



# Bay Area Friends of Tibet n e w s l e t t e r

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## Tibetans Dying From Uranium Mine Waste

by Robbie Barnett

A high proportion of Tibetan villagers living near what is believed to be a Chinese uranium mine have died after drinking water polluted by waste from the mine, according to detailed reports from Tibetans in the village.

In the past three years at least 35 of the approximately 500 people in the village have died within a few hours of developing a fever, followed by severe diarrhea. Six of the victims died within three days of each other.

Local doctors have said they are unable to help, and have not described the deaths as due to an epidemic or infectious disease. "First they get acute thirst, then indigestion. The stool is black," said a villager interviewed on several occasions by T.I.N.. The villager had been trained in Tibetan medicine.

"They die after one or two days; some die after 5 days; a few survive. There have not been deaths from other villages in the area, which are further away from the mines," he said.

Locals say that many cattle in the area around the mine have also died suddenly,

but only after rainstorms, suggesting that they are poisoned by a water-borne toxin. "Animals who drink water coming from the mining area or who inhale the dust die immediately," said the Tibetan. "They seem to have internal burns."

The evidence suggests the rains wash lethal waste from the mine works into the water supply. Locals say they have been told by some Chinese officials not to drink the water from streams flowing from the mining area.

The village is in the eastern part of the Tibetan plateau, traditionally known as Amdo but now administered under the Chinese province of Sichuan. The exact location of the village and the names of the victims are being withheld until further investigations have been completed.

The Tibetans have never been told what is being mined in their valley, and they are not allowed to approach the works. "The whole valley is guarded and no one is allowed there," T.I.N. was told. But they say that the Chinese miners wear protective clothing and work only two hour shifts, suggesting that uranium, or

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another toxic substance, is being extracted.

Chinese engineers spent 15 years prospecting in the area for the minerals, which were finally located in 1976. Intensive work was under way by 1980 and the mines now spread over about 4 kilometers, with many hills hollowed out by the works, which include both open cast and deep mining.

"People started to become ill in 1980; at about the same time the nearby forest started to dry up," said the informant. "Before it was very green but now it is much harder to get plants to grow."

The villagers complained on several occasions to the Government, including sending local leaders with a petitions to Beijing on three occasions, but without any result.

"We approached the Government to ask for the mining to be stopped after the cattle and the people were affected. The Chinese said that we had no right to ask for this as the place did not belong to us. It is a very important place and you have no rights here, they told us. There are

(continued on page 2)

several party members in the village, all of them Tibetans, and they went with the petition to Beijing, but nothing was done about it."

In 1984 a Tibetan official in the mining team came to the villagers and told them that the mineral which was being extracted was gold, and was not poisonous. Villagers say that he told them it was quite safe to drink the water. "We asked him to drink some of the water with us, but he wouldn't", the Tibetan said.

"I myself think that it is something carried in the water, so when it rains it is washed down from the mine workings to the village. We can draw water from a well, but some people use the stream. The Chinese check the water with meters every week, but we don't know why or what they find out," said the villager.

In 1990 the Chinese government announced that more than 200 uranium deposits had been discovered in its southern and western regions, according to the official newspaper "China Daily" on 28th May.

A Chinese delegate to a conference organized by the International Atomic Energy Agency told the meeting that uranium deposits had been found in Western Yunnan, which lies to the south of Amdo, as well as in some other areas of China.

He added that the deposits would be enough for China's short term needs, but said they were "inadequate for a long-term development program".

## 90 House Members Protest Situation in Tibet

Republican and Democratic members of the U.S. House of Representatives sent a letter to Chinese Premier Li Peng which "strongly condemn[s] the human rights violations taking place in Tibet" and urges that "the basic rights of all Tibetans be respected."

Initiated by the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, a bipartisan organization within congress, and inspired by deteriorating conditions inside Tibet, the 90 members of congress joined the effort calling for fundamental human rights in Tibet.

Receiving an exceptionally high number of congressional signatories, ICT president Lodi Gyari said "this letter shows Beijing that there is widespread, bipartisan support for Tibet in the U.S. congress. I hope that Beijing seriously responds to the concerns of the members of congress."

The letter brings to attention recent reports that demonstrations are occurring outside of the capitol city, Lhasa, and that at least 69 arrests have been reported in rural areas of Tibet.

The organization also condemns the arrest and mistreatment of monks and nuns who demonstrated in Lhasa last March directly following Tibetan National Uprising Day, the anniversary of the Tibetan uprising against the Chinese

occupying forces in 1959. In addition, the members called for the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### Tibet Conference of the Americas Scheduled for January

Scheduled for January 30 and 31, 1993 in Washington, D.C., the conference will focus on involving more people in the Tibet movement through skill-oriented workshops and panels.

Noted speakers will address the conference. For more information contact Monica Garry at the International Campaign for Tibet, 202-628-4123.

#### Tibet Video Film Festival

Sponsored by the Stanford Friends of Tibet, the festival, which began in October, will feature a different film every Tuesday night through December 8. The free screenings will be held in the Bechtel International Center on the Stanford Campus. For more information call Michael, 415-723-0707.

#### Are You a Member?

We'd like to keep you abreast of events in the Tibetan community. Become a member of BAFoT today, and help spread the word....

- \$25.00 Annual Membership
- \$40.00 Family Rate
- \$15.00 Student
- I enclose a donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to support Tibetan culture and human rights.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Please send to BAFoT, 347 Dolores Street, Suite 206, San Francisco, CA 94110 ph: 415-241-9197 fax: 415-626-0865

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*Performers in the BAFoT-sponsored "Visions of Tibet" day, part of "Ethnic Visions '92. The Septemberevent was part of a series of cultural shows, music and art displays held in San Rafael.*

## Resettlement Project Update

Twenty-six Tibetans have arrived in the Bay Area with the Tibetan Resettlement Project of Bay Area Friends of Tibet. Although most of the newcomers are working full time, they are still able to participate in BayFoT activities. Recently, they performed Tibetan music, dance and storytelling at Tibet Day in Santa Cruz and at the Ethnic Arts Exhibit at Marin Center in San Rafael. BAFoT looks forward to putting on more events like these in the future.

The Resettlement Project's most critical need at this time is job offers. Tibetans in India and Nepal also need employment, a requirement for immigration with the Project. So far the following employers have offered entry-level employment to Tibetan immigrants: ALZA Corporation; Hyatt Hotels; The Stratford; Chez Panisse; Zachary's Chicago Pizza; Whole Earth Access; Cobblestone Preschool; Fulwiler James Construction; Gitane Painting and Waterproofing; Hillcrest School; John Muir Hospital; Land of Medicine Buddha; Magic Glass; McCormack Kuleto; Salem Home Retirement Community; The Sizzler; Stars Restaurant; Wellex; and Zia Cosmetics.

Soon a group of ten Tibetans who have poor or no English language skills will be arriving in the Bay Area. The Resettlement Project is arranging English as a second language training for this group. We are looking for a house, flat or apartment in San Francisco to house the ESL group. If you know of an affordable housing situation suitable for the Tibetans who will share housing with other members of the group, call Julia at 415-851-4261. Anyone who would like to teach English to Tibetans should call Chimi or Greg at 415-564-1996.

The first groups of Tibetan immigrants have lived in the homes of their sponsors who have generously provided room and board for the first three months. Many of the sponsors are members of Bay Area Friends of Tibet. Sponsors to date include: Fadhilla Bradley; Carol Fields; Lucile Green; James Harder and Rose Cerovski; Mark and Elizabeth Hendersen; Eva Herzer; Dave and Barbara Hunt; Henry and Linda McHenry; Bonnie Mintun and Tim Hoban; George Nandor; Victoria Northridge; Liz Resner and Bennett Dubiner; Thomas Rosin and Gail Wread; Alan and Laurie Senauke; Stevan Sklar and Sharon Pollack; Kendra and Houston

Smith; Susan Sopcak and Bob Spence; Francis St. Amant and Nancy McClure; St. Paul Lutheran Church in Oakland; Carol Sundell; Jan Tiura and Joe Brennan; and Margo and Gordon Tyndall. Thank you.

We are still looking for sponsors to provide housing and acculturation assistance. We are also looking for volunteer friends who can help Tibetans get to their appointments and show the newcomers around their new home. If you are interested in becoming a sponsor or in becoming a volunteer friend, call Nancy at 415-241-9197.

The Tibetan Resettlement Project of Bay Area Friends of Tibet is generously funded by the Koret Foundation and the Jewish Community Endowment Fund. We have also received generous donations from the American Himalayan Foundation, the Fred Gellert Foundation, the San Francisco Foundation, the Jewish Community Federation, and many individual donations.

For more information on the Tibetan Resettlement Project of Bay Area Friends of Tibet, call 415-241-9197.

*-Julia Shepardson*

# Tibet Birth Control Regulations

Official Chinese documents have revealed details for the first time of the birth control regulations currently imposed on Tibetans.

The documents, which were obtained by the Tibet Information Network, a London-based monitoring group, show that birth control was already in force in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) in 1985, when Beijing was claiming that there was no birth control for non-Chinese subjects.

That year Beijing announced that "the minority groups in Tibet ... are exempt from family planning".

In its White Paper on Tibet, issued last month, the Chinese Government acknowledged, apparently for the first time, that the two-child policy has been in force in towns in Tibet since 1984.

The remark is phrased so as not to include Tibetans living outside the Tibet Autonomous Region, who have been subject to birth controls for about 10 years, according to refugee reports.

A copy of the 1992 Regulations on Birth Control in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), issued in May this year, says that Tibetans in towns in the TAR are allowed only two children, as long as the mother is at least 22 when she has the first child, and 25 when she has the second. The Regulations describe the birth of a third child, which leads to a 500 yuan (US \$100) fine, as "strictly controlled".

Fines can go as high as 8,000 yuan - about 5 years income - for people who do not have local registration papers, and in certain situations sterilization is compulsory.

The 1992 Regulations, which appear to be confidential, indicate that Tibetans are treated more leniently than Chinese. But the Regulations include rules seemingly designed to encourage Chinese - particularly those involved in farming and vegetable growing - to settle in rural areas of Eastern Tibet and to intermarry with Tibetans in Central Tibet.

Normally the Chinese in Tibet are allowed only

one child except in special circumstances, such as when their first child is severely disabled. A second child leads to a fine of 3,000 yuan (\$600) and no promotion for 2 years - unless the Chinese person is married to a Tibetan. China said in 1985 that "the Chinese Government has never encouraged intermarriage between nationalities" (Questions and Answers about China's National Minority Nationalities, Beijing, 1985).

## Controls in the Countryside

In Ganze, an autonomous prefecture in Eastern Tibet, now part of Sichuan Province, the birth control regulations appear to encourage settlement by Chinese in rural parts of the area.

The Ganze "Procedure for Birth Control", implemented on 1st July 1989, allows two categories of people to have two children: Tibetans and "Han farmers, herdsmen, and market gardeners". Any Chinese person who lives in any "high, cold and remote mountainous area" in Ganze for over eight years is also allowed to have two children, according to the "Procedure".

The rules reflect the needs of farmers for extra family labor, but the special dispensation for Chinese market gardeners (*cainong*) must act as an incentive for Chinese to move to the area to take up that trade.

In 1982 180,000 people, or one in four of the registered population of the Prefecture were Chinese, of whom at least 37,000 were involved in agriculture. The real figures may have been much higher.

In May 1990 the Chinese Government announced that Tibetans in the countryside would be encouraged to have "three to four children". The 1992 Regulations say that Tibetans in the TAR who live "in the heart of the countryside" are "encouraged" not to have more than three children.

In its White Paper on Tibet, issued in September 1992, the Chinese Government stated that in the countryside it "only conducts publicity campaigns to

inform" rural Tibetans about family planning. The Regulations imply that unspecified methods may be used in the countryside later: "First start propaganda testing work, and then gradually widen the scope on that basis".

The current 5 Year Plan for the Tibet Autonomous Region, initiated in 1991 but not publicly available, says that "the farmers and nomads must self-consciously support and practice the methods of preventing pregnancy."

## Sterilization

The Ganze birth control regulations show that Tibetan farmers and nomads there have been limited for several years to a m

The Commentary discourages brute force, saying that "sufficient propaganda and mobilization work must be carried out to go with this method, and we must give the masses opportunity to choose". But it gives details of the quota system by which cadres can lose their jobs if not enough "contraceptive operations" are carried out. The quota system is now being introduced in the Tibet Autonomous Region as part of the 8th Five Year Plan.

Refugee accounts suggest that sterilization and sometimes the use of physical force have been prevalent in rural areas of Eastern Tibet for some years: "In the village where I was working, we sterilized 163 people out of a population of 4,953 in just one week in June 1986", recalled a Tibetan abortion team worker interviewed in India who worked in Qinghai.

A Tibetan doctor, now in India, said that in her area of Qinghai by 1991 the limit for Tibetans had been lowered to one child, with the fine for a second and that in the countryside "they used to get some of the women [for sterilization] by ... forcing them to go in a truck or jeep to the hospital".

The TAR regulations state that sterilization is compulsory for couples who have had two unauthorized children and for unregistered women who are pregnant, unless they agree to return to their registered home.

In Ganze sterilization "must be especially emphasized" for women who are unmarried and "who consistently have illegitimate births".

The most stringent restrictions cover the congenitally disabled, as part of Beijing's controversial eugenics plan to "raise population

quality", which since 1988 has targeted primarily China's minority nationalities.

"Births are forbidden to people who have serious hereditary diseases proved by medical evidence", say the TAR Regulations. In Ganze couples "who have serious hereditary diseases such as hereditary mental illness, mental disability, or physical deformity must be forbidden from giving birth". For these couples "any pregnancies begun must be stopped".

There are some compensations for following the rules. A woman who has a sterilization gets 30 days paid holiday; if she was up to 6 months pregnant and has an abortion at the same time she is entitled to 65 days holiday and 5 kilos of first class sticky rice plus a kilo of butter.

# Tibetans Impatient for Change

Dawa Tsering emerged from six years of humiliation and torture in a Chinese prison ready to take up arms to expel the Chinese from Tibet.

He did not, Tsering said, because the Dalai Lama preaches peaceful resistance.

Yet, inside Tibet and among young refugees like Tsering who slip across the border into India, militancy and impatience are confronting the Dalai Lama, exiled leader of Tibet and apostle of non-violence.

"People in Tibet, especially people like me, say we should start hit-and-run actions," said Tsering, who escaped from Tibet at the end of April after a harrowing 23-day flight on foot. "Even if it doesn't give us our independence, at least it would put the Chinese in a corner."

Only the unquestioned authority of the Dalai Lama, who is revered as a reincarnated god, has held radicals in check.

As the conflict drags through its fourth decade, however, impatience "could lead to a more violent movement by the people in Tibet," said Tashi Wangdi, foreign minister of the Dalai

Lama's government in exile, based in this town in the lower Himalaya. "That is a major concern for His Holiness."

The award of the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize to the Dalai Lama reinforced his argument that non-violence is more effective than bombing railroads and sniping at Chinese soldiers.

In Tibet's case, active resistance, "apart from the principle, would be suicide," Wangdi said.

China claims Tibet has been Chinese since the 13th century, when it sent its army into the starkly beautiful "land of snows" in 1950.

In 1959 the Dalai Lama shed the maroon habit of a Buddhist monk and fled in disguise to India. He eventually was joined by 115,000 refugees.

Now, after 33 years, Tibetans say time is running out for their hopes of independence.

They say Beijing, offering high pay to workers and easy credit to businessmen, had encouraged mass immigration of ethnic Han Chinese to submerge Tibetan culture and ethnicity, and that their 6 million people are outnumbered by 7.5 million Chinese.

"Tibetans who speak out against the Chinese government are at risk of imprisonment, possibly for years, and torture," Amnesty International said in a report May 20.

The human rights organization, based in London, said at least 200 civilians were killed in clashes from the 1987 uprising in the capital, Lhasa, through 1990. China reported only 28 deaths in that period, including members of security forces.

New allegations of torture and repression reach Dharamsala with each arrival at the Refugee Center, which houses 130 people who have come out in the last few months.

Tsering, a former policeman, said he was arrested for stepping into a fight

between Chinese and Tibetan moviegoers and clubbing a Chinese man senseless.

In prison, Tsering said, he was beaten continuously for two days by 18 Chinese guards working in shifts, then thrown into solitary for a month. During his six-year term, "the Chinese abused us, they treated us like dogs," he said.

The feudal structure of the Dalai Lama's authority has loosened in exile, allowing opposing views to be heard for the first time.

Late last year, an expanded parliament was elected with the new power, at least on paper, to impose binding decisions on the Dalai Lama.

In February, it resolved that any dialogue with China should be based on the premise of full independence. That put a formal end to the Dalai Lama's proposal in 1988 to make Tibet a "self-governing democratic political entity," with the foreign affairs and defense remaining in Chinese hands.

No political parties exist among the exiles, but an informal opposition challenges the essence of the Dalai Lama's philosophy of peaceful protest.

"We are ready to use all means, including violence if need be," said Tsewang Thuntso, president of the Tibetan Youth Congress, which claims 12,000 members. "We are desperate. We want to leave all options open."

The Dalai Lama admitted that after 30 years of Chinese rule, Tibetans were growing impatient with his Buddhist messages of non-violence.

"There's a feeling of desperation building up inside Tibet. On the moral side, I tell them that violence is essentially against human nature.

"But sometimes people don't much care for the moral side," he laughed. "Doesn't matter. All right. On the practical side, if Tibetans were to follow a path of violence, it wouldn't be easy. Where would the weapons come from? How would we get them into Tibet? A few guns would be no use--just a provocation against the Chinese.

"I try to explain this thoroughly to these hot-brained...no, you say hot-minded? Ah, yes--hot-blooded Tibetans. Emotionally, it's hard for them to accept, but there's no alternative."

# Chinese Officials Open Tibet's Job Market to Chinese Workers

## Recent Announcement Threatens to Overwhelm Tibet With Chinese Settlers

Chinese Communist Party officials have called for Chinese to move to Tibet to participate in the recently-announced economic opening. Chen Kuiyan, Deputy secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Region Central Party Committee, said that "we should...open our job market to all fellow countrymen." Another Chinese Party Deputy Secretary, Zhang Xuezhong, called for "continuously inviting talented people to work in the region." Zhang is generally regarded as the most powerful official residing in Lhasa.

The statements represent some of the strongest encouragement for Chinese workers to move to Tibet in recent years. "For recently-appointed Chinese officials to open up Tibet to more Chinese settlers, when Tibetan unemployment is high...shows China's primary goal in Tibet is complete integration with China, with no regard for Tibetan autonomy or culture," says Jigme Ngapo, political analyst for International Campaign for Tibet.

Last month Chinese authorities announced Tibet would be opened to the outside world to promote economic prosperity and national unity. The Tibetan regional government will reportedly offer foreign investment incentives, direct air links with Beijing, Kathmandu and Hong Kong, promote tourism and expand border trade with Nepal and other countries. The opening in Tibet is limited to the economy, and does not appear to presage any political opening. However, the development is expected to have social and political ramifications.

The announcement was necessary, according to Chen Kuiyuan, because of "a shortage of qualified personnel, particularly managerial personnel, scientists, technicians, teachers and those who know how to develop village and town enterprises and a commodity economy." Replacing Tibet's traditional agricultural-based economy, which involves barter and few outside commodities, has often been cited as a major goal by Chinese development specialists and economists.

But Ngapo believes this spells disaster for Tibetan independence. "The first economic opening in Tibet in the early 1980's displaced many Tibetan workers

and the effects of the current opening could dwarf the previous one. This shows that Beijing has repeatedly chosen to import Chinese workers rather than educate and train Tibetans," said Ngapo. Tibetan Party members have recently complained that an extremely high percentage of the Tibet Autonomous Region's education budget is spent in China. A secret document from the Political Consultative Committee, an advisory body to the Party, pleaded with authorities in Beijing to put the emphasis on educating Tibetans back inside the TAR.

## Board Election Results

Bay Area Friends of Tibet's General Meeting and Board Election was held on October 13. The following is BAYFoT's new list of board members: Lhakpa Dolma, Dorji T. Lama, Chimi Thonden, Chimi Wangchuk, Greg Alling, Sharon Bacon, Samten Choeden, Ralph Davies, Carol Fields, Scott Harrison, Phurpa Ladenla, Ed Lazar, Justin Lowe, D'Arcy Richardson, Pema Tashi, Tenki Tendufila, and Jigme Yugay.

*Bay Area Friends of Tibet Board Members wish to salute the memory of Petra Kelly and Gert Bastion, who were two of the strongest voices for Tibet in Europe.*

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