

(Translation)

401379

Clinton-Weyfer

Asahi Shimbun

5 August 1976

High Morbidity Among Islanders Exposed to Bikini H-bomb

Disorders of Thyroid and Others Found

AEC Medical Charts of 66 Persons Obtained by
Gensuikin Kyushu Bloc Council

The Kyushu Bloc Council of Gensuikin (Council Against A- and H-bombs, business manager: Kazuyoshi Yamakawa, c/o Fukuoka Prefectural Council of Labor Unions) which has invited and treated Micronesian survivors exposed to fall-out from the US H-bomb test at Bikini Atoll 22 years ago, which also caused the tragedy of the No. 5 Fukuryu-maru (Lucky Dragon), has obtained the unreleased AEC (U.S. Atomic Energy Commission) medical charts of 66 proximally exposed residents of Rongelap Island. They contain detailed information on the circumstances at the time of exposure and medical data including the after-effects that developed during the 19 years until 1973 and the course of treatment such as are not available for A-bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Specialists who have seen the charts point out that "incidence of thyroid abnormalities is surprisingly high and careful surveillance must be continued against leukemia and cancer." The Bloc Council says it wishes to "expand its treatment program in Japan and use the charts as data for appealing the ever increasing dread of the nuclear bomb."

According to the AEC report, the H-bomb test was conducted on 1 March 1954 and a total of 267 persons were exposed including 28 American scientists. The AEC is sending a medical survey team to the islands and issuing a summary report on the survey findings every year. However, because the United States is refusing foreign survey teams; entry into Micronesia, a trust territory of the US, hardly any first-hand medical data on the individual patients have been internationally available.

The Gensuikin dispatched an investigation team in 1971, but the team was not allowed to enter the territory. Therefore the Kyushu Bloc Council in May this year invited to Nagasaki for the first time two residents of Rongelap Island and opened a way for the Bikini survivors to receive treatment in Japan. In the course of this, copies of the medical charts of 66 of the 86 exposed islanders (including 4 exposed in utero) were obtained. The Council had almost the entire picture analyzed by specialists by the 3rd.

5009799

The medical charts were of 50 subjects exposed to 175 rad at Rongelap Island, 12 exposed to 69 rad at adjacent Ailinginae Island, and 4 exposed in utero.

According to the medical charts, all except those exposed in utero complained of the same acute symptoms as those experienced by the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki immediately after exposure, such as radiation burns, decreased blood count, nausea and epilation due to radioactive fall-out. Among those exposed to 175 rad, 19 under age 10 and all 10 over age 31 had burns and all 10 between ages 21 and 30 had decreased blood count (see table). Subsequently, spontaneous abortions, stillbirths and hematemesis have been occurring repeatedly, and recently visual disorders, cataract and "aging phenomena" have become marked.

Of note is the fact that differing from Hiroshima and Nagasaki more than a half of them have developed thyroid disorders including cancer. This is due to the large intake of radioactive iodine after irradiation through drinking water, etc. It was learned that 13 of the 19 exposed to 175 rad had all or part of their thyroid gland removed by the Americans and were making up for the loss of thyroid function by taking hormones regularly. Besides, 5 of the 20 persons who have died so far were cases of leukemia and cancer of the genital organs. The professors of the Atomic Disease Institute, Nagasaki University School of Medicine who have seen the charts, and the physicians of the Red Cross Nagasaki A-bomb Hospital who have administered medical care to the 2 islanders, say, "Development of cancer and leukemia can be expected to continue in future."

However, according to the islanders the present situation is that no specialist is permanently stationed on the island and they have to get by with health examination and administration of medicine about once a year.

(Note) "Rad" is a unit of measurement of absorbed radiation dose. It is said that exposure to over 100 rad in a short space of time will cause death or such diseases as cancer and that when exposed to over 800 rad all will die.

US to Make Full-scale Study on Residual Radiation Soon

According to Micronesian Assembly sources, the United States Government will conduct shortly a full scale residual radiation survey on the Bikini Atoll and surrounding islands of the Marshall Islands which had been the nuclear testing ground of the United States from 1946 to 1958. The US Government had proclaimed 8 years ago that the residual radiation on the Bikini Atoll was "safe." However, voices requesting a full-scale reinvestigation heightened subsequently among the still worried former residents of the Bikini Atoll, and the matter had developed to the point where a lawsuit was instituted against the US Government at the Hawaiian Regional Court of Law in October last year. This is a case where the US Government was pressured into taking action by the islanders' power. The expense will be 1.5 million dollars (about 450 million yen). Reportedly, it is the wish of the US Government to complete all studies by the beginning of next year at the latest.

Various Examinations Made Every Year Says Responsible Person of US
Institute

Dr. Robert A. Conard, the person in charge at the Brookhaven National Laboratory (New York City), the institute with jurisdiction over the Bikini exposure problem, states as follows regarding the condition of the survivors.

At present the exposed people are given various examinations such as blood test and heart examination at least once annually. A specialist is permanently stationed at Kwajalein Island who visits the Bikini islands on ERDA's private boat to examine the exposed residents.

(RERF Translation Sec - 10 Aug 76)