

## 'Through Gates of Fire'

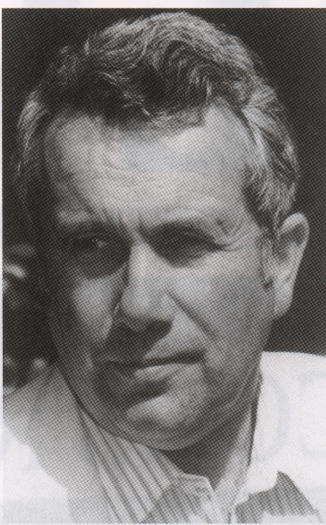
This is the title of the latest book from Suburb resident Martin Bell (published this month by Weidenfeld & Nicholson), and of a talk he will give on 8 November in Free Church Hall (for details, see *What's On*, page 6). Here Elizabeth Cockburn reviews his book.

This is not for the faint-hearted. Martin Bell himself call it a 'rough ride' for the reader, as chapter after chapter chronicles the world's disorders.

He has seen so many of them at first-hand – as soldier, war correspondent, MP and now special envoy (unpaid) of UNICEF. The list goes on and on: Israel, Vietnam, the Gulf, the Balkans, Afghanistan...and he warns that taking our own peace and freedom for granted is an illusion: "We could be dangerously mistaken." Wars no longer have frontiers. Terrorism has no conclusion.

He points out that humans kill their own more than any other species does. Not only weapons of mass destruction proliferate: there are some 700 million small arms in circulation. Suicide attacks multiply and most casualties today are civilians, not soldiers (including victims of the retaliatory cluster bombs dropped by the British).

Martin Bell reveals how little of TV and other news coverage can be trusted. Correspondents 'from the front' may be miles away from any action and military authorities (anxious to minimise casualty figures) may censor or distort information. Equally, TV channels have a bias towards bad rather than less exciting good news regardless of the panic they sometimes irresponsibly fan. Few



reporters have ever served in the Forces and experienced warfare themselves and as to the 24 hour news channels, he dismisses these as rumour bazaars. Examples include a report of Saddam Hussein's death and a non-existent uprising in Basra. Terrorism and hi-jackers thrive on the massive publicity so willingly given to them worldwide. If only broadcasters would stick to what they know and not what they guess and adopt as their slogan not "We got it first" but "We got it right," he says.

Martin Bell's UNICEF work is among children orphaned by war, maimed by land-mines, traumatised by being trained to kill with Kalashnikovs. Seeing so many tragedies is almost unbearable, but he repeatedly says that "Things don't always go from bad to worse" and points to hopeful trends in, for instance, Northern Ireland and Bosnia. But, if we don't help to stabilise countries wrecked by yesterday's wars, they will, he warns, destabilise others – ours included. An obvious example is

the smuggling from Bosnia to Britain of handguns, drugs and quasi refugees. He describes recently visiting a refrigerated warehouse with 4500 bodies (thousands more elsewhere) from the Srebrenica massacre of 1995 still to be identified by DNA. Some of the lives we could have saved but didn't – a lesson to learn for the future.

And then there is Africa. In Malawi, half of the eleven million inhabitants are children, orphaned by AIDS. The average life expectancy is merely 39. Famine, drought, flood – war is the only tragedy Malawi has not experienced but the rest have combined to sink the country just as effectively with Nature's waywardness compounded by man's mismanagement and world indifference. African disasters are now so numerous as no longer to be newsworthy and "future historians will mark out the twenty-first century...as the time when the rich and powerful of the world finally gave up on the poor and wretched." (While I was writing this review the world trade summit broke up, unable to agree on any policy to help the poorest countries.)

As to affairs at home, Martin Bell is scathing about the party system. This breeds too many stooges in the House of Commons, voting as they are bidden (the antithesis of true democracy) while to fight s, each party courts money from rich individuals or companies who expect favours in

return. He warns that, "Either we succeed in renewing our democracy or we will watch it slide away down a slip-way of sleaze and cynicism." The adversarial model is flawed; the mud-slinging in the House unproductive. More Independents are desperately needed.

On the world stage too, the values of democracy become shaky after events like 11 September, "We intern without trial, we rush draconian measures through fearful legislatures...we establish one set of rules for our troops and another for the enemy's." We respect the UN and the Geneva Conventions only when it suits us, with terrorism provoking us to retaliation regardless of justice and civilised rights. As to the "fourth estate" (the press), Martin Bell castigates the trivialisation of news, football taking precedence over foreign wars, for instance. To keep circulations up and advertisers happy, overseas news is downgraded in favour of gossip about royalty and showbiz celebrities. And then there are the spin doctors...and the false prospectus which took us into the Iraq war.

Martin Bell warns that what is to come is an unmapped minefield for us. What other wars of regime changes may America, with its unprecedented might, involve the world in? There must be a revival of democracy, with decision-making no longer so perilously remote from the people. His book is a wake-up call.

## News from Fellowship

August at Fellowship is usually a 'quiet' month. We close Fellowship House for the whole month to enable necessary repairs and refurbishments to be undertaken. This year, fools that we are, we decided to update our premises by having a new kitchen installed. Those of you who have had kitchen work done will, I know, sympathise with us.

Preliminary work by our local electrician revealed that all our wiring was not only faulty but dangerous so the whole place had to be rewired. Our local plumber inspected the radiators and found they were all rusting inside. They both tackled these two large jobs with energy and efficiency but when it came to

installing the new kitchen things weren't nearly so good. The firm that undertook the work subcontracted certain aspects and the subcontractors themselves subcontracted – you can guess the rest. No one person seemed to have overall control and the carefully worked out 'deadline dates' came and went.

Suffice it to say that, by the skin of our teeth, we did manage to re-open on 1 September but only because certain Fellowship members worked their guts out to restore everything – we owe them a great deal. My only consolation is that, hopefully, we shall not have another such trauma during my period of office!

EILEEN WHELAN

## Free Church music recitals

A celebration concert was held on 4 October to thank the community for the support assisting the restoration of the 1912 Norman & Beard organ. Over £100,000 was raised. For the first time for many years, the magnificent voice and range of the restored organ was heard through the skilled playing of the former and current directors of music, Ken Dougall and Christopher Mathews. The music included works by Vaughan Williams, Holst, Widor and also Alan Bush and Maxwell Davies. This social occasion was crowned with a splendid commemorative cake made by Katharine Cheng.

A lunch time organ concert will be held on Friday 31 October, starting at 1.15pm. Christopher Mathews will this time play works by Bach, Dupre, Herbert Howells, Liszt and Vierne. Bread and cheese will be available from 12.30.

A further lunch time concert on Friday 28 November, again starting at 1.15pm, will be given by Christopher on the piano and Odinn Baldvinsson on the flute. Those who have heard Odinn's and Christopher's entrancing playing will want to come the performances of the Monteverdi flute concerto and works by Saint-Saens and Taffanel.

SIMON ABBOTT

## Half price theatre tickets

RA members can now benefit from 'two for the price of one' tickets for selected West End theatre performances. Shows available

are listed at [www.hgs.org.uk](http://www.hgs.org.uk) and vouchers can be collected from the Gallery (Temple Fortune end of Hampstead Way).

## A neighbour's tribute to Anna

Peter and I moved into 4 Asmunds Hill in January 1970. We had fallen in love with the house at first sight but we could never have imagined what a fantastic choice we had made. In these little Suburb cottages neighbours might so easily be too close for comfort – but for 33 years we were blessed with the most wonderful neighbour, Anna Fuchs-Marx, with whom we enjoyed what we called our mutual admiration society.

For the first couple of years we were a little jealous that spring seemed to come earlier in the garden of number two – until she shared with us the secret of the plastic daffodils strategically 'planted' among the real ones!

Mrs Fuchs loved her garden and in the summer, she virtually lived out there. We would greet one another over the hedge and rejoice in the beauty of the day. She had an inspirational

enthusiasm for life – who else would have planted a new apple tree in their late nineties?

These are just a few of the many memories we will keep: her voice just the other side of the hedge talking animatedly to her plants; the day she pruned the untidy-looking wire running across the front of the house and cut off her and our telephones; her calls for help when there was no hot water or heating – and firm denials that she had fiddled with the thermostat or the timer on the boiler; and above all her rapport with people of all ages and her special love of children.

It's hard to believe that she won't be just the other side of the hedge when we step into our garden. We miss our dearest neighbour but we are so glad to have known her.

YVONNE OLIVER

## Quintin Iwi

His family and friends are deeply mourning the loss of Quintin Iwi, a distinguished barrister and member of the local Liberal Democrats, who died in July.

Kind and considerate, he was a popular local resident who lived nearly all his life on the Suburb. He attended St Paul's School and the Oxford University, where he read law and became president of the Oxford Liberals. As a barrister, he had a particularly wide-ranging practice, and was, for a time, head of his chambers as well as legal assessor to the Royal College of Nursing.

In the 1960's, he was elected as a Liberal councillor to Hendon Council, one of the rare occasions

when a non-Conservative has been elected as a councillor for Suburb ward. He also held many other posts over the years within the local Liberal party, including acting as agent or organiser at elections, and he contributed greatly to the party's policy development within the Borough, always producing a clear and wise view of the matter in hand.

He was a member of Alyth Reform Synagogue and contributed memories of his life in the Suburb to the Suburb Archives, particularly his experience of living there during the war.

He is survived by his wife, Diana and by daughters Sally and Kate from his previous marriage.

## Chloe Hilary Gear

Chloe who died suddenly in August was one of the Suburb's most talented artists. Nottingham born but coming to London when she was two and Welgarth Road later, Chloe attended the St Nicholas Montessori School and Camden School for Girls. After a year's course at Brighton College of Art she studied interior design under Sir Hugh Casson at the Royal College of Art obtaining her batchelors and masters degrees. After a career with the GLC, designing playgrounds, play sculptures and landscapes, she practised as an interior designer before taking up etching as a full time profession. She was chairman of the Friends of Queen Mary's in Hampstead

and, a keen gardener, was a committee member of the Hampstead Horticultural Society.

Chloe's etchings, which combined design with botanical accuracy and mood of subject, were enormously successful and at the Garden Suburb Gallery we were proud to be listed among the distinguished galleries worldwide where her work was exhibited. We have lost a friend who, not only acted as a Gallery volunteer but was always pleased to demonstrate her own special etching technique that resulted in those enchanting pictures. Our thoughts are with her many friends and especially with her husband John Cecil-Williams.

RICHARD WAKEFIELD

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