

Bishop Tells of Anti-Thieu Officer Group

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An organization of non-Communist South Vietnamese military officers, called the "Force Libre" and opposed to the Saigon regime of President Thieu, has been reported by the Rt. Rev. Edward Crowther, Assistant Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of California and reportedly the first U.S. bishop ever to meet with representatives of the Viet Cong and North Vietnam.

In an exclusive interview, Bishop Crowther told the Examiner that on May 4th he and two other Californians, Max Palevsky and Orville Schell, met with Col. Tran Dinh Lan, president of the Force Libre of Vietnam, in Paris.

The Bishop quoted Col. Lan as telling him:

● His organization began in 1949 as a clandestine operation against the French, and consists of "both Buddhists as well as Catholics, who are "non-Socialists."

● The organization does not fight for the Viet Cong, nor does it sabotage the South Vietnamese Army. But when taken prisoner, "They are treated differently from other prisoners ... When victory comes, we shall try to reconcile all sections of our people in Vietnam in a true democracy," noted Lan.

● The Force Libre "does not want the total destruction of the South Vietnamese Army, as it contains many elements that will be very useful to a United Free Vietnam ... In the wake of victory will come great confusion with a million men used to killing suddenly rendered useless."

● Certainly having gotten rid of the Chinese, the French, and soon the Americans, we are not going to tolerate another dictatorship. And there will be no place for a bloodbath mentality."

"Non-Communist"

The transcript of Bishop Crowther's interview with Col. Lan does not include any questions as to the numerical strength of the Force Libre — or any questions regarding the possibility of its being a Viet Cong

front, or a North Vietnamese fifth column. But Bishop Crowther said he feels the Force Libre is genuinely non-Communist, even though it is "practically unknown in the United States."

Bishop Crowther said he had also interviewed Buddhist priest Thich Chien Chau, a South Vietnamese now teaching philosophy at the Sorbonne. He reported the priest's telling him:

"The government of North Vietnam will not be imposed upon us. We will have a South Vietnamese government which will have to effect national reconciliation and unification in independence before unity with the North, in a single Vietnam, can be achieved."

Meets VC Chief

The Bishop also met with the chief and deputy chief of the Viet Cong delegation ("Provisional Revolutionary Government of the National Liberation Front"), Madame Nguyen Thi Binh and Nguyen Van Tien.

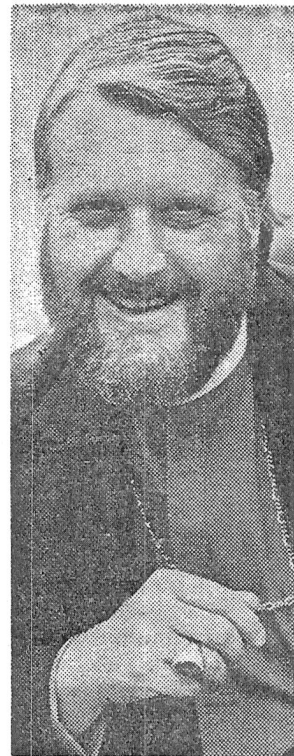
He reported Tien charged that:

● President Nixon has repeatedly suspended the Paris Peace Conference — and has been evasive regarding a date for withdrawal of U.S. troops (including advisors) as well as stipulations regarding cessation of U.S. attacks from inside as well as outside Vietnam.

● The Saigon regime is "bellicose, rotten and corrupt ... abandoning 900 of its wounded soldiers in Quang Tri, which the U.S. bombed heavily in order to kill civilians."

● "The reintroduction of American ground forces is being carried out right now in South Vietnam — 1200 troops from Clark Air Force Base and the 4th Marine Regiment of the 3rd Marine Division has been sent to Da Nang; while the 1st Battalion of the 9th Regiment of the 3rd Marine Division from Camp Schwab in Okinawa has landed in Vietnam."

Bishop Crowther, who is moving in two weeks to Walnut Creek from Santa Bar-



BISHOP CROWTHER
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bara, told a gathering sponsored by Temple Shalom in San Mateo last night that his mission to Paris was to "establish an embassy of peace."

Then, shifting his concern around the world, he stressed the right of Israel to survive, "since it does exist and has the same right to survive as any Christian — we have a common ancestry of one God."