

TIBET: THE LAST REVOLT?

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The anniversary of the riots in Lhasa of 1959 and of the departure in exile of the Dalai Lama has been marked by an uprising of the Tibetan Opposition. Since March 10, they have stood up to the Chinese authorities in the Autonomous Region of Tibet and in the neighbouring provinces of Sichuan, Gansu and Qinghai, where there are substantial Tibetan communities. Not willing to allow such a protest movement just five months before the Olympic Games in Beijing, the Chinese authorities have deployed a great many troops on the ground and prohibited all journalists or foreign tourists from having access to the areas of disturbances. *'I saw a convoy of at least 200 lorries with 30 soldiers aboard each, thus around 6,000 soldiers, moving in just one day,'* the German journalist Georg Blume reported on the BBC after being expelled from the Tibetan capital. He also said that he had seen *'more than 400 military vehicles heading towards Tibet in several convoys. Some soldiers carried automatic weapons equipped with bayonets, while others had shields and still others had anti-riot gear.'*¹

As the Secretary of the Communist Party of the Autonomous Region of Tibet, Zhang Qingli, said on March 19, Beijing has declared a *'fight to the death'* against the Dalai Lama², who is described as *'a wolf wrapped up in a monk's cowl'* and a *'monster with a human face but the heart of an animal.'* China thus appears to reject any dialogue with what it considers not to be a religious leader but a *'political exile who has long used religion to deceive and abuse international opinion, to divide and separate the homeland and destroy national unity and sabotage it.'* However, for nearly fifty years the Dalai Lama has not ceased to take control of radical Tibetan movements which might otherwise use violence to obtain independence. In saying that he was ready to step down, he declared again on March 18 that violence was *'against human nature, [...], we should not develop anti-Chinese feelings. Whether we like it or not, we must live side by side with the Chinese.'*³

¹ 'China steps up Tibetan crackdown,' *BBC News*, 20/03/2008
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7306096.stm>

² Jean-Jacques Mével, 'The 'fight to the death' by the proconsul with the Dalai Lama,' *Le Figaro*, 19/03/2008
<http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2008/03/20/01003-20080320ARTFIG00017-la-lutte-a-mort-du-proconsul-avec-le-dalai-lama-.php>

³ 'The Dalai Lama is ready to resign,' *Le Soir*, 18/03/2008
<http://www.lesoir.be/actualite/monde/la-chine-accuse-le-dalai-lama-2008-03-18-585076.shtml>

Tibet was officially 'liberated' by the People's Liberation Army in 1950 and was incorporated in the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1951. Initially, Chairman Mao promised to maintain the cultural and political autonomy of Tibet under the authority of the fourteenth Dalai Lama. Nonetheless, the country came under the direct administration of the central government following the riots of 1959, and the Autonomous Region of Tibet was established in 1965. More than forty years after these acts, we will show how the Chinese authorities and the Tibetan government in exile are still in conflict over the legitimate sovereignty of Tibet. The example of the United States will clarify for us how a single country could adopt simultaneously divergent positions on the Tibetan question. We will then see how the last few decades have led to the present crisis and why China attaches so much importance to controlling Tibet. Finally we will try to determine what impact the demonstrations of Lhasa may have in the months and years to come, starting with their possible influence on the holding of the Olympic Games in Beijing.

1. Controversy over the status of Tibet

a. A complicated historical debate

i. Tibet proclaims its historic independence

Ever since its exile to Dharamsala, in the North of India, the Central Tibetan Administration (the Tibetan government in exile) has always maintained that *'the history of Tibet goes back more than 2,000 years and that the country was a sovereign and independent state before Chinese domination.'*⁴ This statement mainly refers to the Tibetan empire, which extended beyond the borders of the present Chinese Autonomous Region from the seventh to the ninth century AD. Tibetan historians also emphasise the master-disciple spiritual relationship that united the Tibetan religious leaders and the Chinese emperors of Mongol and Manchu origin during the Yuan and Qing dynasties. They especially insist on the links established in the 17th century between the fifth Dalai Lama and the emperors Qing Shunzhi and Kangxi⁵. This argumentation thus denies that there was any link of submission ever established between Tibet and China. It takes up the declaration formulated in 1913 by the Tibetan delegates to the Simla conference: *'Tibet and China have never been subjects of one another and will never be associated in the future.'*⁶

The tripartite conference of Simla, which took place from October 1913 to July 1914, was supposed to delimit the border between China, Tibet and the Indian Empire. The Convention of Simla concluded on July 3, 1914 provided that Tibet would remain under the *'suzerainty'* of China *'in the hands of the government of Lhasa,'* and that Beijing *'was committed never to transform it into a Chinese province.'*⁷ The colonial British authorities wanted in effect to maintain a buffer state between India and China and to guarantee the de fact independence of Tibet. Persistent disagreements between Beijing and Lhasa over the notion of suzerainty and over the borderline led to the refusal of the Chinese representative to sign the document. The collapse of the imperial dynasty of the Qings and the proclamation of the Republic of China in 1911 had in the meantime already led Tibet to declare its independence in 1913, an independence which lasted up to 1950.

⁴ 'A brief introduction of Tibet,' the Official Website of the Central Tibetan Administration
<http://www.tibet.net/en/tibet/>

⁵ Elliot Sperling, *The Tibet-China Conflict: History and Polemics*, Policy Studies, n°7, East-West Center, Washington, 2004, p.16.

⁶ Id.

<http://www.eastwestcenter.org/fileadmin/stored/pdfs/PS007.pdf>

⁷ Robert D. Sloane, 'The Changing Face of Recognition in International Law: A Case Study of Tibet,' *Emory International Law Review*, Vol. 16, p. 107-186, 2002, p. 148

<http://www.bu.edu/law/faculty/scholarship/workingpapers/documents/SloaneR110906.pdf>

ii. Chine annexes Tibet to its own history

For its part, Chine claims that Tibet was an integral part of its territory ever since the installation of the imperial dynasty of the Yuan, at the end of the thirteenth century. As the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs says in its presentation of the history of Tibet: *'At the beginning of the 13th century, Genghis Khan [...] founded in the North of China the Mongol Khanate. In 1247, a venerated leader [...] and the son of the Mongol Khan Go Tan signed [...] an agreement according to which the various tribes of Tibet joined the Mongol Khanate and accepted [its] administrative system. In 1271, the Mongol Khan gave his reign the name of the Yuan. He unified all of China in 1279 and founded a unified central government. Tibet thus became an administrative unit placed under the direct jurisdiction of the central government of the Yuan of China.'*⁸ This argumentation rests on the fact that the conquest of Tibet by the Mongols, prior to that of China, should necessarily be placed within the Chinese context. However, the Mongol world, on which Tibet depended at the time, was not limited to China, but extended all the way to Persia and Russia. Moreover, the official historic chronicle of the Yuan dynasty, the Yuanshi, compiled in 1369, does not mention Tibet among the kingdoms directly subject to its authority.⁹ Though the argument of Chinese domination over Tibet since the Yuan dynasty is advanced today by the PRC, it should be noted that it was not used by the Chinese delegation to Simla, which took this domination back to the Qing dynasty.¹⁰

b. Legal problems posed by recognition of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet, for example by the United States

Chinese sovereignty over Tibet has never seriously been put in doubt since 1950, either domestically or on the international level. The historical debate that we have briefly presented can thus seem pointless, all the more so as the major part of the arguments invoked by the two parties do not correspond to the present criteria of recognising the sovereignty of states.¹¹ This debate nonetheless lets us pose some precise questions in terms of international law and of recognition of legitimate sovereignty over Tibet. The acceptance of the Tibetan arguments by the international community would in effect transfer the 'campaign for liberation' led by the People's Liberation Army in 1950 into a war of conquest. As Professor Robert D. Sloane has remarked, *'it is a principle largely recognised in the 20th century that an illegal occupation cannot put an end to the sovereignty of a state.'*¹² This principle was notably applied after the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union in 1979 and after that of Kuwait by Iraq in 1990.¹³

The question of recognition of Tibet can also arouse controversy outside China, as the different positions taken by the executive and legislative powers in the United States demonstrate. In the view of the State Department, *'the Autonomous Region of Tibet and the Tibetan prefectures and districts distributed among the other provinces comprise part of the People's Republic of China.'*¹⁴ On the contrary, the Congress of the United States in 1995

⁸ 'On Tibet,' the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 27/02/2003
<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/fra/ljzg/659/660/t1403.htm>

⁹ Anne-Marie Blondeau & Katia Buffetrille, éd., *Le Tibet est-il chinois ?* Albin Michel, 2002. pp. 31-33.

¹⁰ Id.

¹¹ 'To assert that Tibet qualified as an independent state in 1950 does not imply that Tibet was always an independent state; nor, however, does it confirm that Tibet was always a part of China. In fact, in a strong sense, both sides of this argument suffer from a categorical mistake. The distinctly modern Western conception of the nation-state, with precise borders and a single centralized government, is probably inapposite to pre-twentieth century China and Tibet alike.'

Loc. Cit. Robert D. Sloane, p.130

¹² Ibid., p.130

¹³ Id.

¹⁴ 'The United States recognizes the Tibet Autonomous Region --hereinafter referred to as "Tibet" -- to be part of the People's Republic of China. This long-standing policy is consistent with the view of the

adopted a resolution recognising that *'Tibet is a sovereign country under illegal occupation in the view of international law, its legitimate representatives remaining His Holiness, the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government in exile.'*¹⁵ Apart from this taking of sides, Congress has made many other symbolic acts, such as presenting the Dalai Lama its Gold Medal on October 18, 2007 in the presence of President Bush.¹⁶ Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, on March 21 called upon the international community to denounce Chinese repression in Tibet. *'If those who love freedom in the world do not rise up against the Chinese regime in Tibet, we will have lost the moral authority to defend the Rights of Man,'* she said before thousands of Tibetans in exile gathered in Dharamsala.¹⁷

2. From 1959 to 2008, cultural genocide or unavoidable modernisation?

Demanding the opening of an international investigation into the repression and responsibility for the demonstrations in Lhasa, the Dalai Lama denounced the cultural genocide which the Chinese have committed in Tibet. *'Whether the (Chinese) government admits it or not, there is a problem. There is an ancient cultural heritage which is facing grave danger,'* he said before Western journalists on March 16 in Dharamsala, adding that *'whether it was in an intentional manner or unintentional, a form of cultural genocide is taking place.'*¹⁸ However, the Chinese government continues to reject these accusations, saying it is working for the modernisation of Tibet. It is thus useful to sketch the evolution of the political, economic and cultural situation in Tibet from the departure in exile of the Dalai Lama to the outbreak of the latest protest movement.

a. Caught up in the torment of Maoism

As we have seen, Tibet was integrated into the PRC in 1951 after the dispatch of 20,000 soldiers of the People's Liberation Army on orders from Chairman Mao. However, the poor quality of the roads and difficulty with supplies prevented the Beijing regime from sending more troops at once and obliged it to negotiate with the fourteenth Dalai Lama, who was then 15 years old. The next five years there was a relative entente between the two regimes. The Dalai Lama traveled many times to Beijing, where he tried without success to stay with the

international community. In addition, the Dalai Lama has expressly disclaimed any intention to seek sovereignty or independence for Tibet and has stated that his goal is greater autonomy for Tibetans in China.'

Tibetan Policy Act of 2002, released by the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, May 16, 2003
<http://www.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rpt/20699.htm>

¹⁵ 'Whereas historically Tibet has demonstrated those attributes which under international law constitute statehood: it has had a defined territory and a permanent population; it has been under the control of its own government; and it has engaged in, or had the capacity to engage in, formal relations with other states [...] Tibet, including those areas incorporated into the Chinese provinces of Sichuan, Yunnan, Gansu and Qinghai, is an occupied country under the established principles of international law.'

Senate resolution 169 –Sense of the Senate Welcoming his holiness the Dalai Lama, Senate - September 08, 1995.

<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?r104:5:./temp/~r1048Akfn4::>

¹⁶ Stephen Kaufman, 'Dalai Lama Receives Congressional Gold Medal,' *America.gov*, 17/10/2007
<http://www.america.gov/st/washfile-english/2007/October/20071017161425esnamfuako.6734888.html>

¹⁷ Somini Sengupta, 'On Visit, Pelosi Offers Support to Dalai Lama,' *The New York Times*, 21/03/2008

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/21/world/asia/21cnd-pelosi.html?_r=1&hp&oref=slogin

¹⁸ 'Tibet : the Dalai Lama denounces cultural genocide,' *Le Figaro*, 16/03/2008
<http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2008/03/16/01003-20080316ARTFIG00049-tibet-le-dalai-lama-denonce-un-genocide-culturel.php>

Chinese Communist Party. However, beginning in 1956, the completion of two access roads allowed Beijing to strengthen its hold on the country. In 1958, Tibet was launched together with the rest of China on the Great Leap Forward, which bled it white. This period was also marked by the emergence of many armed movements fighting against the growing Chinese presence and food requisitioning. This was the start of an insurrection and the repression which followed was the origin of the great uprising of 1959.¹⁹

On March 10, 1959, riots broke out in Lhasa following rumours that the Dalai Lama had been taken away by the Chinese authorities. They had in fact invited him to attend a theatrical presentation, a pretext used previously to question other Tibetan religious dignitaries. The suppression of the riots was appalling, officially causing the death of 80,000 persons and obliging the Dalai Lama to flee towards India on March 17. A report published four months later by an International Commission of Jurists from the UN denounced immediately *'the acts of genocide perpetrated by the Chinese Communists to destroy the Tibetan nation and the Buddhist religion in Tibet.'*²⁰ Entitled 'The Question of Tibet and the Rule of Law' the document produces proof of murders of Tibetans and the forced removal of children *'in violation of the Convention for the prevention and suppression of the crime of genocide dated February 9, 1948.'* Tibet was again harshly affected between 1966 and 1976, during the Cultural Revolution. The spread of the Red Guards over the new Autonomous Region led to pillage and the destruction of many monasteries, where the 'living Buddhas' were obliged to go and care for pigs.²¹

b. From 1978 to 2008, twenty years 'of progress'

i. Disappointed hopes of a political overture

Like the rest of China, Tibet was affected by the wave of reform launched by President Deng Xiaoping following the death of Mao. During the initial phase of these reforms, from 1978 to 1987, China exhibited a new moderation towards Tibet, even admitting errors committed during the Cultural Revolution.²² A certain degree of autonomy was accorded to the region and a process of negotiation was even initiated with the Dalai Lama, at the initiative of the Secretary General of the Chinese Communist Party, Hu Yaobang.²³ It seemed in fact that Beijing had begun to concern itself with local and international acceptance of the imposition of its sovereignty over Tibet. This political turn aroused much hope though a final solution of the problem always remained distant. The Chinese regime became tense beginning in 1987, fearing that pursuit of a policy of overture might threaten its sovereignty over Tibet, preservation of which always constituted its priority strategic objective.

¹⁹ Jung Chang & Jon Hallday, *Mao*, Gallimard, 2005

²⁰ 'There is prima facie evidence that the Chinese Communists have by acts of genocide attempted to destroy the Tibetan nation and the Buddhist religion in Tibet, the International Commission of Jurists announced in a preliminary report "The Question of Tibet and The Rule of Law" published here today. There is evidence, the report states that the Chinese have by killing Tibetans and by the forcible removal of Tibetan children committed acts contrary to the Genocide Convention of 1948. There is also evidence that these acts were intentionally directed towards the destruction of the Tibetan religion and the Tibetan nation. »

' The Question of Tibet and the Rule of Law, International Commission of Jurists, 24/07/1959

http://www.icj.org/news.php?id_article=3430&lang=en

²¹ Op. cit. Jung Chang & Jon Hallday, p.

²² Allen Carlson, *Beijing's Tibet Policy: Securing Sovereignty and Legitimacy*, Policy Studies n°4, East-West Center, Washington, 2004, p.2.

<http://www.eastwestcenter.org/fileadmin/stored/pdfs/PS004.pdf>

²³ Robert Barnett, 'The Dalai Lama: Conciliator or Enemy?' *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 02/2008

<http://www.eastwestcenter.org/fileadmin/stored/pdfs/PS004.pdf>

The Chinese stiffening was partly provoked by the growing popularity of the Dalai Lama abroad and the considerable presence occupied by the Tibetan question in public opinion.²⁴ The Dalai Lama had begun to travel the world to win over partisans to the Tibetan cause. In parallel, a protest movement arose in Tibet against the hardening of position, leading to the first large demonstration in Lhasa on October 1, 1987. Immediately the Chinese authorities denounced the activities of the Dalai Lama 'in the domestic affairs of China.' Beijing launched a new wave of repression, which was followed by a year of martial law between 1989 and 1990 under the authority of the present President Hu Jintao, who was named in February 1989 as head of the Party of the Autonomous Region.²⁵ Despite a wave of international protests, Chinese policy in Tibet no longer knew overtures after this period, orienting itself towards extravagant demonisation of the Dalai Lama. It is thus a proven policy that the present Regional Secretary of the Communist Party, Zhang Qingli is loyally applying.²⁶

ii. 'The march of Tibet towards modernisation'

Economic development of Tibet is one of the principal objectives declared by Beijing. 'Since the peaceful liberation [of 1951], a democratic reform has taken place in Tibet, putting an end to the regime of feudal serfdom. [...] Thanks to the building of socialism, to reform and opening up, the process of modernisation of Tibet has been rapidly developing just as in the rest of the country, offering broad and beautiful prospects,' states the introduction to the white book on the modernisation of Tibet published by the PRC State Council.²⁷ Speaking in a manner reminiscent of colonial rhetoric, the Chinese government explains that it had to fight in Tibet against 'economic backwardness,' 'a rigid hierarchy and savage repression (sic),' 'theocracy' and 'the chains of religion.'²⁸

The most striking symbol of this policy is without doubt the building of the Qinghai-Tibet railway line, which has been presented to the whole world media as proof of the firm will of Beijing to develop Tibet. 'This project is not just a magnificent step in the history of China but also a great miracle in the history of world railways,'²⁹ President Hu Jintao declared on July 1, 2006 on the occasion of the inauguration of the line, some parts of which rise to above 5,000 metres. The majority of Tibetans have watched fearfully as this railway project for which none of them was ever consulted was implemented. 'The railway line is not in itself a subject of concern for the Tibetan people [...] it is the way it will be used that is disturbing,' said a spokesman of the Dalai Lama following the inauguration of the line.³⁰ A large number of Tibetans fear that this line might serve to increase further the number of ethnic Han

²⁴ Elaine Sciolino, 'US is reassessing response on Tibet,' *The New-York Times*, 18/10/1987

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B0DE3DE123DF93BA25753C1A961948260&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=2>

²⁵ Loc.Cit., Allen Carlson, p.28

²⁶ Cf. supra, note 2

²⁷ *Tibet's March Toward Modernization*, Information Office of the State Council of the Peoples Republic of China, Beijing, 11/2001

<http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/20011108/index.htm>

²⁸ Id.

By comparison, here is an extract from a speech by Belgian King Leopold II delivered on the occasion of the opening of the conference of geography of Brussels on September 12, 1876 :

'To open up to civilisation the sole part of the globe where it has not yet penetrated, to pierce the shadows that envelop whole populations is, I dare say, a crusade worthy of this century of progress. What is involved is planting the standard of civilisation on the soil of Central Africa and fighting against the slave trade.'

<http://www.herodote.net/histoire/evenement.php?jour=18760912>

²⁹ *Railway and china's development strategy in Tibet. A tale of two economies*, Tibetan Centre for Human rights and Democracy, 2006, p.5

³⁰ Ron Gluckman, «The train from heaven end hell », *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 09/2006

http://www.feer.com/jaunt-through-asia/2006/september/the-train-from-heaven-and-hell?sourced=Tibet&highlight=ajaxSearch_highlight+ajaxSearch_highlight1

Chines, encouraged by Beijing to come and install themselves in Tibet³¹, at the risk of overturning the equilibrium of the populations.

3. What strategic importance does China accord to Tibet?

The extent of the repression led in Tibet and in the neighbouring provinces demonstrates the feverishness of the central government in the face of any vague impulse at revolt emanating from a national minority, principally in Tibet and in Xinjiang. The growing relations of China with India and Central Asia have naturally focused the attention of Beijing on the two immense Western autonomous regions.³² These also represent a major stake in view of their underground wealth, indispensable for the continuation of China's industrial take-off. Tibet is rich in various minerals - chrome, cobalt, copper, magnesium, rutile, zircon, etc. - while Xinjiang has become the main route for Beijing's overland importation of hydrocarbons. Finally, a study carried out by the Chinese Ministry of Water Resources has demonstrated that the volume of water reserves of Tibet was the first in China.³³ With 448.5 billion cubic metres of water, the autonomous region has major reserves for a country confronted with serious water shortages, both along the Yellow River and along the Yang Tse Kiang.

Besides its economic interest, Tibet is also situated in a strategic position for China, at the frontier with India. This strategic importance has notably led the People's Liberation Army to rethink its strategic doctrine around the realities of the terrain in Western China. The Army General Staff has for several years been planning the creation of new lightly mechanised units. These units do not require massive logistical deployment and are thus perfectly adapted to the absence of roads and the extreme climatic conditions of the deserts and high mountains. Thought up in the 1980s, these new units are today ready for any possible threat on the Western borders. The announcement of accelerated deployment of these troops last May caused people to fear at the time a Chinese wish to crush all self-rule groups before the opening of the Olympic Games in Beijing.

4. Do the events of Lhasa threaten the Olympic Games of Beijing?

While deploring the violence of the events in Tibet, *for whatever the reason, [...] contrary to the Olympic spirit and values*,³⁴ the President of the International Olympics Committee (IOC), Jacques Rogge, rejected the idea of a boycott of the Beijing Games. The press communiqué published by the IOC on the occasion of the ceremony of lighting the Olympic flame says that *'we think that by opening up China to viewing by the world via the 25,000 representatives of the media who will attend the Olympics, the country will change. The Olympic Games are a force for good. They are a catalyst of change, not a remedy for all ills.'* *'We respect the NGOs and militant groups, as well as the causes they support. We are regularly in dialogue with them. But we are neither a political organisation nor a militant body,'*³⁵ the document goes on to say.

As we write these lines, no country has announced a boycott of the Olympic Games in Beijing. *'All options are open, but I call upon the sense of responsibility of the Chinese leaders,'*

³¹ Ibid, Tibetan Centre for Human rights and Democracy, p.97

³² Xinjiang and Tibet together represent a surface area of nearly 3 million square kilometres, i.e., nearly a third of the total area of the country.

³³ 'Tibet's Water Resources Rank Top in China: Survey,' *People's Daily Online*, 05/08/2003
http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200308/05/eng20030805_121735.shtml

³⁴ Statement by Jacques Rogge, President of the International Olympics Committee, 23 /03/2008
http://www.olympic.org/fr/news/media_centre/press_release_fr.asp?id=2520

³⁵ Id.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy nevertheless warned on Tuesday, March 25.³⁶ Expressing himself on the same day on a *Europe 1* broadcast, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bernard Kouchner, for his part, put aside the idea of a boycott, '*which no one is calling for, above all not the Dalai Lama.*'³⁷ We remind readers that in fact, despite the accusations made against him, the Dalai Lama himself has said that China, '*the most populous nation in the world,*' deserved to organise the Olympic Games. However, he added that it should improve its treatment of Human Rights, '*in order to be a good host.*' Meanwhile, the White House announced that repression in Tibet would not prevent the American President from attending the Olympic Games.³⁸ George W. Bush nonetheless promised to speak with President Hu Jintao about respect for Human Rights in China and particularly in Tibet.

5. What are the prospects for the Tibetan movement?

Seventeen days after the start of the events in Lhasa, China has issued more and more announcements of the return of civil peace in Tibet. The official media have said that more than 600 Tibetan demonstrators gave themselves up to the forces of order. We remind readers that the government of the Autonomous Region of Tibet has promised '*mercy for those who gave themselves up*' and '*still more mercy if they provided information about other persons involved in the crimes.*'³⁹ Meanwhile, a delegation of international journalists left on Wednesday, March 27, to travel to Lhasa at the invitation of the Information Bureau of the State Council.⁴⁰ Such an invitation demonstrates the confidence of the Chinese authorities that order has been restored thanks to the deployment of the Army. According to official figures, the return of order came at the price of 19 lives, including 18 'innocent civilians' and one police officer. The figures of the Tibetan government take the results to 140 Tibetans killed.

We have seen that the Dalai Lama constitutes the preferred target of the authorities in Beijing for more than 20 years. The spokesman of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Qin Gang, has called once again upon the international community to see the '*true face*' of the Dalai Lama [and to] not support '*his secessionist activities.*'⁴¹ Facing calls for dialogue launched ceaselessly by the spiritual leader, it is nonetheless more and more difficult for Beijing to continue to put responsibility for the violence on his shoulders. The Chinese authorities have meanwhile accused the Western media of distorting the reality of events in Tibet. They have also put on guard the heads of state and of government wishing to meet with the Dalai Lama. These warnings come just as the idea of a future visit of the Tibetan spiritual leader to France is beginning to present itself.

Up to the present, the international reactions have remained especially moderate given the events in Lhasa. Calling for 'restraint,' no Western country has clearly threatened China with a boycott of the Beijing Olympic Games. Nonetheless, the international attitude could change if new images of repression began to come out of Tibet and the neighbouring regions. After the abortive uprising of 1987, many officials in the Administration of American President

³⁶ 'Olympic Games: Sarkozy does not exclude a boycott of the ceremony,' *Le Figaro*, 25/03/2008
<http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2008/03/25/01003-20080325ARTFIG00389-jo-sarkozy-n-exclut-pas-un-boycott-de-la-ceremonie.php>

³⁷ 'Interview with Jean-Pierre Elkabbach,' 25/03/2008
<http://www.europe1.fr/antenne/recooutez.jsp?hr=8#>

³⁸ 'White House: Bush will attend Beijing Olympics,' *CNN*, 21/03/2008
<http://edition.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/03/21/oly.bush.ap/>

³⁹ 'Tibet: Beijing accuses and threatens the "Tibetan rioters"' », *France 24*, 17/03/2008
<http://www.france24.com/fr/20080317-tibet-pek-in-accuse-menace-emeutiers-tibetains>

⁴⁰ 'Int'l media delegation departs for Tibet after unrest,' *China Daily*, 26/03/2008
http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2008-03/26/content_6567093.htm

⁴¹ Qin Jize, 'Countries urged to see 'true face' of Dalai Lama,' *China Daily*, 26/03/2008
http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2008-03/26/content_6566018.htm

Ronald Reagan admitted that '*the United States did not react sufficiently strongly to Chinese repression.*'⁴² The movement of 2008 will remain the third largest wave of protest after those of 1959 and of 1987, both crushed in blood. The media coverage which it attracted and the disastrous image that it gave to China could finally incite the Chinese government to open a genuine dialogue with the Dalai Lama. If they do not accept such a démarche, the authorities in Beijing could soon be confronted by radical Tibetan movements ready to use violence to press their pro-independence claims, something which the Dalai Lama has always refused to do.

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⁴² Elaine Sciolino, « US is reassessing response on Tibet », *The New-York Times*, 18/10/1987
<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B0DE3DE123DF93BA25753C1A961948260&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=2>