

The Dalai Lama's life in 3 acts

Act 1: scene 1

At holy Lake Lhamo Lhatso outside Lhasa, in 1933, called The Year of the Water Bird in Tibet. The thirteenth Dalai Lama has just passed away and the search for his successor has begun. According to the Tibetan Dalai Lama tradition, the spiritual and worldly leader of Tibet is a wise and loving person, a bodhisattva, who has been reborn time and time again for 600 years to help and serve the Tibetan people. So, as soon as the 13th Dalai Lama has passed away, the search for his new incarnation begins. The temporary regent of Tibet, Reting Rinpoche sees in Lake Lhamo Lhatso's clear waters a vision of a great three-story monastery with a roof covered in jade and gold. A road leads from the monastery eastwards to a farm at the foot of a hill. The flat roof of the dwelling-house is decorated with turquoise mosaic. Reting Rinpoche writes down his vision and hands it over to the national assembly. Soon after, the government in Lhasa will send out a scout to north-eastern Tibet to look for the new leader.

Act 1, scene 2. Early spring of 1937, north-eastern Tibet.

A search patrol consisting of a few government officials and a very well respected abbot from the great Sera Monastery arrive in the village of Taktser in north-eastern Tibet. There they find the farm with the turquoise mosaic decorations. Disguised as merchants the travelers knock on the door. One of the children in the house, two-year-old Lhamo Dhondrub, was born soon after demise of the previous Dalai Lama. The abbot, who had been the confidant of the thirteenth Dalai Lama, asks Lhamo Dhondrub to guess his real name. Lhamo Dhondrub answers "Sera-aga" which means "a Lama from Sera". Later the boy is shown some objects and he is asked to pick out a few of them. Each time he picks out things that belonged to the previous Dalai Lama. Eventually, after repeated tests, the scouts are convinced that they have found the new leader of Tibet.

Act 1, scene 3. In the Potala Palace in Lhasa.

The walls of the bedroom of the great fifth Dalai Lama are covered with century-old dust. In one end of the room there is an altar with a butter lamp and a plate of food and water as an offering to the Buddhas.

It is night. The fourteenth Dalai Lama lies wake listening to the mice pattering on the altar helping themselves to the offerings. He thinks of them as his little comrades. Sometimes they come all the way to the bed that consists of a big wooden box filled with duvets and surrounded by long, red curtains. The mice get in through the curtains and their urine is dripping on the Dalai Lama huddling under the covers.

Act 1, scene 4.

The greater part of the Dalai Lama's days in the Potala Palace are taken up by studies of metaphysics, philosophy of religion, logic, dialectics and meditation practices. The meditation trains his ability to concentrate. It teaches him to withdraw the attention from the sense world and from all thoughts to seek the foundation of consciousness, that which in Buddhism is called the clear consciousness. The Dalai Lama confides to the Austrian Heinrich Harrer, residing in Lhasa at the end of the 1940's, that he is doing practices by which the consciousness can be separated from the body. The Dalai Lama: "When I master my practice I am going to send you to Gartok, which is hundreds of kilometers from here. And while you are there I will direct your actions telepathically from the Potala Palace." Heinrich Harrer: "When you succeed I will convert to Buddhism!"

Act 2 scene 1.

Lhasa, summer of 1950. The annual opera festival.

The Dalai Lama looks forward to the opera performances, enjoys the festive atmosphere and the colorful dress of the audience. Towards evening, during one of the performances, a messenger comes running to the grandstand where he sits. He is immediately shown to the regent, Tathag Rinpoche, who is sitting in the next box. The Dalai Lama understands that something is wrong. Under normal circumstances government matters would have had to wait until the following week. Something terrible must have happened! He climbs up on a box and peeps in through a high window between his box and the regent's. The face of the regent becomes very grave while reading the letter. After a few minutes he goes out and the Dalai Lama hears him give an order that the Kashag (council) shall be summoned. The letter is from the governor of Kham. It says that Chinese soldiers unexpectedly have attacked a Tibetan camp and killed the officer in charge.

Act 2, scene 2. Tibet's defining moment.

In November 17, 1950, 15 years old, the Dalai Lama is pronounced to be of age, shoulders the worldly power of Tibet, and is given the task of leading his people during the Chinese invasion. In the provinces Kham and

Amdo, where the Chinese soon start to collectivize the agriculture, the property and land of the farmers are confiscated. The ones who protest are subject to public interrogations, so called *thamzings*, where neighbors and friends are ordered at gunpoint to torment and torture the victims to make them "confess". A *thamzing* often ends in an execution.

Thousands of children are taken away from their parents to be brought up in China. At the same time there is the first wave of the around seven million immigrants that China in the course of a few decades will send to Tibet.

The Dalai Lama realizes the futility of taking up arms. The Tibetans would never be able to drive away the Chinese by force of arms. They hardly have any arms and their army is far too small and badly equipped and organized. The Dalai Lama is convinced that the only hope for Tibet is, with the help of an international opinion and diplomacy, to persuade the Chinese to change their strategy and withdraw. He does everything he can to prevent an armed revolt.

Act 2, scene 3.

India. New Delhi.

The Dalai Lama has made a pilgrimage to the bank of the river Yamuna where Mahatma Gandhi's body was cremated.

The Dalai Lama: I wished ardently that I would have had the privilege to meet Gandhi in life. But when I stood there I nevertheless felt that I had come close to him. I knew that he would have advised me to follow a peaceful path. I had, and still have, immovable faith in the teaching of non-violence that he preached and applied. Now I decided with even greater purposefulness to follow his example, whatever the difficulties that lay ahead. I promised never to be the instigator of any acts of violence.

Act 2, scene 4.

March 10, 1959.

Norbulinka Palace (the Dalai Lama's summer palace right outside Lhasa). When the Dalai Lama wakes up on the morning of March 10 and looks out through his window he is met by the sight of large crowds of people surrounding the palace. A rumor has spread in Lhasa that the Chinese are going to kidnap the Dalai Lama and now the inhabitants of Lhasa have turned out to a man to protect him with their own bodies. Armed with sticks, spades and knives the crowd resist for five days and nights. Hundreds of trucks with Chinese soldiers arrive during night to the Chinese camp. And there is a rumor that troop reinforcements even are transported to Lhasa by air. The Dalai Lama: "I felt like I was in the middle of two volcanoes that could erupt at any time. On the one hand I had the unequivocal and unanimous protest of my people against the Chinese regime, and on the other hand the aggressive force of the occupation army. If they were to clash together the outcome would be

given. The inhabitants of Lhasa would be massacred in thousands and Lhasa, as well the rest of Tibet, would be left at the mercy of a military regime with all the implications. I knew that I for my people's sake would have to try to mitigate the anger of my countrymen and calm the Chinese whose resentment otherwise surely would become even greater.

Act 2: scene 5.

March 17, at four o'clock in the afternoon, the Chinese fire the first shots. Two grenades explode in the garden of the palace. That afternoon the Dalai Lama makes the difficult decision to escape already that same night.

The Dalai Lama: "I am not afraid of death. The prospect of falling victim to the attacks of the Chinese didn't scare me. I sincerely think that my spiritual practice has given me enough strength to accept without fear the possibility of leaving my present body. But I knew that my people and my co-workers wouldn't share my feelings. For them the person of the Dalai Lamas was infinitely precious. They believed that the Dalai Lama represented Tibet and the Tibetan way of life, which they held dearer than anything else. They fully believed that if my body would be annihilated by the Chinese Tibet would also be destroyed."

Act 3:

Act 3, scene 1.

Geneva. 1960.

The International Law Commission presents a report where they establish that the Chinese in Tibet are guilty of the "worst of all crimes that an individual or a nation can be accused of; that is to say, intentionally trying to annihilate an entire people".

Act 3, scene 2.

In the cloister yard outside the Dalai Lama's bungalow in the small mountain village of McLeod Ganj in Dharamsala, India. The Dalai Lama speaks to a large number of newly arrived Tibetan refugees. "The enemy is in reality one's own untamed mind. When one hasn't brought one's mind under control, one sees the enemy out there. The real enemy that must be overcome is the enemy within oneself. We are of course fighting our own inner battle. But our mental attitude helps us to neutralize the hatred that we otherwise would feel against the Chinese and to reduce the mental disturbances that such hatred brings with it. If something positive

would happen in China, which is a large and densely populated country, we can be pleased about it. It will benefit so many millions of people.” The Dalai Lama has fought for almost 50 years with diplomatic means to improve the conditions of his people. Han has stood firm on the path of non-violence and consistently advised his people against armed revolt. In November 1989 the Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his work for non-violence. “The Tibetans have, through their struggle for non-violence for over half a century, supplied a pilot example for non-violence in the world,” he says.