

YESTERDAY, June 1, I flew by military plane to Banméthuot, where I learned all the details available regarding the abduction of Dr. Ardel Vietti, Rev. Archie Mitchell and Dan Gerber on May 30 at the Leprosarium.

I believe you are aware that beginning May 23 a special seminar on leprosy was held at the Leprosarium under the direction of Dr. Richard Buker. All the missionaries who are giving any assistance to the outclinic ministry, which includes the Reeds, Longs, Flemings, Phillips and Mr. Frazier, were attending this seminar. Mr. Long and Mr. Fleming were not at the Leprosarium since they had accompanied Rev. H. P. Williams on a trip to visit some of the stations in Central Viet Nam.

On Friday night, May 25, the Viet Cong forces [Communists] cut the road between Banméthuot and the Leprosarium by felling twenty-three trees and burning three bridges. This was discovered the next morning. The twenty-three trees were all felled within a distance of approximately three and a half kilometers from the Leprosarium. They had also planted bamboo spikes along the sides of the road and had put up signs in Raday and Vietnamese stating that no one was to use the road on penalty of retaliation.

This was reported on Saturday morning to the American military advisers in Banméthuot and also to the Vietnamese authorities. When the report was first given, the missionaries did not know how many trees had been felled but simply reported that the road was blocked by trees. It was not discovered until later that the three bridges had been burned.

It was impossible to make any contact with our personnel at the Leprosarium until Sunday morning. Then the Viet Nam Marines finally arrived at the Leprosarium with the word that they had cleared the road but that the bridges were out. The

*The abduction of three missionaries at the Leprosarium in Viet Nam was reported in our last issue and has been well publicized in the public press. This report to the Foreign Department was received in New York on June 7. (See page 4 for late news.)*

*The missionaries stationed at the Leprosarium, located about nine miles from Banméthuot, are: Rev. A. E. Mitchell, superintendent, and Mrs. Mitchell and their four children; Dr. E. A. Vietti; and the nurses, Miss Olive Kingsbury, Miss Ruth M. Wilting, Miss Maxine Craig and Miss Dawn Deets. Mr. Daniel Gerber, of the Mennonite Central Committee, worked with our missionaries at the hospital.*



Vietnamese captain told the missionaries they must all evacuate to Banméthuot.

The missionaries were very reluctant to leave, so made arrangements for Archie Mitchell and Dave Frazier to accompany the Marine captain back to Banméthuot to talk with the authorities. After conferring with those of the American advisory group, it was decided that all visiting personnel on the station should be evacuated that day. However, the missionaries, in consultation with the American military advisers, decided that it would be to the best interests of the work for the personnel assigned to the Leprosarium to continue their ministries as in the past. Since there had never been any indication of any ill feeling against the Leprosarium, and since the same personnel had lived there for a long period of time, it was thought that there was nothing to fear. Also, on Sunday afternoon, the Viet Congs struck at a Muong refugee village some twelve kilometers beyond the Leprosarium, and it was assumed that this was their reason for having cut the road.

That afternoon (Sunday) all the visiting personnel were moved into Banméthuot and those on the staff at the Leprosarium remained there. Nothing happened the following three days and there was no indication of any impending crisis.

On Wednesday evenings the Leprosarium staff has a prayer meeting together. As they were making preparations to meet at Dr. Vietti's house a group of approximately twelve armed men arrived just at dusk (about 7:45 P.M.). They had divided into three bands; one of these bands met Dan Gerber and immediately tied him up. Another band went directly to the Mitchell residence and ordered Archie Mitchell out. They tied him up and led him away to join Dan Gerber. Mrs. Mitchell and the three older children (ages thirteen, ten and eight) all witnessed this. Geraldine, the youngest of the Mitchell children (age four), was already asleep in bed, and the Viet Cong agents would not permit Mrs. Mitchell to return to the house to get her.

Others of the guerrillas had already gone to Dr. Vietti's house where they found her in bed also. She had a very bad ulcer on her left ankle and so had retired early. She was ordered to get up and dress and was led unbound to join the two men who were being kept outside the confines of the Leprosarium compound.

The remainder of the Viet Cong group ordered the Mitchell family and the nurses to gather in front of the nurses' residence. They asked for the car keys, and after some little delay were given the keys to Miss Kingsbury's Land Rover. Part of the group then went to get the car while the others remained to lecture the nurses, Mrs. Mitchell and the children. They spoke in Raday, but according to what the various members of the staff could ascertain, there was only one true Raday in the group. There were a few Vietnamese and some of another tribal group; they spoke Raday but rather poorly. During the lecture they made many threats to all of the missionaries, calling them oppressors of the people, betrayers of the people, agents of the government, and

Alliance Life Article by T. Grady Mangham Jr.



Mr. Mitchell



Dr. Vietti



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## "YE PRISONERS OF HOPE"

May 30, 1962

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