



***The Sino-Tibetan Dialogue Process***

Interview with Lodi Gyari Rinpoche

*Special Envoy of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Washington DC*

*& Chief Negotiator for the Tibetan Government*

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*CA: Mr. Lodi Gyari, we are curious to know more about the negotiations that you are conducting with China?*

LG: The Tibetan movement is a very unique movement. This can be seen from the way we are conducting the negotiations with the People's Republic of China. We are doing it in a different way. If one day, His Holiness the Dalai Lama's' efforts succeed, it will not only have an impact on the six million Tibetans, but it will also be a breakthrough for humanity, because of the nature of our negotiations.

Even for someone like me, engaged in the negotiations, I see it more as a spiritual practice than an exercise in diplomacy. Let me explain this.

I remember very vividly that in 1987, when His Holiness first presented the "Middle Way approach" in a formal document, he consulted a few people outside of the Tibetan leadership. One of them was former President Carter. His Holiness has a lot of respect for President Carter, not because he had been the US President, but because His Holiness believes he is very wise and religious minded (in fact he became closer to us after he left the White House).

So, I flew directly from New Delhi to New York to Minneapolis where President Carter was staying at that time, to show him an 8-page document, which later became the "Strasbourg Proposal". He really took time to read through (he was

famous for that) and took nearly one hour to study it very carefully. Then he turned over to me and told me: "What is His Holiness' bottom line?" I told him: "This is the bottom line". He was surprised: "If this is the bottom line, you have to start from somewhere else". I responded to President Carter saying this issue was raised, but His Holiness' position is that he is not a politician and that he was a simple monk who wants to be really sincere and transparent and place on the table what he really wants.

It is because of such a nature of our negotiations position that I feel our success, when it happens, will be a major breakthrough in the art of negotiation.

*Was it difficult for HH?*

It has been extremely difficult for His Holiness. When he chose "the Middle Way" path, there were tremendous protests from his own people. This strong opposition came from people who were ready to give their lives for the cause. And as someone who served His Holiness very closely and has been intimately involved in the process, I can tell you, it was very painful.

It was certainly a difficult thing for those of us who had the honour to be associated with him. But it was even more difficult for His Holiness to take such a decision. He showed that he was a real leader, because a real leader has sometimes to take unpopular decisions. He showed that he had the courage to take difficult decisions. I always share this with my Chinese colleagues to give them an idea of the extent His Holiness has gone to work for a mutually satisfactory solution.

I would like to mention a personal experience. My mother was one of the first women to take on the fight against the Chinese. She was quite well known. Though she was a very gentle woman, she never hesitated to fight the Chinese. When I accompanied His Holiness to Strasbourg to present the Proposal, she was deeply upset with me.

Until His Holiness' presentation of his proposal to the European Parliament, I would keep this document under my pillow because it was extremely confidential. When I returned from Strasbourg, the first thing my mother told me: "If I had known that the documents that you were so preciously guarding were this Proposal, I would have torn it asunder".

This is just to give you an idea about the mindset of the Tibetan people when they first heard of the Proposal. This shows how difficult the process has been.

*Tell us more about your involvement?*

My first trip to China was in 1982, when I was Chairman of the Tibetan Parliament, I was part of the high level exploratory delegation sent by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. When we first landed in China, the Chinese officials came forward to greet us. For a moment, I did not know what to do: if I shake hand with them, it would a betrayal of the thousands Tibetans as well as my family members. At that moment, I had a flashback of my grand mother and my brothers who died under indescribable circumstances). I thought that if I shake hands, I would betray all those Tibetan who died. Many Tibetans had a similar experience.

Despite all this, we are today engaging the Chinese because we believe that it is the best solution. From this angle also you can see how important the dialogue process is. This is certainly not diplomacy only.

This is the background of our dialogue with China.

*How do you describe the negotiations with the PCR?*

Usually some kind of glamour is associated with negotiations of this nature, but in our case, it is not like this. There is a real human approach. That is why I believe that the impact of this type of dialogue goes far beyond the Tibetan people and the Tibetan plateau.

Further if these efforts of His Holiness bear some fruits, it can bring about some fundamental shift in China. You may think it is too ambitious, but if it sincerely done, it is possible though it is difficult. From this point of view also it is very important that our process succeed.

*Does anybody show some interest in the Sino-Tibetan dialogue?*

As of late, there is a renewed concern about China, especially in Washington DC. There was a time when there was so much enthusiasm about China: it was considered as the most important country to be courted. It was the biggest market that ever existed. China could get away with everything. But things have changed. If the Middle East development had not happened, it would have come even earlier, but there is today a great concern about China; some people even see China as a threat. I tell my American friends: "Well your concern is real, but You can not solve anything through confrontation or by using force. You should make China more friendly and less isolated."

That is why I think that with the positive attitude of His Holiness, the Tibetan issue can be a tremendously positive factor for the future of China. I do not say this in an idealist way, but am being very practical.

*Can you give us some examples?*

Zhao Ziyang, the former Chinese Premier. died recently after spending many years under house arrest. When he was critically ill, we received a message from one of his sons: "My father is very ill, can you ask His Holiness to pray for him." We assumed that this request came because the son was interested in Buddhism. I passed the request to His Holiness who prayed for him. Then after the death of Zhao Ziyang came a communication from all his children thanking His Holiness for praying for their father. But what surprised me most is when we were informed that virtually the last word of Zhao Ziyang was the name of His Holiness. We are talking about a person who reached the highest level of the Chinese hierarchy

(General Secretary of the Party and Premier). This illustrates the extent of reverence for His Holiness even in China today. There are many other instances.

Then I do not believe that it is too far-fetched to think that the Tibetan issue can have a profound impact on tomorrow's China. This sentiment is shared by many Chinese. I see this through my contacts not only with the Chinese government, but with Chinese of all shades.

I am surprised and encouraged to come across Chinese in the government, in the Party, but also this new class of rich Chinese entrepreneurs who believe that what China really needs is the presence of His Holiness.

*Are you trying to negotiate the future of the Tibetan people?*

If you look at the Tibetan plateau, you see that Tibet is the giver of life: all the major [Asian] rivers have their sources in Tibet. Perhaps in a few years time, definitely in 50 years time, people will be fighting wars over water. Recently, I dined with some senior Indian officials. I was telling them that it was very smart of them to invite the Saudi King as Chief Guest for the Indian Republic Day. They said that their Prime Minister made a special exception and went to receive the King at the airport. I said: "Yes, after all, he is the Custodian of the most holy shrine for the Muslims". They said: "Yes, he is also the custodian of oil."

Unfortunately, the time will come when there will be a scarcity of what we today take for granted, particularly resources like water. You do not need to be a prophet to know that there will be shortage of water in 50 years time. Just with that consideration alone, imagine how important the plateau of Tibet is.

You know that former Premier Zhu Rongji took the wise decision to stop the deforestation in Tibet. He took the decision not because he cared for the environment, certainly not for the sake of the Tibetans, but he realized that the floods in China were due to the deforestation in Tibet, which was not natural ones, but man-made. For the last many decades, the Chinese authorities had not cared for the Tibetan plateau, thinking that whatever they can take from Tibet

will only benefit them. But at the end the people of China began to suffer much more than the Tibetans.

So you can see that the whole issue of Tibet is larger than the interest of Tibet and the Tibetan people, and has wider ramifications.

### *What about India?*

In terms of geopolitics, it is very encouraging that there is today much more trade relations between India and China. It is not the Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai relation, which was very unfortunate, but a much more rational relation. But then, it would be an illusion if anyone in South Block feels that there could be a real progress in the relations with China without solving the problem of Tibet. It would be very naïve.

For centuries, Tibet acted as a buffer between these two great Asian civilizations. Now we can become a bridge. Buffer was important during the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century to bring a certain amount of stability: it was like a wall separating empires during what is known as "the Great Game". Today we do not need a buffer, but a bridge. Tibet could play that unique role, to be the bridge. This could help find a lasting and genuine solution. A solution in which the Tibetan issue would not be considered would not be lasting.

A genuine and lasting solution will be in the interests of these two great Asian nations. No one else than Tibet can help to bridge the difference between India and China. Though we are very much part of the Indian civilization, many people feel that Tibetan language must be similar to Chinese language, just because of the fact that Tibet is under China. Similarly, they believe that the Tibetan culture or civilization is similar to the Chinese. I have to explain that our link is much deeper with the Indian civilization. His Holiness describes the link between the Tibetan and Indian civilizations as a filial link. Many aspects of the Indian civilization have been kept intact in Tibet. HH jokes and says that the Indian civilization has been put in a deep freezer on the Tibetan plateau.

One of the good things out of our misfortune is that many texts, the ancient wisdom of India, has been preserved in Tibet. Today scholars in Sarnath are retranslating these texts into Sanskrit or Pali.

But by circumstances, we are politically and otherwise very much part of the Chinese political orbit. This fact is also a positive factor.

*What is the status of your negotiations today?*

The first round of negotiations dates from 1982, when the first Tibetan high level exploratory delegates went to China. More recently, I went thrice to China after 2002 and we had a fourth round of talks in Geneva in [January] 2005. In a month or two, perhaps sooner, I will go back to China to conduct the 5<sup>th</sup> round of talks. It is a very slow process; it is going to take a long time, before we can make substantial progress. I always tell my Tibetan friends: "Don't be in a hurry and don't ask me to hurry." We should not allow ourselves to be forced [into an agreement] too quickly. After all we have already waited very long, His Holiness is good health; we have time.

We are committed and optimistic and we will continue very slowly.

*Do you have any hope? Are you optimistic about the outcome of the talks?*

Yes, I am hopeful, because if I had lost hope, I would have no business to conduct these talks. If I did not believe in this process, it would be immoral for me to continue to lead this team. I do it as my spiritual practice. His Holiness is not only my political leader, but also my guru. If I had any doubt in my heart, my job would be to go to His Holiness and tell him: "Your Holiness, please take me out of this business because I do not believe in it".

*Did you ever doubt?*

I can share a personal experience. Four years back, my father died. For the first year I was like a zombie, it was such a great loss. I realized that that he had so much bitterness towards the Chinese. He was never allowed to go back because he had been part of the Tibetan resistance. He was so upset that he did not even want his ashes to be taken back. He was very tough man: "As long as His Holiness is not going back, I do not want my ashes to go back."

After his death, I felt very uncharitable towards the Chinese. Then I thought I must speak to His Holiness, because with this bitterness in my heart, I could not continue this effort. But after a couple of weeks, I was fortunately able to overcome this state of mind.

I today continue to work for this process not necessarily because I believe in the Chinese, but because I believe in His Holiness' sincerity. I believe in his wisdom. It is not because the Chinese have made any concessions. It is rational, it is not just emotional. Many things we thought not possible have happened, so rationally and because His Holiness complete commitment to his initiative.

*Are the Chinese really sincere? Are they doing it to get rid of the international pressure or to tell the visiting dignitaries that something is happening?*

The Chinese may have got into this process because of international pressure. It is not by compassion or because they realized that they have committed some mistakes.

Having said that it was our job to make this happen and gradually the Chinese leadership is being engaged. It is not only for PR purpose, but to resolve the Tibetan issue.

They have also come to understand that it has to be solved when His Holiness is very much in control.

I am aware that there is in China a school of thought that believes that the Tibetan issue is a single person issue: the moment His Holiness is not there or is not in a position to lead his people, they believe that the issue will have a natural death. I always tell the Chinese that it is a very dangerous thought because, if His

Holiness is not here to guide the Tibetan people, though for us it will be devastating, it will give rise to bitterness, anger, resentment. It cannot be imagined today.

I told you my reaction when my father passed away, you can imagine what will happen if His Holiness is no more. The Chinese will not be forgotten for generations. The bitterness, the remorse will take generations to disappear. I really hope that the Chinese will be wise enough to realize this and will try to find a solution when His Holiness is very much in control.

And there will not be a single Tibetan leader who can keep the Tibetans together and make them agree to the kind of solution that His Holiness has proposed. It would be impossible.

Today the Chinese have the opportunity to deal with one single individual. In the absence of His Holiness, they will have to deal with hundreds of solutions, with hundreds of individuals, none of them able to deliver a solution.

This has been my argument with the Chinese: "Come to sense and find a solution when he is very much there. It will be good for us, but it will also help you."

*What are you discussing? Are you just trying to know each other, to build confidence or is it going further?*

The two first visits in 2002 and 2003 were precisely to build confidence. In fact we deliberately decided not to talk about sensitive issues. We wanted to concentrate on building relations to the extent possible because we are dealing with a communist totalitarian regime. Even though communism is dead, but institutionally, there is still a one-party system with a lot of suspicion and mistrust, not only towards us, but unfortunately often between themselves. Despite all this, we managed to make little cracks. We can see these small cracks through the rigid stance of the officials.

But starting from 2004, we started dealing with some of the core issues. There is more tension: the gap is much deeper than we thought. You may have read the Chinese statements as well as my own remarks where I made it clear that the

differences and disagreements were vast. It is how it is. The positive aspect is that the Chinese are now ready to discuss. In the past, they just say: "There is no issue of Tibet, Tibetans have been happy to be liberated". Now they realize: "We have a big problem, we have not one disagreement, but many major disagreement and they are fundamental."

I find it very interesting and encouraging because I feel that the first step is that all sides should come out of self-denial and the Chinese are coming out self-denial by saying: "Yes, there is tremendous problem". It is where we are.

During the forthcoming visit, we know that we might be confronted with even wider disagreement. But once both sides have let it out, all the points where we differ will be on the table.

*Do you hope to solve these issues one day?*

It is very challenging, it is very difficult, but once everything is on the table, we can slowly try to sort out all the issues. That is why I told you at the beginning that it will be a difficult task, time consuming. At times, the talks may break down, but hopefully not for ever. At this stage we will need everyone's support. When the Tibetan leadership says: "We are talking to the Chinese, do not interfere, because it may disrupt the process" it creates sometimes a misunderstanding with our supporters

But at the same time, I am aware that the day the Chinese sense that there is a lack of support, they will stop the talks right there. Why should they continue? But His Holiness and the Kalon Tripa (the elected Prime Minister) always ask our friends and our people, to support us in a manner which is the most helpful for our cause.

Whenever I have the occasion, I tell people that because of our Buddhist culture, we always look for someone supporting us, a patron. It is where the trouble started with China, though we felt that we were a sovereign nation, the Chinese emperor was at times the patron of our Church: it is what we call the priest-patron relationship. For the Chinese this relation became later assimilated to

suzerainty and then sovereignty. So today, we have to be careful when we look for patrons. I tell the Tibetans that we should not look for patrons, even in our present struggle. We should do it ourselves. We must always be in the forefront. I tell the Tibet supporters: "You can help in staying behind us. You have to be solid like a rock on which we can lean." Sometimes I am not so popular in the West, because I tell very bluntly: "It is our struggle".

The Chinese also used to believe that we were backward people who needed to be 'liberated'. So when a foreigner tells me: "Oh, Tibetans do not know how to conduct their struggle," I reply: "No, we may commit mistakes, but we are able to learn from these mistakes not to repeat historical mistakes." By being ourselves, we are in the forefront. At times, we will fall down, at times we will go in the wrong direction, but ultimately we will find our way. But we need you on our side and whatever small progress we make, we will not go back because we can lean on you.

*Today you advise people to not demonstrate against China. Can you explain?*

I did demonstrate. It was my path also. I was a founding father of the Tibetan Youth Congress and I am very proud of it.

But today we are more efficient, we have been able to take the issue at a much higher level, we can deal directly with the [Chinese] government. When I arrived in Washington, I was not even allowed to walk into the State Department. It was as if I had some type of disease and that I would contaminate the State Department. The 7<sup>th</sup> Floor is synonymous of the Secretary of State, as it is on this floor that she has her office. On the same floor there is now an office called "Office of the Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues". So, we should not spend our energy in the streets, we should get our energies to go inside the government.

I am telling people to do things differently, in a more subtle way, in more creative way. We have to show the Chinese that we have become mature. We have

learned from the past, we are now an efficient organization, we can make a difference and we can now influence government's policies.

This is sometimes misunderstood. We are telling our supporters: "you can help us in a more subtle and sensitive way". The Chinese themselves have become much more sensitive.

Some 20 years back, the Chinese would always help us by doing some stupid things. Now, they do not commit this type of mistakes. So, we should also not do stupid things.

*In China, more and more young people are becoming Buddhist. Do you think that one day these young people support the Tibetan cause in China?*

One of the most decisive factors [in the Tibetan issue] is this newly found interest for Buddhism in China. Thirty years back, for the Chinese, Tibet was the most backward piece of land of the planet and Tibetans were the most retarded people. The Chinese had a very negative attitude towards Tibetans. They considered Tibetan Buddhism as a very strange concept.

But today, in China Tibet is becoming a new phenomenon. For example amongst poets or artists, many Han Chinese write songs on Tibetan themes. Several young artists are interested by Tibet.

In places like Lhasa, fifty years ago, the only Chinese you saw around the Central cathedral, were lifting their nose up and they were often deliberately going the opposite way [anti-clockwise]. Today you see young and erudite Chinese walking shoulder to shoulder with Tibetans nomads. For them, it is very auspicious. They are on pilgrimage. There is a renewal of all religion, including Tibetan Buddhism. It is natural as many Chinese dynasties adopted the Tibetan form of Buddhism in the past.

But in the past [Buddhist] influence was through the emperor's daughter or wives; it remained confined to the court. It was limited. Once the dynasty was overrun or if something happened to the Emperor, the relation disappeared.

Similarly, in Tibet, it depended on a Tibetan lama having a great predominance at that time in Tibet (like the Sakyas, the Karmapas, etc.)

Now for the first time, the relation is not limited to the court, it is ordinary Chinese man or woman who are interested in the Tibetan religion. It is no more limited to a particular household or lama or sect. Therefore the influence has taken root.

Earlier when the lama passed away or the emperor died, it was the end of the relationship. Sometimes it was even followed by a counter reaction.

Our hope is that the Chinese become aware of our problem [through this religious revival].

It is also encouraging to see that many Chinese scholars from Mainland China, are coming to meet His Holiness to discuss with him and offering to help.

*I have seen on Chinese TV that a lot of Tibetan children are taken to China and educated as Chinese. What do you think of this?*

It is one issue that we raised with the Chinese: the importance of the Tibetan language, particularly in areas where the Chinese are a majority. It is not that we are against the presence of the Chinese; we know that Tibet cannot be a homogenous country anymore. I do not say that the Tibetan plateau should be populated only by Tibetans. But Tibetans must be predominant; otherwise our identity will be lost. In the negotiations, this is a fundamental difference with the Chinese.

You ask me about the children being sent to China. In the 60' and 70's we used to oppose this policy, because we said: "The children are thus becoming Chinese". But something very interesting happened. By and large, these kids uprooted from their villages and taken to Mainland China become Tibetans after experiencing a lot of discrimination. They become aware of their identity. They ask themselves: "Who am I? I am not a Chinese". I know a few of them that are more Tibetan than someone educated in an Institute in Lhasa. Those who come back from Beijing are more Tibetan. Today we are not protesting anymore. It is

very interesting. Most of them become Tibetan with a deeper commitment and the rest of their lives they will continue to feel very much Tibetan.

[Part 2]

*You mentioned the support you are receiving from the State Department, but could you tell us the French position on the Tibet issue? Do you get any support?*

More than any other country in the West, France has the wide awareness of the Tibet issue. In terms of Tibet Support Groups, France has one of the largest numbers, even though some are small.

Similarly in Parliament, some years back when Chinese President [Hu Jintao] visited France, the French government was keen to please the Chinese government, so they invited him to speak in the Parliament. However to the surprise of the Chinese delegation, a very large portion of the French parliament house was empty. Very politely, without making any scene, a large numbers of parliamentarians stayed away, as a protest or as a message of their unhappiness with China's policies on Tibet.

In the awareness about Tibetan culture, [i.e Buddhism] no doubt France is foremost. But unfortunately, this tremendous awareness, this deep understanding of the Tibetan civilization is not reflected in the present government's policies. When President Chirac was the mayor of Paris, he was one of the most outspoken leaders in favour of His Holiness. However when he became President of the Republic, he is one of the few heads of state who never received His Holiness. It is disappointing. And I am sure that it is disappointing to millions of French people.

Having said that, I must say for the record, that behind the scenes the French government has been very active. They have always kept me informed of the efforts made by the President, the Prime Minister and other senior officials. These efforts are very meaningful. I know that President Chirac himself sometimes engaged the Chinese leaders in intense discussions on the Tibet issue. We do

appreciate this. I make periodic visits to France and I am very well received by the French authorities both from the Parliament, the President Office and the Foreign Ministry. I always tell the French government that for a country like France which is a leading nation with a very rich civilization, her government must sometimes be willing also to express its respect for His Holiness in a more visible manner. By doing this, they would show respect for non-violence, for freedom and democracy. The Dalai Lama does not only represent the struggle of Tibetan people, but also many other principles dear to France as a nation.

*Such as the principles of the French revolution: "Liberty, equality, fraternity".*

Exactly. That is why we certainly wish that there would be more visible support.

*Recently in the French Senate they questioned the Chinese Ambassador about Tibet.*

As I told you the French parliamentarians have been very vocal, they have not hesitated to express their views, and it is not done as something "anti-Chinese". We are not asking anyone to be anti-Chinese. In fact if anyone tries to do something for Tibet by being anti-Chinese, it does not help us. I have great admiration for French parliamentarians, French people, but about the government, I am disappointed. I feel the government could be more helpful even to China, to be a bit more demonstrative [in their support],-- though behind the scene I want to emphasize that France like many other leading nation in Europe has always been pressing the Chinese government at the highest level to engage His Holiness in discussions.

*You mentioned about the Strasbourg proposal, about a zone of peace, a zone of ahimsa. On this point are you getting the support from the Government of India? They would be the first to benefit from such a zone of peace, isn't it?*

Well, a zone of peace is far beyond Tibet. Its impact, ramifications would not be just limited to Tibet. I am happy that you ask because sometimes people feel if it is part of our bilateral discussions with the Chinese government. These issues such as zone of peace is part of a long term vision of His Holiness, I would not say unrelated to Tibet – of course it is related to Tibet, but it was proposed precisely so that Tibet could become, not a buffer, but a bridge. Obviously one of the countries that would have an immediate and significant impact would be India. Among many Indian leaders, there is an understanding and appreciation of that concept. Whether the Indian government officially is ready to endorse it, is a different matter. Ourselves we did not explicitly ask for an endorsement at this stage.

We feel it should not be confused with Tibet-China relation. It is much more than that. Actually if we read the statement of Kashag [Tibetan Cabinet] on the March 10 last year, it was to clarify and differentiate some of the issues that are relevant to China-Tibet and some issues relevant to much broader areas.

*What about South Block? Is there some opening in the Foreign Office? There is some parliamentarian group which is quite active but it seems to me that the main problem since Nehru and the early fifties has been the attitude of the Foreign Office on the Tibet question.*

I think today there is a new generation of Foreign Service officers. I am not saying that the last generation was unsympathetic, individually they were fine. I had the honour of knowing most of the foreign secretaries, not of the Nehru era, but of the Indira Gandhi era. Each one of these senior officials have been very understanding, very sympathetic. In terms of their official approach, there have always been certain hesitations; they have become kind of prisoners of the ancient school of thought.

Today I feel things are different, the Indian Foreign Service officials are much more self-confident, particularly in their relation with China.

While they are definitely committed to a closer, healthy and even vibrant relation with China, they feel less constrained on issues like Tibet. They feel that they should not simply try to sweep these issues under the carpet.

I tell them very frankly whenever I have the occasion: *"My advice is when you deal with China, you must not pretend that you have no interest in Tibet. When you do that, the Chinese become even more suspicious. How can any sensible people think that you have no interest?"*

India's interest in the Tibetan plateau is intense, inseparable. I always advise the Ministry officials: the Chinese will trust more if you tell them frankly: *"The issue of Tibet is very important to us."*

The Sino-Indian relations can reach their best, only once the Tibet issue is resolved. As long as it remains unresolved, there will always be lingering issues and problems. I think some of the senior foreign service officials understand this. My feeling is that sometimes they deal with this issue in that manner. We certainly hope that they could be more pro-active.

*Twenty years ago, the Dalai Lama told me that the change will come from inside China. You mentioned that it is happening now. My question is: do you see new leadership emerging, like Zhao Ziyang or like Hu Yaobang who have been quite sympathetic to Tibet. Hu Yaobang's visit to Tibet in 1980 opened the doors for negotiations for the next 3 or 4 years. Do you see the emergence of new leadership who would help to bridge the gap between the Tibetan position and the Chinese position?*

I think so. The fact that Hu Yaobang was rehabilitated tends to prove this, though it is not to the extent I was hoping. But the fact that for the first time this present government decided to honour him is positive. [President] Hu Jintao was a protégé of Hu Yaobang. Even though after Hu Yaobang was purged, he had shifted his allegiance, he however never attacked or criticized his former mentor in an open manner. Now when he tries to rehabilitate him by celebrating his centenary, it is a good sign. Similarly if you watch the images of Tiananmen

Square events [of 1989]: when Zhao Ziyang comes to talk to students, the person standing right next to him is Wen Jiabao [the present Premier].

The Chinese people more than any other take this type of association seriously: the Confucius concepts in which loyalty and lineage are very important. So I think the present President and Prime Minister, given the opportunity, will bring about some changes. A fundamental breakthrough on the Tibet policy is not possible unless there is also a major change in China itself.

We know that the present Prime Minister has much reverence for Buddhism. So I think China is changing and it is one reason why I believe that His Holiness can really be a catalyst to bring about this change.