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79-82

Political Events Affect
Middle East Mission Work

By Ruth Fowler
for Baptist Press

Political events continue to affect the work of Southern Baptists in the Middle East, and the forecast for the future is mixed.

One of the most radical changes in the last few months has been in Iran. The future of Baptist work is uncertain "because we don't know if people who are now in power will continue in control," said J. D. Hughey, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's secretary for Europe, the Middle East and South Asia.

He pointed to the return of the Henry E. Turlingtons to their English-language congregation in Tehran as a positive sign for the future of Baptist witness.

"We don't really know what an 'Islamic Republic' is," Hughey said. The judicial system will probably be based on a literal or fundamentalist interpretation of the Koran, the Muslim holy book.

"It would be comparable to our trying to live by all the laws of the Old Testament," Hughey said. "Even in Israel the Hebrew law is not followed literally in every detail."

In Muslim countries people of other religions usually have been allowed to follow their own customs or practices. Iran, however, may become one of the strictest Muslim countries. Muslim law would not just affect the judicial-political system, Hughey pointed out, but also dress, moral practices and daily conduct. In these areas non-Muslims would be expected to conform at least enough to avoid offending strict Muslims.

Hughey is counting on the tradition of freedom for minority groups to allow Southern Baptist work to continue in Iran. "I am not altogether pessimistic or apprehensive," Hughey said. "Even the most rigid Muslims will have to make concessions to human rights and the 20th century."

Baptist work in Iran has been confined mainly to English-language congregations and the main effect on Baptist work will be the reduced number of Americans living in Iran. The first church service since the new government's takeover had 15 persons from six nationalities present, but no Americans other than missionaries.

"Our hopes (for continuing work) are concentrated on the great cosmopolitan city of Tehran where there are many English-speaking people," Hughey said. "Work in Ahwaz (an outlying town) is less likely to be renewed."

Elsewhere in the Muslim world, Hughey points to Morocco and Libya as examples of countries that tolerate Christian worship and practices among foreigners. Southern Baptists have English-language work in both countries. If the visa for John Allen Moore is approved for Baptist work in Turkey, perhaps that Muslim nation can be added to the list of those tolerating minority religions.

Southern Baptist missionaries also would like to live and work in Egypt, where the recent Egypt-Israel peace treaty has won strong popular support.

Residence permits which would allow additional missionary organizations to send representatives to Egypt have been hard to obtain in recent years, although missionaries whose boards or agencies have been long-established in Egypt have been permitted to work.

Southern Baptist missionary J. William Trimble travels regularly from another Middle East country to work with Baptist groups in Egypt but would welcome the opportunity to live in Egypt.

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"Egypt has a larger Christian minority than any other Arab country except Lebanon," Hughey explained. Suppression of the large Coptic Church of Egypt would be "unthinkable," he said. "This provides a kind of guarantee of toleration for Christian religious practices."

Hughey doesn't see that the recent peace treaty will bring any big change in work in Israel, where Southern Baptists have had evangelistic work for many years.

"In Israel, Baptists are respected, tolerated, and well-known, though not numerous," he said. "There is officially and unofficially a rather strong belief that Jews who are religious should follow Judaism," Hughey pointed out. Much of the evangelistic work done by Southern Baptists in Israel is not among the Jews, but among Arabs.

Southern Baptist representatives living in Jerusalem are working in the West Bank area. As this area's political standing changes, Hughey does not expect the Baptist work to change greatly. Because Baptists are working in both Jordan and Israel--the two countries mainly involved in this disputed area--the work in the West Bank should be allowed to continue, he said.

Baptist work in Gaza, mainly a medical ministry, may change, not because the presence of representatives would not be welcome, but because the need for medical care may increase.

"Regardless of political developments we will continue to have mission work in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank," Hughey said. "Our representatives are usually recognized as non-political. They are pro-person regardless of what government they live under. If Gaza does not remain under the jurisdiction of Israel, the hospital will be even more needed." Israel, which has the highest ratio of doctors to people of any nation in the world, operates hospitals in Gaza and near the Gaza-Israeli border.

In Lebanon, which has a population that is half Muslim and half Christian (or Western), Baptist work goes on amid increasing tensions. This nation is pulled in different directions by Syria and Israel, according to Hughey.

"The Palestinians are an extra element, sort of a nation within a nation. They want a home of their own but for now they are in Lebanon," he said.

"But in spite of the present disorder and threat of greater disorder, the ministries of Southern Baptists in Lebanon are continuing in a magnificent way," Hughey said.

Those involved in such international ministries as the seminary, publications and broadcast work have no intention of leaving the conflict-ridden nation. What will happen to Lebanon and the missionaries working there is uncertain. "It's all very 'wait and see'," Hughey said.

This uncertainty is evident in many parts of the Middle East. What happens politically, Hughey says, can affect the Baptist witness, but is not likely to end it.

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Action on Cults Urged By Congressional Staff Report

WASHINGTON (BP)--A Congressional investigative report on the murder of U. S. Rep. Leo J. Ryan has recommended stepped-up research on cults, review of Internal Revenue Service rules on the tax-exempt status of churches and the inclusion of the subject of cults on the agenda of a White Conference on the Family.

The report grew out of the investigation which followed the death of Ryan, a California Democrat, last year in Jonestown, Guyana. It was prepared by a staff investigative group for the House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs at the instructions of Rep. Clement J. Zablocki, D.-Wis., chairman of the committee.

Although it is not an official report of the committee, the findings may be used in deciding if future action is needed in response to the murder of Ryan, members of his party, and the mass suicide/murder of the followers of the People's Temple in Jonestown, Nov. 18, 1978.

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The report notes that Jim Jones' group, People's Temple, had tax-exempt status as a "church." It recommends periodic review of qualifying status "in order to assure that originally stated purposes and objectives are still being fulfilled and that the nature and general activities of an organization deemed to be a 'church' under IRS guidelines have not changed over time."

"The issue of People's Temple's status as a 'church' is also significant in connection with First Amendment protections it sought and received," the report acknowledges. It notes that this is "a difficult and complex matter" which goes beyond the mandate of the investigativ group.

The report concludes that the People's Temple "may have been a bona fide church in its Indiana and early California origins" but that "it progressively lost that characterization in almost every respect." By 1972, according to the report, it could be accurately described as a "sociopolitical movement."

"Under the direction and inspiration of its founder and director and the Marxist-L ninist-Communist philosophy he embraced, People's Temple was in the end a socialist structure devoted to socialism," the report asserts. "Despite that fact, People's Temple continued to enjoy the tax-exempt status it received in 1962 under Internal Revenue Service rules and regulations."

The report also deals with the possibility of the People's Temple being revived. It notes signs of an internal power struggle and the alleged existence of a "hit squad" to eliminat opponents. "There is evidence to suggest Jones and some of his key lieutenants discussed and had 'understandings' to eliminate various individuals, including national political l aders," the report notes.

Acknowledging the complex and emotional nature of the issue of cults, the report concludes that "too little is known about...cults or the dynamics and methods of such groups and their leaders. It is not unreasonable to conclude, in fact, that cult groups in the United States tend to thrive because of this lack of understanding and information."

The report recommends "on an urgent basis, that the professional scientific community undertake a concentrated program of research and training aimed at understanding fundam ntal questions in this area."

The final recommendation of the report is the inclusion of cults on the agenda of a White House Conf rence on the Family "with special reference to their mode of operation, th style and tactics of their leaders, and means and methods by which parents and their children can avoid becoming involved with such organizations."

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Wrapup

Brotherhood Adopts Budget,
Nominee Withdraws Name

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Trustees of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission approved an operating budget of \$2,285,350 for 1979-80, requested two missions volunteers to do Brotherhood work, and heard a challenge from a retiring denominational executive to enlist more laymen in Christian missions endeavors.

An expected recommendation of a new executive director to succeed Glendon McCullough, who died in a traffic accident on Aug. 23, 1978, did not materialize.

Jack Deligans, of Livermore, Calif., chairman of the agency trustees, said a search committee planned to recommend William E. Hardy Jr., but he declined the position at th last minute without explanation.

Hardy, a minister of education at First Baptist Church, Columbus, Miss., has just completed two one-year terms as chairman of the agency trustees.

He had resigned as chairman of the search committee when he became a candidate for the position of executive director.

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Trustees elected Billy Rogers of Earle, Ark., to replace Hardy on the search committee and named Jack Knox of Germantown, Tenn., as chairman. In later action, the trustees expanded the five-man search committee to seven and named Reginal Stokes of Pleasant Grove, Ala., and Jack Harwell of Atlanta to the openings. They also adopted a list of 17 characteristics they desire in a new executive director and a search committee recommendation that no member of the search committee is eligible for consideration as executive director.

Robert Dixon of Dallas, executive director of Texas Baptist Men, was chosen contact liaison to the committee in behalf of the state Brotherhood leaders, who have expressed great concern with the process to secure an executive director.

The new budget, up four percent from the present one, calls for an average increase of 8 percent in staff salaries and an addition of a darkroom technician to the 45 member staff.

The two missions volunteers, requested through the Mission Service Corp program of the Home Mission Board, are for field work among Baptist men and for circulation promotion of agency periodicals.

Trustees asked J. T. Williams of Tallahassee, Fla., to lead in funding and finding the circulation promotion specialist after the millionaire land developer told agency leaders he and a group of influential Baptist laymen were interested in using their expertise in behalf of the denomination without cost.

Porter W. Routh of Nashville, who retires July 31 after 28 years as executive secretary-treasurer of the denomination's Executive Committee, threw out a challenge for involvement of more laymen in Southern Baptist projects to share the Christian message throughout the world within the next 20 years.

"Bold Mission Thrust must become more than a denominational slogan or the best made plans of people, churches, agencies," cautioned Routh. "It must become the beating heart of Southern Baptists."

In other action, the trustees agreed to hold a national meeting in August 1983 to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the men and boys missions movement among Southern Baptists.

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Full Agenda Faces SBC in Houston

HOUSTON, Texas (BP)--Southern Baptists will seek a new president, beam an Astrodome rally throughout the U. S. via two satellites, listen to a recently freed Soviet dissident and conduct a host of business when the Southern Baptist Convention convenes in Houston, June 12-14.

SBC President Jimmy R. Allen, who will preside over the 122nd annual session of the 134-year-old SBC will step down after two one-year terms in the office and messengers will elect a successor.

Spearheaded by Allen, a Bold Mission Thrust Rally will seek to fill the 57,000-seat Astrodome, as Southern Baptists dedicate more than 1,100 missionaries and challenge 1,000 others to dedicate themselves to missionary service.

Allen and evangelist Billy Graham will close out the two-hour service, which takes the place of the SBC's Wednesday evening session and will focus attention on the SBC's Bold Mission Thrust goal to proclaim the message of Christ to the entire world by the year 2000.

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The rally--also featuring an 8,000 voice choir, a procession of 144 flags of states and nations where the SBC has mission work, and mission speakers--will be beamed via Western Union's Westar 1 and RCA's Satcom 1. The signal will be transmitted to large screens at public rallies in at least a dozen cities, to a host of church rallies, and to cable, commercial and public broadcasting TV outlets.

A late addition to the program, Georgi Vins of the Soviet Union will address the Thursday evening closing session of the SBC. He is one of a battery of speakers scheduled at the three-day meeting of the nation's largest Protestant denomination.

Vins, a dissident Soviet Baptist leader, was released along with four other Soviet dissidents, after months of negotiations by the Carter White House, in exchange for two Soviet spies.

Other speakers at the meeting, which will center on Bold Mission Thrust, include a variety of personalities. They are Charles Colson, former White House staff assistant under Nixon who now runs a Christian ministry for prisoners; Jerry Clower, country humorist from Yazoo City, Miss.; Porter W. Routh, who will retire July 31 as executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee; Emmanuel Scott, a black Baptist pastor from Los Angeles; Baker J. Cauthen, retiring executive director of the SBC Foreign Mission Board; William Hinson, pastor of First Baptist Church, New Orleans, who will deliver the convention sermon; Allen, who will give the president's address; and others.

More than 18,000 persons around the nation are expected to register for the convention, which last year in Atlanta registered an all-time record of 22,872.

They will face a number of business items, in addition to speakers, agency reports, resolutions, inspirational sessions and a variety of musical presentations.

With reports circulating about efforts to elect a president whose agenda is biblical inerrancy, Allen, pastor of the 9,400-member First Baptist Church, San Antonio, has expressed concern that the denomination not change its agenda from Bold Mission Thrust to doctrinal orthodoxy.

"I don't question the authority of the Bible," he said. "My only apprehension is creating an atmosphere at the convention resulting in the erosion of trust in denominational leadership and in shifting the denomination's priorities from evangelism and missions to biblical inerrancy."

In other business, messengers will vote on a proposed \$83 million national Cooperative Program unified budget and a \$1,164,000 convention operating budget for 1979-80.

The messengers will also hear recommendations from the Executive Committee that the SBC not establish a seventh seminary and that no merger take place between the SBC Brotherhood Commission and SBC Sunday School Board.

The seminary proposal was recommended for study at last year's SBC in Atlanta. The Executive Committee will recommend "that instead of a seventh seminary being considered, the six present SBC seminaries be requested to study and report to the Executive Committee's institutions workgroup how they can extend their ministries for meeting the needs for theological education in the state conventions in the Northeast, the North Central, the West and the Northwest."

The merger recommendation, made by George Bagley, executive secretary of Alabama Baptists, was rejected after a joint study of the question by the two agencies.

Both the Executive Committee and the Stewardship Commission will report on a motion last year regarding denominational policy on charges for certain special services rendered by SBC agencies to churches.

John Green, a pastor from Indialantic, Fla., asked the Stewardship Commission to consider an alternate method to financing its Together We Build fund raising program, other than by charging churches using the service. He also asked the Executive Committee to study the question of charges by agencies.

The Stewardship Commission, which charges the churches which use Together We Build on a cost-recovery basis, will respond, after a study, that "there is no more practical funding source available" than a direct charge to the limited number of churches which use the service.

Together We Build is a fund raising technique, generally used for building, that secures money and pledges before a project is begun, thereby saving interest charges. The commission raised over \$30 million in this manner last year and over \$100 million since the program began in 1969. Together We Build draws no support from the Cooperative Program.

The Executive Committee will recommend adoption of a statement interpreting current practices concerning charges for services rendered by SBC agencies. The statement says there have been exceptions to the general rule that SBC agencies which receive Cooperative Program or designated gifts make no charges to churches for their services.

The exceptions include allowing agencies to charge which "provide a service and/or materials to a limited number of churches where the service or materials is for fund-raising. They also include agencies "providing curriculum materials, special materials or services to be used in a teaching or training program or in a study of the particular problems of an individual church," and for conferences, seminars, or training sessions conducted by an agency.

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Richmonders Give 233 Acres
For Orientation Center

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--A 233-acre farm near Richmond has been donated to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board as the site for a new orientation center for missionaries preparing to go overseas.

Harwood and Louise Blanks Cochrane, a couple active in Richmond's Tabernacle Baptist Church, donated the property. Cochrane is chairman of the board of Overnite Transportation Company of Richmond, a trucking firm he founded in 1935 and has built into the eighth largest motor common carrier of general commodities in the United States.

The land, conservatively valued at \$500,000, is called "Gold Mine Farm," since at one time prospectors tried unsuccessfully to pan for gold in a creek on the property.

The Cochranes' own farm home is about a mile from Gold Mine Farm. They drive about 25 miles each way to attend Tabernacle Church, where he is a deacon and president of the endowment fund and she teaches an adult women's Sunday School class.

The board now uses facilities at Callaway Gardens, near Pine Mountain, Ga., to provide 14-week training sessions for missionaries going to 94 countries around the world. But with growing numbers being appointed for overseas service, the board voted in April to "look with favor" toward developing its own center in the Richmond area nearer the board's home offices.

A committee has been appointed to plan development of the program and do a financial feasibility study. No estimates on cost of buildings and other facilities can be made until the studies are completed.

About 200 missionaries a year receive orientation at the Georgia resort facility, where use is limited to its "off" season. But it is envisioned that the multiple-use center in Richmond eventually would serve a much larger number.

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Cochrane, a Virginian who started out driving a horse and wagon for a dairy company in Richmond, decided to go into the trucking business at the age of 21. This year he was recognized by Jaycees as "Free Enterprise Man of the Year" and by Financial World as "Chief Executive Officer of the Year" in motor transportation for 1978.

Mrs. Cochrane is a member of the University of Richmond's board of trustees.

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(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state editors by Richmond Bureau of Baptist Press.

Ugandan President Requests
Church Help in Restoration

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NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)--At a prayer meeting in his Kampala office, Ugandan President Yussufu K. Lule told a delegation including Southern Baptist Missionary G. Webster Carroll that the government is dependent upon the church to lead in the spiritual and psychological reconstruction of Uganda.

"The Uganda of today is not the Uganda you knew when you left," he told the group, which included three Church of Uganda (Anglican) bishops who had just arrived at Entebbe from countries where they had been living in exile. President Lule himself had been in exile before being chosen to head the new government.

Although the Church of Uganda was one of four religious groups allowed to function after Amin banned Baptists and 26 other religious groups, individual Anglican churchmen incurred his wrath. Some went into exile and some were rumored to have been murdered by Amin.

At Lule's request the group prayed for Uganda's future and for his administration.

Carroll assured President Lule of prayer support and involvement of Southern Baptists in the spiritual and psychological reconstruction of Uganda. Carroll had spoken with Lule by telephone shortly after the new provisional government was formed.

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story mailed 5/17/79 entitled "Allen Fears Shift in SBC Priorities" please change line in paragraph five, page eight, from "during Allen's term of office" to "since Jan. 1, 1978,"

Thanks, Baptist Press