

FREEMAN



"Why not let God run the world?"

An everyday sort of hell

by Philip Tyndale-Biscoe

THE DECCAN EXPRESS leaves Pune for Bombay at a quarter to three in the afternoon. The journey takes five hours. By the time the 19-carriage train has come to a standstill at platform 1 it has already been filled by the hordes who scrambled aboard while it was still in motion. We had baggage to see us through four months away from home and no seat reservations. My mouth was dry. There were still enough people on the platform to fill a football stadium and we just had to push and elbow our way on to the train like everybody else.

Inside the carriage you plant your suitcase on a patch of floor and sit tight, the seething mass of humanity ebbing and flowing around and over you. Feelings run high. Especially as each new passenger, complete with large metal trunk or whatever, claws their way through the crammed doorway. You are seized by two fears. One is quite simply claustrophobia. The other is that you will lose control and start flaying your fists into the poor unfortunates who share this grubby corner of hell.

A twenty-year-old mother sits on the floor under a leaky hand-basin, her two small children bewildered and frightened by the noisy press of bodies. The little girl is bawling her head off and you pick her up and perch her on the other end of your suitcase. Her face instantly transforms into such a wide grin that your heart breaks into a dozen pieces. She then almost immediately falls asleep, her head on your lap, and remains thus, a tiny island of peace and sanity in the midst of that nightmare, for the next four hours.

And a nightmare it is. An everyday nightmare for millions of people, including that blind beggar struggling and shrugging his way through the press with his tin cup, his feet sometimes not even touching the floor. And when at last, after four hours of this hell, the train arrives at Kalyan and people begin getting off and you can actually see, through a bit of open doorway, a fragment of the passing landscape, you think you are in paradise!

Looking back at the experience from

the comfort of your friend's flat in Bombay you think to yourself, 'Ah, so that's why I came to India. To feel for myself what millions go through every day. To experience in five brief hours the fears, the privations and discomfort that millions in the world experience all their lives.' And you discover a reason to be grateful!



'I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. I can do all things in Him who strengthens me.'

St Paul's Letter to the Philippians
Chapter 4 vv11-13

Costa What?

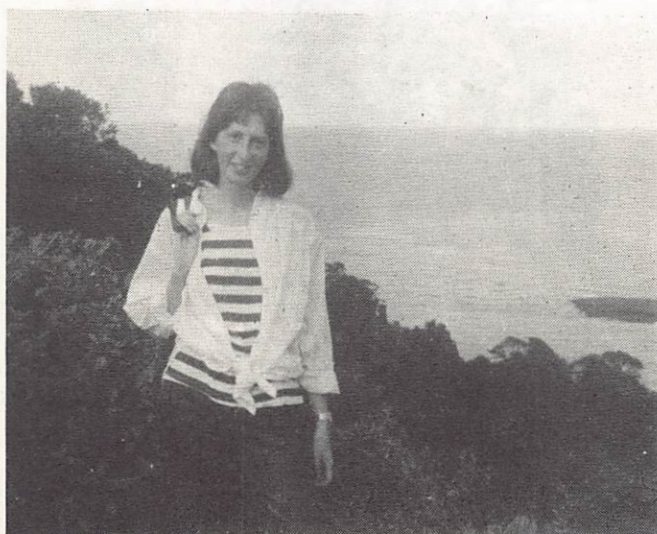
by Pippa Faunce

"THAT'S A LITTLE ISLAND off the United States, isn't it?" said countless people when I told them I was going to Costa Rica for a year.

"No, you're thinking of Puerto Rico" I got tired of saying. Or better still, "... the south coast of Spain?" "I think you're confusing it with the Costa del Sol" I corrected. "Costa Rica is in Central America between Panama and Nicaragua." Their eyes would open wider, and some ventured, "But isn't it a little dangerous out there?"

Misconceptions about Costa Rica are wide-ranging, and many confess pure ignorance. In fact, the safety of Costa Rica's streets was one of the things which most impressed me.

People are startled to learn that Costa Rica has no army. It was abolished in 1948 when a narrowly-defeated government refused to hand over power to the nearly-elected president. Military intervention led by a coffee grower, Pepe Figueres, led to a brief civil war in which 2000 people died. On winning power, Don Pepe abolished the army, and then earned wide-spread respect by handing power back to the rightfully elected president. This precedent has stood Costa Rica's democracy in good stead, and Don Pepe was subsequently elected president twice.



Pippa above Tortuguero beach



A White-Faced Monkey

However, the roots of Costa Rica's non-violence, I believe, go much further back. Whereas in other colonial Spanish American countries, the Spaniards used Indian slave labour, in Costa Rica the already sparse Indian population was virtually wiped out by disease. And as there was no vast supply of gold or silver, the settlers who came were humble folk who tilled the land themselves. No separate ruling elite emerged as in other parts. This relatively even distribution of wealth remains one of the distinguishing characteristics of the nation, and surely one reason for the absence of conflict.

I lived with a Costa Rican family for the year, during which I worked as an English teacher for adults at a language institute. With five children, the family was about average in size, plus a never-ending stream of relatives who came to the house. By the end of the year I was almost one of them, which allowed me a good insight into Costa Rican society.

Although people have many friends, family ties are the closest ones, and everyone has a parent, brother, sister, aunt, uncle or cousin they can turn to. I am sure this is another reason why homelessness, social outcasts and street violence are so uncommon.

Having had no teacher-training or

experience, I awaited my first-ever lesson with my heart hammering and knees knocking. I had spent a good four hours preparing it, and was ready in my classroom five minutes early.

At the appointed time, one student arrived. His name was not on my list, sending me into a panic. Five minutes later another student arrived. Disconcerted, I wandered into the reception with the vague idea that some might have got lost on the way, until the director spied me, and told me firmly not to wait for anyone.

I scuttled back to my classroom, took a deep breath and started the lesson. Over the next half-hour, eight more students meandered in at varying intervals. This sort of thing soon ceased to surprise me, as I learned that time has a different meaning in Costa Rica. A half-hour wait in the bank to cash a cheque, or two months to get a visa are quite normal.

Costa Rica is rich in wildlife and vegetation. My encounter with a five-inch scorpion will not be quickly forgotten! Nor will the sight of Arenal Volcano spitting glowing embers into the night sky, or the baby turtles hatching on the beach at Tortuguero, scuttling across the sand and disappearing into the vast ocean. Such miracles of nature remind me that, while men have done much to divide the region, the flash of the quetzal's plumage and the bark of the howler monkey are common to all Central America.

Costa Rica taught me much about people and different perspectives. Above all, my impression is of a country with its share of problems and complacency, yet in an area with a history of bloody conflict, one which has found some answers, and which has a great deal to offer its neighbours.



The Poas volcano

photos: Pippa Faunce

I love the simplicity of Christmas. Of course it has been overlaid with glitter. But the story of a child coming into the world in poverty and simplicity never ceases to move me. As the child grows up, He reveals what normal life can be like, living a natural life at home, learning a trade, serving parents, obeying God, loving people, and putting no limit on that love. He provides a permanent yardstick to measure our lives by. To me, here is the most attractive life ever lived and He promises us that we can live the same way if we choose, and with the same abundance. And so we can help to enlarge the Kingdom of God, the river of God which flows through history.

As simple as that.

And as difficult! The world, the flesh, and the devil make it almost impossible to do that.

RICHARD FOSTER, from America, in his book a few years ago, *THE CELEBRATION OF DISCIPLINE* writes: *Our adversary majors in three things, noise, hurry, crowds... simplicity is the freedom to trust God for everything... self-denial means first that we do not love to have our own way. It means the freedom to give way to others.*

The great Indian poet, RABINDRANATH TAGORE, wrote these lines in *GITANJALI*:

Every moment and every age, every day and every night, He comes, comes, ever comes.

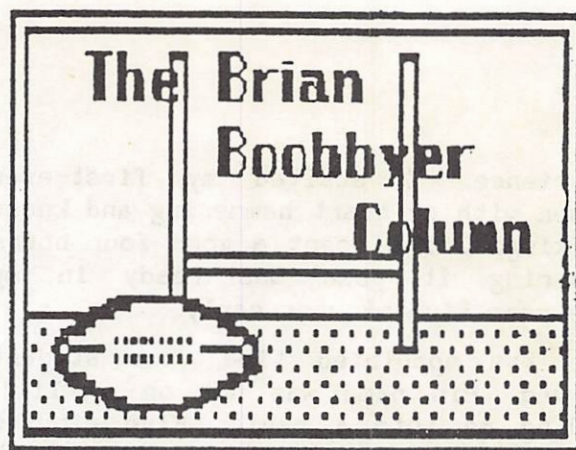
All that I am, all that I have, that I hope, all my love, ever flows towards Thee in depths of secrecy.

These 'all' and 'ever' words are the essence of simplicity.

PSALM 62 says, *My soul, wait thou only upon God.* 'Wait', 'only' - two more such words.

ANDREW MURRAY in his book *WAITING ON GOD* refers to 'the school of waiting'. The heading of his final chapter is 'Only'.

I'm not a golfer, but I enjoy



watching. The statistics of this year's golf season have just been published; who drove furthest and straightest, who putted best etc. One writer said that the golf of 1990 had tended to be 'robotic'. This year, he said, BALLESTEROS, the Spanish golfer, had recaptured his spontaneity. His drive off the tee was never safe, because his swing was not mechanical. Nearly all the leading golfers were ahead of him in terms of safe driving. But there is another dimension. He quotes another golfer who says 'Good steady golfers are capable of doing everything well. The question is: Do good steady golfers set the world on fire?'

Actually steadiness is a very good base, so long as playing safe is not the only motive. It is good for driving cars but, apart from that, all fields of life need the spontaneous, the unexpected, the touch of genius.

I've just read the review of a play called *120 days to Sodom*. The reviewer found it so frightful and sadistic that he felt like turning to his neighbour halfway through and saying 'I have seen enough. Can I go home now?' But he sat through it and ended his review: 'Each succeeding episode is the same but nastier: one damned crime after another.'

Where perversion is more and more presented as normal, it is clear that more than human decency is needed to confront it.

A recent Sunday newspaper had a headline *Permissive road to hell*. It was the story of an American basketball star who had contracted AIDS after sleeping with 500 or so women, and is urging people to learn from his disaster and

A walk in the woods

by Edward Peters

only have safe sex. The writer ends his story like this: 'Who among you, if a man asked for bread, would give him a stone, asks the New Testament. Yet as the bright-eyed children of tomorrow look to us with hope, for the Way, the Truth and the Life, we tell them to hold out their hands and give them a condom.'

A recent United Nations report says that 60 nations in the world practice torture, and 30 others are suspected of doing so.

In face of so much evil and despair there is a light that each of us can choose to live by, which will always outshine the darkness. In fact the darker the darkness, the brighter our light can appear. St John says in his Gospel 'In God was life and the life was the light of men... the true light that lighteth everyone that cometh into the world.'

Simplicity - life, light, everyone.

I mentioned Foster's book earlier. One of his themes is *The discipline of simplicity*. There is nothing complicated about following God, once my will is given to HIM. Each early morning I can recapture the simplicity of following Him.

Christmas time is a good moment to choose to let our light shine in the darkness and choose too to keep it permanently lit.

I've found this piece quite difficult to write. I think probably because simplicity cannot be put into words!

So I end up with the simplicity of silence: in which I can receive God's word, hope, purity, beauty; or just the certainty of Psalm 46: 'Be still and know that I am God'.

IT WAS A PERFECT DAY for a walk in the woods. The sun twinkled through the branches as I crunched noisily along the narrow paths criss-crossing the vast and beautiful forest.

But I saw nothing, absorbed as I was in thought, tangling inside with pressing personal problems.

What a lifeless forest, I thought, not a living creature to be seen, not a sound to be heard.

I trotted on. I sat down awhile on an old stump and looked around me. Some flies were buzzing about. Perhaps there was some life in the forest after all. A spider crawled onto my foot. Suddenly I saw the forest floor alive with beetles and insects. A ladybird, resplendent with colours I had not seen before, alighted on my hand.

Had I been too blind, too wound up in my own preoccupations, to see what was there all the time, to notice the beauty all around me?

There was silence. What was that? I thought I heard a bird singing faintly in the distance. Yes, not one but two. Where had they been all this time? Or rather, where had I been?

Wait a minute, there was quite a chorus now - and close by, too.

Was it only that I hadn't heard them? Or had I been making so much noise that they were too afraid to sing?

Quotations

'The essence of chastity is not the suppression of lust, but the total orientation of one's life towards a goal. Without such a goal, chastity is bound to become ridiculous. Chastity is the *sine qua non* of lucidity and concentration.'

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison

'Many persons have a wrong idea of what constitutes true happiness. It is not attained through self-gratification, but through fidelity to a worthy purpose.'

Helen Keller, Helen Keller's Journal.

Romanian discoveries

Account by Andrew Smith

"YOUR VISIT could have been either received with indifference - because people are only concerned with survival - or a gigantic explosion. After yesterday I can say it has been an explosion." These were the words of a Romanian architecture student commenting on the first official MRA meeting in Romania.

"Your sincerity and friendship have shown me a light in our darkness. I had forgotten that this still existed," said a lady. In a country where communism has for years spread a terrible sickness of distrust and apathy, the simple message of a change of heart fell like welcome rain.

There were eight of us who drove from Caux to Romania together: Andrew and Eliane Stallybrass, Christine Jaulmes (France) Micheline Leclerc (Canada), Philippa Caughey (New Zealand), Raymonde Maalouf (Lebanon), Andrew Smith (Scotland) and Jeroen Gunning (Holland). Why did we go? There are four reasons.

The first is friendship - the work of MRA being the building of a network of people, working together for change. The second, to give encouragement and moral support to those working for democratic progress and a change of mentality. Thirdly, our visit was a form of solidarity with a people who have felt cut off, abandoned and yet part of us and our continent. And finally, it was part of our education and change; part of a process of learning for us, about history, about suffering and about ourselves.

Our first stop in Romania was at Oradea, where we were welcomed by Sandor Fazakas, a Presbyterian minister and his family. We visited his church, packed for each of three services on Sunday, and were deeply moved by the joyous singing which nearly lifted the roof.

In Oradea we talked extensively with a friendly bunch of church youth. Sandor gave us insights into the attitude of the Hungarian minority in Romania and the tension between the two races.

This is an important issue. Hungarian-Romanians feel their culture is not allowed enough expression and would like

universities in their own language. Romanians, however, are suspicious of what they see as separatist tendencies and some feel that these large minorities should go to Hungary if they want to be Hungarian. Sandor does not desire reunion with Hungary, but he wants greater rights for his people's culture as a positive contribution to the Romanian state. For him, the role of MRA is *"to work for reconciliation and to help us see and accept each other as we are"*.

Next came the long drive to Bucharest. We passed through beautiful scenery, the glistening white Carpathian mountains and the stunning medieval town of Sibiu. Another reality was seen from our windows: horses and carts loaded with poverty - peasants straight out of the middle ages, a strange contrast with our Western cars. Their rugged, weather-beaten faces were full of character as they huddled together in the bitter frosty cold, heading off to market in the early morning with their produce. It felt like the passing by of two worlds, far apart in technology and time.

Bucharest has an atmosphere of desperation and greyness about it, a fading memory of the so-called 'Paris of the Balkans'. What remains is a city of pollution where the sun struggles to shine through. Buildings are flimsy, constructed with low architectural standards, ready to collapse like a pack of cards in a region prone to earthquakes. State shops are half empty, without lights, where you can buy a winter coat, but only in one size. Everywhere there are queues for simple necessities - bread, sugar, petrol.

Suddenly, rising like a titan in the centre of the city, you encounter the gigantic 'House of the People' - a neo-classicist monstrosity, one of the largest buildings in the world, built by Ceausescu. Nearly a quarter of the city was destroyed to build this now virtually-empty giant. Leading to it is a huge avenue, a Romanian Champs Elysées, lined with incomplete buildings, a mere facade, like the lies and emptiness of Ceausescu's regime.



photo: Philippa Caughey

(l to r) Ulrike Ott & Christine Jaulmes
in front of the Peoples Palace

If you visited Bucharest as a businessman you might stay a week in a hotel and leave depressed and discouraged. We however had the fortune to live with ordinary people: Sandra Maniu, for example - a lovely, warmhearted little lady. Her family had been wealthy, owning land and property, all lost under the communists. Far from being bitter she was full of smiles and generosity. Her flat became the MRA centre for the duration of our stay. Here we met every day to discuss our programme and organize our thoughts. Sandra kept us supplied with cakes and tea; she really became a mother to us all.

Everyone experienced the warmth of hospitality and the sacrifices our hosts made to provide for our comfort. They would queue for hours for our bread and cheese and give no sign they had done so. The husband of one family which hosted one of our group, would appear at breakfast, take a tiny portion of the food on the table and leave for work, with most of the food left for his guest.

For us this was a vital chance to understand the reality of Romanian life. We lived with the broken showerheads that no spare parts could be found for; we climbed the stairs to our flat in total darkness, searching for the door; and we used the faulty plumbing that left the bathroom swimming in water. Luckily for some of us, the heating was working! However if warmth was lacking it was created through friendship; even if we could only talk with our hosts in broken French, (Some more broken than others?! Ed.) communication through smiles and generosity was achieved.

Throughout our stay in Bucharest we worked alongside a group of young Romanians, many of whom had been to Caux. They cared for us in a remarkable way, helping to organize our programme and acting as guides. We had plenty of time to talk over important personal issues and also the meaning of MRA and its practical application.

Two evenings were set aside to discuss and plan for next year's youth conference in Caux. We feel it is necessary for East Europeans to have a much greater chance to contribute to

ideas for Caux. We wanted to include our Romanian friends in the creation of the conference, and many useful and constructive thoughts came out of these meetings.

Our most memorable time was a weekend together in the Carpathian Mountains. This provided the setting for growth together and for study of the basics of MRA, particularly concentrating on the spiritual side - guidance and sharing together as a group.

The Romanians gave an honest picture of the needs of their country and the difficulty they had with the discipline of 'quiet-times'. For all of us it was important to rethink the spiritual side of life and how this connects with practical everyday reality and the aim we have for our life and country. When we left, the Romanians said they wanted to share the responsibility for the moral re-armament of Romania. One said, "*The communists made us like animals. First we need to do something so that people will trust each other*".

During our stay we met many more youth, mainly students. We presented MRA through songs and personal experience to a class of technical students in their university and to a large group of friends of Mirella, a girl we had met in Caux.

Mirella's student hostel was cold and dark, without reliable lighting. Many students have to study by candle-light. We sat and talked huddled together in warm coats. A revealing student joke tells that 'if the temperature is very cold, students will huddle together round a candle for warmth - if it gets even colder they may light the candle!'. During the evening the light failed and as we lit candles we sang an appropriate



photo: Christine Jaulmes

Bucharest - the avenue leading to the People's Palace

song: 'It's better to light one candle, than to curse the darkness'.

A few of these students had been involved in the demonstrations of 1989 which helped to overthrow Ceaucescu. Mirella regards her involvement in this as the greatest moment in her life. The bullet holes covering the buildings in Revolution Square are a memorial to the thousand injured or killed.

Yet the sense of freedom and elation lasted only a short while, disappearing under the new Neo-Communist regime.

Because of this, many students have a certain apathy and cynicism about life, developed through parents who subjugated themselves to Ceaucescu's regime without much fight, and exacerbated by the apparent failure of 1989 to bring real change.

One student we met, merely laughed at our suggestions of individual responsibility and moral decision leading to change. *"Nothing can be done because the problems are too great"*, was her reply. Another student said, *"In our country, when we see something that doesn't work, we run away to have as little responsibility as possible"*. For one of the students' teachers the problem was simple: *"For 45 years we have had no Christian conscience, people have had no guidelines to run their life"*.

Yet clearly, under the mask of cynicism the students had visions and hopes - it was just a matter of knowing

how to release this. Then many a fountain of ideas, feelings and thoughts unheard of by fellow Romanians came forth. One student said she had never opened up before as she had done to us. She was trapped by the sense of distrust and covering-up of real feeling in Romania.

We were surprised by the fighting spirit that lay underneath the surface. It seemed that as soon as they sensed our interest and our hope for change, a deeply-rooted dream began to take hold of them. One student said, *"I thought I was the only one to dream of a better world. I thought this was abnormal."* Another said, *"I must do something with my life. I always waited for the others to do something."*

Some never give in to disappointment, though. The most impressive example of this are a group of dedicated students we met, *Pro Democracia*. They have committed themselves to fighting for democracy in Romania, to fight electoral manipulation, and to try and help ensure a truly representative government. *Pro Democracia* have limited resources and have a difficult task ahead, yet they provide a real example. Their leader has just returned from a trip to America where she could have found the dream of many Romanians - a Western job. Her determination and dedication touched us deeply.

The first official meeting of MRA in Romania took place on 5th November. It

was attended by over 50 people and was a great success. Many of the friends we had made, came - university students, teachers, members of *Pro Democracia* etc. - as well as the families we had stayed with. The reaction afterwards was terrific. Raymonde and Andrew (Smith) sold their large stock of MRA books in about 10 minutes. People stayed afterwards for hours to talk with us.

When asked what interested her most, one young lady from *Pro Democracia* said, "Your youthfulness. I am not speaking of age, because all of you, especially the older ones, radiated it. Seven years ago I might have been able to be like you, but now I have lost it. You made me think I want to refind it." The mother of the family who had hosted Jeroen Gunning said after the evening, "I am ten years younger because of what I saw and heard. You have offered me a light in darkness - that this openness and warmth is still possible!"

On arriving home tired after the evening, one member of our group found his hosts celebrating MRA with a toast of Romanian vodka - he was forced to join in.

Leaving Bucharest was sad. We and our Romanian friends were close to tears as we said goodbye. It was sad to leave so many great friends behind, but we were sure we would return. In the car park we sang the African hymn, 'Sy a Hamba' (We are marching in the light of God), our favourite and most cheerful song. Passers-by wondered what was happening, but we did not care. Finally the cars drew away and we looked back through the dirty windows to see our friends still waving - it was a wrench in our hearts that still remains.

On our departure from Romania, we stopped at Hunedoara, a steel town in the west. Here we found a landscape fit to film Dante's *Inferno* in. Driving through the city at night we saw ahead of us a red glow in the sky. As we approached the source we saw golden molten slag pouring out of the

steelworks into the open air like a flow of lava. The next day we woke up to a dark nightmarish industrial city sprouting chimneys belching smoke, grey and pink in colour. A terribly polluted town, relieved in it's 1984 vision only

by a stunning but soot-blackened 14th century Teutonic castle

Here we met and stayed with Diana and Tiberius Maris who had been to Caux this summer. We discovered to our astonishment, a thriving, lively and imaginative MRA community formed from the friends of Diana.

As one American diplomat told us, "Romania is like a benign virus. Once you have it in your blood, you have it for life. I have served in many countries, but no other people has touched my heart like this one." We all felt this and as we sped through the shocking contrasts of Austria and Switzerland, we remembered Romania and its people and wondered how we could continue to help.

There is a great chance of a large group of Romanians coming to Caux next year - the problem is how to cover the costs of travel and their stay. Romanians have very low pay and a crippling exchange rate. Also there is a demand for MRA publications, books and videos. Funding for all this needs praying for and we have set up a Romanian fund to provide a basis for contributions. We have great hope for the future of Romania as a result of our trip.

One encouraging remark, which helped us all, came from Sister Agnes, an Irish nun caring for orphans in Bucharest. She said quite confidently, "God is so much at work in this country, it is scary at times".



photo: Philippa Caughey

Meeting on Caux Youth conference with Romanian youth

'I didn't mean it'

by Peter Hannon

Adapted from a recent talk to young people in South Africa

I have a dream. You remember Martin Luther King's call. We all have dreams. Yet the reality is often different. We are insecure, burdened, fearful. And our countries too. This week the 2000th person has just been killed in the 'troubles' in my country, Northern Ireland.

40 years ago I set out to follow a dream: new men, new nations, a new world. That dream, that calling of God, has remained the most precious thing I have. Yet some time ago it seemed shattered. After all the years of trying to serve God I was told by a friend, "You are absolutely impossible to work with," and a list of examples of my impossibility was produced.

encounter with self?



sketch by Ian Kiaer

I felt very misunderstood. I wanted to sort it all out at once. I tried to ask God what to do. The next day I went to my friend and said, "I am terribly sorry if I hurt you. I didn't mean it at all," and I tried to explain the circumstances. The result? Absolutely nil. The curtain remained down.

country. 70 years ago it set out with its own government to permanently entrench the interests of my Protestant settler community over the native Catholic Irish. Since the present 'troubles' began, the obvious discriminatory laws have been changed, but deep wounds remain to be healed.

It is easy and tempting for us to point the finger at bitterness, or indeed corruption, in those on the other side - and these things are wrong - but if we are to have a part in bringing cure we must face the difficult fact that the very system we created had a flaw of corruption at its heart.

These lessons have been essential for me in Ireland. I have used them to open doors with unexpected people, from extremes in my own community to strong supporters of IRA violence. I am learning that the treasure of God's calling has a cost. It is the pearl of great price, not to be had on the cheap. God seems to set us difficulties not to discourage us but to help us grow towards a greater understanding of ourselves and of His truths.

I think of 3 qualities of leadership: 1. Sensitivity. An awareness of, and a readiness to listen to, what others feel. In the early days of our troubles in Ireland I asked a friend of mine who comes from a different background to me and who had suffered from our discrimination, "Gerry, what are the facts?" He said, "Facts? Facts only confuse the issue. In this situation each side has its own set of facts, true but selected to prove its own case. Each ignores the real fact which is what the other side feels. Feelings are the most important facts." we need a totally new readiness to listen to other's feelings, which, in turn, leads to an ability to 'read' what is going on in the other person.

2. Service. As we left Britain there were many calls for wage restraint by the workers. Some employers were themselves accepting voluntary cutbacks but others were granting themselves increases of thousands of pounds. That does not engender trust. I read this morning in a 16th century prayer, "Softener our hearts, Lord, that we may be

moved no less at the necessities and griefs of our neighbours than if they concerned ourselves."

3. Selectivity. How to choose priorities? How do we choose whom to trust? The need for the discipline of an early morning time of quiet, before the day's pressures, to search for God's perspective and guidance on priorities.

Also needed are: A serene spirit. A person in whom one feels the peace of God. "To serve Thee with a quiet mind." A secure spirit. A person who is independent of others, and of the ups and downs of success or failure. Pressure-proof. A searching spirit. A person who is always ready to learn, free from the arrogance of 'I know.'

These qualities are in God's gift. Like anything of value, there is a price on them: the price of letting go our plans, indulgences, know-how, fears. We are called to offer this to our friends (and perhaps enemies?) and to the leaders of our countries, not as some achievement, but as God's gift which we accept first for ourselves. It is MRA. The commitment to be part of a world network of people who set out to explore the full dimension of God's leadership for themselves and their nations.

It was some days later, searching for God's leading in a time of quiet, that the thought struck me, "Your friend's evaluation of your character may be more accurate than you own. You need help to understand what you do to other people just by being you. Saying "I didn't mean it" is no excuse. Many of the worst hurts to others can be done unintentionally, just by being what you are." So I went to my friend and said that I needed help. The door opened and we began to talk.

But God had not finished with me. A week or so later I woke up with a jolt. It was as if God was speaking very bluntly. "The real truth about you, Peter, is that you enjoy treating people around you as second-class." I reacted. "This is untrue. I'm against that in Ireland, in South Africa." But the prompting persisted, "As long as you have felt fulfilled in what you were doing, you were happy for those around you to take second place." I began to see that the problem of Ireland, of South Africa, was not just those unreasonable extremists out there, but the often unconscious arrogance of people who wished that others would be more like them.

The Poppy & the Elephant's tusk

"GOSH - I'M SORRY", said Philip coming into the kitchen for his mid-morning break and finding me elbow-deep in the breakfast wash-up. A few grimy 'left-to-soak' objects from the previous night's supper were there too.

"It's all right Philip, actually I enjoy washing up". I turn on the radio, fill two bowls of hot water, line it all up and attack. Clearing little greasy heaps is very satisfying. I find it a peaceful activity.

I enjoy looking after my home and family. I find it very satisfying. The mother, wife and woman that I am all have the chance of full expression. This is how God made me, this is where He has put me, so this is where I am meant to be. There are such a variety of things that need to be done and so many little daily challenges.

There is a blue china bowl in the breakfast room. It attracts everything I don't immediately know what to do with: various letters that need dealing with, a Remembrance Day poppy, an elephant's tusk broken from the coffee table, pins etc. There's a challenge - deal with one thing at a time and empty the bowl, but it never stays empty for long.

Yesterday a neighbour found a blackbird with a broken wing and asked our older son, Andrew, for advice. Today the four-year-old son of another neighbour, recuperating from whooping cough, is coming round to play whilst his parents go for a walk. There are the young, the elderly, the lonely, the sick. We are part of a community - the world in a small road.

When the sky is blue and the sun shining, and even when the wind is howling, I ache for the hills, the space and peace of the countryside; but when deep down I can accept that here - for the present - is where God has put me, that these people are the ones I can be with and care for, and that I need them, then I feel satisfied and at peace, and I pray for the world around me.

I have put the poppy and the elephant's tusk back in the bowl. The poppy will help me to remember, the elephant's tusk never to forget.

by Liz Lester

Confrontation to cooperation

Story of MRA No. 25

by Rex Dilly

INDIA IS THE TENTH largest industrial nation in the world. This fact is sometimes hard to grasp. We are so accustomed to the images of hungry children, bullocks pulling water from a well, the slow village life unchanged for centuries.

This village life exists, as does the poverty. Eight hundred thousand villages are witness to it.

Yet India is a land of extremes of the most startling kind - not merely of wealth and poverty, but of innovation and industrialisation. The development of nuclear energy goes hand-in-hand with the simplest rural technology.

Nowhere are these contrasts more apparent than in industry. There the masses of India's rural-based labour-force work alongside the educated elite, with their management skills, capital resources and sophisticated technology. As such it can be the arena of sharp confrontation between different cultures and interest groups - or it can be the area of real progress through cooperation.

During the past 18 years there have been regular courses in 'Creative leadership for industry and national development' at Asia Plateau, MRA'S centre in Panchgani, western India. Over 100 companies have participated regularly by sending directors, managers, trade union leaders and shop floor workers.

One of these companies is the largest

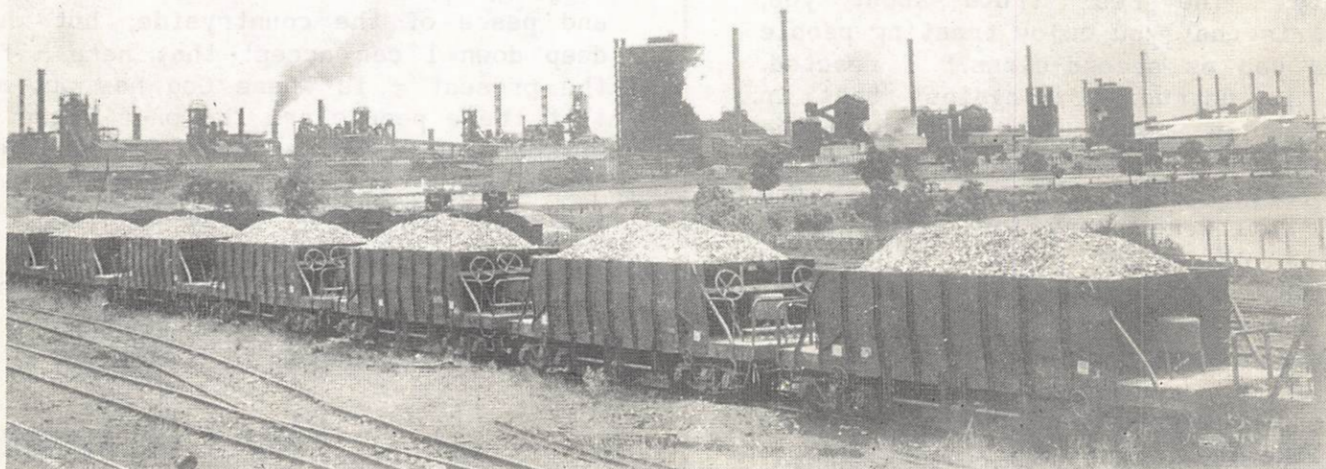
in the private sector, the Tata Engineering and Locomotive Company, known as TELCO. They have sent groups regularly from their two plants in Jamshedpur (near Calcutta) and Pune (near Bombay). They manufacture 70% of the trucks and buses on the Indian roads today. Last year they were chosen by Mercedes-Benz to produce their cars in India for export.

In March 1989 *The Chartered Accountant* magazine published a study of the effect of the courses on TELCO, noting:

- marked improvement in manager-worker relations
- positive attitudes towards resolving conflicts and solving work-related problems
- improved communication between union leaders and managers, and enhanced cooperation
- analysis of problems rather than reactions on the basis of preconceived ideas
- responsibility taken for changes
- increase in the number of suggestions
- positive steps taken by certain union leaders for the welfare of the workers
- improvement in family life.

TELCO's Jamshedpur plant have been sending groups to Panchgani since 1978. They first became interested when a newly graduated engineer, Kiren Gandhi, joined the company.

On graduating, Kiren had wanted to start a small-scale industry with two other colleagues. However he says,



Scene outside Jamshedpur

"Having met MRA and put things right in my life, I searched for the next step. In the perspective of the needs of the nation, the thought came, 'Don't start another industry. Do something to improve the working of those already existing'". He got a job in TELCO, in the melting shop which had a reputation of being the most troublesome department. Two rival groups of workers, battling for control, had caused five strikes in 1975.

Kiren got to know V N Prasad and C P Singh, the leaders of the two groups. He invited them to see the MRA musical *Song of Asia* which visited Jamshedpur. They were both struck by the idea that when individuals change they can bring solutions to conflicts in families as well as between nations. Later they attended a conference at Panchgani.

It was there they decided to start working together on the shop floor for 'what is right'. After returning to Jamshedpur they succeeded in uniting their rival groups. This resulted in their department reaching its yearly production target in ten months, in spite of a severe power shortage.

Together they wrote a courageous and honest article in the company house magazine *TELCO Flashes* in which they told of their new relationship and of the vision they had for their industry and the country. 'Today we are partners in a revolution to build a better world, not only for workers but for the whole of mankind'. They told how they had come to their decision at Panchgani. 'We met men who had decided to become honest with their wives, and capitalists who had decided not to evade taxes and to put people before profits. We both decided,' they continued, 'to sink our differences and to work unitedly for the good of the country. We thought of becoming honest with our wives about certain things that we had hidden from them. We also thought of apologising to some of our colleagues for having nursed bitterness and ill-will towards them. We promise that to settle any dispute, we shall seek that solution which is just to the workers, just to the company and just to the nation.'

Four years ago, an explosion of violence occurred at the Pune plant. The Resident Manager called for an MRA

seminar. 'I am prepared to close down the factory for three days for this programme', he told a dozen senior managers. They were part of the 70 officers, trade unionists, supervisors and workers selected to participate in the first of the programmes held in the plant.

Trade unionists and managers from neighbouring Pune factories who had benefitted from the seminars at Panchgani, spoke along with others from the TELCO Jamshedpur plant. An atmosphere of forgiveness was generated. One man from Pune said, 'After hearing these men I am convinced change in me is possible'. Two assistant managers made apologies to each other for not having talked to one another for eight months.

The President of the union said, 'I and my colleagues will play a full part in this task. What I have learned here I'll spread to my family and community'.

Lt General M L Chibber has a distinguished career with the Indian army. He attended an industrial seminar at Panchgani in 1989 and described it as 'an absolutely unique and exhilarating experience'. He volunteered to assist with future programmes.

The courses at Asia Plateau have been commended by the Xavier Labour Relations Institute through the award of its 'Sir Jehangir Ghandhy Gold Medal for Industrial Peace' to Rajmohan Gandhi - one of Asia Plateau's founders. The citation read in part, 'Through the Moral Re-Armament movement, through Asia Plateau and through numerous articles, speeches, plays ... Rajmohan has worked for moral regeneration as the necessary prerequisite for any real human and economic progress'.

These courses seek to develop a motivation born of conscience and a leadership of integrity for both employees and management. They go beyond industrial techniques to the fundamentals of changing people, whose prejudices can be industry's costliest overhead and indeed a national liability. They are designed with the conviction that industry has an even bigger role to play.

'If aubergine doesn't suit you...'

HAVE YOU HEARD of colour analysis? The sort where you decide, with the help of a book, what colours suit you. Finally, once and for all. No more mucking around buying mustard if it makes you look as if you've just had flu. No more drawers full of aubergine and lime green that don't go together.

I got into this a few years ago, embarking on a long term project to rid my wardrobe of black. Just at the period when black was the BIG fashion story. The consolation for not being in fashion is that you're looking so much better! (It certainly improved my husband's dressing, in my opinion.) In my case, I got fed up with waiting for things to wear out before I replaced them, and decided not to be dictated to.

I hate being told what to do - yet I love it too. Sometimes, it's nice not to have to think. Sometimes it's so much safer and more comfortable to conform. Any slight disagreements I tend to sweep under the carpet, on the pretext that 'it's the general principles that matter'.

This aspect of my personality dominated in the first few years I knew MRA (not entirely bad - in a submissive state I learnt a lot). Then the other side began to take over, and I needed time to think things out for myself. With time and a little distance I've been able to have a good old sort out, keep in my wardrobe of opinions the colours that go together and suit me, and discard those that belong to other people.

The next thing is to have the courage to wear my colours. If many of my opinions are represented by navy blue, that means they'll be accepted (navy, in slightly different shades, is supposed to be the one colour that suits everyone). It's also a good safe base colour. Then if others of my opinions are represented by coral pink or lime green, they'll still suit my navy.

Not only must I wear the more difficult colours, I must help other people wear theirs! If you and I agree on an issue, I may believe in a coral pink view of it, and you may believe in a rose pink view. Or you may not want pink at all, but aubergine, which doesn't suit me. In which case, I need to love you enough to see that aubergine is best for you, and you need to love me enough to see that pink is best for me. The only way to find that sort of love in difficulty is to pray for it, and go on praying for it until it's given.

If aubergine doesn't suit you, I've got to love you enough still to pray for you until you make up your own mind. You're going to be very hurt if I just march up to you and say, "You look terrible in aubergine".

Anyway, the other day a friend and I got talking about colour analysis and I got interested again. I'm going to be brave and try yellow. The next person I want to colour analyse is my daughter, aged 3. At this most impressionable age, some thing can be dictated, like what she wears. Most things cannot possibly be!

The Mad Hatter

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SUBSCRIBER INFO

JOANNA HAYES (cartoonist of the last issue) has offered to be **FREEWAY** representative for New Zealand and Australia - so, you all Down Under, any queries or ideas to her: PO Box 130, Kurow, North Otago, NEW ZEALAND

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