

Dr Fishel

Office of the Secretary of Defense  
Washington 25, D. C.

1 May 1961

MEMORANDUM

From: Brig. Gen. Lansdale *SL*

Subject: Letter from the Boon-docks

Every so often, the human spirit must cry out. The attached letter expresses this eloquently. It was received by a civilian friend of mine in Washington from a Vietnamese doctor who is practicing out in the boon-docks of Southeast Asia. It should have a familiar ring to Americans, since it wasn't too long ago that some of our own, from small towns in the colonial boon-docks of the world then, pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to much the same cause.

Attachment

Vietnam (South)  
January 22, 1961

Dear Dr. ....:

I have received your letter and thank you sincerely for your expressions of friendship which you have expressed to me.

Please excuse me for my delay in replying - my time is so taken up by my service duties. Please also accept my apologies if I must write to you in French, for I would like to express myself clearly on some subjects so complex that I do not have sufficient words in English.

My family and I are very sad to follow the events which are taking place currently in Laos and to state that SEATO has decided not to adopt an energetic attitude towards the communists, that the free world - far from correcting the different international questions - is again very divided while the communist world is revealing itself to be more solid.

We deplore the fate of Laos and that of the other small countries - like ours - directly menaced by the red peril. The indifference and equivocal attitude of France and England has not facilitated the heavy task of the United States of America and of SEATO in the defense of Southeast Asia. The free world is losing a great deal of time in discussions, in negotiations, and in hesitations.

During the years 1937-38 preceding the Second World War, it was the same thing. England, France, and the free world did not react vigorously and efficaciously to put a stop to the mad ambition of Hitler at the time of Sudetenland, Dantzig, and Austria. Chamberlain and Daladier made it impossible to reunite their peoples to negotiate and to yield. They always backed down right up to the moment when Hitler's cannons were aimed directly at the hearts even of their own countries. What a disillusion! Then only did they recognize the absolute necessity of sacrificing "world peace" in order to safeguard their own countries. Then only, forced to accept battle, the free world resigned itself to conduct a war more costly than it would have had to have been because Hitler's Germany - a great deal more powerful by then - had nearly all of Europe on its side. The free world attained the final victory, but at the price of how many sacrifices? of how much blood? of how much grief? of how many ravages?

I will never be able to understand the wisdom of the great politicians, but I must say to you that if the free world continues to hesitate and to yield before communist exigencies, there will soon come a time when all it will have left are some pieces of land with some handful of men and where it will have no choice left but to capitulate or to accept a very unequal battle in which it will be crushed. It would be very sad for the history of humanity because the communist world would have at its command the inexhaustible resources of human lives, of materials, and the means to triumph.

It is time to put a curb on communist lunacy, for otherwise it will be the end of all civilization. The communist peril does not only menace the little countries of Southeast Asia. You can see that it is already at the doors of the United States of America. And on a world map, can you find a single country which is not directly or indirectly menaced by the communists? It is the greatest peril that humanity has ever known.

There is an old saying to console one's self: "Back up in order to better spring", but I often ask myself if the communists are going to allow the free world enough space and enough time to back up.

Communism is a common danger which no nation has the right to ignore and before which no individual has the right to remain indifferent. If only the free world knows what it must sacrifice to remain united and vigorous! If only it knows that it must react promptly and efficaciously to the demented exigencies of the communists! And these, with the help of God, before it is too late!

My dear friend, you have a family whom you love. Defend them with all your strength against communism! Seek to learn what communism really is to better detest it and to better defend your country!

We have much in common, which is why I have permitted myself to go a little into the innermost of my thoughts. Perhaps you will find little that is reasonable in them. If such is the case, please excuse me. As for me, as long as I shall live, with all my means, with all my strength, I shall attempt to fight with tenacity against communism, to defend my family and my country.

My dear friend, excuse me if I have taken a great deal of your time with my long letter. If you do not understand it well, let me know and I will try to write to you in English next time.

Au revoir, dear Dr. .... Let us hope that we will be able to meet one another some day on the battlefield, on the same side, as friend and ally, defending our families and our countries in the fight against communism.

My respects to your parents and to Mrs. ...., and my affections to your children.

Sincerely yours,