

## OPERATION "SERVICE"

Evangelizing the Unreached Mountain Peoples of  
Viet-Nam, Cambodia & Laos.

Rev. and Mrs. GORDON H. SMITH, Box 95, Danang (Tourane), Viet Nam.

Circular No. 41, March 1956.

Dear Co-Workers in the Homeland:

We are thrilled to be back again in Indo-China! This time our headquarters are in central Viet Nam, for what we are temporarily calling OPERATION "SERVICE". We believe God is leading us to make plans for the speedy evangelization of every unreached tribe in Central Viet Nam, South Laos and northeast Cambodia accessible to the Gospel. In deep humility and perfect trust we launch out into this new venture of faith.

We feel a special call to make first of all an intensive survey of the scores of tribes and dialects listed in the margin which are still without foreign missionaries, and to present the challenge to you dear ones at home in order that you will pray that immediate steps might be taken to occupy these tribal areas while the doors are wide open today. We have come back entirely independent at least for the time being. We are going to bombard you with facts and figures which we believe will startle you. We want to do our part so that the Christian Church will see that it is without excuse if it doesn't do something practical and adequate now.

Our last circular was No. 40 in October 1955. It has been impossible to write since, because we have been travelling continually and we packed all our office records and equipment for shipment to the field last October. This was shipped out from Chicago in December. We are now unpacking and organizing our office again in our new home out here as our goods are just arriving. 14 cases and drums with beds and equipment are reported missing at Saigon. Please pray that these may be found. They were not insured.

MEETINGS ON FURLOUGH.

During October we took meetings in the Chicago area. Then we started in Spokane, Wash., on November 3rd to help premiere with Rev. and Mrs. Clay Cooper and Rev. John Newman, their great new cinemascope film, "Trail's End". The picture was taken by these Vision Inc., friends a year ago mostly in our former district of Banmethuot among the Ralay, Mhong and Stieng tribes. It ends with the challenge of the scores of unreached tribes hidden in behind the mountain ranges that we are looking at right now from our office window in Tourane.

5000 people saw it first in the Spokane Coliseum. Then we made our way east taking meetings in every state across to Philadelphia. We went as far north as Brantford, Ont., and south as far as Quincy, Ill. We spoke etc... almost every night. Because of the size of the 21-ft. screen, the meetings had to be held in large churches, or high school, college or civic auditoriums. The picture was greatly appreciated everywhere we went and it has just been awarded the Missionary Film Award for 1955 by the National Evangelical Film Foundation.

To mention a few of the places where we held meetings - In Buffalo, N.Y., the meeting was sponsored by the Ministerial Association, in the Kleinhans Civic Auditorium. It was shown in Wheaton College where 1800 people - half of the audience students - packed the gym. Dr. H.H. Savage's First Baptist Church of Pontiac, Mich., was crowded with about 1200 people.



Dr. Sidney Correll's Christian Temple in Dayton, Ohio; Rev. Carl Burnham's Chapel on Fir Hill (now our own home church) in Akron, Ohio; Dr. Hager's Bethany Reformed Church in Chicago - were all enthusiastic over the challenge.

Our son Stanley drove from Wheaton College back with us to Spokane, where we spent a wonderful Christmas with our Vision Inc., friends. At New Year's we said good-bye to our dear Stan as he flew back to school again. He and his fiancée Ginny Scull are juniors in Wheaton and are preparing to be missionaries.

We continued through January with John Newman and the film from Vancouver, BC. down the West Coast to Los Angeles. At the Seattle Pacific College the picture had to be shown twice in one evening. We showed the film to a wonderful crowd in the Church of the Open Door on the first day of their Torrey Memorial Conference in Los Angeles. Dr. Louis Talbot, our very esteemed and special friend, Dr. Sutherland and Dr. Oran Smith of BIOLA kindly arranged the meeting for us. In the Los Angeles area we were also at Dr. Wm. Orr's Hope Union Church, and in the great Pasadena Civic Auditorium.

#### FLYING BACK TO SAIGON AND OUR BOYS.

At noon on January 30th we had a warm send-off by dear friends in Los Angeles as we boarded the PAA Stratocruiser for our swift flight by Honolulu and Manila to Saigon. We arrived on February 2nd at noon. It had seemed only a few minutes before we were back in the familiar surroundings of tropical Saigon again. What a joy it was to be reunited with our little family out here - Leslie, Douglas and Ruth and our two sweet grandchildren Linda and Dougie. Our son Leslie is doing well as a professional hunter taking mostly American Government personnel into the jungles on elephant back to hunt for big game. He has had some terrific experiences with wild elephants, gaur tigers and bears. One of his safaris is being written up now for Sports Illustrated Magazine by Harry Bristol, one of the foremost photographers in the Far East, who sponsored the hunt.

Douglas and Ruth are in the American Embassy in Saigon. Doug is in charge of the distribution of information films and mobile units through Viet Nam. We had never seen baby Dougie (15 months old) before and Gordon hadn't seen Linda, now four, since she was six days old. We've been called Grandfather and Grandmother by our mountain people for years, for that is their title of honor, but now we really have a right to it.

#### "HE GOETH BEFORE"

Just before boarding our plane in Los Angeles, Ruth's mother and father, the Lanes from Mississippi, telephoned us and reminded us of the verse, "He goeth before" Truly the Lord is opening up the way before us. Within a week after our arrival we were able to purchase a four-wheel drive Rover Pick-up car, rent a house at Tourane, and see important Government officials who assured us of their co-operation. As we mentioned in our last circular we are not returning to our old field at Bannethuet, although the native church and leaders are pleading for us to return. We are many hundreds of miles north of that area, which is being manned by missionaries of the C. and M.A.

On February 16th, Gordon flew 1200 miles north from Saigon to Vientiane, Laos seat of the Royal Laotian Government. He visited the American and British Ambassador. The latter sent his secretary to introduce him to the various government ministers. He first saw the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs who arranged for a six-month visit for him to enter the country of Laos as many times as he wished. This can later be extended. He saw the Minister of Worship and the Minister of the Interior. All the officials to whom he explained our new project, OPERATION "SERVICE", thought it a wonderful thing, and said they would do what they could to help. He experienced no opposition whatever. The Minister of Worship thought that any medical personnel could be put on the Government budget. The Minister of the Interior is writing to the governors of the three provinces in South Laos, telling them to facilitate our survey in every way.

Gordon explained that OPERATION "SERVICE" is out to pave the way for the establishing of many tribal centers where the medical approach would be emphasized, along with the evangelistic program. The head of the U.S. Overseas Mission (USOM) (medical, technical and agricultural aid) hopes we can get started soon in South Laos among the central and southern tribes for nothing is being done for them. The medical officer of USOM in Vientiane was most enthusiastic and offered every help with medical equipment and supplies.

It is amazing to realize that so many agencies are out here to help the main peoples of the land - Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laosians - in a material way, but Protestant Missions are hardly in evidence. The following are some of the agencies: Roman Catholic Welfare; American Friends of Viet Nam; USOM; International Rescue Commission; CARE (food); International Labor Organization; French Cultural Mission; Operation Brotherhood (50 Filipino medical teams); Mennonite Central Committee (food, clothing); Church World Service (World Council of Churches) relief; etc....

#### UNREACHED TRIBES - NO MISSIONARIES



But the tribespeople in these unreachd areas are not in any way being benefited by these agencies. No one cares to bother about them, mainly because they are difficult to reach. So we are out here because we care for them. We are sure that you will care too. What a crime if the Church of Christ "passes by on the other side" and refuses them salvation at this time of marvelous opportunity! Once mission stations are established in these wild areas many of the agencies will be eager to help them too with much material aid. There is a great job to be done and we often feel that unless we do something about it, it may be many years before anyone else does.

#### HERE ARE SOME OF THE FACTS:

The list of three-score tribes and dialects on page one is not complete. We shall soon find more to add to it. But the tragic fact is that there is no foreign missionary working among them, and only one or two native workers. They live in a mountainous area four hundred miles long in south Laos, central Viet Nam and northeast Cambodia. In central Viet Nam with 15 or more tribes there are only two isolated native workers under the C. & M.A. In central and south Laos there are only one or two native lay workers under the Swiss Plymouth Brethren. In northeast Cambodia with five tribes, there is no missionary work whatever.

Most of these are very primitive people. Some have dreadful human sacrifices, where if a young man can plunge his spear 100 times in human bodies he is greatly honored by his village. Some cut off one of their enemy's fingers, pound it to pulp, and rub it all over their bodies. This is supposed to give them the strength of their enemy. They often eat the liver of their enemy for the same reason. One tribes does not even live in houses. They are jungle nomads who live only in leafy shelters. Called the "Yellow Leaf People", they move on when their leafy huts turn yellow. The majority of these tribes live on high mountain slopes in bamboo longhouses. Some are very hostile and warlike, surrounding their villages with fortifications and hiding poisoned lances under leaves on their pathways. Some dialects of the Jeh tribe are said to talk at certain times like chickens cackling. When a group meets to discuss a serious affair they think they must imitate the cackle of hens when they speak!

In the next few months we expect to visit many of these unreachd areas to find out where tribal mission centers should be established and how many missionaries and native workers are needed. We are going forth in complete faith that God is already preparing some Mission Board, with the missionaries, doctors, nurses, etc., for this colossal task. By occupying a main tribal area, we do not mean just putting in a native worker practically isolated and on his own, with no facilities or resources, but we mean organized missionary work in charge of foreign missionaries who will undertake a full ministry of pioneer evangelism, medical work, education and training of native evangelists, translation work, etc. Experience over 27 years has shown that the native worker left to himself, rarely visited by the missionary, and having no

help, gets discouraged and really accomplishes very little. In order to build up an indigenous church a strong evangelistic effort must first be made over a long period, and converts must be trained to carry the Gospel farther on the trail to their own people. Someone must begin the work and lay a solid foundation.

We have hardly unpacked our baggage but already young Vietnamese Christians are coming to us to learn how they might fit into God's program to evangelize these mountain peoples. As soon as funds are available, we want to start teaching some of these for a special ministry among the tribes.

#### POLITICAL SITUATION.

We are happy to say that the country is calm and quickly getting back to normal after ten years of war. There is no comparison with a year ago. Thanks to the honest and energetic leadership of President Ngo Dinh Diem of Viet Nam, this country's outlook is brighter than it has been for many years. We praise God for wide open doors everywhere and no restrictions. Please pray that all three States may go forward in peace and that God may bless these millions with salvation.

#### PROMOTING THE WORK.

We are going to send tape recordings to Vision Inc., for their radio ministry in the Pacific Northwest, and to others who request them. With our portable tape recorder (which is with our baggage reported missing, but which we hope may be found) we shall be giving first hand descriptions of our contacts with these different tribes. To those of you who support this work, we will as before send photographs for your church bulletin boards, and regular reports to stimulate your interest and prayers. Just as the names RADAY, JARAI, MNCNG AND STIENG and others have been on the lips of thousands of American and Canadian friends during the past years, we hope now to make such new tribal names as ALAK, BRAO, SO, KASSING, JRU and all of these on the list, familiar in your missionary discussion groups and prayer meetings. We shall keep you posted on specific needs.

#### PRESENT NEEDS.

Right now our greatest need is for travel expenses, the upkeep of our light truck which rattles to pieces on these desperate trails into the mountain areas, and on the main highways that have been ripped up during the war and still not properly fixed. We shall be needing an out-board motor (available here) and a small boat to haul behind our car for river work. Our office overhead will be considerable as we print circulars, send photos and tape recordings, and mail many letters by air mail. We would like to start training Vietnamese missionaries for tribal work as soon as possible. Twenty dollars a month will cover the expenses of an unmarried man, while in training.

#### HOW TO SEND GIFTS:

Checks sent direct to us here at the address: Box 95, Danang, (Tourane), Viet Nam, will be acknowledged by us as before with our receipt. For those who wish to receive U.S. receipts for income tax purposes, gifts designated for OPERATION "SERVICE" may be sent to Vision, Inc. Box 1, Spokane, Wash, made out to them. When they forward the gift to us we shall send you our receipt also. In Canada, gifts may be sent made out to the Missionary Health Institute,

designated for us, in care of Miss Louise Kirby, 325 Sheppard Ave., Lansing, Ont. They will send you their receipt and forward the gift on to us.

In our next letter we'll tell you about the beauties of Tourane—situated on a lovely bay on the South China Sea, surrounded by towering mountains. We never tire of the flitting sail boats and magnificent scenery. We are trying to find time to learn the Vietnamese language, which is one of the hardest. With warmest regards,

Very gratefully yours in Him,