

From the G.C. President

July 28, 1997

Robert S. Folkenberg

O DATELINE TRINIDAD: Watching hurricanes cross the Atlantic, travel down "hurricane alley" and narrowly miss Trinidad passing to the north has persuaded its 1.3 million citizens that God has a special place in His heart for Trinidad. After all, this large island (1,980² miles/5,130² Km) was named for the Holy Trinity in 1498 by its first European visitors. It is also blessed by natural resources (oil and gas) and a unique asphalt lake from which huge quantities are dug and replaced naturally.

The Seventh-day Adventist message first arrived in Trinidad and Tobago by literature sent from Southampton, England by John Loughborough. In 1891, William Arnold moved from the United States to Trinidad and supported himself as a Literature Evangelist. The first company of believers was organized in 1895. Today it has 50,000 members meeting in 130 churches.

Hundreds of CUC alumni traveled from many continents to celebrate the college's 70th anniversary. Friday morning, I visited several government officials including Prime Minister Basdeo Panday, and in the afternoon, I toured the college campus. On Sabbath, 12,000 members and guests packed the Queens Park Oval Cricket stadium for morning worship services (broadcast live to the nation by radio and television) and an afternoon panel discussion and ordination service.

This trip was special for personal reasons--my mother went with me. She lived in Trinidad for six years as a girl, was present for CUC's first groundbreaking ceremony in 1927, was baptized in the Maracas river that runs through the campus, but never returned since leaving in 1933. It was an emotional experience for us to find the place in the river where she was baptized.

O GOOD NEWS FROM CYPRUS: Due largely to religious prejudice, the Cyprus Ministry of Interior had withheld the licenses necessary to obtain title to a building purchased four years ago in Nicosia, Cyprus for the production of radio programming. We just received the good news that the courts, to which we appealed, ruled in our favor. After re-examining our case, the Ministry of Interior has now authorized us to proceed with the formalities which will lead to ownership of the building. We can now continue the production of our Arabic and Farsi radio programs for AWR without being in danger of eviction.

OPRESIDENT BORIS YELTSIN vetoed a bill that would have sharply restricted all but a few specified "traditional" religions in Russia. His action followed weeks of controversy and criticism by human rights activists that Russia was on the verge of returning to its authoritative past. Yeltsin said "numerous provisions of the bill curb constitutional human and civil rights and freedoms, make confessions unequal, and are inconsistent with Russian's international commitments."

"There can be no democratic society where the interests of any minorities ... are not protected," Yeltsin said in an appeal to the legislature which passed the bill by big enough margins in both houses to potentially override the veto.

Alexander Bulekov, a spokesman for the Orthodox Church (which actively lobbied for the bill), said, "It's

possible parliament will take into account some of the criticism and amend it, and we expect the representatives will eventually overcome the president's rejection."

Please pray that the Lord will hold back these restrictions and that we can fully utilize every moment to spread the word of our Lord's imminent return.

Off the Back Burner

Segment 74: We are continuing our series on the "weight of evidence" that affirms the authenticity of Ellen G. White's writings. Experiences like the following have often happened when reading her books alone provides compelling evidence of her divine credentials. Long before a reader knows anything about the author, her books and articles have driven home the conviction that God was speaking through those pages. The experience of Francis D. Nichol, editor of the church paper for twenty-one years, reflects this experience. In the late 1890's his young parents, were living in a sparsely settled part of Australia where reading matter of any kind was scarce they found a stray copy of the *Review and Herald* and concluded, after one of Ellen G. White's articles quickened their hearts, that "The person who wrote this article seems to be inspired." They wrote for more information about this singular writer, and soon they were members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church--a decision that opened up the future to their young son and to his own distinctive contribution to making others aware of this woman who "seems to be inspired" (F. D. Nichol, "Ellen G. White and Her Critics," Dedication page).

What is happening to these readers who know nothing about the writer? They are reading a quiet, coherent presentation of the gospel that finally makes sense to their heads and speaks to their hearts. That is one reason why I have often emphasized in these segments that the message is greater than the messenger, the content more important than the container. Why? Because Ellen G. White's highest contribution to the church and thus to the world is a reclarification of the Bible's teaching on salvation. She has shown that Biblical truth is interrelated, that to permit error on any doctrine is to invite confusion and incoherence to the entire theological system. For example, if one is confused on the nature of man, one is likely to misunderstand the nature of sin, health principles, and matters relating to the hereafter.

Without understanding the origin of sin, men and women cannot grasp how sin will ever be eradicated. Without understanding the plan of salvation from the cosmic perspective, humans inevitably focus on themselves, working from self-centered motives. Ellen G. White's clear Biblically informed instruction, on all these matters as she unfolds the Great Controversy Theme has given us higher and broader insights into the plan of salvation.