

bev deepe
101 cong ly
saigon

buddhist—1
sept. 3, 1964

SAIGON—Willingly or unwillingly, the Buddhist movement in South Viet Nam today is openly and obviously ~~adding to~~ ^{H.S. 19} a ~~tool~~ ² of the Communists.

Some middleclass Saigonese and Western diplomats argue that Buddhist leaders are simply allowing themselves to be used by the Communists.

Others argue that ~~some~~ ^{AT LEAST} ~~of them~~ —if not all—of the decision-making Buddhist leaders are simply Communist agents.

Others look at ~~the~~ ² ~~effects~~ of their policies and conclude they are overt Communist cadre.

But the almost unanimous opinion of Western diplomats—and more important, the impressions among Saigonese—is that the Buddhists are ~~in one way or another~~ ² helping the Communists.

As the Buddhists ~~(move)~~ have become the dominant political force in Viet Nam, the military war against Communist guerrillas—i conducted with aid of 18,000 American advisors—has waned into significance.

"If we won a clear out military victory against the Communist guerrillas," said one Western diplomat, "we could still lose this country in five minutes through political subversion."

(More)

Beverly Deepe

Buddhist--2

American officials--and some of the press corps--who openly sympathized with the Buddhists in their fight against the Ngo Dinh Diem regime last year are now obviously irked at the troubles the Buddhists are creating. Officially, however, American officials maintain that the Buddhists are simply maneuvering for more political power in the upcoming government, but ~~they~~ are not Communist agents.

"It's stupid to ask if the Buddhist leaders are Communist or not," said one Vietnamese ^{OFFICIAL.} ~~businessman.~~
"You have to check ~~their~~ the policy they are making. They are making the government so weak it can not fight the Communists--and this is the exact policy of ~~their~~ our Communist enemies."

(More)

"We will never finish with the Buddhists," he continued.

"The Communists have infiltrated the movement and the real monks can not do anything about it. If we (the Vietnamese government) does not put them back to a position as a religion--and keep them out of politics--we will never finish with them."

AW

A Western diplomat agreed with the Vietnamese official.

"The record of the Buddhists over the past year is stepping from one slippery stone to another jockeying for position.

They've taken advantage of every concession we've (the government) made them. ~~and~~ each of their final demands ~~has~~ has been broken the next day."

Another Vietnamese, ^{WHO} ~~who~~ closely watches the political scene, ~~is~~ said, "I'm not ashamed to say that I was wrong. I was for the Buddhists last year when they were fighting Ngo Dinh Diem and his family. I did not think the Buddhists were dominated by the Communist party. I thought maybe the ~~high~~ high level Buddhists at the high levels and the low level levels had the same goals of the Communists--to get rid of Diem. But now I think the Communists have infiltrated at all levels, particularly the middle class level."

dece

buddhist-4

He explained the pyramid-type hierarchy of the Buddhist organization as "sort of another government." He said the ~~board~~ broad-base at the grass roots ~~organization~~ ^{begin} begins in the villages and city precincts, rising to the district level, thru the provinces, regions and then to major ~~in~~ Buddhist ~~institutes~~ institutes in Saigon.

In Saigon, the nationwide organization apexes to the chief priest of the Buddhist movement, the Venerable Thich ^{LATE 70'S} Khiet. Feeble and weak in his 80's, he's considered a figurehead. ~~Director~~ He heads the Buddhist Institute for Clerical Affairs, but the power man is Secretary General, ~~the~~ the Venerable Thich Tri Quang, who was the principal strategist of last year's campaign against the Ngo Dinh Diem regime.

A small, elfish looking priest, he sought and was granted refuge in the American Embassy last year after Ngo Diem regime cracked down on Buddhist pagodas. An increasing number of Vietnamese intellectuals are now calling him a Communist cadre. But the highest ranking government officials (Informatively General Khanh) say that it can not be proved.

Other government officials argue "well "we'll never know if Tri Quang is a Communist—but he's acting exactly according to Communist policy."/

(more)

deepe

buddhist--5

"We can never check or find out if he's a Communist," he continued. "You can look and look for a Communist Party card on him, but you will never, never find it."

Paralleling the ~~the~~ Clerical Institute is the Institute for Secular Affairs, headed by the Venerable Thich Tam Chau.

Chau, a refugee from North Viet Nam, has made anti-Communist public ~~announcements~~, statements, has ~~and~~ talked with the American Embassy and the Vietnamese government and generally represented the "softline", moderate view of the Buddhist position. Few believe he is a Communist agent, but admits that he is Communist ~~comi~~ dominated.

As Chau has made promises and compromises with the government, the ~~the~~ "hard-line" monks around Tri Quang have ~~it~~ broken them.

"It's all a game they play," said one Vietnamese official.

"Two monks make an agreement with the government and the others then say no. They form a committee for the stage--~~the~~ just for laughing. It's what you Americans call a comedy."

(More)

deepe

buddhist--6

~~Below~~

But the main work of the Institutes is delegated to commissioner-generals for specialized affairs--such as youth, information, religious affairs. This is termed the middle-level of the Buddhist organization, and most Vietnamese observers believe these monks--~~are Communist cadres~~ assisted by Buddhist layment--are ~~openly~~ Communist cadre, though some of them may be covert members of the Communist organization.

Most observers believe the delirious pace of events during past weeks is the Communist reaction to the Tonkin incidents and the ~~reaction~~ American bombing of North Viet Nam. It is the reaction for which the ~~reaction~~ American-backed Vietnamese government was least prepared for. ~~Origina~~ Immediately following the American bombing in North Viet Nam, the threat appeared to be a North Vietnamese ground invasion or aerial attacks, backed by Communist China. ~~When~~ When this did not materialize, the government feared an all-out military campaign by Viet Cong Communist guerrillas, with regimental-sized attacks against provincial capitals and important installations.

(More)

deeps

buddhist--7

But instead, the Communists stepped into the political arena first to weaken the anticommunist forces in the Vietnamese government and armed forces, and then to maneuver for a pro-Communist government during the coming months.

The battle is clearly one which the ^{Vietnamese} anticommunist ^S must deal with. Informed sources here believe ~~American~~ additional American advisors, American military supplies-- even further American retaliations against North Viet Nam-- will not be able to solve the inevitable confrontation between the Buddhists and the anti-Communist ~~government~~ forces in Viet Nam.