

Blamed in Mutiny

Buddhist Chaplains Criticized

By Father Patrick O'Connor
Society of St. Columban
(N.C.W.C. News Service)

SAIGON — Buddhist military chaplains have been saying more than their prayers in central Vietnam.

They have taken a prominent part in organizing the mutiny among Vietnamese armed forces in Danang and Hue.

This agitation, with which the government has tardily come to grips, is directed by the Soldiers and People's Revolutionary Struggle Force (Luc Luong Quan Dan Tran Thu Cach Mang). Buddhist chaplains have proved themselves

not only zealous workers but even leaders in this ominously named force. Communists are certainly in it, too. Known communist cadres have been recognized in its ranks in central Vietnam and in Dalat.

IN SOME mutinous army units Buddhist chaplains give orders.

It is the view of the government in Saigon that Buddhist chaplains in central Vietnam are subversive agents in the armed forces. Many earnest Buddhists condemn their behavior.

This open mutiny throws light on the issue of the Buddhist chaplaincy which was first raised during the campaign against the late

President Ngo dinh Diem and his government in 1963.

One grievance proclaimed by Buddhist leaders and some of their foreign supporters was the fact that the Vietnamese army at that time had no Buddhist chaplains. A spokesman for the Ministry of Defense, however, told this correspondent in June, 1963, that the Buddhists had never asked to have chaplains until then. Their demand was regarded by many as just a political maneuver to strengthen their case against President Diem.

HE DID NOT refuse their request but he was apparently loath to grant it. He was afraid that once installed as chaplains, political bonzes would cause trouble and disaffection among Buddhist soldiers.

After Diem and his government had been overthrown in the coup d'etat of Nov. 1-2, 1963, the bonzes appeared to be in no hurry to have their chaplains appointed. It was only about July, 1964, that the first Buddhist chaplains were named.

Thich (Venerable) Tri Quang, the bonze who had led the campaign against Diem, revealed his real thoughts about the proposed chaplaincy shortly after the coup of November, 1963. He did not want any Buddhist chaplains, he told an American official.

STATION DEDICATED

Belleville, Ill. — (NC) — Bishop Albert R. Zuroweste of Belleville dedicated a new FM radio at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows at ceremonies here (May 19). The station, a non-commercial venture supported by benefactors of the shrine, broadcasts 18 hours a day.



RELIGION WINNERS — Katherine Reid Fulton (left), daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robert P. Fulton is the winner of the Bishop's Medal for the highest average in religion over a four-year period at Bishop McGuinness Memorial High School, Winston-Salem. Bernadette Lucia Jones, daughter of the late Robert and Elizabeth Jones, is the winner of the religion medal at Mother of Mercy High School, Washington, N.C.

Clergymen Would End Rites in Public Schools

OKLAHOMA CITY — (NC) — A group of 63 Oklahoma City clergymen, representing 14 religious denominations, have petitioned an end to "unconstitutional" religious observances in public schools and a suggested study of feasibility of released or shared time for religious instruction.

The group, called Churchmen for Religious Freedom, said they are "concerned with the silence of the leaders in public education in the state, the county and the community, on the issue of religion in the public school."

The petitioners, including 15 Catholic priests, emphasized they were in agreement with the U.S. Supreme Court's decision, believe

it is right and necessary to safeguard freedom of worship.

The group's statement pointed out that the Supreme Court "did not rule against religion but for it." The clergymen insisted their plea is "pro-religious," not "anti-religious." The group said it is prepared to initiate court action to stop the observances.

Among the 15 Catholic priests signing the petition were Father Ernest A. Flusche, diocesan superintendent of schools, and Father John Joyce, editor of the Oklahoma Courier, newspaper of the Oklahoma City-Tulsa diocese.

The petition was presented to Jack Parker, superintendent of the Oklahoma City public schools.

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