Nevertheless, it was not easy to decide to leave the Coal Board where he had been for twenty years. Apart from the practical consideration of earning a living with a wife and three children to support, the youngest of whom, Nicola, was not yet a year old, he still felt a strong loyalty to Robens. Fritz was unsure whether Robens would in fact leave or be offered another term of office at the beginning of 1971 when his current term was due to end. At first, while discussing the matter with friends and colleagues, he put off making a decision, waiting to see what Robens was going to do, but the weeks passed and there was no hint of his feelings on the matter. In fact, Robens was just as much in the dark as Fritz, as he had not been approached by the Government. Fritz did not know this and, feeling he could wait no longer, went to see Robens. He had decided to take the risk and retire early. ‘After all,’ he kept telling everyone who marvelled at his decision, ‘Adenauer and Churchill both started new and successful lives at the age of sixty so why shouldn’t I?’ He was ready to make his act of faith.

He did not leave his financial affairs entirely to Divine Providence however. His discussions with Robens included a new appointment as part-time Adviser to the Statistics Department and Robens let Fritz go with great generosity. Fritz also formalized his relationship with the Scott Bader Commonwealth who employed him as a consultant to the firm. But to all intents and purposes he was now on his own and ready to face what was to become perhaps the most astonishing and dramatic part of his eventful life. The time had come to draw everything together.

The impact of Fritz’s ‘retirement’ took a while to make itself felt. His trip to South Africa followed closely on its heels and it was not really until late summer that he sat down at his desk to begin writing his book. He found, now that he should have had more time, that it was far more difficult than he had imagined to sit down and write. There seemed to be so many other distractions. He liked to stay in bed longer for a start, pampered by Vreni who brought him breakfast with his post in the morning. There were many books he wanted to read again, and he wanted to pay more attention to the garden which had been sadly neglected for the last ten years.
The garden, which had been the source of inspiration for his first turning point, drew him as much as ever. Although he was twenty years older and no longer as fit to do the heavy work, he was still full of ideas and experiments. He tried a variety of methods to eliminate the heavy work: first covering the garden with newspapers, which blew everywhere at the first breath of wind; then changing to long sheets of black polythene which were supposed to eliminate weeding as well as digging. He came to the conclusion that as there was no substitute for compost, which was heavy and needed shifting from compost heap to bed, that the real problem for the gardener was to devise a way of lifting and shifting heavy weights. As his sixtieth birthday was approaching the family decided to buy him a mini-tractor. Fritz’s mother had great doubts about this idea. She did not think that Fritz would want such a sophisticated piece of equipment. She turned out to be quite right. He declined the suggestion immediately saying that it was too high a technology for the purpose it was to serve. After careful consideration he eventually bought himself a battery-operated wheelbarrow which he found a simple and effective solution to the problem of moving compost. A year or two later a mini-tractor mowing-machine was, however, added to the considerable stock of garden equipment that had accumulated in the garage at Holcombe. Despite all his ideals Fritz never mastered grass-cutting technology and one mower after another was tried and found wanting until the most sophisticated of all proved the answer to the extensive lawns. The shortest-lived mower was an electric one which on its first day of use had its electric cable chopped in half by Robert who was racing around with a little hand mower. The cable was never replaced.

The garden, gradually taking shape again out of the wilderness that had grown around the house since Muschi’s death, gave Fritz great joy. It also made him feel easier about accepting the invitation to become President of the Soil Association in 1970. His commitment to the Soil Association ideal was as strong as ever. He had enormous admiration for Lady Eve Balfour, its founder, and was devoted to one of the leading lights of the organization, Joy Griffiths Jones. He always referred to her as ‘Joy of my life’, and was deeply grieved when she was found to have cancer.

The Soil Association was a cause to which Fritz gave a great deal of thought. He had a debt towards those who had helped him in his first steps towards changing his life and he discharged it conscientiously, leading the Association from an organization concerned exclusively with research to an outward-looking concern publishing its conclusions more widely and offering practical advice on a hitherto unheard of scale. Always ready to forge links between different interests he was very pleased when a project developed between the N.C.B. and the Soil Association over the reclaiming of slag heaps in South Wales. No avenue was ever too insignificant to demonstrate the use of sound and healthy methods.

Not all his contributions could remain voluntary however. He had to take a more realistic look at his activities when he began to face the unpleasant task of demanding payment for his work. Sometimes he felt angry at what seemed to him to be a failure to appreciate his work in the offer of poor remuneration. The B.B.C. were the target of one indignant outburst. As no figure had been mentioned in the contract he had signed for a broadcast, he was disappointed and angry when, after giving his talk, he was sent only a small token fee. As he received the cheque for about twenty pounds the window cleaner was busy outside his study windows. He wrote angrily to the B.B.C. detailing his train fare to London, the number of hours he had had to travel and wait at the B.B.C. and so on, and pointing out that it amounted to a wage of under two pounds an hour, less than the rate of pay for the window cleaner. ‘It is my ambition,’ he wrote, ‘to earn at least as much as a window cleaner.’

There were other tasks he tried to avoid by naming an absurd fee. It did not always work. When he wrote to the United Nations in Geneva that his fee for an article they wanted (and which he did not feel like writing) would be £200, he assumed they would be put off. He was horrified when the money was sent by return and he was forced to write the article.

Between gardening, lecturing, travelling to Northamptonshire to the Scott Bader Commonwealth or to East Anglia for the Soil Association, let alone his frequent trips to London to the N.C.B. and to I.T.D.G., Fritz’s main task was still supposed to be writing his book. There were in fact two books he
wanted to write. The first was a kind of spiritual map - he already had the title: 'A Guide for the Perplexed' - in which he wanted to draw together the threads of his spiritual quest for the benefit of others who were confused at the conflicting goals of the world and could no longer find the signposts to the road they yearned to travel.

The second book was the practical side of the road, drawing together the threads of his conclusions about how to live life in the world, the kind of outer life that was compatible with a healthy inner life. He was as yet uncertain as to the title of his book and toyed with 'The Homecomers' because he believed that the things he was advocating represented a turning around towards sense, a turning away from the 'forward stampede' that characterized modern life. The subtitle he chose held the explanation: 'Economics - as if people mattered'.

Although he felt that the first book was more important, Fritz began with the second. With calculating realism he had decided that the book on economics would sell better than the spiritual book and that he might therefore reach a wider readership if he published the more popular book first. He was convinced that 'The Homecomers' would be a bestseller. He referred to it as his 'Goldregen', the German for Laburnum, but literally translated meaning 'golden rain'. The family looked on sympathetically. 'Poor fellow. What a disappointment he is going to have,' was in more than one mind. 'Fancy thinking such a book could shower him with money.'

Imposing his own discipline was more difficult than Fritz had anticipated. Countless people seemed to want to see him and it took him some time to tumble to the important conclusion that, as he put it, 'It is as far from Caterham to London as it is from London to Caterham.' This discovery enabled him to tell all those who wished to see him to come to Caterham. He began to rely heavily on his past articles and lectures to form the body of the book, adding a little here, updating a little there, and adding linking passages. A few chapters were quite new, but some came from articles he had already published in magazines for which he had been writing regularly. These were principally two: Manas, an American publication edited by Henry Geiger, and Resurgence, a journal that described itself as the 'journal of the fourth world', started by

John Papworth and later taken over by Satish Kumar. Resurgence espoused the ideas of smallness and decentralization and provided a forum for radical alternative thinkers of the day, such as Leopold Kohr, an Austrian Welsh Nationalist, Ivan Illich, dynamic challenger of all things establishment, and John Seymour, leading light in the self-sufficiency movement.

As Fritz sat in his study, his typewriter before him, he began to feel the lack of stimulation that the constant company of his working life had provided. At Holcombe, apart from those who visited him, the atmosphere was quiet and domestic. His first four children had all left home, but he enjoyed his second family immensely and all three children were allowed to come and go into the study whenever they liked, often to play with a box of watch and clock bits left over from his early do-it-yourself days. Noisy games among his papers were discouraged, although he did not need silence to work. His taste in music, never very highbrow, now narrowed itself down to other people's choices. Strains of 'A Hundred Best Tunes' would float through the study door instead of the voices of Maria Callas and Tito Gobbi; and accompanying the music would be the waft of cigarette smoke. The creative state of tension that he required had to be induced with the aid of tobacco and a glass of whisky.

Some way through compiling his book it became clear that he had also had other thoughts on his mind. Suddenly, quite unexpectedly, in the spring of 1971 he asked Vreni to go to Father Scarborough and tell him he wanted to be received into the Catholic Church. It was strange that a man used to conversing with presidents should find it necessary to use an intermediary to arrange a talk with the local parish priest, and no doubt it was even stranger to Fritz to be told that Father Scarborough had taken a dim view of this indirect approach and had merely retorted, 'He'd better come himself if he is interested.'

For some months after this, Fritz went every Wednesday morning to receive instruction from Father Scarborough. He did not share the contents of his talks with Vreni nor did he complain that he already knew everything after years of study and reading, and it was obvious that his affection and respect for his local parish priest grew with each session.
On September 29th, 1971 Fritz was received by Father Scarborough into the Catholic Church. Vreni, my husband Don and I (all converts to Catholicism) were the only witnesses. He was very moved as he recited the Creed and took Communion. He had, at last, come to rest after a long and restless search. He had, as he put it, 'made legal a long-standing illicit love affair'. As for his mother, she was not shocked as he had feared. She merely smiled and said, 'Nothing can surprise me anymore with Fritz.' For Fritz the decision had come after long years of study and struggle. It was an acknowledgment that after examining every option and refusing to accept anything without taking it apart and putting it together again himself, that the time had come to stop searching and accept what was there. Several years later he put it this way:

It has taken me a long time to discover why religion has split up into so many different religions: it's so you can choose the one that is most practical for you. The most practical to me was the Roman Catholic version of Christianity, and now I am relieved of such totally offbeat questions as: How could something incredible, like the human being, have come about by an accidental combination of atoms? So I say, come off it, this is just stupid. I don't know how it is, but I believe that there is a Creator. The moment I believe in this higher level, it would be most improbable that the Creator could have put into life such loquacious beings as you and I and never say a word to us. He has actually communicated to us.

This is called by the simple word 'revelation'. We have the sacred books of mankind, and having spent many, many years studying them, not only in the Christian tradition, I find that it's the same spirit that is communicating to all of us. By various means, in a subtle way, an educative way. You always have to stretch yourself to understand; it is not meant to be automatic. This is the great education we can receive in life, and once we get hold of that, then suddenly we find that we are no longer worried, we have actually to act in this life, we can distinguish between the phony and the real questions, and we're happy.¹

Before he had completed the manuscript of his book he had another crisis to face. At the beginning of 1972 cancer was diagnosed in Vreni. Fritz was desolate. This time he did not hide his tears even from the children. It seemed unbelievable that the same curse should strike a second time. Fortunately it was not to be fatal and Vreni was successfully operated on, but Fritz was left with the question, 'Why cancer twice?' There seemed no rational explanation so he turned to irrational theories. Eventually he heard about a water diviner in Germany to whom he sent a map of the house site and the surrounding countryside. It was returned with a simple, if to most people extraordinary, explanation. Two water courses ran some distance below the house. This, it was said, always had some malign effect. A strange looking object, not unlike a miner's lamp, was enclosed with instructions to keep it always in the house: it would counteract the malign influences of the water courses. There was no charge for this service. The magic lamp stands in Fritz's study to this day. No one dares to remove it or examine it closely for who knows...

Other explanations have been offered which may be as far-fetched (or as true) as the water courses. One is that in both cases the cancer was a form of unconscious protest at a relationship which demanded, by and large, a complete surrender to Fritz's drive and goals in life. Selfless devotion to Fritz's cause ruled out any kind of more obvious self-fulfilment. Muschi and Vreni suffered, not because they were thwarted or frustrated in following a much desired career or goal of their own, but because Fritz's brilliance cast a shadow over their own self-esteem and self-confidence. Not only did they feel unworthy of his love and real devotion but they felt inadequate in a worldly sense too. In fact their illnesses should have made it quite clear to them that they were also Fritz's life force, but such sentiments were not something Fritz was good at expressing. He would try to tell them in a roundabout way, for example, by telling the following story - one of Fritz's favourites. An American lady had an old black servant who served her loyally. The mistress was mystified at the devotion of her servant to a husband who over the years beat her regularly, never got a job and was generally drunk. 'Tell me,' she asked her servant one day, 'why do you put up with that
husband of yours? He never lifts a finger for you after you have been out all day working, and he drinks away all the money you earn.' The old negress replied, 'Well you see, Mam, it's like this. I makes the livin' and he makes the livin' worthwhile.'

After Vreni's operations were over and she was able to make his life 'worthwhile' again, Fritz put the finishing touches to his manuscript. Reading it before delivering it to his publisher, Blond and Briggs, he was spellbound. 'Brilliant,' he commented after each chapter. 'It comes as a complete surprise to me that I have written this marvellous stuff.' With that he delivered it to Blond and Briggs who immediately threw out his title 'The Homecomers'. With a flash of inspiration Anthony Blond suggested: 'Small is Beautiful.'

Small is Beautiful was published in 1973. The reviews, such as they were, did not suggest that a bestseller had been launched into the world. Fritz was not discouraged. He had learnt after a lifetime of world improvement plans that the only things that really work are those that start in a small way, for only they can grow healthily. Small is Beautiful began with modest sales, but every quarter the figures increased at a geometric rate until both the book and its title was suddenly everywhere. The title Small is Beautiful had the appeal of one of Mao's slogans and was used even in the most inappropriate contexts, such as advertisements for Japanese electronic equipment. But the Japanese also published a translation of the real thing as did countries all over the world from Iceland to Portugal. As each new edition appeared, Fritz's post-bag increased. By the end of the year he was receiving twenty to thirty letters a week asking him to address meetings and give lectures. He found himself in the position of a prima donna with two years' bookings in advance.

With public recognition came public honours. The following year, in 1974, when the Queen's birthday honours were announced Fritz's name was among those awarded the C.B.E. This honour and sign of official recognition meant more than the public prestige it conferred, as did subsequent invitations to Buckingham Palace for a private dinner with the Duke of Edinburgh and later luncheon with the Queen. It was a reassurance that his consciousness of his foreignness, still with

him after forty years in England, did not form an unbridgeable barrier with his adopted compatriots.

With this lead, more honours followed: Honorary degrees from Concordia University in Canada and the Catholic University in Leuven came first, then English Universities: first Reading, and then the Open University. He was given an Honorary Fellowship by the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology and elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. In Europe he was presented with a medal by the Italian President, Luigi Preti, and given the European Essay prize from the Charles Veillon Foundation for his collection of essays in Small is Beautiful. Awards in America and Canada excelled every other in their praise. In America he was presented with Carborundum's Award for Excellence and the Vanier Institute of the Family in Canada decided to bestow upon him the Wilder Penfield Award for 'wisdom and leadership in the evolution of human society'. This honour, however, was collected for Fritz posthumously by Robert.

This sudden recognition which had eluded him for so long surprised Fritz when it came. Meeting his friend from wartime Oxford, David Worswick, he said, 'When I was a young man I thought those chaps at the top were there because of the system. Then, as I was making my way to the top, I understood that you got there because of merit. Now that I've got to the top I realize that it's pure chance.' The arrogance of the young crusader and devisor of world improvement plans had mellowed. He had seen that his true cause grew of its own accord because of the truth and authenticity of its message. There was no longer room for anything else but preaching and pleading for action. There was no shortage of opportunity to preach. In the next three years he travelled to every continent from the United States to Australia, the West Indies, the Pacific Islands, and the East Indies. India had received him before this shower of recognition had burst upon him. He had travelled there in early 1973 with Virginia. Although he had been received by Mrs Gandhi and prominent government ministers, as well as visiting J.P. Narayan and his friends in action in the Indian Appropriate Technology Group, he was despondent about the trip. 'India is a sewer,' he said sadly as he returned, weary after
the comparative physical hardships he had endured while travelling and depressed by the apathy and slow progress of the work.

The hectic programme he set himself began to age him rapidly. His hair, only streaked with silver at the temples when he left the N.C.B., turned suddenly white. It grew longer over his collar and, although he still tried to keep it sleek with hair cream, lost its elegance of former years. He grew sideburns of which he was very proud and fingered constantly as he spoke, stroking them downwards in a movement ending at his chin. He began to put on weight as he finally gave up smoking for the last time, and his dress became more casual still, his former trilby hat replaced by a wide brimmed hat which gave him an American air. He looked gentle and benign, blue eyes twinkling and kind under bushy white brows and surrounded by the most good-humoured wrinkles. He had entered the final stage of his life: that of a guru figure.

Fritz’s emergence as a guru figure became apparent first in America. Small is Beautiful had appeared when many young Americans, shocked by the aftermath of the Vietnam war, were looking for new solutions. Thousands found answers in Small is Beautiful. Jerry Brown, the young Governor of California, used it in his election platform. Fritz had put into words ideas which made sense, which people could respond to with their hearts and minds. What was more important: his words were not just hot air, they were practical and down to earth, and they put the whole man back into the picture.

Fritz made two major trips to the United States in the 1970s, as well as several shorter ones. During the first, in 1974, it was clear that his message was beginning to strike home with the young. Everywhere he went he was received enthusiastically and his lectures had capacity audiences. It was a grass roots response to a grass roots philosophy. Jerry Brown, who in a mixture of personal conviction and political shrewdness caught the mood of his Californian electorate, was alone among politicians in America to respond. Fritz, while heartened by the response of the young, nevertheless returned home somewhat disheartened by the frantic pursuit of material satisfaction by those who refused to open their eyes to the realities of the economic, energy, environmental and human crisis around them. He saw highlighted in America the rejection of ancient virtues which he believed were still crucial to Western economic life, particularly the Cardinal Virtue of Prudence which he had described in Small is Beautiful: ‘It signifies the opposite of a small, mean, calculating attitude to life, which refuses to see and value anything that fails to promise an immediate utilitarian advantage.’

He preached that the affluence of the West was not the norm but an abnormality which the ‘signs of the times’ clearly showed was coming to an end. One such sign was the inflation that had started to plague Western economies. Fritz saw inflation as the effect of a power struggle: ‘People ask what causes inflation. A very easy question to answer … prices are put up. Unfortunately the language of most people who talk economics is so sloppy that they prefer to say prices rise … as if prices were balloons. No. Prices are put up and when you put it that way you can ask who put them up. Those who have the power to do so and can get away with it. The powerless cannot get away with it.’

Another sign of change lay in the shift of those who held power. ‘Various groups, who have hitherto counted for little, have discovered their essentiality and therewith their power.’ This discovery led such groups to demand a greater reward for their labours so that, for example, garbage collectors could suddenly demand the same or more than University professors. ‘The party is over …’ Fritz said, and asked:

Whose party was it anyhow? That of a small minority of countries and, inside those countries, that of a minority of people. And as the party became more and more swinging, an increasing number of people began to realize that the party was not for them but that, at the same time, they were needed to keep the party going. And that is why we have inflation now. It is these people who have done the most to wake up society, and you may say that they have done the most to set the inflationary spiral going … Those whose power has grown want to change the status quo; and those whose power has waned want to defend it. The former normally collect a very great deal of abuse whilst those who defend the status quo feel extremely self-righteous.
In making this analysis Fritz did not exclude the additional pressures to put up prices, which came from the struggle over limited resources such as oil and phosphates, but he insisted that both sources of pressure could only be contained through "justice," and "justice" involved setting a limit, knowing when enough was enough. In practical terms Fritz suggested that meant a ceiling to salaries and had strong words to say to those who argued that limits to pay make it difficult to attract the "best" people into the most important jobs. "This argument misses the point. Those who cannot accept that enough is enough are not the best people; they are dangerous people who make our problems insoluble and we cannot have them as top civil servants, industrialists, judges, generals, etc."  

It is hardly surprising that this kind of message appealed more to young radicals than to the "establishment." To those who dismissed him as a crank he replied with delight: "A crank is a piece of simple technology that creates revolutions." Meanwhile, he saw in the young the hope for the future, particularly in America where, although he saw much which he regarded as downright evil, he also saw many seeds for new healthy growth in a changing society. While in America an event occurred which increased his reputation as a crank. It was the birth of his last child, James. He had received the news of Vreni's pregnancy with slight misgivings. "Now people really will think I am eccentric," he had said. The news of James's birth in 1974 came while he was addressing a large audience of young people, and it endeared him to them - this elderly, white-haired man clearly still so young at heart and full of life. It had taken the person who had answered the transatlantic call some time to grasp the message and Virginia, who was phoning through the good news, had had to repeat several times, "Yes, that's right, not a grandson, a son. Dr Schumacher has just had a son." Fritz was delighted to have another son. It had always been his ambition to have six sons. Each daughter had been accompanied by an apology from her mother. However, with eight children he was now prepared to let that ambition remain unfulfilled.

Returning home after his American trip, Fritz tried to settle down to giving his second book, A Guide for the Perplexed, some attention. He was not altogether satisfied with his pub-
and advocate a return to medieval times. His message always contained words like, 'We must use our knowledge, use the best of what we have.' But at the centre of his message was the point that unless it is recognized that there exists something higher than man which gives a point to man's actions, then there can be no future worth contemplating. The recognition of a purpose and an existence beyond that of man was something which Fritz had learnt was more than a mental act: it required the action of the heart. 'Modern civilization can survive only if it begins again to educate the heart, which is the source of wisdom; for modern man is now far too clever to survive without wisdom.'

The urgency of his message increased the urgency which he felt about getting to grips with *A Guide for the Perplexed*. He intended it to be a handbook for those who took his message seriously but did not know where to turn for guidance. In 1976 he worked more systematically than before. He knew that he must complete the book quickly. He believed that time was running out for the world. The sense of urgency within him concentrated his ideas to such an extent that the volumes that he had expected to write were distilled into a slim volume of less than 150 pages. It was a volume intended to answer more fully the challenge with which he had ended *Small is Beautiful*, where he had written: 'Everywhere people ask: "What can I actually do?" The answer is as simple as it is disconcerting: we can, each of us, work to put our own inner house in order. The guidance we need for this work cannot be found in science or technology, the value of which utterly depends on the ends they serve: but it can still be found in the traditional wisdom of mankind.'

It had taken Fritz many years to find his answers in traditional wisdom, to understand its meaning and importance. His task in *A Guide for the Perplexed* was to help those on a similar search to find their way through the confusing ideas of the modern world, to understand where they had taken a wrong turning or gone up a blind alley, and to point them back in the right direction. It was a book for the thousands who had asked him, 'What can I actually do?' and to whom his only reply could be, 'Begin with yourself.' In his Epilogue to the book he wrote: 'The modern experiment to live without religion has failed, [his italics] and once we have understood this, we know what our "post-modern" tasks really are. Significantly, a large number of young people (of varying ages!) are looking in the right direction.' It was for them that he wrote the book, to share with them the happiness he had discovered in the pursuit of understanding. It was stated clearly in the title page: 'Man has no reason to philosophize except with a view to happiness,' a quotation he took from St Augustine. Fritz's choice of a quotation from St Augustine was no accident. St Augustine had been a man who had known the pleasures of life and had tasted them. He had had a brilliant mind. Yet it was only when he had 'turned around' towards higher aims that his true potential could be revealed. Or in Fritz's words:

The art of living is always to make a good thing out of a bad thing. Only if we know that we have actually descended into infernal regions where nothing awaits us but 'the cold death of society and the extinguishing of all civilised relations', can we summon the courage and imagination needed for a 'turning around', a *metanoia*. This then leads to seeing the world in a new light, namely a place where the things modern man continuously talks about and always fails to accomplish can actually be done.