

# Viet Buddhist Chief Bars Reds

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SAIGON.

Thich Tri Quang, South Viet Nam's most powerful Buddhist leader, said yesterday he opposes Communist representation in any elected government here.

The military government pledged yesterday to hold elections for a civilian regime as soon as a constitution is drafted and the voting machinery is set up. But the Buddhists boycotted the preparatory congress at which the offer was made.

Tri Quang, 43-year-old spiritual leader of the Unified Buddhist Church, told The Saigon News, one of two English-language newspapers here, that he is not anti-American.

He said he is "opposed to American policy in so far as it blocks the setting up of a National Assembly."

Such opposition, he asserted, nullifies U. S. aid to South Viet Nam.

## U. S. SAVED HIM

Tri Quang is said to oppose communism on the grounds it is atheistic. And he has some cause to be grateful to the Americans. In 1963 he was given refuge for 64 days in the American Embassy, possibly saving his life, as the Buddhists staged a showdown confrontation with Premier Ngo Dinh Diem.

During this political asylum, American Marine guards lent him a radio, books, writing paper—and made certain he received three vegetarian meals a day prepared by an expert Chinese chef.

American Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, then on his first tour here, granted asylum to the enigmatic monk, as the Saigon regime razed Buddhist pagodas. In return, Tri Quang (whose name means spiritual enlightenment) wrote political theses for the American Embassy, which baffled and confused American officers.

When Mr. Lodge returned to Viet Nam on his second tour here last June, Thich Tri Quang reportedly retorted: "Of course, I appreciate that Mr. Lodge granted me asylum in the American Embassy."

But, he added arrogantly, "I don't feel it's necessary to meet Mr. Lodge any more."

Tri Quang's tart statement about the second appointment of Ambassador Lodge swept Saigon, much to the delight of his Vietnamese followers. But one Western diplomat explained glumly, "The Americans presume that gratitude is more than an occidental quality. It doesn't exist in the Orient—and they should not expect it."

On Nov. 4, 1963, when Tri

**TRI QUANG, who carries the Buddhist title "venerable" before his name, has helped to topple one government with his spellbinding oratory. Now he is leading the Buddhist opposition to Premier Ky's military regime.**



Quang left the Embassy, the major—if not the sole—American influence he carried away was a yen for air-conditioning. He installed a unit in his small room at his creme-colored, curve-roofed Buddhist Institute "so he can work better," his associates explained.

Now, two and a half years later, Tri Quang appears bent on toppling another government—if he succeeds, it will be the fourth in less than three years—by demanding civilian rule very promptly.

Premier Ky called a political congress April 3, to work toward elections and a civilian government in a bid to mollify the Buddhists.

He apparently was unsuccessful. Not only Buddhists but Roman Catholics and students shunned the meeting, attended by representatives of political parties, unions and civic organizations.

The government wants time to effect the transition to civilian rule. For the Buddhists, apparently, any delay is too long and for this reason they boycotted the congress.

## DEMONSTRATIONS

Moreover, Buddhist leaders called for massive demonstrations in Saigon tomorrow to enforce demands for the immediate capitulation of Premier Ky's government.

Even as the delegates met, an estimated 7,000 to 8,000 persons led by Buddhist students marched through the streets of Hue, denouncing the Congress as a "tool of the American CIA."

Another crowd of about 3,000 students later staged a torchlight parade in Hue and burned effigies of Gen. Ky and Chief of State Gen. Nguyen Van Thieu.

In Da Nang, 60 miles south of Hue, more than 2,500 soldiers, police students and civilians—some of them armed—also participated in a peace-

ful anti-government parade. Both cities are in the control of the Buddhist-led anti-government forces.

Charges have been made—by Premier Ky among others—that the Buddhists are infiltrated by Communists. Tri Quang asserted yesterday that these charges are "sheer malice," at least when applied to his group.

"Among the most dangerous destructive forces, we must count Communism, and those who oppose the setting up of a national assembly," he told the Saigon Daily News.

Police sources say Tri Quang has met with members of the Communist National Liberation Front. Some of the highest ranking officers—themselves Buddhists—who overthrew the Diem regime, now accuse Tri Quang of being a Red.

Others say that while Tri Quang may not be a Communist, his politics and tactics are openly aiding the Communists to subvert the country.

"It's stupid to ask if Tri Quang is a Communist or not," a Vietnamese government official said. "You can look and look for a Communist party card on him, but you will never, never find it. But his policy is to make the government so weak it can not fight the Communists—and this is the policy of the Communists."

He radiates a magnetic spell over those who have met and talked with him.

"I've met Ho Chi Minh," one former Communist said. "I've met Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap (head of North Vietnamese Army who defeated the French). But I think Tri Quang is tougher than both."

One official, after a long conversation, said: "His face is pale—without blood—you might say cold-blooded. He's very logical and talks better than a Communist cadre. He

mixes his language with Communist and Buddhist terminology."

Tri Quang was born shortly after 1920 of middle class landowners, in the province of Ha Tinh, one of the poorest provinces in the country. He was named Pham Van Bong, but was later to adopt a number of aliases. His father became a Buddhist priest late in life; his mother died a natural death shortly after the Communist takeover in 1945.

## BURNING

His aunt, after the loss of all family properties during the Communist revolution, reportedly set fire to the family house and leaped into the flames to commit suicide. Almost 20 years later, Saigonees recalled this incident and noted the parallel to Tri Quang's tactics of having Buddhist clerics burn themselves in protest against the Diem regime.

One of Tri Quang's elder brothers is reportedly an important political cadre in Communist North Viet Nam.

When he was 13, Quang reportedly studied for the Buddhist priesthood in the Tu Dam Pagoda, still his headquarters, in the old imperial capital of Hue, 440 miles north of Saigon, the stronghold of Buddhism in South Viet Nam.

During the Indochina War, Tri Quang was arrested by French authorities and held for several months, but upon release he again returned to Ta Dam pagoda in Hue as a full-fledged Buddhist priest.

Reliable sources say in early 1951, he again traveled toward Hanoi, staying a few months in the village of Diem Ho, known as a meeting place for Communist Viet Minh cadres on their way to infiltrate into the French-held areas of the country. Reportedly, he stayed in the village several months and received some training and instructions from the Communist Viet Minh guerrillas before proceeding to Hanoi.

In early 1952, Tri Quang was reportedly invited to be a delegate to an international Buddhist conference; but the French "surete" refused him an exit permit on the grounds he was believed to be a Communist. He had previously been arrested by French authority as one.

Tri Quang admitted to a relative of President Diem that he had been a Communist, but had "since changed his ways." But in 1963 during the first Buddhist crisis, neither President Diem nor his younger intellectual brother Nhu believed him, and Mrs. Ngo Dinh Diem startled the world by calling him a "Red