

Vietnam Coalition: Why It Would Aid Communists

By Fr. P. O'Connor
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(N.C. News Service)

Saigon—The formula for a "coalition government" involving union of representatives of North and South Vietnam as a necessary step to peace here is more widely discussed in the U.S. than in this city. The same story was imbedded in American minds in 1944-47 when the issue was China's freedom. Coalition then profited the Red power grab.

To observers here it seems that people abroad are being led to confuse hopes for representative government with coalition, and assurance of civil rights with surrender to the enemies of civil rights.

In 1946 the late Gen. George C. Marshall, sent to China by President Harry Truman to mediate between the Nationalist government and the Communists, found himself obliged to use the thesis of "coalition government" as a working basis for negotiation.

The coalition proposal had been promoted enthusiastically by the Chinese Communist during the war with Japan. They "sold" it to some American officials and journalists, until people began to regard it as the obvious and only remedy for China's ills.

They put forward a Three-Three Formula. This meant a government composed of three parts Communists, three parts Kuomintang (Nationalists), and three parts independents, members of small ineffectual groups like the Democratic League.

I asked Communist officials in Yenan what exactly they meant. They were denouncing Chiang Kai-shek and his Kuomintang government bitterly. Would they agree to a coalition in which the Kuomintang would hold one third of the government posts?

In China then, or in Vietnam later, the Communists never called for a representative government but only for a coalition. What they want is not an elected legislature in which they would be merely one party and a majority party would form the executive government. They want a prefabricated government in which they would control key executive posts, while accept-

ing—for a while—non-Communist figureheads and colleagues. They would provide for a "national assembly" but only one that they would control.

They know that in any real free election in Vietnam now, if they competed as an identified, declared Communist party, they would get very few votes. Therefore, they evade the issue of representative government and demand a coalition in which, irrespective of popular will, they could ultimately maneuver themselves into dominant power.

The Republic of (South)

Vietnam opposes communism in any form, according to the constitution. Persons who had worked for communism or pro-Communist neutralism were excluded by law from being candidates in last year's elections. Even if this law had not existed, it is most probable that members of the Communist party (Lao Dong and People's Revolutionary party are its two titles) would never have presented themselves as Communists. It would be courting electoral defeat.

The National Liberation Front is avowedly controlled by the People's Revolutionary party, which has declared itself to be Marxist-Leninist and which is believed, on the basis of captured documents, to be only the southern branch of the Lao Dong, the Communist party in the north.

The "Alliance of Democratic and Peace Forces," reportedly formed after the Tet offensive this year, is also an agency obviously sponsored by the Communists.

If the non-Communist members of these groups really separated themselves from Communist control and ran for election as a party accepting the constitution, they could be elected like any

other party or "bloc" to the legislature. If they amounted to a majority in the senate and lower house, they could promote their platform. If they could get three fourths of the combined houses to vote on their side, they could bring about the dismissal of any cabinet.

The hard fact, however, is that once inside a Communist-controlled organization in Asia, no man or woman can easily leave it. Anyone who signs that he or she is quitting from that of the party, would be forcibly detained and probably "liquidated." The measures taken would be all the more drastic in the critical phases of the present war.

Hence it is unrealistic to presume that non-Communists involved in the National Liberation Front or any of its kindred groups can detach themselves at will and enter into some agreement different from what the Communist leaders want.

Short of an improbable breakthrough then, any member of the National Liberation Front taken into a coalition government would be only an instrument of the Communists, even if he were not a Communist party member.

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