

Inside:



8

The Commission on the Status of Women embraces the theme of partnership.



11-12

On two continents, North America and Europe, new approaches to keeping the peace are examined.



13

HRH The Prince Philip to address the 1994 World Forestry Charter Gathering in London.



16

Review: *Worldviews and Ecology* — Exploring the connection between faith and conservation.

An attack in South Africa, the legacy of apartheid

While working for race unity, three Bahá'ís are killed because they were white and associating with fellow Bahá'ís in a black township

MDANTSANE, Ciskei, South Africa — When Hooshmand Anvari first walked into the Bahá'í Center in this all-black township, wearing a big smile and holding his hands on his head, many thought he was about to pull one of his famous pranks.

"He always used to joke," said Shumi Nkonzo, who was present that Sunday in mid-March. "We thought he was joking again."

But when Ms. Nkonzo and the other local Bahá'ís who were gathered for a discussion on family life saw a young man following closely behind with a gun pointed at Mr. Anvari's back, they knew it was no laughing matter.

In all, four young and angry black men came into the Bahá'í Center on 13 March, while two others stood guard outside. Carrying automatic weapons, the four ordered Mr. Anvari and the two other whites who were present to stand apart from the 13 black adults and children.

"They said that the whites must stand there on one side of the room, and the blacks must stand on the other," said Ms. Nkonzo, who is 75 years old. "Then they told the whites to take their keys out of their pockets. And then they just shot them."

Mr. Anvari, a 43-year-old computer salesman with a wife and three young children, died instantly, as did Riaz Razavi, the 44-year-old director of finance at the nearby University of Fort Hare. Dr. Shamam Bakhshandegi, a 29-year-old dentist, was found to be still breathing after the gunmen had cleared out. But he was dead by the time he reached the local hospital —

(Continued on page 4)



Photo taken at a gathering of Bahá'í representatives from around South Africa three years ago reflects the great diversity of the Bahá'í community there — and their historic commitment to race unity.

ONE COUNTRY

is published quarterly by the Office of Public Information of the Bahá'í International Community, an international non-governmental organization which encompasses and represents the worldwide membership of the Bahá'í Faith.

For more information on the stories in this newsletter, or any aspect of the Bahá'í International Community and its work, please contact:

ONE COUNTRY
Office of Public Information
Bahá'í International
Community - Suite 120
866 United Nations Plaza
New York, New York 10017
U.S.A.

E-mail: 1country@bic.org

Editor:
Brad Pokorny

Associate Editors:
Nancy Ackerman (Moscow)
Christine Samandari-Hakim (Paris)
Kong Siew Huat (Macau)
Guilda Walker (London)


Contributing Editor:
Arman Danesh

Production Assistant:
Veronica Shoffstall

Subscription inquiries should be directed to the above address. All material is copyrighted by the Bahá'í International Community and subject to all applicable international copyright laws. Stories from this newsletter may be re-published by any organization provided that they are attributed as follows: "Reprinted from ONE COUNTRY, the newsletter of the Bahá'í International Community."

© 1994 by The Bahá'í
International Community

ISSN 1018-9300

Printed on recycled paper 

On unity and diversity

Nobel Peace Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu was quoted recently as saying that South Africa is in many ways a microcosm of the world, embodying all of the global issues of white and black, rich and poor, of developed and undeveloped peoples.

"Once we have got it right," he reportedly said, "South Africa will be the paradigm for the rest of the world."

We believe that the inevitable forces of history lie on the side of "getting it right" and that, indeed, South Africa will be successful in its effort to create a peaceful, unified and prosperous multi-racial society.

And just as Bahá'ís are optimistic about the final outcome there, we also believe that other countries that are torn by conflicts over race, ethnicity, class, religious heritage, and nationality — which

in today's world excludes virtually no place — will also find that history is on the side of peace, unity and justice.

It may be hard to discern such trends amidst the carnage of several dozen regional and civil wars, the widespread disadvantage of women and minorities, and gross inequities in the world's system of wealth and finance.

Yet Bahá'ís nevertheless are convinced that humanity stands on the verge of a new era in its history, a turning point that can be compared to the collective emergence from adolescence into maturity.

The basis for the optimism that Bahá'ís feel about humanity's future stems from at least three sources: religious inspiration, historical analysis and practical experience.

The first source of optimism is the words of Bahá'u'lláh, the Prophet-Founder of the Bahá'í community. More than 100 years ago, He foresaw that while the world would go through an extended period of change and travail, it would soon reach new heights of peace, prosperity and accomplishment.

"That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that the diversity of religions should cease,

and differences of race be annulled—what harm is there in this?" said Bahá'u'lláh to British orientalist Edward G. Browne in 1890. "Yet so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the 'Most Great Peace' shall come."

The second source of hope lies in the historical analysis of this century's most subtle but enduring trend: the gradual and ever-increasing move toward greater levels of unity and interdependence. The reality of this trend can be seen in everything from the interrelatedness of world economic markets to the proliferation of global communications systems; from the steady acceptance of great new universal ideas, such as human rights, education for all, and general suffrage, to the dawning realization that global social problems such as poverty, violence and environmental degradation cannot be addressed in isolation from each other.

The third source of optimism for Bahá'ís is their own practical experience at building unified and harmonious communities.

The lead story in this issue focuses on three Bahá'ís who were murdered solely because they were white. What makes the story significant is not just the tragic irony that all

Perspective

"We see fellow humans as a creation of God, and the respect and the dignity we feel for each other is based on the fact that we see each other as mirrors of the one reality, which we call God. This transcends our ethnicity."

**— Krishna Naidoo, Chairman,
Bahá'ís of South Africa**

three men were vigorously engaged in promoting racial unity when they were gunned down but the degree of social and racial integration that is reflected in their lives and in the lives of their co-religionists.

The Bahá'í community of South Africa, though relatively small, is extremely di-

verse. Among the roughly 10,000 Bahá'ís there, the entire spectrum of races, tribes and religious backgrounds is represented.

While there may be other groups and organizations in South Africa that display a similar diversity, it is unlikely that they display a similar depth and breadth of unity. The teachings of the Bahá'í Faith, for example, call for the elimination of all forms of prejudice; full equality between the sexes; recognition of the essential oneness of the world's great religions; the elimination of extremes of poverty and wealth; universal education; a sustainable balance between nature and technology; and the establishment of a world federal system, based on collective security and the oneness of humanity.

When one surveys the great social and political movements of this century, any one or two of these great principles by themselves are and have been quite enough to cause disunity within the various groups that have sought to promote them.

So to know that there is one cohesive movement that supports all of these ideas and more is really quite astounding.

The unifying factor in the Bahá'í community is an idea that is spiritual in nature — rather than from some social or political concept. Krishna Naidoo, chairman of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of South Africa, explains it this way:

"What is different is the way we view the whole concept of unity and diversity. This

view lies in the way Bahá'ís understand the nature of human existence itself. To us, every human being has been created in the image of God. And latent in that human being is the potential to manifest and reflect the qualities and attributes of God.

"Therefore, we see fellow humans as a creation of God, and the respect and the dignity we feel for each other is based on the fact that we see each other as mirrors of the one reality, which we call God. This transcends our ethnicity, our secondary qualities in terms of culture and language for a higher reality.

"Our hope is that South African society will grow to the point where its people begin to live together as human beings, rather than as black and white, or brown and yellow.

"And we believe that the communities that we have, although perhaps few in number, offer a new vision for unity," Mr. Naidoo said. "If anyone would like to observe it, to learn what it would take to bring about unity, we are definitely here."

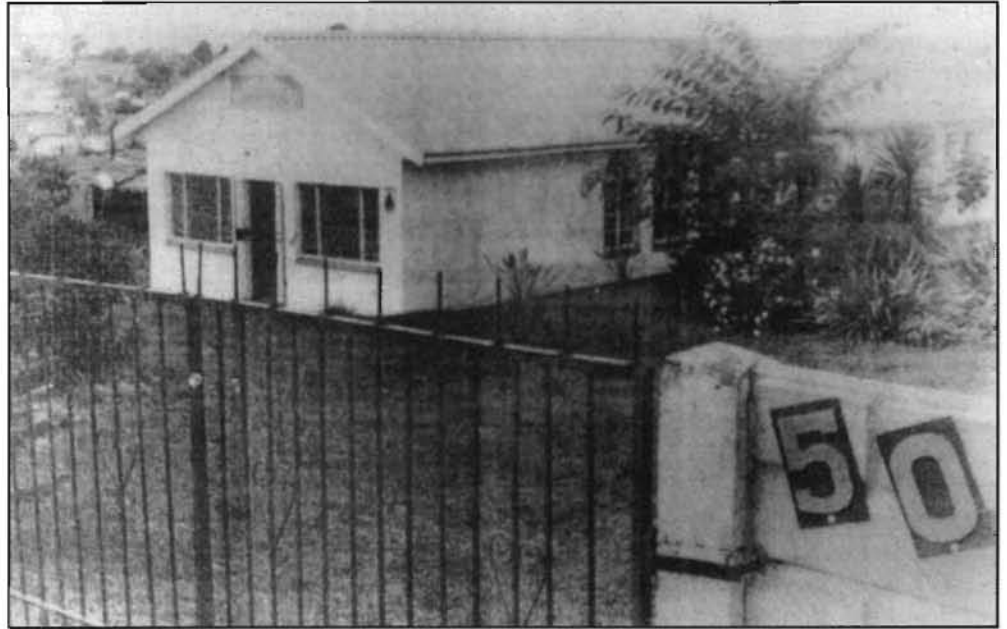
The experience of the Bahá'ís of South Africa is far from unique. Around the world, Bahá'í communities everywhere are almost invariably as diverse.

Bahá'ís welcome such diversity, believing that, when understood in line with the fundamental principles of unity as outlined by Bahá'u'lláh, it contributes to a creative stream of fresh ideas, new possibilities and human advancement. This is in accord with the inevitable direction of history.☪



In Guinea-Bissau, three representatives of the National Spiritual Assembly there met with President João Bernardo Vieira in his offices last July, presenting him with a statement on Bahá'u'lláh.

The Bahá'í Center in Mdantsane where three white Bahá'ís were killed on 13 March by gunmen in a racially motivated attack. The three men were preparing to discuss how the local Bahá'í community could become involved with the United Nations International Year of the Family when gunmen entered the building, separated them from the black Bahá'ís, and shot them.



Three workers for race unity in South Africa are killed

(Continued from page one)

the same hospital where he saw patients, mostly black, each weekday morning.

In a phone call to the South African Press Association, a man claimed the killings had been done by the Azanian Liberation Army, a militant black group. Newspaper accounts suggested that the attack may have come as a terrorist protest to the decision by the Pan Africanist Congress to suspend its armed struggle in advance of South Africa's first multi-racial elections in April.

For the Bahá'í community of South Africa, the killing of three of its members came as a shock. For more than 40 years, Bahá'ís in South Africa had worked steadfastly for integration of the races.

"It is ironic that Bahá'ís had to be the victims of a racist attack, when in fact we have always worked for racial unity and togetherness," said Krishna Naidoo, chairman of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of South Africa, the national governing council.

Quietly Working for Integration

All three of the murdered men were deeply involved in attempting to promote racial unity and to improve social conditions for the black majority.

Mr. Anvari and his wife had recently established a tutorial school for young black

children. Dr. Bakhshandegi was one of just a handful of white doctors working at the Cecilia Makiwane Hospital, which is itself the only major hospital in Mdantsane. And Mr. Razavi, as director of finance at the all-black University of Fort Hare, was likewise one of just a handful of white staff members there.

Their activities and commitment reflect the overall aim of the Bahá'ís of South Africa, who have been quietly working to establish a model for an integrated society — and are today winning increasing recognition for their success at this endeavor.

"In times to come, we will probably hear more and more about the Bahá'ís," said Dr. Gerrie Lubbe, national president of the South African chapter of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, an internationally recognized interfaith organization that strives to promote the peace process worldwide. The Bahá'í attitude about racial unity, he said, "is so much in line with how we hope to see the new South Africa developing."

During the darkest days of state-sponsored apartheid policy, Bahá'ís continued to hold multi-racial services and meetings, focusing instead on their goal of building a harmonious and diverse community which

"It is ironic that Bahá'ís had to be the victims of a racist attack, when in fact we have always worked for racial unity and togetherness."

**—Krishna Naidoo,
chairman of the
National Spiritual
Assembly of the
Bahá'ís of South
Africa**

could, at the proper time, demonstrate to all South Africans that such associations are not only possible — but are in fact joyous and reflective of the reality of human oneness.

Diversity Spans All Races

Today the diversity of the South African Bahá'í community spans virtually all of the races, ethnic groups, and tribes that reside here. More than 90 percent of the approximately 10,000 Bahá'ís in South Africa would have been classified as non-white under the old race laws — a ratio that roughly matches the proportions of the population at large. The Bahá'í community is spread throughout South Africa, too, with local Spiritual Assemblies in more than 200 cities and towns.

"You've not only got Zulu and Xhosa in the Bahá'í community, and those are the major tribes in conflict at the moment, but you've got representatives of the Venda, the Sotho, the Swazi and the Tswana," said Mr. Naidoo, who was interviewed at the height of pre-election violence.

"When you come to the national Bahá'í convention, you find that while others of their tribes or groups are the very people who are fighting outside, so to speak, the Bahá'ís inside are consulting and being in unity with each other," said Mr. Naidoo.

"Bahá'ís in South Africa haven't been involved in civil disobedience, or in throwing stones and bottles," Mr. Naidoo said. "Rather they have concentrated on moral reconstruc-

tion, on building our own community as evidence that attitudes can be changed.

Increasingly, said Mr. Naidoo and others, outsiders are taking notice of the Bahá'í community and its accomplishments.

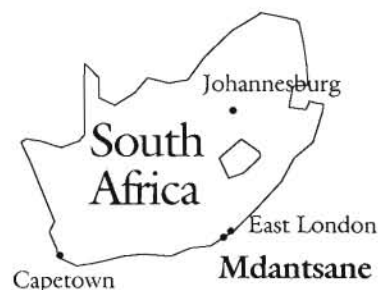
"It is absolutely true that this transitional period [between white and multi-racial rule] has brought people of different faiths much closer together," said Sheena Duncan, a representative of the South African Council of Churches to the Panel of Religious Leaders on Electoral Justice. "And the Bahá'ís are part of that process. They are now very firmly part of the inter-faith community in South Africa."

Monitored by the Police

It was not always possible for members of the Bahá'í community to be so open about their beliefs in South Africa. Although there were Bahá'ís in South Africa as early as 1911, a significant community was not established until the mid-1950s.

From that time until the end of apartheid in 1990, the Bahá'í community was closely monitored by the government's special police, who were charged with maintaining racial separation. Since Bahá'ís are bound by the principles of their Faith both to adhere to racial integration and remain obedient to the laws of the land, they had to walk a fine line when organizing meetings for worship and discussion under the old race laws.

"It was totally against custom for blacks and whites to meet together," said Lowell



At funeral services for the three murdered men in East London on 19 March, family members were among some 500 people who were present. Left to right are Hooshmand Anvari Sr., Mr. Anvari's father; Dr. Amin Bakhshandegi, Shamam Bakhshandegi's father; Mrs. Badri Bakhshandegi, his mother; Mrs. Dina Anvari, Mr. Anvari's wife; Mrs. Vera Razavi, Mr. Riaz Razavi's wife; Mr. Razi Razavi, Mr. Razavi's brother; and Mr. Hooshang Anvari, Mr. Anvari's brother.

"To stand up and say that we were going to openly proclaim the unity of mankind, or the oneness of all races, would not have been tolerated."

— Daniel Ramoroesi

Johnson, a native of the United States who has lived in South Africa since 1953. "For our meetings, we had to take people in through the back door, slip them through the kitchen, and, with the curtains drawn, then turn the lights on. Because, although the law allowed social mixing in your own home, if the neighbors objected, you would have to stop. So we had to be very cloak and dagger about even the simplest gathering."

Daniel Ramoroesi, who was among the first blacks to become a Bahá'í in the 1950s, explained the situation this way: "To stand up and say that we were going to openly proclaim the unity of mankind, or the oneness of all races, would not have been tolerated."

Added his wife, Judy Ramoroesi: "The police watched us all the time. My family was a target, but they couldn't find anything—because we obeyed the law."

Nevertheless, the Bahá'í community stuck firmly to its principles. The first national Bahá'í governing council, elected in 1956, had four white members and five blacks — a degree of integration that was extremely rare, if not unique, for any sort of national organization in South Africa at the time, said Mr. Johnson.

"The integration among Bahá'ís is not only administrative, as has gradually become the case with churches and other groups in South Africa, it is spiritual and social," said Shohreh Rawhani, secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly. "We're not where we want to be, of course. But

there is in the Bahá'í community here a genuine love among the races that goes beyond the intellectual idea of equality. And it is this natural socialization which we believe offers a distinctive example."

All races represented

At one Bahá'í gathering in Johannesburg several years ago, for example, where some 25 regional and local community representatives met with the nine-member National Spiritual Assembly, an outsider counted up the various backgrounds that were represented. Out of fewer than 40 people, there were men and women of white, black, colored, Indian, Chinese, and Persian heritage. Among the blacks were members of the Sotho, Batswana, Venda and Xhosa tribes. And the religious backgrounds included individuals who were formerly Christians, Hindus, Jews and Moslems. Nevertheless, a spirit of genuine friendship and relaxed association pervaded the gathering.

This spirit is difficult to document, of course. Hard statistics on interracial friendship and social integration are elusive. But the anecdotal evidence of genuine integration among Bahá'ís in South Africa is strong.

"For me, the Bahá'í community is quite different from the other communities in South Africa," said Daphne Masethla, a 66-year-old Soweto resident, who was at the gathering in Johannesburg. "We really care for each other. We do things together; we meet, and we socialize and our children mix."☪

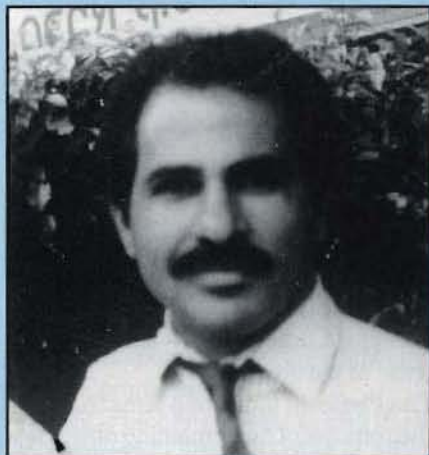
Lowell Johnson, left, and Daphne Masethla, shown here on the steps of the national Bahá'í center in Johannesburg, have been members of the South African Bahá'í community since the 1950s.



Making the choice for justice

The three men killed in the attack at the Bahá'í Center in Mdantsane on 13 March had been invited by the local Bahá'ís who reside in that all-black township to assist them to discuss how the community might observe the International Year of the Family.

All three men were deeply involved in efforts to promote race unity. All were in South Africa by choice, attracted by the opportunity to work for racial justice.



Hooshmand Anvari

Hooshmand Anvari fled his native Iran shortly after wholesale persecution of Bahá'ís began there in the late 1970s, arriving first in the United States of America, where he got an education as a computer specialist and was married. After visiting South Africa once in 1985, Mr. Anvari and his wife decided that they could make concrete efforts to improve the situation between the races there, and so they made plans to re-settle, even though he had recently obtained U.S. citizenship.

"It just seemed that there was so much you could do for the Africans here, because at the time the blacks had absolutely nothing," said Dina Anvari, Mr. Anvari's 33-year-old widow. "People tried to talk us out of moving, saying that apartheid was so awful. But for us, that was the challenge. To be able to work to see that all the races were accepted. And

at the time, they were not accepted in any way, except within the Bahá'í community. And it was such a wonderful feeling that you were actually doing something right."

The Anvaris arrived in 1990 and in 1991 they began to establish a small tutorial school for black children in East London. "Although by then the so-called 'white' schools were ostensibly open to everyone, blacks had to pass very high-level academic tests to get into them," said Mrs. Anvari.

Their school, Mrs. Anvari said, was designed to help young blacks overcome the huge gap between the white schools and the education they had received in the black schools. At the time Mr. Anvari was murdered, Mrs. Anvari said, they were serving about 80 students with Saturday classes and other tutorials after school. Mrs. Anvari said she plans to carry on with the school.



Riaz Razavi

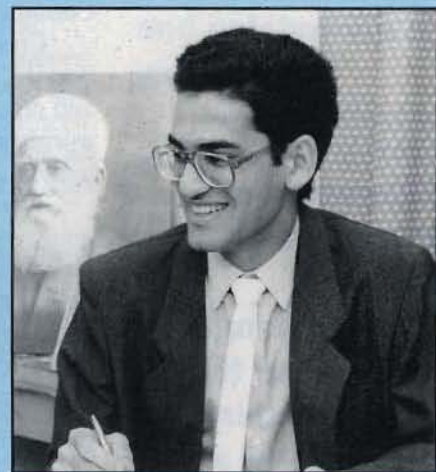
Mr. Riaz Razavi, also, felt drawn to Africa. He left his native Iran in the early 1970s, settling first in Lesotho, where he met and married a Belgian woman. They came to South Africa in the early 1980s, and for a number of years Mr. Razavi worked for the Ciskei Development Bank.

About two and a half years ago he took a job as director of finance at the University of Fort Hare, which is located in the town of Alice and is the main university in Ciskei, a job he took, in part, for the opportunity to help the homeland's black population, said Daniel Ramoroosi, a black Bahá'í

who has been good friends with Mr. Razavi since Lesotho. "He was a very great friend of the African people," said Mr. Ramoroosi. "He gave his services to almost everybody."

Mrs. Anvari, whose husband was a good friend of Mr. Razavi, said he used to spend his weekends traveling into black townships to promote the Bahá'í ideal of race unity.

The Razavis have two children, Rouhie, a 13-year-old girl, and Jalal, a 15-year-old boy. Mr. Razavi was also an accomplished musician. He lived in Kingwilliams Town.



Shamam Bakhshandegi

Dr. Shamam Bakhshandegi was born in Africa, in Mauritania. After finishing high school, he came to South Africa for university and then dental school. After graduating in 1989, he immediately set up his practice in Mdantsane, working mornings at the Cecilia Makiwane Hospital and afternoons at his own clinic here.

"Shamam was very dedicated to the Africans, and that is why he wanted to practice here and to work with them," said his mother, Mrs. Badri Bakhshandegi in a recent interview. "His heart was always with them."

Unmarried, Dr. Bakhshandegi lived in East London. A dynamic individual who spoke five languages, he was heavily involved in the community at large. He was a member of the local Rotary Club and wrote articles on dental hygiene for the local nursing newspaper. ☉

Looking Ahead to Beijing

At the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women, the theme of "partnership" emerges

UNITED NATIONS — As a barometer for what is happening in the world of women, there is perhaps no better measure than the annual meetings of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

Created in 1946 by the Economic and Social Council, the Commission monitors and promotes the advancement of women worldwide, serving as a focal point for information and action.

The Commission focused on key ongoing concerns, such as the disproportionate burden of poverty on women, the wide gap between the sexes in positions of power and decision-making, the frightful increase in reports of violence against women, and the overall inequalities in access to education and health for women.

Among the themes to emerge in this year's meeting, held here from 7 to 18 March, was the importance of forging a new partnership with men in the cause of women's advancement. The theme was a discernible thread running throughout the meeting, showing up in everything from comments by key speakers to the Commission to the small and evolutionary changes that were made in texts that were adopted by the body.

"The fact is, none of the critical areas of concern faced by women — such as poverty, education, health, violence and personal security — can really be addressed without men, because in most cases men continue to be in the major decision-making roles in society," said Mary Power, who chairs the New York NGO Committee on the Status of Women and is director of the Bahá'í International Community's Office for the Advancement of Women.

"That is why this concept of partnership is coming to the forefront," said Ms. Power. "It reflects a realization that at this point in time, men must also be enlisted in

the process of change, because unless they change their attitudes too, society will be unable to reach its full potential."

The emergence of such a theme takes on special importance because of the Commission's role as the preparatory committee for the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Looking to Beijing

Scheduled to be held in Beijing, China, in September 1995, the Fourth World Conference on Women seeks to review and appraise the advancement of women since 1985, when the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women were adopted.

The Beijing Conference is expected to adopt a "Platform for Action" that will spell out for the governments a concrete plan for removing the remaining obstacles to the full and equal participation of women in all spheres of life.

A draft Platform for Action was approved by the Commission. Its "statement of mission" emphasizes the major concerns of the Beijing Conference — and includes the theme of partnership:

"The Platform for Action aims to accelerate the removal of the remaining obstacles to women's full and equal participation in all spheres of life, including economic and political decision-making, to protect women's human rights throughout the life cycle, and to mainstream women in all areas of sustainable development so that men and women can work together for equality, development and peace."

NGO Participation

More than 800 representatives of non-governmental organizations gathered for parallel meetings and workshops during the Commission — the largest number ever and a sign of the building interest among NGOs in the Beijing meeting.

"At the last Commission meeting a year ago in Vienna, there were about 200 NGO representatives, and we had over 1,000 here in March," said Claire Fulcher, the United Nations representative of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women. "This reflects increasing activity and knowledge among women worldwide."

Representatives of NGOs met daily

"The onus for behavioral change has been overwhelmingly on women and they have met this challenge in a positive spirit with courage and determination. It is fair to say that the demands on men for change have been less to date but are increasing."

**— Mary Robinson,
President of Ireland**

during the Commission to discuss the emerging Platform for Action, and then headed off to lobby delegates for changes.

"In terms of adding new language about sustainable development, the problem of trafficking in women, and issues of entrepreneurship and employment, I think those are the areas where language in the Platform was changed because of NGO input," said Sudha Acharya, the United Nations representative of the All India Women's Conference.

Ms. Acharya said the simple coming together of so many women from so many countries at NGO events also had an important effect. She noted that NGOs sponsored some 70 workshops. "These were organized by women's groups from around the world and the significant thing was that many of these were joined by like groups from different parts of the world," she said. "This shows how women around the world have common concerns — and it shows that networking among women for Beijing has already started."

A number of the workshops focused on or incorporated the partnership theme. One, entitled "Men and Women as Partners" was sponsored by the Bahá'í International Community.

Ms. Fulcher and others said the theme of partnership also emerged in NGO consultations. At a 5 March meeting, the planning committee for the NGO Forum '95 agreed that the purpose of the NGO event

in Beijing would be "to bring together women and men to challenge, create and transform global structures and processes at all levels through the empowerment and celebration of women. We are committed to equality, peace, justice, inclusiveness and full participation of all."

Keynote by the President of Ireland

The emergence of the partnership theme is timely, say its advocates. In the keynote address to the Commission, Mary Robinson, the President of Ireland, put it this way:

"The role of women in society is evolving. They are moving from being the mainstay of the family to take on new roles as equal partners with men in society in general.

"Both men and women have gained considerably from the new order. Men and women can reach a new and more balanced partnership, choosing for themselves as appropriate the roles of breadwinner and homemaker, or joint breadwinner."

"For the past few decades, the onus for behavioral change has been overwhelmingly on women and they have met this challenge in a positive spirit with courage and determination. It is fair to say that the demands on men for change have been less to date but are increasing," President Robinson concluded. "This makes demands on the individual and it is important that public policy measures should recognize and facilitate this kind of change and personal growth." ☉

"...to bring together women and men to challenge, create and transform global structures and processes at all levels through the empowerment and celebration of women."

— Statement of Purpose for NGO Forum in Beijing



The Bahá'í International Community sponsored a workshop entitled "Men and Women as Partners" during the Commission. Shown, left to right, are several participants: Bernadette Palle, coordinator of the *Reseau Sous-Regional Femmes Africaines et Droits Humains*; Gianni Ballerio, representative of the Bahá'í International Community's Office for the Advancement of Women; and Miriam P. Ouedraogo, of *Femmes-Action* in Burkina Faso.

Palestinian Nabil Azam, left, played together with Israeli guitarist David Broza at the University of Maryland in April as part of a conference on peace, entitled "Once Empires Fade: Religion, Ethnicity and the Possibilities for Peace." Co-sponsored by the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace, the conference explored how religion and culture can bolster, rather than hinder, the prospects for peace.



Conference in Maryland asks whether religious and ethnic differences are sources of conflict or conciliation

"People came together who don't normally talk to each other, like people from the Middle East and different parts of Africa."

—Bernard Cooperman, director of the Meyerhoff Center for Jewish Studies

COLLEGE PARK, Maryland, USA— When young Israeli guitarist David Broza stepped out onto the stage, he was warmly welcomed by fans who clapped and sang along to familiar Israeli pop songs, which he sang in both English and Hebrew.

Received with less familiarity and somewhat more reserve was the next performer, Nabil Azam, a white-haired Palestinian Arab. Many Jews were in the audience and they listened politely as he strummed on a gourd-shaped *oud*. The applause was appropriate but without excessive enthusiasm.

Then, Mr. Azam switched to the violin and the sweet, mournful strain he played next seemed to dissolve an invisible barrier. As if by reflex, a crescendo of voices rose, singing along in Hebrew as Mr. Azam offered up "Jerusalem of Gold," a well-known Israeli song about the Holy City. An olive branch, it was impossible to resist.

The concert punctuated a 9-11 April conference held here at the University of Maryland, entitled "Once Empires Fade: Religion, Ethnicity and the Possibilities for Peace." The on-stage harmony of an Israeli and a Palestinian stood as a dramatic symbol for the hope of a peaceful resolution to the Middle East conflict — one of more than 40 such disputes based on religious or cultural differences currently raging across the globe.

How the factors of religion and ethnicity

can hasten or hinder the peace process was explored through artistic presentations, scholarly speeches, and discussion groups.

"People came together who don't normally talk to each other, like people from the Middle East and different parts of Africa," said Bernard Cooperman, director of the Joseph and Rebecca Meyerhoff Center for Jewish Studies, one of the three organizers of

the conference. Co-organizers included the History Department and the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace, also at the University of Maryland.

More than 700 people, including students, academics, and public figures, came from around the world, representing a cross-section of religious and political ideologies.

Speakers and some 30 workshop leaders addressed the unique possibilities for peace presented by the end of the Cold War and the opportunity to redirect the focus of defense toward pressing global concerns.

Among the key themes to emerge was that religion, which is so often viewed as a source of conflict, can be a source of peace.

Mona Grieser, chief executive officer of Glovis, Inc., a development communications company, said the current economic

(Continued on page 12)

Peace

Once Europe's killing fields, Verdun now hosts a new museum for peace

VERDUN, France — As the site of one of the bloodiest battles of World War One, this otherwise picturesque town in the Meuse Valley has long been associated with the horrors of war.

More than 500,000 soldiers on both sides died in the first half of 1916 as French forces successfully resisted a massive German offensive against strategic fortifications here. The town itself was reduced to rubble in a series of bombardments.

Now wholly rebuilt and restored, the present day Verdun is rapidly emerging as a major European symbol of peace and progress.

In 1984, it was host to a reaffirmation of the peace efforts of the French and German Governments, displayed in a handclasp between German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and French President François Mitterand, as they stood side by side in the immense military cemetery here.

The latest manifestation of such efforts is scheduled to come on 1 July, when the new World Center for Peace, Freedom and Human Rights is inaugurated.

Housed in the Palais Episcopal, the bishop's former residence near the town's historic tenth century cathedral, the Center will comprise a peace museum, a center for cultural and scientific research, a documents archives, and an international conference site. It will also offer workshops

and classes on peace for youth.

"What makes the creation of the Center especially significant first of all, of course, is its geographic location," said Kazem Samandari, a member of the national governing council of the Bahá'í community of France, which has been collaborating with the Center's founders since 1989, the year after the project was founded.

"There are scores of museums around the world dedicated to the remembrance of war; this Center is one of the few dedicated to the promotion of peace. In a world in which there are currently some two dozen wars ongoing," Mr. Samandari added, "it offers a powerful symbol of the potential for understanding between peoples, in that today the enemies that fought in two successive world wars are united in a European Community."

An International Crossroads

Financed primarily by governmental sources at the national, regional and local level in France, but also with contributions from the European Fund for Regional Economic Development and private sources, the Center has been built and outfitted at a cost of more than 90 million French francs (US\$ 16 million).

It aims to become "an international crossroads, an area for exchanges and a symbolic and prophetic spot, announcing peace to all

(Continued on page 12)

The new World Center for Peace, Freedom and Human Rights aims become "an international crossroads, an area for exchanges and a symbolic and prophetic spot, announcing peace to all the peoples of the world."

The Palais Episcopal in Verdun, which now houses the nearly completed World Center for Peace, Freedom and Human Rights.



Maryland

(Continued from page 10)

paradigm ignores the psychological and spiritual component at the root of third world development.

"There is no doubt that we have the technology to feed, clothe, and house all the people on earth," said Ms. Grieser, who is also a Bahá'í. "Why it is not being done is a spiritual issue which must be addressed."

"Spirituality, applied to global issues both collectively and individually, can set a new global agenda based on a shared vision," she said. "Spirituality can provide the moral authority and...the motivation to implement new policies and programs based on new priorities."

Paul-Marc Henry, an Ambassador in the French Foreign Service, said a "spiritual gap" was in part responsible for the "deep crisis" the world is in, as evidenced by the deterioration of public works and the school system, rising unemployment, and the violence erupting from the frustration of the young.

"The real long term is not to be calculated by the gross national product, but by the hope for the future," he said. "Basically this crisis is one of despair."

Ernest Gellner, director of the European Center for the Study of Nationalism in Prague, took a more secular approach, presenting the idea that differences in culture should be viewed as accidents of birth or history, and should have no bearing on the citizenship rights accorded to one group over another.

Nationalism, Dr. Gellner said, is an "artificial phenomenon" in which culture is narrowly defined by an elite group. Those who do not meet the standards set by that elite, he said, run the risk of being excluded or oppressed, which leads to violence.

The papers presented at the conference will be gathered into a book which, organizers hope, will encourage continued discussion of the new opportunities for peace.

"For the academic world to recognize that religion is an important factor in bringing about peace or in laying down the ground for better understanding among disparate and sometimes contending peoples is in itself an achievement," said Suheil Bushrui, who occupies the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace. — *By Veronica Shoffstall* ☼

Verdun

(Continued from page 11)

the peoples of the world," according to the Museum's brochure.

In this effort, the Center plans to collaborate with countries around the world to create a permanent collection showing humanity's efforts and progress toward peace throughout history. On the Palais' ground floor, there will be seven monoliths, each equipped with an audio-visual system, to depict various aspects of peace-making.

For its part, the Bahá'í community will donate a model of the Bahá'í House of Worship in India. Inaugurated in 1986, the House of Worship has won praise from around the world for its bold and inspiring architecture.

Inspired by the lotus flower, it has nine sides and nine doors, making it possible to enter from any direction, and thus symbolizing the unity of all peoples and all religions.

Madam Rúhíyyih Rabbání, a leading dignitary in the Bahá'í community, is among the first 50 international religious, cultural and political figures to co-sponsor the Center's creation. The Patronage Committee also includes Sadruddin Aga Khan; economist John Kenneth Galbraith; Czech President Vaclav Havel; former British Prime Minister Edward Heath; Oumar Konare, the president of Mali; and a number of Nobel Laureates, including Hélène Ahrweiler, Jean Dausset, Gérard Debreu, Mairead Maguire and Peace Prize winners Rigoberta Menchu and Elie Wiesel.

The ultimate aim of the Center is to stimulate fresh thinking about how to promote peace, according to its director, Denis Maréchal. The archives for documents will bring together papers from the European Council, the United Nations, various human rights associations, and humanitarian agencies. Those documents will be open to researchers and used in special "peace classes" for youth.

"The classes will prepare the youth to think about peace, teaching them to think differently," said Mr. Maréchal. "For example, we are organizing films on war and peace for the documentation center that is being set up. And we find that there are many films available about war, yet few about peace. We are putting the emphasis on peace." — *By Jessica Dacey* ☼

"We are organizing films on war and peace for the documentation center that is being set up. And we find that there are many films available about war, yet few about peace. We are putting the emphasis on peace."

**— Denis Maréchal,
director of the World
Center for Peace,
Freedom and Human
Rights**

Photo: Claude Berger



Madam Rúhiyyih Rabbání, a leading figure in the Bahá'í International Community, left, and HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, are scheduled to be the main speakers at the 1994 World Forestry Charter Gathering. The photo at left shows the pair in 1987, when Madam Rabbání presented to the Prince a copy of the Bahá'í Statement on Nature. The Prince received the statement in his capacity as president of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

1994 World Forestry Charter Gathering to focus on Forest Principles

LONDON — HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, will be the keynote speaker at the 1994 World Forestry Charter Gathering, to be held 28 July at the Palace of St. James.

The 1994 Gathering will focus on the Forest Principles, adopted at the 1992 Earth Summit, and their implications for the peoples and nations of the planet, examining whether the Principles go far enough towards the kind of comprehensive global framework under which sustainable forestry stewardship can be assured.

The Gathering is organized by the International Tree Foundation and the Bahá'í International Community, and sponsored by TAMOIL, the Italian petroleum company. It is supported by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). TAMOIL has been recognized by WWF as a leader in the oil industry for its environmental policies.

Also addressing the gathering, which will bring together diplomatic and environmental representatives from more than 80 countries, will be Madam Rúhiyyih Rabbání, a leading figure in the Bahá'í International Community who is heavily engaged in the field of environmental education.

"In bringing together a constellation of royal, diplomatic and religious figures of

international prominence at the Palace of St. James, which is normally reserved for state functions, the 1994 World Forestry Charter Gathering will highlight the new integration of interests and concerns being brought to bear on the environmental crisis," said Lawrence Arturo, director of Bahá'í International Community's Office of the Environment.

"It will reflect the growing view that the world's ecosystems — and particularly our forests — represent a common heritage for all humanity and that unprecedented levels of international cooperation, based on unity and justice, must be sought if the world's forests are to be preserved," Mr. Arturo added.

First held by Dr. Richard St. Barbe Baker in the 1950s and 1960s, the World Forestry Charter Gatherings represent a pioneering global environmental initiative. Dr. Baker, a renowned ecologist who was also a Bahá'í, brought together diplomats to the Court of St. James discuss the state of the world's forests in the first such meetings of their kind.

In 1989, in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Dr. Baker, the Bahá'í International Community revived the Gathering. The 1994 event represents the second in the new series of Gatherings.☉

"In bringing together a constellation of royal, diplomatic and religious figures, the 1994 World Forestry Charter Gathering will highlight the new integration of interests and concerns being brought to bear on the environmental crisis."

**— Lawrence Arturo,
Office of the
Environment**

U.N. Commission on Human Rights again expresses concern about Iran's Bahá'ís

GENEVA — The United Nations Commission on Human Rights on 9 March 1994 adopted a strong resolution expressing deep concern over reports of continuing human rights violations in Iran, including the persecution of the Bahá'í community there.

By a vote of 22 to 11, the Commission called for its Special Representative to continue his monitoring of the human rights situation in Iran, requesting that he report again next year to the Commission.

In this year's report to the Commission, Special Representative Reynaldo Galindo Pohl wrote extensively about the situation of Iran's Bahá'í community and stated that, despite Government denials that religious persecution exists, the "community suffers discrimination and harassment."

Since 1979, more than 200 Iranian Bahá'ís have been executed, hundreds imprisoned, and thousands deprived of jobs, education

and the right to freedom of worship in a campaign of systematic religious persecution endorsed by the Government of Iran.

The Commission has expressed its concern over the situation in Iran every year since 1982. In this year's resolution, the Commission asked that Government of Iran to "intensify its efforts to investigate and rectify the human rights issues" raised by the Special representative, and to comply with international instruments on human rights to "ensure that all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction, including religious groups, enjoy the rights recognized in these instruments."

During the Commission, a group of international non-governmental organizations presented a joint statement expressing their concern and alarm at the continuing persecution of Iran's Bahá'ís. [See statement below.] ☉

In this year's report to the Commission, Special Representative Reynaldo Galindo Pohl wrote that, despite Government denials that religious persecution exists, the Bahá'í community "suffers discrimination and harassment."

Statement by NGOs on Iran

We, the undersigned non-governmental organizations, noting that United Nations human rights instruments to which the Islamic Republic of Iran is a party guarantee every individual's conscience and preference, are appalled and alarmed at recent trends in the Islamic Republic of Iran. We take note with appreciation of General Assembly resolution 48/145 of 20 December 1993 and of numerous earlier resolutions of the General Assembly, Economic and Social Council, Commission on Human Rights and the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities regarding the precarious situation of Iranian members of the Bahá'í Faith.

We deplore the persecution of Bahá'ís in the Islamic Republic of Iran, indicated by numerous arrests, torture and imprisonments of members of the Bahá'í faith, and by the killings of 201 Bahá'ís since 1979.

We deplore the 17 March 1992 arrest and 18 March 1992 summary execution of the Teheran businessman, Mr. Bahman Samandari. We further deplore the 23 November 1993 death sentences imposed upon Mr. Bihnam Mithaqi and Mr. Kayvan Khalajabadi solely on the basis of their religious beliefs, as they have been charged as "unprivileged infidels at war with the Muslim Nations."

We urge the current session of the Commission on Human Rights to take careful note of violations of United Nations human rights instruments by the Islamic Republic of Iran, and to take the strongest possible action to defend and protect the rights to free choice and practice of religion by all citizens of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

— Caritas Internationalis, General Conference of the Seventh Day Adventists, International Association for Religious Freedom, Lutheran World Federation, Pax Romana, Gray Panthers and World Union for Progressive Judaism.

Review

(Continued from back page)

has given rise to the excesses that today so threaten the environment.

At the same time, McDaniel, a professor of environmental theology and world religions at Hendrix College, suggests that a more liberal interpretation of Christian theology can provide the underpinnings for a movement to "learn to feel the world as God feels it, with sensitivity to the intrinsic value of each and every life, and with delight in the sheer diversity of forms of life...."

The book's final section deals with the emergence of "contemporary ecological perspectives," offering a sampling of the worldviews proposed by such currents as the "deep ecology" movement, "ecofeminism," and the views of modern-day eco-theologians like Thomas Berry.

Each of these examinations also embrace the importance of considering the "spiritual dimension" to environmentalism. This despite the paradoxical rejection of traditional religion by many proponents of these movements. Observes Rasmussen: "many who now make their religious appeal [for the involvement of believers in conservation] public are not religiously observant themselves."

Ecofeminism and spirituality

Charlene Spretnak writes that "the ecofeminist alternative to the Western patriarchal worldview of fragmentation, alienation, agonistic dualisms, and exploitative dynamics is a radical reconceptualization that hon-

ors holistic integration: interrelatedness, transformation, embodiment, caring, and love." These qualities, she says, are "simpatico with teachings of several Eastern and indigenous spiritual traditions...."

Ultimately, then, the crucial role of religion and faith as a key resource in the search for a new worldview that can guide and motivate the creation of a sustainable civilization becomes the dominant theme of this book.

That is precisely the theme presented by environmentalist Robert White in his contribution, "A Bahá'í Perspective on an Ecologically Sustainable Society."

White suggests that the writings and practices of the Bahá'í Faith, the youngest of the world's independent religions, offer a new vision and model for the creation of an ecologically sound global society.

"In the nineteenth century, Bahá'u'lláh stated that the revelation of religious truth is an ongoing, open-ended process that has animated humanity's development toward greater unity and consciousness," White writes. "Within this context, Bahá'u'lláh claimed that the role of revelation was to initiate a process of conscious unification on a planetary scale..."

"The Bahá'í Faith, therefore, presents a unity paradigm which reflects an altered understanding of the relationship of parts to each other and to the whole," White continues. "This spiritual and organic truth, once accepted, can release the constructive energy that will be needed to make the far-reaching structural changes required for fostering sustainable patterns of development." ☉

White suggests that the writings and practices of the Bahá'í Faith, the youngest of the world's independent religions, offer a new vision and model for the creation of an ecologically sound global society.



In Kiribati, a visitor to the Bahá'í community there last August was welcomed with a party that included feasting, dancing and singing. Pictured here are dancers about to present tiaras to the visitor and honored guests.

Two vast rivers converge: religion and ecology in a common channel

Worldviews and Ecology

Edited by
Mary Evelyn
Tucker and
John A. Grim

Bucknell
University
Press

Lewisburg

By some accounts, the juncture between ecology and religion is just a few years old: its public connection can be traced to 1986, when the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) helped to organize a gathering of religious leaders from major world faiths at Assisi, Italy, to enlist their support to protect and preserve the world's environment.

In reality, the association can be traced to the dawn of recorded history. A new volume, entitled *Worldviews and Ecology* and published as an issue of the prestigious Bucknell Review, shows how the "worldviews"

Review

promoted and nurtured by the various world religions throughout history have been instrumental in shaping humanity's relationship with nature.

Indeed, as environmentalists ponder how best to motivate the changes in attitudes and activities that will be necessary to create a sustainable world civilization, the subject of faith and religious belief almost unavoidably comes up.

"As subjects of debate and appeal, cosmology, ethics, religion, faith, the spiritual, and moral responsibility turn up with increasing frequency as the ecocrisis deepens," writes theologian Larry L. Rasmussen in one of the essays presented in the book. "It is as though ecocrisis consciousness and religious consciousness are, in our time, like vast rivers which, though they arose in different terrain, now converge with one another in common channels."

In analyzing the various streams of this merging flow, *Worldviews and Ecology* provides a tremendous service. A collection of 18 essays by religious and environmental scholars, the book offers a diverse and yet coherent sampling of the various strains of thought in the field of environmental ethics.

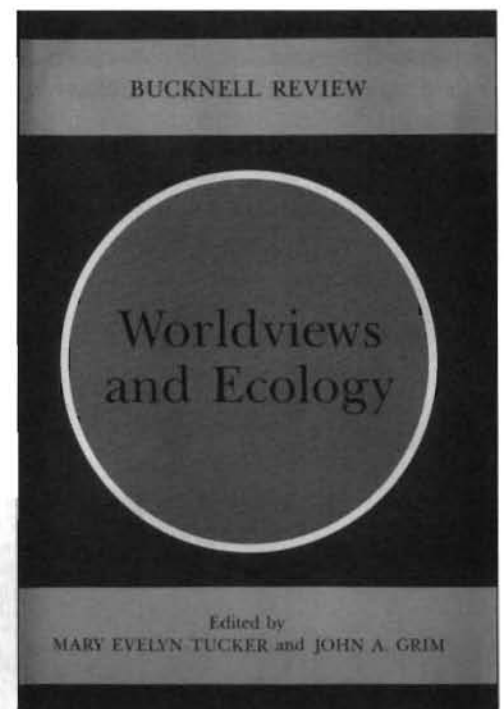
Divided roughly into three parts, the first two essays underscore the importance of revamping our worldview in relation to the environment. Writes Tu Wei-Ming, a professor of Chinese history and philosophy at Harvard University: "...by poisoning the air we breathe and the water we drink, in short, by degrading our environment, we are recklessly reducing the livability of our habitat to a point of no return. The necessity of a basic

reorientation of our thought with a view toward a fundamental restructuring of our style of life is glaringly clear."

The second section offers a series of essays on how each of the world's major religions views the relationship between man and nature. Examined are the worldviews promoted not only by Judaism, Christianity, Islam, the Bahá'í Faith, Hinduism, and Buddhism, but also by native American spiritual traditions, Confucianism and Taoism, and Jainism.

For the most part, these essays take a scholarly overview of the basic teachings of each religion in relation to nature. They examine in brief what each faith's sacred writings have said, how theologians throughout history have interpreted those writings, and the actual record of activity by the followers of each religion in an environmental context.

In Jay McDaniel's essay on "A Chris-



tian Approach to Ecology," for example, he even-handedly considers how the biblical commands in Genesis to "be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" have been interpreted as giving humanity a license to dominate and rule over nature — a worldview that many say
(Continued on page 15)