

Medical 'Bootstrap' in Saigon

The crockery-rattling blast of an exploding ammunition dump set off by Viet Cong terrorists is strange punctuation for a conference between doctors creating a future Vietnamese medical establishment.

But to Dr. Lawrence S. Lilienfield of Georgetown University in Washington and his Vietnamese counterpart, the nearby explosions and constant rumble of distant artillery fire were too commonplace to disturb them during recent Saigon conferences.

The American physiologist, acting for the Agency for International Development and the American Medical Association, is fresh back from Saigon where he was helping Dr. Tran Vy of the University of Saigon plan a teaching program on which the future of Vietnamese physiology might be built. He is in Washington now, but expects to be back in Saigon in February.

Continued dependence on the U.S. or, as was the case in the past, on France, falls short of grounds for an independent Vietnamese medical profession, he feels.

Vietnam, Dr. Lilienfield reports, is desperately short of its own doctors to teach doctors, a need the AID-AMA program hopes to fill.

Dr. Vy is currently the entire faculty in physiology to Saigon University's 400 medical students.

The 400 or so medical students now

at Saigon, Dr. Lilienfield reported in an interview, can look forward to being snatched by the Army virtually as soon as they graduate—before they can become the highly trained teachers on whom the long haul depends.

The present medical school in Saigon had its roots in the French colonial regime prior to 1954, he reports. Its professors were mainly trained in Paris, and the teaching has remained typically European—the lecture method, the two-month oral and written examination on what students can memorize of lectures without textbooks or questions. More modern instruction, in English, is now being planned.

A new medical school is ready for occupancy, with modern electronic equipment provided by the AID, but textbooks and English-speaking professors are both lacking, Dr. Lilienfield said.

Dr. Lilienfield, gentle-spoken, nearing 40, with hair approaching the pepper and salt stage, does not look like a pioneer. But he's the first of what he hopes will be a Saigon-bound stream of U.S. medical educators.

Dr. Lilienfield is looking "far beyond the current war. It will take 10 or 15 years to prepare these young men and women to become teachers."

But for now:

"Send modern textbooks to me for transmittal—not 20-year-old books, please," he pleads. "We want medical schools in the U.S. to aid and support counterpart departments in all fields of medicine. We also are looking for dedicated Americans who can go to Saigon to help in teaching the English language. They need not know French."

In addition, Dr. Lilienfield says he has the names and addresses of 59 Vietnamese medical students, hungry for correspondence with their counterparts in the U.S.

BIOLOGY

Peanut Mold Test Devised

Aflatoxin, the "peanut mold" that is known to have killed thousands of animals during the past six years, can be spotted within two to five hours with a new test method using marine borer eggs, Canadian scientists have reported.

Researchers at the British Columbia Research Council, Vancouver, have found that low concentrations of the dangerous aflatoxin mold can be readily and accurately identified in fertilized marine borer eggs that fail to develop walls if the poison is present. Standard biological tests using chick embryos take seven to 21 days to bring results.

None of the peanut foods approved for human consumption by the U.S.

Department of Agriculture contain any aflatoxin, though peanut meal with a low aflatoxin content can be fed to cows.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has been concerned and is interested in the Canadian tests. There is no danger to humans now, but FDA is always looking for better and faster methods of detecting harmful substances in food, Dr. Henry Fishbach of the Division of Food Chemistry said in an interview.

Dr. P. M. Townsley who presented his work with the marine borers to the Association of Official Agricultural Chemists in Washington, speculated that other mollusks may be more available and more useful than borers.

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