

VIA: AIR

Secret

DISPATCH NO: ²² (EPCSA-23497)

DATE: 11 March 1955

TO: Chief, FE

FROM: Senior Representative, (Philippines)

SUBJECT: GENERAL-- Intelligence

²² SPECIFIC-- Meeting with "Professor LAURA" (Subject of (SMANI) 9539)
REF: (SMANI) 9539, DIR-39952

1. Attached are two copies of a memorandum for the record on the Subject of a contact between Robert F. CHATHAM and "Professor LAURA" to whom reference was made in both (SMANI) 9539 and DIR-39952. This contact was made at the request of the deputy chief to MIDWATCH. A sanitized copy of the memorandum has been transmitted to the MIDWATCH office. Any action in furtherance of the discussions described in the memorandum would necessarily be taken by the local ODACID establishment.
2. No plans are presently known for extending ODACID support to Subject; however, if any such support were to be given by private persons (such as Secretary ARANETA) this probably would not become known to ODYOKE circles.
3. It appeared from his remarks that Subject had not contacted KUBARK channels in the course of his current Asian tour -- either in India or Indochina. Discreet questioning revealed that the 2 March meeting under ARANETA's sponsorship was evidently Subject's first direct appeal, in the course of his current tour, to ODYOKE for assistance. However, Subject may have been withholding details of other contacts with ODYOKE representatives. This would appear a valid assumption in view of the fact that he denied (in response to a question) that he had contacted ODYOKE representatives recently in Hong Kong (per paragraph five of (SMANI) 9539).
4. With reference to the potential for KUBARK purposes of Subject's organization, it became manifestly apparent in the course of his remarks that no cohesive vehicle exists for the purposes he described (however laudatory his purposes, particularly in the Hanoi-Haiphong areas); that Subject has given only limited attention to the types of materials to be disseminated by his "friends"; and that Subject appeared to be far too unsystematic to be entrusted with anything but the finished product in quantity (rather than funds to arrange for its publication).

Clarence T. Louthat
for Clarence T. Louthat

Attachment:
Two copies of memorandum as indicated above

R/C
Chatham

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 3 March 1955

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD:

SUBJECT: Meeting with Professor LAURA

On the evening of 2 March 1955, CHATHAM proceeded to the apartment of Agriculture Secretary Salvador ARANETA with a member of the OLACID political section and an ODCHOP staff member. In brief conversation with the ODCHOP officer prior to reaching the ARANETA home, CHATHAM explained that he had been instructed not to specifically identify himself as anything but OLACID (that is, not to claim USIA connections); and that something was known of the "Professor's" activities elsewhere, which though apparently well intentioned, were subject to some question from the ODYOKE policy viewpoint. The ODCHOP officer explained that his only interest was in complying with the wishes of ARANETA (with whom he had close liaison relationship which he did not wish to jeopardize in any way) that he bring some representative of OLACID by to meet his guest.

We were ushered into the ARANETA penthouse at 6:15 p.m. and were immediately greeted by ARANETA himself and his wife who evidently had been conversing on the balcony with the man they introduced as "professor LAURA" -- somewhat carefully emphasizing the title and the name; the latter was pronounced "LOU (as in loud) RA" giving equal stress to both syllables.

Subject was effusively friendly although quite shy in his greetings. His accent is extremely strong, bearing some resemblance to any Slavic group but with some other influence as well. He is approximately fifty (both in appearance and in actual age), wears horn-rimmed glasses, summer-weight civilian clothes, and with a great shock of very white hair, worn long.

We sat in a circle (except for Mrs. ARANETA, who withdrew immediately). The ODCHOP man also departed very soon after our arrival with apologies and explanations of another engagement. Subject spread a small map on the floor and began pointing out the areas of Communist influence and control (all of which were marked in shades of red) and the potential victims of the next Communist insurrections against the West. He focussed his attention (and ours) on Indo-China and India.

Subject circulated a quantity of pamphlets and brochures or magazines in various languages. He explained that he had personally picked these up in the course of a very few days spent recently in India, where he had been visiting villages and talking with people. He pointed out that almost all the publications were produced in Moscow and the remainder in Peking. He continued by saying that the Communists (Russian or Chinese) have a complete monopoly in books and all types of printed matter in India today, particularly in the smaller towns and villages. Most of these publications are circulated free; some of them cost two or three or four annas; some are in English, others are in the various dialects. They are on every conceivable subject and are designed for all ages.

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Subject explained that in India (and in Indo-China) these publications are being poured into the smallest hamlets like a flood from Moscow and Peiping. The people don't have to seek reading materials, nor do they have to go far for an explanation of what these pamphlets contain. "Leaders" or "cadres" are everywhere to explain the material, particularly in the schools and among youths and students.

He said (in answer to a question) that he had seen some US-produced materials in these areas, but that they were almost impossible to find in the outlying areas. He pointed out that the Communist materials were cleverly done and in some cases, beautiful examples of printing and propaganda presentation. Subject stated that he is now most interested in the Haiphong and Hanoi areas of Indo-China because these will be turned over to the Communists very soon for their control. He stated that his idea is to flood these critical places which face the Communist tide momentarily with as much anti-materialistic, pro-Christian reading material as possible. He hopes thereby to "immunize" the minds of the simple peasants and masses of people against the appeals of atheistic Communism and materialistic doctrines which they teach which turn men against western ideas and civilization. He displayed several examples of what he had in mind. He pointed out that these publications (one of these was a thin, multi-color French magazine entitled "Dieu Existe" ("There is a God") which he had acquired in Paris, and which he had given to "some friends" in Saigon to translate into North Vietnamese dialects as soon as possible, along with a few other items of a similar nature.

He then explained that in these critical border areas of Indo-China there are many Catholics who will soon be completely isolated from the West by the Communists. It is his idea to reach these people before it is too late "through our friends there" whom he described as Catholic laymen and priests or just plain people who were willing to assist in this work. The task is simple, and merely involves passing along reading materials to other known friends for further circulation as broadly as possible. These people have the capability to handle "large quantities" of this material, he claimed. "The leaders" are among them to tell them how. He did not explain who had instructed the leaders, or what they knew, or who they were, in fact. He stated that this was, in effect, "underground activity" and as such could not be described in any detail to anyone who was not "on the ground." He compared it to an iceberg while admitting that he was the principal leader and motivating force.

He explained that he has "helpful friends" in Paris and Rome and Belgium and other places who had been aware of his activities since he began in 1953. He stated that in this period, they had assisted his efforts working from Rome principally into Poland and Czechoslovakia and to a lesser extent, Yugoslavia, Hungary and Rumania. In fact, he sought to introduce "materials" wherever he could behind the Iron Curtain, by whatever means. He explained that his work was known to (Cardinal) VISSERANT (whom he identified only vaguely as "someone whose activities we certainly know about"), and to some Americans as well, including our own Ambassador to Italy, (Mrs) Clare Booth LUCE. He had just returned from Rome. He had gone to Saigon in October 1954 to begin his efforts in that country. He toured the outlying areas for some weeks before proceeding to Rome via India. On returning, he had again stopped in India and then proceeded to Saigon.

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The inspiration to come to Manila to seek help had come from "several Jesuit friends" whom he knew here from their former contacts in China. He had been in China from 1946 to 1949-50, when he had been forced to leave for Taiwan. He remained there until 1952, when he had had a heart attack and was forced to go to Rome for a rest. He had had many friends on Taiwan and had "spent some time" with CHUANG Kai-shek explaining his ideas for using Taiwan as a base for "an ideological conquest of the mainland" to reach the millions of Chinese whom the Communists had not yet won.

He said his information indicated that a million guerrillas were active throughout China as late as 1952-53, but now it was too late. CHIANG he described as a ghost, a shadow, a legend who was completely out of touch even with things in Taiwan. The Gino's son, CHENANG Ching-huo, controlled everything; he was trained in Moscow, was formerly a Communist, but was not one now. However, he was a ruthless, cynical tyrant who would soon dominate completely. He referred to the idea of the Nationalists returning to the mainland as "the wildest folly -- utterly absurd and fantastic." By this time we were seated at the table for dinner. Mrs. ARANETA let slip ("Father.") O

Subject went on to describe the techniques and patterns of Communist conquest and policy. He explained that he had been a partisan leader in Yugoslavia and went on to explain the Tito position at length, decrying the acceptance of "titicism" as a break from Moscow when it was merely an accommodation. He spoke of his travels in the USSR after the end of World War II and of his determination to go to the Far East to work against Communism. He admitted, in response to a question, that he held an (Italian) passport: "Tito did not want me to leave."

The discussion went on to a lengthy examination by Subject of Soviet plans and purposes, as he perceived them from his own personal exposure to Soviet militarists during the war and to their political commissars and cadres at home and abroad and at all levels for years. His review was sometimes incisive, sometimes dangerously oversimplified. "They could take Burma or Thailand tonight by telephone, and Formosa tomorrow night, the same way. But they won't." He explained the Soviet policy as calculated to build up NEHRU as a world figure, which was succeeding, since he was serving their purposes abroad beautifully, although he is losing very fast at home. The Congress Party is shot through with Communists. It is only a matter of time until it is completely a Communist organ.

The USSR did not want a shooting war; they will continue a policy of promoting little wars to bleed US strength and buy time. They are building atomic strength. In 1947, he had told General GROVE that he knew that every leading eastern European atomic scientist was at work in the USSR and that it was to be assumed that they had the bomb; TRUMAN did not admit this until September 1949. He favored (this point was checked by questions) some token atomic bombing by the US of Soviet centers of industry to deter them from their immediate and long range purposes and to shake the regime from within. Paramilitary (sic) or other type action, through whatever vehicle, would be dissipated to the winds -- would achieve nothing but buy a minute of time -- unless it was coordinated on a world scale. The June 1953 East German riots were our opportunity; the West missed it by not pouring in machineguns instead of wellwishes by radio.

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Asked what he wanted from us (or hoped to get, or needed most, or would settle for) he said he would like to be able to print literature for distribution in Haiphong-Hanoi immediately. "We have until the end of April." He thought his contacts and friends could handle 300,000 copies -- this figure took several seconds to come out. He knew there was some capability for this in the USIS mechanism here, which had some regional responsibility. He doubted that the typefaces for Vietnamese dialects were available here (this point was raised to discover if possible what inquiries he had made). He has a "planelead" (a quantity, he admitted on questioning) of books and pamphlets collected for him in Belgium and France for distribution in Indo-China.

He asked if it would be possible for him to see MIDWATCH before he (Subject) left for Saigon. He realized that Chief OMACID had had very little time while he was here and thus had no hope of seeing him. He would wait until approximately 7-8 March to see MIDWATCH if possible. No promises of an appointment were made.

He gave one copy of the French-language publication as an example of what he had in mind for circulation. It was explained to him (and to the Secretary) that we were in no position to make any sort of commitment, but that we would bring his story to the attention of the proper people at OMACID, eventually including, if possible, Chief OMACID, by normal channels to headquarters city. This was very gratifying to both men. They thanked us profusely.

When we were leaving, the Secretary followed us^{os} out to the elevator. He explained that this man was, in fact, [redacted] but had asked for [redacted] to enable him to carry on this work. He accepted Subject's bona fides as a result of the assurances of [redacted]. He (the Secretary) hoped we could arrange some assistance for this cause.^{os} Parting was very cordial.

Subject makes a very strong impression for his tremendous spirit of dedication to his task. He is a strong personality with considerable intelligence, but his manner is very reserved and rather shy. His shyness may derive in some measure from the linguistic barrier; his English is quite limited, and several times he used French words or expressions without apparently being aware of this. Subject does not appear to be well physically, is extremely nervous, and ate very little at dinner. He was not at ease in this social situation.

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