

MIDDLE VS. BOTH ENDS

(Continued from page one)

of which Gen. Khanh is chairman, in dissolving the High National Council last weekend and arresting most of its members and other leading politicians. The High National Council was one of the three components of a civilian government set up last October, the other two being Premier Huong and Chief of State Phan Khac Suu, who remain in office.

Younger generals on the Armed Forces Council, who originally were believed to have engineered the coup themselves, now acknowledge privately that it was in fact planned by Gen. Khanh.

The effect has been that the armed forces, under Gen. Khanh's leadership, rather than the Buddhists got credit for taking action against a weakening and unpopular regime.

Public criticism of Ambassador Taylor was also initiated by the Buddhists while the Ambassador was in Washington for strategy talks early this month. But now Gen. Khanh is capitalizing on this drive that the Buddhists began.

In a meeting Tuesday with other members of the Armed Forces Council, Gen. Khanh reportedly reiterated anti-American views—and maintained that South Viet Nam could get along without American aid, which is being poured into the country at the rate of \$1.5 million a day to help the fight against the Communist Viet Cong.

The net effect of Gen. Khanh's maneuvers has been to diminish the political prestige of the Buddhists and weaken the arguments they were using to attract mass support.

The illusion has been created that Gen. Khanh has allied himself with the Buddhists. But actually he is moving only parallel with them—and several steps ahead.

LESSER OF EVILS

In attacking the Right-wing Catholic-backed Premier Huong, the Buddhists now appear to be supporting Gen. Khanh. But actually Gen. Khanh has forced the Buddhist leadership to accept him as the lesser of two evils.

Without assurances of Buddhist support or at least neutrality, no South Vietnamese leader could effectively rule and press the anti-Communist war.

Tactically, the general has chosen to try to capture the Buddhist masses through a spectacular anti-American campaign rather than give in and commit himself to the pro-neutralist policies of the Buddhist leadership.

This maneuvering—though so far it appears brilliantly successful—is so elaborate that even some of Gen. Khanh's supporters are confused by it.

But its results promise to be of benefit not only to the general but also to American policy, which seeks governmental stability in Saigon and firm prosecution of the war.

The fact is that Gen. Khanh and American policy are almost inseparably intertwined. The general is staunchly anti-Communist. Last July, he was even more aggressively anti-Red than Washington when against American wishes he began calling for a drive to liberate North Viet Nam from communism.

As commander-in-chief of the Vietnamese armed forces—the most organized anti-Communist force in the nation—Gen. Khanh is the center of anti-Communist influence in South Viet Nam. And he is fully in control of the 20-man Armed Forces Council, in whose name the purge last weekend was staged.

FOES SWEEP AWAY

More important, he is more powerful and politically more mature than last August, when the student-Buddhist demonstrations that forced him from office broke out. Since then, both personal and organized opposition to Gen. Khanh has been swept away.

The Dai Viet political party, which opposed him, is now leaderless. Lt. Gen. Tran Thien Khiem, his rival for Roman Catholic support, has been sidelined to the post of Ambassador in Washington. And Gen. Duong Van (Big) Minh, former Chief of State who was Gen. Khanh's competitor for the support of the Buddhists and some military elements, has been discredited and sent off on a good-will tour. Yesterday he was in Formosa. He is among 40 older generals facing compulsory retirement.

Khanh Plays Middle Vs. Both Ends; Rusk Pleads for End to Bickering

THE MILITARY INTRIGUE

By Beverly Deepe
A Special Correspondent

SAIGON.

Lt. Gen. Nguyen Khanh's bold attack Tuesday on American policymakers—particularly Ambassador Maxwell D. Taylor—appeared yesterday to be part of an intricate campaign to outmaneuver the politically militant Buddhist movement.

Pro-neutralist Buddhist politicians—who inspired last year's overthrow of the Ngo Dinh Diem regime and drove Gen. Khanh from the Presidency with a wave of riots last August—were about to do the same to Premier Tran Van Huong and the nine-member High National Council.

The Buddhist anti-government campaign now has been blocked by the action of the Armed Forces Council,
More on KHANH STRATEGY—Page 4