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"AN ASIAN VIEW ON ASIA"

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In the world today, jet air lines can take us to any places in a few hours. For example, Vietnam is more than 8,000 miles away, but we can go there within 20 hours. Our modern technological ingenuity has remarkably shortened geographical distance. However, it strikes me that the distance between the minds or the people has not been shortened as well. In other words, we simply can go fast today, but it doesn't mean that our understanding has equally been improved. Still, in our minds we are very limited in outlook and we haven't got rid of a certain parochialism in its narrow sense and of our ethnocentric attitude.

It is already 25th hour in Vietnam, but the debate on Vietnam today became a great national sport in the United States. Secretary of State Rusk is constantly drawing the parallel between the Nazi aggression in Europe and the Chinese aggression in Asia. His proposition is perfectly clear: China is the enemy. From an Asian point of view, it is pompous nonsense. In conjunction with his view, I would like to pose three fundamental questions:

- (1) Is China really an enemy? If so,
- (2) Why they are enemy? They must have some reasons, what are they? and
- (3) Is anything wrong with us? In other words, did we provoke their animosity?

I shall try to give you an Asian point of view on all these points. However, I am not for a moment, considering communism and anti-communism. If you look at the Asian problems in such simplistic terms as black and white, inevitably you will fail to develop a rational approach because you are already injecting a bias before you do anything at all. In my judgment, the Vietnam problem cannot be separated from the entire chain of historical development in Asia.

It is an extremely significant fact, frequently not realized in the West, that many Asians feel strongly that the West has always been unreasonable to the East. Historically, almost every Asian country, except Japan, has experienced the bitter taste of Western colonialism for over 100 years. For this particular reason, most Asians are extremely sensitive and allergic to any Western military, economic and cultural domination. For example, Ho Chi Minh's letter to President Johnson in March, 1967, strongly substantiates this point, when he said that: "Vietnam is thousands of miles away from the United States. The Vietnamese people have never done any harm to the United States. But contrary to the pledge made by its representative at the Geneva conference...the United States Government...has intensified the war of aggression..."

Ironically, more than one hundred years ago, under different circumstances, the Chinese Emperor sent a similar letter to Queen Victoria. As a matter of fact, until the British established trade relations in 1793, China had virtually no

contact with the West in contemporary history. Unfortunately, there was a terrible misunderstanding between the East and the West. In the eyes of the Chinese, the Westerners came to learn their refined culture. Contrary to this, it has been a well known fact that the British intention was to colonize and to stay in China until thy kingdom come! Poor China missed the boat. In other words, they failed to learn the 19th century popular song, Colonialism.

When the British exploited a large market for Opium in China, more than one million Chinese became addicts to Opium. The indignant Chinese Emperor sent a poignant note to Queen Victoria in 1839. This letter is so significant that parts of it deserves to be quoted:

"We find your country is sixty or seventy thousand li (three li makes one mile) from China. Yet there are barbarian ships that strive to come here for the purpose of making a profit. That is to say, the great profit made by barbarians is all taken from the rightful share of China. By what right do they in return use the poisonous drug to injure the Chinese people? I have heard that the smoking of Opium is very strictly forbidden by your country. Let us ask, where is your conscience?"

Subsequently, out of desperation or for reasons of self-defense, the Chinese confiscated the Opium and dumped it into the sea. The British immediately interpreted this as an act of aggression and demonstrated their absolutely superior fire power. Then, the British called it the "white man's burden". Unfortunately, next the French did the same and took over the Indochina. Then, French called it their "civilizing mission". This is exactly the origin of the Vietnam conflict.

Of course, the Chinese were absolutely humiliated. I don't think any nation has ever had such a violent shock as the Chinese had in 19th century. For these reasons, it is necessary to see the Asian problems from the Chinese point of view, in order to understand their reaction to all that now. In a sense, China has been in the position of Doctor Pavlov's dog. The kind of stimuli which China has received from the West were nothing but an insult. As a result, the Chinese are firmly determined to regain their national integrity and respect. By and large, this determination has been terribly misinterpreted as a sign of aggression in the United States due to the lack of understanding and our neurotic fears of communism.

In addition to this, we have been told by our newspapers that the Chinese are not interested in peaceful co-existence. In 1965, the Chinese prime minister, Chou En-Lai, in his interview with a British journalist, stated that China is ready and has been proposing peaceful co-existence to the American Ambassador to Poland for more than 10 years. I wonder why our newspapers never told us this. Chou continued and said that as long as the United States continues to occupy the Chinese territory of Formosa, it makes very difficult to co-exist. Obviously, Chou expressed his strong opposition to "two China" policy for which the United States has been responsible. The only way to understand the Chinese anger and obsession is to put ourselves in their shoes by imagining how we would react if the positions were reversed.

Suppose, George Wallace of Alabama was elected as a President of the United States on the basis of white racism. While he was serving in the White House he completely alienated the American public; then next election kicked him out from the White House. He moved to the Hawaiian Islands and declared that he is still

the President of the United States and repeated the same old song, "I shall return to the White House." Finally, he and Mao got together and composed a song, "two America."

Seriously, are we going to tolerate it? Whether you like it or not, this is exactly a reversed picture of our relationship with Chiang Kai-Shek. I think it is embarrassing. Besides this, do you know? In Chinese characters they call America, "beautiful country" and the Americans "a beautiful people." I don't know what do they call us now.

After the Second World War, a popular song in Asia was that "the party is over!" you know the sentimental song. The British got the message, learned the song quickly and left before they were kicked out. However, the proud Frenchmen came back to Indochina. Of course, the host, I mean the Vietnamese, told them that the colonial party was over, but the French insisted that the party is not over because it is only 11 o'clock. The indignant host had no choice but to eject the unwanted intruders. Finally, French learned a bitter lesson in Dienbienphu.

Once George Santayana said that people who do not understand history, sooner or later will learn a hard lesson from the history. I think that we are exactly following the same fate. At this juncture, it is extremely significant to understand how did the Asians interpret the historical meaning of Dienbienphu. They believed they were putting a definite period, not a comma, in their gloomy colonial history.

Naturally, the Asians expected "tea and sympathy" from the United States because they admired America as a champion of independence and self-determination. Instead of giving them "tea and sympathy" the United States took over the place of French. This is the most critical moment when we pushed many Asians to the point of no return. The image of America turned to be the Brutus in Shakespear's drama, Julius Caesar. This is the reason; no matter how hard we try to convince the Asians that we are not in Vietnam for a colonial purpose, the facts remain the same. It is very clear now that we have failed to win the confidence and the respect from the Asians.

Finally, my views at this moment are in full agreement with the American Ambassador to Yugoslavia, George Allen, when he said that:

"If the United States had tried with all its might, using money and perhaps bayonets, we might have installed a Jeffersonian democracy in Yugoslavia, but it would have stood only as long as our money and our bayonets held it up. As soon as they are withdrawn, it would have fallen like a house of cards. No system will last unless it evolves out of the soil of the country itself. Those which stand the test of time must grow out of the soil of countries concerned, and not be imposed from the outside."