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Dear General Lansdale,

I have talked at length with Rufe, and although I do not pretend to understand what is going on, I do — I think — understand what Rufe thinks is going on. He spent almost an hour trying to cajole, persuade, urge, insult and scare me out of my decision to go to Vietnam, and I must confess that, at the end, I was really shaken — not in my resolve, but in my boots. Frankly, at this point, if I did not believe so very strongly in the "ism" appended to your name, I would say "a pox on all their houses" and shake the whole business from my life. However, like most converts, I am more convinced and convicted than some of the original believers. For this reason, I am coming to Vietnam to look at things firsthand and gain credibility and authenticity ^{in my book}. To do this, I need not see you; I once spent three hours with you, and honestly do not feel that there is any need for any further personal interview — ever. Although I made formal application through the DOD Accreditation Office, on a printed sheet, to interview everybody I could think of, there is no reason to believe that such interviews will be granted to a free-lance writer such as I am. At most, I can only expect to be invited to open briefings etc., like mass audiences with the Pope. (When in Rome, I even tried to get an audience with him ... why not? I don't need to add that it wasn't granted. But I went through channels at the U.S. Embassy, because they gave me a form asking if I wanted to go, if possible. So, nothing ventured; nothing gained. It would have been an experience.)

Frankly, I have no idea what kind of person all of you think I am, for I would no more "barge into the Embassy" or "charge around Saigon" asking embarrassing questions than I would walk into the DMZ. But I must go to Vietnam, even alone and by myself — which scares me stiff, even if nobody will believe me — at the time of my choice, because I must prove to myself that I am a free-lancing, free-wheeling, free agent and not the victim of anyone's pressure or persuasion. This I must do for myself, as an objective scientist, ex officio. But you can rest assured that I need nothing further to do with the current implementers of the "ism".

I have another psychological parable, this time from physiological psychology. There was once a young researcher who wondered why bunny rabbits always ran from danger while lions stood their ground and fought. He knew it has something to do with adrenalin — the "flight or fight" hormone that comes from tiny glands on top of the kidneys. But he couldn't understand why this stuff (real name: epinephrine) acted so differently in the different species. After much collection and analysis of urine and pulverization and centrifugation of adrenal glands, he discovered that there was another substance "noradrenalin" (norepinephrine) that was responsible for the "fight", and the other ^(adrenalin) was the basis of the "fright" or "flight" parts of the syndrome. Each hormone is secreted by a different part of the adrenal gland, and all species have varying proportions. Nature has fixed it so that most little animals, the kind not equipped with killing apparatus, have more epinephrine secreted during times of danger, and vice-versa. It is really not a matter of the lion's "knowing" that he is big and strong; he simply has more norepinephrine pouring into his bloodstream.

I tell you this little tale to explain that my problem, obviously, is simply that something is wrong with my glands.

HOOVER INSTITUTION
ON WAR, REVOLUTION AND PEACE
Sanford, California 94303-0000



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