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'Reasonable Doubt' Test Not
Required To Prove Obscenity

By Stan Haste

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that juries in obscenity cases do not have to apply the "beyond a reasonable doubt" standard when deliberating whether the materials are obscene.

States may require the standard in civil cases involving obscene materials if they so choose, but "that choice is solely a matter of state law," the high court held in an unsigned 6-3 opinion. The federal constitution, the majority said, does not require such a standard.

Santa Ana, Calif., officials brought the appeal after a trial court imposed the beyond-reasonable-doubt requirement on a jury hearing a case involving 17 films shown at a local theater. Applying the standard, the jury concluded that 11 of the 17 were obscene beyond a reasonable doubt, while four were not obscene. It was unable to reach a verdict on the other two.

Following the decision, the City of Santa Ana filed a cross-appeal, arguing in a California appeals court that the beyond-reasonable-doubt standard is generally recognized to apply to criminal, not civil cases. But the state court upheld the jury finding.

In reversing the California panel, the high court majority declared that the Supreme Court "has never required the 'beyond a reasonable doubt' standard to be applied in a civil case." Two other standards of proof, "preponderance of evidence" employed in most civil cases and the more rarely applied "clear and convincing" standard, have traditionally been used in civil cases, the court elaborated.

Three justices dissented, including William J. Brennan Jr. and Thurgood Marshall, who declared that the Constitution requires a strict standard of proof when First Amendment rights are at stake.

Justice John Paul Stevens also objected, saying he found it "distressing" that the court would consider "novel questions of this character so easy as not even to merit argument." He also expressed surprise "to find the court reaching out to decide such a question when its jurisdiction to do so is doubtful" and when no conflict on the issue exists in lower courts.

Although the majority ruling may help local officials in the regulation of obscene materials by sending them a clear signal that the beyond-reasonable-doubt standard does not have to be applied to determine obscenity, observers believe it does not perceptibly alter the high court's basic view of obscenity.

That view, announced in 1973, states that local communities may generally decide for themselves what constitutes obscenity.

Angola May Allow Mission
Specialists To Reopen Work

By Robert O'Brien

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The government of Angola may allow missionary personnel with technical expertise to reopen work in the African nation, according to a Southern Baptist missionary who visited there.

Betty McCown Dixon, former missionary to Angola now serving in Portugal, said conversations with government officials in two provinces indicated that such personnel--doctors, nurses, teachers, veterinarians, agriculturists and others--would be welcome to help in the "reconstruction of Angola."

Southern Baptist missionaries evacuated the civil war-torn nation in August 1975, a few months before Portugal granted Angola's Marxist government its independence. No missionaries have since been able to return as residents.

Mrs. Dixon, who served in Angola with her husband, Curtis, before transferring to Portugal, spent about two weeks in Angola on a visitor's visa in August 1981, to participate in the dedication of a new church building.

She suggested the re-entry possibility in a recent report to Davis Saunders, the Foreign Mission Board's director for eastern and southern Africa. Saunders said he has encouraged the Dixons and the Baptist Convention of Angola to explore the situation.

Mrs. Dixon noted that life would be difficult for anyone who would go because of food shortages and lack of other items often considered necessary by Americans. But she said Baptist churches continue to meet and are growing.

"There are now 55 churches and more than 35 missions. . . with a membership of approximately 21,000," she said. "The government so far has imposed no other restrictions on worship (except that) they can have services only on church property."

Churches in the Baptist Convention of Angola had a reported 12,000 members before missionary evacuation in 1975. Some estimates place current membership above 21,000. Mrs. Dixon said she has asked for up-to-date statistical data.

In a visit to 14 of the 38 churches in the Uige Province, Mrs. Dixon noted that "almost everywhere we went, the church buildings were full with, at times, more than 400 in attendance."

She spoke at an associational women's meeting at First Baptist Church, Uige, which was held especially for the visit. "Associational leaders in Uige are interested in having Curtis, and perhaps me, too, as official speakers for the dedication of a new church building in the latter part of 1982," she said.

At the church in Huambo that she came to Angola to help dedicate, she said an estimated 2,500 people attended a five-hour service, which resulted in 23 decisions for Christ.

Mrs. Dixon added that churches in Luanda, Angola's capital, have suffered the most in their work but are starting to grow again.

"After almost hitting rock bottom, First (Baptist) Church (in Luanda) is beginning to grow again. There were only six members present who were there when we left in 1975, but there were 85 in Sunday School and preaching attendance easily passed 100," she reported.

Mrs. Dixon said she found the Baptist Book Store in Luanda still open but with a severe shortage of Bibles in the languages and dialects of the area and not enough funds to buy what it needs. She said she also found most of the mission property secure, except for some mission houses on which back taxes and other costs are due.

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Lottie And
The Socks...

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TAEJON, Korea (BP)--It was a small package.

Southern Baptist missionary Rolla M. Bradley of Taejon didn't recognize the sender's name when the clerk at the Baptist Bookstore handed it to him so he simply tossed the packet into the back seat and drove on to a church appointment.

Late that evening at home, Bradley opened the package. Inside were two pairs of men's socks and a letter from a man he didn't know, a minor criminal serving time doing maintenance work at a Korean Army base near the southern edge of the Korean Demilitarized Zone.

Last June, Bradley and four Korean Baptist pastors held evangelistic services in the area where the man was working.

"I want to send these two pair of socks to you, missionary," the man wrote. "I want to thank you for coming to the base where I am and preaching about Jesus Christ. I am so happy I heard and have accepted Jesus as my Lord."

Bradley told of the incident in a report he mailed back to the United States as he reflected on the season during which Southern Baptists work to strengthen their support for more than 3,000 missionaries around the world through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

Looking down at his feet, he remembered Romans 10:15, part of which reads in the King James Version of the Bible, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace. . . ."

"As I write I look at the socks I am wearing," Bradley said, "and I see the most beautiful pair of socks I have ever worn."

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Brotherhood Makes
Two Staff Changes

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12/3/81

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Mike Davis has been named director of marketing and J. Michael Hatley has been named editor of Brotherhood materials in two staff changes at the Brotherhood Commission.

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Davis, an 11-year commission employee, replaces Jack Childs in the marketing position. Childs became director of support services, filling a vacancy left when Roy Jennings resigned to become director of communications at Baptist Memorial Hospital in Memphis.

As director of marketing, Davis will handle promotion of Brotherhood products and periodicals, advertising, public relations and audio visuals.

Hatley's duties will include scheduling and editing special materials, editing Brotherhood Builder, and serving as production editor of Missions Digest.

A native Georgian, Davis came to the commission in 1969 as associate editor of Probe and Pioneer Plans. He later became editor of the two youth publications, a position he held until becoming editorial services director in 1979.

Hatley, born in Fort Worth, Texas, came to the commission in 1980.

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Samford Dean Named
Palm Beach President

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12/3/81

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (BP)--Claude H. Rhea Jr., dean of the Samford University School of Music in Birmingham, Ala., has been named president of the Palm Beach Atlantic College.

Rhea, who will assume the presidency of the 14-year-old college Feb. 1, 1982, succeeds George R. Borders, who resigned to become executive secretary of the Florida Baptist Foundation in Jacksonville.

Rhea, 54, a native of Carrollton, Mo., has been dean of the School of Music at Samford since 1969. Previously, he was consultant for church music and mass communications at the Foreign Mission Board, vice president for administrative affairs and chairman of the division of fine arts at Houston Baptist College and dean of the school of church music at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

He is a graduate of William Jewell College and Florida State University. He has done additional study in education and administration at Columbia University and the University of Rochester.

Palm Beach Atlantic College, affiliated with the Florida Baptist Convention, has 600 students and 59 faculty members. It offers bachelors degrees in a dozen disciplines.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Palm Beach Atlantic College.

Tarrant Pastors Signal Soviet Leader Brezhnev

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Forty-five Tarrant Baptist Association pastors signed a telegram asking Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev to release three Baptist pastors from Soviet prison where Georgi Vins says they are being held.

Vins, former Russian Baptist pastor exiled to the United States in 1979, told a meeting of the association's pastors conference that American Christians support their counterparts in Russia very little. Far more effective, he said, are the efforts of American Jews for their Russian counterparts.

After Vins' familiar recitation of persecution in the Soviet Union, Charles Wade, pastor of Arlington's First Baptist Church, said he was going to send a telegram to Brezhnev. Forty-four joined him asking that Pyotr Rumachik, Yakov Skornyakov and Dimitri Minyakov, all ill, be treated humanely and immediately released.

"It may not have any effect," said Wade. "But we wanted Brezhnev to know that here are 45 real people who pastor real churches who know about the situation and are offended by it."

Vins said they were imprisoned because of their evangelistic efforts, as are 122 other Baptist leaders. Vins, speaking through an interpreter, said American Christians do not realize the religious persecution suffered by Soviet Baptists.

"American tourists are shown churches that are full, and are told there is religious freedom," Vins said in an interview for "MasterControl," a Southern Baptist radio program aired on 895 stations. "But the atheistic Soviet Government has been carrying on a cruel warfare against the church of Jesus Christ for 64 years."

Vins, 52, said he appreciated the help Baptists in the United States give Russian Baptists, but he believes they could do more. He urges letter-writing to Soviet officials asking for the release of religious prisoners. He credits that kind of pressure with helping obtain his release.

"American Jews do a lot to defend Russian Jews, but what are American Baptists doing about persecuted Baptists?" he asked.

Vins conducted an evangelistic campaign in Ekibastuz, a town of 10,000 people in the Soviet Union. He was arrested with Bible workers and imprisoned. He said he was one of the prisoners who had been held in the town.