

POLAND

IN SEVEN DAYS WILL I UNDERSTAND WHO I AM?

From left: Bodhisattva monk Dorota Krzyzanowska, Master Dharma Teacher Mu Deung Sunim, and Bodhisattva monk Andrej Czarnecki overlooking the Vistula River in Kazimierz, Poland. Master Dharma Teacher Mu Deung Sunim has been to Poland twice to teach and lead retreats at the 7 Polish Zen Centers and affiliate groups, once in 1982 and most recently in August 1984. In August he led a 21-day intensive sitting retreat at the Warsaw Zen Center, taking a few days aside to give talks outside the Center. This talk was given at Providence Zen Center on August 27, upon his return to the United States.

Two days ago in Warsaw Zen Center we finished a 21-day summer Kyol Che. 55-60 people attended the first 7 days and between 35-40 for the remaining days. It's funny to be giving a talk here when just two days ago there were talks in Poland. Now it seems like just a dream, a name and form changing dream, that's all. It was wonderful to have been there.

Poland's different sanghas as a community are very wide. All the different Buddhist groups in Poland work together; they have known each other for a long time and help each other as they can. While I was there, a man from a Polish television station, a cultural network, came and wanted permission to do a film on our sangha in Warsaw. I wondered who would sponsor such a program and just what the film was for.

"Oh, it's funded by a branch of the Polish government," he said. "With no outside commentaries in the film by anyone." In Poland, he explained, although most people think the Catholic church is the only religion, there are about 40 different religious groups from outside the country, and more than 50% of them are Buddhist. He told me that 15 films had already been done documenting these groups and our sangha was next.

I told him that if he waited until November our teacher Zen Master Seung Sahn would be there and he would get a very good idea of what our school was like. He replied, "We don't care so much about your teacher. We care about the Polish Sangha. It would be nice to film your teacher and get some perspective on where this

have so little of it they appreciate it a lot and go for it.

We sometimes take it for granted. We have so much that we ignore it, and think it will be there for us tomorrow. But one day tomorrow won't be here. It's hard for us to imagine that something we're used to every day will be taken away from us. But when you go to a country like Poland and see the sincerity, you begin to understand that nothing is guaranteed. You begin to understand, "Maybe this chance will be taken away some day."

We all say "tomorrow." Zen Master Won Hyo said, "Tomorrow also comes, without fail, but few tomorrows are given to good actions." Soon next year is here. Years pass rapidly, and soon you find yourself at death's door. A broken vehicle can-

"After we practice for a while, we find the edge of our search, our big confusion, is gone. We are content with that and think we have found the way. In Poland, the edge is always there."

Mu Deung Sunim

teaching is coming from, but we're most interested in what your sangha does day to day. 1) What do they believe in? 2) How do they perform their religious practice? 3) What are their personal experiences? 4) Most important: How does their practice affect human beings' attitudes towards each other?

When I was there in August, also visiting was Kapleau Roshi, a lama from Denmark, and a lecturer from Tokyo for Jodo Shinshu. Genpo Sensei was due to arrive the day I was leaving Warsaw to do a 2-day workshop and a 3-day sesshin at our Zen Center. Nonstop, just after a 21-day retreat, a workshop and sesshin for three days! Because they don't know when again this teaching will be available, they're hungry for it. They

not run; an old man cannot practice. Tomorrow will be what tomorrow is, but it's important not to fool ourselves. It's important to try our very best whatever that is, even for just one moment to do it 100%.

One thing that impressed me was that most of the Polish Zen students didn't care much whether or not they came with "good" or "bad" answers to interviews. The experience of interview was of primary concern. We've often heard Soen Sa Nim say that "Good and bad answers don't matter. What matters is how much you believe in yourself."

What does it mean, how much you believe in yourself? Does it mean how much you hold your answer, what you think is correct? I used to think that was believing

Continued on page 5

NEWS OF THE POLISH SANGHA

(The following is excerpted from an article written by Senior Dharma Teacher Judy Roitman of the Kansas Zen Center. She visited the Warsaw Zen Center this June while on an international mathematics conference.)

This June I went to Warsaw for a professional meeting, and while there had the good fortune to spend some time not only with the Warsaw Zen Center family, but also with Zen students from other cities in Poland. It did take some fortune—the Warsaw Zen Center is not in Warsaw proper but in the suburb of Warszawa Falenica, and city cab drivers claim they can't find the place. The telegraph operator who telegraphed my predicament to the Zen Center transposed some digits in my phone number and address. But eventually Bodhisattva Monk Dorota Krzyzanowska from Gdansk appeared on my doorstep with a bouquet of flowers and a Falenica cabdriver. This was on the last afternoon of an all-Poland School Congress, so I got to meet Zen students from Gdansk, Krakow and Stecin as well.

the Czarnecki family in two rooms with two small children; there is a bathroom and an improvised kitchen with a hot plate and a small refrigerator. Also upstairs is the guest room/interview room/entertaining room.

Downstairs is the Dharma room, with a huge Buddha and a temple bell from Korea, a women's dormitory room, a men's dormitory room, a room off the kitchen, a bathroom, and the kitchen. The single residents come and go. I was never quite sure about who lived there during my visit, but was told at the time there were three men and three women. Some of the single residents are fairly long-term, others are short term. Because they do not have private rooms their physical situation is closer to a monastic one than most American centers.

We tend to romanticize the Polish Zen students as being incredibly fierce in their commitment and perfect in their practice. To my surprise, I found that they romanticize us in the same way. Neither image is true, and we shortchange each other by holding onto stereotypes. Zen students in both countries range the gamut both in their commitment and in the way they

"We tend to romanticize the Polish Zen students as being incredibly fierce in their commitment and perfect in their practice. To my surprise, I found that they romanticize us in the same way."

The Warsaw Zen Center itself is quite lovely. Falenica is a heavily wooded suburb, and the house is on a large tract of land with trees and a large garden plot. The house was renovated before the Zen Center bought it, with bright light interiors and fine lightly colored woodwork, including some high and extremely useful cabinets. One of the Zen Center members makes simple and elegant furniture, and his work can be found throughout the house.

Upstairs is the family quarters. Two families used to live there, but now it is just

manifest it.

The Kwan Um Zen School is represented not only by the Zen Center in Falenica, but also by non-residential centers in Gdansk, Lublin, Lodz, Turin, Krakow and by various other small groups. Some of these groups have one or two students living in their rented space (the Falenica center is the only house owned by a Buddhist group in Poland); others just rent meditation space. Three Buddhist groups have official recognition from the government: the Warsaw Center, a Vajrayana group, and a group of

Kapleau Roshi's students.

The Buddhist community is remarkable in their friendly relations and the close contact the various groups have with each other. Many of Soen Sa Nim's students feel a close affinity to the Vajrayana group, and with a particular teacher of theirs who visits from Denmark. I met a Pole who recently was ordained as a monk in Japan; he was

obviously a good friend of the Warsaw group.

Leaders of the various Buddhist groups make a point of getting together to work on common projects. For example, they will all help build the new Dharma room at the Warsaw Zen Center. All teachers are received with gratitude; all practices are supported. □

FROM A POLISH ZEN STUDENT

(The following excerpt is from a letter written in July by Dorota Krzyzanowska to Master Dharma Teacher Barbara Rhodes. Dorota, an artist and Bodhisattva monk, lives at the Zen Center in Gdansk, Poland.)

"Two days ago I received a letter from a good friend now in Japan. He does not believe Soen Sa Nim now is his teacher, for he saw him cold and impersonal. That sounds familiar to me, although I have a feeling that Soen Sa Nim is my teacher always. I've got an idea that as we don't see Soen Sa Nim for a long time, we are lucky. We don't have problems how is he, only try following his teachings. The life is here instead of the Zen Master—but when we follow Soen Sa Nim's teaching, IT WORKS, so we believe in him as our teacher very deeply.

Now we are accustomed that he is not around and when he comes rarely, we are happy but we don't need him to be such and such. He could be warm or cold and it doesn't matter because he soon goes away again, and we feel, I believe, that his teaching will stay with us for the rest of the year and this counts. Besides that we love Soen Sa Nim!

Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche discussed the above mentioned kind of disappointment, that the Master seems to be icily cold and impersonal. He, he! Nothing to hold on to, yeah! If my friend writes me again I will tell him how I felt in 1981 at Providence Zen Center. In fact I came mostly because I wanted to meet this legendary person, whose teaching I lived on since 1978. In 1980 I met a lama who was very



warm, and in 1981 I met Soen Sa Nim who showed me his conventional smile and conventional "A good Zen student, good Zen student." I would prefer that he kills me instead of that. He, he! But I was lucky. He was a Zen Master and that was enough. I didn't need him to be as I liked. In some time, Soen Sa Nim showed me that he is able to be not only warm, but hot when necessary." □



THE EAGLE PHOENIX PAPER

(The following translation of a calligraphy by the great Korean Zen Master Hyo Bong was sent to us by Ham Wol Sunim, a monk who recently returned to Song Gwang Sa, a famous Korean temple, from New Zealand. He is working on a book about Korean Buddhism for Australian and New Zealand readers.)

by Hyo Bong Dae Soen Sa, Zen Master, Sunlit Peak, 1888-1966.

Our ancestor, Bodhidharma, came to East Asia from Persia and India and showed people how to practice the Tao. A phoenix and an eagle, (1) he grasped the Hwadu substance, that which is beyond words and the origin of thought. Those who took the precepts and studied without quitting won his esteem. To begin study and keep studying forgetful of the trials is to be an eagle-phoenix, a Bodhidharma: such students can taste the Hwadu.

Settling into study unlimited by common thought, gives muscles the strength of a lion and mind the power of a bull elephant. Since slicing blockages and reveries in two makes the body-mind brave and sharp. Take up the great question "What (is my nucleus which sees as well as hears?)," directly probing for the Buddha nature, and do not be a namby-pamby. Push aside the trite, the posy, the superficial, and sense the noble spirit that fills the universe.

Without the will to overtake all the Sages of the Past, and without shining as brightly as they did—if not more so—the actions of Compassionate Ones cannot spring forth.

Exhausted salmon under waterfalls and hawks tumbled into reeds do not catch up with those ahead. (2) What is the use of mimicking a feeble horse roped to a post or a blind donkey set to watch a stick? (3)

To wind beyond these stages drop needless thoughts and probe the vital phrase or question. Seeing through the question in a flash gives constant alertness and true ease. Manufacturing idle concepts has never liberated anyone.

In order to be able to help others as a Buddha or Bodhisattva, keenly inquire into the Hwadu question.

This is the best thing to do.
1946.10.15

(1) The mythological phoenix dies in, and is reborn from, a fireball. Eagles will spend as long as three days incubating, and later carefully teach their young.

(2) Swamped in discursive ideas, people cannot attain Buddhahood.

(3) Sit in meditation without counting the hours so spent; mindfulness, not drowsiness precedes Awakening.

(footnotes by Ham Wol Sunim)



"In seven days, will I understand who I am?"

Continued from page 3

yourself 100%. But 100% means, moment to moment changes, depending on no thing, idea, or belief, but on something which for lack of a word we may call "don't know."

I gave lectures at different places to an audience of wide backgrounds. People would ask questions, and after a while I began to understand that they didn't care so much about my answers; they were concerned about my sincerity. Not how strong I was, or how much I believed in what I thought I knew, but how sincere I was. It was a really strange experience. Not "What

experience; where is it coming from? Even with that "no idea," just how sincere are you, buddy?

Then I realized (speaking for myself) how in America we can get very lazy. We have a good situation, we have freedom to do almost anything. We practice in a beautiful Dharma room, and our lives are fairly stable.

Though we once had a big question, after we practice for a while we find that the edge of our search, our big confusion, is gone. Not that we've found anything, but the

harsh edge is gone and we are content with that and think we have found the way. We know we can practice again if things get rough, and again just dull the edge, but we never really get to the bottom of it. In Poland the edge is always there. They have no choice. The razor's edge is always there, so they are sincere, and they can sense that in others.

One young man came for an interview and asked with everything he had, "In

can you teach me?" or "How strong is your practice?" or "How well do you answer questions?" but, "Where is it coming from?"

They could not believe in ideas, because in their country everything is changing all the time. They are looking for something that remains stable, not dependent on name and form. They don't believe speech or philosophy or beautiful stories. They are looking for something else. They believe in their

THE POLISH SANGHA

What Is Primary Point?

by Zen Master Seung Sahn

When you have a scale and there is nothing being weighed, the indicator points to zero. You put something on it, and the pointer swings to "one pound." You take it off, the pointer goes back to zero. This is primary point. After you find your primary point, when good or bad feelings come, your pointer swings in one direction or another, but this doesn't matter. Don't check it. When the feeling is over with, the pointer swings back to zero.

If you haven't found your primary point, it's like taking a heavy object off the scale and having the pointer stay at "ten pounds." Or, the pointer moves back only part way, it doesn't go completely back to zero. Then your scale does not weigh correctly. If you put a heavy object on it, it may completely break.

So first you must find your primary point, and keep it very strongly. A taxi has weak shock absorbers, so it's very steady. If you keep your primary point, your mind will become stronger. When you meet a big problem, your mind will move less and less, and soon return to primary point. Finally, your mind will be very strong, able to carry any load. Then saving all people is possible.

seven days, will I understand who I am?" I had not experienced that in a long time. He was 100% sincere. He ended up staying for 21 days and just tried. He didn't know. He didn't care about the idea of enlightenment or easing his suffering or attaining Nirvana or kensho. He had no idea that perhaps if he found out who he was he would be happy and peaceful; that didn't matter. He didn't know what to expect. All that mattered was "What am I?" That's all he cared about.

Three students who sat for three days and wanted to start a group in a small seaside

town invited me to give a talk there. It wasn't scheduled but we made time and went anyway. One of them had told her mom all about sitting and what a wonderful experience she had. Her mother came to the public talk to see for herself. After the talk a group of us went out to dinner.

We were sitting there eating and she started to season my food and make sure I had enough Coca-Cola to drink. As she was doing that I said, "You are a good mother!" And right away she said, "Only my children can say that!" Bang! she had hit me! Simple and quick—"Only my children can say that." She had perceived it as a compliment and small talk and not really my truth, so her words came out. She had no intention of hitting me, just that keen simple observation and wisdom. That's the kind of sincerity they were demanding.

"We must learn not to fool ourselves. It is easy to fool ourselves if we desire something."

Mu Deung Sunim

The people I met practiced very hard. They gave me inspiration and showed me that this mind—thinking and checking and wanting to be clever—cannot really help. It would soon be exposed. They really confirmed that thinking, no matter how much you know, even if your answers are seemingly correct, may not be 100% complete. If it still holds even a hair it is only words or being clever or repeating what someone has taught you, but it means nothing, has no substance. It is only understanding.

All of us have already experienced that. Although understanding can sometimes help it is not the bottom line. Zen Master Nam Cheon already pointed out, "Understanding is illusion, not understanding is blankness."

We must learn not to fool ourselves. It is easy to fool ourselves if we desire something. During interviews people would come, present correct answers in speech or action but even though aware it was basically correct they understood something was missing and would blurt out immediately "Not enough!" They already understood. They didn't need someone else to tell them, so they were not so afraid of being right or wrong, just "how is it just now" completely. It was an amazing experience for me.

Many people I met, including myself, have sometimes made answering kong-ans their priority. They check themselves on that basis. If they've answered 20 kong-ans, that's how much they've gotten closer to enlightenment or to getting something or attaining wisdom. Their primary concern is how many kong-ans they can check off as correctly answered. But what is correct, anyway? If we make anything, already we are dead.

An older man whom I met when I was there a few years ago was really quick.

friends, themselves, everybody and everything.

I hope we can find that, but I don't think we can find that. You can't look for sincerity and get it. You can't make it. I don't know how to get it, but I hope you get it. I think practicing don't know does it. We've all heard that don't-know cuts off all thinking. That's our usual style of Dharma talk: "If you don't understand, only go straight don't-know, then your mind becomes clear."

Maybe there is something in don't know. I hope we all return to that sincerity we had when we first started practicing. I hope we get back that big question, that big doubt, and that don't-know that we had when we first came and asked, "Help me understand...What is this?" □



TIRED OF BORING FORTUNES

in your fortune cookies? Join us in writing snappy Zen fortunes. Example: "If you speak incorrectly, you will be reborn as a fox for 500 generations."

Please send your pungent quotes or creations to:

Fortune Cookie, Kwan Um Zen School
528 Pound Road, Cumberland, RI
02864. The collection will be made available at a later date for inserting into your local cookies.

Personal Questions?

If you have personal questions about your life or Zen practice we encourage you to write to any of the four Master Dharma Teachers. Soen Sa Nim will continue answering his mail, but his extensive traveling, especially outside the United States, often forces considerable delays in his response.

