

January 29, 1969

TO: Coordinator
FROM: Chief Advisor
SUBJECT: Participant Program

We have been holding off replying to recent memoranda from you and from Elsie Cunningham concerning the participant program in the hope that various questions raised in them could be discussed during your visit to Saigon. In view of the uncertainty of your coming and the need to get our thinking into line, I would like to deal here with some of the major points at issue.

1. Doctoral Program

a. Selection of Candidates. The objective of the program is, of course, to provide graduate training in public administration, economics, and other social sciences to qualified persons so that they may, upon obtaining the doctorate, join the faculty of the NIA. The requirements for selection have been that a person possess the license en droit, or its equivalent; that he agree to study in areas relevant to the NIA's academic program and needs, and to work for the NIA upon completion of his studies; that the NIA agrees to engage him as a member of its faculty upon this completion; and that he be judged likely to succeed in his doctoral studies. In connection with this last requirement, separate committees of the NIA and MSUC academic staffs evaluated the nine candidates who applied for graduate scholarships under the present program. The two committees then met together and selected the five candidates who were eventually proposed for study through the Coordinator's office. There was close agreement on all candidates selected except Mr. Buu-Dich. The MSUC committee rated him fifth or sixth out of the nine persons who applied, and probably would not have included him in its group to undertake graduate work because of his ability in English. The NIA committee, however, rated Mr. Buu-Dich

* Drafted by Scigliano in my absence.

third in its evaluation, and, inasmuch as he appeared to be a worthwhile risk, the NSWG committee members agreed to the Institute's evaluation to the extent of including him in the program.

b. Admission Applications. The five persons so selected were told that their wishes with respect to choice of university would be respected, provided their selections met with our approval in terms of the quality and appropriateness of the studies offered. They were told to select several universities, indicating their order of preference, and it was suggested that they consider the better-known institutions, since the name of the university carries some importance in Vietnam. To assist them in their choices, it was arranged for the candidates to talk to different NSUG faculty personnel, and all of them did. The group of grantees as a whole actually exercised little initiative in the selections made, since it did not have very much information but relied upon the suggestions which came from discussions with the faculty personnel and Howard Waltman.

It is hard to reconcile the stories which some of the participants related in East Lansing with the preparation which took place in Saigon. Scigliano talked with both Khanh and Phat after receiving your cable asking that they be allowed to choose between MSU and, respectively, Cornell and Harvard. The choice was complicated by your question as to preference should these other schools accept Khanh and Phat after MSU accepted. Both persons, after the alternatives and relative merits had been explained to them, reiterated their preferences for Cornell and Harvard, to the extent of desiring to transfer to these schools if acceptance was received from them after MSU accepted. Howard Waltman says that he is quite sure that Ky understood from the beginning that his application was for admission to the University of Michigan, and not for MSU, although it now appears that there might have been some misunderstanding on Ky's part. At any rate, Howard and Scigliano talked to Ky upon the receipt of the cable mentioned above. This was the first time Ky mentioned that he had thought he was applying to the University of Michigan, and at that late date all that could be done was to explain the departments and relative advantages at Columbia and Michigan, and allow him to make his choice between the two, which he did. Thus, Ky clearly understood when he left here, albeit perhaps with some misgivings, that he was going to the University of Michigan.

c. Equivalence of Degrees. You are acquainted with the problems involved in equating American degrees with French degrees in Vietnam. Apparently, the Vietnamese are likewise discovering that their degrees are not rated as high in the United States as they would like. Incidentally, I might say that this should be a sobering experience and should help elevate the status of American higher education in Vietnamese eyes. We would have avoided misunderstanding if we had procured information on the value placed on the licensee by American universities at the time we were processing applications.

John Dorsey has written in detail on the relation between the licensee en droit given by the University of Saigon and the degree given by the NIA. The important point, I think, is that the two degrees are about equal. The period of study, the course work, and the value of the degrees to the prospective Government employee are all about the same. In fact, the NIA has a somewhat higher admission standard, and certainly the experience of NSUG teachers in its programs has been better than that of American Smith-Mundt scholars in programs at the University. The problem is that neither institution has adequate standards, by our measurements, though I would say that the NIA is moving as fast in this direction as the University.

d. Coordinator's Support of Candidates. I think that it is necessary to the success of the graduate program that the Coordinator's office support as its own the candidates that we propose for study. This, of course, places a corresponding obligation upon us, that we propose only those persons whom we feel have a reasonable chance of succeeding. In this connection, I might say that American universities do not expect, the improbables being as they are, that all candidates proposed to them by professors and institutions in the United States will succeed; nor that all candidates whom they accept will succeed. But I think it essential that your office accept our judgment that proposed candidates are good bets for graduate study. Any doubts or needed clarification can be settled internally, through correspondence or, when necessary, through cables. I do not suggest that undue pressure should be applied in attempts to get persons accepted. I agree that this does harm to academic standards in general, to the way in which the Project and our counterpart institution are perceived, and to the way in which Vietnamese

perceive the quality of American higher degrees, and those awarded by MSU in particular. I would add that it does no good to Vietnam to have incompetent persons occupying important positions through undeserved diplomas from American universities. My feeling is that East Lansing, acting for us, should assume that our candidates have the necessary qualifications and act accordingly to get them accepted, without asking for special favors. It is then for the universities concerned to make their decisions. I realize that in order for you to do this, we must provide you with adequate information concerning the people we propose. If you are not put in the position of asking special favor, then I don't think you will be faced with much of a problem because candidates seek admission to MSU when rejected elsewhere, or accept other offers after MSU has accepted them. Our candidates would be in the position of other applicants who choose among schools, or who may be rejected by one school and still be legitimately accepted by another. The major qualification I would make to the foregoing remarks is that our candidates should be given the consideration of, and whatever allowances are made for, other student-applicants from foreign countries. Also, I should add that these remarks are made some distance from the situation in which you must operate; however, I hope they serve as a basis for mutual understanding.

Finally, we fully expect some of the candidates to fail before completing the Ph.D. If six or seven of the eleven we send are "flunked" out, we will not be surprised. After gaining admission for them, we should follow their progress and keep contact, but in no way should we push to get them through.

- . Changes in the Program. We are instituting the following procedural changes in our graduate participant program.
 - (1) We will seek transcripts of academic records for all candidates, in order to improve the basis upon which judgments are made.
 - (2) We will strengthen the counseling procedures to ensure further that all relevant questions including university choices are discussed fully with the persons selected for study.

- (3) All participants will be given statements, with copies to their Vietnamese superior and the Coordinator's office, outlining the objectives and conditions of their study. In this way, we may eliminate some of the conflicting stories which are presented after the participants leave Vietnam.
- (4) Several letters of recommendation will be obtained for each participant from MSUG academic staff members and from other persons in a position to evaluate his work and capabilities. Thereby, American universities will have more to base their decisions upon than the general recommendation which sponsorship by MSUG implies.

2. Undergraduate Program.

- a. Rationale of the Program. The MSUG and USOM participant programs in police and public administration can be distinguished by several criteria: whether a person's agency or job falls within MSUG's activities; whether a person's training needs can best be met at MSU or at some other institution; whether training is to be of an academic or non-academic nature. These criteria are helpful, but obviously they do not explain much of participant activity which has been divided between MSUG and USOM. There are some special considerations governing our activity over the past year.

First, MSUG's participant program is broad-gauged if measured by the broad area falling within its purview and the small area falling within that of USOM. Police and public administration encompass a great deal, and, as you know, USOM has done nothing in the first area and very little in the second. More important, however, is the fact that the Government has had a great need for trained civil servants. MSUG had a sizeable amount of money available and the machinery to carry out a large program. USOM had money but was unable to carry out a program.

When you were here in late 1957, it was agreed that MSUG should go ahead on a large scale. In the police field, we pooled our money with that of USOM and divided the participants between the two organizations, with MSUG seeking to send under its grants those persons whose training needs could best be handled at the MSU campus. USOM's program

was actually prepared in large measure by NSUG staff, and it was handled in the United States by the NIA Public Safety Division.

These, briefly, are the reasons for the logical inconsistencies which you note in the NSU and USON programs and for the heavy burden which has descended upon you. It was natural that most of our participants would be sent to campus, though we recognize that NSU does not always offer the best training in certain fields of study.

The exceptional considerations mentioned above will not govern the NSUG 1959 program, and NSUG's participants will be selected from those areas in which we are directly involved in Vietnam. These areas are fewer this year than last. Also, USON should be in a somewhat better position to undertake its own programs, though some NSUG assistance will probably be given to it. Thus, in 1959, NSUG will send about eleven public administration participants and ten police participants to the United States, with a majority of them going to NSU. (Please review my memoranda of August 26 and October 24, 1958, and yours of August 25, 1958.)

b. Academic Emphasis of the Program. Emphasis on academic training will be much greater in the 1959 program. Two or three of the eleven public administration participants will be NIA faculty members, three will be doctoral candidates preparing for positions on the NIA faculty, and about five will study in the taxation, budget, and personnel areas. We will select from the forty police participants being developed by NSUG and USON those ten whose training needs are most academic and who can best pursue their specialized studies at the NSU police school.

The prospect for sending NIA graduates for master's study is not high. I don't think the Government would permit these people to continue their studies after it has subsidized their training at the NIA for three years. NIA students already receive specialized instruction in public administration, economics, and related social sciences, and the need for their services in the Government is great. Moreover, there is not much incentive for the NIA graduate in terms of civil service standing. He already moves into the highest cadre upon graduation from the Institute and would

not benefit from the possession of the Master's degree. However, we should give more thought to your suggestion. It may be possible, for example, to pick up some of those people after a couple of years' service with the Government, and we might consider University graduates with the licence en droit who wish to work for the Government.

c. Course Accreditation. I like your proposal to enroll our MSU participants as visitors, or auditors, assuming the University would permit this. I had assumed you were already doing this. Course grades have little bearing on how a participant is evaluated by his agency in Vietnam, and an appropriate certificate of training serves his needs fully. However, there may be the rare person who wishes to continue his college studies, either in the United States or elsewhere. It might be a good idea, therefore, to permit the participant who shows the ability, the performance, and the desire to take regular course credit. I also like your proposal to maintain controls over non-credit participants. It might be practicable to require all regular class activity of them, with the exception of grades. This would enable them to get the maximum from their studies without having to compete with other students. Putting them on a non-credit basis would relieve instructors of the task of evaluating the performance of participants against that of other students, with, I would imagine, some benefit to the way in which the faculty regards the Project.

I hope that this extended statement, and your comments upon it, will serve to bring our thinking into line on the various facets of the participant program. Let us have your reactions.

This, in my opinion, is a poor substitute for first-hand discussion, but since we seem to have missed connections on your visit, this will have to do.

RBB/dcm

cc: Dr. Dorsey
Mr. Waltman