
Czechs have moral obligation to help people in totalitarian regimes, Dalai Lama says

December 11, 2011; By: Lucie Kettnerová; Section: i-Forum Informs

Shortly after 10 am on Sunday December 11th, a crowded lecture hall at the Faculty of Arts welcomed his Holiness the Dalai Lama. The Tibetan spiritual leader arrived in Prague at the invitation of Václav Havel and the Forum 2000 Foundation to take part in a round table debate titled One Year After an Empty Chair in Oslo. The Dalai Lama and other participants of the discussion were welcomed at the faculty by its Dean doc. PhDr. Michal Stehlík, PhD., and Charles University Rector Prof. RNDr. Václav Hampl, DrSc.

The meeting focused on the current state of democracy and human rights in Asia and among other things tried to address the issues of further perspectives and how the international community should approach them.

The director of the Forum 2000 Foundation Oldřich Černý briefly greeted the attendants on behalf of the former president Václav Havel who was ill. Other debaters included Jianli Yang, dissident and founding president of the Initiatives for China, Stéphane Hessel, diplomat and co-author of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Bernard Kouchner, former French minister of foreign and European affairs, and Shirin Ebadi, lawyer and Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama was the first to take the floor saying he was pleased to have come to the Czech Republic again to meet his friends. "You have a moral obligation to help people in totalitarian regimes because you have your own experience with fighting against it," he said. To their surprise he also told the audience that he was not opposed to socialism or Marxism. As far as social economy is concerned as a Buddhist monk he is in favour of a more even distribution of wealth. "But I'm definitely not a Leninist," he said.

The current situation in China was a topic addressed by all the speakers. According to the Dalai Lama, first of all a large political reform has to take place for a change to occur. As Jianli Yang pointed out, the majority of the country's political elite, corrupted by economic advantages, was not in favour of that and had a vested interest in preserving the status quo.