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Romanian in Paris Still
Reaches Home with Gospel

By Chris Evans

AMARILLO, Tex. (BP)--Romanian refugee and pastor Jeremie Hodoroaba, now of Paris, France, continues to broadcast the gospel into his homeland, although he has not been allowed re-entry there since World War II ended.

Sida Hodoroabo, 20, the daughter of a Romanian refugee who now pastors the Romanian Baptist Church in Paris said here her father's work--including nine half-hour broadcasts and five quarter-hour broadcasts into his native Romania, plus Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, the Soviet Union and parts of western Europe--"is proceeding cautiously, but proceeding."

Hodoroaba, an Allied tank co-captain in World War II, was not allowed re-entry into Romania following the war, his daughter said in an interview for Baptist Press. He attended Ruschlikon Baptist Seminary in Geneva after the war and was the pastor of several churches "which included not only Baptists but friends of Baptists," prior to coming to the Paris Romanian congregation in 1959.

"When he began the broadcasts in 1961 he didn't know what reaction it would bring," she said, adding that initially only one 30-minute spot was aired. She said Hodoroaba--whose name Jeremie "is the same as 'Jeremiah,' the prophet"--actually began his broadcasts when he assumed radio duties while filling in for his Allied tank captain.

"He had a Bible, and when orders weren't being transmitted, he read the Bible to the men over the radio," Miss Hodoroaba said. "You can imagine what effect that had on the men." Several Baptist churches still exist in parts of what used to be Romania but are now in Russia, she continued.

She purposely left out the names of some leading Romanian Christians still living. She would not allow her picture to be taken, but when the name Georgi Vins (imprisoned Ukrainian dissident Baptist pastor) was mentioned, she said, "Yes, I know of him."

She also told of "our greatest Romanian hymn writer" who is still living and writing by hand indigenous Romanian hymns which are copied by hand for use in services. "I cannot tell you his name, because he is still closely watched," she said.

Miss Hodoroaba, who studies piano at the famed Sorbonne in Paris and takes music theory at the Conservatory in Paris, was in Amarillo visiting with the John Boyd Jr. family. Boyd travelled to Paris last year to participate in evangelistic services at her father's church.

"We, as American Christians, have no idea of the terrible persecution under which some Christians must function," Boyd said. "Until you see the pictures of Christians with their heads chopped off like I have, you just can't imagine it. After I preached in her father's church, Sida's mother came up to me and said, 'Use discretion in what you say,' because there was a Communist spy in the service that night."

Hodoroaba's broadcasts, according to his daughter, are through TransWorld Radio, a firm headquartered in Chatham, N.J. When he started the broadcast from France, the results were positive--too positive, in fact, his daughter recalled.

"After two years, the first letters came and they kept increasing," Miss Hodoroaba said. "In almost every letter the Romanian people mentioned their need of having Bibles. My father began doing what was possible to meet the need, and he still does."

"The Southern Baptist people need to know not only about the broadcast," she continued, "But about the need for Bibles, too."

From 1962-66, she said, about 10,000 Bibles were sent to Romania by mail, but in 1966 the Romanian government "closed the doors and 1,009 Bibles were returned... It was a shock, and my father began to try to reach the Romanian authorities through the Romanian Embassy in France and through the French government."

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What followed was a period (1966-73) which Miss Hodoroaba described as "a door not closed, but not open completely." She said a flood in Romania--which left parts of the country devastated and forced the government to accept aid from foreign countries--helped open the way for more Bibles.

"It is very important for them (the Romanian people) not only to have Bibles, but educational material as well," she said. "During the flood, many Bibles were put in packages, and educational material, too."

Then in 1973 came a press law which forbade Romanian citizens from writing to a foreign broadcast. "Something was cut between the one who talks and the one who receives the message," Miss Hodoroaba lamented. "From that time Romanian Christians needed much courage to write, but we still receive a few letters. You can count them with your hands now, though."

When asked about hope for the future, she responded with a resounding, "Yes." Still, in 1974 another law was passed that says no citizen has the right to distribute Bibles or religious literature inside the country, she said.

"As a consequence, one man in a Bucharest Pentecostal church is in jail," she said. When asked about whether people in Romania know of such persecution, she said rather tersely, "We don't have news."

Today, Baptists are one of 14 religious "cults permitted but not authorized," Miss Hodoroaba said. "Freedom is very relative." She explained that because Baptists are allowed to meet once a week, certain other religious faiths are represented in the weekly services, "which may last four or five hours."

One luxury, she said, the Romanian Christians have not been afforded is hymnals, but that there is currently a manuscript set for the near future to be published--and 30,000 hymnals will go out in first printing. "One copy will cost three dollars, and Southern Baptists need to be aware of this need."

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Chris Evans is a staff writer for the Amarillo-Globe news.

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Ford, Carter Have Some
Baptist Ties in Common

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By James Lee Young

NASHVILLE (BP)--President Gerald R. Ford, an Episcopalian and the Republican Party's choice to run in November, and Democratic hopeful former Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter, a Southern Baptist, have several things in common--some related to Southern Baptists.

Each picked vice-presidential running mates with Methodist ties. Ford's choice for vice-president, Sen. Robert Dole (R. Kans.) is said to be a United Methodist. Carter's vice-presidential pick, Sen. Walter F. Mondale (D.-Minn.), is a Methodist minister's son but now is reportedly a Presbyterian.

Second, each of the presidential candidates has addressed the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), Carter at the 1974 convention in Dallas and Ford as the first incumbent President to do so, in Norfolk, Va., June 1976.

Third, the two appeared on a Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission program together in Dallas, when Carter was still Georgia Governor and Ford was vice-president. Ford--as keynote speaker--was introduced by Carter, a Baptist deacon and trustee of the SBC agency, as a man who has "an open mind and a compassionate heart."

In Norfolk this year, Ford reflected on Carter's introduction of him in Dallas:

"The man introducing me was very considerate, very generous in his remarks and very friendly. I was introduced as a man with an open mind and a compassionate heart, and I would like to return that compliment today to the man who introduced me--Governor Jimmy Carter."

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Each of the presidential hopefuls has at least one family member involved in Christian work who is fairly well known, at least because of their politically-oriented relatives.

Carter's sister, Ruth Stapleton of Fayetteville, N. C., is an evangelist. And Ford's oldest son, Mike, was graduated from Wake Forest University, a Southern Baptist school in Winston-Salem, N. C., and is currently a divinity student at Gordon-Conwell Seminary, an interdenominational school in South Hamilton, Mass.

Evangelist Billy Graham, a Southern Baptist who also addressed the 1974 SBC in Dallas, was quoted as saying that Ford, Carter and former California Governor Ronald Reagan, a Presbyterian who was defeated for the Republican nomination for President, all claim to be "born again" Christians.

"There wouldn't be a hair's difference between what Carter, Ford and Reagan believe religiously," Graham told Russ Chandler of the Los Angeles Times.

Editorials in several of the 33 state newsmagazines and newspapers in recent weeks noted that Southern Baptists have drawn considerable attention from the national news media, as a result of Carter's Southern Baptist affiliation, and Ford's address to the SBC in June.