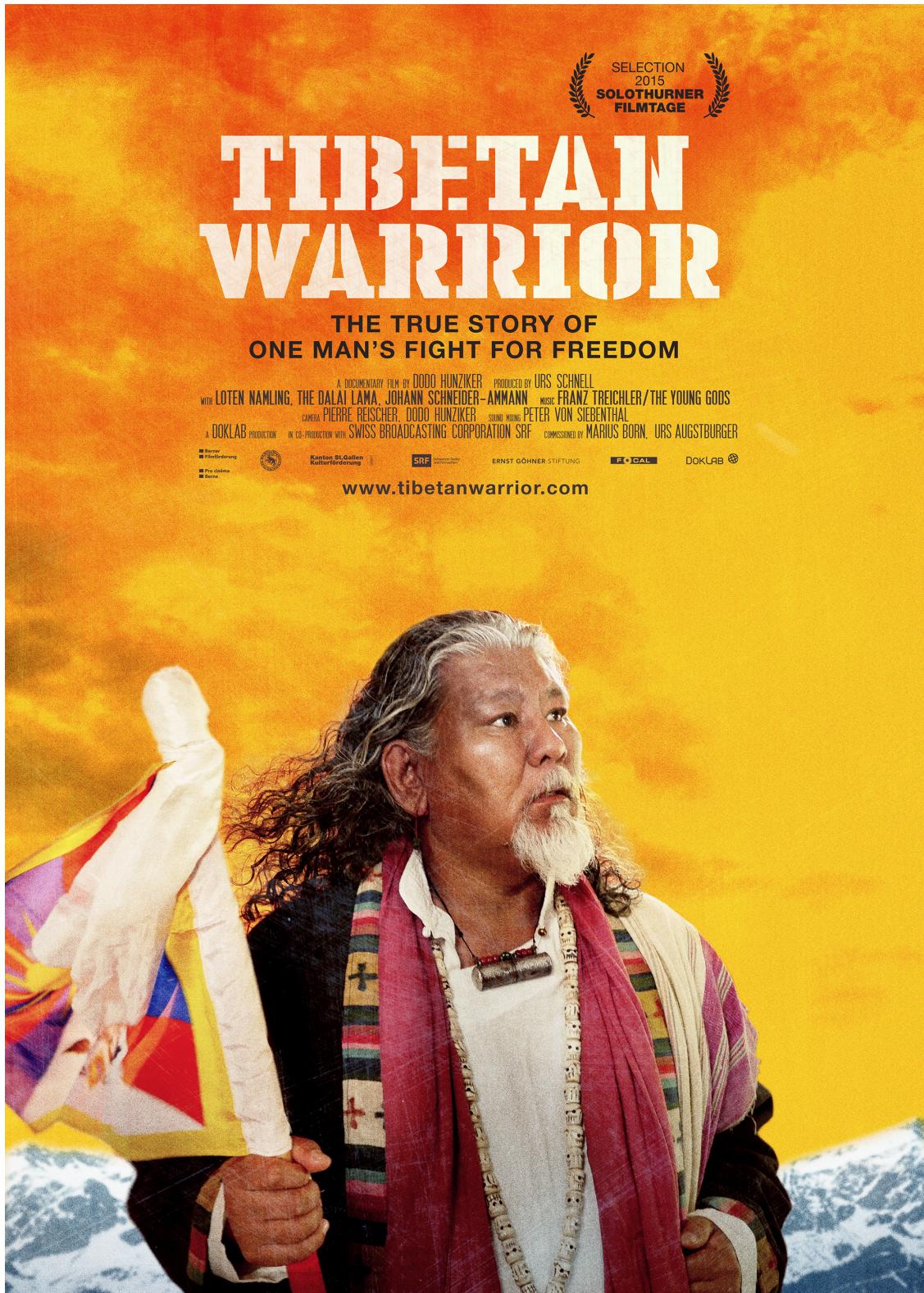


TIBETAN WARRIOR
Press Kit

www.tibetanwarrior.ch



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Synopsis

The true story of one man's fight for freedom.

For more than 60 years Tibetans have been fighting Chinese oppression. But their non-violent struggle appears to be in vain. Now, as a new form of peaceful protest, Tibetans are setting themselves on fire. Loten Namling – an exiled Tibetan and musician living in Switzerland – is deeply disturbed by such self-destructive action. So he sets off from Europe to India, on a one-man mission to meet top politicians, experts and young radicals. He himself becomes increasingly radical and is on the verge of violent protest. Finally he ends up at The Office of the Dalai Lama in India to seek the advice from the exiled Tibetan leader.



The struggle for freedom and self-determination is an age-old struggle. A struggle fought so often by the most violent means – as is very much in evidence around the world today. This is not the case, however, in the on-going conflict between Tibet and China. The Tibetans invoke the principle of non-violence. They try to live accordingly,

even though the past 60 years have seen small but repeated outbreaks of violence. However, more recent years have seen a new form of Tibetan protest which has shocked and appalled me – the act of self-immolation. Through my close contacts with Loten Namling, I have sensed the depth of desperation and helplessness behind each and every self-immolation. The pictures prey upon my mind. The world's media, however, has other priorities. So too do many western governments. They prefer to come to terms with China. My film is intended to make a stand against this convenient "arrangement". I hope that "Tibetan Warrior" – through the big screen, television and the Internet – will contribute to the self-determination debate. My film cannot change the world. But it can encourage and inspire discussion, and initiate attitudes to conflicts – whether in day-to-day life or existential situations. In making this film, it has been my intention to address a public not directly concerned with Tibet and its troubles. I am therefore convinced that Loten's story will have universal appeal.

Quotes from the film



Dalai Lama

Violence always leads to disaster.

There is no alternative to dialogue with the Chinese leadership.

Truth is on our side – and ours is a struggle for truth.



Lukar Jam | Tibetan poet and former political prisoner

We shouldn't let ourselves be influenced by philosophies like Gandhi's.

In our fight for independence, we have the right to use military force.



Loten Namling | central character

The situation in Tibet must change. Otherwise our culture will be destroyed.

The international community is backing China because countries crave for economic gain.

The Free Trade Agreement between Switzerland and China does not once mention Human Rights.

More than 130 people have self-immolated. For them it would have been easier to blow themselves up with a bomb at a Chinese market.

I am absolutely against terrorism, but the world seems to listen only to violence.

Sometimes things are so bad, that to stop bad people, you have to act like the bad people..



Johann Schneider-Ammann | Swiss Economics Minister

(on Switzerland's Free Trade Agreement with China)

When you negotiate then you need to compromise.

I am sure that we will have the opportunity to support both the People's Republic of China and its minorities in improving their living conditions.

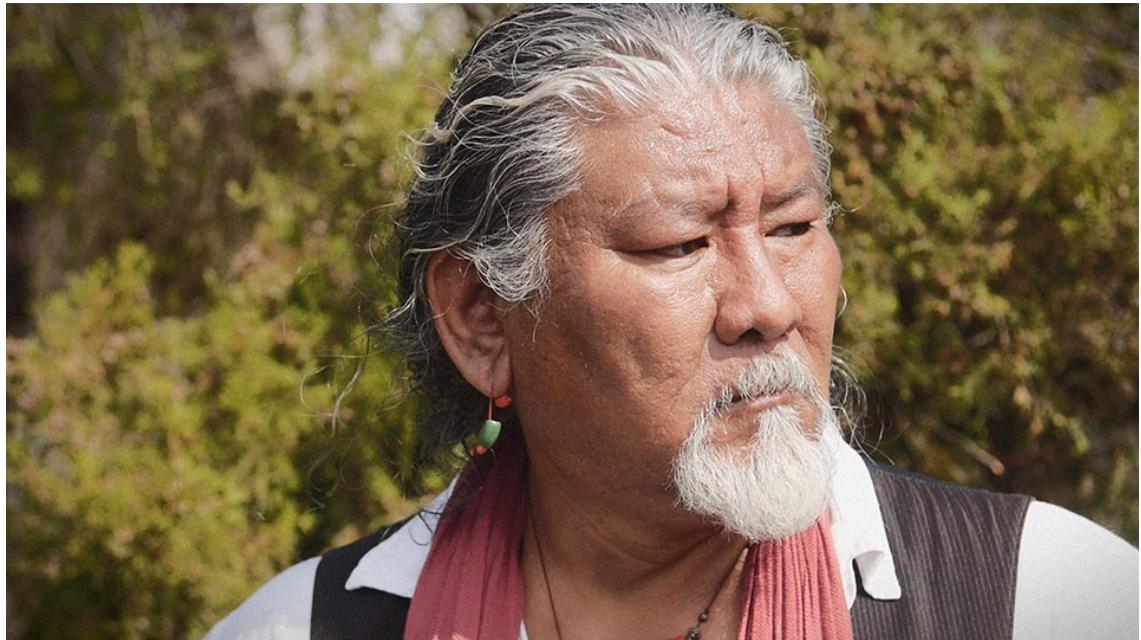
Step by step



From left to right:

1. In the mountains above Dharamsala in India – memories of a childhood in exile.
2. Franz Treichler of "The Young Gods" supports Loten on his journey.
3. Young Tibetans from the Tibetan Youth Congress want radical separation of Tibet from China.
4. The Heldenplatz (Heroes Square) in Vienna – Loten performs at the European Solidarity Rally for Tibet.



Interview with Loten Namling, central character

Loten, for 52 days you walked the 160 kilometres from Bern to Geneva, pulling a coffin with you. You are over 50 years old. Why did you want to make such a strenuous journey?

When I set off on this journey in May 2012, no fewer than 35 Tibetans had already self-immolated. The world had become deaf to these desperate cries for help. So my aim was to change this disinterest and attract world attention. Along the way I honoured those Tibetan martyrs by prostrating myself throughout the journey. At the end of the journey, at the Place des Nations (the United Nations headquarters in Geneva), I performed at a freedom concert with the help of Swiss singer Franz Treichler and "The Young Gods" band and international musicians.

But why choose this way of protest?

My father once made a "pilgrimage" of over 100 kilometres from his home village in a remote part of Tibet to Lhasa, the capital. His mission then was to become a monk at the Drepung Monastery, one of the four largest monasteries in Tibet. The hardship of the journey is always an important aspect of a pilgrimage. Secondly, I saw the black coffin as a symbol of the dying Tibet.

What did you hope to achieve?

I had five goals. The first was to draw world attention to the on-going tragedy on the roof of the world, Tibet. Secondly, I wanted to appeal to China to return to the Tibetan people their right to freedom. Thirdly, I demanded the immediate release of all the political prisoners, among whom are countless artists, writers and (like myself) musicians. My fourth goal was to ask the United Nations to send a delegation to Tibet, to obtain an objective picture of the situation there. My final wish was especially important. After all, I have lived in Switzerland for the past 22 years as an exiled Tibetan. So I asked the Swiss government to initiate a dialogue between the representatives of the Tibetan Government in exile and the Chinese government. The idea was to initiate direct talks between the two parties here in Switzerland on neutral soil.

And now? Have you achieved your goals?

When I was a young boy, His Holiness the Dalai Lama always reminded us that we children were the future of Tibet. During this journey many people supported and applauded me for dragging along this heavy black coffin. But the problem is still not solved – in fact it is even worse. People are still self-immolating, and the world remains blind to their sacrifice. If in the next few years, the situation in Tibet doesn't change then there is a very real danger that Tibetan culture, Tibetan traditions and the Tibetan way of life will come to an end.

The Swiss parliament overwhelmingly approved the Free Trade Agreement with China. Surely this must have disappointed you?

No. I think it is very important that western governments do business with China. But at the same time these governments should take a responsible attitude to human rights. So I went to the Bundeshaus (the Swiss parliament building) to follow closely the debate about the Free Trade Agreement with China. Swiss democracy and moral values are highly regarded all over the world. Here people have rights, the right to express their own opinion. So, for me, of course it was disappointing to see Swiss parliamentarians voting for this Free Trade Agreement while completely ignoring the human rights issue. If the world really believes in non-violence, then they should support the Tibetan cause and stop the brutal occupation. Until now no country has come up with a resolution to stop China – not even Switzerland. The world seems to listen only to terrorists and not to peace lovers like Tibetans under the leadership of the Dalai Lama.

In the film you speak about your disappointment with the Dalai Lama's position. Do you begin to radicalize and to reflect on terrorist action?

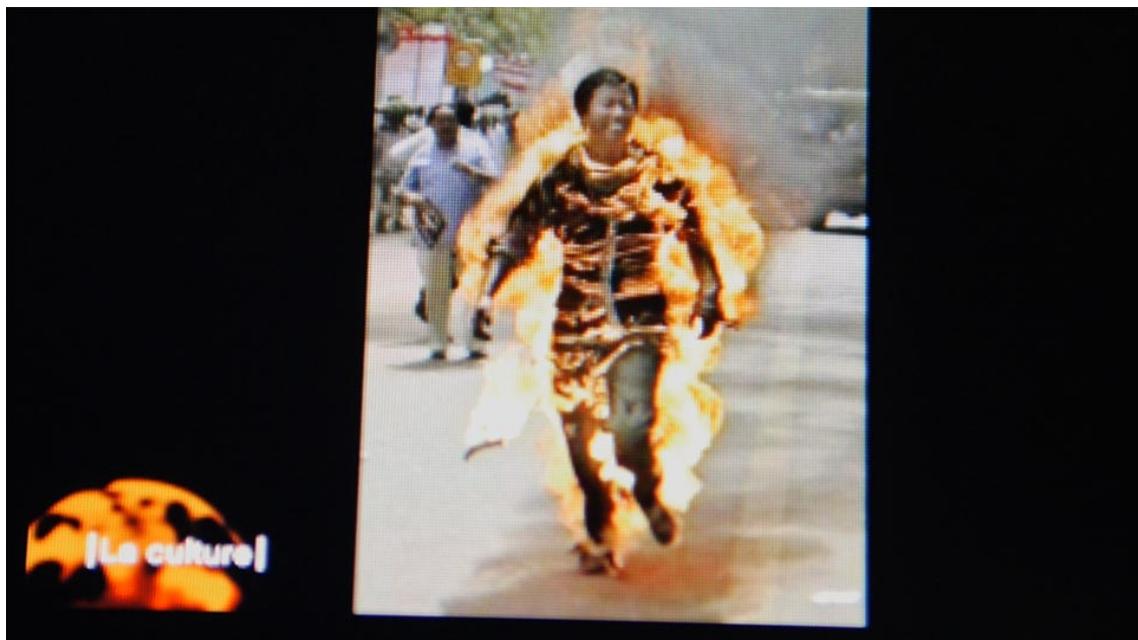
Due to the brutal occupation of Tibet by China His Holiness – through his infinite wisdom – has come up with an alternative policy of non-violence, called the Middle Way Approach. This is now the official policy of the Tibetan Administration in exile. The term Middle Way means a compromise between two extremes, the extremes being "complete independence" or "living under Chinese oppression without freedom". The Middle Way itself is a noble idea and perhaps the only realistic solution for Tibet. It would safeguard Tibetan culture, language and religion while at the same time ensuring peaceful co-existence with the Chinese people. However all these noble attempts by His Holiness to avoid bloodshed and violence have so far failed. The reaction of China to His Holiness is nothing but a pack of lies, blaming him for all the troubles. It is naturally very frustrating for young Tibetans. In one way we have complete faith in the Dalai Lama, but on the other hand we know from past experience that it is futile to negotiate with the Chinese. Many young Tibetans want to fight. Already more than 130 Tibetans have opted in their desperation for an extreme form of protest – namely self immolation.

Self-immolations in Tibet

Facts to the self-immolations since 2009

The first reported self-immolation occurred on 27 February 2009 in the town of Aba, Sichuan province, southwest China. A 27-year-old Tibetan monk, Tapey (also known as Lobsang Tashi), was shot dead by police after setting himself on fire.

Link: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7916544.stm>



Since then 133 Tibetans (112 men, 21 women) have set themselves on fire:

- 107 of the 133 are known to have died following their protest
- 24 of the Tibetans who self-immolated were aged 18 or under
- 44 of the 133 were from Ngaba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan province
- 13 of the 133 were monks from the Kirti Monastery in Ngaba
- 11 of the 133 were former monks at the Kirti Monastery in Ngaba
- 2 of the 133 were nuns from the Mame Dechen Chokorling Nunnery in Ngaba

Why self-immolations?

The latest major unrest in Tibet took place in spring 2008, shortly before the beginning of the Beijing Summer Olympic Games. Since then, the yearning for freedom and independence has become widespread among Tibetans.

According to Tsering Woeser – together with Wang Lixiong one of China's best-known thinkers on government policy toward ethnic minorities – the current self-immolations are continuations of the 2008 pan-Tibet protests. However, the reasons for the self-immolations are varied, she adds.

Wang Lixiong has documented the dying words of the 97 people who self immolated up until the end of 2012. He classified the reasons as follows:

- Suffering from an unbearable situation
- Expressing courage and responsibility – for the dignity of the Tibetan nation
- Expressing protest and demands – calling for Tibetan independence
- Praying for the Dalai Lama – religious dedication

In their final words 14 self-immolators described their immolations as targeted actions, Wang Lixiong writes. They expected "that their sacrifices would help achieve their goal" rather than merely express protests or desperation. And Wang Lixiong concludes: "Self-immolation is the most extreme act of struggle an individual can resort to."

Here the sad summary:

- 112 men, 21 women (133)
- 107 of the 133 are known to have died following their protest
- 24 of the Tibetans who self-immolated were 18 or under
- 44 of the 133 were from Ngaba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan province
- 13 of the 133 were monks at Kirti Monastery in Ngaba
- 11 of the 133 were former monks at the Kirti Monastery in Ngaba (it is not known who of the nine chose to disrobe, or were expelled from the monastery by government authorities)
- 2 of the 133 were nuns from the Mame Dechen Chokorling Nunnery in Ngaba
- 132 of the self-immolations have occurred since 16 March, 2011

The first self-immolation in Tibetan society in the modern era took place in exile in Delhi, India, on April 27, 1998, when Thubten Ngodrup set himself on fire – and later died – as a Tibetan Youth Congress hunger strike was broken up by Indian police.

The Free Trade Agreement between Switzerland and China

In July 2013 Swiss Economics Minister Johann Schneider-Ammann travelled to Beijing to sign with representatives of the Chinese government a ground-breaking free trade agreement. Switzerland therefore became the first country in Europe – even before the European Union – to conclude such an accord. It favours Switzerland in particular because Chinese import duties are being reduced and in some cases discontinued completely. Following ratification by the Swiss parliament, the agreement came into force early in 2014.

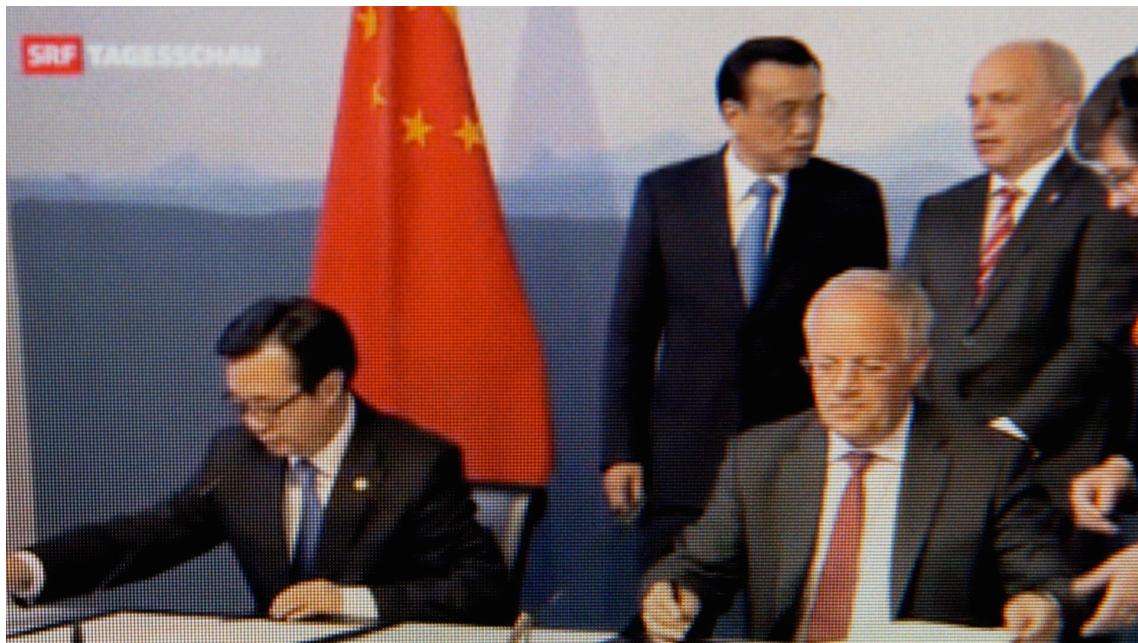
Critics have accused the Swiss government and parliament of ignoring China's human rights record. The free trade agreement covers more than 1000 pages – without a single mention of Human Rights. In reply, the Swiss government has cited its regular human rights dialogue with China.

In English, French and German

- <http://www.humanrights.ch/de/menschenrechte-schweiz/aussenpolitik/aussenwirtschaftspolitik/wto/petition-freihandelsabkommen-china-menschenrechte>

In German only

- <http://www.nzz.ch/aktuell/schweiz/bahn-frei-fuer-freihandel-mit-china-1.18267300>
- <http://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/schweiz/Freihandel-mit-China-kann-starten/story/11252613>



The History of Tibet

Tibet emerged in the 7th century as a unified empire. But it soon divided into a variety of territories. The bulk of western and central Tibet was often at least nominally unified under a series of Tibetan governments located in Lhasa. These governments were at various times first under Mongol, then under Manchu overlordship.

In 1644 the Manchu established in Beijing the Qing dynasty. The eastern regions of Kham and Amdo often maintained a more decentralized indigenous political structure. They were divided among a number of small principalities and tribal groups, yet often fell more directly under Beijing's rule. Most of this area was eventually incorporated into the Chinese provinces of Sichuan and Qinghai. The current borders of Tibet were generally established in the 18th century.

Under the Qing dynasty, China did not interfere directly in local affairs. Between 1727 and 1911, the imperial presence in Lhasa consisted solely of a Residential Commissioner and a few logistical and military personnel. The local ruler was the Dalai Lama as the spiritual and political leader. The Tibetan peasants submitted solely to Tibetan masters – they recognized only the Dalai.

Following [the collapse](#) of the [Qing dynasty](#) in 1912, Qing soldiers were disarmed and escorted out of the [Tibet Area](#). The region subsequently declared its [independence](#) in 1913, without recognition by the following [Chinese Republican government](#). Later Lhasa took control of the western part of [Xikang Province](#), China. The region maintained its autonomy until 1951 when, after the [Invasion of Tibet](#), it became unified into the [People's Republic of China](#). The previous Tibetan government was abolished in 1959 after a failed uprising. The 14th Dalai Lama fled to India. Shortly after he established the "Tibetan Government in Exile", known as the Central Tibetan Administration CTA. The position of the CTA is that Tibet is a distinct nation with a long history of independence.



Today, the People's Republic of China governs western and central Tibet as the [Tibet Autonomous Region](#); the eastern areas are now mostly [ethnic autonomous prefectures](#) within [Sichuan](#), [Qinghai](#) and other neighbouring provinces.

Tibet – the political status

Under international law, the independence of Tibet is disputed. A Tibetan government in exile was set up in India in 1959, and a parliament in exile in 1960. The government in exile is recognized by no country in the world – but enjoys wide international financial and other support. The 14th Dalai Lama withdrew from all his political functions in 2011, while remaining Tibet's Buddhist spiritual leader. Since then the Tibetan political leader and Prime Minister in exile has been Lobsang Sangay, a legal scholar.

The Middle Way Approach of the Dalai Lama

Since 1959 the Tibetan Government in Exile in India and the Dalai Lama (as Tibet's Buddhist spiritual leader) have been in dispute with China over Tibet's sovereignty. They are pressing for what they term a political Middle Way Approach by not seeking full political independence as such, but a status of autonomy with assurances of religious and cultural freedom – currently not guaranteed by China. They are also pressing for extension of the *Tibet Autonomous Region* within China to areas of neighbouring Chinese provinces inhabited by Tibetans.

The Chinese view

From Beijing's perspective, the Chinese Peoples Army marched into Tibet in 1950 to liberate the Tibetan people from the feudal and repressive rule of the Lamas. China cited centuries of serfdom suffered by Tibetan society under the yoke of its dominant monasteries. The Tibetan people "welcomed" the liberation. The subsequent modernisation of the "Tibet Autonomous Region" has since been due entirely to the efforts of China.

Concerning Tibet, China sees the Dalai Lama and "his clique" as the main enemy. The series of self-immolations over recent years have been incited by the "Dalai clique" – yet are incompatible with Buddhist teachings.

In the west, political analysts see China's policy and position as influenced by super-power interests. The Tibetan high plateau is the most important watershed in Asia. It is rich in the most precious raw materials such as chrome, copper, magnesite, boron, lead, oil, gold, iron, lithium, potassium chloride, aluminium and zinc. Exploitation of these resources is a focal point of the Chinese government's current Five-Year Plan.

Interview with Dodo Hunziker, Director

Dodo Hunziker, why a film about Loten Namling, an exiled Tibetan living in Switzerland?

Loten walked into our DokLab offices in Bern to tell us about his one-man mission. We listened and I immediately had this powerful and penetrating picture in my head – a lone Tibetan far away from his homeland pulling a symbolic black coffin through the idyllic Swiss countryside. I'd always been interested in the concept of non-violent resistance; and Loten's personal story gradually developed into a greater more all-embracing question. Namely, how can a single person rise up against foreign domination, political oppression and even the threatened extermination of all his people? During the making of the film, certain aspects assumed more significance. Is non-violent resistance effective? As an expression of resisting oppression, is a process of radicalization inevitable – even to the extent of extreme non-violent resistance? Another important aspect was the cultural context. Not the oft quoted "eye for an eye" or "tooth for a tooth" from the Bible; or the calls to combat to be found in the Koran. No, for Loten Namling resistance has to be based on the principles of Tibetan Buddhism. Down the centuries Buddhism has endeavoured to pacify warring mountain dwellers and nomads. And in the profound human sense of civilization, this has succeeded. As the Dalai Lama says in my film: "Violence always leads to disaster."

Does your film take sides with Tibet?

I make films about topics which capture the heart and which I consider to be of importance. The extinction of Tibetan culture would be a catastrophe; the oppression of minorities in China offends my sense of justice. But I don't see myself as a fighter for a political goal. And I'm not a Buddhist. My aim was to understand the general background to the Tibet situation and, more specifically, to comprehend the one-man mission of Loten Namling. During this process I came to the very fundamental question – how does one fight for freedom and self-determination? Does a noble cause justify each and every means?

What was your input as the author?

As an author, I aim to convey my interpretation of my characters' experiences as I have documented them. First and foremost I'm there with my camera right in the real world of my main characters. I observe, I accompany, I discuss and document by seeking out the most pertinent pictures, the most important images. What finally appears on the screen as a finished film product is my understanding and interpretation of the situation.

And then the actual making of the film?

In making documentary films I try to create a vivid viewing experience. I ask myself how I can reach viewers not usually drawn to documentaries. In principle, a feature film is more of an experience than a documentary. So aesthetically I tend to orient myself in a non-documentary direction. I build on the scenes, develop the dialogue and project the inner pictures or reflections of my characters.

Doesn't sound easy . . .

No, it's not easy at all. With documentaries, there are indeed certain disadvantages. For example, no precise or prepared dialogue; no easy planning of scenes and sequences. But I want to stay documentary, and not feed something to the viewer as fiction. I want to document the world as it is – albeit in narrative form with a dramatic dimension and certain concessions to the norms of feature film production.

"Tibetan Warrior" has been produced by DokLab on a small budget, for both TV and the cinema – that is, in a long and short version. You yourself did much of the actual shooting and also the editing. Was this dual role necessitated by the low budget?

Working in a small team allows a more intimate environment and approach to the characters. The film crew's presence becomes less intrusive. So that has always been my preference, regardless of budget considerations. Doing my own editing work also allows me a more in-depth evaluation of the material and more time to experiment. However, at a certain point I would have preferred to spread the work among more professionals. The time pressures involved when doing everything oneself can be quite stressful. In addition, one misses the creative interchange. In this respect, the low budget was certainly a handicap.

The Director



Dodo Hunziker is a filmmaker / producer based in Bern, Switzerland, and co-proprietor of the production company DokLab. After studying graphic design, he started editing videos, resulting in a passion for documentary filmmaking. After several years of learning by doing, Dodo studied film in Prague has been directing and producing films for TV and cinema since 2006.

Filmography

- 2015 **Tibetan Warrior** | documentary | writer, director
- 2013 **Der ultimative Aare-Ride** | Swiss TV summer challenge, 28 minutes. | director, editing
- 2013 **Ikarus am Eiger** | Swiss TV summer challenge 30 minutes. | director, editing
- 2012 **Wisdom of Lagos** | short documentary, 9 minutes | director, editing, sound | winner short film competition Transparency International, Switzerland, Shnit Festival Bern 2012
- 2012 **Bee-Flat Schülerkonzerte** | film portrait | director, camera, sound, editing
- 2012 **Bottled Life – Nestlé's Business with Water** | cinema documentary, 90 minutes. | production and creative director
- 2008 **Hooligans – the dark side of soccer** | TV documentary, 49 minutes. | editing
- 2008 **Wilko will** | Indy documentary, 52 minutes. | director, camera, author, editing
- 2006 **Sweat for Blood** | TV documentary, 52 minutes | 2nd camera, sound, editing
- 2006 **Timesavings** | short film, CZ, 5 minutes. | author
- 2005 **Sunshine** | music video clip, CH, 3.37 minutes, selection Solothurn Film Festival 2007 | director, camera, editing
- 2005 **The Alchemist** | fiction/documentary CZ, 17 minutes (co-director and editing)
- 2004 **Die Jungs vom Berg** | documentary, CH, 52 minutes. | editing | Bern Television Prize 2005
- 2003 **Kiran over Mongolia** | documentary, USA, 86 minutes. | co-author, editing, sound | Winner Parnu Festival, Estonia; Dubai international Film Festival, UAE; Avignon Film Festival, France; Globians, Potsdam, Germany; Beeld for Beeld Festival, Netherlands; Catalonia international Film Festival, Spain; Rhodes Film Festival, Greece; Santa Fe Festival, USA
- 2001 **Outcaste** | documentary, CA, 30 minutes. | rough cut | Montreal International Documentary Festival, Canada; Hotdocs, Toronto, Canada; IDFA, Amsterdam, Netherlands
- 2000 **Ce serait bon pour une relation de faire l'amour pendant que le poulet cuit à 250 degrées** | short film CH, 12 minutes. | camera, editing

Cast

HIS HOLINESS THE 14TH DALAI LAMA

LOTEN NAMLING

DHINGRI NGAWANG Tibetan army veteran / former political prisoner

VENERABLE BAGDRO former political prisoner

LOBSANG YESHI spokesman, Kirti Monastery Dharamsala, India

FRANZ TREICHLER musician, The Young Gods

KELSANG GYALTSEN Special Representative of the Dalai Lama to Europe

LOBSANG SANGAY Prime Minister in Exile, Central Tibetan Administration

MARTIN NAEF member of the Swiss parliament

CHRISTIAN LÜSCHER member of the Swiss parliament

JACQUELINE FEHR member of the Swiss parliament

GERHARD PFISTER member of the Swiss parliament

ANDREAS AEBI member of the Swiss parliament

JOHANN SCHNEIDER-AMMANN Swiss Economics Minister

PENPA TSERING Speaker of the Central Tibetan Administration

LUKAR JAM poet / former political prisoner

TENZIN JIGME President Tibetan Youth Congress

LOBSANG WANGYAL culture manager Miss Tibet / Free Spirit Award

Crew

written and directed by DODO HUNZIKER
produced by URS SCHNELL
production assistant LEA RINDLISBACHER

co-produced by SWISS BROADCASTING CORPORATION SBC (SRF)
URS AUGSTBURGER / MARIUS BORN

camera PIERRE REISCHER
DODO HUNZIKER
camera Vienna TIZIAN TENZIN (TENZFILMZ)
additional camera Geneva MANUEL UEBERSAX
YVAN ZIADE
additional camera India SAPTARSHI ROY
ASHVINI SOLANKI

editing DODO HUNZIKER
editing supervisor PETER KÖNIG
editing consultant THOMAS BACHMANN
editing assistant TITUS BÜTLER

color grading PIERRE REISCHER
sound editing & mixing PETER VON SIEBENTHAL

sound recordings PETER VON SIEBENTHAL
DODO HUNZIKER
IVAN STEINER
JANOSCH RÖTHLISBERGER
TOBIAS HIRSBRUNNER
ANNA HALDORSDOTTIR
JOSEPH SPAID
sound recording "Yi Re Kyo" BERTRAND SIFFERT

script consultant production JÜRGEN SEIDLER
script consultant development JOSY MEIER
script editorial URS SCHNELL

production assistance Dharamsala NGAWANG RABGYAL (LHA CHARITABLE TRUST)
translations from Tibetan LOSANG RIBI
DUKTEN KYI
LOBSANG RABSEL
TASHI "PASHI" PASANG

translations English COLIN FARMER
translations French PIERRE SOLTERMANN

artwork AMY BOTELLO
dcp mastering TRINIPIX

music composition FRANZ TREICHLER

The Production

"Tibetan Warrior" has been produced by the Swiss company DokLab, in partnership with the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation. The film has been screened in Swiss cinemas and can be viewed online via Video on Demand (VOD). "Tibetan Warrior" (85 minutes) is available in separate English and German versions.

DokLab

DokLab was established in Bern in 2007 by the co-founders Urs Schnell and Dodo Hunziker. The crew of DokLab is passionately devoted to non-fiction film making for cinema, tv and web. Their last cinema production was award winning "Bottled Life – the Truth about Nestlé's Business with Water" (2012).

www.doklab.com

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