



**BAPTIST PRESS**  
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March 30, 1970

Russian Baptist Dissenter  
Group "Seeks To Register"

RUSCHLIKON, Switzerland (BP)--Dissident Baptists in Russia are seeking to register their churches with the government, a Russian Baptist leader said in an interview here with European Baptist Press Service.

Arthur Mitzkevitch, associate general secretary of the All-Union Council of Evangelicals Christians-Baptists, said here that if the dissenters do register, it will represent a turnabout from their previous refusal to follow government rules for religious bodies.

Mitzkevitch, an official of the major Baptist organization in Russia which follows government regulations concerning religion, was in Ruschlikon to attend a conference of national Baptist leaders from throughout Europe.

The issue of government registration has been a leading point of contention between dissident Baptists and the official Baptist group, reported European Baptist Press Service. The dissenters, sometimes known as the "initiatives," split off from the official group in 1961.

Dissenters have attacked the official Baptist movement for being "too subservient" to the government over registration and other religious restrictions.

At the same conference one year ago, Mitzkevitch contrasted the two Baptist groups in Russia, saying that the only difference was "on methods and on attitudes toward the laws of our country concerning religious societies."

Following a meeting of the triennial congress of the All-Union Council last December, C. Ronald Goulding of London, secretary of the European Baptist Federation who was present, said that the congress welcomed back into fellowship a number of the dissenters.

Even officials of the recognized Baptist group in USSR have acknowledged that dissenters are suffering hardships, the report indicated.

A document recently distributed by a publication of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., called "Religion in Communist Dominated Areas," reported in detail alleged acts of persecution against dissenter Baptists.

Dated November, 1969, the report was signed by the "First All-Union Conference of Relatives of Imprisoned Members of the Church of Evangelical Christians-Baptists."

The document goes into specific cases of persons "condemned or under trial" in Russia for "fulfilling the commandments of our beloved Lord Jesus Christ." The document is labeled "an appeal to all Christians in the world."

Physical brutality, imprisonment, confiscation of Bibles and hymnals, and harrassment by police against dissenting Baptists are charged in the document, European Baptist Press reported. Names and places are cited in the report.

Michael Zhidkov, Moscow Baptist pastor and past president of the European Baptist Federation, told European Baptist Press Service that the first issue in 1970 of an official Baptist journal, "Brotherly Messenger," offers a rebuttal and calls the charges in the document "exaggerated."

Zhidkov said that the official Russian Baptist movement was aware of the complaint letter from relatives of imprisoned dissenters.

The official Baptist magazine "regrets the unkind spirit in which this letter was written," Zhidkov continued. "We should solve our problems within our own country and not appeal to outsiders."

Though Baptists play a major role in the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, the group is actually a composite of several Protestant denominations with beliefs similar to those of Baptists.

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Nursery Center For SBC  
Set At Riverside Church

3/30/70

DENVER (BP)--A Child Care Center will be set up during the Southern Baptist Convention here June 1-4 at the Riverside Baptist Church, the local arrangement committee for the convention has announced.

The church is located at 455 South Platte River Drive in Denver, about five miles by expressway from the Denver Convention Center where the Southern Baptist Convention will hold its 125th anniversary celebration.

Public transportation on a regular schedule is furnished by buses which run within one block of the church and one block of the Convention Center, according to Mrs. John D. Matthews of Denver, chairman of the nursery arrangements committee.

The center will be open Monday through Thursday, June 1-4, and will be limited to pre-school children of out-of-town convention messengers only, said Mrs. Matthews.

A charge of \$1.50 per child per session will be made to care for expenses, she added. A child may be left in the morning and picked up following the afternoon session for a total charge of \$3.50, including a lunch costing 50 cents.

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MAR 31 1970

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ARIZONA EDITOR GETS SECOND TERM:

James R. Staples, pastor of Royal Palms Baptist Church, Phoenix, Ariz., has been elected to a second term as editor of the Baptist Beacon, weekly publication of the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention. Staples, previously editor of the paper from 1960-62, succeeds Frank Gillham, who has resigned to become pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Clearwater, Fla. (BP) Photo

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NEW VIRGINIA EDITOR: Julian H. Pentecost,

pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Richmond,

has been elected editor of the Religious

Herald, weekly publication of the Baptist

General Association of Virginia. He succeeds

Reuben Alley, effective June 1. (BP) Photo

CUTLINES:

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