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October 23, 1965

Mr. Joseph A. Califano, Jr.  
Special Assistant to the President  
The White House  
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear Mr. Califano:

Forgive me for delaying so long in acknowledging your letter of October 1st with its invitation to comment, pro or con, on programs of the Johnson Administration. Like my fellow citizens I have been preoccupied with the President's physical condition and didn't want to respond to your invitation until he seemed to be definitely on the mend.

I have been and am a great admirer of President Johnson and of his domestic policies. For these the American people are deeply in his debt. My worry is the war in Vietnam, inherited by the President, about which I wrote him on February 19th as per copy attached. The apparent recent improvement in our strategic position makes me fear an increase in intransigence among our military leaders, in Congress and among the unthinking public.

Ignoring, for the purpose of this letter, the moral issue, I concede that what we are doing in Vietnam might make sense as prelude to a cold blooded permanent destruction by us of China's industrial potential and hence of her military power. But nowhere have I seen it suggested that it would be practical for us to attempt this, considering the consequences. I respectfully submit, therefore, that no victory in Vietnam now can protect us against ultimate reprisal by China when she becomes capable of large scale



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nuclear attack.

In today's New York Times Major Beckwith of the American Special Forces in South Vietnam is quoted as saying of the opposing North Vietnamese and Vietcong soldiers:

I wish I knew what they were drugging them with to make them fight like that. They are highly motivated and highly dedicated.

We had better reckon the cost of taking on 700 million people under the same "drug."

As a people we are tragically unaware of the facts of life in the Orient. We have been the dupes of false prophets of the collapse of the Chinese Communist Government. We have no conception of the massive tangible and intangible strengths opposing us in the giant country of the world, whose population outnumbers ours four to one. To come to terms with China is the direst need the United States has ever faced. Every day that we continue to make war in Vietnam, where our military activity is as hateful to China as hers in Mexico would be to us, we are widening the gap between us. Yet the gap simply has to be bridged. If it isn't, we are lost - and, with us, the world as we know it.

President Johnson has the political genius and the high courage required to make the realities clear to the American people and to liquidate this war. I pray that he will be able to do so.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

H. K. Hochschild

attach.