

'Writings in blood' emerge from Tibet ahead of revolt anniversary

Tibetan writings about the revolts against Chinese rule and their suppression have evaded tight censorship to reach the outside world ahead of the 50th anniversary of the failed Tibetan uprising and the first memorial year of a brutal crackdown that left many protesters dead.

'The Eastern Snow Mountains', a collection of moving accounts of the suffering and loss that followed after the Chinese government cracked down on Tibetan protesters last year, is the only known material in Tibetan on the 2008 protests.

Though soon banned by Beijing, the magazine survived underground and has now been translated into English and made public by rights body International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), which has also brought out a special report to mark the two revolt anniversaries, 'A great mountain burned by fire: China's crackdown in Tibet'.

Originally written in the Amdo dialect, famed for its lyricism, the articles are apparently from a cultural event in Lanzhou on Tibetan futures in a time of crisis, sponsored by the local businesspeople.

'If even most ordinary traders were taking such an interest in the cultural affairs of the Tibetan people and the critical situation in 2008, intellectuals could not remain silent,' says the introduction.

The writings include the story of a man beaten to death, two young monks driven to suicide, and the chilling consequences of a student protest in Sichuan March 17, 2008.

In 'Spontaneous Diary', the writer using the name Torlung, says: 'In the narrow forecourt of the Barkham Nationalities Teacher Training College and Ngaba Prefecture Nationalities Upper Middle school a lot of students are jostling, crying. Don't kill our fellow students! Don't arrest our people!'

'Two days later, the family name, home address, class number and body size of more than 20 people are recorded on forms, and they are removed one by one like hairs from a wound, and taken outside the school. Fourteen of them do not return, and one can only imagine the dark cell in which they are imprisoned and the fearsome torture to which they are being subjected.'

China's new pride, the Qinghai-Tibet railway, is given an ominous image for its role in herding hundreds of monks and laypeople to prison. As a Tibetan eyewitness recorded, 'Every prisoner seemed to be hurt badly and some had blood on their faces. Most were not wearing shoes. There was an old lady in the group with heavy shackles on her feet, and no shoes. She was being beaten by police.'

A common theme running through the 'writing in blood' is anger against the lamas and government officials who encouraged the state repression and turned a blind eye to the sufferings of thousands of people.

A writer condemns them as 'avid sellers of their own souls who value nothing higher than their own positions' and calls for such opportunists to be unmasked.

A year after the 2008 revolts, ICT says the oppression continues even today. Tibetans continue to

'disappear' and face extreme brutality in 'black jails'. According to figures given in official statistics, 1,200 Tibetans remain unaccounted for since the protests began.

'The increase in numbers of political prisoners since March 10, 2008, is likely to be the largest increase that has ever occurred in Tibetan areas of the People's Republic of China under China's current Constitution and Criminal Law,' it says.

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