

Translating for Tadra

by Brian Levin, France

For four or five years now I have been translating this annual Travel Report into English from the German or French. Never before in my long career as a professional translator had I worked with tears in my eyes, or wept as I saved a text into my computer...

Doing these translations, I have learnt much about the Tadra Villages. Learnt of so many people who give of what they have: individuals or companies that sponsor construction at the Village, education, or the purchase of clothes for the children; who volunteer their time to carry out repairs and technical improvements or medical or dental care when on a visit to the Villages; offer their organisational capacities, setting up fundraising events in Switzerland and elsewhere to benefit the Tadra project; who make a regular donation; who sell goods on a stall at craft fairs and other events in favour of the project; the contributions of the wonderful children of the Pestalozzi high school at Unna and other schools in Germany, who not only conduct fundraising activities at home, but have made the difficult journey to the Villages by the dozen with their teachers, some of them staying on for prolonged periods to teach English to the Tadra students; preparing textbooks for teaching English; the loving care of the Village heads and the house mothers, who needless to say do more than just a "job".

The above list, as long as it is, is doubtless only a fragment of the background and foreground activities that characterise this extraordinary world of solidarity.

I have learnt that a little goes a long way in Tibet: a regular monthly contribution of just a small sum of euros or dollars will help to feed and clothe hundreds of children, every day.

I have learnt of those Tibetan refugees who live in Switzerland and elsewhere, who are prohibited by the Chinese authorities to return to their homeland, and who support the Villages in many ways from afar.

But most of all, I have been moved by the stories of the children: children who for years have been living in squalor and distress, sometimes only just staying alive by the skin of their teeth, about whom the head of one of the Tadra Villages is somehow alerted and they are then brought there, sick, dirty, badly clothed, bewildered and frightened, to be taken in by loving adults and above by all the hordes of children who then care for them, turn their lives around and make them part of this extraordinary family, and who, years later as young adults, leave the Village with an education and skills enabling them to stand on their own feet and function as responsible adults in a difficult society, working as teachers, doctors, skilled artisans and more. And I am saddened to know that there are thousands of other such children in Tibet and elsewhere, to whom no such fairy godmother will one day come...

The "before and after" photographs and the stories of some of these boys and girls tell all. These children seem somehow to be genetically programmed to be supportive, adaptable, honest, loving, relationship conscious, with natural social and motor skills and enthusiasm for life. They even practise what might be called psychotherapy with one another, or certainly something just as valuable. As the travellers who write about their visits to the Villages say: we have so much to learn from them. Perhaps we too are genetically programmed to be all these things, and all it takes is the opportunity and the understanding to be our true selves?

And now this year, translating the report by Sabine and Andreas, I learn that Beat Renz, a man for whom I have much admiration, has given up his job to devote himself full time and put his love, energy and work into the development of the Tadra project.

I am proud and moved to be a part of this world of solidarity, however small my contribution, and once again I write with tears in my eyes... Now I dream of visiting at least one of the Villages before I am too old to do so.