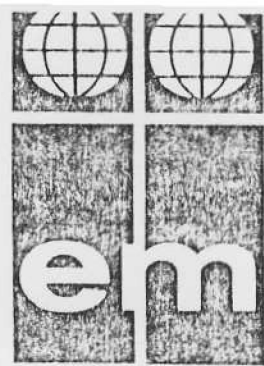


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Vol. VI, No. 3 April 1975



WHEN THE SKY FELL ON VIET NAM

*On April 8, 1975, Dr. Louis L. King, vice-president overseas ministries for the Christian and Missionary Alliance, heavyhearted and fatigued after weeks of vexing decisions related to the evacuation of their missionaries and church leaders, flew to Los Angeles on his return from Viet Nam to address the plenary sessions of the Annual Conventions of both the National Association of Evangelicals and the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association.*

*In this issue we share with PULSE readers the text of his firsthand report as he gave it to the delegates. Dr. King is one of the most knowledgeable authorities on the Viet Nam situation today.*

The crisis in our mission's work in South Viet Nam began with the precipitous attack by the Army of North Viet Nam on Banmethuot.

At 10:00 p.m. Sunday night, March 9, a rain of rockets and mortar started falling on the city. At 3:00 a.m. a tank-led ground attack quickly penetrated the city's defenses. During the following three days a bitter battle raged in the streets. By the latter part of the week, the NVA had gained control.

Very shortly after the onset of the attack, C&MA missionaries Dr. and Mrs. R. L. Phillips and Mrs. Betty Mitchell and Wycliffe Translators Mr. and Mrs. John Miller and their small daughter Luann were able to move to the USAID compound.

During Monday, March 10, the AID representative maintained clear radio contact with the consulate official in Nhatrang. By radio the names of the persons in the AID building were clearly established and, further, they were not injured. Monday evening the radio went dead. Tuesday and continuing through to noon, Wednesday, March 12, radio contact was continued periodically by an airplane flying in the area.

The Reeds gave the pastor 70 hymnbooks and 180 Jarai New Testaments to give away. They gave the Christians all their medicines, rice and food. Then they walked out. As the "chopper" lifted off and circled above the town, they looked down on the mission house and the Jarai church. When they had arrived ten years before, there was not a believer in the province. They left behind more than a thousand believers -- left them in God's presence and care.

It was Tuesday, March 11. Days later the Communists raised their flag over Cheo Reo.

Attacks and warnings of impending attacks were nothing new in the Pleiku area; however, what was new was that, beginning the last week of February, things worsened. Loyal citizens mysteriously disappeared. Villagers cautioned missionaries to stay off the roads after March 1. Rumors mounted that there would be big fighting and that in two months the Communists would be in control.

During the week of March 10, God in convenient grace was arranging for the safety of twelve members of the Alliance missionary staff and three of their children. Furlough, vacation and surgery (with an accompanying nurse) required that five depart for Saigon on Tuesday and Wednesday. Two missionary ladies surprised everyone on Thursday -- since it was totally uncharacteristic of them to leave any dangerous area of their own accord -- by saying that due to strong impressions they would leave Friday. Later that day, Mission chairman Jack Revelle requested that all but Dr. Greene and Gail Fleming come to Saigon. Seven boarded the Friday flight.

Friday night was quiet and peaceful in Pleiku. The next morning Dr. Greene made his rounds at the clinic and Mr. Fleming headed out of town to help at a refugee center. About four miles out he was turned back. The area was swarming with Viet Congs. Returning to his home, he received word that he and Dr. Greene had twenty minutes to get to the airport to be lifted out to safety. They departed, leaving behind the complex of mission and medical buildings, twelve vehicles and the personal effects of all the missionaries.

In two short days, Pleiku -- the headquarters of the I Corps, the impregnable bastion of South Viet Nam's northern defense, the multimillion-dollar military airport, airplanes and scores of tanks and sophisticated weapons -- was a scarred wreckage as the South Vietnamese forces abandoned Pleiku to the enemy.

The refugees that had crowded into Pleiku for safety now moved out, together with Pleiku's residents. Thousands of civilians in a column sixty miles long moved down the road leading to the coast under a scorching sun. On the way many died under the menacing bombing and strafing of the Communist military.

Quang Tri and Hue fell. Their civilian populations and dispirited soldiers poured into Danang. In ten days Danang's population of 500,000 persons tripled. People glutted the streets and sidewalks. The sanitary system failed. Food supplies dwindled, hope of rescue failed and eventually wild irrationality reigned supreme.

The C&MA had sixty missionaries strategically placed throughout South Viet Nam. Except for the Banmethout staff, all were systematically brought to Saigon. There the Regional Director, Rev. T. Grady Mangham, Jr., and I, after consultation, gave them new assignments of service in other countries.

I have many vivid memories of those days in Saigon, especially of Holy Week.

Rick Drummond had stayed on in Danang to help the Christian refugees. On his evacuation flight he helpfully held a seriously ill Vietnamese child on his lap. At Saigon he carried the child, dead, from the plane.

The Wednesday evening prayer meeting at the Alliance Guest House was so unusually large it was held outdoors. In addition to the almost total Alliance missionary staff, representatives of World Relief Commission and Overseas Crusades were in attendance. It was a very moving and very precious time of sharing and praying together. There was a tremendous spirit of camaraderie, of confidence in the Lord's guidance and of love as members of the one body who had served together in Viet Nam's so troubled recent history met for prayer. Almost everyone present had only a suitcase remaining of all their earthly goods.

As a fitting close to the prayer and praise meeting, Mr. Mangham stood on a chair and directed in the singing of the Viet Nam missionaries' favorite hymn, "The Coming of His Feet." The last verse still rings in my ears:

*He is coming, O my spirit, // With His everlasting peace,  
With His blessedness immortal and complete;  
He is coming, O my spirit, // And His coming brings release, --  
I listen for the coming of His feet.*

On Thursday evening -- the night all Christendom remembered the Last Supper of our Lord -- the Mission's executive committee, the executive council of the Evangelical Church of Viet Nam (C&MA), Mr. Mangham and I ate together for probably the last time. Some of these men had come from North Viet Nam and knew what it would be like to be under Communist rule. Some were already separated from their families due to the present crunch of war. It was a mealtime of deepest poignancy. Like the CP

Easter, the day Danang fell to the Communist forces, the thirty-fourth congregation (C&MA) in Saigon dedicated their new house of worship. It was the fourth new Saigon City church to be established during the year. Also on Easter Sunday a rather elderly couple attended a service at the Banco church in Saigon. They were refugees who had made their way out of Cheo Reo. The man had not been well and he had been carried about forty kilometers on the back of a South Vietnamese soldier. He said that for many years they had heard the gospel, but had put off accepting Christ. On the trail they had made up their minds to become Christian if they ever had a chance, and so this morning they went to the church and accepted the Lord there.

We trust this decision of the elderly couple will be the experience of thousands of others who have heard the gospel during Viet Nam's day and now face what may be an uncertain night.

Louis L. King, Vice President  
Overseas Ministries C&MA



Tuesday, March 11, the U.S. Embassy arranged for the rescue of the besieged group by helicopter; however, due to the intense antiaircraft barrage put up by the NVA, the attempt had to be abandoned.

On Wednesday when radio contact failed for the second time -- and with the thought that the AID representative might be able to receive a message, although not able to send one -- the operator in the aircraft requested that they place a mirror on the roof of the house to indicate they were able to hear. No mirror was placed on the roof. Twice again on Wednesday, helicopter attempts to rescue the beleaguered Americans were unsuccessful.

The AID compound was in a section of the city that was not seriously impaired by the battle. Clear to the end of the effort to maintain contact with the group inside the consulate building, the airplane pilot observed that the building remained undamaged.

For some reason C&MA missionaries Rev. and Mrs. S. N. Johnson did not join the group in the consulate building. The battle for Banmethuot had begun in the sector where they lived and it was very soon reduced to a shambles. It is known that a Raday family living near the Johnsons had a strong bunker and might possibly have invited the Johnsons to stay with them. Nothing concerning the Johnsons' whereabouts or condition has surfaced to date.

On Monday, March 10, while the Banmethuot missionaries were awaiting their fate in the USAID compound, Mr. and Mrs. R. W. Reed, in Cheo Reo, traveled twenty miles without incident from their home to Phu Thien. They had a wonderful day with the Christians there in teaching the Word, singing and enjoying a good tribal meal with them.

During recent months the Reeds' area had enjoyed more peace and more freedom to move on almost all roads than many of the provinces surrounding them. And they had been buying up the opportunity to visit the nine tribal congregations. But on this fateful Monday, the situation suddenly, wrenchingly, changed.

During the afternoon they noticed an unusual number of cars, trucks and buses from Cheo Reo heading toward Pleiku: buses with people crammed inside and other persons clinging to the top; trucks loaded with people and goods; cars overflowing with families; motorbikes with two and three persons on each -- all headed for Pleiku. It made them wonder what had happened back in Cheo Reo.

Midafternoon they left the Phu Thien church and headed for home. They were the only vehicle going that way -- everybody else was headed out. Arriving in town they found the shops closed, most of the people gone, the town's airstrip being rocketed hourly, their own house full of terrified Christians with all their possessions. They also learned that Banmethuot had fallen to the Communists and that a helicopter would be sent to lift them out in the morning.

That evening they had a precious prayer service with pastor and people and prayed with a badly frightened man who had been a Viet Cong prisoner once before. Then they walked through the house which had been home for over ten years. They packed two suitcases. It was not very pleasant.

That night the town was deserted except for a very few residents who were digging bunkers by light of kerosene lamps. Abandoned dogs howled and occasionally a baby cried. The Reeds could not sleep. At 5:00 a.m. rockets started landing again. Then they heard the Christians singing and went to join them. A church elder, a soldier, testified he had slept well all night. "How many times can you die?" he asked. "My life is in God's hands." His brother, a pastor who had been killed by the Viet Cong in 1971, had had this same joyful faith.

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French Priest, Fleeing CAMBODIA, Reports on Alliance Church Leaders: Rev. Francois Poncheaud, a French priest who managed to leave Cambodia with other French nationals, identified three C&MA church leaders who had taken refuge in the French embassy and were ministering to other refugees. All three subsequently were ordered out--two into the country and one to the stadium. The priest said he had traveled around the city on April 19 and saw many bodies on the road going up toward the Raday tribal area. Other bodies floated on the Mekong in front of the palace. By then the city was vacant. He noted as he drove down the street on which the C&MA headquarters was located that the building stood with doors and windows wide open in accordance with the directives of the conquering Khmer Liberation Army.

All Missionaries Out of LAOS: With the deteriorating situation in Laos all C&MA personnel have left the country, at least temporarily. Approximately 15 percent of the total C&MA missionary force was working in Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam.

Two Hundred Sponsors Still Needed for VIETNAMESE Refugees: With more than 1,300 Christian refugees now identified, it is estimated that 200 additional sponsors will be required for the remainder of Operation Viet Nam Heartbeat. Churches and individuals willing to sponsor a family should contact their district superintendent. Meanwhile, C&MA Viet Nam missionaries are ministering in all three U.S. camps and on Guam. An additional field office will be established at Indiantown Gap, Pa., as soon as the government opens that base to 10,000 refugees. Lt. Col. Louis Dechert, a retired Green Beret officer, is administering the C&MA operation.

CHILE Freedom to Evangelize "Unparalleled": Although Chile has had religious freedom for years, "the opportunities for witness in government institutions and the encouragement from government personnel are unparalleled in Chilean history," declares a Chile missionary, Mrs. Raymond P. Woerner.

CHILE Orphanage Faces Special Problem: About 40 of the 120 children in the orphanage at Loncoche receive no subsidy because they are over fifteen years of age. Director Luis San Martin does not want to force them to leave, for they have no place to go. Two special projects have been started in the hope of helping these teenagers pay their way at the church-sponsored facility.

Property at Last Secured for COLOMBIA Evangelistic Center: A long search has turned up property in Bucaramanga for a projected evangelistic center for which money was contributed by North American women. A church in the city is already operational and construction on the center should begin soon.

Three Urgent Requests Concern TAIWAN Missionaries: Three Taiwan churches face separate crises at this time. In Chungli, where the Misses Ruth Ruhl and Teresa Dunham work, decreasing attendance has produced a financial crisis and the church may have to find less expensive quarters. Evangelistic meetings are currently in progress. In Taichung Rev. and Mrs. Robert Harrison are beginning a new church. Two weeks of evangelistic meetings will be followed by two weeks of consolidation, with the pattern repeated throughout the summer months. In Hualien, where Miss Pearl Fustey serves, the church may already have been forced to leave the recreational center at Fu An which they have been using for public services. Meanwhile, two women who have prayed for forgiveness need to make a break with ancestral worship, and three others attending an English Bible class seem to understand the way of salvation but as yet are unwilling to commit themselves to the Lord.

# THE RELIGIOUS CARAVAN

## AT HOME

**High school graduates receive Bibles:** Churches in the Delta High School district of Muncie, Ind., presented a Bible or other religious book to every Delta graduating senior at Commencement exercises. Six Bibles and New Testaments were offered. If none of these was appropriate the student could request another book compatible with his faith.

**Public school murders exceed 100:** At a U.S. Senate subcommittee hearing in Washington, educators said that violence in American schools is rising at a terrifying rate, and linked it to the declining moral climate of the nation as a whole. An eighteen-month study involving 757 school districts shows that destruction of school property cost \$500 million a year, and that more than 100 murders were committed in the schools each year. At least 70,000 assaults on teachers were recorded. The "students' rights" movement has contributed to the rise of violence, according to Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers. Leniency in the courts was cited as one of the contributing causes.

**Scriptures for the Vietnamese:** The United Bible Societies rushed a message of hope to Vietnamese people recently relocated at various centers in the United States and overseas. The American Bible Society is printing 50,000 copies each of two Scripture Selections in Vietnamese on the theme of hope. The first contains Psalms 27 and 55 and 2 Corinthians 2:1-13. The second is John 14. These were shipped by air to chaplains at military bases in the United States where Vietnamese refugees are temporarily housed—Camp Pendleton, Calif., Fort Chaffee, Ark., and Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. The United Bible Societies production center in Hong Kong rushed a printing of 10,000 Vietnamese New Testaments, 20,000 copies of a Scripture Portion containing the life and teachings of Jesus and 50,000 additional Vietnamese Scripture Selections on the theme of consolation for shipment to Guam, the Philippines, Wake Island and other refugee centers around the world.

**Nondinner banquet for relief:** Instead of the usual banquet of the World Relief Commission, meeting in annual session at the convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in April, delegates met to fast and pray for the world's suffering people. Each person received a five-ounce packet of millet seed, the average daily personal allotment in

food crisis areas, and contributed the cost of their normal meal to world relief. The more than \$1,000 received would supply a day's ration to some 12,000 people in the famine-ridden African sub-Sahara. Dr. Nathan Bailey was reelected president of the organization. Dr. Everett Graffam is executive vice-president of the agency, which has its headquarters in King of Prussia, Pa.

## ABROAD

**Religious freedom for Chad:** Following the assassination of President Ngarta Tombalbaye in April, the ruling military council published a decree which authorized full religious freedom in this nation of central Africa. Churches and temples closed by the Tombalbaye regime were reopened. The autocratic rule of the former president and the revisionist cultural program resulted in persecution of Christians and death for many pastors and other church leaders (see 4/9 issue).

**"Love China" theme of study congress:** "Love China, '75," an international study conference that will focus on the possibilities for evangelism in China, is scheduled to be held in Manila September 7-11. The goals of the meeting include "mapping out the educational and spiritual training of a new generation of Christian workers for China, and also calling the attention of millions of overseas Chinese and Christians everywhere to the need to take up the spiritual burden of China."

**Israel recognizes Africa's black Jews:** In a surprise announcement in April the Israeli government announced that the Falasha people of Ethiopia would be recognized as Jews. The matter had been in dispute for more than two years. The Falashas are descendants of the tribe of Dan, the fifth son of Jacob. They are in the same position as a baby caught among Gentiles. "We are ordered to save them from assimilation and to quicken their immigration to Israel," said Rabbi Ovadia Yosef. It was a significant decision since it marks a turning point in the internal political pattern of Israel. Previously the rabbinate was the final authority as to who is a Jew. The Falashas must undergo a cleansing ceremony and formal conversion since there has been intermarriage in Ethiopia.

**Campaign against Christians in Equatorial Guinea:** A "campaign against all believers in God" is under way in Equatorial Guinea, a small country on the West African coast, according to reports filtering through European sources. The Swiss League for Human Rights reported last year that President Francisco Macias Nguema was pursuing "militant atheism" in the enclave which is more than 95 percent Christian. More than a fourth of the country's people have fled because of torture and politically motivated killings, the source said. New reports say the president has closed all private schools.



Though Phnom Penh falls  
and with it  
the Khmer Republic

# The Church Is Still Growing!

By A. EUGENE HALL

*Late in March the author and three other missionaries returned for a twelve-day stay in Phnom Penh, Khmer Republic, which they had left a month earlier. This is the last eyewitness report on Phnom Penh from our missionaries before its fall.*

ARRIVING at Pochentong airport, we were quickly confronted by the realities of the war.

As we descended the steps of our plane, sirens warned of an incoming rocket. We hit the tarmac until the danger passed; then we were hustled into a bus driven by a man suited out for combat in flak jacket and helmet and quickly driven from the airport.

The town of Pochentong, once a thriving place, was now completely deserted. In Phnom Penh, craters in the streets, broken glass, large rocket holes in buildings and overcrowded hospitals were testimony to the war's devastation. Fear and hopelessness

filled the hearts of the people. Most knew instinctively that the fall of Phnom Penh was only a matter of time.

In contrast to the bleak military and political situation was the mood in the church. All the churches in Phnom Penh were filled to overflowing. On the Sunday that we were there 185 persons turned to Christ in the city churches. That same week 135 followed the Lord in baptism.

Every day inquirers came to the churches and to the homes of Christians. That week another new church was started in a home, increasing the number of churches or church groups in Phnom Penh to about thirty.

The Christians' zeal for evangelism has intensified. Believers seemed hardly aware that the city was ringed by insurgent forces. They were compelled by concern for the spiritual condition of their countrymen. When we left on February 27 it was not a teary-eyed farewell. Rather, the church leaders requested literature and spoke of their

plans to extend the gospel to the unreached.

Now two second-year students in the Ta Khmau Bible Institute, concerned for the youth in the neighboring Ta Khmau High School, had invited the students to a rally. Eight hundred and fifty attended and 192 made decisions for Christ. Those same two students have organized teams of young people to place gospel literature in every home in Ta Khmau, and they have started seven Bible study cells which are meeting nightly in the area.

The Campus Crusade for Christ director has started "College Life" meetings on Saturdays. During March 132 turned to Christ. He has disciplined thirty young people in soulwinning, who in turn reported 300 decisions for Christ.

The church continues its dual ministry of proclaiming the gospel and sharing Christ's love in tangible ways. Mr. Sin Som, who has opened a refugee relief camp at his church at New Phnom Penh, reports that he has

taken in around five thousand refugees. From that number have come one thousand believers.

People are turning to Christ for two reasons: first, they are attracted by the Christian love and concern displayed by believers who are alleviating the temporal needs of others; second, they see a new hope in Jesus Christ. They say their former gods gave them teachings, but then went off and died. The words often heard on the lips of new believers is that "Jesus is alive."

The sad plight of homeless and hungry refugees is surpassed only by that of the growing number of amputees and paraplegics who bear the permanent scars of war.

Two young believers, concerned about these people, started witnessing to them in the hospital. After forty found Christ they decided to start their own church. Since every available space in the hospital was filled with the wounded, a missionary opened his home to them. Now the group has grown to more than a hundred believers.

What a sight it is to see these men

*A grieving mother at the grave of her fallen soldier son*



Photo by Religious News Service



with broken and mutilated bodies singing because of their newfound joy in Christ. Perhaps it is the first time ever that people have come to church walking on borrowed artificial legs because they themselves had none. A growing group of wheelchair evangelists is rolling around the streets of Phnom Penh distributing tracts and witnessing.

I could not help but think of First John 2:17 during our visit: "This world is fading away, . . . but whoever keeps doing the will of God will live forever" (LB).

The riel is valueless, for the Communists will issue new currency. Cars and houses and land have no value, for the market is glutted since many families abandoned these things as they fled the country. High government positions are no longer desired, for they only expose one to a probable purge. So much that was once so attractive in this republic is fading away.

In contrast, the Christians have

coupled their lives to eternal values. The validity of their choice has been accentuated in this hour of crisis.

Just before leaving Phnom Penh I met with some of the church leaders. In our discussions we talked about the possible peril to their lives should a Communist regime take over. I can never forget their comments.

One layman said he had already settled this matter in his own heart. While pursuing a Ph.D. degree in England he had felt led of the Lord to forgo his further education and return home to join in the spiritual harvest. At that time he realized the possible consequences of his decision. Now he and the others had no thought of fleeing.

"The Christians need us," they said simply. "We must stay and help them."

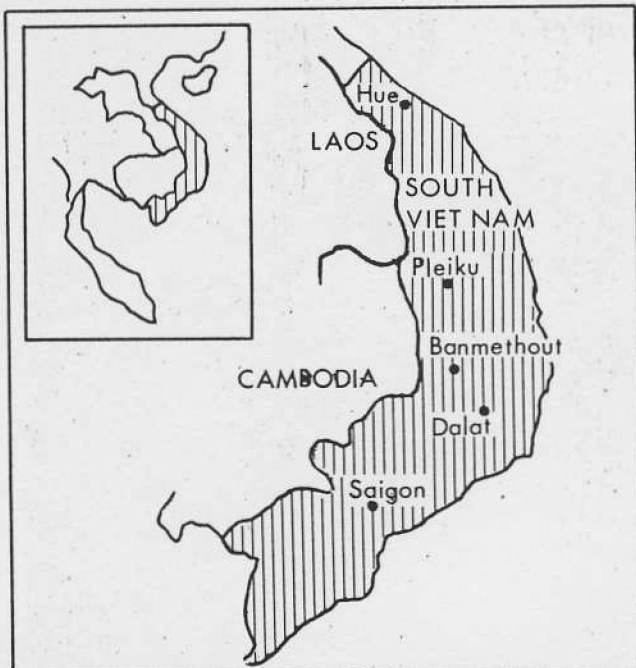
With such dedication as that, it is not difficult to understand why God is blessing His church in the Khmer Republic. ■

# C S O

*Christian Service Outreach, the student evangelistic group at the Alliance Academy in Quito, spent a holiday carrying the gospel to the people of Ambato during the annual Fruit and Flower Festival.*

*Clockwise, beginning upper right, are Terrylynn Kadle (l.) and Linda Abrams doing some last-minute checking of Scripture references; the entire group with faculty adviser David Stockman (l.), sharing a quiet time together; and Juan Zalles (l.) and Dan Smith (seated on sidewalk) witnessing to two men they met in the park. Several people were led to Christ as the Holy Spirit moved in power upon the young people.*





## SITUATION REPORT VIET NAM

**General:** The country's 66,270 square miles make it approximately equal in size to the states of Florida and Washington. The population of 19.1 million is 80-85 percent ethnic Vietnamese, with minority groups of 1.5 million Khmers (Cambodians) and a million Chinese. The remaining one million belong to some thirty highland tribes.

Over the past thirty years war has forced many people from a rural environment to urban centers. Saigon, the capital, has almost four million residents (20 percent of the population). An estimated 37 percent lives in cities.

Viet Nam's fertile soil and tropical climate once made it a rice- and rubber-exporting nation. But fighting has forced evacuation of large areas of productive land. In recent years the country has depended on massive foreign aid for survival.

The land is now completely under Communist control: the North Vietnamese north of the 17th parallel, the Provisional Revolutionary Government (Viet Cong) in the south.

**Religious Overview:** The Christian community of South Viet Nam has the highest percentage (11.5) of population of all the mainland nations of Southeast Asia. (Korea has 10 percent.) Roman Catholics are by far the largest group. Less than 1 percent is Protestant.

The first missionary force in Viet Nam was the Roman Catholic Church which entered three and one-half centuries ago. Persecution cost the church an estimated 100,000 martyrs but did not blunt a strong missionary effort which has resulted today in approximately two million members. In 1972 over 125 missionary priests were reported at work in Viet Nam. Although no longer strongly evangelistic, the church's growth keeps pace with the population increase.

The Catholic Church has exerted considerable in-

fluence on the country through its adherents who occupy many government and business positions.

The first Protestant agency to enter was the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1890. Twenty-one years later the first church-planting mission, the C&MA, arrived and for nearly fifty years remained the major missionary force. During the lull in fighting in the mid-1950s the Southern Baptists, Mennonites and World Evangelization Crusade began work.

More missions moved in during the Viet Nam war; from 1958 to 1971 the North American missionary force almost tripled. In 1973 twenty-five mission agencies had 280 people at work; another fifteen or more agencies provided financial support to Protestant ministries.

**Alliance Update:** The Evangelical Church of Viet Nam (ECVN), result of Alliance missions, is the largest Protestant denomination. In 1973 it reported 53,425 baptized members in 490 organized churches served by 712 pastors and workers. The number of adherents and congregations is undoubtedly higher, but the war has disrupted both the flow of information and the normal life of the churches. The total ECVN community is about 150,000.

The ECVN is an evangelistic church. Evangelism Deep and Wide (EDW), launched in 1970, has not caught on in all areas, but did contribute to the church's 4 percent annual growth among ethnic Vietnamese and 11 percent among the tribespeople. In 1973 baptisms totaled 4,020, and many more converts were unable to be baptized because of the war.

The ECVN and C&MA work together in the training of church leaders. The Biblical and Theological Institute at Nhatrang in 1974 had the largest student body ever. A total of 264 students were enrolled in long-term courses in the three central Bible schools. Another 580 leaders

received short-term training. Over 700 studied in Theological Education by Extension courses. Sunday school enrollment reached 25,800.

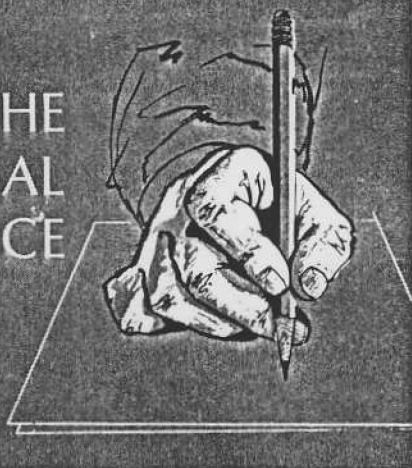
Viet Nam has a relatively high literacy rate (88 percent in urban areas). National workers and missionaries cooperated in producing 38 million pages of literature for this reading public. Wycliffe and Alliance Bible translators worked in over twenty of the thirty tribal languages. The Jarai New Testament was published early this year.

In addition to utilizing relief funds from other agencies, the Alliance spent \$20,000 US to purchase supplies and food for displaced people and distributed tons of donated relief goods. Some missionaries are now involved in aiding in the settling of Vietnamese refugees in the United States.

The Communist offensive in March forced the evacuation of all the sixty missionaries in the country; most have been reassigned to missionary work in other countries. At presstime five C&MA missionaries were still held prisoners.



## THE EDITORIAL VOICE



### ALL THE DOORS ARE NOT CLOSED

Does the sudden cutoff of major missionary activity in the Khmer Republic and South Viet Nam, tragic though it seems, signal the end of foreign missions worldwide?

Young people who suppose that it does need to take a look at the unprecedented opportunities in so many other places. Probably never have so many of the world's areas been so wide open to the Christian missionary.

Latin America is a case in point. The mood throughout Latin America is receptive, thanks in part to the directive of the Roman Catholic Church allowing—and urging—its members to read the Bible. Protestant bookstores are inundated with demands from Roman Catholics for Bibles. The Word of God, once denied to most Latins, is now an open book. By means of home Bible studies, radio broadcasts, cassette-taped messages, evangelistic campaigns, gospel films and face-to-face witness, the message of the Bible is being heard. The Word is doing its work.

The evangelistic campaign last year in Lima has been one of the more publicized examples of Latin openness to the gospel. In a year's time better than two thousand received Christ, and the end is not yet. Attendance at the C&MA Prince Church in Lima jumped sevenfold, to one thousand. People of prominence have been among the converts.

Less well known but equally noteworthy have been the hundreds of decisions for Christ in summer youth and children's meetings in Chile, the stirring among the Otavalo Indians of Ecuador, the congregations begun in northern Colombia through the influence of the "*Alianza en Marcha*" radio broadcasts, the progress in Brazil.

West Africa is another example. Here the focus has been on the large turning to Christ in the Ivory Coast which caught church and Mission completely unprepared for the influx of believers.

In Southeast Asia, in those areas where missionary work may be most threatened, there is a remarkable interest in the gospel. In the Chaiyapoom district of Thailand in recent months more than a thousand people have turned to the Lord through the evangelistic activities led by Pastor Tong Moon Jaengbahn, newly elected president of the Gospel Church (C&MA) of Thailand. In a nation so staunchly Buddhist, this response is unusual.

In Indonesia, gains in Kalimantan, where whole villages have turned to Christ, have been well documented, and the

response to the gospel in other parts of the sprawling archipelago, while less spectacular, has been both steady and significant.

In nation after nation there is an openness to the claims of Christ that calls for greater-than-ever effort on the part of the church. Both in the initial evangelizing and in the consolidation of converts Western missionaries continue to play a vital role.

"In South America we could place fifty missionaries right now with a desire to open new cities and multiply churches," asserts Rev. David K. Volstad, Regional Director. "There are areas we should be entering. We are being pressured to go into Bolivia. We should have couples in Uruguay to assist the young church there. The radio response in northern Colombia is amazing; the Colombia church cannot keep up with it.

"In South America it's open doors everywhere—really!"

Rev. George C. Klein, Mr. Volstad's counterpart for West Africa, has a similar urgency about his projections.

"Gabon is free, wide and open. We could use five couples and several single persons. We need more missionaries in the Ivory Coast. Mali and Upper Volta are open for four or five couples each. Two more teachers are needed in the Guinea Bible Institute. We urgently need doctors for Zaire and Gabon."

Rev. W. W. Kerr, whose administrative area stretches from Japan southward along the fringes of the western Pacific, is remarkably optimistic. His region will gain many of the Southeast Asia missionaries now being reassigned, but even all of them would not satisfy the crying needs. He cites districts in Indonesia with from twenty-five to forty thousand believers with only one missionary couple working among them, and other churches almost as large with no missionary partnership. Only one Alliance couple is doing church-planting in Jakarta, a city of five million. Half a dozen other cities on Java with a million or more people each ought to be entered.

"Taiwan has always been short of missionary staff," Mr. Kerr says, "as has been Japan." In the Philippines the church will need help if it is to achieve its goal of doubling by 1979. "We see no letup!" Mr. Kerr adds.

Significantly, the developments that forced missionaries from South Viet Nam and the Khmer Republic came just as the number of missionary candidates was increasing after half a dozen lean years.

"It will be a tragedy," agrees Dr. Louis L. King, Vice-President/Overseas Ministries, "if young people get the idea that they are not needed. The collapse of missionary work in China in 1949 caused some people to be pessimistic, yet this past quarter century has been the greatest in the annals of missions. There is reason to believe that God is prepared to pour out His Spirit in an even greater measure in the years immediately ahead.

"May the church worldwide be prepared to respond."

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How about this?

from file, articles, VN General Eice

## The Church in South Viet Nam

### WHAT WENT RIGHT?

"What of the future for the church in South Viet Nam? As I look at leadership in the church, and in my own heart, I am pessimistic. But as I look at my Lord, I am optimistic. No one can destroy that church because it is built on the Rock of Ages."

The man who made that statement has the credentials to speak. He is Dr. Le Hoang Phu, Tin Lanh director of theological education by extension in South Viet Nam and also of the church's graduate theological program before Communism triumphed in April. Tin Lanh, the Evangelical Church of Viet Nam (ECVN), has been an autonomous denomination since 1927. The ECVN's community of 150,000 out of a total 175,000 Protestants makes it the nation's major Protestant denomination.

#### Systematic Preparation

If, as Dr. Phu believes, the church will stand despite Communist pressure, it will not be by mere chance. The Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA), parent mission of Tin Lanh, began work in Viet Nam in 1911, but World War II was a warning that time was limited. So since 1945 church leaders and missionaries have been preparing the church for the trial of faith now begun.

Dr. Phu is himself a product of that preparation. A top priority of the church and mission has been to give qualified young pastors the best education possible. After graduating from Nyack College and Wheaton Graduate School with honors, Le Hoang Phu won a coveted award given every five years for the best doctoral dissertation during that period at New York University.

Local pastoral training was another Tin Lanh priority. In 1973 full-term Bible school and seminary students numbered 264; another 700 people received short-term training.

Specialists worked for years in the systematic preparation of a pastor's library to aid church leaders in continuing self-education. By 1975 the library contained over 70 titles, including such study aids as a concordance, a Greek lexicon, volumes of church history and biblical exposition.

More recently the ECVN has placed strong emphasis on evangelism. Rev. Doan Van Mieng, church president, urged, "We must win ten million converts to Christ before He returns." In response the church and mission organized "Evangelism Deep and Wide" in 1969. The emphasis on witnessing cells and small prayer groups may be the church's best resource for maintaining its spiritual vitality under a hostile regime.

#### Warm-Up Trials

It would be a mistake, however, to think that South Vietnamese Christians are just now beginning their ordeal by fire. For over three decades they have been persecuted for their faith. First came the Japanese during World War II. After 1945 they suffered as much from

the French as from the Communist Viet Minh. Following the French defeat in 1954 they were subjected to a deliberate campaign of terror and murder directed by Hanoi.

Testing of another sort came after 1954. The World Council of Churches tried to buy its way into Viet Nam with the offer of scholarships for pastors and material aid for congregations. They succeeded no more than the Communists.

During the same period of testing Tin Lanh churches registered their best growth. In the ten-year period beginning 1964, 24,450 people were baptized, a growth rate of 44 percent. ?

#### Refugees by Conscience

Few South Vietnamese Christians feared death by the Communists. They had lived too long under that threat. But the strong desire to worship God as they believed, plus the stronger desire that their children not become wards of an atheistic state drove many of them to attempt escape. Only an estimated 1,500 got out.

Dr. Phu spoke for the few church leaders who escaped. "I wanted to stay. But if I did, I would have either been liquidated or so effectively silenced that I would have been of help to no one. By leaving I am still able to help my people in other countries."

Thousands of believers left behind will still be led by approximately 700 Tin Lanh pastors and workers stranded with them. Among them is the church president. Mr. Mieng refused several offers of a visa and plane ticket. "I prefer to stay and suffer with my people," he said.

#### The Word at Large

In considering what went right in the church in South Viet Nam, perhaps the biggest plus was the determined effort by every means to spread the gospel as widely as possible. Nothing can undo what the Word of God has begun.

Take, for example, what happened on Easter Sunday in Saigon when the fourth new church this year in the city was dedicated. After the service an elderly couple came to the altar for salvation.

"We are refugees from Cheo Reo," the husband explained. "I became so weak while fleeing that I could not continue. A soldier picked me up and carried me on his back for forty kilometers. I told my wife at that time that for many years we had heard the gospel without responding. We agreed it was time to believe in Jesus."

Upon arriving in Saigon, they entered the first Tin Lanh church they found and did just that.

Dr. Phu put it this way: "Thousands upon thousands of Vietnamese have heard the gospel but did nothing about it. I believe that this is the crucial year and the Lord is giving us a great harvest in Viet Nam."

--By Robert L. Niklaus, Associate Editor,  
The Alliance Witness