

From the G.C. President

March 9, 1993

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Robert S Folkenberg

1. Crisis in Macedonia: Due to the difficulty in maintaining administrative oversight from the South Yugoslavian Conference, Trans-European Division leaders visited Skopje, Macedonia February 26-27 to discuss the establishment of a separate church structure for this republic. The process was halted by a disruption, caused by a small group of self-appointed members who took over Church headquarters. The group (estimated to be 10% of the 400 members), led by a former pastor and avid nationalist, issued an ultimatum to all pastors in Macedonia, asking them to sign statements of allegiance or be dismissed. Failing this, they threatened the ministers and their families with violence and, in fact, physically attacked some of our ministers and the elder of the Skopje church. On Sabbath, Dr. Jan Paulsen, TED president, met with 150 members in a rented hall. After church Dr. Paulsen consulted with the members about the future of church activities in the republic. He emphasized that strong convictions regarding the independence of the church and its structure within the republic need to be disciplined and governed by church policy, order and Christian behavior. "When feelings of nationalism and ethnic consciousness rise to the fore, as is regrettably the case in much of former Yugoslavia, it has devastating consequences for relationships between peoples. Sadly, the church is not sheltered from this. And these sentiments are at the root of the rebellious upheaval by the small group of anarchists in our church in Macedonia", said Dr. Paulsen. The local, loyal leadership was advised to take, where necessary, all possible legal steps to secure ownership of local church properties.

2. Voice of Prophecy celebrates 50 years in Brazil with evangelistic explosion: Young people from North America will join youth in Brazil to assist Voice of Prophecy and other speakers in 90 crusades in Salvador, Bahia. The climax will be Sabbath, September 4, in an 80,000-seat arena celebrating evangelistic victory and 50 years of *A Voz da Profecia* in Brazil.

3. Bright spot in the Middle East: The Middle East is the greatest challenge the Adventist Church has in terms of the small number of members compared with the population of the region. The world wide ratio of Adventists to the general population is 1:799, while in the Middle East it is 1:50,500, the lowest ratio in the world.

One middle-eastern country, which cannot be named, is a bright with hope, for recently many opportunities for gospel proclamation have opened. This country now boasts the most rapid per-capita church membership growth in the world. However, though growth is rapid, it has only just begun, for we have only 2,500 members working in a population of over 25,000,000!

One year ago the Middle East Union sent six teams to open work in six targeted cities. Success was so great that they laid plans to enter six more cities. As of December, 1992, four of these new teams were in place, and as of March 1 the other two teams had arrived. Bicycles have been provided for each team. Adventist young people from existing churches volunteer to move to these cities. They sell Adventist books, conduct 5-day stop smoking programs, give Bible studies, start branch Sabbath Schools thus laying the ground work done for evangelistic meetings.

One evangelist, who is working with the youth teams, just returned from a 10-week trip and reported "walking on foot for many days, riding trucks as they were available." He and the team members conducted small efforts and gave Bible studies, during the trip he baptized 75 people. A fact finding trip is now under way, exploring more of "the land that yet remaineth."

4. Publishing breakthrough in Britain: More than 1,000 Christian bookshops in Britain carry Adventist literature, reports the Trans-European Division. Britain's Stanborough Press published over 20 new titles during 1992. The most recent success is *Albania: Who Cares?* a best selling account of humanitarian aid efforts for Albania which has sold at the rate of 1,000 copies per week over the last 3

months.

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Dear Presidents: Please rush this by fax or overnight mail to each pastor so it will be received by Sabbath, March 13.

WACO SITUATION: Due to the extended crisis in Waco, the General Conference and the North American Division have set up a Crisis Management Team in Waco to direct media releases.

Elder Gary Patterson, assistant to the president of the North American Division (in Texas for this purpose), will be serving as our official spokesperson for inquiries from North America. Requests for additional information must be directed to him. Inquiries from other divisions should be directed to Shirley Burton at the General Conference. **It is vitally important that the information and message we provide to the media are consistent and accurate, and this can only be assured if we have designated spokespersons.**

The following are two items to assist you in responding to questions about the situation in Waco, Texas: 1) A brief media statement for you to use in responding to any inquiries about this topic, and 2) an announcement we urge that you make during your worship service, or include in your church bulletin.

If you are contacted by the news media, please provide them with a copy of this statement. If you are asked for additional information, kindly indicate that you are sorry, but they will need to **contact Elder Patterson at the Southwestern Union office. Tel. (817) 295-0476.**

I understand that members and pastors are deeply concerned about media coverage of this event. We are implementing a comprehensive Crisis Management Plan to help correct inaccuracies and restore a positive image for the Church. **You can help tremendously by asking your members NOT to respond to media reports, stories and talk shows—even though the reports may be inaccurate.**

We do want to address consistent reporting errors, but this should be coordinated by the team of professionals working on this project.

MEDIA RELEASE: The Seventh-day Adventist Church has no affiliation with the Branch Davidians or any other cults. Along with all other people of good will, we express our deep sympathy to the families who have lost loved ones in this tragedy, and our prayers are

with these individuals.

The Adventist Church provides an array of services and programs which focus on Christ's caring model of meeting the needs of those around Him. These services and programs include:

- a worldwide network of hospitals, clinics and mobile health screening vans;
- an international disaster relief agency to help victims of hurricanes, floods, tornadoes and other disasters;
- the world's largest Protestant school system.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has more than 7 million members with mission outreach in more than 200 countries. Our parochial school system includes 78 accredited universities and colleges and nearly 6000 accredited elementary and secondary schools. The Adventist Church is a major and highly respected contributor to health care in the United States and around the world. We operate 162 hospitals, 88 retirement homes and 310 clinics.

CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENT: The situation in Waco, Texas, is tragic, and our hearts go out to the families of those who have lost loved ones at Mount Carmel. Please remember these families in your prayers, and continue to pray for a peaceful resolution of this standoff. Also, please continue to pray for guidance as we work to overcome the misconceptions about our Church that have been communicated in the media.

With the assistance of a team of crisis communication experts, the General Conference is implementing a comprehensive crisis plan to help correct inaccuracies and restore a positive image for the church. You can help tremendously by NOT responding personally to media reports, stories and talk shows—even though the reports may be inaccurate.

As part of our plan, we do want to address significant reporting errors, but to do this most effectively, it is essential that all information be consistent and that we have ONLY ONE individual speaking to the media. Elder Gary Patterson is serving as our Church's spokesperson in North America for this situation and is on-site in Texas. Thank you for working with us on this matter. Please continue to pray that this situation will be resolved without further loss of life and without additional misunderstanding of the Church.

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