

Paris, 29th March 1961

Personal VN

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Sir,

Having read your article in the Christian Science Monitor praising Mr. Ngo dinh Diem, I am taking the liberty of writing to you. First of all, permit me to introduce myself. I am a Vietnamese girl who has lived in Europe for more than fourteen years but who, nevertheless, follows with keen interest all the developments in my distant homeland.

Since I am simply a housewife with no first hand information, no titles, no university degrees, to say nothing of having no connection with the French, the Viet Cong, or Bao Dai (May I, by the way, remind you that both Ngo dinh Diem and Ngo dinh Nhu served Bao Dai for quite some time), my approach to the problem of South Viet Nam must be different from yours. I firmly believe that Mr. Diem does not deserve praise, quite the reverse. As I am not bound to the present government of Viet Nam by any ties of politics or personal interest, I believe that I have no reason for being anything other than impartial.

During his seven years of office Mr. Diem, while enjoying massive American aid in many fields, has betrayed the aspirations of the South Vietnamese. Through his incapacity or inefficiency Mr. Diem has given the Viet Cong a free hand to assassinate defenceless civilians and civil servants (cf. reports in French, British, American newspapers and magazines), which is why I consider Mr. Diem has failed completely in carrying out his first and most important duty, safeguarding the peace and well being of the Vietnamese people. As you know, peace goes hand in hand with security, and security in South Viet Nam nowadays is a laughing (or rather weeping) matter. Ought one not to assess Mr. Diem's achievements in this sphere before applauding him for his great land reforms?

You have also pointed out that the constitution of South Viet Nam is, to a great extent, modelled upon those of the West. Can you, Professor Fishel, as a political scientist, provide me with an accurate definition of "democracy in the truly Western sense"? By the same token, can you honestly claim that South Viet Nam is a democracy? It is my view that South Viet Nam is a police state, worse than the Communist north because it hypocritically conceals its true nature behind the facade of democracy. Democracy

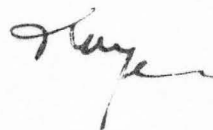
in this case is synonymous with hard labour, with concentration camps where anyone who has had enough courage to criticise the Head of State will be jailed for an indefinite period without every facing any trial, or even with arbitrary death sentences. Thank God, that, as an American enjoying the full benefits of citizenship in the most powerful country in the world, you are able to speak so lightly of "democracy" in a country where the inhabitants live under constant moral and physical pressures. While on this subject, I should like to ask you whether you think that the law concerning divorce in South Viet Nam is also modelled upon Western laws? To my knowledge, there is no such law in the American legal code, and I am glad for American husbands.

Now to my last question. What do you think of the murder of hundreds of unarmed Vietnamese spectators in front of the Independence Palace last November? Possibly this appalling massacre leaves you unmoved since your only concern is with political questions, and you would doubtless argue that, in politics, all means are good provided they destroy the enemy. Mr. Diem, the "staunchest friend of the West", is himself acting in accordance with this principle, and it would appear that he enjoys the approval of his American supporters, in so doing. But may I remind you, Professor Fishel, that even in the darkest days of the colonial era, the French didn't dare to fire on defenceless people in the centre of Saigon in broad daylight. Must we, once more, praise Mr. Diem for this, his second greatest achievement?

In referring to your conclusion, I must draw your attention to the fact that many Vietnamese, like myself, do not believe that either Mr. Diem or the authors of the attempted coup last November are miracle workers whose destiny is to save Viet Nam from the Communists. I am sure that trustworthy, honest, capable, and dedicated Vietnamese still exist both inside and outside Viet Nam. If you would only take the trouble to look carefully, you would discover Vietnamese patriots who, with a little help, would do a far greater and more lasting job than Mr. Diem and his family.

I hope you will answer this letter; for I shall read your reply with very great interest and attention. I look forward to reading what your reasons are for defending what I consider indefensible.

Yours faithfully



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