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ORIGIN ACTION

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

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HANDLING INDICATOR

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INFO: CINCPAC; American Consulates General RIEN HOA, CAN TRU, DANANG, NHA TRANG; USDEL JEC PARIS.

FROM : American Embassy SAIGON

DATE: March 21, 1974

SUBJECT : Biographic Data on New An Quang High Secular Council

- REF :
- A) Saigon A-68, April 28, 1972; B) Saigon A-56, March 21, 1974
 - C) Saigon 12409, July 10, 1973; D) FVS 33,164, January 30, 1974
 - E) FVS 33,114, December 27, 1973; F) FVS 33,067, December 5, 1973
 - G) FVS 32,950, Oct. 25, 1973; H) FVS 32,979, October 27, 1973
 - I) FVS 33,115, Dec. 27, 1973; J) FVS 32,732, July 20, 1973

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

1. This airgram transmits as enclosures a listing and biographic notes on the new High Circular Council (HSC) of the An Quang Unified Buddhist Association (UBA). The new Council was appointed by An Quang Supreme Patriarch Venerable Giac Hien at the request of a group of senior monks who sought by invoking the Patriarch to resolve the deadlock in which the Fifth Bi-Annual UBA Congress had broken up on December 12, 1973. The Patriarch announced the appointments after considerable bargaining in an edict dated January 8, 1974, to be effective January 11. The new Council was invested February 10, 1974. The term of office is one year, and a Sixth Congress is to convene after that time to select a new HSC.

2. This airgram should be read in conjunction with reference A, which provides additional information on many of the personalities discussed, and with reference B which outlines Buddhist developments before, during, and subsequent to the December 10, 1973 Congress.

3. A brief breakdown of the 18-member HSC* reveals the extent of the victory for the centrists over southerners. Of the top four HSC positions, all are held by central Vietnamese. Of the top eight, five are centrists and one a northerner. One of the two southerners in the top eight, Tu Nhon, strongly supported centrist Thien Hinh during the Fifth Congress.

ENCLOSURE 1: List of New High Secular Council

ENCLOSURES 2-19: Biographic Notes on Individual Members

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Contents and Classification Approved by: POL/INT:TPHD:top

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Hence Thien Minh's southern enemies just missed being completely shut out from leading BSC positions. Of the total of 18 BSC positions, 8 are held by centrists, 7 by southerners,** and 3 by northerners (these tend to ally themselves with the centrist faction led by Tri Quang).

4. Viewed from another angle, there are five BSC members who can be more or less clearly identified as members of Thien Minh's faction: Thien Minh himself, Huyen Quang, Thien Sien, Tu Mhon, and Han Giac. Following Tri Quang are, in addition to himself, also four others: Tri Thu, Quang Do, Quang Long, and Giac Duc. Ho Giac's southern faction counts only four adherents: himself, Huap Tri, Tri Tinh, and Thien Hoa. The factional allegiance of three boxes is unclear: Duc Nien, Huyen Vi, and Thien Truong. Minh Chiu by most accounts is a true independent.

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- * Three positions are non-voting: both Advisors and the Deputy Secretary General.
- ** Of the southerners one, Tu Mhon has supported centrist Thien Minh and another, Duc Nien, holds the non-voting position of Deputy Secretary General, and is moreover currently abroad.

Classification Approved by Minister-Counselor for Political Affairs
J. W. Bennett

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An Quang Unified Buddhist Association
High Secular Council
Appointed by the Supreme Patriarch
January 11, 1974

<u>Position</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>On Previous HSC</u>	<u>New to Position or Incumbent</u>	<u>Regional Origin</u>	<u>Factional Affiliation</u>
Rector	Tri Thu	No	New	Central	TQ
Advisor	Tri Quang	No	New	Central	TQ
Advisor	Thien Hinh	Yes	New	Central	TH
Deputy Rector	Huyen Quang	Yes	New	Central	TH
Deputy Rector	Quang Do	Yes	New	Northern	TQ
Deputy Rector	Phap Tri	Yes	New	Southern	S
Treasurer	Tu Hhon	Yes	Incumbent	Southern	TH
Secretary General	Thien Sieu	No	New	Central	TH
Deputy Secretary General	Duc Nien	No	New	Southern	S
Comm. General Social Welfare	Ho Giac	Yes	Incumbent	Southern	S
Acting Comm. General Youth	Giac Duc	Yes	Incumbent	Northern	TQ
Comm. General Cultural Affairs	Man Giac	Yes	Incumbent	Central	TH
Comm. General Clerical Affairs	Tri Tinh	Yes	Incumbent	Southern	S
Comm. General Lay Affairs	Quang Long	Yes	Incumbent	Northern	TQ
Comm. General Construction	Thien Non	Yes	New	Southern	S
Comm. General Finance	Thien Tuong	No	New	Southern	S

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<u>Position</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>On Previous NHC</u>	<u>New to Position or Incumbent</u>	<u>Regional Origin</u>	<u>Factional Affiliation</u>
Comm. General Education	Minh Chau	Yes	Incumbent	Central	IND
Comm. General Propagation of the Faith	Huyen Vi	Yes	Incumbent	Central	TQ

Tri Quang - TQ
Thien Minh - TM
Southern - S
Independent - IND

These are newly created positions which have no vote.

According to Venerable Giac Duc, the titles of First, Second, and Third Deputy Rectors have been abolished and all three deputies have equal standing. They would have to choose from among themselves a successor to the Rector, should that post fall vacant. However, press accounts of the new Council invariably list Huyen Quang as First Deputy Rector, Quang Do as Second, and Phap Tri as Third. It seems likely that in fact they will exert authority in roughly that order.

The legislative history behind the peculiar title of Acting Youth Commissioner General dates back to the 1971 Fourth Congress, when Thien Minh and Tri Quang clashed over the election of Giac Duc to replace the former as Commissioner General. The title is a holdover from a compromise reached then. Giac Duc is a voting member of the Council, however, and for all purposes exercises full authority over youth affairs.

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Rector:

Venerable Tri Thu, Central, Late 60's

Tri Thu was born in Quang Tri. He studied for the clergy in the famous 1936-45 class of Buddhist aspirants at the Bao Quoc Pagoda in Hue. Graduating first in that class was Venerable Tri Quang. Other prominent Buddhist figures who matriculated with Tri Quang at Bao Quoc ("Defend the Nation" is the English translation of Bao Quoc) and who are members of the current High Secular Council (HSC) include, in addition to Tri Thu, Venerables Thien Minh, Tri Tinh, and Huyen Quang.

Tri Thu is a highly respected Buddhist scholar who has not heretofore exercised great political influence in An Quang. His star is rising. From 1964 until 1971 Tri Thu was Commissioner General for the Propagation of the Faith. In 1971 he was elected Commissioner General for Finance. On July 8, 1973 Tri Thu was named Assistant to the Supreme Patriarch. This assignment was regarded as particularly sensitive in that the new, elderly Supreme Patriarch was believed likely to be able to influence the coming selection of a new High Secular Council (see reference C). This in fact did occur, and Tri Thu can be assumed to have played a key role in the selection process.

Tri Thu is viewed as a "moderate", anti-communist, and effective leader. He is a "clean" monk with a reputation for asceticism. He has never been subject to the accusations of gross personal and official impropriety which taint some of the other top bonzes at An Quang.

Tri Thu's January 11, 1974 appointment as Rector was a compromise between the Thien Minh "moderate" faction, which finds his anti-communist viewpoint acceptable, and Tri Quang, who went to great lengths to exclude Thien Minh from the Rectorship. It is a defeat for the southerners who argued ineffectively that as the top UBA clerical post, that of Supreme Patriarch, is held by a Central Vietnamese, the next top position (HSC Rector) should go to a Southerner.

Tri Thu can be expected to advocate the continuation of the recent "low profile" An Quang political stance, remaining harshly critical of the GVN on domestic issues but carefully seeking to avoid confrontation with it.

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Advisor: Venerable Tri Quang, Central, Early 60's

The position of Advisor is newly created and the incumbent has the right to participate on BSC deliberations but has no vote.

The Venerable Tri Quang's controversial career is too well known to merit recapitulation here. It is of interest that among the BSC notables are four of Tri Quang's Bao Quoc classmates, Tri Thu, Thien Minh, Tri Kinh, and Huyen Quang.

This is only the second official position Tri Quang has held in the hierarchy, the other being a brief stint as Secretary General of the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council in 1964.

Tri Quang fought hard and unsuccessfully to remove both Thien Minh and Huyen Quang from the BSC. At various points in the selection maneuvering he allied himself with southern elements. Consistently supporting Tri Quang was Venerable Duc Khuan, a Northerner; on most but perhaps not all issues, Northerners Quang Do (Tri Quang's own favored candidate) and Giac Dua also worked with Tri Quang.

According to reference D, Tri Quang was very upset at the failure to unseat Thien Minh and Huyen Quang at the Fifth Congress. He was quoted on January 16, 1974, that he was pleased at the new BSC appointed by the Patriarch because that had prevented another schism in the church. He was however convinced that the GVN had "used Thien Minh and Huyen Quang to undermine his influence."

It should be noted that Tri Quang was unable to dictate the selection of the BSC, although he was influential in the "compromise" which evolved. While unquestionably his influence remains great at An Quang, it appears that he is no longer preeminent there. Rather he is one of the most influential of several factional leaders. It remains to be seen how the uneasy balance between Tri Quang and Thien Minh will work out and to what extent Tri Thu will play an independent role.

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Advisor: Venerable Thien Minh, Central, Early 60's

The position of Advisor is newly created and the incumbent has the right to participate on HSC deliberations but has no vote.

Despite the close association between Thien Minh and Tri Quang, first as Bao Quoc schoolmates, then as prime movers in the Buddhist struggle against Diem, bitter enmity now marks their relationship. Thien Minh is regarded by Tri Quang as having sought to capitalize on the failure of the several post-Diem struggles and the consequent diminution of Tri Quang's own prestige to replace him as An Quang leader. Tri Quang furthermore regards Thien Minh as an "unclean" monk, lazy, venal and licentious. The issue of Thien Minh's suspected ties with the GVN -- never proven, but frequently raised in conversation about Thien Minh by other bouzes -- is also used against him by Tri Quang and other enemies. Yet Thien Minh and his close associate, former Secretary General and now First Deputy Rector Huyen Quang, have survived determined efforts to oust them from the HSC. Thien Minh's influence at An Quang must still be regarded as formidable.

Thien Minh has been prominent on the national scene since 1963. In 1964 he was elected Commissioner General for Youth Affairs, a post he held until the present. From 1967 Thien Minh was also concurrently First Deputy Rector. In that capacity he succeeded Thien Hoa on the latter's death January 23, 1974.

Thien Minh's influence at An Quang was dealt a setback when he was arrested in February 1969 on charges of having harbored draft deserters at the Quang Duc Youth Center in Saigon. Efforts by various radical anti-GVN elements to use the arrest to stimulate a new "struggle" failed, largely because calmer heads at An Quang prevailed; and because Thien Minh's tarnished personal reputation handicapped those who wished to make a martyr of him. Thien Minh was treated gently while in jail and amnestied in November 1969 amid rumors that he had "done a deal" with President Thieu. This suspicion was heightened as Thien Minh muted his previously strident opposition to the GVN and in 1971 purged and dissolved the Central Committee of the Saigon Buddhist Student Union, then actively involved in the violent street demonstrations against the GVN and the US presence in SVN.

On January 23, 1973 HSC Rector Thien Hoa passed away. Thien Hoa was a southerner with good ties to lay political oppositionists, especially to General Duong Van ("Big") Minh whom An Quang had supported as a candidate for the Presidency in 1971. As Acting Rector Thien Minh did not continue his predecessor's active support of Big Minh or of the rather radical lay Buddhist organization, the Buddhist Parliamentarians' Liaison Group (BPLG) led by Senator Vu Van Mau and by Deputy Le Dinh Duyen. In contrast, Thien Minh broke the ties with Big Minh and advocated a low-profile political posture for An Quang. Since the signature of the Paris Agreement, official An Quang spokesmen have consistently denied that the Buddhist Church in any way represented the so-called "third force" or would endorse anyone for seats on the National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord.

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This brought down the fire of the southerners in general and radicals in particular who allied themselves with the Tri Quang faction in a determined but unsuccessful effort to remove Thien Minh from any position on the USC. As outlined in reference A and previous reporting, Thien Minh and his "moderate" faction were clearly on the defensive until the Fifth BI-Annual UBA Congress opened in mid-December. During the Congress Thien Minh and Huynh Quang adroitly manipulated the provincial vote and the parliamentary situation on the floor. Their enemy, Senator Vu Van Mau, torped their handling of the provincial delegates "masterful" (reference B).

The circumstances surrounding the negotiations which led to the eventual compromise placing Tri Quang and Thien Minh in equal positions as Advisors may never be wholly known. The degree of influence to be exercised by each of the various factions within An Quang will become evident only with the passage of time. It seems likely however that Thien Minh and Huynh Quang will keep a goodly piece of the action in coming months.

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Deputy Rector: Venerable Huyen Quang, Central, Early 50's

Before his selection to the position of Deputy Rector, Huyen Quang had held the important administrative position of High Secular Council Secretary General since 1966. He was a classmate of Tri Quang, Thien Minh, Tri Thu and Tri Tinh at Bao Quoc Pagoda in the early 1940's. Huyen Quang is described as a good administrator, a hard worker and by some as a "tower of strength" to the HSC organization as Secretary General. Huyen Quang was Thien Minh's chief lieutenant in the struggle to retain Thien Minh on the HSC, and it was largely due to what Vu Ven Hau, no friend of either, calls Huyen Quang's "masterful" handling of the floor fight at the Fifth Bi-Annual Congress which staved off the determined efforts of Tri Quang and the southerners to unseat him (reference E).

While deeply critical of the Thieu Government in conversations with Americans, Venerable Huyen Quang also reveals a deep suspicion of communism and a strongly nationalist outlook which falls somewhat short of xenophobia. He has been accused of malversation of funds (the "Swedish money scandal") charges which he strenuously rejects (reference B). Some say that Huyen Quang along with Venerables Han Giac and Thien Minh is an advocate of abolition of the priestly requirement of celibacy, and that he maintains a family in violation of his monastic vows. While this may be true, the more virulent of the personal attacks on Huyen Quang seem to stem more from his close association with Thien Minh than from any particular personal vulnerabilities.

As Deputy Rector, Huyen Quang could become Acting Rector on Tri Thu's removal. His is a high protocol position, but it is unclear what specific responsibilities he will discharge. Whatever influence Huyen Quang retains can be expected to be exercised in support of the low-profile, anti-communist policy for which he was a chief An Quang spokesman for the past several years.

According to Giac Duc, the three Deputy Rectors have no specifically assigned duties and will apportion responsibility among themselves as issues arise. Similarly, should Tri Thu vacate the Rectorship, the three Deputies would meet among themselves to settle the issue of succession. However, most press accounts list Huyen Quang as First Deputy Rector and given his activist background and his acknowledged administrative talents, it seems likely that he will exert considerable influence from his post.

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Deputy Rector: Quang Do, Northerner, About 50

Quang Do is close to Tri Quang, and on several occasions Tri Quang reportedly asked him to stand for the position of Rector in opposition to Thien Minh (references F and G). Quang Do reportedly declined on the grounds that it would be unsuitable for a Northerner to hold the position. He exerted his influence against the retention of Thien Minh as Rector and can be counted among Tri Quang's supporters. Quang Do is one of the six HSC members who resigned in the closing stages of the December Bi-Annual Congress in an attempt to block further floor action which by that time was in the hands of Thien Minh and Huyen Quang. The others were fellow northern boozes Quang Long and Giac Duc; and southerners Phap Tri, Bo Giac, and Tri Tinh.

Quang Do has an excellent reputation as a scholar and an educator, having studied in Ceylon and India from 1950-56 (with Venerable Minh Chau); and holding the post of Assistant Dean of the Van Hanh School of Buddhist Studies under Minh Chau. Quang Do is described by most of his acquaintances, including the outspokenly anti-communist Venerable Giac Duc, as a strong anti-communist. However there is doubt in some quarters on that point. Quang Do is a close personal friend of Giac Duc and cooperates closely with him in An Quang political maneuvering.

According to Quang Do's friend Giac Duc, the titles of First, Second and Third Deputy Rector have been abolished and all three Deputies are on an equal footing. He also says that should Tri Tinh vacate the Rectorship, it would be up to the three Deputies to decide the succession between themselves. However, press accounts have listed Quang Do as Second Deputy Rector and it is likely that at least he will prove more influential than Phap Tri, although Huyen Quang may be a formidable opponent for bureaucratic responsibilities should they come into conflict.

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Deputy Rector: Venerable Phap Tri, Southern, Early 50's

The Venerable Phap Tri is only one of two southerners in the top eight positions on the High Secular Council, the other being General Treasurer Tu Khon, and he staunchly supported Thien Minh during the crunch at the Fifth Bi-Annual Congress. Previously Phap Tri was Second Deputy Rector.

The Venerable Phap Tri is a soft-spoken, relatively apolitical bonze who is not believed to wield much influence in UBA circles. In the past An Quang figures have asserted that his relatively high position on the Council was a cosmetic gesture to the fractional ethnic Vietnamese Theravada Buddhists, a sect to which he converted in the late 1960's from Hoa Hao.

Phap Tri is a student of southern activist bonze Ho Giac and will probably reflect similar views on the Council. He is one of the six bonzes including Ho Giac who resigned during the last stages of the December 1973 Bi-Annual Congress in an effort to block further floor action by the Congress which had by then fallen into the hands of Thien Minh and Huyen Quang. The others were Quang Do, Quang Long, Giac Duc, all Northerners; and Tri Tinh and Ho Giac, fellow southerners.

According to Giac Duc, there is no formal pecking order among the three Deputy Rectors and each has equal protocol status. However, Phap Tri is likely to be overshadowed by the other two, Huyen Quang and Quang Do, should any real contest for bureaucratic authority emerge.

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Treasurer: Tu Nhon, Southern, Mid-40's

The Venerable Tu Nhon is reportedly a somewhat shy and reclusive bonze from Sadec who once was a disciple of the former Rector, Thien Hoa. Despite his regional background he strongly and effectively supported the Thien Minh/Huyen Quang faction during the December 1973 Buddhist Congress. Tu Nhon, Huyen Quang and Han Giac were the only senior bonzes present on the evening of December 12 who did not resign in an attempt to block floor action which would have retained Thien Minh on the BSC as First Deputy Rector. (It was Tu Nhon who had earlier moved to retain the BSC in office on an as is basis, a motion which was approved by a floor vote at one stage.)

According to Senator Vu Van Mau, an unsympathetic source, Tu Nhon supported Thien Minh and Huyen Quang because the latter had provided funds for the reconstruction of a major pagoda in Tu Nhon's home province of Sadec. The source of the funds, according to Mau, was the controversial "Swedish gift" (see references B and E).

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Secretary General: Thien Sieu, Central

Before appointment to the High Secular Council by the Supreme Patriarch on January 11, 1974, Thien Sieu was a principal Ho bonze and since September 7, 1972 had been the chief Unified Buddhist Association (UBA) representative for An Quang in the Van H'nh Region, a Buddhist administrative division which includes all of CWV MR-1. As such he was one of the most influential bonzes in that politically volatile region and undoubtedly was well known to the Patriarch who himself is from Hue.

Thien Sieu has a record of activist "struggle" in 1966. He has displayed marked reserve in his contacts with Americans. However, according to Consulate General Danang, the Venerable Thien Sieu is a supporter of Thien Minh and thus can be expected to support the latter's cautious and "moderate" lead on the HSC.

An indication of Thien Sieu's affiliation stems from his action on October 20, 1973 during the height of the pro-Congress maneuvering. The Buddhist Parliamentarians' Liaison Group (BPLG), a fairly radical lay Buddhist organization led by Senator Vu Van Han, staged a ceremony at An Quang Pagoda to introduce a number of lay "advisors". Thien Minh had sought to exclude the BPLG from An Quang premises on the grounds that the church had no role to play in politics. Thien Minh thus issued instructions that the HSC was not to endorse the ceremony. Thien Sieu, who was then conducting a scriptural study session, refused to allow the session to be interrupted, thus preventing the attending bonzes from making an appearance at the BPLG ceremony. This reportedly angered Tri Quang (reference H).

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Deputy Secretary General: Venerable Duc Nien

This is a new, non-voting position. The Venerable Duc Nien is a Southerner currently studying in Taiwan. According to Giac Duc, Nien will have no vote in Council matters and in fact is not likely to exert any real influence. The reason for the creation of the position and his appointment to it remain obscure.

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Commissioner General for Social Welfare: Venerable Ho Giac,
Southern, About 50

Venerable Ho Giac is one of the leading sudiste political activists on the High Secular Council. As Commissioner General for Social Welfare, he holds a highly visible and potentially influential post. However, Ho Giac is regarded by many Buddhists as venal, opportunistic, and a lex monk ("our Thien Minh", one southern bonze has ruefully described him).

Ho Giac was born in Cambodia of Vietnamese parents. With his disciple Phap Tri, Ho Giac is a member of the small ethnic Vietnamese Theravada Buddhist sect. He studied and taught Buddhist scriptures in Burma (1952-54) and in Ceylon (1954-58). He has attended US Army Chaplain's School in the US. Ho Giac is thus unusually well-traveled for a Vietnamese bonze. He speaks English well and projects a more cosmopolitan air than many monks.

Ho Giac was an active participant in "Struggle I" which culminated in the overthrow of Diem. He is said to be a brilliant, spellbinding orator. From 1963 until 1967 he served as Deputy Chief, RVNAP Chaplain Corps which his friend and mentor Venerable Tam Giac later headed. Despite his association with Tam Giac and Tam Chau, two leading northern Buddhist anti-Diem figures, Ho Giac sided with An Quang when the Unified Buddhist Association (UBA) split in 1966 and the Tam Chau/Tam Giac element formed the Quoc Tu UBA. Ho Giac shortly thereafter left (or was eased out of) the northern-dominated Chaplain Corps.

In 1968 Ho Giac was elected Commissioner General for Lay Affairs and served in that capacity until election to the Social Welfare position in 1971. During this period he also published the Saigon daily Chanh Dng which reflected An Quang Buddhist opposition views. Following the Tet 1968 Communist offensive, Ho Giac was placed in preventive detention for four months along with Tri Quang.

Throughout 1973 Ho Giac strongly opposed the restoration of Thien Minh on the High Secular Council and engaged in vigorous pre-Fifth Congress maneuvering against him. He has been described as the "leader of the southern faction" on the HSC (reference 1). Associated with him were the following southern bonzes: Tri Tinh, Bui Huc, Huc Hung, Phap Tri, and (the other) Thien Hoa. Ho Giac was one of the seven senior bonzes who resigned their positions late on December 12 in a successful effort to halt the Congress before it could confirm Thien Minh and Huyen Quang in their former positions. The others who resigned that evening: southerners Phap Tri and Tri Tinh; and northerners (probably at the direction of Tri Quang) Duc Nuan, Giac Duc, Quang Long, and Quang Do.

It can be expected that Ho Giac will continue to agitate for more southern influence in An Quang affairs. He will maintain ties with southern lay figures, many of whom are rather extreme in their opposition to the GVN. As another USA Congress is now scheduled for early 1975, Ho Giac will no doubt remain deeply involved in sudiste anti-Thien Minh activity.

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Acting Commissioner General for Youth: Venerable Giac Duc, Northern,
Early 40's

Venerable Giac Duc is one of the most aggressive, politically active bonzes in An Quang. He has been one of Tri Quang's chief lieutenants, but he claims to be able to act also as an independent "bridge" to the Thien Minh faction. Giac Duc takes an outspokenly harsh anti-communist line in conversations with Americans. He attributes his virulent anti-communism to events in his youth when he was active in various clandestine nationalist (VNQDD) anti-communist activities in North Vietnam. According to Giac Duc, his father, a wealthy merchant with VNQDD ties, was a friend of Ho Chi Minh who was a frequent visitor in their home. Despite the friendship the Viet Minh killed his father and two uncles in 1945.

Giac Duc describes himself as a headstrong child who was "committed" to pagoda discipline. He studied at Hanoi's famed Quan Su Pagoda where he became a protege of the Venerable To Lien, one of NVN's leading reform bonzes. He became a good friend at Quan Su with Venerable Quang Do, a relationship which persists.

Giac Duc fled south in 1954. He studied scripture in Nha Trang and Lam Dong until 1963 when he made his way to Saigon to participate in anti-Diem "Struggle I". He was an effective organizer of protests and along with many other bonzes and lay Buddhists was arrested by Diem's police during the August 1963 crackdown. In 1964 Giac Duc departed for six years of study in the US where he received a Ph.D. in Southeast Asian Buddhist political history at Claremont College, California. He was thus absent from SVN during the several post-Diem "struggles".

Giac Duc speaks English well. He seems genuinely to have appreciated his American experience. Some bonzes however criticize Giac Duc as "de-Vietnamized", pointing to his fondness for American slang and cigarettes. He has also been the subject of the almost inevitable rumor that he is "an agent of the CIA".

On his return to SVN in 1970, Giac Duc plunged immediately into Buddhist politics, first seeking to achieve a reunification between the largely northern Quoc Tu and An Quang factions. On failing in this Giac Duc opted for An Quang where he was elected to the post of Deputy Commissioner General for Youth under Thien Minh in 1971.

This election was an unusual move as all other Deputy Commissioners General are appointed by their commissioners. Giac Duc was originally nominated for the post of Youth Commissioner General. This was blocked by Thien Minh who, while seeking and obtaining the position of First Deputy Rector, was reportedly jealous of his previous domain over youth affairs. The election

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of Giac Duc as Deputy Commissioner General was arranged as a compromise by Tri Quang. Giac Duc and Thien Minh have not been on good terms since this conflict. While Giac Duc speaks approvingly of Thien Minh's "moderate" policies, he is strongly critical of him personally as a "fallen monk". To retain Thien Minh as HSC Rector, Giac Duc has argued, would render the church vulnerable to extremist and/or Communist propaganda attacks.

During the intense maneuvering which preceded the December 1973 Fifth Bi-Annual Congress, Giac Duc was in the unenviable position of attempting to broker a compromise which would minimize southern extremist influence on the HSC while also blocking Thien Minh's determined bid for the Rectorship. Working with Quang Do and following Tri Quang's general direction, Giac Duc succeeded in shaping the amendments to the Unified Buddhist Church Charter to his satisfaction. He defeated attempts to amend the charter to allow laymen to hold positions on the High Secular Council which Giac Duc feared would open the Council to radical influence. Giac Duc also claims credit for introducing language into the Charter which permitted the Supreme Patriarch to break the deadlock over the HSC election by appointing the council.

It was Giac Duc, he claims, who arranged for the last minute December 12 demonstrative resignation/walkout of the six senior monks which blocked Thien Minh's election as rector. Participating with Giac Duc were fellow northerners Quang Do and Quang Long, and southerners Ho Giac, Phap Tri and Tri Tinh. Giac Duc says he thought up this ploy, then obtained Tri Quang's endorsement for it.

Thus in the end most if not all of Giac Duc's stated political objectives were obtained at the Fifth Congress: Thien Minh's bid for the Rectorship was blocked; southern extremist influence was held to a minimum; the Council structure was maintained intact; and no new schism has yet further subdivided the church. He told Embassy officers March 11 that he was "quite pleased" with the eventual outcome of the Fifth Congress.

This attests to Giac Duc's skill at political infighting. Highly egotistical, ambitious, and intelligent, Duc also is both cunning and tough. Giac Duc's youth portfolio is a politically sensitive position in which his staunch anti-communism will be helpful in stemming any adventurist tendencies. Working against Giac Duc are his somewhat abrasive aggressiveness and ultimately his northern origins. Whether Giac Duc's rather loose life style will become the accepted norm will depend on whether the "new monk" movement takes hold. If it does, Giac Duc's relaxed approach to Buddhist obligations will not be much of a handicap. Giac Duc on occasion expresses very pessimistic views about the future of SVN and asserts that he plans to "retire" from politics. However, for the present, Giac Duc must be counted an important figure in An Quang politics, responsive but not subservient to Tri Quang.

Giac Duc has a problem with his nasal passages which apparently react severely to cold weather.

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Commissioner General for Cultural Affairs: Venerable Han Giac,
Central, Mid-40's

Venerable Han Giac is one of Vietnamese Buddhism's more controversial younger monks. While he is not known to have spoken publicly or published on the issue, Han Giac is charged by his enemies with being a leading advocate of modifying the Church's strict celibacy requirements for bonzes. As such he has been under attack as a "new monk" and worse.

Han Giac studied at Hoc's Bao Quoc Pagoda from 1945 to 1951 where he was a classmate of Venerable Minh Chau and of now Senator Tran Quang Thuan. He also studied concurrently at the prestigious lay Quoc Hoc High School in Huc, an unusual procedure for a novice bonze. There he was a student of now Senator Pham Dinh Ai, an outspoken lay Buddhist critic of the present government. From 1952 until 1960 Han Giac headed the Bo De Buddhist School system in Dalat. From 1962-1965 he was studying in Japan where he received a Doctorate in Buddhist Studies from Tokyo University in 1965. In 1969 Han Giac spent four months in the US visiting educational institutions. He speaks fair English now.

On his return to Vietnam Han Giac served briefly as first Dean of the Faculty of Buddhist Studies at Van Hanh University, but he had a falling out with Minh Chau (reason unknown) and subsequently resigned. He still teaches at Van Hanh however and at Hue and Dalat Universities as well.

As Commissioner General for Cultural Affairs, Han Giac's responsibilities include the publication of a scholarly quarterly journal; caring for artistic works; and undertaking historical research into Buddhist literature. This latter effort is receiving increased attention from senior An Quang bonzes, who have launched an ambitious project to translate numerous scriptural texts from Chinese and other languages into Vietnamese.

Following Thien Minh's arrest in 1969, Han Giac served as Acting Youth Commissioner General until the latter's release from prison in November of that year. Politically inclined (he was active in Buddhist youth circles in the 1966 "struggle") and strongly anti-Communist, Han Giac is disliked by some for what has been described as a "sour personality". His enemies also accuse Han Giac of such unmonkly traits as woman chasing and homosexuality. In mid-1973 these charges were first aired in the press by Cong Luan and Song Than, both of which Saigon journals were then feverishly campaigning against Thien Minh as Acting Rector of the High Secular Council. Cong Luan accused him of "perverted acts". According to reference J, a group of leading bonzes in mid-summer 1973 visited pro-GVN political figure (then Minister of Rural Development) Nguyen Van Ngai to protest these attacks as damaging to the universal cause of Buddhism. The accusations were again freely aired during the Fifth Bi-Annual Buddhist Congress, but this did not prevent Han Giac's reappointment to the cultural affairs post to which he had first been elected in 1971.

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During the congress Man Giac strongly supported the Thien Minh-Buyen Quang faction. He was not present on the floor during the critical last moments of the congress late in the evening of December 12, but his influence was consistently in favor of the "moderates" under Thien Minh. He told an Embassy Officer March 20, 1974 that during the Congress the efforts of lay radicals like Vu Van Mau to stir up trouble between Thi Quang and Thien Minh had been rebuffed. He noted that the provincial delegates had been instrumental in this. Man Giac stated firmly that at this point the Church must avoid a political role.

Man Giac is one of only four High Secular Council members ever to have visited the United States. The others are Minh Chou, Giac Duc, and Ho Giac.

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Commissioner General for the Clergy: Venerable Tri Tinh, Southern,
Early 60's

Venerable Tri Tinh is a respected southern bonze who had close ties to the former rector, Thien Hoa. Like Tu Mhon, Tri Tinh stems from Sadeo in the middle Delta. He has held the post of Commissioner General for the Clergy since the founding of the Unified Buddhist Church in 1963.

Tri Tinh is a scholar, said to be reclusive and relatively apolitical. He is Dean of the Faculty of Buddhist Studies at Van Hanh. He is reputedly one of Vietnam's leading translators of scripture from Chinese.

Tri Tinh studied with Tri Quang, Huyen Quang, Thien Minh, and Tri Thu at Hue's Bao Quoc Pagoda 1936-1945. He reportedly remains on good terms with Tri Quang who in mid-1973 was considering Tri Tinh as an acceptable southerner to succeed Thien Hoa a High Secular Council (HSC) Rector. In late October and early December, however, Tri Quang seemed to have cooled on Tri Tinh as a candidate. According to reference G, Tri Quang characterized Tri Tinh as "not intelligent enough" for the post. A few days later Tri Quang reportedly said that Tri Tinh would be "acceptable" although he preferred Quang Do (reference F). Tri Tinh was one of the six senior HSC bonzes who demonstrably resigned from their positions on the last day of the Fifth Congress in an effort to block the Thien Minh forces. The others were fellow southerners Ho Giac and Phap Tri, and northerners Quang Long, Quang Do and Giac Duc. The resignation-walkout was probably at Tri Quang's instance.

Whatever his present relationship with Tri Quang, Tri Tinh opposed Thien Minh during the Bi-Annual Congress and boycotted the investiture ceremony for the newly-appointed HSC scheduled for January 10, 1974.

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Commissioner General for Lay Affairs: Venerable Quang Long,
Northern. About 50

Although a northerner, Venerable Quang Long has been a long-time resident of the south and received most of his education in Saigon at the An Quang Buddhist Seminary. There he was a disciple of the deceased Venerable Thien Hoa along with Venerables What Thuong, Thien Dinh, and Lieu Minh. Although these do not hold positions on the HSC itself, they are active in the middle levels of the church organization. In 1968 he was elected High Secular Council (HSC) Commissioner General for Social Welfare, a job in which he reportedly earned a reputation as a poor administrator. In 1971 Quang Long was elected to the HSC Lay Affairs position, to which he was reappointed by the Supreme Patriarch January 11, 1974. As Lay Affairs Commissioner, Quang Long supervises An Quang's rather amorphous network of specialized lay organizations (not including social welfare, youth, or education): for example, in his purview are the Buddhist labor organizations and the Buddhist "legal aid committees".

Quang Long has an apolitical history. However he did participate in the resignation-walkout of the six senior HSC bonzes plus Duc Nhatan during the closing hours of the tumultuous Fifth Bi-Annual Congress December 12, 1973. The walkout, which was probably ordered by Tri Quang as a last-ditch effort to stymie the pro-Thieu Minh forces, included fellow northerners Quang Do, and Giac Duc, while southerners Tri Tinh, Ho Giac, and Phap Tri also participated.

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Commissioner General for Construction: Venerable Thien Hoa,
Southern, late 60's

The Venerable Thien Hoa (not to be confused with the former High Secular Council (HSC) Rector of the same name who died January 23, 1973) has been reappointed to the position of Construction and Commissioner. As such he is responsible for the Church's building program. There is another position held by Thien Hoa, that of "Reconstruction Committee" Chairman. This is a new committee not formally a part of the HSC Commission General structure, and there is some ambiguity about what it entails. Thien Minh is also the Abbot of An Quang Pagoda. A respected scholar but an apolitical monk, Thien Hoa has been on the sidelines until propelled into the limelight as the unsuccessful southern candidate for Rector in the recent bitterly contested election. Thien Hoa is universally regarded as politically naive; he was once coaxed into serving as chairman of a stooge Diem "Unified Committee to Defend Pure Buddhism" after the pagoda raids in August 1963, and there are other tales of equally obtuse if well-meaning political gaffes by Thien Hoa.

In the 1930's Thien Hoa studied for the clergy in Long Xuyen in the Delta. From 1938-45 he studied with the previous Rector Hoa in Qui Nhon and later at Hue's Tay Thien Pagoda under Venerable Tri Thu. Following five years in North Vietnam (1945-50), he returned to Saigon where he was active at An Quang in teaching and other clerical duties. In 1967 and again in 1968, Thien Hoa was chosen HSC Commissioner-General for Reconstruction and Finance; the post was split in 1971, with Thien Hoa retaining the not very significant post of Reconstruction Commissioner General.

In the bitter infighting preceding and during the Fifth Bi-Annual Congress, Thien Hoa was advanced, perhaps against his will, as the southern candidate. He refused to accept the position because he could not name other southerners to top HSC positions and exclude Thien Minh and Huyen Quang from the Council. The failure to come up with a more formidable champion demonstrates the de facto weakness of the southern faction at An Quang.

As a gesture to injured southern sensibilities, Thien Hoa has also been appointed Deputy Supreme Patriarch. He would presumably succeed the incumbent, 95-year-old Venerable Giac Whien on his death. Until such an eventuality however, Thien Hoa apparently intends to remain in Saigon. To the extent that he plays any role in An Quang infighting, it will probably be as a malleable instrument of the southern extremists.

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Commissioner General for Finance: Venerable Thien Tuong, Southerner

The Venerable Thien Tuong is a newcomer to the High Secular Council. He succeeds Tri Hu as Commissioner General of Finance. When the split between the An Quang and Quoc Tu factions occurred in 1966, Thien Tuong was one of the few southerners to opt for the northern-dominated Quoc Tu element. In late 1969 he reportedly argued strongly for reunification of the two antagonistic factions "at any price" and quarreled with Venerable Tam Chau and other Quoc Tu leaders over the issue (reference K). At that time Thien Tuong was serving as Rector of the Quoc Tu High Secular Council. He "rallied" to An Quang, resigning his Quoc Tu rectorship on December 17, 1969 and "returning" to An Quang in a ceremony held at An Quang with some fanfare on January 17, 1970. Press reports at the time said that Thien Tuong was promised a "high position" in the An Quang faction hierarchy; however the 1971 Fourth Bi-Annual Congress came and went without any notice apparently being taken of any such promise if indeed any were ever given.

Nothing is known of Thien Tuong's politics or factional allegiance within An Quang.

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Commissioner General for Education: Venerable Minh Chau, Central, 50's

The Venerable Minh Chau is perhaps the most prestigious Buddhist scholar in South Vietnam and one of the country's most distinguished educators. From 1947-51 he studied at the Bao Quoc Pagoda in Hue. Studying with him were Venerable Man Giac and now-Senator Tran Quang Thuan. Together with Thuan and Venerable Quang Do, he was selected in 1952 as one of the first Buddhist monks to study abroad. He later (1963) received a Ph.D. in Buddhist studies from India's Nalanda University. Minh Chau is said to speak English, French, Chinese, Cambodian and Hindi, and to be able to read Pali fluently. He has traveled widely in the US. In 1964, he founded the Buddhist Van Hanh University in Saigon at which he has served as Rector since.

Minh Chau is a political moderate who has sought successfully to minimize the potentially explosive political role of the students at Van Hanh. Reportedly close to Tri Quang, he is a strong nationalist, but rarely speaks out on controversial issues. In line with an An Quang policy set by Thien Chau after the radical student disorders of 1970-71, in 1972 Minh Chau dissolved the Central Committee of the Van Hanh University Student Union.

Minh Chau has served as High Secular Council Commissioner for Education since 1967. It is not known what position he took during the recent battles over the Rectorship. He may be supposed to have welcomed the rebuff dealt more extreme elements by Thien Chau and Huyen Quang while deploring the factionalism which currently disfigures Vietnamese Buddhism. Minh Chau can be expected to exert his considerable influence quietly toward moderation and unity.

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Commissioner General for Propagation of the Faith: Venerable
Huyen Vi, Central, Late 40's

The Venerable Huyen Vi was appointed January 11, 1974 to the same post to which he had been elected in 1971. From South Central Vietnam (Phan Rang), Huyen Vi was said to have been a disciple of the deceased former High Secular Council Rector, Thien Hoa, at the An Quang Seminary. Others who were fellow students at An Quang under Thien Hoa include Venerables Quang Long, Khat Thuong, Thien Dinh, and Lien Minh. Huyen Vi was studying in India from 1966 to 1971 and thus did not participate in Buddhist development in SVN during that period. Huyen Vi's role if any in the various "struggles" from 1963 to 1966 is not known.

Huyen Vi is regarded as an intelligent younger bonze. In mid-1973 he was appointed to a prestigious clerical body, the Scriptures Translation Council. Serving on the Council were Tri Quang, Thien Dieu, Minh Chau, Duc Khuan, Quang Do, Bui Hue, Khat Lien, and Tu Thanh. Huyen Vi may have an activist political future ahead of him. It seems likely he is a Tri Quang supporter or at least, does not follow Thien Minh. At one point during the early December 1973 pre-Congress maneuvering (the other) Thien Hoa, then a strong candidate for the Rectorship of the HSC, listed Huyen Vi as his choice for Secretary General on his package, take-it-or-leave-it slate (reference B).

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