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Lebanon Missionaries Say
No Time To Cry Over Leaving

By Art Toalston

LARNACA, Cyprus (BP)—Bill Trimble and other Southern Baptist missionaries who evacuated to Cyprus have been so busy they "haven't had time to think" about their feelings on Lebanon.

Fifteen missionaries came to Cyprus "numb," as Nancie Wingo put it in late February.

For three weeks before evacuation, they put in long hours turning over their responsibilities to Lebanese Baptists, packing their belongings and saying goodbye to friends and neighbors.

All the while, they had hoped the U.S. government would respond positively to their plea for exemptions to its order that all Americans leave the country.

And for at least three missionaries, their last days in Lebanon were marked by close calls with the violence of civil war now in its 12th year.

The last four missionary couples in Lebanon, along with a missionary retiree, are scheduled to leave there the first week of March.

Trimble, chairman of the missionaries in Lebanon, said it was with "the Lord's strength that we've been able to keep going day and night." Trimble, dean of students at Arab Baptist Theological Seminary, has worked in Lebanon 25 years.

Wingo has not shed an abundance of tears over ending her 17 years of teaching at Beirut Baptist School. "We were just trying to cope with everything else," she said.

Mack Sacco, treasurer of the Baptist mission in Lebanon since 1971, remembers "waking up at 2, 3, 4 in the morning just to think through the things to do the next day."

At least one evacuee welcomed the move. Susan White, 3-year-old adopted daughter of Gary and Jerree White, likes Cyprus "because there are no boom-booms."

Five days before they left Lebanon, the Whites attended a farewell dinner at a Maronite Catholic school where White had coached three basketball teams. On their way home, artillery fire broke out between warring militia groups. A shell landed several hundred feet in front of their car, causing a few moments of deafness but no other injuries.

White wheeled the car toward a nearby apartment building where Trimble and his wife, Vivian, and missionaries David and Maxine King have lived. The three families spent two and one-half hours in the basement before they felt safe to come out.

Five windows in Wingo's apartment in West Beirut were shot out while she was away. To cross the street from the school, she had to run to avoid possible sniper fire. She slept in the apartment hallway, with doors to the various rooms shut.

The fighting closed school for several days, denying Wingo her final goodbyes to the school's 950 students and 50 teachers. She does not know if or when her belongings can be shipped from West Beirut.

As they left Beirut, missionaries adopted a statement drafted by Jim Ragland, superintendent of Beirut Baptist School for more than 30 years, and Frances Fuller, a 24-year missionary veteran who directs the Arab Baptist Publication Center.

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The missionaries note they are leaving Lebanon "in obedience to the order of the U.S. government." Although their tenure in Lebanon ranges from 30-plus years to less than two, "All of us feel that our hearts have been torn out and left in Lebanon.

"We do not fully understand the intention of our government in forcing us to go," the statement continued. "If it is to protect us, we are dismayed, because ... we have lost our right to obey God as we understand his will for us.

"If it is to punish Lebanon, we are sorry, because Lebanon is dying. Punishment is not appropriate for the dying. The dying need urgent and intensive care. We believe that our educational and spiritual and benevolent work is part of that care. We are sure that punishment, revenge and isolation are not the answers to Lebanon's problems."

The missionaries urged "a policy of fairness and compassion" toward Lebanon, "a policy which will attempt to remove the causes of terrorism and to heal the wounds of Lebanon."

To the Lebanese, the missionaries promised to "come again, as soon as we are permitted, to share your life and reclaim our hearts."

None of the missionaries speculated when they might return to Lebanon. Several expect assignments in other countries. U.S. Embassy officials in Beirut told Trimble the order will stand for at least one year. The missionary families will live temporarily in Cyprus, an island in the Mediterranean Sea.

"Why?" is the unanswered question missionaries have faced since the U.S. government order of Jan. 28, Mrs. Trimble said.

Circumstances have been worse at times in the past than the recent situation in East Beirut, where most of the missionaries have lived.

"Everything was going forward," she added, "then all of a sudden" The seminary had a record enrollment of nearly 30 full- and part-time students. Many of Lebanon's 11 Baptist churches were full each Sunday. A new building for the publication center and the Baptist Center for Mass Communications had just opened.

And White, for example, counted seven young men he had been working with who were close to making professions of faith.

The missionaries' last days in Lebanon were marked by a constant stream of visitors to their houses who gave them traditional Lebanese hugs and kisses on both cheeks.

Many asked if the missionaries had heard of any change of heart on the part of the U.S. government. And many voiced hope that soon Americans will return to Lebanon. Dozens went to the port where the missionaries boarded a ship for the seven-hour trip to Cyprus.

In Cyprus, classes for 16 seminary students will be held at an institute operated by Youth With a Mission, 35 miles northwest of Nicosia. The operations of the publication and mass communications centers will be handled by Lebanese Baptist workers in Beirut.

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

Student Grieves, But Follows
Baptist Seminary To Cyprus

By Art Toalston

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LARNACA, Cyprus (BP)—Joseph Kattan struggled for the best English he could muster, "I am very sorry that Americans are leaving Lebanon."

His sorrow, of course, extends to the whole of the Lebanese plight. And his sorrow is personal. Two months ago, his parents and youngest sister became refugees from fighting in southern Lebanon.

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Other than their car and a few of their belongings, he said, "My parents don't have anything now." Their home was destroyed in fighting between Palestinian and Shiite Muslims.

Kattan is one of 16 new students from Arab Baptist Theological Seminary who arrived in Cyprus Feb. 27 to continue his studies. The seminary moved because Southern Baptist educators Bill Trimble and Emmett Barnes are among those affected by a U.S. government order that Americans leave Lebanon.

"We hope, we hope" that this law will change, Kattan said.

The Lebanese deeply appreciate Southern Baptist missionaries and other Americans who have been in Lebanon for humanitarian purposes, he said.

"Lebanon is bleeding. It's a pain on my heart because people in my lovely country are dying."

Kattan, 23, lost one of his closest friends last year in one of the numerous explosions during Lebanon's 12-year civil war. On two occasions, he said, he "saw the shells coming," once recently in Beirut and once near his hometown of Maghdouche, which had 16,000 people before the recent battles there.

His 11-year-old sister was separated from her parents for two days when fighting peaked at Maghdouche. She saw two dead bodies along the road she walked. "It's still on my mind," she told him.

His mother saw a Palestine Liberation Organization fighter kill a Shiite. "His voice is still in my ears," she said to her son.

Kattan is unflinching in his desire to be a Baptist pastor in Lebanon. "Everywhere you go, people talk about the war, about the events in Lebanon, about the economy. It's hard for an average worker. Maybe now he only can buy his bread."

Kattan believes he has a valuable message for his fellow countrymen: "Jesus can save and give you peace."

He rejoices that his mother has professed faith in Christ in recent weeks and that his father is regularly attending Baptist services in Beirut.

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'Concerns' Expressed
Over RTVC Finances

By Dan Martin

Baptist Press
2/27/87

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Members of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee have expressed "concerns" over the financial future of the SBC Radio and Television Commission after being told efforts at fund raising and syndication are below expectations.

During the February meeting of the Executive Committee, Frank Ingraham, a Nashville, Tenn., attorney and chairman of the Executive Committee's business and finance subcommittee, said three primary concerns surfaced during a review of financial materials provided by the RTVC.

"First, the revenues from program syndication are not generating the amount of funds projected;

"Second, the development funds are not yet reaching expectations;

"Third, because of the lack of funds, the production of new programs is not keeping up with the anticipated schedule."

The Radio and Television Commission is required to make monthly reports to the Executive Committee under terms of a September 1985 agreement which allowed the Fort Worth, Texas-based agency to borrow \$10 million with a 10-year payback and to launch a five-year \$10-million fundraising campaign to repay the loan.

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The proceeds from the loan were used primarily to pay short-term loans which had financed costs of starting the American Christian Television System (ACTS), a national "family programming" network owned by the RTVC.

The Executive Committee created a special committee to study the financial affairs of the RTVC. The committee, which has been chaired by Harmon Born, an Atlanta automobile dealer, will cease to operate in June of 1987 and its functions will be assumed by the business and finance subcommittee.

Ingraham, who has been a member of the special study committee in addition to chairing the business and finance subcommittee, told Executive Committee members the body "must recognize its place in the process," and said the Executive Committee has no desire to supplant the role of the RTVC trustees.

In September of 1986, the special study committee and Executive Committee President Harold C. Bennett reviewed the terms of a \$10 million loan from Central Bank of Walnut Creek, Calif.

Ingraham told Baptist Press the business and finance subcommittee met during the February meeting with RTVC representatives Jimmy R. Allen, president; Richard T. McCartney, executive vice president; Jim Edwards, senior vice president and chief financial officer, and T.W. Terral, immediate past chairman of RTVC trustees and a Baton Rouge, La., pastor.

"They expressed concerns about their particular status right now," Ingraham said. "I join with them.

"We understand they do have serious problems in that the projections they have made and the goals they set have not been realized. They are having to restructure their approach to fund raising and financing while staying within their budget," he added.

According to RTVC officials, syndication — sale of programs produced for use on the RTVC's national television network, American Christian Television System (ACTS) to other stations — has not been successful. Syndication of several ACTS shows such as "Country Crossroads," "Cope" and a package of old movies was expected to produce \$475,000 this year but in the first three months produced only \$24,000.

Materials produced for the Executive Committee meeting indicated the present rate of revenue will not reach the projections and "could prove to be a serious problem in future budget years."

Fund-raising efforts also have not produced anticipated revenues. A report on financial campaigns since July of 1985 indicates the efforts have resulted in a loss. The report shows \$2,364,000 has been pledged from development efforts, including capital campaigns and telemissions dinners.

The report indicates \$1,179,000 has been received in cash from the efforts, against a cost of \$1,645,000.

Ingraham said RTVC officials said they have revamped their approach to fund raising and will try out the new method in a springtime campaign in Atlanta. The commission is to report to the special study committee and the business and finance subcommittee in June on the success of the new approach.

Ingraham also said RTVC trustees will meet in a retreat and board meeting in April to "restructure their approach for fund raising and financing the organization."

"I wish them every good fortune," Ingraham said, adding the Executive Committee members "will keep ourselves informed as to the financial status."

New Church Extension Leader
Calls For More Cooperation

By Joe Westbury

NEW YORK (BP)—The newly-elected director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's church extension division has called for greater cooperation among churches as the denomination seeks to win America's cities for Christ.

"America's cities may confuse us, but they will not conquer us," said David Bunch of Atlanta in his first major presentation since election as director of the division charged with starting new Southern Baptist churches in the United States.

"Rather than looking at the cities as churning seas of humanity, Baptists need to perceive them as penetrable ponds of people," Bunch told participants in a national Southern Baptist church extension leadership conference.

Bunch added if Baptists are to reach their national goal of 50,000 congregations by the year 2000, they must grow, not by swapping members, but by reaching the unreached with the gospel. The goal of 50,000 churches is a part of Bold Mission Thrust, the denomination's long-range plans toward the year 2000.

SBC church starts in the denomination have averaged 200 annually for the past decade — far behind the 1,500 needed to boost Southern Baptist congregations from 37,117 to 50,000 by the turn of the century, said Bunch. But the goal can be reached with a new spirit of cooperation and flexibility among congregations and denominational agencies, he added.

"Church extension is applied evangelism," said Bunch, former director of the Home Mission Board's Mission Service Corps volunteer program. "We must help small mission churches with a plan of reaching the lost in their community."

Bunch said the board's church extension division will work more closely with evangelism, language missions and church loans divisions of the board to achieve this cooperation. He added a greater emphasis will be given to reaching more blacks with the gospel.

Gerald Palmer, vice president of the Home Mission Board missions section, echoed Bunch's comments as he called for a greater flexibility in tailoring new churches to community needs.

"Rural people move to the city, and city dwellers move to the country and neither remain the same or become like the other," said Palmer. "Secular society does not need a new message, but it does call for new approaches in communicating the gospel message."

Palmer urged Baptists to provide ministries within the cultural context of the people and to preach in the "language of the heart" to persons whose primary language is not English.

"Some persons prefer a black worship style," Palmer explained. "Some prefer a formal worship style. A person in an economically depressed area may not feel at home in the splendor of some worship sanctuaries. A more modest building or less formal style may best reach some persons.

"The task of missions and evangelism is bigger than any and all of us," he added. "If Bold Mission Thrust goals are to be met, cooperation with all entities of Baptist life is essential," he added.

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