The Blue Beret
June 2001

Austrians Hand Over
In this issue we extend a special salute to Austria, one of the first countries to contribute troops to UNFICYP back in 1964. The June departure of the contingent from Sector 4 ends an historic 24-year association by Austrian peacekeepers with Famagusta.

We are glad to see that Austria will maintain its record of continuous service in UNFICYP because of the stalwarts who will remain to keep the flag flying here at Force HQ at least until 2004.

Austrian and Slovenian peacekeepers wrapped up its five-year stint in the sector.

The departure of the Austrians and Slovenians reflects a contemporary and pressing military and peacekeeping reality, the need to meet and sustain troop and resource commitments elsewhere.

In the case of Austria, this includes service with KFOR in the Balkans, and with UNDOF on the Golan Heights. Both Austrian and Slovenian assets are on call for the planned European Rapid Reaction Force.

Both have served Cyprus and UNFICYP well.

Austria and Slovenia withdraw -- Slovakia takes over

A change of command ceremony held at 18.00 hours on 18 June 2001 in Famagusta marked the handing over of command of UNFICYP’s Sector 4 by Austrian Contingent Commanding Officer, Lt. Col. Gunter Kienberger, to Lt. Col. Milan Kovac, Commanding Officer of the newly arrived Slovak Contingent.

The handover ends 24 years of the Austrian peacekeepers’ association with Famagusta.

Also leaving Sector 4 was the small Slovenian Contingent of 29. They had served in the same sector alongside 114 Hungarians and 245 Austrians since their arrival in 1997. The Hungarians remain on and will now work with the new Slovak Contingent, which assumed command of the sector with effect from 18 June.

UNFICYP Chief of Mission Zbigniew Wlosowicz paid tribute to the departing contingents, thanking them for their contributions to the UN peacekeeping effort during their service in Cyprus.

UNFICYP Force Commander, Maj. Gen. Victory Rama, the Austrian Chief of Defence Staff, Gen. Horst Pleiner, and the State Secretary of the Ministry of Defence Slovenia, Mr. Janko Dezelak, attended the ceremony. Austria’s Ambassador to Greece and Cyprus, Dr. Rene Politzier, Slovenia’s Ambassador to Greece and Cyprus, Mr. Borut Malnic, the Slovak Ambassador to Cyprus, Mr. Dusan Rozhora, Hungary’s Charge d’Affairs and Representative in Cyprus, Mr. Laszlo Nikiser, the British High Commissioner, H.E. Mr. Edward Clay CMG, and the British Defence Attaché, Col Crichton Wakeham were also present.

The downsizing and eventual withdrawal of the Austrian and Slovenian forces from service with UNFICYP, because of their need to meet and sustain troop and resource commitments elsewhere. In the case of Austria, this includes service with KFOR in the Balkans and with UNDOF on the Golan Heights. Austrian and Slovenian assets are also on call for the planned European Union Rapid Reaction Force.

The Slovak Contingent with 280 troops takes over from the Austrians and Slovenians. Slovakia has considerable experience in international peacekeeping missions, having contributed troops and/or observers to missions in the Golan Heights, the former Yugoslavia, Eritrea, and East Timor.

Austria was among the very first countries to contribute to UNFICYP, deploying a field hospital with 54 soldiers in the Kokkino Trimithia area west of Nicosia in April 1964. In May 1972, an Austrian infantry battalion with 283 troops was sent to the island. The new battalion was deployed initially to the district of Paphos, but in 1973 moved to the district of Larnaca before moving on to Famagusta in 1977.

Since the inception of the mission, a total of 16,321 Austrian military - plus 276 UN civilian police - have served in Cyprus. In that time, 15 have died - three as the result of an air attack in 1974.

Thanks to the presence of a small number of personnel who will remain in the UN Headquarters of UNFICYP in Nicosia, Austria will maintain its record of continuous service in UNFICYP at least until 2004. The Slovenian engagement on the island ends this year.

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Brigadier Val Batchelor is currently Director Staff and Personnel Support (Army), and the highest ranking female officer in the British Army.

Brig. Batchelor arrived at HQ UNIFCYP to present Long Service and Good Conduct Medals, an honour one of her colleagues jokingly says is bestowed on personnel with “15 years of undetected crime to their name”.

A quietly spoken woman with a gentle nature and no family military background, she joined the ranks at 17, years of age, first serving as a private. What made her choose the army as a career? “Well, I knew from a very early age that a 9-5 job was definitely not for me. I have an adventurous spirit and I wanted a career with a challenge – and I certainly found that!” But why didn’t she enlist directly as an officer? “I knew I wanted to spend a few years as an NCO – just to have fun with no responsibility. And this experience came in very useful, since I learned how soldiers live and work.”

Following integration, Brig. Batchelor transferred into the Adjutant General’s Corps. For her efforts during the amalgamation of the WRAC into the British Army, she was awarded the O.B.E., which she describes as the highlight of her career.

This was Brig. Batchelor’s first visit to the SPS clerks of UNIFCYP, which she has thoroughly enjoyed. She was also taken on a short tour of Sector 2 where she was extremely well hosted by 12 Regiment. “The boys in Sector 2 have a very difficult job to do here, and it has been a very informative visit for me. I now have a greater understanding of the pressures they are under and the conditions under which they work.”

LS & GC medal recipients pictured below were WO2 Paul Milton (left) and WO2 Val Ramsey of the British Contingent serving with UNIFCYP.

Brigadier Visits

12 Regt Royal Artillery

12 Regt Royal Artillery has deployed to Cyprus to take over from the Queen’s Royal Lancers on completion of their six-month tour. The Regiment took over Sector 2 on 7 June, and will remain until 12 December, when it will be replaced by 32 Regiment Royal Artillery.

Also attached to the Regiment during the tour are 3/29 Battery from 4th Regiment Royal Artillery and a troop of Engineers from 9 Parachute Squadron in Aldershot.

A Brief History

12 Regt Royal Artillery is one of four Air Defence Regiments in the British Army and is the only Air Defence Regiment based in Germany. It was initially formed in 1942 as part of 15 Field Brigade and served in Iraq, then Persia, Syria and Italy during WWII. Then in June 1946, it was redesignated 15 Anti Tank Regiment.

From 1947-1951, the Regiment served in the Mediterranean and North Africa as 12 Anti-Tank Regiment. On redeployment to Celle, Germany, it was renamed 12 Anti-Aircraft Regiment.

The Regiment converted to Rapier in 1972 and then in 1996 to the High Velocity Missile (HVM) system. It has been based in a number of locations, both in the UK and in Germany, with tours being conducted all over the world including the Falklands, Northern Ireland, Cyprus, the Gulf and more recently Kosovo.

The Regiment is grouped into 1(HQ) (Shah Sujah’s Troop) Battery and three equipment batteries: 12 (Minden) Battery, 9 (Plassey) Battery and 58 (Eyre’s) Battery. Each Battery has a training affiliation with different Brigades. In addition there is a REME workshop and RLC stores section.

The Regiment has been located in Dempsey Barracks, Sennelager, Germany since moving from Dortmund in 1995.

Commanding Officer Sector 2

Lt Col IJ Ian Bayless

Lt. Col. Ian Bayless assumed command of 12 Regiment in November 1999. Prior to that he was a Staff Officer in the Directorate of Military Operations. His commissioned service began in J Battery, Royal Horse Artillery (RHA). He has since served in 40 Regt, 45 Regt, 307 Bty and was a Battery Commander in 1 RHA.

Lt. Col. Bayless attended the Army Staff College in 1991 and has experience in numerous staff posts, completing operational tours in Northern Ireland and Bosnia.

Lt. Col. Bayless is married to Wendy and they have two sons, George aged 7 and William aged 5. His interests include sailing and poultry.
TOP X TIPS
FOR SAFE DRIVING IN CYPRUS

By Sgt. Rick Whitehead

I arrived in Cyprus on 23 June 2001 for a six-month UN tour. Previously, I was a Unit Road Safety Officer at the Royal Military Police Training School in Chichester, England. Part of my job was the promotion of road safety awareness to young Royal Military Police recruits undergoing training, and also to more experienced NCOs attending the School for Advanced Training.

Prior to my arrival, the School averaged between seven and ten major accidents a year. I am glad to say that up until 23 June, only one blameworthy accident, and one unattributable accident were reported in a two-year period. Curiously, the only blameworthy accident involved a soldier from, would you believe it, Cyprus! Here are some basic tips for safe driving in Cyprus. If you follow these, I cannot guarantee that you will not be involved in an accident, but at least the chances of being involved will be reduced.

I. Do not copy local driving habits
Local drivers are not inferior drivers, just different. If you try and copy their (sometimes) aggresive style of driving, you are more likely to be involved in an accident. This is because you will not be used to driving in this way (or at least you shouldn't).

II. Drive defensively
Never assume that you know what the other driver is going to do. Just because they are indicating to turn left, does not always mean they will. We have all at some time forgotten to indicate, or forgotten to turn the signal off. Anticipate that the car emerging from the junction up ahead may not stop.

III. Reduce your speed
Drivers in all countries must get bored with hearing this, but while drivers continue to speed, Police Forces will continue to remind them. It is a fact that slowing down reduces your chances of being involved in an accident. SLOW DOWN.

IV. NEVER drink and drive
If you are driving a UN vehicle, you must not have any alcohol in your body. Remember that drink from the previous night's merriment may still be in your system. It takes a good eight hours for all the alcohol in your system to be removed (good value!). If in doubt, don't drive. It is FMPU policy that all persons involved in a traffic accident will be breathalized regardless of who is at fault. If you are driving in the north of the island, remember that the drink/drive limit is considerably less than in the south. Nil alcohol is by far the safest bet.

V. Always wear your seatbelt
Yes, it's a fact that they make you hot and sweaty, and that they are sometimes uncomfortable, but if you don't wear a seatbelt and you are involved in a crash, your car might stop suddenly, but you will not!

VI. Be patient
Plan your journeys so that you do not have to rush to your destination. It is better to get there late, than not at all.

VII. Junctions and roundabouts
Some drivers take amazing risks trying to join the flow of traffic at junctions, and especially at roundabouts. A suitable gap in the traffic will appear, do not force your way in. Remember that at the junction of a roundabout, you must give way to the vehicle approaching from your right. If you are already on the roundabout, vehicles at junctions to your left should give way to you, but beware in case they don't!

VIII. Drive on the left
Remember - left is the correct side of the road. Even when you think you are used to a change in driving habits, such as driving on the "wrong" side of the road, it is easy to forget, and suddenly find yourself driving on the right. (Probably cursing the "idiot" coming towards you on the (supposed) wrong side of the road!)

IX. Drive on the left
Remember - left is the correct side of the road. Even when you think you are used to a change in driving habits, such as driving on the "wrong" side of the road, it is easy to forget, and suddenly find yourself driving on the right. (Probably cursing the "idiot" coming towards you on the (supposed) wrong side of the road!). Driving on the left is second nature for the Brits, the Irish and the Australians, but may take some other nations some time to get used to. Beware.

X. Roadworthiness
Make sure your vehicle is mechanically fit to be on the road. Remember that due to the high temperatures, extra wear and tear is exerted on the vehicle, particularly the cooling system and tyres. Tyres will normally need to be checked more regularly for their pressures, which may be abnormally high due to the outside temperature. If in doubt, refer to your owners' manual or dealer for further information.

XI. The best way to avoid a car accident
Leave the car at home and walk instead!

Have a safe and happy journey!
The Secretary-General opens out on AIDS

How the world can win its battle against AIDS

There are two wrong approaches to the global threat of HIV/AIDS. One is to underestimate or ignore it. The other is to despair. The first can only be described as irresponsible. The second is unwise.

No continent, no society, and no group is immune from this scourge. Twenty-five million people have already died of AIDS since the mid-1980s. Of those, half were children. Perhaps another 20 million are infected.

At the same time, however, we have also seen an upsurge in awareness and action. So the world must make up its mind whether to be afraid or to be ahead of the curve.

I am deeply honoured by the decision you have just taken. It is everybody who you have given me for the great honour you have done me.

When your predecessors reappointed me to a third term in May, in Geneva, I was struck by two things. First, the world is ready to move on. Second, I must prepare myself for the reality of that change. It was the highest yet. Adolescents and children are dying in greater numbers every year. And the gap between the rich and the poor has never been so great.

We must keep up the scientific search, before a vaccine.

Fourth, we must step up the scientific search for a vaccine. And fifth, we must protect those whom AIDS has left most vulnerable - starting with the orphans.

I have sought to equip this indispensable institution so that it can adjust to the principle of the Charter.

I have sought to turn an unflinching eye on the human rights dimension. This is not an alternative but an integral part of the response. This is the right of the weakest and most vulnerable people to be treated with dignity.

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As we approach the new millennium, we must ensure that the United Nations can and will once and for all become the institution that it was never meant to be - a global public service for all the people of the world.

I labour under a constant sense of mission.

At Abuja, I laid out five key objectives for the rest of my term.

First, we have to prevent the spread of the disease, especially in the most vulnerable people. We must make sure that children are not infected, and that no one is left behind.

Second, we must stop the cruellest form of all the killer diseases: AIDS.

Two years ago, at the African summit in Abuja, Nigeria, I proposed five countries as test cases: South Africa, Swaziland, Botswana, Malawi and Mozambique. Two others will join them: Namibia and Zimbabwe.

To implement this new strategy, we must make unprecedented sacrifices. And I believe the future of the world depends on the success of the AIDS challenge.

I am well aware of the many difficulties, and the great human cost of this fight. I am well aware of the many sacrifices, and the great human cost of this fight. I am well aware of the many sacrifices that I have to make, and the great human cost of this fight.

To achieve these objectives, the world will need an annual expenditure of $7 billion to $10 billion. In the developing world, for an annual expenditure of $7 to $10 billion, we can ensure that AIDS does not spread.

By the end of this year, we could treat up to 600,000 people in developing countries. Providing treatment to infected people in developing countries.

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Two Dates To Remember

By Maj. Alejandro Alvarez

On 25 and 29 May, Argentinians everywhere celebrated the 191st anniversary of our first national government and the anniversary of our Army respectively.

In 1810 Argentina was part of the larger “Virreynato del Rio de la Plata”, and as such was under the authority of the Spanish King Fernando VII.

BRIGADIER GENERAL CORNELIO SAAVEDRA

An important figure during the revolution of 1810 was Brig. Gen. don Cornelio de Saavedra. As Commander of the 1st Infantry Regiment, “Patricios”, Saavedra counted on the loyalty of his troops and the recognition of the citizens of Buenos Aires, helping, with his support, to determine the destiny of the first national government.

With the establishment of the first junta, he was appointed the first president to general approval. His patriotism, prudence and authority helped securely lay down the first steps of the revolutionary movement.

However, when Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Spain, subsequently crowning his brother José as Spanish King, Buenos Aires did not recognise his authority.

Thus, the citizens of Buenos Aires together with the military and the Church, decided to replace the Viceroy’s authority with a patriotic junta. By doing so, the first national government came into existence on 25 May 1810. Still, the junta was nominally under the authority of the deposed King Fernando VII.

The call of freedom spread soon to neighbouring countries such as Paraguay and Uruguay, and served as a basis for our future declaration of independence on 9 July 1816.

On 29 May 1810, the new national government called upon militias and loyal regiments in order to establish a national army with the aim of defending and consolidating the security and freedom of the newborn country.

Brazilian Soldiers in ARGCON

By Capt. Jomar Barros de Andrade

Sector 1 does not consist solely of Argentinians. There is a small but very active team of South Americans, two of whom are especially different because they are not from a Spanish-speaking country: Brazil. Maybe Capt. Jomar and WOII Genildo are the only ones in the whole of UNFICYP who think in Portuguese, speak all day long in Spanish and, when they have to answer a phone call, instantly switch to English.

The Brazilian personnel of Sector 1 are based in the Operations Branch of the Argentinean Task Force where they serve as the current Operations Officer and auxiliary. It’s a very important mission in Sector 1, because the team has responsibility for controlling all incidents that take place in the Sector’s area of responsibility.

The history of Brazilian participation in ARGCON began in 1995, when the Brazilian and Argentinian Army Commanders reached an agreement to send one officer and one non-commissioned officer to peacekeeping missions being carried out by each country at the time. So, in August 1995, Capt. Spinola and WOII Teixeira were part of ATF 5 in UNFICYP, while two Argentinians were based in the Brazilian Battalion in UNAVEM III, Angola.

Today, a lieutenant and a warrant officer from Argentina serve with the Brazilian Contingent in East Timor, while Capt. Jomar and WOII Genildo are here in Cyprus, keeping alive the traditions of Brazilian soldiers in the United Nations Family in UNFICYP and the people of Cyprus.

67th

The latest Australian Civilian Police Contingent arrived in the country weary but excited about the prospects of serving in what is UNFICYP’s longest running contribution to a mission under the auspices of the UN.

The 67th Contingent represents Australian Federal Police Offices in Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra. The group brings a total of 105 years of policing experience and a good diversity of personal and professional life skills.

Whilst the majority of the 67th are newcomers to the UN system, three contingent members have previously served with the UN – Sgt. Costa/East Timor, Sgt. Smith/Bosnia, and Supt. Gyergyak/East Timor. The newcomers look forward to donning the blue beret for their first UN mission.

The 67th have taken over the duties of the 65th contingent, who were fondly farewelled, and look forward to working with the 66th contingent, their Irish CIVPOL colleagues, the rest of the United Nations family in UNFICYP and the people of Cyprus.

A PYCALO is not just an instrument

By Capt. Craig Sheehan

Ledra Palace Hotel, the appointment represents a total change of pace for Tom. The PYCALO is based at the UNFICYP station in Pyla and acts as a single point of contact for village residents regarding problem resolution and issue of permits, among other matters.

According to Tom, the most pleasant feature of his challenging post as PYCALO is the constant contact with people in the village. “One of my best duties to date was the visit I paid to the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot children’s schools in Pyla on 16 March 2001. Because St. Patrick’s Day was the following day, as well as speaking to the children about UNFICYP, I also talked to them about different aspects of Ireland and showed them a short video of how we celebrate our National Day at home.”

The children and staff in each school were very welcoming and interested in the presentation - it was a very pleasant experience.”

Tom is married to Eva and they have three children. Sarah and Daire both work in Ireland, and Emma is currently studying computer networking at college in Ireland. Tom is studying for a B.Sc. (European Studies) course with the Open University at the moment. In his spare time, he enjoys swimming, running and hill walking.


Photo credit: UNFICYP
students who lend a hand

UNFICYP lends a hand to students who lend a hand

T

he second time that this type of event has
taken place with the support of UNFICYP.

Students from as far away as Canada, Iceland, Wales and Belarus were housed in the old St. Michael’s School in the United Nations Protected Area. Edward Vernon from Malta said: “The facilities were great, but it was so hot that some of us moved our beds out to the balcony for the night.”

During their stay, the students participated in community service. Here they had a choice -- to work in kindergartens, a library, or for mentally and physically disabled children or in an old people’s home. So every morning, they divided up into their groups and travelled north or south. At the kindergartens (two south and one north), some of the youths gave a fresh coat of paint to the fence, some looked after the kids, some cooked (and ate), some weeded the garden, some cleaned windows and repaired toys, and some travelled north or south. At the kindergartens, a library, or for mentally and physically disabled children, where he helped decorate rooms by painting cartoons on the walls to stimulate the kids. Oana Georgescu from Romania commented: “The experience was great. Students from all over the world have come together during our free time -- we haven’t wasted our time, we’ve done something useful in community services.”

At the weekends, the nine Greek Cypriots hosted the international students in their homes. Time was spent shopping in the mornings in cafes and clubs during the evenings and on the beach on Sundays.

It wasn’t possible for Turkish Cypriots to stay in the UNPA or cross to the south, but the Greek Cypriot students met up with them at the north Ledra checkpoint when the group as a whole travelled to Kyrenia and Salamis. For some Greek Cypriots, it was their first visit to the north. Xeniya Economou says: “I saw it as a lifetime chance because this experience will stay forever -- we had the opportunity to be with teenagers of our age for three weeks and share and become friends. We all intend to keep in contact by e-mail and the Turkish Cypriots will participate in this. A journal will be produced about what we did and our opinion about the course.

“We haven’t wasted our time, we’ve done something useful in community services.”

The biggest fire hazard within UNFICYP at this time of the year is grass and vegetation. Your simple care and attention can prevent fires and save lives.

Below are some simple rules that can help prevent a fire which can rapidly get out of control and threaten life and property.

DON’T…

- Throw away lit cigarettes/matches;
- Smoke in offices and accommodation buildings. Use designated areas with plastic bins, even if you have ash trays;
- Throw away glass materials such as empty bottles or broken mirrors;
- Park your car near any grass or vegetation. Your vehicle’s hot engine can cause a disaster;
- Leave your vehicle engine running. Always switch it off;
- Have a barbecue anywhere else than in designated places;
- Leave your barbecue unattended. When finished, use water or sand/fuel to damp down the fire;
- Use water if electricity poles are involved in a fire. Always use fire beaters or green tree branches, especially if near UNFICYP OPs;
- Start your patrol without having at least four fire beaters in your patrol vehicle;
- Risk your life to fight a fire. Your life comes first. If it is safe, then take all appropriate measures, otherwise wait for the fire crew;
- Fight buffer zone/grass/forest fires alone; always attack the fire in groups;
- Fight buffer zone/grass fire up or down wind, but always from a cross wind direction;
- Forget when fighting fires that mines are present in the buffer zone;
- Spread buffer zone/grass/forest fire with your boots. Always wash them as you leave the area;
- Forget the fire/emergency telephone no. 02-86-4777 (UNFICYP JOC HQ).

Swedish pop group ESKOBAR donates money to charities

Into Space” is the title of a music video which was shot at the old Nicosia Airport in mid-June. The group Eskobar came from Sweden, and consisted of three young men (two, as can be seen from the photo, with very dark hair indeed). It’s the trio’s first music video. They hope it will lead them to fame back home in Sweden and abroad. For two full days they took over the old runway with all their filming and music equipment. And for Argentinian Ambassador visits

Sector 1 welcomed the Argentinian Ambassador to Israel, His Excellency Mr Gregorio Dupont, and Military Attachés Col Daniel Parra and Vice Commodore Eduardo Tzun, who began a two-day visit to the mission on 5 June.

The Ambassador’s first call was to the UNPA, where he was introduced to the Force Commander and then greeted by the Chief of Staff. He subsequently visited Argentinian members of the MFR before moving on to UN Flight.

Next he went to Sector 1 for a line tour. This finished at San Martin Camp at midday, where a parade was held to receive him.

During the parade he addressed the troops, praising the good performance he observed on the line and highlighting the importance of Argentina places on peacekeeping missions.

After the parade, Sector 1 CO Lt. Col. Garcia briefed the Ambassador and his party over the general situation on the island as well as in the Sector 1 area of responsibility.

A lunch was served at the Officers’ Mess to conclude the short visit.

June 2001 - The Blue Beret
Too hot to run? Not for this bunch!

RUNNERS’ FIESTA
By Maj. Alvarez and U/LI Lucarino

The 8 km “Runner’s Fiesta” race, organised by the Cyprus Health Runners’ Club at the Strovilos Municipal grounds of Nicosia, took place on 17 June. Having been on the island for only one month, the 22 Sector 1 competitors were not yet acclimatized to the heat.

Soon after the 6 p.m. start, the field was spread out, thanks to the fast pace set by the front runners in the few first kilometres.

Sector 1 personnel put in a very good performance, with WO Rodolfo Moyano in first position in the male age group 40/49, and Pte. Nicolas Queupo second in the men’s 19/29 category.

Aiyia Varvara to Mathiatis 5km road race
By Sgt. L. Bunch

In soaring temperatures, Sector 2’s personnel decided to enter the Aiyia Varvara Road Race on 18 June. Imagine their surprise when what was supposed to be a 5km trek turned out to be a 6.4km uphill trudge to the finish line along streets lined with spectators.

Happily, they persevered and, as these results show, did well with Sgt. Thornton, third in the 30/39 age group; Spr. Shepherd, second in the under 19 age group and Sgt. Bunch, first the female category.

The local community was extremely friendly and invited everyone in at the end for a cold drink and some cake. The entertainment included singing and dancing. The organising committee truly know how to run (or trudge) an event.

Caption Competition

Major Simon Butt, Ops Branch, is the winner of last month’s caption competition. UNICIVPOL took much pleasure in selecting Simon’s caption from a number of entries, and wonders if this makes Simon the Joker of all Butts?

Will Simon please come to the Public Information Office for his prize.

The best caption for the above photograph will receive a prize -- to be decided.... All entries should be submitted to the Public Information Office by 20 August 2001.