



THE REAWAKENING OF BUDDHA-DHARMA IN MONGOLIA

BY VEN. ROGER KUNSANG

Lama Zopa Rinpoche first started getting invitations to Mongolia from Bakula Rinpoche five or six years ago. Bakula Rinpoche is the Indian ambassador to Mongolia and is a very high lama. He is actually a born prince of Ladakh in north India. He is considered to be an incarnation of one of the Sixteen Arhats.

Now in his eighties, Rinpoche was a member of the Indian parliament for a number of years for Ladakh; he also has four monasteries in Ladakh. Bakula Rinpoche's monasteries are renowned for their strictness in upholding the Vinaya, Buddha's rules of discipline. His nephew is Rigdzong Rinpoche, who is next in line

for Ganden Tri Rinpoche, the throne holder of Lama Tsong Khapa's lineage.

Another interesting member of his family is his brother, an Indian *sadhu* in his nineties. For the last fifty years he has been wandering in Ladakh and Kashmir and doesn't own a thing. He's Hindu and Buddhist – outwardly he roams and dresses like a Hindu and stays in Hindu and Sikh ashrams. Bakula Rinpoche said he doesn't speak much but when he does it's mostly about emptiness. He knows a lot about different religions and says they're the same because they're empty.

Bakula Rinpoche has been in Mongolia since 1989, which is when it became a democracy. Mongolia is seventeen hours west of the US by plane. Outer Mongolia is directly north of China, in between China and Russia; the part of Russia it borders is Siberia. It takes about five hours by plane to get from New Delhi to the capital, Ulaan Baatar.



Recently Bakula Rinpoche sent Lama Zopa Rinpoche another invitation, this time for the opening of a new monastery and school he had built. However, the main inspiration for Rinpoche's visit was an invitation from a small group of lay people. The main person in the group, a journalist named Batbold Baast, explained to Rinpoche in his letter that it's very important for lamas like Rinpoche to come because many young Mongolians – literally thousands of them – have been converted to Christianity by missionaries, many of them American Mormons.

Batbold explained how sad it is that in this naturally Buddhist country these Christians are working so aggressively to write Buddhism off as an ancient, outdated and superstitious religion. At the same time the

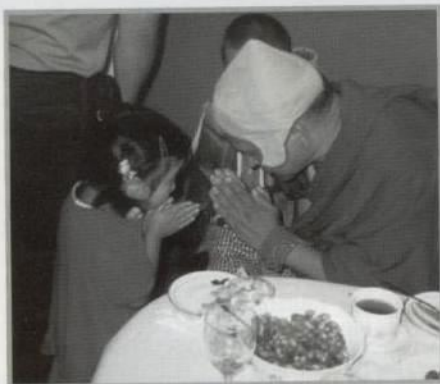
Christians are bringing a lot of money into the country and even sponsor the CNN news channel on the television; the commercials are all about Christianity.

The missionaries give a lot of material help – they even pay Mongolians to come to church! They pay them about \$5 per person; the average Mongolian makes about \$1 a day. And the church also has a television where people can come hang out and watch it. The Christians also teach English, and everything they teach is focused on making the young people learn about Christianity.

Rinpoche felt this was quite sad – not because there's anything wrong with Christianity, but because Mongolia is a traditionally Buddhist country. He feels that young people don't have the wisdom to analyze what they're being taught. Rinpoche made



Opposite page: Lama Zopa will build retreat huts outside Ulaan Baatar; journalist Batbold Baast, inset, invited Rinpoche to Mongolia, where he visited several monasteries, above; being greeted by a devoted child, left.



up his mind that he would start an FPMT center in Mongolia before he even went there (see box page 41), and Batbold also asked Rinpoche that their group be part of the FPMT. Before leaving for Mongolia Rinpoche met with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. His Holiness was very happy to hear Rinpoche was going to help and was keen for him to go.

The city is Soviet-style – cold, square, austere, and everything is small; people are stuffed into apartments. Ulaan baatar has about half a million people. There aren't many cars because

Russia was the only source of petrol and now very few people can afford petrol. The cars look like a parody of the 1950s. The young people are all dressed in the latest American style. Everyone has these high platform shoes, and they try to emulate the latest styles they see on CNN.

Mongolians as a people are very nice. When you walk around town no one stares – it's more of a subdued feeling. There aren't many shops. You can go into a good restaurant and buy a big meal of sheep and potatoes for a dollar – of course that's a whole day's wages here. The petrol costs double what it is in the USA. When you want to get a taxi you go into the road and start waving, and whoever wants to make a couple extra dollars will stop. There are no meters, it's just an easy way to make extra money.

IN MONGOLIA, "IT IS NOW PHYSICALLY VERY HARD BUT EASIER MENTALLY"

By VEN. ROGER KUNSANG

On another day Bakula Rinpoche invited Lama Zopa Rinpoche to the embassy, where he met Bakula Rinpoche's secretary Sonam Wangchuk; Sonam has been with Bakula Rinpoche for more than twenty years. Bakula Rinpoche told Rinpoche about the history of Mongolia. He explained that Joseph Stalin, the former Soviet leader, forcibly took over Mongolia in 1937, and before that, one in every five males was a Buddhist monk. All together there were more than 100,000 monks.

Communism, however, said this was a weakness, that these one in every five males was a waste of a life and was causing society to degenerate. So Stalin began to destroy all the monasteries. He rounded up 1,000 high lamas and monks and beheaded them, leaving their heads in public for display. He destroyed thousands of monasteries. He killed all of the intelligent monks and left the not-so-smart ones alive.

Almost all the monks were killed or forced to marry, although a few were left alive to give the world the impression that everything was okay. From that time on under Communist rule you could only be a monk by government appointment. The monks would go to the monastery during the day and go home to their families at night. Being a monk was a nine-to-five job. If any of the monks did survive they lived monks' lives in secret and gave the appearance of having a family, otherwise all the monks were just monks by name.

One lady of about 22 grew up under Communist rule until she was 12. Her father was a veterinarian and her mother a doctor, and part of their responsibilities as doctors was to lecture subordinates and patients

about certain things. One of them was to tell people that Buddhism was old, ancient, a superstitious poison – they lectured people about that during their workdays. On television they often showed monks but always portrayed as the bad guy who was stupid and carried out sexual activities. They put Buddhism down in every way.

When she was 7 her mother was diagnosed with cancer and she privately told her daughter she thought she would die. She wanted to prepare her daughter to handle her death well enough so she could continue with her own life. She explained Buddhist teachings privately to her daughter, in complete confidence. At the same time her mother was lecturing others officially about how wrong it was. This was the first time she'd heard of Buddhism and it stuck in her mind.

When democracy took over many of her friends began to watch CNN, follow American culture and get a lot of input from Christians. She's had to hide the fact that she's Buddhist because of the propaganda. Many Christian Mongolians feel embarrassed to acknowledge that their father or relative was a monk or lama.

She also mentioned that under Communism everything was done by the state, so materially people were okay; mentally, however, it was difficult because of constant propaganda and forcing people to think in certain ways. Now, everyone feels more relaxed and happier, but, for example, there are young kids on the streets, usually orphans. In the winters it's minus thirty or fifty and they still live on the street. They sleep under the ground on water pipes that the Soviets put there for heating – it's quite a hard life. With capitalism, it is now physically very hard but easier mentally.

AUSPICIOUS EVENTS

Another strange thing is that when we have been walking on the streets with Rinpoche, the Mongolians will come up to the Westerners, not to Rinpoche, to get blessings. They will take off their hats and bow right in front of you and Rinpoche is standing right next to you! In teachings it's very different – they're very humble and respectful of him.

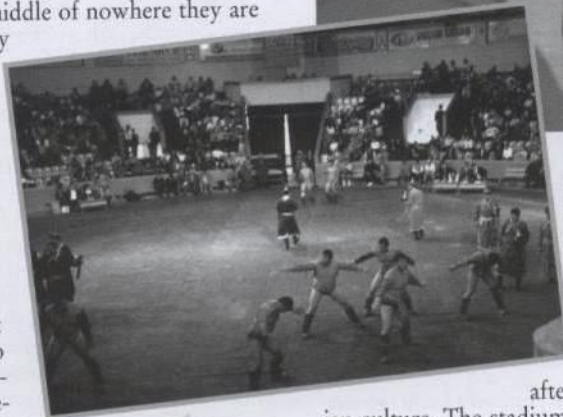
There are a lot of nomads in this very large country who live far out in the country and who graze livestock. In a country of two million people they have thirty million livestock: horses, sheep, camels, yaks. When you come across a yurt (the traditional tent-like homes) in the middle of nowhere they are surrounded by this amazing mixture of animals – like a huge bunch of friends.

The Communists used to take care of the nomads and take their milk, yogurt and cheese to sell in the communities. In return they gave the nomads what they needed, including putting their kids in schools. With democracy the nomads have to find buyers and sell their own things, look after themselves, and find schools for their kids. These people might be several hundred miles from the city – it's very difficult to get all their goods to the nearest town, village or city, and they have no money to educate their kids.

The new monastery of Bakula Rinpoche is a private project, not associated with his duty as ambassador. A few other lamas came to the opening, including Gelek Rinpoche from Michigan, as well as the vice-president of India. All the main lamas of the Mongolian monasteries attended; it was a very nice occasion. There were about forty monks in the monastery, and some came from Ladakh to help with religious entertainment. We were introduced to mare's milk there: that's an interesting experience!

Bakula Rinpoche's main intention is to have a monastery where monks would live purely by Vinaya rules. They would live in their vows as novices and fully-ordained monks, not be married and living at home. He has done a lot to help the revival of Buddhism in Mongolia – he has traveled all over the country teaching and has sent Mongolian monks to India and Tibet for proper training.

The first day of the opening ceremonies consisted of a ribbon-cutting ceremony and traditional music and dancing. The next day everyone was invited to the main stadium in



Bakula Rinpoche at the opening of his new monastery and school, above; traditional wrestlers performed for the guests, left.

the city for an afternoon of Mongolian culture. The stadium was full of people: singers, dancers, a group from Japan, many of whom were benefactors or government people. It was a nice mixture of dance, singing and music.

There were also two girls, both about 12, who were such amazing contortionists. It was like they had no bones in their bodies, and no one could believe they could twist or bend the way they did. It was certainly the highlight, except for the final performance, which was a display of Mongolia's national sport: wrestling.

Ritual is an important part of Mongolian wrestling: they pair off and there are about forty wrestling matches happening in the arena at the same time. The first one knocked to their knees is the loser. When they finish they do this slow movement like a dance with their arms soaring in the sky like eagles. The winner goes and circles a post like an eagle to show he was best. There were about 100 bouts and no one got upset because the ritual keeps it together. The wrestlers are strong, agile and fierce; it's completely opposite to sensational American wrestling.

So whoever wins one match next wrestles the winner of another match until only two are left. This time everyone was cheering because one of the final two was the national champion for ten years running; he was like a mountain, solid stone moving. The other was a popular and innovative young rising star, very untraditional. The young guy lost and was thrown to the ground. After the match both of them came up to Lama Zopa Rinpoche and Gelek Rinpoche, who gave a prize to each.

While Rinpoche was there he gave teachings in a rented hall. He didn't come with a teaching program, and no one had any money to pay for the hall, so Rinpoche paid for it and any other costs. He taught on a Thursday and Friday, and over the weekend gave a Great Chenrezig initiation. Two hundred people showed up.

Most of the older people had books and pens and took notes constantly. Rinpoche said "their hands never stopped moving – they couldn't write fast enough. It was very different from teaching in Lawudo, where they aren't so educated." You could tell they were very interested.

He taught on guru devotion and when he told them about the disadvantages of not devoting oneself to a guru, and how even one negative thought towards the guru would cause so many eons in the hell realms with intense suffering, the women would actually put their hands up to their mouths, turn to the one sitting next to them, and "tsk, tsk" and "oh, oh," to each other. They had a lot of reactions. People generally think about the teachings but these people were physically moved. Their gasping at the results of one moment of anger was audible. People literally took it to heart – I've never seen it like that before.

They were so obviously interested that if they didn't understand what the translator was saying they would stand up and have them repeat it. The Communists were strict about education – there is 98 percent literacy in Mongolia. Many of them go to Russia for their educations.

Rinpoche taught at and visited different monasteries; the main one is Ganden. Within this monastery one room represents Sera and another Drepung. Ganden is on 5 acres right in the middle of Ulaan baatar; the abbot is the main abbot in Mongolia. This abbot had taken his monk's vows in Dharamsala and

was one of a few who was ordained. Now there is a mix of lay lamas who have families and a new generation who are trying to live in accordance with the Vinaya – this is causing some difficulties.

One Tibetan geshe in his late thirties was sent from India to teach monks. He explained that the situation of the monks is not very good. They have about 200 monks; about sixty of them are from Drepung Loseling, but they practice the protector. There are still a number of Mongolians who practice the protector.

The abbot and geshe explained that the monks go home to their families at night and during the day receive teachings and study. They have no money for food so they have nothing to eat during the whole day. They have no shelter, so they have to go back to

their families and risk degenerating their vows. Rinpoche accepted to build shelter for 140 monks and to offer them lunch, but not to the other sixty. He feels uncomfortable that they are going against His Holiness's wishes, but said if they changed their ways he would offer to them, too.

Nuns are almost unheard of in Mongolia. Rinpoche heard of a small nunnery and is interested to help them out.

Buddhist books are badly needed in Mongolia because so many texts were destroyed by the Communists. They preserved more than two million in Ganden, many of them rare texts, but they are in disarray; they are in Tibetan, which most people can't read, or they're in another Mongolian language that most people can't read. People really enjoy reading books because everyone is well

educated. There is a Norbulingka Institute set up there and run by a Tibetan geshe, and Rinpoche accepted his offer to publish three books in Mongolian. One of them is the *Essence of Refined Gold* and another is *Buddhist Tenets*.

Rinpoche also visited the other main monastery, Lam-rim Gumpa. He was invited to teach by a lama who had to give up being a monk but is still head of the monastery. He took Rinpoche out into the country to show him a retreat place he's building. We went about an hour and 15 minutes out of Ulaan Baatar. When you go out of the city it's just like Tibet: really wide open spaces and huge valleys. This retreat place was in a valley,

PANCHEN OTRUL RINPOCHE'S FOURTH VISIT TO MONGOLIA

MARGERY CROSS of Jampa Ling in County Cavan, Ireland, accompanied Panchen Otrul Rinpoche to Mongolia in July.

The woman was desperate. With two young children, she lived in the corridor of an old hostel, which she had to leave by September. They lived on the equivalent of \$2 a day, which she made by selling cigarettes in the street. Very soon winter would come and temperatures drop to as low as minus 40 degrees Celsius.

How and where can we begin to report on a visit to Mongolia? The flight is long from Ireland. It takes travel on three planes before landing in Ulaan baatar, the capital of Mongolia. Rinpoche is met and welcomed warmly by the abbots of the main monasteries and immediately taken to Lam Rim Monastery for prayers and a reception. There is great happiness that he has returned yet again.

Driving through Ulaan baatar one sees a veneer of affluence – big new jeeps, smart new buildings being built, but a closer look reveals a crumbling city; roads with no gutters, so that they become lakes in wet weather, potholes abounding as do manholes without covers. Weeds and graffiti are everywhere.

Rinpoche's fourth visit starts. He travels to monasteries, both in Ulaan baatar and the remoter areas. He ordains monks, gives initiations, teaches people non-violence and love, how to say prayers and take Refuge. His visits take him to prisons, hospitals and Mongolia's only orphanage. He reaches out continually to children and everywhere they respond to his openness.

The people come to see Rinpoche and receive his blessing. He visits them in their apartments and *gers*, accepting all invitations and listening to their problems. The problems are huge and basic. A governmental lack of funds means that services are run down or non-existent. Illiteracy, alcoholism, petty crime, street children, the homeless and jobless, are all on the increase. But it is the severe winter that underlines all



these problems, for then it becomes a matter of survival.

The people are incredibly kind, generous with their hospitality, hardy and resilient. They delight in Rinpoche's presence. One old man had tears running down his face, hands shaking with the joy of having a lama in his *ger* again. People produce old texts, hidden for generations, for Rinpoche's scrutiny.

Traveling is hard and lengthy, there are few proper roads, but the delight of the people and the similarity to Tibet make it all worthwhile. The country is magnificent. It is vast, and its open plains, lush forests, mountains and lakes are unspoiled. Thirty-six varieties of wild flow-

ers were counted on one trip. Wherever he goes, Rinpoche is invited back time and time again.

This year was very special, as Jetsun Dampa, the reincarnation of the last Bohd Khan who died in 1924, visited Mongolia for the first time. Rinpoche spent much time with him, visiting the monasteries and museums. They also discussed the current difficult social problems in Mongolia, both expressing their wish to help in whatever way they could.

Rinpoche has a great wish to be of service to the Mongolian people. His first teacher was a high Mongolian lama. Already Rinpoche has two monks working in Mongolia, teaching both in the monasteries and with lay people. But he also wants to address the basic problems that people bring to him; especially he wishes to help children.

In order to do this Rinpoche would like to establish a permanent base in Mongolia. Mongolia is a Buddhist country with close links to the Tibetan people. They help by allowing young Mongolians to train in their re-established monasteries in India.

Conditions permitting, Panchen Otrul Rinpoche will return to be with the people of Mongolia again next year.



high up in the mountains. It was like *Lord of the Rings* – very beautiful and magical.

This abbot is building the retreat slowly because money is difficult to come by. He has a good relationship with Rinpoche and came to all the teachings. Rinpoche asked him if he could build some retreat huts on the land so Westerners could do retreat. The abbot was very happy. The area is great but winter is quite harsh and you can only get in and out in the winter by horse.

A couple of other interesting things happened during the trip. During the opening ceremony, a girl of about 10 came up to Rinpoche and began to speak in Mongolian. A translator told him, "This young girl wants to wish Rinpoche a very long life and says she will always pray for his long life." It was very out of the ordinary.

An old lady dressed all in red came during Rinpoche's preparation for the Chenrezig initiation, even though it was private. She appeared out of nowhere, sat on her knees a few feet from Rinpoche and wouldn't leave. Gradually she blended in so comfortably that she helped me with preparations.

On the second day there was confusion because we were supposed to be there four to five hours before the initiation privately on stage. We arrived at about 2 o'clock and the initiation was set for 6. When we got there someone else was on stage. The altar and mandala were already set up, but there was a group of musicians on stage practicing full-on! They had electric guitars, synthesizers, drums, and a very large Mongolian man was bellowing with a loud voice – it turns out he's a famous Mongolian singer. The speakers were about 16 feet high and so loud they made everything vibrate.

They had double-booked. There was a room nearby but Rinpoche was not interested to do his preparation there. We had to do the preparation, so what to do?

So there was Rinpoche, sitting bolt upright in meditation on stage doing self-initiation, and then these musicians were to one side playing this blaring music. It was so bizarre – Rinpoche was sitting perfectly silently as if he was part of the band. And I didn't even have my camera!

Rinpoche didn't even blink an eye. Rinpoche was meditating in a band. When the band finished, one by one the members came over very humbly to get Rinpoche's blessings. They were so inspired that someone would do this that they came to ask for blessings and a blessing string with their hands in the mudra of prostrating. They quietly left, and the lady in red was still there.

In the beginning we were in a hotel, which was expensive, so we moved to an apartment. American Ven. George Churinoff came so Rinpoche thought he could stay to teach. Ven. Dakme, Tony Simmons and Debbie Rayfield also came to help. We rented an apartment that is Soviet-style like the others – too small and on the austere side. We then got one on the larger side, which is a little unusual. Rinpoche asked Australian Ven. Thubten Gyatso to come afterwards to be resident teacher for a year.

Six years ago the average apartment cost 400 dollars to buy, and now the same one costs 8,000 dollars. As yet people can't own land they build on – they only lease it from the government. If you have a lease on land and then have a permanent structure on it, the government will give you the land.

Rinpoche decided early on to buy property for the center, so some friends of Saga-day, the husband of Renuka Singh's late sister Ashma (Rinpoche calls him Saka Dawa), helped us find a large three-story building. One room on each level could fit 200 people. It's right in the center of town next to a Christian church.

The idea for the center is to use one level for teaching Dharma and Dharma programs, another for teaching English using Buddhist-English books, and another for a publishing house. Batbold is very keen to publish books in modern Mongolian. Rinpoche already gave him a list of fourteen books to translate, including books by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Rinpoche and Lama Yeshe.



One room is for handicapped people; one guy we met is 21 and was born with no legs and one arm, and said he'd had a very hard life. His parents were poor and he had nowhere to live, so he asked Rinpoche for his help. He knows other handicapped people, many of whom feel psychologically depressed and inferior, so he wants to learn Dharma and help them psychologically. They plan to make a school for handicapped people so they can learn English, computer skills, and feel their lives are useful and productive.

Through Batbold we found another building that is four stories that Rinpoche wants to buy. He will rent it out and use the rent to cover the costs of the center.

Rinpoche's main focus in Mongolia is helping lay people. Monks have been taken care of already, so this is his primary interest. We met the leader of the opposition party through Sonam Wangchuk, so Rinpoche explained his purpose. He was very supportive when we explained we want to establish FPMT-Mongolia as a legal entity and promised Rinpoche they would process it in a week or two. FPMT will be a legal entity that will own property.

So the key activity is to focus on educating lay people in Buddhistharma in order to help revive Buddhism in Mongolia. People

are very eager to learn. Rinpoche was gathering information on different habits to see what was really needed. We plan to do a weekly TV program on Buddhism, put together here with Richard Gere's help. This would inspire the young in particular to preserve their natural culture – Buddhism.

Denma Lochö Rinpoche was supposed to come at the end of September, but they had no money for airfare or for him to teach. They had no space, either, so Rinpoche offered to sponsor some of the hall fees, and also offered him use of our apartment.

After that they told Rinpoche that His Holiness had suggested that Rigdzong Rinpoche come to give the oral transmission of either the *Kangyur* or *Tengyur*, and the Ganden Tri Rinpoche was also supposed to come. They can't afford any of it, so Rinpoche had the idea to build a very large gompa for 1500 people. He feels it's very important for these high lamas to bring back Dharma, pure Buddhism. He wants to build it in the center of town so people can get there easily.

Rinpoche was also thinking to have the Fourth Enlightened Experience Celebration there in the summer of 2001. That would bring Westerners there to receive teachings for two or three months. It would be so inspiring, and the young people would think again after seeing so many Westerners take teachings for so many months. It might inspire them to realize it's not just some ancient superstitious thing. Young people think Christianity is the right way to go, that you're on the progressive path to success, material success in part-

icular. Anyhow, the EEC 4 isn't confirmed, but the idea is to have the large gompa finished by then.

The other thing Rinpoche would like to build is a large Kalachakra stupa. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has been to Mongolia five times, the last time to give the Kalachakra initiation. They wouldn't let him in the sixth time because of the Chinese. Most Mongolians don't like the Chinese – they see the Chinese as being into the economy and too control-oriented.

The ninth Kalka Jetsun Dampa Rinpoche was in Mongolia before we arrived. He is like the Dalai Lama of Mongolia. The original Taranatha – a great lama from Tibet – passed away and his reincarnation became the first Jetsun Dampa Rinpoche. The first was highly renowned in Mongolia. This Jetsun Dampa was recognized by His Holiness many years ago.

It was difficult for him to get into Mongolia, but a couple weeks before we came he came on the invitation of another monastery. He had a one month visa, but the people wanted him to stay so much that they took his passport away. The government has put a lot of pressure on him since this happened and it all became very political. The Mongolians relate to him in the same way Tibetans relate to His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

It was a complicated situation where he was illegally in the country but couldn't get his passport back from the monastery – it was a stalemate. Rinpoche met with Jetsun Dampa Rinpoche and they talked for a while. Before we left he went to Buryat, a small country just inside the Russian border. The culture and people are just like Mongolia, it's

just inside the Russian border. They're Buddhist there and the head lama is part of the Russian government. He's like the boss of that small country and he invited Lama Zopa Rinpoche to teach there. He was very careful in checking on Rinpoche – he checked about him in Dharamsala and inquired about the FPMT in great detail. He made absolutely sure in Dharamsala that Rinpoche isn't practicing the protector.

Rinpoche has also accepted to start an orphanage, as there are many orphans in the main cities. They would get Buddhist educations as well.

Rinpoche is putting so much effort into Mongolia – he feels a very strong obligation to help revive Buddhism there. He is quite determined to get these projects up and running.

Feng-shui master Lillian Too gave Rinpoche \$20,000 to start the Mongolian Fund, and Rinpoche has committed \$40,000 to publish seventeen books in the modern Mongolian language. If anyone is interested to help, it would be greatly appreciated. Contact International Office (see RESOURCES). ❀

Opposite from top:

Kalka Jetsun Dampa with Lama Zopa Rinpoche; Harvey Horrocks and friends.



LETTER FROM ULAAN BAATAR

By HARVEY HORROCKS

November 7: Lama Zopa Rinpoche asked that I try to set up a center in Mongolia as a legal entity. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has given the name for the Dharma teaching dimension of the center as Ganden Do-ngag Shedrup Ling.

Ven. George Churinoff and I stay in one apartment where Rinpoche stayed before; it is rented for the center. When Ven. Thubten Gyatso and Deborah Bloomer, the new director, arrive at the end of this month they will also stay here.

The weather got really cold for a few days, went down to minus 24 degrees Celsius. Since then it snowed and then it has warmed up again. Now it is usually a couple of degrees above freezing during the day and 5 or 10 degrees below during the night. It is often quite sunny. When it gets down to 15 degrees below it is a new experience, but most of the buildings are warm inside.

I thought that it would be really difficult to be vegetarian here. In fact there is a good selection of food: you can even have English breakfast at Churchill's in the morning and pizza delivered for lunch! But actually George does all the cooking and I am gaining weight. The sour cream is amazing.

Ven. George teaches regularly, one class three times a week for a group of sixty-eighty lay Mongolians. They enjoy his teachings im-

mensely. The classes last for three to four hours and are held in Bakula Rinpoche's monastery. Batbold Baas is the translator, a devoted Dharma student and an excellent translator with lots of upbeat energy, who is appreciated by all.

The next class that Ven. George leads is for a group of twenty-five of the young monks at Bakula Rinpoche's monastery. This class is also attended by their regular lay teacher who takes copious notes and really appreciates the classes. Then there is a meditation class for a small growing group of non-Mongolians, mainly made up of VSO staff (the British equivalent of the US Peace Corps).

There will be many activities happening at the new center and all are to be run under the umbrella entity of FPMT-Mongolia center. On November 6, complicated negotiations were finally concluded. Ven. George and I came back to a celebration of hot chocolate and the TV result that the Queen has not been thrown out by the Aussies. We missed the final of the Rugby!

The work on the building is going full force. Creating a center in Mongolia feels like a very timely and powerful mission: the deep latent connection with Lama Tsong Khapa, suppressed for so long, is now allowed to freely manifest.