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FREEMAN

'Why not let God run the world?'



The opportunity of loneliness

Suddenly, you realise that you are on your own. You are lonely, and the loneliness is everywhere. You cannot escape it. If you are to be honest, you have to face it.

Strangely, you realise that there is another side to loneliness: solitude. And solitude is not all that it seems.

Slowly, you discover that solitude is a road into unfathomable depths, into a room without walls. Then, it is also a beaker from which you may drink living water.

Gradually, in your solitude you discover a hidden world, a valley with an unending stream running through it.

Slowly, solitude gives way to silence.

Bit by bit, you start to dream. Silently, the pattern of the world begins to change. The stars beckon; the rivers run swiftly; the horses canter in the meadows. And as you listen, the wind whispers tales of nobility and greatness.

And in the silence, you may strain to hear the silent music, and the waves which break on the other side of silence.

And you start to approach the invisible shore.

So, all of a sudden, you see that loneliness is a window. You may draw the curtain and pretend it is not there, or open the window and climb into the garden. Then you may step into the loving silence.

Of course, loneliness should be no idol through which you defy a world that you do not fit into. It is just a means by which God reveals to you your need for Him. In this sense, loneliness can be your chance. It is a gate. It can be a doorway to the road within.

The road leads to love. In fact, the road becomes love. As soon as you are on it, you will start to live.

The Editors

Lessons from Bulgaria



Photo: Edward Howard

by Angela Willoughby

HOW WOULD YOU fancy going to a completely different society from your own and addressing, in a foreign language, classes of up to sixty students in schools? Sounds rather daunting but that's what Mariana and Angel Zahariev from Bulgaria spent three months in Britain doing.

Angel, an economist turned translator and his wife, Mariana, an English teacher, took unpaid leave earlier this year to share their time and experiences with young people in 45 schools in many different parts of the country.

They began each session with a short presentation of Bulgaria including the recent events and fall of Communism and then encouraged students to ask questions. Most students knew very little about Bulgaria but were very eager to learn. Many topics were discussed; materialism, freedom, trust, authority, direction in life, environmental issues.

The Zahariev's in turn were interested to know what motivates young people in this country, what kinds of issues they stand up for. They asked students what they would like and not like to give to a country like Bulgaria which is trying to develop along democratic lines. Their

answers included homelessness, drug abuse, increasing crime and apathy.

The discussions took unexpected turnings: in one Brighton school, three students from Brunei and Burma, after hearing about the difficulties and challenges in Bulgaria, felt able to share the problems of their own countries.

There were many humorous moments too like the teacher in Staffordshire who had handed out factsheets and questions ready for the lesson - the only snag was that he had prepared his students to hear all about Romania! Also the students of a convent school whose faces were filled with glee after hearing that religion lessons were not permitted in Bulgaria.

Seriously though, not only did Mariana and Angel contribute greatly to the students' understanding and interest of the former Socialist countries but they also managed to set up links between the schools and the Bulgarian Embassy so that students can raise money to help Bulgaria while it is going through such difficult times.

Mariana and Angel have now returned to Sofia where they are facing new challenges including going into Bulgarian schools to tell the students all about Britain!

A cracking good study in

EVIL

POISONINGS, STABBINGS, DECAPITATIONS, and a drowning -- nine deaths in all. Add a ghost in a haunted castle and you have, what? The latest PD James novel, or Ruth Rendall mystery? A Stephen King horror, perhaps? No, it's good old Will Shakespeare. And, boy, did he know how to pack a punch.

If you get the chance to see the latest film of Hamlet, made by Franco Zeffirelli, seize it.

The story so far (as if you needed reminding): The King of Denmark is dead, in mysterious circumstances. The Queen (Glen Close) has remarried -- to the king's brother (Alan Bates) -- in indecent haste. Prince Hamlet (Mel Gibson) is disturbed. His mother has behaved like a harlot. There is something rotten in the state of Denmark.

Enter, at the dead of night on the castle battlements, the ghost of the dead king (Paul Scofield) to tell Hamlet that he was murdered most foully by the new king. Poured poison down me lughole, he did, while I slept (or words to that effect). Hamlet is confirmed in his deepest suspicions.

But how to prove it? And how to avenge his father's death? A troupe of actors arriving at the castle give him his chance. Hamlet gets them to act out an identical murder scene ("The play's the thing wherein to catch the conscience of the king.")

And the outcome? Well, if you don't already know, and even if you do, see this film, stunningly shot on location in a Scottish castle. And don't be put off by a dread of long soliloquies: the film and, above all, the acting bring Shakespearean English alive.

Enough exam questions have been set about the character of Hamlet to fill a dungeon. Was he too much of a ditherer and a dreamer, tempted to suicide, or was he genuinely caught on the horns of a dilemma, not knowing how to prove his suspicions and waiting to seize his opportunity? Zeffirelli puts Mel Gibson's Hamlet firmly in the latter category. This Hamlet is in the action-man league. And when the troupe of actors play their charade before the guilty king Hamlet can hardly contain himself. It is a brilliant

piece of acting.

A more interesting question is where on earth did Shakespeare get his plots from? What sparked his imagination? The story of Hamlet has often been compared with the New Testament story of Herod the tetrach. Substitute Hamlet for John the Baptist, his mother the queen for Herod's mistress Herodias, and the guilty king for Herod and one can see the parallel. Herod, was having an affair with his sister-in-law, Herodias, the wife of Herod's brother Philip. John the Baptist exposed the adultery ("It is not lawful for you to have her"), and Herod promptly flung him in jail. John later loses his head when Herodias's daughter asks for it served up on a plate. (It's all in Matthew 14 if you want to read the gory details.)

Hamlet comes to an equally sticky end -- or, if you prefer, makes the supreme sacrifice -- but not before a certain rough justice is achieved.

What makes Shakespeare, and particularly Hamlet, often regarded as one of his finest plays, so compulsive and enduring? It must be, above all, his understanding of the ambiguities and inconsistencies of human nature -- the struggle between good and evil. But the two are never confused: evil is never presented as anything other than it is.

When all is said and done, the pursuit of evil -- in this case uncontrolled lust regardless of the consequences -- is a messy business and spawns a thousand tragic consequences. And the innocent, like Hamlet's betrothed, Ophelia, pay the highest price.

But it also adds up to a cracking good thriller. So if you miss the film, wait for the video and then rush to your nearest video store.

by Mike Smith

Reflections from a suburban garden

by Alan Channer

PHASES OF LIFE come and go - but are they threaded? Is there ever an intrinsic pattern in our past which contains the elements of our future?

I met an artist recently. She had been studying to become a pianist at the Conservatoire of Music in Milan, when she had a bad car accident. After months in hospital, she recovered; but her musical co-ordination never returned. Her dream was broken.

She speaks softly and kindly and explains that she has accepted it. 'The art is inside, so now I must express it in the life.' Her art is the way she loves people, and loves life.

Some people manage to combine a love for others with a successful career in the world; but I seem to be too selfish for that. As soon I have a material objective, I get confused. I think my success is paramount. I forget all about my soul in the same way that one forgets about the weeds in the back-garden - and it gets choked. Things get so bad you even forget you had a soul; the term garden becomes inappropriate!

I like waking up in the morning to realize that the central objectives of the day will be to love and have faith. If I manage to achieve them, then somehow the weeds don't take over. I've chosen to work full-time (with MRA) because I think love and faith have beckoned.

Some people feel inspired and challenged by a bid to change the world - and that's a positive thing - but I can't see it quite like that. To be an 'artist at life' is what gets me, though I'm pretty useless at it. Just occasionally, in fleeting moments, something beyond seems to move me towards it.

To be an artist at life may be an ambiguous metaphor, but somewhere in it there's scope for Western culture to learn a great deal from the rest of the world. And somewhere in it is a distinctive role for MRA - as a sort of orchestra where each individual and culture has a specific contribution in the creation of music whose only purpose is to serve God.

nitty gritty...

MY ARTY EVENING CLASS has just finished for the year, with an expensive meal out together which I couldn't really afford. The next thing I thought I'd do would be to learn a language. Arabic, as after the Gulf War I felt so strongly that we in the West never understand or listen to the Arab world. To listen well, you need to learn people's language.

So last week I ordered a home study course, and it arrived on Monday morning when I was out. I rang up the delivery company and a laconic voice just found the energy to inform me that it wouldn't come on Tuesday, but it might come on Wednesday. So I stayed in all Wednesday morning. It didn't come.

I phoned up the delivery company again, and arranged for the parcel to be delivered Thursday. Then I rang back half an hour later having remembered I would be out, and arranged Friday.

Out I went on Thursday morning, and when I came back there was another little card in the door. "We tried to deliver your parcel...." I phoned up the company again, and did my best good-tempered-but-cross bit. They promised they'd send it back on Friday.

It safely arrived on Friday morning, and I'm sorry that instead of finding out what problems they were having, I thought only of my side of it, and yelled.

So having had a day off after the evening class, yesterday I got out all the tapes and books that had come and tried to understand where to start. I may still be trying to sort it out a year from now....

'Alice'

"The great advantage of being mediocre, is that I'm always at my best."

Bill Cotton

Thoughts on the gulf

Dr Omnia Marzouk, a paediatrician from Egypt, is currently in Britain carrying out research into childhood meningitis. The following is the text of a talk that she gave recently in France.

IT IS DIFFICULT to stand back and remain indifferent. Whether you were Arab or not, and whether you regarded the war in the Gulf as right or wrong, I suspect it affected you as well as me. We all hoped and prayed that somehow negotiations would prevent the war; we felt pain and anxiety to see friends, relatives and countrymen and women going to a potential war zone; the end of the war brought sighs of relief, but also the numb realisation of the true cost, in 100,000 lives lost and cities destroyed. After the war the questions have followed about the prospects of longterm peace, human rights and refugees.

When you come from the Middle East as I do, above all else it is your home. To live as an Arab in the West during the last eight months has been a very difficult and traumatic experience. Initially, like everyone around me in Britain, I discussed the facts, rights and wrongs of all the events. I avoided going deeper and exploring my real feelings because I was afraid of what would come out. So I lived in a state of turmoil and sleeplessness for months.

In February, during the Gulf war, I went to India to take part in a Moral Rearmament meeting of 24 people representing 14 countries and 4 religions. We discussed how as a world team we could understand our different faiths better, especially the Muslim faith; and how, as a result, we were meant to work as equal partners in facing the challenges and problems of the world.

Suddenly at this meeting, I found myself surrounded by people who wanted to know more about the background of the Middle East, but also about my feelings as an Arab. It was there that the depth of my pain over the last months came to the surface with floods of tears. After this watershed I was able to clarify the feelings that I had suppressed.

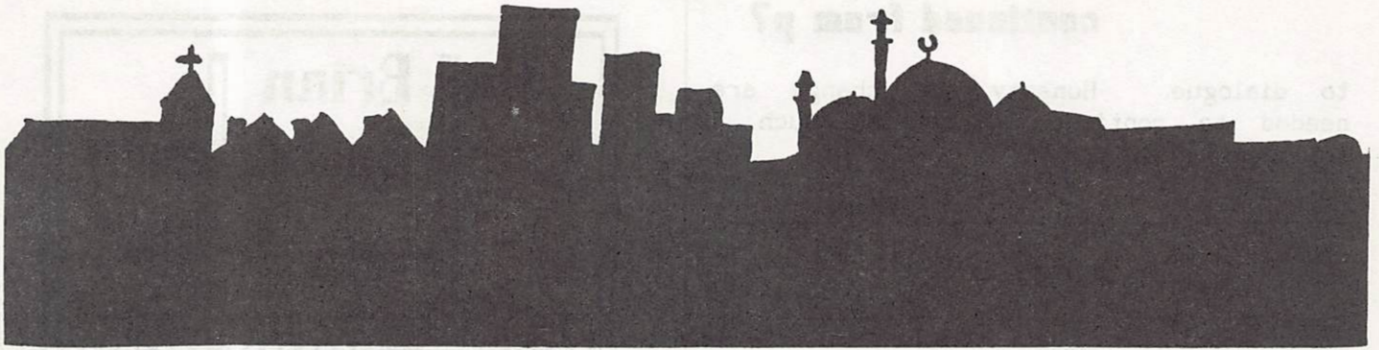
My first feeling was hurt... it hurt me to be an Arab while this war was going on, and to see different parts of the Arab family suffer; it hurt me to see and hear

the negative stereotypes of the Arab and Muslim world expressed in the media; it hurt me to see Iraq, one of the three main centres of Middle East civilization, in rubble and to see the Arab world split amongst itself with Arab fighting Arab.

Secondly I felt anger... that an Arab leader had invaded another Arab country; that the Arab world had failed to settle the issue by negotiations; and that the West had reacted so decisively against Iraq's annexation of Kuwait, but failed to react to Israel's continued annexation of Arab territories.

I felt despair... that the sanctity and value of human life meant so little; with all the achievements of the 20th century, that we had not developed the skills of diplomacy, listening, negotiating, enough to be determined to solve the problem peacefully; and that we were so willing to sacrifice so many lives. My heart wept for the 100,000 Iraqi soldiers killed, as it wept for the few Allied deaths - wasted human lives because of human failure.





I have always felt proud of my culture and proud of my identity, but then I also felt **ashamed** of it. That we had inflicted so much destruction on one another; that innocent civilians in Israel and Saudi Arabia were the victims of Scud missiles; that human rights had been violated both by Iraq during the war, and by Kuwait after the freedom of their country had been regained. The ongoing suffering of the Kurdish refugees, Shia refugees and Palestinians is heart-rending. I felt sorry that other people had experienced hardships and suffering at the hands of Arabs under the banner of 'nationalism' or 'religion'. Now a Harvard University medical team report, after a visit to Iraq, that at least 170,000 children will die this year because of the problems brought on by the war. As a paediatrician I find that even more difficult to accept.

As I faced all these emotions, I felt burdened and despairing about the future. What, after all, can an individual do to alter such grand-scale problems? In the Koran there is a verse that says, '*God does not change the state of people until they themselves change*'. It was for me no longer a question of being aware of the problems and feelings, and expressing them... but, was I prepared to live differently to prevent them from happening again? What more was I going to do to build bridges of understanding? Was I prepared to let go my hurts and find healing... so that I could live a quality of life that brought healing instead of erecting barriers?

At a personal level I had to make a fresh decision to live each day in the light of God's direction and leading. Each day choosing to do essential things - not just what is good or for my comfort. I realised that whatever other people's reactions and negative image of the Arab and Muslim world, I have a choice not to

let barriers develop in my heart towards others.

I had always felt that I was meant to be a bridge between East and West, and between different faiths, to create a true, equal partnership. But I realised that you not only have to be responsible for the future, but also for the past. There is the positive and negative to all our countries' histories and the way we have treated other people. I needed to accept both sides of the coin. If we accept that there is no room for superiority, we've all been equally wrong and can therefore make a fresh start to build that future we want, and we need each other to do it.

The Arab world faces enormous problems - not just political ones - which we need help to find answers to: the balance between democracy and established authority; technology and modernisation versus the threat to moral codes; wealth and poverty - how to bridge the gap. If we do not find answers to these problems that have roots in our culture and tradition, there will always be instability. I have always found that enough time in quiet reflection and prayer has helped me to find the inspired balance between the two different worlds and cultures that I have grown up with. I can then choose the best of both cultures that I want to take back to Egypt.

What is the key to better relations between the West and the Middle East in the future?

Friendship. A deep friendship with someone of another background or faith is the key. If it is not just superficial, it will automatically lead to a deep understanding of hopes, fears - and culture. It will also demand a careful assessment of prejudices, fears and stereotypes on both sides that are a block

Thoughts on the gulf -

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to dialogue. Honesty and change are needed to continue to nourish such a friendship.

Reach out

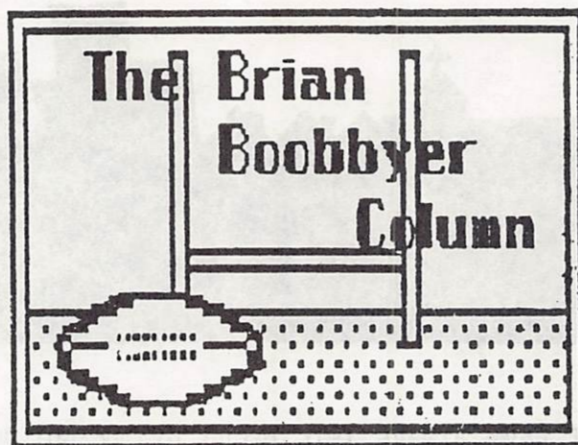
Reach out to the established Arab communities in the West. The Arab world is no longer a continent away; there are established communities living in France, UK, Germany and other Western countries. By reaching out to them you reach out to the the Arab world. They need to feel accepted, and that they are no longer on the fringe of society. By living your Christian faith you can help and encourage them not to be the generation that is torn between two cultures. They need your help to discover their role as bridge-builders, if they can retain the spiritual values of their Islamic traditions within their adopted communities. I know from personal experience that deep care and friendship can be a turning point in finding a new direction and role.

Exchange visits. The Arab world needs to see another side of Western youth other than the decadent pictures on TV, and the Western youth needs to see a different picture of the Arab world. This is where student visits, such as those which have happened in the context of MRA, from France to the Maghreb, and from Britain to Egypt, Sudan and Jordan, are vital.

Political With the determined, united approach to the Gulf situation shown by the Allies, the Arab world now expects the West to be as determined in their approach to peace and the rights of the Palestinian people and Israel's annexation of Arab lands. This is where Europe can play a vital role as a community because it still has some credibility in the Arab world.

I feel that the future of the Middle East is too important to be left in the hands of politicians and experts. While it is important to try to understand the facts, it is also important to understand the feelings in people's hearts. This is where people of faith who seek a deeper understanding have a great advantage.

There is hope for the future because the future depends on what we each decide to reach out and begin to build today.



EACH OF US has a sort of inner clock. At a certain point in life we set it and then seldom change it. Some people are only at their best in the evening and especially as midnight approaches. "That's the way I am."

But we can, if we choose, adjust the clock. Some conversations can be curtailed, some TV programmes missed. But most of all, we may have to deal with the image we have of ourselves.

Rising early to be serious about God sounds like a bit of holiness which may not be at all the image we want. So we settle for an easier road. We would rather be nice and easy-going than be new and centred in God. The last thing we want to do is to become saints. So we settle for the second-rate.

Father Gretry, French priest and philosopher, who died in 1872, wrote a book 'Les sources' meaning 'The Springs'. In the first chapter he presents this extraordinary challenge:

'The advice which follows is not for everyone. Only a few choice spirits, in the present state of the world, are capable of following it or will want to do so.'

Scan the horizon

It is addressed to that man of 20, sane and privileged in mind and even more in heart, who has understood that at the point where his fellow students have finished their education his own begins: who, at the age when the crowd is swept along by the love of pleasure and of freedom, of the world, its honours and its riches, stops to scan the wide horizon of life for a worthier object of love.

I'm not at my best in the morning

It is to this man that I am speaking and to him alone.

First I say this: you must know that wisdom is only to be possessed on stringent terms. Are you courageous? Can you face silence and solitude? Are you willing to see your equals, who have chosen an easy way, advance in their career faster than you and occupy the space in the world that might have been yours? Can you sacrifice everything, without exception, to justice and truth?

Then listen to what follows.

If you have this extraordinary determination and are able to overcome the innumerable obstacles, reasonable and unreasonable, which will bar your way, let me tell you who your teacher is to be.

God is to be your teacher.

St Augustine wrote a book called 'De Magistro' in which he shows that there is only one master, a single master who is inside us. Moreover God is the universal light which illumines every man who comes into the world. Do you believe it? If so you must accept the consequences.

Say to this master: 'Master speak. I am listening.' Then you must listen.

Inner chatter

In order to listen, silence is essential, and that is not easily achieved. What is this inner chatter of vain thoughts, uneasy desires, passion, prejudices planted by your education, or those more formidable prejudices which are part of the age in which you live and which influence you without your knowledge? Before you can reach the consecrated silence of the inner sanctuary there are important battles to be won. You need those supernatural victories of which God says 'To him who conquers I will give authority over nations'.

We must stop being slaves to ourselves and slaves of the age in which we live. I do not say that this struggle has to be over. I do say that it has to have begun.

It is in fact in the morning before the business and distractions of the day that we must listen to God.

Augustine says 'This is what you must do: ask for strength and then for help in finding what you are looking for, then write it down so that this creation of your heart may be a source of life and strength for you.'

Is it not certain that God is continually speaking just as the sun is continually shining?

If you seek in silence and solitude then you will at times wake up to the realisation that you are no longer alone.

Do not trust your memory... you must seize the occasion and write. Try to capture the whole panorama of the inner spectacle.'

The idea of waiting on God occurs through the Bible, especially in the Psalms and the Prophets.

Andrew Murray's book 'Waiting on God' refers to 'The school of waiting'.

I made a short list from his book of some of the promises of God if we wait on Him.

'Integrity, uprightness, courage, strength, hope patience. A new song in my mouth.'

'Since the beginning of the world, eye hath not seen nor ear heard what God hath prepared for those who wait on Him.'

'They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. They will mount up with wings as eagles: they shall walk and not lose heart.'

'Wait on the Lord and keep His ways: and He will exalt thee to inherit the land.'

These promises are almost too good to be true. It is worth considering altering our clock so that we can enable these promises to come true.





OUR FAMILY IS nearing the end of a year spent in the South Pacific. For anyone who has not been to these 'outposts', it is hard to explain what these countries have to offer the rest of the world.

Some of our friends probably thought we went mainly for a sabbatical or 'to get away from it all'. And I guess you could do that. But for me an exposure to the Pacific and her peoples always means an expansion of my heart. And therefore not at all a retreat to a life under a palm tree, waiting for a coconut to drop while the world goes by.

We attended a Sunday morning service in an orphanage in Fiji. We sat on wooden benches or on mats on the floor. The orphans are cared for by Anglican sisters. We were soon taken by the vigour and charisma of the chaplain - a Tongan who led the service with the care and dignity of one ministering in a beautiful cathedral. It was a special occasion and yet this was just an ordinary Sunday service. Each visitor was given a personal welcome, and by the time the service was

On the up

by Elisabeth

over (two hours!) you felt part of a family where all are equals because we are all equally loved. As I walked out of the door, a voice inside me said, 'Fling the doors of your heart open always'.

This is the effect of the warmth and care of the Pacific peoples on me as a North European. We tend to have a rather romantic idea of the Pacific - a place of sun and sand and smiling people in grass skirts. It is hard to convey to anyone who has not been here that this picture, however true, is incomplete. Matters of the heart are hard to explain with words on paper.

Romantic idea

Our experience this year has been mainly in New Zealand - and with her indigenous Polynesian people, the Maoris. There are several things that strike me about the Polynesians which are different from us stiff Europeans. One is their humour. Never before have I seen old and distinguished men - elders or chiefs-giggle! One moment they may be making a very formal and formidable speech in front of the people; the next they are sitting in a corner with a group of their peers



down under

Peters

enjoying others' presentations with endless mirth and laughter. You have to be prepared to have your leg pulled!

We met Dame Whina Cooper, at 96 Maoridom's grand old lady who has worked all her life to help her people. She says: "When people laugh with you they are already close to agreement. "

Maori people have an super-generosity towards each other at times of need or sorrow. People think nothing of piling their kids into a car and driving through the night in order to reach a 'tangi' (Maori funeral) to be able to support the grieving family.

I have experienced myself the sheer physical support which is given when you feel sad. When I had news of a dear friend who had died, my Maori friend next to me put her arm round me. She said nothing, but her support and comfort were tangible. She shared my grief and therefore lifted me, warmed me and strengthened me.

These qualities are not exclusive to Polynesian people, of course. Children often have them. I find it helpful to learn from my children's reactions to things. The other day when we had to say goodbye to some dear friends whom we don't know when we will see again, my five year old daughter found me a bit tearful

in the kitchen. "Are you sad?" she said, and looked at me with knowledge in her big eyes. "Yes," I replied. "Don't be sad," she said, "Can I help you make dinner?" There was not much to do and I said I was alright. But she, with great authority, put on an apron, pulled up a stall to stand on, and said, "But I don't want you to be alone. Not when you are sad." And she was right. I need not so much to talk or to dwell on my sadness - I needed the physical presence of someone's love.

Do we offer this to one another? Do we drop what we are in the middle of doing, in order to support each other?



Doing things together is another quality of people here. If some carrots need peeling, or dishes washing - we do it together until the job is done. No one should be left alone to carry the load.

I learnt a lesson recently when a friend of mine phoned and said she was cancelling all engagements outside her home because she felt she needed to spend more time with her mother. At first I thought, "What a pity. She is a mature woman and needs to lead her own life." But then in my heart something said, "Trust her", and I said to her, "Well, you must do what you feel deepest in your heart." Three weeks later her mother died unexpectedly. I gasped when I heard the news, knowing how easily I could have reacted wrongly, according to my own judgements.

If our hearts and wills are truly handed over to God and we have decided we want His will more than our own, then I believe our hearts can often lead us more directly than our minds.



photos: Peters

Encounters in Moscow

Philip Boobbyer, a student in London, recently returned from a three month visit to Moscow, where he was doing archival research for his PhD. The following are some his reflections.

ANY AMOUNT OF STUDIES cannot prepare you for another society, but particularly one which has been through the experience which Russia and the other Soviet republics have undergone. It is a society which you cannot and should not claim to understand. There is often a deep, dark anger in people.

One evening a man exploded at me and Westerners in general who might assume to understand the Soviet experience. He pointed out that the Russian language was now filled with prison-camp words and subtle double meanings, so that it was impossible for an outsider to really learn it. Then he said that perestroika had come too late for him. He was a man in his forties, the foundations of his life were already in place.

I met a dramatist, who said he was now working on a play about a man who hated perestroika because his youth had already past, and he would never be able to profit from it. The dramatist's insight seemed close to my friend's experience.

Many people do not know their own history. One lady, responsible for all of the theatre directors of the Soviet Union, noted that beyond her parents she did not know where her ancestors came from. Such people are cut off from their past. And to be cut off from your own history is to be somehow cut off from something of yourself.

Rediscover own history

I was glad to meet some younger Russian historians, who are part of the generation who are trying to rediscover their own history; going to archives, carefully writing out by hand - for there are few photocopiers - old documents, and then arranging for their publication. This rediscovery of history sounds easy, but there are plenty of

people who remember the good old days under Stalin and Brezhnev.

It is possible to be romantic about suffering, and assert that those who have suffered may have the most to give. This is partly true. Those who have pulled through the suffering offer us truths which we in the West are in desperate need of. But very few have come through it. A well-known literary critic whom I know, on being told by a friend that Russia was God's reserve force in the world, said that this could be interpreted in two ways: that it might mean that it was a force of good kept behind to deal with the dark forces in the world; or it might mean that Russia stood outside history and was the place where all the ghastly experiments would take place, and from which the rest of mankind would learn the appropriate lessons. Russians are often tempted to believe the latter.

A force of good

What is this suffering? It is difficult to put one's finger on. It is not just the millions who have died, or who have wasted their lives in prison camps. That is the surface of it. From my limited experience, it is also a kind of spiritual claustrophobia. The dissidents who have talked about the 'lie' are those closest to it. It is a system built on always telling part of the truth, but never all of it. People abdicate their responsibilities. The result is the kingdom of mediocrity - at least in public life. Nothing is clean and bureaucracies interfere everywhere.

I was told of a Ukrainian town that had always been closed to foreigners. Then it turned out that the reason was its higher than average radiation level, about which the inhabitants of the town had not been told. A family was emigrating. But the girls had their ear-rings confiscated at the exit-customs, because they had not been given permission to take them by the Ministry of Culture. Such stories are ordinary.

I found myself reflecting on the word 'normality'. There is a certain trend in the West to deny that there are normal and abnormal people, that there are

normal and abnormal ways of living. The Soviet Union disproves this in every way.

On the surface, the Soviet Union is reasonably normal. People go to work, and eat 2-3 meals a day. They get married, have children, celebrate birthdays, go to the cinema. But behind this normality, everything is abnormal, twisted. One friend said that after his first visit to the West, he realised that a normal life was possible. Yes, people go to work, but many of them do no work. Yes, people do have 2-3 meals a day, but the food production and distribution system have broken down, shops are empty and mothers keep their refrigerators stocked up. To stock up, they might queue up to seven hours for butter. (One friend commented that in the West people spend their free time caring for their gardens: but in Russia, they spend it in the queue. The result is the 'culture of the queue.')

The system has taken away personal responsibility; the result is that many people lack a sense of initiative. I said that public life is mediocre; but of course the moment you enter someone's apartment, everything is different and often beautiful. In the public arena, almost everything is dirty and polluted; in the private arena, it is often the opposite. It is surely normal for people to have a measure of private property; they need pride in their own creations.

Lack of initiative

That, I would suggest, is just the tip of an iceberg in the field of 'normality'. One friend recalled a recent conference he had been to in India on the subject of 'Selfless Service'. They had a vote at the conference, and everybody was in favour of selfless service. Except of course, the Russians, who had voted against it. For them, it was associated with an idea for which terrible sufferings had been inflicted on huge numbers of people. Such unselfishness for them was highly undesirable. The story is a useful one, that points out the need for us all to think out the meaning of our moral values. Some of the ideals of communism, such as justice and self-sacrifice, are

Christian ideals without God. The result is a perversion of the ideals.

Not surprisingly, many people are in the grip of fear: the fear of a return to the old system, of the borders closing, of the starvation which might come tomorrow. In the West, we think about making things better. In Russia, experience suggests to people that things do not improve. What then are the sources of hope? One answer must be on a spiritual level. No need to place one's hopes and aims on an improved society in the distant future: God offers Himself now. Christ offered the good news that the kingdom of God is at hand and within. That, of course, should not take away the need to work for a better society.

The grip of fear

I met a human rights activist, who had been in jail. The authorities put another person in the jail cell with her: someone with bad habits, and unpleasant in every way. She said that it was at that moment, alone in the jail with an unpleasant companion, that she understood the meaning of loving your neighbour; and understood that it is impossible to love your neighbour in your own strength.

Another Russian friend, a specialist in Russian philosophy, said that there is a great need to love people in spite of their past, and to fall in love with Russia as a nation in the same way. A lecturer at Moscow University told me of her dream to create primary school education in Russia which would teach people the meaning of love and tolerance.

Related to this, I remember a moving conversation with another friend who had been in prison, who raised the question: What does it mean to forgive those who have knowingly wronged you, yet will not accept it?

I know one couple who have set up a religious centre. They believe that although religion is fashionable, there are many who are simply exchanging the dogmas of Marxism for the dogmas of Christianity without going through an inner transformation. So, there is a

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Africa farewell

by Alan Channer

MAY I RECALL a few of the most moving moments in my life?

The chickens had been slaughtered round the back of the house, and many pots brought over to cook them. Of course the women had taken over - boiling beans, shredding pumpkin leaves, slicing pineapples; and my sack of maize-flour lay empty.

There was feasting, banter and mirth; which all faded with the twilight. We sat down in a large circle. A few moths flitted against the single bulb that lit the verandah. The moments began.

'... we were in the field, harvesting, and Mr Kamangila turned to me and said - laborare est orare....' I broke off; my lips couldn't form round the words. We looked collectively at the dust on the ground until someone added the rest of the sentence - 'to work is to pray, in Latin'. I was too moved to continue.

The memory of that kindness, thoughtfulness and spiritual awareness opened the gate to all the wonders of my time in Malawi. A flood of gratitude rose in my eyes, trembled on my lips, and no words could speak it.

No words, but only a timeless cricket-singing silence sealed our final togetherness.

'...and lastly I must ask you to write your names, with your districts and villages, in my book please. For maybe when I come back to this place, you shall be gone; but even if I am old, with a stick and a grand-child, I shall find you. Wait for me! I shall come.'

There was some clapping when the speech was over, a pause, and a collective glancing to decide who would start the replies. Then one by one every colleague in the circle bestowed his and her blessing on the departing visitor. I shall never forget it. Over some of their faces came a momentary change, like a swirl upon water, as if a rarely-fathomed depth of spirit had suddenly been called upon:

'Before you came, you were one of us.'

'I want to thank you, because it seems that God had a purpose for you being here.'

Out in Africa

by Angela Willoughby

"I WILL ACCEPT any challenge, however small, You give me today." These were my thoughts at 4.00 a.m. one morning during another sleepless night. I had had almost a month of broken nights. This was partly due to a virus, and partly due to an increasing dissatisfaction with everyday life. I was bored, I wasn't challenged enough...

That morning I turned to my Bible in frustration at the arrival of the dawn chorus after yet another sleepless night.

I suddenly realised that perhaps the problem was that I had been ignoring the challenges that God sets me everyday, the little things: people to love, tasks to fulfil, service to give. I had been



Angela (2nd from left) at the Equator

Once I looked up and met eyes like lights, shining through tears, in the darkness. She said, 'And all this time Alan has been living simply - he is just a simple person.' Then she looked at the three other women. One of them whispered something and began a refrain which started the whole circle in song:

'Petani bwino! Mulungu (...something, something). Petani bwino!' I think it was, 'Go well! God go with you. Go well!', repeated again and again, with restrained clapping. Then one by one they came over, shook hands, and left.



complaining so much that I was missing all these opportunities. I decided to meet any challenge that day whatever it was. I never imagined that later that day I would be booking a ticket for Africa.

I was invited to attend the first All-African MRA conference, Nairobi, Kenya which was due to start only six days later. I knew it was right to go and this was confirmed by the arrangements falling into place. In 48 hours I had paid my fare, had all my injections and was on my way!

The full title of the conference was "Men must choose to be governed by God or they condemn themselves to be ruled by tyrants" (William Penn). It was an African initiative to bring together men and women from all over the continent to face their problems and difficulties and search together for God's plan for the way forward.

Amid all the turmoil which many parts of the world are living through - the uprising in Ethiopia, the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, increasing violence in South Africa - here was a common desire to set aside hatred and bring love. An Ethiopian Church choir opened the session in this spirit singing with joy and hope for the future.

A Kenyan set the meetings in context by examining the achievements in Africa after 50 years of self-rule. His answers of poverty, unemployment, hunger and corruption left no illusions and a keen sense of reality was introduced. Throughout the five days this reality was always present, but at the same time there was hope, a deep love for God and a commitment to stand up to the tyrants within ourselves and within our society.

Many people shared their experiences of family life and professional life; the

temptations, the failures and the victories. There were many students, and as they were about to enter into a professional world full of bribery and corruption, it was a strengthening experience to meet older people who have been engaged in these battles for years.

After the conference I spent almost two weeks travelling around Kenya visiting people. I saw so many things:- from the ever-changing beautiful landscapes; sweeping plains dotted with ostriches and impala, pale bushland and luscious deep-green forests; to shabby suburbs with families living in crowded little houses made from mud, corrugated iron and bits of wood.

One of the most memorable visits was to the slum areas surrounding Eldoret. Sam Kinuthia and his friends from around the area were working to transform the slums into proper villages with schools, workshops and other facilities. In five years they had already made quite a change supplying clean water, a schoolroom, 2 training schemes and school fees for some 700 children but their challenges were still immense.

We joined the sewing class which trains unemployed young adults to make clothes ready for sale. The irony was that although they had already learnt a great deal, they were still practising with brown paper because they couldn't afford any fabric. Imagine, perfect garments but all in brown paper.

One thing I will never forget is the cheerfulness, hospitality and friendship of these people who faced such hardship. The faces of the children as they followed us around the village were positively beaming. In Europe we seem to be very good at the theory behind God's love, in Africa they seem to have mastered the art of practising it!

Battle for Bougainville

THE ISLAND OF Bougainville lying to the east of Papua New Guinea and to the north of Australia was the scene of an explosive situation between powerful Western industry, in the form of the international mining company of Conzinc Riotinto of Australia (CRA) and the local people.

Australia, which administered the territory through the Papua New Guinea Assembly, has agreed to the company mining for copper where deposits were known to be. This provoked the local people in that part of Bougainville, who felt they had not been sufficiently consulted, especially on the terms and conditions. There was to be a rent of 5 per cent of the value of the land, but no royalties to the landowners on the copper mined.

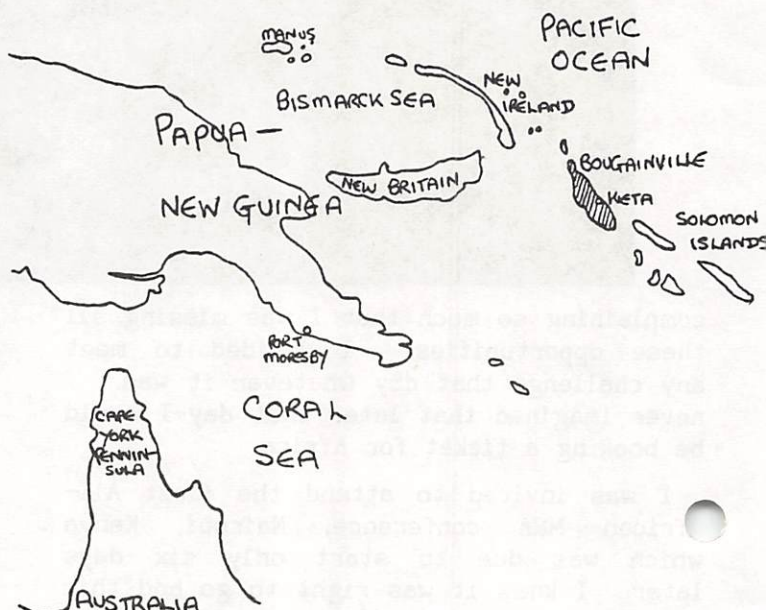
Violence followed. "Batons in Bougainville" was the headline in 'The Sunday Times' of the 17th August 1969. Reporting the angry opposition to the CRA bulldozers clearing the land, the paper wrote, "Seventy armed police fired tear gas. When this failed to disperse the pickets they made a baton charge".

"Batons in Bougainville"

The people's protest was taken up by Paul Lapun who was Member of The House of Assembly for Bougainville. In the face of strong opposition from vested interests he introduced a Mining New Guinea bill in which he proposed that 5 per cent of all royalties should be paid to the landowners. The bill was passed by 31 votes to 21.

However not everyone was satisfied. Although Lapun himself welcomed the economic opportunities and material benefits that would accrue from the coming of the industry, many feared the spoiling of the countryside with excavations and the disturbing of the social structure with the influx of some 4000 foreigners.

But there was a more fundamental objection, which was shared by everyone, when they heard that the land would be compulsorily acquired. There was a deadlock and the company continued to make plans to prepare the land for mining.



At this point Napidakoe Navitu, a movement created to support the villages, decided to send Paul Lapun and Raphael Bele, a landowner, to Australia to get a High Court Injunction to stop the mine and failing that to go to the UN.

Bele refused to eat "White man's food" for three or four days, choosing to live on bananas. He stayed in his room most of the time, explaining "If someone wants my land and I do not want them to have it, they will have to kill me or I will kill them."

The Australian authorities put the two men in an unheated hotel room in the depths of a Sydney winter. An architect, involved with MRA was incensed at this and so invited them to his home. Paul Lapun, had in the previous two years used the MRA film 'Freedom' and once at the architect's home they were able to ask God what they might do about the problem. Paul Lapun thoughts were: "Do not seek headlines, go for solutions. Try to reach the policy makers and see if they will change their policies. Try to see Sir Maurice Mawby (Chairman of Melbourne based CRA), Mr Gorton (Prime Minister of Australia) and Mr Barnes (Minister of External Territories) and see whether they would agree to the wishes of the people.

Sir Maurice reluctantly agreed to meet them. He began by explaining the company's policies and the benefits they

had brought to developing countries where they had been welcome. A colleague mentioned the range of people from Government to anthropologists, they had consulted. Lapun replied, "Yes, and they are all white and we are all black. You have been speaking to the wrong people."

the wrong people

Sir Maurice then asked, "How much do you want for the land?" Bele replied, "To Bougainvillians land is like the skin on the back of your hand - you can neither buy it nor sell it. You inherit it and it is your duty to pass it on to your children in as good a condition or better than that which you received."

Mawby paused and said that it was a very fine idea and asked again for their price, whereupon Bele said that even if they accepted a great deal of money and then lost it somehow, they could never look their grandchildren in the eye. At that moment it appeared that Mawby began to understand that the nature of the problem had to do with cultural value.

After two hours' discussion, Lapun said that they had come to get a High Court injunction, but they wanted first to ask if the company would negotiate directly with the people. Mawby replied that he was willing, but that they would have to persuade the Government. He said that the company would make sure that the social consequences of the mining project would not be too serious for the population. This counted more to Lapun and Bele than all the material advantages they could get.

cultural value

An interview was then arranged with Prime Minister Gorton the next morning. He was joined by Minister of External Territories Barnes. At first Gorton could not grasp what the Bougainvillians were saying or what they wanted and said in some exasperation, "What do you really want to do - to toss the copper company into the sea?" To which Lapun replied, "God put the copper into the ground, and He can show us the right way to get it out. We've come to get your help in finding this." The Prime Minister seemed visibly moved by the sincerity and faith of these men of village background.

Open-cut copper mine at Panguna, Bougainville



Battle for Bougainville -

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When Barnes offered another \$10 an acre, the Prime Minister interjected, "It's no good, they need to go back to their people and actually say that we have changed our policies." Again when Barnes raised another objection, Gorton brushed it aside. The Prime Minister agreed that the Bougainvillians should have the right to deal directly with the company.

Lapun and Bele were flown back to Bougainville by the company in a special chartered plane and were later joined by a team from the company and Administration to complete the negotiations for the signing of the agreement.

The negotiations were not easy. The fears of the villagers for their culture were exploited by elements who were against a settlement. One young man in particular was leading the opposition. He had caused division between Lapun and Bele. Once again the situation became desperate. Lapun continued to battle for what he considered to be in the best interests of the people. Then he showed



Paul Lapun, MHA for South Bougainville

them the film 'Freedom' and at one point told them: "Our need is to change and work according to the will of God. Then peace will be found in the country instead of bloodshed. Bougainville can become a great example to the world."

The young man realising that his opposition could be responsible for bloodshed in the area, told the villages that he now supported Lapun.

Finding a faith

I WOULD LIKE TO share a significant part of how I came to find my adult faith.

Some Christian friends encouraged me to use four standards as helpful guidelines to improve my spiritual awareness and depth; Honesty, Purity, Unselfishness and Love- all absolute.

I had lied to my Dad as to my whereabouts one night when I came in late. I felt cheap and disappointed with myself but became numb to it fairly quickly. This was a cold calculating lie that I had stayed up the rest of that night fabricating.

Since I had been encouraged to practice the principle of absolute honesty I realised that I had to own up to the lie. After an inner struggle I did so and my Dad was grateful. But then something happened that I had not bargained for.

I felt what I can only describe as the spirit of God enter me in a real way as though He was happy to find a place to dwell. Suddenly I recalled that I had exactly the opposite feeling the moment I had lied. As though He left me saying "My son if this is how you want to live, I want no part of it!". I had felt absolutely drained as His spirit left me.

This became a precious experience for me that is a constant source of strength and direction.

by Miguel Richards

On the 10th September 1969, in the Australian parliament Minister Barnes announced that the people concerned had agreed to the use of the land on terms which included leasing rather than buying the land.

The agreement has held for the past 20 years during which time Papua New Guinea became an independent country in 1974.

In 1990 there was again serious unrest in Bougainville when the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BTR) launched a guerilla action and declared independence from Papua New Guinea. Both sides have since met and signed an agreement of 'Peace, Reconciliation, and Rehabilitation'. As a result of over twenty years of friendship of those involved in the peace talks, three from Moral Re-Armament were invited to be present.

great need to create a climate of tolerance and space where people, perhaps for the first time in their lives, can embark on some kind of personal search. The work of their religious centre is to create that space, by providing a framework for study at university. They now have six thousand students. That kind of thing gives me hope.

I come away from Russia inspired by the courage of people, their experience and their hopes. It is difficult to see how things can go back to the former period. But people are waking up from a nightmare, and it will take a long time to recover.

QuoTations

' To get at the core of God at His greatest, one must first get into the core of himself at his least, for no one can know God who has not first known himself. Go to the depths of the soul, the secret place of the Most High, to the roots, to the heights; for all that God can do is focussed there.'

Meister Eckhart.

'If we are to love others as we love ourselves, then we must learn to love the little self which so often needs to be forgiven for doing the things we do not want to do and saying the things we do not want to say.'

Rebecca Beard.

' No one enters into fellowship with God but one who has given much time to the recollection of Him, for perfect fellowship means that the mind and the understanding have become absorbed in the joy of inward converse with their lord, as one who talks with his beloved.'

Al-Ghazali.



Our younger readers - Miss Grace Riddell receives her copy

LETTER TO FREEWAY SUBSCRIBERS

Dear Friend,

We hope that you have enjoyed reading *Freeway* as much as we have enjoyed compiling it. We believe that this newsletter performs an important role in linking and encouraging those young (and not so young) people around the world who are trying to live the quality of life that we associate with Moral Re-Armament.

We would welcome any suggestions from readers on ways to improve *Freeway*. And we invite you to send in your contributions, because the point of a newsletter is to provide a channel for the readers to communicate with each other.

The first issue of next year's volume (October) will focus on MONEY, a subject close to everyone's heart. What does it mean (or has it meant) to you, to give control of your money to God? Write us a paragraph or two on your struggles, victories and miracles?!? (Deadline 15th September).

And talking about money... we hope that you will want to renew your subscription for another year. Though we make no profit, we regret that, because of increased costs, we have to raise the annual subscription for the five issues 1991/2 by £1 to

£7 sterling.

However... we offer anyone who renews their subscription before the end of August an almost irresistible

reduced rate of £6.50

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Sincerely,

The Editors

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