

**POINT OF VIEW***Viet Nam*  
**MSU and the U.S. war machine**

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The following Point of View was submitted by John Masterson, associate professor of mathematics and a member of Faculty for Peace.

We are coming to realize, though we are trying hard to escape the reality of it, that "Vietnamization" is just another word for "mechanized genocide." As the American foot soldier is being withdrawn from the war, the degree of our own direct participation in bringing death and destruction becomes more apparent. We provide the funds with the bulk of our taxes; the government doles them out to American industry to pay for the people killers. A plane that can cover a piece of land with shells no further than one inch apart, an antipersonnel bomb that shoots plastic pellets in all directions inflicting excruciating pain, napalm that sticks to the skin and burns, defoliants that produce malformed babies — all weapons that destroy principally civilians.

It is ironic that Vietnamization began here at Michigan State University about 17 years ago, was publicly exposed four or five years ago, and is virtually unknown to the present generation of students here. This gruesome piece of contemporary American history seems to be taught virtually nowhere. It has been cut from library records of MSU's foreign commitments. Last year, the State News presented a history of MSU's overseas programs with no mention of the Vietnam program. (The writer knew nothing about it, hardly his fault).

When Eqbal Ahmad was here last week, he commented not only on MSU's willingness to prostitute itself to this country's low profile imperialist support programs in countries like Thailand, but also on the generally low level of

scholarship — the willingness to evade rather than contend with truth. (It was amazing that one Asian scholar and a handful of other faculty came to hear this eminent scholar speak). Upon asking my two mathematics classes if they were acquainted with the MSU Vietnam Project, only a handful knew what I was talking about. It would be useful, then, to give a brief outline of this adventure.

In 1950, Wesley Fishel, a young Ph.D. at UCLA met Ngo Dinh Diem in Japan. Fishel, as he himself explained, later persuaded Diem to come to the United States. The trip was sponsored by MSU, where Fishel had gone to teach.

After Dien Bien Phu and the Geneva Accords, Diem was installed as premier of South Vietnam and the American government hoped he would provide a political alternative to the Viet Minh who had just defeated the French.

In early 1955, Diem moved to crush the religious sects opposed to him and his support began to erode. With the strong support of Cardinal Spellman and the Bishops Relief Fund, certain American political forces and the CIA, Diem's power was stabilized.

A telephone call from then Vice President Richard Nixon to MSU President John Hannah created the MSU Military Assistance Advisory Group with the advice

of Wesley Fishel, and MSU began a unique assistance program in Vietnam. It was to be the largest such operation, involving 54 professors and 200 Vietnamese. A four-professor visiting team (two who are still at MSU Brandstatter and Killingsworth,) made an on-sight inspection in Saigon and the project was given a green light.

Arthur Brandstatter, head of the MSU School of Police Administration, began training Diem's Palace Guard and coordinating "internal security" in Saigon. The old French Surete was reorganized as a new "Vietnamese Bureau of Investigation," modeled on our FBI. The police force was turned into a paramilitary unit, a specific violation of the Geneva Accords — and this unit began to operate on the Vietnamese people as the SS did in Germany in the 30s and 40s. A rural-land militia, the Civil Guard of 40,000 men was organized. The immigration authorities were trained to fingerprint the "distrusted" Chinese population. And, unusual in the history of University assistance programs, guns ammunition, vehicles, grenades, handcuffs and tear gas equipment were bought by MSU and passed on to the Diem police. In short, MSU trained the Saigon police and rural militia to suppress, torture and exterminate the Vietnamese who were working and fighting for the freedom of their country.

As if this were not enough, it turned out later that the MSU group was operating as a front for the CIA. Five agents (they are named in the article in Ramparts, April, 1966) were on the MSU payroll.

When some of the MSU people involved began publishing material critical of the program, it was ended. Its ghost, however, is still with us. One of the men responsible for covering up the CIA agents is now dean of International Programs. About the dean, Sheinbaum reported in Ramparts: "Smuckler pulled me aside one day and told me I should know these CIA guys were there, but that we didn't talk about them."

The genocide of the Vietnamese people finds its cause a little more on this campus than in many other places in the United States. In fact, the International Center was built with the blood money obtained from the federal government for trying to subvert the will of the Vietnamese.

Our government, industry and taxes continue to destroy the land and the people of Southeast Asia. We are well aware of that. We are not so well aware, however, of the fact that our universities — particularly this one — have been willing accomplices in this atrocity. Act with us to stop them. Join the Spring Offensive.