

We'd like to Introduce **WHAT'S-HIS-NAME**

An Interview with Paul from Central Asia

We've known Paul for some years now. We know that he is from Central Asia, that he is a Christian and that he risks his life taking the gospel to his fellow countrymen. He and his younger friend "David" trained at GLO Smithton for a year and they are an important part of the GLO family. We recently took the opportunity to ask Paul a few questions.

Spearhead: It's unusual in Australia to meet someone from Central Asia.

Well, yes. I am born and bred in Central Asia. So is David. As you know, my country has a long history of warlords and tribal conflict. Most of our tribe live in Central Asia and we make up about ten percent of the total population. A lot of our tribesmen have been well educated and now hold a number of important jobs.

Spearhead: Did you become a Christian here or back in Central Asia?

In Central Asia. Most of our tribe are Shi-ite Muslims. Mind you, in my village we have quite a number of mosques but not many go there for Friday prayers. Shi-

ite Muslims in my country don't regularly attend a mosque.

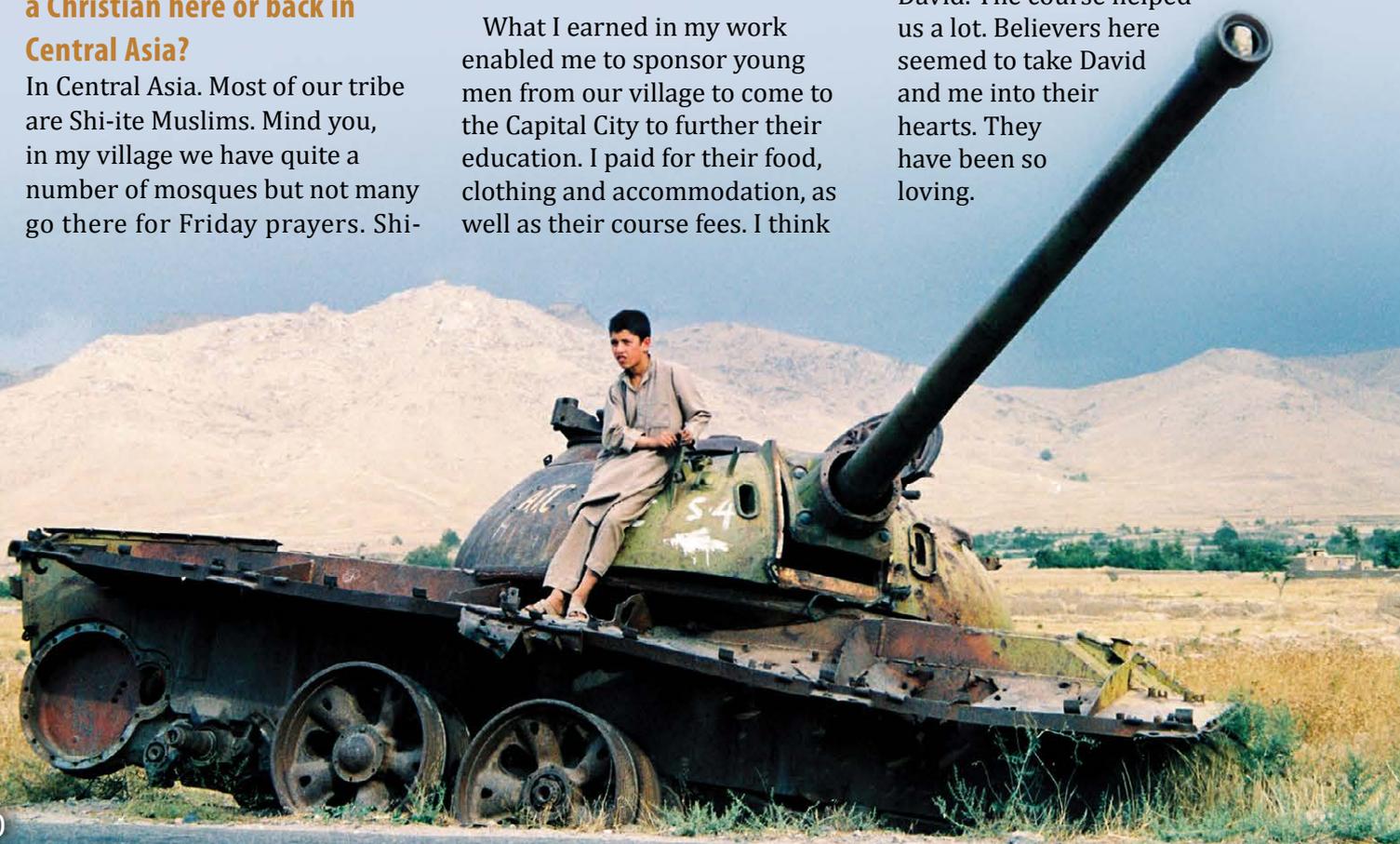
It was while I was working in the Capital City that I heard about Jesus. Shortly afterward I came in contact with Dr Howard Harper, a Brethren missionary from New Zealand. He has passed away now, about two years ago, but for fifty years he worked quietly in Central Asia, establishing eye clinics as a Christian mercy ministry. He was an ophthalmologist. Anyway, our paths crossed, he took me under his wing and established me as a Christian.

What I earned in my work enabled me to sponsor young men from our village to come to the Capital City to further their education. I paid for their food, clothing and accommodation, as well as their course fees. I think

I helped about a dozen men that way. This not only helped these young men to better themselves but a number accepted Christ. We used to meet as secret disciples. Still do, actually, when we're together.

Spearhead: How did you come to live in Australia?

Dr Harper told us about GLO. He was a GLO associate. He originally wanted six of us to come to Australia to train but we were advised it would be safer for just two to come. So I came, with David. The course helped us a lot. Believers here seemed to take David and me into their hearts. They have been so loving.



Two days before boarding a plane to return home to Central Asia we were advised that there had been renewed persecution against our tribe, with 100 being killed that week and that it was dangerous to return. We were granted asylum in Australia and fearful of our lives, we went underground in Sydney with even our GLO friends not knowing where we were.

After a while we were able to get some night shift process work with minimum exposure to the public and after five years we were granted Australian citizenship and passports."

Spearhead: I guess that gives you a certain amount of diplomatic protection. Is it enough?

No. We have to exercise extreme caution. When David and I returned to Central Asia in 2012 for the first time, we were both nervous about our safety. It was only after staying a month in the Capital City that I had enough confidence to plan a visit to my

home village to distribute school books for the students there. Before leaving the city I didn't shower or wash for two weeks, grew stubble and started to again wear the type of clothing used in my home village. The route was dangerous, Taliban territory. On the way to the village our minibus was stopped twice by the Taliban.

My heart was pounding as they went through my luggage.

They made a thorough search of all the passengers' belongings. My heart was pounding as they went through my luggage. Unfortunately for one of the passengers, the Taliban found a phone card in his luggage. They didn't know what it was so they shot him dead on the spot.

David stayed in the Capital City. He had put money into the project, too. But his father is the mullah of the village, that is, the leader of the mosque there. He now knows that his son, David, is a Christian and he would be expected to disown him if he went home, maybe even have him executed.

Spearhead: So security is extremely important.

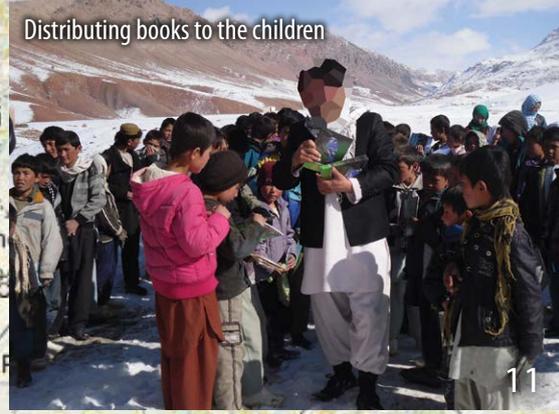
Yes.

Spearhead: Is that why you are careful to not disclose too many details?

Yes.

Spearhead: What can you safely tell us about what you have done recently in Central Asia and, if you can, what you intend doing?

Well, I mentioned an earlier trip that David and I did in order to distribute school material. We did this at ten schools. When I left the area I said we would do what we could to help our



village build a library for their school. To be honest, I was bit frightened that I wouldn't be able to fulfil that proposal.

For quite a while David and I saved what we could of our wages and sent the money back home to buy school readers and exercise books. No one in Australia knew we were doing this, not even GLO. A large shipment was sent from China. My father, who was not a believer, co-ordinated the arrival and distribution of the material. He did this with my brother who is a Christian now.

However, when we came back to Australia, Christian friends here heard of the situation and how the attitude of my fellow villagers toward me as a Christian has changed. Christians gave generously toward the library. So the next year I was able to go back and complete the project.

We are planning to make a similar trip soon. I pray that we will have enough money by then to supervise the building of four classrooms.



The library partially finished

We have a vision of reaching young people from our home district with the Good News about the Lord Jesus Christ. About 25 people in our village are Christians already. We want to bring selected people to the Capital City, help them with their education, and form new Christians into small house churches. The location for meeting will have to be constantly changed, again for security

reasons. Also, we want to start an English course in the Capital City as a base for planting a church there among our tribe people.

Spearhead: What can we here in Australia do to help advance the Lord's work in Central Asia, Paul?

Please pray and give money if you can. Fellowship gifts can be sent through the GLO office, Sydney.

Spearhead: Thank you, Paul.

