

The Free Thinker

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All articles have been translated from Swedish originals,
having appeared in the Swedish issues of "The Free Thinker" ns. 36-40.

Dominating this issue is the remarkable documentation of a conference in Kathmandu
1-2 November, which exposes four different mentalities in the Tibetan region.

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Gothenburg, Sweden, December 10th 1995.

The Emperor Marcus Aurelius and the European Community

Anthony Birley has written a comprehensive study about the Roman emperor, who died 1800 years ago in Vienna at the age of only 58, after a lifetime of unceasing wars and worries, probably of an ulcer combined with angina pectoris and cancer. But this emperor was no ambitious man of power or warfare but a philosopher. What was it then that turned his life into a tragedy?

The man who set him on an unavoidable course towards the imperial office was the emperor Hadrian, who during a long reign secured the frontiers of the Roman Empire and staked everything on maintaining peace within the realm. He adopted his successor

Antoninus Pius, the wealthiest man in Rome, on condition that he already then (138 A.D.) adopted the seventeen-year-old Marcus Aurelius, who was already a philosopher, for his successor. Marguerite Yourcenar's famous book "The Memoirs of Hadrian" about the old emperor Hadrian's fictional letters to Marcus Aurelius is not a fantasy but in the highest degree an illustration of reality.

Antoninus Pius sustained world peace during the whole of his reign of 23 years, and Marcus Aurelius married his daughter. The only war enterprise during this reign was the advancement of the frontier against Scotland from Hadrian's Wall (by Newcastle) to the Antonine Wall, which went through Glasgow. But this new frontier had to be abandoned later on from the land of the wild Picts and moved back to Hadrian's Wall, which was longer but safer.

Marcus Aurelius, who after the reign of Antoninus became an emperor at the age of 40, had up till then almost never left Rome. Thus he had been able to always live in peace and harmony with his philosophy. Almost directly after his installation a very long war with the Persians in the far east broke out, by which the plague was brought to Rome, which inflicted the whole empire. The epidemic is comparable to the Black Death of Europe in the 14th century, which reduced the population of Europe by about the same percentage. As soon as the Persian war was over and the plague had ceased, the Germans invaded the north-east provinces by Vienna and Budapest (Vindobona and Aquincum). This compelled Marcus Aurelius to a soldier's life in the cold north-east for the rest of his life. During these interminably dreary years at the front he wrote his "Meditations", a kind of summing-up of the whole world of thought of classical philosophy but well refined and with a profound touch of pessimism. For the first time in classical antiquity death becomes a more interesting theme than life. To the constant harassment of the imperial philosopher was added a painful rebellion in the east instigated by one of his most trusted generals, the victor in the Persian war Avidius Cassius, in which turmoil also the empress Faustina, Antonine's only daughter, was implicated. She bore twelve children during her lifetime of 46 years in her one matrimony with Marcus Aurelius, but only six survived and only one son. This was Commodus, so different in his vulgar pleasures and vices from his father, that doubts occurred whether the children of Marcus Aurelius really could be his own, since he was so long away at the front. These speculations go on still today.

Marcus Aurelius has been criticized for two things: an augmented persecution against Christians, and the fact that he allowed Commodus to succeed him. Marcus Aurelius never persecuted Christians personally, and the fact that those persecutions increased during his reign was a result of the frontier threats against the empire. The Christians refused to acknowledge the emperor and to obey Roman laws. They were the conscientious objectors of their day and this during a time when the barbarians started to threaten the existence of Roman civilization. As the result of the economic world crisis which the wars brought on, it became too expensive to have professional gladiators at the public festivals, which was why cheaper victims on the arenas came in demand. The only way to solve this problem was to allow enemies of the state on the arenas. According to the law, in times of war conscientious objectors were enemies to the state. The Christian conscientious objectors were innumerable, and many of them wouldn't even defend their lives on the arenas. For that reason the performances became extremely boring, awkward and painful, no one liked gladiators who wouldn't fight, and an age of fiascos was introduced, which eventually brought on the end of such public festivals.

That Commodus was allowed to succeed Marcus Aurelius had more serious consequences. Since the days of Trajan, all Roman emperors had been the adopted sons of their predecessors, since neither Trajan, Hadrian nor Antonine had sons of their own. Marcus Aurelius happened to have one, and even though he from Commodus' manners

and immature ways had reasons to doubt his legitimacy, he never could find out the truth, since Faustina died rather prematurely. And when Marcus Aurelius found reason to question Commodus' fitness as an emperor, it was too late to change the course of things. Laws could not be violated, Commodus had already been thoroughly established, and, most serious of all, Marcus Aurelius passed away too early and too suddenly.

Commodus was worthless as an emperor, he preferred playing the gladiator in the Coliseum, he ruined the imperial finances and allowed the barbarians to overrun the frontiers with nothing checking them. He was murdered 31 years old after 12 years on the throne, after which followed the gradual disintegration of the empire. A few decent and valiant emperors tried to repair the damages, like Pertinax, Septimius Severus and Aurelian, but the dissolution had already gone too far, and gradually Christian pacifism prevailed against military rule by force.

The greatest enterprise of Marcus Aurelius was the long tedious war against the Germans north of Vienna and east of Budapest, which Marcomannic and Quadian countries today constitute the whole of Czechia and half of Slovakia. Marcus Aurelius tried to transform these countries into Roman provinces and thereby remove the frontier from the rivers and valleys around the Danube to the mountains and hills which constitute the natural northern border of Czechoslovakia. This would have been a much more favourable frontier on the Germans. Commodus abandoned this new frontier, the Germans immediately started to overwhelm the borders, and Christian victory in Rome was a poor comfort for the loss of a universal civilization, which was allowed to be raped and utterly destroyed by those northern barbarians who Marcus Aurelius was the last one to make a firm stand against.

Not until 600 years later the Roman Empire was resurrected by the coronation of the German king Charlemagne in Rome 800 A.D. He reunited western Europe, which gradually continued to form the medieval Roman Empire of the German Nation, which lasted until 1806, when Napoleon finished it off. Its chief heir was the Habsburg empire of Austria and Hungary, which was completely dissolved after the first world war. Then the idea of the United States of Europe was born and introduced by president Woodrow Wilson of America, and the idea was adopted by most of the new democracies of Europe. One of its greatest advocates was Stefan Zweig, who in 1932 gave an important lecture in Florence, Italy, on the subject ("The European Idea in its Historical Development"). All these idealistic efforts were brought to nothing by the ravages of Hitler-Germany.

Another of its advocates was Otto von Habsburg in exile in Switzerland, heir to the Austrian throne. In the organization and development of EC he found the great possibility for the ideal to materialize, and so far things seem to have developed accordingly. This year Austria, Sweden and Finland became members, and negotiations are proceeding with Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia and the three Baltic states.

The philosopher Marcus Aurelius died in Vienna defending the great idea of universal political unity, and in Vienna this idea has never vanished but always been carried on. The ECU-coin carries Charlemagne as a symbol, and never since Marcus Aurelius has Europe been more united than it is today, even if it may take some time until the international monetary system of co-operation starts to work - the preliminaries to the painful birth travails seem to be endless.

The Strange Case of Giordano Bruno (1548-1600)

He was definitely the bravest of all the 16th century pioneers within astronomy and the only true martyr for empirical science. Yet he began as a Dominican friar and was even ordained a priest. His home town was Nola close to Naples, where he already as a young man began to have some doubts concerning Christian dogmas and was even accused of heresy. As a result, he left Church and commenced his most remarkable life as an itinerant philosopher all over Europe. In Paris he was at the court of king Henry III; in England he was a friend of Sir Philip Sidney (1554-86) and probably appeared at the court of Queen Elizabeth. In England he felt comfortable enough to publish his most important writings and applied for a professorship at Oxford, which regrettably was denied. He spent two years at the university of Wittenberg, Martin Luther's Vatican, where he enjoyed the highest appreciation; but also at the court of Rudolph II in Prague he found a safe environment. He also spent some years in Geneva studying Calvinism for a possible conversion, but also there he met some conflicts with established dogma.

He was the first astronomer to point out that the stars were other stars like the sun, and he also discovered the poles to be flattened at the poles. He embraced the Copernican theories as soon as he first became familiar with them, which of course brought him into an everlasting conflict with the Church. Copernicus himself had got away with it: he published his revolutionary theories and succeeded in passing away before the Church had had time to organize a proper excommunication with demands of their withdrawal. Also Leonardo da Vinci dabbled with astronomy and got away with his heretical findings by never publishing anything and by only experimenting in secret. Giordano Bruno preferred to take a stand for the new astronomy openly, never be afraid of speaking his mind and never show any sign of weakness or fear. The only thing you can blame him for is incautiousness.

In Prague he received an invitation to Venice by a nobleman, which offered a situation in which he could move and teach freely in Venice and Padua. In the belief that the Republic of Venice was out of the Vatican grasp, he accepted and taught science and astronomy liberally for years; but his host, the noble Giovanni Mocenigo, was not satisfied with Bruno's activities and denounced him to the inquisition. This treason is probably the most shameful in academic history since the first university was founded. Mocenigo not only betrayed Giordano Bruno but even acted as his prosecutor, improving his carefully considered accusations after that Bruno had been arrested.

This happened in May 1592, and the trials of Giordano Bruno started off at once. In July two months later Bruno regretted and withdrew all his teachings and theories probably after sessions of torture. In spite of this he was not released but instead sent down to Rome for further investigation.

The process in Rome against Giordano Bruno went on for seven years behind barred gates, during which period he was kept imprisoned in Castel Sant'Angelo, originally the mausoleum of the most liberal and tolerant of Roman emperors, Hadrian, which the popes had converted to dungeons. We know nothing about this process. The end result, however, seems to have been, that Giordano Bruno towards the end of 1599 regretted and withdrew that he had ever regretted and withdrawn anything he earlier had professed. Thus he rectified his break-down in Venice in July 1592. For this he was condemned to be publicly burnt at the stake. The execution took place on the 17th February 1600.

Unjustly, Giordano Bruno has been shaded over by the other great astronomers of his age, particularly Galilei, who at Bruno's death was in his middle 30s and kept busy in Pisa. Also Kepler and Tycho Brahe, who met in Prague three days before Bruno's execution, have been awarded greater fame, since they managed to survive. Today it seems absurd that Bruno should have had to be executed because he believed

Copernicus was right. That was not the reason, though, why he was executed. His greatest thrust in life was something much bolder.

Giordano Bruno presented a new theology, which made a clean sweep with all superstition. To Giordano Bruno, God was as impersonal as to Buddhism and Hinduism and just as ubiquitous and omnipresent in all forms of life in the whole universe. This could hardly be regarded as very sinful or irritating either. The consequence, though, was for Bruno, that Christ was not the Son of God. This daring thesis galled the Church and its inquisition into madness and hysteria. Professing such a thesis was about the most provocative and forbidden thing that any thinker could apply himself to in the 16th century. By Bruno's extremely solid basis of knowledge and education, universally acclaimed in the whole academic world as a universal man, his uncompromising adherence to this one impossible thesis made the Church shake in her very foundations. It was worse than the whole reformation.

The Vatican tried her utmost to silence him down and almost succeeded. By neither executing nor releasing him during a process of seven years, he was kept buried alive and in death's silence while the world in total ignorance of his fate dared to speak no word about him. There was only one way out of this dilemma, which Bruno finally found himself: by standing up to his own belief in what he felt to be the truth, angering his judges and provoking the Church to blind fury, he tempted the Church to complete digging the grave of its own credibility by committing the worst judicial error of the age. Bruno was not guilty of anything except freedom of conscience and speech.

Bruno was unique in that he had to stand completely alone. No one before him or after him dared to tread in the boldness of his footsteps. To many, his world of thought became immeasurably important and influential, particularly to the astronomers Galilei, Kepler and Brahe, but also to philosophers like Spinoza, Goethe, Schopenhauer and Rudolf Steiner; but none of his followers showed the same consistency and courage in his life's work. Galilei withdrew anything at the mere sight of the instruments of torture, Spinoza enclosed himself in safety within the soft frames of theoretical philosophy, Goethe was terror-struck at the mere idea of challenging the existing order of the world, Schopenhauer protected himself by veiling himself in pessimistic resignation, while Rudolf Steiner followed Goethe's safe policy of restricting himself to constructivism. The boldness of Giordano Bruno is still unmatched today, and he is still waiting for a lawyer to defend him against the Roman inquisition.

Concerning the Bomb

The supreme responsibility was partly held by Einstein. Three years before the second world war he insisted on the development of the atomic bomb considering the development of Germany. His motive was the risk of Germany developing the same bomb, which would be the ultimate world nightmare scenery. President Roosevelt approved of Einstein's views and arguments and launched the Manhattan project.

Some years before Hiroshima, it became evident that Germany would not and could not develop the bomb. The great crime concerning the bomb was committed when the general in charge of the Manhattan project withheld this vital information to Robert Oppenheimer and his colleagues. The general decided to proceed with the bomb although the only justifying reason for developing it had vanished.

When the bomb was used the official motive was to save human lives, that is American lives. In America the only possible alternative was considered an invasion of Hondo, the heartland of Japan, which would cost an enormous amount of American lives, at least an estimated million. What they didn't know in America was that Japan already before the bomb was used had appealed to Russia for peace negotiations. Since

Russia was not yet at war with Japan, the Japanese found Russia (Stalin and Molotov) a proper peace negotiator. But Stalin closed the door and said nothing about Japan's pleadings to America, since Stalin looked forward to the pleasure of invading Japan and occupying a few of her strategic islands.

If Russia had accepted Japan's effort to make peace, a quick end to the war could have been achieved without any further loss of American lives and without the use of any atomic bombs. Stalin's responsibility concerning Hiroshima and Nagasaki is therefore terrible and almost total, since he knew about the bomb. After Truman having released the bomb, Stalin occupied southern Sakhalin and the Kuril islands.

Nothing, however, can excuse the second bomb on Nagasaki. One bomb was more than enough and utterly unnecessary and inhuman as an enterprise. In a matter of seconds, 130,000 civilians of Hiroshima were killed for nothing out of 250,000, while another 114,000 were injured for life, most of whom died from the consequences of radiation. Nagasaki saw another 120,000 civilian victims.

The pilots dropping the bombs considered the mission a great honour and quarrelled about who was to press the buttons. Like French Mururoa soldiers much later, who sank Greenpeace ships and harassed environment activists, they were officially decorated and awarded public honours.

One of the first to turn against the use of the bomb after Hiroshima was Robert Oppenheimer, its chief manufacturer. He considered the Manhattan project a necessary experiment, but after the tests and the use of the bomb in warfare with results horrifyingly unspeakable and unsurveyable in timeless destructiveness, he pronounced further development unpardonable.

All the same, the world proceeded with the USA, Russia, France, Britain and China leading followed by India, maybe Israel and maybe other countries. And China is still exploding bombs 50 years after Hiroshima, and even France, charming intelligent France, who made the film "*Hiroshima mon amour*", the strongest of all film protests against war.

Einstein's supreme world nightmare scenery finally came true. The bomb was never acquired by a dictatorship like Hitler's Germany, but it was acquired by the dictatorship of both Stalin and China, which latter nation still remains the world's greatest and most oppressive autocracy.

Religious Assessment by John

(We put to him the question, concerning an article by him against Islam: Would he still maintain his objections against Islam in the face of the ethnic cleansings by the orthodox Serbs in Bosnia? He is himself a well educated Christian orthodox theologian. An elaborate answer was expected. Here it is:)

"My dear friend, Your query compels me to some painstaking elaboration. I hope at least some of your readers might cope with it.

My distance from Islam has only been more marked with the years. Islam today is the religion with the greatest double standards with on one hand a generous, attractive and reasonable universalism and on the other hand the most extreme terrorism and fanaticism which is seen in the world today. Good Muslims can not understand the fear and prejudice of others against Islam while at the same time they close their eyes to its dark sides; and the greatest danger of Islam today is that all these good and somewhat naïve Muslims, who constitute a majority, are being driven over by the fanatics and fundamentalists.

The situation in ex-Yugoslavia, though, concerns religion least of all. There is a very old hatred against an ancient Turkish-Muslim oppression at the bottom of the conflict,

but this originally logic hatred is not what the conflict is about. From the beginning of the civil war, the Orthodox Church of Serbia definitely denounced the Milosevic regime and its manoeuvres. The Church has never supported the Serbian ethnic cleansings or any war in or against Bosnia, not even morally.

The conflict is extremely complicated since Croats, Bosnians and Serbs really are one and the same people with one and the same language. The differences between them are partly religious, since Croats are Catholics, Serbs are orthodox and Bosnians Muslims; but more prevailing than the religious discrepancies is the heavy historical legacy, which in my view is the villain in the drama. Croats and Serbs have always been fighting each other, although they are one and the same people, only because of a bitter historical inheritance. A wall was erected between them from the beginning by the Church, which prescribed the Croats to become Catholics with a Latin alphabet and the Serbs to become orthodox with a Cyrillic alphabet. In almost every war they happened to land on different sides against each other. The process hardly improved by the Croats developing into good organizers and business men, leaders in peace and war, and the Serbs never getting away from the turf but remaining an uneducated ignorant stock of peasants. The difference between them that never existed in language, culture or religion formed during the centuries into a definite difference in mentality.

It became the task of a Croat to organize and keep modern Yugoslavia together, which at the death of this hero, the leader Tito, lapsed into total dissolution from want of an equally competent Croat to take over.

The lack of education and contact with other peoples has turned the Serbs into a hard and stupid people. By that civil war, which only they have forced upon the country, they have made themselves deserving of a thorough chastisement; being so stupid and hard they need a good thrashing, and that is probably also the opinion of their own Orthodox Church. So much about the Orthodox Church in the civil war of Yugoslavia and my own stand against Islam.

That this religion is on its way out appears to me as self-evident. Only the most stupid, the most oppressed and most uneducated embrace Islam and generally with much fear and superstition. They all seem bound to become losers. Islam is sinking down to some status of the great world religion of pariahs.

But also Christianity is in danger. Jewry manages as it always has managed by primarily safeguarding its own religious core at the cost of expansion and dissemination. Among the Christian churches the Orthodox manages the best, also by consistently turning away from the world to instead carefully watch its own retrospective stability, which has been strongly consolidated during 70 years of communist oppression and persecution; while both the Catholic and the Protestant churches are in a crisis of identity in a modern world which they imagine it is important to follow. This might be their great mistake.

Searching desperately for means of renewal without knowing where, they search in blindness. The Protestant Church is more flexible and therefore has greater chances of success, while the Catholic Church is stuck in old prejudice, which unfortunately seems impossible to break away from.

The only solution as I see it is to commonly strive for the original Church, which existed before Constantine the Great turned it into a state religion, before the massive Catholic dogmatic beton bunker was constructed as a devastating anti-Christian anti-cathedral with heresies and inquisitions in unendingly deplorable towropes, before the popes became infallible and before the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches separated. As I see it, the Christian Church can only survive if it find itself again as it thrived before the year 325.

Of course you can't just abolish everything that happened after the year 325 including the activities of Augustine and Martin Luther. But what you should do is to

reassess all the authorities after 325, investigate them critically and cease to consider anyone as infallible just because he or she represented the Church. The principle of infallibility is the worst trap that any man can fall into.

Many monotheistic fanatics have wandered into this trap with flying colours dragging uncountable innocents with them unto death and perdition. This is the peril of monotheism: it can be abused. Without mentioning any names that could generate protests (- so I say nothing about Moses, Jesus or Mahomet -) you can from our own times pick doubtful characters of that kind like David Koresh, Charles Manson and even Adolf Hitler, who earnestly believed himself to be an instrument of God.

There are such traps and risks also in Hinduism but curiously enough not in Buddhism. During 2500 years, Buddhism has never succeeded in bringing forth any fanatic leader, as far as I know, who in the name of his religion has dragged others into perdition. On the contrary, there are many examples in the history of Buddhism of fanatical leaders who have dragged others into perdition and misery by persecuting Buddhism.

Buddhism and Hinduism walk together and have never persecuted each other, like for instance Christianity and Islam have persecuted each other and Jewry. Both Buddhism and Hinduism have been severely persecuted by Islam, though, which tried to extirpate both religions from India 500 years ago. It only succeeded in destroying an enormous amount of monuments, temples and monasteries from Pakistan all the way down to Indonesia and Java.

In addition to this you also have to acknowledge Hinduism for being an incredibly dynamic and expansive religion, which during so many thousand years (at least three, probably more,) has succeeded in maintaining an originality and multiplicity which no other religion ever could vie with.

For its sobriety and tolerance, lack of abuse, its basic constructiveness and humility, and its human and universal common sense in connection with a faculty for self-denial and self-sacrifice, which is only equalled by Christianity, which has not succeeded equally well in keeping clean from abuses, Buddhism must objectively be regarded as the world's most interesting religion.

I mentioned previously that the only salvation for Christianity is to rediscover its true identity as it was manifest before 325. At that time there were many Christian books which in 325 and later on were completely suppressed. Many were lost in the process. One of the most ruthlessly suppressed was the great orthodox apostolic father Origen, who made magnificent efforts to unite Christianity with the ancient philosophical schools of Greece, so that these would survive within Christian frames. Origen was for example completely open to the idea of reincarnation (the Pythagorean school), and he was far from being alone. For such tolerance, universalism and mental open-mindedness, the establishment of Christianity as an established dogmatic state religion was a catastrophe as disastrous as the invasion of the barbarians was to the civilization of classical antiquity.

During the first half of the 20th century, Jewry became the most important religious issue in the world above all through the terrible martyrdom which that religion suffered in the second world war. In the same manner I think Buddhism today is becoming the world's most serious religious issue through the remarkable martyrdom of Tibetan Buddhism under the hands of a Chinese atheistic establishment of force. The Jews were reconditioned after the war and had their state of Israel, which almost the whole world has supported ever since. The Tibetans were robbed of their own country in 1950, and no one did anything about it, although Tibet appealed to the UN. Not until in 1959, when Dalai Lama was compelled to leave his country, the world started to pay some attention to Tibet, but still nothing was made. The only important initiative to do something about it was the International Jurists Commission's enquiries and reports in

1960 about what really happened. The only other actions was the generosity of the Indian government to support Tibetan refugees and a vague American support to the Tibetan resistance movement among a handful of warriors of Kham. Nothing else was done; and those very few travellers who China allowed to visit Tibet were all naïve obedient lackeys, who were used by China to propagate to the world the one-sided Chinese view of things. Thereby China was given free hands to launch the unspeakably cruel cultural revolution in Tibet with the destruction of 98,5% of all the religious monuments and institutions of Tibet and 85% of all Tibetan original literature as a result, apart from the genocide of 1,2 million Tibetans or a fifth of the population. From 1959 until 1979 the world left the Tibetans to languish or die in their own country under the occupation of an alien nation of murderers. And those very few who knew something about it and who could give the world some information were not allowed to appear, were not believed or were silenced.

The long space of time (20 years, really 30 or even 45) makes the sufferings of the Tibetans from one aspect even more remarkable than those of the Jews 1933-45, which only lasted for twelve years, or at least equally remarkable. More Jews were murdered, but they were also a greater people with some prominence in the entire world. The Tibetans were only a small people living only in Tibet, who only wanted to stay there in their own country and live there in peace.

From a theological point of view, the Tibetan situation thereby is the most interesting situation for any people in the world today. In some way I believe the Tibetans have the future and destiny of the world in their hands. According to my experience, they have thought deeper and further than any other people; and as an example of what they really occupy themselves with, I can recount a discussion which at the moment is very much in vogue among high lamas.

You could say that it is intimately connected with the theory of relativity of Einstein's, which also speculates in the manipulation and change of laws for the fourth dimension of time. A few lamas I am acquainted with, who are deeply engaged in the world's affairs and feel some responsibility for its destiny, are completely united in their conviction, that it is absolutely possible, solely with the power of thought (which is neither limited by time or space or distance), to correct historical mistakes, by practically journeying back in time, visit the exact spots in space and time of critical events (for instance the Sarajevo murders in 1914 or the releasing of the bomb over Hiroshima in 1945,) change the historical course for a better one (by for example letting the Hiroshima plane crash into the ocean) and then return to the present time as if nothing had happened. The world would look decisively different, history would be written in a different way, the whole historical course would be something else, but all this would be natural and accepted both to oneself and to all other people living, who would have experienced something completely different from the Sarajevo murders, the Hiroshima and Nagasaki blasts or the Kennedy assassinations.

Of course, this would categorically be refuted by all realists as wishful thinking and science fiction, but to certain Tibetans it is absolutely possible and perfectly realistic.

That was now a general survey of the religious situation in the world of August 1995 fifty years after the termination of the second world war from a Tibetan point of view in the Himalayas. I hope you and your readers don't mind."

(The famous physicist Stephen Hawking of Cambridge had a comment on the possibility of "journeying in time" in September, in which he completely agreed with the Tibetan lamas about the realistic possibility of the phenomenon.)

Talks in Kathmandu

"Dear Christian, In the spirit of our friend Max Chablon I would like to convey the essence of a small "conference" we had in Kathmandu earlier this year. Besides me and Kim, also our friend Doctor Sun was present with the two Chinese gentlemen, of which one was a communist. As you remember, there was no conference in Kathmandu last year because of the elections, wherefore we had one in Darjeeling instead; but perhaps you could say, that the Kathmandu conference took place this year instead.

No one made any notes, the meeting had no secretary, so I transmit only the headlines and the atmosphere of our conversation. Copy the document, make editions and abbreviations as you will, and then destroy it according to our normal procedure.

(It should here be noted, that all conferences and political talks which John ever participated in were possible only on the condition that nothing was taken down in writing. That's why I always have to destroy all of John's documents, so that he never runs the risk of being blamed for any written reports of such secret talks. *Editor's note.*)

I imagine our talks should be of special interest to you since you were being discussed. What was said could be of some guidance to you for the future.

Our talks were held in English, Nepali and Chinese. Most of what the Chinese said between themselves in Chinese I could not understand, but Doctor Sun gave me detailed accounts afterwards, which I trust. Nothing was said in Swedish, which is why my translation sometimes may seem a bit artificial. I didn't write it all down in English, since I would rather concentrate it all in Swedish, since no one else here understands that language, and since I enjoy practising my Swedish. Of course, no microphones or tape-recorders are possible on occasions like this.

Doctor Sun acted as our host and chairman. I will try to render it all as Max Chablon would have handed it down.

Sun I am very happy to have you all here together under the same roof, so that we can discuss important matters, which concern not only India and China but the whole world. These my friends from China are Mr Ho and Mr Ping. Mr Ho is a member of the communist party and has some influence. Mr Ping is a diplomat and is mainly here as a spectator. Mr Kim is a Buddhist representing India, while our friend Mr John, who is a westerner, is deeply concerned in both Tibetan, Buddhist, political and religious issues.

Ping What religion does he represent?

John I was born a Christian in the Orthodox Church, and my education is Greek-Russian; but I have now been here in India for almost four years and know Ladakh as well as Tibet.

Ping (to Sun) So he does not represent the western world?

John I represent the western world only as a democrat.

Ping A most important political marking.

Sun But we all represent peace. We all desire peace, and we have here a golden opportunity to meet across the borders, India with China and democracy with communism.

Kim India feels the continued Chinese occupation and sinofication of Tibet as a constant and growing threat against India.

Ho India has nothing to fear from China, we assure you.

Kim How can India have faith in the insurances of China when China has placed so many nuclear weapons in Tibet pointing directly at the most populous states of India?

Ho You simply have to believe our insurances. You have no alternative. You have nothing to put against us.

Ping (in Chinese) Undiplomatic, Mr Ho.

Ho (in Chinese) I don't care. India can't threaten us.

Ping (in Chinese) That's why we shouldn't threaten them either.

Ho (in Chinese) Don't you think I know that? But that fellow (*pointing at Kim*) tries to be rude and impertinent.

Ping (in Chinese) Let him roar. He has no teeth.

Kim We have nothing to put against you, but the world opinion is growing against you without the help of India.

Ho (to Ping) Just listen to him! He dares to threaten us! - Mr Kim, are you trying to threaten us? Are you part of the international conspiracy against China? What do you think we have the communist party for? To safeguard China and save her! We don't want western decadence and corruption in China! We don't want American barbarity with video violence, pornography and drugs! We want to keep our China intact and well organized as a state! The whole western world is disintegrating especially morally! It is our moral duty towards our country and people to protect us against all that!

Kim Why then do you persecute Buddhism?

Ho We do not persecute Buddhism.

Kim It is almost extirpated in China. In Tibet you destroyed almost all Buddhistic monasteries and books.

Ho That was a mistake committed by the gang of four. Since then we have restored the monasteries.

Kim You have restored a tenth of all the ruined monasteries and only such monasteries that could be visited by tourists. The rest of the monasteries you allow your impoverished Tibetans to rebuild at their own cost, like for instance Ganden, one of the three greatest monasteries in the world, which you forced the Tibetans to tear down brick by brick, beam by beam, by hand, to transport all the loose stones down into the valley. Now without your help they have to carry up every one of those stones again.

Ping (in Chinese) Leave this to me, dear colleague. (*to Kim*) Buddhism is being restored in all China. It has been subject to gross injustice not only in Tibet but in all China.

Sun Is it not even so, Mr Ping, that you, knowing well the state of affairs in China, quite coolly reckon with the possibility that Buddhism could regain so much influence that it could replace the communist party in China if necessary?

Ping (with a shy glance towards Ho) As a matter of fact, that is so, Doctor Sun.

Ho (in Chinese) What is this? The communist party can not tolerate Buddhist conspiracies.

Ping (in Chinese) This is no conspiracy, my friend. It is rather like an insurance.

Ho (in Chinese) Dear colleague, I don't understand you. Are you loyal to the party or not?

Ping (in Chinese) Of course I am.

Ho (in Chinese) How then can you be a Buddhist?

Ping (in Chinese) Mr Ho, our party has existed for fifty years. Buddhism has existed for one half of five thousand years. It has survived all crises. Not even the communist party has succeeded in destroying it.

Ho (in Chinese) Comrade, your superstition amazes me.

Sun My friends, let's speak English and not depart from the subject.

Ho (in Chinese, pointing at John) For the sake of that imperialistic westerner?

Sun (indicating Kim) We are not only Chinese here, and English is the one language that we all understand.

Ho (turning to John) Well then, Mr Westerner, for your sake we will speak English. You haven't said much. We would like to know what you are doing here. We can't identify your colour.

John I am neutral but very much here to learn and understand. I respect your arguments. I myself consider the American vulgarity culture and capitalism as perhaps the greatest evil in the world. The one thing which perhaps is even more evil is your treatment of the Tibetan people.

Ho They were barbarians. We civilized them.

John With atom bombs? By destroying their schools and universities?

Ho No. They were fortresses of corruption and exploitation.

John They contained only books and works of art. (*interrupting before Ho starts to speak*) And to this evil is added your treatment of the Uigurs of East Turkestan and the Mongolians of Inner Mongolia.

Ho You mean the barbarians of Sinkiang. They are only muslims.

Kim But you explode your atomic bombs in the land of this people which you occupy.

Ho Sinkiang has always belonged to China.

John No, it has been independent whenever it has had the possibility, just like Tibet, Manchuria and Mongolia.

Ho So, Mr John, you desire to bereave China of Tibet, Sinkiang, Inner Mongolia and Manchuria?

John Unfortunately the Manchurians are now only four percent in their own country. The rest of the people there are implanted Han Chinese.

Ho Emigrants and pioneers!

John Call it what you will. They were placed there by you. The other peoples, that is the Tibetans, Mongolians and Uigurs, don't want to share the same destiny of being swallowed up and naturally exterminated by Han. They want to survive. And they see no other possibility of survival than by freeing themselves from China.

Ho They can only survive within the civilization of the People's Republic.

John They themselves say the direct contrary.

Ho They can't manage on their own. Not even the Russians could manage on their own after their fall from socialism.

John Because socialism had destroyed the environment of the whole Soviet Union. Do you want the same thing to happen in China?

Ping It has already happened in many places.

Kim Koko Nor for instance.

Ping Not only Koko Nor.

Ho (in Chinese) Comrade, you amaze me more and more with your low morals.

Ping (in Chinese) Comrade, China is no longer infallible in the eyes of the world. Sooner or later all our secrets will become known.

Ho (in Chinese) Through spies! How do we know for certain that these westerners are not spies, who have come here only to get something out of us?

Ping (in Chinese) Doctor Sun assured us of their neutrality.

Sun Gentlemen, I assure you that Mr Kim only represents Indian and Buddhist interests. Mr John has taken sides against America as much as you.

Ho (in Chinese) America is not the only dangerous party! It's the whole world capitalism! How do we know that Mr John does not represent some secretly false humanitarian organization which only serves capitalistic interests?

Ping (in Chinese) Comrade, I must warn you against your lack of diplomacy. Your way of thinking can only lead into blind alleys and civil wars.

Kim Speak English!

Sun (in Chinese) Gentlemen, please co-operate. That's why we are here. His Majesty the King of Nepal gave us his special permission to gather here for the sake of peace.

Ho (in Chinese) How can the world be so blind and seduced by capitalism so as not to see how communism only desires to propagate peace!

Sun (in Chinese) Say it in English.

Ho (says the same thing in English)

Kim If it only wants to propagate peace, why then does it use violence?

Ho China does not use violence. Our only method is friendly persuasion.

Kim In Tibet that friendly persuasion has always only consisted of violence.

Ho You are wrong.

Kim Mr Ho, you are extremely naïve.

Ho (to Ping, in Chinese) He insults me!

Sun Mr Ho, a theoretical question. If there would be a civil war between the communist party and the army, which side would you take? Would you defend the order and security of the country and support the army, or would you defend your country's freedom and the communist party?

Ho Such a situation can never occur.

Sun How can you be so certain?

Ho It is simply impossible.

Sun And you, Mr Ping?

Ping I admit that the situation could occur. Doctor Sun's question is important. The communist party defends positions which are becoming obsolete while the army is constantly becoming more corrupt. These two developments work against each other. If a crisis would occur, I would abandon both and join a Buddhist party.

Kim Why not a democratic party?

Ping China is not yet mature enough for thorough democracy.

Ho (in Chinese) This is the first sensible thing you have uttered today, comrade.

Ping (in Chinese) I wish you the same wisdom.

Sun Mr Ho, in what respects do you think the communist party has succeeded?

Ho In all respects.

Sun Give an example.

Ho Birth control. In that field China has succeeded while the whole world has failed, *(turning to Kim)* and especially India.

John Do you then consider it human and natural to *force* families into having only one child?

Ho It is necessary. It is necessary in the whole world. The uncontrolled growth of mankind is a threat to all life. The natural epidemics, which formerly limited the growth of mankind, have been eliminated by medical science, and Aids is spreading too slowly. That's why compulsory measures have to be used.

John So you desire a faster epidemic of Aids?

Ho Yes, especially in Africa, South America and India. Look what life has become in cities like Calcutta, São Paulo, Mexico City, Cairo and Delhi! It would be pure charity to let 90% of all the poor people in the world die, so that the others could have a safer future!

John More than half of humanity are living in extreme poverty. So you would suggest that half of humanity would perish so that the other half would survive?

Ho Yes. That would be reasonable.

John And would you then also sacrifice half of all Chinese?

Ho China would only benefit if more than half of all Chinese didn't exist.

John At least you are consistent.

Ho And what are your views on the development of the western world? There you find the worst destruction of the environment in the world.

John I have always been of the opinion that man should return to nature since only nature can save her. The great cities of eight figures I have always considered as death traps.

Ho Then we lean in the same direction. That pleases me. You are sensible after all. But on my part all cities with more than a million people should be done away with.

John In the western world we think that the population explosion is only due to poverty. If the standard of living was increased beyond poverty and distress, families would no longer have many children, and uncontrolled population growth would cease. But we don't believe in communist compulsory measures. Only capitalistic freedom could accomplish the desired results.

Ho What differences do the methods make, as long as we have results? I believe our methods to be more efficient.

John But they are inhuman.

Ho Is Aids, prostitution, drug abuse and suicide more human?

Sun The problem is whether the results could be reached by human means.

Kim Gentlemen, your alternatives are equally inhuman, while the voluntary celibacy of Buddhism and Christianity could be the correct solution and even more efficient than dictatorial force.

Ho China is democratic!

Ping (in Chinese) Don't start all that again!

Ho (in Chinese) He is insulting me!

Sun Gentlemen, I think we have come through our most important matters. May I now invite you for dinner?

Ho Doctor Sun, this was the first sensible thing you have said today. I wanted to end these meaningless discussions all along.

Ping Before we finish, I have still an important question. Doctor Sun, it has come to my knowledge that you have written an article in a western English-speaking journal published by a close friend of Mr John's. We agreed to accept your invitation here for these discussions on condition that they would not come out. How do we know that our talks will be kept secret?

Sun I wrote an article about the future of China in a small insignificant cultural journal, the editor of which I know personally. He works with music and research in literature and is completely harmless.

Ho How can you be so certain?

Sun Gentlemen, you just have to accept it, like Kim has to accept that your nuclear guns are pointed at India.

Ho So you will write nothing of this in that journal or any other journal?

Sun I give you my word that I will not. I am under obligation of silence.

Ping (in Chinese) And what about these two? (*indicating John and Kim*)

Sun Mr John and Mr Kim, my friends demand of you that you will write nothing in English about our talks here today.

John We promise not to transmit any single English word of what has been said here today.

Ping Or Chinese.

John Or Chinese.

Sun Are you satisfied, gentlemen?

Ping We shall have to be. Perhaps China after all here today has come one step closer to India and the western world.

Kim Only one question: what are your plans concerning Hongkong and Taiwan?

Ho The conference is finished.

Doctor Sun brought us smoothly over from our explosive debates to dinner. We did not get anything more interesting out of the Chinese. Mr Ho was silent and sullen during dinner, while Mr Ping was all superficial politeness. I think both felt they had said too much and at least more than they had intended. Doctor Sun was admirable all through by keeping a perfect balance. He is an invaluable asset to us.

Next day we had a completely different kind of conference, which I have not been able to reconstruct in the same way. Instead of the Chinese we had a Buddhist monk from Tibet who is close to Dalai Lama, and a tough Khampa, an incorrigible fighter of the Chinese, who belonged to the last who openly fought the Chinese, who has never given up and who still moves about in Tibet as he wishes without ever having been caught by the Chinese, since he knows the roads and paths better than they do. It is maybe superfluous to add that he is an old close friend of mine and one of my best guides. Doctor Sun was also present.

Instead of Chinese a lot of Tibetan was spoken, but neither Doctor Sun nor Kim interrupted when the Tibetans spontaneously passed their intensive discussions over into Tibetan, since they always afterwards explained everything to us.

The only important point of this almost equally enduring conference was, that my friend the Khampa succeeded in making it quite clear to Doctor Sun, that he personally had no intention to ever rest or give up until not only Tibet was completely independent and restored to its natural and ethnic borders, but also East Turkestan, Inner Mongolia (restored to Mongolia) and Manchuria. He also made it quite clear to Doctor Sun that the Chinese, after the restored independence of these nations, could count on being thrown out from all parts where they had succeeded to plant themselves at the cost of the original population, and with greater consequence and brutality than the Russians were bereft of their rights in the Baltic states. He implied that it was quite realistic, when Turkestan would become independent, to count on that the Muslims there would not hesitate to massacre every single Chinese who had helped in ruining their country. Concerning Turkestan he also made it plain that the Muslims there had massive support to count on from all Muslim nations in Central Asia, since all these countries including Turkey had received hundreds of thousands of refugees from Turkestan, the so called Sinkiang, which in Chinese only means The New Province. Further, he warned Kim especially against leniency and compliance towards the Chinese from the part of India and the western world. He pointed out the western indifference concerning Hongkong and its future after 1997:

"The Chinese have no soul and no integrity. They are a vast spiritless mass constituting a kind of ethnic amoeba swelling and spreading and swallowing everything up which it gets into contact with. Hongkong and the western world can not rely on Hongkong being permitted to keep any kind of individuality after July 1997. The way we know China, it is probable that all things personal in Hongkong then will vanish, like in Taiwan, if China is allowed to take care of this island too."

Of course, the representative of Dalai Lama protested against such an uncompromising attitude and considered the policy of my Khampa both dangerous and unwise. The Khampa answered, that his attitude was no policy, but simply the manner in which every Tibetan, Turkestanian, Mongolian and Manchurian was thinking all over Asia, who had ever had any contact with any Chinese. They had learned this implacable attitude from 46 years of oppression. The monk maintained that the attitude was dangerous, unwise and most un-Buddhistic but resigned.

Doctor Sun said very little but listened very carefully. When my Khampa seemed to have won the field, he said: "God help China," as if he had given up and thought that nothing could save China.

Afterwards I asked him more privately what he really had intended. He presented a very interesting train of thought: "China suffered terribly under western imperialism from 1850 and under the Japanese and Kuomintang up to 1949, but no evil coming from the west was worse than communism. Karl Marx based his life's work and philosophy on an envious hatred of higher classes, and this hatred was the only drive in his whole life. Communism was from beginning to end based only on hatred, and this hatred all Chinese have been forced to swallow during the whole period of Chairman Mao and

even longer. This hatred was allowed to furiously hit also other people and especially the Tibetans, perhaps the least hating people in the world. But hatred always returns to itself. It has to strike back on the Chinese themselves; and this hatred, which the communists have scourged China with for 46 years, will not hit the communists, who like in Russia will simply vanish and change colours, as hard as it will hit the vast innocent mass of the ill-fated Chinese people."

These memorable days were the first and second of November in Kathmandu. A few days later an Israeli shot his Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to death. This gave me much to think of. There is however nothing that unites this Israeli right-wing extremist with my Khampa. They come from two different worlds. I was reminded, though, of your analysis of the equally extremist doctor Baruch Goldstein, who in February last year in madness shot down, was it 29 Palestinians? Your analysis with a cautious explanation of the madman's way of thinking must have given rise to misunderstandings and bad blood. You must denounce such terrorism, because it is nothing else. No Tibetan or other person branded by Chinese oppression has ever gone so far as to terrorism. The terrorists in China are only Chinese; and unfortunately there are many resemblances between individual Chinese commissars, soldiers and guards who kill from sheer panic or madness, and such as those two senseless Israeli murderers, who only do their utmost to destroy Israel. That at least is my opinion.

While I sympathize with Doctor Sun and his compassion, I must at the same time declare my Khampa to be in the right. When Chinese perish through national convulsions you are never informed of the exact number of casualties. An example: at Tiananman Square in Peking June 4th 1989, the communist party published casualty figures of some hundred who had been "killed by mistake" or had died "under self-inflicted circumstances". In brief, Deng Xiaoping was of the opinion, that it was all their own fault who died on Tiananman Square, since they stood in the way of the tanks; while the whole world could watch on television, how these brutally drove over and killed off thousands. The actual figure of death is estimated to some 10,000, possibly 12,000. It's impossible to find out the exact figure. In the concentration camps around Xining some 10 million prisoners are reputed to be held. No one knows exactly, and even less does anyone know how many have died there or been killed under the communist regime, but it should be more. During the "great leap forward", when China was industrialized by force during the 50s, about 40 million people died from starvation. No one knows exactly. They were forced from the countryside into vast industrial collectives where only worthless junk was fabricated, while millions were organized to kill little birds in madness for nothing. During the cultural revolution about 100 million people perished or vanished - no one knows exactly. The human dignity is non-existent in China and has only been developed in Taiwan and Hongkong, which these oases naturally don't want to lose, and which is the first thing they will lose if they are incorporated into China. No human dignity can be developed in China as long as the communists run the country. Their regime has from beginning to end been characterized by empty promises that were broken - the Chinese have never given any promise without breaking it. Of all the unreliable peoples of the world, this is the most consistent."

- John B. Westerberg

(All this has been translated from the author's Swedish original. We have reason to assume, that the discussions as recorded above never took place, since what was actually said never was taken down in writing except in another language afterwards. The facts and figures, only, should be considered truthful, while the wordings certainly must have been different in reality.)

It Happens in Lhasa

A young Tibetan threw two stones at an armed guard. A vice-platoon leader asked: "Shall we beat him?" As the stone hit a vice-battalion commander in his leg, he ordered: "Beat him!" Then he led three armed policemen to chase the Tibetan who had thrown the stones. The Tibetan ran into the house of an ordinary Tibetan family. The armed policemen crashed upon the door and raked the residents with gunfire. All six members of the family were killed, among whom the youngest boy was only eleven years old. But the Tibetan who threw the stones climbed a wall and ran away. The armed policemen followed him and shot him in the leg. One armed police then rushed forward and hit the Tibetan's head with his rifle. The rifle went off accidentally, and an armed policeman behind him was struck in the neck and died instantly. When the vice-platoon leader saw his fellow die, he angrily hit the Tibetan with his rifle and smashed the brains out of the Tibetan's head. When the policemen hit this young Tibetan with their guns, six Tibetans from another family stood in their doorway not far away and cried: "Murderers! Murderers!" The vice-platoon leader then picked up his machine gun and raked them with gunfire. All six Tibetans died.

This is a quotation of a Chinese cadre who witnessed the whole thing. This was not during the difficult days in the 50s but as late as in March 1989. The same Chinese reported to Amnesty International of a massacre in Lhasa in the same month in which 256 Tibetans were murdered.

As you see, the situation in Lhasa is somewhat different from the case of the poor Palestinians throwing stones in the Intifada.

We shall present similar incidents from China's occupied territories in following issues.

Concerning Buddhism

It could be discussed whether Buddhism is really a religion, since it is rather the supreme philosophy. Religion has been defined as "a conviction about a higher power which rules the life of man", which indicates a belief in one or more gods or in destiny. Those are the very things that Buddhism denies. Instead it professes, that each individual is himself responsible principally for the whole universe and his connections with it, which includes his relationship and all his business therewith. Buddhism is in fact so scientific, that its founder from the beginning makes all dogmatism impossible, as he instead encourages his disciples to never take anything for granted but to carefully investigate everything and never accept anything which hasn't been proved to be valid and true by testing. Each one should carefully find the right way by himself alone and one step at a time.

So there is no god in Buddhism, and the one who least of all is any kind of god is Buddha himself, whose real name was Siddhartha Gautama Sakyamuni Tathagrata, which names stand for Christian name, surname, clan name and a title which means "Truth-sayer". This last name was the only title which the man gave himself. It means more exactly: "the teller of the truth, as others have told the truth, as it will always be told" or "the speaker of the timeless truth". An absolutely exact translation of the word is not possible in English.

The man, who was born a Hindu in a royal castle, broke radically with the Hindu traditions, all the established gods and the whole caste system. The one thing he developed instead was the teaching of Karma, which is close to our sense of "destiny" or "fate"; but the Asiatic way of taking the idea of reincarnation for granted gives Karma an infinitely more profound significance. What Buddha consistently sought and found

was a total liberation from all vanities and unimportant things in life - all disturbing thoughts, all desires and sufferings and, in brief, all things evil. The Buddhist ideal is then to acquire a perfectly pure mind which is free from every kind of desire, which necessitates a perfect celibate. This supreme peace of mind has a higher status in Buddhism than all the knowledge and education in the world.

To reach this ideal you have to clean up your Karma, which is the burden of all evil subconscious memories from the past and notably from past lives, which then could be infinite in number with infinities of burdens. This process is achieved by a moderate life of asceticism and meditation. According to Buddha, each one could only do this by himself and alone.

You could also call Buddhism a high ethical moral philosophy, which goes further than anything else in realizing the Greek god Apollo's command: "Know thyself!" A consequence of this commandment would seem to be a slight risk for egoism, which risk is eliminated by the great Buddhistic commandment of love and charity, which even involves the prohibition against killing animals, and by the establishment of the human phenomenon called *Bodhisattvas*.

A Bodhisattva is a Buddha who has achieved Nirvana, that is perfect freedom from the burdens of Karma, and who accordingly have no need of further reincarnations, but who from sheer pity with mankind allow themselves to be reincarnated all the same just in order to help others. There are different views within Buddhism whether Buddha himself after his life's work left the reincarnation process for good or continued as a Bodhisattva. According to the Theravada school of Buddhism, which is the oldest school and the established one in Ceylon, Burma and Thailand, concentrating on Buddhist teachings, it is quite possible and maybe even probable that Buddha returned occasionally. According to Mahayana Buddhism, "the great wheel", which is more practical with a remarkably democratic character, and which stresses Buddhist charity in practice, the established school of thought in Japan and China, Buddha never returned. Of course it is more positive and tempting to speculate in his possibly continued career as a chronic Bodhisattva. (There is a parallel in Christianity: "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," the famous last words of Jesus in the gospel of St. Matthew, the clearest thinkable manifestation of a real Bodhisattva.)

There is a third school within Buddhism which at the same time is the newest, the most remarkable and definitely the most controversial. This is the Tantric school of Tibet, which evolves Buddhist meditation to such extremes, that the breath-taking exercises may lead to perfect control not only of one's own body (enabling you to survive a Tibetan winter naked outside keeping warm all the time) but even of the laws of nature (enabling you for example to dispose of the law of gravitation, calling forth hail-storms as Milarepa did, and to run wild at tremendous speed almost weightlessly, a phenomenon described in detail by Alexandra David-Néel, etc.) and even of world politics (enabling you to predict incredible events which actually occur.) The controversial element in these extreme Tantric practices is, from our point of view, that they seem to be nothing else than super-egoistic trips, with an ugly stress on ego and egoism. In such extreme Tantric exercises there seems to be no room left for love and charity. Typical of lamas of the Tantric school is, though, that they consistently dissuade others from following that way, simply because it is so utterly perilous, demanding a Buddhist sense of what is right which transcends this world. The higher up you get, the more easily you go wrong and fall down the whole way to the bottom.

Buddha was himself against such supernatural practice. On one occasion he met a guru by a river who had spent forty years trying to learn to walk on water. Buddha deplored him and said: "Forty years he has thrown away on this vanity, when it would have been so much easier for him just to go to the ferry-man down the river, who would have brought him dry-shod across for almost nothing!"

Buddhism has dominated the major part of eastern Asia for 2500 years and is still expanding, nowadays also in the west. 1500 years ago it also dominated all Central Asia up to Persia, all India and large parts of Indonesia; but Islam replaced it with violence, while Hinduism regained all India. How could Hinduism, which Buddhism almost universally had replaced, recover almost totally and regain almost all lost territory?

The answer is threefold: the Indian climate, Buddhist moral strictness with never popular celibacy, and the irresistible sensualism of Hinduism. In the long run the Hindus preferred a sensual religion to the opposite, which has much to do with the warm sweet climate of India. Buddhism has almost only survived in India in the cooler mountains. However, Buddhism is now expanding in India again, since so many Hindus born out of caste find this religion a better alternative than a life born outside society, from which you automatically become an outcast forever. That brings us back to Buddha's radical and in those days heroic overthrow of all barriers between different castes, classes and races.

In the next issue we shall have a closer look at Hinduism.

The Year's Travels

The "third successful Indian journey" was already described in issue no. 3. It was a fantastic pioneering enterprise in the footsteps of Vyasadeva and Buddha, discovering new ways and places above all in the Garwhal Himalayas, with turning-points at Dharamsala, Gangtok (in Sikkim) and Bodhgaya.

The obligatory spring journey to the Mediterranean for the first time went through Romania, accompanied all the way down from Sweden through Bulgaria by snow storms, meeting a cold spring not until in Turkey in April.

The great travel experiment this year was a group visit to Prague, which proved a magnificent success, above all because all the participants proved such nice and cultivated people, belonging all to the Writing Society of Gothenburg.

The second Mediterranean journey in autumn was the year's only critical adventure, since for the first time on any voyage (out of 16 Mediterranean journeys) I was robbed of three fourths of what I had to live on.

The damage was partly repaired by the year's last and greatest journey, another tour around the Himalayas for 32 days at a total cost of 700 pounds only, including air flight, 12 hotels, 12 long bus journeys, 2 train journeys of 2000 kilometres, food and everything. The highlight was maybe Badrinath close to the Tibetan border, a place fit for closer acquaintance with Vishnu. But also this my first visit to Nepal was quite an introduction.

Next year we hope to return to the Mediterranean as well as to India and Tibet. For two years now our Tibetan plans have failed, why it is now about time for them to succeed.

Gothenburg, December 10th 1995.