

CONFIDENTIAL

Saigon
November 17, 1957

Dear Glen and Salp^s,

Firstly, a quick but serious apology for not having written until now. I recognized shortly after my arrival that I was going to be subject to such verbalization from many quarters and that therefore my attempts to understand and evaluate the situation here would themselves be subject to currents to and from various directions. In short, I simply wanted time to absorb, to mull, and to articulate. (Although I now feel that what I might have written three weeks ago would make an interesting comparison to what I'll herein set forth.) So if the delay in word from me has caused you any disturbance or concern I can only apologize. It would have been easy, I know, to dictate a few quick superficial remarks, but my pattern of activity has been intense in a way that didn't lend itself to copy-type communication. I might also add that another factor leading itself to this long delay has been the problem of setting time aside for writing (and typing) this myself; I preferred not to dictate this letter for what will be, I think, obvious reasons.

Four weeks leaves me with the general conclusion that the Project is too uncomfortably close to ~~stagnation~~ being stalled as lead center. The rest of this letter will can probably be considered qualifications to that statement. However, I caution you not to infer too much negativism from the statement itself. There remains, as I had always assumed, a large potential for progress; and there exists good reason to believe that things can occur to get the ~~xxx~~ machine into gear. Probably the most unfortunate thing about the situation is the fact that too many of the staff, especially the newcomers, hold the same belief. Worse, they combine that belief with an inability to recognize significant progress accomplished by the Project over the past few years. Progress is intangible and difficult to measure. I have devoted the greater part of my time to getting the answer; it has taken intense questioning and digging. (It is certainly a matter of fact that there has been progress, but I want to register the comment that there is a tinge of disappointment ~~xxxx~~ on my part.) However, the others have not had the time nor the resources necessary to discover for themselves. So therefore has become part of my role has been that of general encourager.

My first two weeks were devoted ^{to} discussions with as many people as possible. This included Division Heads, Section Chiefs, lesser notables in some cases, NSU personnel, VNG personnel, and anyone else, e.g. Lodejinsky, whom I felt could offer serious critiques. It took little time to learn that the morale problem predominated the thinking of the NSU people. I, therefore, will touch on that subject firstly. In my scheduled appointments wherein I had hoped to discuss a staff member's substance activity (to learn where his functions had been, where it is now, and what he is planning for the future) I found that the discussion concentrated on what is wrong with the Project, personal complaints about living accommodations via a via other staff, complaints about misbehavior given during briefing in the US, ~~stagnation~~ mistrust of President Sloc (or those about him), etc., etc. I felt that in these circumstances it would be best for me to become accessible to everyone with gripes against the Project. I lost a week at this, but I believe it served a good purpose since it gave them an opportunity to explode at someone representing the Project and NSU with all their gripes, etc. I later learned from Hoyt that most of the new arrivals, especially in the police group, had actually

been 'gunning for me' since they felt certain things had been promised before they had come and that MSU wasn't delivering. Originally they had 'gunned' for Brandstatter but he was wise enough to stay only five days and not become a target. Some of these complaints were legitimate, most weren't. My concern was with the attitude they reflected. To the university these people were decidedly hostile. (The recent OSUM decision to stop all post allowance payments didn't help this problem. They had been promised that increment by the university; the contractual arrangement between MSU and ICA was no concern of theirs. There were rumors about lawsuits or actually leaving.) At any rate I think that by meeting them head on, by letting them get it all off their chests I did succeed in removing what was a serious irritant.

Just as an aside here. In going over Brandstatter's recruiting on a mass scale I would say that he has been surprisingly successful. There is at least one person, possibly two, who represent definite mistakes. Two could be considered average. Six definitely above average. And three could make the top end of the scale. This, of course, is a hasty appraisal but it represents my own observations combined with discussions with Hoyt. Howard tends to get overly critical of Brandstatter's recruitment because of the one or two mistakes, but when pressed he admits to the quality of his staff. On the other hand, Brandstatter is to receive some blame for the morale problem stated above. He promised some things that we couldn't produce. Fortunately the bulk of the recruiting is over. But should his role again become active in that sense the Coordinator will have to keep a careful eye on what he tells these people.

Housing has been another irritant to the morale problem. The fact that it is an irritant simply reflects, I believe, the fact that people in this kind of a situation are 'not themselves'. This might be referred to as culture shock. The demands made by so many disaffected staff members regarding housing have been incredible in light of the abnormal ~~138122~~ ¹³⁸¹²² ~~318~~ in getting good housing for all. (My reservations I may have stated about Herb's ability I want to withdraw.) None of this recent mass of arrivals had to live in hotels. Houses were ready for all of them. I think Ralph will appreciate the enormity of that accomplishment. The problem was that these people did not. There has been ~~some~~ sniping at Herb because our family was a little further out and that therefore came become more expensive; another felt that his house didn't reflect his status; etc. This area of the morale problem more reflects the nature of the human animal than a failure to adequately provide for our staff. Deeper reasons (and more subtle ones) exist or exist for low morale: frustrations in working with the Vietnamese, for example; the aforesaid disappointment regarding the accomplishments of the Project; etc. These go to create the attitudes that are manifested in petty bickering over housing or other similar problems. And, of course, it does no good to explain that this is why there is a hardship differential.