

May 6, 1974

**Baptist Layman Escapes
Death As Killer Repents**

By Calvin L. Fox
For Baptist Press

Guns at the ready, the soldiers crouched to provide a smaller target and moved stealthily through the underbrush. Without warning, the noise of battle shattered the silence of the mountain forest. As the men sought cover, the captain dived into a shallow ravine.

Months after, the captain (or mayor), who is also lay leader of the Baptist church in his community, learned that the whole incident had been set up by the local Communist group and their professional killer. Their aim: to assassinate the captain. He also found out that the assassin had been hiding in the same ravine, less than ten yards away.

When the Communist executioner later told his side of the story, he said flatly, "Something happened to me, and I just could not shoot the captain."

Within a few weeks the head of the Communist army in the Philippines called the assassin before him to explain why the captain was still alive. The professional killer offered the only explanation he could. "The captain is a man of God," he reported, "and that makes him very hard to kill." Enraged the commander slapped the subordinate's face. "Do not speak the name of God again!" he shouted.

Sometime later the captain led another army patrol on an inspection of the village. "Where is the executioner's house?" asked the sergeant, as they moved through the village. "Just ahead," the officer pointed out. Tension engulfed the patrol, as the men quickly began preparing for a fight. Instead, the captain laughed. "This is not a hostile patrol," he reminded the men, "but only a cleanliness inspection."

He was mistaken. Without being aware of it, he was about to face another brush with death. The patrol's arrival had surprised the executioner, and he was hiding in his house. He confessed later that he fully intended to shoot the captain that day and then turn the gun on himself before the patrol could capture him. Instead, because of God the assassin understood later, he sat quietly and listened as this Baptist layman talked with his wife.

The captain informed her that President Marcos had promised amnesty to any Communist who would turn in his guns and denounce all ties with the Communist movement. The captain added that he would help anyone secure amnesty, if that person would confess his sins to a loving God--who would forgive all sins, not just crimes against the government--and trust Christ as Savior. These words touched the executioner deeply, for he had never heard of a God who loved and forgave; he had heard only of a God who hated and took revenge.

After a few days the captain once again stepped into the valley of death. A party was planned at the executioner's home. As is customary, the captain was invited to make a short speech. The party was only a ruse; every guest had come just to help the host trap and murder the officer.

As soon as the captain entered the house, he sensed the danger. He greeted everyone, sat down, and prayed. The guests, in a game of cat and mouse, gave him a chance to speak. But his words startled them.

"I know who you all are, and I now why you have invited me," he began. "You think I am afraid to die. Well, I am not afraid to die, because I have trusted Christ as my Savior. He has taken away all of my sins and made it possible for me to go to heaven when I die.

"This is what you cannot understand. This is what makes you afraid of me. You can see that I am not afraid to die, but you are. This is why the Communists can hold you and force you do

things you know are wrong."

His gaze swept his audience. "You do not go outside of your homes without a gun or a companion," he charged. "I walk alone at night unarmed. You cannot sleep well at night, because you are afraid you might be killed. I sleep like a baby, because I know that if I die, I will go to heaven. This is beyond your comprehension, but Christ has changed my life and has made me a different man."

Then the captain told how Christ had given him a new life. "Christ is waiting to give you the same new life," he said, "if you will confess your sins to God and accept him as Savior."

Throughout the remarks, in the next room sat the executioner, M-16 in hand, ready to do away with the captain. But he was unable to move. Never had he seen a man who was not afraid of death. Never had he heard so much about this God of love.

"I will help anyone of you to get amnesty, if you will accept Christ and confess your sins to God," he heard the officer saying. "If you confess your sins to man, it is only burying them, and someday the old life will come back. But God removes sins and remakes men. I promise everyone of you that I will help you tomorrow to get amnesty, in spite of the fact that you invited me here to kill me."

He rose, excused himself, and left the house. At the bottom of the stairs the executioner's wife stopped him. "Did you really mean what you just said?" she asked softly.

"I will help anyone who will confess his sins to God and accept Christ as his Savior," he promised.

The following night the captain had a visitor at his home. The executioner's wife came to tell him that her husband would be waiting to surrender to him at a specified place. There were two conditions: the officer must come alone and come unarmed.

After much prayer and a night's sleep, the captain headed for the meeting place-- either to lead a paid killer to Christ or to walk into another trap. He reached the designated spot and waited. In a little while, when the executioner was satisfied that his conditions had been met, he came out of hiding.

"I am ready to surrender, because I can trust you," he said.

The captain smiled and said, "You know my requirements."

"I do, and I am ready."

Together the Baptist lay leader and the trembling executioner knelt. The captain listened as the man poured out his confession of the murders of many of the officer's friends and neighbors.

The story is not over, for neither of these men or their families will be completely safe as long as there is a Communist movement in the Philippines. Both men need the continuing support of prayer. But because a believer was unafraid to die, a guilty man has found the promise of eternal life.

Calvin L. Fox is a Southern Baptist missionary to the Philippines, stationed at Cabanatuan City.

Adapted from the May, 1974 issue of The Commission

**1973 Lottie Moon Offering
Totals Over \$22 Million**

RICHMOND (BP)--The final total for the 1973 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions has exceeded \$22 million according to Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board officials here.

The record \$22,232,757 received represented an increase of \$2,567,785 or more than 13 per cent over the 1972 total.

The 1973 goal was \$20 million. The offering has doubled in the last 10 years when, 1963, about \$11 million was given. The first Lottie Moon Offering, collected in 1888, totaled \$3,315.

The Lottie Moon Offering is sponsored annually by the Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) in connection with the Week of Prayer for Foreign Missions in Southern Baptist churches across the nation. Monies received after April 30 are included in the following year's offering.

"We are greatly encouraged by the remarkable total of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering said Baker J. Cauthen, executive secretary. "We thank God for the devoted service of Woman's Missionary Union and all others who worked and prayed to make it a success.

"This offering," he continued, "will supplement gifts through the Cooperative Program and enable twice as much work to be done on mission fields."

Southern Baptist foreign mission efforts are supported financially by two major channels of giving, the Lottie Moon Offering and the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget plan. Each of these channels accounts for about half of the board's total operating budget.

"Historically, these two channels of mission support seem to grow together," said Jesse C. Fletcher, director of the board's mission support division. He pointed out that the Lottie Moon Offering increase of 13 per cent became predictable a few weeks ago when it was learned that the Cooperative Program increased by 15.15 per cent from Oct. 1, 1973, through Feb. 28, 1974.

"With Cooperative Program gifts exceeding \$100 million now," Fletcher continued, "and the dramatic Lottie Moon Offering results, it is obvious Southern Baptists' missionary commitment is healthy."

The 1974 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goal has been set at \$23 million by the Woman's Missionary Union.

-30-

**Baptists Confirm Clandestine
Publishing Success in U.S.S.R.**

5/6/74

WASHINGTON (BP)--Documents and letters from Baptists in the Soviet Union "contain positive confirmation of the success of the so-called Christian publishing house which was established in Russia in 1971 to produce Bibles, New Testaments, hymn books and other Christian literature," according to a report released here.

The Capital Baptist, news publication of the District of Columbia Baptist Convention, said the documents and letters arrived at the Centre for the Study of Religion and Communism in England.

"Recent firsthand reports have stated that it (the Christian publishing venture) has been producing up to 500 New Testaments or hymnbooks a day," the Capital Baptist said, adding: "Christians in Russia have claimed legality for the activity, though of course the state has made great effort to track it down."

The publication of the D.C. Convention, dually aligned with the American Baptist Churches and the Southern Baptist Convention, said the documents included copies of Bratsky Listok, which it described as "the clandestine publication of the Council of Churches of

-more-

Evangelical Christians and Baptist Churches in the Soviet Union. This is the organization of Soviet "dissident Baptists."

"Bratsky Listok recently told of a woman in Perm, Zoya Radygina, who had her two youngest children, Sasha and Vasya, forcibly taken away from her by police because she brought them up in the Christian faith. A third child, Tamara, is now in hiding.

"A photograph of Mrs. Radygina and her children which recently arrived in the West," the Capital Baptist continued, "bore the note:

"From a mother. I ask everyone who can help me in my distress, I ask you to write and request that I be given back my children, who were taken away from me because I believe in God."

"Since then, Christians from all over the Soviet Union have been appealing on her behalf in open letters to the government," the Capital Baptist said.

-30-

Cooperative Program Gifts
Continue to Increase

5/6/74

NASHVILLE (BP)--Receipts through the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program unified budget continue to show increases over last year, according to figures released here.

SBC-wide Cooperative Program totals for April were \$3,219,526, an increase of \$332,439 or 11.51 per cent over last April, said John Williams, director of financial planning and assistant to the treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee.

Figures for the fiscal year to date, October, 1973 through April, 1974, show an even greater increase over last fiscal year. Williams said \$22,169,859 received this year tops the same period last year by \$2,385,097 or 12.06 per cent.

While undesignated Cooperative Program receipts were rising, designated receipts in April of this year showed a 1.48 per cent decline over last April--dropping \$41,656 from \$2,820,786 received last April to \$2,779,130 received this April.

However, the year to date designated figures showed a 10.77 increase, rising from \$22,373,076 in the first seven months of the 1973-74 fiscal year.

Overall contributions--designated and undesignated--recorded an 11.38 per cent increase for the year to date and a 5.09 per cent increase this April over last April.

Total overall receipts for the year to date, Williams said, rose from \$41,822,592 last year to \$46,580,765 this year. Comparative months show that Southern Baptists gave \$5,707,873 overall in April of 1973 and increased that amount to \$5,998,656 this April.

-30-

Billy Graham Dispels
Retirement Speculation

5/6/74

LOUISVILLE (BP)--Evangelist Billy Graham dismissed speculation that he will deemphasize his preaching and retire to a life of lecturing and writing.

The 55-year-old evangelist told a crowd of 2,000 people at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary that he plans to continue and intensify his preaching.

"There have been reports that we're going back to Los Angeles, where we started 25 years ago, to announce our retirement," Graham said. "That isn't true. Today, I announce an intensification of my (preaching) ministry." The Graham team will conduct a crusade in Los Angeles in 1975.

In a chapel address at the seminary, Graham, a Southern Baptist, called on students to enter the preaching ministry. "If you want to go into a field that is wide open, be a preacher," he said.

-30-

During a press conference, Graham was asked about his relationship with President Nixon and his beliefs about amnesty.

"I have not seen the President since January, and I talk to him less because he is a very busy man," he said. "We should wait and hear all the evidence before we make a judgment."

Graham said he was concerned about the moral climate in America.

Although he said he would not give "blanket" amnesty, Graham said he believes Americans should treat the amnesty question in the biblical spirit of forgiveness.

Graham visited the seminary to inspect the Billy Graham Evangelism Center, housed in two rooms at the James P. Boyce Library and sponsor of student ministries, research facilities and an evangelism professor.

The only center of its kind, it was created in 1960 as a depository for materials on the Billy Graham ministry and for evangelism materials generally.

Before coming to Louisville, where he said he may conduct "an extended meeting" in 1976, Graham spent a month in Switzerland preparing for the Congress on World Evangelization scheduled in Lausanne in July.

He told his seminary audience he believes this generation is capable of reaching the world with the gospel in this generation. He said the current generation is the first to have the necessary resources to carry the gospel to the whole world.

-30-

Next Lottie Moon Goal
Will be \$23,000,000

5/6/74

BIRMINGHAM (BP)--Goal for the 1974 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions has been set at \$23,000,000.

The figure was announced by Alma Hunt, executive secretary of Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), which sponsors the annual offering.

WMU set the goal after the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board completed the tally of the 1973 offering April 30 and announced a total of \$22,232,757.

The offering topped the previous year's offering by \$2,567,785.

The drive for the \$23,000,000 offering will be launched December 1-8 during the Week of Prayer for Foreign Missions. Theme for the observance will be "Grace So Amazing, Love So Divine."

-30-

CORRECTION

In Baptist Press story mailed 5/3/74, headlined "Resigning Churches Means Success to Georgia Pastor," 7th graph, line 2 should read \$4,000 (instead of \$8,000. Thanks.

--Baptist Press