

# VIETNAM'S FAITHS UNDERLIE RISING

14-Sept 1964

Buddhist-Catholic Disputes

Sharpened Under Diem  
New York Times

By DAVID HALBERSTAM

The deeply rooted religious divisions in South Vietnam were reflected in yesterday's military moves in Saigon against the Government of Premier Nguyen Khanh.

There were other factors, too—rivalry among generals and between civilian politicians and the military. But religious divisions have long been among the most troublesome in the war-torn country.

They were sharpened in recent years under the rule of the late President Ngo Dinh Diem, when an essentially authoritarian regime became identified in the minds of many South Vietnamese as a Roman Catholic authoritarian regime.

About 10 per cent of the 14.5 million South Vietnamese are Catholics. Ten or 11 million consider themselves Buddhists, but only about half are Buddha worshippers. The rest are more likely to be ancestor-worshippers.

The present conflicts were rooted in the war between the French and the Vietminh, French and the Communist-controlled but broadly-based nationalist force that fought to end French rule.

## Catholics Fled Southward

The war lasted from 1946 to 1954, and Vietnam was then divided at the 17th parallel, with the Communists in control in the North, and with the United States trying to put together a pro-West, anti-Communist government in the South.

In the North, many Vietnamese Catholics led by their priests had fought during the war on the side of the French. Fearing retaliation by the Vietminh, they fled to the South when the war ended.

In the South, the United States sought a leader for the new government who was both anti-French and anti-Communist. It selected Ngo Dinh Diem, who had an enviable record as a young civil servant.

He had resigned his post when the French had reneged on promises, and he had spent the closing years of the war in exile, at the Maryknoll Seminary in Ossining, N. Y.

Mr. Diem was a devout Catholic. He returned to a shattered country, with little support outside of a political party operated by his own family. He was profoundly suspicious of many elements of the population.

Catholics were Favored

In this situation, hundreds of thousands of Catholic refugees resettled them—one of the foremost achievements of his regime—and he gave them special privileges.

This special relationship was to sharpen feelings of religious discontent in the country. Mr. Diem, a Catholic from the central region, distrusted names from the Southern part of the country and was suspicious of Buddhists.

In forming a government in a country eroded by division and jealousy, he created an apparatus in which jobs in the secret policenetwork and the command of key divisions went to Catholics.

The Catholics were far more militantly anti-Communist than the more phlegmatic, relaxed Buddhists. In addition, many had better education because of training in parochial schools, and this circumstance enabled them to succeed more quickly in whatever profession they chose.

They soon seemed to be rising to positions of authority far out of proportion to their numbers.

## Many Turned Catholic

Since Catholics seemed to have special privileges in the Buddhists' eyes, many young men, anxious to get ahead in the Army, converted to Catholicism.

More than two-thirds of the province chiefs were Catholics. So were a large number of district chiefs. To many Vietnamese, the secret police organizations, increasingly powerful year after year under President Diem, seemed to be Catholic-dominated.

Finally, the Diem Government became increasingly authoritarian. It allowed no dissent, no opposition political parties, and it controlled the press.

In this situation many Vietnamese looked upon Buddhism as a means of expression that was purely Vietnamese and an alternative to organizations controlled by the Ngo family.

On May 8, 1963, the Buddhists in Hue were denied the right to fly their flag. They protested, and Government troops fired into a mob. Nine were killed. The Government refused to accept responsibility for the deaths, saying that they were caused by a Communist agent who threw a grenade.

This was to begin a crisis in which the Buddhists became a spearhead for latent discontent against the unpopular family regime. The crisis ended when the Army overthrew President Diem and his family last Nov. 1.

## Khanh Worried Buddhists

Most Vietnamese, happy to be free of an oppressive government, credited the Buddhists rather than the junta of generals who led the coup.

The Buddhists themselves did not underestimate their role. They wanted to remain involved in Vietnamese politics, and they felt that they should have some sort of say in the Government.

For them, the head of the junta, Maj. Gen. Duong Van Minh, was a hero. When the general was overthrown three months later by Maj. Gen. Nguyen Khanh, the Buddhists

# That Draws the Loyalty of Many Persons

By PETER GROSE

Special to The New York Times

SAIGON—South Vietnam, Sept. 12—A Buddhist revolution is taking place in South Vietnam. Its lines and goals are still far from clear even to many of the Buddhists themselves, but seasoned observers consider it the most significant and far-reaching trend in present-day Southeast Asia. Its implications stretch far beyond the frontiers of this country. They extend not only to nations nearby but also, because of Buddhism's unclear relation to the ideology and power of Communism, the Vietnamese experience could alter the entire power structure the United States has been fighting to maintain in the southwestern Pacific.

The Buddhists seem to be gambling that they can produce a new basis for stability.

So far what has actually happened is that the American-supported Premier of South Vietnam, Maj. Gen. Nguyen Khanh, has accepted in general and in detail an immediate Buddhist formula for reforming his Government along new civilian lines. This is the outcome, now apparent, of this country's political crisis last month.

### Premier First

That crisis was the second step in an evolution starting 16 months ago. The first step was reached last November, when nine years of rule by President Ngo Dinh Diem collapsed in a bloody coup d'etat. Both the Buddhists and the Vietnamese Army contributed to President Diem's downfall, but the Buddhists were neither organized nor motivated to fill by themselves the void left when President Diem was removed.

Since Nov. 1 the army has governed South Vietnam. On Jan. 13 there was a change in leadership—General Khanh took over where a junta had failed to get off the ground—but throughout his first seven months in power the army remained Premier Khanh's principal base of support, his only real claim to hold power in a land torn by war and popular dissent.

Now the Military Revolutionary Council, the instrument of army rule, has been disbanded. A Constitution that seemed to institutionalize military dictatorship was withdrawn. Premier Khanh is in the process of easing his former military cronies out of their Government positions. Many have already resigned.

"I am still a general," Premier Khanh said the other day, "but I am Premier first." The former field commander now wears civilian clothes. He has shaved off the little goatee he sported throughout the military phase of his rule. He never stated publicly why he had grown this beard in the weeks preceding his coup d'etat, but from the smiles and jokes of officers around him it is clear the goatee had a certain bar-room symbolic value to the military clique that helped him into power. Now both the goatee and the clique are gone.

### New Foundation

The full story of why the army gave up so easily has yet to come out—maybe it was only a tactical retreat to prepare for new power plays, perhaps by a younger generation of colonels. Some elements would have the people believe there were secret inducements—that is to say, money—that persuaded certain individuals to abandon their claims to power. More likely the generals felt an onrush of frustration and helplessness from 10 unpleasant months in power, even a feeling that they might as well get out while the going was still good.

However it happened, the army says it has abandoned its foray into politics and now theoretically will return to the business of fighting a war. Political power is forming on a new foundation.

Spokesmen in the Buddhist hierarchy will firmly deny any political aspirations for themselves as persons or for Buddhism as such. They are speaking, they say, solely in the name of the Vietnamese people of whatever religion.

### A Good Claim

In fact, Buddhist leaders have as good a claim as anyone else, and better than many, for presenting the views of "the people," for Buddhism is the family religion of the vast majority of Vietnamese. It has been so for centuries. Premier Khanh himself has long had a Buddhist shrine to his parents in his house.

Figures are difficult and misleading since there are few criteria for claiming to be a Buddhist. Out of a population of 14 million an estimated total of five or six million people are practicing Buddhists responsive to the voice of the hierarchy. Many more who say they are Buddhists if asked pay little more than lip-service to any re-



Liederman in The Long Island Press  
"They're burying themselves!"

ligion. Others adhere to Buddhist-oriented sects that nevertheless shun the central Buddhist organization.

Furthermore, there are clear geographical distinctions of attitude among even the most faithful of Buddhists. Until recently the most politically active were bonzes, or monks, from North Vietnam who had fled to the South to escape Communist rule. They gravitated toward Saigon, establishing their own pagodas separate from the pagodas of their brothers native to South Vietnam.

Northerners are outspoken in their opposition to Communism and have supported the military Government in active prosecution of the war against the Communist Vietcong. The best-known spokesman for the Northern refugees is Thich Tam Chau, who holds the position of rector, or chairman, of the Buddhist Secular Institute, the organizational center of Buddhist political activity.

At the opposite extreme in zeal are the Buddhists of the far south, the populous and rich Mekong Delta. In this area the orthodox hierarchy is weak, laymen have greater influence and religion plays a lesser role in the comfortable life of the population. Here also thrive many independent sects of Vietnamese Buddhists as well as a militant anti-Communist group of Buddhists of Cambodian origin who adhere to the "hinayana," or "lesser vehicle," branch of international Buddhism. Vietnamese Buddhism is predominantly "mahayana," or "greater vehicle," in which the Buddha is deified.

### Hardest to Define

It is the Buddhists of central Vietnam who have spurred the most significant recent advances into politics. Their intellectual center is at Hue. These are the Buddhists hardest to understand or define in political terms. They profess anti-Communism and anti-neutralism, but they also seem far from happy

with the present American policy for fighting the war.

Their undoubted leader is Thich Tri Quang, considered by many the mastermind of last year's Buddhist revolt against President Diem. By seeking refuge in the United States last year, he forced the United States Government to take sides with the Buddhists against the Diem Government, which was trying to arrest Buddhist leaders.

Though Tri Quang lacks Tam Chau's prestigious position as head of the Secular Institute, he seems now to be the most influential single Buddhist in the country. There are some observers who look upon his political skills as setting the pattern for Buddhism throughout Southeast Asia.

A long-term Buddhist revolution is taking place both within the movement and in the country at large. Its goal is undefined. Its purpose, according to the bonzes, is to "protect Buddhism." Neither the meaning of this phrase nor the means to realize it have been made clear to nonbelievers.

A basic strain within the movement is the whole question of whether Buddhism should deal in temporal politics. Any typical Buddhist declaration will be couched in terms of religion, shunning partisan involvement in worldly political matters. Bonzes such as Tri Quang will evade difficult political questions by insisting they are solely men of religion, not competent to speak on matters of politics.

### Drive Removed Doubt

Considering their role last year and this, it is difficult to refrain from charges of hypocrisy on this point. Any doubt about the potential political strength and interests of, at least some Buddhist leaders was removed in their campaign against President Diem.

With the November coup their effectiveness seemed ended for the moment, since they had no viable organization capable of retaining political control after 10 centuries of relative noninvolvement. Quickly but quietly this was changed.

Starting on Jan. 3, when the "Vietnam Unified Buddhist Church" came into being, the Buddhists under Tam Chau and Tri Quang have established a shadow government across the country, a shadow rapidly assuming substance. At the top there are two "institutes," one for religious affairs, which has nominal and honorific responsibilities equivalent to those of a chief of state, and the other for secular affairs, which, like a premier, wields actual power over the organization.

### Political Structure

In the secular institute there are six "general offices," resembling ministries, for clergy-affairs, Buddhist studies, cultural affairs, construction and finance, lay peoples' affairs and youth. Each general office is headed by a commissioner.

Down in the provinces there are delegates and deputies; all bonzes, mostly in their thirties or early forties, all appointed, like the Government's province chiefs, by their own administration in Saigon.

This is the political structure the Buddhists were erecting during the 10 months of military rule over South Vietnam.

How effective would this structure be in support of a government favorable to Buddhists? The matter has not yet been put to a test—little has so far been demanded of the Buddhist population by their leaders. But many observers think the test will come in the next months as long as Premier Khanh leans more and more heavily on apparently the one non-Communist element of the nation that has not yet been brought into active participation in the Government.

1953 to \$4.2 billion last year, while in the same period Soviet trade with other Communist-ruled countries has only little more than doubled.

**Political Climate**

The primary factor in the rapid increase of Soviet trade with Western Europe and Japan has been the easing of world political tensions since the end of the Korean War in the mid-1950's. That in turn has produced a major relaxation in the strictness of the embargo on strategic exports, evidenced by progressive reductions in the number of goods whose sale to Moscow is prohibited.

To pay for the increased purchases, the Soviet Union has stepped up its sales abroad, mainly sales of raw materials such as oil and lumber; has contracted an increasing volume of short and medium-term—up to five years—credits. It has

also increased its sales of gold. Two developments combined this last year to make the Russians step up their pressure for longer-term loans. One was the realization in Moscow that the several hundred million dollars worth of short and medium-term loans it had contracted had reached the limit of its capacity to service, that is, to repay—along with accrued interest—as the loans fall due. The second was last year's unveiling of Premier Khrushchev's ambitious chemical expansion program, whose fulfillment on schedule requires the purchase of billions of dollars worth of foreign machinery and technological know-how.

In recent months, therefore,

Soviet agents in Western Europe and Japan have been dangling the prospect of huge orders—amounting to hundreds of millions or billions of dollars—before businessmen and government officials in these countries. But these orders, the Soviet envoys have made plain will go only to those firms and countries that are willing to extend "reasonable" credit terms, that is, to give loans that do not have to be repaid for more than five—and very preferably more than 10—years. Those urging the Soviet desired easing of credit terms have pointed to the Soviet Union's scrupulous repayment of past commercial credits extended it, arguing this record make

# VATICAN II RECONVENES

## The Ecumenical Council, Which Gathers in Rome Tomorrow, Could Make Significant Changes

By ROBERT C. DOTY

Special to The New York Times

ROME, Sept. 12—The more than 2,300 Cardinals and Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church will assemble Monday in St. Peter's Basilica for the third, and undoubtedly climactic, session of Vatican II, the church's first Ecumenical Council in nearly a century.

It will be a splendid, colorful ceremony—Pope Paul VI in full pontifical vestments on his throne, the bright scarlet robes of Cardinals against the darker, purplish red of the Bishops—in a magnificent setting, the lofty nave of the great cathedral.

The task of the fathers of the Council will be to complete the "aggiornamento"—updating—of the church for a more effective dialogue with the modern world, an updating that began five years ago when Pope John XXIII announced the council.

Two previous sessions, in 1962 and 1963, have produced only two completed decrees but, along with them, an immensely significant stocktaking and exchange of ideas that almost transcends formal votes and decisions in importance.

One of the completed actions was a decree on the reform of the sacred liturgy, introducing vernacular tongues to replace Latin and decentralizing control on liturgical matters—an action qualified experts view as one of the most important changes in the Roman Church in centuries.

The other was a decree giving a rather conservative, superficial and much-criticized definition of the church's attitude toward the press and other communications media.

**13-Item Agenda**

On the agenda this time are 13 items. There are six schemata, full-scale developments of major subjects for discussion and vote. There are six simple "propositions," statements of general principles on lesser matters, synthesized from the written intercession comments of the Council Fathers. There is one "votum," an expression of the will of the council on the general direction of a reform of the provisions of canon law on marriage.

Most important and still controversial, after 79 sittings of the council, are the huge schema, of the church itself—a searching re-examination and redefinition of its very nature; a schema on the sources of divine revelation; a schema on ecumenism, defining the church's attitude toward efforts to achieve Christian unity; much-disputed declarations on the Catholic attitude toward religious liberty and toward the Jews and a catch-all schema on the church in the modern world.

Among them, they touch on all of the challenging issues facing the church today: the problem of marriage and birth control, relations with Protestants and non-Christians, the impact of materialism and modern science on traditional doctrines and forms, the sharing of the authority of the Pope and his predominantly Italian and conservative Curia with the bishops, most closely at grips with mid-20th-century problems at the pastoral level.

Many of the specific issues are stated in theological terms, confusing to the average laymen.

Underlying almost all the detailed theological questions are several general attitudes of approach that have divided the council between progressive and conservative camps.

**Question of Power**

One of these is the attitude toward the government of the church. A clear majority of the bishops gave evidence, in their approach to almost every issue, that they believed that the Roman Curia exercised too much, too centralized and too conservative power in the day-to-day administration of the church under the authority of the Supreme Pontiff.

This view received its most precise expression in a series of five preliminary votes on the collegiality—the collective authority—of the bishops, all won overwhelmingly by the progressives. This has been followed by proposals, not yet in any formal draft, for the establishment in Rome of a kind of "senate" of the world's bishops to advise the Pope—first in authority among the bishops—on church affairs. This plan would cut into the present virtually unchallenged authority of the many curial congregations to

interpret the Pontiff's will on the innumerable matters of detail he must delegate to other

A second major watershed opinion has been the approach to ecumenism, the aspirant toward the unity of Christian

Here so called "triumphalist" having only to pursue its course secure in the certainty of the eventual return of all dissent to the fold, is opposed to the view that the church bears some responsibility for past schism that it must actively seek a commeditions with the "separated brethren," minimize points of difference without, course, compromising on essentials.

Here, too, the Curia as those bishops comfortably sponsored in Catholic societies tend, in varying degrees, to support the first view. The bishop whose lot is cast among Protestants and non-Christians around the globe, generally favor more active ecumenism.

An issue of a special kind presented by the declaration to the Jews. An original draft prepared under the guidance of progressive, Augustin Cardinal Bea, head of the Secretariat for Christian Unity, unreservedly acknowledged that the Jew generally, in Christ's day, had no special responsibility for His crucifixion, which viewed as an atonement for the sins of all mankind.

At the insistence of conservative curial officials and bishops from Arab countries who fear hostile governmental reactions even to a purely religious statement on the Jews, Cardinal Bea's draft was withdrawn in the second session.

A new draft has offended Jewish opinion by exonerating only modern Jews of guilt in the crucifixion and therefore, by implication, endorsing the r



United Press International  
Pope Paul VI, who will reconvene the Ecumenical Council in Rome tomorrow, is shown responding to greetings last week at mass audience at his summer residence in Castel Gandolfo