

WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

Speaking Out Against War

It was wonderful to read your anti-war editorial (Feb. 20). After all, as Buddhists aren't we dedicated to the abolition of war? I am proud to see the Tribune's motto, "The Champion of the People," being expressed in a concrete manner as our country marches deliberately toward war — a war that actually has continued seven years in the form of sanctions, which have killed, by United Nations and other independent human rights organizations' estimates, over 1 million Iraqis to date. The majority of casualties have been children who starve to death or die of preventable diseases. This is part of our collective karma as a nation, and we all bear some responsibility....

It is right that the *World Tribune* should speak out. The Gosho states: "If a practitioner of Buddhism should fail to chastise evil persons who slander the Law but give himself up entirely to meditation and contemplation, not attempting to distinguish between correct or incorrect doctrines,...but rather pretending to be a model of compassion, then such a person will fall into the evil paths along with other doers of evil" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 109). The doctrine of war is incorrect and the slaughter of human beings must be one of the greatest slanders of the Law....

Together, let's help change our country's arrogant and hypocritical tendencies with our voices.... Is it not our "true nature" as Buddhists to speak out against war, even if it sparks a debate with our fellow members who may support it?...

Neither peace nor kosen-rufu can happen unless we the people speak and act accordingly. Therefore, I pray the *World Tribune* continues sounding the rhythm of compassion and wisdom as the drums of war become more frenzied.

— CAROLYN TYNAN, Thousand Oaks, Calif.

Human Life Is Sacred

I believe the purpose of [the recent Ohio town meeting with the so-called ABC team, including Secretary of State Madeleine Albright] was to prepare the American people for a military strike against Iraq. In response to a question about civilian casualties, one top government official replied that every effort would be made to minimize such losses. Once again, as it has many times, the callousness of the military mind struck me painfully. Those casualties he described are not just numbers. They represent real people — people who feel love and pain and have hopes and dreams as real as our own.

Recently SGI members have written letters to the *World Tribune* regarding capital punishment. Even as a child, I could never understand how a democratic government would even consider taking the risk of executing an innocent person. Yet there have been documented cases in which a prisoner was executed after his innocence was proven because his attorneys missed a filing deadline. If that person had been your friend or relative, would you regard his loss as a necessary casualty in the fight against crime, since the death penalty may be a deterrent to crime? (A hypothesis, by the way, which has yet to be proven.)

If there is one political statement that we as Buddhists ought to make, it is against the taking of human life. I believe we need to set an example and to make our feelings known. The human race will always be at war, and violence against people will continue, until all nations of the world come to recognize the sanctity of human life. Either we consider it to be sacred or we don't. There is no gray area, and there are no exceptions. I believe that all the great religious leaders in history have tried to teach this lesson. Apparently, their message still falls on deaf ears.

— PETER BANNE, Pacifica, Calif.

Title: Mailbox: 03/13/98

Subject: World Tribune 03/13/98 n.3182 p.3 WT980313p03

Author:

Keywords: 03/13/98 January June Mailbox Opinion Tribune World