

Tibet, Tibet – A Personal History of a Lost Land by Patrick French.
Harper Collins 2003.

All too often, in a world where the troubles of the Middle East and other regional hotspots occupy the centre of attention, it is easy to forget the plight of another land, the occupation of which has been more brutal and bloody than any other except during times of war. The land in question is Tibet and the occupation is that of the Communist Chinese.

In *Tibet, Tibet* Patrick French, a long time campaigner for the rights of Tibet and the Tibetan people, presents an enthralling account of the history of Tibet, and particularly its long and troubled relationship with Imperial and latterly Communist China. The means by which he tells this extraordinary story is that of a travelogue as he journeys through Tibet, meeting those who have suffered at the hands of the Chinese and those who have established a modus vivendi with them.

French also sets in context the position and history of the great Lamas of Tibet, of which the Dalai is but one, though pre-eminent, and writes admiringly but honestly about the present Dalai Lama, a man who, though widely respected throughout the world, as well as revered and loved by millions, has not always exhibited the surest touch in his realpolitik.

At the end of this superb book one is left with an overwhelming sense of sadness at the senseless destruction of the culture and religious tradition and infrastructure of Tibet by the Chinese, and their brutalisation and persecution of the Tibetan people. But there is also an understanding that the history of Tibet, and particularly that surrounding the Chinese occupation, is much more complex than normally realised and to be pronounced upon with the greatest caution. For this, as well as for a memorable book, Patrick French is to be congratulated.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh