

Dear Wilks and Friends,

It is my understanding that at this time Kienam Hospital Fund is undecided as to whether to disband or to continue operating in hopes that eventually channels of communication to Minh Quy Hospital will be re-established and K. H. F. may be able to continue its work in support of the hospital in spite of its being under the control of a government antagonistic to the United States.

As you know I was in Saigon from April 8th until April 11th, at which time there had been no news from Drs. Edric Baker and George Christian who voluntarily remained in Kienam when its takeover by North Vietnamese forces was imminent. I do feel however

~~that there is some possibility that contact will be~~
established in the near future, and I would therefore urge members of the K. H. F. board to adopt a "wait-and-see" attitude rather than one of object discouragement as concerns prospects for continued support of Minh Quy and the population it traditionally serves.

The reasons for my guarded optimism are as follows:

- 1) During my trip through Asia one of the Japanese newspapers published a release from Agence France-Presse stating a 10-point policy declaration of the P.R.G. concerning the administration of newly-'liberated' areas in South Vietnam, and one of these points was that private educational and medical institutions (presumably including those operated by foreigners) would be encouraged to continue their work. Their practice may not follow their stated theory, but I think it is significant that they made the statement in the first place.

- 2) There have been other press reports to the effect that P.R.G. has solicited humanitarian aid — if I recall correctly from United Nations agencies and national Red Cross organizations in some of the Scandinavian countries — to assist the population of areas seized in the recent North Vietnamese offensive; which demonstrates that they are cognizant of their need for help and will accept this from international non-Communist sources.
- 3) In Bangkok on April 8th, just before departing for Saigon, I met Pat Martin — a former colleague in Vietnam Christian Service and the wife of Earl Martin, another ex-VNCS person currently employed by the American Friends Service Committee in Vietnam. She stated that Earl had chosen to remain behind in Quang Ngai after its evacuation by the South Vietnamese military and most of the civilian population, in full confidence that despite his American nationality he would be allowed to continue his work in Quang Ngai under the P.R.G. Pat herself reflected this same confidence, adding that in the course of time after a transition of governments had occurred in Saigon she hoped to be able to re-join Earl in Saigon. (It should be pointed out that Earl is a Mennonite and a conscientious objector, and therefore would presumably be held in special regard by the P.R.G. when his credentials were established).

By April 11th when I left Saigon, word had already been received via AFSC contacts in Paris that Earl Martin's presence in Quang Ngai was

in fact appreciated by the P.R.C. and that he was being encouraged to continue his program. Since returning to the United States I have read press reports that another A.F.S.C. staff member who opted to return to Dunning and work under the P.R.C. regime — Dr. Tom Hoskins, formerly attached to the Quang Ngai Rehabilitation Center — has been reported safe by communist sources, although I am not clear as to whether he is actually carrying on with medical work.

On Monday April 21st (having telephoned Pat Smith the previous day to find out what approach she was using to get news of Eddie's & George's welfare and the status quo of the hospital) I phoned the headquarters of the American Friends Service Committee in Philadelphia to learn what specifics I could of their means of communication with the P.R.C., and was given the address of the Paris delegation. Mr. Jack Snyder, the program assistant who gave this information, said that on some occasions it has taken a couple of months to get word from them on various matters — I do not know the reasons for the delay, but it might be even longer under present circumstances. Mr. Snyder said that if questions of trying to transfer funds or material aid supplies to support Minh Quy hospital arose, A.F.S.C. might be able to offer advice on the legalities & technicalities of the transfer as they have had previous experience in donating aid to North Vietnam.

I also heard from Kerry Herbuck while in Saigon that an old friend of Minh Quy — Bob McKerron of the New Zealand Red Cross — is now assigned to Omeira

and that he is going to try to assist Kerry in getting news of members of his family (presumably dead or missing) via contacts with the P.R.S. delegation in Geneva. This avenue of communication might also be explored by K.H.F. in trying to get through to Minh Quy.

Another possibility might be through the Mission de Paris in France — who undoubtedly have been making every effort to get news of Bishop Seitz and the other French clergy who remained in the Highlands.

One final comment before I post this off: to my knowledge there have never been any reports of fighting in the Kontum area — it was abandoned by the South Vietnamese military, most of the Vietnamese citizenry left or attempted to leave thereafter, but it was turned over to the NVA/PRG by default rather than as a result of military combat. Thus Minh Quy's physical plant could be assumed to be intact, and as there were no Vietnamese soldiers to loot or vandalize one hopes the bulk of supplies and equipment have survived the transition of government. It is also important to point out that whereas there were reported to be tribal refugees from the Ben Me Thiot area, where there was actual fighting, there have been no reports to my knowledge of any large-scale exodus of tribal people from Kontum. For the most part they evidently stayed behind while the Vietnamese fled.

So, in terms of medical care, the need still exists. And, presumably, so does the hospital, hopefully intact.

So the major question is that of the welfare of Edria, George, and the indigenous staff, and whether they are still able to perform their medical work.

And finally, whether a system could be established for continuing support of Minh Quy under the P.R.G. regime.

It is clearly too early to determine some of these 'unknowns' — so my thinking would be to examine all possible means of contact and communication before abandoning Kontum Hospital and its efforts.

I hope this has been of some help,
and please let me know if there's
anything I could do by way of
liaison either in Philadelphia
or New York —

Sincerely,

Bill R.