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REPORT OF AFSC VIETNAM MISSION

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Revised Edition

I. Nature of the Mission

There were two principal reasons why the AFSC decided in the spring of 1965 to follow up a brief visit to Saigon by Gilbert White and Russell Johnson with a longer three month exploration:

- (1) The AFSC shared the concern of many groups in America over deteriorating political and military conditions in Vietnam, and the resulting U.S. decision to increase its military commitment there, and wished to have representatives on the scene who could provide first-hand reports on the situation.
- (2) The AFSC felt a responsibility to offer some help to the Vietnamese people who were the victims of the vicious warfare that wracked their country, and wished to have areas of possible service explored, especially with the Voluntary Youth Association and the Buddhists, two groups with which the White-Johnson mission had come into contact.

As a result of these related concerns, Stephen Cary and Woodruff Emlen were asked to go to Vietnam. The former left on this assignment May 9th and reached Saigon on May 19th after visits in London, Geneva, Delhi and Bangkok en route. He remained in Southeast Asia eleven weeks, leaving on August 6th to return home via Hong Kong and Japan. Woodruff Emlen left on May 29th, going by way of Japan and Hong Kong, and arrived in Saigon June 7th. He remained in Southeast Asia for 7½ weeks, and left on July 29th to return directly to the United States. In addition to these two members of the mission, Kenneth E. Morgan, a Friend and Buddhist scholar from Colgate University, spent the period July 4-July 29 in Saigon talking with Buddhist leaders and exploring the status of Vietnamese Buddhism. He has submitted a separate report, so that his work and findings will not be reported here.

During the period of their stay in Southeast Asia, Messrs. Cary and Emlen were able to travel extensively. Their visits included the following:

June 9-12 Pleiku (Cary only) This visit to the highlands of Central Vietnam included contact with Montagnards and some travel to surrounding hamlets. A projected visit to Kontum failed to materialize because of intensely bad weather and poor security conditions.

June 14-17 Phan Rang (Ninh Thuan Province) This trip was made in the

company of Mr. Tran Ngoc Bau, President of the National Voluntary Service of Vietnam, and was for the primary purpose of observing the hamlet program of the N.V.S. It included stop-overs in Phan Thiet, Nha Trang, Dalat and Bao Lac (Blau) as well as trips via jeep 60 km. north from Phan Rang to Cam Ranh Bay, and 20 km. northeast to seacoast hamlets.

June 20-24 Cambodia This trip, undertaken to get a different perspective on the Vietnam situation, and to gain impressions of Cambodian neutralism, was largely confined to Phnom Penh, with one side trip 35 km. by Lambretta up the Tonle Sap to Oudong.

June 27-July 1 Delta region, including Can Tho, Vinh Long and Long Xuyen Security permitted fairly extensive jeep travel and hamlet visiting in these rich Mekong provinces.

July 6 Song Be, Phuoc Long Province (Cary only) Visit made with touring F.O.R. delegates to the site of one of the major battles of the Vietnam war (May 1965). Discussion with Col. Ma Lanh Nhon, Province Chief, and Major Sakey, U.S. Sector Advisor, MAC-V.

July 9-12 Hue Discussion with USIS, USOM and other officials; participation in Voluntary Youth Association work camp and seminar at the village of Thuan An on the coast. Emlen also stopped for one night at Da Nang.

July 12-14 Qui Nhon, Nha Trang (Cary only) These visits, made en route back from Hue, were undertaken to observe the refugee problem in Qui Nhon, and to see the Mennonite hospital program in Nha Trang.

July 14-19 Bangkok (Emlen only) Exploration of ECAFE research into social service training in Vietnam, and visitation with representatives of the Mekong Committee.

July 17-22 Laos (Cary only) This trip was undertaken to gain impressions of conditions in Laos, and to get a different perspective on Vietnam. It included a night in Savannakhet, and a 100 km. trip up the Mekong River by helicopter surveying possible refugee resettlement sites.

The balance of our time in Southeast Asia was spent in Saigon talking with a wide variety of persons from many nations and many callings. During the course of our time in Southeast Asia, these talks included Vietnamese government officials, Buddhist monks and laymen, university professors, youth leaders, members of the International Control Commission, American and British sociologists, diplomats from eastern, western and non-aligned nations, Rand Corporation researchers, U.S. Embassy personnel, staff members of the U.S. operations Mission and U.S. Information Service in Vietnam, private agency representatives, Catholic and protestant leaders, and military officers from both MAC-V and U.S. Special Forces, and the Vietnamese army.

Local transportation was by motorbike, ridden double. Taxis are cheap, but often unavailable, and the decision to purchase a motorbike proved a sound one in terms of convenience, speed of moving around and economy of time. Transportation around the country was entirely by air, except where travel within a province was possible by jeep. Usually we purchased one-way tickets to our initial destination on Air Vietnam, and then relied on military planes, Embassy planes or USOM planes (Air America) to "hitch hike" to other points and back to Saigon.

The three month period was one during which the security situation deteriorated throughout much of the country, and the U.S. military involvement steadily increased. The Quat government was replaced by the military government of General Ky, and the strictures against any discussion or publication of neutralist or peace sentiments greatly increased. Decrees making these things punishable by prison sentences or firing squad are being enforced. We tried to employ reasonable prudence in where we went and what we did, and feel that the risks of living and travelling in certain parts of Vietnam are acceptable, under present conditions, for U.S. civilians. Saigon itself is a very large metropolitan community, and, as such, is safe enough, especially if one avoids going out extensively at night. The My Canh restaurant attack was the only event that significantly changed our pattern of conduct in Saigon during our stay. Prior to it, we frequently ate at the larger, better known restaurants, including the My Canh itself on a number of occasions, but afterwards, we employed much more caution. Outside of Saigon, considerably more judgment must be exercised, but if one relies on the advice of American civilians (IVS, USOM, USIS, etc.) living in the area, as to what may be safely undertaken and allows a generous margin of time to get back to secure towns by sunset, we feel that undue risks are not involved. In general, the U.S. press, by reporting (as it must) all of the terrorist incidents, necessarily gives a rather distorted picture of the overall situation in Saigon, since these incidents are widely scattered in time and location, and the chance of being involved in one, while present, is quite small.

II. South Vietnam's Present Situation and Future Prospects

As indicated above, South Vietnam's situation is very bad, and has been getting steadily worse during the months we have been here, in both the military and civilian sectors. Since the former is an area in which we are not qualified to comment with any competency, we will only report that the military situation seems to us worse than either Washington or Saigon have been willing to admit. The Viet Cong controls fully three-quarters of the country, a figure which increased to possibly 90% by night, and enjoys a familiarity with a terrain ideally suited to its guerrilla tactics. The population, all too aware of the inability of the government forces to protect them, withhold for the most part all cooperation, either in fear of Viet Cong reprisals or out of preference for it, so that government and U.S. forces face either a hostile or a passive countryside in addition to having to copy with a formidable and well led military force. This discouraging military situation is further worsened by heavy government casualties, worsening morale and a high desertion rate, especially among new recruits. It is, for example, not possible for the Vietnamese army to engage in nighttime training because it is too easy for the trainees to slip away and return to their villages. We heard many reports of crumbling army morale and are of the opinion that if the war is to be fought much longer, U.S. troops will have to fight it.

Turning to the civilian sector, the problems are hardly less vast, and even more evident. Transportation except by air and by sea is at a virtual standstill. Neither railroads nor highways are operable except in a few provinces and for limited distances. This is partly because of outright day and night control by the V.C. and partly because of nighttime forays that dynamite bridges or plant mines. Along many roads, the V.C. force the villagers to build road blocks by night, while the government troops force them to remove them by day, so that one is reminded of Penelope and her knitting, except that the reason for the work is less worthy!

Sometimes armed convoys can get through to provision important cities, but the effort

is a costly one in men and machines. One such operation during July, for example, required 5,000 troops for three weeks, to open and hold Route 19 from the coastal city of Qui Nhon to the highland city of Pleiku, the headquarters of the Second Corps area. Two large convoys got through, but the day after the operation was completed, it was reported in the background press briefing that the route was closed again. During one week all military air transport of personnel, both military and civilian, was cancelled, presumably to use all available plane space for hauling of provisions and supplies to isolated areas. Even Air Vietnam schedules were disrupted during this period. The flight to Vientiane, for example, was five hours late leaving because the plane was sent to Dalat, probably to transport rice.

The coastal cities are more fortunate, but even here the lack of adequate shipping and the lack of adequate storage facilities in communities used to receiving their provisioning by truck and train makes for serious shortages. Warehouses are being built, harbors are being deepened, and the availability of more coastal ships explored, but progress is slow. One of the unanswered questions, being raised with vigor by the relief agencies, and especially by the Catholics, is why the U.S. doesn't bring over a batch of LST's from the Philippines, to help get food and other supplies to the north.

The extent of this provisioning problem is seen by the fact that it is necessary for central Vietnam to import 600,000 tons of food every year just to feed itself. Normally this comes from the Delta, but only a fraction of this amount is now getting through. Part of the reason is the logistics problem reported above, but part is also due to a very poor rice yield from the Delta, so that much less rice is available for shipment. Wartime harassment has kept the farmers from planting and tending their paddies, and heavy V.C. taxes amounting to 50% and more of the total yield have taken a heavy toll of what rice has been harvested. The result is that the U.S. has had to take steps to arrange for the import of massive amounts of rice from other countries. Already 100,000 tons have been contracted for, and much more will be needed before the year is over. That rice importation should be necessary into Vietnam, the richest rice-producing area in the world, is a measure of the seriousness of the situation that exists there.

One exception to the generally gloomy transport situation is - or at least has been - the continued ability of the large oil companies - Shell, Esso and Caltex - to make deliveries. Their trucks continue to roll, except of course where bridges or roads are actually destroyed. They reportedly pay off the V.C. for their immunity to attack, but at least gasoline and oil continue to be available for civilian use. The situation with respect to electric power, however, is not so favorable, and parts of Saigon must be blacked out every night because of power shortages caused by V.C. destruction of power lines. These blackouts are increasing in frequency.

Another problem area that is worsening is that of refugees. There are now reported to be around 400,000 refugees in the country, an increase of about 100,000 since May. No one knows where this will stop since the ever increasing tempo of violence is driving people to flee their homes and fields in increasing numbers. Great numbers leave because they fear the Viet Cong or because they find Viet Cong taxes so heavy that they cannot survive economically. Other thousands, probably at least as many, leave because they fear U.S. and Vietnamese government bombing attacks. Present government and U.S. military policy calls for a "no sanctuary" approach to the V.C., so that if the V.C. in an engagement flee into a hamlet, the hamlet is attacked without warning and levelled with fire and bombs, regardless of who gets killed in the process. Furthermore, certain V.C. held areas are designated as "open target" areas,

which means that any aircraft unable to use its bombs and rockets on the designated target is free to dump them on whatever it wants to in the open target area, since no aircraft is allowed for safety reasons to land with any of its explosives still aboard.

(Of all U.S. and Vietnam government military policies, it is our judgment that this one of village and open area bombing is the most short sighted and costly in terms of public disaffection. Even Vietnamese who support the war as necessary shake their heads at these policies. We are paying a terrible price in psychological terms for killing a few more V.C., but the military appears to think only in terms of dead V.C. and to be uninterested in the intangibles.)

Refugees now appear to be coming in faster than the government can cope with them. We receive fragmentary reports of 10,000 Montagnards without shelter in the valleys north of Kontum, and 5,000 more Vietnamese descending on My Tho in the Delta with no preparation to receive them. Rubber workers continue to leave the plantations, especially in Phuoc Long province, and the number of refugees in Binh Dinh province alone (Qui Nhon) is well in excess of 100,000, some of whom are being provisioned by air-lift. Probably the worst off are the Montagnards, since the Vietnamese despise them, and to this day treat them badly. Because of the discrimination of the Diem regime, the Viet Cong had an easy time getting control of the highlands because the tribal people were so resentful of the government, but like the Germans invading Russia, the Viet Cong also treated the Montagnards badly so that now they are disaffected from both sides. In theory the government is trying to help all refugees equally, but in practice the province officials often give the Montagnards the short end of the stick.

From all of the foregoing, it will be easily understood why the suffering of the Vietnamese population is appalling. They are the hopeless, forgotten victims of a war that has, for them, raged almost continually for 25 years. They feel no stake in the issues, and far from seeing a prospect of termination, they live in dread that still worse is to come. The rural population - comprising 75% of the people - are caught in a vise between two sides who try to control them by terror. They live from day to day, never knowing whether they will be killed by the V.C. in the night, or destroyed by aerial bombing by day. One can only feel a profound sense of moral outrage at the whole situation and cry aloud for men to stop this madness, but still the fighting and killing goes on.

It is not the role of this report to discuss the paramount question of how a cease fire is to be brought about. We report only on the tragic realities of Vietnam today, and underline that it is the responsibility of all men who prize dignity and human values to work unceasingly for peace in Vietnam, and to remember that every day the war is allowed to continue constitutes a sin against God and man.

We do feel it useful however to assess the prospects for the future of South Vietnam, assuming that peace does come, and that it leaves the two Vietnams at least temporarily divided. This seems to us a reasonable assumption, since immediate reunification could only be brought about under conditions that would make speculation on the basis of present conditions a waste of time. If reunification came as a result of U.S. military conquest of both Vietnams, the conditions of devastation and popular resentment would alter fundamentally the problem of assessing the future. If on the other hand, it came as a result of a negotiated peace that resulted in an N.L.F. government, the unified regime would be communist in character and future prospects would again have to be assessed in very different terms. Given this continued

existence of an independent South Vietnam, therefore, the future appears to us a highly uncertain one, with both negative and positive factors influencing the situation.

On the negative side there is, first of all, the lack of any government planning or preparation for peace. Ky and his government think only in emergency and military terms, and no thought is being given to problems of land reform, economic development, resettlement, tax structure, etc. Secondly, there is the inherent weakness of the whole civil service, which means a basically unsound government administration. In the words of one influential and high ranking Vietnamese, "Corruption is simply built into the system." The officials in the provinces feel no loyalty to Saigon. They are sent to the provinces because they are incompetent or have no influential friends in Saigon, or were identified with Diem or are being punished. Their attitude is too often to get what they can for themselves. Furthermore promotion in and out of Saigon is based wholly on seniority and number of academic degrees rather than on ability and dedication. Pay is low, and different ministries compete for the people they want regardless of the value of a given individual to another ministry. There is a general lack of coordination between ministries that goes beyond competition for personnel and teaches the point of empire building, with each ministry tending to look out for itself. The whole philosophy and structure of the civil service needs overhauling if the great Vietnamese problem of corruption is to be overcome, and we have heard little to suggest that any planning along these lines is going forward.

Another negative factor is an educational system geared to an old era and to old conditions which no longer exist. With few exceptions, Vietnamese education, both at secondary and university level, is wedded to the institutionalized French pattern of rote learning, formal lectures, fixed examinations, and inflexible curricula. Just as in the civil service, academic promotion is on the basis of degrees and seniority rather than ability.

Finally there is the problem of winning back the loyalty of an exhausted and largely disaffected people. Unless conditions change greatly before a peace settlement, one of the greatest liabilities of a post-war South Vietnamese government will be that its problems will not be tackled in an environment of popular support, but in an environment that wavers between apathy and hostility. Sincerity, and even results, will be necessary from the outset if support is to be won, and considering all the difficulties enumerated above, it is hard to be sanguine about the prospects.

The picture, however, is not all bad, and there are some positive elements that can be built upon. First of all, South Vietnam is blessed with fertile land and rich resources. Economically it has the greatest potential of any Southeast Asian country, and it could in addition build a large tourist trade on the strength of natural beauties that are unsurpassed anywhere. All of this means that the potential is there and needs only to be exploited to produce the economic base needed for a stable and viable nation.

Second, there is a stirring of new ideas and a new spirit among significant segments of the population. Young intellectuals, some with outside education provided through USOM efforts, are feeling a new sense of responsibility for the larger community, and especially for the improvement of the condition of life in the countryside. Many of these young people are acutely aware of the tragedy of the betrayal by the wealthy and the privileged of the South's social revolution during the Diem days, and are determined not to let this happen again. They are to be found both in and out of government, and in increasing numbers in the undergraduate community.

New winds are also blowing among the Buddhists, especially among some of the younger monks, and Van Hanh University and some of the projects of the Buddhist Institute constitute hopeful evidences of a reawakened Buddhism in Vietnam. Because of the deep roots of Buddhism at the hamlet level throughout the country, this new stirring, if nurtured and encouraged, has the potential for important influence.

Another institutionalized expression of this new spirit is found in the relatively young Vietnamese Confederation of Labor. The labor movement in the country is lively and forward looking, and its community service efforts in the urban slums of Saigon are the best conceived of any urban efforts we saw. Here again there is a strong sense of responsibility to the poor, but in the healthy context of encouraging them to help themselves, rather than offering charity.

A good word also needs to be said for the U.S. A.I.D. Program, which operates under the name of the U.S. Operation Mission (USOM) in Vietnam. The USOM effort is of course open to much legitimate criticism as any large government operation is bound to be. It works too much from the top down, instead of from the hamlets up (as does the Viet Cong); it is bureaucratic and wasteful at points; it has neglected to gear its program into regional efforts such as Mekong River development; there are too frequent changes in top leadership and therefore in major policy direction. But on balance, we are sure USOM efforts have given a boost to Vietnam's development. It counts many able and devoted men and women within its ranks, who work out in the provinces as near the grass roots as they can, often at considerable personal risk. IVS, a private organization, attached to USOM, makes an outstanding contribution, the best American effort now in operation in the country, in our opinion. These USOM and IVS provincial workers are laying a groundwork in education, in agricultural improvement, in public health, and in encouraging a self help spirit that is extremely important and constructive for the future. Indeed, if the U.S. aid program during the 50's could have reversed the proportions going to the USOM and military programs, the history of Vietnam might have been different.

Finally, there is the likely availability of outside help through the United Nations and under bilateral programs. The world is aware of Vietnam's suffering and of the importance of helping it to recover, and a post-war Vietnamese government can count on important assistance not only in furthering the crucially important Mekong River development, which can transform the whole Indo-Chinese peninsula economically, but in other more specifically Vietnamese problems.

Conclusions cannot be drawn from this tabulation of assets and liabilities affecting the future, except in the broadest terms. We are afraid that the odds are against success, and that the negative factors will prove too much of a handicap to be overcome. On the other hand, there is enough to be hopeful about to warrant an enthusiastic effort to encourage and help, and we hope the AFSC can play its small part in the process. South Vietnam could overcome its problems and emerge as a viable nation able to deal on even terms with the Communist North, thereby opening the way to a rapprochement and eventual reunion of the two Vietnams. It is surely the responsibility of all men of good will to work for this end.

III. Recommendations for AFSC Service in Vietnam

The whole question of AFSC program in South Vietnam needs to be looked at in the light of the danger of identifying ourselves with the generally-held image of America as a military power to be tolerated but hardly respected, and in the light of our inability to work on both sides, which may convey an impression of partisanship contrary to

the spirit of AFSC. We believe it will be possible to establish an identity separate from the government and the military, although it may not be understood by those at a distance. The other problem, of apparent partisanship, is more difficult. We see no way at present for a unit stationed in South Vietnam to have any contact or relationship to the National Liberation Front, at least as long as it works within the framework of USOM and the GVN, which is the only possible way an agency can now work in the South. Theoretically it might be possible for an AFSC team to serve in a medical capacity, for example, with the Viet Cong, but this would hardly be permitted by our own government, and probably would be refused also by the North Vietnamese and the NLF. Practically speaking, therefore, AFSC will have to confine its work to the South, and to one side, for the foreseeable future, and will have to decide if it wants to do this. We are not ourselves in a good position to make this judgment because of proximity to the needs, which predispose us in the direction of involving AFSC in helping to meet them.

In this connection, we note at the outset that three modest grants have already been made to Vietnamese institutions on the strength of our firsthand knowledge of their operations. These grants were made out of funds already allocated to our mission, and with the approval of the Ad-hoc Committee on Vietnam and the Executive Committee of the Board. All of the recipients had the following characteristics in common:

- (1) The spirit of their work, and the methods employed, are congenial with the spirit and approach of the AFSC.
- (2) They are attacking fundamental problems of the Vietnamese social order, which must be solved before stability can be achieved in Vietnam.
- (3) They are pioneering ventures not duplicated by other groups.
- (4) They enjoy our confidence in terms of the integrity of their operations and the use of our funds.
- (5) The results achieved will not be wasted in the event of major changes in the political and military scene.

The grants made, their purposes and amounts, are as follows:

- (1) National Voluntary Service of Vietnam \$3,500

Funds to be used (a) to help in the construction or equipping of their new office facility to the extent that other contributed funds prove inadequate, or (b) to provide the NVS with working capital during the critical months of January and February when the current year's maintenance grant from the government of Vietnam has expired and before the commitment for the following year is available, or (c) to provide funds for their hamlet teams which can be used for extra budgetary purposes that will enrich the teams' contribution to village life, and build closer relationships to those they serve, or (d) other priority needs as determined by the NVS Board.

- (2) Vietnamese Confederation of Labor \$1,000

Funds to be used to carry forward the programs of the two Community Centers operated by the CVT in the slums of Saigon. No specification

was made beyond asking that our money go toward the purchase of supplies or equipment, the improvement of facilities, or the extension of services of the two Centers.

(3) School of Youth for Social Service, Van Hanh University \$1,000

Funds to be used at the discretion of the director, Thich Nhat Hanh either for equipment or services in connection with the opening of this new department at the Buddhist University.

Copies of transmittal letters, and replies acknowledging receipt of funds are attached to the original copy of this report.

Beyond these grants, we have identified the following long range needs in South Vietnam for consideration by the AFSC or other like-minded organizations.

- (1) A camp-based refugee program in and around Qui Nhon in Binh Dinh Province. There are more than 100,000 refugees in this province, of whom approximately 38,000 are between the ages of 3 and 17. Not more than half of these are actually in camps, but little beyond bare subsistence, and in the case of those in camps, housing, is being provided, and there is urgent need for recreation, education and vocational training. Security is good in and immediately around Qui Nhon, but work in 8 of the 11 districts of the province would have to be postponed pending changes in the military situation. Many thousands of refugees are located within the secure area, however.
- (2) A small youth service program of 5 or 6 persons to work in the National Voluntary Service hamlet program in Ninh Thuan province (Phan Rang). Of all the Vietnamese organizations with which we came in contact, the NVS and its parent, the Voluntary Youth Association, won our most complete confidence and respect, and no other organization enjoys more widespread confidence among American groups, public and private. Their "four pillars of virtue", integrity, fraternity, simplicity and personal involvement, are vigorously practiced, and their organizational structure is based on shared responsibility and mutual criticism rather than line authority and hierarchy.

Hamlet teams of 5 persons live in a village at the level of the villagers, teaching school, digging wells, carrying on basic health and sanitation programs, and improving agricultural techniques. Like AFSC volunteers, participants are young university students and graduates and are well motivated generalists rather than experts. Each team services a cluster of surrounding hamlets, travelling on bicycles provided by the Asia Foundation. Supervision is by an "area chief" living in the provincial capital, and carrying responsibility for all the teams in the province.

NVS is eager to have AFSC volunteers in its program and feels that the security situation in Ninh Thuan province makes American participation feasible. This province is the center of Cham tribal population, which is sharply anti-communist, and is regarded as one of the two most secure provinces in South Vietnam. Moreover, NVS is well known in this province, and much loved, with urgent invitations to send as many teams there as they can. We have visited in the area, and travelled by road through much

of Ninh Thuan and can confirm the security situation as satisfactory.

Eventually we would hope for a full-fledged VISA-type program, with volunteers placed with three Vietnamese organizations: NVS, CVT and the Buddhist Institute, all working in the social service area, the latter two in urban settings. This would be a new pattern for American involvement in Vietnam, since no other agency, private or public, has placed personnel within and under the direction of Vietnamese agencies. We believe this would be a valuable and pioneering contribution, expressing confidence in Vietnamese leadership, helping to change the image of Americans as the foreign "boss" and giving our volunteers an insight into the real Vietnam. This full development, however, cannot be recommended now, for although the other two organizations involved are interested, both are very sensitive about too close connections with Americans. In addition, the Buddhist social program is still in an early stage of development, and may well need to accumulate their own experience in operating orphanages and experimenting with their "model village" program.

- (3) A program to further social welfare training in Vietnam. There is a great need for trained personnel in this area, and the need will become even greater in a post-war period. At present there is almost no training available, yet the absence of social workers and general leadership in this field may be the difference between success and failure in furthering Vietnam's needed social revolution when the war ends. We have been disappointed that our explorations in this field have not produced any concrete results. We had hoped earlier that some kind of linkage might be worked out between an American college or university with a strong social service training interest and one or more Vietnamese universities, or possibly facilitate exchanges and other relationships between U.S. community service organizations and community service trainees in Vietnam. These hopes have not yet proved feasible, despite careful exploration in Saigon, and with ECAFE (in Bangkok) which had made an earlier study of this problem. There is considerable interest in the idea in some quarters, but not in the university circles where it is most needed. The French educational system, so deeply imbedded in Vietnam, does not lend itself to this kind of program, and under present circumstances any attempt to enlist U.S. university or community service assistance would prove frustrating. The one possible exception is Van Hanh University, which is embarking upon a promising social service training program, with a special department being created for the purpose, but it is still too new, and the Buddhists' need to operate on their own is too great to warrant serious exploration of a U.S. relationship at the present time. It is our hope, however, that this possible area of service can be kept open for further exploration.

- (4) A rehabilitation program, based in Saigon, to make and fit artificial limbs.

This is a program urgently needed in South Vietnam, and likely to become more and more urgent as time passes. There is at present a government-sponsored shop turning out artificial limbs, and efforts to raise funds privately to supplement government appropriation to pay costs of manufacture and fitting are in evidence, but the effort is too small, and is widely criticized for favoritism and corruption. Unfortunately we did not have time to investigate this situation, beyond determining need and learning of the major criticism of present programs.

IV. Conclusion

There is probably no more important or needy area for Americans of good will to serve today than Vietnam. Americans are widely misunderstood - partly because American policy has consistently failed to take into account the revolutionary mood of Asia, and partly because there is a natural cultural gap between Americans and Vietnamese. The Asian characteristics of politeness, circumlocution to avoid offense, leisureliness, timelessness and reverence for age, for example, come into conflict with western brusqueness, candor, pace of life, efficiency and general exuberance. This cultural gap is especially evident between Asian civilians and the American military, because the western traits listed are most pronounced in military circles, and since most contact between Americans and vietnamese involves the military, the problem is a serious one. This increases the importance of sensitive American civilian involvement in Vietnam, and especially involvement of Americans in subordinate roles.