

deepe

article 10 of series

page 1

THE THREE VIETNAMS

SALOON--Within this small republic the size of Idaho, there are really Three Viet Nams.

There is a state within a state within a state--a government within a government within a government.

Two of these states are fighting on the military front--the Communist Viet Cong and the American-backed Saigon government. But on the political front all three states are fighting--for a third force has emerged in which the center of gravity lies in the Buddhist movement.

On the military front, the state boundaries are clearly visible, but fluid--they shift from minute to minute. On the political front, the boundaries are both invisible and fluid.

During the past three years, the military war has escalated internally; both the Communists and the Saigon government has increased in military strength and influence. Both have increased their control over the "contested areas"--areas of mixed control, or as the Communists graphically describe them in peasant language, "the rice and bean areas."

Hence the military war effort has polarized; the countryside increasingly became either black or white. A military stalemate in which neither side could win or lose was predicted.

(More)

Politically, however, a new aspect arose. A giant grey mass
emerged between the black political state of the Communists and the
white political state of the pro-Western camp. This grey mass revolves
around the Buddhist movement, but includes other elements also.

~~Explicitly, and implicitly, the Buddhist movement is the main element in the grey mass.~~

The Communists maintain a shadow government which
parallels that of the Saigon government, reaching from the central level
to the inter-zone to the province to the district and lastly the
village. The Communist shadow government is etched in the political
policies and aims of the National Front for the Liberation of South
Viet Nam, but the People's Revolutionary Party--the Communist Party--
dominates it.

The grey mass of the Buddhist movement is hastily and efficiently
organising a government to correspond to that of both the
Viet Cong government and the Saigon government. Like both governments,
the Buddhist hierarchy pyramids at the central level to the provinces,
districts to Buddhist associations in the Villages and the "All-Buddhist
Families" in the hamlets. Individual Buddhist families are being
organised in each hamlet in the same manner that the government census
establishes "family and "inter-family" cells to check Viet Cong
movements and penetration. The Buddhists are now issuing details of
how to organise their records and registration, not unlike a military
intelligence staff bureau.

(More)

deeps

article 10

page 3

There are many things clear about the Buddhist movement and there are many unanswered questions.

These things are clear: it is a political movement of significant dimensions--and it is growing. Second, as a political movement, it can survive only by being--and temporarily remaining--a movement of protest. They will mushroom in size by protesting--and their immediate enemy is the g Saigon government--and any Saigon government. ~~It is clear from their policy statements that there will be~~ ~~But they will oppose the government--~~ ~~consistently, but not enough to make it entirely collapse--~~ until they are ready to become the Saigon government.

Third, by remaining an opposition element and hence weakening the Saigon government, the Buddhist policies are obviously aiding the policies of the Communists. Both the Buddhists and the Communist parties are in parallel, both directly their fire at the Saigon government, their common enemy. The real question is whether or not the Buddhists are directed by the Communists.

Fourth, based on this analysis, the American-backed Saigon government must then consider the Buddhists as their "second enemy," for the Buddhists state is out of the jurisdiction of the Saigon government.

deepe

article 10

page 4

To survive politically, the Buddhist state must declare war on both the other two states. But it can not fight both simultaneously. To continue grabbing mass support, the Buddhists must maintain their identity separate from the other two states.

Both the Communists and the national government treat the Buddhists as separate states, because both are attempting ~~an~~ an alliance with it--to have its support. The Viet Cong never say that the Buddhists are part of their government--only that they hope to help the Buddhists. The Saigon government--also wanting ~~an~~ an alliance--do not accuse the Buddhist leaders of being Communist, though Buddhist believers do. Especially at this time, only days before a new Saigon government and before the American elections--no Saigon official or American policymaker would label the Buddhists as Communist. For Khanh desperately needs Buddhist support during the upcoming days. For Americans to acknowledge this before Presidential election would imply that American policy decisions to withdraw support from Ngo Dinh Diem--helping the Buddhists--was a serious policy miscalculation last year. It would also admit that the American Embassy here ~~is~~ harbored a pro-Communist sympathiser only a year ago.

The "first enemy" of the Buddhists is the Khanh government--or any future Saigon government;-- they have yet to declare war on the Communists and its doubtful they ever will. The Buddhist strategy to remain a protest movement means they must attack any Saigon government, no matter what form it takes or who heads it.

deepe

article 10

page 5

They will attempt to isolate the ~~xx~~ Saigon government from the foundations of its support. One tactic is to drive a wedge between the Americans and the national leader--and this is the significance of their anti-American propaganda. Like the Communists, the Buddhists are clearly anti-American and will remain so. Another tactic is to drive a wedge between the Saigon government and the Catholics, as they are doing under the disguise of ridding the country of the old Can Lao party. Like the Communists, the Buddhist leaders are anti-Catholic--and will remain so. And the Buddhists will attempt to chip away the army from the Saigon government--which is the significance of placing the three-man Buddhist ~~committees~~ committees in army companies and battalions. Hence, the Buddhists penetrate the national army on one side while the Viet Cong secret cadre perform "Action Among Enemy Troop" subversion on the other hand.

Hence, the ~~national~~ Saigon government realizes it has the Buddhists as its "second enemy." It must fight the Communists--militarily and politically--at their base of support, the hamlet and village level. And it must fight the Buddhists--~~politically~~ politically--at their base of support, the district and provincial level.

Logically in any military war there are two solid camps of enemies, and everyone else is a satellite or neutral. Logically the Saigon government should spend 100 per cent of its time fighting the Viet Cong--and vice versa. But the government now must spend up to 90

deeps

article 10

page 6

percent ~~has~~ during crucial moments fighting the Buddhists instead of the Viet Cong.

The short-term Buddhist strategy is obviously to remain in the ~~pm~~ opposition to the government, which means they must refuse to ~~a~~ become a significant part of the government. The Buddhists will continue this strategy until they are ready to become the government, when they have the political personalities to take it over. One thing is clear: that time is not this year. A representative of their movement has already relinquished his right to be considered for the position of chief of state; the Buddhists will not ask for the premiership—to do so they become ~~a~~ the government and lose their identity.

No one ~~will~~ knows when the Buddhists will decide to swallow up the Saigon government, but one may suspect their aim is the permanent constitution and permanent constitution to be completed ~~completed~~ next year. For the Buddhists like the Communists operate in phases. Possibly the date to watch is not November, 1964, but November, 1965.

~~The Communist state is headed by Nguyen Huu Tho, as~~

The Communist state is headed by Nguyen Huu Tho, as chairman of the central committee of the National Liberation Front of South Viet Nam. Behind the NLF is the Communist Party of South Viet Nam—and behind that is Hanoi. The "grey owl eminence" of the Buddhist movement is a frail monk named Thich Tri Quang—it's yet unknown if anyone is behind him. The Saigon government is now headed by Premier Nguyen Khanh—the external force behind him is the Americans.

deepe

article 10

page 7

Khanh is clearly the key figure within one of the Three Viet Nams. In the wrangling and maneuvering about the future constitution and the future government, one thing is highly probable.--Khanh will again emerge as the strongman./ after his government officially resigns on Tuesday, October 27.

For no matter how the constitution is written--no matter what Khanh is titled, he will probably again ~~be~~ be the key figure. He may be chief of state, he may be prime minister, he may be commander-in-chief. He may only be the chairman of a yet-unformed committee. But he will again be the strongest within one of the Three Viet Nams.

But the important point, is the size, authority, and ~~a number of~~ jurisdiction of his Viet Nam will have shrunk drastically. The "square miles" ~~is~~ formerly within the ~~gulf~~ territory of his state will have ~~been~~ been forfeited to the Buddhists. For to emerge as the strongman, Khanh will have relinquished part of the authority of his state to the Buddhists in the form of major concessions. It's too early to know what those concessions will be; ~~but~~ but the ~~is~~ Khanh government will have made important ~~major~~ concessions to its "second enemy."

They Buddhists already have been given major concessions--and ~~person~~ presumably they will want only more of the same. The Buddhists within the past months have been usurping the powers of the Saigon government; they ~~have~~ can block appointments of ~~a~~ military corps commander, or cabinet ministers--or prime ministers.

deeps

article 10

page 8

They have already ~~regiment~~ demanded from the government--and received--the destruction of police records on Buddhist leaders. This lead the Saigon police chief to gasp several months ago, "It's the first time in my life I ever heard of a police official handing over police records to Buddhist bonzes."

During recent weeks in provincial capitals, pro-Buddhist mobs have "arrested" ~~Can Lao~~ party members--and turned them over to the provincial government for prosecution. ~~Simmer~~ The military careers of young district chiefs and province chiefs are no longer broken by their military superiors--but by Buddhist bonzes.

Clearly, the Buddhists will move more into the educational field to widen their influence over students; into the social welfare and cultural field to increase their influence over labor unions and other organizations.

In short, on the one hand, the government has consciously made major concessions to their "second enemy" while on the other hand, the Communists have been effectively penetrating it at all levels. This is the most crucial ~~factor~~ factor in the ~~de~~ deterioration of the ~~Fin~~ situation in Viet Nam in the past year.

According to this line of analysis, once the Buddhists swallow the Saigon government, they should then declare war on their other enemy--the Communists. Theoretically, to do this, the Buddhist must move their influence ~~2~~ downwards from the district and provincial level to the village and hamlet level, which is the Communist base of support.

deops

a rticle 10

page 9

However, for years, the Buddhist monks in village pagodas have co-existed with Communist cadre without coming in conflict with them. Like the Communists, the Buddhists preach family life, which is similar to Communist collectivism--while the American-backed government has been preaching individualism. The Buddhists--like the Communists--preach austerity to the villagers, while the Saigon government is preaching economic betterment.

The key fact index of this co-existence is that seldom is a Buddhist priest killed by the Communists; but Catholic priests are often targets for Viet Cong terrorists.

For the Communists will never allow any competition with the masses--if it arises they will crush it as they now attempt to crush the government village chiefs and hamlet militias. But the Communists will allow a peaceful co-existence at the village level between Buddhist houses and Communist cadre. This peaceful co-existence, operating for years at the hamlet and village level already equates at the national level an un-announced state of neutrality. This is clear.

However, the question is whether or not the Buddhist movement is not just an second front for the Communists as the National Liberation Front for South Viet Nam is its first front.

That question must be answered by an enigmatic clocking monk
mysterious monk named Thich Tri Quang.

Tomorrow: The Air-Conditioned Monk.