

interest and enthusiasm. We have a lot to learn from the asylum seekers and they from us.

A WORD IN DUE SEASON

Pat Ducé, living in a retirement home in East Sussex with her husband, writes:

What to do about tackling someone's wrong or difficult behaviour which you find yourself involved in?

A formidable lady with a rather domineering manner came to live here. She was often very negative and critical in her sometimes harsh conversations. We and others found this quite upsetting, especially as she had a penetrating voice and sometimes talked about one or two of the staff or residents at mealtimes, even though they were well within earshot. Her table was next to ours, and so we felt it was really up to us to do something.

She loved going to the chapel and I used to hope that the words of the Confession would mean something to her that she could translate into action. This did not seem to happen. With considerable trepidation I sought the right time to speak to her. Her first reaction was: "Oh, I know all about that," mentioning that two of the management had tackled her about it.

I said, "It's not what they say, it's not what I say, it's what God says. You have God in your life - ask Him what He thinks about it." She hesitated, then to my relief and surprise, she said, "I will, Pat, I will."

From then on (with only one or

two minor lapses) she never offended like that again. Moreover, we became good friends, finding a lot in common including a strict upbringing about right and wrong plus a strong sense of humour. We were really sad when she died suddenly a few months later.

INITIATIVES OF CHANGE IN INDIA: An Assessment

Further to last month's notice about the revised edition, Grosvenor Books and Caux Books will now publish it and the cost will be £4.95 plus £1.00 p&p. Available from David Young, 15 Vale Avenue, Brighton BN1 8UB, cheques payable to David Young No 2 Account.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

MURIEL

Preview of a new one-woman show about the life of Muriel Smith, featuring Shalimar Hickman Jones; written by Adam Nixon.

Produced and directed by Bev Appleton in association with Westminster Productions Ltd at The Barn Theatre, 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1 on Saturday, August 2, at 3pm. No charge, but a collection will be taken. Please phone Reception on 020-7798 6000 to make reservations on a strictly first-come-first-served basis. So book early to avoid disappointment!

The World Premiere of 'Muriel' will take place at Caux on August 5.



NO SUBSTITUTE FOR COMPASSION

"THE problem is not the clash of civilisations but the collapse of them," a leading Muslim journalist told the Greencoat Forum which followed the Oxford Group's Annual General Meeting in London on June 17. **Fuad Nahdi**, the founder and publisher of *Q-News* was speaking on "Towards a partnership of civilisations".

Nahdi was born in Kenya, although his parents originated from Yemen. His parents had planned to send him to the Muslim school in Yemen that his father and grandfather had attended, but this had been closed by the country's Marxist government. Nahdi ended up going to a Catholic school in Tanzania. "I was a walking manifestation of interfaith," he said. Later he moved to England to study and in 1989 married

and became "that strange and complex creature, a British Muslim".

The role of individuals

What struck me most about Nahdi's speech was the emphasis on the role of individuals, rather than institutions, in bridging the gaps between faiths and communities. "Organisations and structures can only act as a barrier," he said. Later on he added, "We cannot always change the world, but what we can change is ourselves."

Many first-generation British Muslims were disillusioned by



Fuad Nahdi (right) with the Mayor of Westminster and Imam Sajid of Brighton

Photo: David Channer

what they had found in Britain, Nahdi said. "We came to this country believing it was a Christian country." The discovery that the role of Christianity in this country was not what they expected was often "very painful". Muslims were often left to speak out on moral issues which Christians were afraid to tackle.

Nahdi called on both Christians and Muslims to begin with "an honest appraisal" of themselves. "There is no substitute for love and compassion; every act of love is like an axe taken to the roots of war," he said. "Even meeting your neighbour with a smiley face is an act of defiance against anger, malevolence and ill will."

"Give us some space"

He was pessimistic about some developments within the Muslim community. "There are very powerful forces within our community which want to make us a monolithic community. Now a good Muslim is judged by how much he hates America, how much he wants to destroy Israel, how much he demonises and ridicules his neighbours for not being good Muslims." He asked non-Muslims to "give us some space to thrash out some issues internally".

He also encouraged the West to sit down with Muslims and listen to them. Nahdi said that the two main qualities Muslims wanted to see in the world are "freedom and justice".

"The root cause of the lack of freedom and justice is when people stop talking to each other," said Nahdi. He referred to his experience as a member of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Muslim-Christian Listening Group which gathers people from both sides to talk freely and openly to each other about the problems they face. The meetings are held in mosques and churches up and down the country. It had proved more difficult to get Muslims to visit churches than to get Christians to visit mosques – perhaps, he said only half seriously, because of the levels of hospitality. "When I go to the mosque I get samosas, kebabs, curries. In the church, I am given some dodgy sandwiches."

Nahdi's light-hearted way of conveying serious points was very effective and stimulated a range of questions and comments from the floor. In response to one, he compared the humiliation suffered by the Muslim world today to that of Germany after the Treaty of Versailles. "We have gone through this humiliation and degradation for 60 years now. If it were not for Islam there would be many Nazi Germanys in our countries. But even Islam is being slowly peeled apart like an onion. There is conflict at the top level about whether suicide bombing is legitimate or not: this would not have been a question for us 50 years ago."

Doug O'Kane

there were those today who thought the UN had outlived its usefulness, while others wanted to strengthen it and amend the charter.

He pleaded forcefully for a third approach, based on bridging what he called 'the faith deficit'. Moral and spiritual elements were in the Charter, but had never been given real weight. He called for honesty, goodwill and humility to help deal with 'the complications of human character'. He quoted one of his first bosses who told him that even imperfect instruments could be made to work if you had the right spirit – and perfect structures could fail without the needed human qualities.

Andrew Stallybrass

SPRINGTIME IN MOLDOVA

It was brilliant travelling to Moldova with Nigel Heywood and Stanley Kiaer in May. I was worried about making sure everybody had a worthwhile time.

Somehow the ten days unfolded magically: times with the team and individuals, Bible studies and also meeting people like the British Ambassador. It was a great experience praying together every evening. Stanley returned home, and Nigel and I got ready for Nick Foster's and Gabrijela Leovic's arrival.

The next week became more work-focussed as we all prepared for a four-day Reflective Course

with the team in a forest setting, close to a river. The team decided they needed to care for the heart of their fellowship, for each other and for their spiritual journeys; also to focus on building a real community by strengthening their friendships. I felt much of this is applicable to the UK too.

Amazing to see one of the team who had joined us in October 2000 discover herself, face the pain of her negative points and the loneliness of that, and suddenly realise there is something that cares. It is a real affirmation when you see before your eyes how the Divine works in a person's heart and gives fresh hope, courage and direction.

I believe they are the future of a new Europe. I hope more and more people will see that Moldova is part of a bigger plan that we can all take part in by getting more involved with this team. They are young and in need of a lot of support, care and sharing of life experience. I know I will be a part of them for this life - and hopefully the next.

Bhavesh Patel

WREXHAM

Alice Hughes writes:

On June 4, Mary Lean, Vice-Chairman of Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group, gave a most informative talk on asylum seekers in St Margaret's Church Hall, Wrexham. This was organised by local IC friends. There were many questions afterwards, creating good

LATIN AMERICA

A month in Uruguay, Argentina and Brazil:

In **Montevideo**, Ismar and Fabiana Villavicencio (who spent a year with IC in Britain) included us in the *Gente que Avanza* training course they are running this year - younger people from seven Latin American countries, presently travelling for three months in Central America.

In **Argentina** we linked former GqA participants with young friends who in recent years have worked as Caux interpreters or in the economat.

In **Brazil** we joined the 9-day Meeting of the Americas, celebrating 50 years of MRA/IC in Latin America, in the Petropolis hills above Rio de Janeiro.

Ernesto and Tania Veras, in charge of the centre, had prepared the event. Tribute was paid to past personalities and miracles that had affected the continent. Groups from the Rio favela communities came, as did a delegation of drivers from one of the Taxi Cooperatives which, through one man's change, now runs on statutes based on the four absolute standards of MRA/IC.

At the conference a commitment was made to improving links between Latin America and the developed countries of the North; a group of younger people in Rio decided to work together across communities, while others took on the media.

Visiting Rio, we felt the enthusiasm and commitment of many professional and voluntary workers who give time and imagination to improving the conditions of life, particularly for children and young adults. In these situations the faithful support of IC friends continues to be a lifeline for people caring for those at risk from crime and drug trafficking.

Tom and Mary Jones

MACKENZIES IN GENEVA

Former British Ambassador Archie Mackenzie and his wife Ruth recently spent three days in Geneva.

An evening at the International Red Cross Museum drew workers from several NGOs and friends of Caux/IC. It was co-hosted by the newly created NGO Committee on Spirituality, Values and Global Concerns.

The following day the Mackenzies were guests of the Swiss Forum for International Affairs at a luncheon whose guests included the Deputy Director of the World Trade Organisation and the Finnish Ambassador. Both occasions led to lively discussion and public debate, followed by personal talks, with many participants buying copies of Mackenzie's book *Faith in Diplomacy*.

Mackenzie contrasted the current atmosphere of doubt and confusion with the post-World War II 'will to agree' in a spirit of idealism bordering on euphoria. He noted that

AFRICA, IN SEARCH OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

"The organisers of the conference could not have chosen a more appropriate theme," said **President John Kufour** of Ghana, in his speech read by the Attorney General at an all-Africa conference in Accra. "For what should be the paramount concern of every African today is the search for good governance."

The President then asked, "What has gone wrong? Is the African incapable of good governance? What are the hindrances?"

Answering his own question, he continued, "For my part I can see a crucial missing factor, which is that we as leaders have not listened to the voice of God. I agree with MRA that those who govern must first submit themselves to the rule of God. Regrettably we have not done this enough. We have thrown overboard the moral values that should be central in our lives as government and as members of society."

It was obvious that the President is well informed of the activities of MRA in Ghana. He also recognised the launch of the *Clean Africa Campaign* and the need to make it a reality.

People came from 12 African countries and there were also delegates from Britain and North America. At the colourful opening ceremony a Ghanaian musical group welcomed guests to the International Conference centre. Other local par-

ticipants included a large delegation of mothers from the Methodist Church, representatives from the Muslim community, students, members of the diplomatic corps and government officials.

To the surprise of over 700 people at the opening, a poem by **Dr Ben Garbrah** (Chairman of MRA Ghana) was vividly enacted in typical African village style. Entitled *Mother Earth Speaks*, it ended on the note: "Let all my children understand that the most powerful force in the nuclear age is God at work in the hearts of men and women."

The conference in Accra gave those of us from other African countries the opportunity to appreciate the essence and value of peace in a nation. Many commented on the cleanliness, orderliness and peace which enable development and respect. In the words of a woman from a war-torn country, the war in her nation had "stripped her of dignity".

Many left the conference with renewed determination to work for peace and responsible leadership at all levels of society and especially to support the Clean Africa Campaign.

Lastly, a visit to Elmina Castle (a slave port) was a pilgrimage for all. It reminded us of a very painful and shameful past but was also an opportunity to reconcile, in our hearts but also physically, with our brothers and sisters in the diaspora. Together we can begin to make a difference.

Amina Dikedi

A PATH TO FOLLOW AND A REFERENCE-POINT

In 1980 I was in charge of massive restructuring for a big industrial group in England. I had had to leave my family in France for two years. Evenings were pretty lonely and I was glad to accept any invitations out. At the Catholic Church I went to, I met a member of the Christian Trades Unions and that meant I began to understand the world of the workers and their concerns.

This young trades unionist was also part of a group called Moral Re-Armament, today Initiatives of Change. For two years he gave me friendship. I felt that he had no personal agenda but wanted to see my life fulfilled and society to benefit. He introduced me to his friends and gradually I felt at home among them, sharing their concerns and struggle. What I found with them helped develop a greater compassion in me as I faced up to the situation I had to deal with. I was able to prevent the closure of the factory in Coventry, belonging to our group. The friendship of Dick and Patrick, two of these new friends, played its part in that.

One day they invited me to an international meeting in London's Westminster Theatre, which was at that time the headquarters of MRA in Britain. I had heard of MRA, which seemed to me a bit utopian, its members warm-hearted but a bit naive.

During the dinner I sat next to a

Frenchman, part of MRA in France. He spoke to me about his commitment but was above all interested in what I was doing and in the enormous problems I was facing. That he listened was a great lift to my spirits at a time when there were few people with whom I could share what I was up against. When we said goodbye, I was not sure we would meet again, despite the warmth of that initial contact.

I believe my new friend felt he had an ongoing part in my life. Just like Patrick, it was as though he suddenly felt the urge to show me care. From time to time, he began to be in touch. So I found myself invited to the centre for international conferences at Caux, Switzerland, sometimes as a speaker and sometimes to take part in the discussions. Each time I went, it was as if I were this person's best friend. Increasingly, I felt he and his wife had taken me on their hearts.

I went many times to Caux with my wife and later with our children. Gradually, almost without noticing, we found ourselves in a new family. I prepared many speeches for these conferences and I do not know what impact they had on others but they had plenty on me! At that time I was deeply involved in the International Division of Siemens, where I was an executive. Preparing a speech for an audience interested in the role of men and women in business helped me go deeper personally

which, later, I was able to apply in the company.

I have travelled this long road for more than 20 years. It has been less a learning process than a path to follow and a reference-point. With the help of friends, it has been a catalyst which has helped to deepen my own inner quest.

If I have followed in the track of my IC colleagues, it is because I have never felt under pressure and have been able to retain total freedom. And I have been struck by their selflessness, their welcome and the sense that I mattered to them. Not because that boosted my pride but because what I did was important for them.

When, in 1998, I was asked to become president of the French Association of Initiatives of Change, I was ready to accept, thanks to my tireless friends!

Jean Fayet

Translated from Changer magazine, April-June 2003, by Laurie & Elsa Vogel

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A RISKY ADVENTURE

Ramez Salamé, Lebanese Christian lawyer, reflected in London on the Middle East.

What is the road to peace? Dietrich Bonhoeffer has written: "Peace is an audacity. It is a risky adventure. Peace is the contrary of security...Peace implies total surrender before God's command. It

does not look for security but hands the history of peoples, in faith and obedience, over into the hands of Almighty God, accepting to be powerless to determine the outcome." It seems that those most powerful today are not ready to take that risk.

In an article in the '80s, Peter Hannon wrote that in South Africa black and white reacted completely differently to the same event. That is the same today between the Arab world and the West. What is the answer? Hannon ends his reflection by citing the words of Jesus: "If you remember that your brother has something against you, go first and be reconciled to him." That means recognising the wrong done and giving him back his due. This is what MRA has taught us; we ought to cling to this.

I believe there is an extraordinary potential for good in the Arab world. The more powerful Christian West has particular responsibility to draw it out. This requires courage and a continuous repenting spirit.

Bishop Kenneth Cragg summarised his vision of Christian-Muslim dialogue by saying, "We are meant to convert together to God."

This issue was edited by Mary Jones and Janet Paine, with layout by Blair Cummock. As in previous years, there will be no Newsletter in August. Please send material for the September issue by August 25 to Mary Jones, Oakley Cottage, Kirkcudbright DG6 4AH.
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