

**MEMORANDUM FROM HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA TO THE PRIME
MINISTER OF INDIA**

April 11, 1986

I am submitting this memorandum which is related to my earlier memorandum of May 29, 1985.

I stated then that for the mutual benefit of both India and Tibet in the long run, there was a need for a careful review of the present policy of the Government of India. In this respect I would like to submit a few suggestions:

1. When the Government of India officially recognized Tibet as being a part of China, the Government must have done so because of the reality of the situation then prevailing. For example, there was the 17-Point Agreement between Tibet and China. During my several meetings with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in 1956, he stressed the need to execute and implement the terms of this Agreement with China. He advised me to return to Tibet and said that it would be better to deal with the Chinese directly from within Tibet on basis of the Agreement. Therefore, it is clear that at the time the Government of India recognized Tibet as being a part of China, its assumption or understanding was that Tibet, though nominally a part of China, would have minimal Chinese interference and military presence. By signing the 17-Point Agreement with the Tibetan Government, the Chinese recognized the existence of a separate government, although they referred to it as the local government of Tibet. In clause 4 of the Agreement, it is stated, the central authorities will not alter the existing political system in Tibet.

The central authorities also will not alter the established status, functions and powers of the Dalai Lama. The Chinese have violated all the important terms

of the Agreement. Moreover, the treaty which the Government of India signed with China on Tibet in 1954 lapsed in 1962.

Since then the treaty has not been renewed. Therefore, now that the conditions under which the Government of India recognized Tibet as being a part of China have completely changed and are non-existent, I feel it would be appropriate for the Government of India to adopt a new policy in accordance with the changed circumstances. The conditions are most favourable at the present moment. The Tibetans in Tibet continue to show high morale and strong determination. They do not want to live under Chinese rule and they look to India with great expectation and immense hope. Here in India and elsewhere, the Tibetans in exile have been able to keep alive the issue of Tibet and attract significant world attention. As a result in recent times, while many governments are rushing to befriend China, there is a growing awareness among the world public about the Tibetan situation and, unlike before, international public opinion is clearly able to see that the Tibetans do not want to live under the Chinese and that Tibet is a separate nation from China. I am convinced that there is scope for the Government of India to review and change its policy in regard to Tibet on the basis of this new and changed situation.

In consideration of the reasons given above, the issue of Tibet is still alive. The Government of India must publicly recognize existence of the Tibetan issue and its international character and take advantage of it. Consequently every opportunity to voice its concern on this issue must be made. I feel this is important.

2- Recently, while there has been some improvement in the situation in Tibet as a result of the Chinese policy of liberalisation, there are still many Tibetans who continue to come to India. Actually, along the Indian border from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh, for many years now, Tibetan refugees have been turned

back and forced to return to Tibet. The Government of India does not allow their entry. However, quite a number are able to come through Nepal, particularly the young who are keen to acquire education. Till now there are about two thousand of them. If the Chinese publicity about the satisfactory improvement of conditions in Tibet and the beneficial effects of their policy of liberalization are true, there is no need for these Tibetans to come to India. All this clearly shows that the situation in Tibet is neither normal nor satisfactory for the Tibetan people.

Unfortunately, however, because of the present policy of the Government of India, the Tibetans coming through Nepal over to India to seek asylum are compelled to do so surreptitiously. Instead, if the Government of India recognized them as refugees, which they are, then the world will know that there are still refugees coming from Tibet. This in itself would be an issue. Once this happens, apart from the assistance from the Government of India, We can also appeal for help from the various voluntary agencies. I am confident that we will be able to raise a substantial amount for the new batch of Tibetans. Consequently, if we are able to look after them and win over all those who seek asylum in India, I am sure that except for a very few the vast majority will develop a sense of loyalty towards India. Some of them may eventually return after being here for a while. The return of these Tibetans, after the acquisition of a decent education and their exposure to the inherent rights and freedoms of an open plural society will prove to be of great political significance. Also because of the deep faith of the Tibetan people the return of those Tibetans who have been studying Buddhism here in India is equally significant.

3- Buddhism is an important part of the great culture of India and it is a fact that Tibetan Buddhism and the culture that evolved around it originated from India. A substantial part of the population along the Cis-Himalayan region

adhering to Tibetan culture is another factor. In view of these, I feel it is important that every opportunity, whether it is through exhibitions, seminars or conferences must be used to discuss the various aspects of Tibetan culture. Such occasions could also be used to highlight the issue of Tibet and its importance.

4- The Tibetan lamas and scholars in exile are regarded as the final authority on Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan culture by the intellectual and academic circles in the world. And we in exile therefore possess the resources and potentiality for the effective preservation, promotion and dissemination of Tibetan culture, something which does not exist even in Tibet. The centre of Tibetan learning, not only relating to Buddhist philosophy but to other aspects of our culture, such as the Tibetan system of medicine, thanka painting, traditional crafts and metal work, is here in India. And therefore, at the moment, the academic world looks to India when they are interested in Tibetan Buddhism and culture. This too, I feel, is significant and important. The Chinese have realised this and their efforts directed towards the building up of an international centre of Tibetan learning are a part of their policy to win over the hearts and minds of the foreign scholars on Tibet and through them to influence and eventually dominate international public opinion with their version of Tibetan history, culture and society. However, this will not be an easy task for the Chinese, at least not now nor in the near future. The Tibetan scholars, physicians and artists and the caliber of their scholarly or medical or artistic skill cannot be reproduced overnight. Nonetheless, unless we are able to provide adequate facilities and strengthen our activities in the promotion and dissemination of Buddhism and Tibetan culture, I see the danger in the Chinese succeeding in their aim. The Government of India's attention on this matter is also of no less importance.

5- If the Government of India reconsiders its present policy on Tibet, it will also strengthen its stand on the Indo-Tibetan border issue. In my previous memorandum I said that the on-going India-China talks on the Indo-Tibetan border is a problem that is not simple and one which will be long-drawn. I also feel that India is on weak ground when holding the border talks according to the McMahon Line, divorced from the overall political importance of the 1914 Simla Convention between British India, independent Tibet and republican China, a treaty which bestowed on the McMahon Line its continuing legitimacy and legality. The demarcation of the border between India and Tibet along the McMahon Line was a bilateral decision between British India and Tibet and was done without any reference to the Chinese plenipotentiary or his government. In its continuing talks with the Chinese on the border, India's stand of accepting the legality of the McMahon Line without recognizing the independent status of Tibet whose participation in the Simla Convention and whose acceptance of the McMahon Line gave the demarcation of this border its present international legitimacy is not only illogical but is also a source of the weakness of India's stand in the border talks with the Chinese.

The Dalai Lama
April 11, 1986

(Courtesy late Prof M.L. Sondhi, Institute of Asia-Pacific Security, New Delhi)

