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Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

-- FEATURES

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460 James Robertson Parkway
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(615) 244-2355
W. C. Fields, Director
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor
Norman Jameson, Feature Editor

February 20, 1978
Baptist Work In Eastern
Europe--Quiet, Effective

78-24

SALZBURG, Austria (BP)--Southern Baptist missionaries living here are doing a quiet and effective work in the Communist controlled countries of Eastern Europe.

Their work includes theological education, lay leadership training, preaching, teaching, radio broadcasts, aid for church buildings, relief work, and help with importing Bibles.

John David Hopper, Southern Baptist missionary and fraternal representative to the Baptists of Eastern Europe, said the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board policy is to work directly with the Baptist Union leadership, which usually is in cooperation with the Baptist World Alliance. It was the Alliance which invited Southern Baptists to cooperate in a ministry in Eastern Europe in 1920. Southern Baptist missionaries were stationed in Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia for a number of years before World War II.

As fraternal representative, Hopper provides a communication link between Southern Baptists and Baptists living in the Eastern European countries.

"Our traditional contribution has been in the areas of pastoral and lay theological education, assistance in church buildings, and in Christian radio broadcasting," Hopper said.

Currently, Southern Baptists provide aid directly for theological education in Yugoslavia, Hungary and Poland. Hopper lectured regularly at the Baptist Seminary in Yugoslavia from 1972-1976 and another Southern Baptist couple continues to lecture there.

Hopper recognizes that religious freedom "as Americans know it" does not exist in Eastern Europe.

"Some zealous Christians who have been imprisoned for their evangelistic activity and later immigrated to the West maintain that the church is heavily persecuted today," Hopper said.

"On the other hand, many Baptist leaders in Eastern Europe consider that the church enjoys freedom within the bounds of a legal framework Americans would call religious tolerance. They maintain that as long as the church members live within the framework of their national law the church is not persecuted."

The framework includes worship at a registered church and low-key evangelism. But for some Christians, deciding to live within that framework is hard.

"In my travels I have noticed that pastors and laymen in some countries of Eastern Europe who are very active in personal evangelistic outreach sometimes suffer for their convictions," Hopper said. "Pastors have been removed from their churches and laymen have been disadvantaged at their place of employment."

"Christians find themselves having to choose between submission to government authority as mentioned in Romans 13; and the answer given by Peter and the apostles when confronted by legal authorities who wanted to stop their witness--'We must obey God rather than man,'" Hopper said.

Southern Baptist missionaries do not break local and state laws. Baptists in Eastern Europe work according to local regulations and have even been given permission to import a limited number of Bibles in some countries where they are scarce. He admits the need for Bibles outstrips the supply but added Bibles are available in Poland and Yugoslavia from local stores.

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Southern Baptist missionaries travel and preach in many areas of the Communist controlled countries, including Russia. Where legally possible, they assist local Baptist Unions in developing their own Christian literature, which can be printed on a limited scale in most countries.

The Foreign Mission Board actively supports an evangelistic radio ministry to Eastern Europe. E. Wesley Miller, missionary in Switzerland and media consultant for Europe, has helped initiate several language broadcasts. Southern Baptists share the cost of air time and provide technical assistance for programs beamed to Yugoslavia, Russia, Poland and Romania.

Southern Baptists have helped with church construction in Romania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Poland and the German Democratic Republic (East Germany).

Funds were offered by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board for rebuilding and other relief efforts in Romania after an earthquake did extensive damage in March 1977. Permission has not yet been received for construction of a seminary building that was badly damaged.

In addition, Eastern European Baptists have the opportunity to attend conferences on Christian education, church growth and Baptist distinctives, and sometimes also to send students to other countries for seminary study. In some instances Southern Baptists help with financing these things.

More than 6,000 attended recent evangelistic meetings in Romania and in Russia several thousand more attended similar meetings. Hopper preached on both occasions and was received warmly.

"This past year I met with Baptist leaders in most of the socialist countries to discuss ways in which Southern Baptists can strengthen the bonds of Christian love and fellowship," Hopper said. "We sought ways of effectively cooperating in the cause of the gospel, making several contacts with government officials responsible for religious affairs in their respective countries."

"And," he pointed out, "Baptist church growth in Eastern Europe actually exceeds that of Western Europe."

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Bennett, Roberts Named
To Presidencies

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PHOENIX, Ariz. (BP)--Harold C. Bennett of Jacksonville, Fla., and John E. Roberts of Greenville, S. C., were elected presidents respectively of the Association of State Baptist Executive Secretaries and the Southern Baptist Press Association during annual meetings of the organizations.

Bennett, executive secretary-treasurer of the Florida Baptist Convention, succeeds James Landes, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas; Roberts, editor of South Carolina's "Baptist Courier," succeeds Jack Harwell, editor of Georgia's "Christian Index."

Other officers of the executive secretaries group are Glen E. Braswell, executive director-treasurer Colorado Baptist Convention, vice president and president-elect; and Joe L. Ingram, executive director-treasurer, Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, secretary.

Other press association officers are Alvin C. Shackelford, editor of Tennessee's "Baptist and Reflector," president-elect, and Bob Terry, editor of Missouri's "Word and Way," secretary-treasurer.

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(BP) Photos of executive secretaries and editors mailed to Baptist state papers.

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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
Norman Jameson, 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) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2000

RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, 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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Home Mission Board Tops Awards Competition

PHOENIX, Ariz. (BP)--The Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention collected 11 awards in the annual national awards competition of the Baptist Public Relations Association, including three of four major "best in class" awards.

Runnersup among the 22 state and national Southern Baptist organizations which received 56 awards included the SBC Foreign Mission Board, with six, and the Baptist General Convention of Texas, SBC Christian Life Commission, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and SBC Radio and Television Commission, with four each.

The major awards went to Everett Hulum, Home Mission Board, (for photos by Paul Obregon), Photo Sweepstakes Award; Dan Martin, Home Mission Board, Frank Burkhalter Award for Excellence in Journalism; J. C. Durham Jr., Home Mission Board, M. E. Dodd Award for significant achievement in films; and Richard T. McCartney, Baptist General Convention of Texas, Arthur Davenport Award for significant achievement through total public relations ("Good News Texas/Living Proof" media campaign).

Hulum (Obregon) also placed first and second in photography categories; Martin first in feature writing; Durham, first in filmstrips; and McCartney (along with Orville Scott, Lynn Yarbrough and David Clanton), first in total public relations. Scott and Debbie Stewart also collaborated on a first place in news writing, and Clanton won a photography first place.

Other leading multiple award winners were Wesley M. (Pat) Patillo, Southern Seminary, four awards (first in advertising series and seconds in total development program, catalogs and development brochures); and Floyd A. Craig, Christian Life Commission, three awards (firsts in posters and direct mail and second in total public relations).

Nine other individuals collected two each--Chris Hansen, Baylor University, two firsts in photography; Richard L. Spalding, Hendrick Medical Center, Abilene, Texas, firsts in total development program and development brochure; Clarence Duncan, Radio and Television Commission, first in special publications and second in advertising single; Catherine Allen, Woman's Missionary Union, first in annual report, along with Debra Baird Bule, and second in filmstrip; Fay Brown, Golden Gate Seminary, first in catalog and second in special publication; Celeste Loucks, Home Mission Board, first in newsletter and second in feature series; Robert Stanley, Foreign Mission Board, seconds in feature writing and news series; Ruth Fowler, Foreign Mission Board, seconds in newswriting and feature photography; and Bob Harper, Foreign Mission Board, seconds for magazine and feature photography series.

Other first place awards went to Lynn Clayton, newspaper category, for "Baptist Digest," publication of the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists; Al Shackelford, Baptist and Reflector, Tennessee Baptist Convention, for personal column or editorial, "Cicero's Comment;" and David Wilkinson, Christian Life Commission, for a news story series on the "Soap" controversy.

Five remaining firsts went to Jim Newton and Charles Warren, SBC Brotherhood Commission, feature series; Constance Semple, University of Richmond, magazine category; Don Hepburn, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, total publications program; Horace O. Barefoot, Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina, information brochure; and Mike Davis, Brotherhood Commission, advertising single.

Other runnerup awards went to El ne Stone, newspaper category, "Word and Way," Missouri Baptist publication; Howard Bramlette, National Student Ministries, total publications program; Darr ll Wood, SBC Education Commission, direct mail; and Judy Touchton, Home Mission Board, news story.

Runnerup awards also went to Leonard Hill, Baptist Program, SBC Executive Committee, for posters or promotional flyers; Walker Knight, Home Mission Board, editorial or personal column; Bonita Sparrow, Radio and Television Commission, feature story; W. R. Waggoner, Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina, annual report; Eugene W. Baker, Baylor University, advertising series; Arvine Bell, Camp Crestridge for Girls, information brochure; Maurice W. Elliott, Baptist Memorial Hospital, Memphis, Tenn., newsletter; and Don M. Hull, Radio and Television Commission, direct mail.

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Penn.-Jersey Names Bush
To Succeed Bullard

Baptist Press
2/20/78

HARRISBURG, Pa. (BP)--Ellis M. Bush has been elected executive secretary-treasurer of the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania-South Jersey and editor of the convention publication, "Penn.-Jersey Baptist."

Bush, 49, executive minister of First Baptist Church, Shreveport, La., will join the convention staff April 1, and assume full responsibility as the chief administrative officer on May 31, when G. W. Bullard retires.

In other action, the convention's executive board also elected A. Wilson Parker, director of missions for the Southern Tier Baptist Association, Vestal, N. Y., as the convention's first fulltime missions division director.

Bush, a native of Hartford, Ala., has served on the staff of the Shreveport church since 1975. Previously he spent 10 years with the Alabama Baptist State Convention, directing the Sunday School department for four years and the church development division for six years.

Other experience includes nine years with the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, where he edited Sunday School materials for four years and coordinated family life education for five years.

Bush is a graduate of Samford University, Birmingham, Ala., where he earned a bachelor of arts degree and was later awarded an honorary doctor of divinity degree. He earned bachelor of divinity and master of theology degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky. He served as pastor of churches in Alabama, Kentucky and Indiana while in college and seminary.

Parker, a native of Jamestown, Tenn., has served as a pastor in Tennessee, Illinois, Montana and Nebraska. For seven years, he directed missions in Montana and North Dakota and spent four years as state director of missions for the Northern Plains Baptist Convention.

Before entering the ministry, Parker spent four years as a salesman and vice president for the Cascade Refining Company.

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(BP) Photo of Ellis Bush will be mailed to Baptist state papers.