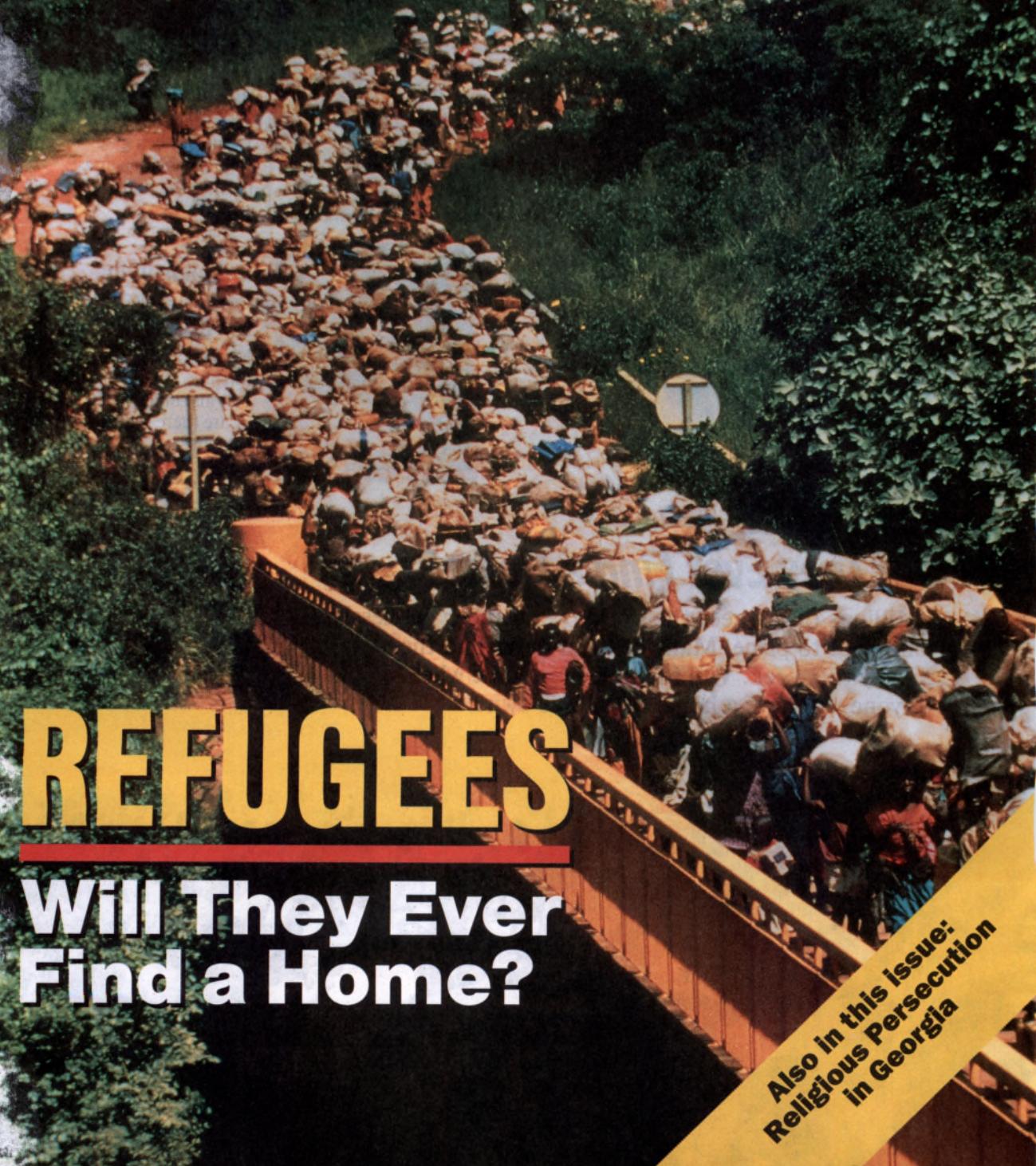


Awake!

JANUARY 22, 2002



REFUGEES

**Will They Ever
Find a Home?**

Also in this issue:
Religious Persecution
in Georgia

Awake!

AVERAGE PRINTING 21,153,000
PUBLISHED IN 87 LANGUAGES

- 3 The People in Search of Security
- 6 Finding a Place to Call Their Own
- 11 A World Where Everyone Belongs
- 14 The Zebra—Africa's Wild Horse
- 28 Watching the World
- 30 From Our Readers
- 31 Second Thoughts About Dams
- 32 "Please Help Me!
You Are My Only Hope"



Religious Persecution in Georgia—How Much Longer? 18

Why are Jehovah's Witnesses being viciously beaten and harassed in that country?



Dabbling in the Occult—What's the Harm? 25

Many youths are intrigued by the occult. Is it just innocent fun, or are there hidden dangers?

REFUGEES

Will They Ever Find a Home? 3-13

Millions of refugees the world over wander helplessly from place to place. Many of them never find the security they seek. Will the time ever come when everyone will have a home to call his own?

Cover: Rwandan refugees return to their country

UNHCR/R. Chalasani

*Pages 2 and 3:
Ethiopian refugees wait
for emergency food and
water supplies*

UN PHOTO 164673/JOHN ISAAC



The People in Search of Security

"The end of the 20th Century has not brought an end to the bloodshed and persecution that force people to run for their lives. Tens of millions of people have ushered in the new millennium in refugee camps and at other temporary shelters, afraid that they will be killed if they dare to return to their homes."

—Bill Frelick, U.S. Committee for Refugees.

JACOB had a dream. He dreamed of a place where people could live in peace, where bombs would not kill his family's goats, and where he could go to school.

People in his town told him that such a place really existed, although it was a long distance away. His father said that the journey was too dangerous, since some had died of thirst and hunger on the way. But when a neighbor whose husband had been killed set off with her two children, Jacob decided that he would make the journey alone.

Jacob carried neither food nor clothing, and on the first day, he just ran and ran. The road to safety was strewn with bodies. On the following day, he met a woman from his town who said that he could accompany her and her companions. They walked for days, pass-

ing deserted villages. On one occasion they had to cross a minefield, where one of their group was killed. For food, they ate leaves.

Ten days later, people started dying of hunger and exhaustion. Soon thereafter, planes attacked them. Finally, Jacob crossed the border and arrived at a refugee camp. He now goes to school, and the sound of aircraft no longer frightens him. All the planes he now sees carry food instead of bombs. But he misses his family, and he would like to go back home.

There are millions of "Jacobs" around the world. Many of them have been traumatized by war and suffer from hunger and thirst. Few have known a normal family life, and many will never return to their homes. They are the poorest of the world's poor.



The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees divides these impoverished wanderers into two groups. A refugee is defined as someone who flees his country because of a well-founded fear of persecution or violence. An internally displaced person has likewise been forced to leave his home because of war or similar grave dangers, but he still resides in his own country.*

Nobody knows for sure how many refugees and displaced persons eke out a living in makeshift camps or how many wander helplessly from place to place in search of security. According to some sources, the total worldwide figure may be about 40 million, and half of them are children. Where do they all come from?

A Problem of Our Time

The refugee problem took on a new dimension at the end of the first world war. In the aftermath of that war, empires were dismantled and ethnic minorities persecuted. As a result, millions of Europeans sought asylum in countries other than their own. The second world war—much more devastating than its predecessor—sent millions more fleeing from their homes. Since 1945, wars have become more localized, but they are just as traumatic for the civilian populations caught in the cross fire.

“Although war has always generated some

* In this series of articles, when we refer to displaced persons, we are not including the 90 million to 100 million people who have been forcibly displaced for development programs such as dams, mining, forestry, or agricultural schemes.

refugees, only in the twentieth century has international conflict affected entire populations,” explains Gil Loescher in his 1993 book *Beyond Charity—International Cooperation and the Global Refugee Crisis*. “The elimination of the distinction between combatants and non-combatants produced vast numbers of refugees who were desperate to escape the ravages of indiscriminate violence.”

Furthermore, many of today’s conflicts are civil wars that take a terrible toll not only on men of military age but also on women and children. Fueled by deep-rooted ethnic and religious divisions, some of these conflicts seem interminable. In one African country, where the current phase of civil war has already dragged on for 18 years, there are four million internally displaced persons, while hundreds of thousands more have fled abroad.

Invariably, the only way that war-weary civilians can escape the violence is to leave home. “Refugees leave their homeland and seek admission to another country not from choice or for reasons of personal convenience, but out of absolute necessity,” explains the book *The State of the World’s Refugees 1997-98*. Nowadays, however, gaining admission to another country may not be that easy.

During the 1990’s, the worldwide total of refugees dropped from about 17 million to 14 million. This apparent improvement, however, is misleading. It is estimated that during the same decade, the number of internally

Awake!®

THIS JOURNAL IS PUBLISHED for the enlightenment of the entire family. It shows how to cope with today’s problems. It reports the news, tells about people in many lands, examines religion and science. But it does more. It probes beneath the surface and points to the real meaning behind current events, yet it always stays politically neutral and does not exalt one race above another. Most important, this magazine builds confidence in the Creator’s promise of a peaceful and secure new world that is about to replace the present wicked, lawless system of things.

Awake! (ISSN 0005-237X) is published semimonthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; M. H. Larson, President; G. F. Simonis, Secretary-Treasurer; 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. **Changes of address** should reach us 30 days before your moving date. Give us your old and new address (if possible, your old address label). **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to *Awake!*, c/o Watchtower, Wallkill, NY 12589. © 2002 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A.

displaced persons reached between 25 million and 30 million. What is happening?

Getting official recognition as a refugee has become more difficult for various reasons. Countries may be reluctant to accept refugees, either because they cannot cope with a massive influx or because they have real concerns that a large refugee population could bring economic and political instability. Sometimes, however, terrified civilians do not even have the stamina, the food, or the money to make the long trek to the border. Their only option is to move to a safer area within their own country.

The Growing Tide of Economic Refugees

Along with the millions of bona fide refugees are millions of other impoverished people who seek to improve their lot in life the only way they know how—by moving to a country where living conditions are much better.

On February 17, 2001, a rusty old freighter ran aground on the French coast. Its cargo consisted of about a thousand men, women, and children, who had been at sea for nearly a week without food. They had paid \$2,000 a head for this hazardous journey, without even knowing to which country they were going. The captain and the crew disappeared soon after beaching the ship. But fortunately the frightened passengers were rescued, and the French government promised to consider their requests for asylum. Millions like them attempt similar journeys every year.

Most of these economic migrants willingly face severe hardships and uncertainties. Somehow they scrape together the money for the trip because at home, poverty, violence, discrimination, or repressive regimes—and sometimes a combination of all four—make life seem hopeless.

Not a few perish in their attempt to find a better life. During the last decade, about 3,500 migrants drowned or disappeared while attempting to cross the Strait of Gibraltar from Africa into Spain. In the year 2000, fifty-eight Chinese migrants suffocated while hidden in a truck taking them from Belgium to England. Countless more migrants die of thirst in the Sahara when their overloaded, ramshackle trucks break down in the middle of the desert.

Despite the dangers, the ranks of the world's economic refugees are swelling inexorably. About half a million people are smuggled into Europe each year; and another 300,000, into the United States. Back in 1993, the United Nations Population Fund estimated the worldwide number of migrants to be 100 million, of which over a third had settled in Europe and the United States. Since then, the number has doubtless increased considerably.

Many of these migrants never find the security they seek. And few refugees find a safe and permanent refuge. All too frequently, these wanderers exchange one set of problems for another. The following article will take a closer look at some of these problems and their underlying causes.

Semimonthly Languages Available by Mail:

Afrikaans, Arabic, Cebuano, Croatian, Czech,[#] Danish,[#] Dutch, English,[#] Estonian, Finnish,[#] French, German,[#] Greek, Hungarian, Iloko, Indonesian, Italian,[#] Japanese,[#] Korean, Latvian, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish,[#] Swahili, Swedish,[#] Tagalog, Ukrainian

[#]Audio cassettes also available.

Monthly Languages Available by Mail: Albanian, Amharic, Bulgarian, Chichewa, Chinese, Chinese (Simplified), Ewe, Georgian, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Igbo, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Maltese, Myanmar, Nepali, Papiamento (Aruba), Papiamento (Curaçao), Sepedi, Sesotho, Shona, Sinhala, Tamil, Thai, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Twi, Urdu, Xhosa, Yoruba, Zulu

Publication of *Awake!* is part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations. Unless otherwise indicated, *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References* is used.

Would you welcome more information? Write Jehovah's Witnesses at the appropriate address: America, United States of: Wallkill, NY 12589. Australia: Box 280, Ingleburn, NSW 1890. Britain: The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN. Canada: Box 4100, Halton Hills (Georgetown), Ontario L7G 4Y4. Ghana: P. O. Box GP 760, Accra. Jamaica: P. O. Box 103, Old Harbour, St. Catherine. New Zealand: P.O. Box 75-142, Manurewa. Nigeria: P.M.B. 1090, Benin City, Edo State. South Africa: Private Bag X2067, Krugersdorp, 1740. Zambia: Box 33459, Lusaka 10101. Zimbabwe: Private Bag WG-5001, Westgate.

Finding a Place to Call Their Own

"Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home."

—John Howard Payne.

FIRST came the war, a war that never ended. Then came the drought, a drought that never relented. On the heels of the drought came the famine. And people did the only thing they could do—they abandoned their homes in search of water, food, and work.

They arrived by the thousands at the border post. But in recent years a million refugees had already been admitted, and the neighboring country would accept no more. Border police with truncheons made sure that nobody slipped through.

A local immigration official bluntly described the reasons for halting the surging tide of refugees. "They don't pay taxes. They wreck the roads. They cut down the trees. They use up the water. No, we don't want any more."*

Such tragic scenes are becoming all too common. Uprooted people discover that it is more and more difficult to find a place they can call their own. "As the number of people seeking protection has increased, so too has the reluctance of states to provide that protection," explained a recent Amnesty International report.

The fortunate ones who do make it to a refugee camp may find safety of sorts, but it rarely seems like home. And the conditions in the camp may be far from ideal.

* The situation described above occurred in March 2001 in an Asian country. But similar problems have also arisen in some African countries.

Life in Refugee Camps

"You might die [at home] of a bullet, but here [in the refugee camp] your children will die of hunger," complained one African refugee. As this desperate father discovered, many camps suffer persistent shortages of food and water as well as a dearth of hygiene and adequate shelter. The reasons are simple. Developing countries that suddenly find themselves inundated with many thousands of refugees may already be struggling just to feed their own citizens. They cannot provide much help to the multitudes who suddenly appear on their doorstep. And the wealthier nations, faced with their own problems, may be reluctant to help support the many refugees in other countries.

When over two million people fled one African country in 1994, the hastily built refugee camps inevitably lacked water and proper sanitation. As a result, an outbreak of cholera killed thousands before it was finally brought under control. To make matters worse, armed combatants mixed in with the civilian refugees and quickly took over the distribution of relief items. This problem was not unique. "The presence of armed elements amongst refugee populations has exposed civilians to increased risks. It has made them vulnerable to intimidation, harassment and forced recruitment," states a United Nations report.

Local people may also suffer from the huge influx of hungry refugees. In the Great Lakes region of Africa, some officials complained: "[The refugees] have destroyed our food re-

serves, destroyed our fields, our cattle, our natural parks, caused famine and spread epidemics . . . [They] benefit from food aid while we get nothing."

Nevertheless, the thorniest problem may be the fact that many provisional refugee camps end up as permanent settlements. For example, in one country in the Middle East, some 200,000 refugees are squeezed into a camp originally built for a quarter of that number. "We have nowhere to go," one of them bitterly explained. These long-suffering refugees face severe employment restrictions in their host country, and as many as 95 percent are reckoned to be unemployed or underemployed. "I honestly don't know how [they] make ends meet," a refugee official admitted.

But if conditions sound bad in the refugee camps, they may be even worse for those displaced persons who cannot leave their own country.

The Misery of Displacement

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "the scale and scope of this problem, the human suffering which underlies it, as well as its impact on international peace and security, have rightly made internal displacement an issue of great international concern." For several reasons, these homeless people are usually more vulnerable than refugees.

No international organization cares for the welfare of displaced persons, and their desperate plight often draws scant attention from the media. Their own governments, bogged down in a military conflict of one sort or another, may be unwilling or unable to protect them. Families are frequently broken up during their flight from danger zones. Often forced to travel on foot,

some displaced persons do not even survive the march to a place of greater security.

Many of these uprooted people seek refuge in cities, where they are limited to a meager existence in shantytowns or abandoned buildings. Others congregate in makeshift camps, which sometimes suffer armed attacks. Usually, their mortality rate is higher than that of any other group in the country.

Even well-meaning relief efforts organized to alleviate the suffering of these displaced persons can boomerang. *The State of the World's Refugees 2000* explains: "During the last decade of the 20th century, humanitarian organizations operating in war-torn countries saved thousands of lives and did much to mitigate human suffering. One of the central lessons of the decade, however, was that in conflict situations humanitarian action can easily be manipulated

(Continued on page 10)



**A refugee awaits
resettlement**

UN PHOTO 186226/M. Grafman

The Plight of Irregular Migrants

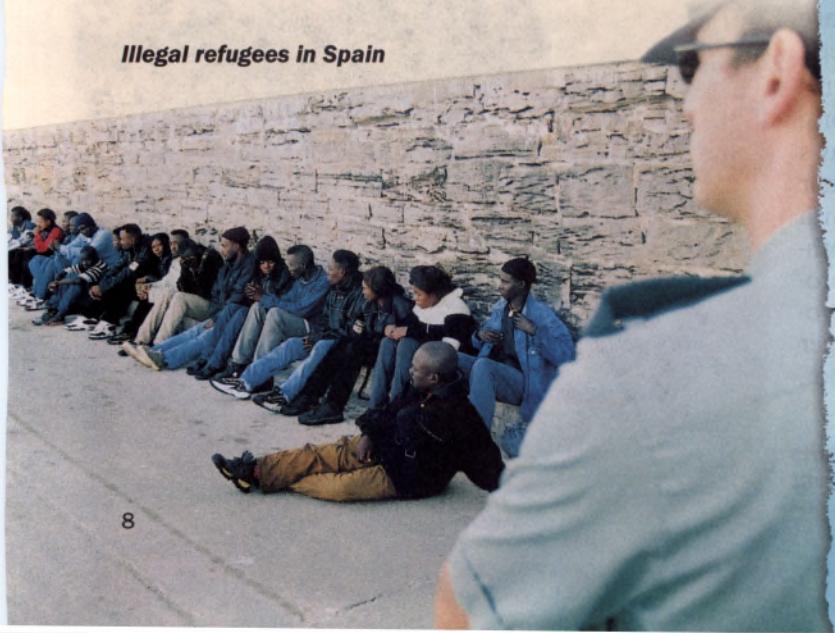
Apart from refugees and displaced persons, there are somewhere between 15 million and 30 million "irregular migrants" throughout the world. Most of these are people who hope to escape poverty—and maybe prejudice and persecution as well—in richer countries.

Since the possibilities for legal migration have diminished in recent years, a new illegal trade in migrants has sprung up. In fact, the trafficking of migrants has now become a lucrative business for international crime syndicates. Some investigators calculate that it generates profits of \$12 billion a year, with very little risk to the traffickers. Pino Arlacchi, a United Nations under-secretary-general, called this "the fastest-growing criminal market in the world."

Irregular migrants have practically no legal protection, and their passports are invariably confiscated by the traffickers. Such migrants may be found in sweatshops, in domestic employment, in the fishing industry, or in agricultural work. Some end up as prostitutes. If they are caught by the authorities, they will likely be repatriated, penniless. If they object to their harsh working conditions, they may be beaten or sexually abused or even have their families back home threatened with violence.

Often criminal gangs lure potential migrants with promises of high-paying jobs. As a result, an impoverished family may mortgage all their possessions just to send one member to Europe or the United States. If the migrant cannot pay his expenses, he will be expected to work off the debt, which may be as high as \$40,000. The 'new life' he was promised turns out to be more like slave labor.

Illegal refugees in Spain



Movement of Refugees and Migrant Workers





Innocence Destroyed

Siri's family lived in the hills of Southeast Asia, where her parents tended their rice fields. One day a woman told her parents that she could get Siri a well-paying job in the city. Her offer of \$2,000—a small fortune for the hill farmers—was hard to refuse. Soon, however, Siri found herself in bondage to a brothel. The owners told her that to earn her freedom, she would have to repay them \$8,000. Siri was 15 years old at the time.

It was impossible for Siri to pay off this debt. Beatings and sexual abuse coerced her into cooperating. As long as she was useful, she would never be set free. The harsh reality is that many such prostitutes are eventually freed—but only to return to their villages to die of AIDS.

A similar trade is thriving in other parts of the world. A 1999 report entitled *International Trafficking in Women to the United States* estimated that between 700,000 and 2,000,000 women

and children are trafficked each year, many of them for prostitution. Some may be deceived, others are just kidnapped; but practically all of them are forced to work against their will. A teenager from Eastern Europe who was rescued from a prostitution gang said regarding her captors: "I never thought this was possible. These people are animals."

Some unfortunate victims have even been picked up in refugee camps, where promises of jobs and good money in Europe or the United States can be irresistible. For countless women, the search for a better life has led them into sexual slavery.

 Areas with major populations of refugees and displaced persons

 Principal movements of migrant workers

Sources: The State of the World's Refugees; The Global Migration Crisis; and World Refugee Survey 1999.

Mountain High Maps® Copyright © 1997
Digital Wisdom, Inc.

(Continued from page 7)

by warring parties, and it can have the unintended consequence of strengthening the positions of authorities responsible for human rights violations. Also, relief supplies provided by humanitarian organizations can feed into war economies, helping to sustain and prolong war."

The Search for a Better Life-Style

Besides refugees and internally displaced persons, there is a growing tide of economic refugees. There are several reasons for this. The gap between the rich countries of the world and the poor ones keeps growing, and television programs daily flaunt the affluent life-styles of certain countries in front of some of the poorest citizens of the globe. Worldwide travel has become easier, and borders are getting more porous. Civil wars as well as ethnic and religious discrimination also provide strong motivation for people to move to more prosperous lands.

But while some migrants—especially those who already have relatives in industrialized

countries—make the move successfully, others end up ruining their lives. Those who fall into the hands of criminal traffickers face particular danger. (See the accompanying boxes.) A family would do well to consider carefully these dangers before migrating for economic reasons.

In 1996 an old boat capsized in the Mediterranean Sea, and 280 people drowned. The victims were emigrants from India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka who had paid between \$6,000 and \$8,000 for their passage to Europe. Before the shipwreck, they had already endured weeks of hunger, thirst, and physical abuse. Their "journey to prosperity" turned into a nightmare that ended in tragedy.

Practically every refugee, displaced person, or irregular migrant has his own nightmare to relate. Whatever the reason for which these people have been uprooted from their homes—be it war, persecution, or poverty—their suffering provokes the questions: Will this problem ever be solved? Or will the flood of refugees just keep on growing?

Count the Cost Before Migrating for Economic Reasons

In view of the many criminal gangs involved in trafficking migrants and the difficulty of immigrating legally to countries of the developed world, husbands and fathers should carefully consider the following questions before making a decision.

1. Is our economic situation really so desperate that one or all of the family must move to a country where wages are higher?
2. How much debt would we incur to finance the trip, and how will the debt be repaid?
3. Is it worth breaking up the family for economic advantages that may prove unrealistic? Many illegal migrants find it practically impossible to obtain regular employment in developed countries.
4. Should I believe the stories about high wages and social benefits? The Bible says that "any-

one inexperienced puts faith in every word, but the shrewd one considers his steps."—Proverbs 14:15.

5. What guarantee do I have that we would not be putting ourselves in the hands of a criminal organization?

6. If such a criminal group did organize the journey, do I understand that my wife—or my daughter—might well find herself forced to work as a prostitute?

7. Do I realize that if I enter a country as an illegal immigrant, I may be unable to obtain fixed employment and could be repatriated, losing all the money I have invested in the journey?

8. Do I want to consider becoming an illegal immigrant or resorting to dishonest measures in order to gain admittance to a wealthier country?
—Matthew 22:21; Hebrews 13:18.

A World Where Everyone Belongs

*"Since refugees are a global problem,
the search for solutions must also be global."*

—Gil Loescher, professor of international relations.

THE young couple left under the cover of night. Concerned about their safety, the husband wasted no time, even though they had a young child. He had heard that the country's ruthless dictator was planning a murderous attack on the town. After an arduous journey of over a hundred miles, the family finally crossed the border to safety.

This humble family later became known the world over. The name of the child was Jesus, and his parents were Mary and Joseph. These refugees did not leave their land in order to search for material wealth. Rather, theirs was a life-threatening situation. Why, their child was the target of the attack!

Like many other refugees, Joseph and his family eventually returned to their homeland when the political situation improved. But their timely flight undoubtedly helped save the life of their young child. (Matthew 2:13-16) Egypt, their host country, had a history of accepting both political and economic refugees. Many centuries earlier, Jesus' forefathers had found refuge in Egypt when a famine desolated the land of Canaan.—Genesis 45:9-11.

Safe but Not Satisfied

Scriptural as well as modern-day examples testify that flight to another country can mean the difference between life and death. Nevertheless, it is still a traumatic experience for any family to abandon their home. Humble though it may be, it likely represents years of investment in time and money. And it may

also be a family inheritance that ties them to their culture and their land. Furthermore, refugees can take few, if any, belongings with them. Thus, refugees are invariably plunged into poverty, irrespective of their former circumstances.

The initial feeling of relief on reaching safety can quickly evaporate if the future seems to offer no more than life in a refugee camp. And the longer the refugee condition lasts, the more oppressive it becomes, especially if there is no integration with the local people. Refugees, like everyone else, want to have permanent roots somewhere. A refugee camp is hardly an ideal place to raise a family. Will the time eventually come when everyone will have a place to call home?

Is Repatriation the Answer?

During the 1990's, about nine million uprooted people finally returned to their homes. For some of these people, it was a joyful occasion, and they eagerly set about reconstructing their lives. But for others, the mood was one of resignation. They returned merely because their situation had become unbearable in their country of asylum. The problems they experienced in exile were so acute that they decided they would be better off back home, despite the insecurity that they would undoubtedly face.

Even in the best of circumstances, repatriation involves hardships because it means being totally uprooted for a second time. "Each

relocation is accompanied with a loss of the means of livelihood, such as land, jobs, homes and livestock," explains *The State of the World's Refugees 1997-98*. "And each relocation marks the start of a tough restoration process." One study of repatriated refugees in central Africa reported that "for the refugees who had received assistance in exile, the return could be more difficult than the experience of exile itself."

Even more distressing, however, is the situation of millions of refugees who are forced to return to their home country against their will. What conditions await them? "Returnees may have to survive in a situation where the rule of law hardly exists, where banditry and violent crime are rife, where demobilized soldiers prey on the civilian population and where light weapons are available to most of the population," stated a United Nations report. Evidently, such hostile environments do not satisfy even the basic security needs of these uprooted people.

Building a World Where Everyone Is Secure

Forced or reluctant repatriations will never solve refugee problems if the underlying causes are not addressed. Mrs. Sadako Ogata, former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, stated in 1999: "The events of this decade—and, indeed, those of the past year—indicate very clearly that refugee issues cannot be discussed without reference to security."

And an acute lack of security afflicts millions of people around the globe. Kofi Annan,

What Is Needed to Solve the Refugee Problem?

"Meeting the needs of the world's displaced people—both refugees and the internally displaced—is much more complex than simply providing short-term security and assistance. It is about addressing the persecution, violence and conflict which bring about displacement in the first place. It is about recognizing the human rights of all men, women and children to enjoy peace, security and dignity without having to flee their homes."—*The State of the World's Refugees 2000*.

United Nations secretary-general, explains: "In some parts of the world, states have collapsed as a result of internal and communal conflicts, depriving their citizens of any effective protection. Elsewhere, human security has been jeopardized by governments which refuse to act in the common interest, which persecute their opponents and punish innocent members of minority groups."

Wars, persecution, and ethnic violence—the fundamental causes of insecurity that Kofi Annan described—usually have their roots in hatred, prejudice, and injustice. These evils will not be uprooted easily. Does that mean that the refugee problem will inevitably get worse?

If matters were left in human hands, that would undoubtedly be the outcome. But in the Bible, God promises that "he is making wars to cease to the extremity of the earth." (Psalm 46:9) Through his prophet Isaiah, he likewise describes a time when people "will certainly build houses and have occupancy; and they will certainly plant vineyards and eat their fruitage.... They will not toil for nothing, nor will they bring to birth for disturbance; because they are the offspring made up of the blessed ones of Jehovah, and their de-

In Our Next Issue

- **The Wedding Day**
—Making It a Joyful Beginning
- **Tourism—A Global Industry**
- **Kea—Clown of the Mountains**

scendants with them." (Isaiah 65:21-23) Such conditions would indeed eliminate the refugee problem. Are they achievable?

"Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed," states the preamble of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. Our Creator well knows that a change of thinking is needed. The same prophet explains why everyone on earth will one day dwell in security: "They will not do any harm or cause any ruin in all my holy mountain; because the earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering the very sea."—Isaiah 11:9.

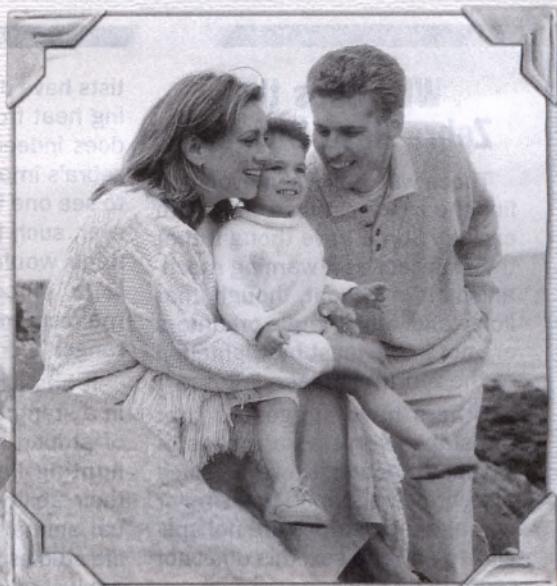
Jehovah's Witnesses have already discovered that the knowledge of Jehovah can over-

come prejudice and hatred. In their international preaching work, they seek to promote Christian values that instill love instead of hatred, even in war-torn countries. They also offer whatever help they reasonably can to refugees.

On the other hand, they realize that the complete solution to the refugee problem lies with God's appointed King, Jesus Christ. He certainly understands how easily hatred and violence can destroy people's lives. The Bible assures us that he will judge the lowly ones with righteousness. (Isaiah 11:1-5) Under his heavenly rule, the will of God will be done on the earth, as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:9, 10) When that day dawns, nobody will ever need to become a refugee. And everyone will have a place to call home.

What Solution Does God's Kingdom Provide?

"Everywhere in the land righteousness and justice will be done. Because everyone will do what is right, there will be peace and security for ever. God's people will be free from worries, and their homes peaceful and safe."—Isaiah 32:16-18, Today's English Version.



THE ZEBRA

AFRICA'S WILD HORSE

BY AWAKE! WRITER
IN AFRICA

ATHOUSAND zebras run freely across the African grassland. Their striped flanks heave as their thickly maned necks rock to the rhythm of their powerful movements. The sound of their hooves pounding the parched earth rumbles across the plains. A cloud of red dust billows upward behind them and can be seen for miles. They run, free and wild, with no sense of restraint.

As if by some unseen signal, they begin to slow and then stop. With their strong, thick teeth, they tug at the dry grass. The herd is alert, occasionally looking up, listening, and smelling the air. Carried by the wind, the distant sound of a lion's roar reaches their ears, and they tense. They know the sound well. With ears held high, grass hanging motionless

from their mouths, the zebras look in the direction of the moaning cry. Sensing no immediate danger, they bend their necks again and continue grazing.

When the sun's heat begins to intensify, they are on the move again. This time it is the smell of water that draws the wild horses toward a river. On a high bank, they stop and stare down at the slow-moving brown water, snorting and pawing at the dry dust. They hesitate, aware of some potential danger beneath the river's placid surface. But their thirst is strong, and some begin to push forward. With one last headlong thrust, they run to the river's edge. One by one they drink their fill, then turn and head back onto the open plains.

By evening the herd move unhurriedly through the tall grass. Silhouetted against the deep red

Why Does the Zebra Have Stripes?

Those who believe in evolution find the zebra's stripes difficult to explain. Some have thought that they may act as a warning mechanism. It is evident, though, that lions and other large predators are not in the least bit frightened by the zebra's stripes.

Others have suggested that the stripes serve as a means of sexual attraction. However, since all zebras are striped in a similar way and their stripes are not specific to any one sex, this does not seem to be likely.

Another theory is that the white and black design evolved in order to help dissipate heat from the hot African sun. But why, then, do other animals not have stripes?

One prevailing theory is that the zebra evolved stripes to serve as a form of camouflage. Scien-

tists have discovered that the rising heat from the African plains does indeed distort and blur the zebra's image, making it difficult to see one from a distance. However, such long-distance camouflage would be of little advantage, since lions, the zebra's main enemy, attack only at close range.

It has also been claimed that in a stampede the moving mass of striped zebra bodies confuse hunting lions, interfering with their ability to focus on individual animals. Yet, in reality, wildlife studies have shown that lions are just as skillful and successful when hunting zebras as they are when hunting other animals.

Adding more confusion to the question is the fact that the zebra's stripes may at times even prove to be a liability for the animal. At night, out on the moonlit plains, the zebra's white and black striped pattern makes it

even more visible than other animals that are solid colored. Since lions usually hunt at night, this would seem to put the zebra at a distinct disadvantage.

So where did the zebra get its stripes? The key to understanding this can be found in the simple statement: "The hand of Jehovah itself has done this." (Job 12:9) Yes, the Creator designed earth's creatures with distinctive attributes and qualities that for reasons man may not fully comprehend marvelously equip them for life. The wondrous design in living things serves another purpose. It brings happiness, pleasure, and delight to the hearts of man. Indeed, the beauty of creation has moved many today to feel the way David did long ago: "How many your works are, O Jehovah! All of them in wisdom you have made. The earth is full of your productions."—Psalm 104:24.

glow of the setting sun and framed by the beauty of the African veld, they look magnificent.

Striped and Social

The daily routine for zebras is always the same. Their constant search for food and water keeps them on the move. Grazing on the open plains, zebras look clean and fat, their striped skin stretched tight over their muscular bodies. The zebra's stripes are unique, and as some claim, no two patterns are exactly alike. Their striking white and black stripes seem odd among the other animals of the plain. Yet, their appearance is appealing and belongs to the very wildness of Africa itself.

Zebras are extremely social in nature. Individual animals form strong bonds that can last a lifetime. Although a large herd may number several thousand animals, it is divided into many smaller family units that consist of a stallion and his mares. This small family unit maintains order by strictly separating its members by rank. The dominant female determines the family's movements. She takes the lead, with the other mares and their foals following in single file according to rank. Ultimately, though, the stallion is in charge. If he wants his family to change course, he approaches the lead mare and nudges her in the new direction.

Zebras love to be groomed, and it is common to see them rubbing and nibbling at one another's

flanks, shoulders, and backs. Mutual grooming seems to strengthen the bond between individual animals and starts when babies are only a few days old. If another member of the family is not available to do the grooming, the itchy zebras find relief by rolling in the dust or rubbing their bodies against a tree, termite mound, or other stationary object.

The Struggle for Survival

A zebra's life is fraught with danger. Lions, wild dogs, hyenas, leopards, and crocodiles all consider the 550-pound animal fair game. A zebra can sprint up to 35 miles per hour, but it is sometimes caught off guard by predators that use surprise and stealth. Lions wait in ambush, crocodiles lurk beneath muddy waters, and leopards lie in wait under the cover of darkness.

The zebras' defenses depend upon the alertness and community action of members of the herd. While most sleep at night, there are always some that are awake, listening and keeping watch. If a zebra spots an approaching predator, it sounds an alarm snort that signals the whole herd. Often, when one member of the herd is sick or old and cannot keep up, the other zebras will deliberately slow down



or wait until the slower animal can join the herd again. When danger threatens, the stallion fearlessly positions himself between the predator and the mares, biting and kicking at the enemy so as to give the herd time to escape.

Such family cohesion is illustrated by a remarkable incident that occurred on the Serengeti Plain in Africa, as witnessed by the naturalist Hugo van Lawick. Relating how a pack of wild dogs began chasing a herd of zebras, he said that the dogs were able to isolate a female zebra, her young foal, and a yearling. As the rest of the zebra herd galloped away, the mother and yearling bravely fought off the dogs. Soon the dogs

became more aggressive, and the mare and the yearling began to tire. The end seemed certain. Van Lawick recalls the hopeless scene: "Suddenly I felt the ground vibrating and, looking around, I saw, to my amazement, ten zebras fast approaching. A moment later this herd closed its ranks around the mother and her two offspring and then, wheeling around, the whole closely packed group galloped off in the direction from which the ten had come. The dogs chased them for 50 yards or so but were unable to penetrate the herd and soon gave up."

Raising a Family

The female zebra is protective of her newborn foal and

the male zebra is protective of his mate and offspring.





initially keeps it from the other members of the herd. During this intimate period of isolation, the infant is able to bond with its mother. The young foal memorizes the white and black striped pattern that is unique to its mother. Thereafter, it will recognize its mother's call, scent, and striped pattern and will not accept any other female.

Newborn foals are not born with the distinctive white and black stripes of their parents. Their stripes are reddish-brown and will only turn black with age. Within the larger herd, foals from various family groups gather together for play. They race and chase one another, kicking and running among the adults, who sometimes join them in play. Galloping on their spindly legs, the

foals make a game out of chasing birds and other small animals. Baby zebras, with their long, slender legs, large black eyes, and lustrous, soft coats, are beautiful little animals and a delight to watch.

Wild and Wonderful

Today large herds of zebras can still be seen running wild and free over the vast golden grasslands of Africa. It is a spectacular sight.

Who would deny that the zebra, with its unique white and black striped pattern, fierce family loyalty, and wild and free spirit, is a majestic and wonderful creature? Learning about such an animal answers a question that was posed thousands of years ago: "Who sent forth the zebra free?" (Job 39:5) The answer is clear. It is the Designer of all living creatures, Jehovah God.

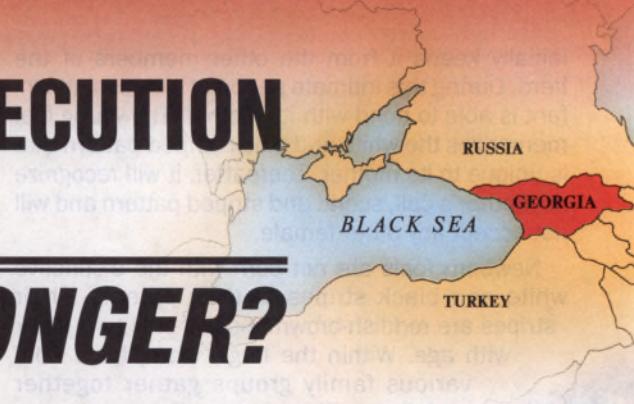
RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN GEORGIA

HOW MUCH LONGER?

FROM THE BALMY COAST of the Black Sea to the icy Caucasus Mountains, Georgia is a land of natural beauty. Thick forests, swift streams, and lush valleys adorn this mountainous region straddling the border of Europe and Asia. Georgia's capital, Tbilisi, is a bustling city where modern buildings mix with ancient architectural monuments. But Georgia's greatest asset is its people, known for their strong family ties and warm hospitality.

Throughout history the people of Georgia have experienced oppression. Their country has been invaded by Romans, Persians, Byzantines, Arabs, Turks, Mongols, Russians, and others. By one count, Tbilisi has been destroyed 29 times!* Even so, Georgians have

* For more information on Georgia, see the article "Georgia—An Ancient Heritage Preserved," in the January 22, 1998, issue of *Awake!*



JUNE 17, 2001 - Giorgi Baghishvili was violently attacked while attending a meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses

maintained not only their love of life, art, song, and dance but also their reputation for being a tolerant society.

Sadly, though, this can no longer be said of all people in Georgia. During the past two years, a small group of Georgians have damaged their country's reputation by assaulting hundreds of their fellow citizens. Mobs of furious attackers have beaten innocent men, women, and children as well as elderly and disabled individuals. With the blows of nail-studded clubs and iron bars, the attackers have bruised their victims' bodies, torn their faces, and ripped their scalps. Why are harmless Georgian citizens being beaten so viciously? Because they are Jehovah's Witnesses—a Christian community that was present in Georgia before most of the attackers were even born.



MAY 13, 2001 - The Shamoyan family lost their home when an arsonist set it on fire

From Denunciations to Attacks

Although religious freedom is guaranteed in Georgia, the literature of Jehovah's Witnesses has frequently been confiscated. In April 1999, customs officials stated that the literature could be released only with the permission of the patriarch, the head of the Georgian Orthodox Church.* The following month, the Orthodox Church was mentioned again—this time in Georgia's Isani-Samgori District Court. There, Guram Sharadze, parliamentary deputy and leader of the political movement "Georgia Above All!" filed a lawsuit seeking to dissolve the legal entities used by Jehovah's Witnesses. He accused the Witnesses of being antinational and dangerous. Who backed Sharadze's claim? Attached to the lawsuit was a letter from the secretary of the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia.

On May 20, 1999, Georgia adopted the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and thus committed itself to upholding the convention's articles. Article 10 states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers." Did this right stop the opposers of the Witnesses from continuing their efforts to ban religious literature? By no means!

On June 21, 1999, the Office of the Patriarch of All Georgia, in a letter to the head of customs inspection, insisted that "the distribution of foreign religious literature should be banned." In addition, Giorgi Andriadze, an official spokesman of the Georgian Orthodox Church, declared that Jehovah's Witnesses were dangerous and should be banned. These denunciations did not fall on deaf ears. Religious fanatics, who had burned literature of Jehovah's Witnesses in the past, now felt confident that they could attack the Witnesses

* During 2001, however, the Customs Department stopped confiscating the literature of Jehovah's Witnesses.

themselves and get away with it. On Sunday, October 17, 1999, they struck again.

Mob Rule Goes Unpunished

That Sunday some 120 of Jehovah's Witnesses in Tbilisi—men, women, and children—attended a religious gathering. Suddenly, defrocked Orthodox priest Vasili Mkalavishvili and 200 of his followers burst into the meeting place.* They encircled the Witnesses and struck them again and again with their wooden clubs and iron crosses. Four attackers grabbed one Witness by his arms and neck. They yanked his head down and began to shave his head while the mob gloated over his humiliation. When the frenzied mob finally left, 16 Witnesses required hospital treatment. One man had three broken ribs. Another Witness, a 40-year-old woman named Phati, later recalled: "They began to shout at me, and one of them hit me with all his might. He hit my face, my eyes. I tried to hide my face with my hands. Blood was running down my fingers." When this brute was finished with Phati, she could not see with her left eye. Today, Phati's eye remains damaged as a result of the attack.

* Vasili Mkalavishvili was expelled from the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) in the mid-1990's after harshly criticizing the GOC for its membership in the World Council of Churches (WCC). (The GOC has since withdrawn its WCC membership.) Meanwhile, Mkalavishvili has joined the Greek Old Calendarists under Metropolitan Cyprian.



JULY 11, 2001 - David Salaridze was hit on the head with a club and beaten on the back and ribs when he was attacked while attending a meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses

MOB RULE CONTINUES

The failure of Georgia's authorities to convict the attackers of Jehovah's Witnesses has exposed the Witnesses to more acts of persecution.

For instance, on January 22, 2001, in the Svanetis Ubani region of Tbilisi, former Orthodox priest Vasili Mkalavishvili and his mob invaded a religious gathering of 70 Witnesses. The attackers punched, kicked, and struck the Witnesses with wooden and iron crosses. One attacker smashed a large wooden cross over the head of a Witness with so much force that its crossbeam broke off. Some Witnesses were dragged into a dark room, where they were beaten by several attackers. Elderly Witnesses were forced to run a gauntlet while being hit with fists and crosses. Two adult men chased a 14-year-old boy and then punched and kicked the helpless lad. A 30-year-old attacker went after a 12-year-old boy and slammed a huge Georgian Bible on the child's head. Meanwhile, a Witness ran out of the house to call the police, but he was caught. The mob hammered his face until his mouth was filled with blood and he started vomiting. Finally, the ruthless mob dispersed. The attackers remain unpunished.

Again, on April 30, 2001, the followers of Mkalavishvili broke up a religious meeting of the same congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. The attackers dragged the Witnesses outside and beat them with sticks spiked with nails. The spikes tore open the right arm, left hand, left foot, and left cheek of a Witness named Tamaz. In addition, Tamaz required five stitches to close a deep gash on his head. The mob also ransacked the home where the meeting was held, smashing the furniture, electrical equipment, and all windows. Then they burned literature published by Jehovah's Witnesses in a large bonfire. On June 7, 2001, Human Rights Watch officially requested information from Georgia's Minister of Internal Affairs, Kakha Targamadze, and Georgia's Prosecutor General, Gia Mepharishvili, about the steps that have been taken to prosecute the perpetrators of this and other recent attacks. So far, none of the attackers have been prosecuted.

This outrageous attack, shown on television, prompted President Eduard Shevardnadze to speak up. The following day, he stated: "I condemn this occurrence and believe that the law-enforcement agencies should institute a criminal case." Since the video footage identified the mob leader and the other attackers, convicting them would be a rather simple matter. Yet, two years later, none of the attackers have been convicted.

Emboldened by Impunity

Not surprisingly, the inaction of the authorities—secular and clerical—sent the attackers the message that violence would be tolerated. Emboldened by this impunity, they stepped up their rampage of robbing, beating, and kicking Jehovah's Witnesses—in private homes, on the streets, and in places of worship. Between October 1999 and August 2001, there were over 80 documented attacks on Jehovah's Witnesses, affecting more than 1,000 victims. Even so, on February 9, 2001, a city prosecutor in Tbilisi told reporters that the investigation of Vasili Mkalavishvili "is still under way." Regrettably, at the time of this writing, Georgia's authorities still allow the opposers of Jehovah's Witnesses to carry out their hate crimes.—See the box "Mob Rule Continues."

What is the role of the police? News reports and video footage reveal that the police not only allowed the attacks against Jehovah's Witnesses but also participated in them! For instance, on September 8, 2000, in the city of Zugdidi, a group of club-wielding police officers broke up a peaceful convention of 700 of

Jehovah's Witnesses. Eyewitnesses reported that masked police officers "carved a path of destruction," beating more than 50 Witnesses. "It was heartbreaking," the owner of the convention site said, recalling the look of terror on the children's faces as blank antitank shells were fired over their heads. Police stormed the site and burned it down. Yet, till this very day, they go unpunished.

Because this sordid incident is no exception (see the box "Police Participation"), on May 7, 2001, the United Nations Committee Against Torture rightly expressed its concern about "continuing acts of torture and other acts of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in Georgia committed by the law enforcement personnel; the continuing failure to provide in every instance prompt, impartial and full investigations into the numerous allegations of torture."* Indeed, not one of the more than 400 complaints that Jehovah's Witnesses have filed with the police has led to a conviction of the known perpetrators! Georgia's Public Defender, or Ombudsman, who is elected by parliament, therefore commented: "Human rights are violated by the very people who are obliged, by virtue of their jobs, to protect those rights. For them, human rights are little more than a piece of paper."

Supreme Court Decision Creates Confusion

As if illegal attacks by mobs and police were not enough, Georgia's

* Georgia is one of the 123 states that are party to the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. As such, Georgia has committed itself to "outlaw torture."

POLICE PARTICIPATION

On September 16, 2000, police from the city of Marneuli set up roadblocks to prevent 19 buses carrying Jehovah's Witnesses from reaching a convention location. At one roadblock, attackers hurled rocks at the buses carrying the Witnesses, striking one passenger in the head. Several Witnesses were dragged from the buses and beaten, while other passengers were robbed. At the same time, the police gave free passage to busloads of Mkalavishvili's followers, who were bent on destroying the convention site. The mob burned one and a half tons of religious literature. Police at the scene participated in the beatings of Witnesses.

Caucasus Press reported that the Ministry of Internal Affairs would investigate this assault and take "proper measures." Investigators have solid grounds for charging the perpetrators. The Constitution of Georgia, Article 25, guarantees the right of all people to hold a public assembly. Yet, none of the attackers have been prosecuted. Five months after this attack, Keston News Service reported that a lawyer for Guram Sharadze, the leader of the political movement "Georgia Above All!" admitted that Sharadze had influenced the authorities in Marneuli and Zugdidi to prevent the holding of two conventions of Jehovah's Witnesses.

GEORGIA'S CONSTITUTION GUARANTEES PROTECTION

The Constitution of Georgia of August 24, 1995, guarantees freedom of religion and protection against brutal attacks, as the following excerpts show:

Article 17—(1) A person's honour and dignity are inviolable. (2) Torture, inhumane, brutal or degrading treatment or punishment is impermissible.

Article 19—(1) Every individual has the right to freedom of speech, thought, conscience, religion and belief. (2) The persecution of an individual for his thoughts, beliefs or religion is prohibited.

Article 24—(1) Every individual has the right to freely receive and disseminate information, to express and disseminate his opinion orally, in writing or in any other form.

Article 25—(1) Every individual except members of the armed forces, police, and security services has the right to hold a public assembly without arms either indoors or in the open air without prior permission.

Supreme Court recently issued a ruling that created confusion about the rights of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Let us consider some background information. Politician Guram Sharadze filed a lawsuit seeking to dissolve the legal entities of Jehovah's Witnesses. His suit was dismissed on February 29, 2000. However, Sharadze appealed and won. Jehovah's Witnesses, in turn, appealed to the Supreme Court. On February 22, 2001, the Supreme Court decided

against the Witnesses, basically on legal technicalities. The Supreme Court reasoned that the Constitution specifies that religions are to be registered under public law according to an as yet nonexistent law detailing the registration of religious associations. The court concluded that in the absence of this law, Jehovah's Witnesses could not be registered in any alternative form. However, some 15 other associations supporting religious activity are legally registered in Georgia.

THE WORLD IS WATCHING

How does the international community view Georgia's failure to stop the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses?

The governments of the United States and Great Britain jointly stated: "A meeting of the Jehovah's Witnesses was disrupted, a large number of people were violently mistreated and others were impeded from access to the meeting. The Embassies of the United States of America and Great Britain are greatly disturbed by this and other recent serious infringements on those exercising their right of religious freedom in Georgia . . . We call upon the Government of Georgia to investigate these incidents and to be vigilant in ensuring respect for the religious rights of all."

The chairperson of the Delegation to the European Union—Georgia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee, Ursula Schleicher, stated: "On behalf of the European Parliament delegation I wish to express my consternation of the latest incident in the series of violent attacks on journalists, human rights ac-

tivists and Jehovah's Witnesses . . . I regard this kind of act as an outrageous attack against the fundamental human rights to which Georgia is committed as a signatory of the European Convention for Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms."

The U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe wrote President Shevardnadze concerning the attacks on Jehovah's Witnesses: "The latest events are genuinely alarming and raise fears that the situation in Georgia is getting out of hand. If nothing is done, those calling for violence against religious minorities will be encouraged to continue their rampages. We hope that you, as head of state, would set an example for the public and Georgia's officials and send two strong, clear messages: whatever one's views of other religions, it is impermissible to use any form of violence against its practitioners; and individuals who engage in such violence—especially policemen who either facilitate or actually par-

ticipate in these disgraceful actions—will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law." This letter was signed by seven members of the U.S. Congress.

The cochairman of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, U.S. Congressman Christopher H. Smith, stated: "Why is Georgia not upholding religious freedom and human rights as they said they would? . . . The burning of literature is totally contrary to the Helsinki Accord and reminds some of us in the Commission of the book burnings that happened during the Nazi years."

The acting Executive Director of Europe and Central Asia Division of Human Rights Watch wrote: "Human Rights Watch is deeply concerned about the possibility of further violence, given the Georgian government's record of failure to prosecute perpetrators for previous violent attacks against religious minorities. We urge you to immediately call for [an] end to the attacks and to bring to justice those responsible for them."

The world is watching. Will Georgia live up to its international commitments? Georgia's reputation is on the line.

In reaction to the Supreme Court's decision, Georgia's Justice Minister, Mikheil Saakashvili, said in a television interview: "From a legal standpoint, the decision is very dubious. I don't think it's the most successful page in the history of the Supreme Court." Zurab Adeishvili, the acting chairman of Georgia's parliamentary legal committee, told Keston News Service that he was "very concerned" about the ruling because "it encourages extremist forces in our [Georgian Orthodox] Church to suppress religious minority groups." Sadly, Adeishvili's concerns proved justified. A few days after the ruling, the violence against Jehovah's Witnesses resumed. In the year 2001, Witnesses were assaulted by mobs, police, and Orthodox priests on February 27, March 5, March 6, March 27, April 1, April 7, April 29, April 30, May 7, May 20, June 8, June 17, July 11, August 12, September 28, and September 30. And the list goes on and on.

In the midst of this new wave of persecution, the Supreme Court took the unusual step of clarifying its decision publicly, stating: "Unfortunately, the public has wrongly interpreted the annulment by the Supreme Court of the registration of the Union of Jehovah's Witnesses . . . When the court registration of defendants, as a legal entity of private law, was annulled, their right to freedom of thought,



JUNE 28, 2000 - Arsonists destroyed literature depot of Jehovah's Witnesses in Tbilisi

AN APPEAL TO THE EUROPEAN COURT

On June 29, 2001, Jehovah's Witnesses filed an application with the European Court of Human Rights that challenges the ongoing inaction of Georgia's law-enforcement agencies. A few days later, on July 2, 2001, the European Court responded. The Court's registrar wrote that the President of the Judicial Chamber was of the opinion that this case "should be given priority."

conscience and religion was neither directly nor indirectly violated or restricted. Their freedom to change their belief, either alone or jointly with others, either publicly or in private, was not restricted. . . . The Court decision has not restricted the defendants' right to receive and distribute their ideas and information. It did not prohibit their right to have peaceful meetings."

Thousands of Georgians Speak Out Against Persecution

While it seems that this statement by the Supreme Court has had little effect on perpetrators of mob violence, it is heartening to note that thousands of citizens of Georgia have



AUGUST 16, 2000 - In the Gidani-Nadzaladze courtroom, Warren Shewfelt, a Canadian Witness, was attacked by a supporter of Vasili Mkalavishvili



"All acts of harassment and physical violence will be prosecuted and the perpetrators will be held accountable before the law."—President of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze, November 2, 2000

already condemned the ongoing persecution. Beginning on January 8, 2001, Jehovah's Witnesses circulated a petition that called for protection from mob attacks and for the prosecution of those who have participated in violent attacks against Georgian citizens. Within two weeks, 133,375 adult citizens from all regions of Georgia signed the petition. Considering that there are only 15,000 of Jehovah's Witnesses in Georgia, the overwhelming majority of those who signed were likely members of the Georgian Orthodox Church. But on January 22, 2001, the petition disappeared. What happened?

That day, in the office of Georgia's Public Defender, Nana Devdariani, a press conference was held to release the petition formally. Suddenly, during the conference, Vasilii Mkalavishvili and ten others burst into the office to seize the 14 volumes making up the petition. A representative of the Caucasian Institute for Peace and Democracy tried to protect the petition, but the invaders assaulted her. While Mkalavishvili was spewing invective, his followers wrestled 12 of the 14 volumes from the organizers and took off with them. A foreign diplomat witnessing the incident exclaimed: "This is just unbelievable!" Fortunately, on February 6, the petition again came into the possession of the Witnesses, and on February 13, 2001, it was presented to Georgia's president.

"All Acts of Harassment . . . Will Be Prosecuted"

Jehovah's Witnesses in Georgia and around the world count on Georgia's president to act on this petition. After all, in the past, Presi-

dent Shevardnadze has repeatedly condemned the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses. For instance, on October 18, 1999, the president described the attacks on Jehovah's Witnesses as "pogroms" that were "intolerable." On October 20, 2000, President Shevardnadze wrote to a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses: "We will do our best to eradicate violence." He added: "Let me assure you that the Georgian authorities will remain staunchly committed to the protection of human rights and freedom of conscience." Again, on November 2, 2000, in a letter to the

"We hope that this matter [of violence against religious minorities] will be resolved and all religious groups in Georgia will enjoy unrestricted freedom of expressing their religious beliefs."—David Soumbadze, senior counselor of the Embassy of Georgia in Washington, D.C., U.S.A., July 3, 2001

Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, President Shevardnadze stated: "This issue [of the status of minority religions in Georgia] has also been the focus of serious concern among our people and the government." He assured the commission: "All acts of harassment and physical violence will be prosecuted and the perpetrators will be held accountable before the law."

Concerned observers in Europe and other parts of the world hope that President Shevardnadze's firm words will soon come true. Meanwhile, Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide persevere in prayer in behalf of their fellow believers in Georgia as these courageous Witnesses continue to serve Jehovah despite bitter persecution.—Psalm 109:3, 4; Proverbs 15:29.

Dabbling in the Occult—What's the Harm?

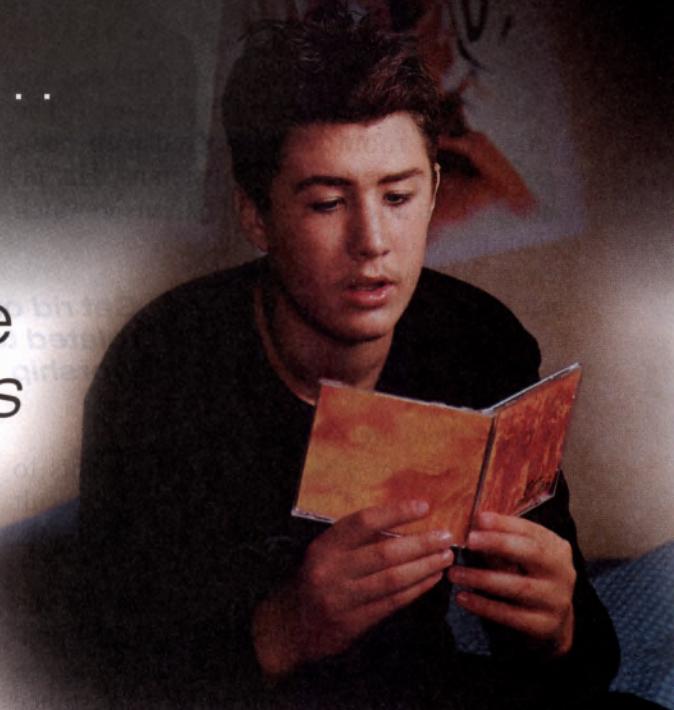
ARE teenagers really interested in the occult? A group of researchers sought to find out by surveying students in 115 middle and secondary schools. The survey yielded these revealing statistics: Over half of those surveyed (54 percent) said that they are interested in the occult and the supernatural, while a quarter (26 percent) said that they are "very interested."

Researchers for the University of Alaska at Anchorage write: "Newspaper and magazine stories about the supposed explosion of satanic cult activity . . . have proliferated in recent years." Experts say that there is little hard evidence to support claims of widespread Satanism among youths. Even so, there is no question that many young ones are interested in aspects of Satanism and the occult, even if such interest is only casual.

"What's the harm in dabbling in the occult?" some youths might therefore ask. In answer, let's look at some of the ways youths get involved in the occult in the first place.

The Lure of the Occult

An article in *U.S. News & World Report* observes that "children and teenagers today have access and exposure to a bewildering—often disturbing—array of imagery and information that would have been unimaginable even 20



years ago." Curiosity drives many youths to read books and magazines, watch videos, or surf Web sites on the Internet that feature occult material.

According to BBC News Online, popular TV programs that feature witchcraft and vampirism "encourage an interest in witchcraft among children, it is claimed." Some heavy-metal music likewise features violent or demonic themes. Columnist Tom Harpur wrote in the Toronto newspaper *The Sunday Star*: "I must issue the strongest possible warning about what is happening [in music]. . . . I have never seen anything so depraved. The songs are obsessed with madness, possession, demons, blood, curses, violence of every kind, including rape, self-mutilation, murder, and suicide. Death and destruction, prophecies of doom, the denial of all that is good and the embracing of all that is hideous and evil—these are the themes."

Does listening to such music really contribute to destructive behavior? It evidently did so in at least one case—that of a 14-year-old

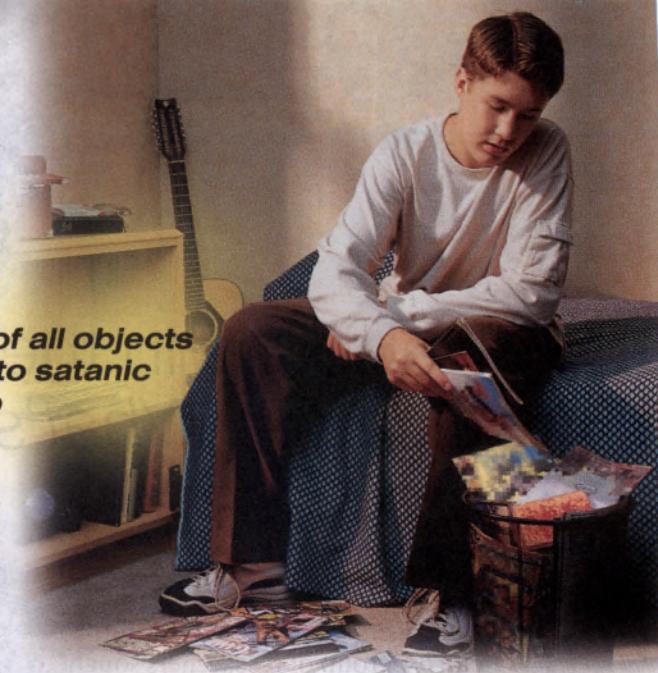
youth in the United States who stabbed his mother to death and then killed himself. The walls of his room were covered with posters of heavy-metal rock musicians. His father pleaded afterward: "Tell parents to watch what music their children listen to." He said that the week before his son killed his mother, he kept singing a rock song "about blood and killing your mother."

Then there are role-playing games, some of which allow participants to take on the role of sorcerers and other occult figures. Many of these games feature demonistic violence.*

Nevertheless, the research organization Mediасscope reports: "Studies show that the preference for heavy metal music may be a significant indicator for alienation, substance abuse, psychiatric disorders, suicide risks . . . or risk-taking behaviors during adolescence, but music is not the cause of these behaviors. It is hypothesized that teenagers already struggling with those issues may be attracted to

* See the article "Young People Ask . . . Is There Any Danger in Role-Playing Games?", in the August 22, 1999, issue of *Awake!*

Get rid of all objects related to satanic worship



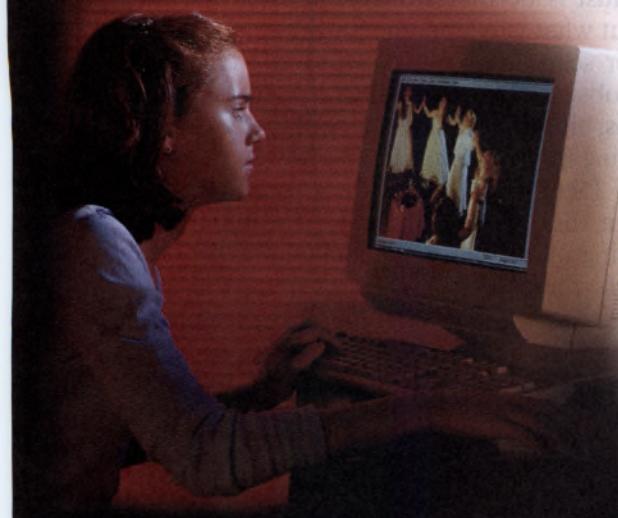
heavy metal music, because the lyrics express their own troubled feelings."

Researchers may not all agree on the dangers of listening to satanic music. But could a diet of videos, music, or games that highlight violence or self-destruction be anything but poisonous? For Christians, however, dabbling in the occult presents an even greater danger.

God's View of the Occult

At 1 Corinthians 10:20, the apostle Paul warned Christians: "I do not want you to become sharers with the demons." Just who are the demons, and why is it so dangerous to get involved with them? Simply put, the demons are former angels, who have chosen to follow Satan the Devil. Satan means "Resister" and Devil means "Slanderer." According to the Bible, this former angelic son of God made himself a resister and a slanderer by choosing to rebel against God. In time, he enticed other angels to join him in his rebellious course.

Beware of Web sites that promote spiritism



These allies thus became demons.—Genesis 3:1-15; 6:1-4; Jude 6.

Jesus called Satan “the ruler of this world.” (John 12:31) Satan and his demons have “great anger” over their impending destruction. (Revelation 12:9-12) Not surprisingly, those who have become involved with the demons have found them to be vicious. One woman in Suriname who grew up in a family that practiced spiritism saw firsthand how the demons “enjoy torturing their unwilling victims.”* Getting involved with these cruel spirit creatures in any way is thus extremely dangerous!

For this reason, God commanded his ancient people, the Israelites, to avoid *all* occult practices. “Everybody doing these things is something detestable to Jehovah,” warns Deuteronomy 18:10-12. Christians were likewise warned that “those practicing spiritism” would meet destruction at God’s hand. (Revelation 21:8) Even dabbling in the occult is condemned by God. “Quit touching the unclean thing,” commands the Bible.—2 Corinthians 6:17.

Breaking Free From Occult Practices

Have you made the mistake of dabbling in the occult? Then consider what happened in the first-century city of Ephesus. Many there “practiced magical arts.” But some were moved by the powerful works the apostle Paul performed with the aid of holy spirit. The results? “Quite a number of those who practiced magical arts brought their books together and burned them up before everybody. And they calculated together the prices of them and found them worth fifty thousand pieces of silver. Thus in a mighty way the word of Jehovah kept growing and prevailing.”—Acts 19:11-20.

What does this tell us? That if a person wants to escape the clutches of the demons, he or she *must destroy all paraphernalia related to satanic worship!* This includes all books, mag-

* See the article “Shaking Off the Yoke of Spiritism” in the September 1, 1987, issue of our companion magazine, *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

azines, posters, comic books, videos, amulets (items worn for “protection”), and demonistic material downloaded from the Internet. (Deuteronomy 7:25, 26) Discard any paraphernalia that might be used in divination, such as crystal balls or Ouija boards. Also, get rid of music or videos that feature satanic themes.

It takes courage and determination to take such bold steps. But the benefits can be great. One Christian woman named Jean* purchased a computer game that seemed harmless at first. As she worked her way through the game’s levels, she discovered aspects of the game that had spiritistic overtones. Before long she began having violent nightmares! “I got up in the middle of the night,” says Jean, “and destroyed the game CDs.” The result? “I haven’t had any trouble since.”

If you demonstrate real determination to break free, you will succeed. Recall the determination that Jesus showed when the Devil tried to lure Jesus into worshiping him. “Jesus said to him: ‘Go away, Satan! For it is written, “It is Jehovah your God you must worship, and it is to him alone you must render sacred service.’” Then the Devil left him.”—Matthew 4:8-11.

Do Not Fight Alone

The apostle Paul reminds us that all Christians “have a wrestling . . . against the wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:12) But do not try to fight Satan and his demons alone. Get help from your God-fearing parents and the elders in the local Christian congregation. It may be embarrassing to confess your involvement, but it can result in your receiving much-needed support.—James 5:14, 15.

Remember, too, that the Bible says: “Oppose the Devil, and he will flee from you. Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you.” (James 4:7, 8) Yes, you have the support of Jehovah God! He will help you to break free from the snare of the occult.

* Name has been changed.

Watching the World

Alcohol Dangers

"Alcohol-related injury, disability, and deaths in younger age-groups in Europe have increased alarmingly in recent years," reports Britain's medical journal *The Lancet*. In Europe, where alcohol consumption is the world's highest, alcohol kills 55,000 young people every year. When asked about their drinking habits, one third of the students polled in Britain, Denmark, Finland, Greenland, and Ireland admitted having been drunk at least three times during the previous month. According to a study of 100,000 students aged 15 to 16 in 30 European countries, the greatest increases in alcohol consumption by youths occurred in Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, and the Slovak Republic. As reported in London's *Independent* newspaper, Britain's Royal College of Physicians warns that "advanced cirrhosis of the liver, traditionally found in hard-drinking men in their 40s and 50s, is now being diagnosed" in women in their early 20's. The college "identified alcohol as one of Britain's most expensive public health problems."

Crossing the Pacific In a Rowboat

Unaided by sails or a motor, a lone man has rowed across the Pacific Ocean in a small, partially covered boat. Briton Jim Shekhdar left the coast of Peru in June 2000, reports Lima's *El Comercio* newspaper. The adventurous navigator took along a portable water desalinator, a radio, four satellite communication systems, and a solar panel to power them all. In March 2001, nine months and



Sweaters for Penguins

More than 1,000 sweaters made by volunteers from around the world have been sent to Tasmania, Australia. Who will wear them? Fairy penguins—small birds that weigh about two pounds and live in an area often plagued by oil spills. "When they preen themselves," explains Canada's *National Post*, "they swallow the toxic oil, which sticks to their feathers. Volunteers are putting the sweaters on oil-soaked birds to keep them from ingesting the oil [before] they can be cleaned." In addition, reports the *Post*, the sweaters help to keep the penguins warm. Jo Castle, spokeswoman for the Tasmanian Conservation Trust, says that sweaters have also been used for seabirds in the Northern Hemisphere but that the pattern "was redesigned for the little penguins in the southern hemisphere."

8,000 nautical miles later, the man whom some had called "the mad sailor" stepped ashore in Australia. During his journey he survived ten shark attacks and a near-miss with an oil tanker. But his last challenge came on the final day when waves tipped over his rowboat and he had to swim the last 100 yards into the arms of his waiting family.

Good Bedside Manner Improves Recovery

"A friendly, reassuring doctor with a good bedside manner really does get better results," states *The Times* of London. After analyzing 25 studies addressing this issue, researchers from the universities of York, Exeter, and Leeds, in England, concluded: "Practitioners who at-

tempted to form a warm and friendly relationship with their patients, and reassured them that they would soon be better, were found to be more effective than practitioners who kept their consultations impersonal, formal and uncertain." In Sweden one study showed that patients "recovered more quickly and were more satisfied when treated by a doctor who assured them that they would get better, encouraged questions and spent an extra few minutes with them."

The Value of Regular Exercise

Many people try to ward off obesity, coronary disease, and other health problems resulting from a sedentary office routine by exercising vigorously once in

a while. A recent study, however, indicates that frequent modest exercise is better at boosting the body's metabolism than intense but infrequent workouts, reports Germany's *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. Dutch researcher Dr. Klaas Westerterp studied the minute-by-minute energy expenditure of 30 volunteers. The results indicated that rather than a person's trying to "balance out phases of inactivity with bouts of extreme activity," it is more effective to incorporate increased physical activity into everyday life. The report suggests: "Alternate sitting and standing with moderate activity like walking or cycling as often as possible."

Fast French Trains

In 1867 the train trip from Paris south to Marseilles lasted more than 16 hours. In the

1960's, it still took seven and a half hours. But in June 2001, French National Railways launched a new high-speed rail link between the two cities. Now passengers can cruise at over 190 miles per hour and can cover the 460-mile distance in just three hours. Along one 150-mile stretch of track south of Lyons, trains cross more than 500 bridges, pass over 11 miles of graceful viaducts, and speed through a nearly 5-mile-long tunnel. If needed, up to "20 trains per hour can run in both directions under optimal security conditions," comments the French daily *Le Monde*. That is one train every three minutes.

Kids Under Stress

"Childhood is no longer the classic period of playing outdoors, of leisure and tranquility, it was years ago," states

Mexico City's *El Universal* newspaper. Researchers have concluded that today a 10-year-old child must deal with a level of stress similar to that borne by a 25-year-old in 1950. Much of this stress results from classes and other activities that parents hope will help their child to have a better future. But the extra load "affects his health, his rest, and his very development," notes the paper. The report suggests that parents reevaluate their children's commitments so that the children can spend more time at home. But rather than doing nothing or being glued to the TV or computer after school, "the idea is that they go out and play with other children, run, ride their bikes, work puzzles, or draw."

Warming Sea Affects Wildlife

On a recent visit to remote Heard Island, located 2,500 nautical miles southwest of Australia, scientists discovered dramatic changes in local plant and animal populations. "King penguin, fur seal and cormorant populations have multiplied and areas once covered with glaciers are lush with plants," reports the *West Australian* newspaper. Biologist Eric Woehler said that in 1957 only three breeding pairs of king penguins were known of on the island. "Now," he notes, "we've got more than 25,000." Woehler said that the surface temperature of the sea has increased about 1.3 degrees Fahrenheit over the last 50 years. He added: "While that doesn't sound [like] a lot, it's more than enough to be implicated in the sort of changes we are seeing." Woehler speculated that the island's climate could eventually become too warm for some plants and animals to exist there.

Slurping Controversy

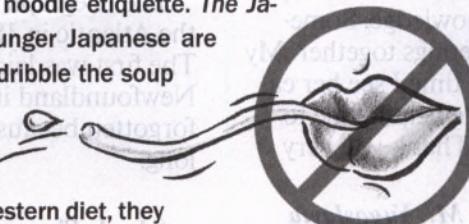
To slurp or not to slurp, that is the question—at least for customers at Japan's popular noodle soup restaurants. Many middle-aged and older Japanese feel that the long noodles actually taste better if slurped along with the broth and while still hot. They consider loud slurping to be normal and a way to show that one really enjoys the meal. But a newer generation of Japanese has a different point of view regarding noodle etiquette. The *Japan Times* reports: "Younger Japanese are more concerned not to dribble the soup onto their silk ties and [designer] dresses.

Reared on Western

manners and a more Western diet, they

are likely to be offended when those around

them slurp." This slurping issue has become part of Japan's generation gap, causing some older ones to be self-conscious about breaking the silence when eating noodles in public. Taking sides with the older generation, a major Japanese newspaper lamented: "It'll be a truly lonely feeling when nobody makes any slurping noises any more."



From Our Readers

Grandparents I have just finished reading the article "Young People Ask . . . How Can I Get Closer to My Grandparents?" (May 22, 2001) My parents have long encouraged me to have a relationship with my grandparents, but because there has always been a feud between my parents and my grandparents on my mom's side, I always felt that I really shouldn't talk to them. This article helped me to realize that Jehovah wants me to have a relationship with them. Instead of choosing sides, I'll choose only Jehovah's side.



C.L.M., United States

What wonderful articles on grandparents! I am so glad you mentioned letter writing. Even some of us 'younger ones'—I'm 36 years old—keep every letter or card sent to us. It's so precious to get something besides bills and junk mail!

M.Q., United States

I want to thank you for the articles on grandparents in the April 22 and May 22, 2001, issues. Although my grandmother lives far away from me, I have a loving relationship with her. It is just like the ones described in your articles. She is one of Jehovah's Witnesses, and she has given me great spiritual knowledge. Sometimes we prepare for Christian meetings together. My love for Jehovah gets greater every time I see her eagerly serving him. These articles are helping me to maintain this special relationship. Thank you very much!

G.M., Yugoslavia

I have a question. My grandfather is very sick, and my grandmother is low on money. How can I get close to them if I can't go out with them?

T.O., United States

"Awake!" responds: If your grandparents live nearby, you may be able to visit them or talk with them on the

phone from time to time. Considering their situation, you may even be able to take care of some errands for them. As the article brought out, writing letters can be another way of drawing close to your grandparents. In any event, your grandparents will undoubtedly appreciate whatever contact you are able to have with them.

Telephones Working in the physics department of a large educational institution, I appreciated your article "You Are Connected—How?" (May 22, 2001) It was clearly written, and hopefully it will be stimulating for those who think that physics is too difficult to grasp.

S.T., Britain

Thank you for the article "You Are Connected—How?" This is a question I have often wondered about. I am a high school student, and I love to read *Awake!* This timely publication has been a great help with many school reports. Thanks for your hard work!

H.W., United States

The telegraph cable laid across the Atlantic in 1866 was not the first. The first was laid between Ireland and Newfoundland in 1858. It has been forgotten because it didn't last very long.

L.D., Britain

"Awake!" responds: Our article simply stated that "a 'telegraph' cable was successfully laid across the Atlantic between Ireland and Newfoundland in 1866." The first was, as you observed, completed in 1858. However, it became inoperable within a few weeks and was subsequently abandoned.



SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT DAMS

ONCE HAILED AS THE SOLUTION

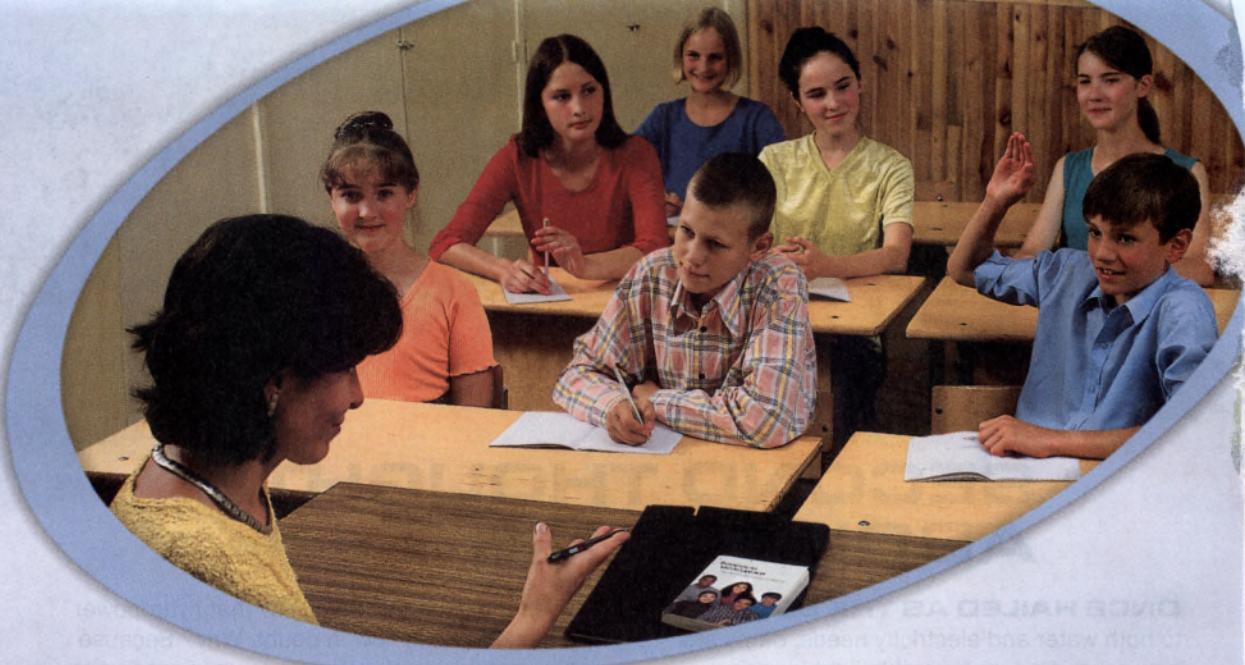
to both water and electricity needs, dams are now seen in a less favorable light in many countries. "The assumption that the benefits outweigh the costs has become less certain," says *World Watch* magazine. "Now that more than 45,000 large dams (over 15 meters high) have been built around the world, a growing body of research indicates that their costs may be higher than many ever imagined." What are some of these costs?

A major cost is the degradation of 60 percent of the world's waterways. *World Watch* notes: "Ecologically, rivers are under siege. They are being drained, diverted, polluted, and blocked at a rate that has degraded freshwater ecosystems worldwide. With more than half of the world's rivers stopped up by at least one large dam . . . , dams have played a significant role in destabilizing riverine ecology. For example, at least one fifth of the world's freshwater fish are now endangered or extinct." Also affected are oceanic fish such as salmon, which can be blocked in their attempt to swim back upstream to spawn.

Even the generally held view that hydropower is pollution free is now in doubt. Why? Because rotting organic matter that ends up in reservoirs releases large amounts of greenhouse gases. There is also the social cost. Because of dams, 40 million to 80 million people have been displaced—more than the population of many countries—often from some of the world's most fertile land.

The shift in attitude regarding the value of dams is spreading. For instance, the United States, which has a staggering total of 75,000 dams of all sizes peppering the country's waterways, is now world leader in dam decommissioning and demolition. Even the World Bank has reduced funding for dam projects.

True, dams serve some useful purposes. But as with so many other endeavors, mankind's dam-building spree has shown a lack of wisdom and foresight, confirming the prophet Jeremiah's words that "it does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step."—Jeremiah 10:23.



“Please help me! You are my only hope”

THE ABOVE IS HOW A DOCTOR at the Kaunas Medical University in Lithuania concluded a letter to the office of Jehovah's Witnesses in that country. The doctor explained:

“At work I began reading the book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*. I planned to use information from it in some of my articles, but something happened and the book disappeared. Apparently someone took it. This bothered me quite a bit—the fact that I lost something that is such a treasure. Please be so kind as to send me another copy.

“I badly need this book because I visit schools and work with young people, and this book helps me answer many of their questions. If I receive another copy, I will keep it at home and take good

care of it. This book contains something very valuable, and that is why someone must have taken it. In these difficult times, it is necessary to derive strength from somewhere. Please help me! You are my only hope.”

