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January 5, 1988

88-2

N-FMB

Malay Officials Release
Jailed Baptist Leader

By Michael D. Chute

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (BP)--Malaysian Baptist leader James Lai was released from prison Dec. 20 by the Malay government just days before he was to be remanded for a two-year jail term under that country's Internal Security Act.

Lai was in the last group of detainees released before expiration of the 60-day detention deadline for people arrested in an Oct. 29 government sweep. The remaining 33 prisoners, including two Baptist workers, were remanded for an additional two years of incarceration under the law. They are being held without trial.

Lai's release left two Baptist pastors -- identified only as Dr. Poh and Joshua -- among the 33 who were remanded. That group includes six other Christian workers.

Joshua, a Malay, apparently was involved in Christian work under the direction of First Baptist Church at Petaling Jaya when he was arrested. The other worker, Dr. Poh, is the pastor of a Reformed Baptist church in Sri Serbang, a suburb of Kuala Lumpur.

Five Baptist workers were among 111 people arrested in Malaysia Oct. 29 during a nationwide sweep by the government in an attempt to defuse racial and religious tensions between ethnic Chinese and ethnic Malays.

The other two Baptists arrested, both women, also were released in December. Tan Bee Hwa, minister at Damasara Utama Baptist Church in Kuala Lumpur, was released Dec. 14. Also released in mid-December was Chee Yah Kee, who reportedly was helping Joshua in his work.

Baptists in Malaysia said Lai has not preached at the church in Petaling Jaya since his release. Along with his family, Lai has left Kuala Lumpur and now is staying at a Baptist camp in Port Dickson. He apparently was told by authorities he is not to discuss anything he was asked or told during his incarceration. Malaysian Baptist leaders are uncertain of his plans.

Baptist work in Malaysia is "at a standstill" following the October arrests and closure in mid-December of four Baptist churches in the state of Negri Sembalan, according to sources there. Three churches involved in new work reportedly have ceased those efforts.

Malaysian Baptists reported a "calm and quiet" Christmas but said churches had to ask the government for permission for members to go caroling during the Christmas season. Even though the carolers went only to homes of church members, some requests were turned down. All meetings, even in one's home, first must be approved by the government.

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U.S.-Brazilian Students
Begin Mission Project

N-55B

By Frank Wm. White

Baptist Press
1/5/88

BRASILIA, Brazil (BP)--The new year for 143 Southern Baptists and 110 Brazilian Baptist students began as they launched a massive student evangelistic project in Brazil.

Following New Year's Eve services in churches throughout the capital city of Brasilia the students left in teams of 10 for projects in 26 locations across the country.

The Brazil-U.S. project is a joint effort of Brazilian Baptists, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's student ministry department. Leaders said they hope Brazilian students will be introduced to evangelism possibilities through the project while U.S. students will be exposed and involved in world missions.

During orientation prior to leaving Brasilia, Olivevira de Araujo, executive secretary of the Brazilian Baptist Home Mission Board, told the students they were "participating in a great battle to preach the gospel."

"The timing of the project is important because if a spiritual awakening is to happen in the country, it will begin with the youth," Araujo said.

The students are presenting the gospel in Brazilian communities through home Bible studies, personal evangelism, backyard Bible clubs, revivals and other evangelistic efforts.

Each project is specifically tailored for its particular location. While some groups are working with established churches, others are involved in efforts to develop new work, explained Mattie Lou Bible, a Southern Baptist missionary who has helped coordinate the project.

Araujo cited a critical need for evangelistic work in Brazil to build on the 100-year history of Baptist work in the country. While 141 million people live in Brazil, 650,000 are Baptists and 18 million are counted among all non-Catholic denominations.

The Southern Baptist students met their Brazilian counterparts Dec. 30, scarcely two days before leaving for their mission locations. Despite the language barrier between the students, they immediately joined in praise and celebration throughout the orientation. The sessions were translated for the U.S. students, but much of the music was in Portuguese with Southern Baptist students quickly joining in to learn the tunes.

Prior to the joint orientation in Brasilia, U.S. students had participated in two days of preparation in Miami with the Brazilian students holding similar sessions in Brasilia.

The Southern Baptist students got an early start on their mission project as they waited in the Miami airport. A waiting lounge partition quickly became a makeshift stage as students presented an impromptu puppet show and songs to the delight of children and the amazement of other waiting passengers. The opportunity proved to be a training initiation for the students when they learned the children gathered for their show were Brazilian.

The students complete their projects Jan. 11, returning to Brasilia Jan. 12. Southern Baptist students will return to Miami Jan. 13.

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One Killed, Two Hurt
In Colombian Car Wreck

W-FMB

Baptist Press
1/5/88

BARRANQUILLA, Colombia (BP)--A Colombian Baptist woman was killed and two Southern Baptist missionaries injured Jan. 4 in a one-car accident outside of Barranquilla, Colombia.

Betty Lemos, a mother of four children and a leader in her church in Barranquilla, was killed. Her 5-year-old son, who was traveling with her, received only scrapes and bruises.

Jeni Hester and Kay Brown, both missionary nurses in Barranquilla, were admitted to Baptist Hospital in the city. Hester's pelvis was fractured on both sides, and she lost about three liters of blood, requiring several transfusions. Doctors placed her on a respirator, and she was expected to remain on it for three days. Brown received a concussion and was disoriented.

The four were traveling from Barranquilla to Cartagena for the Colombia Baptist Convention meeting when the accident occurred in mid-afternoon. The cause of the accident has not been determined.

Hester, from Texline, Texas, has been a missionary in Colombia since 1973. She works in preventative health programs and coordinates medical caravan work from Baptist Hospital.

Brown, a native of Golden, Miss., was appointed in 1986 and has been working in Colombia since July of last year.

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Oldest Retired
Missionary Dies

N-FMB

CHEVY CHASE, Md. (BP)--Julia Lowe, Southern Baptists' oldest retired foreign missionary, died Jan. 1 at the age of 103.

She and her husband, Clifford, spent more than 30 years doing pioneer mission work in southern China beginning in 1908. It was one of the most tumultuous periods of China's history, but only World War II forced the Lowes to come home.

They retired in 1948 but kept speaking for missions in churches and Baptist meetings. He died in 1963 at age 80. Mrs. Lowe continued her ministry in Nashville and later in Chevy Chase, Md., where she lived with her daughter, Reba Campbell.

She prayed daily for missionaries. Despite failing eyesight and hearing in recent years, she also wrote letters regularly and taught Sunday school at Wisconsin Avenue Baptist Church in Washington, until early 1987. She had to use a walker to move around, but visited the beauty shop weekly.

Her three daughters enjoyed bragging about her age and vitality, prompting one young man to ask, "What do you have to do to live such a long life?"

"I told him never in my life had I had a glass of any kind of alcoholic beverage, and I have never smoked a cigarette," she said in a 1984 interview. "But that's not what has given me a long life. It is God that does it. That's what I tell everybody. It's the Lord. It's because of his will. I belong to him."

"Her Lord always came first," said her daughter-in-law, Virginia Lowe. "She had tremendous faith, and she's been ready to meet the Lord for a long time. She never said or did anything that wasn't meant to make the other person feel at ease, and she had a wonderful sense of humor."

The former Julia Martin, Lowe was born in Brooklyn, N.Y., Aug. 10, 1884. She studied at the Brooklyn Training School for Teachers and taught school in Brooklyn for several years.

She met Georgia native Clifford Lowe at a Bible conference. They fell in love, and less than a month after their wedding in 1908, the couple sailed for China. They started out in Wuchow, and later began Baptist work in Kweilin (Guilin), where they worked for 18 years. She started a girls' school there. All four of their children were born in China.

They moved to Shanghai in 1930, where he worked in Christian publishing and broadcasting ministries and she taught at Eliza Yates Girls' School. The Lowes' home was bombed when the Japanese occupied Shanghai, but they moved to another one and kept working. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor came when they were on furlough in the United States, however, and they were never able to return to China.

She said her happiest experience was telling the Chinese people that "there is a living God who loved them and a Savior who died to save them."

She is survived by her three daughters, eight grandchildren, 15 great-grandchildren and other relatives. Her son, Jackson, died in 1984. Funeral services were scheduled for Jan. 6 at Woodlawn Memorial Park in Nashville.

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

NOTE TO EDITORS: Please kill the Baptist Press story dated 12/30/87 and titled "Missions Involvement Helps Struggling Church Survive."

Thanks,
Baptist Press

In Life And Death Martinez
Directs Others To Christ

F - TEXAS
By Ken Camp

DALLAS (BP)--Professions of faith are not common at funerals, but his friends agreed that Ramon Martinez was not a common man. In death, as in life, Martinez pointed people to Jesus.

As many as 70 people made professions of faith at his memorial service, and about 50 others came to Christ at the funeral of the 60-year-old Floydada, Texas, farmer who was seldom seen without a New Testament in his front pocket.

Cancer claimed the life of Martinez, a charter member and deacon at Primera Baptist Mission in Floydada. When the time came for Floyd County residents to pay their last respects to him, about 300 Hispanics crowded into Primera Mission for a memorial service, and at least 1,000 others attended the funeral at First Baptist Church in Floydada.

"His funeral was the largest ever that I can remember in Floyd County," said Floyd Bradley, Baptist director of missions for Caprock-Plains Area. For 22 years, Bradley was pastor of First Baptist Church in Floydada, sponsor of Primera Mission.

"He was one of the most faithful men I have known," Bradley said. "He lived his Christian faith.

"He was very direct -- even blunt -- in his verbal witness. He'd come right out and tell people they were going to hell if they didn't get right with God. Even more through his lifestyle than through his verbal witness, he was a great Christian witness. The beautiful Christian life he lived was a great influence."

"He was not only a person who went to church. He was a man who was faithful to his church and to his God," said Lupe Rando, pastor of Primera Mission. "People saw that in him."

Rando shared a special kinship with Martinez in that both had struggled with cancer. The mission pastor underwent successful surgery to remove his malignancy.

"I remember going to his house and waking him to pray for me, and I prayed for him. He knew I understood what he was going through," said Rando.

Martinez especially was concerned for his family, according to his pastor.

"He told his sons no matter what happened to him, he wanted them to stay faithful," Rando recalled. One son, Jesse, is minister of music at Primera Baptist Church in Lubbock, Texas.

On the evening after his death, a special memorial service for Martinez was held at Primera Mission. The church, which seats about 250, was filled to standing-room only.

"There must have been close to 300 people there, all Hispanic," Rando said. "At the end of the service, I couldn't give a public invitation. There was no room for them to come to the front. It's hard to say how many professions of faith were made, but there were maybe 60 or 70 who stood up."

To accommodate crowds, Martinez's funeral the following day was held at First Baptist Church in Floydada. Even there, the 1,000-seat auditorium was overflowing. Ramon Asebedo, former pastor of the mission, brought the message.

"I preached in English and Spanish from Psalm 40, verses one through three. At the end of the service, I felt the Lord inspire me to give an invitation," Asebedo said. "I don't usually do that at funerals, but I felt the need. There must have been 40 to 50 people who stood."

"Nobody criticized me for giving the invitation. The family was proud that I had done it. They had a lot of relatives there who were lost, and a lot of them stood."

"Two of his younger brothers and their families rededicated their lives and have started attending all the services at church since the funeral," said Rando. "One of his brothers said, 'Ramon taught me something by the way he lived. It was something I realized I needed in my life.'"

West Texas Church Reaps
Bountiful Missions Harvest

By Ken Camp

F-Texas

DALLAS (BP)--Times are tough for west Texas farmers, but one rural High Plains church recently reaped a bountiful harvest for missions that was more than a year in the making.

First Baptist Church of Springlake, Texas, made a commitment several years ago to give 20 percent of its undesignated receipts to missions through the Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget. However, when the farm crisis hit home in 1986, the church found itself in a financial dilemma.

"Things got so tight, we dropped \$5,400 behind in our Cooperative Program giving," said Pastor Steve Branson.

In order to meet essential local needs, the church agreed to temporarily drop its level of support to 16 percent in 1987. However, the congregation still was troubled by what it considered an outstanding debt from the previous year.

"We knew nobody would come asking us for that Cooperative Program money, but we knew it was an obligation we had placed on ourselves. It was like a debt we owed, and we knew that the money would go to a good use. We just wanted to keep our commitment," said Branson.

To resolve the problem the church's long-range planning committee, budget committee and deacons met together and agreed to promote a "Harvest Day" offering Dec. 13.

Although the church averages about 70 in attendance and its highest one-time offering in the recent past was less than \$3,000, First Church adopted an attendance goal of 100 and a giving goal of \$6,700 -- \$5,400 for the outstanding Cooperative Program payment and \$1,300 for regular weekly receipts.

"The church was wholeheartedly behind it," said Branson. "Still, we didn't know if it was realistic."

If the goal looked slightly unrealistic in the early planning stages, it looked totally out of reach Dec. 13 when the ground outside the church began to be blanketed in what eventually amounted to 12 inches of snow.

"By 10 o'clock, we only had about 10 people in Sunday school, Branson said recalling his fading hopes. "But people kept coming in, and we ended up with about 80 in attendance. And when the receipts were counted, we had more than \$13,000."

Branson indicated the record giving was a reflection of the church members' sense of commitment to keep their word, their loyalty to the Cooperative Program and their faith in God.

"Most people here had a good harvest on their crops this year. They don't have their money yet, but they gave in anticipation of selling," he said.

"These are good, solid people, and this was a very exciting Sunday for them. Our goal now is to get back up to the 20 percent level in giving as soon as we can."