

NOTES FROM CONVERSATION WITH DR. HARRY HAINES  
WHO WAS RECENTLY IN HANOI - March 12, 1975~~FILE~~

Dr. Haines stated that the situation in Hanoi, as far as the Christian witness is concerned seems to him to be very similar to the first five years in China after the Communists took over there. He says the church is walking a tight rope. They are in a very tenuous situation there. He stated at the beginning that any attempt by The Christian and Missionary Alliance to make contact with the church in North Viet Nam is not acceptable. He did state that the General Secretary, when he was aware of the meeting in May, where churches of Alliance origin and fellowship will be meeting here, that he wanted to send his greetings in Christ to those who will be present at that meeting.

Dr. Haines said that the Protestant church in North Viet Nam has quite a different relationship to the government, as compared to the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholics claim about one million members in the north. They are a significant minority, whereas the Protestant church with a constituent membership of 10,000 (even this seems a very high figure) has a very minimal significance as far as the government is concerned.

There are 41 churches that are presently functioning. Recently the church at Hai Duong was rebuilt and was dedicated in December. There are 26 pastors. Nineteen of these are full-time and supported by their congregations. The others are in "tent-making" ministries, most of them teachers. The church is under constant surveillance by government representatives. Mr. Thu, the General Secretary of the church, is a member of the national assembly of the government.

Mr. Thu has made two trips outside North Viet Nam. In 1973 he spent two weeks in France at the invitation of the World Council of Churches where he was the guest of the Presbyterian church in France. During that trip he took a government translator with him. More recently he was in Kerala, India for 10 days. He attended the Asia Christian Peace Conference. This is not related anyway to the W.C.C. Ninety percent of those present were from Asian countries. Mr. Thu traveled from Hanoi to Moscow, and from Moscow to India, and returned the same route.

The church will have a general conference when all the churches are represented, on the 18th of March in Hanoi. The meeting will be for a five-day period and at that time, they will celebrate their twentieth anniversary as the Protestant Church in the Democratic Republic.

The ministry of training students for Christian ministry was closed in 1969. It will reopen this month in the building next to the Hanor church. They have quite a few students who will be enrolled. Three pastors will be teaching the classes. They will teach Theological Training, Spiritual Ministries, and Social Service.

They have a program of Christian Education. It is carried on primarily in the homes. Family worship is widely practiced among the Christian families. They also have one hour of Sunday School each Sunday for the children and young people.

the sanctuary. It is a portion of Acts 26:23. The Vietnamese inscription is like this: "Dang Christ phi chiu thuong kho cuu chuoc moi nguoi." Printed underneath was the additional statement: "Dieu you can la tro nen nguoi moi." They cannot, under any circumstances, accept any published works or literature from outside the country. They do know about station FEBC in the Philippines. They do not hear it. Dr. Haines said he asked this question frequently in different places where he went. No one said they heard the program. He did, however, while traveling by car, find that one of the drivers was listening to Radio Saigon, and Dr. Haines was quite surprised about this.

Pastor Phuc and the General Secretary, Thu, may go to Nairobi in November as observers at the World Council meeting. They have no intention of joining the World Council of Churches.

The letter from Dr. Bailey was handed by Dr. Haines to the Red Cross representatives. Dr. Haines handled it this way because he was there at the invitation of the Red Cross and he knew that he must not try to conceal anything. Two days later the letter was given to the General Secretary, Mr. Thu. Mr. Thu said that Jesus Christ is our Leader. He is the Prince of Peace. He is the One to whom we look as our Head. He went on in this vein with, as Dr. Haines described it, deep, evangelical tone in all that he said. He further stated that all during the war and during the time of bombing, the churches were left open around the clock in order to minister to the needs of people. He then asked Dr. Haines, "Will you see Dr. Bailey? Will you give him this message?" He repeated this question. Dr. Haines assured him that he would see Dr. Bailey, and would give him the following message: "They, (that is, the C. & M.A.) abandoned us in 1955. Some of the missionaries persuaded some pastors and members of our churches to go to the South. Now why do they desire to establish contact with us?" The message continues, "Dr. Bailey's letter is very true. Every word in it is a good word. I appreciate his letter very much. I send him my greetings in Christ, but his letter is all about faith. There are no works evident. The New Testament says, 'Faith without works is dead.'

"Why is the C. & M.A. silent, and why has it been silent over the years? There has been no protest against the action of the United States Government against North Viet Nam. Homes have been destroyed. The lives of many have been lost, but The Christian and Missionary Alliance said nothing. Aren't Christians concerned about these things? Our church goes on, as you can see. We appreciate the prayers and the support of churches everywhere. Contacts with churches, however, must be in the Socialist countries. It is not possible to invite representatives of The C. & M.A., or to have contact with them. Dr. Bailey's letter came too late. There is much about faith. His missionaries, however, in the south have not been helpful. We believe the dark clouds will pass. We are part of the body of Christ. We trust His leadership."

Dr. Haines further shared with me a conversation he had with a Mrs. An, one of the PRG representatives, that would be the Viet Cong from the South, who is in Hanoi. She stated there are churches in the PRG area. She invited Dr. Haines to visit Loc Ninh next November. She further stated that those in the PRG have not yet accepted the Socialist system. They are considering it, but they must not be viewed as a part of the system in Viet Nam. She said their immediate concern are the educational and medical needs of the people. Reunification needs can take time. The urgent matters are to

care for the needs of the people. Another urgent matter which she mentioned is the removal of Thu from leadership in South Viet Nam, and she stated that the Saigon people must decide for themselves what kind of government they should have. She said the decision cannot be made on the battlefield, but should be made at the conference table. She stated that President Thu in South Viet Nam has completely disregarded the Paris peace accords.