

*Vietnam
Participant
Program*

January 13, 1960

To: Dr. Ruben Austin, Vietnam Project Coordinator
From: Ralph H. Smuckler
Subject: PhD Participant Program

I have just read the memo of Gabis to Musolf concerning the participant program dated December 11, 1959 and Wes Fishel's December 5th memo on the PhD Participant Program. There are several points I would like to make for information purposes along the lines of our discussion of this subject several days ago. If you were in town we could talk this over and the memo wouldn't be necessary. Let's talk about it after your return.

In many respects the PhD Participant Program should be considered separate from the general participant program of the Vietnam project. In my opinion, Fishel and you are certainly correct in concluding that much more personal attention by an academician must be given to the PhD's than is the case with other participants. The coordinator himself may be able to do this or he may wish to call upon John Dorsey, Fishel, or some other person who has had a direct relationship to the program in Vietnam. We found that even Howie Waltman was not fully adequate for the job of counseling the PhD participants.

It should be stressed that the PhD Participant Program was not calculated to be a 100% success. Most of the comments I have seen and heard about its present problems seem to imply that every PhD candidate sent from Saigon was expected to complete the PhD. At best, we hoped to maintain a 50-60% success story. If we end up with five PhD's out of the eleven candidates we have planned to send, we will be doing all right, assuming that these five will be integrated into the NIA faculty upon return to Vietnam. Therefore, if you are encountering problems and find that such candidates as Mr. Buu Dich are not strong enough to complete the work, you probably should consider this par for the course. The road to the PhD is a rough and rocky one, even for a good American student without cultural and academic adjustment problems. For a Vietnamese student the problems were expected to be greater. If some are going to drop out over the period of the first few years of their work, after we have done the best we can to help them, we should be willing to accept this after a struggle and not jump to conclusions about the total success or failure of the PhD Participant Program.

Dr. Ruben Austin
Page Two
January 13, 1960

The selection process in Vietnam can be examined and reviewed, but I think you will find that the PhD participants we have here represent, with perhaps one exception, the best available and reasonably good risks. I need not review again the screening process which was used, nor need I list the many candidates who applied but failed to pass the tests which were applied by both Americans and Vietnamese.

I want to stress also the great importance which should be attached to the PhD Participant Program. There is probably no single program function of the Coordinator's office more important to the NIA program than this one responsibility. All other negotiations and arrangements are secondary, with but few exceptions, since we are counting on the returned PhD's to provide the solid core for the long-range development of the NIA faculty, the most important single part of Institution building.

I note that the trouble our PhD Participants are having is compared to the success of Mrs. Hue, a Vietnamese PhD candidate at Ann Arbor not being sponsored by the Vietnam project. I don't think such comparisons are valid in that the very reasons for Mrs. Hue's easy adjustability to the American educational system and culture are probably the same reasons she is currently unacceptable to Rector Thong and other Vietnamese at the NIA. In other words, those Vietnamese students who adjust perfectly, become regular American college students, etc., are probably going to find the reverse adjustment upon return to a productive job in Vietnam extremely difficult if possible at all. If our candidates become too Americanized, they would be the exception if they were fully acceptable upon return. There are ample illustrations of Americanized Vietnamese in Saigon who are not acceptable within their own culture and therefore are relatively unproductive in official positions such as those at the NIA. Our PhD's will be most successful if, while gaining a sound American education, they cling to the ability to fit back in once they return to Vietnam so that their innovations are accepted gradually by their colleagues. Mrs. Hue is unacceptable at the present time and would probably remain so because of her having already evidenced characteristics which are outside the framework of the Vietnamese culture.

I think the best we can do under the circumstances is to accept some of these problems as natural in a program such as this. We should give much personal attention to our PhD candidates, try to help them at every turn without babying them, and keep them continually in contact with Vietnam and particularly with the NIA to which they will return. If some drop out after we have done all we can, then we should accept this. On the other hand, we should not accept mere loneliness or lack of conviction as justification to send them back to Vietnam before completing their work. Constant counseling, correspondence and contact will be necessary.

Needless to say you can count on me to help in any way you wish in trying to make the PhD program successful.

RHS:vh
Copy - Lloyd Musolf

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY EAST LANSING

VIETNAM PROJECT • OFFICE OF COORDINATOR



December 18, 1959

Mr. Howard Waltman
c/o Clebanoff
1345 E. 46th Street
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Dear Howard:

It was very good to hear from you, and I hope one of these days that we can get to see each other. Ever since I joined the Project I have been very much impressed by the diligent efforts which you have extended on the part of the participant program.

As I mentioned to you over the phone, I think it would be very valuable if you could see and talk to each of the Ph. D. participants who will be in New York next week.

I am attaching a list of names of individuals who will be calling you. We have asked them to call you Monday morning at your residence and arrange an interview time which is mutually satisfactory. Mr. Phat will remain in Cambridge, and we would be very grateful if you would call him and arrange a meeting there.

I would like to mention a few points that I wish you would stress. I talked with Dean Taggart about this this morning and he was particularly anxious to focus on the setting in which they find themselves. This is going to be awkward for you because you will be seeing most of the people away from their place of residence; but we would like you to explore with them what difficulties if any they are experiencing at the university which they are attending. You can feel free to discuss the matter of grades, the amount of course work they are taking, progress in research techniques, relation with professors and fellow graduate students and general living conditions.

One thing that has bothered me very much is whether or not the Ph. D. participant has the same incentive to go through the Ph. D. grind as an American. If the Vietnamese look upon a Ph. D. in a substantially different light than we do here, this may be significant problem. In other words, when you talk to persons like Phat, Xuan, and possibly Bach-Lan, I would like to recommend that you probe this aspect of their thinking. In talking with one of my colleagues here from Ceylon who has completed his Ph. D. requirements at Michigan, except for the dissertation, he tells

December 18, 1959

me that there is a common misconception among foreign students. They judge American education by undergraduate or secondary school standards and are very much surprised when they find out how difficult it is to get a Ph. D. from a good American university.

Wes Fishel has recommended two possible approaches: he suggests that it would be preferable to group the Vietnamese at one university and that a senior academic person should visit the student at his campus periodically and confer with him and his major professor. After talking with our participants, I would like to get your reaction on this.

Finally, I would very much like a brief analysis of the selection process which took place in Vietnam in relation to the progress or outlook on the part of the participants whom you interview. I do not mean to emphasize this point, but if you feel there is anything of interest here which will help us evaluate the program, we would like to have it.

We will authorize a three-day extension to cover the interviews in New York City and the trip to Cambridge. We have notified Phat that you will probably be getting in touch with him. Whatever incidental expenses you have will be reimbursed to you with the exception of meals in New York. Since the participants are on per diem they understand very well if each is to pay for his own meal, so don't feel awkward about this.

At the moment, I cannot tell you definitely whether we can bring you here on the 29th. Let's keep this open. In the meantime, Dean Taggart and I would very much appreciate a written report from you as the result of your interviews.

Kind regards.

Sincerely,

Stanley T. Gabis
Acting Coordinator

Att.

cc: Cunningham
✓ Taggart

Thurs 9 Dec 59

There is another letter indicating this participant has definitely decided to go home and is requesting that necessary arrangements be made. A thermofax copy came to us several days ago.

copy the letter from Witt to Gabis to see if he can get it signed by Witt
copy the letter from Gabis to Witt to see if he can get it signed by Witt
Yesterday, Gabis called to say he was sending a travel authorization over for Elsie to go to Boston to see the participant and on to Washington to take care of some ICA Participant business. She was to leave last night. I informed Witt of his call and he then signed the authorization. When it got to Dean Combs' office, Betty call sent it back with a note calling attention to the requirement of having several days' notice for such trips. Also that since Dean Combs was out of town and she was not signed permitted to sign for him, there was nothing she could do about it. She then called me to let me know what she had done. I explained there seemed to be some emergency and she then suggested we could take it to Pierson or Wight in the Business Office if we wanted to.

At Witt's request, I got word to Gabis that he could do this and that Witt did not want to because he could not answer the question -- "Why can't this wait until Monday?"

A short while later Gabis called back, very deflated, and said that someone by the name of Smith in the Business Office had tak- referred them to Ruth Jameyson. She in turn had taken it in to President Hannah. He shook his head and said to wait until you got back.

Since the participant had refused, in a phone talk with Gabis, to talk his problem over with his professor, I suggested that Gabis call the Boston institution's foreign student advisor and ask him to talk to the man and try to get him to wait until you got back. He said he thot that might be a good idea, but I don't know if he made the call.

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

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY EAST LANSING

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND PUBLIC SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

To: Dr. Stanley Gabis, Coordinator, Vietnam Project

From: Wesley R. Fishel

December 5, 1959

Subject: Ph. D.'s Participant Program

Our conversation of the other evening concerning the future of Mr. Phat has caused me to review once more in my mind certain aspects of our Participant Program, especially as it relates to the preparation of Ph. D.'s in Political Science and related areas.

I can understand your annoyance at Mr. Phat, because he obviously has permitted some unhappy occurrences to turn him 180 degrees from his course. Perhaps you are right, and he is indeed a "quitter." Perhaps, he, like Mr. Dich, and Mr. Khanh, are not of top quality and should never have been sent to us in the first place. That is a question which bears looking into on another plane. However, it does seem to me that both we and the Government have been rather lax and un-systematic in our planning for this program. In the first place, the Government should be giving us the very finest talent it can find, for these are the men and women whom we hope will become leaders among the Vietnamese intelligentsia in the years ahead. Secondly, as you suggested during our conversation the other day, the Government should show greater interest in the progress and promise of the candidates it sends for this advanced training.

On reflection, I believe that a personal letter from Secretary of State Nguyen Dinh Thuan to each of the Ph. D. candidates currently in the U. S. — a letter stressing the responsibility the Government assumes for placing the individual after his return to Vietnam and the corollary obligation assumed by the candidate when he accepted this substantial grant of funds, noting that the Government is greatly interested in learning from the candidate what progress he is making and what problems he is facing, and inviting him to contact us here whenever he has problems in need of solution — would tend to reinforce the ethical and psychological aspects of the undertaking.

It seems to me that we have made an error in permitting such completely free choice of schools by the doctoral candidates. As it has turned out, our candidates are now quite scattered, and it is only by chance that there are more than one at Columbia and more than one at Michigan State University. It is my feeling that we might be better advised to offer the candidates a choice of three or four schools, with the idea that this will tend to place them in groups, where in moments of stress or when problems arise they will at least be able to turn to fellow countrymen for advice or comfort. I realize that one may also encourage mass disaffection if candidates are together, rather than separated, but I don't see how this limited possibility could give us any more difficulty than that in which we

presently find ourselves.

Again, it seems to me that our candidates have not been sufficiently well prepared on their arrival here, either in the English language, or in their understanding of American culture, or even in their understanding of the reasons for which they have been sent 10,000 miles to study. The blame here might be placed at both of our doorsteps. The important thing is that this situation must be improved. Furthermore, I must say in all frankness that I believe the Ph. D. candidates have needed and do need more direct personal guidance from someone of sufficient status to command their respect than they have had thus far. I would not for one minute depreciate the value of the excellent work that Elsie Cunningham has done and is doing for our participants. But it seems to me that the Ph. D. candidates are a special category, and that they have more need of the understanding ear and mature counseling of a ranking academician who has had experience in their country than we have given them to date. I would suggest, for example, that in the future Ralph Smuckler should go at least twice a year to visit our Ph. D. candidates in their host institutions and confer with them and their advisors. By the same token, it might also be worthwhile to remind them of their Michigan State University "heritage" by bringing them all to the campus each year for a few days of discussion and problem-airing.

This brings me to another point, which is the manifest loneliness of these men and women who are faced with the sometimes unhappy prospect of spending three years here, away from their families, and often working under serious linguistic and psychological handicaps. I think it appropriate to repeat here a proposal which I made in the spring of 1957, and which was at that time approved by the Presidency but refused by ICA, along with other aspects of a much larger proposal which included Ph. D. training. (Many months later, ICA approved the idea of the Ph. D. program, but we did not at that time resurrect the accompanying proposal, which follows here.) It would be extremely worthwhile, in my opinion, to break up the lengthy period of Ph. D. training at a median point, say after about 18-21 months, and return the candidate to Vietnam for two or three months of home leave. I see this as doing at least three things of value: 1. enabling the candidate to renew his contact with his own country and with his family and friends; 2. enabling him to refresh and up-date his knowledge of the situation in his own country, so that when he returns home later, after successfully completing his program of studies, his ideas and his understanding of his society will not be as out of date as would otherwise be the case. (I mention this point particularly because Vietnamese society is changing rapidly, and I have seen many students who have returned to Vietnam after an absence of several years and have found it extremely difficult -- or even impossible -- to re-adapt themselves to life in their homeland.); 3. giving MSUG and GVN leaders an interim opportunity to measure the progress the candidate is making. This is a different approach from that which is generally taken, but it is not bizarre when one considers that we do precisely this sort of thing for our own personnel working in Vietnam (and of course in other countries as well). Obviously, such a return home would have to be hedged in with concrete guarantees that the candidate would depart once more for the U. S. when his leave had ended. But I do not consider that this would be a serious problem. In too many cases the reverse would be true, if our past experience is any indication of what we may expect in the future.

In short, I am not suggesting that we need go out and hire a psychoanalyst to soothe the troubled breasts of our unhappy candidates. But on the other hand, it does seem to me that we ought to take every possible step toward making sure that we understand the reasons that our candidates behave as they do, and that we make such reforms in the program as might be indicated by a careful analysis. The case of Mr. Phat warrants intensive examination. Judging from his record here as well as in Vietnam, I believe it would be extremely worthwhile for you to fly to Cambridge and sit down with Mr. Phat and Rupert Emerson, his advisor, to discuss his problems. It is possible that Emerson's chilly and austere facade have simply frightened Mr. Phat away. I am sure that Emerson would accept your intervention as wholly natural, given the fact that Mr. Phat is being supported by the Project and that you are directing its program in this country. Perhaps you would find that our candidate's work at Harvard this semester has been less than satisfactory and that some drastic action is indicated in his case. On the other hand, it might also be that he has had some other kinds of difficulties which might be susceptible of amelioration if given a thorough examination.

One further point disturbs me. You commented the other evening that you did not see the reason that we need to train Vietnamese Ph. D.s in the United States, and you questioned whether the doctorate from an American institution would rate as highly as the traditional doctorate from a French school. It would take me several pages to reply adequately to this thought, but I would say in essence that in a status-conscious society such as that in Vietnam, we have been seriously hampered by the absence of a large number of American-trained Vietnamese intellectuals. Now it is true that an "intellectual" is often self-defined as such, and it is also true that some classifications of intellectuals include anyone who has graduated from a secondary school. However, though both of these facts are relevant to our problem in Vietnam, the most important aspect of the problem has been the absence of American-trained "Docteurs" to stand up against the scores of French-trained "Docteurs". One of the latter will (grudgingly perhaps) listen to one of the former, whereas he will tend to scorn and, if possible, ignore the remarks of a lowly M. A. or B. A. from an unknown American institution. In addition, I doubt that we will have, if ever, the reform of attitudes and approach to social science problems and instruction that we have been trying to encourage in Vietnam unless and until we develop a sympathetic core of prestigious people on the faculties of the National Institute of Administration and of the universities of Vietnam. Our Ph. D. program is our chosen instrument in this effort. I think it behooves us to make this program as effective as possible, for the sake of MSU's over-all effort in Vietnam, and to facilitate the development of constructive attitudes and to encourage the establishment of modern institutions and practices in the Vietnamese Government.

I would appreciate it if you would pass these ideas along to Lloyd Musolf for his reactions.

M.S.U. STAFF CONTACTS WITH Ph.D. PARTICIPANTS

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Departure from M.S.U. Campus</u>	<u>School</u>	<u>Date of Contact</u>	<u>Where Contacted</u>	<u>Person Contacted</u>
Luong Nhi Ky	February 1959	U. of M. Ann Arbor	Spring Vacation 1959	East Lansing	E. Cunningham
			9/4/59	A.P.S.A. Conference Washington	W. Fishel
Le Thi Bach-Lan	February 1959	Columbia New York	4/1/59	A.S.P.A. Conference Washington	S. Gabis
			9/4/59	A.P.S.A. Conf. Washington	W. Fishel
			4/24/59	N.A.F.S.A. Meeting New York	E. Cunningham
			4/25/59		
			10/23/59	American Friends of Vietnam Meeting New York	E. Cunningham
Tran Ngoc Phat	September 1959	Harvard Cambridge			
Tran Qui Than	September 1958	Cornell Ithaca	12/1/58	Ithaca	E. Cunningham
			12/24/58	New York	E. Cunningham
			4/1/59	A.S.P.A. Conf. Washington	S. Gabis
			10/23/59	Amer. Friends of Vietnam Meeting New York	E. Cunningham
Cao Toan	September 1958	Columbia New York	11/26/58	New York	E. Cunningham
			12/23/58	New York	E. Cunningham
			4/2/59	A.S.P.A. Conf. Washington	S. Gabis
			4/26/59	New York	E. Cunningham
			Oct. 1959	New York	E. Cunningham
Nguyen Day Xuan	September 1958	Vanderbilt	11/14/59	East Lansing	staff

NOTE: Dr. David Cole is also at Vanderbilt and helps Xuan through some of his problems, etc.

VIETNAM PROJECT - OFFICE OF COORDINATOR

TO: Stanley T. Gabis
FROM: Elsie Cunningham
DATE: December 11, 1959
SUBJECT: Comments on Participant Evaluation Study

Not only lack of objectives and rationale, but some of the persons assigned to this program had no interest in it. (Lindholm, faculty and graduate assistants in East Lansing.)

There were a large number of scholarships available -- too many for the number of good candidates proposed.

Agencies not deeply committed in selection of "good" participants for training to be useful upon return -- in fact some times used as a method for getting particular persons out of the way temporarily.

Must recognize both sides of selection (as a reward or to remove undesirable person) and some of the best candidates lost due to prime necessity for political clearance in addition to attempts to balance geographic representation (north, central and south).

Availability of such opportunities was not widely circulated in the government -- over-representation of persons stationed in the capital and environs.

Even where the agency contact has been close, there has been wide variation in the quality and dedication of participants selected for training in the United States. (Budget and N.I.A.) All efforts to suggest ways not only of gaining additional insight or depth on subject matter but on methods as well have been to no avail. Others have extended themselves to farthest limits of their strength and available opportunities. Even with revamped programs due to personal attitude of participant, changed objectives or unrealistic planning, we have not always succeeded in properly gearing programs to abilities and experience.

Particularly our specialization in O & M has caused me great concern:

1. There seemed to be little relevance between participants and their agencies and this type of training especially from the standpoint of background (Loc of Department of Information) and little assurance that I could see for expecting that this training would be utilized upon return.
2. Tend to pick up gimmicks and curealls.

Age problems (older participants have tended to be more conscientious in maximizing training period in terms of effort, etc.)

Our best results seem to be result of the following ideal combination:

1. High motivation.
2. Specific interest (often articulated by a former M.S.U.G. staff member now back in the United States with long and continuous contact with participant).
3. Maturity.

Agree that Vietnamese who associate and reflect American values fit in well here but have difficulty in gaining acceptance at home -- may be dissident before departing from Vietnam (relate to selection for removing temporarily or permanently unwanted participants), tend to be aggressive (suits Americans but not Vietnamese.) In early years a few even came with designation of Direction of Planning but without approval of superior.

English speaking environment -- necessary to achieve fuller results in English training but feel that some arrive with adequate English fluency but nothing else. Their desire to continue to live together (few have requested American roommates) slows down adjustment and English.

Personality plays as important a role as language ability.

Ideal situation (Taylor to Tho) but afraid that classroom situations do little to alleviate concerns (using returned participants might be helpful if well and cautiously selected).

Our reports and participant reports as well used for keeping agency informed -- now no longer one person responsible (no replacement for Waltman).

Wherever possible ICA-MSU one week Communication Seminar.

Follow up difficulties (only two places where fairly regular contacts - Budget and N.I.A.).



To: Dr. Stanley Gabis, Coordinator, Vietnam Project

From: Wesley R. Fishel

December 5, 1959

Subject: Ph. D.'s Participant Program

C Our conversation of the other evening concerning the future of Mr. Phat has caused me to review once more in my mind certain aspects of our Participant Program, especially as it relates to the preparation of Ph. D.'s in Political Science and related areas.

O I can understand your annoyance at Mr. Phat, because he obviously has permitted some unhappy occurrences to turn him 180 degrees from his course. Perhaps you are right, and he is indeed a "quitter." Perhaps, he, like Mr. Dich, and Mr. Khanh, are not of top quality and should never have been sent to us in the first place. That is a question which bears looking into on another plane. However, it does seem to me that both we and the Government have been rather lax and un-systematic in our planning for this program. In the first place, the Government should be giving us the very finest talent it can find, for these are the men and women whom we hope will become leaders among the Vietnamese intelligentsia in the years ahead. Secondly, as you suggested during our conversation the other day, the Government should show greater interest in the progress and promise of the candidates it sends for this advanced training.

P
Y On reflection, I believe that a personal letter from Secretary of State Nguyen Dinh Thuan to each of the Ph. D. candidates currently in the U. S. -- a letter stressing the responsibility the Government assumes for placing the individual after his return to Vietnam and the corollary obligation assumed by the candidate when he accepted this substantial grant of funds, noting that the Government is greatly interested in learning from the candidate what progress he is making and what problems he is facing, and inviting him to contact us here whenever he has problems in need of solution -- would tend to reinforce the ethical and psychological aspects of the undertaking.

It seems to me that we have made an error in permitting such completely free choice of schools by the doctoral candidates. As it has turned out, our candidates are now quite scattered, and it is only by chance that there are more than one at Columbia and more than one at Michigan State University. It is my feeling that we might be better advised to offer the candidates a choice of three or four schools, with the idea that this will tend to place them in groups, where in moments of stress or when problems arise they will at least be able to turn to fellow countrymen for advice or comfort. I realize that one may also encourage mass disaffection if candidates are together, rather than separated, but I don't see how this limited possibility could give us any more difficulty than that in which we

presently find ourselves.

Again, it seems to me that our candidates have not been sufficiently well prepared on their arrival here, either in the English language, or in their understanding of American culture, or even in their understanding of the reasons for which they have been sent 10,000 miles to study. The blame here might be placed at both of our doorsteps. The important thing is that this situation must be improved. Furthermore, I must say in all frankness that I believe the Ph. D. candidates have needed and do need more direct personal guidance from someone of sufficient status to command their respect than they have had thus far. I would not for one minute depreciate the value of the excellent work that Elsie Cunningham has done and is doing for our participants. But it seems to me that the Ph. D. candidates are a special category, and that they have more need of the understanding ear and mature counseling of a ranking academician who has had experience in their country than we have given them to date. I would suggest, for example, that in the future Ralph Smuckler should go at least twice a year to visit our Ph. D. candidates in their host institutions and confer with them and their advisors. By the same token, it might also be worthwhile to remind them of their Michigan State University "heritage" by bringing them all to the campus each year for a few days of discussion and problem-airing.

This brings me to another point, which is the manifest loneliness of these men and women who are faced with the sometimes unhappy prospect of spending three years here, away from their families, and often working under serious linguistic and psychological handicaps. I think it appropriate to repeat here a proposal which I made in the spring of 1957, and which was at that time approved by the Presidency but refused by ICA, along with other aspects of a much larger proposal which included Ph. D. training. (Many months later, ICA approved the idea of the Ph. D. program, but we did not at that time resurrect the accompanying proposal, which follows here.) It would be extremely worthwhile, in my opinion, to break up the lengthy period of Ph. D. training at a median point, say after about 18-21 months, and return the candidate to Vietnam for two or three months of home leave. I see this as doing at least three things of value: 1. enabling the candidate to renew his contact with his own country and with his family and friends; 2. enabling him to refresh and update his knowledge of the situation in his own country, so that when he returns home later, after successfully completing his program of studies, his ideas and his understanding of his society will not be as out of date as would otherwise be the case. (I mention this point particularly because Vietnamese society is changing rapidly, and I have seen many students who have returned to Vietnam after an absence of several years and have found it extremely difficult -- or even impossible -- to re-adapt themselves to life in their homeland.); 3. giving MEUC and QVN leaders an interim opportunity to measure the progress the candidate is making. This is a different approach from that which is generally taken, but it is not bizarre when one considers that we do precisely this sort of thing for our own personnel working in Vietnam (and of course in other countries as well). Obviously, such a return home would have to be hedged in with concrete guarantees that the candidate would depart once more for the U. S. when his leave had ended. But I do not consider that this would be a serious problem. In too many cases the reverse would be true, if our past experience is any indication of what we may expect in the future.

In short, I am not suggesting that we need go out and hire a psychoanalyst to soothe the troubled breasts of our unhappy candidates. But on the other hand, it does seem to me that we ought to take every possible step toward making sure that we understand the reasons that our candidates behave as they do, and that we make such reforms in the program as might be indicated by a careful analysis. The case of Mr. Phat warrants intensive examination. Judging from his record here as well as in Vietnam, I believe it would be extremely worthwhile for you to fly to Cambridge and sit down with Mr. Phat and Rupert Emerson, his advisor, to discuss his problems. It is possible that Emerson's chilly and austere facade have simply frightened Mr. Phat away. I am sure that Emerson would accept your intervention as wholly natural, given the fact that Mr. Phat is being supported by the Project and that you are directing its program in this country. Perhaps you would find that our candidate's work at Harvard this semester has been less than satisfactory and that some drastic action is indicated in his case. On the other hand, it might also be that he has had some other kinds of difficulties which might be susceptible of amelioration if given a thorough examination.

One further point disturbs me. You commented the other evening that you did not see the reason that we need to train Vietnamese Ph. D.s in the United States, and you questioned whether the doctorate from an American institution would rate as highly as the traditional doctorate from a French school. It would take me several pages to reply adequately to this thought, but I would say in essence that in a status-conscious society such as that in Vietnam, we have been seriously hampered by the absence of a large number of American-trained Vietnamese intellectuals. Now it is true that an "intellectual" is often self-defined as such, and it is also true that some classifications of intellectuals include anyone who has graduated from a secondary school. However, though both of these facts are relevant to our problem in Vietnam, the most important aspect of the problem has been the absence of American-trained "Docteurs" to stand up against the scores of French-trained "Docteurs". One of the latter will (grudgingly perhaps) listen to one of the former, whereas he will tend to scorn and, if possible, ignore the remarks of a lowly M. A. or B. A. from an unknown American institution. In addition, I doubt that we will have, if ever, the reform of attitudes and approach to social science problems and instruction that we have been trying to encourage in Vietnam unless and until we develop a sympathetic core of prestigious people on the faculties of the National Institute of Administration and of the universities of Vietnam. Our Ph. D. program is our chosen instrument in this effort. I think it behooves us to make this program as effective as possible, for the sake of MSU's over-all effort in Vietnam, and to facilitate the development of constructive attitudes and to encourage the establishment of modern institutions and practices in the Vietnamese Government.

I would appreciate it if you would pass these ideas along to Lloyd Musolf for his reactions.

29 October 1959

James B Hendry, Asst Prof
Economics Department
Campus

Dear Jim

I have read with interest a copy of your letter to Ralph Smuckler and Lloyd Musolf on participants. The problem you pose is really considerably broader than Viet-Nam. We have a number of students from other countries in various departments who cannot afford to, or do not wish to stay through their PhD program. Andres Schultz from South Africa in your department is one of these.

Right now one of my students has completed his prelims and returned to Pakistan with the understanding that we will try to work out some arrangement. First of all this will involve consulting with him as he works on his thesis--long distance with his thesis supervisor and short distance with someone on our Pakistan Project who can assist him more specifically. When the time comes, I hope we can get approval for a committee composed partly of MSU and partly of other people to review his thesis and make recommendations.

At the present time, Glen Johnson is in Europe and is doing a similar thing by bringing together several English professors to conduct a Master's exam. Admittedly, there are problems in this; at the same time it does contribute to a better understanding of standards and requirements at the several institutions which would be involved.

Homer Higbee is pulling together a report of a committee on foreign student admissions and orientation which met last year. I am sure he would be interested in the contents of your letter. Can you send him a copy?

Sincerely

LW

Lawrence W Witt, Acting Dean
International Programs

lw/mj

cc Dr Smuckler & Dr Musolf, Dr Gabis, Dr Higbee, Miss Cunningham

October 27, 1959

*I see with
be of interest to
Parkinson / also
academic policy
on Ph.D. in
Government
may*

To: Ralph W. Smuckler & Lloyd D. Husolf
From: James B. Hendry
Subject: Participants

I have recently been brought into the discussion of problems relating to Nguyen Duy Xuan, so I would like to add my comments to the general correspondence that has already built up in this case.

One of the things that has struck us in coming back to the United States and talking with participants who are here is the very strong desire they have to return to Vietnam at the earliest possible date. I had not realized that this feeling was as strong as it is, but from my observation thus far it may be a significant factor in affecting both the quality of work that could be expected of students remaining for long periods in the U. S. and also their willingness to stay on to complete advance degrees. The situation is not limited to the campus at Michigan State, but is a common reaction among Vietnamese attending universities in other parts of the country. It is this anxiety to return to Vietnam that seems to be quite critical in the case of Xuan, for his letters to the Project here in East Lansing indicate increasingly strong feelings on the subject of an early return to Saigon. At the present time he is suffering from stomach ulcers, which, according to Dave Cole, are probably due to the tensions of the preliminary examinations which he has just passed, and also to the emotional strain of intense homesickness.

Another case in point involves Vieux and Van here on campus. Both are doing very well in graduate courses in economics, but neither is interested in remaining long enough to complete a doctorate because the time required to complete it will keep them away from Vietnam "too long". They report similar attitudes on the part of Khanh, also here at MSU, and Phat at Harvard.

In view of this development, which concerns Xuan immediately, but may have wider implications, we should give serious thought to means by which Vietnamese students who have passed all their requirements for the doctorate except the thesis can complete the thesis in Saigon. Where American students are concerned, I am heartily in agreement with the view that if at all possible, graduate students should remain on the campus until they have finished their theses. In the case of students from Vietnam, I am not certain this is always the best practice, particularly if means are available in Vietnam by

which they can satisfactorily complete their work there. If arrangements can be made in advance with the NIA to provide positions for returning Ph. D. candidates where they will be permitted to spend one full year working on their theses, and if arrangements with universities offering the degree can be made whereby NSU personnel in Saigon can act as faculty advisors to such degree candidates, I see no reason why the candidates cannot do the work in Saigon they would normally do on campus in the U. S.

I think Dave Cole's observation that such degree candidates would provide a nucleus of research interest within the NIA is a sound one. Not only would they contribute to the Institute's research program, but they might also be able to stimulate interest among other faculty members of the Institute in the work they are doing. I think that the faculty advisor - thesis candidate relationship in Saigon would be a much healthier one for NSU personnel than attempting to work together on some sort of joint research project. It would permit NSU personnel to exert a stronger influence on the research being done, and direct it into desirable channels more readily, than is probably possible in any other arrangement that could be devised.

In short, if some arrangement is made well in advance whereby returning degree candidates can be firmly under the supervision of NSU personnel in their respective academic fields in Saigon, I think that the advantages would be great not only in terms of relationships with the Institute, but also in terms of ultimately raising morale among graduate students now in the States or likely to receive participant awards in the future.

I am increasingly afraid that unless we try something of this sort we will lose several promising doctoral candidates, in some cases after substantial amounts of money have been spent in getting them partly through their course requirements.

JH/ap

cc: Gabis

Cunningham

Tull Program

Lutt

October 26, 1959

Dr. Ralph Smauckler
Chief Advisor
Michigan State University Group
Box 34, A.P.O. 143
San Francisco, California

Dear Ralph:

I was sent a copy of your memo of October 13 to Stan Gabis concerning Mr. Xuan. Subsequently, I discussed the problem with Jim Hendry at the recent Vietnam Conference. I still feel strongly that my earlier position is the right one in general and under the specific circumstances of Mr. Xuan.

I recognize the danger that some students returning to Vietnam without completing their theses may never get around to doing so. However, I feel that measures can be taken to reduce the likelihood of unfinished theses. I realize that this shifts the burden of responsibility to your end of the line rather than leaving it back here, but I think that other benefits which would accrue from theses researched and written in Vietnam more than compensates for the problems that might arise. I may be poking my head in where it is not justified, but I suggest that you try to work out an understanding with the Institute whereby those persons returning to do their theses would be assigned to full-time research and would be prodded to get the job done. If no other satisfactory financial arrangement can be devised I would suggest that MSU pay the salaries of such persons while they are working on their theses. This would be considerably cheaper than supporting them here in this country.

In the particular case of Mr. Xuan, I can report that he is extremely anxious to return to Saigon. In addition to a recently acquired case of ulcers, one factor that is bearing heavily upon his mind is a forth-coming marriage. It seems that he has been committed to the eldest of a string of sisters and none of the others can get married until Mr. Xuan skins off the top layer. Thus, you see that your position has earth-shattering sociological implications.

Finally, I might note that Mr. Xuan could not do a thesis in this country on economic conditions in Vietnam that would be satisfactory to this faculty. There just is not sufficient material in this country. He

Dr. Ralph Sznoklar

-2-

October 28, 1959

could write on some other subject, but again, I think that this is a misallocation of resources.

Turning to another matter, I was pleased to hear that you will be back in this country in December. I would like to visit you in East Lansing sometime in January before departing for Saigon so that we can discuss recent developments and you can clue me in on what to expect. I have just received Milton Taylor's report on the Business License Tax and find that we are far apart on this one. Anyway, we can see how things work out and I will appreciate any suggestions that you have to offer.

With best wishes,

David G. Cole, Assistant Director
Graduate Program in Economic
Development

DCC:mv

cc: Dr. Stanley Gabis

Handwritten: H. T. Gabis

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY EAST LANSING

VIETNAM PROJECT • OFFICE OF COORDINATOR

December 4, 1959

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

You have received my EL-36 in which I raise danger signals concerning our Ph. D. participant program. This matter was precipitated yesterday by a sudden long distance phone call from Mr. Phat, who, as you know, transferred from MSU to Harvard last September. He began graduate work in our Department in January, 1959 and seemed very promising at the time. We were very happy to have him go off to Harvard, and he departed here under relatively favorable circumstances.

Phat and I had a lengthy phone conversation during which he dwelt almost entirely on rather superficial matters. He was having difficulty with his landlady, he disliked having to sign for books, and he was very offended by the fact that the U. S. Government reduced his per diem from \$10 to \$8. I indicated to him that he should see Rupert Emerson, his main advisor, and discuss this situation with him quite frankly. Phat was very hesitant to do this on the grounds that he would not want to discuss his personal problems. I emphasized the importance of doing this, but could not make much headway. From the attached letter which he apparently wrote before he talked with me, you will note that he seems determined to return to Vietnam. I might also say, for some inexplicable reason, he made an issue of his extension even though Elsie and I attempted to impress him that this was a routine matter.

I think I convinced him that he should not return to East Lansing until Ralph Sauckler returns so that he can have a full discussion with Ralph as to his situation. The whole matter is rather strange. I have talked with a number of people who should know a lot more than I do about these matters and opinions varied. Although Phat assures me that academically he is doing quite well at Harvard, several of our colleagues are of the view that the prospect of doing a dissertation is overwhelming. Others talk in terms of cultural adjustment. Phat makes a big issue of minor administrative requirements. Scigliano suggested that the motivation for getting the Ph. D. in a good American university may be weakened by a feeling on the part of participants that they have accumulated enough "points" to advance in the bureaucracy anyhow so why go through the stress and strain of the Ph. D.

In my discussions with Xuan, who, as you know, insists on returning from Vanderbilt before completing his dissertation, he emphasized his family situation. I tried to summarize the whole matter in my cable to you where I indicate that in my judgment our Ph. D. participants simply do not have enough incentive to complete their program. What are the prospects of an American Ph. D. in Vietnam? Will they find themselves any better off in relation to older men who have the conventional law degree? The incentive of Americans to get the Ph. D. aside from a purely scholarly motivation is linked to the peculiar situation in American universities. Does this have as much relevance in the Vietnam setting? I find myself grasping for straws. One thing I was quite sure of. We need to have very specific assurances from someone at a rather high level, Secretary Thuan for example, that the Vietnam Ph. D. participants are actively supported and are assured of responsible assignments when they return to Vietnam. Is the Government of Vietnam prepared to make this kind of commitment? I have the distinct impression that occasional routine letters from Rector Thong are not very adequate. In other words, it would appear that the success or failure of our Ph. D. participant program will largely hinge on the specific support and assurance that these participants receive from home indicating more than occasional interest. I would very much appreciate your reaction.

STG/ap

cc: Witt ✓
Louhi
La Palombara
Cunningham

December 2, 1959

Miss Elsie Cunningham
Participant Program Director
Viet-Nam Project
East Lansing, Michigan

Dear Miss Director:

Please find enclosed my statement on the book bill.

And also, I hereby have the honor to request your kindly withdrawing from the Embassy my former application to the Vietnamese government for an extension of my stay here.

I am submitting you my request for preparing an itinerary of my trip from Cambridge back to Viet-Nam, since the time allowed for my mission here will expire by the end of this month.

It would be helpful if you call me back to East Lansing by December the 15th inst., so that I shall have time to do the necessary preparation such as, sending books, notifying my family and my employing agency of my return, etc...

Looking forward to receiving as soon as possible your itinerary, may I take this opportunity to express my sincere and deep gratefulness to MSUG in Saigon, MSU, ICA and Viet-Nam Project for the kind opportunity and the nice treatment I have been given to come and to study in this friendly country. And to you and especially all Viet-Nam Project management and staff, I am much obliged for many kinds of service you have spontaneously accomplished for me in the past.

It is my guess that I have learnt many useful things while in the United States so far. Copy of my activity report destined to my government will be submitted to you before I leave for Viet-Nam.

Sincerely yours,

Tran Ngoc Phat