

Viet Nam Trip Report
1-8 October 1981

by Wendy Batson and Bob Eaton
Quaker Service Laos & Viet Nam
15/10/81

American Friends Service Committee
1501 Cherry Street
Philadelphia, PA
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Viet Nam Trip Report

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Our meetings were productive and cordial. It was a good trip albeit occasionally experienced by diseased bodies! We both got sick, but, thank God, at different times. When only one name appears present, the other was busy dying. We focused our efforts during this one week period on clarifying old commitments and facilitating the purchase of already-agreed upon goods. The meetings with the Dong Da Screwmaking Factory and the Qui Nhon Rehabilitation Center went well. Our discussions with the Women's Union uncovered several problems which must be looked into. We returned to Vientiane with a renewed confidence that these short "business trips" are important. The Viet Nameese expect us to return early next year. Because we could not visit Ho Chi Minh Ville this time we were not able to pursue discussions with the staff of the Number Three School and the Safety Pin facility.

General Impressions Like many an AFSC visitor before us, Hanoi and its people felt poor. Market prices are very high compared to Vientiane, with the exception of rice, which is greatly inferior in quality to the more expensive Vientiane kind. We received conflicting reports on the recent harvest-Foreign Ministry and Viet My telling us that the harvest had been very good, others saying that the harvest was OK, but plagued with worm infestations.

People work two jobs to make ends meet. Our young (27 yrs.) interpreter, who is unmarried and lives at home, works every evening on the family's hand-knitting machine to supplement his government income. His salary does not feed him, let alone allow him to think of marriage. He says it will take him three years of saving to buy a radio.

The pride cum arrogance of the Viet Nameese impressed us. We were taken to several temples erected for old Viet Nameese generals who had defeated the Mongols and Chinese. We were informed at these temples that the ancient writing on the tablets was a Viet Nameese creation based on the Chinese character system, when, in fact, we were looking at either pure Chinese characters or the ancient style Chinese writing (associated with the Oracle bones of the Shang Period).

When all is said and done, however, our reception was as warm and gentle as the fall weather. We felt enthusiasm on the part of the Ministry for War Invalids and Social Affairs and the Women's Union for AFSC efforts. Viet My wants to re-establish old relationships.

People

Dr. Nguyen Hung is a key person for Quaker Service.

As Deputy Head of Rehabilitation (foreigners who have worked for years with Rehabilitation have never met the Head of Rehabilitation) and Director of the Ba Vi Rehabilitation Center, Hung is in a key position. He understands our needs almost too well - at the Ba Vi Center he told Bob that he would find a young woman who had lost a limb to American bombs and pose her in the wheel chair and send us the pictures for fund-raising purposes in the United States. His English is sufficient for direct communication. His style is business-like without being overly serious or complusive.

It is clear that vis à vis the Qui Nhon Center Hung expects Quaker Service to exercise judgement on requested aid. For example, when Hai requested a photo copier, Hung sat silently while Bob snowed the request under technical information and cautions about supply problems. We later learned that Hung had squashed a request for a copier by his own department. Yet, at this meeting, he seemed to want us to do this on the Qui Nhon request. We have noted this technique in the Department of Agriculture in Vientiane also.

Xuan Oanh seems tired and disappointed in AFSC's new relationship with the Ministry for War Invalids and Social Affairs. However, he has not lost his urbane, cynicism or dry sense of humor. From his comments and attitude at our meeting we feel that he definitely wants to rebuild a relationship with AFSC. For this reason, the more prestigious the next AFSC delegation the better.

Marcel Meijer, a Dutchman in his late 20's, happened to be staying at our hotel. He works at the Rehabilitation Department of the Free University of Amsterdam on international exchanges with Viet Nam. He has visited Viet Nam 5 - 6 times. His University brings one or two Viet Namese doctors a year to Amsterdam for one year's training in the field of rehabilitation. With him this trip was the Head of the Rehabilitation Department, Arie Prevo, MD. Prevo was giving lectures in

Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh Hospitals.

At our invitation, on his next trip to Viet Nam Meijer will try to stop over in Vientiane. He is a good contact and we may be able to tap into technical and possibly financial assistance for Rehab work in Laos and Qui Nhon. Meijer also represents the Dutch Committee for Science and Technology for Viet Nam and the Committee Number Two (Dutch group concerned for Children in Viet Nam). Meijer toured Dong Da for the Dutch committee last May in a preliminary investigation in funding factory expansion.

Fund Raising

For a variety of reasons we feel that the Mobile Teams van proposal (see Rehabilitation) should be treated as a separate item for funding. If the money is raised through a Quaker group outside the U.S., we have no export license problem as we see it. The project can be tied to the prior Friends work at Quang Ngai. As far as we know New Zealand and Australian Friends maintain an interest (if distant) with Viet Nam.

We are aware that Australian Friends were instrumental in getting the funding set up for the saw mill for Kampuchea and therefore we are inclined to approach New Zealand Friends first. Bob has a very close contact there in the Payne family of Wanganui, New Zealand. The Payne's lived in Hong Kong at the time of the Phoenix voyages and were very supportive. They are close Friends of Ruth Dross also.

Next Trip

We think it sensible to plan a two week visit for early 1982, an idea we mentioned several times to The Ministry for War Invalids and Social Affairs. The Women's Union say they will be prepared to take us to see the flood areas where Quaker Service medicines have been distributed. Depending on the Philadelphia response to our questions in the body of this report, we may want to pursue project ideas on teaching English and at Dong Da. The Ministry of War Invalids and Social Affairs will try to arrange a trip to Qui Nhon where we hope to visit a mobile team in operation. We will need to visit Ho Chi Minh to visit with School Number Three to ascertain the status of the equipment there.

1 October 1981

- Arrive at Noi Bai Airport
- Drive about 50 km to Hanoi
- Settle into Thong Loi Hotel

2 October 1981

- 9 a.m. - Meeting at Ministry for War Invalids and Social Affairs with Drs. Hung and Hai
- 2 p.m. - Continued Meetings at Ministry with Hung and Hai
- 3:30 p.m. - Meeting at Viet Nam Women's Union with Duyen and Lien
- 6:30 p.m. - Dinner with Marcel Meijer and Dr. Arie Prevo, Free University of Amsterdam, Rehabilitation Department

3 October 1981

- 8 a.m. - Meeting at Ministry for War Invalids and Social Affairs with Drs. Hung and Hai
- 10:45 a.m. - Meeting at Aidrecept with Bang, Van and Lien
- 2 p.m. - Continued Meetings at Ministry for WI & SA

4 October 1981

- Morning - Sightseeing around Hanoi

5 October 1981

- 7:30 a.m. - Travel to Ba Vi Rehabilitation Center for Tour and meetings

6 October 1981

- 8 a.m. - Dong Da Screw Making Factory for tour and meetings
- 2 p.m. - Ministry for Foreign Affairs with Bai

7 October 1981

- 8 a.m. - State Committee for Science and Technology with Tri
- 9 a.m. - Viet Duc Hospital with Dr. Tung
- 2 p.m. - Viet My with Oanh, Hieu, Huynh and Tin
- 6:30 p.m. - Sign "Agreed Minutes" with Ministry for War Invalids and Social Affairs
- Farewell Dinner with Hung and An

8 October 1981

- 8 a.m. - Leave for Noi Bai Airport and return home

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Meetings with representatives of the Ministry of War Invalids and Social Affairs

2 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Hanoi

Friday, 2 October 1981

9 a.m. - 12 noon

Present

Ministry for War Invalids and Social Affairs, Nguyen Kiem (Vice Minister of Ministry), Dr. Nguyen Qui Hung (Deputy Head of Rehabilitation for the Ministry and Director of Ba Vi Rehab Center), Dr. Hoang Huu Hai (Director of the Qhi Nhon Rehab Center), Le Ngoc Co (Interpreter, Section for International Relations) Nguyen Xuan An (Section for International Relations) and Nguyen Quang Thieu (Ministry Interpreter); Quaker Service, Wendy Batson and Bob Eaton.

General Impressions

Kien welcomed Quaker Service on behalf of the Ministry and then left us to our work with the Doctors. We met with Drs. Hung and Hai on three separate occasions to go over their submitted list for the purchase of equipment and materials needed for the Qui Nhon Center. The meetings were hard working, productive and most cordial. We were assisted considerably by the fact that Dr. Hung spoke some and understood considerable English.

Status Report

Bob opened the meeting with a quick report on current Quaker Service aid to rehabilitation work in Vietnam. Of the \$80,000 remaining to be spent, \$70,000 was to be spent on Qhi Nhon. The remaining \$10,000 was to be used for making wheelchairs. Dr. Hai pointed out that the Ba Vi Center had received about \$5,000 dollars worth of ball bearing rings.

On the basis of Elder telex number twenty-nine, Bob gave a status report on the original list (dated 14 May 1981) for equipment requested by the Ministry for Qui Nhon. He pointed out that although shipping was slow from Hong Kong, the materials already ordered (see attached Master List, dated 2 October 1981) would be sent on the first available ship from Hong Kong.

We asked Dr. Hai to reconfirm that the priorities set earlier stood unchanged. Dr. Hai said that there were no change. He wished, however, to emphasize that Plaster of Paris and Araldite (items No. 15 and 23 of Part I of the Master List) were in vital need.

Catalogs

We gave the Pope Brace, Hosmer and Preston catalogs with recent price lists to Dr. Hai. We explained that Philadelphia had not been able to locate many of their listed items in the catalogs. Dr. Hai said Qui Nhon had some very old Preston Catalogs and that they greatly appreciated receiving new ones. We asked if there were any other catalogs they could use. Dr. Hai said no and that they would use the new catalogs provided by the Service Committee for their future ordering. We worked out an order form which is explained in the foot-notes to the master list.

The bulk of the two meetings on Friday were spent in going over the old list and working out the new Master List. All our discussions on individual items on the Master List are reported through the list itself or the attached "Footnotes to Master List."

New Request:

Photo Copier

Dr. Hai requested that the Service Committee purchase a photo copier for Qui Nhon. The Qui Nhon Center would use the photo copier to xerox medical histories with line drawn sketches of breaks, etc. to distribute to other centers. They would prefer the plain paper kind. There are many photo copiers in Qui Nhon that no longer work because they use a special paper which is no longer available. Most photo copiers in Vietnam are Japanese-made from before the war. When Bob told them that the kind of copier they wanted would cost at least \$4,000 and require a lot of maintenance they told us to forget this request for now. They may bring it up later as they see how much money remains after more important purchases are made.

Magazine Subscription

Dr. Hung said he had received only No.'s 1, 3 and 5 of the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation

magazine ordered for him by the Service Committee. Jackie Chagnon has arranged for two copies of the magazine to be sent to Laos so she could forward them or hand deliver them to Dr. Hung. Only one copy each of No.'s 1, 3 and 5 have been delivered so far. We suggested, and Dr. Hung concurred, that the subscription be changed and the magazines be delivered directly to Vietnam, addressed to Dr. Hung. This method cannot be any slower than the one previously tried. We assume that Philadelphia will take care of this change.

Meeting with representatives of the Ministry of War Invalids and Social Affairs
Hanoi Saturday 3 October 1981 8:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Present:

Bob Eaton, Drs. Hung and Hai, interpreters Quynh and Thieu; Co is in and out.

General Impressions

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the "Agreed Minutes" of the first two meetings, hear more information on the work at Qui Nhon, clarify any remaining issues on the Qui Nhon list, and discuss expenditure of the remaining ball bearing money. Co was in and out of the meeting because he was working on a draft of the "Agreed Minutes." He is obviously more than simply a translator for the Ministry. At several points the Doctors, without relinquishing their authority in the matter, listened very hard to his comments on issues of substance. Mr. Co is probably moving to Ho Chi Minh Ville to work with the Ministry there.

Qui Nhon Mobile

Teams Report

Dr. Hai provided the following information on the newly developed mobile teams at Qui Nhon. The Ministry has decided to use mobile teams in all the country's rehab centers. Qui Nhon serves a five-province area with a north-south axis of 450 kilometers and an east-west axis of 170 kilometers. Because many patients live far away from Qui Nhon, the Center needs to get out into the country-side with medical-technical teams. The teams are not as mobile as the name implies. For

instance, a team stayed in one location in the Quang Ngai area for five months.

The teams serve as a basic advertising and screening mechanism. Through careful advance work via village leaders, their presence is made known in the area they plan to visit. Patients who have never been diagnosed before quite often show up for help. The team screens patients. First limb fittings and non-amputee cases (eg. polio, encephalitis) are sent directly to Qui Nhon. The team replaces, adjusts and fixes limbs on the spot. Help is given in therapy. Team personnel usually includes one doctor, one nurse, one physical therapist, three orthopedic technicians and a driver. They carry with them the tools and supplies necessary for the above-stated functions. Last year three Qui Nhon teams treated 500 patients.

The Ministry wants to expand this program. The Qui Nhon Center does not, however, have a suitable vehicle. In the past they have had to borrow vans from other agencies in Qui Nhon; this has not proved satisfactory. Given the road conditions, they need a four-wheel drive vehicle which can handle the seven person team, supplies and tools. As the Agreed Minutes reflect, Bob pointed out that there might be a great deal of trouble getting the U.S. Government to grant an export license for such a vehicle. Frankly, we would have been far more discouraging about the whole thing if the van had not appeared on a list which had already been gone over by AFSC staff without a written demurer that we could find. (A May 1981 trip report would have been very helpful in guiding our response at this point!)

On further consideration, the idea of the mobile team, even though it is rather energy-intensive, seemed like a good one. We plan to request permission to visit Qui Nhon on our next Vietnam trip. An on-site visit with a mobile team would be ideal, if possible! We could then obtain photographs and personal interviews which could be used by Philadelphia to raise funds for Araldite and the van. (See footnotes to Master List on Araldite use.)

We might be able to interest New Zealand and/or Australian Friends in purchasing

the Van-a solution to licensing problems. It is a neat package which makes it easier to fund separately and it has a relation to prior Quaker Service work at the Quang Ngai Center. The footnotes to the Master List give more information on the type of van required.

Case Load Data
for Qui Nhon

Bob reiterated Dave Elder's earlier request for case load information on the work at Qui Nhon. Dr. Hai was not prepared for this question and gave the following information off the top of his head; the center treats 1,500 patients a year; of these about 1,200 are amputees and 300 are the victims of diseases such as polio. 70-80% of the amputees are lower limb cases. This is the end of the case load report on Qui Nhon.

Qui Nhon List

Drs. Hung and Hai stressed the center's serious need for Plaster of Paris and Araldite. It was agreed that an Araldite request of 15 Tons would be more reasonable than the previously requested 10 tons given the increased consumption rate. Reasons for the increased consumption are given in the footnotes to the Master List Under Item 15.

Ball Bearing Rings

Dr. Hung would like any remaining funds of the \$10,000 set aside for non-Quy Nhon use to go into more ball bearing rings for wheel chairs. The first shipment will meet planned production needs for at least the next six months so there is no immediate rush in re-ordering this item. Bob and Wendy will stay in touch regarding the precise size of rings which would be most suitable in the future. See next section on Ba Vi Center visit.

Shipping Information

Mr. Hung and Mr. Co were both very clear that all Bills of Lading should be sent to : Section for International Relations/Ministry for War Invalids & Social Affairs
2 Dinh Le Hanoi SRVN

They said that they have a special relationship with Aidrecept and that they will take care of notifying Aidrecept. (Parenthetical comment: Everyone respects Aidrecept and everyone wants their own Bills of Lading mail directly [DO NOT PASS AIDRECEPT] to them.) They also stressed that no individual names should be put on the mailing because if that person is out of town the letter will remain unopened. They assured us that the above address was sufficient and that anyone who opened the letter would know what to do with it.

Wendy Batson
9/10/81
Vientiane

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REHABILITATION
Ba Vi Center

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Visit to Ba Vi Center (Hanoi Rehabilitation Center)
Ba Vi District

Monday, 2 October 1981

9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Present: Ministry for War Invalids and Social Affairs, Dr.
Nguyen Qui Hung (Director of Ba Vi Center & Deputy
Head of Rehabilitation for the Ministry), Nguyen Xuan An (Ministry Section for
International Relations), Quynh (Interpreter); Quaker Service, Bob Eaton.

General The Ba Vi (Three Mountains) Center has been formally
renamed the Hanoi Rehabilitation Center, although every-
one still calls it the Ba Vi Center. It is in the Ba Vi district about 50 kms.
out of Hanoi. Most of the buildings were put up seven years ago with aid from
East Germany; buildings have deteriorated rapidly and appear much older. Dr.
Hung, the director, tries to spend five days a week at the center (he has an
apartment there) and two days a week in Hanoi in his role as Deputy Head of
Rehabilitation for the Ministry. During the visit, very few units were operating
due to a month old brown out; a situation likely to continue for at least another
month. Most workers had been laid off with one third salary until the electricity
was back to full strength.

Layout The center is divided into three units; A, B, & C.
"A" Unit fits prostheses and orthoses. "B" Unit makes
components for limbs which are then shipped to the other centers in the country.
"C" Unit is being built with East German aid to house the medical unit. It will
be five stories high with general facilities for patients. Completion date is
scheduled for 1983.

National Centers Dr. Hung listed the six centers which serve the entire
country: Ba Vi Center serves the northern inland pro-
vinces (upper/lower limbs & braces), Tam Diep Center serves the 6 northern coast
provinces, only lower limb work, 12 million people; Nang Center serves two pro-
vinces with three million people; Qui Nhon Center serves seven provinces with
seven million people; Ho Chi Minh Center and Can Tho Center. Hung informed us
that Norwegian Aid is building a center in Haiphong with 80 beds for polio and
paraplegic cases.

Wheel Chairs

A prototype wheel chair has been designed locally by Mr. Minh. Bob took many pictures of it which will be sent directly from Bangkok as soon as they are developed. Because of the power problems, the patients were housed at a temporary dormitory far away from Ba Vi. However, there was one man present with an artificial leg, lost in an American bombing raid, who posed with the wheel chair. They will try out two more models before going into production. The current model requires eight ball bearing rings. Minh, the designer, informed us several times that the patients prefer the style which uses 12 rings. Our first order of 3,600 rings will go into 300 to 450 wheel chairs depending on whether they're the 8 ring or 12 ring type.

Production goals are to produce 300 chairs before the end of this year and 300 more chairs in 1982. Given the power difficulties, Bob assumes that this goal for 1981 is far too optimistic. Therefore, we will not have to make immediate moves to order more rings as indicated in the Agreed Minutes.

After a very large lunch in Hung's apartment we left for the trip back to Hanoi.

Bob Eaton
10/10/81
Vientiane

Meeting with representatives of the Viet Nam Women's Union
Hanoi. Friday, 2 October 1981 3:30-5pm

Present Women's Union: Doung Thi Duyen & Vu Thi Lien; Quaker
Service: Wendy Batson and Bob Eaton; Interpreters from
the Ministry for War Invalids and Social Affairs: Thieu & Quynh.

General Observations The Women from the Union are competent and enthusiastic
regarding future collaboration with Quaker Service. In
spite of fairly serious problems with recent shipments, the Union maintains warm
feelings toward Quaker Service which have been built up by prior Quaker Service
delegations. Duyen is senior to Lien in age and rank; Lien handled most of the
detailed conversation regarding shipping, etc. Lien seems very competent in
this regard.

First Shipment of Since the last letter from the Women's Union (August 4,
Medicines 1981) they have received one more shipment of medicines
(airway bill #203-009-230). Wendy added this informa-
tion to the August 4 letter (copy attached to this report) and had Duyen sign the
letter again as a form of arrival notice/receipt.

The last two shipments of the flood relief medicines have probably been lost in
Bangkok by Suisindo. At this point we agreed it would not be a disaster if the
medicines were indeed unfindable given the July expiration date of the drugs.
The shipment was insured and we can use the money for other purchases. Bob and
Wendy promised to check up on the medicines when they are in Bangkok in the third
week of October.

Duyen said that the medicines received had been successfully tested for use and
distributed. Most of the medicines went to the flood areas; some went to a hos-
pital in Hanoi. Wendy asked for a distribution list for the medicines which
have arrived and was informed that Aidrecept would provide the list.

Second Shipment of
Medicines

The Women's Union has received no word regarding the second batch of medicines shipped on the Neptune Orient's Olivene to Haiphong. The Olivene should have arrived by August 20. Wendy promised to check on this and inform the Union. Once the Women's Union knows that the shipment is in Haiphong, the Women's Union representatives in Haiphong will get on the case.

Madame Duyen then asked Wendy why the second shipment of medicine was sent to the North. Jackie Chagnon promised them that the shipment would be sent to Ho Chi Minh Ville for use in the south. Duyen was quite clear that this had been discussed with the entire Quaker delegation in May, 1981. In yet another undated, unsigned aide memoire which we found in the Women's Union file, we found her understanding to be confirmed in part 2: "AFSC will seek free air transportation for the entire shipment on an Operation California flight to Ho Chi Minh City which is expected in June." This was a handwritten memoire, but it was shared with the Women's Union who appended a typed comment.

Wendy and Bob promised to get in touch with the Philadelphia office as soon as was practical to determine why the medicines were destined for Haiphong and not Ho Chi Minh Ville. Madame Duyen will look into shipping these medicines immediately from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh Ville. The Women's Union may ask for funds from AFSC to cover these shipping costs if they cannot find a free method of transportation. They felt quite strongly that these medicines must get to the South as had been promised. Wendy expressed concern about the expiration date.

Cloth and Vitamins

Regarding the shipment of cloth and vitamins, Lien showed us a telegram from Vietnam Import/Export referring to 43 cases of vitamins and "65/35 sheeting" which was due in Haiphong on the Ham Luong. We assumed that the sheeting referred to in the telegram meant cloth. Women's Union had not received a Bill of Lading yet on the cloth/vitamin shipment. It is not known at this time if the Ham Luong has landed in Haiphong.

Wendy gave the following rough accounting of funds spent to date on flood relief.

Cloth and Vitamins	\$24,840.00
Shipment 1st batch of medicines	\$ 5,529.17

"Convits" (purchased in Bangkok by Rojac)	\$ 418.16
Total	<u>US\$30,787.16</u>

She pointed out that she did not know what other expenses Philadelphia had accrued to date. She promises to find out if any of the \$40,000 grant remained. By her accounting, it was possible that about \$8000 - \$9000 was left.

We agreed that any additional money left over on the cloth/vitamin shipment would be spent on more cloth. The Women's Union will inspect the first shipment of cloth for quality before a final decision is made on any remaining funds.

Duyen stressed that in the future we should send Bills of Lading directly to the Women's Union.

Future Plans

Madame Duyen wanted to take us around to visit some Hanoi hospitals. Our translators, however, pointed out that our itinerary was very full. We added that we really needed to visit the flood area which would take at least a full day. We told Madame Duyen that we hoped to return to Vietnam in December or January. Much to the Women's Unions delight, we will request a full visit to the flood areas as a priority. We explained that pictures of the cloth being sewed into clothing, for example, would be most useful to our organization. We all agreed that such a trip should be arranged for our next visit.

In parting she asked us about our potential for aid in the future. We replied that at the present we have no money but that we are interested in receiving proposals. We will stay in touch regarding current shipping problems and future possibilities for cooperation.

Meeting with Representatives of the Viet Nam Women's Union
Hanoi 7 October 1981 09:45 - 10:15

Present

Women's Union, Vu Thi Lien and Pham Hoai Gian; Quaker Service, Wendy Batson and Bob Eaton; Interpreter from

the Ministry of War Invalids and Social Affairs, Thieu.

Introduction

We stopped by the Women's Union unannounced to cover one piece of business neglected at the first two meetings - the proposed Women's Union delegation to the United States. The entrance to the working offices of the Union are around to the left as you face the corner building which serves as their reception hall. After a five minute wait, Lien and Giang appeared. Lien was dressed in Hanoi "street clothes" (faded blue blouse) for which she apologized. This was our first introduction to Giang who seemed to be Lien's assistant. She is in her twenties.

W.U. Delegation to U.S. Lien has received the invitation regarding a visit to the U.S. Women's Union must make up its 1982 plans before they can make a definite decision regarding the delegation. Lien thought that the invitation specifically invited Nin and Duong to return to the U.S. She asked us if this was correct. We replied that we assumed that the size of the delegation would have to be negotiated, but that the participants list was entirely up to the Women's Union. We need confirmation of this interpretation from Philadelphia so that the Women's Union can be assured that the invitation is not tied to the participation of Nin and Duong. The Women's Union is very definitely interested in the trip but not yet definitely committed to it. Lien will be in touch with QSL regarding the invitation as soon as the Women's Union makes its 1982 plans.

Bob Eaton
9/10/81
Vientiane

Post Script

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WOMEN'S UNION/FLOOD RELIEF
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At the Aidrecept meeting the following day, (see pp 21-23)

Viet Nam Women's Union Nguyen Bang informed us that the Ham Luong is docked in Haiphong. He showed us the Ship's Manifest which indicated 43 cartons of "multi-vitamins, B Complex" assigned to the Viet Nam Women's Union. The Manifest did not show any indication of cloth. The telegram from Vietnam Imex indicated 43 cartons of multivitamins plus "65/35 TC Sheeting" which we all assumed to be the cloth. Bang informed us that Aidrecept will take delivery of the multivitamins on behalf of the Women's Union. Aidrecept will check the Ham Luong's hold for any possible cloth and let Quaker Service know if it is, indeed, on board. Besides the telegram referred to above, Aidrecept and the Women's Union have received no information regarding this cargo. Bob promised to locate the proper documents and to forward them to Aidrecept.

Aidrecept will also check on the whereabouts of the Neptune Orient's Ship Olivene which is reputed to have sailed from Singapore bound for Haiphong with more medicines for the Women's Union.

Bob Eaton

10/10/81

Vientiane

Meeting with representatives of Aidrecept and the Viet Nam Women's Union Hanoi
Saturday, 3 October 1981 10:45 - 1:15 p.m

Present Aidrecept, Le Van ("Chief") & Nguyen Bang ("Deputy Chief");
Quaker Service, Bob Eaton; Viet Nam Women's Union, Vu
Thi Lien; Interpretors from the Ministry for War Invalids and Social Affairs,
Thieu and Quynh.

Introduction This was to be a general courtesy call. There were no
substantive issues on the table at the time the meet-
ing was set up. However, the previous day at the Women's Union several shipping
problems were uncovered. Lien obviously worked on this problem after our Friday
meeting and came to this Saturday morning to help us.

Lien stayed for the entire meeting with Aidrecept and increasingly took over
the role of interpreter from the somewhat inexperienced staff from the So-
cial Affairs Ministry. Nguyen Bang was the spokesperson for Aidrecept. Le
Van sat through the entire meeting and was very attentive, but contributed
to the discussion only from time to time. The Meeting went through the
twelve o'clock lunch whistle on agreement of all concerned. The atmosphere
was cordial and business-like.

Aidcept's Role Bang gave Bob a general run down regarding the role of
Aidrecept. Aidrecept maintains relations with all of-
fices in Viet Nam which receive aid from abroad. Aidrecept serves as a bridge
between these Viet Nameese agencies and the international organizations. Aidre-
cept formally receives the aid material from abroad and insures that it is dis-
tributed according to the donor's wishes. Aidrecept monitors end use and corrects
any problems regarding end use. If aid arrives in Viet Nam without clear indications
as to use, then Aidrecept makes decisions regarding distribution.

Aidrecept is responsible for humanitarian aid from U.N. agencies, non-governmental
agencies (eg. Quaker Service, Oxfam, Mennonites); private individuals, and some
bi-lateral aid (including Socialist governmental aid). Non-humanitarian aid is
handled by the Ministry of Foreign Trade. Aidrecept serves a general function

of advising donors so that international aid conforms to the requirements of the national plan.

History of Quakers &
Nomenclature

Bang then asked that Bob give a report to him and Van on the Quakers. He also asked if Bob could clarify the meaning of all the terms with "friends" in them (eg. Friendshipment, Society of Friends, friends) and the relationship to such groups as Mennonites, Quaker Service Laos, etc.

Bob provided a brief history of the Society of Friends and related terminology. The testimonies were covered and our relations to other related organizations. Bang, Van, and Lien seemed particularly appreciative to learn that the term Quaker was originally a pejorative like the term VC!

Marusa

Bob explained that Quaker Service has communicated with Marusa regarding the Dong Da and School #3 equipment. Bang said that Marusa did not have a permanent representative in Hanoi but that if there was a representative in town presently, then Bang would arrange a meeting with Bob for a "frank" discussion. Aidrecept clearly wanted to be of assistance in this regard. However, it transpired that there was no Marusa representative in Hanoi during our visit.

General Procedures

all communications regarding all shipments
Bang stressed that Aidrecept should receive^A of aid to Viet Nam. He said that this would minimize any receiving and transportation problems. Aidrecept has people at all points of entry in Viet Nam. Their role is to assist the donors and the recipient agencies. The Aidrecept cable address is: AIDRECEPT - HANOI. The postal address is : Aidrecept; 7, Ly Thuong Kiet; Hanoi; SRVN. The critical information that should be included in letters or cables is: 1. numbers of cases and weight and contents 2. consignee 3. name of vessel 4. number of the Bill of Lading or Air Way Bill and 5. Port of Departure and Port of Arrival, E.T.A. Markings on each box can be as follows:

A.F.S.C. /

Aidrecept/ Women's Union, Hanoi

Shipping documents which Aidrecept would need later by post include: 1. Bill of Lading 2. Packing List (liste de colisage) 3. Insurance information.

Quaker Service 1982 Plans Bang asked Bob to provide him with a tentative plan for 1982. He stressed that the list was only to help Adirecept gain an overview and that it would in no way obligate Quaker Service. Bob indicated that he would send a tentative plan after he returned to Laos.

Flood Relief Distribution List Bob asked Bang for a distribution of the medicines and cloth provided for flood relief. Bang said a complete distribution list would be prepared and sent to Quaker Service Laos as soon as the two missing air shipments and the Ham Luong and Olivene shipments were straightened out. Bob agreed to this and indicated that on our next visit we will want to visit some points of distribution.

Bob Eaton
Vientiane
9/10/81

Present: Fung Van Tuong, Director of Dong Da; Nguyen trong Thuy & Nguyen Ba Hung, Vice Directors; Nguyen Thi Thomh, Director of the Women Workers; Trinh Xuan Tien & Cao Xuan Thong, members of the People's Council on Construction; Wendy Batson & Bob Eaton, Quaker Service Laos and Viet Nam; Ngien Xuan Tue, Head of the International Relations Department of the Ministry for War Invalids and Social Affairs; Thieu & Quynh, translators for the Ministry.

General Impressions This was a warm and hard-working meeting. Everybody concerned was delighted to discover that the Marusa people had sent a carbon copy of the price quotations for spareparts and wire needed by the factory to the Dong Da management. (The original had never arrived in Vientiane.) No mention was made of unfulfilled Quaker Service Commitments.

Introductions The Director of the factory made some opening remarks. He sent greetings to the leaders of the Quakers as well as his sincere thanks. During the last three years, many Quakers have visited the factory. He went over the recent history of delegation visits, reminding us that in February 1981 Jackie Chagnon had visited and in May of 1981 Elder and Chagnon and Rumpf had come. During these visits, Quaker Service had committed to the factory \$30,000 for the purchase of materials from Marusa. This aid will help the factory provide work for invalids.

Marusa Spare Parts and Wire Order We asked if the management had inspected the list and determined how best to spend the money. The Director said the management had gone over the list and that they wanted everything. We, after some quick calculations, pointed out that the entire list added up to a little over \$60,000 worth of spareparts and wire. The amount of money available is only \$30,000.

After a quick consultation, the factory leaders told us to purchase the spare-parts and then spend what ever remained on wire. The factory management will have a meeting about what percentage of which size wire they want and will let Quaker Service know before we leave Hanoi.

The factory management wanted all the spareparts to be shipped by air. We pointed out that this costs \$3,000 more than having the materials shipped by sea and would thus reduce the amount of wire they could purchase. They told us that Jackie had promised that she would send the equipment air freight. We suggested that they earmark those items which are most important to them and that we would send these by air and the remainder by sea.

Funds for Expansion

The factory has heard nothing from the Dutch organization which had visited the factory last spring and received a proposal for expansion of the plant. On 21 March 1981, Marcel Meijer, representing an organization called something like the Dutch Committee for Science and Technology for Laos (or Indochina), visited the factory. The staff of the factory gave him a proposal which he promised to send with a letter of recommendation to the Dutch Committee.

Marcel Meijer is on the staff of a project of the Rehabilitation Department of the Free University of Amsterdam which provides technical advise to the rehabilitation work in Viet Nam. Marcel happened to be staying at our hotel and we agreed to remind him, on behalf of the Dong Da staff, of the proposal made to him.

Later in the week Bob and Wendy talked to Marcel and he said he would send another letter off to the Dutch Committee. We do not really believe anything will come of this approach.

Tour of Factory

The Dong Da staff took us on a short tour of the factory. We saw no handicapped workers all morning with the exception of one of the Vice Directors who had lost an arm during the war. We noted

that all the machines were working with the exception of two of the ten threading machines. After the tour we returned for a short report on the work of the factory.

Factory Report

Dong Da is run with a staff of 96 people, twenty of whom serve as managers, administrators, material transporters and typists. Of the 76 workers, 42 are women; of the total 96 staff, 46 are invalids. Of the twenty leaders/administrators, eight are women.

Wages average 120 Dong a month. The official rate is 9 Dong to the U.S. Dollar. We were told, unofficially, that the black market rate runs up to 30 Dong/U.S. Dollar. Rice is available at a special government rate of 0.4 Dong/kilo. Workers can buy 20.5 kilos a month at this government rate. In comparison, rice on the open market costs at this time about 0.8 to 0.9 Dong a kilo. Sometimes the market price drops to 0.4 to 0.5 Dong a kilo. This harvest has been bad because of worm infestation and consequently the price is high on the open market. Items like meat, fish sauce, cooking oil, coal and wood can also be purchased at the government store at prices much lower than on the open market.

If a couple works at the factory, all their children get rice from the government store. Medical care is free. Children go to school free and obtain their school supplies from the government at a low price. Both workers and management get five meters of cloth a year; workers also get one set of work cloths free. Housing is free for the entire factory staff.

The working day in Vietnam is normally eight hours, six days a week. At Dong Da, because of the number of invalided staff, they work seven hours a day. The management, however, works a normal eight hour day. Sunday is the holiday. If workers feel tired, they can rest. Each year, tickets are made available for a small number of workers to go to the seaside for two weeks. This year five people will get to go. This works out to everyone on staff getting a paid vacation about every three years. However, if the economy improves, about twenty workers will get to go every year.

The screw produced at Dong Da is used by house construction crews. The demand for the screws is very high; the factory has been unable to meet it because of lack of money. For the last two years, the factory has not been producing up to full capacity because of the spareparts problem. The factory has faced many difficulties. Some spareparts have been damaged for some time and they have no replacements. They have tried to do their own repair work with limited success. None of the required spareparts are made in Vietnam. The spareparts Quaker Service Laos and Viet Nam will provide will make a significant difference in production rates.

The factory management said that they would explain the full nature of all their difficulties on another visit. They pointed out that they have asked for assistance only in the production area. They need help in the transportation area and in repairing machines but have not asked for it because production requirements come first. In the past, they had thought that money would be available to cover everything. They hope that in the future we might be able to help out by buying a vehicle for transportation. They know this is not possible now because of money difficulties.

The meeting ended with many thank yous all around. We promised to cable them as soon as the order had been placed with Marusa. We were given small gifts and flowers as a token of their appreciation. We took pictures out in the yard during which time Bob, who had turned increasingly white during the meeting, succumbed to the Wendy disease and was rushed back to the hotel to recover.

Conclusion

Everyone was delighted to be able to move ahead on the Marusa purchases. We could not tell if the factory staff had simply not read the price list from Marusa carefully and so did not understand that the total cost of what they had requested came to \$60,000 or if they did indeed understand that but were hoping we could somehow come up with the funds. They certainly did not push it when we carefully explained that \$30,000 was it. We told the factory management that it would be very helpful for us to be able to interview and photograph some handicapped workers the next

time we are in Vietnam. We said we only wanted to do this if those involved were comfortable with the idea. Wendy also asked Madame Thomh to arrange some time for her to talk with women workers at the factory. Wendy explained that many American women were very curious about the lives of Vietnamese women. The staff seemed amenable to both these requests.

Final Note:

Marusa Order

During our farewell dinner on our last night in Vietnam, Dr. Hung delivered a letter to us from the Dong Da staff requesting that we air freight all the spare-parts, and specifying what kinds of wire they want purchased with the remaining approximately \$5,000. (See attached appendix.)

Wendy Batson

13/10/81

Vientiane, Laos

Viet Nam Trip Report
1-8 October 1981

FOREIGN MINISTRY

By Wendy Batson and Bob Eaton
Quaker Service Laos and Viet Nam

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Meeting with North American Section of the Foreign Ministry
Hanoi 6 October 1981

2-3:10

Present Section chief, North America Section, Foreign Ministry
Dang Nghiem Bai; Wendy Batson; Translators Thieu and
Quynh from the Ministry of War Wounded; Translator for the Foreign Ministry.

General Impression Bai struck me as an arrogant, competent, lively old man. He acted like a powerful man comfortable with his power. His delight in the defeat of the United States was a constant refrain throughout the meeting - it colored all his perceptions about current political events and relations between the super powers and Viet Nam. I felt the meeting was a friendly one. Bai behaves as if nothing one said came as a surprise. It is hard to tell whether this is truly the case or whether this is an assumed attitude which makes him appear always on top of any issue. He probably is on top of all these issues. He very rarely gave me any direct response to questions involving future AFSC-Viet Nameese plans. I would not describe what we had as a dialog in the true meaning of the word.

Introduction Bai opened the meeting with a cordial greeting to me and to John McAuliffe and Dave Elder to whom he wished to send greetings. I gave him the materials sent by McAuliffe from the Harvard Negotiations Meetings. Bai said he would see that the proper people got their pictures. He asked me about my impressions ("What is your idea?") of Vietnam and our trip. I gave him a quick rundown on whom we had seen and told him that we felt the meetings had been highly productive in clearing the boards of many old problems.

US Political Picture Bai asked me about my perceptions of current US politics. I gave him a quick run down on the obvious. Reagan's ideological bent is obsessively preoccupied with the Soviet Union. The chances of normalization appear very slim. The State Department and the White

House and the Defense Department are still full of men who remember the Vietnamese War with a sense of bitter failure and consequently feel towards the Vietnamese a deep personal animosity. I pointed out that Mr. Haig was capable of discussing all the super powers in a fairly calm tone of voice but that when he discussed Viet Nam his hands shook. Bai was delighted with this and pointed out that it was because he had been defeated on the battlefield. I said that most generals were not likely to take this kind of thing lightly. I said it was too soon to tell what kind of chances Reagan had for a second term and that even though he was an old man he was likely to want to run again. (As I said this it occurred to me that Bai was at least Reagan's contemporary and that my remark might consequently have lacked tact.)

I said that Reagan tended to view the Vietnamese as a puppet of the Soviet Union; he had difficulty perceiving the Vietnamese as independent actors on the world stage. Bai laughed. We agreed that Kissinger was not as simplistic in his world view. Bai said that he knew Kissinger well from his Paris days and that Kissinger knew better but pretended that he didn't.

Bai said that Reagan would find it difficult to maintain his war expenditures given the economy problems facing the United States. I managed to forebear from pointing out that the Vietnamese faced the same difficulty. I said that I didn't think it a good idea to underestimate the power of the United States or its animosity toward the Vietnamese government. I said that I felt that my country was like a powerful wounded beast and that this could be a dangerous condition. Bai said I was too pessimistic and pointed out that the crucial fact in my metaphor was that the beast was wounded, very wounded. I said as crucial was the fact that it was a beast. On this ambiguous note, we ended that part of our conversation.

US/Viet Nam Relations

I asked Bai about his perceptions on US-Vietnamese relations. "The door is always open," he replied. He would like to see the normalization of relations without any preconditions. During the past 40 years, there have been no preconditions placed on normaliza-

tion by the Viet Nameese. It is entirely the United States' responsibility as to whether we have normal relations or not. He agreed with me that the times ahead would be difficult for normalization. He pointed out that friendly relations could develop between peoples as they did during the war.

Harvard Negotiations

Follow up

I pointed out that the Service Committee needed some response as to the opinions outlined in John McAuliffe's analysis of the Harvard Negotiation Meetings. Should we attempt to set up meetings between high-ranking Republicans and the Viet Nameese or should we concentrate on developing contacts with the Democrats who might have a hand in future administrations or both. There was no discernible response.

AFSC Work

Bai said that the Viet Nameese would do everything they could to make the AFSC's job easier. He said it was a two-way relationship and that the Viet Nameese highly appreciate the help of the AFSC. He said that although there have been many differences, the relations between us can go well. There may be a limit on the help we could give and the relations between us could be better. He said Qui Nhon and Dong Da were excellent examples of good projects. He said we should make every effort to help people hurt by the war in Viet Nam. He said such aid would make for good relations between our people - would make our people closer to each other. In my opinion, said Bai, you should concentrate on Qui Nhon and Dong Da, concentrate on these kinds of projects first. There will be many projects for invalid peoples.

I told Bai that economic difficulties, inflation, the desire of many people to forget the pain of the war years was making it increasingly difficult to raise funds for work in Vietnam. I said that because of inflation it took a lot of money just to maintain what we had begun years ago. I said we were deeply committed to continued work in Vietnam nonetheless. We might possibly explore non-US sources of funds (New Zealand and Australian Friends) for some of Qui Nhon's requests like a van for the mobile teams.

Bai said impatiently that I misunderstood him - that he meant projects like Qui Nhon and Dong Da. I took him to mean that he wanted the AFSC to sponsor new pro-

jects along the lines of these two. I said I did understand him but the AFSC felt a continuing responsibility to old projects. I said we would always be interested in new projects. I reiterated our commitment to help reconstruction and those wounded by the war but pointed out that I could make no promises because of the funding difficulties I had mentioned earlier. I said that now that Bob and I would be able to visit Viet Nam on a more regular basis, we would be able to collect the kind of photographs and stories that would assist our fund-raisers in going about their business.

US Nuclear Build-Up

Bai and I got into a tangential discussion about US policy toward nuclear weapons. I said I was disturbed by recent trends towards strategic nuclear weapons and thought that they were being developed in part as a response to the American experience in Viet Nam. Bai emphasized that the US was a weakened power and therefore not a major danger. He pointed out that the US threatened many times to use nuclear weapons on Viet Nam but never had. He inferred that the US would not use them in the future. I disagreed with his assessment and said that it would be a mistake to assume that the future pattern of nuclear weapon use had been permanently set in Viet Nam.

MIA's, Poison Gas

Bai said that the people of Viet Nam were facing many difficulties: a rice shortage, problems in the South. Reagan was launching a propaganda campaign against the Viet Nameese, accusing them of poison gas atrocities. I told Bai that poison gas and MIA's would both continue to be issues in the United States. I said that the poison gas issue was a complicated one, that it was very possible that it was being raised as a way to prepare the American people for the resumption of the manufacture of biological warfare weapons by the US government.

I told Bai that small contacts were possible on these issues between the US and the countries of Indochina. I gave him a brief account of Senator Hayakawa's visit to Laos and outlined his proposal that the US government do something about unexploded ordnance in the Plain of Jars area in exchange for some help on the MIA issue. Bai nodded as if he knew all about the Hayakawa visit. I asked him

if he had any comment to make on the MIA issue. He shrugged and said "Our position has remained unchanged. You know it."

China and Vietnam

I asked him to comment on the situation with the Chinese. Did he think they would invade again or remain on their side of the border, content with supplying the Khmer Rouge with weapons. He said they always prepared for the worst in regard to China. He said the US government was now acting to strengthen China's hand. I said that it looked as if the Khmer Rouge were digging in a little deeper each month in the border areas. He said this was pure propaganda. He pointed out that elections were held recently in Kampuchea and that only six villages did not vote. He said the Khmer Rouge were not a problem. He said the Viet Nameese presence in Kampuchea was not a burden - that to help the Kampuchea people was to help the Viet Nameese. He said the same was true of Laos. Bai said that although Viet Nam had many problems, things were improving. He felt that the crop this year was a good one and, upon my inquiring, said that worms were not a problem. (This contradicts what other people told us.) He said that within two years Vietnam would not need to import food, that the country would be self-sufficient.

Future Delegations to
Viet Nam by AFSC

I told Bai that the Service Committee was interested in sending two delegations to Viet Nam in the near future. One delegation would consist of high-ranking AFSC people. The other would consist of people who had not been to Viet Nam before from the media and entertainment world. I said that TV personalities often carried more weight than politicians in the United States. I pointed out that in this difficult period of relations between our countries, we felt it would be a good idea to bring over people who might speak to the positive things about Viet Nam upon their return. I said it was important that they be people who would speak in a manner understood by the vast majority of the American people. Bai nodded his head but gave no other response.

Tin Sang Closing

I said I wanted to ask him about an issue that was creating some concern among friends of the Viet Nameese people in the United States. I said we had heard that Tin Sang had been closed and wondered what the reasons were. Bai did not seem to understand me at first

and then said the closing had no meaning. He said only a paper critical of the party line or of the government would face closure as a form of censorship. He said he was familiar with this paper, that he had read it while he was in Paris during the Peace Negotiations. Why would we close it? Bai clearly did not want to discuss this matter. I said such an action would be interpreted in the United States by some as an indication of lack of free press in Viet Nam. Bai shook his head. The meeting ended a short time later. As we walked to the door, Bai said that he had argued many times with his friend John McAuliffe but they had always remained friends. I laughed and said I hoped that would be true of us as well. I said I hoped we could continue this kind of conversation on subsequent visits to Vietnam.

Conclusions

This is a difficult meeting for me to assess. Essentially Bai delivered the government's latest line on a variety of issues to me for a little over an hour. He answered most of my questions with little hesitation with the exception of the final one on Tin Sang. This was in interesting contrast to Viet My's response to the same question. Viet My had a ready answer, and did not seem to particularly mind laying it out. Since this was my first meeting with the Foreign Ministry, I decided to ask questions once, take down the answers, and not push for further clarification. I was a little surprised by Bai's last comment on his and McAuliffe's arguing because at no time had I argued with him. I felt that we must develop our relationship with people like Bai over time, and that I must be more informed on South East Asian affairs to indulge in more indepth discussion.

I am unable to interpret what Bai meant by saying we should stress projects like Qui Nhon. I don't know whether he simply meant they were, in themselves, very helpful and that the government wished we would expand our work in these areas or whether there was a deeper message that we back off from the kinds of peace education that the Service Committee also engages in. I think the former is the case, but I am not sure.

If possible, I look forward to getting to know this guy well enough to indulge in some argument. I look forward to hearing from Elder and McAuliffe as to whether or not this is possible.

Wendy Batson
11/10/81
Vientiane

...../32

Present

Tran Tri, member of the state Committee for Science and Technology; Wendy Batson & Bob Eaton, Quaker Service Laos & Viet Nam; Quynh and Thieu, interpreters from the Ministry for War Invalids and Social Affairs.

Introduction

This meeting was very brief because of an error in scheduling. The Ministry for War Invalids and Social Affairs had set up an afternoon meeting the day before. However, someone in Tri's office never put it on his calendar. When we arrived for the meeting, he was out of town. He called us up and apologized and asked for a brief meeting on Wednesday morning which was the only available time at this late date. The meeting was also attended by the Committee's international relations person - we think that it was Nguyen Minh Tri, but are not sure.

Role of the State

Tri explained that the Committee serves four functions.

Committee

First, it tries to put science and technology into the productive process. Second, it studies new technologies and distributes information. Third, it functions as patent office. And, fourth, it maintains relations with foreign countries on science and technology.

AFSC English Teacher

Tran Tri explained that at the meeting with Elder and QSL Staff he had proposed that AFSC sponsor an English teacher to teach in Hanoi. However, housing and transportation difficulties in Hanoi make the plan impossible at this time. For example, they pointed out that it was very hard to locate a car and a driver! They had hoped that AFSC could supply a teacher who would be able to work intensively with 5-6 students for 9-12 months.

Tran Tri promised that his committee was working to create the conditions where such a project would be possible. We understood this to mean that his committee was having a budget battle somewhere for the resources to provide room, board

and transportation for the teacher. When we asked about a single, no prior commitment visit by Schaffer or how AFSC might help with the financial difficulties, their response was vague to non-existent. In the short time available we were not in a position to discreetly push the matter.

Books, Not Teachers

Tran Tri suggested as an alternative that the AFSC supply some English language text books for technical English. Bob and Wendy agreed that this might be a good interim project of very modest proportions. We suggested that we try to identify some good titles in Bangkok for perhaps 5 or 6 students. Tri also said that there was a very good technical English course offered in Bangkok (\$2,400 for the four month course) which several Viet Nameese have taken in the past. Perhaps the AFSC would like to provide a scholarship for a Viet Nameese student in Bangkok.

Bob and Wendy said that they would take the books and scholarship ideas under advisement with Philadelphia. They will visit the language center (Asian Institute of Technology) in Bangkok.

Conclusions

If Philadelphia wants to keep the door open on the teacher idea then we should probably go ahead with the book purchases, but keep pushing on the teacher idea. The scholarship idea doesn't strike us as a particularly AFSC type of thing. What does Philadelphia think?

Bob Eaton
11/10/81
Vientiane

1-8 October 1981

by Wendy Batson & Bob Eaton

Quaker Service Laos & Viet Nam

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Meeting with Dr Ton Nhat Tung of Viet Duc Hospital

Hanoi

Wednesday, 7 October 1981

9-9:45

Present

Ton Nhat Tung, Viet Duc; Wendy Batson & Bob Eaton,
Quaker Service Laos & Viet Nam; Thieu & Quynh, inter-
pretors from the Ministry for War Invalids and Social Affairs.

Discussion

We asked for a brief meeting to pay a courtesy call on
Dr. Tung, and give him some materials from John McAuliffe.
We met him in his office where he raised several issues with us. He gave us a
letter addressed to Linda Heibert asking her to subscribe to a medical journal
for him. He told us that Cora Weiss has written him that Church World Service
has made \$30,000 available to him for his research. Tung has written AFSC in
Philadelphia 6 months ago about this suggesting that either AFSC or Caritas
serve as the conduit for the money so that he can use it to purchase research
equipment in the U.S. He wanted the AFSC to conduit the money because it would
allow Tung to work with Will Paterson on the purchases. Tung told us, "Patter-
son is very good. I can trust him for the \$30,000, this man is excellent." (A
direct, unsolicited and, in the opinions of the authors, accurate assessment!)
Tung hoped that we could get Philadelphia to respond to this proposal as soon
as possible.

Tung jumped up at one point and began to show us flip charts that he is working
on regarding the affects of agent orange on the medical histories of people in
the south, where it was used, and in the northern areas where it was not used.
The circumstantial evidence was impressive. Tung dispairs that he couldn't
do a full fledged epidemiological study of the question.

As we were leaving, Tung, on an impulse, took us to a section of the hospital
where electronic equipment is repaired. Martin Sobell has visited the hospital
and helped the repair staff a great deal. Pham Ngoc Hoan is the head repair-
man. Tung asked us if we could send Hoan back issues of Medical Electronics
and Data, 1687 Washington Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15228. This journal is very
helpful to the repair shop and because Viet Nam is behind the U.S. in elec-

tronic medical technology, back issues (1960's - 1970's) are still very helpful. We told Tung that the Philadelphia office would look into this.

Bob Eaton

13/10/81

Vientiane

1-8 October 1981

by Wendy Batson and Bob Eaton

Quaker Service Laos and Viet Nam

Page 36

Meeting with representative of Viet My

Hanoi

Wednesday, 7 October 1981

2-4:30

Present

Nguyen Trung Hieu, Xuan Oanh, Huynh, Ms. Tinh, Viet My; Wendy Batson & Bob Eaton, Quaker Service Laos and Vietnam; Theiu and Quynh, Ministry for War Invalids and Social Affairs.

General Impressions

Bob had met Hieu and Oanh in 1967 and 1968 in conjunction with the Phoenix voyages. Huynh had interpreted for the '68 Phoenix crew and for Bob and Janet Kuller and Peter Woodrow on their February 1980 visit to Viet Nam. The meeting was a warm one, a reunion of old friends. The discussion was relaxed and wandered rather widely.

Introduction

We described our itinerary. Xuan Oanh wanted to know how the meeting with Bai of the Foreign Ministry had gone. Xuan Oanh asked if we had seen Indochina Issue No. 15 on the food situation in Viet Nam written by Murray Heibert. Xuan Oanh felt that the piece was more negative than positive. He said the general impression given by the article was very negative and that Murrey took a dim view of the situation. Friends of his said some "facts" in the article were untrue. Xuan Oanh also wanted to know whether we were in direct contact with various ministries on our aid. We said that we were and had had a very hard working and productive week. Xuan Oanh commented that we had progressed: we used to have people to people contact. Now we have people to government contact. We laughed. Xuan Oanh felt that the aid program must be conditioned by the political situation. He did not see any possibility of normal relations before the end of the Reagan term. He said we cannot give up traditional relations with people like the AFSC. Although our aid goes directly to the offices involved, everyone knows that there is an indirect relation with Viet My. What has been built in the past with the Viet My should be maintained.

Xuan Oanh said that Viet Nam had had an excellent harvest. The new policy of encouraging individual farmers was producing excellent results. Within two years, he felt there would be no food shortages. On that basis, Viet Nam could solve

many other social and psychological problems. In two years, Viet Nam will need no more rice imports. In regard to food problems, policy was key. Education and medical care were also being reformed. We asked whether a definite date had been set for the Party Congress. Oanh thought it would be in December. He asked us what we had heard regarding the date. We said that the date varied from December to March depending on who answered the question.

Future Delegations

We described two possible different AFSC delegations for the future. One would be an official AFSC delegation consisting of representatives of the organization including the Chair-person of the Board, Steve Cary, and/or the Executive Secretary, Asia Bennett. We thought that this trip should take place just after the Party Congress. We suggested six or seven people but told the Viet My that we awaited their guidance on this question of size. This would be a formal trip to reaffirm the AFSC relationship with Viet Nam and to provide the AFSC with current information on developments in Viet Nam and with AFSC projects.

Bob then described the second delegation of personalities. He mentioned Ed Asner as an example of a progressive Hollywood type who would not be dismissed as an old anti-Viet Warrior. We would hope to put together a delegation of Hollywood, media and perhaps a politician (out of power right now) who would visit Viet Nam for the first time. Wendy pointed out that we wanted people who could return to the U.S. and talk in non-ideological terms. Oanh said he appreciated this concern. (He said it with a smile.)

Bob suggested that such a trip might include Kampuchea because this country has held many American's concern for some time now. A trip to Kampuchea could get very tricky, politically speaking, but we should think about the idea.

In response to the delegation proposals, Oanh pointed out that a homogeneous delegation was always much easier than a personalities trip. He could see no problem with the AFSC delegation. They cannot fix the date yet, that would depend on the situation at the time. The higher level the delegation the better as far as Oanh was concerned. The trip would not be to give material aid, he said,

but to make contact in spirit. The delegation size would have to be determined later. We were told to remember that the material conditions in Viet Nam were not easy. The spring seemed to be a reasonable time for the trip. On the second delegation, more consideration is needed. This trip also depends on when it is preferable and possible. It would be a fact finding, mutual exploration of political tendencies kind of trip. Xuan Oanh remembered that in 1979 Paul McClery of Church World Service had brought some personalities and that the trip was very positive. The question is, according to Xuan Oanh, will the personalities after the visit draw positive conclusions and will people listen to them back in the states. Would such a trip get more support from the average American?

Xuan Oanh could see no difficulty with the first trip. It should happen after the Party Congress. Coordination between the various ministries involved would be necessary so it was good that we had raised the issue now.

On the second delegation, Bob pointed out that perhaps the delegation should consider paying their expenses. From a political point of view, this might be a good idea as then they maintain some independence. Besides, they are pretty rich. Xuan Oanh said "Then we will charge them double." And Bob replied, "You have the mind of a capitalist." Oanh says we can agree in principle on future delegations. Quaker Service Laos/Vietnam can come to Viet Nam 3-4 times a year; Viet Nam can visit the US 3-4 times a century.

Hayakawa Visit to Laos

Bob then briefed the Viet My on Senator Hayakawa's visit to Laos. Xuan Oanh said that the US government did sometimes visit Viet Nam but that the Viet Nameese didn't attach much importance to these visits. The US and China had agreed on a long-term plan to sow division between countries of SE Asia and the socialist countries in general. Xuan Oanh thought that the Hayakawa trip to Laos could be viewed as part of this strategy. He pointed out that the Lao maintain a very firm position on their sovereignty and their friendship to Viet Nam. The Lao representative to the United Nations had recently (at the opening of the UN General Session) presented a seven point proposal in the name of the Indochinese countries.

Bob asked if Viet My had any English translations regarding ZOPAN (Zone for Peace and Neutrality) from 1975. Xuan Oanh told us to ask the Vientiane Embassy for it and to ask the Lao Foreign Ministry for the Seven Point Statement.

Xuan Oanh gave us the following summary of the 28 September 1981 Seven Point Plan presented at the United Nations by the Lao Foreign Minister:

- 1) Respect for the territorial integrity of each other and peaceful coexistence between ASEAN and Indochina.
- 2) Disputes between the countries of the two groups should be solved by negotiation by the South East Asian countries taking into account the differences between ourselves and without interference from other countries. The right of self-defense and of collective defense must be respected.
- 3) Promote and extend cooperation in the economic, scientific, sports, tourism, and technical realms.
- 4) Respect the sovereignty of national territorial waters and the continental shelf of each territory.
- 5) Countries outside of the area should respect the independence and territorial sovereignty of each area. No S. E. Asian country should provide a base for invasion by another country.
- 6) Set up a permanent organization specialized in dialog with the participation of Burma on a 1-1, 2-2, 3-3 formula.
- 7) The above principles should be used as a basis for dialog.

Bob pointed out that the American Friends Service Committee had helped countries hold dialogs before and that although we understood that a Thailand/Viet Nam meeting was now not possible, we were always ready to help promote such a meeting. He also pointed out that we were ready to offer help in arranging informal meetings between China and Vietnam. No discernable response from Viet My.

Xuan Oanh pointed out that there was a growing feeling among the ASEAN countries that the danger in the area came from China, especially now that the US was supplying China with weapons. He emphasized the importance of dialog between the Indochinese countries and ASEAN and said that not even psychological confrontation between them was necessary, let alone military.

Tin Sang Closure

Bob said that many Service Committee people had been close to the staff of Tin Sang. We wanted to raise the question about the closure of the newspaper with complete respect for the sovereignty of Viet Nam. We feel we must point out that this closure has saddened many people. Among AFSC people, it raises fears of future directions. To some of us, it does not seem as if the paper's political mission is finished. We raise this concern in a spirit of friendship. This is a concern about the vision of the future. The Service Committee in Philadelphia wanted to write a letter but it did not get sent because the AFSC did not want to be misunderstood. Xuan Oanh interrupted here to ask if John McAuliffe had signed this letter. Bob reminded him that no one had signed it as it never got sent.

Xuan Oanh replied that Doug Beam (based in Bangkok) had raised the same issue in a visit to Ho Chi Minh Ville. Xuan Oanh said Bean was told that the paper was mainly the voice of the third force. With the election of the Assembly it had completed its historic mission. The purpose of the paper was to inform people and now there were other ways for that to happen. Many third force groups have joined the Fatherland Front. This is very reasonable. The religious community does not need its own voice because it is now in the National Assembly. These people now have an official voice. The Fatherland Front can also raise problems for them.

Bob pointed out that Xuan Oanh had a profound understanding of the United States and knows that the American experience and tradition is very different. Our definition of a free press is different. When we speak of a third force in the South we are not necessarily referring to a political opposition but to a social and economic grouping that will exist for a very long time in the South.

Xuan Oanh says that people in the US are very conservative and like to keep what they like; they are reluctant to have change. It is a minor problem because most Americans have never heard of Tin Sang. The American anti-war people may interpret the closure as repression. There may be another explanation.

Bob says that some anti-war people in America speculate that the Party feared

instability and that before the Party Congress Tin Sang would serve as a lightning rod for dissidents. In light of recent events in Poland, the party might worry. Bob does not subscribe to this view; everyone has a different theory. We at the Service Committee understand that the closure was not directed against the staff. We do not worry so much about the staff people. We assume they will go to other papers. We worry for the idea behind the paper. Communication is very erratic between us and it is difficult to have in depth communication on issues like this.

Exchange of
Representatives

With Xuan Oanh's comment about the Viet Nameese getting to visit the US about 3-4 times a century in mind, Bob brought up the idea of a permanent exchange between the Viet My and the AFSC. The Vietnamese would send someone to Philadelphia. This would allow the Vietnamese to speak directly to the American people and to travel. The staff person in Viet Nam would be able to follow up on all the aid programs provided by various US groups.

Xuan Oanh suggests we take this up with Bai at the Foreign Ministry. He is the right man. This idea would be a very big problem for the Viet Nameese. We are merely people, not wealthy like the United Nations. If this idea is profitable for both sides, there will be no problem. With no normal relations between our countries, there must be some alternative. It is easy for the US to have a representative in Viet Nam but it would be very difficult for us to have someone live in the United States. We are a very poor Viet My but it would be preposterous to have it all paid for by one side.

Miscellaneous

We discussed all the magazines and newspapers that presently accumulate in Laos for Viet My. (Bob and Wendy delivered an enormous box of back issues of New Yorker, US News and World Report, and International Herald Tribunes. We suggested that perhaps the Far East Economic

Review could be subscribed to directly by the Viet My at our expense. Mr. Hieu said that the mail into Viet Nam was still very unreliable and suggested instead that we give any periodicals we have for Viet My to people at the Press Office of the Viet Nameese Embassy in Vientiane. We said that Jackie Chagnon had

told us the embassy in Laos did not like to do things like that. Viet My will into this and let us know if we can work through the Embassy in Laos.

Xuan Oanh wanted to know if we had read the recent Tom Hayden book. We had not. Xuan Oanh said Hayden wasn't like before and that perhaps elections had become too important to him

Summation

We left among many hugs and invitations to visit, both ways. Xuan Oanh mentioned several times that he knew Bob and felt that because of past contacts and experience, Bob would be a good person to maintain contact with. He acknowledged that there have been problems in the past. He alluded to a situation where the Vientiane-based staff had gotten isolated in the past. We did not try to follow up on this comment to find out what he meant. We felt that this meeting was friendly and covered several areas where problems might develop. Both delegation ideas were received well, even if there were some doubts about the personalities trip. We told Viet My we would hopefully be back in Viet Nam in January at which time we could pursue discussions.

Wendy Batson
12/10/81
Vientiane

...../end