MOSSAIC REUNITES HUNGER STRIKER WITH FAMILY

by John Kovacs

Thanks to MOSAIC, Zygmunt Korycki, a 34-year old Polish refugee, finally ended his struggle with Canadian Immigration authorities - including a hunger strike staged last June - and was reunited with his family this summer. The happy moment came after two years of struggling with bureaucratic delays by immigration and health authorities. Korycki waited anxiously for weeks for his wife Hannah and daughter Kamila to arrive. On August 15th, he met them at the Vancouver International Airport and gave them their first hugs and kisses on Canadian soil.

In 1988, Hannah had applied for Canadian visas for Kamila and herself in Poland. At the time, Korycki instructed her not to withhold any information from the Canadian Embassy in Warsaw. So Hannah explained to the Canadian Immigration authorities in Warsaw that her daughter had been experiencing some kidney problems for which she was undergoing treatments. It was this disclosure that began to adversely affect Korycki's sponsorship application for Hannah and Kamila to come to Canada and dashed his hopes for a quick reunion with them.

Immigration officials told Korycki that Kamila would not be issued a Canadian visa because her kidney ailment posed a potential drain on the Canadian medical system. In 1989, Korycki gave Immigration a medical certificate which stated that Kamila's condition was completely cured. Unfortunately, the family was forced to endure another year of separation before the federal immigration and provincial health authorities agreed to allow Kamila to enter Canada.

In an interview two days before Hannah and Kamila finally arrived in Canada, Zygmunt recalled the pain of their separation: "My wife is a telephone operator in Poland and she would call me long distance," he said. "She thought that I was not trying to get them visas, but I told her I'm trying all the time and every time they continued on page 7


A Farewell from our President.

by James Barber

Nobody finds it easy to explain MOSAIC, without bringing people down to the office, walking them through the ever-changing, multi-colored faces and tongues at the reception desk, around the halls where the bilingual counsellors have their offices, past the busy-ness of the classrooms, past the computer lab ...

"This is Job Corps, this is an employment program, this is the Women's Program, this is the trainee lunchroom, but we frequently use it as a daycare centre ..."

It all sounds so complicated, while in fact it is a simple, very basic organization, supplying the very specific need of a very specific group of people -- the refugees and immigrants who have always been the seed corn from which Canada has grown.

But Canada is no longer an agricultural country -- we can't put people on a farm today and say they'll soon learn to handle a plough.

We plant ideas and computer programs today instead of corn, and we harvest more ideas. We employ over 80 percent of our employable population in service industries, which basically means we are spending most of our energy in looking after one another, in making sure that the ideas will produce a good crop.

I've been trying for six years to accurately define MOSAIC to my friends and to strangers. This is my last year as President and I think I have finally come to terms with the question. We are gardeners -- pruners, planters, fertilizers, waterers and (sometimes) weediciders.

If you want to know any more, you should come down to the office.

Goodbye and thank you all.

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Marriages - Arranged, Free Choice or ... ? the debate continues

by Fil Fernandes

A handsome young turbaned man was speaking to about 30 young Indo-Canadian men and women at MOSAIC. There was pride and confidence in his voice as he said: "I feel privileged to have this problem." Beside him, the only non-Indo-Canadian man in the room briefly lowered his eyes and, with a small sigh, confessed: "I feel unprivileged that I don't have this problem." Instantly the room filled with laughter. The problem? The possibility of an arranged marriage.

The issue was explored at a July forum jointly organized by MOSAIC's Hemi Dhanoa and the Young Indo-Canadians. Dhanoa, the agency's Hindi-Punjabi counsellor, and members of the youth committee wanted to discuss the issues surrounding Indian marriages. The session was entitled "Indian Marriages - Arranged/Free Choice or ...?" Parempal Pawa, a youth committee member, welcomed everyone.

Facilitators were: Dr. Anand Paranjape Professor of Sociology, at SFU; Dr. Abdul Hassam Professor of Education at UBC; and his wife, Mrs. Nasiri Hassam, who has recently completed her M.A. in Multicultural Studies.

Arranged marriages are not a new concept; nor are they specific to Indian culture. From the early dynasties of ancient China to present day computer dating, marriages have been arranged for various reasons: social, economical and political.

The theme of a Romeo looking for his Juliet has been a constant throughout history. As Dr. Paranjape put it, "Lo and behold, he [Romeo] finds her [Juliet], and she says yes, and they both live happily ever after ...

Except not all Romes meet their Julets, or vice versa, and then the drama really starts."

Many great plays of different ethnicities are based on this premise. Shakespeare's classic tragedy, ROMEO and JULIET, set in Italy, explores the conflicting relationships between the two lovers and their opposing families. In more recent times, the Jewish tradition is illustrated in FIDDLER on the ROOF. We see the progression as each of the four daughters makes their specific request to the Matchmaker and gets married to increasingly unacceptable choices as far as Jewish culture is concerned.

Universally, matchmakers do not receive formal training. This highly skilled art is passed down, learned and developed through years of observation, experience and modelling.

Women are becoming leaders in various aspects of society by virtue of their education, their freedom, the need to help support the family and by society's greater recognition of their accomplishments and capabilities in a 'man's world.' Thus, because of careers, women's philosophies and ideologies

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regarding marriage and childbearing are shifting.

One university student challenged the group asking: "What is the reason for getting married? Most of us recognise that one ... of the reasons people get married is to have their relationship legitimized. Why do any of us have to have any of our relationships legitimized by anybody else?" Is this thought provoking query also voiced within the communities of rural India, or is this an example of "Western influence?"

Participants discussed how Western society tends to look at arranged marriages as an "Indian monstrosity." Yet in North America and in Europe, couples within affluent circles and royalty are still being matched to keep the wealth, power and political policies within those circles, they noted. What makes these "monstrosities" any different within the Indian cultures in India, or in Canada, or within the affluent societies of other cultures? they asked.

Indian marriages and the dowry system vary from region to region. In his book, MARRIAGE and the FAMILY in INDIA, author K. Kapadia states: "Hindu marriage can be defined as a religious sacrament in which a man and a woman are bound in permanent relationship for physical, social and spiritual purposes of Dharma, pro-creation and sexual pleasure." WEBSTER'S NEW INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY defines dowry as "the money, goods or estate which a woman brings to her husband in marriage." This can help to take some of the initial financial responsibilities off the new husband.

Dr. Hassem pointed out to the forum participants that the dowry system "also helps to ratify the marriage and to consolidate the friendship between the two families. In Europe, the dowry is not only to enhance the desirability of the woman for marriage but also to build power and wealth of great families ... and to determine the frontiers of policy of state."

What are some of the concerns of Indo-Canadian parents? Are they now more concerned with preserving their culture than with social, economical and political issues?

In a later interview, Ms. Dhanoa explained: "Marriage in our community does not only take place between two people, but between two families. A blending of two families takes place. Therefore, family compatibility is given much more importance over compatibility between the bride and the groom. Also, ours is an adult-centred society. Each individual earns their rights by age, education, experience and maturity. Parents consider young people as not being are the last people that you would go to." After marrying, having her own family and living with both sets of in-laws, she now realises the value of parents, has respect for them and finds them a great source of support.

Do parents always make the right decision for their children? Not always. Dr. Paranjpe states that "arranged marriages are deceptively seen as successful ... It is the same degree of shame that has kept

Participants candidly discuss the pros and cons of arranged marriages.

sufficiently mature and experienced to make important decisions -- especially that of marriage. Parents also fear the negative influences of the dominant Western culture -- the excessive freedoms granted to the young people -- and they may tend to become overly protective of their children. Children translate this behaviour as being suffocating and may become resentful. A breakdown in communication may occur. Both parents and children are being pulled in both ways and each needs to become sensitive to the fears and concerns of the other and persistently seek out ways and means to address this in an ongoing everyday basis."

Forum participants discussed the problems arising when their heritage culture collides with mainstream Canadian values and expectations; peer pressure can be one of the most challenging. Recalling her years of growing up in Canada, Mrs. Hassem said: "One of the values I picked up in Western society is that parents are not to be respected, they don't know what they are doing, there's something wrong with them and they persons living under the same roof without really an emotional bond. The lack of divorces doesn't in itself illustrate the quality of life."

The student who earlier questioned the value of marriage responded, saying: "Morals can not be extracted or divorced from the times which they were cultivated ... Arranged marriages had great social, cultural, religious and moral significances. But in a different context, geographically and chronologically, they take on different significance or as the case may be, a lack of significances."

The forum concluded with an increased awareness of the need for greater openness and more communication between parents and children. Each generation speaks a language not understood by the other. The consensus was that arranged marriages are not necessarily such a horrible thing. Indo-Canadians are very fortunate to have the best of both worlds. Living a bi-cultural existence is very challenging, but it doesn't have to be negative.
Concerned Canadian Helps Unite Refugee Family

by Nancy Knickerbocker

We often take for granted the everyday joys of family life -- being alive and all together, sharing a meal, giving a hug, going for a walk. But for immigrants and refugees long separated from their loved ones, these are often the most cherished memories of the past and fondest dreams of the future.

MOSAIC's Latin American counsellor, Roger Barany, says that a high proportion of refugee claimants endure years of involuntary separation from their loved ones. For Latin Americans raised in a more family-centred culture than the Canadian mainstream, they are especially painful times.

"We see so many cases like this and it gives us an incredible feeling of helplessness," he says. "We see how unresponsive the system is and how hard it is on people to hear that it could be years before their family members may legally come to Canada. But we don't want to raise false hopes."

Barany says that the emotional cost is high: stress-related psychological problems and marital breakdown are quite common. "The delays and uncertainty are so great, that families often grow apart. It breaks down the families' ability to communicate and share their intense suffering as they wait for refugee determination."

Sometimes families feel that only a miracle could bring them together again. This is the story of one family who experienced that kind of miracle.

Frank and Elisabeth

Frank and Elisabeth Ayala were forced to leave their native El Salvador after the death squads went on the lookout for Frank because of his involvement in the student movement. "It's a miracle of God that they didn't kill him," Elisabeth says. Thousands of students, teachers and other civilians in opposition to the government have been abducted, tortured and killed since the eight-year-old civil war began.

Frank fled first in 1983. Elisabeth followed him a year later, reluctantly leaving her babies; Rebecca and Reinaldo, in the care of her brother. The couple arrived in Vancouver in 1986 and were granted refugee status two years later.

Determined not to rely on welfare, Elisabeth and Frank didn't let their lack of English hold them back. They found jobs, worked hard and slowly picked up the language along the way. Elisabeth started out as a dishwasher in a Vancouver restaurant co-owned by Stephen Huddard, who later hired Frank as well. Back then they were simply grateful for the work, and they never dreamed then what a key role their new boss would prove to play in their family life.

As the months became years, the Ayalas persistently begged immigration authorities to allow their children into Canada. But the bureaucracy was complicated, the process slow and the language barrier formidable. They were always told just to wait, to be patient.

As the war intensified back home, Elisabeth's fears for the children haunted her. She was worried sick and almost gave up hope. She even began to question her deep Christian faith, feeling abandoned by a God that could keep her family apart so long. All she had were photographs, and the cold comfort of the telephone to maintain her long-distance relationship with her growing daughter and son.

Stephen

As Stephen got to know the Ayalas and see their increasing desperation and loneliness, his heart went out to them. He often accompanied them to the Immigration offices and came to share their frustration at the seemingly endless delays. "My heart was pounding in my chest when he told me he was actually going to the bank for the money to buy the ticket."

Luckily for Stephen, he met three Canadian diplomats, including our ambassador from Costa Rica, on the flight to the Capital San Salvador. The Canadian of-
Officials were very helpful in getting Mexican transit passes and verifying documents authorizing Stephen to accompany Rebeca and Reinaldo out of the country.

On July 20, almost seven years after their father was forced to leave them, the children arrived at Vancouver International Airport with Stephen. Frank and Elisabeth laughed and wept for joy as they held their eight-year-old daughter and seven-year-old son for the first time since they were babies.

A couple of days later, Elisabeth recalls, she and the kids were in the bank. A friendly teller congratulated her warmly, saying she had seen their reunion on television. She laughed, recalling how the teller teased her that she could be rich now because she won't have to spend so much money on long-distance phone calls.

Stephen modestly downplays his role in bringing the family together again, and points out that the Ayalias are only one of the families torn apart by the war. "There are millions of refugees, both inside and outside of El Salvador, and they are all separated from their loved ones. I'm happy I was able to help this family, but I hope that a just peace can be achieved in El Salvador so this agony can come to an end."

Meanwhile, the Ayalias are still working hard and planning for their children's future. Rebeca and Reinaldo are shy, polite children who seem bewildered and delighted by the drastic change in their young lives. They are looking forward to school this fall, where they will first enter ESL classes.

Asked what advice she has to offer other parents who are separated from their children, Elisabeth says: "Don't lose hope. Keep going back to Immigration, even when they just tell you to wait. And keep asking God for help."

MOSAIC's Barany says that delays in family reunification seem to be getting worse, and he predicts that if Stephen hadn't intervened, the Ayalias children would surely still be in El Salvador.

Enjoying a scrumptious spread, are our Executive Director Vera Radio and President James Barber, along with the graduates of the Women's Program and Job Corps.

Need Information? It's All Here!

Esperanza Gomez checks out the infamous "MOSAIC Information Board" in our reception area.

Juice and cookie time for the children of the Latin American Mother's Group.
by Fif Fernandes

Thanks to her positive attitude and MOSAIC's support and training program, Teresa Zamora in three years has gone from being a refugee to working as a senior accounts payable clerk with Cheni Mines Inc.

In 1987, Teresa fled El Salvador with her husband José and three-year-old son, Rodrigo. She was three months pregnant. Canada opened her arms to her children. Here they found peace; but they had no other family, no friends and no jobs.

Shortly after arriving in Canada, José developed severe arthritis and was unable to work. Although the Zamorras were grateful to the government of Canada for social assistance, Teresa knew that for her own self-esteem she needed to work and support the family.

In El Salvador, Teresa worked as an accountant and as a secretary to the owner of a coffee export business. Here in Canada, she was afraid it would be difficult for her to get a job in an office because of her poor English. She sought a new career. She enrolled in English classes and in a seven month cooking program at Vancouver Vocational Institute. But trying to get a job as a cook proved to be very frustrating. "Most of the places I applied, it was only the men [that were working as cooks] and not women," she said.

Day by day Teresa's self-esteem began to diminish, but her optimism and positive attitude kept her dream alive - - the dream of working in an office. Her eyes light up as she recalls: "It was a dream that I kept in my mind. I said I was going to get a job in my occupation ... It might take me three or four years or more. I will continue to study English and I will find something. But I didn't know it would be this early."

At a pre-natal class, Teresa met Miriam Maurer, a counsellor from MOSAIC. In Spanish, Teresa told Miriam of her work in El Salvador and the frustrations and challenges of finding work in Canada. Miriam recommended that Teresa take more English and then come to MOSAIC to further her training.

Teresa took Miriam's advice. Two years later when her English improved she applied to MOSAIC's Women's Training Program coordinated by Pamela Theriault Coots. She was accepted.

In September 1989, Teresa and 14 other women started the training program. For the first three months they attended classes everyday. Although they all had office experience, they needed to learn computer skills including spreadsheets, business English and life skills which helped build their self-confidence, self-esteem and assertiveness skills.

Teresa found the best and the hardest part of the program was self-marketing. The women were asked to go through business directories and the Yellow Pages to find 100 companies that they could contact. The program then wrote letters of introduction and the women set off to 'pound the pavement.' Teresa was accepted by five firms.

In December 1989, Teresa started as a trainee in accounts payable with Cheni Mines Inc. As a trainee, she was still on a training allowance provided by the Canadian Employment and Immigration. Teresa genuinely states: "I am very grateful to MOSAIC for the opportunity they gave me and to the government for supporting this program. I hope more and more women will get into this program. And I hope this program will expand."

By April 1990, the company offered Teresa a permanent job as a junior accounts payable clerk. Since then, she has been promoted to senior accounts payable clerk. Teresa's immediate supervisor, Carol Ailhes, is very pleased with her work. Teresa envisions herself growing with the company.

Teresa's success and positive attitudes have also helped her husband. His health has improved and he has found temporary work. In September, José looks forward to starting a computer program.

Teresa is a charming woman charged with determination, self-assurance and an abundance of positive energy. When asked how she developed this attitude, her face radiated with love and pride as she remembered her father's words:

"Never give up.
You have to believe
In yourself that you can do it.
With a positive attitude
you can do anything."
How has MOSAIC helped you today?

Katy Rashidinejad

"I am a refugee claimant from the backlog. My counsellor Margaret (Polish Counsellor) is helping me to fill in a job application."

Jacek Targosz

"I lost my bus pass. Mr. Fung (Chinese counsellor) is phoning the bus service to get a replacement pass for me."

Mrs. Wai-Chan Mak

"We want to bring a nanny from Colombia, so our twins can retain their culture. But since our perspective nanny doesn't speak English, she has been denied the visa. Emma (Spanish counsellor) is helping us write a letter to the Canadian Embassy in Colombia."

Alba, Jennifer and Justine Rizd

MOSAIC Reunites cont'd...

[immigration officials] tell me to wait." Last May, faced with seemingly endless delays, Korycki returned to Poland for a three-week visit and saw his daughter for the first time in four years. "She didn't know me. She was five when I left Poland and now she's nine years old! She's got long black hair, you know ...."

On his return home, Korycki became desperate and told immigration officials he simply could not wait any longer. Emotionally drained, Korycki claimed that he was going to stage a hunger strike unless Immigration gave him a definite date for a decision on Kamila's visa application. Korycki said the immigration official told him to go ahead and strike. So he did. He took his sleeping bag and camped out in front of the New Westminster City Hall on June 22, 1990. He stayed there for 11 days, refusing to move or eat any food.

Marie Roche and Bill Wilinski of MOSAIC came to visit him there. They knew he was in a poor emotional state and was in need of support from MOSAIC. They wrote a letter on his behalf to help speed up the immigration process. They also urged him to abandon his hunger strike before he caused himself serious damage.

On the tenth day of his hunger strike, Marie Roche and Bill Wilinski told Korycki to go home, because they had received some optimistic news from Canada Immigration. They had asked MLA Grace McCarthy (Vancouver - Little Mountain) to help with Korycki's problem.

On the 11th day of Korycki's strike the Minister of Health, John Janssen, issued the health approval for Kamila. Wilinski of MOSAIC and F. Mazurek, President of the Polish Canadian Congress, rushed over to deliver the word of his victory -- an 11th hour rescue facilitated by MOSAIC. Korycki finally agreed to abandon his hunger strike.

Later Korycki was frightened at the thought of what damage he could have caused to his health from the hunger strike. He had lost 11 pounds and a doctor instructed him to eat soft foods at first until he felt stronger. Otherwise, he was perfectly healthy.

Korycki went back to his metal polishing job in New Westminster two days later. He seems relieved to be back at work earning a living once again. "I am not going to starve now, anyways ..." he says with a grin.

In an interview after his ordeal, Korycki said he wished immigration authorities would understand one thing: "I am not an animal." He only wanted a decision from them. He feels that if the immigration authorities really cared, there would not have been such a delay. He hopes his hunger strike is viewed positively by others as a symbol of what great pain he has suffered because of a seemingly inhumane bureaucracy. He hopes that immigration authorities will now realize the importance of quicker responses to human needs.

"We want to enjoy life like everybody else ... It's a new life for us!" said Korycki. He is very pleased his family is now reunited, and is very grateful to the support MOSAIC continues to offer them.

The Vancouver MOSAIC Fall/Winter 1990 7
by Markus Bockmehl

You may as well have a good time if you are going to do fundraising! That is the philosophy behind MOSAIC's THIRD ANNUAL NIGHT OF 100 DINNERS, to be held on October 20th, an extravaganza on international gourmet cuisine involving many restaurants and private homes around the city. One hundred diners for about five to ten people each will feature a creative variety of cultural themes. Judging from the success in the last couple of years, it is set to become a Vancouver classic. Last year one hostess served a 14 course Persian feast, while another banquet featured $450 worth of wine.

In addition to the various participating restaurants, several corporate and local business sponsors have again rallied behind this project to help make it a success. Canada Safeway, VanCity Savings Credit Union, Purdy's, Mark Anthony Group, Design Group Marketing, Andres Wines, Heritage Press & Stationers, Profile Business Supplies and David Hunter Florists have all contributed to this event.

Participants will enjoy a thoroughly delightful evening, and proceeds from the dinners will help MOSAIC continue the important work it does with immigrant communities in Vancouver.

Given the great potential and resourcefulness of immigrants, and in order to retain our cultural and economic vitality on the world scene, this is a great investment.

For a broadening experience and an all around good time in aid of a great cause, why not consider being a host or attend one of the many 100 Dinners being held in restaurants and homes around the Lower Mainland. Join us in helping to celebrate Vancouver's Multicultural diversity on October 20th -- join us for a NIGHT OF 100 DINNERS.

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MOSAIC DONATION FORM

Multilingual Orientation Services Association for Immigrant Communities
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