

APPEAL to the World

from His Holiness the Dalai Lama

The events of March 10, 2008 marked a significant day for His Holiness the Dalai Lama. It brought back the same feeling of anxiety and fear which he had experienced when tensions, which began to escalate in Tibet from around 1956, eventually led to the peaceful uprising of March 10, 1959, in Lhasa and his eventual escape into exile.

When asked by MSNBC TV interviewer Ann Curry in mid-April about the suffering he – and Tibet – were now enduring, he said: “As soon as I heard [that people in parts of Lhasa were demonstrating] I felt, oh, now our people are going to suffer ... not only in Lhasa area, but the other four Chinese provinces: my own birthplace, Qinghai, and Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan. In these four Chinese provinces, around four million Tibetans live in this area. So, almost the entire Tibetan population [are] now express[ing] their deep resentment and anger. So, I really feel, of course, fear, much anxiety, anguish, and also a feeling of helplessness.”

The suffering his people are facing, the Dalai Lama also faces. But as he repeated, as he has said many times before: “If there is a way to overcome, then no need to worry. If there is no way to overcome, no need to worry. In spite of some sort of turmoil in the intelligence side [of my brain], the emotional side stays calm. As a result, since March 10 my sleep is never disturbed.” He added, with a chuckle, “This is a practical sort of benefit.”

He affirmed that violence is not the answer, that for almost 2,000 years the Chinese and Tibetans lived [mostly] happily side by side. “I always consider the Chinese as our brothers and sisters. Some kind of negative feeling towards them is useless, unjust. The ancient nation [of China] deserves to host the world-famous Olympic Games ... and when unpleasant events happened in England and France, I

sent a message to Tibetans in San Francisco: please don't create any violence.”

When Curry asked him if he supported the protests he said, “Firstly, I myself am fully committed to democracy, the right of expression, freedom of speech, freedom of thought, among Tibetans,” and when he was asked if he wanted the world and its leaders to boycott the Games he said, emphatically, no. “I wish for the Games event to take place smoothly. Whether individual leaders go or not is up to them, their individual right.”

“And what is the greatest use of your life?” Ann Curry asked.

He said, simply: “To serve.”

He concluded with this: “To help other people. You see, I have three responsibilities up to now. Number one, promotion of human value. This is my main interest ... how to improve human value in order to be better a human being. Then, second, as a Buddhist, promotion of religious harmony. So these two, till my death, I [am] involved [with]. As long as I remain, alive, I [am] fully committed. The third commitment is the Tibetan struggle. Now this has concerned [me] since 2001. We already have an elected political leadership. Since then my position is something like semi-retired. So now I'm looking forward to complete retirement.” And he chuckled.

Ann Curry: “Do you think you'll ever see Tibet again?”

The Dalai Lama: “Yes, I believe. I believe.”

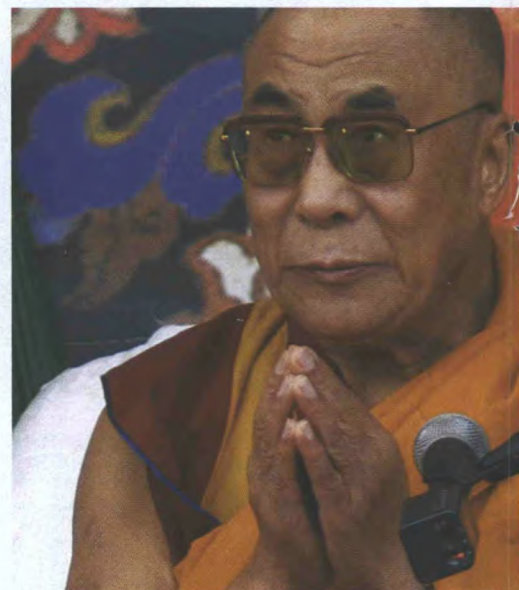


PHOTO: Nick Hoelaars



In widely distributed media statements, His Holiness has said:

"Today [March 28, 2008], I extend heartfelt greetings to my Chinese brothers and sisters around the world, particularly to those in the People's Republic of China (PRC). In the light of the recent developments in Tibet, I would like to share with you my thoughts concerning relations between the Tibetan and Chinese peoples, and make a personal appeal to all of you.

"I am deeply saddened by the loss of life in the recent tragic events in Tibet. I am aware that some Chinese have also died. I feel for the victims and their families and pray for them. The recent unrest has clearly demonstrated the gravity of the situation in Tibet and the urgent need to seek a peaceful and mutually beneficial solution through dialogue.

Even at this juncture I have expressed my willingness to the Chinese authorities to work together to bring about peace and stability.

"Chinese brothers and sisters, I assure you I have no desire to seek Tibet's separation. Nor do I have any wish to drive a wedge between the Tibetan and Chinese peoples. On the contrary my commitment has always been to find a genuine solution to the problem of Tibet that ensures the long-term interests of both Chinese and Tibetans. My primary concern, as I have repeated time and again, is to ensure the survival of the Tibetan people's distinctive culture, language and identity. As a simple monk who strives to live his daily life according to Buddhist precepts, I assure you of the sincerity of my personal motivation.

"I urge the Chinese leadership to exercise wisdom and to initiate a meaningful dialogue with the Tibetan people. I also appeal to them to make sincere efforts to contribute to the stability and harmony of the PRC, and avoid creating rifts between the nationalities....I am encouraged that several Chinese intellectuals and scholars have expressed their strong concern about the Chinese leadership's actions [page 20] and the potential for adverse long-term consequences, particularly on relations among different nationalities. ...

"In 1974, following serious discussions with my Kashag (cabinet), as well as the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker of the then Assembly of the Tibetan People's Deputies, we decided to find a Middle Way that would seek

not to separate Tibet from China, but would facilitate the peaceful development of Tibet. Although we had no contact at the time with the PRC – which was in the midst of the Cultural Revolution – we had already recognized that, sooner or later, we would have to resolve the question of Tibet through negotiations. We also acknowledged that, at least with regard to modernization and economic development, it would greatly benefit Tibet if it remained within the PRC. Although Tibet has a rich and ancient cultural heritage, it is materially undeveloped.

"Situated on the roof of the world, Tibet is the source of many of Asia's major rivers; therefore, protection of the environment on the Tibetan plateau is of supreme importance. Since our utmost concern is to safeguard Tibetan Buddhist culture – rooted as it is in the values of universal compassion – as well as the Tibetan language and the unique Tibetan identity, we have worked whole-heartedly towards achieving meaningful self-rule for all Tibetans. The PRC's constitution provides the right for nationalities such as the Tibetans to do this."

On April 2, he issued this public appeal:

"I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to the world leaders, Parliamentarians, NGOs and members of the public who have expressed their concern over the recent deeply saddening and tragic events in Tibet. I am also grateful for their efforts to persuade the Chinese authorities to exercise restraint in dealing with the peaceful protesters, while at the same time calling for meaningful dialogue to resolve the issue.

"I appeal for your continued support in calling for an immediate end to the current crackdown, the release of all those who have been arrested and detained, and the provision of proper medical treatment to the injured. We are particularly concerned about the lack of adequate medical facilities, as there are reports of many injured Tibetans being afraid to go to Chinese-run hospitals and clinics.

"I would also request you to encourage the sending of an independent international body, to investigate the unrest and its underlying causes, as well as allowing the media and international medical teams to visit the affected areas. Their presence will not only instill a sense of reassurance in the Tibetan people, but will also exercise a restraining influence on the Chinese authorities." ☸