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SBC Executive Committee
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355
Wilmer C. Fields, Director
Dan Martin, News Editor
Norman Jameson, Feature Editor

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Part One of Two Part Series:

Smugglers, Legalists Disagree
On Bible Distribution Method

By Norman Jameson

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Under glaring television lights in a crowded Houston news conference, dissident Russian Baptist Georgi Vins asked the western world to continue to get Bibles into the Soviet Union by any means possible, including smuggling.

At the same moment in an adjoining auditorium, Bob Denny, who was then Baptist World Alliance general secretary, told messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention that there is no need for underground evangelism or Bible smuggling into Eastern Europe or Russia.

Those contrary admonitions graphically spotlight the gulf that deeply and effectively separates Christians on the subject of Bible smuggling. There is no meeting ground between the camps and no room for compromise.

Compromise itself is anathema to the highly competitive Bible smugglers. Those avowed communist haters risk life and liberty to get Bibles to "the suffering church" and they tell about it in three-color brochures and direct mail campaigns that raised \$21.2 million for the three largest groups last year.

On the other side are the more sedate believers who feel that in the long run, cooperation with communist governments will achieve greater results. To them, Bible smuggling is not only illegal, it casts the unfavorable image of "lawbreaker" on Christians.

"They have created problems for the whole Christian witness," says Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks about smugglers. "They could accomplish what they're trying to do in other ways if they had the patience and would work to do it. But it's not sensational and you can't raise money if you do it quietly and legally and don't have a lot of fanfare."

Brother Andrew, author of "God's Smuggler," says in an eloquent defense entitled "The Ethics of Smuggling:" "Of course, we must obey the government, but that goes only so far. We must obey unless that government—whether it is our own or the government of those nations where God sends us as missionaries, as soul-winners, as apostles, as evangelists, pastors, or smugglers—unless that government takes the place of God."

Russia, though not the most oppressive country for Christians and only one of many places where smuggling occurs, is the rally ground for some three dozen independent Bible smuggling outfits. Smugglers' efforts to clip the wires of the "Iron Curtain" with the Sword of the Lord carries the dual intent of landing a blow against communism.

A form letter from the group, Jesus to the Communist World Inc., indicates its dual purpose: "In places which have not yet succumbed to communism and in those which show rapid trends toward it, our mission is to warn Christians of the dangers of communistic subversion."

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The United Bible Societies distributed 13,273,137 Bibles and New Testaments in Eastern Europe between 1945 and April 1980, according to their records. That does not include the hundreds of thousands of Bibles printed within the nations on materials supplied by the United Bible Societies for presses operating legally within the state.

Smugglers say considering the population of the countries involved, that distribution is just a trickle. But they offer no solid statistics of their own, with the exception of Underground Evangelism which says it distributed 281,384 Bibles and New Testaments last year. The others say simply they've distributed "millions" or "many hundreds of thousands."

Bible availability is disputed. Alexei Bichkov, general secretary of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists—the registered Baptists—thinks that now every registered Baptist family has a Bible. You cannot buy a Bible in Russia because Bibles are given freely through the registered churches. Of course, that leaves unregistered church members out of the distribution and it's to the unregistered church the smugglers deliver their wares.

A March 19, 1979 report by Time magazine's Eastern Europe bureau chief said: "A Christian's chances of buying a Bible openly are currently good in Poland, erratic in East Germany, difficult in Czechoslovakia and Hungary (where the purchaser's name may go directly into a government dossier), extremely difficult in Romania, virtually impossible in the Soviet Union and Bulgaria. Buying a Bible is an out-and-out crime in Albania."

Alice Ball, general secretary of the national division of the American Bible Society, says not only are the names of Bible purchasers in Hungary not recorded, but that thousands of Bibles are printed there every year and there is a Bible store in the middle of Bucharest that offers mail order service.

"We've found over the years by distributing Bibles through proper channels, in the long run it's more successful and we don't jeopardize our position in other parts of the world," says Ball. "In some of these countries, as conditions change and it becomes possible to do things legally, you're in a far better position than if you've been trying to skirt the system. It's difficult when you're trying to do things legally and the government connects all Christian organizations. Then you have to prove yourself, that you're not part of them (smugglers)."

Paul Hansen, Europe secretary for the Department of Church Cooperation of the Lutheran World Federation in Geneva, Switzerland, thinks church members are being duped by the underground mission groups. "I want to make clear that anyone in the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Yugoslavia who really wants a Bible can get one," he wrote in the February 1979 issue of The Lutheran magazine. "To 'smuggle' Bibles into these countries is a demonstration, not a necessity."

Bible smugglers, of course, do not agree. Walter Day, field representative of the Canadian headquarters of Jesus to the Communist World, says that Christians in the west fantasize when they believe conditions are improving for churches in communist countries.

More conflict arises over the "official" Baptist representative from the Soviet Union, Alexei Bichkov. Smugglers refute the increasingly favorable conditions Bichkov says exist for believers in the Soviet Union. They say he espouses a party line in return for his travel freedom.

There can be no doubt that Christians are persecuted in communist countries. Reliable sources such as Keston College, a center for the study of religion and communism, Amnesty International, and the testimony of countless exiles and dissidents verify that freedoms are limited. The question is, how much of the persecution results from strictly religious practices,

as claim the smuggling groups who have "adopted" dissident heroes, and how much is the result of political involvement?

The Soviet minister of religion told Denny of the BWA: "We do not put people in jail because they are religious. We put them in jail because they break the laws pertaining to religion. They have church without a license and they incite other people to attend those services or they do not have a recognized job."

Of course, "inciting people to attend services" is simply an evangelical effort to tell others of Jesus. It's restrictions like that that the unregistered Baptists cannot abide. And when a Russian is denied a job because of his faith, he is then liable to be arrested for parasitism. By filtering the process, authorities can claim no one was jailed for their religion.

Yet Denny, who has traveled frequently in the Soviet Union, says such subconscious pressure or persecution is diminishing.

Ed Lofton, area representative for Evangelism to Communist Lands, says that Denny has a one-sided view. "When he goes, he goes officially," Lofton says. "And that's the only side he's going to see because the suffering church is not going to rush right out to put their neck on the line for someone who's not going to be sympathetic to what's happening."

So each side sees only its side. Both groups fish from separate banks into the same dollar pool to support their work. But the live bait they fish with only stirs the waters.

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(BP) illustration mailed to state Baptist newspapers. Next week: Smuggling methods

Home Board Appoints
31 To Missions Work

Baptist Press
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ATLANTA (BP)--The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board approved 31 persons for mission service during the November meeting of its personnel committee.

The procedure for appointment varied from the traditional method of naming mission workers because neither the board nor its executive committee met during the month. Acting under bylaws passed in August, however, the personnel committee approved the candidates for mission service.

"On months when neither the board nor the executive committee meet, members of the personnel committee have been authorized to review files, approve prospects for appointment and act in appointing mission service workers," explained Gerald Palmer, vice president in charge of the Missions Section.

Named were six missionaries, eight missionary associates, six mission pastor interns and 11 persons who will receive church and language pastoral assistance.

Appointed as missionaries were Geriel and Sylvia Ann DeOliveira of San Jose, Calif., Michael Dennis and Beverly Lee Elliott Flannery of Indianapolis, Ind., Beverly L. Gray of Oklahoma City, Okla., and Joe Edward Jones of Freeport, Texas.

Approved missionary associates were Bernard and Louise Blount of Decatur, Ga., Martha and Andrew Creel of East Point, Ga., Harrell William and Vera Lee Parr of Fresno, Calif., and John Lee and Diane Barbara Worcester of Clarkston, Ga.

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DeOliveira will be director of associational missions in San Francisco, Calif. He has been pastor of churches in California and is a graduate of the University of California and Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary.

Flannery was appointed associational director of Christian social ministries for Central Baptist Association in Indianapolis, Ind. Mrs. Flannery will be associational director of Christian social ministries/family and church. He is a graduate of Louisiana College and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Gray will continue to live in Oklahoma City, and will be director of Baptist Center. She is a graduate of Southeast Missouri State University and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Jones will be chaplain in the Port of Freeport. Prior to appointment, he was chaplain/director of International Seaman's Center in Freeport. He also has been pastor of churches in Missouri and Texas. Jones is a graduate of Baylor University and Southwestern Seminary.

The Blounts will live in Orlando, Fla., and he will serve as regional director of the Department of Black Church Relationships for central Florida. He is a graduate of Livingston College and Interdenominational Theological Center, Morehouse School of Religion.

The Fosters were assigned to Atlanta, Ga., where she is director of Stewart Baptist Center. She is a graduate of Southwest Baptist College, Southern Seminary and the University of Louisville. He will act as director of church and family for the center.

The Parris were appointed to the High Desert Association in Barstow, Calif., where he is director of associational missions. He has been pastor of churches in California and Texas, and is a graduate of Howard Payne College.

The Worcesters will continue to live in the Atlanta/Clarkston area, where he will be a church planter apprentice. He is a graduate of the University of Florida and Southwestern Seminary.

Approved as mission pastor interns were James and Lynda Ann Eller of New Town, N.D.; David and Wandena Gay Swartz of Dubuque, Iowa, and Richard and Linda Williamson of Saukville, Wis.

To receive church pastoral assistance are Ronald and Teresa Branch of Mill Point, W.Va.; Glenn and Ella Lawson of Stanley, Kan.; Donny Lee and Connie Linscott of Phoenix, Ariz.; John Harold McNeese of Three Rivers, Mo., and David and Vickie Sutton of Spokane, Wash.

To receive language pastoral aid are Shin Hyuk and Su Ja Kang of Memphis, Tenn.

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Miami Churches Brace
For Haitian Influx

By Patti Stephenson

Baptist Press
11/12/80

MIAMI (BP)--Southern Baptists in southeast Florida, still inundated by Cuban "freedom flotilla" refugees, are bracing for a new flood of homeless Haitians.

John Pistone, language missions director for Miami Baptist Association, says the number of Haitians arriving daily has "jumped drastically" since October, when the Bahamian government ordered 25,000 undocumented Haitians to report for deportation.

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Rather than return to Haiti, some 200 refugees a day are fleeing to Florida. More than 12,500 Haitians have reached the U.S. this year, compared to 2,522 in 1979. Officials estimate as many as 60,000 may arrive by Jan. 15.

Milton Leach, director of Southern Baptist Refugee Resettlement and Relief, says Miami-area associations are "doing the best they can" to find shelter and sponsors for both Cuban and Haitian refugees.

"Their most desperate need is food," Leach says. Louisiana Brotherhood volunteers are moving a disaster relief van to the French-Speaking Baptist Church where they'll serve two meals a day from the converted tractor-trailer rig. Funds to buy rice, beans and fish have been given by the HMB's Christian Social Ministries Department and Language Missions Division.

The Haitian exodus has been triggered by dire poverty and political persecution, Leach says. An estimated two-thirds of the island's six million people earn less than \$200 a year and refugees report rampant human rights violations by "dictator for life" Jean-Claude Duvalier.

Many Haitians flee in small, rotting boats across 500 miles of open sea to the Bahamas, where they scramble for menial jobs and scrimp, sometimes for years, to buy another boat or pay smugglers \$2,000 each to carry them another 300 miles to Florida's Gold Coast.

Countless numbers have perished from hunger, capsizings or at the hands of smugglers who have tossed their illegal human cargo overboard rather than risk detection by authorities.

Many of those who reach Miami with no place to stay are held at the Florida Correctional Institute because of space shortages; some who are not immediately resettled will be transferred to Fort Allen in Puerto Rico. "We don't know how many are in prison or just living in the streets," Leach says.

The Haitians' future is clouded by their uncertain legal status in the U.S. Classified as economic rather than political refugees, they have been ineligible for asylum. Recent public outcry from American blacks and court challenges by some Haitian refugees have brought this immigration policy under review.

At the Baptist refugee resettlement office at Highland Park Baptist Church, Leach says "stacks and stacks of Cuban and Haitian cases are waiting" for sponsors. Especially difficult to relocate are single men. Leach hopes to find "clusters of churches who will sponsor a group of men in their town." Single men, he adds, "usually can become self-supporting much quicker than a family."

Meanwhile, "The boats keep coming," Leach says. "Everybody is desperate to find sponsors."