

# The promise of spring and the challenge of Easter!



For everyone at Children in Distress it has been a long hard winter. We have faced the worst conditions in nearly twenty years with regular snow storms and record low temperatures of  $-22^{\circ}$  degrees in Bucharest and  $-33^{\circ}$  degrees in the countryside. It has not been easy and at times our medical and support staff have had to battle against all that winter could throw at them to make life possible for the children in our hospices and children's centres.

Sadly, we have no answer to the deadly chill of an economic winter that has swept across Romania. With its financial and political crisis and pensions and care allowances unpaid, the poorest families are left on the breadline. There have been weeks of compulsory unpaid leave for doctors, nurses and carers in hospitals, clinics and children centres and now savage wage cuts, job cuts and redundancies are beginning to bite. Hospital wards and services for the disabled are closing or being rundown and, as always, it is the poorest, the weakest and those without a voice, who suffer most.

Today, our hospices at St Margaret's and St Andrew's are full. Our residential beds are blocked, the palliative care beds are full and the respite care beds have been allocated to children with nowhere else to go now that their hospital wards have closed.

Baby Robert Alexandru was rushed to us as an emergency from the hospital in Buftea, where he was starved of oxygen at birth, and abandoned by his single mother who just could not face the challenge of trying to care for a brain damaged child. To give him a fighting chance, he was referred to St Margaret's where he was bathed, clothed and tended with care, and vaccinated for diphtheria and poliomyelitis. We even arranged his baptism as no one had thought to do so before.

Robert is a unique baby boy because he has two godmothers - myself and CID's own physiotherapy consultant, Alyth Hughes. The saddest part is we have repeatedly tried to contact his mother but she will not talk to us and has refused to visit him since he was admitted.

Little Andrei was born with hydrocephalus. The initial shunt operation failed due to infection. The subsequent operations also failed and the doctors withdrew medical treatment as the increasing pressure expanded his head. Andrei, now 18 months old, was accepted



You can make the difference this Easter...

