



Podiumsdiskussion im Rahmen der Abschlussveranstaltung von „Meeting China 2008 – Olympialand kontrovers“; 14. Juli 08: „Wie geht es weiter mit Tibet und China? Ein tibetisch-chinesischer Dialog“; Kelsang Gyaltsen, *Gesandter S.H. des Dalai Lama für Europa* und Prof. Gu Xuewu, *Ruhruniversität Bochum*; Moderation: Friedbert Meurer, Deutschlandfunk

Central Tibetan Administration's position on Sino- Tibetan Dialogue

Introduction:

In 1979 Deng Xiaoping declared that except for the independence of Tibet, all other issues could be resolved through negotiations. Since then His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration have pursued the Middle-Way Approach, which seeks to resolve the Tibetan issue through negotiations with the Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Based on this approach, the envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama have held seven round of talks with the Government of the People's Republic of China since 2002 when contacts were resumed between the two sides. As a result, today there is a better and deeper understanding of each other's position and the fundamental differences between the two sides. Particularly, the fifth round of talks have made it clear that there is a major difference even in the approach in addressing the issue. Despite this, we are committed to the dialogue process and are hopeful that progress will be made by continuing the engagement.

The Middle-Way Approach

The Middle-Way Approach is our basic policy for resolving the issue of Tibet within the framework of the constitution of the PRC. Proposed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Middle-Way Approach is endorsed by the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies and enjoys the support of the majority of the Tibetan people. The essence of the Middle-Way Approach is that it does not seek independence for Tibet. Nor does it accept the present status of Tibet. Rather, the Middle-Way Approach seeks a reunified genuine national autonomous region for all the Tibetan people.

The Tibetan side is convinced that in the long run such an approach is of mutual benefit to both the Tibetans and China. It is the most reasonable, realistic and pragmatic approach that can guarantee a lasting peace and harmony amongst the nationalities.

Since Deng Xiaoping's assurance to resolve the Tibetan issue short of independence, we have pursued the Middle-Way Approach with consistency and sincerity. We have never departed from our commitment to the Approach at any time and in any given circumstance.

Despite such commitment and assurance, the Chinese government is still not convinced of the approach, and doubts that it is nothing but a hidden agenda of seeking independence, semi-independence or independence in disguise. As such, we believe more talks will overcome such suspicions and doubts.

We have always stressed that seeking genuine self-rule for the entire Tibetan people within the framework of the People's Republic of China's constitution is to preserve Tibet's unique identity, the core of which is its culture, religion and language.

There are some individuals and organizations that pursue the path of independence, rejecting the Middle-Way Approach of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. But the situation will never remain the same if there are tangible results for the Middle-Way Approach. In his 10 March 1999 statement, His Holiness

the Dalai Lama emphasized, “A just and fair solution to the issue of Tibet will enable me to give full assurance that I will use my moral authority to persuade the Tibetans not to seek separation.”

Historical Status of Tibet

The Tibetan people and the Chinese government have their own version of Tibet’s historical status. The Chinese government asserts that Tibet has always been an inalienable part of China and demands His Holiness the Dalai Lama to publicly acknowledge this before holding any negotiations on Tibet. Tibetan, however, recognizes that Tibet historically was an independent country. Tibet has a long history of more than two thousand years and we cannot justify the status of Tibetan history by quoting a particular period while ignoring its larger context. Since the true nature of the historical relationship of Tibet and China is very complex, we believe it is better not to hang upon the historical facts. His Holiness the Dalai Lama considers Tibet’s future more important than its past because Tibet’s future is within our hands to shape.

Future Local Government of Tibet

In future, Tibetans in Tibet, owing to their expertise and experience, must shoulder the main responsibility of running the local Tibetan government. His Holiness the Dalai Lama repeatedly and publicly stated that he will not hold any position in any future local Tibetan government, and that the Tibetan Administration-in-Exile would be dissolved.

Restoring the old social order in Tibet is not even in the dream of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the exile Tibetan Administration. No Tibetan, whether in exile or in Tibet, has any desire to have such social system revived in Tibet. In exile we do not follow the old system of governance.

Therefore, we neither have any desire to restore the old social order nor to replace the present socialist system. Our only demand is that the right to regional national autonomy be implemented to all the Tibetan areas both in letter and spirit as enshrined in the constitution. We believe and stand that our demand is most legitimate, reasonable and practical.

Regional National Autonomy for all the Tibetan Areas

The Tibetan people’s demand and aspiration for the status of genuine regional national autonomy to all the Tibetan-inhabited areas is based not on Tibet’s history but the People’s Republic of China’s constitution. In other words, it is based on the principle of self-governance and equality for all nationalities, as guaranteed in the People’s Republic of China’s constitution. If there is separation of the Tibetan nationality then there cannot be real implementation of the system of regional national autonomy and thus Tibetan culture and traditions cannot be preserved. Therefore, the people of Tibet should be administered as a single autonomous region. This is indispensable for the preservation of Tibetan identity, since all Tibetans, whether they live in the Tibet Autonomous Region or outside, have a common language, religion and culture. Such an arrangement will also help realize peaceful coexistence and harmony between Tibetans and all other nationalities. It is true that at the time of the “peaceful liberation of Tibet” the area under the Tibetan government is almost similar to the present-day Tibet Autonomous Region. However, it is not a justifiable reason for denying a genuine autonomy for the six million Tibetans. Absence of such a genuine autonomous region is a major hurdle in the way of achieving Marxist and Leninist principles of accomplishing equality of nationalities. The demand for the status of genuine regional autonomy to all the Tibetan areas incorporated into other provinces is the legitimate aspiration of the Tibetan people. We are aware that it constitutes one-fourth of the total territory of China, and since we are not seeking separation this shouldn’t be the obstacle to grant genuine regional national autonomy to all Tibetan areas. This is not a question of greater or smaller Tibet but the implementation of the principle of the regional national autonomy as enshrined in the constitution of the People’s Republic of China.

Therefore, division of a nationality and incorporating it into other bigger provinces, where a dominant nationality resides, is contrary to Marxist-Leninist theory to settle the nationality issue. Besides, it is against the system of regional national autonomy, the main objective of which is to protect the unique characteristics of the minority nationalities and to create conditions for them so that they become masters of their own affairs. In fact it resembles the imperialist policy of “divide and rule”.

Apart from preserving their identity, we also believe that a unified autonomous region for the entire Tibetan people will enable them to achieve economic self-sufficiency. A change in the present boundary of the minority nationality regions is possible, considering such instances have occurred in the past. Prominent Tibetans who have worked under the Chinese authorities demanded the compelling need for a single and united Tibetan administrative unit. Prominent Chinese leaders had also endorsed the unification of all Tibetan people into a single autonomous region.

Five-Point Peace Plan and Strasbourg Proposal

The Five-Point Peace Plan is the future vision of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The Kashag in its 10 March 2005 statement has clarified that His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Five-Point Peace Plan and the Strasbourg Proposal outline the major issues concerning the aspirations of the Tibetan people. His Holiness the Dalai Lama did not issue them as a non-negotiable and ultimate decision. As for the preambles, they are background information and not part of the agenda. The Five-Point Peace Plan, in particular, is a future vision that, irrespective of the resolution of the status of Tibet, needs to be pursued for the benefit of entire humanity, including the Tibetan and Chinese people. It is, therefore, not directly related to the political status of Tibet and the agenda for negotiations. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama has decided to resolve the Tibetan issue within the framework of the constitution of the People's Republic of China, the presence of the PLA in Tibetan areas and all other defense issues should be decided according to the provisions of the constitution.

In essence, the entirety of the Tibetan population having legitimate rights within the framework of the People's Republic of China to enjoy genuine regional national autonomy is the legitimate demand of the Tibetan people. Therefore, the need for such an autonomy equally and uniformly practised by all the Tibetan people is the fundamental issue.

Population Transfer of Chinese

Article 4 of the constitution of the People's Republic of China states that "regional autonomy is practised in areas where people of minority nationalities live in concentrated communities, in these areas organs of self-government are established to exercise the power of autonomy...all nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages and to preserve or reform their own folkways and custom." This article ensures that Tibetan people's distinct identity based on language, religion and culture will be preserved. But the continuing influx of the Chinese people on to the Tibetan areas threatens the very existence and identity of the Tibetan people. Therefore, such population transfer should be halted so that the aims and objectives of the article 4 of the Chinese constitution can be achieved.

As for the status of those Chinese who are already in the Tibetan areas, the two sides must decide on this issue through the adoption of just laws. We do not expect these Chinese to be withdrawn immediately from the Tibetan areas. We are aware of the present ground realities and the complications involved in such a withdrawal. However, we are against the presence of large number of Chinese population in the Tibetan areas not because we want to split from China, but to preserve the distinct identity of the Tibetan people.

Conclusion

Since early May 2006, Chinese leaders have stepped up their campaigns to denounce His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Their baseless allegations and derogatory remarks against His Holiness the Dalai Lama have deeply hurt the Tibetans both inside and outside Tibet and millions of others who respect His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his message of peace and compassion.

Such actions are not only unbecoming of a country like China, but also undermines the dialogue process. Separation of mind is the most serious form of separatism. Indulging in separatist activities in the name of preventing separatism itself is a grave mistake which endangers the unity of the People's Republic of China.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan administration are determined to continue the dialogue process until and unless a viable solution is found for the Tibetan issue. Towards this end, we will continue to struggle to resolve the issue of Tibet on the basis of the Middle-Way Approach.