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Resumé of
work in Viet-nam

Dear Brother Reimer:

Thank you for your letter of June 4. We do have considerable material on Indo-China, Calls, Conference and committee minutes, correspondence with missionaries, officials, Foreign Department in fact almost everything from the beginning of the work. I am in process of putting it in order and have promised Dr Barney to give him a report on it. This will be delayed until we are located in Stouffville Ont. about the middle of next month. Soon after we celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary June 28. It is quite a year, our 50th, school 50th and field 60th! The only way you could examine what I have would be in person, for I have a small trunk full of materials. Here is a brief resume of Indochina events as I recall them. If you need more data after reading this, I will be happy to do what I can to assist.

Alliance work in French Indo-China began as a result of a burden on the hearts of our missionaries in South China. Jaffray, Hughes and ~~Hoese~~ visited Hanoi and Tourane. The first missionaries included Paul Hosher and Birkel who later served in China under the Presbyterian Board, Soderberg, Cadmans and Irwins. The next group included Olsen, Stebbins, R.M. Jackson, Jeffrey and then those who moved into Cambodia, Thailand, Laos and Tribal areas. (Hammonds, Ellisons, Gunthers, Roffes and Grobbs, H.A. Jackson, Gordon Smiths, Homera Homer-Dixon)

The Mission located first in Tourane (Danang) purchasing the house of the B & F Bible Society representative who was ~~settling~~ ~~France~~, a providential arrangement. We still have it. Then we moved to Hanoi, Cadmans later ^{were} joined by R.M. Jackson and Jeffrey. And in 1918 Saigon; Olsen, Stebbins, H.A. Jackson and others.

At first we were limited to the cities of Hanoi, Haiphong and Tourane. These were considered to be treaty ports under the French. All other areas in Tonkin and Annam were protectorates and closed to foreign missionary work. There was indeed a treaty granting religious liberty. This was interpreted to mean only French catholic missionaries. Actually this was not so stated in the treaty. All of Cochin China was considered to be a French colony, so we were not hindered there.

During World War 1 the Mission was closed by the French authorities because so many missionaries had German names, including Mrs Cadman and Mrs Irwin, not yet married. Mr Hess superintendent of the Indo China work living in Wuchow, South China, wisely took steps to have himself replaced by Mr Jaffray. Jaffray made a visit to Hanoi just when the battle of Verdun was in progress. His visit with the French Resident Superieur, Mr San Jaffray was a diplomatic success. Being Canadian, Anglo-Saxon, for a ~~win~~ French victory at Verdun, and almost claiming relationship with San Jaffray, permission was given to continue the work. There was some discouragement or other and a few missionaries left the field but others remained.

Contrary to what has been written, French officials in Indo-China were the highest type of men and brilliant. It is not to be wondered at that they were suspicious of American missionaries. To them there must be a political association; it had been so as far as their experience went. It required years of patience, perseverance, constant visitation, working only through French channels, never through American or other, putting up with every inconvenience or obstacle. Lower officials were not always what they should have been in relation to the Vietnamese but the top men were high minded in relation to the nationals, at least as far as was possible under a colonial system. We were not involved in the political picture and dealt always on the highest level and were willing to bide our time until we had won their confidence. With scores of hours of hard work we succeeded in winning that confidence as well as a deep heart relationship with all Vietnamese. Most officials were nominally Roman Catholic but they did not like too much church interference or influence. This gained us some favor with the officials as we took a non political stand. And we were useful in teaching their youngsters English. They also helped us with French. They gradually realized our sincerity even though for a long time we were closely followed by agents of the Surete to be sure that we were not furthering political unrest.

On my first interview with Mr René Robin, resident superieur in Hanoi I was received with considerable distrust. They were sure Mr Cadman was working with the Vietnamese revolutionaries. He did know them but was not involved. Later Mr Robin was very friendly to the Mission and became Governor General.

Our work of course was involved entirely with the development of the Vietnamese Church. We did rejoice when the Vietnamese were granted their independence. Had it been complete from the beginning after World War 2, the present struggle might well not have occurred. Or if U.S. had endeavored to bring both sides together instead of sending in an army things might have been different. This of course would have involved a different approach, one that might have prevented the deterioration that forced the use of American troops to prevent the fall of the Vietnamese government. But all this of course is only my personal conjecture.

Opposition therefore to our work was due mainly to a logical and innate suspicion from the French viewpoint but back of it was a spiritual conflict as Satan attempted to block the spread of the Gospel. Restrictions actually helped because enquire4s came in from the country. We were well advertized. Little by little the work grew and we were permitted to open chapels in the country. We visited the christians constantly and enjoyed the marvelous Vietnamese hospitality. Then came alarm, suspicion and attempts to close the churches. Decrees were issued (I have them) our men were imprisoned including Rev Ong van Huyen. Mr L'eu was preaching in Nhatrang. He was arrested, jailed and put to work on the road gang. He won a church while in prison and organized it. A wonderful story. Mr Cadman had friends in France and the French protestant pastor in Hanoi helped. Word of the persecution got around and the matter was brought up in the French Chamber of Deputies. It was a scandal they said that a protestant pastor was sweeping streets in Nhatrang. As a result of this and basically because of prayer all were released.

In Danang as I took over from Mr Irwin in the early thirties the local French Resident in Faifoo (Hoi An) strictly forbade me to carry on any activity in Quang Nam province. Event though the Resident Superieur in Hue Mr Pierre Pasquier was very friendly the local Resident was not. The cause really was an American former chplain in the Philippines who was in Vietnam with his wife a noted botanist. He wore old army fatigues and stopped a car out in the boon docks which happened to be that of the Resident. ~~Suppxix~~ Imagine the U.S. army taking over Quang Nam provinze! For the first and last time I met an official who was really hot under the collar and who did not sit but strode around the room. I was out in the district next day but his men arrested the wrong man, a noted French geologist sent out from France and a friend of ours. He later died at Dien bien Phu. The Resident did not stay but we did.

Another time in Hue I visited the Resident Superieur upon invitation. First we talked of his fine collection of stuffed birds. He was a real ornithologist. Then he told me that we were forbidden to have Vietnamese work in the province unless I was present. Finally he told me how I could manage to do it. Officially No but practically Yes if I knew how to take the responsibility, it required seven years of persistent knocking but not writing to have a missionary live in Hue. We finally entered in '29 or '30. Spiritual persistence is determination in action.

All these challenges were thrilling. Permission for the Bible Magazine, the Bible College, Official government recognition of the Vietnamese Church and acceptance of their Constitution and many other details. Each step has contributed to the wonderful opportunities of the present.

There were attempts to split the National Church. The discipline of Rev Tran xuan Phan, a brilliant leader, who did not yield to discipline by the Vietnamese committee. I worked hard to win him and loved him. He tried to turn everything over to the Adventists. Later after leaving them he came back to the Lord but was killed while serving as a government official. Had he met God he undoubtedly would have continued as leader and President of the church. His case was the opposite to that of Rev Le dinh Tuoi who as a student tried to force the dismissal of a fellow student in Bible College. Unsuccessful in this he threatend to take all southern students back home. But he yielded and became a leader and channel of God's blessing. Other attempts have been made ^{to divide} but God has graciously preserved the unity of the Vietnamese church.

Then the Cao Dai movement was raised up to block church growth. A large popular movement politico-religious in nature. The leader was once an enquirer under Mr Olsen. Again and again satan has used devices to block the Church and the spread of the Gospel but has been over ruled.

There has been constant emphasis on revival. In 1923 Brother Wong was greatly used in meetings in the Bible School. Rev H.E. Nelson in 1950 after he had waited on God on his face for three days in Hongkong before coming on to Viet Nam. Dr John Sung came to us in 1923 when Mrs Jeffrey asked that he be invited. Results of these meetings continue to this day. Missionaries from the homeland or other fields have contributed constantly to revival right up to the present ministries of Rev Allen and Mr Ravi Zacharias. The entire Alliance set-up of Conferencs local, district and national have had their place. And with it the daily ministries of the missionary in the district or in other special areas of service.

Church growth involved the early use of the catechism, preparation of the church constitution, Bible translation, preparation of literature, Bible College, Short Term schools and constant itineration.

This is just a little summary of the background and I have not touched on many phases nor the splendid work of national pastors and christians which is the most important part of the church foundation in the Lord.

Will appreciate anything that you are able to pass on from Mrs Olsen. Mrs Jeffrey has some things in mind and we were close to the Olsens while in Danang. I believe you had a paper at Council and we will be glad for a copy of that.

Yours in Christ,