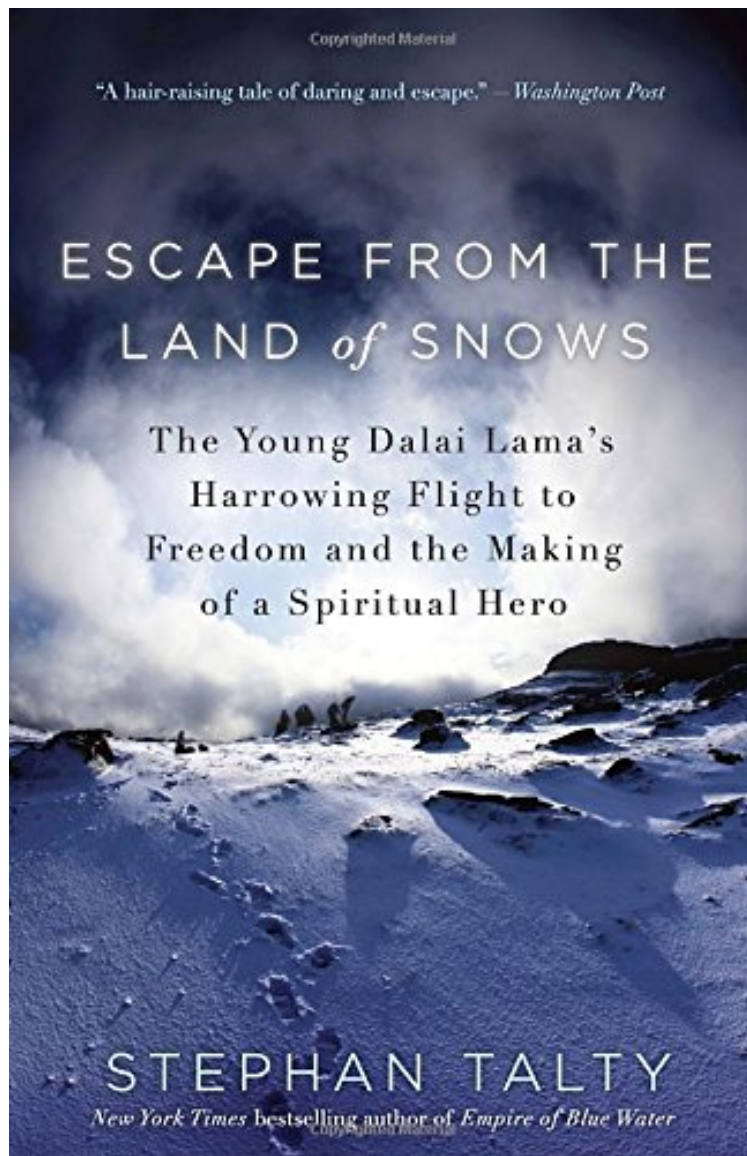


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Escape from the Land of Snows: The Young Dalai Lama's Harrowing Flight to Freedom and the Making of a Spiritual Hero

Stephan Talty

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Stephan Talty : Escape from the Land of Snows: The Young Dalai Lama's Harrowing Flight to Freedom and the Making of a Spiritual Hero before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Escape from the Land of Snows: The Young Dalai Lama's Harrowing Flight to Freedom and the Making of

a Spiritual Hero:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Nice to understand the events leading up to the release ...By Jennifer A. ParisNice to understand the events leading up to the release of Tibetan Buddhism in the world. Writing is okay, but not great. Still, once it got going, it held my interest.0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Exciting read - hard to put the book downBy Bruce B.This book will keep you interested from beginning to end. The story is captivating in respects to imminent danger lurking around every turn as His Holiness the Dalai Lama seeks to flee to India. You literally sense the fear and anger of the Tibetans and they face the Chinese invaders. You feel the courage displayed in the hearts of those Tibetans who are now forcefully reduced to that of a "lesser" human being by the Chinese as they rise up to challenge their oppressors only to be beat down or worse.As well written as this book is, the need for citations would have been a very welcomed addition to the book. It reads more like a novel than it does a historical account of events which is a different approach than I am used to. However, the need to cite the sources formally should have been done to preserve authenticity of the the work.8 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Should Be Regarded as Historical FictionBy Dr. Jan B. NewmanThis is a long awaited book that appears to have had a large amount of research behind it with no attempt at fact checking or attempt for internal consistency. It is written as an as an adventure saga weaving together sources and accounts of what happened when the Chinese communists overran Tibet and the Dalai Lama escaped into India and a few events thereafter. Much is written as first person recall by "witnesses."Tibet was a peaceful country that excluded outsiders after the attempted British invasion and was backward, semi-feudal in nature with significant inequities, and sectarianism, but was peaceful and most people despite living a very hard life were happy. It was complacency and ineptitude more than anything else that prevented them from keeping the Chinese out or turning them back during the initial invasion. The final nail in Tibet's casket was its guerilla fighters being abandoned by the CIA after Nixon decided trade with China was more important than human rights and Tibet. Nepal sided with the Chinese to avoid invasion by the Chinese, and India didn't want to anger its militant neighbor by supporting the Tibetan cause, which would prove to be to its own detriment.Some things are just purely erroneous such as stating Mongolia was under Communist Chinese rule.(Mongolia is autonomous and was previously under Soviet influence. Stalin destroyed the majority on Monasteries in Mongolia which also was a Buddhist country.), Grossly understating the population of Preinvasion Tibet-using a figure of 2 million when it was 6 million plus, underestimating the casualties and the destruction by the Chinese . Over 1 million Tibetans killed and 99.9 % of Tibetan monasteries ransacked, plundered and destroyed in China's attempts to destroy both the people of Tibet and their culture. Large amount of this book were lifted straight out of In Exile from the Land of Snows: The Definitive Account of the Dalai Lama and Tibet Since the Chinese Conquest by Avedon. (They were credited) He even adopted Avedon's writing style. Because the book is so well credited, one could readily accept this book as truth, but clearly there are embellishments and significant errors. Some things are superfluous to the story and not representative of the Tibetan culture preinvasion but appear to be added for sensationalism such as depicting monasteries as seats of debauchery.Every book should have a purpose. I am not sure what the purpose of this book is. Perhaps to bring the plight of Tibet to the average reader. The most enlightening part of the book is Talky's description of his own trip to Tibet.The interested reader should use this book as a starting point, but should read more primary sources and not take this as gospel truth. I will append some of those sources at a later time..

On the evening of March 17, 1959, as the people of Tibet braced for a violent power grab by Chinese occupiersone that would forever wipe out any vestige of national sovereigntythe twenty-four-year-old Dalai Lama, Tibets political and spiritual leader, contemplated the impossible. The task before him was immense: to slip past a cordon of crack Chinese troops ringing his summer palace and, with an escort of 300, journey across the highest terrain in the world and over treacherous Himalayan passes to freedomone step ahead of pursuing Chinese soldiers.Mao Zedung, Chinas ruthless Communist dictator, had pinned his hopes for total Tibetan submission on controlling the impressionable Dalai Lama. So beloved was the young rulerso identified with his countrys essencethat for him to escape might mean perpetual resistance from a population unwilling to tolerate an increasingly brutal occupation. The Dalai Lamas minders sent word to the Tibetan rebels and CIA-trained guerrillas who waited on the route: His Holiness must escapeat all costs.In many ways, the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, was unprepared for the epic journey awaiting him. Twenty-two years earlier, government search parties, guided by prophecies and omens, had arrived at the boys humble peasant home and subjected the two-year-old to a series of tests. After being declared the reincarnation of Tibets previous ruler, the boy was brought to Lhasa to learn the secrets of Buddhism and the ways of ultimate power. Forced in the ensuing two decades to cope with aching loneliness and often stifling ritualand compelled to suppress his mischievous personalityGyatso eventually proved himself a capable leader. But no previous Dalai Lama had ever taken on a million Communist Chinese soldiers bent on stamping out Tibetan freedom.To keep his countrys dream of independence alive by means of a government in exile, the young ruler would not only have to brave battalions of enemy soldiers and the whiteout conditions waiting on the slopes of the Himalayas highest peaks, hed have to overcome a different type of blindness: the navet intrinsic to his sheltered palace life and his position as leader of a

people who considered violence deeply taboo. His mind made up, the young Dalai Lama set off on his audacious journey to India while behind him a Chinese army rolled over Lhasa, its advance hunter patrols in fierce pursuit of the man they most coveted. The 14th's escape was an act of daring and defiance that represented Tibet's last hope, and so the world watched, transfixed, as the gentle monks' journey unfolded. Emotionally powerful and irresistibly page-turning, *Escape from the Land of Snows* is simultaneously a portrait of the inhabitants of a spiritual nation forced to take up arms in defense of their ideals, and the saga of an initially childlike ruler who at first wore his monks' robes uncomfortably but was ultimately transformed by his escape into the towering figure the world knows today—a charismatic champion of free thinking and universal compassion. From the Hardcover edition.

Eric Swanson on *Escape from the Land of Snows* Eric Swanson is co-author of the New York Times bestselling *The Joy of Living and Joyful Wisdom*. Stephan Talty's *Escape from the Land of Snows* gripped me from its opening image—that of a lonely, frightened twenty-three year-old man pacing the gilded cage of a palace garden outside Lhasa—through its final, haunting scenes, which show the Tibetan capital fifty years after the uprising that compelled the young Dalai Lama to escape his homeland in the face of a brutal crackdown by Chinese government forces. This meticulously researched book weaves together strands from a wide array of sources to provide an extraordinarily vivid and compelling picture of a labyrinth of events—from CIA schemes, to assassination attempts, to kidnapping plots, to the callous and calculating debates of Cold War politics, to shattering betrayals of Tibetan government figures—swirling around a young man confronting a destiny for which no amount of spiritual or political training could prepare him. While the outlines of the story are generally known, what fascinated me most was the immediacy that Talty brings to the telling. I felt I was right there, watching the emotional and spiritual transformation of a child plucked from obscurity to become an international icon. Who knew that the Dalai Lama had an early reputation for being headstrong and hot-tempered? That the palace where he lived during his early years was cold, drafty, and rat-infested? That discipline was enforced on him, not by a threat to his physical person, but by beatings his younger brother would receive? (The image of a whip hanging on a wall in his room is just one of many haunting details that stayed with me long past the final chapter, a vivid reminder that at an age when most of us are learning rudimentary social skills along with our ABCs, the Dalai Lama was impressed with the real-life understanding that his least word or action would have consequences for other people). His innocence during his first meeting with Mao—his willingness to believe the best about people—is heart-wrenching, as are the excruciating betrayals and the heroic, against-all-odds choices of the bands of supporters and resistance fighters who lead him ultimately to understand that the only way to save his people is to leave them. The agony behind the Dalai Lama's choice is palpable, unfolding moment by moment against a background of rumors, mysterious oracular pronouncements, and frustrated attempts to communicate with rebel forces and foreign governments. On every page I could feel the tension rising as the citizens of the capital, alarmed by rumors that the Dalai Lama may shortly be killed or kidnapped, flood the streets to protect him against the mounting threat of increasingly violent Chinese armed forces. I found myself holding my breath as hurried plans to escape in disguise, by night, were stitched together and carried out—a gamble so desperate it could seem like something out of a spy novel, except that Talty never lets us forget for a moment that every moment was terrifyingly real. Nor does the tension let up during the account of the Dalai Lama's perilous trek across the highest mountains of the world, pursued by troops and plagued by hunger, freezing temperatures, disease, and an uncertain reception at the end of the journey. Yet it is during this epic flight that the transformation of the young Dalai Lama's character—through stages of exhilaration, fear, anger, despair, and finally, exhausted yet triumphant relief—feels most intensely personal. *Escape from the Land of Snows* is biography at its best: suspenseful, revealing, and profoundly humane. From Publishers Weekly Drawing from written eyewitness accounts and interviews with survivors, Talty (*The Illustrious Dead*) describes the events in 1959 that irrevocably altered the future of Tibet. He skillfully moves between protests in Lhasa and the Dalai Lama's escape toward the border, tracing stories of the many people involved. Adding complexity to this narrative are details about CIA support of Tibetans fighting against the Chinese regime, the U.S. role in securing permission for the Dalai Lama's entry into India, and the worldwide media frenzy that shaped the public's perceptions of Tibet. Witness reports include those of the Dalai Lama's mother and brothers, rebels and refugees, members of the CIA's Tibetan Task Force, and former prisoners of the Chinese. From these multiple voices the author has woven a vivid picture of a dangerous journey and a country in crisis. The accompanying analysis provides context for the intricate events that changed the young leader into a "movable Tibet," and an isolated mountain society into an international cause and "a place of the mind." (Jan.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. From Booklist *Starred* In spite of the Dalai Lama's great renown, the complete story of the brutal events that forced him into exile is not widely known. Talty takes readers back to 1950, when the Dalai Lama was a 15-year-old sheltered monk in Lhasa as China invaded with 80,000 seasoned troops, confronting a poorly equipped Tibetan army of 8,500. The Dalai Lama abruptly ascended to the throne and for nine years struggled to protect his people. Finally, Mao unleashed the full force of his mass terror on Tibet, igniting a courageous uprising. Drawing on riveting first-person accounts of the subsequent battles and providing startling political revelations, Talty chronicles the resourceful Tibetan resistance and the Dalai Lama's perilous horseback escape to India through treacherous mountain passes, blizzards, sandstorms, torrential rain, hunger,

and illness. Taltys portrait of the young Dalai Lama is nuanced and compelling; his account of the CIAs involvement is thriller ready; and his unique coverage of the news frenzy and shenanigans that ensued as the fleeing Dalai Lama became a cold war hero is fascinating. Talty is also acutely attuned to the tragedy and grace of the Dalai Lamas long exile as the revered leader continues to bring his message of compassion to the world. --Donna Seaman