



## GREENCOAT PLACE EVENT

*A day's gathering entitled 'People making a Difference' drew over 100 people to 24 Greencoat Place on May 15. Various people spoke from their different experiences to demonstrate what individuals can do to effect change.*

### 'The Stranger at our Door'

**Mary Lean**, Editor of the international magazine *For a Change*, spoke of her work with the Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group. 'Our response to "the stranger at our door" is a litmus test of our society,' she said. 'If we don't go out to people, we miss the opportunity to open our hearts and minds to the world.' Just listening and offering support to detainees or asylum seekers was a challenging and enriching experience that she would recommend to everyone.

**Howard Grace** described how, in the last nine years, he had taken groups of young people from different countries to address 600 sessions with sixth forms up and down the UK. 'I felt God was leading me to take this adventurous step. Last term our inter-active sessions concentrated on "vision and values". As one strand in this, students were asked to consider the proposition, "We have everything to live with and nothing to live for." This led to many valuable discussions.'

**Fabiola Benavente** from Mexico

has been working with Initiatives of Change (IC) in the UK 'I have seen that there is a role for me to play as a young person. I no longer think to myself, "I'll just get on with my career and only concern myself with social issues when I retire." I will return to Mexico knowing there is a wider purpose for me, where I can make a difference right now.'

'Imagine a world where religion binds instead of divides,' said **Simon Cohen**. He told how his degree in theology and subsequent media experience had combined, so that six months ago he had felt led to leave his newspaper job and set up his own company, Tolerance Limited. He had recently helped organise a *Faith and the Media* conference and was now working on a national conference to be held in 2005 on the *Media and a Multi-Faith Society*.

### Clean Africa Campaign

'With all the problems in Africa it is easy to feel defeated and to suffer from a lack of self esteem,' said **Amina Dikedi** from Nigeria. Her vision is that a different leadership

in Africa can be created. She described how this was beginning to happen through IC's *Clean Africa* campaign. **Osman Jama Ali**, who had served as Deputy Prime Minister in the recent Transitional Government of Somalia told how he had now found a new role as a 'freelance reconciler', helping to rebuild trust between different communities and factions. The key to his credibility in doing this was a public commitment he had made not to seek office for himself.

**Alexander Pinchook** spoke of his work with the NGO *CentreAction* in Belarus which was working to mitigate the effects of contamination following the Chernobyl nuclear power station disaster (see page 3). **Vitalie Cracan** from Moldova outlined some of the work of *Foundations for Freedom* in Eastern Europe. The challenge for him, he said, had been to move from just being a good human being to becoming 'an active and obedient good human being'.

From *Hope in the Cities* **Richard** and **Meili Hawthorne** from Nottingham and **Monica Mackintosh** from London illustrated some of the initiatives in which they were involved. 'Bringing trust into situations is achievable when change starts with me,' said Monica. Richard told of a forthcoming event, 'Holding hands around St Anns'. The idea for this had come through a series of dialogues held in the St Anns area of Nottingham.

## Urgent Need

We were reminded that everywhere, in all our large cities and in small towns and villages, there is an urgent need for tolerance and understanding.

**Imad Karem** from Gaza is doing his PhD degree in London on 'the impact of Arab satellite broadcasting on young people'. Alongside this he is working with FLT films. 'It's not just a case of finding work to support my studies,' he said. 'Here I have found a place where the spiritual combines with the technical and professional. There is a lot to do to counter misinformation and misunderstanding between Muslims and non-Muslims.'

It was generally felt that the day had been useful in making a first step in the long walk. Someone asked the question, 'Can we have another occasion like this?'

**Paul Williams**

## THE ONGOING FALLOUT FROM CHERNOBYL

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Eighteen years after the Chernobyl disaster, millions of people are still suffering from its aftermath, a Belarusian scientist told a Greencoat Forum at the IC centre in London in May. Twenty-three per cent of Belarus – an area larger than the Netherlands and home to two million people – is contaminated. Because of the long half-life of the radioactive elements concerned, this situation will continue for

decades and even centuries, so the issue is how to teach people the safest ways of living with it.

Alexander Pinchook, a physics lecturer from the Mozyr State Pedagogic University, is a founder of CentreAction, an NGO which helps people living in the contaminated areas to break out of hopelessness and resignation and take control of their lives. He and his wife, Natallia, are two of a group of university lecturers, graduates and teachers who devote their spare time to working for the NGO.

In the years after the disaster, people living in the most highly contaminated areas were forcibly evacuated, leaving ghost villages which are now being reclaimed by the forests, the Pinchooks said. Those in less contaminated, but still dangerous, areas were allowed to choose whether to move or stay. Many stayed, fearing that homesickness would only compound the effects of radiation. In all, only some 135,000 people left the area.

The greatest danger for those who remain is eating contaminated food. As trees absorbed high levels of fallout, mushrooms and fruit gathered in the forests, meat from wild animals, and milk from cows grazed on contaminated land are particularly dangerous.

Children are more vulnerable to radiation than adults, because they are still growing. Statistics show that while 85 per cent of children in the area were regarded as healthy in 1988, only 15 per cent are now.

'One teacher told us that whereas only three children in her class were unable to take part in PE before the disaster, only three children are fit enough to do so now,' said Pinchook. Although no figures exist for the numbers of people who have died as a result of the disaster, cemeteries have been growing dramatically in size, and a large number of men are dying in their forties.

## Public Education

CentreAction's main focus is on public education. 'We let people see the test results on our screens with their own eyes,' said Pinchook. They encourage families to avoid forest foods and, if they are unable to afford uncontaminated milk, to process milk from their own cows into butter or cheese, as most of the contamination drains away in the whey. The NGO, in partnership with Focus International, is now expanding into providing equipment and teaching materials for schools in the contaminated areas, which are seriously under-resourced.

In response to questions, Pinchook agreed that giving children holidays in the UK and other countries contributed greatly to their health and wellbeing, but pointed out that this improvement is lost on their return home, unless their families are given the information and technology (such as milk separators) to eat more healthily.

**Mary Lean**

*For more details see  
[www.forachange.co.uk](http://www.forachange.co.uk)*

## IN THE MINORITY

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On Thursday 27th May, I travelled with two friends to The Netherlands to have a series of meetings with people involved in police, community and local government there. It was a busy time, forty-eight hours of back-to-back meetings.

However, for me, it was an eye-opening visit. I experienced so many things and became aware of the kind of challenges that people are facing on a day-to-day basis. I stayed with a Moroccan lady. At 27, she is the youngest female Police Inspector from a minority ethnic community in Holland.

During our first meeting we heard from Rashid, a man dedicated both to his work and to his Muslim faith. He is part of a team running a ground-breaking project working with young offenders who have completed prison sentences and are likely to re-offend. These young people are empowered to make choices in their lives by being given authority in their communities and becoming a positive example for other youth. They come on to the scheme because “they have the will to change and because they have guts”. Rashid and his team have explored, as Police and youth workers, how they should show authority to these kids; the answer, they believe, is not to be authoritarian but to show authority with love, giving positive feedback and encouraging development and the growth of self esteem. 68% do not re-offend after being on the scheme.

Rashid then took us on to visit his mosque and to meet his Imam. As we talked, I realised some of the anguish and pain that has been caused to Rashid and his people since September 11 2001 and how difficult life has become. I felt the need to consider my personal responsibility in all this. As we talked the Imam told us there was about to be a Call to Prayer and we sat transfixed as the sound of the Call thundered through us, shaking the very core of our souls. It was one of those spiritual experiences that will stay with me for ever. Then he led us into the back of the Mosque where we sat while the prayers took place. I was the only female in the place, the only white person. For once I was in the minority.

This led me to think about being in the minority – I have the privilege of being in the majority where I live. I know I have a support network, at work and at home, I know people will listen to me when I speak. I know, even if I have to shout a bit to start off with because of my gender, I can make myself heard. I have done nothing to get myself into this position – it is part of the privilege of being who I am. Enough time, respect and support must be given to those who cannot take this for granted.

Our time in the Netherlands was challenging and raised more questions than it answered. However, I feel it was a step on the long journey of building understanding and trust which enables us to talk together at a deeper level.

**Phoebe Gill**

## NEW BOOKS

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*LIKE A CORK  
OUT OF A  
BOTTLE:  
Talks and  
reflections by  
Brian  
Boobbyer,  
edited by  
Philip  
Boobbyer.*



message: people can discover a life of joy and fascination when they get free of the things that block them up and set out on the road of faith.'

*Philip Boobbyer*

Obtainable from: John Faber, 2 Batworth Park House, Crossbush, Arundel BN18 9PG at £5 per copy (post free in UK) email: johnfaber@tiscali.co.uk

'Growing up he had two dreams – the dreams of many a young English boy – to play rugby and cricket for England. By the age of 24 he had nine caps for England at rugby. He had scored tries at Twickenham and 100s at Lords. He had been offered the chance to open the batting for Middlesex, and he would have been in the running for the 1955 Lions tour. But he then gave it all up because he felt that God was calling him to do something different with his life.'

*Mark Boobbyer*

The pieces that appear were 'written over a long period and for different purposes... In an account of the match between Oxford and Cambridge in 1950, one journalist wrote that Boobbyer "exploded through the centre like a cork out of a bottle" before making a try-scoring pass. This ... seemed to capture the spirit of my father's approach to sport. Yet it also hints at his spiritual

*'WHY TERROR -  
IS THERE NO  
ALTERNATIVE?'*

The 19 who struck on September 11 2001 had a fanatical aim. The 19

Muslims in this booklet show another way to fight for justice, freedom and peace.

The greatest danger is not the weapons, but the walls of hatred and anger, injustice and corruption that power the people who use them. Everyone has a choice: to live in their own little world, building walls to keep out those who seem difficult – or to walk a while in another's shoes and experience their world.

The book is compiled by Imam Abduljalil Sajid and is published by Caux Books at a cost of £2 (postage in UK 50p)



## **ORLÉANS, FRANCE**



Joan of Arc raised the siege of Orléans in 1429. Every year a young woman is chosen to ride on horseback from the city centre to the cathedral by the Loire. She wears full armour and is attended by soldiers in medieval costume. The city is hung with banners and there is pageantry and music.

### **Oratorio for Our Time**

As part of the official programme of festival events, the 'Oratorio for Our Time' was performed on May 2 at the church of St Pierre du Martroi. It was enthusiastically received by the 300 in the audience which included the Bishop of Orléans and this year's Jeanne d'Arc.

The Oratorio is a vibrant choral work which was first performed at the IC centre in Caux, Switzerland in the '70s. Since then it has been sung by many different choirs in France and has inspired audiences in other countries – Poland, Italy, Malta, Australia and Quebec. It is

written by Françoise Caubel-Chauchat and set to music by Félix Lisiecki. It dramatises God's search for the soul of Man and Woman in the modern world. Its simple poetry tells of a change of heart in people. Depicted are a man, very much the disillusioned sceptic, a woman longing for forgiveness and peace, and a teenager seeking security and a purpose in life. All three come to faith and share a vision for the Church's role in society. In addition to the singing, individuals give real life testimonies in a spoken interlude.

### **Three from England**

Three of us from England attended the performance. We watched Joan riding with her knights, viewed the cathedral, the boulevards and flowers of this beautiful city.

Six centuries ago English invaders caused much suffering. A village girl challenged the English and inspired the French king to victory. Martyred by the English, she inspires her nation to this day. One of us expressed deep regret at the way the English treated the French in the burning of Joan at Rouen and the cruelties inflicted by the troops before their final expulsion in 1453. Wrongs committed long ago, yet long remembered.

We dined together and attended mass in the parish church. A memorable weekend.

**Francis Brown, David Hassell  
and Tony Sursham**

## **RUSSIAN VISITS**

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Representatives from *Foundations for Freedom* visited Novosibirsk, Russia at the start of May.

Nick Foster arrived for the first week, working mainly with Youth Humanitarian Initiative, which is a group of students who have teamed up following F4F courses. They had a constructive week unblocking problems and putting plans together for future activities and courses.

Chris Evans and Gordon Fuller arrived as Nick left, to continue meeting people in the Transport University. Interestingly, ethics have become a high priority for the university, and links with the Institute for Business Ethics (IBE) have been laid. Many doors were opened during these visits.

Since returning, Philippa Foster-Black of IBE has agreed to work in tandem with us to help the university to examine its ethical position. No easy task. Prayer and miracles required!

**Nick Foster**

## ***RHUBARB, RHUBARB***

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Humour has to be good for us, particularly where there is self-recognition and no malice. So Hugh Williams' play *Rhubarb, Rhubarb*, billed as a new comedy, augured well. It was performed by Intermission St Saviours and Westminster Productions Ltd at the

light and attractive venue of St Saviour's Church, Walton Place, London.

The casting was good; Edie Campbell as Gillian, and Christine Channer as Vera, gave animated performances. The Rev Guy Bradbury and Emily his wife, played by Rob Gillion and his wife Janine, were both convincing, perhaps not surprisingly, as he is the vicar of St Saviours.

Following the performance, a young theologian, who is also a choreographer wrote, 'I just wanted to thank you for your play. It took me a while to feel my own reaction to it, because although it was written as a farce, it has very serious undertones and I found it in some ways acutely painful to watch because it was so accurate.... The idea of taking off the mask and looking at what is really going on is such an important vision for the church today.'

**Ann Carpenter**

## ***THE SCOTSMAN – May 21***

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Below is an extract from a letter headed 'Moral Revival' from Bill Donaldson who was a head teacher, house-master and Chairman of the Edinburgh *Jubilee 2000* Campaign Committee.

' ... The greatest threat to the contemporary world does not lie in weapons of mass destruction but in the erosion of integrity which leads

to corruption and a disregard for human rights.

As part of the spiritual and moral revival, our General Assembly and Scottish Parliament should lead the campaign to restore our integrity after the evils of the Guantánamo Bay and Abu Ghraib prisons,

Our leaders in church and nation should make their voices heard in the only warfare that will defeat terrorism – the battle against poverty in the developing world and the unjust trade rules from which their people suffer.'

## **NEW BOOKLET**

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A new booklet by Michael Smith *The Sound of Silence – How to find inspiration in the Age of Information* has just been published. With cartoons by Einar Engebretsen, this 16-page booklet is written for today's web-surfing generation.

Also available as a PDF file at <http://www.uk.iofc.org/index.php?sn=6>

Copies from Grosvenor Books postage free for £2 each or 10 copies for £15.

## **NEXT GREENCOAT FORUM**

**Thursday 17 June**

Philip Boobbyer will speak on 'FAITH AND CONSCIENCE IN MOSCOW AND CANTERBURY'

Dr Boobbyer is a Senior Lecturer in Modern European History at the University of Kent in Canterbury. He is the author of *S.L. Frank: The Life and Work of a Russian Philosopher, 1877-1950* (1995) and *The Stalin Era* (2000) and is currently writing a history of moral opposition to Soviet Communism, with special reference to the idea of conscience. Dr Boobbyer will share insights from his current research, and make some wider comments about the role of faith and conscience in Britain and Europe today.

Buffet refreshments from 6.30 pm

Talk at 7.15 pm

A collection towards expenses will be taken

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