

Statement of His Holiness the Dalai Lama

10 March 1980

Every year on this day, the anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising, I greet all my compatriots both in Tibet and in exile.

Twenty-one years have unfolded a shocking experience, which has never had any parallel in the history of Tibet. Never has there been so much systematic and extensive destruction of the religious, cultural, social and educational values of the Tibetan people. The frightening picture of abject poverty, wretched and helpless general conditions, persistent starvation and famine, had never been experienced in Tibet for centuries.

In the past few years, the fluid international political scene has witnessed rapid new developments; the internal situation in China under the present leadership who are "seeking the truth from facts" is also undergoing changes. We hear of the repeated calls by the Chinese government requesting us to return to our homeland. We also hear that the so-called wave of moderation has begun to creep into China and, to some extent, into Tibet. However, it is still too early to predict the outcome of what may happen in the future. In response to these changes, as well as to the request by the Chinese government, I have despatched a fact-finding delegation to visit Tibet through China. It is for the first time in nearly twenty-one years that we have established contact with the Chinese government, as well as our beloved countrymen.

In view of the present situation and development in Tibet we exiles have a tremendous obligation and responsibility to fulfil the hopes and aspirations of the 6,000,000 Tibetans in Tibet. We should make full use of the wonderful opportunity provided by the government and the people of India, for educating thousands of our young Tibetans as well as enabling us to preserve our religious and cultural identities.

It is for the future that we must prepare ourselves. Even though China, during the Manchu Dynasty had constantly tried to exploit and divide the Tibetans, the present adversity has unified all our people. Never in the history of Tibet have the people been so united as they are today.

It is upto us, the Tibetans in India and elsewhere, to work hard and take inspiration from our compatriots in Tibet. Any failure in our duties would be a mockery to the memory of those who have sacrificed their lives for the cause of Tibet, while undergoing tremendous hardship, but who have remained steadfast to the ideals for which we have left our country.

There is no doubt, despite the current leniency, that we in exile are much better off than our friends and relatives in Tibet. Here we have absolute freedom to go wherever we like, do whatever we like and practice every aspect of our religion and traditions without fear of censure from any quarter. Most important of all, our younger generation have at their disposal all the modern educational facilities of the free world. They can learn whatever they are interested in or whatever they feel will contribute something worthwhile to their

community, whereas what passes for education in Tibet — still to this day — is what the authorities decide is good for them. This, I feel, is one of the worst aspects of the Chinese rule in Tibet — this lack of real education. Children of today are the makers of the future society. If the future of our society is in any way to be meaningful in terms of our being a member of the world community, then they must have a modern education, conducive to a cosmopolitan outlook of life, as well as being familiar enough with their own culture and tradition in order to retain their distinct identity.

The present policy of leniency favoured by the Chinese in Tibet, I think, has also room for our contribution towards overcoming this educational discrepancy of the youth in Tibet. There are some Tibetan refugees visiting Tibet now. Why don't some of our youth, who have received decent educational opportunities, offer their service to take up teaching posts in Tibet on a temporary basis, in schools there. And I see no reason, given the present situation, the Chinese authorities should put any objection to this. So on this 21st anniversary of our fight for truth and justice, I hope our youth will seriously consider this suggestion of mine.

In conclusion, once more I would like to remind everybody that the core of Tibetan issue is the welfare and ultimate happiness of six million Tibetans in Tibet. The limited leniency that the Chinese have introduced is a welcome first step. But we are still nowhere near being satisfied that the Tibetans in Tibet are content. What the future holds in store only time will tell. The course I favour is to wait and watch to what extent the Chinese leaders are going to improve the conditions in Tibet.

The Dalai Lama
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