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# Unleashed: John Lindsay and the Vietnam War

Robert Zachary Sanzone

A Thesis in the Field of History

for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

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Abstract

This thesis examines New York City Mayor John Lindsay's calculated decision to side with the Vietnam anti-war movement as part of his re-election strategy in 1969 and how that stance influenced the pro-war movement's role in the Hardhat Riots in May of 1970. Through examining New York City-based newspapers, particularly the *Daily News,* and the *New York Times*, as well as other periodicals written at the time such as *Time Magazine*, the research focused specifically on Mayor John Lindsay's order to lower all American flags atop municipal buildings on October 15, 1969—Moratorium Day—and how the pro-war movement exploited that decision to further their own efforts to support President Richard Nixon's foreign policy. This thesis concludes that the pro-war movement exploited Lindsay's flag edict by manipulating his motive for issuing the order. Lindsay's edict enabled his enemies to consolidate support for Nixon and his Vietnam War policy in a way that undermined Lindsay's tenure, and emboldened the pro-war movement to take violent measures against those they saw as a threat to American values. It also made it easier for pro-war advocates to change the narrative in a way that made conservatives look and sound more positive and patriotic, which served to undercut the growing anti-war movement.

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This thesis is dedicated to my two biggest cheerleaders, my sister Kathryn, and my cousin Helen

“We don’t smoke marijuana in Muskogee
We don’t take no trips on LSD
We don’t burn no draft cards down on Main Street
We love living right, and being free”

-Merle Haggard, “Okie from Muskogee”

“Tin soldiers and Nixon’s comin’.
We’re finally on our own.
This summer I hear the drummin’.
Four dead in Ohio.”

-Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, “Four Dead in Ohio”

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# Introduction

This thesis aims to tell the story of how the political aspirations of a mayor exacerbated violent reactions to the anti-war movement in New York City. It is an analysis of New York City Mayor John Lindsay's role in Vietnam War-related protests that took place in New York City on October 15, 1969, also known as Moratorium Day, and its long-term effects on Vietnam War demonstrations, particularly the Hardhat Riots in May of 1970. My initial idea for this thesis focused on the hypothesis that the anti-war movement was much stronger because its members maintained a consistent message—which was to leave Vietnam—while American forces' inability to achieve a decisive victory challenged pro-war advocates to reconsider their position. I based this hypothesis on the U.S. military's inability to achieve a strategic victory in Vietnam by 1969 that drove more Americans to side with the anti-war movement as casualties increased. This failure not only reflected an unwillingness to appreciate their enemy's military capabilities, but an inability to accomplish their objectives. Despite these ongoing challenges, many Americans continued to support the war effort and argue that anti-war protestors were hindering President Nixon's efforts to bring the war to a dignified close.

The research questions based on this initial hypothesis focused on examining what the actions of pro and anti-war protestors on Moratorium Day revealed about sentiments concerning the Vietnam War in New York City, as well as what key events of the Vietnam War affected American despondency between 1965 and 1969. Other questions regarding how historians have discussed Americans' feelings about the

Vietnam War since 1969, and whether the Mets' 1969 World Series victory influenced Americans' feelings about the Vietnam War, were considered, but did not yield much information. Those questions did though, albeit inadvertently, lead me to focus more closely on New York City Mayor John Lindsay's participation in Moratorium Day activities and how that anti-war stance affected his tenure as mayor. Therefore, the focus of this thesis shifted away from my initial premise towards examining how pro-war advocates exploited Mayor Lindsay's support for Moratorium Day to build a strong coalition to counter future anti-war demonstrations in New York City by specifically focusing on his order to lower the flags to half-staff on the city's municipal buildings.

That change in focus led to the discovery of information giving additional insight into the decisions that President Richard Nixon made in 1969 and 1970 regarding the Vietnam War that can be traced to his fallout with Mayor Lindsay at the 1968 Republican National Convention. This discovery led to the conclusion that Nixon's decision not to choose Lindsay as a running mate in 1968 allowed Lindsay to take more liberal political positions including an intensified stance against the Vietnam War that helped in his re-election as New York City Mayor in 1969. While Nixon pursued plans to end the Vietnam War through what he called Vietnamization, or "peace with honor," Lindsay's anti-war stance incurred intense anger from Nixon's supporters who saw Lindsay as someone undermining the president while directly disrespecting the American flag by ordering that all city flags be flown at half-staff on Moratorium Day. This interpretation of Lindsay's order reflected a larger and more unifying idea among pro-war advocates who believed that anti-war rhetoric in any form was harmful to American society.[1] In

[1] Sandra Scanlon, *The Pro-War Movement: Domestic Support for the Vietnam War and the Making of Modern American Conservatism* (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 2013), 9.

their view, this order blatantly desecrated the very flag that many of them had fought for in World War II and the Korean War, suggesting that Lindsay supported a pro-Communist and anti-American movement. Their anger towards Lindsay for using the flag for what they saw as a political move concentrated itself into a violent response directed at anti-war protestors later in May of 1970 in the Wall Street district of the city known as the Hardhat Riots. These riots marked the culmination of resentment towards Mayor Lindsay, who for months had failed to anticipate his foes' responses to his agenda partly because he likely did not think they would employ such extreme measures in an effort to defeat him. While it is problematic to blame Lindsay for the methods his political opponents and constituents alike resorted to, Lindsay's repeated failures to anticipate how they would react to his policies, as well as his refusal to take them seriously, significantly obstructed his attempts to effectively implement many of his policies.

Overall, the research reached several conclusions. The success of the Moratorium Day demonstrations reflected strong planning and organization powered by a growing number of Americans' ever-increasing disillusionment with the war. Approximately two million people across the United States—250,000 in New York City alone—took part in Moratorium Day activities.[2] The organizers largely avoided hostile conflicts by taking into account previous demonstrations that had turned violent, like the 1968 Democratic National Convention. The demonstrations had broad appeal because they validated

[2] Derek Seidman, "Fifty Years Ago Today, US Soldiers Joined the Vietnam Moratorium Protests in Mass Numbers," October 15, 2019, https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/10/vietnam-war-moratorium-protest-gi-movement.

people with different views on the war. Moratorium Day also reflected widespread disapproval that signaled a shift in views on the war that were becoming increasingly difficult to justify or ignore.

In contrast to the anti-war demonstrations seen in New York City on Moratorium Day, pro-war counterdemonstrations throughout the city were small in number and largely appeared unstructured. Previous anti-war demonstrations did not reflect the level of focus and organization that Moratorium Day demonstrations did, suggesting that pro-war demonstrators were caught off guard because they had written the movement off as nothing more than a disorganized crusade that few respected. However, the success of Moratorium Day rattled pro-war demonstrators and forced them to reconsider their assessment of the anti-war movement. In general, pro-war demonstrators expressed their support through indirect means, such as driving with their car headlights on during the day in support of President Nixon, accusing anti-war demonstrators of not supporting American troops or showing adequate patriotism, and, in particular, flying American flags at full staff in defiance of New York City Mayor John Lindsay's order. More significantly though, Lindsay's order to lower the flags marked a turning point for pro-war demonstrators that would see their ranks grow and culminate into violent action against anti-war protestors in May of 1970.

Mayor Lindsay played an inadvertently significant role in the evolution of pro-war demonstrations. His decision to break with President Nixon in the wake of a fallout with the Republican Party at the 1968 Republican National Convention allowed him to embrace increasingly popular anti-war views that contributed to his re-election in 1969. Despite the positive result, Lindsay's decision to publicly oppose the Vietnam War not

only infuriated pro-war advocates, but his order to lower American flags to half-staff on top of city municipal buildings on Moratorium Day to honor the war dead suggested to pro-war advocates that he neither respected the American military nor President Nixon's efforts to bring the Vietnam War to a peaceful end. This justification resulted in counter demonstrations over ensuing months where American flags were used not only as symbols of unity, but as a means of verifying one's own patriotism in future clashes in anti-war demonstrations.

Contrary to my initial belief, the New York Mets' victory in the 1969 World Series did not significantly factor into a shift in public sentiment towards the Vietnam War. Nevertheless, the victory pacified New Yorkers' frustrations with the war, contributing, albeit nominally, to the success of Moratorium Day. It is unusual to think that a sports team could make so many people happy, but given the Mets' history, it is not difficult to see why they were so beloved. New York baseball fans who despised the Yankees were left with broken hearts when the New York Giants and Brooklyn Dodgers left the city in 1958. They had no real team to root for until the Mets' inception in 1962. Despite a 40-120 record in their first season of existence, New Yorkers, particularly in Queens and other parts of Long Island, loved them anyway, mainly because they were happy to have baseball back. When the Mets went from worst to first in 1969, New Yorkers rejoiced. Mayor Lindsay's decision to attend a number of Mets' playoff games and publicly identify as a fan significantly contributed to, if not became, the deciding factor in, his re-election as mayor of New York City in 1969. David Halberstam said as much following the Mets' victory: "I think it probably helped the Mayor. The Mets'

victory stayed with people longer. It was such a complete surprise."[3] It would mark his resurgence as a viable mayoral candidate that not only made him worthy of re-election but frustrated his rivals who had all but written him off.

The success of Moratorium Day, followed by the New York Mets' World Series victory over the Baltimore Orioles the following day and the withdrawal of American troops already in progress as part of President Nixon's Vietnamization plan, challenged pro-war advocates in their efforts to counter the Moratorium Day demonstrations. Supporters of the war could no longer point to examples of violence or disorganization on Moratorium Day like they had with the 1968 Democratic National Convention to argue that the demonstrations were ineffective and disorganized. Moreover, the Mets' victory temporarily neutralized anger and frustration with the war's progress. "Total strangers embraced. Construction workers cheered from on high, amid the bare bones of new buildings. Cars stopped in traffic were rocked by passersby," while Queens Borough President Sidney Leviss proclaimed, "Joy reigns triumphant in Metsville."[4] These factors significantly challenged pro-war advocates in their efforts to counter Moratorium Day demonstrations.

While pro-war demonstrations on Moratorium Day seemed small and insignificant, the exploitation of Mayor Lindsay's flag order worked to their advantage through counterdemonstrations going into 1970, specifically the Hardhat Riots that took place in May of that year. The Hardhat Riots saw hundreds of blue-collar pro-war

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[3] Art Shamsky and Barry Zeman, *The Magnificent Seasons: How the Jets, Mets, and Knicks Made Sports History and Uplifted a City and the Country* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), 188.

[4] The Associated Press, "New York Erupts Over Mets," *Boston Globe*, October 17, 1969, 1.

advocates savagely attacked anti-war demonstrators in the Wall Street section of New York City. Many of these pro-war advocates saw the Hardhat Riots as their chance for redemption after feeling nothing but anger and humiliation in the wake of Moratorium Day. They set their sights on anyone whom they felt disrespected America. They expressed their pro-war sentiments by carrying American flags, as well as plastering them on their hard hats—many of them were construction workers that were building the new World Trade Center. By focusing on Lindsay's edict to fly flags at half-staff on Moratorium Day, pro-war advocates identified an issue that they could exploit to their advantage while stoking strong feelings in those who sympathized with them. Lindsay's flag order served as a sort of dog whistle that made pro-war advocates rise up in support of Nixon while simultaneously taking advantage of opportunities to both physically and politically strike back at anti-war demonstrators. These riots, which appealed more to emotion than to reason, not only gave pro-war advocates a significant voice in the debate about withdrawal from Vietnam, but after expressing support for the hardhat rioters, boosted President Nixon's credibility, which had been waning in recent months due to the slow progress of Vietnamization.

# Chapter I

In order to understand Mayor Lindsay's actions on Moratorium Day and the effects it had on the pro-war movement in subsequent months, it is important to understand the causes and effects of the challenges that the United States faced in Vietnam. The origins of America's involvement start with what President Dwight D. Eisenhower described as the Domino Theory, a hypothesis that if one country in Indochina fell to Communism, other countries in the region would follow. Eisenhower used this theory to justify American intervention in Indochina. This idea appealed to scores of men and women who contributed to the United States' victory over the Axis Powers in World War II as well as the Korean War and felt duty-bound to support American intervention in the name of halting Communism. These same people stressed the idea that the United States had never lost a war and was not about to lose in Vietnam. Many of their children, however, saw the Vietnam War as nothing more than a civil war in which the United States had no business being involved. As the war progressed though, they started to argue that American had already lost the war.[5]

[5] I believe in the idea that the United States' loss of the Vietnam War has contributed to scholars' perceived lack of attention to the history of the pro-war movement. Historian Mark Moyar argues that, "During the 1960s and 1970s, huge numbers of antiwar Americans entered academia and the media, while few Vietnam veterans and other supporters of the war obtained jobs in those professions, in many cases because veteran status or pro-war sentiments were considered unacceptable. As a result, most academic and journalistic accounts of the war written during and shortly afterwards depicted Vietnam as a bad war that the United States should not have fought." While Moyar's scholarship may not be held in high regard in certain academic circles, examining his work forced me to think more critically about my own scholarship. For me, reading his work forced me to think about whether I truly believed in my own ideas, or if I was only echoing/agreeing with more widely respected scholarship. In other words, while I do not completely respect Moyar's work, he did force me to reconsider my own viewpoints against his, and that exercise allowed me to think more clearly about why I reached certain conclusions in my work on this subject. I believe that it is important to at least consider viewpoints like Moyar's, if only to force ourselves to reexamine our own scholarship. Mark Moyar, "Vietnam: Historians at

The United States initially assumed that its presence alone in Vietnam would dissuade the North Vietnamese from continuing their campaign to unite with South Vietnam under Communism. This approach's ineffectiveness became evident by 1967 when, despite spending $2 billion a month on the war and amassing nearly 500,000 troops in the region, U.S. forces failed to make progress towards defeating the North Vietnamese as they had intended.[6] Setbacks were numerous. Corruption within the South Vietnamese government and military disrupted progress.[7] Growing dependence on American economic aid stalled autonomous growth.[8] These factors contributed to the ineffectiveness of creating a working government and military in South Vietnam.[9]

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War," *Academic Questions* 21, no. 1 (Spring 2018), https://www.nas.org/academic-questions/21/1/vietnam_historians_at_war. Other historians like Christian Appy argue that scholars who echo President Ronald Reagan's claim that the Vietnam War was a "noble cause" lack standing partly because "…it depends on counterfactual claims that victory would have been achieved if only the United States had extended its support of Diem…tried a different military strategy, or done a better job winning hearts and minds." Christian Appy, "What Was the Vietnam War About?," *New York Times*, March 26, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/26/opinion/what-was-the-vietnam-war-about.html.

[6] American military forces had developed a somewhat superior attitude following their victory over the Axis Powers in World War II; this was a level of confidence that North Vietnamese forces would challenge after vanquishing French forces in 1954. Long before the defeat of the French, American journalist David Schoenbrun asked Vietnamese revolutionary Ho Chi Minh, who had dedicated his life to creating a free Vietnam, how he intended to wage war against the French without efficient weapons. "How can you hope to wage war with the French?" Schoenbrun asked. Ho replied, "It will be a war between an elephant and a tiger. If the tiger ever stands still the elephant will crush him with his mighty tusks. But the tiger does not stand still. He lurks in the jungle by day and emerges only at night. He will leap upon the back of the elephant, tearing huge chunks from his hide, and then he will leap back into the dark jungle. And slowly the elephant will bleed to death. That will be the war of Indochina." The North Vietnamese would take the same approach against American forces. Fredrik Logevall, *Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 2014), 143–144.

[7] George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 5th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2014), 113.

[8] Herring, *America's Longest War,* 75-76.

[9] Herring, *America's Longest War,* 178.

Meanwhile, North Vietnamese forces amassed enough manpower to maintain a balanced ratio of North Vietnamese to American soldiers to maintain a resilient military front. Since American forces were fighting in a foreign country that they did not know well, North Vietnamese, joined by Viet Cong forces (South Vietnamese forces sympathetic to the North) were able to choose their own ground on which to engage American troops, often resulting in ambushes that made it easy to disappear as quickly as they appeared.[10] Additionally, the North Vietnamese succeeded in winning the hearts and minds of the people of Vietnam, both North and South, who saw the Americans as they had seen the French before them: colonial occupants intent on ruling over them. For many North Vietnamese, they could only choose between total victory or death.[11]

In January of 1968, North Vietnamese forces launched the Tet Offensive, a series of surprise attacks against American and A.R.V.N. (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) forces in South Vietnam. While the offensive ended in strategic failure for the North Vietnamese, who thought the people of South Vietnam would rise up and join them, the Tet Offensive forced Americans to recognize that the North Vietnamese were much stronger than they initially assumed. The Tet Offensive was the final straw for many weary Americans, despite President Johnson's and military leaders' assertions that they were winning. In fact, journalist Walter Cronkite traveled to Vietnam to investigate the

[10] Herring, *America's Longest War,* 161.

[11] Former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara discussed this idea in his book *In Retrospect* by stating, "We underestimated the power of nationalism to motivate a people (in this case, the North Vietnamese and Vietcong), to fight and die for their beliefs and values—and we continue to do so today in many parts of the world."
Robert S. McNamara and Brian VanDeMark, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Times Books, 1995), 322.

causes and effects of the Tet Offensive. After returning to the United States, Cronkite shared his assessment with America by stating,

> For it seems now more certain than ever that the bloody experience of Vietnam is to end in a stalemate…it is increasingly clear to this reporter that the only rational way out then will be to negotiate, not as victors, but as an honorable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy and did the best they could.[12]

Cronkite's assessment all but single-handedly eradicated America's remaining patience with the war. After listening to Cronkite's words, President Johnson responded, "If I've lost Cronkite, I've lost Middle America."[13] The Tet Offensive was not the only event of the Vietnam War that weighed on Americans.

In March of 1968, about 100 U.S. Army soldiers entered the village of My Lai in South Vietnam and massacred over 500 men, women, and children. The soldiers initially justified the killings by arguing that the villagers were aiding the enemy. Over time, though, a complex story involving orders from top military officers, mixed with a desire to exact revenge for their own war dead, emerged through the reporting of independent journalist Seymour Hersh. Outrage grew when out of the twenty-six soldiers charged with war crimes, the court convicted only one, Lieutenant William Calley Jr. These divisive events exacerbated the anger and frustrations Americans already had with the Vietnam War. American forces' inability to achieve a strategic victory, combined with events like the Tet Offensive and the My Lai Massacre, contributed heavily to Americans' disillusionment with the war, which by 1968 had reached a boiling point. Given his role in the war, which he had overseen since November of 1963 after ascending

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[12] Douglas Brinkley, *Cronkite* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), 378.

[13] Robert Dallek, *Flawed Giant: Lyndon Johnson and His Times 1961-1973* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998), 506.

to the presidency after President John F. Kennedy's assassination, President Lyndon Johnson faced stiff competition in the 1968 presidential election, particularly within his own party.

In the New Hampshire Democratic primary in March of that year, anti-war Senator Eugene McCarthy captured 42 percent of the vote to Johnson's 49 percent numbers that were strongly indicative of Johnson's declining popularity. The growing animosity towards his foreign policies—particularly Vietnam—as well as his domestic policies, led Johnson to announce in late March that he would not run for another term. His vice president, Hubert Humphrey, would take his place despite opposition from anti-war Democrats who felt that voters would see Humphrey as an extension of Johnson, which would lead to his defeat.

Days after Johnson announced that he would not run again, assassins struck down Martin Luther King Jr., a critic of the Vietnam War, followed by Senator Robert F. Kennedy, another war critic and presidential candidate in 1968 later that June. King had turned against the war in recent years, contributing to the declining support for the war from the African American community, particularly because the war subjected African American servicepeople to greater casualty rates in the Vietnam War.[14] Kennedy's assassination brought back bitter memories of his brother's assassination in Dallas only

[14] "The Vietnam War saw the highest proportion of African Americans ever to serve in an American war. There was a marked turnaround from the attitude in previous wars that black men were not fit for combat - during the Vietnam War African Americans faced a much greater chance of being on the front-line, and consequently a much higher casualty rate. In 1965 alone African Americans represented almost 25 percent of those killed in action." Oregon Public Broadcasting, "History Detectives: African-Americans In Combat," PBS: History Detectives Special Investigations, last updated 2014, http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/feature/african-americans-in-combat/.

five years earlier, worsening Americans' already strained confidence in the American government. These assassinations, combined with dueling interpretations of America's involvement in Vietnam, intensified into large-scale protests and demonstrations. Anti-war protestors clashed violently with police, marring the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago (DNC) that sent 101 civilians to local hospitals for various injuries. [15] The trial of the Chicago Seven also contributed to the bedlam. Seven anti-war demonstrators named Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, David Dellinger, Tom Hayden, Rennie Davis, John Froines, and Lee Weiner, were all placed on trial for conspiracy and rioting, among other charges in connection to the violent unrest that took place during the 1968 DNC in Chicago, Illinois. These seven people became the face of the anti-war movement not only for their dedication towards ending the war, but also for their willingness to meet their aggressors' level of violence.

For many voters, the riots and the Democratic infighting that saw McCarthy withhold his endorsement of Humphrey seemed only to validate Republican opinion that the Democratic Party could no longer implement effective foreign and domestic policy. The Republicans, who nominated former vice president Richard Nixon for president, seemed poised to win the presidency in 1968. While Nixon felt confident that he could win the election, he knew part of that success would hinge on whom he picked as a running mate.

Republican officials at the 1968 Republican National Convention floated Mayor John Lindsay's name as a possible vice-presidential candidate. While he did not oppose the idea, Lindsay made it clear that he would want to craft his own independent positions

[15] Daniel Walker, *Rights in Conflict,* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1968), 353.

on certain issues regardless of whether Nixon agreed with them, effectively torpedoing any chances of Nixon naming him to the ticket. When Nixon asked Lindsay to give the speech seconding Maryland governor Spiro Agnew's nomination for vice president in exchange for permission to buy the Brooklyn Naval Yards at a reduced cost if he won (which he would eventually procure after the election), Lindsay accepted the offer. But between his lukewarm endorsement of Agnew—he mentioned Agnew's name only three times in his seconding speech—and a growing rift between the liberal and conservative groups on the convention floor, Nixon's Republican party began to shift its support away from Lindsay.[16] This pivot did not initially bode well for Lindsay. Nixon won the 1968 presidential election by beating Hubert Humphrey, a win that seemingly put distance between Lindsay and the Republican party. In the wake of Lindsay's primary defeat a few months later, Nixon aide Pat Buchannan boasted that not only would the Republican party "witness the unveiling of the true John V. Lindsay" because he would no longer have to appease his Republican constituents, but that "Lindsay's advisers and the mayor himself are now *unleashed* to go where their predilections would lead them—and that is to the left…anti-Vietnam…"[17] For Lindsay, this break with Nixon Republicans freed him from any further obligation to the Republican Party, which meant that he could pursue a more liberal agenda of his own that included amplifying his opposition to the war. Unfortunately for Lindsay, this also marked another instance where Lindsay either did not carefully consider how Nixon would retaliate against him, or believed that Nixon

[16] Vincent J. Cannato, *The Ungovernable City: John Lindsay and His Struggle to Save New York* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 384.

[17] Cannato, *Ungovernable City,* 414.

could not, or would not, do anything to harm a fellow Republican. This level of imprudence often accompanied an inability, or refusal, to anticipate how his foes could hurt him politically in the future.

Although Lindsay had voted for the Gulf of Tonkin resolution as a Republican congressman from New York, his criticism of the United States' role in Vietnam had grown after his mayoral election in 1965. Lindsay's criticism of the Vietnam War during his first term as mayor did not intensify until 1969. Nevertheless, it hurt his relationship with the Republican Party in the aftermath of his fallout with Nixon in 1968. In 1965, he called Vietnam "probably the most unwanted war in this country's history" at a commencement speech at Michigan's Oakland University. That same year, when questioned about his position on Vietnam, Lindsay replied, "Negotiate," and "Get out if we can." This rhetoric got buried under an avalanche of challenges that plagued Lindsay's first term as mayor.[18]

Building a relationship with the city's union leaders marked Lindsay's first order of business after taking office. Unlike his predecessor, Robert Wagner, Lindsay did not like how union leaders and city politicians alike exchanged personal and political favors. Lindsay also did not like the dinners and cocktail parties that union leaders came to expect at Gracie Mansion, the mayor's residence in Manhattan. Lindsay focused on less political and more honest approaches to meeting with such leaders, ones with back-slapping and socializing, an approach that only exacerbated the already dim view they had of Lindsay. In June of 1968, a nine-day sanitation strike resulted in garbage piling up in the streets, some of which caught fire while debris from other piles blew into the

[18] Cannato, *Ungovernable City*, 45-46.

streets, creating the image of a filthy city. February of 1969 brought a major snowstorm that crippled parts of the city, particularly Queens, where streets remained unplowed a week after the storm. Lindsay's emotional outbursts only hurt his image, as well as his re-election chances. While inspecting storm damage in the Fresh Meadows part of Queens, a local told Lindsay he was "a wonderful man," at which Lindsay replied, "And you're a wonderful woman, not like those fat Jewish broads up there," pointing to a group of women who had just criticized him.[19] This comment marked the latest in a string of gaffes Lindsay had made to constituents during his first time. Already angry at Lindsay for his belief that "no particular ethnic group owns any particular job," white constituents took it upon themselves to confront the mayor about his views on race relations.[20] In one incident, Lindsay was touring the predominantly white borough of Brooklyn where a resident asked why taxes paid by white people were being spent on black neighborhoods, to which Lindsay replied, "We have three hundred years of neglect to pay for."[21] These gaffes contributed to Lindsay's defeat in the Republican mayoral primary in 1969. Resentment from white New Yorkers, combined with his all-but-ruined reputation within the Republican Party and trailing the Democratic and Republican mayoral candidates in the polls, few gave Lindsay a fighting chance for re-election as the now third-party candidate for the New York Liberal Party; he had lost the Republican mayoral primary.

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[19] Sewell Chan, "Remembering a Snowstorm that Paralyzed the City," *City Room* (blog), *New York Times*, February 10, 2009, https://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/02/10/remembering-a-snowstorm-that-paralyzed-the-city/.

[20] Joseph P. Viteritti, *Summer in the City: John Lindsay, New York, and the American Dream* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2014), 48.

[21] Viteritti, *Summer in the City*, 48.

As part of his long shot plans to get reelected, Lindsay decided that it was time to get more aggressive about his views on the Vietnam War.

Sensing a shift in public sentiment against the Vietnam War, Lindsay decided to take full advantage and come out against the war. In his mind, he had little to lose and a lot to gain. Most had already written him off as a possible winner, so why not intensify his stances on liberal policies, especially if it could help him win re-election? If he lost, then no one would be surprised. If he won, it would be seen as a classic come-from-behind victory that would not only buy him four more years as mayor of the biggest city in America but would rebuff those in the Republican Party who had turned on him. His staff got to work right away on recreating Lindsay's image.

In radio ads, Lindsay alleged that New Yorkers sent $3 billion a year towards the war and another $6 billion towards the military apparatus, which Lindsay claimed exceeded the city's budget. He punctuated each political ad with the message: "…we are not only sending them our money, we're sending them our sons."[22] By making the Vietnam War a larger part of his re-election efforts, Lindsay effectively forced his opponents to respond with their own views on the war, which they knew would not only complicate their own efforts to win but make the war itself a central point of focus during a time when the Republican Party was desperate to sustain foreign policy support.

Although Lindsay's criticism of the war appealed to many New Yorkers, his campaign staff knew that they still faced a stiff, uphill battle that would include having to make Lindsay seem like someone who could easily relate to blue-collar New Yorkers. This was no easy task, especially after the insensitive comments he had made towards

[22] Cannato, *Ungovernable City*, 421.

New Yorkers whose support he would need in the coming months. When the New York Mets made the playoffs in the fall of 1969, Lindsay's staff saw an opportunity. On October 6th, with the election a month away, Lindsay's staff insisted that he attend Game Three of the 1969 National League Championship Series at Shea Stadium in Queens, their first home game of the series, under the logic that a Mets victory would make Lindsay look successful by association and boost his chances for re-election. If Lindsay's campaign could succeed in making him look like an average Joe rooting for the Mets at Shea Stadium like many middle-class New Yorkers, he would have a fighting chance. One problem remained though.

John Lindsay hated baseball.

The Mets had finished in last place in five of the seven seasons of their existence with the exception of second-to-last place finishes in 1966 and 1968, when former Brooklyn Dodger Gil Hodges took the helm. Hodges, a World War II veteran and decorated former Marine, transformed the Mets from a worst-to-first team that stunned the baseball world when he led the team to the playoffs in 1969, much to the tremendous joy of Mets fans everywhere. On that particular night, over 50,000 fans cheering on the Mets at Shea Stadium were having the time of their lives—except for one. At the end of every inning, an impatient Mayor Lindsay would once again ask his staff if he could finally leave. When the Mets won the game—and the pennant—by a 7-4 score thanks to the superb pitching of a young right-hander named Nolan Ryan, Lindsay's staff rushed him into the clubhouse to congratulate the Mets where he celebrated with the rest of the team. The following morning's newspapers included a photo of Mets players Jerry Grote

and Ron Gaspar dousing the mayor with celebratory champagne, marking his resurrection as a serious mayoral contender. “And in that moment,” CBS News political correspondent Jeff Greenfield writes, “the aristocratic, tennis-playing sailboat-loving mayor became one of the guys.”[23]

While Lindsay navigated his way through the daily challenges that New York City presented to him, protests against the Vietnam War had continued during President Nixon’s first year in office, especially as Americans started to wonder if he could actually end the war peacefully. By October of 1969, a Gallup poll showed that only 32 percent of American approved of American involvement in Vietnam, a 29 percent drop from an all-time high of 61 percent in 1965, and a 7 percent drop from 39 percent in February of 1969, a month after Nixon took office. Additionally, in a Gallup poll in the October of 1969, 58 percent of respondents felt that the United States’ entry into the Vietnam War had been a mistake. Nixon knew he would have to take significant action if he wanted to avoid the same fate as his predecessor: a failed wartime president.[24]

In June of 1969 at Midway Island, President Nixon and South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu announced a phased transfer of all military responsibility to the South Vietnamese called Vietnamization. This plan called for South Vietnamese forces to take the place of American forces as they began withdrawing from Vietnam.[25]

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[23] Jeff Greenfield, “The Second Toughest Job,” in *America's Mayor: John V. Lindsay and the Reinvention of New York*, ed. Sam Roberts (New York: Museum of the City of New York, 2010), 168.

[24] Unknown, “1965-71: Gallup Polls on Vietnam Popularity,” accessed December 3, 2020, https://bcboychronicles.blogspot.com/2017/02/1965-71-gallup-polls-on-vietnam.html.

[25] Richard Nixon Foundation, “President Nixon and President Thieu Meet at Midway Island, June 8, 1969," Richard Nixon Foundation, June 8, 2019, accessed Dec. 10, 2020,

Defense Secretary Melvin Laird supported this policy, arguing that increasing military aid to South Vietnam while withdrawing troops would lead the American public to think that that U.S. forces were finally leaving Vietnam. This approach would satisfy those who were growing weary of the war while giving Nixon time for Vietnamization to show progress.[26]

Historian Robert Dallek notes that Henry Kissinger, Nixon's National Security Advisor, criticized the plan, arguing that if Nixon started bringing more troops home it would become something that Americans would expect on a regular basis. This approach would not only complicate Nixon's relationship with both pro-and anti-war advocates but would further entice Hanoi to wait until U.S. forces had withdrawn completely before resuming with their own objectives to take over South Vietnam. Alternatively, Kissinger suggested a devastating escalation of the war called "Duck Hook" that included the threat of using nuclear weapons, all the while continuing negotiations with the North Vietnamese in Paris and pausing Vietnamization. While Nixon liked the idea, his military advisors said that Duck Hook would not be much more effective than their previous efforts. In fact, it could lead to a collapse of domestic support and hurt relations with both Saigon and Hanoi. However, Kissinger continued to press Nixon, arguing that he still needed a plan to end the war; withdrawing troops would not be enough.

In Nixon's view, both Vietnamization and Duck Hook were plausible ideas, but they came with their own set of risks. If Nixon withdrew troops too quickly and the aid

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https://www.nixonfoundation.org/2014/06/ president-nixon-president-thieu-meet-midway-island-june-8-1969/.

[26] Herring, *America's Longest War,* 288.

sent to South Vietnam proved ineffective, remaining troops would have to pick up the slack, putting them in even more danger. Moreover, despite its promise of "peace with honor," General Creighton Adams, Commander of U.S. Military Assistance Command in Vietnam, called Vietnamization a "slow surrender," expressing his frustration with troop reductions.[27] Duck Hook had the potential to backfire and further increase resentment towards the war. Additionally, the dedication with which the North Vietnamese fought made it questionable whether the firepower that Duck Hook called for would force them into submission. Meanwhile, plans took shape for nationwide demonstrations that Nixon saw as a threat to peace negotiations because they communicated to the North Vietnamese that Americans were growing impatient with the war. The North Vietnamese saw those demonstrations as a promising sign that they would not have to wait much longer before American forces withdrew entirely.

Publicly, Nixon did not express concern about the planned demonstrations. Privately though, he made efforts to undermine them. White House Chief of Staff Bob Haldeman pressured TV networks to triple the number of those opposed to the Moratorium so that anti-war demonstrations would look like a failure in comparison.[28] "After eight months of trying to quiet dissent and convince war opponents that the best way to exit Vietnam was through uncritical support of the White House," Dallek writes, "Nixon and Kissinger faced stubborn and growing antagonism."[29] Additionally,

[27] Herring, *America's Longest War*, 291.

[28] Robert Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009), 160.

[29] Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger*, 160.

historian George Herring argues that Nixon and Kissinger "shared a certain disdain for democracy, equating dissent with treason and carrying to extremes the Cold War dogma that national security was too important to be left to an ignorant public..."[30] Nixon and Kissinger focused more on bringing an end to the war through their own efforts than they did on listening to alternative ideas from people they saw as adversaries. The day before Moratorium Day, the White House, through Vice President Agnew, called upon the moratorium's organizers to reject North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong's expression of support for the demonstrations. Shortly after meeting with Nixon that same day, Agnew called Pham's letter a "shocking intrusion into the affairs of the American people" and said that supporters of the moratorium were "chargeable with the knowledge of this letter."[31] While the moratorium's organizers did not respond directly to Agnew's rebuke, they did say, "It is regrettable the Administration would seize this straw in an attempt to discredit the patriotism of the millions of Americans who sincerely desire peace."[32] While Nixon likely found it personally challenging not to directly address the moratorium's organizers, he did tell Democratic House leaders John McCormack and Carl Albert that he would not let "street demonstrations" influence national policy because he said it would reflect a "mob rule" victory.[33]

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[30] Herring, *America's Longest War,* 278.

[31] James M. Naughton, "Nixon Challenges Protest Leaders," *New York Times,* Oct. 15, 1969, 16.

[32] Naughton, "Nixon Challenges," 16.

[33] Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger,* 161.

The demonstrations, which came to be known as Moratorium Day were the brainchild of two men, Jerome Grossman, an envelope maker and active participant in the peace movement, and Sam Brown, a former Harvard Divinity School student. Grossman's initial idea only included college students and focused on disrupting economic trade as a means of protest—a strike—but Brown persuaded him to focus on making it a day dedicated to discussing the war itself. Brown felt that a "strike" would be too confrontational and pushed for a moratorium instead.[34] "[The leaders] appealed to almost anyone unhappy with the war, shunning extremists and avoiding ideological factionalism," a problematic faction that contributed to the unrest at the 1968 Democratic National Convention.[35] This approach allowed for broader appeal to just about anyone dissatisfied with the Vietnam War; the organizers knew they had to take a different and less confrontational approach to expressing their anti-war views. Other strategic decisions made by Brown included scheduling Moratorium Day for October, because more college students would be back on campus, which would make it easier for them to organize in groups. Scheduling a moratorium for October also gave more time for people's dissatisfaction with Nixon's "cautious pace" to grow.[36] Anything short of a perfect plan for Vietnam from the Nixon Administration would boost people's participation in Moratorium Day demonstrations.

The media eventually began to notice of the amount of time and energy going into Moratorium Day planning, as well as its already-visible effects. More Americans who

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[34] David E. Rosenbaum, "The Moratorium Organizers: Cluttered Precision," *New York Times*, Oct.10, 1969, 12.

[35] "Strike against the War," *Time*, October 17, 1969, 18.

[36] "Strike against the War," 18.

identified as "hawks," or people who supported the war, were sharing the same sentiments as "doves," or those who were against the war in that they both wanted to see the war end. A growing number of people who had initially supported the war were growing tired of the slow, if not complete lack of progress, being made in Vietnam and started to believe that the U.S. military should either win the war or leave. They were also dissatisfied with Nixon's now-public belief that military victory was no longer possible.[37] As of 1966, Nixon believed that military victory in Vietnam was unachievable and that the president had a responsibility to end the war on suitable terms.[38] While Vietnamization appealed to Americans because it signaled the start of troop withdrawal, anti-war advocates were quick to point out that Nixon's initial withdrawal of 25,000 troops was not as significant as it looked. After considering that there were over 500,000 troops in Vietnam, a phased withdrawal of 25,000 troops at a time in a fixed timetable would mean that troops would still be there for the next nine years.[39] While the debate as to whether U.S. forces should withdraw immediately or gradually continued to challenge people within the anti-war community, the fact that people who had initially supported the war were finding common ground with those who were against the war signaled that not only was the anti-war movement growing stronger, but its focused efforts resonated with more Americans. In anticipation of Moratorium Day, the *New York Times'* John Finney wrote, "What started as just a campus movement now shows signs of ballooning

[37] John Finney, "Congress Reacts to the Rising Chorus of Vietnam Dissent," *New York Times*, Oct. 12, 1969, 219.

[38] Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and Fracturing of America* (New York: Scribner, 2008), 419.

[39] Perlstein, *Nixonland,* 418.

into a nationwide 'moratorium' this Wednesday that may become the greatest public outcry again a war since Mark Twain, at the turn of the century, rallied politicians and Boston intellectuals against American suppression of the Philippine insurrection [*sic*]."[40]

In an effort to show support for the anti-war movement, two days before the scheduled demonstration, Mayor Lindsay announced that purple bunting would drape City Hall, the city's municipal buildings would lower their flags to half-staff at noon, and he asked that New Yorkers remember the city's war dead when church bells tolled hourly. He called Moratorium Day,

> a day of mourning for those who have died…a day of hope that the work of death and destruction can be turned to the work of sustenance, and…a day of conscience…when every New Yorker may search the depth of his own soul and join with his friends and colleagues to pause and mark what has happened in Vietnam and what has happened in our own country.[41]

Not everyone appreciated Lindsay's gestures. Members of veterans' organizations, along with New York City police and firemen, immediately affirmed that they would fly their flags full staffed, as well as drive with their headlights on during the day as their way of showing support for President Nixon. Conservatives and pro-war advocates often relied on veterans' groups like the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) to encourage patriotic support of those serving their country.[42] Historian Sandra Scanlon contends that "Pro-Vietnam activists understood that employing patriotic campaigns

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[40] John Finney, "Congress Reacts to the Rising Chorus of Vietnam Dissent," *New York Times*, Oct. 12, 1969, 219.

[41] Linda Charlton, "Day of Observance Here Declared by Lindsay," *New York Times*, Oct. 13, 1969, 1.

[42] Scanlon, *Pro-War Movement*, 189.

could prove more powerful than more intellectual rationales for engaging in Vietnam."[43] It is not surprising that veterans' organizations that were largely made up of World War II and Korean War veterans were the ones who pushed support for Nixon. They probably not only shared Nixon's vehement anti-communist views, but also saw anti-war protestors as Nixon saw them: draft-dodging kids who did not appreciate what America stood for. Although the First Amendment of the Constitution guaranteed anti-war demonstrators' right to protest, Nixon and veterans' organizations alike did not seem to respect the rights of anyone who dissented from their own closely held views on the war. Nixon himself said that the "agitation was undercutting his efforts for an honorable peace."[44] The American Legion called the Mayor's action "indefensible, reprehensible and outrageous…a capitulation to the enemy" while the Uniformed Firefighters Association refused to participate in what they called a "day of national disgrace."[45] The Police Benevolent Association (PBA) went a step further by calling on all precincts to keep their flags at full staff. "We take offense to anyone, including the Mayor, who would place us in this position," said P.B.A. president Edward Kiernan.[46] Korean War

[43] Scanlon, *Pro-War Movement,* 55.

[44] Homer Bigart, "Massive Protest on Vietnam War Expected Today," *New York Times,* Oct. 15, 1969, 1.

[45] Bigart, "Massive Protest," 16.

[46] Kiernan was clearly angry with Mayor Lindsay's order to lower the flags, but it is what he ordered law enforcement officers to do that is particularly revealing. In the same article, Kiernan is quoted as having instructed "all men who are working the several moratorium rallies to wear steel helmets and carry nightsticks to protect their lives and limbs." While Kiernan was probably not anticipating a large-scale riot, especially since the moratorium was being advertised as a peaceful event, it is easy to see his order to wear steel helmets as a prelude to the Hardhat Riots that would erupt later in May 1970. William Federici, "Cops, UFA Defy Mayor on the Flag," *Daily News* (New York), Oct. 15, 1969, 3, 30.

veteran and Uniformed Firefighters Association President, Michael Maye, a Lindsay foe and former boxer who won several Golden Gloves, loved irritating his adversaries during meetings by lighting one match after another.[47] In response to Mayor Lindsay's order to fly flags at half-staff, Maye told the city's 14,000 firemen, "No individual has a right to order us to participate in this voluntary day of national disgrace."[48] J. Milton Patrick, the national commander of the American Legion blasted the decision to fly the flags at half-staff by arguing that only the president could issue such an order. While Patrick did not mention Lindsay by name, he did say that "'some public officials' had tried to turn the Vietnam War into a 'political football.'"[49] Charles Carpenter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars also stated that, "Frankly, we are sick and tired of listening to a very vocal minority undermining the bargaining position of our president."[50] City Councilman Matthew Troy Jr. went so far as to climb to the roof of City Hall on Moratorium Day and hoist the flag back to full staff where it stayed until Mayor Lindsay found out about it and ordered it lowered again.[51] Despite the criticism that pro-war advocates lobbed at Lindsay from all angles, as he left City Hall to attend the World Series, he told the press, "This

[47] Douglas Martin, "Michael J. Maye, 82, Scrappy Leader of Firefighters' Union in Tense Era, Dies.," *The New York Times*, February 26, 2013, p. 23, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/26/nyregion/michael-j-maye-82-dies-scrappy-leader-of-firefighters-union.html.

[48] William Federici, "Cops, UFA Defy Mayor on the Flag," *Daily News* (New York), Oct. 15, 1969, 3.

[49] United Press International (UPI), "Legion Leader Assails Order for Half-Staff," *Daily News* (New York), Oct. 15, 1969, 31.

[50] UPI, "Legion Leader," 31.

[51] William Federici, "Mostly, the Flag Comes Out on Top," *Daily News* (New York), Oct.16, 1969, 5.

moratorium is a peaceful thing, prayerful in manner, to protest this war. This is a day of national remembrance of the war dead…."[52]

Lindsay's opponents in the mayoral race naturally disagreed. Republican Conservative state senator John J. Marchi said that supporting a nationwide demonstration undermined President Nixon's effort to achieve peace with honor. He also expressed disapproval with Lindsay's plans to lower the flags to half-staff, arguing that Americans should fly them at full staff instead so they could express their support for the president. He added that an immediate pullout of U.S. troops would be a betrayal and lead to Vietnamese enslavement. City Controller Mario A. Procaccino, the Democratic and Non-Partisan candidate for mayor, accused Lindsay of using the Vietnam War as a distraction to conceal campaign problems.[53] Many New Yorkers certainly agreed with Marchi and Procaccino because their views resonated with World War II and Korean War veterans—wars they had fought in to stop the spread of fascism and Communism. In their minds, those who opposed the war in Vietnam did not understand Nixon's objective: stop the spread of Communism. They thought anti-war demonstrators did not believe, or even care, about the threat that something like Communism posed to the world. Despite the unlikelihood of Communism's spread to America, the principle of the matter agitated older conservative Americans. How could younger Americans opposed to the Vietnam War not understand that what they were advocating would result in the spread of Communism? For younger Americans though, the measures that were being taken to halt

[52] Homer Bigart, "Massive Protest on Vietnam War Expected Today," *New York Times*, Oct. 15, 1969, 16.

[53] Homer Bigart, "Lindsay's Rivals Score Him on War," *New York Times*, Oct. 14, 1969, 24.

the spread of Communism overshadowed the idea itself. These sentiments revealed themselves in confrontations between opposing groups. The day before Mayor Lindsay announced his plans for the city to observe Moratorium Day, Senator Marchi visited Brooklyn to campaign. Many people in the largely white, lower middle-class neighborhoods were happy to see him, that is, except for two bearded youths.

"You should have talks about this war and demand that Nixon end it, the way we're doing [with the Moratorium]," one of the youths told Marchi.

"You think talk's going to end the war?" Marchi replied.

"You think hiding in a church is going to end it?" the youth replied.

"If you pray, maybe it will," replied City Councilman Vito Battista, who had accompanied Marchi into Brooklyn that day. As Marchi and his group walked away, the two youths started chanting, "Yeah, kill a Commie for Christ…Kill a Commie for Christ."[54]

To these two young men, Communism was not the threat their elders made it out to be. If anything, their mocking chant of "Kill a Commie for Christ" seemed to communicate to Marchi that killing anyone, Communist or not, was the true evil. In the minds of these two young men, the ends did not justify the means. The following day, Marchi continued attacking Lindsay's support for the anti-war movement, arguing that Lindsay voiced opposition to the war for political reasons and not because he sincerely believed that the war was immoral. In addition to reminding people that Lindsay voted for the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution as a congressman in 1964, Marchi also mentioned that

[54] Paul L. Montgomery, "Marchi Is Buoyed by Brooklyn Tour," *New York Times*, Oct. 12, 1969, 46.

just a year earlier at the Republican National Convention, Lindsay had endorsed the Nixon Administration's Vietnam War platform through his endorsement of Spiro Agnew for vice president. In Marchi's view, Lindsay's political insecurities drove him to exploit people's frustrations with the war, deterring them from thinking about his first-term failures. "Mr. Lindsay's pollsters obviously showed him statistics which now lead him to believe that a more extreme position might possibly distract public attention from his failures at City Hall during the last four years."[55]

No one knew what to expect on Moratorium Day. Would its organizers and participants stay focused on maintaining the peaceful aspects of the demonstration? Or would it descend into chaos like the 1968 Democratic Nation Convention riots did? What unfolded on Moratorium Day, fortunately, marked the beginning of a new and more peaceful way to protest the war. People in major cities and small towns across the United States peacefully protested, staged teach-ins, and marched in the streets. Their feelings reflected exhausted patience with the war, as well as with Nixon's plans to end the war through "peace with honor." General frustration with the war did not mean that everyone who participated united under a single set of ideas regarding how the United States should leave Vietnam, but it did signal a more united front against the war.

Careful planning made Moratorium Day successful. Previous years had witnessed abrasive demonstrations and violent clashes with opposing sides, as seen at the 1968 Democratic National Convention. These kinds of protests gave a bad name to the anti-war movement that cost them in credibility and popularity. Making dialogue and

[55] Owen Fitzgerald, "Lindsay Latecomer on Vietnam: Marchi," *Daily News* (New York), Oct. 15, 1969, 5.

reflection the core focus of Moratorium Day helped diffuse most violent confrontations before they could happen. While organizers planned Moratorium Day with the idea that college students would be the group that would primarily participate in the demonstration, people outside of the college community also joined in an effort to increase pressure to bring the war to an end.[56] Mrs. William Beidler, the widow of Norman Morrison, who in 1965 set himself on fire on the steps of the Pentagon in protest of the war, marched with protestors in Charlotte, North Carolina.[57] Even Kim Agnew, the daughter of Vice President Spiro Agnew, wanted to participate in Moratorium Day demonstrations by marching and wearing a black arm band, but her father would not let her.[58]

While Moratorium Day took place with minimal confrontations, it also fulfilled Brown and Grossman's wishes to include a wider audience with differing views. Some protestors felt that Nixon's efforts to pull U.S. forces out of Vietnam validated their disapproval of the war.[59] In fact, weeks before Moratorium Day took place, Robert Semple of the *New York Times* wrote that, "[Nixon] has urged major reforms in the draft, and his Vietnam policy is at least clearer, in some respects, than his predecessor's."[60]

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[56] John Herbers, "Vietnam Moratorium Observed Nationwide by Foes of the War," *New York Times*, Oct. 16, 1969, 18.

[57] Herbers, "Vietnam Moratorium," 18.

[58] United Press International, "Agnew Kept Daughter Out of Vietnam Protest," *New York Times*, Oct. 24, 1969, 7.

[59] "Strike against the War," *Time*, Oct. 17, 1969, 18.

[60] Robert B. Semple, "Mood of Uncertainty Spreads over the Land," *New York Times*, Sept. 28, 1969, 228.

While there were those who still agreed with Nixon's approach to the war, the moratorium clearly showed the war's unpopularity and that more Americans than ever were willing to step forward and say as much. "The Moratorium demonstrates a diversity and spread unknown in the earlier landmark protests against the war… [previous protests] involved directly only a minority of the young and the radical intelligentsia, not anything resembling a cross-section of U.S. society."[61] As Nixon and Kissinger continued to willfully ignore Moratorium Day, their friends tried to warn them of the demonstration's far-reaching effect. Former Harvard University Adam Walinsky even tried to tell Kissinger that "you cannot carry a country that feels this way."[62]

Whether Nixon liked it or not, Moratorium Day would have far-reaching implications that would make it difficult for him to control the narrative. Like Johnson before him, Nixon found himself knee deep in a conflict without a safe or reliable way out that did not include hurting oneself politically in the process. This was the great cost that the Vietnam War exacted on America, a country that thought its mere presence would intimidate the enemy into submission only to find itself searching for a way out with its dignity intact. U.S. forces not only continued to lose in Vietnam, but the divide in American grew to a point not seen since the Civil War.

[61] "Strike against the War," *Time,* Oct. 17, 1969, 17.

[62] Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger,* 161.

# Chapter II

Tom Seaver knew he had to win Game Four.

As Moratorium Day unfolded throughout America, the 6'1 righthanded pitcher out of the University of Southern California who had given up six runs to the Baltimore Orioles the previous Saturday to start the 1969 World Series one game down thought about his strategy for that day's game. The New York Mets came back to win Games Two and Three to make it 2-1 in the series, but Seaver, a Marine Corps reservist, did not want a repeat of his Game One loss as he arrived at Shea Stadium that Wednesday morning.[63]

On the same day, a group of about 200 youths stood outside Shea Stadium handing out anti-war pamphlets.[64] As he traded banter with his teammates in the locker room, fellow pitcher and teammate Tug McGraw, the father of country singer Tim McGraw, approached Seaver holding a pamphlet that was being distributed by the group. "Hey, have you seen this?" McGraw asked Seaver.[65] Taking the pamphlet, Seaver's anger began to rise as he read the words on the cover: "METS FANS FOR PEACE" followed by "Tom Seaver Says U.S. Should Leave Vietnam."[66] Weeks before the World

[63] Tom Seaver passed away on August 31st, 2020, the same week I started writing this chapter.

[64] The Associated Press, "Calm Rules on 'M-Day'," *Democrat and Chronicle (*Rochester, NY), Oct. 16, 1969, 2.

[65] Steven Travers, *The Last Icon: Tom Seaver and His Times* (Washington D.C.: Lyons Press, 2011), 104.

[66] Travers, *Last Icon*, 104.

Series began, Moratorium Day organizers asked Seaver if they could use his statement, "If the Mets can win the pennant, why can't we end the war?" in their literature.[67] Seaver did not object to the sentiment and added, "What is so unpatriotic about being against such a terrible war?"[68] In fact, Seaver had voiced his opposition to the Vietnam War for several years up to that point. As a student at the University of California, Seaver had written a paper arguing against the war, calling it "basically a civil war and a guerrilla war, but now we are committed too deep and at an ungodly cost."[69]

While Seaver's view on the war had not changed, he never intended to see his words printed on pamphlets and distributed a major day of protest. He did not have much time to worry about it though. For now, he had to focus on beating the Orioles' Cuban-born southpaw Mike Cuellar. Meanwhile, Game Four of the 1969 World Series had not even started yet and baseball commissioner Bowie Kuhn already had problems of his own.

City employees were beginning to implement Mayor Lindsay's order that all the flags on municipal buildings fly at half-staff that day. Lindsay said that the flag order's intention was "to be a measure of respect for those—particularly the families of those who had been killed—who still supported the struggle out of this kind of emotional tie."[70] However, many in attendance that day—as well as throughout the city—were not

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[67] George Vecsey, *Joy in Mudville* (New York: McCall, 1970), 234.

[68] Vecsey, *Joy in Mudville*, 234.

[69] Joseph Durso, "Seaver of Mets Joins Intelligentsia of World Events," *New York Times*, Feb. 23, 1968, 21.

[70] Cannato, *Ungovernable City*, 423.

interpreting the message as Lindsay had intended. Kuhn initially granted Lindsay's request to lower the main flag in center field following the performance of the National Anthem.[71] He had to reconsider though when word of the order reached a group of servicemen seated in the outfield stands, many of whom had recently been shipped home from Vietnam due to various injuries.[72]

The 225 servicemen from nearby St. Albans Naval Hospital came to Shea Stadium that day to watch the game as guests of the New York Mets. Some of them wore their uniforms while others were clad in hospital pajamas. Many were wheelchair bound. Regardless of their physical limitations and appearance, when word reached them about the flag order, they quickly threatened to respond with force if stadium personnel attempted to lower the flag. Kuhn had little choice but to respect the servicemen's threat and ordered that the flag fly at full staff for the entire game. "[Lindsay] has requested that I take whatever step would promote the greatest amount of respect and quiet in the Stadium and I have concluded that this step would comply with this request," Kuhn later said in a statement.[73] When reporters asked one of the servicemen what they would have done if someone had tried to follow through with the order to lower the flag, Staff

[71] William Federici, "Shea's Flag at Half Staff," *Daily News* (New York), Oct. 15, 1969, 3.

[72] James Tuite, "War Casualties Demand Full-Staff Flag at Shea," *New York Times*, Oct. 16, 1969, 20.

[73] Associated Press, "Flag Flies High at Shea," *Democrat and Chronicle* (Rochester, NY), Oct. 16, 1969, Metro edition, 1.

Sergeant Maurice Kaplan, a Brooklyn native who had been wounded twice in the Vietnam War replied, "They would have had to fight us first."[74]

The United States Merchant Marine Academy band was scheduled to play the National Anthem at Shea Stadium that day, but they refused to travel to the stadium when they found out about Lindsay's edict regarding the flags. By the time they got word that the flag would fly at full staff, it was too late to get to the stadium on time to perform. In their place, singer Gordon MacRae performed the anthem a capella, but encouraged fans to sing along. [75] The Mets went on to the win the game, 2-1 in 10 innings thanks to Tom Seaver, who struck out six in a complete game to not only redeem himself from Game One but put the Mets to within one game of winning the World Series. Despite his joy in winning, after the game, Seaver addressed the issue of his criticism of the Vietnam War being used by Moratorium Day organizers. "I don't want to say anything about it until [the series] is over…But I have to say I will say it in my own way. I'm a ballplayer, not a politician. But I am an American citizen, and I have my feelings. They shouldn't be blown out of proportion."[76] Seaver was not the only Mets player who felt this way about the Vietnam War. Outfielder Ron Swoboda traveled to Vietnam twice to visit soldiers who gave him first-hand feedback, "a [military] doctor ranted for fifteen minutes about

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[74] James Tuite, "War Casualties Demand Full-Staff Flag at Shea," *New York Times,* Oct. 16, 1969, 20.

[75] Unconfirmed reports claim that manager Gil Hodges was the one who led the efforts to keep the flag flying at full staff. William Federici, "Mostly, the Flag Comes Out on Top," *Daily News* (New York), Oct. 16, 1969. I e-mailed Mort Zachter, one of Gil Hodges' biographers, and asked him about this incident and he told me he has never heard of Hodges doing anything like this. "Gil Hodges," *Gil Hodges,* Aug. 16, 2020.

[76] United Press International, "Seaver Photo on Anti-War Pamphlets," *Boston Globe,* Oct. 16, 1969, 62.

what insanity, what madness, this whole Vietnam thing was. It wasn't anything I hadn't heard a thousand times back home, but hearing it here, from someone so deep in it, left me feeling rattled."[77] Swoboda not only had a bleak outlook on the Vietnam War, but he did not support Richard Nixon either. When Nixon ran for re-election in 1972, his campaign called Swoboda and asked for his support. He refused. When they told him, "You know who's going to be President, don't you?" Swoboda replied, "Yup, but not with my help."[78] Infielder Art Shamsky wrote in his memoir *After the Miracle*, "I was opposed to the war…. I realized there was a lot of evil in the world, and the Vietnam War was no exception. I couldn't imagine anybody being in favor of it."[79]

While Seaver did not want his views on Vietnam to get any more attention than they were already getting, politicians seized on the opportunity to use the Mets' ace in their own anti-war speeches taking place throughout the country. In Boston, Senator George McGovern of South Dakota told a crowd of 100,000 that the Mets had not only defeated the Orioles 2-1 thanks to Seaver, but that Seaver planned to take a full-page anti-war ad out in the paper if the Mets won the World Series. "Seaver believes that if the Mets can win the World Series, the United States can get out of Vietnam…. And I believe we should get out of Vietnam even if the Orioles win!"[80]

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[77] Ron Swoboda, *Here's the Catch: A Memoir of the Miracle Mets and More* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Advance Reader Copy, 2019), 74.

[78] Peter Golenbock, *Amazin': The Miraculous History of New York's Most Beloved Baseball Team* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003), 266.

[79] Art Shamsky, and Erik Sherman, *After the Miracle: The Lasting Brotherhood of the '69 Mets* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2019), 53.

[80] "Biggest Cheer for Mets," *Boston Globe*, Oct. 16, 1969, 2.

Many of Seaver's fans were from Brooklyn and Queens where Mayor Lindsay was not as popular, partly because of his anti-war views. It is difficult to say whether Seaver's fans took true issue with his words (or if they even read about them). Would Mets fans who supported the war have turned on Seaver if they found out the true nature of his feelings about Vietnam? Probably not. People went to the ballpark partly as an escape from current events. As long as their views were not directly challenged by Seaver or anyone else at Shea Stadium, they likely did not care at all what he thought. Still, it is difficult to ignore how ironic it is that a large chunk of Mets fans who supported the war rooted for players who were against it. While I stated in my introduction that the Mets' World Series victory did not significantly influence Moratorium Day, it is difficult to ignore the factors both had in common. Like the Mets in previous seasons, the anti-war movement struggled to gain traction and credibility. Like the Mets in 1969, people started to take the anti-war movement more seriously. And like Mets fans in October, people not only recognized the legitimacy and strength of the anti-war movement but were proud to be a part of it. Even though some historians would like to think that the Mets had a bigger effect on Moratorium Day than they actually did, both the Mets and those who organized the moratorium found a stride in late 1969 that led to their respective success. The Mets' success boosted the confidence of anti-war demonstrators who loved baseball, who likely channeled that energy toward expressing their disapproval of the war. The fact that Moratorium Day took place a day before the Mets clinched their first World Series title makes it all but impossible to ignore that sentiment. While Tom Seaver, Ron Swoboda, and Art Shamsky were ballplayers before they were anti-war demonstrators, the people of New York City, and across America, found that they had more in common with them

than just their love for the game on Moratorium Day. Meanwhile, those who did not share their sentiments were beginning to voice their disapproval throughout the city as they began to realize that this demonstration was not like other ones they had seen before. This one had the potential to legitimately threaten Nixon's efforts to end the war, and more importantly to them, threaten their beliefs that the war was truly being fought to stop communism.

These statements reflected a strong rebuke against Lindsay, but for the most part, that is all they were for the time being. Veterans organizations like the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars did not plan any counterdemonstrations to the anti-war demonstrators on Moratorium Day.[81] Elsewhere in the United States, other pro-war advocates who supported President Nixon expressed their own views, too. In Ontonagon, Michigan, people flew their American flags at full staff, a move widely reported as a gesture of support for President Nixon. Georgia Governor Lester Maddox boasted about how he flew an American flag at the top of his car's antenna while driving in daylight with his headlights on. Clashes between pro-and anti-war groups were not widely reported, but that does not mean they did not happen. "… [Moratorium Day] also demonstrated the great divisions in American society," *The New York Times* reported the following day. "The demonstrations generated counter protests in some areas, and some supporters of the war who had been quiet for months spoke out in anger."[82]

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[81] Homer Bigart, "Lindsay's Rivals Score Him on War," *New York Times*, Oct. 14, 1969, 24.

[82] John Herbers, "Vietnam Moratorium Observed Nationwide by Foes of the War," *New York Times*, Oct. 16, 1969, 1.

In Brooklyn, 29 police cars—all with their headlights on—monitored the area where 600 people attended a Moratorium Day rally outside Brooklyn College's LaGuardia Hall. As the rally came to a close, people started to leave through the main gate where about a dozen members of the Young Americans for Freedom (Y.A.F.) stood holding a sign that read "Bomb Hanoi." People who had attended the rally attacked members of the Y.A.F. and tried to rip their sign before police intervened and broke up the confrontation. In response, Y.A.F. co-chairman Stephen Linetsky said, "Students on this campus who have been sucked in by the New Left are rebelling against their parents and anyone in authority…the majority are too young to even think for themselves."[83]

Mayor Lindsay's opponents stepped up their attacks on him as well after the moratorium. Procaccino told a crowd that, "Persons with honest but differing views on the moratorium—including even the children in our schools—have become more polarized…if anyone disagrees with the Mayor, or even with the meaningless trappings he added, that person is not for peace." Marchi offered a more direct assessment, calling local Moratorium Day protests, "a New York version of Dunkirk" and a "strike against America." At City Hall, where Lindsay spoke to a crowd of 500, counterdemonstrators waived a sign that read "Moratorium Day is for Commies and PIGS!" Despite the criticism, Lindsay stopped at nearly a dozen rallies on Moratorium Day, and also made time to visit military patients at the Naval Hospital at St. Albans, telling people, "The fact is that this dissent is the highest form of patriotism…."[84]

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[83] Joseph Kiernan, "B'klyn College Pros, Antis Clash," *Daily News,* Oct. 16, 1969, 5.

[84] Richard Reeves, "Candidates Clash on Protest," *New York Times,* Oct. 16, 1969, 21.

That same day in the Bronx, buses drove up and down Webster Avenue with their headlights on while police cars displayed the American flag—all signs of support for President Nixon. Those same cars and buses drove by 19-year-old Tom Fanning and Karen Cahill, both students at Fordham University, who stood on a street corner handing out anti-war leaflets. At one point a passerby told them, "If you don't like it in this country, go somewhere else," when they tried to hand him an anti-war leaflet.[85] "What bothers me is that people accuse us of being unpatriotic. But it's because I'm patriotic that I'm doing this. If I didn't love my country I wouldn't bother."[86] While people like Cahill expressed their frustrations with their inability to get their point across to everyone they encountered, Moratorium Day was largely successful throughout the United States.

The overall success of Moratorium Day marked the beginning of a new way to protest the Vietnam War. Demonstrators now had a successful formula that they could use in future moratorium demonstrations; they were already planning another one for mid-November. For the first time, the anti-war movement had a clear path forward. Organizers of anti-war demonstrations now knew what effectively worked, and also knew that if they could sustain this kind of approach to protesting the war that their success could only increase. New Yorkers who had participated in Moratorium Day not only could feel proud of their involvement in a peaceful demonstration, but the following day, the New York Mets won Game Five, and the World Series, after defeating the Baltimore Orioles 5-3 at Shea Stadium, further lifting New Yorkers' spirits.

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[85] Anthony Burton, "They Hand Leaflet to Guy Just Back from Viet," *Daily News* (New York), Oct. 16, 1969, 30.

[86] Burton, "They Hand Leaflet," 30.

Protestors, veterans, politicians, and fans alike all came together to watch the Mets do what had been considered to be impossible only a year before: wining the World Series. “People were dancing in the streets,” George Vecsey wrote, “holding hands with strangers, reaching back to their childhood for ways to express their joy.”[87] The Mets themselves celebrated well into the night with champagne in the locker room followed by a night out on the town. Even President Nixon called the Mets manager Gil Hodges to offer his congratulations.[88]

The success of Moratorium Day combined with the Mets victory significantly boosted Lindsay’s chances for re-election. The fact that he had attended both the playoffs and Game Five of the World Series when the Mets won only served to boost his visibility with voters, especially in combination with the success of Moratorium Day. Despite these boosts to his re-election efforts, Lindsay likely did not realize in that moment that if he won, he would have to serve his second term in Nixon’s shadow, as well as against the newfound animosity that pro-war advocates felt towards him in the wake of his flag edict.

[87] Vecsey, *Joy in Mudville*, 4.

[88] “No. 1 Fan Salutes Mets With White House Call,” *New York Times*, Oct. 17, 1969, 68.

## Chapter III

The day after Moratorium Day, Lindsay's opponents continued their attacks against him. At a breakfast with Republican leaders, Marchi intensified his attacks by arguing, "[Lindsay] has planted a dagger in the back of American servicemen in Vietnam, and I can't find words strong enough to condemn him."[89] Marchi also repeated the accusation that Lindsay was only engaging in Moratorium Day demonstrations as a way of distracting from his poor mayoral record. "This is a transparent ploy to conceal the deficiencies of his administration…the cause of international peace and the early return of our troops has received a setback…."[90] In the days to come, both of Lindsay's major opponents, Marchi and Procaccino, started to see their respective chances to beat Lindsay dwindle, due in no small part to the success of Moratorium Day, and more importantly to the people of New York, the Mets' victory over the Baltimore Orioles. Robert Healy of the *Boston Globe* put it best,

> Two months ago, Lindsay wasn't given much of a chance to win re-election in November. The polls showed Democratic candidate Mario Procaccino ahead…. But things have taken a turn for the better with Lindsay…. And believe it or not, the Mets have probably helped him. The city found itself in love with this ball team and in this display they have also found a little more charity in their hearts for the mayor.[91]

Lindsay basked in the new life that the Mets had breathed into his campaign. He once again had allowed himself to be drenched in champagne in the locker room after the Mets

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[89] Lacey Fosburgh, "Marchi Steps Up Attack on Mayor's War Protest," *New York Times*, Oct. 17, 1969, 50.

[90] Fosburgh, "Marchi," 50.

[91] Robert Healy, "As the Mets Go, So May Lindsay," *Boston Globe*, Oct. 20, 1969, 11.

clinched the World Series (There are rumors that Mayor Lindsay wore his less-expensive suits to the ballpark because he anticipated being showered in champagne, but I could not find a legitimate source to verify. Given Lindsay's uptight and arrogant demeanor though, it is an easy rumor to believe). Later that week at the Alfred E. Smith dinner, a Catholic Charities dinner that benefited disadvantaged children, Lindsay not only introduced himself as John "Mets" Lindsay to the attendees, but likely took great pleasure from Spiro Agnew, who he met in the receiving line at the dinner. Not only was Agnew probably not happy to see Lindsay again due to their fallout the previous year, but as the former governor of Maryland, he likely resented Lindsay and his Mets for beating Maryland's only ball team in the World Series just days earlier. One can only imagine how excruciating it had to be for Agnew to know that Lindsay was likely coasting to re-election now partly because the Baltimore Orioles had lost to the New York Mets.

While Marchi continued to criticize Lindsay's view on the Vietnam War, Procaccino made a series of errors that did not help his image or campaign. Procaccino embarrassed himself at the Smith dinner by holding his hands high over his head like a prize-winning boxer despite being dressed in a white tie—the gesture seemed to clash with mayoral image he was trying to project.[92] A few weeks later, towards the end of October, Procaccino declared that if he won election, he would "camp on the steps of the White House if I have to" to end the Vietnam War, a statement that seemed to contradict his criticism of Lindsay's support for the anti-war movement.[93] For Marchi and

[92] Robert Healy, "As the Mets go, so may Lindsay," *Boston Globe,* Oct. 20, 1969, 11.

[93] Thomas P. Ronan, "Procaccino Vows to Help End War," *New York Times,* Oct. 31, 1969, 1.

Procaccino, lambasting Lindsay's support for Moratorium Day and his criticism of the war seemed to be all they had left to throw at him. While they too supported the Mets, Lindsay had beaten them to the punch by attending the playoff games leading up to the World Series. Lindsay is the one who allowed himself to be doused with champagne by young people half his age. Lindsay's gamble in supporting the anti-war movement had also paid off, as more and more people came out against the war. Even Democratic Senator Eugene McCarthy, who had refused to endorse Humphrey for president the year before, endorsed Lindsay. Things were looking better and better for Lindsay as Election Day approached.

The day before Americans would go to the polls to cast their votes, Nixon gave a major nationwide speech. Although Nixon had not wanted to respond to or acknowledge the events of Moratorium Day or the effect it had, he knew that he had to do something to quell the growing fear that millions of Americans who supported him and the war effort were feeling after seeing how big the anti-war movement was becoming. On November 3, 1969, Nixon gave what later became known as the "Silent Majority" speech, in which he tried to assure Americans that Vietnamization had not only started, but 20 percent of American troops were due to come home by mid-December. That was not the main focus of his speech, though. Nixon's anger focused on the growing resentment towards him, with the success of Moratorium Day truly rattling him. One of Nixon's goals in his speech focused on pushing back against those who criticized the war, which he did through the following words,

> For the United States, this first defeat in our Nation's history would result in a collapse of confidence in American leadership, not only in Asia but throughout the world…Let us be united for peace. Let us also be united against defeat.

> Because let us understand: North Vietnam cannot defeat or humiliate the United States. Only Americans can do that.[94]

These specific words were designed to get the attention of those Americans who were seeking reassurance that America's role in Vietnam would not end in failure or defeat, Americans that Nixon referred to as the great "silent majority" because they did not voice their opinion openly like anti-war activists did. Americans who had criticized Lindsay's flag edict, along with those who had participated in Moratorium Day events, took comfort in knowing they had a president who only refused to let anti-war activists dictate foreign policy, but planned to expand his efforts to ensure that America's role in Vietnam would end in success. Millions of Americans enthusiastically approved of Nixon's speech. Its timing also served its purpose as candidates running for office who shared Nixon's political views won local and state offices throughout the nation. While Nixon's "Silent Majority" speech was not specifically aimed at taking down Lindsay, the 50,000 telegrams and 30,000 letters sent to the White House praising the speech made it clear that a significant portion of Americans still strongly supported Nixon and his efforts in Vietnam.[95] In response to the speech, while Lindsay said that while he prayed that efforts to make peace would be successful, he said he was "disappointed that the speech breaks no new ground and reports no new progress."[96]

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[94] "Nixon's 'Silent Majority' Speech," Watergateinfo (Watergate.info), accessed October 26, 2020, https://watergate.info/1969/11/03/nixons-silent-majority-speech.html.

[95] Perlstein, *Nixonland*, 435-436.

[96] Joseph P. Fried, "Lindsay Disappointed by Speech, But His Two Rivals Back Nixon," *New York Times*, Nov. 4, 1969, 17.

Lindsay would cruise to victory on Election Day, winning re-election with 42 percent of the vote with Procaccino snagging 33.8 percent and Marchi getting 22.1 percent.[97] Lindsay not only got two out of three votes in Manhattan, but he even won Queens.[98] Despite his win, Lindsay's standing in the Republican Party was more strained than ever, particularly after his sharp criticism of Nixon's "Silent Majority" speech. More importantly, his standing fell even more among those who now abhorred him for his flag edict on Moratorium Day. Over the next few months, their anger and resentment worsened as they continued to believe that Lindsay hated America and did not respect the military servicepeople who fought for their country. In their mind, Lindsay was not any different than the long-haired college students who abused their First Amendment rights by denouncing a war that was supposed to be stopping the spread of communism. Pro-war advocates did not reserve their hatred solely for Lindsay. The pro-war advocates, many of them World War II and Korean War veterans, saw anti-war protestors as people who did not appreciate the sacrifices they had made for America. Pro-war advocates' resentment towards anti-war protestors started long before Moratorium Day but they did not take them seriously. To those who supported the war, the riots at the 1968 Democratic National Convention clearly showed that while anti-war protestors were violent, they could not organize themselves well enough to communicate an effective message. Moratorium Day changed all of that. The success of the demonstrations effectively showed that those who opposed the war had not only changed their tone but could organize themselves into voicing a strong and clear message about how they felt

[97] Viterirri, *Summer in the City*, 49.

[98] Viterirri, *Summer in the City*, 49.

about the Vietnam War. The success of Moratorium Day rattled pro-war supporters because it all but forced them to recognize the valid reasons driving opposition to the war. America was not winning in Vietnam like they had won in Europe in World War II. In fact, American forces were not winning at all, and many of those who supported the war in Vietnam struggled, if not completely failed, to accept it. This does not mean that pro-war advocates blindly supported Nixon and the war. Many of Nixon's supporters endorsed his Vietnamization plan because they thought it would truly bring change to Vietnam and allow America to leave peacefully and with their dignity intact. Many of them knew that U.S. forces needed a new plan if they were going to win. Nevertheless, calls for withdrawal angered them, and even though not everyone against the war called for an immediate departure from Vietnam, it did not matter. In their mind, anyone opposed to the war was anti-American and did not appreciate the values that came with being an American. On a larger level, it was the sense of patriotism that supporters of the war felt was under attack. In regard to this idea, Sandra Scanlon argues that,

> The varied ways in which patriotism was harnessed by supporters of the war to advance their goals shaped popular understandings of the meaning of the conflict. An analysis of the activities of veterans' organizations and patriotic groups offers evidence of how supporting the troops was used to gain backing for continuing the war and for Nixon's policy of Vietnamization.[99]

Many pro-war advocates likely believed that what Nixon was doing was the right thing and for good reason. Nixon was not indifferent to the war; he truly did care about ending the war peacefully. However, the questionable and potentially illegal means through which he pursued a strategic victory in Vietnam continued to draw scrutiny. In May of 1970, Nixon authorized the expansion of the war into Cambodia in order to track

[99] Scanlon, *Pro-War Movement,* 187.

down and kill enemy Viet Cong soldiers taking refuge within Cambodian borders. The war's expansion into another country outraged anti-war protestors—many of them college students—throughout the country. College campuses saw a sharp rise in anti-war demonstrations, including Kent State University, where the Ohio National Guard shot and killed four students: Allison Beth Krause, Jeffrey Glenn Miller, Sandra Lee Scheuer, and William Knox Schroeder and wounded nine others after they opened fire on the demonstrating students. The killings at Kent State University led to even more protests throughout the country, including in New York City where Mayor Lindsay met with two Kent State students a few days after the shootings. Jack Corliss, one of the students from the greater New York City area, told Lindsay that "'Vietnam was a dying issue' until the President ordered troops into Cambodia."[100] In response to the Kent State massacre, college students throughout the city of New York, particularly at Hunter College and Pace College, organized demonstrations. After witnessing the nationwide success of Moratorium Day that, in their minds, demonstrated nothing but contempt for American values, pro-war and Nixon supporters alike decided that they were going to counter demonstrate when anti-war advocates took to the streets of New York City in protest of Nixon, Kent State, and the bombings of Cambodia. This time though, in contrast to Moratorium Day, the pro-war advocates wanted both the anti-war demonstrators and Mayor Lindsay to feel their presence.

On May 6th, in partial response to the Cambodia bombings, Lindsay attacked Nixon's Cambodia policy, calling it a "not-so-silent majority" by stating "The same kind

[100] Edward C. Burks, "Lindsay Assails War Policy; Stresses Peaceful Dissent," *New York Times*, May 7, 1970, 24.

of political energy…that helped to reverse escalation of the war in March, 1968…A new majority can influence policy-making at the highest levels. It can elect anti-war Congressmen and Senators." Lindsay did not respond to Vice President Agnew's criticism that Lindsay was a "'well-born elitist' more dangerous than campus 'paranoids…'" This back and forth between Lindsay and Nixon marked the continuing hostility between Lindsay and the Nixon Administration, a level of resentment that Lindsay would feel even more in the weeks to come.[101]

It was not unusual to see anti-war protest in the Wall Street section of New York City, so few people took real notice of the demonstrators who were assembling around 7:30 on the morning of May 8, 1970. They carried placards that said, "NOW BEFORE IT'S NEVER" while one muttered "Death is war."[102] Local workers did not like seeing the revival of the anti-war movement that had quelled somewhat since the Moratorium demonstrations in October and November of 1969. That morning, as a seemingly oblivious Mayor Lindsay played tennis and the protest crowd grew, a local worker called the police telling them that hardhats—a nickname for the blue-collar workers who wore hard hats on the job—were "out for blood today."[103] David Paul Kuhn, author of *The Hardhat Riot,* argues Kent State marked a turning point in the anti-war movement in the minds of protestors because it literally became a matter of life and death for them. Kuhn adds that anti-war protestors believed that Americans would become more sympathetic to

[101] Burks, "Lindsay Assails War Policy," 24.

[102] David Paul Kuhn, *The Hardhat Riot: Nixon, New York City, and the Dawn of the White Working-Class Revolution* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2020), 7.

[103] Kuhn, *Hardhat Riot,* 9.

the anti-war cause after four college students had died as a result of the protests on campus. While the protestors themselves may have believed that Kent State marked a turning point, and it certainly was one of the more significant events of the war, the flags that the hardhat workers brough to the anti-war protests not only signaled they were at the end of their patience but were ready to reclaim their country from those whom they felt lacked the proper level of American patriotism. The anti-war protestors were not their primary target, though.

It was Mayor Lindsay.

Kuhn discusses how the workers believed that,

> Being a workingman, once a badge of honor, was the image of the piggish and plodding yeomanry, a genus of man presumed too dumb to even recognize its ennui. And the condemnation often came from rich kids" able to "turn on, tune in, drop out"—those who could afford to be a hippie. John Lindsay came to personify what bothered them. He seemed to celebrate the people who looked down on them, and court everybody but them. Lindsay was regularly in the media politicking in black and Puerto Rican areas, or with the white opera crowd.[104]

Blue-collar workers saw Lindsay as the anti-war movement's enabler, someone who validated the actions of draft dodgers and rode the coattails of the anti-war movement into re-election at the expense of the hard-working blue-collar people of New York. Lindsay's flag edict on Moratorium Day marked the pinnacle of their scorn for him; their anger for him had dissipated only a little since then. When Deputy Mayor Dick Aurelio suggested that Mayor Lindsay order all city flags lowered to mourn those killed at Kent State, the rest of the mayor's staff hesitated. "Who could possibly object to

[104] Kuhn, *Hardhat Riot*, 67-68.

honoring four dead students by lowering the flag at City Hall?" Aurelio asked.[105] Aurelio would soon find out.

As protestors swarmed the Wall Street area, local workers, many of them building the new World Trade Center building a few blocks away, decided that it was time to confront those they saw as not appreciating their American nationality. Wearing their hard hats and carrying American flags on poles or in the form of a patch or sticker on their person targeted anyone and everyone they saw as an enemy. They targeted anti-war protestors carrying placards. They targeted young men with long hair because they believed long hair defied social conservative norms. They beat anti-war protestors mercilessly with clubs, tools, and their fists. They broke teeth, cracked skulls, shattered bones, and gave concussions. They concentrated months, if not years, of brewing anger towards those who spoke out against the war, and more importantly, towards Mayor Lindsay, who time and time again had spoken out in support of the anti-war effort. These blue-collar workers were not only tired of what they saw as anti-American sentiment, but finally had their own chance to make Mayor Lindsay pay for what he had done to their flag. They were ready to take their country back against those who embraced communism. In fact, they became so violent and aggressive that the *Times* published the following the day after the May 8th confrontation,

> "The hardhats, long scornful of excesses by privileged longhairs on campus, were obviously delighted" to "pour out their hatred on the students" and offer "their venom against the mayor, the most articulate spokesman in public life" for "college youth" and "for the right to dissent." Once champions of "law and order," hardhats had joined "the revolutionaries and bomb-throwers on the left in demonstrating that anarchy is fast becoming a mode of political expression."[106]

[105] Kuhn, *Hardhat Riot*, 119.

[106] Kuhn, *Hardhat Riot*, 231.

This riot, which would later become known as the "Hardhat Riots," marked one of the more violent confrontations between pro and anti-war demonstrators during the war. "It was the wild start to two weeks of almost daily noon-hour, flag-waving, bellicose, damn-Lindsay…and praise-Nixon counter marchers through downtown New York," one journalist noted.[107] Exacerbating the anger from the anti-war demonstrators in the aftermath of the May 8 confrontation was the news that not only were police unprepared to handle the riot—they did not have nearly as many policemen in the Wall Street area as they should have had—but that they had been told about the workers' plan to confront the anti-war protestors but did not have enough officers to control the crowd of workers.[108] According to Martin Arnold of *The New York Times*, Representative Allard K. Lowenstein's office in Nassau, as well as construction workers who did not approve of the use of violence against the anti-war protestors, allegedly contacted the New York City police ahead of the confrontation. A staff member in Lowenstein's office allegedly received a call stating that "the workers were briefed by the shop stewards at the jobs to go and knock the heads of the kids who were protesting the Nixon-Kent thing."[109] The mayor's office acknowledged the warnings too—all of which they referred to the police, but they were not considered credible. The police argued that they did not have the manpower to stop the workers, but they did appease workers by raising the flag to full staff. Mayor Lindsay expressed concern that the cops did little to stop them.[110]

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[107] Cannato, *Ungovernable City*, 451.

[108] Martin Arnold, "Police Were Told of Plan," *New York Times*, May 9, 1970, 1.

[109] Arnold, "Police," 10.

[110] Arnold, "Police," 10.

New York University, Hunter College, and Pace College students assembled downtown to protest the Kent State shootings and demand a full withdrawal from of American troops from Vietnam and Cambodia, the release of political prisoners, and an immediate stop of all campus-related military work. They had been protesting peacefully before construction workers, about 200 in number, carrying American flags and chanting "All the way U.S.A." and "Love it or leave it" attacked the students. While the workers and students engaged in the violent confrontation, an unidentified mailman climbed to the roof of City Hall and raised the flag, to which the crowd cheered. A few minutes later someone lowered it again as they chanted, "Lindsay's a red!" which caused the angry crowd of workers to overrun a police barricade.[111] Police asked a city official to raise it again to appease the workers because they did not have the manpower to stop them.[112] The *Daily News* claimed that over 500 workers attacked Pace College students who were chanting "Impeach Lindsay!" and "Raise the flag!"[113] One worker went so far as to tear down the Red Cross banner from the Trinity Church gates, as well as the Episcopal Church flag.[114] "I suppose [the workers] thought it was a Vietcong flag," said Trinity Parish rector Dr. John V. Butler.[115] The workers were not the only ones who were lobbing hostile messages at the mayor, though.

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[111] Homer Bigart, "War Foes Here Attacked by Construction Workers," *New York Times*, May 9, 1969, 1.

[112] Bigart, "War Foes," 10.

[113] Jean Crafton et al., "500 Storm City Hall to Raise Flag," *Daily News* (New York), May 9, 1970, 125.

[114] Homer Bigart, "War Foes Here Attacked by Construction Workers," *New York Times*, May 9, 1969, 1.

[115] Bigart, "War Foes," 1.

Republican City Councilman Matthew J. Troy Jr., the man who had raised the City Hall flag to full staff on Moratorium Day, called Lindsay the "Agnew of Left" and argued that the mayor had had no right at all to order the lowering of the flag to honor those who had been killed at Kent State.[116] Troy, who had been "thrilled to death" at the sight of the workers that had demanded the flag fly at full staff, said that Lindsay's "frequent proclamations on the flag-lowering, 'puts the flag up and down like it was on an elevator.'"[117] Troy also stated that a mayoral aide named Sid Davidoff had wanted to arrest the worker who had raised the flag on top of City Hall during the first confrontation, to which Troy said he would have had Davidoff arrested instead if he had tried.[118] The police force had its own critical response to Lindsay, who had initially slammed the police response to the riots. The Patrolman's Benevolent Association, whose own president, Edward Kiernan, had expressed his anger at Mayor Lindsay the previous October for his flag edict, stated that their inability to stop the workers from attacking protestors came from being ill-prepared and "inconsistent political directives imposed on the police by the Mayor's office," a direct rebuke to Lindsay's charge that the police had broken down in their duty to keep the workers and protestors separated.[119]

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[116] Bruce Chadwick and John Murphy, "Lindsay 'Agnew of Left': Troy," *Daily News,* May 10, 1970, 2.

[117] Chadwick and Murphy, "Lindsay," 2.

[118] Chadwick and Murphy, "Lindsay," 2.

[119] Michael T. Kaufman, "P.B.A. Blames City in Reply to Mayor on Laxity Charge," *New York Times,* May 11, 1970, 7.

Homer Bigart's "Thousands Assail Lindsay in 2d Protest by Workers" details how a second demonstration took place on May 11 when several thousand workers in hard hats roved the financial district of New York City chanting anti-Lindsay slogans such as "Lindsay is a bum" and "Impeach the Red Mayor." While no confrontation between the workers and students took place that day, the workers also carried placards aimed exclusively at the students that read "Don't worry, they don't draft faggots." Mayor Lindsay acknowledged the divisions by urging tolerance and stating, "that is the only way we can assure the maintenance of both freedom and order." The demonstrations between both groups were now a daily occurrence.[120]

Another article by Homer Bigart titled "Thousands in City March to Assail Lindsay on War," details how on May 15th, several thousand workers comprising 2,000 to 5,000 longshoremen, construction workers, and now white-collar workers, marched in the financial district again, with this demonstration aimed specifically at Mayor Lindsay. A crowd of about 200 students counterprotested nearby while 2,600 policemen working overtime kept them separated from the workers. The workers threatened kids with long hair, people who flashed the V for victory sign with their fingers, and forcefully entered buildings that did not have an American flag installed on the outside. They brought their own flags and raised them over the old Tweed Court House as well as on the *Wall Street Journal* building. When a *Wall Street Journal* employee protested, police told him to be quiet. The workers were not only angry about the protestors, but this time their fury towards Lindsay was even more intense since the mayor had referred to the workers as a

[120] Homer Bigart, "Thousands Assail Lindsay in 2d Protest by Workers," *New York Times*, May 12, 1970, 18.

"tough and organized mob." The workers banged their hard hats against steel girders and carried placards that referred to Lindsay as a "rat, Commy rat, a faggot, a leftist, an idiot…and a traitor," all the while carrying a coffin with the epitaph: "Here lies the City of New York, Killed by Commissar Lindsay."[121]

The workers' rationale for taking such action varied under the umbrella of patriotism and support for Nixon. Francis X. Clines' article "For the Flag and for Country, They March" published in *The New York Times* featured several local New Yorkers expressing their enthusiasm for their country. John Nash, a printer from Newark, New Jersey, said, "We've got to be [*sic*] beat these Communists somewhere. So we're fighting them. Let's win. Victory. No substitute for victory." Nash added that "Outside of God, [the flag] is the most important thing I know. I know a lot of good friends died under this. It stands for the greatest: America." Robert Geary, an office worker, stated that the flag is "me. It's part of me. I fought for it myself two or three years in the Second World War…. All they [dissenters] have to do is move out." Mrs. Allison Greaker marched with her infant children. "I think [Nixon] is doing everything he can to bring about an honorable peace." Robert Romano, a general foreman, said, "I feel [college dissenters] have been with the silver spoon in their mouth too long and somebody has to take a hand in this to stop them because if not, the country itself will come to ruins."[122]

Those were just a few of the many views that were reported in the weeks following the Hardhat Riots; people who supported the Vietnam War and President

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[121] Homer Bigart, "Thousands in City March to Assail Lindsay on War," *New York Times*, May 16, 1970, 11.

[122] Francis X. Clines, "For the Flag and for Country, They March," *New York Times*, May 21, 1970, 22.

Nixon were not necessarily against the students protesting but felt that they did not appreciate the sacrifices that had been made in previous wars. They blamed Lindsay for creating such a divisive atmosphere in the city and pitting college students against their elders. They looked at the students as immature kids who did not understand what they were saying or doing; they were not mature enough to recognize the true threat to America: Communism. By not adhering to the flag code—a separate one that seemed to exist only in the minds of those who supported the war and Nixon—dissenters were seen as outsiders who did not deserve to be Americans because they had dared question American policy, something that the previous generation did not feel they had to do because it was such a strong source of pride for them. They marched to counter the anti-war demonstrators, which many reporters often wrote about and prefaced their descriptions with the sentences like "Marching under a sea of American flags…."[123] "Many of the participants prided not their brutality but what it inspired and the message it sent," Kuhn writes in *The Hardhat Riot*. "They believed that privileged kids had gotten what was coming to them, that peaceniks had defamed the same country that gave them the good life. They often would concede the right to dissent. But a beat later, they would stew over how these "punks" dissented."[124]

Nixon solidified union support by expressing approval for those who participated in the Hardhat Riots. He even got his very own hard hat, which Peter Brennan, head of the New York Building and Construction Trades Council gave to him during a May 26

[123] Homer Bigart, "Huge City Hall Rally Backs Nixon's Indochina Policies," *New York Times,* May 21, 1970, 1.

[124] Kuhn, *Hardhat Riot,* 241.

White House meeting. Nixon also took advantage of the Hardhat Riots by expressing his support for "Middle Americans" and the values they stood for. In fact, the criticism Lindsay received during those few weeks in May all but delighted Nixon. The riots embarrassed Lindsay, who by that point Nixon saw as an enemy. "Let's only hit Lindsay and hit him hard," Nixon said less than a month after the riots ended.[125] Sandra Scanlon's scholarship adds to this idea that Nixon benefitted from the Hardhat Riots by arguing that the pro-American demonstrations blunted the anti-war movement's impact and gave Nixon political capital that he badly needed as it became clear that the war would continue for longer than he had anticipated. It also allowed Nixon to continue withdrawing slowly from Vietnam without much scrutiny.[126]

Did Lindsay's support for the anti-war movement cost him his credibility and ability to run the city? Hardly. After all, it did help him win re-election. That does not mean, however, that his enemies let him forget it. One could argue that Lindsay had made a deal with the devil to become mayor again, a deal that meant he would have to battle pro-war—and by extension—Nixon—advocates throughout the remainder of his second term; he did not run for a third. In 1972 he switched to the Democratic Party and briefly ran for president but performed so poorly in the primaries that he dropped out within weeks after making his announcement. It is difficult to say that Nixon got the last laugh though.

While in 1972, a year before Lindsay left office, 60 percent a Gallup poll of New Yorkers felt that his administration was "working poorly" and only nine percent gave it a

[125] Cannato, *Ungovernable City*, 453.

[126] Scanlon, *Pro-War Movement*, 209.

"good" rating, it was nothing compared to the disgrace that Nixon faced half way through his second term, when the Watergate scandal forced him from office.[127] In August of 1974, with the House of Representatives drafting impeachment charges against him, Richard Nixon decided to resign rather than become the first president to be removed from office.

Lindsay's gamble to break with Nixon had paid off for him in 1969 with a little help from the Mets. He could not have anticipated, however, the ramifications of his flag edict, which pro-war Nixon supporters exploited not only to help Nixon but to fulfill a wish many had held since Lindsay took office: to see him toppled.

[127] Jeff Greenfield, "Hail and Farewell; Reading John Lindsay's Face," *New York Times*, July 29, 1973, https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1973/07/29/404916231.pdf.

# Conclusion

Vincent Cannato argues that the remarks Lindsay gave at the University of Pennsylvania in April of 1970 in which he said that draft dodgers were "truly heroic" contributed to the Hardhat Riots.[128] Anger towards Lindsay went back long before that though, and not necessarily because of his anti-war views, which he did not begin to amplify until his re-election campaign in 1969. In fact, much of the animosity manifested in the early weeks of his first term in 1965. Unions hated him because he did not respect them. Middle class people in the city resented him because of his arrogant demeanor. The police hated him because of the constant clashes between City Hall and the police force. There was, after all, a reason why he did not get the Republican nomination for re-election in 1969. While tremendous resentment existed against Lindsay going into the final few months of his first term, his flag edict on October 15, 1969 became the conduit his enemies—everyone from blue-collar workers all the way up to Nixon—needed to tarnish him and advance their own agendas. Exploiting the flag edict allowed Lindsay's enemies to consolidate support for Nixon and policy on Vietnam, but it also allowed them to change the narrative in a way that made conservatives sound more positive and patriotic, even if it was only in New York City.  The finally found something useful in Lindsay.

It is natural to consider how Moratorium Day in New York City would have played out if Lindsay had pledged more loyalty to Nixon at the 1968 Republican National Convention. These sentiments force one to consider the "What if?" question regarding

[128] Cannato, *Ungovernable City*, 449.

Lindsay's potential relationship with the Nixon Administration. If Lindsay had become vice president, he never would have had to endure the challenges that came with supporting the anti-war movement. While Moratorium Day would likely have taken place without a hitch anyway, it is unlikely the Hardhat Riots would have ever happened. Pro-war advocates who strongly supported Nixon would not have been able to exploit Lindsay's flag edict and turn it into the polarizing political issue that rallied so many conservatives later that May. In fact, they may not have been angry at all as their anger towards anti-war advocates on Moratorium Day would have likely dissipated over time, especially since they knew nothing like a flag edict to which they could respond with anger. While it is difficult to really know, it is fair to consider whether Nixon would have been able to continue to implement Vietnamization without the political capital that the Hardhat Riots brought him in the spring of 1970.

Of course, if he had not become Nixon's running mate and remained mayor while agreeing to tow the Nixon line, Lindsay's opponents could have used the setbacks and failures of his first term against him, but that would have been even more difficult for them to do because Lindsay likely would not only have had the full backing of the Republican Party, but an endorsement from Nixon himself. If Lindsay had maintained a strong relationship with Nixon though, any political opponent, particularly a Democrat, could have used that connection as a point of attack, arguing that Lindsay had tethered himself to a presidential administration whose plan for ending the war in Vietnam was not as sound as initially believed, especially as Nixon found himself sinking deeper into the war as Johnson had before him. If Lindsay and Nixon's relationship had not fractured at the Republican National Convention in 1968, he would have likely expressed his

support for Nixon's Vietnam War policy, which would have surely hurt him in his re-election, especially in the wake of the Tet Offensive and the My Lai Massacre, both of which boosted anti-war sentiment.

While it is impossible to say just how much this would have affected Lindsay, it is important to consider because the war had become such a divisive topic by 1969, which forced politicians to take a stand on the war that could make or break their political careers. Regardless of Lindsay's motivations for taking a more anti-war stance, it paid off for him come election time. By attending Mets games, Lindsay made himself look like someone the people of New York City could relate to. Just how much did the Mets' success in 1969 influenced Lindsay's campaign? Their role in his re-election cannot be discounted at all; without a Mets victory, Lindsay's re-election may have been even more challenging for him. Maybe it would have been just enough to counter the support he would have lost as a result of his close connection to Nixon and the GOP. While the Mets did not make or break his re-election, their victory in the 1969 World Series, combined with the support of Moratorium Day, factored overwhelmingly in his re-election.

Lindsay's role in the pro and anti-war movements of the Vietnam War in 1969 and 1970 exposed a deep rift in American that had not been seen since the early days of the Civil War. Of course, Lindsay did not create these divides; they had started to form in the mid-1960s during the Johnson Administration when it became clear to Americans that U.S. forces could not win the war. By ordering the city flags lowered to half-staff on Moratorium Day, Lindsay inadvertently further divided New Yorkers in a way that not only led to violent clashes—it is a miracle that no one died—but became a useful political tool for Nixon only a year after he and Lindsay began to part ways. That factor is

what makes this story so intriguing. Nixon had no way of knowing that picking Agnew over Lindsay would benefit his administration in the long run. Lindsay did what was best for Lindsay, as do most politicians. He won re-election by speaking out against the war, but it came at a heavy price.

This thesis ends with the words of the Baltimore Orioles manager Earl Weaver. After losing the World Series, journalist Roger Angell recalled someone asking Weaver, "Didn't you think, when you were ahead in the seventh inning, that you could keep that lead and then take the games back to Baltimore and probably beat the Mets there?" Weaver replied, "That's what you can't do in baseball. You can't run a few plays into the line and kill the clock. You got to give the other man his chance at bat. This is why this is the greatest game of them all."[129] Like the Orioles—who would win the World Series the following year—Lindsay could not just sit idle in a second term and wait out his political enemies. Pro-war advocates' attempts to drive Lindsay from office did not succeed but exploiting his flag edict in their favor inflicted significant damage on his second term. In the end, while Lindsay finished his second term, he left New York City very much like the Orioles did in 1969: with his head down, wondering where he went wrong.

Perhaps, if Lindsay had liked baseball more, he could have better anticipated his opponents' moves.

[129] Geoffrey Ward and Ken Burns, *Baseball: An Illustrated History* (New York: Knopf, 1994), 409.

# Afterword

One day last summer as I sat on the porch of my parents' summer home doing research for this thesis, my parents came out with a drink and sat down near me to enjoy the afternoon breeze. My mother asked me where I was in my research at that point. I told her about the Hardhat Riots, and the dissent that so many Americans demonstrated towards Nixon. My parents, lifelong Republicans, responded indirectly to me by discussing Nixon's success in opening relations with China. In an effort to refocus their attention, I told my mother that I would have been one of the dissenters. "No, Zach. We don't do that in this family." In that instance, I gained a stronger understanding of why conservatives prided themselves on being a part of the "silent majority." They did not speak out for fear of embarrassing themselves. More importantly, at least in my family, you support the president and his policies because that is the American thing to do, and you always express support for America, regardless of whether it is right or wrong. This is not to say that my parents do not respect government leaders who are Democrats. While my parents did not vote for Joe Biden in the most recent election, they like him and are looking forward to seeing how well he can lead the country. My parents' fathers both served in American wars, and they were raised to respond to the call of duty in a time of war. My parents went to college during the Vietnam War with people who said they were "hiding out in college" to avoid the draft. That level of behavior still makes them angry to this day. As a result, it is difficult for them to validate Democratic values because in their mind Democrats pay less attention to foreign policy issues, which they feel often results in the decline of the United States as a world power. It is an opinion I do

not agree with, but I have to respect their perspective and the experiences that have shaped those viewpoints.

By telling my father and mother that I would have joined the dissenters, their minds went to a zero sum/love it or leave it scenario that was instilled in their minds in the 1950s by the Rosenberg verdict, as well as parents who had served their country in both World Wars, respectively. In their mind, as well as the minds of those who professed a love for America through their pro-war activities, what was not there to love about being an American? Tried as I did to tell them that it is my love for America that compels me to dissent in an effort to make it better for all (as much of a romantic notion as that sounds), they could not understand why I would do anything that appears at face value to deprecate American values. I love my parents very much, of course, but this moment with them helped me better understand the context of the history I studied for this thesis, particularly Nixon and Lindsay's actions. Additionally, it helped me better understand why pro-war advocates felt the way they did. As I conducted my research, I found it easier than I had assumed to dislike pro-war advocates because of their perceived arrogance. I feel now though that while I still do not agree with them on much, I believe that they, like me, only want what is best for America.

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