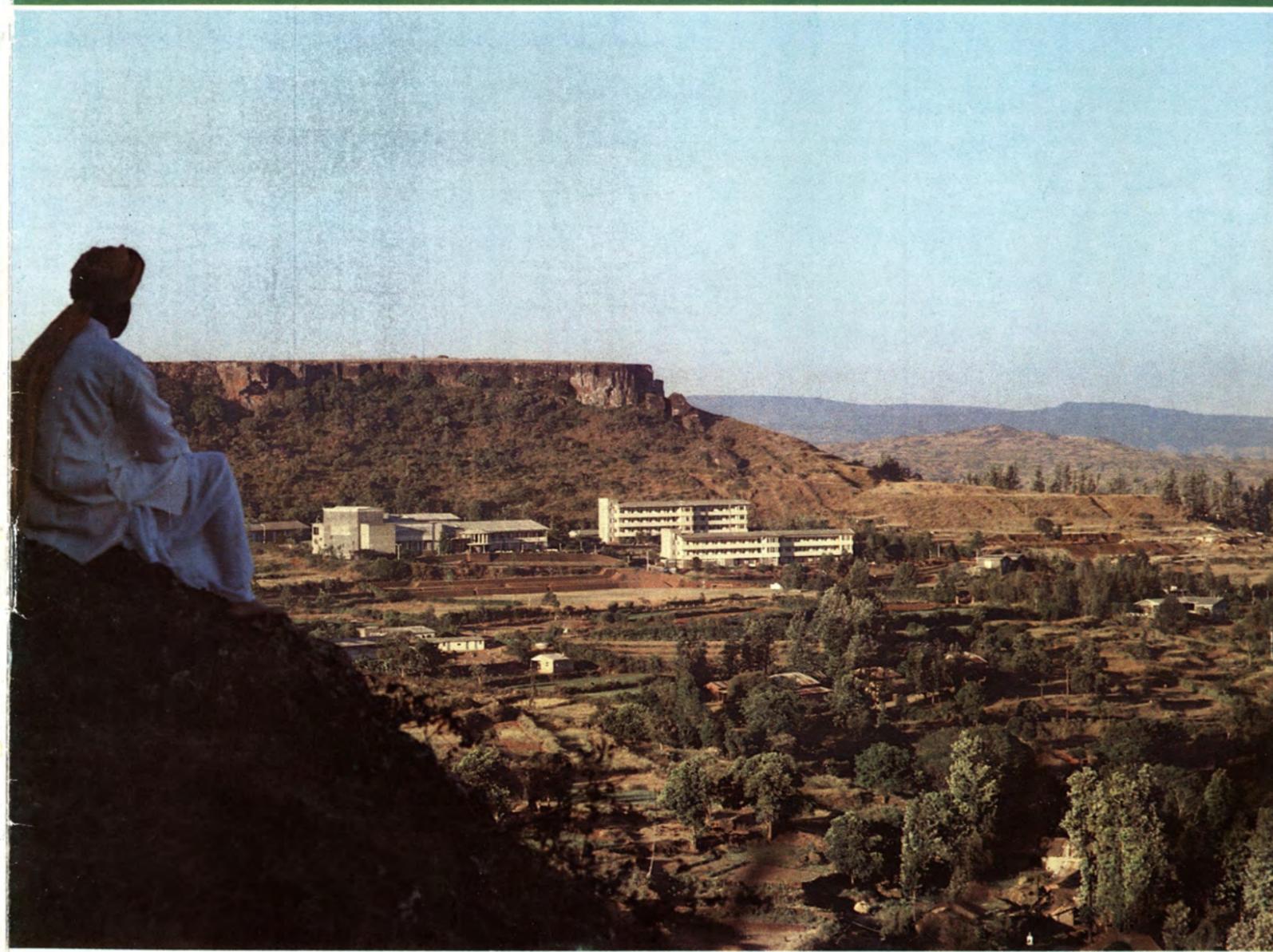


# Asia Plateau

Moral Re-Armament Centre, Panchgani,  
Maharashtra, India

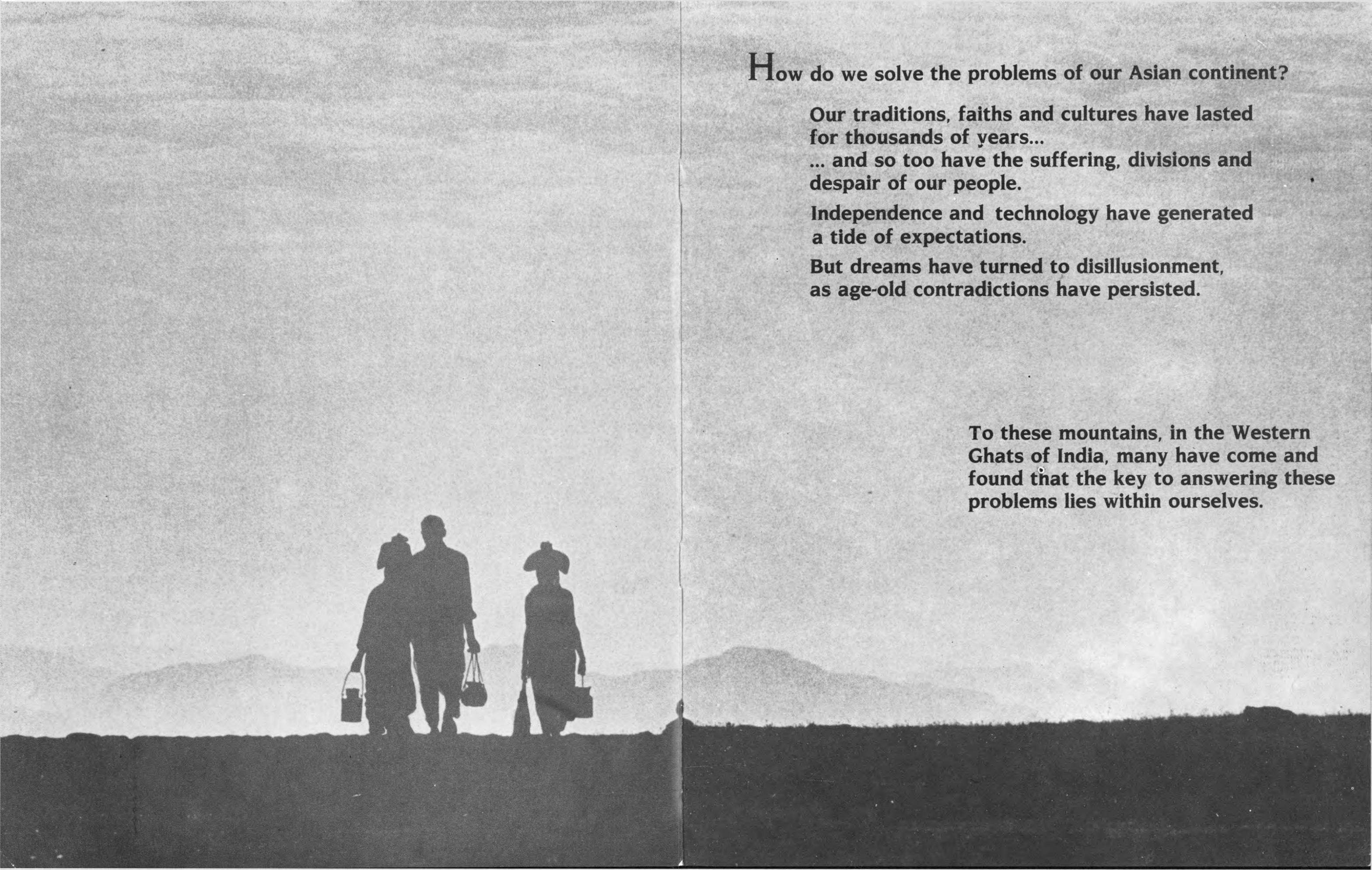


'Here I found the peace of mind  
to think about important issues  
I never considered before'



Published in India by Niketu Iralu, Panchgani,  
and printed by him at Usha Offset Printers  
and Modern Art and Industries, Bombay.  
Typeset at Mebasser Printing Works, Bombay.

10:—



**H**ow do we solve the problems of our Asian continent?

**Our traditions, faiths and cultures have lasted for thousands of years...**

**... and so too have the suffering, divisions and despair of our people.**

**Independence and technology have generated a tide of expectations.**

**But dreams have turned to disillusionment, as age-old contradictions have persisted.**

**To these mountains, in the Western Ghats of India, many have come and found that the key to answering these problems lies within ourselves.**

# Asia Plateau was created to encourage in people the concern, initiative and faith to cure the agonies our continent suffers.

In 1963 Rajmohan Gandhi led a 6500 km 'march on wheels', campaigning for a 'clean, strong, united India'. Thousands responded. So a series of Moral Re-Armament training camps were held, the first being at Panchgani, 200 kms from Bombay. Panchgani citizens suggested building a permanent training centre in the town. In 1966 a work camp began preparations on barren, rocky ground. Within a few years, this modern conference centre developed in lush green surroundings.

For 15 years, people of many backgrounds — politicians and peasants, priests and professionals, young and old — have met here to quest for a quality of life relevant to the age we live in, and a commitment to apply it in action.

'Moral Re-Armament is the old, ancient way of the East. It has given our philosophy a new orientation and given it wings'.

**G V MAVALANKAR,**  
first Speaker of the Indian Parliament



'Out of the stone and rock are springing flowers and fruit, food and buildings.

Out of the stone and rock of human nature  
are springing miracles of hope and solution.'

**ALAN THORNHILL,**  
British playwright, visiting Panchgani

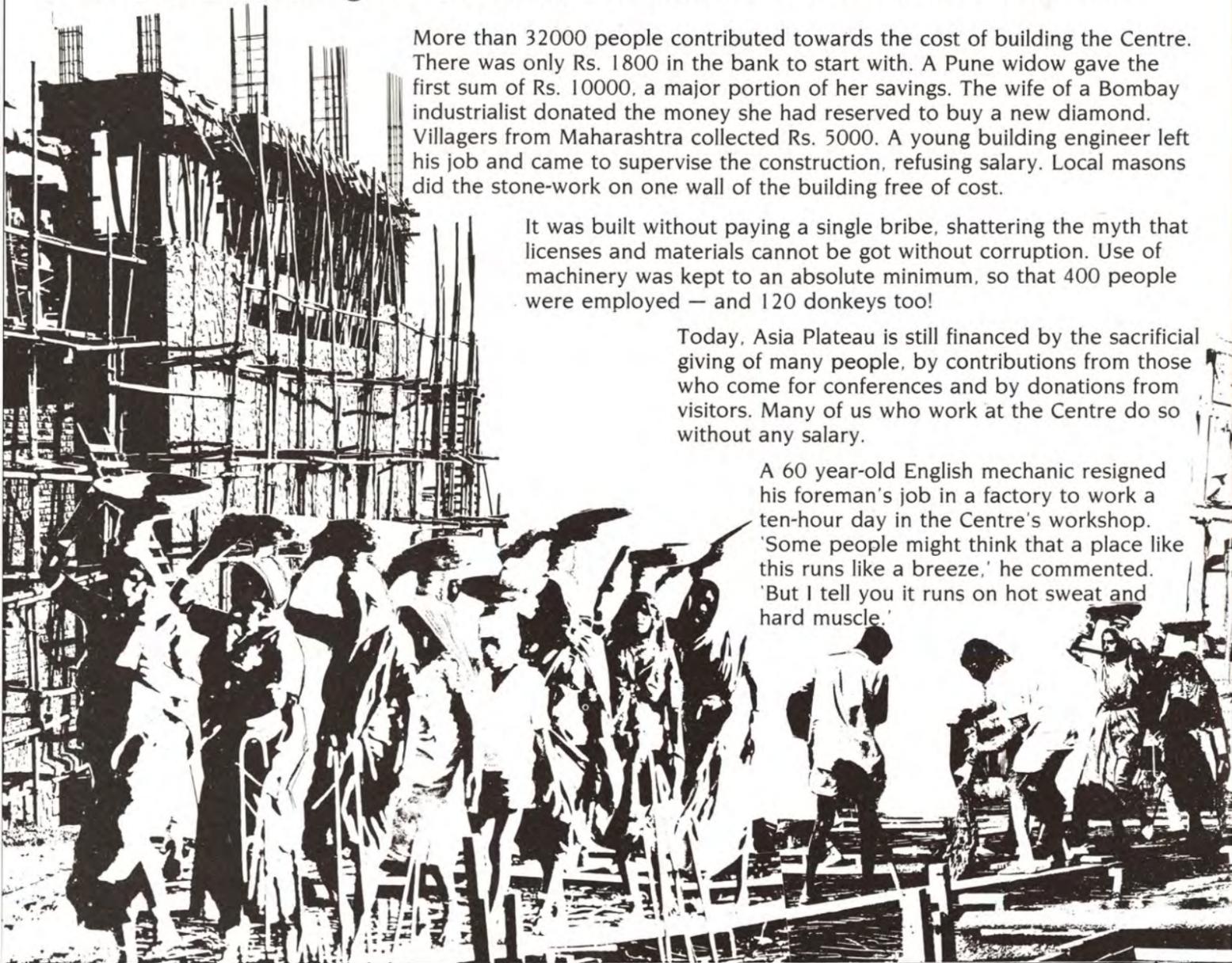
# It was built through the vision, sweat and sacrifice of thousands

More than 32000 people contributed towards the cost of building the Centre. There was only Rs. 1800 in the bank to start with. A Pune widow gave the first sum of Rs. 10000, a major portion of her savings. The wife of a Bombay industrialist donated the money she had reserved to buy a new diamond. Villagers from Maharashtra collected Rs. 5000. A young building engineer left his job and came to supervise the construction, refusing salary. Local masons did the stone-work on one wall of the building free of cost.

It was built without paying a single bribe, shattering the myth that licenses and materials cannot be got without corruption. Use of machinery was kept to an absolute minimum, so that 400 people were employed — and 120 donkeys too!

Today, Asia Plateau is still financed by the sacrificial giving of many people, by contributions from those who come for conferences and by donations from visitors. Many of us who work at the Centre do so without any salary.

A 60 year-old English mechanic resigned his foreman's job in a factory to work a ten-hour day in the Centre's workshop. 'Some people might think that a place like this runs like a breeze,' he commented. 'But I tell you it runs on hot sweat and hard muscle.'



Inside the buildings, (from top to bottom); a multi-faith prayer meeting in the foyer, the 400-seat auditorium, and the Jean Storey lounge.

A team of architects and engineers gave their services during construction. An Australian architect, Gordon Brown, and his firm did all the design work, worth Rs 2 lakhs, but charged nothing. 'The building of the Centre was a miracle of world-wide cooperation and provisioning,' he said. 'While participating in the programmes of Asia Plateau, I have seen the beginnings of a vast



transformation in the spirit of man. Mr Frederik Philips, then head of the world-wide Philips electrical industries, sits at the controls of the modern sound and six-channel translation system which the Philips company donated to the MRA Centre.

Muslim carpenters and craftsmen worked extra hours each day creating all the furniture and woodwork in the Centre. On Id they pooled together from their salaries and presented a donation to the Centre.



A Tamil bank worker sends Rs. 35 each month to keep the Centre running. Many like him regularly contribute. One day soon after the opening, there was no rice in the kitchen. That very day, a long line of villagers appeared, each carrying a gift of rice, which altogether totalled 75 kg.



As we pass the 15th Anniversary of Asia Plateau, we remember with profound gratitude all those who worked for years on its creation and construction, taking nothing in return. There were many from India; too many to name. But we owe our thanks particularly to those from different countries who came at their own expense and gave their expertise: Architect Gordon Brown from Australia, and a team of engineers and architects including David Neale, Bill Burton, Blair Cummock, Cyril Beall and Edmund Rutter (UK); Tom Babcock (Canada) and Dick Pearce (New Zealand). David and Margot Young (UK) who with Indian friends supervised the first stage of construction. Landscape gardeners Stephanie Burton (UK) and Francoise Caubel (France) who with Gunnar

Uhrenholdt (Denmark) created the gardens. Two generations of the Porteous family and Garfield Hayes (New Zealand), Stan Barnes and Spencer Brown (Australia) who developed the farm. Caterers Phyllis Bockock (Canada) and Karen Parsons (Sweden) who helped launch kitchen operations. Theatre technicians Lou Fleming (Canada), John Austin (UK) and Antero Tikkanen (Sweden). Also Peter Wood and Marlys Pearce (New Zealand); David Lancaster, Stan and Aileen Shepherd, Wilf and Alice Clarke, and Lyn Pattison (Australia), and many others.

Our special gratitude to Anil Kumar of New Delhi, Ramesh Shah of Pune, and John Porteous of New Zealand, pioneers of Asia Plateau, who are no more.



# Here we seek a compassionate concern for others ...

For any economic or social development to succeed we need a selfless care for the people affected. Without that our best plans often fail. Change, to be effective, must begin with a basic change in our attitudes to each other. The biggest hypocrite is someone who demands that others should be different but who is unwilling to face where he is wrong.



*'We Tibetans have suffered under foreign rule for the last 23 years. We cannot forget it, but we can forgive. I find it quite difficult to forgive, having lost three brothers, four uncles and a halfbrother of my father — all executed by the Chinese. But in order that we may have a final conclusion for the Tibetan situation, we may have to forgive a hundred times. If you learn to forgive, major issues can be solved without bloodshed.'*

**Senior Tibetan official who represented the Dalai Lama in China.**



*'Disunity is destroying our country. MRA has the answer to it. At Asia Plateau my brother and I got united after 15 years of bitter division. If we don't accept this idea we are traitors to this nation.'*

**Maharashtrian farmer**

*'My evil plan of killing those I thought responsible for the death of my beloved cousins has been completely shattered. I have been too sensitive to how much others have hurt me and forgotten how much I have hurt others. MRA has given me a plan to heal the wounds-I have inflicted upon others.'*

**Son of a former guerilla leader in North-East India.**



# ... an involvement in the urgent needs of our continents

Most of us think highly of our own goodness. But we are good for nothing unless we are actively committed to ending the evil in the world around us.

*'When the Indo-Chinese refugees began to pour out of Vietnam, I found Japan's indifference very hard to accept. Through Moral Re-Armament I have learned to take responsibility for the wrongs of my nation. So instead of blaming the Government, I felt we as ordinary citizens should do something about it. On the spur of the moment, a thought came to me — to ask every Japanese to give one yen. TV gave me time and the money started pouring in. Before four months was up we had 110 million yen. I was able to help the refugees, but also the Japanese. For if we keep closing our hearts we will become isolated from the whole world.'*

**Prominent Japanese lady**



*'Deep fear lies behind the disaffection in the North-East of India. In our view, the whole national scene has become a vast competition in selfishness, unrelieved by any great thinking. In that competition, our people fear for their survival. My visit to Panchgani convinced me that MRA is the ideology to bring sanity and peace to India's troubled North-East. The consensus we arrived at there indicates that politics can be played in a different way.'*

**A tribal leader who found reconciliation with two colleagues at Asia Plateau**



*'Doctors must cease to be isolated dispensers of more or less effective medicines and become members of a team, socially dedicated to primary health care, world-wide. At Asia Plateau I convened a conference for medical students, doctors, nurses and other health workers to face this responsibility. Quite a few of those who attended, including myself, are now working for the rural poor. We are experiencing the truth that even one man can make a difference, and a handful can make it felt.'*

**Bombay paediatrician.**

**... cleansed minds and motives with which to work**

Absolute moral standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love applied in daily living are essential if we are to bring fundamental change. We are seeking to root out the corruption in our own lives so that we can be effective in dealing with it in the world around us.



*'Two days after walking out on my wife and family, with no hope to live by and full of bitterness, in desperation I went to Asia Plateau. After a few days there, I realised that apart from giving myself to God there was no way out. I decided to lead a simple straight life, seeking God's guidance. I called my family to join me and said sorry to them for the many wrong things I had done and, I tell you, it was not an easy job. A whole wall of hypocrisy has crumbled and a new relationship of friendship was established. Our family has not become faultless, but our marriage has been saved, and we are happy.'*

**Bombay businessman**

*'We from the unions cry aloud from the housestops about the black money being generated by the big capitalists. When I measured myself against those absolute moral standards, some thoughts immediately came to me. I had submitted a false taxi bill to the management. I had fiddled my electricity meter to reduce the reading, because I thought it had been wrongly read. It took some months to be honest. And to withdraw money from a fund which was giving me an illegal amount of interest. MRA, with its absolute standards and obedience to the inner voice, helps the men of our union live straight and find the right purpose and direction.'*

**Steel union secretary, West Bengal**



**... and a faith in God to inspire and lead us**

Man's brilliant intellect and accumulated knowledge has not ended mankind's suffering, nor satisfied the deepest searchings of his spirit. Yet God has a sure plan to cure every crisis, a loving destiny for every individual. If we listen in silence, we can begin to find it. If we honestly seek to follow the Inner Voice of truth that speaks in every heart, then new roads open up out of the conflicts and confusion which surround us. Obedience — doing that God wants, not what we want — taps the hidden resources of the Almighty. Anyone, anywhere can listen.



*'To be really honest with my parents about the things I had done, to be unselfish with my sister and pure in my thoughts, has been very hard. But with faith in God I decided that, if He wanted me to live a clean life, He would guide me to it. Gradually my faith in God increased as I depended on Him for even the smallest of things. And being honest about my life was like lifting a boulder which had been in my heart for years.'*

**Muslim school girl.**



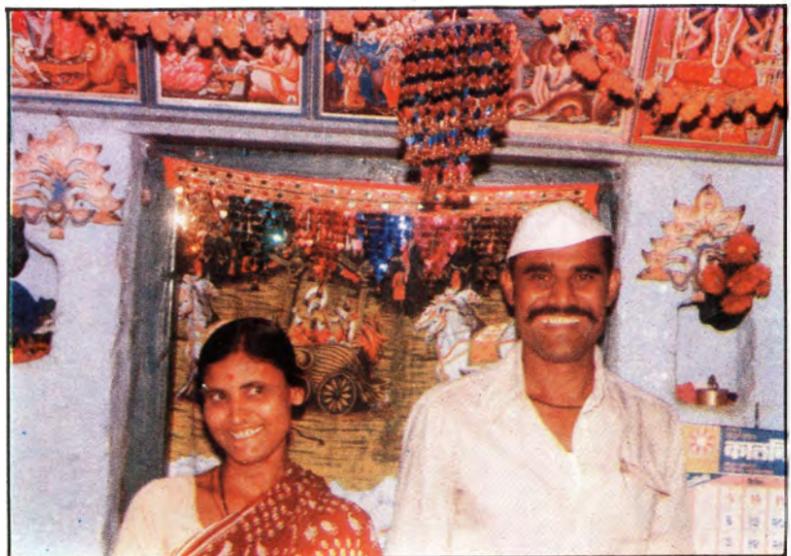
*'The simple miracle of being restored and freed from my own chains came when I decided to face the truth about myself—my failures and weaknesses, my rationalisation, lusts, pride and fears. It was like being given a new lease of life. I found the courage to put right what I could. I soon came to accept the new power inside me as something coming from God. As I obeyed the simple, often uncomfortable thoughts He put before me, I became conscious of His care and patience with me. I discovered that, as we shed our excess baggage, we are freed to let God guide and inspire us to accept challenges greater than what we can manage ourselves.'*

**Chinese accountant**



*'Talk of different religions often arouses competition and divides the world. The four absolutes of MRA are the essence of all religions and they unite the world. Here we have a unity above race and every difference, the sound basis for world peace.'*

**Abbot of a Buddhist Monastery, Thailand**



*'In drunken rage I had destroyed all the images of God in our home because God did not answer our prayers when my wife was seriously ill. But at Panchgani I lost my hatred and prayed: "Please pardon me for all that had happened. Please give me faith and inspiration to avoid evil. When others do wrong, inspire me to give leadership. You be my witness."*

**Pune industrial worker.**

**W**hat goes on at Asia Plateau that causes these changes in the lives of people? Year by year, a programme of conferences, seminars and training courses are held. They generate a core of committed people to work in vital areas.

## An emerging partnership of continents ...

'Asia Plateau may lie in India', said an Indonesian educator, 'but it belongs to the whole of Asia.' In fact, Panchgani has become known around the world. From the Canadian prairies to the Gaza Strip, from the steamy streets of Lagos to the rugged ridgetops of Papua New Guinea, people have come from the ends of the earth to quest together for a new world order of God's design.

Two lawyers, one from Lebanon and the other from USA, talk heart to heart as well as head to head about the needs of their countries. The Lebanese, telling of his devastated homeland, felt the only answer for the Middle East was 'the passionate battle to restore the moral and spiritual values in the hearts of men and nations, starting with myself and my nation'.



Black, brown and white from Africa considered together 'the tools for nation-building', and spoke of dealing with division, superiority, greed and corruption in their countries. Hearing them, a Japanese professor of International Relations said: 'You have put flesh and blood into our understanding of Africa.'

*'I share Mahatma Gandhi's birthday, October 2. I never forget that he was thrown off a train in South Africa, just because his skin was brown, by a white man who called himself a Christian. I apologise to you in India and other countries who have felt the pain of these wrongs. It is not just the things that we do which need to change, but also the things which have become part of our natures. When I saw this, I asked forgiveness of my black friends for the way I had lived and the person I had been. My wife and I committed our lives to building a new society. How were we to do that in our land of apartheid? We had one simple thought — "Be the new society" At a time when it was just not the done thing, we made our home a centre where all races could come, meet together and above all seek the direction of Almighty God together.'*

**Afrikaner from South Africa**



Attending a 'Dialogue on Development', Sri Lanka's High Commissioner to India, Mr Tilakaratna, spoke of his term at the United Nations: 'Side by side with the big dialogues, there must be personal dialogues,' he said.

Three 'Dialogues on Development' have brought together people from all levels of the development process, from economic experts to village farmers. Japanese and Indians co-hosted one such 'dialogue'.

As delegates from Asia and Africa outlined their own initiatives in practical development, tackling such impediments as corruption, a former UN diplomat from Britain, who now works with the Brandt Commission, exclaimed: 'This frankness has produced an atmosphere rarely seen in the United Nations. We from the industrialised nations found ourselves acknowledging our own need for changed attitudes and policies.' The discredited 'trickle-down theory of development' was being replaced by a 'bubble-up type of development at work which gives hope for the future.'



An American who worked in the US State Department apologises to a former Vietnamese General for the arrogance of his behaviour while serving in Vietnam. 'For at least 10 years in the State Department I wrote and gave intellectual speeches on development, aid and trade. But the answers needed are simply not answers of the intellect. If they were, the problems would have been solved long ago,' he said. 'The answer is first to work for trust, and only after that to build structures and sign treaties, not the reverse.'



In 1970, only months after bloody racial clashes in Malaysia a prominent Chinese educator, Thio Chan Bee, and Ja'afar Albar, a political leader of UMNO, came together to Panchgani. A newspaper in Singapore wrote of the 'gusts of goodwill' that their unity created. Tunku Abdul Rahman, then Prime Minister, said: 'MRA is bringing unity where there is division, freedom where there is fear, trust where there is antagonism, healing where there is hatred.'



Governor of an Indian state, B K Nehru, and his wife meet Rajmohan Gandhi (left) and two Australian Aboriginals, representing political life and foreign affairs. Mr Nehru, inaugurating a 'Dialogue on Development', said that the Third World, instead of always looking outward, should pay much greater attention to setting its own house in order'.

## Education for character as well as career

Panchgani is a centre of education in Western India. Educators from nearby schools have met with teachers from other parts of India and overseas to review their mission and methods, focussing on how to develop character and conscience. 'The Way Ahead', a book outlining a moral science course was written and published by MRA, and is being used in secondary schools.



Principal of a Gandhian education centre in Gujarat explains to teachers practical concepts of education, involving manual skills as well as intellect.



Marathi-speaking school children fill the auditorium and hear how change in India can begin with a process of change in themselves.

## ... and a sense of purpose for young people

Through a 'training course in effective living' held each year, hundreds of students have found a passion beyond career and comfort to cure what is wrong in society. A Kenyan, studying in India, said: 'I realised here that I didn't need to wait till I become a top civil servant to help my country.'



Air Chief Marshal, I H Latif, Governor of Maharashtra, visiting Asia Plateau told how impressed he was by students who had stopped cheating in examinations, after attending one of these courses. The Governor, who is also Chancellor of Bombay University, is credited with taking stringent action against cheating, which was widespread in Bombay.

'Here my horizons have been widened', said a student taking part in the training course. 'Instead of being concerned with my own success, I want to appreciate others.' As well as studying social issues and world affairs, the young people learn teamwork through such activities as tree-planting, cooking and serving meals, and staging dramas.



In cities across India, near Vietnam battlefields and the Berlin Wall, in American Indian reservations, a stage production called 'Song of Asia' brought its message of reconciliation and an alternative to violence. Written and produced at Asia Plateau by young people from 14 Asian nations, it portrayed the conviction that Asia would be known 'not for the blast of bombs, nor for the cry of suffering, but for the still small voice that speaks in every heart'.

## Creative leadership for industry

Straight from the factory floor and from executive offices, workers and managers thrash out their problems in regular industrial seminars, and in the process begin to find an aim bigger than sectional interest. Over 80 companies, both public and private, have sent 2500 delegates. The courses go beyond industrial relations techniques to the fundamentals of changing the attitudes of people, whose prejudices can be industry's costliest overhead.' One union secretary from a chemical plant in south India commented: 'My company badly needs to improve production, and so does the country. I am willing to advocate cooperation in doing this, even if I risk my union position.'



Follow-up programmes in factories across India have been initiated by those who have come for the industrial seminars in Panchgani. P C Luthar, chairman of a major chain of power plants which supply eastern India's industrial states, speaks frankly with workers at one such MRA seminar.



'We belonged to rival camps of workers engaged in a bitter struggle for control of the shop floor, a struggle which led to five strikes in one year. But at Asia Plateau we both decided to sink our differences and work unitedly for the good of the country. Our colleagues were quite wonder-struck at our change. On an historic morning our rival groups shook hands. We do not promise that we shall never go on strike. We only promise that to settle disputes we shall seek that solution which is just to the workers, just to the company and just to the country.'

Union leaders in TELCO truck manufacturers, India



A feature of the industrial seminars is the free and honest exchange that between workers and managers, as they find ways of breaking through the human bottlenecks to progress. 'I began to see my workers as fellow human beings instead of instruments of production,' said a textile mill manager from Bombay.



'All of us tend to look to Delhi, expecting everything to be done from there. There is no reason why we in industry should not be responsible ourselves. In our industry we try to help by providing free medicare facilities for some 25000 people who live in the village next door, through a medical centre with five full-time doctors. As an organisation we have been able to benefit considerably from the MRA training seminars. Feelings have been developed of sincerity, of pride in being able to do something for humanity.'

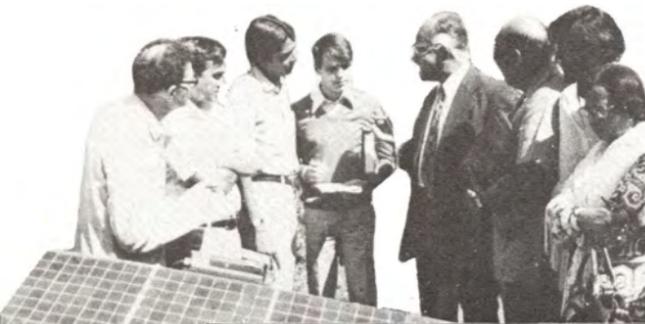
Managing Director, Pune



After a two-day stay at Panchgani, the managing director of a Bombay film-processing company reversed his labour policy, opened up his books to his union leader and in five minutes reached an agreement which ended four years of industrial trouble. In business we do a lot of investing. But we do not see the investment we should make most of all — in men' he said.

## Reaching for rural health and development ...

Asia Plateau is set in the midst of rural India. The urgent needs of improving community health and living standards are typical of those in many parts of Asia. A medical clinic at the Centre provides health care for workers and their families who come from villagers around. A seminar focussing on community health in rural areas brought doctors, specialists, nurses and village health workers from all over India. Agricultural field days, based around the Asia Plateau farm, have enabled local farmers to see new methods and appropriate technologies in operation.



A solar pump, capable of pumping up to 30,000 gallons a day, is demonstrated by M. Varadarajan, chairman of a south Indian chemical company and rural development trust, who told of efforts to manufacture these pumps within the budget of a village farmer.



A Harijan lady captures the attention of highly-qualified specialists as she tells how she and a team have been trained to give basic health care to 100,000 village people.



Farmers from nearby villages inspect crops and techniques at the Asia Plateau farm during a field day. A special blight-resistant variety of potatoes was introduced into the area through the MRA farm. And such innovations as a simple threshing machine, made from bicycle parts, have been developed and demonstrated.

## ... and barren land being made productive.

'Nothing could have looked less like a New Zealand dairy farm', said John Porteous, arriving at Panchgani in 1968 to develop a farm at the MRA Centre, having left his property near Auckland. 'There was so much stone and rock it was virtually impossible to plough. A test made of the soil revealed almost zero readings of phosphate and nitrogen.'

Now, after years of painstaking cultivation, careful use of manure and much hard work by volunteers and local people, a 63-acre farm flourishes, producing milk, poultry, fruit, vegetables and cereals for the Centre, and innovative farm technology for farmers in the area. Furthermore, a string of farms extends along the plateau's edge, where once land was deserted.



With the planting of 11,000 fast-growing Subabul (*Leucaena*), the MRA farm introduced a tree-pasture system into the area. This remarkable tree provides protein-rich fodder for cattle and foliage which can be ploughed into the soil to improve fertility. It can yield up to 75 tonnes of firewood per hectare annually yet survives with very little water.

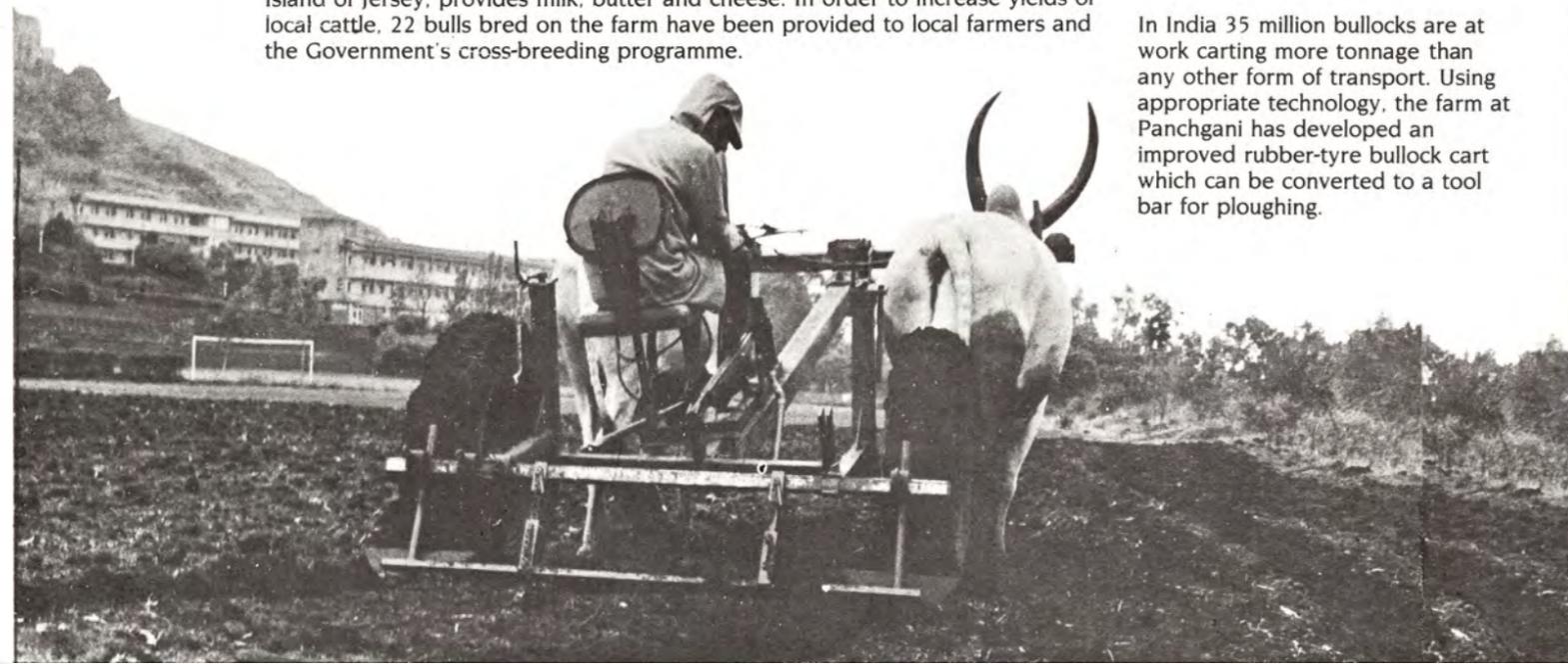


A pedigree Jersey herd, bred from stock originally gifted from Australia and the Island of Jersey, provides milk, butter and cheese. In order to increase yields of local cattle, 22 bulls bred on the farm have been provided to local farmers and the Government's cross-breeding programme.



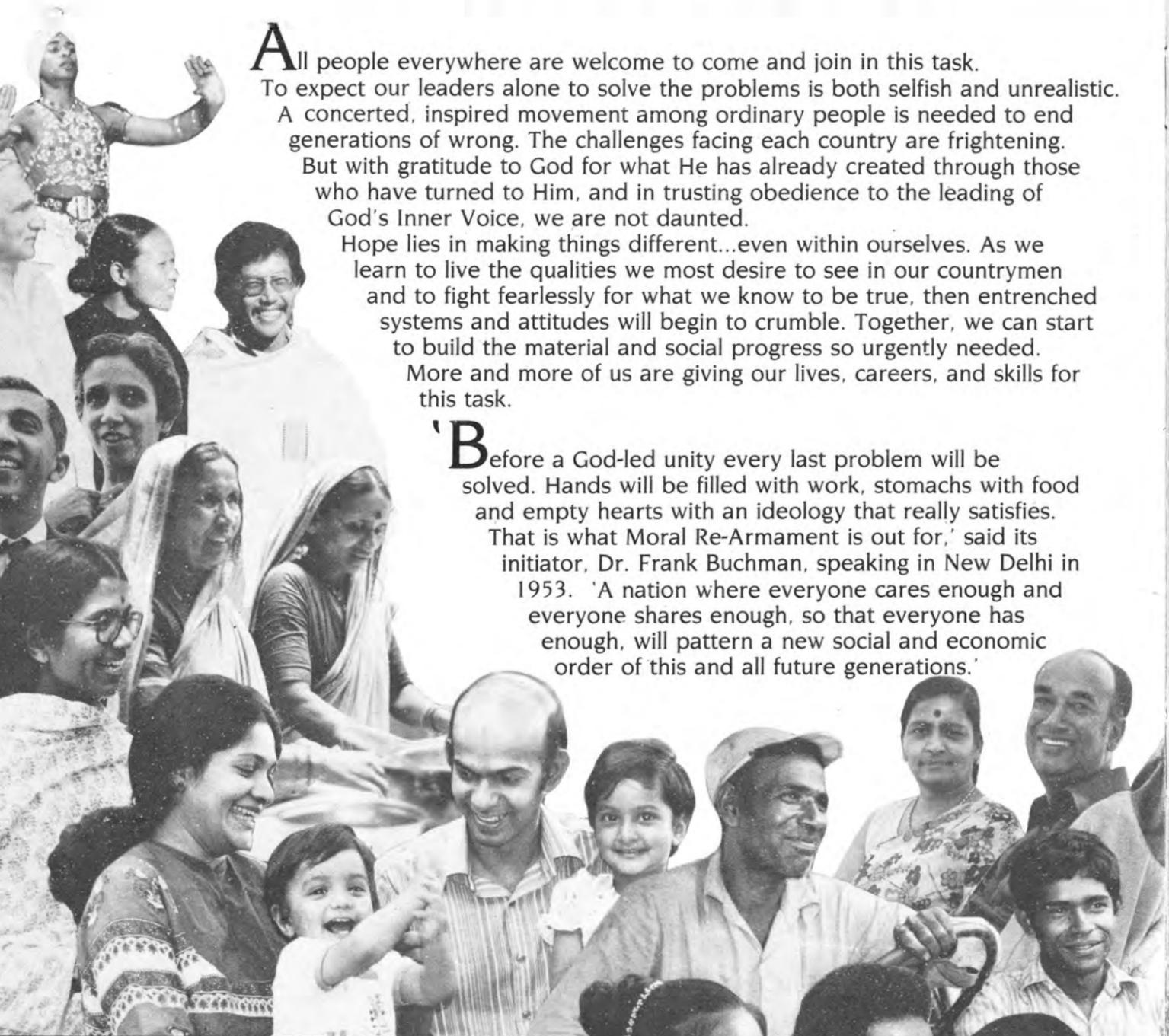
Using cattle and poultry manure, a gobar gas plant produces fuel for heating and a diesel pump, and fertiliser for the fields.

In India 35 million bullocks are at work carting more tonnage than any other form of transport. Using appropriate technology, the farm at Panchgani has developed an improved rubber-tyre bullock cart which can be converted to a tool bar for ploughing.



'The purpose of Asia Plateau is to build a climate of sanity in the world which is basic to solving problems of poverty, hunger, illiteracy and war. This is a centre of statesmanship of the highest order.'

Dr K E BEAZLEY, Australian Minister for Education, 1972-75



All people everywhere are welcome to come and join in this task. To expect our leaders alone to solve the problems is both selfish and unrealistic. A concerted, inspired movement among ordinary people is needed to end generations of wrong. The challenges facing each country are frightening. But with gratitude to God for what He has already created through those who have turned to Him, and in trusting obedience to the leading of God's Inner Voice, we are not daunted. Hope lies in making things different...even within ourselves. As we learn to live the qualities we most desire to see in our countrymen and to fight fearlessly for what we know to be true, then entrenched systems and attitudes will begin to crumble. Together, we can start to build the material and social progress so urgently needed. More and more of us are giving our lives, careers, and skills for this task.

'Before a God-led unity every last problem will be solved. Hands will be filled with work, stomachs with food and empty hearts with an ideology that really satisfies. That is what Moral Re-Armament is out for,' said its initiator, Dr. Frank Buchman, speaking in New Delhi in 1953. 'A nation where everyone cares enough and everyone shares enough, so that everyone has enough, will pattern a new social and economic order of this and all future generations.'



If you wish to participate in any of the programmes at Asia Plateau, or want information regarding the Centre, please write to: The Secretary, Asia Plateau, Panchgani, Maharashtra, India 412 805.  
For those who wish to read more, may we recommend:  
**THE ART OF REMAKING MEN** by Paul Campbell — the basics of changing lives and society (Cost Rs.8)  
**THE HUMAN FACE OF INDUSTRY** edited by Satya Banerjee (Rs. 2) — real life stories of men with a new motivation in industry.  
These, and a full list of publications, are available from:  
501 Arun Chambers, Tardeo Road, Bombay 400 034.