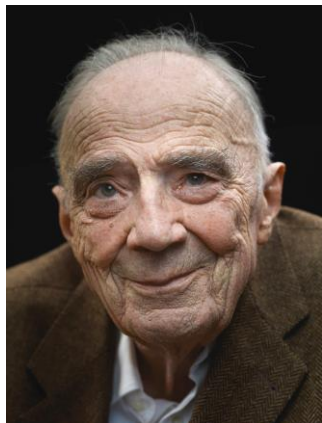


Obituary for Jacques Kuhn (February 15, 1919 – December 30, 2016)

Co-Founder, Vicepresident, President and Honorary President of the Tibet-Institute Rikon



We, the members of the Board of Foundation, the Monks' Community, the Staff and the voluntary helpers of the Tibet-Institute, remember Jacques Kuhn with deep gratitude and great appreciation. He was the Co-Founder, the Vicepresident, the President and the Honorary President of our institution. His commitment for the cause of the Tibet-Institute and for the Tibetan people in our country was extraordinary, untiring and inspiring.

It was almost fifty years ago that Jacques Kuhn, together with his brother Henri, created the Monastic Tibet-Institute. By doing so, Henri and Jacques not only initiated a buddhist cultural centre for Tibetan refugees, but at the same time a place of encounter between East and West. At its time, it was a project of extraordinary vision, and it was realized based on a suggestion and the support of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. One year after the inauguration of the Monastery, Henri Kuhn died, and it was his widow, Mathilde Kuhn-Ziegler, who – for 28 years – lead the institution together with Jacques, who served as Vicepresident. Subsequently, Jacques Kuhn took the steering wheel as the President during another seven years. Then, over the last twelve years, in his role as Honorary President, Jacques participated in almost every meeting of the Board of Foundation. In all the Board's decisions leading into the future, Jacques consented with full trust. For us, members of the Board, this was reassuring and motivating. His voice, although not linked to any formal voting right, has enriched and strengthened our work. It has greatly contributed towards our fellow feeling and our sense of joint responsibility. From the many good memories of our collaboration, we should like present two examples.

The first incident occurred during a Board-meeting. Shortly before that meeting, together with his wife Roswitha, Jacques had visited India. He had participated in a « Study Week » which had concentrated on topics of natural science and had been organized for Tibetan monks in the context of the project « Science meets Dharma ». The venue was one of the big Tibetan exile monasteries in South India. Here, Jacques, accompanied by Roswitha, had followed scientific lessons every day. He wanted to observe by himself, whether or not the monk-students were willing and able to follow the lectures and experiments presented by western teachers and whether the Tibetans were able to integrate the subjects into their own world-view. Jacques had even participated in the geological fieldwork under the tropical sky of Bylakuppe. And then he returned to Rikon, filled with lively impressions, and he presented to the Board his oral report, which was at the same time inspired and inspiring. We deeply felt how happy and grateful Jacques had been when he realized, that the project „Science meets Dharma“ – which he had himself courageously initiated – could indeed be put into practice in the day-to-day reality of of a Tibetan exile monastery.

The second memory to be mentioned here comes from an address delivered by His Holiness the Dalai Lama during his 14th visit to Rikon in April 2013. At that time, we had the opportunity to present to His Holiness the basic ideas and the practice of our Buddhism-Workshops for Tibetan children and youths. The Dalai Lama was pleased with this new educational offer of the Monastery, which – based on modern methodes of teaching and learning – tries to meet the needs and queries of the younger Tibetan generation. At first, His Holiness thanked Jacques Kuhn once again for founding the Institute and for his untiring



commitment. In his vote of thanks, His Holiness lovingly called Jacques *Kuhn Pola*, which in translation means *Grandfather Kuhn*. Jacques Kuhn as well thanked His Holiness from his heart for the latter's repeated visits. I remember the wonderful scene in which – again and again – the two men held each other's hands, and how their foreheads touched each other for a long moment, while their faces were radiating with happiness – a Nobelprize Laureate for Peace and a socially committed entrepreneur.

The industrial Kuhn family has provided living quarters for Tibetan refugees; they have given them employment and income in their Rikon mill, and with the creation of the monastery they have answered to their longing for spiritual support. Thus, they have catered to three basic human needs of the refugees. The latter's integration into the Swiss industrial society was not an easy task. It required much patience and openness. Jacques Kuhn gave us an example, how such an effort can succeed, but also how much strong will and resolution are needed. Sometimes he talked to us about those early years. When the ceremonial survey on the proposed site of the monastery was imminent, the Chinese Government sent a note of protest to the Swiss Federal Council. Therein we read: « ...The Kihn (wrongly for Kuhn) brothers, who are Swiss anti-Chinese elements, went so far as to put the above mentioned institute at the disposal of the Tibetan bandits as a centre for their activities in the whole of Europe. » The Swiss Government, too, was severely criticized, for « it encourages and supports the Tibetan bandits in their unrestrained activities in Switzerland. » Jacques Kuhn was very pleased to note that this protest was duly rejected by the media and the Swiss Government. Neither he nor his brother were intimidated and went straight ahead on their way.

Jacques Kuhn was a Christian, belonging to the Reformed Church. Yet, his relation with the Tibet-Institute and with the Tibetan Buddhist community was always close to his heart. His humanitarian support was based on ethics which encompass all human beings without regard of their creed, their social status or their colour.

It was important for Jacques – and it is enriching for us – to know that members of the founding family still continue their work in the Foundation Board and among the institute's staff. But even more important it was for him to keep the vision alive and to constantly adapt the Tibet-Institute to the needs of the time. Thus, in one of the last Board meetings he was able to attend, he actively participated in our efforts to find new words to express the vision for the Institute. This text, subsequently, was published in our annual report of 2015. Here, I should like to quote its last paragraph: „The Tibet-Institute has been conceived as a practical and durable token of Swiss esteem for Tibetan Buddhism. It is a modest Western contribution to the preservation and lively development of Eastern culture and Spirituality. At the same time, it enhances the spiritual wealth and diversity in our own country, Switzerland, as well as a global intercultural dialogue.“

The members of the Board of Foundation, the Monks' Community, the Staff and the voluntary helpers of the Tibet-Institute as well as many Tibetans in Switzerland will keep Jacques Kuhn in grateful memory. All of us shall give their best to lead the Tibet-Institute into a safe future in the sense of the above quoted words.

Dr. Karma Lobsang, President of the Board of Foundation