

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

VIETNAM ADVISORY GROUP

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

DATE: November 1, 1960

FROM: Guy H. Fox

SUBJECT: Conference with Vice Rector Dang, October 31, 1960

1. Donoghue's class. Dang said that students in Donoghue's class have asked that he speak somewhat more slowly in English. His students say that Miss Phuc's translations are not always adequate; apparently she translates too literally from English and her syntax is therefore faulty.

2. Duy Tan. The Presidency has informed the NIA that the Planning Direction will take over Duy Tan.

3. Book exhibit at NIA. Dang expressed the hope that MSUG would aid the NIA in selecting public administration books to be exhibited at the new NIA campus during the second half of 1961. Dienes has said that USIS will furnish most of the books to be exhibited.

4. Plan for future. Dang said that Thong has emphasized the point that the Vietnamese at the NIA should do the interviewing of Institute faculty and send out any necessary questionnaires. The NIA should not bother their American friends with these matters. Thong will talk with Musolf on this subject next Thursday. Apparently, Dang said, he had misjudged Thong's view. It was Dang's impression that Thong had desired MSUG to take the initiative in obtaining information necessary for the plan for the future.

Dang said he had hoped that Thong and NIA personnel would have an open mind regarding the planning for the future. He said he could understand why the Vietnamese might not always want to follow the advice and suggestions of MSUG members, but he believed that they should at least welcome our furnishing them with new, stimulating ideas. He found the attitude of the Vietnamese faculty and of the Rector as "strange." He said he himself was concentrating to an increasing extent on his "own personal research and activities."

5. Bach Lan. I explained to Dang that Bach Lan was trying to obtain permission from Columbia University to change her major field from American Government in Politics to Foreign Political Systems, and to continue to work for her doctorate. I asked Dang whether the NIA would want to keep her as a participant in the event she was permitted to

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continue her work for the Ph.D. with a major in foreign affairs. Dang said he was of the opinion that we should not maintain her as a participant after January. It seemed to him evident that she did not intend to return to Vietnam, at least in the foreseeable future.

6. Taylor's Excise Taxes. In answer to my question Dang said he had received a copy of Taylor's Excise Taxes in Vietnam. He thanked MSUG for sending him the study.

7. Teaching policies and NIA practices. I asked Dang to explain the teaching policies of the NIA.

a. Degrees. Dang said that until 1959 the NIA was obliged to lower the degree requirements for faculty because it was not possible to obtain persons with proper degrees. Under such circumstances the NIA emphasized experience in government work. Even yet, he said, the NIA does not have anyone with a doctorate or its equivalent in public administration. Now, however, that the NIA is receiving more and more applications from persons possessing high degrees, the Institute can be, and is being, more particular regarding degrees. He hopes in future years to have an increasing number of faculty with the doctoral degree. Though the NIA will still need faculty with government experience, less emphasis will be given henceforth to preclude experience and considerably more emphasis to high academic backgrounds.

b. Teaching work loads. For the next three or four years the faculty teaching load will probably remain about the same as it is now: one annual course or two semester courses per faculty member during the academic year. Dang recalled his previous explanation that because of the lack of materials a long period of preparation is required for each lecture. Upon my questioning this point, Dang admitted that some of his staff did not make the intensive, necessary preparation, but he contended that many hours of preparation were actually necessary for each lecture provided the lecturer truly related his subject to Vietnam. He said that both in faculty meetings and in private discussions he had insisted that each faculty member teach his subject with special reference to Vietnam. Indeed, some of the professors (Le Van An and others) had courses dealing exclusively with Vietnam, and have to dig all their materials from original sources. (Le Van An's course is in the administrative structure of Vietnam.) If professors are not spending 8 or 10 hours in preparation for each lecture, they should be doing so.

At the Faculty of Law, he said, professors are teaching French law; they could very well deliver the same lectures at the Faculty of Law in Paris. The same is true of the economics professors there. On the other hand, there is a constant, conscious attempt, not always successful, at the NIA to have its faculty emphasize Vietnam. At least to some extent all NIA professors present their subject within a Vietnamese context.

c. Rigid teaching policies. Since the NIA has not had a sufficient teaching staff it has been necessary to employ occasional lecturers from the government departments. Moreover, an NIA faculty member sometimes (though this is not a usual practice) is permitted to have a course up and above his regular teaching load; he is given extra pay for this additional course.

The NIA wants its faculty to have influence in government agencies and other Vietnamese institutions. Therefore, Institute faculty are encouraged to accept duties in such places as the Department of Finance, Direction of Planning, etc. There is reciprocity by the departments in furnishing teachers for the NIA; the departments are able to furnish the teachers in specialized fields (such as statistics) in which the NIA lacks qualified staff. The NIA and the departments also cooperate in the field of research. Dang said also that he has encouraged all members of the faculty to take an interest in in-service training activity of the various departments. He himself and others frequently teach courses in government agencies.

In addition to teaching, faculty members have other duties. Unfortunately, however, faculty members do not always take seriously enough their other duties, he said. For example, they often do not produce research. This failure to produce research has even been true in instances in which faculty members have been released, as they are occasionally, for a semester in order to concentrate on research. He mentioned several specific instances in which faculty members released for a semester in order to do research produce no results whatsoever.

Dang also said his division chiefs and some of the section chiefs had neither the interest nor the leadership required for their duties. He simply could not divide himself into enough parts to supervise and direct all the work which they left undone. If only the division chiefs would take a more active role and furnish leadership and ideas, the Institute would be vastly improved. Division and section chiefs complain often of heavy administrative burdens but without actual little justification, he said.

d. Attitudes. Dang said he often becomes discouraged with the attitudes of the NIA faculty. Practically all the permanent members of the faculty have spent at least six months in the States but their program of studies there was apparently not successful in instilling new ideas. They still do not question traditional teaching methods or existing ways of doing things. They have not improved their research methods and techniques, for example. Perhaps their thinking was affected but not their attitudes. He thought there would be some improvement in the future when high caliber persons were employed with doctor's degrees from France and after the Ph.D. participants in the U.S. return.

Before Dang and I could finish the discussion on NIA policies and practices, Dang had to rush off to a meeting with NIA students.