

## SPIRITUAL BATTERIES RECHARGED

"Can something vital come from ruin, war and suffering?" This question was focused at a two and a half day forum in Croatia entitled: 'To ask for forgiveness and to forgive'. The seminar brought together people from Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia, and from further afield. It was organised by the Catholic Mali Tecaj-Cursillo Training Centre and the Islamic Community of Croatia in conjunction with the MRA Conference Centre at Caux.

It began with an introduction by the four signatories of the invitation letter, Father Andrija Vrane from the Cursillo Centre; Ševko Omerbašić, Mufti of the Islamic Community of Croatia; Mgr Mato Zovkic, Vicar General of the Sarajevo Archdiocese; and a representative of MRA. Then the participants were welcomed by Bishop J Jeserinac of the Diocese of Zagreb, who underlined that 'forgiveness is not always spontaneous, sometimes it is heroic'.

Over 70 Croatians took part – representatives of the different communities, professors, two Members of Parliament, people from business and industry, doctors, diplomats, lawyers and artists.

Mgr Zovkic drew particular attention to two from Belgrade, one a professor, the other a lawyer, both known for participating in ecumenical gatherings during the war and distancing themselves from the official stand of their Church. Both have been part of the recent demonstrations, through many nights, alongside the students in the streets of Belgrade.

These two moved the participants through their openness and courage in discussion groups, at table and in a public apology where one said: 'We have come to tell you that there is another Serbia, besides the one you know. I have fought what I saw going on, but I have not fought hard enough. For that I ask for your forgiveness.'

The days were enriched by the presence of Dr Jara Moserová, Vice-President of the Czech Senate; Dr H Dessloch, Bavaria's representative to the EU in Brussels; Russian philosopher Prof V Zielinsky; Judge Tarek Ziadé and lawyer Ramez Salamé from Lebanon; David and Alan Channer just back from Cambodia; and French and Swiss friends.

The first day was hosted by the Cursillo in their centre; the second we all were guests at the Islamic Cultural Centre. Each day began with an introduction to silence as a source of understanding reconciliation, first by the Spiritual Director of Đakovo Seminary, Mgr Ivan Seso, next by Mufti Omerbašić. Then Jewish, Muslim and Christian

representatives introduced the theology and practice of forgiveness.

As the hours went by, people listened to each other with increasing depth. Totally unexpected and courageous words were said, words which came from immense suffering and experiences of healing. On Sunday evening, as we met after waving off people to various parts of Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia, one man prayed: 'Jahveh, Allah, Lord, you have visited us today – we thank you!' Many want to continue this dialogue.

Thank you to all who prayed for us during the preparatory weeks and as we met. We hope to produce a brochure about the seminar.

**Durdica Fuckan, Zagreb  
Christoph and Marianne Spreng**

## CATCHING UP WITH GOD IN MOSCOW

Over 60 people crowded the reception room of the Russian Pen Club in Moscow for the launching of Russia's first indigenously-produced MRA book. The 164-page *Paspel Za Bogom* – 'Catching up with God' – comprises an original piece by Russian orientalist, Grigori Pomerants, and edited versions of *Dynamic out of Silence* by the late Theophil Spoerri, and *Out of the Evil Night* by Leif Hovelsen.

Grigori Pomerants and Leif Hovelsen spoke at the launching, which was chaired by Sergei Chugrov, deputy editor of the Russian journal *World Economy and International Relations*. Grigori Pomerants described the 'amazing' spirit he had found at Caux, a spirit, he said, which Russia needed. He paid tribute to the translator of the foreign sections of the book, a woman who had since been murdered by armed robbers. The publisher said that it had been very difficult to produce the book in the present conditions; but 'if we had only managed to produce one copy it would have been a victory'.

Leif Hovelsen said, 'Russia is going through a painful transition. We in the rest of Europe are also struggling to adjust to a fast-integrating world. We need each other. Part of our continent is still living in the grip of hate and violence, revenge and fear, injustice and distrust. I see no way that our continent will grow out of these destructive moulds except through us Europeans learning to forgive, to repent, to restore and to heal historic wounds.'

The capacity audience included prominent theologians and academics, a senior naval officer,

writers, students, businesspeople – an extraordinary cross-section of Moscow life. The meeting was videoed by Russia's Channel 2 TV, who interviewed several people about the book, as did Radio Russia.

**Bryan Hamlin**

#### **FOUND ON THE INTERNET**

A young woman in Buffalo, New York, heard from her sister of the work she is doing in London with the Channers. 'What is MRA?' she asked herself, and turned to the Internet. She received the full text of Rex Dilly's book *Discovering Moral Re-Armament*. Intrigued, she asked her sister if she can also be a co-worker.

**Henry Macnicol**

#### **FOURTH YEAR IN FIJI**

'I will try and be friendly towards Fijians and try not to think bad of them.'

'I've decided to be polite to other races especially Indians, respecting them and their culture and showing them how much I care.'

'I will return the ball pens I have stolen and write letters and cards apologising.'

Three typical responses of senior high school students out of the 10,000 written ones from the MRA programme 'Building Foundations of a Multi-Racial Fiji'. It started its fourth year yesterday. Since 1994, 633 sessions have been held, involving 13,000 students in nearly 40 schools. Over half have had at least four sessions of MRA training.

#### **USA TODAY FEATURES 'HOPE IN THE CITIES'**

*USA Today*, which claims the largest readership in the nation, has carried a major article headlined: 'In Confederate capital, shared history leads to new solutions'. The story, which appeared opposite the editorial page, was written by Christopher Edley, a professor of law at Harvard University who directed the White House review of affirmative action. He writes that 'the inspired leaders of the Richmond-based Hope in the Cities project have discovered that appreciating shared history can be a catalyst to connect communities long divided.' The article resulted from Rob Corcoran's participation in a recent conference, hosted by the Carter Center in Atlanta, for 120 representatives of local and state government, academia and national networks.

On March 14, Hope in the Cities will lead a workshop at the national Stand for Children conference in Washington organized by Caux Jubilee lecturer Marian Wright Edelman. In the following week, the Baltimore region's Call to Community project will be launched. Other opportunities for outreach around the country open up constantly. Meanwhile in Richmond, 40 specially

trained facilitators are leading dialogues throughout the region using the recently completed Call to Community Dialogue Guide and Workbook. For copies of the *USA Today* story or for more information contact the Hope in the Cities office.

**Rob Corcoran**

#### **WIDE MEDIA COVERAGE IN INDIA**

'Towards positive and responsible media', headlined *The Indian Express* last month, reporting on a ten-day visit to India by William Porter, Chairman of the International Communications Forum. The article quoted Porter: 'We need to give more emphasis on the positive aspect of news and this can be done by making media persons conscious of their conscience.' It was written by a Pune journalist who, three years ago, wrote an article attacking Asia Plateau and MRA. The paper's Pune editor admitted to Bill Porter that they had been wrong about MRA and wanted to make amends. The writer of the articles now wants to join the ICF.

Bill was accompanied to India by Mike Smith. They met 12 senior newspaper editors and 25 journalists in New Delhi, Pune and Bombay. Bill spoke to five audiences in New Delhi including students at the Indian Institute of Mass Communications, and a distinguished group of 70 at the India International Centre, chaired by former *Times of India* editor Dileep Padgaonkar. United News of India sent a report of the event to 800 newspapers of all main Indian languages. The New Delhi and Lucknow daily *The Pioneer* carried a major extract of Bill's speech. The paper also carried a 1200-word article by Mike under the headline, 'A vision for India'.

Padgaonkar interviewed Bill for 10 minutes on his New Delhi current affairs TV programme *First Edition* and a full-page interview with Bill appeared in the Bombay tabloid, *Afternoon on Sunday*. BBC TV's South Asia correspondent, Mike Wooldridge, told Bill that he had broadcast a report last year on the 50th anniversary of Caux, on BBC radio.

Bill and Mike were also invited to speak to 138 people from industrial companies attending a leadership training course at Asia Plateau.

#### **SUSPICIONS OVERCOME**

Last month, Foundations for Freedom hosted a second group of ten young Members of the Ukrainian Parliament for a ten-day programme in Britain on 'Making Democracy Work'. As in the 1994 programme, the MPs were introduced to people in public life, with the focus on the human qualities needed to ensure sound democracy.

There was considerable suspicion among the MPs during the first days towards us organisers. Assuming as they did that everyone acts largely out

of profit motive (very much the reality in post-communist Ukraine), what did WE want to gain from their visit? Once they realised that we were hosting the programme because we cared about them and their country, the atmosphere changed. At the end, one of them said, 'We will use our experience here to promote moral values in Ukrainian politics.' A bold statement, hard to implement; but there is desperate need in Ukraine for selfless leadership in an increasingly chaotic political and economic situation.

Meanwhile, in Crimea (which is part of Ukraine), the 13th Visiting Course has just finished.

**Edward Peters**

### **FORGIVENESS FACTOR AT UNITED NATIONS**

Forty-three floors above the sparkling lights of Manhattan in the Dag Hammarskjold Tower (where the residential part of MRA's UN Center is located) 85 people came to a reception last month to launch Michael Henderson's book, *The Forgiveness Factor*. They included United Nations officials; leaders of non-governmental organizations; conflict resolution practitioners; and the UN representative of the Community of St Egidio, which facilitated the Mozambican peace process.

This was one of many events during Michael and Erica's visit to New York. At a luncheon at the MRA apartment, they met two ambassadors whose countries have come through bloody internal conflicts and are now trying to reconcile. Over the meal, each ambassador told of his nation's and his family's suffering, which led on to a moving dialogue between them. It was clear that both want to bring healing. As they left, one said that MRA had taken a great risk in having such an apartment – 'you are so near the UN, all your friends will come to visit you.' We told him we had taken the risk with that very hope!

**Rob Lancaster**

### **SEEKING TO BUILD BRIDGES**

Last month, Israeli and Palestinian friends of MRA received Bryan and Anne Hamlin and their son John in their homes in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Bethlehem. One reception in the home of Palestinian lawyer, George Samaan, included the former Chief Rabbi of Ireland; the Director of the Israeli Interfaith Association; an Archpriest of the Greek Orthodox Church; a former senior official of the International Council of Christians and Jews; and Israeli and Palestinian friends of MRA.

Meetings were held with two members of the Knesset (Israeli parliament); and with the staff of the Yakar Institute, a group of Orthodox rabbis involved in dialogue with Muslim Palestinians through mutual

textual studies of the Koran and Torah. Especially in light of the present increased tensions in that region, it is truly inspiring to see individuals of various faith traditions all seeking to find God's way of building bridges and a real peace for the area.

**Anne Hamlin**

### **REDISCOVERING IN INDONESIA**

An Indonesian version of *Rediscovering Freedom*, by John Lester and Pierre Spoerri, has recently been published by Pustaka Utama Grafiti in Jakarta. The title is Menemukan Kembali Kebebasan.

**David Locke**

### **'THERE IS A FUTURE AFTER ALL!'**

During a week's tour of Britain last month, Michael Henderson spoke about his book *The Forgiveness Factor* to audiences in Oxford, Edinburgh, St Andrews University, Tirley Garth and Liverpool. In Scotland, BBC Radio Forth began its review of the book: 'Here is the news: good news. This book is a record of situations changed by people of courage and goodwill; of hate and prejudice transformed.' The reviewer cited many of the book's stories, and finished by saying, '...the signs are that once guilt is admitted by both sides, forgiveness can be exchanged, and suddenly there is a future after all!'

**David Locke**

### **DOSSIER DEVELOPMENT**

By the end of March a dossier, made up of discussion papers, proposals and background information on the five themes of the Consultation on Participation and Development of People, will be sent to each of the participants. For others who are interested, this dossier is available from John Mills in Adelaide.

Participants in the 19-26 April Consultation will be: Japan, Kiyoshi Nagano; Taiwan, Liu Ren-Jou; Malaysia, Haridas Nair; Korea, Jung Yeon-Yuk; Fiji, Suresh Khatri; New Zealand, Joan Holland, Lynley Brophy; Australia, John Bond, Jean Brown, Chanthanith Chittasy, John Mills, Erik Parsons, Duc Tran, Rob Wood; United States, Randy Ruffin, Catherine Ruffin; Canada, Anne Hartnell; Brazil, Ernesto Veras; United Kingdom, Edward Peters, Kumar Raval, Laura Trevelyan, Jacqui Daukes, Howard Grace; Finland/France, Anja Snellman Orphelin; Croatia, Tomislav Majeric; Switzerland/France, Jean-Marc Duckert; Switzerland, Marianne Spreng, Christine Karrer; Norway, Astrid Eskeland; Nigeria, Robo Orogun; South Africa, Pieter Horn

Participants from India and the rest of Africa are still to be confirmed.

**John Mills Edward Peters**

## WELCOME TO GLASGOW

The 88th World Convention of Rotary International will bring 30,000 Rotarians to Glasgow, 15-18 June. We know that the Chirimbanis from Zimbabwe and Jayant Shah from India will be amongst them. The delegates will have a busy official programme. But if anyone with close friends attending the Convention will let us know, we shall do our best to welcome them and help them in any way we can.

**Tom & Margaret Glen, Lew & Anne Mackay  
Archie & Ruth Mackenzie, Allan & Moira Smith  
Alec & Alison Porter**

## ANYTHING TO DECLARE AT CAUX

Some of us met in London this month to coordinate ideas for the reunion in Caux this summer of all who travelled with Anything to Declare, and their spouses and children. Working with ATD was a formative experience for all involved. We all helped carry Caux through several summer, winter and Easter conferences and many have worked worldwide with MRA on a full-time basis since.

The joy of meeting up with friends made at that time will be immense, and beneficial to us all as grey hairs become apparent and the desire grows to look at the past and digest it maturely. Some things

might have been done differently; but so many things were simply incredible and invaluable. In looking again at this experience we may be led to see that 'sharing one's gifts is the way to illuminate them and make them precious' (Edward J Lavin SJ).

The first requisite is the determination to be there. The second is to see how to make that possible. For some, finance will be a problem. We would like to establish a fund to help them. Anyone who would like to have a part in this venture can contribute to the 'ATD 1997 Fund' through their own MRA national office.

Maarten and I have agreed to coordinate the use of this fund. If there are any queries please address them to me at: Veursestraatweg 53, 2264 EB Leidschendam, Holland (fax:+31 70 3617209).

*Lis de Pous*

## FACTS ON FAXES, PHONES AND ADDRESSES

**Japan:** from March 24, the MRA Tokyo office will have a new address: International MRA Association of Japan, Tokoen Mansion 802, 3-7-5 Ebisuminami, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo, Japan 150.

Tel: +81 3 5721 6861 Fax: +81 3 5724 6880

**London, UK:** please note the correct fax number for Grosvenor Books is +44 171 828 7609. Some faxes are still being sent to the Lyford Road fax.

# Calendar of Events

APR '97	<u>Kano Nigeria</u>	Conference: Africa - pattern of peace and unity	Apr	19 - 25
	<u>Victoria Australia</u>	Global Consultation on 'Participation and the Development of People'	Apr	19 - 26
MAY '97	<u>Boulogne Paris, France</u>	Preparation for Caux 1997	May	8 - 11
	<u>Moldova</u>	'The Search for Freedom', FFF Seminar	May	23 - 25
JUN '97	<u>Minneapolis USA</u>	International Conference at University of Minnesota	Jun	24 - 29
JUL '97	<u>Armagh Melbourne Australia</u>	'Life Matters', nine-day course for young adults	Jul	4 - 13
	<u>Caux Switzerland</u>	The World of Tomorrow - A Dynamic Learning Community	Jul	12 - Aug 24
	<u>Odawara Japan</u>	Asia Pacific Youth Conference (APYC)	Jul	20 - 29
SEP '97	<u>Tirley Garth Britain</u>	FFF International Course	Sep	4 - 23
OCT '97	<u>Kobe Japan</u>	Asia: Dialogue with neighbours	Oct	4 - 5

*The deadline for the next Bulletin is Tuesday, April 15, 1997*

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