

“ When I Was Hungry You Fed Me ”



Jean-Pierre Rummens, the European Director of the organisation *Feed The Hungry*, was recently in Australia and *Alive* caught up with him. Jean-Pierre has a heart for those who are suffering and he is passionate about his work. He talks about the situation in Europe today and the nations that are ‘closed’ to the Gospel.

LG: 800 million people go hungry every day—what is your organisation doing to help alleviate this situation?

JPR: Many years ago I gave up the dream that we could help everybody, as there will always be some people who would not make it. It was hard for me to get hold of this—to understand this. We want to help as many people as we can—bringing food and bringing the gospel wherever we go.

LG: When there are enough resources in the world to feed everyone, what’s going terribly wrong—why are there so many people starving?

JPR: Recently I read the story of the Samaritan and when I read the story again, I realised he was really sharing. He probably took some clothes off to bind up the wounds of the person who was suffering and he almost got killed. He spent his own resources, his own money, to help somebody. I think that is the biggest problem in the world—people are not willing to share anymore—it is proven that everybody around the world could be satisfied. Nobody should be hungry, it’s just a matter of sharing, distributing the things we have and there would be enough for everybody.

Unfortunately, there are political reasons—this country doesn’t like to share with that country, because of some disagreements. Also, some countries, like North Korea, don’t want any help. I was

recently in North Korea and they need help, but they won’t accept the help.

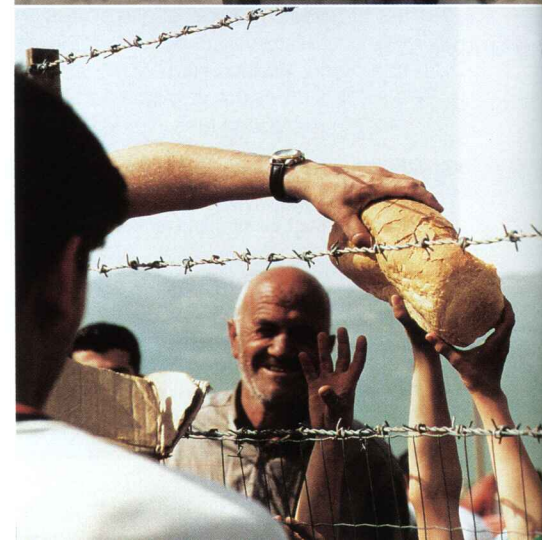
LG: So, what are the governments and the United Nations doing about this situation?

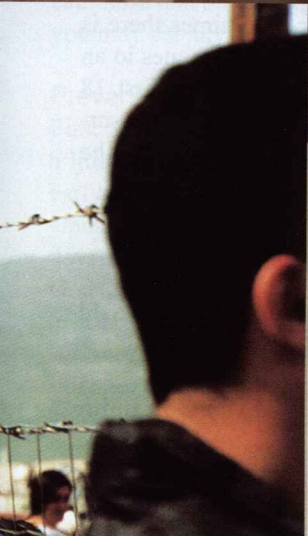
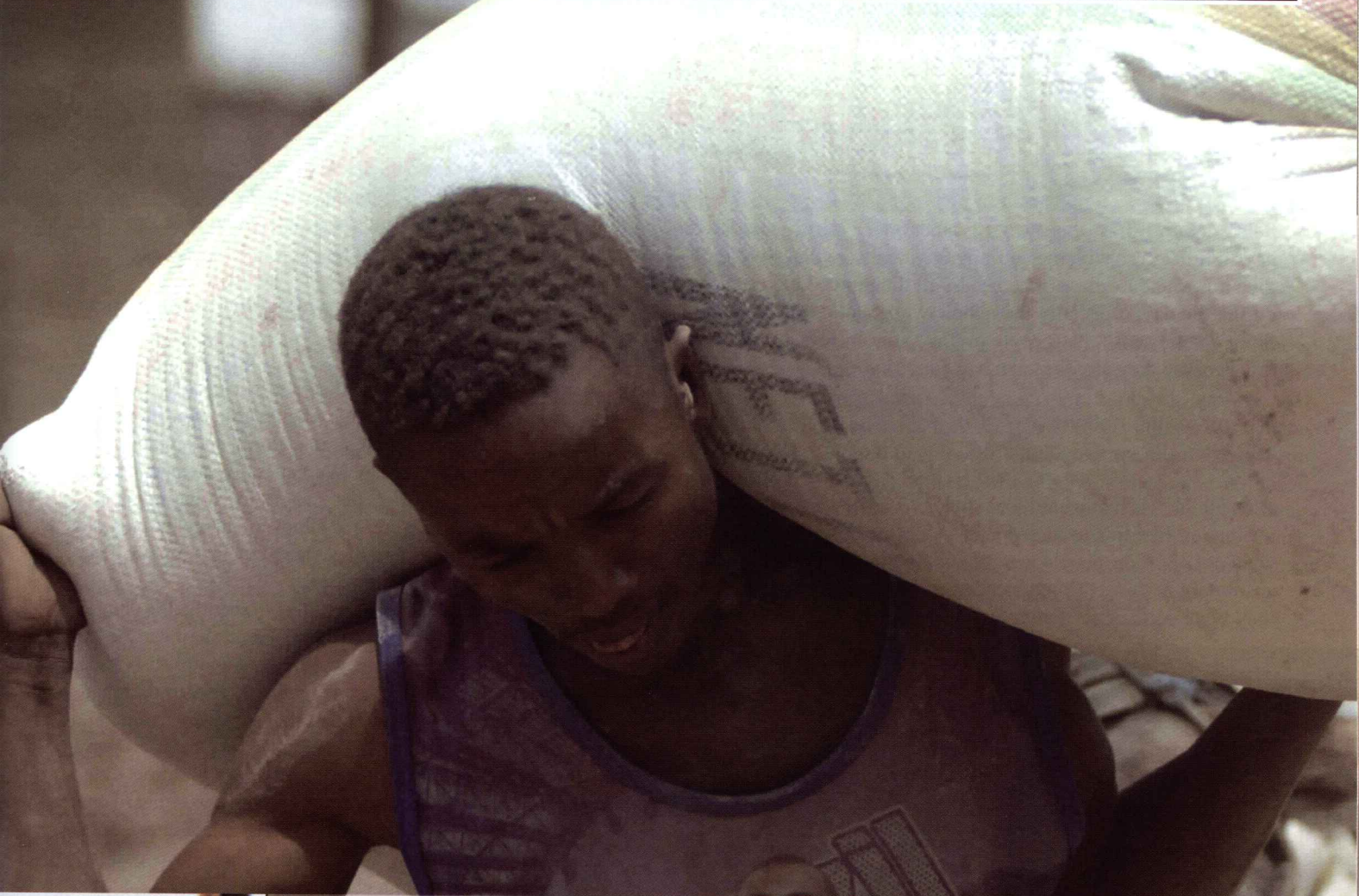
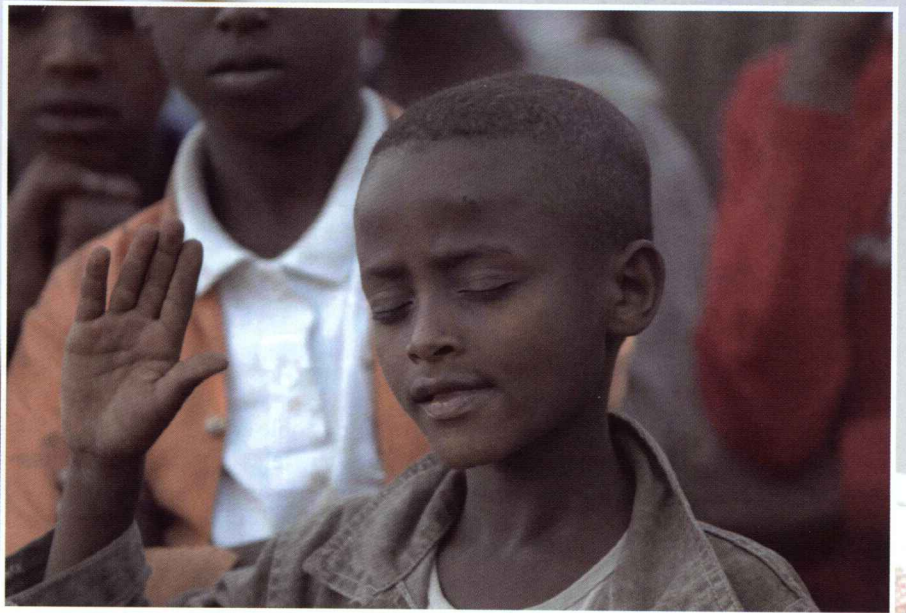
JPR: Actually, I always call the United Nations, United Nothing. The UN is too big—I would say it consumes too much money to run the organisation itself. My observation, in all the travels I do, is that they have an office somewhere, they have some soldiers somewhere, but they really don’t know where the people are, where the need is. For example in Afghanistan, they are in the big places and big cities, where everybody else is going, but they don’t really go outside where the need is.

From television to the mission field

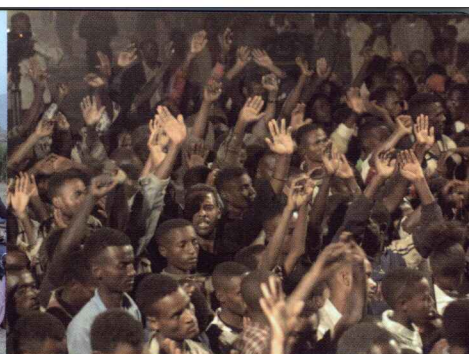
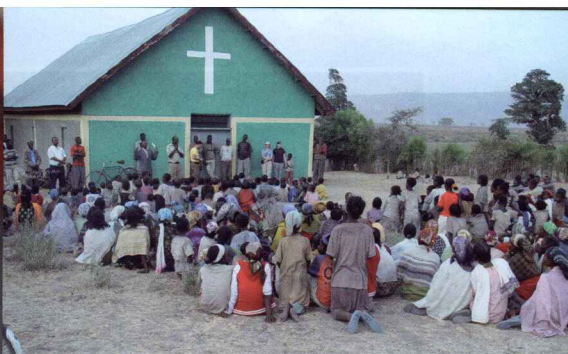
LG: What is your role in missions?

JPR: We have a saying in Germany, ‘I am the girl for everything,’ so I run the German office and I am also responsible for Switzerland and Austria. For 15 years I have been a field representative, so I go on site to make assessments of what really happened; what can we do, can we get the food, where we can ship to, where are the churches we can work through? I take pictures and videos and I write stories and testimonies. I also preach the gospel, if I have the chance, because we don’t just want to bring food. Jesus said, “Man shall not live by bread alone.”





After the communist regime went out of office – hundreds of people were standing around the streets doing absolutely nothing. Things needed to be done everywhere, but they were so used to getting commands of what to do – they were not able to think for themselves.



LG: You were once a well known television identify in Germany—why the change?

JPR: Sometimes I was on television. I love to help people and in the television business you always set things up. The television and movie business was always staged but when I was traveling, doing movies, I was behind the cameras, behind the lights and I saw people in Asia, the conditions they were living in.

When I became a Christian in 1975 I decided to live a different life, a real life, an honest life, so that's why I changed. Now I use my camera skills to show viewers what people are going through.

LG: It wouldn't be easy to see children sick and malnourished, let alone die—how do you cope with this?

JPR: For myself I found a solution, or recipe. After a day on the field is over, I pray about what I experienced during the day. I have a little cross with me and I put my hands on the cross and I give this to the Lord—all the needs, all the things I experienced during the day, especially the people who cannot be kept alive. Sometimes I sense that people prefer to die instead of recovering, because they are in such a bad condition.

A heart for the nations

LG: What did you encounter on your first trip to Albania?

JPR: I think it is really hard for someone who never went through a situation like this to understand. After the communist regime went out of office, people were standing around the streets doing absolutely nothing. Things needed to be done everywhere, but they were so used to getting commands, they were not able to

think for themselves. They couldn't take the initiative to change things. For example, there were big holes in the streets and a little car would literally fall in there, but nobody made the effort to take some cement or tar just to fill the hole up—they were just standing around looking at the holes. There were orphans, children and older people and nobody took care of them. We saw children who were laying in their mess for a week and nobody took care of them. Some children were already dead when we came there and nobody had taken them away. The same with elderly people in old people's homes—they were laying in their mess for days and days with nothing to eat.

Westerners would be killed for \$5 to \$10, so we had to have a bodyguard all the time. But we shipped some goods from Italy, just across the Adriatic Sea, to start up a soup kitchen. We were able to arrange for some orphans to go to Germany as we found some parents to look after them. We worked for a number of years in Albania. We also were involved in the Kosovo War. We ate dog meat and rat meat, but we didn't know it at the time, fortunately.

LG: China and North Korea appear to be very close to your heart – why those two countries?

JPR In both countries, the Christians are very badly persecuted—they are living under hard and unbelievable conditions. We as Christians, in Europe and Australia, don't understand what Christian freedom really means. We can stand at every street corner and preach the Gospel, but people in China cannot do that. Many people in certain areas in China are happy having one page of the New Testament and they share it. Christians still end up in prison if they evangelise too much.

North Korea is even worse—I was there recently. It's dangerous for someone to admit they are Christians; they can be put into a concentration camp and never come out again. Also, there are many orphans there. However, officially there are no orphans in North Korea because the leader maintains he is the leader and father of children and North Koreans really take that seriously, so they say there are no orphans. But there are children living and dying on the streets, especially in wintertime. I heard that between 40,000 to 60,000 children would die this winter.

The officials don't want to admit that they have children who have needs. Some orphan children sleep without a mattress or blanket, they have to sleep on the floor, sometimes there is not even glass in the window. If a newborn orphan comes to an orphanage the officials don't register the baby for the first 18 months, simply because they don't know if the baby will survive this time, so they don't bother to go to the effort to do the registration.

LG: Do you see yourself staying in missions in the future?

JPR: Oh yes, I believe everybody is in full-time ministry. I would like to be some kind of a missionary until I die. (A)

Lynn Goldsmith
Editor - Alive

North Korea used to be very much a Christian country before the Communists took over in 1945. Pyung Yang, the Capital of North Korea, was once called the "Jerusalem of Asia."

In 1945, Korea was liberated from the Japanese occupation. And, in spite of the fact that Korea had fought against Japan, unfortunately, Korea was divided by the allied forces into South and North Korea. The Russian Army again occupied North Korea. Immediately the socialization of North Korea started, including the persecution of Christians.

There are two officially permitted churches and at least 500 home churches totalling about 10,000 to 12,000 Christians. How many underground churches there are, we never know. But they exist. This has come through secret communications through third countries. There are no communications whatsoever through the border.

Even from North Korean governmental reports, an increase of about 50 new Christians every year is apparent. The communistic government may be able to destroy freedom; they may be able to destroy democracy; but God they cannot destroy.

