

**Kwan Um Zen School of Europe:****1987 AN ACTIVE YEAR, MANY RETREATS PLANNED FOR 1988**

by Do Mun Sunim,  
Abbot of Centre Zen de Paris

The Kwan Um Zen School of Europe held its first annual Congress at the Centre Zen de Paris in Paris on December 5 and 6, 1987. Students of Zen Master Seung Sahn, and Dharma Master Ji Kwang (Poep Sa Nim) came from almost every country in western Europe. It was a great weekend of practice, appreciation and fun as our common purpose overcame the barriers of language, culture and individual karma.

The weekend began with a day of ceremonies: a traditional Buddhist energy ceremony by Poep Sa Nim on the day of the full moon, the largest Precepts ceremony yet in western Europe presided over by Soen Sa Nim and Poep Sa Nim, and an evening ceremony on the occasion of Poep Sa Nim's birthday. Nineteen people from seven countries took 5 Precepts at the afternoon ceremony. Many were Poep Sa Nim's students who had just recently met Soen Sa Nim.

Nine students took 10 Precepts. Arno Schuh and Heinke Geise became our School's first two German Dharma Teachers. Griselda Olavarria from Mexico (who lives and works with the United Nations in Switzerland) and Patrice Faure, Annick Hamon, Catherine Neuville, Jacques Ruelle, and Helene and Marie-France Lamourette (all from France) also became Dharma Teachers. The ceremony gave everyone a renewed sense of the power and importance of our practice.

In the evening ceremony we honored Poep Sa Nim's birthday. Students representing each country gave talks, telling anecdotes of their practicing with Poep Sa Nim. There were many flowers, gifts and laughter as students heard from each other, often for the first time. Soen Sa Nim gave a Dharma speech talking about Poep Sa Nim's early life, his experiences meeting her and testing her mind. He then spoke about the importance of kong-an practice and challenged Poep Sa Nim with some kong-ans. She answered stongly and warmly. Soen Sa Nim, smiling and seeming very happy, said, "My present to you is my Zen stick. If you didn't answer correctly, I couldn't give it to you." Poep Sa Nim read a poem she had written for the ceremony. A big party followed.

On Sunday, we held the first meeting of the Kwan Um Zen School of Europe. The school was officially formed with its headquarters for now in Paris, and with myself as School Abbot. The Dharma Teachers Association of Europe was also formed with Joan Insa, Dharma teacher, Abbot of Centro Zen de Palma, Spain, and long-time student, as its president. Soen Sa Nim gave a talk on the development of Zen teaching style since the time of Shakyamuni Buddha. He said that in coming to America, he created Kwan Um Zen School style. "Enlightenment is not so important. What do you do after Enlightenment? Our teaching is keeping correct situation, correct function, correct relationship, moment-to-moment. That is most important. That is moment-to-moment enlightenment."

Poep Sa Nim gave a talk saying, "Thinking creates our life. If we have good think-



Some of the European sangha as they gathered in Korea in September to celebrate Soen Sa Nim's 60th birthday. Photo by Meg Nicks

ing, we make a good life. If we have bad thinking, we make a bad life. If we have no thinking, there is no life, no death. Then, moment-to-moment you can do correct action, correct function. This saves all beings. This is love and correct human life. Our teaching is, attain your true self and correctly function in this life." The weekend ended with a Kido led by Soen Sa Nim.

While in past years Arno, Heinke, Joan and Miquel deHaro (from Spain) have all attended Kyol Che in Korea or at Providence Zen Center, the year 1987 saw a great increase in activity in Europe by the students of our school. Arno and Heinke made contact with meditation groups and interested people in a number of cities in Germany and organized two teaching tours by Soen Sa Nim—to Munich, Munster and Frankfurt. Large public talks and workshops were held in each city. Students of the late Deshimaru Roshi helped arrange two of the events. Paul Koppler, at our affiliate in Nischenich, Germany, organized a three day retreat with Poep Sa Nim. It was the most well-attended retreat yet at Paul's center and was attended by many people who have sat with Soen Sa Nim. Harry Whitford, an American living in Germany, is helping organize multi-lingual publications of our teaching and advertising programs. He took 5 Precepts in December and serves as Poep Sa Nim's translator in Germany.

The Zen group in Norway continues to grow, due largely to the efforts of Odd Runar and Astri Gulbrandsen and the increasing number of interested students

there. Three retreats with Poep Sa Nim and one with Soen Sa Nim were held in 1987. Astri also traveled to Bergen, the second largest city in Norway, to participate in a conference on Buddhism. Sirin Eide, a professional filmmaker, made an English language video of Soen Sa Nim's visit. The chants were all transliterated and translated into Norwegian (as well as into Spanish and German). Mouliko, a Swedish Aikido master who traveled to Korea in August to represent the Norwegian sangha at Soen Sa Nim's 60th birthday, has opened his dojo for meditation practice several days each week for those who live in the center of Oslo.

The Barcelona Zen Center continues to be headed by Ferna Pardo and Kirpaya and Dauramya of Comunidad Ahabah. It is the fastest growing group in our school in Europe and now meets in the apartment of fashion designer Lidia Cassellas. Soen Sa Nim and Poep Sa Nim, between them, led 5 retreats there and at Ahabah this past year. During her last visit, over 130 people in 5 days came to see Poep Sa Nim for personal counseling, followed by a weekend workshop attended by 50 people.

A growing Zen group in the south of France in the city of Montpellier has been initiated by Brigitte Danel, a psychologist who took 5 Precepts last June. She organized a three-day retreat with Poep Sa Nim at Chateau de Theraguyes in the Languedoc region of France last October, and a seven day retreat with Poep Sa Nim is being planned there for next July.

With continuing visits by Poep Sa Nim to Belgium, Switzerland, Italy and England, while no groups have been formed, an increasing number of students are appearing, practicing in their homes, attending retreats and workshops held near them and visiting the Centre Zen de Paris. In August over 30 Europeans traveled to Hawaii for a three week retreat/vacation, and then on to Korea for the celebration of Soen Sa Nim's birthday. This was a very strong experience, connecting new students with the roots of our practice in Korea and with a style of living, traveling and together-action that was new to many.

Soen Sa Nim spent a month in Poland, and in November Poep Sa Nim (with Do Mun Sunim and Do Ryun Sunim) joined him for a week for her first teaching trip there. The sangha had been waiting to see her for over a year and the reception was incredible. Talks in Warsaw, Krakow and Gdansk were attended by 1,000, 500 and 300 people, respectively. Tickets were sold to the public talks in Warsaw and Krakow, which were held in a disco and in the city theater. Workshops following the talks were also extremely well-attended. The Polish sangha is talking of making a meditation and therapy center near Krakow and inviting Poep Sa Nim frequently to Poland to help.

The entire sangha in Europe has been more active in practicing and spreading the dharma this past year. As older students of Soen Sa Nim and newer students who have come to practicing through Poep Sa Nim meet, their faith in each teacher has become strong and our School's teaching has become one that increasingly pays attention to relationships, as well as meditation practice, as opportunities to become clear and help others.

In January 55 Europeans from 9 countries traveled to Hawaii to attend a four-week retreat led by Poep Sa Nim. The retreat combined a strong meditation practice, daily teaching and living together under Poep Sa Nim's guidance in the small temple, with only two bathrooms and people from different cultures and languages. It provided a powerful opportunity to become clear and harmonize with others, a teaching many people have been looking for.

Plans for 1988 in Europe include a major visit from Soen Sa Nim, during which he will lead 7-day retreats in Spain, Germany and Norway. A World Masters Conference is being held in Switzerland in July, to which both Soen Sa Nim and Poep Sa Nim have been invited. Poep Sa Nim will continue to teach in Paris three days most weeks, while a full schedule of retreats and workshops with her all over Europe is planned, with frequent visits to our Zen centers and groups and to new cities such as Madrid, Amsterdam and Milan. Seven-day retreats with Poep Sa Nim in Greece in June and in the south of France in July, and a month long retreat in Hawaii in August are also planned. The German group has decided to hold regular retreats with and without teachers.

We hope that the continued activity and practice of our sangha in Europe will contribute to a growing clarity and harmony in individuals, and in society, this coming year. □



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## SOEN SA NIM'S TRIP TO TIBET AND CHINA LEAVES SEPT. 1

Don't miss this unusual opportunity to travel with Soen Sa Nim. The group will spend a week in Tibet, visiting Lhasa and other famous temples and cultural sites. Soen Sa Nim will then continue on to mainland China, with brief stops possibly in Hong Kong and Sri Lanka, and then to Korea for his annual fall visit. The Tibet group must be at least 15 people. Register by June 1. For information, write Diana Lynch, P.O. Box 877, Stinson Beach, CA 94970 or call (415) 868-2925.

## NEW LOCATION OF CHOGYE ZC HAS CINNAMON-RAISIN FLAVOR

On the afternoon of December 20, 1987, the Chogye International Zen Center of New York held an Opening Ceremony and reception. The center recently moved to its new location in downtown Manhattan at 400 East 14th Street. Soen Sa Nim presented the Center with a Buddha-statue which was placed on a diminutive new altar. The new center is, like most New York apartments, compact. But, as Soen Sa Nim said immediately upon his arrival here for the first time, "Very nice feeling."

There was a chanting ceremony, an opening speech by Nina Davis, a Dharma talk by Richard Shrobe, addresses by Dr. Jagu Kang, Soon Bae Lee, Richard Streitfeld, and Mu Soeng Sunim, and a talk by Soen Sa Nim. Most of the speakers helped recall the warm and interesting history of the Center, which has moved around the city and sometimes temporarily used members' apartments for sitting and chanting. Ronnie Davis generously provided a vegetarian dinner.

The large crowd squeezed into the Dharma room, although several old-timers waited in the hall during the evening chanting and sitting, which was followed by a Dharma talk by Syndria Mecham and a question and answer period with Soen Sa Nim. Throughout the day, all the guests were introduced to a feature of the new Center which all the members know quite well -- the odor of baking bagels wafting up from the bakery below, and the very warm wooden floor. Some members are becoming expert at knowing the bakery's schedule and, as expected, cinnamon-raisin was the flavor of the Opening Ceremony, along with a great feeling of togetherness in our new center.