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MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Vietnam Advisory Group

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Ruben V. Austin, Coordinator DATE: October 25, 1960
FROM: Dr. Lloyd D. Musolf, Chief Advisor
SUBJECT: Attached Thermofaxes of Fox-Dang Conference

The attached minutes are sent to you with the hope that you will learn some of the dialogue between NIA and MSU concerning planning for the future. I refer particularly to point 11, "Needs of NIA."

I have been thinking that the 15-page plan sent to you earlier in the month might provoke some discouragement on Campus as to the mental outlook of MSUG. Perhaps the sending of these minutes will make clear that MSUG is not a body of hopeless cynics but a group trying to keep perspective on the needs of the NIA in the context of actual working relationships. If the relationship with all members of the NIA were as good as between Guy Fox and Nghiem Dang there would be no problem at all. Actually, we are hopeful that this process of examination that is now going on will be a "do or die" proposition--hopefully the former. The NIA needs to be jolted, and the task of developing an analysis of its needs may be the catalyst toward better relationships.

Incidentally, referring to the last paragraph of the attached memorandum, I have endorsed the attitude Guy Fox expressed to Dang.

LDM/dw
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cc: Dr. Guy Fox

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Vietnam Advisory Group

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

DATE: October 25, 1960

FROM: Guy H. Fox

SUBJECT: Conference with Vice Rector Dang, October 24, 1960

1. Trach's speech. I handed Mr. Dang a copy of Mr. Trach's speech delivered in Italy before the IIAS Conference in June, 1960. I said that I thought that this speech might be helpful to him in preparing his article on public administration technical assistance in Vietnam. As soon as Dienes sends me another part of Trach's speech, I said I would also send that to him.

2. Miss Ti. Mr. Dang said the Fonction Publique does not want to raise the status of Miss Ti in spite of three efforts by the NIA. Dang said that he has even seen Trach personally on the matter. The Fonction Publique has stated that the Bachelor's degree from the Philippines is not regarded highly enough to warrant an enhanced position. Dang said, however, that he would make another strong effort to try to obtain a higher position for her. He said he had heard that Dale Rose might have some suggestions in this regard, and if so he would like very much to talk with Dale.

3. Library. Mr. Dang said he had informed Frank Child that he is ready to talk about library affairs at Frank's convenience. Dang said he is sympathetic with the problems raised by Child.

4. Finkle's study of foreign affairs curricula. Mr. Dang thanked us for Finkle's study regarding foreign service curricula in the U. S. He requested five more copies in order that each member of the committee might study the curricula simultaneously.

5. Duy Tan. Dang said he has some bad news to report. The NIA will not get Duy Tan. The Presidency will keep the apartments. He did not know the reason why such a decision was made but he had heard that the Planning Direction had written the Presidency, calling attention to the need of Duy Tan for housing the Smith-Mundt professors.

6. Phat. I asked Dang's assistance in meeting the request of Phat for materials for a graduate seminar. Dang furnished me with copies of the NIA curricula at various stages of its development.

7. Mr. Ky. Dang said that the NIA had sent a letter to Ky confirming his obligation to work at the NIA. Nevertheless Dang expressed misgivings that Foreign Affairs would release Ky.

8. Arretes on present participants. After I had informed Dang that I

had not yet received information from him indicating the time of expiration of the arreates of present Ph.D. participants in the U.S., Mr. Dang said that he had instructed Giau to furnish me such information. He made a note to repeat his request to Giau.

9. Central provincial study. Mr. Dang said that Mr. Khanh, Mr. Giau, and Mr. Pham Ngoc An would be very happy to engage in a central provincial study with MSUG members. As soon as he receives a letter from me saying how many Michigan State people, Americans and Vietnamese, will go, he will make the necessary clearances with the Department of Interior.

10. Thong's article. I called Dang's attention to the fact that Thong had submitted articles which he wanted us to edit and correct. Thong had informed us that he wanted to use these three articles for the first issue of EROPA Journal. I then questioned the feasibility of having three articles by the same author in the Journal. Dang said he felt certain that Thong did not intend to have all three articles in the initial issue. He agreed with me perfectly that it would be ridiculous to have so many articles by Thong in the magazine. He said as tactfully as possible he would explore this matter with Thong.

11. Needs of NIA. Approximately a 45-minute discussion was held on the needs of the NIA for technical assistance and aid. As was the case of our previous discussion on the same subject, the present one was a rambling discourse during which there was an open, frank exchange of views. In this kind of conversation in which Mr. Dang spoke candidly and confidentially on sensitive matters relating to the Rector and the faculty, I made no attempt to take notes. I told Mr. Dang that I believed it would be difficult, if not impossible, for MSUG to draw up a statement of NIA needs to serve as a basis for an application for renewed technical assistance by MSU to the Institute. The NIA's and MSUG's views are too far divergent on the matter.

I reiterated that we were not sure ICA would renew the contract even if that agency were convinced of the need for technical assistance by the NIA. Other university contracts have been terminated by ICA, I pointed out, in spite of the fact that both the universities and the aided countries involved thought assistance should continue. However, I said I was absolutely certain there would be no renewal of a contract unless a need for technical assistance could be demonstrated; that is, the only hope (and that might be slight) of a renewed contract would be to convince ICA of real needs for technical assistance. If an application should be made to a Foundation, there would also have to be a documentation of needs. Provided the NIA did apply to a Foundation, I felt that our division could help the NIA wholeheartedly.

MSUG is reluctant to make an attempt to justify five or more persons to give technical assistance to the NIA as suggested by Thong. Actually, I said, we are giving very little technical assistance at present. I ran through the activities of several members of the division showing that what they did for the most part could not be construed as technical assistance.

Dang replied that what I had been saying was perfectly true. The NIA

faculty and the Rector are not taking advantage of MSUG members as technical advisors. Why is this so, he asked? Is it because the NIA staff are obstinate and refuse assistance? The fault may lie on both sides, I said. Apparently we have not won the confidence and respect which we need in order to be effective as technical assistants; at any rate it seemed to us that the real need of the NIA, in view of present Institute attitudes, was for aid in several fields but for very little technical assistance. Therefore, I said, it was the view of the division, with which I am fully in accord, that the best possible arrangement for the period after June 1962 would be for MSU to have only two or three persons at the NIA, those persons to be supported by a Foundation. These MSUG professors would give advice when called upon but for the most part they would pursue their individual research, some of which would be performed jointly with NIA faculty. Our plan also calls for an exchange of faculty and perhaps of students between the NIA and MSU. The NIA does need aid, we realize, especially for in-service training and for the library. I said I believed (but was not certain) USOM would give assistance to in-service training. There was some chance ICA might give financial aid to the library. If USOM would not help the library perhaps a Foundation would do so. I then proceeded to outline other features of the plan of the division as embodied in our comments on the NIA statement of needs.

Mr. Dang said his first reaction was to agree with what I had said. He had felt for a long time that the NIA was not making proper use of the MSU advisors. He said also he knew the library would suffer if assistance were suddenly withdrawn, and also that in-service training really needs help. But why, he asked--and he repeated this question many times--could not we establish all along the line the mutual trust and confidence necessary for effective technical assistance? He partly answered his own question by saying the fault was to a great extent that of Thong. Though Thong is in many ways an intelligent man, he has taken very little leadership in encouraging the use of technical assistance by NIA faculty and staff. Perhaps Thong is too nationalistic and fearful of charges of dictation to the NIA by MSUG. If only Thong would urge strongly more cooperation, too, and assistance from MSUG, he believed the NIA would profit greatly. Dang says he has tried to influence Thong and believes he has succeeded to some extent; at least he believes Thong is not so inflexible as he once was. In view of Thong's views, Dang said that he (Dang) could not very well take a firm stand. Thong is constantly insisting that Dang merely carry out policies. Actually, Dang said, he does much more though he is not supposed to.

Perhaps the language barrier to some extent has hindered effective technical assistance. Dang recalled Hendry's and my attempts to establish rapport through informal get-togethers. He noticed at these meetings that only those Vietnamese with a fairly good knowledge of English participated very much. He was sure most of the Vietnamese understood very little of what was said.

I reminded Dang of Lindholm's repeated efforts in memoranda to help NIA economists. When Lindholm received no takers, he went to each NIA economist personally but he received no responses. Several other examples were cited including Child's futile attempts to influence Chan. Dang said he knew MSUG had problems in this respect. He had no doubts but that the fault

lies mainly with the NIA faculty and NIA leadership. Yet he expressed the hope that we would realize that one of the biggest problems of giving technical assistance in a strange culture is to overcome just such difficulties. It is possible to win the confidence and trust of people. He cited our own relationship as an example. In the beginning, Dang said, he was suspicious of the American advisors and he feared he was not too cordial initially. But gradually he realized that we were here sincerely to try to help them, that we were spending our money for them, and that we had something to offer. Surely it might be possible to develop other such relationships between the Vietnamese and Americans.

Most of the training of the Vietnamese faculty members has been in Philosophy and Literature. They do not have "clear-cut ideas" as American intellectuals do. Their thinking is somewhat fuzzy. They do not always understand when Americans lay out facts and then show obvious conclusions; to the Americans it is inconceivable how anyone could refrain from accepting such reasoning. It will be a slow tedious process to change such thought habits. The participants returning from the U.S. should go far in making for improvement. Dang said after thinking the matter over as we talked, he believed that five or six Americans working tactfully and skillfully might have an influence on the NIA and perform valuable technical assistance functions. He said he was assuming the five or six persons would be real authorities in their field--that they would be mature persons who would command respect. The obtaining of the confidence and trust of NIA members would be their first goal.

At one point Dang reminded me that the NIA had in effect accepted much technical assistance from MSUG, and he cited a number of examples including the evening school, Society for Public Administration, change in curriculum, in-service training programs, etc., but I said the NIA had not been receptive to technical assistance in such matters as course content, teaching methods, research methods, examination procedures, and the like. Dang said he must admit this was true and that he could not understand why the NIA faculty did not question to a greater extent their traditional ways of doing things. They should realize that they would not necessarily have to accept advice given by MSUG but certainly they should have a mind open enough to listen to such advice and be willing to make an honest evaluation of the American suggestions as against present ways. Dang repeated he realized the NIA had not made optimum use of advisors and that the failure lies principally on NIA faculty members and leadership. Although amicable relationships have existed between MSUG and NIA faculty, the proper degree of trust and confidence has never been established. Dang said he realized the faculty should appreciate our presence more than they do and the opportunity it affords them for improvement; but apparently they do not. Therefore, he hopes (and here he used the analogy of our actively recruiting candidates for participants) we will take the initiative and try to develop a sort of relationship that will make for effective technical assistance. Dang said he would cooperate in every possible way and try to influence Thong as much as possible.

Dang said he wondered whether or not it would be feasible for "Musolf and Fox" to draw up a tentative preliminary draft of a plan within a week or two

and with that plan in hand for Mr. Dang to hold a preliminary talk with USOM officials to ascertain whether there is any chance at all of their supporting a renewed contract. Or perhaps this preliminary draft might be better sent to ICA/Washington for a preliminary exploration. I said that I thought it perhaps would be better to wait until the division committee had more definite information, and that I believed we could wait a month or so before approaching ICA or USOM. At any rate, I would take this matter up with Musolf at our next meeting.