

Minutes of the Meeting on July 27, 1956  
in the Department of Interior

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Present were:

From the Department of Interior:

M.M. Nguyễn Hữu Châu, Secretary of Interior  
Đường Tân Tài, Advisor at Presidency  
Vũ Tiên Huân, Director of Political and Social Studies  
Office at Presidency  
Nguyễn van Chi, Director of General Administration at D.I.  
Nguyễn van Hồi, Assigned for special work

From the Michigan State University:

M.M. FISHEL, Chief Advisor, MSU  
MODE, Chief of the Field Administration  
FESLER, Special Advisor, Public Administration MSU  
Nguyễn QUAN, Interpreter,  
Mai Thanh XUÂN, Interpreter.

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Mr. Nguyễn Hữu Châu, Secretary of Interior, relates that the object of the meeting is to examine suggestions formulated by MSU Advisory Team in its letter on July 26, 1956.

Above all, a definition of terminology is necessary.

Délégué of Government.

By Ordinance issued last year (No. 17 on December 24, 1955) the administrative personality and the budgetary autonomy of the Regions are suppressed. There will not be Délégué again, but the text in French of that Ordinance mentioned a General Prefect: as Government representative for a group of provinces. The general Prefect will not be invested with powers enjoyed by the present Délégué of Government, because there will not be either regional administrative personality.

It is, a manner, an Inspector to whom the President would wish to conserve the title of Délégué of Government, instead of General Prefect, because of protocol motives.

Province and Chief of province:

Province and Chief of province keep their present title.

District:

Under provinces there are administrative delegations ("quân" in Vietnamese). For convenience they will be called district.

Locality (or area):

For discussion needs, will be designated as locality or area several provinces to be grouped, according to the reform suggested by MSU.

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The Secretary of State draws attention to the fact that reforms envisaged correspond to an actual situation, in a given moment; all what we are doing will lead to bring order, method and will eventually permit the implementation of new reforms.

There is a long exchange of views with MSU professors whose ideas were well known on reforms to be applied to Vietnam. Those ideas were published and brochures distributed; they are summarized in the three points of the letter referred to above.

The Secretary of State informs that the basic administrative organization in Vietnam is the province and the village.

The province will remain as administrative unit with civil personality and budget.

That does not mean that nothing will be changed on the subject. This organization is not incompatible with the new conception of combination of provinces in process of examination; personally the Secretary of State is not hostile because a rational basis must be found to have the province on its own.

Otherwise, the present province and eventually the locality (enlarged province) will have the functions and powers of its Chief strengthened. The problem, in process of examination, is only concerned with the executive power. One quite realizes the institution of Council for the province or the locality, but it seems hasty to take up this problem starting from today.

The Government is anxious to have its province chiefs well prepared to perform their task, according to their powers and responsibilities in an independent country. Their functions are not only administrative, but they are also extended to social and economic matters, etc . . . Their attention is drawn to have a balanced budget in their province.

The Government is starting with reforms of which everyone admits the necessity.

But it must want to prepare adequately the chiefs of province to their new task.

MSU had asked for work in contact with various committees created in view of reform study. This is adopted and Mr. Nguyễn văn Hồi is appointed to assure liaison with MSU members in order to give the finishing touch to questions details to be examined by the Committees;

Then, M<sup>•</sup> Dương Tân Tài, President of Committees (for the study of financial and personal questions) exposes to MSU professors the plans of work which were adopted by the Committees in their first two meetings. MSU professors are then invited to participate in the next meetings fixed as following:

Friday 28 - 7 - 1956 at 3:30 p.m.  
 Tuesday 31 - 7 - 1956 at 3 :30 p.m.

Meeting closed at 11:30

Inclosed here with MSU letter and notes recorded by Mr. Nguyễn văn Hồi in the course of the meeting.

The Secretary of State  
 for Interior  
 Nguyễn Hữu Châu

Notes recorded in the course of the meeting  
on 27-7-1956 in the Secretariate of Interior  
with the Michigan Mission

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1. M. MODE: I do appreciate that the Secretary of State has made clear the way for reforms, but temporary measures should not last a long time.

The Secretary of State: I share your anxiety. It is a question of will.

2. M. FISHEL: It is primarily a question of basic, of structural (organization).

The Secretary of State: I agree to the reforms

3. M. MODE: The time is ripe

The Secretary of State: Perhaps, the province chiefs are not mature yet.

4. M.MODE: I do not think so, If till now the Personnel is reticent, I think that is because it has not been given responsibility by the Government. Once it is invested with responsibility, everything will turn out all right.

The secretary of State: After ten years of war, province Chiefs are used to wait for instructions from upper authority. Till now, that authority is the Délégué of Government and not the Government itself. There is a very great change in the state of things.

I would point out a remark to set your mind at rest: in my opinion the present configuration of provinces is not good and does not have favourable repercussion on budgetary respect, because of irrational parcelling, provinces are unable to face their expenses with their own resources. Therefore, at the last meeting of province Chiefs, I had drawn their attention to the dangers following from the present situation. And in my opinion, the combination of provinces must be attained. It is my own opinion; the ultimate decision will be issued by the President.

5. M.MODE I would like to specify that perfection is difficult to reach as well as it is difficult to have provincial budget balanced without subsidies.

The Secretary of State: However, every province is now in need of subsidies.

6. M. FISHEL: According to you, what part will the province chief play in the new reform?

When you talk about the present compass, the present size (surface configuration) which are not rational again, do you mean to to to combination of provinces?

The Secretary of State: Administration basic organization will be the province as well as the village.

7. M. FISHEL: How do you conceive that unit (that basis)? A unit for the control, or an administrative unit, an entity?

The Secretary of State: An administrative unit having civil personality and budget.

8. M. FISHEL: How do you view the difference between that and the recommended situation?

The Secretary of State: Locality is an enlarged province.

9. M. FISHEL: Do you mean that areas (localities) will be similar to present provinces, but their surface will be larger?

The Secretary of State: Yes.

10. The Secretary of State: (examination of the MSU letter)  
Points 1 and 2 are similar. I have admitted the abolition of regions and likely of cantons.

If you want, one will inscribe another principle: extension of powers of province chiefs or area chiefs.

11. M. FESLER: I would wish to draw attention to:

The point 2

Powers and functions of area Chiefs will not be those of French Prefect.

Instead, they will be responsible for technical Services within the province; they will be the "eyes and ears" of the President as to technical program implementation.

Another power of the area chief: he centralizes budgetary estimates submitted by the Services.

Other functions (see report MSU, page 11)

The point 3

It was recommended that the National Ministry be responsible for the implementation of its technical program in province; the Minister will have direct authority upon his technical Service in province.

It is here a restriction to the powers of province chiefs

12. The Secretary of State: We agree very well about objectives which must be realized in the more or less near future. We have worked for the same purpose. There is a delicate point concerned with the provincial budget and General Service budgets.
13. M. MODE: The Chief of province (or area) co-ordinates technical Services budgets, but is not allowed to oppose to the expenses of these services.
14. The Secretary of State: Any formal action may be issued but the main point is to have it applied by competent men. For this reason, I have had a meeting with province chiefs and examined with them what might be done as to administrative, social, economic respects, etc . . in order to make them conscious of their responsibility.
15. M. FESLER : it is committees' affairs to determine the attributions of province Chiefs. But it would be difficult if we do not agree about present sizes of the provinces.
16. The Secretary of State: The MSU is aiming at the reform, we also; but there are actual difficulties. For at least six months, the present configuration must be kept and the work will be important for preparing province Chiefs to their new task.
17. M. Vu Tiên Huân: it does not mean that the project is abandoned. On the contrary, we go ahead to the reform but we must have a period of preparation. We would be successful if satisfactory results should be gathered.
18. The Secretary of State: There is an example which shows that my anxiety is not exaggerated: If a province Chief is asked about American Aid processus, we will not be sure that any pertinent answer would be obtained. When you do not understand the processus, you cannot carry out an appropriate budget. It is true, on other levels. For many the budget is but a counting book. Therefore, reform must be started from reality.
19. M. MODE: We agree very well. We would wish to work in contact with the Committees in order to make clear the ideas on which we would work at the Office, and then, we will write our ideas in French.

The Secretary of State: Agreed.