



50 YEARS AFTER TEST 596: CHINA'S NUCLEAR PROGRAMME IN EAST TURKESTAN AND ITS IMPACT TODAY

OPENING REMARKS

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Dear presidency, dear audience, sisters and brothers,

I apologise that I am late. We were voting in the CULT Committee about the modernisation of the European higher education system. First of all, may I say thanks to the organisers. My office and I are very glad to cooperate with the UNPO, and especially to contribute to the organising of this important event. I should emphasise the moral dimension of this meeting because on behalf of the united Europe, it is a total immorality if it ignores the destiny of East Turkestan, and of peoples, regions and countries which have to suffer such oppression as the Uyghurs have to suffer. I have prepared a short address for this conference, let me read it, and in advance I apologise that I have to go on because I leave from Brussels for some more programmes.

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Dear Guests,

Almost fifty years ago the Chinese Communist Party detonated its first atomic bomb in the deserts of Lop Nor in East Turkestan, today's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China. The explosion that followed lasted minutes, but it was the culmination of ten years in which China's leaders exported the food that their starving people so desperately needed and devoted the best of their young scientific talent to making the instruments of war.

The relevance of China's post-war nuclear programme to Europe – and this conference – is closer than many here might imagine. Uranium mined in Transylvania, my home region in Romania, and refined in Estonia in the 1950s and 1960s fuelled the emerging Soviet nuclear programme that Beijing was after. In the same way as the Soviet Union grabbed resources from its satellite states, so the Communist Regime in China is exploiting Tibet and Inner Mongolia with the same disregard for the lives and livelihoods of the people who live there.

The modern day problems are similar. The uranium mines where the political prisoners of the Communist Regime of Romania once worked remain environmental scars on the Transylvanian landscape today. Safety and environmental standards were unknown in 1950 when the joined Soviet-Romanian companies first surveyed and extracted uranium, exporting it to the Soviet Union. Unsuspecting villagers have used stone from the mines to build their homes. Many of the mines today remain inadequately protected, and there are no solutions to their future safety. Operations conducted in secret, without any regulation, with little knowledge of the risks involved to human life, left long term consequences in Romania's environment. That part of Romania is in the neighbourhood of my city Oradea, near the Carpathians Mountains.

Today the Chinese Communist Party celebrates Test 596 – the first to mark the Lop Nor landscape – and it does so in a theme-park presenting what it considers to be the Party's greatest achievements. But no visitor

will have a sense of the tremendous human, economic, and environmental costs of the nuclear programme.

This morning's conference is intended to be a small step to addressing that lack of knowledge; with the participation of experts that know of the Lop Nor site and others like it, we need to reflect on the ways Beijing could redress the victims of the tests. We also need to engage once again the international community on the question of Lop Nor and the future of the Uyghur people so deeply affected by its legacy. As I know Uyghurs are relatives with the Hungarians, we are Hungarians from Romania, but I don't know what reality it has.

Finally it is a fact today that China has been going through a remarkable growth in the past 30 years. Millions of people have been lifted out of poverty. However this phenomenal growth was not followed by progress in its human rights practice. In fact serious human rights violations and collective human rights violations occur systematically, in spite of China's existing international commitments to protect human rights. We do want to see a prosperous China and we do support a peaceful rise, but never at the expense of basic fundamental rights. Today's conference reflects our strong commitment to human rights, and we urge China to respect its international engagements with the rest of the world. This year I shall probably have the opportunity to be a member of a Delegation destined for China, so we insist on finding facts and new information about China and especially East Turkestan and Tibet, which are very close to our hearts.

Thank you for your attention.