

Society joined Johnnic Publishing and the Independence Newspaper Group in financial support.

Editors of *The Star* (Johannesburg) met with a group of eleven international visitors at a board room dinner. Peter Sullivan, Group editor, Independent Newspapers, said, "South Africa has made great strides since 1994." The biggest achievement had been the establishment of an open Constitution, which condemns corruption and preserves freedom of speech. The fundamental priority now is to address poverty. To this end 1.3 million houses have been built. Alan Dunn, editor, *Independent News Network*, explained, "We are still inexperienced in freedom. Mandela was sent to us. Now we are in a lifting period - an 'adrenaline' time. South Africa is building multi-lateral relations with our neighbours. Yet some see us as the potential superpower of the continent. We must proceed with caution."

All overseas guests visited Robben Island. Our guide had himself spent 18 years in the prison and graphically described his suffering and his conviction, "We are all now one country." We were moved by this experience, deepened daily at the Forum, as person after person shared their testimony.

**Hugh Nowell**

## LATVIA

The second Foundations for Freedom course to be run in Latvia took place at the end of March. The faculty led by Nick Foster from Britain included a Crimean, a Finn, a Moldovan and two Latvians. Karosta near Leipaja, providing stark beauty in the midst of decaying Soviet housing blocks, was a thought-provoking setting for reflection, development and multi-ethnic dialogue.

### Dynamic and lively

The F4F faculty ran the first seven days of the course, preparing the ground for a dialogue run by the Latvians. Participants from both Latvian and Russian heritages came from student and NGO activist organisations: a very dynamic and lively crew! Most took to the morning quiet time very swiftly and for many this has continued by email after the course.

Minna Palsio from Finland steered the group through a most enlightening and honest discussion about the scars of youth and parenting which deepened the whole dynamic. As a course it was a great stretch for the faculty, a developmental time for all involved and another step for F4F methodology. Bring on the second round!

**Nick Foster**



Initiatives of Change

# NEWSLETTER **uk**

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## THE ONLY WAY TO REMAIN HUMAN

Initiatives of Change had its first public event in Russia with the launching in April of the Russian edition of **Michael Henderson's** book *Forgiveness: Breaking the Chain of Hate*.

A highlight of the reception, described as creating a special atmosphere among the 60 present from all walks of life, was the witness to forgiveness in the lives of two people who appear in the book's pages - dissident Russian poet **Irina Ratushinskaya** and Norwegian **Leif Hovelsen**, who had been condemned to death by the Gestapo.

### No compromise with evil

Ratushinskaya said that she had forgiven those who had tortured her even though they had not asked for forgiveness. To do so was not to justify what they did. "We did not cooperate with the persecutors. Nor would we compromise with evil. But we had the right to hope that people would change and to pray for that. It was the only way to remain human. It is what we did in the camp at Mordovia. That is what helps us to cope with our own sins."

Speaking against the background



Moscow

of the war in Iraq, Hovelsen, an underground fighter in World War II, said that the suffering of many innocent people distressed him.

### Fight for the good

Yet he had learnt from his mother that there was a road that could lead us out of hatred, violence and revenge. At one point in his younger years he had asked his mother, "Wouldn't it have been better if I had never been born?" She had replied, "There is so much evil that we must bring children into the world who will fight for the good."

In a message for the launching, Anatoly Krasikov, who had been

head of Yeltsin's press office, said that the book was very useful for Russia. Without forgiveness and repentance we could not create the civil society where the past did not exert a hold on us. "It is a rich collection of stories and ideas of how to get out of dead-end situations."

### To change Russian society

The book's publisher, Alexei Bodrov, expressed the hope that those from Russia who had been to Caux (the world IC conference centre) would help to change Russian society: "Caux has had a huge influence on a lot of us."

Two main TV channels interviewed Henderson at the Moscow launching in the Marina Tsvetaeva Museum. Before the event he recorded a half-hour interview on *Voice of Russia* radio. He also spoke to students at Moscow State University and at an English Speaking Union occasion held in the Library of Foreign Literature and chaired by Father Gyorgi Chistiakov, head of the Religion Department. The week before, British university lecturer **Philip Boobbyer** had discussed the book for an hour on a Russian religious radio programme.

### St Petersburg

The book was also launched at two occasions in St Petersburg. At a crowded event in Central City Public Library, Margaret Mudrak, Chairperson of the English Speaking Union, thanked the

author for introducing so many new examples of forgiveness to a city which had suffered particularly in the 900-day siege in the war. "The book is very valuable to us here in Russia," she said. At the Agora Christian Centre a lively discussion with young Russians underlined the significance of the book for today's generation.

## AFRICA AND THE UN

Following the publication of his memoirs *Faith in Diplomacy*, **Archie Mackenzie** visited New York in November 2002, to meet with a cross-section of UN diplomats and personalities, to discuss the themes addressed in the book. So impressed was the Nigerian Ambassador to the UN, Arthur C. I. Mbanefo, that he immediately invited him to return to the UN, to reflect upon the issues further, with a wider group of specifically African delegates.

So it was, on a glorious week of sunshine in April, that Archie Mackenzie arrived once more in New York, for a luncheon co-hosted by the Initiatives of Change UN Office and the Permanent Missions of Nigeria, Algeria and South Africa.

Attended by 16 African Ambassadors, including Under Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari, plus other senior diplomats, the luncheon saw Mackenzie recount episodes from his diplomatic career, much to the interest

he would write to the schools in May to see how they plan to use the material.

This was my first visit to West Africa. I was marvellously looked after and aided by Nigerian friend Amina Dikedi. Dr Ben Garbrah, who had made all this happen, raised all the necessary money for the seminar and our stay in Ghana.

**Ann Rignall**

## KENYA ON THE MOVE

*Jim Wigan (UK) and Claude Bourdin (France), who spent 14 days visiting farmers in Kenya, share some of their impressions:*

Kenya is a country on the move – the elections and new government have brought a feeling of hope and momentum to the country. At government level, corrupt dealings are being systematically investigated and among ordinary people there is a mood of cautious optimism.

During the independence process in 1963 a land resettlement scheme was launched. Over a 15-year period, and on a 'willing seller/willing buyer' basis, 66,319 African families were settled on 1,325 large-scale European farms whose total area was 769,493 hectares. This laid the foundation for today's agriculture, where white farmers still operate and African farmers are established on large and small units. We saw evidence of the hard work and commitment to farming systems which offer a sustainable future for much of the continent.

Kenya faces many challenges. Though much of the infrastructure is run down, her strength lies in the fact that recent changes come from a population who have said 'enough is enough' and voted for a new government that will bring change.

As we left we were pondering what we from outside could do to assist in the process, for example:

- by passing on to Kenyan farmers examples of sustainable farming;
- by stimulating marketing systems that provide an honourable living for the world's primary producers;
- by gathering and disseminating evidence from Africa and elsewhere of the role of individuals in developing agriculture and strengthening democracy.

## SOUTH AFRICA MEDIA FORUM

106 media professionals from 26 countries and five continents checked in for the latest International Communications Forum in Cape Town in April. *The Cape Argus* carried a full report: "The media must serve the community better" and quoting Bernard Margueritte: "We must build a 'civilisation of love' not the 'pseudo civilisation' of hate and violence."

Journalists came from 17 African countries. Many told of persecutions and imprisonment for holding to the truth. The communications giant Telkom sponsored the conference. The Ford Foundation and the Open

## **PIONEERING IN SRI LANKA...**

I first heard of **Antony Fernando** through reading his fascinating books on Christianity and Buddhism. He has doctorates in both religions. On contacting him, I also discovered that he runs a pioneering education institution in rural Sri Lanka. Hundreds come from local villages to learn English, using a unique approach linking it with Sinhala.

He has an equally deep conviction for the need to develop character training. A new course has started which trains young people to go into the villages to teach English, together with 'vision and values'.

He had never met anyone from IC before. But he asked for a team to run a six-day seminar for his 25 top students to foster the vision and values of MRA/IC. **Vijayalakshmi Subrahmanyam** from India joined **Chris Lancaster** of Australia and myself there in early April.

As well as daily sessions on such themes as 'vocation', 'values' and 'teamwork', we used educational games and videos. All the participants were Buddhists and much appreciated the early morning sessions of contemplation and sharing of thoughts.

The students came in each day from their homes in the rural areas, usually on lengthy and crowded bus journeys. Our first session started at 8 am. It amazed us to find that we could always start on time. We were delighted that old Sri Lankan friends Vijitha Yapa and

Rohini de Mel came in one morning as guest speakers – a valuable link between our new young friends and others with a wealth of experience in MRA/IC. Another valuable factor was invitations from the students for us to go with them to their villages.

At the end all the students spoke movingly about what the time had meant to them. Antony Fernando was deeply appreciative of the students' growth in confidence and spiritual conviction. He is keen for IC to adopt his institution in a practical partnership to transform the quality of life in his country from grass roots level.

**Howard Grace**

## **...AND IN GHANA**

The Methodist schools of Ghana have decided to use *The Other 3 Rs* (by Ann Rignall and Joy Weeks). I was invited out to hold a three-day training session for teachers, who would then initiate the use of this material in their schools.

The teachers worked extremely hard on the unfamiliar material. There were many deep discussions and sometimes tradition was pitted against what most considered right action. In the final session it was obvious there had been changes in attitudes and there were decisions on how to use the material in their schools.

I was impressed that the Director of Methodist Education and the Director of Schools were there all the time. The Director said

and amusement of the gathered dignitaries, and express how he has sought to live out his faith through his actions and decisions in his professional life.

This challenge of principled leadership was then linked more explicitly to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the visionary new strategy, developed by Africans, which hopes to act as the key to a new era of progress across the continent. Mackenzie argued that contemporary cynicism, aggravated by recent international events, had created a dangerous 'faith-deficit' in the UN and urged African nations to draw on their spiritual resources – through initiatives such as NEPAD and the Clean Africa Campaign – to build a healthier outlook in the organisation.

The guests, clearly moved by these words, then pursued a lively discussion on the themes that had been addressed, seeking his advice and opinions on the current challenges to the UN, and on how partnership between the North and the South can lead to the successful implementation of NEPAD.

Tunisian Ambassador Ali Hachani remembered Mackenzie from his days as the UK Ambassador to Tunisia. He poignantly recounted how, as a young diplomat, he had been inspired by the integrity of Mackenzie's interventions at the 6th and 7th Special Sessions of the General Assembly called to deal



**Archie Mackenzie speaking at the luncheon with the Nigerian Ambassador**

with the world oil price explosion.

The afternoon served as a bright note of hope amongst the dismal clouds that have gathered recently across the international community, and the dignitaries left with a renewed sense of purpose and clarity.

It was not just VIPs who benefited from Archie's experience, however: during his time in New York, he also spoke at Fordham Law School, and Long Island University, discussing the history and the significance of the UN, and what its future may hold. The students, well-versed in the vagaries of the UN system, welcomed the rare opportunity to engage with a witness to the birth of the institution, and were visibly touched by his thoughts and insights. In addition, Mackenzie re-connected and developed friendships with several diplomats whom he met back in November.

**Vasu Vaitla & Mark Perera**

## OUT OF SHARED DREAMS

Declaring that, as a white Jamaican, he had been involved in "a great theft – people who had not been paid properly for their part in the nation's development", **Roddy Edwards** and his wife Ann spoke at a Greencoat Forum in London, April 8. "We had robbed people consistently," said Edwards, referring to the white community's exploitation of the majority of Jamaica's population during the colonial era. Compensating with cheques is easy, he said. "But that is not the answer. What is needed to right this historic wrong is decently paid jobs over the long term. I felt I should work towards this in repentance for all the benefits – like an expensive education – which the past exploitation had enabled."

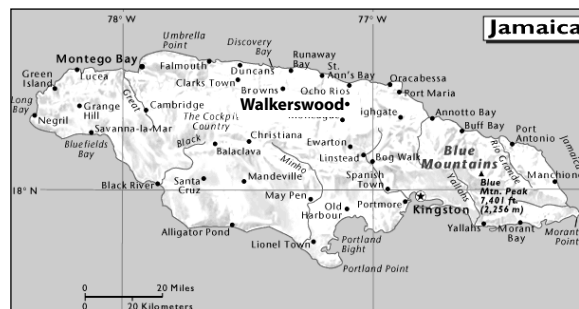
It was this motivation which led Edwards 25 years ago to work with others from the community in founding the Walkerswood Food company as a partnership venture. The aim was to give employment to the village and community where his family had lived for five generations. "What the world needed was a different form of economic organisation – where wealth didn't go to a few but was shared transparently," Edwards said. The company now employs 100 people with a turnover last year of US\$3.5 million. It is run by

a group of 12 partners and there is an employee share ownership scheme. It sells 17 products to major supermarket chains in the USA, the UK and elsewhere. In London it also runs the Bamboula Jamaican restaurant in Brixton.

"The impact on the village has been huge," said Edwards. A local farmer employs 40 people to grow peppers for making Walkerswood Food's celebrated jerk seasoning and pepper sauces. "And farming peppers means you don't need to farm drugs."

"Walkerswood has achieved miracles," said Lawrence Fearon, the African-Caribbean chairman of the forum, introducing the Edwards. "This is a story of faith, and social and economic justice." It was an example of sustainable development based on the development of people in the community.

The vision had grown after Edwards' elder brother, Johnathan, had been impacted by a conference in 1965 for "the moral and spiritual re-arming of the world". The emphasis was that "change starts with me". "I couldn't get out of my mind that I had to change," said Roddy Edwards. He joined the Unemployment Committee of the Community Council. The Council built a community centre and one project to emerge from the Unemployment Committee was to sell jerk (seasoned) pork to the



eight bars in the surrounding area. "The conviction grew to find a decently paid job for everyone in the village."

Edwards said that he had learnt three lessons over the years:

- Firstly, "faith in the Almighty's provision". When the company faced bankruptcy in 1997, a Chinese Jamaican investor visited Walkerswood and, as part of his commitment to Jamaican agricultural development, "invested serious money". Time and time again, resources had unexpectedly emerged to keep the company developing.
- Secondly, "to go for it – to really search for and share our deepest dreams and not to compromise. To go through the doors that are always open." Walkerswood Foods had grown out of the shared dreams and motivations of all the partners – men and women, black and white, young and old. The aim now was to "build a Caribbean world brand name".
- Thirdly, teamwork. "We have to stick together if we are to carry out our dreams," Edwards said. For

him it was "an absolute blessing to have a partner with whom one can be totally honest". His wife Ann told how the community had campaigned to clean up a local waste dump used by cruise ships coming into Montego

Bay. Edwards emphasised that their task "hasn't always been sugar and light". There were battles against corruption. And banks were far too unwilling to take risks in investing in local businesses. But when people are paid a decent wage they find this an incentive for better education to acquire new and better-paid skills.

In the Walkerswood community of some 2,500 people, "we are getting to a situation where everyone who wants to work can find a job," he concluded.

**Michael Smith**

## NEXT GREENCOAT FORUM

**Tuesday, May 13: Hope in the Cities – building sustainable communities**

6.30 for 7.15pm at 24 Greencoat Place. To book your place please telephone 020 7798 6000.

Speakers from several communities will share their experiences of 'honest conversation' and invite the audience to take part in the process.