PEACE CORPS

volunteer

MAY 1969

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Blatchford meet guests at an exhibit of African art held at Peace Corps headquarters in March.

The new director *looks ahead*

Joseph H. Blatchford, the man picked by President Nixon to head the Peace Corps, has been putting in seven-day weeks "listening and learning and absorbing" information about the volunteer agency he was named to direct in mid-March. "I have been finding out what the Peace Corps is doing, where it is going and what new projects it should try," he said.

In an interview with THE VOLUNTEER, Blatchford had high praise for the work of his predecessor, Jack Vaughn, and for the staff members he has met. "There is a strong sense of motivation evident everywhere in the building," he said. "The staff is a lively group. But then, the Peace Corps doesn't attract the kind of person who wants a soft job for 20 years."

Blatchford, 34 and the founder of a private development agency known as ACCION International, plans to visit Peace Corps Volunteers and staff in the field shortly after his appointment as director is confirmed.

He testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee April 15, an appearance which by law precedes the confirmation of Presidential appointees. As of this writing, his confirmation had not yet come to a full Senate vote.

The waiting period between nomination and confirmation has been "an opportunity to establish goodwill," he said. He has been visiting members of Congress, the White House and State Department staffs, and some of the "founders" or early supporters of the Peace Corps such as Congressman Henry Reuss of Wisconsin and former Vice President Hubert Humphrey. He said he has also met with "a group one might call the 'Big Alums'—Peace Corps staff from earlier days"—including Bill Mullins, Lew Butler, Warren Wiggins and others.

"And I've been going to the offices of present Peace Corps staff members," he said, "telling them, 'I wanted to come here to ask you what problems you see, what way you see the Peace Corps going." He has called this "a time for candor and creativity at every staff level," and stressed to staff: "Speak your mind. Don't hold back in anticipation of my reaction. I hope this will always be the tenor of the Peace Corps while I am director."

No specific policy changes have been made yet, but Blatchford has been organizing task forces to survey existing policy areas.

"The Peace Corps is all the people who have been associated with it, and it has a number of constituencies," he said. Therefore, he plans to have the task forces study a wide range of areas, and to be comprised of

"some outsiders mixed with people in the building." Some of the subjects under consideration are binationalism and the relationship of returned Volunteers to the Peace Corps. One task force which had been studying the role of Volunteer support services has already made recommendations to him.

"But you can't cook up too many ideas in Washington," he said, "and I am particularly concerned that all the assistance efforts we make from here should be geared heavily toward needs as seen through the eyes of the nations where we work. My whole background is one of viewing problems that way," he said. "I have lived three years in Venezuela and two in Brazil and have visited every country in Latin America, spending quite a bit of time in many of them. And I have always felt, and feel now, that Peace Corps must respond to the needs of the country as those needs are seen by the country itself and as they relate to the needs of the Volunteer.

"I don't mean we should measure these needs and their fulfillment in terms of bricks and mortar," he added. "But we must contribute in the terms of our hosts."

How the Volunteer can best make his contribution, as Blatchford sees it, depends on what program he is in. "I am concerned that he achieves what he sets out to do, that his efforts have a multiplier effect, and that there is considerably more to what he does than the education he is getting.

"I would say that the educational, cultural, people-to-people benefits of the Volunteer's job are substantial, but they are an obvious concomitant. They are ancillary to the main thrust, which is what we are able to contribute to the country on the country's terms. If we can help solve some of their very serious problems, if we can propose new ways of thinking about those problems and about solving them—in whatever field—we are doing our job," he said.

Blatchford is reluctant to compare ACCION, the private organization which he headed for nearly nine years, with the Peace Corps.

"It's really like comparing apples and pears," he said. "ACCION is different in nature; it's not a volunteer-sending organization anymore. It has evolved into total host country control—there are paid field workers who are host nationals and just a handful of volunteers."

There are some things which worked for ACCION that the new director would like to try or to emphasize more in the Peace Corps.

For example, he felt when he was with ACCION that there was a problem in the Peace Corps' dependence on host country agencies with respect to community development programs. These countries recognize the importance of community development, he said, but often they have not yet had time to create government mechanisms to carry out or provide support for such programs. "I think ways have to be found to set up new structures through which community change can come about," Blatchford said.

More emphasis on binationalism is one way, he said. The program then

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ON THE COVER: A fortune-teller near the weekend market in Bangkok does her crocheting while waiting for customers.

becomes the host national's program; there is more of a vested interest in participation.

"We've got to find these qualified host nationals," he said, "and if we can't find them, we've got to train them; and if we can't train them in one year, we should take five. But we must find ways to solve the problems of adequate structures and host national participation."

Also like ACCION, the new director feels the Peace Corps could do more to help sponsor and set into motion local volunteer organizations, something like domestic peace corps' on a smaller scale. He would like to see as many host nationals involved as possible, "including housewives, people who can do volunteer work part-time, and others."

But he doesn't feel the current status of ACCION—its evolution into total host country control—is necessarily a desirable direction for the Peace Corps.

"It's hard to say that what worked for ACCION will work for the Peace Corps," he noted. "The Peace Corps has 11,000-plus Volunteers. The programs vary so much; they are different from continent to continent. It would be unfair of me to speak of the whole Peace Corps with my experience limited to Latin America so far."

Blatchford also sees a continuing need for American volunteers and technicians in many countries. And he thinks many nations have demonstrated that they enjoy a direct relationship with the Peace Corps, with U.S. volunteers.

He reiterated these thoughts when members of the Senate committee chaired by Arkansas Senator William Fulbright asked if he thought an international Peace Corps would be a good idea.

"I am not so sure," he replied. "My experience shows that many nations do enjoy the relationship of dealing directly with the Peace Corps. . . . but I think we should be able to be flexible . . . there are European sending organizations—Germany, Holland, Great Britain—and I think we should reach out now to work closer with them on teams in the countries in which we are working, and not work strictly independently."

He pointed out that ultimately the presence of an international or multinational volunteer group should be up to the host country.

"My inclination would be to sound out governments and agencies abroad with which the Peace Corps is working to find out what their attitudes on a country-by-country basis would be," he said. "If a country should prefer this type of solution or way of foreign contribution, my attitude would be very cooperative."

Blatchford is emphatic in his view that the Peace Corps should retain its relative autonomy from the State Department.

"We should have a cordial relationship," he told the committee, "but it must be made clear and reaffirmed that the Peace Corps is not a part of foreign policy or subject to considerations of foreign policy." And to THE VOLUNTEER: "The Peace Corps constitutes the idealistic arm of the American people abroad and their desirability to help solve problems."

Blatchford indicated to the Senate committee that one foreign policy, that of the war in Vietnam, has probably affected Peace Corps recruitment. "There are problems currently with Peace Corps recruitment which reflect, I think, a general anxiety about the war, about our own cities, about these problems we are going through," he said. "Recruitment is lower than it has been, but the Peace Corps is still supplying the needs and requests from overseas."

But he doesn't subscribe to the views of some potential recruits that they can't contribute effectively in an organization which is part of the U.S. government.

"For people who want to make a contribution to people, to help them solve their problems, the Peace Corps provides an opportunity," he told THE VOLUNTEER. "I don't think you could find many host nationals, the people Volunteers are working with, who would say, or have said, that the Peace Corps was 'the icing on the cake of American imperialism.' They wouldn't know what you were talking about.

"We are not to be a political organization in any way," he said. "We are not, for example, in the host country to decide what kind of government they should have. We are there as Volunteers, and as such, we must be part of the environment, and we must work within it. Volunteers should treat that environment with good sense, good taste, and the best interests of the people in mind. We must rely on the good judgment of Volunteers and the people they work with.

"Violent revolution," he added, "would get us nowhere. It would solve nothing and it would end up getting us kicked out of the country."

Blatchford stressed that he likes the Peace Corps he has found. "I think Jack Vaughn has done an outstanding job," he said. "He has shown a great deal of sensitivity toward the needs of the field, and he has done a great deal toward moving the Peace Corps with the spirit of voluntarism and cooperation which is so evident. For me, it's simply a question of wanting to do more.

"I have the opportunity to come in with a fresh look. It's another world now than it was in 1961 and '62. Agencies and organizations must adapt to these changes," he said. "The degree to which they can do it is a measure of their success."

The Blatchfords talk with two deputy assistant Secretaries of State for Africa who visited the art exhibit: Robert Moore, center, and Thomas Quimby, former director of the Peace Corps Africa Regional Office.

In his last trip overseas, Jack Vaughn answers questions in his fluent Spanish for reporters in Honduras. During February he visited the Peace Corps and its hosts in Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador.

Jack Vaughn

reflects on his Peace Corps experience

Sargent Shriver once said that being Peace Corps director was "the best job in Washington." His successor, Jack Vaughn, has been saying the same thing for years. In a recent interview with THE VOLUNTEER, *the outgoing director reiterated his feelings about the job he has held for the past three years.*

After a few days off in mid-March when the official announcement of his successor, Joseph H. Blatchford, was made, Vaughn stayed on by request to oversee day-to-day operations and help ease the transition in Peace Corps administration.

Here he talks about many aspects of the Peace Corps he has known and led.

Besides pouting part-time, I've been saying goodbye to everyone here in the Peace Corps, shaking hands with people and thanking them for their votes. I considered an interesting job offer from my father, who has a cattle ranch. As assistant herdsman, I could have earned $150 a month, room and board and "half-laundry." But I decided to turn it down, needing a better laundry deal. Then I thought about doing what many bereaved men do—go to Argentina and write tangos. I decided against that too. And I'm not eligible to be a Volunteer as I have said I would like to—I still have a dependent under eighteen.

My main interest still is in Latin America; I guess I'm an inveterate cha-cha-cha type and I know more Latins than I do Americans. I feel it's in work in that area that I could be most helpful to my country. But with no definite plans at the moment, it just happens to be time for pruning my roses.

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Being Peace Corps director is the best job in Washington because of the association with the kinds of people attracted to the Peace Corps, both Volunteers and staff . . . because of the autonomy and independence of the Peace Corps, the freedom to experiment and change . . . because of the very hospitable climate in this movement . . . because what we are doing is important . . . because Peace Corps is fueled by an idea. I don't think there's any real idea behind the Department of Commerce, for instance, but we have a star . . . a Holy Grail.

The only time being Peace Corps director has ever been a chore is when I have had to fire somebody. It can bother me for weeks. Otherwise, I

have had the ability to shed the office totally when I get home at 9 p.m. or so. I don't "think Peace Corps" the rest of the night. Then the next morning, when I'm jogging or in the shower, I start thinking about the day ahead—the programs, the problems, the whole thing.

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The biggest problem facing me as director has been training and all the things surrounding it—improving it, making it relevant. It is our most glaring deficiency. I haven't solved it and I'm sorry. Sensitivity training especially is bad. It is shot through with charlatans and worse. And there is no evidence that it has done anybody any good. I have tried to get rid of sensitivity training, but training contractors keep sneaking it in under other names . . . D-groups, T-groups, Z-groups. I feel self-discovery should come from doing something practical, from getting out and actually eyeballing a slum dweller.

Despite this shortcoming, there are bright spots in the preparation of a Volunteer. This generation of Volunteers speaks the local language better. They are less often viewed as colonialist or expatriate than in the early days. We're making the B.A. generalists more broadly professional and getting not a better technician but a better Volunteer.

There is a running debate over the technical Volunteer versus the communicator, or the volunteer movement idea versus the development agency idea. Like all Peace Corps debates, this one probably will never be resolved. I hope it isn't. There is a miracle in not knowing which side is weighted. On the one hand, those who want only technicians don't understand the magic. And host nationals have told me that if what they wanted were technicians, they could get 3,000 from Paris or somewhere. On the other hand, our kind of professionalism is spread out—more professional selection, more professional training in some aspects, more professional programming, staff support; it takes some doing to beautifully, artistically place the right person in the right town, the right job or school.

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Now, as we improve and as more countries invite the Peace Corps to work with them, we have another consideration—and that is size. To some countries, perhaps a half dozen, we have sent too many Volunteers at a time. Even though we were responding to requests and even though the countries would appear to have an unlimited capacity to absorb Volunteers, we do not have unlimited administrative capacity. Peace Corps in the countries I'm thinking of is a different kind of Peace Corps from what we have in a country with a smaller number of Volunteers. There is a point where size becomes a very negative factor. Thus, in the past year, with a great deal of analysis and acrimony, we have begun to cut back, just sticking to the highest priorities and doing the things we can do best. And while it may be misinterpreted by Congress and maybe by the host countries, I think we will have a higher quality program and a better experience.

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I would have to say that Volunteers today are more knowledgeable, more inquisitive, more activist than when I first came with Peace Corps. But they are not necessarily happier. In the early days the happiness was, I think, a blissful ignorance about what was necessary to get from Point X to Point Y. But we've all been sobered by what we're up against and what it takes if we are to light a candle.

The early Volunteers could leave after two years flushed with the triumph of high achievement. Then later, they heard that what they did had crumbled into the sands. Real change takes a lot of doing. There aren't any instant heroes now. The Volunteer in Jamaica who worked in fisheries for four years frankly admits now that he had been able to do his job because of the few months' groundwork done by a female Volunteer who preceded him. He believes that the person to follow him can do even better. Some Volunteers want to have a neat package with a ribbon when they leave. But more and more there is a realization that it's those before and those after, eight or fifteen Volunteers—not one—who are responsible for a little bit of change. That's a sobering fact.

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Returned Volunteers, politicians and other interested parties have ideas about how to change the Peace Corps . . . how it should be private to avoid so-called contamination by the U.S. government and its foreign policy . . . how it should be merged in the United Nations with all other volunteer movements around the world . . . how here at home it should be lumped with

VISTA and Teacher Corps.

To start with, Peace Corps is less rigid, less doctrinaire. We are setting a standard for cross-national relationships—for diplomacy. Some of the things we experiment with in Peace Corps are being taken up by other agencies and they result in a softer, more democratic, more enlightened approach to work and to change. But while the Peace Corps can and has enjoyed a better reputation than our government as a whole at certain times, I don't think we should try and set up a two-class society in government and say "Here we are, the Peace Corps, and then there are all those other Americans."

There are some dissidents whose goals are to criticize the U.S. government; then link us to the government and try to debase, distort and ridicule the Peace Corps. It's quite fashionable to think of the U.S. government as "them" instead of "us." But it is "us" ultimately, and even initially it's "us." I see nothing tainted or corrupt in having Peace Corps in government. We are relatively autonomous. We don't have to beg funds and be wary of their source. We have won the respect of the taxpayer. I think it is great that the U.S. people would do this and we can say to our foreign hosts: "We U.S. citizens and taxpayers support it and we send you our best—with pride."

And at the moment I see no special advantage in the multi-national approach, that is, to put all nations' volunteers under the same auspices. What you're asking for there is a very complicated life—complicated in recruitment, selection, language, philosophy. However, we should probably experiment in that direction to see what happens.

I believe the Volunteers to America program will be merged with Peace Corps; that's great. If Peace Corps and Teacher Corps were tied together, it would be fabulous. Teacher Corps could be a most logical second step, after you come back from overseas. Beyond that, all my instincts and my advice are that Peace Corps should be kept separate.

* * *

There's another Peace Corps debate which I hope is never resolved. It's the one about who gains the most. You often hear returned Volunteers say they got more than they gave. I respond to that the same way I respond when a host national tells me that he and his community or school have received more from the Volunteer than they have been able to give him. "How could he stand it here," he says "eating our food, living in a house like ours, working for so little pay, *que sacrificio;* and he had malaria twice. Why did he do it?"

This is where my concept of love fits in. People who are embarrassed to talk about love don't understand the concept or have a concept that is Hollywoodish. Foreign policy and concerns for the gross national product and economic development are not part of our charter. But sharing and service are. And service and teaching and learning and sharing—this adds up to my concept of love. It's built into the Peace Corps.

So is peace. I think people today generally have a better understanding of peace than they did a decade ago. Vietnam and the cataclysmic danger of war are making war-like things harder to do now. People pressures have led to this feeling, and so has youth. Forty thousand people have been in the Peace Corps and there is a conclusion that we are all in the same world boat—that when you're talking about survival, there's nothing glorious in contemplating that Americans might be the last ones on earth.

They learned this from the Peace Corps and they taught it. And if we ever lose track of this vague sharing that has made the Peace Corps what it is—the ambivalent and individualistic and subtle thing of giving and receiving and never knowing who's receiving more—then we're in for a demise that can come pretty fast. This kernel is the magic; it is why voluntarism works. It's the ambivalent mix . . . not knowing who is the benefactor and who is the beneficiary . . . or who sacrifices the most. It's the nebulous nature of this sharing and loving. We must go about it in our own soft way.

Volunteers Sharon Tanberg (left) and Katie Hannon displayed what proved to be an ironic farewell message to Vaughn when he left the airport in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Mike McKinney, editor of the Volunteer publication The Mayan, *took this photo as well as the others which accompany the story.*

Less Peace Corps, more James Bond

Most Americans, whether students, Peace Corps Volunteers, diplomats, or tourists, arrive in Latin America as equals. Our political knowledge and our Spanish proficiency may vary. But emotionally, we have all had fairly similar exposures to Cantinflas, Pancho Villa, Che Guevara, the immigrant elf-shoed pickpockets of the U.S. cities, and the fat Cisco Kid's Pancho. These are the characters that populate our emotional Latin America.

On the way home, we are no longer equals. Of all groups, the most likely to arrive back with a positive emotional attitude about what they have experienced are the tourists. After all, Latin America after 9 capital cities in 14 days can still be quaint and daring. Its frequent hot-blooded, irrational revolutions, as reflected in the eyes of an unshaven man who appears in a slyly-taken photograph, can still be exciting. An original drawing of a barefoot man walking down a dusty road with a donkey trailing behind, bought from a genuine starving artist, is real enough to be almost like fiction. Memories of the frequent fiestas and siestas on humid afternoons will always fill the homeland coffee breaks.

On the other hand, for Peace Corps Volunteers who have been in country at least two years, understanding the culture more in many cases means loving it less. Like honeymooners in their second week, we learn that romantic qualities can quickly become maddening frivolities. Quaintness easily becomes dirtiness, hot-blooded men turn into children, and frequent restful parties are just lazy escapes.

Such distinctions between tourists and Peace Corpsmen are obvious to any Volunteer who has been visited in the host country capital by his untravelled mother. Anti-host culture emotions have to be dealt with by all of us, and some of us resolve the conflicts by ending up hating the foreigners, while most end up half compromising, arriving home with an image of the old Cisco Kid transposed lightly onto the recently abandoned counterpart. Most of us, to some degree, end up disliking in the real what we loved in the abstract.

The extensions of this observation are rarely treated in articles or analyses of the Peace Corps by its staff members. Most reps and staff, intent on investigating why the Peace Corps has not accomplished social change, physical or attitudinal, to the degree formerly hoped, do not often question the basic premise that may provide an answer to the secondary one. That basic premise is that personal communication, carried out in good faith, somehow leads to increased emotional closeness and understanding between peoples. It is not enough that the premise does not hold because a "dear John" letter is safer than a visit to the betrayed, or that a time clock is easier to accept than a nosy boss. More important, between societies, especially between those which have already built up well-defined images of their neighbors, images which are important to their own psychological security, it may be true that increased personal communication on a real level may be more painful than delightful, more harmful than good, more misunderstood than understood.

The Volunteer, for instance, often finds his greatest problem not in adapting to the host people, but in adapting to their perceptions of him. All of us who are somewhat like Lord Jim have a vested interest in escaping from the Great Mistake, in finding a brief respite from the World Movers and the Power Brokers back home. Most of us, conscious of our inequality with the world, want to enjoy, at least for 24 months, the myth that we can be equal with humanity. When a *campesino* called me *"patron,"* I carefully explained to him that I did not want to be a *patron* (master). He gave me a painful look and then shrugged his shoulders and said: *"Si, patron."*

Continued questions about how much my camera costs, why Jackie married Onassis, whether the astronauts brought back the Hong Kong flu, or why I tried to find a comfortable mud hut instead of living in the richest apartment in Riobamba (which I could well afford), are the most painful. It is much easier to suffer poverty than to be told that I am unsuited to live in poverty because I am a rich man. My desire to pay for a two-year indulgence with discomfort, to identify with the powerless, is unattained. And only after this failure did I begin to criticize the society of my hosts, and return to my storybook images of

"how things should be in Latin America."

Likewise, the semi-permanent arrival of a *gringo* into a Latin American town can be a most disquieting thing. After Kirk Douglas in the *Last Sundown*, Marlon Brando in *On the Waterfront*, the Beatles on radio, and Jackie and the astronauts in the papers, seeing an ordinary *gringo* can be very disillusioning. A study has never been done of Volunteers' effectiveness as dependent on their physical size and beauty, and how they look compared to movie stars; but in Ecuador, many of the Volunteers most successful in integrating themselves are not those who reject the role of the soft-spoken, physically indestructible Gringo God, but those who best conform to the image.

A good illustration of what people want to see in us (if only as a way of rejecting us) is in the images they themselves create of us. In Ecuador, this image has increasingly changed from blurred incredulity to seeing us as threats: spies or imperialists in revolutionary clothing.

People here have a need to see us as CIA agents, just as we have a need to see them as in need of development. If we are CIA agents, then they will be reassured that there really is something about them worth spying on, and also that the beautiful, destructive world of the movies is really real. They also have a need to see us as imperialists. Then, we can be blamed for their own "underdevelopment" and it can be explained why we are here, without having to refer to our painful (for them) altruism. They have a need to see us as elitists. If we are elitists, then by choosing to live here, we are bringing them into our elitism.

The idea that we are here to help is as distasteful as was Lyndon Johnson. Benevolence in Latin America always arrives on a Big White Horse, and the heroes, from Cortes to Kennedy, have always doled out graces from wistful myths like Quetzalcoatl or the Alliance for Progress. Kennedy was loved in Latin America, not primarily because he loved the poor, but because he was rich and beautiful, and secondarily worked for the poor. The idea of *caballero* (dashing gentleman) is central to the way of giving in Latin America.

If the Peace Corps has served any function here, it has been in perpetrating these myths, despite the fact that every Volunteer fights them in some way. Just as our dream of being accepted by the Third World as equals in humanity is shattered everyday, and yet we still hold on to it tenaciously, so the movie-picture image of a *gringo* as *caballero* is also broken by the presence of a Volunteer. But the nationals here, like us, cling to the fiction because the idea of an American living as a poor man (Poor Like Me) is repugnant both to the aristocracy of the rich, who want to feel their society is already equal to that of the United States, and the aristocracy of the poor, who want to believe that there is nothing about their lives that should necessarily be changed.

By JOHN ROTHCHILD

In Ecuador, after six years of Peace Corps, the images seem to be getting stronger on both sides, and the "real understanding" is diminishing. It has been argued that with increased contact, our international rapport will be greater. In some places this may be true. Here, it may be the opposite: The more contact we have, the more misunderstanding and clash will erupt. Part of the problem is that the honeymoon is over. Part can be attributed to the short time we have been here. But staff is finding it harder and harder to communicate with national institutions, and the country itself is becoming everyday more skeptical about our presence.

Such difficulties are not all new. The Peace Corps has always encountered problems in working with Ecuadorian institutions, which are often poorly funded and poorly managed, thus offending Volunteers who cannot accept inefficiency and ineffectiveness. However, lately there has also been a visible worsening of personal relationships between Volunteers and Ecuadorians, and the misrepresentations of our role here have become more rather than less widespread as our contact has increased. In the Sierra town of Ambato a group of businessmen and students have started a cafe, El Psiqué, where *gringos* are not welcome, as a reaction to the presence of American Volunteers in the other city cafes. In Quito and Guayaquil, the Peace Corps offices, once immune from the anti-American wrath of students, are now popular targets. During the last year the Quito office weathered a bomb-throwing, while in Guayaquil the secretary suffered severe acid burns after a student attack on the building.

On a less colorful level, day-to-day relations between nationals and Volunteers are being described in the same terms that Ecuadorians have always used to describe the stereotyped American diplomat. Volunteers were once the exception to such characterizations, but this is less true today. In the latest *El Ecuador*, the in-country Peace Corps magazine, an Ecuadorian law student characterizes Volunteers as cold, in-groupish, unwilling to mix with Ecuadorians, and disdainful, and concludes that therefore, we must be spies or at least here to accomplish some task other than friendship. Image problems have prompted the country's director, Joseph Haratani, to think in terms of publicity campaigns to improve our relations with Ecuadorians. As one Volunteer told me, "Once, the best thing an American could do to find acceptance was to say he was a Volunteer. I'm finding it difficult when asked the question, and I would be more comfortable by answering that I was a tourist."

On staff level, programming problems result not from a lack of good ideas, or of available Volunteers, but in finding institutions which can forge a cordial, workable entente with Volunteers, and vice versa. Many of the larger programs no longer work

directly with Ecuadorian institutions, such as *campesino* leadership training and, in some instances, the heifer project—which distributes animals to farmers in various areas. Peace Corps officials usually point to CREA, a regional development organization, as the shining example of good Volunteer-host national relations, but even in CREA, criticisms of Volunteers as being clannish, unconcerned and disturbingly informal are just below the surface and are becoming more visible every day. A six-year relationship with Ecuador has not strengthened Volunteers' contact with Ecuadorian institutions and people, but has rather increased isolation in daily discourse, in Peace Corps programs, and in people's understanding of the Peace Corps program and its purposes.

One Volunteer in Santo Domingo (Ecuador), who worked here almost four years, had a long-time friend with whom he had had contact for his whole stay in Ecuador. A few days before he left, the friend asked him: "Tell me, what really is your purpose here?" Trying to be honest, the Volunteer said: "At times I don't even know." That convinced the long-time friend that the Volunteer was a member of some international spy network. The opportunities to understand were great, but the need to understand was something different. The Ecuadorian in many cases protects his need to understand the *gringo* as an imperialist spy.

It is hard to condemn this while the world continues to be a stage for our own domestic hang-ups. Only when we are worried about political amorality at home does Latin America's "problem" become seen in the same terms. When we are expanding economically (as in the Post War), the sister nations' problems become economic. And currently, while we are worried about how to get along together at home, we are working toward a non-directive methodology, toward mental and attitudinal change abroad. Our world is a stage, but the host country nationals are lousing up the acting.

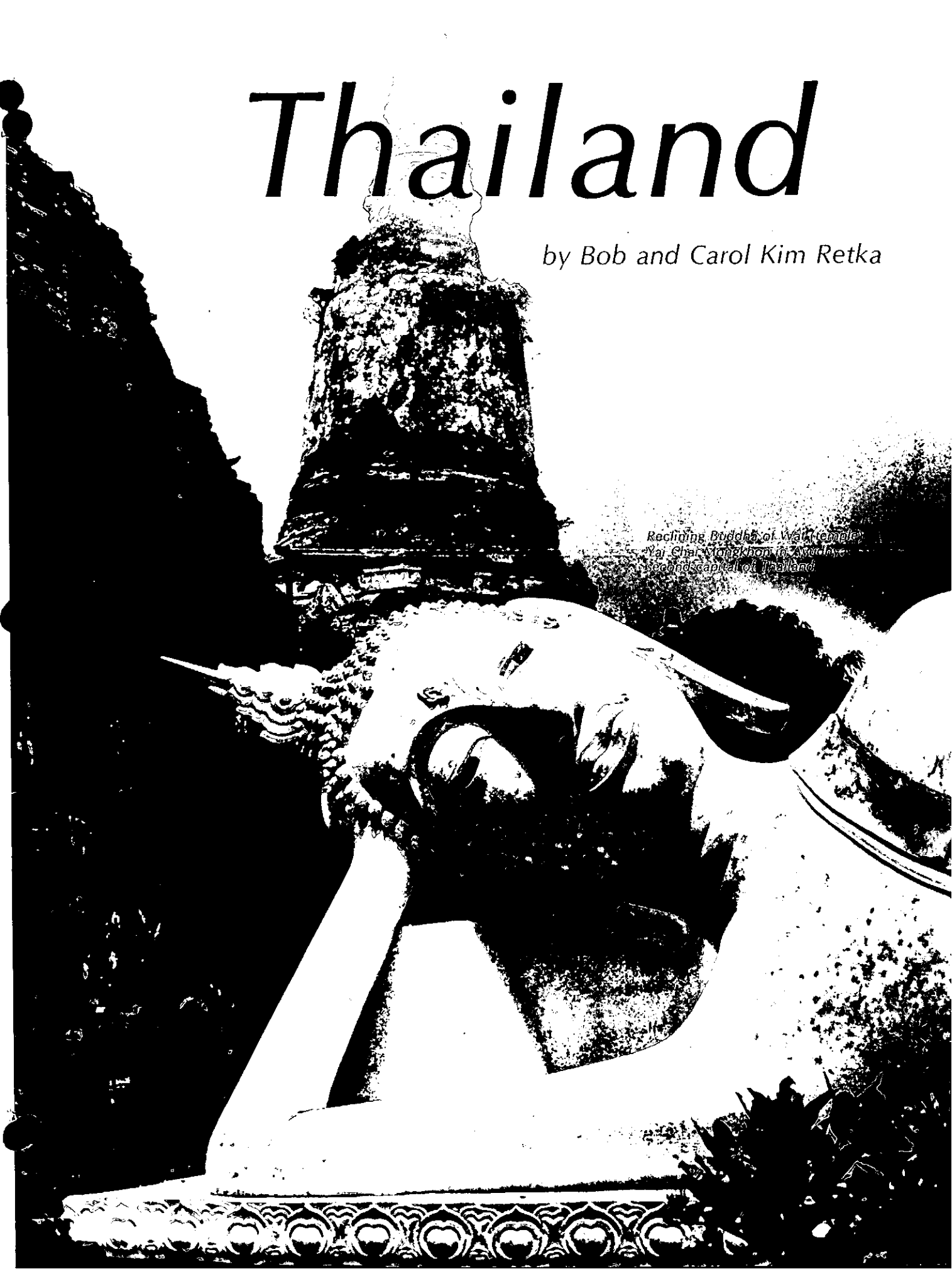
After six years of an attempt at being friends, it sometimes seems that Ecuador would like less of the Peace Corps and more of James Bond. It is not just on the intellectual level, where such thinkers as Albert Memmi criticize the "left-wing colonists" and Mon. Ivan Illich of Mexico asks that all American "do-gooders" get out of his country. On the level of the masses, Volunteers trying to shake the international world-mover syndrome have clashed with people who have tried valiantly to remind him of it. While we have not tried to wield power, the people have asked why the country which made it to the moon couldn't save their village. The Volunteer feels a lack of effectiveness. The people do not. They view the problem as a Volunteer's lack of interest (he is really a spy) or lack of drive (he is lazy, doesn't think we are worth it). Increasingly, the Peace Corps is called "Cuerpo de Paseo" (Vacation Corps).

These problems will not be solved by sending more technically-qualified people, or by changing recruiting or training. They may be solved by honest dialogue about our images of each other, and why they don't reach. But most likely, it will probably be that we and they will continue to protect and perfect the image we personally need, by isolating ourselves, by rejecting social realities, by disliking the people's attitudes. There is no doubt that we change in our view of the host country much more than they change their movie view of *gringos*. But for both Ecuadorians and Volunteers, the process of personal communication and contact is painful and often futile. To paraphrase a Bob Dylan idea: We do not let them live in their dream, and they do not let us live in ours.

John Rothchild is a rural development Volunteer in Cuenca, Ecuador, where he works with the local newspaper on a communication project involving campesinos *in writing and receiving agricultural news. A Latin American Studies graduate of Yale, he studied at Quito's Central University as a Fulbright Scholar. Rothchild was managing editor of the* Yale Daily News *and worked summers for* The New York Times, El Mercurio *(Santiago, Chile) and the* St. Petersburg Times *(Fla.)*

Thailand

by Bob and Carol Kim Retka

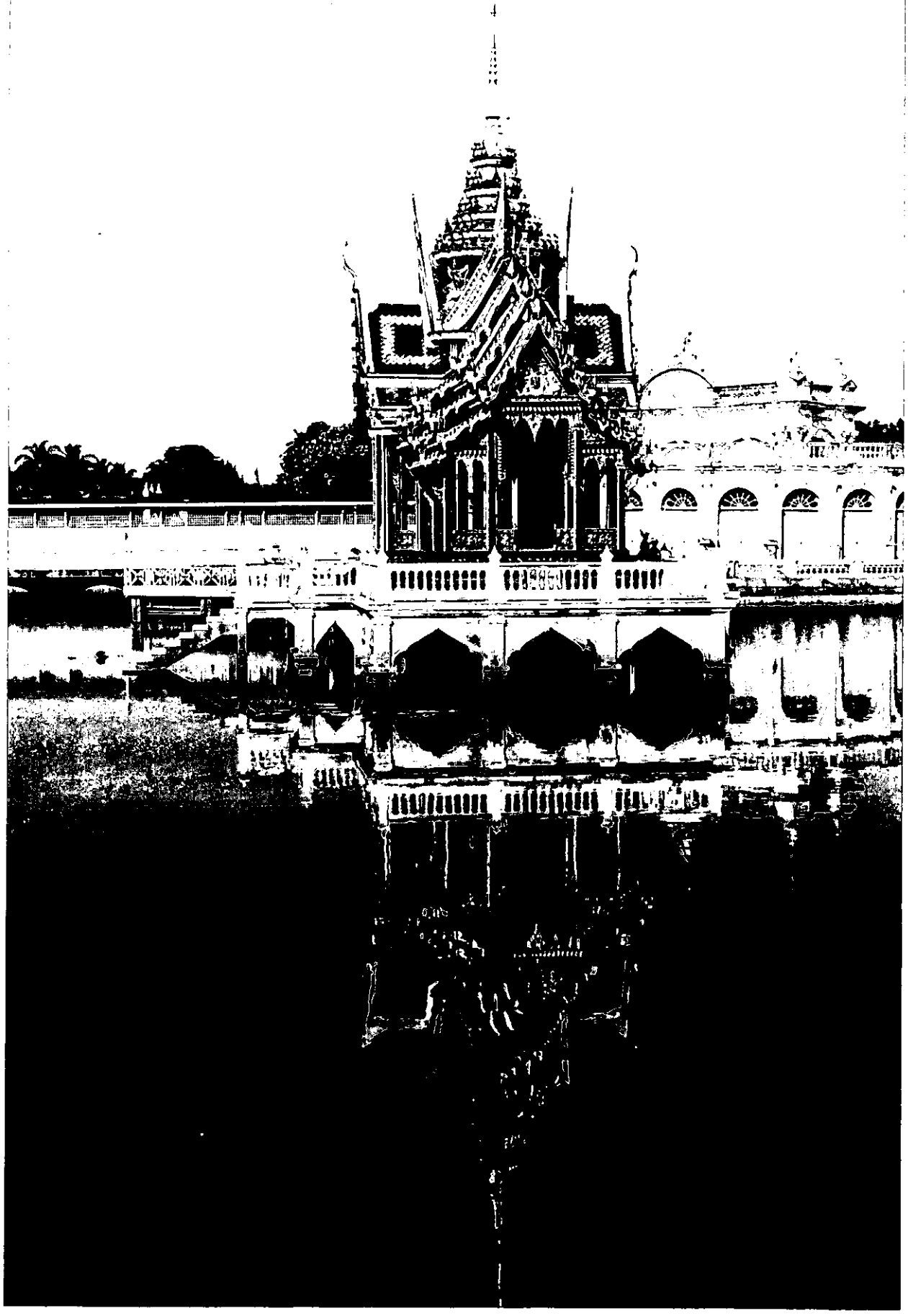


Reclining Buddha at Wat Temple Yai Chai Mongkhon in Ayudhya, second capital of Thailand

Sisters waiting to join a parade.

Students dancing the Golden Fingernail dance of Northern Thailand.

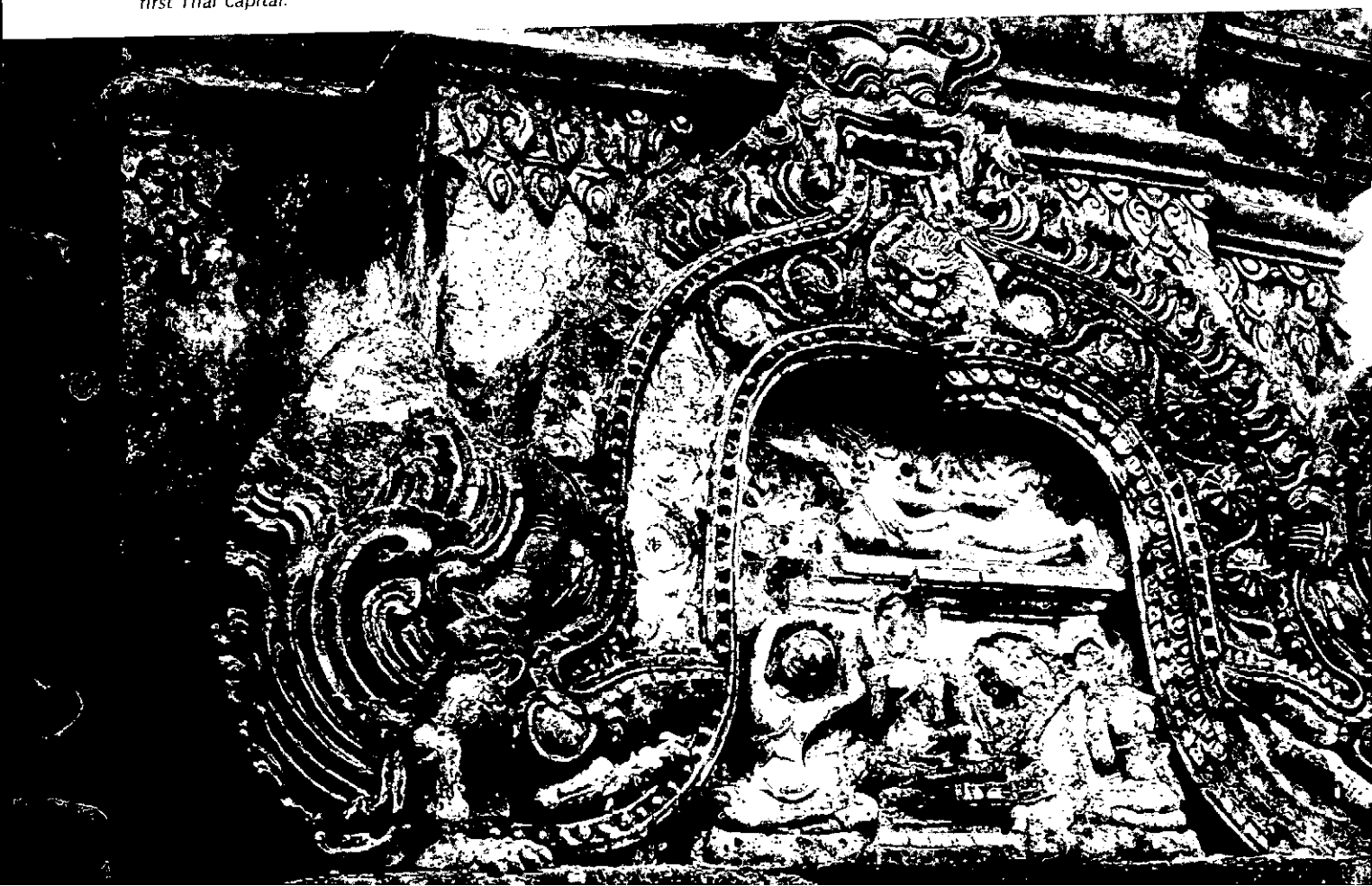
Vegetable vendor and customer in Uttaradit marketplace.



Memorial to King
Mongkon at Bang
In Palace.

Stone beast guarding
a temple entrance.

Stone relief at
Wat Maha Taat in Sukothai,
first Thai capital.



Students join in a ceremonial parade dressed as Thai farmers.

Taking a final exam in boxing—Thai style.

A Thai teacher waits for straggling students on mountain-top temple site in Sukothai.

Water buffalo bathing at sundown.

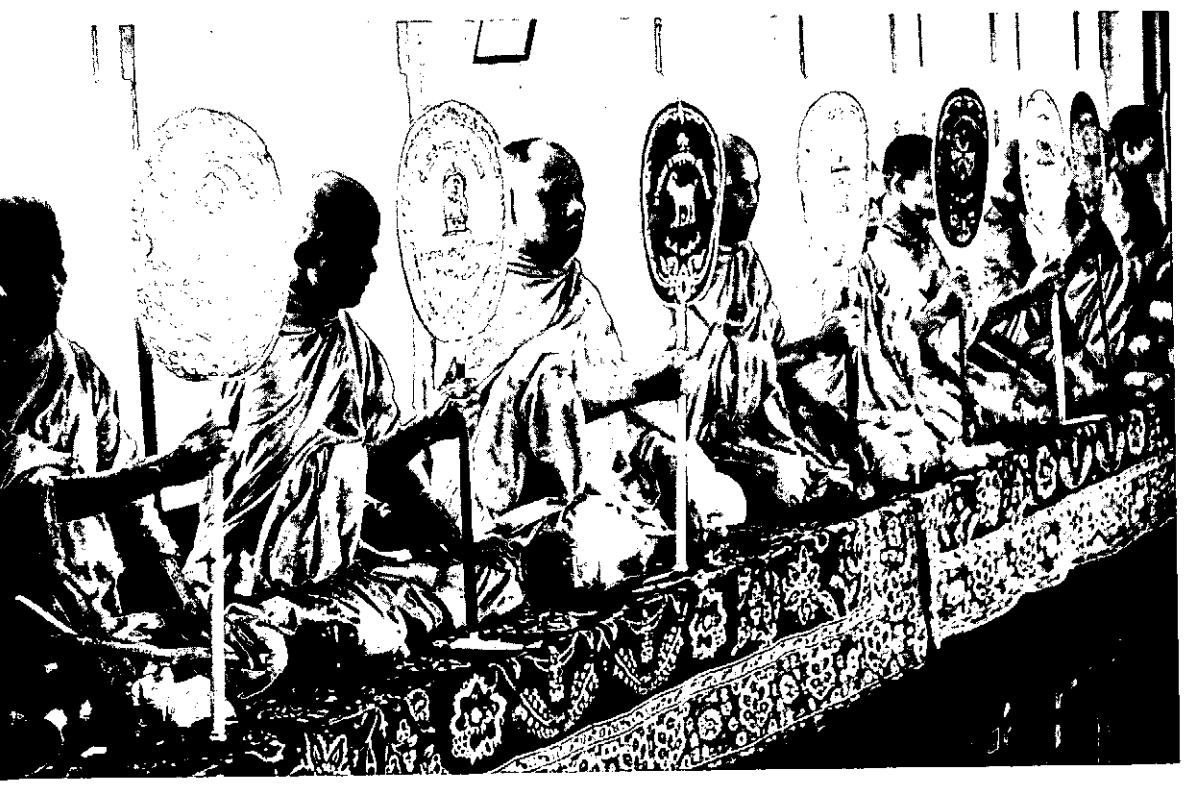
Thai child watches otters in Bangkok Zoo.

The lotus blooms in muddy waters.

Students move through the streets in a Buddhist ceremonial parade.

A newly-ordained Buddhist monk in Kamphaengphet.

Buddhist monks chanting behind their prayer fans.



Students practice a traditional Thai dance—the Ramwong.

Thai child from north-central plains.

While serving as Volunteer teachers in Thailand, Bob and Carol Kim Retka photographed the people of the north-central plains and hills who watch over the early capitals of their ancient kingdom.

The bell tower in temple comp near Ayudhya.

By DEBORAH JONES

Looking at the trainee: '68 model

Training must create for the trainee an environment as like as possible to the one he should face as a Volunteer—not a physical environment, but a conceptual one.

There is only one way to create it:

We tell Volunteers that Peace Corps is a flexible, "human" organization. Let us then develop flexible, "human" training programs.

We tell Volunteers that Peace Corps work depends on the one-to-one relationships developed between individuals and respects individual abilities. Let us then work with trainees as individuals and respect their separate talents.

We tell Volunteers that the Peace Corps believes in involving local people in decision-making. Let us then involve our trainees in decision-making.

We tell Volunteers that Peace Corps will call upon inner resources they didn't know they had. Let us then begin to show them in training what these resources are.

We tell Volunteers that the Peace Corps approach to change is unique because it starts from an understanding of and respect for traditional customs and beliefs. Let us then accustom our trainees to search for the reasons behind what they are told and what they observe.

TRAINING PHILOSOPHY

There really is no commonly accepted Peace Corps philosophy underlying training. But there certainly has been debate on the subject, and it has focussed squarely on the issue of skills versus attitudes. The debate is about priorities: Do we want technicians above all or do we want good Volunteers who are also good technicians? Can we have one without the other?

In real life, of course, programs do not fall into one of two neat incompatible groups—skills and attitudes. They fall along a linear scale with skills at one end and attitudes at the other. The weight last summer was on the technical end.

One program that approached the conceptual realism discussed earlier was an Iran program at Fresno State. Primarily agricultural, it assembled a highly skilled technical staff, concerned, competent returned Volunteers (RPCVs) and several host country professionals, and put them all under an experienced, warm and efficient project director. Trainees started off

Last summer teams of evaluators and other selected Peace Corps staff members visited 55 of the 105 training programs then in progress. Their reports were recently combined by evaluator Deborah Jones for an overview of training in the summer of '68.

In Miss Jones' report, "The Making of a Volunteer," two themes are central.

One is the belief that for the trainee, training represents the Peace Corps world, and that he will invest in the Peace Corps the values and attitudes he is exposed to in training. Consequently, there are fundamental approaches and attitudes each training program ought to exhibit (as illustrated through the suggestions for creating the right conceptual environment which begin this article).

The other theme is that of training authority—the absence of centralized authority since the Office of Training was abolished in late 1967, and the ambiguous nature of training responsibility since it was put in the hands of the four regions (Latin America, Africa, North Africa-Near East-South Asia, and East Asia-Pacific).

The evaluators did not call for a standardized training format or for the reinstatement of the old training office. But obviously they hope that in the future Peace Corps will exercise more control over the training done in its name. They say that contracts often are negotiated before a project director has been chosen and even before a full training proposal has been submitted; that control over staff selection is at best advisory; that sites frequently are chosen less on the basis of who can do training best than who has done it before; that more often than not Peace Corps does not state clearly what it wants.

In the report, distributed in December, 1968, was a recommendation that an agency-wide conference deal with the most critical training problems. But the regions, which have enjoyed that training authority since 1967, have turned off the conference idea and generally minimized the importance of the evaluators' report. Training directors in each region have used the report as a base for discussion among themselves and in staff meetings with former director Jack Vaughn and his deputy Brent Ashabranner. It was primary reading for the 74 participants in the Latin America region's training workshop the last week of March.

But, as one training coordinator said: "The report is theological, rather than operational. And we already have a lot of theologians in the Peace Corps."

Another training coordinator felt the report only "reopened the perennial questions about training that have been kicking around since 1962." The same person admitted, however, that one of the missing dimensions since the abolition of the Office of Training "is that only a region knows what's happening; we no longer share mistakes and successes worldwide."

THE VOLUNTEER plans to present excerpts from the report in two consecutive issues. This issue's selection is a synthesis of six of the subject areas covered by the report. Next month, we will reproduce the chapter on High Intensity Language Training and its effects on training programs during 1968, its first year of implementation.—The Editors

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by planting their fields, thus becoming involved at once in what they would be doing overseas. They got ag vocabulary and subject matter in their language classes and eventually did their field work in the host language. Their cross-cultural discussions, led by trained RPCVs, focussed on their jobs-to-be. Role-playing with the host nationals brought out the trainees' American cultural background and again related it to their jobs. The assessment staff saw its job primarily as counselling, not selection, and was interested and involved in all training activities.

The trainees weren't lectured to about the Peace Corps; they lived it. The guiding principle of the program was that unless a Volunteer had the ability to relate to his co-workers, his skills would avail him little.

Not the least of this program's achievements was its demonstration that the skills/attitudes dichotomy is false: The trainees got high quality technical preparation in close coordination with their personal growth and development.

It is also false to assume, as some technically oriented programs appear to do, that as skills training improves, the importance of attitude development decreases. A Volunteer with no technical background relies on his interpersonal skills because he has to; there is some evidence that improved professional skills, unless supported by strong training in interpersonal and cross-cultural relationships, produce insensitivity and arrogance. (The most professional RPCVs in training were often the most arrogant.)

In the area of philosophical debate over structured versus unstructured training, it is vital for training project staffs to give trainees a chance to exercise their judgment. It is astonishing how many programs last summer, in all or in some parts of training, demanded conformity and passivity of their trainees. A program that adopts a "father knows best" attitude, that inspires fear of de-selection in trainees who object to or question the direction of training, that looks for the "bland personalities or the strong people who have faked it" should belong to the Peace Corps Stone Age. Yet there were four of them in our sample.

The discovery vs. rote or experiential vs. passive learning debate should be resolved once and for all in favor of discovery/experience. As one evaluator put it:

"It seems inconsistent for the Peace Corps to cast trainees in a passive role in the period when they are introduced to the Peace Corps and many of their ideas about it are formed, and then demand an active, involved role from them overseas."

It does indeed. Yet trainees in 11 programs were offered dry lectures on area studies topics. Trainees in nine programs were never asked to risk themselves with people different from themselves.

On the other side is the Micronesia in-country TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) program.

Trainees were immediately placed with Micronesian families—one to a family. They lived there throughout training and used their family experiences as a basis for cross-cultural discussions. RPCVs at one site commented that trainees were asking questions they themselves would not have comprehended for several months.

The trainees practice-taught in Micronesian classes and observed mid-tour Volunteers. The field assessment officers (FAOs) acted as counselors to each trainee. Trainees asked—and answered—the questions. At no point was a Micronesian trainee told to sit still and listen. He was told to observe and participate and feel and think.

CHOICE OF TRAINING SITE

Environment is crucial to good training, and its development must start with Day One.

There are indications that faulty or haphazard scheduling and misinformation on bread-and-butter details rapidly create an impression of the Peace Corps as a well-meaning but inefficient, bumbling, red-tape organization whose procedures the wise trainee (and Volunteer) would do well to circumvent.

There are three general types of environment—academic, on-the-job, and community involvement.

The typical academic program holed up on a college campus. The trainees moved in the standard dorm/student union/classroom circuit, imbibing prescribed dosages of language, teacher training and area studies. At the end of nine weeks, they went into a ghetto neighborhood for two weeks. Somehow the intellectual exercises of the first nine weeks were to have induced the sea change that would enable them to profit from the second experience. They didn't, of course. There were seven like this in the sample.

Next is the on-the-job environment, created either stateside or in country. The exclusively on-the-job environment was rare, and occurred mostly in ag programs. In one, for example, trainees started out by planting gardens and caring for livestock. They got excellent technical support from staff thoroughly familiar with the host country's agriculture. On the whole, the trainees appreciated the program's businesslike quality.

The danger in this type of program is that, unless it is carefully structured, the trainees may deduce from their active involvement in ag work, usually for the first time, that that is all there is to it.

The third environment is community involvement, often done in conjunction with on-the-job training. The connection between such involvement and future service as a Volunteer is obvious enough in in-country programs; it is less perceptible in stateside programs. The health problems of American Indians may not be the same as those of the host country. The classes available for practice teaching may differ widely in age, size, experience and behavior from those the Volunteers will have overseas. It is up to the training staff to demonstrate clearly how such experiences are conceptually relevant to overseas service.

Last summer site choice took on new dimensions with the upsurge in in-country training. This had its roots both in a desire to make training as realistic as possible and in frustration with the results of U.S. training.

In-country training does offer the possibility of more realistic skills training and immediate immersion in the host country culture. But there are pitfalls in it. One of the more serious pertains to logistics and continuity in split programs (part of the training stateside and part overseas). Staff and trainees must be able to see how the two sections of training fit together.

This was done correctly by the Peru co-op project which started training at Escondido, Calif. The U.S. staff knew in some detail what the in-country staff had planned and tailored its own program to prepare the trainees to make the most of it. Each part of this program understood from the planning stages what the other's job was and how the pieces fit together. The personal relationship between the field and training staffs, and the dispatch of training staff members to Peru with the group kept the two parts in communication and balance.

The least successful split programs relied on correspondence; in a few instances, the training staff and the field did not communicate at all.

All three types of contractor (academic institutions, specialized contractors such as Westinghouse or General Learning Corporation and in-house centers) and in-country programs as well are equally likely to produce tedious, passive, deadening "academic" training, and they are equally capable of producing exciting, challenging, trainee-centered programs. The key factor is the kind of environment created at the site.

TRAINING STAFF

The most important activity those responsible for Peace Corps training can engage in is finding, training and keeping high quality staff. Last summer's training indicates that Peace Corps hasn't had much success either in actually doing that or in finding out how to do it.

A surprising number of staffs lacked training experience. As one evaluator said, it should be axiomatic that "We can't turn training over to people who are unfamiliar with the Peace Corps, training and the host country and expect them to provide good Peace Corps training." Yet we did turn over two of last summer's programs to people without any one of those three kinds of experience. We got poor training in both cases and have no one to blame but ourselves.

Also, it should be understood that staffs need time to jell before the trainees show up. Last summer those programs in which the entire staff was given general conceptual and methodological preparation were also those that gave a trainee's interpersonal and cross-cultural skills priority over the development of his technical skills. They were also the most cohesive. In several other programs, staff arrived almost with the trainees.

Peace Corps can and should exercise more control over the selection of project directors. For a start, it could issue guidelines to the contractors and make a serious attempt to see that they are adhered to. Since Peace Corps cannot fire a project director, it should have some say in his selection.

While RPCVs can make a major contribution to high quality training, they, too, need support and training. They usually are non-professionals in their technical fields, even though they may be very knowledgeable within a circumscribed area.

Since it will use the RPCVs in a technical capacity, the country directors who choose them appear to assume that training wants the most professional Volunteers. But those may be precisely the ones with the least ability or inclination to develop their interpersonal skills. Training does not need ex-Volunteers who have never ventured beyond the confines of their jobs and who consequently have never gotten into trouble. It needs ex-Volunteers who have poked their noses into their surroundings, who have tried to find out how things work, who have jostled circumstances occasionally and have made mistakes. Who better can incite trainees to ex-

plore and who better can tell them how to avoid the mistakes?

Increasingly, host country nationals hold jobs in the higher echelons of the training staffs. But far more important than the positions they hold is the way they are treated.

In seven projects they were clearly considered subsidiary personnel, of secondary importance. In another, the language coordinator obviously did not like the host nationals who were most of his staff. A third included a high proportion of them, but none were deeply involved in decision-making. One staff was consistently surprised when the host nationals turned in competent performances. Another staff excluded from the mid-boards the only host national on the site, an important official in the Ministry of Education.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Last summer's new look, self-assessment, is an attempt to eliminate the hints of sickness and therapy implicit in the old clinical psychologist's approach. Self-assessment assumes that in the vast majority of cases Peace Corps is dealing with healthy people. They may not know themselves too well and they certainly know little about the host country or their jobs, but they are perfectly capable of making rational decisions if given proper information.

The Kenya program run by Volunteer Training Specialists, Inc., demonstrated full understanding of self-assessment and what it entails. One of the FAOs was a specialist in cross-cultural training; the other, in group dynamics and interpersonal relations. Assessment became an integral part of training and occurred simultaneously with all other training activities. The entire staff was trying to produce a total Volunteer; they listened and offered advice and honest criticism. The trainees, too, realized that the major responsibility for deciding whether they would go overseas was theirs. In this situation the FAO became a "coordinator of assessment," not a "shrink."

Most of last summer's models—stateside and in-country—would have to be called transitional. They at least paid lip-service to self-assessment, and a majority incorporated some of the elements of it into their assessment process. Most did it fairly well. The weaknesses were due to an incomplete understanding of what self-assessment models require in staff time and involvement, in information and in trainee participation.

Additionally, there must be a match between assessment and selection. It does no good for a program to stress self-assessment if the field selection officers (FSOs) are going to deliver an initial pitch interpreted as "okay, we're watching you." Nor does it do any good to tell trainees they are to assess themselves and then have an FSO who makes technical proficiency the sole criterion for selection.

SENSITIVITY

Area and cross-cultural studies and sensitivity training all deal with aspects of sensitivity: Sensitivity to one's own attitudes and one's effect on others; sensitivity, based on knowledge, to the culture and beliefs of the host country and to one's impact on it and its citizens. There is no doubt that sensitivity in this broad sense is an essential part of Peace Corps training, yet the weight of the evidence is that the development of such interpersonal and cross-cultural skills, which should be the integrating principle of Peace Corps training, is usually peripheral.

Area studies are designed to give the trainees factual information about a country. Certainly they need this information, but just as certainly, *telling* them does not ensure that they will hear. All too often training fails to present the material in a way that encourages them to absorb and use it.

The most effective presentations of information last summer were made in programs where trainees got their information through case studies and role-playing, through community involvement, through informal conversations with host nationals and RPCVs, through technical studies and specially developed language materials.

Cross-cultural studies are more personal than area studies. They force a trainee to confront, physically and intellectually, a world in which he is the curiosity. They should lead a trainee to understand his cultural biases and his personal reactions to difference. At the same time they should convey an understanding of how the host society functions, and why, and an understanding of how the Volunteer is likely to be received in that society.

Particularly at a U.S. site, the host nationals ought to be the major source of cross-cultural information. Several programs used HCNs well. One had a binational staff where the HCNs had just as much authority and responsibility as the American trainers; another held no cross-cultural discussions without an HCN as a co-group leader. In many cases, however, host nationals seemed to be considered language instructors first and host nationals second. In several cases the American staff behaved as if they knew more about the host country than the HCNs.

Off the training site cross-cultural training took the form of community involvement. Overseas, of course, the communities with which trainees got involved were similar to those they would live in as Volunteers. In the U.S., community involvement took the form of ghetto or reservation or labor camp live-ins. Neither kind of involvement is inherently more suited than the other to developing cross-cultural awareness. On the one hand, the trainee acquires a fuller understanding of host country culture; on the other, of American culture.

Sensitivity training lies at the other end of the scale from the detached, factual area studies presentation. Over a third of last summer's programs had some type of group work, usually in the form of development groups.

The most successful groups were those under professional leadership. If RPCVs are to engage in sensitivity training at all, they will need not only intensive training but professional backstopping and close supervision throughout the course of the program. Of the 11 programs with a formal group work component, however, only two had professional support and only five were professionally led.

For best results, sensitivity training must be related to the job overseas. Where it was mixed with cross-cultural material and carefully related to the overseas role, it proved its potential.

TECHNICAL STUDIES

There are four general points applicable to all types of technical training.

It should be relevant to the job to be done overseas; that means good in-country programming and adequate communication from the field. In most cases, the technical aspect was relevant, but there was one program in which the trainees departed over-

seas after practicing skills that had no relation to what they would be doing in country, and others in which trainees with professional skills got little technical training, or none at all, because no one could figure out how to give it to them.

It should rely heavily on supervised experiential learning. No one will ever know whether he is able to teach until he has tried it, whether he can fix a tractor until he has done it himself. The quotient of experience ran pretty thin in some cases; one example is the teachers' group which got only four hours in the classroom.

It should take into account the individual experience and needs of the trainees. In one program a trainee with two years of prior teaching experience in the host country received exactly the same teacher training as his colleagues, many of whom probably had never heard of the host country before being invited to serve there.

It should be done in a context which emphasizes the need to understand the cultural influences underlying traditional practices, and also the pressures weighing on the Volunteers' counterparts. Peace Corps stresses that the effective teacher is one who understands the background of his students, yet the evaluators found no serious attempt, as a part of technical training, to acquaint future teachers with the stories and legends which are the local child's *Winnie the Pooh*, or to teach the traditional beliefs about nature, the spirits, or the beginnings of the world. Certainly none of last summer's teaching programs tried it.

To send a village-level health group overseas, as was done last summer, with next to no knowledge of the health practices in the host country or the taboos responsible for them, is to deprive that group of its best chance to be effective. And to send a group to a country where the development of strong working relationships with counterparts is both critical and fearfully difficult, without any introduction to the problem's historical and cultural causes, is self-defeating.

The point is not that the development of the good Volunteer should precede that of the good teacher or health worker or what have you, but that without adequate attention to cultural influences, Peace Corps will have neither.

Letters *to the Volunteer*

Ethic: hands off

To The Volunteer:

In the beginning there was *not* programming. Perhaps Ward Hower's failure to acknowledge that, when he argues that the Peace Corps is putting too much emphasis on programming and neglecting the "Volunteer ethic" (February Volunteer), is due to the fact that he didn't come to the Peace Corps until it was three years old. What he perhaps does not know is that programming was scarcely even heard of before then. In the old days Volunteers by the hundreds—perhaps thousands—went overseas firmly believing that their goal was to communicate, and the Peace Corps sustained that belief by solemnly training the Volunteers in the evils of Communism and the glorious history of the United States of America. The Volunteers' outcries were immediate and loud; they began the moment the Volunteer set foot on foreign turf and realized he could speak only English, the moment he stepped inside a classroom and realized he hadn't a clue about how to stop the noise, the moment he tried to explain himself to local farmers.

Shriver listened. The wheels of the bureaucracy ground forward. By 1964 the notion that a Volunteer had to have a job and some inkling of how to do it had infused almost everyone in the agency. It was a hard-won battle, and it was waged by those who found out first-hand that being friendly not only wasn't enough but wasn't the point—the Volunteers, the bearers of the "Volunteer ethic" which Hower now claims to be defining.

Some of us who were in non-programs in the early days and who came to Peace Corps Washington afterwards have watched with pleasure and pride while the Peace Corps developed itself. The days of the numbers game are over, to the regret of no one who viewed its results objectively. In its place has grown the idea that Volunteers can be useful if they are carefully placed. I am not talking about the very good Volunteers, whom Hower rightly says do well no matter how the Peace Corps abuses them, nor am I talking about the weak Volunteers, who won't do well no matter how the Peace Corps helps them—for that reason it shouldn't accept them in the first place. I am talking about the average Volunteers (80 per cent of the Peace Corps, according to some estimates), people who are capable of good work if not all the cards in the deck are stacked against them. If giving Volunteers the chance to be useful puts the Peace Corps in the category of a "development agency" then I can only say that somebody up there must like us. Plead guilty, Peace Corps, and be proud of your integrity.

Yes, Virginia, the Peace Corps is a development agency—or is trying hard to be and should be trying. It is a development agency because the people among whom Volunteers work have needs greater than can be filled by the smiling faces of a dozen or a hundred Americans. Whether the Peace Corps should exist at all is, of course, an arguable point in some circles. But if it should exist, it should exist to help and not just to "communicate." In America we have the leisure to sit around communicating. But that is a luxury of affluence; it is not available to many people in the developing world. "Africa is tired of the smiling Volunteer," a rep told me last year; and his point is indisputable.

In any case, the Peace Corps doesn't need to concern itself with the "Volunteer ethic," if that means motivation and the determination to do a job well. The Volunteer has those things when he comes to the Peace Corps, or should have if Selection has done its job. They are the reason he applied in the first place, in most cases. Instead, the Peace Corps should worry about how to utilize that ethic for the good of the countries in which it is work-

ing. I resent having someone try to define my "ethic," as I resented having a Peace Corps official come out from Washington for our close-of-service-conference and tell us he was there to "help you crystallize your experience," whatever that means. Don't touch my ethic! Just give me clues about how to put it to work. The gospel is my business; the tools for its implementation are the Peace Corps'!

PEGGY ANDERSON
Former Volunteer and evaluator
Washington, D.C.

Toward a better job

TO THE VOLUNTEER:

I sincerely hope that Ward Hower's "Defining the Volunteer ethic" (February VOLUNTEER) represents a purely personal point of view which should by now be totally irrelevant around Peace Corps Washington. Such nonsense as Hower has turned out might have been amusing had it been dug out of the files from 1961, but it is alarming that the deputy director of the Office of Evaluation should entertain such mysticism in 1969.

By his definition of criteria for judging programs—for making the decisions as to what Volunteers should be doing—we should expect Hower to send all evaluators out to look for "signs" that the Peace Corps is changing the world. If a good Volunteer is "a bearer of the Volunteer ethic," what is there for the Office of Evaluation to evaluate?

More to the heart of the problem, many people recognized at least five years ago that Peace Corps had made a contribution to the concept of voluntarism; other nations have begun similar programs, and even the United States has followed suit here at home. This is well and good, but it is only an interesting byproduct of what development work the agency was doing. Using Hower's allusion to art, he would have us believe that Pablo Picasso should have stopped painting 40 years ago and spent these last 40 years priding himself on influencing other painters. The Peace Corps "made it" this far because it was a fairly good example, not merely an example; and the only way to continue to "bear the Volunteer ethic" is to do a much better job in the future.

And doing a better job means better programming, more effective development thinking, and above all a concentration on the host country rather than on the Volunteer and his neat "ethic".

JAMES S. KOLB
Former Volunteer
Alexandria, Va.

Selection: the key factor

TO THE VOLUNTEER:

Regarding Ward Hower's article "Defining the Volunteer ethic," (February VOLUNTEER), I would like to express my concurrence and add a few Ceylon cents: That THE VOLUNTEER represents the thinking of Washington is all too evident, but for purposes of clarification, we may want to look at a few factors in the field of results of program planning.

Somewhere along the line, someone decided to push a big recruiting drive in the U.S. The increase in numbers which you so proudly displayed has had little positive effect on the sinking opinion of person-to-person contact, staff to Volunteer.

The quality of Volunteers having taken a nose dive, we noticed a corresponding increase in the amount of time spent on: (1) analysis of the same problems—perhaps for author edification or identification purposes, and (2) the rules and regulations which are necessary, but by definition incomplete in attempting to control the immature representative that too often sails through training, only to cause a very visible lowering of group morale and effectiveness. The next step is infringement of the suggested (and reasonable) code of conduct, which in turn invites more restrictions on the part of the person in charge. Of course the program must be planned out: People need jobs, and among other things these problems must be worked out.

All I'm saying is that here is one variable that can be and should be better controlled. The selection of adults for an adult job should be the basic important factor in Peace Corps.

Because the selection of adults had increasingly fallen into the shade as an important criterion, and because THE VOLUNTEER is the expression of this mistake, I notice more readers being diverted to more relevant publications such as the *National Geographic*, or if they are interested in facts and figures, the *World Almanac*. People (for some unknown reason) like to read articles concerning other people as long as those articles offer fresh insights, honest approaches and common sense solutions. They will not long endure a bunch of political bureaucratic evaluation which does not rest on solid, simple horse sense.

DICK STANLEY
Colombo, Ceylon

Programs based on needs

TO THE VOLUNTEER:

". . . It is better for the host country, for the United States, for peace and friendship and for the world to have a good Volunteer doing any job at all than to have a bad or indifferent Volunteer assigned to the most relevant, structured, need-filling and nation-building work that is to be done there."

So says Ward Hower in his February article, "Defining the Volunteer ethic."

I would like to discuss this statement briefly in relation to a real situation, the TEFL program in Tunisia.

The language of Tunisia is a dialect of Arabic which differs radically from the standard literary language which is taught in the schools. This standard literary Arabic is taught for six hours a week. French is also taught for six hours a week. English is taught for four hours. Simple addition gives a total of 16 hours a week devoted to language. The average school week comprises 32 hours of study.

Thus, the current situation in Tunisia is this: Every student by law spends half his time in school studying an assortment of three different languages, none of which is similar to the language which everyone speaks on the street. (Imagine an American studying Latin, Chinese and Japanese for a rough parallel.)

What are the needs of Tunisia? Relatively simple and direct. Water must be found, the land must be reclaimed, agriculture must be made more productive, the population must be fed and housed decently. The Tunisian people want to establish industry as it becomes possible, but first on the list comes agricultural development.

Now, in my school, agriculture is not studied at all. Most of the students don't make it through school and they drop out with an assortment of linguistic accomplishments which is of little or no use when they're back with the tomatoes again.

The country is in a linguistic tangle—there is no national language, people can't decide whether to speak

Arabic or French, the newspapers come in two languages, purists and enthusiasts abound on both sides, conversation often takes place in three languages (dialectical Arabic, literary Arabic, and French)—and a wee little boy comes up to me and says, "What you do here, mister?" "Oh, I'm teaching English."

What? Will you repeat that? What possible, what conceivable use can there be in such an undertaking? You see, the possibility arises that you may not only be failing to accomplish anything worthwhile, but that your actions are essentially negative and would be better left undone: Let the students study agriculture instead of (strangled noises) English.

Now, what I would propose to Mr. Hower, in relation to his statement above, is this: Take a planeload of randomly mixed people, who are not yet "good" or "bad" Volunteers, and put them into this program, and *how will they develop?* How many are going to become good, cheerful workers, start English clubs, receive much beyond a quizzical look and "discipline problems" from their students? After all, these students know when they're wasting their time.

I might suggest an answer. Mr. Steiner, the NANESA director, dropped by a while ago and said that we seemed in fair shape but lacked "spark." Is this because people sent on airplanes to Tunisia are generally "indifferent" people, or might it have something to do with the program?

GEOFFREY PUTERBAUGH

Gabes, Tunisia

A face-to-face debate

To THE VOLUNTEER:

THE VOLUNTEER is to be commended on presenting two excellent and divergent views on the Peace Corps *raison d'etre* in the February issue. A face-to-face debate between Ward Hower and Dale Deason could hardly have been better.

Hower says Peace Corps "is making a fetish of programming" and is consequently becoming "a development agency instead of a Volunteer movement." According to Hower, "A good Volunteer is a bearer of the Volunteer ethic" of "peace and friendship."

Deason, on the other hand, maintains that certain "Peace Corps lovers" are so "enthralled with the Peace Corps 'idea' they see no necessity for going beyond the basic situation in which the young Americans work with and help 'natives'." Consequently, "the complexities of development and programming receive little attention."

Hower contends that "What a Volunteer does is important but it is infinitely more important that he do it as a Volunteer." He goes on to say that as a development agency, "Peace Corps' performance and potential are relatively insignificant; as a Volunteer movement it might change the world."

Deason agrees that the "people to people" humanistic aspect "is the single and most crucial element of what the Peace Corps is and should be," but that "these aspects alone cannot justify a program." According to Deason, "Sound programming should involve an effective combination of 'people to people' factors and relevancy to development". He concludes: "The unique opportunity and challenge of the Peace Corps is to combine the two and become a more effective force for change."

Which is the realist and which is the idealist? Is Peace Corps capable of becoming an agent of change or is this unrealistic? Can Peace Corps justify itself primarily as an agent of peace and friendship or is this too idealistic? Should volunteer groups such as Peace Corps permanently establish themselves in countries to promote better communications and mutual understanding and trust, or should they be temporary catalysts for self-help, self-reliance and development? Those are their questions.

DON WOLFENSBERGER
Former Volunteer

Alexandria, Va.

On social revolution

To THE VOLUNTEER:

The article "Anatomy of a Peace Corps failure" (February VOLUNTEER) is a very subtle analysis of the problems involved in Peace Corps participation in a rural education program in the Dominican Republic. It is to be commended for its self-criticism. But I find one thing missing—a consideration of the *possibility* that a social revolution rather than better coordination between AID and the Peace Corps is the solution to the "general Dominican lethargy about rural education."

The Dominican Republic's Caribbean neighbor, Cuba, which presumably evidenced this same "lethargy" 10 years ago, has since 1959 doubled its percentage of GNP spent on education, raised primary school enrollment to 100 per cent of all eligible children, made education available to thousands of previously deprived *campesinos*, and in a single year (1961) taught over 700,000 adults to read and write. Cuba, whose social revolution has succeeded despite an invasion sponsored by the U.S.A., stands in stark contrast to the Dominican Republic where a possible social revolution was nipped in the bud by a successful U.S. invasion. No amount of well-intentioned coordination between U.S. aid agencies is capable of doing for the Dominican people a minimal part of what the Cuban government does for its own people.

If we are interested in *real* social change, perhaps we should look beyond the subtleties of U.S. aid programs and ingenious non-paternalistic Peace Corps programs and look at what a nation can do for itself when its people are united and when it has thrown off the burden of U.S. domination and exploitation.

JOSEPH H. ENRIGHT
Former Volunteer

Ithaca, N.Y.

'People' factor foremost

To THE VOLUNTEER:

Dale Deason in his "Anatomy of a Peace Corps failure" (February VOLUNTEER) expresses perfectly the attitude and the point of view that helped to cause the embarrassing pullback of Peace Corps from the Dominican Republic teacher training program. Mr. Deason, who was a very active and ambitious Volunteer during the 18 months he served, apparently sees the "failure" as one of programming in that, if the Peace Corps was going to change the quality of Dominican education, it should have tried to do more in more areas than just try to teach Dominican teachers to teach better. Peace Corps, it seems, should have attempted a shake-up of the "old system" from top to bottom—thus even out-doing AID in achieving "instant progress" towards national development. While Mr. Deason is not so explicit, the implication of his remarks is perfectly clear—the teacher-training program "failed" because it was not ambitious enough.

In the first place the teacher-training program did not "fail"; it continues to exist today and it has already made a substantial impact on the hearts and minds of many Dominican teachers. Secondly, the pull-back that did take

place took place precisely because Peace Corps over-extended itself and tried to do things it does not do well.

The United States Peace Corps, for better or for worse, is composed of a group of idealistic, inexperienced young people whose greatest asset is their exuberance, their youth, their enthusiasm. As "community developers," as "teacher trainers," as "co-op specialists," they are hardly to be taken seriously. Their short-range impact on economic and social development is really of so little import that, if the Peace Corps had to be justified on that basis, it would be in serious trouble.

What Peace Corps can do and what it does do well is encourage, exhort, inspire and influence. By our commitment to social justice, to economic equality, to freedom; by our willingness to spend two years of our lives in a poor country making fools of ourselves much of the time; by being hopeful and infusing hope into the hearts of the despondent; by all these things we influence people, we change attitudes, and we change ourselves. Hopefully we learn humility, compassion and respect for the people and the institutions of the so-called "underdeveloped countries."

The minute Peace Corps begins to take its role as "developer" too seriously, it gets very frustrated. That is what happened in the D.R. teaching program. From the very beginning Volunteers were told, in an absolutely dictatorial fashion, that they were "professors," professionals who had serious job commitments that were of all-consuming importance. Schedules, reports, fancy equipment, "teams" of Volunteers living too close together, close supervision, conferences, curriculum sheets that had to be followed to the letter—all were made integral parts of the program. Very ambitious goals were defined and Volunteers became committed to them.

From the very beginning, the Volunteers were unhappy. Nobody knew why. Everything looked beautiful on the statistical sheets. Peace Corps Washington was ecstatic, but something was wrong. Finally, the D.R. staff had the good sense to recognize the problem and step back.

The Dominican Republic education program is basically a sound one. Volunteers can make a substantial contribution to the atmosphere and substance of Dominican rural education; but most important, the program is a

Memorandum

TO : The field DATE: May, 1969
FROM : The editors
SUBJECT: Invitations and honors

Returned volunteers from all nations are invited to attend a camp in southern France this summer. Former Swiss volunteers are organizing the camp, which will be held at the end of July, and will include "discussions, excursions and sports." Interested persons should write: Margrit Gnägi-Jegge, Swiss Volunteer Association, Wallerstrasse 3, 5000 Aarau, Switzerland.

□ □ □

Country directors may find relief in this item by knowing they can't please everybody. On the questionnaire used in termination conferences, there is a series of boxes where a Volunteer indicates by month the times he suffered depression. This is followed by three questions: What caused your depression? How did you feel? What helped you get over it? To which a couple of India Volunteers in the same group recently replied:

PCV 1	HOT SEASON	SWEATY	RAINY SEASON
PCV 2	RAINY SEASON	COOPED UP	HOT SEASON

□ □ □

Science has honored a Peace Corps Volunteer by naming a rare snake after him. The discoverer was Frank DeSaix, now in his fourth year of teaching in Kenya. The snake is "Atheris Desaixi" of Kenya. It is related to a species found in western Africa and its appearance in Kenya seems to indicate that the West African rain forest had, in previous times, extended into East Africa.

□ □ □

After reporting that two New Zealand Volunteers were working at an altitude of 13,000 feet, the newsletter of the International Secretariat for Volunteer Service issued a challenge: "Who can top this?" Among the responses was one from a Peace Corps Volunteer who worked at the Choroloque Southern Comibol Mines in Bolivia at 15,421 feet. Another respondent from Bolivia observed: "Does man enjoy working and living so far above the rest of the world? Our educated guess is 'no.' One-upmanship in lofty volunteer worksites really isn't worth the effort."

□ □ □

With an eye for news, Kenya correspondent James Kushner has submitted this photograph of Josephine Moikobu, his host country's entry in the Miss World Contest in London some months ago. Miss Moikobu was a Swahili instructor for Kushner's agricultural training group in Milwaukee back in 1966 and has worked in other training programs as well. Currently she is teaching and doing research in sociology at the University College in Nairobi and expects to complete her Ph.D. studies at Syracuse University.

terrific "in." It is a way to meet good people and to influence them and be influenced by them. The "people-to-people" approach, to take issue with Mr. Deason, is the most important single factor in Peace Corps success or failure. Because it was de-emphasized and discouraged in the D.R. education program, the Volunteers did not feel fulfilled. When the Dominican government would not—or could not—meet its commitments to this very ambitious program, there was disillusionment. It was all in vain, the teacher will not get raises, the equipment in schools will be non-existent. So what was all this effort for?

In my opinion, the effort represents our inadequate expression of our love for others—that should be enough—that is why Peace Corps can be the most enriching and beautiful experience of a lifetime.

MARK P. WIDOFF
Former D.R. Volunteer
Somerville, Mass.

CUSO comments

To THE VOLUNTEER:

I was very pleased to read in the February issue of THE VOLUNTEER the letter on host national writers by former Volunteer Ella Doran. I couldn't agree more with every point she made.

A non-American myself, one of the first things I noted when I arrived in Bolivia was the "close-knit groups" which she mentioned. The groups consisted and consist of the diplomatic corps, the religious (not only the Americans) and, of course, the Peace Corps. This may be acceptable from the point of view of the diplomats, but for the religious and the volunteer organization there is no excuse. After all, we *do* go to other countries to help (at least that's the primary motivation). And if that help is given by building a good rapport with the common people, then the more success.

With reference to the "nationals" writing an appraisal (or a severe criticism, whatever the case may be) of the foreign help given to their country, I am in full agreement. This would be an extremely effective contribution on their part and an invaluable positive criticism on ours. We (Canadian University Service Overseas), like you, have taken this initiative and have approached some nations with the topic of foreign help.

With respect to keeping the "quality of the Volunteers high and quantity low," I have one comment. A while back I went to a concert with a Bolivian friend. On the program one could read the following: The National Symphony Orchestra, directed by Gerald Brown. As you probably know, Gerald Brown is a Peace Corps Volunteer. When the concert ended, my friend turned to me and said: "That's the type of Volunteer Bolivia wants and needs."

A. FANTILLO
CUSO part-time co-ordinator
La Paz, Bolivia

Bad Peace Corps ads

To THE VOLUNTEER:

Recently, while driving home late one evening with the radio on, I happened to hear one of Peace Corps' latest advertisements.

With a bit of enchanting African music in the background, the announcer calmly described the experience of a Volunteer in Malawi who writes songs which he sings over Malawi radio "15 times a day." Having established the impression that this could happen to any prospective Volunteer, the announcer closes with the tempting thought that "You too can be a star!" Just call Peace Corps, etc.

This Madison Avenue approach strikes at one of the most fundamental of Peace Corps' ills. It perpetuates and lends credence to the romantic illusion of a Peace Corps which serves as a vehicle for widely-publicized acts of goodness which leave host country nationals begging for more.

One of the crucial tasks of Peace Corps recruiting should be a conscious attempt to dispel these romantic illusions about Peace Corps. "You too can be a star"-type recruiting only heightens the misconceptions of the prospective Volunteer, not to mention the fact that widespread recognition should not be an incentive for joining the Peace Corps.

ROGER S. LEEDS
Former Volunteer
Washington, D. C.

Check the yellow pages

To THE VOLUNTEER:

In reference to Margo Conk's "plea" (February VOLUNTEER) I, too, would be interested to know how many Volunteers are in unstructured situations, withdrawing into their booklockers because they can't find a suitable job. Then we would know where selection has been undiscriminating.

If she and Sally Yudelman (October VOLUNTEER) are looking for an employment agency, there are many to be found in the yellow pages under "E." Or if they want a 100 per cent bona fide, concrete, structured *job*, they could have gone to one of many agencies or foundations supplying overseas teachers, *professional* C.D. workers, nurses, economists, etc., such as AID, CARE, USIS, Community Development Foundation. . . . But the surest bet would have been for them to find a job in the U.S.

PETE WOOD
Machakos, Kenya

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