

Prepared for
BRIEFING
on Work of
Michigan State University Group
Field Administration Division

These summary notes were taken from a tape recording of a previous briefing session. It will, in no way, answer all of your questions, but it should give you some idea of the work of the Field Administration Division. Near the end of the notes you will find comments on some of the problems of work relationships and hints which have been used effectively in working with not only the Vietnamese officials, but with our own Vietnamese colleagues.

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Chief

Review of MSUG Field Administration Division
Viet Nam, July, 1955 - June, 1957

We began operations in July, 1955. I think you are all aware of what the conditions were at that time. Dr. Smuckler, Dr. Wickert and I arrived at about the same time. Dr. Smuckler was in research, Fred Wickert in in-service training and I was in field administration.

On our first day here, we were asked by the President to give some ideas and some thoughts as to the type of organizational structure, of procedure, etc. that would accomplish the job of handling the refugees. He also asked that we make the functioning of the Refugee Commission our first concern in order to get it running a little smoother than it was at that time. When we got here, they were getting about 5,000 refugees from the North every day. You have 5,000 people land on your doorstep every day, with no place to put them, and it is a kind of a hectic proposition; a rather unique mass movement.

Every night there were about 1,000 or 2,000 people sleeping in the Quoc Hoi (Assembly Building). Every doorway was filled; every vacant building was appropriated. It was a critical situation. However, it wasn't as difficult for us coming in as consultants, because the refugees had just about completed the initial phase of movement from the North. The administrative structure that they had for their organization was designed to move people. It did this very well. It was not designed for rehabilitation. They had thirty-seven different directorates or units reporting to the Refugee Commission (Commissioner Luong). Each of these was reporting to his office which was already swamped with refugees, religious leaders, lay leaders, Vietnamese and American officials and others. All that we actually did was to suggest an organization which inevitably would have been the organization that they would have eventually designed. In any event, we went in about the third day after our arrival and started our research.

What we do is a type of administrative research, similar to that which has become rather popular and necessary in the States. It is not a detailed analysis lasting a year or two, but it is an attempt to find the "sore spots" or major weaknesses in organization and procedures. It is a technique that is used quite extensively in both private business and government business. Maybe you are familiar with it. If not, I shall explain its essentials. First, we prepare a questionnaire on relationships, organizational procedures, etc. which will be followed in interviewing the person who knows most about these things; namely, the person on the job. We try to locate "administrative patterns" that can be corrected by either organizational, procedural, or administrative change.

As a result of our research in the Refugee Commission we recommended an organization with four definite directorates, each reporting to the Director of Cabinet. These recommendations were contained in a report issued August 6, 1955, covering the proposed organization of the central office for a new phase of the refugee movement, resettlement.

If you have ever studied refugee movements, you will know that they go in about four different stages. One, initial movement stage; two, a group settlement - where a group of refugees are placed in a more permanent location; three, villages of refugees are integrated into the existing community or government; four, individual adjustments are made. We recommended a simplified organizational structure and the project method of resettling each resettlement camp. If you have been out of town, in any direction, you have seen refugee camps which house anywhere from 1,000 to 46,000 people. We were rather fortunate in the timing when we started, the government was prepared to accept suggestions and they needed a different type of organization to do a different job. We have had probably the most excellent relationships with the Refugee Commission that we could possibly have, because we sort of "fell into them." With these excellent relationships, we have had a reputation to live up to, which has been difficult and taxing. However, the Refugee Commission has been extremely appreciative of our endeavors. USOM has been "just glowing" in its reports on some of the things that we have accomplished.

After that initial report, they asked: "How are we going to organize the field; how are we going to get these people integrated into a community?" So we were again requested to give advice. On this study, we went to every province; we went to 43 refugee camps with detailed questionnaires, collecting some ideas from the refugees, from the province chiefs, from the district chiefs, from the regional personnel, and others. Briefly, we worked hard and long and finally recommended an organizational structure. It looks simple, but producing it was a long, hard, drawn-out, educational process. This was part of the implementation phase of our work which included an in-service training school at Cuu Chi. We had meetings almost daily with Refugee Commission officials to assist in working out some ideas on how the refugees would be integrated into the provinces. We had meetings with some eighteen to twenty province chiefs and went over this whole problem with them. It was a long process, but the result, again, was fortunate for us because it worked. When you compare the refugee handling here in Viet Nam with that of Pakistan, the success here is considered very good. It is interesting to note that about 60% of the refugee villages have been integrated into local government administration.

The refugees have made a good adjustment and, generally speaking, have a better life here than they had in the North. There has been competition with the Southerners and, usually the refugees have been successful. For instance, in fishing villages - they go out further on the ocean, stay longer, work harder, get a bigger catch, and make more money. That's all there is to it. The same is true in many other fields.

The problems of Saigon have been aggravated by the refugees. Its population problem was caused by the war primarily. With the countryside unsafe, Saigon was a haven for the people from the farms, with the result that the population increased from 400,000 to a little more than 2,000,000. The refugees have added to this problem and accentuated the accompanying problems of unemployment, unsettled living and readjustment.

When you add to this situation the fact that the government was then unstable, you can readily appreciate the tremendous change that has come about in the last two years.

In 1955, there were four armies and a police force which were not loyal to the central government. Every one of the cabinet ministers was trying in some way to either get on top or make a good money deal.

The people, themselves, had seldom heard of President Ngo Dinh Diem. Who was he? What did he stand for? That sort of thing. All of these things have been important in our work because our advising must be tempered by the conditions that we found. It was necessary for us to rid our minds of any preconceived ideas and forget our experiences except as they related to the case at hand. By and large, we worked from basic principles of administration rather than from any set plan. For this reason, the research phase of our work was the most important part of our job.

Work Method

Now I would like to comment on how we do our work and the method that we use. It is broken down into three general phases. We try to gather all the facts that we can. This is called, as you know, the research phase. Following that we try to analyze the data that we have obtained and come up with solutions to the problems so that we can make recommendations for an organization and/or procedures that will improve the administration. This is known as the analysis and report writing phase. The third and most important is the implementation phase. We work on problems at the request of the Vietnamese Government. The government had a specific problem when the MSUG contract was signed; namely; the reorganization of the government. We presented a work plan to the government which provides for a study of each of the departments. Based on this work plan we make administrative surveys. In the second phase, we actually analyze and write a report of our findings. The report includes definite recommendations based on our many research interviews and our analysis and is published in both English and French.

We have conducted approximately 6,000 interviews to date. These interviews have had a two-fold effect. One, the official that you are talking to, by asking him questions, thinks about his own problems. Usually his ideas are sound. If we can ask enough people about the same question, we'll find that patterns come up in sharp design. For instance, the Department of Interior, I think you are familiar with this type of department since many of the European countries have it. It is not like our Interior Department; it is the centralized government's regional, provincial, district administrative structure. We found in our research that almost every interviewee said that the regional administrative organization was all right under the colonial administration or probably under a united Viet Nam, but it was unnecessary, cumbersome and costly under existing conditions. After more detailed study of course, one of our recommendations was the elimination of the regional organization as an administrative echelon. You can see how this procedure of research

tends to get acceptance of the recommendations because, first, we usually follow the ideas that have come from these interviewees; they are already thinking in the frame of reference of the recommendations. Secondly, it has forced them to be on our side because they say, "Oh, this is what we told them," and actually it is. Psychologically, they support the ideas because they are their own ideas and we have merely reported them.

The third phase of our work is implementation. The technique which we use in this phase is important. We have an agreement with the Government to work with the department for six months after we make our recommendations. After working with them for six months, we review the recommendations to see if they were valid, and workable. In essence, reviewing for validity of the suggestions has the effect of checking to see if anything has been done by the Department to implement the recommendations. It is a very effective way to do business!

Another essential step in our work is to keep continuous contact with other American agencies -- especially the Embassy, USOM, USIS and MAAG. We also try to utilize the specialists on the MSU staff to assure the best thinking that we can possibly give to the subject at hand.

Schedule of Work Completed

We have already referred to our work with the Refugee Commission in explaining our work methods. You may be interested in our efforts to measure our effectiveness which can be done in general terms by the after six months' reviews. We found in the Refugee Commission that approximately 30% of our recommendations were followed. This, I am sure, is an unusual case for the reasons mentioned above.

Our next study was the Interior Department. Mr. Bui van Thinh, now the Ambassador to Japan, was the Secretary of the Department, and he is still a very powerful man in this country. He is probably one of the best administrators and we had wonderful working relationships when he was here. Now the office of the Secretary has been combined with the office of Secretary of State at the Presidency. Mr. Chau is handling both of them. He is over his head in work and cannot humanly do both of these jobs. The result is that implementation has not progressed as rapidly, nor as smoothly as it might have. It must be added that the recommendations were more basic to the entire government than were those on the Refugee Commission, so you would expect a much longer period of time for acceptance and realization. For instance, we recommended the creation of 14 areas which would require combining provinces. Under the French, the five regions seemed administratively reasonable: North Viet Nam, Annam, Cochin-China, Cambodia and Laos. When the country was divided at the 17th parallel, you can see what happened. To get mail from Saigon to Phan Thiet, it had to go from here to Hue to Phan Thiet, which meant one, two or three weeks instead of one or two days. It is one of the real problems. We recommended that they do away with these regions and it was very interesting to see what their reaction was. Most functionaries recognized the necessity for this before we came.

The Delegate of South Viet Nam is currently the President of the National Assembly, Tran van Lam. The Delegate of Central Viet Nam is now Ambassador to Laos. The Delegate of the PMS is currently the Ambassador to Taiwan. Implementing these recommendations worked fairly well, because there were responsible positions for the important personnel. They didn't feel that they were being demoted; they were actually being promoted. But doing away with these regions isn't that simple. It will have to be determined what functions the provincial governments will perform and what functions will be placed at the national level. This is, of course, a continuing administrative problem which must be solved over a long period of time. They are still working at it. In addition, there exists an appointment system whereby the President appoints the delegate, the Secretary of Interior appoints the province chief, the province chief appoints the canton chief -- all in an indirect line. We recommended a direct appointment system.

The recommendations were based on basic principles of administration, such as the budget system being tied into the total revenue and expenditures of the country. We also suggested that they eliminate some of the super-structure of national, regional, provincial, district, canton, village, and hamlet administration. Each one has its place in this hierarchy of government and to eliminate one is a major accomplishment. Incidentally, the second part of our work program will be a comprehensive study of local government. Originally there were three regions, the Central, South and the PMS; there were 43 provinces though some changes are being made now. For instance, the number and size of the provinces in South Viet Nam have been revised. They have just been reduced from 24 to 19 in number, but they didn't follow our suggestion of reducing them to about 6 or 8. We understand from our discussion with the Vice President that this will come as the next step, but may take a few years, when communications are improved. There are some other changes such as an arrete which does away with the regional offices in Hue and in Dalat and consolidates these areas under a new regional office in Banmethuot with inspecting, rather than supervisory powers.

A district is a part of a province. Usually they have 4 or 5 districts to each province, which means there are approximately 200. A canton, again, is just a breakdown of the district and it varies according to the province. There are about 6,000 or 7,000 villages. The hamlets have been important because they have been a defense unit. They have protected themselves, so to speak.

The Interior Department study was the most difficult one we have done thus far, and the most comprehensive. It presented the most complex factors and most debatable principles of administration. You can argue both sides of the proposition. We had some interesting discussions with the President, the previous and the current Secretary of State for Interior. To a lot of things that we have recommended they will say, "Yes, but!" (En principe, mais.) That's about the way it stands now. They agree, but they are making certain in-roads; for instance, a recent decree provides for the transfer of excess personnel from

Saigon to the provinces. But it is a slow, difficult proposition to reorganize the total government. Many times, we get impatient, but the fact remains that it is a tremendous job. Up until now, it has been a problem of security. First of all, it was Binh Xuyen, then the Hoa Hao, and then Cao Dai. Most recently it has been the ever present Viet Cong. It's difficult. You collect the taxes during the daytime, and someone else collects them behind a gun at night. As you know, most of the district chiefs are military men, and approximately one half of the province chiefs are military men. They understand the military, but you explain taxation to them -- "It's for the birds." We, many times, think that changes should be made more rapidly to be timely, but we find with experience that to move slowly and surely on the talk of reorganization may be the wisest in the long run.

After the Interior Department study, we reviewed our method of research. We were going to the field for each departmental study. This, we agreed, was not the most efficient use of time, so we decided to try combining our research work by going into a selected area and obtaining data which could be used for more than one departmental study. We started what we called the "four department study." We selected those departments which affect the people most: Agriculture, Agrarian Reform, Education and Civic Action. This was at the height of the Hoa Hao activities, so we were limited in our travel area. We tried to take a random sample of the remainder of the country and apply it to the total country. Based upon the data collected we made three reports. We did our research on Agriculture, Agrarian Reform and Education. Civic Action changed its organization during the study so we postponed our study of that agency. The three studies have been completed; the reports have been published.

Techniques of Implementation

We found out that it just isn't sufficient to say, "Well, implement," and that's it. It has to be a little better conceived, a little better planned and a little better executed. What we try to do on this is to establish a working relationship, usually a committee which will meet regularly. This committee is used as a vehicle for getting together, for exchanging ideas, for getting action on some of these recommendations. On the Interior Report, we had three committees: one on administration, one on personnel, and one on fiscal affairs. Secretary generals of each department, personnel officers of each department and a combination of directors of cabinet were members of the respective committees. They were high-powered, but unwieldy. As the result in our most recent meeting, a small committee of about four people replaced the three large committees. The committee has to be small enough and flexible enough to be workable.

For the Department of Education study, six work committees were established, one for each subject matter: anti-illiteracy and popular education; semi-official schools; primary and secondary schools; administrative organization; the publication problem; and school construction. Each of those have been meeting regularly. We have had approximately 60 meetings of the committees and two meetings with the Secretary of

State for Education. They are making some progress; schools are in the process of being built. A study mission went to the Philippines and Japan to study financing and semi-official schools (which is a grant-in-aid program for building schools -- a financial proposition). All of these things are moving along. Because of the techniques which we are using, USOM is an active member. They participate on each of the committees and give leadership in their special fields.

I think it is because of the techniques which we use that we make the progress that we do. We have developed a real working relationship with these people. We have no money to give them, which may be a blessing in disguise, because we are not forced into the time-consuming control procedures set up to determine whether they are spending it properly. All we have to give them is our advice; they can take it or leave it. It's a lovely position to be in because we don't get into the wrangles that USOM does, and we don't get into the personality clashes. We try to keep aware of the policies, certainly of our own government, so that we don't, in any way, undermine what the rest of our government is doing here. On the other hand, we have a pretty enviable position because we can give our best thoughts to administrative organization without the financial worries which is quite different from the position of some of our American colleagues.

You may be interested in a couple of things that we are doing. We found out that we did not know enough about what the real problem is in the province. What problem does the chief of province have as the top administrator of the province? We conceived the idea of going to a province, staying for a month or so, finding out what the problem really is at the provincial level.

The province of My-Tho was selected as the pilot study. We prepared questionnaires covering each of the governmental services and tried to look at the problems of administration from the viewpoint of the provincial officials. We found some very significant administrative situations which have been published in the provincial study of My-Tho.

Work with the National Institute of Administration

There has been considerable administrative research done by the National Institute of Administration staff. We currently are trying to work out a plan whereby our research will be integrated with theirs. This has been difficult because we have a professional staff of ten or twelve full-time Vietnamese, in addition to seven professional Americans; whereas the Institute has assigned only a couple of college professors on a part-time basis. At the present time this unbalance has made it difficult to do much integration. You should know, however, that we are trying to work with the National Institute of Administration so that eventually we can coordinate our research with theirs. It is hoped that a going concern of a governmental research bureau can be left intact when our work here is finished. Whether this can be accomplished is another thing, but in any event, we will try to do it.

Special Assignments

One other activity which continues to take a good deal of our time is that of requests for special advice. We receive these requests from our Embassy, USOM and several of the departments. For instance, we have been working with the Special Projects Administration. This involves the development of land area for large scale resettlement. We have been asked to suggest an organization which would accomplish the work of these reclamation projects, as well as the resettlement of persons from the over-crowded Saigon area.

Another illustration of the requests for special advice is that we were asked to suggest a type of organization to carry out Arrrete 57A on Agrarian Reform.

Recently, USOM's Health Division asked us to make a study of the village structure to obtain information on the attitude of the village people toward western medicine, in addition to that on administrative practices. This was to be interwoven into our village study.

You can readily see that these special requests are time consuming and have a marked effect on our own work programs. In these areas we believe that eventually we can work effectively through the National Institute of Administration when that organization is prepared to meet, study and advise on program and organization problems. This, of course, should be the function of the governmental research bureau.

Future Studies and Related Problems

We have two major studies underway at the present time which cut across the several departments of government. One is the study of the Fonction Publique which is the civil service commission of the government. The other is the Department of Finance which is responsible for the fiscal procedures and accounting of the government. These two studies will be more time-consuming than the regular departmental studies because the changes will be more fundamental to the entire government in the areas of personnel and fiscal management.

In the future we foresee some marked changes which should occur in our activities because the government, itself, has changed in the course of time since original studies. For instance, we have one whole area to which we have given only cursory attention; namely the work relationships with the National Assembly.

Another area of our work is the use of consultants. We have had only one consultant, Dr. Fesler, head of the Yale Political Science Department, who was here for a three-month period. His effectiveness in working with the Vietnamese and in stimulating our own staff has pointed up the need for more of this type of assistance. It should augment our staff on specific specialities.

In addition to this general problem, we are continually faced with the problem of efficient utilization of our own Vietnamese colleagues. In our type of work where we have different phases, we find our work to have peaks and valleys. It turns into an administrative problem of our own to get full utilization of our staff's time. It should be said, however, that we would not be able to operate without our Vietnamese colleagues. They are an integral part of our professional staff. It is through their untiring efforts that we have been able to do the work that we have been doing in Vietnam.