

S. Nyacker, a Viet Nam Missionary, 'I Think the War Will End Abruptly'



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Photo by Bruce Reisman

A MEMENTO FROM VIET NAM IS SHOWN BY REV. STEBBINS
... one of many artifacts collected during 41 years of missionary work

HIS ELDEST daughter, Mrs. George Irwin, is presently working in a tribal area in South Vietnam which is heavily infested with Viet Cong guerrillas.

"I don't think the war can go on much longer. We're going to win it. The world never believes us — paper tigers they call us in the Far East—until they find out."

Rev. Stebbins says that demonstrations in the United States must make American soldiers in Vietnam "furious."

"America is a terrible power to reckon with. We have about 140,000 troops there now and it will be 200,000 soon.

Those fellows are not there just to walk around. I think the government in Washington has a definite plan and we'll go through with it."

As a missionary, Rev. Stebbins' main objective is winning converts to Christianity. When he first went to Vietnam there were only a handful. Upon departure in 1960 there were more than 100,000.

The Christian Missionary Alliance, founded by Dr. A.B. Simpson, has more than 900 missionaries in 42 countries, about 100 in Vietnam.

In addition to missionary work, the alliance holds religious services for U.S. Army personnel in Saigon, a city in which the alliance has 20

churches. The alliance also operates orphanages and does some medical work.

"When the war is over, the people of Vietnam will need new equipment. They will need many new bridges which have been destroyed. They are a very proud people, very very comparable to the Japanese in learning ability and their culture is Chinese. They just need to be left alone. They can govern themselves."

ACCORDING to Rev. Stebbins, Vietnam has excellent highway and railway systems. "The French did some wonderful things over there, but

The war in Vietnam will soon end because of the determination of the United States to win the conflict, says a 71-year old South Nyack minister who spent 41 years of his life in the war-ravaged republic as a missionary.

"I think the war will end abruptly. I have a personal opinion how but I would rather not say. What America is doing there seems to be the only way," says Rev. Irving Stebbins of Fern Ave., who came home from Vietnam in 1960.

Rev. Stebbins, who is affiliated with the evangelistic Christian Missionary Alliance, first went to Vietnam as a missionary in Sept. of 1918 at age 24.

"It was just nine days before the Armistice and we had quite a time getting away because of all the troop ships in the harbor in San Francisco."

The missionary tradition is deeply steeped in the Stebbins family, going back three generations. Five of his seven children presently serve as missionaries, two in Vietnam, the others in neighboring Far East countries including the Philippines, Cambodia and Indonesia.

When Rev. Stebbins left Vietnam five years ago his son Thomas took over his work about 50 miles south of the 17th parallel.

it is difficult to keep things rolling because of the bombings. They are really getting pounded," says the reverend who gets two to three letters weekly from friends in Vietnam.

In the early days, Vietnam was known as French Indo-China and included both Laos and Cambodia. During World War II, he and his family narrowly escaped to the Philippines when the Japanese swarmed in. Those remaining were thrown into concentration camps.

He was also in the country when the Vietnamese fought the French and French forces at Dien Bien Phu capitulated.

Why has this little, seemingly insignificant Far East nation for so long remained a pawn in a power struggle between east and west? Because of economics, says Rev. Stebbins.

"It is the bread basket of the Orient. It is an area that made many Frenchmen rich. It is a matter of trade and all of the larger countries have at one time or another had their fingers in the pie." He also cites the little nation's vast tin, rubber and oil reserves.

Rev. Stebbins, who recently reorganized a church in Baltimore, Md., but had to step down because of poor health, hopes to return to Vietnam next spring.

"I'm adjusting myself to life here. I hope to renew my ministry soon if I don't go back to Vietnam". A book he has written dealing with the history of the Vietnamese church is presently in manuscript form.

A normal term in Vietnam is 5½ years so everytime he returned to the United States between tours he noted tremendous modernization.

"I have spent so much time in the Orient that sometimes I even have to stop to think of the right English word," he concedes.



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