

November 1, 1982

The Rev. Eido Tai Shimano
New York Zendo
223 East 67th St.
New York, N.Y. 10021

Dear Mr. Shimano:

Thank you for your creative letter of Oct. 19, 1982 with its equally masterful enclosure of Oct. 21 to Mr. George (Jochi) Zournas. I must say that as I began to read your work I felt some vestigial hope that you might in fact clear the air, turn some metaphorical corner and clarify what, over the years, has become murky with the stuff that Soen Roshi has learned to call your "lies." By the time I finished reading your words, I was, of course, disappointed if not surprised.

"So much sitting, so many sesshins, so many dokusans..." and still Soen Roshi calls you a liar. Could you tell me why? Is this perhaps another encouragement to "bravely march on"? Coming as Soen Roshi does out of a society that takes pride in indirection, still he uses this most direct word, "liar." Why? Coming as he does out of a discipline that enjoins confession and straight-forwardness, he calls you a liar. Why? Among the monks at Dai Bosatsu last summer you managed to plant the idea that Soen Roshi was an alcoholic and/or senile. But why would a senile alcoholic even bother to call you a liar? Politics, you say? — because Soen Roshi wants Dai Bosatsu, to become king of some American Zen castle? If Soen Roshi actually did want Dai Bosatsu, why not give it to him? Do you not owe him a great debt for his teaching, perhaps as Torei felt he owed Hakuin? As a 'true man without rank,' with so many sesshins, so much sitting, and so many dokusans behind you, surely you recognize that the toys of Zen Buddhism — the robes and monasteries and power — are only dreams. Could you, a 'Zen Master,' be fooled by a dream?

But this, of course, is not your understanding. Your understanding seems to be that They are all out to get you — you who are blameless in administration, honest in the dokusan room, pure and "fair" and deserving of respect from those who support and make possible your meaning as a person of rank. It is the questioners who are "insane" or full of "intense personal hatred" or want Your zendo or want Your monastery or hate you because you have money and they have not or don't understand the 'Japanese' as you seem to feel they should. Surely, they are a mighty and impressive group and you...you bear it all so remarkably well, so staunch and patient. You are really very good at it; masterful, if not the master.

Besides those Jochi George Zournas mentioned in his letter (those others who were out to get you), I would like to take this opportunity to

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recollect some others, perhaps not quite so august, who have left our own sangha. I am not now referring to those who left because they moved or to those who made an easy personal choice, but rather to those who left after some discovery in that beautiful zendo where there is room for our lifelong practice. True, some left in anger or confusion, but what was it they really discovered? Is it possible they discovered what Soen Roshi called your "lies?" I really don't know, but I recollect them now and express my sorrow at their leaving: Daishin Peter Gamby, Maishin Mike Sopko, Reimon Ray Crivello, Gemmy Elihu Smith, Sojun George Seragarian, Bunyu David Bogart, [REDACTED] (all of whom were residents at Sho Bo Ji with your blessing), Kanzan Bruce Rickenbacker (your monk who memorized the whole of the Diamond Sutra), Daiko Charles Carpenter (another of your monks), Shoro Lou Nordstrom (another of your monks), Kozen Peter Kaufman (another of your monks), Jonen Sheila Curtis, Erin Lynn Schwinghamer, Kashin Estelle Gerard, Soshin Janice Levine, [REDACTED], Wendy Megerman, [REDACTED], Toni Snow, Reishu Jim Gordon, Shinso Merete Galesi, Ishin Peter Mathiessen, Jean Day, Carol Binswanger, Jochi George Zournas, Wado Vicki Gerdy, Rinke Peggy Crawford and Mushin Frank LoCicero. You will recall, of course, that, over the years, the list has grown much, much, much longer and is filled with people who did not show sufficient "skepticism about rumors," as you so quaintly put it.

How many of them came to you directly in 1975 and 1979 (when what were humorously referred to as "Fuck Follies I" and "Fuck Follies II" were unveiled)? How many? Was it 10 or perhaps 20? Without any exception I know of, each of those who came to you directly came in a spirit of admiration and love, in hopes of clarifying a delicate matter without public exposure. The situation: your manipulation of the dokusan setting for your own periodic sexual satisfaction (seducing women); treating lovers taken from within the sangha with contempt once you had finished with them; and taking no candid responsibility for your own behavior but rather answering direct, honest and caring queries with, in one form or another, the line you used in a jam-packed zendo in 1975: "it's none of your business."

The line of people outside your door is long, very, very long. In my mind, they wait silently — the They and Them whom you so easily accuse of insanity or intense personal hatred. A long line of crazy people outside your door. What brought them there? Even crazy people have their reasons, don't you agree?

Look! There's [REDACTED]. Remember her? She was the one who sent a letter to the Board of Trustees in 1979 outlining without rancor your sexual blackmail. It was she who wrote: "Personally, I found his (your) seductions very distracting and jarring during the first Kessei....I wonder now if I would not have been a better student in the long run without it....And last year (1978) during my second stay at Dai Bosatsu, it hurt me that he treated me very distantly for quite a while. When he warmed up, it became sexual again. That kind of either/or situation made it very difficult for me (or, I would think, any woman) to be his student. You want his attention and his help, and that, I think, is how it begins. He takes this emotional opening-up, which is normal and right in a spiritual student-teacher relationship, as a sign of sexual readiness." Clearly the Board of Trustees, your Board of Trustees, took the only possible sane action by never fully discussing the matter and by issuing a letter, signed by Korin Sylvan Busch stating, "we affirm our confidence in Eido Roshi and his leadership of our sangha."

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And there's [redacted] [redacted]; Remember her? December 24, 1977, Room 1100A at the Statler Hilton after dinner at Mama Leone's. Remember how the Board of Trustees covered that one when Jochi and Korin, at whose instigation I can only guess, spread lies and rumors about [redacted]—how she was only dreaming of an affair with you? And how even [redacted] was drawn into the lies and told them on herself because she believed the truth would be harmful to you and to Zen practice in America? She was the same one who commented later in front of witnesses that "he (you) never even said thank you."

And [redacted]!... But of course you will recall this and much, much more.

On and on and on it goes down that long, long line. Person after person, Bodhisattva after crazy Bodhisattva, each of them willing their suspicions to silence. How is it possible they were so willing, so stupid? Perhaps it was because many people begin their spiritual practice with the understanding that the ascendancy they have previously granted to their emotions and intellect is the source of much suffering. Because of that pain, they were willing to set aside their own emotions and intellect (to the extent possible), and to be as faithful and obedient as possible. Perhaps they counseled themselves that intellect and emotion are mere delusion. And perhaps they trusted that your emotions and thoughts were not based in delusion. This trust, however misguided, was surely human and understandable. Unfortunately, it was and is open to manipulation and deceit. There are many I know, myself among them, who practiced with you and were grateful to you, until, a little at a time, they began to wonder. In their wondering, they came to you in their twos and threes and tens, not even caring very much that you took lovers on the side, but curious about a wider pattern of contempt and manipulation. No doubt you saw them as insane people out to take your toys. Well, they didn't get them, did they?

To some you said your Japanese heritage and samurai code of honor kept you from understanding or responding to these puritanical "barbarians." Isn't it odd for a so-called Zen Master who has lived in America for 20 years to claim he understands neither his students nor his environment? Isn't such a person in the wrong line of work? No doubt it is equally insane to suggest that a real Japanese man would know something of discretion and that a true samurai would not exhibit contempt and dishonesty towards those in his own circle of honorable endeavor.

Of course it was more difficult to use this line on Dr. Tadao Ogura, the psychiatrist who offered to act as arbitrator in the present upheaval. He was the one who suggested taking three "impartial" observers from the sangha with him when he listened to direct testimony of those involved. The group would then have reported to the Board of Trustees, your own Board of Trustees. Perhaps he too was one of the insane ones, the ones who had to be stopped. And stopped he was when Korin Sylvan Busch, at whose instigation I can only guess, let it be known that three "impartial" sangha members could not be found.

The long line outside your door does not say these things. They are silent. They are gone. It is I who say them, I, Kigen. I take responsibility for saying what I have said and doing what I have done. I have company, but I take responsibility for myself. I am one of Them, those Others whose fault it all is, one of the ones who supported you well, offered you gratitude, did his best to practice the Zen Buddhism of the Patriarchs, lied or remained silent for you on numbers of occasions, lied or remained silent to myself about you, endured and perpetuated your deceptions, and, finally...went..."insane."

It is out of that insanity that I also offer you my most sincere and honest thanks. I offer thanks without irony or sarcasm. You have taught

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me well and I am grateful. Besides the mechanics of Zen Buddhism, you have also taught me what a Zen Master is not -- a teaching worthy of a true Zen Master. Although your teaching lacked the creative clarity, the nurturing of the Buddha Dharma, and the straight-forwardness of a truly enlightened man, still I say your teaching was fine. As I value my life, my Zen practice, so I value this teaching.

This is a time for potential new beginnings -- yours, mine, the sangha's. Always new beginnings. I pray now and will continue to pray that each of us may one day face death with strong, even breaths and perhaps a small smile of true understanding.

Thank you and goodbye.

Adam Fisher
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