

FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE

February 27, 1970

Mr. Wesley Fishel
Center for Vietnamese Studies
Southern Illinois University
Carbondale, Illinois 62901

Dear Wes:

Yesterday I received a letter from Nguyen Ngoc An with whom I worked closely during 1968 and 1969 when he was Minister for Chieu Hoi and also Minister of Information in the Huong Cabinet. Former Minister An is now out of office and wrote me the attached letter which is self-explanatory.

I am writing because I truly feel that he could be an outstanding addition to your faculty in one of a number of capacities. Let me describe this individual in greater detail. He comes from Trang Bang District of Hau Nghia Province and is 56 years old. He was a battalion commander in the Viet Minh and had extensive personal experience in guerrilla combat. He was number two in the Ministry of the Interior in the earlier Huong Cabinet in 1965, having been one of the members of the "Caravelle Group." During most of his career, he was principal of a number of private schools, and thus his primary career was in education.

He is a man of very high integrity and great force of character. To give you some insight into his personality, his customary routine while Minister of Chieu Hoi was to go to bed at 10 o'clock and get up at 3:00 a.m. He would work on office papers for three hours, then take one hour's physical training, then go to the office and put his paperwork in the out basket, which gave him a chance to have conferences and deal with the many problems which would arise during the day without holding up the usual heavy load of documentation. I would describe him as a Roman character, deeply patriotic, anxious to see Viet-Nam returned to civilian control, vigorous and dynamic. He was also a man of impeccable manners and old world courtesy. He used to appear on television and radio quite frequently, and also made many public speeches, and was one of the more effective GVN spokesmen.

An speaks fair English which he is rapidly improving, fluent French and is thoroughly versed in the classical culture and history of Viet-Nam. As an individual, a fighter and a politician, I think he would be an outstanding representative of his country abroad and one who would be immensely popular with the faculty and students at your school. When I received Minister An's letter, it occurred to me straight away that he is precisely the type of man whom you might wish to have visit or work with SIU in some capacity. Since I strongly believe in him, I would be prepared to send him an airline ticket from my own funds if that were the only way to bring him to the United States. My regard for him makes me want to do something for him, but I can assure you that it in no way affects my objectivity concerning his potential to a program such as yours. I wish to reply to his letter shortly and would appreciate any indication you might be able to give as to any interest your school might have in his services.

I am going to spend the month of April in Thailand and will be passing through Saigon on the way out. I may be able to return through India and will try to locate Wolf Ladejensky in New Delhi, if he is still there. I am at present in charge of the Viet-Nam Training Center of the Foreign Service Institute, which I find most interesting. Last week we had a visit from Dennis Duncanson from London, and you will be interested to know that he remains a staunch supporter of Ngo dinh Diem. P. J. Honey will be visiting us at the end of March, and I will be most interested to hear his assessment of North Viet-Nam, particularly since I have never met him in person.

I hope the new program at Southern Illinois will flourish and extend my best wishes.

Sincerely,

Ogden Williams
Coordinator
Viet-Nam Training Center

Attachment

P.S. You will note from An's letter that he thought he wanted to teach Vietnamese at our school here in Washington. Obviously, I would love to have him with us here, but I can hardly see a former Minister of Viet-Nam drilling young students in basic Vietnamese, while the rest of the instructors are young girls or young men. Therefore, I am hoping to look at something more worthy of An's calibre.

O.W.

O/FSI/VTC:OWilliams:d

FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE

March 2, 1970

Honorable Nguyen-Ngoc-An
118 Cu Xa Tran-Quang-Dieu
Saigon, Viet-Nam

Dear Minister An:

Thank you very much for your letter of January 1970 and for the fine gift which you sent me. I shall wear the cuff links and tie pin with great pleasure. You are entirely too generous.

Regarding your suggestion that you might work with us at this school, I am exploring the possibilities now. Of course, nothing would please me more than to have you with us. If your duties were to teach language only, I think this would be much below your distinction as a former Minister of Viet-Nam and as principal of private schools in Viet-Nam. I think we would have to find a position in which you could make a broader contribution.

In this connection, I have also written to Dr. Wesley Fishel at the Center for Vietnamese Studies, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois. I do not know whether they are now looking for Vietnamese visiting professors on their staff, but if they were, I believe that a position such as that would possibly be more in consonance with your distinguished status than anything available here at our little training center. Nevertheless, I am working on this problem, and will do everything I can to give you a chance to visit the United States while awaiting what I hope will be your return to a political position in Viet-Nam. Among other things, would you not wish to run for the Senate so that you could wield influence within the Government?

I have been asked to spend the month of April in Thailand looking at the insurgent areas in that country, and during that time I will definitely visit Saigon, although I do not yet know the exact date. I am not able to leave Washington until March 31, and must report directly to Bangkok to begin work. After April 30 I will, of course, be returning here to Washington.

Again, Mr. Minister, my deep appreciation for your kindness. In this letter I can only tell you that I am working to arrange something for you in the United States, and will keep in touch as soon as something specific is found. I take one hour each day of spoken Vietnamese here at our school, so I will be able to say a few things in Vietnamese when we meet!

With my high regard and best wishes, until we meet in person.

Sincerely,

Ogden Williams
Coordinator
Viet-Nam Training Center