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Better Red than Dead

By FATHER PATRICK O'CONNOR Society of St. Columban

New York — (NC) — A Buddhist bonze reportedly told American clergymen who recently visited Vietnam that Buddhists "hate communism" but would choose it in preference to war.

A source close to the "Clergymen's Emergency Committee for Vietnam" said the Buddhist spokesman seemed "a little timid" in giving their opinion, as they felt the government was watching them.

According to this source, the bonze said that to ask Buddhists to choose between war and

communism was to confront them with a terrible dilemma. "We hate communism but we have inner resources to meet it, for we are a patient people," the bonze reportedly said. "War is too final. If you ask us to choose between war and communism, we prefer communism."

The visiting clergymen also talked to Catholic spokesmen

who stated their conviction that it would be a disaster if the communists took over South Vietnam.

Some members of the visiting group interviewed representatives of the "National Liberation Front," which is conducting the Viet Cong war in South Vietnam. The meeting took place in the house of the North Vietnam government trade mission in Phnompenh, Cambodia. The North Vietnam government declined to invite the visiting U.S. religious leaders to Hanoi. It gave as reason that it could not be responsible for their safety because of air raids (No Vietnamese or U.S. planes have bombed Hanoi).

In a statement published August 1 as a full-page advertisement in the New York Times the Clergymen's Committee urged a halt to the bombing of North Vietnam "as a demonstration of good faith in calling for a cease-fire." It did not urge any halting of Viet Cong attacks in the south.

The clergymen deplored the way in which unnamed major powers "are using the villages of Vietnam as a testing ground for ideological positions such as 'wars of national liberation,' or 'containment of communism by military force.'" The committee speaks of the military action by the Republic of Vietnam and the U.S. as primarily an effort to contain the communist ideology rather than as a defense against aggressors who are communists.

Neutralize Vietnam Vatican City — (NC) — The Vietnamese area should be neutralized to end the war there, a Vatican City weekly magazine has suggested.

Neutralization should be real and not a screen for surrender to the communists, an editorial in L'Osservatore Della Domenica comments. Supporters of the Viet Cong and North Vietnam would "help the cause of peace if they did their best to bring about negotiations without... unacceptable and therefore unreal prior conditions."

Archbishop Welcomed Mwadui — (NC) — Archbishop Marko Mihayo of Tabora, Tanzania, visiting for the first time in this town of Mwadui, in the neighboring diocese of Shiranga, was welcomed not only by Catholic speakers but by a representative of the Moslems, Sheikh Siraji Azubakar, who opened his welcoming address with a prayer.



Child Survives, His Mother Didn't

South Vietnam — (RNS) — A frightened child — his slain mother by his side — pleads for help as he looks up at a U.S. marine in a bomb shelter of a South Vietnamese village. Survivors and the dead were removed from the shelter following a joint Marine-Vietnamese assault on the village to drive out Vietcong guerrillas.

Refugees Swell Few Free Areas In Vietnam

Saigon — (NC) — An estimated 600,000 refugees, many of them Catholics, have fled from the vast areas of South Vietnam controlled and terrorized by the communist Viet Cong.

The refugees have no place to go, no one to receive them, little or no money. Aiding them is extremely difficult. Food is scarce and prohibitively expensive, and the communists are constantly disrupting provincial and district communications.

The South Vietnamese government has only limited means. But at least in some places it has set up primitive shelters. It is also supplying about five cents a day for each refugee. With the roads cut and bridges destroyed, however, few receive even this pittance.

In many districts the refugees are almost all Catholics, who are always special targets for the Viet Cong. Local bishops and priests are doing their best for them.

Catholic Relief Services—National Catholic Welfare Conference—is the organization doing most to help them. Under its director for Vietnam—Lawson Mooney of Boston—the American Catholic relief agency has transported thousands of tons of U.S. government surplus food to the refugees. The U.S. armed forces here have cooperated wholeheartedly in transporting and distributing the relief supplies.

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'No Moral Way Out' from Vietnam

Nyack, N.Y. — (RNS) — Although he stated that there is "literally no moral way out" in Vietnam, the executive secretary of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Alfred Hassler, said it was nonetheless necessary that we (the U.S.) extricate ourselves from Vietnam seeking in every possible way some sort of negotiated settlement.

Mr. Hassler reported on his July journey to Southeast Asia, particularly Vietnam, with 13 Protestant, Jewish and Catholic clergymen. He spoke at a press conference here at the national headquarters of FOR, a 50-year-old interdenominational pacifist group which organized the Clergymen's Emergency Committee for Vietnam, formal sponsor of the seven-day visit to the war zone.

During the visit, Mr. Hassler reported, participants talked with more than 100 leaders of government, military, labor and student groups, and met Vietcong leaders as well while in Cambodia, Paris, Algiers and Prague.

In addition, he noted, the team of clergymen, by dividing into three groups, was able to visit several areas of South Vietnam in addition to the capital city — the Mekong Delta area in the far south; a region 125 miles north of Saigon where a major battle had recently been fought; and a "pacified" province 18 miles from Saigon, known in translation, as "Peaceful Harmony."

"There is no moral way by which we can extricate ourselves at the present point from South Vietnam," Mr. Hassler said. "If we stay it is at the price of escalation of the war and a kind of colonization, making a desert of the country and becoming occupiers of the country for the indefinite future."

"On the other hand," he continued, "if we withdraw we turn over an incalculable number of people who have built a system conditioned on our commitment. These are also human beings who have an interest in saving their own lives and well being, and if we withdraw, unless we find some way of evacuating them also — a literally incomprehensible job — then we abandon them to reprisals and terror."

Holding that it was nonetheless necessary for the United States to militarily extricate itself from the war, Mr. Hassler urged four steps by the American government and people:

1. "We must stop the bombing of both North and South Vietnam. The deep evil of what we are doing in these bombings is almost beyond description... killing simple peasants, wiping out their villages and killing them by the hundreds and the thousands."

2. "We must recognize the National Liberation Front (Vietcong) as the major political force in this situation." While convinced the North Vietnamese government played a major role in political and military control of the Vietcong, he said that their National Liberation Front was nonetheless an independent body in many ways. "In any case," he added, "the Soviets, the Chinese and the National Liberation Front have all made it clear that they build their case on the preeminence of the Front. We cannot anticipate... that all of these groups will withdraw from this solid position."

3. "The United Nations must be asked to intervene... using all possible authority that it has." (He said, however, that the United Nations remains "hopelessly handicapped" so long as "the largest nation on the earth — mainland China" is excluded from membership. "Even so, the United Nations must act," he declared.)

4. "The fourth thing — that is important for us Americans to see — is that the job of dealing with Vietnam, and the succession of Vietnam governments that I am afraid will follow, is here in the United States. We have reached the point where we governmentally and as a public assume that all revolutions are the result of a Communist conspiracy—that communism is a one-dimensional military threat to rule the world and that therefore there is no way with which to react to revolutions except with military opposition."

More important than force, the FOR leader claimed, is the use of persuasion: "not reform, the elimination of graft, the implementation of land reform, education and medical care."

"We will not really solve the Vietnamese problem or any succeeding problems until we recapture a faith in the humanistic revolution of which we Americans were once the principal exporters," he commented.

Describing his visit to "Peaceful Harmony" Province 18 miles from Saigon, an area officially considered "pacified" by the government, Mr. Hassler reported that the few roads which are still open in the area are usable only under heavy guard and then only during the day.

Recalling a conversation with an unidentified American official involved in psychological warfare, Mr. Hassler quoted the officer as saying, "Our team goes in with helicopters, ransacks the village looking for Vietcong and weapons, tearing the houses apart and then the last helicopter lands and we psych people, explain why it was necessary to do this and then we get the hell out before sundown."

Ho Chi Minh, leader of the North Vietnamese government, is far more popular than either the National Liberation Front or the Saigon government, Mr. Hassler declared. "People we talked to on this point were remarkably consistent. How would get a minimum of 50 percent of the vote in South Vietnam alone."

"If there is one thing characteristic of the whole society," he stated, "it is a profound weariness with the war. If there is one thing on which all Vietnamese agree, it is that the war must end though they don't agree on many other things; how it should end, what should be the conclusion, what kind of society afterward."

Two Thorny Topics Confront Pope

(Continued from Page 1)

ated that claim by citing "the mark of command, the keys, that is the power of the Kingdom of Heaven" given by Christ to the Church and its officials.

On July 28, Pope Paul warned against "a spirit of disquiet and radical reformism" infecting many in the Church today. He said these people have used the Vatican Council as an excuse for "calling into question dogmas and laws which the Church has adhered to throughout her long history in fidelity to Church discipline."

On July 7, for example, he said, "People talk of liberation. We see a slackening in the observance of the precepts which up to now the Church has proposed... the idea of sin is altered... obedience is impugned... and contested."

On July 14, the Pope said "a state of mind hostile to the principle of authority is today widespread... in various spheres of Catholic life." He again cited the growing notion that disobedience has a "liberating" effect. He repudi-

ated that claim by citing "the mark of command, the keys, that is the power of the Kingdom of Heaven" given by Christ to the Church and its officials.

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On August 5, he said "strange and confused opinions" rampant among Catholics are "echoes of errors, ancient ones and modern ones already rectified and condemned by the Church." He lamented, he said, "confused views and criticisms which turn history inside out." He appealed for "trust in the Holy Church and in the Chair of Peter (papal authority) in particular."

As a footnote to these repeated warnings of the Pope, Vatican Radio early this month broadcast a commentary on the current program of "aggiornamento" in the Church.

In looking toward the "updating" of the Church, it said, positive aggiornamento "does not confuse the essential with what is non-essential, nor mix traditional and perennial realities with ephemeral transformations."

On the other hand, it warned, negative aggiornamento "sees everything as open to discussion and fit for change, confusing true reform with reformism."

"This," it stressed, "is not evolution, but revolution, a breaking away from the Church's traditional past."

The Vatican station began by noting that Pope Paul VI "never tires in his speeches and allocutions of defining, clarifying or rectifying various religious questions regarding which there are dangers of interpretations out of harmony with the intention of the Vatican Council and the traditional spirit of the Church."

The term aggiornamento itself, it said, like all terms, lends itself to a variety of interpretations, according to how it is used or the meaning read into it. The word implies bringing the Church into harmony with the times. This is a law of living. But how put it into practice? Exactly what does true aggiornamento really imply?

The station underscored its warning against negative aggiornamento by saying that this "amounts to the abandoning of laws, customs and traditions, adopting the current mentality marked by ideological indifference, and surrendering to the relativism and all its problematic restlessness."

"If this is what the Church's aggiornamento is to become," it added, "it can only end in worldliness and secularization. This is certainly not the real aggiornamento proposed by Pope John XXIII, desired by Pope Paul VI and indicated in the pastoral documents of the Second Vatican Council."

Vatican Radio said "there are things that cannot change, because they are by their very nature unchangeable."

"God, the eternal truths, the principles of natural ethics, human nature, the laws of Christian life and morals — these are unchangeable," it added. "Fashions, tastes, points of view, the social framework of human activity — all may change, but principles cannot."

The station held that "what is unessential, superfluous, no longer of use or tending toward corruption or in any way harmful may, indeed, be discarded. But that is useful, serviceable, valid in fostering loyalty to the Church and devotion to her teachings must be retained."

"The Church," it concluded, "achieves true aggiornamento only in resisting error and sin, in the flourishing of virtue, works of charity, faith in full harmony, and a common service of authority and command, freedom and obedience. Any aggiornamento that creates confusion in consciences or results in a spiritual dispersion must be steered clear of."

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