

SUMMER 1968

O death, where is thy sting?  
O grave, where is thy victory?



VIETNAM  
TODAY

# VIET NAM TODAY

*This issue is a special tribute to six of our missionaries who were recently killed and one taken captive when the Viet Cong attacked the Mission compound at Banmethuot. The grave of Ed and Ruth Thompson and Ruth Wilting is the bunker where they were killed (See cover). Bob Ziemer is buried in Toledo, Ohio. Leon Griswold and his daughter Carolyn, are buried in White Plains, New York. As of this writing, Miss Betty Olsen, R.N., is still a captive of the Viet Cong,*

NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE  
VIET NAM FIELD

CHRISTIAN AND MISSIONARY ALLIANCE

**SUMMER 1968 NUMBER 4**

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Cover: grave of Ed and Ruth Thompson and  
Ruth Wilting

Photos on page 8 by Reg Reimer

# Let Goods and Kindred Go



The reign of terror lasted four days. Left in its wake were death and destruction. When the living nightmare ended, 6 missionaries lay dead. Another was taken prisoner. Four Mission residences and a leprosarium clinic were destroyed. The Bible School, two churches, an office, and other buildings were heavily damaged. All vehicles sustained some damage and two were demolished. Four young Raday Christians were murdered. Two Raday pastors were taken captive. The murder of the missionaries was premeditated. The senseless destruction of the Mission compound was complete.

Before the firing stopped, looters descended on the property like human vultures. They left little that was of value. The once-beautiful compound in Banmethuot was a scene of rubble and desolation. All was silent — lifeless.

. . . this, the aftermath of one of the worst tragedies to hit the Christian and Missionary Alliance since the Boxer Rebellion.

But these have not died in vain. The living Church of Christ in Banmethuot and throughout scores of other villages stands as a tribute to six gallant soldiers of Christ.

“Let goods and kindred go,  
This mortal life also;  
The body they may kill:  
God’s truth abideth still,  
His kingdom is forever.”

# THE



# AFTERMATH



# TOTAL COMMITMENT

The readiness of the Viet Cong to sacrifice their lives in battle has greatly puzzled many Westerners. Why will a VC stare certain death in the face? The only logical answer is that he is dying for something in which he believes. Right or wrong, he's committed to a cause he considers worthy of death.

The Viet Cong do not stand alone in their dedication. Recently six of our colleagues laid down their lives in Banmethuot. Just prior to the massacre, a U.S. Army officer asked the missionaries: "Why do you people risk your lives by staying here? Don't you know you may be killed!" The missionary, speaking for himself as well as the others, quietly replied, "We came to terms with that question a long time ago."

When a Christian dedicates his life to Jesus Christ he cannot know where that dedication will lead. For Carolyn Griswold, Mr. Leon Griswold, Ed and Ruth Thompson, Ruth Wilting and Bob Ziemer

it led to violent death. To Betty Olsen it led to captivity.

The six who died did not deliberately court martyrdom. Had there been a way of escape they no doubt would have taken it. Yet, they never forgot that total commitment always included the possibility of death. For those who laid down their lives, their commitment was not made at 2:40 a.m. on January 30th when Carolyn Griswold's house was blown up by a satchel charge. It was not made while Carolyn's cry of pain was heard beneath mountains of crumbled brick and mortar. It was not made as more houses were blown up and the shadow of death came ever closer. Their commitment to Christ and His cause was made years before while they were enjoying all the comforts of America.

We make no effort to eulogize these people. They simply did what they had to do — which was to obey the command of Christ. They died because they were committed and that commitment was total.

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*Lord,*  
*in the strength of grace*  
*with a glad heart and free —*  
*Myself,*  
*my residue of days,*  
*I consecrate to Thee.*

*Thy ransomed servant,*  
*I restore to thee thine own*  
*And from this moment*  
*live*  
*or die*  
*To serve my God alone.*

*—Charles Wesley*

THE  
HERITAGE  
THEY  
LEFT

“Those missionaries were the finest and kindest people on earth.” A U.S. Army officer was speaking about the missionary staff in Banmethuot. Six about whom he spoke are now gone. Absent from the body they may be, but each one has left a rich heritage which will never die.

THE first milestone was finally reached. The translation of the Four Gospels and Acts was finished. Then came the Epistles. In time the entire New Testament and Psalms were translated. BOB ZIEMER experienced more than the satisfaction of a job well done. He felt the thrill of knowing that the Raday could now read the Holy Scripture in their own language.

Yet he could not stop here. Bob and a fellow missionary started translating the Old Testament. After countless tedious hours of labor the first draft of the Old Testament manuscript was finished. What greater heritage could a missionary leave his tribal brethren than the Bible in their own language. But Bob was more than a translator. He was a born teacher. For 20 years his students

benefited by his clear and scholarly teaching. Yet, with his varied abilities, Bob was above all a minister. His pastor's heart reached out to Americans, Vietnamese and Tribespeople alike. Pastor-Teacher-Translator. This was Bob Ziemer. The man is gone but his work lives on.

**S** C A T T E R E D throughout the highlands of Viet Nam are thousands of leprosy victims. The plight of these people could not be ignored. RUTH WILTING was a nurse — and a good one. Ready to serve wherever she was needed, Ruth performed valuable service in Pleiku and Banmethuot. Realizing early in her ministry that the foreign personnel could never hope to adequately staff the clinics and leprosariums, she worked with other Mission nurses in training nationals in lab techniques, nursing, and first aid. Classes in midwifery were also conducted. Today many of these trained medical assistants are serving in segregation villages and leprosy clinics, helping to alleviate the suffering of their own people. Ruth Wilting's grave on the Banmethuot compound is a perpetual reminder of the "woman in white" who was ever ready to minister to the physical and spiritual needs of her adopted people.

**H** O W many Cambodians are indebted to ED AND RUTH THOMPSON for coming their way with the Gospel of Christ. Whether by boat up the winding Mekong, slugging through the jungle on foot, or bumping over tortuous roads in a Jeep, the Thompsons heeded Christ's Commission to go and preach. Leaving Cambodia only after being forced out, Ed and Ruth crossed over into Viet Nam. They were missionaries first of all — the country where they served was secondary. At an age when most people settle back and look forward to a life of ease and security, the Thompsons started all over again by tackling the Vietnamese language in preparation for still another new ministry. Later would come Mnong language study — the tribe with whom they would work. Plans called for them to move to Quang Duc in March. The Viet Cong killed them the first of February. The "woe" to preach the Gospel was upon them. Like the others who were slain they were willing to deny self that Christ might be exalted. The heritage they

left their Cambodian Christians as well as their five children cannot be measured as man measures greatness.

**C** H I C and well dressed — her attention to fashion was not a studied one. Her zeal was contagious and her effervescence a delight to behold. Always young in heart, children and young people gravitated to her naturally. She never had trouble communicating. Love has a language all of its own. And beneath that sunny exterior was a heart of complete dedication to Christ. This was CAROLYN GRISWOLD. The smile has now gone and the laughter is stilled. But her image still lives in the hearts of those Raday young people to whom she was so devoted. She projected Christ through her life. Now, though the person is but a memory, the precepts of Christ, and the high principles of the Christian faith she taught, plus the sheer joy of life in Christ leave a rich heritage to all who knew and loved her.

**W** H A T compels a man who is retired, financially secure, and deserving of the "good life" to launch out into a new endeavor in a foreign country that is rife with war and violence? The call to missionary service does not always fall to the young. MR. LEON GRISWOLD — a widower and successful businessman — left America and a comfortable life of retirement to join his daughter Carolyn in Viet Nam. The talents that he possessed were sorely needed. He immediately filled an important slot as bookkeeper of the Banmethuot Leprosarium. At the age of 66, when his contemporaries might be looking forward to some fishing and relaxation, Leon Griswold, the faithful and tireless lay worker, became a missionary.

**T** H E evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones, was Shakespeare's rather cynical observation. We cannot agree. The good that 6 slain missionaries did during a combined total of 90 years is not interred in graves but lives to offer a great heritage to countless beneficiaries who dot the highlands of Viet Nam.



## SIX NEW MISSIONARY GRAVES

"What were the missionaries doing in Viet Nam in the face of such danger?" reporters ask.

Jesus said to His disciples: "If anyone wants to come with me, he must forget himself, carry his cross, and follow me. For the man who wants to save his own life will lose it; but the man who loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matt. 16:24-25 TEV).

From the time Dr. A. B. Simpson sent the first band of five zealous young missionaries to unfriendly Congo in 1884 Alliance missionaries have known that their final commitment is not to a mission board but to Christ who said that a grain of wheat must fall into the earth and die before a resurrection life of reproduction can come forth and a harvest be realized.

This philosophy, voiced many years ago in Africa, was not deemed too harsh for men and women with only one objective in life — the evangelization of the world: "Our God bids us first build a cemetery before we build a church or a dwelling house, showing us by this lesson that the resurrection of Africa (or China, or Viet Nam) must be affected by our own destruction" (Karpf).

When those five young men stepped off ship in Portuguese Cabinda in 1884, local tribes refused them even the courtesy of a place to sleep that night. The little band of young men, knowing nothing of the language, struck out immediately for the interior. They were sickened and appalled by the cruelty and injustice they saw. John Condit, the group leader, weakened from hardships and fever, soon died from malaria. Those young men planted no church; they had no converts. The truth is they preached no sermons. But they left a grave — and in years

thousands of men and women came to Christ in Congo.

Records are too sketchy to trace a trail to every missionary grave of the earlier days of the Alliance. In the Boxer rebellion in 1900 thirty-six persons of the Swedish gospel societies working under the Alliance were martyred in the fanatical onslaught of the Chinese mobs.

Through the years how many lost the human battle for life to fever in Africa and smallpox in China cannot be reckoned. But the Lord needs no marker for missionary graves.

During World War II the onslaught of Japanese armies in the Pacific brought death to Alliance missionaries by violent martyrdom, starvation and physical disease and exhaustion. The honor roll of those days includes Grace Dittmar, Homera Homer-Dixon, Franklin Grobb, C. R. Diebler, Dr. R. A. Jaffray, E. W. Presswood, Mrs. W. C. Cadman, with special illumination for such victorious martyrs as Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Sande and their infant son, Fred Jackson and John Willfinger. These found their final resting-places only after direct and violent execution.

In more recent years we have shed tears for Paul and Priscilla Johnson, shot without warning while witnessing for Christ in Thailand.

Now from our Vietnamese staff there are six new missionary graves. God is showing us that the resurrection, the evangelization of Viet Nam cannot be affected without our willingness to lay down our lives.

We honor those who have fallen. We dedicate ourselves anew to Christ and His commission. —Alliance Witness.

Danang  
January 31, 1968

Dear Mr. Franklin,

As soon as we arrived at Danang we sent you a telegram, but we are sure you want to understand more clearly; so I'm writing you in order that you can pray for us and also to offer words of praise to God because he has saved us from disaster and brought us home to Danang in peace.

There had been many vicious battles near Khe Sanh but they were always about 10 kilometers away — but this time it happened right at the town. Because of it no one knew how to plan for evacuation. The Viet Cong wanted to take the town in order to get closer to two Allied forts 5 to 8 kilometers away. They assisted Khe Sanh because our strength was only one company. (about 100 men)

Many people advised us to go, but I am one who serves the Lord. My spiritual ministry was more important than a material one. How could I think about leaving before anyone else when nothing yet had happened. We were also concerned about the tribal Christians — our children in Christ.

Because our work is the work of the Lord, each day brings its own satisfaction. During the past two years other religious groups along with us have worked to open schools; but after only 3 or 4 months they left. We have continued for a full two years. Even the American missionaries who had built a house had to leave everything and go to Danang with empty hands.

We have lost everything, but with happiness we praise God because we have everything we need to serve the Lord. If the Lord comes we go and leave everything . . . If we have anything and must leave it to go elsewhere, the Lord takes care of us. This is the third time we have experienced testing like this. But God gives joy and happiness because He has told us to rejoice and be patient in adversity — even when people of the world blame me because they followed our example in building schools, and then had to leave them to the bombs.

Khe Sanh was beautiful and progress was evident everywhere, but then at 15 minutes to 6 on Sunday, January twenty first, war arrived and in only six hours it became a scene of devastation and heartbreak.

The VC's had prepared to hit Khe Sanh a week before. But the B-52's bombed them and there were some big battles, so who would have thought they would come and encircle the town Thursday and Friday. By Saturday they were intermingling with the population. The Viet Cong fought with the Government forces for 6 hours and then took possession of Khe Sanh for a time. From Sunday noon to Monday morning there were no VC guns shooting into the town. They were only shooting at airplanes. The planes were bombing and the government artillery was firing. At 9 o'clock Monday morning the people were allowed to go to the district headquarters and there heard the news that during the previous day's fight the enemy had lost heavily. At 8 o'clock two choppers had landed at the scene of the battle. These were the last choppers to land at the town.

Everyone went here and there dividing sorrow (sympathizing) with each other and prepared to put their houses in order. The government guns kept shooting and the planes continued to bomb. At 9:30 mortar fire began coming in from the south. We knew it was the VC who hadn't left. So at 11 o'clock we banded together and left, not knowing where we were going. Bombs and shells were exploding on both sides of the road.

Everybody decided to leave, carrying what they could. For the first five kilometers there were no vehicles. Each person must care for himself. Anyone who had two bundles, left one behind. Those who had two radios carried one and left one. Nobody needed things at this time. Before leaving I went into the church to pray, and I was reminded of Paul's journey to Rome (Acts 27). I likened this trip that we and the people of Khe Sanh were taking with Paul's trip, so I asked the Lord to protect every life from injury or death. We thank the Lord that he answered our prayers. Two days later when all 1200 of us met together at the Refugee Center at Quang Tri not one had been hurt — even a 2-day-old baby and his mother were in good health.

We thank the Lord with joy that all of us escaped safely even though we lost all our possessions. We gained the love and respect of the people because we stayed with them and acted as their chaplain.

We thank the Lord that on the afternoon of January 24th we arrived at Danang and were met by the missionaries and the district superintendent who found us a place to stay.

We know that everything works together for good to those who love the Lord, so we are happy in the midst of adversity, patient in hope and constant in prayer that God's will be done.

Please pray for us that God can use us in His work.

We send you and your wife our sincere greetings.

Sincerely,  
Rev. Bui-Tan-Loc



# THE CHURCH

STILL

# STANDS

BY GORDON CATHEY

The church building at Phan Thiet is gone. Only the shell of a once-attractive edifice remains. When the Communists loosed their vengeance on the civilian population of South Viet Nam in January they utilized churches, schools, and hospitals as command posts and ambush points. The church building and mission residence in Phan Thiet, a coastal city 100 miles from Saigon, were utilized for this purpose. Both were totally destroyed.

The church building in Thu Duc, just north of Saigon, is a total loss. The Communists occupied the area and installed a machine gun in a tree next to the building. Allied troops found no alternative but to order heavy machine gun and rocket fire against the hidden enemy. What remains of the church building will be razed and a new one rebuilt.

The church building in Tung Nghia, a picturesque hamlet snuggled in the Central Highlands near Dalat, is gone. The Communists set up three machine guns on the property. In the ensuing battle the godly Chinese pastor was killed, and the sanctuary set afire. Where once the hymns of Zion were sung nothing is left but ashes.

The church building at Chau Doc, near the hotly-contested Cambodian border, no longer stands. In February it too became the battlefield between Communist and Allied Forces and was burned to the ground.

The New Year's offensive by North Viet Nam not only affected military and civilian activities in the South, but it disrupted the work of God's people. Miracles of deliverance will be told by national Christians for years to come, but the fact remains that the Church has suffered. Four buildings were totally destroyed, many others were riddled by small-arms fire, one pastor killed, several captured, believers left homeless, and mission activities were drastically curtailed by evacuation from extremely dangerous areas. There are fresh graves marked by wooden crosses on a bleak, lonely mission compound in Banmethuot where the threat of Communist attack still hangs like Diocletian's sword. Why has God permitted this injury to His Church? The most optimistic must confess that as men measure advancement the Gospel of Jesus Christ has suffered tremendous loss.

But stop a moment. When we

write or speak of our mission for the Lord in terms of "tragedy" and "loss" we are thinking as men think. The Church of Jesus Christ is not brick and mortar. Its wealth can never be measured in buildings, nor the effectiveness of its message in terms of acceptance or rejection by the political hierarchy that may be in power at the moment. The Church of Jesus Christ is that body of men and women, known or unknown, influential or hated, well-to-do or paupers, who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. The New Testament Church had no cathedrals or comfortable sanctuaries in which to meet. It had no cushioned pews or organs or trained choirs. The secret of its worship was "spirit and truth". Believers often met in humble homes. But whether it was Simon's house or by the riverside, at the synagogue or deep inside a Roman prison, the place was unimportant. The one essential was that Christ in His risen power should be present.

Church buildings can collapse and be destroyed; pastors and missionaries killed; congregations divided or dispersed; but the Church is everlasting. Jesus said, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Let no man make the mistake of equating the physical or visible damage to churches in Viet Nam with the invincibility of His Church. Already one can see beauty in the ashes and joy in place of sorrow. The Church still sings.

In Banmethuot the funeral service of the seven dead was hardly finished before the tribespeople were sweeping broken plaster and empty rifle shells off the church pews in order to gather for worship. The offering plates had disappeared but someone volunteered his hat. In Phan Thiet the American military mustered an extra army tent and helped pitch it beside the shattered remains of the church. Under that hot, olive-drab canvas the true Church met to sing, "The Church's One Foundation Is Jesus Christ Her Lord."

The believers in Viet Nam have suffered loss. For some, all that they possess is gone. But the Church, the people for whom Jesus died, stands strong and straight and true. Thus it will stand until Jesus comes.



“A handful when hungry -  
a basketful when full...”

*Shown in these pictures  
are some young people of  
the Tin Lanh (Evangelical  
Church) assembling tem-  
porary housing units for  
the refugees.*



# “A handful when hungry - a basketful when full...”

... is a Vietnamese proverb. Its truth was once again realized during the Tet offensive when thousands of Vietnamese lost their homes. In some areas entire city blocks were gutted or burned out. Hospitals, schools and churches were overflowing with the wounded and homeless. Refugees pouring in from the South made the housing problem even more acute.

What was to be done?

Saigon City officials, the Vietnamese Relief Agency, U.S. Military Civic Action teams, churches, universities, youth groups and U.S. relief agencies joined forces. Then things began to move. Classes in the public schools were temporarily suspended and the buildings converted to dormitories. Relief agencies went into action with food distribution even as VC snipers were still searching for targets.

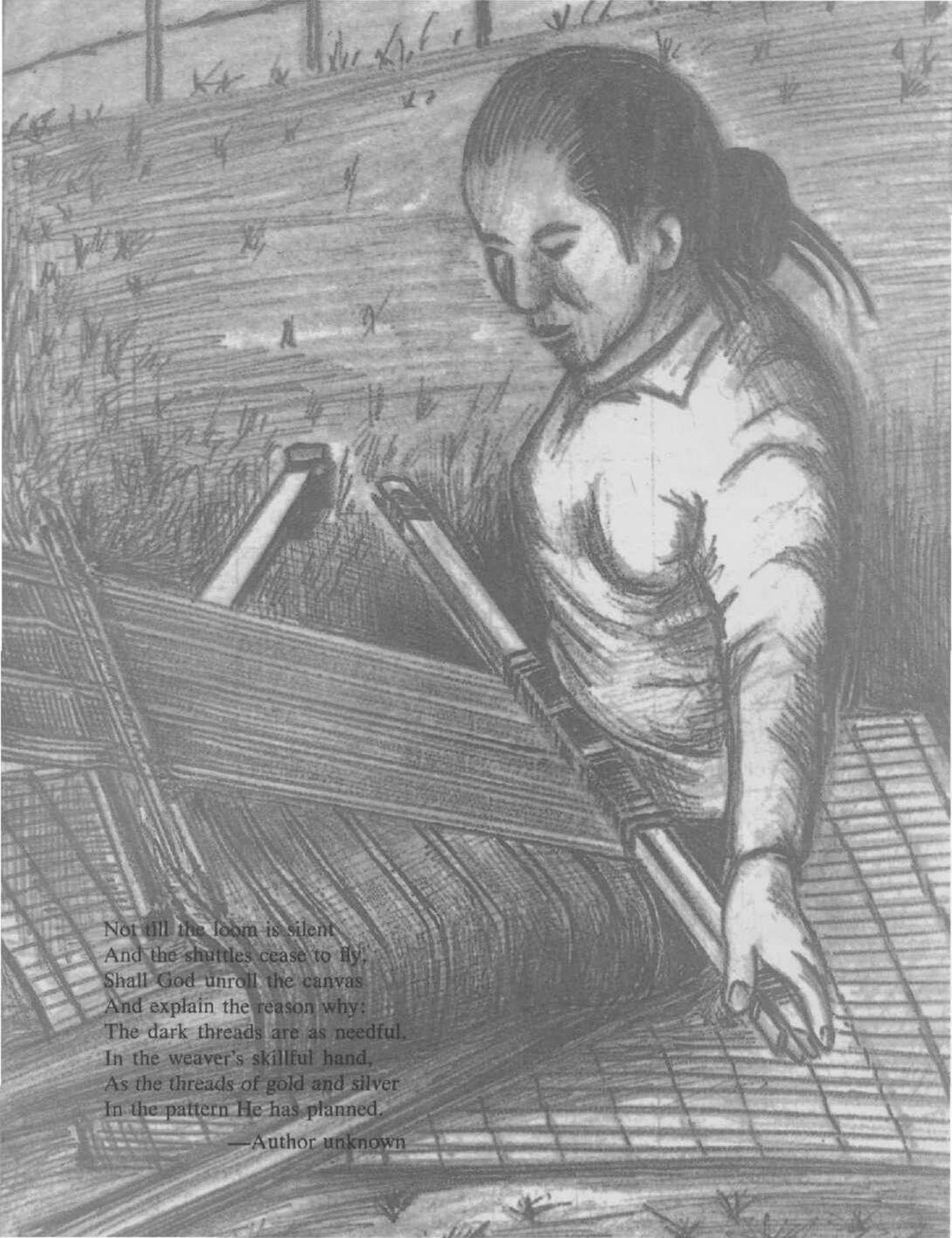
A large area of land was obtained by the government and a self-help program was initiated. The most pressing need was to provide temporary housing for those billeted in the schools. Within a few days the scene resembled an ant colony. Everyone was busy. The construction of housing units was allotted to teams from churches, Boy Scout troops, universities and other organizations. Molded cement blocks comprised the foundation. Experienced carpenters prefabricated the framework and roofs. From there the various teams took over.

The Tin Lanh Church was well represented with 10 of its Saigon churches participating in the program. Everyone pitched in — pastors, their wives, and scores of young people. The Vietnamese Youth Director served as co-ordinator. With portable loudspeaker in hand he circulated throughout the area giving instructions to the teams of workers. The girls cooked meals, served cold drinks

and even helped carry wooden frames to the construction sites. The fellows did most of the actual construction. These young people were responsible for 88 completed units. 80 to 100 young people appeared for work every day.

The Vietnamese Government plans to build high-rise apartments for those made homeless by war. The temporary dwellings will be torn down as the occupants move into permanent housing. In time these wooden buildings will be just a memory, but they are a tribute to those who pulled together to provide their suffering countrymen that essential handful NOW.





Not till the loom is silent  
And the shuttles cease to fly,  
Shall God unroll the canvas  
And explain the reason why:  
The dark threads are as needful,  
In the weaver's skillful hand,  
As the threads of gold and silver  
In the pattern He has planned.

—Author unknown