

Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, CORDS

14 August 1968

MACCORDS-CH

Mayor John V. Lindsay
Gracie Mansion
New York, New York

Dear John:

It has been a long time since you came to lunch at my house in New Delhi in about 1960, when I gathered together a group of people from the political section of the Embassy to answer questions about India, and we ended up being much more interested in your views about politics in the United States.

Your career since then has been easy to follow by just reading the newspapers. For my part, I joined A.I.D. in 1962 as the Mission Director for Laos, but was reassigned to Vietnam as an Assistant Director and then served as Deputy Director of our foreign aid program in Tunisia, returning to Vietnam in 1966 where I am in charge of a so-called Chieu Hoi Program. (Under this program Viet Cong or North Vietnamese are invited to return to the side of the government of Vietnam with a promise of amnesty and good treatment. In 1967 alone, 27,000 Viet Cong returned, of whom 17,000 were armed, military VC. This represented the equivalent of two divisions of enemy troops and also represented a saving of some 5,000 lives on our side, which naturally is a rewarding thing to work for. Whether one is a hawk or a dove, nothing makes more sense or is more humane than persuading the enemy to stop fighting.)

The purpose of this note, besides congratulating you on your outstanding career, is to pass along a few brief thoughts about Vietnam as being of possible interest. I came here first in 1956 and have served some six years here over a period of twelve years. This by no means makes me an expert on this situation. Indeed, I doubt if there are any "experts," although Carver, Doug Pike and some others might come close to it. Nevertheless, one does develop a certain perspective. I feel that if we could turn back the clock of history, we might have been well advised to let Ho Chi Minh assume the burden of modernizing Vietnam, but after we had saved Western Europe, Greece, Iran and South Korea from Communist takeovers by application of the Truman Doctrine, etc., it was entirely understandable that we would wish to support the non-Communist nationalists who had

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opposed the French but who also opposed the Communists. Also we cannot now be sure what else might have happened in Asia if Ho had taken over. Nevertheless, we did not adequately realize at the time that we were also assuming the burden of protecting a nation over a long period of time while it solved its internal social and organizational problems, or how deep-rooted these problems were.

Having done this, however, and having encouraged many local people to take a stance against Communist takeover, any precipitate or drastic withdrawal at this stage would be almost unthinkable and would certainly have severe repercussions in all of Asia.

Nevertheless, we must have a policy and sense of direction with regard to this difficult problem, and it was in this connection that I thought you might be interested to read at least one individual's private view, which has no official status whatsoever and also does not presume to know all the answers or present ultimate truths on one page of paper. At least it has the advantage of being short, which is very relevant to you in your position as Mayor of New York. The position expressed in the attached paper may be unduly pessimistic as regards the time-period mentioned. Nevertheless, I feel it is better to make conservative assumptions, even if they prove to be unduly conservative. In this way, we do not deceive ourselves. Since these views are purely my own, I would appreciate your treating them as personal.

I shall be returning to Washington for reassignment in March of 1969. Should you be at all interested in cross-examining someone who might conceivably be described as "an old Vietnamese hand," I would be very pleased to meet with you at your convenience, since this is a most vital issue confronting the United States and one which you may one day have to confront yourself.

With best personal regards.

Sincerely,

OGDEN WILLIAMS
Chief, Chieu Hoi Division

Incl:
Victory in Vietnam