

DEBRIEF OF AN ASSISTANT

LAND REFORM ADVISOR

VIETNAM

1965 - 1967

No. 2678

DEBRIEF OF AN ASSISTANT LAND REFORM ADVISOR

VIETNAM

1965-1967

Content Summary

	<u>Page</u>
Preface	i
Map	iii
Background, Preparation, Orientation	1

His youth, college education and employment have all been oriented toward life in rural areas. He got a Master's Degree in agriculture and served with the Peace Corps in India prior to joining AID. He received 10 months of training before going to Vietnam in June, 1965. The most valuable aspect of training was the language instruction. Training should include professional instruction about GVN public administration as well as an emphasis on crossing the cultural and communication barriers.

Function as Assistant Province Representative	3
---	---

His first job was as assistant prov rep at Can Tho. He was there only three months in a "generalist" role. He successfully introduced long propeller shafts to the people around Can Tho. He also brought about improvements at the Chieu Hoi center, mainly because he arranged surgical treatment for a child's harelip. He exploited the operation's success by making the results widely known.

Hoi Chanh	5
---------------------	---

The father of the child with the harelip had been a VC. After his son had been operated on he became an ardent supporter.

Function as Refugee Worker 6

He was pulled out of Can Tho in September, 1965, to study the refugee problem. He travelled around the country looking into the problem, and along with several others wrote a joint report. The Office of Refugee Coordination (ORC) was then established in Saigon.

He was then sent to Pleiku to work with refugees there. The security situation was very bad in the province and the refugee population grew rapidly. He faced immense logistics and bureaucratic problems in trying to provide for them.

Black Market: Corruption 8

Although he had no evidence, there was talk of considerable corruption involved in getting food to the refugees. Rice was rationed but ration cards were useless because even in Pleiku city the only rice in circulation was sold at black market prices. Like most Americans in Vietnam, he found it difficult to deal with the corruption problem. One American advisor was pulled from a province because he documented and revealed misdeeds of Vietnamese officials.

Function as Assistant Land Reform Advisor 9

In late 1965, he was put to work on the land reform problem, which had had no American working specifically on it since 1961. The job involved helping the Vietnamese carry out the current land reform policy and planning a new policy as well.

The Land Reform Program 10

The land reform program had been downgraded by the Vietnamese and only supported by the Americans after 1961. Interest and support for it grew in 1965 when people began to see it as an important issue in winning the support of people in rural areas. The issuance of permanent land titles and the distribution of government-

owned lands were being emphasized when he left. The rent ceiling law is violated frequently and needs to be enforced.

In the areas which are largely secure in the Delta, the rents tend to be higher than in areas that are not so secure. He believes there is a relationship between poor land laws and insurgency. A solution to the problem must include both an increase in the number of owner operators and the enforcement of laws dealing with landlord-tenant relationships. A proposal to give power and responsibility to the village in carrying out land regulations has never been implemented. Also, under the village-hamlet reorganization plan of December, 1966, one man on the village council would have responsibilities for land reform.

Social Contacts with the Vietnamese 13

The most important thing in working at the local level is your relationship with Vietnamese officials. He himself was a frequent guest of the Vietnamese but found it difficult to entertain them in his quarters at the American compound.

GVN Officials--Interpersonal Relationships 14

Although it is not easy to have good personal and formal rapport with GVN officials he was generally quite successful in establishing it.

He found that being frank in the beginning with the Land Reform officials paid off.

The most difficult thing is getting GVN officials motivated to act. There are various ways of doing it and one must be willing to experiment. He used publicity and pressure in various instances to get programs going. The Vietnamese are always cooperative when Americans provide assistance, but it is another matter when ideas or advice is offered. American technical assistance is welcomed, but assistance for improving Vietnamese administration is not.

The GVN Directorate of Land Affairs acted efficiently on its own initiative once, when permanent land titles were given out. This happened because officials at the highest level of the government wanted the job done. They applied pressure from the top and also paid the low-level bureaucrats for each title they completed. In this case the Vietnamese proved to themselves that they could be effective when they wanted to. In another case the officials seemed to the Americans to be unconcerned about the condition of the archives room in which valuable land records for all of Vietnam were kept. But when Americans were able to contribute budget assistance to fix up the archives the Vietnamese turned out to be very enthusiastic about it.

For an American to have a good personal relationship with a Vietnamese official he must have an interest in understanding Vietnamese culture. And he must have patience, tolerance, and a genuine sense of humor.

Vietnamese Bureaucracy 21

Finding solutions to problems is sort of like playing with a row of dominoes--the Vietnamese set up a problem and the Americans try to knock it down, and then the Vietnamese set up another. A proposed solution to an employment problem he dealt with went all the way to the minister level without being approved, and when an alternative solution appeared to be accepted it was never implemented. Several subsequent proposals had the same fate. To solve such problems the advisor must know the details of them, be prepared to discuss them thoroughly, and be aware of the resources required for solution.

Observations of Vietnamese Culture 23

The Vietnamese greatly appreciate any interest Americans show in their culture, such as making a gesture at the dinner table, giving the traditional new years' greeting at Tet, or asking about Ông Tao, the kitchen god. Americans should be trained in cultural subtleties

such as not turning your back to the family altar or
sitting with the soles of your feet facing a Vietnamese.

PREFACE

The material contained in this debrief represents the personal observations, experiences, attitudes and opinions of the person interviewed. The Asia Training Center (ATC), the University of Hawaii, the Agency for International Development (AID) and the United States government in no way approve or disapprove of the actions reported or opinions expressed; nor are the facts or situations reported verified.

The purpose of debriefing personnel returning from Asian assignment at the Hawaii ATC is to:

1. Provide AID with management insights suggesting alterations in current policies and practices and to identify patterns, trends and problems which, when analyzed, will provide guidance for future assistance plans and programs.
2. Accumulate new or updated information for an institutional memory, for fundamental research and for application to future development assistance programs.
3. Provide material for understanding the cultural framework of a country, and the dynamics of its mode of social change. And, as a correlate, to discover customs, mores, taboos and other relevant factors which affect interpersonal relationships between Americans and members of a host community.
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.

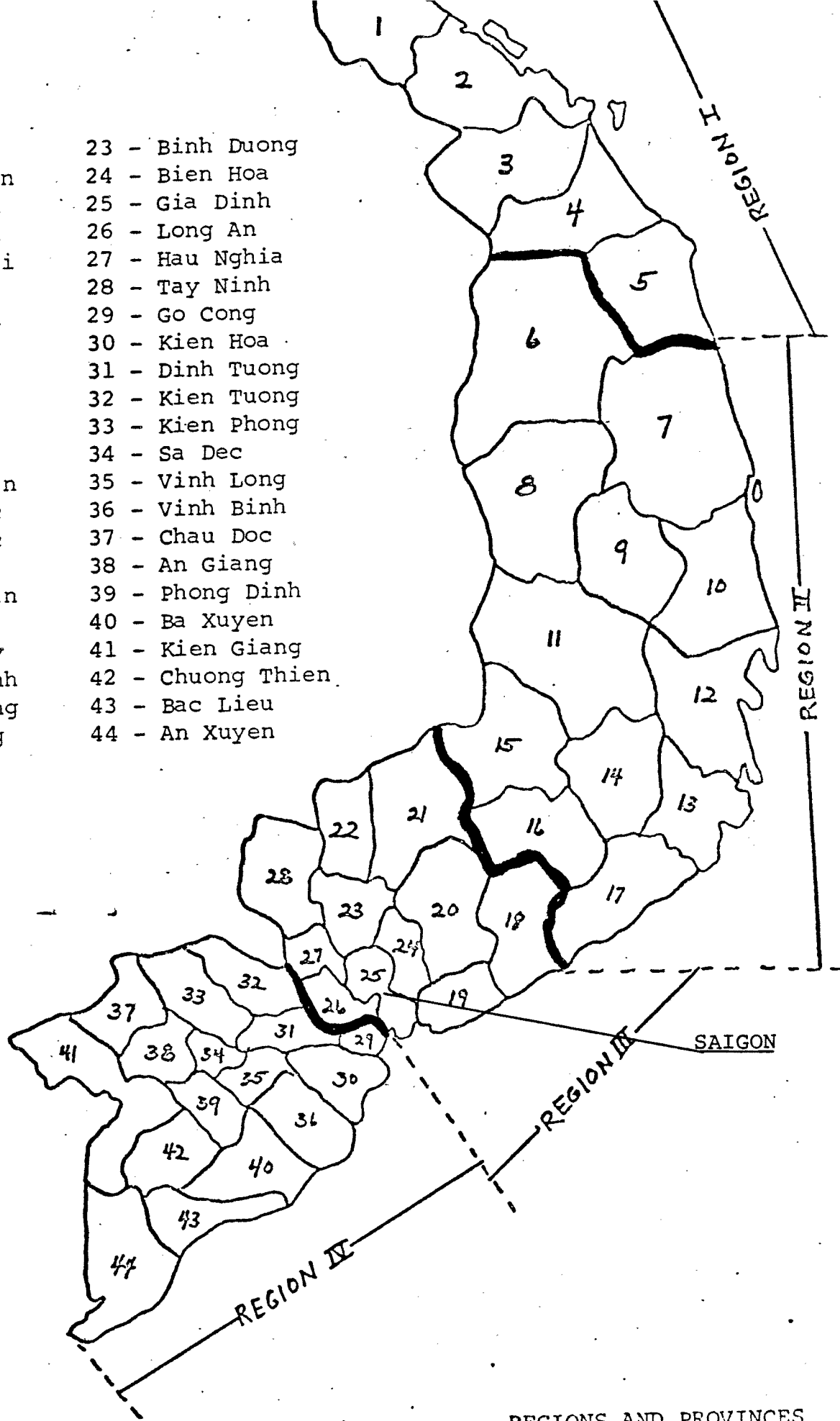
In order to obtain frank and open discussion, interviewees are promised that every effort will be made to prevent disclosure of their identity. For that reason, debrief reports are identified by a code number, unless explicit permission is granted to reveal identity.

In the event, for some legitimate reason, responsible persons desire additional information regarding material presented in this debrief, the ATC in Hawaii will attempt to contact the person involved to obtain the required information or establish

direct contact. Requests for additional information, or direct contact, should outline the reasons for the request and should indicate what use will be made of the information if obtained.

Material contained in this report may not be quoted in publications or cited as a source of information or authority without written permission from the Agency for International Development and the University of Hawaii.

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1 - Quang Tri | 23 - Binh Duong |
| 2 - Thua Thien | 24 - Bien Hoa |
| 3 - Quang Nam | 25 - Gia Dinh |
| 4 - Quang Tin | 26 - Long An |
| 5 - Quang Ngai | 27 - Hau Nghia |
| 6 - Kontum | 28 - Tay Ninh |
| 7 - Binh Dinh | 29 - Go Cong |
| 8 - Pleiku | 30 - Kien Hoa |
| 9 - Phu Bon | 31 - Dinh Tuong |
| 10 - Phu Yen | 32 - Kien Tuong |
| 11 - Darlac | 33 - Kien Phong |
| 12 - Khanh Hoa | 34 - Sa Dec |
| 13 - Ninh Thuan | 35 - Vinh Long |
| 14 - Tuyen Duc | 36 - Vinh Binh |
| 15 - Quang Duc | 37 - Chau Doc |
| 16 - Lam Dong | 38 - An Giang |
| 17 - Binh Thuan | 39 - Phong Dinh |
| 18 - Binh Tuy | 40 - Ba Xuyen |
| 19 - Phuoc Tuy | 41 - Kien Giang |
| 20 - Long Khanh | 42 - Chuong Thien |
| 21 - Phouc Long | 43 - Bac Lieu |
| 22 - Binh Long | 44 - An Xuyen |



REGIONS AND PROVINCES
OF
SOUTH VIETNAM

DEBRIEF OF AN ASSISTANT LAND REFORM ADVISOR

Vietnam

1965-1967

Background, Preparation, Orientation

I've been with the office of agriculture at the USAID mission in Vietnam. My position has been as an assistant land-reform advisor in the Land Branch.

I have a strong orientation toward rural communities. Although I am from a middle-western urban community, I spent all of my non-school time essentially on farms. I worked on farms, rented farms and worked with rural people in most of the employment that I had during high school and college. I hold a Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture with my major subjects being animal husbandry and agronomy, and after serving a period with the military, I returned to college and received a Master of Science degree in agricultural economics. Minnesota is my home state. I went to the University of Minnesota for both undergraduate schooling and graduate schooling.

Prior to employment with AID, I was with the Peace Corps. After the training period, I served two years in India, in the state of Punjab. My work there, primarily, involved agriculture, but also was in community development. I always did have an interest in traveling, and I suppose, maybe a little bit of idealism otherwise I would not have made a commitment toward the Peace Corps. I have always been interested in work overseas--it sort of just grew with my education, etc. Upon hearing about the origin of the Peace Corps, I applied even before it became an agency of the United States Government. I was in one of the very first groups to go overseas. After I did go overseas--after my period of work in India--I spent one year traveling back to the States and visiting a series of countries in Africa and the Middle East. I stopped in most of the Middle Eastern countries after a trip down the White Nile in Egypt; I worked on a kibbutz in Israel for about two months before proceeding to Turkey, Greece and, I would say, all of western Europe. I had become very interested in foreign cultures and working with other peoples and my interest became more and more intense with the passage of time.

Probably my coming into AID was a chance thing. Upon my return to the States in August of 1965, I went to Washington after spending two or three days in New York. I went to Washington to look for employment. My primary interest, at that time, was with the U. S. Department of Agriculture, specifically with the Foreign Agricultural Service. I did go to AID, and at that time I talked with some agricultural people in AID who rather discouraged me in terms of employment with AID. As I recall, I talked with two agriculturalists. Although at that time I had a graduate degree and I had spent nearly three years overseas, the attitude that prevailed, at least as I inferred it, was that I was inexperienced and that I had Peace Corps idealism. They probably figured that to be associated with the Peace Corps was not a technical job; they felt that I did not have the technical background and experience to effectively carry out the role of an AID technician.

Then I heard that they were recruiting people to do provincial work in Vietnam and inquired into that also while I was in Washington. After some interviews and processing I started work on September 20th, only a month later. I had ten months of training before I went overseas--from September, 1964 to late June, 1965. I believe I was in the second group--another group started just prior to ours and we both arrived in Vietnam approximately the same time. There were about 14 or 15 fellows in our group and the training consisted of about five and a half months of Vietnamese language; about one month to a month and a half of area studies; a one week inter-departmental seminar; about five or six weeks at Fort Bragg, N.C., Special Welfare School for training in counter-insurgency. After that, in July, we went. The training, I think, was very helpful in orienting us toward our jobs. Most of the people in my group were assigned as provincial, or assistant provincial, representatives. We went to Vietnam with the idea that most all of us would be working in the field. I had no in-country training in Vietnam. My training I feel, helped me considerably--particularly the language training. Of all the training that I received, I would say that the language training was of the greatest advantage to me in my field work. The training on background and Vietnamese history and geography, political history, etc., was also very valuable to me. Although there was not a direct application on the job, it helped me to adjust and to fit in better and quickly to my work.

I think I learned a lesson in the Peace Corps on fitting in quickly which I sort of applied to my initial work in Vietnam. This was that during the first several weeks there I did not want to make any specific recommendations to the Vietnamese as to how a program should be run and such things. I felt that it was a time for my orientation and that before I would be able to give responsible replies and make decisions, I had to know

more about the environment in which I was living. I would say that this was the first approach that I took. It was one of learning rather than giving advice. Subsequently, I was able to pull in a lot of information. It's a matter of going through files; it's a matter of talking to people, making introductions, meeting people and getting your feet on the ground. After you've been able to do this, you are much better able to get your ideas across in the future.

I would say that in preparation for dealing with people at this level in Vietnam, a better knowledge of GVN administration is essential and I think that for this training we should have public administration people who have a knowledge of the inner workings of the GVN administration and the former French influence. An emphasis on training should also be given to the cross-cultural situation--the problems involved as an American in a foreign culture and related as much as possible to that particular country. I also think it would be a good idea to train our people--give them a background or something--in the techniques of training the Vietnamese--a communications methods course. Of course the first thing is the language requirement. I think that this is essential and it has been--I studied Punjabi prior to going to India and this was very effective, particularly in making initial contact and communication. I would like to also state about this approach in communications methods--this again would apply in general, I would say, to most any developing country or any foreign relation we would have with foreign nationals.

Function As Assistant Province Representative

I have had several jobs in Vietnam. After I reached Vietnam, my position was changed, but originally I was assigned to Phong Dinh province in the Delta and the city of Can Tho, the main city for Region IV. I went to Can Tho after only four days in Saigon, mostly spent in processing. My job was that of an assistant prov rep. I worked at this job until September for nearly three months.

In my job as an assistant prov rep, I spent much of my first weeks getting oriented to the job--getting introduced and learning my various Vietnamese counterparts. This type of job was that of a "generalist." It involved working with all of the service chiefs of the province. But with my having a stronger agricultural background than the prov rep, it was decided that we would flip our duties--he would be responsible for more of the non-agricultural aspects of the work and I would handle the work with the animal husbandry chiefs, agricultural chiefs, the NACCO (National Agricultural Credit Coop Organization) chiefs; land affairs chief, and primarily work in

the agricultural aspects of it, as well as the self-help program. We did have on the staff there a Filipino man who was a specialist in working with the self-help and community development side of it. He left shortly after I arrived--probably on home leave--and I took on this additional task.

I was in this province only a short period of time. More recently I have been in Saigon as an assistant land reform advisor in the Land Branch. It was only during my last month or so in the province that I felt things were starting to roll, that things were getting under way. There was only a very short period of time in which you could see effective results to measure. There are two particular incidents of success that come to my mind. The first was introduction of the motors with the long propeller shafts on them that they use for propelling the sampans up and down the canals. The second incident was not in agriculture. This job as assistant prov rep was that of a "generalist." One of the duties that came to me, in addition to the agricultural aspects, was that of the Chieu Hoi--the Viet Cong returnee program.

To convert these motors for irrigation purposes was a very simple thing. Shafts of about one meter were added. It was something that had been done in another town. I had got the idea down to Can Tho and had had one made. The way I carried this out was that I had one made out of my own money, just a few piasters, as I recall--one, two or three hundred piasters. I brought it down and took it out and let some of the farmers see it for a demonstration. I worked this in conjunction with CATM (Chinese Agricultural Technical Mission). They took this up and the thing sort of grew and grew. It was a matter of coordinating; getting demonstrations set up; having them made locally to show that it could be done locally; showing them the economy and advantages of it, etc. After making a couple of visits back to Can Tho I can see that the idea has caught on in many villages.

At the Chieu Hoi Center, the returnees were not getting the proper training as was set up for them. They weren't getting their uniforms, etc. After working with the chief for a time, which involved many, many visits to his office--almost daily visits to the Chieu Hoi Center--I think things started to improve, I know they started to improve. We got a better program going, we got the training reviewed and I think that some aspects of the training were improving, although it still left much to be desired. I was involved with the former Viet Cong. One of the things that was done at the Chieu Hoi Center was that families were brought in and it was quite exciting for the VC to turn themselves in so they could be with their families again.

One particular family, a man in his forties and his wife, in her late thirties at least, had two or three small children. One boy had a cleft palate and a harelip. His harelip was a double harelip--it was a very ugly looking thing, in fact sort of a monstrosity. I noticed this and took the mother and the boy to the local provincial hospital, where there was an American surgical medical team. I had them look at him and see if anything could be done. They said that they would schedule some plastic surgery. This was done and I notified our JUSPAO people. I also notified the Vietnamese Information Service in the province who published a monthly newspaper. I had them interview the boy and the family. The father and mother were very happy about it. The father was involved in it to the extent that, when the boy required blood for the operation, he donated blood for his son. The boy was about 10 years old. I was personally in the operating theater during the surgery for two and three-quarters hours taking pictures to be used. Prior to surgery there were pictures--before and after things. They were used--the results were excellent. The boy turned out to be a handsome young man and the parents were extremely happy. I saw here a double use--not only in the psychological warfare sense for the GVN side but also for this particular family who had become very pro-government. In fact, the father wanted to join the GVN forces and fight against the VC. Every time after that when I went out to the Center, the mother would thank me profusely in Vietnamese stating that, "I never thought that my boy would ever be normal and I thank you."

This family, and the whole attitude at the Chieu Hoi Center changed toward the Americans. When I first went out they were frightened; they ran away into the barracks or around the corners. After the operation's success, when I stopped my vehicle by the road, the people would come running out to greet me and other Americans there. It had quite an impact, so I think that this would be one of the most memorable experiences that I had. After that there was a tremendous run of harelip cases to the provincial hospitals.

Hoi Chanh

As I said, after the successful harelip operation the boy's father wanted to join the GVN forces and fight the VC. The father had been in the VC for two years--one, training VC troops and VC cadre for fighting and one in actually fighting against the GVN troops in the Delta area. He told me much about his background. I asked him if he was frightened of Americans and he said that he was, prior to coming in. He said he was told that they were replacing the French. I asked him why he turned himself in, as I did most all of them. He told me that, frankly, he was told that since the Americans were replacing

Then I was sent back to Pleiku province to work with refugees in that one province. I had 13,000 refugees there to take

established in Saigon.

subsequently the ORC (Office of Refugee Coordination) was port on refugees. This report was studied, I understand, and with the other four or five individuals, we wrote a joint report there were for them, I went back down to Saigon and they had housing, sanitary facilities, food,--and what pros- conditions--the number of refugees, their location, whether housing, or if they didn't have food, etc. After noting the diseases, epidemics rampant, if these people didn't have background information to find out whether there actually were to Pleiku, where I did most of my work. I was sent to get the sonnel and the provincial social welfare chiefs. Then I went to Nha Trang and interviewed the people there, both AID per- I was sent to Saigon and given some instruction. Then I went

often--sometimes three or four times in a two-year tour. people lost their contacts and had to start all over again very personalities and where he can go and what he can do, etc. These to his particular environment of that province, the people, the one becomes adjusted to the country he must also become adapted tour. This was quite a cause for consternation. Even though one. Very few people stayed in one province for their entire their province well when they would be transferred to another they would just be getting bedded down, so to speak, and know a major gripe among provincial people and field people--that province, which, I might add right here, I never was. This was duty on the promise that I would be shortly returned to my real situation was. I was taken from my province for this mine to what extent the problem existed, to find out what the country where there was a real refugee problem to try to deter- was. In Saigon they sent assistant prov reps to areas of the and some information acquired as to what the actual situation higher levels it was requested that a detailed study be made Washington about the refugee situation in Vietnam. From the In September of 1965 there was quite a political issue in

Function As Refugee Worker

the French that they must fight on for their own independence, etc. Then he said, "One day I got to thinking. How could this be? I had heard that the Americans were rich and had every- thing, so why would they want to come and take things from my poor country and my family who have nothing?" Finally, he said that that, along with all of the other problems of moving day in and day out, the bombings, etc., made him decide to turn him- self in.

care of. There were about 7,000 at the time that I arrived and within three months the number went up to 13,000. Pleiku province is very insecure. In fact, in those days, October and November of 1965, we were cut off by land from any other areas. Everything had to come in by air. This meant a terrific logistics job and so much of my work consisted of arranging for aircraft, meeting aircraft, unloading, seeing that this and that got out to the refugees. One of the problems was that if you gave it to the social welfare chief it may not get distributed to the refugees. The Vietnamese were involved in this. There was a lady social welfare chief--she tried but she had a terrific amount of bureaucratic overhead to fight. In those early days of supporting the refugees, no one was quite sure where funds were coming from. The regulations and other things weren't defined on paper. The refugees are sent to towns and are never given anyplace to go. There were long waits for responses from Saigon to get the things in and out, etc. Through USOM, however, we were able to support these refugees by bringing in commodities.

I would say, in terms of my relationship there with the Vietnamese, that again, they were very cordial and it worked out very well. I did feel that it was so urgent to take care of these refugees and see that they got what was meant for them that I actually was at the physical distribution of most of the tons and tons of supplies for these people. Although, I didn't physically hand out anything, I was there to see that it was handed out. It was always given in the form of the government and whenever I had an opportunity I would say that it was the GVN that was providing it, so we could get the GVN involved as much as possible. They did, within their ability, handle this situation quite well.

I'd like to tell here one of the real problems. In this particular province, a local problem was security. At this time two battles were going on and refugees were building up every day. The military, both U.S. and Vietnamese, was bringing in refugees. Large Chinook helicopters were bringing in 30 to 40 at a time from out in villages in the jungle--Montagnards, some Vietnamese from the Land Development Centers were coming in and influx was terrific. We had a problem of personal security. About half of the refugees were located in Pleiku City and about half of them were located in a district town. This was really nothing more than a fort which was re-established as a district town after the previous district town was overrun in June of the previous year when the government had moved out entirely. We had to take food and clothing to these people by military convoy. This required coordination with the province chief, with the U.S. military sector advisor and with USAID, as well as the social welfare chief and his people. This was quite a job in coordination, logistics and distribution.

This is so sensitive an issue that we have to be quite careful in dealing with it. I don't know how I could have dealt with it. To make accusations about someone being involved in the black market or corruption is a most sensitive issue when you are dealing with a foreign country. I would like to add that one individual who went over with me found in his province that the province chief and officials were so corrupt and things were so bad all the way across the board that he sent a cable into Saigon requesting that USAID stop supporting this province entirely. The result was that he himself, the province rep, was pulled out of the province. So you must be very careful in that type of situation. He had gotten quite a lot of evidence together--I understand some of it was in writing.

Although I have no evidence of this, I was told later that there was a considerable amount of corruption involved in our attempts to bring rice, other food, to the refugees. If I were to work with refugees again, having had the experience, I would prepare for an emergency situation in advance. In so doing, I would request some, for example, bulgur and corn as a supplement so there would be something on hand that would be under the control of the province chief and the USAID people. The situation in the town was so bad that rice was rationed and people had ration cards, but couldn't use them. The people actually tore up their ration cards, although they weren't even using their ration, because rice would only be sold at black market prices.

Black Market: Corruption

Things always went too slowly and sometimes this was nearly disastrous. I recall one period when every week we went by convoy to take several tons of food, primarily, to about 6,000 refugees in the district town, because we didn't have enough air support, there was a weather problem for the airplanes coming in. We didn't have enough food to get out to these people. Primarily, we were short of rice, which was all handled through the Vietnamese side. We were also short on bulgur wheat. The local provincial economic chief handled this. For one week these people got along with just a very bare minimum diet. Certain people in the local government--in particular the social welfare chief--have been trying to get this but have been unable to do so. The social welfare chief tried to get rice--which was held in the province town--they had some rice, but it was for local distribution. She could not get it because she ran into the problem of the bureaucracies. The economics chief would not loan it--he said he didn't have authority, that he couldn't do it without authorization from his chief in Saigon, etc. This, of course, involved too lengthy a procedure, so the result was that we just went without.

I know of cases where an individual has been able to have more land than he should have because there was an irresponsible government official. Let me cite one example. In a province not far north of Saigon, a province chief was given 300 hectares of state land to distribute to refugees--in this case, they happened to be Montagnard refugees. There were approximately three or four thousand refugees, as I recall--at least 3,000. Bordering this 300 hectares parcel of land was a tea plantation--French owned I understand. After some time there was no land distributed to the refugees--they went without anything at all--and the owner of the tea plantation ended up with the land. The province chief had sold this land to the tea plantation owner and had pocketed the money. Here is an outright case of misuse of government lands and corruption--the result was that the refugees went without. I tried to inquire as to how we, on the American side, may react to such problems. Nothing was done--I don't know what could have been done. This was a problem that went unsolved. Admittedly a lot more thought is required on how we should feel with such a situation, particularly if we are working with the refugees.

Function As Assistant Land Reform Advisor

In late 1965 I'd been working with refugees and they wanted me to continue--there were very few people in country working with them at that time that had so much experience, which was not a lot. But a large military operation was being carried out in Phuoc Tuy province. Saigon asked me to come down and participate in a coordinated effort with the military in handling the expected 5,000 refugees which would be generated from this military operation. However, when I arrived in Saigon, I found that I was requested to do some other work and, at the request of the director (by memo), I was taken from field operations and put to work on the problem of land reform in Vietnam. This work had had no American technician working with it specifically since 1961, so for a period of almost four years no one had been working solely on land reforms. Mr. Pringle had been carrying the load along with his other agricultural economics activities. This was the beginning of my move to Saigon where I stayed and worked for the remaining 18 months of my tour.

Since my start there, the Americans' role has been essentially one of getting the program moving again and getting a program under way. We started from scratch in many areas. It involved program assistance, commodity assistance, getting additional third country training, etc., for Vietnamese nationals and helping the GVN to carry out their land reform policy. To a large extent, this included discussion with GVN officials on our development of new land reform policy.

The Land Reform Program had been essentially stagnant since 1961, when President Diem downgraded land reform from a ministry, directly under the President, to a directorate general in the Ministry of Rural Affairs, or Agriculture, as it is now called. Along with that the American aid had diminished and the Americans had sort of stopped their support of the program. As the insurgency became more and more difficult--as the security worsened, etc.--many people thought that land reform was an important issue in helping to win the support of the people in the rural areas. So interest in it picked up again and this was the beginning of it--August of 1965--after the Ky government came into power, a greater interest in land reform emerged. The present legislation needs to be reviewed and, in certain instances, actually should be rewritten. Progress in carrying out the existing legislation and existing GVN land policies is moderate. Recently the GVN has made some very important decisions and is making a particular emphasis in two fields. One is the issuance of permanent land titles, which was a decision made by decree by the Ky government. This year they have

The Land Reform Program

We worked with the director general of land affairs and under the director general are three directorates. The directorate of Land Reform, the directorate of Cadastral Techniques, and the Directorate of Legislation which includes the registration, title making, etc. In programming, we primarily worked with the director general and the Directorate of Land Reform. For example, in the procurement of commodity needs, we did not determine, for example, how many vehicles they needed. But we went to them and said, "Now, we are in a position to help you replace some of your worn out vehicles in the provinces. And in the provinces where you have no vehicles, if they are needed and if you can justify them, we might be able to assist you. We would ask you to review your situation and inform us as to what your needs are." They would then propose to us, in writing, what they needed and why they needed it. Then we would review this, get together and go over with them and we would come to an agreement as to what we should request for the directorate. We had a very good working relationship there that was quite free. In fact, since this particular directorate had not received any support from USAID--I should say commodity assistance--since 1957 or 1958, they were very happy to get anything. We weren't holding this over their heads or anything, but we wanted to rationalize with them. We would say that if they could not make use of any item that we were not allowed to give it to them.....because we were also responsible for the procurement and the use. We are subject to investigation as well as they are.

issued more than 130,000 titles so far. The government previously issued temporary titles of land in the sale of government land. This is because the purchaser, the recipient of these government lands, was not to receive full ownership until after he had made the last payment. The VC used this in their propaganda effort, stating that the government did not have a true interest in them, that the temporary titles were only a piece of paper and that the government actually did not plan to give them this land. So, the decision to issue permanent title was made, and it has been carried out to the full extent. The second point which they were emphasizing at the time I left was the distribution of government lands and, in particular, the former French-owned lands.

Enforcement of the rent ceiling law is an area which needs definite improvement. The Rental Law, Ordinance No. 2, of January 8, 1955, states that the maximum amount of rent that a farmer has to pay the landlord is 25% of the value of principal annual crop. But, in reality, this is being violated to quite a large extent--no one really knows exactly how much this factor in the law is being evaded. Another factor in the law states that contracts have to be written--there have been over 700,000 contracts written, covering 1.3 million hectares. These contracts, although not lived up to, have been effective in one sense, and that is that they have helped suppress a further evasion and a more violent evasion of the law and of the rights of the tenant.

In the areas of greatest security, which are An Giang province and neighboring areas, rent tends to be even higher than in areas of lesser security. In An Giang province the situation is unique in the sense that you have the religious group there, the Hoa Hao. Their attitude toward payment of rent or rent collection is considerably different than you find in some other areas. Also, this being a secure area because of a religious sect has the advantage of the farmers getting out and being able to collect their rents and having a closer contact with the tenants. I think this also has an impact on the percentage of rent that is collected. In the less secure areas, the landlord is not able to have the degree of influence that he may previously have had. Here we run into the problem of VC land reform and VC land distribution programs.

I believe there is a relationship between poor land laws (poor tenure relationships) and insurgency. The relationship is not so much of the law as it is of the enforcement of the law. If you are able to enforce laws, then a proper landlord-tenant relationship could be established. There are two basic concepts in looking at this,--how to overcome the problem of land tenure insecurity in Vietnam. One is to increase the base of ownership, in other words, to have a greater number of owner-

We feel (when I say we, I mean USAID/VN in agriculture) that the village must have the role of carrying out, not just giving recommendations to higher bodies, etc. They must be able to have the decision-making power in land disputes. For example, if there are two farmers who disagreed over which land belongs to whom, a decision has to be made. The body who makes the decision on this must be at the village level; it must try to handle as much as possible of the administration of land at the village level.

The village administrative committee included one member for agricultural affairs. His primary duties and responsibilities are related to land reform. This man is very crucial and we expect his position to be most important in implementing land reform programs in Vietnam. The village and hamlet elections have been going on for two months now, or more, and are still not complete. We haven't had a real chance to see how they will work out, in particular this new position. However, the duties of each of these positions has been decreed by the GVN and the member for the Commission of Agricultural Affairs at the village level, will be primarily responsible for land reform activities, as I stated. There has been a terrific increase in this man's responsibilities and the village responsibility in this issue of land reform, but we think we're making some progress in this area.

I think one of the solutions to help alleviate this problem is that of giving power and responsibility to the village in helping to carry out land regulations. Along these lines what has been done? First, in 1966, a proposal was discussed by USAID with the GVN at the ministerial and directorate levels of establishment of a land reform committee which would be at least evenly weighted with tenants because of the landlord domination in the area. At that time the composition of the committee discussed was three tenants, one owner-operator and one local owner-operator tenant, and one landlord. The GVN proposed this idea themselves and carried it to some extent, at the policy level--however, it has yet to be implemented. This is one of the things that is being worked on at the present. Also, in December of 1966, the GVN promulgated a decree for village-hamlet reorganization. Included in this were plans for a village council and a village administrative committee.

operators, and the second would be to have good enforceable laws regarding governing the relationship between the tenant and the landlord and to enforce them. However, in Vietnam, my personal experience has been that enforcement of laws, particularly in the rural areas is most difficult. Therefore, it would appear that alternate solutions must be considered.

Social Contacts with the Vietnamese

I think of all aspects of working in a foreign country, and particularly at a provincial or local level, probably the most important is your personal relationships. If you get started off on the right foot in that respect, your job will be more effective from there on. Some of the fellows I have talked with have used the method of going out and having a beer with the Vietnamese after office hours, etc. I was a little slow in this and hesitated to do so. One thing--it was the pattern of my boss not to mix too much socially with the various Viet counterparts. On the other hand, it wasn't long before I was introduced to the province chief. With my knowledge of Vietnamese, I was able to speak some with him and he asked me to come to his home to teach him English. This was really my first big breakthrough--in terms of personal relationships--with province. Other service chiefs had lunch with occasionally, but it was mostly a matter of establishing a good working relationship and rapport during the working hours. Primarily, I was invited by the province chief to his home for dinner several times and he came to trust me very much. I was able to go on from this.

I reciprocated his invitation only modestly. One of the problems there, and I was somewhat concerned about this, was that at that time in Can Tho--before it grew to the proportions that it is now--we were all living in the compound. The compound was guarded and all Vietnamese were searched before coming in. This was quite an embarrassing thing for a provincial official to go through. So, my entertaining a Vietnamese had to be at a local restaurant or someplace like that. Bringing them into our little American environment there was quite difficult. Also, some of them hesitated, and had a fear really of walking right into an American home, whereas, if we would go and meet in a neutral ground, such as a restaurant, we could sort of shed American social formalities.

If I were to do the jobs I did in Vietnam again, I would have a little closer social relationship with the Vietnamese. There is a terrific interest in learning English--none of our directors spoke English, with the exception of one who spoke a fair English, I might say. The two key people I was associated with on land affairs did not speak English and the director of land reform had a great interest in it.

If I were to do the job again, I would make a greater effort, first of all, to have more physical meetings with these people rather than an occasional once or twice a week thing. They provided office space for us in the directorate--this we took some advantage of but not as much as we could have. Seeing as how they were very willing to furnish office space to us, I would see to it that I, or someone from our office, would spend at least half a day in that office space.

We had a very good working relationship there that was quite free. In fact, since this particular directorate had not received any support from USAID--I should say commodity assistance--since 1957 or 1958, they were very happy to get anything. We weren't holding this over their heads or anything, but we wanted to rationalize with them. We would say that if they could not make use of an item that we were not allowed to give it to them--because we were responsible for the procurement and the use. We were subject to investigation as well as they were.

I had very good rapport with the Vietnamese people. My particular approach was one of a very quiet, subtle, modest way of working with these peoples and gaining their confidence. I think, at least from my experience in my work, that this has proved to be the most effective way as opposed to one of demanding and commanding, "We're furnishing the money and, by God, you do the work. This is responsibility." This doesn't work. I think establishment of "good relationships" is an accumulation of several things. First of all, it's personality. I suppose. One goes in and one tries to be understanding of the other individual, but--more than that--one acts in a professional manner. The Vietnamese people, particularly at the directorate level, are French-trained; they have French ideas to a large extent, administratively and even socially. So if you conduct yourselves in a professional manner they will respect you accordingly. It's different from being directly in the field, where you are working as an IVS type individual. I have found that a continual relationship with them is deeply appreciated. It is one of the things which I feel, although we did have very good working relationships, could have even been better had we spent more time with them working very closely with them, but still keeping a professional sense of business, etc., in our dealings with them.

GVN Officials--Interpersonal Relationships

If I was to go back, I would have more social contacts and I would take enough time out from my job to teach him English. I think that in so doing it would pay dividends in the working relationship.

We didn't have any serious disputes with officials in land affairs. We made it very plain in the beginning that we did not intend to support the directorate in Saigon with a lot of vehicles, for example, or to use this money in a way which would be ineffective. Laying our cards right on the table to start with explains that we mean business. I think you can avoid a lot of future misunderstanding this way. So this is the way that we worked and when they came to us and said, "Well, this doesn't seem to be right, maybe rather than this we could do this," we worked together and developed what the need was. If they said they needed something and we thought that maybe they did not need it--we asked them why and what it would be used for--how many people would use that, for instance, typewriter.

The problem of the uninterested Vietnam official is a tough one. Here is a problem of human motivation and I think that there may be ways of doing it--I'm sure there are subtle ways of getting them involved. Certainly we must try to work programs along with them--in fact they must be their programs. The old idea of planting the seed and letting the idea come from them of course is probably one of the best ways. If you go in and make a blatant suggestion--the immediate reaction too often is negative. We must think in terms of what they may be thinking. The other way, of course, rather than subtly giving the idea to them and letting it come out from them, is pressure on them from their own people. Now this sometimes works and sometimes doesn't work. If a man has no interest in his particular job, it sometimes requires out and out pressure from the province chief or from someone else.

I had many problems with the local Chieu Hoi chief--problems of motivation, problems of (I suspect) lack of integrity. We were certainly not able to involve the Chieu Hoi chief in publicity on the harelip surgery to the extent that we would have liked so that some of the credit would have rubbed off on GVN, because the Chieu Hoi chief really didn't have any interest in these people. However, on the other side--the VIS side--they published the story in the local newspaper about what the government had done to help these people, and this was distributed. I think there were probably ways in which the chief could be involved in this more deeply. It goes back to the matter of personalities--if there had been an active Chieu Hoi chief who would have really taken an interest in this, undoubtedly the GVN involvement would have been much greater. In this particular case, this man didn't have the interest, he really didn't care about Chieu Hoi or the program. To him it was a job--just a job. There were cases where pressure did work, when in fact, the progress that was made with the Chieu Hoi official--the proper use of the budget in getting uniforms for these people, etc. --was the result of pressure. Many,

Highly respected within the ministry in terms of administration, this man is very receptive to listening to American advisors--he hears what we have to say, is very cooperative as far as meeting us, etc. But when it comes to proposals of

the programs, we had real problems with motivation. programs, but when we started to work in implementing programs and was even willing to go so far as to accept the limits of his normal required work activity. When we started working with the man, he was very willing to listen to our received enough pressure would he be willing to go beyond the to go as far as was absolutely necessary--but only when he continuously since. We found continually that he was willing old and has worked both under the French administration and want for maybe 30 years or more, he is approximately 60 years the Ministry of Agriculture. A man who has been a public servant giving an example of the director general of land affairs in I think this problem of motivation may be best illustrated by

and honor and all of the good things that come out of this. be connected with a project, it will give to them a prestige it's a real pat on the back to them to feel that if they can of him. This immediately evoked a smile--I think often that famous--he would be connected with it. It would be all because him this project was successful and the GVN adopted it for expansion over to a countrywide program. He would become very surveying to expedite the issuance of land titles. We told testing the use of photogrammetry procedures and cadastral land affairs--here we had the An Giang project and we were sufficient motivation. One involves the director general of Let me give you an example of where publicity has served as

higher officials. confidence too--and he was probably not receiving it from his it. But what the man needed was someone to give him some man was ineffective otherwise and I think it might have broken now, it would be something well worth trying--certainly the as a means to get this man involved. As I look back on it As I recall, I don't think I even attempted to use publicity

Directorate of Land Affairs. repeatedly in the case of, at the higher levels, in the official, action will not be taken. I've also seen this regulation. In fact, if something isn't written for the GVN Vietnam today there is greater respect for the written word progress after that. I think that under the conditions in operate. Evidently the orders were put down and there was forming him of what was being done, he was very willing to co- stration and showing what the regulations were and after in- But, after going through the deputy province chief for admin- many trips were made to his office, with little or no results.

new programs, he, again, will listen and has a very friendly attitude about it; however, really taking hold of these programs or ideas or even his own ideas, is something which is a bit alien to him. He has an attitude of sort of "Don't rock the boat; keep everything at an even keel." He is greatly appreciated by his own people--the people who work under him and the people who are above him. This man is highly respected--not only because of his seniority, but because he doesn't have a lot of problems and squabbles, etc. He takes good care of his employees; he doesn't demand a lot of them and they appreciate it. Also the people above him, since he doesn't cause any rumbles or stirring or anything, are very willing to let it go--he just carries out his job.

When one is going to go to do something and to try to implement something, initiate something new, he is very hesitant. He finds many excuses for a program not being made action-oriented. This is sometimes difficult for us to understand, as Americans; however, if we look at it more closely, I feel that he has good reason to feel this way. How do you go about trying to get a real action program going or initiate something new to instill some new blood and get some ideas going? Here is a real problem. We have never been too successful.

We have had to sort of--as a barrier has been presented by him as to why something can't be done--work with him and work out an alternative. Sometimes this has involved going to meetings at a higher level--of course with his request and sometimes even with his participation. Sometimes it has involved going to a lower level and finding out what else can be done. Sometimes it has involved going outside of his directorate to find other ways and this is where he is limited and where the advisor is able to help. Sometimes he requests us to help him. For example, he was short of personnel to carry out a certain project. We were able to assist him at his request. He was quite enthusiastic to bring in outside help through a private services contract, of course, closely coordinated with him, to help carry out the job and get the work done. This worked out very well and he was most happy.

This man also has one other feeling, I think, about foreigners--Americans in particular. He feels that the Americans are extremely competent when it comes to technical assistance and if it's a matter of acquiring commodities or assisting them, getting them vehicles or typewriters, machines, or bringing over technicians who can help in the advanced techniques of the technical aspects of their activities--for example in the cadastral work, in surveying and in new methods of surveying. But his feeling toward the American in administration is that they don't know much about it and that

we as Americans, do not know the situation in Vietnam--we haven't been there long. He feels he knows more about it and his ideas are correct. That American assistance insofar as improving administration is not very effective. It is therefore not taken in a very good light.

This point is extremely important for people going to Vietnam to realize--that often your technical competence is accepted, but your organization, administrative competence, and suggestions toward streamlining any administration or changing old procedures of administration, whether it be paper work or whatever, are just not well taken. The fact is that most American advisors spend, I would estimate, at least half of their time in really administrative problems--personnel, getting things done, trying to expedite a matter of situation, getting the approvals, trying to find ways to get a particular matter approved--for example, from the province chief into Saigon and back down to the province again. How can these long delays be expedited? Generally speaking, I would say that we have usually been unsuccessful in trying to motivate them to carry out administration at a more efficient level. This is brought out in all levels of administration--at the province and even at the villages all the way up to the Saigon offices.

I can give one example where GVN officials actually were able to perform an outstanding job in a short period of time; this was primarily at their own initiative. What happened is that they received pressure from the prime minister's office to issue so many thousand permanent definitive land titles by a certain period of time. They were given the resources in terms of money in December and they were given a deadline of mid-February to have these land titles made. Normally, under regular administrative procedures, this would take many, many months. However, the directorate took these funds and used them in such a way that they were able to do their job. They paid their employees so much per land title in order to give them an incentive to turn out a high number of titles. In fact, many of the employees earned extra money by taking the work home at night and doing it in the evening--they received so many piasters per title. Consequently, they were able to finish the job and on February 22nd and 24th, ceremonies were held in Region III and Region IV, where some 57,000 land titles were distributed by the prime minister, minister of agriculture and the minister of Revolutionary Development to the province chiefs in these two regions for distribution to the various provinces.

Now, in this case, locking back on it, it was only under the top level pressure that such work was initiated, but once it was initiated it proved that they can really do a job and carry it out in a rapid and efficient manner. This was entirely due to their credit.

The USAID input on this was--we helped them to transport the titles from Saigon through the provinces, which was several hundred pounds of paper--we furnished the air transportation and that was the extent of it. Also we assisted in the publicity on the JUSPAO side--however the GVN Press, Vietnam Press, etc. publicized the matter and the whole thing worked out rather smoothly.

I think that there is one follow-up point on this that is important--this is the fact that, even after this big initial push, they found that they could do this and that they could do it on their own. They continued, and are continuing, to issue these titles. Through the months of March, April, May and June--up until mid-June, more than 125,000 have been issued--almost all of them during this year--1967. This is evidence that they can effectively carry out the AID program if they get the motivation which, in this case, started with some superior pressure from the top. When they say that they can't do some other activity, we often remind them of the success that they have had with this program in title issuance. We try to encourage them with this in order to give them the confidence to go ahead with other programs. Actually, one will find a high degree of capability by the Vietnamese people and probably the largest and most difficult job that we have is to try to get them to use this effectively and efficiently.

Often the case is that the Vietnamese do want to do something and there are people who see the problems and difficulties but don't have the power or the initiative to carry out the program and activity which they want. We see problems and things that need to be done but sometimes I would see an American just avoid them and say, "Well, they don't want to do it--maybe it's something that we should have let go anyway."

I can cite one example again in land affairs. They have a large room for archives of land records and register books of all Vietnam--land records, cadastral maps dating back 50 and 60 years--not only of South Vietnam but of North Vietnam. They had never shown me this room--I had never seen it after working there with them for more than a year. Finally, I asked to see it. They agreed and I actually feel that they were somewhat ashamed to show us how they kept their record systems and filing systems. It turned out that it was in a very bad condition. We looked it over and afterwards I suggested to them that they would need some temperature and humidity control in this room because these were extremely valuable records, particularly valuable if any future land reform program was to be carried out--these records would be a basis and would be needed for that. They recognized the value of the records, but here they had been sitting since 1954, after the partition of the country. Maps were rolled up and just laid in heaps, pages not even flat--on top of

There is one incident that I recall in particular. We had-- USAID and the GVN side--an agreement to carry out such and such a program. Included in the program was the GVN commitment to furnish a certain number of people to do a specific job. They had not been able to recruit the people because of many problems in getting trained people; problems in paying the salary--in getting the money, etc. An American went down to the province, talked to the province chief, held a piece of paper in front of his nose, and said, "It says right here that you are supposed to do this. You are obligated to do this and you must do it, no ifs, ands or buts about it." A very inflexible approach. The result was that it alienated the Vietnamese to such a point that they didn't even care to deal with this man any more--his working relationship with them was essentially cut off. When this once happens you might just as well forget about

The type of person that might best, I feel, be able to have a good personal relationship with the Vietnamese--first must try to have an interest in understanding these people-- realize that they have an entirely different culture, that we do not want to make them into a "Little America." Secondly, qualities of a real sense of humor, patience, certainly things will be frustrating at times, but he must be able to have some tolerance and to step back and look at things in the broad sense occasionally in order to continue to grasp the situation as it really is. In this thing of personal relationship and inter-personal relationship, it is essential that one have a knowledge or get a knowledge of the little things that make up Vietnamese society.

In discussing the matter, I asked them if they had any plans to improve their record room and the filing system, etc. They said, "Well, yes, we need something done, but we don't have funds and the budget is too low." This left the opportunity for us to suggest some ways of improving this. We were able then to bring in people to recommend what the requirements would be, what temperature level should be, the humidity. We even went so far as to order or request some equipment to keep the dust down, etc. They were very receptive and cooperative to this and it was just a matter here of bringing the subject to the fore. In the past, it has just been neglected. They either hadn't taken an interest in it or they were not motivated to the extent of trying to do anything for it. They became very enthusiastic and looked forward to getting this room completely fixed up--to having a proper filing system to keep these records in the manner in which they should be kept.

cabinets. There were rats, high humidity, dust, maps deteriorating--it was a very bad situation.

it and get someone there who is able to deal with the individuals, otherwise the program just won't move.

Vietnamese Bureaucracy

There are solutions to problems if one keeps working away at them, but it's sort of like setting up a row of dominoes-- they set up the problem and we knock it down and they set up another one. It's a series that is continuous and requires a great amount of patience and perseverance in order to try to carry these things through. This is the way that, eventually, projects do get finished.

Let me take this instance where there was not enough personnel to carry out the project. We went to the GVN and asked them if they were having any problems in this area or if there was anything that we could do to assist them. And when we went, we had researched the problem to some extent and had some alternatives in the back of our minds. They said, "Well, no, it just seems impossible." They said, "In order to get people, the government regulations say that we can only recruit them on what they call a floating or temporary, or daily wage scale basis and, accordingly, this means that the wage is so low that we can't get the right help on 2,000 or 3,000 piasters a month which is terribly low. The other problem that we're having is that if we get a few people, if we are able to get them, then they are drafted right away and we lose them to the military." We asked them, "Well, isn't there something that can be done? Can we ask the special permission from the DGBFA (Director General of Budget and Foreign Aid) to handle the budgeting for special funds for this purpose?" They said, "Oh no. It's a long drawn out procedure and it would take too long." "Well," we said, "maybe a letter there would help and if you could work on it from your side; we have counterparts in our program office and we'll contact them--maybe between the two of us we might be able to expedite such a thing." So this matter, which started out at the province level, went up through the directorate to the director general and to the ministry. In fact, we had a meeting with the directorate cabinet at the ministry. They contacted DGBFA; we contacted the DGBFA through our program office and we were able to find out that the government was going to be very rigid and wouldn't do anything. This is what we were able to find out.

Well, then what else could be done. Then we thought, here's a new job, a unique job, something that has not been done before. Why not categorize these people the same as other cadres, who are more highly paid than other regular government employees that they had anticipated would go under the

previous wage scale. So, they said, "Well, yeah, maybe so." Then we went in a meeting with ministry officials asking why they couldn't be paid the same as Revolutionary Development cadre members--3,250 piasters per month, plus the per diem and other things that would bring it up to a reasonable salary. Some people thought they had the problem solved and others continued not being interested in solving it at all. About two weeks later we went back to the ministry and they said it was all set, all taken care of, and that these people would be paid. We had thought that everything was all taken care of--three months later we went back down to the province to find that nothing had happened at all. This could be very frustrating--when you thought they had solved a problem and, in reality, nothing has been done at all. I think that this is a classic example of the American taking the "yes, yes" that is given in all cases as being the end of the story when really the story is not ended at all. We assumed, since they promised us that everything was all right, that everything was taken care of.

This points out one other thing--it's always good to follow up on these decisions and I think that here it was a failing on our part. We should have immediately sort of herded this thing on through in the sense of keeping in touch with all levels--from the provincial to the ministerial level.

This is not the end of the story. A solution finally came about. This was done by further negotiations with the high levels in the GVN and they have now stated that "Well, we can use these people." We gave them another alternative--we said we didn't require people with the level of education that they wanted to recruit--this would ease the recruiting burden; this would also make the salary problem not quite so big. People with lower education would be just as acceptable to carry out the work required for this particular job. But here is another thing that I would like to point out--the local provincial service chief, who hired these people, actually did not want to hire people with lower education, because if he could have under him a greater number of more highly educated people, this would increase his prestige. He was unwilling to go to the less educated people and hamlet and village people because he thought this would be sort of degrading to him in some respects.

Well, this story went on and on. We had several alternatives--there were other cadre in the province who we suggested that they possibly might work with; we went to the province chief (here again we did not go on our own but with the service chief) and brought up the possibility of using some of the RD cadre who, in this case, were idle; we suggested the use of other personnel on a temporary basis.

Generally, I think we should be prepared to try to cope with problems even if the agency involved is not prepared to supply funds or technical advice for improvement. Often, we don't know the details of the problem. For example, in the case cited on the record room, we had not even been in to see the record room for over a year. I wasn't even aware that such a problem existed to this extent. I think that if it's an obvious problem, or if they bring it up, or if you approach the problem and it is brought out into the open, even though you may not be able to assist--you don't know--you should still bring the problem up and try to discuss and determine how it may be solved. Of course, all the better if you have the resources with which to assist in clearing this up. Sometimes we don't know all of the various factors involved in the problem, but they should be brought out and if they can't, they should be reported and in the future an attempt should be made to resolve them.

Observations of Vietnamese Culture

Many little things make up the Vietnamese society and culture. A little knowledge of the Vietnamese holidays, customs, superstitions, etc., is most valuable--things that might seem unusual to a Vietnamese for an American to know. Knowing how the Vietnamese act at dinner, for example, doesn't require a mastery of the use of chopsticks, but an attempt to use them. A very good gesture is the willingness to understand that you take some food out of a bowl in the center of the table and put it on your host's plate, and he does the same for you. It's so greatly appreciated by them that you have enough interest to try to understand them.

One should have enough knowledge at Tet, the lunar new year, which is really a big holiday of the year for the Vietnamese, to be able to greet the people with the new year's greeting--a short sentence which anyone can learn. Knowing things like the customs in worshipping Ong Tao, the kitchen god, and discussing these with the Vietnamese surprises them, it is very highly appreciated. He is worshipped in a special ceremony held on the 23rd day of the 12th month of the lunar year. At this time, he is there and is just preparing to make his voyage to the sky to report on the behavior of members of the family, so the family puts on a special ceremony in which they present offerings to him.

Certain flowers are symbolic of Tet. The first person one meets on the first day of the new year is extremely important in terms of their luck for the coming year. If they meet a certain person, their luck may be good or bad, depending on whom they meet and under what circumstances. New clothes

are purchased for the start of the new year. There is one specific food which is most popular and mostly highly associated with the Tet holiday and this is called banh chung--which is "goodness rice." Inside it might have some pork and is wrapped in a green leaf--this is probably the most symbolic of Tet food. They also have other foods, etc., but to have some knowledge of this and be able to share these foods with the people is one way of making their acquaintance.

One should try as much as possible to try to become familiar with their customs and traditions. There is another holiday, during which the graves are cleaned and painted. The ancestors are worshipped in this sense. One should know that when they go into a home they should not, if at all possible, turn their back to the altar--especially when they sit down, this should be the case. When they sit down, they shouldn't cross their legs so that the sole of their foot faces the altar, which is the most sacred place in the home. Many things like this must be given to the American who is going to associate with the Vietnamese--it will make his adjustment and acceptance there so much easier and palatable to the Vietnamese.

Once, when I was in a meeting with some other people, another American individual who was participating in the meeting crossed his legs and pointed the sole of his shoe right at a high official. This happened several times--this is considered extremely bad and impolite. For the individual it was just a matter of not knowing or being acquainted with the customs. I was aware of this and I made particular notice of this high level GVN official's eyes--he would keep looking down at the bottom of this man's shoes about two feet away from his face. It was rather embarrassing for me. I think that we need training in these little subtleties for work in these countries.

In Vietnam, for example, it's impolite to tap people or touch them on the top of the head. This is taken quite badly; it's done with children, but only children. In Saigon, in some cases, this is changing, but it's still there. My suggestion on this would be to get a Vietnamese into a role-playing situation and to evaluate these things as to what could be done better and what is wrong. I feel that this sort of thing should be given in training by Vietnamese, if possible, prior to departure for Vietnam.

One of the problems is that the American in Vietnam has a general reputation of being big, crude, clumsy, maybe loud and often impolite. This is because we don't understand their ways and systems of doing things. We are often

compared with the French and we must take this into consideration, that we are really under a certain degree of scrutiny there in that sense. It is up to the American to become so well informed that he is able to overcome some of these generalizations that the Vietnamese have often placed on us.

I will close by stating one more Vietnamese custom which we should recognize. I think that this is in keeping with the closing--in a parting gift with someone, or with any gift at all, you should never give a handkerchief. A handkerchief is symbolic of sadness and crying and therefore is not a gift associated with happiness--so whether it is a goodbye gift, wedding gift or whatever it may be--don't ever give a Vietnamese a handkerchief as a gift.