

Peace Corps Termination Report

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Whatever the one generation may learn from the other, that which is genuinely human no generation learns from the foregoing. In this respect every generation begins primitively, has no different task from that of every previous generation, nor does it get further, except in so far as the preceding generation shirked its task and deluded itself. This authentically human factor is passion, in which also the one generation perfectly understands the other and understands itself. Thus no generation has learned from another to love, no generation begins at any other point than at the beginning, no generation has a shorter task assigned to it than had the preceding generation, and if here one is not willing like the previous generations to stop with love but would go further, this is but idle and foolish talk.

Søren Kierkegaard



After looking through the suggested termination report outline which with surgical precision divides up "the Peace Corps experience" into ten streamlined compartments, I decided to junk the recommended outline in favor of a free flow account about how I understand my thirty-two months working as a Peace Corps volunteer in Thailand.

Perhaps I am more than just a bit presumptuous in thinking that my service in Thailand allows me the privilege to free lance my way through Peace Corps ideology and practice, a subject more suited to the superficial omniscience of the cross-cultural dilettantes so much in abundance in the Peace Corps bureaucracy these days, but somehow I would rather let my own opinions stand, even if no readers are to be found among the clowns and wizards on the cross-cultural band-wagon.

It was you, after all, who are responsible for my being here in the first place, you who told me in your propaganda rhetoric before I came that my "mission as a Peace Corps volunteer" would be to "assist the people of Thailand" through those agencies of the Royal Thai government by which the people could be reached, you who told me that in my mission I would "symbolize the Peace Corps and the United States" to the Thai people, you who told me that I would be an "agent for peaceful change" joining in "the universal struggle for human dignity", you who told me that by joining with you I would be getting into the thick of life by following the Peace Corps' "philosophy of involvement." I am not putting words into your mouth for this is what you told the American people and countless volunteers. Some of us believed you, others did not seem to worry about it, but after so many months here,



it occurs to me that some of you bureaucrats are not aware of how the Peace Corps' verbal masturbations have translated into volunteer assignments.

Many of us, in the "spirit of service," as an "invited guest" among the Thai people, did not misunderstand our somewhat less than luxurious living standard. We understood that the life-style of a volunteer must "communicate basic allegiance to the people we were working with," and so we went our individual ways day by day trying to get along in a different culture, innocently thinking that "demonstrated competence in cross-cultural matters would win your co-workers respect, and that genuine interest in people and surroundings would be reciprocated by host country nationals."

Along with the "freedom afforded to us as volunteers," we accepted the responsibility of being a participant in the Peace Corps' attempt to be "in service of an idea;" as the Peace Corps handbook told us, we were Americans for whom "the imperfections and inequities of this world inspired neither despair nor acceptance, but rather a quiet, often good-humored resolve to make things better." We said goodbye to the "armchair generals of social change," those "passive spectators" who were concerned but remained personally uncommitted, joining others who "demonstrated their faith" by "helping to eliminate the hunger and disease, the ignorance and injustice, and above all, the hopelessness in which human frustration and conflict breed." For these and many other reasons we joined with you, some of us convinced that service in the Peace Corps, unlike service in the armed forces, would provide benefits instead of destruction for the people we



would be living with.

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But something was happening to some of us, even though we never thought to doubt the Peace Corps' ideology at first and worked as best we could, some of us in impossible situations. Our commitment saw us through at first, but gradually the commitment itself became suspect.

A chasm began growing between Peace Corps bureaucrats (who were beginning to approach the astute acumen of the experts in the United States Agency for International Development.) and volunteers. A feeling that Peace Corps had created a permanent bureaucracy out of itself based on the exploitation of a volunteer's idealism began to find expression after volunteers began to question and are still questioning as to why the bureaucrats were permitted to live like kings when a volunteer had to make a go of it at several times less. The Peace Corps bureaucracy had developed to the point where besides catering to the needs of its volunteers and host country nationals, it was forced to cater to its own survival, much as any other bureaucratic organization in the United States government. One began to wonder whether the bureaucracy considered its own survival more important than its volunteers working at the bottom. A volunteer who stopped to think about it had to wonder whether or not he himself was being exploited when all along he had been convinced that he was helping the exploited in his host country.

Joseph Blatchford, then the new Peace Corps Director, sensed that something was in the air and immediately set out to change the direction the wind was blowing. In an



article written for the October issue of Foreign Affairs, 1970, entitled, "The Peace Corps: Making It in the Seventies," Mr. Blatchford told us of the new directions he was taking the Peace Corps so that volunteers with required skills could be recruited to meet the "high priority needs of developing nations." An international volunteer service was envisioned so that volunteer projects would not be seen as being strictly American undertakings. Returned volunteers would be utilized to relate their work abroad directly to needs at home in the United States.

And yet, the Peace Corps Director did not meet head-on the accusation that he himself pointed out had been leveled at the Peace Corps by others and that some of us had been thinking about while on assignment, namely that the Peace Corps is indeed tainted by the Vietnam War, is indeed simply an arm of the Establishment, and is merely the most tolerable part of an intolerable government. Mr. Blatchford mentioned that "an organized and vocal minority of returned volunteers call the Peace Corps 'the smile on the devil's policy,' "but he never deigned to reply.

It was as if Mr. Blatchford was trying to avoid announcing the death knoll of the Peace Corps, even though as he saw it, the Peace Corps would not be the Peace Corps as we had known it. In fact, the Peace Corps Director felt compelled to answer the accusation that Peace Corps would become a junior AID. The Peace Corps would not become the "haven of professionals come to practice their trade among the élite," he told us.

In the argument between change and/or continuity, Mr. Blatchford tried to affirm both by retaining the name of the organization but changing the directions the organization would take. Thus he thought he could change by means of rhetoric what he saw as the "beginning of the end for the



Peace Corps," into the "end of the beginning." Quite a trick if he could have accomplished it.

What Mr. Blatchford succeeded in doing was to extend the life expectancy of the Peace Corps as a bureaucracy when, in fact, its effectiveness as a volunteer organization was being subjected to attacks from all sides, even host country nationals and volunteers. Had the Peace Corps Director immediately destroyed the Peace Corps in favor of an international organization of volunteers (without any ties to the CIA and the like as is the case for International Volunteer Service in Laos and Vietnam), he might have pointed the Peace Corps into a new and creative direction, but he chose instead to retain the Peace Corps bureaucracy, add some innovations, and thereby hope to win our allegiance.

I suggest that Mr. Blatchford failed on all counts because he did not have the foresight to get rid of the Peace Corps bureaucracy in one fell swoop, thereby falling prey to his own conclusions. As he told us:

The world is long on plans today, but short on implementation because somehow the grand designs break down before someone carries them to the level of the people. This is where the Peace Corps must be found in the 1970s - near enough to the impoverished and disenfranchised to understand their problems, yet in touch with the larger forces which course through every society.

It seems to me that the Peace Corps has been long on plans but short on implementation because the rhetoric broke down long before the ideas could be carried to the level of the people. That exceptional volunteers have been glorified to hide the commonplace has been an attempt by the bureaucrats to delude themselves.

As a terminating volunteer, it troubles me that after three years the Peace Corps' call to service rings hollow.



That there really exist cross-cultural wizards who think that Peace Corps as an organization can be helpful to a developing nation at the level of the "impoverished and disenfranchised" is depressing enough. None of us doubt that you sincerely care about the Peace Corps mission you supposedly wanted us to help you with, we just feel more than just a little disappointed that your rhetoric never seems to permit you to come down and see what your plans and ideas actually come to. Some of you perhaps know, but you never seem to speak up anymore, and so we are left to ourselves.

Any organization which claims to provide work assignments in accordance with the high priority needs of developing nations had better be sure that it is capable of providing such aid. In his article for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Blatchford also pointed out:

A questionnaire completed by 7000 returned volunteers last year revealed that 92 percent thought their service "very valuable" to them and 45 percent felt it had been valuable for the United States, but only 25 percent felt it had been very valuable for the foreign country.

I suggest that you have not been listening very carefully to your volunteers. Is it that you refuse to believe what volunteers have been telling you? Or is it that you do not bother to listen anymore, happy with your over-paid, cross-cultural bureaucratic functions, afraid that if you listen you will be out of a job? To omniscient minds like yours it may not matter as long as the rhetoric keeps flowing.

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By now you have caught on and wonder what ethereal arguments about Peace Corps ideology has to do with the concrete, day-to-day affairs of volunteers as they go about



their business. No doubt you question the value of complex, mental exercises which may not have anything to do with the immediate problems at hand and think that surely a volunteer has better things to do than to worry about esoteric matters of little value on the pragmatic levels of inter-personal relationships, and you would be right - if the existence of volunteers did not depend on the Peace Corps' rhetoric which Washington has adopted to rationalize its continued funding of the Peace Corps. It is strange bedfellows the Peace Corps finds itself with when it goes-a-courting Congress for the funds that it needs to keep going, and if it were not for the heart-rending rhetoric behind Peace Corps ideology, the American military machine, AID, and the CIA would probably devour all the available funds for themselves.

I would find it hard to accept the rhetoric even if the only reason for it is to get the necessary appropriations, but I refuse to believe that the rhetoric is made up just for the American public who, as the handbook tells us, "have a right to know what the Peace Corps is doing." It is my suspicion that you cross-cultural experts really believe the rhetoric you so prolifically expound in, so that I have no choice but to assume that the reasons for the existence^{of} Peace Corps volunteers depends on the very rhetoric which you might think a volunteer should not concern himself with.

From the level of ideology and abstruse rhetoric grows the bureaucratic existence of the Peace Corps in Thailand. It is at this level that absurd rhetoric becomes absurd bureaucracy. That the Peace Corps should exist in Thailand is a study in absurdity on at least two counts.

From my point of view as a terminating volunteer, it



strikes me as extremely questionable that Peace Corps volunteers should be working in a country where the U.S. government pays the Royal Thai government to send mercenary soldiers to Vietnam so that they can join with American, Korean, and Australian troops in one of the most amazing farces of "free world" solidarity in this or any other century. The American government uses Thailand as a sanctuary from which to bomb Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, pays for Thai troops posing as Lao soldiers in the battle against the Pathet Lao and yet this same American government expects its Peace Corps volunteers to work with Thai peasants and students according to the "hunger and disease, ignorance and injustice" rhetoric which we thought was the basis for Congress' funding of the Peace Corps.

Besides the military infiltration of Thailand, there is the United States Agency for International Development spending millions of dollars a year in counterinsurgency work. Translated, this means that AID is responsible for the funds used to train police and soldiers whose only seeming motivation is a new camouflaged uniform to parade around in, an Omega watch, a refrigerator or television, or how many goodies they can get from the PX through their American connections or from their Thai buddies serving in Thailand's Black Leopard division in the PX's of Vietnam. That some of these trained specialists in counterinsurgency might consider the welfare of their country as an afterthought seems often unlikely.

And there is still more. The Advanced Research Projects Agency along with the United States Information Service carry out counterinsurgency research and anticommunist pre-



paganda with ideas about communism fresh out of the McCarthy era in the United States. Just where the Peace Corps is expected to fit in among these remnants of 19th century economic and military imperialism is beyond my futile attempts at comprehension. Would that Mr. Blatchford or the American ambassador to Thailand could clear it up for us, but Mr. Unger has a hard enough time clearing it up for the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee, and I doubt that Mr. Blatchford would care to comment.

The programs that Peace Corps volunteers are involved in in Thailand range from elementary, secondary, higher, and vocational education to paramedical health programs and agriculture and rural community development projects. Well over half of all the Peace Corps volunteers in Thailand are busy as teachers of English, for the most part at the best schools and universities in Bangkok and major provincial capitals, and their most dramatic results are in producing an inordinately high number of Chinese-Thai students who can speak passable enough English to become part of the middle and upper class elite, thereby making the educational system an even better method for maintaining social class cleavages. Amidst all this effort to teach English (and now even French) and thereby help to eliminate "hunger and disease, ignorance and injustice, and the hopelessness in which human frustration and conflict breed," one should remember that over 80 percent of the people living in Thailand are peasants and that their annual per capita income is about 2,500 Baht (\$125). Who is helping them?

I know the teachers are not ^{doing} anything, for the most part, no matter how many times I hear the argument that teaching English prepares Thais for the jobs that a modern society requires, and I do not think that the really few volunteers



working in various health, agriculture, and rural community development projects are making up the difference as they work directly on the level of the people of Thailand. Even if the latter group were to be increased I doubt any benefits to the people of Thailand would accrue. The Thai bureaucracy would get in the way, and this leads us to the second count of absurdity that the Peace Corps should exist in Thailand.

Some of us who have been living on the level of the people of Thailand for the last few years have been astounded at the extent to which the taxi drivers, villagers, up-country bar girls, government workers, and pimps know about the internal absurdities of their own government. When we first came, we thought that these people were unaware of the despotic machinations of the military clique which ran their country in the name of the King of Thailand, but this was because we could not speak their language. Now we know better and commiserate with them in their efforts to get ahead in the face of the incredible corruption and nepotism going all the way up to the highest levels of the Thai government elite.

As the cross-cultural dilettantes told us in training and as countless encyclopedic, Oriental experts have filled pages and pages of books about, corruption (or squeeze) is an accepted procedure in Oriental societies, and so we should not be surprised or disappointed that Thailand is no exception to the time honored tradition. No, it is not this mere fact which is disturbing, for if that were the case it would not disturb thinking Thais either. We all have noted how highly they speak of the late Prime Minister Sarit, a veritable legend when it comes to corruption. His was of the more traditional kind.

What is disturbing is the more up-to-date style of



corruption to be found today in the persons of Prime Minister Thanom Kittikachorn; Minister of the Interior Prapass Charusathiara; Chief of Staff of the Supreme Command, Air Marshall Dawee Chullasapya; and their assorted cronies which has monopolized the exploitation of U.S. government funds and thereby determined in what directions the people of Thailand should be led. That such men would be considered capable of determining what is best for the broad mass of Thai peasants is amazing. Even if their hands were not stuck in the till, it would be difficult enough to provide the leadership that Thailand needs, but because their hands are so busy carving out personal, financial empires, their leadership is at best bogus.

The Thanom-Prapass-Dawee clique has determined the high priority needs of Thailand with the help of a foreign educated elite, but it has never occurred to Peace Corps bureaucrats or any of the higher priced brands of American officialdom to question whether or not the Royal Thai government as it is presently constituted actually ^{is} aware of the high priority needs of its people. To my mind, military leaders have never understood or fooled peasants (it is much more difficult to befuddle innocence than you at first suppose), and I doubt that they are aware of the actual needs of their people. The peasants are not fooled; the taxi drivers know; and meanwhile the Bangkok and provincial elite are wallowing in their maxi's and hot pants, happy that they are getting away with it all.

Peace Corps has no place in this kind of situation, according to the rhetoric upon which it is based. Volunteers find themselves caught in the middle of an unlikely wedding between the Peace Corps bureaucracy and an out of touch host country government.



Under the bogus leadership of the Thanom-Prapass-Dawee clique, Thailand has been forced to follow a road to rapid modernization that cannot be gotten off of, short of internal, economic disruption. At present the expectations of the Thai, Buddhist peasants have not over-reached their patience to wait for their expectations to be satisfied, and there is no political trouble except in the periphery areas where Moslems and hill tribe minorities have been the first to question the Thai governments' right to rule. Should an unanticipated economic collapse sweep away the little wealth that the peasants and lower class merchants have been able to accumulate, then there could be mass disillusionment among the Thai peasants themselves.

It is in this sense that the progress that the Thai government asks Peace Corps volunteers to help in furthering may come to nothing but mass discontent. All that may have been accomplished will have been to awaken materialistic appetites in a previously stable village society, and thereby have destroyed the villagers' traditional way of life. By that time, Thanom, Prapass, and Dawee will have absconded abroad.

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Having furtively ventured into the seldom trespassed ideological domains of our cross-cultural bureaucrats, I think it would be propitious to say a few words about my experiences working for the Thailand National Malaria Eradication Project. It is at this level that I am most at home, and I could go on for quite some time about my experiences working as a Peace Corps volunteer on the village level.



However, I will spare you the ordeal of having to read very many more pages for fear that you are bored to death already. You will of course think that I should have remained in my home grounds all along and avoided my excursion into Peace Corps ideology, but our measuring sticks are based on different scales, I am afraid; those of you who think that I should not have invaded your sacrosanct citadel should be forewarned that while you are preoccupied guarding the entrance, the walls around you may be in the process of crumbling around you.

In terms of the Malaria Eradication Project, it is the Regional Malariologist who has the most influential role in making sure plans are carried out because he is in direct charge of several zones where each zone is made up of several provinces. In terms of the day-to-day field work involved, it is the zone chief (the volunteer's co-worker and supervisor) who wields the most effective role in seeing that work gets done down to the village level. Therefore, in a zone with a less than effective zone chief, day-to-day field operations break down, unless the Regional Malariologist can transmit his influence down to the field level in spite of the zone chief.

I mention this only because for my first two years of Peace Corps service in the Nakhon Sawan zone, the previous Regional Malariologist at Prabuddhabat, Saraburi for reasons beginning with poor health was unable to transmit his influence down to the zone level, and my zone chief could do as he pleased without any fear of interference at the Region level. There is no need to go into detail about those two years and what went on (because no one really knows), but one of the reasons I extended for a third year



of service in the Nakhon Sawan zone rather than transfer to the Songkhla zone in the southern region (as had been approved by Malaria Project HQ) was my feeling that if the Prabuddhabat Region was unable to control work at the zone level, then, at least, I would be able to provide some pressure within my own zone to get attention focused on some serious malaria problems in the ~~Nakhon~~ Nakhon Sawan zone.

After the previous Regional Malariologist in Prabuddhabat committed suicide, the situation in the Prabuddhabat Region, and thus the situations at all of the zones in the Region, changed considerably. A new Regional Malariologist was appointed hindered neither by poor health nor by having any connection with the way things had been under his predecessor. Under the new head of the Region, work in my zone improved, slowly to be sure, until it became apparent that the new Regional Malariologist was capable of transmitting his influence down to the zone level. Zone chiefs in the Prabuddhabat Region could no longer do as they pleased. In addition, Peace Corps volunteers were encouraged to make real efforts to help improve malaria work in their respective zones, and the Regional Malariologist indicated that should any problems arise he would lend his support as much as possible.

Despite the changes for the better in the Region and the Nakhon Sawan zone in particular, there are still many questions in my mind about the value of the Malaria Eradication Project. Under the tutelage of the World Health Organization and AID, malaria eradication efforts were molded into a precise, bureaucratic instrument at least from a theoretical point of view. Yet somehow, by the time the elaborate theory had been taken down the the village level glaring absurdities began to appear.



Those of us who have been asked to supervise the lowest levels of malaria work know what the problems are. I would guess that some of us would blame the failure at the village level less on the temporary employees hired to execute the theory, than ~~than~~ the malaria experts at the top who are deluding themselves if they think that their theories can be carried into practice. Anyone who has walked with DDT spray teams to the fringes of Thai culture, anyone who has tried to inspect a malaria house visitor during the rainy season when the roads have been washed out, anyone who has tried to find a multi-purpose spray team in the jungle, knows that it is simply ridiculous to expect results even approximating malaria eradication. The physical exertion required to carry out the theory is beyond the comprehension of the experts who planned to have malaria eradicated long before 1971. It should be no surprise to anyone that the principal results from malaria eradication efforts have been stacks and stacks of phony statistics, mysteriously translated onto epidemiological maps which are in turn discussed and analyzed by Thai doctors and American and WHO experts who really should know better.

In the midst of this consensus of self-delusion, the Royal Thai government asks the Peace Corps volunteers to pitch in and help, and most of us do because we have found that in helping to fight malaria on the village level we are helping to control a disease directly responsible for the death of many Thai peasants. But one can work in the midst of absurdity just so long before your own efforts take on an aura of meaninglessness no matter how successful you may be in effecting some sort of change in the short run.



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Until now I have been writing in the manner of interpretation only, and it has taken me from Peace Corps ideology down to my assignment as a volunteer working in the Malaria Eradication Project. For fear that I may be accused of having wasted the previous pages in exploring useless generalities, I would now like to bring all of what I have been trying to get across to you cross-cultural clowns down to the level of an actual human situation without the need to waste words on interpretation. I will leave the interpreting to you.

In September, 1970, a malaria epidemic broke out in one of the outlying villages on the Nakhon Sawan side of the Nakhon Sawan-Phetchabul border. The village where the epidemic occurred had been the subject of my attention from the beginning of my Peace Corps service in Nakhon Sawan, and in the subsequent two years I was to mention this village in two of my monthly reports hoping that the Region or Project Headquarters would make some effort to rectify the operational failures that I had tried to mention most diplomatically. I had frequently mentioned the village to the sector chief responsible for the district in which this particular village was located along with the zone chief and assistant zone chief, and invariably they agreed that something should be done and then proceeded to do nothing.

Quite frankly, the sector chief turned out to be one of the most vicious and corrupt persons it has been my pleasure to meet on the face of the earth. On a salary of \$36 a month (720 Baht), he had managed to acquire a television, a refrigerator, an expensive amplifier and speakers, a stereo tape recorder,



and his very own Mazda pick-up. Honestly acquired all of these conveniences would not have disturbed me because as I have already indicated, who was I to envy co-workers who had a more luxurious living standard than mine?

What slowly ate away at my feelings as I watched helplessly while the sector chief commuted in his Mazda between Nakhon Sawan and Chiangmai (the districts he was responsible for were not on the way, I assure you, unless you think that the border area with Phetchabul is the short-cut for travelers on their way from Nakhon Sawan to Chiangmai) was the realization that Thai villagers were getting malaria in his area with a high incidence rate every year, and the sector chief quite obviously could not have given a damn.

Had this paragon of sector chiefs been stationed in an area where malaria was of no problem I would not have given him another thought, but as I began to see for myself, and as other sector chiefs and workers privately told me, it was not by mere coincidence that the paragon was allowed to be responsible for such a serious malaria area. As others pointed out to my still innocent ears, a serious malaria area receives boxes and boxes of DDT every year, and if for some reason or other you are unable to use it all during the planned spray cycles twice a year, it sells pretty well on the open market.

And so I spent over a year doing little else but listening to the workers in my zone. It often occurred to me that they wanted me to do something, but I had intellectualized the situation into a cross-cultural rationalization by sublimating my feelings into the argument that if something should be done, it should be done by the Thais themselves with little more than my own personal encouragement for their efforts, an argument you cross-cultural experts would be the



first to agree with.

I was able to use this rationalization quite effectively until my zone chief asked me to help supervise the zone's efforts to bring the September epidemic in this one particular village under control. What happened then is not difficult to put down in words as the facts speak for themselves, but there are moments when words cannot capture the torrent of emotions that rise up despite ourselves. If you wizards at cross-cultural, inter-personal double-talk had been there, then perhaps you would understand, but no matter what you care to think, I was no longer able to sublimate my feelings away from what was staring me right in the face.

... I had been working with a DDT spray team having spent several days walking from one group of houses to another trying to spray and get anti-malarial medicine to the stricken villagers. Just from my own observations and from conversations with some of the inhabitants it was clear to me that the houses had never been sprayed for several years even though the statistics at the zone office indicated adequate spray work every year. A villager here and there was surprised that we were giving out medicine free because the previous malaria workers when they did come had sold the medicine for a fair sum of Baht - but I knew all this long before the zone chief had sent me out there... I was sitting in this one house talking with the owner and asked him where the owner of the house next door had gone, so that we could ask his permission to spray DDT. The villager whom I was talking with looked at the floor and quietly told me that we had come too late for the people next door. They had died of "jungle fever" on the week before, five of them, a husband and wife, three small children. There had been a



problem in cremating the bodies because there were no relatives of the stricken family available. They had come from another province, come from the ricelands to try to eke out a living by raising corn in the newly opening frontier areas between Nakhon Sawan and Phetchabul. After the smell of the decaying bodies became unbearable, the villagers from the nearby houses cremated the bodies themselves hoping that the absence of relatives and ~~parents~~ would be overlooked...

Those of you who have been to the fringe villages on the edge of Thai culture can perhaps picture the setting, but can you recreate your feelings to approximate mine as I listened to what this one man was telling me, as I was thinking about my cross-cultural role as a Peace Corps volunteer, as I imagined the sector chief cruising around in his Mazda on his way to Chiangmai weighted down with DDT.

There are moments when human actions go beyond the cultural standards of any society, moments when something someone does goes beyond the intricate ambiguities involved in cross-cultural understanding, moments when it becomes clear that by whatever standards you choose to judge, the verdict must be the same. I remember gulping several times trying to regain control of myself, and I remember thinking that if the sector chief had been there at that moment....

When I returned to Nakhon Sawan I conferred with the zone chief and the Regional Malarialogist and with their permission I wrote a supposedly secret report about what I had seen. The sector chief, true to his character, of course threatened me, and on the day before I wrote the report, the sector chief's assistant was found murdered, just three days after he had finished working with me in the epidemic area. His head had been blown to pieces by two shotgun blasts as he was riding a bicycle on a village path.



Eventually the sector chief was transferred to the Tak Zone in the same Region because it was dangerous for the sector chief to remain where he was. It was feared that what happened to the assistant sector chief might also happen to the sector chief. A number of malaria officials were reported to be upset that I had involved myself in internal, Thai administrative affairs. From their point of view, I had again overstepped my stated technical duties as a Peace Corps volunteer working in the malaria project. Because I had reported the sector chief, the Regional Malarialogist told me that I might have to transfer to another zone to make things fair for having the sector chief transferred. From friends I learned that the new Peace Corps staff malaria advisor could not understand why I was always causing so much trouble in Nakhon Sawan and why I had so much difficulty in getting along with Thais.

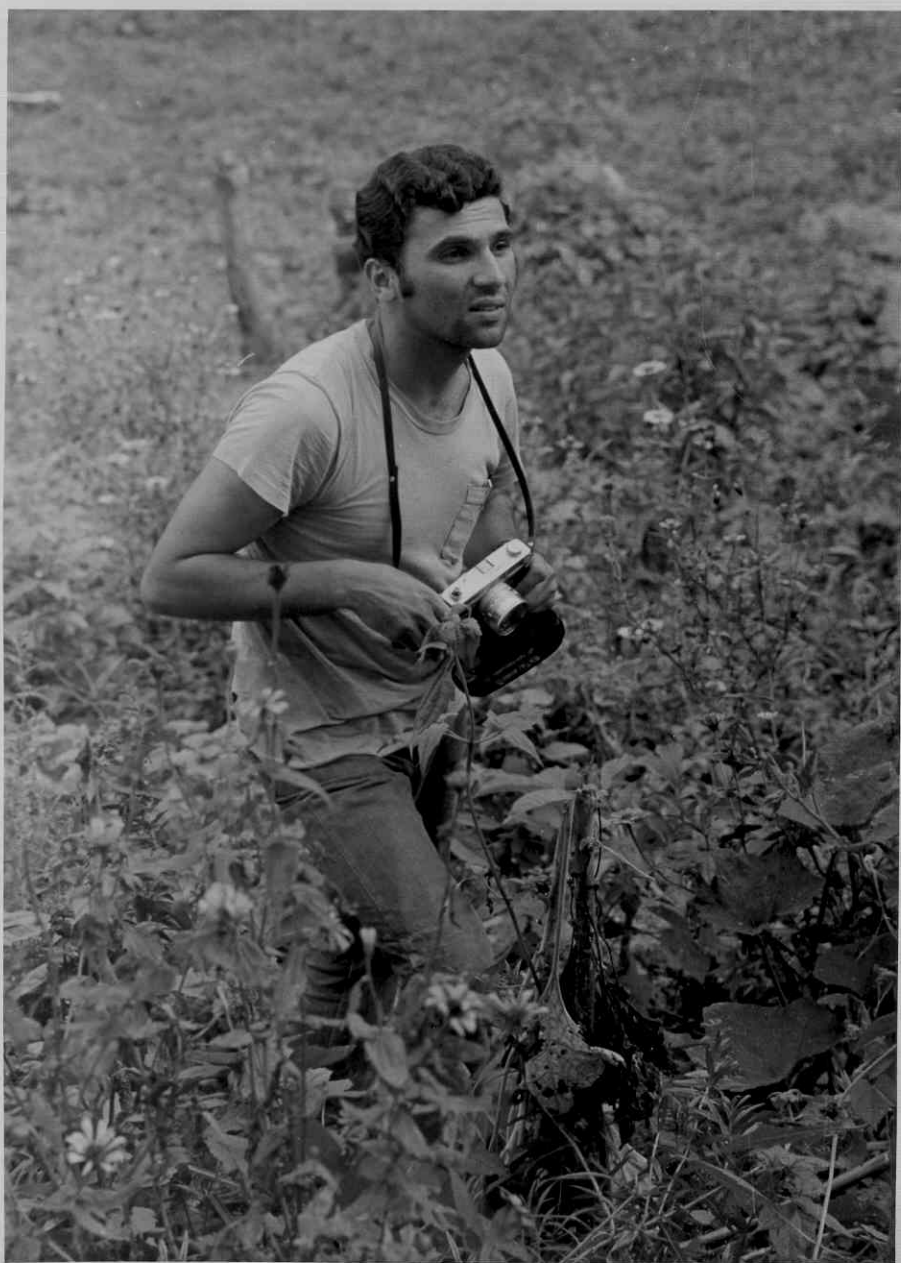
I have never been quite the same since that day when my concern over the death of one entire family was greeted by such disdain from the upper levels of the Thai and Peace Corps bureaucracy. My only consolation was that the people in the Nakhon Sawan zone who knew what I had done began to treat me with more respect than before. By daring to draw the ire of the clowns and buffoons on the top, I began to experience for myself the timeless struggle a single human being faces in trying to get something done from the bottom up in a bureaucracy. Those with me at the bottom respected me for my attempt even though they had stopped trying a long time before.

I wonder what you people upstairs, sitting in your air conditioned offices while you read this, would have done had you been in my shoes? Perhaps to people like you, death

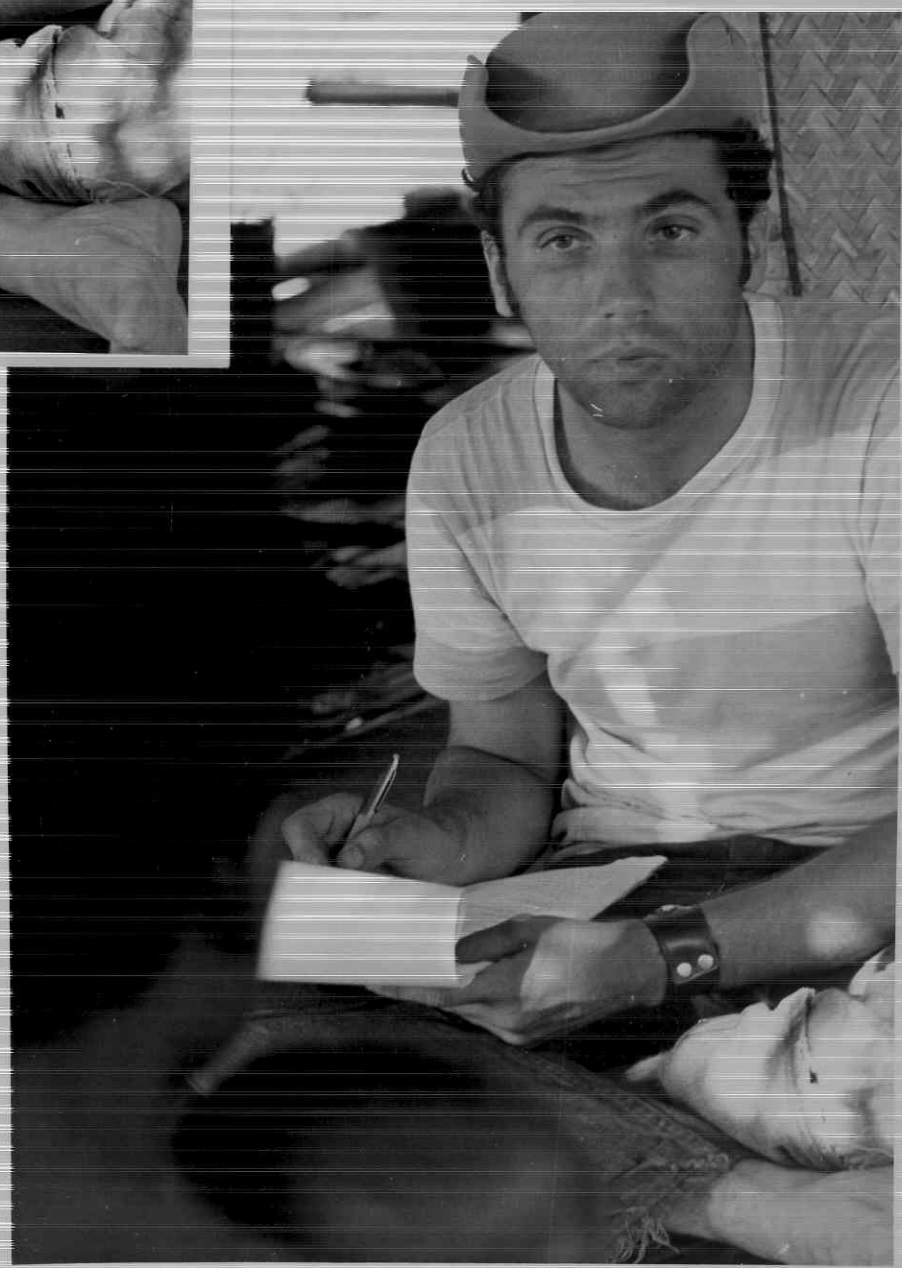


of others is irrelevant until it is time for you yourself to die. To you cross-cultural wizards and upper crust malaria officials I apologize for my excess of zeal. You have taught me that it is better not to know that people are suffering than to pretend that I can do anything about it.













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