

5-16-1984

May 16, 1984 Interview with Edward Lansdale - Part 1

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Recommended Citation

Currey, Cecil B., "May 16, 1984 Interview with Edward Lansdale - Part 1" (1984). *Edward Lansdale Interviews*. 49.

https://scholars.fhsu.edu/lansdale_interviews/49

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impossible. That date hasn't come yet.



C: This is the morning of 10 December, 1984. I'm at the home of Major General Edward Gear Lansdale and we are going to be recording another phase in the materials about his life. Well the last time I was here General, we'd gotten you into the beginning of WWII and you had joined up with the OSS. Sometime or other during the Second WW, did you ever get to the EUropean theater?

L: Never. Never. Never did.

C: You spent all your time then in - where?

L: In the U.S. and working on Asia - the Pacific area.

C: IN the U.S. where were you stationed?

L: In SAN Fran, Washington, and N.Y.

C: What kinds of duties did you have in those years?

L: INTelligence all of it. Originally gathering information, trying to collect maps and that is get geographic information including maps, ~~not~~ trying to get descriptions of roads and stuff like that ^{as well,} trails. And lost materials and target iformation type of stuff. And that was it mostly. It was the most fascinating thing I've ever run across of gathering that sort of information and getting to know places and the peoples and what was going on there and what made them tick and the economies, the value of life and the structure of societies and so forth. Which is a little deeper than military ~~needs~~ really. I just found it fascinating and I was locating people in the U.S. - mostly Americans, but not necessarily Americans - who had been traveling all around the world, so I met some very fascinating people: geologists, explorers, one of them was an ictheologist who, I did a study with him on the poisonous and venomous fishes ^{of} ~~for~~ the seas, with warnings and so forth to our troops in the Pacific, and he told me that I was the best editor that he'd ever found. I was just fascinated. I never thought much about ictheology before. But along with the fishes he had been head of fisheries ~~or something~~ out in the Phillipines before the war, and started telling me stories about the Phillipines in his travels around. And he'd gone on foot practically throughout the islands. He knew the peoples extremely well and the common stories they'd tell and their superstitions and what have you. I found later that I was coming across ~~this~~ trail in alot of places ~~there~~ and one of them was a racket that he'd come across - some PHilipinos who were selling ~~some~~ ^{the} urine from the mother of God and were putting it in little

vials. And she lived up in a cave in the mountains and they were selling it to the superstitious people as a cure all and making good money on it. And I was traveling in my jeep on a road on the side of the same mountain that went down ^{Luzon} ~~southern to blue sea~~ and I saw one of our aircraft heading low that went into the peak and crashed up there. People ^{afterwards} ~~later~~ told me I was standing ^{in the jeep} up/yelling at the pilot. Yu know, you damn fool, there's a mountain right ahead of you see? And he went in and I went up and my gosh ^{there a cave} ~~there was a cave~~ and all I could think of was this ictheologist telling me this story. And in talking to the people I started asking about this and they said oh yeah, people remembered this gal who was the mother of God and so on. I thought that's a wonderful place to live among ~~the~~ people like that.

C: How long did you do this kind of work, General?

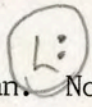
L: It's all during the war and afterwards I got into more specialized intelligence, more analyzing things that others had gotten all the information on, but doing analytical work and getting it prepared for others to read and use.

C: You spoke of working in San Francisco and New York in the earlier part of the war. Did you stay in the states during all of the war years?

L: Practically yes. I got out twice on very short trips out in the Pacific.

C: Where did you go on those trips?

L: Well I got once as far as New Zealand and one trip into China, but it was very brief. I didn't do anything. I mean I might just ~~not~~ ^{not} as well ^{I felt.} have gone. Except it was sort of fun traveling around.

C: You said when we talked last time that at the end of the war you were in Japan.  No I was in the Phillipines at the end.

L: I went out to be one of the bodies shoved into Japan on the big offensive and was sent ^{out} off to the Phillipines ^{right at the end of the war} to be ready for the invasion. I forget ^{what} ~~what~~ the invasion was called. ^{They} ~~It~~ had two fancy names for it.

C: Does Olympia sound right, or Olympic?

L: NO, that's not it. There were two of them. I was one of the two. I think one of them was to go up onto HONchu and the other was Kiushu or something. In other words it was south of there and I was to go up into the main island. They were figuring above 80% casulties.

Then you many bodies.

C: Well, when we were talking last time, you were telling me about becoming part of the OSS but I was uncertain exactly as to how that happened.

L: Well, I was recruited in there. I'd given up my commission in the reserves, ~~we were~~ ^{resigned} ~~assigned~~ before the war, quite a bit. I'd gotten mad about some things so when the war came along, I was trying to get it back. I wanted to serve in the war. I had two boys then. I lost my job because I was trying to get in the service, my boss took a very dim view of I wanted to leave him and go to war. And he fired me so I had some hostages to fortunately, I'd be a damn fool to do it. So the military intelligence service had opened up a place in San Francisco run by friends of mine who were working there and one of them was also helping OSS get started. So he said I think you want to get ⁱⁿ while you're waiting for your commission and everything, ^{so} come on down here and see if you can help these people out. Which I did. And they were recruiting, which I was doing for them, and trying to put together training courses and whatnot and I wrote some of them for them, not knowing a goddamned thing of course. And Bill Vanderbilt came out to ~~o~~. He was in the Navy had been governor of Rhode Island or ^{to take over.} something, he came out to San Francisco to open up a branch office for OSS out there. And I helped him for a time and we became very close friends. (He's dead now) ~~and~~ I was helping him set up shop and also helping the military intelligence service which ^{was} army. And the Army just had great demands for information and we were trying to satisfy those as well. So I was sort of the handy man for - and they both put me under contract. And the Army came up and gave me back my commission - reserve commission.

C: At what rank were you then?

L: I think I came back as a 1st LT. Cause that's when I ~~was first assigned~~ ^{resigned}, I'd been a 1st LT. I'd gotten one through college through going to ROTC and so on and

C: By the end of the war what was your rank?

L: Major. Major.

C: And this was with the U.S. Army? ^{indeed}

L: Yeah. Army of the United States. It's a reserve on active duty.

C: In your book you say that you didn't really want to revert to civilian life at the end of the war. That you saw possibilities for an American in the military service and that

you felt a strong appeal in the U.S. military's part in creating democratic institutions in the Pacific.

L: Yeah. Which I had done in the Phillipines and ^{we} were doing in Japan at the time. I was very impressed when I went up to Japan and I saw the attitude of the Japanese people towards MacArthur, who I felt was a prima donna and so forth, along with many others in the military. But he was very effective and I've since come to have a very great respect for that guy. He might have been an actor and so forth, ^{which} I'm sure he was, but he was a very effective person. Thank God for that. I think he was lousy as an advisor and commander in the Phillipines during the Japanese attack there in '41 '42 but, certainly later he was very great. But they, and compared to the civilian we had out there ^{→ 2 ambassadors} in ~~basters~~ and aid administrators or economic ~~to the~~ people and so on, the military were strangely far more liberal in their political thinking and their insistence on democratic ways of doing things. AND the civilians were very straight laced and I think they'd have opted for dictatorship and wherever they'd have put another Hilter in Germany and Lord knows what in Japan, and a military rule there again.

C: Well it strangely worked that way. ^{which} ~~It~~ was the first institution in this country to desegrate itself. To give women equality of opportunity. The army's a strange institution.

~~(laughter)~~
L: Yeah. It was enlightening to me anyhow.

C: Someone said about McCarther, that when he became military governor there in Japan, ~~ISCAP~~ that the honor that was accorded him by the Japaenese, which was similar to what they'd accorded the Emporer, he didn't feel that was sufficient.

~~(laughter)~~. ^{L: Well, it could have been.}
L: Well, naw, he was quite a person. I've come to have a very high regard for him. Sort of grudgingly gotten that way. AND I'm a little bit tainted ^{by} about Navy beliefs about him you know and what have you, but he was quite a commander. And the Phillipinos loved that guy. ^{They really did.}

C: Yes. Yes. I guess even today they still . . .

L Oh yeah. yeah. I remember when Truman fired him out there the Phillipine President asked me to come down to a cabinet meeting, which I did, and he and the cabinet asked me would the American President, meaning Truman, get very angry if the Phillipines suggested, invited McCarthur to live out the rest of his life in ^{the} Phillipines - they'd made him an honorary citizen ^{but} ~~but~~ they wanted to have him live there and they were going to send that to him.

And I said, no I think the United States would be very pleased if you do something like that . I don't think he's going to , but it's a very nice gesture, ^{to} go ahead and make it. They said, well will Truman and the United States cut off all aid to us? Something as practical as that. And I said, no no, they never would.

C: Well, Truman would have been very happy had ~~McArthur would have been very happy had~~ ^{in the Philippines} McArthur gone to live ^{the rest of his life} ~~in the Phillipines.~~

L: SURE. Sure. So they went ahead and composed the wire there on yellow paper, ruled paper like you got there, that message to McArthur and I helped them with it and ^{they} sent it. I said , tell the guy how much you think of him. That's the important thing. HIS feelings are hurt right now. ^{I let him know what. I said,} "HIS feelings are hurt?" Yes, ^{his feelings are hurt.}

C: You said by the end of the war you had two sons? ^{L: Yeah.} What are their names?

L: They first one is Edward - the same as me - I gave him a different middle name. It's Edward Russell. And the second one is Peter Carroll - Carroll's another family name. Russell's a family name and Carroll's a family name.

C: Is that with 2 r's and 2 l's?

L: Yes. ^{the} ~~That~~ same as the guy who signed the Declaration who's a forebearer.

C: Is that right?

L: Yeah. Yeah.

C: Charles Carroll of Carrolltown

L: THAT's right.

C: There were alot of Charles Carrolls around and he wanted King George to ^{be sure and} find the right one, ^{so he wrote...}

L: He sure wanted to put his address on it. You ^{can} kind find me here, oh boy.

C: That's right. That's a good story. Do you have any daughters or other sons that were born later?

L: NO. Those are the only two. Their mother, my first wife, died after I retired and come back from Vietnam the last time. I was living down ~~there~~ ^{Dickens} near Mt. Vernon. BUT, I'm trying to remember when the ~~date~~ of that was. '74 I believe she died. And then Pat, whom I'd known in the Phillipines before, who had never been to the U.S., retired from her work at the Embassy out there and came on to see the United States. She'd been working in the

information program and she came to see if the U.S. was as good as she'd been telling everybody it was in the information program. And so we got married after she'd been there a time.

C: did you leave the service at all for a while after WWII?

L: NO. I stayed in the Army. I got an Air Force commission. The Air Force ordered me to go to , to report into the 13th Air Force. And I told the people up there, the 13th was up in the middle of ^{Luzon et} Lewis and Clark Field, they said, I was ordered to do something here by General McArthur, and which I'm now doing and they aren't about to let me go from what I'm doing out of this headquarters so, if you want me why don't you just tell Gen. McArthur? And they said, you report to duty here illegible. So it never got resolved and I didn't - I really didn't go into the Air Force until I came back to the U.S. when I went to Intelligence School, the Strategic Intelligence School.

C: Where was that located?

L: In Lowry Air Force Base in Denver, Colorado. I thought I was going to go to school there. They were going to make me an intelligence officer, instead ^{of that} they had me teaching classes there. It was sort of strange. I never paid any attention ^{to} air intelligence before, but I taught strategic intelligence and they wanted me to teach economic intelligence, so the public libraries in Denver were very good and I decided to give non-classified lectures to these students and see how much ^{could out of} I get ^{off} the libraries, which I did. And I gave very long lectures on the Soviet Union and so on and I was amazed on how much I could get on the publications open to the public. About the Soviet Union and about the Iron Curtain countries and so on. Enough to make up real strategic bombing lists and figure out the value of certain things through the economy and to the Soviet Union, the people, and its integral whole. And learned to look through the words of Soviet percentages that they ^{give} get - very, very, funny - they just love ^{give damn} the figures to ^{the environmental} reports and they'll say that a Artic station, 50% of the female doctors and 10% of the male doctors got married up at this station. You discover that there were two women up there, ^{so} ~~and that~~ one of them got married and so on. BUT it's confusing. It's covering up the real facts. They don't ever get down to something real simple and tell you what really happened. So you learn to sort of ~~learn to~~ read them with your tongue in your cheek and sort of read further into them.

C: What year was it that you actually received your commission in the Air Force?

L: It was when the Air Force started.

C: 1947?

L: '47.

C: OK. Why did ^{they} ~~they~~ plunk you back a grade?

L: I don't know. Probably because ^{the reserve is not a} ~~there were a certain amount of~~ regular officers, I imagine. The Army promoted me to Lt. Col. out there right at the end while releasing me. So that didn't help at all.

C: So you came back two grades then?

L: Well, yeah but I never took it as a real promotion of any sort.

C: That was also the day and age of permanent and temporary promotions

L: That's right.

C: So you were a temporary Lt. Col. and maybe your permanent grade at that point was only a Capt.?

L: Yeah, ^{maybe,} something like that. Something like that. Well they were always very reluctant about promoting me, and I never paid any attention to it and during the war they checked on some U.S. agency. Why they'd gone ahead and done something that started a big project against Japan, and they said, well, Lansdale came in and told us it was important to do it. AND they ^{said} ~~said~~ he was a 1st Lt. He was in uniform. Well he was talking like he was head of the whole U.S. Army, they said. AND they'd gone ahead and done it. (illegible) I just thought this is what U.S. and American Agency should be doing on it you see? And they went ahead and did it. I spent my whole service that way. Many, many have said, I wish I could have done what you did, you know, in getting to do the things you wanted to do and were worth doing. AND I said, they ^{were} ~~are~~ there for anybody if you get enough nerve to do it. And they used to bawl me out. I used to get terrible bawlings out and I'd ^{just} ~~just~~ say, well, I went into the service for patriotic ^{reasons} ~~reasons~~ and I'll quit for the same damn reasons. I just wanted to serve my country as best I can. I'll make up my own mind what that is.

C: And yet that's a very unusual attitude for someone in the military - especially at those company grade and middle ^{field} ~~fuel~~ grade ^{rank} ~~rank~~.

L: Oh yeah. Well, I ^{id} made up my mind long ago how I wanted to live my life and not doing _____

but how. That indepenence was part of it. When I was in high school once, I sat on the front lawn of my house there in Los Angeles at the time, and started thinking, I guess I'd been told to think of college and what I wanted ^{to make} as a life, something or other - career or something, so I started figuring out how people lived and how far they go, and at the time we had all sorts of great villians in history and great heroes and everything, and what motivated them and how they looked at themselves and so forth, I started thinking that way and thinking do I want to make alot of money and if so why, and that didn't strike me as ^{it. And I wanted...} what I wanted to do, and I started ^{thinking} what makes an American and what is ^{the} a real goal of the AMERICAN dream for a person to want to achieve and I finally figured out for myself what it was - that independence of spirit and being a free spirit was definitely a part of it. ANd I lived my own life that way. I did when I was in advertising, and I did when I got into the military and I don't need to now, I mean it's a part of me now. But many people, youngsters can't find themselves and leave home and their families and everything to go and find themselves, ^{well} ~~what~~ I wish they'd sit down like I did in high school that time and really start figureing out what the values are in life, what I as a person ~~w~~ wanted to reach and ^{look} ~~what~~ for. ANd I'm happy now that I did it. I was suprised that my brothers hadn't did it. Cause I started asking them the same questions and neither one of them thought about it that much.

C: Well, you've been around the military long enough General, to know ^{that} ~~that~~ mavericks, and I think, you were kind of a maverick, ^{L: Yes, I think so...} that mavericks are often not received well, ^{L: That's correct} and there are any number of officers - oh, a captain will step out of line once, will disagree with a superior once, and he gets shuttled off into a closet someplace. Or a major general will disagree with a Lt. Gen. and it's the end - how over all these years could you be so independent and still be trusted so much?

L: Well, first of all I think most of my actions were unselfish ones. I didn't, ^{none} ~~noe~~ of these... ^{none of the actions} were self serving in nature. The things that they'd would get angry about were actually actions done for the greater good of our country. The motives were ones that they couldn't question. ANd I think that made them madder than anything. It would. It usually does and there were the usual niceties that I never bothered with to follow - going to staff colleges and so forth. They used to tell me in personnel and everything, you haven't made anything and you couldn't anyhow because you're too old or something. Just, after I didn't tell them

I'd just come back from the White House and the President asked me if I wanted to go to the War College - he'd send me himself. He said, I think you're too old now but I'll request it personally and they'll accept it, which they would have. Eisenhower did that once to the National War College. ANd everybody was telling me eh, you've never been to the War College. Well I ^{didn't say} ~~never said~~, well I could have gone you know. I just kept that to myself. It didn't mean that much to me. I'd gone up and taught there. I'd given lectures there at all of our War Colleges and used to when I was in the service, but ^I never regretted that I didn't go, but I didn't feel I didn't need it - it would have been nice to have gone, but people that get in trouble and get rebuffed and so forth and shoved into closets are people who can be wounded that way. And I don't think I was ever in a position to be wounded. I was, everybody thought I was wounded and cut into pieces and everything, and I'd still be going and I just readjusted my goals and going, well they stopped me from doing that - this still need^s going and I'm the only one who can do that, so I'm going to stay and do that. ANd they did that the last time in Vietnam, they really stopped me cold and what I was trying to do there and again the U.S. didn't know how to fight the war and the people in power and the bueracracies and everything, ^{the} ~~they~~ ^{bureaucracies} won out, they stopped me cold. But they didn't win a goddamned thing for our country and that's the only thing I regret, not for myself at all.

C: How should we have fought that war?

L: Well, first of all we should of helped the Vietnamese to be strong enough to have fought it and to have gotten into the politics and psychology of a communist ^{type} state of people's war. Which would have been hard to do but we could have taught them. WE could have made the enemy leadership a target for attack as they made our leaders a target for their psychological and political attack. We could have made a lot of things subject to psychological attack which if it had been native Vietnamese fighting they could have done. It was hard to teach the Vietnamese that ^{these} ~~these~~ were important things to do, but that could have been done. I used to do that every time I was with them. The United States thought it was nonsense, that is our key officials out there, never understood that. I don't think any of them understood that a leadership was a committee up there, a committee that was just begging to be defeated by Lyndon Johnson who had been the city board supervisor or something in one of the Texas cities, he could have licked them. But he never understood that there ^{was an} ~~were some~~ enemy leadership, I

don't think he ever got the names of any of the enemy ~~kl~~ leaders up in Hanoi. He certainly let them get away with murder on the thing. But they were telling the people, look these guys are bringing you this and why don't you get rid of them and everything (illegible) which we used to do with the Kaiser and with Hitler and so. We got the German people to go through with a couple of revolutions in fact. Kicking out ^{their} ~~the~~ leaders. We used to get mad at that. WE got mad at the British originally, at George III. And ^a ~~the~~ guy got elected mayor in Chicago in the 20th century for being against George III. The Americans hated King George that much. But we made sort of a hero out of Ho Chi Minh, which was silly. We never fought politically. And I was trying to get the Vietnamese to take the role of leading the fight to save themselves. And there were some good Vietnamese leaders and I wanted ^{them} ~~the~~ to learn to do it and let them take the ^{reins} ~~reigns~~ and lead themselves out of trouble and run the government - make mistakes and learn from ^{it} ~~them~~ when they'd make one. As it was with the Americans we were doing things ourselves that the Vietnamese should be doing - taking away the initiative from them. We talked down our noses to them so that if they'd made a mistake they'd hesitate to ever let us know it and admit it. They were afraid we were going to bawl them out or laugh at them or something, or maybe cut off aid and everything. We wouldn't trust you guys with help this way. The last time I went out, I figured that the Vietnamese leadership needed friends and they were all afraid of me, the generals ^{because they} ~~know~~ knew they killed a friend of mine - Ngo Dinh Diem, when they'd come in. And I said no, you're stuck where you are now and I want to help you succeed. Cause it's your country and they all started coming over to my house and dropping in and our Ambassadors and other officials were suprised that they used to come over to my house to talk to me and hwere Vietnamese leaders and their wives and families would drop in just as a friend. And they didn't take me as being an official. And they also let me know mistakes they'd made and so forth. I used to sit there quietly face to face with them and go over some of their programs and where they'd gone wrong and would never bawl them out. I was always well, how do you correct that? How do you get it so it works right? And ^{got} ~~he had~~ all these people depending on this and everything and they're going to need some help ^{on this} and why don't you do it this way and get so and so. And they knew ^{that} ~~that~~ so, and that's what we should have done with that sort of help ^{to} ~~with~~ Vietnam.

C: You say that we did things that they should have been doing for themselves, could you give me examples of this?

L; Oh, alot of the example the aid mission there would get provincial ^{sic} reps out to get help into people. They'd start running out of rice or something. We were trying to teach the provincial Vietnamese ^{provincial} officials to take care of their own aid programs and so on. So we'd get the government to distribute rice up to people for the needy and the American advisors up there would see the rice coming in and they, the province chief, the Vietnamese would be worrying about, well, how does Saigon want me to do this? Well, they'll fire me if I do it wrong. And there was alot of that. They were wondering what to do and the Americans would say, these people are hungry and they'd grab the rice and you'd distribute it this way, throw it on the truck, go out and distribute it. AND take all the ~~the~~ ^{initiative} away from them instead of telling the province cheif, well, you do this if you want, I'll call up my friend up in Saigon and he'll back you and so on so the government won't bawl you out. ^{Go on & act.} They'd never do it that way, they'd take it over. So then the province chief would miss the opportunity to maybe have done it a little wrong and everything but there was a great deal of that all over the country. The same in the military ^{it was.} Some of the Vietnamese resented it and still do, and some of the Vietnamese are going to be writing books and everything. There is a feeling of bitterness toward's the Americans who were there. AND I think in about 10 years there'll be books out about the things that the Americans did wrong in Vietnam. By people on our side who we were helping. And they're hesitating to write ^{on it} because it will look like ingratitude and everything, but there are very deep feelings on this. I know the foreign Minister and then he became President of their Assembly over there - a politician, and a very distinguished public servant wants to come and work here in Washington with the Wilson Center as a fellow, to write a piece essentially on, could Vietnam have won the war under President Diem? Meaning if you Americans hadn't [tape ends].

Tape # 2 Side 2

16 May 1984

(10 Dec 1984 — yet that date hasn't come yet!)



C: Yeah you were saying that that will take care of part of the political and psychological aspects that no American has written on yet.

L: Yes. That's true. AND this is by a Vietnamese politician. I hope he understands he can express himself clearly enough on the politics and the psychology of things. He's asked me to act as one of the sponsors. I want to see something like that attempted. So I'm going to push real hard for his getting this fellowship. But there's another Vietnamese in Texas a university, that's written me, and he writing a book about the American Ambassadors^{out} in Vietnam. And I'm sure, he wants to know which Ambassadors were friends to Vietnam and were acting really like diplomats should. And which ones were coming out there as Vice Consulates as proconsulates of the United States, mighty United States, and ^{telling} telling them you either do it our way or else we'll stop all aid and all help and so on.

C: I think the answer is yes. That's what they were.

L: That's what some of them saw themselves as.

C: Oh yes sir.

L: But he was writing me and I said well, you talk to Vietnamese. I said, don't try to figure out what policy they were following from the Department of State. Do it from a Vietnamese viewpoint of how these people looked to you and what all your contacts with them and everything. I said that'll be a true ^{account} account you can write. It'll be one nobody else can do and if you try to figure out what policies they were following from Washington - I don't ~~ever~~ ^{ever} think you can ~~do it~~ ^{dope} that out clearly enough, which is what he'd wanted to do. And so but, these are thoughts of refugees, ^{you see,} of some of the old leaders that have come here. AND I'm sure that they're going to be thinking that way. There were two of them ^{ambassadors} ~~bastards~~ to the U.S.. One of them is writing a book, one of them isn't - but he's very bitter the same way. And they come over and talk to me and I say, put it in a book or tell somebody this. Why me? You know my feelings. WELL you're a friend, we can talk to you. It's the same thing. Because I've been a friend out in Vietnam and made it very easy to talk to me, which the American officials knew, Lodge said, he put it down, he said, you've got patience to spend time with these people. I said, no, it's not patience, I'm trying to listen to what they're really saying And that's all it is And I told this. And I'm not immediately interested in their hearing what I think. I wanted to hear what they think first. And then I'll respond to it.

C: Well don't you think that ^{when} ~~when~~ someone like Gen. Maxwell Taylor or Lodge flies from Washington to Saigon, spends one day on a carefully sponsored tour ^{of the} ~~to the~~ city and the out-lying region and then before flying back to the States they tell the Vietnamese ^{what they should} ~~don't you~~ think ^{they're} ~~their~~ speaking from ~~a~~ simply a well of experience and knowledge?

L: [Laughs]. ^{of course!} No that's what we do all the time and of course ^{the} ~~the~~ Vietnamese, more of them are aware of that.

C: How can any responsible person do that? How can they be so egotistic?

L: Yeah. That's - How can we? I don't know. WE seem to be very good at turning out people. They're doing that in Washington all the time. So. WE used to send people over there and I used to say, you know Washington is a big city and we're used to alot of these antics among Americans and we can understand them and maybe forgive them or at least not pay attention to some of the more annoying habits. But goddamn it - why do we have to export it to foreign countries? AND have them as officials there? And we had a number of officials like that who served in Vietnam.

C: Those same officials jumped down Jane Fonda's throat because she travelled to Hanoi, went on a carefully sponsored tour, after 12 hours ~~in~~ in the city she makes this pronouncement that the North Vietnamese are simply humanitarian and they wouldn't torture anyone. And we say, how stupid can she be? But we sent our own officials to Saigon and in the same length of time they became experts.

L: Yeah. There are other factors in there. First of all we have prisoners who were hurt because of what Fonda said.

C: Oh absolutely.

L: And to me what she did was ^{giveable} ~~unforgettable~~. THE other guys were stupid jerks who came out that

C: Maxwell Taylor - a stupid jerk?

L; Well, not a stupid jerk [laughs]

C: Come on, General.

L: ^{close to it.}

L: A patrician, cold, thinking, short sighted person. He doesn't understand human beings I'm afraid. And the same with Lodge - very patrician again. Again, I don't think

he ever understood that he was dealing with real live human beings out there. And I don't think Taylor ever did. I don't think Westmoreland ever did. NO. That is too bad.

C: Well, Westmoreland, someone was telling me, maybe it was you General, that he arrived in-country knowing no Vietnamese, and not liking the Vietnamese.

L; No, I didn't tell you that.

C: And he left knowing no Vietnamese and liking none of the Vietnamese. And from what I know about the man that pretty well sums up.

L: Yeah. That might be true. He used to go out and see the Chief of Staff every Monday early and ^{then} ~~then~~ they'd go down to essentially a U.S. country team meeting - they called it something else out there, I forget what. I was a member of it but I forget what it was. And when Westy was leaving, his place was taken by Abrams [name supplied by Currey], Abrams asked me to see him and have lunch with him alone, said you got any thoughts on what I should do? And I told him, well, at least change the way you visit the Chief of Staff of the Vietnamese Army. I said, Westy goes out and sees him, he goes out in convoy really, in his sedan. He's got an aide and bodyguards with him, he's got extra bodyguards with him in a 6x8 truck after him with machine guns and so forth mounted and a couple of jeep loads of heavily armed troops with him and with police fore and aft on motorcycles. This is a big convoy and they go out early, at 6:00 in the morning or something like that, out to the Vietnamese headquarters and Gen. Vien is out there and he's got his troops lined up and they present arms and up comes this big convoy ^{and} ~~and~~ out steps the ^{pro} consul of the United States. And he said, how are you this morning, General? How are things going? ^{he says the General.} Fine, ~~he~~ said. Of course they are. This guy's got an army and he's got an army too. ^{Everything's well with my army.} So the ^{American} ~~Army~~ proconsul tells him how goddamned well everything's going with the U.S. Army and says, how's it going with yours? ^{Fine} says the Vietnamese General. THE American general goes down to the meeting and tells the ^{other} Americans everything's going well with the Vietnamese. Half their troops have deserted or something but they aren't about to tell him.

Well, I said, now General Abrams, do you drive? Of course, the guy's a tanker, and he says Of course I do. Whyn't you go over in a jeep and take an aide if you want but you don't need ^{an aide} me, really. You go over in a jeep. ^{Cao Van Vien} Vien'll be there with all his troops lined up and you say Can I park my jeep around here someplace? Be a human being. Go out, and first thing say I'm worrying about . . . (pick some worry with your troops they aren't doing right) and Vien'll say "You haven't heard anything yet. Let me tell you what's happening with mine." And you get down to the truth very quickly. And maybe you can help each other a little bit. And maybe you can buck each other up on some of these things. And I said, better yet, instead of going over there, he's got to come from way out of town to get over to ^{his} headquarters in the morning. Whyn't you invite him over to breakfast? You live not too far from his headquarters and he can come and have breakfast with you and go to work. And the two of you sit alone. Don't have servants overhearing and everything. If he wantsto bring aides, they can eat out in the next room with yours. I said, it's about time we got the thing on the basis of human beings talking to each other. ^{out there.} And he thought that was a good idea. He said he'd do it. I don't know whether he did or not. But he was the type of guy that would. Now, I suggested things like that to Westmoreland who wouldn't want to listen to me on it. I used to go in and he'd just tell me to shut up. I'd bring up a psychological warfare ideas to him and troop behavior and so forth (and he ^{used to} tick them off in little notes: troops misbehaving. I'd get reports from Vietnamese and get them over to him personally to get someone to look into it and he would never really talk to me. Very hard to talk to him.

C: Well, I'm sure he would talk to you, but it was very hard for him

CVU was
Vnse
Cops.
Top man
in VNese
army. Lives
in PA now

to listen to you.

L: Oh, maybe that was it. Maybe that was it. I'd go over and have breakfast with him once in awhile, or lunch, or something, just the two of us alone or/^{he'd} have a visitor, and his visitors would come over and have lunch with me afterwards. They would tell me and . . . I remember when the first VC rockets came in after the Tet Offensive and they started rocketing Saigon . . . goddamned big things coming in. One of them was a guest of Westy's and he said Jesus! Westy's never heard those rockets. They hit the house next door, and they said, I'll show him where the thing was fired from. I've been trying to get the military to get over there and clean out the spot where these guys are carrying these things in and setting them off over across the river. I'll show you exactly where. (I)??

I used to do that when there were attacks on Tan Son Nhut and everything. Which I stopped because they immediately started shelling everything in sight and all my friends were getting killed ^{and} in their homes ^{demolished.} Couldn't get the American troops out to hand-to-hand stuff; you know, confrontation. They didn't get in close enough so's you don't blow up ^{everything} ~~everything~~ for ten miles off.

C: What is your feeling, General Lansdale, about the troop buildup ~~over-there?~~ of America in Vietnam? Did we need those troops there?

L: Well, it was . . . there were empires of, you know, headquarters, and of deals. there. The combat troops had a tremendous backstopping of headquarters and supply units and so forth that staggered the imagination. The -- I don't think we needed all that.

C: Do you know General DeWitt Smith, General?

L: No.

C: He was commandant of the War College for two different tours.

And he said ^{to me} something to the effect that, this is a paraphrase, that it ~~was~~ ^{is} simply immoral in the midst of a war zone to stock PXs with French perfumes and nylons. And he was concerned about all this

backstopping of combat troops with combat service support (interrupt)

L: Hairspray.

L: Friend of mine wrote a song the hairspray in the PXs. It's a comment on MacNamara and his . . . about getting hairspray into the PXs. They're gonna drop it on the VC from the air and kill ^{them} all of ~~them~~. Laughs.

C: Well, I worked out the ratio once. I don't know whether this is correct, but as nearly as I could figure, ~~it was~~ ^{we had} something like 52 or 53,000 combat troops actually performing combat duties when we had 550,000 troops in ~~the~~ ^{country.} That's 1/10th, 1/10th of our soldiers.

L: Yeah.

C: effectively fighting.

L: Yeah. I wonder if ~~we~~ ^{we} had that many.

C: How about American policies like, oh, supporting Diem early on in his agrovilles and New Life villages and then ~~came~~ ^{they became} strategic hamlets where we rounded up Vietnamese and moved them into protected areas.

What was your attitude toward that?

L: I think that was wrong. That was a British idea essentially, and by a Britisher that never understood how they won down in Malaya. He was in charge. He was running things.

C: Sir Robert Thompson.

L: Yeah. But I've been in meetings with the British ^{there} and I started telling them how they won in Malaya, and they never understood the Malaysians. They were a wonderful people. And as soon as they gave Malaya independence they started winning the war. Of course, they were against Chinese guerrillas who looked different, you could spot them. The Malaysians could spot them ^{instantly.} Which the British didn't always do. But they never understood that their victory there owed a great deal to the political act of independence; ^{in that} which I've gotten in talking to some of the Malayan politicians. And the Brits used to come over to the Philippines, cause we were fighting the same ^{type of enemy} ~~kind of men~~ at the same time. And they'd be amazed at the little things that we did that were blown up out of all proportion (they said). So, well, that's psychological action. That's all. As long as everybody believes it, fine. It's to our favor. We're trying to make it come true. They ^{some of them thought} thought ~~that~~ that was terrible. I said, well, the other side's doing that all the ~~time~~ goddam time, see, and if we can get away from it then apparently we are, I had no idea it would spread so far. You're hearing stories over on the mainland of Asia that they're this way, well, why I'm all for it. But apparently the communists thought that themselves. Didn't believe that. Which is, we should have fought that way in Vietnam, see, I'd learned all that in earlier fighting in the Philippines.

C: If you could have succeeded in having Ngo Dinh Diem adopt your suggestions . . .

L: He did originally, when he was first president. He got someone like Lou Conein, who was there at the time or Rufe Philipps, who was there. When Ngo Dinh Diem was first president they said it was very different.

The . . . Vietnam was being run decently and so forth. Nhu and the political party people who were with him had secret police arresting people. I got it stopped. I went down and asked Diem about it and he didn't know about it. His brother was doing it. He didn't tell ~~him~~ ^{me that} ~~about it, that~~ ^{that} I knew ~~about it~~. And I just said well the families are coming to me. What am I going to tell them? That you guys are worse than Adolf Hitler or something, you know? No, no, no. And he stopped it right fast. And we were . . . I had some of the people that had helped Magsaysay, including his closest assistant in defense who was over as an attache--a Philippine attache in Vietnam--and I put him in helping Diem all the time. The guy had tremendous ideas and ability and energy and feeling for the people. And who was helping me and who stayed on there afterwards. But after I left, the Americans and so forth who were there were pushing them the wrong way into doing the wrong things. He didn't understand a lot of things, I used to beg ^{them} ~~him~~ to. We would have talks and he ^{would} ~~used to~~ ask me "what does flooring a loan mean."? I had a meeting with ~~his~~ ^{these} bankers and they were talking about flooring a loan and everything, and I said goddam it our AID mission people should tell you that. / ^{I'll} Get them over. He asked me chain of command. He said, you military talk about chain of command. I ^{said} ~~said~~, I'll tell you and everything. I'll get our general running MAAG to tell you. They should tell you these things, not just throw these phrases around. I told him, I said, essentially this is what it means and then told him, but if we'd ever really explained ourselves as we went along and let this guy learn to start running things. I would sit there and he would say, "Come on out on trips ^{around} the country with me," and I said "No, you don't want to have any damn Americans ^{with you}." You're a Vietnamese. You're a Vietnamese leader.

C: And yet you went on trips around the country with Ramon Magsaysay.

L: Yeah. That was different. They were used to Americans in the Philippines. But not politically. Not when he was running for president. But when he was Secretary of Defense, ^{yes.} But in Vietnam, the ^{about} Vietnamese were highly sensitive ~~to~~ independence and having no foreigners. It's a very anti-foreigner civilization, ^{there.} I told Diem, you have photographers with you. Please show me pictures of you doing whatever you're doing there and I'll look at them, I said, with you. And I'd look at them. He'd be talking to a little peasant and I said look at this guy. He's got his hat off. He's holding it. His head's down. He's not looking you in the eye. How do you know he's telling you the truth? I said, That's your fault. the way you're talking to him. And the way you approach him and everything. I want to see people with their hats on looking you in the eye and talking to you, As a friendly leader, that they want to explain ~~to~~ what they've got or what their problems are. And I'd get him pictures of Sihanouk and other leaders around Asia and show them to him. I said, Now this is Sihanouk out crossing a swampy ground. The camera doesn't show all the people lying on the ground so he doesn't get his feet wet, see, and walk on their rumps.

C: ^{Was} ~~Did~~ he really?

L: Oh, yeah. I said . . .

C: That's funny.

L: I said you can tell that from the faces of those looking at this ^{the} guy. He gradually started changing. Then I sicced ~~a~~ Filipinos on him. They're like young American college people. They taught the Vietnamese, for example, ^{to carry} that carrying Diem--put him up on their shoulders--when their feelings were up and they felt like cheering and everything.

And the last of the old Viet Minh went out of Central Vietnam by ship when they exchanged from north to south and south to north and went out and Diem visited there. I said, you do that now. And the Filipinos taught the Vietnamese how to do it and they got Diem up on their shoulders (and I had a picture of him and he was scared they were going to drop him or something and he was hanging on their hair with his fists) and all the people cheering and you can tell from their faces that it was a great moment they were sharing. He should have been yelling with them but he was looking scared, see, ^{because} but I'd tease him about it, see, I'd say Jesus, you should have been grinning along with them, yelling, and it was a great moment for all of ^{you} ~~them~~. I showed that picture later. I went back to ^{Vietnam on a visit} ~~VN~~ and they were having trouble, ^{with Diem} they were telling me that he ^{is} ~~was~~ a Mandarin, very remote, this that and the other thing, and I said, here, take a look, this is the guy when I was advising him when he was president. ^{Take} ~~The~~ a look at Diem and the people. They said, I don't believe this, ^{picture.} This couldn't be the same man. This couldn't ever have been taken here. It was all different, the approach. And he was responding to all this, the feeling of the people. We would find out conditions in the country and I found out where the mosquitos were particularly bad or where simple things could be done to effect a . . . ^{that} ~~where~~ he as head man in the government could take an action that would help people and I'd tip him off that this is so, ask them around there, so this is what you can do. Then have this ready to follow up immediately. He used to take those actions. Mosquito nets and sometimes blankets when people were cold, sometimes food, all different very simple things that he could act as president on.

C: Do you have, maybe, a 25 point or 10 point or a 2 point policy that

would have worked in Vietnam?

L: I don't have any written out, no.

C: I don't mean that, I mean just in your mind. What could we have really done to have insured that Diem or someone like Diem was able to . . .

L: Yeah . . . it would have been Diem or someone like him. You're right. Been Diem maybe for a time and then someone else. We could have figured out some way for orderly change. I think that the communists were ^{thrown} very much off their time-table and their thinking and everything ^{by} ^{and} ^{he was president} ~~like~~ Diem ~~was-in~~ his actions when ^{when} he refused to go ahead with the voting ~~that would have united~~ north and south afterwards. Which was the correct thing, I think. It was a ~~that~~ thing that they had rigged up under great pretensions and I think he was much stronger than they ^{had} ever thought. He had much more of a following than they had ever thought was possible. He was much more a Vietnamese nationalist than any of the ~~Vietnamese~~ communists ever were. And people would catch on. And they had ^{to change and it} ~~a taint~~ that took them a long time ^{finally} to figure out how to start bringing them down. Which they did. I had always thought that possibly we couldn't have won but we could have made enough political points there so that any eventual taking over of the South would have to be far more political than the communists ever thought. Far more political than military. And they would have to give up points politically to do it. And they would . . . there would have been a lot of compromises and it would have wound up possibly like uh, uh, like in Europe . . . the communists there.

C: East and West Germany?

L: No. Opposite Italy. Yugoslavia. It would have become much more

like a Yugoslavian type of solution, and uh, I thought they were starting entirely too late and they had cards stacked against them. There was . . . and what the Americans ^{there} ~~said~~ didn't ^{understand} ~~understand~~ was that the French colonial system in Indochina was that the French ran ^{every Goddamned thing} ~~EVERYTHING out there~~. And when they pulled out, they left behind ^{just a} ~~the~~ ^{court} untrained bunch of people. The ~~port~~ system that the Vietnamese had wasn't a really effective administrative arm of government. It sort of kept track of things but didn't run things and Diem had served in that in the old imperial days and he'd been province chief and so forth. But they hadn't been . . . they'd been sort of ^a province supervisor or advisor almost and he knew the country very well, ^{but} he didn't know how to run anything; he didn't know how to administer. He really didn't. Nor did any of the other Vietnamese. And, we had... ^{they had} a government with departments in it, ministries, and Jesus, the ministries had been run by the French and all of a sudden the door man was brought in: "You are the Minister, or you are this, that and the other." ^{thing} ^{you} And all he knew was ~~to~~ sit at a desk and what do you do next? He didn't really have a clue. They were smart enough to keep their mouths shut, you know, and try to get along all right and find out. Some of the Vietnamese intellectuals who had college educations ^{or} had done it in Europe ~~and~~ in Hanoi (which was the only college). They were trying, themselves, to set up something. But they'd gone into professions, most of them ^{were} doctors or dentists. There were a few lawyers. But there were none of them in the government, and they needed a whole mass of people trained. Well, the communists had started in '45 with the same thing, but they didn't have the French or anybody else there and they _____ started to run their own affairs. And they killed off a lot of their people, a lot of their

officials were killed . . . liquidated . . . by their own party people. For making mistakes. So, they gradually got people in that could run things, administer and everything. But they learned all the time they were fighting the French. Then when we took over from the French, the Vietnamese on our side hadn't been that way, even the Army, had been part of the French forces, had French officers running it. And uh, the Vietnamese units were almost untrained as a real military force. I held a . . . I was trying to get pacification started and I quickly found out what it was was the Viet Minh in those days would withdraw under the Geneva agreement up to the North. Well, they pulled out of areas in the South and what are conditions in all these provinces? So I called all the province/^{officials} together into Saigon ^{for} a meeting and they were practically all Frenchmen. And uh, province and district chiefs. And we were supposed to send vietnamese in to do ~~it~~ ^{that} and we didn't have any Vietnamese to do it. We had a few government people working in Saigon and Hanoi (who had come down from Hanoi), but they had worked in offices and sat at the door when visitors came in and so on. Usually had them stamp things, the French system of doing any business of the government, to stamp something with a rubber stamp and it'd always cost you, mail a letter, they have to stamp a piece of paper with a rubber stamp. But they badly needed a government service body of people, trained and everything. So we started training on that. But we were starting the training as though it ~~would~~ ^{could} take ten years or twenty years. We got Michigan State and AID working on it. I was explaining. They had a plebiscite set ^{from} ~~for~~ Geneva to decide who runs this country and we need people representing Saigon throughout the country and we need it tomorrow and it should have been there yesterday. Where do we get ~~it~~ ^{them} from?

And I got to find that out. So I decided our pacification would be, where there wasn't anybody from Saigon out there, we can send out an ^{unit of some sort} army team temporarily and let them try to run something and represent Saigon. At least they had radio communication with Saigon and they have some discipline and some sense of order. They have a headquarters in Saigon and so forth. So, the pacification campaign was, was, was getting army out. We had . . . as soon as we'd get some people into ^(supply?) position to supplant them and there weren't any roads around or anything that civilian rule could take place and the sooner the better on it. So . . . and there were several areas the Viet Minh were leaving they had under military ~~rule~~ control in the South, but it worked out at Geneva, and we'd have to send the army in to bring law and order into those areas, supplanting the Viet Minh pulling out. But there wasn't a civil service of any sort ^{there} that meant anything. And I had some of the Viet Minh had quit in great disgust (having) discovered that the Viet Minh were communist to their great horror and they were patriotic VNese, and they ^{had come} came in and tried to help Diem. ^{setting up.} And I started them training people to go out and get people to learn how to fend for themselves out in the provinces and districts. And I was running a big multiple operation. ^{like that.} This was all well on the way when I left. I don't know what happened to all these things afterwards. Uh, they were telling me that Diem had stopped elections in the towns. Well, that wasn't so. When I was there, that was the one thing we were trying . . . we had teams out teaching people how to run their own affairs in each town and each district and each province. I had veterans, a veterans' organization started, and I was begging them to get in and speak up to the government officials on what was needed in place and everything to give the people ^{voice} a choice. That apparently went by the boards. I don't know what happened.

I left it all on paper for people to follow through on and I left organizations intact and had the VNese working on it. I don't know whatever happened.

C: You left in '62?

L: No. I first left . . . it was in the 50s, the end of '58.

C: At that time do you think the Viet Minh or Viet Cong by now, actually, were they communist in order to achieve nationalist purposes or were . . .

L: ~~Yeah.~~ No

C: I don't know if I said that right. Were they using nationalism to achieve communist purposes . . .

L: That is correct.

C: Or were they using communism to achieve ^{nationalist purposes?} nationalism?

L: They were using nationalism to achieve communist purposes. And many nationalists joined in with them who were nationalists in feeling and then came . . . saw suddenly the communist disciplines and so forth get going and so a good nationalist who had done something for the country getting knocked out because they had done something that hurt the communists. ^{cause.} And uh, didn't like it and uh, were looking for something else. ^{And when} Diem came along, ^{he} He was truly a nationalist and he got these people on his side. And he was a much truer nationalist than Ho Chi Minh ever was. And that's why I was trying to tell Washington at the time, and I told all our dumb leaders here: I said, if you had an election today, you're telling me Ho Chi Minh is so well liked, the French are telling us that, and that is not true. I said, he beat the French but the French were hated out there for being French. And they're foreigners and I said Diem would win in a popularity contest hands down if it could be an honest vote. I don't

think anybody here believed me but I said that's true. But I used to wander around in civilian clothes out there and I'd get upcountry and kids'd throw rocks at me for being a dirty (illegible).

FA/ RU RU RU RU throwin rocks and thinking I was a lone Frenchman out someplace. I'd usually drive a French (END OF SIDE OF TAPE).