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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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83-146

Baptists Renounce Vote
To Renew U.S.-Vatican Ties

By Larry Chesser

WASHINGTON (BP)--Southern Baptist leaders have registered alarm at U.S. Senate action authorizing reestablishing of full U.S. diplomatic relations with the Vatican.

By a simple voice vote, members of the Senate Sept. 22 approved an amendment to a State Department authorization bill which would permit spending federal funds for a diplomatic mission to the Vatican. The amendment was proposed by Sen. Richard G. Lugar, R-Ind.

Specifically, the Lugar amendment would repeal an 1867 prohibition on the expenditure of federal funds to support an ambassador to the Vatican. According to Lugar, the U.S. maintained consular relations with the Vatican from 1797 to 1848 and had official diplomatic relations from 1848 to 1867.

In proposing his amendment, Lugar said the language is identical to a bill, S. 1757, which will permit restoration of diplomatic relations with the Vatican. He said he is "proud to count as cosponsors of that measure (S.1757)" 20 other Senators.

Included among the cosponsors of S. 1757 are two Southern Baptists: Sens. Jesse Helms, R-N.C. and Bennett Johnston, D-La.

Despite the absence of formal diplomatic relations for more than 115 years, six presidents --Roosevelt, Truman, Nixon, Ford, Carter and Reagan--have named personal representatives to the Vatican.

James T. Draper Jr., president of the 14 million member Southern Baptist Convention, said: "I'm appalled.

"I was very disappointed that the Senate would take such action," said Draper, pastor of First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas, and a member of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. "It goes against our history in regard to church-state separation and it's a precedent that will be very difficult for us to live with as a nation."

BJCPA Executive Director James M. Dunn underscored Draper's denunciation, saying, "We don't need an ambassador to the Southern Baptist Convention or to the Roman Catholic Church or to the Russian Orthodox Church. Surely the American tradition of church-state separation means more to us than this.

"It's incredible," Dunn continued, "that the U.S. Senate, without a hearing, discussion, debate or dissent, would take such a far-reaching action."

R.G. Puckett, editor of North Carolina's Biblical Recorder and chairman of the Baptist Joint Committee, said, "Whatever rationalizations are made to justify such a move, the plain truth remains that the Vatican is first and foremost a church. Whatever its claims to being a state, they are secondary to its image and influence as a church."

Puckett said the approval of such a "blatantly unconstitutional relationship with one church body is clear evidence our nation's awareness of the importance of church-state separation is at a low ebb." He called for a "renaissance of religious liberty."

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Harold C. Bennett, executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee alluded to the Reagan administration's support diplomatic relations with the Vatican by commenting: "I am very disappointed the Senate has taken this action with the encouragement of the President. I do not view the Vatican as a state but as a religious organization. Therefore, I do not think the United States should have diplomatic relations with it."

R. Keith Parks, president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in Richmond, Va., commented: "I do not think it is appropriate for our government to give diplomatic recognition to a church group. It certainly is contrary to my own convictions of the separation of church and state."

The House-passed version of the State Department authorization bill does not contain a Vatican provision, meaning a House-Senate conference committee will determine the fate of the Lugar amendment. However, its chances appear to be enhanced by the fact House Foreign Affairs Committee chairman Clement J. Zablocki, D-Wis., has introduced similar legislation and several members of that panel reportedly favor the proposal.

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Lebanon Missionaries Sleep
In Basement During Shelling

By Bill Webb

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NICOSIA, Cyprus (BP)--Heavy shelling near the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary overlooking Beirut prompted Southern Baptist missionaries to sleep in basements prior to the Sept. 26 truce in Lebanon.

Finlay Graham, Middle East Associate for the Foreign Mission Board, said all the missionaries are safe, though they reported shells dropping in some areas near the seminary at the rate of one every five seconds during some of the heaviest shelling.

Isam Ballenger, director for Europe and the Middle East, said shell fragments shredded laundry on the backyard clothesline of missionaries Emmett and Lanell Barnes a few days ago. The Barnes are from Poiosi, Mo., and Chileress, Ark.

Services in most Baptist churches are continuing as usual and attendance has been high at several. "People seem to be ready to meet for prayer and mutual support," he said. A week before the truce, Baptists joined other evangelicals in a day of fasting and prayer.

"The people in Lebanon are very, very discouraged," Graham said. "Businessmen are not even trying to promote their wares. Banks are almost at a standstill. Even the usual procedure of determining daily interest on accounts is not being followed."

Missionaries in Monsouriyeh, where the seminary is located, have been closer to the most recent fighting than their colleagues in West Beirut, Graham said. Their town is just across a valley from the residences of the president of Lebanon and the American ambassador to Lebanon.

Missionary Frances Fuller, from Wynne, Ark., who directs the Arab Baptist Publication Center in Monsouriyeh, told Graham none of the national staff had been able to come to work for several days before the truce. "Some of them, such as translators, are doing their work at home as much as possible," Graham said.

He cited Jeryies Delleh "who is working furiously on preparing the text of MasterLife notebooks" in Arabic for the first MasterLife seminar to be held in the Middle East Nov. 7-12 in Nicosia, Cyprus. Seventy participants from Egypt, Morocco, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Gaza and Yemen are expected.

Missionaries are frustrated because fighting has delayed the opening of all schools, including those which their own children attend, as well as the seminary and Beirut Baptist School in the western part of the city.

But fighting has opened a ministry for several churches able to accommodate refugees, Graham said. "One in a suburb of Beirut--the Badarro Street (Baptist) Church--has had as many as 40 to 50 people sleeping in their basement at night.

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Many refugees have crowded onto ships going from Lebanon to Cyprus, where Graham and his wife, Julia, live. "Last week, they were coming in at a rate of 2,000 refugees every day," filling hotels and making furnished apartments rare, he reported.

Missionary Jim Bethea, from Memphis, Tenn., who returned from the states with his family to West Beirut on Sept. 1, told of sharing a witness with Lebanese friends, who asked, "Why have you come back?"

"We want to share with you the peace that God gives," he answered.

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Dallas Baptist College
Gets \$2.5 Million Gift

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DALLAS (BP)--Dallas Baptist College has received an anonymous gift of land and cash that will provide \$2.5 million over nine years to pay off a debt to the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Several other institutions, including the Southern Baptist Home and Foreign Mission Boards, will also benefit, Lynn Craft, president of the Baptist Foundation of Texas, said. Details of those gifts will be forthcoming.

The gift to DBC will enable the college to retire its debt to the Texas convention and help it avoid interest payments. The convention loaned the college \$2.5 million for 10 years in 1982 with the stipulation the first five years would be interest free and the second five years also interest free if the school could raise \$5 million in endowment.

Details of the trust established for the college stipulate the school receive the earnings from \$2.5 million to make its debt payment, and if the money remains invested for 12 years, it will also net the school \$3.6 million for endowment.

President W. Marvin Watson said the college has finally erased its accumulated deficit that at one time totaled \$1.9 million. At the close of the school's fiscal year June 1, he said, there was a fund balance of \$121,202. The school raised \$8,328,098 in 1982-83, he said, while operating with a \$7 million budget.

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Center For Constitutional Studies
Leaves Notre Dame For Mercer

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MACON, Ga. (BP)--The Center for Constitutional Studies, which has been at the University of Notre Dame, has relocated at Mercer University in Macon, Ga.

The center provides basic legal scholarship and selected advocacy activities in support of religiously affiliated and other independent higher education. With its broadly based national constituency, the center has become a widely respected voice in legal scholarship, especially in the areas of religion and higher education law.

Newton Moore, formerly general counsel at Mercer, has been appointed executive director of the Center for Constitutional Studies and also chairman of the John Adams Sibley Institute for Public Affairs.

The center's advisory board, in the spring of 1983, desiring to stress the fact the center is not tied narrowly to the denominational self-interest of any one religious group, chose to relocate at Baptist-related Mercer. Mercer was selected from among 20 other institutions related to various churches or religious bodies, including Catholic University of America and DePaul.

Throughout its six-year existence at Notre Dame, the center has been actively engaged in research and selected advocacy to support the integrity and the autonomy of all church-related and independent colleges and universities.

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In 1979 the center hosted the first major Congress of Church-Related Colleges and Universities. It has explored legal issues affecting the relationships between various religious bodies and institutions of higher education (church and campus) and the impact of governmental regulation on religiously affiliated and independent colleges and universities.

In amicus briefs the center has supported a Southern Baptist university in Mississippi, the Seventh-Day Adventist conference in Michigan, a Presbyterian college in Pennsylvania and inter-religious based groups such as the National Institute for Campus Ministry and the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States.

The center's ecumenical advisory board is inter-religious, presently composed of Baptists, Catholics, Jews, Mennonites, Methodists, Mormons and Presbyterians. This is consistent with its mission to support all independent and religiously affiliated colleges and universities.

The work of the center is funded primarily by the Ford and Lilly Foundations. Funding for projects undertaken from the center, however, comes from a variety of sources, including boards and agencies of the United Methodist Church, the Education Commission and the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, the Mennonite Board of Education, the General Conference of the Seventh-Day Adventists, the Christian College Coalition, a Mormon institution and a Roman Catholic fraternal organization.

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1980s Composers Writing
Diverse Music, Sound Texts

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Today's Christian music is more theologically sound and diverse in style than in recent decades, according to three well-known composers.

Buryl Red, composer and arranger from New York; Ronn Huff, orchestrator and arranger from Nashville, and Mark Blankenship, composer and music editor for the Baptist Sunday School Board, recently led a conference for 75 composers from across the country at the board's church program training center.

All agreed the vitality and creativity of musical styles in the 1960s and 1970s had a great impact on composers and church music being heard today.

Blankenship sees approximately 2,000 new compositions a year in his role as editor and has observed "a trend to more traditional kinds of music." Submissions to the board's church music department, he said, are approximately 25 percent anthem literature.

"I see less of the strong folk rock rhythm," said Blankenship. "Today's good writers are using easy folk rhythms because that's what happening today." He cited the Ralph Carmichael hymn "He's Everything to Me" and "People to People" by William J. Reynolds as examples of the syncopation and easy folk rock rhythm contemporary composers are using.

"Rhythm is constant to life," he continued. "People pervert it. You can't base your worship of God on what non-Christians do. I don't think we have to limit ourselves to a certain sound to be appropriate. Appropriateness changes with each generation."

"The 70s have led us to be eclectic in a mature way--not in a chaotic way," Red observed. "It is true the dividing line between professionalism and amateurism is pretty thin these days. With new technologies, it's pretty easy to produce something of quality. How much depth there is is another matter."

However, Red said he feels there isn't any less quality music being produced than in the past. "What we see from the past eras is only a small part of what was being produced then," he said. "Time has a way of weeding out what is not timeless."

Huff said composers "should not be afraid to do a work of personal expression that shows the emotions of the '80s while being sensitive to the makeup of congregations.

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"I don't think the average person can stand being startled with revolutionary musical ideas," he continued. "I think such music interrupts worship thought. The congregation doesn't get from it what the musician gets."

Blankenship said he feels hymnody is a weak area among today's new compositions. "We need good hymns that deal with praise, the majesty and holiness of God, the worship of God, written in an easily understood terminology but with enough polish to demonstrate substance.

"Fewer than 100 years ago, the bulk of hymn texts were written by preachers," he observed. "We're not seeing much done now by preachers. A number of them are bound to have the gift of lyrics. They should be polishing those skills to leave treasures for further generations. One or two hymns that would last 50 to 100 years would be one of the greatest spiritual contributions a preacher could make."

Red observed that in earlier times the church was considered the center of music. "I want church music to be the pacesetter," he said. "Now we are in many ways followers. The strength of our musicians and the vitality in our churches is such that we can be headed toward the forefront of music today."

Noting "there are a lot of wonderful new ideas to express one's praise and adoration to God," Huff said, "If I could write the hymn of my generation, what better could I do?"

While the youth musical was considered an innovative concept for choral composition for the 70s, there seems to be no emerging new form at this point for the 1980s.

"All publishers and most church musicians are wondering what the next innovative music form for worship expression will be," said Blankenship.

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Peanut Vendors Stop Selling
To Accept Christ In Uruguay

By Betty Poor

Baptist Press
9/26/83

FRAY BENTOS, Uruguay (BP)--Two vendors selling peanuts to weekend revival-goers at a gymnasium in Fray Bentos, Uruguay, heard the gospel message, laid down their peanuts and accepted Christ.

Two policemen working the revival meeting at the small gymnasium, also were among the 42 who made professions of faith.

One of the peanut vendors responded to the invitation with his entire family. After the service, he dispensed peanuts free to team members, which included young people from Montevideo and nearby Mercedes and Young.

The emphasis boosted Sunday night attendance at St. Paul's Baptist Church from 10 or 15 to 105. It was the first of several projects planned by the youth of the Uruguay Baptist Convention to strengthen weak churches and start new ones.

Lemuel Larrosa, pastor of First Baptist Church, Montevideo, preached. Daniel Kernke, pastor of New Dawn Baptist Church, Montevideo, and president of the youth convention, led his group in braving persistent rain and chilling wind to hand out tracts, witness and visit children's homes and homes for the elderly.

They also sang in front of the local high school and industrial school and held an open-air meeting at the city square.

A job promotion in his city government job freed bi-vocational pastor Leandro Cavil to devote afternoons to follow-up visitation, baptism classes and discipleship training for the new converts.

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(Betty Poor is missionary press representative for Uruguay.)