all these preparations were in honour of the Dalai Lama, whose photograph was to be carried in procession and enthroned upon the seat used by him when he visited the temple in 1956. Meanwhile I wandered about the courtyard and studied every detail of the arrangements, without attempting to touch the prayer-wheels as I had done on my previous visit. Some instinct told me that the more sophisticated, Westernized Tibetans were half embarrassed by their own religion, devoted as they still were to it. They found it hard to

believe that any visitor from the West could wish to participate seriously in their rites; and while they were delighted that one should do so, they were at the same time abashed and under a compulsion to be slightly apologetic. In this situation I judged it wiser to maintain a general attitude of reverence without going further than would be expected of a non-Buddhist. I was actually the only non-Tibetan present; yet so hospitable and courteous were these people that I never for an instant felt conspicuous.

The procession arrived with a great roaring of the long trumpets. The Kundun's photograph, garlanded with scarves and mounted on what looked like a chair draped with saffron silk, was hoisted into the temple and Gaye-la pushed me after it in the midst of a small gathering of apparently privileged persons since the temple was by no means full and most of the people were left standing outside it. Rows of long wooden benches faced one another across the central aisle, and on these the congregation seated themselves cross-legged, women on the left, men on the right. I sat down with Gaye-la and every woman within sight of us beamed at me in welcoming friendliness. Many of them, including Gaye-la (who was a remarkably beautiful young woman with a perfectly oval face always carefully made up), were very elaborately dressed and wearing gorgeous ornaments, of which the most conspicuous was the turquoise-studded charm-box which is the pride of every Tibetan lady whose husband can afford to give her such a present. Everyone was chatting together; the crowds chanted outside; monks dispensed butter-tea and handfuls of sweetened rice. Of this we ate a little with our fingers and wrapped up what was left in the small squares of brown paper which had been arranged in front of each place. Then everyone stood up, someone put a scarf into my hand and we formed a procession to pay our respects to His Holiness. Copying the others, I approached the throne, laid my scarf upon it and gently bumped my forehead just below the photograph.

By this time the bonfires outside had been lit and the temple was filled with woodsmoke and the fumes of joss-sticks. Back we

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went to our benches and I found myself holding a large dough torma, heavy as lead and dyed the usual blackberry-pink. I gazed at it in horror, wondering if I were going to be expected to eat it; however, I was given more brown paper, together with rice, sweets, pieces of vegetable and a tiny orange, and, thankfully following the general example, I made another parcel and put it in my pocket. Now the crowd outside was admitted into the temple and began to file past us. There were tiny children, women with babies tied to their backs, old crones twirling prayer-wheels, strapping young Khambas, noblemen with the long earring, women covered in jewellery, women in dishevelled rags, youths and men, some in monks' robes, others in the voluminous brown chuba above long yak-hide boots: every type of Tibetan that I had ever seen seemed to be there moving before me through the haze of smoke. The light from one low-powered electric bulb, falling into this haze, created a soft golden mist in which the colours of the women's aprons and jewellery glowed softly, dulled and yet enhanced. The faces were so beautiful that I held my breath; not as possessing any singular claim to beauty in the obvious sense but as an expression of the very being of humanity itself. Watching those faces, I realized how blurred and vacuous to the point of horror is the average countenance which one passes in an English street.

When the ceremony within the temple was over, we all returned to the courtyard where the smoke was billowing in white clouds from the pine branches; and immediately everyone gathered round the principal bonfire and began scattering tsampa on to it. As they withdrew, a monk came forward and poured water on to the fire from a tiny aluminium teapot. Trays of barley flour were passed round, each person taking a handful and holding on to it. 'Presently,' Gaye-la whispered, 'you throw it—but not yet.' So I waited, holding my flour and eating my small orange, while the crowd chanted prayers, their mouths full of orange, cheese and sweets. The sun shone, the smoke billowed, hundreds of coloured prayer flags fluttered overhead reminding me of Canterbury in

cricket week. No wonder, I thought, the Government could not prevent the refugees from crowding into this district. Here they would come, with rations or without, with shelter or with none, for so long as they could gather like this with the local Tibetans and make a little Tibet.

Suddenly the chanting stopped; three times we stretched out our arms, holding out the flour to heaven, and each time the crowd uttered in unison a loud cry; then with a final joyous whoop the flour was scattered, mine with the rest. Gaye-la and I turned to laugh at one another, dusted all over as if we had emerged from a bakehouse. The long trumpets roared, blown by yellow-helmeted monks, who puffed with all their might, rounding out their cheeks.

I was walking one evening through the streets of Kalimpong in the company of a young Tibetan who could speak a little English. Like many other boys of his type, semi-educated, dissatisfied and restless, he longed to go to England and was vaguely ambitious to become a motor mechanic. He was taking me to visit an old Lama, a painter of t'ankas, wondering perhaps why I should take an interest in such work.

We all but collided with an old man who was hurrying down the flight of rickety steps which led from his house. He was carrying a tray in the centre of which was a dough mannikin dyed pink and swathed in a ceremonial scarf. As I stared after him, he made off at a purposeful speed down the street.

'What is he doing?' I asked.

My companion looked embarrassed.

'It is our Tibetan custom that he does.'

'But what is this custom? What is the little man and where is he taking it?'

'He will take it down the road.'

'And then?'

'He will leave it.'

'But *why*? I would like to understand this.'

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'It is our custom.'

'But *why*?'

'... In his house there is an illness. The Lama puts the illness into this thing and so he takes it away. Then he thinks no more illness.'

The boy spoke in a half angry voice. He had not wanted to explain. He was ashamed of the old man and ashamed of his own embarrassment. I said: 'Thank you. I am interested in your customs.' Then I began to talk about the possibility of his going to England and becoming a motor mechanic.

In that old man's house, I thought, there will be perhaps an image of the Lord Chenrezig honoured with bowls of water and rice and milk. The old man's grandson dreams perhaps of being an electrician and longs to possess a Rolex wristwatch. Perhaps it is the old wife who is ill; perhaps she will get better now because of the little mannikin in whom has been carried away the spirit of the illness. And the grandson will learn embarrassment and perceive the little man as embodying not his grandmother's illness but an impediment to the fulfilment of his own hopes. And who will show him the difference between the little man and the Lord Chenrezig? Very soon he will reject both.

For a thousand years, I reminded myself, an enormous proportion of the male population of Tibet was diverted from the normal stream of human life, from the production of children and the cultivation of the earth, into the enclosed vocation of the religious, the seeker after truth. For a thousand years the Lamas lived upon the toil of the peasants. To what purpose was all this if now, in the time of the people's spiritual need, no one could be found wise enough to show them what they must retain and what they must reject within the framework of their ancient faith? Never was there a religion presenting so strange a mixture of exalted metaphysical concepts, tender and beautiful religious images, debased superstition, evil magic and sheer nonsense as the religion of Tibet. To adapt this religion to the modern world, making possible its reconciliation with scientific modes of thought,

would be a task demanding almost superhuman wisdom, discrimination and psychological insight. What hope had the exiled Lamas, segregated for the most part in 'Lama camps', cut off alike from the people and from the Dalai Lama himself, of achieving this task even supposing them to be spiritually and intellectually equal to it? Yet without them it could not be achieved. The habit of hierarchy cannot be broken overnight. Unless the recognized teachers of the people came to their assistance, the image of the Lord Chenrezig would follow the little pink man and both together would be dumped into a ditch. And after that, I thought, there will be nothing left except the Rolex wristwatch.

It is a fact which does not seem to be readily grasped by those who talk easily about ridding the Tibetan mind of 'all that rubbish' that if, and when, the Tibetans lose their religion they will lose it completely and have nothing whatsoever to put in its place, since their traditional culture was exclusively religious. For them there exists no humanist tradition such as we inherit; they cannot, as it were, turn from a Giotto to a Rembrandt or feed their souls upon a Fra Angelico while rejecting the formal doctrines which inspired the artist. They cannot follow a moral code unless in obedience to the Lord Buddha, or love mercy except in reverence to the Lord of Mercy, who was once a monkey and lay with a she-demon to beget the Tibetan race. What will become of them when they can no longer believe in the Monkey god and there is no one to explain to them that monkeys and mercy may be separated in the mind and not thrown away together into one ditch? It would not be easy, in any case, for the Tibetan mind to conceive of mercy save in a concrete shape. The Tibetan is passionately interested in truth but only in concrete truth. Monkeys and little pink men and Rolex wristwatches and wireless sets.

In New Delhi I had been glad to learn that of the huge sums of money which had poured in from all over the world to aid the Tibetans, by far the largest proportion had come from the worldwide Christian relief organizations, most notably Inter-Church

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Aid, the Society of Friends and the Roman Catholics. It was clear that the members of the Christian Church had been far more concerned for the plight of the Tibetan refugees, far more willing to make sacrifices on their behalf, than had been their fellow Buddhists. As a Christian, I could not but feel proud of these generous efforts, knowing that the money had been given without any motive except to alleviate distress. But now, in the border district, I was to see another side of the picture and to feel ashamed on behalf of the Church. Contemplating the activities of the missionaries in Kalimpong, I could only accuse them of dragging into disrepute the Name of Christ. Their behaviour and their attitude of mind was, and no doubt continues to be, arrogant, stupid, bad mannered and ultimately blasphemous. Individually pleasant, tireless in their work for the physical assistance of those whom they hope thereby spiritually to seduce, they lose no opportunity to insult and belittle the Buddhist faith of which they are ludicrously ignorant since they do not regard it as being worthy of serious notice. The Tibetan form of Buddhism they dismiss in two words: it is 'devil worship'.

The missionaries of Kalimpong dispense medicines and milk to the destitute always with the underlying motive of turning these people away from their own faith and thus destroying such spiritual strength as they may still possess to support them in a time of crisis. The argument that such 'converts' have received in place of their former religion another which is at least of equal value is pure nonsense; since the methods used and the spirit in which this 'gospel' is preached preclude even a glimmering of the true message of the Christian faith. It was a cause of sadness to me while I was in Kalimpong that the Macdonald family whom I so respected and loved could not share my opinion on this important subject, and even rebuked me for holding it. Buddhists and Hindus, on the other hand, finding me sympathetic, freely expressed to me their disgust and astonishment, their own attitude towards other faiths being so entirely different. All of them, however, were anxious to reassure me that their criticisms did not

apply to the local Roman Catholics. The Church of Rome is too old and wise, too holy perhaps, and too wily without a doubt, so to disgrace herself in public, thus defeating the ends for which she works.

As for the attitude of the Tibetans themselves towards these missionary efforts, I saw for myself one interesting example of it when I visited a temporary encampment set up by Tibetan pilgrims who had come to Kalimpong to receive the blessing of a certain Lama who was well known in the district. I was conducted to this camp by two ladies from an establishment which had been set up for the purpose of kidnapping orphan children, keeping them in strict segregation and training them to become evangelists. Besides being practically speechless with astonishment, I was deliberately concealing my emotions because I wished to discover exactly what was going on in order to send a report on it to the local police. Meanwhile I followed meekly in the wake of my co-religionists.

There were perhaps a hundred Tibetans in the camp, which was situated on the slope of Rinchenpong just above the villa belonging to the Dudjom Rimpoche, whom the pilgrims had come to visit. I was charmed by the little low-roofed huts made of branches, on which the leaves were still green and fresh. The people, however, were reserved and made no attempt to invite us inside these huts: whispering surreptitiously in my ear, one of the missionary ladies remarked that they were less welcoming this morning, perhaps something had made them suspicious. She glanced down in the direction of the villa, and added that things were always more difficult when there was a *puja* afoot.

The two ladies then took some photographs. While doing so, and without allowing the matter to seem important, they issued an invitation to a film show which would include (they whispered to me) some light entertainment as well as the gospel material which would be, of course, its main purpose. All this time they were watching my movements and seemed reluctant to let me wander out of their sight; so when the time came for them to hurry away to a luncheon engagement, I thanked them for their

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kindness (they had been, in various ways, extremely kind) and remarked that I would stay on and talk to the people by myself. At this I received disapproving looks; but there was, after all, nothing to be said or done about it. Perhaps they had noticed my Dalai Lama brooch at which a small group of Tibetans were already staring in silence.

No sooner were the two ladies gone than one of the Tibetans approached me and bent forward to look at the brooch, smiling and revealing all his teeth. I took it off and waited while it was passed round the group. It was as if the sun had appeared to roll away the mountain mist. Now everyone laughed. I put my head tentatively into one of the huts and was at once invited inside by an old monk who was copying from a sacred book. Even in these temporary huts there were little shrines: pictures of the gods and burning butter lamps. The old monk, searching through a heap of rags, produced a phurbu or ritual dagger to which was attached a piece of material with symbolic designs printed upon it. I held out my hand and he allowed me to take it. It was a beautiful thing; a weapon of exorcism against evil spirits. I raised it to my forehead in reverence, feeling as if an evil spirit had indeed drifted away down the mountainside, leaving us in peace.

Not long after this, I paid a formal call upon the Dudjom Rimpoche in the company of a Tibetan friend who spoke excellent English. The Dudjom was a personage of considerable importance in the neighbourhood. He lived in style, and the missionaries naturally accused him of profiting on a large scale from the offerings of the numerous pilgrims who flocked to receive his blessing and to hear him preach. To this I would reply that the pilgrims were not obliged to come: they derived great happiness and, no doubt, benefit from such occasions which provided them with a sense of being bound together in their common faith. Crowds of people were gathered round the entrance to the drive when I arrived for my appointment; they were cooking and chatting and reciting their prayers just as the pilgrims had done in front of the entrance to Birla House.

The Dudjom greeted us at his door; there was much bowing, smiling and presenting of long silk scarves; then he conducted us to his room where we sat on the usual low seats covered by Tibetan rugs. He was not wearing the maroon robe but a long tunic of grey silk, and his hair hung in a pigtail down his back; in fact, he was quite unlike any other Lama of my acquaintance. The 'Red Hat' Lamas are free to live more or less as they choose; and the Dudjom, besides having a large family, was extremely sophisticated and rich in worldly goods. All this gave him a certain charm and normality which I found pleasant; I did not respect him the less or doubt the sincerity of his faith because of his cheerful worldliness. His round face was continuously wreathed in smiles and he seemed to be genuinely delighted by our visit. Tea was served in delicate china teacups; doughy biscuits had to be, as usual, steadily chewed while we talked.

The Dudjom was suffering from asthma and seemed to enjoy discussing this complaint, which he referred to with the utmost cheerfulness. When I expressed the polite hope that he was taking some good medicine, he instantly called a servant and sent for the entire contents of his medicine chest, which he spread out for my inspection all over his gorgeously embroidered tablecloth. After duly admiring the bottles, I assured him that I also took 'many medicines', an item of information which seemed to cause him immense satisfaction, as establishing between us a kind of esoteric link. From this we went on to discuss the free medical services in the Welfare State: a topic which I could always lead round to a discussion of the twentieth-century world and the conflict therein between traditional values and material progress. Gradually our conversation turned towards religion. I presented the Rimpoche with some postcards of Canterbury Cathedral, which he studied with enthusiastic interest; when I made my usual observation that Buddhism and Christianity were two ways leading towards one truth, and illustrated this by tracing with my finger two lines converging upon a blue lotus in the centre of the tablecloth, he almost crowed in delighted agreement.

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At the bottom of the drive, to which the Dudjom, as an enormous compliment, accompanied us (great importance being attached to the exact length to which a host is prepared to walk in receiving or bidding farewell to a guest), all the Tibetans leaped to their feet, bowed almost to the ground and stuck their tongues out. The Dudjom grasped my hands; I bent my head and bumped my forehead against our united handclasp. I said: 'To-de-che, Rimpoche, to-de-che', and we both laughed. As I walked away the Tibetans gazed after me in friendly respect. I had acquired status.

On the evening of my last day in Kalimpong I attended a *puja* in honour of the most fearsome of all the divinities of the East: Kali, the Black Goddess. The worship of Kali goes back, far back, over many thousands of years, back through a haze of blood, to an age of which no written record exists. Kali is the spouse of Shiva who is himself the destroyer of the universe. In the caves of Elephanta I had seen the ancient carvings which represent the divine one in his cosmic dance, by which eternally he destroys the worlds in order that they may be eternally created afresh. There, too, as on countless shrines all over India, I had seen the lingam stone, the phallus of Shiva, which reminds the worshipper that the destroyer god is also the giver of life. And there he is represented in the company of Parvati, his celestial spouse, the beautiful goddess with whom he is believed to dwell in love upon Mount Kailasa, the holiest mountain in Tibet. Kali is the terrible aspect of this goddess. Unlike Shiva, she is (or seems to be) wholly fearful in her destructiveness, containing in her nature nothing save what is hideous; yet the modern Hindu saint, Ramakrishna, saw in Kali the image of the Divine Mother, and worshipped her as such with a mystical tenderness.

About a mile out of Kalimpong, a little way above the road and overlooking the great valley through which the Teesta pours itself, is a little Hindu shrine served by two priests and containing an image of the Black Goddess. To this shrine I was taken by a

Brahmin lady, without whom I should not have been allowed to see it except from a distance. I was greatly in awe of Hindu temples and priests, the atmosphere of Hinduism being wholly unlike that of the religion of Tibet in that it conveys to the outsider a sense of being repulsed. Hinduism struck me as having nothing whatsoever in it of human tenderness. It seemed to be only too literally a fearful religion, endlessly concerned with the expiation of guilt and therefore with the punishment of those who dared to pollute the holy places by so much as the touch of an unpurified foot.

The *puja* was held at dusk, commencing in the actual moment of the descent of the dark, and heralded by the wailing of a conch. I know of only two sounds which seem to belong wholly to a world other than this: the cry of the Hindu conch and the roar of the Tibetan ceremonial trumpet. For some reason the latter made me think of the end of the world, and the former of its beginning in some primeval wilderness. I imagined them both as being made by angelic spirits watching over the processes of cosmic birth and death.

Gita and I approached the shrine first by a steep path and then by a flight of steps. It was brightly lit and the image of the Black Goddess completely dominated it. At the top of the steps we removed our shoes and Gita presented me to one of the priests; then we stood with the other worshippers, none of whom entered the shrine itself. I fixed my eyes upon the image and there gazed back at me the crimson, protruding eyes of a four-armed demoness, naked save for a garland of human heads, her crimson tongue lolling out, her scimitar raised to strike. Beneath her feet lay the prostrate form of Shiva, her spouse, upon whom she tramples as Mary does upon the serpent. Before this image Gita bowed herself and after a few moments, overcoming a shyness such as I never felt among Buddhists, I dropped to my knees by her side, bowing my head in a deep obeisance. I felt myself to be in the presence of a vast mystery, which I could perhaps sense the more easily because it was presented to me in this entirely unfamiliar form rather than

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within the framework of my own faith. There are times when the shock of the unexpected and the previously unknown suddenly impinging upon the mind can tear asunder many envelopes.

A priest came out to us with holy water and tilak. He poured the water into our hands and I watched the others and wetted my forehead as they did, although I could not bring myself to copy one woman who raised it to her lips. We presented our money offerings, each receiving in return the customary present: a few orange pigs and bits of cheese wrapped in a leaf. The short ceremony was finished but I still lingered, gazing into the shrine, trying to fix upon my memory every detail of it. Arranged before the image were rows of lighted lamps, vases of crimson poinsettias, trays of rose and poinsettia petals, a coconut—and the conch shell which had cried to us as we approached. Again I looked up at the terrible face. Why, I was asking myself, had the worship of Kali always drawn me as I was not drawn by any of the innumerable other Hindu cults? Who was she and what did she represent? And suddenly I perceived that the answer was simplicity itself. Kali represents everything that we in our ignorance regard as fearful and hideous; she is destruction, tragedy, suffering and death; and the worship of Kali, as of all such beings, is an act of courage and acceptance similar to that which is described in the myth of *Beauty and the Beast*.

We walked back to Kalimpong, eating the pieces of cheese and the orange pigs. There was nothing between us and the mountains of Sikkim except an ocean of darkness.

Chapter 7 · ‘ . . . THAT IS THAT ’

THE last words to me of Bhikshu Sangharakshita before I left for Darjeeling were a reminder to seek out Sister Vajira, who was living in Bhutia Busty and trying to help the refugee monks. Sister Vajira was an English Buddhist nun who had attached herself to the Tibetan ‘Red Hats’; I had heard of her from several sources, and now that I had a fortnight in Darjeeling before leaving for Bombay to board my ship the time seemed to have arrived for cultivating her friendship. The Thondups and the Shabsurs were still away and I felt in need of companionship.

I was planning to walk down to Bhutia Busty and inquire from the monks concerning Sister Vajira’s whereabouts; but it so happened that on my first day back in Darjeeling I saw her in the Chowrasta, entering a grocery shop. There could hardly be two middle-aged Englishwomen walking about Darjeeling in Lamas’ robes, even allowing for the vagaries of the Anglo-Saxon temperament; so I waited outside the shop, prepared to accost the lady and introduce myself. She emerged: and I recognized her at once. She was an old and well-remembered friend. Sister Vajira was Miss Robinson of Sarnath.

My memory went back to the time of my first visit to India and the afternoon which I had spent in the place where, according to a well-authenticated tradition, the Lord Buddha set in motion the Wheel of the Law—or, in other words, preached his first sermon after his Enlightenment. I had been so foolish as to visit Sarnath in the company of an official guide appointed by Messrs Thomas Cook. This guide was an Indian and professed to be immensely sympathetic towards my interest in Buddhism; but for some reason I disliked him and found his excessive friendliness an irritant. I was horribly embarrassed when, before I had time to understand where I was and withdraw in haste, I found

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myself inside a Buddhist monastery with my guide hammering on the door of a cell to summon the Abbot. A large fat smiling Bhikku appeared in the doorway of the cell and invited me into it. His cheerful friendliness could not wholly remove my embarrassment, especially as my guide was behaving as if he owned the monastery and everyone in it. The Bhikku, who spoke very little English, made laborious small-talk. Then he beamed, apparently seized by a happy thought. Would I like to meet Miss Robinson? Being English, she would be able to answer my questions so much better than he could. I had not been able to think of any questions; but now I wanted to ask him what a Miss Robinson was doing in a monastery of Buddhist monks. Instead of doing so, I thanked him politely and said that I would like to meet her very much.

The Bhikku summoned a monk-servant and my guide and I were led out of the monastery, down the garden and through a mango grove by a little winding path. At the end of the path was a clearing and a tiny hut. Outside the hut, seated in the lotus position on a low wooden platform, was a supremely British-looking lady with cropped grey hair and wearing the yellow robe, who was reading the Buddhist scriptures and burning joss-sticks. A little terrier dog ran forward to bark at us exactly as he might have done from the front door of an English country house.

My guide advanced towards the lady and made a formal obeisance. Her eyes glinted and she gave a slight chuckle without losing her composure for an instant. Stocky, middle-aged and humorous, Miss Robinson would have been equally at home in a Bhikku's robe and the lotus position or in tweeds on a shooting stick. All this passed through my mind in the instant before my guide delivered himself of the following speech:

'Madam, here is English lady come to visit Sarnath. She is very silent lady, very lean and pale, and she comes to ask your blessing that she may grow rosy and fat, also words of advice.'

Miss Robinson and I gazed at each other rather as Stanley and Livingstone must have done in the desert. 'Are you staying here long?' asked Miss Robinson. I told her how long. 'Is your hotel

comfortable?’ I reassured her on this point. The guide waited in disappointed silence. After a few more exchanges I murmured: ‘I mustn’t keep you’, and bolted away through the mango grove, leaving Miss Robinson still seated before her burning joss-sticks, the scriptures still spread out upon her lap, but looking after me a little wistfully perhaps, as if for an instant, forgetting the fumes of Oriental incense, she had caught a faint sniff from a wet English wood. . . .

And now here was Miss Robinson coming out of a Darjeeling grocery shop.

Sister Vajira and I laughed heartily over cups of tea in a Chinese tea-shop. Then she took me with her down the long steep path past the white stupa to Bhutia Busty, and entertained me in her room, which was in a tumbledown hostel near the temple of the refugee monks. This was to be the first of many teas which I enjoyed in that room, and I never ceased to marvel at what Sister Vajira had done to it. The rest of the house was deserted, dark and damp, but this one room, reached by a door in the gloomy, evil-smelling courtyard, was a warm and homely place, in which, as soon as I entered it, I felt at peace. It too was dark and damp, but one did not notice this. As evening fell, it was not even physically very warm, although a small oil-stove burned in it. Sister Vajira, having wholeheartedly embraced the religious life, lived without luxuries of even the most harmless sort, in what I should have regarded as great discomfort; yet there was nothing coldly austere about either her surroundings or herself. Her small room was a cheerful clutter of domestic and religious objects. There were no cupboards; consequently from where I sat I could see a display of tins, kettles, saucepans, cups and plates, all huddled together on a shelf; while on and over the mantelpiece were the various objects of piety beloved in Tibet: t’ankas, little images, tinted photographs of high Incarnates, bowls, rosaries, butter lamps, and a dorje and bell which, as I soon discovered, Sister Vajira could wield with great effect. On the walls hung t’ankas; in one corner

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was a bookcase; against the wall at right angles to where I sat was Sister Vajira's bed, covered in a woven rug upon which she would comfortably dispose herself, swathed in her Lama's robe and looking just as happily at home and yet belonging just as obviously to the glossy pages of *Country Life* as she had looked and belonged in the mango grove at Sarnath. She would entertain me to strong tea and stale cream cakes which she bought for my benefit, and which were almost as difficult to eat as Tibetan biscuits.

Sister Vajira took me across to the gompa to visit her friends the refugee monks, for whom she had tried in vain to enlist the help of various rich Tibetans in the neighbourhood. It was clear to me that she possessed a wide and deep knowledge of the religion she practised. Our talks ranged from cheerful gossip to serious discussion of all kinds of curious subjects; and she gave me a great deal of plain practical advice on the subject of psychic attacks, relating to me how a certain high-ranking Lama, in the course of a *puja* to which he had invited her, had tried to gain psychic power over her by entering into a trance, thus causing her severe mental and physical discomfort, and how she had thwarted him by reciting the mantra of Chenrezig. 'In such a situation,' said Sister Vajira, echoing the advice of all the great traditions and calling to my mind particularly the methods of the Russian Orthodox, 'only that *type* of prayer is any use.' She was, I noticed, greatly attached to the mantra of Chenrezig, which she used in the same way as the Orthodox use the Prayer of Jesus. It was slightly disconcerting at first to hear some chortling comment upon one of the well-known characters of the neighbourhood, followed by the mysterious OM MANE PADME HUM, uttered several times and very fast in a firmly matter-of-fact voice, and then perhaps another salty joke. But I soon became accustomed to the little ways of Sister Vajira Robinson. She had a further habit of jumping up suddenly, presumably when in the clock of her mind (she had no other, having learned to do without one, as do most Buddhist monks) some hour struck, facing her tiny shrine and grasping the dorje in her right hand and the bell in her left; then,

extending her arms, she would tinkle the little bell while holding the dorje aloft. Having performed this rite, she would return to her seat and resume the conversation at the exact point at which she had abandoned it.

But of all the idiosyncracies of my new friend, the one I liked best was the remark which she invariably made to herself when she was handling at the same time more than one material object. ‘That is that,’ Sister Vajira would remark in a firm yet pleasant voice, as she took the purchases out of her shopping bag, made the tea or searched for a book. ‘This is this.’ Or, as a variation upon this profound comment: ‘This is this. . . . That is that.’ A great wisdom seemed to me to be summed up in these two remarks. ‘Pay attention,’ they seemed to imply. ‘Look at what you do. Discriminate.’ Behind them was an undertone of the most holy and profound words to be found in the scriptures of the East: *Tat twam asi*, Thou art That, the Vedantic description of the eternal unity of the soul and God. They contained, moreover, an excellent antidote to carelessness. Because of them Sister Vajira never mislaid her spectacle case.

It was Sister Vajira who took me to visit the old painter, Peme Wangchuk. Not only the altarpiece at St Joseph’s but, as I now discovered, all the marvellous frescoes at Ghoom, including the great painting of Palden Lhamo, which had been my first introduction to the fierce divinities of Tibet, were the work of this gentle old man who lived with his family in a tiny little house, which Sister Vajira described as a ‘rabbit hutch’, behind the market.

We found Peme Wangchuk perched on a high seat close to the one small window which let in very little light, since it was close to the wall of the Hindu temple just outside the house. He was beginning to go blind and his weak eyes bent close over his work, which was still as accurate and exquisite as in his youth. Wondering, I watched the sure movements of his brush. He was a very simple old man, poor and almost illiterate, yet he was one of the great artist-craftsmen of Tibet.

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Sister Vajira had come with the purpose of commissioning a small t'anka for herself. We sat on the bed while the old man's wife made tea, and their daughter Dolma, who had been at St Joseph's Girls' School and could speak English, interpreted Sister Vajira's requirements. Peme Wangchuk showed me the green stone from which he made his green paint. Then he produced a pile of drawings of Tibetan divinities, marked out with geometrical figures to show the correct measurements. It struck me that these diagrams made the most beautiful patterns besides being of great interest; so I asked Peme Wangchuk to make a drawing for me of the Lord Chenrezig in his four-armed aspect, leaving in the lines of measurement in red ink.

This was the beginning of a friendship between myself and the family of Peme Wangchuk. I paid several visits to his house, sometimes in the company of Sister Vajira and sometimes by myself; always I found him in the same position, bent over his work. His daughter Dolma accompanied me to Ghoom, where she acted as interpreter and saw to it that I was shown every detail of her father's greatest achievement.

On this second visit to Ghoom I was taken up to the chapel on the roof and shown the collection of one thousand small Buddhas, the equivalent of the thousand images of Tsong Khapa at Samten Choling and of innumerable other collections in temples all over Tibet. The significance of these images is seldom explained, and perhaps not always understood even by the monks. They refer to a profound and difficult metaphysical idea, according to which all forms are the emanations of a single perfect type which is capable of infinitely repeating itself. There are many affinities with Platonism among the Mahayana Buddhists.

As we were about to leave the temple I turned back and went up to the feet of Jampa, the Buddha who is to come, which rest together in the Western posture upon the ground, indicating that this Buddha will come from the West. It has always seemed to me that this figure of Jampa or Maitreya, the Buddha of Love, and the Bodhisattva Chenrezig or Avalokitesvara, the Lord of

Mercy of Tibet, together embody the utmost pinnacles of vision of the Mahayanists. Before I left England, my uncle had presented me with his white silk opera scarf, remarking drily that I should no doubt find a use for it; now I draped it over the feet of Jampa and there left it for the admiration of the monks. My last thought as I bade farewell to Ghoom, gazing up at the slit blue eyes above the butter lamps and making a suitable obeisance, was to wonder what would be the reactions of my sceptical uncle to this, in my view, appropriate ending to the career of his opera scarf; and whether the Buddha of Love had caught from it a gentle emanation of Edwardian romance.

Sister Vajira walked with me for part of the way up the mountain path and we watched the end of the sunset. The rose pink light had almost faded from the snow on Kanchenjunga's summit and it occurred to me that since I was leaving Darjeeling before dawn this might be the last time that I should ever see it. I was sorry to part from Sister Vajira Robinson. We saluted one another, palms together, a gesture which had become natural to me and which I found a great deal easier and more gracious than the Western handshake. For a few moments I stood still, watching her stumping back down the steep slope. I knew exactly what she was repeating to herself. The vast words, measureless, untranslatable, engraved upon the wayside stones, twirling in the prayer-wheels, blowing away on the wind, sounding in the roar of the trumpets, hung over the mountains like a tangible presence. The Name of God and the Invocation of Chenrezig, the Jewel in the Lotus.

I began to climb the path, looking back at the holy one, pale and unlit above a straight line of mist. To me the mountain was indeed a god; I had prayed to it, talked to it, worshipped it, surrendered to it my dream of Tibet, asking in return for one tiny glimmering of the cold pure truth even though it chilled my heart. I would have liked as I bade farewell to 'the everlasting summit of the five treasure houses of snow' to have arrived at some con-

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clusion, undergone some definable experience, passed some spiritual turning-point. Of course I did nothing of the sort. But I thought that I half understood why it was that, although I had lost all hope for Tibet, yet I did not feel hopeless and the word 'Tibet', which had once stood in my mind for a dream, now stood for a reality which could not be touched by any evil circumstance. I had seen a ruined people, without one single element in their situation which suggested that, as a people, they might hope for some future in which the spirit of their past could remain active as a living and binding force rather than as a dim memory flickering over glass cases in a cultural institute. But I had seen, as well, the last quivering glimmer of that once bright spirit and I knew that it would not die but retire, as the Lord Chenrezig is said to retire when the Dalai Lama comes to the end of his earthly life, and come again in some new form once more to grace the earth with its Presence. One must distinguish, I thought, between that Presence and the temporary misery which is another kind of reality, another face of truth, making its immediate demands upon us. Above all there remains the necessity to be concerned with human beings on their own account. The Divine Chenrezig is not more important than one lousy old monk.

POSTSCRIPT

IN this book I have tried to write the truth as I see it at the risk of losing the confidence of all those with whom I have worked on behalf of the people of Tibet. I do not believe that we do any service either to the Dalai Lama or to his people by refraining from a total frankness no matter what may be our thoughts.

There is, of course, a theoretical possibility for the Tibetan exiles, under the guidance of the Dalai Lama, to arrest the present disintegration of their national culture by finding a way of adapting their own distinctive form of Buddhism to the modern world so that it may remain a binding force; but the practical possibility scarcely exists since the necessary intellectual power and vitality is not present amongst those whose task it would be to perform this gigantic feat of adjustment. There is not even a sign that the persons most concerned have any grasp of the nature of their own predicament. It would seem that the Dalai Lama inclines tentatively towards encouraging a simple form of Buddhism, based on the Hinayana school, with its emphasis upon moral precepts and upon the basic tenets of Buddhist doctrine, such as Karma and rebirth, without the complexities of the Mahayana, not to speak of the enormous pantheon of the Tibetan gods. Such a reduction of Buddhism to its lowest common denominator may be useful to individuals; it cannot provide the Tibetan people with a principle of co-inherence. The binding of Tibet is not to be found in the words of Gotama the Buddha, but in the Mantras and the Mandalas and the Fearful Divinities and the gentle Mother Goddess, and above all in the Dalai Lama himself: there is no Tibet without the Presence of Tibet.

The myth of the Incarnation of the Divine Chenrezig in the Dalai Lama is one variant of that universal myth of Kingship, which is manifested wherever we find a united faith on the part of a ruler and his people that in him, by virtue of his function rather than of his own merits, the living spirit of that people is presented

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in a tangible form and a visible appearance, thereby enabling them to believe in themselves as an organic whole, functioning with a corporate will and a corporate intelligence to achieve some clearly defined cosmic purpose. That such an idea, when it is not an intrinsic part of a great tradition, can be a demonic thing, binding a people into wickedness, scarcely needs to be pointed out. It was not an evil thing in Tibet but the strong support of all which in that land was noble and good. Nonetheless it cannot be sustained by even the most well-intentioned pretence. Just as Elizabeth the First believed herself to be the Majesty of England, and this belief was at least as real to her as her personal awareness of herself as Elizabeth, so the Great Thirteenth Dalai Lama believed himself to be the Presence of Tibet. If he was the last Dalai Lama to be capable of believing this, then the prophecy that the Thirteenth would be the last Incarnation was actually correct. For the present Dalai Lama the issue has become so confused that it is scarcely possible for him to understand what he is being asked to believe concerning himself: in such circumstances he can scarcely do otherwise than abandon the ancient formulas before he has grasped their significance.

In a situation so desperate as that in which the Tibetans are now placed, there is only too literally nothing left but truth; and there is no advantage to be gained for anyone by even the slightest veiling or distortion of truth in the supposed interests of a 'cause' which is in any case all but lost. In the present instance, there are certain attitudes and opinions which, although they have been adopted and advocated by eminent authorities on Tibet whose expert knowledge so far exceeds my own that comparison would be ludicrous, I venture to say are of no service to anyone and can only obscure the truth and thereby eventually do harm to those whom we desire to help.

It is, for instance, of no service to anyone to deny that the Buddhism of Tibet, besides being a vehicle of the most profound wisdom, was a fantastic conglomeration of disparate elements; or that at least three-quarters of the Lamas now in India had better

not have been Lamas at all, and should be helped to understand what it is that they genuinely desire to do with their lives rather than encouraged to hold on to a 'vocation' which has become meaningless. It is of no service to anyone to maintain, as an eminent English Buddhist has publicly maintained, that it may well be the vocation of His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama to bring about a revival of Buddhism in India by going from place to place preaching the *Dharma*—when it is so tragically obvious that the Dalai Lama is himself in deep bewilderment concerning his own tradition and his personal beliefs. And it is of no service to anyone that a great deal of time and energy should be taken up and large sums of money spent in championing the Tibetan cause in the arena of world politics; when it is obvious to common sense that the Chinese are not to be either threatened or otherwise persuaded into any arrangement which would totally deprive them of power in Tibet, and that while they retain even a vestige of power they will use it to obtain more and to pursue all those policies which resulted in the 1959 crisis.

I believe that the greatest of all dangers for the exiled Tibetans is that of being persuaded, with or without the concurrence of their friends abroad and their Indian hosts, to return to Chinese-dominated Tibet. If the Dalai Lama were ever to succumb to this temptation, in the belief that some new 'Agreement' could ensure him sufficient authority to preserve the religious freedom of his subjects, he would be involving the Tibetan people in a total betrayal of everything which once constituted their faith. I do not believe that such a danger is remote; and the atmosphere of unrealism which at present surrounds the affairs of Tibet contributes nothing towards averting it.

'What is to be done and what omitted, consider that,' wrote the Great Thirteenth in his Political Testament. If what is to be omitted is the cherishing of such illusions as I have tried to indicate, what then is to be done? What positive action can be taken over and above the necessary alleviation of material distress?

There are, without doubt, amongst the Lamas and monks who

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have found refuge in India, a certain number who have a true vocation to devote themselves to prayer and the quest for truth by means of the disciplines and exercises of the religious life. It would be a final triumph of the Tibetan spirit if, gradually, a clear distinction could be made between such persons and those whose proper function is to be found in the everyday world and in accepting the responsibilities of marriage and earning a livelihood. The need for at least a handful of men whose task it is to pray for the people is surely more urgent—if we believe in the reality of prayer at all—than ever before in the history of Tibet. Anyone who has met the present Dalai Lama should not find it difficult to believe that he himself might become the founder of just such a centre of prayer and religious observance: for this, he would require no qualifications save those which are peculiarly his; for there is about him a serenity and a radiance which betoken spiritual power of a particular kind, far removed as this may be from the kind of intellectual authority and clear-sightedness which will be needed if he continues to pursue an active role in relation to the destiny of Tibet.

‘Having regard to my present age,’ wrote the Great Thirteenth, in a passage which incidentally reveals that he had a far more subtle grasp of the teachings concerning himself than is to be found in all but a very few books which have been written upon this subject, ‘it were better that I should lay down the ecclesiastical and temporal power, and devote the short remainder of this life to religious devotion. My future lives are many and I would like to devote myself entirely to spiritual concerns. But by reason of the Guardian Deities inside my body and my Root Lama, people come to me to hear religion, they come to me to decide their disputes. . . .’ It must be remembered, however, that the Great Thirteenth Dalai Lama, quite apart from the Guardian Deities inside his body and his Root Lama, had a genius for settling disputes; moreover, the circumstances could scarcely have been more different: his successor would have all the excuses which the Great Thirteenth sought for himself and failed to find—if he

had the same desire to withdraw from secular affairs and devote himself to the more inward aspects of his vocation as a monk-priest.

All this, however, is perilously close to the horrid error of imagining that one knows what is good for someone else. The most that a lover of Tibet is entitled to state with firmness is that certain courses would be, in his or her view, harmful and erroneous: no one but a Tibetan has the right to go further than this—and yet, on the other hand, one has no right to go so far without giving at least some indication of an alternative which might hold out a little hope; hence the tentative suggestions which I have made concerning the future of His Holiness. In fact, of course, the very nature of the Tibetan predicament is inseparable from the fact that in this twentieth-century world every individual is being compelled to pursue his own truth. The Fourteenth Dalai Lama will be compelled to do this at whatever cost to Tibet; and, paradoxically, the only way by which he might ultimately betray his people is by refusing to do it.