

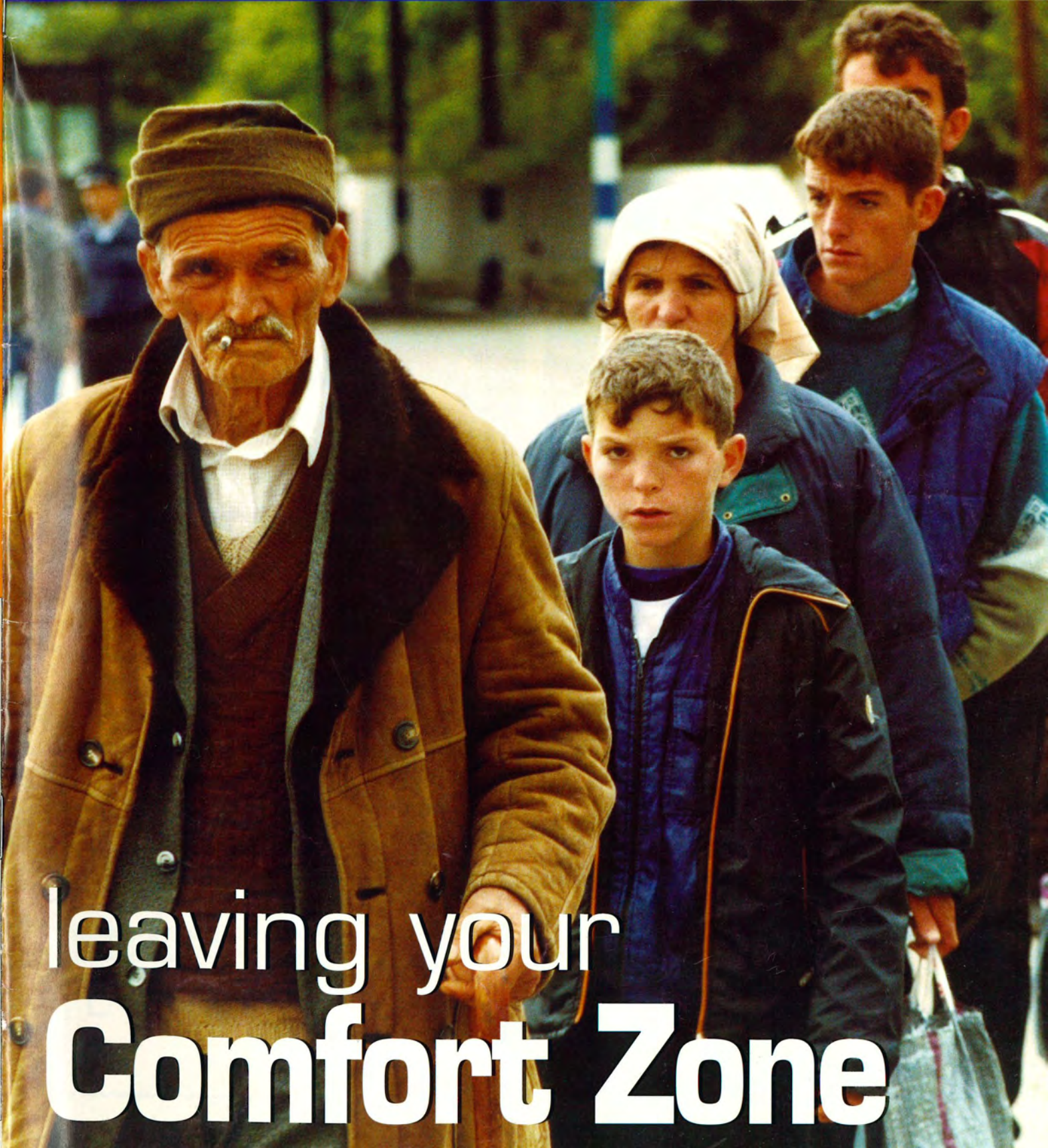
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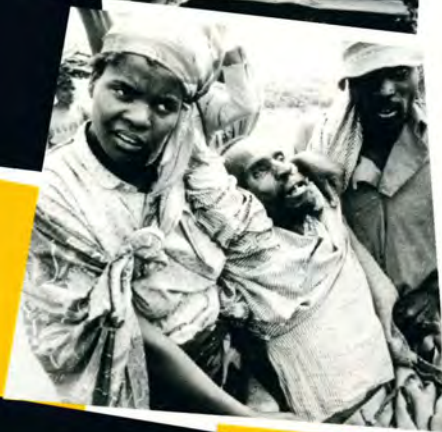
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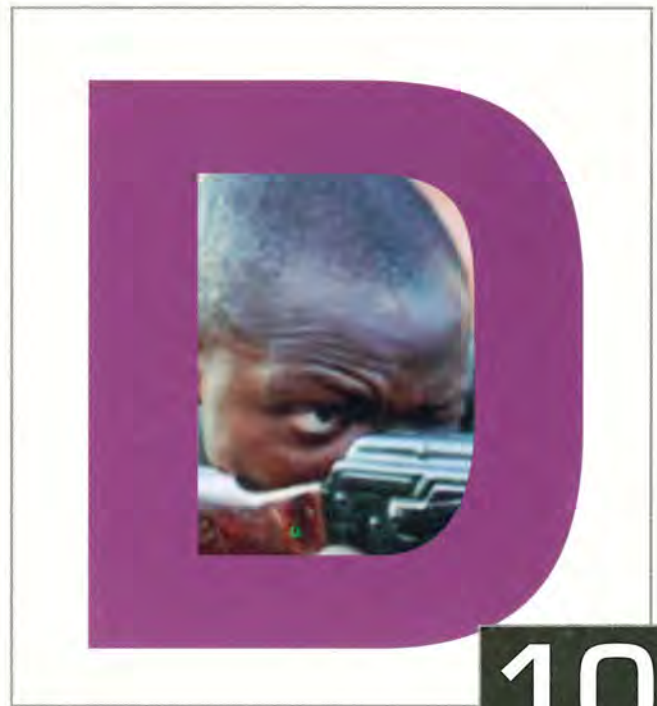
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COVER PICTURE KOSOVAR REFUGEES, ALEX SMITH

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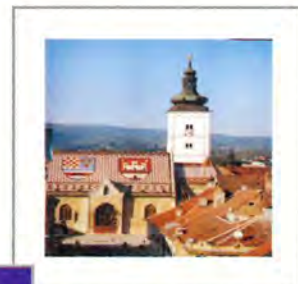
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NEWS

Honduras Former alcoholic wins gangs for Christ

Former alcoholic Armando Meza has evangelised the gangs of Tegucigalpa, and as a result today these gangs are reaching out to 30 groups of 1,100 youths in 15 neighbourhoods of the capital city.

Meza, giving his testimony on the local television station, described himself as a 'sick alcoholic' and said, "I knelt down and asked the Lord to pardon me, that I had failed to stop drinking. I asked him to please help me."

God answered his prayer powerfully. Ten years later Meza became pastor of

preparing their hearts" Meza said. Eventually the boys came to church once a week for Bible study, and began to accept Christ. But they did not integrate well into the church.

A Southern Baptist missionary, Tim Patterson, shared some church planting concepts with Meza including allowing natural groupings of people to form house churches with home-grown leadership. "We discussed the possibilities of raising leaders from the new converts and allowing each natural social grouping



(gang) to become a church in itself."

The new approach worked,

Cerro Grande Baptist Church, and, after a heart attack in 1997, felt led to reach out to the youth of the city. He approached a local football team trainer, and as a result began to help with getting uniforms for the team, and began attending team games.

At first the boys were wary of him, "but I was praying God would be

and Meza reported that God began to move so dramatically among the gang members that a profound change was being made in the Cerro Grande neighbourhood."

Publicity from the television programme has led to invitations for Meza to start groups in other parts of Tegucigalpa.

(Christian Daily News)

Myanmar

Two key Baptists have been arrested by the Burmese military, and so far nothing further has been heard about them. Biak Kam, senior pastor of the Thantlang Baptist Church and Thawng Kam, General Secretary of the Thantlang Baptist Church were arrested when they tried to hold a meeting to address the torture of village leaders. Fellow Baptists have not been allowed to visit them, and fear they might be tortured and be in danger of death. (BWA)

Papua New Guinea

Members of the Malaumandan tribe in this South Pacific nation have been 'blown away' by God's love, according to a missionary spokesperson. Following a six-month programme of Bible teaching and use of evangelistic drama, 65 tribe members have become Christians. Sketches of Old and New Testament stories as well as dramas of the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of Jesus were used alongside teaching emphasising biblical truths. "The people were totally overwhelmed by what Jesus had done for them," the missionary said. (Christian Daily News)

Mozambique

Christian radio broadcasters have come up with a novel way of spreading the gospel in isolated areas of Africa. They have customised and converted shipping containers, making them into studios, and transported them to northern areas of Mozambique. From this 'studios' workers broadcast the message of Jesus Christ (Christian Daily News)

United States

"A long awaited movement of God is taking place among Native Americans" declared Russell Begaye, a Navajo Indian and Christian leader. Begaye, a church planter with the Southern Baptists has said that several influential Indian chiefs have already become Christians. Evangelistic groups are compiling a list of every Native American home on all 550 reservations in the USA so that every Native American living on a reservation can be prayed for. (Christian Daily News)

Laos

At least 25 evangelists have been arrested for sharing their faith. Some have been put into solitary confinement, and locked up day and night in wooden stocks. The wife of one evangelist was arrested along with her baby. She was driven insane by the experience, but since her release has fully recovered and believes the jail authorities put something in her food to cause her to suffer hallucinations. (CSW)

news in brief ● news in brief ● news in brief ● news in brief ● news in brief

Chechnya Christians flee terrors

Two elderly women members of Grozny Baptist



PA NEWS

Church, Chechnya, have reportedly been brutally murdered. An 82 year-old widow was allegedly tortured, raped and strangled; another woman in her 70s was beaten to death. Another woman member was kidnapped and her abductors are demanding US \$4,000 for her release.

Earlier in 1999 the



church's pastor Alexander Kulakov, was kidnapped and murdered. His severed head was put on public display in Grozny. The man who took over as pastor, Vitaly Korotun, a 23 year-old deacon, was abducted in August 1999.

Because of the threats and violence, 23 of the church's members have fled the area, and are now living in a safe house in southern Russia. Those who are left are having to cope with

situations of increasing lawlessness and instability.

It is believed that around 40 Christians remain in this breakaway, predominantly Muslim, republic of Chechnya. (EBPS, Open Doors)

Nepal Christian workers expelled

In a wave of persecution against Christians, ten Protestant churches have been burned by fanatical Hindu groups. The Nepal Baptist Church Council has joined with other Christians in speaking to the government about the protection of human rights.

Elsewhere in Nepal, ten International Nepal Fellowship (INF) workers and their families were issued with exit visas, and given 14 days to leave the country. Some of those named were already out of the country on leave or home assignment. INF state that the expulsions have nothing to do with the individual's conduct, but relate to their 'extra' or 'out of work' activities, that is, religious or Christian activities.

For a long while INF personnel had experienced delays in obtaining residence and exit visas. BMS workers Colin and Denise Clark told BMS General Committee in October how they had only had valid visas for five out of 22 months, and then had difficulty obtaining their exit visas to come back to the UK. The delay in granting these visas is believed to

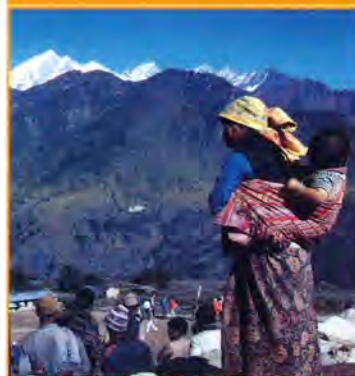
have been a way of obtaining the expulsions of the ten INF workers.

The situation has been brought to the attention of British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Robin Cook, who has intervened, raising the issue with his Nepali counterpart.

INF have declared that if the situation regarding long outstanding visas was not



resolved by mid November, then INF would ask those personnel involved to leave Nepal within three months. Such a decision will present



practical difficulties for the individuals and projects, some of which will have to be cancelled.

It seems that only those who have been in Nepal with INF for a long period of time are affected by this situation. (BWA/INF)

French Baptists pray and fast

The Federation of Baptist Churches in France (FEEBF) encouraged its 111 member churches to rise to the challenge of sharing the gospel and to join in three days of prayer and fasting. The FEEBF General Secretary Etienne Lhermenault and Director of Evangelism Bernard Delépine said "We invite you to join us in prayer". On Day One "we want to repent of our lack of zeal in witnessing; the lack of unity that keeps churches and denominations from working together; the wrong motives that stain our evangelistic efforts." On Day Two "please pray with us for renewed compassion, for the planting of new churches, for increased creativity and boldness in our proclamation of the good news." And on Day Three "An invitation will be given in worship services for congregations to discern who among them God is calling to serve as evangelists, pastors or church planters, for church members to move out for the gospel through personal witnessing, practical service, and support of those involved in such



ministries." The leaders added, "French men and women often have a

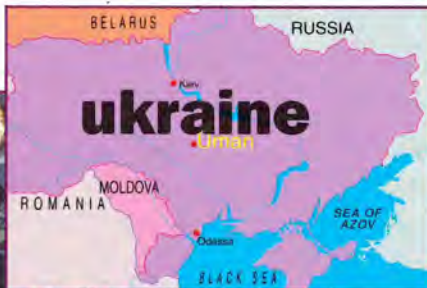
rationalistic mind set that is a barrier to faith in Jesus.” The French Baptists have invited other denominations in France to join them in Spring 2000 in another time of prayer and fasting. “Together, let us lift up our voice and ask the Lord to have mercy on this country” say Lhermenault and Delépine. The FEEBF has 111 churches with 6,224 members. (EBPS)

Ukraine/USA Sister churches evangelise former Soviet Union

additional regular attendees.

For two years the group from Minnesota has travelled to the Ukraine to run a children’s camp. The church helped out by sending supplies, leading the crafts programme and arranging sports activities, while the church from Uman provided the camp leadership, teachers and helpers.

One of the Uman leaders, a man called Vladimir, told the Minnesota group to expect about 20 to 25 children for the camp, but in the event 39 turned up and 25 of them expressed an interest in going to a weekly Sunday school class led by another Uman church member called Nina.



One of the visitors from Minnesota, Betty Foulkes, commented that “the children were amazed at the fact they had a choice of materials. Normally they might only have one coloured pencil or crayon, and they would have to share that with others,” she said. (Assist)

Kosovo BMS helps Kosovans get ready for winter

Winter comes suddenly in the Balkans. From the end of October the days of warmth and sunshine

Alistair Brown



Reflects.....

People in this country nod, smile, say ‘Hmm..., interesting’ but I don’t think they believe me. I tell them the world is exploding technologically, and that in the most remote of places satellite dishes are springing up. People who used to have little awareness outside their own region are now world conscious and media bombarded as never before. But that’s hard for us to grasp. We’re slow to subscribe to satellite TV or the Internet so how can poorer nations be ahead?

But many are. The photo here is from Thailand. The location is a remote village; the house is a traditional self-build wooden construction on stilts. The family are not especially poor, but neither are they well-off. And out the back, among the shrubs, there’s an enormous satellite dish. Often they’re watching the programmes we watch. They’re being asked to buy the same international brand names as us. Other cultures are impacting them like never before in history.

Is that bad? It can be. But minds open to new ideas are also open as never before to the gospel. I don’t champion pumping people with culturally insensitive Christian messages, but wise programming can be a powerful tool for God’s work.

So here we are in 2000. BMS has new enthusiasm for mission. We’ll be doing face to face mission work, but we’ll also be using other ways of passing on the good news: satellite TV, the Internet and whatever else is available. We mean to go through every open door God puts before us. May this be the century when, for the first time, all peoples hear the good news. ●

Alistair Brown is General Director of BMS



change, and for four months the temperature does not rise above freezing; often it is minus 20° in the daytime. Families and family groups are preparing for winter. Eight villages to the north and west of Prishtina have been identified by BMS personnel to be in special

need and they are all receiving regular supplies of food. Families have been encouraged to identify a room in their damaged home to seal off, and use for all activities. BMS has given a grant of 100,000 DM (that is £32,600) to buy 200 wood

ASSIST COMMUNICATIONS



Two churches half a world apart have got together in a sister church relationship to evangelise an area in the Ukraine, a republic, part of the former Soviet Union.

The Evangelical Christian Church (Baptist) of Uman, Ukraine and Cross of Glory Baptist Church, Hopkins, Minnesota have formed a connection to take the gospel to the city of Uman, a major city, about three hours drive south of Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine. The Evangelical Christian Church has about 250 to 300 weekly attendees and Cross of Glory has about 300 members with



stoves and four cubic metres of wood per family to provide warmth and cooking facilities in two or three of these villages.







The wood should last throughout the winter. It is having to be bought from a safe area and transported to the region, because many people have been killed or injured trying to collect firewood because of mines.

In another initiative different families in Kosovo are being encouraged to live under the same roof together for the winter. BMS has provided a grant of 20,000 DM (£6,550) to provide concrete blocks which will act as screen walls to give each family a degree of privacy.

action

card

ACTION CARDS

Action Cards for 2000 can be ordered from Christians Aware, 2 Saxby Street, Leicester, LE2 0ND (Tel/Fax 0116 254 0770). Themes for the year include issues of fair trade, poverty, the environment, refugees, child labour, debt and development. Use the Action Cards to send a message of support, protest, congratulations or challenge.

They cost £2.50 per pack. Cheques or postal orders to be made payable to Christians Aware. ●

Vinoth Ramachandra

Choice and Character

“Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan was well watered... So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out towards the east.” (Gen 12:10 -11)

“Moses chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin... He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt.” (Heb 11:25 - 6)

We face choices all the time. These range from the trivial (“What shall I make for dinner?”) to the life-changing (“Should I change my job?”). Choices we make reflect both our character and our basic framework of thinking, what is sometimes called our “world-view”. But the reverse also holds: we make choices, but our choices also make us. It is the choices we make that determine what kind of people we turn out to be.

For instance, Lot’s choice reflected the popular worldview. Prosperity is more important than godliness. He ended up a weak, ineffectual man humiliated by his own children. In contrast, Moses’ decision sprang from a different vision. It led to loneliness, rejection and apparent forsakenness by God himself. But he ended up a humble, broken and powerful leader of God’s people, one with whom God talked as a friend.

Moreover, every major decision involves risk and a measure of uncertainty. This is how God has arranged things in his world, so that we trust in him and not in our decision, that we love him and not his gifts. So when we demand of God that he gives us “assurance” before we do something that we know (from all other factors) to be the most God-honouring thing to do, might we be guilty of unbelief? ●

Vinoth Ramachandra is South Asia Regional Secretary of IFES.





lee bray's diary

LEE BRAY accompanied BMS President Andrew Green on a journey to Bangladesh and Thailand. Here are some extracts from his diary.

Sunday 24

Departing was hard - it would be so easy to stay! At the morning service in Upton Vale Andrew and I are much prayed for ☐☐ - in the pulpit, in the pew, in the aisle - there is a great sense of God's presence with us. We fly from Heathrow - flight time 7 hours 45 minutes.

Monday 25

We land at Dhaka airport at 16.10 (six hours time difference). Dhaka airport is very basic but seems well enough organised, and John Passmore, the 'area rep' for BMS, is there on the other side of the barrier to meet us. Nothing, I think, could have prepared me for what follows. The airport gates are thronged with people, clamouring to get in or out - it's hard to tell which. Andrew seems to know where he is going and plunges into the crowd so I follow him. Beggars press around us, many are small children. One young girl carries a baby (her own?); she utters some English - "No father, no father" - repeated over and over. I have no idea how to respond, and can only trail Andrew to where John is waiting to stow our luggage into the van - and us with it!



Outside the streets are just the same! What had I expected? I had simply been too busy to anticipate anything, and maybe that was just as well. The streets are awash with traffic - people, bicycle rickshaws, three-wheeled 'baby-taxis', trucks, cars, buses all laden to the brim. Horns blare constantly, but nobody - vehicles or pedestrians - seems to take the least bit of notice. Traffic weaves, cuts corners, and keeps left some of the time. Vehicles are battered and scraped. Damage is painted over (or not). At every junction, wherever traffic stops, beggars and street vendors - mostly children - crowd the road. Pandemonium, noise, colours, faces, activity is everywhere - Bangladesh sucks me in!

Tuesday 26

We are to stay at the BMS flat in Jahanara Gardens Green Road - sounds nice! We turn into a street that seems impassable, and drive down it at a great rate, horn blaring. Suddenly a sharp left into a narrow alley, another blast on the horn, a solid metal gate is slid open and we drive into a concrete yard. We have arrived! No gardens and no green anywhere in evidence! Secure (?) behind this metal gate is a small set of flats, one of which belongs to BMS. We are welcomed by Sue Headlam, local missionary, who makes us a cup of tea and gives us a 'replica' digestive biscuit! We have some things for her - best of all - a copy of The Sunday Times.



To be continued next issue.

mention the risks of living in Angola to someone, and their thoughts usually jump to the danger of land mines. While they undoubtedly cause much death and suffering, we are relatively safe from them. Perhaps surprisingly, Angola's long-running civil war has left Luanda, the capital city, virtually untouched. The victims of the landmines are the poor farmer, forced by hunger to return to his fields, and the young child innocently playing in a country village who comes across a brightly coloured object and who can't resist picking it up.

Luanda is an unsanitary city, heaped with rotting rubbish and awash with muddy mosquito-infested sewage water. Unlike the pioneer missionaries, we take anti-malarial tablets and our house has mosquito screens at the windows. We have to boil and filter our water to make it safe to drink. During the ten months that we have been in Luanda, we have been kept remarkably free from the serious tropical illnesses such as salmonella, typhoid fever and amoebic dysentery

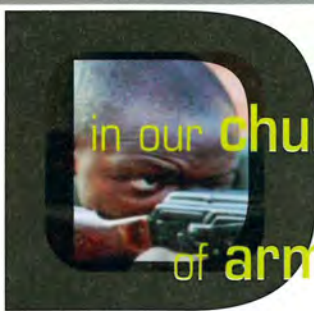
crime occurs, it is often violent. Several people in our church have been killed in recent months, victims of armed robberies. Every shop employs uniformed guards who sit by the door, proudly sporting their weapons. We still haven't quite got used to the sight of shoppers putting their hand guns into a locker at the entrance to the supermarket before starting their weekly shop.

We live on a large site that is owned by the Assemblies of God church. It is a beautiful location, with a view across to rolling hills and the sea. The base itself is very peaceful, consisting of four missionaries' houses, a Bible school with students' accommodation, and a large area of farmland. There are always three armed guards on duty, and a perimeter wall adds to our sense of security. Yet virtually every night we hear the sound of gun shots and hand grenades. The local houses where the materials are stored at night usually have their own armed guards. They fire warnings, designed to scare any would-be robbers away, so we often hear one or two shots. Sometimes, however, it is more in the nature of a running battle. A few weeks ago, we were enjoying a barbecue early one

all the smaller roads are precarious riveted mud tracks filled with sewage and rubbish. Despite this, the Angolans drive as if they are on a Formula 1 racing circuit. Speeding and seemingly suicidal overtaking occur all too frequently. The cars, taxis and lorries are a danger in themselves, most being battered wrecks fit for the breakers yard. They often have broken windscreens, no suspension and no lights, so driving after dark is something we avoid whenever possible. To add to the difficulties, there are no pavements and little children often run out of their houses straight onto the road. Pedestrians often cross without looking or (especially true of teenage boys) with the goading attitude "Hit me if you dare!" On various occasions we have seen dead bodies lying in the road where someone has hit them. The danger for us is that, in Angolan culture, an angry mob will form and kill the driver of the vehicle no matter whose fault it was. Travelling by plane on domestic flights is also dangerous, as many of the aircraft are poorly maintained. On our recent flight to Cabinda, not only were the seats broken but we were very disconcerted to see streaming wisps of vapour from the cloud we were passing through leaking into the cabin. Even when we are on the ground aircraft are a danger to us. At least four Russian cargo planes have crashed here in the last ten months, usually due to being overloaded. One of these hit a residential part of Luanda, just two miles from where we work.

Not all the dangers we face though are man-made. The guards have shot dead various snakes. Our neighbour, Mark, is the proud owner of the skin of one of them, an eight-foot-long boa constrictor. Recently there was a spitting cobra on the steps in front of our house. Simon took one look at it and, remembering Mark 16, promptly squashed its head with his sandalled feet. Unfortunately we can't deal with all the risks we face with such ease; yet we know that God is able to save us and even if he doesn't we will still serve him (Daniel 3:16-18)●

Simon and Karen Collins are BMS workers in Angola



"people in our church have been killed, victims of armed robberies"

Saturday evening. The weather was sunny and the coals were hotting up nicely. Suddenly, a gun fight

erupted in the market, about 200 yards away. For about 20 minutes, our cooking was accompanied by the sound of pistol shots, bursts from AK47 rifles, and the blast of the occasional hand grenade. We later found out that a drunk soldier had started the trouble, and that the police had then responded. Although we were relatively safe behind our wall, it did lend the proceedings a somewhat surreal air.

Travelling is another danger that we face. In the middle of Luanda large pot holes disfigure most of the streets, and

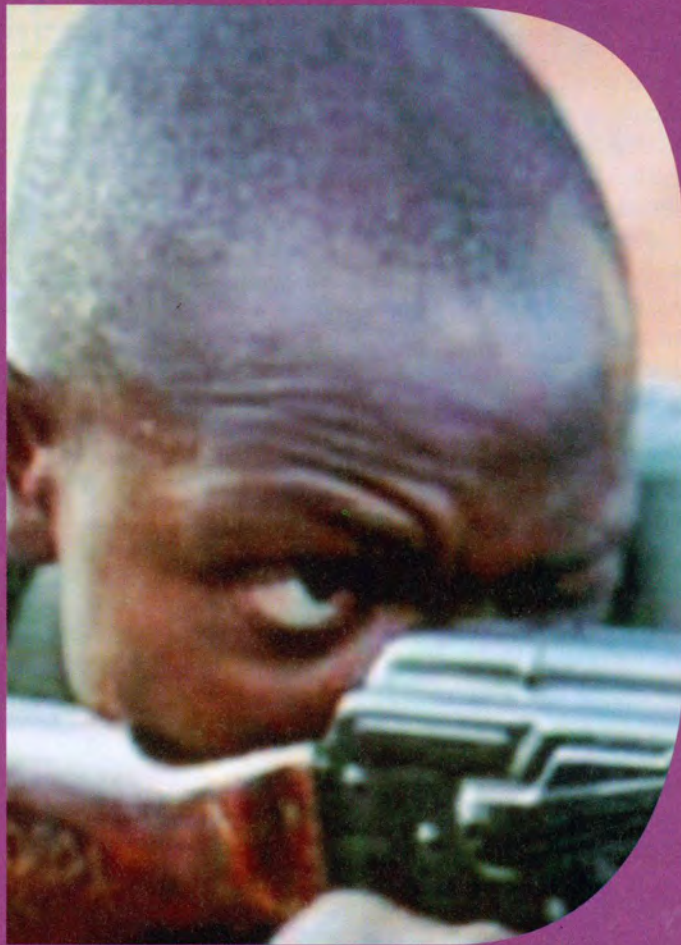
which are so common here.

Despite being relatively safe from disease, we still face dangers, most of which, unfortunately, are man-made.

The biggest danger is due to Luanda's crime rate. As a legacy of 32 years of war, guns are widely available. Combined with mass unemployment, overcrowding due to the influx of thousands of refugees and a rate of inflation that is out of control, it is hardly surprising that for many, turning to crime seems the easiest quick-fix solution. After so much war, people view life cheaply – and when

leaving your comfort zone

danger



disease...

and drunk soldiers

BRAZIL TO ALBANIA

Nurse **Mary Parsons** tells how God led her from one country to another

this is Skenderbeg Square," shouted our team leader, Justine Horsfall. We were on a whistle-stop tour of the city. Who was Skenderbeg? Someone important? The answers were lost in the noise of beeping traffic. Caught in a throng of pedestrians moving in all directions, we sped across the square, avoiding the fast-moving vehicles as we went. Hot sun beat down on our heads as we strained to hear Justine. Money changers plied us with local currency, small boys thrust phone cards in our faces. This was Tirana, Albania's capital city. Was it really only three weeks since I'd waved goodbye to friends in Fortaleza, Brazil?

Some months prior to world-media interest in the Balkans crisis, I read an article about a Brazilian missionary who was working in Albania. It was a moving story of how she had drawn alongside the Albanian people, especially at the time of the civil unrest two years ago. Her testimony led me to pray more for Albania.

My attention was again drawn to Albania when news reports of the horrors in Kosovo flashed onto the TV screen. The March/April BMS News Update, sent regularly to all missionaries, reported BMS folk in Albania had to put aside their regular work to help with the thousands of refugees from Kosovo. At this point prayer concern for Albania and Kosovo led me to consider doing something practical. The first step was to talk and pray with my Brazilian pastor and his wife, and later with the rest of the church. Also with my BMS colleagues and our BMS Regional Secretary Derek

"prayer concern for Albania and Kosovo led me to consider something practical."

Punchard.

In my letter to BMS, with an offer to help in Albania, I suggested that it might be a crazy idea. The offer of help was taken seriously. There were 15 of us in the BMS Team for Albania. Each has their own story to tell of how God often surprises us out of the routine to serve him in some other way. It may be right where we live or on the other side of the world.

It was hard leaving Fortaleza, friends and colleagues. We had worked and worshipped together for eight years. The move to Albania meant leaving the familiar things behind and giving up one's independence to become part of a team. It involved learning a new language and becoming more vulnerable. (Albania is not considered a safe place to live.)

What am I doing now? Three days a week I'm working at the ABC clinic in Tirana while BMS nurse Yvonne Wheeler is on home assignment. The other two days I spend at the clinic in Durres, opened by Elisabeth Towlson during the Kosovan crisis. I'll be here until I come back to the UK for home assignment in January 2000. ●

Mary Parsons has worked as a nurse in Brazil with BMS from 1972 to 1975 and then from 1985 to now.



Nick Welford comes clean

before leaving the UK for Trinidad I was worried about certain things I'd be leaving behind, biggest of these being my two-year old sister. I knew that I would miss a big part of her growing up which wasn't a nice thought for me! I didn't have too many expectations about what it would be like, but was happy to wait and see.

The first uncomfortable thing to hit me was the heat, especially as I had been wearing a jumper on the plane and didn't think to take it off! As far as housing went I don't think we were really out of our comfort zone. We actually lived in one of the nicer areas of Trinidad, one of our rooms had air conditioning, we had a shower, a kitchen and let's not forget the swimming pool! But that was a mixed blessing as the majority of our work was in two poor rural schools.

I found it really hard to go from the extremes of wealth to poverty practically every day. It made me realise how thankful we should be for how God was obviously looking after us in our lives back home and not just in Trinidad. It also made us humble, because of the way the kids were. They would buy us sweets, which for them was a lot to give.

Our visit to the capital, Port of Spain, also moved me out of my comfort zone, mainly because we stayed in a small house right next to a shanty town, but also because I had to share a mattress with team-mate Ben!

Coming home was strange as well and for the first few weeks I found it hard to get back into our concept of poverty in this country. There was one time when I saw some homeless people on the street in Canterbury asking for change, and I couldn't feel



sorry for them because of what they had compared to the children I had been working with. Now I do have compassion for them because they are still poor, especially for this country.

I will never forget my Trinidad experiences – they have changed so much about me for the better and at the end of the day taking the risk was worth it, for God and for me. ●

Nick Welford was a member of 1998/99 BMS Trinidad Action Team



What if
I
took
a
risk
for
God
?!

the task of sharing the good news of the gospel has rarely been an easy one. Modern technology and communications can make it a more comfortable task today, but still great hardships have to be faced. If the gospel is to be taken to the ends of the earth there must be those willing to take a risk for God, and leave their very comfortable comfort zones.

I asked Ken & Ruth, currently in training for service in South Central Asia, to describe their thoughts and feelings about God's calling on their lives. Their country of service is one of the poorest, most restrictive and potentially dangerous places in the world. War, earthquakes, poor agriculture and a lack of foreign investment have left only a shell of a country. A shortage of most of life's basic necessities and the ever present danger of fighting make it a difficult place to live. So what compels a couple to uproot themselves and take their young family to this frightening place?

Ruth answers, "When I hear some of the facts I can be scared and wonder why on earth we are going to such a difficult country, but when I pray it's different to just cold, dangerous facts because it involves my relationship with God. I get a different perspective. Loving God means being willing to do difficult things and obeying. There is no better and happier place to be than obeying God. So I have a tug of war between saying 'No way, I'm not going to such a dangerous place where anything can happen', and on the other hand saying 'God I have to obey you to be close to you and find the happiness of being in your will.' In some ways it's a selfish thing for me. I am going because I won't be happy until I do what God wants of me. While it may be dangerous there, we also know that in many ways it would be far more dangerous to stay here, because we would then be out of the will of God.

"When I was three years old I suffered a serious head injury. God healed me miraculously from that, and ever since I have felt that my life was not my own, that I was living on borrowed time. I know my life is God's and that he has me in his hands, so while physical dangers are still worrying they don't have quite the fear for me that they might."

For Ken there is a different outlook, "The great commission says to make disciples of all nations and we're simply trying to obey that command. I look at history and see the gospel spread out from Jerusalem across the Mediterranean and beyond until reaching the shores of Britain. Those who shared the gospel at that time often faced hostile receptions, most suffering hardship and many paying the ultimate price of martyrdom. As a British person who has benefited by having the gospel preached boldly by such people I feel I have to do my bit so that others can hear and can benefit in the same way I have. There are few more fulfilling things than seeing the someone who doesn't know Christ come to him and nothing is as beneficial for their lives as knowing Jesus as their redeemer.

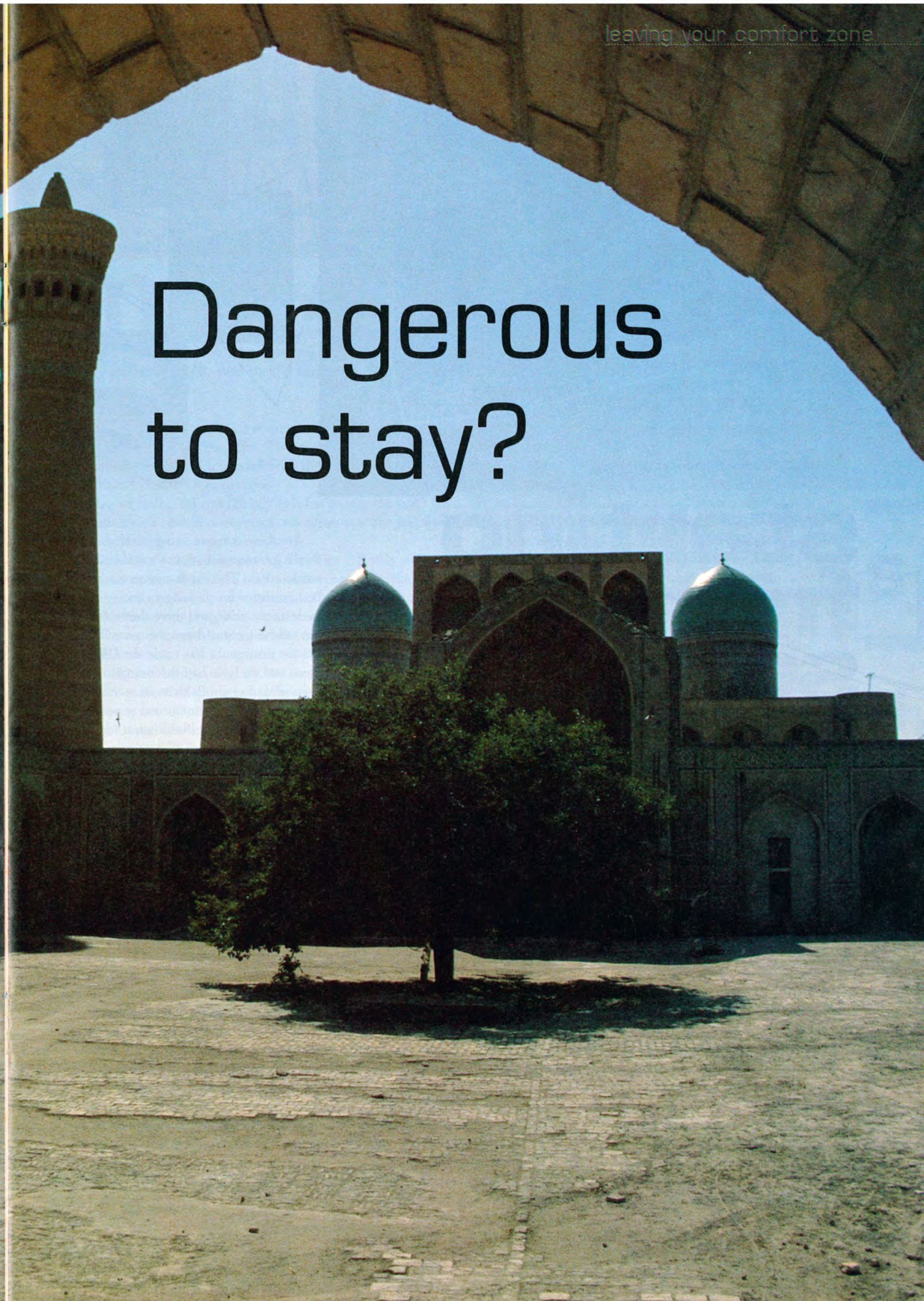
"Sadly, the most unreached people in the world generally also live in the most dangerous and inhospitable places for a Westerner, so any kind of call to the unreached will usually mean going to a country where life will be at best uncomfortable, and at worst life-threatening. Having said that, it is a frequent wrestle in our minds between wanting to enjoy the relative ease and peace of life in Britain and wanting to go to a country where our personal security, health, relationships and lifestyles will all be at risk.

"The Bible gives a strange comfort: 'Rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ'; 'Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.' These give no promise of an easy outcome, nor of God's physical protection, but do help us see that suffering, especially for the gospel has an upside, both for us and for God's glory.

"If we as a couple are willing to give over everything, including each other, our children, our careers, our bacon rolls and trips to the cinema and ultimately our lives, then we will discover the true happiness of being a close disciple of Jesus. God will be glorified and we will see the kingdom come to earth. This godly perspective is what I have to work hard at maintaining; without it I would give it all up and stay home." ●



Dangerous to stay?





Angela and Paul Foster set off for the hazards of Nepal



starting from scratch

“hello, is that BMS? I've only been a Christian for nine months, but we believe God is calling us to work overseas.....”

Our minds were full of questions; what about Paul's medical career and the consultant post just around the corner? What about the children's education? Their physical safety? What would life be like after leaving family, friends and our church for an unfamiliar land? What were the safety issues and dangers of living in Nepal? And frankly were we up to it?

Moving to Nepal didn't just disturb the balance of our world, but also that of our friends and family. Some relationships grew stronger whilst others were strengthened only after time. Some experienced significant conflict. This was also a time of pain; again and again we fell onto the assurance of God's repeated call -

without which we could not have continued.

Our first year in Nepal has been a very special and exciting time after all the preparation. But it has meant starting everything from scratch. We seemed to have swapped all that was safe and familiar for the unknown and uncertain. When you're missing the closeness of good friends, who do you go and see, what do you say to them? Despite its welcome, church is sometimes a struggle - sitting on the floor for an hour, listening to a sermon you don't understand, or "which song are we singing now, he didn't tell us which number?" We feel like clumsy children as we try to chat to people after the service.

Pokhara itself can be smelly, dusty, polluted, full of rubbish dumps, hot and humid. Our house has concrete floors with rush mats offering some cover. It has no wallpaper, the walls are all cream and the woodwork brown (sadly no 'hint of peach').

Are there dangers living here? Paul's job requires a lot of travel by road and air. The roads can certainly be hazardous for passengers and pedestrians alike, and three domestic aircraft have come down this year. The Maoist insurgency has made the UK news and we have had three small bombs explode in Pokhara in recent months. These are not aimed at people but generally empty buildings at night, quite different to the UK's experience in recent times.

But... for us there seem to be fewer issues than back in the UK. We find we live more healthily, take more exercise, and only suffer a rare stomach upset. Pokhara is also beautiful, colourful, has phenomenal views and is populated by such warm people. As for Paul's career, he has found a breadth that wasn't open to him before. The children attend a wonderful Christian school with friends who share their experiences.

Mostly we don't feel that we've left "our comfort zone" - more that we have just exchanged it for another zone with its own benefits and problems. God called us and we responded - surely we need to be within a "zone of obedience to God" whatever that means for each of us, because that is where true comfort or peace will be found. ●

Paul and Angela Foster went to Nepal with BMS in August 1998.



Kathmandu..timbuctoo..geneva..?

A search to know God's will.

michael Owen was just four years old. Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister. AIDS was almost unknown, and it was OK to eat British beef. It was January 1984 when we came to Nepal with BMS. And by the time you read this, we'll have left.

Having spent 90 per cent of our working lives in Nepal, we now plan to move to the West. The most likely destination at the moment is Geneva, to work with the Stop TB Initiative in the World Health Organisation.

Are we doing the right thing? Is it fair to take the risk? It's a question we've asked ourselves many times over the last few months.

But where's the risk in moving to Geneva? Surely we'll face far fewer threats there than in Nepal. Earthquakes, Maoist insurgencies, polluted water, landslides, plane crashes and erratic driving are probably less common in Switzerland! Surely we'll be moving out of an unfriendly environment back into our comfort zone.

No. Quite the opposite. It's the comfort zone we're leaving - after 16 years of adapting to a different culture and developing familiarity and friendships, we're moving into unknown areas where several challenges and risks face us.

The risk of disobedience. We believe we have heard God's call to move on, but we also wonder whether our spiritual ears are deceiving us. Is this truly His will?

The risk of failure. Will we cope with bigger responsibilities? Promoting effective TB diagnosis and treatment services for a population of 20 million is very different to working for global TB control.

The risk of hurt. The people I work with here are a highly supportive bunch of folks - we get on well together, enjoy each other's company, and work well as a team. The same can't be said for Geneva. The headquarters of many UN agencies are infamous for high levels of politically motivated, selfish and manipulative behaviour. It's a working environment we simply aren't used to.

But perhaps the greatest challenge is the risk of complacency. Affluence, physical comfort, and the material trappings of a western lifestyle can coax us into dullness of mind, stunting our spirituality (but expanding our waistlines!).

The risks are very real, but so are God's promises! ●

Ian and his wife Sally worked with BMS in Nepal from 1984 to 1997. Staying in Kathmandu they then moved on to work for the World Health Organisation.



Don't try this at home!

The popular TV programme "Don't Try This at Home" seems to have captured the imagination of millions of viewers. I think it might prove to be far more entertaining if they turned the tables on these dear 'sponsors' and got them to perform the life-threatening tasks themselves! I must confess, bungee jumping on a bicycle or climbing to the end of a crane 170 feet above the streets of London, are not the kinds of things that I would relish attempting!

Of course, all of the above stunts are carefully monitored and controlled by the experts, so the chances of anything going seriously wrong are minimal. The whole point of the exercise is that people are going to greater and greater lengths to prove their human endurance in the face of death-defying odds.

Translate all the above into church life and there are some interesting parallels. It seems that in the biblical accounts of God's dealing with people, he demanded that they break out into unknown territory before he could demonstrate his power in their lives. It was in the excitement and challenge of moving out beyond their comfort zones, that the people of God discovered the reality of their faith. In these days when science and technology have attempted to usurp the throne of God, we have been seduced by the rules that govern our five senses and have forgotten that there is a spiritual dimension that is unpredictably and gloriously as real! But to lock into it often means that we must consciously place ourselves at the disposal of a God who rarely gives us the whole picture at once.

This is certainly a characteristic of much of our missionary work which by its very nature demands a pioneering spirit. It is probably the best argument for ordinary people like you and me to get out there and experience life in another culture where we don't have our props to lean on.

The world is looking for adventure, thrill and challenge. What better place to find these things than in a life dedicated to following Jesus?

That gives the concept of "Don't Try This at Home" a whole new relevance for our missionary enterprise! ●

Steve Flashman is a Baptist minister and International Director of Soapbox Expeditions



steve



At your age?!



Stanley and Nancy Hornsby head for Budapest (and they're both in their 60s!)



most of our friends said, "Isn't it exciting?" Stanley had volunteered to teach English in Budapest for a year at the Baptist Theological Academy. My own feeling was, "No; I'm not a bit excited." Let's admit it: sometimes excitement is best at second-hand. I got a lot of pleasure from my sister's holiday in India; but was relieved it was she who got diarrhoea, and it was me safe at home.

Safe? But often when there is no danger or distress we don't even recognise our need of security. Only when the rug is pulled out from under our feet do we cry out, "Lord, save me! I'm perishing!"

So this is what being in Budapest means for us. All the minor crises and the strangeness of this strange language keep sending us back to the Lord. Where else can you go when the electricity goes off, and you have no words to make sentences with, even if you knew where to telephone (if you have a telephone)?

A few friends thought we were rather foolish. I agreed. Especially at our age. But didn't Paul point out that God had chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise? Shouldn't we occasionally - frequently! - do some foolish things?

A week before leaving we had no accommodation and still no details of the Academy dates. But we have a wonderful

"A few friends thought we were rather foolish. I agreed. Especially **at our age**. Shouldn't we occasionally - frequently - do some **foolish things?**"

Hungarian family for friends. They advertised: "Two elderly English teachers need a large flat..." when we arrived, the flat was there, furnished with things from their own homes. What a joy it was to experience their loving care of us! We hoped people from Swanage would come to share our experiences, like the free English lessons/Bible studies. And three intrepid elderly ladies have been our first visitors.

Another friend said, "I hope you'll feel fulfilled..." I'm not sure about that. Jesus just spoke about his father's will, never mentioning self-fulfilment. We just pray the Lord will keep us going.

Maybe, later, looking back from the safety of our home, we'll be able to say, "Well, some of it was exciting - occasionally. And perhaps some of us are the richer for this foolish year." ●

Nancy and Stanley went to Budapest as BMS Volunteers in September 1999. Stanley is teaching English at the Baptist Theological Academy for one year.



The greatest risk of all

by **Chris Mattock**

Going?

at last we were on our way, spurred on by faith in Jesus Christ, an ordination and two valediction services. Setting out to drive to Italy, ordained, commissioned, valedicted, sent out to serve God, sent out into the world to do the will of God.

Of course it felt risky, scary even. So many new things to learn and understand, and with a five-month-old baby in tow. Another language to learn. A different culture to understand. New people to get to know. Would we be overwhelmed by it all? Would we cope? Yet we were sure it was the will of God to go.

Excitedly we went, safe in the knowledge that although we may even risk our lives, God would be with us and guide us by his Holy Spirit. The risks were therefore diminished and became adventures in depending on the grace of God. Even the risk of failure melted away. We were still sometimes confused and angry, lonely, uncomprehending, depressed, scared witless, and on some occasions, in serious danger, but we knew we were doing the will of God. We were reassured that we had been commissioned to be the right people in the right place at the right time. This meant we never took the greatest risk of all, which for anyone, is to go against the will of God. In 'going', in 'being sent', we never took the risk of accepting the call of God but of attempting to serve him in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Returning?

The idea that one may have been 'sent' to the wrong location against the will of God is rarely considered but approaching the subject of returning is different. If being 'sent' is seen as a



"Being called and being sent has only one direction. There is no 'decommissioning' in Matthew 28:19."



confirmation of the call to missionary service, doesn't returning imply a denial of God's call? This is the most serious risk, before which the "trouble, or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword" Paul writes of in Romans 8:35 are insignificant. The human risks of failing those who commissioned us, of failing those whom we seek to serve, of being unable to cope in the face of difficulty is nothing compared to the risk of going against the will of God.

Faced with such an overwhelming risk and yet sensing that returning was the will of God, what else could we do but seek the assistance of Jesus Christ and make ourselves available to be called to serve in the UK. Beginning the process of returning, required a great leap of faith. It is much easier to 'go' than it is to return. The stakes were higher and the risk greater. The process of being called and being sent has only one direction. There is no 'decommissioning' in Matthew 28:19.

We thank God that the events and timing surrounding our return have fitted together in a way which has rewarded our leap of faith. Most importantly our calling to the pastoral ministry enabling individual Christians and churches to grow, in whatever location we are placed, has been confirmed. Instead being left feeling uneasy and guilty, wondering if we have returned from 'the mission field' too early, our move has been from one missionary situation to another. Our valediction promises have remained true and our return has continued in the direction of our first calling. As we prepare to take up a pastorate in the UK, we thank God for his faithfulness. ●

Chris Mattock and his wife Sarah worked with BMS in Italy and Sicily from 1994 to 1999.



A SERIES EDITED BY **JAN KENDALL** THAT LOOKS AT TOWNS AND CITIES AROUND THE WORLD WHERE BMS PERSONNEL ARE WORKING
BY REUBEN & KATIE MARTIN

Background

Zagreb is the capital of the Republic of Croatia. It lies in the northern part of the country not far from the Slovenian and Hungarian borders. It has a continental climate, ranging from 32 degrees in mid-summer to -9 degrees in mid winter. It lies between the foothills of the mountain of Medvenica, and the floodplain of the river Sava, some two miles to the south.

Zagreb developed from two adjacent, 900-year-old fortified hill towns, Gradec, under the Hungarian throne and Kaptol, under the Roman Catholic Church. From the 13th to the late 16th centuries the two towns, only some 600 metres apart, fought to protect their political and economic interests. However, they united in the early 17th century under the threat of the Turkish

advance which came within a few miles of the city. Zagreb became the capital of Croatia, but remained under the jurisdiction of the Hungarian province of the Austro-Hungarian empire until the fall of the empire in 1918. Then Croatia united with other south-Slavic states in a bid for greater autonomy to become the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. In 1941 the Germans invaded Zagreb and put in power the fascist, Ustashe leader, Pavlic. He was based in Zagreb, yet many townsfolk supported the antifascist communist Tito. Although Tito, the post-war leader of the new Yugoslavia, was born not far north of the city, Zagreb took second place to Belgrade (Serbia) in the Federal Republic.

Nevertheless, Zagreb continued to grow with numerous residential blocks spreading south over the

river into an area now called New Zagreb. Since Croatian independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, Zagreb has been the capital of the new Republic.

First Impressions

Despite being the capital, Zagreb feels more like a large town than a city. The old town on the hill above the central square, with its weather-worn terracotta-tiled roofs and quiet streets is now home to the parliament and government buildings. Below, by the central square, is the colourful and bustling Dolac market selling meat and fish, brightly coloured flowers and the home-grown produce of country folk along with imported fruit and vegetables. The main shopping and administrative centre is contained between the old city and the station, a quarter of a mile to the south. Here, the grid-

like network of roads divides well manicured parks and large, four or five storey, ochre-rendered Hungarian-style buildings containing flats, businesses and university faculties. The shops are small and modern, but despite their inviting window designs, business could be busier. Looking good is very important to Zagreb people. In the summer months especially, Zagreb streets are alive with fashionably dressed young people with mobile phones sitting out in cafes chatting to friends.

People

Zagreb has a population of 872,355 (approximately a fifth of Croatia's population), of which about 20,500 are displaced persons and refugees, especially from Bosnia, as a result of the war following the breakup of the former Yugoslavia in the early to mid 90s. While over 90 per cent of Zagreb people are ethnically Croat, all of Croatia's ethnic minority groups are represented in small numbers in Zagreb including Serbs, Muslims, Albanians, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovenians, Montenegrins and Macedonians. The war changed the ethnic mix as people, especially Serbs, left Croatia in the war and other refugees came in, but until the next census in 2001 the exact picture remains unclear.



Economy

Apart from public sector jobs (police, government, and service industries), the main industries involve the manufacture of food, drinks, and chemicals. Pliva, the pharmaceutical company that developed the anti-biotic, Erythromycin, is based in Zagreb. Croatia is trying to cope with the transition from a communist economy as well as recovering from the expense of war and economically life in Zagreb is tough at the moment. A complex chain of debt, including the government, means that businesses are not paid for their services on time and consequently, employers often cannot pay their employees on time.

Taxes are high and over the last

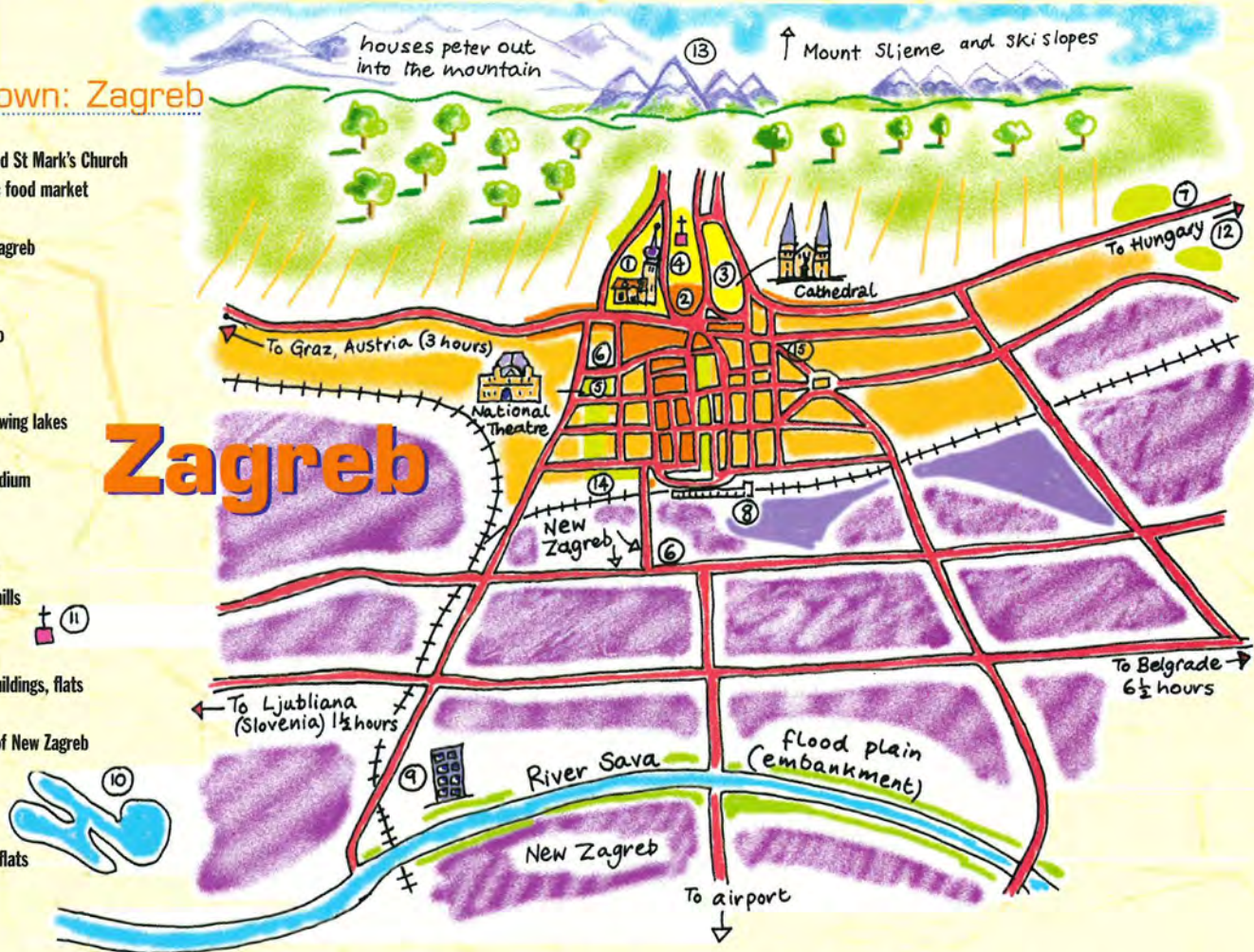


our town: Zagreb

KEY

- 1 Parliament buildings and St Mark's Church
- 2 Central Square & Dolac food market
- 3 Cathedral
- 4 1st Baptist Church of Zagreb
- 5 National theatre
- 6 University faculties
- 7 Maksimira park and zoo
- 8 Main train station
- 9 Our flat
- 10 Jarun recreational & rowing lakes
- 11 2nd Baptist Church
- 12 Croatia, Zagreb F C stadium
- 13 Medvenica mountain
- 14 Botanical gardens
- 15 Zagreb stock exchange

- The old town on the foothills
- Main shopping area
- City parks
- Austro-Hungarian style buildings, flats and businesses
- Modern high rise blocks of New Zagreb
- Industrial area
- deciduous forest
- Wealthier suburbs, modern houses and low rise flats



ten years the cost of living has increased, while peoples' salaries have remained the same. A recent survey showed the cost of living to be the same as Birmingham, but the average net salary is only £270 per month. People, therefore, often have two jobs or a side interest to help subsidise their main job. When people get married, they often have little choice but to live with their in-laws. Unemployment and under-employment are high. It is especially difficult for non-Croats to get a job.

Employment and Social System

Zagreb has good health and education services. The social system is overstretched at the moment. Unemployed people get free basic health care and cheaper transport passes and there are some other basic benefits depending on their circumstances. If a person loses their job having been employed for 12 months, they can claim a small amount of unemployment benefit

(maximum amount of £60 per month) for six months only. Other help includes a winter fuel allowance and a potato and cabbage allowance.

Leisure

Saturday morning is the time to meet friends for a coffee in town. Family is important and many people visit relatives for Sunday lunch. As well as a number of cinemas and theatres, Zagreb has lots of sports facilities – olympic-sized swimming pools, an ice rink, tennis courts, fitness studios and a large rowing lake called Jarun. The major sports are football, basketball and handball. The thick, deciduous forest on Medvenica mountain behind Zagreb has some beautiful walks as well as a few short ski runs in the winter. On the other side of the mountain, a half-hour drive away, are thermal spas.

Religion

Croatia is a Catholic country and so there are many Catholic churches in Zagreb as well as a

Serbian Orthodox and Greek Orthodox. There are also a number of Protestant churches including two Baptist churches, (the central one with 250 members and a church plant of 50 members), four or five Pentecostal/Evangelical churches, Brethren, Lutheran and Seventh Day Adventists. There is also a Muslim community and a small remnant of a Jewish community. Up to 90 per cent of people in Zagreb claim to be Catholic, but only about 25 per cent of these people would regularly attend Mass. Since the fall of communism in the early 90s, all churches have seen a renewed interest in religion. This can be put down to two reasons. Firstly, people who grew up in an atheistic environment have a new freedom to explore their religious roots and many people have become Christians and been baptised. A renewed general spiritual interest has also encouraged the growth of new age ideology and major sects (there are more Jehovah's Witnesses than Protestant

Below: Zeljko & Sijetlana Mraz

Zagreb Baptist Church in Radicéva street showing people mingling after a service



groups). Secondly, religion has become trendy, an expression of national identity and a way to climb up the social and political ladder. Catholicism distinguishes Croats from Orthodox Serbs. Therefore, to be a good Croatian is to be a good Catholic and so religious education in schools is now compulsory. Many national leaders who wouldn't have been seen near a church under Communism are now going to church since it helps promote social and political mobility. In some respects, the Church has replaced Communist party membership.



Baptists

Baptists have existed in Croatia for over 100 years. Under Communism (from World War Two to 1989), Baptist witness was constrained by strict control on religious freedom. However, over the last ten years the churches have begun to grow at a faster rate, in part due to the new-found freedom and in part due to goodwill generated by the churches' response to need caused by the war. Over this period the church has grown from 1,000 to 2,000 members, from 21 to 41 churches and in the last year alone, 12 preaching points (potential new churches) were

opened. As well as the developing work in Croatia, the Croatian Baptist Union feels a special burden to support Baptist work in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Profile: Zeljko & Sijetlana Mraz

Zeljko Mraz became General Secretary of the Croatian Baptist Union while still a theological student at the seminary in Osijek in 1995. Prior to this, while working in insurance, he co-founded the first Baptist local mission organisation that went on to supply some of the first



humanitarian aid in the war and between 1993 and 1995 was a youth worker for the Union. He is now supported by BMS.

Zeljko's main role as General Secretary is to care for the growing number of Croatian Baptist ministers in this growing Union and help provide good

conditions for their work. The Union now has nine full-time workers, seven of whom are pastors, one missionary couple who work in Sarajevo, Bosnia and five part-time workers. He also spends a good deal of time contacting and visiting the Baptist churches and mission stations in the country and their leaders, trying to build a sense of fellowship. Along with colleagues on the executive committee, he works to promote the work of Baptists in the country and also to link with Baptist groups outside the country.

Zeljko & Sijetlana have been married for ten years. Sijetlana was a pre-school teacher before going to theological seminary, but now co-ordinates the Baptist Union's youth and children's work. The focus of this work are the summer camps at the coast for children and teenagers. Over the last five years, 1,000 young people have gone to the camps, 40 per cent of whom were from a non-Baptist or non-church background. Through these camps many young people have made some significant steps in their journey with God. In a country where Baptists are not widely known, they are especially important for children from small churches to feel a sense of belonging to a broader Baptist community and to mix with others of their age. Sijetlana & Zeljko are also active in the central Zagreb Baptist church – Sijetlana leading the youth activities, and Zeljko is a deacon and Bible Study leader. ●

bms volunteers



PHOTOGRAPH: ALEX SMITH

In July 1999, 15 volunteers went to Albania to work with thousands of refugees flooding into the country as a result of the Balkans crisis. Four of those team members accompanied returning refugees into Kosovo for five weeks. This article is taken from an interview with team member Rod Bradley, from Taunton.

We were literally going into the unknown, accompanying a convoy of lorries taking food and other humanitarian relief into Kosovo to set up a new warehouse. The people who had made their way to Tirana, the capital of Albania, had mostly been registered and had their names on computer. Most of these came from the Kosovar city of Gjakova and so that city was chosen for this work.

For the first two or three weeks we set about checking addresses, mapping out the area and getting together a list of people so that we could deliver food to and follow them up from the Tirana work. Work in the warehouse could be laborious – for example hand-stamping addresses into 4,000 children's Bibles.

The country is predominantly Muslim, and most of the people who grew up under the Communism regime are nominal Muslims. But when we visited homes, we would ask people if they would like to come to our house on Sunday because we were going to set up a church. We also prayed with people and handed them gospel tracts. The first Sunday, 29 people plus some children arrived. By the following week there were 50 or more people and lots of restless children, so I suggested we begin a Sunday School. We began the next week with 21 children and did the story of Noah's Ark – I learnt lots of Albanian animal words! Soon the house became too small and we cleaned up a disused supermarket for the church, taking the children to the house instead. We began walking to the house with 30 children, and arrived with over

50! We did the story of Jonah followed by some craft activities. There were very few crayons and only two pairs of scissors between 50 children, but they were very patient and waited their turn.

Many of the people now in the church are those whose homes I had visited. One old man's home had been completely burnt out. We sat in his garage on an orange box, sharing a coffee. This man, in his early 60s, told me it would take ten to 12 years to rebuild his home, but he was determined to finish it before he died. I prayed with him then. That first Sunday I was so happy to see him come to the church, and I understand he still attends regularly. Another couple heard me speaking English and invited me to their home for dinner, giving me everything they had. Their son, Bart, spoke good English and I gave him a Bible. Later I was invited back for coffee and Bart said he had been reading it and asked me to tell him more about being a Christian and how it would be different from him becoming a Buddhist. My goodness... quick prayer! Then I spoke to him. I have now heard that although he is not yet a Christian, he is very close and his cousin became one of our church's earliest converts.

Since coming back to the UK I have heard that the church has continued to grow and has moved to a local school. An Albanian is helping to run the work, and the church has two services each week to fit everyone – 390 adults and 320 children – in! ●



Rod Bradley is a deacon of Taunton Baptist Church



bms action teams

Volunteers in Prague:
Rob Vaines, Marc
Yandle, Jo Oldfield,
Kurt Yandle

below: Mel and Jo
painting the chapel



mission for God

Jo Oldfield speaks of how she learned to trust God through her time on a BMS summer team

the moment I knew I would be spending my summer abroad, I realised that God had a plan for my life that he would never completely show me; all I knew was that my job was to get stuck in! As I was looking into the possibility of going on a mission, I wanted to make sure it was the right thing for me to be doing. I spent a lot of time praying and making enquiries, and then, unexpectedly, I was made an offer of some money to go on a mission to the Czech Republic. As I found out more about it, everything just seemed to fit into place perfectly, and before I knew it, I was on the plane to Prague.

In July of 1999, a team of four of us flew out to the Czech Republic for a four-week long practical mission, at the International Baptist Theological Seminary, just outside the centre of Prague. Our work was very much based

around maintaining the Seminary's grounds and buildings, and undertaking new projects to create more facilities on the campus. Whilst we were there, the Seminary also had its jubilee celebrations and so we became very much involved in the preparations for that too.

My first project was painting the chapel. At first I was a little daunted by the task as you can imagine! I had never before been placed in the situation of having to organise a task such as this, without being directed in some way by another person. I didn't know quite what to expect from myself, but I was able to develop a certain confidence from the experience that I didn't know I had, and I realised that I could take responsibility for my work and the work of others. I spent much of the next three weeks painting, and I found that I could spend most of this time being close to God, and doing a lot of thinking for myself.

During our time in Prague we worked with several groups of

volunteers from America and all over the world, and developed new friendships that have remained strong since our return. I think the most incredible part of my mission abroad was meeting with people, all with completely different backgrounds, but all wanting to worship the same God. To hear how God had touched each of their lives. To listen to the terrible situations that they had been faced with, and delivered from!

I am now no longer scared of what God has planned for my life. I used to be terrified to give everything to him and to have to trust him with my life. I thought I would lose my independence if I did that. However I realised that I can still be independent from others, which is very much my character, but I never want to be independent from God. I know that with God's help there are no limitations and that I can do anything that he leads me to do. ●

Jo Oldfield is a member of Mutley Baptist Church, Plymouth

How comfortable is your comfort zone?

Least comfortable countries in which to be a Christian

		Points awarded*	Number of Christians in country
1	Saudi Arabia	81.5	600,000
2	Afghanistan	72.5	2,500
3	Sudan	70.0	4,800,000
4	China	69.0	60,000,000
5	Yemen	66.5	5,000
6	Morocco	64.0	25,000
7	Iran	63.0	200,000
8	Libya	62.5	140,000
9	Tunisia	62.0	10,000
10	Egypt	60.0	8,000,000

*The points are awarded according to ratings given to questions compiled by Open Doors. They have developed a scale which takes into account factors such as legal restrictions on meeting for worship and on church buildings; opposition in the media; personal restrictions of movement etc. Countries with a score of 9.5 or less generally have freedom of religion. There are 88 countries with a score of ten or more.

KEY

- Not known or not available
- Under 10
- 10 - 29
- 30 - 49
- 50 and over

On 23 January 1999 an historic meeting took place between the main Church leaders in the Middle East. There was just one item on the agenda (one problem that was confronting them all): the countries of the Middle East are rapidly losing their Christian communities. For example:

In Lebanon conservative estimates show at least 650,000 Christians have left since 1975.

In Jerusalem there were 31,000 Christians in 1948; only 10,000 by 1967, and only a few thousand today.

The Gulf War and Kurdish expansion to the South provoked a mass exodus of Christians in Iraq.

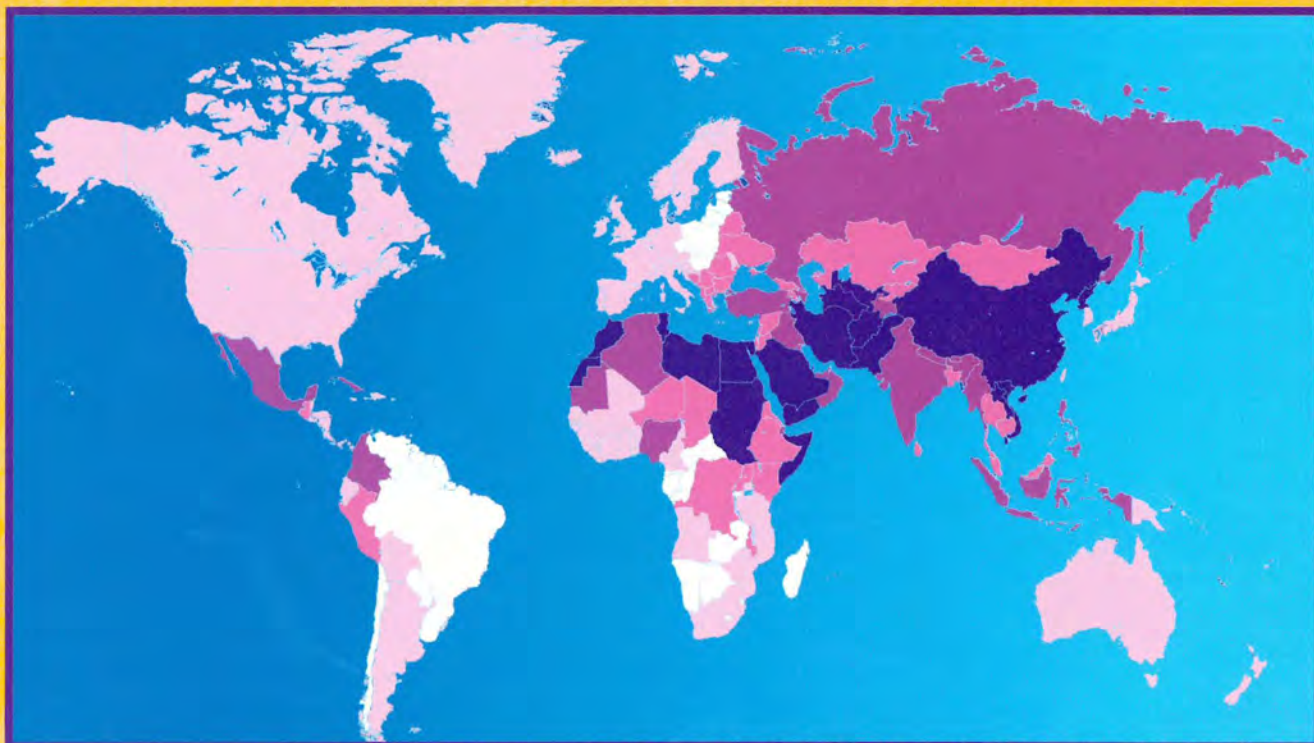
No figures exist as such for Egypt but every year between 15,000 and 40,000 Christians convert to Islam because of social and political pressure. (*Open Doors*)

"A martyr is a believer in Christ who loses his or her life prematurely in a situation of witness as a result of human hostility."

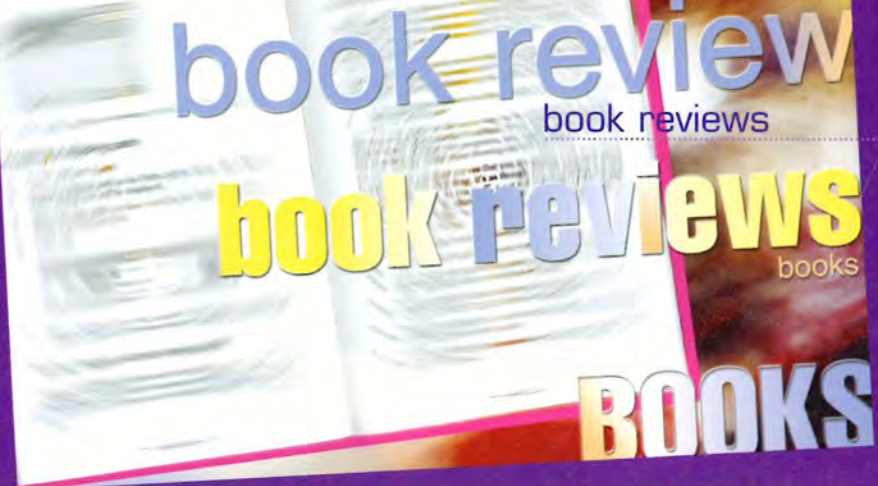
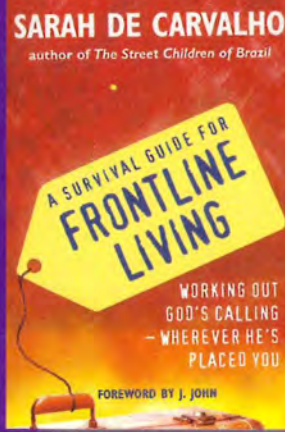
Definition by David B Barrett, world church historian/missiologist.

Barrett suggests that for the 1990s the average rate of martyrdom is about 159,000 Christians per year.

Least comfortable countries to be a Christian



Idea based on map from Atlas of Christianity, by Peter Brierley and Heather Wraight, Christian Research and OM Publishing



Book Title: **A Survival Guide for Frontline Living**
Author: **Sarah de Carvalho**
Publisher: **Hodder & Stoughton**
(ISBN 0 340 74545 2)
Reviewer: **Jan Kendall, Editor mh**
No of pages: **307**
Price: **£5.99**

So, another 'practical guide to doing God's will' to join the rest on the bookshelf, that either weren't very practical, or their authors lived in a very different world to the one I lived and moved in?

No, not this time. This book really was good!

The author, Sarah de Carvalho, is following on from her first book, *The Street Children of Brazil*, a testimony of how God called her out of her comfortable lifestyle as a successful TV and film producer to go to Brazil to work with street children. De Carvalho uses her experiences to bring into being this book: described by J John in the Introduction as 'teaching for the children of God'.

It's an easy read, but not a comfortable one. I found myself challenged time and time again by the author's unpacking of issues all Christians face wherever they are situated: issues such as fulfilling our calling; hearing God speak; faith and financial challenges; supporting those in ministry; undoing Satan's work; learning to live in a different culture; feeling lonely, tired and disheartened; enjoying yourself; struggling with leaders and colleagues; and how God uses the desert places in our lives.

Each chapter has lots of sub-headings, so you can read it through in one sitting or pick it up and put it down lots of times. There's also a summary of key points at the end of each chapter to reinforce what's already been said, and right at the end of the book, there's space for the reader to apply the teaching in the book to his or her own life. So there's no escaping it's not just a read - it's a life application. In fact there are bits I want to go back and read over again, and reflect on. The first read wasn't enough!

Although not hinted at in the publicity, I think also with a bit of adaptation, this book could be used as a basis for housegroup study.

All in all, worth every penny, and I'd agree with J John, 'If you don't want to be challenged, then close this book.'

Book Title: **Good News about Injustice: A witness of courage in a hurting world**
Author: **Gary Haugen**
Publisher: **IVP** (ISBN 0-85111-598-5)
Reviewer: **Simon Jones, BMS Co-ordinator for London and the South East**
No of pages: **200**
Price: **£7.99**

Eight year old Shama works a 13 hour shift making cigarettes in an ill-lit factory for 35p a day. She was forced into this job - and hence to forfeit any chance of school - because a medical emergency forced her family to borrow £15 from a local money lender. The price for the loan was Shama's incarceration as a bonded labourer. Her family will never be able to pay off the debt.

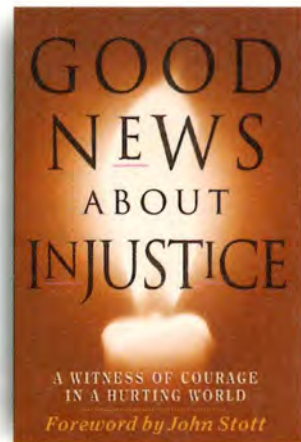
This and other injustices are the core of this powerful, disturbing, life-changing book. Haugen, an American lawyer, has confronted the evil men do on every continent. With the United Nations he unearthed the remains of the victims of the Rwanda genocide and sought to compile evidence against the perpetrators. As a member of the International Justice Mission he has helped women escape sex slavery in Asia and bonded labour in the Philippines.

And now he has written a book that challenges Christians to take seriously God's command that we act for justice and against oppression in his world.

The book is full of heart-breaking stories, movingly and compellingly told. I found myself pausing as I read to fight back the tears and contain the anger I felt at what men - and it almost invariably is men - do in the exercise of power and for the creation and hoarding of wealth.

But it is also a book full of practical things that Christians can do to fight injustice, and free its captives from lives of darkness. Haugen brilliantly expounds what scripture has to say about justice - not just that God thinks justice is a good thing but that his people should have the fight for justice at the top of their priorities. In very practical ways Haugen shows how we can turn our reading of scripture into a lifestyle that defends the weak and frees the oppressed. The final chapter is worth the price of book on its own.

If Christians were to read this book and take its message to heart, the millions like Shama could look forward to a better future.



PROJECTS UPDATE



Streets Ahead paving the way for a new generation

Baptist churches and other groups up and down the UK celebrated Harvest last year serving frango azetona (chicken and olives Brazilian-style) at their harvest suppers, Brazilian evenings and special fundraising projects – all for Streets Ahead, the harvest appeal from BMS and Operation Agri.

Using ideas from the Harvest project book people of all ages joined in making favelas, or shanty towns in their churches. They watched the award-winning Streets Ahead video, narrated by Steve Chalke. They prayed for street kids and the visionary work of Stuart and Georgie Christine, initiators of the Urban Impact project in São Paulo, Brazil. They gave from their pockets and their wallets.

So far £165,000 has come in as a result of this Harvest Appeal – a record-breaking amount.

If you have been meaning to send your Harvest Appeal money in to BMS, but haven't got round to it yet, it's not too late. Please make sure any donations are accompanied by a remittance slip and cheques are made payable to BMS/OA Harvest Appeal. Send to BMS/OA Harvest Appeal, PO Box 49, Didcot, Oxon, OX11 8XA.



The Christian Broadcasting Council highly commended BMS and CVG Television, for the Streets Ahead video production, in CBC's Annual Media Awards



Margaret Gibbs: Durres, Albania

Teaching was put on hold for Margaret when the Albanian Bible Institute (ABI) was closed down for several months at the height of the Balkans crisis. The building was made available to Kosovar refugee families flooding into the area and many staff and students were involved in providing meals for those living there and in nearby camps. Now the families have returned to what remains of their homes and life in Albania is back to what passes for normal. Margaret's responsibilities at ABI include co-ordinating and developing worship, encouraging the students to take a full part in worship, pastoral care for the female students and teaching English and some Bible courses. Her personal priority however is to improve her Albanian for the sake of work and relationships which are so important in Albania.



Please pray:
 P for discipline in learning the language
 P for the students at ABI,

especially the first years who have little academic background and are struggling for good relationships between the students and with Margaret and her colleagues

Mark and Andrea Hotchkin: Conakry, Republic of Guinea

Doctors Mark and Andrea are seconded by BMS to work with the Leprosy Mission. Leprosy as a disease, marks out its victims by disabilities, especially in their limbs, so that they are often rejected by society and so lose their livelihoods. There is hope however. Mark is pleased to see more people coming forward for operations and rehabilitation that can change lives.



In 1999, his operations for performing tendon transfers to



straighten clawed hands doubled, and so allowed patients to reintegrate into society and begin using their hands to make items for sale to earn a living. A film of the work has been made to be shown on TV and sent out on video to outlying areas to raise awareness of the treatment that is available.



Andrea works part-time at the District Hospital, a task made difficult as there are rarely any drugs in the pharmacy. Organising an operation is complicated by having to give the patients a prescription for not only the drugs, but swabs, syringes and gloves. Andrea does a great deal of work operating on women damaged by difficult births often undergone with no medical aid.

Please pray:

P that news of the treatments available would reach all people affected by leprosy and that they would seek out help

P for safety – although generally unreported in the West, there are many human rights abuses taking place in the dispute between Guinea and Liberia

Andy and Linda Eaves: Baturité, Brazil

For the past five years, Andy and Linda have been involved in community work in Brazil, first in São Paulo and now in



Baturité, a little south of Fortaleza in the North-east. Community outreach is a creative ministry and one idea the couple and their church have implemented is a table in the Saturday morning market called the Prayer Point. Leaflets on the Christian faith, as well as New Testaments, are available to any who want to know more, and the Eaves have found it an excellent way to meet people, explain why they are in Brazil, answer questions and to pray for people. One conversation with a group of teenage lads resulted in them agreeing to set up a meeting for 15 to 20-year-olds on Friday nights. Their first meeting saw eight young men attending and the Eaves are praying for numerical and spiritual growth in the group called 'Hora H' (The Crunch).

Please pray:

P for the many Bible studies Andy and Linda are running with neighbours and other thus far non-Christian contacts

P for continued health and safety for the whole family

P for the young people attending 'Hora H' and for others who might be thinking of going along

Gerry and Johann Myhill: Curitiba, Brazil

Gerry and Johann returned to Brazil from UK Home Assignment in November, to move into a new placement and a new home. Previously based in the southern coastal town of Antonina, the couple have moved further inland to



Curitiba, the capital of Paraná State, where Gerry has taken up the post of President/Director of the Paraná Baptist Convention's Social Action Department. Part of Gerry's role will be to plan for the Convention's centenary celebrations in 2003, marking 100 years of Baptist work in Paraná. The Social Action Department's aim is to initiate 100 new projects, making Gerry not only responsible for strengthening and developing existing projects, but also for encouraging churches not already involved to find practical ways of reaching out into their own communities. Despite their move, Gerry and Johann will also continue their work on the islands in the Bay of Paranaguá where there are many poor and needy communities. There are several Baptist churches there but they are fraught with problems because of the lack of educational facilities on the islands resulting, the Myhills say, in 'illiteracy and ignorance as well as inadequate leadership'.

Please pray

P for safety in travel, which will be a large part of Gerry's new role





P for wisdom, visionary ability and initiative in working on ideas for the centenary
P health and strength for both as they take on additional responsibilities

BMS personnel introduce some friends and acquaintances whom they meet from day to day

PEOPLE WORLDWIDE

Jairo Alves

Jairo is the pastor of the First Baptist Church in Jacupiranga, in the state of



São Paulo.

He felt called to the ministry at the age of 12, but when the time came for his national service, the call was forgotten. Jairo imagined his future lay in the Army but whilst in the Army he developed cancer. The first person he told about it was his pastor, BMS missionary John Dyer, who persuaded

him to remain calm – saying the Lord had a purpose in this.

John visited him often and even brought his parents, who lived 60 miles away, to the hospital. Jairo spent three months in hospital, and was given only two years to live. He told John “If I leave hospital walking, I will start preparing myself for Seminary training.”

Jairo did leave hospital, completed his schooling and then went on to Seminary. He said, “I know God calls and equips. Many times we don’t answer the call, or we don’t think it’s important. Then God uses his servants to help those who have not understood their call.”

Today Jairo has been in the ministry for nearly eight years.

John Dyer, Co-ordinator of theological education with BMS in Brazil

Shah Alam

As a child Shah Alam was badly mauled by a jackal. As a result he had a badly disfigured face, and was unable to go to school. He ended up as a beggar on an inland river ferry, wearing a handkerchief around his neck, to catch the dribbles.

In the mid 1980s, when he was eight, he was spotted by Stephen, a member of the British High Commission staff, when he made regular visits to the area. Stephen alerted Bob Hart, the BMS surgeon in Chandraghona at that time, and as a consequence Shah Alam underwent plastic surgery to reconstruct his face. For several months he lived in the Leprosy Hospital as he was so badly



scarred, and felt more comfortable there.

Bob Hart left Chandraghona in the late 1980s and his place was taken by Ron Hiles. Ron always made time to operate on Shah Alam when he made his yearly visits to the Dhaka hospitals.

Sue Headlam unexpectedly met Shah Alam again last year – in Bristol! He was in the UK for more surgery, and happened to be in the same hospital as her mother. A reunion was planned. Bob and Mary Hart, Ron and Jean Hiles, Sue and Shah Alam met up again over a Bangladeshi meal. While in Bristol Shah Alam had learnt good English, been a Rover Scout and had become computer literate.

He returned to Bangladesh last September to complete his education and look for work.

Sue Headlam, BMS community nurse in Chandraghona, Bangladesh



people wanted

People Wanted

Could this be you?

Albania

Ministers
Ministers or ministerial couples needed for general church work. Many new exciting opportunities for church planting; discipling new Christians; identifying and working with future church leaders. Work within cities, towns or rural settings. Each minister, after completing language and orientation, would be working on his/her own but would be part of an overall ministry team working within the country. Opportunities for both experienced and recently qualified ministers

South Central Asia

Ophthalmic Nurses
Needed to teach, supervise and work in co-operation with national staff in the hospital setting. Nurses with an ophthalmic speciality are required with either operating theatre or eye work experience.

Nepal

Confidential Secretary
to the Personnel Director. The job will include word processing, correspondence, filing and other personal assistant duties. Ability to work on own initiative essential. Secretarial qualifications, plus two years' experience as a Personal Assistant

South Central Asia

Ophthalmic Specialists
Needed to teach and demonstrate appropriate skills in speciality (basic eye care, optical, or optometry) and work in co-operation with national staff in an eye hospital/or community based eye project.

Thailand

Ministers
Ministerial couples urgently needed, one of whom would ultimately be involved in Theological Seminary education.

North Africa

Occupational Therapists
To train North African counterparts in day-to-day work with disabled children.

Want to know more? Please see page 35 for ways of contacting us



New personnel

Ewoud and Nicola Bos

Both doctors, Ewoud and Nicola are hoping to work in North Africa in community paediatrics. Currently Ewoud is a Senior Registrar in Community Paediatrics at the Oxford Radcliffe Hospital, and Nicola works part-time as a GP in her local health centre at Didcot, Oxon. They will leave for France in January 2000 to begin French language training, subject to their acceptance by ACT.



Mark and Ruth Warner

Mark is a pastor and Ruth, a British Sign Language tutor. Mark comes with a wealth of ministerial experience and Ruth has done a lot for the deaf community. They have been accepted by BMS and will be in ministerial service in France, beginning their language study in January 2000.



Mat and Hannah Wilson

Mat makes history as he is the first BMS Action Team member to join up as a long-term worker. He went on an Action Team to Jamaica in 1992/3, followed by a Sociology course at University, and then to Spurgeon's College where he is studying to become a Baptist minister.

Hannah is a hospital social worker from Histon Baptist Church. Both have been involved in a number of community projects.

Mat and Hannah have been accepted to work with BMS in Thailand, and will go there in January 2001 once Mat's course is completed.



Iain Gordon recovered

BMS worker Iain Gordon is now back in Kathmandu, where he continues his recuperation from a situation in which he was fighting for his life.

Septicaemia and severe pneumonia developed following a routine operation on his back. All around the world people prayed for Iain and he recovered miraculously. His lungs cleared; his walking got less shaky but his back problem remained. Iain then underwent a second spinal operation, which was successful.

Iain was discharged from hospital in Singapore within a week of the operation. His physician said to his wife Karen, "I have never in all my years practising medicine seen anyone recover as quickly from such a severe ICU illness as your husband has just done."

1979 he was elected Vice Chairman of BMS, and new General Secretary in 1982. Alistair Brown, current BMS General Director said, "He was a tireless and gifted worker for the cause of world mission. BMS today owes much to his 14 years as General Secretary/Director. His passion for making Jesus known throughout the earth was infectious, and he was a significant figure among Baptists round the world in developing co-operative missiological strategies for reaching the lost."

New Director IMC

Alan Pain becomes the first Director of IMC, having spent 22 years as a minister of Sutton Coldfield Baptist Church. He has travelled extensively overseas, especially to South Africa, and brings strong teaching and leadership gifts.

Reg Harvey (1934 - 99)

Reg Harvey, retired General Secretary/Director of BMS died suddenly on 2 November in Cyprus after a heart attack. He was on holiday at the time with his wife Maire.

Reg's service with BMS began when he was chosen to be a member of General Committee. At that time he was a pastor of a local church. He then went on to serve on Candidate Board, becoming its chairman. In



New Manager IMC

Sue Jackson will be the new Manager for Mission Training at IMC. She is well qualified, and has considerable communication gifts. She has been a missionary with BMS, along with husband David, working since 1986 in Brazil, and for the last two years in Sri Lanka. Much of her work has been teaching in the seminary and undertaking curriculum development.

Baptist House News



New Director of Finance and Administration

David Locke - formerly Senior Manager with Ernst & Young - becomes the new BMS Director of Finance and Administration.

David, a keen church member at King's Norton Baptist Church, has a strong sense of calling to his new work. He says at times he wondered, "Why has God given me finance, business and IT skills when my heart is with missionary and pastoral work?"

Nick Bradshaw

BMS Co-ordinator for South and Central Wales now has a new address and tel no:
10 Purcell Road
Penarth
South Glamorgan
Wales CF64 3QL
Tel 02920 703738



Check Out January/February 2000

January 2000

Arrivals

David and Ann MacFarlane from Barletta, Italy

Departures

Margaret Swires to Natal, Brazil

David and Ann MacFarlane to Barletta, Italy

Sheila Loader to Tansen, Nepal

Phillip and Vivienne Hatton to Brussels, Belgium

Ewoud and Nicola Bos to Massy, France

Mark and Ruth Warner to Massy, France

Rachel Moss to Pokhara, Nepal

Rebecca Pearce to Pokhara, Nepal

Julie Russell to Pokhara, Nepal

February 2000

Arrivals

John and Lidia Pullin from Campo Grande, Brazil

Caroline & Tim Trimble from Kathmandu, Nepal

Departures

David and Yvonne Wheeler to Tirana, Albania

Tim and Rosimar Deller to Goiânia, Brazil



Sue Jackson

Signs and Blunders



"We have Nepali lessons every day, and are making reasonable progress with the language. But there is the occasional blunder like telling a lady that 'compared to someone else's food, your's is not at all tasty!' or 'we have not been to your town and actually we never want to go either!'"

Simon and Kate Harry, teachers with BMS in Nepal

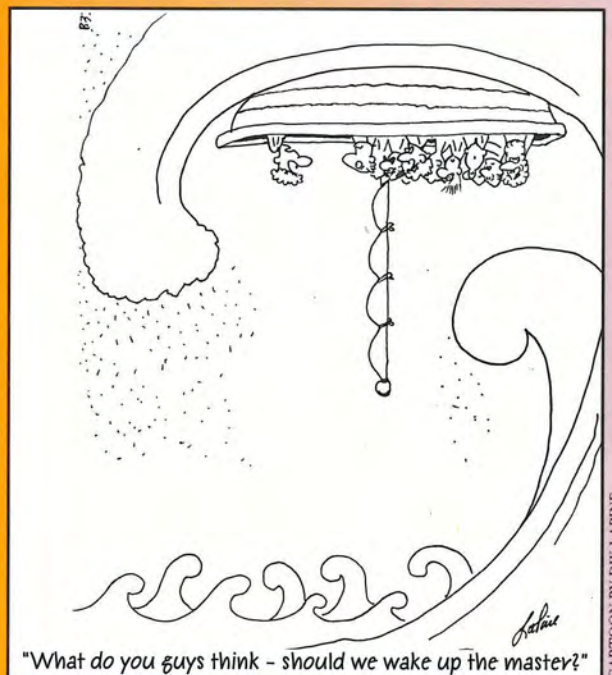
"In Bangladesh it is common before a meal to give thanks and a very common form of grace asks that in eating the meal they will receive strength (bol o shokti). I prayed that having eaten the food they might receive 'boro shasti' (great punishment!)"

John Passmore, BMS Regional Secretary for Asia and North Africa

The leech and the frog

"I anaesthetised a boy last month who'd had a nose bleed on and off for two weeks. When the ENT surgeon examined the boy he saw a leech coming out of the nose! His examining light sent it straight back up; it could only be enticed down with a wet swab. Try as he might he couldn't grab the leech and all three ended up coming to theatre. However after half an hour we had no joy in finding it. Needless to say, I'm being careful where I put my nose during this rainy season! This also seems to be the season for frogs. Us walking out of our house at night is a very hazardous experience for them; they're everywhere. Just last week in 'septic theatre' (so-called because dirty cases are done in there) the drain in the floor was blocked, so water lay about the place, and there to my amazement was a frog, sat quite happily under the operating table. I don't know what happened to him either!"

Paul Foster, an anaesthetist with BMS in Nepal



"What do you guys think - should we wake up the master?"

CARTOON BY DIK LAPINE

world

mission link



Streets Ahead...



Thirty five 12 to 17-year-olds from Perth Baptist Church opened their Monday Youth Fellowship doors to the rest of the church, and at the same time helped raise money for Streets Ahead.

Fired up by a mission worker who had been in Brazil some years ago, the young people originally sought to find out as much as they could about Brazil. In groups they researched the geography, social problems, and culture of Brazil. One group used the Worldwide Web.

They then saw the BMS video Streets Ahead and decided they really wanted to raise some money to help in situations such as the one they had seen on video.

Opening up their Youth Fellowship to the whole church seemed the perfect way to get everyone on board. Using the menu for rice and black bean sauce in the Streets Ahead project, they sold this simple meal at a highly inflated price. Goods in the tuck shop went for double their normal cost. There were also competitions to beat the goalkeeper, and score at table tennis against Callum, their ace player.

Alan Leese, the full-time youth and community worker with Perth Baptist Church said, "We're aiming to get kids to be activists, and also we're giving them an awareness of BMS work in Brazil."

Streets Ahead

Streets Ahead



Six-year-old Alexandra Roy gave up television, computer and playstation for one week, and in so doing raised £170.50 for Streets Ahead.

Alexandra, from Herne Bay Baptist Church, on her own initiative, wrote to her minister Revd Tom McKinlay, saying she would like to help the children of Brazil. She had been inspired by the Streets Ahead poster display at her church.

The church sponsored her for giving up her favourite pastimes.



Children from Nyasaklo School

Hillingdon Park Baptist Church

When BMS Co-ordinator Simon Jones visited Hillingdon Park Baptist Church one Sunday morning last year, little did he realise how one chance remark would escalate and grow into a fundraising project.

Simon, speaking about his recent visit to Thailand mentioned in passing the need for electricity at Nyasaklo School in the north of Thailand.

About 30 people independently felt they needed to give some money to help in this situation.

Their spokesperson, Ruth Martin, said "The church felt very much that God had spoken to us through Simon Jones about this school. For us it was a relatively small amount of money to raise, but we knew it would make such a difference to the life of this school."

When Simon went back to the church in the evening, they had already written out a cheque for £1,000 for him to give to BMS. The church decided to give the money upfront, and to continue raising it throughout the year.

The minister, Revd Reg Craig said, "We're quite a missionary-conscious church anyway, but this took me back in the way people responded."

Leaving your comfort zone

Now it's your opportunity to find out more, to give, to pray and to go...

INFORMATION AND PRAYER RESOURCES

- I would like to find out more about BMS work in:
 - Angola
 - Albania
 - Nepal
 - Hungary

 - I would like to start receiving news/prayer letters from:
 - Simon & Karen Collins
 - Mary Parsons
 - Paul & Angela Foster
 - Stanley & Nancy Hornsby
 - Reuben & Katie Martin
- so that I can pray for their part in making Jesus known worldwide.

GOING

- I would like to find out more about:
 - the vacancies advertised on page 31, especially(please state)
 - other long-term vacancies
 - being a BMS Volunteer
 - overseas Action Teams (Year Teams)
 - UK Year Action Teams
 - summer Teams

Giving to BMS

- I would like to give financially to BMS. Please send me:
 - Ways of Giving leaflet which tells me about all the different ways I can give
 - how I can join the BMS Birthday Scheme
 - details of the BMS Relief Fund

Anything else, not mentioned above (please specify)

Name

Address

..... Post Code

Please cut out whole page or photocopy and send to: Rob Vaines, BMS, PO Box 49, Didcot, Oxon, OX11 8XA
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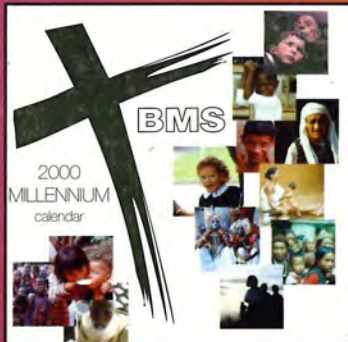
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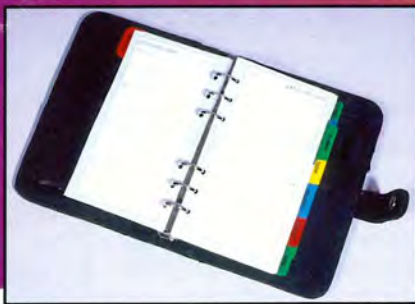
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