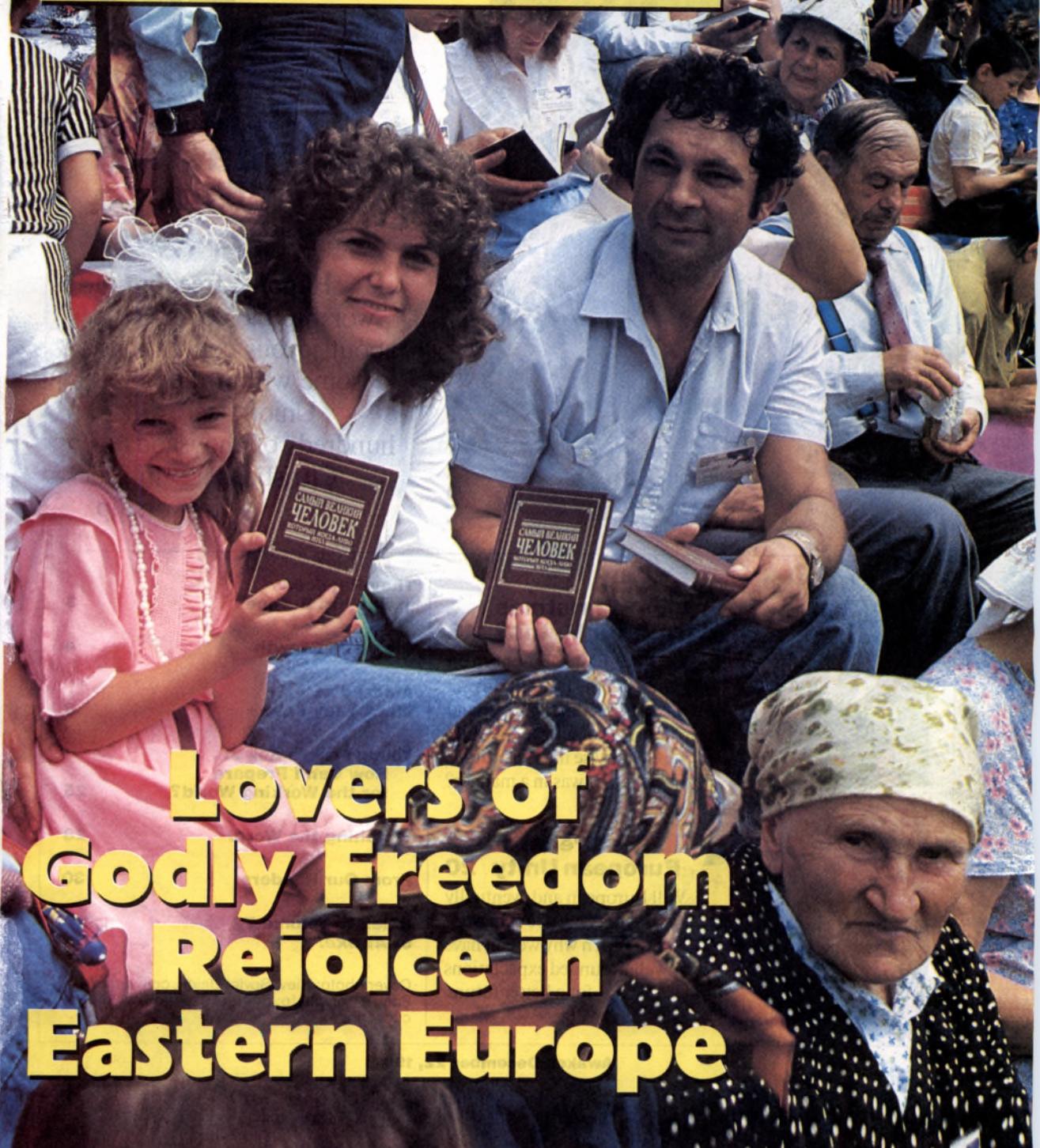


Awake!

December 22, 1991



**Lovers of
Godly Freedom
Rejoice in
Eastern Europe**



Lovers of Godly Freedom Rejoice in Eastern Europe

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Cover photo: Kiev, Soviet Union, convention
Page 2, top photo: Prague, Czechoslovakia,
convention

THEY REJOICED IN EASTERN EUROPE

THIS past summer tens of thousands of people flocked to major cities in Eastern Europe. The streets of beautiful Budapest, Prague, Zagreb, and more than 20 other cities were crowded with people wearing blue and white badges. These identified them as lovers of godly freedom attending conventions of Jehovah's Witnesses.

For the first time ever, conventions were freely held in European republics of the Soviet Union, as well as in faraway Siberia and the Soviet Asian republic of Kazakhstan. Altogether, more than 370,000 conventioners enjoyed warm fellowship in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Poland, Romania, and the Soviet Union.

For those not present, it may be hard to imagine the rejoicing when 74,252 met in the Soviet Union to worship Jehovah God openly and without fear. Yet, their sheer joy could hardly have exceeded that of the 74,587 in Prague and 40,601 in Budapest who assembled in the largest stadiums in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, or of the 14,684 who met in Zagreb, Yugoslavia.

This is so remarkable because just a couple of years earlier, Jehovah's Witnesses were under ban in most countries of Eastern Europe. They were cut off from the West during the Cold War. Even to meet in small groups to worship God was illegal. No wonder there

was such rejoicing at being able to meet freely in large conventions!

A 59-year-old Czech Witness, who had spent eight months in solitary confinement about 40 years ago because of her faith in God, said: "Many of us who lived in Prague dreamed about a big convention that could be arranged in this stadium, but never did we believe that this dream would come true in such a marvelous way."

Two weeks before the Prague convention, August 9 to 11, a city newspaper, *Věčerník Praha*, noted: "Charged with high treason and with disrupting socialism, Jehovah's Witnesses were put in Communist jails for many years." After explaining that the city would soon be host to tens of thousands of Witnesses, the article concluded: "You are not likely to meet so many kind and smiling people in Prague at any other time than during the second weekend of August."

However, you may ask: "Were Jehovah's Witnesses once persecuted with just cause? Were they ever a threat to the political authorities of the countries in which they lived? From where did the hundreds of thousands of convention delegates in Eastern Europe come? Suppressed and isolated for 40 or more years from free contact with the Western world, how were they able to grow to such numbers?"

DRAMATIC GROWTH

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES have never been a threat to the political authorities of the countries in which they live, and this is now recognized. When commenting about one of this summer's conventions in the Soviet Union, the newspaper *Krasnoyarskiy Komsomolets* observed: "The ideologists of our country finally realized that Jehovah's people in no way threaten public law and order."

Similarly, the Soviet newspaper *Vostochno-Sibirskaya Pravda* reported: "Since the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses is strictly religious, they do not share in political conflicts and do not encourage their members to support any political bloc, but they support the authority of the Bible and its Author, Jehovah God."

Growth in Early Years

For many decades Jehovah's Witnesses have been active in Eastern Europe. Already by the late 1930's, Romania had over two thousand of them, Poland a thousand, and Czechoslovakia and Hungary hundreds, and

there were several dozen in Yugoslavia. Although the vast Soviet Union had only a small number, this changed overnight.

A specialist on Soviet affairs, Walter Kolarz, said in his book *Religion in the Soviet Union* that other Witnesses entered Russia "through the territories annexed by the Soviet Union in 1939-40, where there were small but very active groups of Jehovah's Witnesses." Thus, Witnesses living in eastern parts of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Romania suddenly found themselves transplanted, overnight as it were, into the Soviet Union!

Another remarkable way Jehovah's Witnesses were introduced into the Soviet Union was by means of the German concentration camps. How so? Well, during World War II, Russian prisoners found themselves in these camps along with thousands of German Witnesses. These Germans had been thrown into the camps because they maintained a resolute stand of Christian neutrality. (John 17:16; 18:36) They preferred to suffer and die rather than break God's laws by joining Hitler's ar-

Awake!

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mies and thereby become guilty of killing fellow Christians in other countries or of killing anyone else for that matter.—1 John 3:10-12.

Thus, as Kolarz wrote, “the German concentration camps, unbelievable as it may sound, are one of the channels by which the message of Jehovah’s Witnesses came to Russia. It was brought there by Russian prisoners in Germany who had admired the courage and steadfastness of the ‘Witnesses’ and probably for that reason had found their theology attractive.” In the Ravensbrück women’s camp alone, scores of young Russians were reported to have accepted the Bible message proclaimed by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

After the war, prisoners from Eastern European countries who had become Jehovah’s Witnesses returned to their homelands. There they zealously taught that rule by God’s Kingdom is the only hope for lasting peace. Thus, the number of Witnesses in Eastern Europe increased dramatically. By April 1946, there were over four thousand preaching in the Soviet Union, and this number quickly doubled. In September 1946, the Witnesses in Romania held a convention in Bucharest that was attended by about 15,000 persons.

Shortly thereafter, the Cold War began, and this shut down travel and communications between Eastern Europe and the West. Moreover, Eastern Europe’s new ruling powers began opposing Jehovah’s Witnesses. Sadly, they viewed the Witnesses as a threat,

and many were imprisoned. Despite this, by 1951, Czechoslovakia had 3,705 active Witnesses; Hungary, 2,583; Yugoslavia, 617; and Poland over 15,000.

Opposed, yet Growth Continued

In 1967, Maurice Hindus wrote about Jehovah’s Witnesses in his book *The Kremlin’s Human Dilemma*. What he said applied to Witnesses in the Soviet Union as well as other parts of Eastern Europe. “Though they function underground, they are hunted out and given stiff jail sentences. But there is no stopping them. Suppressed in one place, they bob up in another . . . They appear as indestructible as the Soviet police.”

During the spring of 1951, Jehovah’s Witnesses in the Soviet Union received a severe blow. More than seven thousand of them in the Soviet European republics were arrested and carried off to prison camps in remote parts of the country, including Siberia and Vorkuta, in the far north. What was the result?

“This was not the end of the ‘Witnesses’ in Russia,” noted Kolarz, “but only the beginning of a new chapter in their proselytising activities. They even tried to propagate their faith when they stopped at stations on their way into exile. In deporting them the Soviet Government could have done nothing better for the dissemination of their faith. Out of their village isolation the ‘Witnesses’ were brought into a wider world, even if this was

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only the terrible world of the concentration and slave labour camps."

Inside and Outside Prisons

Just as first-century Christians continued to preach without letup when persecuted, so Jehovah's Witnesses did in the Soviet Union. (Acts 5:42) Helene Celmina, a Latvian imprisoned for alleged crimes, says that in the section of the Potma penal camp where she was held from 1962 to 1966, there were some 350 inmates. "About half of them," she said, "were Jehovah's Witnesses." In her book *Women in Soviet Prisons*, Celmina wrote about what she saw in the camp:

"Literature from Brooklyn arrives regularly, in good shape and in large quantities through unofficial and well-organized channels . . . No one could understand how this land of barbed wire and limited human contact could be penetrated by forbidden literature—and from the United States at that! Many Jehovah's Witnesses received ten years of hard labor merely for having a few issues of the magazine *Watchtower* in their apartments. Since people are arrested for possession of these writings, the anxiety and exasperation of the administration over the presence of this literature in camp is understandable."

With Jehovah's help, nothing could stop the distribution of this spiritual food! Celmina noted: "No one has discovered how [*The Watchtower*] gets into the camp. After all, following conviction, every prisoner is stripped of all clothing and completely searched. On arrival at the camp each prisoner is thoroughly searched again, down to the last seam. Suitcases are searched for double bottoms. No stranger is allowed into the camp without good cause. When inmates are let out of the camp zone for work in the fields, they are surrounded by armed guards and no one is permitted to approach them. A thorough search of each prisoner is made when they return to

the camp in the evening. But despite this surveillance, the Brooklyn literature finds its readers."

At the same time, stalwart Christians outside the Soviet prison camps pressed on in their public preaching and teaching activities. This was evidenced by publications and films that were produced in an effort to counteract their ministry. For example, in 1978 the book *The Truths About Jehovah's Witnesses* was published, as was explained in its introduction, for the purpose of "carrying out atheistic education among the followers of this religious movement."

The author, V. V. Konik, pointed out among other things that Jehovah's Witnesses hold public talks most frequently at their funerals and weddings. "For instance," he wrote, "in August 1973, in the village of Krasnaya Polyana, Krasnodarskiy region, there was a marriage of two members of the organization, attended by about 500 people. Six preachers gave talks to them, and their speeches were transmitted through two loudspeakers. Then a drama was put on to show how Jehovah's Witnesses carry on conversations with people of other religions and with atheists."

Yes, despite the ban on their work, Jehovah's Witnesses throughout Eastern Europe continued zealously preaching the good news of God's Kingdom in obedience to Christ's prophetic command. (Matthew 24:14) Finally, in May and June 1989, Jehovah's Witnesses were legalized in Poland and Hungary, in April 1990 in Romania, in March 1991 in the Soviet Union, and in Bulgaria in July 1991. And their work is also carried on unhindered in Czechoslovakia.

Happy Conventioners

Against this background, you can perhaps better understand why the tens of thousands of delegates to Eastern European conven-

tions rejoiced—crying, hugging, clapping, and waving back and forth across the stadiums to one another.

Budapest, Prague, and Zagreb were designated as "international conventions," and special arrangements were made to accommodate tens of thousands of delegates from other countries. In the Soviet Union, conventions were held in seven cities with 74,252 in attendance; Poland had 131,554 at their 12 conventions; and 34,808 attended the 8 conventions in Romania. Although the Witnesses

were not able to hold a convention in Bulgaria, about three hundred from there crossed the border to Thessalonica, Greece, where they enjoyed the program in their own language.

For Eastern European Witnesses to prepare for and host many thousands of delegates was no easy matter. Think about it: In the Soviet Union, never before had such conventions been held! And entertaining tens of thousands of guests, as did the Witnesses in Budapest and Prague, was an unbelievably massive project. Further, imagine holding a convention in Zagreb when the threat of civil war loomed and explosions were heard in the distance!

Surely, you will thrill to read the following report about these conventions.

THE THREE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION SITES AND THE SEVEN CONVENTION LOCATIONS IN THE SOVIET UNION



AMAZED AT WHAT THEY SAW

LAST summer in many parts of Eastern Europe as well as in distant Kazakhstan and Siberia, Jehovah's Witnesses were observed in ways they had never before been seen. Local inhabitants and visitors to the conventions in those places were impressed by, yes, even amazed at, what they saw.

Delegates to Zagreb were told time and time again: "We didn't think you would come!" Most other tourists had canceled their travel plans—but not Jehovah's Witnesses. *The Times* of London reported regarding the convention: "It is, in fact, the first to be organised by Jehovah's Witnesses in a state at war with itself."

Policemen were especially astonished. One in Zagreb said: "It would be good to show the mass media what is happening in this stadi-

um, right here, where we see Serbians, Croats, Slovenians, Montenegrins, and others sitting next to one another in peace."

In Budapest a policeman was asked to compare the Witnesses assembled in the huge stadium with the usual soccer crowds. He smiled, looked up, and said: "The difference is like that between heaven and earth."

"What do you mean?"

"Well," he replied, "just look. Nobody is smoking, there is no litter anywhere, and the people are courteous. They do what you ask them to do."

In Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine, 14,654 met at Dynamo Stadium, a few of whom can be seen on the cover of this magazine. A Witness there asked one of the police captains whether his men had had to work hard during the convention. "No, the next time we will



Right: Translating for different language groups in Prague

Below: Strahov Stadium in Prague filled with over 74,000 delegates

send you only two policemen."

"Why two?" he was asked.

"When one falls asleep," he jokingly responded, "the other one can look after him."

The Public Marvelled

Pesti Hírlap, a Budapest newspaper, reported: "More than 40,000 spent this weekend at Népstadion. No piece of paper, no bread-crumb, nor cigarette butt was left." *Fehérvár Hírlap*, another city paper, said: "Those who strayed into Népstadion by chance between July 26 and 28 were surely pleasantly surprised. . . . They could see the rarely experienced example of Christian conduct and way of life."

Over the weekend torrents of rain inundated Budapest; more than two inches fell. But



it did not stop the Witnesses. "It is fantastic! It is mindboggling!" a policeman was overheard to say. "They keep coming and coming . . . Nothing can hold them back." On Monday one newspaper headlined its article "Prayer in the Rain" and quoted delegates: "We are only washed by the rain, not washed away!"

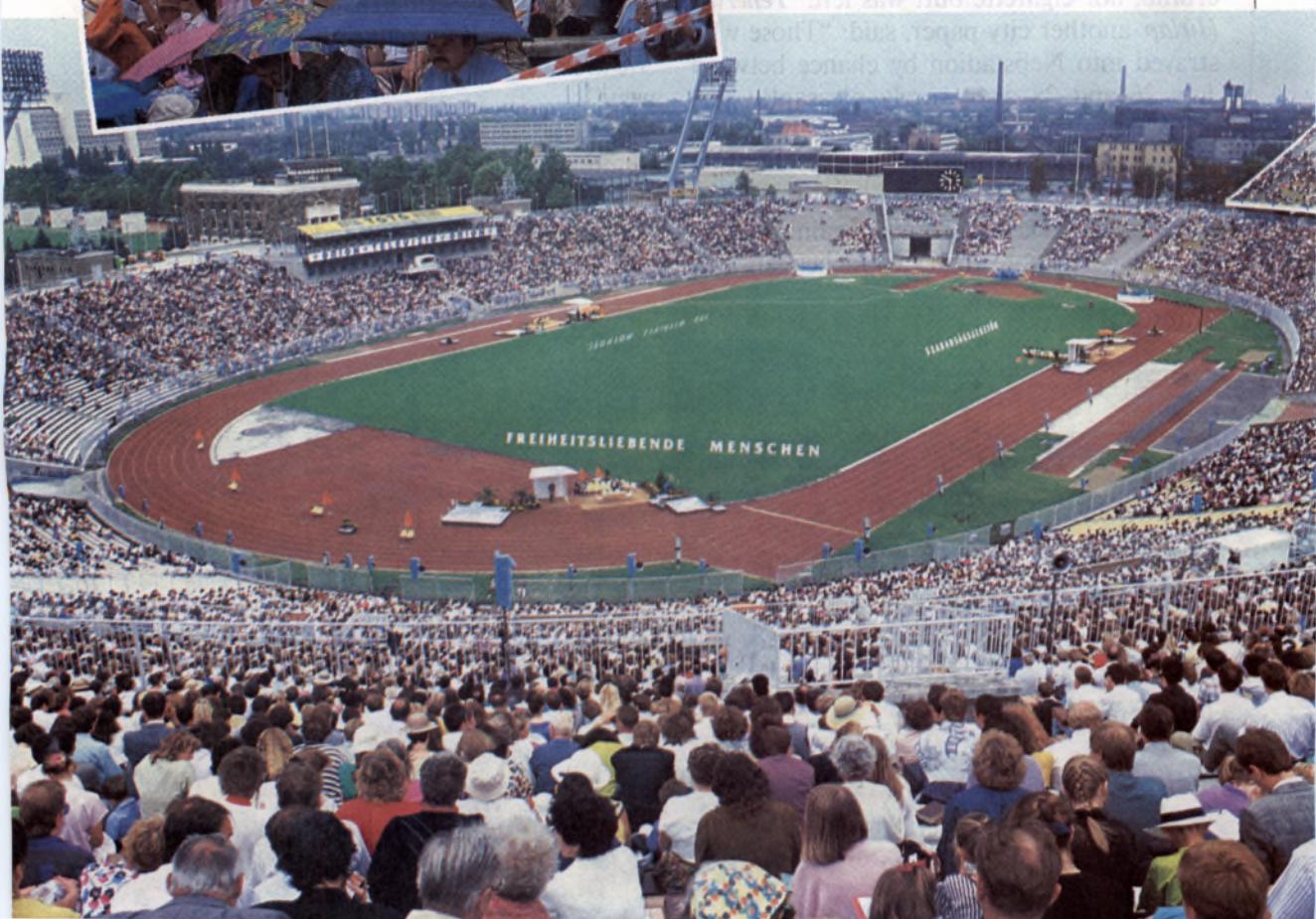
In Lvov, where 17,531 met at the Central Ukraine Stadium, a police official told one of the Witnesses: "For any other public event with so many people in attendance, we would need hundreds of policemen. For your





**Above: Convention
in Tallinn, Estonia**

**Budapest convention, where,
rain or shine, the 40,000
delegates enjoyed the program**



convention we had ten, and they were not really needed."

Then, revealing how much he was impressed by the convention, the official noted: "You excel in teaching others what is good, you talk about God, and you do not engage in violence. We were discussing why we used to persecute you, and we concluded that we had not listened to you and had not known anything about you."

After her visit to the convention in Usolye-Sibirskoye, Siberia, a reporter for the Soviet newspaper *Leninskiy Put'* wrote: "It was amazing to see the courtesy, as well as the ability to discern and react to the needs of others, that the servants of Jehovah showed toward one another. I will never forget the words uttered at the convention: 'You must not steal! You must not lie! You must not drink [excessively]! Be industrious! Help your neighbor!' After all, these are principles toward which people in general should strive. But we often forget them.

"Impressive, too, was the brotherly attitude shown toward others, the willingness to help. One woman offered us a newspaper so that we would not have to sit down on a dusty bench. When it started to rain, the young woman sitting next to me handed me her umbrella with a smile, and nearby a man literally pulled a soaked young boy under his umbrella. . . .

"The very atmosphere at the convention somehow made a person a little better, a bit more cultured, more noble. It was impossible not to respond with a smile to the kindness displayed by strangers. . . . We left the stadium feeling cleansed, feeling that we had come in touch with something beautiful."

For the convention in Kiev, over 2,000 came from Moscow and some 4,500 from the Caucasus. An information desk was set up at the airport, and Bible literature was dis-

played. Many asked questions that were graciously answered. One evening a man approached and said: "I have been observing you for a long time. I am amazed at the kindness with which you talk to people about the Kingdom. Please permit me to give you these flowers as a gift for your excellent work."

During the baptism at the convention in Usolye-Sibirskoye, a newsman was impressed when he saw a number of Russians hugging and congratulating a newly baptized person who was from the Buryat people. Although Siberia is generally free of national prejudices, real friendships between Russians and such peoples are rare. "How were you able to overcome these national barriers?" the newsman asked.

"By applying the Bible principle 'you must love your neighbor as yourself,'" he was told.

An International Brotherhood

What was so heartwarming especially at the three international conventions was the loving interchange between delegates from around the world. Budapest had visitors from 35 countries, most of them from Poland and Germany, but sizable representations also came from many other places, including about 500 from the Soviet Union. Prague had delegates from 39 countries, including more than 26,000 from Germany, nearly 13,000 from Poland, over 900 from Italy, 570 from the Netherlands, 746 from Sweden, and 743 from Japan. Zagreb had visitors from 15 countries, despite the threat of civil war.

At each international convention, three platforms were set up on the field facing different parts of the stadium. From these platforms the entire program was presented simultaneously in three languages. In Budapest the languages were Hungarian, Polish, and German; in Prague they were Czech/Slovak, Polish, and German; and in Zagreb they were Croatian/Serbian, Slovenian, and

Italian. During the instructive Bible drama, which drew from the experiences of ancient Ezra and his associates, delegates speaking different languages could watch the presentation from any of the three language-sections in which they chose to sit.

Most of the principal talks of the conventions were delivered in English simultaneously by different members of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses. Each of these spoke from one of the three platforms. These talks, of course, were translated for the benefit of the three major language groups, and in Budapest and Prague, they were translated into many other languages as well.

The various translators for these language sections stood on the field directly in front of their language group. Loudspeakers focused at that particular language sector made it possible to hear one's own language without being unduly disturbed by the translations being presented in other languages in other sections. In Budapest, for example, talks by Governing Body members were translated into Dutch, Finnish, French, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Norwegian, Spanish, and Swedish, in addition to the principal languages of Hungarian, Polish, and German.

At each of the international conventions, the motivating final talk was given by three members of the Governing Body. Their challenge was to finish as closely as possible at the same time. Afterward, voices of many nationalities joined in song, and finally hearts were united in fervent prayer of thanks to Jehovah God for blessing these marvelous gatherings with success.

When the concluding "Amen!" was said, no one wanted to leave. Tears streamed down thousands of faces. From across the large stadiums, handkerchiefs, scarves, and umbrellas were waved back and forth in a parting salute to beloved friends who had maintained integ-

rity to God in the face of long years of bans and imprisonment. In Prague many friends remained for more than an hour, singing and enjoying fellowship.

The marvelous success of these conventions did not come without effort. Literally hundreds of thousands of hours were spent by Jehovah's Witnesses not only in making preparations to attend but also in caring for the hundreds of details necessary to make these conventions a success.

Preparing the Facilities

The mammoth Strahov Stadium in Prague, which had not been used for a large gathering in years, was in desperate need of repair. There were only about 55,000 usable seats, not nearly enough to handle the number expected for the summer's largest convention in Eastern Europe. So a broken planing machine was located, repaired, and used to build over 12 miles of benches for seating an additional 30,000 or so people.

Making and installing benches, of course, was only part of the work. Painting, cleaning, removing weeds, and general repairs were also needed. Finally, the stadium was decorated with 8,300 pots holding 33,200 flowers and 1,357 coniferous trees. At times a thousand workers were on hand. Altogether over 66,000 hours were spent by volunteers from 260 congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Similar work was done to get the stadiums ready in Budapest, Zagreb, and other cities. About 4,000 volunteers spent over 40,000 hours working at the convention grounds in Lvov. Their work was taken as payment for the rental of the facilities. All the benches in the stadium were repaired and painted, and all the toilets were cleaned and fixed. Also, a one-hundred-foot-long brick building was constructed that contained additional restroom facilities. Similarly, at Khimik Stadium in Usolye-Sibirskoye, 52 extra toilets were

constructed for use during the convention.

The chief engineer at the stadium in Lvov said: "In all my life, I have never seen such strange people. You are working as one big family. I cannot understand it, but working with you is very pleasant." The administration of the stadium prepared a statement in which they thanked the Witnesses "for their commitment to the work they did and for their fine qualities and sense of responsibility." The statement concluded: "We wish you a successful convention in Lvov."

In Kiev the floor of the room where the cafeteria was to be set up needed repair. In two days the work was finished. Two stadium workers came to see the "miracle," one saying to the other: "In two days they accomplished a task that it takes our people half a year to finish." The president of the club for aquatic sports told the convention overseer: "You transformed the stadium so much that we can no longer recognize it."

The staff of the stadium in Kiev wrote in appreciation: "We are thrilled from the heart by the organization of the convention of Jehovah's Witnesses. . . . As spring creeks join to form an overflowing stream, so the stream of Jehovah's Witnesses from small to great is flowing together to their feast. This deserves admiration. We are seeing it for the first time. We thank you that you have taught us something by your example."

Caring for Delegates

One of the largest tasks was the arranging of accommodations for thousands of visitors. Local Witnesses opened their homes to delegates. For the Prague convention, the Czech

CONVENTIONS IN EASTERN EUROPE AND THE SOVIET UNION

| Country | Peak Attendance | Baptized |
|-------------------------|-----------------|----------|
| Czechoslovakia (Prague) | 74,587 | 2,337 |
| Hungary (Budapest) | 40,601 | 1,134 |
| Poland (12 cities) | 131,554 | 4,250 |
| Romania (8 cities) | 34,808 | 2,260 |
| Soviet Union (7 cities) | 74,252 | 7,820 |
| Yugoslavia (Zagreb) | 14,684 | 492 |
| Total 30 conventions: | 370,486 | 18,293 |

Witnesses accommodated 6,280 from Poland in their own homes. In Budapest, 2,203 delegates stayed in private homes. And the 278 Witnesses in Kiev accommodated some 750 to 800 visitors.

In addition, many schools and gymnasiums in Budapest and Prague served as living quarters. Over 40 schools were used in Budapest to accommodate 7,930 persons. In Prague, 12,530 slept in schools and gymnasiums. Thousands of air mattresses were obtained for use in these facilities. Over 29,000 who attended the Prague convention stayed in student dormitories and youth hostels, and thousands more were accommodated in regular hotels.

At some conventions, arrangements were made for delegates to sleep on the trains that brought them. About two thousand Witnesses from Zakarpatskaya Oblast used the train coaches as their sleeping quarters in Kiev. Others coming from the Caucasus to Kiev did the same. Likewise, Lithuanian Witnesses traveling to the Tallinn, Estonia, convention slept on the trains that brought them.

Even after they arrived, delegates were cared for in many ways by their thoughtful hosts. For example, arrangements were made in Prague to operate 40 buses to strengthen a

line normally covered by one bus only. In addition, because of an advance payment, delegates were able to travel free on public transportation to the convention in the morning and home in the evening simply by showing their convention badges. In the Soviet Union, 11 buses on their way to the convention in Usolye-Sibirskoye from nearby Angarsk were kindly escorted by two cars of the traffic police, one in front and one behind!

Efforts to Attend

Particularly did delegates to certain Soviet conventions travel long distances at great personal expense. Some saved an entire year to pay for their trip. A delegation came all the way from the Pacific Ocean port of Vladivostok, traveling over 2,000 miles to Usolye-Sibirskoye. Twelve other delegates were from the island of Sakhalin in the Pacific Ocean north of Japan. One was a 20-year-old youth who was accompanied by three other youths with whom he conducts Bible studies.

A bus driver from Sayanogorsk, who intended to be baptized at Usolye, persistently asked his employer for a few days off to attend the convention, but his boss was unwilling to let him go. So the man drove to the city of Abakan and obtained a copy of the Soviet document of this past March 27 that officially recognizes Jehovah's Witnesses as a religious organization. Despite seeing the document, his boss still would not grant him permission to leave. Early on the day of his departure, after fervent prayer, the man appealed again and finally received permission to go.

Baptism and New Publications

The baptism was a thrilling feature of all these Eastern European conventions. By the symbolic act of water immersion, 18,293 persons attending these conventions went on record before witnesses that they had unreservedly dedicated their lives to serve Jehovah God. One young baptismal candidate in Prague, who

had recently received an attractive job offer, noted: "I felt that I had a choice between a trinitarian deity consisting of the U.S. dollar, the German mark, and the Austrian shilling on the one hand and Jehovah on the other. I decided for Jehovah and rejected the offer."

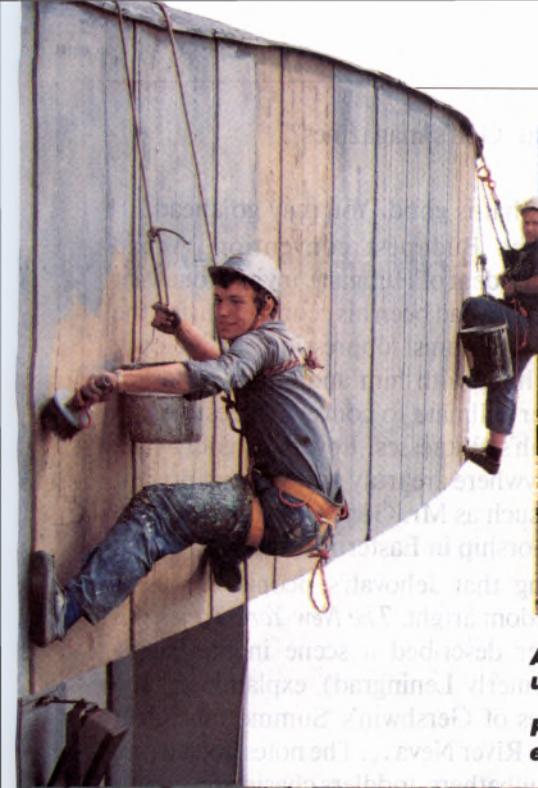
The baptism in Tallinn was held in an outside pool near the Baltic Sea where an old fortification once used as a prison could be seen in the background. Here many Estonian Witnesses were kept before being sent to labor camps in Russia in the early 1950's. What a thrill, especially for such older ones, to see 447 new believers symbolize their dedication to Jehovah in a public ceremony!

Another exciting feature of the conventions was the release of new publications. The Lithuanian friends in Tallinn literally leaped from their seats and cried when they were told that the brochure "*Look! I Am Making All Things New*" was now available in their language. Similarly, a highlight of the conventions in Romania was the release in Romanian of the book *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!*, and for the Czechs and Slovaks in Prague, it was the receiving of the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* in their languages.

Yet, at most of the conventions, the release that brought overwhelming delight was the new book *The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived*. Already ten million copies have been printed in 59 languages.

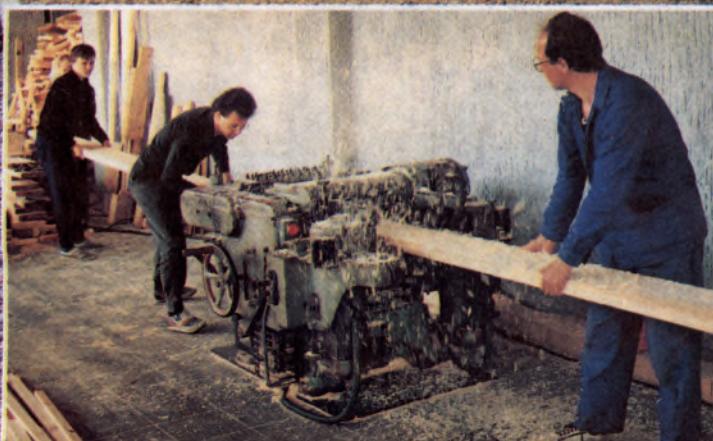
Using Freedom Aright

Today, Bible literature is welcomed into Eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union. Trucks loaded with *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* leave the huge printery of Jehovah's Witnesses in Selters/Taunus, Germany, and stream across the borders into Eastern European countries. How different from the times when, at the risk of imprisonment, the Witnesses had to smuggle literature into these countries!



Above: Some of the toilets built for use at Usolye-Sibirskoye, Siberia, convention

Painting stadium and making benches for extra seating in Prague



Illustrating the wonderful change, the following conversation took place between a customs official and one of Jehovah's Witnesses about the time of the convention in Tallinn:

"What do you have in that small carton?"

"Magazines."

"What magazines? Are they God's magazines?"

"Oh, yes, they are."

"Jehovah God's magazines?"

"Yes!"

"Jaa'a, that is good. You may go ahead."

After the Budapest convention, Arpad Goncz, president of Hungary, invited for a visit a Witness who had been his cellmate during the time of Communist oppression. Mr. Goncz spent an hour with him and afterward asked his former cellmate to convey his best wishes to Jehovah's Witnesses. Lovers of godly freedom everywhere are truly grateful that present officials, such as Mr. Goncz, now permit freedom of worship in Eastern Europe.

Showing that Jehovah's people are using their freedom aright, *The New York Times* this September described a scene in St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad), explaining: "The slow notes of Gershwin's 'Summertime' drift across the River Neva ... The notes floated past rotund sunbathers, toddlers chasing dogs, vendors selling maps of old St. Petersburg and

The Bible drama and baptism in Zagreb



Jehovah's Witnesses looking for converts."

Yes, the Witnesses are zealously using their freedom to preach the good news! Would you like to know more about their message? The Soviet newspaper *Vostochno-Sibirskaya Pravda* explained: "Detailed information about their activities can be obtained at the places of Bible education of Jehovah's Witnesses in any city." Wherever you may live in the world, do not hesitate to inquire.



Upper: Dedication in June 1991 of first Kingdom Hall built by Witnesses in Hungary

Middle: Over 20,000 slept in schools and gymnasiums in Budapest and Prague

Below: Distribution of the book "The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived" in Usolye-Sibirskoye, Siberia



ЛЮБИТЕЛИ БОЖЬЮ СВОЕБУДОВЛЕНІЯ





Christmas Truths or Myths?

FYOU ask faithful Catholics why Christmas is celebrated on December 25th, at least nine out of ten, some surprised and some amused, will answer: 'Why, that is the day Jesus was born!' If, however, you ask one of Jehovah's Witnesses the reason why he doesn't observe this celebration, he will invariably answer: 'Because it is not mentioned in the Gospels.'"

This is how an article about Christmas was introduced in *Il Mattino*, a Naples, Italy, daily newspaper. But which view is correct? "All you need to do," the paper added, "is thumb through Matthew and Luke (the only two evangelists who narrate the Nativity) to discover that the second answer is correct."

Such articles are no longer unusual. News channels frequently expose as myths the commonly held beliefs about Christmas. For ex-

ample, in December 1990, *The Press*, of Christchurch, New Zealand, featured the article "**The Six Myths of Christmas.**" It noted:

"MYTH 1. Santa Claus, who lives at the North Pole, skims his way around the earth on Christmas Eve to deliver presents to good little girls and boys. Well, no one likes to spoil the fun, but it's just not right, is it? So many homes in just one night, so much fruit cake and port? And what happens when there's no chimney? No, this yarn just doesn't hold water. . . .

"MYTH 2. December 25 is Christ's birthday. Hardly. Luke's gospel says that when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, shepherds were living outdoors and keeping watch over their flocks at night. In that region of Palestine the temperature in December averages 7° C [45° F.] by day and a lot cooler at night. There are fre-

quent cold rains, sometimes snow in the highlands. The shepherds would be where their sheep have always been at that time of year—in an enclosed shelter. . . .

"MYTH 3. The first Christmas was in Bethlehem, when Christ was born. In fact its origin seems to have been in Rome, with the earliest record of its observance being in 336. It spread through East and West until being adopted by the Church of Jerusalem in the mid-5th century.

"In a sense, the beginning of Christmas really came in degrees and was merely a matter of the name of the celebration changing: identical pagan revelries and feastings had been going on in late December for centuries before Christ as part of the northern hemisphere winter solstice celebrations . . .

"The embracing of Christ's birth in these pagan-based carousings evidently met no opposition from the church leaders, who seemed less interested in truth or theological purity than the chance to increase their flock and consequently their own power. . . .

"Small wonder the Puritans in Scotland, England and New England endeavoured to abolish Christmas during the 17th century, condemning it as a continuation of 'the vanities and excesses the heathen indulge in.'

"So those annual cries to 'put Christ back into Christmas' ring very hollow indeed: the truth is, he was never willingly part of it.

"MYTH 4. The tradition of giving presents at Christmas follows the practice made by the gifts to Jesus of gold, frankincense and myrrh. In fact people had been exchanging gifts on December 25 and 26 for centuries before Christ as part of those solstice celebrations. The ancient Romans exchanged gifts as part of their sun worship festival, Saturnalia.

"In any case the Magi gave gifts to Jesus, not to one another, in accord with what was then customary, when visiting notable people.

After all, Matthew's gospel shows their interest in Jesus was as the future king of the Jews.

"MYTH 5. The 'three wise men' and the shepherds all did obeisance to Jesus as he lay in his manger. Whoever draws those cute nativity scenes showing the shepherds and the wise men together in the stable doesn't read their Bible too well.

"Matthew's gospel clearly states that when the 'wise men' did find Jesus, he was by this time in a house—and just as well, as it was probably a good two years after he was born.

"Additionally, when Matthew describes the visit of the Magi, he refers to Jesus as an infant, not as a baby. He was well out of swaddling clothes at this stage and the shepherds had long since returned to their flocks.

"Consider, too, that when Herod sought to assassinate the Messiah, he used the date supplied by the Magi and ordered that all male children up to the age of two be killed.

"Would he have made such [a] horrific—not to say extremely unpopular—order if he knew his quarry was just a few weeks old? . . .

"The Bible in fact nowhere suggests how many Magi there were. The Greek word in the gospel is magoi, from which the word 'magic' is derived. . . .

"MYTH 6. Christmas is a time for peace on earth and goodwill to all men. A noble thought indeed, but that's not what the Bible says. . . .

"Interlinear translations of Luke's gospel in the original Greek show that what multitudes of angels who appeared to the shepherds actually said was: 'and upon earth peace among men of goodwill'.

"And that's the difference. One boozy, bloated, over-commercialised day a year does not a Christian make; peace, the Bible says, does not come to those who celebrate a false birthday of Jesus, it comes to those who follow his teachings—all year."

The Dream of European Unity

"ON THE Threshold of a Dream." That is how the newspaper *The European* headlined an article dealing with the "dizzy pace of European integration." How did the dream come about? Are the lofty expectations it arouses justified?

Shortly after the end of World War II, Winston Churchill suggested the formation of a "United States of Europe." Since then things have seemingly been heading in that direction. Now, the year 1992 is being acclaimed as a milestone in realizing this dream. But why 1992?

Simply put, by the end of next year, the 12 members of the EC (European Community) plan on reaching complete economic unification. This will mean an end to all tariff barriers. It will allow citizens within the Community to move without restrictions from one country to another, having the same employment possibilities and rights as local citizens. Eventually, a common currency will be adopted, citizens will be provided with European passports and driver's licenses, and a European central bank will be established. Common policies as to environmental problems and the use of nuclear energy are to be pursued. Traffic laws and other laws will be coordinated.

The EC will thus become the third largest domestic market in the world. Fully one fifth of all world trade—both imports and exports—will involve an EC member state. So its economic policies will logically influence the entire world economy, including the economies of the developing nations.

A recent poll shows that almost 70 percent of all Europeans are in favor of the planned changes. Many EC citizens, in fact, want to go still further. About three fourths of them support pooling scientific research and adopting equal social-security benefits. Well over half even favor sharing a common foreign policy.

Thus, the trend has been shifting away from merely economic unification toward the possibility of political unity. Now, with unexpected suddenness, unforeseen events have given fresh impetus to this goal.

We Are Being Driven

On November 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall fell. The idea of German reunification, often discussed but considered unrealistic, once again became a subject of heated debate. Reunification now appeared inevitable, but scarcely anyone ventured to prophesy how soon it would come. When German chancellor Helmut Kohl was accused of pushing unification plans too fast, he remarked: "I am not the one trying to speed things up. We are being driven." On October 3, 1990,—less than 11 months after the Wall fell—Germans were celebrating. Germany was once again united.

The world rejoiced that the Cold War was over, as evidenced by a unified Germany. Meanwhile, another unexpected event was already grabbing the headlines. How would Iraq's invasion of Kuwait affect plans for 1992? Journalist John Palmer noted: "The Gulf crisis is accelerating rather than slowing European Community economic and political integration—and may be hastening the

day when the EC operates a common foreign and defence policy."

During this crisis and the terrifying days of the war that followed, the European Community was, however, unable to arrive at a common policy. This led *The European* to editorialize: "The Community's feebleness at a moment of great international crisis has demonstrated how vital it is for Europe to establish a common defence and foreign policy which enables it to act with cohesion and self-reliance." Ending on a positive note, it said: "The Gulf crisis could give Europe a chance to make amends for its sorry performance and take a significant step towards showing that political union can be a reality."

Expectations Soar Ever Higher

More and more nations now want to join the EC. Austria, Cyprus, Malta, and Turkey have applied for membership. Other likely candidates are Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland. Even former Eastern bloc countries have indicated interest, including Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland. However, the applications of such nations will not be considered until after 1992, when complete economic unification of the 12 members of the EC is to become reality.

Admittedly, much progress has been made toward European unity—and this at a speed once thought unlikely and on a scale broader than people originally dared dream. "We foresee a new European order in which borders will no longer be divisive barriers, in which nations can live without fear of one another, and where people are free to choose their own political and social systems." So wrote Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Germany's minister of foreign affairs, on the threshold of the 1990's. He added: "This vision is no longer a dream. It is within reach."

But can such unity realistically be expected? If so, would this offer hope that European

On the Road to European Unity

1948: Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg (Benelux) create customs union, forming the basis for economic union in 1960 and abolition of border controls in 1970

1951: European Coal and Steel Community treaty signed in Paris

1957: Treaty of Rome sets up the European Economic Community with BELGIUM, the FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY, FRANCE, ITALY, LUXEMBOURG, and the NETHERLANDS as charter members

1959: Austria, Britain, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, and Switzerland form European Free Trade Association

1973: BRITAIN, DENMARK, and IRELAND join the EC

1979: European Monetary System established; first direct elections to the European Parliament held

1981: GREECE accepted for EC membership

1986: PORTUGAL and SPAIN join the EC

Note: The 12 EC member states are shown in capital letters.

unity is but a preliminary step to something greater—to world unity?

No one will deny that the world needs unity, for unity would go a long way in solving some of mankind's most serious problems. Imagine what could be achieved if time and energy wasted on disagreeing could be channeled into united efforts to solve common problems for the common good!

By integrating their economic and monetary systems, an increasing number of nations now seem intent on testing one another's willingness to collaborate. For example, in pursuit of a common economic Asian

market, the countries of Australia, Brunei, Canada, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Republic of Korea, Thailand, and the United States formed the economic arrangement called Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation in 1989.

So the scenario is: a newly united Germany, embedded in a soon-to-be united Europe, leading to a not-too-distant united world. The idea sounds good, but is it realistic to believe that it can be implemented?

Reuniting Germany—Difficult!

Although Germany has been united politically and economically for over a year, the country is struggling. Outstanding differences still exist between the five new states (formerly East Germany) and the rest of the country. The euphoria of reunification has given way to the realization that unity is not coming cheap. In one way or another, everyone, politician and citizen alike, is being forced to pay the price.

Earlier this year, *The European* spoke of "the emotional crisis" existing in what was once East Germany. Because of the stark economic realities of reunification and the collapse of Communist social structures, doctors there are reporting a marked increase in mental illness and stress-related disorders.

Dr. Gisela Ehle, a psychiatrist, says that "the feeling of helplessness is like an epidemic

ic" and that "everyone you talk to is depressed." In fact, every major change known to cause depression is being experienced by the people: "unemployment, marital problems, uncertainty about the future, financial difficulties, identity crisis, often acute loss of status in society and a general lack of purpose in life."—*The European*.

Uniting Europe—Easier?

If reuniting the Germans, people with a common historical background who speak the same language, is proving difficult, what about creating the "Europe without borders" that the pope of Rome has called for? Achieving in 1992 the unity striven for by the EC—the uniting of 12 economies at different stages of development and strength, 12 countries with differing rates of unemployment and inflation—will be hard enough.

Obviously, 1992 will produce losers as well as winners. In the expanded EC market of some 320 million prospective consumers, some businesses will be better able to compete than others. However, some businessmen say that two out of every three EC companies will be negatively affected. Furthermore, while travelers may welcome the elimination of customs controls, an estimated 80,000 customs officials throughout Europe will need new jobs.

Paul Wilkinson, a professor of international studies, reminds us that even though we are entering 1992, "it's still a Europe of separate sovereign entities," each of which has "its own traditions of law enforcement" and "its own legal system." He warns: "Cooperation will develop slowly and painfully."

Besides the problems of language, differing social backgrounds, and conflicting business methods, probably the biggest problem of all that must be met is the overcoming of slow-dying national prejudices. As former German chancellor Willy Brandt once observed:

In Our Next Issue

Money Worries—Will They Ever End?

We Survived a Murderer's Bomb

A Chilean Drama Prompts Christian Love

When customs controls end, 80,000 people will need new jobs

"Walls in the mind often stand longer than those built of concrete."

Still, the mood is upbeat, the expectations high. "Nobody thinks that 1992 will be easy," writes one business journalist, "but the outlook appears bright."

How Realistic?

Even if both economic and political unity were achieved, would this form the basis for realizing true peace and lasting security? Well, consider: Although the United States of America is made up of 50 states with individual laws and governments that are united economically under a national government, the country still has millions of unemployed; its economic stability is still threatened by periodic recessions and depressions, as well as by recurring bouts of inflation. And the measure of political unity has not prevented the country from suffering from terrible pollution, crime, drug abuse, poverty, and racial discrimination.

Of unrest in his country, Soviet historian Yuri Afanasyev said: "The biggest trouble in our house has come from the least expected place: our rich family of nationalities. . . . We believed our empire was protected from such troubles; after all, didn't we enjoy an immunity of sorts in our 'eternal brotherhood of peoples'?"

Economic and political unity is obviously not enough to create genuine unity. To create an "eternal brotherhood of peoples," something more is needed. What?



Well-Grounded Expectations

Where true unity exists, war is unknown. But an indisputable proof that humans are hopelessly disunited is the fact that for millennia they have been killing one another in wars. Will this senseless waste of human life ever end?

Yes, it will. God's declared purpose is to bring about a peaceful world. How? Through total disarmament. Under inspiration the Bible psalmist wrote: "Come, you people, behold the activities of Jehovah, how he has set astonishing events on the earth. He is making wars to cease to the extremity of the earth." —Psalm 46:8, 9.

The Devil angrily opposes this divine policy for achieving world unity. Since World War I, the words from the Bible apply: "Woe for the earth and for the sea, because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time." —Revelation 12:12.

World unity, and with it true peace and security, is based on the united worship of the

God who "is making wars to cease"; it is not based on the divisive worship of his rival, who is described as "having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time." If our expectations for world unity are to be realized, they must be based on an acceptance of the fact that God's Kingdom is a reality, that it is a literal government ruling in the heavens. This world government authorized by Jehovah God himself is the only means by which world unity will be achieved.

God's Kingdom is already forming the nucleus of a united earthly society to replace the disunited, warring world we now know. Bible prophecy says: "In the final part of the days . . . many peoples [from all nations] will certainly go and say: 'Come, you people, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will instruct us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths.' . . . And they will have to beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning shears. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war anymore."—Isaiah 2:2-4.

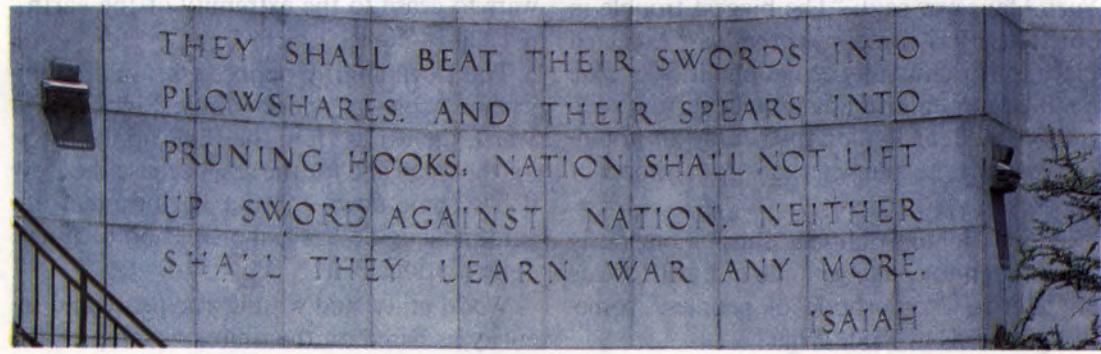
This Bible prophecy is not describing a new world order of human design, even though these beautiful words have been inscribed on a wall of the United Nations plaza in New York City. Rather, this prophecy regarding peace and unity among many peoples is today being fulfilled among Jehovah's Witness-

es, who come from over 200 nations of the world. Among them can be seen unmistakable evidence that a new world society is actually being formed.

Jehovah's Witnesses are willing to be instructed by God's Word. They are applying the things they learn, including the admonition to live at peace by forsaking weapons of warfare. They are thereby enjoying an international unity not experienced by any other organization on earth, be it religious, economic, or political. This surely was demonstrated by the conventions of Jehovah's Witnesses this past summer, when in Eastern Europe alone, over 370,000 met together in peace and unity!

True, none of us can be sure to what extent economic or political expectations for 1992 will be realized. But we can be sure of certain other expectations. For example, 1992 will see a continuation, right on schedule, of the divine countdown leading up to the execution of God's judgment on Satan's world. (Isaiah 55:11; Habakkuk 2:3) Thus, 1992 will move faithful Christians a year closer to life in God's promised new world, in which righteousness is to dwell.

Jehovah's Witnesses invite lovers of world unity to investigate more closely these Bible-based expectations for the future. They are lofty expectations that will not go unfulfilled!



**Young
People
Ask...**



How Can I Prepare for the Working World?

"I FEEL scared and excited at the same time!" So exclaimed 16-year-old Maureen when asked how she felt about some day entering the working world. It is only natural to feel at least a twinge of nervousness when you think about having to enter the job market—even if you are looking forward to the challenge of it. Just before young René left school, he said: "After 12 years of being burdened with school, work will be a pleasure."

Whatever your feelings are, you will probably hold a job in the work force some day.

How can you prepare for that day? Attending school gives you the opportunity to develop good habits, such as punctuality. Furthermore, youths who are still in school might gain experience by working at part-time jobs. However, to prepare well for the working world, it is particularly important that you give serious thought to the courses you choose in school.

A Balanced View of Work

First, you have to determine what you want out of a job. Some youths do not look beyond the size of the paycheck. Granted, "money is for a protection" and is important in life. (Ecclesiastes 7:12) But the Bible is true when it says that "even when a person has an abundance his life does not result from the things he possesses." (Luke 12:15) In the book *Yes—I Can!*, by Barkai, Barkai, and Yeo, the authors offer this advice: 'Don't fall into the trap of looking only for high monetary returns.' They add: "Job satisfaction is just as important for your future happiness." Seventeen-year-old Paulo thus showed balance when he said: "I would just like to earn a decent living while enjoying what I'm doing."

If you are a Christian, however, there are yet other considerations. Even the most enjoyable, challenging line of work will not satisfy your spiritual need. After all, "the whole obligation of man" is to "fear the true God and keep his commandments." (Ecclesiastes 12:13) Since God's command for Christians is to "make disciples," many young Witnesses of Jehovah plan for careers as pioneers, or full-time evangelizers. (Matthew 28:19, 20) A South African girl named Shulamite did just that. And she says that it brings her a "lot of satisfaction to assist in filling people's spiritual need."

Perhaps you too desire to share in the full-time ministry. Still, you will likely have to work to support yourself. Some day you may even have to support a family. On the other hand, circumstances may not permit you to be a



Many support themselves with the skills learned in school

tions realistically.—Compare Proverbs 15:22.

For example, are you a sociable person? Then you would perhaps want to consider subjects that could get you employment in sales or other fields that require close contact with people. On the other hand, if you have a talent for working with your hands, you might want to consider taking a vocational course. At any rate, many full-time evangelizers sup-

port themselves with the skills they began to learn in high (secondary) school. Some have found part-time work in construction, appliance repair, carpentry, home crafts, word processing, or secretarial work.

For Damaris, a young woman from Colombia, South America, taking up typing and bookkeeping paid off. She obtained a half-day secretarial job that supported her evangelizing career. Some Christians have met their needs by janitorial work, landscaping, and so forth.

When Options Are Few

Not all schools, however, offer adequate job training; some even fail to teach their students basic reading and writing skills. In certain areas additional education may be necessary to obtain almost any form of employment. Under such circumstances, you might find out if there are any on-the-job-training or apprenticeship programs available locally. A short-term school course that teaches a marketable job

pioneer, and you may have to seek full-time employment. In either event, would you not want to find employment that allowed you as full a share in God's service as possible? Much will depend on what courses you choose in school.

Choose the Right Subjects

In some lands a youth can choose between academic, business, technical, and vocational education. It is often prudent to consider what types of work are available locally. At the same time, you can evaluate your aptitude and interests. How? By making a list of all the things that you are interested in or that you do well in. Is it mathematics? Computer science? Auto mechanics? Include your hobbies and other casual interests. This would give you at least some idea of what type of work you might be best suited for and what kind of courses might steer you in that direction. Talking with your parents or other mature adults might also help you evaluate your abilities and inclina-

skill is another option. Interestingly, some have undertaken such training in addition to their work as full-time evangelizers.

Youths in developing countries may find that subject choices and school options are extremely limited. Katiti, a young man from a rural town in southern Africa, had no choice but to take Latin, mathematics, and physical science, even though such subjects were of limited value in the local job market. Nevertheless, Katiti succeeded in finding employment. How? By adapting his skills to local needs. When Katiti left school, he supported himself by growing and selling vegetables, knitting and selling woolen scarves and caps, and even distributing patent medicines in the rural areas. Because school had equipped him with the necessary communication skills, he could effectively handle this interesting variety of occupations.

The book *Choosing Your Career and Your Higher Education* says that the ability "to communicate, to understand and to be understood is vastly important" in the work place. Most fields, whether technical, commercial, or academic, require communication skills. So even if your school does not offer specific job training, work hard at becoming skilled in writing, speaking, and listening. The impression you make on a prospective employer will depend to a large extent on your ability to communicate; it may very well be the deciding factor in getting the job you want. Among Jehovah's Witnesses, many youths have sharpened their communication skills by participating in the Theocratic Ministry School in the Christian congregation.

Making Sacrifices

The book *Your Child at School* notes: "We are not all built the same way." Some youths are mechanically inclined, while others are gifted academically. Yet others are endowed with tal-

ents and abilities in the field of music, art, or athletics. Supporting oneself as a commercial artist or a music instructor is one thing, but pursuing wealth or fame in such fields can pose spiritual dangers for a Christian. In addition, since these careers might leave you limited time for Christian activities, such as attending meetings and sharing in the preaching work, would it be wise to spend years gaining the education and perfecting the skills necessary to succeed in them?—1 Corinthians 7:29.

A young Witness named Philip tried to pursue a promising tennis career. "Eventually," confesses Philip, "I had to choose between Christianity and tennis. There was just not enough time to give myself entirely to both pursuits. I decided to give up tennis, and although it was difficult at the time, I have never regretted it."

The apostle Paul made a similar decision. Though schooled in law, he chose to pursue the Christian ministry, supporting himself by the trade of tent making. (Acts 18:3; 22:3) But Paul did not regret his choice. He said: "What things were gains to me, these I have considered loss on account of the Christ. . . . I have taken the loss of all things and I consider them as a lot of refuse, that I may gain Christ."—Philippians 3:7, 8.

Perhaps you will be moved to make similar choices. Rather than developing your academic, musical, or artistic skills, you may decide to cultivate your spiritual abilities. This may mean learning a trade or some line of work viewed as unglamorous by most people. At times a youth may learn a trade by working along with his parents, perhaps learning to do carpentry, plumbing, or some other such trade.

Whatever you decide in this regard, give thought to your future. Choose your subjects wisely, carefully. With God's help, you will be fully prepared for the working world!

Watching the World

How Safe Are Hospitals?

Can hospitals and doctors be hazardous to your health? It virtually goes without saying that they do more good than harm. However, a Harvard University study in the United States found that of over 2,500,000 patients discharged from hospitals in New York State in a single year, nearly 100,000 had suffered "adverse events," or injuries caused by medical management as opposed to disease. In 27,179 of these cases, negligence was involved. The risk of such mishaps doubled for patients 65 years old or older. Similarly, researchers in Germany examined 780 post-mortems carried out there between 1977 and 1990; they found that in 25 percent of the cases, the patients had died of causes that their doctors failed to diagnose. The rate of such errors did not decrease over the 13 years studied, despite scientific progress.

A Greater Role for the UN?

The Paris newspaper *Le Figaro* reports that the world's seven most powerful industrial nations have made an official declaration calling for the United Nations to play a greater peace-keeping role in the international community. The declaration states in part: "We are committing ourselves to making the United Nations more powerful and more effective with a view to protecting human rights, maintaining peace and security, and preventing aggression." The declaration emphasizes the need for a change in the traditional concept of national sovereignty, and it supports UN

intervention in countries where human rights violations threaten world peace.

Africa in Anguish

□ "The World Health Organisation [WHO] estimates that African women constitute 1.2 million of the 1.7 million women infected with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), the virus which causes AIDS," states the Nigerian *Sunday Concord*. Babies born to these women have a 20 to 45 percent chance of being infected with the virus, this indicating that "gains made in child



survival and development in the last two decades could soon be reversed." In one East African nation, 14 percent of all AIDS victims are under four years of age.

□ Cholera is also sweeping through a number of African countries "at a catastrophic pace," according to WHO. Although fewer cases have been reported in Africa than in South America, where the epidemic struck earlier in the year, the number of deaths has been much higher. Through July 18 of this year, there were 3,488 deaths reported. Zambia had over 11,000 cases of cholera, with 981 deaths; Nigeria more than 7,600 cases, with 990 deaths; and

Ghana some 6,500 cases, with 181 deaths.

□ Because of drought and the hundreds of thousands of people fleeing from civil wars in Somalia, Ethiopia, and the Sudan, "millions of people are facing famine conditions" in the Horn of Africa, says James C. Ingram, executive director of the World Food Program. It is feared that the famine will be as severe as the one that struck the region in the mid-1980's, when over a million people died of starvation.

Child Abuse in Japan

"The number of children battered, neglected or sexually harassed by their parents and guardians is soaring in Japan," according to the *Mainichi Daily News*. Cases reported more than tripled in number during a recent five-year period. According to *The Daily Yomiuri*, when a group of college professors surveyed 350 women students enrolled in a course on sexual violence, they found that 68 percent of those who responded had been sexually abused during childhood. However, the *Mainichi Daily News* notes that despite the extent and growth of the problem, "Japanese society barely acknowledges the issue, partly reflecting the fact that killing unwanted babies of both sexes and selling daughters to brothels were common practices until earlier this century." Experts warn, though, that child abuse will get out of control unless appropriate measures are promptly taken. Japan now has several organizations and telephone hotlines set up to help such victims.

AIDS Specter Haunts Hemophiliacs

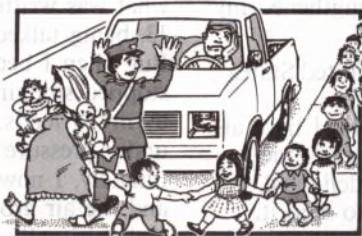
AIDS is decimating Spain's hemophiliacs. According to a report in the Madrid daily *El País*, over 200 have already died of AIDS; 300 more have the dreadful disease. The situation will probably get worse. There are some 2,730 registered hemophiliacs in Spain, and nearly 90 percent of those who have a factor VIII deficiency—the most common form of hemophilia—have tested positive for the AIDS virus. Medical experts have blamed contaminated blood products for this tragedy. On a positive note, at a recent congress of hemophiliacs, it was announced that a synthetic factor VIII blood fraction will soon be available in Spain.

Sunbathers Beware

The ozone layer over Europe is thinning rapidly. According to *New Scientist* magazine, the Stratospheric Ozone Review Group recently published a report showing that the ozone layer above Europe suffered an 8 percent drop between 1979 and 1990. That is twice as fast as the rate of depletion that scientists had predicted. Apparently, Europe has seen more ozone loss than even such countries as New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa, which are close to the ozone "hole" that forms annually over Antarctica. Many people in these countries in the Southern Hemisphere habitually use sun-blocking lotions, since a depleted ozone layer lets in more of the sun's deadly ultraviolet-B rays. According to England's *Guardian Weekly*, some British scientists are recommending that the British take similar precautions when sunbathing.

"Most Prolific Mother"

Leontina Judith Espinoza is listed as "the world's most prolific mother" in the *Guinness Book of World Records*. According to the Brazilian newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo*, she is now expecting her 74th child at 60 years of age. She has been pregnant 35 times and has given birth to 73 children, of whom 39 were triplets and 24 were twins. The



oldest of the 61 children still living is 44. "Born in Argentina and a Chilean citizen since 1963," says the paper, "Leontina lives modestly with her husband and 32 children in a village close to Rancagua, 90 km [56 mi] south of Santiago."

Mail-Order Mayhem

The British magazine *The Economist* recently decried an American catalog that advertises books on how to carry out a horrifying array of criminal acts. The catalog reportedly offers books on such topics as: how to make grenades, bombs, mines, and shotgun mortars; how to fight with knives or brawl in bar-rooms; how to kill people silently; how to con people out of their money; how to pick locks and bug rooms electronically; and how to conceal weapons and smuggle contraband through checkpoints. The catalog even panders to any who might run afoul of the law for putting such

information to use. It has books on how to establish a new identity, how to pass a lie-detector test, and how to use the law to evade the justice system.

Check-Fraud Epidemic

South Africa is facing the worst epidemic of check fraud in its history, according to the newspaper *The Natal Witness*. It seems that the number of summonses against individuals and businesses for passing bad checks has increased by 22 percent, from 4,600 to 5,600 per month in the last year. These figures represent only a fraction of the problem, though, since they do not reflect those who steal checks; besides, financial experts estimate that only 1 retailer in 4 actually turns to the law for redress when given a bad check. The others simply take the loss.

Everlasting Soles

Of all people, who has the greatest need for long-lasting soles on their shoes? That question was prompted by a recent Daedalus column in the British science magazine *Nature*. It speculated on use of certain monomers that could, theoretically, lead to the production of a "self-retreading tire that will never wear out." The magazine noted that such a technology, if developed, could even supply running shoes with self-retreading soles! However, *Nature* observes that "most running shoes are owned by fashion-dazed couch potatoes who seldom even amble." The magazine thus concluded that such "everlasting" soles would be more useful on the "utilitarian shoes of people who really use their feet—housewives, salesmen and Jehovah's witnesses."

From Our Readers

School Harassment I was so happy to receive the article "Young People Ask . . . How Can I Make Him Leave Me Alone?" (May 22, 1991) This is my first year in high school, and there are already lots of guys pressuring me into a relationship. One of them just won't leave me alone. He has asked me to the prom, out to dinner, and even for a weekend in the mountains. "No" doesn't stop him. But the article has strengthened my resolve to resist him.

P. B., United States

Although I am only 17 years old, I have already encountered situations like those described in the article. But being delighted with the attention, I never tried to stop it. Now I understand the need to reject such advances immediately.

L. A. R., Brazil

The article helped me handle the increasing immorality at my place of work. It pointed out the dangers and supported the arguments with Scriptural examples. It is clear that such articles help not only youths but single persons of all ages.

K. H., Germany

The article helped me to reinforce my determination, like the Shulammite girl, to be "a wall."

E. S., Philippines

TMJ Syndrome Thank you for the article, "Out Of The Jaws—The Great Impostor." (June 22, 1991) I have had a loud ringing in my ears for two years because of TMJ syndrome. Your article helped me decide what type of doctor I needed to consult. I feel that Jehovah provided this article for me and countless other TMJ sufferers.

R. B., United States

"Awake!" does not dispense medical advice, but we are pleased to make helpful

information available to our readers. Not surprisingly, the article on TMJ drew an unusually heavy response from readers around the world.—ED.

Smoking Having read the two "Young People Ask . . ." articles on smoking (August 8 and 22, 1991), I can only confirm what was written. I started to smoke at age 13, being talked into it by friends at school. But when I became a Christian at age 15 and stopped smoking, I found myself abandoned by my "friends." Later on, I was again put under pressure to smoke by workmates. Fortunately, I now work for a fellow Christian, and the air around me is now clean—literally and spiritually.

B. S., Germany

Rehabilitation Thank you for the article "The Power of the Truth to Rehabilitate." (July 22, 1991) I am currently serving time in prison and am encouraged to hear of someone else turning his life around. The authorities try to rehabilitate criminals, only to send them right back into Satan's world to offend again. I have found, with the help of some very understanding ministers of Jehovah's Witnesses, that the only lasting rehabilitation involves searching for and serving God.

J. S., United States

Living Space I want to thank you for the article "Win the Battle of Living Space!" (April 22, 1991) We live in a miniapartment, and it always seems that we have too many things. This article was of much benefit to us because we decided to get rid of everything we do not use. This has not been an easy thing to do, and we are still working at it. Thank you very much, as it seems this article was written especially for us.

L. C., Guatemala

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