

“The bomb seemed to have hit each Balinese in the heart, leaving a deep wound, as if the bomb crater had torn into the heart of the island.”

ing, collective field of fear. As I worked therapeutically with some Balinese, I realized that the fear was pressing on their hearts. I showed them how to turn toward themselves in a loving way, hold their hearts, and release the pain and fear. They were most grateful to be able to have their breath deepen and their chests expand again. I was invited to join the psychological crisis team at the Sanglah hospital to care for the badly burnt survivors. The intensive care unit, provisionally equipped, held approximately 22 badly injured Indonesian and Balinese victims. Relatives and families filled the hallways. What could I do here? I spoke to several of the patients who were able to speak English and wished to talk. With their permission, I introduced a few simple relaxation techniques to activate their self-healing powers and calm their racing heart beats. It was gratefully accepted.

One day, during my regular visit with the rector of Warmadewa University, I walked through a large group of students who seemed surprised to see me, a white woman. Several asked, “Aren’t you scared to come here with the bomb?” I answered, “No, the bomb has already exploded. Why should I be scared? The terrorists already achieved their goal to scare the whole world.”

Wherever I went across the island, people were deeply shocked and depressed as a result of this act of terror directed at their visitors and guests on the island. At the same time, the frightening recognition was dawning that the main source of income for most of the population, tourism, had been destroyed for some time to come. By November 2002, over 60 percent of the workers in the tourist sector had been laid off, not counting

many others working here illegally. This means that many people in Bali will go hungry. Experts also said that the explosives (C4, TNT, and RDX) used in the simultaneous bomb explosions caused something similar to radioactive fallout with long-term consequences, meaning an increase in skin disease is expected over the next few years.

Many anticipate that previously existing tensions between multiethnic minorities that have immigrated to the island may increase, because the fight for survival is becoming much harder. Ubaya University in Surabaya, Java, has asked the PsychoPolitical Peace Institute to assist a newly created team of psychologists and therapists in developing a long-term preventive approach toward collective violence and the healing of psychological damage involved. This pilot program will be applicable to the difficult circumstances of ethnic and religious strife facing all areas of Indonesia today. The team is exploring ways to integrate the values of consciousness of joy and empowerment and choice in their own lives, and how to be role models for their students and bring these values into their classroom teaching in their respective fields. Also, a curriculum is being developed for students who want to work in the area of post-traumatic stress syndrome.

Several months have passed since the bombs exploded.

The suspected terrorists were identified and arrested on the neighboring island of Java. They will be brought to justice in Denpasar, the capital of Bali. However, the efforts to help the very special people of Bali overcome their collective trauma and prevent the outbreak of violence will continue.



Margret Rueffler (left) with children's play group in a slum area in the tourist paradise of Kuta, in Bali.



Rueffler builds a volleyball court with a sports group in Bali.

For more information about Margret Rueffler's work in Bali and her organization's international seminars, research, development, publications, and applied action projects, see www.pppi.net.