

## Time for a rethink in agriculture

The British government's immediate reaction to the foot and mouth epidemic—'to close down the countryside'—highlighted for many the value of our agricultural areas. Some saw the potential billions of pounds lost to tourism, others the end of recreation and the chance to renew their spirit. Everyone immediately began to feel involved, although little mention of agriculture was made during the general election.

Most of the British landscape is shaped by farming and, contrary to popular belief, the changes in technology, which have led us to larger and more mechanized farms, have not extinguished the farmer's feeling for Creation. A French colleague ended his e-mail at the outbreak of foot and mouth: 'We are praying that British farmers do not lose faith in their calling.' And a Northumberland victim of the disease ended an article in *The Independent* with the conviction that farmers would need all the vision and passion they could muster to shape the new course which he clearly felt to be their responsibility.

It is too early to know what a public enquiry may reveal about the cause of the epidemic and the execution of the strategy adopted to contain it. But it is clear that the infection was identified very late, and had been widely spread through movements of sheep which are the species least visibly affected. Yet the sheer scale of the spread, and the logistical problems posed by a slaughter policy, led me and many others to favour an attempt at containment through a limited vaccination policy.

### Scale of slaughter

It has to be recognized however that expert opinion was divided on this issue, with perhaps the weight of it dubious if not completely opposed. Experience with the vaccine had evidently given variable results in other countries, but this could have been a valuable chance to gain knowledge of its use, and maybe advance the research which is continuously under way. Perhaps the Dutch experience of using the vaccine will help.

Meanwhile the sheer scale of the slaughter, shown nightly on TV, had a paralysing and depressing effect. Those who felt that for farmers it was merely a financial crisis, and wrote off their anguish, were badly mistaken. Tears overcame people when words failed. One local farmer's wife likened the experience to a family bereavement. Farmers in our village who had shared a common disaster began to get together for breakfast in the local pub. At first it was mainly to commiserate, but then talk turned to the future and ways in which they might be able to work together. It remains to be



by Patrick Evans

seen how significant such a step will prove, but farming solidarity is very much alive.

The regional Lleyn Sheep Breeders Club proposed that each of its members should give a ewe lamb to those who had had flocks wiped out and wished to restart. Not only farmers but the greater part of the nation want to see this family farming spirit continue. It is at the heart of communities which work and stick together.

**'It is time to question the promotion of cheap food.'**

It is certainly time to question the promotion of cheap food, and some of the procedures which have been accepted in the name of efficiency. Accountability and transparency are already being pushed to the top of the agenda in the food industry, and the new UK Food Standards Agency has now to prove itself. Governments have to accept that an unregulated market economy is unable to prevent unforeseen risks to health, and that enforceable standards must be laid down in law.

Much is written about the high level of subsidies going into farming. But a recent university study showed that the farmer receives only 9p of every pound spent in a supermarket. According to government sta-

istics, in 1998/9 over 80 per cent of UK farmers had a total income below £20,000 (the current national average wage). Only one per cent topped £100,000. This income must provide both for families and re-investment. Clearly the government should show more imagination in filling out its call for farmers to diversify. Too little has been done to ease the progress of renewable energy through bio-diesel (rapeseed oil), and other crops for industrial purposes. Science still has many possibilities to offer in using every acre effectively.

### Village meetings

Genetic modification is only one of the choices biotechnology may offer in current developments—bio fertilizers, bio pesticides, vermiculture, aquaculture and so on. But as Prof M S Swaminathan, the internationally known agricultural scientist, has said, 'We have to marry ethics with economics and technology. The technological push must be matched by an ethical pull. If you don't have these two matching each other, then you can't make sustainable progress.'

In *The Century of the gene*, Helen Fox Keller comments on the charting of the human genome: 'There is a huge gap between genetic information and biological meaning. It is a rare and wonderful moment when success teaches us humility.'

Farmers are all too aware of the constant vigilance needed in livestock farming, but foot and mouth has been a massive blow to confidence and morale. Coming on top of BSE it has shaken faith in the accepted ways, and in the ability of scientists to give a clear lead. But most farmers are determined to rebuild, and hope to play a part in shaping a new deal. They know it will be a long haul, and are conscious of the need both to understand and be understood.

It would be a great thing if government ministers could take time now to share and discuss any new thinking in village meetings.

*The flock of pedigree Lleyn sheep which Patrick Evans first established on his family farm in Herefordshire in the 1970s was culled because of foot and mouth disease this March. His book, 'Farming for ever' is published by Sapey Press, Haytons, Whitbourne, Worcester WR6 5ST, UK.*

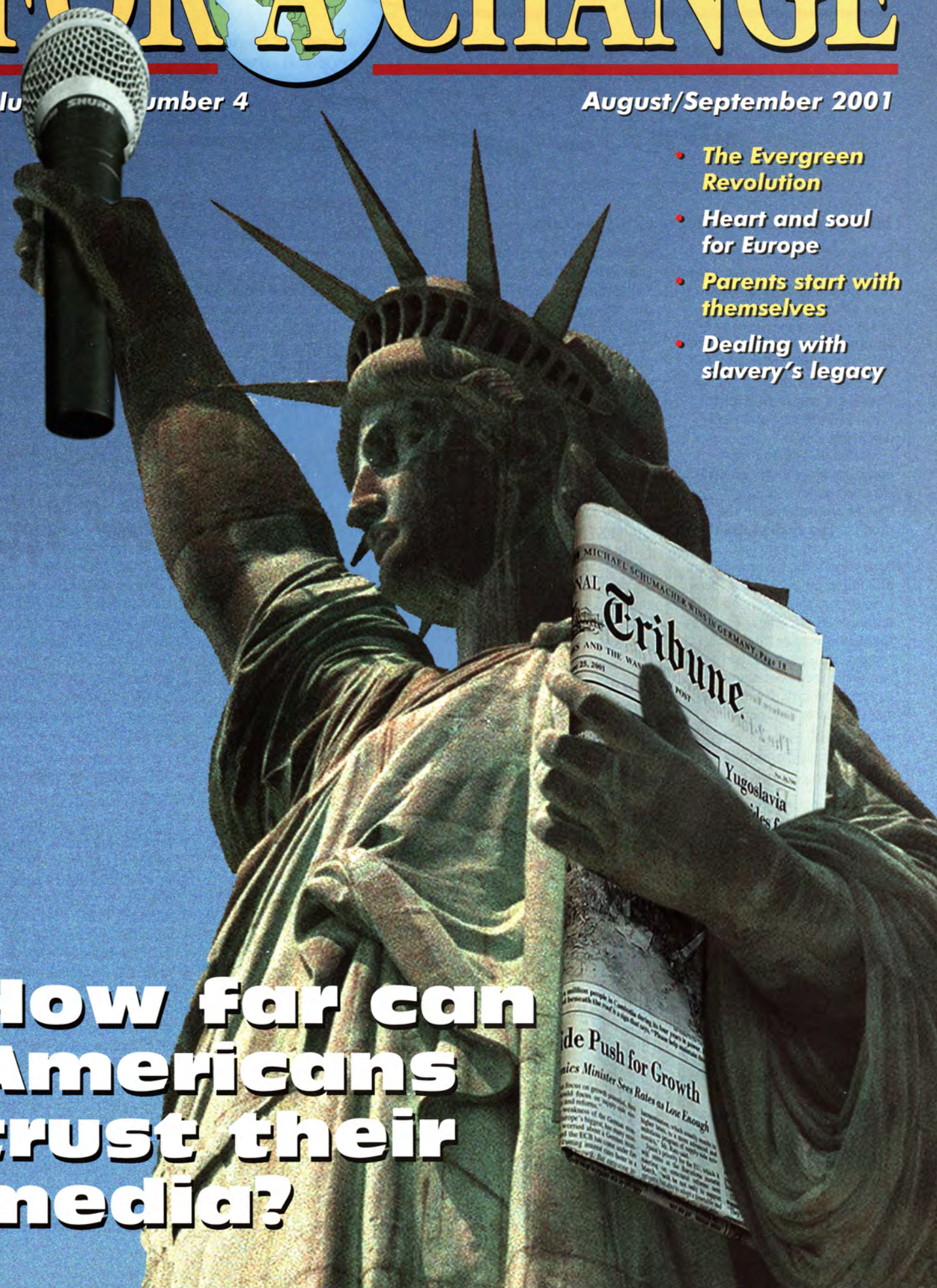
### NEXT ISSUE

**Theme issue:** What's so special about the MRA conferences which take place in Caux, Switzerland, every summer? *For A Change* finds out.

# FOR A CHANGE

Volume 4 Number 4

August/September 2001



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- **Parents start with themselves**
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**How far can Americans trust their media?**

By John Leggat, Denver



**Mile-high and windy**

In Denver, Colorado, for an international media conference. Being more of a beach-goer than a mountain climber, I'd never before experienced altitude for any length of time. The 'mile high city' stands in the eastern foothills of the Rockies, a continental cross-road between east and west, north and south.

At 5,600 feet, the May weather can be unpredictable. On the Sunday morning I opened my curtains to the promise of a glorious day. By noon, we basked in 24°C. By 3pm we ran for cover as winds of 80 mph uprooted pine trees a mile from the hotel and decapitated buildings. Then, as the dust storm settled, the temperature plummeted to 4°C and three inches of snow covered the city. By the next day the warm weather had returned.

**Bison foresight**

Early in the last century, Denver's forefathers purchased surrounding land to preserve as mountain parks and to stop suburban sprawl. Denver owns more parkland outside the metropolitan area than any other US city: over 3,000 square miles. Since the early 20th century the city has maintained two herds of bison, in the Genesee and Daniels Parks. As they graze, they look placid enough, though warning signs say not to stand within three feet of the protective high fence.

**Cody's code**

Buffalo Bill is buried just outside Denver. Born in 1846, William F 'Buffalo Bill' Cody was not only the father of Wild West Shows and rodeos but a champion of the Native Americans and of women's rights. He insisted that the Indians who defeated Colonel Custer were fighting for their existence: 'They had their wives and little ones to protect.' He called the Indians 'the Americans' and employed them in his show to educate the world of their plight.

He also pushed for voting rights for women and treated orphans to free admittance to shows. All women employed by him were paid strictly the same as men.

**Reporting the massacre**

Two years ago 12 students and a teacher were killed by two students in the massacre at Columbine High School near Denver. Patti Dennis, Director of News for Denver's NBC-affiliated TV station, told the

media conference about the ethical decisions she had to make as the event unfolded live to the nation.

'You have to tell everything you know but you don't have to show everything you know,' she said, referring to her decision not to broadcast images that might upset viewers or implicate people as the culprits without 100 per cent proof. In the aftermath of the tragedy, she resolutely refused to become a focus of talk shows, stating, 'I don't think I am the news and I don't think journalists are the news.'

**Gas guzzlers**

Americans have been worrying about the rising price of gasoline. It's all relative: gas in the US is still far cheaper than in Europe. In Colorado the price of an unleaded gallon reached \$1.80 in the week I was there—about a third of the price in the UK.

More alarming was the headline in the *Rocky Mountain News*: 'Gas guzzlers gaining ground'. A federal Transportation Department report showed that average car

and truck fuel economy is down to 24.5 miles a US gallon, the worst since 1980.

The good news is that General Motors is developing a new eight-cylinder engine which will improve economy by between eight and 25 per cent. Even better news from California. Here demand is outstripping supply for new energy efficient hybrid cars which run on both electricity and gasoline, despite the cars' high price.

**Yahoo and goodbye**

In a response to 100,000 messages of complaint from religious groups, the internet provider Yahoo has eliminated vast sections of its adult websites and has made adult 'chat-rooms' harder to find, less explicit and better regulated. Predictably, users all over the country have signed petitions, claiming 'infringement of human rights'.

**World in a minute**

Surfing TV channels for global news, I found an hour-long news broadcast: 40 minutes of local and national news, three weather updates, a seeming eternity of sport and a 'global minute'. True to its name, it consisted of three snippets, each 20 seconds long—Indian protests, Israeli air strikes and the British Deputy Prime Minister's famous left jab on an egg-wielding farm protester.

Which is not to say, of course, that there aren't other US network news broadcasts, which give a much broader perspective on world affairs. ■



Cover: The Statue of Liberty, New York  
Photo: AP  
Computer graphics: Philip Carr

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

**Beyond forgiveness?**

I was in India in 1993 when news came through that two-year-old James Bulger had been abducted from a Liverpool shopping mall, tortured and killed by two 10-year-old boys. Such a heinous crime, reported around the world, shook the British to the core and led to a great deal of soul searching about the moral state of the nation. As we go to press Robert Thompson and Jon Venables have been granted release into safe houses, after serving eight years of detention in separate locations. They are living with new identities to protect them from vigilante groups bent on revenge.

One can understand the feelings of Jamie Bulger's mother that the two murderers have not served an adequate sentence. 'I am full of hate, anger and fear,' she says. 'I never knew I had so much hate in me.' She, like many others, wanted them to serve at least 15 years.

But there is something deeply disturbing and distasteful in reports that vigilante groups and tabloid newspapers aim to track down the two young men and expose their whereabouts. The tabloids know where their bread is buttered. They feed on, as well as feed, the raw emotion of their readers. One Liverpool newspaper conducted a phone-in survey and made money on every phone call. The majority of its readers wanted the two young men to stay behind bars. But other families in Liverpool think that enough is enough, that Thompson's and Venables' eight years was a life sentence from their perspective as children, and that notions of forgiveness and redemption need to be acknowledged. Indeed the lawyer for one of the young men says that his client is deeply remorseful and daily wishes that he could turn the clock back.

In the enormity of their crime, Thompson and Venables have condemned themselves to life sentences of regret and anonymity under new identities. They live in fear for their lives and their freedom remains limited. But above all the case of Thompson and Venables challenges us to the core of our beings on notions of vengeance and justice versus redemption and forgiveness—just as these notions are challenged in Northern Ireland, Palestine and Israel, the Balkans, Chechnya, Rwanda, Sri Lanka and other areas of conflict. Vengeance may give the illusion of justice. But it doesn't necessarily bring closure in the human heart. For that something far deeper is required in all of us. Anyone who has experienced bitterness and hate knows how consuming, how justifying, they can become. Victims need their own release as much as perpetrators.

Michael Smith

FOR A CHANGE

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

FOR A CHANGE believes

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

FOR A CHANGE

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

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A NOTE ON MORAL RE-ARMAMENT

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

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

Published six times a year by Moral Re-Armament, 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD, UK. Tel: +44 (0)20 7798 6000, Fax: +44 (0)20 7798 6001 Reg. Charity No: 226334 ISSN 0959-311X. Price: £2.25 Subscriptions: Tirley Garth, Tarporley, Cheshire CW6 0LZ. Tel: 0182 973 2305 Fax: 0182 973 2265 (Giro No 504 1759) Editors: Mary Lean, Kenneth Noble, Michael Smith Regular contributors: Alan Channer, Michael Henderson, Anastasia Stepanova, Laura Trevelyan, Robert Webb, John Williams, Paul Williams Promotion: Tony Hazell Distribution Manager: Chris Sayers Design and Layout: Sloane Design Associates, Faversham, Kent. Printing: BBH Colourprint Group, Leicester. Indexed with Canadian Periodical Index. For A Change on the Internet: <http://www.forachange.co.uk> Printed on TCF (total chlorine-free) paper.

# GORE WINS -then loses

## How far can Americans trust their media?

The American media has many failings but it still acts as a gatekeeper against the abuse of power, argues US journalist **Walter Lee Dozier**.



John Leggat



Associated Press

critic Howard Kurtz called 'an almost unimaginable display of ineptitude', broadcasters were soon forced to retract their second hastily aired prediction.

The following morning, in an almost arrogant and certainly unapologetic style, some broadcasters attempted to explain their network's ineptitude by sidestepping any accountability for their actions with sanitized versions of the events. 'They gave Florida to Gore, then they took it back,' commented one broadcaster leading into the evening newscast.

It was the misplaced and miscalculated use of the pronoun—they—that instantly offended the sensibilities of many American journalists as well as the American public. Only later, after much public complaining and criticism, did broadcasters finally say, 'We blew it.'

The networks' rush to be first rather than factual further eroded public confidence in the American media. In some opinion polls, the public's confidence in journalists scores only 15 per cent.

'It was the networks,' said investigative reporter Kathy Y Times of WJTV in Jackson, Mississippi, who was working in the field that night. 'We shouldn't be predicting elections in the first place. Why not let it play out and simply tell the viewers it's too close to call? I hope it teaches a lesson.'

The American public's image of print journalists had already been severely fractured by a number of episodes of blatantly dishonest reporting.

For example, on 13 April 1981, *Washington Post* reporter Janet Cooke was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for a story titled *Jimmy's World* about an eight-year-old heroin addict. On 15 April she confessed that there was no 'Jimmy', that he represented a composite of child addicts and that her story was, in fact, fiction. She returned the prize and resigned in disgrace.

The *New Republic* dismissed Stephen Glass in May 1998, saying that an article he had written about computer hackers was 'a hoax'. After further examination, the *New Republic* found that Glass had fabricated six articles and parts of 21 others.

*Boston Globe* reporters Patricia Smith and Mike Barnicle were also fired for fabricating stories.

At the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, star lead investigative reporter Mike Gallagher was fired for unethical and fraudulent exploitation of some 2,000 internal voice mail messages used to gather information about the Chiquita Brands International Company. The *Enquirer* apologized in a six-column headline and paid more than \$10 million to prevent litigation against the newspaper.

And the *Los Angeles Times* is still emerging from an embarrassing 1999 scandal in which sports journalists, who normally write critically about new sports stadiums, particularly if they are built with public tax funds, were told to write favourable adver-

tising copy about the new Staples Center sports arena for a special issue of its Sunday magazine. The *Times* and the Staples Center then split the advertising revenue.

Though vexed, most journalists complied, knowing they had performed the function of the advertising department.

Publisher Mark Willes, who orchestrated the calamity under the guise of creating greater profits, was later fired when The Tribune Co bought the *Times*' parent company. But the incident left many in the public, as well as in the media, wondering if journalism could possibly sink any lower.

**W**hat happened at the *Los Angeles Times* is symptomatic of what is happening throughout the newspaper and television news industry in America.

The drive for increased profits is becoming more important than the instincts of professional journalists. As a result the news media are losing public confidence.

The notion of independent and responsible gatekeeping by the media has come under increased public scrutiny, and the results are less than flattering.

As Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel point out in their recent book *The elements of journalism* (Crown Publishing, 2001) top news executives around the country are being evaluated not by the quality of their journalism, but by how much profit their companies make.

'As citizens, we should be alarmed,' Kovach and Rosenstiel write. 'Journalists, in turn, should understand that they have been undermined.'

In his book *News is a verb* (Ballantine Books, 1998) veteran journalist Pete Hamill, who wrote for the *New York Post* and served as editor-in-chief of the *New York Daily News*, also recognizes the undermining of journalists by the push for increased profits. He points out that the conflict between the corporate agenda and the newsroom agenda is being played out in more and more news media companies.

Huge profit margins, he writes, are being used to mollify shareholders and subsidize weaker members of media conglomerates rather than being ploughed back into newsroom operations, where they should be. This has led to cutbacks in news staff as well as cuts in news column inches.

Hamill describes the corporate influence: 'They meddle most directly by haranguing top editors about stories, the play of those stories, and even writing style. They have never been reporters, have never written stories on deadline, have never stood for hours in the rain waiting for a detective to tell them what really happened. They know nothing about the city where the newspaper is published or the ordinary people who live in that city. But they are convinced they know more than the talent in the city [news] room.'

## How far can Americans trust their media?

In a recent *Miami Herald* column, Dave Barry wrote wryly: 'The typical newspaper staff has been reduced to one editor, 39 deputy assistant managing editors and one reporter. The editors spend their days holding meetings to think of ways to cut costs, while the reporter (who, for budgetary reasons, is not allowed to leave the building) looks out of the window, in case news occurs in the parking lot.'

The effects of corporate meddling are being felt in television newsrooms across the country, too.

In June, Roger Ogden, Senior Vice-President of Gannet Broadcasting and General Manager of KUSA-TV, Denver, said that because of the advertising-driven ratings system called 'sweeps', several journalists had staged a pit-bull terrier fight so that they could run a story about it on television. The journalists had been found out and pros-



Canadian supermodel Leanne Spencer. Has the media made too much of thinness?

ecuted. Ogden was speaking at the International Communications Forum's (ICF) North American Media Conference in Denver.

'Most journalism is driven by for-profit companies in an environment in which Wall Street is king,' he said. 'This doesn't make for good journalism.'

The news media is not the only industry that puts profit before professionalism and the public interest. Despite stern warnings from physicians and social scientists about the destructive effects of eating disorders, popular fashion magazines continue to promote the messages and images of the fashion industry that, for women, 'thin is in'.

In her book *Am I thin enough yet?* (Oxford University Press 1996), sociologist Sharlene Hesse-Biber writes: 'Aided by advertising and mass media, the Cult of Thinness generates enormous profits for the food, diet and health industries.'

At the ICF conference, film critic Michael Medved advocated a public-action response to what he called America's 'bad news business'. He suggested that Americans cut back on their television viewing by half an hour a week as a way to redevelop and reconnect the human relationships that have been lost to the exploitative and negative human images and messages promoted by Hollywood.

He cited a 1997-98 study by Dale Kunkel of the University of California at Santa Barbara, for the Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation. It found that American television had plenty of sex but precious little information on disease prevention or the possibility of pregnancy. Two out of three network prime-time shows portrayed some sort of sexual situation but only nine per cent presented any consequences of sexual activity.

Medved said that the average American spent more time watching TV than doing paid work. 'You never retire from watching TV. We need to rethink the paradigm.'

**T**he lack of diversity in perspectives is perhaps the second most criticized element of the American media. Inaccurate portrayals of women and ethnic minorities have—justifiably—been sources of persistent complaints.

Studies show that a gender double standard is often prevalent in the American media. Men are routinely portrayed as being stronger than women in such areas as technology and economics.

For example, sociologists David Croteau and William Hoynes analyzed transcripts from 40 months (January 1985 to April 1988) of ABC News *Nightline* that included 865 programmes and 2,498 guests. They found that 68 of the 74 guests who appeared alone on the programme were men, and that all 19 of the guests who appeared more than five times were men. Nine out of 10 guests who



Michael Medved: 'You never retire from watching TV.'

were called upon to discuss issues like international affairs, domestic politics or the economy were men.

They concluded that *Nightline* researchers appeared to turn to men much more often than women for important or 'hard' political and economic news and perspectives. Women did appear on the programme 41 per cent of the time when there was a discussion about social issues.

Suzie Siegel, a former features editor for the *Tampa Tribune* newspaper and a graduate student in women's studies at the University of South Florida in Tampa, says that little has changed since that study. 'Stories on serious issues overwhelmingly quote men,' she says. 'Women are more likely to appear in stories given less importance, such as entertainment and fashion.'

Cynthia Tucker, editorial page editor for the *Atlanta Constitution* agrees. She is frequently a guest on high-profile national news programmes where she discusses current social and political issues: 'Look at CNN, Fox or CNBC. How many women hosts do you see? When you need an expert on a subject such as teaching, you will see a woman. If it's stocks or the military, more than likely it's a man.'

The White House Project promotes programmes that enhance public perceptions of women's capacity to lead, change biases against women's leadership ability, and foster the entry of women into positions of leadership, including the US presidency. In 1999 it carried out a study which analyzed 3,900 paragraphs from nearly 500 news stories in the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Washington Post*, *USA Today* and the *Des Moines Register*. It concluded that male reporters covering Elizabeth Dole's presidential campaign were more likely to



Katherine Harris: 'tried and executed in the media by her appearance'

focus on the personal than the political. Only 14 per cent of the Dole-related paragraphs written by male reporters covered her position on issues, while 39 per cent were devoted to personality traits.

In contrast, the report found, female reporters covered Dole, George W Bush and Steve Forbes equitably.

For the most part, the media pays a great deal of attention to what a woman looks like. When Florida Secretary of State Katherine Harris was criticized for her role in that state's chaotic presidential vote recount, some of the most stinging critique centred on her hair, make-up and style of dress. Little mention was made of her Master's degree in public policy from Harvard



Public protest against TV standards outside the NBC studios in Chicago in 1998

University.

'Katherine Harris was tried and executed in the media by her appearance,' said Maryland Delegate Joan Stern. 'Men don't have to go through that.'

Siegel agrees. She says journalists should be challenged to write about political leaders without picking apart their appearance. 'I would be surprised if a woman ever made a name for herself in politics without some scrutiny of her appearance,' she says. 'Even journalists who say this is wrong will still do stories saying that the public cares about this. It becomes a vicious circle.'

'Think of the attention paid to Janet Reno's looks. Have we ever cared about the appearance of a male attorney general? Think of the attention paid to Hillary Clinton's hairdos.'

Tucker says men are not solely responsible for the objectification of women in the media. 'I wish I understood it better. Women do critique women for what they wear and how they look. It doesn't justify it, but we have learned how to cover women from men.'

**T**he portrayal of ethnic minority people by the American media has been equally appalling; their images have been either inaccurately portrayed or simply omitted.

According to the National Hispanic Media Coalition, a pro-diversity activists' group, all four major television networks do a lousy job of reflecting a multicultural image of America in their programming. The coalition rated ABC as the worst, but CBS, Fox and NBC did not fare much better.

The lack of diverse and accurate images has been especially frustrating for many middle-class African-Americans who say their communities and concerns are virtual-

ly invisible to the nation because the whites who control the media are uninterested in issues affecting people of colour.

In his documentary *Colour Adjustment*, film maker Marlon Riggs asserts that America's media has never fairly or accurately represented African Americans, but instead reflects a kind of frightening accuracy of the state of mind of the nation.

He states that most whites in post Civil War America had no personal contact with the enslaved African population. They learned about blacks through the travelling Minstrel Shows—the mass media of the day—where white men with blackened faces portrayed blacks as unintelligent, lazy and animal-like. Today, the narrow and marginalized media-created images of African-Americans, whose history in America spans more years in enslavement than in freedom, continue to permeate the social and economic structures of society.

**M**any American politicians think of the media as an unnecessary annoyance and cite their contentious relationships with journalists as evidence. Others recognize that were it not for the media, the political process could, and more than likely would, be open to unscrupulous practices.

There are countless examples of good deeds. The media has uncovered police brutality cases, bank fraud, medical fraud and code violations in a number of industries.

For example, prior to the Watergate political scandal in the early 1970s, many legislators and journalists in the State of Maryland shared close trusting relationships and were even roommates during the state's 90-day General Assembly Sessions in Annapolis. After Watergate, however, journalists adopted what some have described as a healthy dose of cynicism toward politics and politicians.

Journalists in America routinely uncover and report on countless incidents of social service system abuse, neglect, fraud and mismanagement. This often results in case-worker dismissal and criminal prosecution.

Officials of the judicial system have praised journalists for these efforts without which many of the missteps might have gone undetected while human suffering went unabated.

The media has also been a vigilant watchdog on corporate self-indulgence, which left unchecked would result in the habitual fleecing of American citizens.

When the news media in America functions at its highest level, it becomes what many have called the 'fourth estate,' or the fourth 'power', which checks and counterbalances the three state 'powers' of executive, legislature and judiciary. ■

Walter Lee Dozier, PhD, writes for 'The Gazette', Maryland.

# Values in action

Working in the media can involve tough choices. **Anastasia Stepanova**

talks to young professionals who have to make them

**H**ow often we hear that 'the younger generation don't have a fixed system of values and beliefs apart from money'. And then people wonder where the 'generation gap' is coming from.

Interviewing young media professionals in London gave me a totally different perspective of their values at work. It turns out that it doesn't matter if you work in a commercial structure or if you are employed or freelance, you still have to make choices, solve moral dilemmas and work under the pressure of deadlines.

From my Russian perspective I was interested to find out whether professional values are nationally and culturally specific or common to West and East.

## The publisher

'Publishing is a big gamble,' said Gordon Wise (33), a publisher with Pan Macmillan. 'You can end up getting lots of books back from the shops. In fact with every book we assume 20 per cent of what we ship to book stores will not sell through to customers. So you can never really be sure if something is going to hit.'

Ninety-eight per cent of what they do is commercial, otherwise they wouldn't sur-

vive—so their choice of books is mainly based on profit. But even then there are hard dilemmas. Should they, for instance, publish a sensational autobiography of a criminal which will bring in lots of money or should they resist the temptation?

'Some people criticize us for doing a book like that, "How can you celebrate someone who commits crimes?"', says Wise. 'In my view, it needs to be looked at on a case by case basis.' Once he decided to publish a book by a criminal because he saw it as an 'important social document'. It was written by a man who had been in prison for 35 years for killing a gangster. 'I felt then that this was a particular voice which needed to be heard.' But he decided not to publish another book by a man who had sold arms to an African country and might not have been operating within the law. 'I was very interested in his story, but I felt that if I published it I would really be promoting him and the sorts of things he was involved in.' The first author had made it clear that he had repented, while the second hadn't.

'A book has to have redeeming features if you are in quite an ambiguous area,' he says. 'A lot of books of this type sell anyway whether they are quality or not. So the choice is left up to each editor.'

## The TV producer

K (31), a freelance television documentary producer, believes that values carry a personal character. 'They exist only in the workers, in our individual selves—and we may or may not bring them into the workplace.'

In the UK television industry, there are regulatory bodies such as the ITC (Independent Television Commission) or the Advertising Standards Agency, which issue guidelines which are supposed to set a code of conduct. 'Often, these standards are not implemented and boundaries are crossed,' says K. In her view, professional guidelines and personal values are only 'virtual' until they are put into action.

'As a television producer, I'm interested in what makes people tick on an individual and collective level,' she says. 'Culture, beliefs, the dynamics of our existence!' Above all, she is interested in using documentary film as a tool to expose injustices. 'Making television programmes just for the

sake of it does not motivate me.'

Her biggest challenge is 'working within the constraints of what is essentially a hugely commercial and ruthless industry, and producing documentaries which can bring some significant contribution to others'.

K thinks that because of the desire to appeal to everyone, TV documentaries today all tend to look the same and television channels are unwilling to take risks and let go of formulas they know work. 'The irony, in my view, is that this output becomes patronizing fast food. In this current climate, my challenge is to hold on to my ideals.'

As a freelancer, K has to make difficult choices many times a year. In her 'nomadic existence' she can choose the programmes she wants to work on and with whom she wants to work. On a financial level, however, 'it is either feast or famine'. 'The dilemma often appears when I have no choice but to pay the rent and to work on programmes which I would rather stay away from.'

Professional issues often throw up moral dilemmas. On the last programme she produced, K's editor told her to cut out a valuable contributor. 'I tried to convince him that this person was a constant source of help and inspiration in the making of the film, but no luck. Though this is very much part and parcel of this kind of work, it was a difficult choice to make.'

## The photographer

'As a freelance photographer I do what I want and I don't have to meet anyone's expectations,' says Greg Williams (28). 'Money has never been a driving force in my career.' In 1992 he won the Ilford Young Photographer of the Year award for his work covering the drought in Zimbabwe.

'It's now better from the business perspective and in terms of money too, but it just happens this way because people appreciate what I am doing and they want to commission me. Of course it helps a lot when you can do what you want but not what somebody else tells you.'

He has recently launched a book of fly-on-the-wall photographs of film stars, *On set*, published by Vision On and Growbag. 'I am always looking for the opportunity to build trusting relationships with the people I photograph. When I was doing this book of celebrities I wanted to show them in off-



Greg Williams on set: 'Money has never been a driving force in my career.'

spotlight situations, when they are as they are. I didn't exploit the commercial value, but wanted to produce a book I could be proud of.'

## The video editor

Emma Cromwell (25), graphic designer and video editor at Millennium 7 TV company and MRA Productions, has quite often had to find a compromise between what she wants to do and what she is expected to do. 'I wish I had more time to play with my ideas, to be experimental.' But there's little room for that when you are limited by criteria and deadlines.

'At some places I used to work, the staff didn't really care about the jobs they were doing, they just went with the flow. I can't do that. I have to put everything into what I am doing otherwise it becomes boring.'

She thinks her values come from her upbringing. 'Christian faith was lived out in my family, so I used to take it for granted. Now I appreciate the value of it.'

'Working in the media you realize how much of it is based on money and commercial interest. It's quite annoying because there seem to be lots of people who would like to do their work creatively, but never get the chance because they are not seen as people who can make lots of money.'

Also there is a paradox—the role of routine in apparently creative work. Cromwell tries hard to keep being creative when she has to do something which is not that inspiring. 'It's quite a challenge.'

## The designer

Tapio Snellman (31), architect, designer and co-director of Neutral new media company, also finds it challenging to keep a balance

between hard core business activity and more experimental work. 'The ideal would be to do something conceptual and valuable but well paid,' says Snellman. To keep going he and his partner have to take on some projects with zero content. 'I wish everything we did had some value in it, not just money.'

Because they are a three-man (two partners and one employee) company they have to work under pressure all the time. Everything they do—from websites to animations and graphic design—is usually done by much bigger companies. 'Often you have to ignore social life which can be quite detrimental to your creativity. If creativity declines we have nothing to sell: it's the only product we have,' says Snellman.

Apart from the dilemma of 'survival' (creativity verses money) there is the issue of copyright. Sometimes you have to compete to get a project and present your ideas to the client. Often the ideas are taken and given to a less expensive design company to realize. 'You can see your ideas put into practice by others. It's a pure brain drain. Incredibly unfair but that's how the design industry often works.'

So what about copyright law? 'It's very difficult to prove as it's easy to cover it up: to change font, shape, colour.' Because they are far from being a big company lawsuits are risky. 'In some cases going to court might form the reputation that you are strong and stand up for your ideas,' says Snellman. 'At the same time it may give the impression that you are difficult designers to deal with.'

Snellman says that he constantly asks himself what value the work he is doing has. 'Sometimes it clearly does not have any value as such, but all experience is valuable

for me. I think I'm an artist in the sense that I have to experiment constantly and create not for the sake of money, but for an aesthetic and conceptual value.'

**W**e think of values as personal and yet they seem to be universal.

My country has undergone a lot of political and economic turmoil in the last decades, which shuffled our values and beliefs. New laws and standards are now being applied.

When I started this article I didn't aim at a comparative analysis of young people's values in different countries. But when I was listening to the interviewees I could easily identify them with my friends back in Russia. Young people in both countries struggle with exactly the same dilemmas. For instance, similar relationships with the copyright law that doesn't protect much, the same dilemmas of whether to stand up for your personal concepts or to go with the flow and not jump over your boss's head.

In the Soviet era, people accepted the notion of *uravnivovka*, meaning 'being equal, being like everyone else', 'your personality does not count, the collective is what counts'. Now my generation has a tendency to lean to another extreme—individualism bordering on selfishness like anywhere else. As usual the ideal lies in the golden mean.

As for myself, as a 23-year-old graduate in linguistics, after my internship in Britain I will have to face the music: either to get a job in my field and be underpaid or get a well paid one but totally out of my interest zone.

Our values are constantly being challenged by the difficult choices we have to make. Without this, they become amorphous and abstract. It is up to each individual to live them or not. ■



Gordon Wise: 'The choice is left up to each editor.'



# PEOPLE

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Edited by Anastasia Stepanova

### From stones to water

When Daphne Brown's mother died she left some money to the Miriam Dean Refugee Trust, a small organization working in Zimbabwe. Brown, who lives in Datchworth, Hertfordshire, UK, learned that the money had been used to provide water for the tiny village of Gwava in the Masvingo region.

She had a growing desire to visit Gwava, but, as it was so remote, could not see how to get there. One day, from a TV holiday programme on Zimbabwe, she learned of a travel company which was willing to arrange individual itineraries. They agreed to arrange one for her if she could find somewhere to stay. The Trust that had organized the borehole contacted another mission near Gwava which agreed to look after her.

At Gwava she was received with great warmth, but soon discovered that while the borehole provided plenty of water for drinking and washing, it was not connected up to irrigate the fields. She immediately decided to help them purchase the missing equipment—pump, pipes, taps and hoses. She hired a technician from the nearest town and waited to see it all fitted. 'It was a very moving moment,' she says, 'when the headman turned on the tap to send water, via the large but hitherto unused storage tank, into the fields.'

As one of her hobbies is video filming, she recorded all that had happened and, on returning home, showed the video to various friends. People were so moved that, before long, she had been given over £1,000 to help another village in the same way. Within three months she was back in Zimbabwe in another remote village—Mhikwa—selected by the Trust. 'They had to walk



Villagers at Gwava work their new pump.

five kilometres to fetch water—one hour there and two hours back carrying it.' She had taken a surveyor with her and they soon found a suitable site for drilling, marking the spot with a heap of stones. She also managed to revisit Gwava where she found village life transformed. 'There was a whole field of vegetables, beautifully mulched and healthy, and they supply a large area with produce.'

Once home, more donations kept pouring in and she knew she had to make a third visit. This time she provided boreholes for the villages of Nzemba and Chirove and again the sites for them were marked with stones.

Brown has called the video she has made about the four villages, *From stones to water*. Things haven't stood still and she says she now has enough money to provide water for two more villages—and will shortly be setting out for Zimbabwe again.

Paul Williams

### Hair-raising flight

In 1999, seven million people—about the population of Switzerland—were forced out of their countries by war or persecution. Shabibi Shah understands their experience all too well. Next March will be 20 years since she left her home in Kabul, Afghanistan, to seek refuge from an increasingly oppressive regime.

'I don't know how people manage who do not believe in God,' she says, as she recalls her hair-raising journey to freedom with three young children, and the struggles she has been through since then. Eight years after she arrived in Britain, her nephew was killed in a racially-motivated attack outside his family's flat.

Shabibi Shah met her husband, Zafar Shadji, at Kabul University in the 1960s, where they studied journalism. She went on to teach at a women's college in Kabul, while he

became a journalist. He was forced to flee the country in March 1982, when his outspoken views fell foul of the Soviet-backed Communist government. Shabibi followed two weeks later, with Yama (14), Parissa (10) and Sulaiman (four months).

In her new book, *Where do I belong?*\*, Shabibi describes their escape, disguised as nomads, to Jalalabad and then over precipitous mountain paths and roads into Pakistan. They started out 'on an ancient lorry, whose wheels were inches away from a drop of several thousand feet' and then, when the road gave out, walked for two days, hiding behind rocks and bushes to avoid being spotted by helicopters. Finally they boarded a truck with no sides, where they were roped together with 20 other passengers.

Before they left Jalalabad,

\*Available from 43a Haling Rd, South Croydon, Surrey, CR2 6HS, price £7.00 including postage and packing.

she tried to spare Parissa these hardships by sending her ahead on an easier route with young relations who could pass as locals. As soon as they left, Shabibi panicked. To her relief—and horror—Parissa and her companions returned, having been given away at a military checkpoint by their expensive shoes. Fortunately the army officer who caught them had been so amused that he had simply sent them home.

Once in Pakistan it took two years of struggle and sickness—and in Zafar's case, prison—before they were able to get visas for Britain, where they were later granted asylum. Zafar died in London in 1993, at the age of 52.

Shabibi Shah has recently published a book of poems in her mother-tongue, Farsi. For her, as for many refugees, gratitude to her new country cannot wipe out the pain of exile. 'In the space of 18 years, so many things have changed in my life,' she says. 'But a big part of me is in a beautiful landscape which I can never forget. I feel without ground.'

That doesn't stop her devoting her time to helping other refugees, in numerous ways. In 1999 she won an award from the National Organisation for Adult Learning



Shabibi Shah: 'So much has changed'

for her voluntary work, advising refugees on their day to day problems. She now devotes much of her time to fundraising for Khorasan, a charity which runs a home for orphans from the notorious Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan.

Mary Lean

### Teaching in Mafia-land

Pia Blandano was born and lives in Palermo, the capital of Sicily, known for its beauty and its Mafia presence.

Since Blandano entered the state school system as a teacher of mathematics, she has always worked in schools in areas controlled by the Mafia. She is now the head of the Antonio Ugo Institute, with 800 pupils ranging from three to 14 years old. The Institute works closely with Libera, the national confederation of voluntary bodies which combat organized illegal activities from drug-pushing to blackmail. Blandano has been asked to lead its work in schools. 'A challenge does not put me off,' she says, 'as long as I am young and healthy enough to face it.'

Before starting a new school year, each school must outline its objectives, considering the needs of the area where it operates. 'The prime need of our neighbourhood is to convince its future citizens of the value of law-abiding in face of the Mafia's pressure to establish their own law,' says Blandano.

'But how can we be convincing, if we are the first law-breakers? We are supposed to enforce the observance of compulsory school attendance, but we had a drop-out rate of 27 per cent, not to mention truancy.'

The school's strategy to make attendance more attractive is based on a division of the daily timetable into three



Giancarlo Caselli and Pia Blandano: offering young people an alternative to organized crime

hours of main curriculum and two for special activities. These include small group or even individual tuition to help the less proficient catch up, and a wide range of extra-curricular activities, mostly led by volunteers from outside the school. There are manual activities under the guidance of professional artisans; the students run a weekly radio programme and a school magazine; they have set up cooperatives to supply snacks and soft drinks, a stationery shop, a library, an afternoon playroom and a weekly discotheque. There is also a computer laboratory.

'Of course it was easier to teach when the less motivated dropped out and stopped being a nuisance,' says Blandano. 'Now even the most traditional teachers realize that they need to find new strategies.'

In three years the school has reduced the proportion failing to complete the course of studies to two per cent, while in the adjoining neighbourhood it is 17 per cent and in some other parts of the city, 33 per cent. 'In our school we offer a life-pattern which is an alternative to the one the youth find near their home.'

Blandano works hand in hand with Giancarlo Caselli, the director of Eurojust, the body created by the European Union

to combat organized crime. He often comes into the school to meet the pupils. He believes, 'The youth get to know an alternative, and even if some join the Mafia, they may later decide otherwise.'

The education programme also gets the pupils involved in public service. A democratically elected committee with two representatives for each form decides in which activities the school takes part. This involvement puts the students in touch with associations and public bodies such as the city government and even the Ministry of Justice. As a result they have a sense of achievement and are proud of their school, their neighbourhood, their city and their nation. Their conviction is passed on to their families, who are now regaining control of their neighbourhood, which for too long has been left to the Mafia, while everybody has looked after himself.

Where does the programme get financial support? 'It is not so much a matter of getting extra money,' says Blandano, 'but of everybody fulfilling their obligations, and the job that takes most of my time is to encourage everybody at all levels of public service to do their bit.'

Adriano Costa



Corbis

## Parents start with themselves

A remarkable series of courses is helping Taiwanese parents to cope better with their children—and their own lives. **Jenny Leung** reports:

When Ren-jou Liu tells a parent, 'I don't see any problem with your child,' the effect is often dramatic. 'I was stunned,' says Hwa, a mother who attended one of 'Teacher' Liu's parenting courses in southern Taiwan. 'If there isn't any problem with my child, he must be saying the problem is me.'

Hundreds of Taiwanese people have taken part in Liu's parenting and personal development courses over the last seven years. Hwa signed up because of her frustration with her younger daughter who hated getting up in the morning and was always late for school. 'Every time I tried to put her right, we ended up quarrelling.'

Liu's comment made Hwa reconsider the way she was communicating with her child. She decided that instead of pointing out her mistakes, she would tell her what she felt about the things she did. Gradually, she found her daughter responding differently, and their conversations no longer ended in quarrels, although her daughter's enthusiasm for getting up did not increase.

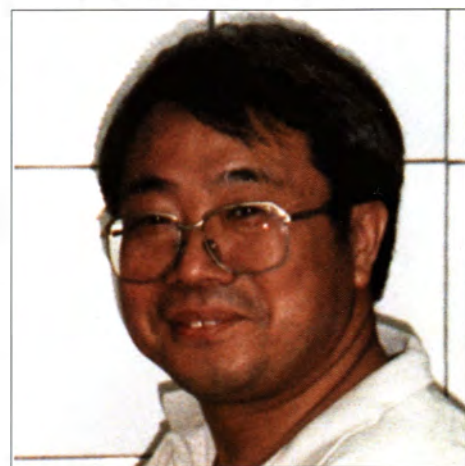
Hwa decided that being late for school was her daughter's problem, not hers. One day, the teacher called. The girl had nearly missed the chance of resitting an exam. She has never been late for school since. 'She's learned it herself,' chuckles Hwa. Their relationship has improved greatly.

Like many of Liu's 'students', Hwa enrolled in search of tips on parenting, but has learnt lessons which reach far beyond—in her case to her relationship with her husband's family.

Hwa married into an extended patriarchal family in the relatively conservative south of Taiwan, with four generations living under one roof. The men are always served first at mealtimes and, during the first months of her marriage, Hwa did not eat with her husband at the same table. Eventually she saved up enough money to buy a flat and managed to persuade her husband to set up a home of their own. But she was still unhappy, and the familiar sense of oppression arose every time she visited her husband's family.

'One of the key things I have learned on these courses is to love myself,' she says. 'If

you love yourself, you won't let others make you unhappy.' Hwa realized that while she might not be able to change the way the family did things, she could change the way she responded. 'I've learned to step into the shoes of my husband's family. When I see the difficulties they are in, I know they are not



Gail Hind

Ren-jou Liu: 'I don't see any problem with your child.'

intentionally making my life miserable. In a way, we are all victims of our upbringing.' She no longer hates her husband's family, and has found that some of them see her as a trusted person they can talk to. She finds this consoling, though a little surprising.

Ren-jou Liu left high-school teaching 16 years ago to work with MRA at home and abroad. The courses he now runs grew out of an invitation to give a talk to a group of mothers in 1994. He told them how, as a rebellious youth obsessed with 'finding his precious love', he had discovered a larger and more satisfying purpose in life. The mothers were so intrigued that they asked for four follow-on sessions.

Liu introduced them to the idea of taking time each morning to be quiet and 'listen to the inner voice' and then putting into action any ideas gathered. Several of the women tried this out between sessions and returned with encouraging experiences to report.

One was the wife of a mayor, who went out drinking with his political friends most nights. She decided to stop complaining about this, and the next day she went to visit her in-laws, who lived some distance away. Her husband was surprised, and pleased. On another day, she went to his office and suggested that they visit a friend of his whom they hadn't seen for long time. When they did so, they found that the friend was suffering from cancer and was deeply touched that they had come to see him. Her husband stopped going out to drink every night.

A woman who heard about the class approached Liu to run a similar course for the nurses at her husband's clinic. He designed eight sessions on personal growth in 'emotional intelligence', maintaining 'listening' as a core element. For one year, he and his wife, Grace, drove two hours each way from south to central Taiwan to give a two-hour session in Yunlin and other cities every week.

Six years ago Liu ran his first *Parent effectiveness training* at a private kindergarten in his home city of Tainan. The parents, mostly well-to-do, were so pleased with the programme that the principal invited him to continue. She agrees with Liu that so often the root of the problem lies not in the child but the parents. 'Save the grown-ups first, then the child will be fine,' she maintains.

When one class finished, the 'graduates' wanted to go on, so Liu found himself developing new courses at the same time as running the original course for new groups. He now has a dozen courses on a variety of themes linked to personal growth, and teaches 15 classes a week. Over the last seven years 100 classes have taken place, each comprising eight two-hour sessions and attended by ten or more people. Last year he founded the Family EQ (emotional intelligence) Development Center, with a fulltime executive to run the programme.

The programme as it stands today consists of five levels, starting with *Parent*

*effectiveness training* (based on the theories of Thomas Gordon). In Level 2, based on Daniel Goleman's book, *Emotional intelligence*, participants learn to overcome personal weaknesses and heal old wounds in relationships. In Level 3, *Listening to the inner voice*, participants are introduced to the practice of listening to their voice of conscience. In Level 4, participants undertake four eight-session courses on *Rediscovering and reinventing life*. These draw on the books of John Bradshaw, Scott Peck, Gerald Weeks and Stephen Treat, and cover such topics as the role of upbringing, reconciling with one's 'inner child', and marriage therapy. When participants reach Level 5, they go deeper into the secret of the changed life, drawing on the writings of MRA pioneer Garth Lean.

Liu's classes take place in homes, classrooms, school libraries or around restaurant tables. In a typical session, attendees read out handouts prepared by Liu, followed by reflection and individual sharing about their life in the past week.

Liu emphasizes three key elements in his programme, which he has drawn from his experience with MRA: listening, care for individuals and faith, which gives people a greater source to rely on.

Most of the participants in Liu's courses are mothers—with young children, teenage children or sometimes sick children. 'I've learned much more about myself,' is a common evaluation. Some say they have learnt to master their emotions and cope with difficult circumstances, thus making their own lives—and others'—easier. Many say they have accessed new concepts and knowledge. And the groups who have stuck together from one course to the next have found fellowship and friendship.

Coco, another of Liu's 'students', was going through a divorce when she was recommended to take one of Liu's classes two years ago. She wanted to know what to say

to her four-year-old about Daddy. She did not find a direct answer to her question, but she found an answer to a longstanding hidden problem.

Coco was close to her own mother, and, together with her siblings, they formed a tightly knit camp against their unloving, critical father, who had been an oppressive, unfaithful husband. Coco wanted to make a better life for her mother, and she took on the rest of her family's problems as her own. Life became a burden. When Liu suggested she should give her mother's life back to her, she realized she had been shouldering far too much. 'Now I'm clear about boundaries,' she says. 'We have things that we have to fight for ourselves. Nobody else can do it for you.'

Coco found Liu's courses so inspiring that she formed a study group with her family members, including her elderly mother. They began to try to integrate the lessons they had learnt with their home lives. Their father, who was sceptical at first, gradually began to come to the sessions. Later Coco received a letter from him, apologizing for the way he had treated his family.

Things have not changed overnight, and Coco is still working hard to help her family, but she no longer harbours hatred. As a Buddhist, Coco counts the chance of participating in Liu's courses among the blessings in her life.

There has been so much demand that the Family EQ Development Center has trained a dozen 'graduates' to be 'seed teachers'. Books and audio tapes have been produced to reach out to a wider audience. Past course participants have also initiated public events to share their experiences with the community.

Effective parents are fundamentally effective human beings. One of the best ways of shaping a better world may be to provide future generations with effective adults. This is the significance of Liu's personal development programme. ■



A parent effectiveness training session in progress



Shirley Souryal

The slave labourers who worked on the US Capitol are portrayed by the Ayinde Dance Troupe of Richmond, Virginia.

## Dealing with the legacy of slavery

Two hundred people symbolically scrubbed the steps of the slave-built US Capitol during a forum on connecting communities.

**John Bond** reports.

How do we answer racism? That question will be focused this August at the World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa.

It is a vital question. Racism causes widespread pain and anger in most countries, and

this has frequently led to conflict. The gulf in wealth between the rich and poor worlds is growing, and broadly this is a gulf between white and non-white races. If it keeps growing, sooner or later it will lead to major international conflagrations.

If there is to be change, it needs to be undergirded by action which breaks down racial barriers in and between countries. A forum in Washington DC in June brought together people who are doing this work in a wide range of organizations—city councils, multi-cultural bodies, universities, churches, think-tanks.

The forum was convened by MRA, and hosted by Agenda for Reconciliation, Hope in the Cities and the Faith and Politics Institute. The National League of Cities was one of several partnering organizations. The theme—'Connecting communities for reconciliation and justice'—

expressed its approach.

As one forum initiator, Rob Corcoran, explained: 'We need to connect our communities in so many ways. We need to find common ground between established populations and new immigrants, between businesses and the localities they serve, and between different faith traditions, racial and ethnic groups.'

'Connecting communities takes persistence, vision and above all teamwork. Trust is a fragile bridge that needs to be built every day through honesty and openness.' The forum offered an opportunity to learn from people in different places 'who are building bridges across divisions that have sometimes seemed unbridgeable.'

He described how, through Hope in the Cities, 'citizens have initiated honest conversations between people of all backgrounds on matters of race, reconciliation and responsibility. They are showing that a willingness to embrace each other's

painful experiences can help heal the wounds of the past.'

This approach is spreading, and not just across America. One forum participant was Joe



Shirley Souryal

Congressman Tony Hall: 'clean out the wound of slavery'

Devaney, until recently the Lord Mayor of Liverpool, England. During the 18th century Liverpool was England's principal port for the slave trade. From there ships would sail a triangular route—first to West Africa where they loaded captive Africans, then to the Americas where the surviving prisoners were sold as slaves, and then to England with a cargo of tobacco or sugar. The city grew rich on this trade.

Devaney sees the racism experienced by Liverpool's African and Asian minorities today as a legacy of the callous racial attitudes fostered by the slave trade. Under his leadership, the city council has acknowledged the harm done by the city through its involvement in the slave trade, and apologized for its role.

Devaney now heads the Reconciliation Triangle Project, which aims to make the slaving triangle one of reconciliation. A partnership has been set up between Richmond, Virginia—at one time a major North American slave trading centre—and the West African country of Benin, which sold huge numbers into slavery. Richmond citizens and the Ambassador of Benin also took part in the forum. A reconciliation sculpture created by a Liverpool artist will be sent to Benin and Richmond next year.

History is usually written by the victor, and Hope in the Cities has worked steadily to ensure the victims' story is known too. As the American poet Maya Angelou writes: *History, despite its wrenching pain/ Cannot be unlearned/ But, faced with courage/ Need not be lived again.*

While in Washington, the US Capitol, where the US Congress and Senate meet, was chosen as a place to take a further step along this path. Few people know that this symbol of global freedom was partly built by slaves. The whole forum gathered at the Capitol steps where the pain of slavery was portrayed through music and dance, and US Congressman Tony Hall spoke. He is known for calling Congress to apologize for slavery. His action has roused fierce controversy, but this has

not deflected him. 'We have got to clean out the wound of slavery in our national life,' he told the gathering.

Then 200 people symbolically scrubbed the Capitol steps. They included Syngman Rhee, who heads the Presbyterian Church (USA). 'We are taking this action to liberate both the oppressed and the oppressor,' he said. 'What happens in the US Capitol affects the rest of the world, and if we admit our injustices, we will help other countries to do that.'

The following days gave participants the chance to explore many facets of the struggle to reconcile people divided by a cruel history.

Aboriginal Australian Patrick Dodson, who chaired his country's Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, told how a nationwide programme of study circles in the early 1990s offered Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians a chance to meet together, and tens of thousands responded.

When a government was elected in 1996 which attempted to turn its back on the harm done to Aboriginals, there was widespread resistance, and a people's movement grew. Last year a million people took part in walks calling for apology as a step towards reconciliation, and the government has been compelled to alter course.

A live issue in the USA is the question of reparations for slavery, and this was reflected in the forum.

'America needs to have a mature conversation about reparations to the victims of slavery, and our continuing moral obligation to Native Americans, the first citizens of this land,' said James Forbes, Pastor of the Riverside Church in New York. He spoke alongside Donald Shriver, author of *An ethic for enemies: forgiveness in politics*.

Any strategy to overcome racism must include measures to alleviate poverty, and the forum looked at this on a world scale. 'It is up to business to do something about global poverty because business is the only group with sufficient resources,' said Win Wallen, a prominent American business leader.



Shirley Souryal

Fr Michael Lapsely: from victim to victor

In the view of Jim Wallis, Convenor of the Call to Renewal, only through the growth of social movements will business and governments take the necessary action. He cited the impact of the Jubilee 2000 campaign for the cancellation of Third World debt.

Charito Kruvant, of the indigenous people of Bolivia and now a US citizen, had developed the work of Creative Associates International. It supplies skilled people to meet the infrastructure needs in situations of war and poverty in 40 countries. She spoke about helping societies to 'transition from a war economy to a peace economy'. 'We can all do some-

thing to answer the needs of crisis situations,' she said.

All three speakers have devoted their energies and resources to overcoming poverty. And that was characteristic of the whole forum. It was a discussion between deeply committed people who have paid the price of commitment. Anti-apartheid activist Father Michael Lapsely from South Africa had had his hand blown off by a letter-bomb from the apartheid government. He described how, in the aftermath of this attack, he had learned to move from being a victim to being a survivor, then a victor. Many participants found the forum similarly empowering. ■



Karen Elliott Greisdorf

Jim Wallis, Win Wallen and Charito Kruvant: overcoming poverty



## Japanese forecast cultural earthquake

For long years, Japan has been braced for the next earthquake. The city of Kobe, so devastated by the quake of 1994, may have been rebuilt, but memories of it are etched deep and the shockwaves linger.

At the MRA Foundation's Asia Centre in Odawara in June, 80 people from 11 countries heard of another earthquake in the making. Toshio Ogoshi, founder and Principal of the Shiyu-juku 'rebirth' Academy, warned that the faultlines run through every high school in Japan. Its main symptom is the growing number of 'normal and intelligent' students who refuse to go to school and very often cannot articulate why.

Official estimates put the number at around 150,000, but Ogoshi, who for 27 years has run an institution to rehabilitate such students, believes the actual number involved is higher. One method of forecasting earthquakes involves monitoring the

changing behaviour of mice: Ogoshi suggested that the phenomenon in the nation's schools was the 'harbinger of a cultural earthquake'.

In response the managing director of one of Japan's best known retail chains commented that, while he had fulfilled all the expectations of a successful Japanese businessman, two of his children had experienced this very problem.

In the business field, Mieko Kuwayama, Deputy General Manager of a large cosmetics company, referred to a recent survey which revealed that 40 per cent of employees 'felt obligated to follow their company's directives, even if these were unethical'. This led to vigorous debate, in one of the 'sharing groups' which followed, on how to combat this tendency.

Korean shipowner Kim Tae-In drew an analogy between reconciliation work and the way a mangrove's roots 'branch out under water providing oxygen'. 'True friendship,' he maintained, 'is treating others as if they are part of you: then you will understand their sorrows.'

Andrew Lancaster

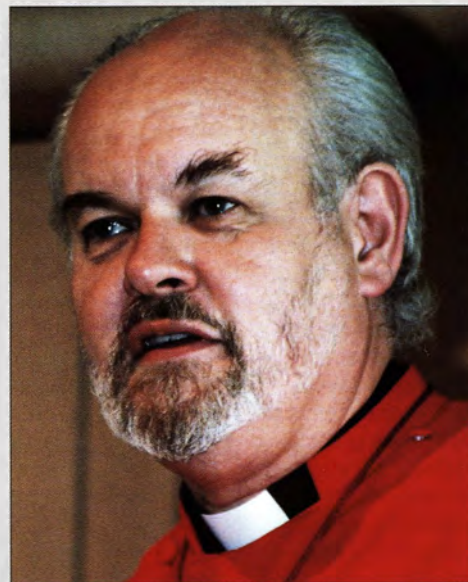
## Bishop dedicates MRA's London centre

Richard Chartres, the Bishop of London, dedicated the new MRA centre at 24 Greencoat Place, London, on 13 June. 'During the [UK] election campaign there were constant appeals for transformation,' Bishop Chartres said, but people had been disappointed in not finding a way that this could occur. The Enlightenment model for building a heaven on earth had achieved huge advances. But society was still hitting problems 'in crime, lack of respect for one another, lack of motivation in learning, anomie in private life, the increasing rate of suicide among young men in particular, the increasing recourse to drugs'. All these had been 'beyond the legislative quick fix'.

Hope lay in the belief that 'the deep structure of the world belongs to God. The greatest need of this nation and all nations is once again to relate to that truth.'

Bishop Chartres stressed that the world's deep structure lay in 'the divine law, the moral law, that humility gives us an open door into'.

'If communication is to be powerful,' he continued, 'it has to proceed from the heart of silence.' Stillness and silence were the great educators. Mere appeals to ethics and fraternity generated little spiritual energy for transformation. 'One of the mysteries for us all is how to translate ethics into ethos, into a transforming womb which can bring to



John Leggat

The Bishop of London: translating ethics into ethos

birth a civilization of love.'

MRA's new centre was building a community capable of turning words, ethics and appeals into an ethos with the power and capacity for change. 'I'd like to thank MRA for the work it has done through the years and to wish you the experience that turns ethics into an ethos and packs the nuclear power to transform.'

Others attending the dedication ceremony included Roman Catholic Bishop George Stack from Westminster Cathedral and Rabbi Malcolm Wiseman, representing the Chief Rabbi.

Michael Smith

Exiled and in despair, Osman Jama Ali had no idea of the impact an unexpected letter would have on his life. The Deputy Prime Minister of Somalia's first government for a decade talks to Mary Lean.

Osman Jama Ali has an unusual CV for a deputy head of government. It includes a nomadic childhood in the interior of what was then British Somalia, seven years in the USSR studying electronic engineering, 16 years in the government of dictator Mohammed Siad Barre and 10 years in exile in Britain. Now he is back in Somalia as Deputy Prime Minister in the Transitional National Government (TNG) charged with re-establishing democracy and the rule of law in a country which has suffered decades of oppression, anarchy and civil war. The TNG, established last year, is Somalia's first central government since the collapse of Siad Barre's regime in 1991.

During the final years of that regime and its devastating aftermath, half a million Somalis sought refuge in foreign countries. 'Nearly every family was affected,' says Osman Jama Ali. 'The chaos was total.' One third of the present cabinet have second passports from the countries where they sought asylum.

He was serving as chief engineer of the country's broadcasting stations in 1973, when a coup brought Mohammed Siad Barre's military regime to power. 'They



Philip Carr

## Rebuilding Somalia

nominated civilian graduates to the ministries and I was appointed Minister of Fisheries and Marine Transport.' He held the post until 1984, then headed a department of the Party for five years, before becoming Minister for Public Works and Housing in 1989.

The coup of 1973 was stimulated by the corruption and nepotism of the preceding civilian governments, and its mood was idealistic. 'The military had been educated in academies overseas and they hadn't had the chance to be corrupted,' says Osman Jama Ali. 'They rectified a lot of injustices and did a lot of reconstruction, and they promised they would go back to their barracks and give political parties the chance to compete for power.'

This promise was not kept. 'Instead they themselves became corrupt and oppressive. Some regions were marginalized and some tribes were overlooked for promotion in the army. Everyone who tried to criticise was either put in jail or disappeared: an Idi Amin type of leadership took hold. It became

nearly impossible to check them by words or argument, so the opposition groups had to take up arms.'

As Siad Barre steered more and more power towards his own tribe, many of his cabinet began to establish secret links with opposition groups and to look for ways to defect. Between 1984 and 1989, Osman Jama Ali's job trapped him in Somalia—'Party conferences were not held in the outside world'. As soon as he was reappointed Minister he seized his chance to travel to a conference in Tunisia and defected. 'I came to Britain, asked for asylum and condemned the regime over the BBC and in the newspapers. Then I went back to Ethiopia, from where the opposition groups were fighting.'

When Siad Barre was overthrown in 1991, the opposition shattered into warring factions, some of which wanted to secede. Osman Jama Ali opposed this, and was distressed by the narrow vision of the different groups. 'Every tribe wanted to secure its share of power.' He returned to Britain, bitterly disillusioned, 'in confusion and despair'.

There, in 1993, a 'packet of literature' dropped through his letter box. With it came an invitation to join members of other Somali factions at a meeting outside Stockholm in Sweden, organized by some Somalis and MRA, prior to another organized by the Nordic Africa Institute in Uppsala. The literature—which included several copies of *For A Change*—echoed the approach of forgiveness and reconciliation towards which Osman Jama Ali was already moving. He has no idea how the senders found his address, but regards it as 'miraculous'.

The meeting outside Stockholm was to be a turning point not just for Osman Jama Ali but also, potentially, for his country. 'The people I met there were in different political factions from me, but they were not those I considered criminals. After long discussions we became friends and we understood each other. Since then we have been working together, promoting the element of forgiveness and of reconciling people of different opinions. Some of these principles were utilized in the Djibouti conference last August which led to the establishment of the Transitional National Government to reform and re-establish the Somali state over the next three years.'

This development faced Osman Jama Ali with a difficult decision. 'I had told my friends that I would not seek any position, unless there were political parties and competition. But although I did not put my name forward, many people asked me to participate in the government.' In the end, he decided to accept.

And how will he and his colleagues avoid the mistakes of their predecessors? Osman Jama Ali believes that the abuses of the Sixties, Seventies and Eighties were exacerbated by the Cold War: 'Dictators in the Third World got away with injustices, nepotism and corruption, because of the rivalry of the superpowers. Now the international community will not help any country which does not adhere to democratic principles. And the press, parliament and judiciary within countries are alert to the signs of dictatorship. It is not as easy as it was for politicians to become dictators, because people know their rights.'

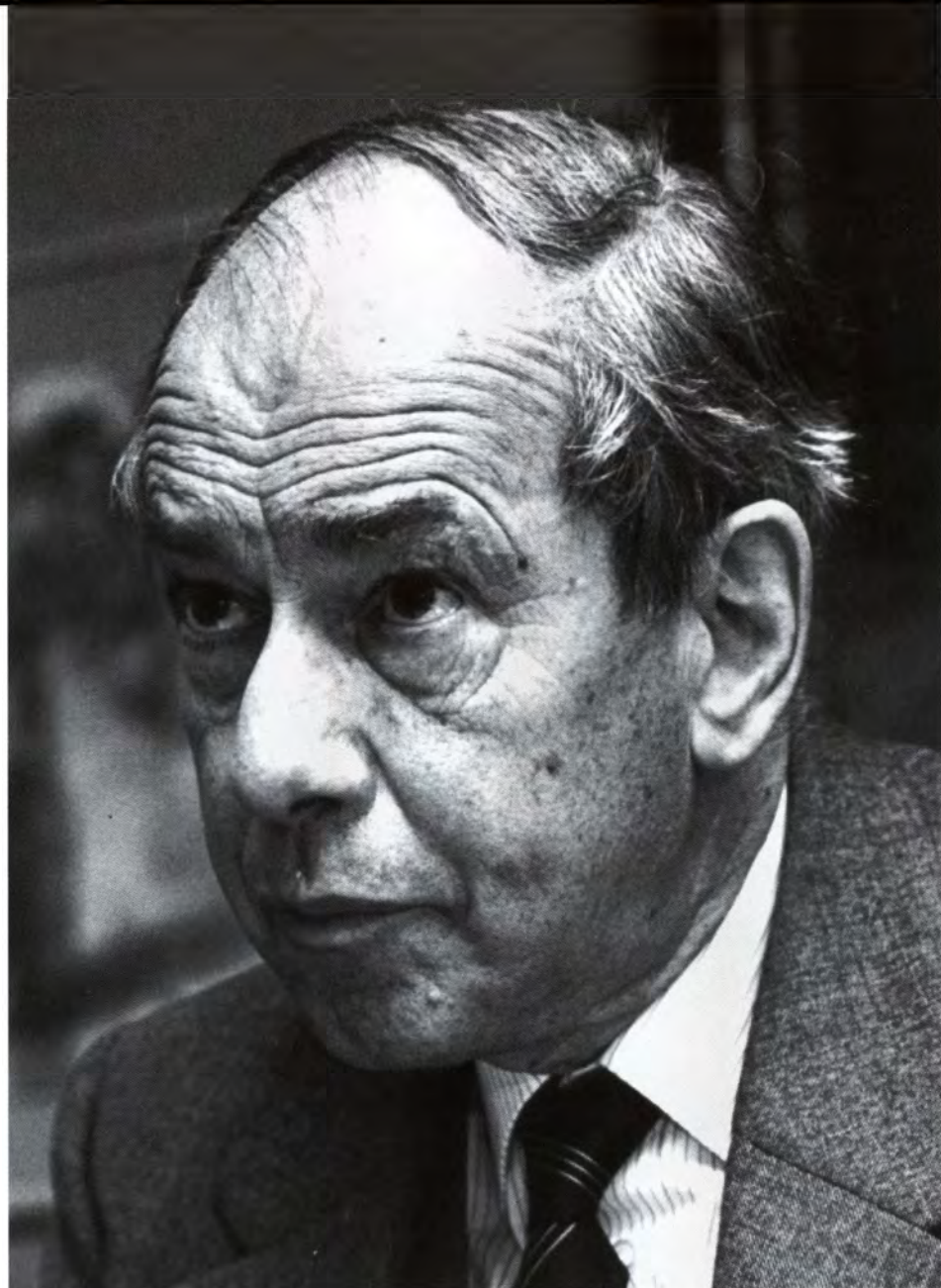
When I met Osman Jama Ali in Britain in May, he had just been in Canada to see his six children, who have grown up in the 10 years since he last saw them. One of the many challenges facing the new government, he believes, is to persuade 'volunteers' from the Somali diaspora to return home to rebuild. The fact that many of these people now have an inalienable right of abode abroad may make it easier for them to take this risk. Osman Jama Ali is realistic about the huge problems ahead, but determined that his country, which has suffered so much, will at last know peace and stability. ■

Edy Korthals Altes

shocked the Dutch establishment when he resigned from the diplomatic service to become an outspoken writer and peace activist. He tells

Hennie de Pous-de

Jonge why he did it.



Hendriksen-Valk

## Heart and soul for Europe

**E**dy Korthals Altes has spent most of his working life as a Dutch career diplomat, serving in New York, Sri Lanka, Paris, The Hague, Bonn, Rome, Jakarta, Brussels and Poland before his appointment as Ambassador to Spain. So his voluntary resignation from the diplomatic service on an issue of principle in 1996 caused quite a stir. Yet he felt that he had no choice but to follow the voice of his conscience.

Since that time he has worked to open people's eyes to the dangers that mankind faces, and to get people to do something about them. His latest book, *Heart and soul for Europe—an essay on spiritual renewal\**, written and published in English, with a foreword by the Archbishop of Canterbury, will come out in Dutch this summer.

In this book, as in numerous speeches at home and abroad, Altes points to three 'time-bombs' that could destroy life on earth: the nuclear threat, the ecological crisis and the growing gap between poor and rich that is leading to economic and social conflict around the globe.

'The military can destroy life at a mo-

ment's notice,' he tells me. 'The ecological issue and social tensions are long-term threats. We are so slow to see, that only a succession of crises will lead to things changing. This means more than the current events in cattle breeding. Our attitude to man, matter and nature needs to change. And here I am not speaking of superficial talk about norms and values, but about change that takes place when people are touched by the deepest dimension, by the religious dimension.'

At the time of our interview Altes has just completed an essay on the dangers of the militarization of space. He is Vice President of the Standing Commission on Disarmament and Security of the World Conference on Religion and Peace. He chairs the working group of this organization that deals with nuclear arms and space mili-

tarization. 'It is utterly wrong to see missile defence as a protective umbrella,' he states. 'On the contrary, space militarization adds a fourth dimension (after land, sea and air) to war. This fuels the arms race. He who has absolute control over space, has absolute control over the world.'

Edy Korthals Altes joined the diplomatic service a year after graduating in economics from Rotterdam. But even as a child he wanted to join the service, attracted by the prospect of travelling and encountering different cultures.

Two points strike you when you talk with him. First, his extensive knowledge of Europe and the world—not surprising in a diplomat—and secondly his profound faith, which evidently influences all he does and says.

Has he always been a believer?

'Thanks to my mother, I became acquainted with the depths of faith from an early age. We also attended church. During my teens and student time there was a period in which I drifted away somewhat. But I owe a lot to my mother's example. Though she had a very difficult life and was frequently ill, she lived her faith with great joy. As with the psalmists, weakness and strength were very close to each other for her. While I used books to seek faith theoretically, I saw through her that faith needs mainly to be lived.'

He acknowledges his debt as a student to the Student Christian Movement (SCM). He learned that prayer, meditation and Bible reading were essential for people in the process of becoming intellectuals. His continuing focus on the confrontation between faith and science stems from that time.

Through most of his life as a diplomat Altes had no difficulty in reconciling his work with his Christian convictions. He was not often able to talk about his faith but it taught him to behave as a citizen of the world and to see the people he met as children of God. During his time as ambassador to what was then Communist Poland he adopted the habit of having a daily quiet time for Bible meditation, and his faith deepened. He got acquainted with a lively church whose members echoed his belief that faith in Christ was a reality to be lived day by day.

Yet in Madrid his faith and work clashed. In his book *Man or puppet*, Altes describes how he had been deeply worried for some time about the arms race. Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (the so-called 'Star wars' programme) and the NATO doctrine of deterrence presented him with a dilemma—how could he continue to transmit the official Dutch point of view, which was favourable to these policies?

Altes says: 'Following many months of internal struggle, considering the pros and cons of speaking out openly about the arms race, I had a dream that was so intense and clear that it stayed with me. I saw Christ in a church, high above the altar. Suddenly sawdust fell from the cross and I saw the living suffering Christ who asked me intensely: "And you, what did you do?" This dream changed my life.'

After this Altes lived through a few more months of internal struggle. He had discussions with colleagues, the minister of foreign affairs and especially with his wife Deetje, before he came to a conclusion. Deetje was of the opinion that no matter how difficult the decision would be, conscience should be the deciding factor. Eventually Altes published his views in an article in a leading newspaper. From his conversations with the minister he knew that publication would mean that he could not maintain his position as ambassador. Four years before he was due for retirement, he requested honorary discharge from the diplomatic service.

How did people respond? Official reactions from the ministry were negative. But some people within the service expressed sympathy or respect for his decision. Then there were those who, out of fear for their jobs, kept silent. 'I had earlier sent my story to a number of colleagues and I still have an interesting collection of highly supportive letters from them,' he adds. 'But they did not want to express themselves publicly.' He would like these letters to be published eventually because they show how thinking about major security issues changed among a wide range of people within the system. He also received hundreds of letters of support from young and old people outside the service, as well as a flood of invitations to give speeches.

After his dismissal, Altes was asked to join the Pugwash movement, an organization whose work for peace and security won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1995. Through this international work he became even better informed about weapons development. In 1987 the Dutch Council of Churches asked him to become Chairman of the International Relations division and he also served as international chief board member of the World Conference on Religion and Peace from 1994-99. He is still honorary Chairman of this body.

**A**ltes is a true European. Through his years of service in Brussels he became well acquainted with European politics. It is therefore no coincidence that he chose the title *Heart and soul for Europe* for his book. It is a response to Jacques Delors' urgent appeal in the early 1990s to all European religious leaders to give the continent heart and soul again. Unfortunately the religious leaders hardly took Delors' challenge on board. Altes calls upon them to do so now. And not only the Christian leaders. He has great expectations of the other religions, especially the more than 20 million Muslims in Europe. A Europe without vision will increasingly get tied up in economic issues and technocracy, he argues. 'Degeneration and disintegration

are enormous. The question is what causes them and how matters can be resolved.'

Altes is not pro-Europe without conditions. He understands some of the objections in the UK and says that not everything should be decided in Brussels. A balance is needed between what we do together and what we do separately. He is in favour of the euro though he thinks that it was introduced too rapidly.

Edy Korthals Altes is deeply convinced of the need to work together with other religions. What does he say to Christians who believe that theirs is the only true faith because Jesus said: 'I am the way and the truth and the life'?

'I subscribe to the words "the way and the truth and the life",' he says. He came to the conclusion that when you take the way—as he did in Madrid—you see something of the truth and come to life. For him this is based on encountering Jesus—'a personal experience that will not leave me'. But Jesus was not exclusive. In the New Testament, maintains Altes, you can see that he wanted to bring liberation for all people in crisis, whoever they were.

He expresses his reluctance to speak of God, 'because with my limited intellect I am unable to say something sensible. Therefore I leave a lot of space for the unspoken, and try to approach it with great reverence. In that wide understanding of God, I have to acknowledge that there is room for him to have revealed himself in different ways. Everywhere where truth is found, God can work.'

In conversations with people from other religions, he says, as you come closer to your own core you also come closer to the heart of what moves each human being. 'In view of the challenges that we face in our time, we need each other very much.' ■

*\*'Heart and soul for Europe' by Edy Korthals Altes, published by Van Gorcum, Assen, the Netherlands, 1999.*

## FOR A CHANGE

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## Now for the Evergreen Revolution

Prof MS Swaminathan, a pioneer of India's Green Revolution, calls for a new approach to world farming.

In India, farming is part of our culture. Seventy per cent of our population—700 million people—are engaged in farming. Half the world's farmers live in India or China: every fourth farmer is Indian.

Famines were recurrent in India before Independence. Between 1870 and 1900, according to British records, 30 million people died of hunger and starvation. Nearly three million people died in the great Bengal famine—in what is now Bangladesh and India—at the time of Independence.

After Independence, both Nehru and Indira Gandhi laid great emphasis on bringing more land under irrigation, in order to insulate our farming from being 'a gamble on the monsoon', as Sir Albert Howard wrote in 1916. As every farmer knows,

without water you can do nothing.

Since I joined the Agricultural College at Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu in 1944, I have seen India's agricultural destiny transformed from being purely a 'gamble on the rain' to being a gamble on the market. In 1950, our total food grain production was 50 million tons. Last year it was 205 million tons. Our average growth rate, particularly in the last 30 years, has been about three per cent per annum, which is above our population growth rate.

Twenty-five years ago we were number 25 in the world in wheat production, and now we are number two. We are number two in rice production and number one in milk production: all produced by very small farmers. As Mahatma Gandhi said, 'Our production is production by masses'—in contrast to

the mass-production technology of the industrialized nations. What we need in India is job-led economic growth, not jobless growth: a human-centred kind of development. We need more farmers' farming and less factory farming.

How did this progress take place? The most important factor was the farmers' receptivity. Our farmers were thought of by Western writers as fatalistic, unlikely to respond to technology. They have proved to be like farmers anywhere else, with three determinants affecting their decisions—cost, risk and return.

The government had three major roles. One was technological: both national and state governments made large investments in agricultural research and education. We have

a vast network of agricultural institutes and universities. And we have had the good fortune of close international partnership.

Technology alone is not adequate—telling the farmer, 'Grow this seed', has no particular meaning unless the seeds are available. Jalna, in Maharashtra, has become 'the seed capital of India'. Such services as the production of seed, irrigation, credit supply, fertilizers have been very important.

Government's third, and most important, contribution was a package of public policy, particularly in terms of agrarian reform and input-output pricing. Thirty years ago, the average Punjab farmer produced one ton of rice per hectare, and kept 800 kg or so for his family. But if he can produce five tons, then he has four tons to sell, and more cash in hand. The smaller the farm, the greater the need for a marketable surplus.

A small farm is ideal for intensive, precision agriculture. On the other hand, small farmers often cannot take risks, have no access to credit and are resource-poor. This is why public policy—such as the small farmers' programme, marginal farmers' programme and programmes for drought-prone areas—matters so much.

The milk revolution was partly achieved by technology, but mostly by institutional reform. The cooperatives gave a power of scale to the woman who had only three or four litres to sell per day.

Cooperatives, joint stock companies and other forms of organization give small producers the power of scale both at the production end and at the post-harvest end. Modern ecological agriculture involves integrated pest management, integrated nutrient supply, scientific water management—'more crop per drop'. None of this can be done by a single small farmer alone. It has to be done on an area basis.

Our population now exceeds one billion. Arable land is going out of agriculture all the time. Water resources are shrinking. Our ground water is getting depleted and in many cases polluted. They are drawing water from lower strata in Bengal and Bangladesh with the result that arsenic is coming up. The greatest internal threat to agriculture is now the problem of conserving our soil fertility, land and water.

This is the phase which I call the Evergreen Revolution. This is where you have continuous advancement in productivity, but without associated ecological harm. It has three major preconditions.

The first is a happy farming family. Scientists like me can give advice and materials, but the farmers are the ones who toil in the sun and rain and produce the food. So we should not only work for the consumer, but also think of the producer.

The second ingredient is a sustainable farming system, not based on one crop alone. Almost every farm in India has one or two cows or buffaloes, or small ruminants like goat or sheep. These are part of our

life—crops, animals, fish, agro-forestry. If you go to Kerala every farm, every house, is a genetic garden: you will find jack fruit, pepper, coconut—up to 20 economic species in each garden.

A sustainable farming system is the very foundation of organic agriculture—some degree of animal husbandry, composting, organic manure and also crop rotation. In the bio-villages started by the JRD Tata Ecotechnology Centre in Chennai, one crop is a very powerful nitrogen fixer called *Sesbania prostrata*. It fixes large quantities of nitrogen both in the stem and in the root. You may need to combine this with mineral fertilizers and chemical pesticides, in a way that maintains both environmental and social sustainability and economic viability.

The third precondition is sustainable food security. Although the Indian Government has 45 million tons of wheat and rice in its warehouses, over 250 million women, children and men still go to bed hungry. Therefore jobs should be the bottom line of our agricultural policy. Where there is work, there is money, and where there is money there is food.

The JRD Tata Ecotechnology Centre tries to marry traditional wisdom, knowledge and technologies with the best in modern life.

Knowledge is a continuum, everyone of us leaves behind something new—and so will our children. You cannot freeze knowledge. So we have taken five different technologies: biotechnology, space technology (particularly in weather satellites), nuclear technology (particularly probes for underground mapping), information and digital technology (we have set up a series of information villages), and management technology. This last, in our definition, puts everything together into a management system for a farm which can be applied day by day.

Ecotechnology helps to bridge the divides in our country. We have found, for example, that bridging the digital divide in villages is a powerful method of bridging the gender divide. The people who are operating the knowledge centres in our information villages are women. Everybody comes to them for knowledge and this builds their self-esteem.

Everybody today talks about the globalization of the economy. Everyone knows about anything which happens—the earthquake in Gujarat for example—at the same time all over the earth. The global village in terms of information is a reality. But in economic terms it is a highly divided village.

We also know that our fates are intertwined ecologically. We can argue endlessly about who is responsible for mucking up the climate. But the fact remains that ecologically our fates are intertwined, and that is why we talk of our common future.

But you cannot have a common future without a common present. In 1994 agricul-

ture was introduced into the World Trade Agreement for the first time. It had five major components of importance to farmers: access to markets, domestic support from governments, export subsidies, sanitary measures—using products which are completely free of salmonella and toxins—and trade-related intellectual property rights (TRIPS)—patenting and protection of systems and plant varieties.

The Indian experience of this has been negative. We have no additional market access—in fact the market has even reduced in the OECD countries in the last six years. The domestic support we are given is a fraction of what is being given in the OECD countries. We don't give export subsidies.

Our sanitary measures are still poor, and this is bad for our own consumers. I tell my colleagues, 'Don't only think that the foreign consumer doesn't want salmonella, our people don't want it either.' Quality is quality, and we should not only think of export-quality. I have been calling for all our agricultural universities to set up short non-degree courses for farmers in the *Codex Alimentarius*, put together by FAO for food safety.

TRIPS has also worked against us so far. There are accusations of bio-piracy from 'gene-rich' countries like ours towards the 'technology-rich' countries. These are divisive forces. We hope that there will be a renegotiation of the World Trade Agreement on Agriculture.

*Sarvodhya* was a term coined by Gandhiji, meaning a win-win situation for all. I would like to see a *Sarvodhya* world of farming emerge, where there is unity of purpose in spite of the diversity of methodologies, farming systems, climates, soil and needs.

Mahatma Gandhi said the pathway to achieve *Sarvodhya* is *Anthyodhya*, attention to the poorest person. So if you want to have a *Sarvodhya* farming world, then I think the more affluent members will have to pay attention to those who are economically, socially and ecologically handicapped. As Gandhiji said, 'Before you do anything, ask yourself whether what you are about to do will help the poorest person you have seen in your life.'

We have to marry ethics with economics and technology. The technological push must be matched by an ethical pull. If you don't have these two matching each other, then you can't make sustainable progress.

*This article is taken from Prof Swaminathan's opening address at the International Farmers' Dialogue at Asia Plateau, the MRA centre in Panchgani, India, last February. Dr Swaminathan's work in crop genetics and sustainable agricultural development earned him the World Food Prize in 1987. He has served as Secretary of India's Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperation, Director General of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research and Director General of the International Rice Research Institute.*



# WEBSITE

by Robert Webb

## Why I'm learning Spanish

**A** brightly coloured, meshed hammock caught my eye recently as I strolled by the Potomac River across from Washington, DC. Stitched on the hammock in big letters was 'El Salvador', apparently the homeland of its owners.

That hammock struck me as symbolic of the cultural revolution underway in America. The new US census shows that for the first time Hispanics constitute the largest minority in the US, slightly ahead of African-Americans. And their numbers continue to rise. So much so that *Time* magazine did a recent blockbuster cover story, 'Welcome to Amexica'.

Amexica was the name applied to the US-Mexican borderland which stretches from the Pacific Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico. 'It is often said the border is its own country, Amexica, neither Mexican nor American,' *Time* staffer Nancy Gibbs wrote. Cities and towns on both sides of the border teem with more and more people. This growth has been fuelled by the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement between the United States, Canada and Mexico. Some communities straddling the border have more in common with each other, apparently, than with their respective countries.

El Paso, Texas, is trying to see how it can help avert a possible water-shortage facing its cross-border neighbour, Juarez, Mexico. *Time* quotes Mayor Betty Flores of Laredo, Texas, as saying, 'The border is not where the US stops and Mexico begins. It's where the US blends into Mexico.'

But if 58 per cent of Hispanics in the United States are from Mexico, millions more

**'For the first time  
Hispanics constitute  
the largest minority  
in the US.'**

are from other countries. The one thing they have in common is the Spanish language, which you hear increasingly not only in major cities such as Washington, New York and Los Angeles, but also in smaller cities and towns. A friend from a suburban area of mid-western Cincinnati tells me she hears Spanish in her neighbourhood now. I hear it all the time in my high-rise apartment building in suburban Washington.

So what does it all mean? Most of all it presents many Americans with not only the challenge but also the invitation to accept that our nation will no longer be the one we knew growing up. Along with increasing numbers of Asians and others from ethnic minorities, Latinos make special contributions to the cultural mix. They bring a warmth of heart and personality quickly evident if you speak even a few words in their language. But many Americans look askance at the immigrant tide. They would like to keep things as they are or, preferably, as they were.

A recent series in *The Washington Post* explored the Latino cultural factors in a posh suburban high school. It found many Hispanics felt left out. For example, Latino girls were not invited to join a group of their peers who met weekly to view a popular TV show. Such feelings of exclusion, as African-Americans know well, can have devastating effects.

For long-time Americans such as me, then, a big question is whether and to what extent we will welcome these men, women and children from Latin America. Mexico's new President, Vicente Fox, visualizes a day when the US-Mexican border is open for unfettered travel both ways. That's unlikely anytime soon, and may never happen. But the tide will almost certainly continue to rise no matter what barriers go up.

Immigration issues, fed mainly by the flow of illegals, are high on the nation's agenda. They defy easy answers. But one thing many of us can do is try harder to learn the Hispanics' language and culture even as they struggle to learn English and blend into American life. That is why I recently decided to learn Spanish.

*Robert Webb is a former columnist and editorial writer for the 'Cincinnati Enquirer'. He lives in Alexandria, Va, USA.*

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## REFLECTIONS

by Sarla Kapadia

# In good heart

I am an ordinary citizen of Mumbai, India, a mother of three wonderful sons and grandmother of six.

It was natural for the insurance agent to send me for a health check before my cover could be renewed. I was advised to have a thallium test on my heart. Never having undergone such a test before I reassured myself with: 'Oh well, I have lived life fully, seen its ups and downs, enjoyed it even, so if I have to go I have to go....' I then remembered the Jain scriptural prayers of forgiveness which I had been reciting twice in the morning and twice in the evening for the last few months.

So when I lay there, flat on my back with the huge machine above me to study the heart which lay within, I was at peace with myself, and my eyes were shut. I lost the sense of my body and heard a voice saying, 'Do you want to live or do you want to die?' For a minute I was taken aback for, in the Jain philosophy, to ask for life is to be vain.

However, I answered, 'Yes, I want to live!' The voice said, 'Then accept the problems and difficulties of life,' and disappeared. The most amazing thing happened: before my eyes, which remained closed, came each person that I may have hurt. Then I saw myself bending down with prayerful hand asking for their forgiveness. In that moment I, too, was ready to forgive and forget what may have happened between us. The clarity with which I saw each person before me was extraordinary. Some were members of my family, others were friends and colleagues.

I felt wonderfully peaceful, an inner

kindling

which cannot be described. The nurse was shaking me. Twenty minutes had passed and the first test was over.

I was then given a fatty meal to eat and had to wait for an hour to see the effects on my heart. This time as I lay there flat, eyes shut, I became conscious of all the people who had helped, loved, accepted me over the last 30 years. I saw, of course, my father and mother, my three sons, my late husband, my brothers and sisters and many friends who had urged me to a new life or shown me the way when I was lost.

Each person was standing in front of me. I saw myself bending down and touching their feet in gratitude. Then the 20 minutes were up and the test was over. I felt this process would have continued forever if I had not been shaken by the nurse. The process had been so beautiful I felt as if I was waking from a deep refreshing sleep.

As I awaited the doctors' verdict I suddenly remembered a senior couple, friends of mine, whose feet I had forgotten to touch in gratitude. So I said aloud, 'Oh, I forgot....'

The doctor came in and said, 'What did you forget?'

'Nothing,' I said.

'Well your heart is in good shape, couldn't be better than it is. Do lots of exercise, eat plenty of fresh vegetables and fruit—that is it!'

After this amazing experience, friendships which I thought were closed have suddenly opened up, and the hurts I had held on to have disintegrated.

The healing has begun.