

Healing history • Transforming relationships • Building community

# FOR A CHANGE

Volume 12 Number 4

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- *The Verwoerds and the ANC*
- *A new day for Scotland*
- *The sixty minute man*
- *Riots and press freedom in Jamaica*

What has  
**PEOPLE POWER**  
done for  
**POLAND?**





by Alison Wetterfors in Falun, Sweden



**Room for wolves?**

Some months ago a bear killed a sheep two miles from where we live. Slightly disconcerting as we walk in that area sometimes, and a reminder that north of us stretches one of the last wilderness areas in Europe.

Another native that is slowly re-establishing itself, protected by a hunting ban, is the wolf. There are thought to be 40-50 in Sweden.

The Sami people in the far North understandably feel strongly when wolves kill their reindeer. How to reconcile the fragile population of wolves with the lifestyle of us humans? Is there room for such wildlife any more in Europe? I would like to think so, but finding the balance is not easy.

**Room for Samis?**

Speaking of Samis, Sweden's indigenous population numbers about 10,000. It is not always easy to marry their interests with those of the majority. Although Sweden played an active role in forming the International Convention for the Rights and Freedoms of Indigenous Peoples, it has not yet itself qualified for membership.

A former Minister of Sami Affairs has made a long-overdue public apology to the Samis for the way they have been treated by the authorities in the past. Some Samis feel passionately that this should be followed by more assertive action to help them.

**Perspectives on tragedy**

When the ferry *Estonia* sank on her way from Tallinn to Stockholm in September 1994, 852 lives were lost. The tragedy left no-one here untouched.

The controversy over whether or not to raise the ship and recover the bodies highlighted the different experiences of Sweden and Estonia over the past century.

In the tradition of regarding the sea as a grave, Finland and Estonia took early decisions to leave the ship where it was. The Swedish government came to the same decision only recently, no doubt because of pressure from victims' relatives.

An old Estonian lady, who lost two of her family on the ferry, commented, 'We have suffered and lost thousands of loved ones buried in unknown graves in Siberia. They will never return home.'

**Not a matter of size**

In an emotional speech to the Swedish Parliament during his farewell visit as South African President, Nelson Mandela paid tribute to the Nordic countries for their part in bringing an end to apartheid.

He told Sweden, 'You made a contribution out of all proportion to your size.'

One incident typified the warmth of the link between the two countries—when Mandela and his wife were greeted by a choir singing African songs at the entrance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they broke into a spontaneous dance.

**Doing it all?**

In this most egalitarian of countries it was a surprise to read that only four per cent of the top managerial positions are held by women. This lags behind the European average of 20-30 per cent. Why?

A central reason is Lutheran

ethics, according to Anna Wahl, a researcher at the Stockholm School of Economics. Women in Sweden still try to handle everything at home themselves without paid help (though, one should hasten to add, many men do their bit too).

But things are changing with the realization that there are some who would be glad of this work.

**Environmentally friendly**

The love of nature expresses itself in many ways. In our town we sort our garbage—oh no, not just your usual bottle banks and paper pick-up points, but also in our homes. Red bags for paper, black for compost, and any other colour for tin and plastic.

Our area has its own compost-making machine. From it we receive good compost for our patch of garden. The only problem is that the system costs more because of all the collecting and sorting.

**A little flag-waving**

OK, I admit it. I watched the Eurovision song contest this year. And rising to the top of the mediocre pile, Sweden amazingly won, 25 years after Abba. They blazed the way for the Swedish music industry, which is now the third largest in the world.

Swedish artistic talent abounds in many fields. I am continually impressed (as a non-Swede) by just how much there is in a country with a population smaller than London's.







Cover: Poland today  
Photo: Rex Features

# FOR A CHANGE

- closes the circle between faith and action, action and faith. It is for anyone, anywhere, who wants to make a difference to the world.

**FOR A CHANGE** believes

- that in a world torn by ancient hatreds, the wounds of history can be healed.
- that in the family and the workplace, relationships can be transformed.
- that in urban jungle or rural backwater, community can be built.
- that peace, justice and the survival of the planet depend on changes in attitudes as well as structures.

**FOR A CHANGE**

- draws its material from a wide range of sources and was born out of the experience of Moral Re-Armament.

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

### The Cardinal who pointed us to the best

Cardinal Basil Hume, the Archbishop of Westminster, died on 17 June mourned not just by Britain's Roman Catholics but by many of different faiths and of none.

He was in a sense a 'reluctant' Archbishop. As the relatively unknown Benedictine Abbot of Ampleforth, he was appalled when his name was first mooted: 'Me Archbishop?' he said. 'Don't be so ridiculous! I'd make a lousy archbishop.'

Yet his sense of obedience was greater than his love of the life of a monk. He thus suddenly found himself not only the leader of the Roman Catholics of England and Wales but a voice of faith and conscience for the country—'a towering figure in the moral landscape of Britain', to quote the Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks.

'It was because people recognized that he was full of love and humility that they felt... that he was a man of special value to them,' commented William Rees-Mogg in *The Times*. Indeed, his was a leadership born of devotion to God rather than confidence in his own abilities. In its obituary, *The Times* wrote: 'His diffident but powerful personality became firmly impressed on the public consciousness...'

'Throughout his life he was more fearful of praise than criticism,' said John Crowley, the Bishop of Middlesbrough, giving the sermon at Hume's funeral: 'To a friend whose virtues were being over-sung in his hearing he remarked, "Enjoy that, but don't inhale please!"'

For his funeral, Cardinal Hume chose a reading from the Book of Wisdom (Chapter 13, verses 1-9). *The Independent* writer Paul Vallely described it as 'a paean to the God responsible for a world of beauty, with a sting-in-the-tale (sic) admonition for those who see the former and fail to make the connection to the God who made it'.

Crowley commented, 'It is a very strong passage, reflecting the Cardinal's deep and growing concern that the judgement on our age might finally be: "We were clever but not wise. If they had the power to know so much that they could investigate the world, how did they fail to find sooner the Lord of these things."'

One of Cardinal Hume's last remarks was: 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven—that's the only thing which really matters. What God wants for us is what is best for us.' It is the clue to how to bridge the gap between cleverness and the wisdom which we so badly need if we are to make a go of this world of ours.

Kenneth Noble

## CONTENTS

### 4 LEAD STORY

Ten years after the people reclaimed Eastern and Central Europe, Mike Lowe revisits Poland, where it all began.

### 12 PROFILES

Who would have thought a Verwoerd would sit in the South African Parliament for the ANC? William Smook meets Wilhelm and Melanie Verwoerd.

### 16 Rob Parsons, founder of Care for the Family, talks to Kenneth Noble about finding time for one's children.

### 14 SCOTLAND

After 292 years, Scotland has its own parliament—and it's going to do things differently, Campbell Leggat discovers.

### 24 GUEST COLUMN

April's riots in Jamaica threw a spotlight on the media's role, believes Martin Henry.

9 Update	20 Newsdesk
10 People	21 Letters
18 Bookmark	22 A different accent
19 Review	23 Reflections

### A NOTE ON MORAL RE-ARMAMENT

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

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





Pope John Paul II revisits Gdansk this June.

# What has **PEOPLE POWER** done for **POLAND?**

Mike Lowe revisits Poland, ten years after its return to democracy.



'Poland's GDP was forecast to be up 21 per cent in 1999.'



**H**istory will surely record 1989 as one of the most remarkable outbreaks of democracy the world has ever seen. The toppling of defunct communist regimes across Central and Eastern Europe (see box page 6) gathered pace through what has been dubbed the 'autumn of the peoples'.

Two years later a failed coup attempt in Moscow led to the break-up of the Soviet Union itself and moves towards multi-party democracy in most of its constituent republics. The end of the Cold War rippled out throughout the world, facilitating movement towards democracy in South Africa, Ethiopia and Latin America.

At the heart of these changes was Poland, a country I have come to regard as a

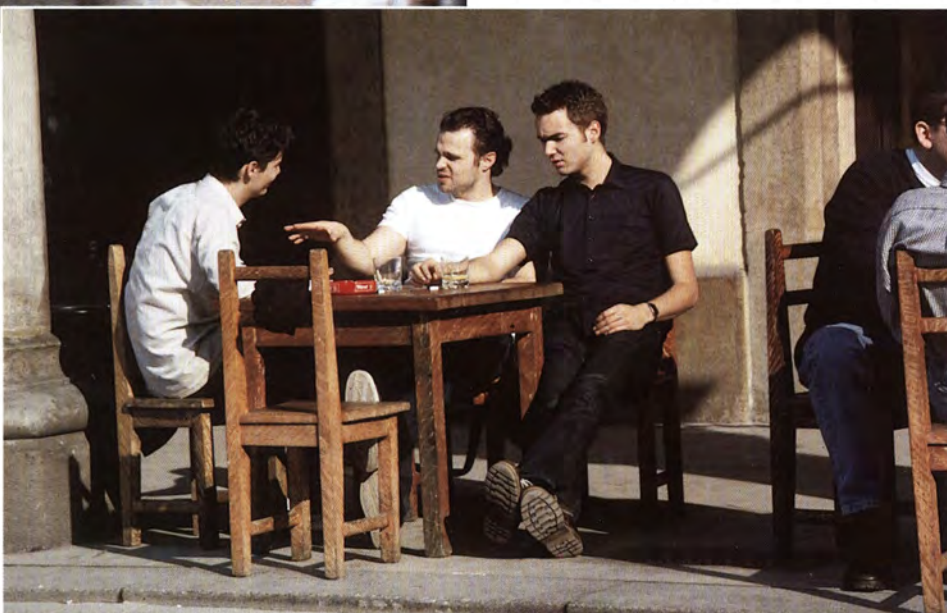
the changes have meant there. Seen from the perspective of 1989, they are little short of miraculous.

The former headquarters of the Communist Party is now the Warsaw Stock Exchange. The old grey drabness has been completely transformed by entrepreneurship and a host of new skyscrapers is rising, just one sign of the huge investment that has been pouring in. Poland's Gross Domestic Product was forecast to be up 21 per cent in 1999, putting her economic growth ahead of all other transition economies.

A few weeks before I arrived, President Kwasniewski had ratified the North Atlantic treaty, formally joining Poland to NATO, in the same hall that the Warsaw Pact had been signed half a century earlier. It was a symbolic completion of the long tortuous circle since Poland found itself on the wrong side of the Iron Curtain after World War II.

On my first visit to Poland a friend in Krakow invited me to walk the six-day pilgrimage to Czestochowa with her and 10,000 others. These pilgrimages to the icon of the Black Madonna, believed by the devout to have saved the Polish nation at various times of crisis, have a long tradition. But since the banning of the Solidarity trade union in December 1981 and the introduction of martial law, the pilgrimages had taken on a new urgency. On the final day we joined the half-million who had come from all corners of Poland and walked triumphantly along the tree-lined avenue that led to the shrine. Out came the sun and out too came the Solidarity banners. In Poland, religion and politics were closely linked.

The process of change can be traced to 1979, when John Paul II first returned to his homeland as Pope. His words, 'There is no history of Poland without Christ,' had a cataclysmic effect. A friend in Warsaw recalls seeing men of 50 with hardened granite faces crumpling into tears. The following year a strike in a Gdansk shipyard gave



'Seen from the perspective of 1989, the changes are little short of miraculous.'

second home. I first visited the country in 1986 and in the early Nineties lived there for a year. In April I returned to assess what



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birth to Solidarity. Its demands went far beyond better working conditions or more pay: Solidarity was from the first a struggle for the soul of the nation. The workers carried pictures of the Pope and sang, 'Poland is not yet lost'. Support was so broad that in 1980 up to a million Communist Party members joined Solidarity—without leaving the Party.

Because of this breadth of support, Solidarity proved impossible to crush even though its leadership was rounded up and imprisoned with ruthless efficiency. Since

the mid-Seventies there had been an unofficial alliance between Poland's secular intelligentsia and the Church on the basis of fighting for truth, human dignity and defence of human rights. The birth of Solidarity extended that alliance to the workers and after the imposition of martial law the whole movement sheltered under the wings of the Church—though even that couldn't protect Fr Jerzy Popieluszko, a charismatic young priest who was brutally murdered by the police in 1984 for his pointed preaching on human dignity. His church in a suburb of Warsaw still carries an exhibition which testifies to the struggles of the Eighties.

I recall the conversations I had in '86 and '87 with members of the Catholic Intelligentsia Club in Krakow and Warsaw. We talked then of the kind of society we dreamed of—one which valued simple hon-

esty, where solidarity with one's fellow citizens was a reality not a slogan, a society which rewarded merit not cronyism. These dreams were deeply rooted both in Christian tradition and in Central European humanism.

Lech Walesa paid tribute to this in May 1989 when he received an award from the Council of Europe: 'Solidarity is a trade union, but it is also an instrument which fights without bloodshed for trade union and citizens' rights and the protection of human rights... I am convinced that respect for human rights and human dignity reflects a great and living Christian heritage in Europe, and a great and living heritage of humanism. Thus the believer and the non-believer can be found next to each other in the respect for human rights and in the fight to guarantee those rights.'

**R**eturning ten years later, I asked Adam Szostkiewicz, Political Editor of the weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny*, what had happened to that legacy. 'Our new democracy means our agendas are set day by day and we tend to overlook the deeper questions of where we are going,' he replied. Although he treasures the heritage of the Eighties he doesn't mourn its passing, seeing this as the price that must be paid for living in a 'normal' democratic country. 'The kind of conversations we used to have in the

Hugh Nowell



**Margueritte:**

**Danger of an increasing gulf between rich and poor**

## 1989: year of the people

**15 January, Prague:** 4,000 demonstrate in Wenceslas Square to commemorate Jan Palach, who burnt himself alive in protest against the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

**6 February, Poland:** Round-table talks begin between the government, Solidarity and the Church.

**11 February, Hungary:** Central Committee of the Communist Party accepts the principle of a multi-party system.

**9 March, Vilnius:** 15,000 attend rally for Lithuanian independence.

**22 March, Hungary:** Eight opposition groups meet to work out a common platform for negotiations with the Communist Party.

**26 March, Soviet Union:** First ever contested elections in the Soviet Union, for new 2,250-member Congress of People's Deputies. A third of the regional Communist Party leaders fail to win seats.

**5 April, Poland:** Round-table talks conclude with legalization of Solidarity and agreement on free elections in June.

**4 June, Poland:** Solidarity wins 99 per cent of seats in Senate and all available seats in the Sejm (lower house), although the round-table agreement guarantees the communists a two-thirds majority. Negotiations begin about forming a government.

**4 June, Beijing:** Troops open fire on

demonstrators in Tiananmen Square.

**13 June, Hungary:** Round-table talks between government and opposition begin.

**22 August, Lithuania:** Parliamentary commission declares the 1940 annexation of the country by the Soviet Union illegal.

**23 August, Baltic States:** Pro-independence demonstrators in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania form a 540-km human chain from Tallinn to Vilnius.

**24 August, Poland:** Tadeusz Mazowiecki of Solidarity is appointed prime minister.

**11 September, Hungary:** The government allows East German refugees to cross the border into Austria.

**12 September, Poland:** Solidarity gets most of the posts in the new government, although communists retain key Interior and Defence ministries.

**18 September, Hungary:** Round-table talks conclude with agreement on free elections in March 1990.

**27 September, Slovenia:** Declares independence from Yugoslavia, with free elections in April.

**30 September, East Germany:** Leadership allows refugees camped in the West German Embassy in Prague to travel by train via East Germany to the West.

**4 October, Dresden:** Police use force to prevent people boarding the sealed train

carrying refugees from Prague to the West.

**7 October, Hungary:** Communist Party dissolves itself and reforms as the Hungarian Socialist Party. Membership drops to 45,000 by the end of November, compared to over 800,000 a year before.

**9 October, Leipzig:** 50,000 demonstrate, sparking off demonstrations across East Germany.

**18 October, East Germany:** Hard-line East German leader Erich Honecker ousted by Communist Party after reportedly ordering security forces to fire on demonstrators. Replaced by security chief, Egon Krenz.

**23 October, Leipzig:** Hundreds of thousands demonstrate for democratic reform.

**25 October, Soviet Union:** Gorbachev announces the 'Sinatra Doctrine': the Soviet Union will allow other Warsaw Pact countries to 'do it their way'.

**4 November, Bulgaria:** Eco-glasnost movement organizes a protest calling for democratic reform.

**9 November, East Berlin:** Krenz announces that citizens who apply will be given permission to travel to the West. Rumours circulate that the Berlin Wall will be opened and thousands gather at its checkpoints: by midnight it is open. East German leadership announces radical reforms.



Eighties are no longer possible because now we are divided by politics.'

When the first free elections were held on 4 June 1989, Solidarity won all but one of the seats available in both upper and lower houses. This remarkable unity came as a surprise to everyone. The film director Andrzej Wajda, who had just been elected to the Senate, remarked: 'Polish society, often badly assessed by itself and its leaders, has proved itself better and much more mature than we thought.' People recall mentally dividing society into 'us' (the people) and 'them' (the communist leadership) and feeling that Solidarity represented 'us'.

After 1989, Solidarity broke up. Szostkiewicz says this was inevitable. 'If there was a consensus in the Eighties, it was on the basis of human rights, democracy, independence. More detailed questions of, for example, the economy, were not raised—we always said it wasn't the right time to discuss them. We didn't predict that Communism would go when it did.'

He feels that to some extent the unity of the Eighties was based on the luxury of not having responsibility—ultimately it didn't matter what opinions people had about the economy because they weren't in power. 'Obviously when you *do* rather than just *talk* you make mistakes. Today there are real choices to be made and I would much rather

## Szostkiewicz:

'When you *do* rather than just *talk* you make mistakes.'



Mike Lowe

be in this position than what we had before.'

Szostkiewicz says that the Pope has come to embody Poland's 'soul-searching' in a way which has absolved the political class from this role. 'Each time the Pope comes people wake up to discuss what is left of our heritage,' he says. 'It is not an ideal solution—we should be asking this kind of question for ourselves.'

In 1991 the Pope warned Poles that they could either 'take the last place among societies of consumption or realize a great ideal by linking the free market with solidarity'. Bernard Margueritte, a French journalist who has lived in Poland for over 25 years, feels that Poles have opted for the former. 'The new ruling elite has only a very vague and mythic view of what a free market means and how it is that Western democracies function,' he says. 'When one takes into account

how thoroughly communism atomized Polish society, killing any sense of togetherness or community, one begins to understand how this idealized view of capitalism, with its cult of the rugged loner, can wreak havoc on what remains of the social fabric.'

Margueritte is one of many I spoke to who felt that Poland was in danger of going the way of Latin America, with an increasing gulf between rich and poor. Up to 15 per cent of the population have attained levels of wealth unthinkable a decade ago, while 40 per cent still languish on the poverty line.

Unlike some other transition economies, most of this wealth has been created honestly. Poles are regularly shocked by revelations of corruption in the press, but it is not endemic. One of the great achievements of the last ten years has been the building of trustworthy institutions, such as the banking sector, which underpin much of the

**10 November, East Berlin:** Hundreds of thousands cross into West.

**10 November, Bulgaria:** Communist leader Todor Zhivkov is replaced by former Foreign Minister Peter Mladenov, who agrees to round-table discussions and free elections.

**17 November, Prague:** Hundreds injured when riot police break up a student demonstration.

**19 November, Prague:** Opposition groups form Civic Forum led by dissident playwright Vaclav Havel. They call for a two-hour general strike on 27 November.

**20 November, Prague:** Havel addresses 200,000 demonstrators in Wenceslas Square.

**24 November, Prague:** Central Committee of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party resigns. Huge crowds celebrate.

**25 November, Prague:** New Central Committee is announced which includes many hard-liners. Civic Forum declares the planned general strike to be a 'symbolic referendum' on support for the regime.

**27 November, Czechoslovakia:** Country comes to a standstill as majority observe general strike.

**29 November, Prague:** Parliament introduces constitutional change ending the domination by the Communist Party and announces a commission to investigate police actions on 17 November.

**6 December, East Germany:** Krenz is replaced by Manfred Gerlach, leader of the Liberal Democrats.

**16-17 December, Timisoara, Romania:** Seventy-three killed when security forces fire on protesters.

**20 December, Timisoara:** 50,000 protest against government violence. Most troops refuse orders to fire.

**21-22 December, Bucharest:** Mass rally called by Romanian leader Nicolae Ceausescu turns against him. Ceausescu

flees in his private helicopter.

**23 December, Romania:** National Salvation Front is formed. Fighting leads to over 1,000 deaths in next few days.

**25 December, Bucharest:** Ceausescu is arrested, tried and executed along with his wife and son.

Mike Lowe



1989—the end of the Berlin Wall

Rex Features



What has  
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done for  
**POLAND?**

economic success.

Jacek Sygutowski is typical of many of the new entrepreneurs. After graduating from the Warsaw Polytechnic in electrical engineering he worked for a variety of firms before being head-hunted for a position with the main IBM dealer in Poland. With the experience he gained there, he was able to start his own computer business which has done well—though not without struggle.

When I knew Sygutowski in the early Nineties he was holding down both a full-time and a part-time job, whilst simultaneously finishing his Masters thesis and raising a young family. Nevertheless he reports that all his friends from college days have been able to buy their own apartments—no mean feat in a country where it is virtually impossible to borrow money for this purpose. For his parents' generation it has been a different story. His father-in-law, a construction engineer, has hardly worked in recent years.

In the early Nineties many of Poland's big traditional industries went bankrupt including the Gdansk shipyard, birthplace of Solidarity, now rescued but a shadow of its former self. These factories now stand empty, so-called 'monuments to communism'. Professor Andrzej Stelmachowski, who was part of the 1989 round-table talks between the government and Solidarity, admits that the workers in these factories may have cause to feel betrayed. 'These people who were at the heart of the struggle for changes have paid the highest price,' he says.

It is hard to see how things could have been different—the collapse of traditional markets to the east and the flood of Western imports meant that factories starved of investment over decades simply couldn't compete. But Janusz Witkowski, a former factory director who never joined the Communist Party (a rare achievement in his day), feels that some of these factories could have been saved.

'After 1989 the old Party bosses took over industry and bled the factories to

death,' he says. 'Although the government gave power to the workers' councils—mostly Solidarity-dominated and good men—these were ignorant of management issues. The managers hoodwinked them by, for example, persuading the factory to put its purchasing into the hands of an independent contractor, who was in reality a crony of the manager—in some cases even his wife. In this way the circles of cronies accumulated vast fortunes while the factories died.'

**S**uch issues fire the debate over how to deal with the past. From the start, Witkowski says, 'we wanted to identify those who had supported the communist regime out of cowardice or for personal gain—not to punish them, although those who were guilty of crimes such as murder should stand trial, but simply to know who was who.' It is only now, after ten years, that a commission has been set up to examine the pasts of those who hold public office.

Szostkiewicz points out that there just hasn't been a good time until now to tackle this issue. 'Immediately after '89, under Mazowiecki, we weren't strong enough—the communists still had control of the Army and Ministry of the Interior. After that we had internal struggles between Mazowiecki and Walesa and then in '94 the former communists (SLD) won the elections so another four years were lost.'

Szostkiewicz suspects that in spite of the commission it is now too late to address these issues. In any case, the former Solidarity politicians have not all been whiter than white. After four years of SLD government, during which there were various scandals and allegations of cronyism, an ugly slogan went around Solidarity circles which roughly translates as 'Now it's our \*\*\*\*ing turn!'

Today the problems Poland wrestles with have a boringly familiar ring to a Westerner: Reforms to the welfare system, in health and education. The struggle to keep inflation down and the budget balanced. And at a deeper level, the problem of how to bridge the gulf between ordinary people and a political class which seems remote to their concerns. It would be a pity, I reflect, if all those noble dreams and courageous struggles end up with debates about the economy and the trivial pursuits of the consumer society.

Szostkiewicz says it is too early to pass judgement on the new Poland. 'What we see



The Gdansk shipyard in the Eighties—many traditional industries collapsed after the arrival of democracy.

now is the surface pop culture, which is not always appealing. But there is more. Many young people are out there collecting for the refugees from Kosovo. And there are still many who go to church—of their own free choice not for any political or social reasons.'

Coming here as a young man in the Eighties, I responded to a sense of purpose and the moral vision which seemed to be missing in the West. I was always aware that mine was a privileged position—I was materially comfortable and could afford to travel. I had always hoped that there might be a third way, somewhere between the free-market consumerism of the West and the Utopian socialism of the East.

On his most recent, and possibly his last, visit to his homeland in June, the Pope addressed the Polish Parliament. He urged them not to forget the moral lessons of Solidarity and warned of the risks of 'an alliance between democracy and ethical relativism.... As history demonstrates, a democracy without values easily turns into open or thinly disguised totalitarianism....'

'The events of ten years ago in Poland created an historic opportunity for the continent of Europe, having abandoned ideological barriers once and for all, to find again the path towards unity,' the Pope continued. 'If we wish Europe's new unity to last, we must build on the basis of the spiritual values which were once its foundation, keeping in mind the wealth and diversity of the cultures and traditions of individual nations.'

My personal wish for Poland echoes this vision. Standing at the crossroads of Europe, Poland has a special vocation as bridge between East and West, which is already partly realized. As we enter the next millennium Poland must decide whether or not to remain true to its heritage. ■

Rex Features



**The Pope:**  
**'Democracy without values easily turns into totalitarianism.'**



# What happens after you say sorry?

**John Bond** describes progress towards healing a deep hurt in the soul of Australia.

**T**wo years ago, a national enquiry presented its report to the Australian Government. It had looked into the effects of removing Aboriginal children from their families, a practice which went on for 150 years into the 1970s and aimed to assimilate Aborigines into Western culture. The report, *Bringing them home*, exposed the immense harm this policy had caused.

The Government received the report with little enthusiasm. But the reaction in the Australian community was very different. According to the Associated Press correspondent in Canberra, it was the biggest news story of the year. Soul-searching discussion went on for months, culminating in a national Sorry Day when hundreds of thousands apologized to the 'stolen generations'—as those who were removed are now known (see *FAC* Vol 11 No 1).

This massive expression of community empathy touched the hearts of many who have suffered as a result of the removal policies. As one woman—who had been removed from her family, and whose children had been removed from her—said on ABC TV, 'At last we are coming back into the family.'

This year the stolen generations responded by launching a Journey of Healing 'for all who want to help the healing process among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, and in the relationship between us'.

As with Sorry Day, events took place all over Australia, developed by small groups, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, who enlisted others, raised the money and organized publicity.

Most cities chose a procession to symbolize the launch. In Adelaide, a thousand people walked to forgotten places such as the site of Piltawodli, an Aboriginal school opened by German missionaries in 1839. School children sang there in the local Aboriginal language, perhaps for the first time since 1845, when troops demolished the buildings and the children were moved to an English school which banned their language.

In other city centres, hundreds took part in colourful processions, beginning and ending with commemorations. Many suburbs, country towns and rural centres organized their own events, as did hundreds of schools, churches and community organizations. There was plenty of music, with two new CDs launched. And two national TV stations

screened programmes about the Journey.

On Sorry Day the focus was on the removal policies. This year the media also carried stories of the foster parents to whom the children went, and of the pain and joy of separated families linking up. Medical journals got involved too, with articles aimed at helping doctors better understand the continuing effects of the removals.

There is a long way still to be travelled. Health and social statistics show that many Aboriginal people are still alienated and in despair. Many of the recommendations of *Bringing them home* have yet to be implemented. But Aboriginal leaders say that since Sorry Day they have noticed an increased respect for Aboriginal people among the general community.

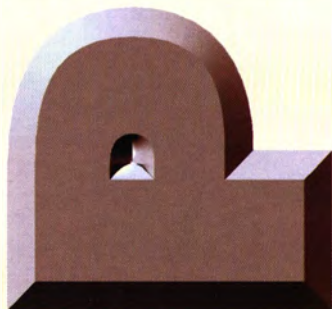
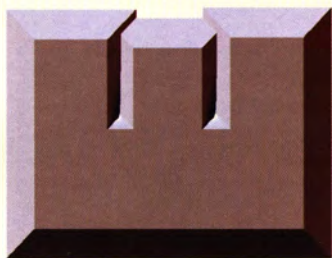
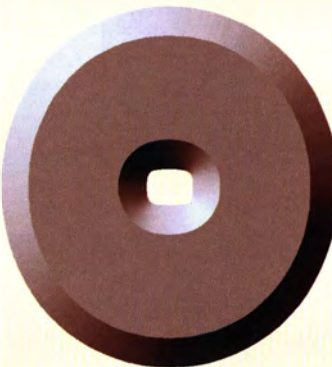
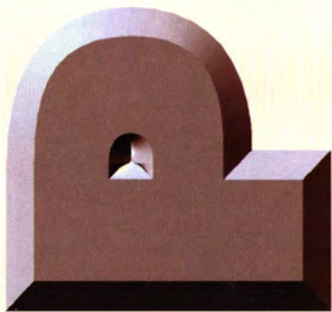
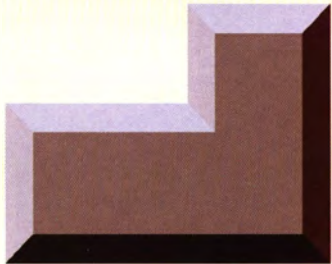
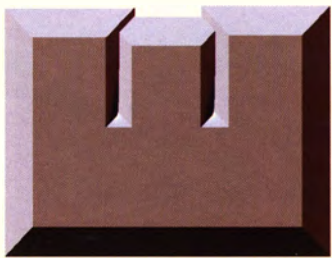
Perhaps this is particularly due to the stolen generations, who have continually kept the focus on healing rather than blame. At the Journey's launch in the Great Hall of Parliament in Canberra, a thousand voices joined in the theme song, written by two Aboriginal people who have suffered from the removal policies:

*Come join the journey, Journey of Healing  
Let the spirit guide us, hand in hand  
Let's walk together into the future  
The time has come to make a stand  
Let's heal our hearts, let's heal our pain,  
And bring the stolen children home again  
For our native children to trust again  
We must take this journey together as friends.*



People from South Australia's 46 indigenous language groups assemble on the front steps of the State Parliament.





## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

### Ugandans go for green

With its pigs and goats, cow and calf, chickens, rabbits, small fields and vegetable plots, Warren Farm in Berkshire, England, comes straight from the pages of a children's story book. Not the first place, perhaps, you would look for answers to Africa's farming problems.

George Kayega, the head of the agricultural department at Namasagali College in Uganda, disagrees. He is one of eight Ugandans who are spending a year at Warren Farm learning about sustainable agriculture. 'Organic farming is very appropriate for Uganda,' he says, 'because you get much yield from a small area.' Eighty per cent of Uganda's 21 million people are involved in agriculture in some way, and 80 per cent of these are smallholders. Inexpensive but labour intensive technologies suit large farming families, which have often been swollen by the children of relatives killed by Aids.

Warren Farm is run by the Kulika Trust, a charity founded in 1981 to provide scholarships for students from the developing world. 'We now focus almost entirely on Uganda,' says its director, Andrew Jones. 'We provide funds for people in Uganda to study subjects to do with development—and which have often tended to be the province of expatriates.'

When the Trust asked its students about projects to sponsor in their home villages, many spoke of the plight of small farmers whose land was degraded because they could not afford to buy chemical fertilizers and pesticides. The Trust came up with the idea of training farmers in organic—and cashfree—methods of improving their land. They set up Warren Farm on an experimental basis in 1993.

And the experiment seems to have worked. In the last six years the farm has trained some 40 farmers as 'key trainers'. On their return to Uganda, they pass on what they have learnt. For while farming conditions in Uganda may differ from those on the Berkshire Downs, the principles of soil conservation, chemical-free pest prevention and biodiversity still apply.



A Ugandan trainee farmer at Warren farm

'If each returning student has a significant impact on ten people, that is good,' says Jones. 'But the anecdotal evidence is far better. One of our first trainees, Josephine Kizza, has set up a demonstration farm in south-west Uganda which has 17,000 visitors a year.'

Warren Farm has been so successful that at the end of this year the project will be moved to Uganda, where the Kulika Trust will be able to train as many people in one year as they have in six in Britain. The new programme will be run by this year's trainees, who unlike previous years' are graduates and teachers.

I am welcomed to Warren Farm on a damp June morning by Flora Nyakoojo, an agricultural extension trainer from western Uganda. She takes me round the seven-acre farm—to the fodder fields where pigs first fertilize the soil and then

crops are rotated; the vegetable fields and poly-tunnels, bright with flowering plants which attract pest predators; and the all-important compost heaps—nothing is wasted here.

In the process I meet Flora's fellow trainees. One is training the bullock to draw a cart or plough; others are looking after the stock and crops; others work in the dairy, the feed store and the farm shop. Each will have done a stint at each task by the time they go home. They also attend lectures and will emerge with a diploma from the University of Reading.

The Trust's name, Kulika, is appropriate. It means 'congratulations' in Luganda.

Mary Lean

### From Korea to the world

Venerable Mother Park Chung-Soo, the head of a



Park Chung-Soo giving stationery to Korean schoolchildren in China

Shin Hue-Je



Buddhist temple in Seoul, is a money-raiser extraordinaire. Over the last 11 years she has persuaded her countrypeople to give gifts totalling US\$2.5 million for projects in 35 countries.

Park Chung-Soo was already involved in a Catholic charity that looked after lepers in Korea when she attended an international conference in Switzerland. She warmed to the sense of unity she found among the 500 participants from more than 50 nations. But when it was suggested that she might like to meet some of the Japanese present, she hesitated. She had been born during the Japanese occupation of Korea, and felt deep hurt and bitterness about the way her compatriots had been treated. She wanted nothing to do with Japan.

However, a friend suggested to her that the world harmony she glimpsed at the conference depended on inner change and sacrifice. She decided to try to overcome her hatred and meet the Japanese. The encounter widened her perspectives. 'When I put my feelings against Japan behind me,' she says, 'I opened my heart to the needs of the world.'

The projects for which she has raised money have been as varied as they have been numerous—schools and hospitals, clothes and famine relief, orphans and even amputees in Afghanistan.

At one point she received a letter from a British friend, who had just heard a talk about the desperate need for mine clearance in Cambodia. The friend asked if she knew anyone in Korea who did this sort of work and might play a part. Park Chung-Soo replied that she knew no one, and thought that was the end of the matter.

But she couldn't stop thinking about those who were wounded or killed when they walked inno-

cently into a minefield. She wrote to her British friend, 'If you can find any organization that clears minefields and can tell me how many mines can be cleared for \$1,000, I will provide some money for them.' She ended up raising \$100,000 for the Halo Trust.

Her latest project is raising money in South Korea to help the starving children of North Korea. The former President of North Korea took great pride in his *Juche* (self-reliance) programme for his country, but it failed to provide for the people's most basic needs. Park Chung-Soo managed to get into the country—no mean achievement for a South Korean—and set up channels for sending food and vitamins to the children.

One of the effects of North Korea's *Juche* programme has been to cut the country off from the world. For the situation to change, North Koreans will need to be ready to admit that they need help—and people in other countries will need the openness and warmth of heart to break through to them. This is something Park Chung-Soo knows all about. *David Young*

*Park Chung-Soo has generously made a limited number of copies of her book, 'Love, Life, Light', available free of charge to readers of 'For a Change'. Requests, plus £2 for postage, to David Young, 15 Vale Avenue, Brighton BN1 8UB, UK.*

## Black belt tackles blackspots

'If anyone is serious about making a difference to society, youth has to be the focus for what is done,' says five times World Karate Champion Geoff Thompson. And the way to reach the youth, he has no doubt, is through sport.

Over the last six years his vehicle for making these convictions a reality has been the Manchester-based Youth Charter for Sport (YCS) which he founded. Its motto is 'providing young people with



Geoff Thompson meets Chris Smith, Britain's Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.

the opportunity through sport to develop in life'.

Thompson (now 41) can highlight three major turning points in his life to date. The first happened when he was seven and his father died. From the relatively sheltered life in Wolverhampton, England, where his Barbadian father had been a popular community worker, he moved to East London. His mother, a stern disciplinarian with a strong Christian faith, struggled to support the family.

'At the age of seven I grew up,' he says. 'I was the man of the house and had to play my part in earning the family income.' He sold meat patties at school which his mother made at night. He cleaned taxis. 'If you want to know about rejection, try selling eggs from door to door each day,' he says with feeling.

In his final year at school he was taken to visit the Sobell Sports Centre in Islington and saw a karate demonstration. He immediately knew he had found his sport. 'I had a violent temper at school and this redirected my aggression.' He found an outfit, found a Japanese coach and, over the next eight years, made his way to the top of the sport in Britain.

The second turning point came on the night after he had won the World Heavyweight Karate Championship in Taiwan in 1982. 'I had what I can only describe as a religious experience,' he says. 'I had a compelling feeling that God was speaking to me. He was asking, "Now what are you going to do?" and part of me was answer-

ing, "Win more medals." But there was a deeper conviction saying, "You know you have got to do something with this—something for the youth."'

The third turning point came early in 1993, just after he had married Janice (also a former World Karate Champion) and moved to Manchester in order to study at Salford University. All was not well on the streets of Manchester. That January a 14-year-old boy was shot dead as he waited at a take-away in the Moss Side district. 'It was just one shooting too many,' Thompson says. 'I had seen violence on the streets of Los Angeles, now it was coming to Manchester.' He felt that this was the moment for which he had been prepared.

Within months he launched Youth Charter for Sport in Wembley Stadium, London, with a host of sporting celebrities and 100 inner-city youth from Moss Side and London. The Duke of Westminster became President and soccer hero Sir Bobby Charlton Vice-President.

YCS raises money for sports facilities for young people and for job creation schemes. Sporting stars are enlisted as role models. The concept has spread beyond Manchester to other countries, including South Africa. Recently YCS opened a Youth Community and Training Centre in Toxteth, Liverpool, to complement the newly built sports arena.

'Forming YCS has been the most spiritually edifying and rewarding experience of my life,' says Thompson.

*Paul Williams*





Wilhelm and Melanie Verwoerd with their daughter Wilmé

# ***The Verwoerds and the ANC***

Verwoerd is one of the names most associated with apartheid.

William Smook discovers that **Wilhelm and Melanie Verwoerd** break all the stereotypes.



**R**econciliation between South Africans can't be achieved until they learn to relate to each other on the basis of being fellow citizens, with shared problems and aspirations, and a common destiny.

That's the view of two outstanding white South Africans, both in their thirties, who've broken many of the national stereotypes to find their place in building a new, unified nation. Wilhelm and Melanie Verwoerd are exceptional for many reasons—not least that he's the grandson of Hendrik Verwoerd, widely regarded as the architect of apartheid, and she's the country's youngest female member of parliament.

In person, Wilhelm and Melanie are bright and forthright, but with a humility that comes from having your preconceptions trimmed by blunt reality. There's no arrogant assumption that their view is the only one. Yet they speak with a quiet conviction that being part of the solution, rather than part of the problem, is the only way forward.

Both said there was a point in their lives when they realized that, in Wilhelm's words, 'Unless we did something practical there would always be this feeling of us and them.' He grew up in a staunchly nationalist family where his grandfather was regarded as a hero. As Prime Minister, Hendrik Verwoerd instituted some of apartheid's most draconian legislation. It was he who said of the African: 'There is no place for him in the European community above certain forms of labour.' And: 'What is the use of teaching a Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice? Education must train and teach people in accordance with their opportunities in life.'

Both Wilhelm and Melanie grew up in the idyllic university town of Stellenbosch. Wilhelm recalls a childhood 'cocooned from the realities under which most South Africans lived', where he was 'put through the usual cultural conditioning that white children went through'. Both studied theology, she as the only woman in a class of 48. Both went through a process of disillusionment with the Dutch Reformed Church because of its support for apartheid as a keystone of its doctrine. Wilhelm's enlightenment took place as a postgraduate in the Netherlands and a Rhodes scholar in Oxford.

For both, an integral part of this process was the testimony of individuals deeply affected by apartheid. The personal accounts of suffering by political exiles and others stripped away any residual veneer of naivety or denial. And they say that individual stories remain a vital component in ramming home to people not merely the moral bankruptcy and long-term political unsustainability of apartheid but also the personal toll it took.

**W**ilhelm says that white South Africans need to acknowledge their complicity, tangible or

tacit, in enforcing 40 years of oppression. He's seen this admission of culpability trigger a catharsis among blacks that can be the start of healing. 'I think people have a need to have the pain acknowledged by those perceived to have been part of those who inflicted the pain.'

'The reaction can be disproportionate to what you say. There's a need for their memories and their hurt to be healed. When they see somebody who's prepared to go outside their stereotypical white, insensitive, middle-class denial, or their paternalistic arrogance, then it somehow carries a symbolic message beyond its actual content.'

Melanie adds: 'Many people don't or won't realize that reconciliation demands sacrifice. It's a natural but flawed human tendency to want to ignore one's complicity in a wrong. But there needs to be some sacrifice and acknowledgement of culpability, then there can be reconciliation. It's a hard, long process, which won't come overnight.'

Both have laboured to effect that recon-

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## **'People need to have the pain acknowledged by those perceived to have inflicted the pain.'**

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ciliation. Melanie worked for a group that helped ease the plight of domestic workers, before becoming an African National Congress (ANC) MP in 1994. She was re-elected this year. (During all this she completed a master's degree in feminist theology.) Wilhelm conducted research for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which aired some of apartheid's dirtiest laundry. He's left active politics—'Two politicians in one family would be bad for the children,' he says with a smile (they have two). He now teaches applied ethics and political philosophy at the University of Stellenbosch.

For Wilhelm in particular, their stand has not been without personal cost. Going public with support for the ANC unleashed shockwaves in his family, leaving a chasm that remains largely unbridged. He's regarded as something of a prodigal son, whose folly will become apparent with age and time. But he felt he had little choice. While in the UK they'd both felt a strong sense of wanting to return to South Africa and commit to 'making a difference'.

In 1990, shortly after Mandela's release from prison, Wilhelm wrote to him. 'I said Melanie and I wanted to commit our lives to rebuild these relationships, to contribute to reconciliation.' He sees what they do now as a continuation of that commitment.

The Verwoerds' experiences have left them with 'a deep suspicion of institutionalized religion'. They regard themselves as spiritual, rather than religious. 'The intoler-

ance irks,' says Melanie. 'We need to be very, very cautious about politics and religion getting mixed.'

Apartheid is a potent legacy of the dangers of religion in politics, she adds. 'Ethical transformation must be driven not only by socio-economic needs but by certain values. There must be something more than the usual political power games. We need to build a human rights culture.'

'What is sustaining in this process is that it's not just an intellectual commitment but that we interact with people,' she goes on. 'The positive fruits give a real sense that we're making a contribution. That's a source of continual inspiration. We both have a strong awareness that it's going to take a long time to rebuild relationships across the racial divide.'

Life in South Africa generally perpetuates the inequalities and lack of tangible cross-cultural joining of hands so effectively imposed by apartheid, the Verwoerds maintain. And Melanie says that their efforts to aid reconciliation constantly run up against 'a continuing legacy of a very successful process of social engineering' which separated communities and had 'a huge impact on human relationships'.

That, along with fears and denial, has resulted in many—whites in particular—becoming ever more reclusive. Melanie adds: 'Those previously privileged have tended to privatize their citizenship more and more, withdrawing from social responsibility and social conscience, and not contributing at all to society.'

The final step in this process is to emigrate, which many do. 'It's not only bad for the country, it's bad for those who withdraw, because you start living in a perpetual cycle of fear and antagonism and negativism, where "everything's wrong". The way to break this cycle is to promote real interaction.' Currently most interaction is limited to the workplace. It needs to go much further than that, she says.

'We need to find common ground, and to share our concerns about the problems affecting the country,' she adds. 'At school, the kids meet, but the mothers don't. There's still very little social interaction.'

Ironically it's crime and the perils facing the country's children that can help unite disparate groups of parents, she says. Helping to reintegrate a generation of marginalized black youths will be less easy.

**P**rogress in bridging the racial gap has been made. There have been significant initiatives in business, sport, churches, youth leadership programmes and non-government organizations. This was a major factor in two largely peaceful general elections, they say.

Wilhelm says that it took many years for him to deal with his own legacy of apartheid and 'to see myself primarily as a member of the broader community'.

Wilhelm and Melanie have made that leap. Most South Africans have yet to do so. This young couple is acting to make sure they do. ■





Members are sworn in at the opening of the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh.

# After 292 years— we meet again

**Campbell Leggat** returns to the land of his birth to find out what Scotland's new parliament could mean for Scotland and the UK.

It was just after 9.30 am on Wednesday, 12 May 1999. The 129 Members of the Scottish Parliament, who had been elected the previous Thursday, gathered together in the chamber of their temporary home, the Assembly Hall on the Mound in Edinburgh. In order to elect a Presiding Officer (Speaker), the 69-year-old mother of the house, Winifred Ewing, was in the chair. Then, as *The Scotsman* reported on its front page the following morning, 'She uttered the astonishing truth: "The Scottish Parliament, adjourned on the 25th day of March, 1707, is hereby reconvened."' In the public gallery, and throughout Scotland, where people were watching the proceedings live on TV, there was many a tear in the eye regardless of background or political loyalty.

So why is it that after almost 300 years Scotland has its own parliament again? Is it

a body with real powers to legislate for the everyday lives of the people? Or just a 'talking shop' to appease national sentiment? And is it a welcome step in the devolution and decentralization of power and decision making needed within the United Kingdom as a whole—or is it, as many have feared, part of an unpleasant and costly disintegration of the United Kingdom, fuelled by feelings of antagonism and resentment, and drawing on the unhealed wounds of history? Searching for answers to these questions I recently met a wide range of people in Scotland.

As with most countries, there are a number of versions of Scotland's history. There is even the Hollywood version powerfully portrayed in the Oscar-winning film *Braveheart*. Hollywood tends to be more interested in box-office returns than in facts, and *Braveheart* is no exception. But for

a younger generation, many of whom are unfamiliar with the novels of Sir Walter Scott or with modern Scottish historians, such a movie can fan the flames of resentment as well as national pride.

Most historians take the view that on the whole the Union since 1707 has been beneficial for all those who make up mainland Britain. Initially it was not popular in Scotland, and indeed the first half of the 18th century saw various attempts to overthrow the Hanoverians and restore the Scottish Stuarts to the British throne. These reached a climax with the unsuccessful Jacobite Rebellion of 1745, launched around the charismatic figure of Bonnie Prince Charlie and ending with the Battle of Culloden. It has often been portrayed as Scots versus English but was more accurately a civil war of Catholic Jacobite Stuarts and their supporters (mostly the Highland





PA News

systems. Post-war Britain, with the loss of Empire and the search for a new role within Europe, created a very different atmosphere. By the 1960s devolution of political power was on the agenda. The first attempt to carry this forward in the Seventies failed.

The decisive swing in public opinion towards support for a Scottish parliament seems to have come during the Thatcher years. Whatever else was achieved, the policies of Mrs Thatcher and her governments towards Scotland seem to have convinced the majority of the Scottish people that they needed their own parliament. A great many of those I talked to, from a wide cross section of opinion, are in agreement on this point.

Impressive grassroots participation and consultation preceded the setting up of the new parliament. Following the referendum of 1979, in which the vote was almost three to one in favour of devolution, an independent project under the title 'People & Parliament' was established by 11 ordinary citizens. In 1979 they distributed 28,000 leaflets inviting people from all over Scotland to share their vision of what the country's future should be like. It took the form of a questionnaire addressing three issues: 1 'We are a people who...' 2 'By the year 2020 we would like to see a Scotland in which...' 3 'We therefore expect our parliament to work with people in ways which...'

An enormous variety of people took part—some 450 groups in all—and a remarkable consensus emerged. This could be summarized as: a deep frustration with fragmented society; a feeling of anger and disconnection with the present system of government and politics; a profound longing for a new kind of politics and society that will listen to, care for, respect and share with, all the people—rooted in a strong sense of national identity and community; a belief that the people of Scotland must take responsibility for their own destiny—and mistakes—and overcome the tendency to blame others; a strong desire for a better society and community, which was constantly linked with the need for greater participation and partnership in power.

The full report, which quotes many of the responses, makes colourful reading. Addressing the first question a group in Falkirk wrote: 'We drink too much alcohol,

are both defeatist and creative.' While a group in Nairn commented, 'We see all humanity as our brothers and sisters... Mind you, some of us are narrow-minded, tight-fisted parasites.' A group of teenagers in a one-time fishing and mining area of Fife wrote, 'We are a people who live in a dull depressing country with no opportuni-

ties of jobs, and there's not much to do.' Others were more positive 'We should expand our international financial skills.'

Question two produced many 'wish lists' including one from a Glasgow group which included 'a quality of life where everyone has someone to love, something to do and something to look forward to'.

On the third question the common thread which ran through the responses was that this parliament should be different—open, accessible and accountable; 'Adversarial politics to be buried and diversity welcomed'; 'Representatives should reflect the people not the party.'

So are there signs of hope that things can be different? The new MSPs clearly carry a wealth of goodwill, but also an enormous burden of expectation. Some who have already been MPs bring the best of the Westminster traditions with them; others are clearer on how they want to do things differently. The majority have never been members of a parliament. The average age is relatively young with some in their twenties and many in their thirties.

Refreshingly, the Scottish Parliament has been constituted in a way that should allow members to have time for family life. In so far as possible, business will take place within normal working hours and there will be a recess during school holidays.

There is also the opportunity to rethink Westminster's tradition of starting each day with the same person reading the same prayer (while members 'face the wall so that their swords don't damage the furniture').

It is ironic that the Conservative Party—which opposed devolution during the 1979 General Election campaign and lost all the seats they had formerly held in Scotland—have now won eight seats in the Scottish Parliament because of proportional representation, a system they had opposed.

While the Labour Party won the largest number of seats (56), they do not have an overall majority and have formed a coalition with the Liberal Democrats (17 seats). This should ensure a more consensual style of government than is normal in Britain.

The Scottish National Party, whose policy is total independence rather than devolution, won 35 seats. Polls show that only 29 per cent of the voters want complete independence. But the fact that the majority of SNP supporters are aged from 18-34 causes many to wonder about the future.

An optimistic view of where all this could lead came from an Englishman, Clifford Longley. He wrote in *The Tablet* a few days after the Scottish election: 'The next phase in Scotland's story is an exciting experiment in governance, which, if successful, will transform the future of all of Britain.... Coalition government is about gaining consent by negotiation and compromise, especially the consent of those who are free to withhold it.... This... is bound to have its influence in England... It will also change the way the English feel about national sovereignty.'

clans) versus Protestant Hanoverians and their supporters, who included many of the Lowland Scots and the most powerful clan, the Campbells.

Following Culloden the clans that had supported the Jacobite cause were brutally suppressed and there were ruthless 'clearances' of crofters to make way for sheep. However being part of a United Kingdom enabled the majority, and especially Lowland Scots, to benefit more from the Industrial Revolution and the expansion of the British Empire. The latter point is illustrated by Ben Macintyre's estimate in *The Times* that the Scottish diaspora now numbers about 100 million, while only 5.3 million live in Scotland.

More recently the shared comradeship of two world wars, and the sacrifices involved in defeating fascism, have held the Union together and built common cause. But throughout these three centuries Scotland has retained its own sense of nationhood with its own legal, education and religious

## FOR A CHANGE

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## The sixty minute man

In 1988 Rob Parson gave up his job as a lawyer to help bolster Britain's ailing family life. The founder of Care for the Family talks to Kenneth Noble.



**T**eacher, lawyer, public speaker, Christian leader, writer. Is there anything Rob Parsons cannot do? Perhaps, like many successful people, he has serious marital problems? Seemingly no chinks in the armour here. He and his wife Dianne have just returned from a six-city tour of Canada, running courses on how to make marriage work.

So it is perhaps encouraging to learn that one of Rob Parsons' most successful books, *The sixty minute father\**, was written out of a sense of failure 'in being just too busy for my own kids'.

A glance at Parsons' CV reveals why he was so busy. Born in 1948, he was brought up in 'quite a poor home' in Cardiff with no hot water or inside toilet. His father was a postman, his mother an office cleaner. His parents were not church-goers but sent the four-year-old Rob to Sunday school, a lasting influence on his life. Eventually he qualified as a teacher. Just before going for his first job interview, someone said to him, 'Why don't you work as a lawyer?'

'I've only just qualified as a teacher.'

'I think you'd be a good lawyer.'

Parsons went ahead with his probationary year as a teacher 'and loved it. In fact they offered me a permanent job. But I thought I would try law.'

He retrained and 'began all over again on £4 per week and a car allowance'. In 1976 he qualified as a solicitor. By this time he was married to Dianne whom he had met at church when they were about 16.

In 1980 Parsons co-founded Lawyers Planning Services, a consultancy to the legal profession on practice management. He still lectures regularly to the business sector and his seminars have been attended by tens of thousands of lawyers.

Rob and Dianne Parsons began doing counselling work in the mid-Seventies, and they were also part of a Christian leadership team on a housing estate of 20,000 people in Cardiff. These activities and his legal work opened his eyes to the difficulties that many married couples were going through. So in 1988 Rob came out of legal practice to start Care for the Family as a department of Christian Action, Research and Education (CARE) Trust, a charity of which he was a board member.

It was a dramatic change of lifestyle for Rob: 'Not least the day-to-day operation. I was a senior partner of a big provincial law practice with people all round. If you wanted a cup of coffee it magically appeared. The next day I was in a one-room garret licking my own stamps. No one returned my phone calls because no one knew me or cared whether they did or not.'

That changed. Today Care for the Family's office in Cardiff has 50 staff plus volunteers. It has become independent from CARE. Apart from producing films and books, Care for the Family organizes seminars, counselling and a confidential line for

church leaders. Seminar titles have included: 'Marriage matters', 'Beating burnout' and 'Life behind the mask'. 'Developing closeness in marriage' workshops are helping couples with their communication skills.

Britain has the highest divorce rate in Europe and Care for the Family has been involved in advising both the Government and the Conservative Party on family issues. Parsons believes that marriage could become stronger in the longer term. 'In the media, people are beginning to realize the importance of marriage and a stable family life. Certainly the Government are realizing that break-up of family life has enormous social and economic costs.' Societies tend to do what is pragmatic.

People find it difficult to be as committed as they need to be, especially where children are involved. 'In previous generations

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## **'We're so busy trying to give our children what we didn't have that we forget to give them what we did have.'**

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people would say, "We'll stay together for the sake of the kids." You tend not to hear that now—though I think it's still a very good reason.' He's seen 'countless' marriages where the partners have done that and 'in that process of loving as an act of the will' have found emotional love again.

What of the argument that it is better for children if their parents divorce rather than row constantly?

He maintains that kids generally do better in a home with conflict than they do after their parents separate. 'And of course the idea that divorce ends conflict is a nonsense. Most kids still see their parents involved in conflict over access or maintenance. The idea that life becomes all sweet for kids after divorce is a massive illusion.'

Rob Parsons' books are racy, down-to-earth and laced with anecdotes, pithy sayings and parables. You can almost hear the articulate, convincing tone in which he speaks. *The sixty minute father*—designed to be read in an hour by busy fathers—reached number three on *The Times Bookwatch* best-seller list. *The sixty minute marriage* is similar in style. His books have sold more than 300,000 copies worldwide. All royalties go to help people in need.

*What they didn't teach me in Sunday school*, published in 1997, is Parsons' personal credo. Unlike the sixty minute books which are written in non-religious language this one takes you into his own life and beliefs and the 'lessons I wish I'd learnt earlier'. He describes movingly his feeling of helplessness during a period when Dianne was suffering from depression, and how this brought him to a new understanding of Christ's words, 'Without me you can do

nothing.' And many would identify with his struggle to forgive someone who had hurt him badly. Not surprisingly, the theme of over-busyness is prominent.

He sees 'the sheer busyness of life' as one of the main threats to parent-child and marriage relationships. One of his most-used phrases is 'the driven life' which, he says, 'tends to know no satisfaction. We're always on to the next thing, we're always saying a slower day is coming. But of course it doesn't until we're 60 or 65 and someone hands us a clock and says they'll miss us.'

The driven person has a great sense of the brevity of life; and often incredibly low self-esteem, says Parsons. They are often dominated by the desire to prove themselves so they end up saying 'yes' to everyone: 'Of course, I'll sit on that board, of course I'll write that article.' They can end up saying 'no' to those for whom they have primary responsibility. Because kids are an easy touch for 'I'll do it later'.

So how do you avoid getting over-busy?

'The basic ingredient is to realize that we don't have to prove ourselves to the whole world.' In his own case, he realized how fast the door of childhood was closing with his kids. 'If I didn't do something

about it soon they wouldn't want to go fishing with me.'

He quotes: 'We're so busy trying to give our children what we didn't have that we forget to give them what we did have.' And adds: 'I began to realize that the simple things: the games, the garden, sleeping in a tent, the water fights were providing far more fulfilling memories for them than expensive toys.'

One of Parsons' most quoted phrases (coined by American lawyer Vincent Foster) sums up his argument: 'No one was ever heard to say on their deathbed, "I wish I had spent more time at the office."'

What of his latest book, *What every kid wished their parents knew and vice versa*? It started when Rob and his 17-year-old son Lloyd began to 'brainstorm'. Lloyd said, 'It's amazing. Parents spend the first 10 years of a kid's life trying to get him into bed and the next 10 years trying to get him out of bed.' They began to produce lists—things that you wish your teenager would say ('No, midnight is far too late, I'll come in at 10.30.');

and silly things parents say ('Don't come running to me if you break your leg.'). They asked children what they wanted to say to their parents, and parents what they wanted to say to their children. 'And we just came out with this fun book. It's got some poignant moments in it: reactions from friends of a guy who took his life; and kids talking about drugs and sex.'

I am left with the feeling that few people make such good use of 60 minutes as Rob Parsons. ■

*\*Rob Parsons' books are published by Hodder and Stoughton.*



# BOOKMARK



**T**alking to a Kenyan I had met in the English Midlands, I mentioned the name of someone I knew in his home country. 'He's a Kikuyu,' was the immediate response, as if his identity was thus fully described. But I knew my friend in Kenya as one of a small courageous band from different ethnicities who were trying to turn back the wave of corruption in their country. I realized that ethnic identification was not limited to the Balkans.

In his book, *The warrior's honor\**, Michael Ignatieff writes from first-hand knowledge of the ethnic conflicts of our time. He has gone into Rwanda, Zaire and Angola as guest of the UN Secretary-General. He sat in the Serb trenches during the Serbo-Croat war of the early 1990s, as the Serbs fired at their Croat former neighbours, 200 yards away. He experienced the Taliban fighting in Afghanistan and visited Somalia at the height of the military action there.

Central to his book is the question, 'How do neighbours, who have lived together for decades and intermarried across communities, suddenly become irreconcilable enemies?'

## When neighbours become enemies

Laurie Vogel reflects on Michael Ignatieff's recent book on ethnic conflict.

Some of the historical background Ignatieff gives is detailed and extremely informative, for example on the present troubles in the Balkans. But he takes issue with those of the Samuel Huntingdon school who would have us believe that the past is the only factor which explains present conflict. Why, after all, did Cain kill Abel? If we

are to believe that account, there was precious little history to draw on!

I found this a relief, as someone who has tried to work for peace in the different parts of the world where I have lived. For if the 'only after studying history' school is to be believed, few can try to be peacemakers. We just don't have time in one short life to study the complex historical backgrounds to conflicts on five continents. And having tried sincerely to study the history of on-going conflicts close to me, I have found my newly-acquired knowledge of little help in relating with the present players.

Ignatieff's title, *The warrior's honor*, refers back to the medieval times when war was seen as an opportunity to display manly virtues and was ruled by its own codes of honour.

There is little relation, says Ignatieff, between that view of war and present day war, where technology may separate the protagonists by many, even thousands, of miles. And even less relation to the disorganized violence when warfare is in the hands of subteenage 'soldiers' and Kalashnikovs are available for the price of a loaf of bread.

Ignatieff concludes that 'identity' is not something innate, but a deliberate choice.

For all of us have multiple identities. I, for example, am British, the son of a Swiss, white, Christian, an engineer, a volunteer with a Christian group, a husband and so on. If I—or other people—focus on ethnicity as my identity, all my other identities are suppressed.

Thus the Serbs Ignatieff met during the Serbo-Croat war had had to suppress the neighbourliness they had lived with for decades. They now saw their former neighbours, some of them married perhaps to their sisters, simply as Croats and 'all Croats are....'

Nationalism defines me as part of a group holding imagined values, in contrast to those of another group with imagined criminal traits. The desire to be 'masters in our own home' is justifiable, says



Kosovar refugees walk to safety in Macedonia.





## BOOK REVIEW

Ignatieff. The problem comes when only 'our lot' is welcome there.

**A**s war has changed, bodies like the International Red Cross (IRC) have worked to outlaw certain practices. The Geneva Convention of 1864 has had to be modified as warfare has shifted from encounters between armies to the deliberate targeting of civilians. Some dedicated groups, like Médecins sans Frontières, have questioned the neutrality so central to the IRC's ethos. 'Between aggressor and victim, no one can be neutral,' they say. True, perhaps. But Serbs were victims of Croatian 'ethnic cleansing' in Krajina before the Serbs imposed the same 'cleansing' on Bosnia and Kosovo. Victimhood is itself a chosen identity, not an innate state.

Involvement (the inner conviction in millions of people that 'something must be done') turns easily to disillusionment ('To Hell with the lot of them. There's nothing we can do.'). This, says Ignatieff, is not only 'involvement fatigue', a state of apathy. It can as easily be a yielding to the 'seductiveness of moral disgust' ('They are brutes and savages. Nothing can be done with them.').

Thus, towards the end of World War I, millions were gripped by the idealism of President Woodrow Wilson with his draft of a new world order. The Versailles Treaty, imposed by those who wanted to 'squeeze the Germans until the pips squeak', killed the idealism, and decades of disillusion set in.

Ignatieff tries to point towards an answer. He sees it in part as breaking the myths of group identity so that individuals see themselves—and their neighbours—with all the identities they have denied. He is clear that this is a spiritual process.

Another factor is perhaps only touched on. Are our passions directed at the past or at the future? Ignatieff points out that the people who brought into being the United Nations, the World Bank, the Marshall Plan, the International Monetary Fund and the rebirth of Europe at the end of World War II were all looking towards the future.

It puts me in mind of Jean Monnet, who, even in the dark hour when he was imprisoned by the Nazis in 1941, told his friends, 'When this war ends, we must build a new Europe with Germany as equal partner and not humiliated.' Irène Laure, a Frenchwoman who went on to play a role in the heart-to-heart reconciliation of Germans and French people after World War II, once burned with hatred against all Germans—not just the Gestapo who had tortured her family. But even deeper was her longing 'that my children and grandchildren will not have to endure the horrors my generation has had to'.

What then turns an obsession with the

### SPRAY, BAKED BEANS AND ADVENTURE

*Atlantic Odyssey*

by Michael Thwaites

New Cherwell Press, 1999, £9.99

ISBN: 1-900312-35-2

In this vivid first-person tale of the Battle of the Atlantic in World War II, the Australian poet Michael Thwaites takes us into the hearts, minds and experiences of the men of the Royal Navy's 'small ships'.

The converted trawler, named *Wastwater* after the Cumbrian lake, was only 57 feet longer than Christopher Columbus's *Santa Maria* and would have been dwarfed by Nelson's *Victory*.

Thwaites was a Rhodes Scholar, and the book launch took place at Rhodes House in Oxford. Robert O'Neill, the Chichele Professor of the History of War, described it as 'giving some wonderful insights into what participation in a war is like.... One sees war through the eyes of a very perceptive and sensitive individual, but set within a wider story of the war itself.'

You can smell the oil in the engine room, feel the sting of salt spray in an Arctic gale, enjoy the irrepressible humour of the British seamen under every kind of duress, and taste the baked beans in the galley. Thwaites draws on his rich store of the classics to describe his experiences.

The author's love of his wife, Honor, of his fellow human beings and of Britain and Australia suffuse his tale. He includes the reader in his ship's company and in the pain of separation from Honor and their little son.

In one 20-month stretch on anti-U-boat patrol, *Wastwater* made an almost complete circuit of the North Atlantic, out from Aberdeen and back to Gourock. Iceland, Newfoundland, the United States, the Caribbean, Latin America and the West African coast are the setting for a well-crafted tale of adventure, tension, danger, boredom, joys and shrewd but kindly insights into the diverse characters that made up the

past into a passion for a new future? Ignatieff says that, when justice is seen to be done, it can help people come to terms with their personal past. One of the first steps of President Aylwin of Chile, when he took over in 1990, was to apologize to the Chilean people for the crimes committed by the Pinochet regime, even though he had personally opposed it. Thousands of private acts of repentance and apology followed.

South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission has equally helped aggressors and victims of the apartheid era to find heal-

ship's complement of 32.

On escort duty in submarine-haunted waters, they did not lose a ship from their convoys. And, thanks to skilful navigation, they were in the right place at the right time to rescue 63 men from a torpedoed ship, and the airmen from a downed flying boat.

There is high drama and pathos here, reminiscent of Nicholas Monserrat's *The Cruel Sea*, yet with the added thread of faith in the weaving, and with honesty about his own nature by the author. Moving poems from his own pen illustrate the action and Honor's letters from England, often months delayed, tell of the waiting and hoping and keeping faith.

The vivid descriptions of the long, dark winter nights, riding herd to a slow moving convoy carrying life-saving supplies for Britain, recalled my own experiences on anti-U-boat patrol in an RAAF flying boat over the North Atlantic and North Sea following D-Day. So I suppose I am inclined to be partial in my praise of this very readable, often moving and always entertaining book.

Gordon Wise



Michael Thwaites

ing. And one of the virtues of properly conducted legal trials is that the false myths of the past can no longer be upheld.

Central to all these processes, I believe, are changed hearts, where human nature with all its good and bad impulses is faced and the divine power of forgiveness achieves the humanly impossible. ■

\**The warrior's honor: ethnic war and the modern conscience*, by Michael Ignatieff, Random House 1998.



## Seminars in Gaza and Israel



Campbell Leggat

The international group in Jerusalem. L to r: Peter Riddell, Jean Fayet, Yusuf Al-Azhari, Piet Meiring, Maroulla and Spyros Stephou, Sushobha Barve, Jeroen Gunning and Cornelius Marivate.

An international group, with experience of facilitating change in their societies, spent a week in April in Israel and Palestine, at the invitation of people who had participated in MRA conferences in Caux, Switzerland. The visit included seminars in Gaza and Jerusalem, and informal meetings in the West Bank and Israel.

The seminar in Gaza

focussed on individual responsibility in rebuilding society, at the request of the invitation committee, which comprised five Palestinians from different sides of Gazan society. 'The empowerment of the Palestinian individual's character is one of the most essential positive steps towards materializing the dream of statehood,' stated the invitation. 'The aim of this seminar is to explore

ways of generating a moral rejuvenation and strengthen the momentum for moral and social change in Gaza.'

The seminar consisted of three panel discussions. The first, led by two South Africans, gave insights into South Africa's transition from apartheid to full democracy. The challenge now, said Prof Cornelius Marivate MP, was for citizens not to become

dependent on the government but take their own initiative. Prof Piet Meiring described the efforts of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, on which he had served, to exorcize the wrongs committed under apartheid.

In the second panel, former Somali ambassador Dr Yusuf Al-Azhari and Indian community worker Sushobha Barve addressed 'moral regeneration at the grassroots level—building trust and community'. The final panel looked at moral regeneration in business, public service and the family. It was addressed by the recently retired President of Siemens Automotive, Jean Fayet from France, and Cyprus's former Deputy Director of Customs, Spyros Stephou, and his wife, Maroulla.

After each discussion there were lively contributions from the audience, who sought to relate what they had heard to their own situation. The main organizer of the seminar, post-graduate student Samer Abu Ghazaleh said that it had realized his hope of 'replacing the continuous story of clash between East and West with a civilized exchange of thoughts'.

Meiring told the audience that he would take home with him 'the picture of the ancient

## Ray of hope from the Hague

'We couldn't let the century end without giving peace the last word,' said Cora Weiss, President of the Hague Appeal for Peace Foundation (HAP). The HAP's civil societies conference in May drew some 7,000 people, representing over 100 countries and 700 organizations. It took place 100 years after the first world peace congress in the Hague, initiated by the Czar of Russia and the Queen of the Netherlands.

'Let us find the moral, spiritual and political will to do what our leaders know must be done but cannot bring themselves to do,' stated the HAP vision statement. Among the issues on

its agenda are the banning of nuclear weapons, landmines and the arms trade; peace education in schools; and the eradication of poverty and colonialism.

The four-hour opening session included performances by the Sarajevo Drum Orchestra and the Victory Sonkoba Theatre of Johannesburg and a videotaped message from Aung San Suu Kyi, which had been smuggled out of Burma.

Speakers included Nobel laureates Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Rigoberta Menchu and Jose Ramos Horta. The UN Secretary General's special representative for children in armed conflicts, Olara Otunnu, received a standing ovation for a speech

which dealt with the ethical crisis in the world. 'Values matter,' he said, 'and traditional local values give ethical bearings.' Calling for a 'spiritual renewal', he said, 'we need justice, forgiveness, reconciliation... a spirit that will yield in order to bend the sword into a ploughshare'.

There were 400 workshops and meetings during the four days. Films and theatrical productions included *Facing the truth*, a film about South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the musical *Peace Child 2000*, performed by high school students.

Among the scores of booths, some for material gain, others

giving powerful messages of healing, was one manned by participants in the Creators of Peace programme, launched at MRA's conference centre in Caux, Switzerland in 1991.

The Dutch newspaper, *NRC-Handelsblad*, started out sceptical but ended up running an editorial on the conference. 'In the midst of daily violence the Hague Appeal for Peace showed a ray of hope,' it concluded. 'Not governments but civil society will have to lay the foundations for future peaceful resolution of conflict. This may be an idealistic perspective. But it is also something to hold onto in order to prevent the 21st century continuing the blood-stained history of the century that has almost passed.'

Vijayalakshmi Subrahmanyam



church leaning against a mosque, embracing each other, as an example to the world'. Fayet added, 'I saw a side of Islam I did not know. I was encouraged to build a relationship with Islam in France.'

The seminar in Israel took place at the Ecumenical Institute at Tantur, Jerusalem, and was hosted by Yehezkel Landau, Co-Director of the Open House Centre for Jewish-Arab reconciliation in Ramleh, and Rabbi Jeremy Milgrom of Rabbis for Human Rights. The visitors' presentations sparked a profound debate on forgiveness. One Israeli asked how to move from a willingness to forgive to actually forgiving. Another was wrestling with what she saw as a Biblical command not to dishonour those who have suffered by forgetting the pains inflicted upon them. A Palestinian asked how, having forgiven once, he could maintain an open heart when he suffered further injustices.

One of the visitors, commenting on her encounters with Israelis who sincerely work for peace, wrote afterwards, 'This has revealed a different face of Israel to me.'

*Peter Riddell*

## Tanzania tackles corruption



Minister Anna Abdullah greets Bishop Elinaza Sendoro

**A**n all-African conference on how to combat corruption and bring reconciliation to a war-torn continent, organized by MRA, took place in Tanzania in May. It was opened by Wilson Masilingi, Minister of State in the President's Office, who said that it would contribute to the National Anti-Corruption Plan which the government was drafting.

'This forum provides an opportunity to appreciate the importance of reviving moral values not only in Tanzania but all over the world,' said Masilingi. Unlike many of its neighbours, Tanzania has enjoyed peace since its

independence in 1964. The country is one of the poorest in the world, and host to 400,000 refugees from other countries in the region, but economic reforms are beginning to bear fruit. A major obstacle is rampant corruption.

The opening ceremony was televised and the conference received wide coverage in the Tanzanian press. The *Daily Mail* quoted Ambassador John Edward Mhina as saying that observing the 'four pillars of absolute honesty, purity, lack of selfishness, and love' was the 'best way to eradicate corruption'.

During the four-day conference speakers gave per-

sonal examples of how they had fought corruption. A Kenyan group described their recent campaign for a clean election, inspiring Tanzanians to plan a similar programme in the run-up to their elections next year.

Sturla Johnson, a Norwegian doctor, underlined how industrialized countries often support corruption in the developing world. He had initiated a campaign in Norway to change the law which allowed companies to claim tax concessions on bribes given overseas. A Kenyan accountant, Ashwin Patel, described how a no-bribes policy had benefited his company.

Retired Bishop Elinaza Sendoro of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania took up the theme of reconciliation. In a talk quoted in both the *Daily News* and *The Guardian*, he said that reconciliation in Africa would not be achieved by fighting but by 'talking together and eventually striking a mutual agreement'.

A young Rwandan said that her father and two brothers had died in the violence in her country. 'But I got the courage to forgive,' she said. 'I have found my life again.'

*Paul and Eva Gundersen*

**From Bill Peters (co-founder Jubilee 2000), Deal, Kent, UK**

Neville Cooper's letter in your April/May issue illustrates well the danger you underline in your editorial there, that those who fight for a more just world end up fighting each other. He loyally springs to the defence of his many friends in the international financial institutions (IFIs) who have given 'leadership with profound faith and human concern'.

The criticism levelled at the IFIs by Jubilee 2000 is not aimed at individuals, many of whom have revised their view of their organizations. The criticism is levelled at the inappropriate neo-classical theories which have underlain IFI practices, in attempting to steer highly



### LETTER

indebted poor countries towards 'sound economic management'.

The present leaders of these institutions (Stiglitz, Wolfensohn, perhaps even Enarque Camdessus) themselves admit they were mistaken all this time in attempting at long range to mould the economies of the debtor nations according to pre-ordained prescriptions which took no account of their individual circumstances. Thereby they added immeasurably to the burden, particularly of the poorest, in those countries.

Jubilee 2000 directed itself to the opaci-

ty and frequent unfairness of the structures of WB/IMF—not to the majority of IFI staff.

Your editorial points up the divergent aims of campaigns against corruption (such as Transparency International) and for the cancellation of debt. In fact there is no conflict, as my friends Jean-Loup Dherse and Daniel Dommell of TI have admitted. Debt campaigners insist that all settlements must be on a case-by-case basis—ie corruption must be taken into account.

In this 'clean-slate' year shouldn't a few of us admit that by harping on corruption in poor countries rather than on Nazi gold or missing billions of Euros we may exhibit something approaching racial prejudice?

*The editors welcome letters but reserve the right to shorten them.*





# A DIFFERENT ACCENT

by Michael Henderson

## Pope calls for communication not alienation

**P**ope John Paul II has spoken out strongly about the special responsibility of the media.

With the explosion of information technology, he says, the possibility of communication between individuals and groups in every part of the world has never been greater. Yet the forces which can lead to better communication can also lead to increasing self-centredness and alienation. It is a time of threat and of promise.

The Pope believes that the Church's 'culture of remembrance' can save the media culture of transitory news from becoming a forgetfulness which corrodes hope; that its culture of wisdom can save the media culture of information from becoming a meaningless accumulation of facts; and that its culture of joy can save the media culture of entertainment from becoming a soulless flight from truth and responsibility. He is calling for closer and deeper cooperation in a spirit of friendship that can help both the Church and the media to serve the men and women of our time in their search for meaning and fulfilment.

David Aikman, a former senior foreign correspondent for *Time* magazine, has written of the Pope in his book, *Great Souls*, as 'asserting without qualification the absolute

objectivity of moral values and of the inherent dignity of the human condition'.

Aikman, now a Senior Fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, DC, is concerned with how one's faith affects one's journalism. He is hosting a conference in Chichester, UK, in August entitled 'The call to truth—being a Christian in journalism today'. He has estab-

**'the forces which can lead to better communication can also lead to increasing self-centredness'**

lished a support organization for Christians in the media called Gegrapha (the New Testament Greek for the words of Pontius Pilate, 'What I have written, I have written.') It has three goals: to build a global fellowship among Christians in journalism, supporting those already in it and encouraging others to enter it; to model Christian standards of excellence and personal ethics within the profession of journalism; and to

be channels of God's grace and truth within the profession.

He says that in his 28-year career as a journalist, 23 with *Time* in about 55 countries, he met fellow journalists who were Christian believers from all over the world. 'When several of us expressed delight that we had so much in common—as practitioners of a wonderful occupation and as members of churches that are often a little suspicious of journalism—we decided we wanted to stay in touch.'

Two other media personalities concerned about their responsibility as people of faith, Bill Porter and Bernard Margueritte, of the International Communications Forum (ICF), met the Pope in Rome recently. They had been inspired, they told him, by his message for the media, in particular his reference to their special responsibility to witness to the truth about life, about human dignity and about the true meaning of our freedom and mutual interdependence. They spoke of the ICF's commitment to moral and human values and of its determination to work with him to give the men and women of the media a constructive purpose in this crisis-ridden and unfulfilled age.

Margueritte, who has represented French papers in Poland for many years, outlined in Polish to the Pope the ideas and work of the Forum. When the Pope was told that many media people linked to the Forum were men and women of faith, and of different faiths, he nodded and said, 'That is very good indeed.' He also expressed approval of Margueritte's view that the media ought to be a service to the public for democracy and that the crisis in the media was a threat to democracy itself. At the end of the meeting the Pope said, 'My blessings for your activity.'

*British journalist Michael Henderson lives in Portland, Oregon, USA.*

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## REFLECTIONS

by Edward Peters

# To see ourselves

**T**he last year has been characterized for me by two apparently opposite emotions. On the one hand the pain and grief surrounding the decline and death from cancer of my brother-in-law. On the other hand inner joy from experiencing the leading of God in my work.

At times this seeming dichotomy has been hard to bear: how can I feel joy in the face of such suffering, and how can I feel grief when God feels so close and so clearly at work? I have started to understand that pain and joy go hand in hand—and that I cannot have the latter without also having the former.

My slowness to understand this may be one reason why my life has sometimes been shallow. In my desire to stay free of pain, I have too readily sought the easy path. In my wish to avoid mistakes, I have often not taken risks. Though I may have avoided some pain and certain mistakes I have all too often missed out on an experience of joy in my life.

I suppose this is part of the mystery that it is our weakness God wants to use, not our strength. When I go the way of love, with the pain that attends it, and choose the path of risk-taking, I am vulnerable and weak—which I hate. Yet that vulnerability is my greatest asset.

One of the most uncomfortable things I have discovered has been the difference between the picture I project to others and the one I have of myself. I often come across as certain when I feel unsure, as opinionated when I don't quite know what I think, as hard or harsh when I feel quite fragile. I have also discovered how easily I hurt other people—usually without meaning to.

I can trace my fear of pain back to my teenage school days when my academic contemporaries were boys one or two years older than me, emotionally more mature than I was. Insecure and often teased, I developed a strong feeling of inferiority. As I grew older I found that I had difficulty in getting close to other people. There seemed to be something inside me which kept others at a distance. It was not until years later that I understood how the hurt I had experienced as an adolescent had caused me to close myself up—quite unconsciously. I had in effect built a wall of protection around myself, hoping to prevent anyone from coming close enough to be able to hurt me again. This had affected all my relationships.

A turning point came when I felt a voice inside saying: 'I love you. It doesn't matter whether you feel worth loving or not. I love

you just as you are.' I began to glimpse the wonder of God's love, given freely and equally to each of us—whether we think we deserve it or not.

Two years ago I took part with others in some 'facilitation training'. At the end of two days together our trainer drew out of each of us what we had learned. When it came to my turn she said, 'Edward, I see you as a strong oak tree.'

I spluttered, 'But I'm not like that, I feel very tender and fragile inside, not at all like an oak tree.'

She looked me straight in the eye and said: 'You will have to learn to take responsibility for how you come across to others.'

It was a painful, but freeing, discovery that I needed to stop excusing my actions by saying to myself that I am not really like that.

I constantly struggle over this. Just a few weeks ago, for example, I felt criticized by someone at a meeting. I retorted in a manner which this other person later said she found rude and hurtful. My temptation was to excuse myself on the grounds that I was misquoted and misunderstood. But I decided to take responsibility for how I had come across, and sincerely apologize for it.

This kind of slate-cleaning is a horribly frequent experience for me and constantly reminds me of how much I need forgiveness from God and from my friends. ■

*Edward Peters is Chairman of the Clean Slate Campaign, which invites people to deal with things in their lives that will prevent them entering the new Millennium with free hearts.*



Corbis



# Tax protests focus Jamaican media's role

**T**he English-speaking Commonwealth Caribbean has one of the freest presses in the world.

Jamaica, the largest English-speaking territory and my home country, has a long history of a vibrant and free press. *The Gleaner*, for which I write a weekly column, is one of the oldest continuously published newspapers in the world. It first appeared on Saturday, 13 September 1834, six weeks after the Emancipation Proclamation which freed Negro slaves in British colonies.

Today the media landscape in Jamaica is thickly dotted with three national daily newspapers, several regional papers, seven radio channels, three television broadcast channels and dozens of imported cable channels, as well as magazine and book publishers.

The government recently privatized its radio and television holdings and has never owned newspapers. So the media is today completely under private commercial control except that government information services use legally reserved time and space in the private media.

## Limits to freedom

The most significant issues facing the press concern the limits to press freedom, the responsible use of freedom, the relationship between press and government, the influence of imported content, and the role of the press in the development of young, independent countries.

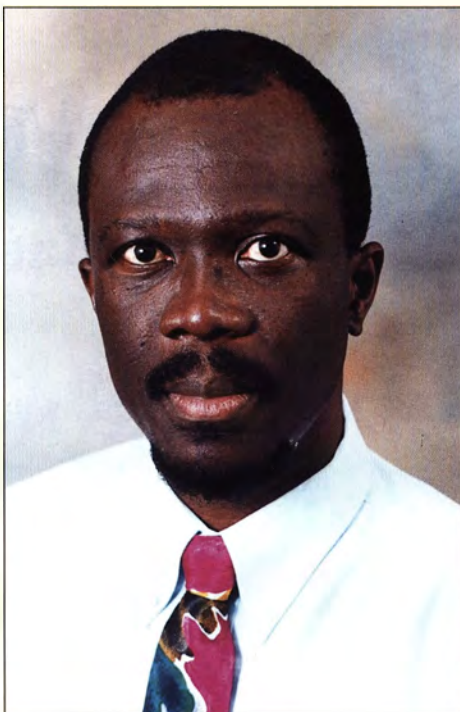
These and other issues were raised at a Caribbean conference on 'the Media and public confidence' in Jamaica from 15-19 April, organized by the International Communications Forum.

On the day the conference ended the country exploded into violence, bringing into sharp and painful focus the very issues discussed.

On Thursday 15 April, the Minister of Finance had announced a large tax hike on gasoline, effective the following day. Protests began on Monday after a quiet weekend. There is little doubt in my mind that early media reports unintentionally fuelled the escalation of protests.

Up to noon on day one, there were only scattered roadblocks which the midday newscasts reported. Within two hours, Kingston was totally locked down with roadblocks. For the next two days the country was brought to a standstill. Media personnel filed graphic reports. Two TV stations showed explicit footage of the partly clothed body of a young woman killed by gunfire in the protests, one of nine casualties.

The press was free to report the protests but was restricted in investigating the political causes of the protest by the Official Secrets Act. The OSA, journalists complain,



by Martin Henry

unduly limits access to the inner workings of government.

To a large degree, the protests were driven by a public perception of an unjust tax burden. More information about the decision-making of government might have averted an estimated Jam\$10 billion of damage and the loss of life.

When the government provided more information and, importantly, a mechanism

## 'Is the media reporting the news or helping to foment protest?'

for dialogue, protesters quickly offered a truce and withdrew from the streets. The Jamaican government is now contemplating a Freedom of Information Act which will allow greater public access to state information.

Roadblocks have become a popular form of protest in Jamaica. They frequently provide dramatic footage and sound bytes. Protesters often refuse to disperse before the cameras arrive, even if they are addressed by the authorities whose actions or inaction they are protesting about. The slogan of one television station—'putting you in the picture'—is often taken literally by protesters.

Is the media merely reporting the news, or is it helping to foment protest? Did the press report the gas tax protests responsibly? This is a difficult one. Alongside the responsibility to 'tell it as it is' is the responsibility to judge fairly 'how it really is' and not to further inflame an angry population.

The boundary between sensationalism and accurate reporting of a violent crisis is hard to judge. What was the news value of exposing a dead woman on the TV screen? The media did, however, follow through with extensive reporting and analysis of the resolution of the conflict.

## Talk shows

Some would argue that the media is not sufficiently aggressive in probing the government. Perhaps the most important role which the Caribbean media can play is responsibly to criticize governments and hold them accountable.

One of the main public forums is the talk shows which flourish in Jamaica and across the Caribbean, a few of which press heavily against the laws of libel and the OSA. The most critical talk show hosts are accused of being 'negative' and even 'destructive'. The tax protests have however provided them with some justification. If the rising complaints of the people against the tax had been heeded, it is argued, violence might have been averted. But detractors argue that the negative talk shows helped to precipitate the protests.

The distrust of the media common in some countries is not evident in the Caribbean. The reverse is true. As public confidence in politicians and other leaders has sunk to unprecedented lows, the media has risen in stature.

The President of the Press Association of Jamaica told the ICF conference that, as people run out of institutions they can trust, there is heavier reliance on and greater public trust in the media. How properly to carry this enormous weight of responsibility without arrogance, usurpation or exploitation is perhaps the biggest and most fundamental issue facing the press in the Caribbean today.

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## NEXT ISSUE

**Lead story:** People who are reasons for hope in cities all over the world will converge on the MRA centre at Caux, Switzerland, this summer. *For A Change* will be there.