



# B U D D H I S T P E A C E F E L L O W S H I P

NEWSLETTER OF THE BUDDHIST PEACE FELLOWSHIP, WINTER 1990



Vilem Kriz

BUDDHIST PEACE FELLOWSHIP  
P.O. BOX 3470  
BERKELEY, CA 94703-9906

❖ *Buddhists & The USSR* ❖ *His Holiness & the Jews* ❖

❖ *Vietnamese Refugees: Forced Repatriation; Children in the Camps*

❖ *Interviews with Situ-rinpoche & Mary Lightfoot* ❖

❖ *More Buddhist Approaches to AIDS Care* ❖

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## LETTERS

I am writing in response to the piece on abortion in the Fall issue. I agree with much of what was in the piece, though I suppose I would have stated the case somewhat differently. I often find myself as uncomfortable around those with whom I agree as I am around those with whom I disagree. Both sides of the abortion debate have self-righteousness to spare, and it is

often difficult to decide which side is more embarrassing in its rhetoric...

The best any of us can do is to examine our own beliefs with as much insight as we examine the beliefs of those with whom we disagree. If we must have disagreements — as it appears we must on abortion — we should try to disagree with compassion, understanding, and all the wisdom we can muster.

— Bill Williams, Minneapolis, MN

## FROM THE EDITOR

As Ram Dass pointed out in a recent talk, it would be difficult to imagine a time in which the Buddhist teaching of *annica* (impermanence) could be more clearly seen on an international scale. The demolition of the Berlin Wall, and the overthrow or abdication of Communist rule in Eastern Europe (and now, it appears, in the USSR) fundamentally reorganize the political world. The metamorphosis underway is obviously incomplete; the outcome is unpredictable.

What does seem clear is that the changes are being driven by Russia, specifically by Mr. Gorbachev, who rides the snarling tiger of superpower adroitly. We look into the belly of the beast this issue with three personal accounts of visits to the Soviet Union.

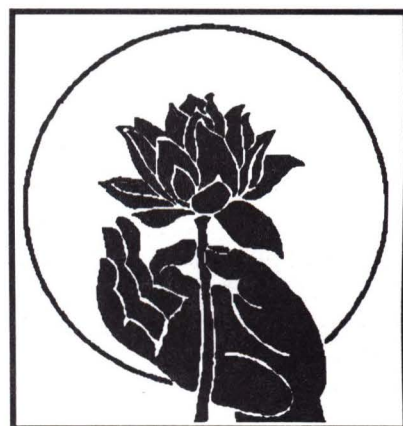
The second of these, Paula Green's piece, points to an important aspect of BPF: its membership in the International Fellowship of Reconciliation. FOR is the granddaddy of modern religious-activist outfits, and BPF owes much of

its character to this progenitor. Following a quick history of FOR, we present the story of an FOR expedition to Libya (!) by BPF member Gene Hoffman.

How extraordinary to have media attention focused on Buddhist peacework, in the form of H.H. the Dalai Lama ! He continues to do and say marvelous things and it continues to be a pleasure to follow him. Witnessing his level of leadership makes us reflect, sadly, on Mr. Bush, whose stance with regard to Tibet and China particularly, begs criticism.

Perhaps the President is simply too worn out from tagging after Gorbachev to notice that by moving as swiftly as he has in "normalizing" relations with China, he trades our national dignity for the future vapid lure of Chinese markets.

According to Asia Watch, arrests, detentions, torture, beatings and executions of dissidents continue under the current Chinese regime. The paranoid finger of a witch-hunt points to U.S. soil as well, with Chinese students here being threat-



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ened, harassed and censored. That Bush should twice send our National Security Advisor to China, secretly, in an attempt to smooth things over is frankly inconceivable.

This is the last issue we can produce on borrowed equipment. We're looking for a Mac SE or above, a large screen, and a laser printer. All suggestions and donations welcome. Cheers. ❖

### *For the Busy Buddhist*

This new column will provide specific "urgent action" information. This information may be repeat what is in our articles, or it may address another subject altogether. Among the suggestions will be what Thich Nhat Hanh calls a 'love letter': a letter of thanks for a person's openness, their movements towards peace. To be effective, the letters we send should be full of understanding and openness, even when we disagree with a policy. You are welcome to contribute to this column; please contact the office with your suggestions.

1. Write or call your senator to ask them to support the Kerry bill to end all military funding for El Salvador. Other key people to contact are Senators Mitchell and Dodd.

The Senate Office Bldg. Washington, DC 20510  
(202) 224-3121

In the House the bill is HR3733 to ask your representative to support, to end military funding. Other key people to contact there are Rep. Foley, Obey, Crockett.

The House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515 (202) 224-3121

2. Write President de Klerk of South Africa thanking him for his courage and broadmindedness in lifting the ban on the African National Congress and for his freeing of Nelson Mandela.

President Frederik de Klerk, State President,  
Private Bag X152, Union Bldg.,  
Pretoria 0001, Republic of South Africa.

### *About the cover*

Vilem Kriz left Prague, Czechslovakia 43 years ago, to pursue his career as an artist in Paris. He became part of the surrealist movement, and his work garnered praise from such powerful artists as Jean Renoir and Jean Cocteau.

While he was in France, however, the Iron Curtain drew tighter around his native land, and relatives there advised him not to return. Kriz and his wife thus became exiles from Eastern Europe. They came to the U.S.

Here, Kriz found little or no sense of artistic community; making a living also proved difficult. The man Cocteau described as being able to "breathe into his camera a heart and a soul," toiled as a janitor for many years, in New York and in California. Recently, his talents were again recognized and he was made Professor of photography at California College of Arts and Crafts. His political exile also ended, with a visit to Prague this past fall, as Communism fell. He was honored in an exhibition there celebrating 150 years of photography, and describes the trip as "momentous."

Kriz's images have in a serene, melancholy way, consistently protested war and tyranny. In honor of his indomitable spirit, and in tribute to that same spirit as it now manifests throughout Eastern Europe, we are happy to have his work grace our cover.

—Rick Levine and David Schneider

## ZEN MOUNTAIN CENTER 1990 WORK-STUDY PROGRAM

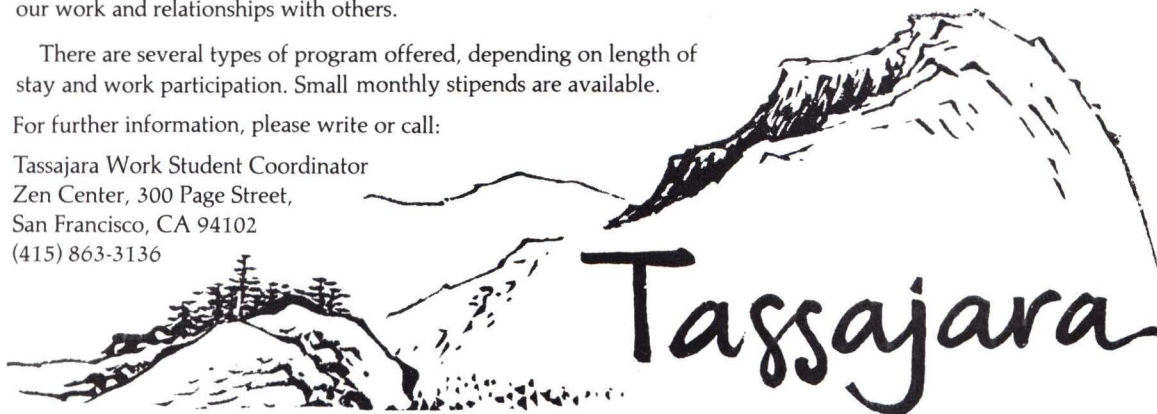
Tassajara is a Zen Buddhist community located in the Los Padres National Forest of California. From April 10 through the end of September it offers work practice opportunities for those interested in experiencing Zen practice in the Soto tradition. The rest of the year it is closed to the public for monastic practice.

The work study program enables participants to learn about Buddhism through meditation, work, study, and living together in the context of the Tassajara Guest Season. We emphasize extending our meditation to our work and relationships with others.

There are several types of program offered, depending on length of stay and work participation. Small monthly stipends are available.

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Zen Center, 300 Page Street,  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
(415) 863-3136



For Guest Retreat information, call (415) 431-3771.

### Sitting Under Trees

For the past two and a half years, 10 of us in Salem, Oregon have been meeting weekly to meditate together. Recently we have added devotional singing to our practice. Occasionally we will watch a video of a dharma talk.

This last year we have become increasingly concerned about the destruction of old growth forests in the Pacific Northwest. We are particularly dismayed about the beautiful Opal Creek watershed, which is close to our homes in Salem.

Because of extreme polarization in our state, we are asking for help in a letter-writing and phone-in campaign to the US Congress. There is hope that pressure on the national level may help protect the ancient forests.

Our meditation practice has helped us see the interdependence of all beings. We need our old growth forests for air and watershed, wildlife habitat and inspiration. We need to support our timber-based communities in finding economically viable alternatives to cutting the old growth forests.

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202-224-3121, or write, c/o:

Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510, or House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515.

For information, contact Martha Abshead, 1710 Fair Oaks Way, NW, Salem Or. 97304, 503-581-1545

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## The Dalai Lama and the Nobel Prize

by Christopher Titmuss



The decision to award the Nobel Peace Prize to Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, is surely to be welcomed throughout the entire international community.

He is one recipient of the award that can truly be said to be worthy of such a distinguished honor. The Dalai Lama has been a tireless campaigner for peace and justice, an unchanging voice for non-violence and active compassion despite the ruthless invasion of the Chinese forces into Tibet in 1959.

The Norwegian based Nobel Prize Committee awarded the Peace Prize not only for the Dalai Lama's religious work but also for "his struggle for the liberation of Tibet."

In his book, *A Human Approach to World Happiness*, he writes about the violent actions of people: "Behaving in ways utterly unbecoming to their status as humans, they inflict suffering upon fellow humans and other living beings for their own selfish gains. All this calls for a new approach to global problems. The world is becoming smaller and smaller and more and more interdependent...the nation's problems can no longer be satisfactorily solved by itself alone; too much depends on the interest, attitude and cooperation of other nations."

The Dalai Lama could have been writing about Tibet and the neighboring Chinese government but, of course, such insights apply worldwide.

To a large degree the brutal methods of the Chinese military to silence voices of opposition in Tibet have largely been ignored. Indiscriminate gunfire, martial law, imprisonment without trial, denial of human rights, destruction of forests and exploitation of resources have been features of the Chinese occupation.

Not surprisingly, the Chinese government reacted with hostility to the selection of the Dalai Lama for the Nobel Prize. After being told he had been awarded the Prize, Dalai Lama said at Newport Beach, California: "I very much appreciate the kind of recognition about my beliefs. In fact, I always believe in love and compas-

sion and a sense of universal respect. Every human being has that potential. My case is nothing special. I am a simple Buddhist monk, no more, no less."

A well-informed source told me during the summer that it was Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa who nominated the Dalai Lama for the Peace Prize. There were understandably a number of Communists in Europe who expressed disappointment the Nobel Prize went to the Dalai Lama. It may have been that they did not want any more attention to be focused on the Chinese Government's ruthless suppression of opposition following the bloody action in Tiananmen Square. There was also a hope among European Communists that Nelson Mandela, the imprisoned ANC leader, would be awarded the Prize.

An increasingly common view here in Europe is that the Nobel Peace Prize is not free from various political influences. In this case the Prize highlights in a direct way the unacceptable actions of the Chinese authorities. More importantly, the Dalai Lama is a voice for non-violence, for change through cooperation and discussion. Cynics regard such a standpoint in this brutal world as full of idealism. But those of us who employ the ethics and strategy of non-violence in all circumstances can equally respond that violence and killing contains as much idealism as a solution to injustice.

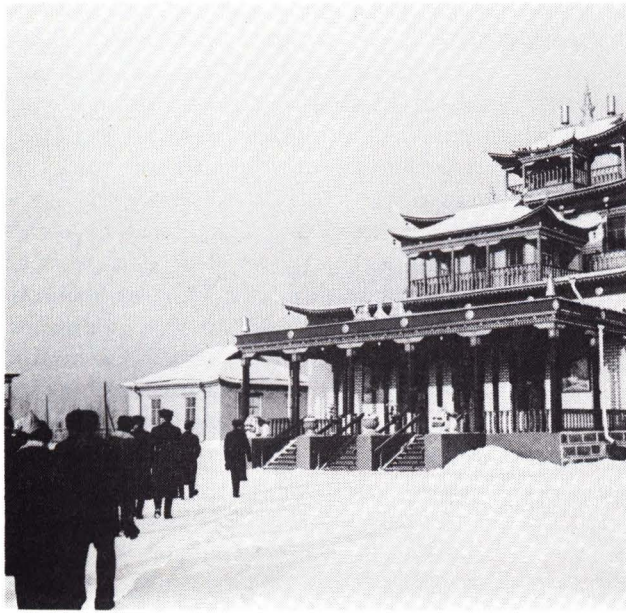
I first met the Dalai Lama in 1972. He went to have meetings with Ven Achaan Buddhadasa, one of Thailand's foremost Theravada monks. Just as today, the Dalai Lama was insisting in a public talk then that his title, function and form was simply a conventional agreement and he lacked any inherent existence.

On two occasions during the 1980's, the Dalai Lama came to the Thai Temple in Bodh Gaya, India, to speak to more than 100 participants in a retreat that I was facilitating. He told the participants that after thoroughly exploring the dharma, if it did not reveal spiritual realizations, he would suggest they explore other religions. What renowned religious authority outside of Buddhism would dare make such a statement?

On the second occasion the Dalai Lama arrived, declined a chair, sat down on a zafu next to myself at the front of the hall, and raised the question: "What shall I talk about today to you all?" Puzzled for a topic, he then scratched his head. He raised his eyebrows and commented: "Look, I have confusion already." The authority of the Dalai Lama resides in his immense generosity of spirit, his disarming humility and his conviction in the power of kindness and compassion. I regard it as a privilege to be on the Earth in the same generation as him.

*Christopher Titmuss teaches engaged spirituality and insight meditation worldwide. He is a member of the international advisory board of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship and is the author of Spirit for Change — 14 interviews with those committed to engaged spirituality. See review this newsletter.*

## 1990 Soviet Union Visit for the Dalai Lama?



Jim Forest

Gandan Dashi Choinkhorling, main temple of the Ivolginski Datsan in the Buryat Republic on the Siberian border with Mongolia

His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, may make an official visit to the Soviet Union some time in the next year. Negotiations are currently underway for a visit that would take in the major capital cities and would also include extensive public dharma teaching.

Representatives of the Dalai Lama reportedly held discussions in October with Nobel Peace prize winner, Andrei Sakharov. He was considered to be a pivotal figure in securing government approval for the proposed trip. However, there is now uncertainty over future moves with Sakharov's death late last year.

It now appears that H.H. the Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, made three previous visits to the Soviet Union: in 1979, 1982 and 1986. All of these trips were private and are said to have been hosted by Patriarch Pimen, head of the state sanctioned Russian Orthodox Church. The Patriarch's role is similar to that of the Pope in the Roman Catholic Church. Under the Patriarch, is a Council of 15 Metropolitans, or Archbishops. The Metropolitan Pitirim of Leningrad, considered by many the likely successor to the ailing Patriarch, is said to favor an official visit by the Dalai Lama. Most Americans, and indeed most Soviets were unaware of His Holiness's prior visits.

This discretion has well suited past Soviet authorities. Even in these times of glasnost, however, there is considerable concern the visit should not destabilize relations with China. The Soviets have made it very clear they regard improved relations with the Chinese as a high priority of their foreign policy and that the Dalai Lama must accept this political reality. Given the revolutionary changes in Eastern Europe in the last six

months and growing internal restlessness, most observers say the Soviet Union is likely to tread very carefully in dealings with the Dalai Lama over Tibet.

Most Soviets, including those in nominally high places, are said to be unaware of the Dalai Lama being the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989.

The award was widely interpreted as a rebuke to the Chinese Government for its brutal repression of the democracy movement, which culminated last June in the widespread bloodshed in Tiananmen Square.

Representatives of the Dalai Lama are understood to have been privately cautioned against dwelling on the Chinese oppression of Tibet since 1949. Author John Avedon (*Exile From the Land of Snows*) is said to have particularly alarmed quarters of the Soviet hierarchy in recent interviews on Soviet television. Going over old history, Soviet insiders are believed to have counseled, would do nothing to rectify the crimes of the past; nor would such a course advance Tibet's position for the future. According to this thinking, a frank discussion of Chinese atrocities in the Soviet Union would only harm the Dalai Lama's cause and would ultimately lead to withdrawal of pivotal support for the trip.

American organizations with contacts in the Soviet Union have provided assistance to the Dalai Lama and his personal emissaries. The Dalai Lama's party, however, is said to be especially concerned about preventing the impression of the proposed visit being a U. S. initiative or idea.

It must be noted that the U. S. has moved swiftly in the post-Tiananmen Square period to restore relations with China to their former level. The U.S. has also recently repeated its position that it never recognized Tibet as an independent entity, and that the Tibet problem is an internal domestic matter for the Chinese. It seems unlikely in this milieu that the Dalai Lama will be given any major U.S. or Soviet endorsement for his five-point peace plan, the central plank of which is to transform Tibet into a zone of Peace.

There has been talk of a small business venture in Moscow which would involve Tibetans, Chinese and Soviets. This could provide a useful model and create a reason for His Holiness to visit the Soviet Union.

Buddhists, like most other minorities in the Soviet Union have long struggled for survival under the Communist regime. For that reason estimates of the number of Buddhists in the Soviet Union vary widely. Last year, the Dalai Lama's emissaries are said to have made extensive personal contacts with the Buddhist communities in Moscow and Leningrad. A subsequent warming of the relations between the Soviet government and Buddhist communities is indicated by the recent decision to return a Leningrad temple built in the 1900's — and presently being used as an animal laboratory — to the sangha. ❖ —by Our Correspondent

*Aitken-roshi on Abortion*

...(For a woman considering abortion), oversimplified positions of pro-life and pro-choice do not touch the depths of her dilemma. Usually she experiences distressing conflict between her sexual/reproductive drive and the realities of her life: social, economic, and personal — and indeed, she faces such realities for any child she may bring to term.

I have known women who said they were not upset at having an abortion, but I would guess that they were not sensitive to their own feelings at that particular time. Perhaps distress shows up in their dreams. Surely self-awareness is never more important.

Sitting in on sharing meetings in the Diamond Sangha, our Zen Buddhist society in Hawaii, I get the impression that when a woman is sensitive to her feelings, she is conscious that abortion is killing a part of herself and terminating the ancient process, begun anew within herself, of bringing life into being. Thus she is likely to feel acutely miserable after making a decision to have an abortion. This is a time for compassion for the woman, and for her to be compassionate with herself and for her unborn child. If I am consulted, and we explore the options carefully and I learn that the decision is definite, I encourage her to go through the act with the consciousness of a mother who holds her dying child in her arms, lovingly nurturing it as it passes from life. Sorrow and suffering form the nature of samsara, the flow of life and death, and the decision to prevent birth is made on balance with other elements of suffering. Once the decision is made, there is no blame, but rather acknowledgement that sadness pervades the whole universe, and this bit of life goes with our deepest love.

In Japanese Buddhism, there is a funeral service for the mizuko ("water baby," the poetical term for the fetus). Like any other human being that passes into the One, it is given a posthumous Buddhist name, and is thus identified as an individual, however incomplete, to whom we can say farewell. With this ceremony, the woman is in touch with life and death as they pass through her existence, and she finds that such basic changes are relative waves on the great ocean of true nature, which is not born and does not pass away.

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*[When asked for permission to reprint this section, Aitken-roshi agreed, and decided to add the following recommendations. —ed]*

After six years I agree with these words in a general way, but I think that now I would want to urge pro-life and pro-choice people to come together for the sake of the women who suffer unwanted pregnancies, and for the sake of their unwanted infants.

All the energy, talent, and money that is devoted to the two sides of the abortion controversy could be then be devoted to non-ideological counseling programs. These should, I think, be run by women, and should follow through after the decisions are made, and after the abortions or births, as long as the need for such support continues. ❖

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## MONKS PUT UP SMOKE SCREEN

*Bangkok* The intensified campaign against American cigarettes got another boost yesterday when senior monks nationwide asked the US Trade Representative (USTR) in an open letter to reject a petition by US cigarette exporters that seeks to force Thailand to open its market to their products.

The letter, signed by 160 provincial monastic chiefs from all 72 provinces, asks the USTR to bar cigarettes from protection under the US trade law. "We ask you to reject the petition by the exporters' association and take the popular initiative," the letter reads.

The monks gathered at the Mahidon University campus in Nakhon Pathom yesterday for an anti-smoking seminar, held one week before a USTR public hearing in Washington D.C. on the cigarette exporters' petition.

"We, the Lord Abbots from 72 provinces in Thailand, have been vigorously campaigning against smoking because of its indisputable damage to health. Any further availability or promotion of cigarettes, particularly high-status foreign cigarettes, can only work against our efforts to inform Thai people of the hazard," says the letter, which was written in English.

It goes on to say that past anti-smoking successes "would be reversed by the introduction of foreign cigarettes and the accompanying high-gloss, hard-sell marketing techniques.

"Your own government and non-government health organizations have been successful in reducing the smoking rate among Americans, from 40 percent in 1965 to 29 percent in 1987. We are attempting to do the same, often with cooperation of your anti-smoking groups. This recent threat would be a significant setback for everyone."

One of the monastic chiefs, Phra Ratkhunaphon from Nakhon Pathom, told reporters the Thai government should not import American cigarettes for the added tax revenue it would gain.

"The tax income does not compare with the large amount of money the government would have to spend on treatment of people suffering from smoking-related diseases," he said.

The monk, however, admitted that a weak point of Thailand in countering the US pressure is that a lot of Thai people still smoke. ❖

*reprinted from THE NATION 13 Sep 89, title, BPF's*



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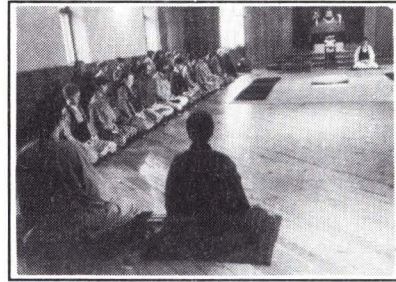
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## Karma Triyana Dharmachakra 1990

### FEBRUARY

- 2-4 Green Tara\* (practice)  
Bardor Rulku Rinpoche
- 8-10 Nyungne\*\*
- 9-11 Chenrezig\* (practice)
- 21-26 Losar (Tibetan New Year)
- 21-24 Mahakala Puja
- 25 Purification Puja
- 26 Losar

### MARCH

- 2-4 Medicine Buddha\* (practice)  
Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche
- 10-12 Nyungne\*\*
- 23-25 White Tara\* (practice)  
Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche

### APRIL

- 9-11 Nyungne\*\*
- 14-15 Refuge Vows  
Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche
- 21-22 Lay Precepts  
Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche
- 28-29 Bodhisattva Vow  
Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche

### MAY

- 8-10 Nyungne\*\*
- 11-13 Women in the Dharma  
Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche
- 26-27 The Karma Kagyu Lineage  
Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche
- 27 Anniversary Picnic

- June 30 The Profound Inner
- July 8 Meaning • Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche  
Those attending this teaching must have attended the ten-day teaching in July 1989, or have listened to the tapes. Refuge is also required.

- Aug Profound Nature of
- 30-31 Vajrayana Empowerment
- Sept 1-3 Vajrayogini &  
Chakrasamvara  
Empowerment • H.E.  
Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche  
These initiations and teaching may be received only by students who have completed the four foundation practices of ngondro.

- Sept 7-9 Teaching of Mahayana  
Buddhism • H.E. Jamgon  
Kongtrul Rinpoche

\* On practice weekends, there will be relevant Friday evening teachings (\$10/teaching), provided the availability of a translator. If no translator is available, practice will commence on Saturday morning as scheduled.

\*\* Nyungne practice will take place every full moon, guided either by resident lamas or students. If Khenpo Rinpoche or Bardor Rinpoche is guiding the practice, newcomers are encourage to attend. If, however, a student is leading only those who have done nyungne are permitted to attend.

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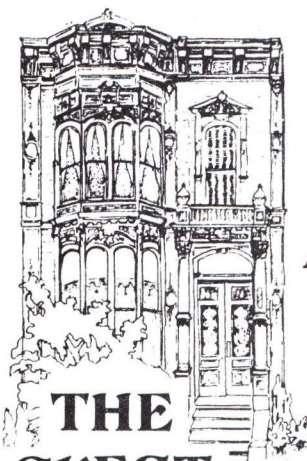
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Contact Jude Anderson

***Dhammapada to be reprinted in Lao***

First published in Vientiane in 1974, this text is now out of print. A reprint will be invaluable for Lao-tian Buddhists around the world, for whom virtually nothing in their own language is available. Each page contains a Pali verse in the Lao script, followed by translations into Lao, English and French.

Ven. Kantasila, an American monk residing at Wat Bovoranives in Bangkok will be overseeing the printing. An initial printing of 5,000 copies is planned, which will cost about \$5,000, a dollar a copy. The books will be distributed free of charge. If you would like to contribute to this meritorious project, donations may be sent as follows: International Banker's Check or Traveller's check to:

*Ven. Kantasila/ Wat Bovoranives Vihara/ Banglampoo/ Bangkok 10200/ Thailand* (pay to the order of "Kantasila Bhikkhu a/c Payee only") no cash, please; personal checks drawn on any American bank may be sent to:

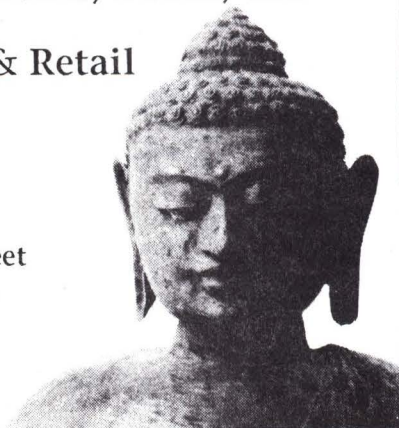
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## *Fellowship of Reconciliation*

This year is the 75th anniversary of the Fellowship of Reconciliation in the United States. It is the oldest peace organization now in existence in this country. We welcome this opportunity to share some of our history and future plans with fellow peacemakers in the BPF.

FOR traces its origins to Europe in 1914. On the eve of WWI an international religious conference convened to try to head off the war everyone felt was imminent, but the conflict broke out during the conference. Two of those attending — a German Lutheran and a British Quaker — pledged not to be enemies because their nations were at war, and to do all they could to preserve their friendship and commitment to peace. That was the beginning of FOR in Europe; in 1915 it came to America where the US branch was founded at Garden City, Long Island.

In the ensuing years FOR worked to nurture things that make peace, both inwardly and outwardly. Concerns included: protection of conscientious objectors; freedom of conscience; the right of labor to organize; opposition to the growth of totalitarianism and other policies that lead to war.

When WWII came, FOR remained committed to nonviolence, protecting the victims of war — the Japanese in this country and the Jews in Europe — opposing obliteration bombing, policies of vengeance and denial of basic liberties. FOR members pioneered in protecting minority rights and building the civil rights movement. FOR opposed the Cold War, the renewal of the arms race, McCarthyism, building nuclear weapons and the Vietnam war.

FOR stands for peace, freedom, justice, and building what Martin Luther King called “the beloved community.” FOR works to develop the philosophy and practice of nonviolence, conducting workshops on nonviolence in the US and places as diverse as the Philippines, South Korea, South Africa, Bangladesh, Thailand and Hong Kong.

FOR began as a Christian organization but later broadened its purpose to become an interfaith fellowship, seeking to affirm the tradition of nonviolence in all religions. Persons like Abraham Heschel, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Mohandas Gandhi helped FOR move in this interfaith direction. Seventeen different religious peace fellowships are now affiliated with FOR, including the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. FOR supports each peace fellowship in its particular concerns and at the same time encourages each one to be aware of and connected to the wider movement.

During FOR's 75th anniversary year, many activities are planned throughout the US: a national conference will be held at Lake Geneva, Wisconsin from July 4-8 with national and international leaders in the areas of peace, disarmament, racial and economic justice.

The theme of the conference is Celebrating our Past/Charting the Future/75 Years of Nonviolent Struggle. Organizing packets, ideas for joining this celebration, and information about the national conference are available from the national office. Write to FOR 75th Anniversary, Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960.

We look forward to your participation in these events, and to a future of working together towards a more harmonious world.

*Richard Deats, Director of Interfaith Activities*

### FOR-USSR Upcoming Reconciliation Projects

April 6-20: Journey of Compassion for people working with the poor, terminally ill, and other marginalized members of our society, to meet with counterparts in the USSR (Leningrad, Moscow, and Lithuania.) Over the Passover/Easter period.

“Moving Beyond the Cold War” packet (\$4.50 plus \$1.50 post). Excellent resource packet to help local groups plan a study series and/or conference on the theme, during this time of historic change.❖

## C O N T E S T

### Standing Up for Peace

Why have some people risked their jobs, their homes, their families and



even prison to take a stand for peace? This is *your* chance to find out. The Standing Up for Peace Contest invites you to talk face to face with someone who has refused to fight in war, pay taxes for war, or build weapons for war, and then to express what you think and feel about what you heard through writing, art or music.

The contest is open to young people ages 15-23. The deadline for entries is May 1, 1990.

To enter, send for the Standing Up for Peace Contest booklet, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960 (914) 358-4601.

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# BUDDHISTS IN THE USSR



All Photos by Jim Forest

View within the compound of Ivolginski Datsan

By Jim Forest

*excerpted from the forthcoming book*  
**Religion in the New Russia**

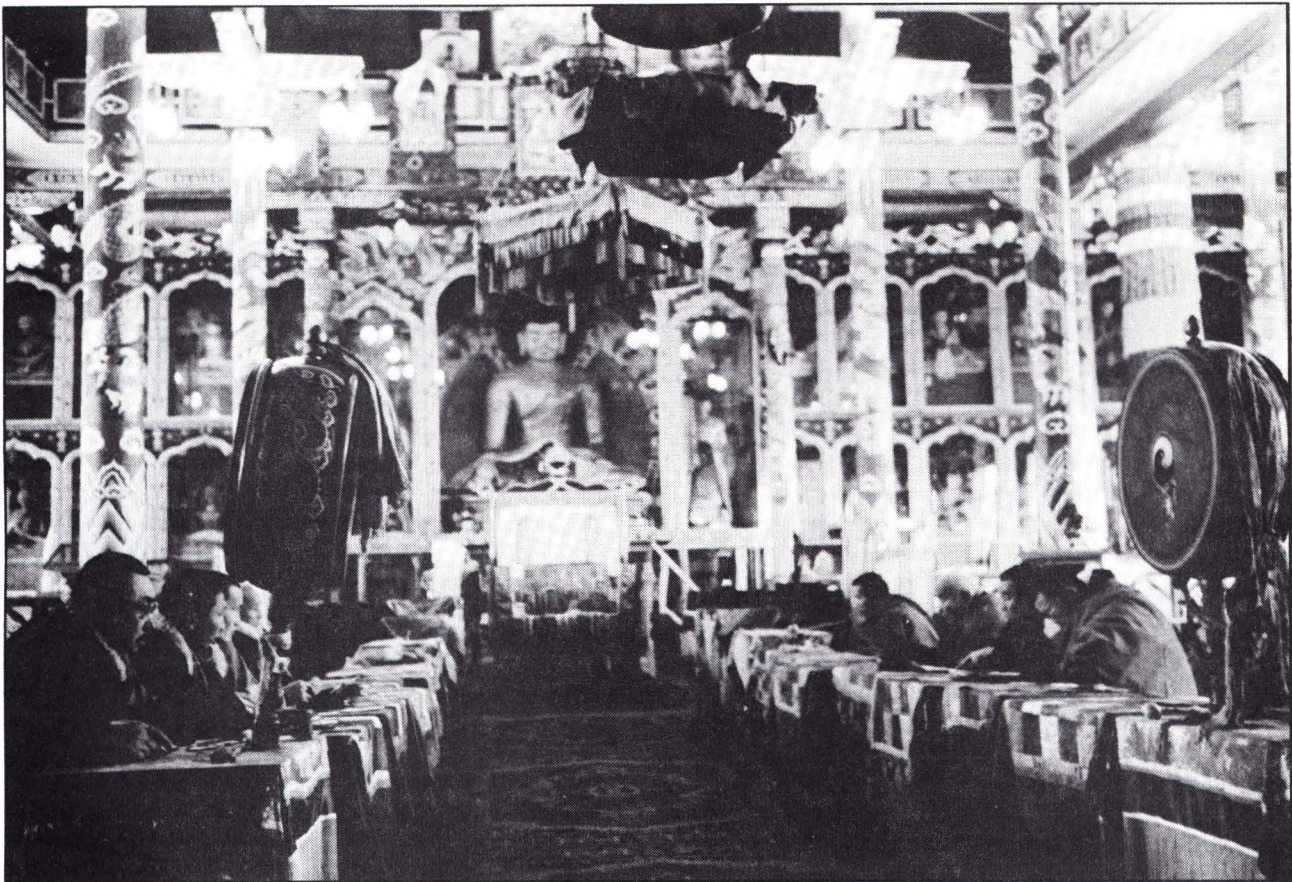
By the time Genghis Khan died in 1227, his warrior horsemen had conquered a land mass that stretched from Peking to Baghdad. At its height, the Mongol Empire included all of China, Manchuria, Korea, Tibet, lower Siberia, the Middle East as far as the Euphrates River, the eastern Ukraine and most of Russia including Moscow. In one of the surprises of history, the descendants of ruthless warriors became peaceful Buddhists.

The coming of Buddhism in the 18th century and the arrival of the Trans-Siberian Railroad led Buryat people from a nomadic life as herdsmen living in elk-skin tents toward a more settled agricultural life, though Buryats are still famed for their skill on horseback and traces of the old wandering life survived.

So profound was the impact of Buddhism on its converts that it made them a people who could not bear to kill. In the 1880's a Russian writer, G.N.

Potanin, wrote of the Buryats' cousins across the Mongol border: "Their ways are gentle. Brutal treatment of women and children is unheard of. Crimes, especially murder, are of rare occurrence. Russian merchants living among them assured me that during the seven years that they had inhabited the town, they had never heard of a murder ... They abhor violence to so great an extent that when [a certain man] was condemned to death for political offenses, no one among them would undertake the role of executioner. A heavy bribe finally induced one of them to carry out the sentence, but from that moment he was isolated by all and henceforth was obliged to wander as a beggar. All men kept him at a distance. When he stretched out his hand for alms, they gave, it is true, but at the same time they asked him to go away."

While Buddhists were regarded as infidels by the czarist government and were subject to state control under the Statute on Lamaist Clergy, the difficulties Buddhists suffered under czarist rule were minor compared to those that came under Soviet rule in the 30's when all the datsans (monasteries) were closed and



Inside Gandan Dashi Choinkhorling, main temple of the Ivolginski Datsan, January 1989

many lamas (monks) were arrested.

### *Ulan Ude*

The Buryat Autonomous Republic is about the size of New York State. The Buryats, traditionally Buddhist, form less than half the republic's population of 900,000. Though an Asian city, the dominant architecture of Ulan Ude, the capital, is Soviet. A massive head of Lenin grimly dominates the city's central square.

Many Buryats have adopted Russian names, like my host, Vladimir Radnayev, head of the Buryat Publishing Committee, and a member of the City Council. With Mikhail Moesivich Mulanov of the Buryat Council for Religious Affairs, we drove out of the city, heading for the Ivolginsky Datsan, the center of Buryat Buddhism, re-opened in 1946 after being closed 10 years.

The countryside we were driving through reminded me of Wyoming: long rolling hills covered with snow, mountains in the distance, split-rail fences, no trees, few cars. An American cowboy would be at home here. The Soviet version of the Marlboro Man would be Buryat.

I asked Mikhail Mulanov if there was a school for Buddhist clergy in the Buryat Republic. "No. Until early in this century, their education was in Tibet. Currently candidates are sent to a school in Ulan Bator in Mongolia where there is a five-year training program. At the moment there are 21 Buryats preparing to

become lamas at the Gandanchekchelin Datsan in Ulan Bator. There are another 20 or 30 Mongol students."

What happened to Buddhism after the Revolution? "Like other religions, it was persecuted. By the end of the 30's all datsans were closed. Lamas were arrested and sent to labor camps where it was hard to survive."

After half an hour we arrived in Ivolginsk. On one side of the road was a village of log houses; on the other, the monastic compound of similar houses gathered around a temple. The temple — Gandan Dashi Choinkhorling — was of three stories, each of the upper stories half the size of the one below. The corners of all three roofs of the temple rose like wing tips. The roof of the third story was crowned with a small golden spire. Pillars and alcoves at each level helped create a climate of worship, playfulness and mystery. The temple was vibrant with color, all the more intense for the bright snow and cloudless blue sky. The walls of the lower two stories were of white brick, the third of wood painted mustard yellow. The foundation and steps leading to the temple porch were forest green while the three doors the steps led to were blood red. Designs in gold were painted on the facade, all shining in the sun. The immediate visual impression was equivalent to hearing a loud gong. I felt as if only now had I arrived in Asia.

Inside, sitting along the center aisle, were 25 lamas, each at his own low table, all wearing wine-pur-

ple robes, reciting in a monotone chant and occasionally ringing small silver bells. A labyrinth of forms, colors and images all centered on the giant golden Buddha seated in the lotus posture at the front of the hall. Golden Dragons encircled the tall red pillars. On either side of the great Buddha along the far wall were two tiers with smaller statues of bodhisattvas.

Though I had never seen anything like this in my life, still it was surprisingly familiar. While Russian Orthodox churches prefer slightly less brilliant colors, the wall of bodhisattvas had much in common with an Orthodox iconostasis. The thangka hanging on the temple's side walls between windows, while quite different, had something in common with Orthodox icons. Both Buddhist temple and Orthodox church reflect the conviction that every artistic gift and every sense faculty should be mobilized in the struggle to open the soul's eyes and bring each person to wakefulness.

Lama Sivan introduced himself at the end of the service and took us to the front of the temple to look more closely at the statues. "They are not old but very beautifully made. This temple was built only 12 years ago."

How many lamas are in the community? "Now we are 28 professed lamas. We each have our own small house on the temple grounds."

How does one take the step to become a lama? "You write a letter to the head lama. He submits your name to the Council for Religious Affairs. Both consider your request. If you have the permission of both, then you can train to be a lama. You cannot say that you rely upon heaven and heaven alone. You need approval."

How did Buddhism find its way to this part of Asia? "In the 14th century there was a Buddhist reform movement in Tibet, the Gelugpas, founded by a lama named Tsong-kha-pa. He was in the tradition of Atisa, a lama of the 10th century who wanted to unite all segments of Buddhism into one. Carrying forward this process, monks of this sect succeeded in finding a way to make the Buddha's teaching more accessible to ordinary people. It stressed the Three Treasures — Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Buddha is the teacher, Dharma is his teaching, and Sangha is his community of disciples. It was something anyone could understand, from the highest lama to a peasant child. Buddhist missionaries from Tibet spread this doctrine in several directions. It came to Buryat 250 years ago."

Has perestroika had any impact on Buddhist life in Buryat? "It is beginning to. The datsan in Chita has been given back and is now under restoration though it is in quite poor condition and much needs to be done. There is a datsan in Guzinazirsk that was closed but which we hope will be returned. We await the decision. Our request is under consideration by the Council for Religious Affairs. We also would like to open a datsan in Kalmiki."

Have you the possibility to publish religious litera-

ture? "We are going to publish a book of sutras translated from Tibetan into both the Buryat and Russian languages."

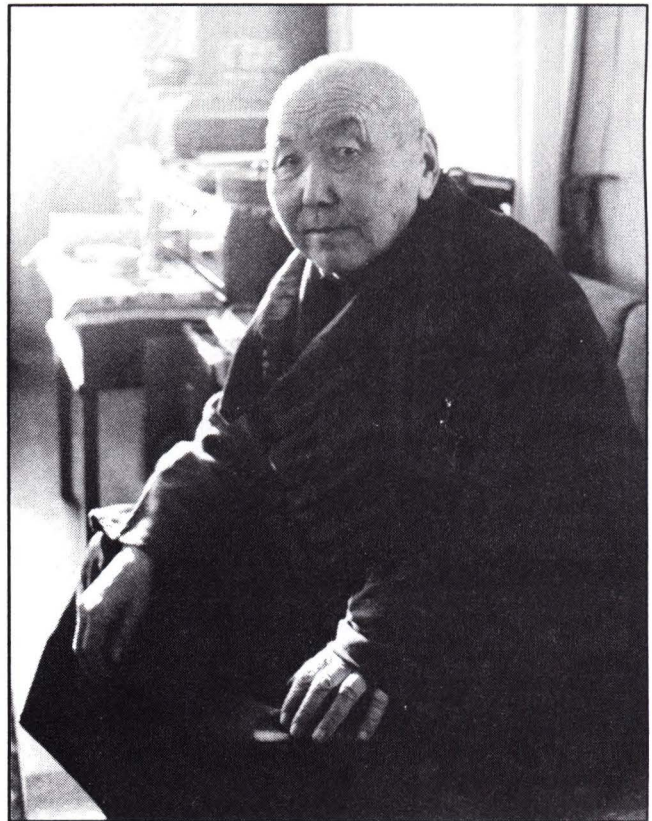
Do you have access to the mass media? "Recently a lama was on television to speak about the environment. We expect more opportunities."

What are the possibilities to teach Buddhism? "We do not hold public meetings but, as you see, many people come there, even some from the European part of the Soviet Union with no previous connection to Buddhism. We can talk with all our visitors and discuss any question they have."

How many Buryats are Buddhist? (laughter) "How can anyone say? It's not hundreds of thousands. Perhaps it is 70 or 80,000 people. Perhaps it is more. There is no census on such a subject."

Have you contact with Buddhists from other parts of the world? "Quite a lot. Two years ago the Dalai Lama came to visit us."

We walked to the smaller temple nearby where one of the older monks, Lama Dorshi, was sitting before a drum, beating it slowly but with great force while praying. "I am praying according to wishes of our pilgrims," he said. "They give us requests to pray for their needs. I am also praying that all people will understand each other and achieve agreements." He showed me how the drum should be struck. I was impressed with



Bandido Kambo Lama Jimbo-Jamso Erdyneev, abbot of the Ivolginski Datsan and president of the Religious Board of Buddhists of the USSR



Lama Sivan

his enthusiasm and his drum-like voice. Was there something he could pray for on my behalf, he asked. I gave him a name.

One small building in the compound contained a lilliputian model of paradise. Up to our ankles in snow, we gazed through a window at a fabulous garden of flowers, fruit and jewels — a world without suffering. Some of the people were flying like birds.

Among the fascinated visitors studying the scene with us were several young Soviet soldiers. Seeing we had a lama showing the way, they joined us as we went on to the next stop, a greenhouse that provides refuge to a Bodhi tree. "It was under such a tree that the Buddha sat when he achieved enlightenment," said Lama Sivan. "This tree has that tree for its ancestor."

We visited the datsan's library, as cold inside as outside. Unfortunately many of the library's manuscripts were lost during the years the datsan was closed, but still it is an important collection.

We went next to the house of Bandido Kambo Lama Jimbo-Jamso Erdynceev, abbot of the datsan and president of the Religious Board of Buddhists of the USSR. He is a round-faced old man, stooped gentle in his manner. Like the other lamas, his head was completely shaved. He invited us to have lunch with him, a real Buryat meal in which only the apples and mineral water were familiar tastes. The main dish was *boze*, a steamed pastry filled with onion and meat.

I asked about his hopes for Buddhism in the USSR

in the coming years. "The major challenge is to overcome the problem of training lamas. The future development of Buddhism here is linked to this. To re-open temples we need well-trained lamas. We hope that in the future we will have a center for training lamas within the Soviet Union. There are many young people who wish to be lamas. It used to be dozens had this wish. Now there are many more who think in this direction. We receive letters about this not only from Buryats and Kuryats but also Russians. One day you will come here and meet a Russian lama!"

"We have to re-open temples and datsans that were closed. In the Buryat Republic there is presently only one other, the Aginkski Datsan in the Chita region. A temple has now been registered in Elitsa city in the Kalmyck region. We have two lamas there now but it is not yet functioning. We no longer face official opposition to reviving temples and datsans, but the buildings themselves are often very deteriorated and in every case major restoration work is required. This is not easy to do and also it requires a lot of money. We also need many books and in several languages, Buryat, Tibetan, Old Mongolian and Russian. Our brothers in India [mainly Tibetan refugees gathered around the Dalai Lama] are helping us with literature in the Tibetan language."

Do you have close ties with the Tibetan Buddhists in India? "Yes. One of our lamas is now in India participating in a special series of ceremonies at which the Dalai Lama is describing the steps to holiness. The last such ceremony was held in 1913 in Ulan Bator."

Do you hope to teach the Tibetan language in the Buryat Republic? "Only to those training to become lamas. The books they must study are in Tibetan. But we see among young people here a fresh interest in learning Old Mongolian and we hope it will be possible for them to study it. The Buryat language is a dialect of Classical Mongolian. They are sister languages, like Ukrainian and Russian."

After the meal I was able to sit with the abbot on his couch. "Originally I was a lama at the Chita datsan," he told me. "I went there when I was 10 and have been a monk ever since, though I was not able to live in a datsan from 1937 to 1945. I was fortunate in that period not to be a prisoner like so many others. I found a job in a factory. Now I am 82. I am happy to have lived long enough to see Gorbechev and to witness these new events."

Outside we stopped near a large prayer wheel being turned by a newly married couple. The prayer wheel reminded me of the candles Orthodox believers light before icons — a similar integration of deed and symbol, tangible and intangible, unspoken prayer and physical action. "The Buddha taught the way for us to pass from suffering to nirvana," explained the abbot's secretary, Victor Mitypov, an English-speaking layman. "There are several ways but all involve movement and this move-

ment is symbolized by the eight-spoked wheel. At the center of the wheel is dharmakaya — the Buddha teaching. The spokes represent the eight-fold path: right seeing, right thinking, right speech, right action, right living, right effort, right mindfulness, and right meditation. The wheel's outer circumference shows that all these different forms are unified. In spinning the wheel, no one rod can be seen. We see only their oneness."

We encountered a Russian couple who had come to the datsan from Moscow. The man knew Lama Sivan and Victor Mitypov from an earlier visit. "I am Buddhist," he said.

"My friend is Christian but she wants to know more about Buddhism." I asked if there was a Buddhist temple in Moscow. "Not yet."

Before leaving Ulan Ude I met with Professor Relbu Pubayev, a historian teaching in Ulan Ude, who described how Buddhism found its way to the Buryat people. "While there had been some contact in the 17th century, the decisive event was a visit in 1725 by a group of 150 lamas from Tibet. By the end of the century there were many datsans in this region and Buryat lamas were travelling back and forth to Tibet. It was mainly religious contact. There was little trade. The Buryat lamas were deeply respected in Tibet. At the end of the 19th century one of them was teacher to Dalai Lama. This was the height of relations between Buryat and Tibet.

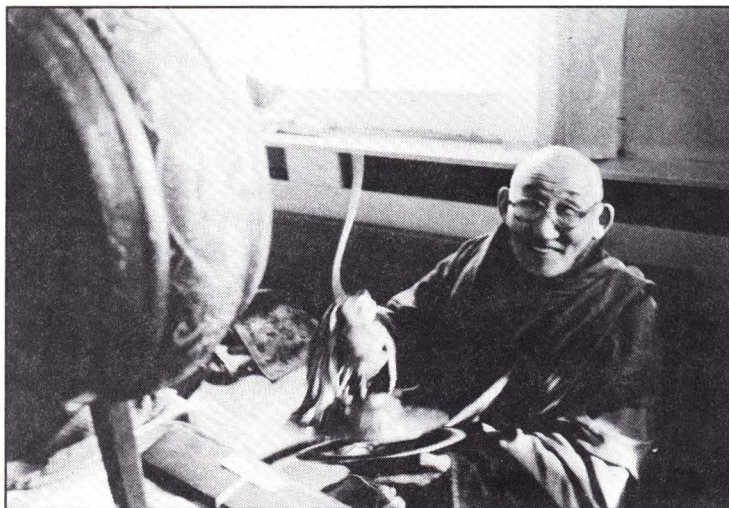
"In this same period the Buryat lamas tried to strengthen the relationship between Tibet and Russia. A delegation from Buryat was sent to the court of Czar Nicholas II. On the whole their mission was not successful — in 1907 the British-Russian Treaty was signed that resulted in Russia abandoning relations with Tibet — but the Buryat effort had one positive result, construction of a Buddhist temple in St. Petersburg in 1915. One can say that there was a better understanding of Buddhism in Russia." [On July 12, 1989, a Buddhist congregation was registered in Leningrad. The members anticipate the old temple will be turned over to them.]

I asked about the doctrinal content of Buddhism. "At the heart of the form of Buddhism that was embraced by the Buryats is compassion. It is the red thread running through all the teaching. There is a list of Ten Virtues. Most of them have their basis in compassion — not to kill, not to steal, not to cherish an intention that could cause another harm, not to harm

one's body with destructive substances, not to violate laws that protect the marital state.

"The Dalai Lama, who heads this branch of Buddhism, is regarded as the reincarnation of the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara

who especially embodies compassion. It is because of compassion for those who suffer that the bodhisattva does not enter nirvana but chooses to help. The lama is primarily there to help the people. He is compared to a man guiding a ferry boat, carrying passengers from one side of the river to the other. People come to the lama with their problems, their worries, and



Lama Dorji

the lama gives advice and prays. Believers show the highest respect toward lamas."

### *A Buddhist in Moscow*

Eremey Parnov, President of the Science Fiction National Section of the Soviet Writers Union and Vice President of the International Science Fiction Association, is also a Buddhist.

Parnov lives in the Sokolniki district in the northwest part of central Moscow. On the living room wall there are leopard and python skins, bow and arrow, and tribal wooden masks. The library is spread through several rooms and lines the main hallway. In areas not taken by books there were awards he has received, a starfish, various kinds of coral, a cup imprinted with the label for Beefeater Gin, and a small Christmas tree standing in front of a Buddha statue.

He is one of the lucky Russians who has had the chance to travel widely. "Travel in Asia is a pleasure to my soul," he said. "I have now been in all the Buddhist countries except China. A month ago I was in India. I have met the Dalai Lama two times, first at his retreat in the Himalayas and again in Mongolia."

He showed us a copy of his book on Buddhism, *Gods of Lotus*, published in Moscow in 1980, handsomely printed on glossy paper with many color plates.

I asked what drew him toward Buddhism? "...in 1950, when I was 15, a friend gave me a little bronze Buddha statue. This was an impetus to find out what it meant and what it was linked with. After being given the statue I started reading books about Eastern culture, sociology, environment, religion and history. I found all this fascinating.

"There was an element of chance. Chance has



played a big role in my life. In 1970, by the time I was a working writer, I went to Japan as part of a delegation from the Soviet Writers Union. I was Pravda's Vietnam correspondent in 1972-3. Living and travelling in Buddhist countries — this was my real university. I happened to be in certain places and happened to meet certain people, people who had never talked with 'specialists.'

"The next stage in my engagement was the consequence of symbolism opening its doors to me. I was drawn into the symbolism of the ancient world, from the pre-Buddhist period of human history, then Indian culture in the pre-Veda period, passing through the Gnostics to various forms of Christianity. I found that symbolism consists of rites and sacraments. It is a presentation of the invisible through the material world. You find that there are certain symbols which occur in every culture..."

Has horror been a factor in your religious development? "The history of this country is horrifying. You cannot consider our history without being presented with the dilemma of good and evil. It isn't hard for us to believe in the devil. In fact it often seemed that only the devil existed, no power of goodness. But you can learn from suffering that the way taken by many people is not the best way. You learn that the path to follow is the way of non-participation in evil. This is fundamen-

tal Buddhist teaching — the noble truth that the source of suffering is desire but that it is possible to live a life not dominated by desire. The control of desire prevents evil."

I asked how Buddhism had mattered in his own life. "It's difficult to say. There has never been a religious revelation. Rather Buddhism has led me into conscious meditation about life. This reinforces my life. What was sensed intuitively was proved. It has meant a deeper sense of connection with the universe. Buddhism has been a way of understanding. But I can't say anything extraordinary has happened."

Did he often take part in events at Buddhist places of worship? "We have a Buddhist center in Moscow but I don't participate often."

Did he think that Buddhism had much in common with other religions? "Yes, the majority of teachings exist in each religion. The differences that exist are around the points of agreement, not at the center. The differences mainly have to do with what comes of trying to describe a world beyond our limits, the content of the 'other world.'" ♦

*Jim Forest lives in Alkmaar, Holland. A well-known author, Jim was the General Secretary of the International FOR from 1977 to 1988, and before that, editor of Fellowship magazine.*

## VISITING THE USSR IN A SEASON OF CHANGE

By Paula Green

During the summer of 1989 I journeyed to the Soviet Union as part of a 17-person delegation invited by the Soviet Peace Committee to share in a learning process on issues of ethnicity and nationalities. The persons selected by the Fellowship of Reconciliation to make the two-week trip were a mix of North American ethnicity: we were multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-ethnic, ranging in age from 20-70 and living in widely dispersed areas of the US. For more than half the members of the delegation, including myself, this was a first trip to the USSR; I felt like a sponge whose capacity to absorb was endless.

To study ethnic issues, we were invited by the Soviet Peace Committee to divide our two weeks between Moscow, Estonia and Georgia. This proved fortuitous: the Baltics and the Caucasian Republics are in the midst of enormous upheaval these days and Moscow, of course, is the center from which change is ultimately regulated.

My overall experience was that the more I heard, the less I knew. There are many ethnic groups within each Republic, some with land claims of centuries and others brought there to settle or work since the Revolution. Within each of those groups inside each of the Republics, there are enormous ranges of opinions: conservatives, moderates, radicals, separatists, and so on. And lastly, of course, within each person there are conflicting voices, those of old loyalties, family ties, new dreams, and visions of the future. This is a heady mix, especially when the voices are as impassioned as Soviet feelings can be. Glasnost has uncorked the bottle; the words unsaid for many years flow freely toward us, the witnessing visitors.

In Tallin, the capital of Estonia, the traditional blue, black and white flag of the Republic is flown atop the highest tower. The building next to it, which houses the Estonian government, flies the more familiar red and yellow hammer and sickle flag of the USSR. One building further is the enormous Russian Orthodox Church in Lutheran Estonia; it is filled with elderly

"babushkas," many of them probably of Russian origin. Down the narrow lane of this old Hanseatic city is the Lutheran Church, less crowded but also open again to believers.

These contrasts name the problem: whose city is this, what language should it speak, what flag and church belong there? Of the 1.5 million people in Estonia 60% are Estonian and 40% are Russian. Most of these Russians were moved or lured here by ample employment opportunities, as the Soviets built factories and tapped the natural resources of the Republic. The Estonians hold deep resentment toward these imported citizens, feeling that they are often deprived of housing, educational, or employment possibilities by the favored Russians.

One solution, spoken of frequently by Estonian women, is to increase Estonian family size from 1.5 to 3 children, and to also increase housing, day care and maternity benefits to support these larger families. One hopes that better solutions are found than a baby race, which would only increase tensions resulting from scarce resources and shortages in consumer goods.

Currently, Estonia supports two school systems; Estonian and Russian children are educated separately. In mixed marriages, which occur there as they do everywhere in the world, parents must choose which school will be the center of education and identity for their child's life. Contacts told me that this is a critical moment in mixed marriages, one that creates huge issues of loyalty/disloyalty within the child. A major difficulty with the dual school solution, it seems to me, is that young people never know each other well enough to break down the very stereotypes and prejudices that keep their families divided.

All signs in Estonia are bilingual, with Estonian the first language on any sign. All Estonian students are required to learn Russian; all Russians, however, have not learned Estonian. This is currently changing; as Estonians assert their power, they make their language more dominant. One recent strategy is medical personnel speaking only Estonian to their patients: no Estonian language skills, no treatment!

The Popular Front here is impatient, more developed and better organized than the Popular Fronts in their sister Baltics Latvia and Lithuania. Some would like complete independence from the USSR by 1990, with their own currency and army. All demand more autonomy politically and more power economically,

including the structuring of their own economy and free market trade. They hold little faith in promises but much hope for nonviolent change.

Estonia is a small, relatively prosperous, European-oriented Soviet Republic. Its struggle for increased self-determination is watched closely by other Republics and the central government. Tolerance for a pluralistic society, skills in nonviolent social change, and greater latitude in internal affairs are hopeful outcomes of this drama, which will undoubtedly affect Soviet and world history.

In sharp contrast to Estonia is the Republic of Georgia; its citizens are as mid-eastern or Mediterranean-looking as the Estonians are Scandinavian. Georgia borders on Turkey and Iran; we arrived in its capital Tbilisi by flight over the rugged and snow covered Caucasus mountains.

Georgia is ancient: Christians and Jews have lived there since the 3rd-4th centuries, and the Georgia Orthodox Church, still functioning, is one of the world's oldest. The old city within Tbilisi reflects its southern location, with winding alleys, painted and balconied stucco houses, the smells of pungent spices and baked traditional Georgian bread everywhere.

Like Estonia, Georgia is in transition, and the Popular Front movement is throbbing with energy. The struggle here is also for greater autonomy; the Vice Rector of Tbilisi University told us Soviet control has been so total that "You couldn't drive a nail into the wall without orders and directives from Moscow," Georgians, he said, "want to be masters in their own house."

There are Popular Front total secessionists in Georgia, as well as gradualists who for now would be content with "greater control over the economy, education, and environment," according to one spokesperson. What has united moderate and more radical elements is the April 9th demonstration in Tbilisi for greater political autonomy, where nonviolent Georgians were met with Soviet troops, tanks and tear gas. Deaths, injuries, an outraged Georgian public, and more support for separatist thinking has been the result of that Soviet response. Adding insult to injury, the general leading that action, which the Georgians call a "military crime," is still stationed in Tbilisi.

We arrived in Tbilisi during another demonstration, this one in response to demands of an Abkazian Moslem ethnic group living in mountainous northern Georgia, who wish to secede from Georgia and join the USSR as an autonomous region. The streets were elec-

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tric with tension, people pouring out of buses and subways onto the grounds of the Popular Front headquarters, many carrying the tricolored Georgian flag. They were waiting for news from Abkazia, anxious about further military interference, concerned about this potential secession within another secession. Nationalist politics in the Soviet Union are indeed multi-layered and complex.

The outcome of this fierce struggle is unpredictable. While Georgians live surprisingly well with Jews, who report harmony without anti-semitism here, Georgians have volatile relations with Moslem minorities and other tribal groups. The struggle for minority ethnic rights within Georgia is a mirror of Georgia's struggle for rights as a minority in the Soviet Union.

Gorbachev and the Soviet government face extremely difficult economic and ethnic problems.

Estonia and Georgia are testing the limits of glasnost and perestroika right now; other Soviet Republics will surely follow. The claims of land, loyalty, and ancestral memory are complex and divisive with the Union, the Republics, and the 140 language and ethnic groups that comprise the USSR.

There will be no easy solution. A best hope is for nonviolence, for understanding and sensitivity to ethnicity on all sides, and for a Soviet social order that realizes a vision of increased capacity for change, flexibility, and the free expression of its many people. We can ask no less from our own government, and from all the countries of the world.

*Paula Green is a former BPF and IMS Board member. She is a psychologist and activist living in Western Mass. She is currently at work on a book in the field of Psychology, Peace and Social Responsibility.*

# THERE ARE NO HOUSES IN MOSCOW

by Nina Wise

I was invited by the Center for Creative Initiatives for Peace (CCIP), a Moscow based organization affiliated with the Soviet government's Peace Committee, for a 10 day cruise on the Volga River with ecologists, peace activists and artists from eight different countries to discuss the relationship between peace, ecology, and culture. Despite the fact that I had to pay my own way to get there, this was an offer I couldn't refuse. Taking off from San Francisco bound for Seattle-Copenhagen-Moscow via the arctic, I was in an elated mood. Being the granddaughter of Russian Jews, I felt that after years of estrangement, I was returning to my homeland.

Moscow means "damp swamp," we were told by the tour guide as we set off for our first round of the capital that houses 11 million people in its 900,000 square miles. Soviets are into bigness. Our guide proudly told us that Moscow is the largest city in Europe with the fourth biggest population. The Hotel Russia, a monstrous rectangular Goliath that covers a city block, is the biggest hotel in the world with 6,500 dismal "suites." And the church bell at the Kremlin is the biggest church bell in the world. So heavy that when they were trying to install it the rigging wasn't strong enough, the bell fell and a large piece broke off. It now rests behind a fence, a tourist attraction, having never been tolled.

There are no houses in Moscow. After the 1917

revolution, the state occupied the palatial homes of the wealthy, and transformed them into governmental offices, committee headquarters, and union halls. The state then constructed housing for the people; 12-30 story flat roofed cubic structures foliate the city like an architect's nightmare. This is one of the most startling of the contradictions that characterize Soviet life. The government, sincerely dedicated to taking care of the housing needs of each and every citizen, has created uniform, but almost unbearable living environments. We visited the flats of a variety of people: a single mother who did ironing for a living, the executive director of CCIP, an aeronautics engineer, an English teacher, and an actor. Only the actor's flat seemed comfortably liveable. He had a new apartment on the outskirts of town that had a bedroom for him and his wife, as well as a separate bedroom for his two year old son. In a city where everyone else we met lived in two room apartments and turned their convertible living rooms into bedrooms to sleep at night, I was impressed with how well artists were treated. Still, in order to have a small dinner party, we took the books off the coffee table in the living room, and laid out a table cloth, as we did in all of the flats at all of the dinner parties we were given.

And dinner parties galore were given in honor of the visiting Americans. I had heard from friends who had been to the Soviet Union that good food was hard to come by, but I was feasted for four weeks. Black

caviar, blinis with sour cream, smoked white fish, egg salad with fresh dill pickles, forest mushrooms, borshcht, the ever present potatoes and canned peas, blintzes, dark fresh rye bread, cheese, more sour cream, and not being a meat eater, I turned down sizzling chicken, sausages, and smoked meats. This is the food that frequented the ceremonies of my youth — bar mitzvahs, weddings, Sunday mornings at my aunt and uncles' in New York, Jewish food, food of my ancestors, blood food. I relinquished all concerns about cholesterol and my figure, and surrendered to the aggressive generosity of my hosts, polishing meals off with ice cream, chocolate, cookies, and cakes.

One afternoon, I offered to go shopping with my translator, Donna, a fifteen year old who speaks English and Chinese in addition to her native Russian, and is a film actress. We went first to the vegetable store and waited in a line of about 20 people. After not making any progress for 10 minutes, we decided to try another store. Again, there were about 20 people in line and after another futile 10 minute wait, we decided we didn't really need vegetables. We went to the dairy store. At all of these places, a single dour person stands behind the counter protecting the goods. You wait in line until you reach the counter and vie for the attention of the salesperson, who is seemingly uninterested. When you get his attention, you ask to look at a bunch of beets, or a cabbage, or a sweater, or a notebook, and ask the price. Then you wait in another long line at the cashier's box. You pay your money, get a receipt, go back to the original counter, wait in line once more, hand your receipt to the still dour salesperson, who finally hands you the goods, wrapped in brown paper. After the open air markets of Mexico, Guatemala, Nepal, and Thailand, the hustle and bustle, smells and colors of the streets of India, and the neon rock'n'roll malls of California, I had become dependent on shopping as an escape from the drearier aspects of my life. Not so here. Shopping is an endurance test, requiring great perseverance, patience and resolve. I am amazed that anyone manages.

And this is a focal point of common complaints. I was told people can't get the most basic of necessities — soap, sugar, tea. In many parts of the Soviet Union, there is food rationing and you need tickets to buy vodka, sugar and other goods. The difficulty in acquiring goods is the cause of a surge of social unrest. Elena, an English teacher with her own flat in Moscow, is an adamant critic of the current government. "We call this

'the time of stagnation,'" she tells me while she cooks a three course meal in her tiny kitchen. Evidently that's a pun, referring to glasnost, "restructuring" and perestroika, a "time of change." Many people here feel Gorbachev is moving too slowly in his liberalization of the Soviet political and economic structure, characterized

by Boris Yeltsin's popularity at the polls. As Gorbachev's most vocal critic, Yeltsin won 93% of the vote in a recent election in Moscow. He recently made history during a whirlwind tour of the United States, for \$20,000 a lecture, criticizing Gorbachev's conservatism.

Elena is in her early forties, a striking beauty with the kind of lips men dream about, and has just separated from her movie star boyfriend. She teaches English in a school for adults, has a number of private clients, and translates each year

for the international film festival to augment her income of 150 rubles a month. Since she is buying her flat, her mortgage payments are 20 rubles a month (rent would be 10), with utilities amounting to an additional 3-4 rubles. Bread is 20 kopeks a loaf, fresh from the bakery, milk 20 kopeks and so on. With the official exchange rate at approximately 85 kopeks per dollar (100 kopeks to each ruble) things look cheap. But on the black market you can easily get 7-15 rubles for each dollar which makes goods for daring foreigners wildly affordable.

The black market is a lively component in this bleak and complex city. Young men approached me at the popular tourist spots and whispered the international code "change money?" Cab drivers, squinting their eyes, whispered the same refrain. Since rubles aren't convertible, and things like VCR's and computers are hard to get, dollars are coveted for their buying power. People collect dollars, give them to someone they know going to the States or to Europe and have them bring back electronic equipment, which they keep or sell at exponentially inflated prices.

There is a more sinister element to the Soviet underground we were told. Since Gorbachev's reign, organized crime has flourished. Like our mafia, the racket has got a vice hold on Moscow's emerging small businesses.

Since perestroika, small independent cooperatives have formed that do business independent of the government and even form joint ventures with businesses and corporations in the West. The Soviets are proud and outspoken about these new inroads into international economics. On the eve of my departure, my

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young friend Donna eagerly handed me a warm loaf of "chorly," Russian dark rye. "It is from the only bakery in Moscow that sends bread to New York," she told me excitedly. In fact, joint venture is the buzz word in the Soviet Union. "Peace as a concept is trite and outdated," Dr. Mark Garber informed us over a dollar-a-hit-hard-currency-only cup of coffee at the Intourist Hotel. Today people are more concerned with business partnerships than peacemaking. Dr. Garber is a medical doctor in Moscow who has also trained as a chiropractor and is currently spearheading over a dozen international business partnerships.

My travelling companion, Joan Halifax, an anthropologist who specializes in tribal peoples and shamanism, was talking with Mark about setting up expeditions to parts of the Soviet Union where tribal peoples still live with their cultures fairly intact. Mark dazzled us with his knowledge of ethnobotany, neurochemistry, international politics, and business. We had just been to the Nicholas Roerich museum in Moscow, which houses an impressive collection of this visionary painter's work. Roerich walked from Russia through China and Tibet, and into India where he settled, married an Indian woman, and painted luminous landscapes of the Himalayas for the rest of his life. One of his remarkable achievements was a 30 point peace plan, which to this day is one of the most eloquent peace treatises in existence. In 1929, Roerich was nominated for the Nobel Prize for his "great summons to the world for loave among men," according to the nominating committee. Joan, Mark, and I talked about reopening the Roerich trail by sponsoring a walk and inviting Soviets, Chinese, Tibetans, Moslems, Jews, Buddhists, Christians, native peoples, peace activists, ecologists, from all over the world to retrace Roerich's footsteps. "We'll call it the Roerich Peace Walk," I volunteered. "No," Mark responded quickly, "not modern enough. It'll never take." We finally agreed on "Reopening the Trade Trail," as a working title.

As I flew out of Moscow on my way home, the contradictions abundant in Soviet life resounded in my mind. Candy colored ornate church spires dapple a cityscape of dismal cubic apartment buildings; spine tingling multi-harmonied sacred singing reverberates in densely frescoed and gilded church domes, but as people walk out on the streets, their eyes are downcast, their energies dulled; food is hard to come by but

artists are treated like royalty, bus drivers recite classical poetry, theaters are filled with attentive audiences; living conditions are crowded and primitive by our standards, but people do not suffer the debilitating isolation fostered by affluent societies; the classical communist government was founded on the vow to take care of everyone of its people, and while there is no homelessness, Soviet people, until the birth of glasnost, were dejected, fearful, and oppressed. Yet a deep genuine heartfelt human spirit has remained intact. People live in tiny low ceilinged two room apartments and wait in long lines to buy food, but they all want you to stay with them and to feed you endless amounts of Russian dishes prepared with joy and loving care. The Soviet with a car is rare, yet they find some one to meet you at the train station, take you to the airport. It is hard to get soap, laundry detergent, but they offer you clean towels and sheets, give you their beds, are offended if you refuse. As glasnost and perestroika gain steam, and the West and the Soviets engage in business, I fear this Old World hospitality will become a thing of the past. I feel grateful to have walked through a window in history and to have met the Soviet people before the invasion of the profit motive disguised as "democracy" does its predictable damage. And at the same time, I am excited and thrilled about the revolutions in the human spirit that are reshaping the face of the globe as our species moves toward recognizing the unity of our home planet. ❖



Dana Gluckstein

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*Nina Wise's show Guidebook for the Lonely Planet runs March 16-April 14 at Theater Artists of Marin, Mission & Forbes St., San Rafael. For information call 454-6056*

# LISTENING TO THE LIBYANS

By Gene Knudsen-Hoffman

*After the 1986 U.S. bombing of Tripoli, BPF and FOR member Gene Knudsen-Hoffman wrote a personal letter to Colonel Muammar Qaddafi, expressing her grief at the violence, the loss of life, and specifically the loss of his daughter. Remarkably, Qaddafi wrote back thanking her, and added an angry condemnation of the military action. When the U.S. shot down two Libyan planes (Jan. 1989) Fellowship Magazine editor Virginia Baron began negotiations with U.N. Libyan Ambassador Dr. Treikki — negotiations that resulted, six months later, in an act of citizen diplomacy. On June 27, 1989, 10 FOR members, including Ms. Knudsen-Hoffman, arrived in Tripoli, for a week of talks with the Libyans.*

Amid the flash of TV and newspaper cameras, we were met at the airport by our hosts, the "Libyan Arab Solidarity and Peace Committee" and taken to the Kabir Hotel, Tripoli's five-star finest.

We met the next morning to begin our explorations of the Libyan grievances, our differences, and what we might do about them.

The Libyan delegation initially consisted of 15 men. When Virginia Baron asked where the women were, we were quickly joined by Salma Abdul Jabbar, a teacher of Philosophy at Tripoli University, and Rawhia Kara, Libya's leading feminist, and associate professor of English at the same University. Most of the rest of the committee were 'Westernized': they'd lived in America, and studied or taught at American universities. With the exception of the former Ambassador to the U.S. — who had been summarily deported in 1980 — they thought highly of America, and longed to return.

We introduced ourselves as the "Libyan Listening Project"; they dubbed us "The Committee of Good Intentions."

We learned some basic facts about Libya: 30 years of Italian occupation ended with World War II. In 1949, the UN General Assembly voted that Libya should become a united independent kingdom. A King was chosen by the national assembly, and in 1951 Libya declared its sovereignty.

The economy was based on foreign aid, and rent paid by the US and Britain for military bases; the King naturally took a pro-Western stance. In the late 1950's, huge reservoirs of oil were discovered, and wealth began to flow into the country. The King was deposed in 1969 when a group of young officers led by Colonel Qaddafi seized power. Liquor was banned, western military bases were closed, and an alliance with the United Arab Republic was formed. Qaddafi became "The Leader."

Qaddafi was born in a Bedouin tent in 1942. His father had taken part in an unsuccessful uprising against Italian rule in 1931. A boy of unusual intelligence, he was educated in Koran schools in Fezzan, where he formed a revolutionary group. While in the military college at Benghazi in 1963, he founded the Free Officers Movement, the group which ultimately overthrew the monarchy.

Qaddafi feels deeply about social issues and the sufferings of impoverished people. (Before the discovery of oil, most of the people were poor and uneducated.) His revolutionary theory is set out in *The Green Book*, published in 1976. This book contains his "Third Universal Theory", in which he rejects both capitalism and communism, and advocates instead a form of people's democracy through Basic Peoples' Congresses and Committees. He believes that people should have direct control over their lives; his government's aim is to promote that goal.

We learned that not everyone went along with Qaddafi — they were divided as to whether his plan is working — but all held him in high esteem and agreed that their situation has improved beyond belief.

Libya is considered a secular Muslim State with Qaddafi as the unofficial head. It is called a state, not a nation, because Qaddafi hopes to unite all Arabs into one nation, of which Libya will be one state.

The grievances we had traveled to hear came to us from the Committee members, from the International Green Book Studies Centre, from the Permanent Secretariat of the Arab Congress, and from private citizens. First in all minds was the US attempt to assassinate Qaddafi, and the killing and wounding of his family and many other civilians in 1986. Then we heard about the economic sanctions against Libya, the embargo on all trade, the freezing of Libyan assets in the US, the banning of all Libyans from America, the ban on travel for US citizens to Libya, the US efforts to dismantle Qaddafi's regime and the campaign of disinformation about Libya in the US.

The former ambassador told us that "since the Libyan People's bureau was closed in the US in 1980, no Libyan voice is left to tell the Libyan point of view. The history of Libya is ignored in the US.

"We have been occupied for centuries — by the Turks, the British, the French, the Italians and by Americans who fought their battle with the Germans on our soil during WWII. Generals Patton and Rommel left our country a shambles. Villages were destroyed, our people were killed, and thousands of mines were sown in Libyan soil.

"After the war, we asked for aid from the Marshall

plan. We were denied it. We asked the Americans and Germans to remove the mines. They refused. Each year many people die from these abandoned mines. And now you bombed two of our planes last January in our own waters."

Ibrahim Aboudhzam, Vice President of the People's General Assembly was probably the most difficult to listen to. Eloquent about grievances against the US, he had an exquisite knowledge of our history, and the deviations from our values. "Your visit is very important because of the radical official situation in the relationship between our two countries. We have respect for the American people who in such a short period created a great civilization.

"The sad relationship with your government is due to a misunderstanding of our government and the Libyan way of life. We want to live free as an independent state. We will never submit to any power, Soviet or US. We are rich and must control our resources and must evacuate all foreign people from our shores.

"This independent policy is the cause of the differences between us. Differences between states is a natural way of life, but during the past few years, an effort has been made to sidestep civilized ways of solving them. Power became the method and led nowhere, and was contrary to American values and the spirit of the American revolution. I refer back to your revolution and Constitution. I have studied both and was inspired by both.

"I felt Reagan was following International Zionism when he bombed Libya. We Libyans condemn oppression anywhere in the world. We do not understand why last year the worst abuse of human rights in the world took place in the US. Your record of capital punishment inflicted is the highest in the world. You use poison gas and the electric chair — both brutal means. You have a vast number of unemployed, homeless and drug addicts. Human rights means aiding people to solve these problems. You do not do this.

"As to your treatment of us: our rights are violated every day by you in the Gulf of Sert. Many areas of the high seas are in our own back yard. What the US fleet does in our high seas is a matter of life and death for us. Your maneuvers are one of the basic problems between us. We are bitter about what has happened. Your military aggression, embargo, refusal to sell civilian planes to us is indefensible. The U.N. has adopted a resolution that we should be compensated for our suffering — but when? We want to be friends with your government and with the US people — but how?"

After a long silence a member of our delegation

responded: "We see a contradiction in your government. Libya wants dialogue and coexistence; in this we stand in solidarity with you. American people perceive that you stand for the liberation of any governments and groups, no matter how violent. American people fear this will bring a reign of terror in the world.

Aboudhzam answered: "As a basic principal we support independent movements which fight for justice; we support them but do not intervene in the process they choose. We support peaceful means to achieve independence, but sometimes they don't work. If we had used Gandhian means, I do not believe we would have achieved independence. Did the US gain independence by dialogue?"

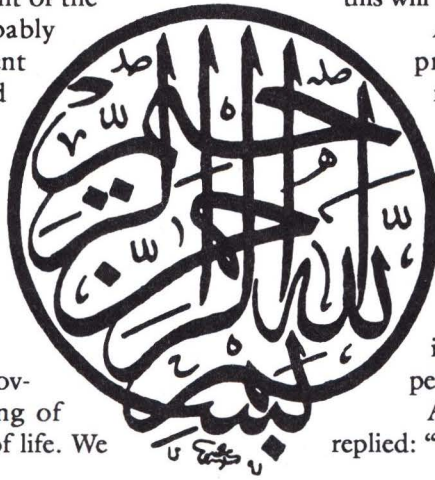
After another silence, Virginia Baron replied: "We're here to begin a people-to-people dialogue. We are experts in the problems of our country. We treasure our right to disagree with the policies of our government. If there is any slight disappointment, it is that we have not had a similar openness from people of your country.

"We have a long history of working against the death penalty and for the rights of conscientious objection. Martin Luther King was member of our organization. Many of us have been arrested and have been in jail on the subject of South Africa.

"We're overwhelmed by your generosity and hospitality and the warmth of the Libyan people. I leave here feeling I have made many new friends."

Not all our experiences were so austere. The meetings were punctuated with delightful and delicious meals, morning and afternoon breaks for coffee, tea, and the ubiquitous pastries. We were banqueted and entertained. There was a memorable evening of Libyan tribal dancers who had a power and vitality I'd rarely experienced. We took early morning walks along the Mediterranean, an afternoon at the exquisite ancient Roman ruins of Sabratha, and a day at the Janzour resort where we swam, rested, and watched the children ride colorful mechanical animals to shouts of laughter and glee.

An extremely important part of the trip was the connections we made with the Libyan people. Several of us visited the house of Dr. Ali Kushaim, a member of our host committee. A gentle-spirited man — author, mystic, and professor — he introduced us to his tall, graceful wife Halima, and their seven children. Halima and two of the teenage daughters wore the traditional Myt Hejba — a head-dress which covered most of their hair — and the Juba, a long full-flowing gown. The elder daughters spoke fluent English.



Arabic script for the Name of God and his titles of "Giver of All Gifts," and "Most Compassionate One."

Salma Abdul Jabbar took me to "the Souk", the old city market, where she carefully described the customs and the wares for sale in the tiny stalls. As we passed the wedding stalls, she made vivid for me the wedding ceremonies, which last seven days. In one of these stalls three Bedouin women were holding a lively conversation. When told I was one of the Americans, they chattered excitedly like morning birds. One woman looked at me with flashing black eyes, and spoke in rapid Arabic. As she spoke, I observed her delicately tattooed chin and forehead, her desert head-dress, full skirt, loose bodice and flowered scarf. "You are American. Please do not bomb us again. We want to love you; please do not bomb us. Let us have love between us. Salaam." the other two Bedouin women nodded in agreement and reached out to touch me with their hands.

I also got to know Rawhia, the other woman on the committee, and her daughter Nada. As a feminist, Rawhia spoke angrily of the women who wore the Myt Hejba and the Juba, saying these were symbols of women's willingness to be inferior to men.

Her daughter Nada had lived in Berkeley, California for the first 10 years of her life, and had returned there to attend the university. She was riding a bus the day the US bombed Tripoli and Qaddafi's home. A man sitting next to her turned and said "If I saw a Libyan, I'd smash his face in." Nada got off the bus at the next stop, frightened and quaking. Soon the U.S. government deported her, and she hasn't been back since.

At the Islamic Call Society, an international center for Muslim groups, we learned a little about Islam: "Islam equals harmony of the universe and human beings. We will explain who we are. We are not trying to convert you. We want you to hear our side, and come to your truth. We want coexistence with other cultures and religions.

"Our task here is to interpret the Koran according to our time, situation and era. Islam is more than a Mosque and praying. Islam is a way of life; it tells us how to handle our problems. We have no Church and no priests. Islam means working for your own life and your own people, and [explains] how to deal with non-Muslims."

Among the questions was one about the rights of homosexuals in Libya. What does Islam say? "In the Muslim world, the majority are against homosexuality. It is thought homosexuality is not going with the natural flow. It must be dealt with as a psychological problem. The Koran says to avoid it. It is not acceptable,

but no one will be executed for it."

What about the Iran-Iraq war? "We feel Arabs are emerging in Asia and Africa. Our job is to be in relationship with them. Arab nationalism is a fact, even in the Muslim world. We must have good relationships with all Arab Muslims. We want Arabs to be one nation."



Salma, listening

We met last with Sassi Salem el Haj, Attorney General of Tripoli. "If someone is accused of a normal crime and is condemned, he has an appeal. After 45 days in arrest, his case must be presented. In the case of a political crime it may take longer. There are two categories of political crimes: one is the dissenter on domestic affairs, the other is the dissenter on foreign affairs.

"People are informed about laws; they know when they break a law. People on drug charges are punished by life imprisonment, but [in practice] it is never applied. They stay in prison for a minimum of nine years, and never more than 20 years. I am against the death penalty under any circumstances, but some crimes are punished by death. Usually the judge will move the sentence down to a life of imprisonment. our form of execution is by hanging, because we feel the suffering is less in hanging than in other methods.

"As to the prisoners on the Amnesty International list you gave me, that list is old, and I know many of them. Almost all of them are now released; just a few are still in prison. I am in touch with all; I can take you to meet some of them, if you wish. [The list *was* old; the group had no time to visit]

"After 1988, most political prisoners in Libya were released. There were more than 500; now there are only about 20. Qaddafi himself destroyed the first jail for political prisoners and we plan to have no more."

Finally our delegation and the Libyan Committee met to determine what we could do to continue the dialogue and to educate Americans about Libyans. The FOR agreed to seek to hold a return delegation of the Libyan Committee in the United States, and to pursue possibilities for a conference of Christians, Muslims and Jews that would include Libyans. We also agreed to see if foreign-student departments would petition the US government to permit Libyan students to return.

We plan a campaign to "put a human face" on Libyans for Americans by creating slide shows, posters and postcards of Libyan people, and by touring a show of Libyan childrens' art. The Libyans also agreed to invite more Americans to visit Libya. Thus our days of dialogue came to an end. ❖



# THE DALAI LAMA & THE JEWS

by Marc F. Lieberman, M.D.

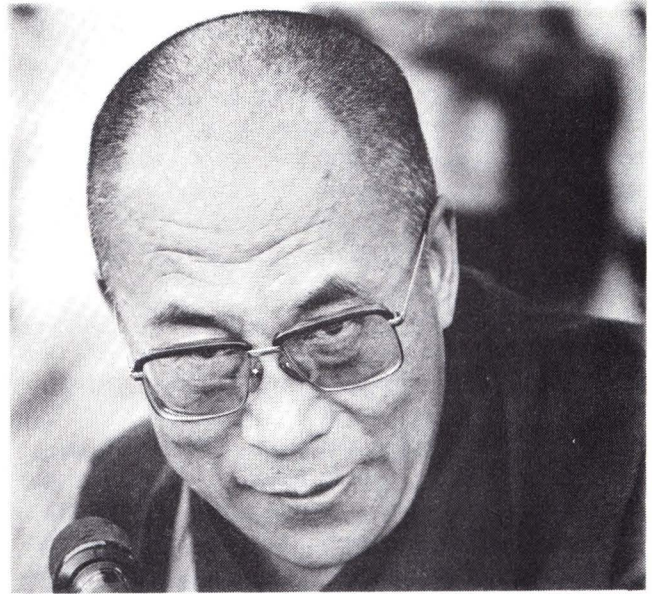
You can't be involved with Dharma activities in the West — Theravada, Vajrayana or Zen — and not ask, sooner or later: "Why are there so many Jews attracted to these teachings?" I've gradually relaxed into accepting my own identity as someone with Jewish roots and Buddhist wings, but the number of Dharma teachers with Jewish backgrounds is truly remarkable. Beginning with the great German monk Nyanaponika in Ceylon, from the Theravadin tradition come Joseph Goldstein, Sharon Salzberg, Sister Ayya Khema and Jack Kornfield; from the Zen traditions are Bernard Glassman Sensei, Sojun Mel Weitsman and Jacob Perl; in the Vajrayana tradition are Anne Klein, Alexander Berzin, Allen Ginsburg and Thubten Chodron.

Illustrative rather than exhaustive, this list suggests the strong resonance between Buddha-Dharma and the many minds raised, to a greater or lesser degree, in the milieu of Jewish consciousness.

The affinities between the Tibetan and Jewish experiences are particularly compelling. Both these ancient civilizations are an intimate amalgam of religious values intrinsic to cultural preservation. Among phenomena they share in common are cardinal beliefs in the unitary sacredness and interdependence of all life; a passion for scholarship in yeshivot and monasteries; the high social premium on compassion and responsiveness to the welfare of others; and an unquenchable devotion to persevering and thriving as a distinctive entity amidst the chaos of exile from ancient homelands.

H.H. the Dalai Lama mentioned several reasons he was particularly interested in forging contacts with Jewish scholars. First was his unwavering desire to promote meaningful interfaith dialogue for the sake of manifesting peace in the world through genuine understanding: "When you see people who genuinely embody spiritual values, then you really get a conviction that each different tradition has the potential to produce a good human being. A good person. So then, you see, it is a tremendous happening to develop genuine respect about various different religions."

Second was the awareness of the Tibetan intelligentsia of how powerful a role model was the Jewish experience of exile. Though the Jews were dispersed from Judaea by the Romans nearly 2000 years ago, they successfully adapted to a myriad of host-cultures and languages. After sustaining a sense of peoplehood for millennia, they eventually reframed their existence with the establishment of Israel a generation ago. His Holiness was greatly curious as to what were the specific mechanisms of survival: how did Jews retain their



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values and identity in foreign countries, generation after generation, without being totally assimilated?

Third was the gratitude felt by the Tibetan communities in exile in India for the generous support provided by many individual Jews and by the American Jewish World Service (AJWS). In the well-developed world of Jewish philanthropy, the AJWS makes a point of expressing the Jewish ideal of *tzeddakah* (deeds of generous kindness) in the Third World. For many years they have provided assistance to establish self-sufficiency for the Tibetan community of Hunsur in southern India. Impressed and intrigued by the help of Jewish strangers, His Holiness let it be known to two trusted Jewish friends his desire to learn more of the Jewish people and their traditions. David Phillips of the AJWS and Richard Weingarten of the Tibet Fund connected with Michael Sautman, long-time student and supporter of the Tibetan tradition, and me, to see what could be done.

It became obvious that funding a dialogue with the Dalai Lama didn't conform to the usual guidelines of numerous Jewish philanthropies. Sensing that education was the key to success, we shifted our attention from raising a large sum for an extended five-day meeting in Dharamsala to finding a modest but visible forum which would include representatives from all segments of American Jewry, and be accessible to journalists of the Jewish, Buddhist and lay press. During his September, 1989, visit to the New York area to receive the Raoul Wallenberg Award, His Holiness graciously agreed to spend an afternoon with selected Jewish scholars and rabbis.

The week before the beginning of Rosh HaShanah (the Jewish New Year) — and 10 days before the

Nobel Peace Prize announcement — seven members of the Jewish community met with the Dalai Lama and distinguished translators (Drs. Robert Thurman, Jeffrey Hopkins and Geshe Thubten Jinpa) at the Tibetan Buddhist Learning Center in Washington, New Jersey. Rabbi Joseph Glaser of the Central Conference of American Rabbis represented the institutional agency of the Reform Jewish movement. Rabbi Irving Greenberg represented both modern Jewish Orthodoxy as well as his National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership. His wife, Blu Greenberg, a widely-respected scholar on Jewish feminism from an Orthodox perspective also came. Rabbi Lawrence Kushner came both as a congregational Reform rabbi as well as a modern interpreter of Kabbalistic lore. Dr. Arthur Green, Dean of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, Dr. Judith Hauptman, Associate Professor of Talmud at the Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary, and Dr. Moshe Waldoks, who combines a background in East European Jewish history with a career as a professional Jewish humorist and video consultant rounded out the group.

The purpose of the meeting was threefold: (1) to initiate meaningful personal contacts between distinguished Jewish guests and His Holiness; (2) to identify which themes and topics of mutual interest would be worthy of more thorough exploration at a future conference of greater length; and (3) to publicize the existence and significance of this unique exchange between the Buddhist leader of a culture revered throughout Asia and the West, and leaders of the spiritually rich and complex American Jewish community.

Hoping to provide a structure around which the dialogue could unfold, we selected four topics to be addressed: (1) Jewish concepts of God and the Sacred — Buddhist concepts of Perfection and Truth; (2) Jewish and Buddhist practices of prayer and meditation; (3) Compassion & Altruism; and (4) Survival and Exile: Strategies of Cultural Preservation. In keeping with the intimacy of the gathering and His Holiness' well-known curiosity, guests were encouraged to bring "show-and-tell" items: a Torah scroll, tallit and tefillin (prayer-shawl and phylacteries), a copy of Talmud, the ritual items of the Sabbath table, etc. A fairly ambitious agenda for 120 minutes!

For every guest, participant and observer present, the meeting crackled with the joy of discovery and interchange. The Jewish scholars were instantaneously enchanted by the profound power, warmth and humaneness of His Holiness. Early in the meeting His Holiness insisted that each tradition must distinguish its differences from one another. Only afterwards can they proceed to identify how their different methods aim for "more or less the same thing — to produce a better human being, harmony and peace."

Dr. Green began with an exposition of meditating

on the four-letter name of the Jewish deity, "YHVH" standing quite simply for Being, as "Is-Was-Will Be."

In a touching declaration of admiration for the Jewish capacity for survival and for the beginning of a long hoped-for process of Tibetan-Jewish Dialogue, His Holiness articulated the recent history of the Tibetan people and their exile. This generated intense rapport among the Jewish guests, who identified with His Holiness' tale of persecution in Tibet: "So naturally when we see different people from the same kind of dark experiences, we develop some kind of special closeness. So I am very, very happy to meet," said the Dalai Lama, radiant in his smile of welcome and goodwill.

Rabbi Kushner unfurled a Torah scroll, explaining the concept that each Jew has a life teaching, a Way, a unique expression of the individual whose task it is to become congruent with the larger Torah or Way of God in the Universe. The written parchment, he explained, is a written reminder of what the holy path comprises. Questions arose as to whether Jews believed in an after-life, as did Christians, or in rebirth, as do Hindus. In a pattern that became typical for the entire afternoon, each question begat several contradictory answers from different participants. In one memorable exchange, Rabbi Greenberg explained: "You've just learned one of the keys to Jewish survival — we disagree with each other all the time." "No we don't," quipped Rabbi Kushner.

The demonstrations of prayer techniques and ritual objects proceeded, following its natural course of discovery and query and dialogue. His Holiness was particularly interested in two areas. One was the esoteric Kabbalistic tradition of meditation and visualization, which in some forms seemed to resonate with Tantric concepts and techniques. Unfortunately this was too complex an area to pursue, and was left for a later agenda.

The second concern had tremendous urgency. What, His Holiness wanted to know, was the "secret technique" of Jewish survival? Blu Greenberg addressed this directly: "The Jewish family was the creator of life, the physical continuity of the Covenant and Torah vision." She referred to the pivotal moment in Jewish history when the Second Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD and Judaism was transformed, through the efforts of a single Rabbinic generation in Yavneh, Palestine, into a mobile and decentralized faith capable of withstanding millennia of exile.

The vehicle for this survival was the family unit, where the head of household now functioned in the place of priest, the family dinner table served in place of the sacred Temple altar — every Sabbath and every holiday. By means of the cycle of celebrations revolving around the home, generations of young and old are bound together, and the "social reality of the family intersects with the vision and values of the religion." She explained the symbolism of candles and their light,

the meaning of the Sabbath breads, of the pushke box for spare change to be donated to the needy. The emphasis in Jewish teaching has been on pragmatic ways to inculcate awareness of the sacred in the life of the family, and by extension, the community.

This concept gave His Holiness pause for a long and thoughtful silence. After several animated moments of discussion in Tibetan, he and his translators explained how with the concentration of ceremonies and rituals in the temples, sometimes lasting hours, there was often a sense of exhaustion. "With your children so happy to participate," mused His Holiness, "that is no doubt one of the secrets."

Although His Holiness graciously extended the meeting by a full hour beyond its scheduled time, it came to an end all too soon. Rabbi Greenberg closed with thoughts that reflected the profound empathy shared by everyone present: "...as Jews having lived through a couple of thousand years of exile, we feel an instinctive sympathy and identification with the unjust exile and suffering of the Tibetan people. Our dialogue is not just to know your doctrines, but is really in part a statement of support and affection and identification with your suffering... The Tibetan struggle, if it persists, will be a model the whole world will study of how one sees courage, faith and persistence."

Along with the traditional exchange of white

scarves came the ancient Tibetan and Jewish traditions of giving gifts. I offered His Holiness a shofar (a ram's horn); he was delighted by its tones. Another placed a white tallit (prayer shawl) around his neck. And so His Holiness the XIVth Dalai Lama strode from the room, tallit-bedecked and with shofar under belt, leaving a wake of broad smiles and joyful hearts.

Writing in bulletins and newsletters for their respective constituencies, the scholars provided exactly the kind of awareness of Tibet in the Jewish community we had hoped to stimulate. National coverage by the N Y Times and the Baltimore Jewish Times (largest Jewish weekly in the U.S.) was greatly amplified by His Holiness' fortuitous receipt of the Nobel Prize a week later.

Most moving to me was the account by a renowned Buddhist scholar whose father, seeing the newspaper photograph of the Dalai Lama looking on the open Torah scroll, acknowledged for the first time that if it "was OK for rabbis to be talking to the Dalai Lama, it was OK for my daughter to be Jewish and study Buddhism." This is the real fruit of interfaith dialog! ❖

*Marc Lieberman is Associate Professor of Ophthalmology at Pacific Presbyterian Medical Center, San Francisco, and involved with several Theravadin organizations in the Bay Area. In anticipation of an eventual book containing edited transcripts of the Jewish-Buddhist dialogs, he welcomes any commentaries or reflections on the nature of Jewish-Buddhist issues that readers may wish to forward.*

# VIETNAM: CRISIS FOR PRISONERS AND REFUGEES

by Stephen Denney

Over the last two years, we have participated in a letter writing campaign to appeal for the release of prominent Buddhist monks and writers in Vietnam. Sister Cao Ngoc Phuong, Thich Nhat Hanh's co-worker in France, has been our source for information and inspiration in this effort. From letters received by Sister Cao Ngoc Phuong in recent months we have important news to share with readers regarding the situation of these prisoners of conscience.

The most disturbing news concerns Thich Tue Sy, the prominent scholar and monk whose death sentence was commuted to 20 years imprisonment in Nov. 1988 after international protest. He has been moved to Camp Xuan Phuoc in a remote jungle area of Tuy Hoa district, Phu Khanh province of central Vietnam, 10 miles from the nearest road. He is allowed only one visit every two months, and his food rations have been reduced. Amnesty International has issued an "Urgent Action" on his behalf and for another prominent monk, Thich

Duc Nhuan, who is detained at Z-30A camp in southern Vietnam and is suffering from severe stomach ulcers.

The two most prominent monks in Vietnam, Thich Quang Do and Thich Huyen Quang, have remained under house arrest since they were exiled from Saigon in 1982 for protesting the dissolution of the Unified Buddhist Church, An Quang Pagoda, and its forced incorporation into the government-created Vietnam Buddhist Church — which in turn is under the control of the Vietnam Fatherland Front, an umbrella organization intended to control and mobilize the various social, religious and ethnic groups in the country. Thich Quang Do is reported to be seriously ill, detained in a remote village of northern Vietnam. The local authorities have reduced his monthly ration of rice from 13 kilos to 5,000 piasters per month, which is equivalent to 6 kilos of rice.

Thich Huyen Quang, age 70, remains under house arrest near Quang Ngai city of Nghia Binh province in Central Vietnam. The government asked that he be

sent to a temple in a remote village of Qui Nhon district of the province. He requested that he be brought to trial instead, stating he would rather spend all day meditating in jail, than to be considered "free" while he is not allowed to venture more than 1,000 meters from his house and is constantly visited and interrogated by security agents. He has been denounced several times by the local Fatherland Front for his criticism.

For Buddhists, as for other religions, a serious problem for the future is receiving government permission for the training and ordination of monks and nuns. According to one letter only one Buddhist seminary is now operating in Vietnam, the Van Hanh Buddhist Institute in Ho Chi Minh City, with only a few dozen students "maintained by the government in order to impress foreign tourists." The long range effect of this policy jeopardizes the continuation of Buddhism in Vietnam. When the old monk or nun in charge of a temple passes away, there is no one to succeed them and the temple may cease to function. Letters of appeal for the imprisoned monks can be sent to:

*Mr. Mai Chi Tho, Minister of Interior /  
Hanoi, Socialist Republic of Vietnam*

Please send copies to the Buddhist Peace Fellowship.

#### *Part II — Repatriation*

The forced removal of 51 Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong to Vietnam on Dec. 12 sparked protests around the world. Here in the United States, the Congressional Human Rights Caucus sent a letter of protest to British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, as did the well-known folksinger Joan Baez and Ginneta Sagan, a human rights activist, in an open letter which will be published in *The South China Morning Post* of Hong Kong during the third week of January. Amnesty International issued a report on Jan. 15 presenting a very detailed critique of the Hong Kong-British policy toward the refugees.

What is happening now in Hong Kong has developed over a period of years. Because of the declining willingness of the West to resettle refugees from Southeast Asia and particularly from Hong Kong, where many are peasants and fishermen from northern Vietnam, Hong Kong began a new policy, effective June 15, 1988, in which refugees were crowded into prison-like detention centers and told they would have virtually no chance of resettling abroad. The policy was described as "humane deterrence" since its purpose was to discourage other people from fleeing Vietnam. It was also required that all refugees arriving after this date be subjected to a screening process in order to separate "economic migrant" from genuine refugee. Even before the process began, Hong Kong and British politicians were proclaiming that the great majority of Vietnamese arriving in Hong Kong had fled for economic reasons and therefore did not deserve refugee status.

The screening process, in fact, is deeply flawed and biased against the refugees. As stated by Arthur Helton of the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, in New York, "...there continues to be an astoundingly low refugee recognition rate of under two percent, excluding family reunification, despite rejected claims based on harsh-re-education, forced labor and severe discrimination."

The British and Hong Kong authorities apparently hoped to persuade Vietnamese to return under a "voluntary repatriation" program, with the apparent belief that people living in miserable conditions with little hope for resettlement would therefore be more likely to agree to return. However, of nearly 40,000 who have arrived since the cut-off date, only some 630 agreed to return under this program of "voluntary repatriation" by the end of 1989. Therefore, Britain and Hong Kong began a new policy this Christmas season of forced repatriation, with the first deportation occurring on Dec. 12, when 51 people were returned to Vietnam. Forced repatriation will apparently resume on a larger scale in January.

Forced repatriation of the Vietnamese refugees should be opposed because there is no assurance that those returned forcibly will not be subject to reprisals, including imprisonment, on their return. Fleeing the country is defined as a crime under Vietnam's vaguely-worded Criminal Code, with penalties ranging up to two years for "illegal emigration" (Article 89); and up to 12 years imprisonment for fleeing the country "with the intent to oppose the people's government," or life imprisonment in especially serious cases (Article 85). Vietnamese in Hong Kong are in a Catch-22 situation — in Hong Kong they have to prove to interviewers that they fled for political, not economic reasons in order to gain refugee status; but if returned to Vietnam they will have to prove to their interviewers that they fled for economic and not political reasons in order to escape more severe punishment. All this occurs during a mounting crackdown on dissents in Vietnam, which was launched by Communist leaders several months ago, apparently in reaction to the events in Eastern Europe.

A lawsuit has been initiated to challenge the unfair nature of the screening process and the prolonged and arbitrary detention of Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong. Working with a group of lawyers in Hong Kong are Arthur Helton of the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights (based in New York), David Burgess, a British lawyer, and Janelle Diller, an attorney in Oakland, CA., who also wrote a report last year on the Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong. This lawsuit is important and needs financial support. Those concerned can send contributions to:

*Indochina Resource Action Center, 1628 16th St.,  
NW, 3rd Floor, Washington, D.C. 20009. Please make  
sure to earmark all checks to the VIETNAMESE  
LEGAL PROTECTION FUND. ❖*

# A MINOR EFFORT: HELPING REFUGEE CHILDREN IN THAILAND

By Gregg Krech

There were no signs of morning as I stepped off the bus in Chiang Kham. This was the last stop. The few remaining passengers were warmly greeted and scurried to their destinations. Not knowing who I was waiting for, I waited. After an hour I noticed a young man in pajamas riding his bicycle toward me. He turned out to be the representative of the Japan Sotoshu Relief Committee (JSRC) who arranged for my visit and for my pass into the camp.

I had discovered JSRC in Bangkok through a directory of refugee agencies. In a country 99% Buddhist, I could find only a couple of organizations which appeared to have Buddhist roots; the rest were government or Christian-based agencies. The JSRC had been started by a Soto Zen group in Japan. The director and several staff were from Japan, but most of the staff were Thai. At the JSRC house/office I had an hour to recover from my 11 hour bus ride. Then six of us piled into a van and began the one hour ride to Ban Vinai, a refugee camp on the Mekong River, just across from Laos.



Doug Hulcher

Ban Vinai was started by an emergency relief camp for the thousands of Hmong who escaped across the river as Laos was being overrun by the Vietnamese. For 150 years the Hmong had lived in the northern hills of Laos, a fiercely independent tribal people. Their resistance to the Vietnamese invasion was supported by the CIA, and when it failed, most fled to Thailand to escape certain death or imprisonment.

As with many of the camps on the Lao and Cambodian border, they have evolved into "villages", though they were set up to provide emergency relief. In Ban Vinai, there are children of 15 or 16 who have never been outside the camp — never seen the "homeland" of Laos.

As we pulled into the camp, there were several ragged busloads of men, women, and children preparing to pull out. I later learned these were Hmong who had been approved for resettlement to the United States. The buses were headed for Panat Nikhom, where the people would live until their papers could be processed and final arrangements made for their departure. An older woman standing outside the bus wiped her tears with one hand as she used the other to reach up and touch the fingers of a young girl she may never see again.

Resettlement is a dilemma for the Hmong. The older generation still has hopes of returning to the homeland — hopes fueled by recent improvement in relations between Laos, Thailand and the U.S. The younger generation, however, having no memories of Laos, often sees the only future as resettlement in the U.S. Decisions about what to do can create an internal struggle within the family or clan already dealing with the pressures of camp life. When I met with the United Nations director of the camp he told me that authorization had been given to 400 people to leave for resettlement, yet only 300 departed. Why the discrepancy? It turned out that 100 people escaped the night before to avoid leaving for resettlement. These people requested to be resettled and only the night before had wanted to go. Such is the anguish of the Hmong's dilemma and the frustration of the refugee agencies who try to assist them.

Refugee authorities will tell you that Ban Vinai is one of the better camps in Thailand, particularly as compared to the camps on the Cambodian border. Those camps are under the jurisdiction of the Thai Military. Food is much more limited and Cambodian armed resistance, primarily the Khmer Rouge, is launched from nearby areas. The reality of war, famine, rape, and disease is harsher there.

Yet Ban Vinai has its own disturbing reality. Opium, grown in Laos and the nearby Golden Triangle, is widely

available in the camp, and has historically been used for social purposes by the Hmong. Addiction is quite common. The suicide rate is high, as is the incidence of depression, stemming from the perceived hopelessness of the Hmong's situation. Schooling is available to young children but often limited, and the birth rate is among the highest in the world. The underlying tragedy of these

camps is that there is almost a complete lack of constructive activity. Basic (very basic) necessities of life are provided to camp residents and the women have taken to doing embroidery.

But amid these difficult living conditions there was a shining star — the children. You can't find a nook or cranny of the camp where there weren't

children playing a game or taking a nap. They demonstrate the ways in which a child's mind can find beauty and play in almost any situation.

The Hmong are a beautiful people and their children carry these tribal features in a fashion that makes them irresistible. The youngest children run around nude. As they get older they sometimes are dressed in vivid and colorful traditional tribal garments, complete with headdress. They're quite shy of Westerners and my first roll of film was a series of very professional shots of them running away from me. When I watched them play I would find that for a few moments I forgot where I was, lost in the joy of a child's entertainment. Perhaps their parents also experience this.

The following week I found myself in Bangkok pondering my visit to Ban Vinai and wondering what usefulness might evolve from it. I met Doug Hulcher, a Vietnam veteran who had been the education director at the Minnesota Security Hospital before he volunteered to work with the American Refugee Committee (ARC) in 1981. Returning to St. Paul in 1982 he began receiving phone calls from Hmong citizens living in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. They were worried about orphaned brothers, sisters, nephews and nieces who were in Thai refugee camps waiting to come to the U.S. One call was from a father whose wife had been killed by Laotian soldiers while his son was taken prisoner. Could Doug check into these situations? Whatever reservations he had then about returning to Thailand were replaced by plane reservations to Bangkok at his own expense. He found that these and other children in the camps qualified for resettlement in the U.S., and though documents had been filed, nothing was happening. The process was dragging on for years in some cases. He discovered that some children had been told "kids under 18 can't interview" and they had given up any further effort. When he contacted the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok about his first six cases, embassy officials initially claimed no such cases existed.

*Addiction is quite common. The suicide rate is high, as is the incidence of depression, stemming from the perceived hopelessness of the Hmong's situation. ... The birth rate is among the highest in the world.*

Doug began what has become a seven year ordeal to assist these children, giving them basic necessities such as food, toothpaste and laundry detergent, and keeping track of each case, and lobbying officials at the U.S. Embassy and UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) to process these cases as quickly as possible. In some instances he put children on a plane to be reunited with family in the U.S. When possible, he made arrangements to personally escort entire groups of kids to their new homes by timing his annual visit to the U.S. to coincide with their departure.

Most of this 6'4" photographer's pictures were of Hmong children, but others were Lao, Khmer, Mien and Vietnamese. Many stories end in success, like the 14 year old girl who had been separated from her brother, and will reunite with him in Panat Nikhom and subsequently resettle in the U.S. with their uncle.

Others do not have happy endings, including three children who contracted diseases and died while waiting for permission to interview for resettlement. Doug told me word had traveled fast "that there was an American here helping unaccompanied children relocate in the U.S." Within the first six months nearly 100 children requested help in joining their families in the U.S.

Warmed by his stories and compassion for these children I asked about his organization - how many staff, what size budget, where do they get support? He smiles. He's it. For the first few years he used his personal and retirement savings. Then he borrowed money from friends and got free office space from the ARC in Bangkok. In 1986, his friends, including two attorneys, set up a non-profit corporation called M.I.N.O.R.S. (Minors in Need of Resettlement). But contributions are few and far between and mostly he sells photographs to generate money for his work in the camps.

When I returned home, our local BPF chapter decided to begin an effort to raise \$100 per month for each of four refugee camps, including Ban Vinai. That meant we needed \$4,800 for the first year; we had only a handful of pictures, a few stories and my experience in the camps. We'd forward the money to Doug (through MINORS) and he would have some type of stable income for the children in each camp, something he'd never had during the past seven years

The process of raising and sending money to support these children has been a spiritual lesson in itself. I began with a combined sense of commitment to the work that was being done and a revulsion about having to ask for money. Soon money began to appear, finding its way from the hearts of generous human beings into the hands and mouths of these children. In Washington D.C., Thich Nhat Hanh agreed to donate the profits from the sale of his recorded retreat lectures. David Reynolds, the leading authority on Japanese Psychotherapy, donated the proceeds from his public talk here. In the past six months I have developed more faith in peo-

ple's basic goodness than ever before.

I've had the privilege of witnessing the compassion on both sides — Doug's work with the children in Thailand and the generosity of those who have helped support these efforts. David Reynolds often uses the phrase, "we're just reality's way of getting things done."

After Labor Day I met with Doug in Washington, D.C. He had escorted about a dozen children to the U.S. to be reunited with families and was visiting other families who had been reunited earlier in the year. He told me of the case of two Cambodian sisters, 14 and 15 years old, whose mother was missing in Cambodia and father had escaped to the United States. The father had been desperately trying to get permission for his daughters to join him, but they had arrived in Thailand illegally and had to be turned into the immigration police first so they would have some legal status to be interviewed for resettlement. They spent many weeks in an immigration jail - a large cell with about 100 people that was hot and dirty and noisy. Doug would visit them and bring them additional rations and other goods while he lobbied officials for their release and resettlement. There are a number of cases like this and Doug is the only avenue for support or assistance of any kind. The two Cambodian girls came to the U.S. on the same flight as Doug and are now living with them in Minnesota.

Unfortunately the news is not all good. An influx of children into Ban Vinai resulted in 102 new cases this past summer. Since our \$100 per month figure was based on estimates of 10-15 per camp there will be a shortage of funds. Though we've received generous contributions we're still about \$900 short of our goal of \$4800 for one year. Hopefully, additional contributions will be forthcoming.

I will be returning to Thailand in March 1990. I intend to spend about 2-3 weeks working with Doug in each of the four camps including those on the Cambodian border. I am hoping to raise an additional \$5,000 dollars to take with me and distribute to the children in each of these camps.

Many people concerned with the condition of the world may at times feel hopeless and overwhelmed. I have a Japanese calendar at home that reads "It may be more than one person can do, but it takes one person to start."❖

*Donations for the refugee children are accepted with gratitude and should be made out to the Buddhist Peace Fellowship with a notation "refugee children" at the bottom. Please send them to: Gregg Krech Buddhist Peace Fellowship, 1908 S. Randolph Street, Arlington, Virginia 22204*

*Gregg Krech is coordinator of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship in Washington D.C. and teaches Morita and Naikan Psychotherapy, two Japanese therapies rooted in Zen and Jodo Shinshu Buddhism.*

# SUHITA DHARMA IN RICHMOND

by Susan Davis

*Some clap hands, some throw flowers,  
Pat bread, lie down, sell books,  
Do quaint dance steps, jingling jewels,  
Plant wild Thyme in engine blocks,  
Make dark grimace stroking mules,  
Fall backward into tom-tom thumps;  
& cheer and wave and levitate  
And pass out lunch on Vulture Peak  
Enlightening gardens, parks, & pools.*

I kept thinking of this poem, written by Gary Snyder in the late 50s, as I interviewed the Venerable Suhita Dharma a few weeks ago. The poem is called "The Bodhisattvas," and it conveys the myriad textures and gestures and moods of a life committed to awakening. Throwing flowers, selling books, planting thyme, making grimaces, and levitating are all but movements in the greater dance of liberation.

Suhita Dharma established one of the first shelters in the country for homeless people with AIDS. Tucked in a residential neighborhood in Richmond, the shelter — originally established as a monastery — is becoming a crucial link in the state's social service network. It is also inspiring the development of a powerful combination of practices that Suhita smilingly calls "Tri-Yana."

Chanting, prayer services, and meditation obviously happens here — as does, perhaps, Snyder's vision of clapping hands, patting bread and jingling jewels. But filling out state forms, political networking, and real estate acquisitions are as much a part of caring for the dying as helping them through their suffering.

Suhita came to Richmond only two years ago, and "purely by chance," he says. He wanted to open a small center in the Tenderloin, to serve the Indo-Chinese population and the youth of the area. But prices were too high. "We would have taken anything," he says, "even a storefront. Buddhists will sleep anywhere. But everything was too expensive."

Instead, Suhita heard of a small house in Richmond, and established his monastery there. He had planned to work with the homeless primarily. But when he found that many of the people on the streets were also HIV-impacted, he decided to work with them instead. "I first found two people with AIDS," he says. "One was fairly well, and one was severely ill. The decision to work with them was real spontaneous. It just started developing. It seems pretty clear that if someone is sick and homeless, they get sick a lot faster."

Although Suhita still serves the homeless with a drop-in program, he works primarily with AIDS patients. He considers his monastery, called Metta



Margaret Howe

Vihara, to be a "transitional place." Residents (there are five now) generally stay about three to four months, he says, and then go on to find apartments. Some go on to find employment. Patients who get very sick stay on at Metta Vihara. So far, three residents have died.

Last February, the State Department of Health Services gave Metta Vihara \$47,000 to continue treating homeless AIDS patients. That funding made Metta Vihara the first funded homeless shelter for AIDS patients in the Bay Area, and one of the first 17 such shelters in the state. Residents of the shelter receive room and board, and are required to get on-going care from qualified, outside organizations, such as home health aide companies and county health departments.

This February, Suhita is moving the temple and monastery to the fourth floor of a nearby medical building, and acquiring another home to use as a residential care facility, in addition to the home he currently leases. He has already applied for renewed funding to get him through 1990.

Suhita has had to learn a lot about working with the state's social service departments. Rules, funding, and general bureaucratic procedures were all new to him. ("I never ever had experience with this kind of thing!") But he's also had to learn about integrating the homeless into what he wants to be an "extended family environment."

"That's the learning experience right there," he says. "The challenge is in getting it to run smoothly, like a community. The patients have to get used to being indoors and dealing with people. Sometimes they have many other problems — mental, social, drugs, alcohol, child-abuse."

In the future, Suhita hopes to be able to offer skills training and support to the homeless and unemployed, both at his center and in the general community. Other long term plans include establishing centers for women



and children with AIDS, developing drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs, opening other residential centers throughout the Bay Area, doing outreach to the Indo-Chinese community, and finding a country home where people can "air out" periodically.

Metta Vihara is only two blocks from Rt. 80. It's right behind a Jeep dealer, a Kawasaki showroom, and a Rexall Drugstore. The neighborhood is characteristic of lower and middle class areas all across the Bay Area: streets lined with beige, white, and yellow stucco bungalows, tiny lawns, bleak playgrounds. It doesn't seem like the kind of neighborhood that would welcome either a Buddhist monastery, a shelter for the homeless, or a care facility for AIDS patients — never mind all three. But, Suhita says, the neighborhood has been "100% supportive."

"I've never had a problem here," he explains. "As a matter of fact, I saw a city council member at the Price Club the other day, and he said that this was a very unique place to have maintained such good relations with the neighbors. But I've not had one problem. Not one."

Metta Vihara's interior is also typical bungalow motif, and disarmingly homey for a monastery. Carpeting covers the floors and stairs, and bookshelves line the walls. The temple is set up in the living room, with statues, incense, flowers, and zafus. The bedrooms, upstairs, have two beds each. When I was there, the smell of fried bacon and potatoes permeated the downstairs dining room, where Suhita and I talked. The radio played top-40, and several Metta Vihara residents wandered in and out of the dining room as we talked.

As Suhita expands his monastery and temple, he hopes to extend this family environment into the community to an increasing degree. "Monasteries in South East Asia act as centers for the community," he explains. "They are social centers, spiritual centers, and educational centers. That way, they work with the whole person."

"We're trying to introduce that concept to meditation centers here in the west. We work with each person, in the moment, without judgement, or according to beliefs. We try not to pigeon-hole people. We're not trying to convert people. But we plant little seeds here and there."

Those little seeds are not of any particular Buddhist variety. Suhita first began his religious practice as a Trappist, at the age of 15. By his early 20s, his practice became oriented towards Buddhism, but he never allied himself with one particular school. Instead, he tried to "take what was best from all the traditions." He continued that integration throughout his adult life, and practices it today at Metta Vihara. "I call it 'Tri-Yana,'" he says, "because it draws on all three vehicles, as well as Christianity and other religions. I thought of calling it 'Eka-Yana,' which would mean one vehicle, but I want-

ed to encourage respect for each school."

"It's been very beneficial so far," he says. "Too often, schools become very exclusive. That's not good for the western psyche, because we're already used to doing that. Becoming exclusive just exaggerates that tendency. My teacher, Thich Thien An, was also very much against the idea of segregating practice."

Suhita tells the story of the time Thich Thien An decided to have a big buddhist parade in Los Angeles. He invited all the buddhist communities to participate. Then he invited the neighborhood modelling school. "So you had all these beautiful people, along with all the buddhists," Suhita remembers. "This is the teaching of using expedient means, and working with everyone, in the moment, right where they are. This is what we try to do here."

"Of course, this may become very controversial," he adds, smiling broadly.

Suhita feels very strongly that action in the world is a vital component of any spiritual practice. "We have our meditations and prayer services here," he says. "But we maintain that meditation in our action when we leave. We extend our practice from sitting to action. This creates balance. If we stayed only in our meditation, we couldn't help anyone. And we would have great imbalance."

"It's not that we're trying to save the world," he adds. "We're just trying to make a little dent somewhere." ❖

— *Metta Vihara needs and welcomes volunteers of all types. Please contact Ven. Suhita at 415-236-0908.*

### *Maitri Hospice/ Hartford St. Zen Center*

As part of the BPF's continuing coverage of Buddhist responses to AIDS, we are happy to announce that Issan Dorsey became the first Abbot of Hartford St. Zen Center (henceforth One Mountain Temple) on Saturday, November 4, 1989.



Barbara Wenger

The Mountain Seat Ceremony confirmed Issan's legitimacy as a teacher; it also established a seat forever, in the Castro district, for a Zen teacher. The Abbot job will continue beyond Issan's lifetime, and we hope, for many generations. Running Maitri Hospice seems to be part of that job. The connection between the two operations was played up in a private event that took place during the ceremony, unknown to the audience.

As tradition dictates, the procession began in an adjacent building to the temple, in this case, the Hospice. A shrill bell rang out, which sounded to most like yet another ceremonial sound, of which there were many. Issan, however, recognized it as one of the bedside handbells used by hospice residents to call for help. He detoured the procession and found this resident on the floor, fallen from bed and unable to climb back. Issan assisted him, comforted him and told him the procession had made a special trip to see him.

Congratulations to Issan Dorsey, his teacher Richard Baker-roshi, and all the practitioners and residents at One Mountain Temple and Maitri Hospice. ❖

### Related Events

**Sweatlodge for People with AIDS March 19-21** with C. Barrett, native American healer trained in the way of the Stonepeople Lodge by the Lakota. *Donation \$100 (deposit \$35) includes meals and land use.*

**Mindfulness Training: The Encounter with Death With Joan Halifax, Steve Allen and Issan Dorsey-sensei March 22-25** A gentle retreat that includes walking and sitting meditation, daily talks, & quiet, simple garden tasks. *Cost \$180 (deposit \$35) includes meals and land use.*

For information on either event contact:

Ojai Foundation PO Box 1620 Ojai, CA 93023  
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# PILGRIMAGE FOR ACTIVE PEACE

## AN INTERVIEW WITH TAI SITU-RINPOCHE

Tencho David Schneider & Melissa Moore

**BPF:** How did the idea for a Pilgrimage for Active Peace arise?

**Situ-rinpoche:** Since 1983, I have been putting lots of time and effort in activities that involve inter-faith, inter-culture, humanitarian causes and preservation of cultures — and Tibetan culture. So that has been my limited involvement. As part of that, I gradually developed this Pilgrimage for Active Peace.

**BPF:** How did you choose your sites?

**Rinpoche:** Originally there were more stops, but as the organizers put it together, these were the ones that could host it.

**BPF:** Usually, the idea of pilgrimage is to go to holy spots...

**Rinpoche:** That's the idea, because to make a pilgrimage for Active Peace is different from a traditional pilgrimage in which you go around to the places of your own religion. By the definition of 'Active Peace' this particular pilgrimage is not only Buddhist, not only religious, but includes socially important places.

**BPF:** Had you met with Pope John Paul before?

**Rinpoche:** Yes, I met him before. This time was extremely encouraging, and I felt very good about it. He read his message. It was a private meeting, just the Pilgrimage group.

**BPF:** How many are in the immediate group?

**Rinpoche:** In Italy, we were about 17 people. I had 10 rinpoches and lamas with me, and also present was the Vatican Council of Non-Christians — I'm not sure if that's exactly what they call it, but it's the department that deals with non-Christians — also there were members of the Dialogue of Inter-Monastics. The Supreme Abbot of the Benedictines was also there.

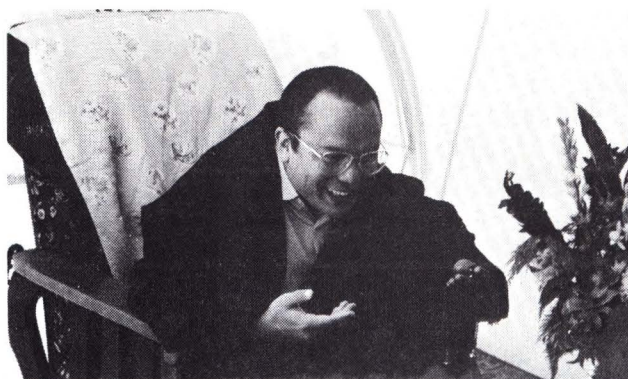
**BPF:** The next stop was in Scotland...

**Rinpoche:** Samye-Ling. It is the first and largest Buddhist temple in Europe; about 200 people are in residence there.

**BPF:** There were Nobel Laureates there?

**Rinpoche:** Several of them. One was my long-time friend George Wald, a biologist who won the prize for his work. Then my other friend, Johannes Gaton who works for peace, won something called the "alternative Nobel Prize." The proper name for that is the Right Livelihood Prize, and it's given in the same country.

George Wald went to USSR a years ago, representing more than 50 Nobel Laureates. His visit, and the effect of all the work of the American Nobel Laureates



Peter Shabda Kahn

may have had something to do with the first Reagan-Gorbachev meeting. If not directly, then in terms of setting the stage. He met with Gorbachev for more than two hours — years before Reagan come to power.

**BPF:** Then you came to the Bay Area. Do you see any relationship between the lhasang you did on Mt. Tamalpais and the earthquake?

**Rinpoche:** I don't think so.

**BPF:** I ask because it was the purpose of the ceremony was to amend the relationship with the environment. Shortly thereafter we had a big earthquake...

**Rinpoche:** I don't think so. The earthquake was already about to happen. Whether we do something or not, it wouldn't change that. First it was in Mexico, then Los Angeles, now here. I'm very sad that so many people died, but compared with many other places, not very many died.

**BPF:** Is it possible to see it as a purification?

**Rinpoche:** We never think that way. It had nothing to do with 'spirits', because spirits also suffer from natural disasters, just as humans do. Our prayer, our lhasang is oriented for the spirits of the mountain, the gods of the mountain. I'm sure many of their friends were also lost. Yes, they lost their friends too. I'm talking here from the Tibetan Buddhist point of view.

**BPF:** What was hit were the arteries of transportation. Some people are describing this as a message. Do you think there is a message here?

**Rinpoche:** I don't think that way. I think people just happened to be there, and also the freeways were old. At the time they were built, it must have been with the best technology, but now, they can do much better. If it is a communication from God or the gods it's pretty bad. It's unfair. You see, everything has a cause and effect; just like if you eat a big meal, you feel full. That isn't a message. If something falls down and

breaks, that isn't a message. It's just breakable.

**BPF:** Next stop is New Delhi?

**Rinpoche:** Yes. I'm not sure about Mother Teresa now. Before she was sick, she said she'd come definitely, and that she was very glad this was happening. Then she became ill. Now she's better, and I'm very grateful that she's improving, but I'm not sure she's in condition to make the journey. It's not that far, and Delhi is better for health than Calcutta, but I wouldn't like to bring her over from there and then have something happen to her. Unless she comes on her own, I am not planning to push. She is very precious.

**BPF:** In addition to the Dalai Lama, who is coming?

**Rinpoche:** I'm very bad at names, but we have the most highly respected Moslem leader in India — he's over 80 and he's coming as a representative of Moslems.

We also have a Sikh; he is supposed to be the most highly respected Sikh. You know that that is the biggest problem among the religions in India right now. Sikh and Moslems are not fighting, but Sikh and Hindus are. It's a very bad problem: everyday 10 people are getting killed, 20 people, everyday! Sometimes buses get machined-gunned.

Then we have the head of the Hindus — Shankaracarya. He's the head of the Hindus, the Cardinal. There are only two Hindu Cardinals in India, and one of them is coming. The other one is chairing the Bishop's Council, so he can't come. We have altogether the heads of 10 religions.

**BPF:** You have described the event as a *padyatra*...

**Rinpoche:** It's a peace walk. That's common in India, and it was started by Gandhi. You walk, simply walk for peace. From a temple to a mosque and like that. But not normal walking, slow walking. *Padyatras* are never demonstrations. It's like a meditation walk, a peace walk; you walk very slowly. I'm sure that there is an older tradition too.

**BPF:** In Taiwan, it seems from the information that there will be a meeting of the four heads of the Tibetan schools of Buddhism.

**Rinpoche:** Not only that. It's a meeting of Mahayana and Vajrayana; there will be five major heads of Mahayana schools, and then the heads of the Vajrayana. We invited the heads of each of the four major sects. His Holiness Sakya-rinpoche, and Dingo Khen-tse-rinpoche are coming; the head of the Gelug has had a stroke, so he won't be coming, and then I will represent

the fourth order. All four orders will be represented

This meeting will be held in public. From the Tibetan side, there will be about 100 monks. From the Taiwanese side, there will be about 1000 monks and nuns participating in the actual ceremonies, and the public will also be participating.

We have three major events. There will be a pilgrimage; then we will have an offering of lamps for peace — one million lamps.

**BPF:** Butter lamps?

**Rinpoche:** No, candles. One million candle lamps; they are lotus lamps, candles molded in the shape of a red lotus. When you light it, it will be pink. It should be very beautiful with one million lamps.



Situ-rinpoche & entourage, in ceremony at Mt. Shasta

Peter Shabda Kahn

The space is very big. They have a hotel that holds 3,000 people, and then a temple — a Pure Land temple, huge, built like Disneyland. They are planning for about 30,000 people to participate.

The third thing is planting of a Bodhi tree — the first Bodhi Tree from India. That's not easy, because there is only one Bodhi tree and quite a lot of bureaucracy that must approve this.

**BPF:** They are set up to protect it.

**Rinpoche:** Of course. It's like taking one stone of love from Mecca ... if everyone took one ... (Non-Moslems are not even allowed to go into the town, not allowed within 15 miles of it. And airplanes are not allowed to fly over it; they must detour. The Moslems are very serious about it.)

All these ceremonies will have lots of chanting and lectures. Local entertainments will be happening as well; all kinds of things during the three days.

**BPF:** Will the Dalai Lama be going to this too?

**Rinpoche:** No. He cannot. The Taiwanese people want him to come, but right now he cannot.

**BPF:** I thought the Dalai Lama was the head of the Gelug.

**Rinpoche:** No, head of the Gelug is Detsen Tiba. The Gelugpa head is appointed by, and from the monks. It goes step by step, as with the Pope. The Dalai Lama is the King of Tibet, and his practice is Gelug. Until the Fifth Dalai Lama, he wasn't the king of Tibet. From the Fifth to the Fourteenth, each successive incarnation has been the King of Tibet.

**BPF:** Then at the end you go to Nepal?

**Rinpoche:** Yes. We'll be taking an eternal flame to a place where you can see the whole Himalayan range. Right now, they are working on building the arch, so

that when we light it, through the flame and the arch you'll see Mt. Everest right there. It's very windy.

They will carry it there from Lumbini, the Buddha's birthplace. They already have an eternal flame there, brought from the United Nations in New York. It will be taken by athletes, who will run with the flame. I understand it takes seven days. Each athlete will run for five miles, and that means it will require about 300 runners. Of course, people could run more than one shift. I think we could handle it with 50 runners, but if possible, I'd like to have each segment run by a different runner. We need many at this point; they'd have to volunteer of course — volunteer to get there and to run. I would be a dedication for peace.

So that will be the end, then, in March, 1990. His Majesty the King of Bhutan will participate, and Her Majesty. The ceremony will be Hindu and Buddhist, since those are the two main religions there.

**BPF:** Your Eminence, after the Pilgrimage, what will you do?

**Rinpoche:** I have many commitments, to my Dharma centers and students. Until now, I haven't been able to do much, because of the preparations for the Pilgrimage. But I have a monastery, Sherab Ling, where the Vajrayana rituals and chanting are practiced and preserved. We have a pretty big community there now.

Also in Tibet, I have a lot of responsibilities. I have to take care of that too.

**BPF:** You've been back to Tibet, then? The Chinese don't mind your coming and going?

**Rinpoche:** I am only a religious leader...❖

### Editor's note:

The seventh event of the Pilgrimage, to be held in Kaoshiung, Taiwan, was postponed due to "politicizing of religious activities." Situ-rinpoche made the decision after a series of meetings with the Dalai Lama's government and the Taiwan Committee for the Pilgrimage. Situ-rinpoche said "Religious activity transcends political motivations. Increasingly around the world, political activity, often violent in nature, is taking place in the name or disguise of religious activities. One need only look at recent events in India, Ireland and the Middle East to observe this. The goals of my Pilgrimage are to emphasize the importance of prayer in a global peace effort to redefine the concept of peace. In Taiwan, the specific goal was to bring together senior leaders of Vajrayana and Mahayana Buddhism. The event had nothing to do with relations between Taiwan and Tibetan governments, the Taiwan and Mainland governments, or the Tibetan and Mainland governments.

"I believe religious leaders must speak out to make it clear to religious practitioners that all religions have one goal, and that is to relieve suffering and to benefit mankind. To reduce these goals to political posturing is to pollute religious activity. In these times, all leaders of religion must vigorously protect and preserve the purity of religious activity."

The Organizing Committee has postponed the event for the time being, and is considering alternative locations. It hopes to include representatives of Theravadin Buddhist traditions along with the Vajrayana and Mahayana.

# MARY LIGHFOOT: AN INTERVIEW

by Wende Elliott

*Engaged social Buddhism is concretely manifested in the work and lifestyle of Mary Lightfoot. Born in Australia in 1945, she has spent most of the past 12 years in India, including 10 in the underdeveloped state of Bihar, where she assists rural, tribal (non-caste) Indians. It is fitting that her social work, which developed out of her travels, and her study of meditation, is based in Bodh Gaya, the site of the Buddha's enlightenment. I first met Mary at the Burmese Vihar in Bodhgaya while I was participating in the Antioch Buddhist Studies program and I have subsequently consulted with her on fieldwork.*

**BPF:** Why did you visit India the first time?

**Mary Lightfoot:** I think I always knew I would go to India. I had an aunt who was very involved in Indian dancing and culture and lived in India. When I was a child, she would come with troops of dancers and these were like fairy-tale episodes in my life. When I was 28 or 29, I decided to go to India and I left a week later.

**BPF:** What path brought you to Buddhism?

**ML:** I used to travel a lot, even before I went to India. I lived in Europe for a while and I was able to get a job quite easily as a pharmacist. After some years of being able to afford the life I wanted, it was pretty obvious that these things didn't control my happiness. I know I was definitely looking for more meaning in life — not in a very recognizable way, but I definitely was.

Well, my life changed so fast when I got to India. In a very short time I got to do some intense meditation with Goenka. I had done T.M. very briefly in England, but my first real meditation experience in a retreat was with Goenka. It was so physically painful...I had locked everything in my body. By the end of the retreat, I felt like a different person, like the weight of the world had been lifted off my shoulders. I continued to do a lot of meditation and yoga, as well as traveling. There was so much change in my life, there was no going back to how things were before. After a while, I felt I had learned so much in India that I want-

ed to give something back.

**BPF:** How did your work with organizations and charities evolve into the grass-roots programs with which you're now involved?

**ML:** I returned to India two or three times, coming to Bodh Gaya to do a meditation retreat with Christopher [Titmuss]. I stayed at an ashram which was doing development work in the village to see what was happening and it just went on and on from there. At this ashram there were about 50 or 60 young girls from five to 15 years old and there was an English girl named Alyson already living there for three months. With my health background, she and I got very involved in the children's health. We worked in about every area of the organization. We would go out to the villages where the children come from. But in the jeep, like a privileged visitor — we'd get served milk which you knew was the only milk in the village and that sort of thing. We wanted to see what it was like there on a day-to-day basis. So we went and lived in a very poor village to work with the people, beginning with health and relief work.

We got to know and work with a number of [the ashram's] past students, some of whom were employed as teachers. Some of the girls we helped look after subsequently got married and are doing village work also.

**BPF:** Would you say that most of the people you work with are Harijan (Untouchable) women.

**ML:** Most of the people I work with are Harijan, but actually, the young workers are mostly men. It's been very difficult to find women who are interested in [social work]. Sometimes, women have joined with the guys for a time, [but] eventually there will be so much pressure from their families, or from society in general, they give up. They don't do [social work] for very long, unless they are married to someone who is very dedicated to what they are doing, and there are two or three examples of this. I do also work with women who have been deserted or whose husbands have died and left them with a family. Their position is extremely bad. Nobody wants them, nobody will take them back again. They are the ones who have a very, very hard time if they have children to support as well.

**BPF:** You believe in the importance of doing things at a grass-roots level, that charities and government agencies have the right motivations, but often get lost in bureaucracy, so the best way is to go directly to the people...

**ML:** Well, you see, for the most part, charities and organizations work on a fairly large scale and they try

to control what is happening, whereas the sort of groups I am working with are extremely small, you couldn't even give them a name. They develop from what arises day-to-day and what people's needs are, rather than making some big plan and saying, "This is how it's going to be."

And that's how our work evolved too when we went out to a village to live. We had ideas, of course, of what we were going to do...certain times when we would see people who were sick and do medical work with them, and there would be other times when we would give classes to the women on nutrition. We had to learn to function and move with what was happening, rather than anything which could be laid down as a program because things just never worked like that. People's life situations changed so much that we had

to change too. To try to help them, we had to adjust ourselves to their life cycles completely.

**BPF:** Does Buddhism influence your work now?

**ML:** It influences my work very deeply in every way. I think over the years, through meditation and study, I've internalized so many of the ideas of Buddhism that I couldn't recognize [my beliefs] as being this or that or where they came from. But of course, I did have quite a religious upbringing as a child; my family was Catholic and quite strongly so. And living in Bodh Gaya, you know, I guess you just take things in through your pores, not in any real conscious way at times, it's just living there in that atmosphere with all the wonderful teachers and people who come there from every country.

**BPF:** When you look at the past few years of your work, do you see progress being made on the village level by the people with whom you are involved?

**ML:** Yes, quite a bit, actually. Mostly at a level of awareness and consciousness raising not only in the group of people I work with, but in the communities they work. Their consciousness has really jumped a lot and they're becoming politically aware.

**BPF:** Do you use "politically aware" in the sense of self-empowerment?

**ML:** Yes, I'm not talking about political parties, but politics having to do with power and how it's used.

**BPF:** How are they channeling this new-found political consciousness?

**ML:** One way is education: in every village where they work, they will have an educational component, usually a night school. The kids come after they've done all their household duties, to study by the light of kerosene lamps. Another educational aspect would be having meetings, organizing meetings in the village. In



these sort of meetings, decisions are always made by consensus. Because, you have to remember, most of these people are illiterate, so any information has to be verbal. The workers have another [goal], making people aware of their rights — the law and legal positions, government subsidies, and things like that which should be available to them — but that's only one step. Then there's helping them to get these things, which can be an incredible battle.

**BPF:** Is it true that Hinduism paralyzes people, conceptually restraining them from changing their lives?

**ML:** It's certainly there to quite a large extent, because that's how the caste system works... you're born into this caste, it determines your occupation, and there is virtually no way out. A lot of people that I'm working with have been in such disadvantaged positions. The stereotypes which are made, that are put on them by levels of society — that they are lazy, that they will never improve — I've seen to be absolutely not the case. The stereotype will often come from the people who are doing the work, you know, who are supposedly working to change the situation. And if that's how they look at it, there isn't going to be a change.

From the people's acculturation over a long time, there is a certain amount of that that's hard to get through, for many of these people have in fact been bonded laborers. That means they were owned, they were a slave of a landlord, and that owner could do with them what he liked. [Change] takes a long time when there's been the sort of mentality that no matter where or how you might work and for how long you might work, it makes no difference. You can see what it'd do to a person's mind. On the other hand, I have definitely seen some incredible changes in people over a not very long period of time and with a little opportunity.

**BPF:** Do the Harijans in Bihar know of the Buddhist conversion movement among the Dalits (another former "Untouchable" group in western India)?

**ML:** I don't know, but I'd like a contact between them. A leader from the Ambedkarite group mentioned that he would like to send someone up to Bodhgaya and I think that would be fine. I feel sure a lot of the people I work with could benefit from it. I don't at all mean a conversion to Buddhism, but I mean the ideals of Buddhism for their own self-esteem and their own lives. I'm not into converting people, because they've got enough beliefs, in fact they have too many beliefs — it'd be better to get rid of some of them than getting some more.

**BPF:** In your opinion, what are the most pressing problems in rural India which need to be addressed?

**ML:** Well, the problems are political — oppression, exploitation, injustice, corruption. That is, igno-

rance, greed, aversion, and lack of compassion for others — once you've seen things in that light, it always does seem to come back to that. They are really the same problems the world over. Corruption is evident at every level, so I see it as one of the basic problems, and it won't change by any governmental rule, it's only going to change if people change from inside. It doesn't look like it's very likely, does it!

**BPF:** That's a very interesting answer because most people with less knowledge of India might answer, "It's the poverty," or "It's the food shortage..."

**ML:** These things are only symptoms of the real problem. It's not really a food shortage. In India, there is enough food to feed everybody, but some people don't have access to the means of getting food. Poverty is the same thing; there are vast amounts of money in India. Bihar is quite a rich state, it has a high proportion of natural resources: minerals, coal, all those things. It's the maldistribution and injustice that makes the poverty.

**BPF:** How do you deal with the intense suffering you see every day in Bodhgaya and in Bihar?

**ML:** My meditation practice gives awareness and the teachings of Buddhism are very helpful for generating compassion. I guess one of the first things to do is to generate compassion, even if you can't do anything in a physical way for that person. You can feel caring about them and feel concern for them. Earlier on when I had number of experiences with people who were sick or in very desperate conditions, there was definitely a feeling of compassion, but not being able to express it was very frustrating for me.

Another thing I find helpful, instead of trying to block out the suffering, which is a very natural thing we all do to some extent, is to try to experience suffering when it comes, whether it's seeing someone else's suffering or your own. To try not to block it and just experience to the fullest you can. This can be very painful, but can also have quite an aftermath. There have been occasions where I really have felt that suffering, letting it take me over and then feeling a very quick change in the quality of that feeling to something quite different.

**BPF:** Giving up the fear of suffering, just to see suffering as it is?

**ML:** Yes, to really experience something, rather than saying, "I'm not going to think about this," or, "I'm going to cut it off here." To just try to experience it as much as you can and to go into that as much as you can.

**BPF:** That's hard.

**ML:** Yes, it is hard, but I'm sure in the long run, suppression is much more damaging and hurtful than the experiencing of whatever that emotion might be.

*It's quite damaging, I would say, to give money to these big, flashy organizations that have pictures of starving children and say, "Just give them the price of a cup of coffee."*

**BPF:** Would you align yourself with a particular school of Buddhism?

**ML:** Having a Catholic background, I've been fairly careful to steer away from being exclusive. One of the basic Buddhist teachings which impressed me is that there is nothing worth being attached to. The word *akincina* means nothing to stand on, nothing to hold on to. I love moving through all the groups; I have connections in all of them because I don't say "I'm this and not that." I've done a lot with Tibetan groups and I've had a lot of teaching, but I've had Zen training, and actually Vipassana has been my main practice.

When I started to learn about Buddhism in an academic way, [I felt] the words Mahayana and Hinayana didn't really apply so much to teaching, but to stages you go through as a person. The first thing being thinking of yourself and having to fulfill that. And only when that has been achieved to some extent, can you think about doing something for other people. Hopefully then being able to use everything which you come across as teaching, as learning experiences, as part of your life and not having to exclude anything.

I prefer not to have any labels. Because you're asking, I'm answering from a Buddhist perspective here. I don't really consider myself a "Buddhist" in the way many other people would identify with that. I'm not much into ritual and doctrine. Buddhism is not so much a religion or something that I must do, but an inner understanding and viewing. My early years of Buddhism were much more meditation practice than intellectual knowledge. But of course we need both.

**BPF:** Who have your spiritual teachers been?

**ML:** As I've said, Vipassana has been my main practice, and I have done retreats with Christopher Titmuss probably ever year since he started teaching. He has been very encouraging and supportive in my involvements, as well as a role model of a social activist. I've also attended talks by the Dalai Lama most years and many other teachers in Tibetan and other lineages. As Bodh Gaya is the center of the universe for Buddhists, they visit there. I learnt the most in the shortest time by working with a well-known Indian social activist, Vikasbhai, until he died in a tragic accident. He lived compassion in action and with no Buddhist influence.

**BPF:** How do you see women's role in Buddhism?

**ML:** I think we can do what we want. There are dialogues that Buddhism has always been so masculine and therefore women's roles are subservient, but we don't have to live by the past. We really do have more freedom than ever before. Actually, I have never felt there was anything I couldn't do as a woman. My experience with the feminist movement was quite an eye-opener because there were so many things that women had experienced that were new to me, that I hadn't experienced myself. The women in both my parents' families were strong and had done unusual

things. And I was never, even though there was some pressure to conform, made to feel that there was no choice but to get married and have children because I was a woman.

**BPF:** Interconnectedness is one of the most basic concepts of Buddhism. How do you see the ideal relationship between the East and the West? For someone who is concerned about economic injustice or human rights violations, what is the most effective way that she or he can help?

**ML:** I think one of the most important things is that people try and learn as much about different situations both in their own and different countries as they can. Of how we in the rich countries exploit and oppress people in other countries. I think knowledge, the removal of ignorance, is probably the most important thing because out of knowledge comes ways of knowing and freedom to act. Acting without enough knowledge is so damaging that it's better not to do very much.

It's quite damaging, I would say, to give money to these big, flashy organizations that have pictures of starving children and say, "Just give them the price of a cup of coffee." These types of schemes generally do nothing to change the power structures, status quo, or make people independent. It's much better to educate yourself and perhaps even give money to something in your own country that you know, that you can see.

**BPF:** You're saying that it would be better for us to think about the homeless in the United States?

**ML:** I don't see how America (or any other advanced nation) can say to other countries, "What will you do about your problems?" with the homeless problem being as it is here. This is the thing that has hit me the most in my visit is the homeless people. When I go home and tell people in India that in Los Angeles, one of the richest cities in America, there are always people who beg on the streets, who go through the garbage bins, they won't believe that in America, the promised land, this happens. Almost everyday here I see a homeless person that has the same sort of situation as an Indian.

In fact, here it's even more shocking, in the midst of such affluence. In India, most people live simply, so not having things in India is not such a vast contrast. To be here, where the general public has such affluence, so much is available to them, to see the people out on the street is shocking. It's increasing a lot here, much worse than the last time I was here. ❖

*Wende Elliott, currently studying at Princeton University, is fascinated by the role of community in spiritual and social transformation. She visited the Ambedkarite Buddhists in the fall of 1988 and wrote an anthropological fieldstudy of the movement's current vitality and frustrations.*



## Board of Directors Report

The new BPF Board of Directors met as a group for the first time January 13-15th in Muir Beach to lay the groundwork for 1990's activities. Our new board members bring a variety of perspectives and organizational skills; based on this first meeting, it promises to be a very productive year. The board is now comprised of a six-person executive committee local to the Bay Area and four additional members from across the country. Our "national" directors represent strong connections with Fellowship of Reconciliation (Fran Levin), International Campaign for Tibet (Michele Bohana), national chapters (Bill Anderson), and environmental interests (Doug Codiga). Our "local" directors offer talents in computer networking (Gib Anderson), publications (George Lane), organizational structure (Linda Ruth Cutts), finances (Gordon Tyn-dall), program development (Donald Rothberg), and fundraising and management (Stephanie Kaza).



Top row, from left: Gib, Donald, David, Michele, Doug, Linda. Bottom row: Margaret, Fran, Bill, George, Stephanie

The Board spent most of the weekend developing program directions for the 1990s. We settled on four main areas of emphasis:

- 1) The Environment
- 2) Nonviolence Training
- 3) International Human Rights
- 4) Outreach

For each area we proposed specific activities and agreed on committee members to accomplish these. Doug and Stephanie will work on the environment, producing a package of materials before April to be available for Earth Day 1990. These will be oriented to Buddhist sanghas and BPF chapters and will include a list of resources, topics for discussion, relating environmental awareness with the Buddhist teachings, and suggestions for "what you can do to practice environmentally conscious living" in the Buddhist tradition of moderation and restraint.

In nonviolence training, BPF will offer several one-day workshops this year, relating Buddhist practices with nonviolent social action. We plan to educate ourselves

and our members on what other groups have undertaken in the way of training and education, with the goal of offering a summer institute in the future. Donald, Fran, and Margaret will head up this committee.

Inspired by the recent profound changes in Eastern Europe, we want to increase our presence and activity regarding human rights issues in the Asian block — Tibet, Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Burma. With assistance from Michele and others we plan to keep you updated in the newsletter, listing specific letter-writing needs as appropriate. BPF will be represented at international meetings where possible through board members and contacts.

By outreach, we intend to increase our contact and presence with Buddhist sanghas as well as BPF local chapters. We want to provide educational materials and suggestions for activities that can be useful in a variety of situations. BPF's membership is currently 1500 members; our goal for 1990 is 500 new members, or more! You can participate in this membership outreach if you like by requesting a stack of brochures from the BPF office for distribution to interested Buddhists (and non-Buddhists). We are also investigating ways to link BPF into several computer networks — PeaceNet, Tibet Net, EcoNet, and Green Net. Gib, Linda, and Bill will be working on this committee.

We also formed a newsletter advisory committee, headed by George Lane, to consider newsletter needs and theme ideas. The committee will work with editor David Schneider to coordinate newsletter articles with national direction, and to provide support for increased desktop publishing capacity.

After careful consideration of needs for clerical staff and improved computer capacity, we passed a budget for the first six months of the year for \$30,000, with member development and fundraising bringing in the necessary income. This is a 33% increase over last year's budget. Based on member response in the last six months, we are confident that we can meet this budget and accomplish the activities we have outlined. The executive committee will continue to meet monthly and the entire Board will meet again as a group in June or July. If you have ideas or suggestions for the board, please feel free to contact any one of the board members or the national coordinator, Margaret Howe. We would be happy to talk with you or respond to your letters.

*Stephanie Kaza, President*

## Earth Day 1990

The national office is developing materials for use in conjunction with Earth Day 1990. We are encouraging sanghas, chapters, and groups of Buddhist and non-Buddhist friends to celebrate this national and international event in the context of Buddhist teach-

ings for the environment. Churches, schools, government agencies, and individuals are all being asked to consider what they can do to increase environmental awareness and develop environmentally sustainable lifestyles. We feel the Buddhist teachings have a great deal to offer regarding compassionate activity based on an understanding of the interrelatedness of all things.

The package of Earth Day materials will include a list of resource books specifically related to Buddhist teachings and the environment, a list of topics for discussion, an Earth Day-oriented precepts ceremony, and suggestions for "environmentally conscious living" based on Buddhist principles of compassion and restraint.

For a copy of these materials, please contact the national office in Berkeley and ask for Earth Day Information. They will be available by March 31. We will be sending them out to Buddhist centers across the United States as well as to BPF chapters. We will gladly accept donations to cover costs of reproduction and postage. Look for more exciting news about Earth Day and the environment in the April issue of the newsletter. ❖

### *Council of Chapter Representatives*

#### *CONFERENCE CALL - October, 1989*

Five people were on the call, which lasted about 1-1/2 hours: Moss Stone from Tuscon; Jim Austen from Boston; George Lane from Marin County; Bill Andersen from Rochester; and Sam Rose from Denver.

Bill: Rochester BPF is quiet and percolating. A fellow at University of Rochester is organizing a workshop on anger and nonviolence. The chapter wants to be involved with Earth Day 1990. Someone in Ithaca is working on a protest at the nuclear weapons depot there and I will be talking to him soon.

Jim: Our chapter is busy with five or six people coming to any one of our monthly meetings. We have a short sitting, a presentation or discussion, announcements, project reports, and a closing sitting. The group maintains a 40 person mailing list. We are basically a support for people as they do their other work.

The group is very excited about the current project: Kmer Buddhist Educational Assistance Program, a joint effort of the American Institute of Buddhist Studies and the Kmer Buddhist Association. The group sponsored a trip to refugee camps in Cambodia and along the Thai border and found that a great number of Buddhist monks and nuns had been killed during the Pol Pot years. Thus the current monks and nuns are very young; average age of 17 years.

There is no education in the camps and monks have lost a lot of respect because their primary role was being teachers. The children have not been taught formally for 10 years and there are severe restrictions on establishing Buddhist temples in the camps. The KBEAP is trying to send educational materials to help

the monks fulfill their traditional roles, as well as videotapes of senior monks who live in the west. A videotape of the tour was produced and is used for educational fundraising. For more information call Phyllis Robinson at 508-693-9014.

Sam: Predictably the burst of energy following Thich Nhat Hanh's retreat in May died down. The sitting group for psychotherapists did not last very long. Days of Mindfulness continue to take place at the end of each month at the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons plant, and functions as a vigil. Our chapter is still dispersed although the Denver Affinity group still meets. We are hoping to sponsor a retreat with Sharon Salzberg next year.

Moss: Our chapter is six years old and was begun when a Nippon-ji monk came to Tuscon to lead a protest against the deployment of the cruise missile. A small community built up around his efforts and has continued with protests against the uranium mining along the north rim of the Grand Canyon and at the Nevada Test Site. Our Zen group has become interested in perma-culture as a way to right livelihood.

I am a nonviolence trainer and have done trainings with high school students at the Nevada Test Site. They became interested and began groups that spread throughout the high school system in Tuscon that are still active. These students later went to university and founded a group that has 200 members. This shows there is a lot of energy and commitment in teenagers, contrary to the media reports.

George: I have just returned from 4 months in Plum Village and the Virgin Islands. We have regular meetings with about five or six people. We sit, have a presentation, and people talk about the many projects they are involved in. We are a nurturing shelter for each other as we do our other work. We read Thich Nhat Hanh's precepts every two weeks. We have tentative relations with Vietnam Vets groups, some of whose members attend sittings. There is tremendous yearning to reach resolution with their pain around their experiences during the War.

A main focus for us has been looking at and working on family practice. With the help of the San Francisco Zen Center we offer Days of Mindfulness for children and families with 50 people attending on average. Two members, Lee Klinger-Lesser and Wendy Johnson have been offering a class in Right Parenting. I was asked to organize a week-long, open, non-denominational meditation for the town of Marin by a local martial arts group.

After this, an interesting 25-minute discussion on parenting, children and family practice ensued. These meetings by telephone are a great way for people from around the country to share ideas and support. You don't have to be a member of a chapter to be in one. Call Bill Anderson at (716) 442-8803.

### CONFERENCE CALL *January 1990*

Four chapters were represented on the call: Ken Simon and two BPF friends from the new Yellow Springs, Ohio chapter, Jim Austin from Boston, Bill Anderson from Rochester and Sam Rose from Denver. Bill gave a detailed update of the recent BPF Board meeting, which preceded a discussion about National BPF activities and their new directions. Chapter reports followed. The Boston chapter meets monthly, with between 3 and 6 people in attendance. Activities include an annual clothing drive for local Cambodian immigrants, a Day of Mindfulness on the annual Oxfam Fast Day that takes place the Thursday before Thanksgiving, and helping with fundraisers for the Kmer Assistance Education Project. Rochester is quiet, with a few meetings. They hope to be involved in Earth Day. Twenty people showed up for the first Yellow Springs, Ohio chapter meeting. Yellow Springs is a university town with a highly educated and active population of 4500. If the Denver/Boulder chapter enjoyed the same attendance rate in relation to the total size of its city, 8000 people would attend our meetings. The Yellow Springs chapter meets for a monthly potluck, attended by between 5 and 10 people. The meetings include an informational component: for instance they circulated petitions about the situation in Tibet and heard a report on the issue of handicap accessibility in their town. They hope to bring Buddhist ideas to help with conflicts in local town politics. The Boulder/Denver chapter has several retreats planned. Our Denver Affinity Group continues to meet. Finally, we discussed the "problem" of the core groups for each chapter being small - four to five people on average. Outside of California, which seems to have its own dynamics, this appears to be the norm for local chapters. Rather than being a problem, small numbers of people forming the core of a chapter appears to be natural.

### *Dear Chapters,*

As agreed on the last Buddhist Peace Fellowship Council of Chapter Representatives Conference Telephone Call, minutes will no longer be written for each call unless someone volunteers to write them. A tape recording will be made of the call for those who might want to listen. A short summary of each call will be written for inclusion in the Newsletter (if room). The next Council of Chapter Representatives Conference Telephone call will be on Saturday, April 14, at 4 pm EST. We will be in touch with you again before that call.

Some suggestions to come out of this past call: (1) plan some local Chapter activity for Earth Day April 22, 1990. It could be as simple as a Day of Mindfulness (call if you want help with planning). Consider raising money to give to an environmental cause. (2)

Chapters are encouraged to sell BPF Newsletters at local events to raise money for Nat'l BPF, write Margaret at the National Office and she'll send you some. (3) Videotapes from the Thich Nhat Hanh retreat in Colorado came out very well and can be used during Chapter meetings or a meditation retreat. Call me if you want to borrow the tapes. Sincerely,  
Samuel P. Rose 303-733-9914 .

### *Chapter Reports*

#### **Boulder-Denver**

A retreat in Thich Nhat Hanh's practice style including families and children will be held from April 27 to 29 in Colorado. Videotapes will be shown of Thich Nhat Hanh. Please call 303-443-5425 for more information. In August Sharon Salzberg will lead a four day retreat, please write 745 32 Ave, Boulder, CO 80303 for more information. Videotapes from the Thich Nhat Hanh retreat held in Colorado last May turned out very well. They can be purchased through Parallax Press, Box 7355, Berkeley, CA 94707. Chapters wishing to borrow tapes can do so by writing Sam Rose, 1934 South University Blvd, Denver, CO 80210. Chapters wishing advice on how to run a meditation retreat (20 to 150 people) should feel free to call Sam at 303-733-9914, because we have accumulated a lot of experience we would be happy to share.

#### **East Bay**

We have deepened our involvement with the Sanctuary movement, increased the output of parcels through the Sponsoring Hungry families Project and continue to work towards the release of Vietnamese prisoners of conscience. The Steering committee meets monthly with a regular attendance of 9-12 members. We meet weekly for a morning sitting, vigil monthly at Concord Naval Weapons Station, frequently stuff envelopes together over cups of tea, hold an occasional social event, and keep in touch by phone.

The primary goal of our participation in Sanctuary is to stop the export of arms to either side in the El Salvadoran conflict and to help the refugees who are displaced because of the conflict. We emphasize that we are pacifist in our intent, and advocate the withdrawal of U.S. military aid to El Salvador and promote a negotiated settlement to that war and all wars. We attend rallies and vigils and join delegations meeting with local Senators about U.S. aid to Central America. We co-sponsored BPF member Joe Gorin to come and talk about the situation in Guatemala and his time there.

Letters of deep appreciation continue to come to us from suffering, near-starving, men and women in Vietnam. As a result of generous responses to a fund-raising undertaken specifically to enable a special mailing of parcels for Tet (Vietnamese New Year), the Sponsoring Hungry Families Project was able to send

its largest number of parcels (200!) in January.

A committee of the chapter continues to work for the release of prisoners of conscience in Vietnam and to stop the forced repatriation of Vietnamese refugees now in camps in Hong Kong. We have co-signed an open letter to Margaret Thatcher signed by Joan Baez and Ginetta Sagan which will appear as a quarter page ad in the South China Morning Post of Hong Kong.

We co-sponsored another ad about Tibet with Humanitas, International Campaign for Tibet, and other Tibet groups. This appeared in the fall as a full page in the Western edition of the New York Times just before the Dalai Lama came to town (and before he won the Peace Prize).

We begin a six week discussion group on engaged Buddhism February 6 with Maylie Scott as the facilitator. We will be studying non-violence.

We welcome anyone who wants to join us in any of these activities or come to any of the meetings to see what we are up to. Please call our contact person Margo Tyndall at 654-8677 with any questions you have. *submitted by Margo Tyndall*

#### Yuma

Three members of our chapter went to the Kalachakra initiation given by H.H. the Dalai Lama. This helped strengthen our ties and bring us closer.

Our other accomplishment was to be part of a successful effort to block the building of a plant by a company called Recontek. Recontek claimed it could take hazardous heavy metal waste, which was being trucked in from California, and turn it into harmless base and precious metals and industrial salts. The only byproduct (they said) would be distilled water!! I wrote a letter to the editor of the newspaper which was printed the day before the public meeting. The outcome was that Recontek decided to go to another city.

Another source turned up more information on Recontek. They hire non-English-speaking employees and do not inform them of safety hazards or how to use emergency equipment. In 1985, one of these employees died from cyanide fumes in a plant and the company officials were charged with murder by the state of Illinois. Three were convicted. A local paper wrote, "The corporate case was believed to be the nation's first in which corporate officials were charged with murder in job-related death of an employee."

My father, who is on the Board of Supervisor's here in Yuma County, took all the information we had to the city in which Recontek decided to locate. There is no word yet as to that city's decision. We played a small part in blocking Recontek in our city. The bad news is that they are still in business and looking to build plants in other cities. *Sally Sheridan*



Mindfulness on the tracks  
at the Concord Naval Weapons Station

#### *From the National Coordinator*

This year has been good for BPF. I came in the middle so I'd like to do a little summary of the things we accomplished in this last half of 1989.

A membership drive brought in 230 new members since July. The Fall fundraising letter also brought in a very good response. The Newsletter is on a regular schedule, with quarterly high quality issues.

An election was held and a new Board put in place. The board was restructured to meet the needs of BPF.

Through working closely with an accountant, a system of bookkeeping and payroll consistent with our growing needs has been set up and maintained.

T-shirts are being sold to celebrate our name and beautiful logo. They are available in blue or white, with black lettering.



We continued the process of forging ties with other peace and Buddhist organizations and responding to the needs of our world. We co-sponsored a Death Penalty March and an ad and letters about Tibet, among other things.

Currently the BPF has approximately 1500 members and is growing (stronger) daily. *Margaret Howe*

# ROCK BODY TREE LIMB

by Nina Wise, from the forthcoming  
*Parallax Press book Dharma Gaia*

1972. I'm in my early 20s and living in my dance studio in downtown Oakland. On a bright cold autumn day, I take off with a handful of friends for Salt Point, our favorite haunt, a state park on the northern California coast famous for its spectacular rock formations. We carry our sleeping bags and groceries into one of Maria's cabins, a cluster of small sheds along Highway 1 with fireplaces and no insulation, and choose our bunks. Ceremoniously, as if in church on a holy day, we each swallow a paper dot of pure LSD, and head for the beach. As the waves of energy come over me, I nestle into the crevice of a water carved rock tower, showered by sea spray, and surrender to the onslaught of visions. Sun heating body pressed against stone, I feel the rock breathing, and I know that this hard, still, mute, "inanimate" thing is in fact alive, moving at a different pace than I am moving, alive in a slow way, in a way that survives a long time. I feel the love of human for rock and rock for human as we snuggle, breathing together, sun heating rock body, sun heating flesh, bone and blood body, serenaded by the roar of pounding sea. "The earth is alive," the rhythm of waves is singing, "the earth is alive."

1984. Ruth Denison, renegade Vipassana teacher who includes movement in her meditation practice, is giving a one day retreat in Berkeley. During a break, I walk slowly to the bathroom where a line of women, in silence, following their breath, wait patiently to pee. As I enter the white tile stall and sit on the toilet, I feel a wave of embarrassment arise, knowing the only sound in that room will be the tinkle of my urine. I realize I have always carried this shame about my processes of elimination, the sounds, the smells, the urgencies. As I relax my bladder and pee, an image of rivers surfaces in my mind, rivers across the planet flowing from mountains, through deserts, tundra, jungles, prairies, valleys to the sea. I image the rivers of my veins and arteries with their capillary creeks and riles, feel my body as an earthen landscape, a planet with its complex and finally mysterious processes, balances, flows. I realize the simple truth that the waters of my body commingle with the waters of the earth, that I am not separate but an elemental part of what surrounds me, that what I do influences my environment as my environment influences me, that inside and outside, subject and object, I and thou are intrinsically related, are one. I feel inseparable from the web of being and awed by the enormous unceasing complexity and mystery of life.

I stand up and push the metal lever down, hearing a rush of waters flush my yellow offering into the bowels of the earth.

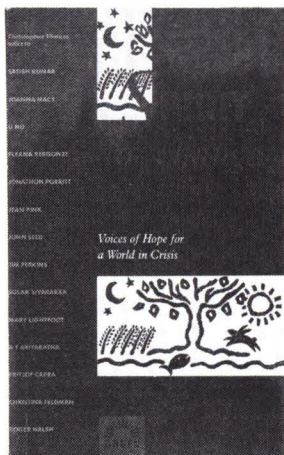
1989. Turning the corner of forty, I live in a small cottage with a woodburning stove and hand laid tile floors not far from my dance studio in Marin County. I have managed to sequester eight days from a too busy life of teaching and performing and fundraising to attend a Vipassana meditation retreat with Jack Kornfield in a Catholic nunnery in San Rafael. I have been to many retreats over the past five years and am familiar with the silence and the rigorous schedule — alternating periods of sitting (watching the breath, watching the sensations, feelings, thoughts arise in the mind and body, and pass away) and periods of slow walking — beginning at 5:30 a.m. and continuing until 10:30 p.m. After lunch each day, I walk along a path lined with peeling Eucalyptus trees into the hills and I climb a stout oak tree that has a strong branch gracefully extended close to the ground. In the zendo, sitting on my zafu, I have felt the boundaries of my body dissolve. When I reached a certain quality of stillness, I began to feel what seemed to be the movement of molecules that make up the illusion of a solid body. Harbored in the cleavage of oak limbs, I feel the aliveness of tree, our dancing chemistries coming into contact, partnership. "I breathe in, oak tree breathes out," I understand, cradled in branches, serenaded by the timpani of blowing fall leaves, "I breathe out, oak tree breathes in." "The earth is alive," the rhythm of wind is singing, as red tipped tuxedo birds, flapping their applause, rise in chaotic unison towards heaven. "The earth is alive." ❖

The National BPF plans an event on Feminism and Buddhism this March, 1990:

***Embrace Tiger, Return to Mountain***  
***Feminist Perspectives on the Dharma***  
**Friday, March 16, 7:30 pm**  
**First Unitarian Church**  
**Franklin/Geary Sts., in S. F.**

This will be an evening with Joanna Macy, Charlene Spretnak, and Susan Griffin to discuss and explore Buddhism and Feminism; the interplay between them, what each brings to the other, and where they differ and meet. Please join us for what promises to be an enriching and lively evening. ❖





***Spirit for Change: Voices of Hope for a World in Crisis*, by Christopher Titmuss, Green Print, 1989  
reviewed by Ken Jones**

The reputation of Christopher Titmuss as a meditation teacher, facilitator and friend in matters spiritual, psychological and Green is worldwide; he practices what he preaches. Meditation teachers who are campaigning Parliamentary candidates are not all that common...

This book consists of interviews with 14 spiritually informed men and women from around the world. Each offers inspiration and guidance about how we can live in active and generous compassion for our planet and all its creatures. The interviews are divided into four sections: inner awareness; attitudes towards creatures and the planet; social action; psychology and change.

Inevitably, some of the interviews went off better than others. The magisterial U Nu, former Prime Minister of Burma, discoursing on the ins and outs of vipassana meditation, seems to have given Christopher a rather difficult time, for instance. On the other hand, two interviews with little-known people seemed particularly successful: with Fleana Bergonzi of Italy, dying of cancer; and with Mary Lightfoot, an independent social worker in Bihar, India. The same goes for interviews with Joanna Macy and Christina Feldman, which unfolded purposively, crisply and systematically.

The unavoidable unevenness, however, is more than offset by the spontaneity, freshness and variety of such an interview presentation. Jonathon Porritt is always worth reading, especially on Green spirituality. The interview with animal rights campaigner Jean Pink ends up with a lively to and fro on the value (or lack of it) of gurus and of making one's self-transcendence first and foremost. Jim Perkins provides a racy account of the American Plowshares action against nuclear warheads, and how people reacted to the savage prison sentences that were handed out. He is followed by Sulak Sivaraksa on 'the religion of consumerism.' Other contributors include Satish Kumar, John Seed, A.T. Ariyaratne, Fritjof Capra and Roger Walsh.

I found this book a lively and inspiring read. Old-timers will discover it to be a useful refresher; to newcomers it offers a rounded and varied introduction to socially engaged spirituality generally and to engaged Buddhism in particular. ❖

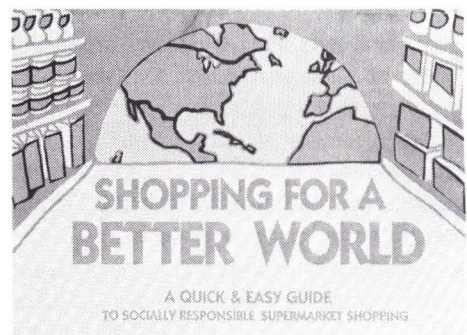
***Shopping For A Better World*  
by Council on Economic Priorities. 1989  
reviewed by Margaret Howe**

Now you can cast your economic vote and shop in a way consistent with your personal values. Brought to you by the Council on Economic Priorities (the same people who brought you the book *Rating America's Corporate Conscience*) this pocket size guide makes conscious shopping easy. The authors have condensed and rated the policies of more than 1500 companies and their brand name products. CEP rates performance and policies on 10 issues most of us are concerned about: nuclear power, military contracts, animal testing, women's and minority advancement, the environment, South Africa, disclosure of information, charity and community outreach. The information was gathered from questionnaires sent to companies, specialized institutions, government agencies, and advisors, and is updated each year.

It all fits in a small, alphabetized chart you can bring with you as you peruse the aisles. Besides becoming acutely aware of how a few large conglomerates own all the smaller companies, you can learn that Pepperidge Farm rates pretty well in all categories, and has on-site day care (breathe easier knowing that some things are still sacred.) The shortcoming of the guide is that it gives the information in a very cryptic form. One is left wanting to know more details about each company. To solve this dilemma one only has to buy CEP's other book (mentioned above).

I highly recommend this little book for all those who are too busy to write letters or protest policies in other ways. This guide gives you a way to influence corporate policy through your (and their) pocket-books. We can now support companies who believe in creating a better world. Available from:

*Shopping For a Better World*, P.O. Box 656, Big Bear Lake, CA 92315. (Send \$4.95 plus \$2 postage)❖



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# BUDDHIST PEACE FELLOWSHIP



## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

- ❖ To make clear public witness to Buddhist practice as a way of peace and protection of all beings;
- ❖ To raise peace, environmental, feminist, and social justice concerns among Western Buddhists;
- ❖ To bring a Buddhist perspective to contemporary peace, environmental, and social action movements;
- ❖ To encourage the practice of nonviolence based on the rich resources of traditional Buddhist teachings;
- ❖ To offer avenues for dialogue and exchange among the diverse American and world sanghas.

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