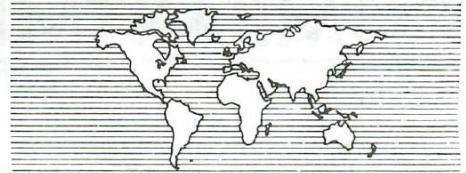


# NEW WORLD NEWS

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Channer

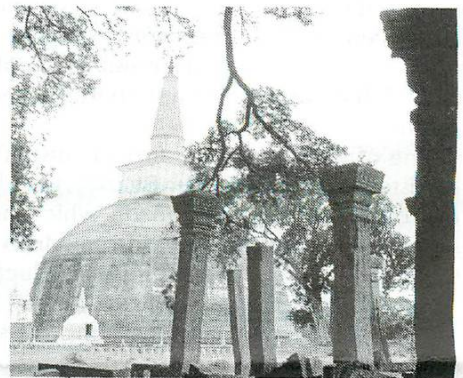
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Aerial view of Sri Lanka, where a Moral Re-Armament group was recently invited. See page 2.

## THE AID NEEDED BY RICH AND POOR

ECONOMISTS AND COMMENTATORS in the West like to divide the world into 'developed' and 'developing' nations. There is now a growing fashion in Britain and the USA to say that the poverty of the 'poor' countries is largely their own fault. There is even opposition to the very idea of overseas aid. Critics say that corruption and internal divisions in the poor countries waste much of the aid, and that the aid tends to destroy these countries' initiative to help themselves.

Others, especially people like myself who have seen the desperate needs of other countries at first hand, maintain that aid should be increased. They say that it is short-sighted not to be more generous; that in the long term the whole world will benefit from a fairer distribution of resources. Perhaps the truth is not only that we in the West need to be more generous, but also that there should be more discernment and closer consultation with the recipient nations—and without the element of 'us' and 'them'.

In our world where terrorism, war and natural disasters deepen the world poverty crisis, what can the person who cares do? What is the best approach to meeting the urgent needs? Yukika Sohma from Japan recently led a Moral Re-Armament group from Britain, Australia, France and the USA which was invited to Sri Lanka. She made a fundamental point when she said, 'We are all from underdeveloped countries.' The truth is that the materialism of the richer nations has seriously added to the problems of the poorer nations over a long period. Morally and spiritually, we in the 'rich' nations are underdeveloped.

Recognising this provides a basis on which people of all nations can work together to grapple with the root problems which afflict us all—the selfishness, greed and envy which underlie so much that is wrong in the world.

Can this be done? There are, in fact, important initiatives going on in many of the so-called poorer countries which critics of overseas aid usually overlook, and from which they could learn much. This issue of *New World News* looks at some of these initiatives. Behind them lies a spirit which sparks into action the creative forces that are so badly needed in every nation. Any people who live to bring such a spirit are urgently in demand. This spirit is available to anyone. But there is a price to pay—the willingness in each of us to undergo radical change in our own motives, aims and living.

Hugh Elliott

Yukika Sohma of Japan, President of the Federation of Asian Women's Associations, recently led an international MRA group to several Asian nations. She explained that the initiator of MRA, Frank Buchman, had admonished her in the 1950s, 'Don't forget the needs of your Asian neighbours.' She has since founded an association to aid Indo-Chinese refugees and she now felt that the time had come to make fresh first-hand contact with these nations. We print reports from two of those who took part:

## TIME FOR PEOPLE TO LEAVE COMPARTMENTS

by Evelyn Ruffin

WE ARRIVED IN SRI LANKA in January as All-Party Amity Talks were under way following the tragic riots of July 1983. These had been sparked off by the ambush and killing of 13 soldiers by Tamil guerrillas, and had led to the burning of hundreds of Tamil homes and businesses and to 400 deaths. Many in the different communities of Sri Lanka still live in fear and many Tamils have left the country.

Our group met people from a wide variety of backgrounds—all the political parties, different faiths and different sections of society.

Mrs Sohma's message was that the spiritual heritage of Sri Lanka and Asia was needed in today's world. Asia and the West must work together for peace and to meet world needs.

'Your ideas are universal. I wish they could be accepted everywhere,' said the President of Sri Lanka, JR Jayewardene, when he received the twelve visitors in Colombo. 'It is very difficult but you have firm supporters in Mrs Jayewardene and myself,' he added.

One of the visitors, the former Australian Labour Party Minister for Education, Kim Beazley, told the President that the Education Commission on which he was currently serving had borrowed a phrase from Mr Jayewardene's 1982 *Call to the Nation*. Their report on education in Western Australia had cited the need for 'a moral infrastructure'.

When the delegation met the Prime Minister, R Premadasa, at his office the same afternoon he said, 'You have come at a very timely moment.' His words were to be repeated by many others. The Prime Minister urged the visitors to meet some of those involved in the Amity Talks. With the help of his secretary, Bradman Weerakoon, they met both Buddhist and Tamil leaders, trade unionists, politicians of all parties and army and police chiefs.

A half-day seminar in Colombo on 'Finding our common identity' started with the lighting of the *Pané* (prayer-candle) accompanied by the patriotic song *Lanka Ape Rate Nayhe*. It includes the lines, 'Giving up differences in race or religion, let us bind our hands together without hate or greed to divide us.'

Mrs Sohma paid tribute to the 'very great act' of Mr Jayewardene in being the first to urge the nations at the San Francisco peace conference in 1951 to accept Japan back into the family of nations. She spoke of the part that Buddhists, inspired by their faith, could play in world affairs.

'There is a battle to be fought between right and wrong in each of our hearts. A choice which we have to make every day. In MRA none of us feel we are developed. We all come from developing nations in the spiritual and moral sense, and can learn together,' she said.

Dr Beazley described how his life had been changed when, as a young Member of Parliament, he was challenged to sit down and listen to the 'Inner Voice' with 'nothing to prove, nothing to justify and nothing to gain for myself—a revolutionary proposition for a politician!'

Responding to Dr Beazley's thought that the function of MRA, of statesmanship, and of religion was the healing of nations, Mr Weerakoon said, 'That is what most of us are concerned about—how to heal deep divisions.'

Justice Manicavasagar, a Tamil, speaking from the audience, said, 'The MRA group has come at a good time. It is now necessary that every Sinhala should learn Tamil and every Tamil should learn Sinhala.... People must come out of their compartments and learn to love their motherland.'

Rohini de Mel, a member of one of the old-established families of the island, who had invited the group to Sri Lanka, quoted WS Senior, 'Sri Lanka must leap to a single bugle, march to a single drum.' She went on, 'I do believe that Moral Re-Armament is that bugle and that drum because it includes people of all classes, races and creeds.' She concluded, 'Moral Re-Armament is out to remake the world. Our task is nothing less.'



Kandy, where some of the overseas visitors addressed a school

'Lanka could contribute towards world peace' was the headline in *The Sun*, quoting Mr Weerakoon. He had been given responsibility for the rehabilitation of Tamils and for estimating compensation to those whose property was destroyed last July. Mr Weerakoon recognised in the audience people from 'all walks of life who have made and are making a very great contribution to Sri Lanka'.

Two other national dailies, *The Island* and *The Daily News*, also carried reports and photos of the group's visit.

Dr Beazley was interviewed on national TV's main evening news, where he again explained how his life had been changed as a young politician. He stressed the importance of aiming to live by absolute moral standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love. Others of the visiting group were interviewed on radio.

Brigadier Dennis Hapugalle, founder and Executive Director of the Community Development Services, arranged a meeting with the Board members and staff of this voluntary organisation, which works in the villages. The Brigadier, who has had a distinguished career and was decorated with Sri Lanka's highest award, the VSV, spoke of 'experiences

which have changed my life'. He described how he had been called by his senior officer who said to him, 'You are capable, but you are impatient and intolerant. You are taking your vibrations from the wrong sources. Both Good and Evil have their vibrations. You should tune in to the vibrations of the Good.' The Brigadier concluded, 'It is not in plans or economic theories but in the commitment of our lives that we shall sort out our country's problems.'

After five days, eight of the group went on to Bangkok in Thailand, while others were invited by their Sri Lankan hosts to stay and work with them for a few more weeks. ■

## Asia's role in a shrinking world

by **ARK Mackenzie**, former British Minister for Economic and Social Affairs at the UN

'WAR HAS MADE the Cambodian people lose their sense of what is right and what is wrong. Please help us to find the light and share peace with the world.' The speaker was a youthful Cambodian Buddhist priest.

We were sitting in a clearing in the Cambodian forest near the Thai border where a township has been constructed for 30,000 fugitives from the Vietnamese-controlled regime in Pnom-Penh.

On one side of the table sat 11 Buddhist priests, saffron-robed and drinking orange juice—Buddhist monks are forbidden to eat solid food after noon. All were young, for the senior Buddhist hierarchy of Cambodia had all been massacred during the Pol Pot regime. All listened intently and spoke movingly of their country's suffering.

On the other side of the table sat 11 of us from five countries plus Prime Minister Son Sann of the coalition Cambodian Government which is recognised by the United Nations in preference to the Vietnamese-controlled regime. We had travelled seven hours by bus from Bangkok through innumerable military checkpoints. Our immediate purpose was to present the first lorry load of the hundreds of tons of clothes gathered in Japan for the fugitive Cambodians through the initiative of Yukika Sohma. Mrs Sohma's purpose was not only to meet the material needs of the



Son Sann (speaking, centre), Prime Minister of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea, received an MRA delegation in his homeland. Here they have a dialogue with Cambodian Buddhist monks.

displaced people, however. She was also using their plight to awaken the consciences of her fellow countrymen to their world responsibility.

In Bangkok, the visiting group met the Thai Foreign Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the President of the Privy Council, the Supreme Patriarch and other senior Buddhist priests. With all of them Mrs Sohma took the same line: 'We in Japan talk a lot about our Asian spiritual heritage and blame the West for her materialism, forgetting that we, too, are quite materialistic. The fact is that we have talked much but have not taken responsibility for the world. We have left it to the West. The situation in the world is now so urgent, and the world itself has shrunk so much, that it is time that we in Asia shouldered our responsibilities. We have therefore come, along with our friends from the West, to invite you to help us with your age-old wisdom.'

The unanimous response from the Thai leaders to this plea was a promise to explore urgently the possibilities of sending delegations to MRA conferences in Japan, Switzerland and India during the coming months.

The Governor of Chantaburi Province in eastern Thailand, after listening to Mrs Sohma, commented, 'This lady should be nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize like Mother Teresa.'



Yukika Sohma talks with Air Chief Marshal Siddhi Sawetsila (centre), Foreign Minister of Thailand, and Air Marshal Jalit Chulamokha.

Travelling in both Thailand and Burma, we were able to meet, within a matter of days, senior Buddhist leaders, a Catholic cardinal and a papal nuncio, an Anglican archbishop and bishop, as well as a lively group of Christian evangelical youth, all former drug addicts, in Rangoon. All were fascinated by the story of Mrs Sohma's vision and commitment. Their response brought home the significance of what the President of the National Assembly of Thailand said after a dialogue with the visiting group: 'I see Moral Re-Armament as a magnet, a central philosophy capable of uniting religious believers of all backgrounds.'

Another Thai political leader added, 'I see now that MRA is not old. It is not new. It is in every heart, and it needs to be lived.'

The open-mindedness and open-heartedness of Buddhist leaders in Sri Lanka, Thailand and Burma was very striking. The Supreme Patriarch of Thailand gave the visiting group his blessing. A monk in Sri Lanka who was a professor of philosophy, coming in touch with Moral Re-Armament for the first time, said after a three-hour dialogue, 'This is a philosophy with which I can agree. The key is practical application.' In Rangoon, a translator and editor of Buddhist scriptures expressed a strong wish to come to study how MRA works in Europe. ■

# JAMSHEDPUR CREATIVE CHANGE FOR TOTAL DEVELOPMENT

TATA STEEL IN JAMSHEDPUR, one of India's major heavy industries, has a dispute-free record in its labour-management relations, stretching back 50 years. The President of the 30,000-strong Tata (Steel) Workers' Union, VG Gopal, says, 'We have a relationship of co-operation, not confrontation' with management. Tata's is said to be the only steel company in the world that made a profit last year.

The sister company in Jamshedpur, Tata Engineering and Locomotive Company (Telco), manufactures 70 per cent of India's heavy goods vehicles. In his best-selling book, *The creation of wealth*, Russi Lala writes, 'In the last two decades Telco has manufactured 400,000 vehicles. An estimated 325,000 are on the road today. It is estimated...that each truck on the road creates twelve jobs. It may be safely said that Telco has created 4 million new jobs in the country.... Ten per cent of the total central and state tax revenue originates from the operation of Telco trucks.'

Together these two Tata companies employ over 90,000 workers, and Tata trucks are exported to over 50 countries.

Recent visitors to Jamshedpur saw a multi-media stage production, *The legend that is Jamshedpur*, which dramatised the history of the Tata enterprises. Jamsetji Tata dreamt of his steel city, and his successors planted a city in the jungle 77 years ago. Since then Tata industries have grown like a great gulmohur tree—a 'flame in the forest' that has been a light to India. Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy, named the city Jamshedpur in honour of its founder.

## Human approach

Russi Mody, Managing Director and Vice-Chairman of the Tata Iron and Steel Company (Tisco), gave a glimpse of Tata's secret when he inaugurated a three-day Moral Re-Armament conference in the Xavier Labour Relations Institute, in Jamshedpur, on 27 January. Sound human relations in industry, he said, were 'based on the one word, care'. He added that 'credibility, compassion and consideration' were all needed in human relationships. In the audience were 750 Tata managers and workers. Mr Mody said that the theme of the conference—Creative change for total development—'amounts to a basic change of attitudes'. Human relations at work were a matter of 'establishing a rapport with the other person. In industry you have to possess a human attitude.' Without that, workers would always feel that managers were a breed apart. 'The worker wants to be treated as an equal,' he said.

Mr Mody, who was last year's 'Businessman of the Year' in India, told of when he had been given charge of Tata's ferro-manganese plant, at that time a 'sick child' through lack of production and profitability. He had felt that the human approach was needed rather than any technical solution to the problem.

He had called for the 450 employees in the plant to come to his bungalow in groups of 50 at a time. 'I understand that the plant is not working well. What is the problem?' he had



Russi Mody, Vice-Chairman and Managing Director of the Tata Iron and Steel Company (Tisco), inaugurating the industrial conference

asked the workers. At first there was silence. Then they began to tell him that they had no protective helmets, aprons nor boots. Mr Mody had immediately ordered 560,000 rupees' (£40,000) worth of these items. Later the company had introduced recreation and sports facilities. Morale in the plant improved and production increased from 1,500 tons a month to 3,500.

Mr Mody concluded, 'What we need more than anything else is to change this world by changing ourselves. It is we who have to start in our own situations. That is what MRA is all about.'

Sarosh Ghandy, Resident Director of Telco, expressed a similar viewpoint: 'The days when a manager can order people around have gone and the faster we realise this the better.' Each person spent around 90,000 hours at work throughout his career. 'That is a long time either to be happy or to be spent in sadness,' he said.

Human relations needed involvement as well as care, he continued. 'So many times, a plant does not take off because the workers have not been consulted.' There was a need to involve workers not just for their labour 'but more important for their good ideas. Good ideas come from the men who are doing the job, who know where the shoe pinches.' Enough talent was being engaged in technological innovation. Now the need was to draw out the best in people.



Sarosh Ghandy, Resident Director of the Tata Engineering and Locomotive Company (Telco), at the opening session of the conference

Tisco now supports rural development projects in 150 villages around Jamshedpur. Father Michael Bogaert, the Director of the Xavier Institute of Social Services in Ranchi, has become a nationally respected figure for his work on rural development, particularly with the *Adivasis* (tribal people) of Bihar. Originally from Belgium, he has lived in India for the last 33 years.

Speaking at the opening session of the conference, Father Bogaert said that until the 1973 oil crisis man considered the world a place of limitless resources. 'Our ideal of man was that of the conqueror who tamed and subjugated,' he said. 'But that concept is now finished.' We were now in the age of the space shuttle. Like astronauts in a confined space, 'we have to learn to live together and to agree with one another. We cannot afford to settle our quarrels by trampling on one another.'

'Mankind's diverse backgrounds,' he went on, 'have to complement one another rather than be used by vested interests.' The greatest need was to work together for the rural oppressed. 'We are not winning the battle against poverty.' He said that the number of poor was increasing, both in absolute terms and as a percentage of the population. 'We cannot wait for the government to do anything about it. Let us not wait for others.' He appealed for people to join together in voluntary service to the rural poor. 'A nation where people are ready to work together for a common cause is a great nation,' he concluded.



Father Michael Bogaert

Shailendro Mahoto, a local *Adivasi* worker with the Telco Rural Development Programme, spoke alongside his wife about reconciliation in their family. His wife and his mother had fought so much in their home that his wife went back to her own family.

Her parents urged her to return to her husband. She did so, but things did not improve between the two women. Shailendro's wife tried to persuade him to move away from his mother. However, his mother could not have survived on her own.

Shailendro sought guidance from the 'Inner Voice' on what he should say. He told his wife, 'We will leave my mother on condition that we leave our baby behind in an orphanage.' His wife was aghast. Shailendro then said to her, 'You want to take the boy with us. Now can you understand how my mother feels if you take me away from her?'

Shailendro's wife understood, and apologised to him for her demand. Later she apologised to Shailendro's mother and the rift was healed.



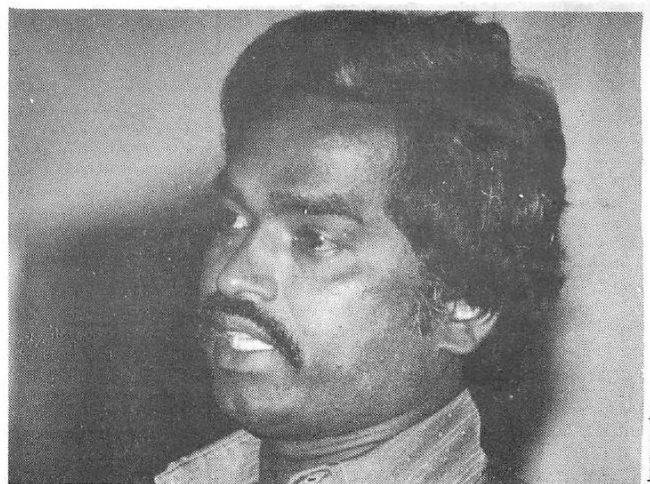
Bhagwandas

Mr Varadarajan, Chairman and Managing Director of Indian Detonators and Chemicals Limited in Hyderabad (right); PN Pandey (centre), Divisional manager of the Telco truck division; and SG Iyengar, Tata management training

From Hyderabad came Mr Varadarajan, Chairman and Managing Director of Indian Detonators and Chemicals Ltd (IDL Chemicals) which employs 3,500 people in the manufacture of explosives for the mining industry. The company has sponsored three MRA seminars on 'Family and Industry' in Hyderabad.

Mr Varadarajan spoke at Jamshedpur alongside two union representatives from the company. So far, he said, 5 per cent of his workforce had attended MRA seminars. He hoped that the remaining 95 per cent would soon have a similar opportunity. He wanted to see what these seminars could do to tackle the problems of communal relations in Hyderabad.

Mr Satyanarayana, an IDL union leader, told of the effect of the MRA seminars on his own life and in the company. 'I used to drink and if a worker came to see me I would pretend that I was not at home,' he said. 'Slowly the workers were becoming distant from me.' At Asia Plateau, the MRA centre in Maharashtra, 'I decided to stop drinking and I no longer have a craving for drink. The Inner Voice is the advisor in my life now.' Union elections, he said, used to be torn by quarrels and fighting. The police would have to move in and some men would end up in hospital. 'During the last union elections, we laid down our principles of how they should be conducted—including not abusing each other. These last elections were singularly peaceful because of the lessons we learnt at Asia Plateau.'



Bhagwandas

IDL Union leader Mr Satyanarayana

During the final session of the conference there was a note of decision-making as, one after the other, delegates spoke of what the conference had meant to them personally. They included:

- The student who decided to apologise to his neighbour whom he had not spoken to since a fight two years earlier. The neighbour 'was gracious enough to apologise to me too', he reported;
- The man who decided to return Rs 180 to people he had cheated by falsifying his bills;
- The student who decided to go back to Calcutta to apologise to his teacher with whom he had had 'a heated discussion';
- The husband and wife who decided to make a new start in their life together; and the husband who decided that he should start praying with his wife, 'because families that pray together stay together';
- The fork-lift truck driver who decided to give Rs 50 a month to the MRA centre at Panchgani from his monthly wages; and the worker who decided to give Rs 25 a month to the work of MRA;
- The man who apologised for his feelings against the British; and the Englishman who responded in Hindi saying, 'We have made many mistakes in your country.'

From the conference, an international group of participants was invited to a reception by the Tata Workers' Union at the union headquarters. The union's President, Mr VG Gopal welcomed them, and they then addressed several

hundred union members. The group also addressed students at the Regional Institute of Technology, and students and teachers at the Co-operative College.

Not only the furnaces but the hope of a better tomorrow keep the flames of the steel city burning.

**Michael Smith**



**Kiran and Niru Gandhi, who helped to initiate the conference.** Mr Gandhi works in the management of Telco where he has been responsible for training. Last year, the company granted him six months' leave on half pay so that he could devote his time to the programme of Moral Re-Armament in Jamshedpur.

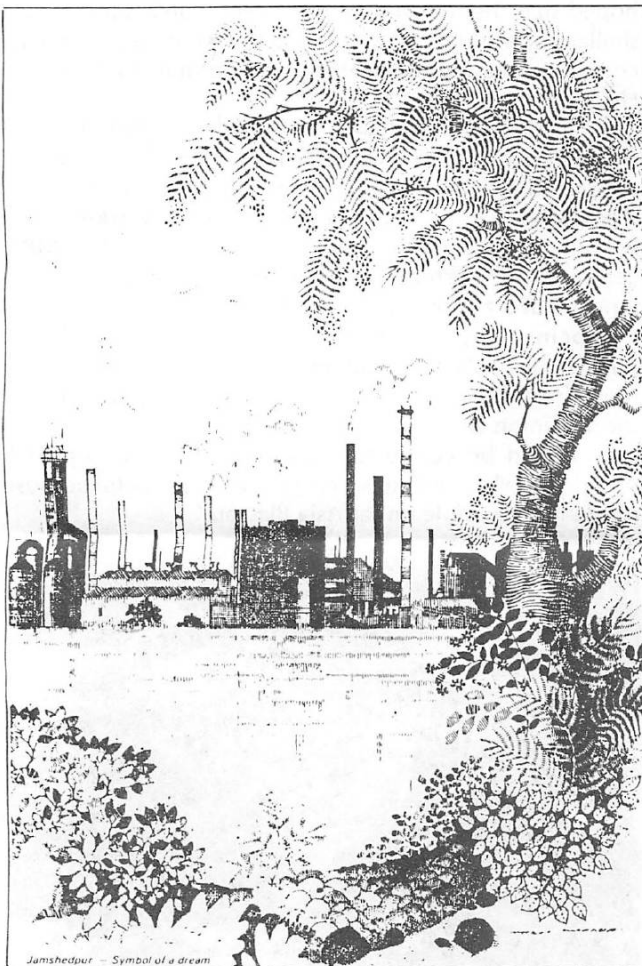
**RAHUL KAPADIA** from Bombay recently returned to India after spending a year working with MRA in Australia. He writes:

## Australian year

YOUNG PEOPLE FROM SEVEN countries took part in a 'Studies in effective living' course at the MRA centre in Melbourne, Australia, from 23 January to 16 April last year. I was the ninth recipient of a bursary given by the Shop Assistants' Union of Western Australia that enables a person from a 'Third World' nation to participate in these three-month courses. The other participants came from Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan.

The first phase of the course consisted of lectures, study sessions, practical workshops, sport, films and visits to local families. We studied such topics as 'the rich-poor gap', the Middle East and the arms race. During Phase Two we visited other parts of Australia. Whether it was having tea in the Federal Parliament with the Aviation Minister or going into the bowels of the earth to see how coal is extracted, each encounter gave us the chance to understand what other people felt. We told them what we were learning.

During the course, the conviction grew in me that united families are the basis of a united nation. I decided to write to my mother and brothers, and to apologise for nursing jealousy and anger against them. This was my first visit out of India. After deciding to accept my country as she is while having a positive vision of what she is meant to be, I began to develop a great love for India. My third discovery was that I could write down thoughts that God gives during early morning times of quiet. I have begun to see more clearly what plan He has for my life. ■



Jamshedpur - Symbol of a dream

**Jamshedpur.** The artist, Mario Maranda, illustrated 'The creation of wealth', RM Lala's best-selling book about the Tata enterprises.

# IN THE HOME OF MOTHER TERESA

IT IS OFFICIALLY a day of prayer and reflection: visitors are not supposed to enter. But as I have to catch a plane back to Bombay in the evening, the sister in the white saree with a blue-striped border gives us special dispensation. We pass through the tiny wooden doorway into the forecourt, and quickly up the stairs to the first floor. As we enter, the children come running to us, gather round and hold us by the hand—a loving welcome from children who know the meaning of love at Shishu Bhavan, the Home for the Children.

There is row after row of wooden cots, and in one a tiny week-old baby warmly wrapped in a blanket. The other children—one, two and three years old—are playing with toys. I ask a young woman in the corner, with a child on her knee, 'Where are you from?' 'Dublin,' she replies. She had come two weeks ago, 'But I was here in 1980,' she says with evident pride.

We saw 150 children in Shishu Bhavan, and upstairs there were a further 90 tiny babies whom we could not see: there was a disease in the ward, we were told. They are 'unwanted' children—children of unmarried mothers or of those who cannot afford another mouth to feed. Many of them are mentally retarded.

But none of them is unwanted here. The children radiate the tangible atmosphere of love and care. I find it intensely moving.

As we leave Shishu Bhavan, a small group of Sisters in the forecourt are slitting open several large sacks of rice. On each sack is stamped in large letters, 'A gift from the people of the United States of America'.

## Headquarters

A few hundred yards further down AJC Road we come to No 54. It is the headquarters of Mother Teresa's Mission of Charity. The entrance is down a side alley.

We arrive at the same time as a smartly dressed woman in a red and white saree, carrying a huge bunch of flowers. She pulls at a chain on the timber door which rings a bell on the other side. We are let in. Yes, Mother Teresa is upstairs, but she is conducting a service—please wait. Shortly, a sister asks if we would like to go up and watch the service.

We take off our shoes before entering a long, unfurnished room with mats covering the floor. It is the Chapel. Several rows of sisters in plain white sarees are kneeling, their backs to us as we enter. We kneel at the back of the room.

Mother Teresa is immediately distinguishable. She is slightly stooped and is the only one wearing a grey cardigan over her saree. It is a commissioning service for 45 new novices to her Order. She puts her hand on the left shoulder of each novice in turn, says a prayer and hands them each a prayer book wrapped in brown manila paper, which they kiss as they accept it from her. They are young women from all over India. Some look almost matter-of-fact during the occasion—it is, after all, their calling. Others are noticeably moved by the significance of the moment.

Outside, the cacophony of Calcutta's traffic below the open windows continues unabated—a sharp reminder of



the world out there to which these fledgling Sisters of Charity have a specific calling. But inside there remains serenity. Such courage in these young women—like so many Joan of Arcs. Father, forgive my lack-lustre heart.

After the service, Mother Teresa hands round to each of them a rosary, a cross to pin onto their sarees, a postcard of the Madonna—and a Mackintosh's toffee! The large tin of sweets is, of course, a gift.

She talks privately to the woman with the bunch of flowers. Then she comes to talk to the six of us, strangers to each other who have called to pay our respects. She asks where we are from: we come from America, Germany, Britain and India. I hand her a pack of postcards—a humble gift from my wife and me. They are cards which my wife has designed and bear the Gandhian slogan, 'There is enough in the world for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed.' Mother Teresa reads it out loud so that everyone gets it. 'This will feed people,' she says. There are 90 cards in the pack, I inform her. 'Oh, but we are 273 here,' she rejoins, smiling. Perhaps she could give them to the new novices? She says she will.

I show her a photograph of my wife and our baby daughter. 'Oh, a baby!' she exclaims. She puts her hand on the picture of our 16-month-old daughter and says, 'God bless!'

Mother Teresa asks which part of London I come from. 'Wimbledon.'

'We have three places in London,' she says. 'You must go and visit our people there—and you'll be able to get others to help. People are so hungry for love.' How keen she is to make sure that I am useful to God!

Below in the courtyard, the new novices are singing, laughing and clapping to the music, 'Praise to the Lord and love Him for ever.' Many of them will. They have a two-year initial training, followed by a further six years. One I talk to comes from Mangalore in South India, another from Nagaland in the North-East. There are 40 to 50 new novices every six months, we are told.

Someone has carried out a blackboard into the courtyard. On it is chalked, in a picture of roses, 'Our very hearty congratulations to our dearest sisters.'

Michael Smith

## BRAZIL

# ALTERNATIVE TO PESSIMISM

by Ellen Ostero and Carlos Puig

SITIO SAO LUIZ is a small farm which nestles in the mountains, one-and-a-half hours from Rio de Janeiro. With its swimming pool, football field, gardens and mountain slopes to climb, it is an ideal location for energetic youth. It is the *Brazilian* training centre for Moral Re-Armament.

A five-day youth conference was held here recently which drew 52 participants from north, south and central Brazil, as well as from nine other countries. They came from widely varied backgrounds: from luxury suburbs and from favelas (shanty towns).

'What do you expect from the youth conference?' was the first question answered by the participants. Most wanted to understand themselves and others better in order to learn to help people. Some less serious, but nonetheless honest, characters said they had come to have a good time and make new friends. They found more than they had bargained for!

The conference programme consisted of meetings interspersed with sports, film shows, music, games, sketches, handicrafts, a Bible study, and work in the garden. One morning a trumpet woke everyone at 5 am to hike up the mountain for a time of quiet with God.

Participants were divided into four teams who shared the practical work, and also functioned as more intimate discussion groups. Here they began to talk about their personal problems.

## Family

Many came from divided families. In the small home of Marcelo, for example, the mother and three sisters never talked to the father and himself. As the conference progressed, Marcelo began to see steps he could take that might change this. Later when he returned home he had an honest talk with his father. His father called the family together to talk things out and they were reconciled.

Ana Inês, one of the conference organisers and a university student, comes from one of Rio's largest slums. She said, 'I know when I go back home I will find that someone from our community has been assassinated by one of the gangs. I don't know what to do to help. Only four from our *favela* are here and even we live on opposite sides of the dividing line that the gangs have created. If we cross that line we're in danger of being killed. What can I do?' At the end of the conference, Ana Inês and her three friends met Luiz and Edir Pereira. As president of a federation of 14 favelas in Rio, Pereira's action has answered violence and brought dignified living to many thousands of *favelados*.



At work in the vegetable garden

The four asked the Pereiras to help them in their *favela*.

At a meeting on reconciliation, Ana Inês' fiancé, *Ernani*, said that he used to hate his father for having abandoned the family. A time of quiet with God had helped him to recognise that hate was never justified. He knew God was asking him to apologise to his father and to forgive him. When he found the courage to do so, the result was a new relationship. Now, rather than fight things out, they talk things out.

After hearing such experiences, several young people decided to put right difficult relationships through apology. One boy spoke of wanting to avoid the pain of life. 'I now realise that my life does not belong to me. I've become reconciled with myself and with God,' he said.

Another theme—conflicts between the generations—was brought to life when a young mother, who had volunteered to help with the conference, began lecturing her son on his greediness. 'It is as difficult for me to stop as it is for you with your cigarettes,' he replied. Soon afterwards, the mother decided to stop smoking when smoking in her bedroom had caused a false fire alarm.

By popular vote, one session separated boys and girls into discussion groups. Subjects included boyfriends, girlfriends, parents, trust and mistrust, and parental control. A young mother explained why fear sometimes ran parents, 'When you're older experience has taught you what can happen. You don't control your natural instincts. I wish I had used my time and energies when I was young to study and to be more creative.'

Several parents came to the final meeting. As they heard about the preceding days, there were often tears of laughter as well as emotion. One father spoke for all when he said, 'Materialism in the West and materialism in the East have made the youth of today pessimistic. But here, during your conference, young people have been discovering an alternative, a new spirit that other young people, and all of us, are looking for.'

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