



GUEST COLUMN YAW ADU-SARKODIE

AIDS IN AFRICA IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

A new commitment has been made by Western governments, especially the UK and US, to devote more resources to fighting HIV/Aids globally. The question on many lips, however, is why has it taken so long?

Since the world became aware of the first clinical case of Aids in 1981, the disease has affected 60 million people. Twenty million are already dead and 40 million are living with the virus or the disease. Over the next decade, without effective treatment and care, they will add to the death toll.

Africa is the continent hardest hit. About 30 million people live with HIV/Aids. This represents 75 per cent of those infected worldwide. Ten million people aged 15–24, and about three million children under 15 years old, have Aids. More than 20 per cent of the adult population in Botswana, Lesotho, South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and Zambia is infected. The next decade will be far worse if effective treatment does not become available soon.

BANKRUPT

Reasons given for the level of the epidemic in Africa include: ineffective education about the disease; poor health services which still cannot screen blood properly before transfusions nor treat the victims effectively; cultural practices which continue to perpetuate the disease; HIV-infected men sleeping with children in the belief that this will cure them; and, most important, poverty.

Structural adjustment programmes carried out in the last decade by African countries at the instigation of the World Bank have left many of them bankrupt. Very little remains for these countries to undertake social programmes. Local industries in Africa have collapsed under

competition with Western and Asian industries which have flooded African markets with cheap goods. Unemployment has risen, and many former rural people now live in urban slums. Unable to find jobs in the cities, many women have turned to prostitution to keep body and soul and their families together. The lack of effective political leadership in the face of Aids, with some countries denying its existence to protect international tourism, has also fuelled the spread of the epidemic.

AIDS ORPHANS

Aids not only results from poverty, it is a major threat to development. The most productive members of society are, in general, the hardest hit. Family income is being hit by the loss of breadwinners, Aids orphans, and increased hospitalization of the sick. This has led to malnutrition, limited access to education and other social services, and a breakdown of family structures. A drop in the labour force due to disease has had an enormous impact on national productivity. The media tell us that the food shortages in Zimbabwe are due to its new land reform programmes. We are not told about the contribution of Aids. Classrooms in East Africa are battling with a lack of teachers due to this scourge.

What is the way forward? In the developed world during the last decade, the use of antiretrovirals (drugs which prevent the virus from further damaging the immune system) has dramatically improved the quality and expectation of life of HIV-infected patients. Aids is being increasingly seen in these countries as a chronic disease, like hypertension and diabetes.

Unfortunately, of the 30 million Africans with the virus, only 50,000 have access to these life-saving medicines. The signs are that this will soon change if the US, the UK and other Western countries stick to their

recent commitments. The World Health Organization (WHO) plans to make the drugs available to three million people by 2005. The Director-General of WHO says that to make this happen, it should not be 'business as usual'. We should acknowledge Aids as a global emergency, big pharmaceutical companies should be more charitable, rich governments should 'walk the talk' and, above all, developing countries should put their health systems in order to make full and judicious use of committed resources.

Would antiretrovirals be the panacea for this global threat? Unfortunately not. We all have a moral responsibility to prevent infections in the first place. The truth is, in Aids as in all diseases, prevention is better than cure. As we propagate the ABC of Aids prevention (abstinence, being faithful to a partner and condom use), we must stress the importance of the A and B just as we do the C.

VIRGINS' CLUB

Most of the population in even the hardest hit countries is still not infected, and children under 15 years of age (except those infected at birth from their mothers) are largely free of the virus. And who says we shouldn't be telling them about the A, and, as they grow up, the B? Do we want the devil to find work for them as they grow? Africa is showing the way. Uganda already has a number of youth clubs addressing this. In Ghana I was recently invited to give a talk to a 'Virgins' Club'. Yes, Virgins' Club! If you think they do not exist for 15–30 year olds, come with me to Ghana!

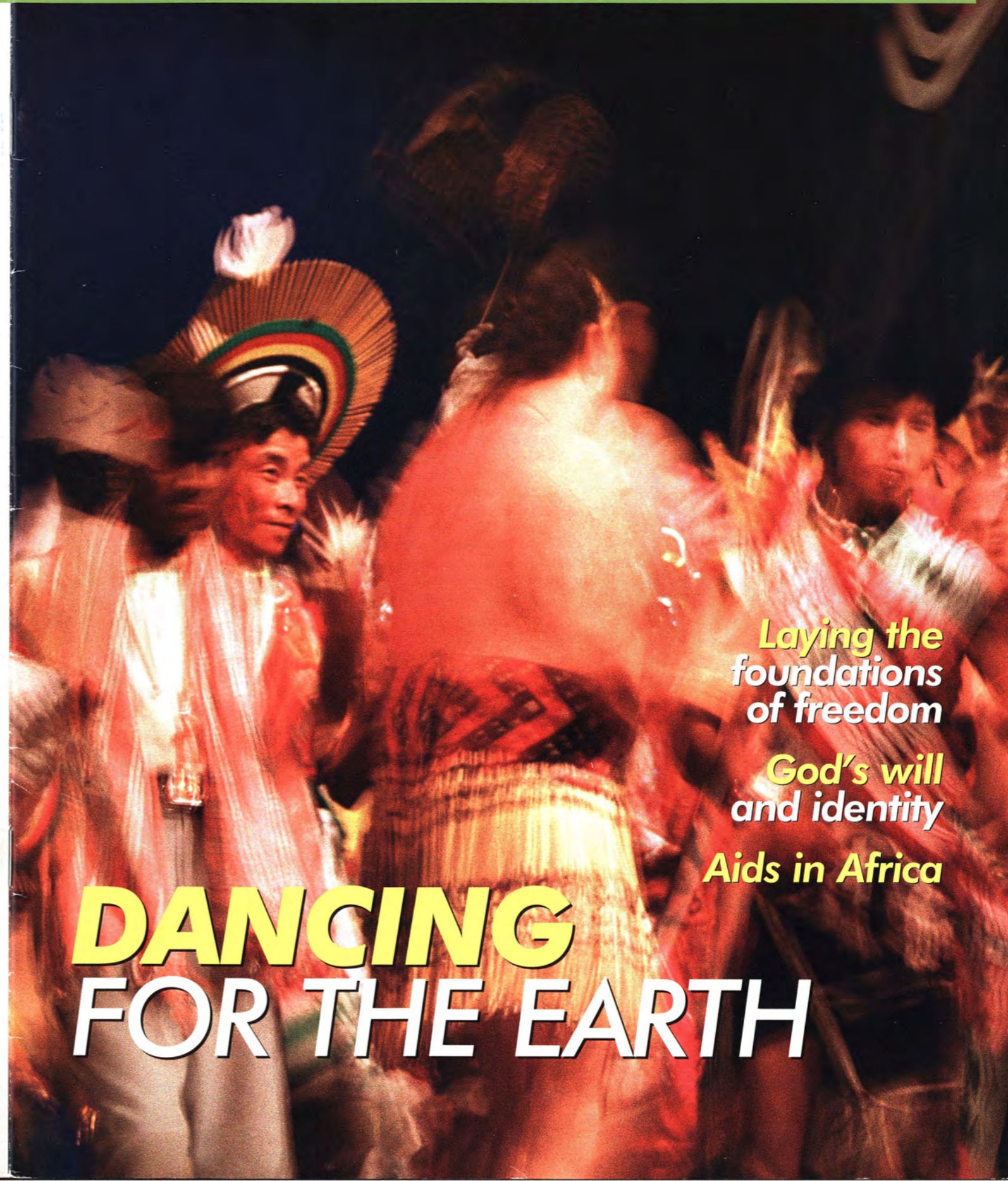
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FOR A CHANGE

HEALING HISTORY/TRANSFORMING RELATIONSHIPS/BUILDING COMMUNITY



Laying the foundations of freedom

God's will and identity

Aids in Africa

DANCING FOR THE EARTH

Next Issue

Lead Story: For A Change meets two artists who get up close and personal with great white sharks in the cause of biodiversity.

Essay: Journalism and power

First Person: the teacher's role in producing good citizens

EAR TO THE GROUND

MIKE LOWE IN MELBOURNE

ST KILDA'S CAKES

A slice of 'Polish cheesecake' in the window of a cake-shop in the seaside suburb of St Kilda, Melbourne, roused my interest. St Kilda, once the resort of choice for Melbourne's elite, has an atmosphere of decaying grandeur. Its bars and restaurants change hands rapidly, but one institution which has remained unchanged over the last half century is the cake-shops of Acland Street, with their delectable displays.

Having lived in Poland in the early Nineties, I asked the shop's owner if he was Polish. He replied that he was born in Poland but had left with his parents in 1950, first to Israel and then, in 1967, to Australia. It was another reminder to me that Poland's Jewish culture—all but vanished in Poland itself—has survived in Melbourne.

POLISH-JEWISH DIALOGUE

In fact, Melbourne has one of the world's highest percentages of holocaust survivors. There is also a large Polish population. This has enabled a Polish-Jewish dialogue, which would be more difficult in Poland itself.

During last year's Melbourne Writers' Festival, the Australian Institute of Polish Affairs brought together in conversation local Jewish author Arnold Zable and Eva Hoffman, the author of *Shtetl* (Houghton Mifflin, 1997), a history of Poland's Jews. Their conversation struck me as deeply humane—sensitive to the moral complexities facing the men and women on both sides who were caught up in the Nazi extermination programmes and forced to make terrible choices. Above all it was a conversation permeated with compassion and a search for understanding rather than naive moralistic

judgements. Those of us in the audience were forced to ask ourselves, 'How might I have acted in these circumstances?'—recognizing that it was impossible to be sure of our answer.

VIETNAMESE JOURNEY

Another important population here are the Vietnamese, who came in the Seventies and Eighties. My friend Jimmy remembers his journey as an 11-year-old with 30 others in a small boat. When the boat's engine broke down in the middle of the night, Jimmy's older brother dived overboard to fix it—quite possibly saving all their lives. It is estimated that as many as 40 per cent of the Vietnamese boat people died en route either through drowning or at the hands of pirates. Those who did get here are now an essential part of Australian life.

Thich Phuoc Tan, Abbot of the Quang Minh Temple, is one of those spiritually radiant

people whose inner joy is infectious. When he was a child, he recalls, his mother would send him to the local temple 'as her representative'. The pride of this responsibility meant that he took Buddhism more seriously and eventually embarked on a path which led to monasticism. 'Now,' he tells me with a twinkle in his eye, 'I use the same trick with my novices.'

POLITICIAN'S APOLOGY

In a message to a group of 'Stolen Generation' Aboriginals, former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser makes that most rare and precious statement by a politician—an apology. Acknowledging that they were removed from their families 'under policies which were cruel and misguided', he goes on to say: 'I wish that, when I was Prime Minister, I had understood better the impact of these policies on your lives. From my heart, I wish to apologize to you for the

wrongs which have brought such pain to you and your families.... I am doing all I can to help create a country in which these things can never happen again....'

Friends recently visited a small country town in New South Wales where there is 85 per cent unemployment and where alcoholism and other contributing factors mean that the average life-expectancy for Aboriginal males is 33. Against this background, Fraser's statement is visionary: 'We need Aboriginal leadership. Those who have suffered can help create a compassionate country. Those who have experienced racism can help overcome racism. Those who know both Aboriginal and white Australian cultures can help build respect for our different cultures. If we can do that, Australia will become a country at peace with itself, and will contribute to peace in the world.'



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The best icons have flaws

Who is your 'icon', the person you most admire in today's world? Perhaps it's David Beckham, late of Manchester United, or Posh, his glamorous wife (formerly of the Spice Girls). If you're an England rugby fan, it could be Jonny Wilkinson whose last minute drop-goal secured the world cup. Or perhaps it's Robbie Williams, JK Rowling, Nelson Mandela, Mother Theresa, George Bush or one of those whom the West calls a terrorist.

For one person's hero is often another's hate figure.

Over the years I've looked up to various people, often dynamic personalities or people who gave me the sort of support I needed. Yet, one by one, my relationships with them changed. Either I could see that they had weaknesses and were not as wonderful as I had first assumed; or I realized that they could not give me as much support as I wanted and I had to find my security elsewhere. Perhaps they even needed my support.

In reality, it's impossible to find any one human being who is worthy of our adoration. We do need role-models, but we also need the ability to evaluate others realistically.

The other side of the coin is that turning someone into an icon may not be doing them any favours. A Beckham or a Beatle can garner riches and fame from their adoring public. But it doesn't take long to think of once-revered people whose names have been dragged through the mud by the mass media as soon as some frailty has been discovered.

Fortunately, some of those who have fallen from grace have had the courage to admit their short-comings and make a new start. Jimmy Greaves and Tony Adams are two great English football players of different generations who have written frankly about their battles with alcohol, and have shown that there is life after alcohol-dependency.

Those of us who are prepared to admit that we are less than perfect might do well to choose as our models people who are learning to deal with their own imperfections.

There's a line somewhere about a forgiven sinner being more compelling than a frustrated saint.

Kenneth Noble

KENNETH NOBLE

www.forachange.co.uk

FOR A CHANGE

For A Change is about change, how to make it happen and how to live it. We believe that what happens inside people has an effect on the world around them. At the heart of global change lies change in the

human heart.

We draw our material from a wide range of sources, including Initiatives of Change. We give a voice to people all over the world who are making a difference. We invite our readers to join them. Your stories are our stories.



Initiatives of Change

Initiatives of Change (formerly Moral Re-Armament) works for moral and spiritual renewal in all areas of life.

It was born out of the work of Frank Buchman, an American who believed that change in the world must start in individuals.

Initiatives of Change is open to all. Its starting point is the readiness of each person to make what they know of God and eternal moral values

central in their lives. This personal commitment to search for God's will forms the basis for creative initiative and common action: standards of absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love help to focus the challenge of personal and global change. These ideas have

given rise to an international community at work in more than 70 countries in programmes which include reconciliation; tackling the root causes of corruption, poverty and social exclusion; and strengthening the moral and spiritual foundations for democracy.

FOR A CHANGE

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COVER PHOTO:
Alan Channer

see environment on page 8



ENERGBANK
Schimb valutar

13-32	USD	13-48
15-60	EURO	15-80
0-42	RUR	0-45
0-36	ROL	0-42
2-42	UAH	2-58
21-85		

FRUITS OF CHANGE

Janet Paine looks back on ten years of an initiative to foster democratic values in Eastern and Central Europe

Participants in F4F courses in Chisinau, Moldova: (left) Stela Artemi, (bottom l to r) Slava Balan, Liliana Botnaru, Igor Ene

Always intrigued by a new language, I was struck by the phrase 'schimb valutar' as we walked for the first time along Stefan cel Mare, the main street of Moldova's capital, Chisinau. Every few yards it appeared on billboards and shop windows. I asked what it meant. 'Change money'—an invitation in kiosks, cafés, shops, banks, wherever.

The same root appeared in the masthead of a publication produced by friends of ours. 'Schimbarea începe cu mine!'—'change starts with me!' There could be no better maxim for what is needed at every level in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe—as well as in our own.

When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, many in the West expected everything to change. We hoped that those who had so valiantly held out for political freedom in the former Soviet bloc would be able to show us in the more comfortable West how to use ours better—or, perhaps, how not to abuse it.

Instead we saw societies spring into being that seemed to have more in common with the Marxist caricature of capitalism than with the flawed but functioning world we knew at home. We started to hear the valid complaint that if the moral values on which democracy is built were neither expressed nor well understood in the West, we could hardly expect them to take immediate root in the East.

My husband and I were part of a group of West Europeans who wanted to respond to these needs, and were encouraged to do so by friends in Eastern and Central Europe. But how?

We agreed that the best investment was likely to be whatever we could contribute to the skills and understanding of young people—and that the values and inspiration needed must come from the best spiritual traditions of the region, rather than being imported from outside. But there the unanimity ended.

Some advocated bringing groups from Central and East Europe to Western countries to see what does and doesn't work in our democracies, and to examine the reasons why. Others felt that a new intellectual framework would be needed, into which people could fit the values they felt most important. Still others wanted to

rely on more heart-to-heart contacts and the universal 'languages' of conviction and life experience.

These arguments were never concluded. The group agreed that each approach had its value, and set up Foundations for Freedom (F4F), linked to Initiatives of Change (IC).

Over the last 10 years, the initiative has received an eager welcome in the countries of the former Soviet bloc and has run over 50 courses and seminars, the most recent last November for young politicians in the Ukraine. In each, participants are asked to select the values which they feel are most important for a democratic society—and the ones they come up with invariably lie at the heart of the great religions: for example, honesty, transparency, integrity, love, justice, respect, trust, responsibility for one's life and surroundings.

COMMUNITY ACTION

Many of the courses have led participants to take common action in their communities and to embark on an inner journey of spiritual discovery. Such groups now exist in Russia, Ukraine, Moldova and the Baltic States. My husband and I have been particularly involved in Moldova.

In Moldova, as in other countries where F4F has worked, it all began with an individual encounter. In 1994, Mircea Eladi, a post-graduate environmental student at Manchester University, attended a three-week 'international course' run by F4F in England. As we live in Manchester, we got to know him, and when he learned we would be in Ukraine the following year, he said, 'Come and meet my friends.'

A night train journey across the border took us into Moldova for the first time in May 1995, to Eladi's hometown of Balti and to Chisinau. Some months later he urged,

'These ideas are exactly what are needed in Moldova. Can you bring a course?' He selected a group of a dozen students from those who responded to a notice on the university board—and a three-day seminar took place in May 1997, with a 'faculty' brought by my husband.

For this and all courses the agreement was that we in the West would provide the visiting faculty, and cover fares, while those on the ground would find the



Street market in Chisinau

venue and meet local costs. Eladi found a dilapidated Soviet conference centre some 30 kilometres outside the capital. Since the cost of hiring a caterer was prohibitive, he enlisted a friend who offered to cook, and his wife brought out supplies each day. On the first evening, just as everyone was about to introduce themselves, there was a power failure. A candle was passed from person to person, so that people could see who was speaking.

One of those who took part was Alexandra Tarasenco, who is now married with a small son. 'I caught a vision for my country,' she says. 'There is a special role I can play. I just need to uncover it. I have also been given the sense of belonging to a wider global family. I cannot think of F4F as just a programme.'

Ideas and energy flowed from person to person. The original group kept together, working out how to put their new discoveries of honesty and unselfishness into practice in one of the poorest countries in Europe. Their enthusiasm encouraged others to join them.

STRUGGLE

The average monthly wage for professionals in Moldova is \$30. Day-to-day living is a constant struggle. Over 800,000 of a population of 4.3 million are reckoned to be working abroad, sending money home to support their families—one reason for the abundance of money-changers. With no natural fuel resources of its own, the country has on occasion gone short when Russia cut off supplies.

Agriculture represents 50 per cent of Moldova's GDP and gives work to 60 per cent of the population. On our most recent visit, last October, buckets of pears, apples and grapes were on sale everywhere, and every home proudly offered us a taste of this year's wine and juice. Despite the dry summer and gloomy predictions, the fruit and grape harvest had been a good one.

However, the average citizen finds life even harder under the present Communist



Bhavesh Patel: perspective

WARD VANDERVEGE (3), MILES PAINE (4)



Civilizatia Noua, including Andrei Tarasenco (front row 2nd left) and Alexandra Tarasenco (back 2nd right)

government, voted back in 2001, than it was under the USSR. Those with power and influence would appear to benefit most from the change in government. And there is the continuing issue of the Transdnistr region, one third of Moldova, where the Russian 14th Army is still entrenched and a semi-autonomous state exists.

Each time we visit Moldova we are impressed all over again by the generous hospitality in homes and the courtesy to older people on public transport, as well as by the army of sweepers who keep the streets cleared of falling leaves and rubbish.

In June 1998 the first full-length F4F visiting course in Moldova took place, following a pattern which had already proved of value elsewhere (see map). Developed by a British architect, Erik Andren, these ten-day programmes on 'Man, Morality, Belief and Freedom' explore such questions as: What makes us human? Who am I? How do things change? What can I do? Each day starts with a time for Research and Development/Reflection and Decision when those taking part can share what they are learning.

SCOTTISH DANCING

At first it was difficult to get much feedback from participants, who had become accustomed under the Soviet system to accept what was presented and not to volunteer opinions of their own. But honest sharing from the faculty usually elicited some response. The courses allowed enough space for at least one day's outing, and recreational activities in the evening—music, games and even Scottish dancing.

Participants are usually selected by those who have attended earlier programmes—although there have been exceptions. One course took place in a resort. Liliana Botnaru, sent there by her parents for a holiday, noticed the course taking place in another part of the building, enquired what

was going on and ended up taking part. Since then she has been one of the most enthusiastic members of the group and is now in India on an IC programme.

The pool for the faculty, in addition to Andren, includes a number of fulltime workers with Initiatives of Change, a doctoral graduate and two management consultants from the UK; and a retired naval officer from the Netherlands and his wife, an ordained minister.

Until now those presenting the training have mostly been English-speaking Westerners, so participants have been

'THE F4F COURSES PLACE THE FIRST SPARK IN THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF PEOPLE'

limited to those with a good command of the language. This has begun to change, as young men and women from across the area have become competent in delivering the courses in their own tongue—the aim from the outset.

The courses and seminars stress the importance of change in the individual which leads on to change in society. Participants vary in their response to this. Some see the urgency of social change and get involved in meeting obvious local needs—working with old people, school children, orphans or the mentally handicapped, for instance. Others want to tackle shortcomings in the political and economic fields. A three-day programme is just being launched for training in ethical and moral leadership.

The group in Chisinau soon realized the need to be sustainable. They set up an NGO, Civilizatia Noua (new civilization), to give legal and financial status. This has just celebrated its third birthday. They instigated regular meetings, often weekly,

when practical and spiritual matters could be addressed.

Common action has also helped to strengthen the group. Not long after the first full course, for instance, the Moldovans offered at short notice to stage the annual 'regional meeting', which brings together the F4F network from around Eastern and Central Europe. 'If it had not been for working together on this event,' says Slava Balan, another who took part in the original seminar, 'I do not think we would have stuck together as a team.'

LEADERSHIP SKILLS

For the last five years, they have also worked together outside Moldova, joining young people from other countries in helping to run IC's international conference centre in Caux, Switzerland. This has not only given them a deeper understanding of the world but has also enabled them to develop leadership skills and strengthen friendships across national boundaries. For the last three years a group, linked by email, has planned the first of the summer's conferences, on 'service, responsibility and leadership'. In 2003 more than 50 people from Central and Eastern Europe attended.

Stela Artemi, a Moldovan Economics student, says that her visit to Caux last summer 'totally changed' her. 'It influenced

my thinking and the way I looked at people. I have learnt that each of us can give something to the other. I needed to understand that ordinary people can do something about life. This is what it is all about—changes in my life, in yours and in the entire world. You have a whole world beside you, a world waiting for better changes.'

The courses represent only a small part of the work of F4F. There have been countless follow-up visits to each group and region, as well as frequent email communications.

A young man from Britain, Bhavesh Patel, spent two winters in Moldova offering support and comradeship to the group in Chisinau—learning Romanian and the joys of the local market stalls in the process. 'Life in a country as poor as this one makes you put everything into perspective,' he says. The gritty determination of the young Moldovans in the face of poverty and corruption was an inspiration to him. The main lesson, he

FOUNDATIONS FOR FREEDOM EVENTS 1993-2003



MAP ILLUSTRATION: PHILIP CARR

VISITING COURSES <i>(MORE THAN ONE IN MANY PLACES)</i>	Lithuania: Kaunas
Belarus: Minsk	Poland: Lodz (youth section of Christian National Union)
Estonia: Vehendi	Moldova: Chisinau
Latvia: Karaosta (workshop)	Slovakia: High Tatras (at request of Spisska Kapitula Seminary)
Lithuania: Nida	Switzerland: Geneva (for Romanian regional politicians)
Moldova: Chisinau	UK: London (young Ukrainian Members of Parliament)
Romania: Baia Mare	Ukraine: Kyiv, Slavsk (young politicians)
Russia: Novosibirsk	REGIONAL MEETINGS
Slovakia: High Tatras	Czech Republic
Sweden: Stockholm (students from Moscow)	Lithuania
Ukraine: Borinjia, Burstyn, Chemigev, Crimea, Kyiv, L'viv	Moldova
	Poland
	Russia
	Ukraine
INTERNATIONAL COURSES	
UK	
INTERNATIONAL SEMINARS	
Finland: Helsinki (for young academics from St Petersburg)	

says, was that life is difficult. 'But the saints got on with it and we have to, too.'

Six Moldovans, along with 'graduates' from F4F courses in other countries, are taking part in IC initiatives overseas. Christina Cojocar, in Australia for nine months, writes of 'finding a higher purpose in life than my own ego and a much broader awareness of what is happening in the world—a sense of care for people and nations around me. I have an understanding that whatever I and each of us do matters and is part of a bigger picture. It is a great support for my spiritual search.'

DAY CENTRE

Others, who have studied or worked abroad, are now returning to Moldova. Andrei Tarasenco, Alexandra's brother-in-law, spent two years working as a baker in Sweden. On his return, he became the project manager for a day centre for old people in Strasen, just outside Chisinau. The centre, funded mainly by a Dutch NGO, was created out of a derelict school and CN have provided much practical help. 'I have been offered ten times the salary by other companies,' he says, 'but this is the kind of work I want to do for my country.'

Igor Ene completed a Masters degree in business studies in Germany, after working with a company in Chisinau. 'Meeting the F4F ideas back in 1998 marked my whole life and guided me on a journey,' he says.

'After being confronted with the four principles of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love [advocated by IC], little by little many things started to change in me and in my life. I've grown spiritually and intellectually and become more aware of my thoughts, values and deeds. I improved my relationships with my family and with my friends. I follow the guiding advice that comes from my inner self. I developed a kind of personal relationship with God and keep the hope that he is guiding my life. This spiritual link proved of enormous support during my last two years in Germany.'

'The F4F courses are very good at placing the first spark in the hearts and minds of people who participate. An increased number of these or similar courses, delivered for all kinds of people at all levels



Mircea Eladi and his family

of our society, could be a good starting point in turning the situation around.'

More senior figures—including the parents and professors of Civilizatia Noua's activists—are starting to become intrigued. The group consulted Serghei Ostaf, Executive Director of the Resource Centre for the Development of Organizations, about a project to 'inspire initiatives and build partnerships' between NGOs in Moldova. CN was different from others, commented Ostaf, because they 'are not only thinking of bottom-line results'.

F4F's mission statement says: 'F4F aims to inspire purpose and vision in individuals and teams grounded in the values that underlie a truly free and just society and to nurture and support them in the process of transforming their own lives and societies.' The last ten years have been a learning experience for all concerned. They have called for courage and vision and persistence, as well as the constant readiness to accept changes in our own attitudes and behaviour.

The hope and promise is that this change will be infectious in countries hungry for a new spirit. Everyone, of whatever age and background, can have a part. Change does indeed start with me! ■

A power point presentation is available from Foundations for Freedom, 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD.

LIGHTING A LAMP FOR OUR EARTH

Alan Channer's visit to India for an environmental and cultural festival launched him on an inner journey.

'You don't rehearse life', he said. 'So we won't rehearse with the groups carrying the lanterns. They'll just flow down the hill onto the playing field and we'll see what happens.'

Te Rangi Huata looked out over the green-brown hills on the Indian horizon as he told me about his approach to the finale of the Apni Dharati ('Our Earth') festival at Asia Plateau in Panchgani last October. 'Each person carrying a lantern will have their own story—and the most important thing to convey is that "it's better to light one candle than curse the darkness".'

Huata, a New Zealand Maori of formidable build, was the artistic director of this remarkable international festival 'to recognize and celebrate tribal and indigenous knowledge of the environment'. He spoke with an enigmatic mixture of softness and certainty as he described the climax of ten days of performances, seminars and workshops.

'At the end of the evening we will burn the lanterns, because it's not the physicality of the lantern that's important, it's the positive memory. A butterfly is beautiful only for a short time and when it's gone you remember it.'

I told Huata that I thought my wife, Mary,



Te Rangi Huata: 'you don't rehearse life'

might like to carry a lantern. 'The night you are talking about happens to be the anniversary of her mother's tragic death. And Mary was six months pregnant at the time. When our daughter was born we called her Aili: we chose the name because it means light.'

Huata was moved without looking surprised.

Over the next few days there were heavy, post-monsoon downpours—local people call them 'elephant rains'—which turned the venue for the finale into a field of sticky, red mud. Then we heard that Huata had been taken ill and rushed to hospital for urgent tests. The organizers of Apni Dharati had not rehearsed for this eventuality, and their spirit was not buoyant as the last day of the festival approached.

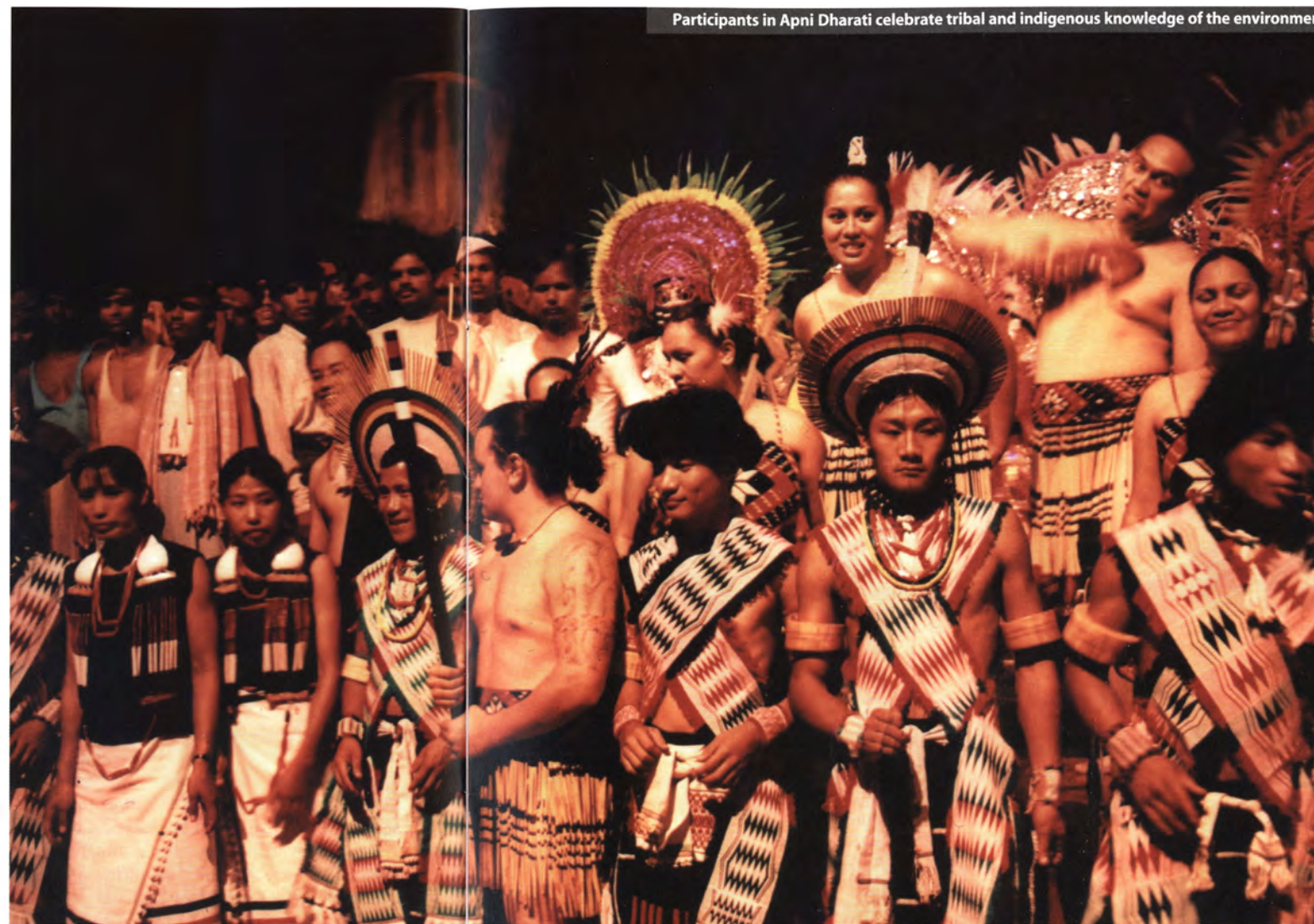
LANTERN PROCESSION

Yet the dawn broke cloudless and clear. Huata was up and about, near the workshop where 300 lanterns had been made especially from paper and bamboo.

That evening, Mary and I found ourselves standing in a circle of girls from a nearby convent school, each holding a lantern. Just beside us was a Maori from the Kahurangi Dance Theatre (see p11). I told him our reason for joining the lantern procession and in the semi-darkness I saw his eyes moisten. 'Come to the front,' he said.

Next thing, we and our two small children were trailing down a hill in the dark, trying to keep up with the barely visible tattoos and head feathers of our Maori leader. And all around us a myriad lanterns, accompanied by a myriad shrieks of excitement, began to fill the darkness. The different lantern groups converged on the playing field from all sides of the compass, watched by a large local audience, under a rising full moon.

Only the leaders of each lantern group, either Maoris or Nagas from Nagaland in



Participants in Apni Dharati celebrate tribal and indigenous knowledge of the environment

north-east India, seemed to know where they were going. Huata was booming down a microphone—something about all the lanterns forming patterns that represented the four winds, the five races of mankind, the tree of life. We didn't notice. We had just become part of a bigger, spontaneous human moment; a gathering of the nations under the sky.

The lanterns were eventually placed on the field to form the shape of the sun—and this marked out the stage for the final performances. The arrangement was the idea of CR Rajagopalan, a professor of Malayanam folklore from southern India. 'We don't walk our talk, we dance our belief!' he said.

Dance, whirl, leap, sing, yell, enthrall—and it didn't stop. After the last emphatic 'Good Night' had boomed down the PA system, the drum strains of the Karinthalakootam fire dancers reignited the general festivity and the audience joined Maori, Naga, Kenyan, Nigerian and Adivasi (tribal) Indian performers in a general dance which only faded away in the small hours.

The next morning, there was a meeting to

'WE DON'T WALK OUR TALK, WE DANCE OUR BELIEF'

evaluate the festival. I walked up the hill to it in a daze of impressions from the preceding days. How could one speak of the spirit of the blind girl who performed the Indian 'rope trick', or the energy of the Chhau dancers from Jharkand? How might one make any synthesis of the seminars, speeches, drama and painting workshops, films, walks, visits? How could one sum up the value of all the one-to-one encounters?

The meeting swirled from 'what could have been done better' to 'what went well' and 'what has all this achieved anyway?' Its highpoint came when the leaders of some of the indigenous groups began to speak. I wrote down the words of the Naga:

'We would like to thank the organizers. We are at the danger point of losing our culture. After the coming of Christian and western influence, our people hardly care

about their culture. Here, we have learnt a lot from the Maori. We are going to go back and find our culture. And we are going to set up a cultural troupe. We need to revive what we are losing. We can preserve our environment and revive our culture.'

The organizers were feeling their way towards an appropriate closure of the meeting when all of a sudden a couple stood up and said they were moved to sing a song in Urdu.

'We wrote this song after the visit of a group of Pakistani students to India. We experienced such joy at their welcome from ordinary Indians. As they were leaving, we sang this for them:

When dew drops come upon the dry leaves of the tall trees,

When, with the first rain, the fragrance of the soil enters our hearts,

When dreams of hope come into the eyes of our children,

Then we must light the lamp of love.'

A week later, we left for Mumbai. There, unexpectedly, we met another Naga, a friend of my family called Niketu Iralu, who was exploring possibilities for the

rehabilitation of drug addicts, in which he is involved back home. He gave me a book about his village, Khonoma. 'It mentions the battle where my people were defeated by the British,' he said. Your great-great-grandfather, head of the medical corps of the Indian Army, was at the battle.'

The words did not pass easily from his lips.

'Today we have a psycho-spiritual crisis in Nagaland,' he went on. 'We have drug addiction and alcoholism. We even have "foetal alcoholism syndrome", where babies' brains are damaged by the alcohol consumed by their mothers when they were pregnant. In the face of globalization and satellite TV, there is so much despair.'

I was surprised and disturbed to discover that I had a personal connection with the fate of the Naga people. I felt stirred to look more deeply into my own attitudes and identity. I recalled the response of an Anglican Mother Superior in Oxford to a question about the negative effects of Christian mission: 'Often we didn't take off our shoes at the holy places of others; I'm afraid there were times when we trampled upon other people's dreams.'

I sensed that I was prone to such blind spots and that I could hurt people by acting out of a flawed perception of my righteousness.

MUMBAI BAZAAR

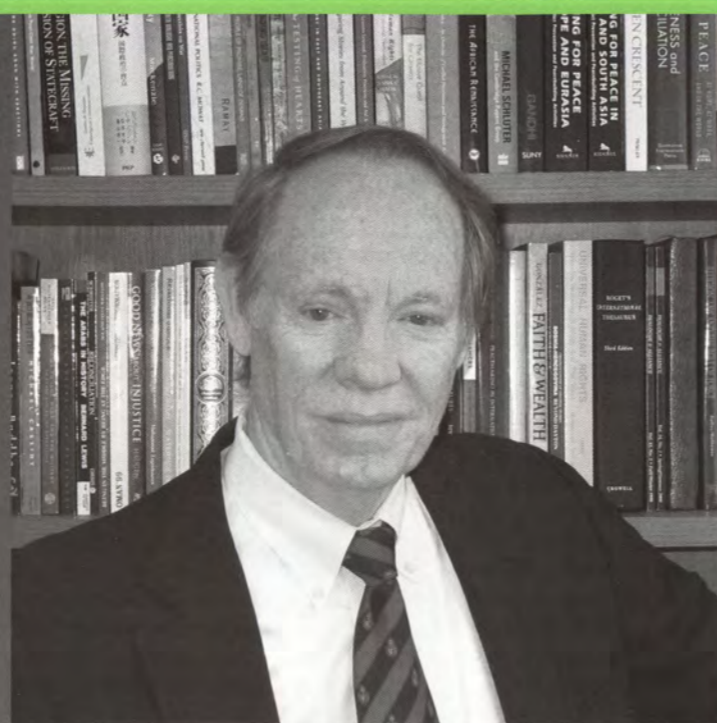
We went to the bazaar in Imam Bada, an area of Mumbai, to buy a kite for our elder daughter. We wandered past dozens of stalls selling booklets of Qur'anic instruction, past a mosque, a small Hindu temple, past hugely crowded blocks of flats and children playing near open sewers. I used my few Arabic greetings and Hindustani phrases, and at every turn we were met with warm smiles and courtesy.

At the time I was satisfied with my intercultural fluency, but afterwards, in some moments of quiet reflection, I realized that I had been using Muslim greetings in Imam Bada partly because I was anxious not to stand out as a white foreigner. Moreover, I was flattered by the courtesy shown to me by ordinary Indians, because they did not expect a white person to be culturally fluent, and I was becoming quietly attached to the easy benefits which this combination of characteristics conferred.

Knowing the pain caused by attachment to identity, understanding the illusion of self, recognizing that humanity is one family, noticing that the light of God shines through the whole of Creation—all this is given to humanity in the spiritual wisdom of India. It points a way towards lessening the trampling upon other people's dreams—and upon our Earth. ■

DOUGLAS JOHNSTON

WHAT'S GOD GOT TO DO WITH DIPLOMACY?



Former submarine commander Douglas Johnston believes that religion is 'the missing dimension of statecraft'. He tells his story to **Bob Webb**.

In the heat of the Cold War, Douglas M Johnston Jr served in the US nuclear submarine service. He sometimes pondered how he would react if ordered to fire a missile signalling the start of World War III, without evidence that an enemy attack was imminent.

But all that's behind him now as he engages in what is perhaps the major challenge of his life: at age 65, when many men retire, Johnston is the founder and President of the Washington DC-based International Center for Religion and Diplomacy (ICRD). Quietly but assiduously, he works to bring peace in Sudan where two civil wars have taken two million lives and displaced countless others. Also quietly but assiduously, he works to help defuse the tensions in Kashmir with its associated threat of a nuclear exchange between India and Pakistan. His commitment to peace spans the globe. His view is that religion—so often the trigger or presumed trigger of violence—can play a major role in averting conflict.

INCONGRUITY

So how did a US Naval Academy graduate and hard-charging submarine officer come to establish a centre increasingly recognized for its contributions to peace?

'It was a combination of two things,' Johnston says. 'First was a thought I had near the end of the Cold War about the incongruity of both sides spending trillions of dollars on weapons systems, the sole purpose of which was to enhance deterrence—so that they would never be used—while much of the world continued to starve. Second was an awareness

(born of an extended involvement with the National Prayer Breakfast movement) of the good that lay people operating on the basis of their personal faith were doing in various parts of the world, reconciling differences between people and factions—sometimes even bringing wars to a halt with no one the wiser as to how it took place.'

The National Prayer Breakfast movement annually attracts about 4,000 people—non-Christians as well as Christians—to Washington for an event widely heralded and extensively covered in the press. But the movement also includes weekly prayer breakfasts where people share their faith, seek spiritual help and reinforce one another in serving the disadvantaged. When Johnston shared the vision of his new centre at one such breakfast gathering in 1999, a former political advisor to the President of Sudan invited Johnston to visit Sudan to see if he could help the peace effort there.

That set off a chain of events leading to the birth of the Sudan Inter-Religious Council (SIRC), a monthly forum where Muslim and Christian religious leaders work out their problems and cooperate in securing a lasting peace. 'It took our centre two-and-a-half years to develop the relationships required to put this council in place,' says Johnston. In an interview last August, Al Tayib Zein Al Abdin, Secretary-General of the SIRC, defined the council as 'an independent, voluntary association of religious leaders'. He said it 'aims at contributing to religious coexistence and cooperation between different groups—Muslims, Christians and African religionists—for the purpose of bringing greater harmony and peace among them. Specifically, SIRC will focus on

issues such as the protection of religious freedoms and places of worship; promoting reconciliation and peaceful resolution of conflict; and building a new social and political environment conducive to the building of peace and the maintenance and promotion of national unity.'

Small wonder the US peace envoy to Sudan, former US Senator Jack Danforth, met SIRC before he met the government on his first official trip there last year. Dr Al-Abdin said, 'We conveyed to Danforth the role of SIRC in addressing religious issues of a practical nature that concern different religious groups. We suggested to him that the prospective peace treaty should give a priority to religious freedom and the rehabilitation of places of worship destroyed during the war.'

ABRAHAMIC DELEGATION

Small wonder, too, that Johnston was one of a small group of Muslims, Jews and Christians who travelled to Iran last summer. This 'Abrahamic delegation' was headed by Cardinal Theodore E McCarrick, the Catholic Archbishop of Washington, and included, among others, Rabbi Jack Bemporad, director of the Center for Interreligious Understanding in Secaucus, NJ, and Imam Feisal Abdul al-Rauf, founder of the Asma Society. The delegation's aim was to begin a faith-based dialogue with Iran that might help avoid another Iraq.

Despite a crowded agenda that would seem to leave scant time for diversion, Johnston swims, sails and skis. His wife, Janean, is a lawyer who conducts ethics audits of law firms for the State Bar of Virginia. Between them, they have five grown-up sons and daughters.

What surprised Johnston on the first of his 14 trips to Sudan was to find Christians and women in high-level government positions in Khartoum. He also learned that three of the six commanders of the guerrilla forces in the South were Muslims. Most of what he'd seen in the press had painted a different picture. There was clearly more to the war than a struggle between Muslims in the North and Christians in the South. Johnston is confident the SIRC can become a major healing influence, complementing the peace efforts of Danforth and others at the official level.

Johnston and his small staff have also initiated peace efforts in Kashmir. Working with the Kashmir Foundation for Peace and Developmental Studies in Srinagar and the Kashmir Institute of International Relations in Muzaffarabad, they have organized and conducted faith-based reconciliation seminars on both sides of the LOC (Line of Control between India and Pakistan). In an address to an international conference on Kashmir in Washington last summer, Johnston said the ICRD is working with its partners to promote 'faith-based reconciliation among next-generation leaders... in an effort to change the spiritual and political dynamics of the region. Our basic strategy calls for developing a cooperative spirit on each side of the LOC and then bringing seminar graduates from both sides together in a neutral location to begin rebuilding a sense of community across the line or, stated differently, to restore the inclusive spirit of *kashmiriyat* that prevailed in earlier times.'

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The director of ICRD's Kashmir project, Brian Cox, and ICRD Senior Associate Dan Philpott have established Institutes for Reconciliation in Srinagar and Jammu. Clearly this approach, embracing Muslims, Hindus and

Sikhs, is having an effect. Johnston says members of the core group 'have become committed to faith-based reconciliation to the point where several have been able to forgive those who have caused the deaths of immediate members of their families (including, in one instance, the death of a brother) and where all of them are strongly committed to facilitating the return of the Pandits, who fled the Kashmir Valley 13 years ago to escape the violence of a newly formed Islamic militant movement.'

As if all this weren't enough, in 2001 Johnston led a team to help equip US Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard chaplains with conflict resolution skills, and to give them a broader vision of their potential role in helping their superiors and US diplomats understand the role of religion in delicate situations abroad. The team included former naval officer Richard Ruffin, then Executive-Director of Initiatives of Change in Washington; Joseph Montville, then Director of Preventive Diplomacy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies; and Donald Shriver, President Emeritus of Union Theological Seminary. Johnston has since conducted related training for chaplains in the other military services.

'RELIGION—SO OFTEN THE PRESUMED TRIGGER OF VIOLENCE—CAN PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN AVERTING CONFLICT'

Low key and soft-voiced, Johnston doesn't strike you as one who at 27 became the youngest US officer to qualify for command of a nuclear submarine. After his naval career, he taught international relations at Harvard University where he also founded and directed the Kennedy School's Executive Program in National and International Security. In between, he also held senior posts in business and government (where he was Director of Policy Planning and Management in the office of the Secretary of Defense and, later, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower). But Johnston is perhaps best known as former Executive Vice-President and Chief Operating Officer of the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies, considered by many to be the leading foreign relations think-tank in the world.

It was in that capacity that he initiated a project on religion and conflict resolution, which led to the publication of *Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft* (Oxford University Press, 1994). Co-editor (with researcher Cynthia Sampson) and principal author of this path-breaking book, Johnston enlisted leading scholars and foreign-policy practitioners to document a host of examples of the critical role religion played in preventing and resolving conflict in various parts of the world. He also edited and was principal author of *Foreign Policy into the 21st Century: the US leadership challenge* (CSIS, 1996) and *Faith-based Diplomacy: trumping realpolitik* (Oxford University Press, 2003). His experience convinces him that many US ambassadors need religion attachés to help them understand and deal with the religious imperatives in their regions. ■

PEOPLE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Diabetes and the turquoise goddess

WHEN THE Italian mountaineer, Marco Peruffo, was eight he was diagnosed with diabetes. 'I was a very difficult patient. I rebelled against blood tests, was undisciplined about my diet and made a fuss about taking medicines. But my father, a keen mountaineer and also a diabetic, took me on mountain walks. The landscape, the immersion in nature, the joy of achievement captured me.'

'At 15, I caught the bug of rock climbing. To be able to do this, I had to be in top shape and so I became a model patient.'

Now 33, and working in the local health department in Vicenza, he already has an impressive curriculum vitae: 250 rock climbs, 100 glacier climbs and four expeditions outside Europe. In 2002 he climbed Cho Oyu in the Himalayas, named after the goddess of turquoise and at 8,201 metres the sixth tallest peak in the world.

The ascent of Cho Oyu was not only a mountaineering achievement, but also a scientific experiment. Six diabetics and 10 non-diabetics took part, undergoing metabolic and other tests at sea level and at 4,000 and 6,000 metres. The result showed no difference in efficiency between diabetics and non-diabetics, even at the highest altitude.

Peruffo reached the top alone, after a nine-hour climb at temperatures ranging between -39 and -50 degrees centigrade. His non-diabetic companion stopped 70 metres short of the peak, because his condition was such that if he had gone further he would have imperilled both their lives. 'This was a great lesson,' says Peruffo. 'It takes more willpower to hold back than to overstep.'

The expedition did not use sherpas nor oxygen. They carried away all their inorganic rubbish and burnt all their organic waste.

The expedition was organized by ADIQ (Diabetic Mountaineers at High Altitude). ADIQ's message is twofold. If diabetics do not take their treatment seriously, they risk severe damage or even death; at the same time they should not let their ailment limit their activity. Any sport is a great stimulus, but mountaineering teaches you an extra lesson: if you want to do well you have to exert yourself to your maximum, but overstepping can be fatal. 'It is all right to reach the top,' says Peruffo, 'but my wife is waiting for me.'



'IT TAKES MORE WILLPOWER TO HOLD BACK THAN TO OVERSTEP'

ADIQ's message is relevant to the general public as well as to diabetics. We all need to take care of ourselves, and at the same time to achieve the best we can. 'And of course,' adds Peruffo, 'it is much more fun to get the message in a light way, interspersed with stunning mountain views.'

The association has met some resistance from the medical world. 'There are still some who consider us raving madmen, but it is not true,' says Peruffo. 'We have always been very careful to make sure we were ready for the next step. We did all the training and took all the tests to make sure we were ready, then off we went! We hope to go to Pakistan next year and reach another 8,000 metre peak, not so high as Cho Oyu, but a more difficult climb.' Adriano Costa



Marco Peruffo climbing Cho Oyu (top) and having a blood test at the highest camp

Hakim Wais (centre) with trainee Sayed Ali Hassan (above), Bob Allender (left) and Jeff Buddle, both of Training and Logistics



Training for the long haul

WHEN LONG-DISTANCE truck driver and road haulage businessman Hakim Wais moved to Sheffield, England, from the Netherlands three years ago, he was disturbed to find high unemployment among the South Yorkshire city's ethnic minorities.

Yet Wais, an ethnic Somali of Dutch nationality, was snapped up as a driver within three days of his arrival. The reason? Britain is short of 80,000 truck drivers—South Yorkshire alone needs 1,000 more.

Young people, he says, don't see any career prospects in truck driving, and most of Britain's drivers—many of whom are retired soldiers—are in their 50s or 60s.

Pulling up on the motorway one night, Wais read a plea in *Trucker* magazine for East Europeans to be employed to meet the shortage. Wais thought of unemployed Somalis and others in Sheffield, who had seen it 'like a sin' that he had got a job so quickly.

As he drove on, he says, 'I was arguing to myself in the darkness of my cab that somebody had to do something about it. Then something struck me, "If you don't want to do it, who will?" Because of the shortage of drivers, he was working seven days a week, 'ending up with no family life'. His wife, Ubah, had once left him in Holland to join her relations in Sheffield, and he had come home from a trip to find a note on the kitchen table saying, 'You know your way to Sheffield!' He didn't want that to happen again.

Back home, he put to Ubah that he should give up his work and switch to training drivers. It would mean taking an initial cut in income of about £300 a week and putting in his own savings. 'Are you insane?' was her initial response. But she also realized that she could not live with him slouching in front of the TV in the evenings, regretting that he had not followed his heart. 'Okay,' she said, 'go ahead. But if it doesn't work promise you'll go back and make yourself a man again.' With this backing Wais founded Nationwide Ethnic Transport Training (NETT) in March 2002.

The big hurdle for black and Asian drivers was not so much the fear of racial discrimination in a mostly white industry, but the cost of training for and obtaining the relevant driving licence.

Wais's breakthrough came on 1 April last year, when he won a £1 million contract from Jobcentre Plus, co-funded by the European Social Fund, to train 275 drivers over three years. 'I was jumping up and down like a kid,' Wais says. Since then, NETT has won further contracts. The scheme has been so successful that NETT, which itself employs ten people, has a waiting list for training places.

NETT also trains drivers in 'soft skills', ranging from literacy and numeracy to confidence building and stress management.

The key, says Wais, was his initial willingness to leave his 'safety shell'. Michael Smith

Changing the temperature

THE MAORI artistic director and entrepreneur Te Rangi Huata (see also p8) found his vocation as a schoolboy, when he was invited to join an international show called *Song of Asia*. The show, inspired by the ideas of Moral Re-Armament (now Initiatives of Change), toured the world and Huata became its assistant director.

In Calcutta, *Song of Asia* performed for the Missionaries of Charity. Mother Theresa said: 'Your work and our work are the same; we are rubbing and scrubbing and you are singing and dancing.'

I asked Huata whether travelling with *Song of Asia* inspired him in his theatrical work with indigenous tribal groups. He answered by recalling a challenge put to the show's cast by Rajmohan Gandhi, a grandson of Mahatma Gandhi: 'There are two types of people in the world, heaters and thermometers—those who change the temperature and those who change with the temperature!'

Several years after leaving *Song of Asia*, Huata began working with his brother Tama Huata, who had founded the Kahurangi Maori Dance Theatre. Kahurangi, which means 'cloak of heaven', was and is an innovative approach to creating cultural, spiritual,

educational and employment opportunities for young Maori. 'We take young people who have dropped out of school, unemployed people, people from prison and we teach them traditional songs and dances,' says Huata. 'When you can get someone right culturally, a lot of by-products stem from that.'

Kahurangi is endorsed as a 'House of Learning' by the Ngati Kahungunu, the fourth largest Maori tribe, and is contracted by its Elders to produce the tribe's New Year, or Matariki, celebrations.

In recent times most Maori had stopped paying much attention to Matariki, Huata told me. 'Now 100 communities have picked up on celebrating Maori New Year—and everyone is aware of it. Sixty per cent of attendees are non-Maori. This is bringing New Zealanders together—and that is my aim: building community through the arts.'

Twenty years after its inception, Kahurangi is New Zealand's best known, and only full-time, Maori dance company. It has a permanent branch in Canada, features regularly at international cultural festivals, receives 80 per cent of its income from performances (of which it does 400 annually) and has seen 300 young people graduate from its programme. Alan Channer



Dancers from the Kahurangi Maori Dance Theatre



Removing the thorns around my heart

Being mistaken for a Muslim started Wadiaa Khoury, a Lebanese Christian, on a journey towards her fellow-countrypeople.

I WAS BORN and brought up in Zahle, one of the major Christian cities of Lebanon, where the sound of church bells and chanting resonates every day. The city contains enough churches to celebrate almost every saint's day.

From my early childhood I came to understand that the city's inhabitants included not only Greek Catholics, like my family, but also Orthodox Christians, Maronites, Syrians, Armenians, Assyrians, Chaldeans. As we were told in many ways, all of these groups came to the city after being persecuted by Islamic regimes in neighbouring countries. This collective memory may lie behind the harmony between the city's different Christian groups. Despite the Holy Church's divisions, there are many occasions where the Catholic and Orthodox bishops gather around the same altar to celebrate Mass.

In 1860—a date marked above the door of every church—all the city's churches were burnt down in an attack led by the Druze. Many people died inside them. In the early Eighties, when I was born, the city was under siege for three months and thousands were killed in the shelling. Then, just when life started to become more peaceful, there was a series of heavy bomb blasts, first in the markets and finally in the Archbishop's place, which we saw as the heart of Christian resistance and strength.

My family owns a large amount of land in the Bekaa plains and mountains. That year, we were both ruined and confused. Our Muslim partner was killed protecting our farm in the plains. Meanwhile our other Muslim partners in the mountains stole our cherries and grapes, and also cut down all the trees. In both places, we lost our partners, income and security.

At that time, Christians were offered the opportunity to emigrate to the United States, with all facilities provided. We saw this suggestion as an attempt to empty the Middle East of Christians and to replace us with Palestinians who had lost their lands—thus solving the region's problems on our backs. I

remember my mother saying that it was not so much our land which stopped us from leaving, but our responsibility towards the area which Christ and his disciples crossed and blessed.

It was only when I went to university in Beirut that I got to know Muslims. For the first time I was directly confronted by fanaticism—and often responded in the same way. Five times a day I heard Islamic prayers from the mosque. I had endless religious arguments with my Muslim classmates, backed up by dogmatic Theology classes and courses on Islam taught to me by everybody except Muslims. I gained nothing but more confusion, and couldn't wait for weekends to rush home to my comfort zone. I saw Muslims as aliens and excluded them from my heart.

In 1997, I visited the Initiatives of Change conference centre in Caux, Switzerland. This pointed me towards inner freedom, by giving me my first chance to have an honest dialogue with a Muslim compatriot.

After graduation in 2001, I joined a 10-month IC programme in India and East Asia. Since I am Arab, I found that people assumed I was Muslim and often criticized me for that. Then I found people insisting that I couldn't be a

'TODAY I UNDERSTAND THAT LEBANON WAS NEVER OWNED BY ANY ONE FAITH OR DENOMINATION'

Christian since I was a Catholic—and others wanting to know how I decided to convert from Islam to Christianity.

I thought these people were stabbing thorns into my heart, but I soon discovered that the thorns around my heart had existed for a long time, and that these people's innocent ignorance did nothing but push them in.

This identity crisis, together with the massacres in the Middle East in March and April 2002 and my unsorted attachment to a friend back home, put me on the edge of depression. Only prayer and deep surrender to God helped me to continue my journey of healing. In silence, I understood that my insecurity was generated by two things: my tendency to rely on people instead of God, and my arrogance and superiority as a Christian who in reality knew nothing about Christ's spirit.

Towards the end of the programme, we took part in a conference attended by young people from all over Asia and the Pacific. After I spoke during a morning session about the desperate conditions in which Palestinian refugees live, I was confronted by an Israeli girl who told me that she 'despised all species of Arab'. Later I offered her my only phone card to call her relatives in West Jerusalem, after we got news of a bomb blast there. This led to a new basis for mutual respect and showed me that reconciliation is possible everywhere.

Back in Lebanon, I'm completing my post-graduate degree in Education. My subject needed to be backed up by Law studies. I did these in the first section of the Lebanese Public University, which is mostly frequented by Muslim students, rather than the second section, which is a Christian environment.

A group of young people from almost all the Lebanese faiths and denominations has embarked on a process of honest dialogue. We visited a Palestinian refugee camp together. We are starting to offer programmes in schools, to enable students of different backgrounds to meet. A year ago we organized a youth day in my home city. For many people, it was the first

time they had a dialogue with Muslims.

I'm now blessed with a true brotherly relationship with a Muslim. Our friendship has freed me, just as his friendship with a Christian some years ago freed him when he was struggling with his feelings toward Christians. Our exchange of books from our faith traditions showed us how much we have in common.

Today I understand that Lebanon was never owned by any one faith or denomination. Most Christian Lebanese are open to western culture, and most Muslim Lebanese are open to Arab culture, but at the same time, 'in every Christian Lebanese there is a part of Islam, and in every Muslim Lebanese, there is a part of Christianity', as one of the initiators of our dialogues said. We have a unique message as a bridge of understanding between the Arab and western worlds. ■

AIDS POSES NEW CHALLENGES FOR WALES-LESOTHO LINK

DOLEN CYMRU—the Wales Lesotho Link—grew out of a desire to see if Wales could make its own direct contribution to world understanding, in particular in bridging the North-South gap. Although a great deal of its activity is now in the fields of education and health, church links have always played an important part—not least because Dolen Cymru's first President was Gwilym O Williams, one of the last century's great Archbishops of Wales.

In an article in the link's first Newsletter in 1985, Dr Williams wrote, 'While we want the link to be of real benefit to Lesotho... we also see the link as necessary for Wales. We have a fine tradition of care for other small nations and need to build on this, so that, whatever our difficulties and differences among ourselves, we can make our proper contribution to the family of nations and further our own development within one interdependent world.'

In October 2003 three Welsh church leaders, representing seven denominations between them, returned from a ten-day visit to Lesotho full of enthusiasm for the warm reception they had been given. They were Bishop Edwin Regan of Wrexham (Roman Catholic), Bishop Carl Cooper of St Davids (Church in Wales) and the Rev Adrian Williams, President of the Free Church Council of Wales.

The church leaders said they were impressed by the way the Lesotho churches worked together ecumenically and by the liveliness of church worship. They also noted the important role played by the churches through their involvement in education, health and the feeding programme. The churches own, and are involved in managing, 90 per cent of the schools (the government pays teachers' salaries) and half of the country's hospitals.

Bishop Cooper emphasized the 'horrendous problems' of poverty, hunger and HIV/Aids—31 per cent of the entire population is estimated to be HIV positive, making it the fourth worst affected country in the world. 'We have brought back requests for the twinning of specific congregations which will be another way of further enlivening the link between our nations,' he reported.

Meanwhile links between schools are being strengthened by a series of two-way teacher exchanges. The latest, also in October, saw five teachers from north-west Wales spend two weeks in Lesotho, including a week teaching and observing at their sister school while they stayed in teachers' homes. Basotho teachers will arrive for a return visit in April. At the same time 12 health service volunteers were spending time in hospitals and clinics in Lesotho on short-term visits. Out of their experience further projects will be drawn up, particularly relating to the HIV/Aids crisis.

At present the Welsh Assembly is helping to fund the link's Director of Development in appreciation of its role in education. *Paul Williams*



Left to right: Carl Cooper, Bishop of St Davids, Edwin Regan, Bishop of Wrexham, King Letsie III of Lesotho and Adrian Williams, President of the Free Church Council of Wales

FOR A CHANGE

FAC DEPENDS ON CHARITABLE GIFTS TO EXTEND ITS OUTREACH, PARTICULARLY IN COUNTRIES WITH CURRENCY RESTRICTIONS. ANY GIFTS IN THE UK THROUGH GIFT AID OR LEGACIES ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE. THESE AND OTHER GIFTS SHOULD BE MADE TO: **FOR A CHANGE, 24 GREENCOAT PLACE, LONDON SW1P 1RD, UK.** (PART OF THE OXFORD GROUP, REGISTERED CHARITY NO 226334.) BANK ACCOUNT DETAILS AND GIFT AID FORMS ARE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST.

from Pat Evans, Worcester, UK

Some of Oxfam's publicity on farm subsidies (FAC, Oct/Nov 2003) is misplaced. I doubt that anyone can substantiate the estimate that scrapping the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) would raise per capita incomes in sub-Saharan Africa by 13 per cent. And most certainly the damage to EU agriculture would have negative economic effects outside Europe.

The EU is the foremost importer of agricultural products from every developing region, and takes two thirds of all African exports. On top of this is the Everything But Arms (EBA) initiative which grants free access to the EU for all exports from the 49 poorest countries.

Contrary to what you state in your Fact File, Brazil is the biggest exporter of sugar—about twice as big as the EU, which comes second. But the EU is also the second biggest importer after Russia, because of preferential arrangements made with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, which guarantee stable prices. This guarantee is important to the producers, because the world price is often well below the production costs of even the most efficient. On a free-for-all trade basis, imports to Europe would most likely come from Brazil and Australia, which produce sugar in large plantations. But this might not be the best outcome from the point of view of the

development of the poorest.

However that does not deny the need for changes, and for them to happen more speedily. We need a thorough examination of the historical position which has arisen, and an objective study of the best way forward. There are plenty of valid criticisms of the CAP, but it has succeeded in steadily diminishing agricultural exports over the last ten years. A commitment to phase out export subsidies completely could be a helpful step.

from Allison Holt, Victoria, BC, Canada

I am very grateful for Andrew Stallybrass's article, 'Becoming myself' (FAC, Oct/Nov 2003). To me, it's like finding 'the pearl of great price'—by casting off all falseness and embracing humility, I learn to become myself and love my neighbour. By applying the outlines of this article I found a fresh start.

Terra Williams, by email

EF Schumacher's book, *Small is Beautiful*, made a deep impression on me when I first read it years ago while living in Jamaica. It is heartening that a person who shares Schumacher's great spiritual sensitivity and vision—Mr St George (FAC, Feb/Mar 2003)—is heading the organization created to carry on his work. In a world that often seems to be drowning in negativity, reports from those who are dedicated to upliftment are vital food for the spirit!

The Editors welcome letters, but reserve the right to shorten them. Write to 'For A Change', 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD or email editors@forachange.co.uk



WHERE EAGLES AND NIGHTINGALES DARE

Does doing God's will mean losing your identity, asks Philip Boobbyer.

We all want to be faithful to our 'true selves'. But how do we discover who we really are? In our individualistic western societies, this is a big question; indeed, the nature of the 'self' is perhaps the central moral and intellectual issue of the age.

Two philosophies of the self are currently very popular. One of them, with its roots in the Romantic movement of the 19th century, assumes that we all have a true self, and that life is about discovering and expressing it. There is great attraction in this idea: we all want to find out what our hearts are really saying. However, taken in isolation it can make life very complicated. It easily leads us into slavery to passing impulses or self-absorption. We feel we must check out every feeling that comes along in case it is reflective of our 'true self'.

Another approach—the post-modern one—assumes that there is no essential self at all: we are either products of our environment, in which case the values that we hold are temporary and certainly cannot be relied upon; or we create ourselves through our own free choices. This approach highlights the fact that we are not abstract individuals, but members of particular communities; and it rightly emphasizes the importance of free choice. Once again, however, it creates a new set of difficulties. It deprives people of any moral landmarks for making choices; there are no absolutes, so anything that comes along might be worth a try.

Both Romantic and post-modern philosophies are designed to liberate people from various forms of oppression. However, they offer no adequate way of resolving the questions that they set, and thus easily leave people with a new set of burdens. They also assume that human beings can experiment on themselves like a scientist examining a test-tube. All sorts of lifestyles need to be tried out to see whether they work. But this is very dangerous; we ourselves are often changed by our

experiments, and continue our lives as different people. Our experiments can lead to addictions that we then try to justify; blinded by our compulsive behaviour, we declare that our addictions are simply an expression of our 'natural' or 'true' selves!

The temptation is to believe that our personalities and our actions can be separated. However, the human being is a unity and to live with this kind of separation has terrible consequences for a person's identity. Pressured, for example, to conform to the values of the crowd, we think we can defend ourselves by playing the roles publicly required of us while remaining unaffected at heart. But we cannot live double lives without being harmed by it. Writing on post-war Poland in his acclaimed book *The Captive Mind* (1950), Czeslaw Milosz noted that many people had lost the ability to distinguish between their real and their false selves: 'A man grows into [his role] so closely that he can no longer differentiate his true self from the self he simulates'. It is dangerous to think that we will be unaffected by the games we play.

RADICAL TRUST

How, then, do we find our true identities? The answer involves turning our attention away from ourselves towards God, and adopting a radical form of trust about the world we live in. We choose to accept the idea that there is a merciful God who knows the purposes for which we were created, and who will generously give all that we need. Here our identities are received as gifts from God. Jesus's primary relationship was with God as 'Father'. Likewise for us, it is as sons and daughters of a Father-God that our true identities are to be found. Identity is a kind of inheritance, and it arises out of our relationship with God. Such an approach does not free us from the task of taking responsibility for our lives and thinking things through. But it means that we look at life in a different way.

This raises another question: in

committing our lives to God, do we not become automatons? Does this not lead to a divided existence where what we ought to do conflicts with what we want to do? According to the Scottish writer, Henry Drummond (1851–1897), the solution to this dilemma lies in the fact that at the deepest level God's will is not something alien to us. God does not want us to be cogs in a machine. What he wills for us is perfectly designed for us. We have particular gifts to contribute to the world, and when we do not use them the world is the poorer for it. And as we exercise those gifts in God's service, we ourselves are changed and become the people that we are meant to be. The tasks God chooses for us are not arbitrary: 'Work is given men not only because the world needs it, but because the workman needs it.' The challenge is to let go of control and the right to shape our futures for our own purposes. It involves a wholehearted decision to trust in God.

Trusting in God's love for us has radical consequences for personal identity. It challenges our constant tendency to try to prove ourselves. However, it can bring great upheaval. Sometimes our friendships, identities and careers have been built around the wrong values or reactions. Things have to be put right, and new habits of mind created. Fear so often prevents us from taking the action that is needed. We are afraid for ourselves, and of what others will think of us. And where others depend on us, we are afraid for them too. It is in the nature of evil to try to prevent us from breaking out of sin for fear of the consequences for those around us.

MISPLACED EMOTIONS

This does not just apply to individuals. As the 20th century has shown, nations can also embrace deeply destructive identities. A country's attitudes can be rooted in pride, anger, guilt, feelings of inferiority or a refusal to be honest; and there are vested interests that profit from mobilizing these



DETAIL FROM GIOTTO PAINTING, CORBIS

'OUR IDENTITY IS ONLY REVEALED AS WE TURN AWAY FROM OURSELVES TOWARDS GOD'

feelings. To challenge misplaced emotions, and to rebuild national life around the right values, demands a lot of thought, courage and care. Honesty, justice, freedom and a generous patriotism have to be worked for.

It is easy to lose sight of the revolutionary kind of change that Christ proposes. Take, for example, the commandment to love our enemies. This is something that requires such a deep-seated reorientation of responses that something very radical must take place if it is to be possible. The same is true in the sphere of sexual behaviour and identity. St Paul talks of people who have been freed from enslavement to promiscuous or perverse patterns of behaviour. What kind of power can make such transformation of character possible? It is clearly not enough for people just to change their outward behaviour.

A kind of 'exchange' is needed. One of the Sufi mystics wrote: *Could there be a better customer than God? He buys our dirty bag of goods, And in return gives us an inner light That borrows from his splendour.*

God himself makes it possible for us to change. It is in this context that the mystery

of Christ can be partly understood. As we take up the Cross, our lives become permeated by a different spirit; we exchange the tyranny of a selfish or guilt-driven life for a life of inner freedom inspired by divine grace. The 'old nature' dies, and a new one is kindled in our hearts. An inner transformation starts to take place that can go on to affect the community. As Dante wrote: 'Out of a small spark comes a great flame.'

MISPLACED EMOTIONS

At any moment we can start again. This is not some quick fix. There is a moderation as well as a radicalism in St Paul, for he noted that our motivations are not changed overnight but are renewed 'from day to day'. But things start to be put right. As the author of the book of Proverbs noted: 'In all your ways acknowledge [God], and he will make straight your paths.' The presence and power of the Holy Spirit is available to us. If we lose sight of that power and the experience of moral victory that it generates, we end up by trying to manage or channel human sinfulness, rather than to challenge it and call its bluff. And the trouble with appeasing sin is that it will always try to

break its boundaries.

Gradually, we find that our very wills are changed. In his *Renovation of the Heart* (2002), the American philosopher Dallas Willard states that people with well-kept hearts find that 'their will functions as it should, to choose what is good and avoid what is evil'. We are moral beings, and when God is at the centre of our lives, we function properly. As we obey God, we find that we actually start to want the right things. There is nothing sinister about this; it is a voluntary process, and God never forces his will upon us.

The Russian priest, Serafim Batiukov (1880–1942), stated: 'Every bird has its own flight. An eagle flies in the clouds, while the nightingale sits on the branch, but each of them glorifies God.' Each of us is unique. Paradoxically, however, our particular calling and identity is only revealed as we turn away from ourselves towards God. As we do God's will, we don't lose our identities at all. Instead, we enter into the inheritance prepared for us all along. ■

Dr Philip Boobbyer is a senior lecturer in modern European history at the University of Kent.

TONY ANTHONY



Ten years of 'honest conversation' in Richmond

TEN YEARS AGO, Richmond, Virginia, caught the attention of the USA with its bold public acknowledgement of its painful history—the capital of the Confederacy during the American Civil War was a leading exporter of slaves to southern plantations for more than a century—and a call for 'honest conversation on race, reconciliation and responsibility'. City and county residents of all backgrounds joined in an unprecedented effort to address the 'toxic issue of race' and build a vision of reconciliation. Their starting point was a conference on 'Healing the Heart of America' in 1993, co-sponsored by Hope in the Cities (HiC), the City of Richmond and Richmond Hill (an ecumenical retreat centre and one of HiC's many community partners).

Two major events were held in Richmond last November to mark the decade of work to free the city of its legacy of racial division. Valerie Lemmie, City Manager of Cincinnati, gave the keynote address at a breakfast forum for 650 people; and Rajmohan Gandhi, a visiting professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, spoke to hundreds more at a 'celebration of hope' at the site of a former Civil War gun foundry.

'I have great hope for our city because of Hope

Above: left to right: Ruldolph McCollum and Valerie Lemmie with Deputy Secretary State Board of Elections, Lynda Sharp Anderson and Richmond City Manager, Calvin Jamison at the MRD breakfast. Below: The Tredegar Gun Foundry and a Civil War scene



in the Cities,' said Mayor Rudolph McCollum, welcoming participants to the annual Metropolitan Richmond Day breakfast. James Dunn, president of the Chamber of Commerce and one of the breakfast co-chairs, added, 'Today's record crowd speaks volumes about Hope in the Cities' practical framework of principles and their impact on the lives of so many in this community.'

Ms Lemmie described how she was using the principles of Hope in the Cities to tackle 'by far the most difficult challenge' facing the leadership of America's cities: creating inclusive, just and constructive communities. Thirty local non-profit organizations and several major corporations supported the event which raised \$60,000 for the work of Hope in the Cities.

Gandhi joined descendants of slaves and of slave owners to affirm a powerful movement for healing and reconciliation that began at the conference in 1993. The Tredegar Gun Foundry, which produced 1,000 cannon for the Southern Confederacy during the Civil War, provided an historic setting for a multi-media presentation of images of Richmond, accompanied by music from the interracial One Voice Choir.

The gun foundry is soon to become the site of the first national civil war museum. It will tell the story of the war from the perspectives of the North, the South as well as black Americans. This is the vision of Alex Wise, a descendant of a Virginia governor who was also a Confederate general. At the anniversary occasion, Wise stood with Carmen Foster, the great-granddaughter of a slave who worked in the foundry. 'Historical imagination is the ability to imagine walking in another person's shoes. It is Hope in the Cities' great gift to Richmond,' said Wise.

A well-known African American newspaper columnist said the city had moved from a place that 'discreetly oppressed its black citizens' to a place of real dialogue. 'We have struggled to move from powerful symbolism to transformative change. We have witnessed our politicians move from stark rancour towards honest attempts to reach consensus.'

Gandhi hailed Richmond's pioneering work of racial unity, and observed that after 9/11, 'America, and all of us, have to strive to heal and unite the world, and for a just and lasting peace everywhere, including in the Middle East.' In an interview earlier in the day, he said, 'The ordinary citizen can only do his or her bit in the community to which they belong. That's a lot. When a violence-prone area becomes peaceful, that has a tremendous effect on the world.'

There is a long way to go but every day more Richmonders are venturing beyond their comfort zones to engage in the difficult but vital work of reconciliation and justice.

Robert Corcoran, national director of Hope in the Cities, USA, (www.hopeinthecities.org) a programme of Initiatives of Change.

Coventry continues role of peace-making

THE city of Coventry in the English Midlands has had a long and honourable tradition in peace building, since its 14th century cathedral was destroyed in 1940.

The city's International Centre for Reconciliation helped broker the Kaduna Peace Declaration of Religious Leaders, and the First Alexandria Declaration of the Religious Leaders of the Holy Land.

In October last year the city of Coventry inaugurated a Peace Month and a Hiroshima Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Exhibition, which was officially opened by the Japanese Ambassador to the UK, Masaki Orita. On

survived the dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan at the end of World War II, lit candles at the ceremony which was filmed by British and Japanese television companies.

The Coventry Citizen described how Dennison had attended a conference in Switzerland in 1962 where he unexpectedly encountered a Japanese delegation. A Japanese general told him: 'I know what happened and I don't ever expect you to forget what happened.' Bowing low, he added: 'I beg you to forgive me and my nation.'

Dennison told the paper, 'He was genuine

'I DON'T WANT BITTERNESS AND HATRED TO BE PASSED ON TO THE SECOND GENERATION'

the invitation of the Lord Mayor, Sucha Singh Bains, a local survivor of Japanese prison camps, Les Dennison, was invited to participate in the inauguration. Dennison was captured at the fall of Singapore in 1942 and was among only 400 survivors out the 1,600 prisoners who were forced to work on the Burma Railway and one of the bridges over the River Kwai. He weighed just 5st 4lbs when he returned home.

After Ambassador Orita had unveiled a plaque, the official party moved to the ruins of the cathedral for an opening ceremony attended by the public. Dennison, together with Yoshiro Yamawaki, who had

and that was the beginning of a remarkable change in my attitude.' The paper writes, 'Despite the horrific treatment of Les and his comrades, he is keen to leave the animosity of war where it belongs—in the past. "For a long time I felt bitterness and hatred but I don't want that to be passed on to the second generation," he explained.'

Ambassador Orita wrote to Dennison, 'It is through the efforts of brave people like you that British and Japanese people are able to grow closer together in the spirit of peace and friendship, without forgetting the past.' Michael Henderson

WHAT HAS RESTORED YOUR FAITH IN HUMAN NATURE?

ON A VISIT to Kenya I was given everything by people who had nothing.

Many wonderful acts of kindness enriched my stay in East Africa. The memory of 30 locals, knee deep in mud, heaving my car back onto the road always because she had learned that I liked pepper with my potatoes and she had none. One woman even halved her budget by feeding me one of her two chickens—eggs were her only source of income.

But one moment has endured above all others. While participating in a reconciliation programme, my sister and I met an elderly woman. As the victim of a heinous crime perpetrated by a white man, she had hated the *mzungu* (whites) for 40 years. We were the first white people to have entered the village during that time. My sister offered an apology for the actions of another member of our race. The woman apologized for her bitterness and they embraced as sisters. Witnessing such a moment has gifted me the clarity to appreciate many more acts of unselfishness than previously.

These people have shown me that giving is the best way to receive. Now it's my turn. John Leggat, London

I HAD HAD a very successful shopping expedition in West Croydon and happily travelled home with three bags on the train. When I arrived at my house I realized to my horror that I only had two bags with me. The third,

with a lovely new jumper inside plus the receipt, was missing. I was devastated. My day was ruined as I was convinced that I would never see my jumper again, particularly as Christmas was not far away.

However my friend who was with me kept insisting that I call the lost property in the station terminus. After a few days I reluctantly phoned the office, having no hope at all that they would be any help. To my astonishment and joy they said, 'You are in luck! Your bag is here.' Someone had turned it in. Veronica Craig, London

LOCALLY THERE has been a spate of vandalism by youngsters. They have smashed bus-stop shelters and phone boxes. They even set light to the tops of buses, which cost thousands of pounds and, nearly, lives.

Recently I and other senior citizens were invited to attend our local primary school's Christmas show rehearsal. The children actually wrote and sent the invitation by hand. It was a grand effort by pupils and teachers alike, and we were served mince pies and tea afterwards by the senior ones, who also asked us what we liked best in the show. They even lined up to send us on our way, making us feel like royalty.

That experience helped me get right and wrong in perspective, and has restored my faith in young human nature, remembering we were there once, warts and all. I see only great hope of better things from our younger generation in Great Britain, including where I live. Bob Bedwell, London

NEXT ISSUE:

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST MISTAKE YOU'VE EVER MADE? UP TO 250 WORDS BY 8 FEBRUARY, 2004, TO: EDITORS@FORACHANGE.CO.UK



PRESS ASSOCIATION

THE ENGLISH ENIGMA

Hugh Williams delights in a book that traces 'Englishness' back to the days before England existed.

I commend Peter Ackroyd's book, *Albion—the origins of the English imagination*, to all those who love the English. I commend this book to all those who hate the English. But above all I commend it to those who are frustrated that they can neither love nor hate the English but find them both admirable and annoying in equal measure.

You will note that I use the term 'English' and not the more inclusive 'British'. But this book is about the English, not the Scots or the Welsh or the Irish, although the Celts have influenced the English a great deal (as have many other nations and races, as Peter Ackroyd is quick to acknowledge). And I write with a modicum of detachment as a Welshman, albeit a thoroughly Anglicized one.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. In fact I relished it so much that I did not want to come to the end of it, so I limited myself to one chapter a day. It is so dense, so detailed, so broad in its scholarship and reference, that one chapter a day is about all I could properly take in anyway!

Who are the English? On the most basic level

they are the people that inhabit that part of the British Isles called England. This definition recognizes that they are a mongrel race with admixtures of Roman, Celtic, Anglo-Saxon (originally north German), Danish, Norwegian, Norman French—and more recently (although Peter Ackroyd's survey does not extend this far) Jewish, Asian and Afro-Caribbean races, among many others. And Peter Ackroyd acknowledges that just as many races have been absorbed into the fabric of the English, so have many cultures. The genius of the mongrel race is that it not only absorbs influences from other lands and cultures, but also turns them into something specifically and recognizably English. Ackroyd cites the stories Chaucer wove into *The Canterbury Tales* and which Shakespeare transformed with his amazing language into his histories and tragedies.

It all began, says Ackroyd, with the Anglo Saxons who invaded England after the Roman departure around 400 AD. Characteristics of Anglo-Saxon language (love of alliteration), thought (empirical and practical rather than abstract), art (fondness for miniatures, for

intricate tracery and the decorative), history (the antiquarian fascination), superstitions (ghosts, spirits and horror stories), psychology (the melancholic streak combined with embarrassment, self-mockery and understatement), weather (chilly, damp mists and fogs) and above all attachment to the landscape of England itself—all have resurfaced at different moments in English history and persist, maintains Ackroyd, to the present day.

From these roots there also grew a tradition of rugged individualism and homely simplicity. 'The deflation of magnificence has always been part of the English imagination,' writes Ackroyd. And from these qualities grew an emphasis on character which in literature gave precedence to biography and fiction (hardly distinguishable at first) and the particular English form of theatre. 'It is better to see learning in noble men's lives than to read it in philosophers' writings,' wrote the 16th century Thomas North in the foreword to his translation of Plutarch's *Lives*, which Shakespeare drew on heavily. And Fielding, the 18th century novelist, wrote, 'Examples work more forcibly on the mind than precepts.' This emphasis on character influenced English painting also—England is the only nation to boast a National Portrait Gallery.

When it comes to philosophy and learning, as with literature and painting, it is hard not to make comparisons with England's nearest neighbours and greatest rivals—the French. Even in the Catholic late Middle Ages the French were complaining that English spirituality was 'pragmatic and particularist and generated little by

its being the gradual and patient accumulation of practice and precedent, in its being, above all, unwritten.'

GARDENS

No study of the English mind would be complete without reference to English gardens. Ackroyd demonstrates that the history of the small walled garden, from medieval through Tudor records to their burgeoning in the 18th and 19th centuries 'becomes the very image of defensive privacy, which is so congenial to the English mind'. And he calls gardening 'a national pursuit with truly native characteristics'. Even when abroad, 'the English establish gardens and always gardens of the type they left in the old country'. The English garden, then, is a nationalist icon 'with its disinclination for magnificence and its almost homely presence'—a veiled comparison with the grand and formal gardens of the French chateaux. For 'the garden displays the fruit of the English imagination, including the passion for intricacy and the love of the miniature'—another hark back to the influence of the Anglo Saxons. The 'serpentine line' favoured by the Anglo Saxons also found expression in 18th century gardens as it did in the paintings of Hogarth and Blake.

There are some omissions, as there are bound to be in so wide a survey, even spread over 450 pages. Ackroyd says little about the industrial revolution in which for a time England was pre-eminent. Surely an example of the practical and pragmatic English mind in its application of scientific knowledge? And he gives no clue as to the reasons for the enormous outpouring of

'THE DEFLATION OF MAGNIFICENCE HAS ALWAYS BEEN PART OF THE ENGLISH IMAGINATION'

way of complex abstract reflection'. And a later French commentator wrote, 'Abstract and general principles have no attraction for Englishmen.' Ackroyd warms to this theme. 'In the English imagination scholarship is applied and learning utilized,' he claims.

PRAGMATIC

This note of the practical and the pragmatic affected early English music, where much was borrowed from Italy. This of the 16th century composers: 'Their approach was pragmatic; what was congenial they used, adapting it to native conditions.'

But perhaps the most marked effect was on English laws and the English constitution. 'The desired goal (of English philosophy) is not that which is ideally or speculatively the best (a comparison with the French again!) but that which is most practical. That, in a nutshell, is also the history of the English constitution and of English common law.' (And, one might add, of the Church of England!) And to hammer home the point Ackroyd adds, 'The strength of the English constitution lay in its having no theory, in

energy overseas which led to colonization of vast tracts of the earth's surface and to the establishment of that 'Empire on which the sun never set'. Or maybe that was largely down to the Scots?

Yet for all that this book is a magnificent achievement. 'The history of the English imagination', concludes Ackroyd, 'is the history of adaptation and assimilation.... This condition reflects both a mixed language comprised of many different elements and a mixed culture comprised of many different races.' In the end Ackroyd sees Englishness not as a matter of race but of place. It is an encouraging conclusion because it opens up an English future to all those who have made England their home in recent years. 'In England the reverence for the past and the affinity with the natural landscape join together in a mutual embrace. So we owe much to the ground on which we dwell. It is the landscape and the dreamscape. It encourages a sense of longing and belonging. It is *Albion*.' ■

'Albion—the origins of the English imagination'
by Peter Ackroyd, Nan A Talese, ISBN: 0385497725

Above: England rugby fans celebrate the world cup victory



KARIN PETERS

Don't just do something

In early 2003 the cities of New York, Chicago, Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal suffered a power blackout. When the lights went out, teenagers saw the stars in the night sky for the first time. They were experiencing visual silence.

I am writing from India, where I am part of a group from 19 countries who will live and travel together in Asia for nine months, under the name of Action for Life. The group includes Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists and those of no religious faith. Part of our community life is an experiment with silence.

On the first day of the programme we got up before dawn and walked in silence up onto the second biggest plateau in Asia, where we sat on a cliff edge and watched the sun rise over India. The vast valley below was slowly revealed to us with its dams, fields and villages. Far away, we could hear an ox bell.

'Loneliness is inner emptiness,' writes Richard Foster in his book *Celebration of Discipline*. 'Solitude is inner fulfilment. Solitude is not first a place but a state of mind and heart.' The solitude that we seek is not to escape our lives but to re-enter them transformed in mind and spirit.

We spend each Monday in silence, from

10 am until 5.30 pm. The Bhagavat Gita tells us, 'The man who in his work finds silence, and who sees that silence is work, this man in truth sees the light and in all his works finds peace.' After the first quiet day many admitted that silence was a struggle for them. 'I suddenly realized how loud my thoughts were,' said one person. 'If I had started to speak I would have been yelling.'

During the course of that day I flipped back and forth from one feeling to another: impatience, guilt, peace, remembering the past, worrying about the future, wanting to get on with the present. I longed for the disciplined clear thinking mind that leads to a simple life. As it's been said: 'Don't just do something. Sit there.'

One Monday we looked at a quote from Mahatma Gandhi: 'Be the change you want to see in the world.' We asked ourselves: How honest am I? How selfless? How pure in my thought and action? How consciously loving? 'To hear God we need a clean heart,' said Mother Theresa.

Another Monday, one of the group went up on the plateau, took a gum leaf from a nearby tree and wrote all her worries and fears onto it. But when she threw it off the cliff, the wind blew it straight back to her. She threw it again and the wind returned it. After ten attempts, she came to the

conclusion that perhaps she did not really want to let these things go. In the end she wedged the leaf in a rock to return to another day.

Another of us went through her life and made a list of all the bad things she had done and wrote letters of apology. She then apologized to the Asians in the group as she realized that she had not been talking to them because of a prejudice she held in her heart.

As we gather in small groups at the end of each quiet day we try to express what blocks us from our Creator and how we are removing those blocks. As we come closer to revealing who we are, our courage, mutual support and trust grow and become the foundations of our community.

At times, of course, we seek peace, or answers, and come away disheartened. Then the struggle and discipline of surrender begins. Instead of receiving we must give, stop our own words, let go of our desires and yield our time, to make space for silence. ■

Nigel Heywood is an Australian fine arts graduate, now travelling in Asia with IC's Action for Life training programme.

REFLECTIONS

JOHANNA JAULMES

Love me, love my nation?

WHEN I GOT married, many things in my life changed all at once. Not only was I no longer on my own but I was going to live in a country I scarcely knew, whose language I spoke badly—far from family, friends and my own familiar environment in the Netherlands.

Many people were consumed by curiosity about how things were going and what I thought of France. During the first year I did not want to answer this question. It wasn't that I lacked an opinion, but my reply would have been superficial.

In fact there were many things I found appalling. Everything was done the wrong way round. No coffee break at 10.30 am, two cooked meals a day (rather than one), cheese between the main course and dessert, and so many expressions which meant I could not understand the meaning of a sentence even though I knew all the words in it. Weren't they just making fun of me?

France, so close geographically, was thousands of kilometres away in its customs.

My mother often used to say: 'We don't live on a basis of comparisons.' She said that whenever I compared my presents with my cousin's after a birthday or Christmas. Unfortunately she would then often go on, 'but...'. A series of comparisons would often follow, ending in a state of colossal self-satisfaction or jealousy. Neither of these was a very positive result. In the same way, comparing countries is not very positive.

It has taken me time to appreciate the characteristics of each country. A few examples come to mind.

In Holland we have *gezelligheid*. This is an untranslatable concept lying somewhere in the

realm of a good atmosphere and the warm, friendly feeling of a time with friends or colleagues. It is what makes for the success of an outing, a visit or a cup of coffee together.

In Britain I appreciate the ability to question, to accept personal change, which you find in some of those television drama series set in beautiful locations. At the end of a story which has made one laugh and cry, one of the main characters admits he has been wrong and apologizes, and suddenly one feels there is hope for all the conflicts in the world.

In Germany, I find a love of handcraft and practical work, very precious to someone like me who loves that sort of thing. Of course, all their specialist shops pose a threat to my purse—but after a visit to Germany one is equipped for

some time to come!

And to return to France: I love its special kind of humour, irony tinged with self-mockery. The adventures of Asterix and Obelix (which should be prescribed reading for those who really want to know France) are a good example. Through the eyes of these invincible Gauls, one not only discovers the country's regional and social idiosyncrasies, but an ability to laugh at oneself which lends healthy distance to potentially tense situations.

Lasting unity and good relations in an expanding Europe depend on us learning both to cherish our own characteristics and to appreciate the positive differences in others. *translation by Mary Jones*

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MR/MRS/MISS/MS:	_____
ADDRESS:	_____
_____	_____
POST/ZIP CODE:	COUNTRY:
_____	_____
PAYMENT:	
I ENCLOSE PAYMENT OF:	
PAYMENT BY: <input type="checkbox"/> VISA <input type="checkbox"/> MASTERCARD <input type="checkbox"/> SWITCH	
THE SUM OF:	
CARD NUMBER:	
FROM DATE:	ISSUE NO (IF KNOWN):
EXPIRY DATE:	SIGNATURE: