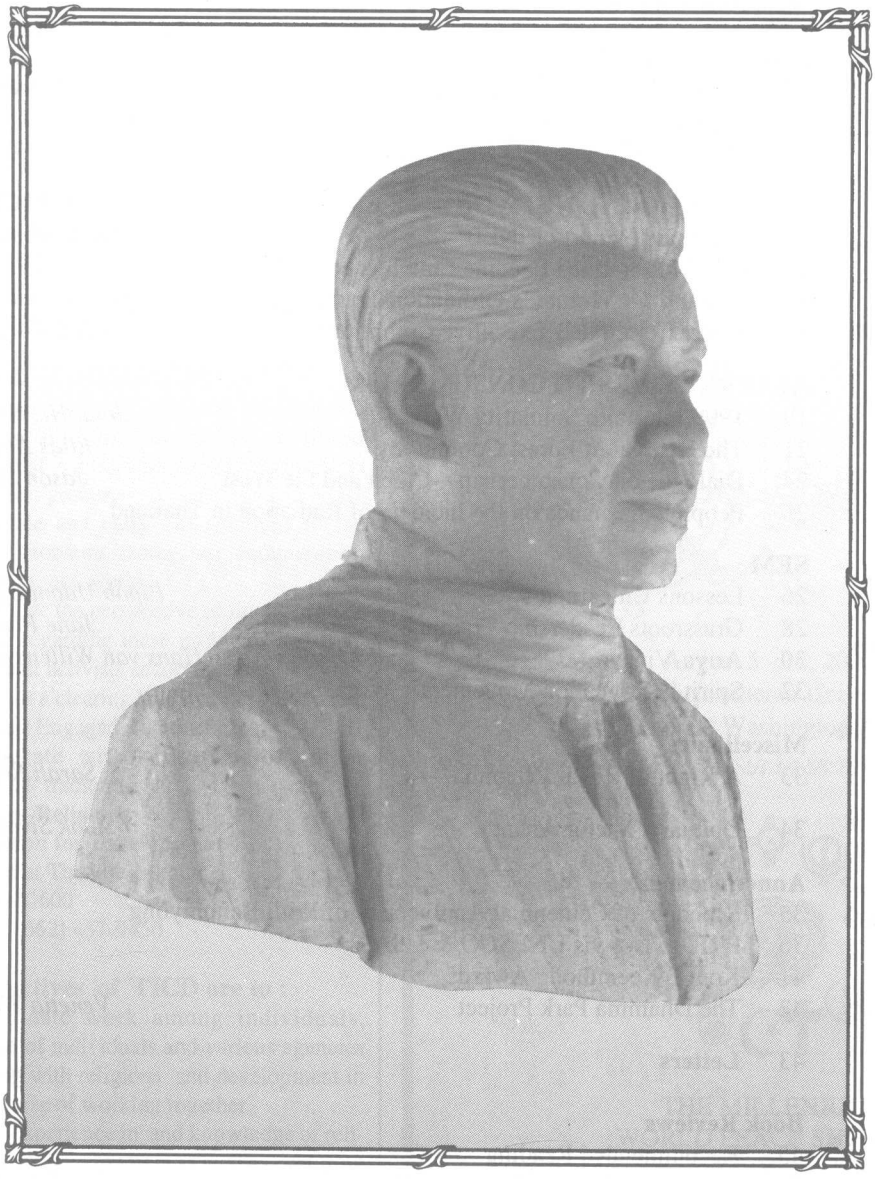
SEEDS OF PEACE

Vol.16 No.2 May-Aug. 2543 (2000)

Pridi Banomyong's Centennary





Social Justice, Democracy and Alternative Politics for the 21st Century



SEEDS OF

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Mr. Pridi Banomyong's sculpture to be installed in the library named after him at Thammasat University. Sculptor: Prawat Raksayam

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PEACE

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The goals of INEB are to:

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

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The objectives of TICD are to :

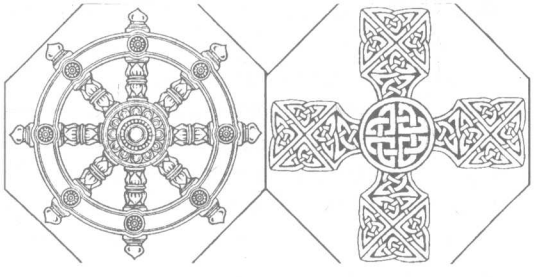
1. Coordinate work among individuals, groups of individuals and various agencies dealing with religions and development in the course of working together.
2. Share experience in and knowledge of religions and development as well as exploring ways and means of working together.
3. Offer training and secure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



Peace hath her victories no less renowned than war.

Phra Dhammapitaka

The Sixth International Conference
Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies 2000
Buddhism Christianity, and Global Healing



August 5 - 12, 2000
Pacific Lutheran University
Tacoma, Washington, USA



THE MILLENIUM
WORLD PEACE SUMMIT
OF
RELIGIOUS AND
SPIRITUAL LEADERS
AUGUST 28 - AUGUST 31, 2000
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EDITORIAL NOTES

March-April-May: The summer heat is at its best—a boon to those working on their tan, a particular nuisance to the rest. The month of April is also when the Thai New Year begins—the water festival, the festivities, etc., rendering the fiery heat wave more tolerable.

As in previous issues, the dual themes of atrocious heat and soothing optimism pervade this summer issue of *Seeds of Peace*. Let us turn on the heat first. The UNCTAD X meeting in Bangkok was an abject failure from the viewpoint of people's and grassroots movements—of democracy, human rights, and environmental sustainability. It merely eloquently restated the orthodox theme: economic globalization is in the best interest of humanity. The only benefit to come out of this meeting is that it enabled the 'losers' of the global economy to (yet again) witness the mentality and values of the world's 'enlightened ruling class.' The view and demands of the Other on globalization is presented in the People's Declaration, issued at the end of the UNCTAD X conference. It should be read in conjunction with David Loy's abridged article on transnational corporations, the main agents and primary beneficiaries of economic globalization. The Pak Moon Report on the construction of dams in Thailand and the paper on the Yadana Gas Project also reaffirm the detrimental human and environmental consequences of the mindless pressure to modernize.

Of course, the situation is pretty bleak, but enough with mind-numbing pessimism—lest we all want to be mummified by apathy and despair. The articles by Elias Amidon, John Herrington and SEM, as well as the report on the progress of the Ariya Vinaya project, to cite a few examples, offer some positive and empowering alternative visions. Furthermore, Sarah Rooney's abridged article on the film *Anna and the King* is of good entertainment value.

11 May 2000 will mark the centennial anniversary of Mr. Pridi Banomyong, the progenitor of Thai democracy. It will be celebrated by Thai communities, nationally and internationally. Needless to say, were he still alive, he would be greatly disturbed by the magnitude of devastation that global economic forces have wreaked on the people and democracy. We have the great pleasure to pay homage to him on the front cover. The picture shows the bust of Mr. Pridi sculptured by Prawat Raksayam.

Subscriptions and donations serve as the lifeline of *Seeds of Peace*. So please renew all your subscriptions! It costs only 25 dollars per annum; you can donate more if you want.

(Note: Due to space limitation, we took the liberty to abridge many of the articles. You folks are just too ornate writers. What we left out are indicated by ellipses. The official brochure on the Sathirakoses Nagapradipa Foundation entitled *A View from Below* will be sent gratis to *Seeds of Peace* subscribers. Please make a request to Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute: it will be sent via sea mail; as expected, those who desperately want to read it first must pay for its air postage—a sum of 3 dollars. Non-subscribers who want to take a peek at it can purchase it for 5 dollars.)

INDONESIA: INTERVIEW/WAHID ABDURRAHMAN -Not content with the old ways

Jeffery Sng: *The public has been fed one piece of bad news after another about Indonesia. Ethnic conflict, secessionist violence, banking crises, military tensions, the loss of East Timor, and so on. Could you tell us something good about Indonesia for a change.*

Wahid: The good news will come upon my return to Jakarta when (former military chief) Wiranto comes to see me tomorrow (Sunday) and I will tell him to resign (from the cabinet as security minister).

Are you under pressure from Western governments to sack Wiranto?

Not really pressure, but they have expressed their views about Wiranto's bad image for the government. Consequently, business leaders are concerned that Wiranto's presence in the government will bear negatively on Indonesia's efforts to attract foreign investment, which we badly need.

Moreover, since we have allowed the Indonesian Commission on Human Rights to investigate human rights abuses, we must let them work and respect their findings. That is the only way for Indonesia to gain the recognition of the international community.

Of course, I will give him respect and find a place for him to retire gracefully.

Your announcement of the sacking of Wiranto, in Davos two weeks ago, became the signal for international journalists to head for Jakarta in anticipation of a military coup d'etat. Jakarta was buzzing with rumours as international journalists holed up in Jakarta's hotels waiting for the army to make a move while you were still outside the country. Aren't you the slightest bit worried?

The coup didn't happen (laughter).

You have focussed on Indonesia's foreign relations since you took office as president. If I am right, you have visited 35 countries in a period of three months. This feat alone would earn you a place in the Guiness Book of Records as the president fastest to travel the world. Are you trying to change Indonesia's foreign relations?

Yes, I am trying to reshape Indonesia's foreign policy. We have been too passive in our foreign relations. Because of that many opportunities were lost.

For example, India has been completely neglected. Yet India is an important country which played a very big role in helping Indonesia gain her independence from Dutch colonial rule in 1949.

Did you know that the last Indonesian president to made a real visit to India was President Sukarno himself, 53 years ago. (Former President) Suharto may have gone there but he only went to attend an international conference; he did not go on a real country visit.

India was one of the countries I visited during my state visits. When I was there I proposed a regular annual exchange of visits between the two countries. India is a big entity that it is impossible for us to ignore.

Why India?

China, India and Indonesia, with the support of Japan and Singapore, make a potentially very strong grouping. As a grouping it could have the same standing as Asean-perhaps even more important because it would constitute a much larger market.

Asean is good but it remains just one possibility. Why should we be afraid of other larger possibilities? If we promote other groupings as well, eventually we can enjoy a loose relationship between Asean, Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation), East Asia and Northeast Asia.

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has been very outspoken about the need to form a larger regional economic grouping than Asean. Is your vision of a larger regional grouping compatible with Dr Mahathir's East Asian Economic Caucus? Have you spoken to Dr Mahathir on the subject?

Mahathir is proposing the East Asian Economic Caucus because he does not like US domination. Like him, I believe that peoples in this region should not be dominated by anyone. I have yet to speak to Mahathir on the subject. But later today after the Unctad sessions, I will have a comprehensive talk with

Mahathir.

The regional grouping that I would like to see in Asia is one that goes beyond just economics or markets, though they are both very important. In post-Suharto Indonesia, our democracy and our human rights are also important. It is imperative that we develop forms of regional co-operation that support and strengthen our democracy and our human rights as well.

Throughout our history the threat to democracy and human rights has tended to come from the military. We can reduce the threat to our democracy by scaling down our military. But we cannot do it single-handedly because the problem involves regional defence systems as well.

Every country in the region is spending too much on defence. Part of the reason is because we build defences against each other. To progressively demilitarise we must demilitarise together. Unless we evolve a regional grouping that will enable us to co-ordinate our defence, as well as our economic, policy we shall not succeed in keeping Asia safe for democracy.

You have mentioned that we may not ignore big regional powers like India in any effective regional grouping. What about China and Japan?

Like the Malaysian initiative, the Japanese Obuchi Plan (a $500 million aid package for the countries of Southeast Asia) tends to emphasise economic co-operation. I think it is good and would complement and strengthen Asean.

Both the Malaysian and Japanese initiatives reflect sensitivities to pressure from outside. Indonesia places her sovereignty



and national interest above everything else. Presently, we have to trade off our national interest against pressures from outside.

I want to talk more about this after the middle of this year when Indonesia's economy is stronger. At that time I will be able to put more stress on foreign policy.

Existing tensions between Asia's big powers-India, China and Japan-make it difficult to include all three under one regional grouping. Although the task is apparently difficult, it may not be impossible. Unless it is done, any attempt to form a regional grouping may be misconstrued as an unfriendly alliance directed against the interests of either: India, China or Japan.

For example, Japanese economic initiatives in Southeast Asia are viewed, in some quarters, as an attempt to exclude China. This is not a constructive view. Far from wanting to exclude China, Japan actually wants to open the market in China. It is far more important for Japan to co-operate with China than to isolate China.

Nevertheless, Japan feels security pressures from North Korea, China and Russia. Japanese economic initiatives in Southeast Asia may be a response to the security pressures she feels from the direction of her northern neighbours. I believe Japan simply wants to secure her flank in Southeast Asia. Once Japan is confident of her flank, she can comfortably attend to her co-operation with China.

Instead of being suspicious, Southeast Asia should welcome and support Japan's economic initiatives in the region. Southeast Asian countries like Indonesia can play a catalytic role in helping to bridge the gap between India, China and Japan. Japan, for her part, must remember that Southeast Asia has her own interests to protect.

Most Western observers tend to view Indonesia through the lens of eastern Europe where the transition to democracy and a market economy was accompanied by a process of balkanisation. Do you think the successful separation of East Timor from Indonesia will be followed by other territories like Aceh, Maluku and others?

You have to differentiate between an ideological construct and a cultural framework. The former Soviet bloc was what I would call an ideological construct, whereas Indonesia consti-

tutes a cultural framework. In eastern Europe Marxist rulers sought to institutionalise an ideology. Marxism did not give any importance to culture and never attempted to build a broad-based cultural unity.

Instead, Moscow sought to impose Russian culture upon everybody. This was counter-productive and only served to exacerbate ethnic, religious and cultural divisions. So underlying the uniform Soviet ideology there was only disunity.

When Marxism had to be thrown away to make way for democracy and a market economy there was nothing left to hold eastern Europe together. The Soviet empire disintegrated.

Unlike Soviet eastern Europe, Indonesia has always had a strong cultural framework. Indonesia had existed as a culture before it became a nation.

During the past century, Malay, or Melayu, emerged as the lingua franca of Indonesia's diverse ethnic groups. When the Indonesian nationalist movement institutionalised Malay as the national language it consolidated Indonesia's cultural unity. This underlying cultural unity was further reinforced by the establishment of a unified administrative framework throughout the country.

This sense of cultural and national unity militates against the unscrupulous use of religion for political purposes. Ordinary Indonesians are opposed to the racial and religious violence in Maluku. They have appealed to me to contain the militant Muslims and Christians alike. We have evidence that the recent religious violence that occurred in Maluku was not spontaneous. It was instigated by pro-military elements of the central government in Maluku.

Jeffery Sng
Bangkok Post
February 15, 2000

THAILAND:
Dam Study brings many ill effects into focus: Findings revealed by world commission

Many adverse findings from the Pak Moon dam construction came sharply into focus on 23 February in a study report of the World Commission on Dams.

The Pak Moon report is one of the eight case studies being undertaken worldwide by the commission to break through the controversy surrounding the building of large dams and a range of other issues regarding planning, design, construction, operation and decommissioning of large dams.

Non-governmental organisations and villagers affected by the dam construction were also invited to the meeting to listen to the presentation of the findings and discuss the draft report before its finalisation.

The study was divided into five major aspects: hydrology and water quality, fishery, social, environmental, and the project's economic value and the living standards of people affected by the dam construction.

Negative impacts were recorded in almost every aspect except that bordering on hydrology and water quality. A researcher said the irrigated area under cultivation in the Chi-Moon basin has not changed markedly as a result of the dam's operations.

Chayan Vaddhanaphuti, of the Chiang Mai University's social science faculty, who conducted a study on social aspects, said the dam was built without sufficient knowledge on the life and culture of Pak Moon villagers. When its construction was approved in 1989, there had been no in-depth studies on the project's environmental and social impacts, and the affected population had never been informed of its possible benefits and losses. Scores of villagers have lost their land which was inundated by the dam. Only part of the compensation was paid to them after long court battles. The project has also reduced the fish population and made it difficult to access the region's natural resources.

Roel Schouten of the Seatec International, a researcher on fisheries, said it was clear the project led to ecological destruction, resulting in the decline of fish population. The traditional fishing methods and tools have disappeared although they were



People's anti-dam rally.

once in wide use. Before the Pak Moon dam was built, there were 265 different fish species in the watershed area. However, after its construction only 96 species could be found upstream with an apparent loss of 196 species.

Wanpen Wirojanagud, of Khon Kaen University's engineering faculty, cited negative environmental impacts from the destruction of natural rapids. Her study revealed that among 57 natural rapids in the Chi-Moon basin, 51 are now permanently submerged.

The loss of these natural rapids has affected not only the fish population but also tourism as these rapids were once regarded as major tourist attractions. The number of tourists in the area has declined from 248, 516 in 1991 to 142,123 in 1998.

Another study on the project's economic value and justification done by the Thailand Development Research Institute showed that the economic gains from the dam were not as high as expected by the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand. Thongcharoen Sihatham, a villager, said it had finally been proven the dam construction was to blame for the destruction of natural resources.

The World Commission on Dams is an independent body assessing the impact and effectiveness of dam construction projects. Its study is sponsored by international donors including the World Bank. One of the commissioners said the report would be finalised with some recommendations before its publication on the Internet. Some representatives of the World Bank were also present at the meeting.

Anjira Assavanonda

Bangkok Post
February 24, 2000

THAILAND:
People's Declaration at UNCTAD X
19 February 2000
Queen Sirikit National Convention Center

Thailand has the honor to host the 10th United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD X) during 12-19 February 2000 at the Queen Sirikit National Convention Center. However, as representatives of the poor, we find contents of the meeting and its underlying concepts closely tided with development under the capitalist system - a new imperialism with the aim to colonize developing countries. UNCTAD has not proved to ensure fair trade and sustainable development for the world community. Even though a number of delegates at this conference represent governments from developing world, however, they worked just to serve the interest of international trade, which has impoverished the majority of the world's population. It has deteriorated our life quality, has destroyed our natural resource base, and has justified the exploitations of the powerful nations and transnational capitals.

In the name of the Network of the Poor including farmers, workers, indigenous people,

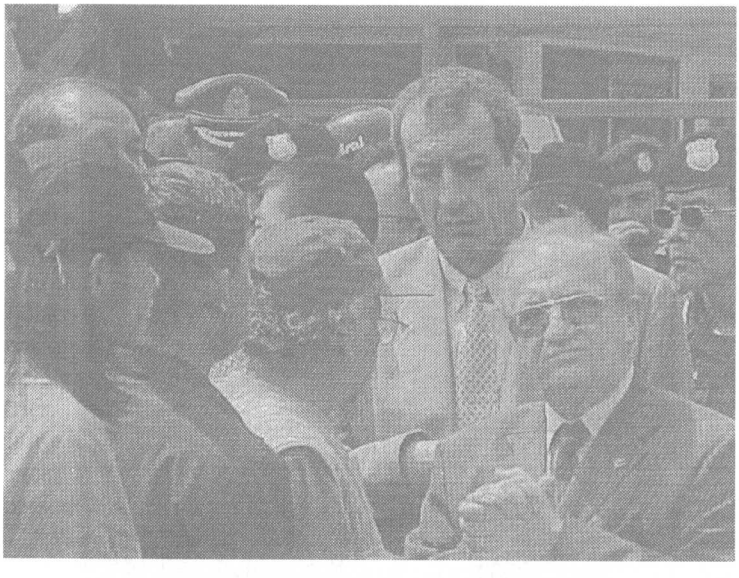
fisher folk, the urban poor, students, and NGO workers, who have commonly suffered from free trade and political centralization, we took the street to demonstrate during the UNCTAD X.

Our aim was to make it known that the poor have been severely affected by the implementation of governmental policies, which gave much emphasis to trade profits rather than to the preservation of our natural resource base or to address our problems. We expected that our voices would be heard during the sessions so that delegates of all government would be aware of our problems, and got united to tackle them. We also wished that once they are aware of our suffering, they will learn from the past failures and stop succumbing themselves to the interest of the powerful nations, which have wrecked our country in the name of the "quasi" free trade". And our demands are made in the following areas;

1. Agriculture: This issue must be totally excluded from negotiations in the WTO. We are also opposed to the patenting of life, as part of the TRIPS and the marketization of GMOs (Genetically Modified Organisms). Debt cancellation must be imple-mented to address debt-servicing problems in poor countries and developing countries as well.
2. Labour: Economic progress and competition in a global economy must come hand in hand with the progress of human rights, labour's rights, community's rights, sound environment and housing, freedom and unionization. All governments must abide by the ILO's conventions. We also oppose privatization set as a predicament by the IMF.
3. Land: The free trading of land must be regulated, and genuine land reform must be implemented. Taxation must used as a measure to promote equitable ownership of land for all people.
4. Natural resource and environment: The World Bank and IMF must not include as a condition in their loans to force the governments to collect fee for the use of water. Their attempt to readjust existing agricultural programs, and to privatize water resource must be scrapped likewise. The state must act to protect farmers and our natural resource base through the promulgation of land reform laws, community forest laws, and laws against monopolization of rights over resources.



WTO, IMF, ADB, WB GO TO HELL!



UNCTAD General Secretary receives NGOs' letter



There must also be stringent measure to monitor foreign investment, so that it will not lead to resource destruction and community breakdown. The state must also promote researches on local wisdom.

5. Energy: The state must scrap projects, which have wrecked havoc our environment such as the construction of coal-fired power plant, gas pipeline, etc., which belong to transnational companies. These projects have infringed on community rights. In the case of dam construction, decommissioning must be ordered if it is found out that the dam is not worthwhile.
6. The government must invest in creating more independent private organizations. Decentralization of the rights over resource management must be implemented so that local people have a say in the decision making as far as trade and development are concerned.

We are disappointed that the UNCTAD X has not given importance to proposals made by people as our problems are not reflected in the Bangkok declaration. We deem it as a failure, like previous conferences. UNCTAD does not exist for the interests of the Third World. It is virtually a paper tiger. We demand they review their roles and stop working as an agent for powerful nations and transnational capitals.

We hereby declare our disapproval of any commitment or contracts made by the Thai government with their counterparts, private sector and industrial sector as well as any multilateral trading organizations on the basis that they lack consent and consultation from the people's sector.

Stop all neo-colonization in the name of trade and development!

Network of the Poor



Summary Report of INEB Executive Meeting 1999

In the 'Letter from the INEB Executive Committee (EC) from the EC meeting 1999', which also appears in this issue of *Seeds of Peace*, an overview of the EC meeting was already provided. Therefore, in this note, I would like to provide INEB friends with a summary of the results of the EC meeting, which took place on January 24-28, 2000. The full report is posted on the INEB eGroups website at http://www.egroups.com/group/ineb/.

We were guided through an effective participatory revisioning process. From the 'reflection' process, we identified factors in the INEB organisation that fall into three categories: 'Opportunities', 'Strengths', and 'Limitations'.

There were several opportunities identified where INEB can provide assistance. Firstly, the current Burmese border situation presents need for training, material support, and political advocacy. Secondly, lack of models for social change requires bringing together theory with grassroots (marginalized, powerless) situations. Thirdly, Buddhist monks and nuns have resources, power, respect, and value within local communities and are potential agents for social change. Fourthly, the need for information by members calls for articles and news about conditions and circumstances in member countries. Lastly, the need for clarifying and exchanging experiences and information requires personal interactions.

We recognized the strengths of INEB as being our work with grassroots groups and different religious groups. In addition, we provide a forum to give voice to "voiceless" Buddhist groups. We match "North" resources with "South" needs. Finally, through the work of the Think Sangha, we analyze structural violence, in an attempt to develop a model for social change.

The factors that limit the work and growth of INEB are: 1) lack of continuity of Secretariat and other local support groups; 2) lack of vision; 3) lack of strategy; 4) lack of program; 5) lack of clarity of work relationships; 6) language barrier among INEB members*; 7) funding process; 8) level of access to information*; and 9) "Oppression" (where * are those factors that we cannot control).

Derived from reflections and discussions during the meeting were WHAT INEB can be and WHAT INEB can do. We drafted a 'Vision/mission statement' as follows: to "help beings liberate themselves from suffering that is rooted in greed, hatred, and delusion built into the very structures and relationships of our present societies. This active approach is called socially engaged Buddhism based on mindfulness, wisdom, and compassion". We identified our visions as being:

- Developing perspectives of socially engaged Buddhism based on mindfulness, wisdom, and compassion:
- Offering grassroots training in Asia to promote understanding, analysis, and empowerment towards a world of harmony and equity for individuals, communities, and societies (in the forms of workshops, seminars, study tours)
- Building a wide network, common principles, and shared work among Buddhists and other socially active groups
- Promoting inter-Buddhist and inter-religious understanding and cooperation

We identified the following as INEB 'Principles':

- Utilizing Buddhist skillful means
- Interconnectedness of all beings
- Not clinging to views and outcomes (avoiding mainstream Western domineering)
- Integration of spirituality and activism
- Non-violence action
- Raising awareness of women and gender and human rights issues
- Economic justice and an end to poverty
- A sustainable environment
- Participatory decision making
- Work with grassroots groups and different religious groups
- Mobilizing resources for priority needs
- Tackling structural violence

As mentioned in the 'Letter from the EC', three main INEB 'Programs' were identified: 1) training; 2) forums; and 3) information exchange. The goals of training program are 'to empower grassroots groups, who are potential change agents living in situations of oppression and conflict in Asia, to respond to issue and their situation, through the application of socially engaged Buddhist principles'.

Those of forums program are 'to bring people together to share experiences, to strengthen cooperation, to extend lessons learned, and to revitalize social/spiritual energy'. Those of information exchange program are 'for INEB members, partners, and other socially engaged Buddhists to share their experience, to provide information and analysis, and to offer advocacy and support'. Potential formats identified included both print and electronic media.

Our ongoing commitments under training program are: 1) training of Women and Gender Program, e.g. for ethnic Burmese refugee women, and for Buddhist nuns; and 2) follow-up seminar of the HIV/AIDS project. For the forum program, the next bi-annual INEB conference is tentatively planned for February 2001 and is likely to take place in Thailand. The information exchange program includes the Think Sangha Journal, Seeds of Peace magazine, INEB website and eGroups.

What remains to be further explored and identified in other follow-up meetings are INEB organizational requirements, i.e. WHO is part of INEB network, WHAT their roles and responsibilities are, and HOW they participate. Roughly we identified those who are part of the INEB network as INEB Secretariat, Executive Committee, Members, Partners, Affiliates, Work groups, Country groups, grassroot groups, and other organizations. In addition, an idea of a Local Working Committee was proposed. The EC strongly agreed that one such committee should be set up in order to help support and advise the Secretariat in the future.

Over the past year, I have learned and gained many valuable experiences in both handling the administrative part of the INEB Secretariat and working as a co-facilitator for training workshops for the Tibetan Buddhist nuns in Ladakh and Dharamsala for which I am very thankful. I wish INEB success in dealing with challenges ahead.

Panadda Kosakarn

Can Corporations Become Enlightened?
Buddhist Reflections on TNCs

We have given corporations dominion over the sustaining of our lives....They concentrate power and wealth. They design and shape our society and world. They carve our goals and aspirations. They shape our thoughts and our language....In other words: what corporations do well, what corporations are designed to be, is the problem.

What is globalisation, and what does it mean for our lives?....Globalisation is a complex set of interacting developments: economic, political, technological and cultural. This paper attempts to bring a Buddhist perspective to bear on what is probably the main agent of globalisation...: corporations, especially transnational ones. I propose to think about what corporations are, from a religious, particularly a Buddhist, perspective.... In 1995, only 49 of the world's 100 largest economies were nations; the other 51 were corporations. Total sales of the top 200 transnational corporations were bigger than the combined GDP of 182 countries -- of all except the top nine nations.... Yet those corporations employed less than one-third of one percent of the world's population, and that percentage is shrinking.

In the United States, the largest 100 corporations buy about 75% of commercial network time and over 50% of public television time as well. This means that they decide what is shown on television and what is not....Corporate mergers and buyouts also mean that the nation's radio stations, newspapers, and publishing houses are owned by a decreasing number of conglomerates.... In short, corporations control the U.S. "nervous system", and increasingly our international one as well. It is amazing, then, that we hear relatively little about what corporations do -- which seems to be the way they like it....The main point of this paper can be summarized very simply: today, thanks to spreading ideals of democracy, states are increasingly responsible to their citizens, but whom are transnational corporations responsible to?

One of our problems today is that, in our preoccupation with present consumption and future possibilities, we tend to lose...our sense of history. If you want to

understand something, one of the first places to look is at its history, which can illuminate aspects that we otherwise overlook or misunderstand.... What does history teach us about corporations and their responsibilities?

Incorporated business enterprises, with legally limited economic liabilities, began in Europe. The earliest record I have found of such a corporation is from Florence, Italy, in 1532.... Columbus had "discovered" America in 1492; just as important, Vasco da Gama had sailed around Africa to India in 1498 and returned with cargo worth sixty times the cost of his voyage.... But there were some problems. First, it was extremely expensive to outfit such an expedition.... Second, such voyages were extremely risky [e.g., due to storms and piracy]. And third, there were debtor's prisons -- not only for you but for your family and your descendants -- if you lost your ship and could not pay your debts.

The solution to these problems was ingenious: legally limited liability. Unlike partnerships...limited liability meant you could lose only the amount you invested. Such an arrangement required a special charter from the state -- in Renaissance Italy, from the local prince. This was convenient not only for the investors but for the prince, because a successful expedition increased the wealth of his territory -- and because he got a big cut of the profits for granting the charter.

[This] shows us, first, that from the very beginning corporations have been involved in colonialism and colonial exploitation.... Second, it shows us that from the very beginning corporations have also had an incestuous relationship with the state. In the sixteenth century nation-states as we know them did not exist. Rulers generally were too limited in resources to exercise the kind of sovereignty that we take for granted today. The state as we know it today...developed along with the royally-chartered corporation....The enormous wealth extracted from the New World, in particular, enabled states to become more powerful and ambitious, and rulers assisted the process by dispatching armies and navies to "pacify" foreign lands. As this suggests, there was a third partner, which grew up with the other two: the modern military. Together they formed an "unholy trinity"....

This incest needs to be emphasized because we tend to forget it. We distinguish between government and the economy, but at their upper levels there is usually little effective distinction between them. Today governments still get their royal share of the booty -- now it's called taxes. On the one side, states today need to promote corporate business because they have become pimps dependent upon that source of revenue; on the other side, transnational corporations thrive on the special laws and arrangements with which states promote their activities....Almost everywhere globalisation means that the interests of politicians who control nations are more and more intimately entwined with those who control corporations. In most countries the elite move back and forth quite easily from one to the other, from CEO to cabinet position and back again; naturally they identify with each other's interests....Occasionally there have been exceptions to this cozy relationship...but they tend not to last very long.

This brings us back to the question of corporate responsibility. A royal charter listed a corporation's privileges and responsibilities. It has been said that the history of corporations since then is a history of their attempts to increase their privileges and reduce their responsibilities. One important step [in that direction] was the introduction of the joint stock company....One's shares in a corporation could now be bought and sold freely, even to someone in a foreign country. The stock market has since become an essential feature of every developed economy, of course, and of most developing ones. Consider, however, the effects of this development on...the ethical consequences of business activities. Legally, the primary responsibility of a corporation is ...to its stockholders....What does it mean, then, when those stockholders are anonymous, scattered here and there, most living far away and with no interest in the corporation's activities except insofar as they affect its profitability? Compare the situation of a smaller, locally-owned business ....My point is that in such a situation economic responsibility is local and not so easily evaded. Everyone in the town knows how you treat your workers, and that affects your reputation -- what other people think about you and how they respond to you.

Contrast that with what happened, say, at Bhopal, India in 1984....Although we do not know who they are, it's safe to say that the stockholder owners of Union Carbide were elsewhere, living in various places around the world; and that...the large majority felt no responsibility for what happened. The people responsible for managing

Union Carbide also live and work far away. Whatever legal liability a corporation may have... is quite different from having to live with the consequences, and this difference has a great impact upon the way that impersonal institutions like corporations can conduct their business. It is important to understand that the Bhopal problem was not primarily a technological one...but one of ...corporate immorality. The gas that escaped is so volatile and dangerous that normally it is not stored but immediately made into a more stable compound; it was stored improperly, without being refrigerated; the emergency release valve was not working; there had been prior problems and accidents but recommendations resulting from those incidents had not been implemented; there were no plans or exercises for emergency evacuation; no training or information had been provided to the municipality about the gas and how to respond to such an accident.... Now consider: if the CEO of Union Carbide had been living next door to that plant, with his family, would those conditions have been permitted to continue?

And Union Carbide never apologized for the accident, evidently because there were some legal implications at stake. Instead, company executives in India spread rumors that a disgruntled employee had caused the disaster, but no evidence to support this was ever provided.... [I]t is intrinsic to the nature of large corporations that they cannot be responsible in the way that you and I can be....The accident cost Union Carbide nothing: it settled all claims for $470,000,000, which was covered by its insurance.

We begin to understand how "a principle purpose of corporations is to shield the managers and directors who run them, and shareholders who profit, from responsibility for what the corporation actually does." We also begin to understand why we should speak of transnational corporations rather than multinational ones. Early corporations transcended local communities; today the largest, most powerful corporations transcend responsibility even to nation-states and their citizens. In their preoccupation with profitability, they have learned to play off nations and communities against each other in order to obtain the most favorable operating conditions.... [A]lthough corporations and nation-states grew up together, in some important respects they have become de-linked.

So, then, what is a corporation? To become incorporated... does not mean, of course, that a corporation gains a material body. You cannot point at a corporation, because it has no physical location. In principle, at least, corporations are immortal.... Everything can be replaced -- all the people working for it, all the material resources owned by it, the type of activities it engages in, even its name -- while it remains essentially the same corporation.

That is because a corporation is not a thing but a process....That is, it must take in energy from the outside, which it processes in various ways. In order to continue "living" indefinitely its income must equal its expenditures. And, like other living things, this process is subject to the law of entropy: although value-added products may be produced, energy is consumed in the process.

It is already evident that there is an parallel here with human beings. Our physical bodies are also dissipative systems that absorb energy (from food) and use it for physical and mental activities. And from a Buddhist perspective this parallel is even deeper.... Buddhism teaches that our sense of self is a delusion - what might now be called a "construction" -- because the feeling that there is a "me" apart from the world is mistaken; our sense of "I" is an effect of interacting physical and mental processes that are part of the world. Although counter-intuitive and difficult to understand, this teaching of anatman is essential to all schools of Buddhism....

This similarity between corporations and people...raises the question whether corporations are subject to the same type of problems. According to Buddhism, the primary cause of our human problems is greed....Is this also the problem of corporations? It is the nature (or natural tendency) of our minds never to be satisfied with what we have, but always to want more. The tendency of corporations to grow and seek ever greater profits implies a similar problem. When we consider the Buddhist solution to this problem, however, we realize the vast difference between corporations and us.

The difference is that corporations are legal fictions...[;] that is why they are so dangerous, because without a body they are essentially ungrounded to the earth and its creatures, to the pleasures and responsibilities that derive from being manifestations of the earth....As the example of Bhopal shows, a corporation is unable to feel sorry for what it has done....A corporation cannot... enjoy the world or suffer with it. Most of all, a corporation cannot love. Love is realizing our

interconnectedness with others and living our concern for their well-being....Corporations cannot experience such love or live according to it, not only because they are immaterial but because of their primary responsibility to the shareholders who own them.

To make the same point in a more Buddhist way...a corporation cannot become enlightened in the spiritual sense. Buddhist enlightenment includes realizing that my sense of being a self apart from the world is a delusion that causes suffering for me and the world. To realize that...I am one of the many ways the world manifests...is the cognitive side of the love that such a person feels for the world and all its creatures....

[To sum up] increasingly, the destiny of the earth is in the hands of impersonal institutions which, because of the way they are structured, are motivated not by concern for the well-being of the earthûs inhabitants but by desire for their own growth and profit....

One might argue, in reply, that there are good corporations which take good care of their employees, are concerned about their products and their effect on the environment, etc. The same argument can be made for slavery: there were some good slave owners....This does not refute the fact that the institution of slavery is intolerable....

My Buddhist conclusion is that transnational corporations are by their very nature problematical....I do not see how, given their present structure, we can repair them to make them more compassionate. So we need to consider whether it is possible to reform them in some fundamental way or whether we need to replace them with better economic and political institutions -- better because they are responsible not to anonymous investors but to the communities they function in, better because are motivated not by profit but by service to the earth and the beings who dwell on it....

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For the full -length article with footnotes, readers may request to: ineb@loxinfo.co.th

Striving for Women's Ordination Tradition: Stories from the Nuns of Ladakh

In February 1999 the INEB Women and Gender Program organized an international seminar for the Buddhist nuns from South and Southeast Asia. Twenty nuns from six countries attended the seminar. Three nuns from Ladakh participated in the event. During the seminar we had nuns from each country report about their situation: their living conditions, their status and their needs. Based on these reports, it became clear that the Ladakh group was in the greatest need of our attention. The following is a summary of the story of the Ladakh nuns taken from the report given by Dr. Tenzin Palmo, the general secretary of the Ladakh Nuns Association and from the information gathered during our follow-up work in Ladakh in July last year.

There are about 600 nuns in Ladakh, but there are only 5 nunneries that can provide basic facilities for the nuns. Each of these nunneries can accommodate about 20 to 40 nuns. The rest of the nuns stay with their families and are the main source of labour. They work both in the fields and in the household. Most nuns have little or no education, both monastic and secular. The nuns' status is disregarded and their problems and needs have been neglected by the public, Buddhist institutions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Ladakh. This is the main reason why the number of nuns has declined in the past decades.

The conditions of the Ladakhi nuns have slowly improved since the Ladakh Nuns Association was established in 1997. Dr. Tsring Palmo, a Tibetan doctor and a nun herself, started the association with a strong determination to help improve the situation of the nuns. Her efforts, especially during the first two years, were mainly supported by female friends who came from Europe and America as tourists, who soon became her good friends and supporters after learning about the hard living condition of the nuns there. After much effort, particularly in the area of monastic education, the association has made significant progress in reviving the women's

ordination tradition in Ladakh. The number of nuns has increased, but more exciting is that the existing nuns have become more visible. It was wonderful to see the re-emergence of the nun group; however, few nunneries have been built or renovated so that the nuns can live independently from their families. The efforts of the Ladakh Nun Association in providing monastic training and constructing basic accommodations for the nuns has received attention and later support was offered by a few local important spiritual leaders, including a famous Rinpoche who is the most important spiritual leader in Ladakh. His Holiness the Dalai Lama, during his 1999 annual teaching to the Ladakh people, publicly encouraged the Buddhists to support the nuns. However, there are still many challenges ahead for the Ladakh Nuns Association to fulfill its mission.

Because of the great need of the Ladakh nuns, the INEB Women and Gender Program implemented follow-up activities in July, 1999. We worked with our local partner, the Ladakh Nun Association, to offer three workshops. The overall goal of the project was the empowerment of the nuns in the association as they worked to overcome the challenges they face. The first workshop was a leadership training organized only for the nuns. The participants came from various nunneries around Leh, the capital city of Ladakh. This was the first leadership workshop ever organized for the nuns. Our main focus during the four-day training course was empowerment, including topics such as working as a team, assertiveness training, and power analysis of structural violence against women. Since most nuns have never been to school it was a challenge to run a workshop experiential training style in which literacy is not the means of communication and learning. Through drawing, sharing stories, roleplaying and simulation games we learned about the heartfelt stories of challenges facing the Ladakhi nuns. The following stories came from the exercises of the leadership-training workshop.

During one of the empowerment exercises, Ven. Tupsen, a nun who has been ordained for over 43 years, tearfully told us about the greatest challenge that she overcame in her life. She reported, "I have lived and worked for my family ever since I was big enough to work. After I became a nun my duty never changed. I work both in the field and at home doing all the housework. I had only nighttime for my own to rest and read prayer books. I never had any monastic education until I attended monastic training organized by Dr. Palmo a year ago. That was the first time ever the I was allowed to stop working and could attend the teaching that I had been longing for since I was ordained. Although we lived in an extended family I have always been the main caretaker of the household. When I asked permission to leave home to attend the teaching my parents and younger brothers did not want me to go away, saying that there would be nobody to do house work and take care of the kids and the old parents. They also said that there is no need for me to learn the teachings since I can read the prayer books myself. I felt very sad because in my village there were no nuns, so I felt isolated. I thought that going to the teachings would be a chance for me to see other nuns and learn Dhamma from the teachers. I finally went to talk to my sisters-in-law, whom I know can influence my brothers to let me go and give me money for the bus fare to Leh. The Buddha saw my determination because my brothers finally gave up and let me go. After attending the teachings I realized how little I knew about the Dhamma and how the nuns should live their life. I felt so sympathetic to myself that I never had the courage to speak to my family about my needs or to just leave my family and look for a nunnery to stay like other nuns."

During the leadership training, we also learned that for nuns who had the courage to leave their families and live in the nunnery it was not such an easy path to accomplish. Because the nuns are not recognized by society, there is no support for them to live independently. For most nunneries that function today the nuns still need to go back and help their families by doing farm work such as harvesting and planting. Most nuns said "If we do not go home to help our families do work in the field, our families will not give us food to eat while staying in the nunnery. If we do not have food in the nunnery we then have to go back and live with our families."

There are a few nunneries in Ladakh that are situated in a temple area and are supported by monks. However, there are problems for the nuns with this model. For example, although the nuns may have the support of the chief abbot in a temple, fellow monks may use their power to undermine the nuns' position. This can lead to conflicts and disempowerment of the nuns.

During one of the empowerment exercises, we had the nuns describe five things they like about their nunneries. It was obvious that the nuns who live independently from the monks in their own nunneries expressed confidence, self-fulfillment and a strong sense of team work. However, the independent nunneries have to depend on support from abroad. They must learn important skills such as English, management and leadership, to be able to develop and run their own nunnery. Receiving support from groups or individuals from abroad does not necessarily mean that the nuns are totally independent from their supporters. Despite this subtle control, most of the nuns expressed the need to have more of their own nunneries with facilities to accommodate nuns and teachers for long term monastic training. One of the older chief nuns from Shergol who came with one of her students shared a story of their struggle to revive the nun tradition in the local area where there are few facilities and little support. She said, "I have been ordained more than thirty years, taught by a few good teachers and I am determined to continue our tradition despite difficulties. In our area there are many nuns, young and old, two are longing for monastic education. We need to have a room to accommodate teachers so that they can stay to give us long term training. At the moment we have only a room that we renovated from an old nunnery and we use it as a classroom and a place for ceremonies when we come together once a month. There is only one toilet and no kitchen. This is the reason why we cannot ask the teachers to stay here on a long term basis. My dream is to have our own nunnery and then find ways to give proper monastic training to my students and other younger nuns so that they will feel hopeful and understand the tradition and practice of the path."

Another important issue discussed during the leadership training was how to run a community in which power is shared among its members. We heard two successful stories of nunneries that experienced a power-sharing model of working together in the completion of a construction project in their nunnery. However, the nuns still continue to face the challenge of how to use a power-sharing model because it is against their traditional community where hierarchy and "power over" are common practices.

During the second leadership workshop we asked our local partner, the Ladakh Nuns Association, to invite local NGOs, nuns' leaders, and monks to participate. This is the strategy of the INEB Women and Gender Program to help build allies for the nuns and to help raise awareness of the situation of the Ladakh nuns among local NGOs and monks. This workshop was also the first time that the local NGOs ever organized a training workshop together and included monks and nuns. We had representatives from NGOs working on issues such as rural development, youth, women, traditional healing, and ecology. Also attending was a monk from a local temple. The main focus of this workship was working as a team. There were some challenges that the group faced during the experiential activities. Each day we invited the group to participate in activities that required them to work together as a team (such as crossing a toxic river, standing together, etc). Through the experiential exercises, participants discovered qualities of an effective leader, the importance of effective communication and planning in working together, how to deal with failure, and the role of power in group work. By the fourth day the group had developed skillful ways of working together. We also observed unity, cooperation, and team spirit among the participants. We ended the workshop by having sub-groups of participants' work together to draw a vision of Ladakh society 5 years from now. During the presentations of their drawings they were asked to tell how each group will carry out their roles and responsibilities to help materialize these visions. The primary theme expressed in the visions is the need to maintain the organic farming system that has historically been used in their culture. Other themes included preserving unique Ladakh cultural traditions, especially their philosophy and practice of living in harmony with their environment and with one another guided by Buddhist principles. Through this visioning process, they also discovered that they need to work together to realize their dreams.

In the third workshop we did a three-day project review and planning for the Ladakh Nuns Association. Dr. Palmo and four other staff attended the workshop. We helped guide the group to look into the project's strengths and challenges, and to plan long and short term activities for responding to their existing obstacles. We were very impressed by the past efforts of the association in improving the situation of the nuns. They have provided a series of training

courses on monastic principles and practice and herbal healing. They also sent five nuns to locations outside Ladakh to learn English, computer skills, office management skills, and Buddhist philosophy (in preparation for the nuns to become teachers). The foci of future activities include the renovation of old nunneries and the construction of new ones, staff training, team work development, and training on secular topics such as leadership, team building, conflict resolution, health care, short and long term monastic training, and training-of-trainers. Since Leh does not have facilities for the nuns' education, one of the main long term projects of the association is to build a training center. His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, during his annual teaching in Leh last year, donated seed funding for this project.

During our three weeks of working and visiting the nuns in and outside of Leh, we felt empowered by their determination and by the strong commitment of the Ladakh Nuns Association to change women's ordination tradition in their region. Their projects, once fulfilled will make an enormous difference in the lives of the people of Ladakh, especially the nuns. However, for the status of women, particularly the nuns to be improved, much support is needed from our Buddhist friends and communities inside and outside of Ladakh. From our experiences in working with Buddhist nuns in other Buddhist societies, we have learned that the challenges for nuns as well as lay women who desire to raise their status in their communities are so over-whelming that it is impossible for them to do it alone. Structural violence must be tackled from as many angles as possible through the commitment and efforts of various groups who are part of the whole structure.

Ouyporn Khuankaew
INEB Women and Gender
Program Coordinator

Letter from INEB Executive Committee

Dear INEB members,

The Executive Committee of INEB has just concluded a five-day meeting in Chiang Mai, Thailand, where the purpose was to explore INEB's vision, mission and program. Along with ourselves, we are grateful for the participation of Ven. Sumanalankar, Hkun Okker, Rev. Alan Senauke, facilitator Arthur Delvecchio, and Executive Secretary Panadda Kosakarn. A number of people traveled many days and miles to take part in our meeting. Ajaan Sulak Sivaraksa, co-founder of INEB, also participated in the last part of our meeting and contributed to the review of our vision, principles and strategies of the secretariat.

Through a deeply participatory process, effectively and patiently facilitated by Arthur Delvecchio, we identified INEB's unique characteristics guided by Buddhist principles, as well as limits and challenges faced, such as continuity of programs and the support for the secretariat. A range of charts and diagrams developed over five long days of meetings uncovered the interrelatedness of our vision, mission and three areas of program focus. This can be both a guide and framework for our work ahead, and we look forward to involving the broader membership in this process at our next conference.

Broadly the EC identified INEB's three main programs as revolving around:

- training for grassroots groups living in oppressive and conflict situations in Asia,
- forums for sharing our stories, victories, struggles and celebrations,
- information exchange involving different formats of communication.

The specifics of these program areas are flexible, according to existing commitments, identified strategic priorities, and our resources and capacity to act. This will be spelled out in greater detail in the full meeting notes and, with your necessary input, in follow-up planning

We are saddened to report that Executive Secretary Panadda Kosakarn has decided to step down from her position at INEB for personal reasons. We deeply appreciate her talents and contributions over the past year and wish her well. The administrative workings and procedures of INEB are much stronger for Panadda's efforts. We have immediately started the process of looking for a replacement and we are strongly considering moving the office to Chiang Mai—closer to a priority area of our work along the Burmese border Please let us know if you or someone you know might be interested in this position. Our hiring proposal is available on request.

As the notes are transcribed and edited we will share meeting outcomes with you in the next issue of *Seeds of Peace* and via the INEB email list, which you are welcome to join at ineb-subscribe@egroups.com or look at the web information at http://www.egroups.com/group/ineb/info.html. The meeting was hard work, and challenging at times, but the process has helped us find a clearer focus for our work in the future. We are truly grateful for Arthur help leading us through this significant and important process. And we hope that with your support and participation INEB will come of age and help the many beings.

Happy new year and warm regards to you all,

Jill Jameson and Ouyporn Khuankaew
on behalf of the INEB Executive Committee

1999 Interfaith Solidarity Walks

How do I begin to share one of the most awesome experiences of my life? This is the question I have been struggling with as I review the journal notes of my 10-day inter-faith solidarity walk experience—the meaning and power of the practice of bearing witness, the commonality of faiths, the richness of life found in the villages and in the forests, and the excitement of a remote forest festival.

I am a 56 year-old American, with a varied career in community and regional planning, forest ecology and non-profit administration. I quit my job two years ago to intentionally spend full time on an inward journey. By the spring of 1999, my journey had led me to the canyon lands of Utah where I participated in a 10-day desert vision quest facilitated by Elias Amidon and Elizabeth Roberts.... My interest peaked when they spoke of the work they were doing in Thailand in association with the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM).... This work included both the "Native Lands Mapping Project" which conducts training in map-making for indigenous groups to help preserve their land rights, and the Interfaith Solidarity Walks conducted in response to the struggles of indigenous highland villagers in northern Thailand. I became determined to join them in Thailand.... While I knew that my experiences in Thailand would be profound, I had not anticipated the volume and depth to which lessons would be manifested.

...In mid-1998, the Thai government reversed earlier decisions and determined that "people and the forest cannot live together." New policies put into place threatened over 700 tribal villages throughout Thailand with re-location because they were on lands that were to be re-designated as national parks or national forests. Tribal leaders believe that the government wants to use this land for resource extraction, tourism, and to affect the assimilation of indigenous people into Thai society. The government, however, claims the new policies of relocation are meant to protect the forest. Karen leaders point out that virtually all the forests that are remaining in Thailand are the ones they live in, since the inhabitants of the lowlands have cut down their own forests decades ago. The situation remains tense.

Why are indigenous land rights important? Why care if indigenous groups maintain their cultures and their ability to live sustainably with the land? My journey was undertaken partly to answer these questions, as well as to understand my own role in the "awakening"...that is called for if we humans are to learn how to live peacefully with each other and with the planet.

...I'll set the opening scene of the 1999 Interfaith Solidarity Walks at the YMCA parking lot in the city of Chiang Mai.... Imagine handing your backpack up to someone standing on the roof of a Land Rover. All around you in the parking lot are sixty strangers doing the same thing.... The sky is overcast and there's a light mist. It's been damp for days and the forecast is not promising.

The caravan heads west for a three-hour trip into the mountains. Most of the journey is on one-lane rutted dirt tracks with mud holes and slippery inclines. The trucks get stuck many times, requiring us to climb out and help push or at least cheer the drivers on. The caravan's final destination is Huai Yasai Temple.... [which is] adjacent to the Karen village of Huai Yasai. The monastery is in a small valley with an assortment of buildings —a cookhouse, latrines, a couple of structures that could be used for sleeping, and a wooden temple with a metal roof, where most gatherings take place....

Two days and nights are spent here in preparation for the Solidarity Walk, learning about the social and political context of the conflicts faced by the Karen people...who represent the largest tribe in Thailand with over 400,000 people. We get to know one another, listen to the struggles of the Karen, share stories, practice sitting and walking meditation led by the monks, and experience the blessing of their chants.

We also spend several hours discussing the practice of "bearing witness." Understanding the concept of bearing witness is the foundation to the "why" of the Walks. Bearing witness is fundamentally a practice of peace-making—it helps us to meet and understand those who are different from us without falling into the traps of judgment and disrespect. Bearing witness means taking a plunge into "unknowing"—into something new into the presence of others. The fears that arise are a mirror of who we are.... [As] the Dalai Lama has said, "I sit at the table of unknowing and invite you to join me there."... [W]e can achieve community when we

release our judgments, ask caring questions, and listen with silence and respect. Letting go of our opinions and attitudes and embracing unknowing, we'll come to a better understanding of all we encounter. Out of this practice, unexpected possibilities for healing arise.

Almost immediately, the power of this simple practice was evident.... The compassionate and heart-felt sharing and listening among the diverse inter-faith group assembled—Buddhist, Sufi, animist, Hindu, Protestant and Catholic from Thailand, South Korea, Burma, India, England, Scotland, and the U.S.—was a true gift. As I sat in a circle of unknowing, I heard voices in Thai and Karen, translated into English, share stories of cultural survival struggles and hopes.... [Here is a small sample:]

"As we begin the new millennium, let's forgive ourselves and each other for the hurt and pain we have caused each other in the past. The hurt of the past started with the selfishness within ourselves, and has been compounded by gender differences, our way of relating to the earth, and conflicts of power and money."

"All faiths will come together to dream a new world of understanding and love."

"The government has to blame someone for the destruction of the forest so our practice of rotational swiddening is blamed, yet, for hundreds of years we Karen have been practicing this kind of agriculture and the forests are still here and healthy. Swiddening is not understood, not just by the forestry department, but is now in school books portraying tribal people as destroying the forests and polluting the rivers with slash and burn practices."

"Citizenship is a big issue. It's estimated that there are 800,000 tribal people in Thailand and so far only 200,000 have been granted citizenship. Tribes don't have the same rights as Thais. Without legal papers, if we have to go to a hospital, we're refused service; if we cut a tree, we can be arrested. Local officials are allocated 4-8,000 citizenship permits per year, and end up selling most of them. If you have money, like drug dealers do, you can buy your citizenship.... In March 1998 six tribes were arrested-they had no citizen cards. They were sent to Burma and not accepted there because they were 'Thai.' They were sent back to Thailand, then back to Burma where they were arrested as POWs and are now slave laborers in Burma."

On the morning of the third day our practice of bearing witness moved from sitting to walking through forests, mountains, valleys and indigenous villages. Led by Father Wichai, Pracha Hutanuwatr, and Elias Amidon, three groups of twenty walked different paths and visited different villages. The oral sharing moved from the temple to observations and questions and listening in the forest, in tribal homes and around campfires.

As a trained forester, I walked without judgments and found beauty in every step as we transitioned in and out of male and female forests, as the Karen refer to them. Not only did I see clean, meandering streams and a healthy forest, but I saw a brightly dressed, happy, caring people living as close to the earth as you can get. They know the land and the plants and animals that share this common habitat. The forest provides virtually all of their survival needs.... Yes, there were clearings for growing the rice, but within a year the forest would begin to take over and soon new tree growth would mask any evidence of agricultural activity and the soil would begin to be replenished....

Walking from the forest after dark into a Karen village like Soblan is an unforgettable experience. Soblan is a small settlement of about thirty bamboo and thatch stilt-houses, with no electricity or roads. Soft voices and flickering candlelight seeping through slits in the bamboo walls of homes is a sharp contrast to the overpowering wattage of lights and noise emanating from most electrified communities. Quiet conversation versus television distraction is a difficult issue facing village elders.

Sitting in a candlelit circle one evening in Mae Lan Kham, the village headman explained, "the construction of roads and electric power lines into some of our villages is having an important impact on our way of life. We can't afford electricity. We don't have the cash. Some people, though, want fans, TVs and refrigerators, so they have to leave the village to work for cash.... They no longer have time to work in the fields for their food, so they have to buy food. Rituals disappear, and the family structure begins to disintegrate. It's becoming a struggle between the elders and the youth -the cultural differences between city life and village life is confusing to our children today."

Life in tribal villages may seem like a hardship by urban standards. Up at 4 a.m., I was awakened by women pounding rice for the day's consumption. By six, many villagers head to their fields for a full day's work.

With no pack animals or tractors, everything is done by hand, from planting to threshing to hauling heavy bags of rice from field to village over narrow hilly trails. Remembering that I was bearing witness, I saw a people happy with their life and culture without grumbling of wanting more. To the contrary, many of them want to maintain the simplicity and independence they enjoy by distancing themselves from the market economy.

When I arrived with my subgroup of 20 at Wat Luang, a 700 year old forest monastery, a week after leaving Chiang Mai, I was transformed by what I had experienced and learned. The next day we were each afforded the luxury of disappearing into the forest for a 24-hour solo of fasting and silence. The purpose of the solo was to reflect on our time with the Karen and to offer our prayers for their well-being ....

For my solo time, I headed toward a steep ravine, a place we had been cautioned not to go for fear of being swallowed and lost in the deep abyss. The sound of water lured me though. Sitting next to the stream in the dark depths of this ravine, with only a small window of sunlight through the dense overhanging bamboo growth, I was lulled into hours of meditative gurgling. What emerged for me was a confirmation of my beliefs -of how sacred the earth is -that in its love for life, it continues to give forth an abundance of pure water; that the simple, gentle, sustainable Karen have as much right to live in these forests as do the animals and birds that make their home here; and that regardless of what faith or religion one believes or practices, if it embraces kindness and compassion it doesn't matter what it is called. What matters is how we live our lives....The love and respect I experienced among everyone I came in contact with in these forests was undeniable.

As I reached for one bamboo shoot after another, pulling myself up the steep embankment of dense growth, while the days light waned, I reflected on the need to preserve the rich diversity of human cultures and languages in the world, just as we need to preserve the awesome diversity of plants and animals that the earth is blessed with...

In all likelihood, I will be back. In fact, I have made a commitment to help raise funds for a school teacher in the village of Soblan, and to work with the Boulder Institute in securing funds to continue the native lands mapping training and other work in Thailand and Burma. For myself I have learned that this work is not distant from my life or irrelevant to my culture. It represents for me the heart of what we humans have yet to learn-how to live in peace, with each other and our world.

John Herrington

The Festival of Forest Community

Waking before dawn to the first rooster songs at the seven centuries-old Karen Buddhist monastery on the first day of the Festival, I wondered, "Will anybody come?" After all the preparations by the Karen (Pgakenyaw) headmen and women, by the Karen youth leaders, after all the long meetings for months before, the journeys undertaken on foot and by jeep to Karen villages scattered through the hills to spread the word about the festival and its purpose, after all the coordination by SEM (the Spirit in Education Movement) and the Alliance for Sustainable Forests and Communities, by other NGO's such as IMPECT and NDF and the Boulder Institute -- after all this, could we be sure that anybody would come? There were no reservations or registrations, no fees paid, there had been only the word put out that a Festival was happening, a Festival of solidarity and celebration and declaration of values.

I found Patti Musaw, Karen poet and leader, down by the kitchen area where dozens of Karen and Thais were already busy in the first light preparing food. "Will anybody really come?" I asked him, half joking, getting my words translated by Nutt, our tireless interpreter and organizer. Musaw smiled and replied, "Just wait."

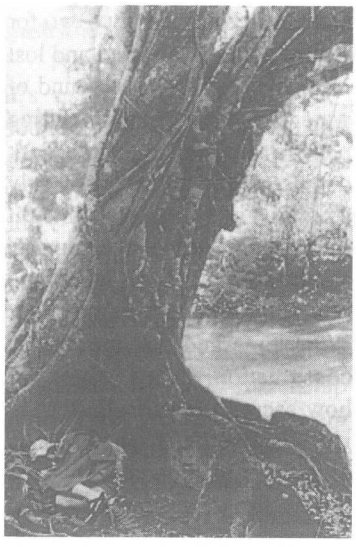
Community Forest MAPS

I walked up the hill past the moss-covered stupa overhung with the great sacred trees, home of the spirit houses, to the Festival grounds themselves. Several groups were there setting out chairs, putting loudspeakers in the trees, and hanging the large display of bioregional, commu-

nity-based maps that had been created over the past year. I joined the map-hangers.

A year earlier Nutt and I had conducted a mapping training for village members from the five Karen villages of Mae Lam. The 24 maps that had been completed since the training were a testament to the power and usefulness of these community-based maps. The maps were mounted on meter-wide boards, and depicted many layers of the human-nature relationship in the community forests of the villages. One map showed the boundaries of the different types of forests: the ceremonial forests which are entered only for ritual purposes, the umbilical cord forests where the placentas of newborns are placed and the individual's bond with the land is established, the mixed-use forests where agriculture takes place and materials are harvested, and the conserved forests which are left untouched except for the gathering of herbs. Another map showed the areas where environmental damage has taken place—where fish have been dynamited or killed with electric shocks by poachers from the lowlands, where fires have spread from careless practices of people coming from cities, and where the forestry department has planted eucalyptus plantations that dry the soil. Other maps depicted all the small streams and creeks that drain these lands, documenting them by name. No one else in the world has names for these streams, only the Karen. This fact alone indicates that these are the Karen's home lands —they belong here.

Further maps outlined very carefully the areas each family maintains for cyclical agriculture. Each family uses seven plots, using each of them only once in seven years, allowing them to remain fallow and be replenished over the six non-use years.



The brightly colored maps hung from lines strung between trees -- they bore witness to a reality much greater than a casual impression of the forests would reveal. They also were the product of an engaging educational process. In creating them Karen villagers had had to question themselves about the nature of their relations with the forest. Their children had looked on as their parents studied the maps and considered the placement of boundaries and the habitats of animal species and the history of the settlements. These were both educational tools and political documents. They showed the interwoven identities of Karen culture and these forested hills.

The Dialogues

The morning sun rose higher. My daughter Aura, who had joined the Solidarity Walks this year, motioned for me to look up the hill. A line of brightly-dressed Karen were filing down the path; now another group could be seen coming from below. People were arriving! By mid-morning there were several hundred people and more coming each minute. Dressed in brilliant reds, blues, yellows—unmarried women in white—upon arrival each would go to the temple to pay their respects. Old pick-up trucks and motorbikes loaded with Karen from villages beyond walking distance began to arrive. The encampment grew steadily throughout the day, and by the next morning the estimate from the kitchen was that they were feeding a thousand people! A wonderful feeling of excitement and gratitude pervaded the monastery grounds.

Of course much of this excitement was driven by the currently hot political situation regarding land security for the Karen. Many indigenous villages throughout Thailand are facing the threat of relocation to the lowlands due to redesignation of their lands as National Parks and forests, or for other "development" reasons. The Interfaith Solidarity Walks had become a rallying point for many Karen-- the presence of a large group of outsiders, Asians and Westerners, coming solidarity with their struggle for justice and respect, offered a renewed sense of power. Pau Luang Jorni, the Karen elder who is perhaps the most respected leader in the area, opened the Festival with these words "This is a very special day. This is a day many diverse people come here as friends. This is a day we Pagayaw can be understood by many people from afar, who will help others understand us..."

The daytimes of the Festival were organized around a series of panel "dialogues" concerning land security, government policies, the spiritual basis for a land ethic, and strategies for protecting the forest and cultural

continuity. The talks and discussions -- by Buddhist and Christian leaders, Karen headmen, NGO leaders, professors from Chiang Mai University -- were passionate and inspiring. I was impressed how attentive these crowds of people were, considering they were not used to the rigors of conferences. When the microphones were passed around for questions and comments the Karen women were eloquent. The dialogues were made particularly relevant by the presence of the director of the Forestry Department for Chiang Mai Province—here was a highly-placed representative from the government doing his best to listen to the pleas of the people. A young Karen woman spoke up, describing to him her fear of being arrested when collecting firewood or working in the fields. He assured her that she would not be arrested. It was a poignant moment, though I noticed that many Karen were suspicious of the official's words, since they had been misled in the past.

Achaan Sulak Sivaraksa gave a particularly inspiring talk in conclusion. He told the people, "You are not poor! You are not poor because you share so much! True affluence is having enough to be self-reliant and to share with others. Contentment is the most precious treasure. Be proud of who you are!"

The Declaration

In my work over the past decade teaching and writing about environmental leadership I have been especially inspired by the many-faceted efforts of people around the world to articulate statements of common values. Over the past sixty years, especially since the formulation of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, hundreds of powerful declarations have been created addressing the rights of children, women, indigenous, ethnic, and religious groups, and all of nature's myriad life forms.

Last year I suggested to a group of Karen leaders and villagers that they might consider creating a "land ethic declaration" that could accompany the maps and would help outsiders take them seriously and understand their values. Over the past year this effort took root and the first draft of their declaration was presented at the Festival. Tears came to my eyes as I listened to the beautiful Karen women reading the declaration out at the culmination of the Festival in Pgakenyaw (Karen), Thai, and English. Here are two passages from this stirring statement:

"...we pass on our petition with honesty and pure heart as follows:

We are native to the land here. This is our home. Our village, our community lives here. We accept the rights and responsibilities to live here now and in the future. We shall not be relocated or be driven out of our land for any reason....

On behalf of the Pgakenyaw forest community, we have a common agreement that we are citizens of Thailand. We shall love and be faithful to the nation, religion and the King. Therefore we deserve the rights, responsibility, freedom and justice as other Thai citizens throughout the Kingdom in general. We demand especially the rights and responsibility to natural resource management for our land and for our community residing in the watershed forest area in order to live in a sustainable way, thus benefiting us and the country and the global society as a whole."

While declarations like this are stirring, one may question if these statements are just words or if they really make a difference. I believe they do make a difference. The process of articulating the beliefs contained in these declarations is a critical step in their ultimate realization. As they seek to define our common norms, values, and ideals, and as we learn to appeal to them when they are ignored or defied, declarations like this will increasingly shape and guide our actions.

The Ordination

The Festival was not all serious business however—evenings were devoted to music, storytelling, traditional sword





dancing, and much socializing. Some of the music was nearly unbelievable to my ears, like early blues or the roots of jazz it evoked a happy, rhythmical confidence that got everyone rocking to it.

But a description of the Festival would not be complete without mention of its great culmination, the "Forest Ordination", as it was called. On the last morning everyone hiked up through the forest to attend this striking ceremony centered around a great grandmother of a tree rising up hundreds of feet into the forest canopy. The ceremony was a kind of combination "ordination" ceremony in which trees are ordained as "monks" to assert their sacred nature and to help protect them from harm, and a "life-extension" ceremony in which blessings are invoked for their continued life. The Karen added another beautiful, and strategic, element to the ceremony by using it to dedicate the surrounding 4,000 acres as "conserved forest" and then "giving" it in trust to the King. This was done to prayers from Karen and religious representatives including a Catholic priest, a Yaqui Indian, a Bahai, a Hindu, a Sufi, and about twenty Buddhist monks reciting an ancient Pali invocation, as well as the Karen women reciting the "Declaration of Pgakenyaw Forest Communities". The idea of giving this forest to the King was a brilliant touch by the Karen, since by accepting it the King and the government tacitly also accepts the implication that the land is theirs to give, which implies the rest of the land belongs to the Karen as well.

At the end of the ceremony the great assembly of brightly dressed people converged on a pile of cloth sashes the color of monks' robes, and went out into the forest tying the sashes on trees in every direction. It was a jubilant and awesome moment that no one present will likely forget. It felt like real "people power", a moment when spirit truly becomes action. It felt for a moment as if in fact all will be well, and the world will rise again in joy and thankfulness and the mysterious beauty of peace, as these lines from one of the prayers recited there attest:

"In the name of the light,
in the name of the roots
and leaves,
in the name of the mice
and gibbons,
we pray, may this forest be safe!
May the children of the
Pgakenyaw be safe!
May the generations be free!
May all beings be free!
May all beings be happy!"

Elias Amidon

Dialogue on Consumerism—China and the West

This past summer, three young people from significantly different backgrounds - having grown up in the People's Republic of China, the German Democratic Republic, and the United States of America, respectively - travelled throughout China to begin a project the aim of which is to initiate a constructive dialogue between Chinese and Westerners on the topic of consumerist lifestyles and the mode of development they accompany.

The idea for this project grew out of our awareness that there exists a large communication gap between many societies regarding lifestyles and priorities for development. On one hand, many people in Western societies are becoming increasingly dissatisfied with consumerist lifestyles and the exploitative (both in the human and the environmental sense) economic system upon which they are based.

Meanwhile, some societies in other parts of the world are on the brink of embracing fully this very way of living, this economic system, on the assumption that it is a desirable goal, the road to happiness, perhaps their only option; much of the information they receive about the West, in the form of advertising, Hollywood films and other corporate media, supports and creates this assumption.

Thus our aim is to facilitate more realistic and genuine communication between these societies. On one level, we want to allow those who have in a sense "scouted out" consumerist ways of life to relay to others what they have seen and experienced. Further, we want to initiate a dialogue in which people from different societies can negotiate whether a global culture of consumerism is really in our common interest, as well as how they could work together to create more rich - and less destructive - ways of life for themselves. In effect, we hope through our project to help people communicate so that they can make more conscious, informed decisions about how they - individually and collectively - wish to lead their lives.

We have chosen to focus for now on China because it stands at a critical time in its economic history, in which important decisions will be made about the direction of economic development, and because, given its size and numbers, the choices China makes will have significant impacts on the rest of the world.

This summer, given the resources and time available to us, we were able only to carry out background research into this project and to make some initial contacts. We are currently working on some articles that we hope to publish dealing with specific findings of the past summer, and our hope is to secure enough funding to be able to make a documentary film or radio program regarding China, from which we would hope to expand later into dealing with other societies, and through outlets other than just the media.

Should anyone reading this be interested in exchanging ideas, have suggestions or advice for us, or be interested in cooperating with us in any way, the members of our team, Jian Yi, Berit Junker, and Jason Subler, would be very appreciative.

Jason Sulber
(jasonsubler@hotmail.com)

People's Demands on the Incident of Radiation in Thailand

1. Besides prosecution against the private company for their mishandling of the radioactive waste, OAEP must acknowledge their mistake and be thoroughly investigated for the sake of their better precautionary and rescue measures to handle such a mishap in the future. At present, OAEP works as a sole organization to regulate the use of radioactive substances, but they neglected their duty and are apparently inefficient. The Thai government should establish another independent mechanism to ensure efficiency of OAEP's operation as their malfeasance can cause tragic accidents that harm a wider public as in the case of this radioactive exposure.
2. All existing patients and the potential ones must be looked after by the government in the short term as well as in the long term. The private company, which illegally appropriated the scrap radioactive irons, must be held responsible for the incurred medical expenses and the compensation as well
3. All places where radioactive materials are kept must be declared to the public. Educational campaigns must be launched to ensure that the public is informed of the dangers of the use of radioactive substances. It should be noted here that Thai authorities concerned with energy including EGAT (Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand) has cooperated with Western nuclear companies, especially the Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL) to launch campaign in different schools throughout Thailand to brainwash the students about the advantages of nuclear energy. We thus demand the Thai government and its authority to stop such a one-sided and bias educational campaign and start to provide comprehensive information for our youth.
4. The event however reflects the inability and the lack of preparedness of OAEP to prevent and mitigate the impacts from nuclear accident, and thus they should not be entrusted to conduct any large-scale nuclear project that might jeopardize the health of the public. In light of this, we demand the government, the Ministry of Sciences, Technology and Environment, and OAEP the scrap the construction of the Ongkarak research nuclear reactor in Nakhon Nayok province and abandoned their idea to use such a residential area as a nuclear storage.

Stop the Ongkarak Research Nuclear Center!

Resource from Press Statement on the Mishandling and Inefficiency of Thai Nuclear Authorities and the Nuclear Mishap by No Nuke Asia Forum

Lessons Unlearned:

PTT's Chronic Suffer as Gas Demand Slumps
Revision of Gas Deals Ordered Despite Early Warnings

The price of electricity has been rising dramatically as a result of the increased costs of fuels such as oil and natural gas. Since nearly half of our electricity is produced from natural gas, higher gas prices mean higher prices of consumers since increased utility costs have always been passed on to them. One of the main reasons for the extraordinarily expensive gas prices are the disadvantageous contracts the Thai government has signed with foreign petroleum companies. 80% of the gas purchased from foreign companies is burned for power production, so these contracts impact consumer prices significantly.

The Yadana gas project is an attempt to exploit natural gas from the Andaman Sea offshore Burma. Included in the project was the construction of a 500-kilometer pipeline to bring gas for a power plant in Western Thailand. Ongoing delays have put the project almost two years behind schedule with regards to power production. While the project produces nothing, Thai consumers are still paying for the gas that they are not using. The Thai government negotiated a "take or pay" contract, and while the Thai consumer gains nothing, they are still bearing the costs of the project through unnecessarily high utility prices. It is one of the many examples that show how mismanagement by the government and the signing of a poor contract put the country in a disadvantageous position over the long term that jeopardizes national interests.

The nature of the purchase contract with the Yadana consortium is based on the "take or pay" clause. This means that constant payments have to be made to sellers regardless of the amount of gas taken or the needs of buyers. Even though the Petroleum Authority of Thailand (PTT), the main energy procurer, has not been able to receive any gas from Burma up to the present, it still has to pay the amounts agreed upon in the contract in advance. It has been more than one and a half years since the delivery should have begun, and PTT has had to pay for gas that it has never obtained.

According to Mr. Prasert Bunsampun, president of PTT Gas, to date, PTT has paid as much as US$55 million to the Yadana consortium led by Total-Fina and the Unocal. The power plant to consume the gas still is not completed. This prompted PTT to ponder revising the contract after which, according to Mr. Prasert, we can save as much as US$990 in the next decade.

Though the economy may not fully recover in the short term, the "take or pay" condition requires an increasing purchase ceiling price based on estimates made during the years when there was a booming economy. Thus, despite the readjustment of projected demand for gas from four billion to merely 2.68 billion cubic feet per day in 2005 based on the economic forecast, PTT has to pay advances for nothing, and this is hurting its financial position. As a result of these advance payments and the recapitalization of several subsidiaries under the PTT that have been hit hard financially, the spending deficit of all state enterprises including PTT will increase from -1.6% to -2.2%

In other words, the late delivery of gas from Yadana has worsened the financial situation of all the state enterprises and has reduced their net profits. Thai consumers are bearing the brunt of this financial burden as people are paying higher prices for electricity. The Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) uses the Fuel Adjustment (FT) factor to calculate the price of electricity. If gas prices rise, the FT rises, and electricity prices do the same. Thus, the burden has been passed on to people, who should not take responsibility for the government's poor decision making.

The contract signed between the Thai government (PTT) and the Yadana consortium is a burdensome contract, which forces us to purchase gas at the fixed incremental rate for 30 years. This contract puts us in a difficult position in light of the ailing economy. It does not matter whether our demand for gas will decline or not. Based on the contract, we have to always purchase the gas, or to pay advances for gas that we do not use. Even though we have found other cheaper fuels, we cannot resort to them, as we have to abide by this long-term fixed contract. Signing the long-lerm contract also causes us to face financial risk due to foreign exchange fluctuations. Indeed, such fluctuations

have occurred and sent the exchange rate from 25 baht to one US dollar down to almost 40 baht per dollar over the last two years.

Recently, the Minister of Industry, Mr. Suwat Lippatapanlop, also elaborated on the extent of the financial harm to Thailand. Mr. Suwat said the Thai government has had to pay US$75 billion for gas that we are not able to utilize as a result of the poor contracts surrounding the Yadana and Yetagun fields (the other gas source from Burma) and seven other sources in the Gulf of Thailand. He therefore ordered the restructuring of all the contracts, an attempt that may be opposed by the various consortia.

It has already been proven that gas prices from the Yadana and the Yetagun fields are almost 50% more expensive than the price of domestic gas and those purchased from UNOCAL in the Gulf of Thailand. Indeed, the high price of the Yadana gas was known and reported as early as September 1994, when the Minister of the Prime Minister's Office, Mr. Sawit Potiwihok flew to Rangoon to sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) shortly before the sales contract was officially signed in February 1995.

The conservation groups, which have campaigned against the Yadana project, have suggested to the government that in light of the sudden economic crisis, they could put the project off for good without offending the conditions indicated in the contract. This recommendation was based on a final findings made by a legal committee appointed by the Prime Minister to review the purchase contract of the Yadana project. According to the findings of the legal committee, the Thai government, as the buyer, could cite the *force majeure* clause to delay the commencement of gas delivery without being fined. Details of the findings can be found in the report submitted by the legal committee on 12 January 1997 to the Prime Minister.

Thus, the conservation groups have proposed a number of times that the economic crisis could be cited as *force majeure* and by the "Act(s) of the Government", delay of the construction of the Yadana project could have been imposed. The proposition was totally rejected by PTT and the government however. They claimed that there could be no flexibility and that the country was badly in need of energy. Both claims have now proven specious. First, late in 1999, PTT successfully negotiated a reduction in the amount of the advance payment to the Yadana consortium. Secondly, the country is now overwhelmed with a glut of power supply. The reserve margin of electricity now stands at more than 50% of the actual need despite the fact that several generators have halved their production capacity.

Ironically, now, the Minister is bragging about his idea to restructure the contracts just as the conservation groups have been suggesting for some time.

The construction of the Yadana gas pipeline has greatly affected local villagers as well. Their properties have been damaged by the use of explosives, and the market value of their property has declined because no one wants to live near the gas pipeline, which may cause fatal accidents at any time as well as impact their plantation.

PTT has also not followed the recommendation of the Committee to Review the Yadana Conflict that was appointed by the Prime Minister. The Committer said that PTT should provide proper compensation to affected villagers immediately, but justice has not been done. PTT has ignored the locals, and to date, they have not received fair compensation even though they have been demanding it for a long time.

The Yadana project has also led to extensive logging and the looming extinction of endangered species including Asiatic elephants, the hog-nosed bats, and the smallest crabs in the world. The project also required the laying of hundreds of pipes (one meter in diameter) in the class A1 watershed area, the most pristine and most important forest classification in Thailand. To date, this damage has not been addressed.

The Yadana project also involved extensive and gross human rights abuses and the impediment of democracy in Burma. Two lawsuits are pending in the United States against UNOCAL, one of the companies in the Yadana consortium. The plaintiffs suffered human rights abuses, including forced labor, rape, torture, and looting as a result of the pipeline project and security measures used by the Burmese military to protect the companies' investment. The direct connection between the project and the human suffering in the region proves how inhumane the project has been.

It seems though that PTT barely cares about its mistakes and the impacts on national interest. Being the sole supplier of oil and gas, it can enjoy reaping off the profits by passing the burden to ordinary people.

Pipob Udomittipong
Kalayanamitra Council

Grassroots Leadership Training for the Assembly of the Poor

The Assembly of the Poor has a history of protests against injustices and externalities resulting from the government's developmental policy; for example, forced relocation without adequate compensation due to the construction of dams, industrial pollution, and dislocation and increasing indebtedness of small farmers who are being uprooted by giant agribusiness. The Assembly's leaders realized the importance of expanding their emphasis in order to sustain the movement; that is, not only demanding compensation from the government, but also initiating self-sustaining, environmentally sound activities that would ensure a decent and healthy quality of life. In so doing, the Assembly of the Poor had requested the Spirit in Education Movement to provide educational support that would help them create alternative socioeconomic systems and networks. This resulted in a series of training activities, starting with a five-week training programme for sixty national leaders in June/July 1999.

Interestingly and quite uniquely, the training programme took place at an ongoing protest settlement near the Pak Moon Dam where thousands of Assembly members from all over the country have long been gathering in protest on a rotational basis; the Assembly of the Poor has protested here for many years, previously in an unsuccessful attempt to stop the dam from being built and later to gain fair compensation for the loss of their livelihood. The government has reneged on the compensation for many relocated villagers, thus contributing to the present contention.

Another unusual feature of the training was its consultative approach to content design. The village leaders and the advisors of the Assembly of the Poor worked closely with the co-ordination team to identify activities that would strengthen the people's movement and build a sustainable and self-reliant community. The guiding concepts were "participant-centered learning" and "learning through experience". Core activities were in the areas of:

Socially engaged Buddhism
- Knowing oneself, co-workers and teamwork
- Leadership consciousness
- Buddhist practice as an alternative to consumerism

Peaceful struggles for new directions of social change
- Mass media studies
- Culture of challenging the state's power
- Domination of capitalism and development and the destruction of rural and urban communities
- Understanding the new constitution and laws that are helpful to people's movement

Formulating alternatives through sustainable community economics
- Social analysis from the perspectives of self, community, and social structures
- Credit union and income generation activities
- Local production for local consumption
- Local currencies
- Natural farming and alternative medicines
- Participatory management approaches for people's organisations.
- Bio-regional mapping

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Some of the highlights of the training programme were as follows:

Buddhism and Consumerism: Several socially engaged Buddhist monks came to Pak Moon and showed how to apply the Buddhist teachings to contemporary and personal issues. This was empowering as it was the first time that many of the Assembly members saw how the principles of their traditional religion could be related to their political struggle. Dhammic teachings also helped them see how consumerism is a destructive force that is dominating their lifestyles and is contradicting indigenous values. Many of the leaders joined a ceremony to reduce the need for luxury consumer goods, inspiring a spiritual and cultural confidence so crucial in confronting the issues of modernity. Some participants went on to ordain for the three-month period of Buddhist lent, helping them gain inner peace after long years of struggle.

Community Economics: Two lecturers from a local university with experience in grassroots education and NGOs gave an illuminating picture of how com-

munity businesses can have an ethic of fairness for both producers and consumers. The group came up with impressive criteria for community businesses that would help combat economic injustice and consumerism, including "appropriate, fairly priced, environmentally friendly, local production for local consumption that utilizes local resources and self-reliance within the family or village community."

Additionally, they created a slogan for the Assembly of the Poor to use for future enterprises: "UNITY, FAIRNESS, AND CONTRIBUTION TO COMMUNITY"

Mass Media Culture: A journalist from *The Nation* gave a riveting insight into how the mainstream mass media serve as a tool of consumerism and serve as the guardian of transnational corporations and the government rather than the proverbial watchdog of the people. He encouraged participants to train representatives to deal with the press as well as set up their own alternative media to strengthen the People's Movement. Some activities that came out of this workshop were the forming of a PR group and an event called Boon Berg Baan to spread the word of the Assembly's local activities.

Useful Laws for the People's Movement: This workshop gave the participants some understanding of their rights under the new Constitution and their rights of access to public information.

Natural Farming: In this session the participants, largely from small farming backgrounds, learned about organic and natural farming. They visited a nearby farm that recycles garbage to make compost and uses a microbe liquid fertiliser. They worked hard to create a demonstration plot on natural farming in the villages, planting seeds and trying out the microbe methods. The resource person will return at a later date to further this experiment.

Alumni projects and other outcomes

The following initiatives have all been implemented in the protest settlement, making a huge improvement in the quality of life there.

1) A group was formed to operate a traditional healthcare centre that offers herbal sauna, traditional massage and medicinal herbs to members of the settlement.
2) Several community businesses emerged using the self-reliant concept. Producing for their own consumption, only the surplus is sold, thus meeting the needs of the members and reducing the amount of money flowing out from the community. Income generation enterprises there include the production of natural shampoos and dish-washing liquids; herbal teas and medicines; natural vegetables; microbe fertilisers; soya milk and vegetarian food.
3) A youth environmental group was established
4) A pre-school centre that is run by volunteer teachers was built.
5) Fifteen men and two boys entered the monkhood for the Buddhist lent and a shelter for monks was set up in the protest settlement.

Obstacles, Challenges and Future plans

Although the applicants are all SEM alumni there is quite a gap between the levels of knowledge of the participants, making the learning process a little haphazard. A big challenge is that many of the Assembly of the Poor leaders are used to hierarchical rather than participatory management. Whilst a strong foundation for a participatory approach has been laid it will take time and many more activities for a democratic ethos to really infiltrate into and take hold of the organisation.

The plan for the year 2000 is to concentrate on applying this knowledge and to take it to other groups in the Assembly of the Poor network. Also on the agenda is to further the diverse range of income generation and community activities to attain even greater self-reliance in rural communities.

These workshops were supported by Alternatives to Consumerism and CCFD.

Jane Rasbash



Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa's next court hearing on the Yadana Gas pipeline will be on June 7 and 13 and July 4, 2000

Ariya-Vinaya: Spiritual Discipline Versus Structural Violence

A small scale encounter involving key activist Buddhist monks and nuns, lay persons and representatives of world religions will take place in July 2000 in Siam. A consultation between His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama and Sulak Sivaraksa evoked an appeal to re-think Ariya-Vinaya or "spiritual discipline". A long term co-operative programme is hoped to emerge from the international activists' gathering.

One common element, shared among the diversity of streams in Buddhism, is the concept of the "Triple Gem" or the "Three Jewels": Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. These three forces represent: 1. the omnipresence and free availability of *Buddha-nature*; 2. the teachings and the laws to be observed; and 3. the community of monks and nuns co-operating in symbioses with laity.

In the course of world history and according to local, regional and national characteristics, Buddhism has developed as an ever-changing pattern and great complexity of streams, schools, sects and movements. In the absence of a central authority it is even arbitrary to speak of one "Buddhism". In accordance with the principles of impermanence and inter-dependence, Buddhisms' tradition demonstrates a vital capacity to transform and to change the world.

The transformation processes in which Buddhist practices play a role can not fully be understood along the lines of materialistic cause-and-effect logic. Recent reviews of Buddhist history reveal interesting and different opinions on how the capacity to induce social change can be appraised; and how it actually works.

While crossing the threshold towards the third millennium, Buddhism is now facing unprecedented social and cultural challenges. If we say that a "third millennium" is of little significance from the Buddhist perspective, we may refer to the turning point represented by the year 2500 B.E. or *1957* in the western era. This "Turning Point", halfway the present 5000 years cycle, may imply a shift from tradition-induced inspiration by the example of the historic Shakyamuni Buddha towards future-orientation; and a process of co-creation or inter-dependent origination towards the realization of a new *time spirit*, the Maitreya Buddha. The Turning Point coincides more or less with the Tibetan uprising. Within this perspective Thich Naht Hanh coined the term *Engaged Buddhism.*

"Engaged Buddhism" or "Buddhist Peacework" is a concerted effort to meet today's world social problems. The actual core challenge can be summarized as: how to liberate from "structural violence", rather than from distinct political superpowers only. The processes of modernization and globalization resulted in one, multiple-faced, overwhelming and hard to grasp system producing inequality and poverty, oppression and environmental devastation. The gathering in Buddhamonthon near Bangkok, 15-25th July 2543/2000 is meant to strengthen the "Engaged Buddhism" movement. In order to facilitate new inspiration, Sulak Sivaraksa consulted His Holiness the Dalai Lama, one of the patrons of INEB. They both agreed that the vocation of monks and nuns in the world of today is extremely difficult and extremely essential in the same time. Nuns and monks are the heralds of alternative approaches to the materialistic worldview. But the monastics have to perform their tasks in the context of traditional rules and regulations, cultural patterns, which often do not comply with the pressure of modern challenges.

An important element of Dhamma, the second Jewel, is the Vinaya: the *code of conduct* for monks and nuns as well as for lay people. With the Ariya-Vinaya Project, we intend to transcend the historic particularities of monastic traditions and explore the essential principles of Vinaya or: Ariya-Vinaya "the Noble Discipline"

Some of the core issues to be addressed in the (first) Ariya-Vinaya gathering are:

1. How to understand and live the 5 precepts for lay people - to abstain from killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct and intoxicants -; the 10 precepts for monks and nuns, including celibacy, and detailed monastic **codes of conduct**; how to understand and live the Buddhist precepts in the modern context of institutional killing, lying, stealing etc? Does conventional understanding of the precepts comply with contemporary interpretations



With His Holiness the Dalai Lama at Dharamsala, India, September, 1999

e.g. the 14 precepts formulated by Thich Naht Hanh? What is the impact of declarations on "Universal Responsibility" (H.H. the Dalai Lama), "World Ethics" (Hans Kueng), the "Earth Charter" (Earth Council), "Manifesto 2000" (UNESCO) and, above all, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

2. How do monastic organizations relate to nation-states; and to the "NGO community" or "civil society"? Is government control over religious organizations acceptable? How to handle violation by nation-states of the **Freedom of Religion or Belief**, one of the Human Rights? What to do when in the name of religion or belief Human Rights are overthrown? Should world religions be monitored by watchdogs in the same way as multi-national corporations are increasingly screened by NGO's according to their Human Rights' records? What can the role of Buddhist activists be in peaceful settlement of conflicts and **how to reverse Human Rights' violations?**

3. How to realize **gender equality** within the Sangha? Recent articles of Ouyporn Khuankaew illustrate how Buddhist practice in many cases can be characterized by male dominance and what a tremendous impact this has on the integrity of individuals, families and Buddhism itself.

4. Is there **a Buddhist alternative for mainstream education?** If spiritual discipline is important, how are monastics and lay people trained to practice in today's social and cultural reality? As Engaged Buddhism seams to move from a marginal position to becoming a growing concern for major Buddhist streams, how can we transcend ethnic and traditional divisions and shape multi-denominational *education and research* for Engaged Buddhism and Peacework?

5. **Economy and Development** is an essential area of engagement. However it is very hard to have any impact at all on economic reality without strong cross-cultural organizations and the establishment of feasible alternatives. This may also be the area in which to consider closer co-operation between Buddhist Peacework organizations, and increased networking between Buddhist development and relief agencies.

6. A creative approach towards **communication and the arts** in order to exchange and multiply experiences in Engaged Buddhism and Peacework, in an appropriate but effective way: this is another essential area of engagement to be reviewed.

At this stage it is impossible to predict which areas will be dealt with in more depth. The Ariya-Vinaya gathering, probably the first in a series to come, is meant to be a participatory and self-organizing process. More articulate impulses for "Sangha reform" may emerge; or new initiatives in education and research may arise. The focus is on reviewing and strengthening Engaged Buddhism and Buddhist Peacework by re-thinking Ariya-Vinaya.

Whether a turning point in Buddhist history—implying an orientation from the past towards the future- can be perceived is questionable. Cultivation of the here and now and direct access to "Buddha-nature" (the first Jewel) may provide genuine sources of inspiration for renewed and strengthened co-operation between Buddhist groups and pioneers for social engagement, while respecting and celebrating diversity.

Hans van Willenswaard
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Spirit in Education Movement's Workshop

All Beings Workshop

Section 1: **The Practice of Deep Ecology**
16-18 June 2000, Wongsanit Ashram (Nakhornnayok province, central Thailand)
Section 2: **Lecture - Deep Ecology: Understanding and Witnessing Inter-being**
3 July 2000, Thammasart University (Bangkok, Thailand)

The workshop will be based on experiential learning. Participants will act as intermediaries learning, expressing, representing, and feeling the inter-being of all existents. They will learn and attempt to 'listen' with an open heart; that is, in the absence of prejudices, beliefs, assumptions, fears, etc. This incubation process will help to germinate internal peace, love, compassion, and understanding.

Each participant will role-play as an object/existent in nature/the world of his or her choice, and will essay to represent its feelings, fears, and hopes (e.g., how it is being treated in the present, how does its future look like, etc). Participants will learn to think holistically (e.g., as prescribed by Buddhist and Christian teachings.) This method has been used successfully in settling many environmental issues; for example, a council of inter-being that acts as defendants or spokespersons for nature is set up.

Resource persons;

Mr. John Seeds is a renowned Australian activist and environmental conservationist. He is very experienced in the realm of deep ecology. For more than 10 years, he has been promoting and experimenting with the 'council of inter-being' techniques.

Being a very colorful lecturer, Mr. Seeds is excellent at stimulating and engaging the audience. Mr. Seeds is also a major gatherer of funds for non-governmental organizations and activists involved in environmental conservation.





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A Right of Royal Dilemma

Spare a thought for Thailand's poor film censors. Today they must decide whether or not to ban a run-of-the-mill Hollywood film called *Anna and the King*. Either way they are damned. Banning the film will be a blow to the nation's hard-fought-for democracy. Allowing it to run could have serious repercussions for the highly-revered institution of monarchy in Thailand.

Set in 19th century Siam, *Anna and the King* is a sumptuous epic about an unrealised romance between King Mongkut of Thailand (played by Chow Yun-Fat) and his children's English governess, Anna Leonowens (Jodie Foster). Fox movies insist the film is based on a true story and that millions of dollars were spent to make it historically accurate. The Thai authorities not only disagree, but also claim the films make a mockery of monarchy—and this in a country where lese-majesty is a crime punishable by up to thirteen years in prison.

History shows Anna Leonowens was more a social-climbing writer of Victorian pot-boilers than a prim and principled English governess. Accuracy was never her strong point. She claimed to be from solid middle-class stock: her father an army captain, her mother from an old Welsh family. In fact, her father was a cabinet-maker from Middlesex and her mother was a Eurasian of uncertain origin. Leonowens claimed her husband was an army major who died after a tiger hunt in Malaya. He was actually an office clerk who died of apoplexy.

Leonowens' writing has proved as dubious as her background [borrowing] shamelessly



from both contemporary travel writers and her own furtive imagination.... She once even apologised to the Thai ambassador in London for her sensationalist style, confessing that she was only responding to the demands of her publisher.

Similarly, Fox Movies has played fast and loose with the historical facts. For example, Leonowens did not repel an entire army with a case of fireworks and bugle, as she does in the movie's climatic scene. Neither was she responsible for the abolition of slavery in Thailand as a statement before the closing credits claims. "Just imagine if someone wrote a story about President Lincoln saying that actually he learnt about abolitionism from a Thai lady. What would the Americans think," says Dr. Chalermsri Chantasingh, a Thai academic who recently completed a PhD thesis on the Anna Leonowens myth.

The concern here is that Hollywood is rewriting history and that ill-informed Thai audience will believe it. Of course, Hollywood has never been lauded for its historical accuracy. Nor have the Thai audiences complained of other historical misrepresentations on film—for example, *Titanic*. As indignant letters in the newspapers attest, the fact is some Thais resent Hollywood meddling with their monarch.

[Nevertheless] Thais do gossip about their royals, but only behind closed doors, and only with people whom they trust. In such a climate, representations of the king which are anything other than reverential are impossible.

But not everyone feels that *Anna and the King* insults the monarchy. "I'm a member of the royal family," says Thai filmmaker Prince Chatrichalerm Yugala, "and I don't find it offensive." [The prince] told a local newspaper that he had talked to the current king and queen, and that they were not bothered by the film.

Out-spoken social critic Sulak Sivaraksa would like to see a culture that can publicly discuss the role of its monarchy. "I want to restore the old culture of criticising the king," says Sulak, who has twice been charged, and acquitted, of lese-majesty. "We don't believe in divinity of the King. We are not Hindus. King Mongkut himself said that if the king is no good the people will chuck him out."

For Sulak, banning *Anna and the King* would be a backward step for democracy in Thailand. "The Thais have become very silly and very reactionary, despite the fact that we have a new constitution which guarantees freedom. There's nothing wrong with making fun of the

king." The Thai censorship board [obviously] does not agree with him.

The debate over *Anna and the King* provides a popular forum for the discussion of some important questions which have no other way of being asked. One of those is the question of representation. While the Thai state seeks to portray its kings as infallible and untouchable, *Anna and the King* presents in Mongkut a more human figure. "If it got shown it would be a huge change in the way Thailand depicts itself," says David Streckfuss, an expert on the Thai law of lesemajesty. "It would allow for a diversity of representation which it has never given before, especially with regards to the monarchy."

In *Anna and the King*, Mongkut is shown, not as an enlightened leader who saves his country from colonialism, but as a semi-savage who only survives because of Leonowens' Western wisdom. Critics have objected that the film patronises Thais as undeveloped and child-like. The irony is that the censorship board is doing the same with Thais telling what they can and cannot see.

Sarah Rooney

Obituary

Victor Anant

Noted journalist and novelist Victor Anant died in London on 17th January 2000. Mr. Anant was the author of the internationally acclaimed novels, *The Revolving Man* and *Sacred Cow*, and had been distinguished columnist of the *Guardian* newspaper. He was well known in art circles of Pakistan—an outstanding writer and art reviewer.

Born in Kerala, India, Victor Anant began his career in Bombay in the fifties as a precocious young reporter. He soon made a name for himself in journalistic circles. Soon after he moved to England, and wrote and published his first novel, *The Revolving Man*. Anant served as a jazz critic for the *Guardian*, and regularly contributed to other British newspapers. He was part of vibrant intellectual scene of London at that time and had as his especially close friend, critic and novelist John Berger. Over the years he cooperated with Mr. Berger on several cooperative projects.

Anant served in various capacities all over the world. He was most recently employed by the United Nations in New York. He kept on contributing poems and articles to noted journals of the UK and USA. After his retirement he devoted all his time to writing and other creative projects. His most recent work of fiction, *The Sacred Cow*, was published by Penguin, India.

In the sixties, Anant and his wife, Zuleikha were stationed in Southeast Asia. Sent by the International Press Institute, he first came to Bangkok to train Thai journalists to be aware of their ethical code in the country which was ruled by dictatorship. He helped pave the way for freedom of the press. Both he and his wife made friends particularly with the young in the circle of the *Social Science Review,* some of whom became prominent intellectuals.

After Siam, he became the first director of the Press Institute of Southeast Asia, with its headquarters in Kuala Lumpur. Here he held many seminars and workshops, thus helped many budding professionals—not only in journalism, but also in other branches of the mass media.

With a brief interlude in Singapore and Africa, the Anants went to Hong Kong, helped editing the *Asian* daily with Tazi Vittachi. Unfortunately the quality newspaper did not last long.

He was most enigmatic—a strange mass of contradictions at one and the same time calm and volatile; wise and foolish, shrewd and gullible; kind and wicked and clever but he struggled greatly to harness his creative energies successfully. He often had difficulties with his friends and his family, yet he and his wife managed to survive together for almost forty years.

Perhaps my wife and I were the closest Siamese friends of the Anants. In my exile in 1976-77, we spent many weeks with them in London. We meant to visit them in Spain and Karachi but regrettably failed to do so.

Although Anant declared himself a Marxist and an atheist, he is very much moved by the compassion of the Buddha. In fact he is really a spiritual person, with deep loyalty of friendship, to truth, beauty and goodness. He cannot stand mediocrity or hypocrisy, otherwise he would have lasted much longer with the UN, which he held a high position in Africa. And if he had cared to the demands of popular press, he would have so many books to his credit. Yet he left for his friends to remember him as someone rare and very unique, someone beyond the Pulitzer Prize or the Nobel Prize. Although Anant had many weaknesses but was a truly warm human being, with deep commitment to humanity, especially for the poor and the oppressed.

Sulak Sivalaksa

Schedule of Centennial Anniversary of Pridi Banomyong:

Year 1999

24 June	1st Public lecture on "Political Changes Leading to the 1932 Revolution" by Dr. Suthachai Yimprasert at Thammasat University
24-27 June	"The 1932 Revolution ...Towards the Centenary of Pridi Banomyong" at Thammasat University
July	*The 1932 Revolutionist* performed in Paris, the Hague and Stokholm .
26-27 November	Exhibition on biographies and works of Pridi Banomyong, Tokyo, Japan
25 December	2nd Public lecture on "Human Rights and Democracy" by Dr.Sriprapha Petchmeesri at Thammasat University

Year 2000

14-28 January	Art Exhibition on the Occasion of the Centennial Anniversary of Pridi Banomyong at National Art Gallery
26 January	3rd Public lecture on "Nai Thong-in Phuripat's Roles" by Ajarn Piriya Mahakitikhun at Ubonrachathani University
16 February	4th "Looking at Thai Society Through Pridi Banomyong's Life" by Prof.Charan Dithapichai
18-20 February	Temple festival: "From Temple & City Grounds... Towards the Centenary of Pridi Banomyong" at Thong Nopphakhun Temple
March	Exhibition on life and work of Pridi Banomyong, New Delhi, India
March	"*The 1932 Revolutionist*", drama performance in USA
7 April	5th Public Lecture: "Development of Capitalism in Thailand" at Thammasat University
April	Exhibition on life and work of Pridi Banomyong, Bangalore, India.
May	Publishing the Commemorative Book on the Occasion of the Centennial Anniversary of Pridi Banomyong
5-8 May	International Symposium on "Social Justice, Democracy & Alternative Politics: an Asian-European Dialogue" at Ayudhaya.
9 May	The Commemoration Concert of Pridi Banomyong "Pridi Geetanusorn" composed by Somtao Sucharitkul, performed by Bangkok Symphony at Thailand Cultural Center
10 May	Speech by President Abdulrahman Wahid, Indonesia at Thammasat University
11 May	Official Ceremony in Praise of the Centennial Anniversary of Senior Statesman: Pridi Banomyong at House of Parliament
12-14 May	"Sri-Ayudhaya Noble Man Festival" at Thammasat University
24-27 June	Workshops on "The 1932 Revolution Towards the Centenary of Pridi Banomyong" at Thammasat University
September	Children's Art Contest: "Pridi Banomyong"
December	World Sacred Music Festival at Chiangmai.

The 1932 Revolutionist was a Huge Success in the USA!

The Crescent Moon Theatre performed the play *The 1932 Revolutionist* in Los Angeles on 19 March. The audience was very receptive. Deeply touched by the play, many even shed tears. Most of them expressed the desire to see the play again. The Crescent Moon Theatre is touring Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, and New York on the Occassion of the centennial anniversary of Pridi Banomyong until early April.

PRIDI ris-a-vis UNESCO & USA

Mr. Pridi Banomyong's centenary will be on 11 May 2000. Last year, on the 30th of October UNESCO, reflecting the unanimous decision of its General Assembly, announced in Paris that Mr. Pridi is one of the great personalities of the century. The mainstream magazine *Asiaweek* also listed him as one of the most influential Asian personalities of the 20th century—alongside Mahatma Gandhi, Sun Yat Sen, etc. Unfortunately, and particularly for the Thai people, Mr. Pridi is a posthumous figure: He was almost completely rejected and denounced by all sides when he was alive. It is only now, after he had passed away, that the people are beginning to appreciate his ideals and breadth of vision.

Mr. Pridi was the father of Thai democracy and the quintessential intellectual of the masses. Educated in Paris, he was one of the very first, handful of Thai intellectuals that employed their expertise and knowledge to represent and serve the common man, especially the poor, weak, downtrodden, subaltern, and marginalized. This was a hitherto unknown and almost unthinkable practice. Before, the intellectual's sole responsibility was to serve the royal house and the state; in other words, to legitimize the unjust and oppressive elitist system. And they were amply rewarded, financially and socially. Mr. Pridi shunned this, although he could have easily been an excellent 'legitimizing expert'-with all the privileges that it entailed. He did not simply follow the road less traveled: he trail-blazed a completely new one. This was the road of democracy, envisaged by Mr. Pridi and a number of his compatriots while studying or working in Paris. They became the nucleus of the so-called People's Party (also known as the Promoters).

At dawn on 24 June 1932, the People's Party, consisting of government officials, military officers, and ordinary civilians rapidly and bloodlessly took over the government, transforming it from an absolute monarchy to a democratic, constitutional one. Mr. Pridi, who was the civilian leader of the People's Party, was the progenitor of the new provisional constitution, which was installed as the supreme law of the land that same year. The provisional constitution explicitly declared that supreme power rests with the people and made a clear separation of legislative, executive, and judicial powers. Needless to say, the absolute monarch previously usurped all these powers.

Between 1933 and 1947 Mr. Pridi held numerous important official positions (e.g. Minister of Interior, Minister of Foreign Affaires, Minister of Finance, Regent, and Prime Minister), and he made good use of his power to catalyze democratic reforms in the country. Of course, he was not always successful, as many vested interests proved insurmountable. This is not really the place to go over all of his numerous achievements. However, let me highlight some of the important ones in the realm of promoting political and socioeconomic democracy in Siam. He drafted the 1933 Municipal Act, which allowed the people to elect their own local governments; founded the University of Moral and Political Sciences in 1934, making higher education more accessible to ordinary people; successfully revoked the unequal treaties Siam had been compelled to sign with foreign powers; reformed the country's unfair tax system; and largely contributed to the 1945 constitution, which guaranteed universal suffrage and recognized and upheld human rights in various articles.

Internationally, to cite just a few examples, he opposed fascism and led the Free Thai Movement against the Japanese occupation of Siam during the Second World War. He tried his best to restrain the Thai militarists from going to war with France over Indochina during the Franco-Thai border disputes. And he supported de-colonization and self-determination for all people, particularly for the Indochinese peoples.

In my view, Mr. Pridi's credentials as a democrat and man of peace are indisputable. But his vision of a just, compassionate, and peaceful society was perhaps well ahead of his times. First, the royalists and the militarists accused him of being a communist for his emphasis on socioeconomic democracy or equality; he was not satisfied with merely formal political democracy. Then when the communist stigma failed to stick, he was implicated in the regicide of King Rama VIII-an incredible charge, to say the least. He suffered lifelong exile for his democratic ideals, for trying to speak the truth to power and represent the poor.

But that was then, and this is now? Have all sides involved mended fences? Far from it! Mr. Pridi is still a controversial and highly misunderstood figure,

nationally and internationally. Let me raise two examples: one concerning the UNESCO recognition of Mr. Pridiû s achievements and the other relating to the government of the United States of America.

Some factions in the Thai reactionary group had secretly maneuvered to remove Mr. Pridi's name from UNESCO's evaluation process, arguing that H. R. H. Princess Sangwan Mahidol, the King's mother, should be the only Thai honored by the organization this year. (It should be noted that when they were alive both individuals were also not on the best terms.) And for a brief, dark period it seemed that they were successful. Fortunately, Mr. Wichien Watanakun, a former Thai ambassador to France, patiently explained to UNESCO's executive board on 11 October 1999 in the following light.

"...Pridi Banomyong [is] an able and far-sighted educator. In Bangkok in 1934 he founded the University of Moral and Political Sciences as an Open University, providing higher education to the large part of the population...and consequently became its first rector. The university later changed is name to Thammasat University and has been a leading institution in helping to promote and protect democracy, social justice, and human rights in Thailand.... [The university] has become one of the two most prestigious universities in the country."

"...[A]s a humanist, Pridi Banomyong advocated peace and non-violence. At the same time, he did not succumb to external power. He led the national resistance and rallied the nation to oppose invasion and occupation during World War II. That is why he is respected internationally and was the first Thai to be honored by the Smithsonian Institution..:. [The Smithsonian Institution named a species of bird founded in Siam in 1945 after him as a symbol of peace.] The combination of Pridi's relentless efforts to strive for social justice and to establish a meaningful democracy in Thailand was reflected in the constitution that he was the architect. Universal suffrage... was thereby guaranteed as well as human rights was firmly recognized and upheld."

"...Mr. Pridi Banomyong was [also] a man whose ideals were well taken and appreciated throughout the region. He... supported self-determination and independence for all peoples. He even contemplated creating a Southeast Asian League.... But a military coup forced Pridi into exile in 1947. His vision of a league of Southeast Asian nations lives on [in the form of ASEAN]."

It seemed that Mr. Wichien's presentation helped sway UNESCO's opinion on Mr. Pridi. UNESCO ultimately cut the Gordian knot by recognizing both H. R. H. Princess Sangwan Mahidol and Mr. Pridi Banomyong in its anniversaries of great personalities and historic events calendar.

Now let me elaborate on the second example. When the young King Rama VIII was still a student in Switzerland, Mr. Pridi acted as his Regent. It was in this capacity that he led the Free Thai Movement against the Japanese occupation, closely collaborating with the Allies. The Allied nations greatly appreciated his contribution, and after the war US President Harry S Truman decorated him with the medal of friendship. Furthermore, the American president agreed with Mr. Pridi to raise the status of the Thai and American legations to embassies.

Mr. Edwin Stanton was the first US Ambassador to Bangkok; hitherto there had only been US ministers. Mrs. Josephine Stanton saw an empty plot of land on Wireless Road belonging to the Thai Foreign Ministry. She asked Mr. Pridi to have it rented cheaply to the US government in order to establish the ambassador's residence. Mr. Pridi consented and facilitated the transaction. Today this plot of land still houses the US ambassador's residence.

What I am trying to portray is straightforward: Mr. Pridi was one of the closest Thai friends of the United States during and after the war. But this apparent friendship cannot be taken for granted: American sincerity cannot be assumed, judging from the denouement of subsequent events.

To better understand the downfall of Mr. Pridi, let me introduce another Thai character in this sketchy historical narrative. During the Second World War, Field Marshal Pibulsongkram, the country's dictator, sided with the Japanese and declared war on the Allies. Interestingly, the Field Marshal was also one of the 1932 revolutionaries. The Allied powers perceived him as a war criminal, worthy of standing before the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal. The Pridi government-Mr. Pridi served briefly as premier between 1946 and 1947-refused to extradite the Field Marshal, and the latter was subsequently tried in Bangkok and was acquitted. However in 1947, a military coup toppled the Pridi government, restoring Field Marshal

Pibulsongkram back to power. The coup also destroyed all democratic elements within the Kingdom. Mr. Pridi soon launched an unsuccessful counter-coup, and was forced into lifelong exile. And what was the American reaction? What did the then most powerful and wealthiest country in the world do? How did the self-designated protector of the 'Free World' react? At first Washington was passive, and then she welcomed the military coup in Bangkok.

It was because of the brewing cold war. The Americans feared the expansion of communism into Southeast Asia, and hence they favored the iron-fist stability imposed by pro-American dictatorships, the argument goes. But fear-like ignorance and carelessness-is a socially neutral term. Perhaps, if we try to transcend this facile and simplistic explanation, we will gain a better understanding of the American position. In other words, we also have to consider the American imperial, as opposed to territorial, ambition.

The imperial creed rests on law making; that is, prescribing the boundary of expressible actions. Early on, Field Marshal Pibulsongkram threw the country into the US orbit; apparently, he sought American military aid to entrench his power and position. He was a first-rate opportunist. The Field Marshal justified his action by citing the communist threat, although sensible diplomats and bureaucrats in, for example, the foreign ministry-themselves landowning elites who had a lot to loose if Siam turned communist-saw no immediate reason to put all the eggs in the American basket. To prove his anticommunist credentials, the Field Marshal maneuvered the country to recognize the Bao Dai government of South Vietnam, which was in essence an American creation. Siam was the first Asian country to recognize Bao Dai-that is, even before the Philippines, the quintessential US client state. Of course, North Vietnam did not receive the news with open arms, and tension and hostility between Bangkok and Hanoi quickly mounted.

From available historical evidence, it seemed that Field Marshal Pibulsongkram and his clique perceived the recognition issue to be tied to the flow of US military aid. After all, every foreign policy benefits a particular sector or group of individuals. In this case, the militarists and forces of autocracy gained, while the neutralists and democratic elements lost. Aside from speeding the advent of the Cold War in Siam and polarizing Thai society, the entrenchment of the power and position of the military was both the most immediate and long term effect of this policy-with all the negative implications to the flourishing of democracy in the kingdom. In short, Field Marshal Pibulsongkram started a new era of American domination in Siam, a historical period that has been superbly captured by Daniel Fineman in his book *A Special Relationship: The United States and Military Government in Thailand, 1947-1958.*

Mr. Pridi, on the other hand, favored a non-aligned and flexible foreign policy. He envisioned an independent and neutral Southeast Asia. As such, unequivocal alignment with the United States was unthinkable. Even newly independent Indonesia, which the US then perceived as the most important country in Southeast Asia, pursued a foreign policy of non-alignment. Needless to say, Mr. Pridi's policy was antithetical to the US imperial conception. Among other important reasons, an independent Southeast Asia would not be beneficial for the reconstruction of Western Europe and Japan, the two engines of the international capitalist economy: the region was seen as a dependent source of raw materials and markets. Had he stayed on in power he might pose a major threat, Washington probably concluded. So it did not really matter if the Pridi government was toppled. Pridi was a potential rotten apple in the barrel, a potential threat of a good example. If a weak state like Siam could remain quite democratic and prosperous while upholding a policy of independent nationalism (i.e., self-determination), other small and weak countries might follow suit. Yes, autonomous nationalism was as frightening to the US as communism. The Cold War also meant warring against the autonomy of the Third World. As a footnote, in the late 1950s the Field Marshal began experimenting with autonomous nationalism and a more flexible foreign policy-e.g., he tried to reach a rapprochement with China. A military coup toppled him, possibly with Washington's consent or tacit support.

It should be noted that the evolution of ASEAN was not really a reaction to the communist threat. ASEAN emerged and developed against the backdrop of the devastating American war in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos; of a hostile and unstable Indochina, resulting from the American war; and of the Sino-American rapprochement, which invited Beijing to assume a major role in Southeast Asia. As the

historian Robert McMahon put it, "ASEAN is best understood as an effort by Southeast Asians to forge a regional order on their own terms-free from the external dictation of the US or any other great powers. Because the United States served for the ASEAN states as a negative reference point, it probably can, in a curious way, claim some credit for the association's emergence" (The Limits of Empire: the United States and Southeast Asia since World War II). In sum, Mr. Pridi's concept of a neutral and independent Southeast Asia thus proved all the more visionary.

Continuing with the story, by 1949 Mr. Pridi was already in exile. In May 1949, while residing in China—then Mao Zedong had yet to establish the People's Republic of China—Mr. Pridi wrote:

"We [meaning his wife and him] thought of going to Mexico with a stop by San Francisco. While we were presenting our passports to the Chinese official in charge of immigration, a young American called Norman Hannah, vice-consul of Shanghai, arrived in a rush, wrenched my passport from the hands of the Chinese official, and cancelled the American visa given to me by the American embassy in London. I then realized that a young American vice-consul had full authority over a Chinese official, and even over the American ambassador (later I learned that this vice-consul was a CIA agent). Besides that, I understood that the medal and citations bestowed on me by the American government were of no value, but in fact I was considered as a criminal on the accusation of their enemies during the war (Pibul), in refusing me a transit stay of a few hours on American territory."

And what did Field Marshal Pibulsongkram and his cronies accused Mr. Pridi of, which the Americans so gullibly accepted? Masterminding the murder of the young King Ananda or Rama VIII. The Americans and the Thai military dictatorship were well served by this pretext: The removal of the democratic Mr. Pridi would not be too questionable, and the rule of the Field Marshal would be legitimized. As Mr. Pridi was turned into a communist traitor involved in the regicide, Field Marshal Pibulsongkram was transformed into a protector of democracy. It was a sick joke, but Washington and their Thai military friends were more than willing to indulge in it.

What I have just related so far is in fact alien to most members of the US embassy in Bangkok. When I met some of them I tried to explain that Thai governments between 1947 and 1982, the year Mr. Pridi died, were all hostile to him on the ungrounded pretext that he was responsible for the mysterious death of King Rama VIII. Let us explore two important historical documents that would help prove Mr. Pridi's innocence. The first is a memorandum dated 15 June 1946 by American Charge d' Affaires, Charles W. Yost, to the US Department of State. Yost argued that Mr. Pridi's political opponents were exploiting the death of the king to undermine him and to bolster their own political fortunes. He wrote: "The Department may also be interested to know that within forty-eight hours after the death of the late King two relatives of Seni Pramoj, first his nephew and later his wife, came to the Legation and stated categorically their conviction that the King had been assassinated at the instigation of the Prime Minister. It was of course clear that they had been sent by Seni. I felt it necessary to state to both of them in the strongest terms, in order to make it perfectly clear that this Legation could not be drawn into Siamese political intrigues, and that I...considered the circulation at this time of fantastic rumors unsupported by a shred of evidence to be wholly inexcusable."

The second document concerns a meeting in mid-1948 between Field Marshal Pibulsongkram, then the Thai premier, and US Ambassador Edwin Stanton. The American ambassador wanted to know the Field Marshal's view on the impending trial of those suspected of being involved in the regicide affair. Stanton asked Field Marshal Pibulsongkram "whether he thought the court would be able to resolve the mystery of the King's death," and the Field Marshal replied that he was really doubtful. The Thai dictator then voluntarily said that he "personally doubted whether Nai Pridi was directly involved for two reasons: firstly...Pridi is a very clever politician, and secondly...he has a 'kind heart'." Thus the Field Marshal continued, he çdid think [Pridi] would cause anybody to be murdered." This conviction did not last long, and by the following year, for want of scapegoats and for lust of power, Mr. Pridi again became public enemy number one.

Moreover, according to a recent book, *The Revolutionary King: the True Life Sequel of the King and I*, by William Stevenson, His Majesty King Rama IX explicitly stated that Mr. Pridi was entirely innocent on the

matter.

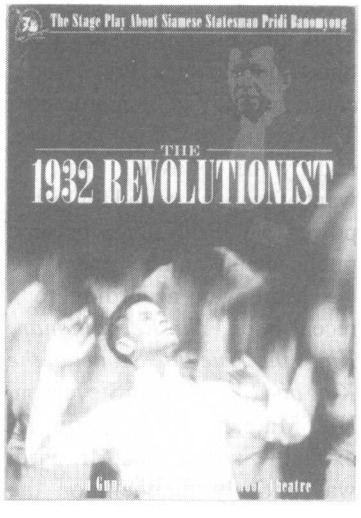
Recent Thai governments since and including General Chaovalit Yongchaiyut's have gone out of their ways and decided to celebrate Mr. Pridi's centenary in a grand manner, nationally and internationally, despite some opposition. Yet the American government and the US embassy in Bangkok seem to be ignorant-on a scale that defies comment-of their past karma vis-?-vis Mr. Pridi. Perhaps they are engaging in willful ignorance and historical amnesia. Otherwise, the United States government would have to admit the egregious mistakes and atrocities it perpetrated in numerous other countries worldwide. This would be detrimental to its self-styled image as an 'enlightened state:' better throw everything down the memory hole.

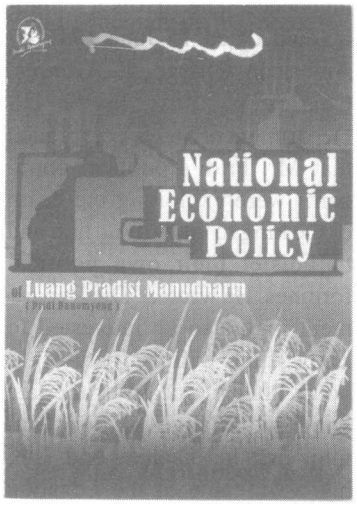
The American embassy in Bangkok was at best lukewarm about the performance of the play The 1932 Revolutionist, which is about the life and times of Mr. Pridi, by Crescent Moon Theater in several major American cities between March 15 and April 4. And it did not facilitate the travel. Moreover, the American public was, by and large, not even aware of the performance. At least when this play was performed in Stockholm last summer, it was well reported in the Swedish mass media. I understand that the United States government is no longer a member of UNESCO. But I wonder whether or not Washington really cares about the act of atonement and long term Siamese-American friendship-or merely imperial domination in the short-run.

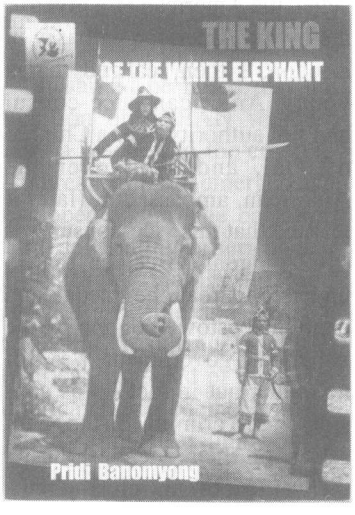
So I have offered a brief interpretive history of some of the chronic misunderstandings-quite a few of them maliciously concocted-surrounding Mr. Pridi. Mr. Pridi's legacy lies in transforming all Thai people into citizens and in attempting to create a conducive environment for them to exercise their rights and liberty meaningfully as citizens. Prior to the 1932 revolution, and particularly prior to the Pridi-initiated reforms, the Thai masses were merely oppressed, fawning subjects. Awakened by the bells of democracy, the Thai people kept the democratic ideals alive through the turbulent decades of military dictatorship. Since the late 1980s, democracy has gained a firmer foothold in the country. But, as Mr. Pridi would say, it is merely nominal democracy. Socioeconomic equality—the basis for any meaningful exercise of freedom —is conspicuously and disturbingly lacking in the country. New threats to democracy also emerge in the form of, for example, transnational corporations and neoliberal capitalism. Thus the struggle for meaningful democracy in Siam continues.

Perhaps the US government is interested in atonement, in admitting responsibility for some of the grievous incidents that occurred in Siam during the American Century. In May this year the Thai private sector in conjunction with FES of Germany will hold a series of activities to commemorate the centennial anniversary of Mr. Pridi Banomyong at Ayudhaya, where he was born. Both at Ayudhaya and Bangkok international luminaries such as the Indonesian President and Jose Ramos Horta will participate in these activities. If the US government has any guilt complex—and this is a very big if—then it may wish to send some representatives.

S. Sivaraksa







Komol Keemthong Awards



Komal Keemthong Foundation's Honorary People for this year. From left, Mrs Jinda Sirimanond, Jon Ungphakorn received the award on behalf of his mother Margaret, Thanpuying Poonsukh Banomyong who chaired the event, Chayaphan Bamrungphong received the award on his mother's behalf, and Mrs Chanid Saipradit.

The Komol Keemthong Awards symbolize sacrifice, dedication, selflessness, compassion, and social responsibility. On 22rd February, they were awarded to five females and 'unsung heroines': the wives and life companions of important personalities in Thai society.

Mrs. Margaret Smith Ungphakorn's belief in social democracy and simple life had an influence on her late husband, Dr. Puey. Her independence, love, and dedication enabled him to serve the country to his fullest potential. Mrs. Ungphakorn had also worked as a volunteer for social welfare in both Thailand and England.

Mrs. Chalopchalai Balanggura and her late husband Jamkad, a member of the Free Thai Movement, founded the Darunothayan School, which produced many good and responsible alumni for Thai society. Mrs. Chalopchalai gave shelter and education to children of pro-democracy fighters that were heavily prosecuted after the 1947 military coup, and extended aid to students who were in trouble after the crackdown on October 6, 1976. The octogenarian Mrs. Chalopchalai is still a dedicated teacher.

Mrs. Chanid Saipradit supported the pro-democracy activities of her late husband, the legendary journalist and writer Kularb Saipradit (Sri Burapha) and ran everything when he launched the *Suphapburus* newspaper. She is also an accomplished translator, turning masterpieces like *Jane Eyre* and *Les Miserables* into Thai.

Mrs. Kruaphan Bamrungpong's support and love enabled her husband the writer Sakchai (Seni Saowapong) to pen some of his masterpieces, including *The Ghost*. She is the daughter of Chaliaw Pathumros, who was wrongfully implicated in the death of King Rama VIII and was executed for it.

Mrs. Jinda Sirimanond's late husband Supa was one of greatest journalists the country has ever known. When he launched the progressive magazine *Akornsarn*, Mrs. Jinda was instrumental in its management and distribution.

มูลนิธิโกมลคีมทอง

The Dhamma Park Project
A Contemporary Centre for Socially Engaged Buddhism and the Arts.

An interesting experiment is underway at the Dhamma Park Gallery and Sculpture Garden in the Northern Thai Province of Lumphun. The Centre was opened to the public by Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa and the Deputy Governor of Lumphun, Nai Somsakdi Boonpeng on January 15th. It was a lively and festive occasion.

The Gallery has been crated to introduce visitors to the fundamental teachings of the Buddha via a series of modern, unorthodox and humorous sculptures. The project welcomes to visit and enjoy Buddhist and Secular Art in a modern social context.

Venetia Walkey

The Dhamma Park Gallery
109/2 Pasan Noi-Moo 1, Tambon Bahn Pan,
Ampur Meung, Lumphun 51000
Tel/Fax: 66-53-521-609
Email: dpp@loxinfo.co.th





Dear Mr. Sulak,

Thank you for your letter of December 31, 1999

I have just finished reading your book on Dr. Pridi Banomyong which you gave me. I learnt from it much that I did not know about Dr. Pridi. I also found his statement about democracy in Thailand which you have reproduced as an annex in the book, very striking indeed, particularly in the context in which it was made. Recently, I was at the inauguration of an art exhibition to mark the beginning of the celebrations of the centenary of Dr. Pridi. Madame Pridi was there too and I had an occasion to briefly meet and greet her.

I am happy to be able to tell you that the Indian Council of Cultural Relations will gladly organize a two-day visit by you to Ajanta and Ellora. If you let me know where the concerned people and contact you in Bombay and when it will be convenient for you to leave Bombay for Aurangabad, which is the main town and airport closest to the Ajanta caves, we shall work out the details.

Yours sincerely,

R.K. Rai
Ambassador
Embassy of India in Bangkok

Dear Esteemed,

Kindly accept my warm greetings and best wishes for the New Year. I pray God to bless you with good health and long life to serve and struggle for causes that are dear to you. Peace is not an ideal alone but a way of life to which we all have a right. We shall fight peacefully to achieve this right.

Let peace prevail.

Sincerely,

R. Manivannan
New Delhi

Dear Khun Sulak,

It was a great pleasure finally to get to meet you. As we begin a new century, conflict within and "between nations and groups" continues. So the work that headers like you do well also continue to be even more vital.

One of our challenges is surely to nurture the young generation and create more leaders with a vision to transform society.

Thank you for your work. Ian and I wish you and your colleagues all the very best. I hope we do get to meet in Switzerland this summer.

With warm regards from Ian and me,

Kristsna (Sondhi Mayo Smith)
USA

7 January 2000

Dear Dr. Sulak,

Thank you for your New Year card and for the reading material you have been so kind as to send me from time to time. It would be an honour to be able to include a message on your New Year card for 2001 but my calligraphy is not of the beautiful standard set by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Please let me know when you would like the message.

May I wish you peace and success in your admirable endeavours throughout 2000. I deeply appreciate the kindness you have shown towards my family and myself.

With warm regards,

Aung San Suu Kyi

21 January 2000

Dear Khun Sulak,

Your very fine card of greetings and your good wishes for the new century reached me recently, and gives me pleasure. With most appreciative thanks I reciprocate your good wishes very warmly.

I was sorry to be unable to let you have at short notice an obituary or memoir for Acharn Snoh. The BBC Thai Service is, to the best of my recollection, in possession of documentation of relevance, e.g. a 50-year anniversary (1991) of our—his and my—founding of the BBC Thai Broadcast (April 1941). So you see our association and friendship goes back, and in recent years I have kept in touch with him constantly.

Until two or so years ago I used to visit him often at his place in SW1—indeed since I am now 90 I do not get around on my own as freely as I'd like but he and I spoke at least once a week by telephone until almost the day he died. I miss him greatly. His demise was very sudden and funeral arrangements were swiftly made, no death notice published here to my knowledge, and the ceremonies completed in Bangkok.

I have not forgotten about your plan for May in Paris but I now doubt whether it will be in my capacity to travel and do it. If you are still hoping to follow up the idea in some way perhaps you will be so kind as to keep me in the picture.

I trust you flourish and will show up in London some time soon again.

With warm regards,

Alec E. Adams



Local currency launched at Kud Chum in Yasothorn province on March 29, 2000

Recommended Reading

Distant Mirrors: America as a Foreign Culture edited by Philip R. Devita & James D. Armstrong, Wadsworth Publishing Company, U.S.A.1998

Abolishing War: Dialogue with Peace Scholars by Elise Boulding and Randall Rorsberg, The Boston Research Center for the 21st Century (BRC), 1998

Subverting Hatred: the Challenge of Nonviolence in Religious Traditions edited by Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, The Boston Research Center for the 21st Century (BRC), 1998

A New Humanism: The University Addresses of Daisaku Ikeda by the Soka Gakkai, Weatherhill Inc., NY, 1995

The Oil Flows, The Earth Bleeds, edited by Elizabeth Bravo Velasguez, OILWATCH, Quito-Ecuador, 1999

Young Journalists and Alternative Media: A Forum on Human Rights and Development edited by Stephanie Jones, Venssa Liell & Boonthatn T. Verawongse, Asian Cultural Forum on Development (ACFOD/ acfodbkk@ksc15.th.com), 1999

Kwangju Diary: Beyond Death, Beyond the Darkness of the Age by Lee Jae-eui, translated by Kap Su Seol and Nick Mamatas, UCLA Asian Pacific Monograph Series, University of California, LA, 1999

What Buddhists Believe by Elizabeth J. Harris, Oneworld Publications, Oxford, 1998

The Art of Happiness by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Howard C. Cutler, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1998

Short Circuit: Strengthening Local Economies for Security in an Unstable World by Richard Douthwaite, Green Books, England, 1996

Buddhism in America by Richard Hughes Seager, Columbia University Press, 1999

Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism edited by Stephanie Kaza and Kenneth Kraft, Shambhala Publications, Inc. 2000

Buddhist Studies Review Vol. 16, 2 edited by UK Association for Buddhist Studies, London,1999

Dialogue with a dream: reflections of poets, artists and dreamers by Max Ediger, Bangkok.

Buddhist Peacework: Creating Cultures of Peace. Edited by David W. Chappell. Wisdom Publications in association with the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century. ISBN 0-86171-167-X.

Think Sangha Journal. An Occasional Journal of the INEB Think Sangha. Buddhist Perspectives on Modernity and the Pitfalls of "Saving the World". Jonathan Watts, Editor. E-mail: jonaomi@ari.bekkoame.ne.ip, Think Sangha web page: http://www.bpf.org/thing.html.

Christian Path to Mental Maturity by Antony Fernando, Inter-cultural Book Promoters (inculture@eureka.lk), Sri Lanka, 1999.

Alternative Politics for Asia

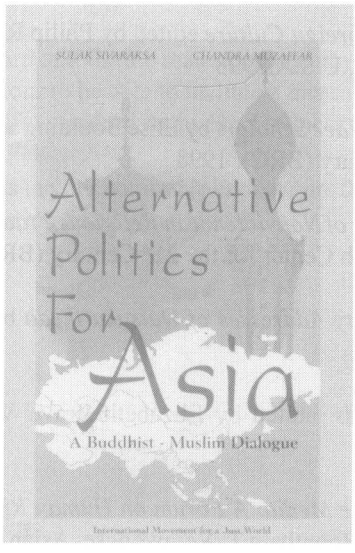
Alternative Politics for Asia is a small book, which addresses big issues. A revealing subtitle describes the book as *A Buddhist - Muslim Dialogue*. The book is, jointly written by Sulak Sivaraksa, an internationally renowned Thai Buddhist and Chandra Muzaffar, a Malaysian intellectual politician, who contested the last Malaysian general elections on the ticket of an opposition party led by Wan Noor Azizah, the wife of the former Deputy Premier Anwar Ibrahim.

The book is structured in the form of a dialogue between Sulak Sivaraksa and Chandra Muzaffar. The dialogue replicates the program of a conference, which took place in Penang, Malaysia from 11th to 13th October 1996. It is divided into 3 sessions.

Session 1 is an edited transcript of their analysis of the effect of globalization on Asian societies, culture and religion. Session 2 addresses the question whether the sources of Buddhist and Islamic traditions can provide a basis for an "alternative politics" for Asia. Session 3 assumes that an "alternative politics" for Asia is already possible and proceeds to address the "how to" issues. The discussion is interesting but stops short of proposing a concrete and systematic program of activities to achieve it.

What is "Alternative Politics?" The simple answer is that it is an alternative to traditional politics or politics as we know it. The 2 terms have been given opposite connotations like darkness and light.

"Alternative politics" stand for justice and humanity. Traditional politics stands for power and the absence of justice and humanity. The underlying question is whether there is something in Asian cultures and religions that make for the possibility of a politics that cares for justice and humanity? In other words can we realize in Asia what the rest of the world including, the West, the Middle East, Latin America and Africa have largely failed to achieve?



The main argument of the book seems to occur in Session 2. Both authors argue that the sources of Asian tradition, culture and religion contain the seeds for constructing a polity in which justice and humanity prevails.

Chandra and Sulak take the reader on a guided tour of traditional Muslim and Buddhist religious ideas. However, the exercise falls somewhat short of establishing that conditions in Asia are ripe for the emergence of an "alternative politics," in which justice and humanity count for more than in the familiar kind of politics that appears to prevail in the rest of the world. The hegemony of Islam in the Arab World or Buddhism in Imperial China had not produced any "alternative politics," otherwise the participants would not be sitting down in the conference in Penang to discuss it.

For that matter notions of justice and humanity are also, to be found in most Western religions. But politics in the West, as in Asia, tend to be driven by greed and power rather than justice and humanity. Therefore, there might be no special grounds for suggesting that conditions in Asia are more conducive for the development of an "alternative politics."

However, the apparent failure of the book's main thesis does not in any way detract from its value in providing an informed and lucid exposition of basic Buddhist and Islamic social ideas. In fact the grandiose philosophical argument serves as a peg for hanging some gems of religious, political, economic and social commentaries. The book serves as an excellent introduction to and summary of basic Islamic and Buddhist social concepts.

My personal impression is that the treatment of Buddhism, in the book, is handled more expertly than that of Islam. Sulak's handling of Buddhist concepts appears to be more lively, concrete, precise and clear than Chandra's rendition of Islamic ideas. Some of Sulak's best passages occur in pages 54-57. Chandra's exposition of Islam is fluent but a little bit boring.

However, it is interesting to compare the approach, to politics of Chandra Muzaffar, the

Malaysian politician, with another renowned Muslim like the Iranian Prime Minister and Islamic politician, Mohammad Khatami. In a sense both are trying to promote an "alternative politics."

Chandra is apparently, seeking to reform mainstream politics, which tends to be dominated by the forces of Westernization and globalization. But he does not want to throw out the baby with the bath water. For him there are some redeeming features of the Western Liberal Democratic State. He would like to see more of the positive aspects of the Liberal Democratic State in Asia.

Khatami apparently, wants to modernize Iran's Islamic State and incorporate Western elements of the rule of law, civil society and basic individual rights of Iranians.

But they tend to position themselves differently vis-a-vis the Western and Islamic traditions. Chandra turns to the sources of Islamic tradition for inspiration, whilst Khatami turns to Western jurisprudence and the political ideas of Saint Augustine, Rousseau, Hobbes, Locke, Saint Thomas Aquinas, Machiavelli and Voltaire for inspiration.

The problems each of them are addressing are also, somewhat different.

Chandra is apparently concerned about the attempt by the West to impose economic liberalism upon Third World countries, at gunpoint through the support of corrupt authoritarian regimes, which tend to deny the people their basic human rights and political freedoms. He delves into the sources of Islamic religion to mobilize traditional conceptions of justice against the social dislocation and outrage caused by the penetration of foreign capital into indigenous societies.

Khatami apparently, believes in the centrality of Islam to Iran's culture, society and presumably, government. But Khatami, apparently also, sees Islam as a religion and civilization in crisis, which is no longer responsive to the needs of the times, whether in science, economics or political organization. Islamic civilization had achieved greatness, power and influence in the Middle Ages and then declined like the Greek and Roman civilizations, which came before.

The world, today, is dominated by Western civilization. Muslims can better deal with the exigencies of the modern world if they acknowledge this reality. Instead of turning its back on the West, Islamic civilization should intellectually engage the West and make up for its deficiencies, especially in its conceptions of government and the principles for the management of society.

However, Khatami's admiration of Western civilization has not blinded him to the role of the former as colonizer and exploiter of other peoples and other civilizations. He apparently, distinguishes between the West as a civilization and the West in its political activities. Whilst he wants Islam to intellectually engage the West as a civilization, he apparently opposes Western political activities on many fronts and supports a strong Iran capable of defending herself in the face of a nuclear threat.

All said and done, *Alternative Politics* should be recommended for its clear and simple presentation of the pressing issues we face as the world passes into the 21st century, as well as, its critique of the mainstream intellectual positions of various religious, social, economic and political issues.

Reviewed by *Jeffery Sng,*
Former staff of Quaker
International Seminars
(Southeast Asia)
2/23/00

Powers That Be:
Pridi Banomyong through The Rise and Fall of Thai Democracy
by Sulak Sivaraksa

For anyone following the career of Sulak Sivaraksa, I don't think that it would come as much of a surprise were I to put forward the observation that for the last generation there have been two Sulaks confronting Siam, and confronting one another. These two Sulaks have spoken what appears at first to be a mutually intelligible language, and they have both drawn largely from a common vocabulary (e.g. Siam, monarchy, and dictatorship). But they come from such diametri-

cally opposed points of view that it is difficult to believe that each has been able to persist seemingly independent of the other for so long.

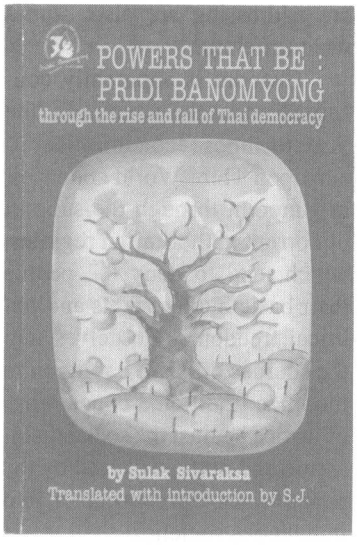
As with many things in life, the fact of there being two Sulaks becomes clearest just before passing. For with the publication of Sulak's latest book, *Powers That Be*, the newer Sulak-of-the-masses has gained firm ascendancy over the older Sulak-of-the-elite - with the former threatening to reduce the positions of the latter into unintelligibility.

Before going any further, I should mention the nominal subject of this work, Pridi Banomyong. This little book is important in its translated form if only because the amount of material on Pridi in English is so limited. This nook is a first-hand account, a memoir that gives a bit of the flavor of what kind of person Pridi was. One can only hope that this publication will inspire other English-language written works to appear on Pridi and his historical legacy.

But, as Sulak quite freely admits, the book is not so much about Pridi as it is about Sulak's changing view of Pridi, and the world. Coming to term with Pridi both as a man and as a symbol of the certain kind of "Thai-ness" with integrity, Sulak writes that he underwent a "fundamental and radical shift" in attitude and "it seems as if my whole world has finally turned right side up" (p.21).

Powers That Be is a most remarkable book. I say this not merely because of the information a reader might discover about Pridi (although there are many interesting items about him not generally well known in the book).

More uniquely, what makes this book so remarkable is that it



represents, with a steely honesty that sometimes makes the reader wince, probably the most absolute self-renunciation in Siamese history. The present Sulak responds to Pridi's description of his 1972 self - "a hated debris of the corrupt aristocracy, a social parasite, and an arrogant, selfish scavenger" - by saying that such words were "fair descriptions of me" (p.57). Praise to Sulak for having the intellectual honesty to confess that for the first half of his adult life he had been dangerously misled.

Has there been any other comparable such transformation? One might suggest Kulap Saipradit whose prose shifted radically over a twenty-year period, or even perhaps Chamlong Srimuang who went from possibly having a role in the 6 October 1976 massacre to himself leading the protest against dictatorship in 1992. But a closer match might be a Mahatma Gandhi who abandoned a promising colonial career, or even a Leo Tolstoy who struggled to give up his aristocratic upbringing and privilege and become a peasant.

Although always preserving a sharp critical voice, Sulak began as a conservative royalist. Sulak says in this book that he "shared the elitist conviction that the masses are ignorant and dangerous and that they are drowning in the unhappy consequences of poverty because they are lazy and extravagant." Poverty, he had felt at the time, was the result of "serious personality flaws rather than from structural deficiencies"(p.23). While studying in England, he agreed with his friends there that "the aristocrats or ruling elites could easily rise above their class interests and clearly discern the public interests"(p.36).

These observations are in themselves rather common and betray typical conservative views. What makes this particular elite attitude so interesting is that it has co-existed for the last twenty-five years or so with views that stand out in utter contrast to it. Take, for instance, a line from this book:

"Masquerading as arms and legs of the king...[the conservatives] have been, speaking metaphorically, joyfully drinking nectar from the skull of the oppressed"(p.46). These are fighting words barring any future reconciliation. Sulak has crossed beyond the point of no return.

In coming to terms with Pridi, Sulak was confronted by his own life. For Sulak, Pridi became the quintessential man of the masses, a committed intellectual who fought for the common person. The question is how did Sulak reconcile such opposing views? Perhaps he didn't. Perhaps in the ashes of his burnt-down bookstore in 1976, Sulak has since become a sharply polarized contradiction, with each pole representing opposite visions of a future Siam.

One Sulak has believed that ultimately absolute monarchy

was the best system, that the masses could never be trusted, and that an enlightened aristocracy was the only class with enough wisdom and morality to rule. This is the Sulak who has praised Prince Damrong as a "great historian"(p.59). This is the Sulak who has considered King Chulalongkorn as a great reformer and who has opposed the military not for being so much anti-democratic but for being unenlightened developers of the country. For this Sulak, the military has been the problem, for they brought an end to the golden age of rule under righteous kings.

The other Sulak has questioned the reforms of the kings and any leanings toward democracy that the royals may have confessed (p.27). This Sulak has opposed the military because it is not democratic. This Sulak goes and talks to villagers not to tell them the right thing to do, but as a friend who has come to learn, and share, and to join them in solidarity. This is the Sulak that has fallen from heaven and grown anew among the grassroots. Beyond recording a key leg of a profound journey, this book also allows the reader to note a subtle change in Sulak's thought that may not otherwise be apparent. Sulak has a peculiar facility to maintain certain views while completely changing the logic underpinning them. To take just two of the clearer examples of this, we might examine Sulak's use of the word, "Siam" and his views on the monarchy.

Sulak has long preferred the use of "Siam" over the English mongrelization of "Thailand". In this respect, he seems to be in agreement with Pridi's attempts to preserve the name of Siam for the country. However, Sulak's "Siam" previously linked him to the days of the absolute monarchy. He had no trouble using the words, "Thai culture" or "Thai people" to describe who or what was in Siam. His opposition to the military was voiced through his preference of Siam. However, Pridi was after something entirely different. Pridi preferred Siam because he recognized the fact that the majority of people living in Siam were not ethnically Thai and so the best way to fend from Thai jingoism was to preserve the more inclusive "Siam". It is only recently that Sulak has come accept the historical multi-ethnicity of the country, thus decoupling his choice of Siam from considerations of the monarchy.

In a like manner, Sulak has always considered himself a consummate royalist (p.45). Of course, the earlier Sulak supported the monarchy because "absolute monarchy was my most preferred political and social system" (p. 35). His reasons for supporting monarchy these days, though, are completely different. His royalism is no longer set in opposition to democracy. In fact, he seems to have placed all of his hope ultimately in the masses and grassroots action. Sulak says in this book that he believes that "democracy cannot be taught or imposed from above" (p. 37). The implication is that it is only through pressure form below that true democracy will emerge. Accordingly, Sulk has gone from protest to protest throughout the country, supporting grassroots movements that promise a more just Siam.

By this point, it almost seems as if Sulak is seeking to preserve the form of his original vision - monarch, Siam, Thai worldview - while more or less razing and rebuilding the foundations of such a vision. Can both the Sulak-of-the-elite live in the same world as Sulak-of-the-masses? Is Sulak's view of the monarchy now merely an anachronism within his redefined society, a mere unnecessary remnant left over form a previous personal incarnation?

This little book on Pridi seems to answer these questions. Sulak's struggle with Pridi and his legacy seems to have finally forced Sulak to set his stakes securely with the masses. The Thammasat University lecturer Kasean Techapeera wrote a few years ago that Sulak "is rejected by all systems so that he is outside any system, unaccepted by all systems." During the time of two Sulaks, this statement was certainly true. But is it still true today? Or has Sulak finally found his home, among the people?

It is remarkable what a few years of exile, a few court cases on crimes against the state, a couple of arrests, an honest mind, and a relentless courage to question can do. For the last number of decades, there has been two Sulaks warring against each other at least as much as they have been striking out against injustice. The result has been perhaps that the force of Sulak's rhetoric has never obtained fully, allowing the government to discount much of what he has said. Now, this book seems to be evidence that Sulak has resolved many of his internal conflicts. If such is true, then we may expect that Sulak will become more singularly formidable and dangerous to those whom he now calls the oppressors.

David Streckfuss
His latest book is *Modern Thai Monarchy and Cultural Politics*

Eight Verese for Training the Mind

1. *With a determination to accomplish*
   The highest welfare for all sentient beings,
   Who surpass even a wish-granting jewel
   I will learn to hold them supremely dear.

2. *Whenever I associate with others I will learn*
   To think of myself as the lowest among all
   And respectfully hold others to be supreme
   From the very depths of my heart.

3. *In all actions I will learn to search my mind*
   And as soon as an afflictive emotion arises
   Endangering myself and others
   Will firmly face and avert it.

4. *I will learn to cherish beings of bad nature*
   And those pressed by strong sins and sufferings
   As if I had found a precious treasure
   Very difficult to find.

5. *When others, out of jealousy, treat me badly*
   With abuse, slander, and so on,
   I will learn to take all loss
   And offer the victory to them.

6. *When one whom I have benefited with great hope*
   Unreasonably hurts me very badly
   I will learn to view that person
   As an excellent spiritual guide.

7. *In short, I will learn to offer to everyone without exception*
   All help and happiness directly and indirectly
   And respectfully take upon myself
   All harm and suffering of my mothers.

8. *I will learn to keep all these practices*
   Undefiled by the stains of the eight worldly conceptions
   And, by understanding all phenomena as illusions
   Be released from the bondage of attachment.

Geshe Langri Thangpa

Burma-Cambodia-Siam Dialogue
Buddhist Sangha in Transition (II)



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