



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
466 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 Richard T. McCartney, 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) _____ Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2798

RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151

WASHINGTON Stan L. Hastey, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

December 27, 1979

79-216

Allen in Tehran;
Pleads Release

By Norman Jameson

TEHRAN, Iran (BP)--Jimmy Allen, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, is among seven religious leaders in Tehran to ask Iranian officials for the release of American hostages held there.

According to a NBC news report Dec. 26, the group spoke directly with the Ayatollah Khomeini but would not discuss the content of their conversation until they were ready to leave Iran, probably on Jan. 3. An Iranian spokesman told reporters the group talked only of religious matters and did not discuss anything substantive.

The group is separate from the highly publicized Christmas visit of three clergy to the hostages at the American embassy in Tehran.

Allen, president-elect of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, spoke with Iranian officials at their invitation Dec. 22, then left for Iran. According to Bob Maddox, President Carter's special assistant for religious liaison, the White House is not involved in the trip in any way.

Allen, the elected spokesman, said the group went as private individuals and religious leaders. "It is our hope," he said, "to explore the implications of our mutual commitment to justice and to explore means of dealing with release of the hostages."

Harold C. Bennett, executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee, citing his "deep regret" at the imprisonment of the hostages, has asked Southern Baptists to observe Jan. 13, 1980 as a day of prayer for the spiritual well-being and early release of the hostages. "Also I think we ought to pray for a spirit of cooperation between President Carter and the Ayatollah Khomeini and for the relationship between our nations," he said.

Allen's trip evolved from a Dec. 13 prayer vigil at the Statue of Liberty after which vigil organizers sent a communique to the Iranian ambassador in Washington. The organizers, John Walsh and William Kirby, chaplains at Princeton University, enlisted Allen to lead the group to Iran.

According to Maddox, Allen received only a standard briefing by the state department prior to the trip and there was no indication he would be "debriefed" upon his return.

Earlier in 1979, Allen spoke in Israel with Prime Minister Begin and other Israeli officials and succeeded in obtaining a clarification of a new law that was interpreted by many to be "anti-missionary."

-more-

When asked if that instance and Allen's well-known friendship with President Carter were the reasons Allen was able to arrange the Iranian meeting, Maddox said, "I'm sure they were aware of his accessibility to the president."

Maddox also indicated that the Iranians "sensed in Allen a person who really understood the situation."

Making the trip with Allen were: Dale White, Methodist Bishop of New Jersey; Charles Caesaritti, assistant to the presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church of America; Charles Kimball, a graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and specialist in Islamic studies at Harvard University; Thomas Ricks, specialist in Iranian and Mideast affairs at Georgetown University; Walsh, a Southern Baptist, and Kirby.

-30-

Convention Politicking
Top 1979 News Story

Baptist Press
12/27/79

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Political activity surrounding the election of Adrian Rogers as president of the Southern Baptist Convention dominated balloting for the top 10 Baptist Press news stories of 1979.

State Baptist newspaper editors and Baptist Press bureau personnel from around the United States awarded the events surrounding Rogers' election 30 of a possible 36 first place votes, and 343.5 points, far outdistancing the forced retirement of Paul Stevens, president for 26 years of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, which finished second with 230.5 points.

Rogers' first-ballot election at the convention in Houston in June followed politicking by forces committed to biblical inerrancy as an issue. Rogers said he had earlier disassociated himself from the group, but the politics prompted messengers to vote to disavow "overt political activity" and reaffirm the 1963 statement of Baptist Faith and Message. Related to the convention was an investigation of alleged registration and voter regularities that revealed no massive wrongdoing.

Rogers' election garnered 343.5 of a possible 360 points in the balloting on a statistically weighted system designed for Baptist Press by Martin Bradley, manager of research services for the Baptist Sunday School Board. The system recognizes the narrow distinction between choices in the mid-range and rewards items for making the final ten. Balloting reflects an 84 percent return on 43 ballots.

Paul Stevens was forced by trustees to retire after 26 years as president of the Radio and Television Commission. The trustees cited "grave misgivings about management policy, disclosure of information and stewardship of resources." Harold Martin succeeded Stevens as interim president and said, in effect, the commission had no television ministry. Stevens was allowed to retain an attractive retirement package.

Voters considered the SBC era ending with the retirement of Baker James Cauthen and Porter W. Routh as the third biggest story of 1979 with 185.8 points. Cauthen was head of the Foreign Mission Board for 26 years and Routh was executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee for 28 years. R. Keith Parks succeeds Cauthen; Harold C. Bennett succeeds Routh.

Receiving three first place votes and 160.1 points and in fourth place was the continuing story of Baptist aid to refugees. Southern Baptists geared up to sponsor refugee families in large numbers and the Home Mission Board urged each of the 1,200 Baptist associations to place at least one family. The Foreign Mission Board designated their largest single allocation in history--\$500,000--in emergency aid to starving Cambodians streaming into Thailand.

-more-

Other stories and their finish in the top 10 were as follows:

(5) Bold Mission Thrust and Mission Service Corps begin to escalate toward their goals of presenting the gospel to everyone in this century and placing 5,000 volunteers beside missionaries at home and abroad by 1982. A massive Bold Mission Thrust rally in the Astrodome during the annual meeting in Houston was transmitted throughout the United States and attracted 1,200 volunteers for missions.

(6) World hunger concerns come to the fore. Many Baptist state conventions, the Foreign and Home Mission Boards, Christian Life Commission, Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, Baptist Student Unions and others launch efforts and urge action. The Foreign Mission Board's hunger and relief allocations top \$3 million for the first time.

(7) Dissident Baptist pastor Georgi Vins, freed from Soviet prison, along with other dissidents; worships with President Carter at First Baptist Church, Washington, D.C.; addresses Southern Baptist Convention. (One first place vote.)

(8) Baptists pitch in after Hurricanes David and Frederic in the U.S. and abroad. Baptist aid is the first to arrive on Dominica. Medical and volunteer teams assist victims and help in rebuilding on Dominica and Dominican Republic. Baptists respond to earthquake ravaged victims on Colombia-Ecuador border.

(9) Projections indicate upturn in baptisms across SBC in 1979--the first increase in three years--and continued numerical and financial growth; enrollment in most church program organizations projected to continue decline.

(10) Effort in Georgia, spearheaded by William Powell of the "Southern Baptist Journal" fails to generate support to fire Jack Harwell, editor of the "Christian Index" over Harwell's interpretation of the Adam and Eve account in Genesis.

Two other stories that received one first place vote, but did not make the top 10 were: religion's role in the search for Mideast peace at Camp David; and religious leaders' push for ratification of SALT II treaty.

Other stories that received a significant number of votes but which didn't make it into the top 10 were: Heart of America Bible conferences sponsored by evangelist James Robison and W. A. Criswell, pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas; religion's role at Camp David; and the missions hope rekindled in China after U.S. recognition of that huge nation.

-30-

Missionaries in Rhodesia
Ask Concentrated Prayer

Baptist Press
12/27/79

GWELO, Rhodesia (BP)--Southern Baptist missionaries in Rhodesia urged all Southern Baptists to unite in concentrated prayer for the country in a statement prepared after the Dec. 21 signing of the cease fire ending Rhodesia's seven-year war.

"Although a cease fire has been signed, and sanctions lifted, many troubled days lie ahead," read the statement telephoned to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board Christmas Eve by Ralph L. Rummage, chairman of the organization of Southern Baptist missionaries in Rhodesia.

-more-

"Pray that in the days prior to the election, peace and serenity will reign and that the results of the elections will produce a political climate in which the word of God can continue to be preached and Christians can exercise freedom to worship and witness."

The Foreign Mission Board is prepared to rebuild its missionary staff as soon as missionaries can work outside the towns again, said Davis L. Saunders, the board's secretary for eastern and southern Africa, after talking with Rummage. "We are ready to go, and the missionaries are ready to go."

Since the war between Patriotic Front and Rhodesian government forces began, one Southern Baptist missionary, Archie G. Dunaway Jr., has been killed, and others have had to limit their activities to urban areas. Some Christians in rural areas have been reported to wrap Bibles in plastic and bury them, while others have fled to the cities. Because of intimidation and threats to Christians in rural areas, church services there have all but ceased.

-30-

Brazilian Baptists Sign Up
For Witness to 30 Million

By Bob Stanley

Baptist Press
12/27/79

SAO PAULO, Brazil (BP)--Southern Baptist missionary Glendon D. Grober logged more than 80,000 miles in 1978 as he started promoting an evangelistic campaign as big as all Brazil.

In 1979 he quit keeping any kind of mileage record--the total was just getting too ridiculous, he said.

But the payoff for the country's second national evangelistic effort in 14 years will come in 1980. This is the year that Brazil's 450,000 Baptists have set aside for "doing the work of evangelism."

Throughout this sprawling giant of a country, as large as the United States if you exclude Alaska, church members are signing scrolls pledging to share their testimony and a tract daily with someone who needs to know Jesus.

The goal is for one-fourth of Brazil's Baptists to share the gospel with one-fourth of Brazil's 120 million people in this one year.

Planners of this "Good News Brazil" effort believe it can generate a life style of evangelism that will continue--and hopefully boost Brazilian Baptists to their goal of having 1 million church members by 1982, their centennial year.

Brazilians are hearing about the campaign in many ways. Pastor-evangelist Nilson Fanini, whose television programs reach millions on 74 stations throughout the country, is using six 30-second promotion spots prepared with the aid of Alan Compton, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board mass media representative for Latin America.

One shows John Leite, a leading Brazilian soccer player. He talks about the sport and then turns quickly to a testimony about his relationship to the Lord. It ends with the campaign slogan.

Grober and other campaign planners would like to put these on national television at prime time--but at \$15,000 a spot, this hasn't been possible with the funds available.

Up to this point, Brazilian Baptists have paid all the expenses of the campaign except for Grober's travel and part of the printing costs for the 30 million tracts that are being used in the daily witnessing.

-more-

Grober is excited by the kind of response the campaign is generating. In Porto Alegre, one of Brazil's southernmost cities, the state convention executive went into a hardware store three times in one day because of some plumbing work he was doing at home. On the third visit, realizing he hadn't given out his witnessing tract for the day, he decided to talk to the owner.

As he started to share his witness, the man said, "Wait a minute. This morning a 10-year-old boy came into my store. He gave me a tract and he talked to me about Jesus like nobody ever talked to me before in my life. You tell me something more about it now."

In the moments that followed, the store owner accepted Christ.

It is this kind of witnessing, which thousands are pledging to do daily in 1980, that campaign planners believe can become a life style for Brazilian Baptists. Leadership training and the starting of thousands of home Bible studies are also being emphasized.

The idea for the national campaign came from Rubens Lopes, an internationally known Brazilian Baptist who also led the first national campaign in 1965. Lopes' death on Nov. 3, 1979, rather than slowing the evangelism effort, is expected to unite Brazilians even more solidly behind the campaign as a tribute to his life-long evangelistic zeal.

The Brazilian Baptist Convention, which has about 450,000 members in its 2,800 churches, has a goal of having one million members and 6,000 churches by Oct. 15, 1982, the centennial of the founding of its first church.

As part of the overall thrust, major city evangelism campaigns are being planned in nine of Brazil's major cities in the next three years. These targets include Brazil's new industrial and business giant, Sao Paulo, with a population growing so fast that even the estimate of 10 million now in the city seems conservative.

Others are Rio de Janeiro, which has about eight million people, and key cities in other regions--Belo Horizonte, Curitiba, Recife, Belem, Fortaleza, Salvador and Vitoria.

"We could easily see more than 100,000 baptisms coming from these major city efforts alone," predicts Joseph B. Underwood, Foreign Mission Board consultant for evangelism and church development.

Texas Baptists are deeply involved in the campaign. Between 200 and 300 Texans participated in various evangelistic projects in 1979, Underwood said, and hundreds more are expected to take part in 1980.

Grober, who's worn out the tires on three cars, has been a ball of energy promoting the campaign. Said another missionary of Grober's efforts:

"Without a doubt, he's the man God has raised up for this task."