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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355
W. C. Fields, Director
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor
James Lee Young, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Walker L. Knight, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Orville Scott, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Tex. 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996
MEMPHIS Roy Jennings, Chief, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, Tenn. 38104, Telephone (901) 272-2461
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Gomer Lesch, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 254-5461
RICHMOND Richard M. Styles, Acting Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON W. Barry Garrett, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

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**Baptists Urged To Recall
Role of Ethnic in America**

By Everett Hullum

WASHINGTON, D. C. (BP)--A Southern Baptist language missions leader declared here that America is celebrating its 200th birthday without admitting the significant role of ethnic peoples in its history.

"The biggest mistake Americans--and Southern Baptists--could make in our Bicentennial is to forget that God created the world--and ethnics created the United States," Oscar Romo said.

Romo, director of the Home Mission Board's department of language missions, spoke to more than 100 language missions leaders from across the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) at the 19th annual Language Missions Leadership Conference.

"Many have come to this nation not to become part of the 'melting pot,' not to lose their identities, but to find their identities," Romo added.

David Larson, sociologist/anthropologist at Bethel College, St. Paul, Minn., warned that unless Southern Baptists continue to bring ethnics into all areas of SBC life, the convention cannot hope to overcome the "supratribalism that divides the species."

"Diversity is the best we can offer ourselves," Larson told the conference. "Unity is our weakest quality--and it doesn't always work . . ."

First-century Christianity presented an opportunity for men to overcome "tribalism"--the concept that a group looks at everything from self-interest.

But as Christianity developed, Larson said, Christians began tribalizing themselves, thereby losing the power "to create, through reconciliation, a reunion of the human family."

Larson called for Christians to develop a "deeper homogeneity" based on scriptures "that allows diversity" and returns to the Christian belief that "the Kingdom of God transcends the interests and activities of any one tribe--it has species-wide significance."

Calls for understanding amid diversity, in fact, echoed throughout the conference.

Carter Bearden, Home Mission Board language consultant for the deaf, issued a plea that Southern Baptists understand that deaf people need to participate in all areas of Baptist church life.

But they should not be "forced to be like hearing people--they are different," said Bearden, who is deaf himself.

"Deafness is the most neglected major handicap" in the U. S., added Frederick C. Schreiber, head of the National Association of the Deaf. The 13 million U. S. citizens who have impaired hearing--1.8 million or two of every 1,000 with irreversible deafness--"are being cut off from people, family, friends, even God--for the God of the world is a hearing God," he said.

Schreiber asked Southern Baptists to "help breach the barriers of deaf isolation and bring us into the mainstream of humanity. We aren't looking for your help in finding a substitute for ears, but help in developing what's between them," Schreiber said.

"We need to come together as human beings with the same goals, same needs, same desires as you," Schreiber added, "for that is what we are: human beings."

Participants learned that more than 700 SBC churches now offer sign language ministries and that there are at least seven all-deaf SBC congregations with their own full-time pastors.

Despite rapidly growing language missions, admitted Romo, "Baptists are not communicating across barriers" as they should.

"We are adding over 100 new ethnic units per year to the convention," Romo said, "but we need to form 5,000 new congregations in the next 25 years just to stay even with population growth."

Romo urged the language missions leaders to develop new techniques for reaching ethnics "that will allow their differences, that will involve ethnics without being paternalistic."

He demanded that Southern Baptists begin preparing special literature for other language groups, "rather than always saying, 'Let's translate . . .'" and he sought increased participation by ethnics on SBC boards and agencies.

"We are in reality the most integrated denomination in the U. S.," Romo said. "But our key to continued SBC growth is with ethnics, both in--and outside the south."

"We cannot pass up this opportunity to weave ethnics into the very fabric of the tapestry of the Southern Baptist Convention," Romo insisted.

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Florida Men Help Pick Up
The Pieces in Guatemala

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By Jim Newton and Teresa Shields

GUATEMALA CITY (BP)--Within days after a killer earthquake devastated homes, churches and buildings in this country, 35 Florida Baptist laymen were among those helping Guatemalans pick up the pieces.

The Floridians first task was to help tear down the rubble and unsafe church buildings still standing after the giant quake rocked the country.

People hesitated to go back into the adobe (mud) churches "because they were afraid the walls would collapse," said Jim Arnold, an apartment complex manager from Gainesville.

Once the Florida Baptists began tearing down the "dangerously cracked and crumbling adobe walls," Arnold said, "The Guatemalan Baptists followed. We worked side by side."

Of the 52 Baptist churches in Guatemala, 14 were severely damaged and four required total rebuilding, according to reports.

Work crews demolished the buildings, knocking out adobe walls and crumbling the mud bricks. The rubble was placed at a central point, and the Guatemalan government took care of its disposal.

Later, when the church facilities are rebuilt, it "will be out of stronger reinforced materials, according to new building codes set down by the Guatemalan government," Arnold said.

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The team was scheduled to help build a new mission at Escuintla, about 30 miles southwest of Guatemala City. But after the earthquake, the team was enlarged and dispersed in four groups to different parts of the country--eight to Escuintla and three teams mostly to Zone Three of Guatemala City.

Whenever possible, the teams held worship services at night. About eight Guatemalans reportedly made decisions for Christ during one such service, led by Jerry Pile, a minister who works at the juvenile rehabilitation center in Chattahoochee, Fla.

On the job, the workers wore hard hats, bearing the words, "Sonrie, Jesus Te Ama," or in English, "Smile, Jesus Loves You." Passersby stopped to ask what it meant.

Elwood Baker, a telephone company worker from Archer, Fla., said one situation almost turned into a "streetside revival." He was talking to some children on the street, reading to them in English while another read in Spanish, from the Book of John.

A man asked about accepting Christ, so Orestes Lopez, a Cuban layman from Miami explained. A crowd gathered, and it ended in a street-corner worship service, said Baker. "MKs" (children of missionaries of "Missionary Kids") helped with translation.

Baker said he was going back home and urge every Christian layman he knew to get involved in such a work project as the Florida men's Guatemala venture: "It was the greatest experience I've ever had as a Christian."

Dan Pogue, 22, a carpenter from Fort Meyers, said he was amazed how God could take tragedy like the earthquake and use it for good. "I think the disaster has sparked a time of real spiritual awakening for the Guatemalan people," Arnold added.

All the Florida laymen paid their own way on the project--including travel. They stayed at the Baptist seminary in the area and in a missionary's home. They ate breakfast and supper at the seminary, and found that the two girls who prepared the food lost their homes in the earthquake.

Rowell said there were 20 men in the first work crew, with 11 staying a second week to join 10 other Florida laymen in another work team.

Fifteen to 20 similar teams will be needed in the stricken country in the next 8-12 months, he said. The teams are being recruited by directors of state Baptist Brotherhoods (organization for men and boys). Teams have been sent from at least three states.

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Youth Choirs Possible In
Russia, Baptist Reports

Baptist Press
3/1/76

WASHINGTON (BP)--Two Russian Baptist visitors said here that increased church attendance by children and teenagers in the Soviet Union has made youth choirs possible.

"For the first time, we are able to have an all-Moscow youth choir," said Ilia Orlov during a visit to the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's annual Language Missions Leadership Conference here.

Orlov, a preacher and organist at the Moscow Baptist Church, is also assistant director of the international department of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, the Baptist body in the Soviet Union officially recognized by the government.

Visitors to the churches in the Soviet Union reportedly have seen an increasing number of young people in attendance in Soviet Baptist churches over the years. It has been illegal for children to join the church under the age of 18. But, according to observers, it apparently has not been illegal for children to attend, although there may have been pressure against attendance.

Orlov also noted that some 600,000 Russian Baptists added 6,000 new converts last year--"1,000 more than the previous year."

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Another Russian, diplomat Oleg Yermishkin of the Soviet Embassy, said, "Even though I am an atheist and you are Christian, we can both attempt to bring happiness to the world's people and work toward a common objective of peace. For we know if there is a war--between our countries especially--the whole world will be destroyed.

"Our goals, your goals, human goals can be achieved only in a time of peace," Yermishkin claimed.

Another diplomat, Rosargentina Pinel, a Honduran Christian, said, "I am a Christian saved by the grace of God and my mission, besides that of being a diplomat, is to share the Christian gospel."

Conferees who heard reports on ministries to ethnics and deaf persons in the U. S., also visited 12 embassies "to learn first hand about the culture of other countries," said Oscar Romo, language missions director for the Home Mission Board.

They took gifts to the embassies, including a copy of the New Testament in Today's English Version, a copy of the Bible in the language of the country and a copy of "The Human Touch," pictorial book on the work of the Home Mission Board.

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Cooperative Program 14.77%
Ahead After Five Months

Baptist Press
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NASHVILLE (BP)--With five months gone in the 1975-76 fiscal year, the Southern Baptist Convention's national Cooperative Program unified budget totals more than \$19.9 million--a 14.77 percent increase over the same point in 1974-75.

Total giving--Cooperative Program and designated--amounts to \$40,691,654 through the first five months, a \$4.9 million or 13.76 percent increase over last year. That figure includes \$19,935,028 in Cooperative Program receipts and \$20,756,626 in designated gifts.

February, the fifth month of the 1975-76 fiscal year, meanwhile recorded \$4,460,718 in Cooperative Program funds--a 20.75 percent increase over last February. It recorded an additional \$12,724,725 in designated funds for a grand total of \$17,185,443 or a 15.78 percent increase over the previous February. The \$4,460,718 is the second highest month for Cooperative Program receipts in SBC history. January 1976 set the record with over \$4.8 million.

If the Cooperative Program continues at the 14.77 percent increase pace--which is difficult to predict--the Cooperative Program would yield over \$47.1 million in 1975-76 on a national level, according to a projection by Billy D. Malesovas, director of financial planning and assistant to the treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee.

That would not reach the total goal of \$51 million, but would exceed the basic operating budget for the SBC agencies of \$41 million and the capital needs budget of \$1,080,000. The rest of the budget is "challenge" funds.

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Foundation Execs.
Elect Randolph

Baptist Press
3/1/76

TUCSON, Ariz. (BP)--The Association of Baptist Foundation Executives elected Grady Randolph, executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Foundation, Middletown, Ky., as president during the body's annual meeting here.

The group, which explored ways to increase financial efficiency, also elected Ed Coates, executive director, North Carolina Baptist Foundation, Raleigh, as vice president, and Tal Roberts, vice president in charge of trust for the Baptist Foundation of Texas, Dallas, as secretary-treasurer.

The 1977 annual meeting is set for April 19-21 in Raleigh, N. C. The group will also hold a luncheon at the annual Southern Baptist Convention in June in Norfolk.

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