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WASHINGTON -- Senate vote apparently nearing on RFRA.
CROATIA -- Yugoslav and Southern Baptists seek help in a troubled land; photos.
KENYA -- Small things -- even crutches -- make big difference to refugees; photos.
ST. LOUIS -- Missouri students clean flood-ravaged St. Louis area.
COLORADO -- Air Force cadets find fellowship, spiritual nourishment through BSU; photo.
NASHVILLE -- Three Baptist colleges names to magazine's Top 100 list.
NASHVILLE -- Correction.

Senate vote apparently
nearing on RFRA

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
9/27/93

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Religious Freedom Restoration Act apparently is nearing a vote in the Senate more than three years after its original introduction.

A unanimous consent agreement has been reached among the Senate's members setting debate and a vote on RFRA for Oct. 22 or later. Although it is possible RFRA, which is bill number S. 578, could be brought to the floor by the Senate leadership before then, it is unlikely.

RFRA, which is intended to restore a previous standard of protection to the free exercise of religion, appears to have an excellent chance of passage, but an amendment which limits its application appears certain of being introduced. The amendment would provide an exemption for prisons, thereby preventing prisoners from being protected by RFRA.

The coalition of more than 65 organizations supporting the bill opposes an exemption for prisons. Attorney General Janet Reno has said such an exemption is unnecessary, but some state attorney generals have called for an amendment excluding prisons.

The coalition contends an amendment is unnecessary because the courts will apply the "compelling interest" test to enable prison administrators to maintain order while allowing for limited religious freedom for prisoners.

"We urge Southern Baptists to ask their senators to oppose the prison amendment and support the Religious Freedom Restoration Act," said James A. Smith, director of government relations for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

RFRA was introduced first in 1990 in response to that year's Employment Division v. Smith opinion in which the Supreme Court ruled government no longer has to demonstrate it has a "compelling interest" before restricting the free exercise of religion. Under the Smith ruling, it became easier for government to limit the religious expression of citizens.

The Coalition for the Free Exercise of Religion includes both the CLC and the Baptist Joint Committee, as well as a diversity of groups such as Concerned Women for America, American Civil Liberties Union, National Association of Evangelicals and People for the American Way.

The House of Representatives approved RFRA in May. President Clinton has said he will sign the bill.

**Yugoslav and Southern Baptists
seek hope in a troubled land**

By Marty Croll

ZAGREB, Croatia (BP)--Like cool water on parched lips, Nela Williams' words about Baptists in her homeland are welcome relief to someone hunting down hope in the bitter chaos of Yugoslavian bloodshed.

"When the song says, 'In Christ there is no east or west,' that's really true when you think what binds us together -- our common faith," said Williams, a Southern Baptist missionary and native of Zagreb, Croatia's capital.

The spirit of unity allows Baptists to pour out their lives over the land. They've fed and nursed refugees and are still looking for ways to help.

"We're first Christians, then Croats or Serbs. This is how it should be," said Williams, a third-generation Baptist who continued as a missionary after her husband, James, a native of Atlanta, died in a 1980 automobile accident in Yugoslavia.

Phone lines have been cut, roads demolished and blocked. But prayer among Baptists travels across military lines undetected by the Bosnian, Croat and Serb armies scurrying to consolidate land gains before peace requires them to live side-by-side with each other.

Factions of the three largest republics once comprising communist Yugoslavia have failed repeatedly to honor cease-fire papers hammered out by their leaders. Now they face peace forced on them by such powers as the United States or United Nations -- if either decides to use military muscle.

Each faction names one of the others as the evil aggressor. But among Baptists, no one points a finger, Williams said. "We don't talk politics. We talk about Christian beliefs and trust in the Lord, and we don't take sides."

Baptists of all ethnic backgrounds are too busy working together to meet human and spiritual needs to play politics, take sides or battle each other. Non-Baptist leaders say Baptists will be in the best position of any religious group to help after the killing stops because their faith sees beyond ethnic barriers.

Historically, Croats have been identified with Roman Catholics, Serbs with Greek Orthodox and Bosnians with Muslims. Protestants are few. Multi-sided civil war -- which quickly became anarchy -- broke out after the central communist government fell in 1990 and republics in Yugoslavia began declaring their right to exist as separate nations.

Serbs, who generally dominated the central government, began using force to expand Serbia into Bosnia and Croatia. Human rights watchdog groups have accused Serbs, Bosnians and Croats of ethnic cleansing -- trying to rid the land of other ethnic groups. The result: hundreds of thousands of refugees created; whole towns decimated and residents raped; surviving men, women and children homeless -- many tossed into barbed wire prison camps.

The United Nations High Commission on Refugees asked Southern Baptist missionary Bill Steele of Columbus, Ga., earlier this year to help coordinate Baptist involvement in a U.N. project to provide school supplies to 130,000 displaced children. Baptists also cooperate in several projects to feed refugees and couple relief projects with spiritual ministries.

Baptists planned to package about 1 million notebooks, 780,000 pencils, 40,000 paint sets and ton of chalk, said Steele, who coordinates Southern Baptist relief works in the republic. They used Red Cross channels throughout Serbia and Montenegro -- a southern republic loyal to Serbia -- to distribute them, employing Baptists and refugees in the region.

Steele moved his family from Belgrade, capital of Serbia, to Ljubljana, capital of Slovenia, in May. Slovenia, separated from Serbia by Croatia, is relatively peaceful now, after defending its right to stand separate from Serbia. Steele finds it easier to travel from there than from Serbia because of wartime measures.

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His ties with UNCHR not only increase the visibility of Southern Baptists in the region, but allow him ease of entrance into areas of the republics where the denomination funds food projects through local Baptists.

In August, the Foreign Mission Board gave \$250,000 for feeding refugees and \$200,000 for a cattle project, both in Croatia. The money to feed refugees will buy 350 tons of food -- 700,000 meals for 10,000 people.

The cattle project resulted after Southern Baptists, at the invitation of the nation's vice president, sent a team of cattle breeding experts to Croatia to help refurbish the farming economy. The team proposed spending the \$200,000 to place 200 pregnant heifers on small farms. A central coordinating team of Baptists and other humanitarians will manage the project.

Officials figure the war has sliced Croatia's farming output by about a third, with more than a fourth of the cattle either destroyed or stolen.

"This country is based on the small farmer," said Steele. "I mean a couple cows, a couple pigs, a couple chickens."

Southern Baptists in Virginia sent the owner of a cattle operation and an animal scientist to join a short-term mission veterinarian in Croatia. They met with family farmers, high-tech farmers, ministers of agricultural and local officials there to explore every aspect of the cattle breeding needs.

Rather than bringing in cattle from outside Croatia, Baptists would buy them from a large farm once owned by the communist government. A farmer receiving a cow from the project would be responsible for returning a calf, helping the project support itself.

It's just a beginning in remaking the morale of people whose whole lives have been torn out from under them.

But if Baptists have their way, the new nation that rises will be powered not by a spirit of racial competition, but by unity around Jesus Christ.

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(BP) photos (two, horizontal; one vertical or horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Outlines available on SBCNet Newsroom.

Small things -- even crutches --
make big difference to refugees By Craig Bird

Baptist Press
9/27/93

MANDERA, Kenya (BP)--When the world scrambles to keep a dying nation like Somalia alive it gets to be a big, big job.

Small things get lost in the rush.

In the Somali refugee camp in Mandera, Kenya, most projects cost hundreds of thousands of dollars and impact tens of thousands of people.

A project that helps 58 people isn't that big of a deal, unless you're one of the 58 -- or unless you're a volunteer who has found a small way to make a big difference in their lives.

You can fit 58 pairs of custom-made crutches in the back of a small pick-up; distribute them in a couple of hours and even make adjustments and give lessons in how to use them; and spend only \$500 in the process.

That's exactly what short-term mission volunteers Frank Weiss of Waco, Texas, and Steve Brawner of Wynne, Ark., did this summer in the refugee camp in Mandera.

They ran across an earlier survey done by Southern Baptist missionaries in Kenya identifying refugees who needed crutches. The report had been submitted to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees with no results.

So Weiss and Brawner got together with the camp chapter of the Disabled Association of Somalia, updated the list and started measuring. They contacted the Kenyan prison in Mandera and negotiated a contract with the prison workshop.

A gift of \$500 from First Baptist Church of Decatur, Ga., paid the bill.

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"It feels good sometimes to do something that has almost immediate results for the good," Brawner said. "We wanted to provide something concrete to give needier refugees some tools to help themselves."

Some of the 58 crippled people had never walked with crutches before and had to be coached. A few had roughly fashioned sticks to lean on. Others crawled from place to place.

But not anymore. And that isn't such a small thing after all.

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(BP) photos (two, vertical) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutlines available on SBCNet Newsroom.

**Missouri students clean
flood-ravaged St. Louis area**

**Baptist Press
9/27/93**

ST. LOUIS (BP)--Leon Ray of Crystal City, Mo., sits among memories on his flood-ruined back porch. Surrounding him are items he can't bear to throw in the dumpster on his front lawn.

A broken cuckoo clock and tattered American flag lie at his feet. His son's mildewed army uniform is draped across a framed picture of John Wayne and his wife's wrinkled Bible rests on the sill of his combination home and photography studio.

The warped, stained products of his trade are piled in a trash heap waiting for removal. The "Photographer to the Stars," as his business card reads, sifts through photographs of wildlife, people, and generations of family, and slowly shakes his head.

Ray knows loss. He also knows hope, which came in the form of a clean-up crew of Missouri Baptist students. The students were a few of the nearly 600 participants at the Missouri Baptist State Student Convention "Special Assignment" Sept. 24-26 in St. Louis.

The convention, originally scheduled for Windermere, Missouri Baptist's state assembly, was moved to St. Louis after Missouri Baptist disaster relief officials asked for flood clean-up crews in July and August. Missouri has been continually hard-hit since April by the flooding Missouri and Mississippi Rivers and their tributaries.

Participants cleaned homes and churches filled with mud, sandbagged against newly-rising floodwater, worked in a relief warehouse and fed victims in an inner-city soup kitchen.

Missouri Baptist Convention student ministries department director Shirley Williams said the student convention's change of format more accurately reflected this year's convention theme of servanthood, "Towels and Basins."

"The theme of Jesus serving, cleansing and modeling for us was reflected in what we did during the weekend," she said. "It was an attempt to make a practical application of the theme, to demonstrate the purpose of servanthood, and to respond to the obvious needs of those involved in the flood crisis."

"With a theme on servanthood, we didn't feel like this could be 'business as usual' with such a great need," said convention co-planner Jerry Carmichael, Baptist Student Center campus minister for the University of Missouri in Columbia.

"The students went home with a greater appreciation for those material things that they have," said Williams. "I also believe they went home with a deeper understanding for the meaning of servanthood, a commitment to be sensitive to the needs around them and God's leadership in their lives."

Heavy rains in the three days preceding the convention forced planners to reevaluate work areas almost hourly. Elisha Tabb, volunteer coordinator for St. Louis Metro Baptist Association's disaster relief efforts, said the new rains made the week "unusual." "On Thursday, we realized we couldn't get to some of the places we were going to clean because of flash floods and high water. It was constantly changing," she noted, "but other places opened up."

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Students formed teams by schools to work in nine flooded areas across St. Louis and in small, outlying areas. One of those areas was the community of Lemay, where students cleaned and gutted small, wood-frame homes.

Lemay resident Alfred Lynn said students from UMC and Northwest Missouri State in Kirksville, "tore out my hardwood floors, ceiling and walls. If they hadn't gutted out my house, the mold would've gotten it," he exclaimed. "They saved me about 30-40 man hours at \$200 an hour."

Lori Eakin and Jennifer Keck, both third-year students at the University of Missouri in Kansas City, sandbagged in Lemay. Both swatted at swarms of bees that stung several students during cleanup, but neither was disappointed the convention changed meeting locations.

"It would be kind of hypocritical sitting in an auditorium just talking about helping someone else," said Eakin. "But it's real hard to see people's homes and what they lost."

Several colleges were represented at First Baptist Church in Fenton, where a flash flood left water in the sanctuary and two inches of mud covered the lower floor of the education building, along with children's toys, baby beds and cooking equipment from the kitchen.

Terry Coker, First Baptist's minister of education and youth, surveyed the damage and directed cleaning efforts under a blaze orange rain poncho. He noted the students reduced the church's cleaning time from two days to one.

"The State Student Convention has given us manpower to do things the membership could not provide," he said. "There was no way to get everyone together this quickly. Having the students here this fast means we're able to save a lot of furniture and help the mildew from spreading."

Karen Holder, a Missouri Baptist College in St. Louis sophomore, was covered in grime as she shoveled a mud and sewage mixture into a wheelbarrow in the church's basement. She said the benefits of working far outweighed the costs.

"The worst part is the smell. I can't even describe it. And I will not go into that room. There's a snake in there," she said. "This is the perfect opportunity for flood relief, though. I wanted to find a way to get involved."

Students also heard keynote speaker Esther Burroughs, assistant director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's lay evangelism department.

"When we can be abandoned to the will of Christ," she said during Saturday evening worship, "we will know how to reach out and touch the world in a powerful way and all of the glory will be given to God and none to man." Burroughs spent Saturday cleaning Leon Ray's home.

Ray looked at the memories surrounding him and bowed his head. "I can't say what we would have done if they had not come.

He then looked out at the young workers in his yard, reached down and touched an iron coffee table. "I can't lift this alone, but many fingers can raise it."

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Air Force cadets find fellowship,
spiritual nourishment through BSU By Chip Alford

Baptist Press
9/27/93

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (BP)--Laughter, hug-prefaced greetings and good-natured teasing fill the air as 50 college students crowd into the "Eagle's Nest" on a cool September evening. This is no retreat center, just a large, comfortable home at the foot of the Rocky Mountains in Colorado Springs.

At first glance, the gathering seems much like any other Baptist Student Union meeting across the country, but a closer look reveals the uniqueness of the ministry.

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As the students begin taking their seats on metal folding chairs and a circular sofa in a large sunken den, a photograph of a F-16 jet tacked to the wall is easily noticeable, as are half a dozen students dressed in military uniforms. Freshmen cadets at the U.S. Air Force Academy, they are still required to wear their "service dress" when they leave the academy grounds. They are here with several upperclassmen cadets and students from three area colleges to participate in the weekly Saturday night meeting of the USAFA-Metro BSU.

Part of tonight's meeting includes a testimony from Adam Graham, a senior cadet from Spartanburg, S.C.

"It's really easy to get close to God as a freshman because you're really under fire a lot of the year," he says, apparently directing his comments to the freshman cadets. A couple seem to nod in agreement.

The pressure on first-year cadets is tough. In addition to a full academic load, they are assigned numerous other military duties and endure a barrage of orders from upperclassmen who often refer to them as "SMACKs" (Soldiers Minus Ability, Coordination and Knowledge).

"The stress level can get pretty high, but it's all part of the training," Barrett McCann, a junior cadet from San Antonio, said.

That stress level is one reason many cadets first become involved in BSU, McCann said, adding it offers them a chance to "kick back, relax and just hang out. Plus, the music and Bible study are good and the people (here) are my best friends."

Those are words Dwain Gregory likes to hear. Director of the academy BSU for almost 10 years, he has worked hard to provide cadets with a "home away from home" atmosphere at the Eagle's Nest, where he lives with his wife, Marilyn. His younger son, Scott, now a college student at Colorado State University, grew up around the cadets, viewing them as "my bigger brothers."

"I considered becoming a cadet myself," Scott, who is preparing for a career in student work or missions, said. "Some of them really took me under their wing. It was really a good influence in my life, seeing the work of God right here in my own home."

A long-time veteran of student work -- he served in West Virginia and northern Virginia before moving to the Rockies -- Gregory has found his ministry niche at the academy.

"I really hope God doesn't call me anywhere else. Being here is like having your cake and eating it, too," said Gregory, a career missionary appointed by the Home Mission Board who also serves as director of student ministry for the Colorado Baptist General Convention.

"The students here are the literally the cream of the crop from all over the country," he said, referring to the academic prowess of the cadets. According to an academy brochure, 80 percent of Air Force cadets graduated in the top 10 percent of their high school class, 68 percent were members of the National Honor Society, 27 percent were National Merit scholars and 83 percent earned athletic letters. The average high school grade point average of incoming cadets is 3.8.

"Because of their schedules and the academic load they carry (some cadets take between 21-27 class hours each semester) they are making a real commitment just by being here," Gregory said.

In addition to Saturday night BSU meetings, Gregory also leads a Monday night Bible study at the academy and frequently meets with cadets one-on-one or in small groups for Bible study, counseling or "rap sessions." He also takes his group on yearly mission trips.

"I try to keep the ministry focused on discipleship and evangelism and lay the groundwork to help students discover God's call on their life," Gregory said. "The cadets end up in high-level positions all around the world. I really try to impress on them the importance of being a 'missionary' wherever they are."

Though the cadets may be the most easy to notice students at meetings, they are only part of the USAFA-Metro BSU. In recent years, Gregory has expanded the ministry to include students from area schools like the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, Colorado College and Pike's Peak Community College. In fact, for the first time in the group's history, this year's BSU president is a civilian -- Sean Cole, a senior at UCCS.

"They are really two different worlds," Cole said, referring to the difference between college and academy life. "Sometimes I have a hard time relating to some of what (the cadets) are going through, but I think it's good that we have a diverse group."

In many ways, Gregory said the two groups are more alike than different. "The cadets have the same needs as other college students. They like to date, play games, have fun. They miss home and wonder about their future. They are college kids first and military officer candidates second," he said.

After some singing, a time of prayer and Bible study, the BSU meeting winds to a close with a skit performed by several members -- a takeoff on "Beverly Hills 90210." Cadet McCann, who has dreamed about being a pilot since junior high, wears fake sideburns to portray one of the characters.

Then all the students, cadets and "civilians" alike, form a circle around the den, join hands, and sing a few verses of "Lean on Me."

"There really aren't any rivalries between schools," Cole explained earlier. "We try to work together."

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

**Three Baptist colleges named
in magazine's Top 100 list**

**Baptist Press
9/27/93**

NASHVILLE (BP)--Three Baptist colleges have been named to Money magazine's Top 100 "Best College Buys" for 1994.

Baylor University, Waco, Texas; Samford University, Birmingham, Ala.; and Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, N.C., were ranked 33, 38 and 70, respectively, as schools with Southern Baptist ties in the top 100.

The magazine analyzed more than 1,000 universities and colleges to identify the 100 best values, "schools that give you the most for the money."

As regional best buys, Baylor ranked fourth overall in the Southwest while Samford ranked 10th and Wake Forest 20th overall in the Southeast.

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Billy Graham to address Mohler inaugural worship," dated 9/24/93, please note the following addition:

Following the inaugural service, renowned evangelical theologian Carl F. H. Henry will address a luncheon for seminary faculty and other invited guests. Henry was founding editor of Christianity Today and is the author of numerous volumes on theology.

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