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Missionaries stay inside
as Philippine forces rebel

N-FMB

MANILA, Philippines (BP)--Southern Baptist missionaries in the Philippines stayed inside their homes Dec. 1 as mutinous armed forces began their second day of the most serious attack to date on the government of President Corazon Aquino.

Southern Baptists support 175 mission personnel in the Southeast Asian nation.

According to reports Dec. 1, about 200 rebels still occupied a Manila air base, command headquarters of the Philippine air force. Rebels also seized parts of Ninoy Aquino International Airport, the main commercial airport, bombed the presidential palace and knocked a government television station off the air. Military officials were claiming Dec. 1 that the coup had failed.

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Czech Christians gain promise
of freedom from government

By Mike Creswell N-FMB

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PRAGUE, Czechoslovakia (BP)--Christians in Czechoslovakia have been assured by government leaders they will receive major new freedoms as the country moves towards its first representative government in 40 years.

In meetings with church leaders Nov. 30, officials of the government's ministry of culture promised many changes in church-state relations in the days ahead, the church leaders said.

Catholic leaders met with government representatives during a morning session. Baptist, Brethren, Methodist, Evangelical and Orthodox church leaders met with them in the afternoon.

Not all the church-state changes were detailed, but Baptists learned they could start a seminary immediately if they wish, said a jubilant Jan Pospisil, executive secretary of the Baptist Union of Czechoslovakia, who represented Baptists at the meeting.

Besides starting a seminary, they want to establish senior citizens' homes, print books freely and broadcast on television and radio.

Pospisil said he and other leaders will suggest possible changes in the national constitution's sections dealing with religion during the coming weeks. "We're hoping many possibilities will be opened," he said. "This is a great thing. We have prayed for revival in our country for many years. We feel this is the answer from our God, not only for political change, but for moral changes as well."

Great spiritual hunger exists in Czechoslovakia today, especially among young people, said Pospisil, 45, who has led the nation's Baptists for five years.

Baptist students now should be free to attend classes at the new International Baptist Lay Academy in Budapest, Hungary, Pospisil said. Baptists had discussed for five months how to obtain clearance for students to attend the academy, he said, but "it was proving difficult." Now things have changed.

One likely change that may require some adjustment for churches involves paying salaries to their pastors. Now all pastors receive their salaries from the government, a requirement since the late 1940s.

Catholics have been much more visible than other church groups during the recent drive for freedom in Czechoslovakia, said American Harriet Macek. Her husband, Peter, is pastor of Second Baptist Church in Prague.

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Many people still are concerned about a reported 40,000 prisoners held in Prague jails and about freedom of the press, she said, adding that Czech television now broadcasts "pretty good coverage."

Baptist pastors did not organize their people for participation in the massive demonstrations which have rocked Prague, but many were involved, Pospisil said.

"I was there every day, and my four children and my wife were there also," he said.

About 4,000 Baptists are members of 30 congregations in the country, but Sunday attendance averages about 10,000.

In mid-November leaders of the Baptist union sent a letter to Czech government leaders expressing "deep regret" over the brutal beating of demonstrators in Prague Nov. 17. "We are convinced that this harsh use of force against peaceful citizens, perhaps holding other opinions, is an abuse of human dignity and an attack on freedom of conscience and freedom of speech," the letter stated.

Later 33 members of Second Baptist Church in Prague sent a letter to the world community of Baptists asking intervention in such violence and requesting prayer support, European Baptist Press Service reported.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Correspondent Martha Skelton visited East Berlin four times following the opening of the Berlin Wall. This is her report on the involvement of East German churches in the rapid changes now taking place.

East German Christians want
'windows and doors' in Wall

By Martha Skelton

F- FMB

Baptist Press
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EAST BERLIN (BP)--The Berlin Wall need not fall entirely, but it must have doors and windows, said Siegfried Holtz, an East German Baptist youth leader.

Every house has walls, doors and windows, Holtz said. Many East German Baptists, like their countrymen, do not want to tear down their "house." But they want doors and windows of more freedom, equality and justice.

East German churches have played a key role in the dialogues and demonstrations that led to the sweeping changes of the past weeks.

Two years ago, the Ecumenical Council of Churches started emphasizing the themes of freedom, justice and stewardship of God's creation, said Siegfried Reichelt, pastor of Cantian Street Baptist Church in East Berlin. In the forefront have been East Germany's Lutheran churches, which have opened their large buildings to meetings and published reports of government injustices.

Religious words and symbols are found in the reform movement. For instance, reform groups called for people to form a human chain across East Germany Dec. 3, north to south and east to west, in the form of a cross.

Small peace groups have met in churches, and various pastors and youth leaders have participated in demonstrations and meetings on reform. The political group New Forum has used the Cantian Street Church building for meetings. Several weeks before the Berlin Wall opened, Baptists sent a letter to the government supporting initiatives for justice and reform. Similar letters also were sent by the Lutheran church and others.

The government tried to discredit them. The communist youth magazine charged East German Baptists used a European Baptist Federation meeting in Budapest last summer as an excuse to flee the country. "That was a poisonous lie," said Reichelt. "All who registered (for the meeting) came back."

Now new government leaders and new policies are in place. While no constitutional changes related to religion are yet underway, the government's relationship to churches has changed. The new minister of religious affairs is no longer a communist functionary, but a Lutheran lawyer.

Christians face the challenges of living and working redemptively in the emerging order. Healing of spiritual and physical rifts now are possible.

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When the wall was built, men and women lost their jobs, bisected neighborhoods deteriorated, families and friends were denied the chance to stay close. One Baptist man from East Berlin gave an example of this quiet cruelty. His son lay dying of cancer in a Potsdam hospital. Relatives in the West applied for visas to come east to see him one last time, but they weren't allowed to come. The man also prayed his daughter would live to see the day she could visit the West. They both have lived to see it.

"For a week now, I've cried and cried," he said shortly after the wall opened. "If you can't cry as a German in these days, you're not human."

An East German man sitting in a tearoom operated by a Baptist church in West Berlin remarked on his first visit to that part of the city in 30 years. "I feel like I'm able to dismantle the picture of the West as the enemy," he said. He was a member of a reserve military unit for 25 years. "I will never put on that uniform again," he promised.

Evangelicals are finding a need for public expression of their privately held beliefs.

Friedhelm Sachse, youth secretary for the East German Baptist Union, will represent free churches on a committee working toward an officially recognized Christian youth organization. Currently only the government-sponsored communist youth organization is allowed.

"It's important for evangelical youth to not only see a duty to proclaim the gospel, the main work of the church, but to be active politically. It's a special moment in time, like Martin Luther King in the United States," he said, stressing that Christian voices should be heard as new parties organize and discussions are held about the future.

Christian goals in the national debate include the right to assemble in places besides churches, have a free press, organize student work, do more youth and children's work, and have alternatives to military service and participation in communist school organizations.

"We want a school to be a neutral place," said Ulrich Materne, general secretary of the East German Baptist Union.

Christians also question the pledge of allegiance to the state and its atheistic tenets, which young people must sign at age 13 or hurt their education and work prospects. Discussions have begun about changing wording so Christians can accept it, said Manfred Sult, Baptist union president.

The country faces hard times, especially economically. But the church has a role to play even in economics, Sachse said, noting, "The church has never said material things are what it's all about."

Rebuilding economic structures will take some time, Materne added. "People are seeing the West, seeing what they don't have. Will they be willing to sacrifice?" he asked.

"It's still the responsibility of the church to proclaim the gospel here. It hasn't lost its role; life has more meaning than travel, open borders. At the end of trips, spending money, are they any happier?" asked Sult.

"People have already changed. The prevailing fear is gone. They say what they think. But that doesn't make them wonderful people. Society may have good ideals, but normal people do not realize society needs regenerated people," said Materne.

"When the euphoria is over, there will be hard years ahead," predicted Hans Guenther Sachse, church growth secretary for East German Baptists. "We always knew the country was in bad shape. Now we are learning how bad. Many will be unhappy. The church has a big role. Many people will be open to Christ. Historical events are times of revival."

He has tried to introduce innovative ways of evangelizing over the years, so he doesn't see any sudden changes in evangelism methods, which include weekend retreats. Church members invite non-Christian family members or friends to attend, where they can hear the gospel and consider it in a quiet atmosphere. Tent revivals also are planned for next summer.

"Our No. 1 problem is too many Baptist members with no spiritual basis from which to do evangelistic work in society. We need more mature and effective church members, although Baptists are in better shape than some," he said. He has adapted a West German version of the MasterLife discipleship program for use in East Germany, and he links discipleship training with evangelism so one can nourish the other.

East German Baptists face their own changes, as they adapt to their new context and possibilities for ministry.

Some church members have been active in reform efforts, but others have objected to any political role for the church. Siegfried Holtz, who works with youth groups in the East Berlin area, has marched in demonstrations for change, as have young people and some pastors. He and his wife took their children to one such march to show them "this is our thing to do and say."

But Holtz has no interest in leaving East Germany. "I love this country. It's my home," he said. "I've heard the call in my life of Jesus to full-time service. Here are people who need Jesus. Because I'm one of these people, growing up here, Jesus wants me to be here and tell the good news."

Some tensions were felt before the Berlin Wall opened among church members who considered emigration and those who felt strongly believers should stay.

When many East Germans started fleeing the country through Czechoslovakia and Hungary, Baptist pastor Uwe Dammann and deacons of Lichtenberg Baptist Church in East Berlin wrote an open letter to the congregation, encouraging them to stay. They warned of the danger of becoming "enslaved to the modern societal drive for luxury, travel, freedom. It would be a shame to have one's worldly goods replace love for God and neighbor."

They admonished the church to put God's Kingdom first. "We believe God's Kingdom should be built all over the world, including (East Germany). The desire to leave the mission field of (East Germany) is not from God. God trusted us with service in this land, he will help us complete it," they said.

Paul Gerhart Boese, pastor of Blankenfelde Baptist Church in East Berlin, said the open wall will help address this problem. "The opening of the wall relieved so much pressure. "We won't lose many more. People are talking openly with hope of changes," he said.

"I hope the evangelical free churches realize we can't hold ourselves out of the society in which we live. To be credible as a church, we've got to do more than proclaim the gospel. We must be socially and politically active," Reichelt said.

The amazingly quick and comprehensive changes have East Germans trying to adjust and assess what they mean. "For me, it's a sign that God makes history, not only man," said Ulrich Materne. "Whether all that's new is totally positive is another question. What people do with the new possibilities is their responsibility."

The wall may not fall soon, but if enough doors and windows open in it, East Germans may thrive without suppression and isolation. A sign near the Brandenburg Gate in East Berlin warned, "National Militia Only." After the wall opened, someone penciled underneath, "And Everybody Else."

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

Scholar urges churches
to focus on relationships

By Pat Cole

N-CO
(SBTS)

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LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Churches must rid themselves of "institutional oppression" if they are to touch the lives of people, claimed church and community scholar Carl S. Dudley.

"If we want to mobilize the church of Jesus Christ, it is not by organizational analysis," said Dudley, professor of church and community at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago. Mobilization requires "the body of Christ that wants to touch other people and respond by caring and somehow making a difference."

Dudley addressed a national conference on small churches at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. The event was sponsored by the seminary's Dehoney Center for the Study of the Local Church and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

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Relationships provide the key for strengthening the body of Christ, Dudley said. He differentiated between churches that function as the body of Christ and churches that function as institutions.

For example, he said, the institutional approach to evangelism consists of leading people to faith and giving them a "saving knowledge of Jesus Christ." However, he said, evangelism in the body of Christ is helping people "find a place." People find faith and a "relatedness that cares for, is touched by and touches other people," he said.

Dudley also emphasized that churches find strength in their pasts. "The strength of the body of Christ is in its memory and in the bondedness that holds people through the struggles," he said. "They've been carried by the power of God in the past they've shared."

While history should not dominate or limit the life of churches, pastors tend to be too "future oriented" or "production bound," he said. Many churches "have been denied the power of memory by pastors who are so future oriented they don't think anything happened if they weren't there," Dudley declared.

Pastors often leave seminary with the desire "to be professionals" when their congregations want them "to be lovers," he said: "They don't want our professionalism less. They want our humanity more. The body of Christ is where we can be vulnerable to each other."

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Pastor extends ministry
as college football chaplain

By Mark Wingfield

F - HMB

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PITTSBURGH (BP)--Pastor Dan Crow has two congregations. One worships in a small building with a bell tower; the other plays in a 56,500-seat stadium.

Crow is pastor of Pittsburgh Baptist Church and chaplain to the University of Pittsburgh football team.

For 13 weeks each fall, Crow spends Friday nights and Saturdays with the Pitt Panthers. He often travels with them to out-of-town games, attempts to talk individually with each player before a game and goes to the hospital with injured players.

He will travel with the team to El Paso, Texas, for the John Hancock Bowl Dec. 30.

Before each game, Crow leads a brief session of singing, Scripture reading and prayer. He gives motivational talks based on Scripture and counsels with players facing various problems.

"If we're playing Notre Dame, they pray a lot," he quipped.

Crow, who is a member of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee and immediate past president of the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania-South Jersey, does the chaplaincy work as volunteer. He sees it as one of many ministries the church can perform in the community.

"I go in there and I say, 'I just want to be your friend,'" Crow said. "I rejoice with them and I weep with them.

"Football players need somebody to love them. They are loved by the masses but not by students, who see them as a privileged class.

"And if you ask a football player how he feels about playing for a university, he'll tell you he feels like a prostitute. If he doesn't produce, he's gone.

"I don't have that pressure on them. If they don't produce, I'm still a friend."

Crow hasn't tried to tackle his Saturday congregation with the gospel. Instead, he has run alongside them for three years, waiting for players to intercept his message when the time is right.

"My goal is not to have them whipped into heaven this week," he said. "My goal is to share a biblical message with them that will lead to a decision.

"You've got to be willing to invest time without an immediate return."

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In the third year, that commitment has begun to pay off in tangible ways. Several players and wives have made professions of faith in Christ, some have joined his church and his relationships with the players are deeper, Crow said.

This season, one player who previously had been polite but distant was glad to see the chaplain. "He put his arm around me and said, 'Could we sit down and talk,'" Crow recalled.

The player recounted how he had injured his knee the previous season and how his father had died of a heart attack during the summer. He told Crow: "I always heard what you had to say, but never thought it was for me. Now I've realized the things you say are true. I want you to know I've committed my life to Christ."

That player, like 80 percent of the team, is from a Catholic background. In fact, the University of Pittsburgh is considered a Catholic school where evangelicals -- and particularly Southern Baptists -- are a definite minority.

Crow's surprising opportunity came about because of his love for college students. Pittsburgh Baptist Church is located about three miles from the University of Pittsburgh campus.

On his own, Crow determined to spend time on campus witnessing to students. Through this outreach, he met the Panther quarterback coach, who became a member of his church and later invited Crow to one of the games.

"The chemistry hit," Crow said of his first encounter with the players. "I could relate to the guys."

Because of that, Crow was invited to become the team's permanent chaplain -- a role that had always been filled by a Catholic.

"It's not just that I am a Baptist," Crow explained of his ministry opportunity. "It's that I'm in a church that has a presence."

He sees this ministry as an important step in building good relations for Southern Baptists in an area where they are not well known. "It's building a positive image for Southern Baptists and it's building bridges that will last into the future," Crow said.

"We're going to see a lot more evangelism now. But we had to buy the ticket first."

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Annuity Board's Fixed Fund
to earn 8.9 percent in '90

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(A. Bd.)

Baptist Press
12/1/89

DALLAS (BP)--The Southern Baptist Annuity Board has announced a Fixed Fund earnings rate of 8.9 percent for 1990 and a one-time crediting of excess that raises the 1989 earnings rate to about 9 percent.

President Darold H. Morgan announced the 1990 earnings rate, noting an increase from the 1989 rate of 8.75 percent.

"We are also pleased that actual 1989 earnings will allow us to make an additional credit to accounts that will raise the effective annualized rate to approximately 9 percent," he said.

The Annuity Board offers four funds to which members may direct their contributions while employed by Southern Baptist Convention churches and entities. These funds have varying earnings and degrees of risk. Each member decides his own risk tolerance.

The Fixed Fund is the board's most conservative plan fund. Plan members' accumulations in the Fixed Fund are invested in fixed income assets. The primary objectives are preservation of principal and predictable returns.

Fixed income assets presently in the Fixed Fund include guaranteed investment contracts issued by major life insurance companies, bank investment contracts and related deposit products issued by commercial banks, and high-quality money market investments.

The other funds are: the Balanced Fund, a mixture of common stocks and bonds; the variable fund, comprised of common stocks and securities convertible to common stocks; and the Short-Term Fund, primarily money-market investments.

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