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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee  
901 Commerce #750  
Nashville, Tennessee 37203  
(615) 244-2355  
Herb Hollinger, Vice President  
Fax (615) 742-8919  
CompuServe ID# 70420.17

**BUREAUS**

**ATLANTA** Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522  
**DALLAS** Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232  
**NASHVILLE** Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300  
**RICHMOND** Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va., 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151  
**WASHINGTON** Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223

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Supreme Court hears  
Operation Rescue case

By Tom Strode

WASHINGTON (BP)--Operation Rescue-type blockades intended to prevent abortions discriminate against all women and should continue to be forbidden by federal courts, an attorney for several abortion clinics and the National Organization for Women told the Supreme Court in a case containing far-reaching implications for the pro-life movement.

Attorneys for the pro-lifers involved argued women seeking abortions are not a class deserving of protection under a 120-year-old civil rights law, and federal judges should not be allowed to fine rescuers.

The case, *Bray v. Alexandria Women's Health Clinic*, was heard by the Supreme Court Oct. 16, one day after Clarence Thomas was confirmed by the Senate. The case was heard by the other eight justices two days before Thomas was sworn in at the White House as the newest justice.

In November 1989, Jayne Bray, a Bowie, Md., pastor's wife and the mother of five children, and other members of Operation Rescue were enjoined by a federal judge in the Eastern District of Virginia from blocking access to Alexandria Women's Clinic and other abortion clinics in northern Virginia.

The judge found the Civil Rights Act of 1871, also known as the Ku Klux Klan Act, applied because rescuers deprived a class of persons, women, of their right to interstate travel to obtain abortions.

The 1871 law was passed to protect blacks, who recently had received their constitutional rights, from harassment by KKK members. Under the act, victims were granted the right to sue private offenders in federal court. Federal courts have used the same law in issuing injunctions against and fining Operation Rescue and similar groups in several other cases.

The judge's ruling was upheld by the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. The decision was appealed to the Supreme Court by Bray and her copetitioners, including Operation Rescue founder Randall Terry.

The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission joined the National Right to Life Committee in a friend-of-the-court brief arguing the KKK Act should not be used to protect the rights of women seeking abortions.

"The losers are all women," John Schafer, attorney for NOW and the abortion clinics, said in reference to Operation Rescue's tactics.

"When you target a right of women, you target women," Schafer said. "When you target a right of a class, you discriminate against the whole class."

Jay Sekulow, attorney for Operation Rescue, said only women desiring abortions, not all women, are the targets of blockades.

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In this case, "classification is defined not by gender but by activity, seeking an abortion," Sekulow said. The blockades "are not just aimed at women" but doctors and clinic personnel as well, Sekulow said.

"Here petitioners do not seek to deny to some what they allow to others," argued John Roberts Jr., deputy solicitor general of the Department of Justice. "They seek to stop all abortions."

Roberts presented the federal government's case before the Court. The Department of Justice had filed a brief siding with Operation Rescue.

Schafer's argument of his side's case from an abortion rights approach rather than an interstate travel one was a "strategic mistake," Sekulow said outside the Supreme Court building.

James Bopp Jr., counsel for the National Right to Life Committee and an observer of the proceedings, seemed to agree.

"I think they were on very tenuous ground there," Bopp said. "... to be arguing to a court ... the majority of whom do not believe that there is a right to an abortion in the Constitution ... that they ought to expand the right to abortion in this case.

"This case involves a fall-back strategy," Bopp said of the pro-choicers' approach in the face of a probable future overturning of the Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion, "that is trying to find some other place in the Constitution that will protect the right of abortion, and they're looking at the equal protection clause rather than the right of privacy.

"What the argument really amounts to is an expansion of the right to abortion, where not only states cannot protect innocent human life, but private individuals cannot protect innocent human life."

The justices questioned both sides frequently. Associate justices Antonin Scalia and Byron White seemed skeptical of Schafer's arguments for gender-based discrimination, while Sandra Day O'Connor especially questioned Sekulow's reasoning.

Sekulow told the justices such cases should not be in federal court but in a state court under charges for trespassing or public nuisance. It is necessary for it be in federal court because a "federal right is being attacked" and lower courts cannot provide appropriate relief, Schafer argued.

The Justice Department's position is not about jurisdiction but "how far this administration will go to pander to the anti-abortionists," Patricia Ireland, NOW executive vice president, told reporters afterward.

Operation Rescue's "hope is that the club of the federal judiciary has finally been taken out of the abortion industry's hands. ...," Terry said. "If we win, it's a victory for all protest groups."

The Supreme Court is not expected to release its opinion until next summer.

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Missionary ministers amid  
riot, fighting in Bucharest

By Mike Creswell

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BUCHAREST, Romania (BP)--A Southern Baptist missionary told protesters about Christ's peace during a violent demonstration by 4,000 coal miners that left three people dead during days of savage street fighting.

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Tear gas swirled around the home of T (NO PERIOD) and Kathie Thomas in late September as protesting miners swarmed onto their street pursued by police and army troops.

On the second night of fighting the miners were trying to march to the television station to air their grievances over higher prices announced for Oct. 1. They also protested low wages, poor working conditions and generally poor economic conditions afflicting the formerly communist country.

But armored vehicles blocked the two main streets, forcing the miners to spill over onto the street where the Thomases live. The clash awoke the missionary couple about 5 a.m. Miners set up a barricade in front of the Thomas home which the police later charged. Miners threw gasoline bombs in response and fighting broke out.

"A lot of tear gas and rubber bullets were flying," said Thomas.

While Kathie Thomas sealed windows in their home to keep out the tear gas, her husband went out on the sidewalk with his next-door neighbors and tried to talk to the miners.

Since Thomas only recently arrived in the country, he still speaks Romanian very haltingly. The miners told him that everyone in Romania -- the president, the prime minister and their own union leader -- had let them down.

"I replied that when we put our hope and faith in men, we're always discouraged, but when we put our trust in God, we're never discouraged," Thomas said.

"The miners were hungry and scared. You could see it in their eyes," he added. They asked the residents on the block to march with them and some did.

The timing of the riot was unfortunate, Thomas said, since his supply of Bibles and tracts was at the Baptist seminary where he teaches. Neighbors cautioned him not to drive out of the area during the conflict to get them.

The Thomases, of Atlanta and Cynthiana, Ky., and three daughters, ages 6, 4 and 2, arrived in Bucharest in September. Two older daughters attend college in the United States. The Thomases transferred from France to become the first Southern Baptist missionaries to work in Romania in half a century.

The couple said they felt safe, since the fighting was between miners and military-backed police force. But Thomas admitted he was a little worried, "because we didn't know how things were going to turn out. It was a pretty tense time."

The miners' protest, which broke out only days after the Thomases' arrival, forced the resignation of Romanian Prime Minister Petre Roman. The miners ransacked the Romanian parliament building.

Bucharest residents were worried and uncertain as word spread several thousand miners had commandeered two trains in central Romania and were descending on Bucharest, Thomas said.

During a similar visit last year the miners used brute force to help put down a student protest against the government. Six people were killed in those clashes.

This time, though, the miners themselves protested government policies. Inflation is running at 300 percent, Thomas said, "and people are having a really hard time." Bucharest residents are uneasy about their economic plight with winter approaching, he said.

As residents in Romania, the Thomases face some of the same economic conditions cited by the protesters. Food is scarce in Bucharest stores. Neither fresh fruit, milk nor potatoes are available, and much of the food that is available is of inferior quality, Thomas said. Water and electricity are shut off during the night as a conservation measure.

"Some of the pastors say they haven't seen milk for sale since the revolution," he said. "If we hadn't brought food from France, we would be having a hard time. As yet, we're experiencing no hardships. But if it's a cold winter it will be hard on people here."

Despite the economic hardships, Thomas remains upbeat about life and ministry in Romania. "It's truly an exciting time to be in Romania. The door is open wide and now's the time to step boldly through it," he said.

Thomas teaches missions and evangelism to third-year students in the Baptist seminary. Next year he will direct them in starting a church as part of their class work. He also is working with Ferintare Baptist Church to start a church for Gypsies in one of the city's poorer sections. Three Baptist churches have members who are predominantly Gypsies, he said, but no new churches have been started for them in many years.

Gypsies, a people group spread through much of eastern Europe, have their own language. Frequently poor -- and despised for centuries in Europe -- they're again becoming targets of persecution. Reports of violent attacks on them have increased as economic tensions and travel restrictions have eased.

In mid-October Czechoslovakia agreed to set up a commission to examine Gypsies' problems after gangs of skinheads attacked two Gypsies in Teplice-Sanov, north of Prague.

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SBC president stirred by  
Soviet spiritual hunger

By Donald D. Martin

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WICHITA FALLS, Texas (BP)--The sight of a young Ukrainian woman clutching her first Bible overshadowed the Kremlin's splendor for Southern Baptist Convention President Morris Chapman during his recent visit to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

"I was struck by the spiritual hunger of a people who have lived for so long under an oppression that we've not experienced in the United States," reflected Chapman after completing an 18-day trip sponsored by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. Chapman is pastor of First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Texas.

While in the Soviet Union, Chapman and his wife, Jodi, met with Baptist leaders in Moscow, Kiev and Odessa. He also preached in a number of churches and met with the first Southern Baptist missionaries assigned to the Soviet Union, George and Veda Rae Lozuk of Fort Worth and Corpus Christi, Texas. Besides the Soviet Union, the Chapmans visited Baptists in Hungary, Romania, Germany and France during the Sept. 24-Oct. 11 trip.

The Chapmans' tour included a number of the Soviet Union's historic sites. But the indelible image of the young Ukrainian woman, startled when she received a Bible, towers in Chapman's memory above the onion-shaped domes of St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow's Red Square.

"Once the young lady realized what she had been given, she clutched the Bible to her chest and said, 'Oh, I've wanted a Bible for so long. May I have another one for my sister? She has wanted one also,'" Chapman recalled.

A fragile window of opportunity is open for spreading the gospel throughout Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, Chapman said. "The urgency of the hour is so critical," he said. "I believe it is the decisive hour in Soviet and eastern European history."

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The Foreign Mission Board's "Green Alert" plans, which created a fast track for expanding mission work in the Soviet Union, are vital in seizing the historic moment, he said. "I wholeheartedly support the Green Alert approach in getting the gospel into these areas where crises have occurred."

The current Green Alert calls for deploying 116 missionaries in the 15 republics of the Soviet Union in 1992. Southern Baptists never have sent so many missionaries into a single region at one time. Plans also envision sending more than 200 shorter-term personnel to the region, including English teachers, student evangelists and theological educators.

While in Romania, Chapman preached in Oradea, Arad, Timisoara and Bucharest. He also participated in the 70th anniversary of the Baptist Theological Seminary of Bucharest. Southern Baptists assisted the seminary in the early 1920s by providing property and construction funds.

"Having Dr. Chapman here is a visible sign of the ties which have united us throughout the years," said Nicolae Gheorghita, general secretary of the Romanian Baptist Union, during the ceremony.

Chapman said he was captivated by the optimism of the Soviet and east European Baptist leaders he met.

"They had a certainty about their own spiritual destiny," he said. "In the churches I found people were filled with an exceedingly great joy. The Baptist leaders I spoke with are very optimistic about the possibilities in reaching countless people for Christ."

The Chapmans were accompanied in the Soviet Union by Ronnie and Jeana Floyd of Springdale, Ark., where Floyd is pastor of First Baptist Church; Fred and Leigh Lowery of Bossier City, La., where Lowery is pastor of First Baptist Church and president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention; and Don and Sue Wills of Dallas, where he is a deacon at Park Cities Baptist Church. The Willses also accompanied the Chapmans to eastern Europe.

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'Dottie' Allen, wife of former  
RTVC executive, dies

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Dorothy Marie "Dottie" Allen, the wife of a former Radio and Television Commission vice president, J.P. Allen, died Wednesday at a local hospital. She was hospitalized two weeks ago with bronchial problems, and just last week learned she suffered from an extremely aggressive form of lung disease. She was 76 years old.

The Allens moved to Fort Worth in 1963 where he was pastor of the Broadway Baptist Church for seven years.

"Mrs. Allen was the quintessential pastor's wife," recalls Pat Wooley, the current counseling supervisor for the RTVC. "She was very involved in the church, and a very warm and caring person. She will be missed by all of us."

She was born in Bedford, Va., and was a graduate of Longwood College in Longwood, Va. She received her master's degree in Christian education from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

In 1979, the Allens moved to California. While there she taught a class called "The Ministry of the Pastor's Wife" at Golden Gate Seminary from 1979 to 1983.

The Allens returned to Fort Worth in 1989, where they resumed membership at Broadway Baptist Church.

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She is survived by her husband of 53 years, of Fort Worth; her daughter, Trish Asmus of Coral Springs, Fla.; and two grandchildren. The family requests any memorials be made to the Dorothy Allen Memorial Fund at Broadway Baptist Church.

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Writing book on Holy Spirit  
changes WMU author's life

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Esther Burroughs never dreamed of shopping through the Bible for clothing. But she, and others, have been intrigued and empowered by the "wardrobe" they found there, she said recently.

Burroughs is the national evangelism consultant with women for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

While participating in a study of Judges 6 a couple of years ago, Burroughs heard Avery Willis, a manager in the discipleship training section of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, read a verse that struck a nerve in her.

"When he read 'The Spirit of God came upon Gideon,' it jumped off the page to me," Burroughs said. "The margin of my Bible said 'clothed Gideon.' When I got home, I studied further and realized all through the Old Testament it talks about the Spirit of God coming upon or clothing individuals."

Burroughs realized clothing individuals with the Holy Spirit was exactly what happened at Pentecost.

"The Spirit of God empowered them to do more than they ever thought or imagined," she said.

Little did Burroughs know then God was preparing and empowering her for a task ahead, she said.

Burroughs soon was asked by Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union to write the theme book WMU members would use during the 1990-91 church year. The subject was the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

The theme book, "Empowered!" is now in its fourth printing and has sold more than 40,000 copies. It is one of the highest-selling books WMU ever has produced for general church audiences.

Burroughs has heard story after story of ways the book has been used. Not only have WMU members read and studied the book, but men's groups and entire church congregations have used "Empowered!"

A member of a Methodist church in Tuscaloosa, Ala., read the book and then shared it with her pastor. As a result, the church began a group to minister within their church and community, she said.

"Their bulletin cover even quoted from the book," she added.

An Arkansas pastor told Burroughs he was leading his church to study the book.

"God is just doing awesome things in our church family as we have discovered the work of the Holy Spirit as he clothes and empowers us," he told her.

Burroughs attributes the book's success to the power of the Holy Spirit. She feels there are other reasons, also, for the book's success.

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Burroughs, who speaks all across the country, thinks men and women want to live a life that is fulfilled in Christ.

"They want to know how to touch the world in the ordinary, in the everydayness, in the marketplace, in the church," she said. "There's a great thirst to know God in such a way that it empowers them to make a difference."

Another reason for the book's success, she believes, is that through story illustrations, readers see how they can be clothed in the power of the Holy Spirit.

"As I speak about being empowered, I have been reminded that God is at work in the everyday, the mundane, the ordinary. I've felt the power of the Holy Spirit as I've shared these stories," she said.

"I've realized for the first time in my life that the Holy Spirit empowers me to do the things I do. It's kind of exciting to catch that concept!"