

- Between The Lines

By Leo Anand

President Kennedy stated a fact of modern political life the other day when he commented on the situation in South Viet Nam ... when he said that the regime of President Diem could not win the war against Communist guerrillas unless it had a broader, more popular base.

This has been the experience all over the world in the past dozen years or so. The days when a minority government could demand sacrifices from the people in a war—just or unjust—are just about over. In a manner of speaking, and many observers see it that way, the repression in South Viet Nam may be forcing the Buddhist majority—15 to one—into the arms of the Communists.

But why don't we disentangle ourselves then? The answer here has to do with more than strategic considerations. We have created a crack Army at tremendous effort and sacrifice—billions of dollars and many precious lives. We must continue to exert any influence we may have to see to it that this army is used against the Communists, not against the people of South Viet Nam.

We bear a responsibility, in other words. The Buddhists in the Indochinese Republic and elsewhere in Southeast Asia would never forgive us if we effected a withdrawal at this desperate juncture. Then, too, the Communist world would have something to gloat about. Their propaganda machine would make capital out of our failure.

There is no problem without solution. There must be a key to the puzzle at hand. It is believed in some quarters that the Viet Nam Army will react sooner or later. Its leaders may feel obligated to the Viet Nam regime but the lower echelons, those who have to do the fighting, will develop a mind of their own.

It is not likely that the Diem government will remain in control for very long. The people of South Viet Nam must know by now that we do not approve the behavior of the leadership. Sooner or later, they will find a way to checkmate the regime. There still is time for Diem to clean house. He is personally admired by many Buddhists—perhaps most of them. The government is to blame and Diem must know as much.

The Central Intelligence Agency has been blamed for many errors in recent months and years but it has continued to do its necessary work. The CIA is a silent organization. It cannot strike back at its critics without disclosing important secrets. But it may do something about a poisonous article in a Viet Nam paper which is said to reflect the policy of the Diem regime.

It is charged that the CIA had a plot to overthrow the government on Aug. 28 but postponed it because the Diem police got wind of it. The article in question goes on to say that the intelligence organization set aside \$10,000,000 to \$24,000,000 to finance the plan. The President's brother and sister-in-law were to be sent into exile and Diem was to become a prisoner of American advisers. It is further claimed that CIA agents tried to bribe the police, the Army, labor, civil servants and other organizations into supporting their scheme.

There are other juicy details. We are informed, for instance, that the CIA has a special squad for engineering anti-government uprising and that it had been successful in Turkey, Guatemala and Korea but had failed in Iran and Cuba.

All of which is a measure of the extremes to which people can go to justify their own failings ... their own derelictions. Our enemies have been kinder to us. Indeed, we may expect Red China and others to use this trash to advantage. The thought occurs that maybe the CIA should have done what it has been accused of wanting to do. But that is not its function. Neither can our government demean itself in this fashion.

A spokesman for Diem has said that the United States just does not understand what is going on ... that the repression against the Buddhist majority has been misunderstood. The contrary is true. Washington officials understood too well.

But patience has its limits. There may well come a point of no return. Our South Viet Nam policy is being reviewed from day to day. It won't be long before some formula is evolved.