



Venerable Ringu Tulku Rinpoche

Press Conference

Held on March 12, 2009.

Organized by Mr. Spyros Marinos, Chairman of the Advisory Council for Foreigners of the city of Münster, seen on the photo that was taken in the office of the Council.

Josef Kerklau: “Let me first thank Mr. Marinos and Mrs. Stockmann, Director of the Sozialpädagogisches Bildungswerk in Münster, for having made it possible that Venerable Ringu Tulku speaks to a bigger audience in Münster by offering two lectures, entitled *Buddhism & Ecology* and *Non-Violence & Peace*. Karma Sherab Ling has been organizing seminars in collaboration with the Sozialpädagogisches Bildungswerk since 2001 and Venerable Ringu Tulku has been instructing and guiding our group wonderfully and most reliably by visiting us every year since then.

Ringu Tulku Rinpoche was born in 1952 in Kham, East Tibet and was recognized as the reincarnation of the abbot of Rigul Monastery. His name *Ringu* denotes his monastery, *Tulku* is the Tibetan term for a highly reincarnate Lama, and *Rinpoche* is an honorary title that means ‘Precious One.’ His actual name is Karma Tsaltrim Gyurme Trinley.

Ringu Tulku Rinpoche fled from Tibet when he was still young, lives in Sikkim, studied and practiced all four Tibetan Traditions of Buddhism, and is one of the leading scholars of *Rime*, the non-sectarian philosophical tradition that evolved in Tibet in the 19th century and that surmounted rivalries among the various prevailing schools and institutions. Ringu Tulku is very interested in inter-religious dialogues. He travels around the world and presents lectures in the United States, Asia, and Europe regularly. He is also very interested in western science. Buddhism isn’t a religion based upon blind faith, but is a science of the mind. Older and newer religions and modern science agree that all phenomena are composed of waves and light. Therefore, Tibetan Lamas are very interested in science. His Holiness the XIVth Dalai Lama has become a student of quantum physics. Ringu Tulku is also deeply involved with the exchange of knowledge between religious scholars and scientists. He is technically very skilled, so his nickname is *Laptop Lama*.

The city of Münster was awarded many golden medals for its unique architecture and environment. It is one of the greenest cities in Europe. Giving a lecture on ecology in Münster is a little bit like the saying goes: "Bringing owls to Athens." When Rinpoche arrives here from India, he must think it is an oasis of silence in comparison."

Ringu Tulku: Yes.

Josef: "I told Rinpoche about an article that appeared in the newspaper about 2 days ago. It reported about a student writing his dissertation on happiness in Bhutan. Scientific research has proved that the Bhutanese are the happiest people on earth. His Holiness the Dalai Lama requested Mingyur Rinpoche, who Ringu Tulku knows quite well, to have his brain waves measured and scientists discovered that he is 4000 times happier than a normal human being."

Mr. Marinos: "It's experiencing Münster as the green capital when coming from Athens."

Josef: "Ringu Tulku will speak about ecology and healing the earth according to Buddhism. He is interested in seeing how environmental matters are dealt with here. The heads of all major Tibetan Buddhist schools, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama, have given their monasteries directives to plant trees, to install solar energy panels, to care for the environment, and so forth. From March 21-25, His Holiness the Gyalwa Karmapa will chair the *First Conference on Environmental Protection for Kagyü Monasteries and Centers* at the Vajra Vidhya Institute in Sarnath and representatives from 26 monasteries in India, Nepal, and Bhutan will attend. We all have the same problems and are in this together, so we can learn from each other, which is the message that Rinpoche hopes to convey to us during his visit."

Mr. Marinos: "Today is a symbolical day, because it marks the historical day the Chinese invaded and took over Tibet fifty years ago."

Josef: "There is the great danger that the entire Tibetan culture will vanish."

Mr. Marinos: "Even though Rinpoche may know more about this, I want to mention that according to Christianity, the Patriarch of Constantinople is called 'The Green Patriarch,' because he has a similar view. He tells followers, especially the spiritual order of the Greek-Orthodox Church, that respect for nature is a divine commandment."

Before asking him to answer questions today, I want to thank Venerable Ringu Tulku Rinpoche for being in the office of the Advisory Council for Foreigners that represents multicultural interests. Thank you very much."

Venerable Ringu Tulku

Thank you. Okay then, if you have any questions, please ask.

Question: "It was said that this is a historical day. Would you describe the atmosphere in Tibet, 50 years later?"

Ringu Tulku: March 10, 1959 is regarded as the day of the Tibetan uprising. But it wasn't the only day, because the revolts started breaking out in other regions of Tibet in 1957. My family started protesting and revolting at the beginning of 1957 and we ran away from the Chinese in that year and fled until March 1959. His Holiness the Dalai Lama also escaped from Lhasa to India in 1959, so March 10th became the date of observing the uprising.

Strongest protests against the Chinese took place throughout Tibet last year, but they weren't as international as this year. Tibet was divided into many regions in the past and the regions of Kham in the South-East and the region of Amdo in the North-East were not always united with Central Tibet. Revolts took place in Kham much earlier than in Central Tibet. Now they protest together. It seems to me that in the meantime the people in Tibet have become much more united. When a protest occurs in the farthest reaches of Tibet, it happens all over Tibet, so this has changed.

Something very significant for me is that three years ago, His Holiness the Dalai Lama asked the Tibetans not to wear furs made from tigers, leopards, or otters. In the last few decades, I think the Chinese encouraged people to wear furs. His Holiness asked them not to wear furs and suddenly every trace of fur sales, that brought many thousands of dollars, were burned all over Tibet and

since then nobody wears these furs; it changed from one day to the next. In the same way, it was easy for Tibetans living inside Tibet not to celebrate the Tibetan New Year this year. The Dalai Lama and Tibetan Government in Exile had not ordered this, but certain people made the decision and it was adhered to in every province and all over the world. The government inside Tibet wanted the Tibetans to observe the celebrations; they even provided funds, but nobody went to any Tibetan New Year ceremony this year. I think it's the first time that this has happened in the history of Tibet, because the Tibetans like being merry, they like having picnics, and they like taking part in celebrations. This year they didn't celebrate and I think they wanted to demonstrate their unity by peacefully protesting in this way. This is something that has been happening slowly. That's my feeling about changes that are taking place.

Next question: "Would you say a little bit about what you will speak about in your lectures?"

Ringu Tulku: You have to go to them. I have been asked to speak about the environmental issue and about non-violence and peace. I think these topics are connected. Actually, in a way, one of the main problems in Tibet, too, is the environment. When His Holiness the Dalai Lama submitted his *Five-Point Proposal* to settle the conflict with the Chinese, the environment was a main issue. From the Buddhist point of view, the environment is very important. Instead of saying that a god will do something for one, Buddhists believe that every one is responsible. Our world is our home, our basis, our container. If we spoil our container, our world, then we will suffer; nobody else will suffer. Therefore, people have to take care of the environment for their own good, for their own future, as well as for the future generations of all living beings. Taking care of one's environment and doing everything that is necessary to bring more prosperity, more happiness, more well-being for oneself and others is our purpose. Therefore, we need to become aware of the necessity and then find a way to go about caring for the world. This is something that each and every one has to become committed to doing. It's not a matter of one or two people or a government. I think it's necessary for everybody to become aware of the problems and for everybody to think about the best way to heal the earth, to make things better for the future, to do something very important. That's the main understanding and I will say something about that.

Same reporter: "And your second speech?"

Ringu Tulku: I think it is quite connected to the first. The second speech is about non-violence and peace. Why are people ruining their environment? Why is there violence and why are there lots of problems in this world? These problems are very much related. They come from the same source - from one's way of reacting, with too much aggression, with too much selfishness, with too much greed, without trying to see things clearly but with short-term selfishness, and the inability to develop compassion and concern for others.

From the Buddhist point of view, people need to change their way of seeing things. They need to stop thinking only of what is best for themselves. They need to stop exploiting the world. They need to stop thinking that what they want is the most important thing. They need to start thinking about what is good for everybody. Sometimes I think that the modern way of reacting is always, "What I want is most important!" and not what is good for everybody else. If one can change this way of reacting, then I think that there can be more peace and happiness, more cooperation, more harmony. This is what I will speak about.

Next question: “You have been visiting Münster regularly since 2001. Would you tell us if you like Münster and what you like about the city?”

Comment: “If it is raining and the church bells are ringing, then you are in Münster.”

Ringu Tulku: Yes, somebody told me that if there is a photo of a nun holding an umbrella while riding a bicycle, then it was taken in Münster. But it's not always like this. There are also very nice days. It's a beautiful city and has many green spots. When I was here the year before, I was told that Münster is the most beautiful city in”

Comment: “... in the whole world.”

Ringu Tulku: I think it's a very nice city.

Question: “And the people?”

Ringu Tulku: The people are very kind. I haven't met many people and I cannot talk too much with them because I don't speak German. I know Josef very well and he is a very good friend.

Question: “Don't you feel the Westphalians are stubborn?”

Josef: “Tibetans are also stubborn.”

Ringu Tulku: I think they are more stubborn than other people.

Josef: “Somehow it's a little similar to Tibetans, because it takes a long time to become friends with mountain people of Tibet, but they are friends and are reliable for a lifetime once one has become friends. It's like that with the farmers living outside Münster.”

Ringu Tulku: Generally, German people are very straightforward. They tell you what they really feel. So in a way it's difficult because it's not pleasant to be told directly what others think of one. But in a way it's very good because one knows exactly what they think and one doesn't have to think about what they think. One knows. They are very nice.

Mr. Marinos: “A good place to live.”

Ringu Tulku: The nicest place to live.

Josef: “That's why Ringu Tulku visits us every year.”

Comment: “We could talk for hours.”



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Blessings of peace and ease to everyone!