

## **Statement of His Holiness the Dalai Lama** **10th March 1990**

Thirty-one years ago today, the Tibetan people rose up against the Chinese occupation of Tibet. In commemorating this momentous event in the history of our country, I extend my greetings to every Tibetan. Today, we remember those brave Tibetans who gave up their lives for the freedom of Tibet. We also express our deep admiration for our people's courage and determination in their struggle for freedom, even under the most brutal martial law regulations.

Today, as we contemplate the future of our Tibet, we cannot help but think about the historic events of the past year. In China the popular movement for democracy was crushed last June by unrestrained violence. But I do not believe that the demonstrations were in vain. Rather, the spirit of freedom has been rekindled among the Chinese people and China cannot escape the impact of this spirit of freedom which is sweeping through many parts of the world.

Extraordinary changes are occurring in Eastern Europe: events which have set the pace for social-political change throughout the world. Similarly, Namibia has gained its independence from South Africa and the South African government has taken the first steps towards the dismantling of apartheid. It is encouraging to note that these changes are the result of a genuine people's movement, and basically due to the irrepressible human desire for freedom and justice. What these positive changes indicate is that reason, courage, determination and the inextinguishable desire for freedom will ultimately win.

Therefore, I urge the Chinese leadership not to resist the trend of change, but to consider the problems of the Tibetan and the Chinese people with imagination and broad-mindedness. I believe that repression will never crush the determination of any people to live in freedom and dignity. The Chinese leadership must look at the problems of China itself, and the Tibetan issue, with new eyes and fresh minds. Before it is too late, they must listen to the voice of reason, non-violence, and, moderation which is spoken by the Tibetan people and by China's own students.

Despite claims of Chinese propaganda, millions of non-Chinese people living in areas presently under the People's Republic of China suffer all kinds of discrimination. The Chinese themselves admit that even after forty years of communist rule these areas are backward and poor. However, the most disturbing effect of Chinese policy towards people in these areas is the demographic transformation which has been imposed upon them. In virtually every area new Chinese immigrants have become the majority community. Manchuria has been completely absorbed. In Inner Mongolia, only 2.6 million Mongols remain surrounded by eighteen million newly arrived Chinese. More than fifty percent of Eastern Turkestan's population are now Chinese while in Tibet, the six million Tibetans are outnumbered by 7.5 million Chinese immigrants.

Naturally, the non-Chinese people are restive. Unless China's leadership can take steps to assuage their feelings, there is every likelihood that serious problems will result in the

future. It is imperative, I believe, for China to learn a lesson from the Soviet Union and, in particular, to follow the example set by President Gorbachev who is seeking to solve similar problems through dialogue and compromise. The government of China needs to realize that the problems it faces in the non-Chinese areas under its rule are not merely economic. At root they are political and, as such, can only be solved by political change. To bring about a peaceful and reasonable solution to the question of Tibet I proposed the Five Point Peace Plan and the Strasbourg Proposal. Even after the imposition of martial law in Tibet, we proposed to hold preliminary meetings in Hong Kong to discuss procedure and other matters in an effort to reduce tension and to facilitate an early start to the actual negotiations. Unfortunately, China's leaders to date have not responded positively to our sincere efforts.

Recently the Chinese have vehemently rejected and condemned my stand on the past status and history of Tibet. They want me to change that stand. However, no one can alter truth of facts. By their narrow outlook the Chinese are missing the main message which I have tried to convey to them in my Five Point Peace Plan, the Strasbourg Proposal and the Nobel Lecture<sup>1</sup> which concerns the future relationship between Tibet and China. I am prepared to consider this with an open mind through dialogue.

It is important for the Chinese authorities to recognize the true aspirations of the Tibetan people, the majority of whom live inside Tibet. Virtually all Tibetans long for nothing less than full independence for our country. If the Chinese have any doubts on this then they should permit an internationally supervised referendum in Tibet to determine the wishes of the Tibetan people.

Any relation between Tibet and China must be based on the principles of equality, trust and mutual benefit. It must also be based on the principles which the wise rulers of Tibet and China laid down in a treaty as early as 823 A.D., engraved on the stone pillar in Lhasa. Among other things the treaty says, "Tibetans will live happily in the great land of Tibet, and the Chinese will live happily in the great land of China".

It is with sadness I note that, far from looking at the Tibetan issue from a fresh perspective, the Chinese authorities continue instead to use their awesome military might to crush the numerous protests of the Tibetans. Last year, in response to Tibetan protest demonstrations, the Chinese authorities imposed martial law in Lhasa. Martial law imposed in Beijing a few months later was recently lifted. In Lhasa, far from lifting the martial law the Chinese are intent on tightening the noose around the Tibetan people. Recent reports from Tibet indicate that further repressive measures are being carried out. These days the Chinese authorities are conducting house searches for participants of the pro-independence demonstrations.

Despite such brutality by the Chinese authorities, the Tibetans in Tibet remain determined and undaunted. It is the right and responsibility of every Tibetan to fight for freedom and rights. But our struggle must be based on non-violence.

An important event for the Tibetan people has been the award of the Nobel Peace Prize. Though it will not change my status as a simple monk, I am happy for the Tibetan people, for this prize brings well-deserved recognition to the Tibetan people's struggle for freedom and justice. This reaffirms our conviction that armed with truth, courage and determination, we will succeed in liberating our country.

Since our struggle is for the rights, freedom and future well-being of six million Tibetans, we must strengthen our democratic institutions and our democratic process. As I have said many times, respect for freedom and democracy is essential for the development of a modern Tibet and for the development of its people. In 1963, I promulgated the democratic Constitution of Tibet and we have gained valuable experience in the working of democracy. There is still need to further democratize both the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies and the Tibetan Administration itself. To make our institutions more effective and democratic, I have sought the opinions and suggestions of our people. I feel that it is the responsibility of every Tibetan to create a truly free and democratic community in exile and, more importantly, in future Tibet where the main responsibility obviously must be shouldered by the educated young and those working inside Tibet under Chinese rule.

In conclusion, I wish to thank all those who have given moral and political support to our struggle for freedom and justice.

The Dalai Lama  
10th March 1990