

An Open Letter to Friends about Olympic, Tibet, and China

Dear friends of peace, freedom, and justice:

I received some inquiries and comments from friends about Olympic, Tibet, and China, especially after the April 9th, 2008 Olympic torch rally in San Francisco. Without much knowledge about Tibet, it seems it is better to write a letter to express my limited observation.

I did not pay much attention to the Olympic news, partly because of my detestation of its overwhelming commercial advertisements. When I worked in Japan for Dentsu group, the world largest advertisement firm, I worked for several sports event/facility plans, and learned how these sports projects were operated (manipulated). There are so many other priorities in the world. As for myself, as a stateless refugee for more than one decade, I have abandoned the illusion that any state power in our current political order will “grant” me passport or visa to enter Beijing (my birthplace, though).

Four years ago in 2004, I decided to give the American constitution a chance to test, so I applied for a U.S. passport (as Karl Marx did to the British Empire). During the interview test with the CIS (Citizenship and Immigration Service of the Homeland Security Department) official, I made one “mistake”: I answered that the American constitution protects American citizens ONLY. The official politely corrected me and ensured that the constitution protects all people (regardless their “legal” status) on the land of America. At the end, he told me that he cannot approve my application because the FBI was conducting a background check of me. “It will take just a couple of weeks,” he said: “Your file is always on my desk. So when I receive FBI’s clarification, I will call you directly.” However, after four years, the FBI still refuses to answer my inquiries about the background check situation. My experience with Chinese and Japanese regimes tells me that the FBI cannot, and dares not to reject my application, but it also will not “grant” “citizenship” to me. If Jesus, Socrates, Spinoza, and Marx live today, which state power will “grant” them “citizenship?” Is America’s constitution superior compared to China and Japan’s constitutions to protect human rights? At least, we know that the United State of America’s No. 1 founding father Thomas Pain and the most famous anarchists Emma Goldman and Alex Berkman were not allowed to enter the U.S. territory. The Wall Street Journal reported that when some Muslim permanent holders tried to enter the U.S., they were stopped by Homeland Security Department officials. They were not allowed to enter unless they sign to become agents to spy in their communities.

It is thus quite beyond my expectation when Dr. Gilbert Guo called several friends in the San Francisco Bay Area to prepare to participate the April 9th event in San Francisco. About seven-eight people met on April 3rd afternoon at my Dublin office. I have received quite a few messages from several Chinese group lists (such as local Tsinghua and Nankai alumni, Chinese engineers associations), from which we knew the Chinese government was mobilizing the whole local Chinese communities to anticipate this highly politicalized event. We decided to bring some human rights signs (such as “Release Dr. Wang Bingzhang”, “Release Hu Jia”, and “For Justice”) there.

I rode a boat by an American friend Michael (who is Fengsuo Zhou’s co-worker) to the port of San Francisco crossing the bay from the eastern Berkley side. When we arrived near the torch’s start location, I could see huge flows of five-star red Chinese flags with noises. There were Tibet flags too. Police boats prevented us from going closer. I counted six helicopters flying over us. There were other three or four well-prepared boats for Tibet, and one for China with the red flag. Our boat with five crew members had only a small “human rights” sign in Chinese. We waited around the pier near the end ceremony plaza for about two hours. Since the helicopters never came over, we knew the route changed. From the cantankerous noises and police sirens, we were concerned of

the situation on land. For us, it was a peaceful day. It was actually the first time I rode a boat crossing the San Francisco Bay. What a beautiful scene in the world!

It turned out that we were fortunate on boat. My friends on land were attacked by Chinese government supporters when they displayed their "human rights" and "justice" signs. The organizer Gilbert Guo was hit on his back head bleeding. The police came but could not protect them. It is not difficult to image what happens in China when people speak out. This reminds me of my case in Japan. A Chinese agent hired by a Japanese national university beat me heavily at a Sino-Japanese Friendship conference. I reported to the powerful Tokyo police with the hospital record and field photos. Later, however, the Tokyo police searched but could find my case. I realized that my case was brought to Japan's Public Security Committee (the secret police, evolved from the war-time special advanced policy section), and I was warned not to pursue this case, because the secret police could turn this case against me ("fighting each other") to expel me from Japan.

With these life experience with state powers, I paid little attention to media reports about Olympic, Tibet, and China. We will eventually know the truth and facts behind the recent events. However, I did feel the need to learn more about how Tibetan people thought. I have a book of Tibet from a Chinese poet (who once visited Tibet), but I did not read it. Now I realized how important for me (and other Chinese without much knowledge of Tibet) to learn some basic facts from such book. The book "A Tibetan Revolutionary: The Political Life and Times of Bapa Phuntso Wangye" was written by M. C. Goldstein, D. Sherap, and W. R. Siebenschuh, published in Berkeley by University of California Press in 2004. Wangye was founder of Tibetan Communist Party (independent from the Chinese Communist Party), led the Chinese People's Liberation Army entering Lhasa, was the translator for the Dalai Lama in Beijing, and once the highest Tibetan officer in the PRC government. Eventually he spent eighteen years in Beijing's jail. As a Tibetan, he also wanted a united Tibetan republic with the Dalai Lama as the head (including wide areas in Sichuan, Gansu, Qinghai and Yunnan provinces) within a federal system of China. He regarded the 1959 Tibetan uprising a tragedy mainly caused by the PRC mistakes. For example, he pointed out that many Tibetan upper class families suffered from the rush reform and fled from their estates without preparedness. The Dalai Lama even left his diary when he fled to India. His views are quite in line with the Dalai Lama's appeals. The book starts with a traditional Tibetan saying: "Tibetans are ruined by hope; Chinese are ruined by suspicion."

Ma Shaofang, a Chinese Muslim student leader in the 1989 Tiananmen democratic movement, told me after one month stay in Lhasa: "The Hans and Tibetans are never reconciled after the death of the Dalai Lama." The more grievous reality, however, is that most Han people do not want to face this situation. Criticizing the Western media's bias is mostly correct, but the root of the problem is in Beijing. Rather than the manipulated fear and hatred of "Tibetan Independence", we Chinese people should abandon such concepts as "national interest", "territorial sovereignty," as European peoples are making the EU based on human rights principle. The surge of the Tibetan problem shows again that China's democratization (in which Western state powers have less and less influence) has more and more international significance.

The great Chinese democratic movement educated me to adopt Anarchism as my belief to fight against dictatorship, racism and imperialism of Beijing, Tokyo and Washington powers. They are actually one ugly trinity to be abolished all together.

With best wishes to the Chinese and Tibetan people,

Jing Zhao
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