

January 1st, 1960

Dear little Els,

I started writing you a letter yesterday to tell you that the books (except Lind.'s) had arrived and thanked you for that. But the gentle fairy fever took over me once more, after the previous 2-week rehearsal prior to Xmas. Nothing serious; just a lovely little re-touch: I can still type but, unfortunately, not think academically.

Today I feel somewhat better; the 1960 sun is shining outside. It is my hope you and my friends at EL are having a wonderful New Year's Day.

Let's see. What else can I tell you now? I am afrrrraid that under unhealthy conditions, I am going to lead you to hell once more with my "blues" and "confessions" and other "immature" and "silly" things of that sort. It's so lovely outside, I want to pass this new day of the year with someone. Well, read and forget; I just feel the urge to put down what went through my dirty head. Remember, you girl, that this is not a girl talking to you, although it will sound like one; you are so courageous and practical that I always have to remember that you are a girl, since you are worth more than a man. Right, if you are a man only, I should be glad to be only a half-man.

You have received my letter of counter-resignation I guess. Do not believe a word in it. Nor in the previous letter of resignation. Do not believe in the reasons I have given to come back. I just wanted to look logical and mature. Now I am neither. First, let me think of my former logic: I wanted to come back because, (1) I was mistreated, (2) I was homesick; next came my second plan, i.e., go back because unable to study successfully. I am not going to hide the reasons any longer, even though these aren't logical nor mature, but real. Keep it for you.

I came to find wrong in America. And now Uncle Sam has conquered me. During one year I studied less than tried to get into every corner of American life and thought, just to find wrong. Now I love America, and its system, and its people, and its hours of happiness and misfortune, so much that I could not find words to express it. This finding has made me now unable to study any more; I JUST CANNOT STUDY ANY MORE, cannot write my papers and cannot study for the exams. But before I go back for "academic reasons," let me tell you now and here that I cannot study and want to go right now back to VN even at the price of humiliating myself, not because of mistreatment or because I am unhappy here.

I do not want to prolong such a catch-and-hide game any longer, that is why I am telling you the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. The above confided reason might seem illogical; but it's just about it. I asked and I'm asking to return, because I have been disgusted with myself. I want to come back right away to tell my people back home that America must be our symbol, our ideal, to attain. All the other reasons I gave were all insignificant, as Dr. Gabis so rightly guessed. Please intervene for my return just for me; I am not feeling worthy of the American people. They are so good, so nice, so high, and so perfect in their errors and weaknesses that I find myself all wrong; I am having the impression that my personality is falling apart.

How much I love America now, you cannot imagine. Because it cannot conquer me by propaganda, by money and favors; it has done this killing job of winning my heart by itself. I love America with all its contrasts, with all its strength and weaknesses; because it is the projection of life itself, the kind of life I'd like my people to have.

It's a real shame that the world over cannot afford now to have the "America"'s luxury. I have pity now for my own people in government who, after almost eighty years of experience with fear and dishonesty, have come to a state of mind which dictates their psychology to always lie, deceive, suspect all the time. They are killing themselves and doing a lot of harm to my dear people. The same in many other countries, I guess. I pray that America will not be bound to lower itself to the level of its environment, but I fear that this, to a certain degree, might come. And then the most unfortunate thing I'll bring with me in my mind at my death would be the image of America losing its innocence and precious childhood state of purity and sincerity.

Americans are so good, so wonderfully wrong and so "American!" Yes, you, you, and you, and others are too good; too good to win this cold war. But anytime/^{you win} you are so great, and each time you lose your greatness is greater than any victory. Dear Els, you are lucky to be an American and live in this wonderful world of yours; don't go anywhere else unless you are bound by duty to do so. After one year of inquiry and reflection about the causes of greatness and weakness of America, and experience with the observations myself, I am more and more conscious of the kind of unhappiness my beloved people are suffering, so that I want to come back to them right now to write, to speak, to act in such a way that America can be known to a large audience in the masses of my population, and in the meanwhile, to suffer in communion with them.

This I wanted to tell you a long time ago, but somehow I could not find the words to express my feelings yet. Today after a prolonged period of sickness I come suddenly to a very lucid state of mind; hence this letter. Forgive if in the past I have used you among others, to experiment my theories about America. But this has been fundamental for me. Because I want now to commit myself to the job of supporting America, and winning believers to its cause. For this job another kind of profession would be more helpful than professorship; may be a writer, or a people's representative with a certain freedom from professoral ethics, to speak up without fear of suspicion, and commitment. It is my dream to de-Red the north of 17th parallel Viet-Nam, for I believe that only a handful overthere are really Communist, the mass being people like in the South; if you win that handful you win the whole Viet-Nam. In the South more unified minds are a pre-requisite to this persuasion enterprise; basic conditions have to be realized for the withering away of distrust and mutual disagreement, by way of friendly persuasion and not by fear. A certain kind of people are maintaining this atmosphere of fear and suspicion based on Communist danger for their own safeguard and interest; this the people do not need, you can kill them they won't utter a word of submission, that's the situation in the north as well. It is illusion to rely on old concepts of wisdom and conservatism to keep the old mentality of people in government, treating the people as children, ignorant subjects; the French, the Communists have failed in their plans because of the same lazy approach to the people. Genuine mass education, a more permissive atmosphere for the intelligentsia help clear out the tension, correct the weaknesses and strengthen the regime. It is a dangerous error to conceive of Viet-Nam as a country where democracy can be postponed indefinitely, that it needs a different kind of democracy than the one in the United States: there is but one democracy in this world; there are of course phases to full-pledged democracy, but always the path must be traced forward and it can always be traced forward. Doing away with ineffectiveness, corruption, distrust, fear, personal and familial interests are the basic minimum for this path; so that economic and psychological welfare coupled with genuine education and conditions for self-education, will bring about deeper and deeper consciousness as to the desirability of the free regime and the evil of Communism. Only a people who has convinced itself of a cause that it will ~~fight~~^{fight} to death for this cause; Vietnamese history has shown that. And the leadership role of the government makes it necessary to keep and select only not necessarily brilliant and genius people, but honest, cooperative, dedicated (not selfish) and sincere (the liar, concealer, delayer and deceiver must be punished by capital punishment) statesmen and public officials.

I hope you don't mind this. But I just feel the urge to confide my secret thoughts to someone. I owe you at least this sign of trust and friendship.

Sincerely,

That

January 13, 1960

Mr. Tran Ngoc Phat
53 Trowbridge Street
Cambridge 38,
Massachusetts

Dear Phat:

Please find enclosed your per diem check for the period
from January 16th through the 31st.

Also enclosed is a general participant memorandum covering
Alien Registration.

Sincerely yours,

Elsie Cunningham
Participant Director

EMC:rm

Cambridge
1/21/60

Dear Elsie,

I hope you are not keeping too long a tooth against me. I have pity on a lonesome, familyless heart.

I am writing to let you know my deep joy at the prospect of coming back to East Lansing and how much I appreciate this opportunity. Finally! You would certainly be an angel to let me have a few extra days of "prodigal son's" stay at the "home" land, e.g. 2/3 - 2/7 altogether.

Before leaving I'll try to catch Prof. Emerson & Coates, on the 1st or 2nd, to discuss with them about the possibility of a "career" at Harvard. While the paper for Emerson's course seemed to have made a living of some sort, the one in constitutional law seminar will apparently have a hard time to squeeze through Prof. Sutherland -- a former Justice of the US Sup. Court (Brrrr!!!). A re-writing is possible for the latter. -- I'm in the midst of studying for the coming exams in History (1/28) and Econ (1/30); the prospects are not brilliant are not

brilliant in this direction neither, since I have neglected the reading assignments because partly of my incapacity to compete with the library's boarders! I imagine, this very day, I have just received bills amounting to approximately 20 blue round dollars of fines for books returned late. This is just not human, that's all! - By the way, speaking of d-o-l-l-a-r-s, I'm now and here frightened at the present red ink's picture: \$20 (fines) + \$50 to Dy + \$30 to Hong + \$30 to the Landlady, etc. = \$130 + ... Well, my dear Elsie, if I'm not at the "summit rendez-vous" - this would mean simply that I'll be in jail for indebtedness; don't worry! I hope that after having read the books in general course (do not look at me like recently bought that, please!), I'll be a better budget-man for my own skin.

All in all, I have this to tell you now. From the bottom of my heart, I am asking you for the last time to forgive me for having been so unfair to you and others. You were right, Dr. Fox was right, Dr. Galois was right, Waltman was right, and a

lot of people - at MSU and elsewhere - were right, in disapproving my past attitude & action. I was ~~not~~ ^{nothing} more than an ungrateful, insensible & wicked person; and I am now the very image of a wrecked, prostrated, "through" fellow.

These thoughts have been making me so ashamed of myself that I cannot study. - I dare to ask you this, however: if, disgustfully swallowing my shame, I'll bring my property (only books!) back to E. L., would MSU still accept me? - After having heard Dr. Baker & Dr. Finkle in their letters, & Dr. Austin in person here, I came to the conclusion that I have made the gravest mistake in my life of coming to the US with a wrong state of mind & especially, in leaving my friends at MSU. - I have been feeling so alone, friendless & helpless here. Although Hawaii has been very kind & helpful to me, I now realize that what I am missing is friendship; and this has almost cost my health.

I am right at this moment having a bad headache (a real one, kind of physical sickness you know!) But this is a recurring gentle thing which has always happened to me whenever I have a "headache" in life. Nothing serious; it will pass with the Vietnamese New Year. - I have received Vt cards from my brother, my wife (in US), from Chien & Vien, also letters from Mr. Highbee, Van & Frank.

A little message to prospective grad. participants ("Ph.D." hunters) in Vietnam: at least in my field (government and the like), do not display any "silly" nationalistic attitude about diplomas; believe me, my own experience has taught me that a real "hard" work is awaiting them, to get to know the back ground of the American system only. If they want to get equivalence, better remain and get their doctorate elsewhere first!) and come only for a short visit; if they want to get the degree -- and I talk from my own experience from NIA & the Faculty of law -- they have to expect to begin by the beginning. My experience has cost victims (incl. you, I'm sorry now!) a money to the American & DRV people. There are perhaps "geniuses", but even if they get their degree here they won't know much, if they don't begin by the beginning as I said at NIA first!). - So much for this time, dear heart! Elsie; looking forward to seeing you soon, yours always, Phat

January 22, 1959

Mr. Tran Ngoc Phat
53 Trowbridge Street
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Dear Phat:

This morning's mail from Saigon finally brought a copy of the decree extending your stay in the United States. Since I am unsure whether or not you will have received your official notification of the extension, I am enclosing a thermofax copy for you.

We look forward to seeing you in East Lansing on the 6th. Chau dropped in last night to let me know how "TET" plans were developing and we played over the tape - several times in fact.

See you soon.

Sincerely yours,

Elsie Cunningham

January 26, 1960

Mr. Tran Ngoc Phat
53 Trowbridge Street
Cambridge 38,
Massachusetts

Dear Phat:

Probably you have guessed in advance that all things considered, it would be undesirable for you to transfer back to M.S.U. In fact, Dr. Austin was a little surprised that you were contemplating such a move. Perhaps what Harvard lacks in warmth will be made up in prestige. I know that people from Harvard, Boston, and the entire New England area are reserved and perhaps a little distant by comparison to those in the Midwest.

We are having some small difficulties with housing as the dormitories are completely full -- Buu Dich is the only person having a space to put someone up. Therefore, given your budgetary problems, I would hesitate to recommend an early arrival in East Lansing unless you are better able than I to find inexpensive accommodations. At the moment it looks like Kellogg Center is the only possibility, and I trust that this will not break you or any of the other participants for the few nights you will be here. If you still wish to come earlier, please do so.

Sincerely yours,

Elsie Cunningham
Participant Director

EMC:nm

P.S. Please find enclosed your per diem check for the period from February 1st through the 15th. This includes an additional \$4 per day from 2/5 through 2/7. We will make any other adjustments that may be necessary on your next per diem.

Looking forward to seeing you here in East Lansing.

January 29, 1960

Mr. Tran Ngoc Phat
53 Trowbridge Street
Cambridge 38,
Massachusetts

Dear Phat:

I just wish to let you know that Dr. and Mrs. Smuckler are giving a reception on Saturday afternoon following the Ph.D. meeting. Perhaps we can all get together and have dinner at my apartment after the reception.

I will meet you at the airport providing the weather and the airlines cooperate.

Sincerely yours,

Elsie Cunningham
Participant Director

EMC:rm

Cambridge 1/31/1960

Dear Elsie,

This is just a quick note to inform you of my decision not follow up the suggested offer of a combination - trip thru Detroit. Although it would be real fun to ride with you from there to E. Lansing I hate to cause you such an extra-trouble. Thanks for the thoughtful idea anyway!

Let's stick to the former schedule (with no stopover and carryover at Detroit) then, with perhaps the departure from Boston advanced one day (2/4 instead of 2/5).

By the way, don't worry overly about the housing shortage; as a last resort, I think I'll can sleep in the Y for one or two nights as well.

So much, and since I'll be seeing you after all, let's reserve the rest for later on. Now, take a deep breath and relax! (that's food.)

Sincerely,

Phat



Harvard University February 7, 1950

Dear Nancy,

Alan just returned
the books bill with course
certification.

Hoping to hear from
you soon again &
remain

Yours sincerely,

W. P. How



Harvard University

2/11/1960

Dear Elsie,

Thanks for your hospitality and "cooperation" on the occasion of my quick return to East Lansing last weekend.

I'm now shopping for the courses to be taken during Spring term and also preparing myself more actively for the final exams & the thesis during my "spare" time.

I miss you all very much; especially you and Chae.

Sincerely,

W. Phat

P.S. 1. Please find enclosed:

1. 1 appln for membership in the Am. Academy of P & S S, to be decided upon at your discretion;

2. Pat's "original" letter;

3. a request (now and here) for adjustment of transport fees: (2/5)

- tubway to Boston (fr. Camb.): 0.20 \$
- taxi from " to airport: \$2.00

total \$2.20

P.S. 2. Again feeling so "lonely" and "left out", after the warmth in E. Lansing. - But everything is OK!

February 16, 1960

Mr. Tran Ngoc Phat
53 Trowbridge Street
Cambridge 38,
Massachusetts

Dear Phat:

Please find enclosed a bill from Harvard which came yesterday. I cannot tell from this bill just what this charge is for. I wonder if you could help me on this. If this is a medical bill (I had an idea it could be that) then also please have the doctor fill in the attached form and sign it, and you do the same.

It was so nice to see you again when you were in East Lansing. Lots of luck with your exams.

Elsie left Saturday for her much deserved vacation. We all will miss her for a whole month, but just hope she really has a good time.

Sincerely yours,

Nancy Maddalozzo
Secretary to Elsie Cunningham

Tran Ngoc Phat
53 Trowbridge Street
Cambridge 38,
Massachusetts
February 16, 1960

Bob
P/S

Miss Elsie Cunningham
Participant Director
Vietnam Project
Michigan State University
East Lansing,
Michigan

Dear Elsie:

After one week of course "shopping" and mental exercise, I now am in a position to let you know what is my present academic rate of growth, what is my future degree-hunting strategy and what are the related problems and plans.

At Michigan State University as well as at Harvard up to this point, consciously or unconsciously my studies and research work have been rotating around a triangular axis: understanding American society and government, and acquiring new methodological experience, comparative and historical background, theoretical notions and concepts as well as multiple technical tools, in order to open a first door to Vietnamese past, present and destination; profiting from the invaluable time and opportunities provided me, to enlarge and improve my general knowlege; and, last but most important of all, satisfying the requirements for obtaining a Ph. D. degree in Political Science with a view to become a teaching member at the Saigon N. I. A. . . These three areas of concern have been arbitrarily dissected to help comprehension; that they are intimately intertwined and mutually interacting is beyond question. To continue with the three-fold presentation, may I submit to you that as of date the first two goals have been fairly attained and the **third** in the process of completion. The present year (1960) is going to be entirely devoted to the practical task of readying myself for the General Examinations (called Prelims. at M. S. U.?).

In order to be officially entitled to these examinations, the authorization of the Government Department (which grants degrees in Political Science at Harvard) is necessary. And this authorization can be requested whenever the student thinks he is thoroughly prepared to do so, subject to the approval of his Major Professor (in my case, Professor Gaus in the Major Field of American Government.) As to the official side, namely Professors Emerson and Gaus, they think that "if everything goes well" I can plan to undergo the exams. by the end of next Fall term, i.e. sometime in January 1961. The qualification

.../2...

put in quotation marks seems to bring the question to only one point of focus -- myself. I have tried to evaluate the situation as realistically as possible, and hereafter are the tentative results --

A-On the credit side:

1. In terms of course work:
 - a/ At Saigon N. I. A. and Faculty of Law: The tremendous amount of courses taken there would be useful mostly only when I shall be back teaching in Vietnam; very little hope for having any of them credited at Harvard, although they are helpful in terms of general background and add to my prestige (?) here;
 - b/ At M. S. U.: Except three seminar courses respectively in political thought, foreign political systems (with emphasis on Russia) and political organization and behavior, the remaining four courses which I had taken there were mainly in the general scope of public administration; there is some hope that at least the courses in thought and p.a. will be granted credit -- a request to this effect will be submitted to the Registrar by the end of this term;
 - c/ At Harvard University: In accordance with the six fields developed here, last term I took four courses in four fields, namely Constitutional Law (Government 224A), International Relations (Government 295), Economics (Economics 206, a full-year course), and History (History 171b) -- the two last fields will be "written off" by the end of this term (i.e. as soon as the requirements of one full-course or two semester courses for each are met); except the constitutional law course which needs a revision of the seminar paper (to be completed, hopefully, within the next couple of weeks), all the other three courses have been satisfactorily given credit (i.e. with a grade of B or above);
2. In terms of language requirements: French language exam. had been passed successfully to meet the first language requirement; it has been my understanding that Vietnamese could be offered as my second language -- even in this case (fairly certain, because Professors Emerson and Gaus have acquiesced), if time permits, before I return to Vietnam I hope to have the opportunity to study Chinese in this country instead of in Vietnam;
3. In terms of adjustment to the University's outlay and system: Although it has been time-consuming to get used to the many libraries (especially the Law Library), the process of adjustment in this respect is going on quite rewardingly; on the other hand, the choice of the courses has been partly guided by the concern for getting acquainted with the professors in various fields in preparation for the research work for the general exams.;
4. In terms of preparation for the thesis: the various trips (e.g., to TVA, Civil Service Cn., etc.), the attendance at various conferences (PSA, ASPA), the individual contacts with administrators, professors, government students, as well as individual readings outside of the course work, have helped enlarge the horizons for the possible choice of a topic.

B. On the planning side:

1. The immediate plan is to finish up the course work requirement. This involves the writing of four papers; so far, one has been accepted, one is being revised prior to final submission (for the 1959 Fall course in Constitutional Law, Government 224A), and two are planned to be produced either next Summer (if there will be appropriate courses worth taken and if the instructors like the idea) or next Fall (while supposedly preparing intensively for the coming Generals)--of the two alternatives, the first is to be preferred obviously. For this Spring term, in addition to the continued work in Economics 206, I am taking three more courses, namely one in Political Thought (Government 106b), one in Constitutional Law (Government 124, with McCloskey) and one in History (History 164b). For purposes of writing better papers and the final thesis more smoothly as well as in preparation for the written part of the Generals, more systematic personal daily work in English is felt necessary.

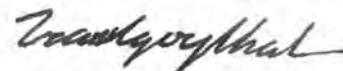
2. The overall plan to get the degree within the 3-year tentative limit (counting from January 1959) is still possible, providing that the course work requirement and General Exams. are satisfied as early as scheduled (January 1961), and that the dissertation is successfully completed by January 1962 the latest.

The various problems in the past, mostly of a personal nature, have been fortunately satisfactorily solved altogether. Now that conditions and prospects for my academic success here are all the most favorable, it is hard to conceive of any difficulties which cannot be removed fairly easily by sacrifice, hard work and...good luck.

May I take this opportunity to officially present my apology to Vietnam Project for having been recently the reason of overconcern for its officials and associates; and I hereby withdraw my former discontinuation request. Instead, although it may be quite out of place here, I have felt it necessary to renew my request for having continued financial and administrative support from Vietnam Project until successful completion of the program originally projected for my training in this country.

I am grateful to all who have so generously and spontaneously understood and helped me from East Lansing and Saigon, especially...who you know.

Sincerely,



Tran Ngoc Phat.



Harvard University

2/6/960

Dear Elsie.

I forgot to ask for the gift you once promised to me. If you still think I'm still worth of this honor, please keep it until our next "rendezvous" (!) for me.

The weather is quite fair. My cough still hangs on, but I'm feeling much better than last week.

I have met again W. W. Snyder who seems ^{as} busy as I am.

Please submit the enclosed letter to Dr. Austin for his perusal too. Above all, please do not be so pitiless as to laugh at me or to tell wicked things about me. Remember, I'll be watching you!

Again let me tell you how much I was happy in having been able to confide to E. Lansing. Although I've tried to "kill" my sentimentality, my "double" homestead nest once in a while, recurs...

But let's forget about this. Let me only tell you that I'm looking forward to seeing you (and Chau)

some other time, for a longer period so that I'll be able to tell you what I did not have time to tell you - a fortnight or so ago in E. Lansing. Sincerely,
Zookat

(over)

P.S. 1, I have got the passport back. They only gave me a visa valid until next July. If this is not too much inconvenience to you, please indicate if you can help me in this matter once again.

P.S. 2 I have heard from Alfreda, than -

P.S. 3 Salute to Bona, Nancy, } Chere
and ... others.



Harvard University

19 February, 1960

Dear Nancy,

It is my impression that the mystery-bill from Harvard Coop. referred to an earlier books purchase in October, 1959 (charge slip attached). please let me know of any kind of further difficulty which may arise out of this matter.

It was great to hear from you. I was really happy these two days I had been welcomed back to E. Landing; your baby was just wonderful.

I did not know that Elsie was having her vacation that early. Anyway I miss her too, and hope to hear from her soon.

Sincerely yours,

Tran Ngoc Phat

P.S. I have moved to the house next door (55 Trowbridge Street Cambridge 38, Mass.); I do not have a kitchen in the new place; but I have found out there was not much time left for me to cook after all. Hence, this change of address.

February 23, 1960

Mr. Tran Ngoc Phat
55 Trowbridge Street
Cambridge 38,
Massachusetts

Dear Phat:

Please find enclosed a billing from Harvard for books which we received this week. Would you please indicate for which courses these books were purchased and return the billing to me.

Hope this finds you well and working hard. We haven't heard from Elsie at all - but imagine that she is really having a wonderful time.

Sincerely,

Nancy Maddalozzo
Secretary to Elsie Cunningham

nm



Harvard University 25 February, 1960

Mrs. Nancy Mandalozzo
Vietnam Project
Michigan State University
East Lansing,
Michigan

Dear Nancy,

Please find returned here with the books
bill accompanied with course certification
as asked. My own quest is that you
did right in with holding the former bill
until Elsie's return.

I am feeling quite well again.
The new place, though lacking a kitchen,
is very comfortable; the only inconve-
nience is that there is no telephone
service in the new house, and I am
hesitating to install one for my own
use under present conditions.

Besides, my work is going on at
an increasingly intensive rhythm. I
hope something (quick and successful)
will come out at the other end.

Thank you for your solicitude,
Nancy. It is my wish that you and
your dear family are happy as always.

Hello to Chau and Dora. I
miss you all. No word from Elsie yet.
She must be, as you said, having a
really wonderful time.

Sincerely,

W. O. R. H. O.

February 25, 1960

Mr. Tran Ngoc Phat
55 Trowbridge Street
Cambridge 38,
Massachusetts

Dear Phat:

Please find enclosed your per diem check for the period from March 1st through the 15th.

Phat, I have changed my mind about saving these bills for books until Elsie returns. If you will indicate for which courses these books were purchased and return the bill to me, I will then process them for payment.

None of us have heard at all from Elsie - guess she must be really having a good time and enjoying her vacation.

Sincerely yours,

Nancy Maddalozzo
Secretary to Elsie Cunningham

nm