



UPDATE

IIHA & THE RENAISSANCE GROUP

August/September, 1993

Campaigning for the Unborn Child



The latest health statistics published in the Moscow Medical Gazette show that about 70 per cent of newborn infants suffer from some kind of pathological condition. Out of every 1,000 teenagers, 21 enter adult life with an illness and only 20 per cent of Russian youth are considered fit for military service.

With all eyes on Bosnia and other disaster areas very little attention is given to an impending disaster, which can be prevented in Russia. One also wonders sometimes if there's anyone concerned enough in Russia to prevent the worst from happening. Those in positions of authority are so preoccupied with the economy that any health-care programme which hasn't the potential of earning dollars is ignored or neglected.

Ministry thwarts major initiative

Writing in the British Medical Journal about the latest statistics quoted above, Michael Ryan, an expert in Russian Studies, says: "These facts make it seem all the more puzzling, to say the least, that the Russian Health Ministry is thwarting a major initiative designed by the British Institute of Brain Chemistry and Human Nutrition under its Director, Professor M. Crawford,

in collaboration with IIHA.

Michael Ryan goes on to explain that the target of our five-month pilot programme is to provide some 93,000 women of child-bearing age in central Moscow with a nutritional supplement which would provide 200 calories a day, plus a full range of vitamins and trace elements. In this way we would help to prevent an epidemic of birth defects among children born next year after a winter during which many expectant mothers will probably be unable to afford a healthy diet.



We have been discussing this programme since early last year when a group of us, including Professor Michael Crawford, met at the Royal Society of Medicine. This followed a meeting of leading Russian doctors at the King's Fund Centre in the autumn of 1991. Michael Crawford was there and was appalled at what he heard about the low standard of women's healthcare as a result of a poor diet and poor working conditions. It was obvious from what he heard that there was an acute food shortage comparable with food shortages in Holland and

Norway during World War 2. Babies conceived at the time of the food shortage were born with birth defects.

Our proposal to prevent birth malformations had the enthusiastic support of the Ministry of Health.

But there is a stumbling block. The proposed formula contains milk reconstituted with vegetable oils, and this is classified as a food by the Russian Ministry of Health. One of the conditions attaching to the European Community's loan for food and medical supplies to Russia is that food must be sold through the normal retail network and cannot be distributed free to a specific population group.

"So, at the time of writing, this life-saving nutritional programme," says Michael Ryan, "is stalled due to an adverse bureaucratic decision and the myopia which underpins it. On the evidence available, readers may well conclude that the Russian Health Ministry needs to be prompted powerfully on behalf of children who are yet unborn."

In every child who is born, under no matter what circumstances, and of no matter what parents, the potentiality of the human race is born again. And for all of us every child is a reminder of our terrific responsibility towards human life.

James Agate

Mankind owes to the child the best it has to give.

U.N. Declaration

IIHA -SOUTHAMPTON HOSPITAL CYSTIC FIBROSIS PROJECT

JOINT RESEARCH BENEFITS CF CHILDREN IN RUSSIA AND BRITAIN

There tends to be over-treatment of CF patients in Britain, but only the minimum of treatment in Russia, where some of the most important life-saving antibiotics and enzymes are unobtainable.

"Cystic fibrosis care has been transformed in Western countries," says Dr Chris Rolles, Head of the Southampton University Hospitals CF Clinic, "so that now all patients are able to survive well into adult life. With further developments on the horizon survival may even be approaching that of a normal individual and dramatic new forms of treatment are about to emerge."

In Russia, however, lack of resources prevents highly competent paediatricians from offering their patients the best modern CF care.

There is therefore a need, as Dr Rolles points out, to increase the effectiveness of the treatments available and to help the Russians to obtain a wider range of drugs and to keep going after initial Western help.

Research along these lines could help improve CF care in other East European countries and could also help in the assessment of routine treatments which have never been properly tested in the U.K.

What is cystic fibrosis?

Cystic fibrosis, or CF as it's called, is the commonest genetic disease in the Western world where it affects one in every 2000 children.

One person in 25 carries the gene.

2,000,000 people in the UK are carriers.

6,000 people in the U.K. have CF

CF affects the glands which secrete body fluids damaging many organs including the pancreas, and digestive tract. This complex disease causes the production of thick, sticky mucus which clogs the bronchial tubes and prevents the body's natural enzymes from digesting food.

The most effective and economical aid for CF patients

The International Integrated Health Association and the Southampton University Hospitals Cystic Fibrosis Clinic are planning to work together on a clinical project to treat a group of children in the Moscow Cystic Fibrosis Clinic with a carefully designed intermediate level of care. The hypothesis to be tested in this research is that by identifying the most important elements of modern care, it may be possible to improve to a marked extent the quality of life of CF patients in Russia and other East European countries without necessarily incurring Western costs.

A group of about 25 Moscow children (from non-smoking homes and with parents eager to co-operate) will be given modern pancreatic enzymes, some well selected antibiotics for chest infections, and good physiotherapy. The group will be followed for a year and assessed at three monthly intervals either by members of the Southampton team or the Moscow team. At the end of the year there will be a full appraisal to determine the effectiveness of the plan.

It is expected that the project will continue in a modified form to obtain further information. At the same time, Integrated Health is planning to help the Moscow parent association with their fund-raising.

Changing our manner of thinking



The following extracts are from
an article by Roy Ridgway
which appeared in the Summer
issue of

Reconciliation Quarterly:

Our manner of thinking, which, during the past three centuries, has to a large extent been influenced by the philosophy of Rene Descartes (mind-body split, separation of subject and object) and the mechanistic physics of Isaac Newton, has served us very well, but this reputedly sound base on which we have built our modern world has now begun to show cracks.

In the natural sciences we are undergoing what the philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn called "a paradigm shift", in which the whole basis of our scientific thinking is being questioned. But old ways of thinking still have an enormous influence on us. For instance, those who are responsible for planning our education in today's technological world are, in general, more impressed by a scientific approach to problems than a religious interpretation or a poet's vision of the world.

I once came across the following absurd scientific description of life:

Life is a partial, continuous, multiform and conditionally interactive self-realisation of the potentialities of atomic electric states.

Whatever that means, I am unimpressed. And I am sure most people who are not scientists, and even many who are, would much prefer Keats's description of life:

*Life is the rose's hope while yet
unblown;
The reading of a never-ending tale;
The light uplifting of a maiden's veil;
A schoolboy riding the springy branches
of an elm.....*

There is nothing more difficult than to become critically aware of the presuppositions of one's thought. Everything can be seen directly except the eye through which we see. Every thought can be scrutinized directly except the thought by which we scrutinize. A special effort, an effort of self-awareness, is needed - that almost impossible feat of thought recoiling upon itself: almost impossible but not quite.

E.F Schumacher,

A Guide for the Perplexed

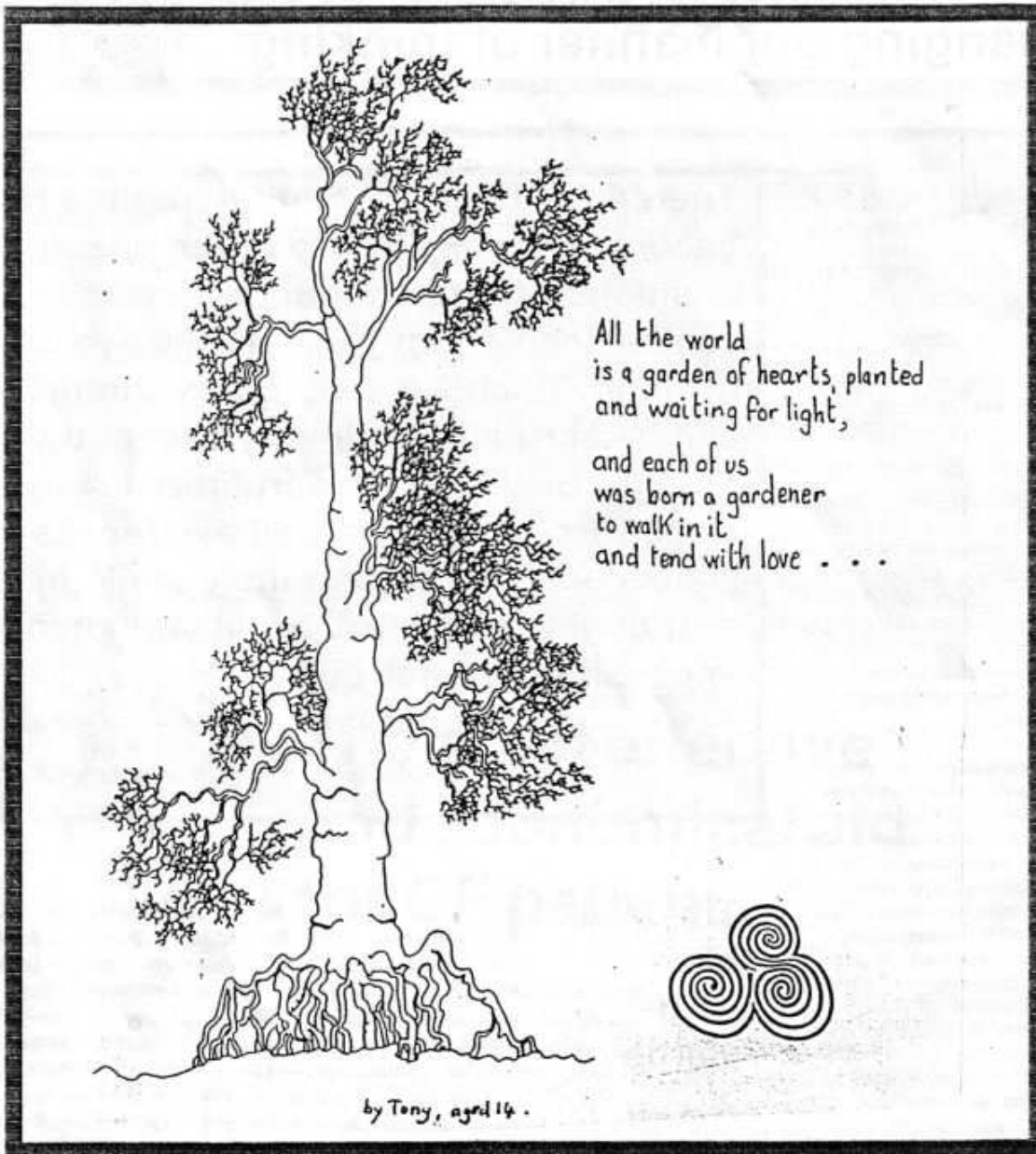
The trouble with words is you never know whose mouths they've been in

Denis Potter

ATTITUDES are changing. Modern science seems to have discovered God at the end of the cosmic rainbow. The origin of the universe, as described in the Big Bang theory (or Big Bang singularity, as Stephen Hawking described it) and the Genesis story in the Bible are remarkably similar. In fact, so similar that the Roman-Catholic Church issued a statement in 1951 to the effect that the theory was in accordance with their teaching. It did not rule out the possibility of a prime mover or creator.

"Everything seems to indicate that the universe has in finite terms a mighty beginning," said Pope Pius XII at a meeting of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences.

Bridges have to be built in our minds. The most important bridge that needs to be built is the one that links the two sides of what has been called the subject/object split. This split, which began with Descartes, is alienating - it separates us from nature and from one another, and creates deep divisions in ourselves, between the mind and body, so that we are always trying to control our feelings through our thinking or willing, which leads to neurosis and depression.



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