



## IofC DELEGATION AT THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

'Strasbourg – Capital of Europe', say the postcards proudly, and with some justification. This ancient French city, annexed by the Prussians in 1870 and restored to France in 1919, is a symbol of post war Franco-German reconciliation and the new Europe that flowed from it. Its magnificent old cathedral, impressive university and other historic buildings are a reminder of the culture and heritage of Europe.

Many know Strasbourg as home to the European Parliament. It is also home to an older political organisation, the **Council of Europe**.

Founded in 1949, the Council was set up with three main aims: to defend human rights, parliamentary democracy and the rule of law; to develop continent-wide agreements to standardise social and legal practices; and to promote awareness of a European identity based on shared values.

The Council now has 46 members, 21 of them from Central and Eastern

Europe. Since 1989 the Council's main job has been to act as a political anchor for Europe's post-communist democracies, to assist them in carrying out and consolidating political reform in parallel with economic

reform and providing know-how in areas such as human rights, local democracy and education.

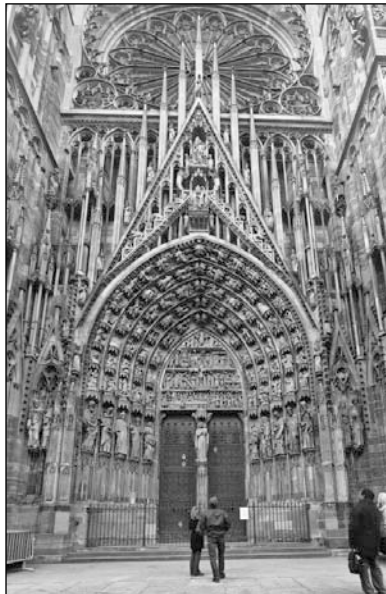
The Council of Europe has recently shown a greater recognition of the contribution which international non-governmental organisations can make. As an International NGO, IofC has now been granted participatory status.

At the end of April, Cornelio Sommaruga, President of **Initiatives of**

**Change International**, led a delegation of nine people from six countries for two days of visits and meetings around the Council of Europe.

### Future teamwork

The three main reasons for the visit were to make IofC better known and to present its aims and programmes



Thomas Murti

**Notre Dame Cathedral, Strasbourg**

to the Council; to explore ways and means for future teamwork with the Council; and to discuss how, as IofC representatives, we should maintain and develop our presence there.

Our group was received by the President and Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly; the Human Rights Commissioner; the Director General for Political Affairs and other senior officials. Considerable interest was shown in IofC's track record, especially the programme of *Foundations for Freedom* in Central and Eastern Europe, the outreach of *Agenda for Reconciliation* through the Caux conferences and the experience of *Hope in the Cities*. Clear possibilities for teamwork and co-operation emerged, and consideration is being given for representatives to attend the Caux conferences this summer.

**Campbell Leggat**

## **HOPE IN RWANDA**

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Seven of us accepted Didacienne Mukahabeshimana's invitation to visit Rwanda following the *Creators of Peace* conference in Kampala, Uganda in April. We went not really knowing what to expect, but with heads full of the news reports from the genocide in 1994. Rwanda is a beautiful country of rolling hills, lush green vegetation and friendly, smiling people with a tradition of welcome to the foreigner. It is hard to understand what happened there and to reconcile the fact that these warm, friendly people were killing each other less than 12 years ago.



**Rwanda's countryside**

We spent our time visiting a widow's association, meeting with the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, visiting an association of people living with HIV/Aids, meeting the Executive Secretary of the Commission for Unity and Reconciliation, seeing the orphanage and home operated by the Sisters of Charity, visiting the Genocide Memorial in Kigali. Everywhere we heard about the genocide and its after-effects. Everyone had a story to share. No one is unaffected by the tragedy. Everyone is either a victim or a perpetrator and sometimes both.

The stories and experiences freely shared with us were deeply moving, disturbing and sometimes almost unbelievable in their revelation of the darker side of humanity. And yet... I have come away from Rwanda with a sense of hope.

As a whole, the Rwandese have not

denied their past; they have not swept it under the rug. They are confronting it, admitting it, dealing with it. They are trying to relearn how to live together. They have delved into their own past to create a solution for the future with the creation of traditional Gacaca courts. These are based on a centuries-old system of judging the accused publicly within the community; giving the victims a chance to confront the accused and air their grievances and giving the guilty a chance to admit their guilt and ask for forgiveness. It is a process in which the whole community takes part. Yes, Rwanda has a tragic past, but the people are trying to learn from it, though the process will take years.

I spent only ten days in Rwanda, but I can confidently say that those ten days have changed me – not by making me fearful about the future, as one might think – but by giving me hope for the future. It will take me months to process everything I heard and saw, but I am deeply grateful to the Rwandese for their willingness and eagerness to share the lessons they are learning.

**Eve Wojciechowska**

## **LETTER FROM KOREA**

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We are writing from Seoul, the capital of South Korea, in the spring time with cherry blossom starring the hillsides and wild azaleas in the woods. We have come on a three-week visit to this country because, over the past twenty years, we have had many Koreans to stay in our home in London and it is a wonderful chance

to see these friends in their own surroundings.

Seoul is a bustling city of 13 million, plus another 10 million who commute in from the surrounding area. In fact, nearly 50% of the population of South Korea live in or around the capital. Amongst those we are meeting are a leading politician of the ruling party, and the vice-governor of a province in the south. These two men and their wives have both been at Caux conferences in earlier years.

## **Hope for the future**

A thriving team of young people gives great hope for the future of this exciting country, until a few years ago a military dictatorship, now a democracy. Always conscious of the division between North and South Korea and the conviction that one day their land will be united, the parliament building has two chambers – only one is used at present but when unification comes they plan to have both a lower and an upper house.

The young people we have seen have mainly been graduates who meet in three separate teams once a month. They have a quiet time together and share their thoughts. Every Wednesday evening there is a meeting in central Seoul for any who wish to come. We have been struck by this commitment in spite of their long hours of work. Many of them have taken part in *Action for Life* programmes or have attended Asia Pacific Youth Camps which take place in different Asian countries every alternate year.

**David and Elizabeth Locke**

## THE WAR WITHIN AMERICA'S SOUL

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Who was it who said he'd been to Los Angeles and caught a glimpse of the future... and it was frightening?

Actually, I loved the place the moment I arrived. I was 20, it was the Sixties and everything was changing. California was fast and free... and just a little frightening in a challenging sort of way.

It had problems, of course, as did America: race riots which burned through the Watts area of LA flared again in Detroit three years later after the assassination of Martin Luther King. By the end of the decade when I left, much of the Sixties idealism had come crashing down too - 'free-love' spawned unstable relationships, cause-driven consciences became drug-clouded, the debacle of Vietnam delivered 'peace' with a bitter taste. But I had tasted America's dynamism and diversity. It is a nation always re-inventing itself - always reaching for a vision of itself beyond what it is.

Twenty years later I was back. The Cold War's end had brought a warm flush of democracy's victory. America was reinventing itself as the 'last great Superpower'. Some writers bravely pointed to Americans' need to face 'the enemy within'. Race riots again tore through parts of Los Angeles.

Fifteen years on, last month, I was driving down LA freeways in a sunny smog-free atmosphere washed by recent rains. It feels good; but the smog soon returns. Normally up-beat friends speak of a State economy driving towards disaster, plummeting



**Mike Brown**

classroom standards, a health system facing terminal breakdown, the economic stress caused by a million illegal immigrants who pour into the US each

year, many into California.

The unease goes deeper. It is not the America I knew before. Post-9/11 fears are partly the cause. Security personnel checking my baggage issue commands with a military edge I had not felt before.

### Red or blue

If terrorism and war reinforce fears from abroad, within the country it is the sharp clash over moral issues which has made Americans distrustful of one another. The last Presidential election seems to have left the country more polarised than ever between what can be caricatured as the traditional upright 'red' heartland states and liberal dissolute 'blue' states on the coastal edges.

But to depict the struggle in these terms is a gross simplification. For one thing, a comparison of divorce, abortion and teenage-pregnancy rates in 'red' Republican Texas shows them to be roughly double what they are in 'blue' Democrat Massachusetts.

Dismiss that as hypocrisy if you will. Closer to reality may be the perception that those who vote 'red' are all too conscious of the moral malaise around them, making them all the more passionate for the return to some moral order. Those labelled 'blue' hold to other moral issues just as fiercely – tolerance, economic justice, not killing people through war. And there's further complexity: 'blue' California has a 'red' Republican governor.

'The spasms of moralism that have punctuated American history from the Puritans all the way through prohibition and now the backlash against gay marriage are not a war of one part of the country against another,' wrote Andrew Sullivan in the London *Sunday Times*. 'They are a war within the souls of all Americans.'

## **Closing the gap**

With sophisticated media campaigns and complex political arguments, America is re-inventing itself through this tortuous moral struggle. Whether or not the process delivers any unity in America's national spirit depends, in my view, not on one side prevailing and imprinting its values on policies, the media and government. It depends on generating the convincing outcome of lives that are changed deeply enough, through moral and spiritual renewal, to affect every area of personal and national life – the need all of us face to close the gap between our 'talk' and 'walk'.

There are some encouraging signs: earthy daytime talk-shows grapple with personal moral choices, the mega-response to best-selling books

like *The Purpose-driven Life*. In Los Angeles one evening, we witnessed the tough-love talk of high-achieving recovering alcoholics doing their 12-Step programme. But the vital question is whether this stirring of personal renewal will go far enough and deep enough, to challenge and change the systems of American money, might and mentality.

Frank Buchman, the American whose ideas and commitment sparked the movement of moral re-armament, believed that 'absolute honesty, unselfishness, love and purity are standards of personal, national and international life'. Re-implanting such moral absolutes in relationships scarred by abuse, in communities fractured by injustices, in a natural environment dangerously polluted, in economic systems skewed by greed and in international relations fuelled by fear, takes such standards beyond personal value-choices. They are instruments for bringing national and international peace and progress.

It is just too easy for us – around the world as well as in America – to point to Enron-type corporate corruption, to Michael Jackson scandals, to the unholy nexus between corporate wealth and policy-making in the US – and to feel smug on our little patch of moral high-ground. America is re-inventing itself. We outside the United States can either be cynical critics or participants in the struggle to build integrity, within the context of our own nation's challenges and shortcomings.

The future need not be so frightening.

**Mike Brown**

## **A SAEIMA FOR YOUR (2006) DIARY**

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Twenty people from all over Europe met in the new IofC centre in Paris over the weekend of April 16 and 17, to share and to plan for a European IofC Consultation. This has been dubbed a *Saeima*, – a Latvian word meaning a gathering of the clans or communities.

Lively discussions about Europe, the EU and Initiatives of Change in Europe, were interrupted on Saturday evening, for a public meeting addressed by Chris Evans and Kostya Ploskyy, in which some 40 people came to hear about developments in Ukraine and *Foundations For Freedom*.

In the course of Sunday morning, agreement was reached that the *Saeima* should take place in the autumn of 2006, and that it should be in Ukraine. It has a working theme, which may not be its final one: 'Initiatives of Change and its contribution to a heart and soul for Europe'.

**Chris Evans**

## **'A SOURCE OF HOPE'**

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During the UK General Election, party leaders offered their views of our national future. **Leslie Fox**, who died on March 20 aged 94, was an Englishman who believed that Ireland was key to it. For many years Treasurer of the Oxford Group, he wrote in 1979, 'My own commitment is to pray and work and think and cherish until the England/Ireland relationship resolved is a source of

hope and a Christ-filled answer to every hopeless situation in the world.'

At an intense time of the long conflict in Northern Ireland this was backed up by men on opposing sides talking to Leslie. A militant Republican: 'We would like England to find her destiny in the world. If we could iron out the Irish question we could really move together.' A Paisleyite: 'If the people of Northern Ireland knew there was a core of people in England who really cared, it would make all the difference.'

In his tribute at the funeral, Dr Roddy Evans of Belfast said that during the violence he and his friends needed a divinely inspired entry into the heart of England. This connection came through the Church of England, and the human agent making it was Leslie Fox. 'We owe a great debt to Leslie. The understanding, the care and the help which he gave us over many years make our debt to him impossible to repay.'

Full texts of this tribute and others can be had from **Ivan Poulton**, Tel: 020 8840 5938

## **Update on Rajmohan and Usha Gandhi's visit to the UK**

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(See February '05 Newsletter UK)

### **November 12-15 – Scotland:**

Visits to *The Scotsman* where Rajmohan did his original training, and encounters with people in public life. A reception at Winton House near Edinburgh on Sunday, Nov 13. Rajmohan will also speak in a univer-

sity setting in Edinburgh. Further details from Professor Roger Spooner: roger.spooner@penfriend.biz or Tel: 0131 667 2555

**Nov 15-17 – Liverpool:** Rajmohan will give a *Gandhi Memorial Lecture* at Liverpool Hope University at 7pm on Nov 16. Details from Gerald Henderson, GHenderLiv@aol.com or Tel: 0151-724-4229

**Nov 17-18 – Sheffield and Bradford:** programme being worked out by Nick Foster, Krish Raval, Peter Vickers and Dr Philip Lewis of Bradford University Department of Peace Studies. Details to be confirmed shortly.

**Nov 19-20:** A weekend for many who are taking leadership in IofC, to take advantage of the Gandhis' perspectives in clarifying our sense of direction.

**Nov 21-22 – Oxford:** Rajmohan will speak at the Oxford University Union Society and be welcomed by the Centre for Islamic Studies. Details from Peter Riddell at: 01865-511800 or peter.riddell@uk.iofc.org and Edward Peters.

**Nov 23-26 – London:** Programme includes a reception at the London Press Club, a dinner in Parliament and a public event on the evening of Nov 23 at a venue to be decided.

We have engaged the services of a media consultant, Simon Cohen, to obtain coverage of the visit by national and local media. The text of Rajmohan's speech is available from Reception at Greencoat Place.

Please send any questions, ideas or offers of help to **Peter Riddell**.

## BOOKS

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Comments on *The Morning Quiet Time*:

'The morning quiet time has been a gateway to new life for me. It has enabled me to deepen my faith, find a purpose and to face with equanimity assaults of cancer... Philip Boobbyer and John Faber have done us a great service by reviving this gem of the 1930s.'

**Russi Lala, India**

'A great refreshment and revelation for anyone sincerely trying to find their way spiritually; whether they have been at it for years, but have become stale, or want to start but have not known how. Every Christian minister in the industrialised world today faces the paradox of a popular wish for spirituality coupled with apathy towards organised religion. *The Morning Quiet Time* takes us all back to the roots of spiritual life, where the Holy Spirit can breathe life into old forms. It contains the brevity to suit busy people with the simplicity accessible to everyone and the profundity that leads us all into new realms'.

**Rev AJD Craig, Scotland**

'I read it with delight and learned much from it, especially from the seriousness and spirit of discipline that Jack Winslow attaches to this "morning watch".'

**Philippe Laserre, France**

*£3 post free, or £2 each for 5 copies or more; cheques to John Faber, No 2 Account, at Batworth Park House, Crossbush, Arundel BN19 9PG.*

## **UNFINISHED JOURNEY**

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Michael Thwaites has recently published this collection of his poems dating from 1932-2004. They are a feast for the spirit and include his celebrated war poem, *The Jervis Bay* and the *Hymn for Australia*, which was used at the Bicentennial celebrations. His *Farewell* sung to *Finlandia* by Sibelius, was the Recessional hymn at the Requiem Mass for Pope John Paul II in St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney. There are verses, too, that mark intimate personal experiences. All are thought-provoking and there is humour as well.

**Veronica Craig**

*Copies (£10) from 24 Greencoat Place*

## **LETLAPA VIDEO**

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If you would like to see Letlapa Mphahlele in action in UK schools, that is now possible through a new half-hour video. It shows his fascinating interaction with Sixth Form students here and also includes the story of forgiveness and conciliation relating to massacres he ordered during the time of Apartheid.

There is no charge for this but any contributions for videos and DVDs will go to the *Lyndi Fourie Foundation*,

set up by Letlapa and Ginn Fourie (mother of one of the victims who died in the Heidelberg Tavern).

**Howard Grace**

*Enquiries to: [howard.grace@uk.iofc.org](mailto:howard.grace@uk.iofc.org)  
or Tel: 01635.47196*

## **THE GREENCOAT FORUMS**

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24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P1RD  
Refreshments from 6.30pm, talk 7.15pm.

*RSVP to: [reception@london.iofc.org](mailto:reception@london.iofc.org)  
or Tel: 020 7798 6000*

**Tuesday, May 10**

**Peter Rundell**

*Making poverty history:  
A personal perspective*

Dr Rundell works in the Development Directorate-General of the European Commission, where he is responsible for policy on poverty reduction strategies and macro-economic support. He has a number of years' experience in Africa, especially Zimbabwe.

**Tuesday, June 14**

**Denis Nowlan**

*Faith in the media*

Denis Nowlan is Network Manager for BBC Radio 4 and formerly Executive Producer in the BBC's Religion & Ethics Department.

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This issue was edited by Ann Carpenter and Mary Jones with layout by Blair Cummock.  
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Old Trafford M16 0DP, email: [mjpaine@onetel.com](mailto:mjpaine@onetel.com)