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HOW THE INITIATIVE MIGHT BE TAKEN AWAY FROM THE BUDDHISTS

1. In the present situation, the Buddhists remain determined to overthrow the Government despite the good faith of the Government. The Buddhists also have and are retaining the initiative in the struggle despite the President's latest proclamation. This proclamation only has value if concrete, well-publicized actions are undertaken by the Government to openly demonstrate its good faith. Otherwise the Buddhists will continue to keep the Government on the defensive, despite the fact that the Government is right, honest, etc. The Government must take the initiative away from the Buddhists.

2. Outright suppression of the Buddhists, even though they have become political agitators trying to overthrow the Government, is not practical. Internally it would probably cause sufficient dissension within the Government to bring about a coup, externally it would probably result in a withdrawal of Free World support from the present Government. Therefore, it is imperative at present that the Government use other means and take other action to solve this problem.

3. A Mixed Commission of the Government and the Buddhists to investigate complaints has been proposed and this is an excellent idea. However, the Buddhists may drag their feet on this. Therefore, other action should be taken in the meantime which would fit in with the Commission once it is formed.

4. From a knowledge of the press and from a background of political experience, the following actions are suggested for consideration:

a. A "Permanent" Secretary should immediately be named for the Inter-Departmental Committee on Buddhism. This Secretary would need an office, several telephones, a small staff and several automobiles. His job would be to receive any complaints of Buddhist mistreatment by telephone and send a member of his staff to investigate this complaint. His office would be completely open to newsmen who could accompany his staff on their calls at any time they wished. Buddhist monks would also be invited. The existence of the Secretary and his office, the purpose of the office and its address and telephone number should receive the widest possible publicity.

b. The Secretary should also have an ARVN airplane permanently assigned to him for trips to the provinces. Once the Secretary was named, his first act could well be to announce an on-the-spot investigation in one of the provinces about which the Buddhists have complained. A Buddhist delegation would be invited to accompany the Secretary (the first trip might be lead by the Vice-President) as well as the press. If the Buddhist delegation did not show up, it would be bad publicity for them. Even if an actual fault by a Government official is uncovered by the investigation, this can be turned into excellent publicity by rectifying the fault. It is good publicity to admit a fault and then correct it; it can be converted into better publicity than never having committed a fault.

c. For the position of Secretary, someone who is obviously neutral (i. e., neither a Catholic nor a Buddhist) is recommended. He should also possess an ability to deal with people in a diplomatic way and he should not,

must not be afraid of the press. It is suggested someone such as General Van Thanh Cao might be considered for such a position, despite the fact that he does not speak English. A lack of English could be a virtue in dealing with the press, because working through an interpreter gives one time to think what to say.

d. Once the Mixed Commission is fully formed and operating, the Secretary could continue to act as Secretary for the Mixed Commission. If the Mixed Commission is formed right away, then it would still be wise to appoint a "Permanent" Secretary who could help perform in its name the functions described above.

5. If the above suggestions are considered useful, action should be taken as soon as possible before the Buddhists, by clever action, turn the President's announcement into a dead letter.