

GEORGE ZOURNAS
Director

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Reverend Eido Tai Shimano
New York Zendo Shoboji
223 East 67 Street
New York, M. Y. 10021

Dear Taisan :

Thank you very much for your long letter of October 21 which Kogen was kind enough to deliver to me. I am so glad that you decided to take the advice I gave you when we met for our long conversation on the morning of October 13 at Shoboji, namely, that you yourself write an account of the events of the past months and years. I was rather disappointed, however, to find that what you have written is but a reprise, as it were, of a song that those of us who have been around the zendos for any time at all have heard you sing again and again. It is a song of betrayal that you have sung at the departure of each of the monks and nuns from Dai Bosatsu. You have chanted it each time the many residents of Shoboji have departed. (Incidentally, Korin remarked a little while ago that Genro is the only Shoboji resident who has not left in anger or despair -- a remarkable record!) You sang it ad museum when more than half of the Shoboji Sangha left in the wake of the 1975 scandals and again last year when Mr. Doi and Mr. Sasaki telephoned the abbot of Yakushiji about your behavior. And now, of course, you have brought it forward one more time as Rinko Peggy Crawford, Mushin Frank LoCicero, Wado Vicky Gerdy, Kigen Adam Fisher and I depart from Shoboji. This is, however, as you say, the first time the song has been set down on paper.

I really think it would have been far better if you had followed through on the suggestion Dr. Ogura made a few weeks ago, namely, that a committee of three Sangha members from Shoboji be formed which, with Dr. Ogura, would carefully consider the many accusations against you that have accumulated over the years. Aitken Roshi wrote that he would be willing to write up the entire 1964 episode in Hawaii for such a committee. Bill Johnstone was ready to give the committee his first-hand information about the 1979 scandals. Maureen Freedgood, whom you ordained, was ready to talk with the committee about the many young persons -- monks and nuns and lay people -- who have come to her over the years for solace and advice after their devastating encounters with you. Wado Vicky Gerdy, Mushin Frank LoCicero, and Kigen Adam Fisher were prepared to discuss the countless obstacles that in the past have been placed in the path of anyone wanting detailed information about Zen Studies Society finances. It was, therefore, a great disappointment when Dr. Ogura called me to say that he had heard from Korin Sylvan Busch, who said that it would be impossible to find three neutral Sangha members in the New York Zendo/Dai Bosatsu Zendo Sangha and therefore the idea of forming this committee should be abandoned. As Zenshin Richard Rudin remarked about this, it is

rather a slap in the face of the Sangha to say that three such people can't be found among its members. However, so be it.

In your letter you present me as a villain, and I am sure that is the way you view me. However, I find myself in rather distinguished company. On the afternoon of Saturday, July 24, when I went up to Bosatsu to talk with you and Soen Roshi about the telephone call I had received earlier that week from Mrs. Robin Westen, you brought together in the meeting room there Soen Roshi, Yasuko, Bugyo David Schnyer, Korin Sylvan Busch and me. After I had related to that group the substance of Mrs. Westen's telephone call, you replied by saying it was all a plot by the martial arts Master, Min Pai, and the members of his zendo, who wanted to destroy you. A few moments later you expanded this group of conspirators to include Maezumi Roshi of the Los Angeles Zen Center, who, you said, hated you because "Maezumi Roshi owes almost a million dollars, and Dai Bosatsu owes no one a penny"!!! When I met with you and Bugyo at Shoboji on the looming of October 13, your list of persecutors had been expanded to include Soen Roshi who wanted to remove you from Dai Bosatsu so that he could become Founding Abbot and perform an expensive ceremony!!! A few moments later, the plotters were joined by Yamada Mumon Roshi, the abbot of Myoshinji. You said that he had invited himself and his monks to the Golden Wind Sesshin several years ago, that you had not invited them, but now you saw that that was a first step to their adding Dai Bosatsu to Myoshinji territory. As I said before, Bugyo was present when you made these extraordinary accusations.

It is a rather peculiar position that I find myself in. I am by nature conservative and a traditionalist. In the Mahayana Buddhist tradition a student gives unquestioning loyalty to his teacher, and, indeed, for sixteen years I have tried to model my behavior on that ideal. But this year the full realization that I also had deep responsibilities to the Buddha Dharma, to the two zendos, and to the Sangha as President of the Zen Studies Society Board of Trustees become clear to me. This presented a terrible dilemma to me, which was only resolved with much anguish. If you had resigned, as you told me on Saturday, July 31, you intended to do, there would have been no need for my letters. As you did not choose to do so, I had no choice but to fulfill my responsibilities as President of the Board of Trustees and let the other members of the Board and the Sangha know the full story, as I saw it.

When the 1975 scandals erupted, Soen Roshi was outraged by your behavior, but I pled with him then for you, as indeed I did with other members of the Board of Trustees and with many of the Sangha at large. I tried to rationalize your behavior by telling them that you were still a young man, that you were a stranger in a strange land, that we spoke a great deal about "saving all sentient beings" and that you, with your many splendid gifts, were worth a good deal of effort to "save as well. Many people were shocked when Soen Roshi did not come to the dedication ceremonies of Dai Bosatsu, but even then I persisted in my belief that he would one day come and show the world that he still had confidence in you. After the two 1979 scandals, there was a period when I genuinely felt that your whole outlook towards the world had changed radically, and at that time I went to Japan, ostensibly to visit the grave of my first Buddhist teacher in Matsuyama but also to visit

Ryutakuji, in the hope that I would see Soen Roshi and could convince him to return to us in New York. By great good fortune Soen Roshi had just emerged from one of his retreats, and I spent a great deal of time with him. After much talk, he finally promised to come again to Dai Bosatsu and Shoboji. This gave me the greatest happiness, and indeed one of the high points of my life was in June of this year after we attended the dedication ceremonies at Ryutakuji and you, Bugyo and I flew back to America with Soen Roshi. Then came the blow.

When I went to Dai Bosatsu to relate Mrs. Westen's telephone message at the meeting I have described before, at which Korin Sylvan Busch, Bugyo David Schnyer, and I were present. (Soen Roshi had asked Yasuko to leave), soon Roshi denounced you in our presence as a liar. He said you had lied to him when he confronted you about the scandals in Hawaii in 1964, and he said you were lying now. I was much shaken by this and became even more disturbed as I learned of the treatment that Soen Roshi received at Dai Bosatsu and as I witnessed your behavior towards him during that week of July 26 through 30. I finally realized that it was impossible for me to continue in such a situation and, on the morning of Saturday, July 31, I wrote out my resignation from the presidency of the Zen Studies Society and from the Zen Studies Society itself and took it up to Shoboji. Although I had not discussed my resignation with Soen Roshi previously, I showed him my letter, and he agreed that the time had come for such an action to be taken. I went to your room and gave you the letter. At that time you asked me not to make a final decision about the resignation and asked if you might come and talk with me about it that evening. I agreed to this, with some misgivings, but I at that time was still hopeful that something could be worked out whereby you and Soen Roshi would be able to work together at Dai Bosatsu and Shoboji and that, under his influence, your inclinations that have caused so much distress and grief in the past might be curbed and that energy redirected. You agreed to many of my suggestions, and it was with high hopes that the two of us went up to Shoboji to talk with Soen Roshi. When we got there, Kogen told us Soen Roshi would see us in the garden zendo, and we went there together. Soen Roshi asked you to close the glass doors to the garden, and the three of us together performed the Purification, recited the "On Opening This Dharma ceremony, and chanted Namu Dai Bosa. You then turned to me and asked me to begin. Before I could open my mouth, Soen Roshi -- at last at the end of his patience with you -- sprang to his feet and once again branded you a liar. It was an awesome thing to see him manifest as Fudo Myo-o and witness his Dharma Wrath blaze out over you and through the Three Worlds (you described this scene very accurately to Bugyo on Wednesday morning). After once more labeling you a liar, Soen Roshi turned to me and said, "Jochi, go home you are tired," and went down the hall shouting epithets in Japanese that brought Kogen, the Shoboji Resident, scrambling from his room on the second floor. Appalled by this, I turned to you and asked if I should try to talk to him, and you said, "Yes, Jochi please." So -- once more for your sake -- I went to his room, knelt before his door, and beat my forehead on the floor pleading with him to listen to me. He came out, and he and I had a long talk, during which he discussed the money matters which I related in my earlier letter. I pled with him that these were mistakes and it was not too late for a reconciliation to be made. He agreed to talk with you en route to California and I said I would withhold my letter of resignation until he had called me again, which he promised would be before he left the

United States. He told me to go home immediately, without saying anything further to you.

Early the next morning, Zenshin telephoned me from the airport where he had driven you and Soen Roshi, to say that Soen Roshi wanted to talk with me. Soen Roshi came on the wire and told me that he had had a long talk with you during the night and that the situation was hopeless, that I should send out my letter. We chanted together the Purification, On Opening This Dharma, and Great Vows for All. He then, as is his custom, told me to "bravely march on" and was gone. Thus was set in movement the long chain of events that has culminated in the present situation.

Soen Roshi and I have talked several times since his return to Japan and in one of those conversations he said to me, "I do not hate Eido and Yasuko. I love them very much. But I do hate their lying and falsehood." Although you refuse to believe it, everyone with whom you have come in contact has the tenderest feelings of affection and gratitude towards you, as Soen Roshi indicates. In this difficult time, I have received dozens of letters and telephone calls from Sangha members, present and past, who have suffered from your actions and who have encouraged me in what I have done. Nevertheless, without exception, each of them has spoken of his or her abiding gratitude and affection for you. At that afternoon meeting on July 24 at Dai Bosatsu at which you, Korin, Bugyo and I were present, Soen Roshi reminded you that after the 1964 scandals in Hawaii he had told you the story of a great demon who could not keep his hands off any woman who passed by and was always molesting them. By some mysterious working of the Dharma, he said, that demon was transformed into a Bodhisattva of great purity. Soen Roshi then turned to you and said, "Eidoshi, I tell you again, purify yourself, purify yourself! Become that Bodhisattva of great purity." All of us who care for you and the Buddha Dharma pray that you will follow his advice.

With the departure of Rinko Peggy Crawford, Wado Vicky Gerdy, Mushin Frank LoCicero and me from the Board of Trustees and New York Zendo Shoboji, you have an opportunity to reconstitute the Board and make a fresh start. Many senior members of the Sangha are also leaving Shoboji for other zendos, but New York is a vast reservoir of people interested in "spiritual" things, and I am sure that the cushions in the zendo will be full again before very long. It is a splendid chance for you.

When Soen Roshi said, "Eido's shame is Soen's shame, the shame of Dai Bosatsu is the shame of Ryutakuji and every Buddhist monastery in the world," he spoke a very great truth, for indeed you are not the only one responsible for this terrible situation. Eido Roshi is responsible. Soen Roshi is responsible. I, Jochi, am responsible. Each member of the Sangha is responsible as well. We are all caught up in some very grievous error, and I pray that in the fullness of time our error will somehow be transformed into Buddha's Wisdom.

Gassho,

[signature]

George Zournas