

FOREIGN RELATIONS

With Cap & Cloak in Saigon

She looked slightly siliconized, but otherwise the pneumatic twister on the cover of *Ramparts* magazine was unmistakably Mme. Ngo Dinh Nhu. Why was *Ramparts* celebrating South Viet Nam's Dragon Lady? And what on earth was she doing in a Michigan State cheerleader's costume? Two lines of type above the cover caricature explained all: THE UNIVERSITY ON THE MAKE (OR HOW M.S.U. HELPED ARM MADAME NHU). *Ramparts*, a contentious Roman Catholic monthly published on the West Coast, was firing its latest broadside in a long and shrill campaign against U.S. policy in Viet Nam.

"Scurrilous & Silly." The point of the magazine's piece was that Michigan State, while running a big, U.S.-financed project to train Viet Nam's fledgling police forces from 1955 on, provided cover for five CIA agents. On that, everybody concurred—but on precious little besides. Among *Ramparts'* other natterings: the cloak-and-dagger men,



RAMPARTS' MADAME NHU
Merely the latest shrill.

TIME, APRIL 22, 1966

though supposedly assigned to teach the police administration techniques, were actually under orders "to engage in counterespionage and counterintelligence"; M.S.U. raked in \$25 million in seven years before Premier Ngo Dinh Diem canceled its contract; the university "actually supplied" the Vietnamese "with guns and ammunition." The gravest accusation of all, from the standpoint of academic integrity, was that the university had made "a conscious effort to prepare reports pleasing, or at least palatable" to Diem.

At East Lansing, M.S.U. officials were as irate as campus football fans on a losing Saturday. "A scurrilous and silly hatchet job," said Political Scientist Wesley Fishel, who headed the project from 1956 to 1958 and was "as close as friends can be" with Diem. Fishel conceded that the university knew all about the CIA men. "Anyway, they joined the project on our terms," he said. "While I was there, there was definitely no cloak-and-dagger stuff. They trained the Vietnamese police."

Fishel said that he had not been happy about harboring the agents; nor had his successor, Political Scientist Ralph Smuckler. "It may not have been right to get into it," said Smuckler. "We were caught and felt we had to follow through."

"No Love Lost." In 1959, largely be-

cause the CIA men on the payroll had become an open secret in Saigon, the agents were transferred to the U.S. mission there, and M.S.U. was able to sever its uncomfortable connection. Three years later, Diem had the project terminated because, said Smuckler, he "felt the people in it were not 'sufficiently loyal' to him"—that is, they had published critical articles. Smuckler termed *Ramparts'* figure of \$25 million for the project "ridiculous," insisted that the university had received only \$5,354,352.75 in seven years. As

for the gun-buying charge, he noted that M.S.U. had routinely advised the Vietnamese on what equipment they would need, bought only a dozen training revolvers on its own.

The thing that really puzzled Fishel was the cover sketch of Mme. Nhu. "There was no love lost," he said, "between Mme. Nhu and M.S.U." He was less baffled by the tone of the *Ramparts* story. Its four authors—one of whom participated in the Viet Nam project—are "outspoken advocates of the Viet Cong," charged Fishel, and would like to see a Communist victory in Viet Nam.