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Freeing Tibet: 50 years of struggle, resilience, and hope

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Freeing Tibet reveals the extent of the covert involvement of the United States' Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in the 1959 uprising of the Tibetans against the Chinese including the training of Tibetan guerilla fighters in Colorado secretive airlifts of massive amounts of military equipment and supplies and even its collusion in the Dalai Lama's escape and the formation of His Holiness's government-in-exile at Dharamsala India. Backed by four successive presidencies of Truman Eisenhower Kennedy and Johnson "…the first part of the movement to free Tibet began as a secret Cold War operation—part guerilla war part battle to shape public opinion." Classified documents here revealed for the first time detail how the United States interested in Tibet for its own reasons among them the intent to discredit communism in world opinion engaged in an attempt to help the Tibetans wrest their freedom from the Chinese invaders. After a time the CIA had to accept that guerilla warfare against the massive Chinese army could never succeed and support for covert operations in Tibet ended.

The Dalai Lama had not endorsed the covert CIA war because of his firm opposition to violence instead while American officials worked with his brothers and Tibetan resistance leaders the Dalai Lama broadened his contact with Westerners both serious students of Buddhism and counterculture figures and concentrated his energies on the survival of Tibet's people culture and religious institutions during exile. As the CIA lost interest in Tibet poets artists writers musicians filmmakers and spiritual seekers took up its cause and the intersecting planes of the free Tibet movement and the explosion of world-wide youth culture with its craving for new spiritual experiences caused the dharma to be heartily embraced by the West. Tibetan Buddhist philosophy religion and culture are now widely known in Western society and many Westerners are becoming followers of the Dalai Lama with some even seeking ordination as Buddhist monks and nuns.

During the first decades of his exile the Dalai Lama was conceiving and nurturing a "Middle Way" grounded in Buddhist philosophy and teachings that would provide hope for the survival of his people and their culture without loss of the commitment to peaceful action. His plan makes use of many of the same elements that resulted in the ending of the apartheid regime in South Africa and it may be possible that those same sanctions and demands enacted by a world horrified at the extent of Chinese brutality in Tibet will result in the creation of an autonomous Tibet within Chinese society and peacefully resolve the half century of conflict.

John B. Roberts II is a journalist television producer and former Reagan political strategist. He is a consulting producer for *The McLaughlin Group* and has been featured on NBC's *Dateline* and in *The New York Times The Washington Times The Washington Post* and *USA Today*. He and Elizabeth A. Roberts have indicated Howard Bane declared to be "Friend Mentor Spy" in their dedication as a primary source for their material.
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