

Tibet

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PRESS WATCH

WINTER 2010
*A publication of the
International Campaign for Tibet*

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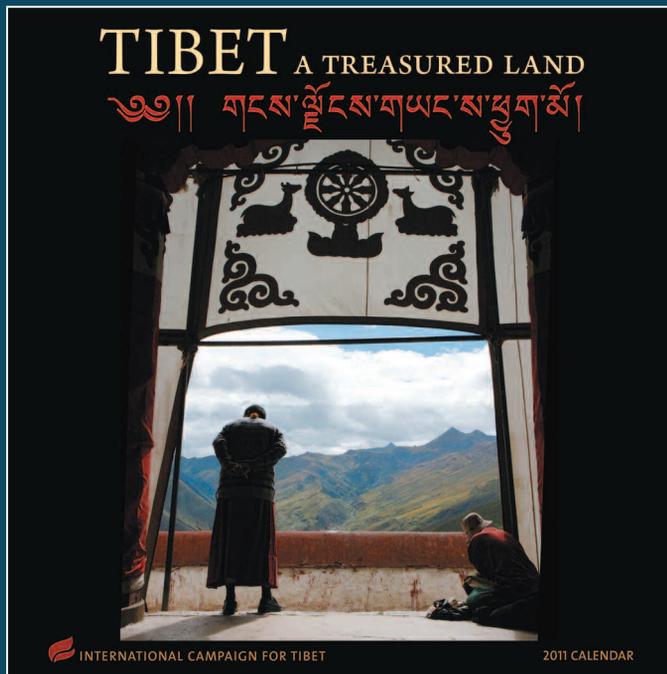
INTERNATIONAL
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NEW REPORT: The Kyegu Earthquake: Six Months On

On April 14, 2010, a devastating 6.9 magnitude earthquake flattened the town of Kyegu in a sparsely populated, Tibetan rural area in present-day Yushu, Qinghai province. The earthquake left 2,698 dead and 100,000 homeless according to the official count.

ICT's newest report looks at the impact of the earthquake — and the response of the Chinese authorities — half a year after the tragedy. Among the findings:

- The decision by authorities to scrap plans for temporary homes as shelters in order to avoid "waste" means that it is unclear how many families will survive the winter.
- There is serious concern about the decision by the Chinese government to exclude non-governmental organizations.
- The authorities have excluded Tibetan involvement in the reconstruction planning process, although Yushu is a Tibetan area with a strong Tibetan identity and historically significant religious and cultural institutions.
- Aid from outside Tibet has been essential in helping Tibetans to survive the devastating impact of the earthquake. It has provided hope and broken through the sense of isolation, exacerbated by the frustration many Tibetans feel as the Chinese

government controls reconstruction in Yushu. Tibetans and others involved in relief work report on the spirit and resilience of ordinary people in surviving the quake.

You can download a free copy of this remarkable report in its entirety at savetibet.org/media-center/ict-news-reports.



Children play at temporary kindergarten set up in Yushu after the earthquake.

From the President



Mary Beth Markey,
President

TIBET PRESS WATCH

The International Campaign for Tibet works to promote human rights and democratic freedoms for the people of Tibet.

Founded in 1988, ICT is a non-profit membership organization with offices in Washington, D.C., Amsterdam, Berlin and Brussels, and field offices in Dharamsala and Kathmandu.

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Cover photo: Cell phone image of the first protests in Rebkong October 19, 2010

There is always a flurry of activity at year's end, much of it planning and budgeting based on current assessments of the situation on the ground in Tibet and the changing circumstances of Tibetans in exile. At the new year, we are now poised to begin again. More than that, we are eager to confront the challenges and opportunities the new year will bring.

Since the demonstrations against Chinese misrule spread across Tibet in 2008, we have observed a new expression of a potent political consciousness among Tibetans. Inside Tibet, Tibetans are taking great risks to express their political opinions through poetry, essays and music. In exile, Tibetans have thrown themselves into the elections for the Kalon Tripa (executive head of the Tibetan exile government) with tremendous enthusiasm and new expectations for a fully democratic government.

Friends of Tibet around the world celebrated the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Liu Xiaobo, a formidable representative of those in China who not only grasp the injustices in Tibet, but are ready to use their influence and prestige to promote human rights and democratic freedoms for their Tibetan brothers and sisters.

"Hope for the best but prepare for the worst." Quotations on hope are often attributed to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, but this is one I have heard him say time and again. My guess is that it has come to mean many different things to His Holiness over the 50 years since he has come out of Tibet to be a free spokesman for his people and homeland.

Recently, His Holiness has used this statement when speaking about his persistent efforts to engage Chinese leaders on a peaceful and just solution for Tibet, even as the situation in Tibet becomes more difficult and new Tibetan refugees continue to seek freedom in exile. While His Holiness hopes for a solution, he and the Tibetan exile government must prepare for a longer struggle. And in this worst case scenario, he urgently needs our help.

With the commitment of our partners, we at the International Campaign for Tibet have been able to work side-by-side with the Tibetan people and leadership in their efforts to turn the Chinese government in the direction of a more hopeful future for Tibet. Thanks to generous contributions, we were able to help in the worst times, including during the terrible emergency that resulted from the earthquake in eastern Tibet.

We are most grateful and encouraged by your pledges of continued support. One of my favorite quotations comes from the indomitable Eleanor Roosevelt who said "Nothing can stop us but inaction, lack of imagination, and lack of courage." I can assure you that in Washington, DC, Berlin, Amsterdam, Brussels, London, and in the field, ICT staff are working with great determination to advance the cause of human rights for Tibetans, to report to the world the true situation in Tibet, to promote meaningful engagement with the Chinese, and to support Tibetan communities as they struggle to preserve their unique identity in Tibet and far from home.

Thank you for your dedication to the Tibet cause. We are stronger because you stand with us, and we invite you to work with ICT as we continue to pursue justice and freedoms for Tibetans.

Tibet Press Coverage

News from around the World

LIFE IN TIBET

The Chinese government struggles to present an image of harmony and contentment within Tibet, but frank reporting betrays the reality China tries so hard to camouflage. Among the telling signs: a new level of scrutiny on Tibet's new middle class, enforced restrictions on Tibetan nomads, and eyewitness accounts from worldwide reporters.



Todd Stein, Director of Government Relations

China's Bad Press in Tibet

ICT Blog, August 9, 2010.
By Todd Stein

Once again, Chinese authorities have allowed a group of foreign journalists into Tibet with a tightly regimented itinerary that allows for no free and independent reporting. These reporters, in turn, file stories about restrictions on their visit. They write about how their handlers block opportunities for honest interviews with ordinary Tibetans and ensure that the places, people and images they see accord with the official Chinese view of the situation in Tibet.

On Tibet, the Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party faces a conundrum — face criticism for keeping foreign journalists out, or face critical reporting by those they let in.

The New York Times' Edward Wong, ruminates on this question, and concludes that it's better to get in with restrictions than not to go at all. Mr. Wong's piece follows, as well as others from the trip:

Fear Lingers in Tibet Two Years after Riots

Reuters, July 2, 2010. By Ben Blanchard

"Armed soldiers and police patrol the streets, especially in Lhasa's old Tibetan quarter, in a reminder of Beijing's tight grip on the restive region. "The fear is all around," said one nervous young businessman, "... "There are spies everywhere. Who knows who is listening to us."

No Room to Talk in 'Stable' Tibet

BBC News, July 15, 2010. By Damian Grammaticas

"China's aim was to convince us that things are back to normal after the serious unrest that erupted across the Tibetan plateau

just before the Olympics in 2008, and that the money China is investing to develop Tibet is transforming the place. But ours was a highly controlled tour. We had a set programme, minders watching us everywhere, and few opportunities to talk to Tibetans freely. Everywhere we had a police escort, and we passed huge military convoys rumbling along the mountain roads. It gave the impression China is nervous about its hold on Tibet."

China's Money and Migrants Pour into Tibet

New York Times, July 25, 2010. By Edward Wong

"The government bars foreign reporters from traveling independently in Tibet. Journalists on the tour were brought to several development projects by ministry officials, but were occasionally able to interview locals on their own. Tibetans interviewed independently expressed fear of the security forces and spoke on the condition of anonymity."

A Trip to Tibet, With My Handlers Nearby

New York Times, July 31, 2010. By Edward Wong

LHASA, Tibet. One warm morning on the campus of Tibet University, a couple of foreign journalists on a government-run tour of Tibet quietly broke away from the group to talk to students standing on a grassy lawn. Security guards dashed in and waved the students away.

Two days later, Chinese officials brought the 30 or so foreign reporters to the sprawling Tashilhunpo Monastery in Shigatse, the seat of power of the Panchen Lama, a reincarnated leader in Tibetan Buddhism. The officials had arranged for a monk to brief us on the monastery's history. But reporters preferred to pepper him with questions about the selection of the 11th Panchen Lama; the Chinese government appointed one in 1995 after whisking off a 6-year-old boy endorsed as the genuine reincarnation by the exiled Dalai Lama. The boy and his family have not been seen since.

A foreign ministry official from Beijing quickly signaled an end to the talk. Later, walking through the white-walled monastery, the official shook his head and said to me: “The questions you all ask — what is the word I’m looking for? They’re ridiculous!”

These days, the Chinese government wants foreigners to think it is moving beyond Orwellian controls on information. In Beijing and most other parts of China, a foreign journalist can usually travel freely. Plainclothes officers don’t regularly follow journalists around. And ordinary people who talk to journalists usually do not fear reprisals from the authorities, unlike many Tibetans, who speak to foreign reporters only in quick, furtive conversations because of the omnipresent security forces.

China is pushing its state news agency, Xinhua, into new markets in hopes that foreign publications will run its stories as if they are those of The Associated Press or Reuters. The Chinese government and its information agencies crave legitimacy among foreigners. But open and critical inquiry is still an alien concept to Chinese officials, as I discovered on this five-day government-run tour of Central Tibet.

China Tightens Grip on Tibet’s Business Class

Time Magazine, Wednesday, August 18, 2010

Weeks after a prominent Tibetan arts dealer was sentenced to 15 years in prison on charges his supporters say were trumped up after he crossed powerful local officials, a second Tibetan businessman has been sentenced to life in jail. As one of China’s richest Tibetans, Dorje Tashi was an unusual target. Tashi ran a business conglomerate involved in hotels, tourism and real estate, and was responsible for the employment of hundreds. He was noted in the state-run press for contributing to various charitable causes, and his financial success was a symbol of the type of prosperity and modernity China wanted to promote in the restive Himalayan region.

While China’s efforts to encourage development in Tibet has helped build a class of successful Tibetan businesspeople, that prosperity hasn’t built unswerving loyalty to Beijing. “It does suggest that how ever much money you pour into Tibet, you can change the physical landscape and the actual social landscape, but it doesn’t change the cultural topography,” says Robbie Barnett, director of Columbia University’s modern Tibetan studies program. “The fact is they can create people who say this system benefits us financially, but it may not change their sense of cultural values.”



Armed Chinese soldiers walk past a monk during their patrol in Lhasa, Tibet, on February 1, 2009.

Tibetan Nomads Struggle as Grasslands Disappear from the Roof of the World

The Guardian, September 2, 2010

Like generations of Tibetan nomads before him, Phuntsok Dorje makes a living raising yaks and other livestock on the vast alpine grasslands that provide a thatch on the roof of the world. But in recent years the vegetation around his home, the Tibetan plateau, has been destroyed by rising temperatures, excess livestock and plagues of insects and rodents.

“The grass used to be up to here,” Phuntsok says, indicating a point on his leg a little below the knee. “Twenty years ago, we had to scythe it down. But now, well, you can see for yourself. It’s so short it looks like moss.”

Scientists say the desertification of the mountain grasslands is accelerating climate change. Without its thatch the roof of the world is less able to absorb moisture and more likely to radiate heat. Partly because of this the Tibetan mountains have warmed two to three times faster than the global average; the permafrost and glaciers of the “Third Pole” are melting.



Monks pass by a billboard outside one of the new Chinese shopping malls in Lhasa near the revered Tibetan Potala palace.

Tibet Press Coverage

News from around the World

TIBET IN EXILE

The struggle to maintain Tibet's identity, unique culture, and commitment to democracy from exile requires careful balance and the global participation of the Tibetan diaspora. Recent elections for the Kalon Tripa were marred by Chinese interference when 18 ballot boxes were seized by the Nepalese police at polling booths in two areas of Kathmandu, wasting over 1,000 votes. Nepalese police were acting on the request of the Chinese government. The following articles outline some of the scope of the work of the exiled Tibetan government.

US Envoy Meets Dalai Lama

AFP, October 19, 2010 – 9:34 am

A US envoy held talks on Monday with Tibet's spiritual leader the Dalai Lama and voiced support for a peaceful solution with China, officials said, in the first meeting between the two sides in months.

The Dalai Lama, who is on a nine-day trip through North America, met in Atlanta with Maria Otero, the Undersecretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs who serves as the US coordinator on Tibet.

Lodi Gyari, the Dalai Lama's chief negotiator with China, said that the monk reiterated to Otero his "Middle Way" of working non-violently to improve the rights of Tibetans while staying under Chinese rule.

"Support for his efforts from the United States has been critical at many levels and His Holiness was very pleased to hear again from Under Secretary Otero that the Obama administration (supports) his Middle Way approach," he said.

The Surajkund Statement and Action Plan on Tibet

Adopted by the Sixth International Conference of Tibet Support Groups. Surajkund, India, November 5–7, 2010

The Sixth International Conference of Tibet Support Groups was held at Surajkund in the north Indian state of Haryana from 5 to 7 November 2010. It was convened by the Core Group for Tibetan Cause — India, the apex coordinating body of the Tibet supporters in India, and facilitated by the Department of Information & International Relations of the Central Tibetan Administration.

The conference was attended by 258 participants from 57 countries. His Holiness the Dalai Lama was the Guest of Honour and the former Deputy Prime Minister of India, Mr. Lal Krishna Advani, the Chief Guest. The Kalon Tripa, Prof Samdhong Rinpoche, delivered the key note address.

The purpose of the conference was to take stock of efforts in finding a negotiated solution to the Tibetan issue, discuss the current situation in Tibet and outline ways for the Tibet groups throughout the world, including Tibetan NGOs and Tibetan associations, to strengthen their work in light of new developments in China and Tibet.

The participants agreed to the Surajkund Action Plan to focus the attention of Tibet Support Groups on a number of areas of importance, including efforts to build up Tibet as a constituent issue in parliaments and governments; support the aspirations of the Tibetan people for His Holiness the Dalai Lama to visit Tibet; reverse the Chinese government's attempts to weaken the status of the Tibetan language; increase awareness of human rights abuses in Tibet and foster a greater understanding between Chinese and Tibetan peoples.



ICT staff participate in the Sixth International Conference of Tibet Support Groups in India in November.

Election Commission Declares Preliminary Election Results for Kalon Tripa and Parliament in Exile

On November 12, the Election Commission of the Central Tibetan Administration declared the results of the Preliminary round of general elections for the 15th Tibetan Parliament-in-exile and the third Kalon Tripa, Prime Minister of the Tibetan Government in Exile.

The Election Commissioner, Jampel Choetsang, said that 61% of registered voters cast their ballots in the preliminary election held on October 3, 2010. But he said that more than 1000 votes were wasted in Nepal, on account of 18 ballot boxes seized by the Nepalese police at two polling booths in Kathmandu, and 613 votes were wasted in Bhutan, on account of the Bhutanese government's orders not to send the voting lists and ballot papers to Dharamsala.

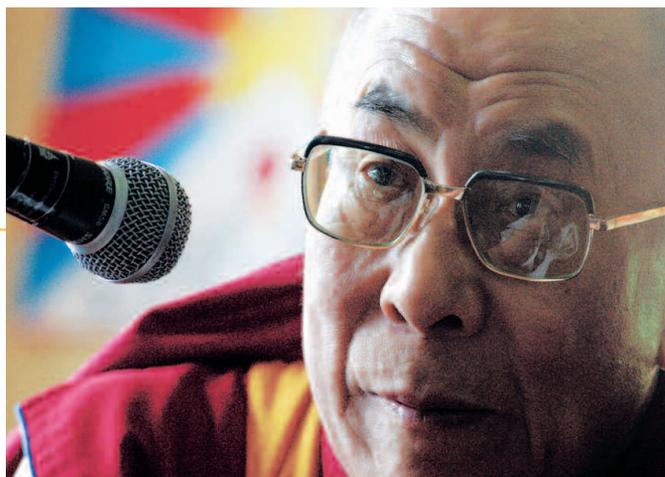
The leading candidate for the post of Kalon Tripa is Dr. Lobsang Sangay, a Harvard scholar. Former Kalon Tripa Tenzin Namgyal Tethong is in second place, followed by Mrs. Gyari Dolma, Mr. Tashi Wangdi, Mr. Losang Jinpa and Mr. Sonam Topgyal Khorlatsang.

Understanding the Dalai Lama's Retirement Statement

November 30, 2010. By Bhuchung K. Tsering

The recent media statements by the Dalai Lama about his desire to announce complete retirement has created a buzz among Tibet watchers at all levels. I have no doubt that the Chinese government, primarily, and all concerned governments are studying the implication of such a development. China is already testing the waters by having "scholars" comment on the statement. The Chinese seem to be closely following the development, as they should be, and have publicly outlined the chronology of the Dalai Lama's statements relating to his retirement.

At the onset, when the Dalai Lama talks about "retirement" it should not be taken in the way a conventional politician or international figure retires from public life. The Dalai Lama's latest statement has to be understood in the context of his description of the historical responsibility of the institution and how it has changed in recent years. As he explains it, historically, the Dalai Lamas have been both the spiritual and temporal leader of



Tibet. While the temporal leadership was limited to the Tibetan people, the spiritual authority expands to almost all followers of Tibetan Buddhism who regard him as the manifestation of the Bodhisattva of Compassion. His spiritual followers have traditionally been the Tibetans, the Buddhists along the Himalayan region, as well as the Buddhists in Mongolia and the Russian republics of Buryatia, Kalmykia and Tuva (as I write this the Dalai Lama is giving teachings to several hundred Buddhists from these places in the Russian Federation who have gathered in Dharamsala). In the post 1959 period there are several thousand followers of Tibetan Buddhism throughout the world who also revere him as a spiritual leader.

In 2001, following the establishment of the system of the directly elected positions of the Kalon Tripa, the Chairman of the Tibetan Cabinet and the de facto head of the Central Tibetan Administration, much of the political authority has been delegated to it. The Dalai Lama has said that since then he has more or less ceased being the temporal leader.

Therefore, his latest statement, to me, is a step towards making this transformation in the age-old responsibilities of the institution of the Dalai Lama more formal. His Holiness has talked about wanting to discuss this matter with the Tibetan Parliament in Exile, which is the highest decision making authority in the Tibetan administration system in exile. The parliament is scheduled to have its next session in March 2011.

Even if the Dalai Lama decides on his retirement, he has said he will continue to be active in the public domain, primarily to continue his work towards the promotion of human values and religious harmony.

On the broader issue of the Dalai Lama commanding the loyalty and trust of the Tibetan people, particularly those in Tibet, I do not foresee any changes in the future. The Dalai Lama will continue to be regarded by the Tibetan people as their free spokesman, irrespective of the changes that take place in his political role in exile. His role as the moral authority on the Tibetan issue will not diminish. As one Chinese Government scholar has understood it, the Dalai Lama, in a sense, cannot retire. He will continue to be a force to reckon with.

Tibet Press Coverage

News from around the World

RESPONSE TO CHINA'S POLICIES

As the general public becomes increasingly aware of China's brutal repressions in Tibet, more and more voices are being heard speaking up for the protection of human and civil rights in Tibet, and to uphold religious and cultural self-determination. The Nobel Prize Committee (who honored His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 1989) selected a Chinese man long known for his outspoken advocacy for human rights, including for Tibetans — an indication of the growing strength of pro-Tibetan commitment.



Ellen Bork

US Must Publicly Pursue a Clear Tibet Policy

August 19, 2010
Wall Street Journal Asia edition
By Ellen Bork

Over the past several years, Beijing's repressive policies have increasingly alienated Tibetans. One indication was the March 2008 uprising and riots across Tibet. Yet Beijing responded not by moderating its policies but by intensifying repression — launching a “patriotic education” campaign and targeting members of the educated elite, many of whom have long gotten along with, and even flourished within, the communist system.

Beijing has taken the same approach to criticism from abroad over its handling of Tibet, significantly raising the stakes by identifying Tibet as a “core interest.” Beijing has given notice that unless the world adopts a “correct understanding” of Tibet by spurning any view contrary to the Communist Party line, there will be consequences for bilateral relations and it will be difficult for China to cooperate on the global economic recovery or other issues.

American officials should know by now that nothing is gained by acquiescing to China's overbearing behavior on Tibet or any other issue. Adapting to Beijing's “correct understanding” of Tibet undermines not only the Dalai Lama and human rights for Tibetans, but also America's own “core interest” in seeing these respected in Tibet and China as well. To be credible, America must clearly and publicly pursue a well-established policy on Tibet.



Lodi Gyari

The Tibetan Impasse

September 10, 2010
South China Morning Post
By Lodi Gyaltzen Gyari

I have spent much of the past three decades representing His Holiness the Dalai Lama in talks with Chinese leaders. Through these many years of intermittent dialogue, I have sought to make the Chinese leadership understand the will of the Tibetan people and the vision of His Holiness in finding a common road to peace and reconciliation.

As part of my work I have tried to understand the reasons behind the current attitude of the Chinese leadership, and can think of three possible mindsets. The first one is the view that China is rising and all ethnic peoples need to modify their individual aspirations to fit in with this new identity.

The holders of this viewpoint in China seem to disregard and undermine the distinct identity of the Tibetan people. Beijing seems to mistake the artificial stability in Tibetan areas as a sign of Tibetan acquiescence. But this is not the quiet of complacency or contentment. Rather, it is the silence of growing desperation and bitterness — the kind that multiplies under repressive conditions. It is, frankly, the kind of silence in which the seeds of future violence and instability are sown.

The second mindset is that if the Chinese authorities are successful in improving economic conditions in the Tibetan areas, the Tibetan people's concerns will be addressed and the whole issue will go away.

This is, again, a very narrow approach to resolving the Tibetan problem. Economic integration without any respect and sensitivity for their culture will lead to more resentment by the

“I would like to take this opportunity to renew my call to the government of China to release Mr. Liu Xiaobo and other prisoners of conscience who have been imprisoned for exercising their freedom of expression.”

— from the press statement of His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Tibetan people. This was the clear message that the Chinese authorities should have received from the 2008 protests all over the Tibetan areas.

The third mindset is that China should wait until the passing away of the present Dalai Lama, when the Tibetan issue will naturally disappear. This thinking is based on the belief that a leaderless and disoriented movement would fragment into pieces and eventually become irrelevant.

This is a misplaced mindset for many reasons, and very counterproductive to China’s own future. Those who subscribe to this view do not understand that fragmentation today no longer means irrelevance; it means radical unpredictability and vastly greater risk. Far from fading away, the Tibetan political movement will reinvent itself in the absence of the current, Fourteenth Dalai Lama, and become something far more complex and unmanageable in the process.

It is disheartening to see just how far China’s leaders have drifted from the early days of bold reform. It is my hope that today’s leaders will seize the opportunity and have the courage to confront the difficult truths of contemporary Tibet.

China’s leaders have a historic choice to make: will they steward China towards a peaceful future in which Tibetans finally find a sustainable home within such a modern Chinese state? Or will they look the other way as the seeds of alienation are sown, with negative consequences for the distant future?

I know His Holiness the Dalai Lama has chosen the right side of history. I can only hope China’s leaders will see fit to do the same.

Lodi Gyaltzen Gyari, ICT Executive Chair, is the Special Envoy of the Dalai Lama and head of the Tibetan negotiations team in the talks with the Chinese leadership.

Human Rights Groups: US Should Adopt Principled China Policy

October 21, 2010. Human Rights Watch, New York

American policy toward China should reflect a more principled, high-profile approach to human rights in China, said a group of human rights advocates and China experts in a letter to US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

The letter was sent by Amnesty International, the Foreign Policy Initiative, Freedom House, Human Rights First, Human Rights

Watch, the International Campaign for Tibet, Project 2049, Reporters Without Borders, and the Uighur American Association.

The letter applauds President Barack Obama and Secretary Clinton for the support shown to the October 2010 awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to imprisoned Chinese government critic Liu Xiaobo, but urges Clinton to take a series of steps prior to the US-China summit, tentatively scheduled for January 2011, between Obama and Chinese President Hu Jintao.

Press Statement of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on Liu Xiaobo’s 2010 Nobel Peace Prize Award

December 10, 2010

I would like to offer my heart-felt congratulations to Mr. Liu Xiaobo for being awarded this year’s Nobel Peace Prize. Awarding the Peace Prize to him is the international community’s recognition of the increasing voices among the Chinese people in pushing China towards political, legal and constitutional reforms.

I have been personally moved as well as encouraged by the efforts of hundreds of Chinese intellectuals and concerned citizens, including Mr. Liu Xiaobo, in signing the Charter 08, which calls for democracy and freedom in China. I believe in the years ahead, future generations of Chinese will be able to enjoy the fruits of the efforts that the current Chinese citizens are making towards responsible governance.

I believe that Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao’s recent comments on freedom of speech being indispensable for any country and people’s wish for democracy and freedom being irresistible are a reflection of the growing yearning for a more open China. Such reforms can only lead to a harmonious, stable and prosperous China, which can contribute greatly to a more peaceful world.

I would like to take this opportunity to renew my call to the government of China to release Mr. Liu Xiaobo and other prisoners of conscience who have been imprisoned for exercising their freedom of expression.



Imprisoned 2010 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Liu Xiaobo, with his wife, Liu Xia.

ICT Responds

Press Releases and Blog Posts from the International Campaign for Tibet

Trial Delayed for Tibetan Writer Imprisoned for Critique of Chinese Policies, Expression of Tibetan Identity

August 12, 2010



Tragyal's arrest is one of the most significant in the context of a broadening crackdown on Tibetan writers, Artists and educators.

Tibetan writer and editor Tragyal, best known by his pen name, Shogdung is facing trial on the charge of inciting splittism after writing a book critical of Chinese policies in Tibet.

According to new reports, the authorities may be delaying Tragyal's prosecution, although it is not clear whether this means the authorities are seeking evidence for further charges against him, or querying the basis for the prosecution.

According to ICT sources, Tragyal has been described as achieving the status of a "hero" among Tibetans and his book is selling widely underground. Tragyal is being detained in Xining No. 1 Deten-

tion Center according to various sources but his family has not been allowed to see him yet, not even to take food. Tragyal suffers from various chronic ailments, such as kidney stones and stomach problems, but the delivery of his medication to him has not been permitted. The family's popular bookshop, 1+1 in Xining was closed on April 15 and copies of Tragyal's book seized.

From the ICT Blog: 50 Years of Tibetan Democracy

September 2, 2010

Posted by Bhuchung K. Tsering



Bhuchung K. Tsering

Today, Tibetans celebrate the 50th anniversary of the introduction of a democratic system of governance in exile. As an organization dedicated to promoting Tibetan human rights and democracy, the International Cam-

campaign for Tibet celebrates the democratic experience with them. Tragically for Tibetans in Tibet, the evolution to democracy began only after the Dalai Lama was forced to flee to India in 1959 and when he had a free hand to decide the course of his leadership. Today, the Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamsala, India (commonly known as the Tibetan Government in Exile), functions as a democratic system with Tibetan characteristics.

Through a change in the governance system, the Dalai Lama has brought about a social revolution and in the process reformed the old Gadhen Phodrang government system that began when the Fifth Dalai Lama took over both the temporal and spiritual leadership of Tibet in the 17th century.

There are three main messages from this experience in democracy by the Tibetan people.

1) Tibetans living in freedom have achieved an era of government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Unlike the system during the "old society" (as the Chinese government terms the government in Tibet prior to their arrival), today's system allows the Tibetan people to look at the administration as their own.

2) Tibetans living in freedom have achieved class equality. The past governance of Tibet was based on domination by aristocrats, lamas and chieftains. The democratic system provides a level playing field to all Tibetans irrespective of their status, gender, age, or whether lay or clergy.

3) Tibetans living in freedom are protected by the rule of law. With the introduction of a Draft Constitution for Tibet in 1963 and the adoption of a Charter for Tibetans in Exile in 1991, the administration of the Tibetan community in exile functions according to a legal framework adopted by an elected body, the Tibetan Parliament in Exile.

When we talk about Tibetan democracy we need to look beyond the limited scope

“We continue to urge both sides to engage in substantive dialogue and hope to see a tenth round of dialogue that will lead to positive movement on questions related to Tibetans’ lives and livelihoods.”

— from the U.S. State Department Annual Report on Tibet Negotiations



PHOTO: RFA TIBETAN SERVICE

Speaker Penpa Tsering and Deputy Speaker Dolma Gyari of the Tibetan Parliament jointly offering a golden plaque to the Dalai Lama on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Tibetan Democracy.

tantly, the leadership has to be mindful that in the past 50 years the Tibetan community in exile has seen major social transformation and, therefore, policies that are formulated must complement this new reality.

United States Reiterates Support for Dialogue to Resolve Tibetan Issue

September 8, 2010



of the offices in Dharamsala and to think of the majority of Tibetans in exile who are residing in the different settlements in the Indian subcontinent. In the post-1959 period it is these communities that have started practicing grassroots democracy.

The settlements are divided into individual “camps” whose day-to-day administration is handed by the directly elected camp leaders as well as sectional leaders. Also, many settlements are agriculture based and so the co-operative societies play an important role in the people’s lives. These co-operative societies are managed by a Board of Directors who are directly elected by the Tibetans themselves.

Tibetans in exile are on the democratic path, and their challenges are similar to those faced in other democratic communities. Many Tibetans need to understand more fully both their rights and duties under such a system. Most impor-

The United States has called for direct and substantive discussions without preconditions between the representatives of the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government. In its annual Report on Tibet Negotiations, submitted belatedly to Congress in August 2010, the U.S. State Department wrote, “Encouraging substantive dialogue between Beijing and the Dalai Lama is an important foreign policy objective of the United States.”

The report termed the ninth round of dialogue between the representatives of the Dalai Lama and Chinese officials in January 2010 as a “positive step.” At the same time, it stated that “we are disappointed that eight years of talks have not borne concrete results.”

Further, it said, “we continue to urge both sides to engage in substantive dialogue and hope to see a tenth round of dialogue that will lead to positive movement on questions related to Tibetans’ lives and livelihoods.”

Announcing ICT Germany’s Snow Lion Award

In 2011, ICT-Germany will award the first-ever “Snow Lion” Journalist Award to honor outstanding journalistic reporting in German-speaking media including radio, television, print or internet. The Snow-Lion is awarded for reports on the political, economic, cultural and social developments in China and/or Tibet, and comes with a prize of EUR 3,000 (approx \$4,000).

Excellence in reporting is crucial for understanding the often alien and very complex world of China and Tibet. To promote this excellence, the International Campaign for Tibet in Germany has called for entries to be considered for our outstanding journalistic reporting award.

Tragically for Tibetans in Tibet, the evolution to democracy began only after the Dalai Lama was forced to flee to India in 1959 and when he had a free hand to decide the course of his leadership.

PROTEST: Defending Tibet's Heritage

After the 2008 uprisings that spontaneously spread across the Tibetan plateau, China's repressions were brutal, and citizens rightly feared for their freedom and their lives. This justifiable fear makes recent events all the more remarkable.

The Chinese government recently proposed new measures that would make Chinese the main language of instruction in Qinghai province in the Tibetan area of Amdo; Tibetan will be downgraded to the equivalent of a foreign language class.

Protests began quietly. Elementary and middle school teachers in Amdo attended a week-long Tibetan Language Course Reforms Training, at which the new measures were explained. The teachers objected by drafting a petition, a significant expression of dissent in a place where free speech is not guaranteed.

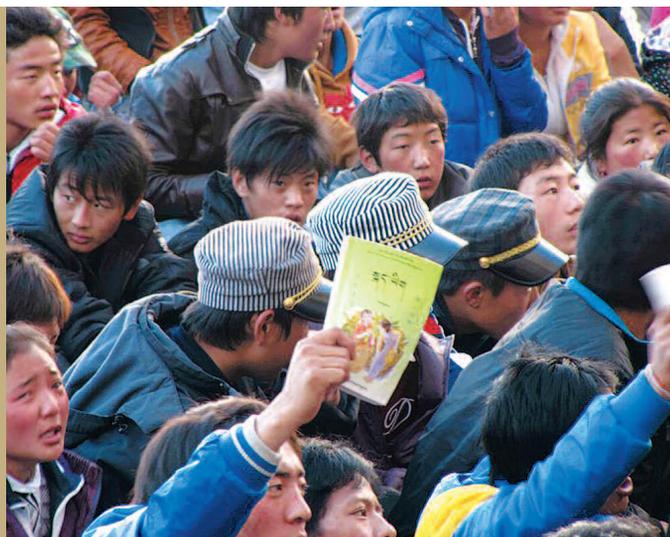
“If our province were to address such a group as this by adopting Chinese-language instruction, the outcome would be that the students would not understand what the teacher is saying, not to mention be able to actually learn anything. In many places in our province, Tibetan students have studied Chinese for 10 or more years — from elementary school until upper middle school — but they are still unable to communicate in Chinese.

“The choice of language of instruction should depend entirely on those being taught. The purpose of education is for teachers and students to convey and receive knowledge by the most

easily understood means between teachers and students. As far as the Tibetan students in our province are concerned, they are not familiar with Chinese and so they are not able to think about or express their ideas in Chinese, not to mention being able to use Chinese to creatively analyze problems. “Therefore, all [signatories] maintain that it is scientific to continue using the mother tongue as the language of instruction.”

Just days after the teacher training conference was completed, news had filtered down through the schools. On October 19, hundreds of students and some monks in Rebkong, in the Tibetan area of Amdo marched peacefully in protest. The next day, thousands more joined them, and the marches spread across the region. By October 22, some 400 Tibetans studying in Beijing also held a protest, seeking to keep their native language in the curriculums of schools in Tibet.

They did so knowing how brutally the Chinese authorities react to even the most peaceful protests. In August, villagers in the Tibetan county of Palyul signed petitions in protest because the local authorities were planning on opening new mines in the region, further damaging the croplands the families depended on. They took their petition to the government building and gathered outside; some sat to wait.



Tibetan student holding a Tibetan textbook that would be banned under the new language measures.



Students from the Central University for Nationalities in Beijing demonstrate for the preservation of Tibetan language.

Security officers fired tear gas into the crowd and later began to use “anti-riot shotguns” on the peaceful gathering. Chinese authorities admit one protester was shot “by accident”; Tibetan sources say at least three Tibetans may have been killed.

Given the swiftness and violence of the Chinese response, any Tibetan that dares to protest takes his or her life into their hands; their courage is extraordinary.

The Tibetan language is one of the four oldest languages of Asia and has one of the most original literatures, along with Sanskrit, Chinese, and Japanese. The preservation of the language is crucial to the continuance of the culture. But there are indications that the protests may be sparked by more than national pride. In 2008, some 200 local elementary and middle schools were consolidated into 60 boarding schools in larger towns. Children as young as four and five are required to board in these schools and can leave their campuses only once a month. Guidelines for schools include provisions that each administrator “equip each individual class at nationality boarding schools with a television, and arrange for teachers and students to watch such Chinese-language programming as “News Broadcast” every day.”

At colleges, graduates have protested the lack of jobs available to them. Regardless of the language spoken, most of the jobs go to Chinese students. In 2006, Lhasa University protested when 98 out of 100 government positions were assigned to Chinese graduates; only two went to Tibetans. Hundreds of graduates of the Institute of Tibetan Traditional Medicine protested in Lhasa, carrying banners demanding an increase in available jobs. According to an interview with a Radio Free Asia reporter, a source noted “Many Tibetan students who have texted [by cell phone] among themselves have been detained.”

The October protests left the region in a reportedly tense state. More than 20 students were detained for investigation — possibly being held in their boarding schools. One student described the situation as feeling “potentially explosive.” The current Party Secretary of Qinghai province Qiang Wei said that strengthening “bilingual” education, which asserts the importance of the Chinese language, is “an important political duty.”

Language experts are united in their opinion that the Tibetan language must be supported. David Germano, University of Virginia Associate Professor of Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, said that the scenario of Chinese becoming the professional language of Tibet is “one that simply consigns Tibetans to oblivion and to permanent second class status.”



Student protesters in front of their local Chapcha Prefecture Government Building.



Students in Chapcha protesting new language edicts despite knowing peaceful protests have historically been brutally suppressed.



The first protest to China's announcement occurred in Rebkong Prefecture October 19.

Tibet and the Arts

Films to Watch for: Tibet in Song

Review by Melissa Jimison

Nov. 23, 2010. On Friday night I had the privilege of attending the Washington, D.C. premiere of former political prisoner Ngawang Choephel's film, *Tibet in Song* (www.tibetinsong.com).

The film was wonderful. It tells the story of occupied Tibet through the lens of music and the experience of political prisoners. There were beautiful images of Tibet, recordings of traditional folk music and the interviews were brilliantly interwoven to tell the story of Tibet and Ngawang's experience.

While the film was well done, it was clearly not a Hollywood film. A Hollywood film wouldn't have had its director taken as a political prisoner part way into filming. There wouldn't have had to be an international campaign to secure his release. His release wouldn't have taken seven years. And most importantly, there would have been a happier ending.

One of the quotes that has had the strongest impact on me and reminds me why we continue to campaign for human rights for Tibetans is a quote from former political prisoner Palden Gyatso, "Every prisoner lives with the hope that somehow, once the world learns of their suffering, there will be a rush to help those who have fallen into the pit of hell."

Ngawang's film can help breathe renewed energy into our efforts as he helps us realize that this campaign can make change, even if one political prisoner at a time.



Former political prisoner Ngawang Choephel (at right) preparing a traditional song for the film *Tibet in Song*.

Book Review:

In the Shadow of the Buddha: Secret Journeys, Sacred Histories, and Spiritual Discovery in Tibet

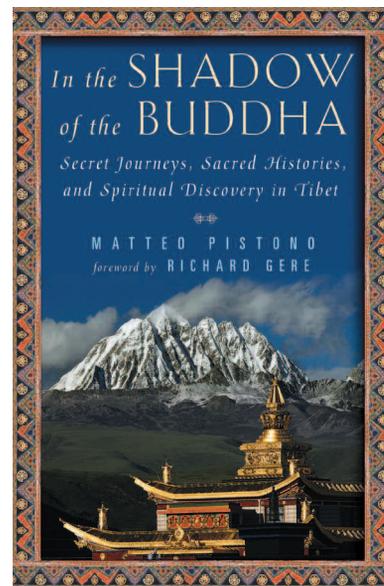
By Matthew Pistono



Spiritual biography meets edge-of-your-seat undercover reporting in this remarkable book on an American Buddhist who smuggled out hard evidence of abuse and torture in Tibet.

For nearly a decade, Matteo Pistono secretly carried evidence of atrocities by the Chinese government out of Tibet, showing it to the US government, human rights organizations, and anyone who would listen. Yet Pistono did not originally intend to fight for social justice in Tibet — he first went as a Buddhist pilgrim. Disillusioned by a career in American politics, he traveled to the Himalayas. After encountering Buddhism in Nepal, Pistono's quest led him to Tibet and to a meditation master whose spiritual brother is Sogyal Rinpoche, bestselling author of *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*.

Pistono not only became the master's student, but also couriered messages to him in Tibet from the Dalai Lama in India. This began an extraordinary adventure.



In the Shadow of the Buddha is a book about Tibet through the eyes of a devotee — a stranger hiding in plain sight. It's about how a culture's rich spiritual past is slipping away against the force of a tyrannical future. It's about how Tibetans live today, and the tenacity of their faith in the future in spite of dire repression and abuse. It's also about Pistono's own journey of merging political activism with Buddhist mysticism as a man who traveled thousands of miles and risked his own life to pursue freedom and peace.

IN MEMORIAM: Wangchuk Meston

1970–2010



Wangchuk Meston was born to American parents who left him in Katmandu with a Tibetan family when he was two years old. He was ordained as a monk in Kopan monastery in Nepal at age 6. He didn't know he was Jewish or a U.S. citizen. Once he learned of his heritage, he traveled to the U.S. He relearned English, attended Brandeis University, and married Phuntsok Dolma.

Wangchuk traveled to Tibet as a guide and interpreter for a reporter and later

for U.S. Congressman Frank Wolf. On a World Bank fact-finding mission that was instrumental in helping to defeat funding for an insidious resettlement project of Tibetans, he was arrested and endured interrogations before jumping out of a third story window. He barely survived his injuries and ICT helped arrange his medical evacuation. His ordeal, extensively covered by the world media, tipped the scales and helped convince the World Bank to cancel the funding requested by China.

In 2007 Wangchuk chronicled his life in *Comes the Peace*. He is survived by his wife, Phuntsok and daughter Jasmine. ICT is grateful for Wangchuk's efforts to raise awareness about Tibet.

Take Action

Please sign this petition to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and return in the enclosed envelope or mail it to ICT at 1825 Jefferson Place NW, Washington DC 20036. She needs to know we care about the fate of Dhondup Wangchen and all Tibetans imprisoned for expressing themselves.

Thank you for remembering a Tibetan political prisoner trapped in a Chinese prison.

Dear Secretary Clinton,

Out of great concern I appeal to you on behalf of imprisoned Tibetan writers, intellectuals and other politically engaged individuals who have been sentenced unjustly to prison because they peacefully availed themselves of the right of freedom of expression.

Dhondup Wangchen was detained in 2008 soon after completing *"Leaving Fear Behind,"* a documentary film about the feelings of ordinary Tibetans towards the Beijing Olympics and their lives in Tibet. In 2009 Wangchen was sentenced to six years imprisonment for "subversion." From the moment he was detained and through his sentencing, the Chinese authorities suppressed due process in his case, ensuring that Wangchen did not receive a fair trial. In so doing, the authorities violated legal safeguards incorporated into Chinese Criminal Procedure Law and their obligations under international law.

I respectfully request that you emphatically engage yourself in the cause of securing freedom for all Tibetans who find themselves in prison because of the peaceful expression of their ideas. And because the United States is historically and firmly committed on principle to upholding the human rights of all peoples, I thank you for not yielding to Chinese pressure to dispatch Tibet to the realm of inviolable "core issues."



Sincerely,

NAME

ADDRESS

Visit us at savetibet.org

Plan to Make Your Support Last!

Consider a planned gift to ICT from your estate.

Those who place ICT into their will or life insurance policy, donate real estate, or participate with a gift annuity are inducted into our Mandala Society to honor their long-term commitment. For more details, please contact Chris Chaleunrath at 202-785-1515 or members@savetibet.org.

Pass the Word — Help the Planet

When you're finished with this issue of Tibet Press Watch, please consider passing it on to a friend instead of throwing it out. Your thoughtfulness will not only ease our carbon footprint in the world, but help to spread awareness about the plight of Tibetans and the mission of peace and compassion of the Dalai Lama. Thank you.



KARMA

ACTIONS OR DEEDS THAT AFFECT THE CYCLE OF CAUSE AND EFFECT

You can affect the lives of people in Tibet, and protect a vibrant, ancient culture, by becoming a member of

Friends of Tibet

the monthly giving society of the
INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET.

Pledge a gift of as little as \$10 a month (that's just 33¢ a day) in support of our programs and you'll help provide a reliable fund that allows us to act immediately and strategically to benefit the people and culture of Tibet. Should the need arise, you can change or cancel your pledge at any time.

Visit www.savetibet.org/friendsoftibet to establish a Friends of Tibet monthly gift.

IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO — IT'S GOOD KARMA.