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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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December 30, 1971

Russian Baptist "Initiatives"
Build Press to Print Literature

WASHINGTON (BP)--In an act of defiance against the government of the Soviet Union, a group of dissident Baptists usually called the "initiative Baptists" have informed the Kremlin that they have built their own printing press to produce "spiritual literature," according to the Washington Post.

In a news report datelined Geneva, the Washington Post said that the developments were revealed in documents recently smuggled into the West.

The report indicated that the "initiative Baptists" had printed a declaration run off on their new press and addressed to Premier Alexei Kosygin, announcing that they had formed a new publishing house because Soviet authorities had refused their repeated requests for facilities to print church material.

Under Soviet law, no printing press can operate in Russia without explicit government permission.

The publishing house is reportedly being operated at an undisclosed location by Baptist volunteers who are members of the Council of Churches of Evangelical-Christian Baptists.

The council split away from the officially-approved All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists about 10 years ago.

Documents smuggled to the West indicated that the leader of the "initiative" or "reform" group of Baptists, Gennadi K. Krychkov, is currently in hiding while the Soviet police are conducting a nationwide search for allegedly "spreading literature of a slanderous character" and leading "illegal groups of Evangelical-Baptist believers."

Krychkov reportedly had been released from prison in 1969 after serving a three-year prison term for illegal religious activities. Wanted posters on Krychkov have appeared in several towns, and his wife has been threatened, the Baptist group reported. They said his life is in danger.

In the declaration addressed to Premier Kosygin announcing they had built and were operating a printing press, the reform Baptist group claimed that "we are subjected to surveillance, threats and oppression by the organs of power, although our activities do not harm the interests of the state.

"We no longer ask you for cooperation in publishing our necessary literature of the faith, but we do ask you not to place any obstacles in the way . . . and to consider literature under the 'Khrystyanin' (Christian) imprimature legal," the declaration said.

The Baptists issuing the declaration added that they were not signing the document since Soviet authorities never wrote back anyway, and that "every previous attempt at legalization (of their movement) began with a list of signatures and ended with the repression of those on the list."

Reliable statistics do not exist on Soviet religious organizations, but the Washington Post report estimated that there are nearly 3 million Baptists in Russia. The Baptist World Alliance office here lists 550,000 as the number of Baptists in Russia.

The general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, Robert Denny, when asked about the report in the Washington Post, said that the Alliance is always concerned about the religious liberty and human dignity of all men, regardless of their religion or political ideologies.

"The story published in today's Washington Post indicates that the religious liberty and the dignity of some Baptist people in the U.S.S.R. is being threatened," Denny said. He expressed hope that the Soviet government would "look into this matter" and see that religious freedom is guaranteed to all Russian citizens as promised in the Soviet constitution.

The Washington Post report indicated that one document asserted that 75 per cent of the Baptist congregations in the Byelorussian Republic are "reformist" or "initiative" groups. The reform Baptists are thought by Western specialists to have about 1,000 unregistered congregations throughout the Soviet Union, the Post reported.

More than 200 documents were received from the Baptist group by Radio Liberty, a U. S.-sponsored station which broadcasts to the Soviet Union from Munich, Germany, according to the Post. The documents include the declaration sent to Premier Kosygin, numerous Baptist texts, petitions, a bi-monthly magazine printed by the reform group and a letter which 70 reform Baptists sent to U. N. Secretary General U Thant.

The letter to U Thant claimed there are now about 200 Baptists imprisoned in Soviet labor camps. Other documents reported cases of torture of jailed Baptists, destruction of churches and kidnapping of believers' children.

The documents further indicate that 1,453 mothers from 42 villages and towns signed an appeal to the Soviet government leaders against the regime's "illegal tormenting of our children" by interrogation, beating and slander of Baptist children in schools, and threats of kidnapping.

The forerunners of today's reform Baptists were a nonviolent milk-drinking sect called Molokans, according to the Post report. Since 1917, Russian Baptists have lived under almost constant harassment, except during and following World War II.

In 1961, the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists was given official government recognition after the council agreed to adhere to regulations set forth by the government.

The regulations, according to the Post, include such things as: children are forbidden to attend church services; baptism of people between 18 and 30 must be kept at a minimum, the pastor must remember his duty "to check unhealthy missionary tendencies" and that his main task is not enlistment of new members, nor should he become too involved in preaching.

Baptists who could not agree to the government imposed restrictions formed a group called the "Initiators" and began agitating for free worship, the right to preach and to educate their children in church, and separation of church and state as proclaimed in the Soviet constitution.

In 1966, about 500 reform Baptists from 130 towns came to Moscow and staged a demonstration at the headquarters of the Communist Party central committee. They delivered a petition before being beaten in the street and taken away, according to the Washington Post report.

The news account, written by Don M. Larrimore "special to the Washington Post," concluded with the observation that the 1966 demonstration, like the new printing press, "was almost unthinkable in the Soviet Union."

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Birmingham Church Names
Tampling as New Pastor

12/30/71

BIRMINGHAM (BP)--Andrew W. Tampling, pastor of First Baptist Church in Sylacauga, Ala., has been named pastor of the First Baptist Church of Birmingham.

Tampling was called as pastor about 16 months after the church was split over the refusal of a majority of the members to admit blacks as members, and over the role of the pastor in integrating the church.

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Herbert J. Gilmore, then pastor of the church, has since become pastor of the Baptist Church of the Covenant, a new congregation formed from a nucleus of First Baptist members who left the church in protest of the rejection of black members.

Tambling, the new pastor of First Baptist, has been a member of the Baptist State Executive Board and its administrative committee, and a member of the board of directors for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. In 1969 he was named Sylacauga's "Outstanding Citizen," and was chosen to preach the annual Alabama Baptist Convention sermon the previous month.

He assumes the position in Birmingham Jan. 15, 1972.

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Becoming Controversy Voted
Top Baptist News Story of '71

12/30/71

NASHVILLE (BP)--A controversy which erupted after Southern Baptist Sunday School Board officials decided to withhold and revise a church training quarterly because of its racial content was voted the top news story of the year concerning Southern Baptists by editors of 32 Baptist state papers across the country.

The top ten news stories of the year concerning Baptists were selected by the editors in a poll conducted by Baptist Press, the news service of the Southern Baptist Convention.

In a point system ranking stories in order, one through 10, the editors gave 248 votes to the controversy surrounding the decision by Sunday School Board officials to withhold and revise *Becoming*, a church training quarterly for teenagers, because they felt misunderstandings would result from its racial content.

In reaction to the decision, board officials said they received the most mail response in the shortest time period, state Baptist state conventions adopted resolutions expressing varying degrees of displeasure over the decision, the editor of the publication resigned in the wake of the decision by his superiors, and board officials issued statements blaming the press with distorting the issue.

Fifty points separated the number one story from the number two story of the year. Others ranked by the editors were:

2. Non-denominational prayer amendment defeated in Congress by close vote; Baptist leaders oppose prayer amendment; SBC adopts resolution opposing amendment. (198 points)
3. The Jesus Movement involves Baptists; raised question on how church will respond; numerous Baptist churches report youth-led revivals with record responses. (186 points)
4. Broadman Bible Commentary controversy continues in SBC; Sunday School Board votes to ask original writers to revise materials; SBC in St. Louis requests board to obtain a new writer; Clyde Francisco agrees to accept assignment. (160 points)
5. Baptists express concern on racial reconciliation; W. A. Criswell calls rejection of Negroes "manifest hypocrisy"; South Carolina church fires pastor in racial disagreement; 13 state conventions deal with race question; SBC Christian Life Commission urges open door racial practices. (89 points)
6. Six state conventions debate "messenger" requirements including church affiliation with association, alien immersion, baptism and open communion practices of some churches. (88 points)
7. U. S. Supreme Court prohibits parochial school aid but permits some aid to colleges and universities; President Nixon pledges efforts to work for tax aid for parochial schools; President's panel on private education asks for aid; OEO voucher aid experiments continue; several state Baptist Conventions oppose such aid. (87 points)
8. Statistical projections indicate 1971 is second highest year in SBC baptisms; Houston church baptizes more than 1,600 for new record; numerous churches, several state conventions report record responses in revivals and baptisms. (80 points)

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9. Baptist-Catholic interaction steps up; dialogue in Daytona Beach involves local leaders for first time; W. A. Criswell visits pope, urges love toward Catholics; Synod of Bishops in Rome reveals Baptists, Catholics face similar human frailties; Catholic nun named fellow at Baptist seminary. (71 points)

10. Youth involvement in SBC increases; several state conventions, SBC agencies appoint student participants on boards; students make inspirational presentation at SBC in St. Louis; White House Conference on Youth has implications for Baptists. (69 points)

The balloting included returns from 32 of 39 editors of Baptist state papers and bureaus of Baptist Press. The news service has bureaus in five offices, plus two national staff members.

While 50 points separated the number one story from all others, the margin narrowed to only one vote separating the fifth and sixth stories and two votes difference between the ninth and tenth stories.

No criteria were given the editors. Each voted on his own judgment of what he considered "the most newsworthy developments concerning Southern Baptists during 1971."

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NOTE TO BAPTIST STATE PAPER EDITORS: Complete results of the balloting giving information on the stories that did not make the top 10 are being mailed separately, and are available to others on request.

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McCullough to be Installed
As New Brotherhood Leader

12/30/71

MEMPHIS (BP)-- Glendon McCullough will be formally installed here Jan. 20 as the fourth executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission.

The installation dinner, part of a two-day meeting of the elected Brotherhood Commission, is expected to attract more than 200 persons, including representatives from most of the 19 Southern Baptist Convention agencies and 32 state Baptist conventions.

McCullough, who became the chief administrative officer of the Southern Baptist agency on Nov. 1, will make the principal address. He will speak on new directions in lay work.

McCullough, who served 12 years as director of personnel for the SBC Home Mission Board, succeeded the late George W. Schroeder, who headed the Brotherhood Commission for almost 20 years before his retirement in April. Schroeder died a month later.

Five leading Southern Baptists will speak at the installation dinner on the urgent need for lay involvement. They are Porter Routh of Nashville, executive secretary of the SBC Executive Committee; Arthur Rutledge of Atlanta, executive secretary of the Home Mission Board; Baker James Cauthen of Richmond, Va., executive secretary of the Foreign Mission Board; Alma Hunt of Birmingham, executive secretary of Woman's Missionary Union; and James Sullivan of Nashville, executive secretary of the Sunday School Board.

Other program personalities include Owen Cooper, Baptist layman from Yazoo City, Miss.; John Farmer of Columbia, S.C., director of Brotherhood work for South Carolina Baptists; and five officers of the Brotherhood Commission, John Smerge of Silver Spring, Md., chairman; Hovie Revis of Greenville, S.C., vice-chairman; Amos Ledbetter of Thomasville, Ala., recording secretary; Jerry Glisson of Memphis, chairman of the Executive Committee; and Solon Freeman of Memphis, chairman of the selection committee for an executive secretary.

In a business session Jan. 21 at agency offices, the elected commissioners will hear committee reports and an 80-day progress report from McCullough, including the status of an SBC Executive Committee study to restructure the denomination.

The Memphis-based agency designs and services a program of mission learning experiences and mission involvement for 453,000 men and boys in almost 15,000 Southern Baptist churches throughout the United States.

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