

APPENDIX A

Transcript for tape # 4-6

TRANSCRIPT OF CONVERSATION

Participants: Generals Thang and Lansdale, Messrs. Miller,
Deutch and Pham Duy

Date: November 25, 1965

EGL: Did they give you any idea of what they needed or how many cadre they needed; you were going to retain some of the cadre....

THANG: They will give us that on the first of December when we come down to the province and listen to them...but let us take Quang Nam. That is a priority area...why has that been selected as a priority area? Because it is so crucial to the base of the area (of the enemy)... and we would like to take advantage of the American troop presence but we cannot pacify that area from Touraine to Hoi An in one year because the people have the active hand and there is the problem of political parties -- like the VNQDD, and you cannot pacify Quang...and politically speaking, that area is really weak, very weak. We cannot do that in one year. However, we give the instruction to the Province Chief...and you have to try your best in order to make progress in this area...and everything you ask for...if that reasonable, that is what you'll get.

EGL: Yes, but haven't you given them some idea of how many cadre they ought to have in there, about how many do you think he is going to need in there from Danang or Touraine down to Hoi An.

THANG: You mean that area....

EGL: Yes, that area you have asked them to concentrate on.

THANG: I've spent time in that area south of Touraine. They are using already something like 400 or 500 cadre. That is all right...that is enough, but as a good cadre, no, of course we have to retrain them...and those areas...retain them.

- EGL: Now you have a new training class starting at Vung Tau.
- THANG: In February...because there is a class now, and it will be until February.
- EGL: Are there people from Quang Nam in it?
- THANG: They have some but not many. I think our real program starts in February...the selected area...our first priority given to the selected area...the second priority given to the other type of cadre, which will be Rural Construction, according to the new status.
- EGL: How about in Binh Dinh?
- THANG: In Binh Dinh....
- EGL: You aren't waiting until February there are you?
- THANG: You know at the actual time in Binh Dinh they have, they can use 7 teams. It means that they will organize something like 17 groups of cadre; they are in pretty good shape, and with 17 groups of cadre they can pacify. What is 4 times 17...in that area north of Qui Nhon.
- EGL: And those are really villages...they way they really claim? And it would be 4 times 17 for the villages which would be 68. You think 68 villages, or are they big hamlets that used to be villages?
- THANG: Right.
- EGL: About how long do you think this would be? 3 to 6 months?
- THANG: No, we are speaking about one year, four villages in one year. The last time I met the province chiefs, they asked for something like three more. The province chief said to me that he had the capability to recruit 3,000 more. I told him that the next time I meet him in December we can do it if they have the capability.

THANG: You know that affair of the need of the people... the American programing embassy....It should be closely integrated with a mind to do what they did last year. Priority area -- I gave you those three districts. You have to pacify the whole three districts in one year; then based on that, you make your plan, you make your request. In my opinion that is not flexible. I told the province chief that it is crucial that we would like you to make progress here, do your maximum; so he calculates their need based on the capability of recruiting people.

EGL: Now in Binh Dinh, the province chief says he can recruit 3,000 more and he needs it.

THANG: I made a mistake, I meant 300.

EGL: Oh, 300...OK. That would be roughly six teams, maybe 4. Now what are you doing on the planning of the training of them. Will he have people for the next class?

THANG: I thank that my policy is this, based on the fact that you need to retain people and you cannot stop pacification to wait for your people to retrain them. That is not the first year we pacify this area; no, we already pacified it for years and years already. So we get a lot of experience, and experienced people, so just go ahead with what you have. But you have some other people that you request to train. For instance three more PAT or four more PAT and come up with something like 20 PAT or 22 PAT. Plan to use only let us say 3 or 4. For example, plan to use only 60...as soon as there is a good training center, you go back....

EGL: Yes

THANG: So the tempo, the moment of pacification, is not stopped.

EGL: But when you ask people to make a priority effort on something and that you will help, you still have to follow through yourself, depending pretty much on what it is you need, what it is you want me to do.

THANG: That is right, that is right.

EGL: Will you be doing that again when you go around to talk about the budget plans and everything?

THANG: Yes, I'll be in the field in December. At that time I will check all province plans, correct them if necessary, and approve them. And by so doing, they will receive the funds for 66. I already sent a wire (to the Province Chiefs) telling them about the four criteria on which I will base the checking of their plan:

First, they should respect the priority given by higher headquarters. Second, their plan should be concrete enough and should be based on the real capability and the military support given by the region. Third, the principle of the mass (en mass) should be respected. It means I hate to see our province plan with four districts, and they try to develop the four districts simultaneously. I think that violates the principle of war which we call the principle en masse. I would prefer to see the focus of the effort in one district, maybe with the other districts coming in the second effort.

And the last point is this: Before they sign and before the division commander and the corps commander sign, they promise us that 75 percent of what they promise us will be implemented before the end of the year, and when I sign as minister, I recognize that promise. So those are the four points. I think by the 20 of December or something like that, we will come up with the whole plan and then sometime by the end of the year, with the exact figures. We can display the whole plan and have a very clear idea of the 1966 plan.

EGL: That is the overall plan for all over the country? But here now, the prime minister asked you to give priority to certain areas and this is a responsibility for you. Now you have got to treat those a little differently than you do the other provinces and what I'm wondering is, what your own personal plans are for giving that priority or preference to those areas?

THANG: To begin with, when we briefed the province chiefs last time the priority area has been given more strength than the other areas (this was last week...ay.) When I review the plan, emphasis will be given to the selected area. You know that we will meet first the selected area, and they will get the real priority in that and in my field trips. In my inspections I will pay attention to those areas.

SUMMARY

You know, very soon I shall have 34,000 cadre, and I would like to be able to talk to all of them every day.

At Vung Tau they do things very well (lit: have a very good idea of mise en scene) with an opening ceremony, etc. I have already told Captain Mai (Manh?) my idea, that I would like to make tape recordings which they could play every night to the students before they go to sleep. It is very well for them to study theoretical subjects during the day, and sing songs at night (and things like your entertainment troupes) but the last thing they should think about should be inspirational thoughts about Mother Vietnam. (No, US is female, so is France, but it is le Vietnam. Ed note: Not clear whether he means VN is male or neuter.)

I would like to teach one new song to the cadre every week.

Instructions on songs for cadre use

THANG: It seems to me that one point in this, really, is to eliminate the VC underground -- to eliminate the VC infrastructure in order to provide security for the people. Another point, point number two, is to eliminate corruption at the grass-roots level. Point number three is to permit free elections, elections of the hamlet committee. The next point, point number four, is that if you will stand up and defend yourselves I will back you up; I will provide weapons and ammunition for you to fight against the VC. Point number 4 is the self help projects and economic development. Very simple, just four or five points.

THANG: The purpose of that is this: If you stand up and consider that this or that is your affairs (?) the government and the armed forces so happy to back you up and help you in achieving the five following points, and then list the individual points, I think that those are the points that are most important for a simple song and may be that is what Mr. Duy might do...(Vn)

EGL: Hank Miller first...you read that now...he says: A nation is as strong as its people, a nation is as great as its people, you the people of (name of the village) can make Vietnam strong and great by making your village of (name of the village) strong. We the cadre of the Rural Construction are here to help you make your village strong.

THANG: Yes, yes, something like that, to help you make your village strong (mixed interjections). We would like to stress that you -- you the people -- can make Vietnam strong; we would like to stress on that, that it is the people, not those who come in here and provide such and such a thing to us; we would prefer that people understand that they must fight the VC themselves and that we will back you up, that is the psychological point that we must get across, that the people must stand up.

EGL: Let me say that (suggests song contest, judged by cadre -- then French from Pham Duy) then Bernie comments favorable, more chatter about contest, chatter in French...turns about PD saying that one song alone cannot do it, must be many...more chatter...songs must be adapted to the locale. Chatter in French and Vietnamese, several, including EGL talking at once (some of the Vietnamese might be worth translating).

THANG: I told Mr. Duy that when I was a boy I used to listen to the songs of the VC, they were so simple they touched the heart, so everyone can sing, one song for the whole country (I think) so simple that anyone can sing it, the whole country, I gave him an example, singing him-one of his own songs...so he agreed; I proposed that we make something similar to that, one very simple song for the whole country...after that we can adopt your idea, but with a poen..For all the country is fooled by Ho Chi Minh.