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El Salvador Hangs On
Despite War, Economy

By Erich Bridges

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (BP)--Easter week in El Salvador was uneventful this year: The military and the rebels battled. The faithful went to church. The vacationers went to the beach.

While the media spotlight glares on neighboring Nicaragua's conflicts for awhile, El Salvador has lurched into its seventh year of guerrilla war with no end in sight. Many international observers believe the leftist rebels, now on the defensive, have little chance of outright victory. But with continued outside aid, it's predicted the rebels could go on fighting almost indefinitely.

Yet this tiny country survives. Despite the war, a staggering economy and tens of thousands of internal refugees, El Salvador is hanging on. Even more remarkably, the church is flourishing.

Roman Catholics remain by far the largest religious body. But evangelical Protestants--including Baptists--reportedly are approaching 1 million in number, out of a national population of 5.1 million. That's at least five times the number of evangelicals counted before the war.

The war and its suffering have caused people to seek hope and comfort in the churches, missionaries say. But the expansion also is part of a wider evangelical growth boom which has swept throughout Central America in recent years.

Baptists still are a relatively small part of the Christian scene in El Salvador. Pentecostal groups reportedly claim at least three fourths of all evangelical believers. But several programs involving Southern Baptist missionaries reach beyond church walls.

The six Southern Baptist missionaries in the country coordinate a literature ministry which consistently leads Southern Baptist publishing efforts in the Spanish-speaking world. John and Peggy Alums recently transferred from Panama to join Bill and Libby Stennett and Ernie and Lee Ann McAninch in the work.

In 1985, the Baptist bookstore and book deposit in San Salvador sold and distributed more Christian literature than any other wholesale literature distributor in the chain operated by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's Baptist Spanish Publishing House.

"The evangelical community is continuing to grow tremendously, but even non-Christian people are very interested in Christian literature," said Stennett. "And our new Sunday school materials have been much more of a success than we even dreamed."

A five-minute Baptist radio broadcast on Christian family living airs 10 times daily on several stations. Listener responses and requests for Christian counseling average about 250 per month (334 were recorded in February). "We've had letters from all over the country, from one end to the other, from Honduras, from Guatemala and even from Nicaragua," Stennett reported. "I would say we're reaching a possible audience of 2 million."

Southern Baptists also sent \$195,000 in hunger and relief funds to El Salvador last year, primarily for refugees made homeless by the fighting. The money provides food and medicine through an evangelical relief agency for about 8,000 refugees each month.

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"It's not just going out and handing out food to anybody who wants to eat it or sell it," Stennett explained. "It's actually checking out the people, giving them the medicine they need, the vitamins along with the food and then going back the following month and checking them out again and seeing that they are benefiting from what we're doing."

Each week as many as 40 refugees accept Christ as their Savior through the medical ministry and are put in contact with a local church, he said.

The homeless aren't the only Salvadorans struggling for survival. Some analysts fear the shaky state of the economy poses a greater potential threat to national stability than the fighting. The guerrillas' long-term efforts to destroy the economy, coupled with chronically low agricultural production and shrinking export markets, have taken a toll.

Unemployment officially was estimated at more than 30 percent late in 1985. Some private estimates range higher. Labor unrest is increasing in the wake of a government austerity program aimed at reviving the depressed economy. Poverty still reigns in the countryside.

Churches haven't escaped hard times. "The pastors are suffering because people just do not have money to contribute," Stennett said. "But increased numbers of members in the churches have helped overcome some of the economic crisis."

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

Supreme Court Will Review
Seventh-Day Adventist Claim

By Stan Haste

Baptist Press
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WASHINGTON (BP)--A Seventh-day Adventist who was denied unemployment compensation benefits after being fired for refusing to work on her Sabbath will have her day in the nation's highest court.

Paula A. Hobbie, who worked for a Florida jeweler for more than two years before being baptized as an Adventist, has claimed she was denied the constitutionally-protected right to free exercise of religion when the state Department of Labor and Employment Security refused her request for unemployment benefits.

Seventh-day Adventists give strict observance to a Sabbath that begins at sundown on Friday and ends at sundown on Saturday.

But the state has countered that it "refused to discriminate against other applicants for benefits by providing special treatment" to Hobbie.

After her initial request was denied, Hobbie exhausted all administrative appeals and filed suit against the department in state court. But that panel affirmed the previous denials of benefits.

In a written appeal, Hobbie's attorneys asked the nation's high court to review the lower rulings, arguing their client's rights of free exercise and due process of law were denied.

They also cited a pair of earlier Supreme Court decisions, the spirit of which was violated in Hobbie's case, they claimed. In one of them, the 1963 case of Sherbert v. Verner, the court upheld the unemployment benefits claim of another Seventh-day Adventist discharged by a South Carolina employer because she declined a job when informed she would not be given time off every week to observe her Sabbath.

In the second decision--the 1981 case of Thomas v. Review Board--the court ruled in favor of a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses who was denied unemployment benefits after quitting his job at an armaments factory on religious grounds.

Hobbie's case against Florida will be argued during the Supreme Court's 1986-87 term that begins next October. (85-993, Hobbie v. Unemployment Appeals Commission)

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Midwestern Trustees Pick
Trio Of Vice Presidents

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)—Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's board of trustees elected three vice presidents during its semi-annual meeting April 14-15.

Kenneth Edmondson, former vice president for development at Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee, Okla., unanimously was elected vice president for institutional advancement for Midwestern effective June 1. He will assume responsibility for development, concentrating on endowment and capital funding.

N. Larry Baker, professor of Christian ethics and academic dean, was named dean of the faculty and vice president for academic affairs. He was elected to the faculty in 1978 and named academic dean in 1982.

Sam T. Switzer, business manager since April 1982, was elected vice president for business affairs beginning June 1. He will continue to be responsible for all duties assigned to him as business manager. Switzer came to the seminary in July 1981 as director of financial services.

R. Wayne Stacy was elected assistant professor of New Testament effective July 1. Stacy is professor of biblical studies and philosophy at Palm Beach Atlantic College in West Palm Beach, Fla.

Academic tenure was granted to A.L. Butler, associate professor of church music education; M. Vernon Davis, associate professor of Christian theology; W. Hulitt Gloer, assistant professor of New Testament; and Donald E. Hammer, director of theological field education and associate professor of ministry studies. Gloer also was advanced to associate professor of New Testament.

The board also adopted a proposed budget of \$3,206,293 for the 1986-87 academic year.

All board of trustees' officers were re-elected for another term. They are Kermit D. McGregor, chairman, director of public relations at Baptist Children's Village, Jackson, Miss.; Doyle Smith, first vice chairman, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Great Bend, Kan.; Jerry Davenport, second vice chairman, a layman from Sheffield, Texas; and Paul Terranova, secretary/treasurer, a layman from Lenexa, Kan.

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Conference On Peacemaking
Urges Christian Involvement

Baptist Press
4/22/86

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)—As American bombers were enroute to the April 14 attack on Libya, a speaker at a religious conference on peacemaking predicted small-scale wars, many of them backed by terrorists, may be more likely threats to global security than a full-scale nuclear war.

"We live in an era in which a big-unit war is not likely to occur," said foreign policy expert George Lopez of Earlham College in Richmond, Ind. "Instead we live in an era of small wars" including state-funded terrorism and mercenary-led conflicts.

Lopez was unaware as he spoke in Louisville, Ky., that American planes were headed for a "preemptive strike" against terrorist bases in Libya.

In the face of such threats, "the issue isn't whether we can find a solution rooted in technology, but whether we have the commitment to move beyond a technological dependence to embrace a peaceful image of the future that will motivate us to work for peace," Lopez said.

Lopez and other speakers at the third biennial conference challenged America's religious community to find new ways to work for peace. About 270 people attended the two-day meeting sponsored by the Council on Peacemaking and Religion. Louisville's Crescent Hill Baptist Church has hosted each of the three conferences.

Stanley Weiss, president of Business Executives for National Security, advised the group "policy makers don't listen to non-experts. What works is speaking concretely and practically about what we do know.

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"In much of the peace movement we find an enormous amount of caring, but little rigorous thinking," Weiss said. "Inevitably this approach loses to those in politics who have less compassion but who think more rigorously."

Concerned about escalating military expenditures, Weiss criticized the lack of competitive bidding and the absence of rigorous testing of conventional weapons. "The Pentagon," he said, "is the pork-barrel of the 1980s."

Weiss said the American public should demand three things of the Pentagon—integrity in purchasing procedures, economy in spending and quality testing of conventional weapons and products.

Another speaker, former Congressman Robert Drinan, challenged some stereotypes related to the politics of peacemaking.

"Efforts for arms control and peace negotiations are not simply efforts of liberal Democrats," Drinan said. He pointed out Republican President Dwight Eisenhower launched the effort for the nuclear test-ban treaty and Richard Nixon, also a Republican, signed the SALT I treaty and suspended production of the elements for gas warfare.

Also, he noted, the Republican-controlled senate in 1984, by a vote of 77-22, urged President Ronald Reagan to pursue a mutually-verifiable test-ban treaty.

Drinan, expressing more concern about the possibility of large-scale wars than Lopez, cited three crucial steps toward avoiding nuclear war—future adherence to the proposed SALT II treaty, an end to nuclear weapons testing and a halt to possible production of the "Star Wars" system.

Drinan and other speakers portrayed "Stars Wars" as a threat to peace rather than a means of securing peace. Drinan noted "even a perfect 'Star Wars' system couldn't pick up a submarine-launched cruise missile."

Unlike some "Star Wars" critics, retired Air Force Lt. Col. Robert Bowman said he believes the system's technological problems are not insurmountable. Bowman, who directed multi-million dollar space programs—including what are now the "Star Wars" programs—for the Air Force and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, said, "It's not that our technology, ingenuity and creativity cannot overcome staggering obstacles. They can."

The problem, he said, is new technology also is available for improved offensive weapons. "This happens more easily, more quickly and more affordably than with defense systems. For offensive systems to succeed, they only have to overcome a small part of the defense, while success for the defense demands near perfection," he said.

In addition to offering technical and political advice, several speakers also encouraged Christians to persevere in working for peace in an atmosphere of frequent misunderstanding and distrust.

Earlham College Professor Patricia Washburn, who spoke on women and peacemaking, held up a tiny sock as a symbol of her commitment to working for peace. The sock, she explained, was left under the bed during a recent visit by her grandchild.

"This is my flag," she declared. "This is what keeps me going."

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Hunter Inaugurated
After Two-Year Delay

By Lonnie Wilkey

Baptist Press
4/22/86

CHARLESTON, S.C. (BP)—When Jairy C. Hunter Jr. became president of Baptist College at Charleston in 1984, he delayed his inauguration because of something "more important."

Almost two years later, Hunter was inaugurated April 18 as the South Carolina Baptist Convention-related institution's second president, after countless hours of effort and fears inaugural day might not even be necessary.

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Hunter inherited a college where survival was the key issue. Some observers felt the school was "a sinking ship" and eventually would close.

Problems plagued the Baptist school. In November 1983 John A. Hamrick, the college's first president, retired after three of his top administrators were forced to resign. The college also had an indebtedness of more than \$14 million due to building projects, including the construction of a \$4 million chapel/auditorium.

Hunter came to the post with an understanding of the situation, but he notes there were some "surprises." What he did not realize, he says, was enrollment in the fall of 1984 would drop by 200 students because of negative publicity, causing a \$1.5 million budget deficit.

Also, he says, the that reality the chapel, which was nearly 80 percent complete, did not have a financing plan also was a major shock. He notes the college only had about \$1.8 million in cash and pledges for the \$4 million building.

Those problems caused the implementation of an entrenchment process in which about 40 employees were laid off and faculty and staff took a pay cuts of 10 percent.

The college also set a goal to raise \$1 million in cash by May 31, 1985, a goal which was exceeded by \$100,000. Despite those efforts, Hunter is convinced Baptist College would have closed if not for a called special meeting of the South Carolina Baptist Convention May 9, 1985. He recalls it became apparent the school would not survive unless South Carolina Baptists were willing to give total support.

"The most crucial decision I had to make was whether to take that question to South Carolina Baptists. Had their vote not been in the affirmative, I do believe Baptist College would have closed," he says.

Messengers approved a plan which would allow Baptist College to go directly to more than 1,750 churches in the state to ask for budget help. Convention guidelines forbid its institutions from raising funds directly from the churches.

Hunter says that decision represented a vote of confidence from South Carolina Baptists. For him it "was the turning point of the college."

The college since has implemented a five-year plan which calls for a 3 percent increase in enrollment each year during the period. A \$12 million fund-raising campaign has begun which Hunter says will help the college liquidate its short-term debt.

Hunter notes the college, with a net worth of about \$28 million, is operating on sound budgeting and accounting procedures. "We are applying scarce resources to our priorities."

Apparently the plan is working. In 1983-84 the college had a deficit of \$850,000. This year, according to Hunter, the college expects a surplus of about \$100,000 in its \$9 million budget.

Enrollment seems to be stabilizing despite an 11 percent decrease last fall. Hunter says the college's retention of students from the fall who returned for the spring semester was 94 percent.

"We are not looking for large numbers of students or expanding facilities. Our plan is to strengthen our academic program, liquidate our short-term debt and grow very modestly," he says.

But the college is not out of the woods. Even though school administrators expect to pay about \$2.5 million of its debt this year, that debt still exceeds \$11 million.

What has been accomplished is stability and credibility. "It's very difficult to be open and tell bad news when it was bad. But at the same time, we learned quickly that bad news isn't really bad if you have a plan to deal with it," Hunter says.

He predicts the college will continue on its upward path: "We can't be all things to all people. But the more we fulfill our Christian commitment, the stronger the college becomes."

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