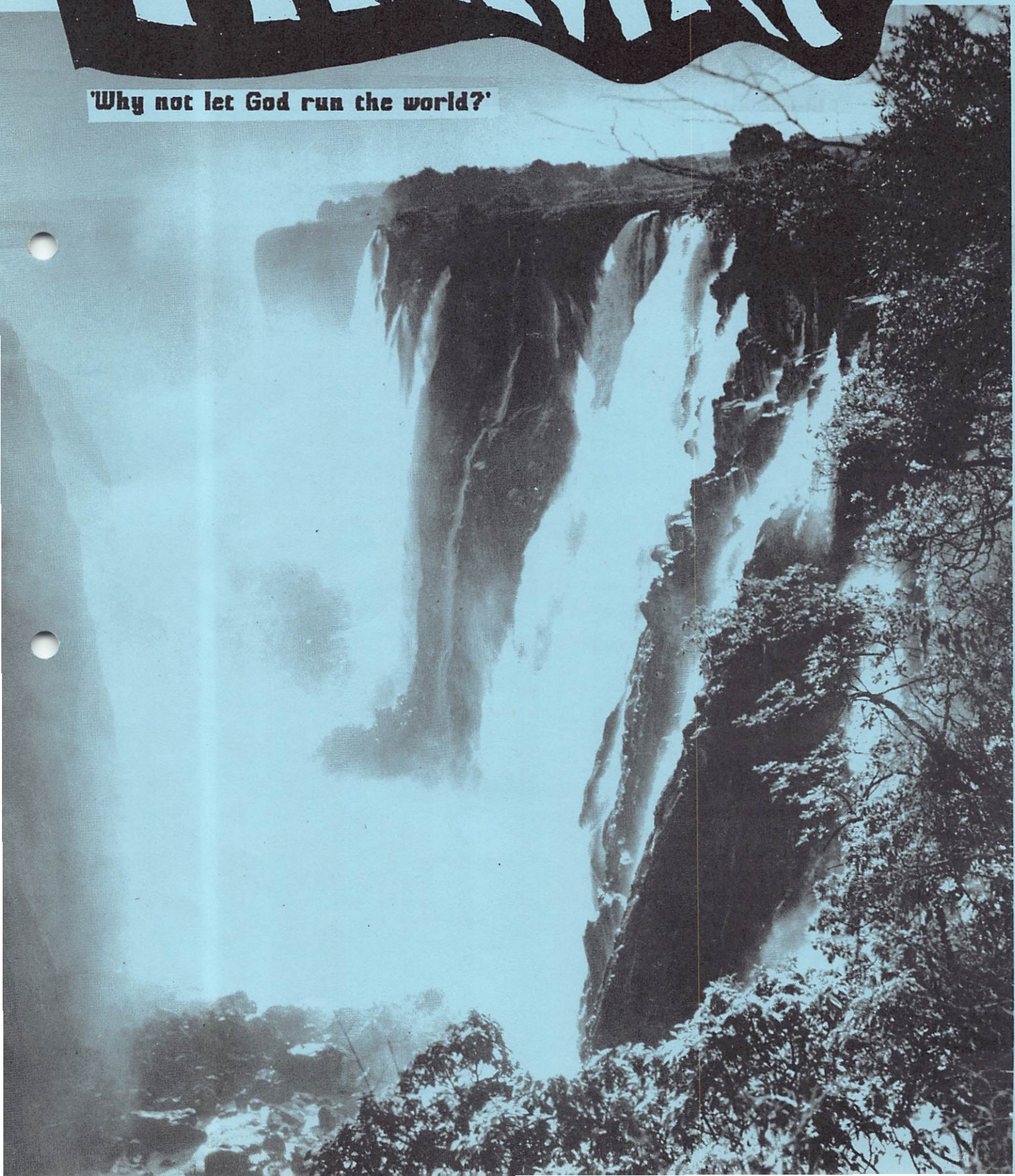


April 1991 Vol 5 No 4

FREEWAY

'Why not let God run the world?'



An injection of life

We are often asked what the most dangerous thing in the world is. Nuclear Threats? Terrorism? Communism? Pollution? The list of candidates appears endless. But surely all these things have a common factor - a human element. If the human element is 'safe' then the situation is no longer dangerous. How often does the danger occur, then, because people do evil or, worse still, do nothing?

How many of us feel shocked at events in Northern Ireland, the Middle East or South Africa, but simply have the attitude, "How sad, never mind"? Someone once said that, "Silence presumes agreement." If we see something wrong or evil, and do nothing about it, then surely we are just as bad. Many of us have felt this apathy, the thought which says - "Leave it, it doesn't matter". But if everyone left everything to everyone else, nothing would get done! When studying we know we have to get on with things ourselves. If we don't write the essay, nobody else will write it for us. The same is true of letters (and articles!) The secret is to see how it all fits together, as different parts of God's Plan. We can write letters to share experiences, difficulties, to encourage and support each other, or simply to pass on news. It is always uplifting to receive a letter - because it means that someone, somewhere has been thinking of you. Similarly writing letters brings a feeling of achievement instead of the emptiness of avoidance. The motto "Never put off until tomorrow, something which you can avoid altogether", doesn't work! But by seeing *why* something is being done - I'm writing to encourage someone, the essay is part of God's Plan - adds fire and purpose.

This is what is missing in so many people today. We need an 'injection of life', to snap out of the rut we sometimes find ourselves in, to say "NO" to what is wrong, and "YES" to God. We should start being bothered. When we stand up for something, we find that others appreciate the courage we show. Many people are in the same position of wanting to do something, but are too apathetic to break the ritual.

This 'injection of life' also helps us to see world situations in a different light. True, we may not be able to do anything about Northern Ireland - but we can support those who can - a letter can go a long way! Similarly we can get to know people from these countries, who may take something of us back with them. If we really want to do this, then God will show us how - all we have to do is to make the effort.

How do we instil this vitality into others? That is the crux. We can't. Only God can do that; we must simply live as He tells us, and perhaps some of our passion will rub off. One thing is certain though - those who put nothing into life will simply drift along, with false aims, or none at all. What kind of a life is that, compared to the one God has ready for us?

The EDITORS

Lord, why did you tell me to love

Lord, why did you tell me to love all men, my brothers?
I have tried, but I come back to you, frightened...
Lord, I was so peaceful at home, I was so comfortably settled.
It was well furnished, and I felt cosy.
I was alone, I was at peace,
Sheltered from the wind, the rain, the mud.
I would have stayed unsullied in my ivory tower.
But Lord, you have discovered a breach in my defences,
You have forced me to open my door,
Like a squall of rain in the face, the cry of men has awakened me.
Like a gale of wind a friendship has shaken me,
As a ray of light slips in unnoticed, your grace has stirred me
... and rashly enough I left my door ajar. Now, Lord, I am lost!
Outside men were lying in wait for me.
I did not know they were so near; in this house, in this street, in this
office; my neighbour, my colleague, my friend.
As soon as I started to open the door I saw them, with outstretched hands,
burning eyes, longing hearts, like beggars on church steps.

The first ones came in, Lord. There was after all some space in my heart.
I welcomed them. I would have cared for them and fondled them, my very own
little lambs, my little flock.
You would have been pleased, Lord, I would have served and honoured you in
a proper, respectable way.
Till then, it was sensible...
But the next ones, Lord, the other men, I had not seen them; they were
hidden behind the first ones.
There were more of them, they were wretched; they overpowered me without
warning.
We had to crowd in, I had to find room for them.
Now they have come from all over, in successive waves, pushing one another,
jostling one another.
They have come from all over town, from all parts of the country, of the
world; numberless, inexhaustible.
They don't come alone any longer but in groups, bound one to another.
They come bending under heavy loads; loads of injustice, of resentment and
hate, of suffering and sin...
They drag the world behind them, with everything rusted, twisted, or badly
adjusted.

Lord, they hurt me! They are in the way, they are everywhere. They are
too hungry, they are consuming me!
I can't do anything any more; as they come in, they push the door, and the
door opens wider...
Lord my door is wide open!
I can't stand it any more! It's too much! It's no kind of a life! What
about my job? my family? my peace? my liberty? and me?
Lord, I have lost everything, I don't belong to myself any longer;
There's no more room for me at home.

Don't worry, God says, you have gained all.
While men came in to you,
I your Father,
I your God,
Slipped in among them.

Michel Quoist

Construction or destruction?

by Ian Healey

TO WALK THROUGH the Cheshire countryside and hear hammering and sawing, and for those with good ears, the soft stroke of a paintbrush, is not a very unusual thing. When the Swiss Alps are filled with the echo of demolition, it is something rather different. It must be 'workweek' time.

The first Caux workweek was really in 1946, when the whole building needed cleaning up and renewing after being used for refugees during the war. The spirit which was created then, the spirit of working together with fun and having a good time, helped build a team which has carried Caux and the whole work of MRA ever since.

In 1986 the idea was conceived to start up a new workweek - to help prepare Caux for the summer by doing a lot of the jobs which needed doing, but which needed time and labour. The first year drew 60 people, who spent a week painting, gardening and renovating all the garden chairs. It was a success, and grew every year, peaking at 170 people in 1990, and has now become as much a part of Caux as the summer and New Year conferences.

Christoph Keller, the mastermind behind the work, starts preparing for the week immediately after Christmas. Together with Caux's own paid staff, he plans the work, thinking through the tools, paints and equipment that are needed, and preparing contingency plans if the weather makes things difficult. He is especially grateful for those who come a week or more earlier, to help with the preparation. It is important to fill in the holes in a wall before painting it!

"People want to contribute," he says, "and the help and savings for Caux cannot be overestimated: we have saved tens of thousands of Swiss Francs, through the help from these people, since a lot of the work needs to be done anyway."

There is also a second aspect. Working together with people - and it is hard work - does create friendships in a less formal way than in the summer. The atmosphere of the week is much more relaxed ("Afternoon Tea" is drunk out of plastic beakers in the cafeteria). Many people have found it a good to introduce their friends to Caux, who might not come to a 'full' conference.

The 1991 workweek has been probably the most dramatic. The whole area of the third floor, the Green Room, costume room, the old Economat and the area underneath the Scene Dock/Workshop, has been completely rebuilt. This has created new, much needed Seminar Rooms for the summer. Other work has included gardening and the rebuilding of the rock garden, and the peeling of hundreds of apples.

At the same time this year was the third 'Tirley Garth Workweek'. Tirley is the MRA conference centre in Cheshire, in England. The success of the Caux weeks spread and fifty people have come along to Tirley each year. Again the work has been invaluable. Jim Wigan has taken responsibility for the maintenance of the centre, which is set in 40 acres of landscaped gardens - a great source of peace and beauty for all who come.

"The help during the workweeks amazes me," he said, "It has brought forward our work schedules by months."

There is also continuity: in the first workweek a new set of garages were built and the old one was made into a games room ("Sports Complex"). The second year saw a second set of garages and complete decoration of the games room. Tirley's skilled employees also joined in: by learning how to paint, the participants are encouraged to help out their parents when they get home...

This year in Tirley has again been useful, with a new roof being built for the tractor shed - and (since this was too long?) an extension to the shed; Tirley's chalets have been wood-treated and protected against wild animals; forestry work has been carried out in the little copse, and electrical work has also been completed. The digging out of brambles always features at Tirley workweeks; it is one of the most satisfying aspects of the work to look back and see what you have achieved - a metre-long bramble, a newly painted room, or just a pile of stone and a hole.

And don't forget the new skills! How many people will leave the rubble of Caux, ready to start again at home?!

New Age & the Cross

by Mark Boobbyer

THE CROSS IS OFFENSIVE to the world....it contradicts all that the world stands for. We should not tamper with the offence of the cross in some well-meaning way, because it is through an experience of the cross that people and nations can find new life and freedom from conforming to the standards of the world.

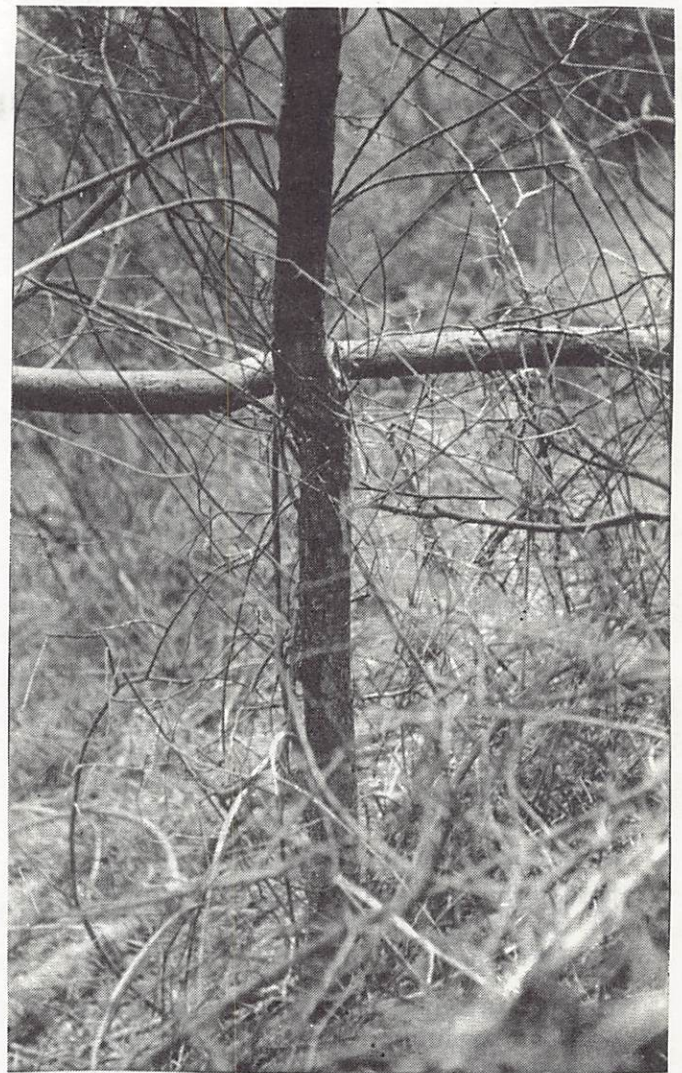
The cross isn't very fashionable these days. Mind you it never has been and it never will be. Yet many people, in the West at least, are becoming increasingly interested in spiritual matters, apparently in an attempt to find an explanation for their lives. Or perhaps a solace amidst the helter-skelter of a world that will not slow down and is sweeping away many who are unable enough to stand against the bombardment of materialism and permissiveness.

But mention moral values, mention God, mention the cross? Er...no thanks.

Many people are worried about the future and make it their business to try and find out what it has in store. They consult Tarot Card readers and Palmists, gaze into crystals and rush to read the stars in newspapers and magazines to see what the day, the week, the year has in store. Most newspapers and magazines now contain horoscopes and even television shows have astrologers who exercise a disturbing power over many people, who then find it convenient to excuse their behaviour by saying, "It's not my fault I'm the way I am. I was born when the sun was passing through Leo," or some such...

But of course it is all such innocent fun, isn't it? No one really believes it ... or do they? The fact is that what is for many 'a bit of a laugh' is becoming for an increasing minority a way of life; which draws people further and further into it's web until caught, rather like drugs...whole shops in London are devoted to books and artifacts about the paranormal, psychic phenomena and the occult, which sucks the unaware person into a maze of the darker side of spirituality, the spirituality of what the Bible calls 'The Prince of this world,' the Devil... you may not believe in him... I do.

Shirley Maclaine, doyen of the New Age, a title given to this enlightened spiritual movement, would have it that we are all in



fact gods. We have thrown off the superstitious constraints of the Middle Ages and we are all free to do as we wish, fulfilling the divinity in each one of us. Mankind is not sinful, so there is no need for the cross. What a revolutionary idea!

Would I be alone in believing that this thinking went out of date with the dinosaurs? There is nothing new or revolutionary in New Age thinking. Where does all this leave the cross?

The cross will always be revolutionary because it renews and revitalises human nature...but it will always be costly, costing no less than everything...small wonder it has never been popular. Undoubtedly it would be more convenient to explain away infidelity, dishonesty and perversion as due to planetary conversions at one's birth..., leave you free to do so. But if you want freedom from sin, sin that binds and cripples, you do not need a star atlas, you need to go the way of the cross, every single day. In an age when people are crying out for spiritual satisfaction, let us not give them half the cross, but the whole thing. Most will find it offensive, but those who are brave will grasp a hold of it.

Where does hope come from?

MY WIFE AND I recently spent five days in Moscow - visiting our son who is currently doing research for a PhD.

It was devastating. And fascinating.

Nearly everyone very depressed, buildings falling to pieces, indescribable squalor, food very short and famine looming on a massive scale. Yet there were patches of beauty like the Kremlin churches and museums, wide streets, pockets of efficiency like the Metro and the telephone (free anywhere within Moscow), glimpses of glamour like the Bolshoi, and the gracious insides of six Russian homes, harbouring gallant people - and we had memorable conversations.

The father in one of those homes said "All our dreams are gone".

The whole experience made me want to rethink what I say to people, so that the hope of a new world I believe in is not dependent on anything from outside.

I have always been lucky to have had access to beautiful places and things. I have seldom missed the abundant hope that comes in the springtime of the year. But millions and millions of people have no such fortune. There was hardly any colour to be seen in Moscow. Even the birds. I only saw crows, pigeons and sparrows.

Study the word 'nothing'.

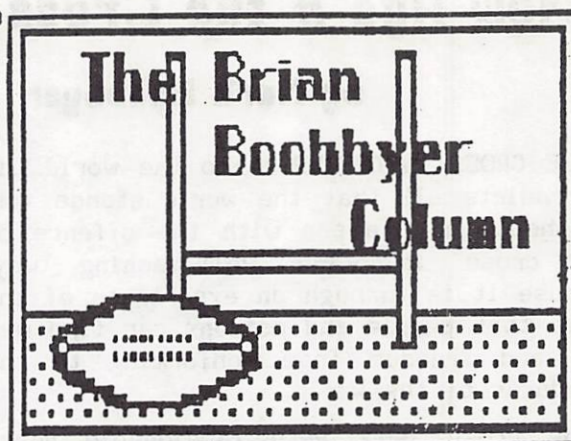
I have just re-read the old spiritual classic *Absolute Surrender* by Andrew Murray. I read it first in my twenties, again in my forties and now in my sixties.

He writes, 'The disciples gave up all they possessed at the beginning of their three years with Jesus. Only at the end of their time did they begin to give up themselves. They had given up nets, homes, friends, but they had not given up self.'

The great hindrance to trust is self-effort. As long as we are something, He cannot be all. That is the beginning of faith, utter despair of self.

Study the word "nothing". When I am nothing, God can become all.'

This to me is the secret of hope. I am very limited and anything I do in my own



strength is only going to end in exhaustion.

But God is not limited. And there is no limit to what He may use me to do.

Shakespeare in East Europe

Earlier this year the National Theatre from London toured Prague, Bucharest, Leipzig and Dresden with Shakespeare plays *King Richard III* and *King Lear*.

The *Times* reporter, Anne McElvoy, wrote about the visit to Romania: 'Richard III, with its echoes of the country's recent past, drew bursts of applause throughout the performance. The audience was clearly charting Richard's descent into evil with their eye of memory fixed on their destroyed dictator. When the flag was torn down in the final scene, its centre cut out and thrown over the new king, the theatre was briefly transformed into a political rally with cheers and calls of "Liberty".'

"Romanians love Shakespeare because he was with us throughout the worst of times", said a young stage director.'

The review continues, 'Richard III conveys the mean thin misery of a dictator who is driven but never fulfilled by his ambition, as he leads himself into isolation and his country into chaos. When he reached the lines, "There is no creature loves me, And if I die no soul will pity me", the mind flashes back to the last days of Ceaucescu.'

She quotes Eyre, the director of the play: 'Richard III is the most Romanian play because it deals not only with a dictator, but dictatorship's deflating effects on the spirit. When Richard says,

"The rest that love me, rise and follow me", they shrug their shoulders and go along with him. That is true tyranny: the ability to make people feel they have no choice.'

The review ends, 'In Prague, the company was received by President Havel, who was so moved by the performance of "King Lear" that he used it as the basis of his weekly address to the nation. "We understand that," he told Cox who played King Lear. "That is our history in a single gesture."'

When I read this, I felt proud and grateful that Shakespeare, who died 375 years ago, should give so much hope to these lands. People love someone who understands them.

Hope is a choice

When the Berlin wall came down in 1989, the world celebrated. Orchestras from East and West Germany, and artists from many countries performed Beethoven's Choral Symphony on Christmas Eve. Before a worldwide TV audience. It was one of the most hopeful events I've ever seen.

In St Peter's 1st Epistle, he writes about 'those who are kept by the power of God through faith'. Here are two truths. God does the keeping and I do the trusting.

Christ said that if I believed in Him and followed Him I would do the same and greater things than Him.

Gandhi once said that anyone could do what he had done.

It is still Eastertime as I write this and I remember that Christ died for the world as well as for me. It reminds me that there is a world to love and care for as well as my world. If I do that, it gives me a sense of proportion. Hope may be scarce in some places, but more apparent in others.

At the same time there is hope even in the darkest places. God's light never goes out and I can always choose to share that light.

Hope is a choice. It comes and remains when I totally empty myself and I allow God's fullness and friendship to take my place.

Threat

Through a viewfinder,
I see a square pool,
Bordered by white flagstones,
and sand.
A courtyard,
enclosed by white laced stone.
Through the fretwork, endless blue sky,
Desert stretches beyond.
The pool, looking in, reflects no blue.
Its depths are grey.
Into sight comes an arm, khaki clad,
Heavy with military insignia,
Threatening the tranquillity of the pool,
Preparing to mar the polished pewter,
The fist clenches, and strikes.
And the ripples spread...

December 1990

After ceasefire

Far beyond,
A land of sun
And mountains.
Black over the mountains
Flocks circling
In front of the sun.
Billowing robes
Black of mourning.
Living shadows,
Widows, mothers, daughters.
Iraq we weep for you
Iraq we cry for your
Long black eclipse.

Su Riddell

February 1991

Equipping oneself

by Pravir Bagrodia

ASIA PLATEAU, the MRA training centre in Panchgani, India, was bustling with activity from January 4th to February 15th. The reason was the training course "Equipping oneself for a lifetime", which brought together 35 young people from 21 countries spread across all the continents (except Antarctica, because Penguins were not eligible).

The course curriculum was a blend of information, education and entertainment. One of the aims listed in the brochure was "to learn to understand, appreciate and create working partnerships for life between people of different communities, cultures and countries". The programme succeeded in establishing enduring friendships amongst the participants, who came from such diverse backgrounds.

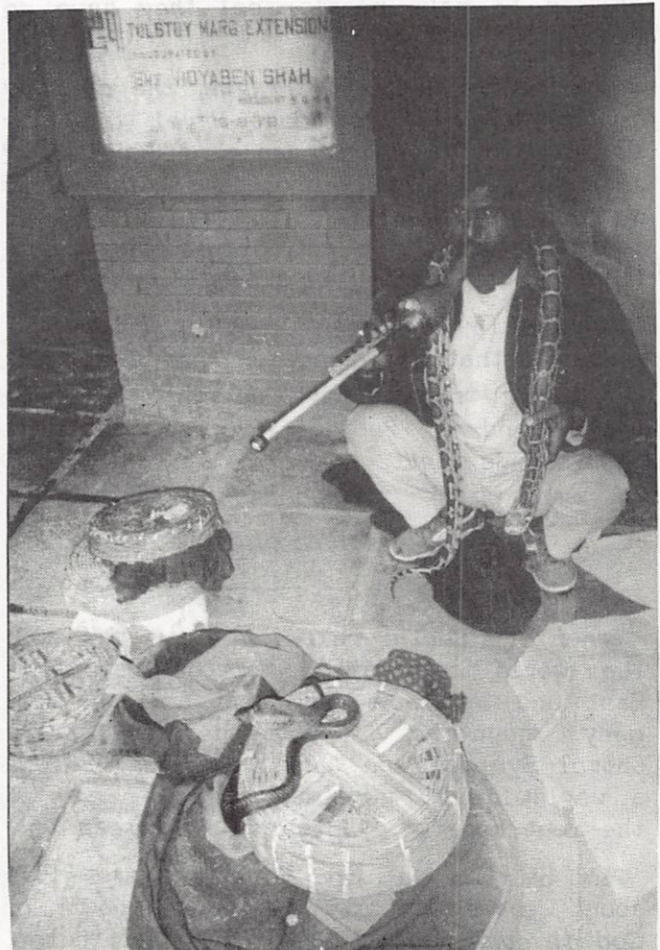
The inner-development sessions brought out the "value of values" in life, of faith, commitment and moral standards. Visiting speakers focussed attention on issues such as addictions, leadership, bridge-building and international relations. In addition, there were talks on Jainism, Islam, Vedanta and meditation. The founder and President of The Spastics Society of India, Mithu Allur, shared her vision of a caring society.

One to one sessions provided an opportunity to evaluate one's life. We greatly enjoyed the drama workshops while the music classes enabled us to learn 11 songs in 9 languages. Our knowledge of different countries was put to the test during the presentations by each of the participants about their own countries. It was a chance to understand our world better, to understand the common dilemmas of various countries.

Sports and games, gardening and field-work, meal service and dish-washing, all these contributed to the building of the team-spirit. Prayers, slides, films, assignments, walks, outings and cultural programmes were an integral part of the schedule. The participants were able to display their creative skills through a creative-evening'. They could interact with delegates of an industrial seminar and later with many students of Panchgani schools.

We stayed overnight in a nearby village and were struck by the simplicity and hospitality of the rural folk. We also visited the Pune plant of TELCO, India's largest manufacturer of commercial vehicles.

The most memorable experience, however, was the five-day visit to Surat and Valsad districts of the province of Gujarat. We were greatly inspired by



Equipping oneself with charming techniques

the sincerity and devotion of the people there who were trying to improve the condition of their less-privileged brethren. Several rural development schemes have been undertaken, related to 'khadi' and handicrafts, education and teacher-training, health and housing, bio-gas and tree-plantation and drinking water facilities.

The stay in India, with all its sights and sounds, problems and contrasts, culture and heritage was a unique experience for the overseas participants. The serene and beautiful surroundings contributed to creating a better sense of care for creation. The message that was clearly conveyed was the need to change ourselves first if we want a better tomorrow for a better world. Remarkable changes were noticed in the participants during the course.

The programme was an opportunity to look in and to reach out; to come together, live together and work together. It was an attempt to equip ourselves better to face the challenges of life and be instruments of change.

for a life time

by Andrew Smith

A LAND OF VAST CONTRASTS, colour, beauty, smells, and full of people, India affected all our hearts in a profound way. Getting to know India started off in Asia Plateau, where we helped to run an MRA Industrial conference. This was a chance to meet ordinary people from all over the sub-continent of India. On one occasion we visited the local Indian village, Dandeghar, and slept ate and worked with the villagers. We were welcomed into their homes with wonderful hospitality, they gave us the best they had. It was a great experience; the group I was with shared a room with a buffalo! We also encountered various Indian insects, who happily bit us all night long.

One week of the course was set aside for a trip to the hill villages of Gujarat - a trip which requires a 20 hour journey by bus. Here the reality of India was seen. We experienced traditional Indian dancing and music, ate simple Indian vegetarian meals and saw not only the great problems and the poverty, but also the dignity, spirit and faith of Indians. This was a real education for all on the course, especially those from rich countries.

For me personally it was a shock; when I saw these villagers who endure back-breaking work just to stay alive, I realised that God had given me great opportunities and gifts. I saw clearly how terribly unfair it would be to these

villagers for me not to use my talents and gifts effectively for the benefit of the world - I realised I had a duty to these Indians.

In Gujarat we also stayed at a religious centre based on the principles of Gandhi, a place where there were men who had met Gandhi and continued his work. The centre trained young Indians in the principles of Love, Truth and Compassion - very similar to MRA! From this base many schemes aimed at improving the quality of life in India were visited, including programmes of housing improvement, the setting up of local craft industries and the production of electricity from manure. We saw clearly what could be done practically to help.

The course was a great success and we as participants benefited greatly from it. One young man said, "We opened our hearts honestly to others and took in all new ideas avidly as we were given a real vision for the future." One young Indian wrote in his assessment of the course, "What I had been doing before was something too shallow to bring joy. The thought of man's futility in all he did and a deep sense of purposelessness had lodged in me. This course has brought a storm of change into my world and instilled purpose into my existence."

Photo: Francisco Rueda



Photo: Janet Leggat

Taking a bus to Gujarat

Lay down your dreams

by Rachel Charrett

CONTROL. IT IS A MAJOR disease of the western world; to plan, to mould the future, to make the world 'safe'; to predict, contain, influence.

We also try to control God - to limit His ability to make a difference. We have difficulty in imagining what we have not already personally encountered, so we seek to build into our plans things which we know.

The saying "better the devil you know than the devil you don't," really sums this up - humans beings are resistant to change, resistant to the idea of being or doing something other than what they know, even if what they know is, quite literally, hell. Even though I suspect that deep within us we all contain an inkling of the idea that it is indeed "variety which is the spice of life", we feel afraid to launch out into the unknown.

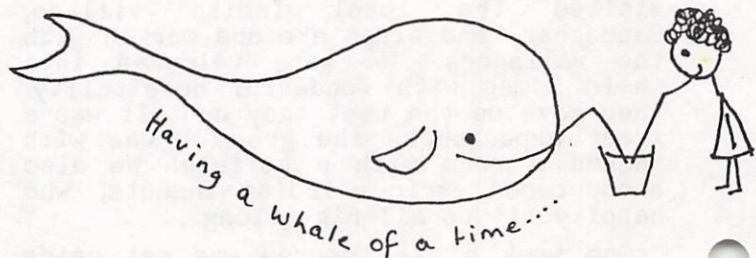
Fear is, I think, the greatest, perhaps the only, tool of the devil. With it he can whisper to us that the rough deal we are experiencing is all we are likely to get. ("Better stick with it, things could be worse..."), that it is better to be safe.

The worst thing about seeking to control is that we die, gradually, inside. All the excitement, freshness, sparkle of life ebbs away, and is replaced by a sense of comfortable mediocrity. One by one, we build around us a series of cushions, which we use as excuses for not changing. Then whenever we hear God challenging us, we trot them out. Jesus heard them all: 'I've just got married, you can't expect me to change my routine just now'; 'I've just bought a field, and I cannot come'. And so it goes on.

Gradually, we persuade ourselves as best as we are able, that it's normal to be safe. Everyone does it. We plan our future - our jobs, our holidays, our retirement! It's all mapped out, from beginning to end, a series of dots on the page, which we carefully join up. But inside, we know when we are behaving like a coward; tempted and then tormented, we cling to the safety of what we know

What strikes me about all this safety and security, this careful dotting of i's and crossing of t's on the chart of life, is that it is the opposite of God's way. If we plan so carefully ourselves, we have no

room for God's generosity. Surely, His vision of my tomorrow is vaster and more exciting by far than mine! If I have tomorrow neatly packaged before I have even finished today, can I meet God unawares? Of course I can, but I think that we limit His influence simply by our state of mind.



Cartoons: Rachel Charrett

In resisting change, what is it that we are really saying? God made us with a need for love and security, but He intended us to find these in Him, and not in the world around us, or through other people. When we try to do that, we find all the things which we thought would satisfy us are empty and hollow.

We are missing the point. Life is a journey. At no time should we stop travelling. To imagine that a set of circumstances, or a possession, or a person, is going to bring us true happiness or satisfaction, is to say that we want to stop moving. Of course, we can do that. But life is for living, God intends us to walk. And as we walk we learn more of Him.

So much effort is spent trying to control ourselves, our family, our friends, our circumstances, so that they will, between them, add up to a whole.

For God to be able to break in, we need to be expecting the unexpected, looking for a challenge, listening for a whisper of truth. I have experienced days when life and love seemed to burst forth from around every corner, and fill me with God's presence.

The greatest thing is that life lived 'expecting the unexpected' is fun!! It is a roller-coaster adventure, never dull, always challenging. It lives up to God's wildest dreams, not just our own.

If I seek to know the future before it is given to me, I surely express my

distrust of God. What a shame it would be if, before every Birthday or Christmas celebration, we all knew exactly what we were to be given. All the fun would go out of the receiving, but also out of the giving! I am convinced that God wants to surprise us with His generosity - leave us amazed at His extravagance, and certain that these gifts come from Him, and are not of our making.

I wonder if even when we pray, we seek to control God: "Please do this," "please do that," "please bless so and so," "please help." Perhaps God would like to surprise us also in our prayers. I think instead that God simply longs for us to spend time with Him, to get to know Him. A friend and I were once in a restaurant in France. She ordered ice-cream, and asked the waitress for two flavours, and she got them. What made her mad was the thought that if she hadn't asked, hadn't limited the choice to her own, she would have got all five flavours! I think it is rather like that with God - if we ask Him for our own wishes, maybe we'll be given them - but maybe we could have received much more if we hadn't given God our own specifications for the future!

Psalm 37 says,

"Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart."

I used to think that if only I could do the first bit - a spot of delighting, God would dole out whatever I most wanted. A sort of quid pro quo arrangement with the Almighty. But I think this is meant in a different way. Make God your sole desire. Long for Him, for His presence, to be with Him. Psalm 42:

"As the deer pants for the streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?"

Then, says the psalmist, he will give you the desires of your heart. You will live the things he wants to give you, because He will have prepared your heart. The things I want are the same as the things God wants, and He lets me enjoy them.

The cost? Quite simply, to give God complete control of your life. To rescind any rights to anything. Christ is the great

I AM. I AM not in the past, or in the future, but I AM in today. Search for Christ in the present, and He will overwhelm you. Search for Him in the past, or in the future, and you will miss having a whale of a time today.

The cost? To stop seeing the changing patterns of life as ends in themselves, but rather as the means to an end; the means of finding Christ, who is the Alpha and the Omega, my beginning and my end.

Satan tells us that it is foolish to give up our lives to God. How can He be trusted? After all, you don't know what He'll give you tomorrow - it might be really awful.

It is not easy to give up our 'claims'. It costs. The thing to recall when it is hardest to do, when fear is rising within us, and Satan is giving his all, is that those who have, at least in part succeeded, shine with a light and joy that I never see on those who have not.

In C.S. Lewis' "Perelandra", Satan has tried to tempt the newly created Queen from breaking God's only commandment to her - not to sleep on the fixed land, but on the floating islands. When the battle is over and victory is won, she says:

"The reason for not yet living on the fixed land is now so plain. How could I wish to live there except because it was fixed? And why should I desire the fixed except to make sure - to be able on one day to command where I should be the next and what should happen to me? it was to reject the wave - to draw my hands out of Maleldil's [God's], to say to him, 'Not thus, but thus' - to put in our own power what times should roll towards us... as if you gathered fruits together today for tomorrow's eating instead of taking what came. That would have been cold love and feeble trust."

Always, God asks us to be prepared to love everything for Him, to leap off precipices and trust to Him to catch us and bear us up on the wings of eagles. Sin is simply to fail to live and live abundantly, as Jesus said we ought. There are no guarantees, no assurances, other than that He will never leave us, never forsake us. In the end all other assurances are worthless.



Latin American meet

by Marta Castelli

"Team-work and Action" was the central idea of a Latin American gathering taking place in Petropolis, a Brazilian town 60km from Rio de Janeiro.

The Sitio Sao Luiz (the MRA centre in Brazil) received representatives from the USA, Mexico, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and some Europeans who have lived on this continent for many years.

The opening session presented us with a challenge: know each other better to form a united group and thus an efficient team.

What can I do? What prevents me from fighting freely? These questions provoked many answers. In any situation each of us has a part to play. We could see clearly, if only we would choose a lifestyle that would make us a useful tool for God to use at His will. It is a frightening thought to accept because it implies an enormous responsibility. Apart from fear there are other noises that silence the inner voice calling us: pride, materialism, greed, laziness, insecurity... How to beat them? Make God the centre and goal of our lives, listen to what He asks us to do and then DO IT!

Latin American economic and military situations was another of the main topics.

Different countries are going through similar crises: low levels of employment and production; heavy external debts which cause an outward flow of resources; internal debts which require the production of money and the inevitable rise in inflation. Poverty rates grow alarmingly.

There is a common root to all of these problems in South American countries: inflation (exhausting economic energies), statism (too many state owned enterprises that are inefficient), corruption (which needs a moral reaction) and monopolies (which force up prices). To make our economies work we must first solve these problems.

As for the military, it has been a repeated story: the military take-over of a government followed by a violent reaction from the left. The Army's excuse is that they must bring order; the guerillas' is to free the people from exploitation. Then civil war, hate and division come in.

MRA groups from Central America have begun a series of meetings, with people

A view over
Rio de Janeiro



Nothing is less convincing than someone saying something that he does not really believe. To be able to transmit the idea of MRA, we have got to live it and so testify to it with our actions. Testimony includes sharing, honestly and without fear our own experiences of change. Be they simple or exemplary, we never know how far they can reach, how much they can touch somebody else's heart. It is always a great help to know that you are not the only one.

from both sides, to try to narrow the gap between these two groups of their society.

The role of Youth was another issue. We discovered that our problems know no borders. All over the world, youth means strength, energy, freshness and initiative, but also impatience, volubility and rebelliousness. If the energies of the young are not channelled correctly, if young people do not find a way to express themselves in an adult world, then those

energies can very easily lead to drugs, alcohol, crime....

Trying to become the models society wants us to become can create bitterness in ourselves and our families. The need to belong can drown us. We want this or that because society says that we should; girls have to be thin; guys have to have either very long or very short hair, etc. etc.... Money becomes the ultimate wish and master. Let's help young people in our countries (I am 21 years old so I include myself), to dare to be what they are, without any masks.

This meeting has been very important for me. We, Argentinians have always looked up to Europe and that made us consider ourselves as not being South Americans (we were better), and so looked down on the other American countries. Well, meeting all these people from the rest of the continent, showed me that I still have a great deal to learn. First of all, never to deny your roots and your kind because then you lose your identity. You have got to know where you come from to be able to know where you are going to....

The right perspective

by Marta Castelli

Sightseeing in Rio de Janeiro this January, we arrived at Mount Corcovado, where a huge statue of Jesus overlooks the city. As it is a very high place, it has a magnificent view: the Sugar Loaf, Guanabara Bay, the beaches, the buildings, everything.

Half an hour before, we had been driving through the city and everything had looked so big, noisy and overwhelming. But from that height, it seemed tiny and tidy; you could grasp it all in a glance.

It came to me that we could do the same with our problems and daily preoccupations. Sometimes when we are immersed in our worries, it looks as if we will never see the end of them; they suffocate our faith, our capacity for creation. But if we try to elevate our souls to God, through guidance and quiet times, we will be able to get things into the right perspective. And we will see that our troubles were not so difficult after all.

Let us pray that God will be our mountain so that we can see the world in its right size.

Welcoming strangers

by Elizabeth Dunkley

IN A MAGAZINE I READ recently there was an article entitled: "Martha and Mary are alive and well." One of the questions posed was: "What does it really mean to open our homes in the way Martha and Mary did?" It started me thinking of how our home has been used since we got married. In the first month after we were married we were asked if we could put up the daughter of a friend, in order that we could take her to a conference early the next morning. We first had to buy blankets! Over the years we've had mainly younger people to stay, sometimes for one night, sometimes for as long as a month, from all parts of Britain and from all over the world. They have mostly come to visit our area to tell people of the change in their lives that has come through listening to the inner voice of God speaking to them, and obeying. They were mostly people living by faith who weren't getting paid for what they doing.

Sometimes, like Martha, I've felt someone else ought to do the work, and when people arrive I've felt like Mary, sitting and listening to what they've been doing and hearing who they've been meeting and having my faith built up. Being someone who finds it difficult to stand up in a meeting and express my faith, I have been reminded that here is something I can do, and that God has meant us to use our home in this way.

In Peter's letter he writes, "Open your homes to each other without complaining. Each one as a good steward of God's different gifts must use for the good of others the special gift he has received from God," and Paul writes in Hebrews, "Remember to welcome strangers in your homes. There were some who did that and welcomed Angels without knowing it."

I looked through our Visitor's Book and was reminded of those people from different countries who have stayed with us:- Australia, Barbados, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Holland, India, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, South Africa, Sweden, and Zimbabwe.

I remember one man who was staying with us who went to a meeting one Monday morning. He led a very busy life, so I offered to do his washing. It was such a beautiful day that everything dried in double-quick time. After lunch our guest

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Dawn in Zimbabwe

by Rex Dilly

Photo: David Channer



Lord Soames, representative of the British government, with President Robert Mugabe, (then Prime Minister) for Independence Day celebrations

RHODESIA, OR ZIMBABWE as it is now known, was one of the last African countries to gain its independence. This happened at midnight, 17-18 April 1980, when the British flag was lowered and the flag of the new independent Zimbabwe was raised.

During the '50s and '60s a wind of change blew through Africa, as country after country became free of colonial rule which had been in place for a hundred years. But in the case of Rhodesia there was an obstinate refusal, on the part of the white population, even to consider giving the blacks a greater share in the government of the country.

The British Government attempted to negotiate a transfer of power, but the newly-elected white Rhodesia Front were adamant. Ian Smith, its leader, slammed the door on Britain and made his Unilateral Declaration of Independence.

Meanwhile the black nationalist movement was growing fast. The struggle intensified and in 1972 it erupted into guerilla war and continued with increasing suffering for seven years, during which 27,500 people were killed and 275,000 wounded.

The priority was to find ways of changing the whites' attitudes, and to build bridges of understanding between them and some of the black leaders. A formidable task, but a fundamental need.

A major step in answering this need was a change in Alec Smith, son of Prime Minister Ian Smith. He had hated always being referred to as 'Ian Smith's son' and rebelled against this loss of identity. He had taken to drugs, become a hippy and drug pedlar and landed in court.

He then had a remarkable experience which turned his life around 180 degrees. This brought a new awareness of injustice and oppression in his own country. He called a conference on the theme, 'The change in people which alone will make political changes work', and gave a vision of the new country he wanted to see.

'Ian Smith's son'

Attending the conference was a black nationalist leader, Arthur Kanodereka. He was a Methodist minister, but had been recruiting young blacks to fight in the guerilla forces. Deep bitterness lined his face. He was very suspicious, and when the son of the man he most hated got up to speak, he thought it was a trap.

But Alec Smith's sincerity took him unawares when he said, "I have come to realise that I have a personal responsibility for my country's dilemma. It is me, Alec Smith, who is answerable because my selfish life-style and insensitive attitudes have driven those boys into the bush."

Alec recalls, "As I was speaking something was happening to Arthur. Despite all his deeply-felt hatred and suspicion, despite his knowledge of humiliation, his memory of torture, despite himself, he was profoundly moved by God's power to so obviously change the heart of a man. He saw I was truly a new person, that I was no longer an enemy but an ally."

Can't change a man by hating him

Arthur Kanodereka wrote later, 'I saw Christ, not for blacks and not for whites, but for all people. A care for white people, that they should find something new came into my heart, and I felt a new authority from God to give his message of reconciling love to all people, regardless of the colour of their skins. I realised that you could not change a man by hating him - you only made him worse - and I felt my hatred fall away.'

He and Alec became firm friends and spoke together in crowded meetings, later travelling to Europe and even to South Africa. Arthur also visited the Caribbean and the USA.

Alec decided to invite Arthur and his wife to meet his father and mother. His father was much embarrassed by his son's friendship with a black nationalist, but they agreed. After a talk over tea at the Prime Minister's residence, Ian Smith said privately to Alec, "If there are more black leaders like Arthur Kanodereka, I could hand over tomorrow."

In late 1978 Kanodereka decided to venture on a dangerous peace mission to promote an all-party conference. He went to meet the guerilla leaders in Zambia and Mozambique. Tragically, he was assassinated a few days after he returned home.

Mugabe and Smith meet

During these months, a group representing different races and political viewpoints had begun to spend time together regularly. The basis of their meeting was not political, but a common love of the country. They set out to explore the way forward to bring the civil war to an end, and they were led to people who played their part in achieving this.

It was from this group that a secret meeting was arranged between Ian Smith and Robert Mugabe during the tense time of the run-up to independence. This was an audacious step, because both men had denounced each other in the strongest terms, and a white coup had been arranged in the event of a Mugabe victory. But the meeting took place on the night when the election result was to be announced. Alec Smith writes in his autobiography*, 'Observers felt afterwards that this secret meeting was a crucial step in calming fears and averting the expected bloodshed'.

Next evening on television, Mugabe called for reconciliation, and invited the whites to stay and help to build the new Zimbabwe. He used phrases like, "Let us beat our swords into ploughshares, and forgive others and forget, join hands in a new amity together".

Then Ian Smith, to the surprise of the world, called on the whites, many of whom were preparing to pack their bags and head out, not to leave but to stay.

*'Now I call him brother' by Alec Smith is published by Marshalls

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Welcoming strangers

came in and said he'd had a call to go to Brazil and it meant leaving immediately. He was so grateful to pack clean dry clothes, instead of them still being damp. That's one way in which God provides.

On another occasion there was a meeting in our city, and a coach-load of people were coming to participate. I was asked if I could put on a meal for half of the coach-load, somebody else doing the other half. We lived in a small house on a new estate; what would the neighbours think of a coach turning up, and everyone pouring into our house?! From my own experience of being on the receiving end, I know how much it means to be welcomed into a home.

Our most recent guest has been the first Pastor of a Methodist Church to be allowed out of Estonia. It is a privilege that God has given us to be part of building friendships between East and West.

LIVING - FOR WHAT?

Following the success of the Youth Hosted Session in Caux last year, plans are well advanced for another this summer. Running from August 3rd (5pm) until August 10th (2pm), the theme this time will be '*Living - For What?*'

A group met in Caux at Easter, and are happy to report that things are taking shape. The main change from last summer is that we would like to shift the emphasis slightly, and make discussion groups more of a priority, then everyone will have more opportunity to have their say. Questions will be prepared, and the discussion group leaders will be trained in advance. All candidates are welcome! If you are interested, let us know. All ideas are still very much needed.

Events:

Men must choose... - a conference in Nairobi, Kenya 22-27 May 1991

Change In People, A Factor In World Development is the title of a conference in Cameroon from June 27th to 30th.

There will also be a second International Youth Camp in Taiwan from August 23rd to September 1st

Deadline For Next Issue: June 10th 1991

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