

Speech by Mrs. Lisbet Palme on the 2014 Olof Palme Prize Ceremony, January 30, 2015

Today we are celebrating the recipient of the 2014 Olof Palme Prize, Professor Xu Youyu, for his international and prominent research focusing on areas of importance to the quest for peace in a broad context.

At the same time we are struck by a tsunami wave of knowledge about the oppressed, tortured, hunted, humiliated people around our common globe. Thousands of lives are lost under horrendous circumstances.

Xu Youyu, I will try to catch a moment of joy for freedom. Let us go back fifty years. In 1965 Olof Palme was Advisory Minister to the Prime minister of Sweden Mr. Tage Erlander who was Prime Minister of Sweden for 23 years. Mr. Tage Erlander and his wife Aina were invited to an official visit to the Soviet Union. Olof was travelling with the Prime Minister and I was invited to accompany Aina Erlander. In Moscow we entered the limousine taking us to the guesthouse. Tage Erlander talked loudly with gestures about his political intentions. Aina Erlander and myself tried to calm down this peaceful Prime Minister but he asked "Where are bugging equipment? Tell me! Tell me! For once I will get my message out." And he smiled.

I will send you two quotations as a message from Olof, connected to your work; in politics and democracy.

Already in 1964, Olof Palme held a speech at the Social Democratic Youth of Sweden Congress. And he said:

"Politics is to want something. Social Democratic politics is to want change, because change holds out the prospect of improvements, offers food for the imagination and encourages initiative, dreams and visions."

Some ten years later in 1975, then as a Prime Minister of Sweden, Olof held a speech at the Social Democratic Party Congress in Stockholm. And he said:

"For us, democracy is a question of human dignity. And human dignity – that includes the political liberties, the right to freely express your views, the right to criticize and to influence opinion.

Human dignity – that is the right to health and work, to education and social security.

Human dignity – that is the right and the practical possibility to work with others in shaping the future together.

These rights, these democratic rights, cannot be reserved for a certain sector of society.

They have to belong to all people.

Social Democracy has always emphasized political democracy as being of value in itself.

And he continued:

"At the same time, Social Democracy has always regarded democracy as being more than formal rights. We have seen it as a way to realize people's wishes, to achieve social progress, to renew society."