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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
AIRGRAM

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HANDLING INDICATOR

TO Department of State WASHINGTON DC

INFO: AmCons BIEN HOA, CAR TEO, DANANG, NEA VSANG, CINCIPAC, USDEL JEC PARIS
 19 35 301 1973

COPY NO. 1

SERIES A

FROM: AmEmbassy SAIGON
 E.O. 11652: GDS
 TAGS: FINT VS
 DATE: March 21, 1974

SUBJECT: The Fifth Annual An Quang Congress and its Divisive Aftermath

- REF:
- (a) Saigon A-264, November 16, 1973; (b) Saigon E0864, December 12, 1973; (c) Saigon A-55, March 21, 1974;
 - (d) FVS 33,082, Dec 8, 1973; (e) Saigon 12409, July 10, 1973;
 - (f) FVS 33,114, Dec 27, 1973; (g) FVS 33,085, Dec 11, 1973;
 - (h) Saigon 21424, Dec 2, 1973; (i) FVS 33,115, Dec 27, 1973;
 - (j) FVS 33,164, January 30, 1974

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Background and Summary Comment

1. Reference (a) discussed the acrimonious maneuvering which pre-occupied leading AnQuang Buddhist figures in mid-November as the Fifth Bi-Annual Congress of the An Quang Unified Buddhist Association (UBA) drew nearer. The Fifth Congress, scheduled for December 10-12, was charged with two major tasks: amending the UBA Charter and selecting a new High Secular Council (HSC). In particular the position of Rector was at issue, having been vacated on January 23, 1973 by the death of the Venerable Thien Hoa, a pro-Big Minh southerner. The controversial Venerable Thien Minh, a central Vietnamese, as Acting Rector was drawing intense fire from southerners and from Venerable Tri Quang, who harbors

Enclosures: att-5

- 1. Communiqué (unnumbered) of December 11, 1973
- 2. Report No. 07 of December 12, 1973
- 3. Communiqué No. 0115-VHD/VF/BYC of December 14, 1973
- 4. Declaration of the Fifth Congress of December 12, 1973
- 5. Article by Venerable Thong Bau, undated
- 6. Listing of HSC Membership

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Clearances: OSA:CKLaGhaux

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a strong personal dislike for Thien Minh. Thien Minh's critics variously charged him with being a lax monk, having misappropriated funds, and with being "in the pay of the GVN". Some who feared an increase in extremist opposition influence at An Quang hoped to retain Thien Minh in some position of influence, but sought someone with a better personal reputation as Rector.

2. In mid-November Thien Minh's determined campaign for the Rectorship seemed in trouble. Tri Quang was tending to ally with the southerners against him. However, ably assisted by Venerable Huyen Quang, ISC Secretary General and a fellow "moderate", Thien Minh campaigned vigorously with provincial Buddhist figures. He succeeded in accumulating formidable support on the floor at the Congress, which eventually deadlocked over the election (reference (b)).

3. This report will summarize the events which immediately preceded the Fifth Bi-Annual Congress; proceedings at the Congress itself, and the ensuing deadlock; and the efforts by Tri Quang and others which culminated in the intervention of the Supreme Patriarch, who on January 11 named a new High Secular Council. Information is incomplete on the sequence in which certain events occurred, and on some details of the shifting personnel allegiances. However in broad outline the picture provided below is believed accurate.

4. The membership of the Council reflects a compromise between Thien Minh and Tri Quang to the virtual exclusion of southerners and has drawn harsh criticism from embittered southern extremists as a "rightist" group of "GVN puppets". The new ISC is apparently functioning, although its shortened mandate -- one year -- and the continuing animosity between Thien Minh and Tri Quang, plus the hostility of southerners who feel cheated at the outcome, will continue to make it difficult for the ISC to speak authoritatively for and to the faithful.

5. The prestige of the Buddhist leadership and of the Church itself has suffered by the sometimes sordid squabbling of the past months. The disarray in An Quang ranks is no doubt welcomed at Independence Palace as reducing the capacity for coordinated action of a potentially significant element in the opposition. However the squabbling at An Quang also illustrates the continuing failure of one important element of Vietnamese society to achieve political unity which, under the right circumstances, could provide an asset to the anti-communist nationalist cause.

6. This report will also briefly discuss the changes in the USA Charter which were approved at the Fifth Congress.

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7. Transmitted separately as reference (c) is biographic data on the new High Secular Council. In addition, this airgram forwards as enclosures 1, 2, 3 and 4 documents issued following the Congress by the pro-Thien Minh faction; as enclosure 5, a statement of the Church's anti-"third force" position; also published by a Thien Minh supporter; and as enclosure 6, a listing of the new High Secular Council appointed by the Supreme Patriarch by edict on January 11, 1974.

End Background and Summary Comment

8. A Fragile Compromise. As the December 10 opening date for the Fifth Bi-Annual Congress of the United Buddhist Association Congress (UBA) drew nearer, the campaign against Acting Rector Thien Minh grew more intense. On November 29 a petition was circulated by the southern faction led by Venerables Ho Giac, Phap Tri and Bau Huc, aided by Senator Vu Van Mau and Deputies Kieu Hong Thu and Hoang Phuc. The petition urged southern Venerable Thien Hoa to stand in opposition to Thien Minh for the Rector's post. Mau was also circulating a letter accusing Thien Minh and Huyen Quang of being "thoroughly corrupt". There was also press speculation about a possibly more prominent role for the Venerable Tri Quang.

9. According to FVS-33,082, December 8, 1973, Thien Hoa, Tri Quang and Thien Minh in early December reached a tentative compromise "for the sake of Church unity": the post of Rector would go to Thien Hoa with Thien Minh and Tri Quang being accorded equivalent newly-created positions as Advisors. Thien Minh's condition for this was that his colleague Huyen Quang retain some influential post, either as Secretary General or perhaps as First Deputy Rector. The compromise proved fragile, however, for the following reasons: Thien Hoa was under continuing pressure from southerners and others to exclude Thien Minh and Huyen Quang entirely; Venerable Duc Nhuan, a northerner and an associate of Tri Quang, was also vehemently opposed to retaining Thien Minh or Huyen Quang in any position of influence and was reportedly so angry at the compromise that he threatened to defy his mentor Tri Quang; and because Huyen Quang was gaining confidence that provincial support might just be sufficient to carry the day for Thien Minh after all, hence making any concessions less necessary. Although Thien Hoa attended a negotiating session with Tri Quang, Thien Minh and Tri Thu on December 7, he was described as "angry" and "willing to go it alone" by one source.

10. The Supreme Patriarch's Directive. On December 9, on the eve of the Congress, another meeting of the senior bonzes was convened at which a Directive from the Supreme Patriarch was read. It will be recalled that the Patriarch, 95-year-old Huc Venerable Giac Nhien, had been elected in July 1973 (see reference (a)). Appointed then as his chief Assistant was the Venerable Tri Thu, a respected central Vietnamese bonze whose assignment was reportedly to influence the Patriarch along lines acceptable to Tri Quang. The Patriarchal Directive read to the

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assembled on December 9 requested the Congress to do three things:

- A. Elect Thien Hoa as Rector;
- B. Retain all incumbent High Secular Council members on the Council;
- C. However, to reassign responsibilities among them, in a fashion not specified in the directive.

11. Viewed by the Thien Minh faction, the Patriarchal directive was less than satisfactory in that it denied the post of Rector to Thien Minh; and could be used to further downgrade him from his incumbency as First Deputy Rector. Viewed by the southerners, the Patriarchal advice was also less than perfect, in that it froze the composition of the HSC in its basically unsouthern and in their view unrepresentative, configuration (except of course for prize of the post of Rector).

12. The Compromise Falls Apart. The Congress opened December 10 with Tri Quang in the chair. This gave rise to more press speculation that he might emerge from the Congress with more operative responsibilities, perhaps even with the Rectorship. However, Tri Quang soon relinquished the chair and resumed his more customary behind-the-scenes role.

13. Intense lobbying among Congress representatives ensued. Strong provincial delegation support for the Thien Minh-Buyen Quang faction became apparent. On that first day, December 10, Thien Minh gave a fighting speech to the Congress. He targeted his lay opponents in the Buddhist Parliamentarians' Liaison Group (BPLG), attacking them for opportunism and insincerity in their claim to be the only true "strugglers". He charged his enemies with "sabotage" and "blasphemy", singling out Senator Ton That Dinh, publisher of Coong Luu. Thien Minh recalled his own leadership during the struggles, but asserted that now is not the time for the Church to play an overt political role. He called for the expulsion of the BPLG from their quarters in the An Quang Pagoda. At some point in the proceedings, it is not clear exactly when, a vote was taken and the BPLG censured. This was an impressive demonstration of Thien Minh's floor strength. (See Enclosure 1 for a December 11 communique issued in the name of the Congress denouncing the BPLG.) Nevertheless, the BPLG still holds its meetings in An Quang which, it will be recalled, is still under the direct control of its Abbott, Thien Hoa, who is sympathetic to the BPLG. That the BPLG office is still at An Quang was confirmed by Vu Van Mau to an Embassy officer March 2. (However on March 18 Senator Tran Quang Thuan told an Embassy officer the BPLG had moved out.)

14. In his capacity of Assistant to the Patriarch, Tri Thu read to the Congress the Patriarchal Directive referred to in paragraph 9 above. The next day, December 11, was taken up with further lobbying.

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15. Thien Hoa's Ultimatum and Walk-Out. Sometime on late December 11 or early December 12, Thien Hoa and his southern supporters submitted a letter to the Congress in which they laid down a virtual ultimatum: Thien Hoa said he would agree to accept the HSC Rectorship as the Supreme Patriarch had directed, but only if he could designate the top HSC leadership as follows: fellow southerner Tri Tinh as Deputy Rector in charge of internal affairs; Quang Do, a northern opponent of Thien Minh and Tri Quang follower, as Deputy Rector in charge of external affairs; Phap Tri, another southerner, as Deputy Rector for general affairs; and Huyen Vi, a south Central Vietnamese sympathetic to the southerners, as Secretary General. (An earlier list floated by Thien Minh supporters had been purely sudisto.)

16. Counterattacking, Thien Minh and Buyen Quang charged Thien Hoa with seeking to dictate to the Congress and seeking to pack the HSC leadership with southerners. A vote was called for on the three recommendations in the Patriarchal Directive listed in paragraph 9 above: (a) Thien Hoa was chosen Rector; (b) the Congress voted to retain all incumbents on the HSC; (c) but voted not to reassign responsibilities among them, as the Patriarch had directed. This last vote was a clear victory for Thien Minh and Huyen Quang, as it retained them in key positions of First Deputy Rector and Secretary General respectively. Thien Hoa then walked out of the Congress, according to some reports, thus highlighting the deadlock.

17. The Deadlock; More Walkouts. The final session of the Congress was convened at 2:30 p.m. December 12 with one of Thien Minh's principal opponents, Duc Nhuan, in the chair. Duc Nhuan first invited into the Congress hall several of the leading lay members of the Buddhist Parliamentarians' Liaison Group (BPLG). (See paragraph 13 above for previous Congress action consoling the BPLG.) Duc Nhuan's invitation to the BPLG was viewed by Thien Minh's supporters as a challenge to the validity of all the Congress' previous proceedings, especially the key vote to retain all HSC incumbents in their previous positions. Thien Minh's supporters noisily challenged Duc Nhuan on this point, charging that he as Chairman was deviating from the established agenda and pointing out that the Congress had already disassociated the Church from the BPLG.

18. This issue unresolved, the Congress prepared to turn to the next agenda item, a report by Secretary General Huyen Quang on projected Buddhist activities during the coming two-year term of the HSC. Again Duc Nhuan intervened amid uproar to prevent Huyen Quang from speaking. Huyen Quang nevertheless delivered his address.

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19. As this last day of the Congress wore on into the evening hours, debate became more and more acrimonious. Following a brief supper break, the bonzes gathered again at 10:15 p.m. Present was Tri Quang, whom many thought would propose some major compromise to break the deadlock, but he reportedly left the Congress after only twenty minutes. (Tri Quang was subsequently criticized for failing to speak out at this critical juncture by some bonzas.) Fighting to the end to prevent the Congress from confirming Thien Minh and Huyen Quang in their positions, Duc Nham finally rose to address a shocked Congress with these words: "I have no evidence that the Venerable Thien Hoa has absented himself from these proceedings because he could not sit together with trespassers of Buddha's Law." This was an unmistakable public reference to the charges of concubinage and theft of Church funds which had been circulating against Thien Minh and Huyen Quang. Duc Nham further asserted that he "had evidence" against the trespassers, which, however, he was not then authorized to reveal to the Congress, but which would be made available to appropriate Church disciplinary bodies. Reportedly speaking through tears, Duc Nham then resigned his post as Secretary General of the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council (in which capacity he had convened the Congress and chaired most of its sessions) and left the Congress.

20. At this point, Tu Mhon took the chair; a southerner, he was however supporting Thien Minh/Huyen Quang (see references (c) and (f)). Before the Congress could determine its next course of action, six members of the BSC rose, announced their resignations, and walked out. All anti-Thien Minh, those who walked out were either northerners allied with Tri Quang, or southerners: Quang Do, Giac Duc, and Quang Long, northerners; and Ho Giac, Tri Tinh, and Phap Tri, southerners. Giac Duc later explained to an Embassy officer that this maneuver had been devised by Quang Do and himself and "cleared" with Tri Quang. It was also coordinated with Duc Nham, whose own resignation and walkout immediately preceded theirs. Its intent, of course, was to disrupt the Congress before it could conclude its work, thus stymieing Thien Minh and Huyen Quang who at that point had in fact been reelected to their positions as First Deputy Rector and Secretary General. The six claimed that in their absence the Congress had dissolved and thus all its work to that point was null and void (except the previously adopted Charter amendments, which as will be seen below, Giac Duc was most anxious to see remain intact).

21. The Venerable Tu Mhon did not acknowledge that the Congress was no longer competent. He brought it to a formal close at midnight, declaring that if Thien Hoa refused to accept the Rectorship, the present BSC would remain in office (including of course Thien Minh as Acting Rector) until a new Congress could be convened. (Tu Mhon's final communique, in which he defends the competence of the Congress as described above, is appended as enclosure 2.)

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22. The Charter Issue. Before dealing with the post-Congress confusion and acrimony, developments with regard to the internal Charter of the An Quang UBA should be described. Amending the Charter was one of the two principal tasks of the Fifth Congress, the other of course being the selection of a new High Secular Council. Well before the Congress opened, Venerable Duc Nhuan had compiled a set of proposed amendments. On December 2 and 3, a Committee chaired by Tri Quang met to discuss them. They included proposals:

A. To eliminate the term "Unified" from the title of the Association. Duc Nhuan (a northerner) argued that the term perpetuated the concept of regionalism, and was therefore divisive;

B. To increase the power of the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council (SEC), of which he was Secretary General, in secular affairs, at the expense of the High Secular Council;

C. To allow laymen to hold certain seats on the HSC, thus increasing the potential political role of that body.

23. While Tri Quang's role in the debate which followed is ambiguous, Giac Duc and his colleague and friend Quang Do opposed Duc Nhuan strenuously. (Tri Quang later reportedly said that while he opposed Thien Minh and Huyen Quang, Duc Nhuan had "gone too far" in his vehement attacks on them, reference (j).) Giac Duc told an Embassy officer that he was determined to prevent the SEC from usurping the secular affairs responsibilities of the HSC, as the former is composed of elderly monks who are "naive" politically and would be more subject to political manipulation than the more worldly younger bonzes on the HSC. He was also adamantly opposed to allowing laymen onto the HSC, a step he was sure which was backed by activist and in some cases extremist figures on the Buddhist Parliamentarians' Liaison Group (BPLG). Giac Duc feared a laymen's role on the HSC would mean more radical influence in Church affairs.

24. On December 3 Duc Nhuan's proposals were rejected. Amendments approved were:

- A) To limit the public role of the Supreme Patriarch to one public statement annually;
- B) To eliminate the post of Assistant to the Patriarch and to create a Deputy Patriarch who would succeed in the event of a vacancy;

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C) To insert language in the Charter which would allow the Supreme Patriarch "to take appropriate action in extraordinary circumstances." This language was shortly to be invoked to justify the call for Patriarchal intervention following the deadlock at the Fifth Congress (reference M and paragraph 30 ff below).

25. Although Duc Huan reportedly promised to continue to push for his amendments, on December 12 the Fifth Congress approved Giac Duc's proposed amendments. When the six anti-Thien Minh boozes walked out of the Congress late on last day of the Congress proceedings, they sought thereby to declare the Congress incompetent with regard to the election of a new Council, but did not seek to annul the amendments as voted December 12. Giac Duc has described this outcome as highly satisfactory to him and other anti-communists on the HSC.

Tu Khon's Declaration and Communique

26. On December 14, Venerable Tu Khon, in his capacity as Chairman of the Congress at its close, issued a Communique No. 0115 to the faithful which asserted that the Fifth Congress had come to a successful conclusion, having "voted the amendments to the Buddhist Charter" and having "unanimously" voted to retain the HSC in office until the convening of another Congress (see enclosure 3).

27. On the same date Tu Khon also circulated a more lengthy Declaration, dated December 12, which summarized in more detail the work of the Congress from the Thien Minh/Huyen Quang point of view (see enclosure 4). The Declaration asserts that the Congress had escaped in its last hours the "danger that could have wrecked it and disrupted the Church." The Declaration asserts the validity of the Congress vote retaining the Council membership intact "until another Congress can be held to elect the High Secular Council for a new term." Furthermore the Declaration maintained that the Fifth Congress "opposed any attempt to ... restore the powers of the organizations which have discriminated against and sought to destroy Buddhism" (here read the BPLC).

28. On the Issue of Peace. Regarding the issue of peace, the Declaration Issued by Tu Khon restated the conventional formulation which, under the leadership of Thien Minh, has been the hallmark of similar Church statements this past year: the Paris Agreement is to be fully implemented, those who violate it are to be condemned, and the RVN is responsible for solving the pressing problems of the people "otherwise, disturbances will become inevitable." Finally the Declaration also warned all clergy and believers "both in and outside the country, to guard against any attempt to subvert the Church, regardless of origin, and to continue implementing the resolution of the Church's Fourth Congress." This is the exhortation to hold to the low-profile, disengaged political posture which the HSC has advocated since the signature of the Paris Agreement.

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29. And Especially No Third Force Role for the Church. Elaborating on this important point, Venerable Thong Buu wrote an article which was enclosed in the publication issued by the UBA following the Fifth Congress. Thong Buu strongly attacks the idea that the Church should take a position with regard to the "Third Force" because "the latter has not made itself known yet." Thong Buu argues, "The UBA has put forth its own doctrine of reconciliation. But some still ask, why does it not want to set itself up as a third force?.... The reason is that the UBA has no desire to rank itself with or against the two antagonists, and thus become a third antagonist. Two political colors are obstacles enough to any real solution for our country..." Thong Buu concludes that the Church will play "no go-between role..." (See enclosure 5 for the text of Thong Buu's article.)

30. Despite the hold-fast stance of the Thien Minh group in asserting that the Fifth Congress had legitimized the present HSC until another Congress could be held, strongly conflicting views eventually prevailed. Not however without an extended period of more acrimonious and public disagreement which left the reputation of the Church and its leadership badly bruised.

31. The Thien Minh/Huyen Quang group continued to promote its position through issuing documents and declarations such as those above. Huyen Quang retained his office at An Quang and function of HSC Secretary General despite cries against him. (Tri Quang was reportedly very critical of Huyen Quang for continuing to act as HSC Secretary General.) On December 15 BPLG leader Vu Van Mau convened a meeting decrying the BPLG "expulsion" and calling on Thien Hoa, the presiding Abbott at An Quang, to move the HSC offices out of the building so as to escape the hands of the "usurpers." Failing in this, lay leaders of the BPLG asserted their right to continue to meet at An Quang, while launching in alliance with Duc Huan a personal counterattack on Thien Minh. The latter claimed he would publish the charges of concubinage, theft, and perversion against Thien Minh and Huyen Quang. Song Thuu shortly began to attack the "sabotage of degenerate bonzes". Duc Huan also declared on December 13 that henceforth all Church business would be conducted by the Supreme Patriarch.

32. December 16 and 17 saw fruitless meetings convened by Tri Thuu at which various combinations of senior bonzes sought but failed to reach agreement (reference (f) and (i)). On December 17, Venerable Thien Minh submitted a letter of resignation as Acting Rector (this was Thien Minh's second "resignation" in four weeks). He posed however as a condition that Huyen Quang be retained in a position of influence. The southerners demurred, saying they would have nothing to do with Huyen Quang. On December 26 Thien Minh reportedly softened this condition somewhat (reference (j)). Rumors began to circulate that yet another schism was facing the Church, either by disgruntled southerners or by the Thien Minh faction.

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33. Tri Quang Intervenes. However, the contending factions recoiled from the prospect of another schism. On December 22 about 25 senior bonzos met with Tri Quang and agreed to invoke the new language in the Charter to call for the intervention of the Supreme Patriarch. Various combinations were mooted: that Tri Quang, Quang Do, Tri Thu, and Thien Hoa act in place of the HSC for three months pending a new Congress; that a new Congress be convened (Tri Quang strongly objected to this, on grounds that Thien Minh and Huyen Quang would again influence the provincial delegates, reference (j)); that a "Buddhist Affairs Committee" be selected from a wider group of bonzos to run the UBA until a new Congress in 1974 (Thien Hoa's idea); and that the Patriarch be requested to co-opt a new HSC. The latter was decided upon, and Tri Thu was despatched to Hue to summon the elderly Patriarch.

34. On December 31 the Supreme Patriarch arrived in Saigon and launched a series of consultations with the various factions. These took place against a continuing backdrop of sordid acrimony. For example, a charge of 14 separate instances of cohabitation against Thien Minh were aired in Song Thum. (Thien Minh has lodged a libel action against the paper which has not yet been resolved in the courts.) There were accusations that access to the Supreme Patriarch was being manipulated by one or the other faction. A letter "signed in blood" protesting Thien Minh was delivered to the Patriarch. On January 1 Thien Minh and Huyen Quang presented their case to the Patriarch, stressing the fact that the Congress had lawfully voted to retain the former HSC intact. The next day southerners Ho Giac and Thien Hoa met with the Patriarch, who sought to convince Thien Hoa that he should accept the post of Rector. The latter reportedly agreed but only on condition that HSC seats be denied Thien Minh and Huyen Quang. The bargaining and jostling continued for several days (see reference (j)).

35. A New High Secular Council Named. The Patriarch finally agreed to Tri Quang's suggestion that he decree the membership of a new HSC. The Patriarchal edict dated January 8 was circulated within Church circles January 11, and it is from this date that the appointments are deemed effective. The term of office is one year, i.e., until January 11, 1975 when a Sixth Congress is to be convened.

36. The Venerable Tri Thu was named Rector while both Tri Quang and Thien Minh were designated to new positions as Council Advisors. Huyen Quang was named to the post of Deputy Rector. The new Council represents a compromise between the Thien Minh and Tri Quang central Vietnamese factions at the expense of the southerners who just missed being shut out of all top HSC positions. (See enclosure 6 for a list of the new HSC, and reference (c) for an analysis and biographic detail.)

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37. The new HSC was denounced immediately by southerners and extremists as "rightist", a "tool of the GVN", and "corrupted". An attempt to announce and invest the new HSC on January 10 failed because many southerners refused to participate. On January 12 the new HSC was announced to the general public without any ceremony, and on January 14 the Patriarch returned to his Hue Pagoda.

38. Other Assignments. With the designation of Tri Thu as HSC Rector, his position as Assistant (now termed Deputy) to the Patriarch became vacant. Another important position on the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council, that of Secretary General, had also been vacated when Duc Khuan resigned on December 12. The Venerable Thien Hoa has been appointed by the Patriarch to the Deputy position; so far no name to replace Duc Khuan has yet been announced. Thien Hoa's assignment thus places a southerner as next in line to succeed. Another Venerable, Nhut Lion, was appointed Aide to the Patriarch.

39. The Swedish Gift Affair. Sometime during the early summer of 1973, a Swedish benevolent organization presented as a gift to the An Quang Unified Buddhist Association a sum amounting to 103,640,450 \$VN. (Dollar equivalent at current exchange rate of \$1.00 = 590\$VN is about \$175,000, a substantial sum.) Huyen Quang as HSC Secretary General received the money. The enemies of Thien Minh and Huyen Quang immediately charged that the fund was being improperly used. Added to other allegations of personal misconduct against Thien Minh, the "Swedish gift" charges further poisoned the atmosphere at An Quang.

40. During the floor fight at the Fifth Congress, two southern bonzes, who had previously been harshly critical of Thien Minh, abruptly shifted to his support: Venerables Phap Lan and Thong Bui. Their shift has never been fully explained. However according to Vu Van Mau, Phap Lan shifted sides because of a promise from Huyen Quang of substantial funding from the Swedish gift for Phap Lan's Committee to Free Buddhist Political Prisoners (see reference (f)). Mau further alleged that support for Thien Minh and Huyen Quang had similarly been bought from Venerable Tu Nhon, the HSC Treasurer who chaired the Congress in its tumultuous closing moments (see paragraphs 20 ff above). According to Mau, Tu Nhon was given a substantial amount to build a pagoda in his home province of Sadec, in the Delta. Whatever the truth of such allegations, they illustrate the unhealthy atmosphere of expirmination pervading debate on important matters at An Quang.

41. Counterattacking on the Swedish gift issue, Huyen Quang on January 1 issued a public statement denying the charges, listing the amount as somewhat in excess of 103 million \$VN (it had been rumored as much larger). On January 5 the HSC announced that anyone with a legitimate need for the information could audit the Swedish fund account. While the issue probably still festers, it has not again been raised publicly since.

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42. Angry Reaction But Investiture Finally on February 10.

The initial angry southern reaction to the new USC was as noted above. Southern Bonzes walked out of a January 8 meeting at which the Patriarch announced his edict. They refused to participate in any investiture ceremony for the new Council, first scheduled for January 10, then January 12, then again January 30. Claudestine "Radio Liberation" termed the new Council a group of "traitors" in a broadcast monitored January 10. On January 15 a meeting was held at the home of General Duong Van "Big" Minh at which many of his southern political associates condemned the appointments as "rightist" and "designated by the GVN". The meeting reportedly concluded that the new Council would only function "temporarily", although speculation that a southern schism might occur soon died away. A ceremony of investiture was finally held at An Quang February 10, presided over by Tri Thu.

43. The new Council is now operative. However, hampered by the remaining personal and regional animosities, it cannot speak for the faithful with its former authority.

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

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UNCLASSIFIED

Vietnamese Unified Buddhist Association

High Secular Council

Communique

Following submission of reports from various (provincial) Associations, the Congress, in its session on the afternoon of December 11, 1973, discussed various problems relating to the various Associations this past term. Particularly, the Congress dealt with the scheme of exploiting factional and regional divisions which has led to a disruption of Church unity and to a lowering of dignitaries' prestige, with a view to paralyzing the leadership machinery of the central Church organization. Various communications media, such as the press and leaflets, have been employed in this effort. Typical is daily Cong Juan which, during the past eight months, has unleashed slanders and distortions aimed at wrecking the prestige of the Church's leading dignitaries.

Various organizations attempting to exploit Buddhism, such as the "Buddhist Parliamentarians' Liaison Group" and the "Ho Phap Layzen's Group" played a role in this scheme. The Congress denounced these tactics by forces hostile to Buddhism of "breaking the bundle of chopsticks one by one".

Because of the present very serious and complicated situation of the Church and of the country, the Church must be directed by a clear-sighted, courageous, unified leadership in the days ahead. This is why the Congress has uncovered and criticized these schemes for the faithful to see and understand. At the same time, the Congress has adopted the following Resolutions:

1. The Congress rejects all slanders and distortions against leading dignitaries on the High Secular Council;
2. The Congress fully rejects the "Buddhist Parliamentarians' Liaison Group" and the "Ho Phap Layzen's Group";
3. The Congress appeals to all levels of the Church to heighten vigilance with regard to those organizations which seek to exploit Buddhism and which do not fall within the purview of the General Association of Laymen or other organizations recognized by the Unified Buddhist Church.

Saigon, December 11, 1973
Fifth Congress of the Church
(Disseminated by the Office of the
High Secular Council of the
Unified Buddhist Association)

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Viet Nam Unified Buddhist Church
High Secular Council

Office
243 Su Yen Hsah
Saigon 10

Report No. 07
(December 13, 1973)

Chairman: Venerable Duc Thuan (at the beginning)
Venerable Tu Nhon (at the end)

Secretary: Venerable Thich Quang Thanh (who had resigned from
the function of Secretary together with Venerable
Tu Hinh and Venerable Hai Thanh, at the end of the
Fifth Congress on December 12, 1973, but was later
invited again by the Congress).

Present: Venerables Phap Lan, Ho Giac, Quang Do, Tu Nhon,
Han Giac, Giac Duc, Tri Quang, Phap Tri, Tri Tinh
and all delegations of representatives of provinces,
cities and districts of the Capital.

Opening: At 22:15 on return from the School of Youth for
Social Welfare, after having supper there.

Discussion: Continued to discuss the election of the new Steer-
ing Committee of the High Secular Council for its
5th term of office.

Opinions: To invite Venerable Thien Hoa to assume the post of
Rector, and to agree that the remaining members will
be invited by Venerable Thien Hoa, and to consider
that as a condition for obtaining the approval of
the Venerable.

According to the petition of the absolute majority of the
delegations of representatives attending the Congress, correctly to
carry out the instructions of the Patriarch, the Congress decided:
to invite Venerable Thien Hoa to assume the function of Rector; and
to maintain all the remaining members in office, as formerly.

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According to the instructions of the Venerable Assistant to the Patriarch (Tri Thu), if a deadlock arises, the High Secular Council for the 4th term of office should be maintained in office until another Congress is held.

The Congress came to a deadlock, the Venerable who presided over the Congress (Duc Khuan) resigned, and charged the Congress to elect another Chairman.

Venerable Tu Nhon was invited by the Congress to preside with the consent of Venerable Duc Khuan, who had resigned.

Venerable Tu Nhon, as Chairman, broke through the deadlock of the Congress, and the Congress unanimously agreed with the following Decisions:

1. Seriously to execute the instructions of the Patriarch, inviting Venerable Thien Hoa to assume the post of Rector and maintaining in office all the remaining members as formerly;
2. In case Venerable Thien Hoa refuses, the Congress should invite the whole High Secular Council for the 4th term of office to remain in office until another Congress is held by the Church to elect a new High Secular Council, as instructed by the Venerable Assistant to the Patriarch (Tri Thu).

Closing: The Congress closed at 24:00

Signed and Sealed

Chairman

Venerable Tu Nhon

Secretary

Venerable Thich Quang Thanh

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Viet Nam Unified Buddhist Church

Saigon, December 14, 1973

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Communiqué

The 5th Buddhist Congress ended at midnight of December 12, 1973, after voting the amendments to the Buddhist Charter, and the Buddhist Program of Action for the new term. Noteworthy is the fact that it unanimously voted the keeping in function of the 4th term High Secular Council until the convening by the Church of a Congress to designate a new High Secular Council.

Signed: Venerable Tu Hson
Chairman of the Convention

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Enclosure 4 of
Saigon A-56

DECLARATION

of the Fifth Congress of the
Viet Nam Unified Buddhist Church

Considering:

Ten years since its foundation, the Vietnamese Unified Buddhist Church has met with repeated and ever-worsening difficulties and subversion from within and from without, especially since the late Patriarch died;

The Church has tried to overcome the obstacles, and has contributed greatly to the major historic deeds with regard to the people and Buddhism;

The Fifth Buddhist Congress has been held, while the war is still going on in this country, with its exhausted economy, depressed society, and most critical divisions between the people;

The Fifth Buddhist Congress, in order to continue the mission and preserve the tradition of the Church, unanimously

Proclaims:

A. As our internal policy:

1) Respectfully to express gratitude to all those monks and Buddhists, for their noble sacrifices during the past ten years, that have helped the Church exist and develop;

2) With absolute unanimity and unprecedented clear-sightedness and persistence of its members in the voting for the leadership of the Church, during its last hours the Congress has escaped the danger that could have wrecked it and disrupted the Church;

3) The Congress fully votes to retain the High Secular Council of the Fourth term until another Congress can be held to elect the High Secular Council for a new term;

4) The Congress calls upon the clergy and believers both in and outside the country to guard against any attempt to subvert the Church, regardless of origin, and to continue implementing the resolutions of the Church's Fourth Congress;

5) The Congress is opposed to any attempt to retaliate on the Buddhist by restoring the powers and organizations which have discriminated against and tried to annihilate Buddhism (Comment: Here read BPLG).

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B. As an external policy:

6) The Church appeals to the committed parties of the Vietnam war fully to comply with the Paris truce agreement of January 27, 1973;

7) The Church firmly opposes the deliberate violations of the Agreement, on the part of any party that tries to extend the war, which tends to break out again;

8) The Church demands that the RVN Government urgently solve the crises which are seriously affecting the people's life; otherwise disturbances will be inevitable;

9) The Church appeals to all peace-loving people in the world and to the nations connected with the Paris Agreement to seek means to have the concerned parties respect and comply with the Agreement so as to bring about an early peace in Viet Nam.

Made in Saigon, on December 12, 1973.

The Chairman
of the Convention's Last Meeting.

Signed:

Venerable Thich Tu Nhon

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Enclosure 5 of
Saigon A-56

The Vietnamese Buddhist Unified Church
and the Third Force
(Ven. Thong Bau)

A recent rumor said that the Fifth Buddhist Congress and a number of Buddhist leaders had declared that they would not recognize the Third Force.

What I write below is designed to dispel a misunderstanding among members of the Buddhist congregation, a misunderstanding caused by nearsighted and ambitious personages of influence, and not to dismiss or confirm that rumor.

First of all, the Fifth Buddhist Congress was publicly held with the attendance of nearly one thousand delegates and Buddhist leaders, but not one ever heard the Congress make any affirmation or denial with regard to the Third Force.

More: Buddhism is a peace-advocating religion. The Buddhist laity as well as the leaders of the Vietnamese Unified Buddhist Church have made bloody sacrifices with the sole purpose to secure peace for VN. Now that peace has just taken shape, their purpose is to safeguard it at any cost (which is one of the four points advocated by the Buddhist Church).

Does it make sense to say that they are safeguarding peace while denying the Third Force? But the controversial point arises in the fact that the understanding from one person to another about that force differs, because the Force has not made itself known yet.

Under the Paris Accords, the Third Force shall consist of two halves, each being designated by one South Vietnamese party. As a consequence of this, it cannot be an independent force, and how can it be called a Force while it is denied independence? And composed as it is, how can it conciliate the two antagonist parties?

According to the concept and the stand of the Unified Buddhist Church, the Third Force should consist of those persons who do not espouse the doctrine of this or that side. With that composition, can it be strong enough to carry out the important mission entrusted to it by the nation?

The UBA has put forth its own doctrine of reconciliation. But some still ask, why does it not want to set itself up as a Third Force? Especially as the Church is uniquely qualified for this? UBA has no desire to rank itself with or against the two antagonists, and thus become a third antagonist. Two political colors are obstacles enough to any real solution for our country. The establishment of a Third Force, or third

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political faction by the Unified Buddhist Church, could lead straight to new strife with the other two parties before it could accomplish anything good. This is the reason why the Unified Buddhist Church wishes to stay outside the dispute, and outside their orbits of both factions. This means that the Unified Buddhist Church will not oppose any side. The Unified Buddhist Church makes reconciliation its duty, but it will play no go-between role, because an intermediary must rank with or below the contending parties, and this would in fact become another obstacle to reconciliation.

/s/ Venerable Thong Bui

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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 Minh	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 Nhon	Yes	Incumbent	Southern	TH
Secretary General	Thien Sieu	No	New	Central	TH
Deputy Secretary General	Duc Nien	No	New	Southern	?
Comm. General Social Welfare	No 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 Hoa	Yes	New	Southern	S
Comm. General Finance	Thien Tuong	No	New	Southern	?

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<u>Position</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>On Previous RSC</u>	<u>New to Position or Incumbent</u>	<u>Regional Origin</u>	<u>Factional Affiliation</u>
Comm. General Education	Hinh 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 Thap 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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