It is with mixed feelings that I leave NIU’s Center for Southeast Asian Studies, after eight years as director, to take up a position in the Asian Studies Department at the University of Hawai‘i. On the one hand, these years have been a real challenge and much has been accomplished. On the other, there is still much to do. Although I leave knowing that what were once ad hoc (or even non-existent) activities have now been regularized and institutionalized, new directions and dimensions must be forged if the Center is to remain strong. I leave the Center in the good and experienced hands of Ron Provencher, who will be interim director for a time.

As it stands today, NIU’s SEA program is one of the stronger ones in the nation, and unique in its Center for Burma Studies. But if it is to remain strong and unique, it will need continued financial support from the University and cooperation from all of its faculty associates. Thirty-something years have gone into making this Center what it is today; but it can take just one critical budget cut, one moment of indiscretion, to take us back an entire decade, or at least force us to "tread water," which while it may prevent us from drowning does not allow us to come out of the water either.

In this, my last Mandala, I wish as always to highlight the activities of this Center’s students and associates. I would also like to direct the reader’s attention to several brief accounts of some of our faculty who have recently gone to Southeast Asia. Richard Cooler is featured in a recent event in the underworld of Burmese art. Clark Neher and Steven Johnson write on Vietnam and its enthusiasm for change, and Dwight King reflects on East Timor. See the "Reflections" section on page 5.

— Michael Aung-Thwin

Our highest congratulations to Julie Tumbarello, Rob Daley, and Bryan Hunsaker for being awarded national fellowships for 1995-1996. Julie will be in Banyorang, Sulawesi, with a Fulbright grant to study why trained midwives are underutilized and traditional midwives are the choice of women in Banyorang. Rob will be in Thailand with a Fulbright grant to conduct research on economic policy-making in Thailand and theories that explain the process of decision-making in Thai politics. Bryan received an Area and Language Studies Doctoral Fellowship from the National Security Education Program (NSEP), being one of the 19 winners from among 800 competitors nation-wide, for his dissertation research on determinants of municipal fiscal capabilities in Thailand. These students’ awards are, of course, testimony to their own personal character and intellectual prowess, but also to the guidance and mentoring by Center and other faculty, notably in the departments of political science and anthropology.

Congratulations should also be extended to the following students who received Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) and Henry Luce Foundation awards for AY 1995-96. Three are incumbents, and three are new.

Henry Luce Foundation Fellowship Award:
Aung Zaw Lyn - Art History - incumbent

FLAS Fellowship Awards:
George Fisher - History - Burmese - incumbent
Michael Hodgman - Political Science - Thai - new
David Oldfield - Political Science - Thai - incumbent
Leili Pans - Anthropology - Indonesian - new
Shishak Wungram - History - Burmese - new

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IMPRESSIONS OF BURMA, VIETNAM, AND INDONESIA, featuring Richard Cooler, Clark D. Neher, Steven Johnson, and Dwight King 5
Our T.A. this year for the course "Southeast Asia: Crossroads of the World" (Intra Liberal Arts and Sciences 225) is Wanlapa Thajinda. Wanlapa is an NIU student who has been here for several years. She comes to us from Thailand, well prepared with several years of teaching experience, and is in the final phases of her dissertation on education in Thailand.

We got wind of Andrew Gallagher’s desire to return to NIU from the University of Oregon to complete his Ph.D. in TESOL with the English department here. In cooperation with that department, the center persuaded L.A.S to provide a one-year appointment at the Center for Andrew, thereafter to be picked up by English. He will assist Nancy with Center duties and the new editor, Edwin Zehner, with copy editing. Another worthy note: Bob Vore has successfully completed his prelims in English and is now ready to write!

Welcome to three new students who will be concentrating on Southeast Asian Studies. Both Shishak Wungram and Will Womack are enrolled in the history department and come from Wheaton College and University of the South respectively. They both have indicated their interest in studying Southeast Asian and Burmese history. Michael Hodgman, a FLAS fellowship recipient, is beginning studies in political science after having received his undergraduate degree from Augustana College.

We also congratulate the NIU students who attended SEASSI at Madison this summer with FLAS fellowships or some other form of support. They include Tammy Duckworth, Jeff Lattimer, Leili Parts, and Bob Vore. Our Burmese language T.A., Than Than Win, was also appointed a faculty associate at SEASSI to help teach Burmese with John Okell and Saya Saw Tun.

Jo Jo (Joselito) N. Fornier successfully defended his dissertation in history entitled “Antique (Antike) in the Nineteenth Century: Colonial Politics, Society, and Economy in a Philippine Province” on May 3. Professor Constance Wilson was his supervisor.

Visiting Student-at-large from the University of Michigan is Michael Charney, a Ph.D. student studying Burma and focusing on Arakan. He will enroll at NIU and take Burmese with our famous Saya Saw Tun. Somehow U of M has managed to give him a Burmese FLAS for studying at NIU. This is an innovation that other Title VI institutions should seriously consider adopting, so that students studying SEA at centers where their language of research is not offered can have similar opportunities. Perhaps we can send our students to other Southeast Asia centers to study languages we don’t offer during the academic year, such as Tagalog, Ilokano, Khmer, or Vietnamese. This would be particularly useful for students who for some reason cannot attend SEASSI.

NIU’s Southeast Asia Club hosted a conference in spring in cooperation with its counterpart from the University of Illinois, Urbana. There were twelve papers given, whose titles are listed below:

“The Mines of Mogok” - George Fisher, Dept. of History, NIU
“Vietnamese-American and African-American Relations: A Study of Social Cleavage and Conflict” - Timothy Daniels, Dept. of Anthropology, U of Illinois

“We have invited two new faculty to become Honorary Associates of the Center: Professor Anita Andrews in History and Professor Eliot Kang in Political Science. Anita’s research focuses on Ming China and Eliot’s is political economy of the Pacific Rim.

Our congratulations to Saya Saw Tun for being awarded tenure and promotion to associate professor of Foreign Languages and Literatures. It is also worthy to note that no one received the national prize in Burmese literature this year which Saya received last year. Apparently he has established a standard that others will have difficulty emulating.

Lee Dutton, librarian, Donn Hart Southeast Asia Collection, visited major archives and libraries in London and Paris during July and August. Places visited included the Royal Asiatic Society Library, the British Library, Bibliothèque Nationale, the Sorbonne, and several others.

Harold Smith, sociology, and May Kyi Win, curator, Donn Hart Southeast Asia Collection, have produced a book entitled Historical Dictionary of Thailand. It is due out from Scarecrow Press in October 1995. Orders can be placed by calling 1-800-462-6420. Another contract was signed with Scarecrow Press by May Kyi Win and Dr. Art Guillerme for "Historical Dictionary of the Philippines." May Kyi Win is now serving as editor of the Bulletin of the Burma Studies Group.
David Mullikin, our long-standing copy-editor, will be leaving us this summer. Our best wishes to David.

Dwight King, political science, presented several papers at conferences including “The Political Economy of Forest Sector Reform in Indonesia” at the (SEASSI) conference on Environment and Development at University of Wisconsin, July 9; “Indonesian Politics in Transition” at the conference on An Indonesian Update, University of Toronto-York University Joint Centre for Asia Pacific Studies, July 11; “Politics and Society Today” at public symposia in Chicago (March 13) and Minneapolis/St. Paul (March 17) on Uncovering Indonesia sponsored by Asia Society; and “Qualifications of Indonesia’s Civil Servants,” at the annual meetings of AAS, Washington, April 7.

Ladd Thomas, political science, presented “Bureaucratic Role in Public Policy Making: Impact of Democratization in Developing Countries—Thailand and the Philippines,” at the XVI World Congress of the International Political Science Association held from August 20-25, 1994 in Berlin; and “The Thai Bureaucracy in the Next Century” at a conference (on Thai politics and administration in the next century) held at Chiang Mai University on November 11, 1994.

The FLIS project directors, Jim Henry and Bob Zerwekh, computer science, and Patricia Henry and John Hartmann, foreign languages and literatures, have developed a new Foreign Language Instruction Station for Windows, and are nearing completion of a multimedia electronic dictionary for Thai and Indonesian. The dictionary will be available on CD-ROM or tape cartridge sometime this fall. Please see the enclosed insert for further information about these projects, or access the WinFLIS World Wide Web Home Page:

http://mp.cs.niu.edu:8000/~zerwekh/WinFLIS.


Michael Aung-Thwin published “The ‘Classical’ in Southeast Asia: The Present in the Past” in the Journal of Southeast Asian Studies in the commemorative issue of the Journal’s 25th anniversary. He has also recently submitted two entries in The Encyclopedia of Historiography on the Burmese chronicles (Garland Publishing) and is working on a manuscript tentatively titled “Myth and Historiography in Early Burma.”

H.K. Han, School of Music, lectured on “Bronze and Bamboo in Indonesia: Gamelan and Angklung” at Indonesia Day, Field Museum in Chicago on August 20, 1994; directed the NIU Gamelan Ensemble on April 2, 1995 at the Chicago Cultural Center and April 23, 1995 at the NIU Music Building; and published an article, “Khapsai Music: A Preliminary Study,” in Themes and Variations: Writings on Music in Honor of Rulan Chao Pian, ed. by Bell Yung and Joseph S.C. Lam, p. 260-277 (Cambridge, MA: Department of Music, Harvard University, 1994). He was also responsible for making the arrangements to bring Pak Minarno of the Indonesian Consulate of Chicago to teach the NIU Gamelan, January to March 1995.

Hsin Yi Ling, geology, was awarded a collaborative research grant from NATO International Science Exchange Programmes for “Paleogene and Mesozoic Radiolaria from the Halmahera Ophiolitic Sequence, Indonesia”.

George Spencer, history, chaired a panel on “Mothers, Daughters, and Wives in Indian Inscriptions,” at the Annual Conference on South Asia, University of Wisconsin-Madison, in November 1994.

Best wishes to Don Maxfield, geography, on his recent retirement.

To Arlene Neher, our congratulations on being elected (by a national constituency no less) a member of the Southeast Asia Council of the Association for Asian Studies.

Richard Carp, School of Art, has two books forthcoming: Making Sense: Religion, Material Culture & Perception and From Jena to Rothko.

For more on the Center and its faculty, see our new Home Page on the World Wide Web:

http://www.niu.edu/acad/cseasl/index.html

PUBLICATIONS

We are extremely pleased to introduce Edwin Zehner, our new editor, an ABD from Cornell in anthropology, focusing on Thailand. He and his (Thai) wife Wichuda live in DeKalb. Ed taught at Wheaton (IL) College for a term and worked at various places until he came here. He has already begun the tedious process of sifting through many files, completing (with David Mullikin) certain unfinished manuscripts, and reorganizing the publications program so that it can be even more competitive with other Southeast Asia programs. In this regard, the editor seeks to enlarge the number of subscribers to Crossroads appreciably, both here and abroad, streamline methods for better efficiency, seek a more diverse representation of manuscripts, work more closely with the publications committee, and in general follow a specific “five-year plan” that will enhance the program.

Crossroads, the only interdisciplinary journal of Southeast Asian studies published in North America, will have a new look. We also will have three categories of monographs: Special Reports, Occasional Papers, and Southeast Asian Language Text Series. A forthcoming volume of Student Papers is also part of the publications program.
The next issue of *Crossroads* (Volume 8, Number 2) is *Terry Miller's "A History of Siamese Music Reconstructed from Western Documents, 1505-1932."* We also anticipate a *Burma volume* of essays in one of the monograph series stemming from the proceedings of the 1994 *Burma Colloquium* at NIU. It promises to carry a wide variety of subjects by numerous scholars from several disciplines. *Bob Wick*'s chronology and typology of the coins of Burma and Thailand is also in queue for the *monograph series*.

Nguyen Long, Marybeth Clark, and Nguyen Bich Thuan's *Spoken Vietnamese for Beginners*, published by the Center, has been well-received at universities throughout North America and Australia. The draft of a second year text by some of the same authors is now under review. We have been discussing with Stephen O'Harrow of the University of Hawai'i's department of Indo-Pacific Languages and Literatures the possibility of converting both Vietnamese texts into interactive CD-ROM format. John Okell's *Beginning Burmese* series has also drawn good reviews. Its combination of taped and written instruction is designed both for classroom use and for self-instruction. It has been said by a reviewer in the ASEASUK News to "resemble a face-to-face lesson with Okell himself."

For the latest news on the Center's Publications and the Journal *Crossroads*, see the new Home Page on the World Wide Web:

http://www.niu.edu/acad/cseas/pubs.html

**DONN V. HART SOUTHEAST ASIA COLLECTION**

The SEA collection continues to grow. Probably because of the continued participation in NPAC, the *Indonesia* collection has now surpassed the *Thai*, with 18,000 plus titles in the former to 12,000 plus in the latter. The *Burma* collection is near 8000 titles. This means, with *Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines* each with over 8000 titles, parity among the collection's national language holdings appears to have been achieved. Our major gap remains *Indo-China*—target for the future?

These figures reflect the most accurate and recent count of our *catalogued* holdings to date. *May Kyi Win*, with her usual energy, spent a year and a half supervising the *manual* compilation of the data in part to check the accuracy of the computer count. The major problem with the latter process is that titles in Southeast Asian languages cannot be accessed by computer and have to be done manually anyway. (There is software already developed for this but it remains only for Thai and has not been implemented in the Library yet. Another future project?)

**SEASSI**

As most know, SEASSI (Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute) was held at Madison, Wisconsin, this summer. For the next two years, it will be held at Arizona State University, at Tempe. (Hopefully, the site is air-conditioned). Thereafter, we anticipate the host to be the University of Oregon.

**THE CENTER FOR BURMA STUDIES**

The *Center for Burma Studies* is a most important component of Southeast Asian Studies at Northern Illinois University. Without it, we cannot claim the kind of uniqueness we do now.

In October of 1994, the biennial *Burma Colloquium* was held in which many international scholars on Burma participated. The program committee of the *Burma Studies Group* has completed the selection of the papers given at the colloquium that are to be submitted for publication with the Center here. The "contents editor" of the volume is F.K. Lehman. The colloquium and the resulting publication were financed by a Henry Luce Foundation award given the Center in April 1994.

**SPEAKERS SERIES**

The Southeast Asia *Speakers Series* continues to enrich and add intellectual depth to our program. The Fall of 1995 will see the following speakers:

September 15 - Ben Muego, Bowling Green State University
"Like Night and Day: The Aquino and Ramos Presidencies Compared"

September 22 - Jeff Winters, Northeastern University
"Zonal Capitalism: The New Face of Industrialization and Labor Control in Indonesia"

September 29 - Al McCoy, University of Wisconsin-Madison
"Khun Sa, 'King of Heroin'"

October 6 - Duranee Tantiwiramanond, Chulalongkorn University
"Development Process and Women’s Lives in Thailand"

October 20 - Michael Rabe, Saint Xavier University
"Perilous Revelations: Images of Tapas and Temptation from India and the West"

October 27 - Stephen Douglas, University of Illinois
"Paradoxes of State Ideology-Making in ASEAN"

November 10 - Ellen Rafferty, University of Wisconsin-Madison
"The Malay Story of Nyai Dasima: 1880-1930"

**MIDWEST CONFERENCE ON ASIAN AFFAIRS (MCAA)**

The Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs meets October 13-15 in St. Louis, Missouri. The panels include several contributions on Southeast Asia. Our own *Andi Mallarangeng* has been awarded the Buchanan Prize for best student paper on Southeast Asia.
COTS

The Council on Thai Studies Annual Meeting will be held in Madison, Wisconsin November 3-5. Cosponsors are Thongchai Winichakul and Mary Grow.

MYANMAR LANGUAGE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION MEETS IN YANGON

The Myanmar Language Teachers Association will have its first meeting in Yangon this winter. It is being hosted by the Government of Myanmar which will provide lodging and food. All interested parties should contact Saya Saw Tun at NIU or John Okell at SOAS, the chief officers of the MLT (formerly BLT, which by the way, is not part of the menu in Yangon).

ELDERHOSTEL ON BURMA AND THAILAND: SPRING 1995

Arlene Neher, Director of External Programming for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, organized a Burma-Thailand Elderhostel program during the second week of May, 1995. There were 19 students who attended lectures on the history, art, and politics of the two countries. Burmese and Thai cuisine, and numerous other relevant cultural activities were provided. Clark Neher, Richard Cooler, and Michael Aung-Thwin were the regular speakers, with May Kyi Win leading a discussion on meditation.

IMPRESSIONS OF BURMA, VIETNAM, AND INDONESIA

BURMA

A 1,000 year-old statue stolen from a Burmese temple. A scholar who had seen the statue on site in Burma. A lawyer with expertise on Burmese art. Sotheby’s, the world’s leading art auction house. The FBI.

These are some of the elements of a real-life detective story, with a happy ending, in which the detectives come from NIU’s Center for Burma Studies, the only center of its kind in the United States.

We’ll begin our story in 1991 when an 11th century image of Buddha is withdrawn from an auction at Sotheby’s in New York, two weeks before it was to be sold. The reason: reports that the image had been stolen from a cave temple at Pagan, the ancient capital of Burma and a national monument, and then sold by a dealer in Bangkok to a dealer in San Francisco. Not much happens for the next two years.

Now we jump to the summer of 1994 when the U.S. Attorney for New York calls NIU art history professor Richard Cooler, the director of Northern’s Burma center, and requests an expert opinion on whether this image is the same as a similar one known to have existed at Pagan, Burma (now officially known as the Union of Myanmar), and to ask whether Cooler might serve as an expert witness in the case.

Identification, Cooler explains, required clear documentation of the image’s presence in Burma, including photographs, a detailed description, and evidence of ownership. Cooler had seen the statue on site in 1974-75 while in Burma as a U.S. State Department special exchange scholar. At that time, he was the first American scholar in 12 years to be permitted to conduct research in Burma. Books on The Image of the Buddha and The Temples and Sculpture of Southeast Asia are on his office shelves. They are part of the detailed research that made him confident enough by late fall, after a trip to New York to view the image, to prepare an affidavit in which he unequivocally declared that Sotheby’s statue was the image he had previously viewed at Pagan. Therefore, establishing the basic evidence for proceeding with the case.

His certainty came in part from the exceedingly rare nature of the 24” high image. A standing rather than sitting Buddha, with his hands before his chest in a gesture indicating that he is preaching his first sermon—the event in which he shares his discovery of enlightenment with all mankind—which only occurred during the reign of the ancient Burmese King Kyanzittha. “It was unfortunate, but also fortunate,” Cooler adds, that the image was broken sometime before 1887 when thrown from its niche during an earthquake. That idiosyncratic break shows up in even the earliest photographs, providing an irrefutable means of identification. There also were the specific configurations of red and black pigments, known to Cooler from previous viewings.

In December 1994, Cooler returned to Burma to see if he could find the lower third of the image and match the signature break. His search was successful, he notes, “because after the theft, the archaeological survey had removed all the images from the temple to safekeeping in its storehouses.” The photos he took of the feet and of the base matched the body of the image.

Legal, as well as artistic, points were at issue. The odds against finding a lawyer with expertise in Burmese art are immense. But Cooler knew one—Jack Daulton, a graduate student of his in Burmese art and a lawyer with Davidson, Goldstein, Mandell & Menkes, a Chicago firm specializing in art and entertainment law. Daulton, who has studied the Burmese language as well as art, was intrigued by this case which "dovetailed" his art and legal interests. After he received permission from his firm to work on the case pro bono, with a substantial commitment of time and resources, Cooler got in touch with the Burmese ambassador in Washington to see if the two could proceed with the case on behalf of the nation of Burma. Permission was granted.

“The Burmese government probably wouldn’t have con-
continued with the case if we hadn’t been able to pursue it (without charge), because it’s time consuming, expensive, and risky,” Cooler declares. Civil court proceedings began in New York, following an FBI investigation.

Which set of law was applicable was among the complex legal issues on which Daulton worked. The image was from Burma, was sold in Thailand, entered the U.S. in California, and was for sale in New York. Then suddenly, over two years after the image was impounded and as proof mounted, the case was concluded before it went to trial when the dealer agreed to relinquish ownership to the Burmese government while Cooler was still in Burma.

Daulton and Steve Mandell, a colleague who had worked with him, went to New York in January. Accompanied by an FBI agent, they took custody of the image, brought it to Chicago, and transferred possession to Cooler who brought it to NIU. In return for Cooler donating his time and expertise, the Burmese government had agreed that, if the case was successful, the Center for Burma Studies could display the image for one year before returning it to Burma. This fall, the image and similar works borrowed from collections around the world will go on public exhibit at NIU’s Burmese Gallery under the name Turning the Wheel of the Law: King Kyazitha’s Buddha Reclaimed.

“We had no idea at the outset it would conclude so quickly. We expected a long-term battle,” says Daulton. “To obtain a victory in this case, returning a sacred object to Burma, was most rewarding, one of the great experiences of my life...I felt I helped to right a wrong.”

Cooler has already been contacted by museums around the world about exhibiting the image on its way back to Burma. That pleases him. For when asked about the gratification he got from his role, he replies, “I find it rewarding that, through these efforts, this image will be returned to the Burmese people and to the public domain where it can be viewed and appreciated, studied and enjoyed, by generations of scholars and lovers of the arts.”

The Burmese Gallery is located in the NIU Art Museum on the second floor of Altgeld Hall. Hours are Monday-Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Thursday until 7 p.m.) and Saturday from noon to 4 p.m.

Reprinted from Northern Now, a publication of the Office of Public Affairs at Northern Illinois University.

THE NEW VIETNAM

Even today, the word “Vietnam” is so much more than the name of a country. Vietnam is also an emotion, a trauma, and a distant memory of a nightmare no one wants repeated. When the travel/study group of some twenty friends of NIU flew over the mountains of Vietnam toward Saigon this past January, we all felt the power of that word “Vietnam”. We were apprehensive about how we would be greeted by the Vietnamese as they prepared for the twentieth anniversary of the end of what they call the American War.

We soon learned that our trepidation was unfounded. We were met with great warmth everywhere we travelled, from Saigon, the vibrant, open, and chaotic city of the south, to Hanoi, the staid capital in the north. When the Vietnamese learned we were Americans, they immediately came to us and informed us that we were “number one.” Their genuine smiles relaxed us, and reminded us that the Vietnamese have learned to forget, to get on with their lives, and not to let the past haggle their aspirations for a better future.

Vietnam has suffered grievously since the end of the war in 1975 as a result of natural disasters, the American embargo that precluded trade there, and an insufferable bureaucracy that repressed the entrepreneurial spirit of the entire society. Vietnam continued down the path of stagnation and oppression until 1989 when the Communist authorities belatedly opened up the country’s economy to full-blown capitalism. In the past five years, Vietnam has developed remarkably, averaging seven percent growth rates, and significantly improving the quality of life. We noticed new buildings, roads, and factories; great amounts of manufactured goods in the stores; an abundance of food in the markets; and a hustle and bustle that did not exist just a few years earlier.

Vietnam is growing with remarkable speed, but without a clear vision of its future. At present, the country is overwhelmed by street capitalism at its best and worst. The best is that market forces have taken the place of centralized commands, resulting in a higher standard of living for the majority of Vietnamese. The worst is that the seamer side of the open economy has arrived with a vengeance, with crass materialism and corruption pervading every aspect of the new Vietnam. The gap between the urban rich and the rural poor has widened. The nation’s infrastructure of roads, bridges, communications, and services has not kept pace with the private sector’s growth. Pollution and environmental degradation loom as problems.

Despite these difficulties, the Vietnamese appear pleased with the new openness of their economy. We were told that the Vietnamese want a corresponding opening of the political system. They view their Communist authoritarian government as an anachronism in this modern world.

We were overwhelmed by the vibrancy of Vietnam and felt privileged to be there during this time of extraordinary change. The nightmare is over. Now is the time for the United States to establish full and supportive relations with this country of 72 million people.

—Clark D. Neher, chair & professor, political science

OLD MEMORIES, NEW LOVES

After receiving extensive training in Vietnamese, which I still speak, I first went to Vietnam in 1972 with the United States military, ending up in a non-combatant position. It was an unbe-
lievable experience for someone who grew up in Geneseo, Illinois. The culture, the food, the environment of Saigon was so foreign, but I ate it up hook, line, and sinker.

In the spring of 1973, I was one of the last American forces to leave Vietnam. A few weeks later, I returned as a civilian employee of ITT and was one of the Americans evacuated out of Saigon in 1975. I adopted two Amerasian orphans, Anthony and Christopher, now 21-year-old college students. Although I visited Vietnam in 1990 and 1994, it was especially meaningful to help Professor Clark Neher escort a group of NIU faculty, staff, and alumni to a country about which I still feel deeply.

A highlight of the trip for me was showing the group the Saigon, now Ho Chi Minh City, I remembered. Everything was different, but nothing had changed. I felt at home again. We stayed at a familiar hotel, shopped a familiar market, had breakfast at my favorite soup stand, walked through a park near where I had lived.

But I still can’t get over my reactions to Hanoi. In the past, I couldn’t understand why people preferred Hanoi to Saigon. Now, I prefer Hanoi, a city of culture and class, over Saigon, which is like a carnival show. And I hate to say that because I always have loved Saigon.

I shouldn’t have been surprised. The people of Hanoi are totally different from the people of Saigon. They look different, wear different clothes, eat different foods. What links them is communism, the political system.

I also was surprised by all the new construction. Twenty years ago it was all destruction, now it’s all construction. Peace lets citizens prosper and grow; you can remodel your house or build a new one. Many Japanese, European, and U.S. corporations are moving in too.

Now, I’m looking forward to a personal trip to Hanoi in August and to leading another NIU trip in January 1996 with Professor Neher. This trip will include visits to the central highland cities of Dalat, Pleiku, and Ban Me Thuot. Anyone who would like information on the trip should call me at (815) 753-5200.

—Steven Johnson, ’69, ’76 M.S.Ed., external programming director, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Reprinted from Northern Now, a publication of the Office of Public Affairs at Northern Illinois University.

SOME THOUGHTS ON INDONESIA:
THE IMPORTANCE OF EAST TIMOR

“Why are foreigners so preoccupied with the problems of East Timor when it is such a small part of Indonesia?” a non-Timorese, Indonesia born Canadian resident asked me at a recent forum. Indeed, the population of East Timor currently constitutes less than half of one percent of the total Indonesian population and its economy is the smallest among all 27 provinces—reasonable bases for the query. Although my spur-of-the-moment response was even less adequate, my answer consists of the following main points.

Anyone who places intrinsic value on human life and upholds the integrity of the person has to be abhorred by the continued stream of credible reports of violations by authorities of the integrity of Timorese, including politically motivated torture and killings, not to mention the scale of accumulated deaths of both Timorese and Indonesian military personnel which approaches a quarter of a million since 1976, equal to about one-third of the population of East Timor. The signature of Indonesia’s former leaders on the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the commitment of its present leadership to the Pancasila national ideology (humanitarianism, social justice etc.) are evidence that Indonesian political elites themselves espouse these values.

The Soeharto government’s policy toward East Timor is deeply hypocritical and hobbles its ambitions to play a role commensurate with Indonesia’s size in regional and international conflict resolution. No country is prouder of its independence struggle against a colonial power, a more vocal advocate of self determination and non-aggression. Yet the Indonesian Army invaded East Timor not to advance a nationalist agenda—East Timor was never a part of the Dutch East Indies—but for the narrowest of security reasons. Since the East Timorese have never been allowed a free act of self determination, and there is considerable evidence only a tiny minority support integration with Indonesia, the conclusion is inescapable that Indonesia engaged in aggression and controls East Timor primarily by force. In the eyes of the international community, such colonialism is especially egregious in the present global context marked by resurgent nationalism and renewed interest in democratic ideal and practices.

Continued if not growing political unrest in the province after almost 20 years of “integration” has shown the government’s repression-and-develop policy toward East Timor is bankrupt. When thousands of young people who are Indonesian-educated, speak Indonesian, and are without personal experience of Portuguese rule openly express their Timorese nationalism at immense personal risk, the conclusion is inescapable that Indonesian policy has failed to win the hearts and minds of a new generation of Timorese.

—Dwight King, associate professor, political science