

Statement of His Holiness the Dalai Lama 10th March 1970

March 10th has now become a symbol of our struggle for freedom, for justice and for the right to live as we wish. March 10th today stirs the hearts and minds of all Tibetans. Whether they are in the free countries or still under suppression in Tibet, March 10th, 1959 marked a new era in the history of Tibet — it was on that day when the brave people of Tibet rose against the might of Communist China. It was on that day when unarmed men, women and children paraded through the streets of Lhasa calling for the restoration of Tibet's independence. It was on that day when the people of Tibet united as one force in a heroic attempt to free themselves from bondage. The world knows of the brutal and ruthless oppression that followed the national uprising. That was eleven years ago.

The situation in Tibet has ever since been gradually deteriorating, and conditions worsened with the advent of the so-called Cultural Revolution. Eleven years may not seem long to those of us who have been able to escape into free countries, but to those of our countrymen who are still in Tibet, it has been a period of unending terror and suffering. Yet in the midst of such a desperate and difficult situation the flame of freedom, which was lit on March 10th, 1959, still burns persistently. The Communist Chinese regime in Tibet has experienced constant opposition from the Tibetans, often in the form of violence. In 1969 alone, we learnt of ambushes and raids by Tibetans on Chinese military camps and ammunition dumps in the area of Chamdo, Poh, Lhoka, Tolung, Nyemo and Shang. There were also incidents where many Chinese officers were killed and many were held prisoners by the Tibetans during meetings organised by the Chinese. Above all, the Communist Chinese must have been shocked to find mounting opposition from the young Tibetans, many of whom have been educated and indoctrinated by the Chinese themselves in Tibet as well as in China. These are clear indications that all is not well in Tibet; that Tibetans are not contented and satisfied under the rule of alien power; that desperate resistance still continues; and that the spirit of liberty is still strong.

It is now nineteen long years since the armed forces of Communist China trampled Tibet under their feet. The Chinese have had all the time required to educate, indoctrinate and produce a new group of Tibetan leaders who would totally support their regime – but this has not happened. They have not been able to produce a single notable, young Tibetan leader. They are still using a few ex-members of the old Tibetan government who are actually considered to be reactionaries according to the Chinese themselves. This is again a clear indication that the Tibetans, young and old, no matter how they are treated or brought up are not prepared to yield completely to the Communist Chinese rulers. Many of these Tibetans may be ideologically Communists, but they are definitely nationalist Communists. To these Tibetans their nation comes first, ideology second. We are fighting against colonialism and not against Communism.

When the hopes and aspirations of our countrymen, struggling to survive in a vast prison camp, are so strong and persistent; so unfailing and determined; it is not sufficient to dedicate this day only to the memory of those martyrs who laid down their lives for the freedom of Tibet. We must, also, renew our pledge to hold high the torch of freedom and to continue the struggle so that the sacred cause for which six million Tibetans are still aspiring can be achieved. It is only fitting that we in the free countries shoulder this responsibility as our duty. We, therefore, solemnly rededicate this day and earnestly renew our pledge for the cause of Tibet's independence.

The world is ever changing. International changes are occurring almost every day of the year. A change in Tibet will definitely come about. The Chinese must realize that the spirit of freedom in the Tibetans is indomitable.

I take this opportunity to express on behalf of the people of Tibet and on my own behalf, our sincere and deep gratitude to the government and people of India for their generous and understanding assistance to the Tibetan refugees living in India. We also remember and remain deeply indebted to those countries, along with India, who have supported us in the United Nations. Last but not the least, we thank the various voluntary agencies that have come forth at a time when help was urgently and desperately needed. Much of what we have achieved in the fields of rehabilitation, education and cultural activities would not have been possible without their help.

Finally, while I call upon my people to strengthen their determination and work conscientiously for the freedom of Tibet, I also appeal to all those nations who cherish freedom to give us their firm and strong support in the just cause of Tibet's independence.

The Dalai Lama
10 March 1970