



CHILDREN OF THE ANDES

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P.O. Box 3442
Dublin 14

Irish Photographer, Liam Regan, has recently returned from a three month voluntary stay at the Foundation in Colombia. The following is a first-hand account of his experience there.

AT last, my dreams were being fulfilled as the plane touched down on the runway at Bogota Airport. This was to be a thirteen week journey into the unknown. With mixed feelings of anxiety and enthusiasm, I approached the Colombian Airport Authorities, who stamped my passport with a ninety day visa.

Every night on the patrol, we packed enough food for all the children we hoped to meet, plus a little extra, but we never had enough. Without exception, each group we met, had a dog for protection. Whenever we gave out food, the dog was given the first offering. They were pleased to be able to feed their animals. Their generosity towards one another was great to watch. When the dogs had been fed and the children were offered bread rolls for themselves, they broke them in half and passed them on. I couldn't help but think of the children from more privileged backgrounds, who when sweets are brought for them, race off without sharing anything. One night returning to the ambulance, a boy of eight stopped me. He wanted to know if I had any curry left which I could give him. I was able to make up one plate for him and as we drove off I noticed that he was feeding another boy, who would not join us earlier, because he was high from glue sniffing and felt uncomfortable about talking to us in that state.

The children don't usually allow anyone except Jaime to enter their world below ground in the sewers. I was privileged to have had the opportunity to go down with him one night. I had an hour's sleep earlier in anticipation of a long night, Jaime

came straight from work. I was wearing clothes that I intended never to wear again, he was wearing his wet-suit. We went to a street as wide and as busy as O'Connell Street, Dublin. Jaime started to hammer on the tarmac road. I was standing on the kerb about twenty feet from him. In response, I heard knocking close to where I was standing and called to Jaime. He knows the sewer network well. He paused a moment and pointed to a manhole which he felt was our most direct route down. Because of the heavy traffic he parked the ambulance close to the manhole and we dropped eight feet into the darkness and the wet. We could hear voices calling "Papa Jaime, Papa Jaime". We waded in that direction with our torches. The tunnel narrowed and we had to crawl as there wasn't room to kneel. Jaime directed me off to the left tunnel and he went ahead. I crawled for almost five minutes. At this point I saw a huge rat racing towards me. I stopped, put my head down and hoped he would keep going. He did. Soon I saw pieces of water-logged carpet and realised I was nearly "home". Attracted by the torch light two puppies appeared in front of me. I was temporarily blinded by another torch light shining in my face. Two boys, ten and twelve, enquired about "Papa Jaime" and I brought them and the pups back to meet him. They told him about a friend of their's who had been injured. He was sleeping in a crack in the tunnel wall. Jaime brought him to the surface and contacted the "Patrol Doctor" - who looked after him.



**Liam and Rescue Patrol
(Liam 2nd front right).**

It was now 5 a.m. and we had about ten children and a man of forty-five in the back of the ambulance. We went to a fast food restaurant, where Jaime, complete with wet suit and wellingtons bought hot dogs for us all.

Overall, my time in Colombia has been a period of personal growth as well as an opportunity to help in a small way with a huge problem. Apart from the practical work that Jaime and his volunteers are doing, he is helping to raise a level of consciousness and debate about the plight of the street children not only in Colombia but in all of South America. Rest assured that the funds which are raised are going to a very worthwhile cause. I just hope that Jamie Jaramillo can continue to draw on his reserves of energy for many years to come.



1 A.M.: Young street child, Bogota.



2 A.M.: A volunteer gives a 6-year-old street child a haircut.

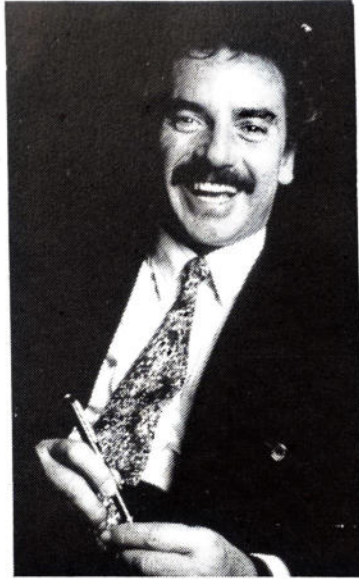
NEWS FROM HOME

JAIME JARAMILLO, Founder of Fundacion Ninos de los Andes, paid a "flying visit" to Dublin in late August. Though time was short, Jaime had a most productive day. First on the agenda was a visit to R.T.E. where Jaime did a twenty minute interview with Jerry Ryan. Next, Jaime had a meeting with a member of a film crew who are interested in travelling to Bogota to make a documentary about Jaime and the children and also about the "Death Squads". After this Jaime did an in-depth interview with the Cork Examiner Newspaper and IT Magazine. At lunch time the Area Organisers had a brief meeting with Jaime and were able to ask him questions about the situation facing the children and himself now. Last stop was at 98FM Radio Station where Jaime spent a very emotional hour with Fr. Michael Cleary. They seemed like old friends by the end of the show and Jaime was quite overwhelmed by Fr. Michael and by the instant response via telephone calls during the show. Some people actually turned up at the radio station just to shake Jaime's hand or to give him a donation. It was a very heartening experience for Jaime.

We have had a very good response to all Jaime's interviews and though his visit this time was very brief, Jaime promises to stay for a longer period of time next year.

Watch Out Congratulations

THE December issue of IT Magazine will be publishing Jaime's recent interview. It will be on sale at the end of November.



Jaime Jaramillo in Dublin.

TWO very successful Fashion Shows were held recently in aid of the charity. One was organised by Select Boutique, Roebuck Shopping Mall, Dublin, and the other by Breege Lennan, in Kilkenny. Breege enlisted many of the staff of St. Luke's Hospital to grace the catwalk and a fun time was had by all! The money raised by both shows (in excess of £2,500) will buy much needed medical supplies and educational equipment for the Hope Centre.

Good Luck!

TO Cliona Lambe and Blathnaid Walsh, Newbridge, who have bravely offered to do a "Sponsored Parachute Jump" in aid of Children of the Andes. We will be thinking of them on the 14th November.

Adopted!

THE Fourth Year students at the Holy Family Secondary School, Newbridge, have adopted our charity for this school year. As well as fund-raising for us, the girls have decided, through their media studies class, to make a film about the charity in Ireland. They hope to show this film to schools in their area. We are very pleased to have such young groups helping us with our campaign.



Volunteer giving medical attention to a street child.

New 5p Appeal Continues

THE New 5p Appeal continues and thanks to your very generous support for Brendan Flynn's brainwave, we have so far raised £1,500 in 5ps. We have decided to let the appeal run into the new year as so many people wish to continue collecting for us.

School Visits

SCHOOL VISITS have started again and we ask you to let us know should you think a school in your area would be interested in a slide show and talk on the subject of the plight of the sewer and street children and the work that we are doing to help them. We have a SCHOOL PACK ready should you be interested.

Area Organiser

AS we now have an AREA ORGANISER for Limerick, Cork, Dublin, Kildare, Mayo and Tipperary, we are keen to expand into other counties. Please let us know if you would be willing to represent us in your county. This Christmas each Area Organiser will sell some Christmas Cards for us in his/her area. This is a great help to us and is an example of how very useful an A.O. can be.

News From Colombia

UNFORTUNATELY the "Death Squads" have recently started their campaign against the street children again. Jaime informed us that he has seen posters on the streets inviting the public to come to the "Extermination" of the street children. A recent report from UNICEF stated that there are now twice as many street killings in Colombia than in Brazil.

Despite this very disturbing and most disappointing news, we are very happy with the enormous progress that is being made through Jaime and the Foundation. Jaime tells us that the Hope Centre is flourishing and that the number of children in it's care is increasing daily. We have over 1,500 children between the five centres who are under the protection and care of the Foundation.

Rescue Patrols have increased their street visits to seven nights a week. This enthusiasm shown by Colombians is very encouraging.



DOWNTOWN BOGOTA
One of its 5,000 street children.

Death warning terrifies Bogotá street children

Timothy Ross in Bogotá

THE STREET children of Bogotá are terrified: they have been invited to their own funerals. Posters have been plastered up along block after block of the grimy central streets, announcing the extermination of delinquents.

Bearing a black cross, the posters are invitations to attend the burials of the delinquents who operate in that area of the capital, and exhort the public to join the funeral cortège.

Colombia has one of the world's worst records for the killing of children. After a recent massacre of street urchins in Rio de Janeiro, the United Nations Children's Fund announced that, although 1,000 minors are murdered annually in Brazil, in Colombia — with a quarter of the population — twice as many die violently every year.

Most of the killings are carried out by self-proclaimed clean-up groups. But never before have they announced their intentions so blatantly.

"They mean us", said a frightened boy, aged 14, looking at the posters on 22nd Street. "We are just dirt; they can kill us whenever they want."

Ironically, the posters appeared on the eve of a conference in Bogotá on violence and cruelty against children. Volunteers from the Renacer Foundation, an organisation which helps vagrant children, have been touring the area, warning them to get off the streets at night.

Stella Cárdenas, a psychologist with Renacer, said: "We take this very seriously. Two teenage girls were shot down earlier this week. We fear this is a public call for a massacre."

"They have paid to print all these posters and stick them

up," said Martha, a pretty, drug-dependent, occasional prostitute, aged 14. "That means they are organised and serious, and mean to kill us."

The death notices are signed by industrialists, shopkeepers and civic groups in the city's centre, pillars of the community who have become frustrated at the level of violent robberies, woundings and prostitution. Increasing drug abuse, especially among the very young, is the main cause.

Last month Bogotá's police commander announced plans to restore order to the city centre, with plain-clothes detectives posted to the worst areas to catch muggers.

After an initial spate of arrests, the situation has not improved. Earlier this week, three boys in their early teens were seen repeatedly stopping passers-by at knife-point to snatch money.

"How else are we going to live?" asked one. "If I had a home to go to, if someone would give me work, I wouldn't steal."

A curly-haired boy called Paise bared his chest to a group of passing policemen and yelled: "Shoot me then, come and kill me."

Four weeks ago his friend, Emilce, a teenage prostitute, was shot dead. The children blame policemen.

The attorney-general has investigated several policemen for possible involvement in murdering children, but without results. Shopkeepers and their security guards appear to be more directly involved.

In one recent case, a security guard in a shopping centre on a main Bogotá avenue was ordered to clear out young male prostitutes. He simply pulled out his revolver and shot a youth, aged 17, in the leg in front of dozens of shoppers.

The guard has not been charged.



A rescued sewer street child demonstrates some of the new dental equipment provided by Children of the Andes.

CHRISTMAS CARDS

THIS YEAR WE HAVE COLOUR CARDS ON SALE IN AID OF CHILDREN OF THE ANDES.

TWO CHILDREN RESCUED BY JAIME AND WHO NOW LIVE AT THE FOUNDATION HAVE DESIGNED THE CARDS ESPECIALLY FOR US.

A PACK OF 10 CARDS WITH 5 OF EACH DESIGN COSTS £3.99.

We have taken a big step this year having 10,000 cards printed. We hope that you might be able to help us by buying or selling some for us.

For your convenience and to enable us to deal with your order promptly, please fill in the form below and return it to our P.O. BOX together with a cheque or Postal Order made payable to the charity.

PLEASE MARK YOUR ENVELOPE "CHRISTMAS CARD ORDER".

On behalf of Jaime and the children I would like to wish all our friends of Cota *A Very Happy Christmas & Peaceful New Year.*

CHRISTINE THORNTON,
Irish Representative.

DESIGN 1:



DESIGN 2:



***Wishing You Peace
& Happiness
For Christmas & The
Coming Year.***

Special thanks to Larry & Trevor Grehan, Printers,
Brunswick Place, Dublin.

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COTA would like to acknowledge with sincere
thanks the People Newspaper Group who very
kindly offered to print this Newsletter.