

## Theatre Arts Books

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Dear Aitken Roshi:

Please excuse me for being so long in replying to your January letter. I had heard no more from Mrs. Westin and had assumed that her article had been abandoned. It occurred to me to write one final letter to you and our other friends who had expressed concern about the Shimano scandals but, to tell you the truth, I couldn't bring myself to enter the wretched realm of Yasuko and Eido Tai Shimano. Three noble friends, Dai Bosatsus every one, have died in the last two months, and contrasting their beautiful lives to the wretchedness of the Shimanos' quite overcame me. However, Mrs. Westin called me about ten days ago, and she said that her article is very much alive and is now scheduled for publication in the Village Voice for the issue that will appear on April 20 or April 27. I had planned some months ago to go down to see my family in Texas during the week of April 16-24, so I will not be here if the article appears on the 20th. I have asked Mrs. Elaine Hallett in our office to send you copies of the article if it should appear on the 20th. If it appears the following week, I will send it to you myself.

Your continuing concern about the reaction of the Sangha members of Dai Bosatsu and New York Zendo Shoboji is very heartening. In these six months since the ax fell, as it were, I have met with a good many of them individually or in small groups and, as you guessed, the principal feeling is one of betrayal, and the wounds do indeed go very deep. For those of us who have not passed the Mu barrier, it is difficult, indeed almost impossible, to feel that "everything is really all right." Most of us are willing to accept intellectually Hakuin's assurance that "this very body is the Buddha" is still the truth, but this acceptance is based on faith and for most of us our faith has been severely shaken by Taisan's behavior over the past years and especially his and Yasuko's treatment of Soen Roshi when he visited us last summer. My first Buddhist teacher said that it was a mistake to translate Asvaghosa's great work as "The Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana." He said that "faith" was not a good translation of the Sanskrit "srada," that "srada" was something that was based on personal experience of such vividness and immediacy as to leave "faith" way behind. I think this especially applies in the Zen Studies Society case. Most of us had great faith, but few had awakened srada, and that, of course, caused the great devastation that came to us. Many New York Zendo/Dai Bosatsu Sangha members have been lucky enough to find homes at the other Zendos in New York. Some are at the First Zen Institute. Others have found refuge at the Riverdale Center. Many are now sitting with Dokyu Roshi at the Soho Zendo. Yet others are at the Chelsea Zendo, which was formed some years ago by the students who left the New York Zendo. A good many people continue to sit at the New York

Zendo, merely because it is a beautiful and convenient place to sit. One distinguished doctor who is doing that has written me to say that he feels great abhorrence for Taisan, but he continues to sit and does not go to the Zendo when Taisan is scheduled to be there. Others, for one reason or another, have given up sitting altogether, and this is one of the more serious results of Taisan's heedlessness. Some continue at New York Zendo with full faith in Taisan. What their reaction to Mrs. Westin's article will be I, of course, do not know, but I suspect they will be hit rather badly by the cumulative evidence she has gathered. She has not told me any details of the article, but I do know from her and from others that she has consulted many, many people who have been caught up in Taisan's intrigues over the years, so we can expect the cumulative effect to be quite overwhelming.

In talking with my Buddhist friends from New York Zendo and other Sanghas around the country, I find the thing that seems to disturb them most is that Soen Roshi and other Zen teachers have never taken any position about Taisan's behavior. It is a great comfort that you have decided that the time has come to say quite plainly what you feel about the situation. Other Roshis and Zen teachers have also written to me or telephoned me and have assured me that the point of no return has also been reached by them. I had dinner with Margot Wilkie and her husband several weeks ago, and she told me that Brother David Steindl-Rast had been to see her and told her that he had insisted that Taisan remove himself from a seminar that had been planned at the UN. He felt it would be wicked to embarrass the UN with his presence. Margot indicated that Brother David will no longer appear on the same platform with Taisan. Taisan is so far gone in his illness and is so encouraged in his delusions by Yasuko that I doubt very much whether any of these protests will get through to him. After my letters had been sent, he asked me to come to the third-floor meeting room at the New York Zendo to talk with him. Soen Roshi once said "The Zen way is that if you have something good to say about someone, you say it to his back. If you have something bad to say about him, you say it to his face." This has always seemed an excellent means of proceeding to me, so I was--I cannot say happy but at least willing--to meet with him. When we came together, he began to lie about what he had said to me at our last encounter. I rose to leave and said, "If you are going to lie, there is no point in continuing this meeting," and I started down the very steep stairs. He came running after me in a panic and, on those dangerous steps, we had quite a wrestling match, in the course of which I cried out, "Soen Roshi loves you, I love you; we want only to help you." But he shouted back, "Forget about love." At that moment I looked into his eyes, and that was perhaps the most horrible moment of my entire life, because I saw nothing there. All feeling, all love, had indeed been banished and forgotten. Poor, unhappy man.

It is a comfort to know that you and the other Roshis and Zen teachers are standing by. Many of us have the symptoms of what I suppose might be labeled an Orestes complex. It is a terrible thing, indeed, to have to proceed in ways contrary to that of someone who has been your teacher and to do anything that might wound him. No matter how effective we are in convincing ourselves intellectually that he is

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*grief*  
mentally ill and, as one authority said, "should be removed from his current position and never given a position of primary authority again," this deep feeling of ~~malaise~~ persists. Your standing with us and the assurances of the other Zen teachers that Taisan's actions are not acceptable to them either is a great comfort.

Namu Dai Bosa, Namu Dai Bosa, Namu Dai Bosa.

Gassho,

*George Zournas*  
George Zournas

cc: Soen Roshi  
Maezumi Roshi  
Baker Roshi  
Maureen Freedgood

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa  
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