

1950

Speeches/Documents

Title: Appeal by His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet

Author: Dalai Lama

Date: 11 November 1950

Source:.

Description:.

To the United Nations

U. N. Document A/1549

11 November 1950, Kalimpong

The attention of the world is riveted on Korea where aggression is being resisted by an international force. Similar happenings in remote Tibet are passing without notice. It is in the belief that aggression will not go unchecked and freedom unprotected in any part of the world that we have assumed the responsibility of reporting to the United Nations Organization, through you, recent happenings in the border area of Tibet.

As you are aware, the problem of Tibet has taken on alarming proportions in recent times. This problem is not of Tibet's own making but is largely the outcome of unthwarted Chinese ambition to bring weaker nations on its periphery under its active domination. Tibetans have for long lived a cloistered life in their mountain fastnesses, remote and aloof from the rest of the world, except in so far as His Holiness the Dalai Lama, as the acknowledged head of the Buddhist Church, confers benediction and receives homage from followers in many countries.

In the years preceding 1912, there were indeed close friendly relations of a personal nature between the Emperor of China and His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The connection was essentially born of belief in a common faith and may correctly be described as the relationship between a spiritual guide and his lay followers; it had no political implications. As a people devoted to the tenets of Buddhism, Tibetans had long eschewed the art of warfare, practised peace and tolerance, and for the defence of their country relied on its geographical configuration and on non-involvement in the affairs of other nations. There were times when Tibet sought but seldom received the protection of the Chinese Emperor. The Chinese, however, in their natural urge for expansion, have wholly misconstrued the significance of the ties of friendship and

interdependence that existed between China and Tibet as between neighbours. To them China was suzerain and Tibet a vassal State. It is this which first aroused legitimate apprehension in the mind of Tibet regarding China's designs on its independent status.

The conduct of the Chinese during their expedition of 1910 completed the rupture between the two countries. In 1911-1912, Tibet, under the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, declared its complete independence-even Nepal simultaneously broke away from allegiance to China-while the Chinese revolution of 1911, which dethroned the last Manchurian Emperor, snapped the last of the sentimental and religious bonds that Tibet had with China. Tibet thereafter depended entirely on its isolation, its faith in the wisdom of the Lord Buddha, and occasionally on the support of the British in India for its protection. No doubt in these circumstances the latter could also claim suzerainty over Tibet. Tibet, notwithstanding Anglo-Chinese influence from time to time, maintained its separate existence, in justification of which it may be pointed out that it has been able to keep peace and order within the country and remain at peace with the world. It continued to maintain neighbourly good will and friendship with the people of China, but never acceded to the Chinese claim of suzerainty in 1914.

It was British persuasion which led Tibet to sign a treaty which superimposed on it the nominal (non-interfering) suzerainty of China and by which China was accorded the right to maintain a mission in Lhasa, though it was strictly forbidden to meddle in the internal affairs of Tibet. Apart from that fact, even the nominal suzerainty which Tibet conceded to China is not enforceable because of the non-signature of the treaty of 1914 by the Chinese. It will be seen that Tibet maintained independent relations with other neighbouring Countries, such as India and Nepal, Furthermore, despite friendly British overtures, it did not compromise its position by throwing in its forces in the Second World War on the aide of China. Thus it asserted and maintained its complete independence. The treaty of 1914 still guides relations between Tibet and India, and China not being a party to it may be taken to have renounced the benefits that would have otherwise accrued to it from the treaty. Tibet's independence thereby reassumed de jure Status.

The slender tie that Tibet maintained with China after the 1911 revolution became

less justifiable when China underwent a further revolution and turned into a full-fledged Communist State. There can be no kinship or sympathy between such divergent creeds as those espoused by China and Tibet. Foreseeing future complications, the Tibetan Government broke off diplomatic relations with China and made a Chinese representative in Lhasa depart from Tibet in July, 1949. Since then, Tibet has not even maintained foreign relations with the Chinese Government and people. It desires to live apart, uncontaminated by the germ of a highly materialistic creed, but China is bent on not allowing Tibet to live in peace. Since the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the Chinese have hurled threats of liberating Tibet and have used devious methods to intimidate and undermine the Government of Tibet. Tibet recognizes that it is in no position to resist. It is thus that it agreed to negotiate on friendly terms with the Chinese Government.

It is unfortunate that the Tibetan mission to China was unable to leave India through no fault of its own, but for want of British visas, which were required for transit through Hong Kong. At the kind intervention of the Government of India, the Chinese People's Republic condescended to allow the Tibetan mission to have preliminary negotiations with the Chinese Ambassador to India, who arrived in New Delhi only in September. While these negotiations were proceeding in Delhi, Chinese troops, without warning or provocation, crossed the Di Chu river, which has for long been the boundary of Tibetan territory, at a number of places on October 7, 1950. In quick succession, places of strategic importance such as Demar, Kamto, Tunga, Tshame, Rimochegotyu, Yakalo, and Markham, fell to the Chinese. Tibetan frontier garrisons in Kham, which were maintained not with any aggressive design, but as a nominal protective measure, were all wiped out. Communist troops converged in great force from five directions on Chamdo, the capital of Kham, which fell soon after. Nothing is known of the fate of a minister of the Tibetan Government posted there.

Little is known in the outside world of this sneak invasion. Long after the invasion had taken place, China announced to the world that it had asked its armies to march into Tibet. This unwarranted act of aggression has not only disturbed the peace of Tibet, but it is also in complete disregard of a solemn assurance given by China to the Government of India, and it has created a grave situation in Tibet and may eventually

deprive Tibet of its long-cherished independence. We can assure you, Mr. Secretary-General, that Tibet will not go down without a fight, though there is little hope that a nation dedicated to peace will be able to resist the brutal effort of men trained to war, but we understand that the United Nations has decided to stop aggression whenever it takes place.

The armed invasion of Tibet for the incorporation of Tibet in Communist China through sheer physical force is a clear case of aggression. As long as the people of Tibet are compelled by force to become a part of China against their will and Consent, the present invasion of Tibet will be the grossest instance of the violation of the weak by the strong. We therefore appeal through you to the nations of the world to Intercede in our behalf and restrain Chinese aggression.

The problem is simple. The Chinese claim Tibet as a part of China. Tibetans feel that racially, culturally, and geographically they are far apart from the Chinese. If the Chinese find the reactions of the Tibetans to their unnatural claim not acceptable, there are other civilised methods by which they could ascertain the views of the people of Tibet; or, should the issue be surely juridical, they are open to seek redress in an international court of law. The conquest of Tibet by China will only enlarge the area of conflict and increase the threat to the independence and stability of other Asian countries.

We Ministers, with the approval of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, entrust the problem of Tibet in this emergency to the ultimate decision of the United Nations, hoping that the conscience of the world will not allow the disruption of our State by methods reminiscent of the jungle.

The Kashag (Cabinet) and National Assembly of Tibet, Tibetan delegation, Shakabpa House, Kalimpong.

Dated Lhasa, the twenty-seventh day of the ninth Tibetan month of The Iron Tiger Year (November 7, 1950).