

DIRECTION

In my days of long-distance commuting, one of my regular drivers was a guy called Mark. He'd been in the army for nineteen years, and had risen to the rank of corporal...*for the sixth time*. He was always in trouble, and his regiment couldn't believe their luck when he volunteered for Romania - anything to get rid of him for a while. Seizing the opportunity, his C.O. gave him the title of "5th in charge of the regiment", a fictitious post with no duties attached - except that he must go to Romania as often as possible. That C.O. popped round one time, and asked me to pick up a group of his soldiers for a 'recce' of a route to Albania (on the way back from Romania). I'm garbage at maps, but even *I* knew that coming back as far as Vienna - picking up some soldiers - and going home via Albania, was *not* "on the way". For one thing, the route would have to go back through Romania: at that time, the Yugoslavians were competing with each other to shoot anything that moved, and they'd probably win the cuddly toy for bagging British squaddies.

The trip was not without incident. Late one evening, we pitched camp in a large field. I was just getting ready to sleep, when a local guy entered my tent and made himself comfortable (they always find *me*, don't they?). *I* wasn't too comfortable: he was dressed only in pyjama bottoms, which had been ineffectively secured. He prattled on in Romanian for an hour, until some other guys came and picked him up. Only the British Army could make camp in the grounds of a mental hospital.

We queued 24 hours for a ferry over the Danube - at least, the soldiers did. I booked into a local hotel, for the equivalent of £2.00. It was a bit dear for the standard of accommodation...but the price did include food-poisoning.

Arriving in Greece, we had to phone the regiment from the Consulate at Thessaloniki. There was a very sad guy waiting there, so I thought I'd cheer him up with the Good News of the gospel. He already knew about that...but proceeded to tell me his tale of woe. He said that God had told him to get a bus - fill it with aid - and take it down to Eastern Europe. He'd brought his wife and 2 small kids, who were fortunately unharmed when their bus had been machine-gunned in Yugoslavia. That bus developed every kind of mechanical problem known to man...and when he finally got to Greece, the vehicle was impounded. The Greeks suspected he was going to *sell* all his stuff in Albania, and wanted £2,000 in tax. So I've got to ask him: "Are you *sure* God told you to get all this stuff and take it to Albania?" He thought for a moment. "Well, *actually* - he told me to take it to *Romania*, but I thought they needed it here more".

That prompted me to ask another question - "*Well - aren't you getting the message, pal?*" Here was a guy who knew better than God. *His* God is sitting around in heaven somewhere - in his flares and his kipper-tie - listening to the Osmonds on his eight-track stereo...he's completely out of touch. He hasn't a clue what's going on, and he needs this comedian to put him right. I don't think so! I asked him when he'd have got to the Romanian border, *if* he'd stuck to God's plan. Then I pulled out a piece of paper with an address on it. "This is the people in Romania who need your stuff. If you'd done what you were told, you would have got to the border at the same time as me, and I would have given it to you then. But *you* had to come all the way down here to see me.... *didn't you?*"

Hearing from God is normal for Christians - but so is obeying him. Those who *don't* are likely to end up in the wrong - the wrong job, the wrong fellowship...even the wrong country. But what about you? Do you expect him to lead you, and if you *do* - are you really willing to follow...even if you think you know better?