

Edited for web, Sub Chapter of the 1993 Sequel to World Peace?

[In April and May 2007 I was finally to spend over a month traveling back roads of China, facing my concerns, giving homage, listening, and embracing a people. It was a most rewarding and long awaited journey, a gift in life.

People are people, and I met so many good and helpful souls, leaving with much gratitude. Nature is astoundingly beautiful there, and as precious as anywhere on the planet. Perhaps most importantly, the reminder that children are children throughout the world, and this journey and work is largely inspired by and dedicated to them, their future.

The below Chapter written many years earlier gives some of my previous mind-set. Unfortunately, it also shows some of the basis for what we see today in Darfur, Iran, and other lands, and a land where caring about others, about the human environment and human safety has not yet come to the fore.]

China, and it's influence (1993)

In the summer of 1970, the Wilhelm and Baynes translation of the ancient philosophical text the I Ching, and the work of Lao Tzu strongly opened and educated me to the importance of studying the inseparability our our inner selves with the cycles of nature around us, the movements of humanity and social order in civilizations. Beginning in the early 1980's for 8 years, T'ai Chi was part of my every day life, sometimes to the consternation of others, strange movement no matter where I was. These are both specific Chinese contributions and there can be no measuring the personal debt I, and civilization owe to such knowledge gathered and passed down.

“Never, never trust the Chinese!” a Vietnamese diplomat implored me long ago. OK, can we ever trust anyone at times? Not the Vietnamese, not the Germans, Japanese, African countries, etc, ourselves? Ask a Cambodian lying dead in a killing field if he thought the US was going to protect him and his land.

I knew during the Veit Nam War, China their long time enemy, supplied them with weapons. The Chinese also made sure large supplies of the best heroin were made available for our troops. “Watch. The Americans will destroy themselves.” How devastating right they were. The opium trade taught them that self destructive lesson long ago. Drugs came to be the ravage of all our cities. I was to lose too many friends.

Some of the diplomats being asked about China's influence asked that they not be identified with their comments on this subject. That response alone answered my question about China's influence. That is how wary of, or smart diplomats are around this "third world nation". China continually claims itself to be a third world country, sounding much like "poor poor, and good good me", but it is clearly gaining power and influence rapidly. I ask if this third world outlook is true.

"I have great respect for China. It has been underestimated by the rest of the world. Taiwan is there to prove that the Chinese people can make it. I don't agree with many of the policies of China, but you have to agree on some things. Forty years ago illiteracy rates were horrendous, access to health was appalling, women's rights were non-existent. They were like the least developed country. After the revolutionary process you see definite improvement in all these issues. Women's rights still have a way to go, but if they didn't have a strong policy in terms of population they wouldn't be 1 billion people, they'd be 3 billion people."

"I remember once a Norwegian delegate criticizing China for its population control policies. The Chinese delegate said she was completely in agreement with her colleague, and that her country would immediately cease to have any population programs if Norway would accept at least a million Chinese a year, and the same for each of the rest of the world.

"It is a developing country, but with an impressive economic growth of 7%, which is the highest at this moment. Maybe Indonesia is close to it, but they are oil exporters which China is not. China also is a nuclear country, which gives them a different perception of life. I do believe once they take off, and they are going to do so, it is going to be a very extremely powerful country."

The present and past was hidden from the public so well that I knew nothing of Tibet until one cold evening, winter 1977. I happened by chance to walk by a Lama on 125th Street. I stopped a moment to satisfy my curiosity of his presence in Harlem. He invited me to a special occasion beginning just then, an all night chant. Up an old rickety narrow, dimly lit staircase, incense floating, butter lamps burning gently, mysterious sounds and language resonating, handwritten sacred texts unfolding from between hand painted wooden covers, wild art of devouring demons on the wall (tankas), long flowing robes, unique hand gestures, clanging bells, ... all something I had heard of but never experienced directly. This wasn't for show. It was a trancelike night, stepping into another time, and certainly another place. Warm, welcoming, sincere, reverent, a very modest, and humble people. I was deeply moved.

What I did not know before that moment, was the history of why Tibetans here, now? A student began to unfold for me that night the story of this lama's near death escape from Tibet, of his many countrymen who didn't make it, and for those who did, a people now without a country. A few years later I was to befriend the daughter of the military scholar, Stanton Candlin, who long before, wrote the on the scene book, "Tibet at Bay", and get to see and hear one of the wisest leaders I'd ever come across this life-

time, anywhere, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. Although the Chinese clearly wish he did not exist, there is nothing in his intentions and words that would not contribute to the Chinese becoming an even greater nation and people.

Such sadness and injustice. Why didn't I hear of this earlier? It happened in my lifetime, a country taken over by another. Such great untold suffering, a hidden genocide. That next week, I wrote my first letter on Tibet to my representative.

In these interviews, I repeat an inquiry, like a mantra, to the diplomats: I am uneasy. Not just because China can someday challenge the US, which it very well may. We seem to be granting this country very biased trade conditions with "Most Favored Nation Status" while the examples of their behavior on Taiwan, and Tibet [and now Ti-ananmen Sq.] go unchecked, unrecognized, unknown. I've been in several meetings where if the word "Tibet" is just mentioned, the Chinese delegates stand right up and walk out of the room. They hold all policies on even unrelated issues hostage if there be the slightest mention. I saw them immediately even walk out of a room because a Human Rights Watch representative (Tibetan refugee's were included in a recent study) walked in. He wasn't going to mention Tibet at all, the meeting was on other issues.

It's amazing to watch this behavior in an international forum. We are not allowed differing views? We can't talk about it? We don't have to be pro or anti independence, but let's discuss things. An NGO seeking accreditation will get blocked if at anytime, in it's lifetime, it had anything to say about either of those situations. That is blackmail. The international community let's blackmail stand. The US Congress even grants, "Most Favored Nation". All ethically and morally short sighted, for again, roosters do come back to roost.

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A diplomat confirms, "Yes. Look what happened yesterday. The Chinese student, 24 yr. old Chang, one of the organizers of the student uprising, was invited by the Correspondents Association to speak at the UN. The secretary General said, No. He was not allowed to come here, nor make any press conference. So the Chinese do have their leverage here."

I respond: "I know the US and Western countries have exercised leverage at times too. When we don't want something, we have also used the Veto. It makes me uneasy for any country to have that much power, just that sense of any wrong they may do can be covered up, yet they feel free to fire away at others. But most importantly, it is the not being open for critical feedback.

I am not into just pointing the finger. Every country can point a finger at someone. America has done some horrible things. At least during the Vietnam War there was critical feedback allowed, and it was heard often in the UN at the time. That's the big difference. But I get very uneasy, when a country says "There is no problem here. It never existed. Move on. End of discussion."

He replies, "Yes. I do think that China with Tibet is one of the saddest cases of the UN silence. We also have the Kurds and other situations. The Kurds of Iran, Iraq and Turkey, on this the UN has also been completely silent. And the indigenous people in most every country... in every country."

"Yes," I respond. "Non-interference we call it [Strongest of proponents of which has been China.] Even the [American] Indians here."

The ambassador continues, "So, the UN has been silent on a number of issues. The question is, how strong is China? For me from the part of the world I come from, we have diplomatic relations with Taiwan, therefore we have no relations with China [China's will, not theirs]. We have a difficult relationship because of that. Now you see the Taiwanese are talking with the Chinese. They have economic interests on mainland China, so we have to see what will happen next. Anything can happen. It can be that Taiwan may become an independent nation, as it truly deserves to be, if it wants to."

Me. "I don't think they would stand for Taiwan being independent."

"I know they won't. Taiwan is a very successful economic country. China is a world apart. But I think they [China] are looking at what went on at the unification of Vietnam and Germany, because that sets a lot of the pace. Taiwan will say, OK let's merge, but they know they will have to spend a lot of money in mainland China."

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I found Chinese Counsellor Zhang Yan, to be a very affable, upbeat, confident, friendly, a well seasoned diplomat. We both seemed to be relaxed and enjoy the personal contact, when talking about life in general. I'm indebted for his sharing below. Not in a stereotypical heavy handed pedagogical way, but as diplomatically as possible, he drove home the same all too common points, their same mantra also recited everywhere you turn and in my 1983 interview, that of stressing non-interference in internal affairs, and how important that was for the international community. And in terms of the arms race, always always pointing blame to other nations (yes, naturally, the US). They had a military force for protection only and had no interest in the arms race. They don't meddle in other affairs, as we do. They were offering to help people around the world. The great powers were only interested in using others, and in increasing their hold on power. I failed to get him to modify his view on these critical global issues. Nor on Tibet. That land and people was always China, and they were liberated. A thought later occurred to me, perhaps the inability for exposing any self criticism was linked to pure survival.

We don't know what it took to survive the Cultural Revolution, as all his generation had to. Can the world help them loosen these real fears of their past?

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In reviewing some of these responses with a few Chinese friends, most with relatives still in China, and another Taiwanese friend, a few noteworthy comments:

“All politicians in China are trained to say certain things. If you don't say something right about China or the party, you are out of a job that day.”

“It is always safe to blame the West, to accuse the West for all problems, and shortcomings. It has become a safe habit.”

“ My sister knows some of the democratic dissidents who got into this country after Tiananmen Sq. They were given money and a place here. Some work hard, but after the several months, many have now spent their money. Some got divorced, don't work. Basically they can not handle taking this kind of new responsibility for their life. This is a tough part of democracy they knew nothing of in China. They still expect to be given everything.”

“When I was a little girl in Taiwan, China was called “The shadow”. We were told someday we would conquer China's Communists. Although China's view is we are part of China, we are not. We have had our own government and economic structure. China says, if you call yourself independent, we will strike. The US and UK said they would protect Taiwan if ever attacked. This is one of the reasons China talks of noninterference constantly.

Businesses actually flourish between the two countries, but it is still illegal to go from one to the other. Quite in the open, people just travel via Hong Kong.”

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[Sudan: Fourteen years later we can now see in today's Sudan the consequences of a world saying nothing to the earlier denied genocides in China. Who knows where else these consequences are being drawn out. As you read below, what can we now think of the results of these “good works in development”, of “non interference”, “correct positions” and putting forth “a better face”? Once again, it's not to point blame. What is needed is more about encouraging the foundation of trust, truthfulness, and the betterment of conditions for all in the world, including China.]

Sudan's Ambassador Ahmed Suliman has a warm, pleasant disposition and big smile, an older gentleman's aura. But I can feel shadows that i can't put my finger on.

He states the only reason he let me interview him was I had an Irish last name. He had fond memories and a sense of indebtedness of his early school years to Irish teachers who served in Sudan. He becomes particularly buoyant when he says he likes this “new young man Bill Clinton a lot” and has hopes he’ll turn things around for Africa, but doesn’t like what he’s seen in the past:

“I am not a communist now. When I was a communist, I was on the Russian side. But, I visited China twice in 1955 and again 3 years ago. The problem with these people [the US and Russia] is that they are shortsighted. They don't look at the phenomena of development. As I see it now, the only force gaining momentum in the UN and the Third World is the Chinese. Because the Chinese are taking the correct position regarding the Third World.”

I repeat, “You are saying there is a correct attitude and the Chinese are taking it? Towards the Third World? They are seen as taking up your issues, your concerns?”

“Yes. They are speaking our language, and standing up with our problems. They are adopting good positions here in the UN. The Americans are trying to utilize these measures [such as] Human Rights, and so on. [They are] not true.

People every day are coming to America. They are going to be disappointed. On the contrary, China is having a better face. Unless things change, they will become the most influential power in the world.”

[The genocide in Sudan would never have gotten this far without China’s direct and indirect support. Today, they have the ability to reverse it. I only wished I had the foresight and time to look further into these statements at the time. Skepticism isn’t enough.]

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About Tibet: This is story none of my friends nor family knew anything of at the time, early 1989, in the months before Tiananmen Square.. They would protest for my safety. I was frustrated with the lack of knowledge about the Tibetan plight, especially the Chinese people knowing only the narrow party line. Even students talking of more democracy didn’t seem to know how good they had it in comparison and never outwardly championed Tibet. The world’s governments also remained quiescent and complicit in the suffering that continues. I remember Hitler’s comment to move against the Jews, reassuring those about how quickly the world forgot what happened to the Armenians in that genocide. Forgotten? Not even on the radar to forget.

I hatched a small plan, now seen as rather futile and innocuous, and something that would have most likely made little difference, a message lost under another tank tread at Tiananmen Sq. as all the other ideas there, [If only for this moment for surely those lives must be acknowledged] but fyi, another story of another, less lethal, failed attempt.

The plan stressed that no Tibetan people were to have any responsibility or involvement in this action. For Tibetans would just suffer in backlash. I found and gath-

ered a number of willing volunteers from various western countries (about 5 of us in the end.) The plan was to enter China on separate, different tours, each defect from those tours, and hand out a single page of literature on the realities of Tibet (That so many had been murdered, so many are languishing in prisons, that most their holy sites have been destroyed, that the area is being militarized and mined for China's resources, a culture very different from theirs was being wiped out, and large numbers of Chinese were being transported there to live and intermarry, and that they should go and find out for themselves about the truth, not believe this pamphlet. Was this their concept of liberation? Of themselves? Tibetans could see the need for some change in their own culture, but.... this was pure inhumanity.).

This pamphlet was to be handed to as many Chinese as possible, especially students, and again, not to Tibetans. Any involvement on their part would get them in serious trouble. We would get out as much information to student leaders and the public in several of China's cities until arrested. We surmised, we'd be arrested quickly, and that the normal treatment at the time for Westerners (since China is on Most Favored status) was a good scolding, a fine, and put on the first plane out with future visas denied. Even writing this now could assure not getting a future visa approved, unless things change fairly drastically. [Several things have]

We had agreed that our strategy was to refuse to pay any fine, and not have any cash (just a few travelers checks on us at the time). We would be of peaceful nature and explain over and over again why we we doing this, and certainly not show anger at those that arrest us. It is clear that our problem is not with the Chinese as a people, or as individuals, but the policy they have which continues to uphold genocide of a people and culture. We knew this was a risk. The chance to get imprisoned was possible. However, that was a hopeful outcome, provided it wasn't forever. Why jail?

We would have others back home bring to the press's attention, and thereby hopefully, our governments attention, that we were being held in jail for simply distributing factual information about the reality of Tibet. We knew our governments did not wish to bring up nor care much for this issue, but perhaps some press would help public opinion get a bit more educated before voting yes to Most Favored Nation status and other positive financial arrangements with China.

This action was not against developing trade with China. I would like plenty of healthy trade with China and the world. Money is a very critical factor however, and anything to do with inhibiting the flow does put pressure on governments. Fully aware we may have no effect whatsoever except to inconvenience our own and loved ones lives [They would be fully informed upon departure with instructions], we were hoping this to be one of many small efforts to pressure our own governments.

Less than two months before the action, partial information and misunderstanding of the plan was leaked by someone outside our circle. Without contacting me, they fully exposed the attempt in their public newsletter to all Tibetan organizations (hence the Chinese) critically jeopardizing the personal effort before it could get off the ground. Information being circulated in the crackdown at Tiananmen Sq. may have led to yet more blame, more paranoia and China's sensitivity to "outside interference."

For years since awakening, I would imagine the faces of Tibetans, young and old, innocent and steeped in their ancient culture, being forced from their way of life, being tortured and killed. A Tibetan is not any more special than any other person, including a Chinese. Tibetans are no more important than those in my own streets, nor those suffering anywhere else, but we each get pulled uniquely to situations put before us, that call us. For the present, I've let this be.

Now that the Dalai Lama has finally been awarded a long deserved Nobel Peace Prize, more know the story. The struggle continues, but so does the aversion of our governments due to that not so blind spot, the one overriding excuse, commerce. Why we can't develop healthy commerce and at the same time maintain a respect for people's basic human rights is an argument whose time has not only arrived, it is long overdue.

No human enjoys seeing things about ourselves that is unflattering, and we need ask the question to China, as we continue to do with ourselves. It's a strength.

Admitting to and comparing our dirty laundries isn't the end, nor the fulfillment of the way out of our distrust and entanglements. It's an important first step. We each have to back up with verifiable deeds what we say, and come to an agreement on what kind of future we wish together. It is important that we bring up human rights abuse as a country rises to become so powerful. It's humanities future. And yes, let's listen and look into our arms shipments, CIA plots and all else they bring up. We can do this, and support the same. It's by example that people trust, not words. [Funny, the Chinese delegate said the same darn thing.]

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Periodically we read reports of Yeltsin traveling to Poland, to Czechoslovakia, to formally apologize for the Soviet past, and affirm new behaviors of Russians. Even Japan recently went to China, finally, and began admitting some wrong doings during the war. These are such powerful examples.

Living in Germany in 1973-4, those I spoke with clearly admitted to and denounced the horrors of their past. It humanized them for me, and built personal trust immediately. We could focus on the inhumanities of the moment, Vietnam. In the US there is plenty of literature in text books, in our public libraries, newspapers, and infinite daily open conversations, etc. of what our government has done wrong. Slavery, racism, our own indigenous people, corruption, etc. We rid of a President for lying. Imperfect, and in process, with few excuses tolerated. This is healthy in the context of the whole. Keeping ourselves somewhat honest? Challenging ourselves. Otherwise, it's "Mission Control, this small planet has a problem."

Admit, own what responsibility is valid, apologize sincerely, make the changes, work toward a better relationship and get on with the better business of life.

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Speaking to Minister Counsellor Francis Aguilar of Guatemala about the morale in general at the UN:

“Everybody was believing in the effects of the peace dividend coming to the UN. There was a rosy world coming, and now you see, like life, there are setbacks at times. Today feels like it [the UN] is not going anywhere.

What happened yesterday with Chang [China's Tiananmen Square dissident stopped and not allowed in to speak at UN] brought a lot of depression to the organization, to many individuals here.

For an organization in which you fight for freedoms of all sorts... There are brave people. They have almost never been listened to at the UN anyway. Chang represents those little people.

When the indigenous people came to the UN, it is the first time in my 10-15 years here that I see the real people come and talk at the UN, not just politicians. So Chang was like the real people, and he wasn't allowed in, by our highest official. If the highest official is like that, what are the directions he is giving to the organization?”

“Yes.” I ask, “Are his hands tied? Some perceive this particular Secretary General to be “a pawn in the hands of the West”. But, that's why I also bring up China.”

“Yes, well, China controls him too.”

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[The below dialogue may be especially notable in light of today's Iran and Sudan crises, among others.]

China has been going ahead with nuclear testing, ignoring the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty. It has satellites in place and others in preparation. I begin to ask about this and armaments, but while much of their criticism may be valid, how can we just go along with the bias here? What can be behind such steady defensiveness? The issue of Tibet isn't even a concern for them, for the international community has long been trained and obedient to their rules on that, and now the same with Tiananmen Sq.

I sit with China's Counsellor Counsellor Zhang Yan:

“I think on this question of how to control the arms exportation and how to stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the major countries, like the US and the Russian Federation bear the major responsibilities, because they have the highest technology. They have the biggest capacity of producing weapons and they are the main exporters around the world. This is one fact.”

Me. "China is right up there too, yes?"

“We export some defensive weapons to some countries.”

Me. "I'm not pointing a finger. I think all industrialized countries are entrenched in profit from this. I'm trying to think of what measures we can take that might stop this cycle.”

“If you sell weapons purely on a commercial purpose, and purely for a defensive purpose, I don't think you have to worry so much. Unfortunately, some countries use arms sales as a kind of political leverage to influence the policy of a certain region or country, or to interfere in the affairs of certain regions or countries. [Here we go again]

A typical example is the arms sale [US]to the Middle East and the arms sales to the Chinese province, Taiwan. [“Province” says who, besides China?]

Taiwan is a part of China. We are now moving in the direction of talking unification, but some countries are selling such sophisticated weapons to Taiwan. Obviously, this will create tensions and troubles in this region. They obviously knew that, but still those countries like the US and France go ahead, sell weapons to Taiwan. So from this we can see, those major countries should be responsible. If they are responsible [i.e. see it our way] we can have hope to solve this problem.

The AK 47 rifles we export to the US is legal under your law. It is not some kind of weapons sale for political purposes, just for commercial purposes.”

What blows me away as I listen is, it appears he truly believes this, and he has been in the Security Council for years! How is this blanket is pulled over all the Chinese people? They are convinced this is all true (or do a great acting job), that all countries except China sell arms irresponsibly and with offensive purposes. This is worrisome.)

“If we put out the figures of arms sales to the Middle East carried out by the US, Russia, and France, the nature of our sales is different, the quality and quantity are all very different”.

I'm not sure. “Was it propaganda that China supplied the Vietnamese at times, and the Khmer Rouge [Cambodia]. Did you not do that?”

“No, No.”

A long stunned pause. I need the pure data and think, we really need to get a transparent study on who is doing what here. I don't push as I ought to. “I agree our governments all need to take responsibility, but are there any international issues that you would like to have put into place? Like, would you like there to be a registry for all weapons? So that it will all be out in the open, and any arms shipments would be visible?”

“People are working in that direction. A few years ago the UN adopted a resolution on the arms race situation... In principle we agreed, but we think it should be based on a fairness, equability and objectivity. [Lets do it.]

How far we can go also depends on those major countries. [And China?] If we really have sincerity, then we can make progress. If you talk one thing and do another, then people will not believe you. [And China?] So in this sense the answer is if the big countries, the major arms producers/suppliers, can be responsible in these dealings then we can have some hope. [And China?] Otherwise I don't see the chance.

I have the feeling that some countries just want to use this kind of mechanism to monopolize the weapons market, control the others, to make room for themselves. [And China?] This is not good.

I agree. "So, you are not very trusting. It is all for a unfair political purposes?"

"We have to be careful at least. Particularly if we want to do something to manage, to regulate or control arms control. We must do it in a very serious manner.

Of course China participates in arms control discussions... but since the US, and France, sells weapons to Taiwan we find it is useless to have this kind of dialogue."

Useless? "So that is the real thorn in the side?"

"Yes, on the one hand they are talking about how to control armaments, and on the other hand they are selling f-16's, missiles, submarines, mirage fighters to Taiwan. It is ridiculous."

Me. "It interferes with trust."

"Yes, this kind of thing really interferes and destroys the trust.

My mantra, "And when the trust is destroyed, it is hard to have relations."

"Yes, hard to make progress."

My trust is being destroyed, well, strongly tested, before me. How to broaden our one sidedness in life? "Is it just the US, France and Russia? I tend to feel that we, and every country have made transgressions. Every country has done something which causes some distrust from another country. Is China doing anything that you think irritates America? I don't always trust the press but, I do read that there are some things..."

"Of course very often in the press there is some unofficial news on China stating this or that. But we don't have.... very often they cannot substantiate those reports. But some governments still use these kind of figures in their reports to attack China.

If they are serious, then they should show the proof and talk bilaterally, and try to find ways to solve that question.

At the request of the government of Saudi Arabia, at that time a very good ally of the US, we sold a few medium range missiles to them (Iran?), but just the conventional weapons, not nuclear weapons. [nuclear?!]

Immediately after the bilateral discussion between the US and China we said we will never sell these type of weapons anymore. And up till now we have stopped. We have our principles in selling weapons to other countries. Principles must be conducive to the security of certain regions. We sell only defensive weapons. [Heaven help us, please] We don't sell offensive weapons. And we don't use weapons sales as political leverage, to interfere in the internal affairs of countries. [Heaven help us more!] These

are our principles. As I said our quantity is very very little. Because we don't have very sophisticated weapons which can be for exportation, warships or this kind of thing. [Is this why our representatives think they deserve Most Favored Nation again and again?]

I'm not quick on my feet, "Perhaps it is a game the press is playing, when they say there is a terrorist type of connection, and the materials were gotten from China? When we were having trouble with Iran it was said you supplied them with missiles [silk worms]. Is the press just playing these games to try and set each other up, creating this antagonism? [Long pause. Will I be asked to leave now?] I hope we can both create measures to help build more trust between us."

"We have some peaceful nuclear cooperation programs with Iran, but this is totally open. [Really?] We have an agreement between the two countries. In the agreement we made it very clear, all activities should be under the supervision of the IEA. If we have any project, the first criteria it must be under the supervision and safeguards of IEA. Up to now, we are dealing in a very normal manner. Very often the western media makes some fuss, but a few days later they stop. They can achieve nothing by just saying these things."

Me. "I think no matter what you do in Iran, for some people it will be a bad thing."

"But a certain country cannot impose their views on other countries."

[Amen. I don't ask, Calling vast areas and people as being China is not imposing?] "I am just saying this is a perception of some."

"Of course you can have your position, but you also have to respect others."

I fail to argue with the mere words. We are both smiling for some reason. "Absolutely, otherwise, it is called arrogance."

But is it not worse and more than arrogance? With all smiles, where the hell are the big "we" heading? Can we talk more over dinner?