

# BAHÁ'Í JOURNAL

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## PROGRESS REPORT

At the Centenary Convention, nearly eighteen months ago, we adopted our Six-Year Plan, and during the months that have passed we have been in the preliminary stages of working the Plan. No doubt we were not very quick in getting started—to this a number of things have contributed: lack of pioneers, restricting employment rules and other war-time restrictions, housing shortage and the like, but the greatest impediment has probably been our own lack of consciousness of the vital importance of the work we have undertaken and its future consequences for our Bahá'í community and for the country generally. However, we have started and here is our first progress report. To an outsider it might not appear to be very much, but it is a sample of things to come and as such is an historic event.

First of all, we have now two pioneers at work. The exodus of devoted believers to spread the Faith, so long urgently needed, has begun. Mrs. Brown and Ursula Newman of London have set to work, Mrs. Brown in Nottingham and Ursula Newman to help Bernard Leach at St. Ives. In both these places teaching work has already been done with some prospects of success and the activities of these believers will consolidate the interest shown and also open up new circles to the Faith.

Besides single pioneers, there are others working in the field of the Six-Year Plan, namely our two established groups, at Northampton and Blackburn, who are hoping to be first amongst the nineteen assemblies we have set ourselves to build up. Northampton now numbers eight, seven voting members and one youth. They are working actively as a Bahá'í community and are hunting hard for a centre, though so far without success as the housing situation is as difficult there as everywhere else. They have grown almost to assembly size in the last two years and are an example of what we hope to achieve in all the towns where

pioneers are getting to work. The other group, Blackburn, is still at an earlier stage of development, numbering at present four voting members and one youth. In spite of small numbers, however, they are holding public meetings which are very well attended and have commenced to keep the 19-Day feasts, thus making another step on the road to community life and providing a basis for further expansion in the future.

Further progress will come, there is no doubt of that, if we work actively and untiringly. Not only the pioneers, the groups and the assemblies but each individual one of us. All can help in some way, firstly by continual prayer for the success of the Plan, next by looking out for ways in which we can actively help, either by assisting those already in the field or by undertaking some job which will make another pioneer free to set out.

### ANNUAL TEACHING CONFERENCE.

The Annual Teaching Conference will be held, as usual, in Manchester, on the 2nd and 3rd of February. The whole of the Conference will be devoted to the Six-Year Plan. Sessions will be as follows:—

Saturday, Feb. 2nd: 2.30 p.m.—4.30 p.m.

5.30 p.m.—7.30 p.m.

Sunday, Feb. 3rd: 10.30 a.m.—1.0 p.m.

2.30 p.m.—4.30 p.m.

The Manchester community will do all they can to find accommodation for those requiring it and friends wishing for help in this respect should advise the Secretary at the Bahá'í Centre, 39 High Street, Manchester 4, before January 12th of their requirements.

### Telegraphic Address.

The N.S.A. now has an abbreviated telegraphic address, i.e., "BAHAI SOWEST LONDON," for inland telegrams; and "BAHAI LONDON," for overseas cables.

## NEWS.

The British community had the great pleasure recently to receive a visit from Mr. and Mrs. Mottahedeh of New York, who came over here on business. They visited Bahá'í communities and friends in various parts of the country. In London Mrs. Mottahedeh spoke at two well-attended meetings, one at the Bahá'í Centre. The other meeting was held in a private cinema which was rented. The film of the American Centenary Convention meetings, lent by Mr. and Mrs. Mottahedeh, was shown and Mrs. Mottahedeh spoke on the activities of the Faith on the American Continent.

The Committee appointed for the purpose has duly commenced to hold meetings on Sunday mornings in Hyde Park. The meetings have been very successful, good crowds listening on each occasion. This is a good method of making the name and the basic teachings of the Faith known to large numbers of people, and it has resulted too in some people coming to the Centre for further information.

Sheila Jewell of Bristol was married in the London Centre on Sunday, October 14th, to Mr. Leonard Worrall. She is now living in Bromley, and has therefore become a member of the London community.

Marion Holley and David Hofman were married in Northampton on Sunday, October 21st.

Norman Smith of the U.S. Army who was in this country for about two years and for a good deal of that time was a member of the London community, has left London on the first stage of his journey home.

London has been visited recently by Mr. Weiss, a friend from New Jersey, serving in the U.S. Army, and also from Mrs. Appleton of the United States, working in Paris with the American Red Cross. She was returning to Paris and very kindly took some presents to the friends there.

### N.S.A. Membership.

As Mrs. Preston (Miss Wellby) is leaving England, a by-election was held to fill her place on the N.S.A., and Mr. David Hofman was elected.

### New Believers.

We are glad to welcome Miss Margaret Shanks of Southport (Youth) and Mr. Robert Cheak of London.

## The World Community of Bahá'u'lláh.

On the conclusion of the war with Japan, the American believers received the following cable from the Guardian:—

"Our hearts are uplifted in thanksgiving for complete cessation of the prolonged, unprecedented world conflict. I hail the prospects of the removal of the restrictions enabling American Bahá'í community to expedite the preliminary measures required to launch the second stage of the Divine Plan.—I appeal focus attention upon the requirements of the all-important Latin American work. The adequate fulfilment of this vital task precludes the assumption of collective responsibility by triumphant community of the spiritual enlightenment and ultimate redemption of sorely-tried, war-ravaged European continent, destined to be associated with exploits which must immortalize the second stage of the World Mission entrusted by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the apostles of His Father's Faith in the western world. The opportunities of the present hour are infinitely precious, the time is pressing, the call of the distressed, groping peoples of Europe pitiful, insistent. The work still to be accomplished to consummate the mighty enterprise undertaken in Latin America is considerable. The Almighty's sustaining grace is assured, unfailing. I am praying from the depths of a joyful, thankful heart for the outpouring of blessings no less remarkable than the divine bounties vouchsafed unto the valiant prosecutors of the Plan in the course of the opening phase of their World Mission.—Shoghi Rabbani."

Further news has now been received about the death of Siyyid Mustafa Roumie. From a letter sent to the Indian N.S.A. by Mr. S. G. Murtaza Ali who was present, it appears that nearly three thousand Burmese dacoits and hooligans from adjoining villages attacked the village of Daidenaw on March 13th, 1942. They killed many of the friends, looted their properties and burnt all the huts. All, including friends from Rangoon who had taken refuge there, lost all their belongings. Siyyid Mustafa Roumie was killed in the Haziratu'l-Quds which was afterwards burnt. The writer himself, a member of the Rangoon community, has suffered physical injury and lost all his possessions, including his cherished Bahá'í books. He reports also that the Haziratu'l-Quds of Rangoon has been destroyed and that the whereabouts and fate of many of the Burmese Bahá'ís is still unknown. The Indian community has opened a fund to assist the Burmese friends.

Philip Hainsworth spent some time in Egypt on his way to East Africa and stayed in the



Haziratu'l-Quds in Cairo for a few days' leave. He gives the following description of it:—

"It is very new and a most beautiful place. It was only completed a matter of one hour before the Centenary celebrations were due to begin. As soon as the workmen finished, swarms of the friends dashed around the place and cleaned it up so that everything should start on time. The exterior and dome is still incomplete. It is a nine-sided building of simple design but unusual, with a dome on top supported on nine pillars, about 15-20 feet above the main body of the building. Eventually the surface will be covered with some plastic material and the dome will be floodlit.

"It lies a hundred yards back from the main road between a Coptic Church and a Mosque. (This Mosque was built specially to oppose the Haziratu'l-Quds and meetings are held in it for the sole purpose of raising hatred against the Bahá'ís.)

"In the basement of the Haziratu'l-Quds are five rooms, kitchen, etc., the rooms being used for the library and book store, for the Youth Groups (boys and girls meet separately for the present), the local assembly, etc. Above the basement is the reception hall, a small office, and the large assembly hall, which will seat 150 or so. The next floor has the two guest rooms, the archives room, the N.S.A. room, library (display), bathroom and small kitchen. Above this again is the flat sun roof with the dome rising above all."

Mrs. Louise Caswell of the U.S. who is pioneering in Panama, writes us: "The main effort we are putting forth is now by press, radio and lectures, in accordance with the Guardian's suggestion for the year ahead. We have had fairly good press articles, about ten since the formation of our Assembly, we have a weekly radio talk in Spanish and a talk has been given at Rotary International in Spanish, one at the University to the philosophy class, and we now have plans for a talk to the boys of the 'Instituto,' comparable to public high school. Julie Regal, a young pioneer, is doing the honors for youth in Panama. She writes the radio script and mimeographs circulars which we are distributing to all educated people, already we have distributed over a thousand."

Johnny Eichenauer, with the U.S. Army in Germany, writes that he is able to see the Bahá'ís in Stuttgart and Esslingen quite often. The American officer responsible for religious matters in the area knows of the Faith, as his aunt is a Bahá'í, and he has allowed the friends to hold meetings and to publish a pamphlet. Johnny has permission to attend the meetings. He reports that there are about sixty believers

remaining in Stuttgart and forty in Esslingen. He has also heard that the believers in Heidelberg, Karlsruhe, Goppingen and Neckargemund are safe. -

We hear that Arnold van Ogtrop of Bussum, Holland, who accepted the Faith whilst in this country, is safe and is recovering now from the hardships which, like all the Dutch people, he had to endure.

We also hear through Mrs. Lynch of Geneva that she has heard from Mr. Vuk Echtner of Prague. He is alive and well and says: "We are translating and circulating tablets from the Holy Books and are planning for 19-Day Feasts and a Study Class for interested people."

We have also received a letter from Mrs. Ramsli of Kristiansund, Norway, telling of her adventures. The town was bombed and nearly all of it burnt, though her own house was mercifully spared. She has suffered great difficulties and privations, but is thankful for having been protected and glad once more to be in touch with the rest of the world.

#### Correspondence.

We have received the following letter from Mark Tobey of Seattle, U.S., who was for years a member of the community here:—

Dear, dear English Bahá'í Friends,

It seems like taking up the threads of an old incarnation to be addressing you. The period just passed has seemed so dark to me and it was only at breakfast on V.3 day that something was released within me in knowing that at last your ordeal in the center of the hurricane had passed.

Tonight we all shall be thinking of you, particularly Mr. and Mrs. Bishop and myself, for I am chairman and Helen is speaking on the theme—The Cause in Europe. Last Tuesday we had a similar one on the Cause in the Orient with oriental music. We follow with two more, Latin America and North America.

The school is more attended than ever and if deeper physical foundations are not laid, I don't know what we will do, as I believe the attendance will grow and grow in spite of the fact that all travel and food are becoming increasingly difficult.

Only last night I read your Centenary book, which certainly brought back old times, yes and wonderful they were. Needless to say, the heart yearns towards England and that England is for the most part all of you and what you mean to me. Happy would be the day when and if ever I come rushing towards your shores—perhaps a comet will carry me! . . .

All good luck and deepest Bahá'í greetings to all.

MARK TOBEY,  
Geyserville Summer School.

From Miss E. A. Blundell of the Auckland, N.Z., community:—

"... Now with business seen to, one can turn to the pleasure of sending greetings to you dear faithful ones who have stood the test of six trying years of war. In the paper 'Picture Post' we saw your 'gathering' in celebration of the first Bahá'í Century—'underground.' Now you will be able to 'come up' again and continue in the great work of building a new society—new in heart and mind. We in New Zealand had very little to contend with in comparison—shortage of clothes, stockings, etc., black-out, but no bombs! No sound of war—only men in uniform—rations in butter, meat, etc. We had to leave our room in Symond Street some six months ago and now we are settled in a new one in a good position in the main street of the city. It is smaller but has other benefits. Each day from Tuesday to Friday it is open for enquiries, etc., from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. or later if needful. Our Youth Group has been well and truly scattered—three boys called up! They asked for and were given positions in the Medical Corps. Two have been overseas in the Islands—soon we look for them to be assembled again."

### **The Bahá'í Life.**

A Bahá'í is a Bahá'í because he believes that Bahá'u'lláh is the "Word of God." No other reason can stand a moment's scrutiny. Bahá'u'lláh Himself has in no uncertain terms proclaimed that no one's faith can be dependent upon the faith of any other person. Nobody therefore can declare his or her belief in Bahá'u'lláh because he or she likes this or the other Bahá'í, and the converse of this is just as true. That is, no one can logically cease to believe in the Faith because this or the other Bahá'í is a difficult person. All this is sheer common sense.

It is true that the greatest teacher is deeds and not words. See what the Guardian wrote way back in the early twenties:—

"Not by the force of numbers, not by the mere exposition of a set of new and noble principles, not by an organised campaign of teaching—no matter how world-wide and elaborate in its character—not even by the staunchness of our faith or the exaltation of our enthusiasm, can we ultimately hope to vindicate in the eyes of a critical and sceptical age the supreme claim of the Abhá Revelation. One thing and only one thing will unfailingly and alone secure the undoubted triumph of this sacred Cause, namely, the extent to which our own inner life and private character mirror

forth in their manifold aspects the splendour of those eternal principles proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh."

However, the acceptance of the Cause does not necessarily transform the believer all at once into a saint. Moreover, all the Bahá'ís cannot reach absolutely the same level of spiritual development. People will be in different stages of the journey towards their Creator. Bahá'u'lláh says: "The whole duty of man in this Day is to attain that share of the flood of grace which God poureth forth for him. Let none, therefore, consider the largeness or smallness of the receptacle. The portion of some might lie in the palm of a man's hand, the portion of others might fill a cup, and of others even a gallon measure." Within the pale of the Cause there will be men and women of different temperaments and capacities.

The Cause does not guarantee that there will be no conflict of temperaments. Had it given such a promise, it would have falsified a good many of its teachings. But the Cause does give this promise and this guarantee, that every human problem, every clash and conflict of opinion and temperament and capacity can be solved within its pale. Its history has borne out this claim.

Let us always remember these words of Bahá'u'lláh: "O Children of Men! Know ye not why we created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other." And also these: "Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art thyself a sinner."

### **Bahá'í Marriages.**

The N.S.A. has taken the following decision with regard to the administrative procedure for Bahá'í marriages:—

"It was resolved that in a community with a local assembly, a member of the local assembly should be present for the purpose of certifying the marriage; in the case of a pioneer, a member of the N.S.A. or a deputy properly appointed in advance by the N.S.A., should be present for the purpose of certification. Believers are free to ask for the appointment of any particular person if they wish. Further, that the register, local or national as relevant, shall be signed by the contracting parties and the certifying member or deputy. The chairman and secretary of the national or local assembly, as the case may be, should countersign the marriage certificates afterwards."