Summation of Elizabeth Reid's Visit

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"The Catholic Church needs generous laymen and women to give a few years of their lives to help the downtrodden peoples of other countries, to act as shock troops against the constant surge of Communism."

This thought-provoking challenge was issued to a group of University of Dayton coeds last week by Elizabeth Reid, former editor of the Hong Kong Sunday Examiner, diocesan newspaper, in an informal talk on "Asia Today."

The lay apostolate, she told the coeds, must become interested in those people because of our common bond of brotherhood found in the Mystical Body of Christ.

A native of Australia, Miss Reid is on a speaking tour through the United States, giving her impressions of conditions found in southeast Asia during the past several years. Active in the Grail Movement, she was the first Australian to join that cause.

Miss Reid spoke from firsthand experience of the hundreds of thousands of refugees which have created immense problems in Hong Kong, in Korea and Vietnam.

"Food sent to help these refugees is better public relations for the United States than six million dollars worth of jet planes for Formosa," Miss Reid pointed out.

Besides the food problem, there is a great religious crisis which must be met, she said.
Elizabeth Reid --2

For example, in Korea, there is a great flowering of the Faith. In one small section alone there are over 20,000 catechumens waiting and wanting to be received into the Catholic Faith. And there aren't enough missionaries to instruct them all.

"This is a great moment in the history of Korea," she explained. "Catholic now and there may be a great change for that country. The opportunity may never come again. There is a great need now for a 'peaceful army' of lay apostles to come into this nation.

"Willing souls are needed to help spread our great heritage of freedom of religion."

Turning to Vietnam, and speaking again from firsthand experience, Miss Reid pointed out a few important facts which she feels may have gone unnoticed when the northern portion of Vietnam "was served on a platter to the Communists."

"They were given the richest rice bowl of the country; the capital city of Hanoi; the port city adjacent to Hanoi; a railroad line which provided a direct route from southeast Asia right into Europe; but most important, they took over the most intensely Catholic part of southeast Asia, where the population is 85 per cent Catholic."

These Catholics were given a "terrible choice," according to Miss Reid: the choice of remaining and living under Communist rule or leaving everything behind and going to the south as refugees.

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"They knew they'd lose their religious freedom under the Communists, so they left all and fled. In 92 days, 800,000 Catholics fled to freedom that they might preserve their religious freedom for themselves and their children.

"Now as refugees, these people are living in south Vietnam in tents and huts. And between each hut is a cross, a permanent sign of their faith which nothing can overcome."

The exodus of these people from Communist rule provided one of the most heroic witnesses of the faith in our times, Miss Reid feels.

She told a story which she had heard from refugee children, a story which vividly demonstrates what many Catholics went through when the Communists took over northern Vietnam.

Communist soldiers came on a priest instructing children in the Lord's prayer.

"Repeat what you have told these children," a soldier ordered the priest.

And he repeated the Our Father.

Angered, the soldier drew a knife and cut out the priest's tongue that he might never again say those words.

Then, turning to the horrified children, he ordered them to repeat what the priest had instructed them.

When they had completed saying the Lord's Prayer, the soldier pierced the eardrums of each child that they might never again hear those words.
Asia has a great need for Catholics who would be willing to sacrifice three years of their lives to work for the Church—teachers, social workers, journalists, stenographers, almost any profession—and make the Church visible in that part of the world, Miss Reid told her audience.

"If you would just spend three years there—then come back and get married and do whatever you jolly well please."

"Three words," she said, "sum up the situation: Challenge, strategy and response.

"The challenge is to save the lives of the brave people of Asia; the strategy must be that of the lay apostolate streaming overseas. And as for the response—if the first two words are answered, the effect could be as great as what happened when one woman responded to God's call—the fiat that changed all of history."

Accompanying Miss Reid to Dayton for her address to the UD coeds was Mary Brigid Niland of the Grail Center in Cincinnati. Her visit to the campus was sponsored by the Rev. Phillip Hoelle, SM, director of the Marian Library, and Miss Kathleen Whetro, dean of women.