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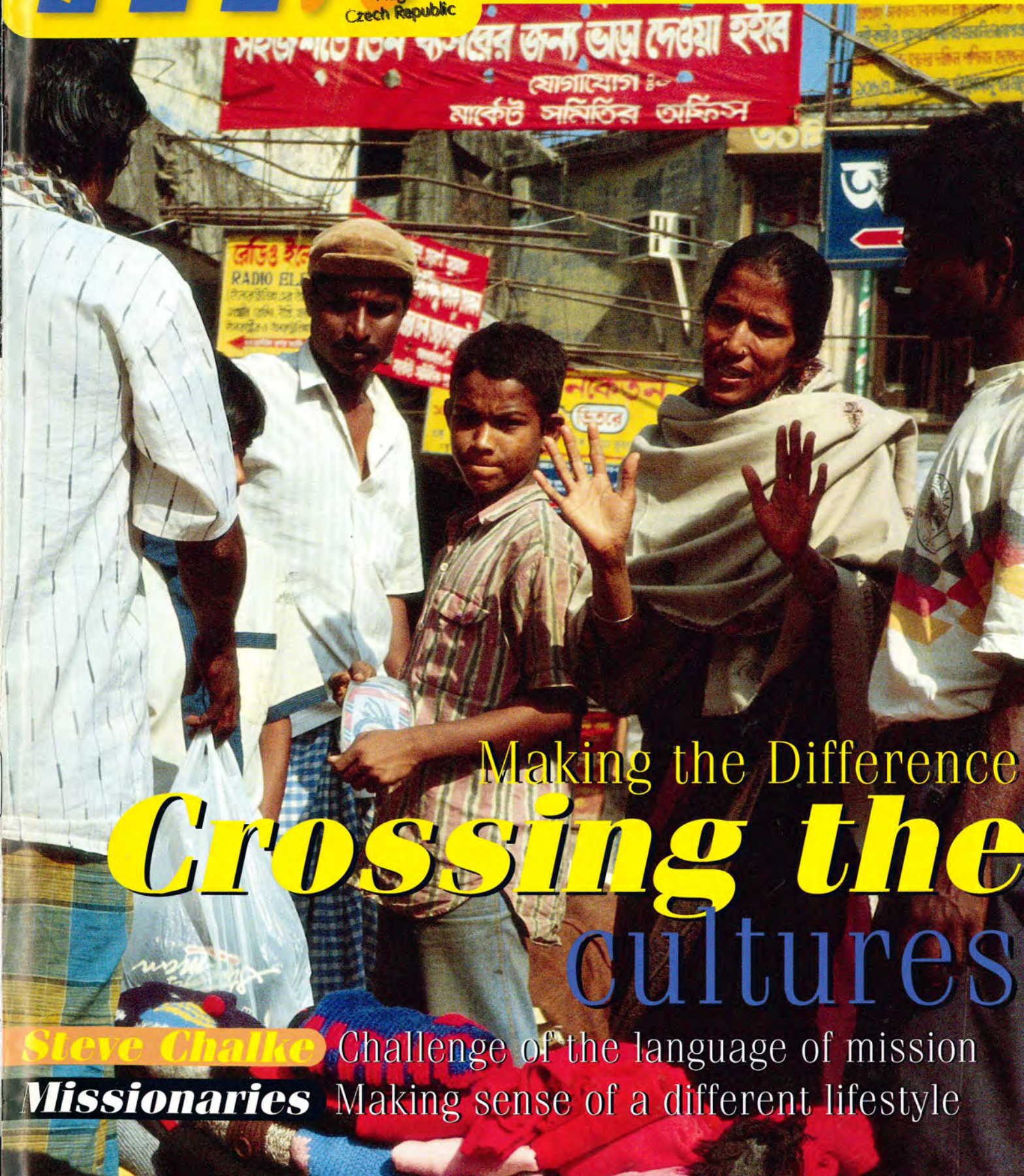
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Steve Chalke
Missionaries

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That’s how we do it in Britain. And very convenient it is! But it doesn’t happen everywhere, so we commissioned four contributors to open the door on to other ways of life to show what cultural gulfs BMS missionaries sometimes cross to share the gospel of Jesus Christ and to encourage national Christians in the work of mission. It’s not designed to send you on a Western materialism guilt trip – but we hope it will help you to pray with understanding for those who are at the sharp end.

Richard Wells

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missionary herald

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Out in the sticks

THERE'S A WELCOME IN THE HILLSIDE . . . BUT IT'S A TWO-DAY WALK AWAY, AS **MARK AND MARIAN RUDALL** EXPLAIN

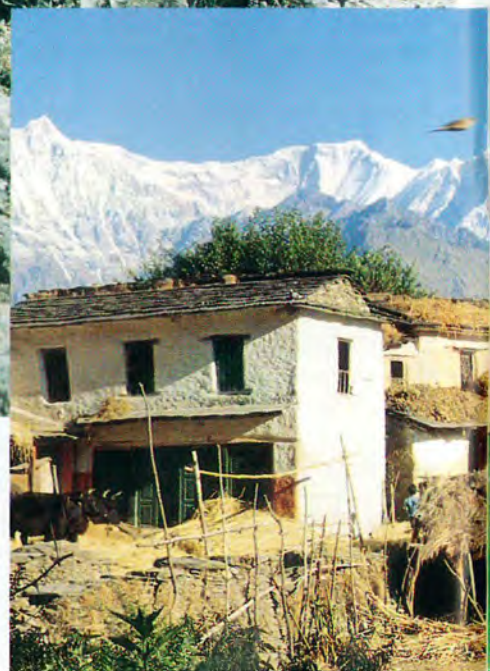
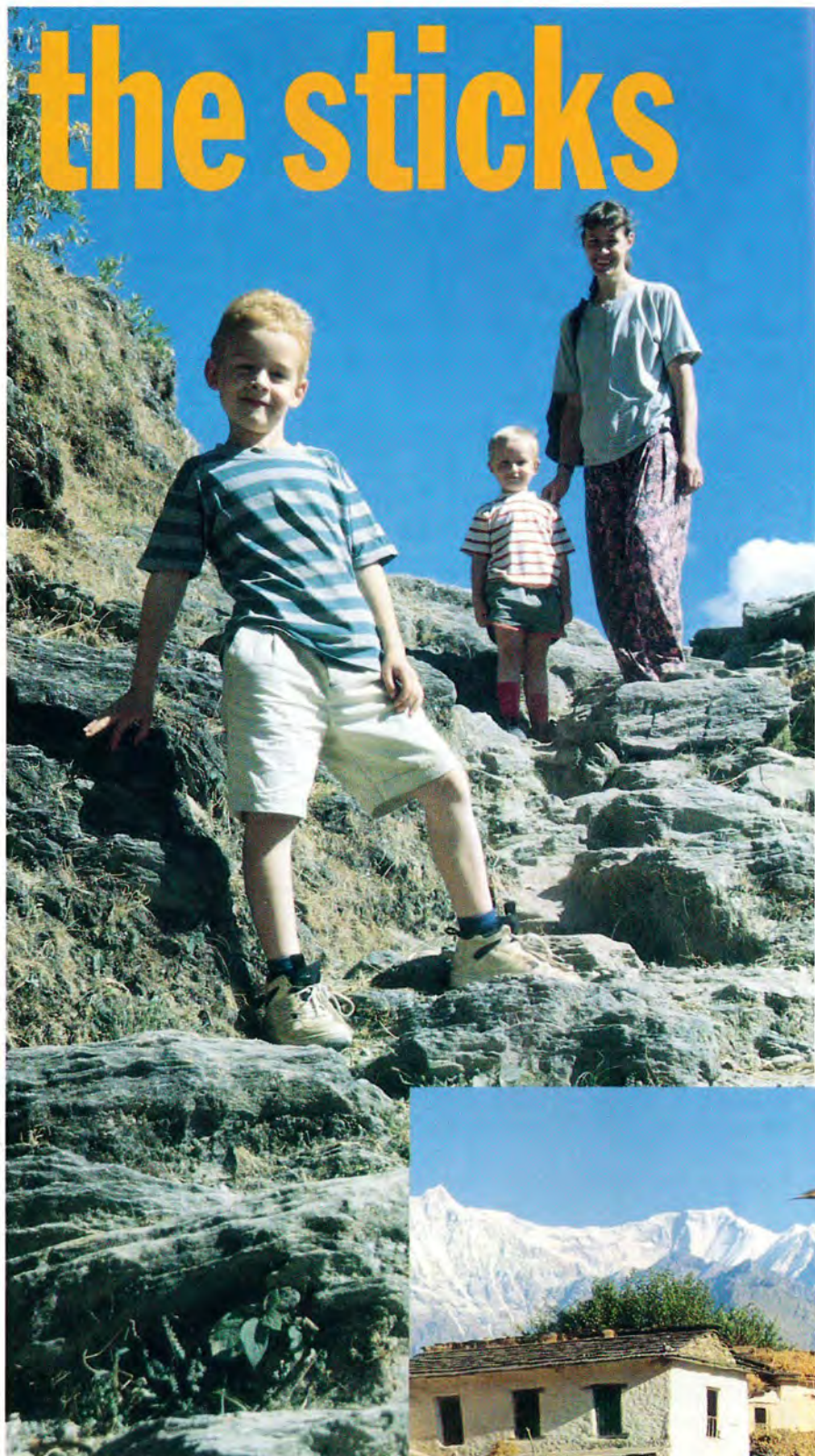
Nearly vertical zig-zag paths are never inviting, especially to tired walkers in blazing sunshine. But there, just visible at the top were three tiny figures and through my binoculars I saw them shielding their eyes from the sun, squinting down at us and waving.

This view of the welcome party – a mother and two children at the top of the hill – had the same kind of effect as a rope being let down as we trudged wearily upwards to greet them. Yet despite the encouragement it was nearly an hour after our first sighting that we finally clambered up to join my sister-in-law and two young nephews.

Alison Rudall, married to my brother Chris, has two young sons of seven and four. She and her husband are BMS missionaries and they live in Takum, a Nepali village 30 miles – two days' walk – from the nearest road.

When she came to meet us Alison had not left the confines of the village for some three months and during that time had carried on a daily routine of formal home schooling for seven-year-old, Alex, and informal teaching of David, who is four.

Home for the family is a rented stone-and-mud house of classic rural Nepali style. While it is undeniably picturesque with its wall of snow-covered Himalayas looming in the



background, life inside is a far cry from Chris and Alison's pleasant semi in Macclesfield.

The Takum house has a slate roof but no ceilings so that when the occasional rat runs along the roof-beams he's easy to see if not so easy to

catch. The roof leaks spectacularly in monsoon rain because hundreds of years of Nepali roof design never quite cracked the problem of what to do at the apex of pitched roofs.

Floors downstairs are of earth, newly mudded each morning by the family's Nepali home help, their Didi. The word means "elder sister", but Didi is an essential daily help, baking bread, making dal baht and taking the washing out to be scrubbed on the concrete at the nearby tap-stand.

The long-drop toilet – just a hole in a concrete slab – in a tiny outhouse peopled by curiously flat but large spiders, provides its own special challenge several times each day. The same is true of the wood-fired stove and two primitive Chinese-made paraffin stoves on which all cooking and water heating is done.

The house became space-age in the eyes of neighbours when a shallow concrete sink was installed, standing on two massive pillars with a gap between. The householders point out that the design is exactly the same as the one in Fred Flintstone's home in Bedrock, except unlike him, they don't have a pocket-sized dinosaur sitting underneath to act as a pedal-bin.

There is a small outhouse with a rain-water tap fitted up by Chris. This wash-house, though, is not conducive to washing too regularly although

occasional once-overs with the sort of solar showerbag used by caravanners is a possibility when the sun is out. The sun also powers a solar-panel which charges a truck-battery and provides, again, caravan-style lighting around the house.

The milkman comes each day in the form of a small Nepali boy with a grubby plastic jug. Most of the foreign bodies in it are caught when the milk is filtered twice and boiled. This buffalo milk is mixed with dried milk to make supplies of yoghurt using cultures sent from Britain.

Supplies brought by visitors are very important. Savoury sauce mixes add interest to the ever-present rice. A large selection of Instant Whips and similar products are essential to mix with the buffalo milk. Best of all though, for every missionary that I have ever met, a supply of Cadbury's Dairy Milk is a treasure beyond rubies. Eyes light up when the chocolate appears because nothing tastes so much of home.

Yes, the Takum house may be very attractive in a photograph. Indeed, having travelled for five days to spend a weekend there, followed by a further five days to get home again, its almost total isolation up there in the Himalayan Middle Hills lent it a romance I will never forget.

While there I recorded the jackals coming up the hill and taunting the local dogs. I resisted the temptation to record the sound of Takum waking up – best symbolised by the gut-wrenching sound of sustained hawking and spitting as the people started their daily routines.

I wanted to identify with Chris and Alison, for my wife, Marian, and I are both involved in world mission in different ways ourselves. She is a Senior Accounts Clerk at BMS in Didcot while I serve Tear Fund as Regional Co-ordinator for Central Southern England. Our private visit to Nepal in November 1995 brought

these roles together since Chris and Alison are BMS missionaries seconded to the International Nepal Fellowship to work on INF's "West Myagdi Community Health Programme" – which happens to be funded partly by Tear Fund alongside contributions from Tear Fund Australia and Bread for the World.

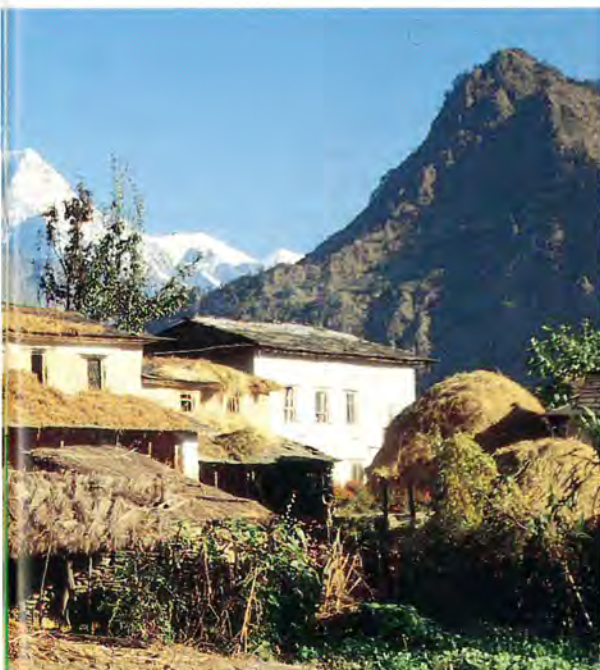
With all these connections we ought to feel very involved in their scene: but we live in comfortable surroundings in Britain. In Takum we saw one of the truly isolated frontiers of 20th Century Christian mission where the work is uphill in every respect. We shared communion together and my brother said it all as he chewed on the piece of Didi's solid-but-wholesome bread I had broken off for him: "this could take some time!"

To choose to live there, surrounded by a people whose culture, dark religious traditions and language are all so alien demands that people like my brother and his wife are either mad or trusting fully in the Grace of God. Only he could ask them to go there – or perhaps more accurately, only he can keep them there.

It's also only in His strength that they, like so many other equally isolated Christian mission and development workers, can say "We've never felt so sure that we're in the right place at this moment". ➔

TOP LEFT:
Reception committee: "Get a move on Auntie Marian!"

BOTTOM LEFT:
Chris and Alison Rudall's picturesque home in Takum (far right) thirty miles from the nearest road. Living conditions are altogether less attractive. The mountain behind is Dhaulagiri, the sixth highest mountain in the world.



LEFT:
The kitchen. Chris's hi-tech high-level sink is an object of wonder in Takum where everyone else washes up at ground level.



TOP LEFT:
Head office of the
International Nepal
Fellowship's West Myagdi
Community Health
Programme in Takum.

BOTTOM LEFT:
The family at home

MARIAN WRITES:

In Liverpool they have a word for it: "nesh". It describes someone unable to cope with any sort of discomfort. Some might say it describes my reaction to the things I found hard to handle in Nepal which my brother-in-law Chris and his wife Alison accept as a part of everyday life.

Cleanliness was an issue for me, especially after a three day walk wearing the same clothes in high temperatures. I was desperate for a shower and never has a bowlful of hot water been so appreciated. It's clearly impractical to attempt to maintain Western standards of cleanliness and there are not the same social pressures to wear clean clothes everyday in rural West Myagdi. Indeed, because the floors of Chris and Alison's house are made of mud, everything quickly attracts a layer of brown dust.

Many household tasks we take for granted in the Western world become major issues in Nepal. Is there any hot water in the Thermos flasks for washing up and rinsing? Is there filtered water available for cleaning teeth? But there are sometimes simple answers to familiar problems too and I noticed that the scourer for saucepans was a stone split by Didi to provide a flat abrasive surface. It was very

effective and environmentally friendly!

Cold was not a problem while we were there but in winter the temperatures sometimes demand up to eight layers of clothing to keep warm in a house which has plastic sheeting in some of the windows and simple wooden shutters in the others. The only form of heating is the wood fire used for cooking. Nobody would want to wash frequently in conditions like those! The "bathroom" is an outhouse with a cold water tap and a drain in the floor.

But set against all this is the breathtaking natural beauty of the mountains. Also beautiful were some of the paths we walked on up to Takum, over the top of occasional landslides, one of which had wiped out an entire village a few years previously, and across rickety bridges which needed some attention. A cow had fallen through one the morning before we used it.

The porters who carried our luggage moved gracefully and at a steady pace. We wore fell boots but they wore only flip-flops or thin canvas shoes and others we saw were barefoot. At one stage on the way home we passed porter after porter struggling under massive loads made up of 8ft lengths of polyethylene water pipe of

the kind Chris uses. None of them wore anything substantial on their feet as they picked their way along the path, rarely looking at the ground – something I did all the time.

To see all this filled me with amazement as I thought how Chris and Alison regularly entrusted their two small boys to porters like these to be carried in baskets over narrow slippery paths while they could only watch and keep them happy by telling them endless stories as they walked behind.

The path is the only route to civilisation – short of a helicopter – and if anyone needs medical attention they must summon the courage to walk or be carried the 30 miles to Baglung. One young woman on the staff at Takum earlier in the year was unable to face the trek at the end of a pregnancy which promised a difficult delivery. The westerners on the project tried to persuade her to make the journey, but she refused, preferring to stay in the village to die after an agonising labour. Things like that are hard to watch.

On getting home? I am profoundly grateful for the opportunity to see Chris and Alison in their setting, but how grateful I am, too, that God has called me, for the time being anyway, to serve him in the UK! ●

We all miss the warmth of the African sun on our backs. We are annoyed by having to take half an hour to dress up in order to go out for a walk in winter

Out of Africa

RICHARD AND ELISABETH SMITH TALK ABOUT WHERE HOME REALLY IS

Our ministry in Zaire came to a rather ungainly end with social and economic unrest and the seemingly timely intervention of French and Belgian paratroopers. The children were suddenly faced with being divorced from the country of their birth; we as their parents with a sad, rapid, yet strangely prolonged divorce from a life and ministry of over 10 years.

Richard began the long and frustrating search for a job in the UK which would be both worthwhile and support the family, after recognising that it was probably right to take time out from working with BMS. We felt very lonely and isolated whilst trying to discern the right way forward and the Will of God in all the turbulence, this inspite of the support and listening ear of BMS, family and friends, because at the end of the day, the agony and decision was ours alone. Even two to three years after the separation we wonder should we not have taken another path and perhaps pursued more actively a continued association with BMS and or missionary work.

After some nine months of concentrated effort, we felt relieved when a job came and we were able to look forward to owning, at long last, our own home and lead a 'normal' life. We soon found out that buying a house was neither cheap, easy and certainly not without numerous and deep pitfalls; on our third attempt we succeeded and this is now the first time in our married life when we haven't moved house in less than two years. Our house is rightly Africanised with oil paintings and various other memorabilia, even the house name is suitably Zairean; 'Lipamboli', meaning blessing, which, of course, it is but

there is still a strong part of us that would rather be living in the real thing. Every so often, one of the children will ask, "Can't we have mpondu (leaves of the manioc root eaten at every meal as the vegetable), beans and rice for dinner?" This was our staple diet in Zaire. We still eat a lot of beans and ours is one of very few homes in Horsham where no television resides and no, neither we, nor the children, miss it. We never needed one in Zaire, we really don't need one here either as there is always far too much else to do. We were paid a compliment very recently by a young university student member of our house group when he said that he was impressed by our lack of materialism, not that we can claim total success on this front. In Africa, we neither had, nor particularly wanted, the trappings of the Western world. Here in Britain we find that we are bombarded by the materialism of the environment in which we now move and work. Have you noticed how it is expected that you possess certain 'essentials' and you are thought a little eccentric when you do not conform to these expected norms of society. The children sometimes find that peer pressure in this regard is a problem but, for the majority of time, they are very laid back about the things which we do not have - their African upbringing maybe!

We all miss the warmth of the African sun on our backs, we are annoyed by having to take half an hour to dress up in order to go out for a walk in winter and the necessary encumbrance of scarves, coats, etc. It may seem a strange thing to say but we all miss the freedom we enjoyed there too. We are not really able to define what, precisely, that freedom was or is; it was part and parcel of life in Zaire. Not that life was a bed of roses because

most certainly it was not and there were many trials, frustrations, tribulations and crises. We miss the closeness of the missionary family in which we lived; our doors were always open, people came and went as they felt they wanted or needed to and it wasn't a nuisance or hassle. Here, it seems everyone's door is firmly closed and, of course, leaving your front door open in modern day Britain is to invite theft and Jack Frost to invade 'your space'. We miss being involved in mission.

The children are still fiercely proud of having been born in Africa and it is not unusual for them to be teased at school for being 'African', not that to look at them you would consider them anything other than British. Claire had a school trip to France recently that caused slight consternation and extra form-filling to allow her to be a legitimate British citizen on the school group passport. Be thankful that →

BELOW: Bolobo hospital where Richard Smith was a nurse

INSET: Missing Zaire - the Smith family





Out of Africa

we don't have to fill in forms to get into heaven!

We find talking to people about life in Zaire difficult. We have come to the conclusion that unless people have had that same experience or similar, then their understanding is always going to be limited and fenced in by preconceived, dare we say it, Western indoctrination. If you are good at reading between the lines you will know already that we are not entirely settled and that things African which we see or hear make us homesick. We pray continually that the Lord will be gracious to that great and wonderful continent in all its trials, tribulations and that He will keep its people warm, friendly and open as they are.

Personally, we continue to search and wonder what the future holds for us trying, as did Paul, to put the past behind us and run the race set before us by our Lord. We daily ask God for discernment concerning the future, asking Him to show the way. ●

PRAYER POINTS

● **For Africa and its people.**
So much to pray for; their salvation; their freedom; their food; their health; their children's education.

● **For the African Church.**
That it would be a light shining in the desert, unafraid to proclaim the Gospel, to speak out against injustice.

● **For Ourselves.**
That we would discern God's way; that we keep our African inheritance; and maintain our contentment with the necessities rather than the 'essentials' of life.

WE MAY BE SEPARATED BY ONLY 22 MILES OF WATER BUT CULTURALLY THERE'S A GULF BETWEEN THE FRENCH AND BRITISH
RUTH ABBOTT
ANALYSES

Across the channel

The French

They look like us, live near us, have houses like us, roads, schools, hospitals, churches like us – surely they must BE like us. On face value, you would never think that English missionaries would encounter cross-cultural problems working in France – but putting aside all those things that make us “alike” – there are many adjustments that need to be made in order to relate in the French culture. We have often commented that we are nearer to French culture than American culture, even though we share the same language as the Americans, but being “nearer” to their culture doesn't imply similarity in our ways of thinking and reacting.

French Mentality

The French are very much influenced by the idea that man has the ability to solve his own problems. C S Lewis's “God in the Dock” is a good example. There was a time when man had to justify himself before God. In France,

God has to justify Himself before man! The idea of absolutes is missing – one sole authority – the only absolute is that there are no absolutes. Each man has built around himself his own philosophy and prides himself on respecting the philosophies of others but in reality he has taken a bit of what he likes from various philosophies which forms a framework for what he believes or not. It's rather like a man trying to keep 50 plates spinning all at





once – if you have the chance to speak to him about God he sees God as another plate he can spin at the same time as the others. But as there is no absolute truth, not one way which is better than the others, the implications of the verse, “I am the Way, The Truth and the Life”, is hard to swallow. The average French person is very much an independent free spirit who needs the conviction of the Holy Spirit to recognise his need of God.

In general, we have found the French way of life much more laid back than in England. The advantage is that you can work and live at the same pace. The disadvantage is that decision-making is often frustratingly drawn out. In fact, the reluctance to make decisions underlies a deeper problem – the reluctance to be responsible for something. There are three options: you say “yes” and hope the pastor does it; you say “yes” and that implies it’s up to me to do it; or you say “no” and nobody does it (leaving the leadership frustrated)!

The Church

Being Catholic in France is more than a commitment to the Church. It is also often linked with patriotism and respect for family tradition. This is why the Catholics who we have come across may agree entirely with what we tell them about the Bible and biblical doctrine but would never put a foot in a Protestant church because they would see this as some sort of betrayal to their families and even their country. On the other hand, many French people are so disillusioned with the Catholic Church and what they have been taught that they close the door on God (as if He is just a sort of policeman breathing down their necks) →

Steve Chalke
Steve Chalke



DOES IT MAKE SENSE?

Why on earth did God choose to give the apostles the gift of ‘tongues’ on the day of Pentecost? Why not something less controversial? He must have known what a bone of contention it would prove. Couldn’t he have made the disciples glow instead — a bit like Moses on Mount Sinai? Wasn’t there another way to produce the spectacular evangelistic result he wanted without all the subsequent hassle?

But to ask this is to miss the whole point. The truth is that tongues were the obvious, the only appropriate gift for the occasion, because these tongues weren’t the kind that charismatics and anti-charismatics have spent so long tragically fighting over. They were not the ‘tongues of angels’ needing interpretation but ordinary languages, comprehensible to those listening. As the crowd that had gathered from across the Middle East pointed out: “All these people speaking are Galileans aren’t they? So how come each of us hears in our own mother tongue?”

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was given to equip the Church to present the good news about Jesus to everyone in a way they can understand and relate to — in their own language and culture. When Jesus told us to go to all peoples, he didn’t just mean physically. It’s clear from his example that he meant culturally as well. John’s gospel spells it out: “The Word became human.” But the truth is that God didn’t just become a man. He became a particular kind of man; an olive-skinned, Aramaic-speaking, Galilean-accented, circumcised, poor carpenter’s son from 1st century Palestine. That’s what incarnation is — it’s specific.

Likewise, it’s our responsibility to ensure the gospel truly relates to our specific audience; that it is doctrinally sound and culturally accessible. But now for the sobering part. The gospel was expressed in the language of the crowd on the day of Pentecost as a result of God’s supernatural intervention. But the rest of the book of Acts is an account of the Church’s struggle to understand what it meant to present their message in a gentile context.

This is still the issue for the Church today. In the context of world mission, must a person adopt Western culture in order to become a Christian? And nearer to home, must a 19 year-old immersed in club culture suddenly develop a liking for the organ and the Baptist Hymn Book or, for that matter, even the keyboard and Spring Harvest Praise, as part of their conversion?

During the last century, most Western missionaries had no idea they were exporting a whole lot more than pure gospel. Today, we are rediscovering the need for missionaries working in other cultures to learn to ‘speak in tongues’. But have we learned to apply the same principles at home?

Steve Chalke is General Director of Oasis Trust.

Across the channel

continued for page 9

← and the Bible (often seen as a penal code!). From our experience, the God of the Catholics we know bears no resemblance to the God of the Bible whom we know as a God of love, justice, grace and forgiveness. One Catholic lady said to us the other day, "There is no good news in what I believe about God".

On the other hand, the French are very open to spiritual things. The problem is that they may not search for the answer to their spiritual hunger in the right place. The world of the occult is flooding the advertisement columns of newspapers – healers, fortune tellers, spiritual counsellors – and all of them just a phone call away.

The Family

Family tends to be very close-knit almost to the exclusion of others. To be invited into a French home tends to be quite a formal affair for the first time. The French pride themselves on their *savoir faire*. The house is spotless, table elaborately dressed with numerous knives, forks, spoons and glasses and this is overwhelmingly impressive. Even the way they eat and appreciate each course makes our way of eating a sort of sacrilege. You need to be prepared to stay at the table for two, three or four hours because the meal is the centre-piece around which you sit and converse.

Invitations to us were slow in coming at the beginning – English, i.e. foreigner, probably not staying in the town for a reasonable period of time and, therefore, not worth getting to know! When people realised that we were hoping to live in Clermont-Ferrand for at least five years or more it was just the suspicion of being a pastor in a Protestant church which was the final obstacle to conquer; fear of establishing a friendship with



people who were in some kind of sect! Then, of course, it was our turn to invite them back... panic! I certainly didn't want to shock our friends by our food being crammed on the plate and the whole meal finished in half an hour! So I watched, experimented, bought a decent French cookery book and invited our French friends. The home, family, eating together all speaks of a certain intimacy. I felt vulnerable, as if we'd be judged by our French friends, but in fact it wasn't like that at all. Entertaining and hospitality are easier now and once the friendship is established, the food is not as important as time spent together.

Education and Schooling

The French education system and intellectual attainment are extremely important. School life begins from two and a half when unsuspecting toddlers are ushered into "Maternelle". There are no facilities for children to take packed lunches; they eat in the school restaurant (£3 per meal) or at home. Primary school is for ages six to 10; college from ages 11 to 15 and lycee ages 16 to 18. If you don't make the grade you stay down a year.

Children are very much under

pressure to succeed at school – there is little encouragement if you show yourself capable and lots of humiliation if you are not. We try to instil in our children that we are happy if they do their best but there is very much a spirit of competition and rivalry. It is hard for a French person to congratulate another on good results as it is too threatening.

Medical Systems and Health

If education is a sort of "god of the age" then health is too. Medical visits are paid for at £18 a time plus the medicines prescribed and which you buy at the chemist shop. In the smallest of French towns you will generally find a baker, a church and a chemist. The reasoning behind this is prevention rather than cure.

I've never seen such extensive medical boxes as I've seen in French homes – some take up a whole cupboard! Obviously, my treatment of a cold, a dose of Calpol and a sniff of Vicks, is not enough. A runny nose calls for an appointment with the doctor or your child might pass on germs to another one. Subconsciously, you begin to feel as though you are an inferior mother because you don't go to the doctor straight away, your child doesn't wear a bonnet when it just starts to get cold and your child doesn't wear slippers in the house!

At the end of the day, my children are neither less nor more ill than any other – its just a question of culture, you see!

Neil and Ruth Abbott are BMS missionaries in Clermont Ferrand, France, with their children, Hannah and Daniel.

news



Literally... a lifeline

You are a missionary in a foreign land, living with an alien culture. You struggled to learn a new language. All around you everything is written and spoken in that language.

You begin to wonder—what's happening back in the old country?

Then it hits you. Am I still up to date? Have I missed something? Keyhole surgery – sounds like a locksmith's nightmare. Gigabyte chips – help! And what's happening to fashion?

There is something lacking in your life. Something to read. The Missionaries' Literature Association (MLA), which exists to plug that gap, is seeking sponsors to pay for newspapers, magazines and periodicals to send to missionaries.

Treasurer, John Chamberlain says the value of its service lies not only in the technical and professional areas but also current affairs, leisure and entertainment. The MLA is just as happy to provide missionaries abroad with the Weekly Guardian, Telegraph, Woman's Weekly, or Nursing Times as it is to send Playdays, Nintendo or the Beano.

"These are their choices, not ours," says John. "Missionaries can read about changes in attitudes, their professions, or street culture for kids. They may not approve of the changes but at least they'll be aware of them before they run straight into problems."

MLA supporters in Britain help in a number of ways: Sponsors pay for a magazine and postage and the MLA orders and sends it; contributors make one-off or regular

donations to the MLA general fund; others who buy magazines for themselves, send them on to missionaries.

"In the latter cases we ask supporters not to cut anything out and to send copies by air mail," says John. Missionaries treat the MLA as a lifeline. John Clark, in Fortaleza, Brazil, says he values the Guardian Weekly, which is devoured by him, his wife Norma, and son Daniel, and then passed to Mary Parsons.

"It's certainly well used," he reported. "We don't know who the sponsor is but we're grateful to God for this ministry."

While in Cameroon, Andy Wilson found that his Classic Cars magazine not only provided him with information to help him maintain the mission's vehicles, but brought back memories of cars he once looked after on the estate of an English earl.

Sian Williams, BMS Director for Missionaries, is thrilled by the effect magazines from home can have on missionaries' morale. "All those I've spoken to have been warm in their praise of those who send them papers," she says. ●

More information: Telephone Christine Neilson, BMS Literature Secretary, (01235 512077) for an MLA leaflet or write to John Chamberlain at 39 Charlesworth Drive, Waterlooville, Hants, PO7 6AZ.



Wheelie good gift

BMS missionaries Ryder and Heather Rogers have their first pair of wheels in Albania thanks to a PIPs project, which has raised £1,500 for a Piaggio motor scooter. And before it was dispatched, Mandy Ponting – secretary to

John Passmore, the BMS Europe representative – tried it for size.

The 50cc ride-about is a good investment for Ryder and Heather, who live in Bregu, a suburb of Tirana. Unlike a car, they will be able to take the scooter indoors at night to

prevent it being stolen and to thwart the thieves when they are making pastoral visits.

John Passmore says: "They had no transport at all, so its arrival at Christmas was an added bonus." ●

Stamps of Success

A total of £5,500 has been given to the BMS general fund by the society's Stamp Bureau, which handled more than a ton of stamps donated by supporters.

This figure was achieved last year despite static prices and a difficult stamp trade.

The bureau, run by Richard Camp, of Telford, Douglas Neilson, of Dundee, and David Beaumont, received 1,014 parcels containing more than seven million stamps and weighing in at 1,027 kilograms.

David (pictured right), who operates the kiloware/sorting department at Baptist House, Didcot, every Wednesday, had the stamps trimmed and sorted by local volunteers before passing 97kg to the bureau's foreign department, run by Douglas, and 42kg to the Great Britain department, run by Richard.

The remaining 964kg were sold in bulk as kiloware – the name used to describe stamps stuck on paper – for £1,692.

In addition to stamps from Didcot, Richard also receives

some from local churches and buys stamps to meet special orders. During the year he bought heavily but expects the outlay of £1,068 to be realised during the next two or three years. His sales at stamp fairs last year yielded £614 and he raised £2,255 through mail orders.

Douglas, who is thankful for the help of local volunteers for sorting and soaking stamps off paper, made £2,449, mainly through mail orders.

A small coin department, run by Richard, and a card department, run by Chris Breakell, of Shrewsbury, raised £292.

Expenses, including stamps bought for resale, stamp fair fees, catalogues and postage, came to £1,886.

Richard, who describes the bureau's year-end result as highly satisfactory, says it would not have been possible without support from collectors and those who trimmed and sorted stamps.

"We're very grateful and thank God for the interest and concern that all this represents," he said. ●



Stamp sale

CALLING COLLECTORS!

Packets of 100 off-paper foreign and Commonwealth stamps (mainly large) available post-free (UK). Packets contain no mainland GB stamps.

British Commonwealth	£5.00
Western Europe	£4.00
World mix	£3.00
USA commems.	£3.20

HOW TO ORDER

Please state your name, address and requirements on a small sheet of paper and enclose with a self-addressed envelope and a cheque/postal order for the correct amount to:

D. G. Neilson, 4 Argyle Street, Dundee, DD4 7AL.

Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to BMS Stamp Bureau.

Roger's home mission role

Roger Collinson is the new Home Mission Co-ordinator for Berkshire and Southern Baptist Associations.

Roger and his wife, Angela, returned last year after spending five years as BMS missionaries in a church-planting role in Rio Grande, Brazil.

Before their offer of service to the BMS, Roger was minister at Stoke Road Baptist Church, Gosport, and had served 34 years with the Royal Navy.

His new job involves promoting home mission as part of a comprehensive mission strategy. ●



You can go **Around the World in 132 Ways** with the new BMS catalogue. This free colour guide to BMS products is packed with information about books, publications,

500 mourn loss of Simon

More than 500 attended the funeral in November of Simon Houghton, who died of heart failure at the age of 36.

Simon, chaplain at Sevenoaks School, Kent, had been assistant minister and later minister at St Andrew's Street Baptist Church, Cambridge, after three years as a BMS missionary in Zaire.

Simon became a Christian while reading zoology at Durham University and, after graduation, his offer of service as a teacher abroad was accepted by the BMS. He leaves a widow, Clare, and a 19-month-old daughter, Emily. ●

Christine Neilson – Off the shelf

videos, leaflets and audio visual resources. It's easy to read and easy to order.

Catch it in the car, hear it on your hi-fi . . . wherever you listen to it, **WorldWide MasterTracks** (£2.50) will inspire you. The monthly BMS prayer

tape service now brings you a special series of key speakers on world mission. First is Stuart Christine, BMS missionary in the favelas of Brazil.

● Call Christine, BMS Literature Secretary, on 01235 512077.

Surprise at intolerance

A workshop organised by the Conference of European Churches (CEC) in the Czech Republic town of Vilemov expressed surprise about worsening religious persecution of Bulgarian evangelicals, reports Stanley Crabb, EBPS.

Theo Angelov, vice-president of the Bulgaria Evangelical Alliance, told 32 delegates from Eastern European countries that Baptists and other mainline Christian churches were considered sects by the government and media.

He showed newspaper articles which suggested an all-out campaign to destroy non-Orthodox believers and described attempts by the Bulgarian government and the country's Orthodox Church to discredit all non-Orthodox denominations.

This, says Angelov, is a shift from the freedom evangelicals enjoyed during the first two years of democracy. The CEC will monitor Bulgarian concerns and organise a similar workshop later this year. ●

Italian gift to Tirana

The Italian Baptist Union (IBU) is to sell a property in the southern town of Conversano in aid of church work in Albania's capital, Tirana. IBU president Renato Maiocchi said the money would help the Tirana church, at present meeting in a cinema, to buy its own building, and an advance of 60 million lire (£20,000) has been made.

The BMS has a major role in church-planting and evangelism in Albania.

Belgian growth



ABOVE: Malmedy Baptist Church pastor Jean-Pierre Greth (left) and Samuel Verhaeghe stand in the baptistry, once the grease pit in a lorry garage which members have converted. LEFT: Pastor Marcel Goffart (73), with his wife, may be the oldest pastor in the BBU, but they are still full of life at Temple Baptist Church, Mont sur Marschienne

(Pictures: EBPS, Hamburg)

Encouraging signs of growth have been recorded among Belgium's Baptists, a group of 19 churches and 850 baptised members. And they are not short on determination, either, reports Stanley Crabb, EBPS.

The Belgian Baptist Union (BBU) president, Samuel Verhaeghe, and secretary Gaston Wathieu, took a European Baptist Press Service representative on tour for talks with pastors, families and church members.

At several locations they found church members renovating recently bought old buildings for use as worship areas, training rooms and even a library. The activity is a result of a BBU strategy supporting Baptist leaders' feelings that their buildings, often uninviting and shabby, should be improved to eliminate the embarrassment felt by members who wanted to invite outsiders. Other signs of development,

reported by the tour group, are that:

- Sunday morning attendance is often nearly double the number of baptised members.
- Most Belgian pastors are under 40 years of age.
- A building project at Ougrée, Belgium's oldest Baptist church, is nearing completion.
- At the new Baptist Theological Seminary of Belgium some 90 people have enrolled.
- Since its birth almost 10 years ago, the Aywaille Christian Centre has grown to some 90 adults and children in its regular congregation, 20 of whom are baptised members. The BMS is significantly involved in church work in Belgium and in October accepted an offer of service by Paul and Linda Ellis, who will start work after a period of training, bringing the total number of partnership personnel there to four.

Prisoners of superstition

Christians globally are this month praying for freedom from fear for the 1.8 million Komerung people in the south of Sumatra, Indonesia, reports YWAM's News Service.

Theirs is a Muslim faith mixed with traditional beliefs about evil spirits which influence their lives.

It is estimated that up to five million Christians are spending the Islamic month of Ramadan – from January 21 to February 19 – praying for this Sumatran group, who live in stilt homes along the Komerung River.

Among the superstitions are a fear that whistling indoors at night might entertain demonic forces and a dread of walking about on one's birthday for fear of bad fortune.

While dramatic church growth has been seen in other parts of Indonesia, the strength of Islam and the dense Sumatran jungle is a challenge to Christians.

The month of prayer was founded in 1992 by Youth With a Mission and has grown into an independent ministry.

The BMS is in partnership with Indonesia's Baptist union, (Karapatan Gereja Baptis Indonesia) working in northern Sumatra. The union aims to plant a church in every district of the country's 27 provinces. ●

Christians free

The group of 11 Nepali Christians, jailed for allegedly converting Hindus to Christianity, have been freed following prayer by churches internationally. ●

FOREIGN

Scandal of the Ghana sex slaves

IF YOU SIN IN GHANA, ATONEMENT CAN COST YOU YOUR DAUGHTER.
CLIVE DOUBLEDAY REPORTS

In Ghana, as many as 20,000 girls, some as young as eight, are being forced into slavery. Today, the Trokosi (virgin of a god) system, as it is known in Ghana's Volta region, thrives in spite of the abolition of slavery by the British over 100 years ago in this former West African Gold Coast colony.

In July 1994, the Ghana Baptist Convention invited five London Baptist ministers to preach and minister in some of the 500 churches throughout the nation. Although the delegation were greatly encouraged by the spiritual growth and hospitality for which the Ghanaians are famous, they were appalled to discover the evil practice of child slavery.

Under the Trokosi system, fetish priests are consulted by those who have recently experienced a number of deaths among their family members. The fetish priest

concludes that members of the family, either past or present, must have violated or sinned against the gods. The offence, which may be as trivial as stealing a chicken or as serious as murder, is divined by the fetish priest.

The only atonement for such a sin requires that the family hand over one of their young virgin daughters — usually aged 12 but can be as young as eight — who becomes a slave to the fetish priest for life. Her duties are to work long days, planting and harvesting crops on the land belonging to the priest. She also serves as a handmaiden, caring for the local fetish shrines as well as becoming the fetish priest's housekeeper and wife.

The girls sent to the shrine are reduced to menial and sexual slavery, producing as many children as the priest demands. They become his possessions for life, working 12 hours a day in high temperatures, with their small and fragile babies strapped upon their backs, which they have to feed and care for themselves. The young women do not receive any reward for their labours as the family is held

responsible for providing food and clothing.

Any one shrine may have between 20 and 60 girls or women in their service. The vestal virgins, as they are called, are denied any formal education, subjected to many forms of harsh treatment, including forced labour, denied access to proper medical care and the basic necessities of life.

The family must also replace a girl should she die in slavery. Even though this gross act of child abuse openly violates the Ghanaian constitution on human rights, as well as the UN rights for children worldwide, Ghana's president, J J Rawlings, who took power through a coup, defends it as a cultural tradition and one of religious freedom and practice, which is all part of Ghana's rich heritage.

The truth is, more probably, that he does not wish to upset local chiefs and priests, or lose government support by challenging or outlawing this practice.

Over the past 18 months, the five British Baptist ministers who visited Ghana have established a charity called the Ghana Christian Support Group, whose aim is to encourage and support the Ghana Baptist Convention as it lobbies government for the abolition of these practices.

Already, talks have taken place at the House of Lords, the Foreign Office, with local MPs and Ghanaian politicians. The practice has received exposure in the Sunday Times, Marie Claire magazine and on radio. There are plans for a TV

documentary later this year.

However, it is one thing to pass a law but quite another to enforce it in the remote, inaccessible villages. So the Ghana Baptist Convention plans to build a rehabilitation centre to provide accommodation, medical care, schooling and vocational training for the young girls in the future. On offer would be skilled training, including cloth and mat weaving, sewing and dressmaking, pottery and home gardening. It is hoped to help girls establish their



own businesses and become self-supporting.

The support group has also been raising funds to sink fresh water wells and pay for teaching at ministerial Bible schools and at the Baptist Seminary in Kumasi. The group also helps supply theological books for the seminary as

“The spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives.”

Isaiah chapter 61 v1

UPDATE

The road to Shkrete

Albanians have in the past turned inaccessibility to their advantage. For 26 years in the 15th century the warrior hero, Skenderbeg, held at bay the Ottoman armies attempting to capture his stronghold at Kruja. In World War II, the Partizans similarly used their knowledge of local terrain to discomfort the invading German armies. Today, the situation is different.

People from the mountain village of Shkrete do come down to Tirana; rarely do people from the city venture into the mountains where the Code of Lek, described by Glyn Jones (*Missionary Herald*, November/December), perpetuates the blood feuds which have plagued Albanian society for centuries. Lack of contact and communication breeds suspicion and prejudice. It seems that the mountain dwellers are regarded as different by those in the towns. Indeed, those who seek closer contact with such outlying settlements face a hazardous journey. The road to Shkrete, closed for months at a time by snow, is constantly eroded and often swept away by rain and melt water and is then impassable even by Land Rover.

David Wheeler, BMS missionary working with the European Baptist Federation (EBF) in Albania, is a trained civil engineer and he believes that an adequate line of communication to the mountain communities is a vital pre-requisite to improving the quality of village life. By providing a route along which the produce of upland farms can reach a market and by facilitating the return flow of medical and technical assistance, David knows that a way will then be opened for missionaries carrying the good news to establish a more than occasional contact with spiritually needy people.

He plans to use money from US Baptists (CBF) and an ample supply of local labour, currently unemployed, to build drainage channels and culverts along the route as it winds and climbs from the village of Nuaj to the commune of Cudhi where Shkrete is situated. A gang of men and a mechanical digger have begun operations at the Nuaj end of the road and 1.5km of surface has already been drained and consolidated. As work proceeds more local labour will be recruited from roadside homes and protective Wellington boots for them have been donated by people from Carshalton Beeches Baptist Church.

It may be a straightforward plan at first sight but nothing is simple in Albania. Questions like: "Who works?", "What's the pay?" and "What's in it for me?" need to be addressed with fairness and tact but David has, at least, got the show on the road and, in due course, a lifeline will have been thrown to some of Skenderbeg's descendants in highland Albania.

SKENDERBEG, named Gjeraj Kastrioti, was born in 1405. He was the only survivor when taken hostage with his three brothers and became a Muslim, entering the Ottoman army where he distinguished himself as a commander. He was given the name Skenderbeg — Skender is Albanian for Alexander (the Great) and Beg, a title signifying bravery. In 1443 he suddenly left the Ottoman army and returned to Albania where he became the leader of resistance to the Turkish invasion and re-converted to Christianity. He resisted Ottoman attacks for 26 years using the citadel of Kruje as his base and was named Champion of Christendom by the Pope.

Skenderbeg died in 1468 of malaria and is buried at Lezhe, northern Albania.

Roger Cady

The treacherous road to Shkrete, passable at the best of times only by four-wheel drive vehicles, is being upgraded by missionaries to clear the way for the gospel of truth

well as practical support for church planting and evangelism nationally.

Encouragingly, young Baptist minister Pastor Wisdom, who has planted more than 30 Baptist churches in the Volta region in the past five years, has seen much spiritual fruit, in spite of opposition and death threats from fetish priests and chiefs. As Christianity spreads, the light of Christ dispels the darkness of superstition and fear, replacing it with joy and hope.



ABOVE: Children of the Volta region — could one of these end up as a vestal virgin? LEFT: A poky circular hut is home to many vestal virgins

● If you would like to support and receive the newsletter from the Ghana Christian Support Group, please write to the Revd Clive Doubleday, 117 Kingsway, Petts Wood, Orpington, Kent, BR5 1PP.

Clive Doubleday is minister of Poverest Road Baptist Church, Petts Wood, and a member of the BMS General Committee.



Dates for your diary

March 2/3

Western Association Missionary Weekend
Details: Miss Pauline Tounson 01297 442583

March 2/3

Cardiff District Missionary Weekend
Details: Miss Beryl Davies 01222 756426

March 5

Newport and District Women's Missionary Auxiliary
Details: Mrs K Wilkie 01633 894427

March 6

West of Scotland Missionary Auxiliary
Details: Mrs Freda Kennedy 0141-632 0883

March 11

West of Scotland Women's Missionary Fellowship
Details: Mrs Ann Durning 0141-641 6248

March 23/24

Scotland BMM 50th Annual Conference
Details: The Secretary, Dr Ken Stewart 01236 738444

March 22/25

Scotland Women's Auxiliary Annual Conference
Details: Secretary, Mrs Margaret Brown 01294 465886

Missionary tales

On the wrong lines

I hear the familiar squeal of metal on metal which tells me that I have about 17 seconds to cover the distance I normally saunter in two minutes. The train is early. I rush on to the platform, jump into the carriage and, with a nonchalance which tells the well-known faces who do this journey with me each day that I could have done it in half the time if I'd wanted, I smile, open my bag and casually fish for something to read; a chance to melt in with a compartment full of Financial Times, Daily Mails and The Sporting Life.

No daily paper.

OK... I notice that my travelling companion opposite is reading Jeffrey Archer.

No book.

My hand settles on a sheaf of A4 sheets which I withdraw with an air of professionalism that wouldn't look uncomfortable on a business entrepreneur about to cast a confident eye over a healthy half-year financial statement. The sheaf fans out on my briefcase.

Missionary prayer letters! Dozens of them.

Newspapers rustle attentively. The Jeffrey Archer devotee cursorily examines my reading matter.

Do they look shocked, perhaps a little embarrassed?

Do they move to other seats? Do they ask questions?

No, this is England and we don't do such things on the morning train. Now had it been Bangladesh or Brazil the questions about my unusual reading matter would have come more quickly than I could answer.

Of course there is one thing that gets us talking on the train — delays and cancellations. It's amazing to see how bad news breaks down the English reserve.

But when it comes to the Good News . . .



World

After nine months of planning and preparation the day had finally arrived, writes Maggi Bass. It was time for the BMS 20-20 Vision team to take the stage at Peterborough.

But at 2pm panic was setting in. Only 30 people had arrived.

This turned out to be because of road works and Christmas shopping traffic and 15 minutes later, 150 were off to the creche, a lively fives to 11s programme and workshops and seminars for adults.

People had come from as far as Norfolk and Derbyshire to the Saturday 20-20 Vision presentation. It included seminars on praying with missionaries, practical experience of life in a refugee camp and a meeting with Valentina Mema, BMS scholarship holder from Albania studying church management at St Andrew's College, Birmingham, whose testimony featured in the BMS Project 95, Breaking Chains.

Tea separated the



Inspiration for mission

seminars from the main event — a 90-minute multi-media presentation using drama, quizzes, music and audio-visuals on a huge screen, to inspire and motivate Christians in mission.

Hours of work had gone into the event; I only wish every member of every church involved had been there. On the Sunday, when team members spoke at local churches, the teaching would have inspired many to mission involvement.

The Peterborough event was one of the last in the BMS 20-20 Vision roadshow series. This year, incoming president Carolyn Green will tour the UK with a BMS team.

Inspiration, motivation, ideas, news
on world mission for churches...

Mission Link



ABOVE:
BMS 20-20 Vision team members
Audrey Rowland and Phil Marsden get
to grips with a menu for world
mission in one of the multi-media
presentation dramas
TOP RIGHT:
Celebration time at New Milton
Baptist Church after raising £300 for
the BMS children's project

WOW! Cash continues to pour in

Youngsters throughout Britain have rallied with enthusiasm to the call for support for the BMS Deka Bangladesh project. Many have broken their targets.

And with the dawn of the WOW Children's Project 96 – By His Stripes, in aid of medical work in India – fund-raising for last year's project is still going strong.

More than £2,000 beyond the target has been raised to help the school for blind girls in Bangladesh – and children used a wide variety of fund-raising methods to achieve this blockbusting effort.

A small group from Great Sampford Baptist Sunday school in Essex burst their £50 target by £20. Marjorie Wilson says: "The children's enthusiasm was very

encouraging. We learned a lovely song entitled Thank You Lord for my Eyes, which brought them to a closer feeling of how it must feel to be blind."

Now they are looking forward to getting involved in the WOW project.

At New Milton, Hants, children – most of them from non-church families – quadrupled the target they had



set themselves, and handed a cheque for £300 to the BMS.

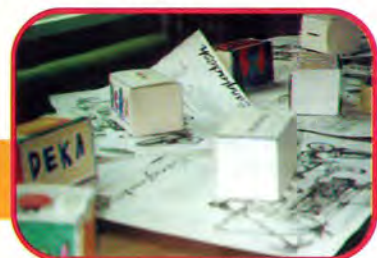
John Drury reports that they started with a party to try to understand what it meant to be blind. Then they made collecting boxes, organised a sponsored walk by the sea and arranged a coffee morning.

Hugglescote Baptist Sunday school doubled its target by fund-raising from a car wash, a fun run, a bring-and-buy sale and a disco.

Members of the Junior Christian Endeavour at Pinhoe Road Baptist Church, Exeter, collected the toys and books they no longer needed and sold them, while at King Street Baptist Sunday school, Oldham, youngsters decorated empty film cartridges and collected 2p coins in them. This, along with the sale of self-designed Christmas cards, brought their total to more than £130.

At Whetstone Baptist Church, Sunday school members spent the year putting 5p pieces into a jar. At the end of the year they had raised £220.

Tracy Roslyn, who has been co-ordinating the Deka Bangladesh project at the BMS, said the school was very grateful for the generosity of children in Britain's Baptist churches. "Everyone seems to have had a wonderful time raising money for the school for the blind," she said. "I'm sure some of these ideas will be useful for the new project."



Dear Audrey...

Q. We've been told that we must get our Link-Up missionaries Prayer letters from our Link-Up Contact - why? Surely this means they take longer to arrive?

A. With nearly 550 Link-Up groups, involving more than 2,000 churches we need a way of keeping in touch that is both efficient and not unduly costly. The way chosen is for each group to have a CONTACT; they act as an efficient POST-BOX for the Link-Up group. While prayer letters will take a couple of days longer to reach each church in the group, the advantages of the Contact system far outweighs this small delay – it saves BMS time and money, means we have an efficient and quick way of getting in touch with any Link-Up group, and, from the churches side, enables the Contact to have regular communication with the churches in the group.

The problem with changing the normal process for one or two groups means that we risk either duplicating some things or missing some people off other Link-up mailings. Modern technology is wonderful but it doesn't seem to cope efficiently with too many exceptions to the rule. ●

A welcome to where the church

VETERAN MISSIONARY MARGARET GRENFELL RECEIVED VIP TREATMENT WHEN SHE RETURNED TO SPEND HER 90th BIRTHDAY IN THE WAR-RAVAGED ANGOLA SHE GREW TO LOVE AS A MISSIONARY. **SANDRA CARTER** REPORTS

The banknotes pile so high in the Sunday collection that they use washing up bowls to collect it. But its size in Angolan churches doesn't reflect their wealth. It's because inflation rockets at 1,737% a year – 1 million kwanzas to the pound. The economic ordeals of the people soar to match.

Angola – torn by three decades of civil war, economy in tatters, studded with millions of land mines – is the country Margaret Grenfell chose to visit to celebrate her 90th birthday last August. She also took badly needed medical equipment for church dispensaries. It proved an emotional homecoming to the land she learned to love during 34 years as a BMS nurse.

"We were overwhelmed by the love and welcome we received everywhere. So many people came to talk to me who had known us when we were working there. I even met a few from my first term as a missionary in 1933!"

For this war-torn African country taking tentative steps back into the international community, Margaret's visit with her son, Stephen, and his wife, Linda, became something of a VIP event. Press and TV highlighted their farewell feast and recorded her preaching in Kikongo to the delight of old friends.

The man who is now Angola's equivalent of Attorney General greeted Stephen enthusiastically. Stephen said: "He came along with his chauffeur and bodyguard, saying, 'I remember

playing with you in the Lussenguele River in Kibokolo.' He was one of the many who had attended school at our mission base there." Stephen returned to school in Britain at the age of six.

The United Nations brokered a fragile peace 1994, just in time for Margaret to plan her birthday trip to the capital, Luanda. Did she find the work of missionaries since 1878 had borne fruit – or did the war years destroy it all?

Certainly the signs of destruction are unmissable, she reports. Rubbish is everywhere. Roads are impassable. Street kids roam the capital, either orphaned or sent to the city to fend for themselves. Banditry is rampant. Abandoned half-built tower blocks with no side walls are used as homes; 14 floors up a family will be living with children running around. Margaret was told: "You'll hear gunfire all night, just turn over and go to sleep."

But she found the church strong and vibrant amid the chaos. "The church is alive! We found the people full of the joy of the Lord. Here even a small church has 800 people. One has a Sunday school of 1,000 and 1,800 attending each Sunday. They are well grounded Christians. To see the kind of love they have today is humbling."

At the outbreak of the war of independence in 1961, the future looked bleak as traditional mission work came to an abrupt end.

"The fighting to win independence from Portugal, which had ruled Angola for 400 years, brought chaos to our area in Kibokolo. Almost overnight everyone disappeared, fleeing into the bush or over the border.

"One evening we were just going to have supper when we heard hundreds

of women going by, with loads on their heads and children on their backs. The Portuguese had started bombing their villages and they were fleeing to the border with Zaire 70km away.

"The rebels would come to a village and say to the pastor, 'we have no quarrel with you'. The next week government troops would come through and say, 'if they didn't kill you, you must be siding with the rebels'. So



they killed the villagers. Anyone with a pen was killed – they could read and write and were potential leaders.

"Our senior nurse, a very dear man, was taken and killed. We decided we were needed now where the church was – among the refugees in Zaire."

Margaret, her minister husband David and other mission staff worked among the refugees in Zaire for the next six years, setting up village schools and rehabilitation centres and caring for the sick. She recalls: "It was really tragic. There were little children shattered by mines, so ill-nourished it



thrives in the aftermath of war



ABOVE
A joyful welcome from the church in Palanca

FAR LEFT
Margaret meets an old acquaintance at Petro Angola

CENTRE
Margaret and David Grenfell before they had to leave Angola

BELOW LEFT
Piles of rubbish – a common sight in Angola today

PICTURES:
Stephen Grenfell and BMS Library



had a big and secure extended family who cared for them at home.”

The final years of warfare and refugee work took their toll on David. She recalls: “He was shattered. He was bursting with all the tragedy of Angola and wrote letters to the press and to anyone else he could influence. We went twice to America to speak at the United Nations and in Washington.”

The couple finally returned to Britain at the age of 62. Retirement wasn't an option for Margaret. For the next 12 years she was a night duty nurse at a home for retired nurses in Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire, not far from the old family home.

David died in 1980 but at 90 Margaret is still active at Rickmansworth Baptist Church.

During the dark years of civil war the BMS helped where it could. The fact that almost half a million Angolans fled the country brought a few bonuses. Many were helped to get Bible training and returned as strong

Christian leaders.

One of the tragedies of Angola is that it could be so wealthy. Five times the size of Great Britain, it has natural riches to rival South Africa. Oil earns a lavish revenue but some 80% of it is believed to have gone to the war effort.

The BMS has a partnership with the Evangelical Baptist Church of Angola and has given grants for needs such as medical work and church roofing. British doctor Simon Collins is responding to the churches' request for

medical help and travels to Angola with the BMS later this year. Partner churches are contributing to a new project to help Luanda's street kids.



BMS Africa Representative Derek Rumbol says: “There is so much insecurity and anarchy. But there is a positive side too. The church is flourishing, really dedicated. One has to admire they way they've gone back and got on with the job.” ●

Sandra Carter is a Christian journalist living in High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire.

was like picking up a couple of empty tins. Yet I look back on it as a marvellous time of team work with laughter as well as tears.”

Recalling those early days she said: “We made our life out there and loved the people. It was home. But as a mother it was terrible. Today there are schools for missionary children, but ours had to be sent home to boarding school and we only saw them during furloughs. I think it had a long-term effect on my three children. It's part of the price of mission. Angola robbed them of their parents. Fortunately we

country in focus

ZAIRE

Listed in 1992 as one of the 10 poorest countries in the world by an American Population Crisis Committee, Zaire is not faring significantly better today. According to UN figures 25 per cent of the infant population and 13 per cent of pregnant women in Zaire suffer malnutrition. In March 1995 the UN Human Rights Commission condemned Zaire's government for the systematic use of torture and executions.



UPDATE - CONSULTATION FRONT

A consultation between a BMS delegation and 21 delegates of the Baptist Community of the River Zaire (CBFZ) took place in Kinshasa in September at which Operations Director David Martin shared the

BMS vision for mission.

He suggested prayer, evangelism, training of spiritual leaders, medical work – especially in the areas of community health, education, development and administration as areas in which CBFZ and BMS might work together.

The consultation was the follow-up to talks in 1990. The BMS delegation this time comprised David Martin; Derek Rumbol, Africa Regional Representative; David Wilson, President; Owen Clark, BMS missionary and Pat Woolhouse, BMS missionary. CBFZ representatives, included the heads of each CBFZ department and delegates from the Church regions.

EDUCATION

Against the background of the disintegration of the State system it was thought possible to set up pilot schools in each CBFZ area. There was a desire to make education more relevant to local needs by providing trade or technical training rather than focusing on a western academic syllabus.

EVANGELISM

It was recognised that there were certain groups of people largely untouched by the Gospel such as Pygmies and the Bateke, both in Zaire and outside its borders.

WORK IN URBAN AREAS

So far the focus of work has been with

rural populations. But it is estimated that urban centres will grow by 50% before the year 2000 and it is hoped that more work will be done there with street children, prostitutes, drug addicts and criminals.

YOUTH WORK

Positive measures were approved in order that young people could develop their gifts within the church community.

COMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSPORT

CBFZ is experiencing difficulties in its work because of inadequate communications and transport. Both CBFZ and BMS agreed to look further at various areas implicated. CBFZ would look at the possibility of buying a boat and acquiring further radio-telephone equipment and BMS would reflect further on what contributions it could make in this field, and also the development of satellite communications.

MISSIONARIES

BMS agreed to open the way for missionaries to go to Zaire on the understanding that CBFZ would indicate key areas and types of work where they would be needed. The plan would be for missionaries to train nationals alongside them to take over eventually.

(Material for this supplied by Katherine Jones, BMS Department for Operations)

UPDATE - AGRICULTURAL/DEVELOPMENT

In June and July 1995 David Stockley, retired BMS missionary and now serving on the BMS/Operation Agri Joint Agricultural Development Committee (known as JADEC) and Pierre Lusadis Kieka-Nkweno, the CBFZ Development Co-ordinator visited Baptist supported Agricultural Projects in Zaire (funded by Operation Agri through a JADEC grant).

They visited nine projects:

- Tokima Nzala at Ntongo.
- George Grenfell Foundation, Bolobo.
- Youth farm programme, Bolobo.
- Telema, Upper River.
- Lower River Agricultural project at Mbanza Ngungu
- Self-help project at Yakombo-Koi.
- Yakusu Water Project.
- Pygmies at Ntongo
- Project Hope at Lisala (Kinshasa)

At a meeting with local people at the Tokima Nzala project (the words mean "Let's flee hunger"), it was unanimously proposed that the farm be worked voluntarily on a points system, where people would be awarded points for the amount of manual work put in – four hours being worth one point.

Then the harvest could be claimed in points – 2kg of dried corn or 5kg of manioc being worth one point. Because no cash would be involved, the system would be inflation-proofed.

At Yakombo Koi, where a self-help

project is operating under the leadership of Pastor Gbamo, different activities are carried out including agriculture, carpentry (where tools sent by TWAM are used), blacksmithing, and sewing. These projects are run with no monetary assistance from outside. David Stockley said: "Mr Pierre Lusadis and I were very impressed... Everyone was involved in the projects; there were no grants from anywhere and people's expectations were from their own resources!! Recommendations – what can you recommend?!"

(Material for this supplied by Katherine Jones, BMS Department for Operations.)

Getting around the projects proved a major logistical challenge, as David relates:

Crossing the river with a Toyota truck was a four hour job! On arrival at the riverside you "honk" to tell the ferry crew on the other side, to come to work. Then you have to send enough diesel fuel for the engine, and a 12-volt battery to start the engine, by paddle canoe ferry. Across the river, no response! – till the canoe ferry came back to inform us the battery was not strong enough: another battery please! The Toyota engine was opened to take the battery, but not enough spanners. So, the canoe, which because of the current always had to move upstream, did another round trip



with passengers, cycles and luggage, eventually coming back with spanners from the ferry crew. The battery was removed and sent to the ferry crew.

"The silence was awful!! Then – a burst of black smoke – then the sound 'the ferry is alive', and moving. A cheer from the crowd. It passed up river to cross. We got our battery back, so the Toyota could start, and get on board. We paid the ferry fare!! During the crossing, the Toyota turned around on the ferry, as it was easier to get on and off the front end of the ferry.



TOP: The future may be uncertain but the faces of Zairian Christians are a picture of joy.

ABOVE: At last – the ferry crossing

A wet Sunday by Owen Clark

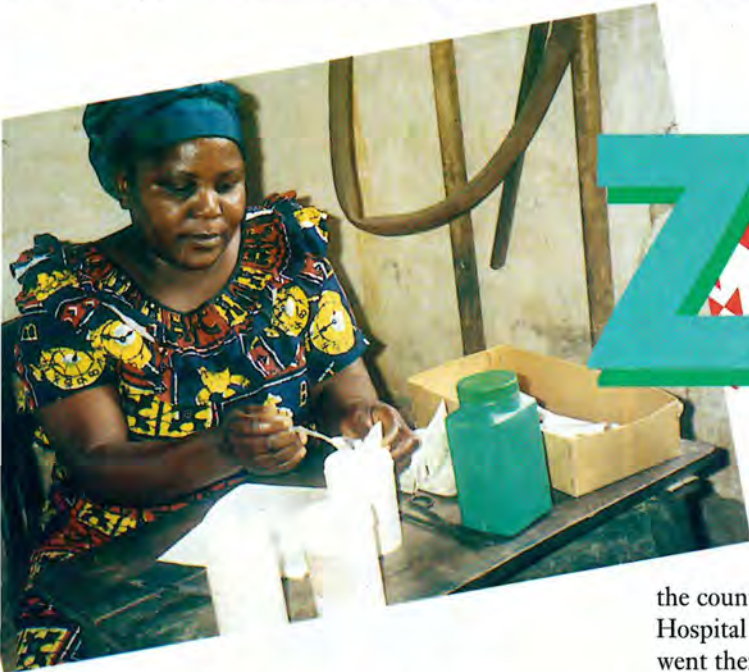
It was the first Sunday in Advent. We had agreed with Evangelist Mputu to visit Ngamanzo, where an embryo church had been recently planted. It was my turn to preach. Deanna would lead communion. The sky was grey with rain-cloud as the service got underway in the open-sided stick shelter with a flimsy roof, overlooking the Zaire river.

The early part went fine, but during the welcomes thunder began to roll in the distance. The sky behind us grew dark. With the offering, the reading and another hymn we were into the sermon, while the thunder got louder and the sky ever darker.

Naturally I had chosen to launch Advent with a word from Isaiah, in fact from chapter 7, where the prophet tries to encourage King Ahaz in Jerusalem not to fear the attacking alliance of Ephraim and Syria. The storm-wind struck from behind just as I quoted the bit about the hearts of the king and people shaking as the trees of the forest shake before the wind. With dust from the dirt floor being blown into their eyes the congregation turned away. Rain began to fall and the roof began to flap. I hesitated but just managed to quote Isaiah's words to Ahaz, "Remain calm and unafraid, do not let your nerve fail...", when my own nerve and that of the congregation collapsed. Gathering our bits and pieces we fled in all directions.

After the storm, with water still dripping and pools on the floor we reassembled in a mud hut with a tin roof, and, after a hymn and a prayer, picked up again at: "Remain calm and unafraid..."

The moral of this little tale is: Don't feel guilty about your fine church building. It's there for a purpose. C H Spurgeon was convinced of the importance of church buildings in promoting the preaching of the gospel and the growth of the church. I hope we can move on to something better at Ngamanzo and elsewhere. ●



ZAIRE

UPDATE - MEDICAL WORK

In August 1995 David Wilson, President of BMS and former missionary in Zaire, and his wife, Sue, also a former missionary in Zaire, and former BMS Co-ordinator for Wales went back to Zaire to undertake an appraisal of the medical situation. Both have written on their experiences.

ZAIRE REVISITED - A TALE OF TWO HOSPITALS

From 1954 to 1957 I was the doctor at Pimu Hospital, *writes David*, and from 1957 to 1967 I worked as a member of the medical team at IME Kimpese in the Lower Region of Zaire.

Returning to Pimu after 38 years was an amazing experience. A few of the older people remembered me and others were intrigued that I could speak to them in the Lingombe language. Our journey there had been a nightmare – state employees had not been paid for a year and a half, and consequently roads and bridges were not being maintained. The journey from Upoto, which in 1955 would have taken five hours, took us two and a half days in 1995. The jungle has grown in over the road, pot holes swallowed up the landrover's wheels and wooden bridges had to be checked and reconstructed before crossing them.

In stark contrast to the collapse of

the country's infrastructure the Pimu Hospital has been rebuilt. When I first went there the wards were made of mud bricks. There was a men's ward and a women's and children's ward. Now, built in cement blocks, there are new wards for men and for women, and a separate children's ward. There is a maternity unit, and intensive care ward and a separate ward for eye patients. There is also a new pharmacy, new operating theatre and new outpatient clinic. Although this hospital is in the heart of the tropical forest patients come to it from up to 150 miles away. There is also a chain of rural health centres relating to the hospital and at the present time one young Zairian doctor is carrying the whole load of responsibility.

The Institut Médical Evangélique (IME) at Kimpese was opened in 1953 through the initiative of missionary societies from the USA, Sweden and Britain. It is now one of five large Christian hospitals in Zaire which are



maintaining Christian standards of medical practice and training.

When I worked there I was responsible for the Orthopaedic department. In 1956 a technician from Roehampton, England had spent three months there, training local craftsmen to make crutches, splints, callipers and artificial legs. Axel Mapeka has been making artificial legs ever since then. Now almost 40 years later he is beginning to talk of someone to replace him when he retires.

In 1967 when I left Kimpese I handed over the responsibilities of being legal representative and director of the hospital to a Zairian colleague, John Mandiangu. John has carried these duties ever since, maintaining a strong Christian ethic in the hospital's work and a fine Christian witness among the staff and patients. There are now 15 Zairian doctors working there, approximately half of them being doctors-in-training. All these doctors are members of the church and several are playing a leading part in the life of the church.

The Kimpese hospital is fortunate that there are two local cement factories and a large sugar plantation in its catchment area, and these companies are able to pay appropriate fees for the treatment of their employees and their families. John Mandiangu told us that only 11 per cent of the hospital's budget comes from abroad.

However, in the interior of the country our hospitals at Bolobo, Ntongo, Pimu, and Yakusu are almost entirely dependent on the BMS for hard currency for the purchase of medicines and equipment. With the

ABOVE: The pharmacy at Nlemvo

RIGHT: Pierre Lusadis, CBFZ Development Co-ordinator and Dr Motingia, Central Medical Co-ordinator, at the BMS/CBFZ consultation

PICTURES: David Wilson and Derek Rumbol



total collapse of the State medical service these church hospitals are providing an essential and vital contribution to the people's health.

SUE WRITES:

It had been seven years since I had been in Zaire .

Sadness was certainly one of the first emotions. We felt sad that politically things were so unstable, state hospitals were barely functioning, vaccination programmes virtually non-existent, state salaries had been unpaid for 16 months. The education system had crumbled as had other state services. Inflation was rampant and the currency had been changed and devalued several times. I couldn't cope with a bunch of bananas being 3,000 New Zaires, which would have been £3,000 when I first went to Zaire!

In this gloomy situation one would have expected to find people depressed and devastated, but that was so far from the truth, it constantly amazed me. Africans seem to have resilience that we lack here in the comfortable materialistic West.

Joy was the next emotion that we felt; joy that the Church was alive and growing; joy with our brothers and sisters in Christ who are able to walk daily trusting their Lord despite the crumbling situation around them.

I asked myself many times would I still teach if I hadn't been paid, or nurse if I could gain more money gardening or fishing. Yet it was the pastors, teachers, doctors and other church members that challenged us

Facts and figures

Religious allegiances

Roman Catholic 42%
Protestant 36%
Kimbanguist church 17%
Traditional 3%
Muslim 1%
Jehovah's Witnesses 1%
(Figures: Operation World)

Population

42,476,000 (1994)

Children per woman

6.7 (1991)

Health services

One doctor for every 13,540 people (1984-89)

Calorie consumption

96% of required intake (1988-90)

Literacy

84% male; 61% female

Communications

2 newspapers, 1 TV set and 97 radio receivers per 1000 people (1991)

Economy

Annual growth: 1.8% (1980-92).
Inflation: 1,000-3,000% annually.
(Figures: A Third World Guide 1995/96)

and moved us often to tears.

It had been 16 years since I had seen Bilepo. We had first met at Ntongo, her home, and a CBFZ mission station on the shores of Lake Tumba. Bilepo was then a young woman wanting to train as a nurse. This she later did at Yakusu Nursing School. Bilepo was a good student, but it was tough working 600 miles from her home and tribe. Many times she had wanted to return home, but three years later she was able

to do this as a qualified nurse and midwife. I met Bilepo again; she is now the Regional Medical Co-ordinator .

I had hoped with the food shortage I might lose weight in Zaire. Far from this we were fed with true Zairian hospitality. One of the nurses who cooked for us at Yakusu was Kelekele, a good friend of many years standing. We wept with her over her sad story.

Kisangani had changed dramatically since I had lived there. It was now a centre for diamond trading and the cost of living had risen greatly. Many had left work and become caught up in the diamond search. So much of this was sadly also caught up in black magic and witchcraft. We heard terrible stories of people exchanging a member of their family for a large diamond. It was not clear to us whether Kelekele's husband, whom I had known as a fine Christian man, was involved in the diamond trade but we heard how he had become involved with a witch doctor and had been told to leave his wife and family and marry again.

Kelekele conducts the women's choir at Yakusu, and is fully committed to women's work. As she struggles with a family of five she told us how Jesus was her only hope. It's only because she has faith that she can face tomorrow.

It was this kind of faith that we saw throughout Zaire. ●

BELOW LEFT: A bridge on the road from Yakusu to Yauonge — it remains in a poor state because no one is paid to do the repairs

BELOW: David Wilson meets Dr Lobo at Ntongo

PICTURES: David Wilson



Listening and learning

GOING BACK TO BASICS GIVES US A VALUABLE TOOL FOR COMMUNICATING OUR FAITH – LEARNING THE LANGUAGE. BUT THAT'S NOT THE END OF THE STORY, AS **DAVID POUNTAIN** EXPLAINS

Of course missionaries have to learn other languages. We know that! Don't their first prayer letters start with "namaste", "mbote" or some other word of greeting as they try out their new-found linguistic abilities? We take it for granted that if they are to be effective communicators as Christians in another society then they must learn the language.

The first months of most missionary careers are spent back at school learning the basics of a new tongue, perhaps, as in Nepal, living with a local family to hear the words spoken in real situations. And the new words have to be tried out, in markets and shops, in homes and in church.

"It's like being a child again, learning to speak for the first time," said one missionary. "You have to be prepared to make mistakes, to use the wrong words in the wrong situations, to use verb tenses incorrectly and to mix up masculine and feminine nouns. You don't have to mind being laughed at or to meet puzzled expressions when people have no idea what you're trying to say."

It's not easy for anyone with a mission, for anyone with an urgent and burning desire to share the good news of Jesus Christ which they believe can change the world, to hold back and assume the role of learner. But do it they must because there is more to it than acquiring a new language.

Language is not just about communicating. It is the tool people use for thinking and for understanding. The whole of a people's history is bound up in language. The phrases that are used are reminders of past speeches, of poetry and of historical events. Strung together in particular ways they can soothe and calm or they can stir people into violent action.

It is not possible to preach effectively or to share the gospel adequately without understanding the culture of a people. The key to culture is the learning of a language but once into it missionaries soon discover that they are receiving far more than they are teaching. Through a language, a people and a culture God offers new insights, new understandings, new meanings to an old faith. God is no longer speaking in English, in British thought forms with all the historical and cultural baggage of our past. He speaks

afresh using new words and offering new understandings out of another culture.

There is nothing new in this of course. The Apostle Paul, although born in Tarsus, was brought up in Jerusalem and educated at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). He would have spent his early years in Jerusalem before entering Gamaliel's school at about the age of 15. His childhood would have been within an Aramaic-speaking community and this would have affected him throughout his life.

However, the language which bound together most of the peoples around the Mediterranean was Greek and this was widely spoken even within Palestine. Some of the disciples of Jesus, like Andrew and Philip, had Greek names. In fact, in Galilee where Jesus was brought up and began his ministry, Greek towns (Decapolis) and Jewish villages existed side by side, the two cultures rubbing uneasily against each other.

The disciples of the rabbis were educated in Greek culture and we can assume this was true for Paul as a pupil of Gamaliel. Then Paul, after his conversion, spent something like 20 years in a Greek environment continuing to assimilate Greek culture. But more importantly, he began to hear Jesus speaking, not in Aramaic, but in Greek. He had the tools of a new language to develop a theology which had meaning for people beyond the small

nation Judah. This must have been a major factor in the spread of Christianity throughout the ancient world.

In our modern world, where cultures, once separated by mountains and oceans, are constantly coming into contact and even conflict, it is vital that Christians should understand how others think and feel before they even begin to preach. The multi-cultural mix of our modern cities, the cultural and language differences between the generations, the techno-speak of our secular society, all call for Christians to assume the role of learners and listeners. Only then may we begin to hear God speaking through the new cultures and the new languages of our age, bringing the gospel alive for a new generation.

Carol and Angus MacNeill had to assume the listening

Christians should understand how others think and feel before they even begin to preach.

RESOURCES

role again when they moved to a new situation in Thailand.

"If you arrive in Sangklaburi on Sunday... come to the Christian hostel at 9.30am and you will be able to share in a Thai service," they wrote in a recent letter. "You might just meet us there, sitting on a mat with the young people. Alternatively, you could go to Eejo's house, where there might be 30 people worshipping in Karen and Burmese at 12 noon. You might just meet us there too, sitting on a mat up against a wall, trying not to fidget too much and refusing to let the word "cramp" enter our thoughts. Eejo will explain things to you in English, if you want... If you wish to attend a more normal kind of Church service, you could go to Huey Malai and worship in either of two fairly

sizeable churches there. Go to one of them and you will meet us there too, sitting on a proper bench this time, listening to the Thai that is being spoken and switching off when the Karen translation begins."

God has much to say to us from other people and through their cultures. Perhaps we should learn to shut up for once and just listen. Then having assumed the role of learners and learned some humility we might become more effective communicators.



David Pountain is Missionary Herald Consulting Editor and minister at Florence Road Baptist Church, Brighton



TAKE
2

TAKE TWO

Questions for discussion

- ① Would crossing cultures be a major deterrent in making you think twice (or three or four times!) about becoming a missionary? Or would it only be a minor deterrent? Or not one at all?
- ② How would you react to the almost total isolation experienced by Chris and Alison Rudall? (See page 4)
- ③ When you're out of the country, even for a short time (eg on a business trip or on holiday) what do you miss most about living in the UK? What do you not miss at all?
- ④ Would you regard lack of materialism as a compliment? (See Richard and Elisabeth Smith's article, page 6) Or as a sign of eccentricity?
- ⑤ What do you think is the effect of entering another culture on one's children? How might it a) help, and b) hinder their development?
- ⑥ How do you think this country has changed in the last five years? Would people who return here after such an absence notice these differences?
- ⑦ How can our young people be slaves to our culture? (See article Ghana Sex Slaves, page 14)

When little Joel Aston returned to the UK with his parents from Senegal, he had many questions, including, "Why do people hang their plates on the wall?" and "Why do people make their toilets so pretty?"

(Taken from Worldwide, WEC International magazine, Sept/Oct 95)

BOOK
review

**GIVE ME THIS MOUNTAIN (THE ROAD TO AFRICA)
HE GAVE US A VALLEY (RETURN TO AFRICA)**
both by HELEN ROSEVEARE
published in the CHRISTIAN CLASSICS series
by IVP @ £1.99 each

At a time when church libraries (and presumably, readers) are appealing for new and up-to-date books with some street cred, it might seem a little incongruous for a well known publishing house to be re-printing 'Christian classics.'

Having read "Give me this mountain" in my teens, I appreciated re-reading Dr. Roseveare's story, even though some aspects like her early days at Cambridge during the Second World War seem far from reality. This book and its sequel take the reader through Helen Roseveare's call to what was then the Belgian Congo, with descriptions of the medical and other work she was involved in. "Give me this mountain" culminates in the 1964 civil war in which she was held captive.

"He gave us a valley" goes over some of the ground of the earlier book, but with additional details, particularly of the brutality Dr Roseveare suffered at the hands of the rebels through to her return to the UK in 1973.

Even though this story is now 20 - 30 years old, its power to declare the faithfulness of a great God does not diminish with time. For those of us living cosy Western lives it is good to be reminded of the reality of the gospel lived out in such harsh times.

Jan Kendall



♥ GIRL TALK ♥

A short play by Jan Kendall

Scene: Two girls sitting on a wall in a town. Other people are walking to and fro. Edwina spends most of the time filing her nails. Selina spends most of the time looking in a mirror and adjusting her hair and make-up. They are dressed in the very latest fashion (the more outlandish the better - whatever you can dream up!).

Edwina So, who are you going to send Valentine cards to then?

Selina I'm making a shortlist at the moment. Trouble is, they're a bit expensive - I mean, the really good ones that say what you are feeling deep down, play tunes when you open them, that sort of thing. Know what I mean?

Edwina Yeah. It's hard, isn't it. So many difficult decisions to make.

Selina (*butting in*) I thought you were going to say, who do you reckon would be sending me a Valentine card?

Edwina Well, it goes without saying, they'll all be queuing up.

Selina You know that new family that's moved in down our street?

Edwina Are you trying to change the subject or sommat?

Selina Yeah, well, I thought we'd exhausted Valentine cards. Anyway, that new family, they're from a country called Karakanda. Funny name for a country I thought.

Edwina No funnier than Wigan. My family come from Wigan.

Selina (*Ignoring her*) The mother, she went shopping, and do you know what she did?

Edwina No

Selina She tied to haggle with ol' Henry at the Veg shop. Imagine that?

Edwina Huh. You can talk! I've known you trying to get your 30p off bananas at the end of the day!

Selina And the kids! You should see 'em. They look like they come from another planet.

Edwina (*Gives Selina a long penetrating look.*)

Selina And do you know - they eat with their hands, don't use a knife and fork. It's not very hygienic is it? (*Pause*) Talking of food, shall we eat now?

Edwina OK Where shall we go?

Selina Have you tried that new DacDonald's?

Edwina Finger-licking good, I believe. Let's move then. (*They both get up. And begin to walk away*) Seriously, though, who do you reckon will be sending us Valentine cards?

END

ACTION card

BRIEFING FOR FEBRUARY 1996 LANDMINES

Every month landmines kill over 800 civilians and maim a further 450. Over 100 million are buried in one third of the countries of the developing world. Mines remain in place when wars are over, and may maim or kill for years after fighting has stopped. Land may be unusable and refugees unable to return home. The United Nations has a demining programme and clears about 85,000 mines a year, but this effort can never deal effectively with the problem. The anti tank mines are triggered by the pressure of a heavy load. The much smaller anti-personnel mines are triggered by trip wire or by being trodden on, by adults or children. There are many varieties of anti-personnel mines. Faless, now aged five, was three years old and being carried by her mother when they stumbled upon one of the estimated 2.5 million landmines which still lie hidden in Mozambique.

Mother and daughter survived but are now living as destitute cripples in a poor country which has no free health service. The international campaign to ban landmines was launched in 1992 and many countries have agreed to either a moratorium or a total halt on exports, including the United States, Mexico, France, Belgium, Greece, South Africa, Israel, Germany and Italy.

In December 1993 a vote was passed in the United Nations for a three year international moratorium on the export of landmines. Britain supported this resolution but insisted on an opt-out to allow the export of landmines which are equipped with self-destruct or self-neutralising mechanisms. But these devices fail in up to 20 per cent of cases. Such mines are therefore still dangerous to civilians after a war has ended.

Send this month's Action Card to your MP at the House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA suggesting a ban on the export of self-destruct landmines.



Action card for February 1996

Washing carrots, Dalat, Central Vietnam

TAKE 2

28:19

teams in action!



Asia team



Albania team



Trinidad team

Sam Gibson reports on BMS Action Teams around the world

In September 1995, 22 young people embarked on the 28:19 Action Team programme, taking time out to serve God overseas.

Hi! We're Sarah (18), Jo (21), Sarah (18), John (22) and Nigel (18) - in India for three months and then Sri Lanka for a further three months. Calcutta is an incredible city which is constantly awake. The poverty here is like nothing we have ever experienced before. People spend their days in one position begging on dirty, smelly, polluted streets. You can walk straight past them but it's only when you stop to think about the reality and complete injustice of their situation, that Calcutta hits you.

We are working with Emmanuel Ministries and have each chosen a project

to work on. Sarah, Sarah and John are teaching at a Pavement Club which provides informal education for street children. One Sunday they had the kids marching down the street singing "Jesus' Love is Very Wonderful". Jo and Nigel are teaching mainly English, maths, art and R.E. at a school in a slum area. At first, the language barrier was a problem but after prayer, it has faded into insignificance - praise the Lord! Another thing to give praise for is the discovery of Coke in glass bottles for just 12p - a real bonus!

Things are hectic and our time is so limited; we stayed at a YMCA orphanage in a hostel north of Calcutta for a week, visited a home helping to rehabilitate mentally ill women and

visited various churches and the projects they run. As the daytime temperature plummets to a nippy 20°C, our thoughts turn to Sri Lanka....

Please pray:

- for our health
- for our safety, especially for the girls who cannot go out without male company and are constantly stared at because they are white
- that we be effective in our work as we are here for such a short time
- that God will begin preparing us for the change to Sri Lanka - we are very nervous

Hi! We're Andy (18), Mel (24), Helen (18), Gavin (24) and Hugh (18) - in Albania for six months. We arrived in Albania in one piece and with all our luggage (the first miracle) and are now working in

pairs teaching English to various ages in a suburb of Tirana. Hugh and Andy have started a football team at the Baptist Centre in Tirana and Gavin is giving guitar lessons there. Helen is leading a singing class and Mel an art class, both in the suburbs. We are all involved in the Sunday School and helped with their Christmas preparations - a great privilege as it was only the second time they had done anything for Christmas. We have also begun visiting families which gives us the chance to use our extensive Albanian language skills (ha, ha!).

We have been really blessed with our apartment which has beautiful views over Tirana although the water only comes on three times a day so it's a mad dash for the shower. At least we've got one; from the horror stories we were told before we left Britain we're surprised to even have a toilet! Drinking Raki is an experience, too - the army must run their

tanks on it as it's so strong!

Please pray:

- that communication will not prove a problem despite the difficult language
- for opportunities to share the gospel with our new-found Albanian friends
- for our work
- thank God for our accommodation and good health - pray it may continue

Hi! We're Daryl (22), Angela (22), Anna (18) and David (22) - in Trinidad for six months.

After an initial settling in period, we are beginning to tour different churches encouraging young people and teaching in Baptist schools. Anna and Angela are also teaching three sisters, Marissa (8), Maria (6) and Miranda (5) who are in desperate need of remedial education.

The girls are staying with Revd Brian Skinner and his family (President of the BU of Trinidad and Tobago) in great accommodation in Chaguanas. The boys however are in an old people's home in Port of Spain where the lights and radio come on automatically at 4am! It's a bit depressing but we hope to be moving to alternative accommodation nearer the girls at some point. The tans are coming along quite nicely but we still can't pass for locals - we stand out like snow in the Caribbean!"

Please pray:

- for suitable accommodation for the boys
- for safety, particularly for the girls who are harassed on the streets by locals
- for Marissa, Maria and Miranda, that they be able to attend remedial education classes
- for our spiritual lives, that we would trust God day by day

Hi! We're Paul (18), Richard (18), Emma (18) and Anna (18) - in Bordeaux for six months.



Bordeaux team, France

After an enthusiastic welcome by the church we began helping to promote evangelistic events, singing and playing music in Sunday services and participating in a monthly English service. We have found some attitudes here are different from home however and one in particular has proved to be a hindrance to our work. French people do not have much confidence in people of our age and some of the tasks we have been given to do appear very menial to us. We need to show people we can be responsible and to develop patience and accept that not all our work here will be as challenging as we had anticipated.

There is a large amount of occultism in France which has at times mingled with Catholicism - sects abound too. This produces many confused beliefs about God. One way in which we are attempting to counter this in the church, is to set up a Bible study for the youth. There is no opportunity here for the youth to meet together to read and discuss the Bible and God - many people are dubious in accepting the youth (aged 16 to 25) are ready for a Bible study group.

Please pray:

- that our French will improve and not form a stumbling block to our work
- that we show the church we are responsible despite our youth and that we would be patient and find peace about the situation
- for the youth Bible study - that there be no opposition from the church and that the youth have the confidence to begin organising and taking Bible studies for themselves
- for protection - there is much occultism here and we have at times felt under spiritual attack

Hi! We're Oliver (18), Barney (18), Maggie (21) and David (18) - in Morsang near Paris for six months.



Morsang team, France

No sooner had we set our bags down in the church when we were whisked off to the regional Baptist Youth Congress in Orly - a chance to experience praise and worship on a larger scale with French people our own age.

When we returned we began going into a local secondary school to take English conversation lessons with sixth form girls (the lads now believe that serving the Lord has its definite perks!) and we are also taking music workshops with primary school children explaining about our instruments and how they work. Practical work involves decorating the Sunday School rooms, running a stall in the weekly market and helping to publicise evangelistic events, especially those held over Christmas.

Please pray:

- for our communication skills - there has been some definite improvement
- for a spiritual revival in Morsang
- for openings to express the gospel in the schools and to people in the market

prayer *focus*

A regular update from our missionaries around the world compiled by **Sam Gibson**



George and Betsy Lee

SRI LANKA

Fighting continued over Christmas between the government forces and the separatist Tamil Tigers, particularly in the north around Jaffna. Strict security checks slowed up all activities in other areas but life continued more or less as normal for the Lees near Colombo. The Tigers evacuated civilians from Jaffna in November before the town finally fell to government forces in December. Over 20,000 people were moved south but many thousands remained in the area without shelter in the monsoon rains. Aid agencies were reported to be helping with essentials, but the killing went on.

Please pray:

- for the continued safety of George and Betsy when they return in May.
- that the Tigers be prepared to compromise on their stand for a separate state so that a settlement becomes possible
- for peace around Jaffna

so the refugees may return home

- for the work of the aid agencies in the north



Valerie Hamilton

BANGLADESH

Due to disturbances, elections due to be held in January have been moved back to this month. The country remains unsettled with tense strikes sometimes erupting into violence.

Please pray:

- for peace to allow the elections to take place
- for the Lord's outcome to the elections

Europe



Saverio and Betsy Guarna

ALBANIA

The church in Tirana continues to grow. Last year thirty three new believers

italy

Mark and Claire Ord

The Ords accepted an invitation in August 1995 from the Italian Baptist Union to continue their training in Genoa, at least for the next 18 months. They were assigned to the two Baptist churches in Genoa but are mostly involved with the larger Central Baptist church. Mark was worried that the pastor, two years past retirement age, had finally cracked when at a members' meeting, he thought he heard him repeating the phrase "our church is an elephant". Mark had misunderstood however, the pastor was describing the church building as elephantine whilst complaining about the size of the building being a drain on resources!

Please pray

- for the Central Baptist church facing increasing maintenance costs with a smaller congregation
- the pastors of both Baptist churches retire this summer and they are unlikely to be replaced immediately
- for Mark and Claire's work with these churches as they face difficult times ahead
- for their language study

baptised in the sea in July were welcomed into membership in November and the congregation moved into a new church building seating 300 people. The new place is a cinema which shows some rather dubious films, but the staff have been helpful and promised to attend the meetings. The police also became interested, going out of

their way to ensure the forecourt was cleared of cars and trouble makers. Albanian Christians are now taking on much more responsibility in the life of the church.

Please pray:

- for the training and equipping of Albanian church leaders - they are all new Christians
- for a permanent building

asia & europe

- for a permanent building for the Tirana church
- for wisdom for Betsy and Saverio as they take on this support role
- that the presence of the church would sanctify the building so that it would not be a church in a cinema but a cinema in a church



David and Yvonne Wheeler

delegation of responsibility are new concepts to be learned and many are concerned about the result of elections to be held next month.

Seventy new students started at the Faculty of Nursing in October 1995. Most of the students and staff are keen to change old-fashioned methods of teaching but there is a long way to go due to lack of facilities. Even when helpful books and other materials are available, they disappear which is frustrating.

Please pray:

- that those searching for the truth will look to God and find it
- that next month's elections be led by God
- for a time of justice when the basic needs of all Albanians are met
- that truth, honesty and responsibility be exercised in the nursing faculty

Americas

BRAZIL

The water board in Genibau ordered all water being pirated to be cut off in six or seven streets in order to lay mains pipes. They did a deal with the community to charge them only a third of the installation costs if they dug the holes. The streets were filled with people

digging trenches for three days who then had to pay half a month's salary for the installation! This sight proves that the future development of the country lies in the hands of its people and shows the importance of forming a co-operative between Western help and the people of Brazil.



Mark and Suzana Greenwood

Please pray:

- for Jair, Joao, Edson, Moises, Eliene and Aldenir - six Brazilian Christian friends who have proved themselves reliable in looking after the work at the church on odd days when Mark and Suzana are away. Pray for wisdom for these young people as they take on further responsibility.

lost the house they had been renting for twenty years and were virtually living on the street. The church agreed to help them buy a piece of land and to start them off with a one roomed construction they could add to later. Luiza and Eliezer moved in before Christmas with tears of thanks.

Denise, wife of the secretary to the Evangelical Council was diagnosed with bone cancer and the church helped out from time to time with medical bills. As well as this and unbeknown to others, ladies from the church had also been visiting her virtually daily taking food or medicines and offering to help in the house. The Lord loves these secret acts of caring and service and John was humbled by the example of his own members.

Please pray:

- that Hope Baptist Church continue to grow and mature in the Lord
- that this grass roots love and care be a visible witness to people around of God's love for the world
- for a piece of land or building and the resources to start a new church in an area where a home Bible study group has outgrown its home



Prema Tennekoon

Prema is developing and implementing a nursing curriculum and training programme in Vlora. Many of the people she comes into contact with - including university staff, students, patients and relatives are all searching for the truth. Change for many is difficult however, especially for the old who have only known life under communist dictatorship. Trust and



John and Norma Clark

Hope Baptist Church in Fortaleza is growing not only in numbers but in spiritual strength and as a community of love. A family

MASTER TRACKS

How is John Chapter 4 connected with a slum called the Valley Of Blessing, a boy in a wheel chair and a woman looking for milk?

The answer can be found in the first edition of Worldwide **Master Tracks** in which Stuart Christine a BMS missionary illustrates how the Gospel is changing lives in the slums of Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Master tracks is designed to build into an audio library of one off sermons, bible studies, and addresses by prominent and gifted speakers on mission. Listen to them at home, in the car or with friends. Each tape costs £2.50 and is approximately 40 minutes in length. **Can you afford to miss this series?**

Please send me _____ copies of **Master Tracks** I have enclosed a cheque for £ _____ made payable to the Baptist Missionary Society.

Name.....

Address.....

Post Code

nepal



Steve and Pam Seymour

ZIMBABWE

The rains have come late to Zimbabwe and drought affects most parts of the country. There must be heavy and continual rain for some time in order to replenish the exhausted water stocks and as such, the drought may continue for some time. Government feeding schemes were struggling to meet demand at the beginning of the drought and Steve and Pam were caught up in trying to assist drought victims. The permaculture training and drought mitigation programmes do not help when the rain simply does not come and next year's development-related projects and training are at risk of being put on hold if the country's water resources are not replaced quickly.

Please pray:

- for enough rain
- that Steve's work will not be put on hold
- the churches want the Seymours to extend their work for another year but their permit reads 'non-renewable' - pray God will clear the way if He wants them to stay

Asia



Sue Frame

NEPAL

Sue has taken on a short term project with the International Nepal Fellowship's Hospital Assistance Project (HAP). She is to research and write a proposal for HAP's input into Nepal's Safe Motherhood programme.

The aim of the Safe Motherhood programme is to reduce the number of pregnancy and child-birth related deaths by half by the year 2000. Ninety nine per cent of maternal deaths occur in developing countries and Nepal has one of the highest rates in the world. Most of these deaths are preventable. The official rate for Nepal is 850 deaths in 100,000 live births. In the more remote areas however, figures of 1,500 in 100,000 have been suggested. This is compared to eight in 100,000 in the UK.

In Nepal, 90 per cent of people live in rural areas and most have no roads

allowing quick access to hospital when complications arise. Only seven per cent of these women give birth attended by trained health personnel and one of the problems facing the implementation of the Safe Motherhood programme is the serious lack of emergency obstetric facilities in the country.

One of the main aims of HAP is to help the government implement the Safe Motherhood programme. This will not only include operative facilities but could include staff training, regular drug supply, initiating a system of community transport and setting up antenatal and family planning services. The proposal Sue is to write will suggest what interventions could be appropriate in the various HAP programmes.

In January, Sue visited the Myagdi District Hospital programme in Benj where she assessed the project from a midwifery perspective, helped to set up an antenatal /family planning clinic and was involved in some staff training. The team of five expatriates there who give medical and nursing input have been hoping for a midwife to join the team. As yet there is no one in the pipeline - is God calling you?

Sue returns to Britain in March for her home assignment. She has applied to go to All Nations Christian College from September and has no imminent plans to return to Nepal.

Please pray

- For Sue's work on the proposal
- For a midwife to join the team at Myagdi District Hospital.
- Pray for Sue as she prepares to leave her church and friends in Nepal and settle back to life in Britain. Pray for clear direction in her life.

Americas



Evelyn and Lee Messeder

BRAZIL

At the end of last year, Lee completed his teaching year at the Dourados Baptist Seminary in southern Brazil. He and Evelyn have now accepted the pastorate of a church in the town of Itpora, 18 km from Dourados. The church had reached a low ebb and was unable to support a pastor.

The Seminary has been coming to terms with a shooting in which a



Africa & beyond

FEBRUARY 1996

CORRECTIONS

In last month's Prayer Focus proofing corrections which were not made resulted in errors, for which we apologise.

The heading Africa, over the information about Roger and Nikki Pearce, should have read Europe.

The sub-heading El Salvador underneath the picture of John and Lesley Moody should have read Brazil, and Lesley's name should have been spelled consistently throughout.

A picture of Jill and Philip Igoe was inadvertently used instead of a picture of Jerry and Ruth Clewett, and Paul's name was omitted from the caption to the picture of Paul and Hilary Drinkwater.

Our thanks to those who wrote to let us know about the errors.

africa

The capital of Zaire was thrown into shock when an aircraft on take-off from Ndolo airfield on January 8 failed to make it into the air and crashed on to the Type Ka market killing more than 300 and injuring hundreds more market shoppers.

Reports from Steve and Elizabeth Allford say it put tremendous strain on Kinshasa's medical resources, and an appeal went out for sutures, plasters and blood. However, people were said to be reluctant to give blood because of the danger of HIV infection and fears that the blood would be sold and not used for the air crash victims.

Although the disaster happened weeks ago, the results and memories will be with the people for years to come. The market is a favourite with women of the Baptist church (CBFZ), so Steve and Elizabeth, and Owen and Deanna Clark, will no doubt come into contact with relatives of the dead and injured, and also encounter the anger at the lack of control on aircraft maintenance and the state of medical services. The BMS Relief Fund has made a grant to enable the CBFZ to help the victims and their families.

Please pray:

- for the church (CBFZ) as they offer comfort and support to the bereaved.
- for the relatives of the dead and injured as they come to terms with the shock and loss in a life of continuing uncertainties.

student, Paulo, was killed and his wife, Annie beaten up in the presence of their 15-month-old child. The assailant, another student, had been suspended from the seminary a fortnight previously and given thirty days to leave seminary accommodation. He is said to have started an argument with Paulo in his flat before shooting him three times. A neighbouring student rescued Annie and her child before the assailant made off in his car.

It has been difficult for the Messeders and everyone at the seminary to work out how such a thing could have happened. A commission is looking into the events although it is difficult to see how the incident could have been avoided.

Please pray

- For those at the seminary as they begin to find the way forward from this tragedy
- For Annie and her child that they can put these horrific events behind them and begin a new life. Pray also for Annie's financial situation as a widow
- For the Messeders as they take up their pastorate

ARRIVALS

George and Betsy Lee from Sri Lanka
Mark and Andrea Hotchkin from Guinea Conakry
Bob and Ruth Ellett from Nepal

DEPARTURES

Philip and Jill Igoe to Zimbabwe
John and Lesley Moody to Brazil
Tim and Rosimar Deller to Brazil
John and Maria Dyer to Brazil
Katie Norris to Nepal

OVERSEAS VISITS

Reg Harvey to Bratislava, Czechoslovakia
David Martin to Thailand
Philip Marsden to Sri Lanka, Thailand, India and Nepal
Richard Wells to Sri Lanka, Thailand, India and Nepal
Andrew North to Brazil
Derek Rumbol to Johannesburg
Steve and Carolyn Green to India and Thailand
John James to Sri Lanka and Nepal

ANONYMOUS GIFTS

Date range: From 01.09.95 To 31.09.95

	£
Abergele	20.00
Anon	100.00
Boston	100.00
Darlington	50.00
Dover	60.00
GYE 190	119.94
Jersey	3.00
Kennedy	54.00
SW Charitable Giving	14.74
	£521.68

LEGACIES

	£
Bailey Mrs Helen	1,160.00
Ferris Miss Hilda Mary	1,000.00
Grieve Mrs Margaret MacDonald	1,324.04
Hunt Miss Mildred Annie	500.00
Lord Miss Dorothy	250.00
Lund Mrs Jean Hutchieson	33.16
Massam Mrs Lilian Irene	1,000.00
Pellowe Mrs Ethel Nancy	150.00
Philpott Miss Margaret Dorothy	500.00
Preston Miss Jessie	5,188.00
Selby Mrs Freda Phyllis	67,004.57
Turnbull Miss Mary	25.29
	£78,135.06

Nepal

Green Wellies



what could he say...

Green wellies and wax jackets. You know the image. There are a lot of them about in our village – green wellies that is – rural south Oxfordshire is that sort of place, horses, Land Rover Discoverys, gallops and half-timbered houses with thatched roofs – real Dick Francis sort of place really.

Why mention this? Well, just recently I was listening to an item on the radio which was analysing the current economic situation (it had been left tuned to Radio 4 by the previous user!) and was describing how the recent cold snap had been good for high street business. The weather was to blame yet again – it had been too mild. The shops were full

of winter stock but no one was buying until the weather changed when, suddenly, woolly jumpers and overcoats were in great demand.

“After all, no one buys a coat until the weather changes,” said the interviewer. This reminded me of an incident I heard on a recent visit to Albania. Because of the difficulties of just doing normal everyday things and the problems associated with most aspects of running a home, many of the missionaries there employ Albanians to help in the home.

When one couple were away for a few days their helper decided to do many of the jobs she had seen needed doing around the house but had not had the time to tackle. She cleaned and washed everything in sight. The husband returned first and was proudly shown around a sparkling house. He was very impressed at the end of the tour of inspection and full of compliments for her hard work and initiative. “Oh and one other thing,” said the helper, “Those two dirty, sticky old coats you and Mrs X (anonymity for the protection of the image of BMS personnel) wear – I’ve cleaned and scrubbed them. It took some doing but with a broom, a hose and lots of soap I managed to get all the gunge off them!” Silence! What could he say?

It wasn’t her fault, she only had one coat and wore it whenever it got cold. She was no victim of fashion. No thought of nipping out and buying the new season’s latest fashion and in any case who ever heard of smothering a nice green coat in wax? ●

John Passmore takes a sideways view

John Passmore, the BMS Europe Representative was a missionary in Bangladesh for ten years

waves

WHAT A WASTE OF MISSIONARY EFFORTS

Why should there be so much carnage in countries around the world; especially places in Africa and elsewhere where missionaries endlessly toiled to propagate the gospel.

One laments at the terrible experiences in places like Sierra Leone, Liberia and Rwanda. It is rather depressing to see villages being burnt down with an exodus of people trekking on foot to find safety.

What is responsible for this spate of violence where there seems to be no regard for life and property? What is responsible for this unhealthy desire to acquire power and to arbitrarily laud it over the defenceless and the destitute?

I enjoyed pleasant experiences in places in West Africa where missionaries have laboured relentlessly achieving tremendous results. In Sierra Leone (Segbwema) the Nixon Hospital, which received missionary funding, performed excellent services to the country.

Liberia was famous for the translation work of the Lutheran Bible translators: the Sim's Elwa, which was Africa's best known radio station broadcasting in 44 languages.

Where are these projects now? They have been abandoned due mainly to rebel incursions in the ongoing wars in these countries. Can you imagine the cost of these projects, the prayers of missionary agencies and the support from donors? All these efforts, what a waste, millions poured down into the drain.

In my view, the call to missionary duties can no longer be perceived as *Sola Fidei*, it is tantamount to putting one's life on the line. Missionaries have been deliberately targeted, shot, arrested in some circumstances. The missionary field is comparable to growing vegetables on a field laid with land mines – one could be blown apart. Life has to be given in order to restore it.

But all is not lost, the faith of the people in these countries does not diminish in the face of these calamities, they cling steadfastly to Jesus. The work of missionaries must be supported. Mission is compelling, challenging and above all rewarding.

The Revd Cornelius Mereweather-Thompson is minister of Harlesden Baptist Church in north west London and is author of the book *Christian Dialogue With Living Faith Communities*



WHERE IT MATTERS

Helping Where it Matters

BMS Relief Fund



Meeting needs that don't always hit the headlines

£250 £50 £25 £10 Other

Name

Address

.....

.....

.....

Natural disasters, civil wars, refugee crises... they're images we see regularly on TV and in the newspapers. But what about those that don't always hit the headlines? Like making life more bearable for children who survived the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, or supplying medicines to fight measles in Zaire. The BMS Relief Fund is able to respond with compassion and speed to those hit by circumstances beyond their control. What's more, we know we have control over where the money goes and that every pound donated will go to meet those needs, because nothing is deducted by BMS from gifts for administration.

Please will you help us to help where it matters?

BMS Relief Fund

Please make cheques payable to Baptist Missionary Society. Unless requested, receipts will not be issued for donations under £10.