

The British Council Language Matters

The Intro

Welcome once again to the British Council column. Today's selection in our column has some regular features but also another new slot that we hope will be popular. It focuses on vocabulary and is intended for the elementary level learner. Please let us know what you think of the different features in the column. In this way we can develop to suit your real needs.

Other Words

Here is a new feature that aims to help you widen your vocabulary. Our first topic is sport.

Exercise 1

Go/Play with sports

Look at these sentences:

Do you want to go swimming on Saturday?

Do you want to play kabaddi on Saturday?

I'm going skating with John next week.

I'm playing squash with John next week.

Can you work out the rules for when we use play or go?

Use play or go in these sentences.

1. Would you like to _____ fishing on Thursday?
2. Imran Khan _____ cricket for Pakistan.
3. I used to _____ hockey when I was younger.
4. People often _____ diving when they visit Kenya.
5. I usually _____ football on Saturday.
6. Lots of people _____ skiing in the winter.

Exercise 2

Anagrams are jumbled letters which form a word when re-arranged.

Re-arrange these letters to form the names of sports: e.g. otfoball = football. The answers are at the bottom of the page.

- okhcy = lvloylelab =
 kcirct = lhalshkte =
 mntoadin = gsnwmimi =
 qsasuh = lhalsh =

- glnshi = olgt =
 sitnen = yurgh =
 chitetas = kstngi =

Exercise 3

There are fourteen sports hidden in this square. Can you find them? The names can be hidden vertically or horizontally. One example is given to get you started. The answer will be published next week.

WORD SQUARE

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M E M R I G O L F T O R T J N
M I T D M N T B F I S H I N G
S V M C R U G B Y O M K W T B
Q B D S F G A L O I V J H V V
U H B A D M I N T O N A T U V
A H J K G J J G B H G J L O O
S T U I T Y U B A S E B A L L
H O C K E Y G M L F K A T L L
T P R G T U M O L P H H E E
S W I M M I N G T U I O L T Y
F G C D G H J K M F H R E O B
P S K I I N G S J P R R T V A
R G E H J E U Q E F D D I E L
F F T E N N I S L M F H C H L
B A S K E T B A L L M G S C N
D M T E T G E T T B E S J K E
    
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The Language Lab

In this column we want you to write to us about any little problems that you have with English and we will see if we can 'analyse' them. We will try to give the best answer possible in the space available.

Today's question comes from a reader, Md Shafiuddin. He writes

I have a major problem with the grammatical facts of English... Do we need every grammatical fact to read or write?

Well, this is once again a very interesting question and the short answer is probably 'No.'

But that answer needs a little bit of explanation...

There are differences between speaking and writing on the

one hand, and listening and reading on the other. For the sake of this answer, we will concentrate on the skills of speaking and writing.

In addition to grammar, there is another very important issue here. And that is 'How well can you communicate in English?'

It has long been recognised that the ability to communicate in a language is at least as important as grammar.

Let us take an example: Many people live their lives in countries that they emigrate to as adults. They become used to speaking a foreign language every day. Their accent may be poor. Their grammar may be weak. But they still have little or no problem in speaking and understanding that language in everyday situations. They can function at a level which is appropriate

A Reading Diary

Reading fiction is not only a great pleasure, it is also a very effective way getting to know another language. And finding interesting things to read in English is easy - for example by joining the British Council Library, or by buying books at any number of good bookshops in Bangladesh - try browsing through the shops in Newmarket, where the selection seems to be getting better all the time.

If your knowledge of English is limited, it's probably not advisable to embark on a whole novel; the sustained concentration needed would take away all the pleasure. You could start off with short stories in books or magazines, or 'simplified readers'.

Simplified readers are either adaptations of existing books and stories, or are written specifically with the language learner in mind. The language is simplified in terms of vocabulary and grammar, but the characters and the storylines are still there. In this way, you can have the pleasure of reading in a foreign language without having to stop to look words up in the dictionary all the time, or making wild guesses about what's going on in the plot. The books are graded according to level of language ability, and most are written specifically for adults, so there's none of the embarrassment of reading 'kid's stuff'.

Whatever you choose to read, you can either just sit back and enjoy it, or you can make a more conscious effort to reinforce the language related to the story. This reinforcement doesn't have to be in the form of tedious questions and answers to test your comprehension, it can be done in a more natural and enjoyable way.

One good way is to share your reactions to the story with a friend, a group of friends, or members of your family. Reading is a natural stimulus to a discussion. Form a 'reading group' and agree to read the same stories so that you can discuss them. Or how about a 'reading diary'?

A reading diary could be a written version of the sort of things you

would say naturally when discussing a story. Here's a suggested way of going about it:

- Write down the title of the book, and the author's name.
- Make a list of adjectives or phrases which would describe the story (eg: exciting, funny, realistic, interesting, full of facts, sad, romantic, depressing, fascinating, gripping, powerful, stimulating, tedious.....).
- Write down the name of the main characters in the book.
- Note which character you liked most.
- Note which character you liked least.
- Note who was the most interesting.
- Choose one of these characters and write a few lines to explain why you liked, disliked, or found him or her the most interesting.
- Choose one part of the book that you thought was particularly good, and describe it in a few sentences.
- Make a list of words or expressions from the book that you thought were effective, and try to use them in your own writing or conversations.
- Summarise your opinion of the book:
 - What did you think of it?
 - Would you recommend it to other people?
 - Would you read other books by the same author?

Keeping a reading diary can be very satisfying - you can watch it grow and feel a growing sense of achievement. You also have a permanent record of pleasurable time spent reading, and the knowledge that - by the way - your language level is gradually rising.



Answers to Ex. 1: 4, go 2, plays 3, play 4, go 5, play 6, go Sports: hockey, volleyball, cricket, basketball, badminton, swimming, squash, baseball, fishing, golf, tennis, rugby

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It looks highly imaginative for the commuter to eternally post his last message at the exit point of earthly journey - the grave. It is the dead man's message for the living which we shall now discuss. Many have left inscribed such observations on tombstones called epitaph, which the cynics branded as belated commercials to promote sale of goods that have gone off the production line permanently.

Some called epitaphs as undesirable intrusions of the dead into the time of the living. Others claim that epitaphs are symbolic of the dead man's failure to complete his work in his life time. Still some feel that epitaphs symbolise attempt of the dead to stage a come back to the living world. Whatever they are or designed to be, tombstone inscriptions are last messages of the dead to this world of sound and song on the eve of or ere to his departure to the world of silence. This represent the dead man's eternal urge to talk to his people, his surrounding where he breathed in heartily, before breathing out to a world unknown and unexplored. Once the barrier, dividing life and lifelessness is crossed, the person might or might not know that he would remain excommunicated with this side of the terrestrial world.

Epitaphs, usually, are indicative of an unfulfilled desire, a grievance, a complaint or an urge or the last stone hurled at the departed. Jonathan Swift, the writer of Gulliver's Travel who suffered from protracted illness of the eye and was criticized mercilessly by the contemporary literary society for his 'misanthropy' had chosen his own epitaph this way:

*Ubi saeba Indignation
 Cor ulterius lacrare nequit
 (Where bitter indignation
 Can no longer tear his heart.)*
 Here the writer considered his grave as an abode of peace where earthly insinuations and

THE VIEW AFAR

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vituperations could not reach him. He took death as an entry to the world of tranquillity and peace, devoid of earthly hatred and jealousy. Paul Scarron (d. 1660) a seventeenth century French poet was a cripple man and hideously deformed. He was loved by father but dejected by step mother. His bad habits combined with physical inability, rendered his life into a continuum of suffering and misery. He composed in French and epitaph which at once was an elegy and a moan:

He who lies here awoke more pite than envy and suffered death a thousand times before losing life. Passing, make here no noise. Take care not to wake him. For this is the first night that poor Scarron sleeps.

Both Shakespeare and a Sumerian Princess echoed the same curse for the grave diggers. The Sumerian princess lived and died probably around 2000 BC and Shakespeare in seventeenth century (AD). There is no probability that they exchanged views on how to preserve their mortal remains or to pronounce judgement on the intruders. The epitaph on the floor near Shakespeare's grave at the Stratford Church inscribed on a stone read:

'Good friend, for Jesus sake forebear to dig the dust enclosed here (here). Bless (bless) be ye man yt (that) spares these (these) stones and curst (curst) be he yt (that) moves my bones.'

Shakespeare desired to preserve lifeless bones. God knows why!
 In 1989 an Iraqi archaeologist, Muzahim Mahmoud Hussain, discovered the grave of an Assyrian princess at Nimrud. She was Yabaha, daughter of Sargon II. After opening the grave the excavator found an epitaph written in

Cuneiform on a marble tablet. It read: "If any one lays' hand on my tomb, let the ghost of insomnia take hold of him for ever and ever." We have no information whether the curse really worked or that the excavator was haunted by the ghost of insomnia.

Cervantes (d 1616) the celebrated writer of Don Quixote made the world laugh while alive. He created Don Quixote as an endearing character whose almost every movement provoked laughter. Cervantes knew when to stop laughing. Four days before his death (April 23, 1616) he wrote: "And so farewell to jesting, farewell my merry humours, farewell my gay friends; for I feel that I am dying, and have no desire but to see you happy in the other life."

Ben Johnson (d 1637), one of the great English playwright saw his fame wane during his old age, his friends disappeared, his last plays failed and his wife and children all were dead. He was all alone. Lingered in pain and penury for eight years, he died. A famous epitaph appeared by the side of his grave in West Minster Abbey. It was curt and boastfully read:

*"O rare Ben Johnson!"
 It was an eulogy inscribed by his friend.*

There had also been last messages in the form of epitaphs but in other forms, words or written communications. Some inspired piety, some sympathy.

Queen Mary Scots, one of the martyrs for her faith in Catholicism, and whom protestant Queen Elizabeth had beheaded, wrote a poem in Latin in the morning of the day of her execution:

*O Lord God, I have hoped in thee
 O my dear Jesus, now free me.
 In cruel chains, in bitter pain,
 I desire thee. Longing, moaning*

and bending thee knee I adore
 I implore, that you set me free.

French King Louis XIII, when told that his death was near, the King behaved as if God sought his permission to take his life. The King without any change of facial countenance said, "Then my God, I consent with all my heart." Most medieval Kings believed that they were agents of God on earth to rule.

Michael Madhusudhan Dutta's earthly life was anything but happy. This unbounded genius, perhaps better than all combined in original thinking and ideas in Bengali literature, wanted to re-establish his begoggled identity as a Bengali through the message on the epitaph. Abandoned by kith and kin, scorned by jealous contemporary literary critics, forsaken by his society and haunted by poverty, he literally fell on the thorns of life and bled profusely. On his epitaph at Sagardari he wrote:

*Ye passerby,
 If you are born in Bengal
 Tarry here awhile
 Here lies buried
 Madhusudhan Dutta....*

The epitaph could have been otherwise but the poet perhaps wanted to reassure his countrymen of his futile sojourn in the realm of alien literature under a false garb and hope. It spoke of his return to the dust from which he wrang.

Sometimes epithets look vengeful, when these are hung up by the living near ones of the deceased. A bereaved husband (also relieved) put up this epitaph on the grave of his wife:

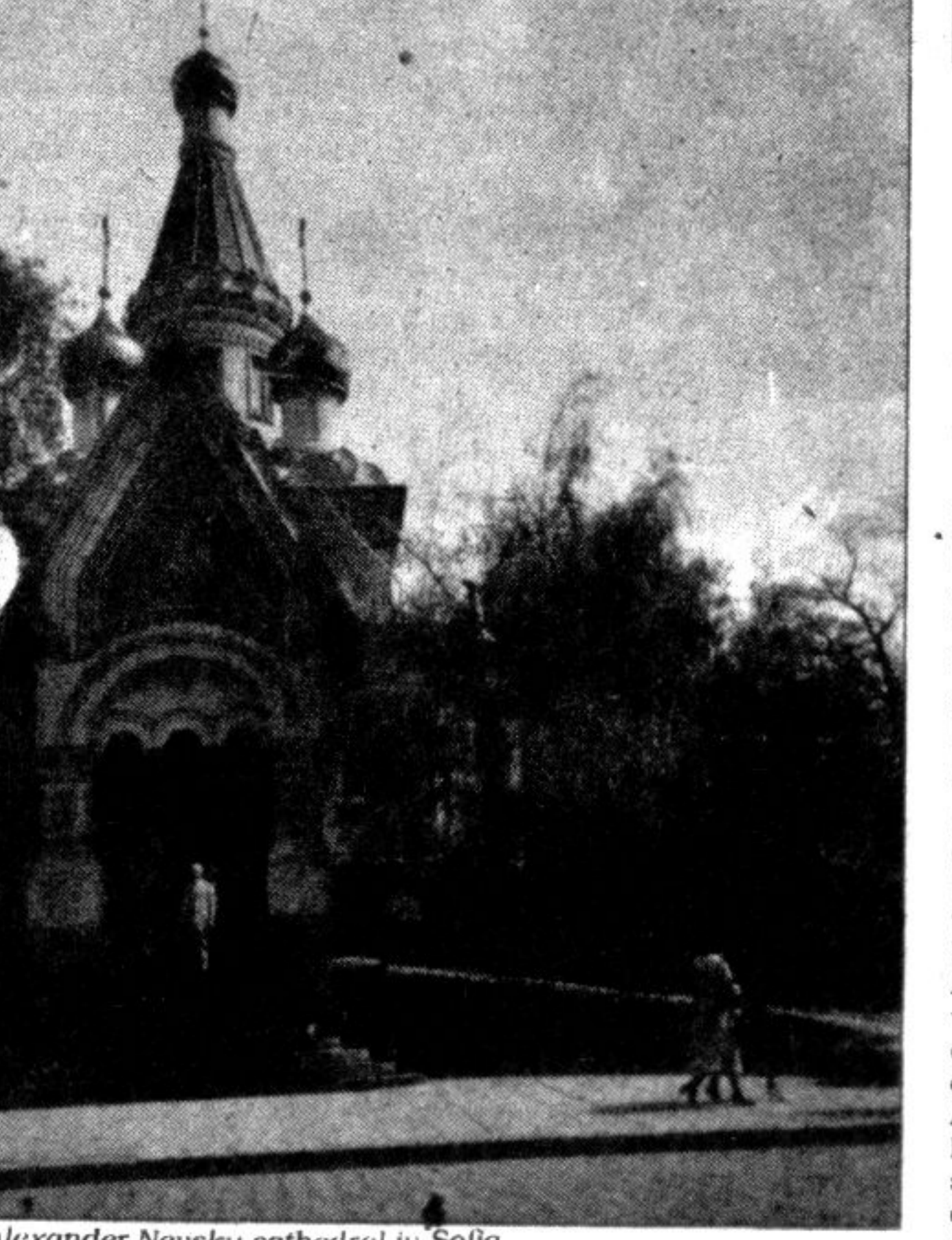
Here lies the mortal remains of my dear wife in eternal silence. Wake her not, for she never ceased to talk in seventy years while alive. If she resumes talking, the world will be deprived of the bliss of silence.

People and Places

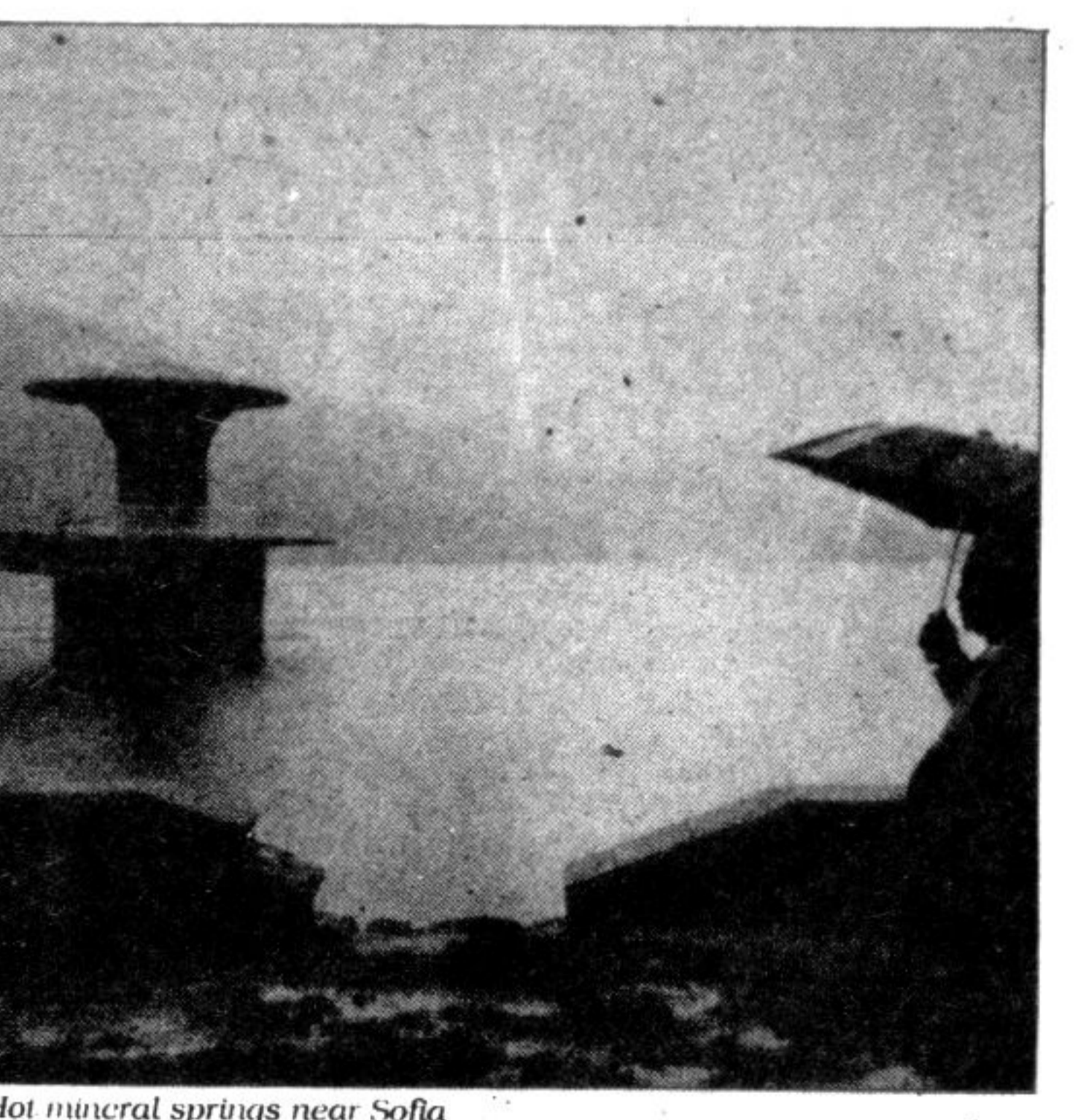
Two Cities

Continued from page 9
 In Sofia. It may be of interest to note that Muslims established Movement for Rights and Freedom in 1990 as a political platform to raise their grievances following overthrow of the communist regime of Tudor Zhivkov. This organisation represents Muslims in the Parliament.

A Seat of Learning
 Sofia is a seat of learning. Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the Academy of Agricultural Sciences, the Sofiski Universitet (University of Sofia)



The Alexander Nevsky cathedral in Sofia



Hot mineral springs near Sofia founded in 1888, University of Medical Science, and a number of other institutions of higher learning are located in Sofia. A huge number of foreign students which include Bangladeshis are studying in different educational institutions. A big residential complex was built near Vitoshka mountains for accommodating foreign students. It is known as Darvennitsa (students city). Students enjoy modern amenities in the dormitories. There are Cyril and Methodius National Library, the National Art Gallery, the Ivan Vazov National Theatre and Opera House, an astronomical observatory and a number of museums. Apart from these, St. George and St. Sofia churches, two historic mosques - one of which contains fine archaeological collections, and the Alexander Nevsky cathedral with original gold spire put to express gratitude of the people of Bulgaria for the Russian Red Army general for liberating Bulgaria in 1878, and the mausoleum of the great statesman of Bulgaria Georgi Dimitrov are also of very much historical

significance. In front of Grand Hotel Sofia a huge statue of an unknown Russian army general riding a horse flanked by a few soldiers either side is erected on solid pedestal. This war memorial symbolises the might of the former Soviet Union. The nearby Pancharevo where the valley of roses exist and Isku Gorges are popular picnic spots, and mineral baths and sanatoriums, a few kilometres off the main city, make interesting health resort. The centuries old hot mineral springs evoke interest of sick people in particular. There is a saying that hot water from these springs could cure a patient, who is ailing complicated nature of disease. Bulgaria is known as the country of roses. The city is not the exception. The people cultivate roses on a large scale and produce excellent perfume from roses. In the city, parks add modern flavour where young couple spend their leisure time. Sofia is indeed a picturesque city, surrounded by hillocks, mountains and roses.