

January 5, 1963

The Honorable John F. Kennedy  
President of the United States  
The White House  
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

A double duty compels me to address myself to you today, the duty of a Vietnamese who seeks to save his country and that of a free man who cannot remain indifferent to the communist danger, not only to my country but also to the entire free world.

Having attempted in vain during the last five years to warn the Saigon government as well as certain circles in Washington of this explosive situation, I have ever since looked for an opportunity to come here to make an appeal to you, as President of the United States and leader of the free world, with no other purpose than to serve the common cause.

You, Mr. President, more than any other statesman in the world today, both before and since you have become President, have led the way not only to a sound foreign policy but also an unprecedented one, in defending with fervor and conviction what you yourself have defined as the "most powerful force in the world today," namely, "man's eternal desire to be free and independent."

Before presenting in detail my qualifications to speak on the Vietnamese situation, might I express my conviction, based on intimate knowledge, that in my opinion the struggle that is being waged in Vietnam is not the kind of struggle we should engage in against Communism, because it only relies on the forces of arms, lacks the support of the people and consists of a simple tactic of defense which, in the long-run, will turn into a terrible war of attrition to our disadvantage, with the communists having control over 80 percent of the villages in the South, and enlarging it and consolidating their position every day without counting their arsenal in the North. If, to this force of destruction from the outside, one should add that of disintegration from the inside as the result of the evergrowing discontent of the population, the administration and the army, one can look to the future only with pessimism.

To introduce myself, I have the honor to present to you the attached letter from Their Excellencies Pham Ngoc Chi, Bishop of Quinhon, and Le Hun Tu, former Bishop of Phat Diem, former Chief Chaplain of the Vietnam Army, and now retired to the Monastery of Don Duong, both widely known for their organization of the Catholic Self-Defense Forces in North Vietnam from 1950 to 1954.

Having fought effectively against Communism on all fronts, ideological, political and military, for more than four years as Chief of Province, and having converted to the nationalistic cause nearly 4,000 Communists in the provinces of Khanh Hoa and Dinh Tuong, I believe I am in a position to present to you what seems to me to be the true situation in Vietnam today, and what seems to be the best way to pacify the country, or at least to achieve this goal at a cost of less bloodshed, pain and money.

I have no illusions about the gravity of the situation, because we have wasted too much time and allowed the Communists to gain too much ground. However, I believe there are strong forces in the nation which remain dormant, and which can be awakened and launched into the struggle in order to reverse the situation. There is also a good chance of winning to our cause a large number of those who are at present fighting against us, thus speeding an end to the massacre. Indeed, experience has proved that Communism is defeated wherever one knows how to oppose its organization with an effective organization, utilizing against its weapons, tactics and techniques, equally effective weapons, tactics and techniques.

I presented my program of action to President Ngo Dinh Diem as early as March, 1958, at the very time when the Communists redoubled their activities. The President had at first consented to entrust me with the task of carrying out this plan, but finally gave in to his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu's opposition, whose strategy consisted in withdrawing the forces and awaiting the coming of the third World War, which he believed inevitable and imminent. It was this misconception, joined to other mistakes, which led to the general launching of communist attacks since January, 1960.

Subsequent to that date, my program was revised and enlarged with the addition of the military section. It was submitted again to President Diem at the end of 1960 by Reverend

Hoang Quynh, former Commandant-in-Chief of the Catholic Self-Defense Forces of the Bui Chu and Phat Diem dioceses in North Vietnam, but again Mr. Ngo Dinh Nhu vetoed it, for fear, he said openly, that the nationalist elements of opposition would enter the party and outweigh the President.

It was from this program of ours that Mr. Ngo Dinh Nhu borrowed the concept of strategic villages which he unfortunately carried out in such a senseless manner by divesting them of their essence, namely, our counter-guerilla organization and our political action, so that his plan was doomed to failure from the outset.

It is, then, this urgency of the situation and the desire and determination of a Vietnamese citizen to try to do something about it which led me to address to you the following presentation. In addition, because it is impossible for me to express myself fully and adequately in a document which I wanted to be as condensed as possible so as not to abuse your valuable time, I would like to request a personal audience with you, at a date that would be convenient for you, at which time I would present my views in fuller details.

I have the honor to be,

Sincerely yours,



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