

David, Blanche thought you might want to see this. Kokai

Subj: Re: From: Kokai
Date: 98-06-22 08:58:48 EDT
From: pphelan.wilson@mhs.unc.edu (PHELAN, PAT)
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To: sfzc@aol.com

Dear Kokai,

I just received this info -- some of which I think was presented at the Suzuki Roshi Conference -- from Miriam Levering. How are things in SF? When it is convenient, could you tell me Blanche's plans to lead sesshins for the next 8 months. Also, will she be leading the Spring Practice Period at Tassajara?

Hope you are well and having a good summer.

Pat

From: "Stuart Lachs" <slachs@postoffice.worldnet.att.net>
Date: Thu, 18 Jun 1998 23:10:50 +0000

I have been in touch with Brian Victoria - the author of Zen At War - I have mentioned to him some of the discussions that have taken place on the e-mail lists and that in the course of these discussions -Shunryu Suzuki's anti- war activities have been mentioned - I asked Brian for comment - he sent the following and said that it was O.K. to post it on the lists-

Bian wrote;

"One minor piece of information for you is that Shunryu Suzuki appears not to have been the "exception" that some of his American disciples have tried to make him out to be. I say this based on a telephone conversation I had with his son, Hooitsu Suzuki, when I was in Japan at the beginning of this year. In response to my question, Hooitsu replied, "I keep getting questions from foreigners about alleged anti-war activities at this temple during the Pacific War. I don't know where these persons are getting their information, but there were no such anti-war activities here. We supported the [Japanese] war effort just as all the other temples did."

In his new book on Shunryu's life and thought, entitled the "Crooked Cucumber," David Chadwick includes a more detailed description of Shunryu's wartime activities, though he presents nothing that seriously challenges Hooitsu's description. For my part, I am convinced that by the 1930s if not before there simply was no active resistance to Japanese military actions on the Asian continent on the part of any Zen Buddhist priests, Rinzai or Soto. On the contrary, there is massive evidence to show varying degrees of cooperation, collaboration and support for these actions on the part of Zen scholars and priests. This said, as in D.T. Suzuki's case, there does appear to have been some reservation among some better informed priests about the advisability of initiating a war with the U.S. and England. Their reservations, however, were largely based on the pragmatic question of whether or not such a war was winnable, not opposition on religious or moral grounds. This is, I think, a crucial distinction. "

I would like to add as a reminder that by the 1930's D.T.Suzuki had already spent many years in the U.S.A. so that he was very aware of

its industrial might and potential as compared to Japan's- other Japanese too were aware of this industrial might but believed that the superior spirit of the Japanese would overcome this material imbalance - apparently D.T.Suzuki among others was not convinced-

Brian adds;

." Please feel free to share Suzuki Hoitsu's comments via e-mail to those interested. I would, however, ask that you also inform list members that David Chadwick's new book, "The Crooked Cucumber" goes into this question in some detail and presents a more nuanced picture (and, frankly speaking, a somewhat more sympathetic picture than I believe the facts support when placed in the larger context of the Soto Zen sect's overall fervent support of the war. This said, it appears that Hoitsu's rather blunt comments may also represent a subsequent rift between himself and his father. Possible 'father- son conflicts,' however, are not an area that I intend to pursue. In the final analysis it must be remembered that S. Suzuki was, during the war years at least, only slightly more than a 'run-of-the-mill' village priest and local school teacher."

Stuart

----- Headers -----

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Received: from hermes.oit.unc.edu (hermes.oit.unc.edu [152.2.21.1])
by rly-zb03.mx.aol.com (8.8.5/8.8.5/AOL-4.0.0)
with ESMTTP id IAA01084 for <sfzc@aol.com>;
Mon, 22 Jun 1998 08:58:42 -0400 (EDT)
Received: from mhs.unc.edu (mhs.unc.edu [152.2.254.94]) by hermes.oit.unc.edu (8.8.5/8.7.3) with SMTP id IAA14370 for <sfzc@aol.com>; Mon, 22 Jun 1998 08:58:42 -0400 (EDT)
Received: from Connect2 Message Router by mhs.unc.edu
via Connect2-SMTP 4.30.b5; Mon, 22 Jun 1998 08:56:08 -0400
Message-ID: <46C55B7001F60008@mhs.unc.edu>
In-Reply-To: <0807665501F60008@mhs.unc.edu>
Date: Mon, 22 Jun 1998 8:58:20 -0400
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Organization: University of North Carolina
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Subject: Re: From: Kokai
Importance: Normal
MIME-Version: 1.0
Content-type: text/plain; charset="US-ASCII"
Content-disposition: inline
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X-Mailer: Connect2-SMTP 4.30.b5 MHS/SMF to SMTP Gateway