Hungarian Government Awards to Former WHO Staff Member

(QN is always interested to know about extraordinary accomplishments of former staff members and any honours they receive. When we learned of several awards given to Marguerite Ban, who, until 1979, worked for the International Classification of Diseases unit at Headquarters, we spoke to her at her home in Le Grand-Saconnex, Switzerland. When we entered, the 82-year young person was watching a professional tennis game on television: “These youngsters are so graceful, like lovely ballet dancers!”)

QN: Please tell us a little about yourself and the awards given you in Hungary.

Ban: Most people at WHO will remember me as Mrs. Margit Ban when I worked with Drs. Marie Cakrtova and Karel Kupka on the ICD for twenty years. That was a long time ago! I left the Organization in 1979.

I was honoured on 26 August 1996 with The Officer’s Cross of Merit of the Hungarian Republic, an award usually reserved for military officers. Also, immediately after the Second World War, I was given an award for work I did during the Nazi occupation.

QN: What exactly did you do to be honoured with such high awards?

Ban: The most recent award was for my work with the Hungarian workers movement between the two World Wars and for my activities helping Hungarian refugees following the suppression of the 1956 popular revolution.

QN: And the earlier award? We know that you were active in unusual ways during World War II. Tell us about some of the things you did that are behind this honour.

Ban: I was very active in the Social-Democratic Party when I was growing up in the 1930s. As party members, we put as much emphasis on the “democratic” part as we did on the “social”; we were as concerned with individual freedom as we were in social justice. During World War II, Hungary was allied with the Axis powers and all members of the Social Democratic Party had to hide, those from the same family in different places. But, we still tried to do what we considered to be our human duty.

When the Nazis actually occupied Hungary in March 1944, I became part of the underground. Like a few other young women, I was able to move around Budapest without suspicion and collect dues and do other things for the party. The “disguise” I wore was the costume and manner of a refined upper-class woman — well-dressed, elegant high-heeled shoes, beautifully coiffed, and with long, red fingernails; I did not look like my natural self! Certainly not like a stereotypical “socialist”, and I was not bothered by the Gestapo.

Because individuals could not send parcels to our comrades in prison, I gathered contributions from Party members and gave these to my church which could address them to our friends. I was also in contact with small shop keepers — shoemakers and other trades people. My most important job was to take individuals likely to be persecuted by the Nazis — fellow Socialists, Communists, and Jews — to these small shops to hide. During the day, these individuals could melt into the crowds on the street but at night they were too obvious. At the end of the day when the shops were closing I...
took individuals to these havens and saw that they were safely locked inside for the night.

Imagine, these small stores were sometimes no bigger than closets, they had no eating or toilet possibilities and no light or sounds could be made. These persons were forced to act as if they didn't exist - it was a matter of life or death for them. They were safe inside for the one night, but early in the morning the shops had to be cleaned out and made to look as if nothing unusual had occurred. We protected quite a number of people this way, one night at a time, and the Gestapo never did find any of our friends.

QN: Why do you think you were able to do these dangerous things?

Ban: I don't fully understand now why I did them. I think in times like this, some people do the right thing without really thinking of the consequences. There were many small kindnesses shown by many people. Let me give a small example: One day in late November when it was very cold, I was walking on the street with a friend and we met another woman wearing only a thin rain coat. My friend remarked that the coat was not warm enough. "But it's all I could save from my home when I had to flee from the Gestapo," was the reply. "Come with me to my house and I will give you a proper winter coat," said my friend. There were many such examples of human greatness. It was part of our Social-Democratic tradition.

QN: What happened after World War II?

Ban: First, in 1946, a republican constitution was adopted and a truly democratic government was formed. Then, the general secretary of the Social-Democratic Party asked that those of us who had worked in the underground accept a medal from the government, thus telling the world that not just the Communists resisted the Nazi occupation. In 1948, however, the Communists forced the resignation of the prime minister and the entire government, including my husband, who was then minister of industry, and he and I left for Switzerland and later England.

After my husband died in 1951, I settled in Geneva and began working for the International Labour Assistance, an organization sponsored by the trade unions. I was the liaison person between the ILA and the other international organizations in Geneva working to close the refugee camps by helping families emigrate to other countries. When the popular anti-communist uprising broke out in Budapest in 1956, I was sent to Vienna with several truck loads of supplies for the victors. But, the Soviets suppressed the revolution and the "victors" became refugees. I ended up helping people who had escaped from Hungary pass through Austria to other countries.

When I returned to Geneva, I continued working with the ILA to close the camps. After a few years I began working with WHO and, following twenty years with the ICD project, retired in 1979.

QN: We're looking at the medals you have been given. The first — given for your work in the underground — is about three centimetres in diameter and shows a bust of Louis Kossuth, a patriot from the 1848-49 Hungarian revolution. The second, about seven cm in diameter, is white, shaped like a Maltese Cross, and features the crest of the Hungarian Republic at its centre. Please tell us more about them.

Ban: They're so imposing, I feel that I need a swallow-tail coat and sash across my chest to wear them! As I said earlier, the first medal was given to me right after World War II for hiding anti-Nazis. Last year I was told by the Hungarian government that it was honouring those who were active in the democratic worker's movement and with anti-communist refugees. I travelled to Budapest and was given the large medal in the hall of Parliament by the President Arpad Goncz.

I still don't know why I was given this last medal, maybe it's because — through me — Hungary wanted to honour my husband and others who supported individual freedom during World War II, and also let the world know that, now, Hungary is again a real democracy.

WHO'S TO BE THE NEXT DG?

All of you must know that a new Director-General will be elected by the World Health Assembly in May 1998. As is customary, the January 1998 session of the Executive Board will consider the applications and recommend a candidate to the WHA for an up or down vote. At the moment, the facts end there!

But, there are rumours. There are said to be seven candidates before the EB: two women, one an ex-prime minister famous in United Nations circles for her work for the environment, and the other with long experience as the head of a health-related UN agency.

The remaining candidates are five men, one the Acting Deputy Director-General; three regional directors, perforce having substantial WHO backgrounds; and one ex-minister of health, having experience in health administration and the advantage — or disadvantage — of no previous WHO experience.

Take your choice! Compare your selection with that of the EB. The results will be reported in the daily commercial press; we will also report the outcome in the next issue of QN.
We were having our habitual cup of coffee, and I sensed that Albert had a problem once more. "Go ahead, tell me, what's the matter?" — "Well," said Albert, "Yesterday, at my usual annual check-up, my doctor asked me whether I knew my height and weight. Sure, I said, ever since my forties, I am 172 cm tall and weigh 72 kg. He looked at me somehow suspiciously and said: Wouldn't you mind checking this? So he put me on the balance and under the scale. I did weigh 72 kg — that was no surprise, since I had taken my weight about a week ago; but I turned out to be only 166 cm tall — six centimetres less than I thought I was! What is going on? Am I shrinking?"

Yes, my dear friend, you are shrinking, we are all shrinking with age, some of us more, some others less. Elderly people are undergoing bone loss, men somewhat less than women. According to the heavy 1323 page volume of Principles and Practice of Geriatric Medicine (M.S. Pathy, 1985), bone loss begins around 40-45 years in women, and between 50 and 60 years of age in men. The mean percentage of bone loss seems to be 10 per cent. per decade in women and 5 per cent. in men. The resulting osteopenia — similar to, but not identical with osteoporosis — is a normal phenomenon, one of the many features of aging. It is "clinically silent", the reason why we are not aware of it; but the X-ray picture shows clearly an increased transparency of the bones after a certain age. This is, however, only part of the story. The spaces between our vertebrae become narrower with age. Much of our loss of height is due to stooping, our age-long bending over drafts, memoranda, reports and statistics lying on our desks, all those precious mental fruits we were producing during the decades we spent in the office. The resulting kyphosis ("abnormal curvature and dorsal prominence of the vertebral column", Dorland's medical dictionary) makes us look smaller. It is easily preventable by assuming a correct posture at the desk and by practising sports, but once it is acquired, impossible to get rid of; so, we have to accept it.

I had no doubt: Albert was irritated by my long and pretentious soliloquy. — "So, talking of acceptance", I said, resorting to the habitual refrain of this rubric, "why don't you accept this small piece of chocolate cake? It will not save us from further shrinking, but it's rather tasty."

—T. Strasser, M.D.
(formerly CVD)

Plaudits to Dr René Collas (AFRO, 1963-1984) who has had his third book published. The novel "L'Otage Battanghi" (Charenton, Presses de Valmy (FRF 115) recounts the stories of five persons who witness the taking of a hostage. (See also QN, No. 23, Autumn, 1995)
THE CASE OF THE MISSING MONEY (UPDATE)

Past issues of QN have covered the sad case of one of our colleagues, Mr Alberto Besa of Manila, who was the apparent victim of a fraudulent bank transaction when his account was emptied against his will. A sum of CHF 154,000 was incorrectly transferred by order of a forged signature from Mr Besa's bank in Geneva to a bank in Bangkok from where the sum was immediately withdrawn by persons unknown. Since the exact mechanism and fault cannot be clearly determined, a settlement was reached between the Geneva bank and Mr Besa. The settlement followed standards established by the Swiss banking community in which both sides shared the loss and each agreed to not publicly discuss the case further.

In the absence of all details and full knowledge of the legal implications, it is inappropriate for the AFSM, and QN, to comment on this particular case.

QN has reached several conclusions from this experience, however:
- We believe that the AFSM has a responsibility to ask questions and protect the interests of our members following the "Rules of the Association of Former WHO Staff Members" included as Annex 1 to the "Statutes and Rules of the Geneva Staff Association of the World Health Organization."
- We believe that the entire "Besa" case was handled as well as possible under the circumstances from Mr Besa's first letter to our Association.
- We believe that the full resources of the WHO Staff Association, including its sub-committee on bank relations, should have been involved at the first sign of trouble.
- We believe that the bank enjoying a special relationship with WHO is not sacrosanct and should respond fully to concerns expressed by our members who happen, also, to be individual bank customers.
- We promise to fully explore to our fullest ability any situations in which our members have unaccountably lost money through actions of WHO's guest bank.

QN also cautions its readers that:
- they have primary responsibility for the safety of their money, no matter where it is held. This is especially true when funds are transferred internationally and between independent financial institutions.
- Be formal, be cautious, be careful.
- Do not divulge your financial particulars to persons other than immediate family members and trusted financial specialists.
- Protect your signature and do not sign papers unless you fully understand and agree with their content.
- First telephone your bank with your request and then confirm the request in a letter with your clear signature.
- Make certain that your bank knows your current and correct address.

QN also appeals to financial institutions holding our members' hard-earned and precious money to:
- exercise your fiduciary responsibility and
- verify transactions, especially long-distance requests for the withdrawal of substantial sums to be transferred to distant banks with which you have no formal association.
- Do not depend solely on vague signatures;
- confirm any significant request by contacting your customer at the last address of record.

QN appreciates the many letters from readers expressing concern with this case, the time taken by the individual writers, and their points of view. Because of limited secretarial resources, this note is considered a reply to each.
A sharp-eyed member of AFSMT Executive Group wondered if the arrangements proposed by the Headquarters Staff Health Insurance Service for eye operations at the Clinique du Bois-de-la-Chapelle in Onex, Switzerland, were mandatory or suggested and if a participant's own ophthalmologist can not be used for such an operation. The answer to the question raised by the Memorandum dated 22 October 1997 sent to those in the Geneva area is contained in the last paragraph: the information is only a suggestion but following it will save money for both the patient and the Staff Health Insurance scheme; the principle of free choice is still upheld.

AGEING OPPORTUNITIES

All too seldom do we see the work of WHO reflected directly in programmes of our local community. One welcome example is GINA, the Geneva International Network on Ageing started 1 October 1996 at the initiative of WHO, the Swiss Research Programme on Ageing, and the American Association for Retired Persons. This date is now promoted as the International Day of the Aged and 1999 will be the United Nations-promoted Year of the Aged.

QN will keep you posted on related activities throughout the world but, because it all started here, QN’s participating reporter tells a bit about the events in Geneva this year:

A cycle of disparate events was organized in Geneva on 3-4 October, beginning with a series of lectures and culminating with groups of the elderly parading through this stolid town. It wasn’t simply a parade, there was music and demonstrations of ways for the no-longer-young to keep fit. (One simple method for exercising limbs being urged is to use a piece of stretchy material and pull it in various directions.)

The meetings included plenty of longevity and health statistics, reminding many of us of our privileged living conditions. We heard from China (organized!) and from Africa (strong mutual support), but, while the spirit and warmth is still evident in Africa, the tragic AIDS epidemic is now severely threatening this traditional family-based system in many of the continent’s countries.

We learned that 20 per cent of Europe’s population is over 60 years of age and that this will also be true of the entire “developed” world by the year 2020. Less important than age, however, is what one speaker called the older population’s health level (espérance de vie en santé): in Switzerland, the elderly are in good health 90 per cent of the time; in the United Kingdom, persons live as long but in slightly less good health. In France, 60 per cent of those aged 65 and over are in good health, and the figures are also good for Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia.

Levels of health care was an important topic, but most speakers emphasized that the quality of life depended mostly on the individual’s role in his or her community. A speaker from Africa told of the community’s need to profit from the morality of the elderly; in many societies, wealth has been placed in younger hands, it was reported, and this has led to those societies’ indebtedness.

We learned that 50 per cent of 80-year olds living at home are in good health. Thus, it was concluded, the elderly don’t cost the community as much as is feared: most serious and expensive ill health occurs before people get old; it is only in the final two years of life that health costs go up again.

Lastly, we can tell by looking in the mirror that the body grows old, but that the mind may not. Most of today’s pensioners are urban dwellers, rather than agricultural workers (the speaker was referring to Switzerland, but this can also apply to some other countries), and are accustomed to change and following new developments. These folk have time to spend on hobbies and other projects and are able to express social roles outside the economy. The old concept of “good works” should be replaced by non-remunerated activities that are open and recognized. In addition, the relationships between children and parents are changing and it is now much less accepted for children to care for elderly parents — and there are many elderly who have no children.

A conclusion of the two-day GINA event is that there is plenty for us to do, if we keep ourselves physically fit, mentally enthusiastic, and simply look around for new opportunities!
Reinhard Lindner e-mails from Vienna:

I have just read the last issue of QN and have a question and some news. Couldn’t you send only an English or a French version of QN — depending on the personal choice of the reader — in order to save money and to cut down on the use of paper and trees and the accumulation of refuse?

Because you do not seem to have much news from outside of Geneva let me tell you about former staff activities in Vienna. Every six months or so, we have a meeting at the Vienna International Center (VIC) including former international staff from the UN and several specialized agencies. We talk about practical issues that affect all of us, like the use of the commissary currently denied to former staff.

I plan to go to Bosnia as an election supervisor for the European Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) as I did for the election in September 1996. I had similar assignments in earlier years negotiating the reconstruction of a hospital at the armistice line in West Slavonia but, unfortunately, the outcome was not successful. I also participated in a conference on Healthy Cities in besieged Dubrovnik.

I think it’s wonderful to continue participating in international work and urge others to use their professional skills in the same way.

Thank you for the QN.

—Reinhard Lindner
e-mail <rlindner@pina2/telecom.at>

QN responds: Thanks for your comments and information. The question of single language copies sent to particular readers is frequently asked and this answer may not sound adequate. If the publication is lengthy, is issued in a very large number of copies, in as many as six languages, and a large staff is available for the work involved, it can be a savings to use only one language as is done with official documents in the UN family of organizations. For more modest publications, like QN, the most efficient choice is to send out copies in the two most useful languages in one bi-lingual “back-to-back” document. The choice may not be the best but QN believes it is the most practical. (See also the related announcement on free WHO publications — you can choose the language you want!) QN is delighted to hear about activities outside the Geneva area and they will be reported when known. QN asks all readers to let us know what they are doing! We hope that Dr Lindner, especially, will contribute a short article on his activities with OSCE.

Dave loves to fly.

He flew everything from dirigibles to jet fighters in his first career with the US Navy. He flew more sedately on many of his assignments with WHO as a management officer until he retired about 20 years ago. He flew through Geneva at the end of October this year, arriving with the pumpkins for an American-style Halloween at the home of Lisa and Francesco Cirieco — Lisa is the daughter of Herb Ohlman, also retired for many years from WHO. Dave then stayed with friends, Jery and Inge Kilker, in the Haute Savoie. He also called upon other former colleagues from WHO, including Irwin “Ike” Brooks, formerly Chief, Supplies, and Ann Elter, of the former division PGS, John Morgan, BFI, and Yves Beigbeder, PER.

We admire Dave. He has been flying in this world — one way or the other — for 83 years. He packs his kitbag and tosses it over his shoulder, puts on his beret, kisses his wife, Jean, adieu, hops on an airplane near his home in Falls Church, Virginia, USA, arrives in Europe the next day, and — if he doesn’t meet an interesting companion when he lands — jumps on a train and visits friends or favourite haunts. He left us on this trip when we put him on the direct train to Toulon, in the South of France, to continue his visit with Stan Dota, another old buddy from Geneva.

Viva Dave!
QN Editor Takes Sabbatical:
PETER OZORIO BASKS IN THE FLORIDA SUN

Peter Ozorio, the only Editor QN has ever had, and his wife, Mary Lou, are taking a well-deserved vacation at their new secondary home in Florida. Peter has been the diligent mainstay of this newsletter ever since he was first asked to "help out" with issue No. 1, way back when. The style and heart of QN have always been Peter's. We miss him and hope he returns soon, refreshed and raring to go for many more issues. In the meantime, the volunteer members of the Editorial Board struggled mightily to get the present issue to press and distributed. We all now recognize the amount of time and pain necessary to put out an issue and promise to be more tolerant of delays in the future. Peter, come home!

"Photo Lady" Still in the Picture

We saw Mrs Arni on a brisk, sunny day in early November. You'll remember Mrs Arni as "the photo lady". She sat at the desk in the lower lobby of the Geneva headquarters' building, outside the bank and the post office, waiting for us to bring her our rolls of film to be developed and printed. Mrs Arni was a dependable institution, one we all appreciated.

We saw her walking on the gravel roadway between the EB block and Avenue Appia and we greeted each other. Even though we had been away from Geneva for twelve years, she still remembered us. "Do you still accept film for development?" we asked. "No, I'm not doing that anymore — I'm 77 years old. I still come to WHO to eat in the cafeteria, however; it's such a pleasant place."

Yes, we remember that.

Free Subscriptions to WHO Publications

Former staff are reminded that they can receive subscriptions to two of WHO's major serial publications and discounts on WHO's other priced publications. Persons who have left the organization (after at least six months service) can choose either or both World Health or World Health Forum to receive in one of the regular language editions. In addition, they can receive a fifty per cent discount from the normal price for other publications. The discount for other subscriptions is twenty-five per cent. An added advantage for alumni away from Geneva is that these discounts are in addition to those for developing countries. Also ask for catalogues, order forms, and publication announcements. Write to DSA (direct FAX +41 22 791 68 57; e-mail <publications@who.ch> or visit WHO's Web Site <http://www.who.ch> for more information.

Extra special: The July-August 1997 recent issue of World Health is devoted to the health of the "Active Ageing".

Health Insurance and Pensions

THE EFFECT ON EX-SPUSES OF SEPARATION AND DIVORCE

A question frequently asked by former staff is the effect on health insurance and pension benefits for a spouse if the marriage is altered by either legal separation or divorce. QN asked the relevant authorities for their answers.

The key point to remember is that both entitlements are based on the marital relationship existing at the time of leaving WHO. For coverage under the WHO staff health insurance system, the staff member must have been a participant — with his or her family — before leaving the Organization and then the choice may be made to continue the coverage after departure. In the event of later legal separation or divorce, the ex-spouse can request to remain covered so long as the contributions are paid annually. If the request is approved, the ex-spouse can remain covered indefinitely, even if the former staff member remarries or dies. However, if the former staff member remarries, the new spouse can not become covered by the staff health insurance system. For specific information about individual cases, please contact Mrs Ann T. Van Hulle-
The United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF) which administers the common system pension benefits, has revised, effective 1 August 1997, the administrative rule that seeks to assist ex-spouses of staff members and former staff members in regard to lawsuits — but AR B.4 has no effect on the conditions described above. As a participant of the pension fund, if you have not received a copy of the revised administrative rule in English, French and Spanish contained in a letter from the Secretary, UNJSPF, dated 25 July 1997, please contact the Secretary, UNJSPF, c/o Palais des Nations, Room 300-16, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland, or Secretary, UNJSPF, United Nations, NY 10017, USA.

**Tax Questions**

We are frequently asked questions about our individual tax obligations in countries we live in after leaving WHO. Usually, QN is not able to give adequate answers because we are not tax specialists and we do not have access to the national tax laws. A good source of tax information in some countries is a United Nations office in that particular country. Because of the common system, and our participation in the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund, as far as tax obligations on our pension entitlements, we are all in the same "tax boat" regardless of the organization for which we worked.

A recent inquiry from a former WHO staff member living in Italy was referred to FAO Staff Association office in Rome. If you do not live in a "United Nations headquarters country" and have tax-related questions, your Association will look for an authoritative source of information for you.

Our sister organization, the Association of Former International Civil Servants (AFICS) has prepared a 10-page document “Taxation of United Nations Pensions,” March 1996. This is a very good source — we applaud AFICS for researching and printing it — that describes national tax philosophy and briefly mentions our tax status in Australia, Austria, Canada, Germany, Hungary, India, New Zealand, Singapore, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States, and other Western European countries. The greatest and most explicit detail is given to the national and local tax situations in France, and in the Swiss cantons of Geneva and Vaud. We urge QN readers to request a copy from: AFICS, Palais des Nations, Room C-542-1, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland (TP +41 22 917 33 30; FAX +41 22 917 00 75). If you are not already a member of AFICS, also ask for an application form.

**Special Rates For Special Automobile Insurance**

Automobile insurance benefits are offered to former staff members just as they are to serving members, says a representative of CASBIA. In addition to coverage in Switzerland, the benefits are now available to individuals and their families living or having property in France.

CASBIA, the French acronym of the international civil servant automobile and motorcycle drivers cooperative, has for many years offered discounts for insurance issued by selected Swiss companies and it now, through negotiations with French companies, has extended the same arrangement to former staff living in France. Former international staff in France are also eligible for the "French civil servant" special rates from many French-based mutual insurance companies; now they are also eligible for CASBIA rebates — which may be even lower — if they are covered by any of the CASBIA partners. If you are already insured with one of the CASBIA partners, you can receive the lower rate when you become a CASBIA member.
**You Don’t Have To Pay For Your Books**

WHO has a staff lending library with current and classic English and French fiction and non-fiction books and the library welcomes former staff members and their families. The library is staffed by volunteers and is open to borrowers in the main Headquarters building, room L 24 on Tuesdays and Fridays during the lunch period — from 12.45 to 13.45 hours. The annual subscription is CHF 30 per person or family, or CHF 20 for six months.

A member may take up to three books at one time and keep them for three weeks with the possibility of renewal. New English books are ordered through the Good Book Guide in London every few weeks, and suggestions are invited. Contact Jan Simkin, responsible for English book acquisitions, at +41 22 791 25 93, for further information. Contemporary and classic French literature is also available.

**New Executive Group Elects Officers**

The newly elected executive group consists of Yves Beigbeder, Rosemary Bell, Joseph Chang-Wailing, Gérard Dazin, Stanislas Flache, Jery Kilker, Roberto Masironi, Rajindar Pal, Gérard Perrin, Vitorino Pinto, Thalanayar Sundaresan, and Alain Vessereau. At its first meeting on 26 September 1997, the Executive Group elected Rajindar Pal as Chairman, Roberto Masironi as Vice-Chairman, Joseph Chang-Wailing as Vice Chairman and Treasurer and Gérard Perrin as Vice-Treasurer. In addition, the group reactivated its Editorial Committee to oversee, initially, the publication of the association’s Quarterly News, and appointed to it Yves Beigbeder, Rosemary Bell, and Jery Kilker, and R. Pal ex-officio member.

A number of topics are currently under discussion by the group — including contact and cooperation with other United Nations associations of former staff and with GINA (see related article in this issue of QN), and the possible advancing of the date for the annual reception in Geneva. Developments in these areas will be reported as they occur.

**Annual Reception**

Several hundred former staff gathered on 12 November 1997 in the WHO cafeteria miraculously transformed for the occasion to greet each other at the annual AFSM Reception. They were joined by a good number of serving staff who were perhaps seeking answers to the question “Is there life after WHO?” We believe that everyone present would say emphatically “Yes!”

The food was good (we still marvel at the simple device for hanging one’s glass on the snack plate), the conversations lively, the dress fashionable, and the speech short. The Director-General sent his regrets for being unable to attend and his Deputy Director-General, Dr Fernando Antezana was asked to say a few words on his behalf. Dr Antezana graciously assured the former staff members how important they were to the organization, especially during these times of uncertainty about the future. In this, he was referring to the many changes taking place within the United Nations family, including the World Health Organization.

Some conversations were so intense, that they lasted beyond the scheduled closing time and drifted out to the corridors and the entrance lobby. All of us are anxiously awaiting next year’s reception when we will meet old friends, see new faces, and hear new speeches.

*(There is discussion within the Executive Group and among some members about re-scheduling the reception earlier in the year to take advantage of longer days and, perhaps, allow visiting members who may be in the Geneva area during the late summer to attend. If you have ideas about this, QN would like to hear from you.)*
Réhane Repond

(Exceptionally, QN is publishing two remembrance by her friends of Réhane Repond who died peacefully in her sleep on 9 October 1997. Her friend, Anna Knights, suggests that she can think of no better tribute than that paid to Réhane by her former colleague Ritchie Calder on the occasion of Réhane’s early retirement from WHO in 1976 after 28 years of charter-service.)

AVE ATQUE VALE, RÉHANE!

If Réhane Repond had been around in the Garden of Eden, she would have beguiled the serpent into eating the apple. And into coiling itself in the caduceus as a future symbol for WHO.

All her guile and disarming charm has served only one end — World Health, with or without the “O”.

I discovered that in our very first encounter in 1948 when Dr Brock Chisholm was making his debut as Director-General before a non-governmental body. Brock, with calculated indiscretion, had departed from his official script, which had been released to the press. He had “blown the whistle” on the secret biological warfare activities of some of the powers. This was political dynamite and I as a journalist had taken a full shorthand note.

Réhane, as official press officer, tried charmingly to persuade me to stick to the original release but did it in such a way as to make doubly sure that I would use that ad lib so that she could re-use it by putting the responsibility for the disclosure on me! Chisholm emerged as a courageous Director-General to the enduring credit of WHO. Devious? No. Subtle? Yes.
The hundreds of journalists of all nationalities whom Réhane put under the WHO spell, knew that behind the charm she would give them all the facts, the insights and the explanations. She was their vade-mecum and encyclopedia of WHO activities. She, on their behalf, exercised the same charms on the sensitive professionals of the Organization, to extract information which they feared lay journalists could not handle competently. But she could.

With Réhane’s help, WHO acquired a rapport with the press and a credibility, which, in my extensive experience, exceeds that of any other international organization.

WHO without Réhane will be like Geneva without Le Jet d’eau. Her force, her bubbling effervescence and her sparkle will be missed by visitors to Headquarters but not, I hope, by me.

—Lord Ritchie-Calder
(Reprinted from WHO’s staff Dialogue, 1976)

Réhane Tells of the Armoured Geneva Tram

A friend and former colleague from Morocco writes:

Réhane Repond was a founding member of the WHO Secretariat and many of us remember her charm, vivacity, and competence.

During my first visit to WHO headquarters at its first venue at the Palais des Nations, I found myself by Lac Léman with Réhane and a group of her friends for a traditional yet simple meal: she was next to me on the bench. I remember her so well — we last spoke on the phone but a month or so ago but now, alas, we shall see and hear her no more.

That supper, 47 years ago, was at the crossing from the war to peace, we were all filled with immense new hopes. The new United Nations and its agencies were making peace secure and starting to re-civilize the world. Around the lakeside table we talked — as survivors — of times we had shared but which we never wished to see repeated; the war was still very real.

Réhane, though Swiss, had been with the Free French and worked for General de Gaulle’s mission in New York. She was well informed of the Resistance and of the efforts made to bend Swiss neutrality to help the Free French. Réhane recounted this story of the very un-neutral manoeuvres of a Geneva tram:

“Inside the Geneva depot, a tram had been concealed in a corner of the repair shop. In 1944, little by little, its windows had been replaced by steel sheets, the driver’s platform was similarly lined, while its upper deck was made into an armoured casemate. Volunteers, all Swiss and owners of sporting rifles, were joined in late August by a couple of French frontiersmen who had Bren light machine-guns ... and a plan.

Early one morning, in the first week of September 1944, the armoured tram roared across the Franco-Swiss frontier at Moillesulaz. A devastating barrage from its assorted weaponry swept the Nazi military posts on the border. The return fire from the old-age pensioners guarding this neutral front was not lethal so the tram thundered on towards Annemasse, targeting military signposts and other marks of the occupation. It stopped dead, just short of the Annemasse terminal when the authorities in Geneva, alerted to this breach of neutrality, cut off the power to the overhead wires.

In the Haute Savoie, there had been a mass uprising at dawn that day but the tram arrived in time to assist in the Liberation and its crew were given a hero’s welcome by the Resistance. Without
power, though, the tram was stranded in “enemy” territory and Swiss volunteers were unable to go home. They were obliged to hide for a period since their abuse of neutrality was a criminal offence.

A final bother for the Genevese was that, between two inventories, an entire tram had disappeared. In the face of such unprecedented events, it was decided that nothing had occurred — the Armoured Tram became a non-event and so escaped the record ... until this moment.”

Sitting by the Lake, we stopped talking about war and started to feel confident about the peace. When we separated, I felt a wonderful optimism about the future and an immense elation at the prospect of spending the rest of my working life in such company.

Ave atque vale Réhane. May those who join WHO today contribute to the Organization and to the life of their colleagues as generously and as sensitively as did you. Those who come after will profit from all you have left behind.

—K. S.-L.

Qasbah des Oudaiyas, Rabat

(As this may very well be the first time this tale of the armoured Geneva tram has seen print, QN would like to hear from anyone with more information about the events described.)

In Memoriam

PAT DEACON

It is with deep sadness that we announce the death on 17 June 1997 of Pat Deacon, after a relatively short illness. Many of her friends stayed in touch with her in the hospital and at home where she passed away peacefully. Pat’s funeral was 24 June 1997 in Salisbury, United Kingdom.

Pat worked in Budget in Geneva since she joined WHO in the 1950s and her duties brought her in contact with many staff members. All those who knew her will remember her kindness, her pleasant manner, her friendly and unfailing helpfulness in advising people to resolve many intricate budgetary problems. Very patient and discreet in her nature, Pat always made time available for everybody even though it resulted in her having to work for many additional hours.

Pat will also be remembered for her love of walking in the hills and mountains and for travelling to many parts of the world including places which were not the usual tourist areas. This she managed to keep up after her leaving the organisation. May she continue to walk in peace.

LLOYD JEROME CHRISTOPHER

Lloyd Jerome Christopher died of cancer on 29 January 1997. He was born in Trinidad in 1933, qualified for his MD in 1959. After his training in general medicine, he entered clinical pharmacology, serving with WHO and as a senior lecturer at the University of Dundee before entering the field of geriatrics in 1978. At Pembury his special interests were stroke medicine and Parkinson’s disease, and he established facilities for both conditions. He retired to Scotland in 1994 where he continued his hobbies of music — particularly playing the violin — and golf. He is survived by his wife, Ellie, and their son and stepson, and four children from his first marriage.

Acknowledgements: The Executive Group wishes to thank those who have made possible this issue of QN, especially the Editorial Board (Yves Beigheder, Rosemary Bell, and Jery Kilker); Marianne King, Secretary; Linda Gajardo, translator; Ted Wiseman, photo research; Jim Duppenthaler, computer support; Humphrey Matthey of Glasgow, Scotland, layout. Editor Peter Ozorio is on sabbatical.

Signed articles express opinions of their authors; unsigned articles are prepared by the Editorial Board and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Executive Group.
IN MEMORIAM

Deaths announced (since last list)

ADANHOINDE, D. 28.08.95
AKRIBAS, Aristos B. 22.11.96
ALBI DE LA FUENTE 17.04.97
ALEXANDER, H. 20.10.97
AL HASANI, Hisham 01.04.96
ALVES, O. 17.11.95
ANGULO, H. 08.03.97
ANTROBUS, A.C.K. 02.11.95
ARUNAVEJA, Sakorn 12.04.95
ASSIMACOPOULOS, J. 16.12.95
ATKINS, C.H. 13.12.96
ATKINS, J. 24.11.96
AVRANDJIAN, V. 21.02.96
AYROLLA, Jacy 25.05.97
BACHMANN, Günter 15.10.97
BARKHUUS, Arne C.V. 26.09.96
BARROW, Ruth Nita 19.12.95
BAYA, Patcuma 01.02.97
BAZABIDILA, J. 09.12.96
BELTZUNG, Irene 31.05.95
BERNAL, Lopez C. 05.01.97
BETANCOURT, Lucy 11.05.95
BIERSTEIN, Paul 07.04.96
BINIAKOUNOU, E. 14.05.96
BIRRELL, Andrew 01.07.95
BOWLES, Patrick W. 21.06.95
BLUMENKRANTZ, R. 30.12.96
BORBA, José C. 28.09.96
BOYLE, Peter 02.12.95
CAKHAR, Bhagwan D. 01.01.95
CALDEYRO, Barcia 02.11.96
CALDITO, Teodoro V. 26.02.97
CALLABY, Flora M. 26.05.96
CANTUARIAS, E.O. 25.08.89
CARNEY, John G. 22.01.97
CATIPOVIC, Ante 17.12.94
CHANG, Nan Hwa Liu 15.02.97
CHAVES, P. ??12.95
CHERKESLY, H.J. 12.03.95
CHILDRESS, W.H. 19.04.97
CHRISTOPHER, Lloyd 29.01.97
CLASSEN, Irma 26.07.97
COCHET, André P.E. 20.04.95
COE, H.M. 17.07.95
COLES, Jesus A. 15.01.96
COLLER, Carlos D. 20.10.95
CONE, Robert 07.06.95
CORPATAUX, Evelyne 16.03.97
CROSS, H.D. 18.12.95
CULSHAW, Kathleen 21.07.95
CUMPER, George E. 15.09.95
DEACON, Patricia 17.06.97

DEMBELE, Bagna 03.98.95
DE NERVAUX, Loys M. 08.09.95
DESCOMBES, Marcel 07.01.97
DHINGRA, Shanti L. unknown
D'IPOLITO, G. 02.01.97
DJUKANOVIC, V. 08.12.95
DORAISINGHAM, H. 13.05.96
EALY, Hilda M. 08.01.96
EMMANUEL, Jean C. 21.10.95
ENG, Ah Yew 17.02.97
ESTRADA, Remedios 04.01.95
EWALD, Gerard 14.06.95
FIRLA, Leszak P. 04.12.96
GADE, Anne-Marie 10.04.97
GALATI, Salvatore 22.04.95
GANICKY 03.03.95
GARCIA-GILL, G. 17.06.96
GARNER, George 15.12.94
GATTI, Franco A. 12.09.95
GIDDINGS, Frances 10.07.95
GRIFFITH, Gwilym unknown
GUYE, Anne-Marie 19.06.95
HASENBRING, D.O. 03.04.96
HERLIN, Ruth 06.09.97
HERNANDEZ, Louise 10.02.95
HILL, Rita D. 13.10.95
HINDLEY, Smith R. 17.04.96
HINGANO, Siona P. ??09.95
HOLSTEIN, Max 05.97
HLOMABU-MALM, K.E. 23.08.95
HORWOOD, Lorna M. 19.10.96
HOSNY, Lucette 26.11.95
HUGHES, Thomas P. 16.01.95
ISMAIL, Yousef S. 03.03.95
JACQUET, Etienne R. 19.04.95
JALIQUE, Rodolfo 27.06.95
JIMENEZ, Jorge 12.11.95
JUNGALWALLA, N.K. 08.05.95
KAGAN, Aubrey R. unknown
KAPAL, Ewald 25.01.95
KOMLAN, Jerome B. 14.09.95
KONUNENBURG, F. 22.05.95
KRISHNAN, K.K. 28.05.96
KUDICKE, Gunter G. 20.12.94
KUMAR, Raj unknown
KWAN, Mun Choe 07.12.96
LABRACHERIE, Janine 19.12.96
LAMBERT, Henri 27.11.96
LARSEN, Marta 18.10.96
LOMBARDO, R. 16.11.96
LOPEZ-BONILLA, J. unknown
MACHER, Cesar A. 23.05.97
MADSEN, Ellen O. 22.05.95
MANGER, Arthur J. 22.07.96
MANTILLA, Luis F. 24.06.95
We have recently learned of the deaths of John Burton, Paul Brès and of André Valot—we will ask colleagues to write about them for our next issue.