

January 6, 1967

Professor Henry A. Kissinger
Center for International Affairs
6 Divinity Avenue
Harvard University
Cambridge, Mass., 01238

Dear Professor Kissinger:

Thanks for your letter of December 28. Actually I had not expected to hear from you because you were certainly under no obligation to comment on something that was supposed to have been confidential in the first place, and your taking the trouble to reply is therefore all the more appreciated. As you note, Dan Davidson on his most recent trip did have a chance to delve into Saigon realities more deeply than before, and I am gratified that he felt that his views were subject to some revision. In that connection, I have learned on excellent authority that the worst marks I was given by your contacts came from an individual with whom I had talked perhaps three times for five minutes since arriving at this post in July 1966. Apparently he classified me as a Lansdale man, and he has a deep hatred of Lansdale, no doubt mixed with other emotions. In any case human nature is frail, and I have noted many times it seems to be more frail among the high level bureaucrats than among many of the less senior people.

The NR Plan went before the Cabinet on January 3. They had no particular difficulty with the promise of civil and political rights, but were somewhat dismayed by the comparable career offer provision. I have sent out a cable giving some of the reasons. It may be possible to make such a blanket offer by national proclamation in a while, but for the moment I think we can achieve much the same effect by in fact giving excellent jobs to senior Viet Cong, attended by widespread publicity. This will demonstrate that the Government in fact wants to employ middle and high level VC and it will be possibly more convincing than mere promises to do so. In the meanwhile, I have persuaded Colonel Anh to press ahead with a National Proclamation limited only to the promise of full civil and political rights. This would take care of one of our principle objectives in NR. He has agreed and thinks it feasible.

Personal copies.

Regarding Chieu Hoi, we set ourselves the goal, in July, of doubling the 1965 returnee total, and the 1966 figure of 20,240 substantially achieves that goal. We still intend to double this figure again in 1967.

Please remember me to Hollis Chenery. He may recall in particular a dinner at my place in Saigon in 1964, where we and Dick Stilwell, Lou Conein and others subjected him to some of the non-economic aspects of American foreign aid in Vietnam. I think Hollis felt my orientation was entirely too political for a legitimate economic aid officer, particularly after he looked at our program in Tay Ninh, and the irony of this would not escape Dan Davidson.

Thanks again for your letter. With best regards,

Sincerely,

Ogden Williams

P.S. If you run into Bui Diem, the new Ambassador-Designate, you may be interested to know he is the GVN official I hid in my apartment in 1963 when the secret police were after him, as mentioned in my earlier letter to you. I have known him intimately since 1956. He is intelligent, charming and capable, [redacted].