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January 10, 1984

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**Baptist Leaders Condemn
U.S.-Vatican Relations**

By Stan Haste
and J.B. Fowler

WASHINGTON (BP)--Despite strong and growing objections from most religious quarters, the United States established full diplomatic relations with the Vatican Jan. 10.

Announcement of the new relationship was made from Vatican City in a brief statement which read: "The Holy See and the United States of America, desiring to develop the mutual and friendly relations already existing, have decided by common accord to establish diplomatic relations at the level of apostolic nunciature on the side of the Holy See and of embassy on the side of the United States beginning today, Jan. 10, 1984."

Southern Baptist reaction was swift and predictable.

James T. Draper Jr., president of the Southern Baptist Convention and pastor of First Baptist Church in Euless, Texas, issued a statement through his church office which expressed, "extreme disappointment" and warned President Reagan has, "greatly endangered the support of millions of evangelical Christians" by pushing for the establishment of formal diplomatic ties.

The move, "violates every rule of reason as it relates to church and state," Draper said. "The Vatican controls no country so there is absolutely no reason for any formal tie," the statement said.

In a news conference at First Baptist Church in Albuquerque, N.M., (where he was attending an evangelism conference) Draper enlarged on his feelings.

He told reporters he would have been just as disappointed had the White House named an ambassador to the Southern Baptist Convention because he opposes any action which elevates one religion to a special status.

Draper reminded listeners President Harry S Truman had backed away from a similar plan in 1951 after he was deluged with opposition from across the country. The head of the 14-million member SBC urged people to, "Call the president at 202-546-1414 and register your opposition."

James M. Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, said in Washington the action "is one more evidence of massive misunderstanding on the part of the Reagan administration of the appropriate relationship of church and state."

Dunn, whose agency has fought establishment of diplomatic relations with the Vatican for more than 40 years, said further: "Such an appointment is a clear violation of the principle of church-state separation, a dangerous and divisive precedent of government meddling in church affairs, and the occasion for practical problems for all those engaged in the farflung missionary venture in developing countries."

Reacting to an Associated Press report quoting sources within the administration that the principle of separation of church and state will not be violated because the move to establish full diplomatic relations confers special status not on the Roman Catholic Church but on the Vatican as a state, Dunn declared: "For the administration to pretend that the naming of an ambassador to a church has nothing to do with religion is a ludicrous leap of logic smacking of Orwell's 1984."

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In Richmond, Va., SBC Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks also responded strongly. "I am disappointed President Reagan has decided to proceed with a diplomatic relationship which so flagrantly violates the principle of separation of church and state and also threatens to hinder Baptist missionary witness overseas," Parks declared.

Elaborating on his concern about the implications of the move for foreign missions, Parks said: "Obviously it will hurt us most in countries which are non-Catholic in orientation, but I believe it will also affect our work in nations which are predominantly Roman Catholic.

"It has been more than 115 years since the United States put one religious group in such a favored status. To do so now will confuse those with whom our missionaries work in 103 countries around the world."

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Baptist Children's Home
Tied To X-Rated Theatre

By Bob Terry

Baptist Press
1/10/84

ST. LOUIS (BP)--The Missouri Baptist Children's Home is an unwilling partner in the ownership of the only St. Louis theater which specializes in X-rated movies.

"Missouri Baptists will continue making every effort possible to disassociate themselves from the theater and what it represents," promised Missouri Baptist Convention Executive Director Rheubin South after a front page article in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported the Southern Baptist children's home was one of 10 churches and charities which own the business which features "soft pornography" films.

In a prepared statement, South said: "Missouri Baptists strongly oppose all forms of pornography including the type films reportedly shown at the Fine Arts Theatre. Unfortunately, before the theater in question came to the 10 charities, a legal and binding lease on the property had been exercised." Attempts to break the lease have been unsuccessful, he said.

Others owning part of the movie theater, according to the Post-Dispatch are: the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of St. Louis; the Evangelical Children's Home; Emmaus Homes, Inc.; Oblate Sisters of Providence; Sisters of St. Mary; St. Joseph Institute for the Deaf; German St. Vincent Home; Athletic Boys Club of St. Louis, Inc., and St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tenn. All but the hospital are located in the St. Louis area.

The theater and eight other parcels of land, became the property of the 10 charities in 1979, a bequest from the estate of the late Henry J. and Adele Halloway of St. Louis. At that time, the theater was showing X-rated films. Representatives of the charities agreed to sell all of the properties of the Halloway estate and drew up a special trust agreement with St. Johns Bank and Trust Co. authorizing the bank to sell the property and to manage the property until the various properties were sold.

The Missouri Baptist Convention agreed to the sale of the Halloway property during the 1979 annual session. Ed Brock, pastor of Windsor Baptist Church of Imperial and chairman of the MBC executive board's inter-agency relations committee that year, recalled Children's Home officials had been open and forthright regarding the problems with the property.

"They (the MCBC officials) didn't try to hide anything," Brock said. "They admitted part ownership in a property which was a problem for them. They wanted to sell it as fast as possible. We (the inter-agency relations committee) thought that was a good idea and recommended the sale."

Seven of the nine Halloway properties have been sold. Only the Fine Arts Theatre and the airway Drive-In Theater remain in the trust.

MCBC administrator Bob Kenison pointed out that, technically, no money comes to the Children's Home from the theater in question.

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He explained the current operators of Mid-America Theaters of St. Louis subleas both th Fine Arts and the Airway Drive-In from Gen ral Cinema Corporation in Boston, Mass. General Cinema has leased the Fine Arts building since 1949 and the Airway Drive-In for a number of years. The leases expire May 31, 1989.

"We do not know what Mid-American pays General Cinema," Kenison explained. "We only know General Cinema paid the trust \$27,436 in 1981 and paid the trust \$29,930.04 in 1982."

Kenison said trust expenses are deducted from that amount and the remaining funds equally distributed among the 10 beneficiaries of the Halloway estate.

Only one offer has been made since 1979 to purchase the Fine Arts Theatre and that offer was reportedly withdrawn before it could be accepted, Kenison added.

South expressed appreciation for the intent of the Halloway family to provide child care through the Missouri Baptist Children's Home and added the Children's Home had attempted to fulfill the wishes of the donor by using its share of the estate's assets in child car .

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Romanian Student Left Home
To Com To United States

By John Dellis

Baptist Pr ss
1/10/84

WACO, Texas (BP)--Corina Gheorghita has not returned home since she went away to college three years ago. What's more, she probably never will.

If Gheorghita, a senior at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, returned to Romania, "I would be arrested by the secret police. If I ever wanted a job in Romania, I would have to renounce my Christian faith and I would never be allowed to leave Romania again," she said.

Gheorghita said she would be interrogated because she has stayed in the United States longer than the three months for which she was originally granted permission.

The reasons for coming to the United States--and remaining--revolve around the Christian convictions of her family.

"People in the United States do not have to count the costs of being a Christian," Gheorghita said. "In Romania, the people are oppressed and persecuted by the government. If the president of a company became a Christian, he would lose his job."

Certain jobs and positions and access to some schools and universities including schools of philosophy and law are not open to Christians. The Romanian government also reads all of the mail and monitors all telephone calls going in and out of the country, she charged.

"When I write my parents, I have to write in a way not to get them or me in trouble," she said. "I number all of my letters, so my parents will know if the government keeps one.

"They censored one of my letters which contained a picture of an American Christian singing group. When I talk with my parents on the telephone, the government sounds 'beeps' when my parents try to tell me things the government would not want me to know," sh said.

The Communist Party gained strength in Romania, a small country on the Black Sea in southeastern Europe, under the protection of Soviet troops in 1944. The Russian troops stayed until th late 1950s and communist dictatorship was established in 1947.

Of the 22.8 million citizens, 75 percent are members of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

Gheorghita was reared in a Baptist home and graduated from Decebal High School in Romania in the summer of 1979. She has one brother, a senior physics major at the University of Romania, and one sister, who is 12 years old.

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"Because my parents are not members of the Communist Party and because of their Christian faith, my brother will never be allowed to go on to advanced research like he wants," she said. "My mother taught biology, but lost her job because of her Christian faith. She now works as a taxidermist at a museum."

Her father had been an endocrinologist until he decided to become a minister. He is pastor of the largest Baptist church in Romania, with a membership of 2,000.

"My father was ordained in January 1982," she said. "He had been a lay preacher all these years and received his training from missionaries and from books smuggled into Romania. His best friend studied religion at Oxford University and preached in Romania before he was forced to immigrate to the United States."

Although her father is a full-time minister, the government still pressures him to return to practicing medicine. His church is in the town of Oradea, 120 miles from the family's home in Deva, but the government has yet to give the family permission to move.

Gheorghita came to the United States in February 1980 to return a cousin who had been staying with her family to his parents in Cleveland, Ohio.

"I had to get an invitation through the embassy to return the child to the United States," she said. "The Romanian secret police questioned my father about the trip and I was only supposed to stay three months."

"On the flight to New York City, there were 20-30 Romanians on the airplane and one-half of them were secret police. They would listen to every word we would say and would follow us to the bathroom," she said.

Gheorghita contacted friends of her father at Trinity Baptist Church in San Antonio, was offered a scholarship to Baylor and decided to stay in the United States.

Gheorghita is majoring in business and German and will graduate with a bachelor of arts degree in May 1984. Her plans include staying at Baylor to obtain a master's degree in international management. She would like to work for an American firm in Germany, which would allow her to be close to her homeland.

She is a member of Highland Baptist Church in Waco and works as a resident assistant in Dawson Women's Residence Hall at Baylor.

"Someday I would like to return to Romania and help my people," she said. "I pray that day will come soon."

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(John Dellis is a writer for the Baylor University public relations office.)

'Gimmick' Drawings
Bring In Lost People

By Marty Croll

Baptist Press
1/10/84

VITORIA, Brazil (BP)--Kent Faris uses chalk drawings for evangelism because they work.

He gives his drawings to Christians who bring the most lost people to church with them. Such methods, he's been told, are gimmicky, even antiquated. But he does it anyway.

At one church, members seeking his chalk drawings brought 253 visitors.

"I consider myself pragmatic," said the 56-year-old Southern Baptist missionary from New Mexico. "I'm doing something that works. When it quits working, I'll stop doing it."

Faris has seen consistent success using his chalk drawings as evangelism incentives in the Brazilian state of Espirito Santo, where he directs evangelism and missions for the Brazilian Baptist Convention.

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"My whole message is to try to involve people in the church to become evangelists," he says. "I've developed the theme: 'Each One Win One.'"

But the drawings are only a part of Faris' evangelism strategy. Faris uses them to identify true workers by seeing who is willing to invite people. Once he identifies top contenders, he teaches ~~them they should~~ witness not to win a picture, but to serve God.

"Everyone wants the pictures but not everyone is willing to work," he explained. "When I go back to the church a month later, there are usually about three to five people who have taken the initiative to bring in new people. Then I tell them they should do it for the Lord."

Faris sketches biblical pictures on a 2-by-3-foot pad while his wife, Sarah, leads music and Bible study for the first 10 to 15 minutes of their service. He gleans subject matter from wherever he can get it--like prints in books and American Christmas cards. Usually he sketches scenes with backgrounds such as a globe or an open Bible.

Faris is amazed the little talent he claims to have and the simple art it produces would be such an attraction. A group of American Christians visiting Brazil who were asked by nationals if they knew Kent Faris even though at the time of the inquiry, Faris had been away from Brazil for seven years during a break in his missionary service.

"It's amazing. They remembered my name, remembered the work I had done in a park there. They even remembered what I drew that day."

An amateur artist all his life, Faris just happened on his chalk ministry. He bought a box of chalk just before he began his first term as a missionary in 1966, but let it sit unused for almost four years.

Then just before the end of his first term a Brazilian congregation asked him to draw an American Christmas card. The reaction was so overwhelming he began to incorporate chalk drawings and visual sermons into his services.

But Faris soon developed a problem: What do you do with the picture when the service is over and you're packing to leave? "First come, first served doesn't always suit the situation," he admitted.

Once, on a trip to one of the 182 churches in his state, two young boys appeared after the service with soulful pleas for his drawing.

"Not willing to do another drawing and wanting to return to the paved road which was several miles away, I said: 'Look, whichever person in this church will bring the most visitors the next Sunday to worship service can have the picture as a prize. OK?'"

In about a month, Faris went back to the church. Neither young boy took the prize. A young girl who lived outside the town brought 46 visitors the next week. The elderly husband of a new believer brought 47.

In another church, the incentive resulted in 94 visitors one Sunday. When the church members wrote to thank Faris, many of the visitors were still attending regularly. Eleven had made decisions of Christian commitment.

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



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