

Dr. Harry Wu's talk to the entire staff of the CTA (Transcript)

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Please note that this is an unedited, rushed transcription of the talk

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my first time in Dharamsala and it is the first time I have visited the Tibetan government in exile, but it is not the first time I have met His Holiness the Dalai Lama; I have met him many times. Actually, I have too much to say about it so that's why I don't have any paper. I didn't make any preparations, but I hope I will satisfy you because I want to tell the truth beyond the specifics. I remember 1959. The Dalai Lama escaped on March 10, but in September, China held an exhibition talking about the Tibet rebellion and talking about how Tibet is a backwards society and showed a lot of ugly things - lamps made of human skin and Tibetan burials. When they die, they don't really bury the body - they break the body, break the bones, and feed the birds. And they talked about a lot of Buddhist relics, a kind of master of the people. But what you have to know is that in September of 1959, I was already an enemy of the Communist Party because of two reasons. One, I was Catholic. The second reason was because I was a member of the bourgeois class, capitalist class. My father was a laborer as a counter-revolutionary Rightist and I was a 20-year-old university student. I didn't know about politics. I played baseball and the Geology Institution of Beijing was champion of baseball in Beijing. But I was encouraged by the Communist Party to speak out and I really didn't have any idea, I didn't have any concept of politics. Ultimately, under their invitation, I went to the conference. I said one word. I said, you know, the monitor of our class at the beginning of each meeting day would always say "comrade students" to my class of 30 students. Seven students, including myself, were not members of the Communist Party or the Communist Youth League, so we are kind of white students and the other 23 students, 16 of them were in the Communist Youth League and 7 of them were members of the Communist Party. So 23 students were red and 7 students were white. So that's why the monitor said comrades to the students and I felt that this was a kind of discrimination, because at that time in 1959 in this country, nobody called you mister, missus, or madam. Everyone was very happy calling each other comrades and we were separate from the comrades because we were students. That's why, I shared my idea at the conference - that was my crime. And before that in 1956, the Soviet invaded Hungary and the Hungarian uprising was finally crushed by the Soviet Union Red Army. But at that time I agreed with it. I said, "Well, the international communist revolution needs support, so the Soviet Union supports Hungary, and China supports Hungary, that alright." But I added one more sentence, "When the Soviet Red Army sent in the tank and sent it onto the footpath to suppress the people, maybe it is wrong." This was my second opinion. The two opinions caused me to become a counter-revolutionary Rightist and in April 1960, I was arrested and I was sentenced to life. But I didn't go to court, I didn't get a verdict. It was only during an interrogation at midnight that the warden asked me, "What is your sentence?" I said, "I don't know." "Ok, that's fine, I'll look at your file. You are sentenced to life, that's it." The door was closed behind me. So, the last time I visited the Tibet Museum I was an enemy, but this was an internal exhibition. Every factory, every hospital, every

university arranged by the Communist Party went to the exhibition to see it. Even I was a counter-revolutionary. You know what I said? I said, "Well, Tibet needed liberation." That you can see the powerful Communist Propaganda Department was not convincing some people – not only the people, but also the enemy, including me – we have agreed on what the Communist Party did. But this was my last chance. I finish my life. You know, a death sentence to me means total darkness in front of me. For nineteen years, nobody came to see me because my father was tortured later and died, and after two weeks in the camp, I sent a letter to my mom. I said, "Sorry, I'm in the labor camps. I cannot support my family." And my mother committed suicide and died right away. And later, my younger brother was killed by the police. So for nineteen years, nobody came to visit me. I was in the coal mine, in the steel factory, I was on a farm, in the tanko factory, everything was labor– I only had vacation for two days during Spring Festival and one day for National Day – everyday, no weekend. In the coal mine we were working 12 to 12, two shifts per day. But this is over finally. I survived. Many people passed away or committed suicide, and I did, I tried to commit suicide twice but I'm still alive until today. I just didn't know that I could have a good life in America. Today, I'm 75 and I can come to Dharamsala. I am so honored to meet so many Tibetans. So that's why when the gentleman asked me if my trip was okay, I said, "Yes, of course, it was okay. It was wonderful." But today I am not really wanting to talk about my personal life, because in 1985, when I arrived in America, I was a visiting professor of Geology at UC Berkeley – University of California Berkeley, so it had nothing to do with politics. I was a visiting professor and I told myself to close the old chapters and open a new chapter. So I cut it off. I didn't want to think about China. I didn't want to think about my nightmare. It was over. I needed money. I was 50-years-old, I had nothing. I had no family, I wanted to have a family, and in America, everybody needed a car. At 50-years-old, restarting your life is not easy. Anyway, a couple of years later in 1990, I got an invitation. I went to the American Senate. One of the senators is a good friend to Tibetans, Jesse Helms. In the conference, everybody was very, very quiet as they listened to me. I talked about when I was 19-years-old, my life story in twelve different camps, including the first labor camp that was established by a Soviet Union expert, because China called the Soviet Union a great brother. So at that time, China depended on the Soviet Union for financial support, military support, and political support. It was under the Soviet Union for all of its support. But finally at the end of the conference, Senator Jesse Helms asked me a question. He said, "Well, can you tell us how many labor camps are in China and how many people are there?" I was shocked and I couldn't answer the question. I said, "Sorry, I don't know." I knew of about twelve labor camps, but how many labor camps were in the whole country, including Tibet? I had no idea. Even today, nobody can tell you how many prison camps are inside of China. I realized this was a very serious question because Hitler, in Germany, set up concentration camps where twelve million Jewish people were in the camp. Six million passed away, and even up until today, there's a Dark Heart Camp, Auschwitz Camp, everywhere. In 1993, America set up the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C. I was surprised when President Clinton invited eight European countries' Presidents and had a grand opening. I talked to Washington Post and New York Times reporters said what I want to do Hitler never went to the United States, so why do you want to set up the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C? But the answer is very, very simple. This is a human rights violation. We cannot forget it. And you know the Soviet Gulag, until 1991, still existed but finally, it ended as the Soviet Communist Party suddenly disappeared. All of these American experts and British experts were so surprised. Oh gosh, is the Soviet Union okay? Because President Yeltsin went to the Communist Congress and said, "What shall we do? Are you

ready to fight for Communism, to rebuild Socialist Country?” And all the Communist members said, “No.” “Okay, dismissed.” There is no Soviet Union today and sixteen Republics combined together as a country, separated. It is a wonderful, wonderful experience. But we today have China as a Communist Regime. That’s why we have to talk about it. I went to the Soviet Union many times. I saw Magadan – one million Soviet prisoners were there digging the mines and doing labor, because Magadan only had six months of effective transportation. The other six months, the ocean and the rivers became blocks of ice, frozen. All the people were there. Magadan City Hall and the city construction was done by the prisoners, but anyway, it is over. The Soviet Union has 25 million Gulag prison survivors. I was encouraged by the American Congress, so in 1991, I went back to China with CBS’ 60 minutes. 1991 was a very interesting year. In America, they were talking about whether or not to give the Chinese Most Favored Nation trade status. And in China, the other side, Communists just rebuilt the political system and the Chinese Laogai systems. Everywhere, you could see the advertisement of the Laogai product, a prison-made product for the domestic market and also for export. So, that’s why I went back to China with CBS’ 60 minutes. At the time, they were not very clear. Even the producer abruptly went into the camp with me. We drove the jeep to Chenguo Farm and we saw prisoners picking grapes – at that time grapes were being exported. When I was there, they were exporting to Japan and the police were there. Suddenly, they said, because Bradley is a black person with a big body. So this guy was a black foreigner, what did we want to do? I said, “Well he’s just a foreigner who wants to have some grapes to eat. How much for this box?” “Oh,” they said, “Oh no, no, wait, wait. Okay, there, after I can arrange for a prisoner to pick them up for you. Just wait, just wait, just wait.” So the police were very enthusiastic when it came to handling Bradley and picking up the box, which came to 20 dollars. Bradley was the first American producer to come face-to-face with the prisoners. Since then, Americans have had very serious debates about whether or not they should give Most Favored Nation trade status to China. And in 1992, when Clinton got elected, he said, “No, we should not give the Chinese Most Favored Nation trade status because 68% of the people say, no, no, no.” Of course, later Clinton changed. He cared about business and the entrepreneurs gave into high pressure because after the 1989 Tiananmen Square Movement, the Taiwanese were the first to go to China and make money, leading Western countries to invest in China. This is a long story talking about foreign affairs. In 1992, I wanted to go to China again but I was forbidden from entering because there was a black list inside China. I was on the list. In 1993, I had a chance to meet His Holiness the Dalai Lama. So I met the Dalai Lama and have known him since 1993. And you wouldn’t know it, but His Holiness is so easy-going, so common, it’s so easy to talk to him. I grabbed his sleeve and I said, “Come on, I want to talk to you”, because at that time, no one knew about me, I was still a very small person. He said, “What do you want to do?” I said, “I need your help.” He asked, “What do you want me to help with?” I said, “I want to go into Tibet.” “Say what? Oh, you talk to this guy, Lodi Gyari.” In 1993, your exiled government – I remember at that time – the security department head was named Lama Tsering and they arranged all the trips for me. I went to Kathmandu, then I intended to go from Kathmandu to Dhokangni, Jammu. I wanted to get into China and one Tibetan woman and one Tibetan man became colleagues. We went together, but this is a long story. Anyway, I was in Thothapani, but you know, suddenly, from the Chinese side, a Toyota jeep came over. I was surprised because I recognized every Chinese jeep sign as a GA – that means military security, military police. I thought, “How come Chinese security, Chinese police are coming into Nepal?” All the people came out – five people, including one uniformed policeman with a camera. Of course, I took their camera too. I took their photos too, so I

can show everyone now. I only publicized this story last year because one of the Tibetans was later arrested. Let me stop this story now. In 1994, I immigrated to America and became an American citizen. I changed my name to Peter Wu, so you have heard Peter Wu. Right away, I got a Chinese visa and I went back to China again. I spent almost six weeks inside China, traveling from Xinjiang to Shanghai, to Manchuria, to Guangdong and I came back with my secret report. I told the American Congress that I estimated that China had more than one thousand prison camps. But in 1995 – it was very strange – I got a visa again, but the Chinese arrested me at the border. But according to the regulations between America and China, they have to inform the other side that they have arrested their citizens. But they didn't, they keep it a secret for 20 days. Finally, I had an assistant tell the American government what was going on, so the government, including Clinton and Hilary Clinton, including Republican Congressmen, whatever, stood up fighting for my freedom. That's why the Chinese had no choice but to release me and sentence me to 15 years again. So I was only freed in 2010. But I can tell the people, I could ask the Chinese government, "Why did you sentence me to 19 years, plus 15 years? 34 years! What is my crime? Of course, I am not a drug trafficker, I am not a terrorist, I've never robbed the bank, I have never raped any women, I have never stolen anything. Why did you want to deprive me of 34 years of my life?" But actually, you know about AmaAdhi, the lady. There are a lot of Tibetans in the same situation because they have a Laogai system. This is something we really have to tell the people in our human society about – not only about German Hitler's concentration camps, not only about the Soviet Gulag system. There is a Communist China Laogai system and it is much more cold and backwards than these two systems. Today, I came to Dharamsala. Of course, this is my historical trip and maybe this is, in my life, my last trip here. I am very sorry I am 75-years-old, but I have one mission in coming here today because since 2008 until today, the situation – the political situation – between China and Tibet and also within Communist China, itself, is very different. There have been twenty-some Tibetan self-immolations. You do have to know one thing – there are not any nationalities today in the world that have had so many people kill themselves for this, and Tibetans, they have. It is a very serious political issue. We can't let them simply solve the problem. So I came here, I wanted to. Anyway, in 2008, I set up the Laogai Museum in Washington D.C and, in 2009, His Holiness the Dalai Lama visited the Laogai Museum. We were very honored to have His Holiness see this and we really didn't know how to handle it. For example, her husband was there – her husband was Tsegya – and he was the Chinese translator for the Dalai Lama. I only met him two days ago, but I remembered seeing in a photo behind the Dalai Lama, Tsegya, her husband, and finally said, "Oh, this is your husband!" I was really honored to meet her husband. Today I came over here. I am planning in maybe May or June to set up Laogai Sharing of Tibet in the United States. I can't invite many people but I think my finances will allow me to invite about six to eight Laogai survivors to come to the United States to tell the people what the Laogai is. You do have to know one thing – today, China's Propagating Department is telling the people to say they are doing a good job, particularly that they are investing lots of money and building lots of high apartments, and especially that they have railways. But they don't tell the people that they have established many labor camps over there. They don't tell people that they have destroyed most of the country's temples. So we have to tell the people to say, "Okay, I don't care if America wants to invest in Tibet or invest in China, whatever is the good or bad for the Communist Regime. You do whatever you want to do, but I am telling you the truth." Labor camps were there. There is no reason for the people over there. In 1993, I was interviewed by a Washington Post reporter and the Washington Post reporter very strangely said, "Harry, what do you want to

do?” Because in 1993, many entrepreneurs on the newspaper, on TV stations, and on radio stations were talking about, whoa! China has a good market, good business, and about how it was a good place, you can see and you can go. But nobody was reminded that China is a Communist Regime. And my conversation, my dialogue, corresponded with this. I, very simply, said, “Well, I hope ‘Laogai’, l-a-o-g-a-i, becomes a word in every dictionary, in every language.” and he put the article in the Washington Post and I said I hoped I could see the ending of Laogai. Of course, today you can’t. Ten years later, in 2003, the Oxford Dictionary entered the word “Laogai”, then the Japanese Dictionary, German, Swiss, Spanish. All the world dictionaries entered the word “Laogai”, it became a word, and they remembered my name. I was very, very happy but I also very, very sad. “I am very happy,” I said, “because today I can retire. I am 60-some-years-old, you know. Everybody knows about the ‘Laogai’.” Actually, “Laogai” is very common word, a common word inside China. The people say, “What about your father?”, “Oh, my father has been in Laogai for ten years.” We don’t say prison, we don’t say jail. “So what about your brother?” “Oh, my brother was in Laogai but right now, he is out.” Apart from China, none of the countries in the world have ever heard about the Laogai. I say fine, but do you know the Soviet word “Gulag” that was 1974 that means 21 years after Stalin died and Alexander submission the Gulag survival he picked five letters first G-U-L-A-G put together what is that but today everybody say Gulag is Stalin put it widens Soviet prison camp but actually, Gulag is nothing, it’s not a word but it has become a common word. So that’s why I am happy “Laogai” has become a word, a common word for everyone, every country and everyone. But the people asked another question – you have to tell the people what Laogai means. Yes, and all of you have to tell the people what Laogai means. You know, you have to tell them it is a suffering word. I am not sure that in my lifetime I can do it but I will try. In October and November, maybe I will set up a Laogai photo exhibition in Taiwan, because today, only Taiwanese are less educated. They don’t know about the Laogai system. KMT Guomintang supports very enthusiastic want to do business with China and what is it. And particularly, many Chinese city mayors visit Taiwan and this is a chance for the people to see it. But my final wish is that Laogai can become a part of a museum inside of China. Even now, I want to say, if today China entirely became a democratic and free country, I would like to see a Laogai museum in Beijing, in Shanghai, in Lhasa, in Chengdu, everywhere, because this is warning, a warning to the leader. It is a warning that the people say you can’t set up a government system to destroy and prosecute common people if they disagree with you – that is so called democracy. That’s why, in 1993, Washington D.C set up the Holocaust Museum. I don’t know if it will happen or not, but I hope so. Let me go back to another issue I want to seriously discuss. Two days ago, after the March 10 ceremony, I was very lucky and very happy I to be interviewed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. This special meeting was less than two hours, so we had lots of time to converse, but I remind you that in 2009, when His Holiness visited the Laogai Museum, we both grabbed each other and touched heads. He quietly told me one thing, “Independent, independent.” I was surprised and said, “His Holiness, you say what?” “Independent,” he said. This time, two days ago, I met him again at the end of the conference. We grabbed each other, we talked to each other, and His Holiness told me again, “independence”. This independence for Tibet, this is a principle, but in the two-hour-long interview, I was put out. Oh I have here, here is the speech of Sangay your Prime Minister on the March 10 meeting and I said, “Well, Sangay, this is the first time I’ve met you but I want to comment on your speech, because your speech was complicated. Some part fights against the other part and other part fights against this part, so why?” “Yes,” I said, “Well, there is one sentence here that says that in 1949, China invaded Tibet, that’s

why. The Chinese invaded Tibet, but I turn the other page and it says we are looking for autonomy,” I said. What is autonomous – that means under a regime, you have a high level of autonomy under the regime, under Communist China. This policy fights against the principle and the principle does not acknowledge the policy, but I have agreed with the Dalai Lama’s Middle Way policy for many, many years, because it is reality. There is one very important figure you have to know. Tibet was a small nation. Tibetan Buddhism was a small religion before 1959. Only a few Tibetans were outside of Tibet, only a few Tibetans earned a master’s degree or PhD, but today there are probably 200 000. Everywhere has a Tibetan association, Tibetan conference, Tibetan group, and particularly in Germany, one day every year most of these towns and cities raise the Tibetan flag and the Dalai Lama is welcomed by people of the world. This is the result. But at this time, I want to remind you that the Middle Way policy has come to an end and turned into a new policy, because the reality, the situation is very different now. First of all, Communist China will not be for much longer. You can’t treat this regime as permanent, you can’t treat the Chinese government as though it will be in power forever. Even in America, you see this year, Obama may be will not re-elected, there might be a new president, but this is the American government, it’s no problem. But if the Chinese government changed, this power would totally shift. They are very different. You have to know that when in 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed, this was a big shock to the Chinese. Deng Xiaoping was a good cooperator with Mao Zedong that’s why he said, “I can’t change it – maybe in next century.” In the 21st century, he has to keep the country as it was before, that’s why Mao’s portrait still hangs at Tiananmen Square and Mao’s body is at Tiananmen Square. But sooner or later, Mao’s portrait will go, Mao’s body will burn away. And today, as you know, there are two things. One is that Capitalists today can join the Communist party – that is, I think, just a joke. Capitalists are the targets of Communist Revolutionaries, but they can become Communist members, which is totally against communist principle. Today, the economic development in China is pushed by foreign investment and pushed by people and capitalist ideas, not from communism. I give you two small examples. Today, everybody is talking about Chinese corruption. Well, corruption is a part of politics in Asia, Indian, and Nepal, there is lots of corruption. The Japanese has a lot of corruption, but it is different from China. For example, Sichuan province, Hanan province, Hunan province. Three provinces, the head of the prison camp, the head of the prison bureau, are corrupt from top to bottom. How many prison camps under his control in, for example, Hunan province – 120 major cadres, so-called communist cadres together with the head are corrupt. What they corrupt, they corrupt from the prisoners if I stay in as I was arrested by the government I can spend money by us I can have a good life. I could get released soon but, as I understand Chinese, was very, very careful about the so-called judiciary system, military system and security system, the three major policemen from three provinces are inside the police systems, so you can see how serious corruption is there. That’s why I came up to His Holiness and all your people to say this is the time for you to rethink your Middle Way policy. I think this is the time you really have to tell people we are the representatives of Tibet, we have the exiled government ready to fight for independence. And I suggest to Lodi Gyari, I say well, you are no longer representative of the Dalai Lama, because Lodi is pretty close to me because Lodi was a member of our Laogai Research Foundation, he knows everything, because the Dalai Lama is out of politics but the Chinese are not willing to talk with the Prime Minister of the exiled government. But sooner or later, because you have seen how they change for example. This time Xi Jinping visited the United States, he got very high pressure from the Madam, pushing him to continue the dialogue with the Tibetan government but how? What happened? The Chinese today,

they do lot of things. They try to block the border, they intend to give the Tibetan government \$750 million USD (Nepho) but I don't think it will happen. So I think whatever you working today over here in external department or internal department or working for security, working for culture, and working for medical whatever you have to thinking about it. Tibetans have been outside of their country more than fifty years, more than half a century, but the people all the time stand together, fight together. I am very honored to be here with Tibetans, thank you!