

THE ADVISOR AND HIS COUNTERPART IN VIETNAM

HANDOUT

THE POSITION OF ADVISORS AS VIEWED BY A VIETNAMESE

1. In the fierce struggle against Communist aggression, the people and armed forces of our nation have received the strong support of the various free countries of the world, most important being that of the United States. At the same time that it participates directly in combat, the United States continues to push forward with great energy to help us build up our rear areas in every aspect. In every field of endeavor, the United States has placed advisors to work closely with all levels of Vietnamese authority from the Center (ministries, zones...) to the local (province, district, service...).

2. The East tends to the internal; the European-American tends to the external. In administration, the East looks to the ethnical side; while the West looks to the scientific side. Administration in the East emphasizes the virtuous character of the "quan tu." (Tr. comment: Confucian ideal of a scholar-bureaucrat-gentleman. The quan tu was always a civilian. So low on the social scale was the military in old China that a military officer, almost by definition, could never aspire to be a quan tu. Thus, the author's use of the quan tu concept, in a time of military province chiefs and military district chiefs, seems a little strange.) The quan tu, dating back many generations have caused the two countries to evolve historically quite differently; thus, even if great effort is made to mold them together, there is no way that this can be done quickly.

3. If, according to the original meaning, the two words co van (advisor) have the sense of "to care for" and "to observe" with the end of contributing an opinion when asked, then, in fact, the duty of every advisor at every level of the Vietnamese bureaucracy is not limited merely to giving advice when this is requested. Therefore, in any field in which there are advisors, that is, where the United States provides material support, the advisors at all times observe activities and the results of activities of the government organs. At the same time, they observe the extent to which standards are honored in the implementation of programs. In addition, advisors participate directly or indirectly, to a lesser or greater degree, in the making of joint decisions. The positive nature of the function of advisor is reflected more clearly by the name "partner" than by "advisor."

4. One who directs a government organ, no matter how qualified he may be, cannot be knowledgeable in every field. Given the necessity to set aside a major part of one's time for administration, execution, supervision, and control, then it can be seen that no matter how energetic and efficient one may be, there is never enough time for study, analysis, and comparison of any matter. Moreover, everyone is subjective and conservative to a degree; and the more a person is sincere, firm in his viewpoint, and dedicated to work, the more subjective he will be. Therefore, we cannot see all sides of a matter or all

related details as well as can an observer on the sidelines or as can one whose mind is not so occupied. So, there must be objective observers and minds which are less busy in order that study, analysis, judgments, and corrections can be made in time and at the place needed. The larger the sphere of responsibility, the broader the area of administration (particularly when changes are occurring rapidly in the life of a nation), the more there is need for objective observers. Another benefit is the increase in supply of materials needed for carrying out programs. We inevitably encounter the situation in which on one hand military requirements absorb a major portion of public expenditures and on the other hand public requirements call for expenditures in excess of budget capabilities. We are able to see new viewpoints and new organizational methods of the richest and strongest power in the world, the United States. We are able to see many out-dated aspects of a legal system and an organization left over from French times. We can see from our own study the sincere sense of service, the conscientious attention to duty and, above all, the spirit of public welfare of the various advisors at all levels.

5. Some difficulties and obstacles from the advisor's viewpoint are:

- a. A Vietnamese emphasizes the spirit and the inner, hidden side of man. The American spirit of rationalism and of hard work is unfamiliar to a Vietnamese and can easily bring about a lack of sympathy.
- b. Some advisors concern themselves only with work and do little in the way of building social contacts with the levels of the Vietnamese leadership or with the people themselves, and therefore do not create a climate of friendship with which to enter upon sincere cooperation. Then misunderstandings develop in relation to the advisor.
- c. Some advisors mistake their function, sometimes seeing themselves as a kind of superior with powers of control and criticism, or sometimes being indifferent, unwilling to pay attention to the work of the government organs for fear of creating misunderstanding or arousing criticism.
- d. Some advisors believe that their decisions and work methods are always reasonable and correct, frequently holding viewpoints which are not in accord with the actual situation in Vietnam and the psychology of the people; thus, their proposals are either difficult to implement or, if they can be implemented, are inappropriate.
- e. Misunderstandings arising from language problems.
- f. Sometimes promises are made to government organs or to the people, for provision of materials, or for fulfillment of some requirement, which are not implemented.
- g. The rapid turnover in advisors interferes with continuity in work.

6. Some difficulties and obstacles from the government official's viewpoint are:

- a. Excessive pride, with a resultant reluctance to learn.
- b. A narrow outlook regarding one's own sphere of power and prestige of the nation, in which the advisor is seen as a controller, and his presence accepted only grudgingly.
- c. Fearful of trouble, and therefore constantly seeking to use familiar methods which are out-dated; unwilling to adopt more progressive methods.
- d. An inferiority complex and excessive deference before the advisor, with an unwillingness to put forward an opinion even though one knows that the suggestion of the advisor is not suitable to local conditions.
- e. Whether through pride or for fear of language differences, one fails to create a close mutual liaison.

7. The role of advisor is the role of an official of a modern and advanced nation, rich in resources, working by the side of the official of a nation in a war situation facing many difficulties and obstacles, but striving hard to raise itself up quickly, and to achieve advances in every field. He is a wealthy friend with wide experience trying to work with the Vietnamese people to achieve a level of progress which will be of benefit not only to the people of Vietnam but also to the free world bloc. Thus, the advisor not only has the duty of counseling but he also must cooperate closely with, and give effective aid to, the government organ. In summary, the advisor has three principal functions:

- a. To advise, that is, to provide suggestions to the government organ regarding organization, administration, and programs. One can say that the advisor is a kind of reserve brain for analysis, study, and synthesis; putting together various opinions, proposals, observations, and experiments; and evaluating the process of implementation in order to support the directing government organs.
- b. To work, that is, to research and plan along with the government organs so that the activities of these organs will be fruitful, combining closely with these organs and having joint responsibility in both victory and defeat.
- c. To aid, that is, to provide materials for the programs of the government organizations.

8. I suggest some methods to help us utilize the many resources of the United States which, if added to the high sense of service of the advisors, will produce effective results from the coordination of the efforts of the U.S advisor and Vietnamese government organ.

a. The advisor must study in order to understand: (1) The history, customs, and society of Vietnam; (2) the administrative organization of Vietnam, and (3) the administrative, and particularly the financial, regulations of Vietnam. These represent a minimum understanding to be gained. Experience teaches that if the administrative and financial regulations are not understood, and the advisor pushes too naively for quick results, he sometimes will show unhappiness because of slowness on the part of government organizations.

b. A lack of understanding of the customs and social psychology of Vietnam can easily result in misunderstandings, because the advisors of a friendly nation sometimes have attitudes which, although natural, are likely to arouse discomfort among Vietnamese, who are very emotional people. An advisor should remember the Vietnamese saying, "On entering another man's house, one should act in accord with the family customs; on entering another country, one should act in accord with political realities," and work hard to accommodate the customs, traditions and feelings of the Vietnamese. Particularly, the advisor should take notice of the fact that country people in Vietnam are very conservative in the matter of relations between men and women.

c. The advisor should gain rapport with the various levels of command in Vietnam, with prominent persons and respected figures, going beyond merely paying social calls, in order to establish better mutual understanding, thus creating emotional ties and a spirit of friendship, and bringing about a lasting unity.

d. The advisor should also observe our protocol of rank, respecting the spheres of responsibility of our government organs, and avoiding any diminution of the prestige due them. If an advisor is lacking in prestige himself, then he will not be able to convince others. But if an advisor should denigrate the position and authority of a counterpart, this will lead to internal division, that is, bring defeat in our duties.

e. An advisor always has to remember that his opinions have only the character of advice and are not directives. Therefore, an advisor should not be disappointed nor dissatisfied if he is not able to reach agreement on wordings or on programs; on the contrary, he should reexamine the problem, to clarify it with the goal of finding means to accommodate different points of view.

f. An advisor should not be too conservative or proud, always believing that his programs are correct; on the contrary, he needs an attitude of inquiry toward a problem on the theoretical side, and thus avoid mistakes arising out of lack of practical experience. Even though one has practical

experience, experience from another country is limited in its applicability to Vietnam and may not be suited to the geography or people of our country. Therefore, the advisor must unite his theoretical knowledge with the actual experience of the administration in Vietnam.

g. During implementation, the advisor must follow closely each stage zealously and with objectivity, discarding pride and stubbornness in order to persuade, to make adjustments, and to make corrections as necessary.

h. During the period of review, the advisor should make corrections sincerely, see weaknesses clearly, and discard pride in order to further develop those good points which are not yet fully realized.

i. In working with government organs or the people, the advisor should be careful about making promises to provide this or that material support, or to help out in this or that program, in order to avoid going back on one's word. With regard to this, I believe there is a saying in the United States, "Giving is better than promising."

j. The advisor should not forget the saying, "The manner of giving is more important than what is given."

k. The longer one serves in an area the better.

l. The advisor should choose employees with good qualifications in order to avoid attitudes of over-reliance and pride, which will result in criticisms of the advisor's office.

m. If the advisor works hard to learn Vietnamese, it will be easier for him to make contact with all levels. If he does not, then the advisor should choose a capable interpreter who will accurately reflect the viewpoints of both sides, avoiding errors in interpreting which not only will result in failure to understand a problem completely, but also sometimes lead to harmful misunderstandings.