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Agenda item 77EXCHANGE OF CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit for the information of delegations, and in connexion with agenda item 77, the texts of an exchange of correspondence between him and the President of the Republic of Viet-Nam which took place during August and September 1963.

1. Message of the Secretary-General to the President of the Republic of Viet-Nam, dated 31 August 1963

I have the honour to inform Your Excellency that the Asian and African Member States of the United Nations, through their representatives to this Organization, have come to see me to express their grave concern at the situation that has arisen in the Republic of Viet-Nam, and have asked me to request Your Excellency's Government to take all necessary steps to normalize the situation by ensuring the exercise of fundamental human rights to all sections of the population in the Republic.

It is in the light of humanitarian considerations, to which we all, as members of the human family, are bound, that I have felt it my duty to transmit the above request, adding to it my own personal appeal to Your Excellency, as the head of the Government of Viet-Nam, to find a solution to the questions which are so deeply affecting the population of your country, in accordance with the principles laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

(Signed) U THANT
Secretary-General

2. Letter dated 5 September 1963 from the President of the Republic of Viet-Nam, addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your recent message in which you were kind enough to inform me of the concern shown by the representatives of African and Asian States Members of the United Nations with regard to the situation in Viet-Nam.

I thank you for the opportunity this gives me to clarify fully the Buddhist question, to which your message refers.

First of all, I can assure you that there has been no suppression of Buddhism in Viet-Nam since the establishment of the Republic. Any allegation to the contrary is nothing but an imperialist invention. The Buddhist question is not a question of suppression, but a phenomenon of the development of Buddhism, a growing-pain of Buddhism, which should be viewed in its historical context, that of an under-developed, newly independent country - a country, in other words, which is short of cadres and of financial resources but desirous of rapidly asserting itself. Like the other movements in process of expansion which are linked to the independence movement, the Buddhist movement began to develop all the more quickly because it was held in check during the colonial period. In this unduly rapid development, Buddhism, like other movements, both public and private, is suffering from a shortage of cadres both qualitatively and quantitatively, and this offers the East and the West an opportunity to infiltrate, if not to impose their own cadres who try to take over the leadership.

This results in ideological deviations, which in practice are reflected in techniques of political agitation and propaganda and in the organization of riots and coups d'état for the benefit of foreign interests. This is the tragedy of Buddhism in Viet-Nam; it will no doubt be the tragedy of Buddhism in the other countries of Asia.

We hope that, instead of allowing themselves to be poisoned by an international conspiracy of the East or the West against the Republic of Viet-Nam, the fraternal African and Asian countries will benefit from the experience in our country and forestall the crises which they will possibly have to face.

Every Government is in duty bound to uphold public order and also to ensure that alien cadres both from the East and the West, with their specific ideologies

and policies, do not mar the original purity of Buddhism and the other movements. In other words, the action taken by the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam in connexion with the Buddhist question has no other objective than to free the Buddhist hierarchy from all outside pressure and to shield the development of Buddhism from any external influence that works against the interests of the Buddhist religion and against the higher interests of the State.

I am also happy to be able to inform you that a solution has already been found to the Buddhist question which bears witness to the merits of the policy pursued by the Viet-Nameese Government. Freed from the evil influence of foreign agitators and adventurers, the Buddhist hierarchy has resumed charge of the Buddhist community and of the pagodas throughout the territory of Viet-Nam.

I request you to be kind enough to communicate this message to the distinguished representatives of the African and Asian States Members of the United Nations.

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) Ngo Dinh DIEM
President of the Republic of Viet-Nam
