

Inside:



8

Looking to Copenhagen: the World Summit on Social Development is finding its theme.



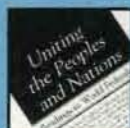
12

In Malta, NGOs launch the International Year of the Family, stressing the importance of the basic unit for society.



14

In Switzerland, Bahá'ís discuss the future of agriculture and its links with other disciplines.



16

Review: *Uniting the Peoples and Nations* — As an idea, world federalism spans many cultures.

Helping “street kids” in Brazil find a new life

In the Amazon, the Center for Social Welfare provides education, moral training, support to parents and love for the region's dispossessed

MANAUS, Brazil — Wearing ruby-red lipstick and a tight-fitting skirt and blouse, 13-year-old Theresa carries herself with a worldliness that seems out of place among the other third graders at the Masrour Vocational School.

When Theresa first came to Masrour, which is located in the poor and densely populated Manaus suburb of São José, she told teachers that her dream was to be the owner of a house of prostitution. As a child of the streets in this fast-growing metropolis of some 2 million people in the heart of the Amazon River basin, it was perhaps the highest aspiration she could then envision for herself.

After spending a year at Masrour, however, where she not only gets a primary school education but also receives vocational training, moral guidance, and meals, Theresa's vision for her future has changed considerably.

Now when she matures, Theresa said recently, she wants to be a teacher. “The teachers here, they are just like parents to me,” said Theresa, which is not her real name. “They teach me the things that my parents don't, like respecting people and how to have good behavior.”

It is an answer that speaks volumes about Masrour, which is operated as part of a larger project aimed primarily at helping down-and-out street children become healthy, conscientious and productive members of society.

(Continued on page 4)



Daily classes in vocational education are offered to street children at the Center for Social Well-Being. Staff member Manuel Paulo Mendes, 25, shown holding the plaque, is a specialist in agricultural education.

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Balancing Family Values

When families are strong, much is right with the world. In the loving matrix of the family, we can develop our full potential as individuals. Family life is the source of some of our happiest and most satisfying feelings.

When families are weak or fragmented, however, almost nothing goes well. The most stressful problems of our lives often stem from family troubles.

The importance of the family is recognized in the United Nations' call to observe 1994 as the "International Year of the Family." As proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989, the Year takes for its theme: "Family: resources and responsibilities in a changing world."

Implicit in the Year's theme is the recognition that families in our modern age are in a time of transition.

In every culture, families are disintegrating, fragmenting under pressure of economic and political upheavals and weakening in the face of moral and spiritual confusion.

Yet families remain the most basic unit of society, and without a re-creation and revitalization of this most fundamental institution, civilization as a whole stands in peril.

The teachings of the Bahá'í Faith, which is today the second most widespread independent world religion, offer a distinctive remedy to many of the forces that are pulling families apart today.

The essential message of the Bahá'í Faith is unity, and Bahá'ís around the world have found that it is possible to use this guiding principle in a way that combines traditional values with progressive social principles so as to provide a bulwark against the forces of disintegration in our modern age.

Family unity begins with marriage, a divine creation. According to Bahá'í law, a man and woman are free to make their own choice of mates; however, they must then obtain permission from their parents for marriage. Although parental consent may seem overly traditional to some in the West, Bahá'ís find that this requirement helps greatly to preserve the unity of the

extended family — while at the same time reaffirming the importance of the bond between parent and child, a lesson that is then passed on to the next generation.

The Bahá'í marriage vows are taken in front of witnesses from the community, further strengthening the supportive network of family and friends. The marriage vow is simple, requiring merely that each partner recite the words "We will all, verily, abide by the will of God." Yet it carries with it an implicit commitment that involves not only the two parties, but also the Creator. Bahá'ís understand from this that the husband and wife must then strive to become loving companions and comrades, "united both physically and spiritually, that they may ever improve the spiritual life of each other."

This commitment is the foundation for creating a happy home. And since the physical purpose of marriage is the creation of a new generation who will love God and serve humanity, children benefit from these promises — not to mention from the support of the extended family.

These ideas, of course, are traditional: all of the world's great religions have taught essentially the same things about the impor-

Perspective

Bahá'ís around the world have found that it is possible to combine traditional values with progressive social principles in a way that can provide the family with a bulwark against the forces of disintegration in our modern age.

tance and purpose of marriage and family life. Yet these traditional values have come under attack in the modern world — and many families are failing under the onslaught.

When such values are balanced with progressive principles, however, it is possible to create the kind of family that is in harmony with today's world.

For Bahá'ís, perhaps the most important such principle in the preservation of family unity is the recognition of the fundamental equality between women and men. The Bahá'í sacred writings state: "Until the reality of equality between men and women is fully established and attained, the highest social development of mankind is not possible."

The use of consultation, a non-adversarial method of decision-making, gives the institution of marriage a new resiliency in a rapidly changing world. The spirit of consultation allows husbands and wives the flexibility to adjust their roles, when necessary, to meet the needs of each family member and the family as a whole.

Although men and women have complementary capacities and functions in certain areas, women are encouraged to pursue their own careers, and fathers are not exempt from household duties or child-rearing.

The family must be continually concerned with nurturing the highest qualities and values in each member. Parents must

provide for the integrated development of their children's capacities—spiritual, moral, intellectual, emotional, and physical.

Therefore, both girls and boys are to be formally educated according to the same curriculum. Should limited resources force a choice, daughters, as the potential trainers of the next generation, are to be granted a "prior right to education over sons."

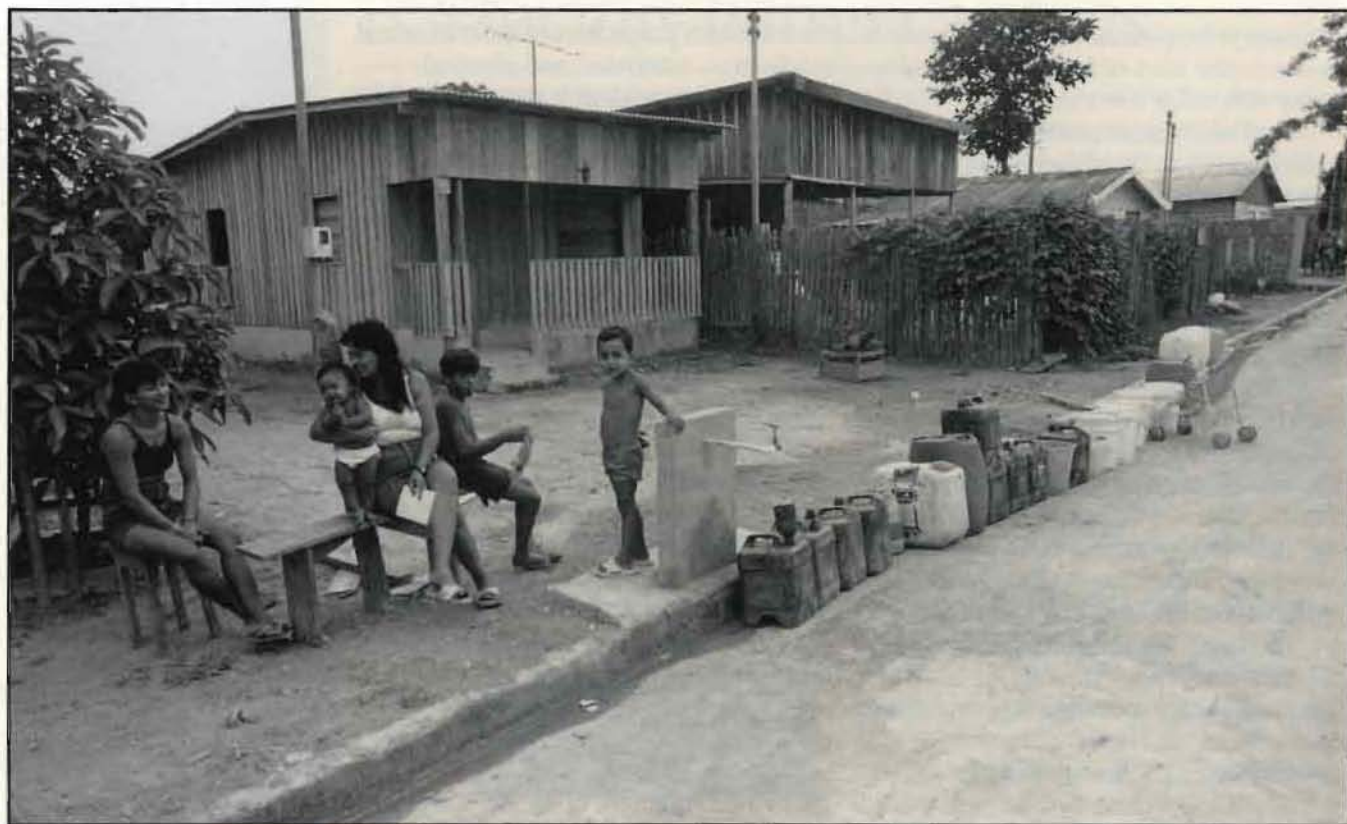
When women are educated, as urged in the Bahá'í writings, statistics show that families reap measurable benefits. Family income rises, and the money mothers control tends to benefit their children.

Educating girl children appears to be one of the best ways to address national population concerns. Educated women have fewer children, and those they bear tend to be healthier, better nourished, and better educated.

At all times, the complex of family relationships must be guided by the highest moral standard. Unity, justice, love, compassion, trustworthiness, courtesy, honesty—these qualities have been taught humanity by the Founders of all the world's revealed religions and remain the foundation for human happiness and well-being. ☸



In Kiev, members of the Bahá'í Chorale stopped to pose for a photograph during a 14-day tour in Russia, Moldova and Ukraine in October 1993. Composed of 43 singers from Australia, Canada, China, Israel, Iran, Mexico, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States, the Chorale also spent three days in the Mosfilm Studio recording the music they performed at the Second Bahá'í World Congress, which was held in November 1992 in New York. The program for their concerts last year included contemporary choral interpretations of classical Persian, Jewish, Indian and American Gospel music.



In the poor *bairros* around Manaus, clean water comes at a premium. In the neighborhood near the Center for Social Welfare, residents place their water containers in a line, awaiting their turn to use the tap provided by the Center.

Helping “Street Children” find new lives in Amazonas

(Continued from page one)

The Center for Social Well-Being, as the larger project is known, takes an integrated approach to social welfare. In addition to the general classes at Masrour school, the Center offers a special program of vocational and moral training for street children, an outreach program of community organization aimed at empowering the poor women of the neighborhood, and direct services, such as the supply of clean water and health care.

Operated by the Bahá’í community of Brazil, the Center’s approach is distinctive in that it seeks not only to provide material and educational assistance to the children and youth it serves, but also to empower them with the intellectual and spiritual tools with which they can transform their own lives, and ultimately to reach out themselves to help others.

“There are of course many groups attacking the problem of street children in

Brazil,” said Ferial Farzin, the Center’s director. “What makes our approach different is that we search for the jewel that we believe exists inside of each person.

“Most other institutions aren’t interested in developing these children as individuals,” said Ms. Farzin. “They know they need money, so they teach them to sell ice cream. And then in the streets, the children have more money and learn how to sniff glue. And so the problem grows. What we believe is you must look at the potential of these children. And then work with them in a dynamic way that integrates the spiritual with the practical.”

A Worldwide Problem

The problem of homeless children, of course, is a worldwide problem and is not unique to Brazil. According to UNICEF, an estimated 100 million children and young people worldwide live or make their livings on urban streets around the world. Of those, an estimated 10 percent are so-called “children of the street,” abandoned or separated

from their families and living day-to-day by their wits.

UNICEF estimates that some 40 percent of the world's street children live in Latin America, and a variety of factors have made the problem an acute one in Brazil, where world attention has been particularly focused because of reports of the semi-organized murder of street children. According to *Newsweek* magazine, an estimated 6,000 Brazilian "street children" have been killed over the last four years.

The problem is partly rooted in changing demographics. Thirty years ago, some 70 percent of Brazil's population lived in rural areas. Today, an estimated 70 percent live in urban areas. This flow from the countryside to the cities, coupled with a population rise from roughly 70 million to an estimated 146 million, has overwhelmed the social services and outpaced job creation.

In the sprawling shanty-towns or *favelas* that have sprung up around the country's major cities, the impact of these trends is evident.

The streets of this fast-growing suburb are lined with make-shift homes and shelters, built of everything from bricks to scrap wood. Most of the households are headed by women, said Ms. Farzin, a fact that stems largely from the failure of husbands to find jobs and being forced to head back into the interior to find employment in forestry or mining. The household income in the area averages about U.S. \$60 per month, she said.

According to the INPA (National Institute of Research of Amazonas), nearly 40 percent of the children in Manaus suffer from some form of malnutrition. Just 12 percent of the houses have septic systems and nearly 58 percent of the children are afflicted with parasites.

Families are large and there is little for the children to do but hang out in the streets. Petty crime, glue sniffing, and prostitution are common preoccupations for such children on the fringe.

Started as an Orphanage

Founded in 1985, the Center for Social Welfare started as a rented home in Manaus and during its first years functioned primarily as a foster home, caring for abandoned and abused children until they could be adopted. With a capacity of 50, the Center served more than 300 foster children between 1985 and 1992.

In 1988, the Center managed to purchase 12 acres of undeveloped land on the outskirts of São José. With help from private donations, the Center then built several buildings and moved here in 1989. At about the same time, the Center began to shift its mission from simply being a foster care provider to functioning as the integrated school and social outreach project it is today.

The Masrour primary school has a capacity of some 240 children, 40 percent of whom attend on a free scholarship. In addition, from among those 40 percent on schol-



Teacher Irlania da Silva Pinheiro instructs a class of third graders at the Masrour Vocational School.

The school is special not only for its attempt to serve the poorest children of São José, but also for its distinctive curriculum, which focuses on giving the children moral and spiritual education in addition to the traditional subjects of reading, writing and arithmetic.

arship, about 40 children are offered free vocational training in the afternoon.

As a private effort, the school is special not only for its attempt to serve the poorest children of São José, but also for its distinctive curriculum, which focuses on giving the children moral and spiritual education in addition to the traditional subjects of reading, writing and arithmetic.

Based on Bahá'í teachings, the moral and spiritual curriculum emphasizes the oneness of all religions and peoples, which in turn provides a starting point for greater self-confidence and self-respect.

"In the other schools, the spiritual education was only Catholic," said Christina Ihhamus de Paula, 29, a Masrour teacher who taught for four years in government schools before coming here a year ago. "But if there are students of other religions, they feel sad and discouraged. Here we have them talk about God, the God of everybody, and it helps the students."

Ms. Ihhamus de Paula added that if the school were not here to serve children in the area, "most of them would be abandoned and like many other children, they would live in the streets."

"Many of the students are from the poorest class of society and they lack care and tenderness," she said. "I feel myself that they need my love, because they often don't have it at home. Not all of them get enough to eat, so the need for the school is very important."

The salary of about half of the school's

teachers are paid by the government — which reflects the high regard state and municipal authorities have for the project.

Josue Filho, Secretary of Education for Amazonas, said that the government was eager to work closely with any group to improve the availability of education. He added, however, that he has been especially pleased with the service-oriented philosophy espoused by the Center.

"Besides the good relationship of the government with the Bahá'í community in general," said Dr. Filho, "there is also a bond of friendship with the Governor of Amazonas and with me. It is a spiritual and affectionate bond."

Community Outreach

Beyond the relatively straightforward operation of the school, the Center also strives to help adults, and particularly women, in the surrounding community to become better organized and developed.

The Center, for example, has been instrumental in helping to organize a mothers' group in the neighborhood immediately adjacent to the project.

Many of the families send their children to the school, and from this association the parents have slowly evolved into a force for social change and action.

On many evenings, members of the mothers' group can be seen walking around together, visiting with families that are having problems and seeking to provide some sort of mutual support. Ms. Farzin often

After school hours, the Center provides a place for young people to gather — offering an attractive alternative to life in the streets. Here a group of young boys play soccer shortly after sundown.





A group of mothers gathers outside the front gate to the Center for Social Welfare in the evening before going on an informal "tour" of their neighborhood. With the encouragement of the Center, the neighborhood mothers' group has been instrumental in providing a new and much needed element of community organization. Mrs. Maria Edjmar, who is quoted below, is shown second from the left.

joins the group on these rounds. On one recent evening, they toured the neighborhood to discuss the distribution of water.

Clean water is an important issue in the *bairro*. The municipality does not serve this section of São José with pipelines, and all drinking water must be hauled in or produced from local wells.

The Center itself has dug two 50-meter deep wells, which are capable of supplying most of the neighborhood's needs. But rather than simply dictating when and where to build the tap lines, it has asked the mothers' group to make such decisions—in consultation with the neighborhood at large.

Such an issue might seem trivial, but in the loosely organized, *ad hoc* neighborhood that surrounds the Center, the question of where to locate a water tap can be quite contentious. Without proper agreement and consensus, it is possible that the family upon whose property (a term that must be loosely applied, as few have formal deeds or titles) the tap is located might try to charge a fee for the water. They might also be the subject of jealousy by others.

The Center, however, has provided the mothers' group with training in consultation—a form of non-adversarial decision-making used by Bahá'í communities around the world. By using this process they have learned how to become better organized and to settle their own difficulties.

"Normally, when you are talking about water, there are conflicts and political problems — because it has been traditional for the politicians to use water as one means of winning support," said Ms. Farzin. "Likewise, if you just give water away freely, the people have no ownership, and they are as likely to break the lines and the taps as to maintain them.

"However, we have explained that it is up to the neighborhood itself to decide where the water lines will go, and how they will be run," she said. "We ask that they cooperate, for example, to collect a small amount of money for the maintenance of the pipes and the well. And, so far, they have been able to do this with no conflicts. We believe that this comes from learning to consult."

Going from house to house, the group discussed the pros and cons of running a new water line and where to put the tap. The process was extremely informal, but it was clearly designed to build consensus. In the process, neighborhood residents are coming to understand that the responsibility for progress is largely in their own hands.

"The Bahá'í community gives us a new vision," said Maria Edjmar, 43, a member of the neighborhood mothers' group and a Catholic. "Many many people promise us things. But they do little accomplishment. But the Bahá'ís are always willing to serve and they show us that example." ☉

"Besides the good relationship of the government with the Bahá'í community in general, there is also a bond of friendship with the Governor of Amazonas and with me. It is a spiritual and affectionate bond."

**— Amazonas
Education Secretary,
Josue Filho**

Preparations for World Summit on Social Development highlight the need for integration of global issues

After Rio, and looking ahead to Cairo and Beijing, the Copenhagen Summit seeks to tie sectoral concerns together

UNITED NATIONS — Because it comes less than three years after the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, and a few months before the scheduled 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, some critics have wondered why the United Nations is planning to hold next year a World Summit on Social Development (WSSD).

Didn't we already talk about development in Rio — establishing that it should be "sustainable?", such commentators asked. And isn't the status of women among the most critical social issues, which is scheduled to be discussed in Beijing at the Women's Conference? And what is "social development" anyway?

But after the first meetings of the WSSD Preparatory Committee (Prepcom) here in New York in early February, it was clear that the Social Development conference had found a purpose — although, of course, for many it had never been in doubt.

Both in the public deliberations of the Prepcom, as well as in private conversations in the hallways, there was a sense that the main currents of the Summit would flow from the concept of integration.

Specifically, participants expressed hope that the Summit will focus on integrating the various sectoral issues, such as environment, development, women, international finance, human rights, and population, that have been highlighted at Rio, and which remain on the agenda for the upcoming Women's conference, and for the World Population Conference, scheduled to be held in Cairo in September.

"The issues of Rio and Cairo and Beijing are in a way elements of the broader issue of social development," said Dr. Yogesh Atal, director of social science for the United Nations Scientific, Educational, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), who is co-

ordinating WSSD work for UNESCO. "The other conferences are addressing those areas in which there is a crisis, and they have done much to highlight these crises. But in terms of an integrated approach, it all comes together in the framework of social development."

Summit Objectives

The Summit is scheduled to be held in Copenhagen in March 1995. Its objectives were established by the United Nations General Assembly in December 1992. The Assembly decided that the WSSD should seek to address three core issues: 1) the enhancement of social integration, particularly of the more disadvantaged and marginalized groups; 2) the alleviation and reduction of poverty; and, 3) the expansion of productive employment.

During its two week meeting, which ran from 31 January to 11 February 1994, the Prepcom worked principally to outline the main elements for a proposed Declaration and Program of Action, which would be the Summit's main products.

As government delegations sought to better define the goals of the Summit, some differences of approach emerged. Following the pattern at recent United Nations world conferences, delegations from the North generally emphasized human rights and a focus on national measures for the alleviation of poverty, while Southern delegations sought to emphasize the need for adjustments in the global system of finance and trade, with the aim of addressing economic imbalances.

Nevertheless, the theme of integration was highlighted in a number of ways. The delegates agreed, for example, that "common aspects of the core issue should be emphasized and treated in an integrated manner" as documents are readied for the next Prepcom in August.

Speeches by the delegates struck similar notes. The Canadian statement was typical, saying that final Summit documents should incorporate "a conceptual framework that will enable all partners to deal with the

Only as the peoples of the world come to view the planet as one home and all its inhabitants as one people, will the vision, moral integrity and commitment necessary to address the complex challenges of social development emerge. Then and only then will humankind be able to erect a single social order whose boundaries are those of the planet.

— Excerpt from the Bahá'í International Community statement to the WSSD Prepcom

complexities of social development in integrative ways based on an holistic understanding of people-centered development."

Non-governmental organizations, also, played a key role in underscoring the interdependence of social concerns.

"We join with those delegations that stressed the interrelatedness of issues as characterizing our present situation," said Lisinka Ulatowska, the United Nations representative for the World Citizens, an NGO with affiliates in more than 35 countries. "Social development is interrelated with economic development, justice, and human rights and responsibilities."

Jorge Durão, the president of the Brazilian Association of NGOs, said the confluence of world wide social problems is opening the way to a new "social alliance" between NGOs and governments, and between North and South. "We need not think only in terms of opposition between North and South, but in terms of cooperation between North and South. And this is the role of NGOs, to promote this idea of world or international citizenship."

Women's Caucus Highly Effective

Among the most effective and vocal groups representing civil society was the Women's Caucus, an ad hoc organization of some 100 women from 23 countries who met daily during the Prepcom and on 10 February issued a statement calling on governments to "conceptualize a new paradigm of development that is centered on the needs of women, youth and children."

Many NGOs also said that solutions to social problems lie not just in government action, but in a greater reliance on and involvement with civil society.

"The closer you are to a problem, the more you can see its various causes, so you need to consult with local people," said John Tomlinson, who represented the Syneros Institute at the Prepcom. Based in New York, the Syneros Institute works with anti-poverty NGOs in Africa and Latin America.

Lawrence Arturo, director of the Bahá'í International Community's Office of the Environment, said the high level of the discussions at the Prepcom has done much to boost the overall recognition of the role and importance of the Summit.

"In today's world, through many processes — not the least of which was the Earth Summit — we are coming to recognize and accept the global interdependence of peoples and countries everywhere," said Mr. Arturo. "To respond to this new reality, there is a need for global approaches and understanding in the fields of economics, politics, technology, environment, law, finance and the media.

"The critical link in all of this is the issue of social integration," Mr. Arturo said. "How do we encourage all of the diverse elements of humanity to cooperate fruitfully and harmoniously, whether at the local, national, regional or global level? If the Summit earnestly seeks an answer to this question, it will be successful beyond the hopes of its greatest supporters." ☉

"We need not think only in terms of opposition between North and South, but in terms of cooperation between North and South. And this is the role of NGOs, to promote this idea of world or international citizenship."

**— Jorge Durão,
Brazilian Association
of NGOs**



In Gambia, four Bahá'í youth from the United States and Canada pose with the children who attend their weekly literacy and moral education classes in the village of New Yundun. The four youth are in Gambia for a year of service.

In Germany, the City of Berlin held a ceremony on 11 November 1993 to celebrate the birth of Bahá'u'lláh. The Bahá'í community of Berlin was asked to organize the program, which was filled with prayers, music and theater. The event was part of an effort by the City to demonstrate the variety of religions represented in the reunited city.



ONE COUNTRY now available on-line

NEW YORK—ONE COUNTRY, the newsletter of the Bahá'í International Community, is now available on-line to computer users with access to the Internet, the global computer communications network.

With the assistance of TogetherNet, a private not-for-profit computer service dedicated to creating a communications and information system for organizations working towards a sustainable future, the full English text of ONE COUNTRY, including all back issues, can be read by any computer user with full Internet access.

The "gopher" address for TogetherNet is "gopher.together.uvm.edu", and ONE COUNTRY is listed under "Organizations" on TogetherNet's menu.

Alternatively, computer users with a modem can subscribe directly to TogetherNet's on-line service, which not only carries the text of ONE COUNTRY, but also a variety of other documents from the United Nations and other non-governmental organizations.

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to TogetherNet, write to: TogetherNet, 130 South Willard Street, Burlington, Vermont, 05401, USA, or send an email to "todd_tyrrell@together.org".

The editors of ONE COUNTRY can also be reached via Internet at "1country@bic.org". ☉

Government in the Marshall Islands asks for Bahá'í help in education

MARSHALL ISLANDS—At the request of the Majuro Atoll Local Government, the Bahá'í community of the Marshall Islands has been asked to assume the responsibility for administering and managing five public schools on the atoll.

A memorandum of understanding which formalizes the move was signed on 26 November 1993, and the Bahá'í community is scheduled to begin operating the schools, which serve some 30 percent of the student population in the Marshall Islands, in early 1994.

The assistance of the Bahá'í community was sought because of its strong reputation in education. The community's plans to upgrade the curriculum by focusing on moral education, bilingual education in the English and Marshallese languages, and global awareness. ☉

Briefs

Warning that the existence of the Bahá'í community of Iran is "threatened," the U.N. condemns Iran on human rights

UNITED NATIONS — The United Nations General Assembly voted on 20 December 1993 to express "deep concern" over continuing reports of violations of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran — including the persecution of the Bahá'í community there.

The resolution, which passed by a vote of 74 to 23, warned that because of the discrimination faced by Bahá'ís in Iran, their "existence as a viable religious community is threatened."

"Given that the United Nations General Assembly represents the considered opinion of the community of nations, we are extremely gratified that the world has so explicitly called attention to the persecution faced by the Bahá'ís of Iran," said Mr. Techeste Ahderom, the main representative of the Bahá'í International Community to the United Nations.

"The resolution makes clear in no uncertain terms that the world community understands that Iran is persecuting Bahá'ís solely because of their religious beliefs, despite the Iranian Government's assertions to the contrary," said Mr. Ahderom.

Bahá'ís seek only legal rights

"We wish to re-state that the Bahá'ís of Iran are a peaceful and law-abiding religious community that only seeks the right to freedom of belief and practice, as recognized under international human rights instruments to which Iran is a party," Mr. Ahderom added.

Since 1979, more than 200 Bahá'ís have been executed or killed in Iran, hundreds more have been imprisoned, and thousands have been deprived of employment and/or education. Although the pace of executions has slowed in recent years, there are still numerous and wholesale signs of religious persecution against the Bahá'ís of Iran.

The December resolution by the General Assembly follows closely the conclusions and recommendations made in a report in early November by Professor Reynaldo Galindo Pohl, the special representative of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

In this year's report, Mr. Galindo Pohl said the Bahá'í community has for the last ten years been denied the right of assembly and the right to elect and maintain its administrative institutions.

"Those institutions constitute the core around which Bahá'í community life revolves," Mr. Galindo Pohl said. "Given that the Bahá'í Faith has no clergy, being deprived of its institutions threatens the very existence of the Bahá'í community as a viable religious community."

Mr. Galindo Pohl also said that the property rights of Bahá'ís continue to be disregarded, that many of the 350,000 Bahá'ís in Iran continue to be deprived of a means of earning a living, and that an entire generation of young Bahá'ís has been denied a higher education.

Other incidents of persecution

Throughout the year, there have been numerous signs of the continuing nature of the Government's involvement in the persecution of Bahá'ís in Iran.

In June, the municipal Government of Teheran began to dig up and remove the bodies of Bahá'ís from a Bahá'í cemetery, to make way for the construction of a cultural center.

In September, a penal court in Shahr-i-Ray ruled that a murder conviction against two Muslim men, which would ordinarily call for the death sentence and the payment of "blood money" to relatives, was "inapplicable" because the victim was a Bahá'í.

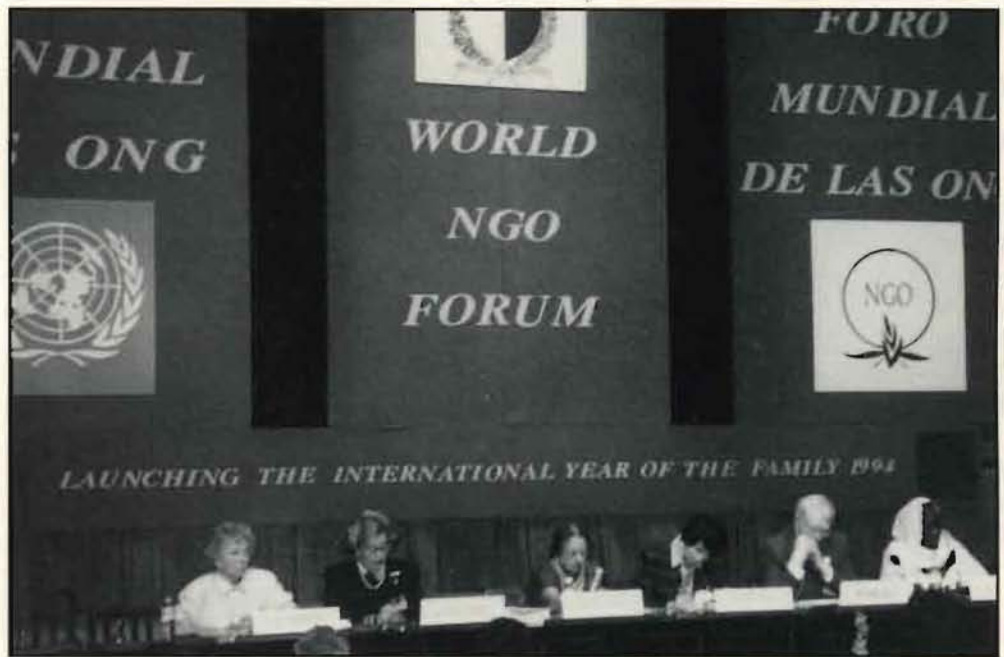
While the court wrote that "it is proven and established that the accused...have jointly participated in the abduction and subsequent deliberate murder of Rúhu'lláh Qidami," provisions of Islamic law calling for the death sentence and payment to relatives were inapplicable because the victim was "a member of the misled and misleading Sect of Bahá'ism."

The two murderers were, however, sentenced to 18 months in prison because, according to the court, "the action they have committed is illegal, upsets public order and security, and disturbs the well-being of the sacred order of the Islamic Republic...."❁

"The resolution makes clear in no uncertain terms that the world community understands that Iran is persecuting Bahá'ís solely because of their religious beliefs, despite the Iranian Government's assertions to the contrary."

— Techeste Ahderom

Plenary sessions featuring distinguished speakers from around the world were but one element of the World NGO Forum in Malta late last year, which was held to launch the 1994 International Year of the Family.



World NGO Forum launches 1994 International Year of the Family

MALTA — To launch the 1994 International Year of the Family, representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from nearly 100 countries gathered here from 28 November to 2 December 1993 to promote the understanding that healthy families are essential to the well-being of both individuals and societies.

Organized by the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family in cooperation with the United Nations Secretariat for the International Year of the Family (IYF), and supported by the New York NGO Committee on the Family, the four-day World NGO Forum featured a series of major speakers in plenary sessions and more than 40 workshops and forums on issues ranging from gender equality to homelessness.

"The Conference was focused on the Year of the Family, of course, but the key theme of the whole event was a realization that the family is a very very important unit of society," said Betty Benson, a Bahá'í International Community representative to the conference. "Virtually everyone reiterated that you cannot ignore the family and have a good society."

The Forum culminated with the signing of an NGO statement which urged governments to formulate policies that protect families, promote their self-reliance, and

encourage their participation. "In this regard," the statement said, "a family-friendly society, specific economic and ecological measures, and recognition of the contributions of families in the social, cultural and economic fields are indispensable."

The NGOs pledged to explore areas where "new and creative actions can be developed to support family resilience and to emphasize the significance of family life for the benefit of its members" and to develop "a new culture of partnership" and cooperation to "fulfill our vital functions in the interest of families."

Key Themes

In addition to the Forum's final statement, participants said, a number of important themes emerged in the speeches and workshops. These included the overall recognition of the family's importance as a building block for society, the importance of promoting equality between the sexes, and the significance of education for women.

"Women play the central role in enabling the family to function," said Her Royal Highness Sarvath El-Hassan, the Crown Princess of Jordan. "Education is the key to women's success in making the right choices."

Alba Zizzamia, who is chairperson of the New York NGO Committee on the Family, said she felt that an overall theme of

A conference organized by NGOs supports a powerful but often overlooked idea: we cannot attempt to address the ills of society without considering its smallest unit.

"hope" also emerged at the conference.

"The fact is that people have been prophesying the demise of the family for years," said Ms. Zizzamia, who is the United Nations representative for the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations. "And yet the family is still surviving, and there is a great deal of interest in it and how it functions and the roles of people in it, as evidenced by this conference."

As reflected in the final statement, many speakers called on governments to do more to protect families. At the same time, the key role of NGOs in working to strengthen the family was repeatedly underscored.

"International organizations and governments must be encouraged to view families as among their most important partners, the first line of defense and protection against all obstacles to human well-being, and the building blocks of communities," said Richard Jolly, deputy executive director for programs of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

"In this effort, NGOs have both power and responsibility," Mr. Jolly continued. "Their grassroots approach places them close to families where they can encourage important attitude changes. They exert considerable influence over policy-makers. And they are well-organized. Using these skills would serve this movement immeasurably."

Testimonial Awards

As a means of recognizing the work of various organizations and individuals in promoting the International Year of the Family, 100 "testimonials" were handed out by the IYF Secretariat in ceremonies on 1 December. Three testimonials were granted to the Bahá'í International Community and its representatives: one to the Bahá'í International Community as a whole; one to Jenny Field for her work on the New York NGO Committee on the Family; and one to Bahia Ettehadieh for her work as the Bahá'í representative to the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family.

"The testimonial was basically a way of saying that we have spoken on the issue of the family and that we have said we want to be involved in this worldwide focus on the family," said Ms. Field. "We were very gratified to have received these awards, and promise that you can expect us to continue to be involved in promoting family issues."

The Bahá'í delegation to the Confer-

ence totaled some 23 individuals from 13 countries. Its members ranged from official representatives of the Bahá'í International Community and national-level Bahá'í administrative councils to family professionals who are Bahá'ís.

"Many of the themes that emerged at the conference were themes that the Bahá'í community has been stressing for some years now, such as the necessity of forging an equal partnership between women and men, the necessity of ensuring education for girls and women, and the simple idea that the family, as the most basic unit of society, must be healthy for society itself to be healthy," said Ms. Field. "So it should not be surprising that the interest among Bahá'ís in this conference was great."

The Bahá'í International Community also sponsored one of the Conference's 40 workshops. Entitled "Breaking the equality barrier: Emerging roles of men and women in the family," the workshop was given by Linda Kavelin Popov, a family therapist from Canada; her husband Daniel Popov, a child psychologist; and Ms. Benson.

"One of the major points we made was that, for the well-being of the family, we need to move from the dominance model within families to the partnership model," said Ms. Popov. "Part of the way we can do this is by understanding the purpose of life is the growth of our soul, and not so much how many things we accumulate or how much power we have in the eyes of the world." ☉



Shown above is the logo for the 1994 International Year of the Family. Below is a photo showing Bahá'ís who received "testimonials" from the IYF Secretariat in ceremonies on 1 December 1993. Shown left to right are Florence Kelly, Betty Benson, and Jenny Field. Ms. Kelly is displaying an award given to Bahia Ettehadieh for her work as the Bahá'í representative to the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family; Ms. Ettehadieh was ill when the awards were presented. Ms. Benson is holding the award given to the Bahá'í International Community as a whole; Ms. Field received an award for her work on the New York NGO Committee on the Family.



Participants at the third annual conference of the International Society for Agriculture and Rural Development, a Bahá'í professional organization, posed for a group photograph during their meeting in Switzerland last November.



Conference on Food and Agriculture stresses interdisciplinary approach

"...on some level, doctors and farmers must interact, in order for each to have a more concrete understanding of what is healthy food and where it comes from and how locally grown food can contribute to the community's health and well-being."

— Sally Jamir

WEINACHT, Switzerland — The crucial and multi-faceted role of agriculture in maintaining human existence and well-being was the focus of the third annual meeting of the International Society for Agriculture and Rural Development (ISARD), held here at the Landegg Conference Center 22-28 November 1993.

Some 30 individuals from 10 countries participated in the conference, which featured the presentation of some 11 papers, 5 panel discussions, and video showings.

The topics discussed were wide-ranging, from technical briefs on soil mineralization to discussions of biotechnology and rural food marketing. Yet, according to participants, a distinctive theme emerged in the integration of ideas from a variety of food and agriculture-related disciplines — an integration that some said is the hallmark of such Bahá'í professional meetings like this.

"The conference showed the connection between agriculture and health and nutrition," said Sally Jamir, an agriculture education specialist from the United States. "In the participants there was a wonderful combination of agriculturalists, medical doctors, nutritionists, people involved in community development, and farmers."

Ms. Jamir and others said that diversity of disciplines contributed greatly to the cross-fertilization of ideas in all of these fields.

"For Bahá'ís, what is important is to consider the many faces of the community, and how they all interact and relate to one another," said Ms. Jamir.

"The Bahá'í approach would be to see that on some level, doctors and farmers must interact, in order for each to have a more concrete understanding of what is healthy food and where it comes from and how locally grown food can contribute to the community's health and well-being."

Iraj Poostchi, the conference coordinator and an agricultural development specialist from England, said in the papers and presentations made at the meeting were the seeds for a new vision of world agriculture.

"Agriculture is really the foundation of the world's economy," said Dr. Poostchi. "No other industry has so many people involved in it worldwide."

Dr. Poostchi and others said future agriculture has to be from the grassroots on upwards, focused at the village and farm level, and not from the top down. "The current system of subsidies for agriculture can't be sustained," said Dr. Poostchi.

Alfred K. Neumann, a professor of public health, and Geraldine S. Robarts, a community development worker, said "a multi-faceted, family- and community-based approach to rural development is called for, an approach that includes health and nutrition, income generation and management, social components including equality of the sexes, universal education, open and equal consultation, and moral, ethnical and spiritual teachings and discussion to guide the wise use of new income and to promote family and community unity and stability." ☉

Review: World Federalism

(Continued from back page)

ity for each unit, and respect for the rights and responsibilities of the individual.

The 364-page paperback is divided into three sections. The first discusses the general principles of federalism, striving to define what it is and to examine its origins. The second section covers theories and proposals for global governance and world government throughout history. The third section focuses on the United Nations experience — and looks at some specific ideas for the New World Order.

In each section, the range and scope of the readings is impressive. The passages selected for the first section, as might be expected, include key excerpts from *Federalist Papers*, the collection of originally anonymous writings by Alexander Hamilton, John Madison and others who were instrumental in helping to shape the newly independent United States of America in the late 1700s.

However, the book also includes readings that show widespread appeal of the federalist idea, providing descriptions of the tribal federations used by the Iroquois people in North America and excerpts from the writings of post-colonial African leaders like Kwame Nkrumah and Julius K. Nyerere.

The second section, likewise, contains passages not only from the best-known proponents of world peace and unity throughout history — such as Dante Alighieri, William Penn and Immanuel Kant — but also from those whose contributions are just now beginning to be acknowledged.

Nearly six pages are devoted to the work of Chinese scholar K'ang Yu-wei (1858-1927), who Ms. Walker notes "may be been the first person to set out such a comprehensive world government plan."

As well, the book includes five pages on the life and writings of Bahá'u'lláh (1817-1892). Ms. Walker notes that "as the founder and central figure of the Bahá'í Faith...his practical and ethical religious teachings have gained followers from all over the world."

The readings that follow provide a concise overview of Bahá'u'lláh's dramatic call, made more than 100 years ago, for the rulers of the world to recognize the essential oneness of humanity and to band together to create the institutions of an united

world that could enforce the collective security and pave the way for a new era of peace and prosperity for all.

The third and final section leaves out many of the standard documents about the United Nations, such as the U.N. Charter itself or Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1942 "Declaration of United Nations," in favor of readings that are both less commonly available and more focused in their criticism — albeit mostly constructive criticism — of the United Nations system.

The readings in this section, for example, delve into matters that are highly practical, and which have proven to be quite sticky in a world ruled by anarchic nation states. Several excerpts deal with the problems and potential of peacekeeping, for example.

Passages from the book *40 Years a Third World Soldier at the U.N.* by Carlos Romulo raise trenchant questions about the limitations of peacekeeping in a world where all the parties must agree to an operation before it can be undertaken. "Can you imagine a policeman being required to secure the assent of the parties in a street fight before moving to break up the conflict? That is the United Nations' present predicament."

In summary, the book offers an easily accessible primer on the basic concepts and advantages of federalism while at the same time providing an overview of the degree to which some of history's finest minds have embraced the idea. In the coming debate over how to unite our world, it will be a valuable resource. ☺

Shown below are some members of the Bahá'í delegation to the NGO Symposium of Women in Development, held in Manila, the Philippines, from 16 to 20 November 1993. Held in preparation for the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, which is scheduled to be held in China in September 1995, the NGO Symposium drew some 550 participants, who discussed how NGOs could provide assistance in the formulation and implementation of a regional plan of action for the advancement of women in Asia and the Pacific.



Out of Anarchy: a multi-cultural look at the Federalist ideal

Uniting the Peoples and Nations — Readings in World Federalism

Compiled by
Barbara Walker

The World
Federalist
Movement

Amsterdam

During the Cold War years, world federalists were largely viewed as an overly idealistic and dreamy bunch — even though their proposals for the creation of a world federal system sounded quite attractive versus the very real prospects for global destruction in a U.S.-Soviet nuclear exchange.

Yet although federalism has proved workable in a variety of settings, from Switzerland to the United States of America, the hard realities of an ideologically split, bipolar world seemed to preclude any reasonable hope that all nations could ever be welded into a

Review

united federal system. As compelling an idea as a United States of the World might have been, the gulf between the East and West just seemed too great.

Since the end of the cold war, however, and with the rise in anarchy that is unfortunately coming to be associated with some newly independent states, the call for something more powerful than the present-day United Nations Organization is increasingly heard. In its most vague form, that call rings with the phrase “global governance” — a sort of toe-in-the-water slogan that simply articulates the need for more international structure.

People in the World Federalist Movement, however, have thought about this problem for a long time, and amidst the growing clamor for something to be done, they have produced an important new book, one which is sure to be valuable as the debate over how to unite our fractured world broadens.

Published at the end of 1993 by the Movement and its U.S. affiliate, the World Federalist Association, *Uniting the Peoples and the Nations — Readings in World Federalism* offers a wide-ranging and multi-faceted view of what federalism is and how it might be applied on a global level.

Compiled by long-time world federalist Barbara Walker, the book succeeds on many levels. It serves as a cogent and scholarly review of how the concept of world unity has evolved from ancient times up to the present day.

On another level, it exists as an important collection of short readings on the topic of federalism by well-known thinkers. Thus, as might be expected, excerpts range

from the writings of Immanuel Kant to Albert Einstein, from James Madison to Dag Hammarskjöld.

Perhaps the book's most significant contribution, however, is in the degree to which it publishes the thoughts of lesser-known and/or emerging thinkers from around the world, offering a look at how Eastern and Southern thinkers have dealt with the idea.

As such, the book convincingly shows that federalism is a nearly universal idea, capable of appealing to people of many cultures and backgrounds.

Federalism, of course, is the division of governmental functions between legislatures at the provincial or sub-regional levels and a national or more-widely encompassing “federal” legislature that oversees the whole. According to Kenneth C. Wheare, whose writings are among those quoted in the *Uniting the Peoples and Na-*

Uniting the Peoples and Nations

Readings in World Federalism

Pierre Joseph Proudhon • Alexander Hamilton
Benjamin Franklin • René Dubos & Barbara Ward
H.G. Wells • Javier Pérez de Cuellar • Kenneth C. Wheare
Hanna Newcombe • Sir Peter Ustinov • Shirdath Ramphal
Immanuel Kant • Julius Nyerere • Alexis de Tocqueville
Dante Alighieri • Hugo Grotius • James Madison
Woodrow Wilson • Jean Mouret • Emery Reves
Albert Einstein • Lewis Mumford • A. Fonseca Pimentel
Mortimer J. Adler • Kang Yu-Wei • Herman Kahn
Jean-Jacques Rousseau • Hadrian T. Muzundar
Lord Lorban • Dag Hammarskjöld • Jan Tinbergen
Mikhail Gorbachev • John F. Kennedy • Mario Albertini
Bertrand Russell • Andrei Sakharov • Alva Myrdal
Boutros Boutros-Ghali • R.G. Ramcharan • Richard Falk
Grenville Clark & Louis Sohn • U Thant • Silvan Brucan
Vladimir Petrovsky • Erskine Childers & Brian Urquhart
Sadrudin Aga Khan • George Kennan

compiled by Barbara Walker
with an introduction by John Logue

tions, this division implies not “the relationship of superior to subordinates,” but rather “the relationship of co-ordinate partners in the governmental process.”

Other elements of federalism, according to Wheare and others quoted in the book, include a reliance on democracy for selecting the legislatures in a federal system, the underlying use of a constitution or compact to delineate the spheres of author-
(Continued on page 15)