

Where peace begins

During my years with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), I witnessed massacres and genocides, the growing wave of torture and rapes, the displacement of civilian populations, and also extreme poverty, sickness and hunger.

I do not believe that these evils are inevitable. Since the causes can often be found in people themselves, the remedy also has to be found there. Peace cannot simply be made by the solemn signature of a nicely-drafted diplomatic or military document. Peace must also be made in the heart and spirit.

Take Bosnia-Herzegovina, for example. An ICRC survey, immediately after the signing of the Dayton Agreement in 1995, found that after less than four years of civil war 20,000 people were unaccounted for. Tens of thousands of women and children were still waiting for news after harrowing events.

The ICRC's first step was to work with the appropriate organizations to find out what had happened to all these people (mostly servicemen). We asked the military and civilian authorities on all sides to help with documentation and identifying burial places. The ICRC published a book, with 20,000 names and details supplied by the families, in order to get the help of the population.

Five years later, only 2,000 cases have been clarified and only about ten of these people were found alive. Only half the bodies so far exhumed have been identified. Mothers and wives have few illusions as to the chance of finding their loved-ones alive. In these circumstances, the process of re-establishing peace in people's hearts is progressing very slowly indeed. For if 18,000 people are missing, at least 40-50,000 people are affected.

Security challenges

In all parts of the world, we must restore a culture based on ethical values. We must do our utmost to prevent hatred from gaining the upper hand. Violence leads to an endless spiral of retribution. We must reject religious or spiritual justification for discrimination, exclusion and violence.

MRA allows us to join forces to take responsibility. We have to work towards far-reaching change, locally and globally, starting, if needed, with changes in our own lives. At the MRA conferences at Caux, Switzerland, we want to bring hope to those who are in despair—a hope rooted in God, hope for peace in open conflicts and in forgotten conflicts. We want to help overcome the most resistant wall in relations in war-torn societies: the psychological barrier.

Preventive work is vital. This is the



by **Cornelio Sommaruga**

responsibility of those wielding political power, but increasingly also of those holding economic power. Their ambitions are now global and so are their responsibilities. Security challenges must become a matter of concern to the whole of civil society. Global responsibility must accompany a global economy.

All governments have a duty to respect international humanitarian law and to ensure that others respect it. One of its cardinal

'Peace must be made in the heart and spirit'

principles is the ban on using weapons or methods of combat which cause unnecessary suffering. Among the weapons that raise questions are cluster-bombs and depleted uranium munitions. Their longterm effect on civilians requires careful consideration and possibly urgent legislative action.

The legal and illegal manufacture and transfer of ever more sophisticated weapons of all kinds must be taken much more seriously by the international community.

I was a member of the Panel on UN Peace Operations, which produced the Brahimi report last year. Between March and July 2000 ten of us focussed on the issue of conflict prevention. We requested governments

and the UN to be much more active and effective in this area. We called on member states to make peace-building strategies an integral part of Security Council mandates.

In the future governments will find it increasingly difficult to invoke national sovereignty in the face of international concern about large-scale human rights violations. The Holocaust and the genocides of Armenians and in Rwanda make it impossible for us to remain inactive in similar circumstances now. This brings us to the delicate question of intervention, despite the rules of the UN Charter.

This burning political issue will be the theme of the new International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), of which I am a member. It will report to this year's General Assembly.

No difference

Last year our planet passed the six billion inhabitants' mark. These individuals do not all enjoy the same prospects nor the same access to resources or to education and health care. Most people in the world are not officials in nice buildings, diplomats in comfortable residences, officers equipped with modern weapons and technology, nor executives in dynamic and successful companies. They are not connected to the Internet and do not follow the ups and downs of the stock market, even though the latter can have a decisive effect on their lives. A growing number of people do not even have access to safe drinking water.

Max Frisch once stated: 'The rich expand their wealth, the poor their numbers.' Absolute poverty and the tremendous gap in living conditions around the world are a real challenge to peace and security.

Let us commit ourselves to making the following beautiful and powerful Hindi saying into a reality: 'The good man makes no difference between friend and foe, brother and stranger; he approaches everybody with impartiality. A real friend shows compassion at any time.'

Dr Cornelio Sommaruga was President of the International Committee of the Red Cross from 1987 to 1999. He is now President of the Swiss Foundation for Moral Re-Armament. This article is extracted from a talk he gave during a visit to Britain last January.

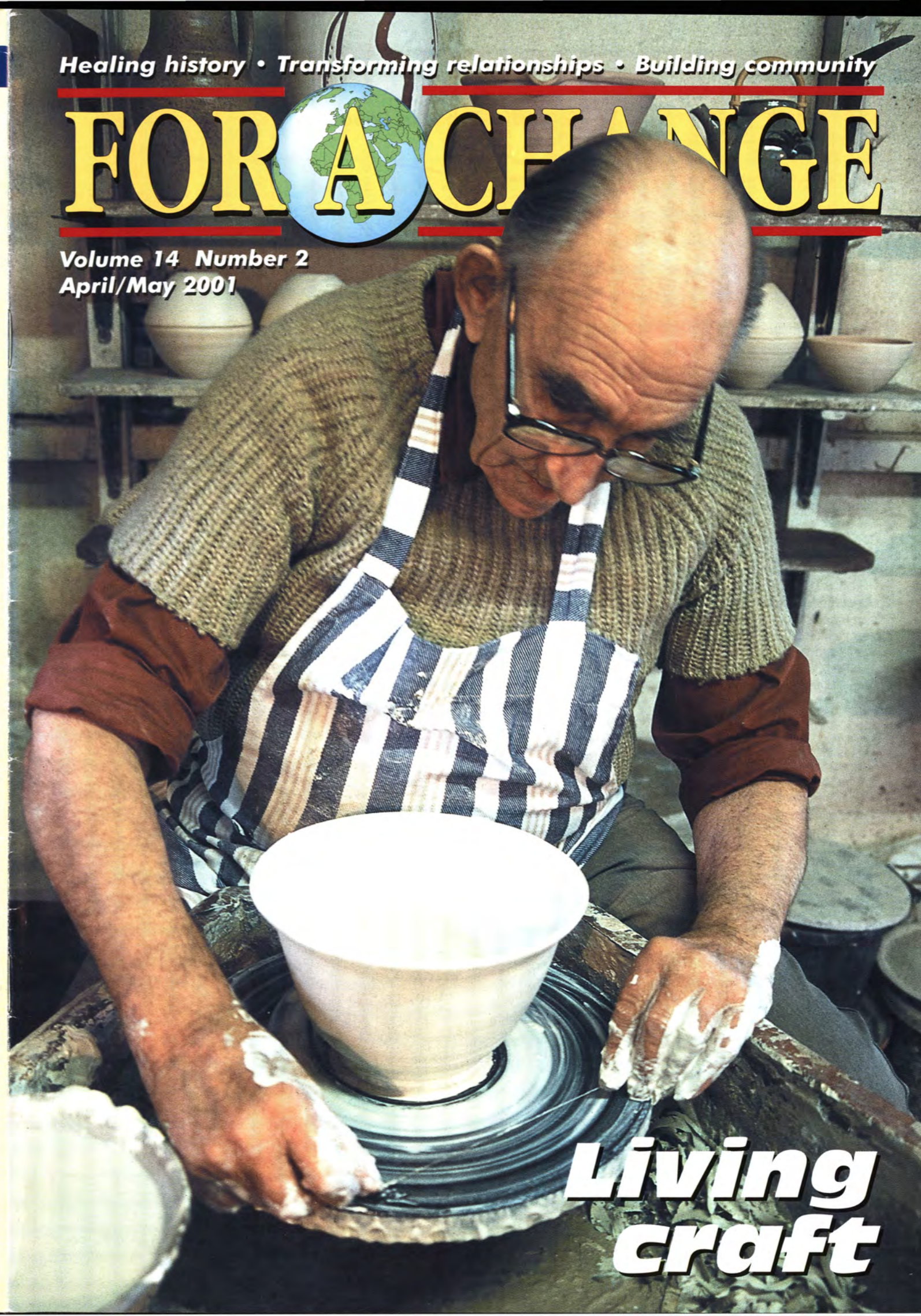
NEXT ISSUE

Lead story: Toys for boys or the best thing since sliced bread? FAC asks where the internet is taking us.

Profile: Peter and Linda Biehl, serving the country where their daughter was murdered

FOR A CHANGE

Volume 14 Number 2
April/May 2001



**Living
craft**

By Kenneth Noble in London



More truth than poetry

British readers will be all too aware of the massive disruption of our railways last winter following bad weather, a fatal accident and drastic speed restrictions. I'm told that, following the autumn gales, one station announcer apologized for the usual 'leaves on the line' but added that this time there was a tree attached.

Bad as the problems were I was surprised to read on the monitor at Victoria Station: 'For your comfort and safety do not board any train'. Eventually this scrolled over to 'until it is advertised on the departure board...'

Sad, but happy

This is the last year when Formula One motor racing fans will be able to hear Murray Walker's excited commentaries on British TV.

A tearful Walker told the press, 'I have a purely gut feeling that now is the time.'

Walker has been known to make the odd gaffe during his live broadcasts. My favourites include: 'And now excuse me while I interrupt myself.'

'Do my eyes deceive me, or is Senna's Lotus sounding rough?'

And: 'It's a sad ending albeit a happy one here at Montreal for today's grand prix.'

Bye-bye birdie

What can be done to save the humble house sparrow? Walking round Vincent Square, near the FAC office in central

London, recently, I failed to spot a single specimen of this once ubiquitous bird. *The Independent* has offered a £5,000 reward to whoever first comes up with a convincing explanation of the sparrow's 92 per cent population decline over the last decade in British towns and cities.

Denis Summers-Smith, author of several books on sparrows, considers it to be 'one of the most remarkable wildlife mysteries of the last 50 years'.

He has speculated that chemicals in lead-free petrol might be the cause of the sparrow's plight—how sad if the 'green' leap forward does prove to have backfired.

Correspondents in New Zealand and Canada tell me that the sparrow has declined in those countries, but that the trend has been reversed in NZ.

Mass extinction

Would the loss of one bird species matter? The New Testament tells us that not one sparrow is forgotten by God. Those who believe he is

responsible for creation and considers it 'good' may deduce that he is not happy about mankind causing the extinction of species, whether wittingly or not.

For the less theologically inclined, there is the worrying thought that a species' decline may be a forewarning of serious environmental degradation.

Sir David Attenborough's recent BBC TV series, *State of the Planet*, presented the evidence for an imminent 'mass extinction' of species even more drastic than the demise of the dinosaurs.

He listed such causes as pollution; introduction of non-native species; and 'islandization' of habitat (so that blocks of otherwise suitable habitat are too small to support some species). All of these can be laid at mankind's door—unlike the ending of the dinosaurs, which many now blame on an asteroid hitting the Earth.

Signs and portents

The UK government is considering spending £10 million on a

telescope to detect Earth-bound asteroids. Have they been reading too much into celestial portents? Following the Hale Bopp comet in 1997, the Leonid meteor shower in 1998 and a total eclipse of the sun in 1999, many of us in the UK recently saw the moon turn red—or to my eyes, pale pink—during a total lunar eclipse.

Some may feel that detecting undiscovered asteroids is less important than learning to live in harmony with nature, and with each other.

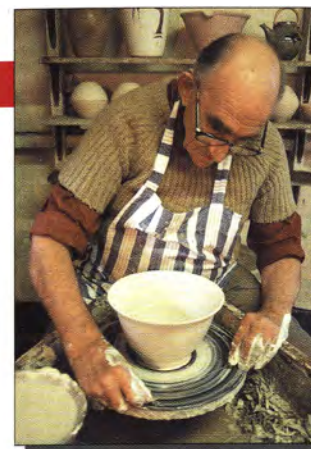
Stamp aid

Some 40 years ago I used to watch the children's programme, *Blue Peter*, on BBC TV. It took its name from the flag flown by ships leaving port.

Blue Peter is still going strong—and still launching its annual appeals which involve young people in tackling some area of need.

The 'Millennium appeal' aimed to help the Quechua people, who live high in the Peruvian Andes, to have access to basic health care. *Blue Peter* is working with the British charity Health Unlimited to set up three health posts and train local people to treat such potentially life-threatening ailments as diarrhoea, cuts and coughs.

Thousands of British children have been sending in envelopes, each containing 200 used postage stamps. These will be sold in aid of the venture. The initial target of 100,000 envelopes was quickly exceeded and the final number of stamps sent in was estimated to be 64 million. ■



Cover: David Leach at work in his studio
Photo: Robert Hesketh

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

It's not your genes' fault

Perhaps a little humility is in order. Two teams of scientists have succeeded in mapping the 30,000 or so genes that make up the human genome—and they tell us that we have only 50 per cent more genes than the earthworm.

Mapping the human genome has been a remarkable scientific achievement. It has taught us a great deal about what effects genes have—and, just as important, do not have—on us as individual human beings. Some people had apparently hoped that the genome would unravel many of the mysteries of life, showing that certain genes were responsible for certain human characteristics. How neat it would be if we could show that gene A was the cause of right-handedness, gene B of heavy-handedness and gene C of light-fingeredness!

But, as Nigel Hawkes wrote in *The Times*, London, 'Those who believed that elucidating the genome would provide the key to understanding everything will have to think again.'

Our genes, in combination and in ways that we have only begun to understand, do make us human, and they do determine many of our physical, emotional and psychological characteristics. But they do not take away from us the responsibility of making our own choices in life. We can blame our parents for our genes (which are entirely inherited from them), but it is not scientifically justified to lay at their door any ill consequences of our decisions.

This puts decision-making firmly back on the life-skills curriculum. And it is important enough a subject to be worth investing a great deal of thought and effort in. Rather than attempting to chart the way forward in a short editorial, it may be more apposite to end with quotes from two high-profile young Britons, who have their own valuable takes on decision making.

James Mawdsley, 27, released last October from being a 'prisoner of conscience' in Burma: 'I hope that young people will be empowered by the idea that they can achieve things very young without resources or being qualified, without belonging to an organization or having an employer, just by going out and following their hearts'.

Or, as Ellen MacArthur, solo round-the-world yachts-woman, 24, loves to say, 'If you have a dream, you can really make it happen!'

Kenneth Noble

FOR A CHANGE

- closes the circle between faith and action, action and faith. It is for anyone, anywhere, who wants to make a difference to the world.
- **FOR A CHANGE** believes
- that in a world torn by ancient hatreds, the wounds of history can be healed.
- that in the family and the workplace, relationships can be transformed.
- that in urban jungle or rural backwater, community can be built.
- that peace, justice and the survival of the planet depend on changes in attitudes as well as structures.
- **FOR A CHANGE**
- draws its material from a wide range of sources and was born out of the experience of Moral Re-Armament.

CONTENTS

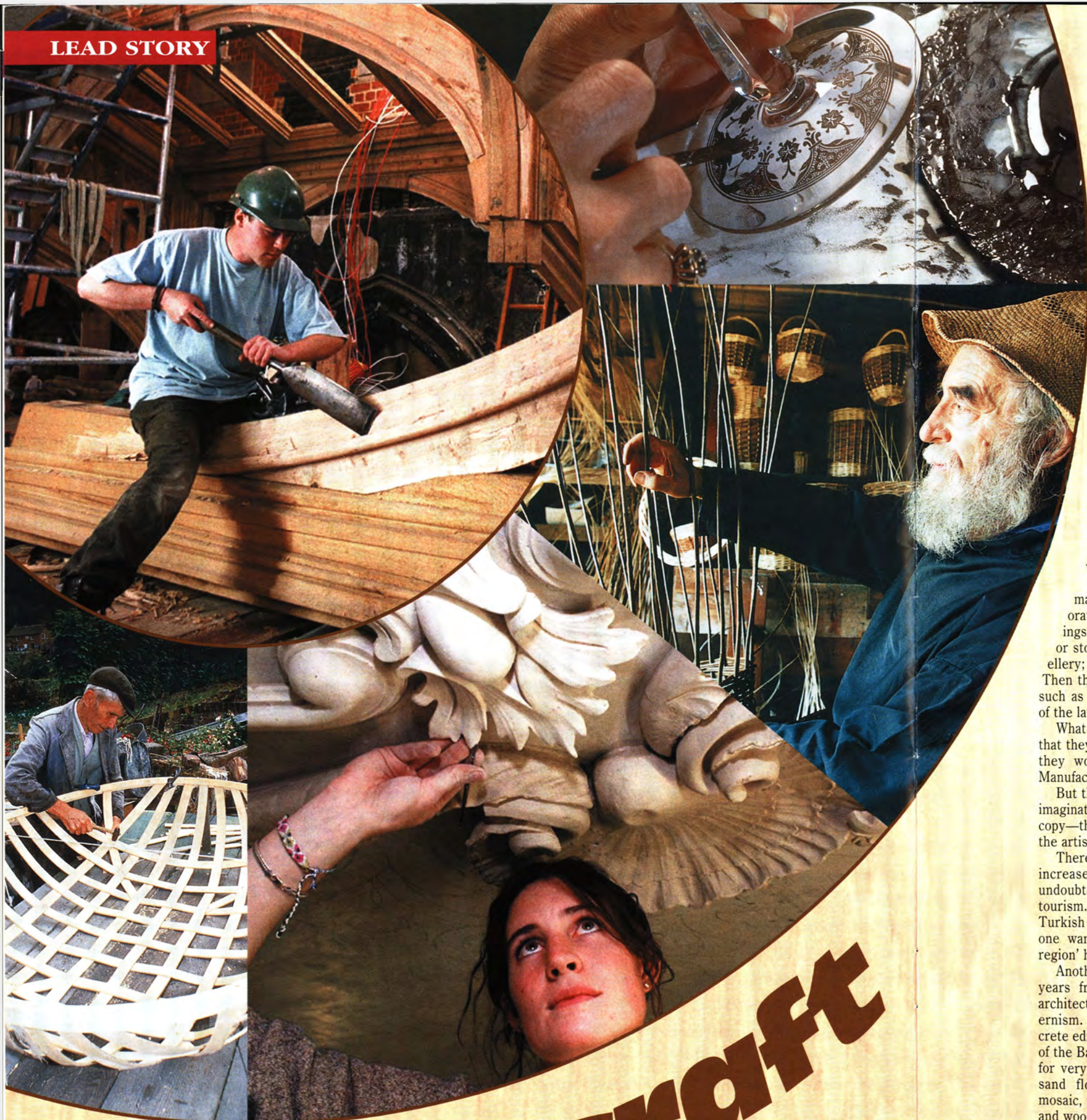
- 4 LEAD STORY**
Hugh Williams welcomes the revival of crafts, and *FAC* interviews two outstanding exponents—potter, David Leach, and silversmith, Jan van Nouhuys.
- 14 PROFILE**
Russian philosopher Grigory Pomerants has maintained his independence of spirit throughout the vicissitudes of Russian political changes. He talks to Peter Thwaites.
- 16 UPDATE**
What does a small company in Jamaica want with a restaurant in London? Mary Lean finds out.
- 18 BOOKMARK**
Margaret Smith reads a book which questions some of the conventional wisdom of conflict-resolution practitioners.
- 24 GUEST COLUMN**
Cornelio Sommaruga, who knows more than most about the cost of war, outlines some pointers for peace.
- 11** Turning point
- 12** People
- 13** Letters
- 20** Newsdesk
- 22** Website
- 23** Reflections

A NOTE ON MORAL RE-ARMAMENT

Moral Re-Armament was launched in 1938 when Europe was rearming. Frank Buchman, MRA's American initiator, called for a programme of 'moral and spiritual rearmament' to address the root causes of conflict, and work towards a 'hate-free, fear-free, greed-free world'. Since then people of all backgrounds and traditions have been active in this programme on every continent.

MRA is open to all. Its starting point is the readiness of each person to make real in their own life the changes they wish to see in society. A commitment to search for God's will in daily life forms the basis for creative initiative and common action. Absolute moral standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love help to focus the challenge of personal and global change.

Published six times a year by Moral Re-Armament, 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD, UK. Tel: +44 (0)20 7798 6000, Fax: +44 (0)20 7798 6001 Reg. Charity No: 226334 ISSN 0959-311X. Price: £2.25 Subscriptions: Tirley Garth, Tarporley, Cheshire CW6 0LZ. Tel: 0182 973 2305 Fax: 0182 973 2265 (Giro No 504 1759) Editors: Mary Lean, Kenneth Noble, Michael Smith Regular contributors: Alan Channer, Michael Henderson, Anastasia Stepanova, Laura Trevelyan, Robert Webb, John Williams, Paul Williams Promotion: Tony Hazell Distribution Manager: Chris Sayers Design and Layout: Sloane Design Associates, Faversham, Kent. Printing: BBH Colourprint Group, Leicester. Indexed with Canadian Periodical Index. For A Change on the Internet: <http://www.forachange.co.uk> Printed on TCF (total chlorine-free) paper.



Living craft

Hugh Williams looks at what crafts and craftspeople can bring to an increasingly wired-up society. And we meet two leading exponents of their crafts.

What is craft? And in what way does the work of the crafts-person differ from that of the artisan or the fine artist?

Essentially craft is about making—and making with one's own hands. Cabinet and wooden clock maker David Bowerman describes his works thus: 'functionally useful, structurally sound and aesthetically pleasing'. Potters, glass blowers and silversmiths would agree.

However not all craftspeople make utensils. Many produce decoration and ornamentation—carvings and mouldings in wood, plaster or stone; stained glass; gilding; jewellery; tapestries and wall hangings. Then there are the more arcane crafts such as the exquisite glass engravings of the late Laurence Whistler.

What is common to most makers is that they work in three dimensions and they work on one piece at a time. Manufactured 'handicrafts' don't count.

But then there is another element—imagination. True craftspeople do not copy—that is the highly skilled work of the artisan. They create.

There are several reasons for the increased interest in crafts. One is undoubtedly the huge burgeoning of tourism. Whether it be Welsh pottery, Turkish rugs or Indian carvings, everyone wants to take something 'of the region' home with them.

Another is the shift in the last 20 years from a modernist approach to architecture and design to post-modernism. The stark, rectangular, concrete edifices of the modernist disciples of the Bauhaus or Le Corbusier allowed for very little decoration. Now a thousand flowers bloom. Stained glass, mosaic, plaster moulding, gilding, stone and wood carving are all back.

A third factor, in Britain at any rate, is fire. From the mid-Eighties to the mid-Nineties a series of fires partly destroyed some of our most famous buildings—York Minster, Uppark House in Sussex, Hampton Court Palace and Windsor Castle.

Restoration had three effects on crafts in Britain. The first was financial. Huge resources—whether from insurance companies, government departments or the Royal Household—were devoted to reconstruction and refurbishment. Some at least of that money found its way into the needy pockets of craftspeople.

Secondly, like a revelation, we discovered as a nation what wonderful craftspeople we had. In his book *The Great Fire at Hampton Court* Michael Fishlock writes, 'We have often been asked whether we had difficulty finding craftsmen capable of carrying out the complex work of restoration. The answer is no. Traditional skills are far from dead.' He adds, significantly for the future, 'In an age when it is often assumed that traditional crafts are fast dying out, it is encouraging that so much of this work was carried out by younger people.'

The third effect of the fires and restoration work was that they made riveting television. Millions of people, many of them for the first time, saw craftspeople at work—and the results of their skill and artistry. Craftsmanship suddenly became high profile.

As a result more people wanted beautiful objects and decoration in their own homes. And with increased wealth many were able to afford them. For millions of people crafts are the most accessible—and affordable—form of artistic experience. The British Crafts Council claims, 'Crafts bring culture into our homes and streets in a way that people can readily enjoy.'

The Crafts Council, the principal organ of advocacy for crafts in Britain, also points up the economic benefits that craftspeople bring to their communities. They encourage employment and tourism. They enliven the environment, through their presence in public buildings and spaces.

But it is in education that the crafts are seen at their most beneficial. To quote the Crafts Council publication *Why Do The Crafts Matter?:* 'In a rapidly changing world, the next generation of adults must be inventive, resourceful and visually sensitive.' Craft in education, it is claimed, can help bring this about. 'For everyone, and particularly young people, learning by doing and

making is the best way to understand the three-dimensional world in which we live... Practical learning by designing and making is a natural, creative human process—vital for the emotional, intellectual and physical development of all children.' And it quotes the old maxim, 'I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand.'

If this message is yet to be embraced by the developers of the national curriculum for schools, the news is better in adult education. Already 30 per cent of all adult education classes in Britain are craft-based. It is estimated that 11 per cent of all adults participate in wood crafts, ten per cent in textile crafts and five per cent in other crafts.

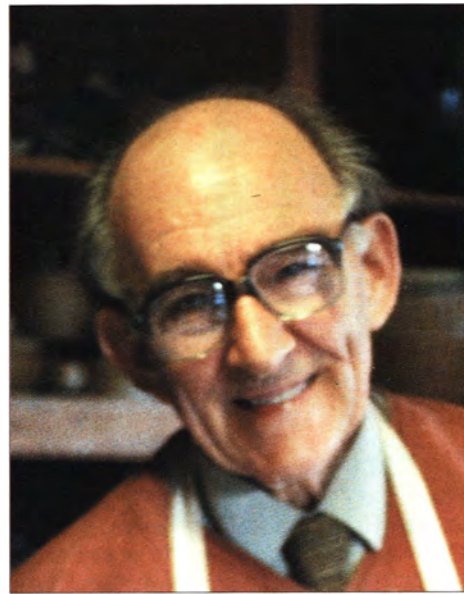
The Economist makes the national economic case for such education: 'As computerized manufacturing develops it will be relatively simple and fast to transfer manufacturing skills from one country to another. What is more difficult is to transfer design and innovation skills and for this reason such skills will become increasingly important in the UK economy.'

Away from the heady world of macro economics, what motivates the crafts-person? For some it is the exhilarating challenge presented by the innate material in front of them. 'Problem solving' is what animates one British craftsman I spoke to. 'Lateral thinking,' the reply of another.

For American ceramic artist Janet Hero Dodge, her work reflects her concern for the environment: 'Each decoration has its roots in the visual imagery of the natural world. The decorated surface then becomes a translation of my environment.'

For potter Julie Dickinson in a remote community in Montana, USA, it is 'to express my deep love for God's creation in all its beauty and variety'. Indeed craftspeople of faith I have talked with see themselves fulfilling their function as beings made in the image of God, the designer and maker of the universe.

But perhaps the last word should go to that great advocate of the Arts and Crafts Movement of the 19th century, John Ruskin, who wrote, 'The question to ask regarding all ornament is this: was it done with enjoyment, was the carver happy while he was about it?' ■



Good for a thousand years

Veteran potter **David Leach** believes art is about transcendental values. He talks to **Mary Lean** and **Anastasia Stepanova**.

When David Leach examines a pot fresh out of the kiln, he looks for one thing above all else: does it convey life?

Ninety in May, Leach has been making pots for 71 years: and he certainly conveys life himself. He may be diffident about his achievements, but not about his convictions. 'Breadth, strength and honesty can all be expressed in the thing you make,' he says. 'Art to me needs to be inspirational: to lift.'

If William Morris was the great-grand-

father of the British arts and crafts movement, David's father, Bernard Leach, was its grandfather. He went to Japan in 1909 as a two-dimensional painter and etcher, was captivated by the three-dimensional art of ceramics and returned 11 years later with a Japanese potter, Shoji Hamada, to set up his own studio. The Leach Pottery in St Ives, Cornwall, reinvented pottery in the UK, and trained or inspired the leading British potters of the 20th century.

David, born in Japan in 1911, was Bernard's eldest son. Over coffee in his home at the foot of Dartmoor in the West of

England, he describes three milestones in his career: his choice, aged 19, to work with his father; his first encounter with the Oxford Group (later known as MRA) in 1934; and his decision in 1955 to leave St Ives and launch out on his own.

David's choice of career was a surprise to his father, who had expected him to go into medicine. 'That fizzled out because I was not clever enough to get a scholarship to university and because my father was an impecunious artist who couldn't possibly afford to send me there without one.' At the same time he had begun to recognize that



Photo sequence: Robert Heskeith

his father 'was about something which was unique and potentially universal'—and that he needed help in achieving it.

By this time the Leach Pottery was employing several people, and producing a range of pottery ware. 'Like most artists, my father wasn't the most practical of men to run a business. I could see all sorts of technical, business and organizational areas where I might learn and help him.'

Apart from periods away for training and war service, David stayed at St Ives for 25 years, running the pottery under his father's artistic direction. Together they would identify gaps in their range, work out how to fill them, and then David would make the prototypes from his own and Bernard's designs. Later David selected the students or apprentices best able to produce the pots. 'I was a sort of filter of our original ideas to that which was reproducible by the team.'

In 1934, somewhat to his father's horror, David Leach embarked on a three-year course at the North Stafford Technical College in Stoke on Trent, the centre of Britain's mass-produced pottery industry. While hand potters throw each pot individually, industrial processes devised in the 18th century use moulds to produce large quantities of identical crockery. 'We studio potters don't take very much line from Josiah Wedgwood,' he says. So it wasn't for artistic guidance he went to Stoke, but for training on such highly technical subjects as firing methods and kilns, and the composition of clays and glazes. He still makes up his own glazes and pigments.

It was in Stoke that Leach encountered the Oxford Group, through his brother, Michael, who had come home for the summer from Cambridge having 'undergone a change: we all thought for the better'. David made contact with Oxford Group enthusiasts in Stoke, and accepted an invitation to a 'house party' conference in Harrogate. 'It hit me between the eyes'—to such an

extent that he returned the next weekend with two or three friends.

For Leach, the measure of spiritual growth, as of art, is 'life'. Just as one can recognize quality in a work of art, he says, one can recognize inner change in a person—the transformation from 'a life that didn't have life to a life that becomes full of life'. He sees MRA, with its stress on listening for God's direction, on moral values and on putting faith into action in the community, as 'the most effective way of focussing my Christian life'. Taking part in MRA events has provided some of the 'most

inspirational moments' of his 89 years.

Not, he is quick to stress, that trying to live out his values has been easy. 'It's been a battle: it's sometimes successful and it's sometimes not. There's been a tussle between the vocational life as a so-called creative artist and the direct demands of living out what is common to us all on a more general moral level, whether we call ourselves artists or roadsweepers.' Sometimes he has agonized over whether to give up potting, so as to devote his whole time to MRA campaigns; thankfully for posterity he has held to his vocation.

In an interview with a former student, Gary Hatcher, in 1992, Leach describes his deeper inspiration as coming 'from a quietness' and a 'basic belief' in God. 'I go along with this, believe in it, practise it and find through this that I attain slightly higher levels of intelligence and application of creative forces. This comes through in the rightness and integration in a piece of work.'

The third turning point came in 1955, when Leach left his father's pottery to set up on his own at Lowerdown Cross in Bovey Tracey, Devon. 'By then my father was getting old and was writing little pamphlets saying "my days are numbered and I want my son, David, to carry on the pottery". I got cold feet: I had become proficient enough in the things I went to the pottery to help my father over—training, technology, marketing—but that wasn't artistic creation. My father presupposed this was naturally there: I wasn't that confident.'

To find out what he could do, Leach felt that he had to get out from 'under my father's seeing eye and rather strong domination'. 'He was a good teacher, very clear about what he thought was good and bad, and he didn't mind telling you. For many years after I came here I went on producing very similar pots to those I made, under my father's direction, at St Ives, and then because of the separation I began to develop



Robert Heskeith



Good for a thousand years

my own expression.' Looking back, he is inclined to regret that he left it so late.

David and his wife, Elizabeth, have been married 63 years and their three sons all trained with him at Lowerdown Pottery. The eldest, John, now has a pottery and international reputation of his own, at Muchelney in Somerset, while Jeremy and Simon both combine potting with other interests. None of David's seven grandchildren have taken up the family vocation, though John's eldest son, Ben, is a sculptor. There are eight great-grandchildren.

Like his father before him, David has trained a generation of potters, and lectured and given workshops all over the world. He received an OBE in 1987. The Devon Guild of Craftsmen, based half a mile from his pottery, is an abiding enthusiasm. The guild was founded in 1955, with the aim of becoming the 'best craft guild' in England, and today has 220 members, drawn from the whole southwest of England. Selection is rigorous: 'if we pass three or four applicants out of 20 we're lucky,' he says.

Leach is disturbed by the 'strong disrespect for tradition' and the overemphasis on 'rather inward-looking self-expression' he sees in much of art today. 'Art schools are not so interested in the acquisition of skills as in drawing out the student's creative capacity and ideas, which are sometimes very immature and quite unskillfully performed. I think it is important to learn the skills first, then you have the facility to do what you have in your mind successfully. The modern generation wants to take short cuts to self-expression.'

He has little time for the 'shock tactics' of such modern stars as Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin with their bisected sheep and unmade beds. 'If you ask some modern artists what they're trying to convey, they will nearly always say it's up to you, make of it what you will. I think that is an abdication of responsibility. The communication between maker and viewer is not good, because the work is not founded on these basic feelings we share.'

'There's too much novelty-seeking. Novelty is here today and gone tomorrow. If my pot is good I want it to be good for me, good for the people who see it and good for a thousand years.'

And if, for David Leach, art is about conveying life, this is not an exclusive preserve. 'We tend to wrap artists up into sculptors, painters, poets, musicians.... Eric Gill said, "An artist is not a special sort of man, every man is a special sort of artist".'



As Jan and Anneke van Nouhuys from the Netherlands approach their silver wedding they tell Kenneth Noble about the highs and lows of Jan's calling to be a silversmith.

Jan van Nouhuys is one of the Netherlands' leading silver artists, with his work displayed in London's Victoria and Albert Museum, but if he and his wife Anneke had listened to their accountant's advice 15 years ago there would almost certainly be no silversmiths producing contemporary designs in his country today.

In 1991 the Dutch government commissioned him to design 30 table bells to be given as gifts to the European leaders taking part in the Maastricht Summit on the future of the European Community. In 1999, when he exhibited at the Spring Olympia Fine Art and Antiques Fair in London for the first time, Karen Falconer wrote in *The Independent* that his pieces are seen as the possible antiques of the future. 'In a field with a history of the ornate,' she writes, his silverware is 'modern and geometrically based'. She quotes David Beasley, librarian at the Goldsmiths' Hall, as saying that van Nouhuys's work blurs the line between the contemporary and the classical. 'He is acceptable by both ends as he follows traditional silversmithing ideas of function and object, but his work has a pleasing, soft quality and is less angular than some of our British cutting-edge modernists.'

Van Nouhuys learned some of his skills at Wackely & Wheeler, the London silversmiths, and he says that a clear line can be traced from the conventional work he was doing there to his recent modernistic works.

Jan van Nouhuys did not start out with the intention of being a silversmith. Born in 1949 in Amersfoort, the son of a civil engineer, his desire was to go into teaching and drama. (He has played a convincing clown in amateur settings.) Not having the necessary qualifications, he decided to try and seek direction from God—an idea that had 'absolutely fascinated' him when he came into contact with MRA. 'A simple thought came: why not go to gold- and silversmithing college?' So he spent three years in the department of jewellery at the College for Gold- and Silversmithing in Schoonhoven, a



The silver couple

historic town on the banks of the Rhine which has long been known as the silver capital of the Netherlands.

There followed three difficult years of repairing jewellery at a shop in the Hague—difficult because: 'I enjoyed the work but I didn't want to do it for the rest of my life. I felt trapped.' At one point, in desperation, he prayed and he felt as if a gentle voice was saying to him, 'Be quiet, you, trying to do things on your own. Just make the best of your gifts.' This made sense to van Nouhuys. He felt at peace and ever since

that moment, even when circumstances have been difficult, he has felt certain about his calling.

It was in the following year that van Nouhuys went to London to broaden his experience. There he discovered that he loved silversmithing. The work was repetitive, making many examples of each design. But he learned new techniques and how to work quickly—and, just as important, he gained confidence from the way in which his foreman and employer appreciated his work.

In 1975, he returned to the Netherlands, and at the same time got engaged to Anneke. Together they decided that he should open a workshop in the Hague. With his training and the mass-unemployment at that time, it seemed the only road ahead.

Just a few days later van Nouhuys was offered a full-time job teaching goldsmithing (which, he explains, is as different from silversmithing as is plumbing from being a dentist). 'We felt called to turn down the offer and to give the workshop a chance,' says Anneke.

It was a risky venture. Silversmithing requires a large workshop with many hard-to-obtain tools, anvils and machines. And the raw material is expensive. With a big bank loan and high outgoings, it was a struggle to keep afloat. 'Jan would cycle to all sorts of jewellery shops asking if they had any work,' recalls Anneke. 'He started repairing antique silver. When jewellers asked if he could do a job, he always said "yes", even if he didn't have a clue how to go about it.'

When work was slack, van Nouhuys designed and made his own pieces, though they did not sell. The public was not yet ready for them. The fact that his individually designed, and therefore more expensive, creations were displayed among conventional silverware in jewellers' shops did not help.

In 1978 the college in Schoonhoven asked van Nouhuys to teach silversmithing for two days per week when someone fell ill, and this time he accepted.

In 1987 van Nouhuys was lucky to survive an attack of meningitis. This made them decide to move to Schoonhoven and put down a deposit on their present unpretentious but comfortable house. 'It was a big risk,' explains Anneke, 'because it meant cutting ourselves off from most of Jan's work in the Hague. We had some very lean years.' She considered getting a job herself, but decided not to because of their three sons and also because of the role she played in supporting Jan, both practically—she does most of the administrative work—and emotionally.

In between teaching, van Nouhuys had plenty of time to execute his own designs in the workshop he set up in a former telephone exchange building.

When asked whether he ever doubted his calling van Nouhuys replies simply, 'No.' What about his wife? 'I never had doubts because I believed that Jan was making beautiful things,' she replies.

But their business remained in a parlous state, not helped by a tax system that charged even for unsold products. When their accountant advised the van Nouhuyses to close, Jan was 'shocked and frustrated. I went up to my room paralyzed. Then I had a little rest and the thought came to me, "Go on! Go on! Go on!"'

A breakthrough occurred in 1988 when a dealer in antique silver from the Hague said that he thought he could sell a pitcher of van

The silver couple

Nouhuys's. 'How much do you want for it?' he asked. Van Nouhuys named a price which Anneke felt was very high. 'You should charge double that,' said the dealer. Later he phoned van Nouhuys: 'It's been sold... I've bought it myself.'

The van Nouhuyses started to exhibit at art fairs as there were no galleries selling contemporary silver. Slowly but surely people started to appreciate the work as art, not just functional silverware—though he insists that functionality is the fourth dimension of his work. 'Eighty per cent of the buyers of my work have had nothing to do with silver,' he explains. 'They are interested in art.'

Gradually he built up a clientele—to the point where he recently declined an invitation to exhibit in New York because he could not meet any increase in demand.

It bore in on van Nouhuys that none of the students graduating from the silver-smithing course in Schoonhoven were becoming silversmiths—the obstacles were too great. So in 1990 he and Anneke decided to organize five series of master classes over the course of a year under the title of Silver in Motion. Their aims were to stimulate and guide promising designers and silversmiths and also to promote contemporary silver nationally and internationally.

At the end of the year some 40 artists of all disciplines produced designs for silverware which van Nouhuys and others executed. They held a joint exhibition in a museum in Rotterdam, and this led to an invitation to



exhibit in Ghent, Belgium. Silver in Motion started a dialogue about contemporary silver and helped to bring silver back into the arena of the arts. It also sparked similar initiatives in other countries.

Although it was never the intention, Silver in Motion helped seven or eight silversmiths to get started in their careers. It was wound up in 2000 but its legacy includes an attractive exhibition centre and three workshops in a belle époque watertower that dominates one part of Schoonhoven. Two of the three resident contemporary silversmiths currently have apprentices, as does van Nouhuys himself. So the van Nouhuys' initiative has created competition whilst at the same time increasing appreciation of and demand for his art-form.

He has also spent time in New Delhi where he was asked by an Indian businessman to set up a silversmithing workshop, train some 20 local craftsmen and produce designs for them to make. They find a ready market in India, says van Nouhuys.

He sometimes works from a drawing. At other times 'I allow things to happen.' As he told the German publication *Schmuck* (June/July 1997), 'During this phase of my work, I'm involved in such an intensive dialogue with the materials that they seem to take on an independent life of their own.' He talks of his inner drive to make visible an idea. But he is not consciously trying to express a message—that would be to lose authenticity. 'Art and craft is a message,' he says. 'It reminds us of God as the creator. A craftsman is not just taking part in a production process, like building television sets. He is starting from scratch and seeing the creation of a design through to the end. It reminds you of how the creation of man could have been.'

He feels that craft in general has something important to say to today's society where everything is measured in terms of speed, efficiency and results. 'My work as a silversmith is inefficient. When someone buys one of my objects, he buys a piece of inefficiency.' Places like his workshop—'islands of inspired anarchy within a highly regulated state'—are needed as a reminder that there are other values, he says.

'The essence of art,' he insists, 'is not trying to create something beautiful, nor even trying to be authentic, it is being who you are and doing what you are called to do. In that sense every person is, to my mind, called to be an artist. Silversmithing happens to be my medium.'

On his website (www.studio925.nl), van Nouhuys writes: 'Why am I doing what I do? Basically I do what I like, with an attitude of joy. With a love of form, the search for beauty and surprise, with a keenness of adventure in the process of designing and making.' This May, Jan and Anneke will celebrate 25 years of marriage—25 years that have, indeed, shown 'a keenness of adventure'.



Fred Weegenaar



Fred Weegenaar



Tony Reynolds was a high flier until a change of motive led his career into a seeming backwater. But, as he tells Paul Williams, there were unexpected spin-offs.

Tony Reynolds joined the Canadian federal civil service later than most of his colleagues because of a decade in unpaid voluntary work. He soon made up for lost time. 'Within a few years,' he says, 'the taxes I was paying outstripped the salary I had first received as a junior officer.'

Early on he was executive assistant to the deputy minister in the Department of Finance, one of the power brokers in the civil service. 'I loved being around where key decisions were made,' he says. 'I loved the smell of powder in the air as the big guns went off.' He had grown up with certain assumptions about his place in the world, about the style of life that he wanted, 'assumptions which perhaps are typical of many young men but were highly self-centred and self-important'. He had now found the avenue to fulfil these.

He took on varied tasks in the Department of Finance and later of Industry, Trade and Commerce. He headed up the latter's activities in the province of Manitoba. These included helping to develop the inner city of Winnipeg with its large Aboriginal population. Success in these activities brought notice in Ottawa and he was given an award 'for exceptional contribution' to the public service. 'By my measurements, my career was on track,' he says.

But his rise had not been without cost. 'It left me little time for or interest in my growing family,' he says. 'Clashes with my teenage daughters were becoming frequent. My son was quiet and seldom around. Anger was a frequent companion in my relationship with my wife, Rachel—anger born out of guilt at my neglect.'

Reynolds' preoccupation was noticed by the rector of the church they attended. 'One day he said to me, "Tony, I get the sense that you worship at a different altar. Do you want to talk about it?" My honest response was "not likely!" But talk we did.' It did not take Reynolds long to recognize that his



Tony Reynolds and his wife Rachel sell their produce at a farmers' market.

Worshipping at a different altar

career was the altar he worshipped at. 'Jesus and his demands on my life were an accessory. But the thought of switching altars created panic. Where would I get my drive? And what about the success I was beginning to enjoy? The sense of self-worth that my civil service career embodied was the bedrock of my identity.'

Yet he knew the rector's question required a choice—revising the centre of his life or walking away from his faith. 'I could not do the latter. My decision to do the former was not made on any kind of spiritual high. It was just a choice exercised.'

His wife and children noticed the difference within days. The anger and the 'driveness' were subsiding. Within three weeks of taking that decision he was asked to lead the Canadian Government's efforts to promote economic development among the country's Aboriginal people. Although the job carried the title of assistant deputy minister, it definitely would not lead to the top of the civil service ladder. 'If it hadn't been for the rector's intervention, I would not have considered it,' he says.

It led to what he describes as 'years of fascinating work'—building a team across the country, helping many communities recapture the dignity of self-reliance, getting to know Canada's Aboriginal leaders. 'Far from losing energy or passion, these rebounded but in a far more wholesome fashion,' he says. For the first time, his wife and children became really interested in his

work. 'They loved to hear about it. We were frequently awed by the sense of God's hand honouring the earlier choice made.'

Five years into this work he was asked to become executive director of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Again he recognized it was a task he had been prepared for. The Commission held hearings in 96 communities, initiated 350 research projects and accumulated 70,000 pages of public testimony. Reynolds says that its final report four years later 'challenged Canadians to a fundamental restructuring of the relationship with the Aboriginal peoples'. The national Aboriginal leadership told the country that they could wholeheartedly endorse the Commission's recommendations, and that their implementation would finally resolve the crisis in their relationship with the people and the federal and provincial governments of Canada.

After a year, the Canadian Federal Government issued an historic *Statement of Reconciliation*. This went some way to implement the Commission's report, but left many critical questions unaddressed. But Reynolds realized his contribution in that forum had come to an end. He now farms on Vancouver Island and does voluntary work with an Aboriginal social agency. He has no regrets. 'We have learned not to try to perpetuate the past,' he says. 'If the core of your life is not self-gratification, then there is significance in everything and everyone around you.'

PEOPLE

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Edited by Anastasia Stepanova

Rescue to families

There are many people today who feel they are failures and need friendship, encouragement, love, care and the will to keep going.' This was one of the reasons why Elaine Banks became the coordinator of 'Family Groups' in the Birkenhead area of north-west England.

Each of the area's ten groups consists of about ten people who may be feeling isolated, lonely and finding life hard. The groups are set up in the local community, with leaders from that area, and have a two-hour session each week where they can relax and have fun together. There is a monthly crèche for pre-school children. Members range from teenage mothers to elderly people in their seventies, both men and women, with or without children. Referrals come from health visitors, schools, social workers, and churches.

Members talk and learn from each other's experiences of life. They have the chance to try all sorts of craft activity and many are amazed at what they can achieve. Visiting speakers and trips are also included.

The Family Groups started in 1988. Elaine Banks first got involved seven years ago when she was asked to help with parenting courses. As the scheme grew, there was a need for a coordinator and she was asked to apply for the post.

As a family they had known difficult times when her husband was unemployed for seven years. 'We were living in an area where there was high unemployment and many people were feeling pretty helpless. The project gave me an opportunity to reach out and support others.'

She believes that God uses her to affect other people's

lives. 'I am aware how he has helped our family and brought us through many difficulties. I want to be used to help others to come to know his love.'

She tells of one 77-year-old man, who lived alone and had no immediate family. He had moved from the big family home where he had lived all his life to a small bungalow two miles away. He became isolated as he did not know his neighbours.

When he first arrived at the Family Group, his coat was badly stained and wrongly buttoned. He spoke very little, but kept coming back week by week. Gradually he shared more about his life and they discovered that, in the past, he had done beautiful woodwork.

Some months later the leaders went to visit him and found that he was barricaded in his home, with all sorts of locks. He could not invite them in as he only had one chair.

Through the care and support of the leaders he began to realize that people did care about him and were interested in his life. He found a reason to wash his clothes and come out and meet with others.

Recently, they brought in a couple of teachers to help parents to recognize and develop their children's potential. Through this, they found that many of their members had themselves had missed out on education. 'We had one 20-year-old who had three young children and had left school at 14,' says Elaine Banks. 'She was excited because at the end of the session she had learnt how to spell a 12-letter word that she had never seen before. It was just the beginning but she could now start to help her young children with their reading. It has given her hope in what she felt was a hopeless situation.'

Two thirds of the group

leaders have been members and want to put back a little of what they have received. Many have found the confidence to get involved in other voluntary groups, and some have gone on to further education. One woman who had been very depressed is now doing an Open University course in child care. If it had not been for coming to the groups she says she would not be where she is today.

Elaine Banks thinks that many people just need the right opportunity and the right circumstances to access what is available for them to move on and reach their potential. 'Not only does this affect the immediate person and their family, but the ripples go out into the community. That sense of care and love can be very powerful.'

Ann Rignall



A Family Group in action: 'the ripples go out into the community'

A golden thread of music

Concordia—a Latin word meaning 'of one heart or mind'—is a perfect name for a foundation that aims at 'building bridges through music and the arts'.

Concordia was founded in 1994 by the international soprano Gillian Humphreys, with Yehudi Menuhin as its patron. It was born out of the desire 'to give young artists their own international voice and to allow them to speak out through their music and art'.

How does Concordia go about this? It arranges exchange visits between British artists and those in other countries, presents

concerts and gives special events. All this is co-ordinated from Gillian Humphreys' home in central London where rehearsals and auditions take place as well as concerts and performances.

Concordia brings together musicians and performers from all over the world. High achievers from Romania, the USA, Russia, Britain, Israel, Spain, Malaysia and many other countries work together in a unique atmosphere of collaboration. Most of them are students at British conservatoires, or finalists from international players' competitions.

As artistic director, producer and forward-planner Gillian Humphreys is constantly involved in all aspects of the foundation's running. Her husband Peter, treasurer and a trustee, deals with administrative work. 'I just couldn't do it without my husband's support.'

One of Concordia's aims is to encourage and promote young musicians and performers. 'Young talented people can't perform in front of large audiences until they have more experience and public acclaim.' That's why she thinks that recognized artists should try to help emerging ones more often.

Concordia's latest project involved taking a group of young professional singers from the UK to Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam, where together with local musicians they performed at the re-opening of the recently restored opera house. It was the first fullscale opera there since the Vietnamese War and took over nine months to plan.

'It was a huge project,' says Gillian Humphreys, 'I had no budget... I went

with faith that we would get some help.'

As with most charities and non-profit organizations, sponsorship is a major issue. But Gillian Humphreys and her team are full of creative ideas and approaches. They travel extensively, giving performances and workshops on Cunard's world cruises. She also holds Concordia Friends' Evenings in her magnificent music room with grand piano.

The Concordia Foundation is also involved in humanitarian projects. They have funded various educational programmes such as art and music classes for children in the Philippines. As well as helping children in schools and orphanages, the foundation has helped to renovate equipment for a children's hospital in Romania and raised money for the Save the Children Fund in Argentina. 'The great contrast between our Gala



Gillian Humphreys (second left) with Concordia performers in Switzerland in 1996

concerts, performances and master classes and our visits to the orphanages is enormous, but part of the wonderful tapestry that music and the arts can weave,' says Gillian Humphreys.

Concordia's diary for this year is full of concerts and events, including a Gala Concert in Vietnam with the Saigon Concert Orchestra in March and the Concordia English Singers and Speakers

Prize and Concert at the Purcell Room, London, on 29 June.

'We have experienced that our work reaches out and really touches the hearts and minds of all generations and much positive change can be achieved,' says Gillian Humphreys. 'It's like a golden thread leading from one country to another, from one heart to another.'

Anastasia Stepanova

LETTERS

From Alexander Pinchook, Mozyr, Belarus

When I showed our article 'From victims to survivors' (Dec/Jan 2001), to one of my colleagues, it turned out that she knew the mother of Alec Zhoba, the child in the AP picture printed with it. They had got to know each other in the Children's Haematology Hospital in Gomel where their sons were receiving treatment for serious blood diseases. Alec is now much better but has to go to hospital once a month.

When Alec's mother saw his picture in FAC, she was shocked. She had not realized that the picture had been circulated through the media, and was flooded with memories. Later, when she read the article, she was pleased that people abroad were ready to share the pain of sick children and their parents. She mentioned that the medical equipment and drugs necessary for Alec's operation had been brought by Japanese visitors, and stressed the commitment and support of the staff at the hospital.

The editors welcome letters for publication but reserve the right to shorten them. Please write to 'For A Change', 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD. E-mail: fac@mra.org.uk

From Myra H Griffiths, Bristol

I was impressed by Robert Webb's article, 'I too have a dream' (Feb/March 2001)—and most especially by the question, 'after apology, what?'

Apology in words has made a relaxed atmosphere between me and a person I had offended. Now I feel 'safer' with the person, therefore more able to behave constructively.

At other times it has been a case of just doing something for a person I have disliked. And at other times again I must try fore-giveness, free from demand for result. This needs prayer and practice and patience.

It took a lifetime, almost, before a close relative could recognize a change of heart in me, but before her death she did.

Forgiveness may bring a 'third way' in divided communities around the world. We had better keep working on this one.



Grigory Pomerants at home in his Moscow flat in June 2000

A dissident for our times

The Russian essayist and philosopher

Grigory Pomerants found his voice in a Soviet prison camp.

He talks to Peter Thwaites:

Periods of national crisis have a way of producing prophetic voices who speak with special sharpness and clarity. In Russia today, such a voice is Grigory Pomerants, one of the country's most original thinkers since the early 1960s.

Now aged 83, Pomerants is an essayist and philosopher, who graduated in 1939 from the Moscow Institute of Philosophy, Literature and History (IFLI) but was never allowed to take a higher degree or to teach at tertiary level. For five decades—until 1990—his work could not be published in his own country.

Born four months after the Bolshevik Revolution, he has lived through the Stalinist terror of the 1930s, three years of frontline war service including the Stalingrad campaign, and four years of political imprisonment. He has learned to walk towards and through fear, and to conquer it. He is a great mind and spirit who has refused to be crushed by what he calls 'the reign of inertia'.

In his autobiography, *Notes of an ugly duckling*, he describes a childhood of sensitivity, introspection, insecurity and loneliness. He was born in Vilnius, then in Poland, and spoke Yiddish and Polish until the age of seven, when his mother and he followed his father to Moscow. His parents divorced when he was 12, and his mother left for Kiev, leaving Pomerants with his father.

He describes his years, from 1935 to 1939, as a student at IFLI as 'ugly'. Arrests on suspicion were normal: his father was

arrested and banished from Moscow in 1938. 'I could not manage without consciously and half-consciously lying,' writes Pomerants. His thesis on Dostoyevsky was judged 'anti-Marxist' and he was excluded from further studies.

During his four years' war service, Pomerants was twice wounded and twice decorated. In 1946 he was demobilized and expelled from the Party (which he had joined at Stalingrad) for 'anti-party statements'. Three years of aimlessness and depression followed and his arrest in 1949

came even as a release. It was like the slap on a new baby's bottom to start it breathing, he says: he began to learn to make the best of every situation.

In prison, for the first time in his life, he found a society of people who understood him. In Soviet society he had been isolated. In prison everybody, except the actual criminals, was 'anti-Soviet'. 'I found for the first time an environment of live philosophical debate,' he writes. He describes his fellow prisoners, arrested for 'talking too much', as 'gasbags' who 'philosophized irrepressibly in the evenings, lacing bookish phrases with thieves' language... I felt like a fish in water.'

When Stalin died in 1953, Pomerants was released. He found work as a school teacher and then as a bibliographer in the Main Library of Social Sciences. 'I found my own opportunities in this "failure's job",' he says. 'In my lowly position I found a guarantee of freedom: no one could intimidate me by threatening me with the loss of my job.'

All his academic research had to be done in his own time and shared in the informal, unofficial, semi-tolerated twilight world of free inquiry and underground *samizdat* publications.

In that strange intellectual world behind the Soviet scenes Pomerants became well-known. In 1970 he attended a private seminar with Andrei Sakharov, the physicist and Nobel Peace Laureate, who wrote in his *Memoirs*: 'I was astounded by his erudition, his broad perspective, his sardonic humour and his academic approach... Pomerants is a man of rare independence, integrity and intensity who has not let material poverty cramp his rich, if underrated, contribution to our intellectual life.' He also locked horns on several occasions with Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who in *From Under the Rubble* (1974) criticized Pomerants' views but conceded that some of his statements were 'strikingly true'.

Because his inability to conform earned him non-personhood in the Soviet world, Pomerants has had to rely even more on his own inner resources. His spiritual strength and personal authenticity sparkle through his writings and conversation, against the grey background of Soviet (and post-Soviet) conformity. This sparkle still captivates the young of Russia today: on my most recent visit, a young ceramic artist told me, 'I adore Pomerants.'

Pomerants has survived by facing and reflecting on the realities both surrounding him and within himself, however ugly or distorted they may be. He expresses a deep religious faith that is open to the wisdom of more than one confession but is the fruit of personal struggle and experience. Much of the fascination in his writings is in his vivid accounts of these experiences and the sense that they form one piece with his scholarship and his philosophical reflections.

I first met Pomerants in 1992, when I was the driver of a minibus sent to collect a group of Russian scholars from the airport, who had come to attend a seminar on 'moral lessons of Soviet history' at the MRA centre in Caux, Switzerland. Some of the group, like Pomerants—a small, wiry man with bright eyes, a beaky nose and receding, tufted hair—were already well-known. Others were from the young, post-Soviet generation. It was just months after the Soviet Union had ceased to exist.

In the distinguished group that gathered in Caux that year he stood out as an acute, and humorous, observer of human nature (including his own). One of his interventions was to point out that silence is an essential part of dialogue. The atmosphere of Caux captivated him and his wife, the poet Zinaida Mirkina, who accompanied him on two later visits. Some of the outpouring of poems she wrote there appear in her recent collection, *Moi zatish'ya* ('My moments of quiet').

'In my lowly position I found a guarantee of freedom'

In Moscow's *New Times* of November 1994 Pomerants described his impressions of Switzerland as a country where 'the people do nothing to spoil the beauty'. He dubbed Caux 'planet MRA', a place where behaviour normal on planet Earth seemed suddenly out of place because 'the spirit of reconciliation reigned'.

He also recognized something familiar. 'Action out of silence is an idea that is extraordinarily close to me. I did not know that the ideas given form in the verses of Zinaida Mirkina and in my essays are very close to MRA.... In MRA I easily march in step.'

In 1997 he published a book on MRA: 'Running to keep up with God' (echoing a phrase of the initiator, Frank Buchman). Its opening essay—entitled, with wry Russian humour, *The spiritual movement from the West*—will soon be published in English by Caux Editions, along with two other articles by Pomerants: *Russia's spiritual and social crisis and Europe, Asia and Russia—dialogue of cultures*.

Later in 1992 I visited Pomerants in his small Moscow flat. He presented me with a copy of his book on Dostoyevsky—his first work to be published in Russia. Parts of the manuscript had been written for his 'anti-Marxist' thesis, 50 years earlier. On a more recent visit, last June, my wife and I arrived to find him frying potatoes in the kitchen. He had travelled into Moscow from the dacha, where he and Mirkina spend the summer months, for his weekly 'day in the office'.

Our conversation was interrupted frequently by phone calls from friends and colleagues in Russia and abroad, who knew the day to reach him.

Before I first met him I had heard one person suggest that he was a figure of the past. Eight years later his inner life and mental activity are undiminished. A lecturer in religious studies calls him 'the last of a great generation.... He has outlived practically all the dissidents of his generation and many younger ones'.

Pomerants spends his days speaking, writing articles and books, giving media interviews and publishing. His occasional lectures at the 'Muzei Mit-senatov' (Patrons' Museum) are publicized mostly by word of mouth, but when in one television interview he inadvertently mentioned the venue of the next lecture so many people turned up that the event had to be postponed. His aim at these occasions is to bring together young and not-so-young 'in the spirit of Caux'; not to talk all the time himself but to give inspiration to the listeners. He and Mirkina answer questions together.

In post-Soviet Russia Pomerants has been given belated recognition as a Member of the Writers' Union and of the Pen Club; a Member of the Academy of Natural Sciences; and as head of the Cultural Section in the Humanities Research Academy. But such status means little to him now. 'The most important thing is the effect you have on the soul of the reader or the listener,' he says.

His passion to communicate comes from the belief that he has something vital to say in the present crisis of Russian (and not only Russian) society. He puts hope in the small, unseen groups of people in towns and villages around the country with whom he corresponds. He longs for such groups to coalesce and become more visible. Recently some of his articles on 'the crisis of the sacred and the moral order' have appeared in teachers' professional journals which have a wide readership. 'Schools must educate the personality,' he believes.

He sees both of the wars in Chechnya as disastrous decisions. But such mistakes cannot be quickly undone—the cure to the problem needs to be deep and long-term. He quoted a song by Alexander Galich: 'I don't need "quick aid" (first aid), give me "slow aid" (long-term).'

The themes which preoccupy Pomerants—the wisdom which conquers fear; the embracing of difference; finding authenticity and wholeness as an individual, as a country, as the human race—are timeless. Like Dostoyevsky he is gripped by the journey of a human soul, its adventures, struggles and discoveries. 'Everything I write, I write via myself. I try to approach both God and people through "I", through the depths of myself that I can reach,' he writes. ■

From Walkerswood to the world

Since we last wrote about Walkerswood, Jamaica, in 1994, its cottage industry has burgeoned into a company with a £2 million turnover. **Mary Lean** reports below—and (right) visits its London showcase, Bamboula restaurant in Brixton.



Prince Charles at Walkerswood Caribbean Foods with managing director Woody Mitchell and Virginia Burke, managing director of Walkerswood Marketing.

'One of our competitors decided not to continue to export and lost its market to Costa Rica.'

The company weathered the crisis and, thanks to the way its staff rallied round, managed to raise productivity by 60 per cent. In 1998, so as to spread its risk, it set up its own farm in the south of the island and entered into an arrangement with a large farm in St Mary, to the east of Walkerswood. But they continue to buy produce from some 100 local farms, some of them very small.

When the company celebrated its 21st birthday in 1999, the guest speaker was Jamaican economist Norman Girvan, whose parents helped to set up the original 'Pioneer Club', from which the village's self-help initiatives stemmed. The teamwork which ensued between the villagers and the local landowning family testified, said Girvan, to 'the critical role of religious faith in bridging the gap between the materially privileged and the materially less privileged'.

The deeper spiritual and human values which motivated Walkerswood's pioneers live on in the ethos of the company. 'The Walkerswood team speak of the strong bonds of faith in God that unite them,' Girvan said. 'They speak of constant communication—talking through problems of human relations, of debt and drought as they arise. They speak of a constant effort at meditation, reflection, self-criticism and seeking guidance from above. They speak of the importance of community rootedness, of partnership and of equity.'

The company is owned by 12 partners, mostly from the community, and none of

them owning more than 17.5 per cent of the shares. It has 23 shareholders, and has just opened up the opportunity to buy shares to employees of five years' standing.

Walkerswood's spiritual roots help when it comes to the hard graft of building teamwork between the partners, says their chairman, Roddy Edwards. 'There's a continual need to talk honestly, not to sweep things under the carpet, and to admit one's mistakes,' he says. 'When people are prepared to talk openly about such issues as jealousy, we can come to new unity.'

When the Prince of Wales visited the factory last year, his spokeswoman said, 'It's a good example of local people getting together and proving very successful in an area where people find it hard to make a living.'

And what of the future? Walkerswood Caribbean Foods has just published a cookbook* to show customers overseas what to do with the spices and sauces it supplies, and, says Mitchell, plans to add a new pepper sauce to its repertoire this year.

Its most ambitious plan is to build a new processing facility which, when fully operational, will raise productivity 'at least four-fold' and increase employment correspondingly. The hope, says Mitchell, is to break the ground this year and complete construction over the next two years. 'We are excited by the possibilities,' he says. 'We continue to live the dream that started from a small seed years ago.'

**Walkerswood Caribbean kitchen* by Virginia Burke, Simon & Schuster UK Ltd, London, £7.99 (US price, \$12.00)

The brighter world of Bamboula

When I arrive at Bamboula, London's pioneering Caribbean restaurant, manager Paulette Pryce is deep in conference with chef Obrie Blasse. This gives me time to admire the decor. The idea, Pryce explains later, is that someone looking in on a cold winter's day should be drawn into the warmer brighter world of the Caribbean.

Opening Bamboula—the name comes from an African street-dance—in 1997 was something of a risk for Walkerswood Europe and its partner Island Grill (Jamaica's spicy answer to Kentucky Fried Chicken). Eighty per cent of new restaurants go bust in their first year. But three and a half years on, the venture is beginning to pay off. The restaurant is '95 per cent' self-sufficient, its turnover has quadrupled and it now serves as many people a night as it used to in a week.

Time Out, London's weekly entertainment guide, describes it as a 'fantastic Caribbean restaurant' and the menu is mouthwatering and exotic—flamed jerk chicken, escoveitch fish, callaloo lasagne and chicken rundown. To Blasse's chagrin, there is only table space for 22 customers at a time. 'If we had bigger premises,' he says, 'we'd really be doing good.'

Caribbean food is becoming increasingly popular in Britain, but it's usually only available as a takeaway. Pryce is used to customers telling her what a relief it is to find a Caribbean restaurant where they can sit down and talk. She was working for Walkerswood Europe, promoting the products of Walkerswood Caribbean Foods at food shows, when she spotted the gap in the market. 'We'd have a pot with small pieces of chicken with jerk seasoning on it. The smell would attract people. They kept on asking us, "Where can we find a really good Caribbean restaurant?"'

It's unusual for a small company to 'bring the food from the field to the plate' in the way Walkerswood does at Bamboula, says Ian Cook, a lecturer in Cultural Geography at the University of Birmingham. 'It seems incredibly ambitious for a company that small, that young and from that far away to even consider opening a restaurant in London. Grace Kennedy, a long established and much larger Jamaica-based competitor, has just one UK-based employee working from a small office in the City.'

The restaurant works well on a number of levels: not least as a showcase for Walkerswood products. 'They bring the buyers for supermarket chains to Bamboula, rather than just waving a bottle under their noses in an office,' says Cook. 'They get the

smell, the music, the decor and then they taste the food. Walkerswood are canny, they know what attracts people.'

Walkerswood Europe chose Brixton as the venue because of its large Caribbean community. 'The customers who had helped us get where we were at the time were the people of our own community,' Pryce says. 'We wanted to put something back.' She gets a kick out of the fact that the community come to Bamboula to celebrate their birthdays, weddings and promotions.

Wherever possible, Bamboula employs local people. Obrie Blasse is a case in point. After 27 years as head chef at the University of London Union, he has been working at Bamboula for three years and doesn't miss the commuting. He enjoys the interaction with customers—'People come right into the kitchen and say thank you'—and is getting used to apparent strangers recognizing him in the street.

The biggest challenge, both agree, has been finding staff. 'The people we have now are very good, they actually "own" Bamboula,' says Pryce. 'But I remember thinking that one year had been the longest of my life because of the things that happened: we had people who didn't turn up or just left without saying they were going.' After disappointing experiences with government employment schemes and the local job centre, Pryce now recruits through word of

mouth and a sign in the window—and has a waiting list of people interested.

The restaurant now employs ten people. The staff's sense of ownership is encouraged by monthly staff meetings, where issues—such as how often to offer Sunday brunch—can be discussed.

Like all small businesses, Bamboula has faced constant challenges. 'We were lucky that the manager of the local HSBC bank caught Paulette's vision and stuck with us,' says Roddy Edwards of Walkerswood. 'The VAT people and Inland Revenue have been very patient with us too, as we attempted to honour all our debts. For small businesses to survive they need banks and officials with that sort of attitude.'

Bamboula tries to do its bit too. 'We were late in paying one builder because of our cash flow problems,' says Edwards. 'Later, when we were doing better, we added interest in recognition of the problems we had caused him.'

Although she jokes that she 'must have been ill' when she came up with idea of Bamboula, Pryce was so convinced by the venture that she put in her own money. Friends tell her that if she could bottle her determination, she'd be a rich woman. 'When things are not working I say, "Dear Lord, give me the answer"—and I think he does, often without me even realizing it.'

Pryce is proud of the celebrities who have eaten at Bamboula, including the West Indian cricket team. She believes the restaurant has given the community something to brag about. 'Brixton should be proud that we have a Caribbean restaurant that's been around now for three and a half years. And it's going to be around a lot longer if I have anything to do with it.'



Paulette Pryce at Bamboula: 'Brixton should be proud'

BOOKMARK



A new take on peace and religion

Margaret Smith finds lessons for peacemakers in a book which looks at conflict resolution through the lens of Jewish tradition.

Since the early 1980s the developing field of conflict resolution has drawn together people of many outlooks who recognize that working for a more peaceful and just world cannot and should not be left to governments. Such groups have gained credibility from the fact that in the past 20 years governments have found themselves less able to respond to pressing social needs in the international environment. As a result, officialdom increasingly accepts and recognizes the role of non-government actors in international affairs.

Those engaged in conflict resolution work recognize that healthy processes must include as large a number as possible of those affected by the conflict, giving them a sense of being heard and a sense of ownership of any agreement. They believe in the importance of good negotiation and communication skills, in particular the ability to listen actively as a way of acknowledging the other's concerns. They emphasize the value of a 'third party' who can help those on two sides of a conflict talk through their differences. And they derive their optimism from the overarching idea of 'win-win'—the belief that it is possible to find solutions where all parties feel their fundamental concerns have been met.

Rabbi Marc Gopin identifies himself, broadly speaking, with the conflict resolution movement. His book, *Between Eden and Armageddon: the future of world religions, violence and peacemaking* (Oxford University Press, 2000), respectfully criticizes certain elements of that movement and attempts to broaden it. Most fundamentally, Gopin challenges the way that concepts of negotiation have had such a defining influence on this field. Emphasis on direct communication, he argues, privileges cultures and individuals who are at ease with the spoken word, particularly those with higher education, and assumes that direct verbal dialogue is, of itself, an agent of change.

Secondly, he questions the pervasive belief in 'win-win', arguing that in certain cases there is no win-win solution, and that the conflict resolver must help the parties mourn those things that cannot be achieved in negotiation. Thirdly, Gopin critiques what he sees as the 'secular liberal' assumptions of the conflict resolution movement—relying as it does on rationality and critical dia-

logue. Because of this bias, he says, many conflict resolution specialists understand religion only in terms of its capacity to create or exacerbate conflict and fail to understand the 'prosocial' role religion can play in



Marc Gopin: Judaism as a peacemaking faith

encouraging peaceable behaviour.

In fact, religious actors are getting more acknowledgement for their peacemaking work than in the past, witness the UN's special meeting for religious and spiritual leaders in New York last September. In particular, this acknowledgement has to do with their capacity to play the role of a third party, both in unofficial dialogues and sometimes in official settings.

Gopin is calling for a different take on religion's role in conflict resolution—one that acknowledges the value of religious teaching per se. As an Orthodox rabbi, he develops his thinking mainly with regard to Orthodox Judaism. He proposes that normal processes of rabbinical interpretation could lead Orthodox Jews to develop ideas about peacemaking that are already present in their teaching and pinpoints elements of Jewish teaching that could be developed in this way.

It is impossible to read this book without relating Gopin's arguments to the current situation in Israel and Palestine. Indeed, a subtext of the book is the question 'How can the Ultra-Orthodox community in

Israel be brought into a future peace process?' Gopin criticizes the now-defunct Oslo agreement on the grounds that it built on the liberal, secular, pro-peace elite at the 'centre' of Israeli-Palestinian politics. Oslo thus supported the tendency of secular groups to label the religious right in Israel as contributors to conflict and then to ignore them. A fresh articulation of Judaism as a peacemaking faith and culture, he argues, could draw together religious and secular alike in a new conception of Israeli Jewish identity that could lead to gestures of acceptance of the Palestinians.

As a non-Jew I am not qualified to comment on the workability of this proposal. But Gopin's book offers the non-Jew an opportunity to reflect in a fresh way about what it means to be a peacemaker, by looking at this vocation through the lens of Jewish tradition.

Gopin speaks, for example, of the importance of the face to face encounter in Jewish teaching. 'The talmudic rabbis,' he says, 'mandated that one should greet everyone with a loving, or literally "beautiful", face (*sever panim yafot*). They prohibited the kind of language and actions that make the face

turn white with embarrassment, making the latter into a sin akin to murder, literally the shedding of the blood of the face. Conversely, they made the honour of the Other into a supreme *mitsvah*, the opposite of humiliation of the face of the Other.'

He tells the story of Rabbi Meir (c 135-170 CE), who was once lecturing when a married woman came to hear him speak. The lecture lasted late into the night and when the woman got home her husband was so angry that he would not let her into the house until she spat in the rabbi's face. The rabbi heard of the plight of the woman and went and found her in her place of exile. Pretending that he had an eye ailment, he asked her how to do incantations over an eye that is unwell. She could not remember an incantation for eyes, but he told her not to worry, because he knew that if she would just spit seven times in his eye he would be cured. And so the woman was reconciled with her husband.

Gopin emphasizes that Rabbi Meir lowers himself—allowing himself as a person of elevated spiritual standing to be spat upon—and offers this as a model for third parties, who must be willing to lose a little face in order to open a path to reconciliation. But in addition, the cultural specificity of this story and the rabbi's insight—combining as it does compassion, humour and originality—reminds us that true spirituality involves a creative response to a particular situation that surely cannot be reduced to a science.

Forgiveness, says Gopin, has been much discussed in conflict resolution circles, but usually from a perspective that is Christian without recognizing that this is so. What forgiveness actually means and how it is acted upon varies greatly from person to person and culture to culture. 'It also can and does interact in complicated ways with competing moral and spiritual responses, such as commitments to truth, justice, apology, repentance and penance, among others.'

He speaks of the Jewish process of *teshuva*, which can mean 'repentance' or 'returning', which he regards as essential for the transformation of relationship. *Teshuva* should involve restitution, deep remorse, a confession of wrongdoing, and a commitment to change in the future. An experience of deep remorse and critical apology, he argues, is fundamental to real societal change: forgiveness offered without this will not have the same profound impact.

Gopin calls for memorials to past horrors that are not simply to be looked at, but which are places where confessions, apologies and restitutions can be made on an ongoing basis. This continuing process could free everyone involved to mourn the past together with the victims, and foster a new future.

Gopin, wisely, does not attempt to dis-



Israeli and Palestinian schoolchildren take part in a programme for non-violent communication in 1999.

cuss the application of his ideas to Islamic teaching, though he makes it clear he has studied reconciliation processes in Islam and has worked with Moslem students.

The knottier problem that Gopin chooses not to engage in this book is the explosive combination of religion and politics on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the way that so-called fundamentalist traditions tend to reinforce already existing political extremes. Instead he focuses on the fear of annihilation that causes the religiously committed on both sides to emphasize the elements of their religion that negate the Other, because they feel a duty to protect their religious tradition. This is the tendency Gopin seeks to redirect, and he implies that redirecting it will have political consequences.

In the broadest philosophical sense, this book engages the temptation that idealists face to search for a key to unlock the prob-

lems of life that works for everyone. Christians in the past have thought, and in some cases continue to think, of their faith in these 'universalist' terms. Other potential universalisms, whether they are based on the 'dialogue group' so popular in conflict resolution circles, or on a belief in liberal values like human rights, may also have validity. But if the claims they make are too great it will be impossible for extremist groups to participate in the process they are offering. Minority groups who take extreme positions need reassurance that their own group is honoured and upheld for what it is before they are willing to move out into a wider forum and participate in reconciliation. ■

Margaret Smith is an Assistant Professor of International Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution at American University, Washington, DC.

FOR A CHANGE

FAC depends on charitable gifts to extend its outreach, particularly in countries with currency restrictions. Any gifts in the UK through covenants, Gift Aid or legacies are tax deductible. These and other gifts should be made

to: Moral Re-Armament, 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD, UK. (Registered Charity No 226334). Bank account details and Gift Aid forms are available on request.

Australians follow journey of healing to southern Africa



Edward Howard

Johnny Huckle sings to students at Orlando West High School in Soweto, South Africa

In Johannesburg in February the Chair of the South African Human Rights Commission, Dr Barney Pityana, met a group of Australians. He had heard that last year nearly a million took part in walks for reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. How had this massive people's movement developed, he wanted to know. Could something similar happen in South Africa?

An Australian Aboriginal replied. Johnny Huckle is well-known on the Australian music circuit. He grew up in the Aboriginal reserve on the edge of a country town, enduring the contempt with which many white people treated Aboriginals. Music became a useful tool to express his anger and hit back at the white community. Gradually his

bitterness and despair led him into alcoholism.

'I didn't like the person I had become, with all my dishonesty and resentment,' he says. 'Three years ago I had a dream, in which my ancestors asked me to turn away from all that was imprisoning me. That was the start of a journey which renewed my spirit. I found a whole new vitality.'

His personal healing coincided with a national initiative to heal the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. In May 1998 hundreds of thousands came together in a National Sorry Day, held so that non-Aboriginals could apologize to Aboriginal people for tragically misguided past policies. Aboriginal people responded by launching a 'journey of healing' for all who have been harmed by these

policies. Huckle decided to get involved. He and his partner, Helen Moran, have taken a Journey of Healing music tour to every State of Australia, singing to tens of thousands of people, particularly in Aboriginal communities. Their message is that no one need remain in despair; everyone can find the next step towards healing.

The Journey's approach is that, while government programmes have a vital role in healing, so too do ordinary people who get together across the racial divide, wherever they live; listen to each other; and take action together. The Journey offers three criteria as guidelines for action—recognition of the truth of what happened rather than the version too often found in history books; commitment to heal the harm done; and unity

between the races in grappling with the problems. As the Journey of Healing song—written by Huckle and Moran—expresses it, 'to trust again, we must take this journey together as friends'.

The Journey is one of several community initiatives which are now offering Australians a chance to build just and respectful relationships between the races. News of it reached southern Africa, where people of all races who are active with MRA decided to invite a group, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, to speak about this work.

Our group spent six weeks in Zimbabwe and South Africa. We put together a presentation of dance, song and sketch, outlining the Journey of Healing and the personal experiences of healing undergirding it. This presentation was seen

on Zimbabwean TV and by many live audiences including nearly 10,000 students. After every performance, people spoke to us about the conflicts and tensions they encounter between differing races and groups. As one South African said, 'I want to be part of healing. You have shown me that I don't have to wait for the authorities to take the initiative. I can do something myself.'

In turn, we were inspired by much that we saw of inter-racial cooperation in southern Africa. It was moving to watch black and white together caring for AIDS sufferers and their children. In grappling with these huge problems, southern Africa may discover its own grassroots movement, bringing with it a new respect and appreciation between the races.

John Bond

Leicester renounces anti-semitism

How far back should modern day societies go in renouncing the evils in their past?

At the end of January, as Britain observed its first national Holocaust Memorial Day, the City Council of Leicester unanimously renounced the anti-semitism of its 800-year-old founding charter. Simon de Montfort's charter of circa 1231 stated 'No Jew or Jewess in my time, or in the time of any of my heirs to the end of the world, shall inhabit or remain, or obtain a residence, in Leicester.'

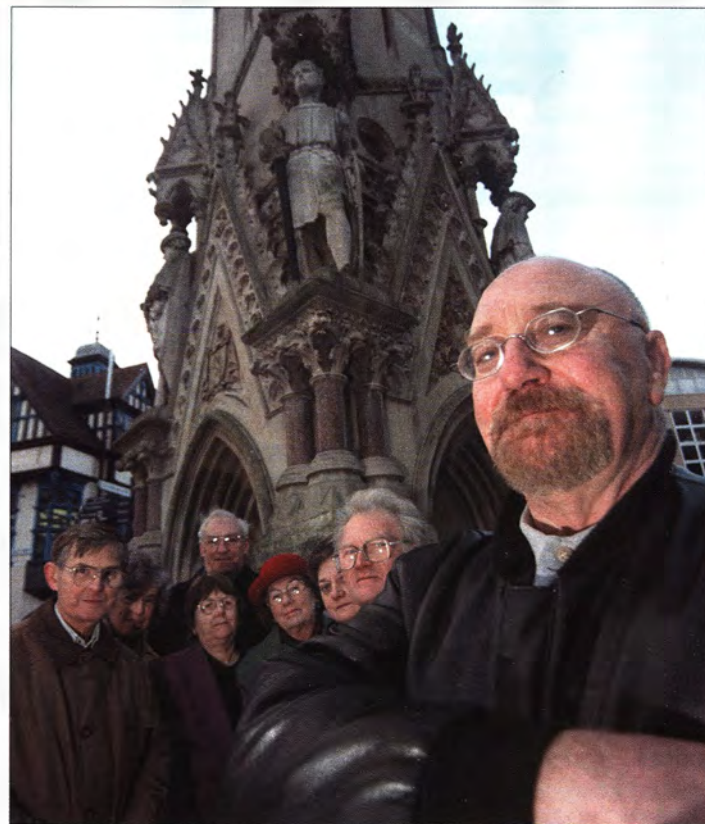
Simon de Montfort notwithstanding, there has been a significant Jewish population in Leicester since the 1840s, with one Jewish Lord Mayor being elected four times. But City Councillors believed it was important to reassert Leicester's commitment to racial tolerance. Within 10 years Leicester could be the first city in Britain with a non-white majority population.

Introducing the initiative, Councillor Veejay Patel, a

Hindu, said that views expressed in the charter were in tune with the national thinking of its time. 'Although recognizing they are not relevant today may appear unnecessary,' he said, 'we have an opportunity for the citizens of Leicester, through their elected representatives, to proudly reaffirm Leicester as a vibrant, integrated and harmonious city that celebrates its rich cultural diversity.'

The leader of the 56-person City Council, Councillor Ross Willmot, who is from a Jewish heritage, said, 'It's extremely personal for me. I would not be allowed to be leader of this council because I would not be allowed to be in this city.' He said that the hate-mail which had resulted from the Council's action showed 'why it was important to do this'. The initiative was also welcomed by Rabbi Chaim Kanteovitz, of the Leicester Hebrew Association.

The petition to the City Council about the charter was prompted by the Watchman Prayer Ministry. Its



Liz Hewitt

Leicester citizens call for the anti-semitism of their 800-year-old city charter to be renounced.

spokesman, Dan Kay, commented, 'The city and the media saw it as a repudiation of racism and a positive reaffirmation of the city's commitment to cultural diversity, but the

Christians involved believe it is also important as the removal of an obstacle to spiritual blessing and renewal.'

Michael Henderson

Creators of peace

After the colour, hustle and bustle of Mumbai, India, the tranquil setting of the Asia Plateau MRA conference centre, 260km south-east in the Deccan hills, was appropriate for a workshop on 'Everyone a peacemaker'.

It was organized by Creators of Peace, a women's initiative which invites people of every background, race and position to embrace their own peace-making potential. It encourages individuals to 'start creating peace where you are—in your heart, your home, workplace and community'.

Fifty-five women and men from 19 countries took part in the workshop last January to renew their commitment to 'creating peace—one heart at a time'. Outside the conference sessions, participants had the opportunity to meet women and children from the local villages, to do volunteer cleaning and weeding at a local hospital and to visit a hospice for aids patients and a metal-casting factory. Each day started with the 'mindful' practice of yoga before dawn.

For us as Canadians, it was

humbling to listen to the stories of those from the Great Lakes area of Africa, the Middle East and north eastern India. Those from the Democratic Republic of Congo heard of the death of their president while they were in India and were fearful of what violence might ensue. A Rwandan woman, who did not know the fate of her husband who had ventured into Congo some years before, spoke of her decision to put aside her suffering and to work towards peace. When asked how she could work with those who had caused her pain, she replied that she saw in them the face of God, not of an enemy.

Participants from the Middle East described how they had helped one another when there was great pressure from opposing parties to keep the conflict going. A group of women had set up a suicide helpline to serve Israeli citizens, which had also helped distraught Palestinians.

One important theme that emerged was the desire of indigenous peoples, no matter where they come from, to



Left to right: Illa Mehta, Kirti Dolkar, Judy Forbister and Yukari Tatsuno at the Creators of Peace workshop in India

determine their own destiny. It was clear that in many countries people were struggling against the efforts of the dominant culture to force its structure of governance on others, one of the aftereffects of colonization.

One delegate commented that the intimacy of the group enabled us to go into each others' hearts, and to understand, love and tolerate more. Another delegate pointed out that while we were talking about women's role in making peace, we should not forget women's capacity for creating conflict.

Some participants decided to develop peacemaking and compassionate listening seminars for the youth and refugee groups they work with, while others decided to gather with their neighbours to examine how to live out the qualities of a peacemaker. The concept of 'kitchen table gatherings' was presented as a framework for creating new initiatives for peace. The workshop also produced a declaration inviting others to 'join us in this journey of change of heart so that the 21st century could become a celebration of life'.

Judy Forbister, Joy Newman



WEBSITE

by Robert Webb

Cincinnati's open house

The Open House centre for Jewish-Arab reconciliation in Ramle, Israel, was established 10 years ago to help heal the deep emotional wounds and distrust among Jews and Arabs. The house was originally the home of a Palestinian family, then of a Jewish family, but it now brings Jewish and Arab children and their parents together to help them understand one another.

When two of those responsible for the Ramle house came to Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1999 to enlist support, they unwittingly planted the seeds for another Open House. The vision and inspiration of Yehezkel Landau, an American-born Jewish immigrant to Israel, and Michail Fanous, an Israeli Christian Arab, captivated a diverse group of Cincinnati residents. They decided to work for dialogue among Jews, Christians and Muslims in their city. They won't have their own house, at least not at the start, but will continue to meet at Hebrew Union College (HUC), an internationally known centre of reformed Judaism which has a Jerusalem branch.

Significantly, Rabbi Ezra Spicehandler, a moving force in this latest Open House effort, was once dean of the HUC Jerusalem campus. Another prime mover is Margaret Rahn, a former Peace Corps volunteer who met Landau at an MRA Agenda for Reconciliation conference in Caux, Switz-

erland, shortly before he and Fanous arrived in Cincinnati. Rahn emphasizes the vital roles played by other members of the group including the Rev Linda Bartholomew, Canon of Christ Church Cathedral, Danya Karram, an Arab Muslim, Rita Edlin, who is Jewish, and Lou Vera, an ecumenical specialist from the office of the Catholic Archdiocese.

'The Open House effort in Cincinnati continues to move forward,' says Rahn, a graduate student in international ethnic relations. 'Wisdom seems to come out of the mouths of babes in these gatherings as we all feel like novices in the effort, but it does grow more apparent that we were brought together for a reason beyond us.'

Although the US has relatively little ethnic or religious violence, we clearly have much to learn from any country where efforts are under way to promote inter-group healing. So often we Americans talk the talk but fail to walk the walk. We would like others to think that we are the model. But just as we have far to go to solve our racial problems, we have by no means bridged the gaps in understanding among our religious groups.

'Some people may wonder why we are involved in reconciliation between people who are not at war,' says Margaret Rahn. 'But there is temporal prejudice and scape-

goating. There are feelings among the Palestinians [in America] that they've lost their home.'

Rahn says that with its current scant resources the Cincinnati Open House won't be able to provide much financial support for its Ramle model, though they hope to in future. 'But they [Landau and Fanous] are grateful that we're trying to reflect their philosophy and keeping them in our prayers and thoughts.' Just as the Cincinnati group takes Ramle as its model, so it may show other American cities what they can do.

Rahn says the group has set a meeting for 29 April to expand its ranks and plan for a larger community gathering next fall. The group also hopes to organize exchange trips with Open House, Ramle. Other goals include an annual citywide interfaith forum and the establishment of an interfaith youth group. Members of the group visualize eventually spinning off into small circles sponsoring culture-fests and other activities. In a report on a meeting of the group Rahn writes: 'Our vision is to conduct interfaith activities and dialogues which locally mirror the guiding belief of Open House of Ramle... that dialogue and positive interactive experiences with others of different faiths can reduce misunderstandings and misperceptions of the other, and thus cultivate harmonious and productive interfaith relationships.'

I'm reminded of the story I heard about a white woman in Jackson, Mississippi. She was said to have proclaimed that if an African-American family ever moved next door to her she would move. One did. The result was a friendship so strong that she and her new neighbours exchanged house keys. Fear often fades with dialogue and mutual understanding.

Robert Webb is a former columnist and editorial writer for 'The Cincinnati Enquirer'. He lives in Alexandria, Va, USA.

REFLECTIONS

by Mike Lowe



Corbis

Walking to the beat

I am not a soccer fan, but one thing that gets me excited at a big match is when, seemingly spontaneously, the strains of *You'll never walk alone* or some other anthem swell from the vast crowd. There's something powerful about large numbers of people singing in unison. I get the same thrill from a big orchestral concert. In each case the rhythm is vitally important. The orchestra has a conductor to beat time. The soccer crowd, not having this advantage, usually lose it after a few bars.

Whether we are musical or not, rhythm touches the core of our lives. From the moment we are born to the moment we die, our hearts beat a regular pulse. Our days fall into rhythmic patterns of sleep, meals, work and rest, with wrist-watches and alarm-clocks keeping time as surely as any conductor. And while I may choose to relax to some classical music, others unwind by submitting their bodies to the powerful beat of nightclubs.

Therapists working with brain-damaged and handicapped children find that music and

simple rhythm can calm or excite the emotions in ways that nothing else can. Poets and politicians alike use the rhythm of words to cast their spells. The art of public speaking depends on it.

As I write, I can see the first flowers of spring emerging. Nature too has its rhythms, though we are less in touch with them than our forefathers were. Freezers and cheap transport mean that I can buy strawberries in January or fresh apples in April. When nights draw in and days get cold I can put on the lights and turn up the heating.

For religious believers the rhythm of the seasons goes hand in hand with the cycle of religious festivals. In the spring, Jews celebrate Pesach, the passover, Hindus celebrate Holi and Christians celebrate Easter. Yet too many of us in the West have become cut off from the essence of these festivals just as we have lost touch with the seasons. What is the meaning of a feast when not preceded by a fast?

At first sight a Benedictine monastery

appears a place where time has stood still for over 1,500 years. Yet look deeper and you find a place that is pulsating with vibrant rhythm. The hours are punctuated by bells calling the community to prayer. Each day changes subtly, with saints' days and feast days different again. Every seventh day there is a break from daily toil.

It is a curious paradox that for most of us in a time of rapid change, days, months and years merge into a dreary monotony. Although we may still have our daily routines and some vestiges of the weekend left, we have lost sight of those rhythms with a longer span.

When we reconnect with these deeper rhythms we begin to weave the tunes of our own individual lives into something much bigger—a cosmic symphony which started before us and will continue long after we are gone. Its significance is greater than that of our own brief span, yet it renders our lives full of meaning. And, like the football crowd, we know that we will never walk alone. ■

SUBSCRIBE NOW!

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS (six issues a year)

Please send form with payment to FOR A CHANGE (except India, see below) to:

UK & EUROPE Tirley Garth, Tarporley, Cheshire CW6 0LZ £16.00
Over 65s (UK only) £13.00

(Giro Transfer No 504 1759 & Eurocheque, written in English, to UK only)

E-mails to subscription dept: FACTirley@aol.com

Other countries Tirley Garth, Tarporley, Cheshire CW6 0LZ £18.00

If you live in one of the following countries, you may pay in your own currency:

AUSTRALIA/PNG P.O. Box 53, Burwood, VIC 3125 \$40.00

CANADA Ste. 403, 180 Markham Road, Scarborough, ON M1M 2Z9 \$38.00

NETHERLANDS FAC Subs, Morele Herbewapening, Amaliastraat 10, NL-2514 JC'S-Gravenhage f56,00

NEW ZEALAND PO Box 1834, Wellington NZ\$50.00

SOUTH AFRICA 227 Loveday St, Muckleneuk, 0002 Pretoria R140.00

SWITZERLAND Caux Editions, Rue de Panorama, CH-1824, Caux SFr40.00

SWEDEN MRA, Djurgardsvagen 220, 115 21, Stockholm SEK 250
(Swedish Postal Giro no. 35 70-6 MRA/10K)

JAPAN Tokoem Mansion 802, 3-7-5 Ebisuminami, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150 Y4,500

USA 1156 Fifteenth St. NW, Suite 910, Washington DC, 20005-1704 \$25.00

INDIA Cheques made out to: Friends of Moral Re-Armament (India)
Asia Plateau, Panchgani, Dt. Sotara, Maharashtra 412 805

Individuals Rs300

Institutions/Companies Rs850

Discount rates are available for more than one copy—please apply to the appropriate address above for details.

GIFT/SUBSCRIPTION/CHANGE OF ADDRESS (BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE)

MR/MRS/MISS/MS.....
ADDRESS.....

POST/ZIP CODE.....COUNTRY.....

If this is intended as a gift, name and address of recipient:

MR/MRS/MISS/MS.....
ADDRESS.....

POST/ZIP CODE.....COUNTRY.....

VISA Mastercard
I enclose payment of.....
Payment by credit card:

Charge my VISA Mastercard/Access account the sum of.....

Card number.....

Expiry date.....

Signature.....