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INSTITUTION BUILDING

1. The various processes of pacification generally provide for the reestablishment of a relative degree of law and order and for the elimination or circumscription of subversive elements. These processes may also involve the development of an economic base. In the same way they can contribute to the beginnings of a political base; however, in order for this base to be other than narrow and provincial a framework must be created which will develop the political consciousness of the rural population out of the narrow confines of their villages, districts, and provinces and into the mainstream of national political life.

2. The framework for such political development lies in the establishment and careful nurturing of governmental and non-governmental institutions. On the governmental side, these institutions are the basic administrative services of the province together with the police, civil service, and other agencies of government which reach the rice-roots-level inhabitant as the extension of some national policy. These governmental institutions are, and ought to be, the object of considerable American concern. Extensive USOM programs are in process to shape their development.

3. On the non-governmental side, there are some promising beginnings; but not enough has been done in the field of private institution building. Put in the simplest form, this consists of creating an identity of interests among target population groups which extend beyond the administrative boundaries of a district, province, and eventually of a region. Some platforms on which to build an identity of interests already exist. These are the religious institutions: Buddhist, Catholic, Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, Confucianism; political parties: the Dai Viet, the VNQDD, and smaller groups; labor unions and their national organization; special interest groups such as veterans, students, women s, and farmers associations.

4. The emphasis here is on non-governmental institutions. The emphasis must also be on institutions evolving from the ground

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up rather than those which are imposed from the top down. The reasons are obvious. Experience indicates that attempts to organize from the top down universally result in a dilution of political content and impact in the countryside. Also, since the purpose of these institutions is to serve as a focus for identity of interests, the government initially does not have the capability of such appeal. This is so because the government must collect taxes, must conscript, must punish crime, whereas the institution, in order to attract followers, will have few, if any, punitive powers.

5. A good example is that of the labor union. The union is formed and attracts membership because it promises something better for its membership; better wages, better relationships with management, etc. . But the union, if it is to succeed and expand its membership must from time to time strike to prove its militancy and to win its point. Having won, it distributes the benefits of victory to the membership and additional members thereupon join in to secure the same benefits for themselves. Similarly a veterans organization that does not protest that the government is doing too little for its former defenders is not likely to exist for long. The policies of the institutions, therefore, will diverge at times from the tactical goals of the government; and, if the government wishes to preserve these institutions, it will compromise with their legitimate aims.

6. The value of the institutions is that they serve to pull together large blocs of persons who, out of self-interest, become a stable and eventually even a conservative force within the body politic since once they have achieved certain successes they then exist in order to preserve them. These institutions likewise build from the ground upward developing natural leadership and these leaders become eventually influential, if not participants in the process of government itself. They become a welding and a weaving force so that in time the farmer in Can Tho feels a kinship and has an interest in the agricultural experimental station in Hue; and the laborer in Saigon can join with the worker in Camh Ranh in political projects of mutual benefit.

7. At the bottom then there emerges a sense of common struggle, and at the top leaders of government and of the institutions become dependent on each other for support, influence, and benefits for membership.

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8. The development of these institutions requires a careful orchestration of diplomatic and covert skills. On the diplomatic side, the inclusion of selected personalities in leader grant programs; mission-sponsored training programs; and appropriate and well-timed calls by senior mission officials on labor union leaders, veterans officials; participation in religious ceremonies, etc., can all provide stimulus to the growth of an institution. On the covert side, there is called into play the entire syllabus of covert persuasion and influence, the building of leaders and programs behind the scenes, and the development of institutional doctrines which bring the institutions into collaboration with one another and, as feasible, with international counterparts.

9. Existing organizations provide a highly feasible point of attack for such a program. Among the Buddhists, the Christians, and the sects, the priests and bonzes provide a leader elite which is not yet either so fully penetrated or so nationalistic as to be unsympathetic to a careful approach. The labor unions, particularly the farmers organizations, need the application of organizational skill, the creation and attainment of struggle goals, and the development of fresh leadership. The veterans organization needs a new lease on life which would make it separate and distinct from the government rather than simply the organ of government. Student and youth groups can be united into politically effective organizations if finite struggle goals can be set and met in such concrete matters as housing, food, meeting halls, and reduced prices for education and textbooks. Political parties need to be taken out of the hands of the few self-styled intellectuals and become fleshed out with honest organizing effort.

10. In some cases, a new approach to institution building can be achieved by direct discussions with the present leadership, working through this leadership to select and train organizers, propagandists, and in turn help to devise campaigns in behalf of the membership. Others of these institutions require a completely different approach which includes bypassing the chieftains and developing new leadership. Opportunities for training, travel, contact with other international organizations, visits by international officials who are concerned with veterans, students, religious problems, etc., can be

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arranged. Modest overt financial support can be accomplished through the contributions of international organizations, other contributions can and must go under the table. Money alone is not the answer. Its application must be accomplished by seasoned advice and careful step-by-step progress towards well-defined goals.

11. The question arises as to how much of a deliberate design to build new government institutions should be known to GVN leaders. The answer must be--as little as possible--since governments change but hopefully the institutions will survive. Also, good leadership will often refuse a relationship which includes the covert support of our government with the knowledge of their own government.

12. However utopian this development may seem, it can, if pushed forward vigorously, provide the base for national political unity and thereby considerably reduce the porosity of Vietnam to Communist infiltration.

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