

PD ABG-892

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DEBRIEF OF
AN EDUCATION ADVISOR
SAIGON, VIETNAM
1966 - 1967
No. 166710

BEST AVAILABLE

DEBRIEF OF AN EDUCATION ADVISOR

SAIGON, VIETNAM

1966 - 1967

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The interviewee received a one-week orientation in Saigon. He was transferred while in service in Indonesia. Most orientation to Vietnam was done by fellow workers. No formal language training was received, but he felt it was important preparation for assignment overseas.

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PREFACE

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4. Provide material suitable for instructional purposes.
5. Obtain information which will be of value--generally and specifically--to American overseas personnel in their future assignments.

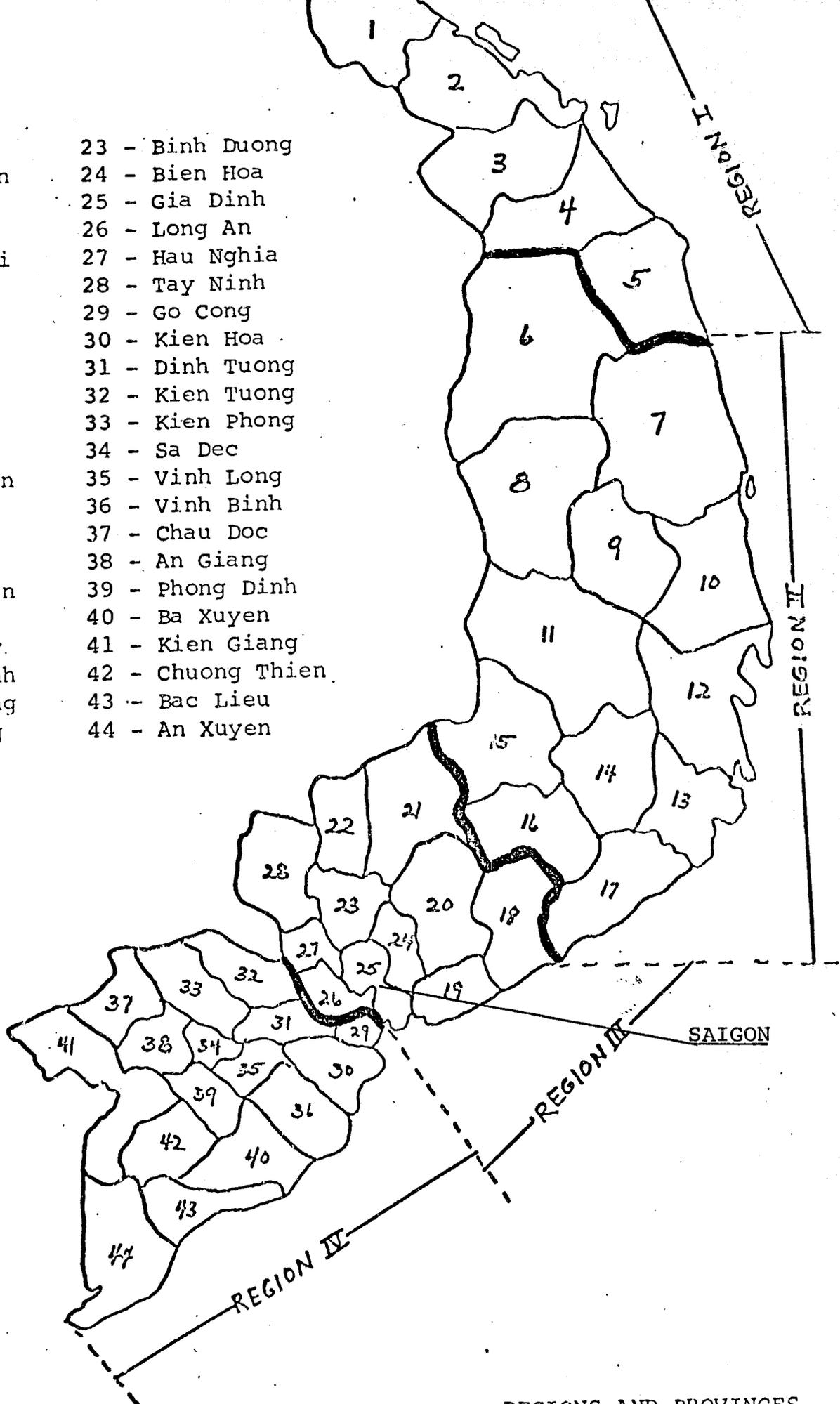
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REGIONS AND PROVINCES
OF
SOUTH VIETNAM

DEBRIEF OF AN EDUCATION ADVISOR

Saigon, Vietnam

1966-1967

Orientation for Position

I was a mid-tour transfer from Indonesia to Vietnam. I did have a one-week orientation after I arrived in Saigon, but I was also oriented to some extent by the people who I worked with in Indonesia who had previously worked in Vietnam. Both of these people had spent two tours there so I learned a great deal about Vietnam from them before I arrived. Of course, I was oriented in a general way to overseas work by a six-week orientation course in Washington in January of 1962. This consisted of orientation to the agency A.I.D., and to the cultural differences and the cultural situation that we would encounter in Indonesia at that time and in the Far East in general. We had a review of the religions of the Far East, and as I recall, a review of some of these programs that were going on in Indonesia and other countries in the Far East, something of the history of Indonesia, some information on the silent language. I believe that was just about all I can recall. I didn't have any language training at all in Washington.

When I was in Indonesia, the mission offered us courses in small groups in the Indonesian language. But I found out that I could learn much faster by employing a teacher and taking the lessons privately. I think I probably, although I was never tested, was at the S-1 level, or not too far from there. But pressure of work was too great to develop much facility in the language after I got on the job. I have also tried to do the same thing in Vietnam, and I think maybe I might not be too far from the S-1 level; maybe I am at the S-1 level there. I feel very strongly that language training is one of the most important preparations a person can get while he's in assignment overseas.

USAID Education

Administrative Tasks

In the USAID Elementary Education Division in Vietnam we have two projects: the hamlet school project and the elementary school

project. We have a curriculum specialist and an advisor who is giving assistance to elementary education in Saigon. This Elementary Education Division was organized about two months ago, and we see our job as planning assistance to elementary education country-wide, and then picking out the areas where we think American assistance will make the greatest impact, trying to fit it all together as a systematic team effort and push elementary education along as fast as possible.

One of the things that has helped me tremendously is having as my administrative assistant a Vietnamese educator, now retired from the Ministry of Education. Before that, all his working days he was a high school English teacher. He has been very helpful to me in working with the Ministry, and he travels around the country with me and with other people. We have two other Vietnamese assistants, one of whom was formerly an English teacher. Then of course we have a couple of typists. We have prospects of getting another person or two.

A good deal of our time in Saigon is taken up with the CAP writing exercise. CAP is Country Assistance Program. You see, this is extremely important. It has to be done very well because this is the basis upon which Congress approves or disapproves the program so it has to be well done. I won't argue about that. But I think that we spent a good part of seven months last year tied up in this exercise. This is planned by the program office and it's much better planned this year; I don't think it's going to take so much time this year.

We have to write a description of the project. First, the rationale or the background of it; then a progress to date, what's been done so far; a course of action--we're going to build 2,500 classrooms and this is going to cost X hundred dollars, X piasters, actually state the cost there; and then you have to have all these supporting schedules. It's a lot of paperwork. In the past the emphasis was in the hamlet school projects, to get these classrooms up, and get the teachers in front of the classes. But it doesn't mean that you could not write a project and emphasize quality. ~~What we did~~ last year--and spent so much time on it--was write the 1967 part and make some emphasis on quality; then we also projected into 1968, so we said this could be our big record for 1968 and subsequent years. We're not tied down to quantity in lining this up, however, we must quantify, we have to say how much money we need for this and that.

In the reports from the regions, we get reports from one region that almost always talks about the quality side of things, getting ideas

about instruction across. This is their main activity and this is fine. We had reports from another region that had 30 items, and there was only one mention of the quality side, and this was kind of a slight nod in that direction and really didn't amount to anything; it said that nine of our projects would now receive new jeeps which will be used to improve the instructional program. It kind of sounds as if we're going to train the jeeps to improve the program. I'm not so clear about training jeeps--maybe they can be!

We're making the most progress in Region II, at present. Our advisors there are getting good support from their acting chief.

Field Trips

Most of my visits in the field are to the regional capitals like Can Tho, Bien Hoa, Da Nang, Nha Trang--it depends on where the problem is. Or sometimes we go for textbook distribution, or construction problems--but we don't get involved much in construction problems because CORDS handles this and handles it very well.

One of our problems in Saigon has been the lack of enough staff strength to get out in the field often enough. From December of '66 until the middle of May 1967, I was Hamlet School Project Manager and I was the only one in that project at that time. I got out as often as I could to talk to the staff in the field, to backstop them and listen to their problems and so forth. I managed to get out three and four times a month, but when I came back my desk would be pretty high. But now we have a good staff of five so we should be able to get out more. The field staff are very cooperative. In fact, they are too cooperative. When I come into a region--I try to talk to them about this--I don't want to be met--it takes their time, I can take the shuttle bus. I don't want them to have special luncheons and all that sort of thing because this takes time away from their work, but some of them feel they want to do that so they still do. The relationships are good between our American education advisors out in the field and those of us working in Saigon.

I fly to the regions and provinces by Air America; I'd say 90 percent of my travel was by Air America. I get to the regional capital and get out to the provinces the same way. Although in the old days they used to fly a great deal by helicopter. Sometimes regions would have their own helicopter, but mainly I would be traveling by a military helicopter. I find that I almost never have to stay overnight; I can't remember a time in the 2½ years when I've been held down because of transportation. Sometimes Air America transportation isn't available but then I go over to the military side, and get on some kind of craft going to Saigon.

I don't carry a weapon and I think it's a mistake to do so. Our jobs are not combat jobs, it's a civilian type of activity. I think if you were stopped by the VC and they found a weapon on you, they would think you were military and might take care of you on the spot.

U. S. Bureaucracy in Vietnam - Frustrations

Saigon-Field Relations

I think that the morale of our teams in the field could be tremendously improved if we could give them a great deal of direction from Saigon. I think maybe that in education we have a better record turnover-wise than other divisions, although I'm not sure. But there are some real frustrating things that I think could be ameliorated at any rate, if not corrected. One of the things people in the field say to me is, "What is my job?" I say, as far as the hamlet school is concerned, it's to get classrooms built, get the teachers trained, get textbooks delivered, and teach the teachers how to use the textbooks. But they say, my bosses in the field tell me different things. So there is this sort of problem. The team leader in one of the regions resigned about two months ago because of this tangle. I think the morale would be greatly improved if these people could be given some simple, very direct guidance on what their job is. They can do the things that need to be done quite well if they were free to do them and if we could be given the responsibility to guide them--what are the four or five main objectives, main goals, that they should shoot for in their daily efforts, day after day.

And if this could be incorporated in their description of major activities--which as I remember is the number one part of their efficiency reports--and if they can be judged by that, but judged by a professional educator rather than non-educators all the time, this would be a great improvement. I read the ERs that come to me on our people but I get them after the ER has been written by--it used to be in the old days--the deputy director of the region, and reviewed by someone else. In other words, the whole thing is wrapped up and written by the time I get a chance to see it. I put my initials on it to indicate that I have read it, but this is not the way to do it, in my opinion. And this is something that is disquieting to the people in the field because they wonder what kind of an evaluation they will get when it's written by a non-educationalist. So there are two reasons for letting us participate actively in the ER in Saigon: one, the American advisor would be happy about it. Two, it would give us a chance to direct what they're doing. I can try to do things by persuasion, but without the authority to get the job done, I don't know.

Relations With CORDS
(Ministry of Revolutionary Development)

We have administrative problems, as everybody knows, between USAID technical divisions and CORDS. I think it is almost inevitable--when you get human beings in situations like this--there's bound to be some conflict and lack of communication. Some senior educational advisors, prov reps, take a very proprietary attitude towards their provinces, and technicians have told me that they have been told--I think this is very rare, but even very rare is far too often from my point of view--that "You may not see the provincial primary education chief unless I ask you to. If you want to give him advice, you must get my permission." These people were employed to help these primary education chiefs. This is way off target as far as I'm concerned.

The hamlet school project, which is what I've been mainly talking about, is operated and implemented by two ministries: MORD (Ministry of Revolutionary Development) has the plaster input which takes care of the labor, furniture and the training of the teachers, and pays their salaries now for two years. Ministry of Education has a responsibility for supervision of the hamlet school teachers and paying their salary when MORD has finished their salary contribution. In the past, USAID technical divisions--education division--could only negotiate with MORD through a CORDS representative (formerly an OCO representative). This is like negotiating through a couple of layers of wet blankets--not to say that the CORDS people are wet blankets, but I'm just saying that when you have a lot of detailed technical things to decide and talk over--the money for technicians (their salaries come from hamlet school projects)--you really ought to talk directly to these people. I found that working through an American representative who has many things to do besides education is not satisfactory. Now CORDS has said to us, "You are the people, the technical division, who are the people who work directly with MORD." All along we've worked directly with the Ministry of Education. We should be able to coordinate this thing much better now.

Let me review the history of this administrative tangle as I understand it. First of all, we have this go-go ministry, the Ministry of Revolutionary Development, which somebody conceived very brilliantly because the thing really does go. It's cut all the red tape that we would otherwise be involved in and we have a real chance to get things done in the field and get the peasants' attitudes changed in the direction of realizing that the central government really cares about them, is interested in them and so forth. Under this Ministry of Revolutionary Development there are 18 or 19 activities that are considered to be important for

pacification--the hamlet school project is one. Regularly the hamlet school gets about 25 per cent of the MORD annual budget, but many other important things are under that also: public works, agriculture affairs, agricultural credit, health and so on down the line.

Now, my understanding of this is that CORDS is organized to implement these pacification projects of MORD. They're doing a fine job of it, but they should be satisfied with that. These nineteen activities require the best efforts of CORDS. They should not be concerning themselves with higher education, this is a national project, or with vocational education, which is a national project, or the normal school development which is another project. I'm saying that they should stick to the pacification projects which are part of MORD. This is enough work for anybody, and is one of the most significant things we're doing right now. What can our team do to develop a faculty of physics, for example, in the university? This is a specialized job--all of these things are specialized jobs. I talked to all the people in charge of these nationwide projects and they say the only help that they would like to have from our educational teams in the field is they would like to have them interview some of the personnel, Vietnamese educators, who are involved in these things. Otherwise, they don't need help. So if we can get this thing redirected and focused on helping the elementary teachers, this thing will really go. If we can't get it redirected, there's not much hope.

Another thing we're wasting time on, in my opinion, is at present they have these education teams running around gathering statistics, harassing the VN primary education chiefs, who are overworked to begin with, and just as fast as you get one statistic report done, and they check on it to find it's not very accurate, they start another one to evaluate it. They waste a lot of time that way.

Now, if we could just agree that CORDS would implement these MORD projects which are focused on pacification; if we would commit our educational teams in the field to focus on the things that they were employed for and not all these other national projects and running around gathering statistics all the time, or many other ways of being taken off their jobs--this would make an enormous improvement in the effectiveness, I think, of the MORD implementation job that CORDS has to do. It would help the national projects in that they would be free to go ahead, without any obstructions, to develop their projects. It would focus our regional educational advisory team on the training that they can do and are prepared to do and that they're paid to do, and this would give us a chance to move ahead in this very important

elementary education effort of helping teachers. I think if that could be reviewed and examined, that this administrative tangle could be straightened out. Now of course, I think it's natural that some people of the CORDS organization take a sort of proprietary view of their kingdom, shall we say, and want to be responsible for everything that's in it, but I don't think this is quite sensible administratively in terms of getting all of these things done reasonably well.

Anything that I might say about the administrative tangle with CORDS is said in all kindness. I like these men very much, so forth and so on, and it's becoming untangled now. We're quite hopeful about it. A man pretty high up, who came in a few months ago, has encouraged me to report to Saigon immediately any business like the senior provincial advisor saying, "You can't see your counterpart unless I say you can." One people are educated to assist these people and to change their attitudes and so forth, and if you get to see them once every month or two by the leave of the senior provincial advisors, this is really subverting our efforts. I think many of these things are going to clear up; I have high hopes. I think that's our No. 1 problem right now --to get good understanding on both sides of how these teams shall behave in the field, what their so-called thrusts should be in the field. It's a challenging job. It's the most interesting thing I've ever done, I'm very pleased with it and quite encouraged about what I think can be done. I haven't been too encouraged until the last six weeks or so. Even so, it's been an interesting job, I seem to be doing a lot of good. In my view, there hasn't been the concentration on the high priority goals.

Logistics

Except for these administrative problems in connection with CORDS, I don't believe I can pinpoint any one thing that gives me trouble. Overseas you have to reconcile yourself to the fact that you're going to move much more slowly than you do in the States. You have to realize that, despite the resources that America is putting into this effort, there's just so much that can be done by your support people. Sometimes you must be ready to deliver a jeep yourself, and sometimes take books to the airport on an emergency basis. When you're out in the field sometimes you find the only possible way of getting books out is by helicopter and things of that sort. Sometimes you spend quite a bit of time at that sort of thing but I think this is something that we must do.

In terms of this big effort--this focus of our efforts on helping teachers--the problem right now, as I see it, is administrative.

It's this lack of clear-cut administrative operation as between CORDS and the technical divisions. For example, the hamlet school project pays the salaries of the eighteen of us now aboard on this project and will pay the salaries of the eight coming out. But when they get in the field we lose control of these people, and what they do depends on what their team leader tells them to do. The team leader is a person like myself, with a background like myself. The team leader gets his directions, in the past, from the deputy regional director, now it's the New Life Development man. I think the efforts of these people are misdirected and I don't think we'll be able to succeed in this, what seems to be of most importance now, helping teachers. You see, when we started, the idea was, let's have an impact program because the peasants have said they want education for their children first, this is the service they wanted most. Sometimes it's security and education next, sometimes it's education first. It is true, they wanted these classrooms. So it was a matter of getting the classrooms built, getting the teachers trained and going on to the next quota. Now we think it's time to begin to think about quality of the program because it's one thing to put a teacher in front of a bunch of kids, even the children of peasants, but if they're not getting educated, I don't think this pacification program will amount to very much. I think we have to have more control from Saigon on these education teams. CORDS people have come to me and said they want an American education advisor in every province. I say, "OK, that's fine, we don't fight that, but let's make much better use of the people we have in the field. Here are the things that have to be done to make them effective. We've got to let them concentrate on the thing they were hired to do--now it's helping the teachers. We must give them good housing; we mustn't expect them to sleep in the senior education advisor's office. We must give them good transportation."

In some regions in Vietnam the housing is very poor. And it's especially frustrating to women, it's frustrating to anybody. I've had quite a few complaints about housing out in the region. When you work hard all day you don't want to come home and share a room with another person. You'd like to have a nice little apartment where you could relax and have some privacy and so forth. I'm for this business of one American advisor in every province, providing they can do things we've been talking about including housing and pretty good transportation.

One of the things that frustrates some of our people out in the field, and there may be no cure to this, if they go to the airport in the morning, leave at 8 o'clock, sometimes you don't get a flight til 10, they get out to the province about 11 o'clock and the

siesta starts at 12 and goes on til 2, then 3 o'clock you get on the plane and come back because they don't want technicians in some of these places overnight. So that gives them a very short working day. This is frustrating. When you get in the province, your senior provincial advisor is responsible for getting you back. When you go out from the regional capital to the province, the travel officer in the regional headquarters of CORDS will arrange your flight for you. I don't believe that we have enough Air America support, I think that's where the problem is in the provinces--there aren't enough planes. Now when you get to the point where the whole region is pretty secure, then our people could actually reside in the provincial capital, drive an automobile back and forth; but you can't now, the place is too insecure.

Of course, housing is quite difficult in Saigon too. But things are a little better in Saigon--electricity is available most of the time, it doesn't go off very often; they have nice piaces to eat, things of that sort. I think housing is slowly improving there, although in my first tour--I'm not complaining but to give you an illustration--I worked in Saigon all this time--I moved seven times in two years before I finally found an apartment, a small apartment where I live now which is very nice. All the time, I was working through the housing office of the American Embassy, but actually I guess there were maybe 2,000 Americans on the civilian side in Vietnam by then, and the staff increased so rapidly that they couldn't keep up with the housing. I think it's going to change quite a bit in Saigon with the moving of most of the military out in quarters on the Tan Son Nhut air base.

Having to be separated from the family presents problems for most of the people. The acting chief in Region II will be leaving in February. I'm sorry to see him go, but I think he's leaving for reasons that had nothing to do with the A.I.D. program. It's strictly personal reasons; he's unhappy to be separated from his children. They're at the age where he thinks he should be in the family. It will be fine when the families can come back to Vietnam.

Language

One other thing that bothers some of the staff is lack of language fluency. Now it might be different in other areas of work, but in our work, in elementary education in Vietnam at this time, we have the opportunity of working closely with provincial primary education chiefs and primary teachers, and some of our people feel they could do a better job if they could speak the language to some extent. One of our advisors worked for eight years in Indonesia

for one of the major American oil companies; this company gave her language training at Berlitz before she went to Indonesia. When she arrived in Indonesia she was sufficiently fluent to do what she felt was a good job in guiding elementary schools. She said that unless she gets language training, she will not come back, she will not come back to A.I.D. This would be too bad to lose a person like that. I think if those technicians who are with us now who wanted it could be given language training, they could get more job satisfaction as a result and they would be more inclined to stay.

Vietnamese Ministry of Education

Education Officials

The present Minister of Education probably holds the record, since the Diem regime, for tenure in office; I think he's been in office about a year and a half. This is one of the problems in Vietnam--the rapid turnover of people at the ministerial level. We don't know now and since the elections are over, who will be the next Minister of Education or whether the present one will be reappointed. The present incumbent is a dentist who graduated from a university in the United States. His wife has a masters degree in public administration from a university in the States and can speak English very well. We hope that this man can continue. It works very well. He is quite willing to admit that he is not an educational specialist, but he has welcomed many, many of the textbook surveys that we have had, and had many contacts with the survey personnel. Our chief and his deputy have a conference or two each week with the Minister. Many times these conferences will run for several hours and the Minister is a very good listener. But this man, whom I consider to be a good minister, must continue practice as a part-time dentist because his salary is not sufficient. This is a symptom of what the problem is, one of the big problems in Vietnam. When the French pulled out, there was very little trained leadership in the country. This is going to take a long time to develop. I know MORD doesn't need any help; they're doing fine. But if the Ministry of Education is typical of the ministries, they all need an enormous amount of help. It's help you can't give them quickly. So far I haven't seen much evidence of planning on the Vietnamese side--mainly coping. This is something that will hopefully be developed with them. I think one of the things about the Ministry is that they have neither the staff, the plan nor the implements. It's kind of a brush-fire operation.

About the only politics that I've been able to identify in the Ministry is the kind of infighting you would find in most ministries anywhere around the world, people jockeying for position, some of that. I think that the Minister is doing some things that hopefully will get himself re-appointed as minister. That's about the extent of it. There may be some graft and corruption in the Ministry; I haven't discovered it yet. I heard yesterday from a Vietnamese here at the Center that the going price for a job as a teacher in Saigon is 30 thousand piasters now. I assume that to be true, but I don't really know.

The Director of Primary Education is a very able man--not very well trained as far as an American would look at it, but a good man. As far as I know he has only two professional assistants, assistants that know something about education, to help him with education problems. Thus far the approach to solving education problems is kind of on a mandarin basis. If anyone comes in with a problem, they try to solve it. But with a staff of that sort, it's impossible to plan in advance and to implement the plans out in the field. One of the things that we hope to do is to build up that staff in Saigon, and whenever possible we take them out in the field with us; otherwise, they would almost never get out. As much as possible on these workshops, we try to get those three men to go with us because the presence of the Ministry has great influence on the teachers in the field.

There's a provincial primary education chief in every province in the country. Their responsibilities are roughly similar to the county superintendent in the United States, with the big exception that their work is focused on elementary education. Then there are their assistants and inspectors. They are the Ministry representatives in the province and are very important people in terms of educational change in the province. They communicate with Saigon by letter and telegram and sometimes trips to Saigon. All these people and the Ministry people are old hands at working with Americans. If an American makes a mistake, they know enough about Americans to understand it and know that the intent was not to be objectionable.

Stateside In-Service Training for Officials

I don't think much has been done to up-grade the Ministry. We're talking about those in our elementary education unit. What is needed is to find people who can give good leadership on the ministry level; of course, they need training. The trick is to find them, train them, and to be sure they get back into the Ministry and positions of influence after their training. Now we haven't figured this last thing out yet.

We do have a program for up-grading the effectiveness of the provincial primary education chiefs and inspectors. Our goal was to send ninety of those whom the Ministry of Education would approve. A few of them were turned down on the basis of age, which is wise, I think for some of these overaged people, but when the group goes in November and comes back, we will have reached 84, which is good. We send these people on a 90-day observation tour of elementary education in the States and a third country or two in the Pacific. This tour has been focused on four objectives: (1) methodology; that is, how to use the textbook; (2) supervision--what is it, what's the potential and how do you do it; (3) community school; and (4) the role of elementary education in nation building. It starts out with a three-week university seminar in which these matters are emphasized.

The seminar is held at a different university each time. I tried to persuade the U.S. Office of Education in the States that they ought to pick out two or three universities that do the best job and have them repeat the program over and over again. But they weren't convinced. The University of Illinois has given one; SIU has; a university way up in northern Michigan is giving one now. Some California institutions will be. The idea is that they get lectures in the morning and reinforcing observations and demonstrations in the afternoon. Some universities do a bang-up job with this, and then the participants will say that this was a highlight. We find it difficult to get the right sort of observations. What these people want is to sit down and watch the teachers teach arithmetic and stay with that teacher most of the day, and be able to question her, and get an explanation of why she did this and that. For some reason or other, it almost never shapes up. I don't know why. They haven't been able to provide this, and also they haven't been able to provide good demonstrations on supervision--a good program on supervisory techniques. I know it's not a lost art in the States, but this must be difficult for the sponsors in the States to provide.

Another problem of the tour is that they want to show the participants the Head Start Program, pre-school program, kindergarten program, testing programs, guidance programs. I guess some of this is all right because it points out some basic things about people and about education. But I long for the time when they can just concentrate on these simple direct things that they're not doing now--on how to teach arithmetic, how to teach reading and that sort of thing. This is the trouble in the field too, because everybody will ride off on his hobby, you know. The education advisors are inclined to do that--it's the human thing to do--rather than concentrate on the things that are needed most.

It would help if demonstrations could be televised in this country and sent to Vietnam for in-service training. When I get back to Saigon, I want to see if JUSPAO won't film in color and, of course, sound, the demonstrations that our advisors are giving in II Corps. One of the very encouraging, also frustrating, things about this business of in-service education, is that they want it so badly. They want help, and our advisors are busy. They have to turn people down sometimes because of conflicting schedules.

When a group goes on a tour, I always entertain them at my home. I say, "Now listen, let's concentrate. This is a very serious matter and the government's depending on you, and I want you to come back and be able to tell me a lot of new ideas about the community schools, use of textbooks and so forth. Not that we want you to think about adopting the American education system because it's not applicable to your situation, but we want you to get all the ideas you can and come back and consider them and decide if there are some you can use." Then I entertain them when they come back. We get as much feedback as we can about what they learned, what they think, what their feelings have been toward the tour. How the tour can be improved the next time around. We have them write up individually what their impressions are and what ideas they've got--how they apply them to Vietnam. The Vietnamese leader of the group is expected to turn in to the Ministry his report on the whole thing, and many times it has been a team effort to develop it. One team leader wrote a 25-page report in French that he filed at the Ministry; we get these reports and have them translated.

We try to observe these people in the field to see what they're doing after they get back. Some of them are very active. The provincial primary education chief in Gia Dinh--Gia Dinh is the biggest province in the country, it's a doughnut type district which completely encircles Saigon--systematically got all his teachers together and reviewed the tour. The Chief in Phong Dinh could be a successful school superintendent in the States; he's terrific. You go into his office and see flip charts on how many teachers he's got in the various districts, how many textbooks he's received. He gets these teachers together for workshops, and he advises the American advisory team on many things outside of elementary education. This man is terrific. Can Tho is the regional capital, where you can see really good use of textbooks.

We think this 90-day tour has been very helpful. It still can be improved a great deal, but by and large it's been very good.

Relations with Vietnamese

This entertaining of these groups is about the only socializing I do with Vietnamese. We get our people together in the elementary school unit; I always have the Education Division Chief and the Deputy. We usually have a training officer come and talk to them about all the arrangements they have to make. I find it very enjoyable. Most of the time I've been able to use the representational allowance for the entertaining, but even if I can't do that I want to do the entertaining.

Many times when we go to the field, I'll be invited out to Vietnamese education officials' homes, but I don't seek opportunities to entertain these people except in connection with business of the projects, because by the time I try to do all the things that a project needs, I'm pretty well worn out at the end of the day.

Vietnamese Primary Education

Revolutionary Development - Hamlet Schools

As I said earlier, the hamlet school project is operated by two ministries, the Ministry of Revolutionary Development and the Ministry of Education. MORD, through CORDS, takes care of building the hamlet schools. Hamlet school construction has a good record. One of the criteria of building a hamlet school is to build it in a secure place. In the old days these sites were chosen by a provincial committee made up of prov reps, prov chiefs, and the MACV advisor, leaning heavily on the provincial primary education chief for leg work and recommendations and so forth. Now most of them--75 percent, I understand--are being placed in the New Life hamlets that are relatively secure. Maybe one of the reasons that we have never been harassed, although I can't be convinced of this, is that the classrooms that are being built have been well chosen, put in relatively secure areas.

We try to get the building of new classrooms done in the spring; the program usually builds about 2,500 of these a year--they train that many teachers. Then the teachers are trained in the summer-time while the school is not in session. MORD pays for the cost of their training, and then pays their salaries. In the past MORD paid their salaries for the first five months of the new school year, then in January the Ministry of Education, MOE, would put them on the payroll. Now the new plan is that after training they

would be paid as in the past by MORD up until January, which is the first five months in the new school year and also the next twelve months--these salaries are on a twelve-month basis. So I guess you'd say 17 or 18 months after the teacher starts being paid by MORD, he or she--mainly she--will be placed on the MOE payroll.

The Ministry of Revolutionary Development is a go-go ministry, not tied down by the dead hand of the past, shall we say. They get things done quickly. They're talking now of putting secondary education as one of the MORD projects. If they do, they'll get something done quickly in secondary education. Otherwise, it will be a very slow development. (We've been invited to put an American, full-time, in the program officer's office of MORD. The program officer is a very clever Vietnamese man and he wants to develop a filing system for the country, starting with MORD records. What I see as an opportunity there is to simplify the gathering of educational statistics, so that when CORDS, USAID and refugee people in the highlands, the commissariat and so forth, and Washington wants educational figures, maybe we could develop a monthly report that would be prepared; everyone who wants educational statistics would go to the provincial primary education chief. We could develop a monthly report that would satisfy everybody, hopefully.)

Community Schools and Community Participation

MOE for ten years has had a UNESCO assistance project in developing community schools; and the Long An teachers college, about 25 miles south and east of Saigon, has been assisted by UNESCO for ten years in developing an outlook and developing a content for converting schools to be centers for community improvement. This school graduates 200 normal school graduates every year which is not enough to do the job. The teachers, after they have had the training, are supposed to get really involved in community affairs and to remain involved, but this is difficult, if you've ever tried to do this in an American community with all the resources we have in America. The community school program places quite an additional burden on the teacher, and these people need encouragement, supervision, and help, which I'm almost positive they're not getting at this time. But we hope to support this. We are supporting this effort to convert--the ministry wants 80 percent of the primary schools in the country converted to a community school concept in its curriculum within five years. It's a noble goal, but not very realistic.

As I see this, the key to all of this development is training the people. If you train the people, they will build their classrooms, they will get the teaching machines, and they'll get the teachers

teaching properly, and the leadership will get more participation on the local level. This is one of the problems. Now, you see, the people are accustomed to this notion of everything being done from Saigon. But if they had to make a local contribution to their own schools, manage them through committees or boards of education, they'd really see them as their schools.

There are quite a few parent-teacher associations in the country. But here again, this is spotty. There are quite a few of them in Phong Dinh in Region IV, and they've been very helpful, and sometimes they'll pass the hat and supplement the teachers' salaries, and organize simple lunch programs and first aid centers, things of that sort. In places where some religions are strong enough, like the Cao Dai in Tay Ninh, there's a lot of parent participation. But this needs to be formalized a little bit. When the lower house is elected, then they'll be in a position to write a school code, and the Minister wants us to do this: get a pattern of school legislation that hopefully will do a lot of these things--provide for local and provincial financial support and more participation by people in educational programs.

Primary School Curriculum

There is, in my view, the basis for a functional curriculum in Vietnamese primary education. The traditional subject matter includes arithmetic, reading, history, geography, child care for the girls in the upper grades, and health and science. They have civics, too, which begins in the first grade and goes up the line much like we would teach civics in the elementary school in America today--responsibilities of the child living in the family, in the home, in the school, in the wider community, and so forth. They have nothing at the moment very much in agriculture, although in the 90-day teacher's training program in the summer, there is 20 hours of instruction in how to introduce agriculture content into the primary school curriculum. What the 90-day teachers are urged to do is to bring in the representatives of the various ministries who can present different aspects of agriculture, of health and so forth, to the children.

I understand that no examination is required now to graduate from the five-year primary school in Vietnam. If you have an average mark, which is 10 out of 20, 20 being perfect, you may graduate. Then there is a competitive examination for junior high school, because there's not enough room in the junior high school for all those who graduate from the primary school. The content of the examination is based on the textbooks of the last grade of the

primary school, which is fine. Before that the content of the examination was quite different from the content of the primary school textbooks, which meant that the teachers would not teach the textbook because they would be afraid the students wouldn't pass the exam. But now I don't think, as far as primary education is concerned, we have an examination problem.

The increased moving about of people and the growth of the cities create education problems and many others in the cities. Saigon has four districts--4, 6, 7 and 8--filled mainly with rural people who came in for one reason or another from the rural areas. We're trying to build classrooms, hamlet school style, in these districts, also to help out with secondary education. We are attempting to help the Ministry with their program called the Abolition of Noon-day Classes--the idea is to add some more classrooms for these children so they need not go to school during the noon hour. In the cities, classrooms are so crowded that sometimes they have three and four shifts so they probably only get a couple hours of education per day.

Textbook Program

We believe that in Vietnam now there is a tremendous opportunity to get elementary education and subsequently other levels on a much higher level of effectiveness now by working on the methodology of teaching, particularly as it involves the effective use of textbooks. The instructional materials project handles a textbook program in elementary education. Manuscripts have been written on almost all of the 35 titles needed to provide every pupil attending any kind of a primary school in Vietnam, public or private, with a full set of textbooks. This is very unusual for developing countries. These textbooks were written by committees of Vietnamese educators--starting in 1957. The Southern Illinois University contract team were involved in this and took the lead in it, as I remember. There was an American advisor, a specialist in various branches of elementary school subject matter, on the committee, and the content was checked using all the resources on hand to be sure that the content was up to date and accurate. The textbooks are well illustrated. (There's almost a full set of these books here in the Center library, if anyone wants to see them.)

These textbooks cost about 25 cents apiece and are to be furnished free to all elementary school children in this country. About 12 million of these textbooks have come off the press and have been delivered to the regions and provinces. The U. S. military and other free world people are quite willing to help us deliver the textbooks to the provincial capitals out in the remote areas. One

of our problems there is getting them delivered to the schools. The provincial primary education chief is responsible for warehousing the textbooks and getting them out to the schools. When they get in the schools, the Ministry's plan is that these books will be loaned to the children for one year, and that they should be returned at the end of the year. Hopefully, the books will last for three years-- they're all paperbound books. The Ministry has gotten out communications indicating that the teachers will not really be held responsible for book loss and destruction; that the family, in the event that the children are very careless, might be asked for 15 piasters if the textbook was completely ruined or if it was lost. Now 15 piasters is less than 15 cents; I can't believe that this is too much of an obstacle in the use of the textbooks. We have used workshops around the country to get the views of people on this idea. I think we're going to get this part of it ironed out.

I think this offers an enormous opportunity at this time to really upgrade elementary education and all other levels through the use of the textbooks. From my experience in Indonesia, it was a very unusual teacher who had a full set of textbooks. Textbooks were not formally prepared and issued by the ministry there; it was sort of a spotty thing. Some teacher would decide that she knew quite a bit about arithmetic, for example, and write a textbook and maybe in a certain area in Java that textbook would be popular. And let me say that this will be the first time in Vietnam and I think most young developing countries around the world where they'll have an opportunity to systematically teach the national primary school curriculum. Prior to that, it's all been chalk and talk; teaching what the teacher had somehow picked up, maybe in training or from other teachers, and presenting that to the children on the blackboards, making them speak, memorize, speak in unison. What the children got depended on what the teacher had in her notes. I assume that they've had a great deal of this content before, presented in a very spotty and unsystematic way. If she was a normal school graduate, then she got the French oriented two-year normal school curriculum, which apparently also emphasized memorization and rote learning. Now if the teachers will follow the textbooks and can be taught to use them effectively, the children of Vietnam, those who attend the five-grade primary school, will get the whole primary school content presented to them systematically.

A management survey team, under contract with USAID in Saigon, was invited to make a study of the publishing industry, textbooks and libraries. And they commented on the elementary school textbook program, and said at that time--this was about a year ago--that they felt that a third to a half of the teachers were making reasonably

good use of the textbooks at that time, but they urged us to focus our efforts on getting the whole group of teachers, as much as possible, to understand what a textbook is and how it can be used in the education of youngsters. Another thing that they mentioned about the textbook program is that Vietnamese society in general is not book-minded. They have a very limited publishing capability there, and this survey pointed out that, in their opinion, getting effective use of these textbooks and having the children carry them in the homes so the family can get some view of them, and let the teachers understand how much more can be accomplished for children through the use of textbooks, would be a way of convincing Vietnamese society in general that books have real developmental potential, and to get them using them in all aspects of Vietnamese life.

In-Service Education for Primary Teachers

These books can make a real impact if we can get the teachers to understand how best to use them and to be comfortable in so doing. There's a teacher's manual on how to use the textbooks, and we have asked Washington and our technicians to be alert to good, simple, direct professional books on how to teach arithmetic, how to teach reading, and so forth. When we find these, and when they are approved by the Ministry, then we will have them translated and published in Vietnamese. Our goal there is to make these accessible to all the teachers as a follow-up on our workshops on how to use the textbooks. We're planning workshops next summer for 5,000 teachers as a start. These workshops will be held in every provincial capital, and every autonomous city. It'll be about 50 places. These workshops will be led by the provincial primary education chief, very important people in the educational organization, and their assistants, the inspectors. We will take teachers starting with the 1963 hamlet school teacher group, 1964, and 1965 til we get 5,000 of them. We want to have a good exercise and do this very well. It's taken the Ministry eight years to accept the idea of in-service education. So we want to do a real good job. Now they're asking for it, and the teachers are asking for it. Another advisor and I took a one-day workshop on how to use textbooks for all the teachers in III Corps, about 12 provinces. Sometimes we had more teachers attend the workshops than were listed as teachers in the Ministry statistical book.

Presently our efforts in this in-service education have not been systematic. For example, the province chief in Tuyen Duc, II Corps, gets the idea that he wants a workshop in arithmetic. OK, you go out and give him one. And the guy down in Phu Yen says

give us one in reading. So you go down and give one in reading. What we ought to be doing is to say, okay, reading gets priority No. 1, health gets priority No. 2, science gets priority No. 3; and then we go around systematically to all the regions all over the country to see that every teacher gets these subjects systematically. I'm not criticizing what we're doing now because we're just getting started popularizing this thing.

Of course, in this business of in-service education of teachers, we would like to reach all of them and reach them regularly. Let's put ourselves in the position of the primary school teacher in Vietnam. We estimate that out of over 30,000 teachers, 2,000 of them now have had the two-year normal school training. These are the so-called elite. We are not too impressed with the normal school curriculum; from the American standpoint, it needs quite a bit of improvement. I think the Vietnamese educators are beginning to agree with us. About 9,000 of the teachers have had the hamlet school teacher training courses--the 90-day teacher training course that is given to the teachers in the summertime before they begin teaching. Then the remainder probably have had no formal training at all. They were recruited by the Ministry on what they call a daily basis. The Ministry finds a likely candidate and may be able to give them a few weeks observation of an experienced teacher--maybe another daily basis teacher, and give them maybe some supervision by the principal, but almost no supervision from Saigon.

In the old days teachers would teach from their notes; the children had no idea what was in the notes. Now the children have a full set of textbooks. You can imagine the insecurity of the primary school teachers who haven't been trained very well themselves, have very limited intellectual resources themselves, now facing the children who have these textbooks. They have to keep a step ahead. It will push them, many of them, to keep a step ahead.

We hope to be able to work out with the Ministry a system whereby the teacher may move from the level of this daily basis teacher who has had no formal education at all--gradually up the scales just like the teachers climb the ladder in America, finally get a bachelor's degree--we hope in Vietnam we can arrange it so that they will finally get the normal school diploma.

This means, of course, getting the normal school course on a credit basis. Now the school is following the old French pattern whereby you take an examination at the end of the year and you pass or fail. If you fail, you have to repeat the year. We want it on

a credit unit basis, like three semester hours of credit for educational psychology, three hours for general methods--that sort of thing. Now, to get into the normal schools, you must be a high school graduate, and of course many of our teachers need high school courses. And it will be necessary for these courses to be taught in the late afternoons and on the weekends, later on by radio education and that sort of thing. But I believe the Ministry--the present officials--can't be persuaded that this is a good idea. Because of the high turnover of officials, no one likes to make these long-range decisions.

The use of teaching machines has been talked about, but I sort of discourage the handing of anything like this to the Ministry at this time because of the problems of warehousing, distribution, repair of the machines, the cost of them, and all that sort of thing. My notion of the place where we might do something on programmed learning would be a general methods course for teachers. If we had a programmed course that would be available in most provinces, teachers could take this and get normal school credit for it, just as soon as we're going to get a credit unit basis, but these would just be programmed textbooks, not a machine. The way I see the thing now, we have so much to do in just getting the textbooks used properly, and we have a limited staff to get that job done. I look with a jealous eye on anybody who runs off in any other direction.

The whole problem of up-grading education, as I see it, is leadership. If we had five or six thousand people in the country who had the equivalent of a Bachelors degree in Education and who were insistent on good schools--as people are in developing countries, they won't stand shoddy education, they'll stand up and be counted--they could put enough pressure on the government to get a ministry that would really serve and do all these things--all these problems we talk about would disappear. It's a matter of leadership and getting professional unity there that would get the job done.

The Viet Cong and Education

We've been relatively free from trouble with the VC. Maybe the VC are threatening the teachers in the remote areas, I'm not sure about that, but very few classrooms, hamlet school classrooms, have been destroyed. When they are destroyed, it's sort of a rare grudge battle between the VC and the village/hamlet people. Sometimes, of course, a classroom, not a hamlet school classroom, will find itself in the middle of the battlefield and get torn up. I sort of believe that the VC take the position that they are going to win this anyway so why not let the Americans build up the education system.

As far as the VC educational system itself is concerned, I don't know too much. About all I know about it is that in VC areas in South Vietnam they sometimes will demand that someone in the village, usually some woman, get the children together under a tree if necessary and give them instruction. Maybe some of our books reach the VC. I think maybe this is one of the reasons that we have not been harassed. After all, the peasants are not involved in this struggle ideologically; what they want is security so they can grow their rice and their families, and they want their children educated. I don't think they're too much concerned about whether the textbooks come from Saigon or Hanoi. I think that, in areas that are in kind of a gray area between secure and VC territory, we are educating a lot of the VC children.

The Montagnard

We do some work in education with the Montagnard people, who have many problems. They've been targets of the VC and have been second-class citizens in Vietnamese society--they've never been integrated into society. The Vietnamese look on them as sort of sub-human creatures, but the Vietnamese realize the importance of doing something for them and they're doing better now. We have a project to translate the textbooks in the first three grades into the most commonly used Montagnard languages. The children will begin to switch over to the Vietnamese language at the second grade level. This is being worked up right now. Then we plan workshops to teach the Montagnard teachers how to use the textbooks. We have a contract with the Summer Institute of Linguistics to do this work.

The problem has been the attitudes of the Vietnamese. In our hamlet school projects, if there's a choice to be made between a New Life hamlet that is Vietnamese and one that's Montagnard, quite frequently it will be put where it can serve Vietnamese people.

However, because of the Montagnards' lack of educational advantages, there is a project to offer them a preparatory year for high school after the five primary grades. The idea is to put another year there, an accelerated year, so then when they enter into high school they can move right along with the regular Vietnamese class. There is a special Commissariat for Montagnard affairs and they've been able to build boarding houses for secondary schools. The Ban Me Thuot Normal School is planned entirely for the service of the Montagnards. The Montagnards may enter there with two years less of high school education than required of the

Vietnamese. I think they're allowed to graduate without so many years of training as the Vietnamese. It's improving, but it still can be improved. I am sure our advisors in the field emphasize the point to the Vietnamese that it will hold the country back unless they can get these people educated.

Suggested Orientation for Education Advisors

Type of Personnel Needed

I was quite pleased to see that the training program here included this thing we've been talking about in connection with in-service education. All the candidates that come out here have been selected in Washington, and are capable of doing this thing that needs to be done. All these people here, the A.I.D. people here, and all of them who are in Saigon now are capable of doing this. Some of them are like myself, are administrative types, and have been somewhat removed from the classroom. But we have the help of people who have done this: Eleanor Green, for example, who is a member of our unit in Saigon, was a rural educator connected with the University of Florida for many years; her job was to teach and to give in-service help to rural teachers. So this is her specialty. Ann Domidion is very good at this, Hazel Olson is too. With the help of people like this, I'm sure that we can get the job done. And as people go back to the States and elect not to return to Saigon, then we'll replace them with people whose experience is more involved in this particular area. This business of being able to help teachers does not need a Ph.D. degree. I would say a Ph.D. is really no handicap and can be useful, in that one of the jobs of our American education advisors is to plan provincial educational programs with the chief and this requires perspective of the whole sweep of education. But right now we need people to help the teachers and we're preparing a SPAR in Saigon now to submit to Washington asking for a different emphasis on the type of people that are coming out.

Orientation and Language

I don't know too much yet about the content of the course for the education advisors over here, but they had a simulated workshop last week by one of our advisors. She showed them how to introduce the textbooks and I think she also gave a demonstration on the use of the arithmetic textbooks in teaching youngsters. I think it would be a fine thing if the senior provincial advisors could be clued in on what I think is an opportunity of a lifetime in education, through this textbook project.

I think in getting ready to work more closely with teachers, probably inter-cultural training is important, though for myself I should say the Vietnamese I have encountered and the people who work with me have coached me on what to do and what not to do, so that I would not be objectionable in a social situation. But as I said earlier, I feel very strongly that language training is one of the most important preparation a person can get. If you could afford this sort of thing, I think it would be good to have the advisors come to the country first for three months or so then bring them back for training. This course that they're taking, is supportive --the cultural aspects, the problems to watch, how to get along with your counterparts, and so forth. But it would be much more meaningful after some experience in the field. The kind of people that we are getting now are people who are very sensitive to how the other fellow feels and how he reacts--you can't last very long with a school teacher unless you're pretty sensitive as to how people react. At any rate, I think it's important for most people who are to be educational advisors to have language training. It's a good ice-breaker with the local people. They love to have you speak and they are so appreciative with Americans who make an effort to learn their difficult language. The same thing was true in Indonesia. In Vietnam all the nationals that I know are so pleased when I speak to them in Vietnamese and are delighted to hear me struggle with it and make mistakes and are all ready to correct me. I think it's a great rapport maker, but if you can get to a place where, if necessary, you could speak a little bit on educational matters, this would be very helpful.