

Problem Solving Through Understanding: A Personal Opinion on How to Approach Development Problems in the Highlands.

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In 24 years of continuous work in hill tribe affairs, I have never seen a conference more important than this. Five principal ministries and departments are represented and all in attendance have come to explain policy, planning and other activities under their responsibility. It is regrettable that provincial governors could not join this meeting but because of administrative tasks generated by the forthcoming election [July, 1986] their absence is understandable.

I am of the opinion that we are considering two to three issues which boil down to the one thing: dangers presented by highlanders. There are many aspects of this danger, many issues, but all of them have some bearing on the question of national security. It is important to assist hill people to settle and so protect the forests. Agreement on this point is a good place to start.

With this agreement in mind I would like to suggest a creative and practical approach to hill tribe problems in the

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hope it will not only be acceptable but also have less negative impact than other methods proposed.

I would like to point out that when we consider problems associated with highlanders we often find ourselves talking as though we intended to wage a war in which there are only two sides: the enemy and us. In actual fact the situation is not so simple. There is a clear conflict of interests between highlanders and us but when we talk of hill people it is important to remember that we don't have a real enemy. We ought to admit this to ourselves before we get into a fight by default. Government policy has for years accepted in principle that all hill people are potential Thai citizens and that the state will grant citizenship to all those who qualify on the basis of existing regulations. This policy is based on a long established regulation first promulgated a decade ago (Cabinet resolution, 6 July 1976). Let me be quite explicit: we are not fighting the hill people but we are fighting their problems. They are our allies with whom we should join forces, shoulder to shoulder or at least in the same company.

What do I mean by this, that we are "fighting their problems"? How many here realise that the highlanders current situation is fraught with difficulties which they would certainly change for the better if they could? If we maintained a better relationship with them and we all understood the problems of the highlands from our different perspectives in a communicable way, would there be a war? If we expect to win the war against the problems of the highlands we must bring the Chinese principle of *Zun Wu* to our deliberations, that we need to know both them (the enemy) and ourselves.

For as long as we insist on considering differences rather than similarities, the judgements impacted in our discussion will themselves serve as obstacles to development and problem solving. A good example of how such thinking

leads us away from solutions rather than towards them is contained in statements like this, "Hill people are not Thai, they are foreigners". Such an observation is at best a half-truth. If to be Thai means to share a belief in the same ethical system, then we have half the truth. However, if such a statement refers to an ethnolinguistic reality, we had better watch our step. In a paper presented to the International Congress of Anthropology at Rome, Italy (1966), a Japanese historian announced that in ancient times the Meo-Yao group maintained close ethnic relationships with the Tai, a tribal group referred to as Pai in Chinese chronicles. The American linguist Paul Benedict (1975 and 1976) has argued convincingly for a language Superstock known as Austro-Thai which places Tai-Kadai and Meo-Yao in the same family. This has been accepted by the University of California linguist Jim Matisoff of Berkeley (1983). Then again we can draw a lesson from the late distinguished Professor Phaya Anuman Rajadhon, who long ago (1961) told a workshop of hill tribe survey workers that, "Although the Meo and Yao are now forest mountaineers, do not look down on them because we might share a common ancestry".

As for the ethnic category "hill tribe" ("*chao khao*" in Thai) and all associated with the term, we had best remember that the word only came into official use in 1959 following the formation of the Hill Tribe Welfare Committee. When we count back this is just 30 years ago but hill people have been here much longer than that. Historical and archaeological evidence documents the fact that in some parts of the North, the Lua and Karen were here before Thai language and culture came to dominate daily life. Many people in the north are descended from these original inhabitants.

The term "hill tribe" is not well defined even in government regulations. From documents and established usage we can assume that what is meant is strictly this: the ethnic minorities residing in the highlands such as the Meo,

Yao, Lahu, Lisu, Akha, Karen, Lua, Htin and Khamu who moved from Laos to take up residence in Thailand before 1975 and before 1974 if they came from Burma. According to regulations those who migrated into Thailand after those years are illegal migrants who ought to be arrested and arraigned before the courts or repatriated. Even though such migrants may belong to resident ethnic groups they cannot legally be called hill tribes. The term "hill tribe" has a quite specific interpretation. Hill tribe people are part of the Thai population, a section of the community who, it is widely acknowledged, qualify for special attention if they are to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to become first class citizens. According to this classification, hill tribes are not foreigners at all in the sense that they either lack nationality or are the citizens of other countries.

Some look down on hill tribe people as though they deliberately engaged in illegal activities such as growing opium poppy, felling forests and so forth, as though they wanted to annoy clean living, honest Thai citizens. How can people see positive qualities when they are so well conditioned to see highlanders as both dangerous and inferior?

It would be difficult to attempt to correct all the negative highlander references in use, but working just with data and information concerned with the issues at hand, it is possible to straighten the record on a few.

First, highlanders have a record of giving assistance to the nation. All of us here remember the troubled times commencing in 1967 when a few small groups of hill people emerged in armed opposition to the state. This uprising took more than 15 years to bring under control. It was not until 1982 that enough mutual trust was reestablished to bring the rebellion to an end. The crisis was damaging in more ways than one. The trouble makers suffered, Thai citizens working in close proximity to the combat zone suffered and for a long

time the life and property of all officials and villagers in the areas affected were exposed to serious danger. But how many know that from the time when these troubles first began until the situation was brought under control, many highlanders fought on the side of the government and gave their lives fighting against communist insurgents or provided information which helped the loyalist cause? Many military and Border Police Patrol officers know this. Some civil servants, who were able to go into hiding just before attacks were mounted, were warned by highlanders to whom they came to owe their lives.

Second, the picture of the hill tribes which most of us carry in our minds is that of opium growers. This is only partly right and that right part is quickly diminishing. Not every hill person grows opium: most have never grown opium simply because not every ethnic group has made this a part of their agricultural system. To speak loosely of highlanders as opium growers is to set a classification into which most people do not fit and where the category is foisted upon them anyway, we should realise that it makes for considerable misunderstandings.

In fact only Meo, Yao, Lisu, Lahu and a few Akha grow opium. Altogether these people make up only one third of all hill people. The Karen, Lua, Htin and Khamu in common with Thai farmers do not traditionally grow opium and nowadays the few villagers who do remain the exception.

Overall, fewer and fewer villagers are growing opium than in the not too distant past. If we compare the amount of opium produced in Thailand as estimated by UN experts in 1967 with what we know is produced today, the hill tribes of Thailand are producing at least 100 tons less than they did twenty years ago. Surely this is a measure of the success of problem solving whether directly or indirectly aimed at cutting back production? In 1967 the estimated yield was 145 tons. ONCBs production estimate for the 1984/85 season was only 34.6 tons.

This is an impressive result from twenty years work. Although there is no single comprehensive study on which I can base the observation, clearly the achievement is the consequence of many factors, such as efforts in educational development, public health, agricultural extension, opium crop replacement and suppression, road construction, market influences, religious teaching by Buddhist monks under the Dhammacarik programme and well publicised campaigns supported by radio and the mass media to highlight the dangers of opium smoking and addiction. There is also a widespread shortage of land suitable for growing opium because of both population increase and intervention on the part of government agencies concerned with watershed conservation.

All of these factors have contributed to the drop in opium production. But this doesn't mean that we are out of the woods. I would like to remind you of the words of Mr. Jorgen Gammelgaard the UNFDAC senior field advisor, "A one-sided approach to opium poppy emphasising only eradication of cultivation may have unwanted side effects which are so common in the history of drug abuse control. One is to convert Thailand into an opium importing country. Another possible effect may be to pave the way for heroin dependence in hill tribe villages" (Gammelgard, 1985). To keep the level of opium production dropping, it is necessary to cure addicts and encourage growers to voluntarily decrease production. I believe there are now suitable models available which could be widely applied.

Third, there is the stereotype of the swiddener as an itinerant gypsy. Some people believe that there is nowhere in the world where swidders have settled down to take up permanent residence. Perhaps we ought to take more care with our words? The term "swidden" itself comes from Anglo-Saxon and dates from a time, less than two thousand years ago when the ancestors of modern Europeans were swidders. In

the contemporary world, those who insist on seeing the hill tribes as gypsies are reluctant to look at the facts and prefer to step across the mundane details that abound in our lives. As the proverb has it, "It is just as hard for the elephant to see the mite as it is for the mite to see the elephant" or as is said in English, "It's difficult to see the woods for the trees". In fact Thailand has examples of permanent settlements established by each hill tribe group and it is not necessary to look for examples elsewhere.

The truth of the matter is that the hill tribe way of life is quite different from that of gypsies. Gypsies are not agriculturalists but work as musicians, small-scale traders and do odd jobs. Their way of life is adapted to moving quite frequently from place to place. The situation of the highlanders is quite different. Their main occupation is agriculture. Their swiddening farming system makes extremely efficient use of energy and requires that they clear, dry and burn the natural vegetation before sowing seeds. The system does not require a knowledge of soil conservation and nourishment necessary to maintain permanent fields. Most highland soils are of low fertility and without very intensive care (eg. terracing) are not suited to permanent cultivation. Farmers rely on nutrients released from the biomass rather than those already present in the ground and if they attempt to extend the period of continuous cultivation beyond one or two years, they must face a weeding problem and falling fertility. It makes more sense to abandon the land and either allow the vegetation to regenerate before using it again (rotational farming or cyclical bush fallow) or go in search of new land on which the vegetative nutrient bank is well established (pioneer swiddening, or primary shifting cultivation). Some highland farmers, then, clear land and plant it for only one to two years before allowing it to return to fallow. Others use their fields for as long as possible, basically until it becomes too difficult to farm because of weeds, declining yields and low fertility.

RESETTLEMENT

Of these two methods, primary shifting cultivation has the most dramatic impact on the landscape. Virgin forest is destroyed on an ever-increasing front by people in search of land on which they can grow rice. The Lua and Karen however use a rotational system which is ecologically informed. As long as the fallow period is of sufficient duration to allow the vegetation and nutrient levels to recover, land can be used continually over many years. Some Karen villages for instance have been established for over 200 years.

Dr.Sanga Sabhasri and his colleagues studied this rotational system very carefully. They found that the method under which fields are used in a cyclical fashion over a set period has much to recommend it. Settlements are permanent. The boundaries of village estates are clearly known to all. Villagers supplement the product of their swidden fields with rice grown on irrigated terraces. Farmers keep strictly to their land and neither intrude into nor destroy virgin forest. They also possess a very strong tradition of looking after the forest because it provides so much they need to keep themselves alive.

It surprises me that some people consider such rotational farming as a waste of land. This is an issue we should look at carefully and analyse before we act. If there is an urgent problem it has more to do with primary shifting cultivation than rotational swiddening. It is the primary swidders who are constantly attempting to bring virgin forest land under cultivation, who wish to continue their pioneering life without having to take into account either new techniques or the new political situation in the highlands.

In my opinion, it is possible to solve the problems which come in the train of shifting cultivation and to protect the forest against further intrusion. I will base my argument on the following assumptions:

- the pattern of agriculture influences the duration of

settlement;

- if the pattern of agriculture is shifting then the associated settlements will be of a temporary nature;
- if the pattern of agriculture is permanent the associated settlements will also be permanent.

I might well use the formula, agriculture commands residence rather than residence commands agriculture! Today it is not uncommon to find highlanders who set their village in one area but work in another. To do so they simply travel by small pick-up trucks which they obtain under hire purchase agreements. People can live where they like but they cannot live too far away from where they work. We can readily appreciate that permanent agriculture could well serve as the heart or foundation of any strategy designed to prevent people from intruding into virgin forest. The forest must first be felled before a farm can be set up. When the agricultural possibilities of the site are exhausted, farmers must move on. As they move, the forest is destroyed. If they grow opium at high altitudes (900-1000 metres), at the very top of the watershed, then forest destruction also means destruction of the watershed.

Primary shifting cultivation is a cause of the destruction of natural resources. including forest, soil, water and even wildlife. The sensible solution is to bring such shifting cultivation to an end by replacing it with a new model of agriculture.

When we are able to promote a new model of permanent agriculture, it can be expected that highlanders will themselves take up permanent residence. Just as Thai farmers base their communities and household stability on permanent rice paddies: hill tribe people will come to see their future from the same perspective and be happy to maintain stable communities.

It is my opinion that the best way of solving the problem of natural resource destruction by the hill tribes is to settle them on permanent sites well serviced by the administrative and socio-economic infrastructure. The appropriate government offices involved should be assigned to identify areas suitable for settlement. Settlement on land where it is possible to earn a living and gain access to agricultural extension services should receive the recommendation of all concerned officials. By this I mean that it is the suitability for sustaining agricultural production and long term residence which is the main point. The Royal Forestry Department is authorised to give permission for using land and could readily assign the Department of Land Development to check suitability with the appropriate criteria: slope, soil type etc. This Department is well qualified to decide whether land is best suited for use as watershed forest, commercial forest, orchards or farming. It seems to me that promotion of a settlement policy should be accompanied by optimum development of land use, especially establishing of trees which take a long time to grow. Hill people now understand the financial significance of trees and have always appreciated the availability of timber for building, firewood and other uses. Villages now located at some distance from forest have to pay for firewood to be brought to them. Forestry development for watershed protection and commercial plantations could well follow the establishment of villages and provide a source of income to the settlers while they build up their farms. Highlanders should certainly be more involved in community forest development just like lowlanders. Farmers could be encouraged to plant trees at recommended spacings throughout their farms. There is no reason why they could not take the benefit of this participation in agro-forestry.

In considering the question of how to identify the best way for hill people to earn their living from the land, the first consideration must make full acknowledgement of the need for them to cease practising primary shifting cultivation and

to change to perennial gardening or permanent agriculture. We must not only think in terms of watershed classification but also permanent residence, sustainable production and the impact this is likely to have on both forest and watershed resources. The Karen and Lua who have maintained permanent settlements for centuries have shown that this is possible. Those living in this manner have also developed a very strong sense of land tenure which involves ownership (Chantaboon, Chapter 4). Ownership is hardly relevant to swiddeners who plant then move on. Such people are willing to welcome newcomers to their village, especially those who belong to the same lineage. After farmers come to base their livelihood on irrigated rice fields, grow perennial shrubs such as tea, coffee or fruit trees and see what their labour invested in the land can do, they become increasingly interested in protecting their holdings with a widely accepted form of land tenure including outright ownership. In a Ph.D dissertation prepared by the Englishman Bob Cooper, the broader social impact of this trend from shifting to more permanent forms of agriculture is explored. The kinship system of the Meo village he studied underwent considerable change.

Where land becomes a more valuable and scarce resource, several things happen. People are less likely to want to share. A Karen village in Mae Hong Son faced with a Government order to make room for other Karen pushed out of Burma in the course of fighting was most reluctant to do so. They fully realised that the availability of land was decreasing and that the fallow period was being foreshortened by natural population increase without exacerbating the problem by trying to help others. Over-use of land slows the rate of regeneration, reduces both nutrient build-up and release, and places farmers at risk. The weakest point of border control is that those already settled within Thailand do not report to officials when new people move in.

Increased awareness of land shortage can be used as a tactic to discourage immigration from neighbouring countries and the support of those already here could easily be secured by acknowledging their rights to land. If the status of hill tribe citizens was clearly distinguished from that of recent immigrants, their rights could, if necessary, be defended by the armed forces and the migrants expelled. Where it is decided to settle hill people and undertake agricultural development these people will, as citizens, identify closely with Thailand's interests. When such a situation holds, it will be much easier to undertake systematic development work rather than treat highland communities as a buffer against disaffected elements in neighbouring countries who have to engage in illegal trade in arms and drugs to survive. The state of anarchy which prevails at the moment is a real obstacle to setting up administrative procedures as well as adding to the problem of intrusion into the forest and its destruction.

To carry out effective development work implies that all aspects of the highlander's life would be taken into account. Plans would have to be prepared to deal with agricultural production as well as those things which can make such a difference to the quality of life, such as public health services, education, community work, attitudinal development, paid employment opportunities and an infrastructure of roads, water and so forth. Implementation must attempt holistic planning, what can truly be called integrated planning. In such planning, the people most affected by the outcome must be fully consulted. They must participate in every aspect of the operation and be encouraged to enter into the programme enthusiastically. Such participation should be aimed at providing learning experiences for individuals to pursue self-help, which is also an objective of current rural development policy.

There is a real need to call a forum where a free exchange of opinions on holistic and integrated development can take place. How development should be conducted ought

to be settled in advance of action. Once resettlement areas are selected, the next question will be how to get the cooperation from the people who are to be moved. This can either be done in harmony with our hearts beating as one or with all the misunderstandings that come from being out of rhythm with the times.

This is not a matter to play with. We have every reason to be as one mind in this and enter both seriously and sincerely into a programme of common understanding. There should be a uniform approach to public relations, administration, application of the law and development policy. Let me discuss each of these in turn.

Public Relations

Once a strategy has been identified it should be clearly explained to all of the hill people concerned. Farmers should be told in quite precise terms the exact intention of the government: what land will be taken, where it is forbidden to settle (as this applies from province to province), how much support the government will give to development, and so forth. Statements must reflect a good understanding of the history of existing villages, some of which have been established for a hundred years or more. It is not enough to say out of the blue that such and such an area has been declared a public forest or national park or wild life conservation refuge. People have an intense sense of belonging to areas where their families have lived for centuries. It is reported for instance by some anthropologists that many Karen hold land to which they were given title by the Prince of Chiang Mai well before Bangkok established suzerainty over the North. If the government is to announce that the historic arrangement under which they hold the land is null and void then it ought to pay compensation for all of the improvements made by farmers such as: fruit trees, other commercially valuable perennials, permanent fields and existing structures. If under current law this cannot be done, then the law should be

changed so that justice is not only seen to be done but really done.

Public relations workers should explain that it is not the intention of the government to deprive them of their livelihood but to provide support in special development areas set aside for them. Many highlanders face real problems concerning land shortage and currently attempt to secure a living from land which is already exhausted. These people are looking for new land and would be interested in responding to and cooperating with the government. Many government agencies maintain good relations with hill people who often make requests for land. If land was set aside for settlement, they could be shown it in their own good time. They could send representatives to look at it, bring information back to their homes and consult widely with others in their communities. Such a strategy has much to recommend it over exhortation and persuasion.

Where it is necessary to announce that it is forbidden to live in such and such an area, people should be told that full compensation will be paid to those who must move out. It is also essential to warn people well in advance of the move to give farmers time to prepare themselves. Provision should be made for settlers to move as they are ready and the authorities should be in a position to provide psychological and educational support. The use of force is a last resort. There is neither a real need nor a widely acknowledged emergency that justifies armed intervention.

Administration

An efficient administrative system should be staffed by those competent in cross cultural communication, assigned to keep their eyes open and their ears close to the ground, make contact with local leaders and do their best to avoid a situation that might provoke a hostile response.

Law

The law regarding forest protection should be rigorously enforced. However, not only those cutting trees should be punished but also those who support such activities. This is especially important when it comes to the issue of stealing commercially valuable timber. An example needs to be set to show how serious the government is about protecting the forest and to demonstrate how the law works.

Development

The commitment and readiness of government officers charged with responsibility for carrying out development work should be demonstrated. This will make the government's intention very clear. If farmers are to stay in the areas to which they have been assigned they must be given serious and sincere support in development activities, especially those which promote self-help. This strategy is recommended because if there are no differences between settlements where help is given and areas beyond the reach of help, farmers will be most reluctant to remain. The positive attraction of the assisted settlements should, in their own right, serve as an incentive to resettlement.

We could legally use direct force as a way of solving the problem and move people down at gun point. This may ensure that people will shift but such action would be totally opposed to retaining the best wishes, support and loyalty of our friends in the highlands. Surely the use of force is only justified when all other methods have been tried and failed? I sincerely believe that if force is used against the hill people they may well quickly form alliances with those along our borders and on the other side of our borders who owe nothing to Thailand. This could well evolve into armed rebellion. Highlanders have traditionally been prepared to rise in defence of what they believe are their own best interests.

Hill people who are forced to migrate are almost certain to be angry with the government. Some may move as far away as they can, out of reach. Others may well take a lesson from the many other minority people in neighbouring countries who are fighting to unite their fellow ethno-linguistic brothers and sisters and establish independent states. Alienated from the Thai government, they may well get into the rhythm of opposition, roll over and sleep, shut their ears to anything good which might come their way and close their eyes in case they see something which might contradict their prejudice. For such people the fruit of discontent, bitter though it may be, will be eaten as a natural act of defiance. Those unwilling to resettle will establish their communities on the basis of such bitterness that they are likely to harbour resentment against the injustice of their treatment for a long time to come. They will not forget how they were treated when they came in contact with government officers. They may well harbour feelings of hostility and resentment which they will pass on to their children and grandchildren.

We only need to look at our community of minorities to see what a huge impact relocation has had on both the number of people present in Thailand and their distribution. Highlanders are currently found in 21 to 22 provinces. If they were pushed together and came to share a common resentment, this would present a huge obstacle to integration and assimilation. If they came to consider it necessary to group together to form their own unitary state, such a move would challenge Thailand's unity as a nation. There can be only one unitary state and this ideal would be fundamentally compromised if we established special areas for highland ethnic minorities. We would end up with a type of mosaic integration, instead of the process of natural integration which prevails at present. Our nation is a plural society made up of many different ethnic groups. Is not the variety and complexity of this ethno-linguistic mix and consciousness the very basis of the richness of our culture?

On this last point I would like to outline what I consider should be the principles on which the problems presented by the hill tribes should be approached, especially those concerning the conservation of forest and water resources.

First principle. I am confident and optimistic that if we work together with hill people and secure their full cooperation we will be able to win the war against "hill tribe problems". I am confident of this because I firmly believe that the main "hill tribe problems" arise from ignorance. However, ignorance is a condition well known to mankind for centuries.

Although we may be confident of our modern knowledge concerning the environment, we must be realistic. This knowledge is new, has not been available for very long and we cannot yet claim to have mastered it.

To solve "hill tribe problems," we ought to provide only relevant information about which we can be confident. To know what is relevant we need to know them thoroughly, including the factors which condition people's behaviour. I believe that most hill people have the ability to learn just the same as the members of any other ethnic group. To use the Lord Buddha's designation for homo sapien, we are all *venaya satawa*, trainable animals. There will be a few who stubbornly refuse to change. Such people can be found in every society. Sometimes these people make it necessary for strong measures to be used against them otherwise they refuse to learn. However, the disincentive of punishment will teach them to behave. After the appropriate lesson, they will cooperate and make the necessary changes.

Second principle. Although highlanders are able to learn from others, they still do not understand the environmental inter-relationships, especially between soil, water and forest, which together constitute the main renewable resources

in the highlands. It is an urgent matter to instruct the hill people about this matter in an appropriate way. Today they are much better prepared to understand than in former times. This is because they are aware that resources have diminished. They lack timber for building and firewood. Ground water resources have dried up. Wildlife is greatly reduced and some species have disappeared from some regions. Many products that were once gathered from the forest can no longer be found. An explanation which traces the root cause back to shifting cultivation would have a salutary effect. It would not be difficult for them to accept their responsibility and be more willing to take up permanent agriculture based on irrigated rice, permanent gardens or orchards in place of shifting cultivation. I dare say that the hill people will readily accept permanent cultivation over swiddening. At the moment, they lack knowledge of the methodology, tools and labour as well as the land suitable for this. As long as there is no hurry to transform the problem of intrusion into, and destruction of, the forest overnight, then in due course, when the fields of their old farms no longer provide the yields they need and the soil is exhausted, they will prove to be students willing to listen to a better alternative.

I am of the opinion that it is an urgent matter to start making provision for wide scale adoption of permanent agriculture. Land suitability surveys should be got underway. The promise of long term settlement ought to be used as part of a strategy to protect and conserve highland resources. An example should be made of law breakers to discourage others. However, although some hill people will be arrested, this should be done on the basis of individual wrong doing rather than to approach all highlanders as if they were criminals.

Third principle. I believe that the corner stone of hill-tribe welfare and development policy is the Cabinet Resolution promulgated 6 July 1976, specifically with the objec-

tive of making "hill tribe people self-reliant, Thai citizens". These words reflect the highest wishes of government. The objective clearly serves the cause of building a united nation made up of many ethnic minorities who are not a socio-economic burden to the administration. If we take this one step further, we can say that the intention of this policy is to both establish national solidarity and continuing socio-economic growth.

This intention might well serve as another important ideological component of current policy in which both sides, the state and the individual, in this case citizens and highlanders, would willingly participate in a common effort to reach the stated goals. In practice, pursuing this collective and co-operative ideology concerning ethnic minorities makes it necessary to clearly distinguish between what we call "hill tribe problems" and ethnic minorities who are not satisfied that their interests are served by the policy and activities of the government to the extent that they identify their "best interests" with others similarly dissatisfied in neighbouring countries. If this happens and security problem emerges, it will make it much more difficult to solve our "hill tribe problems". It is most important that our current concerns for the environment do not generate a security crisis. Stability should remain uppermost in our minds and if highlanders remain loyal and can understand actions undertaken by government officials, we will be given the time necessary to solve the issues that most concern us.

Fourth principle. Social action that attempts to change the status quo always provides a challenge to humanitarians. It would be best if everything went smoothly but if there is to be some suffering, the pain should be minimized. If the transformation is well managed the change we are asking for may be willingly accepted or at least tolerated. The change may be compared to the fear and worry with which a mother faces the birth of her first child. The process

of giving birth is naturally painful but the reward of producing a healthy child is a joy which makes suffering worthwhile.

Social action of this kind need not be conducted blindly, social science has provided us with experience and theories which can guide us. There are no formulas similar to those of physical science. There is not the certainty that two parts of hydrogen and one of oxygen will produce water but by conducting ourselves sensibly and allowing time for adequate reflection, theories of social action can guide us through the change with full participation at all stages. Social action is like a journey; the destination is known but there are many ways to reach the goal. I would select a safe path and intelligent companions who can be consulted along the way. It may not be the most direct way, it may not offer any short cuts but if we meet any obstacles, we will have companions with whom we can share the hardships, we would not expose ourselves to loneliness and we would eventually reach our destination together.

To sum up, I believe that there is no need for us to make a hard struggle out of "hill tribe problems". The hill people are not our enemies. The main strategies we must keep in mind concern realistic land classification and land allocation for both the hill tribe people and the many Thai who earn their living from the highlands. This is principally a question of making provision for the permanent settlement of farmers on agricultural land, a settlement of people who have lived for millenia in this kind of environment. We should use a wide range of strategies all designed to meet our most important goal: the accelerated promotion of stabilized agricultural systems to replace shifting cultivation as a cause of environmental degradation. To do this we must utilize techniques that support the overall strategy. We must face up to the ecological ignorance of the hill tribes and educate and train them in the scientific interrelationships between natural resource conservation and the need to sustain agricultural

production. The participation of the hill tribes and others should be based on a firm alliance that eschews the use of violence and is regulated by a psychologically informed approach, including public relations, payment of compensation and resettlement grants to reduce the inconvenience of relocating and enable them to reestablish their communities, houses and fields with a minimum of hardship. Administrative arrangements should avoid a situation in which the hill tribes become welfare dependants. Law enforcement should be conducted so that justice is done and that punishment is handed out on a case-to-case basis. Provincial authorities should identify resettlement areas and set up a public relations system designed to persuade highlanders reluctant to move to migrate voluntarily to designated areas.

Land set aside for agricultural development in resettlement areas should be classified to facilitate implementation of good ecological and conservation principles. Land classification should be carried out from the lowlands right through to the mountain tops. Resettlement itself should be entirely infused with the idea that the participation of the hill people in area development will guarantee that they receive the full benefit of their own labour and grants made in assistance. The farms, paddy fields, crops, orchards and trees which they plant will protect the watershed and there should be no need for them to destroy new forest. Management of new forest could well incorporate local labour in such a way as to provide additional income. If social action is managed with considerable skill, perhaps the hill people may volunteer their labour in a manner not unknown in the past.

The sort of strategies and tactics outlined above and supplemented by common sense may well serve to win hill tribe support and participation to protect the forest without any risk to national stability which might otherwise lead to a security crisis.