Thursday morning, October 5, Mr. Mode and Mr. Haney called on Mr. Ladejinsky at U.S.O.M. to discuss with him the forthcoming study which the MSU Team will make of the Ministry of Land Registration and Agrarian Reform. Mr. Mode indicated that he hoped this talk would forestall any possibility that the MSU study might run counter to the work that Mr. Ladejinsky has been doing.

Mr. Ladejinsky answered that no matter how good a job the MSU Team might do in uncovering errors in the organizational scheme of the Ministry and no matter how pertinent our suggestions might be in attempting to remedy those defects, a basic problem would remain—a problem which he has not been able to solve. That difficulty is the lack of enthusiasm, if not personal opposition, on the part of government officials, who are charged with carrying out a program of land reform, but whose personal interests involve a substantial stake in maintaining the status quo.

The Minister is himself a landowner, whose total holdings may run to more than 15,000 hectares. Although Mr. Thoi is charged with over-all responsibility for execution of the program, he has not yet responded to Mr. Ladejinsky's invitation to show him even one contract of the recommended type, the type sponsored by the Ministry, signed by a tenant farmer and Mr. Thoi or his representative. Many of the Province Chiefs are substantial landowners in their own right, too. The Minister has never shown direct opposition to the program; but some of the Province Chiefs have not tried to hide their lack of interest in promoting land reform. At least one of them bluntly told Mr. Ladejinsky over a drink that he was opposed to it. At this point Mr. Ladejinsky asked what the MSU Team could do to help him overcome this handicap.

Mr. Haney suggested that the President might have had that kind of situation in mind when he asked MSU, an unofficial body, to undertake these studies of governmental operation. Standing outside official channels, the MSU Team would be less influenced by inertia or dilatory tactics on the part of the responsible officials. The format of the interview pre-supposes good intentions on the part of the interviewee. The questions would at least have the value, as Mr. Mode said at this point, of encouraging the official to think through the significance of his job and the contribution which he can make to the program. We do not expect to work miracles, he continued, but our efforts would be justified in large part if we merely succeeded in persuading the responsible officials to do some thinking about what they are supposed to do.

Mr. Ladejinsky agreed and then pointed to the crucial role which the President could play if and when he decides to "crack down." Already he has made a start by
going into the field himself and taking some of the high-ranking officials with him on these visits. According to Mr. Ladejinsky land reform in South Vietnam should be the President's answer to the challenge posed by Ho Chi Minh. Perhaps, when the President feels more secure politically, he will require his officials to take a positive attitude toward the implementation of the land reform program. Meanwhile, Mr. Ladejinsky urged that the MSU Team stress at every opportunity the importance of vigorous leadership. Progress has been slight up to this time, but he is prepared to risk his professional reputation in this field by continuing to urge the need for action even though there is no guarantee of success.

The meeting ended on a note of agreement and mutual support.