

You dear friends--

Again we come to put before you the challenge, the romance, the high adventure of your and our task of building the Church of Christ here among these tribespeople of the Darlac Province, and of blazing trails on out into the new unopened areas among the Stiengs and Mngong Dip in two new provinces.

Since Christmas we have been out among our people most of the time, taking with us our four good friends of VISION, INC., Spokane, Washington--Rev. and Mrs. Clay Cooper, Rev. John Newman, and Mr. Joe Erickson, with the heavenly tenor voice. (When he sings, our undemonstrative Raday clap their hands and call for more and more.) They are here in Indo-China for several months making moving pictures for The Christian & Missionary Alliance in Viet Nam, Cambodia and Tribesland. They are going to put this missionary challenge also into Cinemascope, which will be shown to the general public in large auditoriums throughout America. This will be the first time that Foreign Missions will be presented in this amazing new way. They have the latest equipment with them.

After the VISION INC. folks had made some visits in Viet Nam to film the refugees, and to Cambodia in January, the three of us, Gordon, Leslie and Laura met them in Saigon on February 1st with our two jeeps and trailers. We made our first camp at Budangsrey, 180 kilometres from Saigon, the center of one of the new areas we are entering for the first time with the Gospel. Here we were among the Mngong Dip and Tungul and Stieng people, near the Mngong Bunors. We camped in a thatched shack belonging to the Public Works, setting up our camp beds on the dirt floor and eating our meals on a big veranda with a deep thatched roof hung with purple bougainvillea.

We visited villages throughout the district, driving the jeeps over bumpy trails, taking movies, and doing our best to make ourselves understood in these new languages. The Mngong Dip are wild, primitive people, picturesque and friendly. The men wear navy blue loin-cloths gaily tasselled in red and the women wear a short wrap-around blue skirt. They wind masses of blue beads and pewter rings around their necks, and yards of thick brass wire up their legs and on their arms. Both men and women wear their coarse, curly hair long, sometimes rolling it up in a knob at the base of the neck held with a red band, red pompom and a shining pewter comb shaped like a bow. Tall black and white feathers are stuck into the men's hair knobs fluttering gaily high over their heads. They all cut off their top front teeth and file their lower ones to sharp points. They wear big ivory ear plugs in their ears, smoke long bamboo and pewter pipes and carry curved shoulder axes, tall spears and red-wood cross-bows. Like all Mngongs, the Dip build their houses right on the ground, thatched with nipa palm, and they are always smoky and filthy.



We are very anxious to begin evangelistic work here immediately. May the Heavenly Father open the hearts of His people to support some native workers who will enter this tribe and learn the language. They will need living quarters, simple thatched houses in which to establish their work. We are putting the challenge to our Raday and Mngong workers to go as missionaries to this far-away area. It will not be easy for them, and we can hardly spare any from our Banmethuot area, the need is so great. May God stir us to enter these 250 villages first by faith, on our knees, and then to thrust forth reapers to bring in the harvest.

We also visited Nui Bara, 55 kilometres away, where the Vietnamese missionaries, the Sung, are the only witnesses for God in this vast Stieng tribe. They are carrying on as best they can, translating portions of Scripture and some hymns, preaching and praying. But with 250 villages to reach, and only a bike, it is hard to see how the Stiengs are going to be evangelized. They should have a motorbike at least to get around on, over the long trails through the jungle.

The new wooden house at Nui Bara for the Sung, is gradually being built as special funds are received. It is high on pillars to give space underneath for meetings.

Although quite a number of Stiengs have prayed, there is none as yet that can be called really born again. How we long for young men from this tribe to study the Word of God with the Sung and be trained to evangelize their own people. Please pray fervently to this end.

TO THE MNONG GARS—When we arrived back in Banmethuot, we got ready to visit the Mngong Gars at the Krong Kno. It takes quite a while to assemble the many items used for camping for seven people—old clothing for the dusty roads and filthy longhouses, bedding, cots, mosquito nets, toilet articles and balls of string to hang our things on; food and pots and pans, charcoal for cooking cakes and pies in a small gasoline-can oven, guns and lights and can openers. Everything has to be packed properly and stowed in the box trailers, then canvas tarpaulins are tied on to keep out some of the dust.

We took with us a small generator loaned by the military, so that our friends could light up the longhouses and take night movies in color. Sixty miles south of Banmethuot we camped at the Krong Kno in our nice longhouse chapel with Y Preh, the Raday evangelist. He is a real missionary himself, having learned the Mngong Gar language well. With him are two student workers.

During the many meetings we held at night in the longhouses, 14 Mngong Gar received the Lord Jesus as their Savior. After four hard years of sowing, some of the harvest is beginning to appear. When we first entered this area we wondered how we could ever begin to conquer these poor benighted Mngong Gar for Christ. Now we find that through Y Preh's faithful preaching, many people are open to the Gospel, asking intelligent questions. Over fifty of them have left their old dark heathen sacrifices and now believe on Christ. They can sing hymns and lead out in prayer and testimony. Two influential chiefs are on the point of accepting the Lord. It is thrilling and uplifting to see the miraculous power of the Gospel working at last at the Krong Kno River.

Our VISION, INC., friends got wonderful pictures inside the low, dark, smoky longhouses, especially the night scenes. The sepia-brown-skinned tribespeople eating from their black clay cook-pots beside little orange fires all down the center of their longhouse; orange torches flickering and gleaming on rows of brown alcohol jars, black shadows, bronze gongs, brown bamboo—all making up a richly colored study of "Sepia and Shadows."

Our friends registered the sounds on their tape recorder, synchronized with their movies—the gong harmonies, the rapid tattoo and thunder of the big drums, the wierd tribal singing, the creaking of the handmade cotton gin turned by an old woman, the guttural, explosive talk of the Mngong Gar, the frogs, the insects...a strange new world to take home to challenge you dear friends in America.

TIGERS! Magic word that is too awesome to pronounce. Our natives hold up a hand with their fingers making claws to represent the king of the jungle. They musn't say his name. Our VISION INC. friends bagged two of them at the Krong Kno! They first shot a big sambar deer. We used some of it for food, and tied the rest firmly with wire to a tree for tiger bait. (There must be hundreds of tigers in this valley of the Krong Kno.) It was at the very tree where Gordon shot a tiger two years ago. Sure enough, another great striped killer came creeping up in the twilight to the bait and Clay and Mary Helen Cooper shot it from their mirador—a platform in a tree.

What excitement, what thrills! We all tore out to the spot when they came to tell us, and set up the generator and lights, and got beautiful night movies there in the thick woods at midnight with the magnificent lord of the jungle lying dead at our feet.

The next night, John Newman sat up in the mirador over the same bait. An

from a shotgun right in the head. Leslie, Laura and Joe Erickson were to pass the spot at 10 p. m. to see how John was getting along. Just as they were coasting down to a stop near the bait, they saw a brilliant tiger cross the road in front of the jeep. Thinking it was on its way to John's bait, they refrained from shooting. Then John shone his light down from the tree and mournfully said, "Come and see my bait." They thought a tiger had come and pulled it away. When Leslie went in and shone his light on it, he shouted wildly. We all ran to see, and there was a great painted Royal Bengal tiger of 500 pounds lying sprawled dead by the bait!

What sledge-hammer paws he had, as big as a frying pan! What great white sabre fangs! What awful symmetry and immeasurable power in his bulging legs. His yellow eyes still burned brightly in the lamps. They jumped in the jeep and blew the siren all the way back to camp. Once again we set up the lights and took movies in Cinemascope. Clay Cooper made one of his tapes for his daily radio program in Spokane, Washington, with his foot on the tiger's back. It took ten men to carry the beast on a pole out to the road and load it into our box trailer. The tribespeople in the nearby villages lent a hand, thrilled with joy to hear of another striped enemy's death. When we sometimes kill a tiger, we do a good service to our people, for their buffaloes, cows and pigs are frequently destroyed by them.

The dead tigers were immediately taken to a friend of ours who is the official hunter and skinner for His Majesty, Bao Dai. He and his men are working on the skins and skulls to preserve them.

Joe Erickson shot a rare clouded leopard one night. He also sat up in a tree over another bait one evening, and at 7:30 a great spotted leopard came crawling towards his bait. He watched it coming stealthily for over an hour. He didn't want to shoot until the leopard was settled down eating on the bait. At last the leopard reached the bait and began tearing and gnawing. Joe fired with the aid of a flashlight attached to his gun barrel, but he missed. His light had gotten jarred and was off the target by a foot. He was sick indeed over losing such a fine trophy.

Gordon passed by this spot two days later to see if any of the bait remained. As he neared it, a leopard quickly rose and padded off over the dry leaves and disappeared. Gordon was unarmed so had to watch it go.

ELEPHANTS! Leslie too, had some great excitement recently in this same area. He and a Frenchman ran into a herd of wild elephants on the road. Getting down to shoot, two big male tuskers charged them. The Frenchman shot one dead, just as it was in full charge about twenty feet from Leslie. Les was backing up pumping buckshot from his shotgun into its head, as his rifle was out of ammunition. He had used it on another huge elephant, wounding it badly. This one stumbled around and ran off to join the herd now in flight, bellowing and blasting and knocking down trees as it went. The Frenchman got the two big ivory tusks and the four feet, which make quaint umbrella stands when tanned. Les was unable to find his wounded animal, but hoped the natives will come upon it if it should die. Next day about a hundred natives had cleaned the dead elephant of everything but the bones, hauling the meat away in back baskets.

Leslie sat on a limb of a tree nearby over a dead deer, and at 7:30 p. m. shot a fine tiger, his very first.

Our oldest son, Douglas, is stationed now at Saigon with the U. S. Embassy. He has a very busy program in the Information Service to combat the spread of Communism. He looks to God to help him in this very important work. It is like a happy dream to have him out here so near to us in Saigon. His wife, Ruth, and two babies, Linda and Douglas, will arrive at the end of March.

Stanley has a full schedule at Wheaton College. This is his sophomore year. He wrote recently of wonderful blessing in evangelistic meetings there, and a whole day spent in prayer. Stan writes, "I realize that religion must be in the heart as well as in the head."

LEPROSARIUM NOW ON ITS OWN—Since October 15th, 1954, Gordon has relinquished his directorship of the Leprosarium. It is now being run by the Field Executive Committee, of which he is a member. It will not be necessary to have our name on gifts, parcels or correspondence for the Leprosarium. Just address them—"Leprosarium, Banmethuot, Viet Nam." The staff will acknowledge them and send you their information circulars.

MENNONITES SEND HELP—Thanks to the Mennonite Central Committee, we have received a few bundles of clothing and some surplus food to distribute to the poor "in the Name of Christ." These are so greatly appreciated. We could use carloads of them, for our people are poorly clad, and at this time of year suffer much from the cold.

RADIO PROGRAMS—We mention again our willingness to send you special tape recordings or regular missionary programs for radio broadcast in serial form. With our portable recorder we can talk to you from jungle villages, describing the sights and letting you hear the sounds around us. All we ask is that you send us some tapes, plastic, small fifteen-minute size. We record at $7\frac{1}{2}$ speed and use both sides, and post them by air mail so that you can use them within ten days after they are made. No mention is made of money on the tapes. We believe we can make the missionary challenge very real both to Christians and the public. Already some pastors are taking advantage of these tapes to foster missionary interest.

THE WORK EXPANDS—And so God continues to give us strength to press on. We are getting back to our early pioneer days of twenty-five years ago, struggling with still more dialects, reaching out to hundreds of untouched villages. We should spend more time in our office, writing you personal letters, but if we do not preach to these new tribes, who else will? We should have half a dozen young missionaries to do this work, but where are they?

As if the burden of these tribes is not enough, we also have to contend with a spirit of defeatism in some who continually remind us that the doors will close and that we have only a year or so left to work before Communism takes over. We heartily disagree with this attitude. The political situation is getting better and better, and the American authorities firmly believe that this southern area will not fall to Communism. They have top priority from Congress in their efforts to stem the tide. We here at Bannethuot believe that God is going to give us a chance to witness to all our tribes, and we are making plans to this end.

We are expecting soon to receive two specially built house trailers, small but very strong, to haul behind our jeeps, in order that we may oversee the work of our preachers in the new tribal areas. It will enable us to camp along the trails as we walk in to the villages on the narrow footpaths.

OUR HEARTFELT THANKS—There is room only for a brief but sincere word of thanks to you all for your prayers and sacrificial gifts. You who have stood by us through the years know how deeply we appreciate every cent you send, every kind letter you write us. We acknowledge with thanks the greetings from church prayer groups, as well as the many Christmas cards that still keep coming.

Yours in His joyful service,

Laura and Gordon H. Smith

P. S. Any parcels sent directly to us by mail enter duty-free and arrive in about two months time.

Please make out all gifts to the Treasurer,

The Christian & Missionary Alliance,
260 West 44th Street,
New York 36, New York.

and mark them: "Tribeswork," "Native worker support," etc., c/o Gordon Smith, Bannethuot.

G. H. S.