

Statement of His Holiness the Dalai Lama 10th March 1992

As we commemorate today the thirty-third anniversary of the March 10 Uprising in 1959, I am more optimistic than ever before about the future of Tibet. This optimism stems from the determination of the Tibetan people inside Tibet and also from the dramatic changes that have taken place everywhere in the world, particularly in the erstwhile Soviet Union. I feel certain that within the next five to ten years some major changes will take place in China.

The collapse of totalitarian regimes in different parts of the world, the break-up of the Soviet empire and re-emergence of sovereign, independent nations reinforce our belief in the ultimate triumph of truth, justice and the human spirit. The bloody October Revolution of 1917, which controlled the fate of the Soviet Union for seven decades, came to an end in the bloodless, non-violent August Revolution of 1991.

We know from history that the mightiest of empires and military powers come and go. No power remains sacrosanct forever. This is particularly true in this modern age when the power of communications is so effective. It is, therefore, quite clear that China cannot remain unaffected by what is happening inside and outside the country.

The present Chinese leadership must have the vision and wisdom to learn from the current political changes in the world in order to find a lasting and peaceful solution to their own problems. Today, we have on the one hand the total disintegration of the Soviet Union, and on the other, the fast emergence of one common Europe voluntarily joining together for common and mutual benefit. We are also seeing the birth of a new Commonwealth of Independent States out of the ashes of the now defunct Soviet Union. For some years I have been putting forward similar ideas for solving Sino-Tibetan problems. I also said that this could be a model for solving similar problems elsewhere in the world. In today's world of interdependence and interconnectedness, no nation can hope to survive, let alone prosper, on its own. At the same time, no nation or community wants to be a colony or subservient to another.

The present Chinese leadership today has two choices. The first one is to start an enlightened political process for a smooth transition towards a fully democratic society and allow the countries they have forcibly annexed and occupied to become free and equal partners in a new world order. The second choice is to push the country to the brink of bloody political struggles, which in a country populated by a quarter of humanity would be a great tragedy. On our part, there will be no lack of willingness or sincerity, should the Chinese government show a genuine interest in finding a solution to the Tibetan problem. Even though the Strasbourg Proposal, which I made more than three years ago, is no longer valid, we are committed to the path of negotiations. This willingness is amply demonstrated in my proposal for an early visit to Tibet. Regrettably, this proposal was turned down by the Chinese government.

With increased awareness of the real situation in present day Tibet, there has been growing world concern and support for our cause. I was very encouraged by the genuine interest and sympathy shown by political leaders I met during my travels in the past year. We consider these favourable changes in the attitude of governments not to be anti-Chinese, but pro-justice and truth.

Today also marks a very successful conclusion of the International Year of Tibet. The International Year of Tibet was celebrated in over thirty-six countries with more than 3,000 different events and activities. The world is much more aware of Tibet today than it was a year back as a result of International Year of Tibet related activities. These activities not only reminded the world of the ongoing suffering of the Tibetan people and the destruction of its environment, but also introduced to the world the unique richness of the Tibetan civilization through the presentation of performing arts and above all through the many exhibitions.

Having created tremendous enthusiasm and goodwill, we must now globally try to deal with more specific and urgent needs confronting the Tibetan people. Therefore, I strongly endorse the call by the International Campaign for Tibet, the Washington-based organization, to dedicate the year June 1992 to May 1993 to creating greater awareness and an active international role concerning Tibet's environment and human rights for Tibetans.

The indomitable courage and determination of our people of Tibet has been the strength of our movement. The unique feature of our struggle has been its non-violent nature. While we continue to strive for our legitimate rights, we must not deviate from the path of non-violence. I have no doubt that one day our people, as well as the peoples of Inner Mongolia and East Turkestan, will be re-united in full freedom in their respective countries.

Meanwhile, in exile, we are preparing the ground for a fully democratic Tibet in future. An official document to this effect has been brought out recently. Entitled *Guidelines For Future Tibet's Polity And The Basic Features Of Its Constitution*¹ this document states that the present Tibetan Administration will be dissolved the moment we return to Tibet, and that I will hand over all my traditional political power to an interim government. The interim government, it explains, will be responsible for drawing up a democratic constitution under which the new government of Tibet will be elected by the people. It assures that there will be no political recrimination against those Tibetans who have worked in the Chinese administration. In fact, because of their experience, the Tibetan officials of the existing administration in Tibet should shoulder the main responsibility. The future Tibet will be an oasis of peace in the heartland of Asia where man and nature will live in perfect harmony, benefiting not only Tibet and Tibetans, but also helping to create the basis for a more cordial relationship between India and China. When a genuinely cordial relationship is established between Tibetans and the Chinese, it will enable us not only to resolve the disputes between our two nations in this century, but will also enable the Tibetans to make a significant contribution through our rich cultural tradition for mental peace among the millions of young Chinese.

May our struggle soon lead to the restoration of our legitimate rights and to peace and prosperity in the whole region.

The Dalai Lama
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