

## FROM MECCA

By Shirley W. Madany  
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There is always an air of hopeful anticipation and excitement in the opening of the airmail packets from Khartoum, Sudan. These packets are the visible response to the daily Arabic broadcast of The Back to God Hour.

Will there be anything special this time? Is the mail from Syria still increasing? Where will the most letters come from?--at the moment it is Morocco. Is the response mostly from Trans World Radio broadcasts from Monte Carlo or is the new program from Cyprus being mentioned? These and other questions follow each other fast.

What is noteworthy at first glance? Letters from Russia or Yugoslavia, Yemen or Saudi Arabia, are always in this class. Imagine, then, what a great day it was when the same mail produced a *first* in the letters from both Mecca and Moscow!

Does this stir your imagination?

Mecca! Someone in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, listening to the gospel? Mecca, "the highly honored" to a Muslim, is a forbidden city to us. This is the very heart of Islam, the most unreachable of all Arab points. And here is a listener calmly asking for all our publications?

Mecca is the city of pilgrimage. This very February more than 400,000 foreigners along with a million local Saudis made their spiritual pilgrimage to this shrine of their faith. Every good Muslim ought to make a journey there at least once in his life. If he survives the rigors of the trip, the terrible heat and privations involved in that crowded pilgrimage, he returns to his home a "holy" man. From that time on he is known as a "hajji"--one who has been to Mecca. And when one sees a good Muslim, this could be someone living anywhere from West Africa to Indonesia. There are now 500 million Muslims--a seventh of the human race!

Perhaps you have read tales of some adventurous Westerners who have tried to penetrate this forbidden area in the heart of Arabia. Some have resorted to the use of disguise and some have met with death when their disguise was not sufficient. Others have become converts to Islam, renouncing what faith they had, and have traveled freely to Mecca. The closest that a reporter can get to observe this gigantic holy observance is the small village of El Shemeshi a few miles from the beginning of the shrines.

Islam sprang from this locality 1300 years ago. It is still growing. Even in America there are mosques, and on certain university stations you can hear the reading of the Koran on the religious free time. This year there were pilgrims from the U.S.A. The

pilgrimage is a series of ceremonies based on the traditional deeds of Abraham, Hagar, and their son Ishmael. The prophet Mohammed encouraged the pilgrim to associate himself with other pilgrims from the moment he set out on his journey. Besides being an individual act of faith, it serves as an unforgettable experience of international unity: a brotherhood living in a city of tents, enduring hardship together.

Let us praise God for this breakthrough! If there is one listener in Mecca who writes, it is not unreasonable to presume that there may be many more who are hearing even though they are not writing.

And then Moscow! What a thing to contemplate! We know more about Moscow. It is not forbidden, merely difficult, to enter and live in. But imagine this--the Christian gospel in Arabic is being listened to and appreciated by an Arab student in the very citadel of Communistic training!

Early in the 60's the Russians initiated a special university in Moscow for the training of foreign students and called it Patrice Lumumba University in honor of a Congolese national leader. To this center of education and atheistic indoctrination, thousands of students from Latin America, Africa and Asia have flocked. This particular student, in Moscow to study veterinary science, must have been sitting at his radio late, for the program reaches Moscow at 1 a.m.--all the way from the powerful transmitter of TWR in Monte Carlo.

How amazing it is that God has allowed us to advance technically and then shown us how to throw the Good News of salvation higher than all the man-made barriers and curtains, be they iron or straw! And at the same time He has given us the assurance that wherever He has His children, He will guide them and call them. The family of God will be gathered out of every race and from the very ends of the earth.

Is your heart as open as it should be for this international aspect of our faith?

Whenever you read a report on radio missions it is important that you, the reader, set your imagination to work. Put yourself in the place of the "others"--of those who do not have the blessings and benefits that you enjoy. Think a few minutes of what their circumstances must be--and of what this broadcast means to them--of how they have not only the opportunity now to hear the good news of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ, but also, thanks to your contributions, these people in Arabia and Russia and all the countries in between have the opportunity to grow in grace through steady, daily food and publications. They have the personal touch of letters and unexpected mail when a new book arrives at their home. They have a very real contact which gives them the confidence that they are in a broader fellowship, that they are loved and cared for in their spiritual life. Think what a light and hope this must be for many whose immediate circumstances are hopeless. Many who hear these foreign broadcasts have no freedom such as we enjoy. Now they have a way to escape through the Christian hope.

We live in the land of affluence, even when it comes to religious broadcasts. It is possible to get oneself thoroughly confused by too much listening. But this is purely an American phenomenon. Spin your globe and think a minute about all those *other* countries. Support your Back to God Hour. It is an international gospel broadcast which is ever expanding (in direct proportion to your support) and which is reaching countless thousands of people who would have no other way to hear the Good News.

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Last year approximately 3,000 letters were received in response to the Arabic Broadcast of The Back to God Hour. Listeners to this program are asked to write to an address in Khartoum, Sudan, which is more familiar to the people of the Near East and North Africa than our address in Chicago would be. There the mail is forwarded two or three times weekly by members of the Sudan Interior Mission to Rev. Madany, our Arabic Radio Minister, in Chicago.

Naturally, Mrs. Madany has a deep interest in her husband's ministry, and from her knowledge of the religious life of the Muslims, has written the accompanying article. We will never know the total effect of the preaching of the Word of God, as it is proclaimed to people who live in hostility to Christianity and bar the door to missionaries of the Christian Church. But 3,000 letters, from all over North Africa and the Middle East, prove that God's Word is heard, and responded to, in spite of Satan's opposition.