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MISSIONARY Herald

Cry Freedom

- In Nepal
- In Sri Lanka
- El Salvador

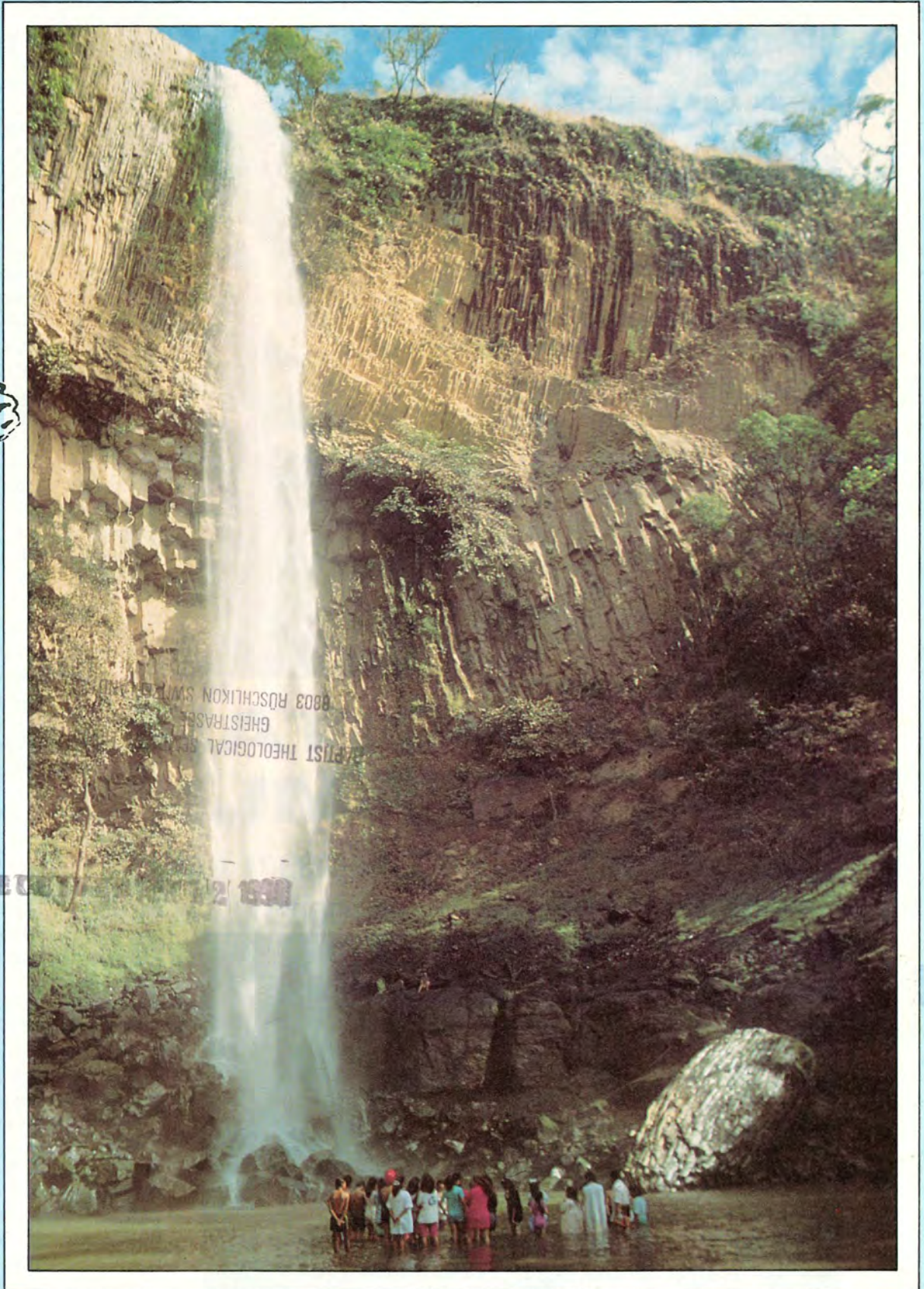


Call to Prayer

Bicentenary

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PO Box 49, Baptist House
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Telephone: 0235 512077
Telex: 94070435 BMSB G
Fax: 0235 511265

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General Secretary
Revd Reg Harvey

Overseas Secretary
Revd Angus MacNeill

Editor
Revd David Pountain

Design
Anthony Viney

Enquiries about service overseas to:
Personnel Secretary
Joan Maple

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

'Freedom' is a word we've heard spoken frequently over the weeks of the Gulf War. But then so many words were used – and to tell us what? Certainly not the truth, which is always the first casualty of war. Sometimes one got the impression that certain words and phrases were chosen specifically to obscure the reality. How can we talk of 'friendly fire' when it nevertheless maims, kills and destroys? And then there is 'collateral damage' which is a nice forgetful way of describing the deaths of women and children.

And so to the word 'freedom' which is not only our theme this month but that of the Baptist Assembly in Bournemouth. We explore freedom in several ways as we look at different countries.

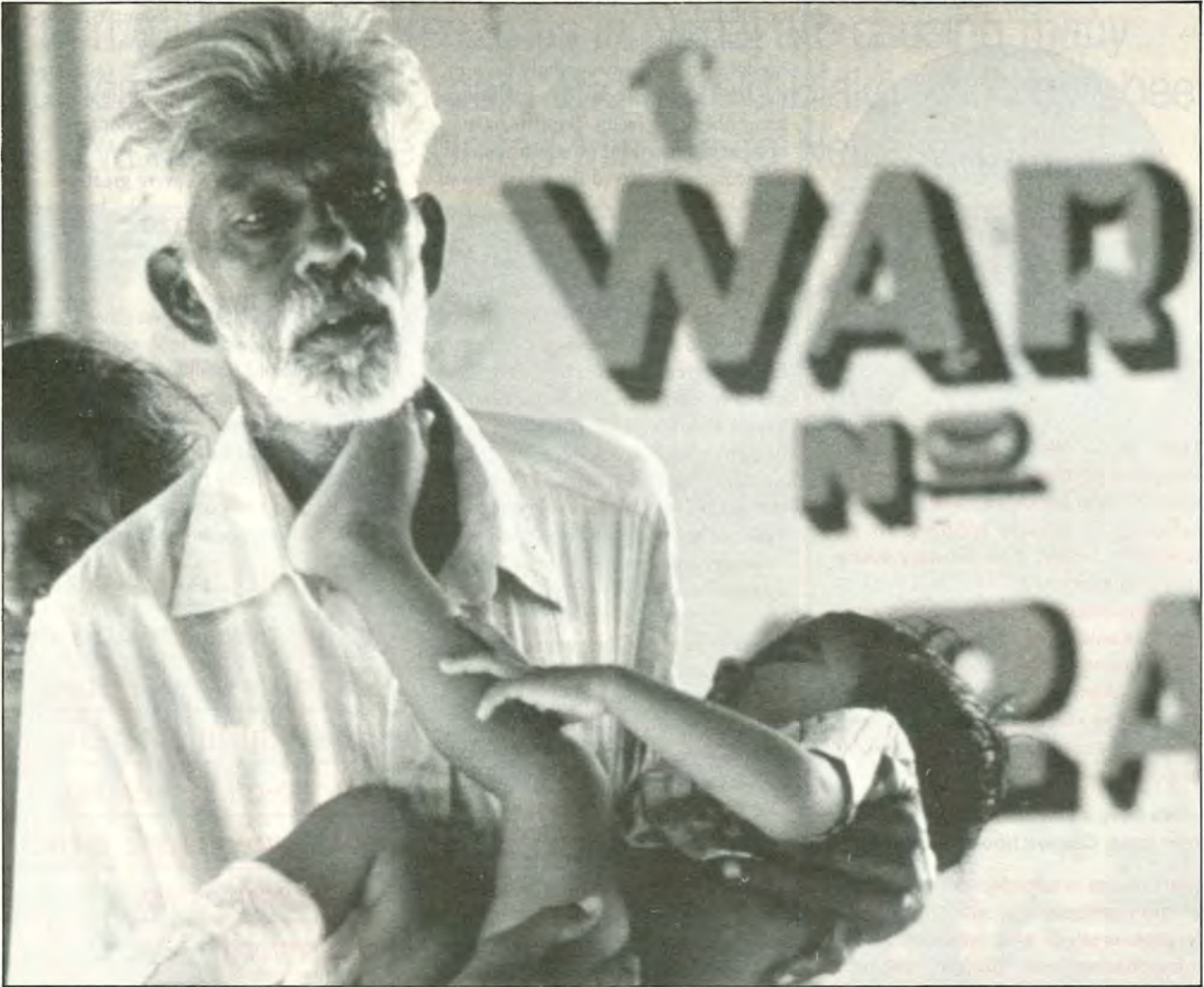
Is it the 'idea of freedom' which has gripped the people of Nepal rather than an understanding of the responsibilities which political and religious freedom demand? In Sri Lanka we are surprised to find that they do not share some of our ideas of freedom.

Then in the heart of El Salvador's capital we find a simple woman, certainly not enjoying economic freedom, most definitely part of that country's majority who are held down by a privileged élite and yet knowing a different kind of freedom.

'I am courageous because God is with me,' she says.

It is a reminder to us all that true freedom has spiritual roots. It is never achieved by going to war, or if it is it is often quickly lost to another kind of slavery.

'The truth shall make you free,' says Jesus. And that is what we are about. At the heart of all that we do as a missionary society is the desire to tell, with clarity, that truth which is gospel – good news.



LIBERATION AND LIMITS

What does 'Freedom' mean in troubled and civil-war-torn Sri Lanka? That's the question we asked Michael Hambleton who returned from that island last year.

THE PEOPLE of Sri Lanka have been praying for and longing for the freedom to move about their island. To live on an island where there are no-go areas is a symbol of their lack of freedom.

Christians, however, rejoice in that freedom of speech which enables them to address the gospel to the war situation. Often they exercise that freedom at great personal risk. The words which they write, or speak over the radio and television, could be used

against them by those who would not agree with the Christian understanding of the political situation.

They are also free, within the churches where Sinhalese and Tamils have found a common faith, to break through racial divisions which normally separate the two groups in the island.

Christians are free to evangelise and they make use of this freedom gladly.

The Christian understanding of grace breaks the Buddhist and Hindu belief in merit and therefore gives freedom to

those who can embrace the Christian faith from those backgrounds. The message, that there is forgiveness of sins by the grace of God through faith in Christ, is the message to Hindus and Buddhists who believe they are bound up in the circle of life until they have atoned personally for all their sins.

As a whole, Sri Lanka rejoices in its independence and freedom from colonialism. There is a desire to maintain that freedom by resisting dominance from outside, whether it be commercial



World
MISSION
Link

THIS IS IT! We're launching World Mission Link this month. We've talked about it long enough and the new terminology is already tripping off the tongues of many a missionary secretary and minister.

Out go deputation, furlough, deputation organiser. In come WML, Home Assignment, WML Organiser, Staff Teams, Mission Education, Link-Up.

If you are still confused, don't worry. We're here to help and to answer some of your questions.

We have a special celebration in our own town. Can we book a Staff Team?

Staff teams are made up of members of the headquarters' staff, BMS Area Representatives and, when available, missionaries and foreign nationals. The teams will visit different areas of the UK. Dates will be set aside well in advance because Team Visits will involve churches from a much wider area than previous 'Deputation Week-ends'. Early preparation, planning and publicity will be essential.

The BMS Representatives will be responsible for choosing the areas where teams will visit. Any area interested in such a Team Visit should contact their BMS Representative to discuss possibilities.

What is the commitment that churches make when they become part of a group Link-Up?

Both churches and missionaries agree to certain things. The churches agree to support their missionary Link-Up through prayer; keep in regular contact; give towards the support of world mission; and plan a Link-Up visit when the missionary is on Home Assignment. The missionaries agree to keep in contact, share news of themselves and their work and support their Link-Up churches in prayer. □

or cultural.

The contribution of the church to modern Sri Lanka has mainly been in the form of education. This has been a great liberating factor. Baptists have been at the forefront of education and particularly pioneered the education of girls.

The attitude towards young people in Sri Lanka is very different from that in the west. The so-called freedom that young people exercise in Britain is not understood and even pitied by a society that lays great store on the family and old-fashioned morality, on parental advice and discipline. The influence of western media is regarded with great suspicion by Sri Lankans. They believe that young people enjoy a greater freedom because they know their limits.

Those young people I spoke to about arranged marriages — 'love marriages' are becoming more common in Sri Lanka — said that they would like to have the responsibility taken from their shoulders. They trust the wisdom of their parents on both sides in the arranged marriage.

The Buddhist community would feel that western influences are more acceptable to Christians. This has odd by-products. In an attempt to bring back a bit of old fashioned respect for the elders, the Buddhist government has requested that all children revert to the old practice of worshipping their parents before leaving home in the morning and worshipping their teachers when they arrive at school. This simple ceremony involves bowing down before them for a while, touching their feet and then rising up so that the parents' hands can be laid on them in blessing.

Christians prefer to use the phrase 'honour your parents' and have rejected 'worship'.

'Children should not be made to worship their teachers,' they say, 'and probably not their parents.'

'This is just another example of lower, western morality creeping in,' say the Buddhists. 'We are trying to raise moral standards, to lift the discipline of the children. Christians are obviously opposed to it.'

In spite of this, we were greatly surprised and encouraged by both the responsibility of parents towards their children and the acceptance of discipline by the children.

Where we felt guilty was that those same parents would look at us and ask how we could possibly leave our children, who are only in their early 20's, alone and separated from parental discipline. This spoke to them of an attitude to family that they could not understand from responsible Christians.

Sri Lankans generally marry at about

The attitude towards young people in Sri Lanka is very different from that in the west. The so-called freedom that young people exercise in Britain is not understood.

26 or 27. But in a sense that does not cut them off from parental responsibility. They are still sons and daughters and parents are still honoured and respected and looked to for advice and guidance. Parents remain the head of the family.

These are attitudes we would have expected in Britain a couple of generations ago. Things have changed and we have entered a so-called greater freedom. But is it a greater freedom? Who knows? Perhaps the people of Sri Lanka can teach us a thing or two! □



The Henstock family (centre) with Stella and Michael Hambleton (right back) and Sri Lankan friends

'The new found freedoms in Nepal are causing many problems,' explain Barbara and Harold Blake who have been working with the United Mission to Nepal at Butwal.



THE IDEA OF FREEDOM IS RIPPING THROUGH NEPAL

THEY SEE FREEDOM as the freedom to obtain what they want. So there have been many meetings where students have come up with long lists of points. Instead of working with the companies in their factories, they want half-time — half time working and half time in education.

They want more sports, more facilities for recreation, better housing conditions, better working conditions, overalls, protective clothing.

They have submitted their points to

the management and it has caused great problems. One solution we came up with was that instead of a four year training programme we should offer a two year programme and the option at the end of either discontinuing the training or going on to a third year, then after review a fourth year. This is a way for the management to control 'freedom' which has got out of control.

This pattern is seen right across the country. Any group of people can stop what they are doing, go on strike and demand anything from four to 15 points.

The best example has been in the hotel industry. A group of people came out on 'hunger strike' demanding improvements in their work. In order to obtain what they wanted they went on hunger strike — but of course it was in rotation.

Freedom in Nepal for many is obtaining what they feel they would like, not for the benefit of the country as a whole. They are trying to understand what freedom is about. Not having experienced it before they are exploring all the possibilities.

It is quite a hotch-potch — individual

striking, group striking, striking for what they want or striking for their party. Freedom is ripping through the country.

The worst example was in a hospital for disabled children just outside Kathmandu. It has been functioning for quite a number of years. The children are trained to produce goods for sale. It has been an ideal, if simple way to give them some employment and to build up their self-esteem.

Now, of course, with the new freedom they are saying, 'Hey, we want better



food, better sleeping facilities, shorter hours.'

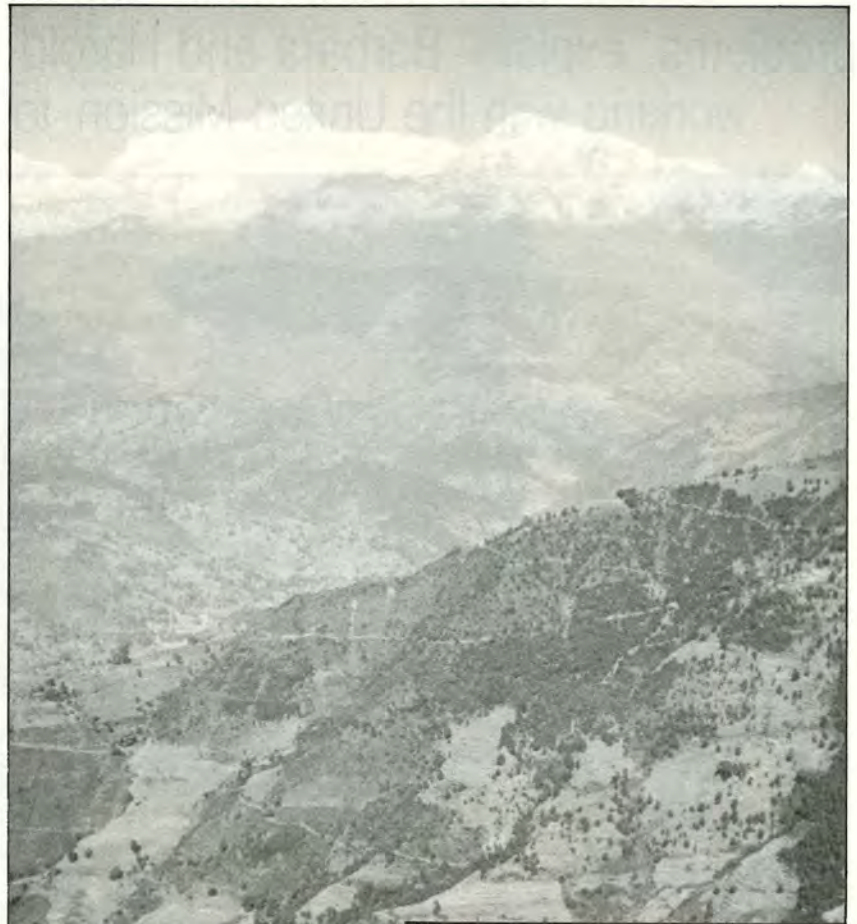
They have gone so far as to close their department to the people who are running the hospital. They are refusing to work and to move. Here are people who would have been destitute without the help of the hospital. It is really sad.

Where does the United Mission to Nepal fit into the new freedom to express their Christian faith? How are they going to enter into this new phase in the life of the Nepali Christian Fellowship? The UMN is having to make decisions about its place in the country, even to the point of wondering whether it should introduce pastors into Nepal to work alongside Nepali pastors.

The new constitution has given specific freedoms to Christians and to faiths other than Hindu. They are now able to hold meetings and own buildings.

Part of the constitution talks about freedom of the press so the Nepali Christian Fellowship has interpreted this as freedom to publish Bibles and Christian literature – something they were not permitted to do before.

But there is still that clause which forbids people from changing the



religion into which they were born. At the moment no one knows what a new government will do if they find that anyone has been converted. In the old days that person would have been imprisoned.

Those who are already Christian have freedom to meet and to worship and to use a building for church purposes – but not to evangelise.

So there is both a positive and negative side to the new-found freedom of Nepal.

One real problem is that people were not prepared. 'Democracy' was just a word, an idea. No one gave them any education about how to use it or what it means in terms of personal responsibility. □

**Top left: Harold and Barbara Blake
Above: Non-formal education class
Right: Nepali church service**

THE ADVENT OF DEMOCRACY — hopes for Nepal

RAMESH KHATRI is an author and Bible School teacher who has been living and studying for a doctorate in Oxford. David Pountain spoke to him about his work and his hopes for Nepal.

What have you been studying in the UK?

I am studying towards a doctorate in theology, and my topic is the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares. This is one parable least worked on by other scholars and very little has been written about it. I hope to finish this quite soon.

And this is to help with your work back in Nepal?

Yes, the Nepali Bible Ashram Educative Board sent me to study. The Nepali Bible Ashram is a small Bible Institute in Kathmandu. Realising that the church in Nepal is only 40 years old, we have very little Biblical material like commentaries and other helps in Nepali. When I go



back, my main work will be to write commentaries and materials in Nepali. I will also continue to teach in the small Bible School where I served for the last six years before coming with my family to Oxford.

You had some problems in setting up the school in Kathmandu?

Yes, our problem was that faced by all churches in Nepal. No Christian organisation was allowed to register

legally in Nepal. However, they continued to exist and were harassed by the authorities from time to time.

Our Bible School started on the same basis in 1981. We bought a piece of land, put up a building and started the School. Because land was cheaper outside Kathmandu, the School was located in a village. Soon, because everyone knows everyone else in the village, some started to object to the Bible School, and we were reported to the police quite often.

Ramesh Khatri



In January 1983, I was threatened with imprisonment and told that we could no longer have Bible classes in the building. So we had to vacate our building. We then rented other buildings in the centre of Kathmandu and started the School there in March 1983. Ever since then it has been continuing.

So, in reality, we just had a one month delay and that was all the damage done. Now with the advent of democracy in our country, I think the Bible School can run more openly. Although it will be some time before the new Principal will

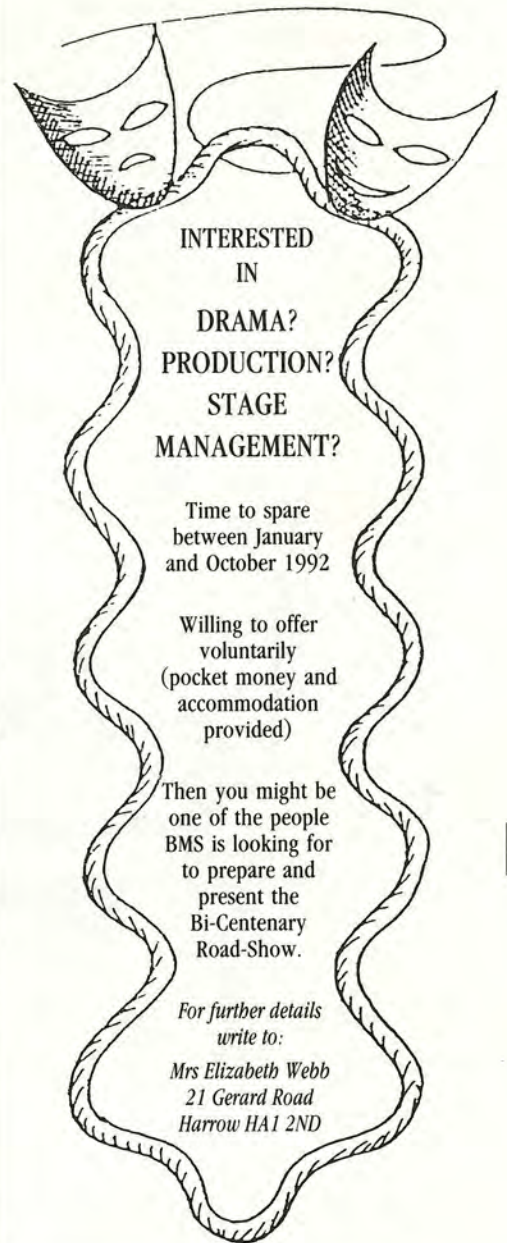


MAKING TRACKS IN THAILAND

1990/91 BMS WOMEN'S PROJECT

We're thrilled with the response to the project from women all over Britain and we are well on the way to reaching the target of £21,000.

Please don't forget to send in all your contributions for the project before the end of April.



take measures to register the School legally and have it recognised.

How many students are there in the school?

We usually have about 12 students, including one or two married couples and the rest single boys and girls. Normally about five or six people graduate each year. This is quite small, but then Christians constitute 0.1% of the total Nepalese population, and the church only started after 1952, this is a contribution to the church. Many of our graduates are now serving their village communities or the village churches that sent them. We have had our share of failures, but many students are making a contribution to the life of the church in Nepal.

How many Christians do you think there are in Nepal?

The figures vary quite a lot. I am still conservative in my counting. People have speculated that there may be 75,000. But what usually happens is that people count the number of people that come to faith in Christ but they don't consider that many churches have actually been wiped out through persecution as well. So my own reckoning is about 40,000 Christians at present.

You have mentioned the new democracy and freedom. How do you see the new freedom in Nepal?

I have just read the new Nepali constitution that was promulgated on 9 November 1990, and I am encouraged to see how much freedom the press has received and that there is now total freedom of speech. There is a clause saying that no-one will be imprisoned for writing or publishing anything, and no printing press or publishing house will be closed because of what they publish. This is remarkable when just a few years ago newspapers were continually being quashed by the government for printing something the government didn't like. Freedom of speech is very necessary.

Regarding freedom of religion, there is still a clause which prohibits conversion, but another contradicts that saying that Christian organisations and churches will be allowed to register. The name 'Christian' isn't actually stated, but religious organisations and bodies will be able to register legally. My own guess is that by putting in this anti-conversion clause, the government is trying to save face. But I don't think that there will be the sort of repression that we faced over the last 30 years. □

AT LAST!

'Nepal has a new democratic constitution,' writes one Christian worker. 'In spite of the diverse ethnic, political and religious groupings in the country, it seems acceptable to the vast majority. Some have been disappointed that the new constitution keeps Nepal a Hindu state. It need not necessarily be a bad thing. It depends on future interpretation of the constitution in the law.'

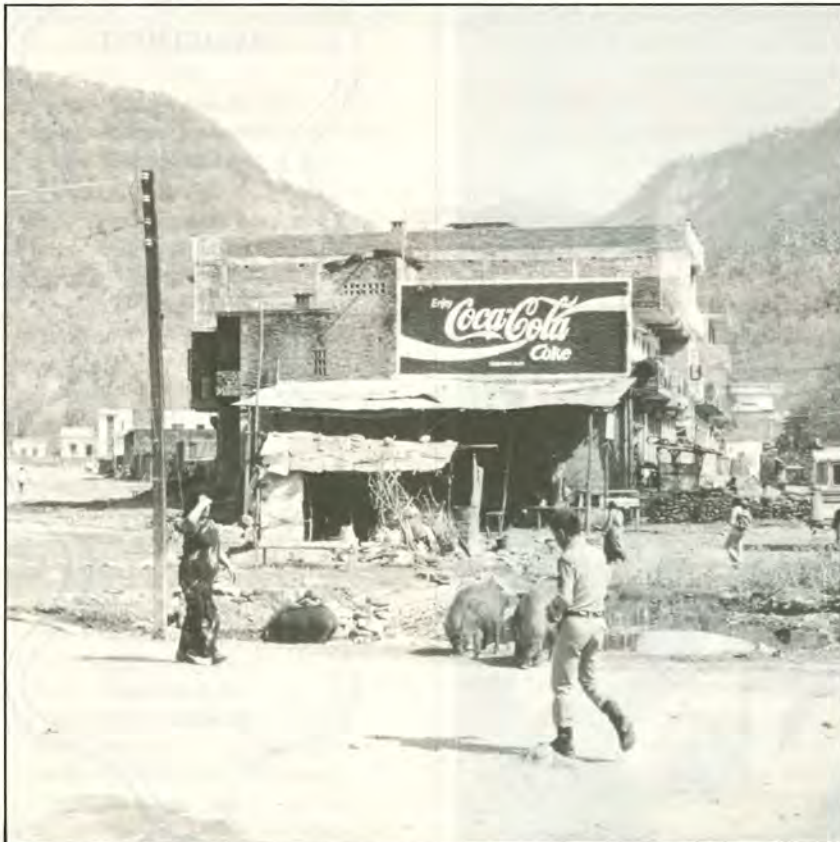
The new leadership has a much more relaxed attitude towards Christians, Muslims and other minorities. The Prime Minister greeted the Christian community on Christmas Day.

A new spirit in the country does seem to exist – at present. But one has a nagging doubt that the new constitution, with the wrong government in power, could again be misused to persecute religious minorities.

In our village, we started constructing a new church building just before Christmas. It is almost finished now. No one was quite sure how much opposition there might be from the villagers and whether we would be physically prevented from proceeding. So far, there has been none and the building has gone up quickly and without problem.

When finished, it will be large enough to house our Saturday morning worship, and for prayer groups. Later, as finance permits, it will be expanded to allow space for all church activities.

In some ways it will be sad to move out of our long-used rented buildings, but moving into the new will be a result of planning and vision which goes back many years. And the new constitution of Nepal *does* allow churches to exist and own property – we think! □



Developing Nepal!



Leopoldville (Kinshasa), a rapidly expanding city

After the Pioneers: Africa 1914-1960

1. Setting the Scene

THE FIRST 30 YEARS of the Congo Mission tell a hard and dramatic story. Fifty missionaries had given their lives, taking 'the short cut to heaven' as it became known. But the sacrifices of the pioneers had fuelled the fervour of others, determined, in the words of the 1877 slogan, to win 'Africa for Christ'.

A new century brought new political arrangements in Congo. In 1908 power was transferred from the Free State to Belgium. Scandals associated with the rubber trade had been coming to light, and measures were necessary to deal with the brutal treatment meted out to natives. At first the BMS had been reluctant to get involved with the 'Red Rubber' campaign, led by Edmund Morel. Grenfell and others felt that private representations to the Belgian

King would be enough to stop the atrocities. When it became obvious that more action was required, the Society backed the efforts to outlaw the exploitation, and missionaries passed on vital information to the investigators. Conditions began to improve after 1908, but in some areas progress was slow.

In the Portuguese Congo (Angola), trouble arose over conditions in the cocoa trade. In 1913-14, an uprising against the planters turned into a rebellion against the Portuguese government. A BMS missionary, Rev J S Bowskill, was asked to act as mediator. However, initial hopes for peace were dashed, the San Salvador church was devastated, and Bowskill himself was imprisoned, charged with aiding the rebels. He was released after a few days, and the rebellion harshly put down. Reprisals followed. Church membership plummeted from 1,128 in 1913 to 439 two years later. Rev R H Carson ▶

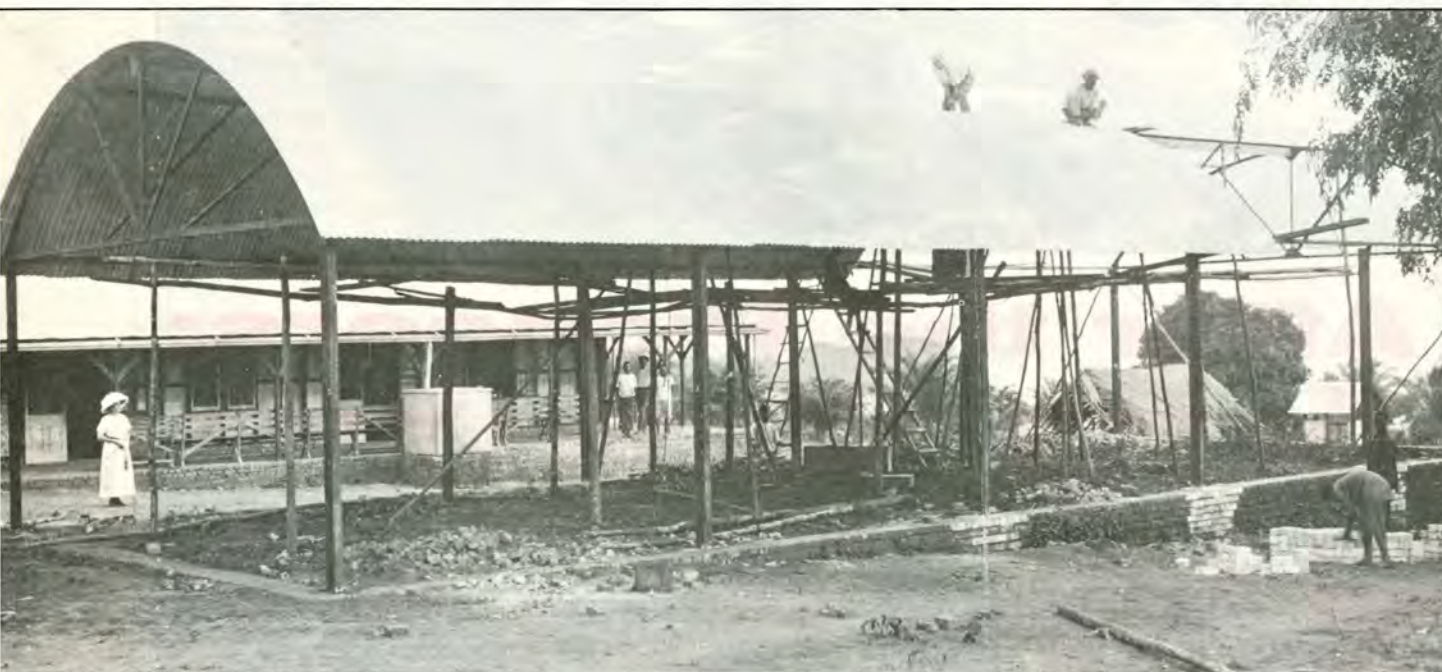
◀ Graham was amongst those given the task of re-building the shattered church.

The War in Europe also had an impact on Africa. The supply of missionaries, especially medical personnel, was affected, at a time of rapid growth in both the churches and the towns in Congo. Leopoldville (Kinshasa) began to develop into a busy urban centre, along the lines of a town plan drawn up in 1913. In 1915, the Kalina church was built by the river, and in the same year the last of the BMS river steamers, the 'Endeavour', was taken out of action. It was seen as redundant in an era of government-run transport.

Despite the difficulties and the changes, church membership had risen to 7,353 by 1918. It had more than doubled in ten years. The number of school children stood at 20,000. The need for pastoral care and teaching was enormous.

the furthest flung. Their recommendations included the closure of some stations, and the amalgamation of others. They emphasised the need for new missionaries to develop the work. Their pleas were heeded, and the number of missionaries increased from 91 in 1919 to 138 by 1939. That the missionaries lived longer and enjoyed better health was a noticeable feature of this time. Only two missionaries died between 1919 and 1939, and many served faithfully for very long periods.

The Church in Congo was beginning to develop leaders of its own, often people who had been educated in mission schools. Their powerful testimonies to the power of God which had totally transformed their lives, won many converts. Some Churches began to take on some financial responsibility for the work, as the BMS found itself hit by the economic depression in Europe. This was



2. 'After 40 Years'

AT THE END of the Great War a deputation of General Committee members was sent to the Congo in 1919, to review the Society's work. The group comprised C E and Amy Wilson, Rev and Mrs Louie Parkinson and W Parker-Grey. On their return to Britain they published a report entitled 'After 40 Years', which was to shape BMS policy in Africa between the Wars.

In a trip lasting four and a half months, they visited all the BMS stations, from Matadi to Wayika,

compounded by the ending of the Arthington Bequest in 1928, and led to years of deficit for the Society in the 1920's and 30's. Roman Catholic missions received increasing subsidies for their school, but Protestants were granted no help until 1948.

Let us now look in more detail at what was happening in the different regions between 1914 and 1939.

Building Bolobo Hospital 1914

3. Portuguese Congo (Angola)

THE UPRISING OF 1914 was followed by the issuing of Decree 77 from the Portuguese government. This strictly regulated the operation of Protestant missions. Schools had to teach in Portuguese and a Portuguese national to be appointed as Headmaster. In the churches, the use of Kikongo hymn books and Bibles was forbidden, although preaching and prayer in the native tongue were allowed. Many people emigrated to the Congo because of the high levels of taxation. If you had a friendly local official, you might establish a good relationship with the government, but in another district the opposite could be true.

The first BMS hospital had been established in San Salvador, with Dr Gamble arriving in 1907. He was very successful in the treatment of sleeping sickness. Because medical help was so scarce, the services offered were much appreciated. Even Watavidi, wife of the King of Congo, received treatment. Converted through the witness of Mrs Lewis, she had been baptised and joined the church despite the initial opposition of her husband. Walter Wooding describes her determination to attend church services, even though increasingly handicapped by leprosy: 'When leprosy completed the ruin of her feet she crawled to chapel on her hands and knees, though the former were by that time nearly gone too. At length, thin and worn by the terrible malady, she was wheeled in an old hand-cart, but the smile, the dimple and the bright eyes shining out their welcome were there still.'

The building of roads and the forcible movement of people from rural areas to sites along them caused much hardship and many refugees. Road transport aided the growth of church membership in the 1930's, but the students were not allowed to cross the border to receive pastoral training at Kimpese.

Kibokolo, where Thomas Lewis began work in 1898, at last began to show fruit in the 1920's. After a severe 'flu' epidemic, in which the missionaries toiled ceaselessly to bring relief, a real eagerness to hear the Christian message developed amongst many who had previously been uninterested. In ten years, church membership grew from 200 to 1,200. The Zombo people wanted to build a church, and having no constructional materials near at hand they began

the task of carrying stones from a site four miles away. Forty thousand stones were transported by men, women and children, covering, in Fullerton's words, 'a distance, in aggregate, equivalent to twelve times round the earth!' Symbolically trees which had been planted to provide fetishes were cut down to form the pillars and beams of the church.

The station at Mabaya had been closed in 1915, after eleven years. Sleeping sickness had decimated the population. But demand from local people led to the re-establishment of work at Bembe in 1932.

4. Lower River Region (Matadi-Kinshasa)



THIS WAS AN area which becomes generally more urban and prosperous in character. Wathen (Ngombe Lutete), established in 1884 in open countryside, expanded its influence. Simon Kimbangu, originating from one of the outlying villages, became a church member at Wathen. In 1921 he declared that he was to lead the people in healing and teaching, having received a direct revelation from God. Immediately he was hailed as a prophet, and he attracted great crowds wherever he went. The government was afraid of the often hysterical response evoked, and Kimbangu was

sentenced to death. Missionaries such as Joseph Clark and Ross Phillips, though they did not agree with Kimbangu's methods, interceded for him with King Leopold. As a result, the death penalty was reduced to life imprisonment: Kimbangu lived in exile in Katanga until his death in 1951. With Independence in 1960, Kimbanguism was no longer a banned faith, ending 30 years of underground operation by its adherents.

At the outset, Kimbanguism had a bad effect on the churches. Many local people disagreed with the missionaries' condemnation of the movement. They left the church in large numbers. In 1924 an outbreak of 'Prophetism' in another area led to similar defections. However, by 1925 those who had become disillusioned with new movements began to return to the churches. The 1930s was a period of recovery, and in 1938 Ngombe celebrated its jubilee with a membership of nearly 2,000.

In 1920, a new station was opened at Kibentele (later Nlemvo), south of Thysville (Ngombe-Lutete), and it quickly grew in size. Thysville itself developed in importance after it became the base for railway engineering in 1923, although it, too, was affected by Kimbanguism. Leopoldville (Kinshasa) became the seat of government in 1925 and its population increased dramatically. In 1928, when the Golden Jubilee of missionary work in Congo was celebrated, a hostel and permanent office for the Congo Protestant Council were established in the city. Previously the BMS had tended to represent the interests of all the missions in Leopoldville.

In 1928 the work at Matadi was taken over by the



Mr and Mrs Clarke at Bolobo with orphan children

Swedish Mission (SMF). They joined in the work of the Kimpese Evangelical Training Institute (KETI) in 1936. After 1933, separate courses for teacher training and pastoral work were introduced at Kimpese. It became known as EPI – L'Ecole de Pasteurs et d'Instituteurs. From the ranks of its students came many distinguished church leaders, such as Jacques Nzakimwena and later Samuel Koli.

5. Middle River (centred on Bolobo)

BOLOBO, GRENFELL'S BASE and dockyard for the 'Peace' became the main centre for the region, with its fine schools and industrial training facility. It hosted the remarkable ministry of Miss Lily de Hailes and long periods of service by A E Scrivener and J A Clark. The hospital, founded in 1910, attracted patients from a wide area and here, too, sleeping sickness was successfully treated. Dr Ian Acres served for 15 years at Bolobo from 1933 to 1948. In 1930, Andrew Macbeath opened a Bible School to deal with the increasing need for trained pastors.

Lukolela, which had been closed as a station due to depopulation, was re-opened in 1925 under the care of the Stonelakes. New employment in the cocoa plantations was largely responsible for people returning to the area.

Thirty miles down-river from Bolobo lay Tshumbiri, run by the American Baptists. In 1923 they asked the BMS to oversee the work, and in 1930 the station was permanently transferred. The Americans also asked for help at Ntongo, on Lake Tumba, and Dr and Mrs Alfred Russell were loaned to run the hospital there in 1938. Later, this station too was handed over to the BMS.

In 1934 a tremendous revival shook the area. It began with the carpenter Botendi experiencing God's dealings. Confessing openly his own sins, he challenged his fellow-Christians to repent and re-commit themselves. The churches at Bolobo, Lukolela and Tshumbiri not only saw a phenomenal rise in numbers (membership at Bolobo doubling in four years to 4,258) but a new sense of spiritual life and urgency. New chapels were built, and many men wanted to be trained as evangelists. Mankoko of Tshumbiri, a leading Chief, was restored to fellowship.

to be continued

□

LUCY



SHE WORKS VERY hard from very early in the morning until she leaves for home late at night. She has one basket full of small packets of sweets which she sells to passers-by. In another she has grapes which she has bought from the United States. The third basket contains little bags of sliced pineapple, papaya and other fruit.

Lucy is about 45 years old. Her husband left her when she had three small children and since then she has been putting all she can into keeping the family together. She has beautiful eyes and a very dramatic face.

In order to do what she does, Lucy borrows about 1,000 colones for a month and pays back at the rate of 50 colones a day which includes interest. On the day I spoke to her she had sold 60 colones worth of goods. Fifty colones were going to pay back what she had borrowed. One colon was going to somebody to look after her baskets during the night so that she wouldn't have to carry them backwards and forwards to Zacamil each day. So out of the day she had a profit of nine colones, which is worth about 50 pence.

When we spoke to her, she was worried about the municipal police. They had been watching her for three or four days and she was concerned for her future.

Lucy is a member of the Zacamil Baptist Church in El Salvador. She is a street seller and for the last eight years has been placing her three large straw baskets, along with other street-sellers, by a bus shelter in the middle of San Salvador. That's where Sian Williams met her last year.

They had offered her the opportunity to buy an ID card for 150 colones saying that with it she could stay on her pitch — for the price of another 150 colones each month. So that was another 5 colones each day just to stay where she was. That is just the kind of harassment street sellers feel from the military.

Lucy lives with her three children in a little room at the back of Zacamil Baptist Church. The roof is made of corrugated iron and leaks. The floor is of concrete. She cleans the church for nothing.

Everything seems to be against Lucy without any possibility of change. She

believes that she could get on her feet if she could actually have 1,000 colones to pay off some of the debts.

There are thousands of people like her. So how does she cope?

'Well, I'm courageous because God is with me. He gives me courage,' she said, her faith somehow shining out from her eyes.

She takes part in the Zacamil community Bible study and is one of the church leaders. She has great leadership qualities and a strong faith, but as far as society is concerned she has a very low position. □

FOLK MEDICINE IN NICARAGUA

'Herbs, roots and plants – the natural medicine of Nicaragua's indigenous peoples for centuries – are becoming popular once again through necessity,' reports Paul Jeffrey, a Methodist missionary working in Nicaragua.

IN NICARAGUA, WHERE the economic crisis is literally killing the poor, interest in natural medicine is on the rise.

The National Centre for Traditional Popular Medicine (NCTPM), based north of Managua in Estelí, is one of several centres conducting workshops throughout Nicaragua to assist health workers in learning some of Nicaragua's ancestral natural medicine.

The centre's staff has done research on more than 957 medicinal plants in Nicaragua and has assisted health workers in learning correct usage and dosage. The NCTPM staff has also published a manual on natural medicine for rural health workers.

For many of the workshop participants, however, using or

prescribing natural medicines is nothing new.

Elvira Cuna, a 58-year-old midwife who helps run a Baptist-sponsored clinic in El Obraje, in northwestern Chinandega, said she had been using herbs, bark, roots and leaves for more than 20 years. She said she first learned how to use medicinal plants from old women who passed on their knowledge to young midwives.

According to Cuna, about five years ago, however, the Health Ministry started working with midwives in her area to help them understand the correct uses of medicinal plants.

'There were some remedies that we were giving in doses that were too strong,' she said. 'The Health Ministry people supported what we were doing,

but gave us some training so that we could do it better.'

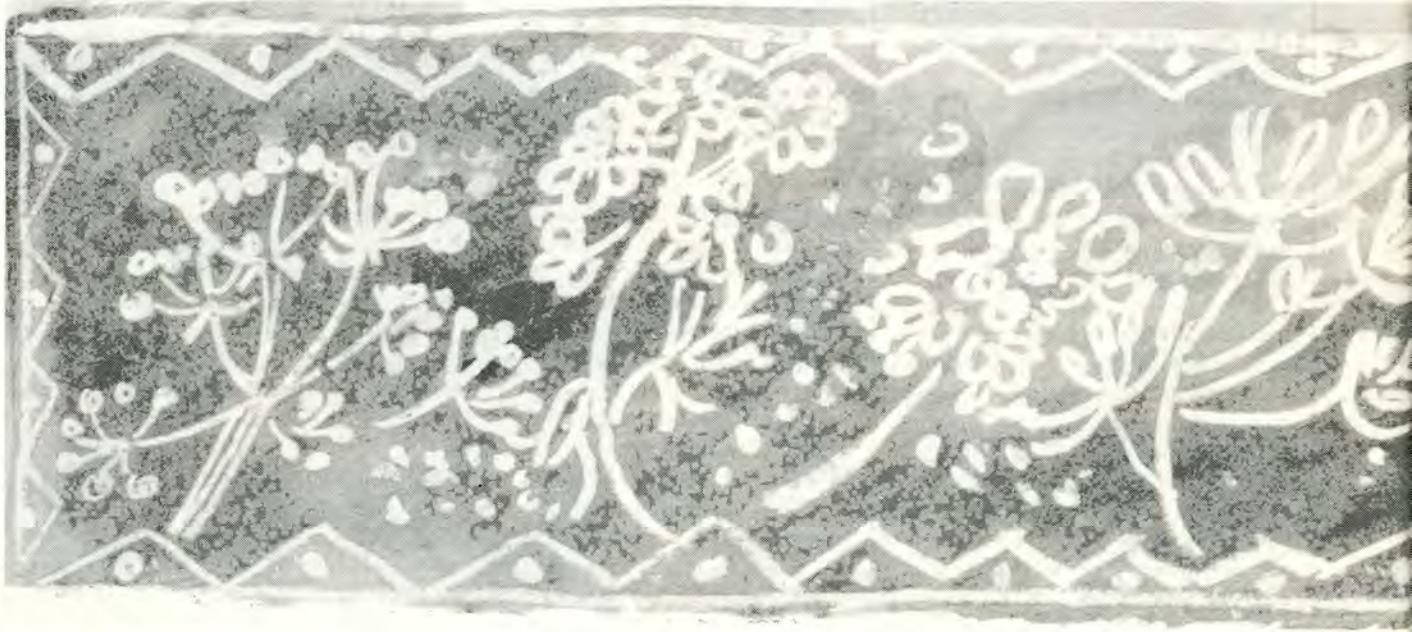
This change in attitude had its roots in the trade embargo imposed on Nicaragua by the US government in 1985. When the main source of pharmaceuticals was cut off, Nicaraguan health officials began looking for alternatives.

Along with other, smaller groups, the NCTPM began a study of the ethnobotany of the north, interviewing *curanderos*, *remedieras* and midwives – those who administer health care in the remote countryside.

'We discovered a valid cultural legacy,' said the NCTPM's Alejandro Florite. 'Despite the thousands of commercial medicines that had been developed, and despite the aggressive advertising by the transnational drug companies, our people kept their traditional practices intact. They didn't lose this inheritance from our ancestors.'

Florite claimed the NCTPM is careful in its use of the scientific method to analyse plants and their usages. Such a studied approach has made it easier to convince the doubtful of natural medicine's efficacy.

According to Florite, however, the hardest to convince are the physicians who 'still see the patient only as a source of income'.



He hopes physicians studying at the National Autonomous University will soon have a course on natural medicine to complement the programs the NCTPM already carries out with nurses and paramedical workers.

Campeños, who have long used natural medicine, generally need no convincing of its benefits.

them from the countryside, cultivating them in their yards.

The NCTPM is also opening natural pharmacies in departmental capitals. In the central rural town of Boaco a local pharmacy will open soon providing medicines made from native plants.

Although it was a central factor in starting the NCTPM's work in 1985,



Lilliam Escobar, a Baptist health leader, suggested that groups supporting village health workers need to help rural residents strengthen their knowledge of plants by adding scientific findings to the folk wisdom passed on by community elders.

Urban residents – now the majority of the Nicaraguan population – are not cut off from the natural medicine chest of the countryside. Florite says that urban migrants often bring a few plants with

Florite said the end of the US embargo last year did not lessen the importance of research and education in popular medicine.

While more medicines are now available, the majority of the population cannot fill a prescription at the well-stocked, but high priced private pharmacies. And government clinics – which for the last decade provided medicines at no cost – are plagued by bare shelves. □

BMS MEETINGS AT THE BAPTIST ASSEMBLY

*at the Bournemouth
International Centre*

TUESDAY 23 APRIL

11.15 am

Annual Members'
Meeting

WEDNESDAY 24 APRIL

9.30 am

Missionary Sermon
Preacher: Rev Sven Ohm

WEDNESDAY 24 APRIL

7.30 pm

Annual Public Meeting
(with valediction of
missionaries)



EVANGELISM RESEARCH

An evangelism research project has been launched by Churches Together in England and the Bible Society. It aims to find out how people come to faith and so identify the best possible way of passing on the good news of Jesus Christ.

The project team hopes to publish its findings next year and to make them available to churches of all traditions. It is hoped that the report will provide new insights to help churches be effective in outreach in the 1990's.

According to John Finney, the project manager, 'The project depends on the assistance of Christians across the country for its successful completion.'



Roger Zavala (left) and Pablo Gaitan (right)

FELLOWSHIP VISIT

Last year, the BMS entered into partnership agreement with the Nicaragua Baptist Convention.

'In these early stages it is important that we get to know each other so that we can build up understanding and fruitful co-operation,' says David Martin, BMS Assistant Overseas Secretary.

As part of this process the President of the Nicaragua Baptist Convention and

Principal of the Baptist Theological Seminary, the Rev Roger Zavala, and the Rev Pablo Gaitan, Secretary of the NBC Executive Committee and pastor of Peniel Baptist church, Managua, will be visiting Britain in May.

'They want to see as much as possible of Baptist witness in Wales, Scotland and England, to have contact with our Baptist colleges, and to see some hospital chaplaincy work,' says David Martin.

'They also wish to see special ministries such as those amongst the elderly, drug abusers, young people and community projects. They would also welcome the chance to share in Association Assemblies.'

David Martin would like to hear from those who would welcome a visit from our Nicaraguan friends and also from those who are fluent in Spanish who would be willing to act as interpreters. They both understand English but are not very confident in the language.

DISASTER WARNING

In a recent report, several churches and aid agencies warn that 20 million to 600 million people in Africa face starvation in 1991 unless enough food aid is provided.

The report was issued by the Geneva based Licross/Volaga Steering Committee for Disasters, which includes the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Caritas International, Catholic Relief Services, Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches.

In particular Ethiopia, Angola, Sudan, Liberia and Mozambique face 'grave food shortages' because of civil strife. Other parts of Africa will suffer crop failures due to drought. 'If help does not

come quickly,' the report says, 'Africa will face a famine as bad as or worse than that of 1984-85.'

STREET KIDS

Brazil's Health Minister, Alceni Guerra, has promised to release the names of business people who finance and organise 'death squads' that kill street kids. In Rio de Janeiro alone, 445 street children were killed in 1990.

According to government statistics, eight million adolescents and children live on the streets of Brazil's larger cities. These youngsters survive by guarding cars, working as drug couriers or by stealing.

In response to Guerra's declarations, Silvio Cunha, the president of Rio de Janeiro's business association, stated that whoever is killing the street kids 'is doing society a favour'.

Cunha added, 'Those who decide on a life of crime have to run the risks of the profession. They will kill and die, and when they die there's one less.'

Usina Baptist Church facing a Brazilian street and bringing hope to the 'kids'



PANIC

On the eve of 15 January, consumers in Venezuela were crowding supermarkets to stockpile food, anticipating the worst as a result of the Gulf war.

This scene was repeated elsewhere in the Caribbean region when news of the bombings brought about near panic reactions. Rumours spread that merchants were withdrawing items in anticipation of higher prices.

As a result some governments imposed price freezes to discourage hoarding.

At a special meeting of the Rio Group, which includes eleven Latin American and Caribbean countries, a regional response was made to the economic security and called for a meeting of the region's energy ministers to develop regional security measures.

Churches, social organisations, political parties and coalitions also came together to demand a peaceful solution to the hostilities. The Latin American Council of Churches strongly criticised the United Nations for 'applying the logic of war instead of the logic of peace'.

'Peace is an undeniable right of all people and no country or international organisation has the right to

deny this privilege granted by God.'

The war dealt a devastating blow to the region's tourism industry, which is the backbone of the economy for many of the islands and smaller countries.

In Costa Rica alone hotel bookings were down between 15 and 30 per cent.

The panic buying was not completely unfounded. A quick glance at shelves in most stores shows just how dependent Caribbean consumers have become on the import of processed foods and other consumer goods.

But some commentators are saying that the crisis could have its beneficial side 'if governments are forced to devise more realistic plans for sustainable long-term development, based on the region's own renewable resources'.

CHURCHES VIE FOR LATIN SOULS

Through the use of mass media the evangelisation projects, the Catholic Church's Lumen 2000 and the Fundamentalist Protestant *Proyecto Luz* have spread their 'message' to large portions of Latin America's population.

'The two have one strategy,' stated the Rev Miguel Angel Casco, co-ordinator of the Nicaraguan ecumenical organisation.

According to Casco, a Pentecostal minister who until recently hosted a television programme, 'On the one hand, the Catholic Lumen 2000 and the Protestant *Proyecto Luz* have common elements, and on the other hand they are in competition.'

Lumen 2000, along with a related project Evangelisation 2000 which is based on fortifying the power of the Pope and the hierarchy, are part of the Vatican's new

evangelisation campaign for Latin America.

The two Catholic programmes count on the support of powerful charismatic Catholic groups in the United States and Europe. With the endorsement of the Vatican, these groups have developed programmes for parishes using techniques adapted from Protestant 'televangelists'.

Proyecto Luz falls under the umbrella of the 700 Club, US evangelist Pat Robinson's vast religious media empire.

The confrontation between the two mass media evangelisation projects has to do with their very clear proselytising characteristics.

'The Vatican is conscious that the Latin American continent is the greatest reservoir of what remains of the Catholic faith. In reaction to the Pentecostal advances, above all in Central America, the Church responded by giving its support to Lumen 2000. It wants to preserve its Catholic base in the face of evangelical gains,' stated Casco.

'*Proyecto Luz* has aimed its campaign at winning over nominal Catholics who make up the majority in our countries,' he added.

In spite of their differences, Casco claimed that the two projects have a common denominator: They are both directed toward stopping a Christian consciousness which is committed to the continent's popular movements.

According to Casco, 'The fundamental aspect for the ruling system is not how many Catholics or Protestants there are in Latin America.

'For the system, what is important is stopping the advance of popular church, whether Catholic or Protestant, that adopts a liberating position. This is the overriding strategy. At the present time the system is appealing to religious elements because its ideology is being weakened,' he stated.

Proyecto Luz first launched in Central America at the end of 1989. It began operating in Guatemala and in a short time had a major impact: Within months membership in evangelical churches tripled.

In Nicaragua, *Proyecto Luz* was launched at the end of the presidential campaign in February 1990. The surprising victory of Violeta Barrios de Chamorro and the right-wing *Unión Nacional Opositora* gave an added boost to the project's theme, 'Now there will be more light.'

The evangelical campaign was launched in Argentina in October 1990 with series of television programmes broadcast by 16 stations in the interior of the country. It is estimated that some two million people saw the three programmes distributed by the Argentine branch of the 700 Club.

Before beginning the television campaign, however, 700 Club members distributed 13 million brochures in churches and public areas. The brochures included a short evangelical message and announced the upcoming broadcasts.

According to Mario Bartolini, the director of the 700 Club in Argentina, a survey taken by a private polling company showed that 43 percent of the population in the northwestern city of Rosari, the third most densely populated city in Argentina, saw the *Proyecto Luz* broadcast. In addition, in the northern city of Tucumán, 70 percent of the 100,000 residents tuned into the programme.

The severe economic crisis that is affecting Latin American countries and the lack of confidence in political leaders are seen by analysts as contributing factors to the growth of evangelical congregations throughout the region.

Dafne Sabanes Plou, an Argentine journalist



BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

Part of the Bible now exists in 1,946 languages according to a report from the United Bible Societies. In 1990 at least one book of the Bible was translated into 18 new languages and three of these now have complete New Testaments.

The UBS also reports that four languages now have complete Bibles for the first time.

It is estimated that there are about 6,000 languages in the world. UBS translators are currently working in 406 languages in which at least one part of the Bible is being translated for the first time.

The Bible Society says that in theory more than 80 per cent of the world's population has access to the Bible, or at least a portion of it, in a language they can speak or understand. But this estimate is misleading when considering factors that hinder availability such as geographical isolation, illiteracy, political and social problems and the difficulty of grasping meaning in a language which is not one's mother tongue.

CALL TO PRAYER

24 APRIL-
2 MAY

Zaire: Pastoral Training

One of the major problems caused by the rapid growth of churches in the developing world is a lack of trained leaders. This is true for Baptist Community of the River Zaire which is training pastors, catechists and evangelists in its own Bible schools and theological institutes and also in co-operation with other churches in Kinshasa and Kimpese.

Ian Thomas teaches at the Baptist Theological College at Bolobo, and Tim and Barbara Bulkeley teach at the Faculty of Protestant Theology in Kinshasa, where Tim is the Vice-Principal.

5-11 MAY

Brazil: Paraná and Rio Grande do Sul

Parana is the area of Brazil where BMS has worked the longest. The state convention is aiming to increase the number of churches from 143 to 200 by the end of next year. Derek and Joanna Punchard are in Curitiba where Derek is Association co-ordinator. Avelino Ferreria took over as director of state missions just twelve months ago.

'I made contacts with our 27 missionaries and made plans to visit them all within the first six months,' he wrote last year. 'In six weeks, I was able to visit half of them which involved driving over 3,000 miles. Those missionaries work on 14 different fronts and I was most grateful to God for being able to visit seven of them.'

A recent area of BMS co-operation is Rio Grande do Sul in the very south of Brazil. Here Roy and Margaret Deller have been working since 1985 and Roger and Angela Collinson have recently started work in Rio Grande.

12-18 MAY

North India

Whenever Christians come together from different traditions, however loving and accepting they are, there are inevitably some tensions. This is no less true for the Church of North India, which has its headquarters in New Delhi. Many former Baptist churches are now part of the CNI, especially in Orissa where there is a continuing response to the gospel.

*Lord,
yours is an everlasting kingdom
that will never pass away
but sometimes
watching with our earthly eyes
it looks fragile and vulnerable
and ready to break apart
especially
when Christians don't agree
and struggle for status and
authority.*

*Lord
hold your church together
in the unity which is strong in witness
just because of the variety of
background and experience.*

19-25 MAY

National and Area Representatives

Some of the key people in relating to the Baptist Churches in the UK are the BMS National and Area Representatives. This year especially they have the responsibility of helping churches to understand the way World Mission Link works. We remember them as they travel long distances and work 'unsocial' hours visiting churches, associations and auxiliaries and as they seek to bring world mission alive to Baptists in Britain today.

One or two of the representatives are near to retirement and the Society is looking for those who will replace them. Please pray that the right people will be recruited.

26 MAY-1 JUNE

Bangladesh: Community Involvement

Christian work in Bangladesh is never easy, but it has been especially difficult in recent months. Not only has there been the unrest linked with the dismissal of President Ershad, elections and a change of government, but the war in the Gulf made many militant Muslims resentful of anything Western and, by implication therefore, anything Christian.

The Bangladesh Baptist Sangha has several areas of outreach into the community. The Social Institutions Board oversees most of the medical and educational work of the BBS while the Social, Health, Education and Development Board promotes work and projects in rural areas.

We remember the School for Blind Girls in Dhaka and the Christian Primary Education Centre offering schooling in English. Sue Headlam co-ordinates community health projects throughout the country and is involved in an exciting income generating scheme at Chandraghona.

2-8 JUNE

Zaire: Church Work

The Baptist Community of the River Zaire (CBFZ) is one of over 50 protestant communities in the country which form the Church of Christ in Zaire (ECZ). The President of CBFZ is the Rev Koli Mandole Molima. BMS worker Owen Clark acts as Vice-president and Treasurer.

The CBFZ area is enormous, stretching as it does for over 1,000 miles along the River Zaire. It would be almost impossible to administer if it were not divided into regions each with its own president and officers. Nevertheless, Pastor Koli has to travel extensively each year in order to visit each area. This is increasingly hazardous as communications worsen in a country of high inflation and a failing economy.

9-15 JUNE

Young People

Sunday is the Baptist Youth World Day of Prayer. We remember young people all over the world and pray that their lives may be changed through Jesus Christ.

The First of the BMS 28:19 The Action volunteer teams returned home in April. The Jamaica Six are now travelling around Britain, visiting each of the BMS areas, in order to share something of their experiences. We now look forward to the formation of new teams for 1991-2.

The summer programme this year includes visits to Jamaica and France sharing in the outreach programmes to these countries. There is also to be a holiday with a difference at the Gaines Christian Centre, near Worcester.

WORLDWIDE

The monthly BMS cassette tape of interviews and news to inform your praying.

Write to BMS today to order your copy.

16-22 JUNE

Brazil: North East and North West

'The pattern of droughts for successive years and then suddenly floods (which they call green drought because the crops are still lost) has been observed since Europeans first came to Cear  in the 17th Century,' writes Iain Walker who works in the North East of Brazil. 'About a third of the six million inhabitants live in the dry scrubland of the interior.'

Iain and Anne have been invited to work in a small town, Canind , with a new Baptist church. The church, although it is quite small, is anxious to get involved in social work. They have already bought a small shack in a *favela* where they 'preach, hold a Sunday School and organise a vaccination clinic.'

Over in the North West, in the state of Rond nia, Vince and Sadie MacDougall have moved to a new work in Cacoal where the church has 800 members and 13 congregations. Vincent's job is to develop, train and encourage the congregations.

MISSIONARY MOVEMENTS

ARRIVALS

Tim Reed

on 25 January from Pimu, Zaire
Michael and Jackie Cranefield
on 8 February from IME Kimpese, Zaire

Brenda Earl

on 15 February from Pimu, Zaire
Edith Dawson
on 15 February from Pimu, Zaire

DEPARTURES

Foster and Jean Wright

on 30 January to Kinshasa, Zaire
David Payne

on 8 February to Butwal, Nepal

Graham and Louise Jackson

on 12 February to Kinshasa, Zaire

Kevin and Linda Donaghy

on 21 February to Campinas, Brazil

Martin and Kathie Hewitt

on 24 February to Porto Alegre, Brazil

BIRTHS

On 17 February, to **Tim and Mary Reed**, a daughter, **Laura Alison**. Laura weighed in at 10lbs 3ozs.

On 3 March, **Rachel** was born to **Catherine and Robert Atkins**. She weighed in at 3.6kgs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

LEGACIES

Mrs Olga Page	100.00
Mrs Margaret Hayes	6,429.21
Jane L Scott	1,048.97
Miss H M Russell	2,000.00
Muriel Alberta Staines	7,987.34
Miss W A Coleman	120.00
Miss Muriel Greer	500.00
Mrs W B S Davis	248.95
Cecil Evan Tenison Lloyd	5,596.97

General Work

Anon: £30.00; Anon: £10.00; Anon: £400.00; Anon: £30.00; Harrow: £50.00; Payroll giving via Barnardo's: £20.10; via Partners in Giving: £50.00; Huddersfield: £300.00; Huddersfield: £350.00; Aberdeen: £100.00; Anon: £200.00; Kidlington: £10.00; Aberdeen: £20.00; via Charities Trust: £4.75; Finchley: £300.00; Anon: £12.08; Southend: £2.00; Durham: £40.00; Anon: £113.55.

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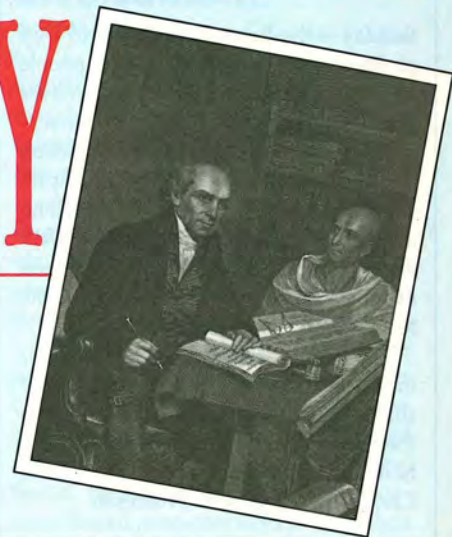
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