

AVI 2002 Conference in the USA

Sunday - Focus: International Zone

Report by Julian Lines

Megan Thomas, who is a real pro at running a meeting, facilitated our second day. Her intelligence and attention to the group's needs kept another full and complex day moving forward at a steady pace.

People praised the location and atmosphere, even though there is a substantial climb moving from many of the cabins to our meeting hall.

It was especially nice to see a number of young adults join the meeting including Satyavan Alexander and Aurelia Walton.

One of the more telling morning feedback requests was that someone else overheard a conversation critical of an attendee. Bill Leon quipped that we should complain more quietly about each other. This may be one of the best suggestions to come out of our meeting.

AVI Center Reports on their Pavilions

We then embarked on an alphabetical report on the status of the international pavilions from the attendees (there are many omissions, but at least my notes will give you the flavor)

Africa Report by Tekeste Africa has played a big role in supporting the idea of Auroville in '69. Halai Salassie put it in writing. There is powerful potential, which you will see in the film. I have Mother's support for our work. The video will tell more on the current status of Africa House.

Argentina by Anandi I can relate to Tekeste's work coming from an undeveloped country. It will help us to publish a good book in Spanish. We are working on one, "The Wisdom of Sri Aurobindo". I gave talks on TV and have some articles to show you from New Age magazines. In '94 we got some workshops together for the Pavilion to have a full continental Pavilion since we in South America have so many things in common. If we only put buildings in the IZ, then only first world countries will have them.

Canada by Andrew AVI Canada in Quebec has been in existence for 30 years. In Ontario and the rest of Canada, we are in a search to find our national identity. France and England, our original influence is now influenced by an international influx. One of the main ideas for the Pavilion is to build a hockey rink. We don't want an Americas Pavilion, but our own.

France by Alain No one has taken responsibility for the Pavilion in France, but rather in Auroville. I summarize a report from Serge and Claude. We laid the first foundation stone by an industrialist; the French ambassador lay the 2nd stone two years later. The idea of the French is now to build up a European space. We hope to build up a French corner with a library and video center. We have an office in Aurolec with a computer and plan to organize cultural programs, student exchanges and showing of films and television. The study of the French soul is not yet part of the program.

Germany by Wolfgang and Friederike At least 16 people for ten years have been researching the inner soul searching and for the last year an outer manifestation. Philosophy and music and the strength of the rational are part of our heritage. We have the advantage of Sri Aurobindo's comments

on the soul of Germany and have benefited from the talks of Ananda Reddy the past two years. In 2001 we had an inauguration of our site and had a reception in Auroville. As a theme for our Pavilion, we chose water as a theme from the esthetics of the building to desalinization of water.

India by Bankim Bharat Nivas will be shifting offices out creating new spaces. Permanent exhibitions on India were suggested. Asia Urbs created a new look in the Bharat Nivas campus. Auroville is not very well known in India. I personally feel that the group should reach out in India and have more activities. We can learn from the mistakes and successes of Bharat Nivas. It has been under construction and functioning for longer than Matrimandir.

Netherlands by Martin I can be very short because nothing much is happening yet, but discussions are just starting. In last October we had a meeting about what to do, but we have not approached the general public. The strong feeling was that we might not want a Dutch Pavilion per se, but cooperate, for instance, with the Belgians. (An objection from Guy drew laughter from the group).

Russia by Michael On February 21st the inauguration of the Russian Pavilion took place. For the first time an official statement by the Russian ambassador gave support for Auroville and the Pavilion. On the physical level, not so much is happening right now, but funds are available from Dimitri von Morenschildt who died last month at the age of 100. We are now seeking counterparts in Russia to work with the Russians in Auroville. We have no plans or architect, but that is the step before us now.

Spain by Tine for Alfonso Alfonso has published a book "In Search of the Soul of Spain" which is extraordinary and very much worth reading. The work on the Pavilion in physical has not yet begun.

Sweden by Eveline The Swedish center is very small. The Pavilion is not an issue that moves me very much. When we had the AVI meeting in Sweden, we tried to explore the national soul, which is very hard to do in a global community. I am listening and waiting for inspiration. What I like is the Unity Pavilion.

Tibet by Julian The Tibetan Pavilion is an inspiration to us all. Through the dedicated efforts of Claude Arpi, it is nearly completed. When the US and Russia had a meeting on cooperating on a well in the International Zone, they met in the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture. It is the only Pavilion, which had its cornerstone, laid by the head of state, H.H. the Dalai Lama. Tibet is the only government, which solves its most difficult problems by consulting an oracle. We have much to learn from their spiritual science. Unfortunately, the construction has stopped for lack of funds. Can't we network to find the \$30,000 needed to complete it? Joan and Jill commented on the contribution of the visiting doctor and the atmosphere of the New Year thousand light mandala.

UK by Martin Two prongs are happening, some in the UK and some in Auroville. We only just started in the UK and have put it on our agenda. There are some people who don't agree we need a Pavilion. We benefited from Ananda Reddy giving us a talk. Anne and Gilbert are having group meetings and creating a brochure and have made contacts with the British consulate.

US by Bill and Jill We believe we are following Mother's intention by creating a national pavilion. We are looking at activities and functions more than form. Looking in the "Agenda", we read Mother's characterization of our national soul and its dynamic youthful quality of action. This is what we wanted for the buildings and the activities. So the student guest house "the little wide eyed open quality" could be manifest in the building itself. The building could be used as artist groups and economic development groups, for exchange and community rather than a museum. We brought an

architect and an applied environmental scientist to AV is 2001 and brought forty students in 2002 to create a building. It is not JUST for USA students, but also for anyone who wants to come.

Unity Pavilion by Jill A video has just been completed which will explain more. The Unity Pavilion will be open to all AVI people to gather and meet and have an office when they come to Auroville. How can we imaginatively share and celebrate what we have in common i.e.: snow around the world? We could have international studies on World Peace and Human Unity. Russia and USA made donations for the Unity Pavilion.

Panel Discussion: Ideals of the International Zone

We then had a panel discussion on the International Zone with Helmut, Jill, Tekeste, Peter and Ananda.

Presentation by Helmut - living area - cite universitaire. Biggest group are those who want to participate, but don't know how. Emphasis on centers, Agora, Town Square, reflected in "university campus" model discussed by the Americans.

Jill mentioned we had four zones, plus Peace Area and Green Belt. Each country has to go through a process in IZ Group and the Development council.

Peter, in quest of the order of the International Zone: How can we implement the free grouping of nations Sri Aurobindo mentions? Galaxy is valid in putting out deeper cosmological structures, an energy field.

Ananda was concerned that while the Tibetan Pavilion breathes the soul of Tibet, unfortunately Bharat Nivas does not manifest the soul of India.

Action points: Compilation of Sri Aurobindo's writing on international zone. Figure out what is relevant to Auroville today Nation soul based on past or future?

Sunday afternoon

Megan tried to guide us to obtainable goals. We broke into small groups to discuss:

How do AVIs participate and what are their roles in the evolution and decision making in the international zone.

How to include all players?

How do we best manage the development of the international zone with close communication and collaboration with Auroville and other actors? a. build on successes b. look at problems Mechanisms

After a half hour discussion we returned with the following reports and suggestions:

#1 Taranti Create a phone center for international communications Fund delegates to meet face to face Bring trainings to Auroville

#2 Paula We had the sense that the time is NOW to move forward on the International Zone. Presence and commitment present makes a difference -i.e. Claude and Tibetan Pavilion Strong presence outside can also have an influence as with Germany. Working with AV yields new result: US Student Guest House

Opportunity for Growth Grow out of your national karma Lack of diversity of cultural groups: Jews and Arabs Aurovilians must have final say!?!? Expanding IZ group to include AVIs and villagers

#3 Andrew US group and how it worked - saw it through from start to finish Co builders - US Model on international scale Bring national vision to AV, go to AV face to face

#4 Renu Designed together Collaboration with Ashram through Bharat Nivas

#5 Roger Simplify, right job for right group AV Rep key to feeding back and forth between the country and its Auroville counterparts Invite ashram participation and hold seminars on Sri Aurobindo and Mother's insights.

#6 Molly Momentum Development group working together Tamil Housing a need

#7 Guy Decision-making process a focus - AVI Centers - AV National group

Need a close collaboration, illustrated by a flow chart.

Current decision-making process PLUS IZ group's new orientation with their consent

Water Report

Our next session was an overview of the impact of water reported on by Jill. Admitting her "amateur" status, Jill was drawn to the issue from her experience in moving the American Pavilion project forward and trying to resolve best strategy for getting water to the building site and supplying it in the future.

It is a very wide subject touching many areas. The current Water Service has been dissolved, creating a difficult situation. She cited a few responses to her questionnaire and essays on water including an early interview with Roger and some health and the suggestion to form an Advisory Board. The well at the visitor's center may also help serve the International Zone.

Ed responded with a number an insights based on his earlier understanding of the dynamics of the Auroville water table. He suggested we should put a well on the other side of the IZ. It is one of the richest areas for water.

As a delightful bonus to our day, we saw excellent videos on the Unity Pavilion and one from the students from the University of Washington who worked on the US student dorm. This video has a bonus ending which has to been seen

Dynamic Programming

We then had some dynamic programming, breaking off into a number of various subject groups including more on water and a discussion of the nation-soul.

Variety Show: Cultural Program

Our evening session consisted of Savitra's songs from the early years. He invoked the special feelings of the early days and his relationship with the children. His songs were evocative and well received.

Paula followed with a lovely collection of stories about a journey to Tibet combining both stories read from a diary and recited from memory.

The talent show continued with essays and poetry from Amrit Imandar, who served as a secretary to Rabindranath Tagore and told stories about the relationship between Sri Aurobindo and Tagore. He also read from his original poems.

Chandresh followed with a few of his original poems, some of which have been previously published on the internet.

The very long and wonderful day ended with an acapella rendition of an original song by Taranti, a personal antiwar song about a young friend who was sent to war at age eleven and died, dedicated to the mothers of Iran and Iraq.

Already new friends, Sami Sunchild, (www.redvic.com) and old family Renu and Savitra and Auropuja and tribe have left, so our peak number has passed. We walked back through the redwoods and moonlight, brimming with images of Auroville dancing in our heads, poetry and songs echoing into the night.