

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON CHRISTIAN WORK IN NANKING - WINTER 1938

The tasks of each day are so insistent that no one can give thought and time to elaborate reporting, nor to the counting of dead and harmed and destroyed among the members and homes of the churches in Nanking. But at this moment (February 18) there is reason for a brief description, largely for the interest of Christian workers perforce absent from us, of the Christian activities in Nanking during these eventful months.

The major Christian task has been that of direct service to non-combatants endangered by war. This is not the place to tell the story of the International Committee for a Safety Zone in Nanking, and of the hundreds of Chinese helpers who made its work possible. But it is the universal opinion in this city that the attempt to establish and to maintain a Safety Zone saved many thousands of lives, held down the terrible scourge of rape, and supplied food and endurable conditions for life for tens of thousands who found no ray of light elsewhere. Despite the great withdrawal of population from Nanking in the weeks of expected assault, 250,000 entered the Safety Zone; and a few thousand remained outside, to suffer far more cruelly. A strong majority of the members of the International Committee are Christian missionaries, and the German Chairman has been our colleague in all things even to Sunday afternoon services of the Union Church. The Director and a high percentage of the Chinese leaders in the work of the Safety Zone are also Christian workers. The one considerable medical service, of critical importance under war conditions, was that of the University Hospital; and this was supplemented by noteworthy Christian effort for wounded soldiers.

Within the Safety Zone, some 70,000 persons were cared for in large camps, the majority of these people in the buildings of Christian institutions placed at their disposal. In such camps the situation and personnel were such as to give favorable opportunities for Christian service of all types, granted the crowding of buildings and the manifold burdens upon the staffs. The meaning of such opportunities is realized only in contrast with the outer darkness; for in the rest of the city organized life was impossible for civilians, and outside the walls burning had been comprehensive even before the fighting and the military plague. Since November there has been no school of any sort save the emergency ones conducted for refugees in Christian properties within the Zone; and until recently there has been no church service apart from the Zone.

The 250,000 people have lived largely in crowded, strange surroundings, for the Zone is only about one-eighth the area of the walled city. Many of these families lost members by death, often the unreasoning murder of persons quiet in their homes. Thousands of women were raped, and all were in terror of that suffering. Thousands of families knew that their homes were burned; and practically all lost household and personal property through continued looting and through hold-ups even in the camps of refugees. Large numbers were reduced to an inadequate diet of rice gruel, and that possible only through charity. In these conditions of strain and anxiety, there has been little margin for non-essentials; and the struggle for existence has brought forth some harsh results. Yet by and large, there has been a good deal of cheerful acceptance of the inevitable, and a fair measure of co-operation for the common good.

Great numbers have expressed their gratitude for Christian aid, and the response to limited programs of religious work has been remarkable. Although only three of the regular pastors of the city are at their posts, Christian teachers and laymen and retired pastors have supplemented their efforts in church enterprises that comprise something like the numbers of normal times with full staffs and a population of 1,000,000. These workers have almost all carried heavy responsibilities in other aid to refugees.

At five points, including the two churches located within the Zone, services were carried through without a break, even during the two weeks that were the height of the Terror. At six other points regular Sunday programs were started about New Year's (the Japanese entry was completed on December 13). Of these eleven centers, eight conduct daily programs, some of them extensive ones. New centers are being opened this present week, as the gradual improvement of conditions permits the return of some people to their homes in other parts of the city. During January and February the attendance at daily services and Bible classes has been nearly 1000, and at Sunday gatherings 1400. These numbers could easily have been increased if larger halls were available in certain camps. Indeed, in more than one camp tickets or other means of rotation have been employed to spread out the opportunities of attendance. Although we have not especially inquired for such figures, some 200 new believers have been reported to us.

On the material side, the Christian enterprise in Nanking has not suffered as much as might naturally have been expected. The Chiang Tang Chieh Church of the Methodist Mission, and the Young Men's Christian Association Building on Chung Hwa Lu have been burned, both by Japanese soldiers. So also have two of the buildings used for the Boys' School of the Christian Mission in the South City. The Parish House of the American Church Mission on Tai Ping Lu was badly damaged during the fighting, and a few other mission properties have suffered somewhat by shells or fire. But by and large, apart from the buildings that were burned, the property loss is not heavy; though when looting is counted, the total for all Missions and Christian institutions will run into some tens of thousands of dollars. Residences of Chinese and foreign workers, as of church members, have nearly all been looted; and the aggregate losses in this respect will undoubtedly be very large. The chief significance of this last statement for our present purpose lies in the fact that the Christian community, never very strong economically, has been still further weakened by what has happened.

In addition to the above direct loss or damage to Christian property in Nanking, there is a very heavy indirect loss due to the extensive use of Christian buildings for the housing of refugees. Of the 25 camps conducted by the International Committee for the Safety Zone, 11 have been on mission property, and these 11 have housed nearly two-thirds of the camp population. The resultant wear and tear upon buildings has been heavy, and repair bills for this item will be large. In the case of the University of Nanking alone it has been estimated at \$10,000. But repair bills of this sort can perhaps be paid with satisfaction because of the tremendous service which the buildings have rendered to the people at this time of crisis. Never have the buildings been more useful than in these recent months.

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