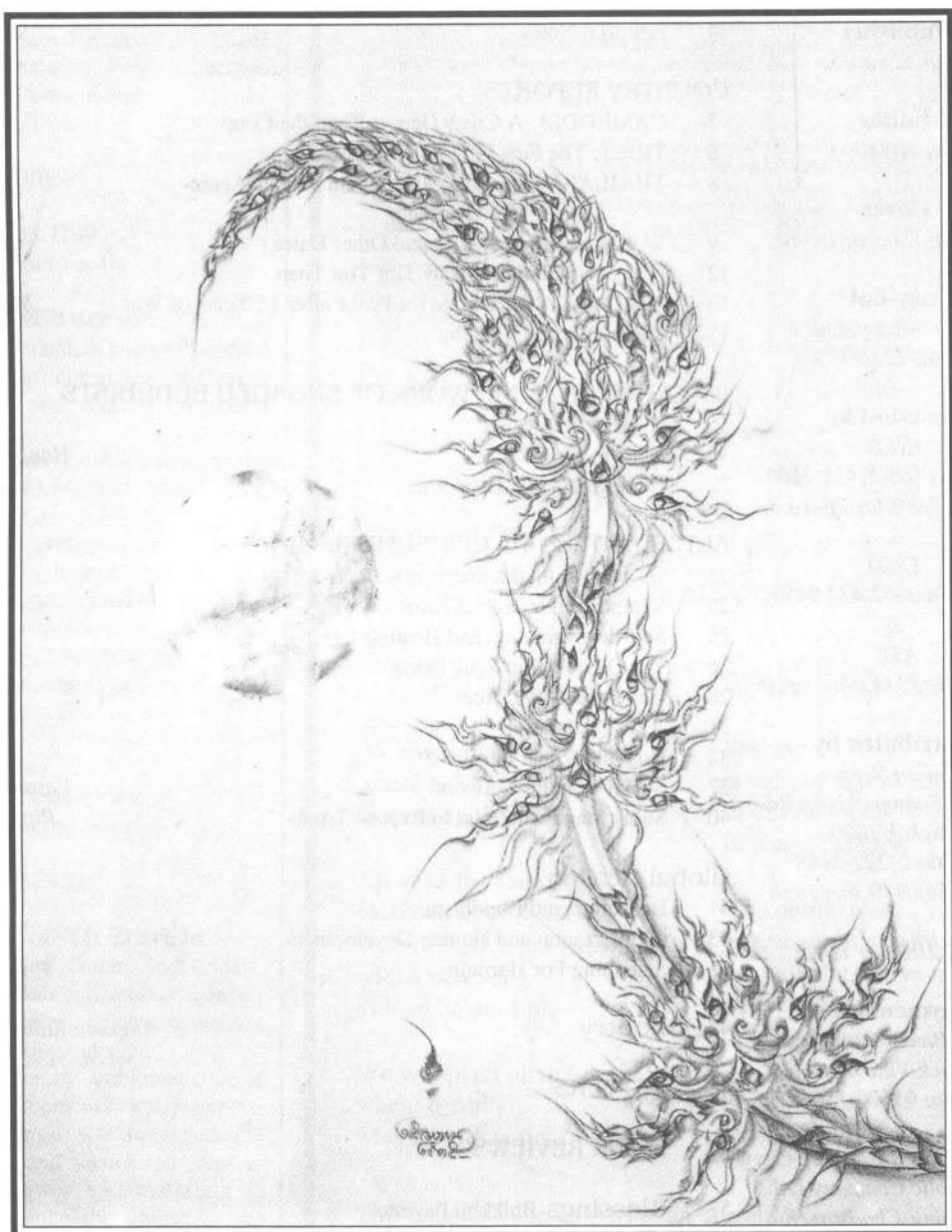


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Global Healing



Prayer for a New Millennium



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4 Editorial Notes

COUNTRY REPORTS

- 5 CAMBODIA: A Crisis Deeper Than the Coup
- 6 TIBET: The First Freedom Fighters
- 8 THAILAND: Spiritual Materialism Strikes Again
Merit for Sale
- 9 BURMA: Anniversaries and Other Dates
- 12 Obituary: Daw Tint Tint Than
- 13 SRI LANKA: Desperate for Peace after 15 Years of War
- 15 Recommended Reading

Bruce Matthews

Martin H. Petrich

INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF ENGAGED BUDDHISTS

- 16 INEB Update
- 18 Nuns in China
- 22 Is the Crisis Just Economic

*Hans-Gunter Wagner
Jonathan Watts*

ALTERNATIVES TO CONSUMERISM

- 25 Greeting from the Secretariat
- 25 Symposium on Social Justice
- 26 Self-determination and Healing
- 26 The Day the Sun Rose twice
- 28 Under the Olive Trees
- 31 ATC Declaration
- 32 No Nukes Asia Forum
- 37 Social Venture Network
- 40 Sulak Stands for Trial to Expose Truths

Jane Rasbash

Jane Rasbash

*Sucitto Bhikkhu
Vasana Chinvarakorn
Pipop Udomittipong*

Global Healing

- 41 Education and Buddhism
- 43 Globalization and Human Development
- 45 Searching For Harmony

*Johan Galtung
Sulak Sivaraksa
Pravit Pojanapruet*

47 Poetry

Angkarn Kalayanapong et. al.

48 LETTERS

50 BOOK REVIEWS

52 Blessings Bhikkhu Payutto

*Drawing on the top by Depsiri Sukhsobha of the Venerable Phra Bodirangsi of
Chiengmai who reaches the age of 80 on 25th December 2541*

PEACE

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The goals of INEB are to :

1. Promote understanding and co-operation among Buddhist countries, different Buddhist sects, and socially conscious Buddhist groups.
2. Facilitate and carry out solutions to the many problems facing our communities, societies, and world.
3. Articulate the perspective of Engaged Buddhism regarding these problems and train Buddhist activists accordingly.
4. Serve as a clearing house of information on existing Engaged Buddhist groups.
5. Cooperate with activists from other spiritual traditions.

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The objectives of TICD are to :

1. Coordinate work among individuals, groups of individuals and various agencies dealing with religions and development in the course of working together.
2. Share experience in and knowledge of religions and development as well as exploring ways and means of working together.
3. Offer training and secure resources in terms of man-power and materials to support and enhance the agencies that need help.



THE DALAI LAMA

MESSAGE

No matter what part of the world they live in or what tradition they belong to, those who truly embrace the spiritual life are rare.

As a religious practitioner and, in particular, as a monastic, Thomas Merton was really someone to look up to. He had all the qualities of having listened to and studied spiritual teachings, and also of thinking about them and absorbing himself in them. Besides his great learning and discipline, he had a good heart. He was not only able to do his own practice, but he had a very broad perspective on the spiritual life in general.

Thus, it seems to me that those of us who admire him should express it by following his example. In this way, even though it is now thirty years since he passed away, what he was hoping and seeking to do will remain forever. Not only is his wonderful example being followed in his own monastery, but it seems to me that if all of us followed his example by cultivating profound respect for each other's spiritual practice it would be of very great benefit to the world.

I think of myself as one of his Buddhist brothers and will always remember him, his activities and his approach to life with admiration and a brotherly affection. Meeting with him filled me with great inspiration and, when I look back on my own life, I hope I will also have the satisfaction of having made some contribution to fulfilling his wishes. My thoughts will be with all of you who will be participating in the ecumenical meditation being organised by the Thai Inter-religious Commission for Development on the anniversary of his death.

November 27, 1998

Prayer for a New Millennium

We will plant olive trees
where before
there were thorns.

All of us the same,
each one of us different,
we will walk hand in hand
with a new song
of love on our lips.

We will plant olive trees
where before
where were thorns.

Sharing
is the one urgent need
in this dawning
of a new century.

Paz, peace, paix,
mir, shalom, salaam:
we will plant olive trees
where before
there were thorns!

Frederico Mayor
Spanish Director General,
UNESCO, France

This poem is excerpted from an upcoming book
Prayers for a New Millennium
edited by Elias Amidon and Elizabeth Roberts

EDITORIAL NOTES

The Satirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation was registered as a philanthropic legal entity in 1968-thirty years ago. Its main objectives were and still are to promote art, culture and environmental balance through education. In order to achieve these goals we have created a number of nuclei or seed organizations like the Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development so that the ecumenical endeavor could take place among Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs etc. Within Siam and abroad these organizations have reached out to the grassroots, combining a desire for social justice and a recognition of the key role that local wisdom plays in attaining this goal for the benefit of individuals and communities. Over these years Siam has seen what kind of results arise from a purely economic and technological based scheme for "human improvement".

TICD has been publishing *Seeds of Peace* since its founding in 1983. They also publish *Sekhiyadhamma* in Thai language to raise awareness about the wealth of wisdom contained in the Thai religious tradition. It promotes the utilization of the best of the spiritual wisdom to address contemporary social ills: structural violence in the nation state as well as a "New World Order" which is highly unethical. Unless people of faith are aware of the reality of the spiritual crisis in the world, and prepared to overcome the challenge mindfully and non-violently, their faith can cause them to become more ignorant, sectarian and self-righteous. In this condition they will always seek to go blindly with the status quo, let the rich stay rich and the poor stay poor, even if it results in the destruction of natural resources and native cultures can no longer survive.

While TICD is oriented mainly to the religious and spiritual means of addressing social ills, the Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute under the umbrella of SNP works widely in the secular arena. Santi is peace, Pracha is public participation, and Dhamma is truth. Thus the SPDI works for a collective and honest appraisal of the problems we face and a lasting, peaceful solution.

It is through SPDI, with the encouragement of TICD, that the Alternatives to Consumerism network was created in collaboration with spiritual leaders from all over the world. ATC, working with SPDI and TICD aims to study and confront the specter of consumerism which has emerged as a New World religion with money as the godhead. In this religion, a human is only as valuable as their production capacity and a forest is only designated so many board feet of lumber. Human happiness is nowhere in the equation for the religion of consumerism. Money and technology are the measure of success in life, not happiness, goodness, strong families or closeness to God or some other spiritual quintessence.

The foundation's first line of action is education. Mainstream education has failed to prepare students for life as fully alive human beings. It only concentrates on the heads of the students; it extends the paradigm of the marketplace to the University, measuring the value of an education in tangible returns. Meanwhile, the heart and soul of the student is deemed unimportant or even worse: a hindrance to being a good student, a good future worker or factory drone. In this model the clever, more in the sense of devious than intelligent, are recognized, financially, socially, academically. They need not care or be aware of the suffering that is in the world around them. Hence the Spirit in Education Movement was created, in consultation with spiritual friends from all wisdom traditions. SEM is prepared to offer an alternative way of education, which diffuses through and permeates all of the activities in this web of organizations. SEM honors the reality of the need for activists and leaders in society to transform themselves personally, to be more mindful, more non-violent and compassionate in all aspects of their work, from the ground up. This is an essential step before society at large can be restructured to a more fair and spiritual, community-based organism.

Always looking for opportunities to link with like-minded groups, these organizations are happy and enriched by working with educational institutes that are promoting alternative education; for example Sharpham and Schumacher colleges in England and the Naropa Institute in the United States. Here in Siam collaboration with local Universities and Buddhist temples has proven fruitful. The "village school" known as *moo baan dek* on the river Kwae in Kanchanaburi province is an example of alternative education at work. Finally the ashram Wongsanit in Nakhon Nayok has provided a place to put some of the principals into practice. The ashram is thirteen years old and a new ashram may be founded in the near future.

Although the prevailing state of capitalism and the recently disintegrated system of communism represent embodiments of greed and aggression, and mainstream education fosters ignorance; skillful means, and non violence or derision will be the means to a positive transformation. Indeed communism at its best is similar to the Buddhist Sangha, promoting a simple, sharing, harmonious lifestyle. In the capitalist world a recent happening is the emergence of the Social Venture Network, who were recently in Siam to share their vision with Siamese business-people. Their goal is to make capitalism moral and to use the system to create social justice and greater opportunity for the community at large, not just a select few. Thus a meeting was hosted by SEM and SPDI here in Bangkok to foster the dialog between European and North American business-people, and the Siamese business community along with some of the alternative NGO's. The hope is that Asian business will become partners in this Social Venture Network and try to do business in a way that respects people and natural resource.

Finally the SNP through TICD has been linked with the International Network of Engaged Buddhists since its inception twelve years ago. *Seeds of Peace* has been the voice of INEB and prominently featured the activities and ideas of INEB in these pages. The ashram was the base for INEB for many years.

INEB will always be with us in spirit and we will remain strongly connected. However after the annual INEB meeting in March INEB is maturing and will be publishing its own journal. This is the last issue of *Seeds of Peace* in which INEB will have a featured presence. *Seeds of Peace* gives its best wishes for the success of INEB's new journal.

December 1998 is not only the 30th anniversary of the Santirakoses Nagapradipa foundation, and the 13th of the ashram, but it is the 30th of the demise of Thomas Merton here in Siam. We will be commemorating that great loss at the ashram on 13-14 December.

Most importantly we are preparing to celebrate the birth centenary of one of the greatest leaders in Siamese history, Mr. Pridi Banomyong. From now until the year 2000 all of our periodicals will be telling about the life and mission of this great senior statesman. He is the father of democracy in Siam and the highest source of inspiration for the many activities we are engaged in today.

CAMBODIA: A Crisis Deeper Than the Coup

The July 1997 coup helped the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) to gather around it a group of people who were willing to genuinely cooperate with them. These partners were a group of deserters from the Royalist FUNCINPEC. The July 1998 elections have reversed the process and brought the CPP's most bitter opponents as its only possible partners. Thus the Cambodian electorate has created the deepest crisis of authority and legitimization within the Cambodian political system since the collapse of the Pol Pot regime. Now, months have passed since the elections, attempts at the formation of a coalition have failed. Even if some form of a coalition between these bitter opponents may resolve the immediate constitutional crisis relating to the formation of a government, the political crisis will continue. No political observer is sure what type of a regime will arise in Phnom Penh.

Just at this moment, the debate is about the authenticity of the election results. The FUNCINPEC and the Sam Rainsy Party (SRP) have demanded a fresh recount of votes in 800 communes. The Cambodian election law provides for investigations into alleged irregularities by any party. However, the National Election Committee has failed to carry out this function. One of the NEC members, Ms. Kassie Neou, has made the following admission of this failure in the Cambodia daily: "The real end is the successful transfer of power to the new government, at

which time all key players must be satisfied. This means that there is still work to be done for the 1998 elections, among other things - recounts based on specific complaints and a full reconciliation of used and unused ballot papers. Reasonable measures such as these will do much to reassure the population and the parties that they have been fairly treated. This will result in a smooth transition to the new government."

The decisive factor during the month after the elections has been the intervention of the people themselves. It began first as an overnight sit-in in front of the NEC to protect the ballot boxes awaiting a recount. Nearly the throwing of a grenade into the crowd gathered for the protest did not deter two weeks of such protests. A Japanese person who was there to do an interview was killed by the grenade attack. Instead of being intimidated, the Cambodian people began to take to the street. An Asian Human Rights Commission observer describes an early protest gathering thus: "When the demonstration started at seven o'clock, there were only about 1,000 people participating. But within the next hour more people kept joining. After about two hours the number of participants rose to more than 10,000 for the meeting at the stadium. Sam Rainsy came at eight o'clock, and more vehicles came along full of people. The military checkpoints once stopped the people coming from Kompong Speu, Kandal, and Kompong Cham, and military personnel asked the people to turn back. But

later they allowed the people to enter the city."

"There were representatives from the United Nations, human rights workers, embassy people, the Red Cross and about 100 monks. Finally, Sam Rainsy and FUNCINPEC leaders gave their speeches (Prince Norodom Ranariddh did not participate). The rally was due to head to the Interior Ministry where the NEC is located and to the SRP headquarters. But they could not go beyond the stadium because the police were alert at the Independence Monument to stop the rally. Sam Rainsy said that since we didn't want any more trouble we would only run the rally through the roads around the stadium. On the way more people joined the demonstration, and finally there were more than 15,000 people. The rally finished at 10 a.m."

While the formation of a government is a way to legitimize authority and a particular kind of social control, an election can either become a means to legitimize authority or an occasion to destabilize such authority. The net result of the Cambodian elections is the latter.



A Buddhist monk protester is shot in a police crackdown on 9 September

TIBET: The First Freedom Fighters

Tibetan women - and especially nuns - are key activists in a unique freedom struggle which follows the Buddhist principles of non-violence and compassion. Although nuns appear to be spearheading the pro-independence movement, laywomen have also played, and continue to play, an important role.

While women were very active in the resistance movement before 1959, it was in the tense month of March that women visibly organised political action as a distinct group. In the aftermath of the March 10th Uprising, an estimated 3,000 women met publicly at Drebu Lingka, the ground below the Potala Palace, on 12 March 1959. Dolma, the journal of the Tibetan Women's Association, described this historic gathering as the day "that the women of Tibet revolted against the illegal and forcible occupation of their country by the People's Republic of China" (*Tibetan Women's Uprising Day*, Dolma, Summer 1991). Lobsang Choney, a nun who was present at the Women's Uprising, said that more than just the wives of high Tibetan officials came out: "What happened during the Lhasa Uprising was a spontaneous movement of ordinary women including nuns." (*Philippa Russell & Sonam Lhamo Singeri, The Tibetan Women's Uprising, 1992; p.51*) Tibetan women gathered once again at Drebu Lingka on 18 March, this time for an even larger show of solidarity, with at least 5,000 women participating. The following morning the Chinese crackdown began.

One of the outstanding leaders of the resistance was the daring Pamo Kusang. Having played a traditional role as a minor official's wife before the Uprising, she inspired many women with her both her bold words and determined appearance. She was immediately imprisoned, but even within the prison walls Pamo Kusang managed to assert her convictions. She formed the organisation Thu wang Ku along with other prisoners, and in 1970 they began an anti-Chinese demonstration. Pamo was later executed, and became a legendary martyr for Tibetans (*Carol Devine, Determination: Tibetan Women and the Struggle for an Independent Tibet, 1993; p.21*).

Tibetans also revere nuns for their leadership in uprisings. Chong-kso Jetsun-ma Rinpoche is well-known for her religious accomplishments and her "courage as a freedom fighter." She was killed for opposing Chinese rule in 1959 (*Devine; p.21*). In a second large-scale rebellion in 1969, a nun from Nyemu County emerged as a freedom fighter. Thinley Chodon (also known as Nyemu Ani) was said to have killed many Chinese through the vast guerrilla movement she set up. She was executed in 1969. Soon afterwards the Chinese stepped up their persecution of nuns and the destruction of nunneries (Hanna Havnevik, *The Role of Nuns in Contemporary Tibet, 1990; p.5*).

Nuns in the Resistance

The role of the nun in Tibetan society has changed dramatically

during the 40 years of Chinese occupation. Their unique position enables them to fight for Tibet's freedom. Knowing they may be arrested and tortured during their protests, and knowing they do not have children who would suffer as a result of their imprisonment or death, they are willing to be leaders in the independence movement (*Devine; p.18*).

Most of the demonstrations in Lhasa are initiated by nuns although they face automatic arrest. Nuns took part in 15 of some 25 incidents reported between September 1987 and September 1989, and almost entirely staged 13 of them (*Tibet Information Network, TIN News Update, 21/02/92*). According to a TIN report in July 1993, in the previous six years 49 of the 120 known pro-independence protests in Lhasa (40%) had been led by nuns (*TIN News Compilation 1992-1993, 1993; p.44*).

Between 1980 and 1987, nunneries and monasteries grew significantly in number and size. Since then, however, the Chinese crackdown on resistance to the occupation has become increasingly centred on nunneries. Nuns are seen as powerful political enemies by the Chinese authorities, who have tried to weaken the nunneries and their spiritual teaching by imposing strict rules, planting informers and "workers", devising schemes of political re-education and expelling nuns. Work teams of Chinese officials have been holding regular indoctrination sessions and refusing to allow nuns convicted of political offences to return to their worship

(*TIN News Update*, 21/02/92).

Multiple arrests of nuns are recorded each year, particularly during religious festivals, and seemingly minor acts of non-violent protest are met with the "iron fist"

In October 1993, 14 nuns from Gari Nunnery received sentences of up to seven years for allegedly being involved in demonstrations the previous year. Another 14 nuns in Lhasa's notorious Drapchi Prison had their sentences doubled or tripled because each sang a pro-independence song in their prison cell in June 1993. The 14, including one woman whose sentence was increased from nine to 17 years, were serving terms of "reform through labour". Such reports run contrary to recent statements by the Chinese authorities about the leniency with which Tibetan prisoners are treated (*TIN News Update*, 20/02/94).

Latest figures show that 77% (362) of political prisoners in Tibet are clergy, of whom just over 30% (113) are nuns. Nearly a third (27%) of the 467 political prisoners in Tibet are women (*TIN News Update*, 24/09/93). These prisoners include three 15-year old girls, all novice nuns, who were taken after arrest to Gutsa Detention Centre. There has been no news of their whereabouts since (*TIN News Compilation 1992-1993*, 1993; pp.47-49).

Although nuns appear to be the most active female dissidents, it is believed that laywomen take part in protests more often than gets reported. Due to the different security structures surrounding laypeople, there is far less material on them. During the demonstrations of 1987, laywomen played a major role, being the first to venture forward from the crowd to damage property or

throw stones at the police (*TIN News Update*, 17/11/89). Several nuns have also testified that lay people helped them during demonstrations in Lhasa.

Torture and Ill-treatment of Women

First- and second-hand reports by Tibetan women reveal that torture is a common response to non-violent protests. Human rights groups and the press, both national and international, also provide strikingly consistent accounts of political actions by Tibetan nuns and laywomen, and the subsequent punishments meted out to them (*Devine*; p.47).

Sexual assault is a particular form of torture used to punish, humiliate and coerce women. Torturers force electric batons into Tibetan women's mouths or vaginas, set dogs on them, strip them naked before interrogation and beat them with clubs (*Women in the Front Line: Human Rights Violations Against Women*, Amnesty International, 1991; p.30). Although women are the main targets of severe sexual abuse, there have been an increasing number of reports of men who have been sexually assaulted.

The Tibetan Women's Association in Dharamsala collects the testimonies of women who have been tortured for taking part in demonstrations. Statements from these women confirm the abuses described by human rights groups. They also report the laceration of nipples - sexual torture that has not been documented by other human rights organisations, but that was reported in an article which appeared in *The Independent* in February 1994. Dawa Hansum, a nun who is still in Gutsa, one of Tibet's most notorious prisons, after taking part in a 1989 pro-independence demon-

stration, had one of her nipples severed with scissors. The TWA also reports rape, drugging and other abuses of Tibetan women by Chinese army personnel (*Devine*; p.53). Amnesty International has no reports of rape of Tibetan women by guards, but a report published in May 1992 described the testimony of a Buddhist nun from Shungsep who was "raped with electric cattle prods" (*China: Repression in Tibet, 1987-1992*; p.41).

In Drapchi, where 10% of the 300 or more prisoners are women, Prison Governor Yin Xingwen claims "women prisoners are given special care." Reports of recent beatings of women prisoners, however, refute his claims (*Devine*; p.66). The revelations of four nuns, who escaped to India in February 1994 to tell of tortures and beatings in Chinese prisons in Tibet, also cast doubt on China's willingness to cease its human rights abuses (*The Independent*, 12/02/94). Two of the nuns, Ngawang Kyizom, 22, and Tenzin Choekyi, 24, said they were shocked repeatedly with an electric cattle prod applied to their breasts, thighs and tongues. During interrogation, Choekyi also had her thumbs tied diagonally behind her back in a torture known as the "flying aeroplane", and was suspended from the ceiling and beaten.

Status of Tibetan Women

There are many conflicting images of the status of women in Tibetan society. While earlier accounts claim Tibetan women had equal rights with men and enjoyed a higher status than women in neighbouring countries like India and Burma, recent feminist thought suggests they were relegated to an inferior position in society. To discover

which is true, we have to understand Tibetan society as a whole and look at the role of women in the pro-independence movement.

Namgyal Phal, who leads the Tibetan Women's Association in Zurich, Switzerland, believes Tibetan women have equal rights with men. In contrast Yangdol Panglung, who grew up in Switzerland and now lives in the United States, believes the women who say "there is no discrimination between men and women in Tibet" enjoy a status where either religion or aristocracy cover their gender. Panglung, however, points out that women's struggles

in Tibet are part of a nationalist movement, not a women's liberation movement (*Devine; p.25*).

Although views on the status and roles of Tibetan women vary enormously, there is a common thread: that Tibetan women suffer immeasurably under Chinese rule. Despite this, they are still unwilling to let the Chinese authorities treat Tibet as part of the Chinese "motherland".

All attempts to discuss Tibet are bedevilled by the Chinese redefinition of the country's borders since 1949. The Australia Tibet Council uses the term Tibet to refer to the three original prov-

inces of U'Tsang, Kham and Amdo (sometimes called Greater Tibet). When the Chinese refer to Tibet they invariably mean the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) which includes only one province, U'Tsang (the TAR was formally inaugurated in 1965). In 1949 the other two provinces, Amdo and Kham, were renamed by the Chinese as parts of China proper and became the province of Qinghai and parts of Sichuan, Gansu and Yunnan provinces.

This information was compiled by the Free Tibet Campaign, 1998, 1 Rosoman Place, London

THAILAND: Spiritual Materialism Strikes Again

A unique phenomenon is sweeping Thailand in the form of one Luang Ta Maha Bua, the abbot of wat Pa Baan Tad. He is known as the monk with the Midas touch and his goal is for the Thai people to save themselves from the present economic crisis by giving all of their gold to him! Of course he will subsequently turn it over to the Bank of Thailand in front of the TV cameras and reporters, but at least some Thai activists and intellectuals are questioning this spiritual carnival led by Maha Bua, a self-professed arhat (saint) who has already announced he will enter nirvana as soon as his Thai help Thai campaign is over.

Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa is a leading Thai social critic and the publisher of *Pacaryasara*, an alternative periodical that stresses holistic thinking and a struggle against consumerism. He recently commented in *Pacaryasara* that

donating money in this way would do little good since the culture of exploitation and oppression is deeply rooted in the socio-economic structures of Thai society. "If Thais really want to help Thais, they ought to realize that the various crises in our society today have their roots in the greed, anger and delusions of the ruling elite who have become mental slaves to the West. We are now giving up our national sovereignty to the IMF. This is neo-imperialism." Sulak is urging his fellow Siamese to declare war on greed and its many manifestations, including the spiritual materialism, which is eroding the moral and educational leadership of the monks and the temple in Thai culture.

Here are some impressions of the recent gold-gathering meeting held by Maha Bua at; of all places, the central branch of the Siam Commercial Bank.

These observations appeared in the *The Nation* in an article written by the noted socially aware journalist, Pravit Rojanaphruk.

Amplified by a microphone the man's strong voice belies his 85 years. It echoes around the hall demanding instant respect. And gold. Baht will do nicely too. Or dollars, yen, pounds sterling. Hand over your gold he commands. There was a quality of instant gratification to the whole event-rather like a person satisfying his hunger at a fast food restaurant instead of cooking a proper meal at home. Sermon over and donations collected a middle-aged woman bowing deeply called to Maha Bua. "Your reverence I shall be visiting your temple soon to pay my respects to you." Glancing around at the small crowd gathered around and then at the woman, Maha Bua nodded and said, "just don't forget to bring your gold".

Merit for Sale

Buddhist preacher Phra Payom Kalayano, Buddhist scholar Sathianpong Wannapruerk and social critic Sulak Sivaraksa agree that the Dhammakaya school of Buddhism is unorthodox.

The Dhammakaya temple's cleric and lay officials were not immediately available for comment.

Phra Payom of Nonthaburi's Suan Kaew temple said at a Buddhist gathering at Chiang Mai's Sri Soda temple that Dhammakaya temple led its followers to believe that it was imperative for Buddhists to donate the amount specified by the temple so they could fulfil all of their wishes.

This tenet was flawed, Payom argued. Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sanan Kachornprasart completed his tour of alms-giving at a total of 10 temples nationwide, and he still faced a scandal in which his aide and driver was allegedly involved in bribe taking from unsuspecting

bureaucrats.

Payom alleged that the temple exacted such high donations from its followers it caused domestic disputes, and cited the case of a woman who donated money that had been budgeted for her child's tuition and temple fees.

He said the temple's call for contributions came at an unsuitable time, when the national economy is struggling.

Sathianpong agrees. He attacked the temple's teachings as an anathema to mainstream Buddhism, in that it asserted that the Buddha's teachings were lost five centuries after his passing away while Luang Phor Sod, the self-proclaimed new prophet, on whose dogma the temple bases its preaching, claimed he had rediscovered the Buddha's teachings.

He said he believed the temple's teachings were dangerous and an ugly direct sale, that plays on human greed in order to contribute to the false belief that merit

can be bought.

Sathianpong said Buddhist followers were pestered into contributing greater sums and were left with the feeling of being insecure if they refused.

Sulak agrees. He claimed the temple teaches its followers greed, wrath and delusion, an extreme far cry from Buddhist principles.

The temple, he alleged, had prepared and groomed, in a subtle way, its followers to be capitalistic, consumerist and materialist.

Sulak said the Sangha Supreme Council, the Buddhist governing body, would do Buddhism a service to have the temple's assets audited.

Sulak, commenting on the temple's monastic life, said: "Holy monks now have everything in common with the laity, except that the former have vows of celibacy and no meals after lunch."

The Nation,
Sunday, November 29, 1998

BURMA:

Anniversaries and other dates: a summer of discontent in Burma

July and August of 1998 brought forward several key calendar dates that in one way or another heightened the struggle between the proponents of democracy and the military rulers of Burma. These included July 7 (thirty-sixth anniversary of the 1962 massacre of students and destruction of the Students Union building at Rangoon University);

July 19 (Martyrs' Day) and August 8 (tenth anniversary of the great 1988 uprising). Other critical dates were associated with university examinations (beginning on August 18) and the confrontational insistence by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi that the government convene Parliament by August 21 on the basis of the 1990 national election. From any per-

spective, these months looked heavy with potential for civil protest and disorder - something hard-line democracy supporters were not averse to seeing take place. Many must have hoped that, perhaps by some miracle, one of these dates might have been able to precipitate a political convulsion sufficiently powerful to persuade the military junta to

decamp. Certainly there were many well wishers urging on the prospect from the sidelines, so to speak. Even the Philippine Foreign Minister, Domingo Siazon, went so far as to urge the Burmese to stage a "bloodless revolution" like the one in 1986 which discharged the Marcos regime in Manila.¹

Secretive Burma itself generated much white noise, making it difficult to assess just how significant these calendar dates were to citizens. Beyond Burma, on the other hand, the media engaged in a spate of predictions about an imminent, possibly violent clash between the military junta and the people, the end of the dictatorship and the triumph of democracy. None of this was to be. It was under these circumstances that I went back to Burma in July 1998 to review the situation from a fresh perspective.

By way of method, I'll first comment on the current structure of the State Peace and Development Council (*SPDC or Naing Ngan Daw Aye Chan Thaya Yae*). Second, I address the issue of the well being of the National League for Democracy. Third, I offer some observations about the economy, the Achilles heel of the military junta and the singular area where a combination of internal and external pressures may succeed in forcing political change.

Turning to the first point, much has lately been made of at least three powerful cliques within the SPDC. There is speculation that at a moment of crisis or uncertainty, such as the death of Ne Win (the 87 year-old architect of military rule), these cliques will openly engage in a power struggle so intense it will fragment the *Tatmadaw* (armed forces). A resulting schism would

be the ruination of the junta. This is not likely to take place, for a number of reasons. A year ago I argued that the chain of command in the SPDC was a respected institution among the military. I further claimed that up to two million people receive immediate profit and security from SPDC rule, mostly families and friends of the 350,000 strong armed forces, and a sufficiently large enough sector of the general population to help keep the junta in power.² Nothing has transpired in the last few months to persuade me to change my mind. The Vice-Chairman of the SPDC, Gen. Maung Aye - a known hard-liner, opponent of Daw Suu Kyi and of outside interference of any kind in national affairs (even of ASEAN) - will succeed to the chairmanship and the Prime Minister's office when Senior General Than Shwe vacates that office. Although hardly popular with the public, Maung Aye is a 'soldier's soldier,' with the allegiance of the officers and ranks that really count - those with battle experience and with front line troops. On the other hand, dour-faced Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt, Secretary 1 of SPDC, is arguably more open to making political concessions and dealing with the outside world. As director of military intelligence, he presides as well over the Office of Strategic Studies (OSS), which appears to come closest to issuing policy statements on behalf of the junta, although no policy decision of magnitude can escape the ultimate hierarchical approval of Than Shwe and Maung Aye. Further, only these latter two can order the deployment of troops in any major sense of the word. At the risk of oversimplifying a very complex matter, I maintain that the *Tatmadaw* is still loyal to the

Commanding Officer, whoever he may be, and that more than anyone else, Maung Aye is the regime's man of the future.³

The SPDC's structure features a Council (*Kaung Si*) of the top five generals, the chiefs of services, and twelve regional commanders, for a total of nineteen. The regional commanders (major generals or brigadiers, many in their *ç*forties) have widespread localised authority in their zones, and outrank cabinet ministers when it comes to implementing policy that might affect them personally.⁴ The Cabinet (*Wungyi Aphwe*) has the usual ministries (presently thirty-one), but no policy decisions of note emanate from it. Further, no ministry or arm of the civil service is professionally administered, and all are mired in apathy, corruption and decay. Most importantly, despite 'five year economic plans', from a policy perspective, the State in fact lives only from day to day.⁵

The actual political parties mark a second feature of political life. Although ten are legally acknowledged, the only significant one is the National League for Democracy (NLD). This party still has offices in most parts of Burma, working out of visible though often dilapidated structures. The NLD's Secretary and leader, Daw Suu Kyi, retain widespread popularity. David Steinberg rightly notes that the government "is faced with a strong, vocal, eloquent, and attractive personality now protected by her international aura".⁶ If anything untoward were to happen to her, however, it is questionable whether this would bring people to the streets in riot or disorder, as it might have a year or two ago. Some I spoke to claimed her popularity is now mostly with

the poor, and that support for her in what might pass as an economically frustrated middle class has weakened. It is difficult to gauge this sort of thing if only because it is impossible for the public to register support for Daw Suu Kyi, given the climate of fear (*kyauk yung*) which pervades the entire society (including the armed forces). By consequence, Daw Suu Kyi is mostly accompanied by older supporters (e.g., Aung Shwe, Kyi Maung and Tin Oo). Most of the younger ones (e.g., U Win Htein) are in jail or forced exile.⁷ From time to time the junta approaches the NLD for discussions (e.g., 7, 18 August, 1998). The invitations always exclude Daw Suu Kyi, perhaps to provoke schism in NLD leadership. In turn, the NLD will not compromise on what it sees as the single, vital issue: the legitimacy of the 1990 elections.

This essay is based on the premise that despite a great deal of genuine affection for Daw Suu Kyi, there is not likely, in Burma, to be anything like the 1986 Philippine experience, or the outpouring of support seen in 1988-90. Present economic conditions are so much worse than they were ten years ago that most people have energy only to look out for themselves and their families. Zeal for democracy is not a high priority for those involved in such a survival economy. Further, memories of 1988, in which as many as four thousand people were killed and hundreds of thousands of lives ruined in one way or another, are too painful to permit a similar mass demonstration for democracy now. (It is not uncommonly heard that had the 1988 uprising lasted another week, it might well have prevailed - but a far greater number than a mere 3 - 4000 would have

been prepared to die. They were not so prepared, and they are not now.) Neither is there any suggestion that Daw Suu Kyi would herself wish such a scenario. Some kind of mass movement to unseat the military junta in the name of democracy is, then, not likely.

This does not infer that Daw Suu Kyi is losing significance in the politics of Burma. She remains the one really important beacon of hope for the country. Although the political future of Burma remains impossible to safely predict, it can be argued that Daw Suu Kyi is *the* pivotal figure who will yet determine the nation's political destiny. Her several Gandhian confrontations with the government throughout the summer of 1998, including gruelling days and nights confined to arrested automobiles, may be known only by word of mouth within Burma. Internationally, however, they send a strong message of fearlessness and courage. Whether global opprobrium is enough to bring change to Burma is a subject fraught with controversy. Indeed, some argue that should the regime feel truly threatened, it still retains the power to return to a policy of strict isolationism (and Burma the natural resources), to last indefinitely under meagre but survivable conditions. Meanwhile, the government and the NLD seem cornered, unable to agree on anything, particularly on matters of dialogue. Both appear to see political issues as still starkly black or white. If there is compromise in the air, as is periodically suggested, it is well hidden from the public. Daw Suu Kyi has many times noted that the military should enjoy an honourable place in the nation, even a role in state affairs. But clearly the junta is

fearful of revenge should any power sharing be agreed upon, even if promises to the contrary were forthcoming (which presently they are not).

A third feature that warrants review concerns Burma's plummeting economy, the most dangerous liability to long-term military rule. As one of the world's least developed countries with a per capita income of under \$300 per annum, Burma's brief attempt to introduce a free market economy since 1988 has in no way released it from its wretched economic performance. Certainly there is no expectation that a robust middle class might emerge from this opportunity, much less that any emerging 'business class' might try to compete for power with the junta. With twenty million - nearly half the population - living in poverty (though not starvation), the prospects for political trouble are distinct. Because there is no manufacturing or industrial base to speak of (insufficient and unreliable electrical power ensures this), the economic infrastructure relies largely on agriculture. Hence, an agrarian crisis is the single most dangerous spectre confronting the government. At the heart of the matter is the question of the price of rice. Although the government buys some rice at a reduced rate for its reserves, rice prices are not fixed. They will soar if there is any attempt to cap them. In the summer of 1998, the basic unit of purchase (one *pyi* or eight condensed milk tins) cost Kyats 120 for medium grade rice.⁸ This is enough for one person to live on for two or possibly three days. A family of three needs about K15,000 per month to get by with this grade of rice, a moderately balanced diet and normal household expenses. When this is com-

pared to what most people earn in salary (many peasants are not much involved with a money economy), the hardship of meeting those prices is evident. The highest salary for a civil servant is K2500 per month. Low-grade peons will earn only K800. School and university teachers are similarly neglected. This forces these individuals to depend on 'contributions' and corruption of one kind or another (e.g., 'donations' to schools) in order to survive. This completely skewed salary structure for state employees also means that the civil service has been essentially destroyed. For example, workers often put in only a brief office appearance before heading off on another job. Absurdly, a labourer actually makes a much better wage than most professionals do. A female labourer, for example, could earn K1500-2000 per week, enough for her to survive with one child for one week. An ordinary male labourer can expect double this amount.⁹ Should the price of rice accelerate by another K50 per pyi, hoarding and panic buying can be expected, and riots will not be far behind. With a reduced principle rice harvest (*moe saba*) a year ago because of flooding, it is assumed that there is not much largesse left over in the event of a similar problem this year. If this is so, then ironically, the weather may have its own role to play in the destiny of Burma. But although the junta appears closer than ever before to financial ruin, there are continuing and future sources of income that may prevent economic collapse. For example, anticipated revenue from the Yadana and Yetagun natural gas deposits alone are expected to bring in billions over the next two decades.¹⁰ There are as well Byzantine financial links

with China, Singapore and other friendly foreign nations.¹¹ Finally, profits from an ever-present narco-economy are a known, albeit dark, government resource. Notwithstanding these factors, however, if rice becomes scarce or unaffordable to the point where this is panic purchase and hoarding, there will be riots of magnitude with consequences that could be devastating to the SPDC.

In conclusion, I have argued that a number of anniversaries and dates symbolic of challenge to Burma's political status quo during the summer of 1998 received widespread attention internationally, but were not much acknowledged in Burma itself. Doubtless this is indicative of the generally cowed nature of society and of a people who haven't the emotional resources to rally behind something as seemingly nebulous as democracy. Daw Suu Kyi herself acknowledges these periodic states of inertia.¹² For whatever reasons, although the junta claims it is just a caretaker government, is not likely to move over any time soon. If there is to be a completely new polity, then

one can only imagine the challenge of rebuilding a shattered civil service and of holding the thin veneer of an ethnically fragmented union together. Not a single economist whom I consulted thought that a totally fresh government could last more than a few months, even with massive international financial and moral support. The Tatmadaw has effectively destroyed the normal infrastructure of polity and society. Most other vital ingredients of a stable civilisation - economic integrity, ethnic harmony, jurisprudence, even religious life - have been so seriously compromised by the long-term brutish conditions that, as institutions, they too need to be rebuilt. At this stage, we can best lay our hopes in some kind of compromise between the military and the NLD. It is not too late. But if the agrarian crisis that some predict becomes a reality, who knows what political fate might await Burma?

Bruce Matthews

(foot-notes may be obtained via e-mail to atc@bkk.a-net.net.th)

Obituary:

Daw Tint Tint Than

She was born on the 9th of August 1922.

A devout Christian laywoman, Daw Tint Tint Than received her Arts degree and graduate degree in Law from the University of Rangoon. She was recruited to become one of the earliest batches of Lady officers in the Defense Forces of Independent Burma. In 1975 she was appointed Deputy Director of Paper and Chemicals corporation in the Ministry of Heavy Industry. In 1983 she came to Thailand to serve the Asian Cultural Forum on Development and then the Slum Childcare Foundation under the royal patronage of HRH Princess Galyani. She returned to Yangon in January 1997.

She passed away in her homeland after a long treatment for Parkinson's disease on October 4th, 1998.

SRI LANKA:

Desperate for Peace after 15 Years of War

In October 1998, a single battle in Sri Lanka's north claimed 2,000 lives within three days, adding the number of dead to more than 60,000 people in the last 15 years. Hardly a day passes in this island without victims of the war between the Government army and rebels of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). More than one million people have been displaced internally with another half million going into exile abroad. Besides the tragic loss of precious human lives, the social and economic damage is immense. According to a study on the cost of the war, undertaken by the Marga Institute in Galle, the total losses in 1996 amounted to 165 billion Rs (app. 2.8 billion US-\$) or 21.3 percent of GDP, and was more than three times the direct budgetary expenditure on defense. The study assumes that without war, the average household incomes would have been higher by 40 percent. Government expenditures on health, education and roads could have been at least one third higher (see Sama Yamaya, Newsletter of the National Peace Council, February 1998 or <http://www.peace-srilanka.org>).

15 years after the 'Black July 1983', when thousands of Tamils died in countrywide pogroms, the majority of the people of Sri Lanka is tired of the endless bloody conflict. This shows clearly the result of an opinion poll published in October 1998. The Sinhalese majority (74% of Sri Lanka's 18 million people) who dominates the government and who mainly lives outside the war zones in the

North and Northeast, overwhelmingly rejected military solution as the only route to long-lasting peace in the island. More than 77 percent of the 2,000 heads of household surveyed by researchers from Colombo University polled a definite "No" to the question, "do you think a military solution can solve the problem." 65 percent favor non-military options like a political solution, policies devoted to ensuring equality, amity and harmony and confidence building.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga won the elections in August 1994 mainly, because she promised peace through peaceful means. Soon after taking office, she initiated peace talks with the LTTE in 1995. But when they failed after one round, President Kumaratunga returned to the old 'war for peace' strategy of ushering tough military campaigns in order to force the LTTE to the negotiating table on the government's terms. The so called Third Eelam War started. A military solution is also favored by the opposition United National Party (UNP) on even harsher terms. The Government's earlier offer of more political and administrative autonomy in Tamil-dominated areas, is rejected by the LTTE as well as the UNP. The 118,000 strong army, which has grown tenfold since 1983, has also been reluctant to support the Government plans.

Pathways to Peace

The political stalemate and the intense heavy losses of the war have generated a number of in-

itiatives for a peaceful solution of the conflict. In September 1998, a group of 21 NGOs, religious organizations and business people, a.o. The Inter-Religious Peace Foundation, The Center for Society and Religion, The Dharmavedi Institute, The National Peace Council of Sri Lanka, the Tamil Youth Cultural Organization, sent an Urgent Appeal to President Kumaratunga and the UNP Opposition Leader, Ranil Wickremesinghe. The group urges them to share responsibility and credit for resolving the national crisis, to take the conflict out of the arena of party electoral politics, and place a joint minimum consensus for a peaceful solution (see declaration). One of the initiators of the appeal, outspoken Catholic priest and former director of the Centre for Society and Religion, Fr. Tissa Balasuriya OMI, explains the reasons for this appeal: "The war is going on for so long. There are no signs for an end. Fact is that two major political parties are against each other and only are interested in keeping or getting the power. What Government proposes, the opposition opposes. A whole generation is badly brought up, affected by the ongoing war."

On 4 January 1998, more than 1,700 participants gathered for the National Peace Delegates Convention in Colombo. This convention was initiated by the National Peace Council of Sri Lanka (NPC), and brought together people from all walks of life and ethnic groups. The delegates agreed that the only way of ending the war is through

a negotiated solution. According to their resolution it is necessary to bring all parties including the LTTE in national dialogue and to achieve an "honorable and just settlement". But such a settlement, so the delegates, requires the eradication of structures that generated the conflict through a systematic democratization of the state and society. The civil war is according to the resolution "a result of a majority-rule state structure which has given rise to a demand for self-determination by the Tamil people." The convention noted that a constitutional reform process is needed, "whereby all citizens ... and their respective political representatives would articulate a common vision for the country through a democratic process of consultation and reconciliation."

Various religious grassroots organizations also try to overcome the vicious circle of violence. They stress that the basic teachings of all religions support a non-violent way of conflict resolution. One of the ways to implement these teachings is through peace education on various levels. E.g. the Karuna Center for Peacebuilding, U.S.A., and the Dharmavedi Institute will conduct various training in conflict resolution in February 1999 for Monks, Nuns and NGO workers. These workshops will focus on how the Buddhist teachings can be applied to the current conditions in the country. They reflect on social responsibility and engaged Buddhism for monks and nuns to build a pathway to peace through the teachings of the Buddha. Similar workshops are conducted by the NPC, Sarvodaya Shramadana, the Center for Society and Religion, and others. A common belief of the mentioned organizations is that a true turn

away from a culture of violence can only come from the grassroots level, e.g. when villagers early 1998 resisted attempts of the LTTE to close schools for combat training of young students over the age of 13. As A.T. Ariyaratne, President of Sarvodaya Shramadana, underlined in his acceptance speech for the Gandhi Peace Prize 1996: "We recognize that the resolution of our war cannot be left to either the politicians or the military commanders alone. Making peace calls for a realistic assessment of ground realities. Increasing the awareness of people at the grassroots and generating in them a sympathetic feeling for the sufferings of others is one part of changing those ground realities. With its presence in nearly half of Sri Lanka's village communities, Sarvodaya has taken the initiative in promoting Sinhala-Tamil-Muslim village exchange programs, whereby youth from the different communities engage in constructive activities... Multi-ethnic and multi-religious peace marches and peace meditations in which hundreds of thousands of people have participated, conflict resolution training for Buddhist clergy and Tamil and Muslim community leaders, and joining in the peace activities of other organizations are some of the other ways in which Sarvodaya has tried to promote people-based peacemaking."

All these grassroots organizations are determined not to give religious chauvinism any chance in this country. They believe in what Raja Dharmapala from the Dharmavedi Institute calls the 'Garden Concept': "Sri Lanka is a multi-religious and multi-ethnic society. Like a beautiful garden which consists of various plants and trees, flowers, etc. That's why we should consider the cultural

and religious diversity in Sri Lanka as beauty. We should understand that the Tamils, Muslims, Christians are human beings with an old and a wonderful rich culture." It is up to these cultures and religions with their age-old spiritual and social values, to inspire a more just and humane solution to this crisis. This depends on leaders who are "prophetic, even at the cost of being rejected by one's own people", as NPC's Media director, Jehan Pereira, notes. But it is the only way to avoid that another generation in Sri Lanka will grow up in violence and desperation.

Martin H. Petrich is Executive Secretary and one of the Coordinators of the International INEB Conference in Sri Lanka

An Urgent Appeal

"Recently, we celebrated 50 years of our independence. No one can deny that all these years, since 1948, have been marred by bitter political rivalry (electoral, to be precise), of the main political parties - the UNP and the SLFP and their allies. The principal issue of this incessant rivalry is none other than the national ethnic question and consequent power sharing between the Center and the Districts, the Provinces and the Regions.

People are well aware that this senseless and harmful rivalry has not been on matters of principles, or on matters related to serving the people and the country. On the contrary, each party has opposed when out of power what it has proposed when in power. This has impeded the implementation of any reasonable solution to this issue in 1956, 1958, the 1960s, 1972, 1983 and 1987...

up to now. This has only led to the worsening of the situation, resulting in greater suffering and widespread violence, and to an ongoing civil war that has lasted for over 15 years.

We will not hesitate to state here that the two main parties that have governed this country since independence have miserably failed to come to an agreement on this burning national issue. This failure, while being the principal cause of this continuing war since 1983, costing over 50,000 precious lives on both sides, has also uprooted from their homesteads over a million people and made them refugees in Sri Lanka and exiles abroad.

Furthermore, the depletion of our financial resources - to the tune of over one third of our national economy; the ever increasing indebtedness of our country; the destruction caused to the environment; creating distrust and animosity among communities and promoting the cult of violence and the violation of human rights must be seen as direct consequences of this failure on the part of our political leaders to arrive at a consensus to resolve the crisis. What is even more serious is that this war situation is today assuming such frightful proportions that it may soon lead to a mass recruitment of school leaders into the security forces to continue to fight this deadly war. People are aware that this war is not being fought on their behalf. It is indeed a crying shame to find Sri Lanka listed among those countries where violence and crime have assumed unmanageable proportions. These reflections of the international community are further confirmed when we realize how age-old spiritual and social values that guided our lives have been thrown overboard and

how violence is being resorted to in resolving social conflicts.

It is of utmost importance that this national question be resolved with wisdom, justice and the wide consensus of our political leadership since people's inalienable rights and sense of security are at stake and these need to be guaranteed with justice to all. We cannot hope to achieve peace without justice, because peace is the fruit of justice.

Any attempt to solve the national problem through the electoral process will be to load people with an additional burden. Besides, it will only serve to divide our people even further. Our history provides numerous examples that the electoral process has not been the most appropriate means to solve problems of this nature qualitatively. Our firm conviction is that serious consultation between the two main parties is vital if this national crisis is to arrive at a reasonable and acceptable solution. In the event of a consensus being reached, no one should grudge the parties to the dialogue from sharing the credit for their efforts.

While this requires an approach of mutual respect, understanding, dialogue and consensus seeking among the leadership of the two main parties, the whole

process can serve as a striking example of conflict resolution and have a significant impact on all other political groups.

We firmly believe that our cultures and religions can inspire a more just and humane solution to the present crisis. There are methods of wise conflict resolution based on the search for the common good (and not of party electoral victory). The international society gives us ample examples of such approaches. We wish to state categorically that any attempt to restore peace through armed confrontation is not only against the teachings of the religions, but also not the most constructive way to resolve the national crisis.

We, therefore, earnestly urge President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunge and The Honourable Ranil Wickremesinghe, Leader of the Opposition and their two political parties and alliances

- to come to an agreement on sharing responsibility and credit for resolving the national crisis,
- to take it out of the arena of party electoral politics,
- and we firmly urge you to place before the country and the world your joint minimum consensus for a peaceful solution, with justice to all, of this burning problem.

Recommended Reading

- 1) *Traditional Studies Journal* : Vol 3 Issue 2, The Importance of Witnessing : Thailand's Indigenous People Struggle to Maintain Their Way of Life.
- 2) *Tricycle* : Winter 1998. USA; stressing on Thai Buddhist forest tradition.
- 3) *Impact* : Asian Magazine for Human Transformation.
- 4) *International Federation of Human Rights Leagues* : November 1996 : Burma, Total and Human Rights : dissection of a project.
- 5) *Burmanie, le directeur du pavot* : by Francis Christophe (Editions Philippe Picquier) Paris 1998.
- 6) *Buddhism Today* (formerly known as *Metta*) Vol 1 No 3 November 1998 by the Buddhist Federation of Australia.
- 7) *Global Healing* : essays and interviews on structural violence, social development and spiritual transformation by Sulak Sivaraksa, US\$15 (paper back) Email : Sop@ffc.inet.co.th

INEB Update

Executive Committee Meeting in Bangkok

From 24-26 September 1998, members of the INEB Executive Committee (EC) held their annual meeting in Bangkok. The EC, which is the decision making body of INEB and which is elected every two years, evaluated the past activities of the network and discussed the future direction of INEB. It was remarked that the network has grown continuously since its beginning ten years ago in 1989 but it was stressed, that INEB has to become more focused in its work despite the diversity of the members. Sub-networks and Programs like the Think Sangha, Ordained Sangha and the INEB Women Program are attempts to make the work of INEB more specific. An important step in this direction is also seen in the coming INEB Conference in Sri Lanka. It will be the first bigger international INEB gathering outside Thailand. The Conference theme "Towards a Culture of Non-violence" is expected to be a guideline for all kinds of future activities of INEB and it is planned that INEB will link closer to other organizations like the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR), et.al. The next EC meeting is scheduled for 6-8 March 1999 in Sri Lanka, when a new committee will be elected by representatives of the INEB affiliates.

Study Tour for Bangladeshi Bhikkhus in Thailand

In November 1998, senior Indigenous Bhikkhus from Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) came to Thailand in order to study the work of Phra Sekhiyadham-

ma, a Thai network of engaged Buddhist monks. The delegation visited the Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University, Bangkok, and different temples and development projects in North and Northeast Thailand. The study trip focused on three areas where Thai monks have played leading roles in innovative social work: 1) The Hak Meuang Nan Group in Nan province (North Thailand), which is particularly outstanding in community forestry, cultural preservation, and environmental preservation. 2) The Sangha Asa Pattana Group in Yasothorn province (Northeast of Thailand), which is strongest in herbal medicine, environmental preservation, and natural agriculture. 3) The Village Development Funds & Committees in Trat province (East of Thailand) in which local people are caring for many of their economic and social needs through their own pooling of resources. The committees are guided by a monk but much of the control is in the hands of women. This study trip has been coordinated between various INEB affiliates, the Buddhist Peace Fellowship Bangladesh (BPF) and the Thai Inter-Religious Commission on Development (TICD). BPF in the USA was one of the main financial sponsors. Objective of this visit was to reflect on the situation in the CHT, consider possible responses to the unfolding situation there, and begin to develop collective response strategies. Main coordinator, Ven. Santikaro Bhikkhu from Suan Mokkh, is convinced that the observations, analysis, and plans of this group will provide both direction for the

concerned Buddhists of the CHT and a framework through which outside friends can show their support. Further training programs for monks from the CHT are planned.

If you like to sponsor the follow-up projects or if you like to have further information, please contact Ven. Santikaro Bhikkhu, e-mail: santikaro@suanmokkh.org. Any donation is highly appreciated. Checks can be sent to the INEB Secretariat.

100 Heroines Award for Stella Tamang

Stella Tamang, INEB Nepal, has been selected as one of 100 Heroines honored for her courageous work for women's rights. This "100 Heroines" Award recognizes and celebrates outstanding contributions from women toward achieving equality for women. The 100 Heroines Project was initiated by a group of women in Rochester, New York, USA, in celebration of the 150th anniversary of the first women's rights convention held near Rochester in 1848. Several hundred women from all over the world were nominated for the Awards in recognition of their ongoing global efforts for equal rights and opportunities for women.

Peace Prize for Non-violence trainer George Lakey

The Sixth Annual International Conference on Conflict Resolution, meeting in St. Petersburg, Russia, gave George Lakey, 60, its highest recognition during its May 1998 meetings. The Ashley Montague International Peace Award is given "in

honor of dedicated and distinguished service toward the advancement of an international culture of peace." After years of organizing in the civil rights and peace movement, George Lakey served on the faculty of the Martin Luther King School of Social Change from 1965-70. Since then he has led over 1,000 social change workshops on five continents. Lakey has taught in Thailand almost every year since 1989, working with INEB, the Wongsanit Ashram, and Spirit in Education Movement (SEM). He taught pro-democracy students in a "jungle university" at the Thai-Burma border and trained Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka.

Court Hassles against former Conservationist monk, Prachak Pethsing

It is obvious that the Provincial Court in Korat has no interest in an early ending of Prachak's hearings. Prachak, who celebrated his 60th birthday on 15 November 1998, and his lawyer have been several times turned away by the court in Nakhon Ratchasima (Khorat), after the hearings had been cancelled in the last minute. Each trip to the hearing causes expenses of 6,000 ThB (app. 160 US-\$) for Prachak. These include travel, lawyer fee, witnesses, etc.

Prachak has still to encounter two charges. According to Prachak's lawyer, Vinit Lamlheua of Viruch & Associates Law Office, Bangkok, Prachak has to face charges for "Resisting the order of the Government official, bringing vehicles in and out of the national park without permission and cutting trees in the national park". The hearings started on 1 June 1998. In a conversation between Thailand's Minister for Interior, Maj.Gen. Sanan Katchornprasart, and Sulak Sivaraksa,

the Minister showed sympathy for Prachak's case and promised help.

Kindly we ask you for your help! What you can do is 1) send a letter to:

Interior Minister, His Excellency Maj.Gen. Sanan Katchornprasart, Ministry of the Interior, Atsadang Road, Ted Tanakarn, Bangkok 10200, THAILAND. Make known your solidarity with Prachak and ask the Minister to help Prachak Pethsing that all charges against him will be dropped. 2) Please send a letter of solidarity to Prachak and support him through your donation.

INEB Conference Invitation

Date of Conference: 1-5 March 1999

Venue: Buddhist Center near Colombo

Program: Panel-discussions on 'Buddhism and Non-violence', "Women under armed conflict"; workshops conducted by non-violence trainers, daily meditation, country and project presentations, etc.

Conference Costs (include fee, local transportation, simple board and accommodation):

US-\$ 300 (for participants from prosperous countries)

US-\$ 195 (discount after request)

US-\$ 15 (for participants from poor countries)

Objective:

- to present ways of non-violent conflict resolution by experienced facilitators.
- to provide an opportunity for Buddhist grassroots workers from different cultures and traditions to exchange information about their situation,

problems and needs.

- to offer a chance for participants to share their experiences both with their practices and their activities.
- to give the participants the possibility to learn through this exchange from each other's strengths and weaknesses and to see how they can support each other in the future.
- to help establishing links among the participants and involved organizations in order to strengthen their activities.
- to enable INEB to plan its directions and programs for its future activities.

Further Activities:

20-28 February: Seminar-cum-Exposure trip for Buddhist nuns. 26-28 February: Non-violence training workshop for participants from Asia by Dr. Paula Green (Karuna Centre for Peacebuilding) and Stella Tamang (INEB Nepal), et.al.

28 February: Think Sangha Meeting.

6-8 March 1998: Assembly of the INEB Affiliate Representatives. Discussion and Plans of future activities; election of new Executive Committee.

For further information and participation please contact the INEB Secretariat.



Human rights defenders summit the International Assembly - Paris, December 1998.

Nuns in China

Chinese Buddhism is not very popular in the West. Although China is the origin for such famous schools as Zen (Chinese: Chan) and the Pure Land School, China's contemporary Dharma is cut off from the international buddhist community and despite reform and opening policy still remains in an arbitrary state of isolation. But things are going to change. Repression and terror of the so called Cultural Revolution could not eradicate the living Dharma. Up to this very day there is still the unbroken lineage of full nun ordination in China. After the persecution of the past, the reconnection with Buddhist tradition is now confronted with the challenges of a rapid changing society.

Black heaps of coal tarry the way to the "Temple of White Clouds" in Foxin, one of the largest coal mining towns of North China. In direct neighborhood is located the once biggest coal power plant of China, whose presence is by the all-penetrating coal dust as visible as by the high rate of lung-cancer in the town. The way leads through dark lanes with stringed up washing to an open square. Liturgical chants and the smell of burnt incense show the way to the new erected temple, a solid construction made of concrete. Above the main gate there are six black Chinese characters on yellow ground: Na Mo A Mi Tuo Fo - Worship to the Buddha Amitabha. A young novice shows us the way to the main hall and offers candied fruit and green tea. We are the first Western guests, and so there is large interest on both sides.

Hui Lian - The Wisdom of the Lotus

Five Nuns live here, among them two novices and the eighty year old abbess, who - heavy disabled - slowly enters the hall. A twinkling pair of eyes and the friendly smile of a toothless mouth indicate a life full of hardships, which nevertheless was obviously nurtured by optimism and faithful devotion. Hui Lian - The Wisdom of the Lotus belongs since early youth to the Buddhist Order. Without hatred and visible excitement she reports about the horror of the Cultural Revolution, when awful youngsters, from the party incited to break radically with the old ideas, assaulted the temple wearing red armbands and fanatic shouts. In a state of ignorance and blindness they smashed the Buddha figures in thousand pieces. Afterward, the Sutras - as documents of "primitive superstition" - were burned in the temple's court. Hui Lian together with other nuns was disrobed, driven out of the temple and forced to rejoin a work unit in the country side for re-education. After that the temple building was in use as a storeroom of an ironmonger's shop for some years. As they did not make any efforts to maintain the building, it fell into disrepair. As a result, even such kind of use was no longer possible. Finally, the 500-year-old temple was totally demolished. Hui Lian kept loyally devoted to the Dharma. During the day, she worked with the others in the fields setting rice shoots in spring and cutting wheat bundles during autumn. In the evenings, she had to study the teachings of chairman Mao and

other patriarchs of the Communist theory. "At night I took refuge to the three jewels and in my mind I recited for endless times the name of Buddha Amitabha." What ever she was forced to do, Hui Lian remained indelibly connected with her inner support, and saw what happened to her with faith and serenity, knowing about the mutual interdependence of all things. "Serving the people" - a slogan of the "great helmsman" seems to her as equally reasonable as the demand that women should carry "one half of the sky". After a few years, she could return into the town. From that time onward - in spite of the danger of repression - she organized together with former friends small celebrations and rituals during Buddhist holidays as well as funeral services for passed away laymen of the half-legal community.

Broken Threads Tie Together Again

At about the end of the Cultural Revolution and with the beginning of the opening policy in the early eighties, the local cadres no longer stopped Buddhist activities, which then were arising everywhere again. They did not want reports on the repression of Buddhists should not spoil the atmosphere for foreigners willing to invest money in China. Anyway, the obsession of the Epoque Rouge had given way to cultic worship of Western lifestyle and economic prosperity. As a result, the authorities did not just allow to unfold any kind of Buddhist activity, but they finally stopped the direct, brutal oppression and cruel persecution. Since that time

many people could re-link themselves with the broken threads of Buddhist tradition. The wheel of the Dharma could be turned again and the teachings could size the hearts. At that time, Foxin's destroyed temple could be re-erected. Wealthy Hong Kong-Chinese donated some money for the reconstruction and a new interior decoration. The new main hall is built in the classical style of Chinese temple architecture with the Milefo (the Chinese representation of Maitreya as "happy Buddha") next to the entrance. In the center there is a big statue of Buddha Sakyamuni accompanied by Buddha Amitabha and the Medicine Buddha. The back door is adorned with a white-blue porcelain statue of the Bodhisattva Guanyin, a bright female figure resting on a white elephant. The Guanyin shows remote resemblance with pictures of the Virgin Mary in roman-catholic churches. As Chinese representation of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara she is held in great reverence. The temple is small, and so there is neither a special entrance hall with the four guardian gods nor a second main hall with the 18 arhats and side halls with another bodhisattvas and local saints, as in most of the larger Chinese temples. Unmistakably clear is the Chinese influence in the iconography, which gives the Buddha images instead of the ascetic intensity of old India lavish forms and a muscular build, which sometimes appear in bulbous-spongy forms. When I asked to which school they belong to, the nuns remained silent for a moment. To the school of the Pure Land responded one of the younger nuns and looked inquiring to the others. Sure, said another one, but we also belong to the Chan-school. Head-nod-

ding. Buddhism - on all account, we were finally told. During many centuries, the Dharma in China has built up its own characteristic shape. Dogmatism was always rather alien to Chinese Buddhism. Its eight schools (Tiantaizong, Sanlunzong, Lzong, Faxiangzong, Huayanzong, Jingtuzong, Chanzong and Mizong) today are intermingled. But in this mixture, the teachings of the Pure Land of Buddha Amitabha and the reverence of Guanyin can everywhere be found as common denominators. At which time the Buddhist teachings first came to China is controversial. Early Buddhist documents date from the time of emperor Han Mingdi (at about 67 BC). Reports about the first Chinese nun A Pan are also from that time, even though the real history of Chinese Sangha with a larger number of people taking vows and ordinations begins only with the Three Kingdoms (221-265 AD), when the ruler then let the Buddhist movement thrive. In contrast to most of the Theravada-countries, Buddhism in China never became an important part of statesmanship, because the Dharma was always in contrast to the classical rites and traditions. The chances to develop were inseparably connected with the weal and woe of the respective ruler. Furthermore, the Dharma was always in an area of conflict with native Taoism, the Confucian ethics and the traditional ancestor worship. When we just started to leave, a small group of old peasant women from the surrounding countryside enters the main gate to do their devotions. Red candles are lighted in the court and joss sticks in whole bundles are burnt down to pay reverence to the Guanyin. The old ladies ask for blessing under deep rhythmic bows. The novice

reminds loudly not to enter the buildings with burning candles and not to burn too much incense. Three sticks - each for one of the three jewels - are enough - One fears burns and danger of fire. So the nuns have declared war to the old notion of "the more incense is burnt - the more merits are acquired". The old ladies laugh and smoke. They ask us to eat some of the offerings they brought with them - steamed wheat bread, kumquats and glutinous rice balls. Nothing should be wasted, they urge us. They wave their arms, when we finally leave.

Deep Wounds Heal Slowly

What we heard and saw in the Temple of White Clouds, it is typical for the monastery life in China after the Cultural Revolution. Nobody is able to give us exact figures, but Jingyin, a young nun from Zhejiang province guesses that today there are some ten thousand ordained nuns in the whole of China. Until today, the scars of terror and violence still determine the monastic life. There is no backbone of old and experienced Dharma-teachers. The age structure of Chinese nunneries is onion-shaped: at the top are a few old nuns who were already ordained at the time of the Cultural Revolution, and at the bottom end there is a larger number of young novices who after liberalization decided to chose a spiritual way of life. But almost everywhere there is a lack of people in their middle ages, those people who owing to the political circumstances could not enter the monasteries in former periods of their lives. Most of the people who could not be ordained due to the former political situation have now a family and are engaged laymen. Right after the beginning of the reform and opening policy,

when a lot of the once expelled nuns came back to the monasteries, the crush of young girls willing to become nuns was as big that it was not easy for the monasteries to receive all of them. But in the meantime, the initial enthusiasm has dropped off. Jingyin tells us that the decision for a monastic life normally ripens into the family where children can see how their parents practice the Dharma and the parents often encourage them in that direction. Although most of the young nuns come from the countryside, their level of education is often high. Many of them finished high school. In this respect, they differ from some of their male counterparts who occasionally choose monastic life mainly because of getting daily food and accommodation as well as the chance to study useful skills as the martial arts or Chinese medicine which might be helpful elsewhere - so at least the complaint of a former monk of the Shanghai Jade Buddha Temple.

Monastic Life

In China, monastic life is hard and full of privation. In the "Temple of great Mercifulness" in Yunnan Province we have the opportunity to become familiar with the nun's everyday life. The Song-dynasty Temple with its glazed and curved tiled roofs is solitary, located between large fields of tea in steep sloping hill-sides and blooming azalea forests. Three to four nuns share a sparsely furnished room with coarse-fiber walls and an uneven stone floor. Each nun has a mattress of rice straw, a bamboo chair, a small wardrobe, a corner of the wooden table and a plastic wash-bowl that lying underneath the bed. Each three rooms have a common wash-room with a wash-basin made of concrete and a

cold-water-tap. At 4.30 in the morning, the nuns get up. The day begins with clearing up and cleaning work right after waking from sleep. After that there is silent prayer and at 6.30 they have breakfast, normally a rice soup with salted vegetables, deep fried oilbread and small pieces of dried tofu. Chinese ordained people are almost always strict vegetarians. As in many other larger temples, this temple has also a small vegetarian restaurant. The time until lunch at about 11.00 is used for study and recitation. In China, practicing meditation is not the main part of the activities of nun and monks, and laymen do it even less. Rather widespread is sutra recitation and the recitation of mantras (nian fo) as well as the celebration of long lasting ceremonies in which the participants recite texts, chant and prostrate themselves before the Buddha images. Such ceremonies are accompanied by drumbeats, the use of cymbals and the first slow and then ever faster knocking on an large wooden instrument (muyu). During larger ceremonies with the participation of laymen, there are also guided walking meditations, by which one moves - coordinated by the ringing of a small bell - through the main hall, the court and the side halls. Between 11.00 am and 1.00 pm there is a period of quiet after lunch, where many Chinese have their afternoon nap. Afterwards the activities of the morning are continued until about 4.00 in the afternoon. During the time until supper at 5.30 the nuns get together. This time is also used to look after guests and visitors. The remaining time after lunch can be used individually. But the nuns go early to bed, as almost everyone in China. Besides the daily obligations, there are a lot of

irregular tasks as talks with laymen and assistance for people in difficulties which both are important parts of the nun's life. In spite of scarce finances, most monasteries give regular support for orphans and in case of serious illness, if nobody else can provide necessary means. Most monasteries are financially weak. The largest part of the monastery income results from the organization of funeral services (song jian wang zhaodu), which plays an important role in Pure-Land-Buddhism. These "requiem masses" are supposed to lead the spiritual substance of the deceased to blissful states and protect against rebirth in the lower realms. In general, the relatives of the deceased take part in the ceremony which can take up to several days. For each day, they are expected to pay 300 Yuan. Considering the present average income in larger towns of about 1,000 Yuan, this is not a small amount of money. In Jingyin's temple, 80% of all-income results from this source and the remaining 20% come from ticket selling, profits of the vegetarian restaurant and donations. The lack of qualified Dharma teachers and scarce financial means are described as the two biggest problems of the Chinese nun order. Jingyin knows in the whole of China only one Buddhist teacher who still masters the Pali. For most of the nuns, there is no provision for the old age and no sure support in case of illness and need of care. Only on the rich "Pilgrim-island" Putuo Shan, we once saw a rest home for old nuns. Painful privations and existential instability are the rule. The young nuns are lacking in opportunities for further education and training. Even the theoretical study of Buddhism - at the few universities where it is possible anyway - is,

because of the problem of cost, mostly done in form of crash courses. There is also an urgent need to learn such useful and practical things as foreign languages and the use of computers and modern media. Only a few ordained people speak English.

Chinese Authorities and Sangha

As we in Shanghai get to know, Chinese ordained people normally take part in several activities on the district and community level, but mainly because the political leaders expect that kind of engagement. The Buddhist community is expected to make contributions for the sake of Socialism. In a society oriented toward formal harmony and consensus, even from religious representatives, conformity and willingness to cooperate is strongly demanded. But there is nothing given in return for this demand. The authorities neither give any financial support nor do they permit religious education in schools. On the contrary, they issue detailed rules and regulations on what is allowed and appropriate and what not: Sutra recitation and the burning of incense is allowed as far as the people doing so pay attention to the regulations of fire damage. Ritual objects and religious writings may be distributed as long as they keep away from political questions. To offer Qigong and treatment in traditional Chinese medicine is the monasteries particularly prohibited, as according to some officials those activities exceed the actual religious purpose of such institutions and furthermore might promote the spread of "backward and undesired superstition" (mixing). Discussions on political issues like human rights or the independence

of Tibet are almost excluded. Most of the Dharma-believers in China are poorly informed about the real situation in Tibet, because there are no alternative channels of information available. As a result, they perceive Tibet only through the perspective of the censored press which always depicts the Dalai Lama as a representative of an exploitative feudal aristocracy and a slanderous separatist. In temples of the Tibetan tradition, which are scattered over Sichuan province, Inner Mongolia and the North-East, hang only pictures of the Panchen Lama instead of those of the Dalai Lama. Nevertheless, there are some indications that things might become more liberal in the future. Only ten years ago, it was really inconceivable to talk to foreigners frankly about outrages and persecutions. But today, it is possible with certain precaution. The state has now new and different problems, we were told, it has mainly take care to ensure prosperity and welfare and to prevent economic crisis. In this framework, temples and monasteries play foremost a role as places of folkloric interest. To attract more tourists, the monks and nun are consequently expected to celebrate colorful rituals and ceremonies in order to add some spice to temple visits out of tourist interests. On the one hand, people are resigned about this, but on the other hand, they are not unhappy to have now some degree of freedom, in which to develop. Voices like that, we heard more than once. Today, the predominant way to control and regulate the Chinese Sangha is no longer the open and brutal repression as in former times, but forced conformity and the assignment of a social role which nips in the bud even the embryo-

nic forms of self articulation. The Buddhist Association of China (Zhongguo Fojiao Xiehui) strives to give to the outside the impression as if it were a self organized organ of the Chinese Sangha, but actually it is rather a semi-stately organ to control and to carry out the religious policy of the government. The actual activities of this association are ambivalent. For the whole of China, they publish the magazine "Voice of the Dharma" (Fayin), expanded by further publications on the province and district level. Almost all of these publications deal with the Dharma teachings sound and close to life. Besides of that the Association organizes national congresses and summer camps where there is a vivid exchange of experience. But on the other hand, the scope of activities includes some other less welcome ones: If it has to do with the announcement of statements of devotion and loyalty to newly chosen state and party leaders, shouting and sheering for new government bills to Chinese religious policy or shrill reproves and condemnations of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan exile government, then the voices of official representatives of the Chinese Buddhist Association can be heard in the front most row. Hardly any local Buddhist community could dare to take assertive action against this omnipotent apparatus. Subtle and delicate are the mechanism, to force people to show devotion and "good conduct". Thus, hardly nobody puts the everywhere and loudly praised social harmony into question.

The Hub of the Wheel

Due to these circumstances, the Chinese nun order like the whole Sangha remains in a state of forced social inactivity.

Engaged Buddhism takes only place in the framework permitted by the government. Today, it is the small, but so important and useful daily activities like the mutual help and assistance in neighborhood and community and all the selfless service in the benefit of others which sow the seeds of engaged Buddhism and help the shoots growing. In a few decades, the Chinese context of values has changed from once revolutionary fanaticism and later the disillusionment about a terribly failed utopian ideal to the worship of hedonistic life-style without reservation. Apart from the later, things deprived of its mystique. But still today, where privation and bitter poverty of

former years - at least for the people in larger towns - give way to prosperity and individual wealth. As for centuries ago, the Sangha still offers a realizable model of an alternative way of life which is based on simplicity, equanimity and peace. Amidst the rush and bustle of the new flourishing towns, the old temples are now again an oasis of silence and peace. The beams of the morning sun reflected by gilded Buddhas and the soft sound of small bells moved by the wind blowing through the open doors as well as the fragrance of burned sandalwood incense remind the mind to recognize its true nature. Might be that today people primarily come to the temple to beg for male

descendants or good examine, but the pictures, text and symbols of the Dharma they encounter there still have the liberating power to turn the attention from the surface to a deeper level of existence. So that the impermanence of the world of objects can be recognized. It is in the first place the engaged Sangha itself which reminds to strive for higher aims and for a peaceful and serene heard. Like the hub of a wheel, which itself does not turn, nevertheless only by its pure existence creates the basis for stability amidst all movements.

Hans-Gunter Wagner, member of INEB Germany, works currently for a German Development Agency in Shanghai.

Is the Crisis Just Economic?

In the past year in Asia, newspapers, magazines, TV and assorted media have been absorbed in the politics of finance: from the devaluation of currencies to the machinations of the IMF to the reform of Asian financial institutions. "The Economic Crisis" has become a sound bite for all those in the Asian region. Yet what is disturbing about the crisis is not so much the perceived problems of Asia's economies but how little all this talk makes sense to the average person on the street. For example, many have been experiencing dramatic increases in the prices of basic food stuffs yet they look out over plantations and fields still yielding crops. Others are experiencing unemployment while they continue to see people streaming into air conditioned shopping malls. What then is this beast called "the economic crisis?" For some it seems

like a dream made up by governments and big business to pass their mistakes on to the man on the street.

Indeed, when we begin to peer beyond the all-encapsulating lens of economics, we begin to see a deeper crisis going on in Asia. This is what we might call a "crisis of values" which is affecting the vast majority of social institutions, most conspicuously the economic. This "crisis of values" has received some lip service by the media - corruption is being painted as a central factor in the failing economies of Asia. In the countries most heavily hit by "the economic crisis" such as Korea, Thailand and Indonesia, this "crisis of values" has come to the media's attention in political turmoil and change.

However, a more in-depth examination of this larger social corruption has not occurred, and

the focus continues to be on structural reform, mostly economic. Deregulation, structural transparency, and the cleaning-up of government have been presented as the mechanistic levers which will tear down insider networks of self interested businessmen and politicians. These ideas are well and fine when connected to a more rigorous re-evaluation of not only the structures of society but the values, norms, and ethics of Asian society. Such a rigorous re-evaluation, however, does not start in Washington D.C. with the pondering of the IMF. It rather must begin here in Asia with a deep look at the wash of conflicting values which have come to make up modern Asia.

What stands out clearly in Asia today is the ongoing struggle between pre-modern Asian values and the values of modernity, most of which come from the

West. For example, political leaders like Mahathir Mohamad, Lee Kwan Yew, and Suharto have embraced western-style capitalism while perpetuating pre-modern paternal ties and networks under the guise of "Asian values". Civil servants are reared on modern, western-style education, yet they misuse government structures to build personal wealth and buffer their social status in their communities. From the leaders of nations to school teachers in rural villages, we are witnessing a descent to the lowest common denominator: the worst aspects of western modernism (individualism, economic greed) are combining with the worst of indigenous Asian values (feudal patronage systems, social prestige over individual merit). What is taking place today in Asia then is not its emergence into the ideal of the modern world, that is the free individual enjoying material prosperity amidst democratic government. Rather we are seeing a tragic warping of this vision: material prosperity exists for a small group of patron elite in government and business circles; feudal cronyism is disguised as representative democracy; and a mass of disempowered citizens are increasingly cut off from their historical and cultural identities by the "clear-cut" of economic "development" and consumerism. This is what is the deeper "crisis of values" behind "the economic crisis". Asia has reached a crisis in the true sense of the word; that is a "turning point" where this mash of ill-accommodating values must be discarded; where each different Asian society from India to China to Chittagong to Minahasa must re-inhabit its cultural space, critically evaluate it and complement it with the best of modernity. It is perhaps the Dalai

Lama, representing a people forced into cultural re-evaluation by exile, who expressed this "crisis" most clearly. He has said that certain aspects of Tibetan culture are not progressive and must be left behind without fetishizing all that is traditional. Yet other aspects are indeed truly progressive. These must be retained and developed if Tibetans are going to successfully move into the 21st century with a distinct but not petrified identity.

Indeed, identity is a central concern in this crisis. With increasing speed, we are seeing a revolution in personal identity in Asia. Identities have typically been based in community, roles and personal relationships. They are now increasingly based in the abstractions of religion, state and economy which are woven together into exclusivist and chauvinistic mentalities. Thus many young have become cut off from their community, familial and cross-generation ties as they embrace the global youth culture built on consumerism and individualism. Others have retreated from the intrusions of modernity into nationalist and religious fundamentalism which view outsiders as hostile. Both impulses, however flawed, are attempts to incorporate the good of both modernity and pre-modernity. Young people tire of the stifling hierarchies of feudal village life, while fundamentalists cling to traditional personal and communal bonds which provide support in an ever-disempowered and alienating modern world.

These impulses are human and filled with good intention. Yet they miss their target by overcompensating and clinging to these new identities as an all encompassing solution. What we need to work toward is a type of

middle way, a "Radical Conservatism". This seeks to unite the best of the traditional and the best of the modern. It might be envisioned as an identity which remains rooted in place (the village, the urban neighborhood, the local church and not the TV, the religion or the state) while nevertheless learning from other races, nationalities, religions, etc. as a student of the world. The strength of Asia's cultural heritage offers great resources to this endeavor.

As we develop such human resources, we need to address social structures. Principally, as we confront "the economic crisis", we must consider the reintegration of economy back into culture. Perhaps the differentiation of these two has provided an important venue for Asia to realize economic prosperity, but this differentiation has gone too far. Cultural/ethical values and economics have become alienated from one another. When economies are more locally structured (i.e. people produce and consume their own basic essentials) and organized in expanding and efficient webs (e.g. overseas Chinese business networks), mutual trust, reciprocity and generosity more strongly assert themselves within a base of personal relationships. Such horizontal trade networks further help to weaken the hierarchical ties of paternal relationships, while smaller structures based on personal ties lessen the dependence on legal systems which become alienating and wasteful if overdeveloped.

In sum, this agenda for a "Radical Conservatism" enfolds the personal within the social and the local within the international in a dynamic of individual integrity in the service of the good of the whole. Individuals and com-

munities physically occupy a local cultural tradition while incorporating at their own respective paces cultural technologies from other places. Economies are rooted in self-sufficient community but supported by a global network of human based resources.

In order to enact this agenda, we need a social means which integrates the traditional construct of COMMUNITY (a group of personal bonds and duties based around a specific locale) and the modern construct of CIVIL SOCIETY (a group of egalitarian horizontal bonds based on mutual interest and commitment and working for a

larger good). Amidst "the economic crisis", some of the most compelling "rescue work" is not being performed by the structural readjusters of the IMF or the economic "dream teams" of new governments, but rather the confluence of traditional communities and modern civic groups (principally NGOs). Such people's groups, such as the Forum of the Poor in Thailand, are addressing the actual sufferings of everyday people and helping them to make sense of their lives in this time of crisis, this "turning point".

It would be wonderful indeed if all our media outlets began to focus more closely on these

people and groups creating change rather than the economists and politicians who talk of change. If such a view were gained by a critical mass of people, then this "crisis" might not appear as a financial disaster but as an opening for change (a true crisis) and a time for hope, faith and good works.

Jonathan Watts is member of the INEB Think Sangha. He represented the INEB Think Sangha at the People's summit in Birmingham in May 1998. If you like to know more please visit the Website-Page: <http://www.igc.apc.org/bpf/think.html>.

Colombian Peace Community Receives International Award

The Fellowship of Reconciliation is awarding the 1998 Pfeffer Peace Prize to the Community of Peace of San José de Apartado in Colombia, South America. The Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), the largest interfaith peace organization in the United States, awards this \$2500 prize annually to individuals or organizations that exemplify Gandhian and Kingian traditions of nonviolent social change. The Community of Peace, composed of 28 settlements with San José de Apartado in the center, formed in March 1997 after Colombian paramilitaries accused them of supporting the guerrillas and murdered four of its local elected officials. The Madison, Wis.-based Colombian Support Network nominated the Community of Peace for the award.

The Community formed in reaction to the endemic violence that has for decades plagued San José de Apartado, and many other regions of Colombia. Its members have united to break free from Colombia's cycle of violence by agreeing to maintain a policy of absolute neutrality; to refrain from providing arms, logistical support, or information to any of the armed groups involved in the conflict; and to solve personal, family, and community problems without the assistance of armed groups. For their noble decision to respond nonviolently to the brutality wracking their communities, they have paid dearly. The Catholic Colombian human rights organization Justicia y Paz reports that since the founding of the Peace Community, at least thirty-five of its members have been killed by rightist paramilitary groups or leftist guerrillas.

"We are extremely pleased to be able to honor the courageous people of San José de Apartado, Colombia with the 1998 Pfeffer Peace Prize," said FOR Director, Rev. John Dear, S.J. "Their commitment to overcoming violence and repression with the healing power of nonviolence is truly inspirational." The award will be presented in the U.S. later this fall.

Greetings from the Secretariat

Dear friends, This ATC newsletter aspires to raise awareness about self determination for indigenous people and the links between the roots of the dominant consumer society and the abuse of indigenous communities. At the ATC Gathering last December the plight of indigenous people around the world was graphically brought to the attention of participants when a Native American friend tore up the Declaration on Spiritual Alternatives to Consumerism.

Perhaps many of us do not realize the extent of what the so-called civilized societies have done to destroy indigenous communities around the world, let alone acknowledge it and try to do something positive to rectify the situation. It seems imperative that we listen to the stories and the requests of the indigenous people from their own mouths. It is with this in mind we are printing a request letter from Pauline Tangier, Maori Elder to find a way to bring the peoples of the Pacific together to tell their stories. As an example of the injustice in this part of the world we include a short commentary of what happened to the gentle Rongelap islanders. We have also printed the Kari-oka Declaration which poetically presents the dignified requests of the indigenous people for self determination.

The newsletter goes on to print the long awaited revised copy of the Declaration on Spiritual Alternatives to Consumerism and reports on an inter-cultural meeting in Naxos which highlighted the challenges of writing/translating inspirational statements of intent. As was reinforced at that meeting this kind of joint statement can be very effective when used as a starting point for inter-cultural dialogue and understanding as well as a guiding light for future action.

The ATC Secretariat

Symposium on Social Justice, Democracy & Alternative Politics:

An Asian-European Dialogue. This symposium will bring together sixty thinkers and activists to dialogue and synthesize innovative political visions of Asian and European societies particularly focusing on social justice, democracy and traditional Asian values. The participants will debate how the wisdom and experience from these different groups can confront the structural crisis that European and Asian societies are facing today. Can Asian activists and thinkers learn from the social justice of the west and can European Social Democrats learn from the holistic roots of Asian society? Can we move into the new century with social structures that care for social justice and are based on a holistic worldview that opposes the threatening consumer monoculture? If people can be content consuming less and sharing more with the needy they would not use so many resources, close the gap between rich and poor and thus move the planet towards sustainability. The outcome is to create a vision that is an alternative to liberal capitalism and to inspire a common understanding of democratic political movements for a just, peaceful and sustainable future. This symposium will be of special interest to people who attended the Alternative Politics for Asia workshop in December 1997. For more information please contact the ATC Secretariat.

30th Anniversary of Sathirakoses Nagapradipa Foundation December 13, 1998

10.00 - 12.00 a.m	Pajarayasara Lecture "Life and work of Thomas Merton" by Prof. Bradley Holt
01.00 - 03.00 p.m	"Direction and network organizations of the Foundation"

Self-determination and Healing

All over the world indigenous people bear the brunt of gross injustice that has decimated their ancient and sustainable societies. Colonial invaders were often welcomed but soon grabbed power and land considering native tribes a lower species. Indigenous people evolve with their places. The Berber in the desert and the Inuit in the Arctic have become extremely adept at living in harsh climates. In a US bank there is DNA data from over a 1000 different tribal peoples identifying their uniqueness. Most did not know what the tests were for and some unaware a sample was taken as DNA can come from a single hair.

Sacred lands are robbed of trees, flora and fauna abducted by medical multi-nationals who claim ownership of plants and use them for wonder drugs. Marshall Islanders, whose land hosted nuclear tests, have a huge incidence of cancer and have long been giving birth to "jellyfish" babies.

Indigenous peoples are seeking self determination which is the right to determine their own future on their own land. This should include flora, fauna and the use of DNA.

The modern world is hurtling towards a meltdown caused by the dominance of structures based on greed and delusion. The greed is inherent in the insatiable economic system that can only survive by creating artificial needs and using up the worlds resources. Most modern people delude themselves by not atoning the societies they have descended from based on virtues such as genocide, slavery and unrelenting reason. Can we bear to listen to the cries of indigenous people, gain a true understanding of why they are being annihilated and take positive steps to untangle these violent structures? Is everyone indigenous even those whose roots that have become so entwined with others? With compassion in our hearts can we confront all the other injustices in this ugly, modern world particularly hunger, oppression, mental confusion and the raping of Mother Earth? Unless we spawned from the cultures of oppression can heal ourselves how can we truly support the movement for indigenous people and look to a healthier future with shining eyes?

Jane Rashash

The Day the Sun Rose Twice

An account of injustice against indigenous people

Over the last few years we have seen mass protests around the world against French Nuclear Tests in the Pacific. The people of Rongelap in the Marshall islands are still suffering more than forty years after Bikini was used as a site for US Nuclear tests.

For hundreds of years on a beautiful coral island by a lagoon the gentle people of Rongelap lived a simple life in harmony with nature. They fished from canoes, drank rainwater and sea-food and fruit provided a simple nutritious diet. Rongelap is part of the Marshall islands and despite Spanish, German, Japa-

nese and US influences over the last few hundred years the majority of islanders still managed to live in their sustainable island culture.

On 1 March 1954 the residents of Rongelap were stunned by the apparent rising of the sun in the west, more vibrant and colorful than usual. Shortly afterwards the sun rose in the East. During that morning there was a ferocious heat that stung and burned exposed skin, this was followed by a tornado like wind that caused havoc on the islands pulling out trees, breaking windows and uprooting plants. A few hours

later a dust began to fall on to people, into water tanks and on the land. In the afternoon a US seaplane arrived and warned the people not to drink the water but they already had. Many people became sick with cramps and diarrhea. The next few days US men arrived to check for radiation and on the third day the islanders were evacuated without any possessions. By this time many people had open wounds and were losing their fingernails. Tests confirmed that about 75% of people on Rongelap had been exposed to radiation equivalent to half the deadly dose through

drinking or eating contaminated substances or through radioactive powder on the body.

The H-bomb dropped that morning by the US military was 1300 times stronger than the one dropped on Hiroshima. The previous year the US government had removed 165 islanders from Bikini to clear the area for the nuclear tests. Between 1946 and 1958 sixty-six atomic tests were carried out in the Marshall Island Atolls and each one further contaminated the atmosphere. Two years later the islanders were told it was safe to return. They were told that all food except the coconut crab was safe to eat but they noticed some foods had changed color and burned their mouths. Over the years many islanders developed strange illnesses, women lost their fertility had miscarriages or born stillborn and deformed children. So many children were born without proper bone structure that the term "jelly-fish babies" became used to describe them. The people wondered why their health was deteriorating and why they were being tested by the US military each year although given little treatment.

In the early 1960's following a UN report that the Marshall Islands had a huge lack of economic development, President Kennedy instigated a development plan. This involved millions of dollars of aid to Micronesia over the next ten years, many of the islanders became dependent on Aid and a lifestyle they could not afford. Not only had the land of the Rongelapese been poisoned but their values had also been contaminated in what could be argued as an attempt to minimize the damage and keep the islanders quiet.

Gradually the extent of the

damage dawned on the Rongelapese people. In 1982 the US Dept. of Energy published a report that showed that parts of the island were still dangerously contaminated. By this time more than 30% of people who had been on the island on the day of the fall out had died of cancer and other previously unknown diseases. Whilst the US Dept. of Energy claimed to have documented all relevant information little or no essential health concerns had been communicated to the people. A military doctor said, "we couldn't educate them - they did not even have a word for radioactivity". Why should they - radioactivity was not in the realm of their experience.

In the 1980's radiation survivors were given some \$150 million on the condition that lawsuits amounting to \$7 billion were wiped out. Greenpeace took up the cause and in 1985 amidst a blaze of publicity they were moved off the island on the Rainbow Warrior. Local leader Jeton Antain who had been a major player in raising awareness of the injustices and in the negotiations made a speech -

"American scientists have been lying to us for 30 years about the radiation on our islands. The poison from the Bravo monster bomb is still being felt today. Our people suffered then, and we are still suffering from radiation diseases, such as thyroid, tumors, birth defects, still births and miscarriages. Now as we all decided the time has come for us to leave for Mejato Island. For the sake of our children and grandchildren it will be hard but we will find a way to survive".

Majeto Island is not a fertile land and the Rongelapese now have to live on imported American food, their traditional way of

life has been devastated and they live in the uncertainty of not knowing how the radiation will pass through generations.

The nuclear tests in the Pacific were not aimed at any particular enemy but they have become a lethal weapon with devastating unjust effects and long-term suffering on a nation of simple, happy people who had no word for enemy. This kind of abuse has happened to indigenous communities all over the world. Those of us from the so called "developed" countries must make an effort to understand what has happened and challenge our governments into accountability for such gross injustice.

Tena Kae Jane

In August/September 1999 our committee will be holding a Jury Court Hearing on Violence to Landa Women. This hopefully will be held in the Pacific in Auckland, Aotearoa, NZ. And for the first time women of the Pacific will tell of the violence. Some will come with stories of Nuclear Testing and aftermath, of its effects, dumping of nuclear wastes, mining of uranium on Indigenous Peoples lands as well as personal violence. Our committee in relation with the Asian Women's Human Rights Council hope to seek funding internationally, but because it is perceived that Maori, and the place its being held is a first World Country so many avenues of funding may be difficult to access. However holding this meeting in Aotearoa NZ will give the maximum coverage of between 1500 to 2000 people to attend.

We are seeking sponsorship for the Aotea Center with Costs of \$9000 per day to take the notes for 2 day sessions. Of course there are other areas of sponsorship should any one wish such as airfares, sound system, videos and other incidentals as hotels for the 50 incoming jury and story presenters from round the world. If anyone would see their way to support we would be humbly grateful.

In Peace, Pauline Tangiora, Maori Elder

Kari-Oca Declaration

We, the Indigenous Peoples, walk to the future in the footprints of our ancestors.

From the smallest to the largest living being, from the four directions, from the air, the land, and the mountains, the Creator has placed us, the Indigenous Peoples, upon our Mother the Earth.

The footprints of our ancestors are permanently etched upon the land of our peoples.

We, the Indigenous Peoples, maintain our inherent rights to self determination.

We have always had the right to decide our own forms of government, to use our own laws to raise and educate our children, to our own cultural identity without any interference.

We continue to maintain our rights as peoples despite centuries of deprivation, assimilation and genocide.

We maintain our inalienable rights to our lands and territories, to all our resources - above and below - and to our waters. We assert our ongoing responsibility to pass these on to future generations.

We cannot be removed from our lands. We the Indigenous Peoples, are connected by the circle of life to our land and environments.

We, the Indigenous Peoples, walk to the future in the footprints of our ancestors.

Signed at Kari-Oca, Brazil on 30 May 1992

Under the Olive Trees

A Gathering where the role and applicability of
Declarations and Platforms was debated by an inter-cultural forum.

Under the olive trees together from afar, the old gnarled branches, the silver leaves. Wisdom is there if we open our eyes, our hearts and listen to the universe.

Under the ancient olive trees on the island of Naxos a diverse group of people bound together with common hope for a more sustainable world for future generations gathered. Many of the group had attempted to translate a statement called the Platform for a United and Responsible World into their own languages and had run into difficulties with making the inspiring but rather Euro-centric text relevant to their own cultures. The Platform aspires to

link together and motivate a broad ranging group of people around the world in what is called the Alliance. Other group members had studied the text and felt some common understandings although not all had signed. Some gave illuminating perspectives from living in alien cultures or part of inter-cultural marriages, one participant from Pakistan gave us all an insight as to what it means being a young women in an Islam society and a marvelous Maori Elder who is a champion of her people inspired us with her hope and wisdom. Thus the meeting became a voyage of discovery for each of us giving glimpses into the ways of others

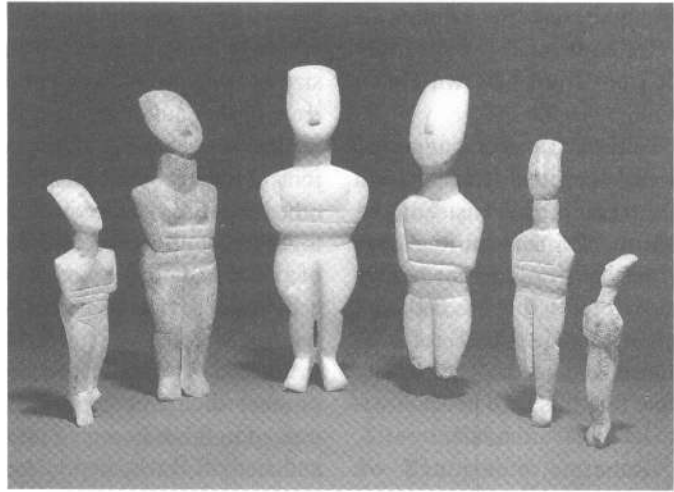
and the misunderstandings that can occur with inter-cultural dialogue. The purpose of the meeting was to find a way forward for the Platform, a way that is inclusive and respectful of the diversity it aspires to reach. Having myself come from the ATC network where we struggled to find a way to write a similar joint statement of intent I was particularly hopeful that this meeting could shed some light on a process for our Declaration on Spiritual Alternatives to Consumerism.

As always at international meetings I was struck by the wonderful work people are doing in their own societies and so

grateful that they find the time in their busy, busy lives to share together. This time I also greatly appreciated the efforts of many people who are primarily translators or communicators and gained new insights into the connections between these messengers and the concrete grassroots actions of the many inspiring initiatives others represented.

On the first day it became obvious that people were coming from cultures which had many different assumptions and burning issues. Unless these are carefully considered and text made relevant to them the Platform becomes meaningless. Whilst there were small significant differences in European countries it was the translation of the text to African, Asian and other indigenous languages that seemed the most challenging. An example of different cultural assumptions became clear the first day when many of the people from the so called first world commented that the document lacked a spiritual aspect perhaps a reflection of the societies they came from. Friends from the south particularly Pakistan and India found this hard to understand, in their cultures spirituality was at the root of everything. This huge difference was referred to again and again throughout the week.

Concerning relevant issues Pauline Tangiora, the Maori elder, spoke for many indigenous groups in advocating the inclusion of self determination over land, flora, fauna and even DNA, a vital matter in their communities many of which have been taken over by dominating colonizers. In the eyes of indigenous people this right to determine their own destiny on their own land is crucial to their survival and often far more relevant than autonomy which may



not be on their ancestral lands.

Those from poor countries thought hunger should be tackled before lofty philosophical ideals. There were several pertinent comments about how such a document could be useful to hungry people whose energy is focused on finding enough food and who may not be able to read anyway! An African friend also linked hunger to anger in his society. We learned so much from each other as we began to glimpse the assumptions and priorities of other societies and the misunderstandings that could so easily occur.

The gaps and commonalties were well illustrated in a very active session on Greetings in the different traditions. Where hierarchy is inherent in the culture it was reflected in the greetings. In Thailand the hands are placed together in greeting, first by the junior and answered by the senior, hands are also placed at different levels to indicate social status with (male) monks being at the top of the hierarchy. In Pakistan a younger person would bow down and touch the leg of an elder and his or her head would be touched by the elder which was a blessing. This respect towards age was shown in many cultures

yet in the modern, egalitarian west it would seem very strange to lower ones body or indeed exaggerate different status in this way. The Maori greeting touched noses to connect with the other by intermingling breath and spirit. Whilst the importance of breath is at the heart of Buddhist cultures touching in this way between the sexes, particularly between a monk and a women would be taboo. The big bear hug of the Brazilians would be unthinkable in the Pakistan culture where men do not openly touch women. The African greetings included shaking hands for a long time whilst asking the welfare of family, extended family and friends. Who in the speedy, West would have time for this interaction of several minutes many times each day?

So aware of all these challenges how can we bring the essence of the Platform to diverse cultures? A young Indian participant explained he had to put in an introduction to make the Platform relevant and to address the pertinent issues in his society such as caste, population and poverty. Several of us were so curious as to how he had done this that we suggested he translate it back to the original language to

help us understand the differences! He also illustrated it beautifully with icons from his own Hindu culture.

Pauline Tangier suggested that it is spirituality rather than action that is the basis of the Platform. Perhaps spirituality is the part that words do not convey - but culturally this has different implications in the East it is assumed and in the West many people find this hard to acknowledge let alone articulate.

Someone mentioned we should think of the Platform as a basis for discussion rather than a tome written in stone! We were also reminded that we should not be overly critical of the Platform as it had brought us all together to share so much. However we must be open to the challenges of the rather Eurocentric process of formulating the Platform which may have little relevance to an oral culture or indeed a hungry person.

I reflected that if there is a common understanding that such a document has a dual purpose as an inspirational tool but also as a fluid, evolutionary process with feedback into itself and does not take itself too seriously then it can be very useful as a means for inter-cultural understanding as well as spreading the words it contains and inspiring action for a more sustainable world. This was further elaborated by one of the working groups after Edith Sizoo described what she called Inter-independence. This facilitates a culturally relevant interpretation of the Platform and resulting action or perhaps it is relevant action that inspires a culturally relevant interpretation. The flows of information, meetings and exchange between what is happening in each area are crucial and this is what the Alliance tries to facilitate. There is no

center to this very fluid model and each area is autonomous, varies in size and may well spawn or influence further autonomous or connected actions which then may join together or influence each other hopefully in a positive way towards common understandings of a more sustainable world. Such a fluid and dynamic model may seem wishy-washy or irreverent to those of us from the schools of rational thought where we are trained to think in such a precise and analytical way that alienates or demolishes the views of the less linear communicators. As one participant jokingly commented "we are now talking about ways to change the bible!" It seemed to me that it is the spirit of the platform that can be replicable but the resulting content and actions will vary according to local need and then bounce back to influence the original instigators.

When I think of the efforts of our own Alternatives to Consumerism network to create a declaration I remember the insistence of one of the key people that this statement should be a guiding light for all activities in the network. This lofty statement somehow irritated me although I was not sure why. The Naxos meeting has helped me to clarify that it is also very necessary to emphasize the inspiration of the diverse concerns, ways and ef-

forts that link people together as a network. So rather than thinking of the Platform as a guiding light to activities in the Alliance network perhaps the various translations interacting with local initiatives can be seen as lights to guide the Alliance!

Despite the many differences that were aired and shared the atmosphere of the meeting was very harmonious and many friendships cemented. How could we feel negative about differences when we listened to the cries of people suffering? I am sure that a myriad of small actions for a more responsible and united world will evolve or be reinforced after those days spent under the shady olive trees. This seemed to me symbolic of the positive aspects of inter-cultural dialogue and proof that it can happen and be a learning and growing experience for all concerned although the warm feeling in the heart is largely intangible.

Jane Rasbash attended the What Words Do Not Say Workshop which was organized by South-North Network Cultures and Development who are involved with the Alliance. If you would like to find out more about the Alliance Network and the Platform for a Responsible and United World please contact: Foundation Charles Leopold Mayer, 38 Rue Saint Sabin, Paris, FRANCE.

Seeds of Peace is proud to announce the accomplishments of one of the ATC network partners, the Wayang video group. Wayang is a team of videographers who make videos which are intended to raise social awareness of problems in the world around us. Their most recent video, "Dolls and Dust" presents analyses and testimonies from women workers and activists in Sri Lanka, Thailand and South Korea on the impact of social restructuring, globalization and mal(e)-development on their lives, communities and the environment.

"Dolls and Dust" was recognized as an outstanding video at the 4th Videolympiade of Local TV and Video Creation, a conference held in Capetown, South Africa from September 19-22, 1998. The conference focused on 'the right to communicate in the Australasian region'.

More details of the excellent and interesting contributions of the Wayang team to raising social awareness will be coming in the next issue of Seeds of Peace.

Declaration on Spiritual Alternatives to Consumerism

(4th revision - Oct. 1998)

This statement has been written and endorsed by representatives of many countries, religions, wisdom traditions, cultures, individuals and organisations most of whom attended the Alternatives to Consumerism Gathering in Thailand in December 1997. The Declaration process has highlighted that in the search for common understanding people express themselves in different ways and unpredictable influences can change views and actions. Thus the Declaration is not a static tome rather a reference point for dialogue to inspire, guide, connect and reflect on illuminating initiatives around the world.

The Problems

Whilst aware of our limitations in finding universal truths we have a common understanding that the rampant growth of consumerism is harming minds, bodies and spirits, and threatening the life of our communities and the whole earth. The culture of consumerism requires consumption which is not necessary to meet our basic material and spiritual needs.

We respect and honour the few indigenous communities around the world still living in a sustainable way retaining the virtues most of us lack due to Western influence. Yet we despair of the huge outside forces these communities are facing in these days of globalisation where consumerism is fostered by misleading, inappropriate and superfluous propaganda.

We cannot separate ourselves from consumerism. It is in and around most of us, induced by

greed, materialism, exploitation and self-indulgence. It is an obsessive yet futile attempt to fill the vacuum of discontent in our lives created by a loss of meaning and spiritual direction. Consumerism begins with the belief that more is better, and eventually results in irresponsible multinational corporations, degradation of the environment, and endless bombardment of pressure to increase our craving for non-essential goods. Painful consequences are the systematic widening of the gap between the poor and the rich; the loss of confidence in traditional wisdom in many indigenous societies and the loss of contentment among all people effected by consumerism.

The Vision

We are ready to face this crisis on our planet and we resist the spreading of a "consumer monoculture" around the world. Our vision is holistic and transformative. Many of us touched by the violence of reason struggle to look humbly at the last remnants of indigenous sustainable societies and seek to bring this wisdom into our fast paced, wasteful lives. All of us on this planet share the challenges of the future. We want to bring together art, science, nature and religion to more deeply understand that all things are interconnected and interdependent. Thus, economic activities will be more responsive to social, political, spiritual and environmental dimensions of reality. We envision a sustainable future which supports fulfillment of the positive potential of humanity and safeguards future generations.

We envision a restored earth with healthy children, vibrant and creative communities, valued elders and contented people where human beings live as part and friends of nature not as masters and the conquerors of it.

Alternatives

The positive potential of humanity includes love, spirituality, unity in diversity, non-violence, responsibility, joy and altruism. Nurturing these potentials may lead us to a universal culture of caring and stewardship. We want to reclaim friendship, family and community values as the basis for bonds of solidarity. We are open to the spirit of justice leading to genuine reconciliation.

As individuals and a network we aspire to :

- to cultivate and induce others to cultivate contentment
- whilst honouring our diversity we will unite and gather from different traditions to question the essence and goals of human life, examine our deep rooted values and realize ways for a just and sustainable world
- we will respect and support and learn from the indigenous people who are struggling to live the sustainable lifestyles close to that we aspire to
- develop in ourselves a sense of caring, respect and responsibility for the true well-being of all life;
- live with integrity, simplicity and in harmony with nature;
- encourage the growth of varied local alternatives in education, trade, industry, agriculture, and politics;

- promote and strengthen communities which are inclusive, self-reliant, sustainable, holistic and supportive of each other, and which grow from shared values and wisdom ;
- facilitate meaningful interaction and communication between these local groups;
- express our genuine human

needs, listen carefully to each other, participate in decision-making, and join in the action of our communities;

- define and implement ethical principles for science, technology and commerce.

An ongoing process

The secretariat recognises

the Declaration on Spiritual Alternatives to Consumerism is an emerging fluid process and welcomes comments and criticisms which will be published in newsletters. However the above statement will be used as long as it serves the needs of the network.

ATC SECRETARIAT

No Nukes Asia

According to statistic from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), 1998 marks the first year ever that the installed capacity of nuclear power has reduced from previous years. It further predicted that by the year 2020, worldwide capacity of nuclear power would cease at 14% of the total electricity, about 3% short of the present installed capacity. In fact, throughout the world, only four countries, namely, France, China, India and Pakistan, which are notorious for their nuclear testing programs, are pursuing plans to build more nuclear facilities. And just last year, the Canadian power utility, Ontario Hydro, has announced that 7 of its 19 nuclear reactors had to be shut down due to under-productivity. In the meanwhile, the Greens and Social Democrats are joining hand to phase out nuclear power in Germany.

The statistics should tell us something about the unhealthy trend of nuclear option. Instead of opting out of it, many nuclear multinational companies have been looking for new customers. Asia, in particular Southeast Asia, where before the crisis the surge in energy demand had been so reckless, is aimed as their primary target. Whether you like it or not,

the economic pinch has helped to slow down their plans. This year, the Indonesian government, which has been supporting nuclear projects for many years, had to put off a plan to build a first nuclear facility citing economic as the primary reason.

But they have never fallen asleep. Projects, aid, and all sort of propaganda have been intruding into the region from the nuclear corporate. In Siam, AECL (Atomic Energy of Canada Limited) has helped to form Department of Atomic Engineering at Chulalongkorn University, and in the last few years, have supported projects to publish numerous pro-nuclear books and have them distributed to different schools.

It was primarily the concern for nuclear export by anti-nuclear activists in Japan, Korea and Taiwan that the first NNAF (No Nuke Asia Forum) was held in Japan seven years ago. This year, it was held in Siam from 27 October 1 November. The event has brought over 50 activists from countries in East Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia, as well as friends from Green Peace, WISE (World Information Service on Energy) and other international energy organizations to share their problems, forge tie, and col-

lectively find ways by which nuclear expansion can be prevented. The tone of the conference was set since the first day by Sulak Sivaraksa's opening speech in which he threw his whole-hearted support to movements against nuclear power. Citing the incidence that India was capable of testing nuclear bombs a few years after it had been donated a research reactor from the Canadian government, he addressed the scary fact that nuclear power has been abused for military use since the beginning. His opinion was shared by Sanghamitra Gedkar from Anumukti, a local anti-nuclear group in India in her presentation of the same session. There were reports from representatives of each country, which participated in the event, altogether more than 10 countries in Asia.

As to Siam, the parliament has recently passed a 4,000 million baht budget for a research reactor being built at a site about 50 Kms from the international airport. It is located just a few kilometers from Wongsanit Ashram, and just right in the middle of a big community including schools, a hospital, and residence. Similar to other projects, the attempt to build this research reactor has been creep-

ing quietly. No consultation with local communities has been made. Even though the 10 megawatts reactor is proposed for producing radioactive isotopes used in hospitals, the way it has been implemented and its surrounding context cannot alleviate the fear that it is just a first step toward a more expansive nuclear facility.

The current status of nuclear option in Siam is a committee has been set up to study its feasibility. There has not been any conclusion as to its result. But the adverts and other pr campaigns which have been launched by the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) and the Office of Atomic Energy for Peace (OEAP) to support nuclear power plants, have simply caused concern among those who are aware how unprofitable and destructive nuclear power is.

During the NNAF gathering, participants have got a chance to witness by themselves how EGAT has aggressively put forward their nuclear agenda. We went to two potential sites for EGAT's nuclear facilities, in Chumporn and Surat Thani. At both places, we have found that there have been attempts to buy at least 3,000 Rai (about 1,000 acres) of land for the purpose. Again, the villagers have never been properly informed enough of the other effects of nuclear power.

On the day of our visit to Patew District, Chumporn Province, nearly a hundred of local villagers crammed the makeshift we used for a panel discussion on the pros and cons of nuclear power. They were so amazed how nuclear power can contribute a great deal to the increase of power supply, but at the same time can cause grave dangers to their health and environment. The slide pictures of victims of nuclear power plants

in India have stirred up their hesitation toward selling their land for such a risk-taking project.

In Surat Thani, again, the local audience has given a serious attention to our panel discussion. The testimonies by friends from countries who have experienced for a long time suffering from nuclear projects have so much shocked them. Many of them felt very upset that the government and concerned authorities have never given them both sides of the impacts of nuclear option.

To make contribution towards anti-nuclear groups in Siam; please contact

Alternative Energy Project for Sustainability (AEPS)

801/8 Soi Ngamwongwan
27, Ngamwongwan Rd., Muang,
Nonthaburi 11000

Siam Tel/fax +662-5915076,
9527606 email: aeps@ksc.th.com

NO NUKES ASIA FORUM: "Towards a Sustainable Energy Alternative for the 21st Century"

Declaration of the Sixth NNAF Meeting Thailand, Oct. 27-Nov. 1, 1998

We realize that citizens of the industrialized world have woken up to the foolishness of nuclear power and are successfully rejecting it, and that the industry is dying in those countries. It is this vanishing domestic market which has recently driven nuclear interests to step up their sales pitch to Asian countries.

What we Oppose

a.. the aggressive promotion of the nuclear business in the Asian region; we oppose the expansion of nuclear technology in Asia. In particular, we strongly condemn the marketing and pro-nuclear

propaganda carried out by governments in Japan, Canada, US and Europe.

b.. the construction of any new nuclear facilities, whether for research or power generation. In particular we oppose: the 4th Nuclear Power Plant planned in cooperation with US and Japanese companies in Taiwan; the research centre in Nakorn Nayok Province, Thailand; current plans to introduce nuclear power in the Philippines.

c.. weapons testing, in particular the recent tests carried out by India and Pakistan.

d.. plutonium reprocessing and the international shipment of reprocessed nuclear fuel, in particular the planned MOX fuel shipment from Europe to Japan.

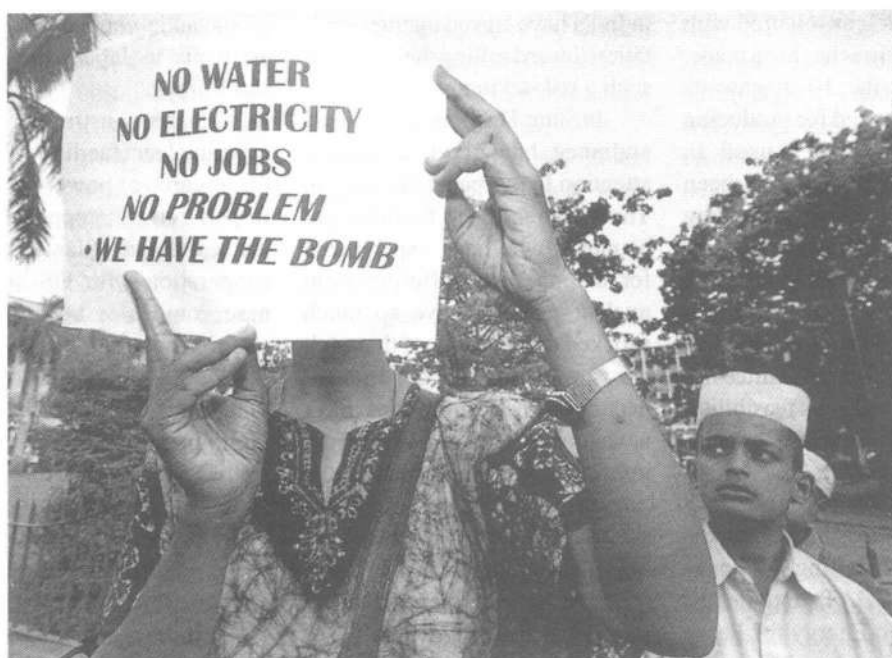
Why we are Opposed

a.. The health risks from radiation in all stages of the nuclear fuel cycle (including uranium mining, nuclear fission itself and waste treatment) are undeniable and unacceptable, including normal atmospheric leakage from research.

b.. Nuclear power is an incredible drain of capital, often destroying a country's economy. It simply is not economically viable, especially when power plant decommissioning, and costs to human health are taken into account.

c.. There is still no safe way of dealing with radioactive waste despite decades of well-funded research.

d.. Misinformation and lack of accountability have marked the government of Thailand and most other countries in their efforts to develop nuclear energy programs. In most cases where the democratic process has been allowed to operate, citizens have rejected nuclear power.



e.. Nuclear energy is no solution to the build-up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere that lead to climate change. Because levels of electricity generated in nuclear power plants cannot be adjusted, conventional power plants **MUST** operate along side them to meet surplus needs during times of higher electricity demand.

f.. Nuclear power supports a development model which condones ever increasing through-flows of energy, recognizes no limits for industrial growth, and which is inherently violent in that it encourages humans to exploit and manipulate the world for their own selfish desires.

g.. Nuclear power programs are inextricably linked to the development of nuclear weapons, which themselves drain economies of scarce capital and contribute to fear and violence between nations.

What Alternatives we Propose

a.. To reform the policy and structure of power utilities.

b.. To use renewable energy

sources such as solar, wind, and biogas and learn from indigenous approaches to sustainable living. Governments should encourage efficient technologies and conservation in all energy sectors.

c.. Existing nuclear power programs should be phased out in favour of these sustainable alternatives.

We must realize that we can begin solving our energy problems only when we develop energy visions rooted not in greed and unlimited growth, but in peoples actual needs, and which have physical health, ecological balance and social well-being as their goals.

Dying in the West, Nuclear Power Targets Asian Market

When it was being developed in the 1950's, nuclear energy was heralded as the passport to a modern age of universal affluence, in which unlimited supplies of clean energy would be "too cheap to meter." Without fathoming the depth of its problems, many nations jumped on

the nuclear bandwagon to meet their industrial economies growing energy demand, and to provide cover and support for nuclear weapons production, the Siamese twin of nuclear power. But resistance to the nuclear industry grew in the 60s and 70s, and nuclear power took a serious hit with the partial meltdown at Three Mile Island in the U.S. in 1979. Seven years later, the Soviet Union's Chernobyl accident further damaged the industry's position. Consequently, nuclear power has been demystified for much of the worlds' citizenry who are unwilling to accept nuclear power's realities: the social and environmental costs and risks at all phases of the nuclear fuel cycle (mining, transport, reprocessing, nuclear fission, reprocessing, disposal), the critical yet unsolved dilemma of waste disposal, the staggering economic burden, and the lack of public accountability that tends to characterizes most countries' programs. Seeing its true colors—expensive, deadly, unjust—people in those nations with nuclear

programs continue to fight successfully (with some exceptions) to oppose its further growth and to phase it out.

As a result, the nuclear industry is on its last legs in many places. In the U.S., original proponent of the technology, no reactor orders have been placed since 1978. In Canada, no more reactors are being planned or built. In Western Europe, the major question is not whether to shut down nuclear reactors, but when. Even in France, often held up along with Japan as a "nuclear success," the Green Minister for the Environment in October 1998 called for a phase-out of nuclear energy there.

But just like the U.S. tobacco companies when facing a failing cigarette market at home, companies selling nuclear technology are exporting their unpopular goodies to the East and the developing world. They predicted a huge market opening when Asian economies begin booming in the 70's and 80's and the region developed a voracious energy appetite. While those selling the technology and others who stand to make large sums of money from nuclear programs may trumpet nuclear power as the salvation of industrializing countries, they are actually hoping for the reverse: that these nations will resuscitate the moribund industry by purchasing their nuclear reactors.

The No Nukes Asia Forum

Needless to say, there are many people who are disturbed by this trend and working to counter it. And these people have been linking up and forming networks to learn from each other and draw support. From October 28 through November 1, some 30 people of one such network gathered in

Thailand for the 6th annual No Nukes Asia Forum (NNAF). Delegates came from India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand. (Koreans have attended in past years, and it is hoped that China and Pakistan will join future forums.) First they met for two days in Bangkok, listening to each other's experiences and discussing alternatives to nuclear power. Then the forum moved south to talk with villagers and people's organizations in Chumphon and Surat Thani provinces, candidate sites (along with Nakorn Sri Thammarat) for nuclear power stations. Here, they offered support to the local communities trying to stay nuclear-free, shared their own countries' experiences with nuclear power, and listened to how the situation is developing in Thailand.

Thailand's Nuclear Situation

They learned that the Thai government is making serious preparations to bring in nuclear power. At Ongarak in Nakorn Nayok Province, just north of Bangkok, the Office of Atomic Energy for Peace (OAEP) is planning a nuclear research facility, with a 10-megawatt experimental reactor. At the same time, Thailand's power utility, Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) has been playing up nuclear power's benefits while ignoring its costs and dangers. With production assistance from Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, EGAT has used television cartoon ads, printed ads, and distributed printed materials to the public. It has done extensive public relations work at the potential plant sites, including distributing promotional videos and booklets to schoolchildren. It has even started arranging to

buy land for nuclear plants. Because of the recent economic crisis, EGAT has said that no nuclear power plants will be built within the next 10 years, but their goal in the meantime is convincing the public, particularly where the plants might be sited, that nuclear energy is necessary, beneficial and safe.

For the most part, the local people aren't convinced, and are in fact opposed. Many villagers near the planned research facility in Nakorn Nayok grow vegetables for a living. They worry that, regardless of whether their produce is actually contaminated by the nuclear facility, buyers will fear that it is, and the villagers will lose their markets and their livelihoods. They are also concerned about health effects from radiation and for the water quality in their irrigation systems. In June, villagers took a letter opposing the center to the Prime Minister. Various academics and have joined in calling for the project to be abandoned. Similarly, in Chumphon and Surat Thani are opposed to a nuclear plant. Most villagers are not selling their land, even with offers as high as two million baht per rai.

One of the main fears is about the various associated health hazards. People are also beginning to realize that the OAEP and EGAT are providing a misleading and irresponsible picture of nuclear energy and are making decisions and colluding with foreign companies largely behind closed doors. Any kind of criticism is being either ignored or dealt with in non-democratic ways. For example, General Atomic (GA) was awarded the contract for construction of the OAEP's experimental reactor. But in 1996, in light of the fact that GA has no previous experience in

building a 10-megawatt reactor, the committee which reviewed the government's decision to award the contract voted 5-to-1 to cancel it. Before the committee's decision could ever be implemented however, the OAEP quickly replaced four of the committee members. Today, despite serious doubts about the company's experience and safety standards, GA still holds the contract and has been paid at least 652 million baht.

Other Countries' Situations

As delegates to the NNAF listened to each other over the four days, a clear pattern for Asian countries emerged: nuclear power is being pushed despite overwhelming public resistance. In the Philippines, the government has targeted ten sites and launched a massive information campaign, despite the failure of the sole existing nuclear plant, which never came on line due to technical problems and bribery during its construction. Likewise, Indonesia has no nuclear plants yet, only a government that is continuing its pro-nuclear campaign despite recent economic and social upheaval. India's nuclear program had been floundering with cost overruns and technical problems; its ten reactors perform at the lowest efficiency of any country in the world. But after the nuclear weapons tests by India and Pakistan in May 1998 and the pro-nuclear hype that followed, the nuclear energy budget increased by 67%, allowing plans for two 500 megawatt plants (and more weapons development) to proceed. In Taiwan, citizens' groups are hoping that international pressure can help stop a fourth nuclear power plant from being constructed, which would send a clear signal to Japanese compa-

nies like Mitsubishi that they will not find an easy market in Asia for their nuclear technology. Japan is also stubbornly planning an additional 20 plants by 2010, despite accidents which continue to plague its 52 existing plants, and the lack of any method for waste disposal.

General Trends

Why are certain countries still pursuing nuclear power when its costs and risks are so obvious? When confronted with the fact that there is no safe way of disposing of nuclear waste, proponents answer, "We will certainly find a way in the future." Also, there is a general fascination with sophisticated technology like nuclear power and an assumption that nuclear countries are more modern. It is a cover for the preparation of weapons grade uranium or plutonium and therefore indispensable for nuclear weapons production. And the vast sums of money that big infrastructure projects put in the pockets of well-positioned people cannot be underestimated.

But the most important factor is that governments are finding it harder to respond to their citizens' wishes and are increasingly under the influence of large corporations. A corporation has the same legal rights as a person, but unlike the individual, has vast finances and teams of talented personnel which can be focussed on achieving the corporation's agenda: profit. Their influence, especially when they collaborate with each other, enables them to reshape the legal and economic structure of individual nations to satisfy their own wishes. They support the predominant approach to governance, which posits an increasing GNP, and other measures of economic growth as

the true standard of success, and so gives them top priority. Never mind that such growth invariably removes control of resources from the hands of local people and comes at the expense of local culture, human health, balanced ecosystems, and meeting basic human needs. It is in this context that big infrastructure projects that like nuclear plants are still being pursued: in providing energy for an ever-expanding economy they support the "unlimited growth" model which corporations have made such a killing on. Also, nuclear power plants are themselves sources of corporate profit, given their tremendous expense and international contracting.

Alternatives

Because it is not enough to just oppose nuclear power, the forum's second day in Bangkok concentrated on examining existing and possible alternatives. During the other four days as well, delegates could often be found talking about this in small groups. They recognized that we need to reform our power utilities and push for energy efficiency and conservation measures in the consumer and industrial sectors. They realized that we must protect and learn from indigenous peoples' approaches to using energy while implementing renewable energy technologies like solar, wind and biogas. Finally, it was understood that all of these various ways must be rooted in an energy vision that has meeting people's basic living requirements as its objective. As one friend from India paraphrased Gandhi on the second day, "There is enough for everyone's need, but not everyone's greed."

*Sucitto Bhikkhu
and Pipop Udomittipong*

Social Venture Network: Capitalists with a New Face

A recent meeting between Thai and European businessmen found ways to make money and serve society at the same time.

Phinant Chotirosseranee may have very little in common with Body Shop *grande dame* Anita Roddick, but last week the Kanchanaburi native received an honorary award from the Social Venture Network (SVN) Europe organisation, of which the Body Shop is a member. (see page 51)

SVN Europe is an association of business leaders who believe they can use their money-making companies to create a more just, humane and sustainable world. Set up in Amsterdam in 1993, some of their big name members include the Body Shop, Esprit, Auchan Group, the Rabo Bank, Scott Bader Commonwealth Ltd,

and Ben and Jerry's Benelux bv.

The association said Mrs. Phinant is a great example of one who fights against big business for the sake of the environment. Why? As Ms Roddick herself once said: "If you think you are too small to make a difference, you must have never spent a night with a mosquito in your bedroom."

Originally a lone crusade against a multi-billion-baht state project that threatened to destroy pristine forest along the Thailand-Burma border, Mrs Phinant's campaign eventually snowballed into nationwide debate on the issue of development vs. conservation.

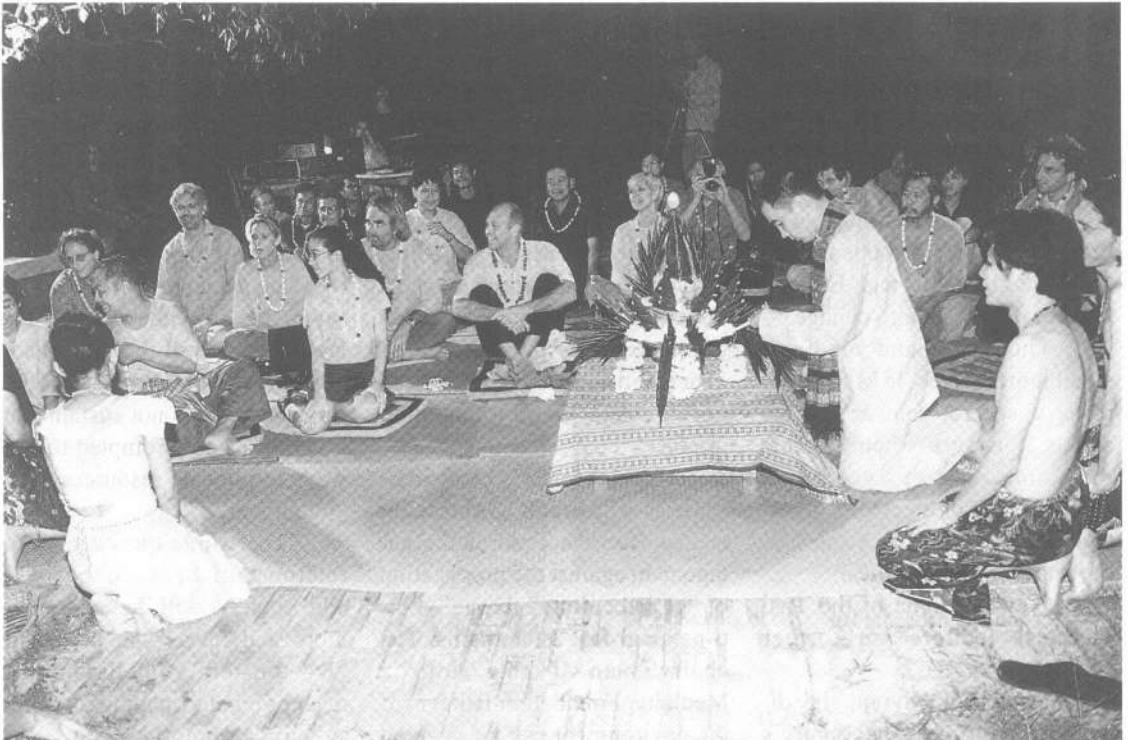
Other recipients of this year's SVN Europe awards were Boonsong Chansongrassamee, another Kanchanaburi native who

fought alongside Mrs Phinant; human rights lawyer Wasant Panich; and the Khaosod newspaper.

The award ceremony was probably the first of its kind in Thailand.

A group of western business representatives came to exchange experiences with their Thai counterparts. And despite differences in backgrounds, both found they spoke a common language when it came to the philosophies and strategies of conducting business.

Profits no longer dominate boardroom meetings. Even the idea that you make money first in order to support charity later is looked down upon as merely "goody-goody" and perpetuates the status quo.





Together with its sister organisations in North and Latin Americas, SVN Europe's members have links with over 2,000 like-minded businesses. A plan is under way to set up a similar network in Asia, with Bangkok as a hub of all activities. The first conference of Social Venture Network Asia is slated to be held here in early 1999.

"We invited the SVN group here because we want to start a dialogue among what we think are the new generation of business men and women," said Sulak Sivaraksa, founder of the Spirit in Education Movement, which hosted the meeting.

"If the world is to change at all," added Josh Mailman, who initiated the SVN groups in both the United States and Europe, "business will have to change."

"The small and medium-sized enterprises [SMEs] will place a special role as change agents, thanks to their flexible size and pregressive social values. Many of the SMEs investors went through students' movements in the sixties."

Likewise, some of the Thai business leaders are former activists.

Theeraphol Niyom, the director of Plan, one of the country's

biggest architecture and publishing groups, narrated how his enterprise was originally founded with a clandestine purpose. During the seventies, at the height of military-dominated regime, the company's revenue was secretly channelled to support activities of the underground Communist Party of Thailand. Presently his conglomerate continues to support social activities. "We probably give away more free [architectural] designs than any other company in the country," Mr Theeraphol said.

When it comes to marketing strategies, both parties also found similarities in attitudes.

Joyce Meuzelaar, secretary of SVN Europe and an advertising consultant, cited the Buddhist teaching of non-attachment as one of her main pieces of advice to clients: They must seek their own identity, and shouldn't try to get the whole world to buy their products.

Ms. Meuzelaar's niche marketing approach somewhat echoes Rotsana Tositrakul's antagonism against the propagation of "global culture" through multi-national fast food chains. The chairwoman of Thai Holistic Medicine Foundation believes if the environment can be saved at

all, the first effort must go towards preserving local culture. Her organisation has been running projects and campaigns for almost two decades to raise public awareness on the significance of herbal medicine and organic products.

New values, beside monetary, have been coined to represent the goal of these socially-conscious organisations. Eckart Wintzen, whose company imports American-made ice-cream Ben and Jerry into Europe, said the delicacy stands out from the crowd because it uses "emotional" ingredients. They make sure what goes into making the product comes from fair trade transactions. Mr Wintzen claimed his company spends virtually none on advertising. But their name keeps showing up in the news through their "social projects."

Thawatchai Tositrakul, manager of a farmer-run rice mill in Yasothon province, says his group sees the number of jobs it generates for locals to be far more important than the amount of cash it can make. The mill continues to hire locals through all stages of production, unlike other operations which cut down cost by resorting to machinery. This has helped curb the flow of migration to the cities.

Mr. Mailman concluded by saying the present economic collapse has proved that the trickle down theory no longer works. Rapid growth is not sustainable. So all of us are prompted to find ways to allocate resources more "intelligently."

"The whole question of the relationship between business and society will be addressed more and more," he predicted. "By the term 'intelligently' I mean, you start paying attention to environmental issues and

energy efficiency. You make sure there is not an outflow of resources going into pesticides and insecticides, which are poisoning the land and creating

health problems for the workers.

"Our association is thus for people who who want to change the system and make it function more effectively from both an

economic and moral point of view."

Vasana Chinvarakorn



TICD organized a new kind of temple fair at Wat Thongnavaguna in connection with SVN meeting in Bangkok to conscientize the Thai public on alternative to consumerism.

Sulak's schedule

1998

- Nov. 15-18 Interreligious dialogue of world religions by Asian Intellectuals, Manila, Philippines
- Dec. 8-11 The Human Rights Defenders Summit : The International Assembly, Paris, France
- Dec. 25 Criminal Court on Yanada Pipeline

1999

- Jan. 25 The Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) and Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO) Annual Conference, Kanchanaburi
- Feb. 3-6 Annual National Workshop at Australia Tibet Council, Melbourne, Australia
- Apr. 15-18 Buddhist-Christian Dialogue in Indianapolis, USA
- 23-25 Teaching Intensive Course at The Naropa Institute, Boulder, USA



Marching to the Court at Kanchanaburi
7 March 1998

Sulak Stands for Trial to Expose Truths

Eighth months past after the round up of protesters against the construction of the natural gas pipeline from Burma to Siam. Among the arrested was Sulak Sivaraksa who has founded the Kalayanamitra Council as an alliance of organizations to raise awareness of the public, in Siam as well as the world over, about human rights abuse and environmental destruction related to the pipeline's construction. He was arrested on the charge of preventing the Petroleum Authority of Thailand (PTT), owner of the project, from completing the pipeline.

Since last year environmental and human rights activists have cried out against the construction of the pipeline to bring 525 MMcf of natural gas from the Matanban bay of Burma to feed the combined cycle and thermal units with total capacity of 4,600 megawatts in Ratchaburi, West of Siam. In Burma, evidence has been established that a number of ethnic populations have been forced to help in construction. Worse than that there have been reports of rape and different kinds of torture against the minorities. Just recently, the accusation as to forced labour has been confirmed by a report of the US Labour Department, which will be sent to the meeting of the International Labour Organization in November this year as well.

Apart from human rights abuse, a number of local and national organizations concerning environment have been campaigning against the pipeline on the ground that it involves destruction of forests. The pipeline sneaks through a very fragile, but

important eco-system for as long as 50 Kms, and has affected the habitation of many rare species. It was argued that re-routing was possible to avoid the destruction, but the authority ruled it out, and said that the area will be reforested after the pipeline has been laid down. However, according to our latest survey, soil erosion has taken place extensively in the area, and it is posing grave danger to the habitation of animals and fauna in the forest.

Thus, for nearly three months, activists had been camping in the forest to block the construction. Sulak Sivaraksa had joined them and was arrested on 6 March 1998. The charge was pressed against him on the following day, to which he categorically denied. Even though the penalty is minor, a fine of 1,000 baht, Sulak maintains that he would fight the case to the end in order to get exposed information as to environmental destruction and human rights abuse of the project to the public. The first trial took place on 27 October, during which a PTT official espoused details of the project and of Sulak's violations. It was an opportunity that we could ask to view the related contracts between PTT and the Yadana consortium which is consisted of the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE), Unocal, Total, and PTTEP (PTT Exploration and Production, a subsidiary of PTT). We hope to use the court order to demand exposition of many more contracts whose access had been denied by PTT.

In the meanwhile, PTT has to suffer losses as to its inability to use the gas. According to the

purchase contract, the gas delivery should have been commenced since last July. But due to the delay in construction of the first combined cycle unit of the Ratchaburi power plant, the gas has not been released. However, a clause in the contract stipulates that the purchasing party or PTT in this case has to bear the interest incurred during the delay period. Up to the end of this year, PTT has to pay at least 4,000 millions baht (110 millions USD) as it did not succeed in convincing the Burmese authority to relax the term. According to the latest announcement by EGAT (Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand), the first unit will be completed in April.

EGAT has failed to complete the unit due to its lack of financial liquidity. It has sought for World Bank to guarantee its bonds to be launched in the global market to raise 100 millions USD for the Ratchaburi power plant. Anyhow, in August 1998, Earth Rights International, activists in Siam and the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) in Washington DC sent a letter to the board of directors at the World Bank, to ask the bank not to fund the Ratchaburi plant because of the human rights and environmental implications of supporting the project. Convinced by the plea, the World Bank has replied to the effect that the guarantee will be dropped. Currently, Egat is seeking for loans from Japan Exim Bank.

To make contribution towards legal assistance for Sulak Sivaraksa, please contact

Kalayanamitra Council

Education and Buddhism

In honor of the Ven. Prayuth Payutto

We place very much hope in education in this so-called modern world. Today's students will be the leaders of tomorrow's world. That is the challenge, to them, to us. But is it also our hope?

That depends not only on the universities but also on the students. And after more than forty years as a professor I have come to know two types of students. One goes in for schooling and sees the University as a school. The other type goes in for education, and sees the university as a great opportunity to enrich oneself, the society, and the world. The two types do not exclude each other; a good student will be on both tracks.

The schooling type sits through four years, passively, soaking in what is said, looking dull. In the end there is a diploma. He or she watches the professor carefully; takes note of phrases the professor evidently likes. When the exam comes, those phrases will reappear. He may understand absolutely nothing. But human beings being what we are he may score some points. We professors are weak; we like to hear our own ideas repeated. He or she gets the diploma, possibly also a job, but that is also all he gets. He will fill an empty slot, a hole in a company, a ministry waiting. But there is very little to fill the hole inside him or her. He did not take on the challenge offered by any university in the world, even the poorest: to expand, to grow, and to spill over with creativity in the society, in the world. He did not seize the

opportunity for any type of spiritual growth. And this in his or her most sensitive years when the spirit is most opens, a fresh field for seeds to grow.

The education type doesn't just sit. He or she is intensely alive. Eyes are shiny. That student has some problem working at his heart and at his brain. He simply has to have an answer. He may not accept the answer he is given. Or if he does, he may just come up with a new problem. He has understood what science, research and education is all about. There is no final answer. The only thing that is final is that there always will be more questions, just like the child going on and on: But why is that so? And schooling, unfortunately is a way of killing that child in us, creating an illusion of final answers, as if the creation of the world were done once and forever.

But the world is a scene of perennial creation, of flow-anicca, not a final state of affairs. Education should reflect this, not handing down answers but subjecting them to dialog. So the student needs somebody for dialogs.

He may get fifty percent of what he learns from books and self-study. The schooling type will underline, the education type will paint the page with exclamation signs and question marks, expressing his own excitement, having a virtual dialog with the author, maybe even a real dialog-through mail or e-mail.

He will spend at least thirty percent of his time as co-study, having dialog with other students, trying out answers on each

other, discovering together.

And twenty percent he will get from the teacher, and even then to a large extent through questions and comments. He knows that the more he participates the more he learns, the more he will get in return.

I know who will be the most enriched: the education student. The schooling student may just get rich. I know who will move society and the world ahead: the education-the dialog type.

But beware: both professors and administrators may prefer the type who slides through the university like a piece of soap, well greased. For the university to become a mutual learning community both sides have to cooperate.

Why is this so important? Why not just get a good position, put the diploma on the wall, raise a family, and build a house? Join the 4-4-4 club around the world: four members in the family, a four-room apartment and four wheels on the car? The most successful ideology in history, the bourgeois way of life, today found all over, North, East, South and West?

The answer is simple: because he is cheating himself and others in addition.

Think of the privilege of being a student permitted to dedicate four years to his/her own inner enrichment, expanding and growing. If all you want is a diploma you are a cheat, of yourself to start with. You could have used the time to build meaning into your own life, studying what the great minds humanity have

had to say, challenge them. Instead you just passively accept what you hear. Why demand so little?

But you are also cheating your professors. Of course there are professors who turn the pile of lecture notes and play the same cassette over again. Isn't it your responsibility to help them grow? To ask them challenging questions? Every challenge is an invitation to grow, and a good student will of course permit the professor to say, look, I do not know the answer but I'll try to come up with something for next week. Have you lived up to your responsibility to the professors? You may not believe it but professors are human too. The university as learning community has to have two way traffic.

And you are cheating your own society. The world is in a crisis right now. On the surface it is an economic crisis, mainly in the finance system. But underneath is a much more important crisis. Call it a spiritual void, a lack of soul. A lack of identity a lack of meaning. If you as a student don't build your own meaning through hard work, through questioning and answering, dialog, then how can you expect society to find that meaning? People in general so not enjoy your privilege, of having time, of having easy access to resources that grow the more you use them, not the more money you through at them.

And you are cheating the world. There is suffering out there. What is the purpose of you becoming more international, learning languages, travelling and all that if you don't relate to the real world? In Buddhist studies the Sanskrit word for suffering: dukkha plays a major role. A brilliant American-Chinese, Dr.

Ralph Siu, has constructed a scale of suffering from 1-9: 9 means I cannot take it, I want to leave this life, 1 means the concern you have when there is a dentist appointment tomorrow, a slight uneasiness. One dukkha is the unit, one person suffering at level one for 24 hours.

As you can imagine there is an enormous amount of suffering, very high level of dukkha, many places; for instance when the bereaved are bemoaning those who did not survive a war, an earthquake. So Siu suggests that we may not always agree on what is the god society. But we can agree on what is the bad society: people deprived of their lives, of their well being, of their freedom, of their identity or meaning with life. The problem of the world, of humankind, now as yesterday or tomorrow, forever. Your problems.

So maybe we could all meet in the effort to reduce the suffering in the world. You. And you. And I. But if that is what we want and not just to serve ourselves, then we have to join the university and any school in the spirit of the learning- community- a true sangha in the Buddhist.

And this is a far cry from the giant universities of today, with 10,000, even 100,000 students. These institutions are like the dinosaurs, huge, but with little brain and even less heart. Rather

1000 learning communities, in each municipality, each ward of the city with 100 co-learners in each, than one mega-university with 100,000 students, unusually in the nation's capital. Rather many small rooms where students can come together for co-study than giant auditoriums for the delivery of messages called lecture.

The German word for lecture, *Vorlesung*, actually means to read in front of the students. What is the purpose if students can read themselves, why not go straight to the dialog with the professor and among the students- after each student has exposed the material to an inner dialog, with him/herself?

Another word for "inner dialog" is meditation; another word for outer dialog, with others, is to meditate together. Meditation can be mind emptying, to prepare the clean slot for maximum sensitivity. But it can also be mind filling. The best form of meditation would perhaps oscillate between the two.

Buddhism is co-creative, meditative, active, aiming at reducing dukkha and increasing sukkha. Education is a way of filling our giant schooling institutions with the Buddhist spirit. And at the same time giving those institutions a very concrete mission: the Buddhist agenda.

Johan Galtung

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Globalization and Human Development

I feel very privileged to speak at the UNESCO headquarters with the deputy director general of UNESCO in honor of Fr. L.J. Lebre. I hope UNESCO will soon announce that our late Siamese statesman, Pridi Banomyang to be a great man that we should recognize as the one who really cared for human development, not only in his own country but in the whole region of South-east Asia. He brought democracy to Siam in 1932 and founded the first open University of Moral and Political Sciences. During the Japanese occupation of Siam in the Second World War, he started the free Thai movement in collaboration with the Alliance powers. Hence Siam was not defeated in the War. We were even admitted to the UN before Sweden. He also helped his neighboring countries to gain independence from the French and Dutch empires.

Mr. Pridi was educated in France in the 1920's where he planned in Paris to end the feudal regime of absolute monarchy in his country. He was a successful statesman and educator for fifteen years after 1932 but unfortunately in 1947 the military coup pushed him out of power. At this time the military dictators even changed the name of the country from Siam to Thailand. Bearing in mind the false western ideas of fascism and Nazism and uprooting us from our traditional culture. Mr. Pridi had to live in exile for thirty-seven years. He died in Paris in 1983. Now the Royal Thai government has proposed that UNESCO recognize his centenary in the year 2000.

Mr. Pridi was pushed out of

the country because the Thai generals held all of the power. But even the Americans who had worked with him during the war turned against him because he would not kowtow to the American plan of neocolonialism. Mr. Pridi wanted the entire Southeast Asian region to be free of control by any superpower. Hence the Americans even backed the Thai leader who had declared war on them during WWII and who at one time was set to be prosecuted by the Americans as a war criminal. This is who the Americans were satisfied to have replaced Mr. Pridi.

If Mr. Pridi were alive, he would be very much against the present trend of ungodly globalization controlled by the transnational corporations, with the IMF, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and the like—with the emphasis on unethical capitalism and hyper-consumerism, the demonic world religion. Then we have so called free trade, which in fact is not fair trade at all, especially for the small people.

I was surprised however when Dr. Wolfensohn, the President of the World Bank, invited me with leaders of eight other religious traditions to meet with him at Lambeth Palace last March. He told us that the World Bank wanted to change drastically—not to support big infrastructure anymore. The Bank wants to work more with NGOs and to learn from various spiritual traditions. He asked me about the economic collapse in my country in July 1997. I said as a Buddhist that was a sign sent by heaven. In Buddhism, we called it a *devaduta*,

heavenly messengers. They come to tell us that if we are mindful and skilful, we can overcome this crisis-- indeed any crisis. But going to the IMF for help is not Buddhist. It means that we promote more globalization.

When Prince Siddhartha, the founder of Buddhism, saw an old man, a sick man and a dead man, he felt that these were heavenly messages. Hence, he left the palace to seek the truth. After six years he awoke from greed, hatred and delusion. That is when he became the Buddha, the awakened one who overcome birth and death.

The President of the World Bank wanted me to be more specific, so I told him that globalization is of course synonymous with development and colonization. Although my country was not colonized politically, we were colonized intellectually and alienated from our Buddhist roots. Hence the Buddhist Kingdom of Siam has more prostitutes than monks; people have been uprooted from their villages. Bangkok, once a beautiful city—the so-called Venice of the East, is now the most polluted and ugly. People have been brainwashed by the World Bank and the American experts that to be self-reliant and contented is very dangerous. The American and international business experts told our government that if we were deeply rooted in our spiritual tradition, we would never be a developed country. Unfortunately our governments believed in these so-called experts. Hence we now have a bigger than ever gap between the rich and the poor and our environment has been destroyed.

Many of the poor have become addicted to drugs, superstition and gambling, and they are landless laborers on the land that they once owned. Many poor people have migrated to the big cities where their conditions are even worse than before. They sell their children to become prostitutes and slave laborers, in so many cases they have lost all hope.

Yet, through Buddhist meditation on mindful breathing, some monks have helped a number of people empower themselves spiritually. Now they have joined together, half a million strong in the group known as the Assembly of the Poor. They have united for the purpose of becoming self-reliant and they are demanding their right to do so from the government.

Some of us help in the training of these grassroots organizations in our country and we have expanded our encounter with the grassroots, people's organizations, to neighboring countries. Although working on different community projects they are facing and sharing challenges with each other and their peers. Their communities are tackling burning issues and together working out possible solutions to problems like food security, lack of education, hand to mouth living and debt. Their projects all have an element of self reliance so as not to become dependent on outside funding with most becoming self sufficient within three years. Projects include credit unions, community income generation, sustainable agriculture and leadership training. Many of the participants are Christian ministers and their experiences in Siam and the Philippines have become the basis for lively sermons that question the dominant development model and promote

community and appropriate scale development.

In Siam engaged Buddhist projects are experimenting using meditation as a means for community awareness and imaginative reinterpretation of Buddhist traditions. One example is ordaining trees to stop them being felled. Buddhist monks and nuns are challenged and educated by SEM & TICD workshops that apply the Buddhist teachings to social work and conflict resolution.

Now we have founded the SE Asia Centre for Sustainable Communities as a spiritual base, which welcomes people from all faiths. All programmes aspire to be culturally relevant to the diversity of ethnic/tribal cultures and participatory in all aspects. Gender awareness and sensitivity will be considered.

The demonstration technologies will be culturally appropriate and where possible made with parts available locally. They will be those that can help alleviate poverty without stimulating over consumption.

The programmes will be grassroots oriented and help to build civil society by empowering leadership from the bottom up.

Ecological lifestyles will be encouraged and programmes to restore and rehabilitate what has already been disturbed within our region through teaching community development skills and environmental restoration technique and practices.

The courses offered will draw from several broad areas of alternative education such as spirituality, holistic worldview, community skills development and sustainable development in agricultural and small business methods.

To enhance participants feeling for their own spirituality we will offer spiritual walks, meditation, yoga and other contemplative practices. Broadening the students perspectives will entail looking at holistic world views which are informed and open minded with regard to world issues, and gender/race awareness. Deep ecology is also a part of broadening perspectives by examining and perhaps restructuring worldviews. Healthy communities are also a part of alternative education. Learning how to organize communities, use conflict resolution skills and consensus decision making can help people lead happier, healthier lives and to avoid being so vulnerable to deceptive promises by big business in regard to development projects in rural, less organized areas. Rice banks and other locally run projects are sustainable and give a sense of well being to those in a community. Finally sustainable technology can improve the prosperity of communities and indeed nations without depleting the land and sapping the peoples spirits. Some examples are: slope agriculture techniques, bio-intensive agriculture, composting techniques, food storage and preservation techniques, sustainable forestry techniques, well-drilling, small-scale sanitation systems and primary/ secondary water, treatment systems and there are many other technologies that really do benefit the people in a direct way.

As requested by the President of the World Bank, I have sent the details of this proposal to the World Bank in New York, with a copy to its representative in Bangkok. Hopefully we can pursue the matter constructively further in the near future.

For me this is not a new utopia but it is a possible path of human development with a spiritual dimension, which I feel is akin to what Fr. Lebreton stood for. If the World Bank is not interested in real human development, which must of course include local wisdom and appropriate technology, it is their loss. I know that the people will win.

For us, the Siamese, the year 2000 will be the centenary of our late senior statesman, Pridi Banomyong. We hope that the

next century will be for our friends and us the beginning of real human development. Perhaps the center Lebreton may wish to collaborate with us in this venture.

Fr. Lebreton is well known in France, Lebanon, Africa and Latin America for his pioneering work regarding human development and social justice. But he is not so well known in Southeast Asia and China. Mr. Pridi and Fr. Lebreton served the same cause, of social justice and human development, albeit in different parts

of the world. Perhaps by bringing the message of Fr. Lebreton to Asia by way of collaboration in celebrating the centenary of Mr. Pridi the center Lebreton may bring his message and fame world wide. Perhaps next year is a good year for a Pridi-Lebreton colloquium here at UNESCO? Who knows what the future holds as we all continue to struggle to advance the missions that were begun by these two great men?

Sulak Sivaraksa.

13 November 1998

Searching For Harmony

In one of her poems she imagines "glamorous blue lagoons" and "the blooming of coral rocks" yet as Doris Kareva strolled the streets of Bangkok last week the reality of actually being in the tropics, of having managed to escape, however temporarily, the wintry temperatures of her native Tallinn, still hadn't quite sunk in.

"I've had to pinch my arms to remind myself that I'm not dreaming," she says, treating me to an appropriately dreamy smile.

In recent years Russian visitors have become a common sight in Bangkok and Pattaya but Kareva said that for Estonians Thailand is still a very exotic and faraway destination. Not that there was any hesitation, though, when she received an invitation from the Spirit in Education Movement, a Bangkok-based alternative institute of education, to give one of the two keynote speeches at their annual gathering last Wednesday.

It would have been next to impossible for her to have come here if Estonia were still under Russian rule, Kareva says, since at that time citizens needed special permits to leave the USSR. "You had to watch your words. There was strong censorship."

There were compensations, however. For, back then poets were members of Estonia's elite, a privileged group who could earn money and fame just by scribbling down a few words in praise of Lenin.

But that was nearly a decade ago. And while many outsiders may assume that life must surely be a lot better for Estonians since the Baltic republic regained its independence, Kareva, an accomplished poet with 10 collections of verse published to date, says the reality is not quite that rosy.

"The number of copies of books [print runs] were 10 times larger than nowadays; 40,000 copies for a newly published book was common back then. And good books tended to sell out in one day. Today, however, you're lucky if you can sell 4,000. And that takes a few months."

Recently turned 40, Kareva characterizes life during the Soviet era as being secure but lacking in freedom, while today Estonians enjoy freedom but no job security.

She is philosophical about this, however, remembering something her father, a composer

of classical music, taught her as a young child.

"'Whatever you want,' he said, 'you can achieve, only remember — there is no gain without loss.' And this is where people often go wrong imagining that they can have all without giving up anything."

Quite a few of her fellow poets have had difficulty finding suitable subject matter, she remarks wryly, now that there is longer a general secretary of the USSR to eulogize. Some, she says, have even turned their hand to writing crime novels in order to "please the masses", a state of affairs she considers "a sad paradox".

Yet neither the change in the political system nor the problems other poets are having adjusting to economic realities are matters which particularly interest Kareva. As literary editor of an influential weekly magazine and secretary general of the Estonian National Commission for Unesco, she says she is much more concerned these days with resolving conflicts within herself and between herself and the world at large.

This process, she says, is an art in itself. And like all art forms,

it requires both study and practice to master.

Kareva made a very early start on her voyage of self-exploration. By the age of four, even before she had learned how to write, she was already composing poetry with the help of her parents. And by eight, she had begun to invent her very own fantasy world.

"All the gods and goddesses I created were to meet my various needs, my fantasies. They had their own temples that no one knew [the location of] except me. And I used to go to those places and talk to my gods and goddesses. I used to write a wish on a small piece of paper and throw it to the wind. That was my ritual sacrifice."

But to communicate with these personal deities required her to cultivate her language skills. "You had to be brief and [only] talk about the most essential [things]. And there had to be respect because this was a sacred speech."

For Kareva, there is nothing more sacred than poetry.

"In a way it's close to a *mantra*. It's like a healing. Someone is dead. It can't be undone so you create a poem to heal the wound."

Ordinarily she finds most poetry "readable" but Kareva says she has come to realise how vitally important it is for a poet to write only that which is truthful and sincere. This was brought home to her very clearly some years ago when she was trying to come to terms with the death of her first child.

"I couldn't read other poems because they seemed so superficial. But [Emily] Dickinson's talk about truth."

She says this period of mourning made her much more critical about poetry.

"The truth is visible; we all know it but it's not easy to say. Yet when a person speaks the truth we are shocked by the beauty of it."

As far as writers from the

East go, Kareva says she admires the work of Kahlil Gibran and Rabindranath Tagore. By the age of 14, she knew many of Tagore's poems off by heart.

It is the quintessential mystery of these men's work which attracts her. "Their, what I call, haunting style. Once you master this style you can capture the reader. But if a writer of low morality masters this style he can take you into all kinds of delusions. Political leaders sometimes do this. They speak in hypnotic ways."

As Kareva gained in years and self-understanding, she began writing didactic poetry, poems in which she attempted to convey her own life philosophy to the reader. She acknowledges, however, that poetry is just one way of doing this. "It's a kind of a short cut," she confides.

Life's sad paradoxes, she notes, always seem to come between actual reality and the realisation of one's higher aspiration.

She says the during the Soviet era it took a lot of courage for an artist to specialise in painting only flowers, for instance, since this was not considered in keeping with the proper "revolutionary spirit". Back then many artists created work in which they did not really believe. "It was already bravery not to paint soldiers of the Red Army."

And the irony is that while Estonians now enjoy freedom of expression, many artists and writers are so haunted by the prospect of poverty that they dare not take risks for fear of alienating the mass market. Kareva knows this paradox well and says it is confined not just to poets or artists but to anyone who sees something wrong and chooses, for want of courage, to ignore it. One of the untitled poems she read out at the SEM meeting goes:

*Every night,
every morn
someone comes,*

*eyes burnt.
Does not say
what he saw
in the land
of the living*

While acknowledging that if one leads a courageous life one must be prepared to pay the price, Kareva believes this is the highest calling to which a human being can aspire. In another poem she entreats her readers to lead honest lives and speak truthfully, no matter the cost. Only then, she says, can one live life to the fullest extent of one's humanity.

*You, you are the one who is called
by the silence
suddenly, just while crossing the
river hand in hand with your own
shadow, who whispers:*

*The angels would envy you,
if you opened your wings,
if only you dared to touch
your innermost instrument, strings
of the soul.*

*For you, you are the one who is
blessed with the power
to speak the unspeakable.
You will be killed.*

*But the sound will be there,
everywhere, always, filling the
universe,
so you see: there is nothing to
fear.*

The topic of this year's SEM gathering, the fourth such event, was "The Path to Live Harmoniously in the Present World" SEM has published Kareva's speech ("Lesson of Harmony") and that of the other keynote speaker, Latvian poet Guntars Godins ("Do I Answer by Putting the Question?") in a Thai/English booklet priced at Bt75. To order a copy, write to SEM, 60/2 Soi Tivanont 34, Amphur Muang, Nonthaburi 11000. Phone: 950-6601-2. Fax: 580-3711.

*Pravit Rojanapruet
The Nation,
November, 29, 1998*

Torch of Victory

Waiting to see others die

In the act of selfless service
At the peak of a hunger strike
As the law forced them to break their
Oath
Of starvation unto death
You chose to dignify their sacrifice
As they were taken away
By offering your own body
As a torch of victory.

Thubten Ngodup

As a diamond you disappear
Into space
Leaving no trace of impurities.

Was it an act of nonviolence

To destroy yourself like that?
Will it give rise to love
To courage and patience
In those who take up your way
And pursue your peaceful aim?

Or will your gesture of truth

Bring forth all rage and hatred
The end of humble endurance?

'There must be no malice

no fraud nor grossness of means
in the heart of nonviolence'
like that it was said by Gandhi.

Even in Tibet

There is nothing to lose but love.
Likewise for us in the west
No war is won by impatience.

May that sacrifice

Be seen as an act of patience
Rather than one of impatience.

May it be seen as a generous act

Rather than one of destruction

May it be seen as a perfect act

Rather than one of weakness.

May it stand as an example of doing whatever is
needed

Of giving wholeheartedly
Of showing unfailing strength.

May we learn to be equally fearless

Each in the way of our own.

Thubten Ngodup!

Wherever you are

Pray for us all to become devoted warriors of
peace.

May your fervent prayers be heard

As the song of the joyful release

As the wind of undying zeal

As the conch of wisdom union.

*By Karma Yeshe Wangmo in memory
of Thubten Ngodup who burned himself during
the Tibetan Youth Congress hunger strike.*

Angkarn Kalyanapong

A CONTEMPORARY BANGKOK POET

Marvelous Bangkok,

out of this world,

where the puppets have declared themselves

great,

their lives a whirl of stupidity

and confusion.

The more stupid and confused they grow

the more they celebrate.

Angkarn Kalyanapong

Translated by Susan Kepner

11th February is the poet's 72nd

birthday, thus he completes his 6th cycle anniversary

20 October 1998

The Prime Minister of Malaysia
Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad
Office of the Prime Minister
Sri Perdana Jalan Damansara
Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

As friends and acquaintances of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, we, the undersigned, wish to express our dismay over the recent developments in Malaysia. We were shocked by the injuries sustained by the former deputy Prime Minister while he was held in police custody, and hope the investigations currently being conducted will see the perpetrators being brought to justice.

We know Datuk Seri Anwar as an intellectual, a man of ideas and vision whose willingness to engage in dialog and discussion was appreciated by even those who don't share similar views.

We also join our voice to those calling for a fair trial of Datuk Seri Anwar. We believe it would be in the long term interest of Malaysia to ensure that the rule of law prevails, as any perceived miscarriage of justice would be detrimental to the reputation of the country which you have worked so hard to build.

Yours faithfully,

Members and friends of the Southeast Asian Study Group

Nancy Chng
Karina Constantino-David
John Dennis
Riaz Hassan
William Lim Siew Wai
Lena Lim
Goenawan Mohamad
Arun Senkutthuvan
Sulak Sivaraksa

24 August 1998

Dear Sulak,

Just received a copy of your biography. I'm taking it away to the country to read with great curiosity. As you know, I always love your books. Father Joe Maier has just sent me an article from the *Bangkok Post* about your continuing work on the Burma pipeline protest. What a business this whole story is. It's curious that in spite of the desire of governments like the American government to act in an ethical manner on the question, how in the final analysis they do nothing about the one thing that matters-i.e. the oil company which essentially funds the SLORC.

Two weeks ago, I closed a conference in Ottawa celebrating the 50th anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (in fact a Canadian wrote the first draft). I talked about your ideas in the speech. I hope you would have approved if you'd been there.

Adrienne sends all her best to your wife, as do I.

Yours,

John Ralston Saul

Toronto, Ontario
Canada

November 13, 1998

Dear Mr. Sivaraksa,

I was looking through my files and stuck by sudden horror at my own negligence in failing to write back to you after your kind letter. Please forgive me. It was so kind of you to respond to my letter and I appreciated your kind suggestion that I contact the Aga Khan foundation. I have recently completed researching this foundation and am preparing to submit some materials regarding the Maitreya Temple project in Ladakh, India. It is also nearing the deadline to submit to the World Monuments Fund. I have done this in the past, and although at that time, this project was not granted funds, I remain optimistic. I am very happy to announce that we received a grant of \$ 5000.00 from a private foundation here in New York with the promise of another \$ 300,000 from concerned private individuals. I nearly leapt into the air upon receiving this excellent news.

With all the conflict in the world and the sort of grip that religious fundamentalism and political power-mongering appear to have upon the minds of so many, it seems more important than ever to honor the symbolic values of Maitreya: hope, faith and peace.

I have heard so much about you from Ivan and hope that someday I will have the honor and pleasure of meeting you. It is with humility that I write at this very late date. I was very touched by the kindness and grace of your response. I hope that this letter finds you in good health and spirits.

May you have peace, fulfillment and many, many blessings.

Sincerely and respectfully yours,

Mechelle M. Becker
Architectural Art Conservator

Date: Mon, 23 Nov 1998 15:57:23 EST

Dear Khun Sulak,

I am sending this to all three email addresses I have for you and I hope this gets through to you on at least one of them! -- but maybe this is just typical American overkill!

I was delighted to find that Parallax Press has published *Loyalty Demands Dissent* and I have almost finished reading it. Parts of it read like a thriller, but all of it is full of wisdom. I have also enjoyed reading the various papers you gave me when I visited you earlier this year, particularly the paper on Alternative Development. I found the story of the developments in Siam quite fascinating. I discussed with my colleagues at Kumarian Press if we could publish it in this country, but the general feeling was that it was too specific to Thailand to appeal to our Kumarian Press's readership. Book publishing, as you well know, is a risky business. We published a collection of the late Soedjetmoko's writings and despite the admiration in which he was held, we have only been able to sell very few of them. I am arranging for a complimentary copy to be sent to you.

I will be returning to Thailand on January 3 and expect to be there for two to three months. I will as usual be staying with friends in Pattaya Catherine Wyatt-Morley, the author of *AIDS Memoir: Journal of an HIV Positive Mother* (of which I gave you a copy when we met) is going to be arriving on January 17 and will be joining us in Pattaya. She will be in Thailand until February 9. I am setting up meetings for her through Dr Somsak Chunharas in the Ministry of Health. She is a remarkable and courageous woman who feels called by God (she is a Christian) to educate people about the disease. I believe you would very much enjoy meeting her and I know that she would like to meet you. I hope we can arrange that.

I have just returned from a Hope in the Cities retreat where I met a young friend of mine, Patrick McNamara, who knows you from his own time in Thailand. I was also on the phone this morning to my friend and hostess in Pattaya, Janya KaewAroon, who told me that last week she heard you on TV (or it may have been radio) talking about the Wongsanit ashram.

With all best wishes. May you long continue to bring the light of the teachings of the Buddha to the consciousness of the peoples of Siam and elsewhere.

I look forward to seeing you again in the New Year.

Ian Mayo-Smith

To Walk Without Fear: The Global Movement To Ban Landmines

To Walk Without Fear is a comprehensive and authoritative account of the global movement to ban landmines. It brings together leading academics, senior policy makers, and prominent leaders of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to examine and draw lessons from the 'Ottawa Process' that culminated in December 1997 when over 120 states signed a convention to ban the use, sale, and production of landmines.

An essay by Nobel Laureate Jody Williams and Steve Goose, of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), describes how a global coalition of NGOs led the world toward a ban on landmines, while a chapter by the Canadian diplomats who orchestrated the 'Ottawa Process' takes the reader behind the scenes into the diplomatic arm-wrestling that resulted in Canada's leadership role. International specialists offer assessments of the military utility of mines (retired General Robert Gard), their humanitarian consequences (Alex Vines), the

role of the Red Cross (Stuart Maslen), landmine victims (Jerry White and Ken Rutherford), national ban campaigns (including Valerie Warmington and Mary Wareham), the problems of mine clearance (Don Hubert), and interpretations of the legal text of the treaty (Thomas Hajnoczi and Deborah Chatsis). Academic specialists analyze the policy process and negotiations, explore the political economy of mines, identify the implications of the treaty for the development of international humanitarian norms, democratization, and civil society, and Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs (Lloyd Axworthy) draws lessons from the Ottawa Process for other policy issues.

The book resulted from an unusual collaboration between universities, governments, and non-governmental organizations which developed in tandem with the negotiation process itself. Chapters were developed through a series of policy workshops, a seminar series, intensive focus-group discussions with govern-

ment officials and NGO members, and a 'lessons learned' exercise that brought together over 200 NGO and government participants immediately after the signing of the convention. As a result, the book provides a rich source of new information and analyses. It will be both timely and of enduring value to policy makers interested in drawing lessons from the Ottawa Process, to non-governmental organizations interested in replicating its results in other areas, to academic specialists and students interested in foreign policy and international affairs, and to the general public seeking an accessible and readable account of one of the most significant global movements in recent years.

It can be ordered through: Oxford University Press, Attn.: Ric Kitowski ISSR/College Exhibits Coordinator, 70 Wynford Drive, Don Mills, ON M3C 1J9, CANADA.

Ed. by Maxwell A. Cameron, Bob Lawson, and Brian W. Tomlin

Books Received

Voices from the Heart. Edited by: Shapiro, Eddie and Debbie. J.P.Tarcher/Putnam P.: New York, 1998

The subtitle of this book is 'A Compassionate Call for Responsibility'. It is a collection of essays by the visionaries of today such as the H.H. the Dalai Lama, Ram Das, Thich Nhat Hanh and many others. These essays all speak to the possibility and method of creating positive personal transformation and how we may

best share such positive growth through creating harmony in our environment

Asian New Urbanism. Lim, William S.. Select Books Pte. Ltd: Singapore, 1998

This book is a collection of articles and speeches about the rapid development of urban areas in Asia. Through the lens of architecture and assessing the physical environment imposed, especially on the poor, by rapid growth, Mr. Lim expresses his

concern about the widening inequality of the rich and poor in urban areas.

Buddhism and Nature Conservatism. Kabilisinh, Chattsumarn. Thammasat University Press: Bangkok, 1998

In this book the original texts of Buddhism are explored to reveal what they have to say about ecology. The deep insights of Buddhism into the causes of human behavior are linked to the effects they create on human behavior.

Citation for SVN Awardees

Ms. Bhinand Jotirosanee and Mr. Boonsong Chansongrasamee

Ms. Bhinand Jotirosanee and Mr. Boonsong Chansongrasamee are ordinary citizens and owners of small businesses in the town of Kanchanaburi. Despite their middle class background, their concern for environment is astounding. During the last two decades during which many big projects such as dam construction were implemented, they have been protesting and demanding such centrally planned development be revamped to save the environment. They have fearlessly stood in the forefront, and helped bring down several projects prone to destroy the local habitat of human beings and wildlife. Their most dramatic opposition was perhaps the case against the construction of pipeline from Burma to Thailand. For human rights and environmental reasons, both have staged numerous campaigns, and eventually risked their lives by camping in the forest for three months to block the construction. Such persons should be recognized to emphasize the fact that there is an increasing awareness among the middle class for environmental and social causes. After beginning with these bold leaders, the movement has grown to include all segments of society. Thus these brave activists and businesspersons have brought about a positive and nonviolent change. Local officials are still harassing Mr. Boonsong and we hope that this recognition by his fellow businesspersons from abroad will strengthen his spirit as he continues to struggle against inappropriate development.

Mr. Wasant Panich, Human rights lawyer

Law counseling can be very profitable career if one chooses to help only the rich. Choosing a noble path. Mr. Wasant instead looks for ways to help the oppressed who are often abused and manipulated because of their ignorance of the complexities of the legal system. In a country where enforcement of laws, and judiciary processes are influenced by political clout, many activists have been threatened unlawfully and unjustly. They need protection from lawyers, and Mr. Wasant is one among a few of them who whole heartedly devotes his time and energy to this task. His ardent, eloquent, skillful and competent arguments in court have brought him a reputation for excellence and have set free a number of his unjustly prosecuted clients. Perhaps the most notorious, was his counsel given to Sulak Sivaraksa when he was charged with Lese Majeste a few years ago. He has also represented Ms. Wanida Tantiwittayapitak, the leading activist against the Pak Moon dam who was also falsely charged with offenses to scare her off her crusade for the fisher folks whose lives are completely destroyed by the dam. Mr. Wasant never feels tired of driving long distances to provinces where the cases are held, sacrificing his time to be with his wife and children, and other privacy he deserves. This award will hopefully help to boost his spirit in this rugged and noble fight for the people's cause.

***Khaosod* Daily Newspaper**

The name, a few years back, was still unknown. It was bought when it nearly collapsed — and went from a daily circulation of less than 5,000 copies to become the third largest Thai daily tabloid. Its strength is a strenuous will to investigate the stories most newspapers shy away for reason of fear and lack of integrity. The most well known saga was its attempts to uncover a sex scandal by a famous Buddhist monk a couple of years ago. Their daring efforts have duly earned them dramatic increase in circulation. At the same, it helps shed light on the unscrupulous demeanor of a highly respected Buddhist figure who, without the revealing reporting by *Khaosod*, would easily escape the accusation. Lately, it has focussed the issues surrounding the gas pipeline case from Burma to Thailand. Again, instead of being lured by money of the Petroleum Authority of Thailand, owner of the project, and its influential consortium which includes big transnational companies like Unocal and Total, *Khaosod* has been feeding to readers all the facts pertaining to the environmental damages and human rights abuses caused by the project. They, like other tabloids, could easily earn much needed advertising revenues in the present economic crisis by backing down the reporting on the gas pipeline to please the Authority. That was the practice their rival newspapers employed, one revealing of a lack of character. In spite of being published in Thai language *Khaosod* has an international reputation for honest, daring journalism. SVN is pleased to acknowledge the contribution to social welfare by this publication, the *Khaosod Daily*.



Message of Blessings

by

His Holiness Somdet Phra Nāpasamvara
Supreme Patriarch of Thailand

Venerable Phra Dhammapitaka (Prayudh Payutto) is today known far and wide. This is because of his gratitude and benevolent attitude towards Buddhism. He has a strong sense of devotion in his heart to the Buddha's teaching and he uses his time skillfully benefitting Buddhism. He is therefore a very important figure who shines brightly in a world covered with darkness. He is a breath of fresh air to the depressed, a ray of hope for concerned Buddhists.

The advent of the 60th birthday anniversary of this important Buddhist teacher is a milestone for Buddhism. I would like to express my sincere gratitude for giving all of us renewed hope. With Blessings and thanks.

Bovoranives Vihara, Bangkok
30th November 2541 B.E.

SEM

Spirit in Education Movement Course Prospectus 1998-1999

60/2 Soi Tivanont 34, Muang Nonthaburi 11000 Siam (Thailand) Tel. 9506601-3 Fax. 5803711

Date/time	Trainers	Title/Place	Fee
11-21-December 1998	Joni Odochao Elias Amidon Pracha Hutanuwatra	Forest Walk "Dhammayatra and Solidarity Walk" walking meditation, fast and retreat at Mae Wang, Chiang Mai	6,000 B.
27 December 1998- 5 January 1999	Phra Paisal Visalo Taenjai Deethes	Forest Walk "Dhammayatra and Solidarity Walk" walking meditation, fast and retreat at Mae Salong, Chiang Rai	6,000 B.
11-16 January 1999	Elias Amidon Pracha Hutanuwatra Taenjai Deethes	Seminar "Deep Ecology Training for Trainers" at Children Village School, Kanchanaburi	4,000 B.
22-26 January 1999	John McConnell	Workshop "The Dhamma of Being in Conflict"	3,300 B.
29-2 February 1999	John McConnell	Workshop "Dhamma and Third-Party Roles in Making Peace"	3,300 B.
5-8 February 1999	John McConnell	Workshop "Creative Writing Workshop"	2,600 B.
13-14 February 1999	John McConnell	Workshop "Dhamma and Healing"	1,300 B.