

NEWS

Suffering in South Viet Nam

As conditions in South Viet Nam deteriorated rapidly during Holy Week, most missionaries there were reported to be safe, and they and other church people were helping in the vast effort to feed and resettle hundreds of thousands of refugees.

Seven missionaries and a child, however, were presumed to be in the hands of the Viet Cong or North Vietnamese invaders. They are:

Mr. and Mrs. Norman Johnson, both 39, of Hamiton, Ontario (Christian and Missionary Alliance); Richard and Lillian Phillips, 45 and 43, of Bloomington, Minnesota (CMA); Mrs. Archie Mitchell, 54, of Bly, Oregon (CMA); and John and Carolyn Miller and their five-year-old daughter, of Allentown, Pennsylvania (Wycliffe Bible Translators).

All were at Ban Me Thuot in the central highlands, where the CMA op-

erates a leprosarium and hospital. The Johnsons fled into the jungle at the outset of the attack on the town early last month and still had not been heard from as of March 26. The others, along with one or two other foreign civilians, had reportedly sought shelter in the compound of the International Commission for Control and Supervision as fierce fighting raged through the area. Radio contact with the group was lost on March 14.

North Vietnamese sources, in replying to inquiries about the missionaries, said no harm would come to civilians genuinely engaged in humanitarian work, according to a U. S. State Department source.

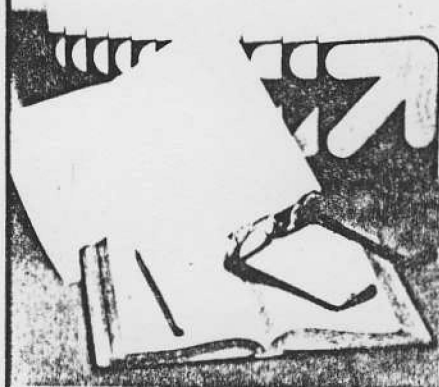
Mrs. Mitchell's husband was kidnapped by the Viet Cong from Ban Me Thuot in the Tet Offensive of 1962. Two others taken with Mitchell at that time were Elinor Ardel Vietti, a doctor from Houston, and Mennonite worker Daniel Gerber of Dalton, Ohio. Gerber is presumed dead; Mitchell and Dr. Vietti are listed as missing. Mission leaders say privately they believe the pair are dead also, but there have been scattered—and disputed—reports suggesting the two have been seen alive in Viet Cong captivity.

Concern was also expressed for the well-being of national church workers at Ban Me Thuot and for the nationals there on the staff of Vietnam Christian Service, a joint project of the U. S. National Council of Churches and Lutheran World Relief.

Mennonite worker Earl Martin of New Holland, Pennsylvania, stayed behind in Quang Ngai. A friend said Martin didn't believe political barriers should affect his relationship with the people. Martin is on good terms with the Viet Cong, added the friend.

Most CMA missionaries in inland locations left their posts in mid-February when rumors spread that an attack was imminent, then returned when nothing happened. Miraculously, only

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those in Ban Me Thuot were trapped. They were evacuated in March. 10,000 people fled from Da Lai in March.

Those cities follow

In another miracle of sorts, Cliffe's sixty Viet Nam-based workers and their children were attending a translation conference on the coast of Nha Trang when he reported their number of them would have been transferred safely from Da Nang with working up in the hill country.

FFKSA

The Millers left the conference for a two-week stay in Ban Me Thieu to check the final stages of a New Testament translation. (Mrs. Miller has twenty language projects underway in South Viet Nam.) Mrs. Miller is the daughter of Stephen Paine, former president of Houghton College. New York's older Miller children were in Saigon at month's end.

As the fighting intensified, the U.S. military airlifted many of the missionaries to the CMA-affiliated Evangelical Seminary in Nha Trang and Saigon. More than 5,000 Protestants in the land were evacuated to the CMA-affiliated Evangelical Seminary in Nha Trang.

Both the U.S. and the CMA have important Bible schools with them. The CMA Bible school enrollment of some 10,000 students was left in Nha Trang.

Da Nang. The majority of the missionaries were evacuated to the Philippines or Bangkok. The CMA has ninety-three missionaries in South Viet Nam, including several on loan from other groups (48 are Americans). Most were evacuated late last month.

All six of the Southern Baptist Convention's missionaries were evacuated to the Philippines or Bangkok.

PRAYER REQUEST

Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen started praying three years ago for the medical and other work of the U.S. Air Force. He is distributing "family survival kits"—sacks that contain clothing, cooking utensils, and a small number of international medical supplies.

Lonien services in New York then went to bed to do their weekly services daily, though preaching on Good Friday services on Easter Sunday. Sheen says he's added a commitment to his prayer request: he wants to die "on a feast of the Blessed Sacrament." "If I don't," he says, smiling, "I'm going to be very embarrassed."

EDWARD E. PLOWMAN

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