

To: Ralph Smuckler  
From: Howard Waltman  
Subject: Ph D participants in the U.S.

January 7, 1960

The following is my report of interviews with the following Ph D participants: Luong Nhi Ky, Le Thi Bach-Lan, Cao Toan and Mr. Xuan. I was not able to get together with Tran Qui Than or Tran Ngoc Phat, although I am hopeful of doing so in the future. My reactions and a report on the interviews are included for each of the people that I interviewed.

General Recommendations

- (1) Maintain closer and more regular contacts with the Ph D candidates.
- (2) Have the NIA maintain contact with the participants.
- (3) Restate, in writing, the administrative conditions covering travel, per diem, etc., for all the Ph D's, so that they will understand that all participants are subject to the same rules and regulations.
- (4) Appoint a faculty advisor on campus in the field in which the participant is studying to act as an advisor and to approve programs, dissertation subjects, etc.
- (5) Have the participants develop a proposed timetable for their work, so that there will be a series of target dates for examinations, dissertations, etc.
- (6) Re-emphasize to the Ph D's their future role at the NIA.
- (7) Have the Ph D candidates write job descriptions of what they envision the assignments that they will have upon their return will consist of.

Meeting with Luong Nhi Ky - December 21, 1959

My general impression regarding Mr. Ky is that he has adjusted to all aspects of graduate work and life in the U.S. well. He has his degree objective firmly in focus and is moving toward it at a satisfactory pace. Mr. Ky's age, family status and background in European education are all assets working strongly on his behalf.

During his first 6 months in Ann Arbor, he shared a room with an American student, which he found useful in improving his English. It was also expensive (\$37.00 per month) in his estimation and afforded only a minimum of space. He is presently sharing a three-room furnished apartment with a USOM-financed Ph D participant from the Vietnamese Office of the Budget. The apartment rents for



\$75.00 a month (\$32.50 each). They cook their meals at home and can in this way economize on time and money.

Mr. Ky appears to be doing satisfactory work academically. He is taking a rather heavy academic load, but feels this is necessary if he is going to free himself completely during the third year for his dissertation. He presently plans to complete his comprehensives, preliminaries and all class work by the end of the second year. He has not given any thought to his dissertation except that he would like it to be on some aspect of Vietnamese-American relations. He also observed that he is getting more out of class work and discussions now that his English is better. He estimates that he still loses approximately 25% of many lectures. Mr. Ky is speculating about the possibility of presenting Mandarin as a second language. He is presently auditing a class in Mandarin and feels that he will be able to master it as a tool. He has written several papers in conjunction with his course work and, while I cannot comment on the quality, it is certain that he has a respect for research and has thought about its usefulness in Vietnam.

Socially, Mr. Ky appears rather inactive. His major diversion is movies, although he does swim and exercise occasionally at the Union. He mentioned a family which "adopted" him under some university-endorsed program. He has spent weekends and holidays with this family and seems to be pleased about this. He does not seem to have made any real friends amongst his classmates, although he was vague on this. He has not dated American girls even though he is young and a bachelor. He feels generally that Ann Arbor offers little in social activities and is rather puritanic in the moral code it imposes upon its students. He cited specifically the prohibition on the sale of alcoholic beverages on campus as an example. He has, however, concluded that this is really an advantage because it forces the student to work because of the lack of something better to do.

Mr. Ky said that he has not been contacted by the NIA except by Prof. Quynh. He did not see Quynh because he was insulted by Quynh's approach. He felt that he being summoned and responded negatively. Ky did not express any strong feelings regarding his future at the NIA. He did say, however, that he plans to write a book upon his return, and was quite interested in the NIA library.

He feels that his Ph D will be very valuable to him. He also feels that the University of Michigan is by far the most difficult school in the country and that his degree and marks will mean that much more. American education, he now feels, is superior to French and his degree will mean that much more again. Ky, I think, regards the degree close to the way we do and is firmly convinced that 3 years is a reasonable expenditure of time to gain this reward.

Meeting with Le Thi Bach-Lan - December 22, 1959

In reporting my interview with Bach-Lan, I have avoided any judgment because my contacts with her in Saigon were such that I have pre-conceived judgments regarding her situation.

I met Mrs. Bach-Lan in her apartment on 112th Street and had lunch with her. She was completely preoccupied with her financial condition during our talk. Mrs. Bach-Lan said that it is impossible for her to live on \$240.00 per month, as she is presently forced to since her per diem was reduced.

She noted that her savings in Saigon have been depleted, except for approximately 10,000 piastres, since she has been forced to withdraw funds regularly to supplement her per diem allowance. Mrs. Bach-Lan said that the 10,000\$ was the last of her assets still in Vietnam.

I asked her to analyze her monthly expenditures for me. She reported the following fixed expenses:

Rent.....	\$100.00
Utilities.....	30.00
Food (cooked at home).....	40.00
Daughter's school lunches.	20.00 (\$1.00 per school day)

She said that the other money was being spent to fix up the apartment. She estimated that it cost her approximately \$400.00 in security for the apartment and expenditures for basic household necessities. (Mrs. Bach-Lan has a 4-5 room furnished apartment). This is her third residence since her arrival. She left the second one, she said, because it was not the right kind of dwelling for her daughter for three years. She has signed a three-year lease for her present apartment.

Mrs. Bach-Lan feels that she is making satisfactory progress with her academic work and said that if she is relieved of the anxieties created by her financial condition that she can complete her degree in about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  years. She said that the degree is very important to her and that she would be very sorry to have to give up for reasons other than academic ones. She said that she feels her first love is teaching and that she wants to better prepare herself for her profession. Mrs. Bach-Lan did not indicate a strong identification of her future with the NIA.

She spoke several times of her being refused permission to travel by the project at the end of her first semester(or possibly summer session). She feels that the refusal, and the way in which it was made, were insulting to her. She also said she has not had satisfactory contacts with the Vietnam Project in East Lansing. She was mainly annoyed by the lack

of "human relations" and "warmth" displayed by the staff. She cited specifically the lack of personal contacts.

Mrs. Bach-Lan said that she will ask to return to Vietnam if her \$300.00 monthly allowance is not restored. She told me, however, that she will wait to discuss the matter with the Project at the time of the participant meeting in February.

At one point in the interview, Bach-Lan cried. This was in response to my question regarding return transportation for her daughter when she is scheduled to return. I made no attempt to make an issue over the statement of financial conditions that she agreed to prior to her departure, because it was obvious that she was in an aroused emotional state and that she has chosen, or been forced by circumstances, to disregard this explicit document.

Meeting with Mr. Xuan - December 23, 1959

This interview was my first meeting with Mr. Xuan, since he left Vietnam before my arrival. Mr. Xuan, of course, has completed all of the requirements for his degree with the exception of his dissertation, which represents the major problem at this time.

Xuan's attitude toward the degree is vague, and I do not feel that I can speak with complete assurance. He indicated, however, that he wants to complete his dissertation very much and will make every effort to do so. He also suggested that if he is unable to complete it for one reason or another he would not be too disturbed. He feels that the most important thing is for him to have the opportunity to teach and disperse his new knowledge.

Mr. Xuan seems to identify his future with the Institute, although he has anxieties concerning his release from the Ministry of the Economy. He said that he hopes he doesn't have to return there, but is worried about the Vice-President's attitude concerning the transfer. (The Vice-President is his former superior.)

Xuan seems to understand the needs of the Institute and appears to be sensitive to the problems that he is likely to encounter. He was also pleased at having MSU economists available to criticize and help him with his dissertation.

Basically, my feeling regarding Xuan was that if he is properly stimulated and guided upon his return to Vietnam he will produce a dissertation. We should explore, immediately, with Vanderbilt their ruling on awarding degrees to people outside of the country so that we can be sure that this thing is possible.

One of the staff in Saigon should assume responsibility for guiding and stimulating Xuan toward his objective. If he does not start work immediately and if bad habits are started immediately, it is unlikely that he will ever get to complete his degree.

Meeting with Cao Toan - December 26, 1959

In general, I was surprised and pleased with the changes and development in Cao Toan in the year and a half since I last saw him. On the basis of our talk, I am inclined to revise some of my earlier negative feelings.

The strongest single impression is the change in his general appearance and demeanor. Where he was previously nervous, shy and uncertain, he now appears to be confident, poised and well adjusted to his environment. Academically, Toan seems to have improved and he feels that he is in the clear. He plans to complete his last 12 credits by June of this year and then take the balance of the year to prepare for his exams and to develop an outline for his dissertation. By the end of the year, he plans to begin working full time on his thesis. Mr. Toan has considered his dissertation subject and tentatively decided on a study of the devaluation of the French franc in 1958. He indicated to me that he would like to spend several months in Europe researching part of the topic. The project should consider carefully its position on this before Toan invests too much time on this subject.

Mr. Toan feels that his social and academic adjustment has been considerably helped by his becoming acquainted with a girl from the Philippines, who is studying in the U.S. Mr. Toan appears to be quite serious with this girl. It is entirely possible that Mr. Toan will eventually consider marrying her. This could or could not develop into a problem for the project.

Mr. Toan seems to be serious about and like the idea of returning to the NIA, although he does not seem particularly sensitive to the problems that could bother him in integrating, or of the true nature of what his function is to be.

Mr. Toan is presently living in a private apartment-type hotel where he has one room and kitchen facilities. He has maid service and utilities for \$100.00 per month. Mr. Toan did not indicate any financial hardships, nor did he identify any other serious problems.