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THE USAID PROGRAM AND VIETNAMESE REALITY

This paper is a staff study
--not a statement of policy,
It was drafted to serve the
Program Memorandum Task Force
in its deliberations. In its
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and represents only the views
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VIETNAM RESEARCH AND EVALUATION
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Drafted in June 1968 by Abraham M. Hirsch, Chief, Evaluation & Research Division, Program Office, USAID	Authorized as a Staff Study by James L. Roush, Assistant Director for Program, USAID, Vietnam
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Recently, the Personnel Consultation and Assistance Branch prepared and utilized a questionnaire to solicit candid and accurate responses from returning USAID/Vietnam employees. Respondents were asked not to sign their questionnaires and were assured that their anonymity would be preserved.

The purpose of the questionnaires was to discern developing patterns pointing to weaknesses in our activities; problem areas, if you will, which impair the efficiency of operational conduct. To date, 35 questionnaires have been completed and the following is a summary of the responses received.

1. CONFORMANCE OF YOUR ACTUAL JOB TO YOUR EARLIER UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT YOU WOULD BE DOING IN VIETNAM.

Thirty-seven percent of the respondents claimed that the job they performed in Vietnam bore little resemblance to the type of position for which they were initially hired. Obviously, some of the men might have misunderstood their recruitment and personnel officers in Washington, and rapid changes in assignments are not unusual. But, it is difficult to understand why better than one out of every three men arriving in Saigon might have felt as if he were starting off on the wrong foot by performing duties which did not suit his skills or interests. Emphasis on the negative does not discredit the fact that 63 percent of the respondents thought that their actual work conformed well with their job descriptions. Rather, the disparity between intended and actual work assignments reinforces the frequently-mentioned charge of poor personnel administration, especially in Saigon.

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PREFACE AND SUMMARY

This paper deals with issues in the USAID program--issues that arise when present policies are compared with policies that might be adopted, and that might be more successful in achieving important United States goals in Vietnam. These alternative policies might have been adopted years ago, but they also could be adopted and implemented now. Though written with the benefit of hindsight, this paper talks of the present and the future, not of the past.

In the drafter's view, the USAID program has suffered because of its heavy and exclusive reliance on the Government of Vietnam (GVN). The GVN is a useful instrumentality, and neither the U.S. Mission nor USAID can or should ignore it. However, it is a government of little capability, and it should not enjoy a monopoly of USAID assistance. Rather, USAID should pursue a pluralistic policy of working with the GVN as well as with other political entities in the country; these are local power elites (LOPEL), which control about sixty per cent of the country's population. The LOPEL seek to maintain their autonomy both vis-a-vis the GVN and the Viet Cong/National Liberation Front (VC/NLF). In resisting the VC/NLF, they are far more effective and efficient than the Saigon government. If a roll-back of the VC/NLF threat is the U.S. Mission's and USAID's objective, then much of the project program should be conducted with the LOPEL rather than with the GVN exclusively.

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There still will be some important functions for the GVN to perform. Among these are supporting and back-stopping local bodies that provide services or are engaged in development; and the provision of certain central government services to the LOPEL, and the conduct of a few "super-projects" designed to enhance the posture of the central government vis-a-vis all the LOPEL. These super-projects are designed pragmatically to integrate LOPEL population with the national government, by creating on the part of the population a pattern of dependence on certain types of services that only the central government can provide. This same emphasis on "pragmatic integration with the central government" also should animate all other projects in which the central government is involved.

Certain organizational changes may have to be made within the USAID/CORDS structure to implement the approach discussed in this paper; some of these changes are described in general terms.

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THE USAID PROGRAM AND VIETNAMESE REALITY

In the early summer of 1968, it has become apparent that the situation in the Republic of Vietnam has not improved significantly in spite of the massive American civilian and military presence. The Saigon government's hold over the country is tenuous, and for the first time even the security of urban areas no longer can be taken for granted. An elected Parliament now exists, but it has yet to play a constructive role. There is considerable tension between it and the Executive branch of the government. Within the Executive branch discord prevails. The president and vice-president are widely believed to be at odds. The do-nothing cabinet of Premier Nguyen Van Loc was replaced in May by that of Tran Van Huong, and the ability of the new cabinet to function cannot yet be assessed; at time of writing there is little to distinguish it above its predecessor. Rumors of impending coups still circulate, and are taken seriously by many, even within the ranks of the public service in the capital. The atmosphere created is not one which encourages the uncommitted to align themselves with the central government. All these and other factors--such as lack of skilled, trained and motivated personnel, wide corruption, and absence of charismatic leadership at the top levels of the government--keep the Government of Vietnam (GVN) at low levels of effectiveness.

Two other background factors affect consideration of the USAID program. The first has to do not with Vietnam but with the United States. These

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are times of balance of payments problems, austerity in federal budgeting for operations abroad, reductions of AID personnel, and, last but not least, a widespread feeling at home that all is not going well in Vietnam. Two years after the massive U.S. buildup in Vietnam, the American electorate is weary--and this is an election year. The second has to do with the Paris talks. Regardless of where these talks are leading or indeed whether they will continue to be held, they have served to undermine further such prestige as the Saigon government has among its supporters. To the Vietnamese it appears that the U.S. government is ready to seize upon some accommodation with the NVA/VC/NLF to wash its hands of the Saigon government, and to exert pressure on the Thieu administration to bend to the wind of the American desire to see the Vietnam question settled, somehow, but quickly. In Vietnam this has exacerbated relations between Americans and Vietnamese. It has fed latent feelings of anti-Americanism, and reduced--though it was never high--the influence of American advisers in many GVN units and agencies. Additionally, the Paris talks are creating uncertainty in Saigon, and uncertainty which in turn feeds the demagoguery of some leaders, unbalances some intra-GVN balances of power, dampens the private sector's enterprise (already subdued because of military insecurity). Many Vietnamese wonder whether the U.S. is prepared to chuck South Vietnam onto the heap of discarded policies. The Vietnamese have never understood or believed the intensity of our

involvement as we have spoken of it; and they are all too prone to see their disbelief justified by events, and to see us endowed with that basic Vietnamese political characteristic, pragmatic flexibility.

All these factors justify raising some basic issues about the nature and content of the USAID program. There may earlier have been reasons for an agonizing reappraisal of our project program, but now these reasons are pressing. Each year we have talked about new thrusts, greater focus, fewer projects, greater impact. Events appear now to have caught up with us, and to force us not only to make a reassessment, but to implement a major overhaul.

There are obstacles to such an overhaul. Government policy has a momentum of its own, and once a course is embarked upon, it is hard to change direction. This is true always, but truer still in Vietnam. Here, objectives and the means of reaching them have become intertwined. Criticism of the means often is interpreted as a challenge to the objective, or, worse, to basic American policy on Vietnam. Moreover, a real shift of policy may be interpreted at home as an admission of failure of past efforts, and this, in turn, brings into question the validity of current endeavors. Last but not least, there are a number of fixed notions--I call them our mythology--which have captivated us: the mythology, the mystique, the conventional wisdom, of counter-insurgency, of anti-guerrilla warfare, of subduing wars of national liberation. Part of the mythology is made up of gods cast by

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doctrine-pourers in remote policy-making places; and part stems from a misreading of the lessons of Greece, the Philippines, and Malaya, and a failure to understand that Vietnam is different, and why and how.

But, whatever else revolutionary warfare may require, it requires flexibility. This is a war of opportunism, of avoiding fixed positions, of mobility: this is true for the military tactician, and it must be true of the civilian policy-maker, and it must become our tactic as it is that of the opponent.

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I. VIETNAM: THE DIFFERENCE

The Vietnamese war as we know it--"our" Vietnam war--is merely a continuation of a protracted war that has been waged since the end of World War II. In and of itself this is significant. For the enemy's leadership and for many of his fighters, and for the civilian population throughout both Vietnams, this is not a war which began in the 1960's; it is a continuation of a revolutionary effort which Ho Chi Minh embarked upon during the latter part of World War II.

When we look at the war, we often forget how long a history it has. This long history is reflected in seasoned veterans; in an enemy methodology which no longer is experimental, but based on precedents of past tactics and engagements (political and military); in Viet Cong/Viet Minh control of certain areas now for over twenty years; in a whole generation in parts of South Vietnam for whom the VC, not the Saigon government, are the normative government; and in an institutionalization of Viet Cong control over parts of South Vietnam's population.

We see the Viet Cong largely as insurgents depending on aid from abroad. In a sense this is true, since the Viet Cong could not possibly wage the military war they are waging without assistance from North Vietnam. But for the South Vietnamese, North Vietnam is not "abroad". It is part of the country, though under different, and for most South Vietnamese, hostile management. To this must be added the personal dimension--the fact that there are many families in South Vietnam,

including families who are anti-VC, who have relatives on the other side, fighting with the VC or living and working in North Vietnam. Surely, this war is "international," since it involves an invasion of South Vietnam by forces under the control of the North Vietnamese government; but though we see this aspect clearly, we must not lose sight of the other angle, that this also is a civil war, with all the complications resulting therefrom. However, using the term "civil war" carries an erroneous implication again, for it would seem to indicate that Vietnam earlier had a unity which now has been rent by factional strife. This, too, is untrue. Vietnam is not like Spain in the late 1930's, or like Greece during the upheavals following World War II. Spain and Greece were nations, and had a sense of civic unity. Vietnam in its present configuration never really was one nation, and a strong sense of being Vietnamese, a strong ethnic consciousness, or loyalty to the same emperor, is not the same as a sense of civic unity. What we are involved in in Vietnam is something sui generis, for which Western political terminology has no appropriate term, though the term "revolutionary war" perhaps is the best, simply because it is so vague and begs so many questions. The Vietnam war is a struggle between two groups, both minorities within the context of South Vietnam, both receiving assistance from abroad, assistance which helps determine the technological character and the intensity-level of the war, but is not and was not the determinant of the origins, continuation,

or conclusion of the war. In that contest, the majority of South Vietnamese are neutral, though their neutrality is not a fixed position, but a spectrum of varying degrees of non-involvement; and are ambivalent, having mixed feelings, friendly and hostile for both sides, though to varying degrees at different times.

Not so for Greece. The Greeks long have been a nation, with a sense of civic unity, and the Greek insurgency was ideological, fanned by the Cold War. The degree of individual involvement was high; few Greeks stood aloof from the contest. The insurgents heavily depended on assistance from abroad, from non-Greeks. And their movement collapsed when Yugoslavia broke with the Comintern, and ceased to give safe-haven and other assistance to the guerrillas. In Greece, the contest was between an established government, a national tradition, and foreign-sponsored revolutionaries with an alien ideology.

The Malayan Emergency had an overriding ethnic character. The insurgents were Chinese, mainly non-urban Chinese; practically no Malay or Indian, and few urban Chinese, supported their movement. The ethnic and class character of the insurgency provided the strategy for its suppression: the non-Chinese population supported moves which sought to prevent a Chinese Communist take-over. The British had a firm base, and a considerable measure of popular support, in squashing the rebels; they had an efficient organization, and since Malaya was not yet independent,

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they had a freedom of action that we lack in Vietnam. Most of the things which make the Vietnam war so complex were simple and neat in Malaya.

Of the three insurgencies--in Greece, Malaya, and the Philippines--the latter bore the greatest resemblance to the revolutionary war in Vietnam. But here, too, significant differences make comparison difficult, and reduce the instructiveness of the Philippine operation against the Huks to our endeavors here. First and foremost, there is the difference in timing. The Huk movement at its height can be likened to the Viet Minh in the early and middle 1940's, before the Viet Minh acquired respectability by longevity, and authority by the maintenance of control over specific portions of the land. What was done against the Huks in some measure might have succeeded against the Viet Minh early in the game, but not in the 1950's, and certainly not in the 1960's. Once the Viet Minh received recognition as a national entity (recognition that the French gave them and which the Geneva Agreement reaffirmed), the similarities between the Viet Minh and the Huks began to fade. Unlike the Viet Minh, the Huks remained a rural insurgency, with active and vociferous sympathizers but little concrete support in the cities. Moreover, the Philippines had emerged from their colonial experience with more administrative cohesion than did the Vietnamese, whom the French ruled under three separate administrative systems. True, the Filipinos to this day lack the fierce sense of ethnic consciousness that characterizes the Vietnamese,

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but they also inherited from the American administration a sense of administrative and organizational unity which helped the Manila government to maintain itself in power. Militarily, the American-trained Filipino army, especially the Philippine Constabulary, was designed to meet local emergencies, not to fight conventional wars; while in Vietnam, through the 1950's and into the 1960's, the emphasis in the training of the RVNAF by the JUSMAAG was placed on forming an army for the defense of the national territory against external aggression more than in shaping a military force to cope with insurgency. Last but not least, the Vietnamese have significant indigenous political traditions; important localized foci of political power; and a political character which delights in conspiratorial tactics and secretive methods. The Filipinos politically are much less sophisticated, and such traditions as they have largely are imports from Spain and America.

Vietnam is different. The difference is great enough to warrant the view that, although there always is an opportunity for transferring some techniques from one milieu to another, the Vietnam war must be fought on its own terms; we must come to understand what it is that makes this situation novel, and learn how we can apply these specifically Vietnamese factors to benefit our cause.

II. A PLURALISTIC CONTEST

The conventional wisdom sees an insurgency in bi-polar terms. There is an established government (paint it white); it has legitimacy; it has limited acceptance; but it lacks appeal for some portions of the population (usually for some of the rural population, in the classical analysis); and it is controlled by selfish guys. There is an insurgent group, usually receiving some assistance from abroad (paint it red); they compete with the established government for the loyalty of the disaffected elements, and exploit to their own advantage weaknesses in the central government's performance. There is a contest-- for the hearts and minds of people. The government must stop doing the wrong things; it must come to do the right things. It must curb corruption and despotic practices; it must build roads, schools, dispensaries, latrines, pig-sties; it must win the people. The good guys must replace the selfish guys in the government. The people go to the highest bidder, the one that offers them the best and the most. The United States must help the government to offer the people the best and the most. Then the people become disillusioned with the insurgents; they rally to the government. Gradually, areas under insurgent control begin to wither; gradually, the blots of red shrink, break up, and are reduced to naught. Finally, there are no more red areas left. All the population now roots for the government. End of insurgency.

The Vietnam war is not like this; it is a pluralistic, multi-polar contest. Yes, there is a government, but its position is not

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as postulated by the conventional wisdom. Yes, there are insurgents, receiving help from abroad, but they have a different character than that assigned to them in the conventional view. Finally, and importantly, there are other participants in the contest, and it is their presence and their effect which make impossible the application of the conventional wisdom.

(A) The Government

There are qualitative orders of governments, and the GVN is a government of a low order. The constitutional history of Indochina in the years between the end of World War II and the Geneva Agreement of 1954 is sufficiently complex as to lend support to any of the following views: that the Hanoi government is the legitimate government of Vietnam; that the Bao Dai government was the legitimate government, and that the Saigon government of which Ngo Dinh Diem became the head inherited the legitimacy of the Bao Dai government (what happened to that legitimacy in November 1963 is another matter); that neither of the two governments that existed in 1955 (Hanoi and Saigon) were more than de facto administrations of their respective territories. But all this is western constitutional theory; the de facto situation, as it applies to the present government in Saigon, is of greater operational concern.

The Saigon government now can derive legitimacy from the election held in the Fall of 1967, but its status as the de facto government is controversial. It does not have, and it never had, effective control

over all of the national territory. Significant areas of the country have never, since the end of World War II, been under the control of the successive Saigon governments. Even before the Tet offensive, Saigon's rule over South Vietnam was nil in some areas, vague or intermittent in others, and was effective only in some parts of the country,

So much for jurisdiction. More important in revolutionary war is the way people feel about the government, how they see it, and how they react to it. That the Saigon government scores low on this with the VC/NLF is not surprising, nor significant. What is significant is that the Saigon government is seen as inefficient and ineffective even among those who oppose the insurgents. (In this its position is in stark contrast to the position of the legitimate governments in Greece, Malaya and the Philippines during the insurgencies there.) Directly related to this are two elements of Vietnamese political thought. The first is that the Vietnamese always have seen their central government with ambivalence, have never accepted the desirability of having a central administration with pervasive powers, and hold that the less central government the better. Most Vietnamese don't really feel a need for a strong central government. The second has to do with the traditional concept of "change of mandate" (cach mang)--the Chinese and Vietnamese equivalent of revolution--which still influences the thinking of many Vietnamese. This concept combines pragmatism with a sort of circular

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reasoning. Simply stated, it is that government's function, and the justification for government, is the maintenance of law and order. When law and order break down (whether because the ruled revolt, or because of other circumstances) there is an inference that the rulers no longer enjoy the mandate of heaven. This justifies ignoring the government, or opposing it. Thus a breakdown of law and order undermines the legitimacy of the government, and this in turn may contribute to further resistance to the government--and so on, until a new ruler makes manifest his mandate of heaven by imposing on the ruled his will, his new order, his law.

However, legally, politically, administratively, psychologically, and for obvious public relations purposes, the USG effort here must be channeled through a legitimate indigenous government; in dealing with Vietnam, the USG needs a Saigon government. That point cannot be made too strongly; and nothing in these pages is meant to suggest that we do without a GVN. But we should not take that GVN too seriously--and many of us do, and much of our policy, as reflected in the USAID program, does. The GVN is not a government-in-being; it is a government-in-training, an infant institution which now still is more an administration than a government, but which, hopefully, some day may become a government. That the VC/NLF see the Saigon government as a corrupt creature of the Americans is not in and of itself significant; it is to be expected.

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That many Vietnamese see it in that light--many Vietnamese who are against the VC/NLF--is more than disturbing. Most Vietnamese see the Saigon government as an inefficient, corrupt group of self-seeking men, out to squeeze the mostest out of their official opportunities. For most Vietnamese, the Saigon government is an unattractive mafia, whose major merit is that in some ways it strives to overcome that other mafia, the VC/NLF. Most Americans are aware of some of the corruption, and many can cite some specific instances of it; most Vietnamese know far more about it than the best informed Americans, for they live entrapped amidst the tentacles that suck at their earnings. Americans must ask themselves the obvious question--"If we were Vietnamese--would we dig this government? Would we cheer for Thieu and Ky, feel loyal to their administration, and support this group as our government?" Why should we assume that the Vietnamese, heirs to a sophisticated and pragmatic political tradition that goes back millenia, are less discriminating than we are?

So much for image. On administrative efficiency the GVN scores equally low; in part, to many Vietnamese, its inefficiency makes the government bearable, for it blunts its effects and lightens the load of governmental control. Much of this inefficiency is tied to corruption; only some of it is the result of sheer lack of talent. The best men in Vietnam do not work for the government. One need only to read through USAID

program documents to see how ineffective the government is in trying to handle even the simplest matters. In large measure, the ineffectiveness is less an ineffectiveness of procedures (not knowing how to do something) than an ineffectiveness of motivation and purpose (not knowing the need for something to be done, and not passing on a sense of urgency to subordinate levels). Frequently, too, officials block moves because they are against their personal interest.

Thus, while we Americans need the GVN as a facade, as a tool, it is a facade and a tool that represent liabilities, more than assets. The Vietnamese blame their government and its weaknesses on us. If an official enriches himself on USAID goods, if he exacts a levy from recipients of our aid, the Vietnamese, who credit us with better intelligence and more power than we have, believe that it is we who tolerate all this, who abet it at least by our passivity, by our reluctance to blow the whistle. In general, the Vietnamese believe--they too have a mythology, and that's a part of it--the USG in Vietnam to be far more powerful than it is, and we get blamed for things about which we have little official or substantial knowledge.

Being Americans, conditioned by the political system of which we are part and by not too dissimilar systems in other Western countries, we are slow to recognize the tremendous gap that separates most anti-VC/NLF Vietnamese from their government; and slow, therefore, and hesitant, to accept the real operational implications of that gap. What we have done,

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and generally unsuccessfully, are the cosmetic efforts: propaganda efforts by the GVN supported by JUSPAO advisers and military psyops personnel; and GVN displays of magnanimity, usually with our obvious material support. These efforts have not succeeded; it is doubtful whether the Vietnam Information Service (VIS) converts Vietnamese who feel hostile to the Saigon government. It is doubtful whether the average Vietnamese, seeing a GVN official hand out American cement and rebar to the homeless, comes to love his government more; probably he believes that the GVN official has profited materially from US munificence, and that only a part of the goodies which the foreigners made available find their way to the needy--and the USA, of course, and the GVN, are blamed for allowing the graft to go on. Most Vietnamese think GVN officials to be more corrupt than the GVN's fiercest American critics believe it to be, and it is hard to say who is right. But in revolutionary warfare, especially in a pragmatic culture such as that of Vietnam, what is absolute truth does not matter really; what matters is what people widely believe to be true.

We must come to face up to the reality that helping the GVN is not the same as helping the anti-VC/NLF Vietnamese, and that many of these feel that when we help the GVN, we are choosing to aid a small group of officials--our friends--instead of helping the people. Most Vietnamese distrust the GVN, and do not see it as a fit channel for Americans to use to help them; or at least, as a channel to be

used exclusively. And if most Vietnamese feel alienated from the GVN, and do not trust it, then we should consider the implications of this. These implications will be discussed further on in this paper.

(B) The Viet Cong

Any portrayal of the Viet Cong as a mere band of armed insurgents, seeking by violent means to overthrow the government of South Vietnam, and to replace it by a Communist regime controlled from Hanoi, is simplistic, though not completely incorrect. If there are qualitative orders of government, and if on that scale the GVN ranks low, then there are qualitative orders of insurgencies, and on that scale the Viet Cong rate high; they rate higher, for instance, than did the Hukbs in the Philippines, the Communist Terrorists in Malaya, and the Communists in Greece. The VC have shown themselves capable of long-range planning, of conducting governmental and economic operations in areas under their control, and of restructuring Vietnamese society in these areas. Moreover, the Viet Cong, more wrongly than rightly, have acquired an image, widely held by Vietnamese and shared in some measure by some American officials, of incorruptibility; to most Vietnamese, this incorruptibility is a fearsome aspect of Viet Cong rule, since it reduces the ability of the individual to influence the application of governmental policy, and to harmonize that policy with his own needs; but, like any fearsome virtue, it also is admirable.

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The Viet Cong have outgunned the Saigon government both in ideology and in pragmatics. Their appeal is wide; even many Vietnamese who oppose the VC admit that the VC have virtues, and these virtues mostly are described in terms of the GVN's failings. The VC outscore the GVN in historical continuity; the top leadership, and the policies they espouse, largely have remained the same since the beginnings of the Viet Minh movement. Their program is more understandable to the simpler Vietnamese--the VC "don't try for too much." (Pike, Viet Cong, p. 41). It consists of fewer points than the sophisticated, multi-faceted, complex programs of the Saigon government; it gives the impression of being more attainable, in part because it is simpler, in part because the Viet Cong have, on the whole, realized more of their claims than have the successive Saigon regimes. Last but not least, the Viet Cong can play on the endemic xenophobia of the Vietnamese by claiming to be irrevocably nativistic, undilutedly Vietnamese, while the Saigon governments have relied heavily on foreign support and assistance (foreign, of course, means non-Vietnamese; to a denizen of Camau, a man from Hanoi is not native, but he is far less foreign than an American or a Frenchman).

More important pragmatically is what the Viet Cong appear to offer:

- "(1) Social mobility--the promise of a better social and economic status.
- "(2) Political power--the promise of government of the people, by the people, and for the people through the instrumentality of the MLF/PRP, which is very plausible given that (1) is accepted.

"(3) Anti-U.S., anti-colonialism--this puts the struggle into the context of a Holy War of Liberation rather than the much less palatable one of a civil war."
(Menkes and Jones, Pacification , p. 11).

The first item, social mobility, in particular, is important. In spite of its traditionalism and apparent static character, Vietnamese society traditionally has allowed quests for upward social mobility. In historical times, this could be achieved both from within and from without the political system. The mandarinal system originally, though less and less as time went by, permitted unusually gifted individuals of low origins to rise to the top, and become entrenched there; and alternatively it often became possible for a venturesome and fearless individual to rise to the top by force of arms (banditry, if you will)--become a warlord, master of some chunk of territory, and on rarer occasions, to seize the imperial throne. Viet Cong leadership contains numbers of individuals who have become important in spite of low origins and lack of educational credentials; more important, there is a wide belief that a bright young man can go far in the Viet Cong hierarchy. The Saigon hierarchy does include some individuals of low origins; but, more important, there is wide belief that positions of power in the Saigon system are reserved for those of powerful families and concomitant educational advantages, and connections.

The Viet Cong slug away at a few selected points: independence from the foreigner, a better deal for the masses, a restructuring of

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Vietnamese society, punishment for traitors and oppressors. The Viet Minh early gained the initiative on the ideological/philosophical front, and have not lost it. In comparison, successive Saigon governments have offered little. Their appeals have sought either to beat the Viet Cong at their own game by promising the same things, or have been self-denigrating--statements about punishment of corrupt officials, improving the efficiency of government, reducing the influence of the foreigners. No Saigon government, from Diem to Thieu, has come up with anything new and startling by way of a political philosophy.

This is neither surprising nor shocking. No government in power can have a dynamic ideology; only a revolutionary movement can spot an ideology worthy of the name (some governments have revolutionary antecedents, and their ideological statements are reflections of their revolutionary pasts, not of their present conditions). In competing with a government in power (no matter how firm or how shaky that power), the insurgent always can out-ideologize the government. On the contrary, a government in power can weaken its position by imitating the yelps and cries of the insurgents; and this is what, in part, the Saigon governments have done.

On the pragmatic side, the Viet Cong have not done badly. There are areas which have been governed by the VC for the last twenty years; these areas include portions of the Camau peninsula, much of the Plain of Reeds, major segments of War Zone "D" northwest of Saigon, some areas

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of northern Kontum Province, and some of the highland areas of the coastal provinces in the northern part of the country (Thua Thien, Quang Nam, Quang Tin, Quang Ngai, and Binh Dinh) (Hickey, Accommodation. . . . , p. 9).

In those places where the Viet Minh-Viet Cong have long held sway, their influence has permeated deeply and affected most aspects of the society. . . . In these areas (they) organize many of the economic activities--rice marketing, land reform, and taxation. Most important, however, is that their influence has penetrated the attitude-value system. The net result of these innovations is that, after a long period they have developed localized Viet Cong societies. (Hickey, op. cit., p. 9-10).

In the areas under their control, they provide the normal minimal governmental services. They run village schools, adult education classes, a normal school, cultural schools, and have revised curricula; they claim that 40 per cent to 70 per cent of the children in the areas under their control are in school. They maintain dispensaries, keep the local economies running, collect taxes and provide justice, build roads, and to some degree bring in technical innovations (Pike, Viet Cong, pp. 231-282, 294-295; Hickey, op.cit., pp. 11-13). To a villager in a Viet Cong-ruled area, the prospect of having a MORD-sponsored school established if and when the area is submitted to RD treatment is not enticing; the pragmatic advantages of being ruled from Saigon are limited, at least from the village-level viewpoint. There is little, if anything, that the Saigon government is likely to do for that villager within the confines of the village which the VC/NLF cannot do for him too, or even might have done already. To this should be added another pragmatic aspect of the Viet Cong rule. Usually the Viet Cong do not insist on cutting off an area under their control from contacts with other areas; they permit

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commerce to continue with areas under full or partial GVN control; and often they permit goods to move from one non-VC area to another through VC-held territory, albeit in return for a "tax". Once the GVN is in control, however, it establishes check-points, and generally discourages contacts with VC-held territories. Being in VC-held territory thus offers more options, and these in some measure are lost when one's village is brought under "pacification".

In the rest of the country, Viet Cong influence has been of lesser magnitude, and though it has had impact it has not contributed to significant socio-political changes. In those areas, the Viet Cong have shown their ability to penetrate, to assault, to brutalize--but not to hold. This inability to hold--to hold on to towns or areas seized as a result of a sudden attack, or after a period of infiltration of cadre--is significant: it points up the existence, in such areas, of counter-vailing forces which resist the Viet Cong.

Ruthlessness amplifies the impact of the Viet Cong. By threatening to punish those whom they brand "traitors", and then punishing them--publicly, brutally, manifestly--the Viet Cong have achieved credibility. In contrast, the Saigon governments have an erratic record of claims and stated intentions, followed generally by a failure to carry out. The Viet Cong have acquired the reputation that it is hard to reach accommodations with them; that they are tough; that they doggedly pursue their aims till they achieve them. In this society, which stresses harmony and accommodations, this kind of reputation begets fear, and respect, though it doesn't make for friends.

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(C) The Local Power Elites

The Saigon government and the Viet Cong are not like two boxers, contending for victory in an otherwise empty ring; they are more like two bar-room brawlers, each seeking to knock down the other in a tavern crowded with others to whom the contest is a nuisance, an unwelcome violence that threatens them with harm as they dodge the flying bottles and furniture.

Only small parts of South Vietnam are under the firm political control respectively of the GVN and the Viet Cong; VC areas hold between fifteen and twenty per cent of the population, and the GVN controls perhaps another fifteen to twenty per cent. (Based on MACCORDS-RAD, "Monthly Pacification Status Report (U)", 27 May 1968 (CONF). Precise percentages of population control are given there as 18.5 by the GVN, 17.9 by the VC.) The rest of the population in large measure is autonomous of both the GVN and the Viet Cong, preoccupied with defending its autonomous institutions in the face of mounting pressure from both sides, eager to seek accommodations, and striving in the long run to manipulate the two principal contestants in such a manner that the present struggle between Saigon and the insurgents may yet come to strengthen the autonomy they seek to preserve.

This autonomy is institutionalized in what, in this paper, I call local power elites (LOPEL). These LOPEL constitute the single most

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significant gap in our knowledge of Vietnamese affairs; and our ignorance of their characteristics, in turn, has led us to ignore them operationally.

Generally, the following seems to be true of the LOPEL:

- (1) Led by important, wealthy, influential, and inter-connected families, they control much of the social, cultural, economic, and institutional life of their respective areas.
- (2) The most significant LOPEL operate behind the facade of an sectarian, ethnic, or political movement; examples are the Hoa Hao, the Cao Dai, the Chinese congregations, the FULRO movement, certain Catholic communal groups, the Dai Viet, the VNQDD. However, other LOPEL may exist which lack such ideological/sectarian framework.
- (3) The most significant LOPEL have some sort of military tradition. Some, like the Hoa Hao and the Cao Dai, at one time maintained their own armed forces, at times placing them at the disposal of the central government or of a foreign power; this is what FULRO does now, in fact.
- (4) LOPEL maintain some sort of shadow government in the areas under their control. They maintain offices or agencies at local levels; in Hoa Hao country, for instance, the local Hoa Hao temple also serves as an organizational and political arm of the Hoa Hao leadership. At the local level, these governmental

agencies compete, usually quite successfully, with the local arm or branch of the central government's hierarchical structure. At the local level, LOPEL are sufficiently effective to block GVN actions which they do not favor.

- (5) LOPEL offer public services. Nearly all are concerned with education and health. Nearly all run social welfare services. They also assist their adherents economically in a variety of ways.
- (6) LOPEL have representation in Saigon. Mostly this representation is cloaked under other guises, but it is effective. Some LOPEL have their own members of Parliament; are represented at high levels in the military structure; or otherwise have informal spokesmen whom the Saigon government recognizes as such; and FULRO, of course, maintains an "embassy" in Saigon--it is called the Ministry for the Development of Ethnic Minorities.

LOPEL also have representation with the VC/NLF. Some LOPEL are represented officially on Viet Cong organizational bodies.

- (7) Some LOPEL at some times have been successful in forcing the Saigon government to place a LOPEL man within the GVN's administrative structure in a given territorial area. Examples are the Hoa Hao and FULRO. Both have been successful at times in having one of their men appointed district or province chief in areas

of importance to them.

The most important LOPEL include some that are ethnically Vietnamese and some are minoritarian. Mostly ethnically Vietnamese are the lesser LOPEL, which lack the easy identifiability which the larger groups have. There appears to be a LOPEL well established in parts of Kien Hoa province, for instance, for which no identity can readily be established, save that it seems to be powerful in parts of Kien Hoa.

LOPEL see themselves endangered both by the Saigon government and the VC/NLF. They seek to protect themselves between the two principal contestants by limiting their own involvement in the fracas, or by reaching accommodations with both sides, or, if that is not possible, by allying themselves to the Saigon government on terms which respect their quest for autonomy. The two principal contestants, in turn, seek to compromise the LOPEL so as to force them, somehow or other, to break away from the other side completely and throw their lot in completely with one side.

The LOPEL represent traditional forces, but traditional forces modernized in many ways. The Cao Dai, for instance, have a modern humanistic religious character (how can one be other than quasi-modern when one has Victor Hugo and Sun Yat-Sen as part of one's pantheon?). The Hoa Hao too have twentieth-century origins, fostering simplification

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of ritual. Both sects, and FULRO, count among their leadership persons who came under strong French influence in one way or another (it is not surprising that the Hoa Hao and the Cao Dai both were formed in Cochinchina, a French colony, while FULRO aims in large measure now to restore to the Highlanders the privileges and safeguards they enjoyed in French times). FULRO's leadership, and to a lesser extent that of the Hoa Hao and the Cao Dai, includes many who saw military service with the French, or at least served in LOPEL forces fighting under French direction. The lesser LOPEL also combine modern and traditional features.

A clear-cut victory by either Saigon or the VC/NLF would be a serious blow to the LOPEL, and they know it. The Saigon government, victorious, would seek to reduce and destroy the LOPEL's power, and homogenize them into the national body politic which Saigon would seek to create. Saigon would pre-empt the services which LOPEL now offer their adherents, and have these services dispensed, if at all, by local branches of Saigon agencies. For this reason, the LOPEL are in no hurry to see Saigon win quickly and smashingly. Nor do they wish to see a clear-cut VC/NLF victory, because the VC/NLF would impose on South Vietnam forms of social and political organization in which the LOPEL would be doomed, or at least threatened with doom.

The war has reduced but not eliminated LOPEL action against each other. They appear no longer actively to be undercutting each other in the countryside, seeking to increase their control over population

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at the expense of a neighboring LOPEL. (Some rivalry no doubt still exists in areas where more than one LOPEL has adherents.) It is in Saigon, and to a lesser extent in the provincial capital, that the competition now takes place; and it takes place through politics rather than through violence. The issues are both immediate and long-term. Immediate issues relate to the survival of the LOPEL's autonomy and to the aggrandizement of its power, and to preventing another LOPEL from increasing its power and influence. Any major change in the economy or population or organization of an area may affect the relative power of different LOPEL: the outflow or inflow of population; taxation; the establishment of a new settlement or the destruction of an existing one; the creation of new wealth or a reduction of economic life; land reform; the removal of males by conscription; the implantation of Saigon officials or teachers or RD teams; restrictive controls over the internal workings of the LOPEL organization. Immediate issues also deal with getting for the LOPEL and the area under its controls some of the fruit, permitted or forbidden, of the assistance which the foreigners give to the Saigon government; and at the same time blocking the foreigners' efforts to increase the power of Saigon's officials through their magnanimous help.

Long-term issues relate to the power-play which will take place when hostilities are reduced, or peace comes. Each LOPEL is determined that when that day comes, it will be in a position no less favorable,

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vis-a-vis the central government or vis-a-vis other LOPEL, than now. Against that day each LOPEL seeks now to obtain security and guarantees from both sides, concessions and promises--which in true Vietnamese fashion will not be kept, of course, but will serve as bargaining points in a new process of harmonization and accommodation.

In the areas where they operate, the LOPEL constitute a powerful bulwark against VC/NLF infiltration, subversion, and take-over. Their firm anti-VC/NLF stand, of course, has nothing to do with loyalty to the Saigon government; it rests rather on the internal cohesion of the LOPEL, and on its determination not to see its power encroached upon, or its adherents subverted. Historically, the Viet Minh/VC in South Vietnam were successful in establishing themselves only in areas in which no LOPEL existed, or where earlier they had been weakened. The Viet Minh/VC came to fill voids--exploiting breakdowns in social or communal organization resulting from the weakening of French control at the end of World War II. Where LOPEL existed, the Viet Minh were unsuccessful; and even more recently there is no instance in South Vietnam in which the VC/NLF have gained permanent control over a LOPEL. In such areas, the VC/NLF have had only limited success in temporary military forays into the area, or in temporary exploitations of a weakening of the LOPEL by large-scale military action upon the population and the economy, or the encroachment of the Saigon government over the area. The sense of loyalty which the LOPEL foster--upward loyalty to leaders, lateral loyalty to fellow-villagers--can provide the kind of security of which the textbooks on counter-

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insurgency speak as being a basic pre-condition to what in Vietnam we call pacification. The followers of the LOPEL are the "we", and the outsiders the "they". The LOPEL give cohesiveness to the villages and hamlets under their control. They permit the formation and maintenance of ties of loyalty within hamlet and village society, ties of loyalty which emanate from within the extended family and its personalized relationships, but extend beyond the extended family. These ties then become the best--in fact, the only--guarantee of relative security for the individual. They foster group responsibility in the face of outside attempts to infiltrate the village, or to get village individuals to denounce each other to one or another of the outside contenders for control of the village.

The historical record justifies one writer's observation that:

"Security is the product of group organization not national loyalty. . . . The acid test of pacification is whether a locality developed the will and the means to defend itself against VC attack or infiltration. To date, with rare exceptions the only localities (in Vietnam) which have developed these capacities are those organized by ethnic or religious minorities."

(Huntington, Political Stability. . . ., pp. vii, ii.)

I would include in this statement the few LOPEL which are not ethnic or religious minorities.

The Tet offensive and its aftermath provide some interesting footnotes to the above discussion. During their occupation of Hue, the VC/NLF/NVA forces systematically murdered officials of the Saigon government; but they also butchered, equally systematically, members

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of the local political elites (Dai Viet and VNQDD). Many of these political leaders were in no way subservient to Saigon; but the VC/NLF killed them because by doing away with them, they could weaken significantly the vitality of the Hue body politic. The VC/NLF understand full well that though Saigon is their avowed enemy, the LOPEL constitute an even stronger obstacle to their victory.

Following Tet, American observers noted that in many localities, the people went on a spree of anti-VC/NLF demonstrations, and that in many places the population banded together, organized militia or self-defense groups, and demanded that the Saigon government arm them against the enemy. American field reports have interpreted these moves as giving evidence that the population is rallying to the Saigon government. My interpretation is different. Faced with mounting VC/NLF power and aggressiveness, and with the obvious inability of the Saigon and foreign military units effectively to defend towns and villages, the population rallied--to its LOPEL, which were the only ones to take real gains from the Tet occurrences. The demonstrations, the quest for arms, constitute a restatement of the LOPEL philosophy of local autonomy, of local political self-sufficiency and non-reliance on outsiders. In Kien Hoa Province, for instance, some 500 youths volunteered to serve in an RF battalion, quickly responding to a recruiting drive launched at the end of March (MACV, at time of drafting, had turned them down, since such a unit did not figure in the projected strength plans). (Hq. Kien Hoa Province, IV CTZ (MACCORDS-KH), MACCORDS Field Reporting

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System (U), (RCS-MACCORDS 4/67), 4 May 1968 (CONF.). Here, then, are 500 men who might have elected to join ARVN, to rally to the Saigon military, with better pay and more prestige than the RF. But they didn't; they wished to form a local unit, to fight for the defense of Kien Hoa against the aggressors. As one report shrewdly observes:

"When a man is drafted into the Army of Vietnam, he is drafted into the government's Army; it is not his Army, and therefore he does not feel any more allegiance or patriotic fervor than would a mercenary in a similar situation." (Menkes and Jones, op. cit., p. 8).

Those 500 Kien Hoa youths do not wish to be mercenaries in Saigon's service. They wish to fight and die for their leaders in Kien Hoa.

III. THE USAID PROGRAM IN A PLURALISTIC SETTING

Principally the USAID program addresses itself to that U.S. objective which, in the Strategy Statement of November 1, 1967, was described as

"development of Vietnamese governmental and political institutions and programs which offer attractive alternatives to the VC; and which foster cohesiveness and create a sense of nationhood on the part of both rural and urban Vietnamese."

Two comments are pertinent. The first is that in this multipartite, pluralistic contest, the GVN is not the only alternative to the VC/NLF, nor, by any means, the most attractive one to most Vietnamese, nor, one should hasten to add, the most effective one. The Saigon government--this one or any other that is likely to be formed in the near future--just lacks appeal to most Vietnamese. If "attractive alternatives" is what we are seeking to develop, we should not confine our quest to Saigon, but should begin to look elsewhere as well. The second comment is that this objective is perhaps a realistic one in a twenty or twenty-five year time-frame. But if this objective is to serve the two paramount U.S. objectives, defined in the same Strategy Statement as "(1) defeat of the NVA and VC main force military units; (2) gaining or regaining control of VC-dominated areas and elimination of the VC infrastructure", then the long time-frame required for this objective makes it irrelevant to the two more important ones.

In the short-run, and in the immediate time-frame of the FY 1970 Program Memorandum, we should diversify the direction of our efforts in favor

of alternatives to VC/NLF control, alternatives that already exist, and that are obvious to most Vietnamese. In terms of a statement of objective, the wording quoted above might properly be replaced with the following:

"development of governmental and political institutions, whether linked to the central government or of a local character, which offer attractive and effective alternatives to the VC; and which foster social and political cohesiveness, whether on an all-Vietnam or on a more localized level."

This kind of diversification can go a long way in enhancing the political stability of South Vietnam, and developing a viable, though pluralistic, national society. Decentralization is not a step down the road to chaos. On the contrary, in the Vietnamese context, it is argued that it tends to avoid chaos by strengthening the localized loyalties which are building blocks of national loyalty, and by removing tension between LOPEL and the central government. As one observer of Vietnamese affairs, arguing for a somewhat different policy change, has written,

"Any suggestion for greater decentralization in Vietnam is always met with the charge that it will encourage 'warlordism,' to which a strong Central Government is the only antidote. In actuality, however, as the earlier history of China, Viet Nam and even Western Europe amply demonstrates, warlordism is the product not of efforts to provide a structured decentralized authority, but rather of efforts to maintain a narrowly based, centralized authority where it is inappropriate to the situation. Warlordism is the illegal, disruptive and violent way in which a centralized system is adapted to the realities of dispersed power. Warlordism is the alternative to the formal decentralization of authority, not a product of it." (Huntington, "Bases. . .")

(A) USAID and the Saigon Government

The exclusive reliance which USAID has placed on the Saigon Government as the sole counterpart of its efforts has not paid off. On the contrary, by giving the Saigon Government the monopoly on the utilization of our assistance, we have weakened our program greatly in terms of our objectives, and, one might add, weakened the Saigon Government as well.

By dealing only with Saigon, we have become its captives. We have allowed ourselves, time and time again, to make massive inputs of USAID resources which remained unmatched with GVN resources. Not only that, but by avoiding all other counterparts save the GVN, we have allowed the GVN to retain the full freedom of failing to come to grips with issues of policy which must be resolved if our programs are to be effective. What good, for instance, is our massive effort to strengthen the Saigon police force if, as one reliable journalist asserts, corruption and venality (and thus VC capability to bribe policemen at checkpoints) is built into the system by the head of personnel of the National Police? (Warner, "Defense. . .", p. 19). By avoiding dealing with alternative sources of power, we have given the Saigon government absolute veto power of our program. Of course, we have leverage--but the leverage we have is confined to brow-beating the GVN, to launching frontal assaults on its adamance or uncooperativeness. We lack now the freedom of action to engage in the kind of indirect, manipulative, pluralistic tactics which are the only ones suited, and the only ones that can be successful, in the Vietnamese political context.

By allying ourselves exclusively to the Saigon government, we have harmed the LOPEL, and damaged gravely our reputation with them. Such of our assistance that does not get redirected for personal profit, or diverted for personal gain, by Saigon officialdom is used by them to further the power of the Saigon government, not necessarily to develop Vietnam. Saigon uses our aid not just to enhance itself vis-à-vis the VC/NLF, but vis-a-vis the LOPEL as well. Thus the LOPEL-controlled population sees us as deeply involved in the political contest between themselves and Saigon; to them, we appear to be far more interested in boosting the Saigon government, and in the welfare of Saigon's officialdom, than in diminishing the power of the VC/NLF.

By avoiding direct assistance to the LOPEL, and a direct inter-action with them, we have invested our resources where they can do the least good, and failed to invest them where they can bring political and other returns. In fact, it is likely that in some cases we have weakened, pragmatically, some of the very functions which our assistance seeks to develop. In the field of primary education, for instance, we have invested heavily to train Saigon-sponsored village teachers, and to build Saigon-sponsored village and hamlet schools. Yet, are we really that sure that that hamlet teacher, trained quickly through our project, is really better than a teacher hired by the local Hoa Hao establishment and teaching in a Hoa Hao school? Would it not be reasonable to extend help directly to the Hoa Hao, give in-service training to their teachers

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through their organization, and help the Hoa Hao to build or improve their schools? All over the country, we have helped create situations in which "our" Saigon government competes, blatantly with our help, with the local power elites, using or misusing what are known by all to be American funds and materials, rewarding its officials and supporters, penalizing or depriving its opponents -- not the VC/NLF opponents, but the LOPEL opponents.

This policy may have weakened the Saigon government in some ways. First, because all power corrupts, and greater power corrupts more greatly. We have given the Saigon government massive resources, which in instances it has grossly misused. We did not create corruption in Vietnam, but we have amplified it by providing ever-increasing stakes for a monopolistically limited number of players. Thus one effect of our giving assistance solely to the Saigon government has been to add to its ill-repute. A pluralistic use of our resources would spread the wealth. There is no reason to believe that a LOPEL would use our assistance less effectively or more corruptly than does Saigon.

Our policy also has placed on the Saigon government burdens that it cannot carry--and could not carry even if corruption or venality or disinterest were not present. The GVN lacks the administrative capability to carry out its tasks. By ignoring the resources which the LOPEL have, and which could be brought to bear on our objective of offering "attractive alternatives to the VC", we have thrust upon the Saigon government alone the weight of that effort. We thus have exacerbated the gap between what

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the government should be doing and what it is doing, and thus strengthened the traditional view held by the average Vietnamese, for whom

"the government is a bureaucracy; it is unresponsive and unreliable, its promises are not often kept, it makes demands upon him which run counter to his will, and, most importantly, he has no means of redress or of criticism" (Menkes and Jones, op. cit., page 8).

Moreover, our program of assistance to the Saigon government has overstressed the administrative, and under-stressed the political aspects of the development of national cohesion. We have helped build up an administrative bureaucracy, not a flexible and responsive political organization. As one writer put it:

"We have incorrectly identified the Vietnamese political structure with the (GVN) administration, and erroneously believed that by strengthening the administrative structure, we were contributing to political progress. This is like assuming that by strengthening the Department of Health, Education and Welfare in Washington you can significantly strengthen on a "crash-impact" basis the Democratic Party in New York City, and at the same time bring over the Republican leadership." (London, "A New USAID Strategy", Part II, p. 3).

By avoiding using the LOPEL in our contest with the VC/NLF, by openly involving only the GVN--we also have detracted from the stature of the GVN, such stature as it has in the absence of any other recognized central government in South Vietnam. (The VC/NLF do not claim to be a

central government; they acclaim Hanoi as the central government.) A true central government--an "emperor-figure"-- loses stature when it must fight directly with a force of inferior stature. Moreover, competition itself--direct face-to-face competition--is viewed by Vietnamese as degrading, as a confession of lack of superiority, as an admission that the opponent has the power to force one to compete. (This attitude was well expressed by Generals Nguyen Van Thieu and Nguyen Cao Ky when in the summer of 1967 they refused to participate in the presidential campaign on the same footing as the other candidates, a refusal that surprised and disappointed some Americans, but was understood by the Vietnamese as a refusal to be degraded.) The Vietnamese kind of competition uses intermediaries, for by using intermediaries one can give the impression of remaining aloof, of refusing to be sullied by the contest, and yet achieve one's aims of bashing in the opponent. By using the LOPEL, we would be using others to deal with the VC/NLF. By encouraging or forcing the Saigon government to allow us to work with the LOPEL, we could help improve the GVN's image and stature. Now, of course, it is a bit late. However, we now should work with the LOPEL, even though this may be seen by some Vietnamese as a change of American policy which denigrates the Saigon administration.

All this does not mean that we should begin to ignore the GVN, but it argues for an allocation of USAID resources between the Saigon government on one hand and the LOPEL on the other; criteria for this allocation are discussed below. A pluralistic allocation of USAID resources not only

will make for better returns on our investments; it also will help our bargaining position vis-a-vis the Saigon government as we seek to get it to improve its performance.

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(B) USAID and the LOPEL

With rare exceptions, USAID's involvement with the LOPEL so far has been entirely negative. There are a few instances in which self-help projects have been conducted by LOPEL with USAID/CORDS assistance; but in these cases we helped not in order to assist a LOPEL, but rather because we saw them part of a local population whose self-help initiatives we wanted to support. Similarly the rationale behind the USAID/CORDS program for the Highlanders focusses less on helping the Highlanders as a LOPEL than on assisting the Saigon government to integrate them.

In large measure we have ignored the LOPEL. Our ignoring them has been based in part on lack of knowledge. We know little about the LOPEL because, never having become operationally interested in them, we have not felt the need to learn much of their inner workings, the character of their leadership, their aspirations, and the mechanics by which LOPEL leadership maintain their hold on their followers.

Our ignoring them also has resulted from our overreliance on Saigon. We have judged the LOPEL by Saigon's standards; and since the LOPEL are not loyal to the Saigon government, we have tended to see them only as centrifugal forces (which in large measure they are) which threaten the achievement of that nation-building that we are seeking in the mistaken belief that it can be achieved quickly. We have failed to recognize their inherent anti-VC/NLF capability, which in the present context is centripetal; and to seize the opportunity of using the LOPEL

constructively in order to contain and roll back the forces that we are fighting--the VC/NLF. Our own polarized orientation--"we're with the Saigon Government; those that are not are against us"--has blinded us to the realities of manipulative opportunities in a pluralistic contest.

We have undermined the LOPEL by unequivocally supporting the government in its quest to achieve ascendancy over the LOPEL as well as over the VC/NLF. In public administration, education, health, in the whole gamut of our many efforts in Vietnam, we have consistently sought to help the Saigon government to thrust its officials into functions that the LOPEL either do not want performed, or else perform themselves.

We have misread the political realities. Because the VC/NLF is right now the most powerful of all the challengers to the Saigon government--it is the only one at this time with a significant military force with which to confront and contain the Saigon government--the GVN's efforts, to the degree that they have been successful at all, have been successful only in the areas controlled by the anti-VC/NLF LOPEL; and this whittling away at anti-VC/NLF forces has had our consistent support, and has been financed with our funds, and supported with our materials and commodities. Inasmuch as the LOPEL lack military forces with which to resist the GVN, the latter naturally has used its--and especially our--resources far more against the LOPEL than against the VC/NLF.

This has been true even of the RD program, that civilian program which we see as the cutting edge of anti-VC/NLF pacification. The GVN has used it widely to cut into LOPEL power. In Quang Nam province in 1966, "all nine villages which were given priority in that year's pacification program were dominated by the VNQDD" (Huntington, op.cit., p. 19). In An Giang province, a secure area under the control of the Hoa Hao LOPEL, there are at present some 38 RD teams in action. Obviously, they are not there to

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roll back the VC/NLF, for according to our own estimates, for the area there are no VC-controlled hamlets in that province (MACCORDS-RAD, "Monthly Pacification Status Report (U)", 27 May 1968 (CONF.)). These are just two examples, but there is reason to believe that they indicate a tendency. In any event, widespread hostility of the local leadership against the RD teams has been reported by one observer, who sums it up this way:

"The RD teams function under the direction of the Saigon government's district chief. If the teams are ineffective, the blame is placed on the government. If they are effective in achieving their goals in the village, they show up the local leadership which had not been able to bring these benefits to the hamlet and create aspirations among the people which the local leadership will not be able to satisfy once the RD team moves on. The net effect of RD, in short, often is to undermine and weaken whatever patterns of authority and deference may exist at the village level, without creating anything permanent to take their place." (Huntington, op.cit., p. 18)(Underscore added.)

Instead of helping to weaken the LOPEL, we should strive to strengthen them. They can serve us well to reach our principal objective in Vietnam-- the objective of developing alternatives to the VC/NLF. The LOPEL already are just that; our program can make them more effective in that respect.

What is proposed is a tactical withdrawal of the already over-extended Saigon government to those functions which it best can handle, and which are not competitive with the LOPEL, and allowing the LOPEL to function constructively in those functions that are within their historical traditions, and within their competence, especially if this competence is enhanced with USAID assistance. As one writer has noted:

"the government would do well to encourage those sociopolitical groups already well organized to consolidate their leadership, increase the effectiveness of their communication and internal structure, and continue recruitment. Groups less developed should be encouraged to build themselves into viable movements which can assume a meaningful role both locally and nationally. Accommodation

to these . . . groups will mean giving them more prerogatives over territories and populations where they are in definite predominance. This has been the case with the Hoa Hao, and it is happening to some degree with the Highlander leaders. In working out similar arrangements with the older sociopolitical groups, the government stands to gain considerably in increased support among rural and urban populations and extend its influence over larger territory." (Hickey, op. cit., pp. 22-23).

USAID's program concepts and techniques would have to undergo major changes in order to exploit the opportunities which the LOPEL present.

Principally these changes would involve:

(1) Working directly with the LOPEL in matters which are primarily of local concern, or involve functions which they already fulfill.

Instead of supporting Saigon government agencies in their efforts to eclipse the LOPEL in their traditional roles as providers of services at the local level, we should encourage the LOPEL to assume these roles again, to expand these roles, and increasingly to provide local services in education, social welfare, health, and agriculture. Inasmuch as the capacity of each LOPEL varies, no firm criteria for separating what is to be locally provided from that which will have to emanate from the central government can be drawn up. The resources, technical, human, and financial of each LOPEL will have to be evaluated in order to come up with the formula best suited to that particular power elite.

Just as we have neglected the potential role of LOPEL in social services, so we have neglected it in the area of production--agriculture and agro-industries. Experience over the years has shown clearly that the Saigon government is an inefficient channel for the transmission of technical assistance. There is every reason to believe that most LOPEL

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would be much better conduits for such assistance, inasmuch as their power depends in large measure on the economic well-being of the area under their control. Nor is there any doubt that a farmer would be much more receptive to information being provided him by someone from his own community--someone from within his LOPEL--than by someone who, in terms of the limited horizons of the farmer, is an outsider. Some attempts already are being made to provide technical assistance through the Farmers' Union. That is a step in the right direction. But the Farmers' Union itself is not usually an integral part of the LOPEL; the LOPEL itself would be more effective.

This implies, of course, a diversified and decentralized approach to the USAID program. As that program now is devised, it assumes that Vietnam has a uniformity which it does not possess. Our present program takes little account of the considerable differences that exist from region to region, from province to province, or--more pertinent to this discussion--from political environment to political environment. The program implicitly required for the "LOPEL approach" would assume that there is, at this stage in Vietnam's development, no real reason for applying the same standards throughout the country, say in the area of education, or of health. That such standards ultimately are desirable is not challenged; what I am suggesting is that the application of such standards is premature by many years.

USAID's support for Saigon government agencies would continue, but would become more restrictive, and more selective. Essentially USAID

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will have to assist the Saigon government to provide those services which only a central government can provide, and which no LOPEL, singly or in combination, has the resources to manage. This is discussed in greater detail below, under The Nation-Building Program.

(2) Focusing on the LOPEL to revitalize and strengthen village and hamlet government, and providing content for the work of these local bodies.

USAID already is concerned with revitalizing village and hamlet government. It will be recalled that the threat to local government came from Saigon, not from local forces. As long as USAID conducts its local government programs through the Saigon government, these programs will be suspect, and the local participants in such programs risk being viewed by their local constituents more as tools of Saigon than as defenders of local autonomy. To the village and hamlet dweller, his autonomy is threatened whenever the Saigon government puts one of its fingers into a local pie. To the village and hamlet dweller, central government concern for his local government and local autonomy is a paradox, which he tends to explain as a ruse to gain further control for Saigon officialdom. Finding content--meaningful, constructive content--for the work of village and hamlet organizations has been a problem hitherto. Much of this problem is of our own making; we have encouraged the Saigon government to take on so much that there is little left over. What we have been doing is to try to create in the country-side new institutions,

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agencies of Saigon ministries. Instead of creating new agencies which inevitably will be seen by the villager as competitive to his own institutions, we should make use of what there is already.

How would such local activities be funded? They would be financed in small measure by local resources, in large measure by funds now part of the American Aid Chapter. Instead of all piasters generated by our CIP assistance going to the Saigon government, a major chunk of these piasters would go, on some sort of a matched basis, to the LOPEL directly. They would have to match these funds with local resources; the formula would vary, and would be subject to negotiation with the LOPEL itself--and this would provide additional leverage.

LOPEL would need some generation of funds of their own. All LOPEL already have a source of funds, otherwise they would not be able to exist. It is suggested that the tax system be so revised or restructured as to provide sources of tax money for the LOPEL. USAID already has been involved in steps designed to reserve some sources of taxation to villages and hamlets. I suggest that villages and hamlets, per se, are neither proper collectors nor proper spenders of funds in most instances. Given the political realities in Vietnam, village and hamlet government mostly is responsive to the respective LOPEL. The tax structure should be designed accordingly. There is reason to believe that LOPEL would operate far more efficient tax-collecting agencies than the Saigon government; they know where the money is.

The LOPEL also would be involved with local activities which are off-shoots of USAID efforts that are regional--that is, affecting

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areas much broader than the area of any LOPEL. These USAID efforts, including those discussed below as part of the PING approach to USAID programming in Vietnam, require local "agencies"; the LOPEL are natural for this function.

At present, Vietnam's provinces are not based on any important criterion related to development. With few exceptions, they are not drawn on the basis of the composition of the population, or economic factors, or geography, or social/communal characteristics (e.g., LOPEL). Especially in view of the programming approach discussed here--but even if this approach were to be rejected in toto--serious consideration should be given to encouraging the Saigon government to create "Development Areas" which, in large measure, would replace existing provinces. These "Development Areas" would be drawn on the basis of a number of factors--demographic, local-political, economic, geographic, etc.; maintaining the integrity of LOPEL would be one of the more important criteria since it supports political development, itself a requirement for other types of development. The "Development Areas" would be put together using the present districts as the basic pieces, but in most cases would be much larger than the existing provinces, and likely some twenty to twenty-five such areas would cover the country. The Development Areas would serve as the planning units for development, and for the administration of development services. USAID/CORDS would restructure its field organization accordingly.

One of the problems that we now face in working with the provinces and districts is the existing information gap about these areas. Certainly

we, and even the Saigon government, lack detailed, operationally usable data about districts and provinces. There thus is need for an intensive effort by an appropriate research organization financed by USAID to put together, in operationally utilizable form, a province-by-province, district-by-district handbook. Such a handbook would be a compilation of all available data on every area of South Vietnam; included would be the more important facts about the political, social, and economic life of the area. Much of this information already is available somewhere, but it needs to be identified and organized, and perhaps augmented with some amount of field research. A proposal for such a document, a "Vietnam Gazetteer", is being formulated. Such a document would provide the data base for analyses and decisions for^a/decentralized LOPEL-oriented program, and for designing and developing the "Development Areas". A Gazetteer would serve the Saigon government as well as ourselves.

(3) Utilizing the inherent anti-VC/NLF posture and self-interest of the LOPEL to facilitate the attainment of USAID/CORDS objectives in the pacification program.

There is reason to believe that the Chieu Hoi program would be more successful if it offered a LOPEL rather than the GVN as the alternative to which to rally. There is evidence that in many cases VC now defect locally, rather than rally to the Saigon government through the Chieu Hoi program. LOPEL should be encouraged openly to solicit "their" VC to return to them; and such appeals should be supported with the entire range of gimmicks which^{now}/are part of the Chieu Hoi program, including recognition,

cash payments, and re-training. Moreover, a LOPEL can far better than the Saigon government protect and take care of its ralliers, and re-integrate them into non-VC society. LOPEL might be rewarded for stimulating defection from VC/NLF ranks by monetary grants for the training and re-settlement of line-crossers.

The refugee program is another case in point. LOPEL usefully could assist handling and resettlement of persons displaced more or less within the LOPEL area, especially if these persons are supporters of the LOPEL. This role for LOPEL would relieve the Saigon government and its American refugee advisors of some of their present responsibilities for refugees; and it would place these refugees in non-governmental hands, with all the psychological advantages and savings in government manpower that this implies.

Though this paper treats only the USAID program, the programs of other agencies also might be affected by a shift of policy to extend assistance to the LOPEL. The present RD program would be recast to concentrate solely on those few areas of Vietnam in which no LOPEL exists, and in which the VC/NLF hold is of a military nature only. However, cadres similar to those of the RD program could well be developed within the LOPEL itself. These teams, organized by the LOPEL and trained with CORDS assistance (possibly at the RD Training Center at Vung Tau) would perform politically-oriented development and security services on the marches of the LOPEL area of control. These teams would not seek to displace the existing political infrastructure; they would serve to enhance the prestige of the LOPEL among its more marginal supporters.

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A military extension of the LOPEL concept would involve the US and GVN military in far greater efforts to recruit, train, equip, and direct local militia. The present RF/PF concept is a step in that direction, but further decentralization of the armed forces that oppose the VC/NVA is suggested. In the last analysis, what would be wrong with a Hoa Hao militia or a FULRO-led Montagnard force, operating under some form of US/GVN military direction? There is evidence that, at present, GVN province and district chiefs often neglect the RF/PF in favor of the regular forces, and often subvert the RF/PF concept by making inappropriate use of these local forces. RF in particular often display allegiance to and follow the orders of the LOPEL rather than the province chiefs. Many a province chief has to request, as opposed to order, an RF unit to conduct a particular operation due to considerations of the local situation (i.e., the RF unit commander has more standing with the populace of a given locality.) This points up the fact that the less tied to the Saigon government a local force is, the more it can mobilize the psychological forces that bind the population to their traditional and accepted elites, the more forceful will be local armed resistance to VC/NVA military threats.

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(C) USAID and the VC/NLF

USAID's programs in their local contexts in certain parts of the country may serve to reach local accommodations with local VC/NLF organizations.

It already has been pointed out that in some places the VC/NLF constitute a LOPEL of sorts, and function as the normative local governmental administration that provides control over, and services to, its populations. At present we view the USAID program solely as helping to create alternative control and services. It is suggested that this approach may be invalid, and politically disadvantageous.

It is invalid because in these areas the population has loyalty to its local VC/NLF authorities. These authorities have established their credentials with the population, and the population is no more likely to be receptive to the creation or imposition of a Saigon-connected administration in the area than would supporters of any other LOPEL. There is nothing that the Saigon government can do in these areas which will "win the hearts and minds" of these people. Though the population might be pleased with certain new facilities--they may enjoy a better road, a new school building, or better latrines--it is doubtful whether it would change their loyalty patterns one iota. Moreover, even though USAID and the Saigon government can install facilities, their utility to the local population, their upkeep and utilization, depend on local support. In VC/NLF areas, this local support either will be withheld (thus making the facility pointless) or else would come only with the approval of the local VC/NLF leadership.

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At the local level, the VC/NLF, where they are the established LOPEL, are less an ideological force than the leadership of a community of villages and hamlets. They share much more the characteristics of other LOPEL than those of an insurgent force in the classic sense. They are not out to destroy, but to maintain themselves in power, to ward off outside encroachment, and to continue the development of their society.

If in some areas "the Viet Cong have demonstrated admirable efficiency in coping with administrative and economic problems" (Hickey, op. cit., p. 27), then it may well be to our interest to involve them in certain programs conducted by USAID. I am not suggesting that we build village roads or pig sties in VC country. I am suggesting that we should be prepared to include VC/NLF LOPEL in certain broader programs, such as those proposed below under the PING approach; and that the VC/NLF leadership of certain areas may well be willing pragmatically to participate in such programs, on the same terms as other LOPEL. In this connection, it should be remembered that "few of the rank and file are Viet Cong for ideological reasons," and "not all of them are Communists" (Hickey, op. cit., p. 28). Assuming that our programs make sense pragmatically, one may well assume that there will be some amount of pressure from below exerted on the VC/NLF leadership to allow participation in them.

The above discussion assumes, of course, that accommodations, multiple and plural accommodations--between the GVN and the VC/NLF, between each of these two and the LOPEL, and among the LOPEL--are the

prerequisites for a settlement in Vietnam. By mid-1968, a knock-out victory by the Saigon government over the VC/NLF seems remote, and appears as the least likely outcome of the Vietnam war. Besides, the GVN and the VC/NLF between them control only a little over one-third of the population. The LOPEL control most of the balance, and no settlement is possible that doesn't take them into account, too. And that indicates that multiple and plural accommodations constitute the only politically feasible and realistic road to peace.

IV. THE CONTENT OF USAID'S PROGRAM: A SHIFT TO PRAGMATISM

The present assumption of much of our project program is that the Saigon government can be made more lovable than the VC/NLF, and that if we assist it to do good throughout the country it will become beloved. This--the "Win-Hearts-and-Minds" approach--does not stand up under closer scrutiny in the pluralistic contest now taking place in Vietnam, and considering that most of the population is loyal neither to the Saigon government nor to the VC/NLF. This is not a bi-polar ideological struggle but a complex pattern of multilateral competition, in which the Saigon government is more handicapped than any other contestant in gaining acceptability and loyalty.

What is suggested is a shift toward a pragmatic approach to USAID programming in Vietnam. This approach would avoid ideological rationales or justifications. It would seek to strengthen the ability of LOPEL and of the Saigon government to provide certain selected services to the population, not in order to win their hearts and minds--their loyalties--for the Saigon government, but in order to integrate them into a national system which, weak and decentralized and "thin" in the beginning, may develop in time into an integrated national society, with effectively inter-linked institutions which can give Vietnam the kind of stability which is required for development.

This approach--pragmatic integration with the national government (PING)--assumes that most Vietnamese inherently are suspicious of the central government, and of what it has to offer; but that, hesitantly,

or even reluctantly, they will accept what it has to offer if its services are useful to them, personally, individually, selfishly, pragmatically. This, of course, creates no loyalty to the Saigon government; but, in time, there will have developed a dependence on these services, and a reluctance to do without them. There thus will develop a grudging admission that, bad though it is, a central government is necessary, and therefore requires the kind of support which enables it to keep going and offer its services. In time--not this fiscal year or next--the individual will have become pragmatically integrated with the national system; he will have become "hooked" on Saigon. In the meantime, we shall have bolstered the LOPEL by providing many services through them, and by bolstering the LOPEL will be providing attractive and viable alternatives to the VC/NLF. (Even where the latter are the LOPEL that we might work with, we shall be reducing their dependence upon the central VC/NLF apparatus, and increasing their autonomy from Hanoi.) The PING approach avoids or limits competition; it stresses accommodation and harmonization of interests. It may pave the way for some VC/NLF reintegration. As one writer has suggested:

"In the past, USAID/GVN strategy was to build projects in localities, which would undertake to keep the Viet Cong out. This was an explicit criterion and it must be dropped. A new USAID program must insist that no project be undertaken unless it is linked to political organization and is open to political elements of all hues. This is not to say that the NLF must be represented in every local area, but it should no longer be excluded a priori." (London, op. cit., Part II, p. 6).

The PING approach involves the following operational principles:

A. Matters and responsibilities which the LOPEL now can handle without outside help will be reserved for them as their area of concern, and no outside help--from Saigon or from the USAID--will be provided.

B. Matters and responsibilities which the LOPEL could handle with outside assistance will be handled by LOPEL with assistance directly from USAID; and with Saigon assistance as pertinent and to the degree that it does not create competition between the Saigon government and the LOPEL.

C. The Saigon government should refrain from competing with the LOPEL in matters and areas in which the LOPEL, with or without outside assistance, are or can be made to become competent. The Saigon government should limit its concerns to such functions as cannot be handled by the LOPEL and which must be handled by a central government, or practically speaking are beyond the capacity of the LOPEL, or would become greatly more expensive and less efficient if handled by each LOPEL. Examples are central banking, control of epidemics, the postal service, the national armed forces, foreign affairs, advanced agricultural research, medical education, major communication and transportation facilities. In addition, the Saigon government, with our assistance, should engage in planning and research endeavors for development of the country as a whole.

D. In addition to the standard and minimal government services required of the central government, the Saigon government also would engage, with USAID assistance, in a few "super-projects", designed both to strengthen the LOPEL and create preconditions for greater ascendancy of the national government. The "super-projects" manifestly would be of the

kind that a LOPEL--or the VC/NLF--clearly lack the capacity to undertake.

Insofar as they relate to the LOPEL, the application of these principles will have to be flexible to take account of the greatly varying capabilities of these local groups. In those areas of the country in which no LOPEL exist, the operational principles should be applied with a view to encourage the formation of some form of community organization, or the voluntary acceptance of the hegemony of a neighboring LOPEL. Only as a very last resort should the Saigon government be permitted to function locally in matters which elsewhere are the responsibilities of the LOPEL.

In general, it has been suggested that:

"Projects should be evaluated in terms of their political 'absorptive capacity', i.e., who will manage them at the local level, how will they be managed by local governments, organization of boards of directors, job opportunities offered in their management, etc. USAID social welfare and similar civic action projects have proved of limited political effectiveness in the past because they have left no organization (e.g., school boards, maintenance organizations, etc.) behind them, and because they have deliberately avoided VC local leadership. In the future, such projects should be curtailed vis-a-vis projects with political payoff in terms of local organization and reintegration of Viet Cong elements." (London, op. cit., Part I, p. 7).

In working with the LOPEL, and generally in implementing this new kind of program, the same sorts of program inputs would be made by USAID as are made now in our projects with the Saigon government: advisers, participants, commodities. It is possible that the overall number of American advisers might have to be increased, especially since some of them will be operators rather than advisers assigned to the central

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government or working with LOPEL; by and large, of course, these advisers need not be AID direct-hire, but could be contractors, or from such organizations as IVS. Key technical or managerial personnel should be selected for participant training abroad; but on the whole the main training effort should be done in-country. In planning sessions in Saigon, we have often talked of a massive skills training program; such a program would be much more effective if linked to LOPEL than to the Saigon government. As for commodities, I believe we should be able to save millions of dollars by programming these at the LOPEL level rather than at the central government level; the transfer of control over commodities at the LOPEL or local level, combined with the greater specificity of programming of commodities, would permit increased surveillance and far less diversion and waste than now occurs.

A. The New Program Structure

The new USAID program would comprise four categories of projects: LOPEL projects; nation-building projects; super-projects; and war-related projects. These categories describe the primary level or purpose for which they are designed. Actually, each of these will involve the LOPEL (or some local body), the central government, and USAID in some measure.

(1) The LOPEL Projects

LOPEL projects are those designed directly to reach the people, and use LOPEL organizations as the intermediary between USAID and the people.

LOPEL projects will come to include all the efforts in education, agriculture, public health, public administration, industry, etc., which

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now take place at the provincial level or below. The principal counterpart agencies would be the LOPEL. At the present time, no LOPEL has such agencies in being, but the more important LOPEL in fact have persons who, with some training and guidance, would make effective counterparts. Such counterpart agencies would not necessarily be bureaucratic; I do not necessarily visualize a formal Hoa Hao office of agriculture or a Cao Dai department of education. In the first instance, such existing instrumentalities as now exist within the respective LOPEL organizations to handle certain functions would take up the new responsibilities. Secondly, committees or associations of a voluntary nature could take over formal counterpart responsibilities, augmented perhaps by a servicio-type of organization. Such a servicio organization might involve American personnel with qualified personnel from one LOPEL; or service more than one LOPEL, staffed with personnel drawn from all the LOPEL being serviced; or, in some cases, would be staffed with Americans and with LOPEL personnel borrowed from the central government agencies where they now work.

In any event, such projects would not take place in areas in which LOPEL are known to exist effectively unless they provide a counterpart agency of some sort. Thus our projects would use the leverage of USAID non-involvement to force LOPEL to improve and modernize their internal organization. Since no LOPEL likely would be willing to be left out, they may be expected to come up with some form of entity with which we can work. The diversity of projects that we would be involved in with any LOPEL likely

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would not include, at least initially, the full range of functions which USAID now is involved in. Each LOPEL will have to decide how many different projects it wants, and this desire will have to be matched with organizational adaptation and LOPEL-generated support for the project. The LOPEL, not the USAID, will determine how many projects it can handle, and can afford in terms of its limited manpower and financial resources.

In areas in which no LOPEL exist, it is doubtful whether USAID should become involved in projects at all. However, the opportunity of obtaining USAID assistance may stimulate the formation of community organization at the local level where none now exists.

(2) The Nation-Building Program

The nation-building program will consist of those projects which have the GVN as USAID's counterpart, and which seek to assist the GVN (a) to perform better those functions which by their very nature must be performed by a central government, and (b) to increase its capacity to "backstop" those LOPEL activities which require backstopping from the central government. Examples of the former group of projects include those in fiscal and customs administration, statistical services, major communication and transportation services, development planning, advanced agricultural research, etc. Examples in the second group include certain functions in public health, education, agriculture, public works, social welfare, manpower training, etc.

Both groups of projects will seek to enhance the GVN's stature and capabilities as a central government which in certain functional areas

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clearly stands "head and shoulders" above the LOPEL.

Through its support of the nation-building projects, USAID will be able to influence the allocation of responsibilities between the Saigon government and the LOPEL. Obviously, no firm overall delineation of responsibilities is possible. However, the rule-of-thumb should be, as stated above, that whatever the LOPEL can do themselves they should be enabled to do, with USAID assistance as required.

This sharing of governmental functions should make it possible for the GVN to reduce its employment rolls. Clearly it will not require a full crew of ministerial officials in every province (creation of development areas, suggested above, also will cut staffs). Some of the surplus personnel likely will find employment as LOPEL technicians. Others might be employed in the private sector, or in servicios. At the same time, with fewer responsibilities in the field, the GVN may come to perform more efficiently those functions which are and remain those of the central government.

(3) The Super-Projects

The super-projects will be major and expensive and complicated undertakings which by their very scale can be undertaken only by the central government, and are well beyond the capabilities of any LOPEL to initiate. They will be dramatic efforts to show the population at large the advantage of pragmatic integration with the national government, and they will have to have popular appeal. They will be the capstones of the PING approach. At the same time, at least some of the super-projects should involve some form of local organization support from within the LOPEL.

Implicit in the PING approach to the super-projects is that they are "bonuses" offered for pragmatically acceptable behavior. The super-projects are efforts that the central government does not need to make, but that it makes for the good of the population. Thus any community which violates the implicit arrangement by actively and militantly opposing the central government should risk being cut off from the benefits of the super-projects.

Examples of super-projects are the following:

(a) Electrification

Electrification not only is dramatic, but it is a catalyst of new agro-industrial activity, and permits a rise in the rural standard of living. Once an individual has gotten used to having electricity, and has invested in the purchase of electric gadgets and machinery, he no longer wants to be without it, ever. Massive electrification thus is a fine application of the PING approach.

As a start, the whole Delta might be electrified. "It has been estimated that electrification of the whole Delta using five or six modern steam-turbine units similar to those at Thu Duc would cost about \$50 million: Probably electrification of most of the rest of the country would double this bill." (London, op. cit., Part II, p. 4).

Such electrification efforts would require considerable technical assistance to the Saigon government; likely this could best be provided through a servicio. At the same time, LOPEL should be involved at the

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community level, perhaps entrusted with the task of creating a board which would install and run the distribution system within the confines of any LOPEL area.

(b) A New Mandarin System: Education for Mobility

This super-project involves the creation of a new educational system with an intake of 1,000 persons a year. Initially it would focus on LOPEL youths; later, as the various educational systems of the LOPEL improve greatly, the system might be modified or abandoned in favor of a normal scholarship and fellowship program.

The system would involve rigorous examinations, devised by American and Vietnamese specialists and administered by a servicio, testing intelligence and learning capacity, not knowledge. They would be given to youths ages 11-12 and 16-17; annually 500 in each of these age groups would be selected. Once selected, they will be educated in a special school, the curriculum of which will be designed to cram into two years all of elementary education for those taken in at ages 11-12, and into three years all of elementary and secondary education for those taken in at ages 16-17. In each group, there will be some dropouts. After completing their university education, graduates will be offered jobs with the central government or commissions in the national armed forces. They will be under no obligation to accept such offers, and some likely will prefer suitable employment in private industry, in LOPEL hierarchies, or in the liberal professions.

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This system is an adaptation of the mandarin system at its best. It will offer the youth of the countryside opportunities at social mobility, the absence of which now is a major problem in the Vietnamese social system, and provides the VC/NLF with some of their appeal.

The system might be embellished to involve the LOPEL. An endorsement by a LOPEL, or by a committee of representatives of several LOPEL, might be required to enable a youth who successfully has passed the intake-examination actually to enter the appropriate course.

The establishment of the system may cost \$4 million (devising examinations, constructing and equipping a school for this special type of courses). Annual cost of running the system should not exceed \$2 million. It is not suggested that this entire scheme be financed by USAID; both LOPEL and the Saigon government should be expected to contribute.

4. War-Related Projects

Even war-related projects can be conducted with LOPEL assistance, and can imitate the PING approach. The Chieu Hoi program already has been given as an example of something that can be conducted with LOPEL support. Similar techniques can be applied to a number of war-related projects, from LOCs to public safety to the refugee program. On LOCs, for instance, we might be prepared to build some roads desired by the LOPEL leadership in addition to other roads, if the LOPEL leadership undertakes maintenance of some parts of the major LOCs, for instance as these run through towns and major villages.

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B. Management Implications

The shift in program content will have implications for USAID management techniques. The utilization of LOPEL for the conduct of our program, and a reduction in the all-Vietnam aspects of our program, might suggest that we decentralize USAID away from Saigon. This in turn would require a new arrangement with MACCORDS.

Utilization of LOPEL would be made easier by the creation of Development Areas, delineated among other criteria on the basis both of the extent of the LOPEL's influence. On the American side these Development Areas would be provided with an American staff, and organized as an autonomous office under CORDS or USAID. On the basis of some loose programming exercise, the head of each Development Area's office would be given a budget, largely to be used as he sees fit. In other words, decentralization of responsibilities on the Vietnamese side--as between Saigon and the LOPEL--should be accompanied by decentralization on the American side as well. USAID/CORDS Saigon role should be limited to (1) specialized backstopping of field efforts by a small and highly qualified staff; (2) conduct of the nation-building program; and the overall management function (Director and staff, plus staff for non-project programs.)

Shifting from provinces to LOPEL would imply a concentration of staffs at Development Area level. This likely would not mean a reduction in field personnel: It would mean fewer headquarters personnel and more field and servicio-connected employees.

This kind of organization would require two reforms of our present personnel system. The first is that with a force of 1500-2000 direct-hire employees, we should be able to get away from specific position recruitment, and move toward a comprehensive replacement system. Except for highly specialized positions for which specific recruitment would continue, all positions would be filled from a manpower contingent. This contingent would include an assortment of the main types of skills now required in the USAID/CORDS organizations. Placement would be made after a person has arrived in Vietnam, and on the basis of current needs. In effect, this would eliminate personnel pipelines except for highly specialized positions.

I believe that it is not possible to run this program--the program as now conducted or the program suggested in this paper--with two-year tours, or worse, with 18-month tours. Vietnam personnel (again, except highly specialized positions) should be hired for four years, and there should be no ceiling to the number of returns to post. Of these four years, 6-8 months should be spent in training in the United States. No one should be sent to Vietnam without language training and area training; and, barring unforeseen needs or specialized requirements, no one should be assigned to headquarters functions in Saigon who has not had at least nine months in a field position.

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