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Declining Dollar Strains
Overseas Mission Effort

By Anita Bowden and Ruth Fowler

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Nine men at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board anxiously watch as the U.S. dollar bounces up and down on foreign exchange markets. It's budget time, and they're concerned.

Eight of them are area secretaries, responsible for balancing the wants and needs of the various missions in their area with available funds. The ninth, Winston Crawley, is director of the overseas division and the one responsible for calculating how much the others have to juggle.

Each year the juggling act becomes more difficult as inflation and dollar devaluation stretch Southern Baptist mission dollars tighter and tighter.

This year special consideration was given to countries where the dollar declined 10 percent or more in the past 12 months because of devaluation. For the first time, a figure amounting to one half the dollar value lost in each of the 20 affected countries was skimmed off the top of the overseas operating budget. This means that before the overall budget was divided among the eight areas, \$516,200 was marked for distribution among the hardest-hit countries.

Of those 20 countries, Switzerland lost the most ground, with 55 percent more money required in the 1979 budget to provide the same number of francs secured with the 1978 budget.

Japan was the second hardest-hit, requiring 46 percent more money in 1979 just to match 1978 purchasing power. That means \$456,216. That doesn't include funds needed to maintain missionary salaries and support or for capital outlays.

The special consideration given Switzerland, Japan and the other 18 countries still leaves their area secretaries looking for ways to make up the other half of their dollar devaluation loss. Those funds in Japan will have to come from the other countries in the area, says George H. Hays, area secretary for East Asia. "And that means no increases for some countries and only slight increases for the others," he says.

National Baptists in Spain agreed to a decrease in Southern Baptist subsidy and in Italy a publishing house is being closed which will make more funds available for Switzerland, says J. D. Hughey, secretary for Europe, the Middle East and South Asia. "Some gifts have come from European Baptists," he says, "but basically we're making drastic efforts to economize. All the missions have been urged to eliminate all 'fat' from their budgets."

Even those areas where dollar devaluation didn't reach 10 percent are feeling the pinch with inflation. And this year's skimming process left them with a smaller share of the overall budget than they might have expected.

Although money problems may not be severe enough in most countries to actually cause cutbacks in present programs, "advances and expansion may be impossible," says Crawley.

Solutions lie in attitudes at home and new approaches on the field. "Missionaries, especially those in expensive countries, need to be certain they are good stewards of their time, constantly aware of why they're there," says Hays. "They must ask themselves, 'is there a more effective method?'"

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Foreign Mission Board Executive Director Baker J. Cauthen describes it as "riding loose in the saddle"--being flexible enough to attempt different methods and realistic enough to understand that "we can't continue doing everything we've been doing." He also says the national Baptists in each country will have to be challenged to do more of the work and handle more of the financial responsibilities.

At home, "Baptists have to understand the realities of today (inflation and dollar devaluation)," says Crawley. "The same financial problems we face here are often much worse on the field."

But the board isn't ready to curtail or eliminate work in the expensive areas, according to Crawley. "The Great Commission doesn't tell us to evangelize only the cheap countries," he says.

"Our only hope lies in Southern Baptists responding boldly to missions education and stewardship training," said Hays.

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Southern Baptists Join Air
Disaster Relief Efforts

By Don Hepburn and Polly McNabb

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SAN DIEGO, Calif. (BP)--When a giant passenger-laden Boeing jet collided with a small plane sending flaming fragments to a populous residential area in San Diego, several Southern Baptists joined relief efforts.

Officials report at least 151 persons were killed, including a Southern Baptist airline stewardess, Jane Wyle-Stitz, 30, a member of First Baptist Church of Del Cerro in La Mesa, Calif. Miss Wyle-Stitz was not working on the ill-fated Flight 182 of Pacific Southwest Airlines (PSA) but was a passenger along with 38 other airline employees. As with many of the victims, officials could not recover Miss Wyle-Stitz' body. A memorial service was planned at the La Mesa church.

A 74-year old Southern Baptist Sunday School teacher was an eye witness to the crash and watched in horror as the planes' wreckage plummeted to within four houses of where she stood.

Mildred Alexander was out in her front yard watering the lawn. "At first everything appeared normal, then I saw smoke and the plane exploded. I cried, Oh, God, Oh, God," she said, explaining that she wasn't being profane but was calling on God to help. The plane barely missed her three-story home.

While Mrs. Alexander moved about the neighborhood consoling panic-stricken neighbors, police and fire and other rescue personnel raced to the normally quiet neighborhood, now in a state of chaos. Staff members of First Southern Baptist Church, San Diego, of the Southern Baptist General Convention of California, and the San Diego Baptist Association also moved in to provide assistance.

Charred bodies lay in the streets and atop the houses, while looters stole from the dead and ransacked houses struck by the flaming jet fuel. Residents wandered in disbelief.

Mrs. Alexander, after trying to calm several women and children who were in the street at the time of the crash, went to another neighbor with a history of emotional problems. The moment she walked in the neighbor cried, "How Could God let a thing like this happen?" Mrs. Alexander had to draw on all her Christian faith resources but never lost her calm as she consoled victims of the tragedy.

Don Brown, pastor, and Hughes Davis, minister of education, First Southern Baptist Church, San Diego, first learned of the tragedy over the radio when a plea for help was made for food and refreshments for the hundreds of rescue personnel. Brown gave Davis \$100 in church funds to buy refreshments which he delivered to a Salvation Army disaster center at the crash site.

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L. G. Chaddick, a Christian social ministries worker for the Southern Baptist General Convention of California, also went to the crash site to determine ways Southern Baptists and their agencies could provide assistance.

"This was an unusual kind of disaster," Chaddick said. "There are no wounded, no injured, no survivors. All that remained was the task of cleanup and burying the dead."

Within hours of the tragedy, Chaddick along with Jerry Brumbelow, director of church services for the San Diego Baptist Association, huddled with Red Cross and Pacific Southwest Airlines officials.

"It was quite evident that officials were at a loss as to how to do the followup," Chaddick reported. But he insisted that area pastors could provide counseling for the many families who lost a relative in the crash.

Another Southern Baptist who found himself at the heart of the crash's tragic aftermath was Gary Kissel, a member of First Baptist Church of Del Cerro, and a PSA official, who became responsible for coordinating assistance to the victims' families. He learned of the offer of Baptists to provide whatever assistance they could and quickly accepted. Kissel told the ministers, "You are a comfort to me personally just by you being here."

Kissel agreed that trained counselors were needed to assist the victims' families. He suggested Chaddick check into the Sheraton Hotel, where PSA housed all the families of the victims, to be on call for counseling.

Chaddick found that airline employees were relieved that a "resident minister" was present. Within the first several hours after reporting to the hotel, he was called upon to provide counseling to a number of family members.

Pastors of area Baptist churches were also asked to be available until all the families checked out of the hotel.

Although no stranger to death counseling, Chaddick found that this tragedy did bring its own special trauma. "These families are having extra difficulty because there is nobody to relate to, only fragments and charred remains," he said. One family member directed PSA officials to ship an empty coffin back to the funeral home because "that's all we have to show."

Within 48 hours of the worst air disaster in U. S. aviation history, the men's ministry department (Brotherhood) of the California Baptist Convention was developing followup relief efforts with Red Cross officials.

Edd Brown, director of men's ministry, reported that a great deal of assistance will be needed to help the people whose homes were destroyed or damaged by the aircraft wreckage and the ensuing flames.

"Most of these people are elderly and will need help in relocation and starting new homes," he said. "Others who will want to return to the neighborhood will need building assistance."

Brown also noted that Red Cross officials want to bypass as much red tape as possible to help the people get resettled. "We will be working with them through the local Baptist association to provide whatever assistance is necessary," he explained.

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Norton Accepts Church
Staff Post in Chattanooga

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CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. (BP)--Ralph E. Norton, who will retire Dec. 31, 1978, as executive secretary-treasurer of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, will become minister of pastoral care at Brainerd Baptist Church, Chattanooga, Tenn., Jan. 8.

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Norton, Tennessee Baptists' chief executive for six years, will assist the pastor, Winford Hendrix, in visitation, counseling and senior citizen ministry.

A native of Chattanooga, Norton was pastor of Red Bank Baptist Church, Chattanooga, for 25 years. He also served as minister of youth and education for Central Baptist Church, Chattanooga, and once taught mathematics in a high school there.

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Tresch Teaches
Lifestyle Evangelism

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WAKE FOREST, N. C. (BP)--Students in John Tresch's class on lifestyle evangelism at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary are required to help at least one non-Christian acquaintance understand how he can make Jesus Lord of his life.

"A lot of folks are asking the Philippian jailer's question (What must I do to be saved?) but not in his words," says Tresch, 41. "We need to be able to interpret what is being said so that we'll recognize the question when it is being asked. It can take the form of a direct question about what it means to be born again, or an allegation by a non-Christian that religion is just a bunch of garbage."

Tresch, a pastor for 20 years before joining the Southeastern faculty June 1, explains that in his view, New Testament evangelism is the offer of relationship with a person, Jesus Christ.

"This is an active and not a passive relationship," Tresch says, "Man is not reduced to a robot or puppet because the same God who controls his life is the God who created him and knows his needs."

"Modern man needs someone with whom he can experience an interplay of life--share joys and sorrows. Jesus Christ is that person. His personality merges with that of the believer in much the same way that a couple married for many years become more and more alike. He should be growing more like Him."

Tresch feels that another major problem in modern life is the problem of guilt. "We need to tell people that Jesus delivers not only from the penalty of sin but also from the guilt of sin," he explains, "Modern psychology has recognized that guilt is a problem, but until Menninger (Whatever Became of Sin?), guilt was always swept under the rug. Other philosophies and systems deny the reality of evil."

"Christianity is the only approach to life that comes to grips with the problem of sin and offers a solution. No witnessing interview is complete until the new Christian has been assured of forgiveness as explained in the first two chapters of I John."

Tresch says discipleship training was lost in the press of people coming into the churches during and after World War II. In the pressure to maintain increasing memberships Jesus was emphasized as savior with no insistence on His Lordship.

"Now we have large percentages of absentee and uncommitted members," Tresch says. "The current renewal movement is a response to this lack of emphasis. It's an effort to give vitality to the Christian experience. Too many times we've been unconsciously guilty of leaving Jesus on the cross, when it was the resurrection, ascension and Pentecost that made the redeemed life."

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