

On July 17 - 1957 a meeting was called by Dr. Fishel to discuss MSUG status in the eyes of the Vietnamese Government and Community. Were present: Dr. Fishel, Messrs. Cole, Chuong, Khoi, Murphy, Phon Anh, Rosenfeld, Ryan and Mrs. Pauline Tho.

Dr. Fishel opened the meeting in the following lines: "In our daily contacts, we have the impression that there is an increasing anti-American feeling among the Vietnamese officials. The French are trying to create an antagonism between the Americans and the Vietnamese, and to some extent, they have succeeded in giving rise to the sensitivity of the Vietnamese towards the Americans. What steps can we take in order to minimize such attitudes?"

Mr. Quan presented a written list of remarks in which he stated what he believed are the major reasons for the V.N. officials' unfriendly or reluctant attitudes:

- In their relations with V.N. officials, the American Consultants may have been indiscreet and given the impression of supervising or investigating rather than cooperating and advising "in any case, always bear in mind the importance of the face question in oriental countries"...

- Interpreters' attitudes may cause a great deal of damage: some of them "have tendency to show off because they are working with an advisory group", or "introduce themselves as Government Advisors". Mr. Quan quoted the study mission to Japan and the Philippines as an example of the interpreters' misbehavior. Besides, "translation has been often careless"...

Mr. Khoi: The difficulties between the V.N. Government and MSUG seem to come from many sources. We could discriminate two main categories among them: Those which are relevant from the structure of our relationship with the V.N. Government and those which are accidental. To each category, we must provide for specific remedies.

- Structural problems: The role of an advisory group is a dynamic one. We have been trying to insufflate technical skill and self-confidence into the V.N. Administration, it is to be expected that some time they feel mature enough not to depend on us any longer. Then in order to achieve completely our program, we must develop an important program of "Public Relations" parallel to our plan of action.

- Accidental problems: Among these, the most important are the "behavioral" aspect of Americans as well as interpreters.

Is this problem really so bad? Too much has been said, especially about the interpreters. So far, there has never been any direct complaint or any proof of MSU's interpreters misbehaving. On the contrary, precisely in that trip to Japan, the Viet Nam

officials paid a particularly cordial homage to the interpreters for the quality of their assistance. Press campaigns and rumors should not by any mean be considered a channel of communication between the V.N. officials and M.S.U.G. Anyway, in order to have the situation under control as much as possible, MSUG should determine a pattern of behavior for all members, Americans and Vietnamese. With clear indications, it will be no longer possible to anyone to overpass his competence or to slip out of the usual requirements of courtesy without sanction; on the other hand, this will cut off the way to insidious and unfounded rumors. We should not accept any blame that we do not deserve.

Mr. Ryan: The problem of interpreters is only a small aspect of a deeply rooted misunderstanding between Americans and Vietnamese. Different culture, traditions, customs and mentality... Daily frictions... There is no solution to such problems! Therefore, let us merely remember what is our goal and aims here and carry it out without paying attention to the rest.

Mrs. Tho: The main problem is how to gain trust and confidence from V.N. officials. Such personnel as interpreters and assistants only serve as scapegoats in some difficult situations between our organization and a government agency. They do have the status of Interpreters although they are constantly expected to be more than mere interpreters.

Dr. Fishel: One characteristic of our policy has always been to create for the V.N. Government a "Corps of Technicians or Experts". Those, who are now interpreters and assistants, may later on serve directly the Vietnamese Government.

Mr. Cole: Precisely, we should not limit the role of our V.N. top employees to translation and interpretation and should have them participate in studies as technicians. The interpretation work should be made less necessary by an intensive training during 4 or 5 months in French language for all Americans just coming from the U.S.

Mr. Quan: Field Administration should be reorganized into small teams, each team being made available to one department of the V.N. Government. Thus, our cooperation would be at the working level and we would not give the impression of being sent down to the departments by the Presidency.

Dr. Fishel: We shall take Mr. Quan's suggestion into consideration. However, in order to start a study in a department, we always need approval from the Presidency. Besides, USOM is already organized into teams and the opportuneness is debatable as to whether we should duplicate a system already existing in the mechanism?

Mr. Chuong: In general the Vietnamese in their relations with the Americans have an "inferiority complex" whereas the Americans often have a "superiority complex".

Mr. Murphy: We have a lot to offer, but we cannot always impose our advice on V.N. officials. It is probably better to offer our service whenever we are requested to.

Mr. Khoi: We can always suggest. Our activities would be so limited if we waited until we are requested. That is the reason for which we need a well developed public relations system: suggestions are easier to make through social contacts.

Mr. Murphy: We are tackling now a very serious problem: How far and how should we extend our social contacts with V.N. officials? Should I for instance, invite the Director of the Budget with his Staff to dinner?

Mr. Ryan: In Police Administration Division, we feel through our experience that we should not develop any social relations with V.N. officials and stick to work relations. Private contacts could be harmful to our friends: We are still in a period of transition, with such ideas as "loyalty, cult of personality..." and out of work contacts could arise suspicion.

Mrs. Tho: This is probably true for police, and possibly the army where a strict hierarchy must be observed. But as to the other parts of the V.N. Government, social contacts are the best public relations weapon that we have. We should develop them as much as possible.

Mr. Rosenfeld: We should take note of all these suggestions for the use of our newcomers. I suggest that a "guide" for social behavior be established.

Dr. Fishel: Mrs. Tho, Messrs. Chuong, Khoi, Phon Anh and Quan will get together and work out one guide: "Social Codes for the Americans in Viet Nam"....

Our meeting ended at 12:15.