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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Baptist Team Perilously Close
As Lebanon Leader AssassinatedRB
By Bill Webb

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Two Foreign Mission Board staff members and a missionary found themselves perilously close to machine gun fire as they unknowingly drove to within a block of the bombing-assassination minutes earlier of Lebanon's president-elect Bashir Gemayel.

Missionary Ed Nicholas was driving John Cheyne, senior consultant for human needs ministry, and special assignment photographer Don Rutledge to an appointment when they thought they heard firecrackers being set off by children celebrating a religious holiday.

"The firecrackers got a little more intense and suddenly we realized we were not hearing firecrackers," Cheyne said. "We were right in the middle of machine gun fire (about a block from the blast) and it was all around us.

It wasn't until hours later that they learned of the assassination, however.

The mood that immediately swept over the country was in stark contrast to the optimism Cheyne and Rutledge sensed when they arrived in Lebanon earlier in the day.

"The country had been through all this turmoil; the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) was gone. There was a high sense of hope and anticipation that now we have this young, articulate leader who is a strong man and he is going to lead us back into a strong sense of nation," Cheyne reflected.

"The missionaries had this same sort of electric excitement about them."

As expected, Cheyne and Rutledge found West Beirut badly bombed, but the streets were being cleared, some of the shops had already reopened and the traffic was already "abominable" again, Cheyne said. "It was just like there hadn't been a war there."

Then suddenly, the president-elect was dead.

"The sense of depression we felt ... the people were literally stunned," Cheyne said. "We went down to the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary the next day and they couldn't even talk to us, they were overcome by such a deep sense of grief and bewilderment."

Cheyne and Rutledge stayed with Ed and Anne Nicholas in Mansouriye, a village overlooking Beirut, during their four days in Lebanon.

The Nicholases and Mabel Summers, all with long years of experience in the Middle East, are the only Southern Baptist missionaries who have remained in Lebanon since Israel launched its invasion in early June.

They took responsibility for the seminary and for the refugees who lived there during the earlier fighting. Miss Summers, stationed at Beirut Baptist School until the war began, has been interim mission treasurer.

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Jim and Leola Ragland, who were in the United States for approximately a month to attend their son's wedding, were the only other Southern Baptist missionaries in Lebanon during Cheyne and Rutledge's visit. They were preparing for the opening of Beirut Baptist School, in the heart of West Beirut.

Earlier in the conflict bombs tore holes in the roof, caused light structural damage to the front of the school and broke several windows. In the aftermath of the bombing looters stripped the facility of supplies and furnishings.

Release of \$25,000 in Southern Baptist relief funds will repair the school and replace whatever was taken in the looting.

Cheyne, missionaries and the ad hoc committee of the Lebanese Baptist Convention discussed various other ways the mission might utilize relief funds.

Though no definite plans were made they discussed conducting a survey to determine who among the members of nearby Mouseitbeh Baptist Church and the parents of Beirut Baptist school-children might need assistance in repairing or rebuilding their homes.

They also discussed aiding people whose businesses were bombed. Such aid would help them reopen and restock enough to get started, Cheyne said.

Cheyne urged the missionaries and Baptists alike to consider not only construction aid to individuals but projects like helping the village of Ashiya restore its water service.

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

Executive Committee Hears
Bold Mission Thrust Update

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Baptist Press
9/22/82

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Southern Baptists are making progress toward the Bold Mission Thrust goal of telling everyone in the world about Jesus Christ by the year 2000 but the successful completion of the task is "humanly" impossible, the SBC Executive Committee was told.

"We could look at the number of people in the world, look at the number of countries where we don't have missionaries, look at our budgets and decide we can't do it," William O'Brien, executive vice president of the Foreign Mission Board, admitted. "But rather than becoming 'galvanized' by our circumstances, let us become 'Gideon-ized' and rely on the Lord to accomplish his plans."

O'Brien and Leonard Irwin, vice president for planning at the Home Mission Board, shared what their agencies are doing in Bold Mission Thrust with the 67 members of the Executive Committee board. The Foreign Mission Board reported it is on schedule on its goals to have 5,000 missionaries on the field by the year 2000 (presently there are 3,136); ahead of schedule of having missionaries in 125 countries (presently SBC work is underway in 95 countries); and expect to reach the goal of 10,000 volunteer missionaries 10 years ahead of schedule by 1990.

The effort to have 75,840 churches by the year 2000 is behind schedule with only 11,478 reported in the current year.

Irwin told the committee members the Home Mission Board is seeking to start 1,000 new churches a year in order to reach the goal of 50,000 SBC churches in the United States by A.D. 2000. One-fourth of the planned new churches will be "language churches" ministering to ethnic groups. "We must actually start 1,450 missions each year in order to have 1,000 a year grow into churches," Irwin said.

A major emphasis will be Pentecost Sunday, May 22, 1983, when the HMB will attempt to lead 3,000 SBC churches across the nation to commit themselves to starting another church within the following 12 months. In 1986 the HMB hopes to coordinate and promote simultaneous revivals in every church of the convention.

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Other goals for the HMB include the appointment of 250 Mission Service Corp volunteers (people who generate their own financial support while doing mission work) each year and having a total of 3,655 home missionaries by 1990.

Reginald McDonough, associate executive secretary of the Executive Committee, reminded the group, "we don't have to get our mind around all the barriers before us. Our job is to get our hands around the task God has put before us. As a planner I hate to admit this--but our attempts to share Christ with our world cannot be based on goals to be reached but must be based on love and obedience."

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Forged Letter Criticizes
BWA Disarmament Statement

By Anita Bowden

Baptist Press
9/22/82

RUSCHLIKON, Switzerland (BP)--An unknown person or group, claiming to represent European Baptist Press Service and Baptist Theological Seminary, has mailed a letter criticizing Baptist World Alliance's statement on peace to secular and religious newspapers and religious bodies in Europe.

The letter, printed on falsified EBPS letterhead, contained "right-wing political statements" attacking BWA's disarmament statement, according to Keith Parker, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board associate to the director for Europe.

Parker said the letter contained pro-American sentiment, mentioned the "alarming rise of passivism in Europe," and explained the Soviet Union has nuclear superiority and that an arms buildup is necessary for peace.

It closed with: "Members of the Baptist Theological Seminary of Ruschlikon and the European Baptist Press Service, therefore, ask you to pray and work taking the above into consideration and to use your high prestige and authority to make this argument clear to your flock."

John Wilkes, director of EBPS, discovered the letter by accident when one mailed to a newspaper which normally does not receive EBPS releases was returned to his office because of an incorrect address. He also received a call from London Sept. 17, asking about the letter and commenting that the sentiment expressed did not sound like something to be expected from either the Foreign Mission Board or the seminary community.

Parker said they had ruled out the possibility that someone may have broken into EBPS offices and stolen the paper because it was a different size from that which EBPS uses to mail releases.

The letter, dated Sept. 7, was postmarked in Zurich, Switzerland; EBPS releases are mailed from the Ruschlikon post office.

Wilkes and Gunter Wagner, acting president of the seminary, sent a disclaimer Sept. 22 to the EBPS mailing list and secular newspapers in Europe notifying them of the forged letter and asking that notice of the forgery be circulated as widely as possible to alert other recipients of the earlier mailing. They also asked that the original letter and envelope be returned to Wilkes in case they could help identify the forgers.

Wilkes said he did not know of any Baptist individuals or groups who received the letter but that other religious organizations in Europe did. He knows letters were mailed to individuals and groups in England, Germany, Holland, Belgium and Spain. He does not know if any were mailed to Eastern European countries or to the United States.

If any letters were mailed to Eastern European countries, Wilkes said, they could affect the students from those countries who wish to study at Ruschlikon and could cause Baptist leaders to be questioned. Wilkes said his own travel privileges in Eastern Europe could be curtailed because his name appears on the printed letterhead as director of EBPS.

Wilkes said he and the seminary were pursuing legal action with Swiss authorities.

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President Should Keep
Powers, Draper Says

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) -- The president of the Southern Baptist Convention should retain "all of the discretion and initiative of the office," current SBC president James T. Draper Jr. says.

Draper, pastor of First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas, expressed his views of the use of presidential power at the September meeting of the SBC Executive Committee.

After saying he believes "God wanted me to be president of the Southern Baptist Convention," Draper commented on a plan to "depoliticize" the convention, which was presented to him in August. The plan, devised by a group of convention "moderates," would have required the president to give up the only real power a convention president possesses: the power to appoint key denominational committees.

The Texas pastor noted the proposal -- which included a bylaw change -- "would reduce and virtually eliminate the appointive and discretionary powers of the presidency. I felt I had to reject that proposal.

"I believe the discretionary power of the president is a safeguard for the SBC and it keeps us from becoming purely bureaucratic and parochial in attitude. It is a very vital and baptistic part of our Southern Baptist life," he said.

He added the "very cornerstone of Baptist heritage" is voluntary cooperation, which he believes "is good for everyone. I am going to do many things that have been suggested.... I'm going to do them because I choose to do them because I think they are best to do rather than because I have to do them. That is the approach I am going to take."

The proposal was presented by a group headed by Cecil Sherman, pastor of First Baptist Church of Asheville, N.C., and including Bill Sherman, pastor of Woodmont Baptist Church of Nashville, and Ed Perry, pastor emeritus of Broadway Baptist Church of Louisville, Ky.

Draper said: "We did not agree, but I am glad we met. I respect them. They are men of conviction. We happen to disagree. Because we disagree doesn't mean I'm right and they're wrong. It just means that I am president and they are not."

He said, however, that he does not care if he is re-elected at the 1983 annual meeting. "Nothing I do is going to be geared to getting me votes in Pittsburgh; nothing I do is going to be geared to keep someone from running against me in Pittsburgh. That is not an issue."

One of the reasons he says he feels the president should retain his power is that "more people elect the president than elect executive secretaries. The people do get involved in that process. Executives of most state conventions and boards and agencies are elected by trustees rather than by direct election.

The appearance at the 67-member Executive Committee marked Draper's 100th day in office, a post to which he was elected at the June meeting of the 13.8 million member denomination, an election marked by bitter factionalism between groups within the denomination.

"These are very crucial times for Southern Baptists," Draper said. "There have been lots of presidents who have been elected with no more margin than I was elected by, but there have been perhaps none that have been elected with that margin that had such hostility...."

The factionalism, he added, is deep, and noted "everyone thinks they are mainstream Southern Baptists."

Draper told committee members he is concerned about the division, noting: "There is a growing spirit of concern across our convention and if we are not careful those of us who are in positions of leadership are going to kill the goose that laid the golden egg. There is a growing concern about unity; there is a growing concern about missions, about evangelism.

"The laymen of the SBC are sick of the controversy. They view it as a preacher fight, as a power struggle and two groups who have polarized in this matter.

He referred to the controversy as a "vicious cycle," and noted: "Only a fool loves to fight and I don't believe any of us are that foolish."

Draper told of his efforts to be a peacemaker in the strife-riddled denomination, and said he is "trying to establish communications." He said he is attempting to set up a meeting with "some key people in the academic community," and is planning a trip to Israel with a "diverse group" of leaders.

"I am trying to establish some communications and build some relations between some Southern Baptists," he added.

In his maiden address to the committee, Draper said Southern Baptists are going to have to deal with some issues "we have not been willing to face. I think we are going to have to deal with world peace. I think somehow Southern Baptists are going to have to be a bigger part of the push toward peace in the world."

He added he believes the denomination also should deal with issues of poverty and hunger.

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Committee Report
Release Recommended

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Baptist Press
9/22/82

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) -- A bylaw change recommending release of the Southern Baptist Convention Committee on Boards report prior to the annual convention has been recommended by the SBC Executive Committee.

The change in Bylaw 16 requires action by two subsequent annual meetings to become part of the constitution. It will be presented at the 1983 annual meeting in Pittsburgh, and, if adopted, also requires action at the 1984 meeting in Kansas City.

The recommendation requires that the report of the Committee on Boards, Commissions and Standing Committees be released to Baptist Press, the denominational news service, "no later than 45 days prior to the annual meeting of the convention."

Currently, the bylaw requires that the report of the committee on boards be published in the first day's convention bulletin, but does not preclude early release.

A decision by the 1982 committee on boards to withhold early publication of the report set off a storm of controversy, and resulted in a motion at the annual meeting requiring release of the body's report at least 30 days in advance of the annual meeting.

In presenting the recommendation, Welton Gaddy, chairman of the Executive Committee's bylaws workgroup and pastor of Broadway Baptist Church of Fort Worth, Texas, said the committee revised the suggestion to the 45 day release date which he said would give the news service and denominational publications 15 days in which to prepare it for publication.

"We believe we are staying within the spirit of the motion by adding 15 days in order to get it to the people," Gaddy said.

The committee turned down an effort by Tommy Hinson, a member from West Memphis, Ark., which would have referred the recommendation back to the bylaws workgroup, instructing them to make an addition which would require that "substitute nominees offered in challenge to the report ... be provided to Baptist Press at least 30 days in advance (of the meeting) and published in the first day's bulletin."

In the past two conventions, successful challenges have been mounted to the committee report. In Los Angeles, five nominees were replaced, and in New Orleans, substitutes were elected for three persons named by the committee on boards. The bylaw provides that the committee report "may be amended on the floor by a majority vote of those voting."

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Attorney Ed Drake, a member of Dallas' First Baptist Church, supported Hinson's effort, calling the substitution of nominees from the convention floor "a problem." He noted such substitution does not give messengers "ample time to evaluate the person."

"There is something inherently bad about that situation," he said, adding that he does not "know what the solution is, but we have to have some safeguard...."

In response, Gaddy said he believes the convention "can instruct committees on the process they should follow," but does not believe "we can instruct messengers and bind them to 30 days notice" if they wish to challenge a nominee.

Only four persons voted in favor of Hinson's effort to refer the bylaw back to the bylaws workgroup for further study and addition of the challenge rules. They were Hinson, Drake, John Christian of Hopkinsville, Ky., and SBC president James T. Draper Jr. of Euless, Texas.

The Executive Committee also recommended that Bylaw 16 be revised to require that persons who serve on the committee on boards "shall have resided within the state from which they are elected at least one year prior to election."

Gaddy commented the revision also was in response to a motion from the New Orleans convention, and that it applied only to the committee on boards and not to persons it nominates. "It was felt the people who do the nominating need to know the people from the state they will be nominating," he said.

A similar change will be recommended to the Pittsburgh convention concerning Bylaw 21 on the Committee on Committees, which nominates the Committee on Boards.

The change in Bylaw 21 also specifies names of persons nominated to serve on that committee by the SBC president "shall be released to Baptist Press no later than 45 days prior to the annual meeting...."

Gaddy said the bylaws workgroup rejected a suggestion from Russell Bennett, director of missions of the Long Run Baptist Association, Louisville, Ky., that would strip the president of appointive powers, and give it to state conventions.

Draper recently rejected a proposal by a group of "moderates" that he depoliticize the convention by supporting a similar plan, under which he would receive nominations from state conventions and would be bound by them in making his appointments.

In another action on the bylaws, the Executive Committee declined to change the responsibilities of the first vice president, to include that he or she be responsible for prayer support at the annual convention.

Gaddy noted former president Bailey E. Smith of Del City, Okla., started the practice by asking 1980 first vice president Jack Taylor of Fort Worth, Texas, to set up prayer rooms at the convention.

He said the bylaws workgroup was "reticent to institutionalize such responsibilities for the first vice president," and recommended that the Executive Committee "encourage the convention officers to call the convention to prayer rather than amend" the constitution.

Gaddy told the committee the bylaws workgroup is continuing to study possible revisions on bylaws regarding the resolutions committee and the rules which govern recognition and representation of new states and territories.

Draper announced to the Executive Committee extensive new procedures in handling the resolutions, which in recent years have grown to such proportions that it required 25 hours of work by the 10-person resolutions committee in New Orleans to prepare its report.

The Executive Committee adopted a revision of its own bylaws, most of which were "cosmetic changes" in language, but which do eliminate the "annual call" of Executive Secretary-Treasurer Harold C. Bennett.