

SHARE INTERNATIONAL

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"Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond their control."
(Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25)

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The destined path

by the Master —, through Benjamin Creme

It is becoming increasingly clear that man is ready for a great leap forward. Despite the many tensions and dangers which still exist, and which to many seem increasing, the human kingdom is moving forward and upwards in line with the Plan which guides the actions of us all. The Cosmic Magnet draws everything towards a planned destination; the energies of the magnet wax in power and cannot be withstood. Man must learn and understand the power and beneficence of Cosmos. Thus will he grow correctly with the minimum of suffering.

The Light of Cosmos shines on man as never before, inspiring him to simplify his life and so regain the connection with the Source which, sadly, he has lost.

Were men to heed these words, they would soon enter into a state of Being altogether new in their long journey to perfection.

Time, for the old ways, is fast running out. The old thinking and acting, which cause men so much distress, is nearing its end. A new Light sheds its beauty over humanity and brings to a conclusion the aberrations of the past.

Thus do We see the future for man as one bathed in the light of the new understanding. Thus do We rejoice at the nearness of the time.

Revelation

Man's long struggle to build the structures which will serve his rightful purposes is almost over. The required forms are already dimly sensed and soon will break upon his understanding as revelation.

From that moment alone, his progress will astonish all but the watching Brothers. We have for long worked towards this end and wait patiently for its enactment. We know that men's hearts are ready to give form to their loftiest aspirations, to enter willingly into a future as yet unknown, to rectify the mistakes of the past and to begin again on the long ladder of ascent. We know this to be so and have confidence in man's capacity to change when needs he must.

This is such a time. Conditions on Earth are deteriorating rapidly: the divisions which have dogged men for centuries raise, as ever, their perennial problems. The planet groans under the impact of man's wanton destruction. Men await a sign, an assurance of leadership and guidance, and an opportunity to hope.

The signs, for men, are everywhere to be seen. The guidance is assured. The reasons for hope are long and constantly offered.

That men heed them not results from fear. Blind, men are, because they are afraid to see. When, soon, Maitreya steps into the centre of man's affairs, making known the reasons for, and the solutions to, man's problems, they will see that the leadership they yearn for has long been theirs to enjoy, that the time has come to abandon the destructive ways of the past, and that all unknown, they have within themselves the hope and capacity which will remake this world and set it, once again, balanced and safe, bravely on its destined path. •

Politics vital for human development

by Ann Pettifor

London, UK— Politics and human development go together like a horse and carriage, argues the United Nations Development's (UNDP) latest report *Deepening democracy in a fragmented world*. And democratic politics, it asserts, is the best workhorse for the carriage of human development: 42 out of the 48 high human-development countries are democracies.

At the same time, the report notes in a sweeping overview of governance across the world: "people seem to have lost confidence in the effectiveness of their governments and often seem to be losing faith in democracy". Gallup International's Millennium Survey asked more than 50,000 people in 60 countries: "Would you say that your country is governed by the will of the people?" Fewer than a third said yes. The survey also asked: "Does government respond to the will of the people?" Only 10 per cent said that it did.

The UNDP report ranks countries by subjective and objective indicators of good, democratic governance. Britain fares comparatively well on most of the subjective indicators: civil liberties, political rights, law and order, government effectiveness. The exception is concentration of power in the media. As Albert Camus once argued: "The press is free when it does not depend on either the power of government or the power of money." In the UK the press depends on the power of money. Four groups own 85 per cent of the daily press, accounting for two thirds of total circulation.

The UK also falls down on the UNDP's objective indicators. British voter turnout is among the lowest (59 per cent) of all democratic states, lower than Germany (82 per cent), Greece (76 per cent), and Spain (71 per cent). Women are poorly represented in Parliament, holding only 17 per cent of seats. This is better than in Japan (10 per cent) and the US (13.8 per cent), but worse than Germany (31 per cent), Spain (27 per cent), and the Seychelles (23 per cent). Trade Union membership is low, at 26 per cent of the non-agricultural labour force,

lower than Sweden (77 per cent), Norway (52 per cent), and Canada (31 per cent).

Which makes it all the more significant that Britain has more NGOs (3,388) than any other country except France (3,551). How to explain that? Perhaps it has something to do with the attitude of British but also most western political parties. Almost without exception they downgrade democratic politics and instead promote the market as the most efficient, reliable, and democratic mechanism for allocating resources. More efficient and democratic, according to some economists, than a "rent-seeking" parliament, government, or local authority.

The electorate, particularly the young and women, have got the message. If the "invisible (and unaccountable) hand" of the market is allocating resources — to railways, football clubs, and pensions — then why bother with government, political parties, and the democratic process?

But there are still many who believe that the market should not displace democratic politics and governments. Having been abandoned by political parties, we have tried to achieve a fairer and more sustainable allocation of resources by other means. We engage in campaigns like those which oppose the interests of the global rentier [moneyed] class by "looking to the local", or those which challenge international injustice (like Jubilee 2000) and offer solutions to environmental degradation (like the Global Commons Institute).

The report notes that over the period that the market has been freed up by governments to take over the role of allocating resources, "the world has become much more unequal, with the level of inequality worldwide grotesque". Between 1970 and the 1990s the world was more unequal than at any time before 1950. Countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have increased their incomes over the past two decades, but most have seen rising income inequality, "most consistently and dramatically in the United Kingdom and the United States", asserts the report. Between 1979 and 1997 US real GDP

per capita grew 38 per cent, but the income of a family with median earnings grew only 9 per cent. So most of the gain was captured by the very richest people. The income of the top 1 per cent of families was 10 times that of the median family in 1979 — and 23 times higher in 1997.

So the invisible hand is working for some. This is mainly because the links between democracy and human development have been weakened.

There is now universal concern for "good governance", particularly from big corporations and the World Bank, desperate for legal systems that will guarantee property rights. But their concern seldom extends to the notion of good democratic governance. If we are to "enlarge human choices and build human capabilities" argues the UNDP, we cannot have the one without the other. The carriage will not advance without the horse. (© IPS) ●

Democracy gaining ground

In the 1980s the world had nearly 70 authoritarian regimes; now, 20 years later, the number of dictatorships has shrunk to 26. In the last 20 years Latin America jettisoned many military juntas, the fall of the Berlin Wall brought about a flood of changes in Eastern Europe, the Philippines deposed Marcos, and in Africa a number of dictators were overthrown.

This does not necessarily mean that these countries automatically became truly democratic. Approximately 40 countries are in a transitional phase, some of them lacking full freedom of the press, or the freedom to form trade unions, a reliable judicial system or a proper opposition.

From 1985 to 2000 the proportion of democratic countries grew from 38 per cent to 57 per cent, while authoritarian countries decreased from 45 per cent to 30 per cent. (Source: *Trouw*, the Netherlands) ●

Living under occupation

An interview with Belinda Coote by Gill Fry

The UK charity Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) was formed in 1984 after the massacre of hundreds of Palestinian refugees at the Sabra-Shatila camps in Lebanon. For 18 years MAP has provided medical equipment and medicines, opened health clinics and trained health workers throughout the occupied territories. Working with the Palestine Ministry of Health, the Palestine Red Crescent Society and many non-governmental organizations, MAP aims to address the most urgent medical needs of Palestinians. MAP has many longterm developmental projects planned, but since the beginning of the current intifada in 2000, with conditions deteriorating, the focus has changed to providing emergency relief. MAP reports: "Our staff work alongside what remains of the Palestinian health service — doctors and nurses determined to help their people working in crumbling hospitals and clinics that are often flooded with casualties. Despite curfews and intimidating military checkpoints, MAP relief convoys are still getting through with food parcels, milk for children, and first aid supplies."

Gill Fry interviewed MAP's chief executive Belinda Coote for *Share International* at their headquarters in Islington, London, UK. Having worked for Oxfam for over 18

years Ms Coote joined MAP in July 2002, and made her first visit to the West Bank, Gaza and Lebanon in October 2002.

Share International: Could you describe your recent trip — did you visit the refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza?

Belinda Coote: I went to the West Bank and Gaza but we didn't get into the refugee camps there because things were very tense at the time. Gaza is a 28-kilometre strip of land along the coast and it's like entering an open prison, or another country — you have to go through passport control — and it's all very heavily militarized. Once you are there, in many ways life looks pretty normal on the surface. There are shops and commercial activities, hotels for the odd visitor like ourselves, right on the beach — you get the sense of what could be a very prosperous bit of land. But when you spend time there you begin to realize how extraordinary it is to live there, because the Palestinians who live in Gaza are not free to come and go at all.

SI: What difficulties do the Palestinians face there?

BC: The main thing going on while we were there, and I think is still going on, is that every night there is a military incursion into Gaza. You don't know where they are going



Palestinian woman and child

© MAP: photo by Carlos Reyes-Manzo



Belinda Coote

to come, but usually eight to ten tanks and bulldozers enter a specific part of the Strip, and proceed to demolish two or three houses — and usually somebody is killed. This happens every night or a missile is fired from two or three miles away into the Strip to take out a particular house and usually a lot of people with it.

The fear that people live with was very striking: children can't sleep at night, people are jumpy — it is a really traumatized population. We stayed one night and there was an incursion in Gaza City not far from where we were. One man, about 50, was killed — he was on night guard-duty. When the tanks came in they shot him dead as he was sitting outside a shop, then they destroyed three shops and left. End of story for them, but what we picked up on was the huge grief that his family had to go through, and the anger and fear. Nobody was alleging that this man had any links to Hamas — he was just a regular guy with four or five children and a young wife. And I don't think it got a line in the newspapers. This is going on all the time.

SI: Is it difficult then to lead a normal family life?

BC: We visited one family who lived outside Gaza City and they had obviously been quite wealthy, well-to-do Palestinians at one point. The father is the head teacher of a local secondary school of 1,000 pupils. He has a very articulate 17-year-old daughter, a couple of younger children, his wife and mother, and they live in what was probably once a beautiful house set in lovely land, with greenhouses, trees and vegetables. Two years ago the Israelis wanted the family to move out so that they could make a milit-

7 ary outpost and occupy the house. He and his family made the decision to stay and now they live under siege: they are only allowed on the ground floor and there is a great tower behind the house, with a gun permanently trained onto their courtyard. They told us stories of how they were ordered into one room and made to stay there while the soldiers occupied the rest of the house. For some reason the Israeli army stopped short of killing the family, which is what has happened to many families who won't move. The father is a very determined man, whose great mantram in life is peace — he has no bitterness against the Israeli forces.

SI: Is a food crisis developing?

BC: Yes, there's a lot of malnutrition. We went to a clinic and saw many undernourished children. It is not like parts of Africa at the moment but the situation is deteriorating very quickly with people really struggling to survive. In the camps where the greatest need is, there are people without any means of income trying to feed large families and keep them decent.

They get food in the Strip but people don't have money because they don't work. Destroying two or three businesses or shops a night has a devastating effect on the economy. The worst thing in many ways is the trauma and the humiliation of being held captive in this way and of being subject to these nightly attacks.

SI: What is the situation like in the West Bank?

BC: The West Bank is something else altogether — with the Israeli policy of fragmenting the region with a number of different strategies. Firstly there is rampant settlement and road-building in every strategic location, on top of hills for instance. If the settlement isn't yet built, it has been marked out by little wooden huts in a circle. Roads are cut through the landscape to get to the settlements — these roads are settlers' roads, so they can't be used by Palestinians. The environmental impact is huge, with the West Bank being cut up into strips — huge swathes of road carved through the hillsides.

The other thing is the checkpoints: you can only get to every city or habitation in the West Bank by going through an Israeli checkpoint. These are often manned by 17-year-old soldiers — young men and women. They are very nervous and have huge amounts of weaponry so they are very dangerous.



Women at a funeral — a daily event

© MAP: photo by Carlos Reyes-Manzo

SI: Do the checkpoints cause a lot of frustration?

BC: There is a ritual humiliation of Palestinians going in and out. We were at one checkpoint waiting to get through and saw a woman who was completely desperate, beside herself, screaming and crying, and they wouldn't let her through. She held up a piece of paper to us. It said in English: "I have angina. I need to get to the hospital."

A lot of roads into Palestinian areas are blocked: they put trees across or have mounds of earth shovelled over them or some other tactic. You'll be driving along to a village and suddenly you'll hit a roadblock and have to turn round.

Another strategy is the curfews. In Ramallah, where we have an office, they have been under curfew from 6pm to 6am for about three or four months. Every now and then the Israelis call full-day curfews, so people can't go to work, run their business, go to the shops — they have to stay at home.

SI: What is MAP doing there?

BC: MAP is doing a variety of things. It is very difficult for people to move about in the West Bank now, and to get basic medical help or vaccinations, so MAP is supporting a network of rural clinics so that people have a clinic in their area operating one day a week. We are getting a lot of requests for food and basic emergency supplies. We send in food parcels whenever we can, but it is very difficult and dangerous to get around. We get a lot of requests relating to the psycho-social trauma, particularly in

Gaza, and requests for income-generation so that women especially can raise some money to keep their families. So MAP's focus is shifting: in the last two years since the intifada, we have gone right back into emergency relief work.

SI: Are medical facilities affected by the Israeli army?

BC: The Israeli army is destroying ambulances — you see them bulldozed or run over by the tanks. They haven't destroyed the hospitals, and we still take in medical supplies and equipment. A large number of babies are being born at checkpoints because women can't get to hospitals, and traditional diseases of poverty are increasing, like malnutrition and TB. A lot of vaccination programmes have been interrupted so there's the worry of a re-emergence in the future of some diseases that had been eradicated.

SI: Is there much evidence of children being psychologically disturbed?

BC: A lot — this was very striking in Gaza. Children are having nightmares, bed-wetting, lack of concentration — all the classic symptoms of traumatized behaviour. You hear explosions going off during the day, helicopters buzzing overhead, and you can see the fear around: "What are they going to hit this time?" There is no safe place you can go to that is immune from attack.

SI: Do the children go to school most days?

BC: Yes, there are schools and the Palestin-

ians put a very high value on education. When we went to Nablus it was full of tanks. We got there when they were all leaving school — lots of young boys and young women in their school uniforms walking down the street. I thought they were extraordinarily brave to walk straight past the tanks to get home. You have to admire them so much for keeping their lives together.

SI: There has been talk of ‘snipers’ shooting at the Palestinians. Have you heard about this?

BC: There are a lot of settlers doing that. As we were driving up to Nablus there is a stretch of road where there are quite high hills either side. For some time that road was not considered safe because there were snipers up in the hills just picking off cars. I was very pleased to get to the other end of that road — it is a very difficult, dangerous place at the moment.

SI: What is life like in the refugee camps in Lebanon?

BC: There are about a quarter of a million refugees. There was a large influx in 1948 and many are still there 50 years later who have absolutely no civil, economic or political rights — Lebanon has refused to make them citizens. There are 73 occupations that they are not allowed to engage in (which is just about everything), so basically they are not allowed to work. They are still in camps, fed by the World Food Programme, with their education and health service delivered by UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.) They are the most pathetic group of people it is possible to imagine.

SI: Do they have houses to live in?

BC: Yes, most of the camps are not the classic tents in rows by any means. What has developed are like small towns within towns, but in some parts of Lebanon these are actually sealed off, so you have to go through a checkpoint to get into them — they are living in segregated communities.

The refugees who went to Jordan or Syria were given citizenship but those who went to Lebanon or Gaza drew the short straw. Although in Lebanon they are not having the incursions, life there has an awful mentality of dependency.

SI: How are you helping the people in these camps?

BC: MAP has had a very active programme in Lebanon, supporting and training health professionals and getting equipment into hospitals. Now the programme is moving more towards public health, putting in water and sanitation, rewiring, reroofing — environmental health work coupled with health education. In Lebanon we need to do more capacity building with other NGOs, getting people more aware of what they can do, trying to break that dependency culture.

SI: Do you see MAP’s role as informing the public about what’s going on?

BC: I think that we have a real responsibility in that respect. However, the humanitarian crisis is being brought about by a political crisis, so we have to tread the line carefully within our humanitarian-charity mandate.

SI: Reporting of the Palestinian/Israeli crisis in the media nearly always seems to me to be biased in favour of the Israeli viewpoint.

BC: Yes, and the language is often biased. A suicide bomber is called a terrorist and an attack by the Israeli army into Gaza is called an incursion. There is a very uneven balance in some newspapers.

SI: Was the situation worse than you expected?

BC: Yes, and it is really hard to believe it until you’ve seen it. I have never seen anywhere where there is such heavy militarization used so deliberately and oppressively against one group of people by another. It was very shocking. The whole

policy by the Israeli defence force in the West Bank and Gaza is, as far as I can see, designed to humiliate a group of people, and is done very successfully. When you do that systematically over a long period of time there is going to be a response, as tragic and awful as that is.

SI: Are you working with any Israeli groups?

BC: There is a group called ‘Jews for Justice in Palestine’ based in London, and they have given us very generous donations. We would like to make more links with the Jewish community because it is terribly important. I know there are a lot of Jewish people who are appalled by what is going on, and we need to work with those people.

SI: Do you have hope for the future, or is the situation heading for a major humanitarian crisis?

BC: The crisis is here. Some people feel that it just can’t get any worse — but it could get worse. Palestinians see the international community, inadequate as we are, as the only brake on Israeli aggression towards them. If America invades Iraq, Palestinians are scared that everybody will be watching that and not what’s going on in the West Bank. So I don’t know what the future holds — it’s probably going to get even worse before it gets better.

For more information visit: www.map-uk.org
Or telephone: +44-(0)20 7226 4114



Going to school — against the odds

Courage to refuse

Daily their numbers grow. Israeli reservists are finding the courage to refuse to serve in an army which commits what they see as unjust and unacceptable acts of repression and violence against the Palestinian people. The 'refusenik' movement in Israel first came to public attention earlier in 2002 when a group of reserve officers signed an open letter explaining their stance. The soldiers claim the right to be conscientious objectors in the first instance but also take their case much further — asserting that Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories on the West Bank and Gaza is illegal, and, that being the case, that it is their duty to refuse to participate in such acts. In an unprecedented move the "Courage to refuse" campaign is now taking its country to court.

The movement is growing in strength: to date there are 501 soldiers who have pledged to resist carrying out certain orders. Among the voices raised in support of the refuseniks are those of respected academics and professors from a number of Israeli universities who have also published an open letter:

"We, faculty members from a number of Israeli universities, wish to express our appreciation and support for those of our students and lecturers who refuse to serve as soldiers in the occupied territories. Such service too often involves carrying out orders that have no place in a democratic society founded on the sanctity of human life.

"For 35 years an entire people, some three-and-a-half million in number, have

been held without basic human rights. The occupation and oppression of another people have brought the State of Israel to where it is today.

"Without an Israeli declaration of an end to the occupation, accompanied by appropriate action — unilateral, if necessary — the present war is not being fought for our home but for the settlements beyond the green line and for the continued oppression of another people.

"We hereby express our readiness to do our best to help students who encounter academic, administrative or economic difficulties as a result of their refusal to serve in the territories. We call on the University community at large to support them."

The testimonies of the soldiers contain harrowing accounts of military action they saw, appalling suffering they and their fellow soldiers were expected to inflict or ignore — all of which was, in their eyes, illegal and immoral, and failed to ensure the security of the Israeli people. Michael Sfar, a lawyer for the movement and a refusenik himself, says that Israeli reaction to the Palestinian intifada has consisted of a series of human rights violations amounting in fact to a "systematic mechanism of collective punishment". International law prohibits such action.

Many refuseniks initially served proudly, ready to protect their country and fellow citizens; but as their experiences grew more horrifying they found them-

In this section, we review developments and opinions which demonstrate that there is an increasingly powerful undercurrent sweeping the world in the direction of synthesis and sharing, relaxation and co-operation, of new relationships and new approaches.

selves rebelling. Rami Kaplan, a refusenik who has been imprisoned for taking a stand and who is now taking his country to court, says: "I hated going after kids who threw stones. On one occasion we sent in dozens of troops just to arrest a 10-year-old kid who was on some list." How could it be part of an army's regular duties to cut down Palestinian orchards, vines and palm trees? "There was no tactical explanation."

Kaplan is convinced that the army's actions in the territories are the cause of the bombings in Tel Aviv. "You have to be blind to think that people under oppression won't rebel. Suicide bombing is a new phenomenon. It happened after 30 years. This just shows how bad the situation in the territories has become."

A way out for the poor in Malaysia

Wijadi (Wanita Innovatif Jaya Diri) is a non-governmental organization funded by the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and based in Malaysia. It was set up primarily to provide legal assistance to abused women who were unable to seek

Original Appeal made by 53 reservists in Ha'Aretz, 1 February 2002:

"We, reserve combat officers and soldiers of the Israel Defence Forces, who were raised upon the principles of Zionism, sacrifice and giving to the people of Israel and to the State of Israel, who have always served in the front lines, and who were the first to carry out any mission, light or heavy, in order to protect the State of Israel and strengthen it;

"We, combat officers and soldiers who have served the State of Israel for long weeks every year, in spite of the dear cost to our personal lives, have been on reserve duty all over the Occupied Territ-

ories, and were issued commands and directives that had nothing to do with the security of our country, and that had the sole purpose of perpetuating our control over the Palestinian people. We, whose eyes have seen the bloody toll this Occupation exacts from both sides;

"We, who sensed how the commands issued to us in the Territories destroy all the values we had absorbed while growing up in this country;

"We, who understand now that the price of Occupation is the loss of IDF's human character and the corruption of the entire Israeli society;

"We, who know that the Territories are not Israel, and that all settlements are bound

to be evacuated in the end:

"We hereby declare that we shall not continue to fight this War of the Settlements.

"We shall not continue to fight beyond the 1967 borders in order to dominate, expel, starve and humiliate an entire people.

"We hereby declare that we shall continue serving in the Israel Defence Forces in any mission that serves Israel's defence.

"The missions of occupation and oppression do not serve this purpose — and we shall take no part in them."

(Source: The Support Committee for Israeli Freedom and Human Rights Organizations Foundation, the Netherlands; *The Guardian*, UK; www.seruv.org)

justice for themselves.

However, Wijadi discovered quickly that most of these women had no income whatsoever and were living in poverty. "They were in dire need of financial assistance," Aniha Isahak, executive officer and chairman of Wijadi, explains. Malaysia is one of the few South-East Asian countries where inequality between the rich and the poor is not very marked. According to a report by the World Bank, real average per capita income increased 2.5 times in a quarter of a century, and the poverty rate shrank from slightly over half of the population to 7.8 per cent. But hard-core poverty is still critical in some areas and ethnic groups, and particularly affects women.

Wijadi started its income-generating project with small grants enabling single mothers to become self-sufficient. To qualify for the grant, the project has to be related to sustainable living and biodiversity, so the activities carried out generate a stable income for women, and preserve and protect the environment. For example, Wijadi manages a garden with endangered aquatic and terrestrial plants, and fruit tree varieties which are no longer developed through natural selection or are becoming extinct. The approach to farming is sustainable, using natural compost and animal waste as manure, and a drip irrigation system. There are also plans for a solar pump to tap ground water. Plants are harvested and sent for extraction of essential oils which will be used in soaps and candles. Women involved earn about 10 Malaysian Ringgit (approximately US\$2.5) for half a day's work and have their own plot of land to grow vegetables.

However fundamental to eradicating poverty, economic growth alone is not enough, and the state Government must play its role. "It really depends on how the resources generated are used. Is education provided widely? Do you have a good healthcare system, and who has access to it? Who gets to make decisions?" These are some fundamental issues underlined by Dr Maxine Olson, UNDP representative in Malaysia. "These are what makes the definition of poverty very broad. It includes deprivation of essential capabilities for a long and happy life, lack of economic resources, access to health and education as well as participation in decisions that affect one's life." (Source: *New Straits Times*, Malaysia)

Truce in Ivory Coast

A rebellion that killed hundreds of people in the Ivory Coast ended with the signing of a truce by the insurgents who had occupied locations in the north and central areas of the country for over a month. Once the model for stability in West Africa, the nation had become unsettled with ethnic, religious and political tensions rising to the surface. The framework for the peace proposals was initiated by the head of the Economic Community of West African States, a regional grouping which agreed to the deployment of West African troops to monitor the cease-fire. According to one mediator, the truce provides "a framework of principles to bring an end to the ongoing crisis through dialogue and negotiations". (Source: *The New York Times*, USA; BBC News, UK)

Women vote in Bahrain

The Persian Gulf kingdom of Bahrain made history with its first parliamentary election in 30 years. It marked the first time women were allowed to run for office and vote in any parliamentary election in the Arab Gulf region. Although no woman was elected to the parliament, two of the eight women who ran will continue to the second round of voting. Twelve secular and nine Islamic candidates won the 21 contested seats, with the secular candidates securing 21 seats overall. The elected members of the Consultative Council will share decision-making with the members appointed by the Amir of Bahrain, Shaikh Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa.

The election represented part of a move by the progressive king to encourage economic growth and defuse tensions between the country's Sunni and Shiite Muslims, and followed municipal elections held earlier in 2002. Shaikh Hamad paved the way for these elections by releasing political prisoners, repealing laws that punished dissidents, and relaxing rules that inhibited the press.

Even though democracy is still a work in progress and critics argue that the elected Parliament lacks true power because it can only legislate with the consent of the appointed House, the tentative steps taken toward shared decision-making, building

coalitions, and giving the people a voice in solving their own problems, can only be viewed as a ray of hope. (Source: *The New York Times*, USA)

Working-class President elected in Brazil

In a landslide victory, with over 61 per cent of the vote, Luis Inacio Lula da Silva became the first elected working-class President of Brazil. A former factory worker, labour union leader and imprisoned dissident, and the son of farm labourers, Lula, as he is commonly known, has been given a mandate to remake Latin America's largest country. Candido Mendes, a leading political scientist in Brazil, points out that Lula "won every region of the country at every stratum of society" and that the election represents "an historic shift of direction, which shows how much this country wants change".

The Workers' Party, founded by da Silva along with a group of intellectuals, labour leaders and environmentalists after his release from prison in 1980, has persevered in successive elections, moderating their views but remaining true to their primary responsibility of ending hunger and malnutrition among more than 20 million Brazilians. Da Silva even chose Jose Alemar, a textile magnate and member of the Centrist Liberal party, as his Vice President. Said Alemar: "Lula represents labour, and I represent capital." The unusual alliance will be needed to reassure foreign investors and financial institutions who are being encouraged to give da Silva some breathing space and be understanding of Brazil's financial plight.

"Hope has vanquished fear," said da Silva as he promised to "do everything within my reach to bring more peace to our continent" and "build a country that has more justice, brotherhood and solidarity." He continues: "The endemic deprivations suffered by the working class cannot be rectified overnight. There are no miraculous solutions for such a huge social debt ... If in four years we succeed in our goal of ensuring that everyone in Brazil gets three meals a day, it will be the major achievement in my life". (Source: *The New York Times*, USA; *La Vanguardia*, Spain; BBC News, UK) ●

Global negotiations

by James Bernard Quilligan

In its July/August 2002 issue *Share International* published the first of a series of articles — in essence “the Brandt Commission Report revisited”. In a major assessment of progress achieved since the Brandt Reports of 1980 and 1983 James Quilligan provides a keen analysis of the half-successes and failures in implementing the changes urged by the Brandt Commission.

In 1977 Willy Brandt, former German Chancellor, gathered a group of former heads of state and eminent figures to examine “the failure of the global economy and the problems plaguing developing nations”. Now, more than 20 years since the publication of the Commission’s report *North-South: A Program for Survival* and its sequel *Common Crisis: North-South Co-operation for World Recovery*, James Quilligan says: “The international community has had more than a little time to respond. Stakeholders of the world deserve an appraisal of how we have fared — measurable results that provide a glimpse of where global society may be heading. What follows is an update of the major issues that the Brandt Commission addressed, along with an evaluation of the Commission’s proposals associated with them. A grade is also assigned at the end of each action item, holding everyone to account for our 20-year progress towards the Brandt objectives.”

James Quilligan now focuses on global negotiations, and concludes his survey, deploring the lack of progress made since the publication of the Brandt Commission Reports.

Global Negotiations

North-South called for a summit of international leaders to discuss the foregoing array of development issues. Brandt hoped that these interrelated concerns would not remain under separate negotiations, to languish in the province of specialists. Rather, the Commission wished to see international development issues considered together and dealt with simultaneously by a wide-ranging group of world representatives, reflecting the realities of interdependence.

The Brandt Commission envisioned an ongoing multilateral forum “for discussing the entire range of North-South issues among all the nations,” with the goal of launching an international emergency relief program and creating a stable monetary and financial system. (*Common Crisis*, 5) The Brandt Commission stood for the principle of inclusion, of issues as well as nations: “The aim of ‘global negotiations’ is international consensus. This means that no single problem, energy or debt or food, for example, would be viewed in isolation without considering its direct implications on the full global agenda of interconnected issues.” (CC, 5-6)

At Brandt’s invitation, 22 world leaders met in Cancun, Mexico, on 22-23 October 1981 to discuss the issues raised in *North-South*. Attending this meeting were leaders from the developed world, as well as heads of state and other leading figures from developing nations. In spite of lively exchanges among the many heads of state, the economic conference failed to produce results, and there have been no North-South summits since. Brandt sensed an unwillingness for further dialogue, noting that: “after Cancun there was a setback. Most industrialized countries, facing deteriorating economic conditions at home, adopted self-centered measures — with dramatic and damaging side-effects on North-South economic co-operation.” (CC, 4)

Why the impasse? In essence, developing countries have been under-represented in the management and decision-making procedures of the world economy, while developed countries are reluctant to change a system structured in their favor. Yet, as the Brandt Reports stressed: “the achievement of economic growth in one country depends increasingly on the performance of others. The South cannot grow adequately without the North. The North cannot prosper or improve its situation unless there is greater progress in the South.” (*North-South*, 33)

The fact of economic interdependence seems self-evident, but after 20 years the world economy remains unco-ordinated, left to the determinism of market forces. In an interconnected world, there is still no

The Brandt proposals: a report card

Issue/Grade (where A is best and F is worst), with reference to the effectiveness of action taken and progress achieved on the Brandt objectives in the 20 years since the Brandt Reports.

Hunger:	F
Poverty:	F
Population:	C
Women:	D-
Aid:	D-
Debt:	D-
Armaments and security:	F
Energy and environment:	C-
Technology and corporations:	D
Trade:	D
Money and finance:	F
Global negotiations:	F

consensus or collective action on vital economic matters. Only the Central Banks of the Group of Seven nations and the International Monetary Fund have a say in world monetary policy, and neither speaks for the world’s people.

The Group of Seven nations are preoccupied with their own economies, particularly with the problem of inflation. The G-7 has neither the power nor reach to govern the international economy or adequately staunch its financial crises. Absorbed with domestic problems, the world’s élite economies have no proactive policy for international development or the needs of impoverished nations, even though the G-7 nations’ internal decisions have far-reaching impact on the interest rates, taxes, tariffs and balance-of-payments of all nations.

The Group of Seven was formed in 1975, largely in reaction to resolutions by the UN General Assembly the previous year for a complete restructuring of the international economic system, aiming to check any new economic power bloc that might emerge from the developing world. Can anyone claim that G-7 economic policy is especially democratic in its outlook, when its member nations (Japan, Italy, Germany, France, England, Canada and the United



photo: UNICEF / Marcel Minnee

“Better living conditions will hardly be achieved without a sense of responsibility for the fate of fellow human beings and without a human motivation to work and production.”

States) represent just 15 per cent of the world’s population?

As for the International Monetary Fund, it has no real power to set exchange rates or promote exchange-rate stability in the global economy. Though the IMF is a well-known watchdog on economic adjustment in developing countries, it takes a hands-off approach on the economic policies of G-7 nations, the Fund’s primary contributors. Voting procedures in both the Fund, and its sister institution, the World Bank, favor developed countries, especially the United States.

A hopeful development is the establishment of the Group of Twenty in 1999. It brings representatives from developing countries into discussions about the international economy and global development. The G-20 includes the G-7 nations, plus several nations from the developing world. In 2001, the G-20 began to explore ways of helping bankrupt nations restructure their debt without international bailouts, but no recommendations have yet been adopted. The G-20 may have some influence on global financial reform, but the new panel has limitations. Heads of state do not attend its meetings. The developing

countries represented are among the world’s wealthier developing nations. So far, the agenda of discussion for the G-20 has been set largely by the G-7, the World Bank, and the IMF. In addition, the G-20 has yet to develop a global audience or find acceptance with the majority of developing countries.

Developing nations have at times threatened to form a debtor’s cartel. Advocates say that by repudiating their debts as an organized bloc, developing nations could increase their political bargaining power and force changes in the international economic system. In *Challenge To The South* (1990), the South Commission, chaired by former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, put the burden back onto developing nations, urging them to commit to genuine reform and take responsibility for the corruption which results in governmental mismanagement, authoritarianism, lack of public accountability, and militarization.

Like the South Commission, Brandt believed that with democratic governance and greater South-South co-operation, including regional economic agreements, preferential trading, and extension of pay-

ments and credit arrangements among themselves, developing nations could heighten their bargaining position at the international level without having to resort to shrill protest, which has a chilling effect on the North. *“There is no time to lose in making a new start,”* said Brandt. *“If the style and tactics of strident demand and mute response continue, both development and world recovery will be victims; people in both the South and the North will face mounting hardship.”* (CC, 142)

As Brandt suggested, global discussions must spring from goodwill, mutual interests and forward-looking policies for economic advancement: *“Better living conditions will hardly be achieved without a sense of responsibility for the fate of fellow human beings and without a human motivation to work and production. Focusing on questions of historical guilt will not provide answers to the crucial problem of self-responsibility on which alone mutual respect can build. Self-righteousness will neither create jobs nor feed hungry mouths.”* (N-S, 25)

It might seem that simply bringing all the issues together, and all the representatives required to discuss them, would not be

7 so great a task, but this has proved otherwise. In spite of the vast disorder produced by an unregulated monetary system, governments are still reluctant to begin constructive discussions on the international economy. After 20 years of ignoring the problem, there are neither global negotiations, nor a central international body fully empowered to: fight poverty and meet humanity's basic needs; provide oversight on speculative capital flows; respond to economic setbacks and currency crises; assist the adjustment process in nations independently; effectively stabilize international currencies and exchange-rates; provide orderly expansion of global liquidity; oversee sustainable development and protection of the environment; and act as a central clearing-house for the world economy.

The Brandt Commission stressed that no agenda for world development has much relevance until all of its objectives are carefully woven together into a plan of action, but so far the competing claims of North and South have produced a stalemate in negotiations for an international program of action. The closely related issues discussed in the Brandt reports remain unlinked, unexamined by nations together.

That is not to underestimate the valuable achievements of the United Nations, its agencies, and many non-governmental organizations in hundreds of conferences on development during the past half-century. The Brandt Commission acknowledged that significant progress can be made in these limited settings, even as the international community strives for a broader consensus on the international economy: "Greater use should be made of single-issue negotiating conferences, since they are often more efficient in reaching agreement.... In doing so, however, one should not lose sight of the ways in which different issues are naturally interrelated, or of negotiations in fora which deal with wider sets of issues. Single-issue negotiations are complementary to and supportive of universal negotiations, and not contradictory to them. Indeed, the former have usually arisen out of the latter." (CC, 143)

In recent years, the United Nations has been striving for expanded partnerships, more practical policies, and increased cooperation at the international level. Agenda 21, an extensive plan for sustainable development adopted by 178 governments at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, incorporated many of the Brandt and

Brundtland Commissions' proposals on development, though subsequent implementation of those reforms has been hampered for financial and political reasons.

At the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000, 147 world leaders set effective new goals for reducing poverty and child mortality, and increasing education programs in developing nations. At the ground-breaking International Conference on Financing for Development held in Monterrey, Mexico, in March 2002, an array of groups, including 51 heads of government, and numerous representatives of international financial and trade institutions, business, and civil society, held inclusive roundtable discussions for the first time in history, addressing key financial issues relating to international development. The World Summit on Sustainable Development, in August 2002 in Johannesburg, attempted to launch many of the proposals for sustainable development set forth previously at the Rio, Millennium, and Monterrey summits, with disappointing results.*

"The extent to which the international system will be made more equitable is essentially a matter for political decision," the Brandt Commission observed. "We are looking for a world based less on power and status, more on justice and contract; less discretionary, more governed by fair and open rules. A start must be made in that direction, and the obvious place to start are those where positive mutual interests in change can be identified. We believe there are numerous such interests. But greater efforts are required to place them at the center of debate." (N-S, 65) (Grade F)

Global wealth without benefits

The Brandt Reports called the world to a higher standard. Developed and developing nations were equally aware of the stakes. The incentive to meet Brandt's objectives was: *"that the North as well as the South gets much in return, both in straightforward economic benefits and in a reduction of uncertainties and instability. And there is not only the capturing of mutual gain to be considered, but also the avoidance of mutual loss. It is not difficult to envisage a world in which the measures we propose are not carried out; and in which the path of the future leads to reciprocal impoverishment."* (N-S, 76-77)

It is true that the Brandt Commission set difficult goals, but it is also true that societies have failed to achieve the level of inter-

national co-operation needed to solve their most fundamental problems. After 20 years, we have fallen far short of Brandt's objectives for eliminating global poverty, getting the developing world out of debt, and transforming the international economy.

As the world's issues are interrelated, so too should be the process of global decision-making. The Brandt Reports were a comprehensive, forward-looking plan from a group which, in its own roundtable discussions, exemplified the sort of representative negotiations and good faith needed at international levels to gather consensus on economic issues from a diversity of world opinion.

The Brandt Commission offered the international community a vision for balancing the creation of wealth with the provision of public services, anticipating new foundations for the future of civilization. In a world where economic growth has become the means to human and social development, the Brandt Reports declared that local development must be the means to growth — *"that the focus has to be not on machines or institutions but on people,"* and the creation of a supporting environment in which they can lead long, healthy, and productive lives. (N-S, 23)

North-South and Common Crisis had a profound initial impact on the public, governments, and international agencies across the world, but went unheeded by developed nations during the prosperous 1980s and 1990s. The disparities about which the Brandt Commission cautioned are reaching breaking point. Citizens of the 21st century will be the clearest judges of whether the Brandt Reports were off the mark in their proposals, or perhaps ahead of their time.

In Part 2 of this series of articles, we will discuss the dramatic economic changes relating to global debt and international finance that have occurred since the Brandt Reports were published.

*See James Guilligan's report, 'Johannesburg World Summit impasse' (SI November 2002). For more information: <http://www.brandt21forum.info>

Grateful acknowledgment is extended to MIT Press for permission to use published material from *North-South* and *Common Crisis*.

Abbreviations

N-S = *North-South: A Program for Survival*
CC = *Common Crisis: North-South Co-operation for World Recovery* ●

Global peace movement growing

“What Maitreya can do is educate, inform, inspire, create a reliable vehicle — the voice of the people of all countries of the world — and create an articulate mass against which no country in the world can stand. We need an informed, educated world public opinion for peace, justice and freedom. Nothing less will do. That is how it will be.” (Benjamin Creme, SI Nov 02)

In an international show of solidarity anti-war demonstrations circled the globe in October 2002, showing a growing opposition to a war against Iraq.

Belgium, 25 October: protesters gathered at the US Embassy to say ‘no’ to the war against Iraq.

Denmark, 26 October: 3,000 demonstrators gathered near the US Embassy in Copenhagen.

Germany, 26 October: 20,000 rallied in Berlin and marches were held in 80 German cities. Also hundreds protested against the planned construction of a gigantic US command centre in Heidelberg.

Italy: At least 500,000 people took part in a march through Florence on 9 November in the first Europe-wide anti-war rally. The protest was the climax of the first meeting of the European Social Forum, bringing together anti-globalization campaigners for five days of debate and conferences.

Led by banners reading “No War”, marchers walked peacefully through Florence, waving rainbow flags and carrying placards, in a carnival atmosphere, to the sounds of whistles, brass bands and bagpipes. About 100 protesters carried a huge Palestinian flag to draw attention to the Middle East conflict. Guy Taylor, from UK’s Globalize Resistance, told Reuters: “This is the first Europe-wide anti-war demonstration and I think it’s vital it has a real impact. There’s such strong underlying opposition to the war that I think we can stop it.”

Anti-war groups in Italy are asking people to hang up white rags, symbolizing peace flags, on windows and balconies, and to wear white ribbons on wrists, bags, bicycles, dog leashes or wherever is visible.

Like the HIV red ribbon campaign, the white ribbons may soon become a potent visual expression of opposition to war.

Japan, 21 October: 600 people marched in Tokyo at an anti-war rally, with similar-sized actions in Osaka, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On 26 October a demonstration of 700 people took place in Tokyo, organized by 14 non-governmental organizations.

Norway, 26 October: hundreds demonstrated in Oslo and many Scandinavian cities.

Puerto Rico, 26 October: hundreds of protesters in San Juan gathered at the Puerto Rican National Guard to denounce possible US military action in Iraq.

Spain, 27 October: there were demonstrations in Madrid, Barcelona, Bilbao, Oviedo, Valencia, Caceres and Sevilla. The largest, in Barcelona, drew more than 30,000 people.

Sweden, 26 October: 1,500 marched through the streets of Stockholm.

The Netherlands, 26 October: nearly 10,000 people took to the streets of Amsterdam opposing war, and 1,200 protested in Rotterdam.

The Philippines, 25 October: demonstrators in Manila protested in front of the US embassy against the war and also demanded that US troops leave the Philippines.

Turkey: In Ankara on 21 October students braved attacks by police to protest against a visit by US Central Command Chief General Tommy Franks, who has been named as the regent of Iraq should the US occupy that country. Their banners read: “We will not become soldiers of the USA.”

UK: In the UK a Day of Protest on 31 October saw protests in over 34 towns, from banner-drops to teach-ins, from sit-downs to cycle rides, with many universities and colleges also getting involved.

In London 3,000 students occupied universities and held debates about the possible Iraq war, then joined thousands of protesters at Parliament Square in the evening for a rally with speakers including Tony Benn, Tariq Ali and MP Jeremy Corbyn. The 4,000-5,000 strong gathering then

Over the years, *Share International* has printed articles outlining Maitreya’s expectations concerning political, social, environmental and spiritual changes in the world, as presented to us by one of Maitreya’s associates in the London community in which He lives. From time to time, both Benjamin Creme and his Master, have shared their prognosis of future developments. In this section, “Facts and forecasts”, our staff monitors recent news, events and comments bearing on these insights.

walked to 10 Downing Street and held a lively, colourful demonstration outside Prime Minister Tony Blair’s residence.

USA, 26 October: some of the largest anti-war demonstrations since the Vietnam War were held in cities across the United States to protest against the possible war on Iraq. Marchers in Washington numbered in the hundreds of thousands, with a companion demonstration in San Francisco of over 50,000, and smaller protests in cities such as Augusta, Maine and Austin, Texas.

The turnout in Washington far exceeded the organizers’ expectations and demonstrated that the antiwar movement is both substantial and building momentum. Those who came to Washington were a cross-section of people, and many had never attended a political rally before. Said one woman: “Being in Washington energized me, by seeing I was not alone.”

A coalition of groups called International Answer asked people to vote in an online referendum called votenowar.org which they hope will symbolically counter-balance the Congressional vote for military action. And moveon.org, a group of online activists, started an online petition drive and raised millions of dollars for Congressional candidates.

In an effective display of people power, *The New York Times* and National Public Radio were forced to publicly correct themselves when their initial erroneous and biased reporting on the demonstrations were called into question by an enormous outpouring of emails and phone calls from outraged citizens.

(Source: *The New York Times*, Foundation for Ethics and Meaning; CNN, Associated Press, USA; BBC News, UK)

(continued on page 19)

*Between 1988 and 1993 Maitreya, the World Teacher, released a series of forecasts and analyses of the current state of the world, as well as fragments of His teachings. Through one of His close associates in the Asian community of London, these were released to **Share International** for publication and sent to the world's media as press releases. Phrased in the words of His associate, a selection of Maitreya's spiritual teachings has been arranged by subject to facilitate the reader's study and application in daily life.*

MAITREYA'S TEACHINGS

Salvation, equilibrium and harmony

What is salvation? To be able to move about in mind, spirit and body at will. (Jul/Aug 1991)

Salvation operates on the spiritual level. (Jul/Aug 1989)

Salvation is achieved through honesty, sincerity and detachment. You can go anywhere with these three principles and you will never feel fatigued mentally, physically or spiritually. You feel free within. (July/Aug 1989)

A person who is physically and mentally free, not conditioned, and able to express himself, is often branded as mad. Madness in this sense is not a disease. Maitreya says: "Look at a saint. What do you find in him? He does not allow himself to be conditioned. He has the mind and heart of a child. But he is not branded as a madman because he has adopted a holy aura. But a person who has not adopted this aura, yet who behaves like a child, is also free from the automatic processes of conditioning. That person is also on the threshold of salvation. Conditioning does not take place in mind, spirit and body, and the Self can move around freely. These are natural qualities from birth. Whoever displays these qualities from birth is on the threshold of salvation." (Sep 1990)

As evolution proceeds from one stage to another, the Self becomes that much more independent, free from commitments. When you are on the threshold of salvation, everything leaves you. (Sep 1990)

Maitreya says: "Look at saints. When they reach the threshold of the Lord, they have to leave everything behind. They give up a mundane life. This is done by the individual. But when nature gives you these conditions, they are natural. They are the blessings of the Almighty." (Sep 1990)

Maitreya says: "Even by becoming immor-

tal you do not achieve salvation. Salvation is achieved only through honesty, sincerity and detachment." (July/Aug 1989)

Equilibrium and Harmony

"How can you say Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, if the Light which exists in Jesus exists in the entire creation?" Equilibrium and harmony will automatically evolve out of this realization. (Sep 1988)

If you force your viewpoint on someone else, it creates a sense of burden. This occurs in the totalitarian family, and equally, in the totalitarian nation. To pile on rules and regulations — a process of addition, or a process of multiplication (a rapid form of addition) — tilts the scales. There is no equilibrium. The problem cannot be solved merely by a process of subtraction. The weight decreases, but the problem subsists. The way forward is through division, which means learning to exchange views and developing the art of communication. Freedom lies in the art of communication. This creates harmony, equilibrium. This results in true democracy. (Dec 1988)

If you look outside all the time you will lose sight of your inner self. Life then becomes too materialistic. If the reverse is the case, and you look inside yourself much of the time, you lose contact with external reality. Equilibrium between inner and outer leads to right relationship developing in mind, spirit and body. The point of equilibrium must be maintained. (Apr 1989)

When swamis, gurus, etc, experience uneasiness they give up the world and go into retreat in caves and mountains. This is called "peace" but it is not peace; it is often a state of shock such that they cannot face the vibrations of life. (Jan/Feb 1992)

The murderer is sick, which means he is out of balance. Equilibrium in mind, spirit and body would enable him to express that energy in another way. The person in equilib-

rium experiences a state of freedom within. He will not commit murder. (Apr 1990)

If there is no equilibrium, wars, famine and natural disasters will take place. If there is equilibrium, the same energy can create happiness, enabling people to live and share together. (July/Aug 1990)

The best way forward is to harmonize the opposing forces (which can be called positive and negative); you then create energy. There must be an attempt to reach a consensus; thus both forces lose their unnaturalness. Whatever is natural remains. Otherwise, you replant the seeds of destruction. (Oct 1988)

The heart

Life has to be balanced, and we have to be aware of the Self in the heart. (Apr 1990)

The heart is never tarnished or touched, it is the seat of the soul. It is the mind that leads us astray. Peace, bliss, happiness and grace are the qualities of the heart. By tuning into the 'feelings of the heart' you are able to experience your natural innocence, that innocence you had as a child. Do not 'visualize' the heart. For that is only the mind seeking to find the source of light with a torch. (Dec 1989)

Even gurus and prophets are now beginning to realize that salvation is not achieved through the acquisition of phenomenal powers, but only in being humble to the Lord, seated in the heart. (Sep 1988)

Maitreya says that He has come to guide us to experience Him in our hearts. That experience cannot happen in the mind, spirit or body because they exist in evolution. Divinity is pure and eternal. The Self exists in the heart which is where you experience God. (Apr 1990)

Maitreya says: "The heart of a person is my parliament where I give experiences. It is 7

Burial chest of Jesus' brother found

An inscription in stone, found in or near Jerusalem and written in a language and script of 2,000 years ago, bears the words "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus". The stone may be the earliest artefact ever discovered relating to the historical Jesus, according to French ancient texts scholar André Lemaire who wrote an analysis of the inscription in the magazine *Biblical Archaeological Review*.

The words, written in Aramaic, were carved on a 20-inch-long limestone burial chest or ossuary, similar to those used by the Jews only in the first centuries BC and AD. More specifically, Lemaire said, the style of the script and the forms of certain words placed the date of the inscription to the last decades before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. An investigation of the stone box by the Geological Survey of Israel found no evidence of modern pigments, scratches by modern cutting tools or other signs of tampering.

Some Biblical scholars said that James (Jacob or Ya'akov), Joseph (Yosef) and Jesus (Yeshua) were common names of that time and place, but it would have been highly unusual to have the names appear in the combination and kinship order found in the inscription. In addition, rarely would a brother of the deceased have been added to the inscription, unless the brother was prominent.

If the inscription is authentic, and indeed refers to Jesus of Nazareth, it would be the earliest known documentation of Jesus outside the Bible. But some scholars say it may be impossible to confirm a definite link between the inscription and any of the central figures in the founding of Christianity.

It is said that Jacob was stoned to death in AD 62 and that his bones would have been interred in an ossuary a year later.

(Source: *The New York Times*, USA; *De Telegraaf*, the Netherlands)

(*Benjamin Creme's Master confirms the authenticity of this find. Maitreya, Himself, caused it to be found.*) [See also *Questions and Answers*.]

UFO sightings worldwide

"Keep an eye on the skies over Britain, Europe, the whole world. There will be much activity. This is a time when highly evolved beings are moving into the world, in every nation and country, giving experiences to people, showing them a higher life, a higher wisdom." (Maitreya's associate, *Share International*, April 1990)

Media around the world are reporting hundreds of sightings of unidentified flying objects, including the selection below:

- **AZERBAIJAN:** On 20 June 2002 four silvery-white disks appeared over the capital Bakou, on the shores of the Caspian Sea. Seen by hundreds of people, the first disk arrived at about 10am, followed later by three others. The UFOs remained stationary above the city until 3pm, when they moved slowly towards the Caspian Sea before disappearing. (Source: *Al-Azerbaijani*; Amer-

icanFreedomNewsradio, Azerbaijan)

- **BULGARIA:** Over several nights in August 2002 residents in the city of Vizrojdentsi saw strange manoeuvres in the sky. One witness, Anton Dimitrov, aged 14, says that "the first UFO was a bright red triangle". Two other craft followed, moving in a figure-of-eight with as many as 10 disks in the sky before disappearing." (Source: *Standart*, Bulgaria)

- **FRANCE:** In June 2002, a flat object, flying straight but tilting to one side, was photographed near Tosnen, in the Alps.

On 5 July eight red lights, flying in two triangular formations, were seen over Le Pertuis and La Motte d'Aigues.

On 8 and 10 July a yellow, lighted sphere was seen flying over Argonnay, in the Alps. Witnesses said that the light was only 300 metres away and was moving at a regular speed, with a sudden increase in brightness just before it disappeared.

On 4 August five ovoid objects were seen flying towards the dismantled nuclear plant of Brennilis, Brittany.

On 8 August a UFO was seen and photographed above the city of Douai. (Sources: *VSD Magazine*, *Nord Matin*, *L'Alsace*, *France Ovni*, France)

➤ my temple. When I speak there, changes take place in the individual's mind, spirit and body and no one can stop them." (Mar 1990)

"The language of the heart is where the Lord lives." (Oct 1988) ●



Circles of light on a bank building in Utrecht, The Netherlands

photo: Adward Blufpand



At a pre-school for mainly Muslim children, in Brussels, Belgium, paintings are displayed after a trip to the zoo. The 'dove-like' light pattern revealed when this print was developed is a blessing from the Master Jesus.

Photograph sent by Martine Dupont.

about 11-15 metres long. The object was flying at about 200 metres above us ... It was moving totally silently and at low speed, so you could get quite a good view of it."

Anders firmly believes the Hessdalen phenomenon is caused by alien intelligence which is gradually trying to make contact with us. (Source: SI interview) See also: SI Sep 2001. To visit Project Hessdalen website: www.hessdalen.org

- **SRI LANKA:** On 9 June 2002 many UFO sightings were reported over the ancient city of Polonnaruwa, north-east of Colombo. A "V-shaped" light was seen by hundreds of witnesses, including a television journalist. A team of astrophysicists from the University of Colombo tried unsuccessfully to determine the nature of this light, which moved at a very high speed while emitting a buzzing sound. (Source: *Times of India*, India and Sri Lanka; www.ananova.com)

- **THE PHILIPPINES:** On 28 June 2002 Eleazar H. Allen, a worker at the Dole plantation in Pomolok, on the west coast of Mindanao Island, saw a brilliant "éclair-shaped" object in the sky. It quickly changed to a flying object as wide as an Airbus aircraft (but without wings),

- **MALAYSIA:** Images of a UFO were captured by a surveillance camera at the Kota Kinabalu International Airport in Malaysia. Security officers were surprised to see an unknown object flying across the screen and disappearing within seconds. Also a security guard in the area saw a UFO rising near the ocean, flying over the terminal at great speed, then disappearing behind the adjacent hills. He reported: "There was no sound at all." (Source: *Daily Express*, Malaysia)

- **NORWAY:** Hessdalen, an isolated valley in south-east Norway, is well-known for its mysterious flying objects and light phenomena that began on a massive scale in the early 1980s. Theories and speculations abound as to the nature of the mysterious lights, which occur both day and night. 'Project Hessdalen' was launched to find a scientific explanation for the phenomenon, which as yet remains unexplained.

Many local residents who witness the

objects almost daily, consider the phenomenon to involve alien intelligence. Anders Berglund of Sweden, has visited Hessdalen for many years, and reports a UFO sighting in July 2002. Driving out of Hessdalen with his fiancée and her daughter, they suddenly noticed an elongated object in the clear sky. They stopped the car to get a better view with binoculars. Since it had no wings, jet engines, propellers, signal lights or windows, Berglund concluded that it could not be a plane or any other flying object that he was familiar with from serving at a Swedish airforce base.

"From what I could see, the object was cigar-shaped with a smooth, metallic surface of a light golden-brown colour. It was moving silently at about 100 km per hour from the east towards the mountains in the north, where it disappeared from view after a couple of minutes. It was difficult to see through the binoculars since the object filled the entire lens, but looking at it with the naked eye, I would say it was

silver in colour and with metallic strips on its upper section. After shooting off in the direction of the plantation, it suddenly reversed 10 times faster and disappeared in the sky. (Source: www.ufoinfo.com)

- **TURKEY:** On 5 June 2002 Haktan Akdogan, director of the Sirius Centre for Research on UFOs and Space Sciences, gave a briefing on UFOs to 70 high-ranking navy and airforce officers. A number of UFO cases were presented to the officers, who agreed to co-operate and exchange information on the "reality of UFOs in Turkey". (Source: www.siriusufo.org)

- **UK:** A photograph of an unidentified flying object taken in Kent in June 2002 excited Graham Birdsall, editor of *UFO Magazine*, who called it "one of the greatest ever UFO pictures". It shows a tower-like structure on top "very similar to the McMinnville and Rouen sightings", he said — referring to photo-

*In His Message of November 1977, Maitreya said: "Those who search for signs will find them". Ever since, an increasing number of miraculous phenomena have flooded the world: appearances, crosses of light, healing wells, weeping icons and statues. In May 1988, an associate of Maitreya stated in **Share International**: "The signs of Maitreya's presence in the world will continue to increase. He is going to flood the world with such happenings that the mind can never comprehend it."*

graphs taken over McMinnville, Oregon, USA, in 1950 and Rouen, France, in 1964.

The photograph was snapped in a field in Tonbridge, UK, by an anonymous photographer who sent it to the local newspaper, *The Kent and Sussex Courier*. The object was seen for 10 minutes moving sideways before suddenly disappearing. (Source: *Daily Mail*, UK)

• **UKRAINE:** On 5 July 2002 a dazzling light, similar to that produced by the explosion of a missile, was simultaneously seen by the pilot of an El Al plane en route between Tel Aviv and Moscow, and the pilot of an Oural Airlines plane flying from

Odessa to Ekaterinbourg. Remembering the dramatic case of an Ukrainian missile which destroyed a civil plane in October 2001, both pilots alerted the authorities. Ukrainian authorities issued a formal denial because all missile activity has been forbidden since the incident, and in fact no Ukrainian radar observed any trace of the light. The light was witnessed by many people who described it as "a red ball". (Source: Agence France-Presse, France; Reuters, Associated Press)

• **VENEZUELA:** On 3 June 2002, a brilliant, flat, circular UFO appeared above the electricity power plant in Bello Monte near Caracas. Witnesses described the craft as having powerful red, yellow and white lights, like those in a sports stadium, flashing in an alternating pattern. The spacecraft stood still for a while and then began oscillating smoothly before disappearing and reappearing twice more. (Source: www.newsnet5.com)

White buffalo calves bring hope

In August 2002, a white buffalo calf was born on a ranch in north central North Dakota. By early September, three more white buffalo calves had been born on the same ranch.

Since the calves' birth, Dakota Native American elders have visited the ranch, owned by Dwaine and Debbie Kirk. "The Elders have such a great respect for the animals," said Debbie Kirk. "They sing to the calves, and leave their sacred tobacco to honor the spirit of White Buffalo Calf Woman."

According to Dakota tradition, the White Buffalo Calf Woman is a spirit who appeared to the Dakota Native American people 2,000 years ago, and foretold a time when she would return and the people would know peace, happiness and prosperity. Her return would be heralded by the birth of a white buffalo calf.

"The traditional people, the spiritual people, are really excited about this," said Merry Ketterling, a Native American from the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in North Dakota. "With all the problems with drugs, alcohol, poverty and broken treaties, Indian people have held onto this hope that things will get better."

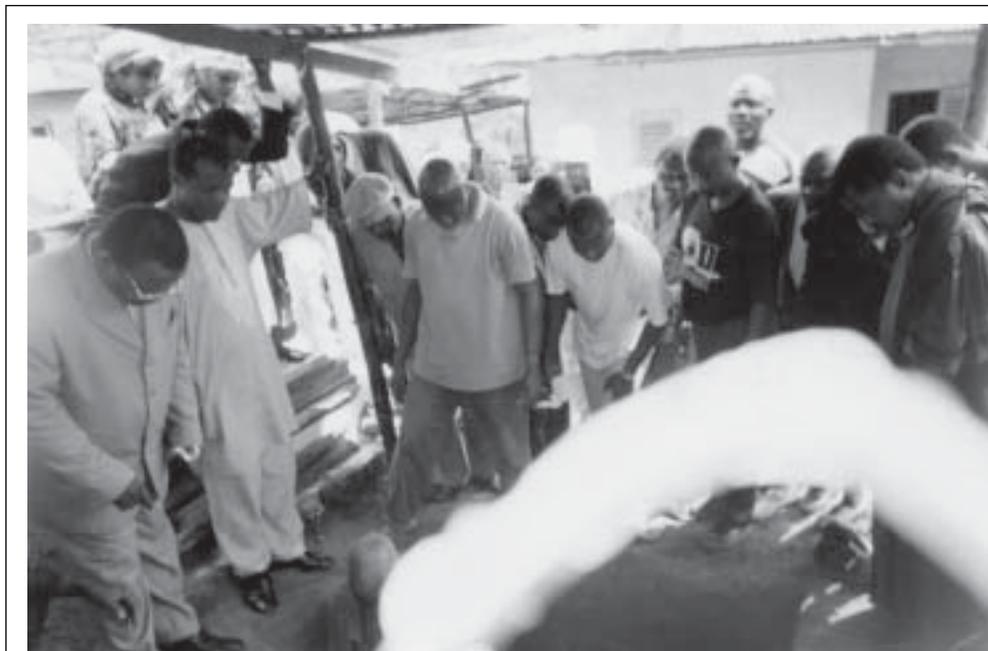
Bison have made a comeback on the Great Plains, where millions once roamed. They were hunted almost to extinction, but ranchers and farmers have lately developed herds.

A female calf born on a farm in Wisconsin in 1994 is believed to be the first white buffalo born in more than 60 years.

This calf, named Miracle, has become a tourist attraction, as has White Cloud, an albino calf born in 1996 in North Dakota.

Several more white calves have arrived since, including a bull born in August 2001 in Michigan. It was given the name Wahos'i Messenger by Chief Arvol Looking Horse of the Cheyenne River Reservation in South Dakota, current keeper of the sacred pipe. "White Buffalo Calf Woman's spirit has announced her message of support in this time of great danger," he said at the time of Messenger's birth, "and she continues to announce the message in the birth of each white buffalo — each one of them a sign."

"The birth of four white calves is a sign of great urgency," Looking Horse said recently. "This is telling us we are at a crossroads." (Source: *Star Tribune*, North Dakota, USA)



Light blessing from Maitreya on a photograph taken at the funeral of Simon Ilouga's mother, 14 July 2001, in Ngambe Babimbi, Cameroon.

Medicine should not be a luxury

An interview with James Orbinski
by Diana Holland

*Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) (Doctors Without Borders) is an independent and well-respected humanitarian medical relief agency founded in 1971 to provide crucial medical assistance to victims of armed conflict, epidemics and natural and man-made disasters worldwide. It runs 400 projects in 85 countries and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1999. Dr James Orbinski, who chairs the Drugs for Neglected Diseases Working Group of Médecins Sans Frontières, was interviewed for **Share International** at the G6B [Group of 6 Billion] People's Summit in Calgary, Canada, which ran parallel to the G-8 Summit in summer 2002.*

Share International: *MSF has launched the Campaign for Access to Essential Medicines — to improve access to essential drugs for populations in danger. What compelled your group to begin this campaign?*

James Orbinski: There is a gross inequity in the amount of effort and money being spent globally on research and development for health interventions that focus on the most neglected and marginalized persons. Only 10 per cent of the global resources that are spent on research and development is spent on 90 per cent of the morbidity, mortality and suffering associated with diseases occurring largely in the developing world. The corollary is that 90 per cent of the resources — financial, intellectual and material resources, globally — is spent on 10 per cent of the morbidity and mortality that occurs in the so-called developed world.

That is a structural manifestation of the practical reality that we see every day on the ground. Every single day, we see that our patients — the poorest of the poor, the most marginalized, the most neglected people in the world — are increasingly dying for lack of political attention and lack of effective research directed at developing new medicines, new interventions, and healthcare systems that focus on their needs.

SI: *Why does that happen?*

JO: In today's globalized political and economic system, it is largely markets and market forces that determine who gets what,

when. Poor people have virtually no effective purchasing power, and therefore they don't represent a "viable market". There is no adequate return on investment for the pharmaceutical industry, and so there is no research and development for new medicines for the diseases that affect those people, diseases like African sleeping sickness, Chagas disease, trachoma and leishmaniasis — diseases that most people in the North have never heard of, but which affect hundreds of millions of people. These also include tuberculosis, malaria and AIDS in a different way.

For example, there are treatments for AIDS, but they need to be modified in such a way that they can be taken and used according to the realities of daily life in the developing world: they need to be single-dose, once-a-day medications that are chemically stable so that they are not susceptible to variance in humidity and temperatures, and they need to be capable of being stored for long periods of time without refrigeration. I'm giving AIDS as an example, but the same principle applies to virtually every other disease that I've talked about, in addition to research for new and effective therapies.

SI: *You need to find the therapies, you need to find an effective way to package and deliver them, and you need to make them available and affordable. What is standing in the way? Is it simply market forces?*

JO: There are a whole range of issues. Probably the easiest way to describe them is to say that governments are increasingly relying on the idea of market forces as the only way of developing and delivering effective goods and services, whether it be medicines or healthcare. But the basic problem lies in that assumption. Market forces have failed to develop effective therapies for the neglected diseases that I talked about earlier. They have also failed to deliver existing therapies for AIDS, TB and malaria. The failure of markets should not be used as an excuse to accept that public policy must also fail. We have to reverse the whole notion of society being imbedded in the market, and recognize that it is the markets that are imbedded in society, not the other way round.

It is often said that economics is amoral. It is amoral if it is left without a moral framework in which to operate. To expect that a moral framework will somehow find space to exist in a market system is just completely spurious. There's no question that the key issue is the basic values and principles that define society. They have to be the starting point within which society and the market are embedded.

We need to be sure of the notion of public goods, the idea that there are some things, some concepts, some goods, some services that all human beings have a right to not be excluded from: the right to shelter, the right to food, the right to work, the right to healthcare, the right to life-saving essential medicines.

SI: *All of which is in the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights.*

JO: I would agree in principle that the UN Declaration of Human Rights sets out a global framework that defines basic parameters concerning human dignity and human rights, but there also has to be an accompanying set of duties that correlate with those rights. When I talk about the notion of public goods, I think that is a core element of a social framework. I would also include the notion of access to essential medicines as a public good.

SI: *How do you achieve access to essential medicines for all?*

JO: The process of discovering medicines has historically taken place in the public sector, largely through universities and publicly-funded research institutions. Then there's a process defined as "research and development" that has to some extent typically taken place in the private sector. We have to be clear that the private sector has in fact developed some very useful medicines over the last 100 years. But just because an individual or body develops a medicine does not mean that they hold an exclusive right to exclude others from access to that medicine.

SI: *Governments are actually not only paying lip-service to, but also encouraging, market globalization. How do we find a way out of the profit motive that will allow the*

initiatives that you are talking about to take place?

JO: It requires that people citizens take responsibility as citizens, and not just as consumers, to understand the underlying dynamics and the underlying principles and values — or the lack thereof — that define our political/economic space. And that they take responsibility as citizens — and this is a fundamental precept of democracy — to insist that values drive society, that the market is embedded in the society and not the other way round. And that they then insist that their governments create the kind of practical infrastructure that's required to address these needs.

MSF has been working very hard over the last year to create a global, public sector research and development capacity to address the need for medicines for the most neglected diseases. We have a very concrete plan. We have the commitment of the Brazilian Medical Research Council, the Indian Medical Research Council, the Thai and the Malaysian Medical Research Councils, the Pasteur Institute in Paris, the Tropical Diseases Research unit of WHO and an African working group of researchers. We've put together this group to focus on how we can create a "Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative" and we have started five immediate drug development projects.

We're insisting that governments fund this initiative, learn from it and create a larger-scale initiative so that it can be even more effective. This is a very good example of what citizens can achieve. If you look at the history of tuberculosis, cancer, and AIDS, particularly in the Western world, it was only when citizens organized themselves and demanded that governments engage in research and proactive measures to address the issues, that the governments began to pay attention.

SI: In a perfect world, how would your initiatives actually work out in the field? What would be happening now if things were as you want them to be?

JO: A basic healthcare infrastructure would be established, would be functional, and would be sustainable in the developing world. There would be a clear ability of developing world nations to manufacture their own generic high-quality medicines for the treatment of AIDS, TB, malaria and other neglected diseases. They would have their own health research and development capacity, one that is closest to their needs,

and could develop new approaches to meet the needs of their people.

Finally, in terms of access to other essential medicines, there would be a global system of equitable pricing. It would recognize that the price of medicines should be higher in the North and much lower in the South so that individual citizens and governments could afford to buy those medicines. And again, it's not just a matter of market forces. It's not a matter of saying: "There will always be poor people, there will always be marginalized people, there will always be people who are outside of the economic system." We have a duty as human beings to make sure that they're included and that their needs are met.

SI: Do you have an approximate figure as to what this might cost?

JO: Jeffrey Sachs* quotes from a December 2001 report of the Commission on Macroeconomics and Health, a commission sponsored by the World Health Organization, which stated that by the year 2007, to achieve the kind of things that I have described would require \$28 billion a year, and by the year 2015 that number would have to go up to \$38 billion a year. For the G-

8, whose gross domestic product is \$21 trillion a year, that is an insignificant figure.

SI: How optimistic are you?

JO: If infectious diseases and access to healthcare in the developing world are not the centrepiece of any new initiative, the initiative will fail. Last year, a Global Fund was established by Kofi Annan and endorsed by the G-8. It calls for \$10 billion a year to fund treatment, prevention and control strategies for AIDS, TB and malaria. To date, the G-8 countries have funded it at a level equivalent to only 5 per cent per year of what's required. Five per cent is not even enough hot air to get the balloon off the ground, let alone to get it to its destination. If the wealthiest countries in the world don't meet the minimal obligations, which they set up themselves, then not only do they leave an incalculable swathe of humanity to suffer in an inhuman way, but they also diminish their own humanity.

For more information on Médecins Sans Frontières visit: www.msf.ca

*Professor Jeffrey Sachs, Economist, Director of the Center for International Development at Harvard University, USA. ●

Facts and forecasts

continued from page 13

Children march for justice

"The voice of children will be heard even in parliaments." (Maitreya, *SI* Jan/Feb 1990) Hundreds of children marched into Buenos Aires early in November 2002 after a 900-mile journey to demand more funding for education and social welfare programmes for the poor. The 300 primary- and high-school students set off on their protest march at the end of October in the northern city of Puerto Iguazu and ended it with a demonstration outside the presidential palace to call attention to the serious lack of funds within the public education system. They chanted slogans about ending hunger and poverty among the neediest children.

"We have to fight for our future because the politicians are not going to do it for us," said 14-year-old Karina Morales. Teachers, parents and community groups supported the young protestors' appeal to the Government to increase social services for the approximately 18 million people — half of Argentina's population — who live below

the poverty line. Years of economic crisis and high jobless rates (currently 22 per cent unemployment) have led to widespread hunger and homelessness in what was once a relatively prosperous country.

The children made the point that the Government has failed to provide Argentina's youth as a whole with the basic rights as outlined by the United Nations. "The government has to respect our rights: housing, three meals a day, clothing. Without those rights and without education, we can never succeed," said 10-year-old Maria del Carmen.

The march's organizer, Alberto Morlachetti, said Argentina must abide by the United Nations' 1990 convention governing the rights of children to basic education, health care, shelter and food. "Any noncompliance is in violation of our basic human rights and for this we are here today," he told local news agency Noticias Argentinas.

The 'March for Life' has won the support of UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), and of individuals such as the 1980 Nobel Peace laureate Adolfo Perez Esquivel. (BBCTV, UK) ●

WHO lists top 10 preventable death factors

Just 10 avoidable risk factors, including malnutrition, unsafe sex, smoking and poor sanitation, account for 40 per cent of global deaths each year, according to the World Health Organization. WHO's new data on patterns of death and illness appear in its World Health Report 2002. WHO says that inexpensive remedies exist and that governments of all countries can do more to prevent unnecessary and premature death. It concludes that such countermeasures could extend average life expectancy by five to 10 years.

"This report provides a road map for how societies can tackle a wide range of preventable conditions that are killing millions of people prematurely and robbing tens of millions of healthy life," says Gro Harlem Brundtland, WHO director general.

The risks are starkly different between "haves" and "have-nots". Whereas poor people typically die through lack of food and clean water, the rich die through diseases of overindulgence. Brundtland described the difference between rich and poor people as particularly shocking. The Report states that 170 million children are underweight while one billion adults are overweight.

Of the 10 risk factors, the five that dominate in poor countries are: abnormally low body weight, unsafe sex, iron deficiency, unsafe water and exposure to indoor smoke from solid fuels. "Indoor air pollution was a complete surprise," says Christopher Murray, overall director of the report. The smoke causes pneumonia in children and lung disease in women.

In richer countries, the five key killers are tobacco, alcohol, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and obesity. Murray says that a big surprise was the unexpectedly large impact of high blood pressure, cholesterol and alcohol on intermediate-income countries such as India and China — "They've always been perceived as problems of high-income countries" — so countermeasures taken now, as countries industrialize, could have disproportionately large benefits in the future.

Inexpensive but effective measures to combat these diseases of "affluence" include applying higher taxes on tobacco to combat cancer and heart disease. WHO reports that consumption falls by 2-10 per cent for every 10 per cent increase in price. And mandatory reductions in the amount of salt added to processed foods could reduce strokes and heart attacks caused by high blood pressure.

In poor countries, abnormally low weight in infants and mothers is the major avoidable risk factor, killing 3.4 million in the year 2000. Children who are lower in weight are weak and more prone to infection because they are malnourished, lacking simple dietary essentials such as calories, proteins, vitamins, and minerals such as iron. Inexpensive remedies advocated by WHO include adding micronutrients such as vitamin A, zinc and iron to food, plus counselling to encourage mothers to breast-feed. (Source: www.newscientist.com; *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Germany)

Pollution in Bangladesh

For the countries which are reluctant to sign the Kyoto Protocol (most notably the United States), here are some data they should consider:

15,000 people die each year in Bangladesh from air pollution. The overcrowded cities, the indiscriminate emission of toxic gases from cars and industries have caused a deadly level of pollution in many regions; 6.5 million people suffer respiratory illnesses.

Environmental pollution, in the form of a dense layer of smoke and toxic particles, is an everyday reality for 12 million people living in Dhaka, the capital of the most densely populated country in the world (900 inhabitants per square kilometre). Most of the children show a high concentration of lead in the blood as a result of the noxious elements to which they are exposed.

Many cars are old and use low-quality fuel (usually oil with kerosene), and con-

"To aid men in their task, the Christ has formulated certain priorities. They cover the essential needs of every man, woman and child. The first priority is an adequate supply of the right food. Secondly, adequate housing and shelter for all. Thirdly, health-care and education as a universal right." — Benjamin Creme's Master, January 1989.

In this section, *Share International* addresses problems in the areas of Maitreya's priorities, and also identifies related plans, solutions and projects.

sequently 90 per cent of the 300,000 motor vehicles circulating in Dhaka give off high levels of carbon monoxide, soot and sulphur dioxide.

The Government of Bangladesh has started to replace the old engines with new ones which run on concentrated natural gas; the problem, however, is that the initiative is limited to Dhaka. (Source: *El Mundo*, Spain).

Fifteen million Ethiopians face starvation

A drought-induced famine of huge proportions is once again threatening Ethiopia, despite warnings and appeals since early 2002. According to Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, around 6 million people need immediate food aid, with the number set to rise to 15 million if international aid is not forthcoming by the New Year.

The current famine outstrips even the 1984 Ethiopian famine, when 5-6 million were affected and 1 million starved to death. Georgia Shaver, director of the World Food Programme (WFP) in Ethiopia, warns of the colossal scale of the crisis: "In Southern Africa there are 10-14 million people needing food aid across six countries. In Ethiopia we could have the same number in just one country." She describes the current level of food aid to Ethiopia as a trickle in comparison with what is needed: "We need the resources today so that we can prevent a deterioration of the situation. We don't need the resources six months from now when we see terrible images on the television." Mr Meles also fears that developed nations will not take the crisis seriously without images of skeletal figures on their television

screens. He says that his Government is already barely able to keep its people alive, let alone supply adequate food, and cannot afford to buy in extra stocks itself — stocks which would amount to 200 million tonnes of food aid, according to BBC correspondent Mike Thomson. But without it, says Mr Meles, the escalation of famine will be “too ghastly to contemplate”.

The effects of the famine are evident in the countryside, where watering holes have been reduced to dustbowls surrounded by fields of failed crops. In recent famines

people have pulled through by selling cattle, but with the unique situation of both seasons of short and long rains having failed, the drought is so severe that cattle are dying before they can be sold; farmers are leaving their parched land to search for water and grazing in the remote hope of keeping a few animals alive. Crops turn to dust in the hand, and have not produced seed. Grain and cereal prices are rising fast. “The livestock has died and people don’t have any reserves,” said local Imam Sheik Abdullah Mahmoud. “It’s so serious that it’s beyond our capacity.”

Bob Geldof, driving force behind the Live Aid relief effort of 1984 said: “Throughout all the conferences ... the vast international governmental community ... don’t seem to be capable of coming to the root causes of famine.”

In the meantime, children in the countryside are already accepting that they will die. In the village of Di Fakar, 200 kilometres south of Ethiopia’s capital Addis Ababa, eight-year-old Fayo Hadji understands that, with the cattle dead and the crops failed, his parents cannot feed him. “I know I am going to die and so are my brothers and sisters because we are all so hungry,” he said. “I would prefer to die rather than keeping waiting for food.”

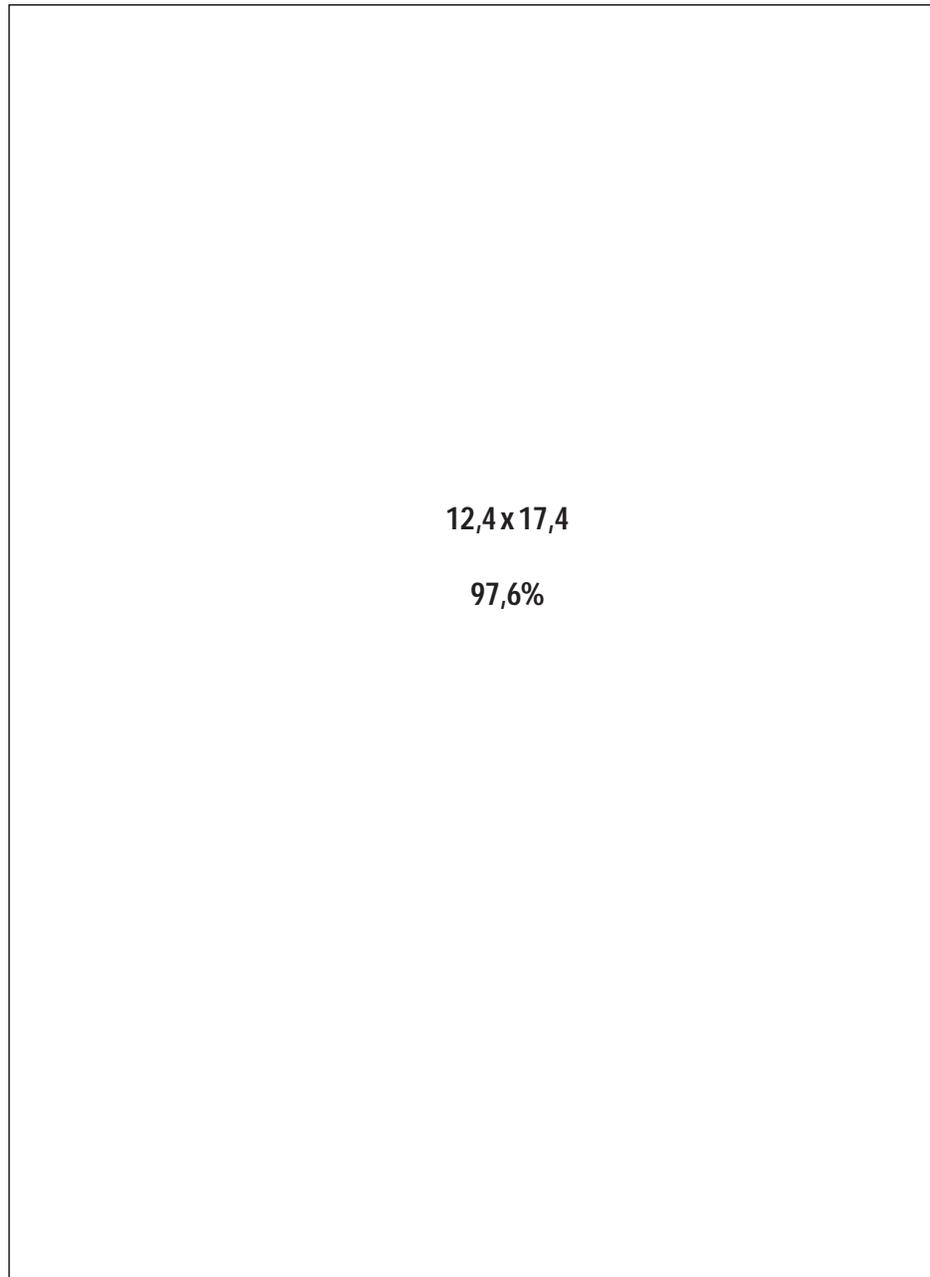
Commented Bob Geldof: “If my four [children] come home from school this afternoon and I have nothing, nothing to give them, and then I hear one of the youngest ones saying, ‘Well, come on death, anything is preferable to this,’ that is untenable for anyone to listen to, the world, the UK or whatever. It is absolutely a disgrace.” (Source: BBC, *Evening Standard*, UK)

Water wars

For one in six people on the planet, finding water for drinking, cooking and washing is a daily struggle; 80 per cent of them live in the countryside where some — quite literally — have to fight for every drop. Plumbing the Rights, a recent documentary by Earth Report, paints a grim picture of the growing desperation — as well as a growing awareness of their rights — among people in the shanty-towns and villages of the developing world. Cut off by poverty from access to water, people representing the poorest are getting organized to fight for a right to water — a fight they intend to take to Japan when world leaders gather for the third World Water Forum in March 2003.

In some urban areas of South Africa being poor can literally mean being cut off from a lifeline supply of water. People are coming to see this as a denial of the most basic human right — the right to life. Chatsworth is a township outside Durban housing over 300,000 people. The township is now also the front line of unreported water wars, with security guards and armed police turning up to cut off residents who cannot pay.

Christina Manqele is a single mother, struggling to bring up her own four children



12,4 x 17,4
97,6%

For one in six people on the planet, finding water for drinking, cooking and washing is a daily struggle

photo: WHO / P. Almasy

and three others in a tiny two-room flat. After 12 years of service for the same employer, Christina found herself without a job and seriously ill, needing major surgery. She began to fall behind in her water, electricity and rent payments to the point where she now owes the council roughly US\$2,000. In January 2000 her water was cut off. Christina resorted to using water from a nearby polluted stream. An independent analysis found this water to contain high counts of bacteria from untreated sewage that cause waterborne diseases such as cholera.

In a unique piece of legislation, South Africa's celebrated New Water Act gives each household the right by law to a basic allowance of 6,000 litres of free water per month. In view of this the community rallied round and helped Christina to make an urgent application to the High Court to get her water reconnected. But it was not until three months later that she was finally able to argue the case in court. In the meantime she still had no water. In desperation she decided to reconnect her own water. Despite the Act, the authorities say this is against the law.

Partly as a result of having reconnected her own water illegally, Christina lost her case. Today she is still forced to use illegal water as she struggles to pay off her bill. As more and more households have their water supply cut off, community members are now taking the law into their own hands and have become expert at reconnecting people's water.

"Cutting off somebody's water is totally inhumane and its definitely against the constitutional right to basic services," according to Brandon Pillay, a local activist. "People who can't afford to pay are forced to reconnect illegally and to go to bed knowing that they're using illegal electricity and water. They have to do it because they have children and this is a basic necessity for people in this community."

Further north of Durban, along the Dolphin Coast, thousands of people in the poorest townships now have their water supplied by a private multinational. A French company, SAUR International, has been granted a 30-year concession to run the water services. But here the poor are cut off from the start. Standpipes prevent people from accessing water until they pay 60 Rand for a card, and then they pay extra for water on top of that. Despite promises of free water, many people simply can't afford the cards.

Meanwhile, SAUR International claims it is not making a profit and merely acts to

cover the costs, while it feels that the matter of access for the poorest is a political issue. And although the entry of the private sector into water management in the developing world is proving to be highly controversial, it is being embraced by many governments as a way of mobilizing finance.

Orlean Naidoo a Chatsworth resident: "It is ridiculous to privatize water. Privatization is a profit-making system. How can you make profit out of poor people? People can't afford to pay for water services, and now if you privatize it the prices are definitely going to increase. The unemployment rate is high and people don't have money to pay, so if we privatize then people are definitely going to die of thirst."

(Source: BBC World TV; Changing Currents web publication, www.tve.org)

Weapons of Mass Salvation

Weapons of Mass Salvation is the title of a special report for *The Economist* by Jeffrey Sachs, director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University, New York, and Special Adviser on Millennium Development Goals to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Hard-hitting criticism of the shortcomings of current US policies is combined with an urgent call for change, compassion and the right use of the United Nations to benefit the entire world.

"If George Bush spent more time and money on mobilizing Weapons of Mass Salvation (WMS) in addition to combating Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), we might actually get somewhere in making this planet a safer and more hospitable home.... WMS ... are the arsenal of life-saving vaccines, medicines, and health interventions, emergency food aid and farming technologies that could avert literally millions of deaths each year in the wars against epidemic disease, drought and famine. Yet while the Bush administration is prepared to spend \$100 billion to rid Iraq of WMD, it has been unwilling to spend more than 0.2 per cent of that sum (\$200 million) in 2002 on the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria."

Not sparing the US President's illusions, Professor Sachs writes of the great leaders of the Second World War alliance who understood both destruction and salvation, and whose aim was not simply to destroy but "to create a world of shared prosperity". Roosevelt, he points out, spoke not only of "Freedom from Fear" but also "Freedom

from Want". The Bush administration is "turning a cold and steely eye away from the millions dying of hunger and disease".

The United Nations' General Assembly has just been addressed by George W. Bush: "We want," the President said, "the United Nations to be effective, and respected, and successful." Yet it is the US which falls \$60 billion short every year of meeting its agreed commitment to the UN. A lot of money? Not when one realizes "that the annual military spending in America has risen by about that amount since Mr Bush entered the White House," writes Professor Sachs. The USA is "firmly in the last place among the 22 donor countries in aid as a share of income, a position it will continue to hold even after the small increases the administration announced earlier this year." America's planned contribution to the global Aids fund is only a fraction — one-sixth — of what is needed in 2003. It would take only \$25 billion a year to prevent around 8 million deaths annually. "The expected \$100 billion cost of war against Iraq would therefore be enough to avert around 30 million premature deaths from disease, if channelled into a sustained and organized partnership with the poor countries."

Professor Sachs argues that there is "a way out": let the United Nations do what it was created to do. Despite criticism and withholding of funding, the UN's specialized agencies "have far more expertise and hands-on experience than any other organization in the world".

Sachs urges that, in tandem with the World Bank, the UN should be asked to set up "Global Frameworks of Action" which would "outline in broad terms, yet with specific budgetary guidelines and timetables attached, the specific ways in which rich and poor-country governments, the private sector, philanthropic foundations and other parts of civil society could get organized to win the fight against poverty and disease."

"Our interconnectedness on the planet is the dominating truth of the 21st century," writes Sachs, yet the US is doing little to mobilize weapons of mass salvation. If George Bush would mobilize America to fight poverty, disease and hunger he would mobilize millions against terrorism and "fulfil his own call for the world to 'show that the promise of the United Nations can be fulfilled in our times'". (Source: *The Economist*, UK)

Honourable work

Dear Editor,

In March 2002 our group were late preparing the stand for the esoteric fair in Hamburg. We only had one week left and much work to do. I had not been well and felt tired and without energy or interest to do anything, so I decided I should work as little as possible.

On Friday morning I went out with my daughter to the nearest photocopy shop to copy the 'hand of Maitreya' and several pictures of light circles. I was waiting in a queue when two people came in who attracted my attention. A very energetic young woman with a strong radiance, a 'sunny' person with very long dark hair which fell down to her waist in tiny curls. She had big green eyes surrounded by lots of green mascara. Behind her a young man who looked a little bit like the German singer Heino — not a favourite of mine so to speak: very yellow-blond hair, brown skin, black leather jacket

and black mirror sunglasses (which I really hate, especially worn indoors).

The woman went to my left and the man to my right in the queue. At once she turned to me and we started talking. She had to give a talk that evening in the university (for the annual Woman's Day) and wanted to have more pictures. She enjoyed having the opportunity to talk to children, and soon we talked about the need to change education, to free children from being conditioned, the importance of the mother in the family and the necessity to create new and better structures in the world. She was full of animation, energy and joy; I was fascinated.

Then we had a misunderstanding: I wanted to agree with her that by talking to children a different kind of speech or words is sometimes necessary, more concrete descriptions than adults need. And I said: "It's difficult sometimes to find the right words." (I have been a teacher for 25 years and I know

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this.) She interrupted me, turning to me quickly, looked into my eyes directly, and without a smile said: "No, nothing is difficult! It's an honour to do this work."

I tried to explain that she misunderstood me, but she stopped me with a gesture and continued: "It is not at all difficult or a strain, it is wonderful — wonderful to be allowed to do this work and to go to fairs and to do all this. I know this because I did it. It is an honour to work for the new times."

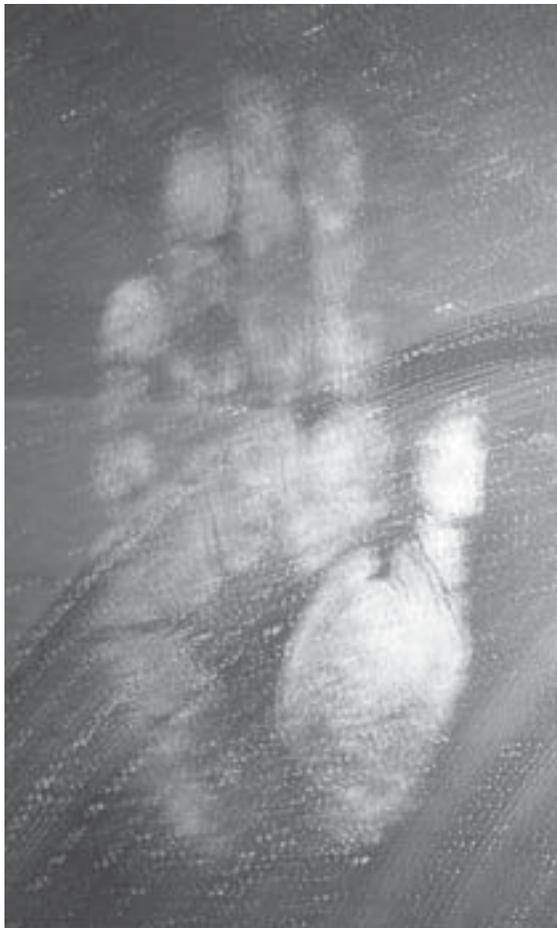
I had not told her before what I was doing and I am fairly sure that I had not mentioned the fair. But at this moment we were stopped by the copier who had enlarged the 'hand of Maitreya' to A2 size. He held the photo up and asked: "Is it okay?" All the people in the long queue looked at the hand and stopped talking. For me, the energy streaming out was very strong.

Then the young man with the glasses tapped me on my shoulder, and in a rather hushed voice asked: "Is it *His* hand?"

"Yes," I answered quickly. I found his question unusual because in Northern Germany religious things are generally not included in daily life and I never heard someone talk about the Christ in such a familiar way. I asked him if he knew about the photo or the story. He took off his glasses. He had green eyes too and looked intelligent and sympathetic. He answered: "No, I don't, but when I saw this hand I thought it must be *His* hand."

My daughter returned and we rushed off immediately. In the following hours, at first the young man seemed unusual to me, but more and more the words of the young woman came back to my mind. Though she had misunderstood me, she gave me just what I needed at that moment. And it really worked!

In the evening we had a group meeting and I told the story to the others. No doubt it



The hand of Maitreya



7 gave us a lot of fiery energy, wondering whether the woman and the man were 'special' or not. We had really good ideas about how to arrange our stand, and at the fair it seemed that we were "the centre of interest" with people coming to us continuously all day long — and of course it was "an honour for us to be allowed to work for the new times"!

Were they 'special' people in the photocopy shop?

Heide Diercks, Hamburg, Germany.

(Benjamin Creme's Master confirms that the 'man' was Maitreya; the 'woman' was the Master Jesus.)

Sleep remedy

Dear Editor,

A man from Maarheeze, Holland, came to me about six months ago. He had bone cancer and came to me for help because I am a healer. I spoke to him for an hour and a half. I also told him about the return of the Christ, and gave him two cards of 'Maitreya's hand'.

About four weeks ago he visited me again. He was a different man from the first time — instead of fear of death, he had accepted that he could die. He told me that from the day I gave him the cards of Maitreya's 'hand', every night he put one under his pyjamas on the left side and the other under his right side. From that day for six months he slept every night, and had no pain at night.

I said: "Perhaps you would like to have new 'hand' cards?"

"My story isn't finished," he said. "Every morning I awake bathed in perspiration, then my wife gives me dry clothes, and a dry bed. But in all those months the hands of Maitreya were never wet, crumpled or discoloured. So I tell you I need no new 'hands'. I am very glad and thankful with the 'hands' I have."

Anneke v/d Burgt, Heerlen, the Netherlands
(Benjamin Creme's Master confirms that this is indeed a miracle manifested by Maitreya.)

Arresting experience

Dear Editor,

During our vacation to Turkey in October 2002 my husband Peter and I had a funny experience. We had rented a car and driven into the mountains. On our way back we picked up two walkers who told us many

things. After we had let them off at a crossroad we were still a little confused from the interesting conversation so that Peter, upon turning off, accidentally drove into the opposite lane. We noticed quickly, though, and corrected it.

Unfortunately, the police had seen this, and as we drove off the road at the next gas station to fuel up they blocked our way and took away my husband's driving license and car papers. I was mad and shouted: "We are not going to pay anything!" They told us to stay there and drove out of the gas station around a corner out of sight.

I was rather angry and certainly did not want to pay the police a "bribe". At that moment, to our right a car with two men stopped and the driver (he didn't look Turkish but more European) asked us if we were having trouble with the police. We told him our situation, first in English and then in German, but he seemed to have known everything beforehand anyway. He was very nice and unobtrusive and seemed somehow amused and relaxed. He offered to take care of our papers and walked to the police car. I was still sceptical and said to my husband that I would simply drive away on the other side of the gas station (since I still had my driver's license), he could apply for a new driver's license in Germany, and the rental agency would take care to get back its car papers.

I went to the police car to protest and to see what was going on. I doubted that the man could help us, and stood beside him, dragging at his sleeve and grumbling in general. He was nice but didn't let himself be interrupted in his friendly discussion with the police. Then I talked to the policemen directly, but they also were not at all impressed by me. So I stood around for a while not knowing what to do, until I convinced myself again to simply take off.

Peter had paid for the gas and I wanted to sit behind the steering wheel, when the nice man came around the corner, waving the papers. He handed them to Peter, opened his arms and the two embraced each other sincerely. Then we all shook hands to thank him. We were very relieved and totally happy. The man really seemed amused the whole time as if this was only a performance for him.

Afterwards my husband and I really had to laugh about the whole situation. Maybe I

should add that before we had started off I had stuffed a little copy of Maitreya's hand in the windscreen ventilation and asked Maitreya to look after us and the car.

Did we get help from a Master or Maitreya?

Petra and Peter Schag, Berlin, Germany.

(Benjamin Creme's Master confirms that the two 'walkers' and the 'policemen' were Maitreya and the Master Jesus. The 'helpful' man was not 'special'.)

Ghostly guidance?

Dear Editor,

On Wednesday 16 October 2002 my wife and I went to Notre Dame de Bonnefontaine (canton of Fribourg, Switzerland) where in the forest a spring flows in a cave dedicated to the Madonna.

In the little town of Payerne we stopped to ask the way. As I was about to put coins into the parking meter, a man called out from the other side of the parking area telling us not to pay because in the morning the parking was free. Then he ran up, greeting us with a marvellous smile.

We took the opportunity to ask him the way to Bonnefontaine. His face became even more smiling and happy and he told us that last Sunday he had been there with his Catholic wife. With a rare kindness and a fine humour the man gave us detailed directions. Taking leave of him, we told him our names were Georges and Marcelle and still smiling broadly he replied: "And I am Caspar the Ghost!"

Half-an-hour later we were in the cave we had searched so hard for, still astonished to have been so well-informed at the right moment.

Since then we have wondered about two things: (1) Is the spring of Bonnefontaine energized? (2) Who was the kind man who gave us information in Payerne?

Marcelle and Georges Wyss, Preles, Switzerland.

(Benjamin Creme's Master confirms that (1) the spring at Bonnefontaine is indeed energized, by the Master Who was the Madonna; and (2) the "kind man" was Maitreya.)

Loop the loop

Dear Editor,

On 9 November 2002, a friend and I were standing outside getting a breath of fresh air in Amsterdam. The night sky was clear and



my friend happened to notice a glowing orange ball moving erratically across the sky. We watched it for a couple of minutes: it was travelling in one direction but all the while made abrupt zig-zag loops and twists, almost dancing about.

Could you please say whether it was a UFO or something else?

Sonya Creme, Amsterdam, Holland.

(Benjamin Creme's Master confirms that the object was not a UFO but Maitreya's Lightship.)

Alarm bell

Dear Editor,

While visiting London in the mid-1990s I thought I would make it a tourist visit to see the place in the modern world to which the Teacher had chosen to return. I walked the length of Brick Lane and back again to get a feel for the area, and on the way back to the tube station detoured into a small side street just off Whitechapel. About a block into the side street I saw a man I took to be about 50-55 years old, obviously a street person, ambling nervously around with no particular sense of direction. Dressed in a blue work shirt and jeans, he was of medium height and build, with short-cropped, blondish-red hair, a three-day stubble and a very tired, weary expression on his face.

My reaction to him was one of alarm and pity. Alarm because he seemed slightly menacing, walking in an unsteady, almost uncontrollably agitated manner. Then pity and some guilt, for having been alarmed in the first place.

Same old scene, I thought. Anyone living in any modern city has seen it all too often: not enough food, no real shelter, over-exposure to the elements, and, in this case, one got the impression of a nervous system compromised by drug or alcohol abuse. A sort of one-man encapsulation of everything that is wrong with the world, everything that comes of greed, complacency and indifference. Worse, this guy seemed too whacked out to even try to be helped.

So I kept an eye on him. He darted out onto the street, stepped back to the curb, muttered something angrily to himself, walked aimlessly around, crossed the street and turned my way. In the interim, I had begun to sightsee again when suddenly he was

headed straight at me, much closer than I'd remembered. It looked as though he might try to mug me, but I quickly turned my head, shot him a hard look, and he backed off. Somewhat relieved, I made my way back to the tube, continuing to keep an eye on him till he was out of sight.

At the time, I had a strange, only partially registered sensation. I couldn't figure out how he suddenly got so close to me, and why, seemingly just in time, I had turned my attention back to him. On one level, this was a sad, half-crazed street-person. On another, it seemed I'd turned back toward him as if in response to him saying something to me internally, like: "Hey, pay attention will you?"

Reading accounts of appearances by Maitreya and the Master Jesus in *Share International*, it becomes apparent that the manner in which they appear often has something to do with the psychology of the person to whom they are appearing (not always entirely flattering). The nature of the appearance itself seems to have something to communicate. Then I remembered that, as a younger man, I often wore work shirts and jeans. Was this street person an exaggerated, future-tense reflection of me and my own fears?

To this day, I don't know if I've completely grasped the significance of this encounter, but as I recounted it, I realized who the 'street person' might have been. It was quite a performance.

Marc Gregory, Santa Monica, California, USA.

(Benjamin Creme's Master confirms that the 'street person' was Maitreya.)

Piccadilly circus

Dear Editor,

(1) While travelling on the London Piccadilly Underground line a couple of years ago, I had an encounter which delighted me. I noticed an older couple across from me and heard myself think: "Tourists." A Turkish-looking man, dressed in working mode, with balding hair combed sideways, fattish with a moustache, said out loud: "Could be, could be." Next I heard myself say: "On holiday." Again, the man who was sitting next but one to me said: "Could be, could be." I suddenly realized that he was either mad or telepathic and I laughed internally and could hardly stop myself looking at him. Next, he burst into song —

Italian opera — whereupon I laughed quietly to myself hardly containing it. Then he touched me on the shoulder to get me to look at him, which I did and he sang to me. I was highly delighted. I knew he wasn't drunk or mad. Next he got up and pranced around and danced, singing and interjecting it with comments about it being a special night, a special weekend. He performed for the few people who were there and everyone without exception smiled and laughed.

Then at Finsbury Park station he turned and looked directly at me and in a very cheeky way raised his eyebrows three times as if to say: "Do you recognize me?" Then he got off. As he was getting off I suddenly got an image of that finger on my shoulder and his last look and recognized him as Meher Baba. A few weeks later I saw him again, and practically bumped into him as I came out of my flat. "Lovely, lovely," he said in passing. I was dumbfounded and swore that next time I would speak with him. Was it Meher Baba or a Master taking on his earthly look?

(Benjamin Creme's Master confirms that the 'Turkish man' was Maitreya.)

Father figure

(2) I went to Assos, in Turkey, for Christmas. On the first day my friend and I walked to an archaeological site. When we arrived in the village a handsome looking tall man with grey hair and practically transparent, youthful-looking skin aged 55 (as he told me later) appeared out of nowhere. He told us he was the head archaeologist and would be happy to show us around even though it was closed. He gave lots of information on Saint John and the church he built there, showed us the cave church where evidence of four religions was apparent. He also told me to stop smoking saying he'd given up some years before, and gave me wild thyme for my lungs and held my hand. I felt like a child and he the father. He had child's hands, unblemished (for an archaeologist). Later, back at the hotel, when we told the staff of our adventure they looked at each other and declared it was impossible as the archaeologist had returned to Istanbul four days before for the holiday. Who was he?

Mary O'Reilly, London, UK.

(Benjamin Creme's Master confirms that the 'archaeologist' was, in fact, Maitreya.) ●

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. If your Master or the Christ could today address directly the United Nations Security Council and the world's leaders, what would They advise in order to cement a real and permanent rapprochement in the Middle East, and with the Muslim world in general?

A. The creation of justice and freedom through the sharing of essential resources throughout the world. Sharing is inevitable, and the sooner understood and implemented, the sooner peace and security for all will be achieved. This is true for the Middle East and the world in general.

Q. (1) How receptive, from the Hierarchy's point of view, is humanity at present to Maitreya's ideas? (2) Does increased fear and tension close people psychologically to His priorities?

A. (1) Twenty-five per cent are very receptive; 40 per cent are fairly receptive; 35 per cent are not receptive. (2) No, the opposite. Fear drives people to act hysterically — as in the US today — or to look for answers to the problems.

Q. I am confused about Maitreya's reappearance. I can understand that karmic laws are under consideration here as well as not infringing free will. It just worries me sometimes that only the agents of the "light" forces take heed of these things. We have many crazy people ready to blow themselves up (with many others) in the supposed name of God. They seem to have no problem (or awareness) of karma, free will etc.

If they pull off some major terrorist acts (nuclear, chemical or biological), it doesn't seem like the planet, or human race, will be around for the reappearance. How is that karmically correct?

A. Of course, that is precisely why this time is one of such major tension and crisis. Nevertheless, Maitreya and the Masters must obey the karmic law — even if we do not. We have to trust that Maitreya knows exactly when — and when not — to intervene, and still remain within the karmic law.

Q. Minnesota Democratic Senator Paul Wellstone was killed in a plane crash along with his wife, daughter, staffers and pilots while campaigning for re-election. He was a true democrat in that he cared about his constituency, especially the poor in his district. He did not take money from corporations. His death is a great loss to America. (1) Was foul play the cause of the plane crash? (2) What was his ray structure and point of evolution?

A. (1) No. This tragic event was a pure accident. (2) S: 2; P: 4 (6); M: 6 (2); A: 4 (6); Ph: 3 (7). He was 1.5 degrees initiate.

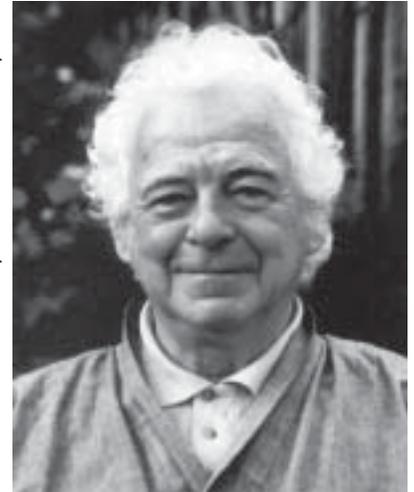
Q. (1) Did Jesus have a brother Jacob (James)? (2) Was he older or younger than Jesus? (3) Was he stoned to death, and why? (4) Could we have his ray structure and point of evolution?

A. (1) Yes. In fact, four brothers. (2) Younger. (3) Yes. As a brother and follower of Jesus. (4) S: 3; P: 6 (2); M: 3 (7); A: 6 (6); Ph: 7 (3). He was 1.6 degrees initiate.

Q. Who did the Bali bombings in October 2002? (1) Is it terrorists' work or the USA? (2) Is it local people's work, or foreigners? (3) Is it linked to Al Qaeda? (4) What is the motive behind this? (5) Is Abu Bakar Basyir a terrorist like the Americans say?

Questions dealing with the activities of Maitreya and the Hierarchy of the Masters of Wisdom, and about the Ageless Wisdom Teachings, which have not been answered in his books, are answered by Benjamin Creme in this section. Benjamin Creme does not seek to set himself up as an arbiter of the authenticity of other groups' activities and communications. Please refrain from posing such questions.

Send your written questions to: Share International/Questions, PO Box 3677, London NW5 1RU, UK.



A. (1) Terrorists. (2) Local people. (3) No. (4) Terrorism against Westerners. (5) Not directly, but he sympathizes with their aims.

Q. Who will be the next president of Indonesia? Will it be Megawati again?

A. No.

Q. What would happen to Indonesia in the future? (1) Will Indonesia come out from its present crisis, or get worse? (2) What will happen to Indonesia's economy in the future?

A. (1) It will get worse. (2) Downgraded, near collapse.

Q. How would you describe the state of the US economy at present?

A. Shaky. As stable as the Dow Index which, we know, is totally erratic.

Q. Would you say there is a danger of an economic domino effect throughout Latin America, with one country after another appearing to collapse, or on the verge of doing so?

A. Yes, that scenario is very much on the cards.

Q. There seems to be increased seismic activity at present across the globe. What is the cause?

A. There are several causes: increased sun-spot activity; natural plate-movement; the heightened tension generated by humanity by wrong thought and action — this is a time of crisis and widespread fear. We have President Bush and his advisers to thank for that.

Q. Did any of the Masters comfort and help the children killed recently in the earthquake in Italy?

A. Yes, as always in a catastrophe, several Masters are immediately involved in saving and comforting.

Q. I know your Master's article about children and gays is a lot deeper and more helpful to all than I understand at my point of evolution, but I'd like to know more about how to handle the criticism of readers who misinterpret it as bigotry. [The family', SI October 2002]

A. The Master's article is not about "children and gays" but about the family unit as the basic form in which children can find the

necessary relationships to evolve correctly from an esoteric and karmic standpoint. The Master says expressly that Hierarchy is not the enemy of homosexuals, but it is obvious that single-sex partnerships cannot provide the full requirements for children's inner development. I have no doubt that same-sex partners can and do provide, to adopted children, the love and care which all children also need.

Q. (1) Are the Energies being sent into the world by the Christ and Masters now more potent than ever? (2) Would it be correct to say that there seems to be an intensification of Hierarchical effort at present as we move to the year's end?

A. (1) Yes. (2) Yes.

Q. The groups working around the world for the Emergence also have the opportunity to help inform, explain and educate after Maitreya's full public emergence. (1) Many in the groups are interested in healing, but no specific instruction has been given about it. Is that because the primary task, at least initially, is educational? (2) Will the Masters be giving training in healing? (3) Would that be in some years' time?

A. (1) Partly, yes. (2) Not directly, but through disciples. (3) Yes.

Q. Are any of the Masters residing in Africa (Kenya)?

A. In Africa, yes. In Kenya, no.

*Q. In response to the following question and answer in **Share International**: "Q: When Judas betrayed Jesus, did that not alter his evolution? A: Yes, it did alter His evolution. He has since paid the price, the penalty. Also, of course, it was part of a plan." When he "paid the price, the penalty", what exactly did that entail? What was it he had to go through?*

A. In his immediate next life Judas was a 'Christian' preacher, a follower of Jesus's teachings. 'Christianity' was an unauthorized and unacceptable 'sect' or 'cult'. Judas was betrayed by one of his close followers, arrested, imprisoned, tortured and eventually put to death by stoning.

Q. The Thai press has recently reported thousands of tourists flocking to see a mysterious phenomenon in Nong Khai province, north-eastern Thailand, in which coloured fireballs known as "Naga's Fireballs" shoot into the sky on the first full-moon night of October each year, at the end of Buddhist Lent. The flames, said to come from a mythical serpent living in the Mekong River, are being investigated by the Thai Government. Is this an authentic miracle?

A. This phenomenon is not manifested by a Master but by the Space Brothers (UFOs), so it is not exactly a miracle.

Q. In a television report early in August 2002, the first experiments on stem-cells have been shown, then "prophet-genes" have been identified, making it possible to define a human being's future in a single drop of blood. What point have these experiments reached now? (1) Are they the premises of the future healing through the technology of Light? (2) In one of your previous answers, you have specified that in no case man should play God. Does this remark apply only to the practice of genetic engineering?

A. (1) No. (2) In respect of cloning.

Q. (1) Can one send energy to another person by using the card showing Maitreya's hand? (2) If one holds in one hand the card and in the other hand a photo of this person, does this work (better)? (3) If one holds in one hand the card and with the other hand one holds the person, does this work (better)?

A. (1) No. (2) No. (3) No.

Q. (1) Is it psychologically possible for child soldiers to be fully rehabilitated and restored to a normal psychological state? (2) What would be the best way to help them?

A. (1) Yes, very often. Many have been rehabilitated even after years of 'service'. (2) They usually need counselling, and education in the company of 'normal' children, well away from their army experience. And, of course, much love and affection.

Q. In many Western countries the incidence of depression is increasing staggeringly. In the UK, for example, the prescribing of anti-depressants has increased 700 per cent in the last 10 years. What is the reason for this 'epidemic'?

A. Depression is the social illness of a society dedicated to materialism. It is 'spiritual starvation', and is growing more and more throughout the developed Western world. The highest incidence of depression and the greatest use of anti-depressants and tranquilizers are in the USA.

Q. How do audiences in the USA respond to the idea of sharing?

A. It is difficult to gauge the response to radio interviews because the audiences are so large but at my lectures there is always a large majority in favour of sharing.

Q. How do audiences in Japan react to your information about a world stock-market crash?

A. The Japanese people have already experienced their own stock-market crash: the Nikkei collapse from 40,000 to 10,000 points. They have seen its effect on the economy of Japan and neighbouring countries and await, stoically, a worldwide replica of their own experience.

Q. Belgian authorities have decided to withdraw fluoride from water and were also hoping to have it removed from dental products, although this latter proposal has not been agreed on. Belgian tests show that too much fluoride can affect the nervous system. Is fluoride not good for healthy teeth?

A. Not all people need or lack fluoride and it is a crime to put it in drinking water — an infringement of the free will of all the people who do not need fluoride. Fluoride is good for teeth but only porous or unhealthy teeth. The best way to take it, if needed, is in homeopathic potency.

Q. (1) Is anyone receiving messages from "the Brotherhood on Sirius"? (2) If so are they publishing them? (3) If we come across printed material containing what is claimed to be Sirian language — greetings and exhortations — should we generally discount its validity?

A. (1) Under the level of a 5th degree Master, no. (2) No. (3) I certainly would.



photo: UNICEF / Shamshez Zaman

**Peace, Sharing and Justice are central to My Teaching.
Wherever the Light of these Truths shines I turn My eye,
and through the channel of that Light do I send My Love.
Thus do I work.
Thus through you do I change the world.
Maitreya, from Message No. 92**