

## **Statement of His Holiness the Dalai Lama** **10 March 1987**

Our struggle is a fight for the rights that are justly upheld in today's modern times — the rights that we have inherited from our past history — and is not an act of hatred towards the Chinese.

The past four decades, which witnessed the invasion and consequent occupation of Tibet by Communist China, have been the most difficult and tragic period in the long history of our country. Yet we responded positively when the new leadership in Beijing showed interest in having direct contact with us in the late seventies. Unfortunately, it seems there is no desire on the part of the Chinese to resolve the issue on the basis of mutual respect and for mutual benefit. The mass arrests of Tibetans in 1983, official encouragement to large-scale Chinese immigration into Tibet contrary to their earlier promises to withdraw the bulk of the Chinese civilian population, continued denial of political rights to our people, and the presence of Chinese military and intelligence personnel in Tibet are creating obstacles for better understanding the possibility for a mutually satisfactory solution.

The Tibetan people have bravely withstood the unparalleled atrocities committed upon them. They have remained steadfast and strong. Their courage and determination are remarkable — a tribute indeed to the indomitable spirit of Man. And today when we commemorate the twenty-eighth anniversary of our National Uprising we once again remember the brave Tibetan people.

In recent years there have been some changes in Tibet as a result of the policy of liberalization in China itself. Nevertheless, there has been no fundamental shift in the Chinese attitude to the basic issue of Tibet. We cannot therefore remain complacent and contented with the current limited easing of conditions. In fact, we must be particularly cautious and pay special attention to new developments that threaten our very survival in the long run.

During the last few years there has been unprecedented increase of Chinese civilians throughout Tibet. This policy of colonization and demographic aggression poses a great threat of reducing our people to a minority in our own country. This has also rendered the much publicized Chinese claim of respecting Tibetan identity, religion, culture and traditions meaningless. Furthermore, this has resulted in Chinese domination of economic and employment opportunities particularly in the major towns where almost two-thirds of the population are now Chinese.

Today there is greater danger than ever before to the survival of our people, our religion, culture and our country.

Firstly, the so-called religious freedom in Tibet today amounts to permitting our people to worship and practice religion in a merely ritualistic and devotional way. There are both direct and indirect restrictions on the teaching and study of Buddhist philosophy. Buddhism is thus being reduced to a blind faith which is exactly how the Communist Chinese view and define religion.

Secondly, although economic and other conditions have been eased slightly, in reality the young Tibetans are neither provided with adequate facilities nor are they encouraged in their

educational development. Bad habits like drinking and gambling are allowed to spread in the society despite the knowledge of their harmful effects. Deliberate obstacles are being placed before those who are academically inclined. There is thus every danger to Tibetans being turned into a backward and illiterate community devoid of any real culture and education.

Thirdly, the large-scale Chinese influx is threatening to transform Tibet into a Chinese territory.

Thus, while China accuses others of crimes of racial discrimination and injustice, the Chinese themselves continue the worst forms of genocide, racial discrimination and colonization in the countries under their subjugation.

In any situation of human conflict it is short-sighted to believe that a lasting solution can be found through the use of force. I have always expressed my firm conviction in the wisdom of following a non-violent path. Force and confrontation can only bring about temporary gains. In the case of Tibet too, Tibetan opposition will continue to exist so long as the hopes and aspirations of our people remain suppressed. I would like to reiterate that the issue of Tibet is not about the power and position of either the Dalai Lama or the future of the Tibetan refugees alone but rather it is the question of the rights and freedoms of the six million Tibetans.

It is a mistake to presume that mere economic concessions and liberalizations can satisfy our people. The issue of Tibet is fundamentally political with international ramifications and as such only a political solution can provide a meaningful answer.

In the past, too, Tibet had played an important role as a neutral buffer contributing to the stability of the region. This historical precedence provides the basis for working out a solution to the issue of Tibet for the benefit of all parties concerned. The demilitarization of Tibet and its transformation into a zone of peace should be the first step. This will contribute in bringing peace not only to this part of Asia but also to the world at large.

Before concluding, I would like to express my solidarity with many of the educated and intelligent young Chinese who are undergoing physical as well as mental suppression. Even the Chinese themselves, who have an ancient civilization, are deprived of individual freedoms. They are living in a state of great anxiety about the present changes and uncertainty of the future. It is my hope that they too will gain the inalienable rights and freedoms that are basic to all human beings.

My prayers for the well-being of all sentient beings.

The Dalai Lama  
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