

NOTE

Mission to Lhasa

Tenzin Tsundue writes :

LAST TIME THIS WRITER went to Tibet in 1997 and was arrested by the Chinese authorities, beaten up, interrogated, starved and finally thrown out of Tibet after detention in their jails for three months in Lhasa and Ngari. I walked to Tibet, on my own, alone, across the Himalayan Mountains from the Ladakh side.

Eleven years later, I am walking to Tibet again; this time too, without permission. I am returning home; why should I bother about papers from Chinese colonial regime who have not only occupied Tibet, but also is running a military rule there; making the people in Tibet live in tyranny and brutal suppression day after day, everyday for fifty years.

The Year 2008 is a huge opportunity for the Tibet movement to present the injustices the Tibetans have been subjected to, when China is going to attract international media attention. I am taking part in the return march from Dharamsala to Tibet, that is being organized as a part of the "Tibetan People's Uprising Movement", a united effort put together by five major Tibetan NGOs: Tibetan Youth Congress, Tibetan Women's Association, Gu-Chu-Sum Movement of Tibet (an association of former political prisoners), National Democratic Party of Tibet and Students for a Free Tibet, India.

There had been similar attempts in the past, but this is 2008, and I have seen the organizers working extra hard with strategic planning, taking care of every minute detail, and the best thing is that we have all the NGOs working unitedly for the common goal. This unity is our strength! I do not know where we would end up, that's why I am giving away the little collection of books (my only possession in life) to a library in McLeod Ganj, Dharamsala. My friends: Lobsang and Nyingje (who served in the Indian army as part of the Tibetan battalion) are also giving away their personal belongings; committing themselves for the march.

Of course the Indian police will do their duty; the Chinese army at the Tibet border would be overtly enthusiastic. Since we are leading a peaceful march, with absolute commitment to non-violence, I do not think anyone - either from Indian authority or Chinese - would impose themselves on us. Inspired by Gandhi's Salt March, even if they did try to stop us, we are not stopping. For how many days can they jail us for just walking peacefully? And why should the Indian government stop Tibetan refugees voluntarily returning home on foot?

In the past I have climbed buildings to shout for freedom, thrown myself at the Chinese embassy gate in New Delhi, spent months in jails, got beaten up by police, fought court cases, but I never lost the dignity of the struggle : my faith in Non-violence. The March to Tibet will be non-violent; it is a sadhana, a spiritual tribute to the truth and justice that we are fighting for. This is our Long March to freedom.

Here is an opportunity to join a historic non-violent freedom struggle, a people's effort to win freedom for a country that remains subjugated even in 2008. □□□