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produced by Baptist Press

SBC Executive Committee
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Nashville, Tennessee 37219
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March 11, 1975

75-38

Church Helped East German
Prisoner Gain Her Freedom

By Adon Taft

MIAMI Fla. (BP)--When Gisela Kupfer set foot here for the first time, she knew she had 32,000 friends waiting.

Their names were presented to her in a bound volume during a special service of thanksgiving at the Perrine First Baptist Church, Miami.

The church's members collected the 32,000 signatures on petitions that played a role in Mrs. Kupfer's release from East Germany, so she could be reunited with her husband, Dr. Manfred Kupfer, a pathologist. He, his brother, and two others jumped from a communist ship in the Gulf Stream more than four years ago to find asylum here.

"This is a real answer to prayer," said Tommy Watson, pastor of the church, Watson went to West Germany to bring Mrs. Kupfer here.

"The State Department people were very cooperative and said they wouldn't believe it could happen until they saw it.

"The East Germans don't like to release the families of anybody who escaped, and as far as we know, she is the first one," Watson said.

The Kupfers will reside in Rochester, Minn., where he is engaged in research at the Mayo Clinic.

Mrs. Kupfer, also a pathologist, was jailed July 6, 1973. That was the day after her sister-in-law, the wife of Dr. Reinhold Kupfer, slipped out of East Germany with her children to join Reinhold here. (The Reinhold Kupfers have since moved to West Germany.

Mrs. Kupfer was held in a political prison in Leipzig for five months, three of them in solitary confinement. She was never charged and finally was released under a general amnesty decree just before Christmas, 1973.

During that time, she received 500 letters from members of the Perrine Baptist Church, she said, although she was not aware of most of them until she was released to resume work as one of Europe's top 25 neuro-pathologists. She also received a recording made by the church's youth choir.

"I had no doubting" (of her faith), said Mrs. Kupfer. "I had a strong belief in our Lord, and I knew he could help me get out of prison. I asked him to give me power to overcome,"

Mrs. Kupfer, who was known only as "No. 58" in prison, said after her release she prayed, "Thank you, Lord, that by believing in you, you made the impossible possible."

Although she was not allowed to have a Bible in prison, she was able to rely on much of its message of hope which she had committed to memory since her uncle, a Lutheran pastor, had given her a Bible years before.

When the United States established diplomatic relations with East Germany last September, Mrs. Kupfer's name was brought up in the negotiations through efforts of the Perrine Baptist Church and Rep. Dante Fascelle, said Watson.

A message of thanks, Watson added, has been sent to the East German government with the hope that it will continue to liberalize its emigration policy.

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Adon Taft is religion editor for the Miami Herald, Miami, Fla.

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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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March 11, 1975

75-37

McGovern; 'U.S. Can't Be
Lifeboat for World's Hungry'

LOUISVILLE (BP)--America cannot become a "lifeboat of survival in an ocean of starvation," U. S. Senator George McGovern declared in a national Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission Seminar on Integrity.

The South Dakota democrat, one of several speakers on the opening day of the three-day program, addressed himself to "national integrity and world hunger," a subject he has pursued since the 1950's.

From a practical point of view, he said, "what is right (about feeding a hungry world) is also realistic." America cannot "be a lifeboat in an ocean of starvation, for the lifeboat cannot run without fuel; it's fittings cannot be repaired without metal; it's tiller cannot turn without lubricant and we do not carry enough of these stores in our own hold.

"Quite literally, we will all sink or all be saved together," he said.

A statistic of the U. S. Budget Bureau, he said, shows it "costs three times as much to deal with the problems of malnutrition as it would cost to provide a decent diet for every person in the United States."

McGovern, who headed the Food for Peace program under the Kennedy administration, said, "We all stand for the constitutional principal of separation of church and state. But we should all stand against the practice of separating morality from public policy.

"While we all know that the Kingdom of God will not come from a piece of legislation or a program of government," the Methodist minister's son continued, "we also know that if someone is hungry we should give him food. That is the command of Christ--his standard for our judgment.

"Seldom in history has that command so starkly sounded among men. For today half the world is hungry; a fifth of the human race is starving; and he (Christ) tells us if we betray our brothers and sisters now, we betray Him."

Referring to past efforts through the now reduced Food for Peace program, McGovern said, "It is my opinion that what we have done with food in meeting the needs of hungry people has done more in preventing people from slipping into the canyons of chaos and communism and totalitarianism than all the military hardware we could ship to the nations of the world."

America should "end the airlifting of munitions to Cambodia which prolong the killing to no purpose and begin now airlifting food," he told more than 700 Christian Life Commission Seminar registrants.

Expressing the conviction that the regime in Cambodia will collapse with or without U. S. munitions, McGovern said, "Every American plane which has brought bombs and bullets and napalm to Phnom Penh should immediately be diverted to the delivery of wheat and rice."

He said, "Current policy makers point to large food shipments and congratulate themselves for it," but he noted the shipments are "food for war," not "food for peace. They include food which is sold to buy arms in Southeast Asia and food which is used for a diplomatic bribe to keep 'dictators on our side.'"

The United States, he declared, should rely on volunteer agencies who know how to get food directly to the people who need it.

"The cynics will reply that the world is a hard place, and we must harden our hearts to it. They will say that idealism does not work--that we must be realistic by being ruthless," he noted with disdain.

"But, in Vietnam, the hard line was the hardest not on enemies but on ourselves. Every bomb dropped in the jungles of Indochina weakened the fabric and soul of America.

"And the wrong of Watergate proved to be--not a way to keep power, but a way to lose it."

Specific proposals advocated by McGovern included cutting multi-billion dollar military budgets, which "are over inflated," by as much as 10 per cent for food development.

"If ten per cent is set aside for fertilizer, plants, irrigation, improved seeds, pesticides and rural development, we could end hunger on this planet in five or ten years," he said.

Speaking on the role of the church, McGovern said it has done only a "fair" job of being the moral leaven in society.

"The church has a principal role in society, a responsibility to set the moral tone and make the difference in such things as hunger and economic justice," he said.

"That performance," he continued, "contains room for a good bit of improvement," although the "civil rights movement in the 1950's and the peace movement in the 1960's are examples of two areas in which the church provided moral leadership.

"Those who argue that religion and politics don't mix," McGovern declared, deny Jesus and His words: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'"



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