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# BUDDHIST PEACE FELLOWSHIP

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## A LETTER FROM THICH NHAT HANH

Thich Nhat Hanh has long been a central figure in the Vietnamese Buddhist peace movement, and is a Vice-chairperson of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. As one of the leading exponents of engaged Buddhism, Nhat Hanh helped found and direct Van Hanh University and the School of Youth for Social Service in Vietnam, and in 1966 came to the US on a tour sponsored by FOR to speak on behalf of the Vietnamese people and their wish for peace. Though he has been unable to return to Vietnam, he has continued peace efforts as head of the Vietnamese Buddhist Peace Delegation in Paris, and through FOR.

The following letter was written in response to a request by photographer Don Farber that Nhat Hanh contribute an introduction to Refuge in L.A., a photo essay on life at the Vietnamese Buddhist Temple in Los Angeles that Don hopes to publish soon as a book.

This spring the Buddhist Peace Fellowship will sponsor a visit by Thich Nhat Hanh to the States. If you would like to know more about his visit, write to Andy Cooper, 905 S. Normandie, Los Angeles, CA 90006. We will send you information when plans are more fully worked out.

Les Patates Douces  
August 28, 1982

Dear Don,

I have looked at the pictures attentively and I thank you for having sent them over. They are beautiful and inspiring. I hope many more people will have a chance to look at them, and to meditate upon the situation in which all of us find ourselves now.

I do not know how much happiness the people of Vietnam have gotten from the importation of Western civilization in their country. But I know that the amount of suffering that they have endured in the past few decades has been beyond measure. You know that the ideological conflict that has torn their

country apart is not really their own. It was invented in the West and introduced from the West. Both capitalism and communism are alien to the their way of life. Yet, they have taken the conflict to be their own and have learned to look at each other as enemies. The weapons they have used to destroy each other and their land have also been imported from the West. The land and the people were divided and the world was behind them, taking sides, and showing "solidarity." Even if they wanted to stop, they could not. There was

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## ON THE BRINK OF TIME

By Joanna Macy

The following article is an edited version of a talk given by BPF board member Joanna Macy at the Reverence for Life Conference held this past June in New York City.

We all have something in common despite our differences in religion, nationality, the political views that we may hold or the strategies that we may espouse. What we have in common distinguishes us from any preceding generation: We all live on the brink of time.

Every generation throughout history lived with the tacit assumption that others would follow. Every generation assumed, without questioning, that its children and children's children and those yet unborn would carry on the work of their hands and hearts. Hardships, failures, personal death, were ever encompassed in that vaster assurance of continuity: the assurance that there would come those who would walk on this green earth and breathe this air. And now in each of us there is some measure of anguish for this ailing endangered planet and its inhabitants. Our traditions, our history, our culture, give us no images of this. No language or symbols exist that are appropriate for that which is almost beyond words and with which each of us must cope. For that reason I deeply honor you for being here today, for joining in this conference.

# THICH NHAT HANH

one time when a number of them cried out: Let the big guys leave us alone so we can settle the problem by ourselves. Their cry was lost in the sound of the bombs. There was one time when they brought down their family ancestral altars to the streets to block the tanks. This attempt to challenge violence by their own traditional culture was not even understood. It looked as if their country was born to be crucified. For the world's sake? I do not know. Has humankind learned from their suffering? I do not know.

Gà một nhā bởi mắt đá nhau. "In order to fight each other, chicks born from the same mother-hen put colors on their faces." This is a very well known Vietnamese saying. Putting colors on one's own face is to make oneself a stranger to one's own brothers and sisters. One can only shoot at others when they are strangers.

The conflict did not end after 1975. Anger, hatred, and retaliation continue. Perhaps you have learned that boat people refugees in Hong Kong divided themselves into two camps, Northern and Southern, and continue to fight the war. Most Vietnamese living abroad, still considering themselves either pro-communist or anti-communist, continue the fight in magazine articles. They bring up their children in this spirit of division and hatred, perpetuating the conflict into the future. When shall our hearts be liberated from the bitterness? When shall the chicks of the same mother-hen get rid of the colors on their faces and recognize each other as brothers and sisters? If you know how much suffering there has been, you know how difficult it is to get rid of the bitterness.

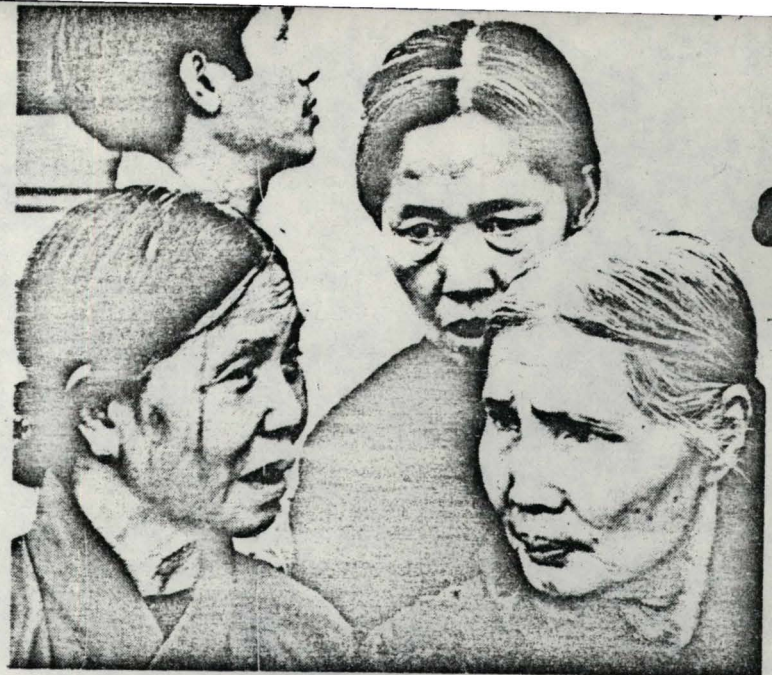
Vietnam is the world and the suffering of Vietnam is the suffering of the world. We should be able to recognize this. No one in the world can say that he or she is not responsible. Our world continues to be Vietnam. On the body of the earth, we feel many painful spots like Vietnam; the cause of the suffering is the same. The conflict that causes so much suffering has also brought about the means for humankind to destroy itself and the world: the nuclear arms race is a cancer in the body of the world and it seems that it can no longer be removed.

Let us look at each person in the pictures: children, adults, and aged people. We find innocence, joy, and serenity; but we also find loneliness, bitterness, and silent pain. Many people like them have died during the war, many have died in the ocean as boat people, many are still dying in the re-education camps. Look at them. Meditate on them. Their presence among the American people should create awareness about what America has done and is doing. The conflict has not ended. Most of us are still in the conflict, and the conflict is going to destroy us.

The only way out of the danger is for each of us to remove the colors from our faces. Each of us should be able to say to the other: I am your brother, I am your sister. Please recognize me as your brother. Please recognize me as your sister. We are all of the human kind and our life is one. I know that we shall live or die together. I am capable of recognizing you, even under the colors that smear your face.

The pictures you have taken of the Vietnamese refugees, Don, should help in creating that awareness. Each member of the human race, whether he/she is African, European, or American is a Vietnamese. The conflict is leading to the destruction of our own planet. When the destruction comes, where shall we be able to seek refuge, even if we, with our technology, become "space people" instead of "boat people"?

Nhat Hanh



## ON THE BRINK

Photo by  
Don Farber

And I honor as well all those who are going to join us this week, bringing their hopes and determination to this United Nations Special Session on Disarmament. Because these acts show a willingness to deal with a pain beyond the naming, a pain which our culture still would deny. And many of us who, by working in whatever realms that we choose -- as activists in the anti-nuclear movement, in the movement to save our earth, in the fight against human oppression -- have each to cope in the depths of our own hearts with -- well, there really isn't a word for it. Anguish comes close. It is a pain. It's not despair because, strictly speaking, despair suggests a loss of hope. This pain can go along with hope and, indeed, I am convinced that confronting and dealing with it, finding the strength and energy in it, is necessary for us to be able to tap the great personal resources we each have within us.

Recent polls taken in this country tell us that over half of the American population expects that there will be a nuclear war within the next few years. And a larger proportion than that expects that should such a war occur, they would not survive, nor would the world as we know it. That is staggering. And yet we look around and we see life as usual going on. We continue to pursue the everyday plans and hopes and activities that have molded our days in a routine fashion. We take our children to the orthodontist, pay insurance premiums, and so forth, as if we expected that normal life to continue. All the while, within us is the awesome, absolutely unprecedented awareness that our mothers and fathers did not have: the sense of being on the brink of time. This is what Robert J. Lifton calls "double life," and he says that we all live it to some extent. On one level, a more or less cheerful capacity to deal with life -- getting up in the morning and remembering which shoe goes on which foot, getting ourselves to work, cheering up our friends, getting the kids off to school; and underneath, an anguish beyond the naming -- an awareness of the dimensions of the horror that we face. Lifton goes on to explain that so long as we cannot find ways to deal with this level of anguish, we suppress it, and with that suppression we are drained of the energy we need for action, creativity and vision.

I want to suggest to each of you -- to all of us -- that we use this gift of time we have together to reach down and touch that level of our experience. Now this looks like an ordinary room and an ordinary

## ON THE BRINK

school like 15 million meetings that we may have been to, but let's not let it be just another meeting. Let's use this moment right now to experience what we are given to experience in this planet/time -- our anguish and the spiritual teaching that can come out of that.

This is a conference on spirituality and disarmament. I don't know whether it's very useful at all to talk about which traditions that we represent have which gifts to bring. The very nature of the time that we live in, and the bomb itself, can be a spiritual teacher for us. Let us open ourselves to that. What is a spiritual teaching? Turn, for a moment: right now -- turn and look at the person next to you. Just look! Right there! There is someone living in this planet/time with you. You're not alone. You see that face? Take a moment to look at it. That is the face of a person who may die in a nuclear war. We are asked to do a death meditation each day we live under the bomb. We are asked to realize the power of our awareness, which is that as we touch the pain we feel and share for our world, for those beyond our sight, those not yet born, we touch something that is very important in each of us. We move through that pain to come in contact with its source, which is caring and love. And the good news about that, brothers and sisters, is that you don't have to be saintly, and you don't have to be noble, and you don't have to be a very evolved guru to know that. We're all in it together. That is the promise. That can be a bridge to our own power and to the power we find in each other.



## PERSECUTION OF U.B.C. CONTINUES

The persecution of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam continues. Two of the UBC's leaders, Thich Huyen Quang and Thich Quang Do remain in harsh exile, banished in villages away from the activities of the Church. In June the Conference of World Buddhist Leaders and Scholars in Sri Lanka expressed solidarity with the Buddhists of Vietnam, and called for an investigation by an independent judicial tribunal. Also in June, participants at the inter-religious Reverence for Life Conference in New York called for the release of Thich Quang Do and Thich Huyen Quang, saying, "For the last 15 years we have known the Unified Buddhist Church to be a religious community dedicated to the cause of Peace, Reconciliation and respect of Human Rights. Because the Unified Buddhist Church represents the genuine aspiration of the Vietnamese Buddhists, we believe it is vitally important that it be allowed to function free from governmental obstruction."

Please consider writing letters or circulating a petition calling for the release of the two monks and an end to the suppression of the UBC. Send copies to:

Prime Minister Pham Van Dong  
Socialist Republic of Vietnam  
Hanoi, Vietnam

## NO WAR TAX

Your editorial on the MX missile and Warren Christopher's piece on the danger of the arms race (9/20 & 22) both refer to the deterrence of Mutually Assured Destruction, the prevention of nuclear attack through the guarantee that the attacker will be destroyed along with the victim.

With the development of such weapons as the MX and the Trident nuclear submarine, the United States has moved from MAD to "first-strike," and the Soviet Union is developing similar weapons. With this first-strike capacity, the side that feels threatened can press the button, and the other side will not be able to hit back. MAD is thus destabilized, and no longer a deterrent.

The weaker side will probably hit first, and from all we are reading in the press and seeing on TV these days, the Soviet Union is slightly the weaker in the quality of its weaponry, so we on this side are the likely victims. The more threatening we get, the more vulnerable we become.

An enormous amount of treasure and human energy is invested in the arms race. Short-term returns are making a lot of people very rich and very powerful. We can bring forward balanced arguments in moderate language, we can write letters to Congress and send contributions to worthy causes, but such measures won't touch the juggernaut of the arms industry. It is time to talk the language the power brokers understand.

Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen of Seattle has called upon his Catholic parishioners to withhold 50 percent of their federal income taxes to protest the stockpiling of nuclear weapons. In effect, he is saying, "It is time for us to take personal responsibility for humanity and all life, and vote with the same ballot the arms merchants use -- money."

Money is the energy we can use to turn the machine around. Let's recycle the money our government has earmarked for death and destruction and use it for making friends overseas, not enemies.

Archbishop Hunthausen spoke as religious leader of his diocese. We speak as individuals, and urge our friends to join us in withholding 50 percent of federal income taxes to show the merchants of death and their political colleagues that we too mean business, long-range business which we can pass on to our children, and to their children, in a peaceful world.

Anne Aitken  
Robert Aitken

(reprinted from the Honolulu Advertiser, 9/26/81)

For further information on such war tax resistance:

-- a pamphlet is published by War Resisters League, 339 Lafayette Street, New York, NY 10012.

-- an informative article appears in the Winter 1982-83 Newsletter of the Resource Center for Non-violence, PO Box 2324, Santa Cruz, CA 95063.

# Resources

As a regular part of each issue of the BPF Newsletter we will include a resource listing. Any suggestions? We hope to hear from you. Here, in no particular order, are a few recommendations to start with.

-- No Need to Kill. Lively and informative monthly newsletter of the San Francisco Bay Area BPF. Subscriptions: \$4 for 6 issues. Write No Need to Kill, 2490 Channing Way #503, Berkeley, CA 94704.

-- BPF member Ken Jones' booklet Buddhism and Social Action is available from the Buddhist Vihara Society, 5017 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20011.

-- We've seen several books of collected lectures by founder of the Nihonzan Myohoji school of Buddhism the Most Venerable Nichidatsu Fujii, including Buddhism for World Peace and The Time Has Come. For these and other publications by and about this extraordinary man and his teachings of "peace-Buddhism" in the tradition of Nichiren, try writing to: Nihonzan Myohoji, 2674 S. Vermont Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90007.

-- Joanna Macy's groundbreaking article "Despair Work" is available for \$2.50 from New Society Publishers, 4722 Baltimore Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19143. (215) 222-4635. Her new book about the Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya (a Sri Lankan Buddhist-inspired village development movement)

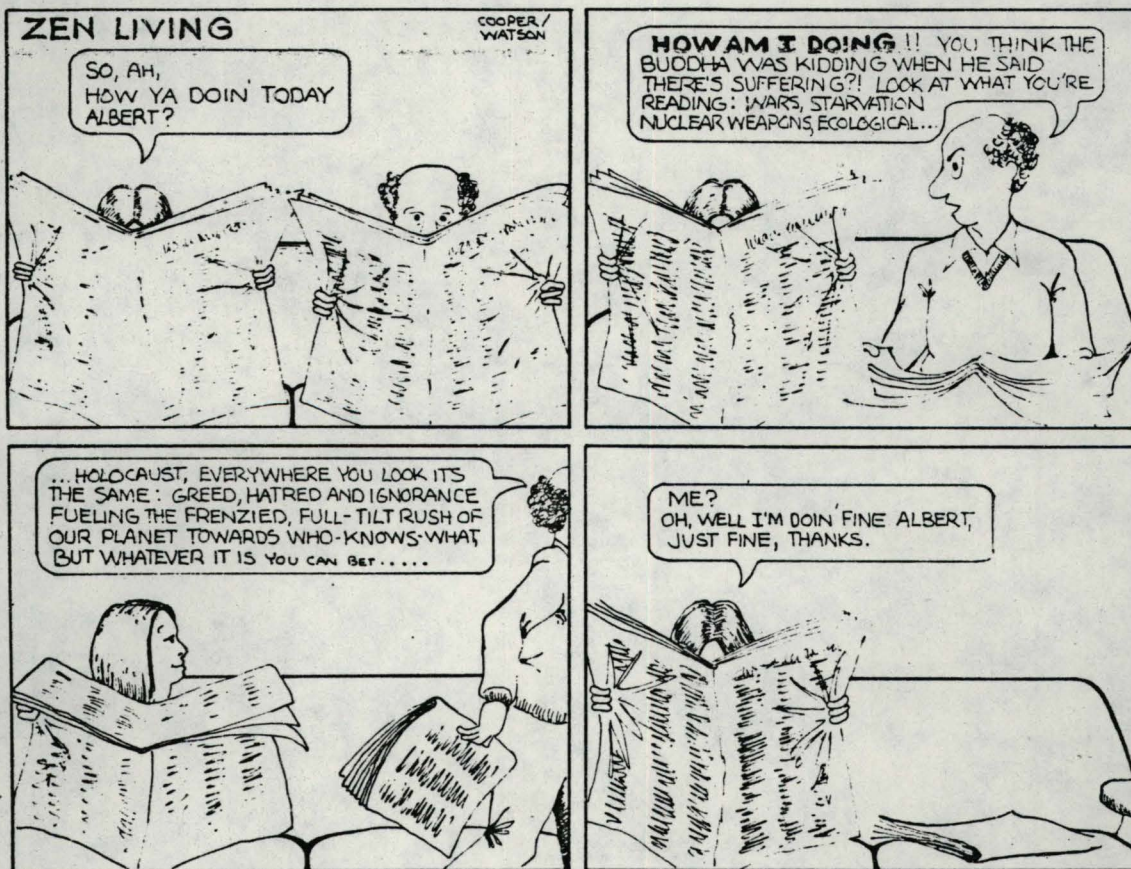
Dharma and Development is available for \$6.75 plus \$1.50 for shipping from Kumarian Press, 29 Bishop Road, W. Hartford, CT 06119.

-- If you are already receiving the Fellowship of Reconciliation's Fellowship magazine, you know how valuable a resource it is. If you don't receive it, a one-year subscription (8 issues) is \$10 from FOR, PO Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960.

-- Blind Donkey is a quarterly journal of the Diamond Sangha in Hawaii, including articles by BPF board member Robert Aitken, Roshi. The Diamond Sangha also publishes Kahawai, Journal of Women and Zen. Write to the Diamond Sangha, 2119 Kaloa Way, Honolulu, HI 96822.

-- Recent issues of the Rochester Zen Center's Zen Bow have included an article by Casey Frank on the Nihonzan Myohoji's World Peace March, Bodhin Shakya on the zazen vigil at the UN, and Noelle Oxenhandler on Thich Nhat Hanh. Write Zen Bow, 7 Arnold Place, Rochester, NY 14607.

-- And how could we fail to mention the Zen Center of Los Angeles' The Ten Directions? Recent issues have included interviews with deep ecologist Arne Naess and BPF board member Joanna Macy, and an excellent and chilling piece by Michael Soulé, "The Destruction of Diversity." Send a dollar (for postage) to Ten Directions, 905 S. Normandie, Los Angeles, CA 90006.



(reprinted from The Ten Directions)

# News

We hope that all BPF affiliates and members will utilize this newsletter to share information about your activities and perspectives. Here are a few brief news items, followed by a report on the Bay Area BPF by Patrick McMahon.

We're sure there's more to say, and for this we depend on you. Please contribute and stay in touch.

**Los Angeles.** Like our friends in the Bay Area, BPF members and friends worked to support California Proposition 12 calling for a US/Soviet freeze on the testing, production, and deployment of nuclear weapons. With the successful passing of the proposition we began plans to participate in and organize support for the upcoming demonstrations around the MX test launch at Vandenburg Air Force Base. (At the time of writing it seems the demonstrations may be cancelled because of the freezing of MX funding.) We've also been preparing for Thich Nhat Hanh's visit to the west coast and a Despair and Empowerment Workshop led by Joanna Macy, both this spring.

**Providence.** The Providence Zen Center's Great Masters World Peace Assembly celebrated the tenth anniversary of Master Seung Sahn's activity in North America by affirming commitment to world peace. Speakers included BPF members Phra Mahagokananda and Jack Kornfield, and Jewish Peace Fellowship member Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb.

**Trident blockade.** A number of BPF members and friends participated in the blockade of the Trident submarine in Bangor, Washington. There's a nice article about the blockade in a recent issue of No Need to Kill (see "Resources").

**San Francisco Bay Area.** The Bay Area (San Francisco/Berkeley/Oakland and neighboring communities) Chapter of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship -- BABPF -- is pleased to inform members of the BPF of its recent coming-into-being. Early last December some 40 of us came together in Berkeley for our first meeting. Diversity would seem to be our prominent quality, as representatives of the following groups were present: Buddhist Churches of America (Alameda), Berkeley Dharmadhatu, San Francisco Dharmadhatu, Bodhi, Friends of the Universal Life Church, Buddhist Women's Sangha of the Bay Area, Berkeley Zen Center, San Francisco Zen Center, Kannon Do Zendo (Mountain View), Nipponzan Myohoji, the Sarvodaya Movement, Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, a local Vipassana Group, and Green Gulch Farm Zen Center.

We heard from each other concerning various projects which are already in the works and ready for our group to take up. These include:

THE BUDDHIST CIRCLE FOR PEACE DAY, a project to get the word out to sanghas all over the world, that on a day around the summer solstice of next year, Buddhists will express themselves globally in their intentions for world peace, through meditation, services, or whatever way is appropriate to them.

THE AMERICAN INDIAN MOVEMENT and nuclear disarmament. Indian lands have been, and are being, exploited for their nuclear materials. The Japanese Buddhist order of Nipponzan Myohoji has long felt affinity with American Indians, as most recently expressed in the World Peace March from San Francisco to New York last year.

THE CHOOSE LIFE PEACE VIGIL at Lawrence Livermore Laboratories, principal research and development site for nuclear weapons. Eighteen of us have since vigilled, standing at the gates of the Lab in the

pouring rain, holding a banner saying "Buddhist PEACE Fellowship." Plans are to have a BPF vigil once a month at the Lab.

THICH NHAT HANH'S SPEAKING TOUR to the West Coast this spring. BABPF is in a natural position to help with Nhat Hanh's visit to the Bay Area.

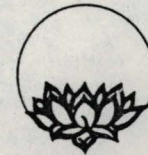
NO NEED TO KILL, our local Buddhist peace newsletter, plans to become the means of communication for BABPF.

With the richness of projects which we already have available to us, it's evident that our group is not really so much beginning as finding itself already in the midst of peace activities. And in announcing our existence to the BPF we're really just confirming a relationship that's been there all the time. Two years ago, when a nuclear disarmament group was forming at Berkeley Zen Center, Nelson Foster and Michael Roche lent us their helpful presence, and have continued to support us ever since. Then last September Aitken Roshi and Gary Snyder moderated the Mahasangha Conference in San Francisco, a boost for us in forming the chapter.

We look forward to finding our place in the network of the BPF. We especially invite contact with other chapters. Please write c/o Kent Johnson, BABPF, 2490 Channing Way #503, Berkeley, CA 94704. Or call our contact person, Nina Sprecher, (415) 848-5215.

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The Fellowship of Reconciliation will sponsor a peace journey to the USSR in the summer of 1983, similar to the trip in the summer of 1982 organized by Promoting Enduring Peace. The dates will be July 24-August 14, 1983. The trip includes a 2000-mile cruise up the Volga River and visits to Kiev, Leningrad and Moscow. For brochure, contact FOR immediately; last year's cruise was over-subscribed in a few weeks. Address: Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960.



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WANTED: assistance in typesetting for forthcoming informative brochure on Buddhist Peace Fellowship.

If you know of any access to free or inexpensive typesetting please communicate with Newsletter staff.

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with thanks to Larry Watson & Paul Hilsdale