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Demand exceeds expectations,  
causes delay for literature

By Frank Wm. White

NASHVILLE (BP)--Literature orders of twice the projected increase and a higher than expected demand for promotional copies have required a last minute reprinting of some Sunday school literature products published by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board and delayed shipment to some churches.

Inventories of about 30 titles are low, and about 19 of those titles are being reprinted, according to Dick Gillespie, manager of product development for the Sunday school division.

"For other titles we are substituting alternate products or have enough in stock to meet the demand," Gillespie said.

When titles are out of stock, other titles may be substituted when appropriate, he said.

The quarterly Sunday school production includes about 95 titles, Gillespie explained. Actual circulation for the October/November/December 1990 quarter was 9.763 million. Printing contracts for the same quarter of 1991 were for 10.5 million copies allowing for sample copies of the newly improved curriculum and a 1 percent increase in church orders.

"Both demands for sample copies and church orders were beyond projections," Gillespie said.

Sample copies totaled more than 300,000 compared with the 106,000 for the same quarter last year. The projected increase in church orders is about 2 percent for a projected total of 9.991 million units rather than the anticipated 9.860 units, Gillespie explained.

"When we print materials there is always the danger of having too many or too few," Gillespie said. "Trends tell us how much to produce, but when we have a major change in materials, the trends go out the window."

Titles that are being reprinted should be available from printers by Oct. 15, according to Jim Shull, director of the board's procurement and administrative services department.

"We are sorry some churches did not get literature when they needed it. We hope they will be understanding of a delay that has resulted from success of the literature," Shull said.

If the reprinted literature is delivered from the printers on schedule, back orders should be shipped to churches by Oct. 18, said Allen Adcox, senior manager of inventory management.

Shifts in orders for some titles have been as much as 15 percent, Adcox said.

Youth materials particularly have shown a "phenomenal increase" in orders, Gillespie said. Following a 14-year decline in overall annual circulation of youth materials, the October/November/December quarter projected increase is 22 percent over the total for the same quarter of 1990, Gillespie said. Shifts of that nature have been difficult to predict, he observed, particularly when the demand is in late orders.

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"We want to be just responsive to those orders as to any others," he said.

Churches who ordered on time should have received their material in time to prepare for the first Sunday in October, Andy Dodson, director of the distribution services division, said.

It was difficult to determine from the board's ordering system how many churches actually will be receiving literature late because of the inventory problem, Dodson said.

Efforts will be made to call each church affected to explain the delay, Gillespie said.

Printing is under way for the January/February/March quarter, and some material for that quarter has already been received in the warehouse. Trends from the October/November/December quarter are being evaluated to consider early reprints of some titles for next quarter to avoid a repeat of this quarter's shortage, Gillespie said.

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Soviet gospel ads  
reaching millions

By Mike Creswell

Baptist Press  
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SHEFFIELD, England (BP)--More than 5,000 people a day respond to gospel-centered advertisements in Soviet newspapers and magazines, according to the German Christian businessman who places them.

Waldemar Murjahn of Mettmann, Germany, said he places Christian ads in key Soviet publications that reach 63 million subscribers. Because most authorities estimate several people read each copy, actual readership likely is much higher.

Total cost of the project to date has been only \$23,500, Murjahn said. He described the ministry at an international conference on Christian communications at the University of Sheffield in late September and displayed sample copies of the advertisements in an exhibit booth.

"Our commercial advertisements gave us the idea to put the gospel in paid ads," said Murjahn, who owns a chain of clothing stores in Germany.

Murjahn is a member of a Brethren church, which in Germany is affiliated with Baptists. He first organized other Christian businessmen into an organization called Advertising Mission to specialize in Christian advertising in Eastern European countries. Later he joined forces with a Christian organization called AMG (Advancing the Ministries of the Gospel), based in Chattanooga, Tenn., which mounts similar advertising campaigns in other countries.

He secured funding for the effort from Christian businessmen in Germany. "It's our joint venture in missions," he said with a laugh, referring to the many East-West joint business ventures being established these days.

Last year Murjahn began the project by placing an advertisement in Nedelja, a weekend magazine supplement for the major Soviet newspaper Izvestia, which has a circulation of about 3.5 million. The ad included an insert with the Gospel of John and outlined the steps to becoming a Christian. The \$3,000 advertisement netted about 40,000 responses, he said, adding, "This was still a test. We had not been prepared for the huge response."

Since then, Murjahn has referred those responding to Moscow Baptist Church, where pastor Alexander Kozynko and church members have organized follow-up, which Murjahn described as a "great challenge." One of the biggest brakes on the project, he said, was a fear the responses might overload those attempting follow-up.

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Between January and August, he placed an eight-ad series into one of the leading monthly magazines for women in the Soviet Union in cooperation with Soviet Baptists. A quiz on biblical knowledge was in the last ad and offered children's Bibles to those answering the questions correctly. The series netted 2,000 to 3,000 responses daily, he said.

Murjahn also placed an ad in Komsomolskaja Pravda, the world's most-read newspaper, according to the Guinness Book of World Records, with a circulation of 18.3 million.

In Poisk, a tabloid published by the Soviet Academy of Science, Murjahn arranged for ads to carry an article by a Welsh professor entitled "Why I As a Mathematician, Became a Christian." A professor from Northern Ireland wrote another ad for the publication entitled "Is Religion Opium for the People?"

"I just heard from home and we're getting 2,000 responses a day to this one," said Murjahn.

The recent failed coup attempt in the Soviet Union has helped open the way to such advertising, he said. A magazine for teachers, Utischelskaja Gazeta, rejected his efforts to place ads in the publication before the coup; afterwards it welcomed him warmly. More than 5,000 letters are being received daily from this ad. Since the coup he has placed Christian advertising in some publications that normally don't carry any advertising, he said.

Murjahn has arranged for an ad entitled "The Lord of the Universe," which explains Christmas, to be placed in the December issue of Arguments and Facts. The Soviet Union's largest weekly magazine, with a circulation of 25 million.

Because of the high response rates in the Soviet Union, Murjahn said he now is preparing a similar campaign in Czechoslovakia. He also would like to publicize the many Christian radio programs available in many languages and said he is open to cooperative ventures on that front. He dreams of establishing a press service that would continually place Christian articles and advertisements in Soviet media.

But Murjahn fears the opportunity to do such advertising in Eastern Europe may not be effective forever. Publications are discovering they can charge more for advertisements, and rates have risen sharply in recent months. Also, he fears Western cult groups will pick up on the approach to advance distorted views of Christianity.

Still, he is looking further east -- to China. "We must plan a conference to prepare for China," he declared firmly. "Nobody was prepared for the U.S.S.R. -- not the politicians and not the Christian organizations. They made a lot of mistakes. There must be advance preparation for the day China opens," he said in an interview.

Murjahn gestured to a fistful of Soviet newspapers emblazoned with Christian advertisements and shook his head with wonder.

"Imagine seeing Christian advertisements in these newspapers, the same ones that were under Stalin," he said.

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East Europe, Soviet changes  
affecting Christian media

By Mike Creswell

Baptist Press  
10/7/91

SHEFFIELD, England (BP)--Rapid changes in Eastern Europe are forcing Christian communication workers to change their methods as they scramble to present the gospel to formerly closed and atheistic lands.

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Discussion of the changes came during a week-long conference on Christian communication sponsored by the International Christian Media Commission, an interdenominational group with members from 60 nations. More than 700 delegates attended the sessions held at the University of Sheffield.

In one session delegates backed an informal effort to encourage cooperative efforts between evangelical churches and organizations in the East and West to get more Christian programming onto the airwaves of the East. Some participants will follow up that effort later this year.

Many in the West assume Christianity will come "bubbling up" now the pressure of communism is off, said one speaker who recently visited Estonia. But that's not happening, he said, because atheism remains firmly entrenched. People have a sympathy for Christian things, he added, but in one televised church service, worshipers were so unaccustomed to church they had to be coached on what to do during the service.

About 70 percent of the people in Romania don't even know the Lord's Prayer, reported Christi Tepes, a Baptist from Bucharest and a producer with Romanian National Television. He chairs the Radio/Television Department of the Romanian Evangelical Alliance.

Romanian television has gone from two hours of dull political programming to 22 hours of daily programming, said Tepes, 33, in an interview. But it often features programs imported from the West that have poor values. Some imported cartoons for children even support witchcraft, he said.

"We're looking for programs to improve the nation and promote the gospel," he said. Some Christian organizations in the West have provided specials and films, but only one in 10 answered his letters asking for materials. Meanwhile, Bahai's, Mormons, yoga adherents and other non-Christian groups have put forth programs and advertisements for Romanian television.

Tepes wants good-quality Christian films to dub into Romanian for showing on national television. He would welcome documentaries on the Bible and programs highlighting outstanding Christian laity and missionaries.

"With no restrictions, everyone is thinking to catch the nation," he said. "It's good to think in terms of spiritual battle."

The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and Campus Crusade for Christ will show a popular film on the life of Jesus on Romanian television, Tepes said. The Christian Broadcasting Network will show its animated Christian series, "Super Book," beginning in November, added Michael Little, CBN group vice president working with overseas operations. The series shows two modern-day children, Chris and Joy, interacting with biblical characters. CBN invested \$4 million in the series, now shown in 22 languages.

The Evangelical Alliance will follow up on mail responses to the program. CBN has ordered 1 million copies of the gospel of Luke in Romanian for use in follow-up, Little said. The series also will air on Bulgarian national television starting in January and has been bought for showing on Hungarian television. "Czechoslovakia is in the works," Little said, but changes in government leaders have slowed efforts to place the program in Poland.

Twenty-six episodes of "Super Book" have shown on the Soviet national television network, he added. The second 26 episodes will begin in January.

When the program offered to send gospels of Luke with pictures to children who answered three questions from the series, more than 1 million letters flooded their five mail centers, Little said.

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Along with "Super Book," CBN has produced three prime-time programs that will air multiple times in the Soviet Union. The first one, for children, will air in November and feature 700 children as a studio audience. A second program for young people is called "What Are You Living For?" A program discussing the Ten Commandments will air Jan. 7, the Orthodox Christmas Day.

"The formats are very innovative and fast-moving, especially by Soviet standards," he said. CBN has invested \$500,000 in the three productions in the Russian language. CBN will pattern the Soviet effort after a similar media blitz it conducted in Latin America that involved extensive television programming, advertising and distribution of food and 13 million tracts.

The Soviet campaign will focus on getting names of prospects to Baptists, Pentecostals and others for follow-up. "A way to measure effectiveness is whether churches are started and disciples are made," Little said.

Political changes in Eastern Europe also will mean changes for Christian radio ministries, said Jim Bowman, director of field operations for Far East Broadcasting Company, based in Los Angeles.

Far East broadcasts from 32 stations in more than 120 languages around the world. It long has had 24-hour shortwave broadcasts into the Soviet Union. They have had solid audiences because people had little else to hear on government stations. But Bowman said studies by the British Broadcasting Corporation have shown people stop listening to overseas stations when three or four local stations are set up and carry more open programming.

"That's pretty much been the pattern in the world," he said. "State radio has been boring, but with openness they're getting better local programming that will compete with us."

To counter the trend, some organizations will try to develop local programming from within the region. "That's a problem because broadcasting still isn't developed among Christians within the U.S.S.R.," Bowman said.

But one Christian broadcast in Finland has gotten access to at least 1,500 small stations by putting programs onto a state government network. "They got a million letters in the first month," Bowman said.

Buying time from outside the Soviet Union through brokers can cost eight to 10 times as much as when Russians themselves buy it within the country, he said. The same situation applies in some other Eastern European countries.

Soviets also resist outside organizations going in with lots of money to buy buildings, Bowman said, comparing the Soviet Union today to Japan just after World War II. "Lots of missionaries set up organizations in Japan after the war; they're still essentially foreign," he said. Now the thing to do is buy up inexpensive land in cities, then develop local, autonomous ministries using local people, and give guidance and consulting help, "but make it wholly Russian to begin with," he suggested.

Despite the prevalence of Christian radio broadcasting around the world, research has discovered about 160 people groups who number more than 1 million each but have no Christian programming. Because of this, Far East has joined with HCJB World Radio, SIM International/ELWA and Trans World Radio to establish programs for these groups in their languages.

This dovetails with efforts of Southern Baptists and other mission-minded Christians to reach the many people groups in the world who have little or no gospel witness, Scriptures in their own languages, missionaries, or other help. This so-called "World A" numbers about 1.3 billion people -- 24 percent of the world's population. They live mostly in a band stretching across northern Africa and southern Asia.

As Christian communicators increasingly open up the airwaves of Eastern Europe to the gospel, they will move closer and closer to these other areas, which constitute the "final frontier" in foreign missions.

Washington session begins  
national Bible reading chain

By Frank Wm. White

NASHVILLE (BP)--A Bible passage read Oct. 2 by a member of the fastest growing Southern Baptist Hispanic church in the Washington, D.C., area was the first in a chain of Bible readings in every state convention before the National Convocation on the Bible in Nashville on April 21-23, 1992.

Margarita Pinta, from Iglesia Bautista de Washington read in Spanish the first of four passages in the worship service at the Thomas House Baptist Senior Adult Center in Washington.

The Bible reading ceremony was the focus of a joint service with the staff of the District of Columbia Baptist Convention and residents of the Baptist senior adult center, according to Paul Clark, director of the department of Christian education for the D.C. convention.

Other passages were read by members of the convention staff followed by a sermon by James Langley, executive director of the D.C. Baptist Convention.

After the service, the Bible was sent to the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware and will in turn be sent to each state convention before being returned to Nashville for the National Convocation on the Bible.

"We wanted to kick off the reading in the nation's capital and end with a presentation at the convocation," explained Charles Bridgers, coordinator of the project in the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's Sunday school division.

The National Convocation on the Bible will be a three-day event sponsored by the Sunday school division with support from other Sunday School Board components and other SBC agencies.

Planners said they hope as many as 8,000 people will participate in the conferences, workshops, plenary sessions and other special events at the Nashville Convention Center.

After being read in 41 locations throughout the nation, the special Holman Bible will be returned to the Sunday School Board during an evening celebration session of the convocation, Bridgers said.

The Bible is a Holman "Read to Me" Bible in a special leather binding with presentation pages for signatures of representatives of two persons from each state.

Each state convention is to send the Bible to the next state on the reading schedule until it reaches Tennessee for a reading on April 5, 1992. A representative from the Tennessee Baptist Convention will present the Bible to Sunday School Board representatives at the convocation, Bridgers said.

"Each state convention is planning its own event for reading the Bible," Bridgers said. One state is planning to read the Bible in a historic church while others plan readings at state capitol buildings.

Each state will be provided a suggested Scripture text and may add others to meet the needs of their ceremonies, Bridgers said.

"This is an opportunity for a public event in each state convention to highlight the Bible," Bridgers said. "With this reading, the Bible will be literally moving across our continent."

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A list of state conventions and reading dates mailed to state Baptist newspapers by SSB bureau of Baptist Press.

Harrison leaves NOBTS  
'fulfilled' from service

By Breena Kent Paine

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--"Fulfillment" is the word George W. Harrison uses to describe what he has received from 31 years of service at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, now that he is taking medical retirement from his position as professor of Old Testament and Hebrew.

"I'm always honored when a student will say, 'For the first time the Old Testament came alive to me,'" said Harrison, who strove to show Old Testament characters as "contemporary, and not plaster of Paris saints."

He said he felt his role was "to share with (students) the continuing revelation of God through the Scriptures, showing its relevance to our changing times."

Harrison did this by "dialoguing with the Old Testament, letting the characters speak to the contemporary situation, (because) I think that a number of people never have an idea of the everyday life of the Hebrew person."

Harrison was a native of Aetnaville, Ky. He received a bachelor's degree from Georgetown College; the bachelor of divinity and doctor of theology degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.; and additional study at Union Theological Seminary, San Francisco Theological Seminary, and the Toronto School of Theology.

Harrison was pastor of churches in Kentucky and associate professor of Bible and philosophy at Georgetown College before joining the NOBTS faculty in 1960. He said he continued to serve as interim pastor of churches in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama to help him more effectively teach and counsel the contemporary pastor.

The seminary's student body 30 years ago, Harrison said, totaled only about 800 on campus, with no off-campus extensions. Now, however, over 3,300 students attend the seminary and its extension centers in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, and Puerto Rico.

Among other changes at the seminary, Harrison served under three presidents and two acting presidents; and has seen at least 50 faculty members "come and go."

"I've been amazed at the administration's ability to secure replacements of equal quality with those who are departing, so we have not suffered a weakening of academic strength and outreach of our faculty," he said. "Through all the changes we've had, a bond (continues to develop) between the new faculty and the existing members of faculty and administration, ... a bond strengthened by prayers and fellowship."

The biggest change in the past 31 years of Harrison's life, however, has occurred in his family, he said. He and his wife, Jean, moved to the campus with a one-year-old daughter, Janet; two years later, twins David and Carolyn were born. Now the Harrisons have three grandsons.

Harrison himself is now 65 years old. "I've not dreaded my birthdays, but rejoiced in each one, not as millstones," he said, "but as steppingstones."