



Prayers for the Dead

Buddhist monks say prayers over the bodies of eight Cambodian soldiers in mass burial in Siem Reap, the day after their deaths in a firefight. (RNS)

Priests Denounce War in Survey

By LINDA B. MAJOR

Washington —(NC)— There are nearly 60,000 priests in the United States. More than half were asked to speak out against the war. About 3,000 did. Another thousand refused.

These figures fail to conjure the true strength of priests against the war, said Father Richard McSorley, S.J.

Father McSorley, who teaches theology at Georgetown University here, was one of six priests who along with Sen. George McGovern (D-S.D.) held a Capitol Hill news conference Sept. 24 to document the growing number of priests who have joined together to speak out against the war.

Their movement started in Oklahoma early this summer when they sent out letters asking for support of the following statement of commitment:

"We hold that the American participation in the war in Vietnam is wrong, unjustified, and unjustifiable. Fidelity to conscience and love of country demand that we, as leaders in the

Catholic community, publicly deplore the American policy in Vietnam. As moral leaders we will continue to teach this in our communities."

He blamed "faulty mailing" for the relatively low response to 39,000 letters mailed and said he'd be "surprised if two-thirds reached their destination" because of bulk mailing and a slightly dated address list of parish priests.

Among those supporting the anti-war priests are two Catholic bishops, Victor J. Reed of Oklahoma City and Charles Buswell of Pueblo, Colo. According to Father John Sheerin C.S.P. New York, group chairman and editor of "Catholic World," the bishops are the first two members of the American Catholic hierarchy to condemn a national war.

Last May the U.S. Catholic Conference's international affairs committee issued the Church's first official statement on the Indo-China crisis and questioned U.S. Military action in Vietnam and Cambodia.

Supporting the right of dis-

senting Americans to "reach and express" conclusions against the war, it called on both supporters and opponents of President Nixon's policy to "refrain from words and actions which will further complicate the search for a just resolution of the crisis."

With stacks of answered letters in front of him, Father James Nexin said there were nearly 3,000 "favorable" responses and almost 1,000 "negative." Of those, he added, many said their sympathies were against the war but they could not sign the statement for various reasons.

He said that some refused to sign because they interpreted the statement as opposing the war since its inception. Others weren't sure moral leaders should be preaching such things from the pulpit. Some said they had not yet decided their own consciences on the issue.

To help them make up their minds, the group will continue mailing out its document against the war called "The Statement of Commitment."

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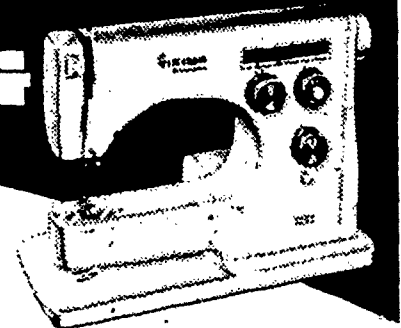


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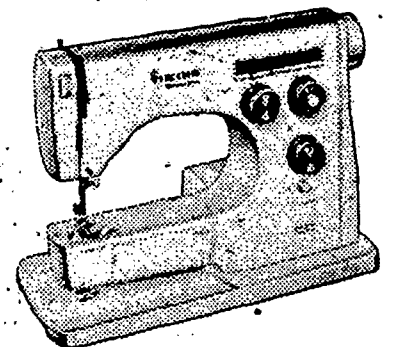
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