

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY EAST LANSING

VIETNAM PROJECT - OFFICE OF COORDINATOR

December 11, 1959

To: Lloyd D. Musolf  
From: Stanley T. Gabis  
Subject: Participant Program

I was very much interested in reading Waltman's statement on participants. I gave it to Elsie Cunningham to get her reaction. I am attaching a copy of her remarks for whatever use it may be. There are a number of interesting problems involved here, but my guess is that over the past several years each has been rehashed rather thoroughly.

At present, my main concern is the Ph. D. participant program. I have discussed this with several persons on campus, including Wes Fishel. I am attaching a copy of an interesting memo which he wrote on the subject. I want to make several observations.

We have not had conspicuous success in grouping participants at a particular school. A great deal depends on their maturity and congeniality. For example, I had considerable difficulty concerning the relationships between Phat and Dich. Phat actually objected to attending classes with Dich. Khanh became very upset when he discovered that one of the participants made an "A" in the course which he only made a "B". This is trivial but illustrative.

The problem of maintaining effective contact is rather complex. I have asked Elsie to draw up a statement of the personal contacts which have been made the past year. This is attached. This does not include a conference which we are arranging the end of January. Also it does not include more formal contacts by letter and phone, which are fairly frequent. I don't think personal contact from here is as important as a serious show of interest from the higher echelons in the GVN. Mr. Phat was given much sympathetic attention while he was here at MSU, and I urged him to stay on here primarily because he would have an opportunity to work with John Dorsey. This did not seem to have any effect. Xuan worked closely with Cole at Vanderbilt. We could not persuade him to stay on to complete his dissertation. On the other hand, Mrs. Hue, who unfortunately is unacceptable, has been doing a very good job on her own and from everything I have been able to learn, displays a commendable independence. I would also be hesitant to recommend a procedure by which senior academics from this campus make it a practice of meeting with the academic advisors of our Ph. D. participants.

I think occasional correspondence on specific points is certainly acceptable. Personal intervention and consultation for Ph. D. students seems to me to be subject to a negative reaction on the part of senior colleagues in other institutions. I may be quite wrong about this.

Rather than recommend a return to Vietnam after the half way mark has been reached, I would prefer that the Ph. D. participants be permitted to bring his family to the States. I mentioned this to Mr. Dienes when he was here, and I still think it makes sense. The point to be emphasized is that our investment in the future is so great that this should be seriously studied.

The most single important point that I would make if we could start this program all over again would be this: we should not attempt a Ph. D. program unless we can be assured of recruiting young Vietnamese who are intellectually gifted, persevering, and academically oriented. We should not accept people who are at best marginal or good average. I think it is probably time that this aspect of our participant program be thoroughly re-examined.

STG/ap

cc: Seelye  
Taggart  
Fishel  
Cunningham ✓