

that we can serve as bridges, as healers in a world where turmoil rules. Put another way, our imperative as members of the Brevard community is to make this campus a model of how people of different national and ethnic and religious backgrounds can work together toward a common destiny.

You know as well as I that we are very lucky to share this quiet, hospitable, safe, beautiful campus, for we live in a disturbingly turbulent and violent time in the history of the world. Students in South Africa or Yugoslavia or Southern Lebanon or the Republic of Georgia or Cambodia or on the streets of Managua, Nicaragua, live with one ear cocked for the sound of bullets or even the heavy, whirring, clanking terror of an approaching tank. They study with the numbing ambiguity of not knowing whether their society will endure, much less whether they will be able to find a position of leadership or security within that society.

In spite of this turbulence and uncertainty, it is also an incomparably exciting world and time that we inhabit, isn't it? Amid all the brutality and hunger and violence as we approach the midpoint of the last decade of the twentieth century, there is around the world an expansive sense of possibility, an insistent yearning for freedom and self-determination. You feel it in the air. You can almost taste it.

Beneath the decay and disintegration of old regimes in Asia and Africa and Eastern Europe and the Middle East and Central America — through the clangor and smoke and mutilations in the mountains and cities of Bosnia-Herzegovina — in the forest villages of Cambodia — in the townships of Johannesburg in South Africa — on the dusty by-ways of Mogadishu in Somalia — among the war weary compesinos of Nicaragua — in the streets of Belfast and Miami and Newark where cowardly men with guns kill or burn those whose only crime is that they do not have the same skin or speak the same language or pray from the same book as their attackers — yes, beneath these cruelties that we read

about in the daily newspaper, or catch fleetingly on the evening television news, we can nevertheless hear throughout the world today the palpable heartbeat of aspiration, of hunger for a decent life, free from violence and political intimidation.

There is a spirit at work in the world that can triumph even in the midst of such violence. It is a spirit that is flowering this day along the banks of the Jordan River, one of the world's most sacred but also war-scarred places, where the ritual greeting that is common both to the Palestinian and the Israeli, Shalom Aleichem, Peace Be With You, seems to be at last, perhaps, more than wishful thinking. Let us pray that it is.

It is a spirit that can emerge at any time, on Broad Street in Brevard, or anywhere. It is, sad to say, not common, but it is the true aim of all the education we seek at this college. It is a spirit, without which all of your work in classes, all of your success on the athletic field, all of your commendable drive to be a winner and a leader, is in vain.

Let me take you back with me for a moment to the capital city of the formerly Soviet Republic of Georgia. It is early October of 1991, but it could be happening this very day, and it could be happening on the streets of many other places in our world.

It is a bright, crisp, calm afternoon before the first flare up of the Georgian civil war. You are in the ancient and beautiful city of Tbilisi, set amid hills that remind you of Tuscany, through which runs a broad river lined with lofty sycamore trees whose leaves are beginning to turn bronze in the autumn air. Ancient church spires, some dating back to the sixth century, reach up above the roofs of delicately balconied houses, and behind them, crowning the hills above the city, spread the parapets of a 4th century fortress. This was a major urban center through the days of the Byzantine empire, was the splendid capital of the Georgian empire during the 10th through the 13th

centuries, was later sacked and burned 40 times by invaders from East and West. It is a city that in spite of these disruptions has long prided itself for its ethnic and religious tolerance, where as early as the 12th century mosques and synagogues conducted their services peacefully within a few feet of the main Christian orthodox churches and cathedrals.

Only eighteen months before this day, on an occasion infamous even in the bloody annals of Georgian history, the Soviet army broke up a peaceful civil demonstration with tanks and shovels, killing scores of Georgians, mostly women and students. The ensuing outrage forced Moscow's hand, precipitated the withdrawal of troops from the city, and directly led to the first free elections in Georgia's history and the elevation of the first non-communist government in the Soviet Union. It was the opening tremor in the earthquake that would bury the USSR as we knew and feared it.

Now on this day in early October 1991, only months after that election, Tbilisi has sunk into a severe emotional depression. The normally flamboyant Georgian people go uneasily through their daily routine dispirited by the absence of their normal amenities due to the Russian boycott of oil, gas and even more dispirited by a growing sense that they may have made a terrible mistake in electing as their president a man they had thought was a patriot and democrat but who now seems to be failing them. Some fear a new tyranny; others are convinced he is simply dangerously inept, leaving the state rudderless. Even you, a newcomer to the city, an American scholar with a visiting appointment at Georgia's national university, can feel something dangerous in the air, a lull before some unnameable storm.

The university has put you up for three months in the once-elegant Hotel Tbilisi, built during the Russian empire. Your large suite, generous of proportion but now threadbare and with water and electricity only sporadically available, overlooks the broad, sy-