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Laos - cont.

The Swiss Brethren Mission began work in southern Laos in 1902 and have continued until today, with three stations in the region of Savannaket. They have made preaching trips and done colportage work in the northern part of the country, but for the most part they have confined their work to the south where they have a group of several hundred Christians scattered through the country. The Swiss missionaries translated the Bible into the Lao language, the New Testament having been printed in 1926 and the entire Bible in 1932.

Recently an independent missionary with what would appear as good backing has entered south Laos to work among the tribes.

Early workers of the North Siam Mission of the Presbyterian Church made trips through the kingdom of Luang Prabang with such good results that there are now several hundred believers among the Kha people of Laos. Several years ago, however, the Presbyterian Mission in Siam turned over to The Christian and Missionary Alliance this large area in northern Laos, as they had no main station there.

The C. & M. A. has four main mission stations. They are Luang Prabang, Vientiane, Xieng Khouang, and Sayaboury, the last named having been entered in 1955. All are in north Laos. The present staff of Alliance missionaries at work on the field numbers 14 with 6 missionaries detained in the United States for health reasons or on special assignments. Three new missionaries will reach Laos during 1957.

Until 1950 the number of converts after twenty years of labor was less than twenty. Then suddenly in a few brief weeks there were about 1000 converts.

Today there are in Xieng Khouang Province alone approximately 5,000 Christians in 94 villages. In Luang Prabang Province there are 1,115 Christians in 19 villages.

The Christian and Missionary Alliance aims to occupy the remaining sections of north Laos as soon as the provinces there have been released from Pathet Lao (Vietminh) control.

Viet Nam

In order to comprehend our work in Viet Nam, an historical resume seems essential. The facts briefly stated are as follows:

At the founding of our Society 70 years ago, it was declared to be one of its main objectives to take the gospel to the closed land of Indo China. As early as 1893 our Foreign Secretary visited Saigon. At the same time our missionaries in South China were camping along the northern border waiting for the first opportunity to enter. No missionary, however, succeeded in getting a foothold for the Mission, despite repeated efforts, until 1911.

In that year property was purchased at Tourane, half-way down the coast; then, four years later, with a staff of nine missionaries and the prospects bright, the French Government issued a decree prohibiting any further work among the natives. Our chapels were closed and some of the missionaries forced to leave the country. The few who remained were not allowed to do any missionary work. A year later the ban was lifted, with the proviso that gospel work could only be done in the port cities and in South Viet

Nam. A treaty made in 1884 between the Annamese Empire and the French Government, which restricted all missionary propaganda in the Empire to the Roman Catholic Church, was responsible for much of the trouble, and it was a thing the Mission had continually to reckon with in most of the intervening years.

At the time the ban was lifted, the Alliance missionaries, though now hopelessly depleted in number and restricted in their orbit of labor, decided on a policy of "spreading out". In rapid succession, under circumstances that were nothing short of unusual, they occupied Hanoi, Haiphong, Tourane, Saigon, Mytho and Cantho. In each of these cities the beginning of the Lord's work reads like a continuation of the Book of Acts. The Holy Spirit brought key men and women into contact with the missionaries.

In Hanoi a celebrated Annamese sculptor as well as a wealthy university man and also the editor of the newspaper were among the first converts.

At Hue one of the first converts was the wife of a Duke at the royal court, and their first pastor had been the royal court historian.

The Tourane Church began with the conversion of a Confucian classical scholar of reputation, as well as four members of the Annamese royal family, three customs officials, and three secretaries employed in the head office of the government railway. This Tourane Church doubled its membership each year for a number of years, until there were over 1,000 members. The Christians had received the contagious type of salvation, and as in the days of the apostles they went everywhere gossiping the gospel.

At Faifoo a popular actor well known throughout the province was converted, and after being trained in the Bible School became a famous preacher. In one year's ministry 1,000 people were converted. Like Paul he was called before the Governor, jailed and finally exiled because of his phenomenal success in preaching the Word. He is still the most successful soulwinner in the country.

The work in South Viet Nam sprang up in what seemed for a time to be almost a mass movement, and that in spite of fierce persecution in every village.

One remarkable feature of the work in this country was that while the missionary was prohibited to minister in other than the main cities, the national brethren carried the saving message to the lesser towns and their work has yielded good results. By 1927 the work had progressed to such an extent that the evangelical church of Viet Nam was organized with its own administrative setup. Complete self-support was made a requirement for full membership in that national church body. Congregations that were subsidized by the Mission were permitted to send delegates to the Annual Conference of the national church. They were allowed to take part in the discussions, but they could not vote or hold office. The method employed in attaining self-support was rather novel. For every ten members the Mission subsidy was reduced 10%. When a church attained 100 members all Mission subsidy ceased. By 1935 sixty-three churches had attained full membership in the national church; each had its own church building built with its own money. By 1941, 75% of all the churches, or 121 congregations, had attained full self-support.

Viet Nam - cont.

"The promising work of the entire field was dealt a severe blow with the coming of World War II and the invasion and occupation of Indo China by the Japanese. Some of the missionaries were evacuated; others were interned, but not to be released until after Japan was defeated. Most of the released internees then returned to America to recuperate. For ten months one lone missionary in the country carried on as the sole administrator for the Society, and the only missionary counsellor for the distressed national church."

"As soon as possible after the close of the war, missionaries began to return to the field. They found scenes of desolation and ruin throughout Viet Nam. Nearly all property of the Mission and Church had been looted and every building required extensive repairs. The damage in property, however, was nothing in comparison to what the national church had suffered. Some pastors and many Christians had been martyred. Of those who were spared, many were left sick, destitute and afraid. Travel was unsafe throughout Viet Nam except by aeroplane or convoy, and even convoys were sometimes attacked and destroyed." (Foreign Department's Missionary Atlas). Slowly, however, the scenes of desolation were changing for the better and thousands of evacuees were returning to their homes, when the war between the people who were striving for national independence, and the French who sought to hold Indo China in colonial status, broke out. Beginning in 1945 this caused heavy loss of life and property and tragic suffering among the people. During this war, disaster came to many Christian homes, and death to not a few of the pastors. Pastors and missionaries worked in the face of constant danger of attack from ambushes and grenades. Our preachers and Christians were often under suspicion from both sides. In the interior, where a number of our churches were located, some of the rice fields had to be abandoned and where cultivation continued, crops were repeatedly looted. Consequently many people in this one-time rich granary of Southeast Asia were made poor, and this made it most difficult to continue self-support. During the years of the civil war crisis, there was scarcely a week that some prominent Christian, often a pastor, was not robbed or killed.

The laconic record reads thus:

1. Mr. Nguyen-thien-Thi, pastor of Thanh Quit Church, Central Viet Nam, and his wife and son were killed by the Viet Minh in a field near the village of Thanh Quit at night. They were seized and bound at the home of a Christian and were then led away to the place of execution.
2. Mr. Phan Lang, preacher, was shot by French soldiers. His body was thrown into the Bau-Sau river between Phong Thu and Tourane.
3. Mr. Ma-Vien, Mr. Dang-Kien and Mr. Phan-phung-Phuc, deacons in the church, were killed by French soldiers at the same time with pastor Lang.
4. Mr. Nguyen-van-Tai, serving as pastor at Ma-Lam, Central Viet Nam, was pursued and shot by the Viet Minh on the road between Phan-Thiet and Ma-Lam.
5. Mr. Trinh-Ly, preacher, was seized and done away with by French soldiers at the Nhatrang station. Later his wife was shot at Cam-Ly, Dalat.
6. Mr. Nguyen-van-Huan was killed by soldiers of the French Army in Soc-trang district, South Viet Nam.

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7. Mr. Pham-van-Khan, preacher, was killed by Tho soldiers in Soc-trang area.
8. Mr. Tran-my-Be, preacher at Choudoc, South Viet Nam, was seized and killed by the Viet Minh who buried him standing up at Tien Sam. The tragedy affected his wife who became ill and died leaving two children.
9. Rev. Trinh-an-Meo was killed during an attack by Viet Minh on a convoy between Saigon and Dalat. - 1948
10. Mr. Nguyen-Dau was killed by French soldiers and buried near Phong-Thu. His family later found the body and re-buried it.
11. Mr. So, an earnest Christian at Phong-Thu, Central Viet Nam, was killed by French soldiers while on his way to church with his Bible in his hand.
12. Rev. Tran-Chuong and deacon Chinh of Can-Duoc, South Viet Nam, were killed by Viet Minh near Can-Duoc.
13. Mr. Huong-Khai, and village chief Cac, were killed by Viet Minh at Quang Ngai.
14. An elderly man and his wife who looked after the church at an outstation from Go-cong, South Viet Nam, were killed by Viet Minh.
15. Mr. Chanh Ho and his son, Mr. Le-vanTiep, were shot by French soldiers at Bien Hoa.
16. Mr. Ho-ngoc-An, preacher, killed by the Hoa Hao (sect) at Cai Von, South Viet Nam.

In Central Viet Nam District alone 93 Christians were killed by the bombing and shooting.

Christians in all the areas were terrorized. Because of the threats, rumors and sporadic attacks on the towns, many Christians decided to seek safer surroundings. They wandered in the mountains and out-of-the-way places. When they returned, destitute, they found their homes had been invaded and looted and everything lost. Other Christians had been drafted, tortured or imprisoned by both sides in the conflict. The Christians themselves were divided in their loyalties. Quite a large number sided with the Viet Minh. This was due largely to their passionate love of their country and their determined though silent opposition to and hatred of foreign control.

The war damage to churches was great and although a number have already been re-built, those listed below and on the following page have not.

South Viet Nam

1. My-tho. This is one of the most prominent cities in South Viet Nam and our largest church in the South was here. The building was burned to the ground and has not been rebuilt.

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2. Binh-Tay. This church was bombed during the fighting between the sects. The Christians have not been able to get enough to rebuild.
3. Binh-tri-Dong. This church was occupied by French troops and has not yet been rebuilt; they have a little temporary thatch structure but need to do something to replace the church.
4. An-thi-Dong. The French forces destroyed this church and the flock was scattered. Christians are now meeting but they do not have enough money to rebuild their church building.
5. Cao-lanh. This church also was badly affected by the war and the pastor is making every effort to rebuild. They have secured a piece of land and are ready to build.
6. Quan-tre. Here was a nice little church, but it, too, was destroyed during the fighting; they now have a little temporary chapel.
7. My-an. A bomb destroyed the church building when it was a jumping-off place for what was the hideout of rebels during the war.

Central Viet Nam

Six brick and tile roof churches and one thatch church were destroyed.

1. Dai An destroyed twice, first by Viet Minh and then rebuilt. Second time by French bomb, and has been partially rebuilt.
2. Khanh Binh destroyed three times by French. First time by bomb and rebuilt on river bank in thatch. Second time by bomb and rebuilt on original foundation.
3. Thu Bon destroyed three times by French and now nearly completed.
4. Phu Lanh destroyed by French. Bricks used to build a fort.
5. Truong An destroyed twice by French. First time by bomb, and second time it was torn down.
6. Ninh Hoa destroyed by French and now nearly finished.
7. Mo Duc completely destroyed and burned by French. Not yet rebuilt.

Six parsonages were destroyed. Two have been rebuilt. Four partly rebuilt.

The Church has gone through great tribulation and because of it some have grown cold or wavered in their faith. For these, suffering and want did not result in intensified faith and devotion; rather, carelessness crept in and a light view of sin is now noticeable in some. Since many churches were closed or burned or occupied by the military, the believers - to a large extent and for long periods - were deprived of the ministry of the Word. There are, however, many who came through purified and perfected.

In order to bolster the faltering and beleaguered Church, the Mission began to subsidize the pastors' support, as well as to help in the rebuilding of churches. In no instance, however, was more than \$60.00 given to any one church. The result was that the number of self-supporting congregations was greatly reduced. Of the 140 organized churches situated south of the 17th parallel until April 1954, 76 only were still on a full self-supporting basis. Today, however, all 140 are completely self-supporting.

Viet Nam - cont.

Despite the spiritual and economic problems facing the church, there are wonderful indications of renewed vitality in the various congregations. In all of my travels I have never seen such intensive witnessing being carried on by the lay people as well as the pastors. Thirty-four churches by actual records have had 502 baptisms from January to October of this year, 1956. The churches in Saigon and environs have about 300 people engaging in regular witnessing from house to house. The Saigon Central Church is full for the Sunday service and holds three evangelistic services each week, almost always with fruit: in one recent service in the Central Church, sixty were baptized. Six churches in the South have purchased a sizable boat for working the canal area. They report wonderful results.

At Nhatrang the church, without aid of money or personnel from our mission, conducts an orphanage and school for about 300 pupils. The 52 orphans are the children, for the most part, of pastors who were killed in the war. This orphanage, though not as large as some others I have seen, is the best in plan, cleanliness, finances and administration that I have seen. Our church is THE Protestant Church of the land, with a constituency of 42,000. Except for four small Seventh Day Adventist churches we are the only group there. This field, therefore, is our most serious obligation as a mission today.

In addition to the work among the Vietnamese people themselves, work is being carried on among the tribes people in the central plateau region. Here where there are approximately 1,200,000 tribes people, The Christian and Missionary Alliance is carrying on work, using 24 tribal languages with a staff of 15 Vietnamese missionaries from the Evangelical Church of Viet Nam and 37 American missionaries. There are 157 church groups and a baptized adult membership of 2,218 (children are not counted.)

The Christian and Missionary Alliance has entered into a working agreement with Wycliffe Translators with a view to entering the unreached tribes. .

At Banmethuot a leprosarium is conducted with 284 resident patients. The American Leprosy Missions, Inc. contributes to the support of this project.

In a recapitulation for the whole of free Viet Nam, including the work among the Vietnamese as well as the tribal people, The Christian and Missionary Alliance has on the field 86 missionaries with 14 under appointment to sail for the field within the next few months. This is a total staff of 100 American missionaries. There are 297 congregations of Christians south of the 17th parallel. The Christian and Missionary Alliance has occupied most of the strategic centers throughout Viet Nam and is working together with the national church to evangelize the outlying areas. Also the Christian and Missionary Alliance has placed on official record that it will give Viet Nam top priority for the next few years in regard to missionary personnel.

The Mennonite Central Committee is working in Viet Nam, and the Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, with headquarters at Akron, Pennsylvania, has sent two missionaries to Viet Nam and has another couple under appointment to that field.

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