

Innocents Abroad?: Mennonite Central Committee's Beginnings in Vietnam, 1954-1957

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"I am in an interesting and tragic land."¹ This is how Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) worker Delbert Wiens summarized his Vietnam experiences in December 1954 after a four-month stay in that country. Wiens was the first MCC'er in Vietnam, and little did he and others realize at the time that his mission in that "interesting and tragic land" would mark the beginning of an important Mennonite connection with this part of Southeast Asia. This article will try to tell why and how MCC became involved in Vietnam in the years 1954-1957. It is based on Delbert Wiens' extensive journal, MCC files, and correspondence and interviews with former MCC workers.

Mennonite Central Committee began in 1920 as a modest relief effort to feed starving Mennonites in southern Russia. During and after the Second World War MCC considerably expanded its relief work and by 1954 had workers and offices in many parts of the world. It was perhaps logical that sooner or later MCC would consider the possibility of bringing relief to the war-torn land of Vietnam. That opportunity came when the so-called First Vietnam War ended in July 1954 with the signing of the Geneva Accords by which France agreed to withdraw from this

important Southeast Asian possession. Furthermore, France and her Vietnam communist- nationalist adversaries, led by Ho Chi Minh, and the big powers accepted a “temporary” division of the country at the seventeenth parallel into two “zones” soon to be known as North and South Vietnam.

France acquired a large southeast Asian empire in the second half of the nineteenth century, known as Indochina. It consisted of Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina, three areas later collectively known as Vietnam, and neighboring Cambodia and Laos. Although France did something for the economic and social development of her colony she allowed very little native participation in the administration of the region and brooked no nationalist expressions. The twentieth century gave birth to modern Vietnamese nationalism, but the French colonial administration often brutally responded to any demand for greater political participation, autonomy or independence. The French should have realized that the Vietnamese had a proud history of stubborn resistance to Chinese domination and fierce pride in their own identity. World War II brought Japanese occupation, ignominious collapse of French colonial rule, and the birth of a communist-led nationalist movement, the so-called Vietminh under Ho Chi Minh who on 2 September 1945 proclaimed the independence of his country, Vietnam. Naturally, France refused to recognize Ho’s regime and fought a long and bloody war against a formidable and stubborn foe from late 1946 until the summer of 1954 when French forces were badly mauled at Dien Bien Phu. After this defeat France was ready to extricate itself from Vietnam although the French army lingered until 1955 and occasionally meddled in South Vietnamese internal affairs.²

In the meantime, the United States had become deeply involved in the French-Vietnamese conflict by supplying her Western ally with vast amounts of financial resources and military hardware. Deep American involvement in the war reflected U.S. policy that viewed this conflict in Southeast Asia as part of a larger struggle against international communism instigated and led by Moscow and, after the Communist assumption of power in 1949 in China, also by Beijing. At that time it was not understood that communists could lead genuine nationalist movements. Therefore, as soon as France exited from the region the United States pledged its support to the non-communist regime in South Vietnam. American support of France and later South Vietnam in the 1940s and 1950s eventually led to large-scale military participation in the 1960s in the war between North and South Vietnam and serious domestic divisions.

In 1954 the newly-created nation of South Vietnam was faced with formidable obstacles. While North Vietnam ruthlessly imposed unity through the established communist party, South Vietnam was for some time plagued by weak leadership and internal divisions. Furthermore, the nation was faced with a serious economic crisis and a formidable refugee problem when in the summer of 1954 about one million North Vietnamese fled southwards.

South Vietnam consisted of some 67,108 square miles, most of which had a hot, tropical climate. Much of the western part of Vietnam consisted of the so-called Annamese Cordillera, a rugged mountainous region that ends some fifty miles

north of Saigon. Part of this chain was a plateau, the Central Highlands. Its southern part, called Pays Montagnard du Sud, the Southern Montagnard Lands during the French colonial period, consists mostly of forests but also includes much arable land. Dalat was the center of this region which is about 15,000 square miles in size. It was mostly in this area that MCC tried to render relief. East of the Cordillera are the Central Lowlands. South of Saigon lies the Mekong Delta, the most populous and fertile region and the main breadbasket of Vietnam.³

The population of some thirteen million was more than 80 percent Vietnamese. Most of the smaller ethnic groups lived in the mountainous Central Highlands where they were known as Montagnards. One of the largest non-Vietnamese ethnic groups was the Chinese most of whom inhabited Cholon, a suburb of Saigon, and controlled much of the city's organized crime. In 1954 Saigon, the site of MCC's "headquarters," had a population of about 1,500,000 and was described as "a very sinkhole of violence, corruption and intrigue."⁴ Yet, most Americans experienced little if any violence or crime and were relatively safe. But Saigon was also called the "Paris of Southeast Asia, a city of broad avenues lined by tamarind trees, pastel French villas hidden by walls splashed with flowering mimosa and brilliant bougainvillea, and bustling open markets" where wrinkled peasants hawked their wares.⁵

Most people in Vietnam were nominally Buddhist but many worshiped all sorts of local and other spirits. Since the seventeenth century French Catholic missionaries had made many converts. These converts numbered about two million in 1954 and during the regime of President Diem often occupied many important political and other public positions. Protestant missionaries had been active since 1911 when the Christian and Missionary Alliance, CMA, started a mission post in Tourane, now called Danang. In the following years it made many followers especially among the mountain people. CMA was also responsible for a translation of the Bible and many hymns. In 1929 the Seventh Day Adventists started missionary work in Vietnam but had made only a few hundred converts by 1954.⁶ The French Protestant Church did not engage much in missionary activities but did establish through its *Société d'Évangélisation des colonies* a congregation in Saigon in 1902. It consisted of French residents, other Europeans, and Americans living in that city. In addition there was an Anglican and an American Church in Saigon. In 1954 there were 145 Protestant churches in South Vietnam with a total membership of about 14,800 baptized members most of whom were members of the Evangelical Church of Vietnam.⁷

Prior to World War II Vietnam had been one of the principal rice exporting countries in the world. But many years of war had wreaked great havoc with the economy, and in 1954 the country required much outside assistance. The United States was willing to oblige, and by 1956 paid the South Vietnamese government some \$270 million per year. With the exception of South Korea no other nation was the recipient of so much American largesse per capita at that time.⁸ In addition, the United States provided much technical and military assistance. Much of the economic and technical assistance was channeled through the United States

Operations Mission (USOM) and Special Technical and Economic Mission (STEM), so-called operating missions of the Foreign Operations Administration (FOA) and later of the International Cooperation Administration (ICA). MCC and other relief workers had much contact both with USOM and STEM. U.S. military aid came through the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG). All of these U.S. agencies constituted a formidable American presence which in late 1954 consisted already of some 600 individuals.⁹

Much of the early and also later economic assistance, however, was not properly administered; the Vietnamese bureaucratic and political system allowed for much graft and corruption. In addition to U.S. public aid, many private relief agencies came to the rescue. Especially the dramatic flight of many North Vietnamese had caught the world's attention and moved many Americans and others to extend a helping hand. The various relief agencies in 1954 were: the National Catholic Welfare Council (NCWC), now called Catholic Relief Services, which was the best organized and most amply funded; Cooperative for American Relief to Everywhere (CARE); Church World Service (CWS), which represented the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA; the International Rescue Mission; and Mennonite Central Committee.¹⁰

Not only the economy but also the political system was in disarray in 1954. Since 1950 the French-sponsored South Vietnamese government had been headed by President Bao Dai the former emperor of Annam. Not until the French exit in 1954, however, did Bao Dai have any real power or authority. But the situation did not improve much after July 1954. Bao Dai simply lacked the interest, energy, or ability to lead the nation. More important was his prime minister, the Catholic Ngo Dinh Diem, whom he appointed in June 1954. Diem, however, also had limited political ability and many shortcomings which would effect his tragic demise in 1963. Diem was dictatorial, nepotistic, pro-Catholic and anti-Buddhist. In the course of time much political power was wielded by his incompetent brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, and the latter's wife, Madame Nhu. Upon assuming his responsibilities Diem was faced not only with economic and social collapse and chaos but also formidable political opposition. Diem only controlled Saigon and its immediate surroundings; the rest of the country was in the hands of the Vietminh, various military commanders, and sects all with their private armies. As Frances Fitzgerald concluded, South Vietnam at that time was "a political jungle of warlords, sects, bandits, partisan troops, and secret societies."¹¹

With the assistance of C.I.A. chief in Vietnam, Colonel Edward G. Lansdale, and General J. Lawton Collins, President Eisenhower's special envoy, Diem survived a military plot in the fall of 1954. But in the spring of 1955 Diem's alliance with two sects, the Hoa Hao and the Cao Dai, and the head of a Saigon crime syndicate, General Binh Xuyen, broke down. The former had about one million followers and controlled much of the region northwest of Saigon. The Cao Dai, with about two million adherents and its army dominated much of the Mekong Delta. General Binh Xuyen with his army controlled much of the organized crime in Saigon. In early 1955 these three formed the United Front of Nationalist Forces. Fighting broke out in

Saigon on March 30 when Binh's forces attacked Diem's national army headquarters in Saigon killing many innocent bystanders. With U.S. assistance a truce was arranged the next day. The State Department was about to "drop" Diem when new fighting broke out in Saigon between April 28-30. This time there were about five hundred casualties, but Diem survived. Bien's forces were defeated, the Hoa Hao forces routed, and later in the year the Cao Dai was forced to make peace with Diem. In October of that year Diem felt strong enough to hold a referendum to effect Bao Dai's removal as president and to declare himself head of state. Apparently, Diem was a survivor, but it was obvious he would have been less successful without, what one American diplomat called, "the last French colonialists in Indochina," i.e. the Americans.¹² All of these dramatic events of 1955 occurred during the first year of MCC's presence in Vietnam. Yet, in spite of deep American economic and military involvement in this land most Americans were and remained ignorant of Vietnam until the 1960s.

MCC relief interest in Vietnam began in 1950. It was most likely Orie O. Miller's idea to initiate an MCC presence in Vietnam. Miller had been MCC's executive secretary since 1935. On July 15, 1954, MCC's Executive Committee approved in principle the plan to send a worker to Saigon to meet with Miller "with the view of establishing a relief project there." Miller felt that Delbert Wiens was the right person to head this new venture.¹³

It was typical of MCC, at least at that time, not to study, explore, and to investigate a proposed project very thoroughly before workers were dispatched to the area. Once a new project had been chosen MCC would try to identify the right person or persons to launch the new venture. Such a person had to meet certain qualifications: he or she had to be resourceful, flexible, be able to improvise, and possess leadership ability. Even inexperienced young men and women were trusted with important and difficult assignments. World War II Public Service Camp experience had shown young men could be entrusted with demanding tasks. Nor did knowledge of the local language and culture seem to be of considerable importance. However, it would have been very difficult to familiarize oneself with Vietnam at that time; very few people in the United States knew anything about that country in 1954. In sum, MCC ventures rested much on faith. With God's help and the right people on the scene MCC might succeed. It was Orie Miller's uncanny ability to identify the right person or persons for new, challenging tasks. He believed he had found the right person for MCC venture in Vietnam. For that assignment he chose Delbert Wiens.

Wiens was born in Bessie, Oklahoma on 23 May 1931, where his parents belonged to the local Mennonite Brethren Church. His parents were H.R. Wiens and Barbara Kleinsasser. The elder Wiens was a parts manager in a garage and auto parts store in neighboring Cordell and a pastor in in the Bessie church. Wiens attended grades one through four in Cordell and grades five through nine in nearby Corn at the Mennonite Brethren's Corn Bible Academy where his father served as principal from 1941 to 1946. In 1946 the family moved to Reedley, California, where his father became the head of the Immanuel Academy, a Mennonite Brethren high

school, and also served as associate pastor and pastor at Reedley and Dinuba. Furthermore, he served for some time as executive secretary of Mennonite Brethren Foreign Missions. Wiens attended Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kansas, for two years and in 1953 graduated from, what was then known as, Fresno State College. In that same year he began serving, as he called it, as a Voluntary Service "flunky" in Akron to fulfill his 1-W service. He wanted to go to Europe, but Ori O. Miller had other plans for him and asked him to go to Vietnam. Miller told Wiens that God wanted him in Vietnam. Wiens felt he had no choice but to go; was he "to argue with God-or moving up the scale, even with O.O.M.?", he reflected many years later.¹⁴

Miller wanted Wiens to meet him in Saigon on August 8. But it would take some extra MCC effort to obtain permission from Selective Service officials to allow Wiens to go overseas and to get a passport and visa. Furthermore, it was learned that it would be impossible to leave San Francisco before August 12 and to reach Saigon by August 16 the day on which Miller was to leave South Vietnam. Because of all these problems Wiens's ardor cooled, and he concluded that if God really wanted him to go to Vietnam "the fulfillment of these requirements would indicate His will" for him. But he did receive a passport and a visa and permission from the Selective Service to go abroad. Furthermore, Miller was cabled to wait for him in Saigon. But initially MCC was unable to obtain a plane reservation from San Francisco to Saigon. "So on the strength of that and with many misgivings" he left on August 7 for San Francisco to visit his parents in Fresno. Finally, a reservation was secured for a flight from San Francisco to Saigon on Thursday, August 12. Arriving at the international airport that day he was still not sure if he wanted to go; but he did leave at midnight and arrived in Saigon four days later where he met Miller at the airport. However, the latter did not know Wiens had arrived; he was at the airport ready to leave!¹⁵

Very soon after his arrival Wiens had to use his ability to improvise: how to secure housing for himself and other MCC workers. One of the few things Ori Miller had arranged for Wiens was housing for him in Saigon. Miller knew the missionary couple Harold Curwen and Sheila Smith in Saigon who were willing to accommodate Wiens for a while. The Smiths were long-term Canadian missionaries in their fifties and sixties who represented the British and Foreign Bible Society.¹⁶ In general, the Smith residence was a good place for Wiens to stay, and he appreciated the many things his hosts did for him. Staying with the Smiths would also save MCC much money. But by mid-October Wiens was told to leave. As a good MCC'er he would now have to use his imagination, not become discouraged, and improvise. Because of the refugee and other problems finding new housing was not so easy, and Wiens had visions of sharing the lot of many refugees who were living in pup tents along the road. Although he had faith that "things will work out" he sometimes had the same feeling in his stomach he had as a child when he had to go to the doctor or when he had done something he feared would lead to a spanking. He stayed a few days in the Majestic Hotel, the most expensive hotel in Saigon, and then was fortunate to find a room with a Monsieur Sauvage, an "elderly, large, but slightly droopy Frenchman" who was married to a "little, shrewish old-looking

Vietnamese.” The room would be large enough for three people and included breakfast and maid service. Sauvage asked six thousand francs, but he finally settled for one thousand. This room was an answer to Wiens' prayers.¹⁷ Occasionally, other MCC'ers lived with Wiens, an arrangement which did not cause any difficulties until MCC worker Eva Harshbarger arrived in late November 1954. Because it was difficult to find a room on the day of her arrival, Wiens allowed her to stay in his room while he slept on the couch in another room in the house. When Sauvage learned about this arrangement he flew into a rage; he believed Wiens tried to use two rooms for the price of one and to make an MCC hotel of his house. According to Mrs. Harshbarger, Sauvage “lived up to his name.” It was finally agreed to allow Mrs. Harshbarger to stay in Wiens' room while the servants put him up for the night. Wiens felt sorry for Mrs. Harshbarger for this “rather singular introduction for one having just arrived.”¹⁸ He stayed with Sauvage until February 1956 when he found a house where he was “waited on hand and foot” and led the “life of Riley.” In 1957 he rented a house to be able to accommodate himself and guests.¹⁹

The MCC'ers who joined him in November 1954 were Roy Eby, Adam Ewert and the above-mentioned Harshbarger. Eby was a member of the Landis Valley, Mennonite Church, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and a mathematics major from Goshen College. He taught briefly at Messiah College and before coming to Vietnam served in Formosa where he took a mobile clinic into tribal villages. Roy knew enough French “to get around and to buy things.”²⁰ Adam Ewert was a member of the Carson Mennonite Brethren Church, Delft, Minnesota, and a biology major from Tabor College. He served with MCC in Korea before coming to Vietnam. Adam knew some French.²¹ Neither of the two men was very anxious to go to Vietnam and they were afraid much time would be wasted before they could render meaningful service. Both men would spend most of their time in Dalat where they assisted with food and clothing distribution. Wiens, Adam and Roy formed a very good team; Wiens felt his two colleagues were “wonderful.” Eby's MCC assignment ended in February 1956, but he stayed in Vietnam until the summer of that year by accepting employment with USOM. Ewert left in December of the same year when his term expired.²²

Eva Geiger Harshbarger was fifty-two when she arrived in Vietnam. She was a graduate of Bluffton College and widow of Emmet Harshbarger, former history professor at Bethel College. After her husband's death in 1942 she taught English and family courses at Bethel and served as dean of women. Prior to coming to Vietnam Eva served in Korea. Wiens did not think they needed her, but MCC insisted; according to Wiens, Akron felt that the three men needed a chaperon! For some time Harshbarger was in charge of young people's activities in the Dalat House. Here she found a real “niche” for herself among the Vietnamese who appreciated her. When that facility closed she moved to Saigon in March 1956. She went home in June of that year. Wiens felt sorry for her because she remained “outside the rest of us young ones.”²³

Wiens, Eby, Ewert, and Harshbarger constituted the original MCC Vietnam team. As we will see, with the establishment of the medical facility at Banmutheot some

time later others would join them.

In order to execute his work Wiens had to communicate with native Vietnamese and/or the French; at one time he felt like a "colossal idiot" and "ashamed" for not being able to do so.²⁴ This he did by hiring different interpreters and by trying to learn Vietnamese and French. A foreign "language" in which he was able to "communicate" a little was Low German. This language he spoke with Dutch relief workers including Dr. Jeltje Antine Stroink, a Dutch Mennonite medical doctor who worked for the World Health Organization.²⁵ However, the Dutch reminded him that Wiens spoke fifteenth-century Dutch!²⁶ Few languages are harder to learn than Vietnamese, but by February 1955 he had a "nodding acquaintance" with a group of words. French, which, remained for some time the official language, was easier to learn, and after some time he understood much and was able to carry on some conversation.²⁷ In November 1956 he was even elected to serve on the presbytery of the *Église réformée de France outre mer à Saigon*, the Reformed Church of France Overseas in Saigon.²⁸ In spite of the language barrier, Wiens learned much about the local culture and political scene by reading rather voluminously and by talking to informed individuals.

Wiens was fortunate that his job allowed him to do so. It must have taken some time before many foreigners felt comfortable in Saigon. Traffic was certainly an intimidating factor; Wiens found it "more dangerous to drive down the streets...than to play left guard against the Oklahoma line."²⁹ The narrow streets were crowded with bicycles, pedicabs, motorbikes, cars, buses, jeeps, pony and ox carts and made Los Angeles look like an "also ran." Most drivers seem to have a disdain for danger and a mania to get somewhere as quickly as possible. The result was more blood and gore than a "Mickey Spillane thriller."³⁰ However, MCC'ers had no choice but to face the challenge. Wiens usually traveled by scooter, motor bike or jeep and had already had several minor accidents by late September 1954. Later his vehicle was hit by a Vietnamese navy truck, an incident that caused the regular and military police to come out. However, it was also dangerous to travel on the highway. One time in June 1956 some 125 miles from Saigon Wiens could have had a near-fatal accident. Like most Vietnamese drivers his taxi driver drove too fast, went off the road and overturned. The driver was badly hurt but Wiens was unscathed. Furthermore, it was dangerous for MCC'ers to drive by truck through the jungle and bandit-infested country.³¹

It also took some time to get used to the large number of Saigon prostitutes. Especially in Cholon Americans had to run "a regular gauntlet of pimps" although none ever tried to seduce Wiens. However, he did have an embarrassing encounter with Cholon prostitution. In February 1955 he tried to locate MAAG headquarters on Rue Hardeman to see a movie. Since he did not know the way he asked for directions at a Cholon "hotel." The man at the desk did not understand Wiens' French and took him upstairs. Here he saw couples and girls walking around who looked puzzled when they heard his question. Obtaining no satisfactory answer he left not thinking much of it, but later it hit him how "ludicrous" it had been to wander around in a "whorehouse asking where Rue Hardeman was."³²

In August 1954 at the time of MCC's arrival, South Vietnam's political institutions were still very unstable, a situation that complicated MCC's work. Yet, the Diem regime seemed friendly and accommodating to MCC. In early September 1954 Wiens and visiting Church World Service representative, J. Lawrence Burkholder, the future president of Goshen College, were invited to meet Diem and other dignitaries in Saigon. Afterwards they attended a party in Bien Hoa, located a few miles north of Saigon, and in Cap St. Jacques, now called Vung Tau, located on the coast, and visited a refugee camp. Later there were more meetings with Diem.³³ On March 29-30, 1955, anti-Diem and government forces clashed in Saigon. The fighting took place about one mile from Wiens's room. He was not scared but not "exactly at ease either." He seemed less scared when one month later he drove near the site of the fighting.³⁴ Diem survived this new challenge, but Wiens considered the regime weak and ineffective. "So far," he correctly observed, "all we have is a bunch of bureaucrats propped up with American support and money. The French might be reactionary but we haven't exactly hit it on the head either." Later he observed Diem's dictatorial tendencies and ridiculed the constitutional assembly which he felt was run like "a high school speech class." Yet, in spite of all the Vietnamese confusion, bureaucratic bungling, and indecisiveness MCC was able to carry out its tasks.³⁵

On the other hand Wiens and his successors never interfered in Vietnam's political problems nor offered advice or criticism. MCC was and remained neutral even in the tumultuous 1960s when many Mennonites were urging a less neutral stance and political involvement. They felt MCC could not remain silent in the face of widespread political corruption and gross violation of human rights. Nor could they condone unstinting American support of what they considered an abusive and corrupt South Vietnamese regime.

Wiens hoped to do most of his work among refugees outside Saigon. But the Vietnamese government preferred to receive food and clothing. Therefore, much but by no means all of his work was done in the capital city. Here he rented office space on the fifth floor of the Perchoir building located on Rue Catinat, the "soul of Saigon," and later moved a few feet to a different office at 91 Rue Pasteur. Wiens's work consisted of many activities: establishing contacts with Vietnamese, U.S. and other relief agency officials or representatives; distribution of food and clothing; handling of all correspondence; assistance in refugee resettlement near Da Hoa; organizing student work camps; teaching English at a night school, and later the establishment of a medical unit in Banmethuot. But he also had to travel frequently to Dalat, some 180 miles northeast of Saigon and to Banmethuot, 220 miles from the capital city. His tasks were often very intense and made more complicated and frustrating by language barriers, Vietnamese work habits, bad roads, and the oppressive tropical heat and diseases. There were many long and exhausting days. But there were also many lulls between shipments and time for vacations in Hong Kong, Japan, Indonesia, and Cambodia, and time for reading, sightseeing, watching movies, hunting, and playing golf and tennis. Furthermore, he received much support from his relatives back home. His mother alone wrote him some three-hundred

letters during his stay in Vietnam.³⁶ How many MCC'ers have been able to "cope" with adversities because of this kind of moral and spiritual support?

During Wiens's stay in Vietnam, 1954-57, MCC sent some \$41,295 worth of relief to Vietnam.³⁷ Most of the food and clothing distribution took place in the countryside especially in the mountainous areas but also in the Mekong Delta near Saigon and spots near the coast. Later there were also distributions in the Banmethuot area. The first food shipment, which was donated by FOA, consisted of 363,238 pounds and was valued at \$78,000, arrived in December 1954. It was the relief organizations' task to convert this food into thousands of small packages of fourteen pounds each containing: a quart of cottonseed oil, a can of beef and gravy, two pounds of cheese, a pound of butter, a pound of beans, a pound of shortening, and six pounds of rice. It took several meetings of relief agency and USOM representatives and others to determine the division of the shipment, the place of assembling the packages, transportation, and the areas of distribution. It was agreed to give MCC 16.7 percent or twenty-thousand packages and to divide the rest between Church World Service and the National Catholic Welfare Council. Obtaining Vietnamese permission to unload and dealing with Vietnamese coolies' work habits brought additional frustration; the experience made Wiens "homesick for American efficiency." Some disagreement arose between Wiens and NCWC program director, Monsignor Joseph J. Harnett, when the latter insisted on delivering several packages to the bishop at Kontum, located some two hundred miles northwest of Dalat in an area considered MCC "territory." Harnett was a very able but domineering person. Wiens spoke up very "stoutly" and Harnett graciously yielded; it was agreed to allow MCC distribution around Dalat, a city where it acquired a large warehouse, and in the nearby coastal region. However, the situation became more complicated with the report of some five thousand missing packages. Especially, Harnett was infuriated, and at a meeting on January 14, 1955, "went into a really awesome rage," stood up and with a "red Irish face launched into a several-minute tirade that was really something" at some Vietnamese officials and stalked out of the meeting.³⁸ Later the shipping company was held responsible for the loss which amounted to \$4865.00. But in spite of everything, MCC distribution finally began on January 19 and was finished in March 1955.³⁹

A very large food distribution took place in August 1955 in neighboring Laos. At that time Wiens was also representing Church World Service which wanted him to distribute rice near Savannakhet, on the Mekong River. The original request for food had come from Swiss Brethren missionaries Armand and Heidi Heiniger and Bernard and Héline Félix who served with the *Service missionnaire évangélique*. All four were members of the *Assemblées évangéliques de Suisse Romande*, a Swiss faction of what is generally known in the Anglo-Saxon world as the Plymouth Brethren. At the same time MCC would then distribute canned meat. However, Laotian authorities would not permit them to distribute the rice. They wanted to distribute the rice themselves; handing out food would afford them with opportunities for graft, corruption and political influence. Therefore, it was decided to purchase 239 sacks of rice from neighboring Thailand and smuggle them into the

country. For some reason Laotian authorities would allow such a "transaction." The rice was transported across the Mekong River, the boundary between Laos and Thailand, and was piled up on the river bank. Subsequently, Wiens and Eby trucked the one-hundred kilo sacks by truck as far as they could go. Then they switched to jeeps and pirogues and transported them to local missionaries and Laotian Christians for final distribution. The local governor threatened to jail them, but they considered his warning an empty threat in light of the approaching elections. But Wiens felt the real "hero" of this episode was a middle-aged Swiss missionary, Marie Dufour, who ran an orphanage in the interior. She was the person who supervised the final distribution of the food.⁴⁰ How would MCC have reacted if it had known about this kind of unorthodox food distribution program?

While distribution of food, blankets, clothes, etc. remained a regular MCC responsibility, a new venture was launched in 1956 with the establishment of a medical clinic at Banmethuot. In the mid-1950s, with the departure of many French citizens, Vietnamese medical needs became acute. Especially MCC workers Ewert and Eby were very much interested in providing health care. Eby had been involved with the MCC mobile medical in Formosa and Ewert in public health in Mississippi. MCC responded to this concern and in 1955 decided to establish a clinic. MCC's decision should come as no surprise; for many years Mennonites had shown much interest in health care.

In October 1955 MCC, rather hastily, sent Dr. Willard S. Krabill and his spouse Grace to Vietnam before Vietnamese permission had been obtained to establish a clinic or a good location had been found. The Krabills were Goshen College graduates; Dr. Krabill received his medical training at Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia. Their trip to Vietnam was also their honeymoon. In the next few months various options such as Kontum, Pleiku, Djirring, and Ankhe were considered, but none of those cities were found suitable. Pleiku was considered unacceptable, for instance, because of Vietnamese insistence that the MCC doctor work under a military doctor in a government hospital. Krabill tried to explain to Vietnamese officials why Mennonites tried to remain aloof from the military, but he was not sure they understood. Furthermore, he would not like to be used as "a political instrument of the V.N. government."⁴¹ In the meantime, on January 31, 1956, Wiens had submitted an application to the Vietnamese government to allow MCC to establish a medical clinic. Usually, such applications were approved within two or three months. But this time there was no prompt reply. In June 1956 Wiens visited with President Diem; it was his fourth meeting with him. During the interview he informed the president about Mennonites and their belief in nonresistance. However, Diem was not impressed and concluded that Mennonites were probably people who were "in trouble with the army" and compared them with some of the hostile sects who were also preaching pacifism.⁴²

Obviously, the Vietnam government was not enamored of pacifism; it needed the military in order to survive. Most likely, there was another important reason for Diem's refusal to sign. A letter intercepted by MCC's interpreter revealed that the Vietnamese were not eager to replace the French with Americans to dominate them.⁴³

Ironically, while the Diem government temporized over MCC's request to launch an independent clinic Krabill and others concluded that such a venture might be a bit too costly.⁴⁴ However, finally a solution was found by establishing an MCC clinic at the Christian and Missionary Alliance leprosarium near Banmethuot.

Banmethuot at that time a community of about 10,000 souls, is located on the Darlac plateau, in the midst of the Rhadé, Mnong, Jarai and other tribes who were known in those days as Montagnards or mountain people and later designated as highlanders. Banmethuot, the capital of the region, was "the heart of the land of the primitives."⁴⁵ CMA missionary Gordon and Laura Smith began their work among the Radhé in early 1934; they were the first western missionaries in that part of Indochina. Until August 1941, when they had to leave because of the threat of war, the Smiths baptized many members of some fifteen different tribes. They returned in 1947, and in 1948 initiated plans to start a leprosarium about fifteen miles south of Banmethuot. It took about three years to clear the jungle, but on January 2, 1951, they were able to admit the first patients. A few years later they had as many as 230.⁴⁶

But the leprosarium needed a clinic. MCC could meet that need and was not required to secure Vietnamese approval to establish a medical facility at an existing leprosarium. Negotiations with CMA were successful, and the parties signed an agreement on April 25, 1956. However, the CMA New York Board remained afraid of "liberal or modernist Mennonites." Therefore, much to Orrie Miller's dismay, Krabill had to pass a "doctrinal test." Miller felt that anyone who was good enough for MCC was good enough for Christian Missionary Alliance and instructed Krabill never to submit to such a test again. Furthermore, CMA later explained it had only entered into the agreement because of Dr. Krabill's qualifications; renewal of the agreement was contingent upon the qualifications of his successor.⁴⁷

The facility was constructed with some 450 corrugated iron sheets donated by the French army through *Pasteur* Bertrand de Luze, the minister of the French Reformed Church in Saigon with whom Wiens had very close personal relations. The work was begun in March 1956. In April of that year the clinic was dedicated, and by October MCC had a well-functioning medical clinic at Banmethuot as well as a mobile clinic which ministered to the needs in the villages. Both Eby and Ewert worked hard to build the facilities. Furthermore, Ewert did an outstanding job in organizing the mobile clinic. By early 1957 the MCC staff at Banmethuot consisted of Doctor and Grace Krabill and two MCC nurses, Margaret Janzen, and Juliette Sebus, a Dutch citizen. Grace Krabill served as hostess of the MCC unit and assisted in the leprosarium's nursery. Janzen who, according to Wiens, could handle "just about anything capably," worked mostly with the mobile clinic. She was Canadian and had previously served with MCC in Italy and Germany. Sebus was a native of Utrecht, the Netherlands, where she received her nursing training. At Banmethuot she was the nurse at the clinic and at the small in-patient hospital. As the only non-North American at Banmethuot she often felt a bit isolated. Harry and Esther Lefever joined the staff in September 1956. Esther studied two years at Eastern Mennonite College before coming to Vietnam. At Banmethuot she served as cook

and housekeeper for the MCC unit and assisted the nurses. Harry was an Eastern Mennonite College graduate with a major in Bible. In Vietnam he worked with the mobile unit. Later the couple was assigned to Saigon. In February 1957 Paxman Duane Swartzendruber arrived from Princeton, Illinois; he had previously served for about three months in Germany. Duane served as maintenance man, truck driver, and also administered vitamin shots. In August of the same year Dr. Donald Goering, a Bethel College graduate who received his medical degree from the University of Kansas, and his spouse Loua, joined the clinic's staff. In Saigon Wiens had been assisted, since early 1957, by Paxman Carl D. Hurst, a Goshen College music graduate who had previously done MCC work in Germany and Austria. Hurst organized seminars and work camps for university students and tried to promote understanding and rapport between the latter and common people in the villages.⁴⁸

MCC's work increased rapidly and already by August-September 1956 workers had treated some 618 patients from thirty-five different villages.⁴⁹ But not everything was smooth sailing. While MCC Vietnam was busily establishing itself at Banmethuot, CMA's New York office suddenly raised objections and in September Krabill was told not to proceed with plans to build wards for non-leprous patients. The disagreement was in part the result of two different views: While CMA was not opposed to providing some health care, it considered the "cost per soul in institutional work greater than cost per soul in direct evangelism." Therefore, it did not want to provide extensive health care, a contingency that might occur if MCC were ever to withdraw from Banmethuot. In that case CMA would inherit a white elephant. Furthermore, there was some CMA concern about the possibility of allowing too much MCC visibility at the leprosarium. They did not want to give the impression MCC was "taking over."⁵⁰ Dr. Krabill, reflecting the MCC view, felt it was unrealistic to have a general clinic and mobile unit in a primitive country without a "base" from which to operate, a base that included provisions for in-patient care. To see a sick person in the clinic, he pointed out, and then to send him back was demoralizing, discredited the leprosarium and denied MCC the opportunity for witnessing and demonstrating Christian love and concern. A meeting of Wiens, Krabill, and CMA officials Grady Mangham and Lewis L. King in October 1956 revealed that CMA had never fully understood that MCC's presence consisted of more than Dr. Krabill and his spouse. The presence of two nurses, another couple and one Paxman was to them a "completely new and frightening development."⁵¹ Fortunately, negotiations in late October 1956 between Orie Miller and CMA's New York office resulted in permission for MCC to proceed with the building of the proposed facility.⁵² Apparently, CMA realized that discontinuation of this part of MCC's work might not sit well with the natives. Yet, MCC Vietnam continued to be very sensitive to CMA's concerns and made efforts to allay fears or suspicions that Mennonites were "taking over" at Banmethuot. As Dr. Krabill informed MCC in September 1957, [we must be] "very careful not to take too great a part in the leprosarium affairs."⁵³ In the years following, MCC-CMA relations were very good, and there were no further problems. Much of this successful cooperation was the result of Dr. Krabill's work.

In May 1957 the Vietnamese government finally granted approval for MCC to establish its own clinic. When Christian and Missionary Alliance opened its own clinic at Banmethuot, MCC started a clinic in Nha Trang, in 1961, located some two hundred miles northeast of Saigon.⁵⁴ But MCC maintained ties with the leprosarium by sending workers. One of them was Paxman Daniel Gerber from Kidron, Ohio, who went to Banmethuot in October 1961 as a maintenance worker to fulfill his alternative service (I-W). On May 30, 1962, he and two other CMA employees, Dr. Eleanor A. Vietti and Rev. Archie Mitchell, were captured by National Liberation Forces soldiers and never heard from again. In February 1968 Gerber's fiancée, Ruth Wilting, a nurse at the leprosarium, was killed at Banmethuot during the war.

Meanwhile, MCC had also become indirectly involved with community development. Church World Service representative, William Kellerman, launched such a project among Protestant North Vietnamese refugees at Da Hoa, located on the road from Saigon to Dalat. The area for resettlement consisted of some fifty hectares of level but rugged terrain covered with trees and bamboo. Da Hoa was to become a model community which initially had some two hundred members who would receive one-fourth hectare or one-half acre of land. Later the settlement would be increased to about one thousand members. After six months Kellerman left and Church World Service asked Wiens to continue the project. He agreed and in May 1955 became the CWS "stop gap" representative, a function for which he was remunerated. Although Wiens had much respect for these pioneers, this community project became an additional source of frustration. Its members were in need of everything and often quarreled among themselves. Especially military veterans proved to be troublemakers, and it was sometimes difficult to differentiate between heroes and villains.⁵⁵

One of Wiens's most interesting encounters in Vietnam was with western missionaries and the local native Protestant community. At the time of his arrival there were no Mennonite missionaries in Vietnam. Most Vietnamese Protestants were the fruit of CMA's work. In June 1957 the Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities sent James and Arlene Stauffer to Vietnam to initiate Mennonite mission work. For some time the Stauffers lived with Wiens in the same apartment. Wiens considered them very conservative but also felt they might have considered him a "heretic." Yet, in the course of time he came to appreciate them.⁵⁶ The Stauffers, were just as ignorant about Vietnam as the MCC'ers; they were better about informed about their mandatory conservative Mennonite attire and hair styles than native culture.⁵⁷ Yet, in spite of these and other handicaps, the Stauffers and others did found in 1965 a Vietnamese Mennonite Church in Gia Dinh, located north of Saigon.⁵⁸

Although very supportive of mission work in general Wiens was rather skeptical of older American missionaries in Vietnam, many of whom he considered poorly educated. Today's missionary, he argued, should be intelligent, educated and more sensitive to various cultural nuances. He also felt it was insufficient to believe in the Bible and to be "on fire." Furthermore, he considered the old emphasis on evangelization among Asians no longer appropriate and believed their work to have been

more harmful than good. Even the "super-evangelistic" Christian and Missionary Alliance, he noticed, no longer engaged in much evangelization. Yet, he did have much respect for some missionaries. Among them were the CMA missionaries in the mountains near Dalat and the Swiss Brethren, the Heinigers and the Félixes in Laos.⁵⁹

Many missionaries were very defensive about their "turf" and not too anxious to allow others to enter their mission field. Especially the older ones were "positively paranoid" about allowing anyone to encroach on their work. In September 1954, during his visit to Vietnam, J. Lawrence Burkholder had a very unpleasant experience with a CMA chairman who screamed at him for one hour.⁶⁰ Many missionaries also considered the World Council of Churches (WCC) as a threat. They viewed the WCC as "modernistic" and as an agent capable of teaching Vietnamese Christians much about the outside world about which missionaries had often kept them ignorant.

Therefore, many American missionaries were not very enthusiastic about the visit to the Vietnamese Protestants of WCC's representative, R. Dumartheray, in 1956; they wanted him to leave as soon as possible. But in spite of much suspicion and lack of cooperation Dumartheray left many missionaries "perplexed" by showing Vietnamese Protestants that he was a "living example of real fellowship" and by refuting WCC's "modernist" legend.⁶¹

In January 1956 CMA made Vietnamese Protestant churches independent. However, independence made it very difficult for many pastors to survive on meager salaries of twelve dollars per month. Their parishioners who were mostly lower class could not pay them much. Furthermore, many churches lost much revenue because of new restrictions to bring their funds to the black market. Of some 120 pastors eighty did not have enough to live on Wiens reported in January 1957.⁶² They asked Americans to help them. However, Wiens and also MCC opposed subsidies. MCC subsidies were against MCC policy, but Wiens also felt some Vietnamese Protestants lacked a sense of responsibility and were unable to spend money without squabbles. He felt it was more important to inspire native churches to form a committee to work on relief needs. The chair of that committee later expressed his appreciation to Wiens for having learned from MCC how to show love.⁶³

In August 1957 Wiens's term in Vietnam ended. He returned home by boat and motor bike via Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, the Middle East, and Europe; it took him seven months to get back to Reedley. When he left Saigon he was physically, psychologically and spiritually exhausted.⁶⁴ But his stay in Vietnam had been a growing experience. The same can be said of many MCC workers who received much more than they were able to give. Also, his stay in Vietnam made Wiens a very "ecumenical Mennonite" who worked with different Christian groups and even served on the presbytery of the *Église Réformée*. In spite of his parents' concern he had not been "corrupted" by "modernism," wearing shorts, and some occasional wine drinking. How many other MCC parents have been concerned about such "dangers?" He and other MCC'ers could look back with satisfaction on their accom-

Notes

¹ "Delbert Wiens Journal," Dec. 24, 1954. Mr. Wiens kindly allowed the author to copy this very detailed journal. It is the major source for this article and any study on MCC's early beginnings in Vietnam. (Hereafter cited as WJ) This article was written before Perry Bush's article, Vietnam and the Burden of Mennonite History, *The Conrad Crebel Review*, 17 (Spring 1999): 5-27, was published. This article might serve as background reading for the Bush discussion. However, the Bush article has too narrow a focus. The burden of Mennonite history not only includes the MCC experience but also the two other dimensions: Mennonite draft resistance and Mennonite response to the war at home.

² The amount of literature on French rule in Vietnam is very extensive. For a good introduction see Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Political History* (New York: Praeger, 1972).

³ William J. Duiker, *Vietnam: Revolution, Transition*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 1-2. Some of the statistics and geographical data were obtained from a great variety of sources.

⁴ Frances Fitzgerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1972), 77.

⁵ William Prochnau, *Once upon a Distant War* (New York: Random House, 1995), 9.

⁶ Robert Niklaus, John S. Sawen, and Samuel J. Stoesz, *All for Jesus: God At Work in the Christian Missionary Alliance over One Hundred Years* (Camphill, Penn.: Christian Publications Inc., 1986), 109; A.W. Tozer, *Let My People Go: The Life of Robert A. Jaffrey* (Camphill, Penn.: Christian Publications, 1990), 52-54; Phu Hoang Le, "A Short History of the Evangelical Church of Vietnam (1911-1965) (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1972), 99.

⁷ Various sources cited different statistics on South Vietnamese Protestants. See Le, "Short History," 331, 445, 468; Reginald E. Reimer, "The Protestant Movement in Vietnam: Church Growth in Peace and War among Their Ethnic Vietnamese" (M.A. thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1972), 38; WJ, June 24, 1956.

⁸ Fitzgerald, *Fire*, 85.

⁹ To the best of my knowledge there is no historical literature on USOM and STEM. Information was kindly provided by the Office of the Historian of the U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C.

¹⁰ Robert W. Miller, "The Role and Contribution of the Foreign Voluntary Agencies in South Vietnam, 1966-1971" (M.A. Thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1972), 5.

¹¹ Fitzgerald, *Fire*, 69.

¹² Ibid., 69-77; Edward C. Doyle, et al., eds., *The Vietnam Experience: Passing the Torch* (Boston: Boston Publishing Company, 1981), 117-131; Robert Shaplen, *The Lost Revolution* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 123-124; Duiker, *Vietnam*, 12-13; George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975* (New York, John Wiley and Sons, 1979), 27, 52-54.

¹³ Luke S. Martin, "An Evaluation of a Generation of Mennonite Mission, Service, and Peacemaking in Vietnam, 1954 - 1976" (Akron, Penn.: Mennonite Central Committee Peace Section, Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, 1977), 6 - 7; MCC. Minutes Executive Committee Meetings, July 15, 1954. Archives of the Mennonite Church, Goshen, IN. IX-5-1. Hereafter cited as AMA.

¹⁴ WJ, n.d.; Wiens to author, April 29, 1993 and April 13, 1995.

¹⁵ WJ, Aug. 5-16, 1954.

¹⁶ Information on the Smiths was kindly provided by Christian and Missionary Alliance and

the British and Foreign Bible Society. WJ, Oct. 5-18, 1954.

¹⁷ WJ, Oct. 5-18, 1954.

¹⁸ WJ, Nov. 21, 1954; Mrs. Eva Harshbarger Report to MCC Nov. 1954. MCC Files, AMC, IX-16-13.

¹⁹ WJ, Jan. 22, 1957.

²⁰ Eby's response to author's questionnaire.

²¹ Ewert's response to author's questionnaire.

²² Wiens to author April 13, 1995. WJ, Feb. 17 and July 17, 30, 1956.

²³ WJ, *passim*; Wiens to author, April 13, 1995; LaVonne Platt, "Hostess in the Cause of Peace: Eva Harshbarger (1902-)." In Mary Lou Cummings, *Full Circle: Stories of Mennonite Women* (Newton, Kans.: Faith and Life Press, 1978), 98-109.

²⁴ WJ, Aug. 23, 1954, Feb. 11, 1955.

²⁵ Ibid., Feb. 17, 1956. Information on Dr. Stroink kindly provided by Mrs. P. Jonker-Stroink, Wezep, the Netherlands.

²⁶ WJ, Feb. 17, 1956.

²⁷ Ibid., Feb. 25, 1955.

²⁸ Ibid., Nov. 7 and Dec. 13, 1956.

²⁹ Ibid. Sept, 28, 1954.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., May 31, 1955 and June 5, 1956.

³² Ibid., Feb. 13, 1955.

³³ Ibid., Sept. 4, 1954. At this time Wiens also received a presidential invitation to attend a special dinner in honor of Cardinal Gilroy of Australia. He reacted to this invitation by saying: "When I think of the thousands of priests and nuns that would give a little finger to attend and a Mennonite heretic gets invited I [was] almost overwhelmed by the irony." Ibid., March 22, 1955.

³⁴ Ibid., March 25-29, April 28, 1955.

³⁵ Ibid., June 25 Oct.. 17, 1955.

³⁶ Ibid., *passim*.

³⁷ Martin, "Evaluation," 184.

³⁸ WJ, Nov. 24, 1954-Jan. 17, 1955. Wiens to author, Nov. 9, 1996.

³⁹ Ibid., Jan. 19, 1955-Feb. 22, 1955; Wiens to M. Beaudry, Chief Field Investigation Office of the Comptroller, April, 4, 1955. MCC Correspondence.. AMC, IX-6-3-75. AMC; Wiens Report, Dec.27, 1955. MCC Indo-China Office, 1956. AMC. IX-6-3-75.

⁴⁰ WJ, Aug. 7, 1955-Sept. 16, 1955. Information on Swiss missionaries Armand and Heidi, Bernard and Hélène Félix, and Marie Dufour were kindly provided by Jacques Baumann, Bassecourt, Switzerland and Silvain Dupertuis of the Service Missionnaire Évangélique, Geneva, Switzerland. Bernard Heiniger had been in Laos since 1939 and Heidi since 1951. The Félixes arrived in 1953. Dufour had been in Laos since 1936. The Swiss Brethren should not be confused with Swiss Mennonites who have until fairly recently also been designated as Swiss Brethren.

⁴¹ WJ, *passim*; Krabill to Director of Relief, J.N. Byler, Nov. 12, 1955; Wiens to Byler, Dec., 9, 1955; Krabill and Wiens to Byler, Dec. 30, 1955; Krabill to Byler, Jan. 31, 1956; MCC Correspondence. IX-6-3-75. AMC; Krabill to author, Feb. 10, 1997. The Krabill's first child was born in Vietnam.

⁴² WJ, June 5, July 17, 1956; Wiens to Orie O. Miller, Aug. 25, 1956; Krabill to Orie.O.

Miller, September 8, 1956. MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3-75. AMC.

⁴³ Krabill to author, Feb. 10, 1995.

⁴⁴ Krabill to J.N. Byler, Nov. 12, 1955. MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3-75. AMC.

⁴⁵ WJ, Sept. 17-20, 1954.

⁴⁶ Rhadé is also spelled Raday. The neighboring Jarai referred to them as Rhodé from which the French derived the name Rhadé. Banmethuot is also written Ban Me Thuot. It is the Lao version of the Rhadé name, Buon Ama Thuot, which means Village of the Father Thuot. Gerald C. Hickey, *Sons of the Mountains: Ethnohistory of the Vietnamese Central Highlands to 1954*. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982), 9, 270, n.11. On the Smiths' missionary work in Southeast Asia see Gordon H. Smith, *The Blood Hunters: A Narrative of Pioneer Missionary Work among the Savages of French Indo-China* (Chicago: World Wide Prayer and Missionary Union, 1943); Laura I. Smith, *Gongs in the Night: Reaching the Tribes of French Indo-China* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1945); Laura I. Smith, *Farther into the Night* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1954); and Laura I. Smith, *Victory in Vietnam* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: G.R. Zondervan, 1965). On their pioneer work at Banmutheot see Smith, *Farther*, 231-234. Interesting are Wiens's comments on the Smiths. In September 1954 he considered Gordon Smith an "enlightened" and one of the "most intelligent missionary that I have seen out here." But he also felt that Smith was "opportunistic." Later the Smiths severed their ties with CMA and joined the World Evangelization Crusade and returned to Vietnam. Smith, *Victory*, 126-127. See also WJ, May 22, 1955.

⁴⁷ Martin, "Evaluation," 171.

⁴⁸ WJ, *passim*; Krabill to Byler, April 8, 1956. MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3-75. AMC. Miss Janzen to author, Dec. 1996; Henry Lefever to author, Jan. 11, 1997; Carl Hurst's response to author's questionnaire. Sebus to author, March 1, 1997 and answer to questionnaire; interview with Duane Swartzendruber, April 9, 1997.

⁴⁹ Wiens to Byler, Nov. 12, 1956. MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3-75. AMC; WJ, Oct. 2, 1956.

⁵⁰ Wiens to Orie O. Miller, Oct. 9-11, 1956; MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3-75. AMC. Wiens to author, Nov. 9, 1996.

⁵¹ Krabill to Lewis L. King, September 10, 1956; Wiens to Orie O. Miller, October 9, 1956. MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3-75. AMC.

⁵² Orie O. Miller to Wiens, November 26, 1956; Krabill to Orie O. Miller, Nov. 28, 1956. MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3-75. AMC. Yet, a similar problem arose in March 1957 when once again MCC was instructed to discontinue expansion of its program. Apparently, that problem was also resolved. Krabill to MCC, March 18, 1957; Robert W. Miller, to Krabill, March 27, 1957. MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3-75. AMC. There was no problem when MCC did not have a medical doctor available in August 1958 to succeed Dr. Krabill. Until October of that year Dr. Clarence Rutt and his spouse, Helen, who were assigned to go to Indonesia, provided leadership. After that Dr. Eleanor A. Vietti of the CMA was in charge until the arrival of Dr. John Dick in 1959. Janzen to author, March 9, 1997; Martin, "Evaluation," 180.

⁵³ In September 1956, much to Krabill's dismay, former CMA missionary Gordon Smith charged that MCC was "taking over" at Banmutheot. Krabill was unable to obtain a satisfactory retraction from Smith. Krabill to Smith June 20, 1956; Smith to Krabill June 28, 1956, and Krabill to Smith, July 12, 1956. MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3-75. AMC. Later Krabill responded to two MCC *Information Service News and Notes* which might give the impression MCC was taking over at Banmutheot. In a letter of September 9, 1957, to Miller he warned not to let CMA see that. "The reality of the situation here," he wrote, "demands extreme care on our part to avoid offense." Krabill to Orie O. Miller, Sept. 9, 1957. Ibid.

⁵⁴ Carl Hurst to Robert W. Miller, April 25, 1957. MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3-75. AMC. Hurst was a new MCC worker in Vietnam assisting Wiens in Saigon. Martin, "Evaluation," 11, 19.

⁵⁵ WJ, *passim*; Wiens to author April 13, 1995; Le, "Short History," 388.

⁵⁶ WJ. June 4 and 17, 1957.

⁵⁷ Wiens to author, Nov. 9, 1996.

⁵⁸ Martin, "Evaluation," 64 ff.

⁵⁹ WJ, *passim*.

⁶⁰ Wiens to author, April 13, 1996; J. Lawrence Burkholder to author, Feb. 13, 1996.

⁶¹ WJ, Aug. 1-5, 1956; Wiens to MCC, Jan. 10, 1955. MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3-75. AMC.

⁶² Ibid., Jan. 14, 1957; Wiens to author, Nov. 9, 1996; Le, "Short History," 396.

⁶³ Wiens to MCC, Jan. 10, 1955; WJ., Sept. 18-25, 1955; Wiens to author, Nov. 9, 1996; Martin "Evaluation," 119.

⁶⁴ Wiens to author, April 29, 1993. Upon his return home Wiens taught at Tabor College, graduated from Yale Divinity School and in 1970 received a doctorate in Hellenistic Philosophy and Religion from the University of Chicago. He taught at Fresno Pacific University, 1969-1997. Eby received a master's degree in mathematics and became a statistician. Ewert received a doctor's degree in microbiology with a specialty in tropical parasitology. He taught at the University of Texas medical branch until his retirement a few years ago. Mrs Harshbarger taught high school until 1967. She died in 1991. Dr. Krabill began a medical practice in Goshen, Ind. Harry Lefever received his Ph.D. in Sociology and Anthropology and has been teaching at Spelman College, Atlanta, Geo. since 1966. Esther Lefever was a homemaker, became very active in Atlanta, Geo. community development and served briefly on the City Council. She died in 1991. Janzen joined the Victorian Order of Nursing and later served as head nurse in a Mennonite home for the aged. She is now retired. Sebus married Rev. R.S. Kuitse and inter alia lived from 1962-1969 in Ghana where her husband worked for the World Council of Churches. In Ghana her Vietnam, Third World, experience was very useful. In 1978 she and her family moved to Elkhart, IN, where Kuitse taught at the AMBS. They are now retired in Amsterdam. Hurst received a master's degree in music and taught public school in Valparaiso and Hobart, IN. He is now retired. After his return home Swartzendruber became a truck driver the kind of work he still enjoys doing.