

Letter from the Editors

Dear Friends,

'Freeway' was launched almost six years ago in 1986 at the Youth Forum in Caux. We wrote at that time of *'the expanding team from all over the world, who have made a commitment to turning the world Godwards, and who want to work together'*. We felt the need of a means of communication between us, and out of that need 'Freeway' was born.

A small group in Britain undertook the task of gathering material and putting it together in the course of one frenetic Saturday every two months. (Frequently the day was lengthened because some of our number just *had* to watch some football match or other.) There followed the addressing, stamping and stuffing of envelopes.

The original conception and much of the foundation work came from Philip Boobyer, Warren Buckley, Ian Healey and Edward Peters in teamwork with Mike Lowe, Mots Leballo and Peter Riddell. Many others have been involved as the team has evolved through the years. There was an enthusiastic band of regional representatives, and many others who have contributed material. Particular thanks must go, for their regular features, to Brian Boobyer who has shared the roots of his faith with us, and to Rex Dilly who, with exhaustive research, has helped us to evaluate how God has worked through MRA.

You may be asking yourselves where this is leading. *The fact is that those of us currently responsible for 'Freeway' do not feel able to continue.* Warren Buckley (the longest serving editor) has a very demanding job with one of Britain's biggest portable telephone companies. Angela Willoughby is about to start teaching after a year's training. Rachel Charrett is about to get married and move to Brussels.

But the need of a 'means of communication' still exists, perhaps more than ever. If anyone would like to take over the baton and develop a team to do it with, we would be more than delighted.

We do have one idea which corresponds more closely to the current inclinations and availability of our team. The next (and last) 'Freeway' will be a special 24-page issue on the theme *'An Anatomy of Love'*. We hope that it may be something you would like others to read, and we plan to print it in considerable numbers. Thereafter, we would like to produce, perhaps twice a year, similar collections of experience and reflection on some of the important issues of the day.

We enclose a slip, by which you could let us know what you think of these developments: how the means of communication between us can be maintained, what themes these special issues might develop, and any other ideas.

All those who have participated in producing 'Freeway' have found it immensely enjoyable and rewarding, and look forward to all that results from the network that is being created around the world.

The Editors

East is East...

by Jeroen Gunning

PACKED TO THE BRIM, five not-too-tiny people in our blue Mazda, matching blue canvas flapping from the bulging roofrack, we entered Germany in a whirl. Our four week tour had started: ten stops in East and West, invited by friends from Caux, who all took the opportunity to invite their friends to meet us. We chatted, told about our visit to Romania (Freeway December) or our project in Geneva, and invariably got deeply into Germany's problems. We found two worlds, desperately trying to be one. Forty years are not easily forgotten, nor should they be. It is hard to understand each other, even if the language is the same. Our talks with small groups drew us a picture worth scanning in close-up.

Rallying in Nürnberg

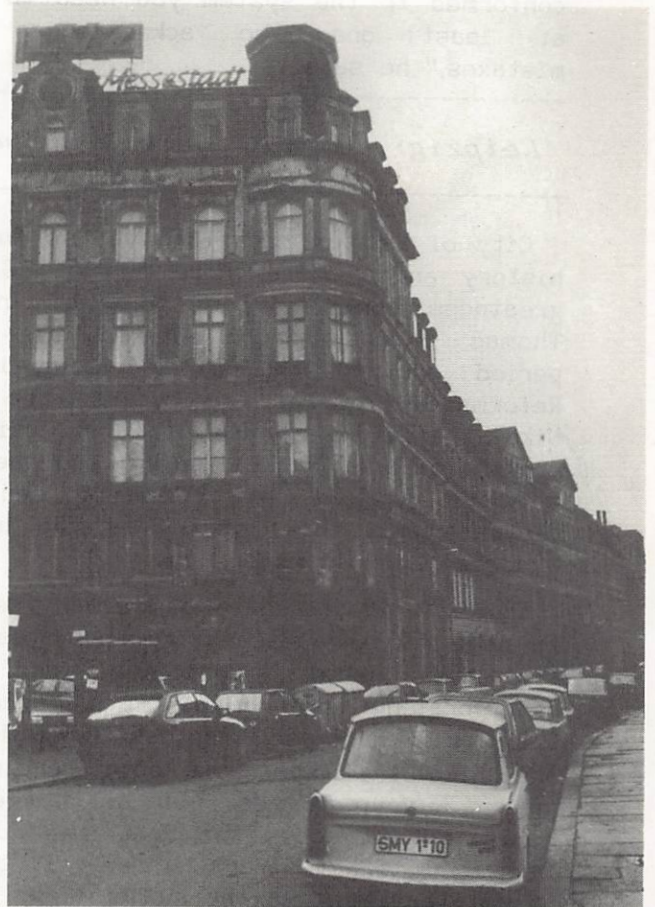
We drive into an enormous car-park near the Nürnberger Messe. We are searching for the place where the famous Trials were held. Looking closer, we see that the line of cars, ten deep and kilometers long, is covering rough pre-war blocks of concrete. We are driving on Hitler's parade ground! Towards the end of the war it was used as an airstrip for the Allied forces, now it is reduced to a car-park.

We continue, manoeuvring through the endless rows of cars. Towards the end we come to a massive wall with enormous Roman doors set in the middle. We search for a back entrance and find ourselves suddenly confronted by a vast arena, facing an impressive rostrum high up amidst rows of seats arranged like an amphitheatre against the back of the wall. Here crowds of up to 1.6 million gathered to hear their Führer speak. The wind blows coldly, the arena is deserted. We climb up to the rostrum and imagine the crowds filled with the fever of mass-power.

Thomas Bräcke's car suddenly pulls up on the side of the road. There is mud all around, nothing in the least spectacular. It is cold so why stop? "This used to be the border..." we hear Thomas say - and only then do we see the long scar winding

"This used to be the border..."

endlessly across the hills, like a torn-down Chinese Wall. Two towers gaze at each other from a distance, making sure no one can pass unnoticed. We move on to the second border, the disturbed earth still fresh. All that remains are the two concrete strips used by the patrol cars.



photos: J Gunning

Last of the survivors - Trabant in Leipzig

In Dermbach my host, Wolfgang, was in the resistance against the former regime. When he started work he had had to go through all the Party propaganda ending with a compelling invitation to join the Party. "I am a Party-member already", he replied. The Party-fishers were astonished. "Only it's a different party - the Christmas-party, those who follow Christ..." The bosses got the point - and he paid the

...and West is West

price by being treated as the down-trodden, good-for-nothing outcast of the factory.

All who now claim that they had to obey, are dodging their personal responsibility, in Wolfgang's view. His wife Bettina had hoped to study, but wasn't allowed to unless she joined the Party. So she gave up her dreams - though she still feels a little inferior when she meets someone who did study. But she can hold her head high. "Before you can forgive those who conformed to the system you need to hear at least one who acknowledges the mistakes," he said.

Leipzig: city of Bach & Luther

City of Leipzig, grey and yet so full of history and culture. Here the old German greatness comes vividly to life. In the Thomas Kirche, Bach entered his peak period and Martin Luther declared the Reformation. Only two years ago the Nikolai Kirche harboured the revolutionary spirits of the GDR. Suddenly I see the link between present day Germany and its distant past; this country is not just a hundred-year-old experiment.

In 1981, groups all over Germany decided to have regular peace prayers, in response to the nuclear build-up and the deteriorating environment. Each Monday at 5pm a tiny group of people would gather in the Nikolai Kirche, and burn candles in prayer - year in, year out. As the general crisis got worse in the East, the numbers increased till from '86 onwards it became an embarrassment to the authorities.

In '89 the Monday prayers became the focal point of all opposition. Believers and non-believers alike participated and all agree that the peace radiating from the burning candles, the organ playing and the soft prayers permeated the demonstrations so thoroughly that they remained non-violent. On 9th October, the turning point in the 'Wende', the tense crowds shuffling out of church were met by a threatening wall of police. In the

previous days people had been beaten. Then, slowly, people walked to the nearest policemen and started talking. Did they look like criminals, like they wanted to destroy the State? Would the police beat them? That day the power of fear was broken.

My host are Holger and Christiane and their 8-year-old daughter Emanuela. They live in a renovated, pre-war flat, with a dark, stately staircase winding up. Christiane is a lawyer and has a hard time switching to western-style law while running a full practice. Western lawyers make use of her lack of knowledge in order to manipulate. It doesn't help the 'mutual love'.



With Leipzig minister Michael Hecker and his family

I get my first ride in a Trabi! Holger takes us out to the browncoal mines just outside the city. The nearer we get, the browner the houses are. Pollution lays heavily on us. We whirl into a muddy side road, and sputter along over the rough territory. Suddenly we find ourselves peering over a ridge into a vast void. As far as the eye can see, there is a brown, ravaged landscape. On the horizon, tiny factories belch out thick smoke; but for that, there's the eeriness of a nuclear fall-out.

In Berlin we are expected to take three 10th form classes in a school in East Berlin. We cross the city and the only sign that we have entered the eastern part is that there are no new buildings, only grey or black houses. When we get out of the car, the browncoal smoke settles heavily into our lungs. We inhale a few times to get used to it.

Slogans on the school walls shout out their messages. The eastern youth-radio has been ordered to shut down. Something to do with communism and old affiliations. Yet the youth see this as their only way to have a voice. So the slogans summon

Berlin

pupils to demonstrate at the notorious Alexanderplatz.

It is the first sign that the youth are concerned about their society. After our 'lessons' we get dragged along to the schoolyard - our pupils need a smoke. They explain the situation, arguing with each other in trying to get at the truth. *"I feel ashamed to be German"* says a girl, *"because of all the evil my people has committed. When I see neo-fascists attacking dark-skinned people, I wish I could disappear and start afresh."* Her hair is dyed black, her pale face cut in two by enormous black lines issuing from her eyebrows. Her clothes are all black - a reaction against her Aryan background? A girl of Arab origin suddenly lashes out at two approaching blondes. *"Get lost, you dirty neo-nazis!"* To our surprise the girls are hardly upset. They just argue back why they are not nazis. *"I am not against all Turks, only those who shoot us down. They shouldn't be here, killing us!"*

Did those faces really belong to 16-year-olds? The 'Wende', the problems of their parents, often jobless since the changes, had had a clearly maturing effect. Asking what they would want the 'Wessies' to know, they said: *"Be less arrogant, we are not second-rate citizens. When we poured through the breaches in the wall you were overwhelmed with joy. But it took*

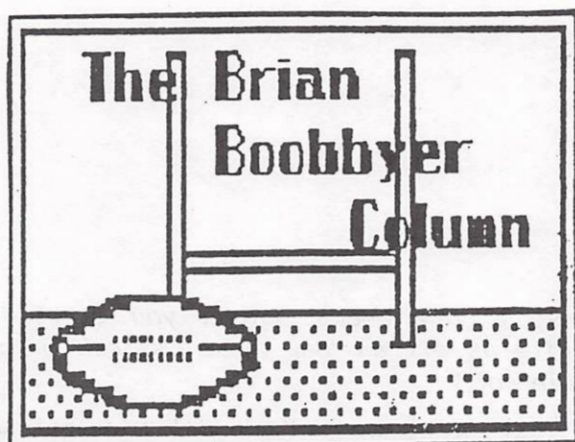
just a few weeks before you started to write us off as 'na, those Ossies'. Be more tolerant."

That night we talked till midnight with three of the pupils. Through their words we saw their East-Berlin childhoods and teenage-years. They had probably never met 'those corrupt bank-managers' but they were sure they would never want to become one. *"I believe in anarchy"* said Tilman, *"but I am realistic enough to see it would only work if all were intelligent."* *"I still believe in communism"* said his friend, throwing his long hair backwards. *"Not the one we had"* he hastened to add. No they were not happy with the 'wende' or the Reunification. They had never wanted to have the West. Stasi-threat? Never a problem. The Wall had been a fact that hadn't bothered them. They hadn't even visited the West after the Fall.

What makes this talk fascinating is their eagerness to hear what our dreams are and how to bring them about. Dreams of change, rooted, for us, in faith. We tell



Brandenburg Gate without the wall



I WAS PLAYING in an important rugby match and in the first half managed to make a break which led to the one try of the match. At half-time the opposing fly-half passed me as we crossed over and said quietly "Well played, Brian". It was only years later that I remembered this.

By then he had died young. His name was Glyn Davies, a brilliant player for Cambridge and Wales. He had the longest sidestep of anyone I can remember.

How attractive sportsmanship is - and often unseen.

I grew up in a cricketing family. My brothers and I were in the garden through the summer months imitating the great players of the past; players we had got to know through our large library of cricket books. Many famous names stand out, including the great Indian player and artist, Ranjitsinghi. But perhaps most of all we pretended to be Victor Trumper of Australia and Jack Hobbs of England.

Stories abound about each of them and all in the realm of perfect sportsmanship. Moreover, Hobbs' wife became mentally ill and he looked after her with devotion and took her with him to meet people without embarrassment.

We all know the unpleasant side of sport, the violence and corruption. These things have always been there. I remember one particularly violent university rugby match that I played in. Any temptation to feel superior to the violence in today's sport is always tempered for me when I remember that game.

But there are great things to learn. You can learn to succeed one day and fail the next and keep your balance; to be generous; to be fit enough to go all out; to lose when you deserve to win, to win when you deserve to lose; to bring out the best in the team around you; and of course you can make lifelong friends.

Important lessons for life.

But it is not so easy to be unselfish when you're dead keen to succeed!

An old friend who later captained England at rugby used to come off the field and say: "You played a great game today. How did I play?" I would say, "Eric, you were great".

It's easy to pretend to be better than you are; and if you're not realistic about yourself and your performance you're not going to improve.

But it's also easy to pretend to be worse than you are; to lose confidence and allow one or two failures to induce the feeling of being useless. I never forget what I owe to the encouragement of my parents in particular, but also of numerous teachers and coaches and players.

All this has made me want to make it a priority to encourage people in every sphere of life. I do not mean hearty praise, which can be false. But rather a spur. I have a special affection for Barnabas in the New Testament. I think his name means 'son of encouragement'. I can imagine how Paul must have blossomed through his friendship and encouragement. There is a tradition that they were fellow-students. Perhaps Barnabas shared Paul's enthusiasm for sport that runs through his letters.

Of course violence in sport is very much the relection of a violent world. When in 1985 the football tragedy happened in Brussels in which 38 people died, I was in Washington. On the front of the sports page in The Washington Post, there was the report of an interview with the great footballer Bobby Charlton. He said, "Over the past seven or eight years violence has gotten really bad. There are lots of reasons for it. You could blame unemployment, the lack of authority in schools, poor policing. But you can forget about the politicians and the authorities. The individual, his thinking, the reason for doing what he does, have to be changed. In 30 years I've never seen anything like it."

About 20 years ago, Stan Smith was playing Rosewall in the semi-final of the men's singles at Wimbledon. He was leading by 2 sets to love, and 5 games to 3, and was serving for the match. And he lost. When he was interviewed afterwards he said, "The name of the game is confidence".

Last weekend Jimmy White was leading Hendry 14-8 in the final of the world snooker and dominating the match. Then Hendry won a succession of very close

games, and White's confidence seemed to go. In fact White did not win another game, and lost 18-14.

One of the big questions of sport and life is how to develop the right kind of confidence. If you try too hard you easily get tense and lose the natural touch. At the same time confidence partly comes from the knowledge that you've prepared thoroughly.

Confidence is the same word as trust. In sport you can trust your own ability and skill and keep working to increase them. In the life of faith you can trust God and let Him use you to build His Kingdom.

Recently I read through the book of Isaiah and copied out all the promises of God I could find. At the end I felt almost overwhelmed. One verse says: 'His breath is like an overflowing stream'. All I have to do is to believe those promises and match my life with them to enable them to come true.

Hunte in South Africa

Conrad Hunte, the great West Indian cricketer, was on his last cricket tour of England in 1966. He came to Oxford and the team stayed in the Randolph Hotel. On his birthday, May 9, he invited them all to dinner to celebrate at the end of a day's play. Then he showed them three short films and told them of his decision to put cricket on one side and launch out on a wider mission, to heal the divisions in the world. Each of the team spoke afterwards to salute or comment on what he was proposing to do.

I remember that he was 34 years old at the time, so I know for certain that he will be 60 this week as I write this!

During the last two years he has been coaching cricket in the townships of South Africa. Sir Colin Cowdrey, Chairman of the International Cricket Council, told me on the phone this week, "What Conrad is doing is fantastic".

He spoke on the BBC last year of the poverty of his childhood and the power of forgiveness in his life.

His story makes me realise afresh how God uses people but also goes on preparing them.

You can go all out for a limited objective like sporting success.

It may be a good preparation for going all out for God and His kingdom, an objective that has no limit.

'Tear down those walls!'

'Tear down those walls' is the title of the Caux Youth-hosted session 24-31 July 1992.

Nine people met in Budapest, Hungary at the end of March to carry forward the planning for it. They were: Dominique Aubert (Switzerland), Petru Avram (Romania), Philippa Caughey (New Zealand), Gabra & Marketa Drgova (Czechoslovakia), Jeroen Gunning (Netherlands), Christine Jaulmes (France), Anna Misiurewicz (Poland) and Veronika Schuster (Austria).

They write that they hope people will leave with a 'clear idea why walls should be torn down, a dedication to do it and some clue as to how' and the realisation that 'walls don't necessarily disappear in one day, but usually take costly decision'.

Two questions focused for them some of the basic issues:

- 'When a wall of hate separates me from another, the first step is to stop hating. Does taking the first step mean you have to go on to the second, meaning to start loving? And how?'

- 'You sit in an empty bus and see a person of a distinguishable group (be it race or background) come in. You know a lot of stories about robberies, violence committed by members of that group, so you get afraid and suspect the person. How can you overcome such prejudice?'

Some of the main themes of the programme will be:

Walls between me and others - family, friends, colleagues

Walls between parts of society - groups, gangs, politicians, classes, generations

Walls between ethnic groups/cultures - nations, races, minorities

Walls of greed in and between nations - indifference, North vs South, mass-consumption

How to stop building walls

They hope that everyone who is planning to attend will be able to contribute to one of these themes. There is everything to create, so all ideas are welcome.

Further information can be got from Christine Jaulmes or Jeroen Gunning:

YHS, Casa Postale 3, 1211 Geneva 20 Switzerland.

Out of Ethiopia - a light

by Alan Channer

ONE VERSE OF AN ETHIOPIAN SONG conveys the tragedy:

'Oh mother of a boy,
Tie your stomach with rope,
It will be a vulture
And not a relative, who will bury him.'

More than a million Ethiopians have been killed by war, famine and persecution over the last twenty years. A greater number have been wounded, traumatized or forced to flee as refugees.

Nigussie Asress fled in 1984. 'We were trying to apply the principles of Moral Re-Armament in those days,' he says. 'One day I was shocked to receive a sealed envelope from the secret police with instructions to give false testimony against people I knew were innocent. I met with my committee [of a "kebele" or urban association] and we agreed that I must tell the truth. Several times after that the secret police came to my house and took me away for questioning. Eventually they got false testimony from someone else.'

'When I visited the people in jail, they said, "We know we are innocent, so if we die it doesn't matter". Shortly afterwards I was told I was in danger. My family and close friends advised me to hide or flee. I

left in the night and walked to the border with Sudan.'

More than a year later, his wife, Eskedar, gathered up their two children and set out to join her husband. 'We walked for two months, always at night. During the day, we slept. We swapped our clothes with ordinary villagers. One morning we were still walking when the sun came up, and we were robbed. All our money and gold was taken. We continued with nothing, sometimes having to scrape in the soil to get water. Well, God helped us and eventually we reached a refugee camp in Sudan.'

Nigussie and Eskedar now live in north London. Their children often come top of the class at school.

Window of opportunity

In Ethiopia today, there is respite in the air. Colonel Haile Mariam Mengistu, one of the most ruthless dictators of modern times, has fled. A window of opportunity is open, but re-building the country is an enormous task. According to a Human Rights Watch Report, 'The economy is bankrupt, the



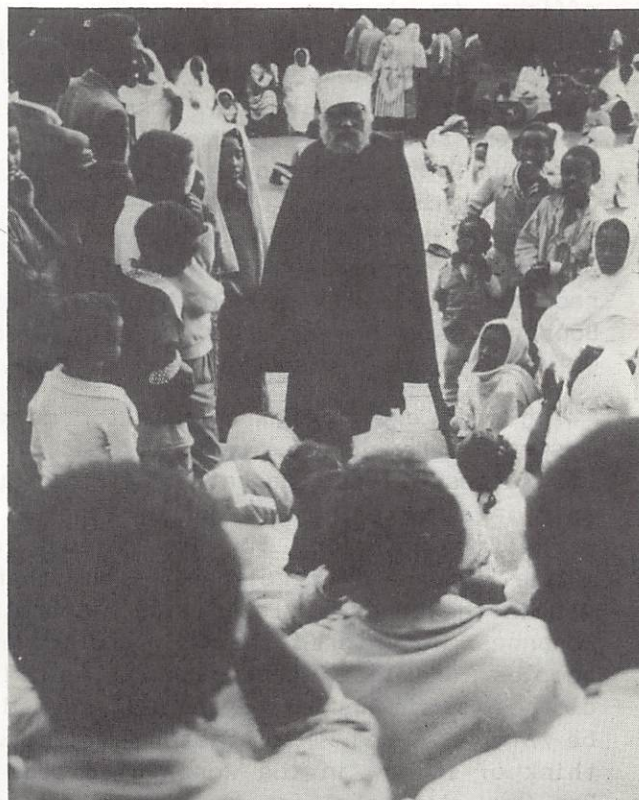
photos: A Channer

natural environment irreparably damaged, the country torn apart and the growth of civil politics aborted'.

This was the setting for our visit to Addis Ababa, the first by Europeans working with MRA for 17 years. We could not have prepared for the hospitality and embraces which welcomed us.

I was accompanying Hugh Elliott, now aged 80, who spent many months in Ethiopia, together with his wife Bridget, over seven consecutive years (1969-1975). It became clear that there was something remarkable about the nature of the friendship between Hugh and the Ethiopians he knew.

We were met at the airport by three people - Major Alemseged Ghebreyohannes, a Police Commissioner in charge of security



Ethiopian Orthodox priest with his congregation

London, two floors below my bedroom, and used to pat me on the head when I came home from school. After 12 years as a taxi-driver in Washington, he was called home by the new government, and is now re-united with his wife. His is a daunting and crucially important task. We could remember him in our prayers.

Shortly after finding ourselves in a comfortable room at the Ethiopia Hotel, we were whisked through a seeming maze of suburban compounds - jolting over ruts in the road, passing children leading small donkeys - to the spacious, barely-furnished home of Woizero Kabeba and her husband Ato Truneh. Here Hugh had attended team-meetings 17 years earlier - in a room which, during all the intervening years of suffering and terror, had remained available for people to come and to share in fellowship and prayer.

About a dozen people gathered for our first lunch, one of whom was Eskedar's younger brother, Tezera. He would catch my eye frequently to ensure I was feasting amply from every lavish platter of traditional food. After the meal Hugh and the others spoke: the elders remembered old times, and everyone was moved.

From then on a string of engagements was woven from the generosity and courtesy of many Ethiopians - who came to the hotel, who took us to their homes or



Statue of Emperor Menelik who established the boundaries of modern-day Ethiopia

within the country; Mr Merkuria Worku, Ethiopia's representative of Rank Xerox, and Woizero Kabeba, a mother of five who hugged Hugh thrice. She is Nigussie's sister.

Major Alemseged drove us to the centre of Addis Ababa in a large jeep, smiling warmly as he recalled those in MRA who had helped him when he was a refugee. During the time of Mengistu's 'Red Terror', he had been ordered to arrest people for crimes they had not committed - and he objected. He was obliged to flee for his life in 1977. Extraordinarily enough, he worked for a while with Grosvenor Books in

offices, to churches, restaurants and the market. Some just heard we had come - and appeared. And so we found ourselves with Dej. Zewde Gebreselassie, former Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, for two hours. He is behind a new association called 'Ethiopianness', which is trying to act as a unifying, all-inclusive force to prevent national disintegration. He recalled Jim Baynard-Smith and Brian Boobbyer, who he had first met at Oxford University, and a visit to Caux in 1947.

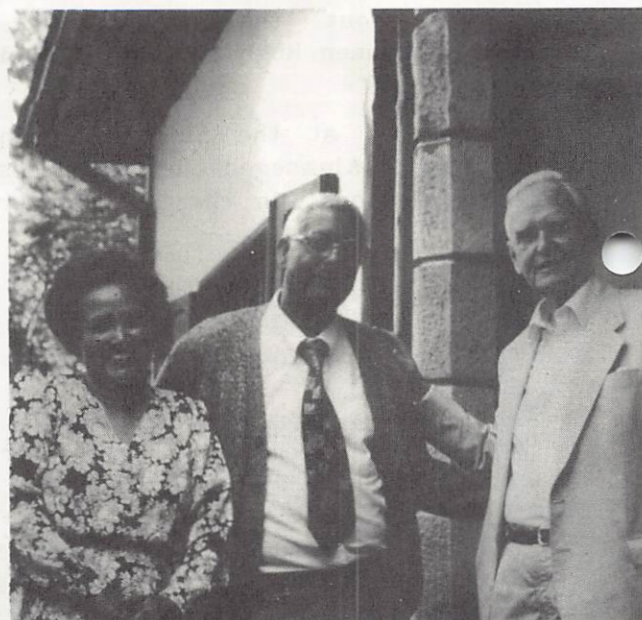
The most exciting experience for me was a stroll through the 'marcato', said to be the largest street market in Africa. Hugh said I was entering the 'danger-zone' - the market is notorious for its thieves, and little visited by foreigners - but then I was in the hands of Tezera and his brother Johannes. We entered the throng of diverse peoples - amidst scents, shouts, swirling clothes, music and exuberance. It seemed to be Africa laced with Eastern promise. I think of it now in the words of a poem by Ben Okri, 'grateful for the manifold dreams of creation, and the many ways of the unnumbered peoples'. And we went to a church, St. George's, and prayed outside the door. Ethiopia has been Christian since the 4th century.

'manifold dreams of creation'

The most moving moments of the visit came at the home of a writer called Ato Mammo Wudneh and his wife, Woizero Almaz. Mammo had spent most of the previous night writing an article on the kind of change Ethiopia needs; an article partly inspired by a statement on Moral Re-Armament in Kenya's 'Daily Nation', called 'Time to choose, time to change'. He told us how he had made a television broadcast at the time when forces of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front were preparing for a final assault on Addis Ababa and Mengistu's East German-trained army were preparing to defend the city with heavy artillery. Wudneh said, 'If there is a fight for Addis Ababa, we will all be losers'. Church bells rang out, people prayed all over the country, and extraordinarily, Mengistu's forces surrendered. Unlike Masawa - or Mogadishu - Addis Ababa still stands in its former glory.

After a large tea at the Wudneh's (soft drinks, peanuts, crisps, savoury snacks,

cookies, popcorn, sweet bread, cake - and tea) people began to say what was most on their hearts. Hugh told how God had somehow used him to re-unite his parents, who lived apart for 26 years; and told of the suffering Bridget and he had been through when she got cancer - of how, despite everything, a sense of God's love was never lost. Woizero Kabeba, wiping the corner of her eye with her white shawl, said, 'We have also suffered so much, but God has helped us'.



Writer Mammo Wudneh, his wife Almaz and Hugh Elliott

We had a long quiet-time as dusk drew in. After it Almaz said she was sorry she had not been keeping in touch with Kab - she would make a point of meeting her more often. Ato Truneh said he was involved in a difficult situation, but had had a thought on how to resolve it. A spirit of oneness came into our gathering; a collective experience of the triumph of love over suffering. I shared a thought: "Through much tribulation," said Thomas a Kempis, "we must enter the Kingdom of God." For us being with you now is like an experience of that Kingdom.'

On our last day Mammo showed us his article, fresh from the printing presses of the main Amharic newspaper 'Addis Zemen'. 'The editor is very excited,' he said.

There is a deep Christian spirituality in many Ethiopians, which is a light to anyone's path. Perhaps that spirituality will now be harnessed to foster peace and justice. Ethiopia can be a light to the nations.

This and that

We have been pleased to receive a number of letters from *Freeway* readers, in several cases promising items for future issues. Unfortunately, since the next issue will be the last, and will have a special theme, they will not see the light of day.

However, we thought that you would be interested to know something of these readers and their concerns.

We received Easter greetings from Jerzy Muszak on behalf of the MRA group in Poland, and a substantial report of a conference that they held in September. Jerzy is currently taking his Secondary School certificate.

Joe Hakim in Beirut wrote on 12th April, 'It might be true that we have a kind of civil peace nowadays, but it's not at all what satisfies people. It's a real catastrophe we are still living through. The problem isn't solved in the right way. How many people and leaders are keen and willing to fight for righteousness without any kind of fear? But there's always that calling which becomes more and more clear: we are but meant to live through faith alone.' He writes of the preparations he and other friends are making for the coming of an MRA group at the beginning of May. They are planning a special programme for young people. 'I feel already it will be a new step for the new Lebanon.' Joe will take a week's holiday from work (making jewellery) to participate in the visit.

Marthamarie de Voogd writes from Rotterdam that a hot issue in Holland is a change in the law that ensures that people who are permanently unable to work can still obtain support. Apparently the number of people who are unable to work for one reason or another is growing too fast. She is confronted by this issue because she has patients in her movement-therapy practice who are unable to work because of back pain.

Vera Frampton (England) one of the brightest senior citizens I know, is hard at work on her next book. (Her last, co-authored with Norah Cook, was a study of the Ten Commandments for use in schools). She writes asking for help with the book, which is on the theme of 'communication with God'. She is looking for stories which 'illustrate the many ways in which God speaks to us. They can be short - perhaps

an episode where a thought has been acted on or a chance taken. Some may have experienced a change of direction through something they have read or heard.' We will be happy to pass on to her anything you write.

Petru Avram in Bucharest, Romania, writes that after a brief talk with the other members of the Romanian MRA (Youth) Group, 'it was decided that I should try and produce a printable "something" for the next issue of *Freeway*. (The decision was very easy for the others to take - as I happen to be a journalist - but it is a challenging task for me.)' Unfortunately, his 'printable something' still has not arrived, and we may never know what he might have written...

Peter Riddell

Jean Vanier founder of L'Arche communities for the handicapped spoke to students at Oxford University. Edward Peters took the following notes.

"Andrew is a mentally-handicapped young man, with a healthy body. He was very keen to take part in the Special Olympics (for handicapped people) and trained hard. He was keen to win his 100 metres race. The gun went and off he charged. Half way to the line, a rival on his right stumbled and fell. Andrew stopped, picked him up and ran hand in hand with him to the finishing line. How different from athletes in the real Olympics!

...How easily we reject those who aren't the way we want them to be.

...To love people is not to do things for them (we can do things for people and crush them). To love someone is to reveal that they are beautiful, precious. You don't have to be wise, to go through university, to do that.

...There is a well of tenderness inside me, and through this well I can give life. But there are also powers of violence in me which can hurt someone weak. We can spend our lives thinking we're elite when in fact we're using our eliteness to crush those weaker than us.

...Our intelligence is meant to be at the service of the heart, or it will destroy us."

Letter from Japan

by Hiroo Sugi

THE FRENCH PRIME MINISTER who resigned recently called us 'ants' when she referred to Japan. Yes, we are ants, but it is a different concept from what she had in mind.

I often hear that Japanese people don't know how to spend their holidays. These critical laughs don't mean anything to me. All Westerners must know Aesope's fables - well the Japanese also avoid spending life as a grasshopper (or beetle). If our labour attitude can be criticised by others in economic conflicts, I must say that it is racial discrimination against the Japanese.

I'm not saying that others are lazy, but the labour spirit is one of our beauties - or the only one - which most of us are very proud of. We try to work ten hours if the others work nine, in order to make 100% best.

Japan is recognized as a developed country and one of the biggest economic nations in the world. I suppose you could hear or read a lot about our economic success even if you don't know the name of our current Prime Minister. (But don't worry, many young students here don't know either, although they know who the best fashion designer is.)

On the other hand, we always respond that our nation is rich, but the people are not. It is quite rare to live in a house with a garden in Tokyo. So we live in a very small room in a flat or apartment which an American once called a 'rabbit hutch'. Yet people who have a house in Tokyo are rather privileged. Most of us working in Tokyo during the day, live outside the city. Eight million people spend two hours travelling to and from work, so you shouldn't be surprised at the scenes at the stations in the morning and evening.

If we miss the last train around 1.00am after working late or having a drink, we can sleep in a 'capsule hotel' which is quite a new system, in which you just slip your body into a capsule. (You could call it a cocoon, but not a coffin!) These residential problems are part of the price of our rapid economic growth over the last 20-25 years.

Although there are aspects of housing which can be improved, we are still fortunate; young ladies can stay safely in

town at night; when I am hungry on Friday night, I can go to a supermarket which is open 24 hours and find something to fill up my stomach for a while until breakfast. Life is quite comfortable. The major reason for this security must be the social trust amongst Japanese (sharing the same language and skin colour).

I think I don't belong among the pessimists. I am the easy-going type. Good and bad come and go together. But still, we are facing serious problems.

These days shortage of labour is becoming a issue. Manufacturers have to depend on foreign workers - (this raises another important issue which I will leave for the time being). The drop in birth rate is one of the reasons, but the main one is that we are becoming a highly educated society.

In general, ones school record is quite an important factor; companies may look at which university you graduated from rather than looking at the person. To have graduated from a famous university is the same sort of status as which family blood you have.

This concept makes parents push their children to study hard day and night 'with love', remembering their bitter experiences of not having had a high education. (But mind you, most of the modern industrial pioneers of Japan such as Mr Matsushita (Panasonic) and Mr Honda studied on their own and made progress by themselves.) You may understand from this why the rate of suicide among youth in Japan is so high.

There is an image that blue collar work should be for people who have no education. Physical work is now labelled hard, dirty and disgusting, so young people prefer desk-work. Desk-work is also more imposing.

Losing the 'labour spirit' relates to losing a sense of money. We want to earn money without having sweat on the forehead. This is the reason that the land price in Tokyo has risen unbelievably.

We hear the footstep of economic crisis approaching. Everybody says, as if talking about the weather, 'our bubble has started bursting'. Almost every day I hear and read the news of 'high-level' corruption involving by politicians, bankers and

East is East

experience upon experience and, though not convinced, they show immense respect.

Back in the west...

We spend a weekend with friends of friends. We play a German type of bowls with tiny balls. And we talk, around the fire or after our slides. We manage to discuss for three long hours and it is a struggle not to escape into politics and economics.

We are surprised that only a few of them have been to the East, making an effort to understand. They live 20 kms from the former border. Two years ago the GDR didn't mean anything to the young generation. They had no friends there, hardly any close relatives. It was a foreign country, and much less attractive than Southern Europe. Why be confronted with hardship, just for the sake of exploring the past of one's own country?

At this moment one of us couldn't keep quiet any longer. There are so many prejudices and false images already that could break up the country. It is so easy to go and explore. If only more 'Wessies' could have met and heard those we met. How come someone from so far away is so much more passionate about the East than us, they ask.

In the South we visit some schools and learn of the fear of Turkish immigrants. They are so different, they don't belong. They roam about at night beating people up; non-Turks do as well, they admit reluctantly. Nobody in these classes knows any Turks personally; only from hearsay. How to bridge this cultural, and economic gap? After our talk some pupils decided to do something about it and met twice with their teacher who invited us. We are interested to know if anything comes of it.

Out of the 150 pupils we met, a lot seemed to be intrigued by what we said. No cynical remarks, so easily made in a school context. There was a need for some dream big enough to give sense to their lives.

Our contact was too short and superficial and we are too incompetent, but their willingness to listen and their urge for sincerity, made me see how relevant our own search is.

businessmen.

A few years ago, it was discovered that most MPs had received shares in a particular company. It used to be said that in Japan the economy is the first class, and its politics comes third. But last year another of 'the biggest' scandals was revealed. There are so many financial crimes by bankers coming out one after the other.

I don't know much of the details, but feel uncomfortable breathing the polluted air of Tokyo when I hear that the amount they got away with was Yen 400,000,000,000. I couldn't earn that if I worked for over 100,000 years without food! Anyway it clearly shows that highly-educated brains often produce rotten work.

But my concern is not with those brains, but the youth and grass-roots people. We all possess several credit cards and use them. As a result, during the last year 25,000 people were willing to be bankrupted in order not to pay back.

Small crime such as shop-lifting or ticket cheating for public transport (in spite of electronic barriers being installed) has increased. Maybe we don't realise it is a crime. If we were discovered stealing a pen or a cassette tape, we might just say "What's wrong? I was just going to pay". My friend who is a policeman once told me that they do it as a game to have fun rather than because of being poor.

If I was was a non-Japanese citizen, it would be rather easy to tell how the Japanese should be for the next century. But in fact, I am pure Japanese, dark-haired and short legs, so I don't want to be critical.

I am so sorry that I cannot give you my complete vision! But it is obvious that we really have to face up to the concept 'No matter big or small, bad is bad', even though the politicians who are supposed to lead us are so hopeless and helpless.

Fortunately I have been living for five years in the end of downtown Tokyo where blue collar and foreign people live together. No need to pretend to be a rich boy here by using a credit-card for a bunch of carrots! Honesty is one of the best ways of making a real friendship with them. This is my small step to cure the social disease.

Sri Lankan response

by Rex Dilly

BORN AND BROUGHT UP IN SRI LANKA, at 16 he received a tennis scholarship to a school in Pakistan and became a member of the Sri Lankan Davis Cup team. He was given a scholarship to Harvard University where he studied for four years. He holds the degrees of Doctor of Law and Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Harvard Law School and Harvard College respectively. He is a commentator on social and political issues in Sri Lanka and won the 'Outstanding Young Person' award for his journalism.

Jehan Perera is a Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, where the three major communities are Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims. Most of the Sinhalese are Buddhist, most of the Tamils are Hindus, and some Sinhalese and Tamils are Christian. "As a Sinhalese Christian," he says, "I have had the advantage of experiencing both the majority sentiment of the 74% who are Sinhalese and the minority sentiment of the 8% who are Christian."

He describes Sri Lanka as a very unequal society. "Wealth, power and status are concentrated in the hands of an urban minority, people like myself." 90% of the people are non-English speaking, but they are ruled mainly by an English-speaking cosmopolitan elite. This is just as it was when the British ruled Sri Lanka. "Our elite" he says, "inherited that system and they have kept it going, of course with many reforms, but not enough. That is why the bottom 40% of the population get only 7% of the national income."

It is understandable that there has been a struggle for justice and social change. "But" says Perera, "what is tragic is that this struggle should have set community against community. In our struggle for justice for ourselves, we lost sight of justice for others. We became filled with anger and hate, and blinded to the immense suffering we heaped on people, especially if they were different from us because they spoke a different language, professed a different religion, or came from a different social class."

In 1983 Colombo and elsewhere erupted into massive riots against the Tamil people. This was in response to the

increasing anti-government violence in the Tamil areas of the country. Perera had just arrived back from seven years in the United States.

He poignantly tells how he went searching for a young Tamil friend who had returned that summer with him from Harvard. He found him in a refugee camp and took him to his home only to find it looted and burnt.

Perera recalls that he watched TV to hear the President's report on the crisis. "I remember him saying that what we were witnessing was the rightful anger of the Sinhalese people, and that Tamil terrorism would be ended soon." He also added, "I remember telling the wife of a Tamil MP who was my friend that what had happened was not unexpected, that it had been coming to the Tamils, and that terrorism inescapably reaped a bitter harvest."

He now reflects with candid honesty, "An opportunity to be genuinely sorry, to show compassion and to make a fresh start was lost. On my behalf, I know I was part of that same problem that culminated in tragedy. When I tried to rationalise the gruesome events to that Tamil lady, I was no better than the President."

It had not been an easy decision to return to Sri Lanka after he finished Harvard. There were the heady pulls of financial security and the trappings of worldly success. His qualifications could ensure this. Yet there were other factors beckoning which were difficult to escape.

At Harvard he was acutely aware that his privileged position in Sri Lankan society entailed a duty of social responsibility. He had also felt very lonely at Harvard, partly through his own preoccupation with his studies, but he longed for the warmth of friends and relations. "These then were the two things, one relating to service, the other relating to human relationships, that brought me back to Sri Lanka."

However, apart from his family's love, he found very little to reassure him that he had made the right decision. Even members of his family thought that he should have

spent a few years in the USA and become a person of independent means before returning to Sri Lanka. The political situation was chaotic with large scale violence. He soon dropped the idea of working for the Government.

About six months later he was introduced to Dr A T Ariyaratne, leader of the Sarvodaya movement, which had been inspired by Mahatma Gandhi. It operates in about 8,000 of the 23,000 villages in Sri Lanka, and stands for development that is people-centred and not only centred around production and consumption. It emphasises that economic and social development must lead to the spiritual development of the individual. Dr Ariyaratne immediately asked Perera to join him. Perera put the proposition to the back of his mind as he had assumed that doing service for the country would mean working from the top, in an air-conditioned office with a substantial salary that would permit him to be a part of Colombo's elite.

In the meantime, Perera received an invitation to attend an MRA conference in Panchgani. He describes that time spent in India as among the happiest times in his life. He says, *"In those two months, two principles that guide my life today jelled in my mind. The first was to recognise how feeble was my knowledge about the world and what should be done to put it right. There are so many views. Which is really the best? God alone knows. So my first principle would be to say with Jesus, 'Not my will but Thine be done', and I would not be anxious, but would take life as it comes."*

There was indeed a basis for his taking this attitude of trust. The scholarship which took him to Pakistan and from there to Harvard, had been totally unexpected. He accepted it because of his and his family's belief that what came of its own, came from God. Now again, another offer had been made unexpectedly which seemed to fit the larger pattern of his goals. He decided to accept Sarvodaya's offer.

There was also a second decision that he made at Panchgani. *"This", he said, "was to accept the need for personal change as my best contribution to change in Sri Lanka. A consequence of this was that I finally accepted the truth that I was Sinhalese before I was a Sri Lankan, that there was indeed in me a racist. It was only when, inspired by the example of others, I applied the four standards of morality,*

(honesty, purity, unselfishness and love) and turned the searchlight inward, that I found the strength to face the harsh and the humble truth."

"I know now what I should have told my Tamil friends in the shadow of the riots of death and destruction. I should have told them that I was sorry, that what was happening was a terrible wrong, and that I would commit myself to do what I could to make Sri Lanka a home of peace and justice for all."

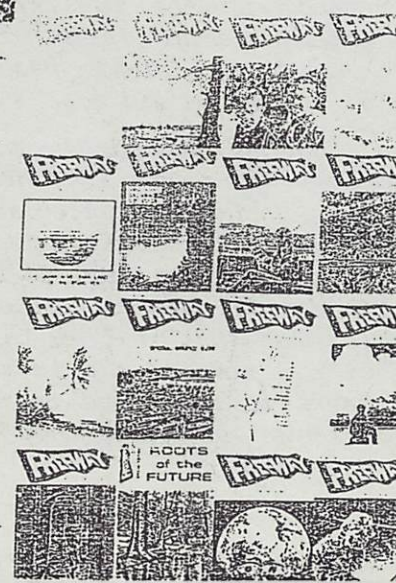
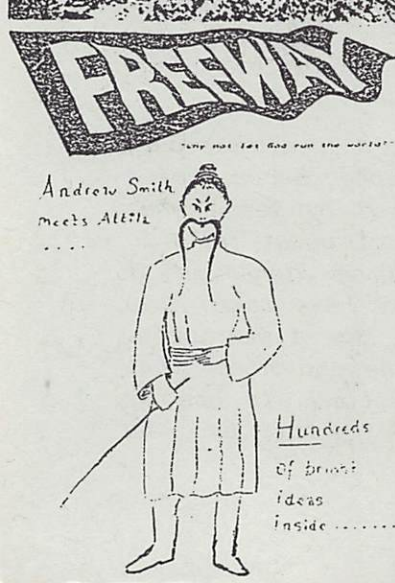
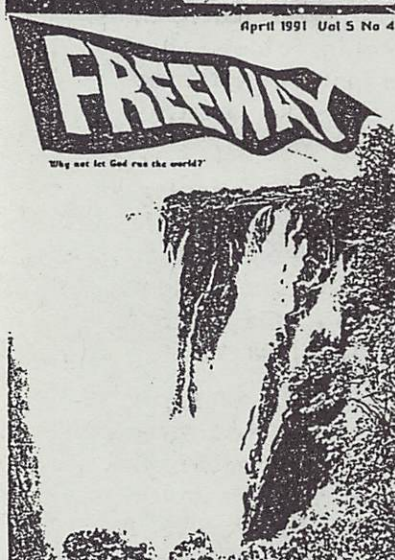
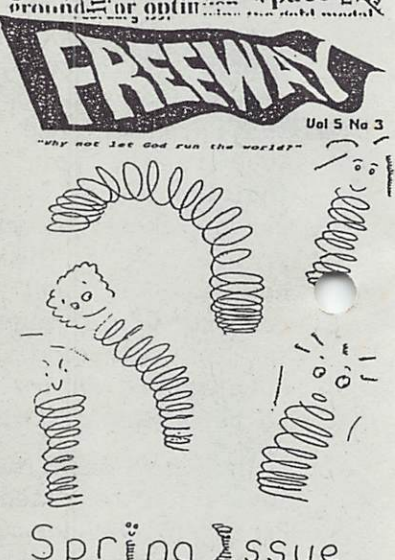
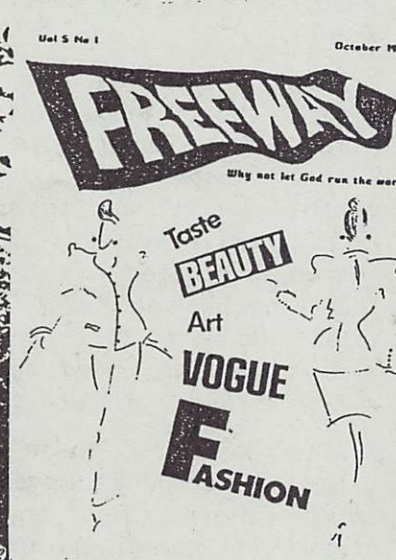
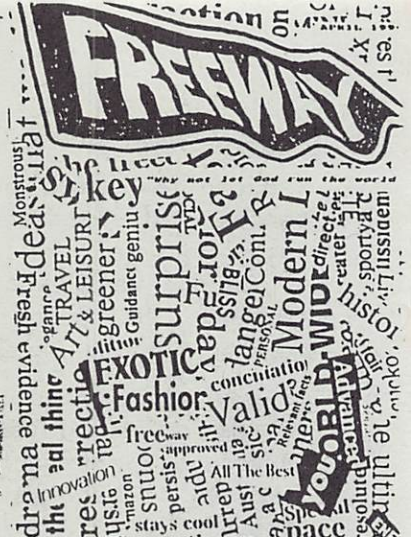
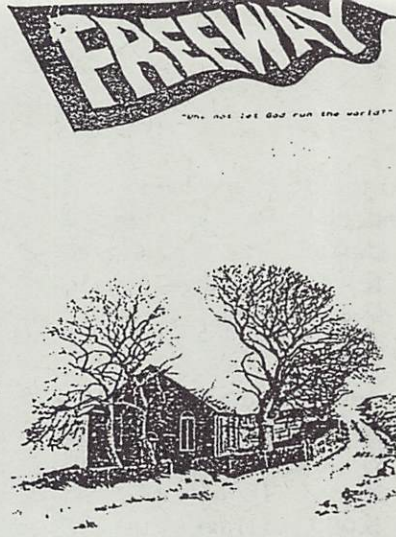
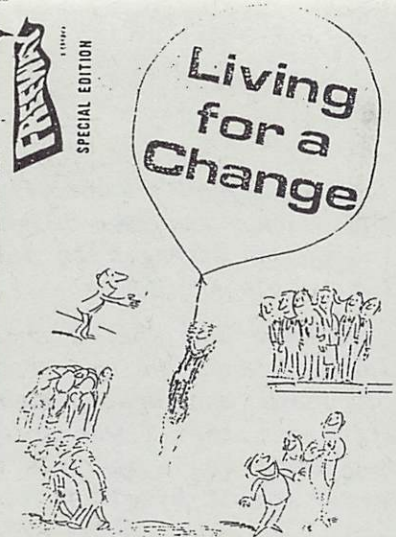
The day he made that decision he made several new friends, but one especially - a Tamil from South India who had developed a deep anger against the Sinhalese. A month later he was the guest of this man in his native state of Tamil Nadu, which is feared and hated by the Sinhalese as the launching-pad of Tamil invasions of their island. He says, *"The hospitality I received amazed me and filled me with the hope of a new future - different from the past."*

After spending three fascinating years with the Sarvodaya movement, Perera began to be dissatisfied and started looking around for something new. One day he saw a job 'tailor-made' for his qualifications, advertised by the UN office in Colombo. Not only was it development-orientated, it also offered a salary six times the monthly amount he received from Sarvodaya.

"I got really excited by the job opening. It offered me internationally marketable skills, a higher standard of living and an opportunity to move in the most sophisticated and powerful circles in Sri Lanka. My family supported the idea too."

"A part of me wanted so much to apply for that job." He continues, "I wanted, even at this relatively late stage, to equal my friends from school and tennis, who would offer me rides in their new cars, while I stood for the bus. The great advantage with material things is that they are visible. My friends had the visible signs of success. I did not."

"But in the end, the more idealistic part of me triumphed. It triumphed because of a third principle articulated by Jesus when he said, 'Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it lives alone; but if it dies it bears fruit'. I have taken this to mean that if I am to live a meaningful life, I need to die to the ego in me that seeks to climb and be noticed, to use my talents so that not I, but God be glorified."



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