

HEROES OF GOD

HISTORY OF THE BAHÁ' Í FAITH IN ECUADOR

1940 - 1979

by

HELEN BASSETT HORNBY

New June
→ Sabrina
It is such a young
person as you that will
continue to write the history
of the Faith in Ecuador the
the future - With much
admiration and love
Helen Hornby
10/17/84

HEROES OF GOD

HISTORY OF THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH IN ECUADOR, 1940 - 1979

by

HELEN BASSETT HORNBY

QUITO, ECUADOR

SEPTEMBER 19, 1984

Heroes of God
History of the Bahá'í Faith in Ecuador, 1940 - 1979

Approved by

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Ecuador

© Copyright 1984
Helen Bassett Hornby
All Rights Reserved

Printed in Ecuador by Arqtelier, Quito

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As the moments pass history is being made and what will be done tomorrow depends on what was done today. Therefore experience is a stepping-stone for future achievements because experience is history. Herein we have tried to recapture and relate the experiences of those who have trodden this path so that those who walk it today will benefit therefrom and attain to greater heights of service for the noble Cause they have espoused.

When one looks retrospectively he sees all the glaring errors that were made yesterday through human frailties - but what they fail to see is the broken hearts and broken health which were suffered in those early days in order that the Faith would be proclaimed from border to border in Ecuador and beyond. Ecuador, as is well known, is one of the smallest developing countries. The Bahá'í Faith has had wide appeal, in this country, to the Indigenous and Negro elements but never has been able to count a single affluent native as one of its adherents, yet it was chosen to be the site of one of the greatest adventures that the Faith has witnessed to this day - the establishment of the first Bahá'í radio station in the world - an event which caused world-wide acclaim and is the fruit of the sacrifices of John Stearns and others. This is an accomplishment that surely future historians of the Faith will write about, with a clarity that is not now visible. They will appraise the acuity of the vision of John Stearns, the father of the Bahá'í Faith in this country, and the first to use radio to proclaim the Cause here as well, also Hascle Cornbleth, the second pioneer to arrive in Quito and who helped to reactivate the radio programs in Quito and Guayaquil after the death of John. They will trace the work of Lawrence (Larry) Kramer who made every effort, from the moment of his arrival as the third permanent pioneer to Ecuador, to keep the flame aglow until he too succumbed to severe health problems and eventually returned to his country.

All these hearty young men as well as a number of women helped to make today possible and these historians will certainly not overlook the yeoman service performed over the years by Ecuador's own native believers and homefront pioneers. Such staunch believers certainly make the souls of those dawn-breakers of the Cause in Ecuador rejoice in the heavenly realm.

Foremost I would like to express my gratitude to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador for having more confidence in me than I had in myself - that is by entrusting me with the great responsibility of writing the history of the Bahá'í Faith in this country, which had been requested from them by the Universal House of Justice. I would not have dared to attempt it had they not commissioned me to do so, for I am well aware that I suffer intensely from human frailties and to my dismay these frailties show glaringly in this my first effort to write a history. Howbeit, I have made a serious attempt to be as factual as possible at the risk of being monotonous and I used only the material which could be corroborated by at least two additional sources, except in the case of originals or photocopies. Interviews were also checked with a second or third party for accuracy as far as possible if there were no documents to support them.

Further I would like to express my appreciation to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States for giving my National Assembly permission for me to work in their archives to locate the material necessary to begin writing the history of the Faith in Ecuador and of course had it not been for their

dedicated Archivist, Mr. Roger Dahl, who so patiently assisted me and who found the 'magic box' with the very important papers which treated the beginning of the Faith in this country. Likewise, I wish to thank the National Assembly of Perú and their secretariat for giving me permission to work in their archives to look for pertinent material pertaining to this country. Due to the fact that the Administrative Headquarters of the Faith for South America was situated in Lima for many years, the archives there hold many of the records pertaining to this country as well as to that country and that was the second place it was necessary to visit to continue the research. For this reason, as well as for health reasons, it took many months to gather sufficient material to even begin writing the history. I am also grateful to the individual members of the Lima community who spent many hours helping me to investigate what seemed to have been thousands of pieces of paper in the Archives.

I appreciate very much the secretaries of the local Assemblies and the Local, National and Regional Teaching Committees for the copious notes they made during the early years of the Faith in this country. Had it not been for these minutes, letters and reports, to write this history would have been impossible especially since there were long periods of assembly and group inactivity in the country during the first 20 years of the Faith here but communication did not cease especially between some conscientious secretaries and individuals and the proper National Assembly or Teaching Committee. Among the outstanding secretaries in years past were: Rosa Argentina Tutiven G., from Guayaquil (now deceased), Luis Martinez and Bolivar Plaza, Guayaquil; Hans Levy, Hans Dory, Roxanna Gallegos and Larry Kramer from Quito; and in more recent years, Dorothy Campbell, Isabel de Calderón, Ilene de Valdeveiso Hirono, Alejandro Bernal and Macario Guillen from Cuenca.

I am especially grateful for the assistance of my three youngest helpers and their parents. Najin Mansuri and Evelyn Pesantes for "baby-sitting" with me when I was alone, for cooking, typing and being in general good "girl-Fridays" when their time permitted. And to our young granddaughter, Halene Chamberlayne, while on school vacations helped in proof-reading - I would like to thank all three of you again. Also I am deeply indebted to Margot Beers for her secretarial aid and proof-reading; to Shadi Javad for her art work on the memorial pages, to Sue Khozein for her long patience in transcribing very long tape recorded interviews and reports and typing them very neatly - which was an immense help to me; to Donald Stewart for his minute scrutiny of every page and to my husband, Charles Hornby for his many hours of patient proof-reading and "rescrutinizing" the finished product, and dear Susan Agahi for her many hours of typing.

It would indeed take pages to name each and every one of the dear friends who so kindly, or was "trapped into it", spent at least a few moments to many hours, either proof-reading, typing or analyzing the work - to each and every one of you many thanks!

Helen Bassett Hornby

INTRODUCTION

The name of Ecuador, in connection with the Bahá'í Faith, it appears, was first mentioned by 'Abdu'l-Bahá when He called on the United States and Canada in His Tablets of the Divine Plan "...to strive as far as ye are able to send to those parts fluent speakers, who are detached from aught else save God, attracted with the fragrances of God, and sanctified and purified from all desires and temptations..."¹ In Tablets of the Divine Plan, dated April 8, 1916 and March 8, 1917, He calls on the "believers of God throughout all the republics of America" to "arise blowing over all parts of America the breath of life, conferring upon the people a new spirit, baptizing them with the fire of the love of God, the water of life, and the breaths of the Holy Spirit...and travel throughout these countries...", which included Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands. The Galapagos belong to Ecuador and were made famous by the noted naturalist Charles Darwin.²

The Divine Plan of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was actually held in abeyance by the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, Shoghi Effendi, until about 1937 when the administrative machinery, i.e., the institutions necessary to canalize the Plan, had been erected and with his guidance put into motion. The time had then arrived when it was ready to perform its divinely ordained responsibilities as revealed by Bahá'u'lláh and interpreted by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Initially the first response to the Plan after its unveiling in 1919, was made by individuals rather than institutions. It should be noted that at the time He called on the believers to arise He was well aware that the "destined" administrative machinery had not as yet been erected and there could be no collective organized efforts in this regard.

Available records do not indicate whether or not any of those early believers who first responded to this divine call in an effort to work for its realization ever visited Ecuador. Certainly as the ships which carried some of them on their round-the-world teaching trips passed the shores of Ecuador enroute to the far-reaches of South America, the Greatest Name was intoned and the fragrances scattered over this country. Among those early believers was Miss Martha Root, the "archetype of Bahá'í itinerant teachers".³ 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote to her in 1919 in response to her efforts to travel teach that "it is...advisable for thee to travel to the different parts of the globe and roar like unto a lion in the Kingdom of God. Wide-reaching consequences thou shalt witness and extraordinary confirmations shall be exhibited unto thee...teaching stands above everything else and if thou deemest it advisable, engage thou in the spreading of it throughout the regions of the world."⁴

In January 1936, when the time was ripe, the Guardian wrote to the National Representatives of the American believers stating: "Now that the administrative organs of a firmly established Faith are vigorously and harmoniously functioning...an effort unexampled

Introduction - History of the Bahá'í Faith in Ecuador

in its scope and sustained vitality is urgently required so that the moving spirit of its Founder may permeate and transform the lives of the countless multitudes that hunger for its teachings..."⁵ Again in May of the same year he suggested that "A systematic, carefully conceived, and well-established plan should be devised, rigorously pursued and continuously extended. Initiated by the National representatives of the American believers...its supreme immediate objective should be the permanent establishment of at least one center in every state of the American Republic and in every Republic of the American continent not yet enlisted under the banner of His Faith."⁶ Ecuador was one of those countries which had not as yet been awakened to the call of Bahá'u'lláh. Shoghi Effendi reminded the Bahá'ís that 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan "is the key which Providence has placed in the hands of the American believers whereby to unlock the doors leading them to fulfil their unimaginably glorious Destiny."⁷ In regards to the teaching campaign he stated that "the uninterrupted prosecution of this holy enterprise and its extension to the South American continent and the islands of the Pacific will no doubt attract unimaginable blessings and must entail far-reaching consequences."⁸ During this same year (1936) in preparing for the initiation of this campaign, the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada appointed the Inter-America Teaching Committee to advise and assist the Assembly in activities related to promotion of the Faith in South America and of other areas, and entrusted it with the direct responsibility of organizing the teaching work and the development of the Faith in these countries. Later an International School to provide training for Bahá'í teachers in Central and South America was founded.

In 1937 the Plan called for by the Guardian, entitled the "Seven Year Plan" was launched. One of its immediate goals was to establish a minimum of one Bahá'í center in each of the Republics of Middle and South America. He called upon all to arise and participate, "however restricted their means, however deficient their education, however unfavorable the environment in which they live," and referred to the 'privileged few' as 'ambassadors of the Message of Bahá'u'lláh' and stated that the Plan was primarily formulated to attain this goal.

It was destined that the North American community would become the spiritual mother of Latin America - for it was to this community that 'Abdu'l-Bahá directed His appeal to carry His Father's Faith "to the East and to the West of the world and summon the people to the Kingdom of God."

On October 21, 1939 a young Bahá'í businessman by the name of John Stearns from Jamestown, New York wrote to the Inter-American Teaching Committee offering his services as a

Introduction - History of the Bahá'í Faith in Ecuador

pioneer. He explained that he did not speak Spanish but was beginning to study it and that he had studied Latin for three years. He informed the Committee that he had been a Bahá'í for only a year and that he had sufficient income to sustain himself. He also had a complete knowledge and experience in candy manufacturing and distribution. He gave the names of some outstanding Bahá'ís in the United States for reference. Then he asked, "May I be of any assistance in executing the Seven Year Plan, as a settler?" 10

On November 8, 1939 the Committee responded by saying they were thrilled to receive his letter and that they believed that the experience he had in candy manufacturing, soda and lunch management, as well as his ability to play the cello, would bring him sufficient remuneration. "The knowledge you have of these things is far better for South America and Central America.... Would you like to take the post of Ecuador?" Another country was also suggested but he was encouraged to consider Ecuador. He sailed from Los Angeles, California on April 20, 1940 and on the night of May 13, 1940 he arrived in Guayaquil, Ecuador. The light of Bahá'u'lláh had arisen in Ecuador! 11

1. *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, pp. 31-32, 1977 edition, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois
2. *Ibid*, p.95
3. *God Passes By*, P. 386
4. *Star of the West*, Vol. 10, No.2, p.30
5. *Messages to America*, p.8
6. *Ibid*, p.6
7. *Ibid*, p.8
8. *Ibid*, p.8
9. *Ibid*, pp. 10, 16, *passim*
10. Original letter in Archives, Wilmette, Illinois; photocopy in Archives of National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador
11. Photocopy of letter, Archives, National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	iii
Introduction	v

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page</u>
I. JOHN POPE STEARNS.....	1
Arrival of John Stearns in Ecuador - The First Bahá'í of Ecuador - John Stearns, Father of Bahá'í Radio in Ecuador - Radio Programs "jammed", Kandy Kitchen boycotted- Czechoslovakian Club Writes to Congratulate John - First Public meeting with first International Travel Teachers to Ecuador, Rafi and Mildred Mottahedeh- First Bahá'í Group formed in Ecuador when young Bahá'í from San Salvador, Hans Dory, arrives in Quito - Letter from Shoghi Effendi to Bahá'ís of Quito - John goes to Perú for Radium Therapy - His illness, death and funeral - John is Eulogized by the Guardian and others.	
II. FORMATION OF FIRST SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY IN ECUADOR.....	15
First Bahá'í of Ecuador attends Centenary Convention in Wilmette, Illinois in 1944 - Virginia Orbison arrives in Quito, Ecuador, December 1944 as itinerant pioneer - For health reasons Virginia transfers to Quayaquil - Haig Kevorkian arrives as itinerant pioneer to Quayaquil from Argentina - Letters to and from Shoghi Effendi.	
III. FIRST NATIVE ECUADORIAN WOMAN TO ACCEPT BAHÁ'I FAITH...	21
Madame Maria Claudet introduced to Faith by John Stearns -Letter from the Guardian - Haig Kevorkian visits Quito- Kandy Kitchen dissolved - Ecuador receives new pioneer, Hascle Cornbleth.	
IV. PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC INTRODUCED TO THE BAHÁ'I FAITH..	27
GAYLE WOOLSON AND HASCLE ALSO VISIT WITH FIRST LADY OF THE REPUBLIC	
V. FIRST LOCAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY IN CAPITAL CITY.....	30
Letters from the Guardian, Quayaquil helps Quito to attain Assembly Status - Flores Hottes speaks over Radio "The Voice of Democracy" about the Bahá'í Faith - In Early 1947 sixteen Believers in Quito - Loss of Second Pioneer, Hascle Cornbleth, due to insidious disease -"Sidewalk Cafe" Extension Teaching in Santo Domingo, Ambato, Manta and Bahia de Caraquez - International Travel Teachers to Ecuador; Esteban Canales, Marcia Steward Atwater, Amelia (Millie) Collins and Robert Miessler.	
VI. THE FATAL FIFTIES.....	39
Arrival of Itinerant Teacher Blanca de Campo from Panama-	

CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
VI. Arrival of third Permanent Pioneer to Ecuador, Lawrence (Larry) Kramer - Upsetting Newspaper Publicity and its Outcome - Third Pioneer stricken - Positive efforts Stronger than Negative Influence - Young believer from Guayaquil attends first South America Bahá'í Conference as representative of Ecuador - First Ecuadorian Bahá'í makes Teaching Trip to Europe - Letters from the Guardian - First visit of Gwenne Sholtis - Shortcomings and Frailties - the Guardian never mentions - First Bahá'í Wedding of a North American Pioneer to Native Believer - Bolivar Plaza delegate to help elect first Regional National Spiritual Assembly of South America - First Youth Committee organized - Participation in Regional Conference of Non-Governmental Organization in Quito - Emilio Minervina of Guayaquil had First Bahá'í Wedding of two natives - First Believer of Quevado - Some Old Believers.	39
VII. LAUNCHING OF WORLD SPIRITUAL CRUSADE - TEN YEAR PLAN... First Visit of a Hand of the Cause to Ecuador, Mr. Valiallah Vargha - All Old Bahá'ís inactive in Quito Community - Inclined towards different cults and politics - Letters of encouragement from the Guardian - Ten Year Goals for Ecuador. Ecuador's Virgin Territory - The Galapagos Islands..... Obstacles facing Gayle Woolson and Haig Kevorkian - Gayle arrives at Post, becomes Knight of Bahá'u'lláh - Haig Kevorkian relieves Gayle earns crown of Knight of Bahá'u'lláh - Haig suffers Attacks from Bishop - His Dear Dorothy Letters Speak of His Suffering. First Believer in the Galapagos Islands, Moyses Mosquera..68 Moyse Mosquera attacked by the Church and loses job because of Bahá'í Faith. Haig Kevorkian's death. Third Pioneer to Galapagos, Luis Peñaherrera..... 78 Attacked by Monsignor and Expelled from the Islands Fourth Pioneer to Galapagos, Juan Vargas Ayara..... 81 First and Second local Spiritual Assemblies of the Galapagos formed in 1977 with help of Bahiyyih Rashidpour and Nooshin Burwell 82 First Pioneers to Guayaquil, Ervin and Wilma Thomas..... 84 Wilma Thomas passes away - Else Jorgensen who made ninth member of first Assembly of Guayaquil passes away Circumstances attending the development of the Faith in Ecuador..... 85 First Sunday School classes held in Quito in 1955 - Bahá'í Faith taken to Otavalo and Ibarra 1954 - Indian Teaching begins in Otavalo in 1957 - Letters from the Guardian.	

CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
VIII. LAUNCHING OF SIX YEAR PLAN	90
Purchase of National Ḥazirātu'l-Quds - Temple Land and Espejo Endowment - Mrs. Millie Collins, benefactress - Shoghi Effendi Passes Away - Letters and Cables - Dr. Ghodsea Ashraf, descendent of Dawn Breakers arrives to pioneer in Guayaquil (1959) - First Pioneers to Cuenca settle in that city and encounters attacks from Archbishop - Newspapers protests in favor of Bahá'ís - First Local Spiritual Assembly of Cuenca formed in 1960.....	
	102
Ex -Ambassador to United Nations, Dr. José Vicente Trujillo attends Bahá'í Public Meeting in Quayaquil.....	
	105
FORMATION OF THE FIRST NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF ECUADOR - BORN IN ADVERSITY.....	
	108
Professor Moyses Mosquera C., reports signs of defection in the Quito and Guayaquil - Four pioneers sent by the Hands of the Cause to sustain Quito Assembly - Five Members of the local Assembly of Quito lean toward Covenant-Breaker Mason Remey.	
Early Indian Teaching - First Bahá'í of Otavalo - Preparation for Mass Conversion in Ecuador - Raúl Pavón begins literacy classes - First All-Indian local Spiritual Assembly in Vagabundo, Ecuador - National Ḥazirātu'l-Quds in hands of discontents - Sotomayor and first Bahá'í of Ecuador, Gonzalez expelled from the Faith - Jorge and Alicia Paez expelled from the Faith - Faith grows in spite of Problems - First visit of Dr. Muhájir to talk about Mass Conversion in Ecuador - Otavalo, testing ground for pioneers and Natives - a "Manifesto" from Covenant-Breakers and discontents -113-136	
IX. TERMINATION OF TEN-YEAR CRUSADE AND SIX-YEAR PLAN.....	137
National Assembly of Ecuador participate in election of first Universal House of Justice - First contact with Shuara (Jivaro) Indians - Bahá'ís in Ecuador suffered imprisonment because of Misinterpretation of Teachings and political situation in the country - Hand of the Cause Mr. Kházeh congratulates Assembly Mass Conversion - Nine Year Plan Goal for Ecuador - Interview with Vicenta Curillo Anrango - problems of enrollment due to Indian superstition Salomón (Pacora Bluemountain) first pioneer of Inca descent Distinguished Bahá'í and Author, Rosy Pool visits Ecuador - First visit of Hand of the Cause Rúhíyyih Khanum- First Chinese Believer of Formosa welcomed to the Quito Community. Interview with Auxiliary Board member, Rufino Gualavisí - Interview with President of the Republic, Dr. Otto Arosemena G.	
X. FIRST MASS CONVERSION CITY IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE.....	177
Hand of the Cause Mr. Jalál Kházeh bids farewell to Western Hemisphere- Visit of secretary of International Goals,	

CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
<p>X Mrs. Maurine Kraus - Salasaca Indian area opened Fifty local Spiritual Assemblies elected in mass Teaching area - Second visit of Hand of the Cause Dr. Muhájir - Dorothy Campbell finds first Bahá'í of Esmeraldas - Province of Esmeraldas opened with 72 New Believers First Visit - Santo Domingo, Quinindé and Esmeraldas - First Bahá'í Funeral in Ecuador in City of Quinindé</p> <p>Rúhíyyih Khánum visits Esmeraldas, She represents House of Justice at National Convention, She writes poem for the Descendents of the Incas - Salasaca Indian represents Ecuador in Jamaican Conference - Interview with Maria Perugachi - Final Year of Nine Year Plan - Santo Domingo Project, Chief of Colorado Indians accepts the Faith - Dorothy Campbell- Dedication of 'Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum Institute in Otavalo</p>	177
<p>XI. GOALS OF ECUADOR DURING THE FIVE YEAR PLAN.....</p> <p>House of Justice approves project for Radio Station - Dr. Muhájir makes special visit to Ecuador - Dr. Muhlsch - legel visits Guayaquil - First Bahá'í Radio Station in the World - Visit with Shuara Indians - the Cuenca Community - Women, Children and Youth - International Year of the Child - Bahá'í Youth Club in Catholic University - Highlights of 1976, 1977 and 1978 - Third International Quechua Confer- ence - Pioneer carries Bahá'í Faith to Auca(Guarani) Tribe - Pioneers trials and tests in the path of God - Conclusion of Five Year Plan</p>	227

5
1
0

0
1
0

0
1
0

CHAPTER I

JOHN POPE STEARNS

On May 13, 1940 the light of Bahá'u'lláh arose over the horizon of time and its rays permeated this receptive equatorial country to an extent far beyond the expectations of the bearer of that light. It seems fitting, therefore, that the writing of the history of the Bahá'í Faith in Ecuador should commence on the evening of the fortieth anniversary of the arrival of the first Bahá'í pioneer to this country, the bearer of the light of Bahá'u'lláh!

John Pope Stearns wrote to the Inter-American Teaching Committee regarding his voyage and his activities en route to Ecuador. Also one of the pioneers to Panama, Mrs. Cora Oliver, wrote a glowing report to the same Committee regarding his visit to that country:

During the ten-day visit of the Bahá'í pioneer settler to Ecuador, John P. Stearns, the fragrances of the spirit were showered upon the groups and individuals with whom he came in contact. Those were glorious days when John put his shoulder to the wheel of the Panama activities and gave the Message as only one of his ability, detachment, and devotion can.¹

These are John's words in a letter dated June 5, 1940 describing his trip, his first impressions of Ecuador and his initial experiences:

Sailing from Los Angeles on April 20th, I arrived at Balboa on the 29th. Here immediately (I) contacted Mrs. Oliver and Mrs. Caswell. We held a consultation as to my activities while in Panama and during my stay there proceeded under this guidance....

The Santa Lucia was a day late leaving Balboa, sailing the evening of May 9th. Saturday evening, May 11th, while the ship was handling cargo at Buenaventura, Columbia (sic), I had a few hours ashore. In a coffee shop fell in with a chance acquaintance (sic), who was much interested in inter-American relations and left him with a copy of "Principios de la Fe Bahá'í."

The nite of the 13th I reached Guayaquil where I remained nine days, except for a week-end trip up the Guaya(s) river by motor launch thru the tropical fruit and cacao regions to Quevedo. In Quevedo made the acquaintance, in particular, of a Sr. Carlos Juez who may prove of some significance in the future. Also aboard the Santa Lucia made the acquaintance of an Australian, now a Ford automobile dealer not far from Bueanas Aires (sic). His name I failed to record but gave him my copy of "Foundations of World Unity" after a couple conversations proved him ripe material and called his attention to the group in Bueanas Aires.

The evening of the Bab's Declaration I arrived in Quito. Here I have established residence, as noted above, among kindly intelligent German people. (There is a careful distinction made here, between "Germans" and "Nazi Rascals.")

HISTORY OF THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH IN ECUADOR

The reputation and reception of Americans in all circles in this particular country is very kindly. I am gradually developing acquaintances of the "middle-class" from all backgrounds -- Ecuadorian, American, French, German, Chinese, etc. and hope to get to the Indian sooner or later. The government is very much awake and progressive. Everything American is much admired, both because of our material progress and relatively advanced social conceptions. I can not help feel the Bahai Teachings will find a warm response.

My plans (always subject to change) for the coming month include instruction in Spanish under the tutorship of the professor of English at the Central University, trips to many more parts of the country and an invasion of the musical circles here in Quito. I have deliberately delayed the use of letters of introduction here until a more opportune moment. Also by carefully avoiding all publicity I am securing the most valuable type of advertising, -- a word of mouth campaign based on the curiosity naturally attending my appearance here, accompanied by the one simple bit of knowledge that I am a Baha'i.

Living and travel are ridiculously (sic) cheap at the present exchange. There also seems to be a crying need for the professional knowledge which I have. After a bit I shall have a chat with the government as to my purposes in the country. At that time I shall also clearly set forth my religious status....²

In his next letter to the Inter-American Committee, dated "Feast of Rahmat, 97" (June 24, 1940), he continued describing his experiences:

The past month has marked a gradual widening of acquaintances and deepening of friendships here. I might mention three contacts that seem particularly interesting.

The 1st, Les Gonzales, who joined me at table the day after my last report. He is reading my one Spanish Esselmont and The Goal of NWO (The Goal of a New World Order). Also we informally celebrated this feast together and I gave him a prayer book on the occasion. So far he is the one person whom I could call an ally here. He is of good Ecuadorian family, mostly resident in Guayaquil. A snap taken the day we climbed Pichincha is enclosed.

The 2nd, Rogelio Dillon, who was assigned to me for conversational Spanish by the professor of English at the University. My call here was anticipated, as is every move, if I mention my intentions a few days in advance of executing them, and Dillon introduced to me because considered a brilliant and faithful Catholic. My Spanish and his English are improving daily, as is our friendship and his understanding of the Baha'i philosophy. Last nite as I was composing the enclosed letter to Secretary Hull², he, accompanied by another dental student and a medical student pounded on my door and announced they had come to celebrate St. John's Day in honor of my namesake. So we celebrated with some fun and a healthy discussion of national prejudice and the new spirit of internationalism, particularly bearing on

the status of Germans here in Ecuador. Dillon graduates in dentistry in a couple months. Also from a good Ecuadorian family resident in Riobamba....

The 3rd, a Mr. Vogel, German, cripple from last war, who frequents the Pension restaurant (sic). He seems to be a particularly broad and understanding mind. Short conversations lead up to loaning him *The Goal of NWO* the day France capitulated. We have not had a talk since but he, his wife and son (whom he hopes to send to Idaho mining college) have remained most cordial in attitude. He is the only German I have been able to get to because he has a perfect command of English. Even if my Spanish were good it is of little use with these people, they have not learned it well. But many of them impress me as wonderful material.

Since my arrival I have handed out 9 pieces of printed matter (with my name carefully stamped on them) with only one negative reaction, and that I believe to be only temporary.

I came here resolved to be silent until I had a permanent cedula. This has become impossible. In self defense if nothing else I have had to clearly state my program to avoid confusion with subversive activities of the 5th column....

I may just as well open both guns now, as the cat is already out of the bag and there is nothing to be lost. If I get thrown out on my ear, I'll try another country, but the seeds will be well planted here. While I do not want to leave Quito hanging in the air, it is possible that business will necessitate my locating in Guayaquil. Of the two cities it should also be the most promising ground for Baha'i teaching. Quito is extremely provincial -- even the supposedly educated elements -- whereas Guayaquil is much more cosmopolitan, because of its contact with outside world. I trust that events will steer me on the right course and that I will be able to cover both sections in due course.

Until Kalimát (July)

yours in service,

/S/ John Stearns

Later he informed the Committee:

At the beginning of the month I transferred residence from the Pension, taking over part of a house in the north residential section together with four other young men. Before undertaking this arrangement the matter of my religious status was, of course, carefully discussed. I occasionally have (the) opportunity to talk with them of serious matters. The change of address gives me a kitchen in which to pursue experimental work with native materials for candy and provides several other advantages. I continue to eat at the Pension occasionally and keep my acquaintances there....

The First Bahá'Í of Ecuador

In an article entitled "The History of the Bahá'Í Faith in Guayaquil" by Mrs. Virginia Orbison, she describes the meeting of

John Stearns with the one who would become the first native believer of Ecuador, Eduardo Gonzalez. John mentioned him in a report to the Committee as a person "whom I could call an ally here". Mrs. Orbison states that this is the version of the meeting related to her by some of the contemporaries of John and Eduardo:

Eduardo Gonzalez Lopez (known as Les) who was lodging in the Pension Neumann, arrived early in the dining room for dinner since he had to be at work at 7:45 PM as an announcer for the Radio Teatro Bolivar. While waiting to be served John Stearns entered and took a table next to his sitting face to face with Les. John was having difficulty in making the waiter understand what he desired to eat, painstakingly looking in his small dictionary for the necessary words. In spite of this, José, the waiter, could not understand. Looking alternately from John to Eduardo he asked "Why can't those 'Gringos' speak Spanish? Why doesn't the whole world speak the same language to avoid such problems like this 'Gringo' has, one could die from hunger for not knowing how to ask for food!" After these remarks, Eduardo, being attracted by the friendly smile which was always a part of John, arose from his table and introduced himself ... speaking in English and offered to help him. John was very happy and said that now that we share the same dining room it would be better if we shared the same table. Les immediately ordered dinner to be served....

There soon began an animated conversation about the need for a universal auxiliary language. Leaving this subject John led the conversation toward other related problems, in other words, toward the basic principles of the Bahá'í Faith.

Both friends were shaken by emotion... So enthusiastic was Eduardo that he decided to telephone the Radio Station and beg to be excused from work that night. His request was granted. Minutes became hours as the conversation continued and the history of the Faith was unveiled until the sleepy voice of the waiter brought them to reality: "Pardon me Señor Gonzalez and you Mister, but it is now 12:00 PM and we have to close the dining room, and besides I am falling to sleep".

A few moments later John invited Les to his room. Upon entering the room Les' attention was drawn to a photograph on the table and he told John that he knew that person, that he couldn't remember if he had seen another photograph of that person in a movie or in his sleep, but that face was very familiar. Johnny smiled and told him that he could be sure that this was the first photograph of the Master that had arrived in Ecuador.

They continued their talk and John gave him some books and pamphlets in English and a photograph of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Finally they noticed that it was 3:30 AM and realized that they had to part. Les asked John to count him as the first follower of the Bahá'í Movement in Ecuador and that he was ready to comply with all the requirements and to give the Message to other Ecuadorians or whoever. John was overwhelmed with emotion but told him that this takes time and that

he was not sufficiently versed to become a member of the Faith. That, besides, there are strict laws that must be obeyed and an Administrative Order to follow. He answered that he was ready to obey all the laws and anything else that might arise during his studies. John asked his age and Les told him that he would be twenty years old in June. John decided to let him sign a card temporarily under the condition that when he attained the age of twenty-one he could ratify or rectify the matter. ³

Les introduced John to Mr. Jack Shepard, a Northamerican newspaper reporter who offered him a job as a writer. He was an indefatigable worker and hardly took time out to rest nor did he give Les much time. On Sundays they left the city to find a solitary place under eucalyptus trees to study the Dawn Breakers in English.

John soon left his job with Mr. Shepard and began to teach English in the Centro Ecuatoriano-Norteamericano, where he could meet a cross section of the population. He also began his experiments with making chocolate candy; he had owned a candy shop in New York called Betty Dixon Candies.

While Eduardo (Les) was on vacation in his native city of Guayaquil, he introduced the Faith to a number of his close friends and old schoolmates. He received an urgent letter from John Stearns requesting him to try to find a Mrs. Mary S. Barton, who would be passing the port of Guayaquil on a boat of Grace Lines. Emilio Minervini, an old friend, who learned of the Faith from Eduardo, accompanied him to look for Mrs. Barton. They found her and she began to talk with Emilio about the Bahá'í Faith in his native tongue, Italian. Later he became a Bahá'í and is still an active member of the Guayaquil community. The three said prayers aboard the boat on the river Guayas for the advancement of the Cause in Ecuador.

John Stearns - Father of Bahá'í Radio in Ecuador

The first established pioneer in Ecuador was also the father of Bahá'í radio in the country. He began sponsoring a radio program in Quito under the auspices of his small business, "Kandy Kitchen", which presented lovely classical music and readings from the Bahá'í Sacred Writings. These broadcasts came over short wave (32.05 meter, 9355 Kc) Monday evenings at 8:00 PM Eastern Standard Time. According to reports received they could be heard all over South America and occasionally in Spain.

The Bahá'í Radio Hour, *Letra y Música* (Words and Music) was broadcasted every Sunday from 3:00 PM to 4:00 PM and *Ecos Bahá'ís* (Bahá'í Echoes) three times a week Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9:15 to 9:30 PM. "The radio programs were broadcast for about a year. *Words and Music* and *Bahá'í Echoes* were made into booklets and distributed as far afield as the broadcasts themselves."⁴ The booklet, *Words and Music*, announced the programs from June 9, 1942 to February 15, 1943.

He used the daily papers *Ultimas Noticias*, *El Dia*, and *El Comercio de Quito* to invite the public to conferences and meetings in the Bahá'í Center, and he kept busy with translations, preparing talks and deepening courses as well as his radio programs which lasted one year over Radio Teatro Bolivar. John became a member of the Quito Symphony Orchestra, playing the cello, and associate editor of a magazine entitled *The Ecuadorian Voice*. He had Bahá'í meetings on Wednesday nights and Sunday mornings. He looked up old contacts and prepared new believers as future members of the community.

Among the visiting teachers were Mr. Phillip Sprague, Mr. and Mrs. Rafi and Mildred Mottahedeh and Mrs. Etta Mae Lawrence. Unfortunately, for some reason, he was unable to attain his goal of finding sufficient believers at the Ridván period to form a local Spiritual Assembly.

This was during the war years and often on his radio programs he would state the Bahá'í principles of peace. The first Bahá'í of the country was the speaker on these programs. Later, it is recorded, his business was boycotted by a group of European refugees because of their lack of understanding of the peace programs and there was even "jamming of his radio programs".

He spoke to officials regarding this problem to no avail. However, in counteracting the attacks in the newspapers, he placed an advertisement inviting the people of Quito to listen to a Bahá'í radio program of current importance. A pioneer who succeeded John in his post reported that John outwitted those who had caused interference with his radio programs by going out in the country to the transmitting towers where he was able to broadcast directly and without interference. And that the next day at his candy shop there was a line of people who had caused the misunderstanding. They made token purchases and extended to him words of encouragement. "In the broadcast, among other pertinent facts, he gave the statements on the Bahá'í Faith made by Jan Masryk and Eduard Benes of Czechoslovakia...." Hasclé Cornbleth, the second permanent pioneer to Ecuador, stated that a few years after this broadcast "a young Czech girl asked me for Bahá'í literature in English, explaining that she had been translating it from the Spanish into her native tongue and sending it on to Czechoslovakia."

As a result of this broadcast the president of the Czechoslovakian Club wrote to John as follows:

We are happy to inform you that the Directorate of our organization, in its meeting yesterday, unanimously resolved to express to you its most profound gratitude for having in your renditions of "Words and Music" a program exclusively Czechoslovakian with music of Czech masters and words of our presidents Prof. Masryk and Ed. Benes dedicated to our organization a fact of which was highly appreciated not only by the Directorate but also by all the other members of our club.

We should like to take advantage of this occasion to express to you once more, our sincere vote of consideration.⁵

Very truly yours,

The Czechoslovakian Club of Ecuador
Dr. V. Gach, President
P. Pfeifer, Secretary

John made three trips to Guayaquil to visit the Bahá'ís and help in their teaching work. He also consulted doctors there as well as in Quito for the discomfort he felt in his tongue. Later, in October 1943 he discovered that the pain he had tried to ignore for so long was a serious illness. The doctors advised him to go to Lima, Perú for a more thorough examination at the Instituto de Radium. He left in December 1943 with every hope of returning. En route he visited his friends in Guayaquil not realizing it was for the last time. His business was left in the care of Bahá'í friends in Quito.

The First Bahá'í Public Meeting in Ecuador

As a result of the appeals of the beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, to the Bahá'ís to arise for pioneer and teaching service, many Bahá'ís arose to travel throughout South America. Among the travel teachers and the first to visit Ecuador were Mr. and Mrs. Rafi and Mildred Mottahedeh in 1941. Travel teachers are always an inspiration to a community and most especially to an isolated pioneer. They tell of their arrival in Ecuador and of the pioneer, Mr. John Stearns taking them to meet the heads of an English cultural center. The three teachers were Ecuadorians and had started a center to promote better understanding between Britain and South America. Excerpts from their report to the Inter-American Committee follows:

We invited two of these heads to meet at John Stearns' house at his suggestion. About nine people came to that meeting including the first Ecuadorian Bahá'í... We were supposed to leave the morning after this meeting, but the plane could not come over the mountains to Quito from Guayaquil, so we had to stay another day. We spent this day with Eduardo... and John. That evening we held the first public meeting in Ecuador which was attended by about twenty-nine people who listened with great attention and who accepted with alacrity the Bahá'í principles. One of the heads of the school said you may count me the second Ecuadorian Bahá'í. We said to the group that if they thought these principles were good they should start a weekly study class, which suggestion was eagerly accepted.

John wrote that:

Their arrival was virtually without any forewarning... Despite this in a hasty way we gathered together an interested handful for a small meeting Sunday night, really the first of such held in Ecuador. Bahá'u'lláh saw fit to detain them a second night by allowing landing conditions to be impossible for their plane to leave. On Monday evening they again talked to a larger group, assembled by the process of uniting the meeting classes

at the English Center to hear them. Among these were many whom I was anxious to have reached. My only regret and the only regret of the friends they left was that it was impossible on such short notice to assemble all the people who should have met and heard them. Anyway we now have a study group, and their visit was like a drink of fresh water to me personally. Their stopover was a big lift in Ecuador.⁶

On October 15, 1941 John was joined by another young Bahá'í from San Salvador, Hans Dory, who was to perform a historic service as secretary of the group and later of the local Assembly of Quito. And on this same date Eduardo (Les) Gonzalez, now 21 years of age, signed his card as an adult Bahá'í, thus making a group of three in Quito.

John notified the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, when the first Bahá'í group was formed in Ecuador and on the 23rd of November 1941 the Guardian responded in a letter written on his behalf to the Bahá'ís of Quito:

Dear Bahá'í friends:

The Guardian just received your letter sent to him on the occasion of the Feast of 'Ilm, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

Your message brought great joy to his heart, as he sees in your little group the first glimmerings of the light of Bahá'u'lláh which is beginning to dawn upon South America.

Though in each Latin American Country the number of believers is as yet small - yet they represent to that great continent what the early Christians did to Europe in the first centuries after Christ. They are the leaven that must leaven the lump.

The Guardian hopes and prays that your group will grow stronger and larger all the time, and that eventually you will be able to send out, from among yourselves, teachers to teach your fellow-countrymen the Divine Glad Tidings for this age.

Bahá'u'lláh has said that God will assist all those who arise in His service. The more you labour for His Faith, the more He will aid and bless you.

Assuring you all of the Guardian's most loving and ardent prayers for your progress and welfare.

Your Bahá'í co-worker,

/S/ R. Rabbani

(P.S. in the Guardian's handwriting)

Dear and Valued co-workers:

My heart overflowed with joy at the receipt of your most welcome message. I wish to assure you of my special and constant prayers for your protection, your spiritual advancement, the increase of your numbers, the extension of your activities, the fulfilment of all the hopes you cherish in the service of our beloved Faith. I am so eager to hear from you regularly, and I trust you will keep me in touch with your work to which I attach the utmost importance. Persevere, be happy, and rest assured.

Your true and grateful brother,

/S/ Shoghi

Then on July 31, 1942 still another addition to the group was reported: a German youth, Hans Levy who would also play an important role in the development of the Faith in Ecuador. The little group worked arduously to find sufficient believers to form their first local Spiritual Assembly. The secretary of the group reported early in 1943 that there were nine believers in Quito, but unfortunately, one of them would not reach the age of twenty-one until July of that year. The report also stated that henceforth, John Stearns' radio program would be purely Bahá'í.

In spite of John's many activities in an effort to spread the Faith, it appears that he was inwardly lonely. He expressed his sentiments to the Guardian, who responded in a letter written on his behalf to John dated January 20, 1943.

He has often thought of you and followed with interest such reports as he received concerning your pioneer labours in far-off Ecuador, and he was very pleased to get your letter and hear of the small but devoted group of believers you have succeeded in gathering together, a group which he hopes will expand into a flourishing assembly...

Bahá'u'lláh has urged marriage upon all people as the natural and right-ful way of life. He had also, however, placed strong emphasis on its spiritual nature, which, while in no way precluding a normal physical life, is the most essential aspect of marriage. That two people should live their lives in love and harmony is of far greater importance than that they should be consumed with passion for each other. The one is a great rock of strength on which to lean in time of need; the other a purely temporary thing which may at any time die out....

(P.S. in Guardian's handwriting)

Dear and prized co-worker:

Your letter refreshed and heartened me, and rejoiced my soul, and I assure you I will, fervently and continually pray for you, that all the hopes you cherish may be fully realized, that you may find true and enduring happiness, that you may be able to establish a local assembly

in Quito, and thus render a memorable and historic service to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. Rest assured and persevere.

Your true and grateful brother,

/S/ Shoghi

John's Illness and Death

John made a long, painful overland trip to Lima, Perú for treatment at the Hospital de Radium Terapia. Eve Nicklin, pioneer and spiritual mother of Perú, helped him and tried to comfort him. She states that he endured the horrible pain and the torturing treatments almost without comment. Eve notified the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, and on November 3, 1944, Mr. Horace Holley, secretary of the National Assembly responded:

*Miss Eve Nicklin
Apartado 772
Lima, Peru*

Dear Miss Nicklin:

Your letter of October 27 has just been received and I wish to express grief and sorrow at the news you have given us concerning John's serious physical condition.

The National Spiritual Assembly will be in session for several days beginning November 10 and your letter will be presented as soon as possible.

Meanwhile I am trying to get in touch with Mr. Betts and give him the information about John and ask him to get in touch with you or Mrs. Betts as quickly as he can.

I am also cabling the Guardian, as I think it is spiritually justified to advise him of such a serious condition with one of the devoted pioneer teachers.⁷

Faithfully yours,

*/S/ Horace Holley
Secretary*

Previously, after having received a cable from the Guardian, whose prayers had been asked for, John had a period of seemingly regained health and he spent some of his time with Raymond Betts, an American businessman in Lima, lying in the desert sun. Here he discussed the Faith with Raymond who had heard of it from Eve and Flora Hottes. On April 21, 1944, both he and Raymond became members of the first Spiritual Assembly of Perú which was formed in Lima. Unfortunately, John was not to see the formation of the first Spiritual Assembly of Quito, for which he so assiduously

labored. Shortly after the election of the Assembly in Lima, he learned he must have another operation, which he patiently endured, watched over by Mrs. Raymond (Irma) Betts who took him into her home. He lasted only a short time. Mr. Betts was away on a business trip and it seemed John made himself endure the suffering until he returned. Then on November 7, 1944 at 4:45 PM he quietly passed away. Eve Nicklin, Irma Betts and another friend were with him on that evening.

Services were held at 4:30 PM Wednesday, November 8, 1944 in the Cementario Británico de Bellavista. The Guardian cabled:

RADIANT SELFLESS SERVICES DEAR JOHN STEARNS WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN
COUNTRY INDEED BLESSED WHERE PIONEER NOT ONLY TAUGHT BUT REMAINED
DIED STILL LOVING GLORIFYING HIS FAITH.

On November 19, 1944 he sent another cable:

*Share grief at passing of devoted, faithful pioneer (John Stearns)
His services have been unforgettable and highly meritorious. Advise
the construction of a memorial. Assure friends in Lima (Peru) my
deepest, loving sympathy.*

The National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada cabled:

HEARTFELT SYMPATHY GRIEVOUS LOSS HEROIC SELF SACRIFICING BAHÁ'I
PIONEER JOHN STEARNS HIS DEATH LIGHTS ONE MORE SPIRITUAL BEACON
ILLUMINATING PATH UNITY AMERICAS IN BAHÁ'U'LLAH'S REVELATION.

The grief-stricken Bahá'í Group of Quito wrote:

*Our beloved and unforgettable teacher and pioneer, John P. Stearns,
passed away at Lima, Perú, on November 7, 1944. He was and always
will be so near to our hearts that we can hardly believe he has gone...
We consider ourselves as the first harvest of the seed he has sown.
We proudly affirm that his sacrifice shall not be in vain. John's
loving kindness and the Faith he gave us will live on forever and ever.⁸*

Although John was suffering he could not be idle. Eve writes that after his passing she was leafing through some of his books and found the following words underlined: "O ye beloved of the Lord. The greatest of all things is the protection of the True Faith of God, the preservation of His law, the safeguarding of His Cause and service unto His Word." She further confided:

*The things we remember most are his fortitude, his patient endurance,
his smiling answers to our solicitous questions about his health,
"I'm feeling fine", or when the pain was worse, "so-so", his brave
humor - calling the radium needles in his tongue his phonograph needles.
His only impatience was when he thought we were doing too much for him.
We all wished we could do more. While taking his treatments in Lima
he went into business with Mr. Betts, who was the manager of Cremica.
It was because of this association with John that Ray became a confirmed*

believer in the Bahá'í Faith. The men with whom he worked spoke of John as a quiet man, a man who constantly sought divine direction in the daily performance of his duties, a man whose life was a testament to his convictions.⁹

The Inter - America Committee also wrote to Miss Nicklin expressing their grief:

November 16, 1944

Miss Eve Nicklin
Apartado 772
Lima, Peru

Eve dear:

Your letter of November 8th has just arrived and I hasten to let you know how deeply touched we are by the news it brought.

Our thoughts and prayers have been with John constantly for we were aware of his great suffering and of the noble strength which he had displayed throughout his illness. He has been a great inspiration to all of you I am sure.

It is lovely to know how completely he was surrounded by the love and tender care of his friends and I am sure that the knowledge of this will bring great solace to his family who were so far away from him. The Committee is so grateful that you could be with John during his last hours for we can appreciate the comfort you brought him. Surely his wonderful work will continue even though his physical presence is no longer with you.

With warm Bahá'í greetings to each and every one of the Lima Community.¹⁰

Faithfully,

Edna T.
Secretary

The services of the small group of believers in Quito were stymied by the loss of their beloved pioneer-teacher. They had high hopes of his recovery and his return to them. This was apparently expressed in a letter the group wrote to the Guardian in December 1944 just after John's death. A copy of their letter is not available but the following is the Guardian's reply:

Haifa, Feb. 8th, 1945

Dear Baha'í Friends,

Your letter of December 12th has been received and the beloved Guardian has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

Your loving and loyal sentiments towards the devoted pioneer - Mr. John Stearns - who left his homeland in order to spread the

message of Bahá'u'lláh in your country greatly touched and pleased Shoghi Effendi.

The services of these sincere and dedicated souls who have arisen to serve their fellow men with selfless hearts cannot be over-estimated, and it is fitting that their names and their example should be cherished by those people to whose lands they have brought the healing remedy of our Faith.

It is the Guardian's hope that in the near future the Faith in South and Central America will have grown so strong that the native Baha'is of these Latin American countries will be able to supply pioneers to spread the message in more cities and towns and amongst the Indian population.

He assures you all that he will ardently pray for the success of your devoted labours for the Cause and for the speedy establishment of a large and flourishing Community there.

With warm Baha'i greetings,

R. Rabbani

(P.S. in Guardian's handwriting)

Dearly-beloved friends:

I wish to assure you in person of my deep and loving appreciation of your high endeavours in the service of our beloved Faith, and of my fervent prayers for the extension of your valued activities. You are often in my thoughts and prayers. Rest assured, persevere and be happy.

Your true and grateful brother,

/S/ Shoghi

On August 14, 1945 the Guardian's secretary wrote to Miss Eve Nicklin in Perú on his behalf;

He was very sorry to hear of the death of John Stearns, he was a fine believer, and it is a pity he should have passed away so young - but his reward is assured and his name will be forever preserved in the roll call of the early Bahá'í pioneers to South America.

It should be recalled that John wrote to the Inter-America Committee asking: "May I be of any assistance in executing the Seven Year Plan, as a settler?", and how God granted his humble request. Not only was he blessed to open up a country but to perform meritorious service in two other countries, Panamá and Perú. He lived to see the completion and achievements of that first Seven Year Plan which was "The greatest collective enterprise ever launched by the Western followers of Bahá'u'lláh and indeed ever undertaken by any Bahá'í community in the course of an entire century, ... gloriously consummated. A victory of undying fame..." (Shoghi Effendi, Messages to America, pp.69-70)

No doubt John read the Guardian's statement of appreciation and eulogy to the pioneers and itinerant teachers cited in *Messages to America*, p.70, which could have been at least part of the stimulus in helping him to acquire the spiritual contentment with the Will of God which he so admirably reflected.

To the band of pioneers, whether settlers or itinerant teachers, who have forsaken their homes, who have scattered far and wide, who have willingly sacrificed their comfort, their health and even their lives for the prosecution of this Plan... future generations viewing the magnitude of their labours in their proper perspective, will no doubt pay adequate tribute - a tribute no less ardent and well deserved than the recognition extended by the present-day builders of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh to the Dawn-Breakers, whose shining deeds have signalized the birth of the Heroic Age of His Faith.

Because of John's illness and death, the believers in Quito were alone for nearly a year. Virginia Orbison could not remain with them due to the climate and health problems. The Inter-America Committee asked her to go to Quito to help the believers but when she arrived in December 1944 she found that the believers had become scattered and only three remained firm. She related:

However, activity for me was rudely curtailed by prolonged and persistent neuritis, and a change of living quarters and medical aid did not help. On the night of Christmas, unsleepingly, pondering why such obstacles should be presented when a Spiritual Assembly was the intense hope for April, it occurred to me that perhaps Guayaquil was the destined spot.

CHAPTER II

FORMATION OF THE FIRST SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY IN ECUADOR

The first stage of the development of the Bahá'í Faith in Guayaquil is intimately linked with the events upon the arrival of John Stearns in that city where he paused for nine days before continuing his trip to his assigned post of Quito. The first native Bahá'í of Ecuador was from Guayaquil. During his vacation, after hearing of the Faith, he returned for a visit to his home where he had friends he thought would be interested in the Bahá'í Faith. He found the atmosphere a bit difficult at first because, from among all his friends, he found only one who showed any interest, Emilio Minervini, a childhood friend.

In August of 1944, Eduardo, who had been a delegate to the Centenary Convention in the United States, returned to his native Guayaquil to live. He did not wish to stay in Quito when it seemed John would not be able to return to his post. He met some of his friends who had accepted the Faith earlier, Jorge Sarco and Jorge Jalon Feraud and they decided to work hard to establish the first local Spiritual Assembly in Ecuador in Guayaquil. Soon they learned that two more Bahá'ís from Quito were now living in Guayaquil, Francisco Morales and Mme. Marie Constantine Claudet (Colette). Colette had learned of the Faith by listening to John Stearns' radio programs in 1943 while she was living in Quito.

On July, 1944 the Guardian expressed his desire to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada that a Spiritual Assembly be established in every remaining republic during the first year of the second Bahá'í century which began in April 1945. The Guayaquil group resolved to work quietly to attain Assembly status by the set date. They knew all the correspondence was forwarded to Quito where the resident pioneer had lived and a group was established, and that no one was aware of the strong determined group in Guayaquil. After they received notice of the death of John Stearns in November, Eduardo definitely decided to stay in his native city and work hard for the Faith.

During the last week of December 1944, Les (Eduardo), who was working for the Airline 'Panagra' was reading the passenger list of the arrivals from Lima, Peru. In transit for Quito was the name of a Miss Virginia Orbuson. Emilio Minervini and Jorge Sarco were waiting for him at the gate to get off from work. Les told them that a passenger had passed in transit to Quito from Lima. They too were interested to know if this person was a Bahá'í. They returned to the office of Panagra to examine the manifesto and to his surprise he was told that the plane had returned to Guayaquil to pass the night due to weather conditions in Quito. Immediately he found out where the passenger Virginia Orbuson was assigned to spend the night. These three adventurous Bahá'ís resolved to visit this señorita at her hotel that night to see if she was wearing a Bahá'í ring, or one way or another to find out if she was a Bahá'í. Les was sure that somewhere

he had heard the name 'Orbuson' as a Bahá'í, and anyway there was nothing to lose for as an employee of Panagra, he had reason to visit the passengers and advise them the hour of departure of the plane. Therefore Emilio and Les went to her hotel. Jorge had excused himself for he had something to do but promised to see them later. They knocked at the door and Les asked, in the name of Panagra, for her complete name and was happy and surprised that the name on the passenger list was incorrect - it was not 'Orbuson' but Orbison. They saw the Bahá'í ring and immediately said 'Allah-u-Abhá'. Virginia was very surprised, ignorant of the fact that there were two Bahá'ís in Guayaquil and was even more surprised at dinner when she was visited by five united believers and contacts. She explained that she had been sent to Quito as a pioneer where it was believed that there was a strong group. She congratulated the friends and the following day continued her voyage to Quito.¹

For health reasons, Virginia could only stay a very short time in Quito with the three "handicapped", inactive believers. She found it necessary to return to Guayaquil where the "tropical heat thawed out the pain in two weeks". She found lodging in a guest house owned by an English woman and the aunt of Les Gonzalez. Here the first "real Bahá'í meetings in Guayaquil" were held in an upper room arranged with seats, desk, table, lamp, ferns and flowers and, most important, Bahá'í books and pictures. Thereafter, this group of four labored continuously trying to find enough believers to establish their first local Assembly.¹

First Local Spiritual Assembly of Guayaquil

Miss Orbison briefly describes the days leading up to the establishment of the first local Spiritual Assembly in Ecuador:

From January to April we worked together, the four of us - gradually adding others. One more came from Quito; still another believer re-awakened to active effort. Friends were met and brought to the gatherings held regularly. The date of April 21 crept nearer... A young medical student, Guillermo Molina, who came to exercise his scientific learning at the Bahá'í expense, left with fervent expressions of conviction of Bahá'í truths. He soon declared his intentions but insisted that he would examine it thoroughly so as to be sure of his action. (Commendable, yes - but would he convince himself by April 21!) Suddenly he and another serious and fine young man, who had felt himself not worthy, begged to be accepted. April 8 came bringing Haig Kevorkian from Buenos Aires. He was to do pioneer teaching in Guayaquil, and arrived only after lengthy procedure of travel. (These were the war years). April 17 found us needing one more, as neither Haig nor I was eligible to be on the Spiritual Assembly, neither one having a permanent residence visa. The person nearest to joining us was a lovely Norwegian exile, who had a beauty shop. During the three hours it took to have a permanent wave some heart-deep questions were asked. After receiving the replies, she fell silent for a time. There was no

sign of effect until, just as we parted Else Jorgensen* asked that she might sign! Even the rains had remained in the clouds at least on the evenings of our meetings.

So, in the upper room, surrounded by our Bahá'í books, pictures and many flowers, in the hot breeze of the electric fan - each in his "best" and with happy smiles - the first Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador was formed! The memory of John Stearns was very strong with us as we all felt that he was happy at last over the flowering of his devoted and selfless labors in that land... The members of the first Spiritual Assembly of Guayaquil were:

Eduardo Gonzalez Lopez
Emilio Minervini
Jorge Jalón Feraud
Mme. Marie Constantine Claudet de Thomas
Lauro Sánchez

Luis Guillermo Molina DeFranc
Jorge Sarco
Juan Luis Aguirre Turpeau
Else Jorgensen*

Miss Orbison continues;

On May 17, 1945 was the date of my reluctant farewell to Guayaquil. This new Bahá'í community seemed especially remarkable as it consisted of very young people, five men of unusual attractiveness and capacity, all under twenty-five, one of thirty two, and two women but a few years older. Haig Kevorkian, a young Syrian, whose family came to Argentina as pioneers with the Guardian's own counsel stayed until October to help them to develop and strengthen their Assembly.²

After having been notified of this achievement the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi from the Bahá'í World Centre cabled:

OVERJOYED MAGNIFICENT ACHIEVEMENT GUAYAQUIL FRIENDS LOVING FERVENT PRAYERS.

SHOGHI

Most of the members of the newly formed Assembly had transferred to Guayaquil from Quito, where they had been introduced to the Faith by John Stearns. In October of that year, the young Doctor Molino offered his office as a meeting place for the Assembly. On June 15, 1945 the Guardian wrote to Virginia Orbison regarding this young Assembly:

Dear Bahá'í sister:

He was delighted with the formation of an Assembly in Guayaquil, and interested to learn that all its members are active, enthusiastic young people. This augurs well for its future development and for the spread of the Faith in Ecuador.

The youth are indeed those to whom the Cause should perforce offer its greatest appeal, as it holds alone the promise of their future security. Without that which Bahá'u'lláh has given to humanity, the outlook for the future of the world would appear truly hopeless, for the evil forces in men's nature seem to have gained ascendancy, and only a spiritual force direct from God can enable the good side of human nature to again assume command of men's lives.

Please give his loving greetings to all the dear friends there, and assure them he will watch their growth and activities with keen interest and pray for their success and spiritual unfoldment.

He will also pray for your health and that your many much-appreciated services to the beloved Faith may be rightly blessed.³

With warm Bahá'í love,

/S/ R. Rabbani

(P.S. in the Guardian's handwriting)

May the Beloved bless continually your highly meritorious efforts, guide every step you take in the path of service, and enable you to proclaim to all who are far and near the saving and healing truths of this glorious Revelation, and contribute a notable share to the multiplication and consolidation of its Institutions.

Your true and grateful brother,

/S/ Shoghi

This young community, inspired by the Guardian's cable, wrote a heartwarming letter to him expressing their deep gratitude to the teachers who brought them the Bahá'í Message and imploring his prayers for their guidance and spiritual development:

July 3rd, 1945

Beloved Guardian,

The newly formed and very young Spiritual Assembly, young in years and in experience, now take this opportunity to greet you in the name of our beloved Faith. We sent you pictures which we hope have reached you by this time.

We were cheered and inspired by your cable and were happy that, now, our small efforts are a part of the great organic whole. Our combined effort, unity of purpose and devotion to our Faith will be measured by future results, but, all that we are and all that we possess we lay at the Divine Threshold. These little fledglings who are just trying their wings, implore your prayers that we may be guided, that we may be united, that we may become selfless and worthy of the great bounty that is ours.

We shall be eternally grateful to our departed brother John Stearns who sacrificed himself that we might know of God's Great Plan. We owe much to Virginia Orbison who worked so diligently and faithfully to bring some of us into the fold and who united us. To Haig Kevorkian who is an inspiration and a guide with his oriental reverence for our Faith. We are grateful Gwenne Dorothy Sholtis has come to us for eleven days. She obtained for us the first Bahá'í newspaper publicity in

Ecuador. The owner and editor was impressed and asked for books. Gwenne gave some but he would like to have all of them for the newspaper library and for future reference. Gwenne sent us books from Panama, and when they come, we will see that he gets them.

To you and your wife we send sincere love and we hope and pray that each of us will endeavour to be real Bahá'ís.⁴

Faithfully

THE SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF
GUAYAQUIL, ECUADOR

/S/ J.L. Aguirre, Jorge Jalón, M. C. Claudet, Emilio Minervini, Else Jorgensen.

The goal of the Seven Year Plan and a number of other goals were achieved in spite of the "world-embracing crisis", World War II, as predicted by the Guardian in a letter dated January 15, 1942 cited in *Messages to America*, p.54.

...The obstacles which the extension of the war to the Western Hemisphere has raised are, I am well aware, manifold and formidable. The heroic self-sacrifice exhibited by the North American Bahá'í community will, I am confident, surmount them. The Hand of Omnipotence, which has led so mighty a member of the human race to plunge into the turmoil of world disaster, that has provided thereby the means for the effective and decisive participation of so promising a nation in the immediate trials and the future reconstruction of human society, will not and cannot allow those who are directly, consciously and worthily promoting the highest interests of their nation and of the world, to fall short of the accomplishment of their God-given task. He will, more than ever before in their history, pour out His blessings upon them, if they refuse to allow the present circumstances, grievous though they are, to interfere with the full and uninterrupted execution of this initial undertaking in pursuance of their world mission....

During the war years, which were also the early years of the Faith in Latin America, there were not enough believers in the West who could avail themselves for pioneer service. Being aware of this the Guardian called for travel teachers in order that the new believers in various countries would not be completely left alone. In a letter to the Inter-America Committee dated November 21, 1941 written on his behalf, the Guardian added in a postscript:

I wish to add a few words to what has been written on my behalf and stress afresh the vital importance of increasing by every means in our power the number of pioneers who for however short a period are able to help in promoting the establishment of the Faith in South America. The utmost encouragement, moral and material, should be extended to those heroic workers who are willing in these days of uncertainty and turmoil to travel to or settle in those regions.

Although travel teachers passed through Quito from time to time to stimulate the believers, it was not the same as having a permanent

mainstay. Before Haig Kevorkian returned to Argentina, he made a trip to Quito to visit with the small group of believers who were sad because of John's death and because they were unable to have the first Assembly "for Johnny". But the time arrived when he had to leave, even though the believers so desperately desired for him to stay. They cabled the Inter-America Committee asking that he be permitted to stay with them a while longer. Mail was very slow during those days and uncertain, so when permission did arrive for him to stay, he had already left the country.⁵

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST NATIVE ECUADORIAN WOMAN TO ACCEPT THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH

There appears to have been some confusion as to who was the first native Ecuadorian woman to accept the Bahá'í Faith, perhaps due to the delay in the mail service during those years. The secretary of the Guayaquil local Assembly wrote to Hascle Cornbleth, the pioneer who succeeded John Stearns in Quito, notifying him that "the first native Ecuadorian woman to accept the Faith" was Judith Franco on September 14, 1946 in their community. However, in the annual report of the Quito group (1946-1947), it is reported that Señorita Rosario Vera Barahona was the first native Ecuadorian woman to become a Baha'i in October 1946. So it is evident that Judith Franco was the first native Ecuadorian woman Bahá'í in the country and Rosario Vera Barahona was the second.¹

Mme. Marie Constantine Claudet (Colette), a French lady who now resides in Costa Rica, heard of the Faith while living in Quito through John Stearns' radio programs. Madame Colette relates that she accepted the Faith after devoutly studying *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, which John lent her in her native language and that after attending the third meeting held in John's "Kandy Kitchen", she enrolled. She recalls that at the time there were many men contacts but only one other woman attending the meetings, Mrs. Jenny Huber. Mrs. Huber was a German who with her husband and daughter had fled Germany from the Nazis. She later resigned from the Faith due to internal problems within the Bahá'í Community; after requesting to be reinstated, she resigned again. It was her husband, who never became a Bahá'í, who made it possible for John and Eduardo to speak a few moments once a week over the radio regarding the Bahá'í Faith. Madame Colette said that John soon became very ill with cancer of the tongue and had to leave for Lima, Perú for treatments. After he left the meetings ceased in Quito for there was little enthusiasm.²

In February 1945 Madame Colette moved to Guayaquil where she was privileged to become a member of the first Spiritual Assembly of that city and of the country. She recalls that they had very little literature and many problems but sufficient enthusiasm to continue to meet and little by little the number of believers increased. From time to time they would lose some members to the United States to continue their studies or for other personal reasons. Some members also moved to other localities in the country thereby opening them to the Faith. Nevertheless, in spite of the problems and ups and downs the young Assembly was proud of its achievement and wrote to Shoghi Effendi regarding the aspirations it held. On October 5, 1945 his secretary responded on his behalf:

Your welcome letter dated July 16th has been received by the beloved Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

He is very happy to see that you now have a united and devoted group of believers there, and have formed the first Spiritual Assembly of your country; your efforts must now be to build up a Community of Bahá'ís in Guayaquil sufficiently large and strong to enable you gradually to form other spiritual assemblies in Ecuador.

He was also very pleased to see that the Cause is receiving newspaper publicity there, and that you are winning the sympathetic interest of editors and people of importance. The Faith needs friends as well as adherents, and you should always endeavour to attract the hearts of enlightened leaders to its teachings.

The work done by dear John Stearns and other pioneers will never be forgotten; it is the Guardian's ardent hope that from the ranks of the Latin American Bahá'ís pioneers will increasingly be found who will carry on the work in Central and South America among their own people.

You may be sure his loving prayers will be offered for the success of your teaching work and for your guidance and protection in administering the affairs of the Cause there.

*With warm Bahá'í love
Yours in His service,*

/S/ R. Rabbani

(P.S. in the Guardian's handwriting)

I was extremely happy to receive your letter. The sentiments expressed therein I greatly value, and I wish to assure you in person of my constant and fervent prayers on your behalf, that your newly established centre may flourish, and that your meritorious efforts may be crowned with signal and enduring success.

Your true and grateful brother,

/S/ Shoghi

The friends in Guayaquil were triumphant - they had quietly attained their goal of having the first local Assembly in Ecuador through persistent struggle. However, the outlook for Quito, the capital city and site of the first pioneer, was very bleak. It had lost its pioneer John Stearns through an "untimely death", his temporary replacement could not live in the hostile climate due to her health, and many of the believers and contacts had left Quito for other localities or had become completely inactive. There were only two young active believers by now, Hans Dory, who was secretary of the group, and Hans Levy. The forlorn feeling of this little group is reflected in the letters they wrote to the Inter-America Committee. On October 9, 1945, the secretary wrote on behalf of the group:

You may have wondered about the long silence from Quito, but I can assure you that we are still alive and kicking, and it so happens that after a long sitback in our chairs we are just about to get organized again, and to imitate the example of the Guayaquil group... Haig Kevorkian came up to Quito for a few days to visit the Bahá'ís. This has been a wonderful opportunity for us, and due to his initiative and efficient help, we have been able to hold a few very interesting meetings with some new visitors around. We are only sorry that he has to leave again so soon. I do hope that Gwenn Sholtis will be coming before long so that we not again stay without a pioneer.³

It seems that John's death left the same sad impact on the neophyte believers in Quito as the death of a mother or father leaves on their little children who have no one to care for them. This is reflected in their letters to the Inter-America Committee begging for someone to come to guide and protect them. Hans further stated in his letter: "Since Johnny died we have not paid anything for subscriptions of books or magazines as our treasury has been empty, but as soon as we get better organized I shall try to get off to you the regular subscriptions..." And again on October 18, 1945 he happily wrote:

This message from Quito brings you Three Cheers for Haig Kevorkian. He really is worthy of special praise, and I know that Bahá'u'lláh must be pretty proud of him in these days. After Haig's one week visit to our tropical ice-berg, two new believers... are almost ready to sign, and a third one is very near to it. This is what Haig performed in little more than a couple of days. You can imagine how sorry we were about his departure... we are missing him in Quito terribly, as the wonderful work he has done here is just about to bring its fruit. Although the undersigned is doing his best for the sake of Bahá'u'lláh in Quito, it so happens that I am working almost single-handed and Haig's assistance would be of immense value, and is almost indispensable in these decisive days where we are working full steam ahead towards the formation of an Assembly in the capital of Ecuador.⁴

Another reason the Quito group felt such desperate need for an experienced pioneer was that they found themselves embroiled in internal problems which were overwhelming for their limited experience. Records are not presently available as to how two of the believers acquired John Stearns' candy-making business after his death, but conflicts regarding it arose which would disrupt and demoralize the community for some time.

On October 26, 1945, the secretary of the Quito group reported to the Inter-America Committee that the present owner of Kandy Kitchen had usurped the post office box which was used by the Bahá'ís as well as by Kandy Kitchen; that the owner and another believer "continue having hard feelings against the Guayaquil group and have openly declared that they refuse to cooperate with a group to which belongs Les Gonzalez."⁵ (It should be recalled

that Eduardo (Les) Gonzalez was the first believer in Ecuador, who performed outstanding service for the Cause both as an itinerant teacher abroad and pioneer to Spain and Venezuela. Sadly, in later years he became a Covenant-breaker and had to be ex-communicated.) The reason for the refusal of these believers to cooperate and accept Les at that time was not explained in the reports available. The secretary continued in his report:

As I consider such hostile tendencies as irreconcilable with the basic principles of the Faith and certainly detrimental for the future development of the Faith in Ecuador, I have proceeded to take the following action for which personally I assume full responsibility.

1. I have dissolved the Bahá'í Center located at the Kandy Kitchen, and have made it clear to everybody that the genuine Bahá'í Faith in Quito will in the future have no connection whatsoever with the chocolate factory Kandy Kitchen, and that as far as I am concerned no more Bahá'í meetings will be held at the Kandy Kitchen.

2. Consequently I have taken out of the Kandy Kitchen all archives, papers, books and other belongings of the Bahá'ís of Quito, and have taken them to my own home. I shall hold meetings with the friends of the Faith wherever possible and convenient until such time when it may be possible to again establish a decent and adequate Bahá'í Center. I assure you that I had to proceed so drastically in order to save what is left of the Faith in Quito. In view of the foregoing, it is now even more urgent than before that Haig Kevorkian be transferred from Guayaquil to Quito and I therefore beg you emphatically to consider immediately the request I made in my letter of last week....

After consulting with the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States about the problem, the Inter-America Committee answered Hans' letter assuring him that a cable had been sent to Haig in Guayaquil asking him to please return to Quito for at least two months, if possible. As previously mentioned, when the cable arrived in Guayaquil, Haig was en route to his home in Argentina. When the Committee learned of this they wrote to Hans again expressing their regret saying, "You may be assured that the Inter-America Committee will keep you constantly in mind, and send you some teaching assistance at the earliest possible time."

When Haig learned of the request he was very sad that the cable was delayed in arriving and it was not practicable for him to return for two months. These were war years and travel was often very hazardous. Nevertheless he was destined to return to Ecuador in later years where he would be immortalized as a "Knight of Bahá'u'lláh" for his yeoman service in the virgin territory of the Galapagos Islands.

By March 1946, Hans reported that one of the believers, Mrs. Jenny Huber who was involved in the "Kandy Kitchen" affair had

become active again saying, "At least we are working together again, the two of us." He also mentioned their delight and joy over having received a visit from a travel teacher from Washington, D.C., Mr. Charles Mason Remey*, the previous week and that they had two very interesting meetings during his visit.

Then in April 1946, the small Quito Group was overjoyed to receive a new pioneer, Hascle Cornbleth from Los Angeles, California. He came armed with the spirit of faith, enthusiasm and determination to help develop the group into a Bahá'í Community as John Stearns had so longingly desired to do. A few months before his arrival, the two active believers had expressed a desire to find their own pioneer - they feared that the Faith would die out here. Little did they know what the future held for them and that during the time of their extreme anxiety, a pioneer was preparing himself to settle in Quito. Time was to witness Hascle's endeavour to personify the advice given to him some years earlier by his beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, on August 20, 1932 in a letter written on his behalf by his secretary:

Your joy must now be immense and your heart should overflow with gratitude and thanks to God for having enabled you to find the Light of Truth and given you the courage and zeal to not to turn away from it.

It behooves you now to try to deepen your knowledge of the history and the teachings of the Faith and get acquainted with the principles that stand at the basis of its present-day Administration. The best way to attain that goal is through continued cooperation with the friends and through participation in their spiritual activities. For you cannot catch the spirit of the Cause through the reading of books alone. You should reinforce the knowledge you get through Bahá'í Writings with a whole-hearted association with the friends.

In his moments of prayer and meditation Shoghi Effendi will always remember you and ask Bahá'u'lláh to impart to your life the zeal, the enthusiasm and the strength which are indispensable for your service to the Cause.

(P.S. in the Guardian's handwriting)

With the assurance of my loving prayers, for your welfare and spiritual advancement, your true brother,

/S/ Shoghi

The secretary of the group wrote, "It seems that through him everything has changed and he is giving us new inspiration." Hascle soon rented a room in the Pension Suiza (Swiss Broadway House) to have a meeting place and a place to reside. Then he

*Charles Mason Remey would later become a devastating Covenant-breaker.

began to establish contact with the old members of the Faith who had become inactive after John's death and try to stimulate their interest in the Faith again. He started English classes to make more contacts for the Faith, and soon had interested a number of people in the Cause. Those lonely Bahá'ís could not praise him enough. They wrote, "We find Hascle to be a suave, charming person and a dynamic Bahá'í. Our activities are in full swing; there are about four active Bahá'ís in Quito now, and very likely two more will declare themselves in the near future, so we are confident to form a Spiritual Assembly in April 1947." When Hascle arrived in Ecuador, he had found only two active believers, Hans Dory and Hans Levy. They were soon spiritually reanimated and immediately began to reorganize the group. Soon one of their first new contacts, Miss Hazel Marie Messimore, a North American teacher, accepted the Faith. She had heard of the Faith in Lima, Peru through the resident pioneer Miss Eve Nicklin. She immediately became very active and was an inspiration to the group. Unfortunately, soon after her acceptance of the Faith, she had to return to the United States due to the illness of her father; but before leaving, she helped the believers in Guayaquil to translate the first section of *The Hidden Words* into the Spanish language. She did not forget the group in Quito and wrote beautiful inspiring letters encouraging them to work diligently to acquire their Assembly by the following year.

In July 1946 the new pioneer to Ecuador, Hascle, made his first visit to Guayaquil. While there, he received a letter from Mrs. Gayle Woolson notifying him of her impending visit:

August 8, 1946

Dear Mr. Cornbleth:

The Inter-America Committee has given me the happy news that I am to visit Ecuador next month. I was also informed that you might still be in Guayaquil when I pass. First I shall visit Cali for ten days or two weeks starting the first part of September, (don't know the exact date of my leaving Bogotá yet) then the same amount of time in Guayaquil then to Quito, the goal city for an Assembly. I hope you are enjoying your stay in Ecuador. I've heard many lovely things about the country and am anxious to visit it....

Her visit was destined to be a turning point for the struggling Bahá'í Community of Ecuador.

CHAPTER IV

THE PRESIDENT OF ECUADOR IS INTRODUCED TO THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH

In September 1946, one of the most outstanding and dedicated pioneers to South America, Mrs. Gayle Woolson, made her first visit to this country. She, as well as Haig Kevorkian, was destined to return to Ecuador in later years and attain the spiritual bounty of being crowned valiant Knights of Bahá'u'lláh. During her six day stay in Guayaquil she visited the office of the most important daily papers, spoke over radio and gave many talks to various lodges, societies and schools. She was well received everywhere she visited. At the Masonic Temple, the Governor of the Province, high officials of government, members of lodges as well as a number of high society women attended the conference. She left many new contacts for the Faith in that city.

She arrived in Quito-"Light as the spirit, pure as air, blazing as fire," and "unrestrained as the wind." The believers and friends referred to her as the "distinguished North American Lady" with great talents, an exceptional spiritual beauty with a great intellectual capacity. She remained in Ecuador for several weeks, initiating overwhelming activities for the Faith. One of her most outstanding feats was to give the Bahá'í Message to the President of the Republic of Ecuador in a very long interview. She gave innumerable talks. The most important was given in the Sucre Theatre to more than a thousand people. She proclaimed the Cause to business groups, military personnel, teachers and students alike in various schools and universities, as well as working closely with the Quito Bahá'í Group. The newspaper publicity was exceptional and sympathetic and commented on the many successful conferences she held. The fructiferous result of her visit was soon visible. Two of the old inactive believers of Quito returned and reaffirmed their belief in the Cause, requesting that their names be placed on the active list of believers (the Group asked the Inter-America Committee to please give credit to John Stearns for these believers). Five new contacts accepted the Faith, the first being the second Ecuadorian woman to enroll and the first for Quito, Señorita Rosario Vera Barahona, who would be privileged to be a member of the first local Spiritual Assembly of Quito.

Taking advantage of Mrs. Woolson's visit, and with the cooperation of pioneer Hascle Cornbleth and the Bahá'í Group of Quito, an intense teaching campaign was systematically carried out. Five different groups invited her to give conferences on her return to Quito, and after her talk in the Sucre Theatre the directors of four different schools invited her to give talks in their schools. The highlight of her visit was when she and Hascle were granted an audience with the President of the Republic, Dr. José Velasco Ibarra, on October 3, 1946. Following is her account of the interview with the President.

...Mr. Hascle Cornbleth, pioneer in Quito, and I were given an audience with the President of Ecuador, His Excellency José Velasco Ibarra. He is renowned in Latin America as an intellectual of high ideals. He received us with warmth and kindness. After the Message was explained

to him, he said: "I congratulate you for being in this great work. This is something truly magnificent. It is a great doctrine. Now in this time of crisis when there exist in the world such hate, prejudice, lack of understanding and limited nationalism, these universal teachings come to give a new horizon, a world concept. Everyone who comes here to see me comes to ask for something but you have come to give me spiritual renovation. These ideas should be spread with great intensity. It is not the quantity nor the multitudes that count, but the intensity with which these ideas are promulgated."

He asked where I was giving conferences, and after I named various clubs and organizations, he said that his wife was the president of the Women's Cultural Club, and that he wanted us to meet her and that a talk would be given at this club. He said he himself would arrange it with his wife. He rang for his secretary and told her to arrange an appointment for us with his wife, and instructed the secretary to send us an official car to take us there as their home was somewhat distant. He said: "This will give the women something lofty to think about. They, too, should work for the betterment of the world as we men do. They should be doing what you are doing." At this point, the Bahá'í concept of the bird of humanity having two wings, the masculine and feminine, was explained to him and he enjoyed this very much.

We gave him Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era in Spanish, "Appreciations of the Bahá'í Faith", and a card with the twelve principles and the address of the Quito Bahá'í Center. He asked for more information about Bahá'u'lláh pronouncing His name perfectly and asked if he was pronouncing it correctly. He asked about the origin of the Message and when did Bahá'u'lláh ascend. We explained to him the manner in which we work, that is, by establishing groups and assemblies that represent these ideals and about the Bahá'í Center in Quito and Guayaquil. He said he was happy to know that there was a Bahá'í Center in the city and he hoped that the persons in the group were sincere as their people have the tendency to become enthused about things for the moment and then lose interest. He added: "The Center should plant its roots deeply so that it will be strong and permanent. This Center can influence the thought of the country."

He asked how long I would be in Quito and said that he would be very pleased to visit with us again before my departure for Colombia "to talk more about these high ideals." I asked him if he would give me a statement about the Bahá'í Faith for the World Order Magazine, and he said "yes, with much pleasure." We did not get to see him again before I left Quito as he went to Guayaquil for several days and returned a matter of hours before I left the country, so I was unable to get the statement at this time. As we were leaving his office, he stated that he was very glad we had visited him. A few days after this visit, we saw the President's secretary and she joyfully commented on how happy the President was after our visit with him.

As the President had promised, "he personally arranged to have us meet the First Lady of the Republic, Señora Corina Parral de Velasco Ibarra,

on October 16th. There was a delay in having this interview with her because she had been ill. The day set for the interview was the day before my return to Colombia which was my pioneering post at the time.

The secretary of the President had advised me of the hour of the appointment and told me that the president would have an official car sent to take us to the Presidential Residence.

We were grateful to God for such bountiful Divine Confirmation and still felt elated over the receptivity and enthusiasm of the President towards the Bahá'í ideals shown in our interview with him, at which time the light of the Spirit of Bahá'u'lláh seemed to inundate his office....

We were received by the gracious, charming and gentle First Lady of Ecuador in an elegant reception room. She was beautiful and walked, moved and sat with lovely dignity and grace. She told us of the work she is doing to advance the Ecuadorian woman and for the educational, cultural and moral elevation of the Indian children. She invited me to speak before the Women's Cultural Club upon my return to Quito and told Hascle that in the meantime he could present a written paper on any aspect of the Faith to read at one of their meetings. She said that she was interested in reading the Bahá'í literature and remarked that she would ask her husband for the books we had given (to) him. She presented each of us with a book of poetry written by her and autographed and invited us to call on her again. One of the poems in her book, written in Spanish, which immediately caught my eye depicted how men have established frontiers that separate them from each other. It terminates with the question: "Will they some day put up frontiers in the sky, too?"

At the conference given at Colegio Mejía for the Sociedad de los Graduados del Mejía (The Society of Graduates), there were present a Doctor Carlota Felix and Doctor Mercedes de Mora. They showed much interest in the Teachings and said they would like to cooperate with our new Cause....

A few years ago (mid 1970's), a lady telephoned the Bahá'í Center in Quito to seek information about the Bahá'í Faith. She was Ecuadorian but had been living out of the country for many years. She was a young lawyer in 1946 when Gayle spoke to a group of lawyers in Quito, she recalled, and was very impressed by the Bahá'í Teachings. All the years she was away, she never met a Bahá'í but did not forget her first contact with a Bahá'í, and as soon as she returned she began to make inquiries about the Bahá'í Faith (It is interesting that her sister had taught Spanish to a number of Bahá'ís at the Catholic University, including the writer). After receiving literature and visiting the Bahá'í Center, she accepted Bahá'u'lláh. After 30 or more years, the above-mentioned Doctor Carlota Felix refound the Faith! It appears that the seeds sown by Gayle were nourished by the spirit and became trees still bearing delicious fruits!

CHAPTER V

FIRST LOCAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY IN THE CAPITAL CITY OF QUITO

During this period the group in Quito was visited by a number of national and international travel teachers to help the community to achieve Assembly status. Among the international teachers were Mrs. Flores Hottes, who on May 10, 1947 spoke over the radio, The Voice of Democracy, on the subject of 'The Dynamic Force of Religion'.

By early 1947 there were 16 believers in the community, including four or five inactive members; and there were two active committees, a teaching committee and a committee for radio programs. They felt quite confident now of being able to elect their Assembly in April even though they lost two more very active believers from the group. The Guayaquil community was quite active in assisting their sister community to attain Assembly status. Both communities wrote to the Guardian of the Faith in September 1946, sending him five dollars each as a contribution towards the completion of the Shrine of the Báb on Mount Carmel. On February 9, 1947, the secretary of the Guardian replied to the Spiritual Assembly of Guayaquil on his behalf;

Our beloved Guardian received your letter of Sep. 15th, with the cheque you enclosed as your loving contribution towards the Báb's Shrine completion work, and I am enclosing a receipt from him and answering you on his behalf.

He is very happy to see the devotion to the Cause which your letter evinces, and the love which unites you all in its service. Wherever there is love and unity among the believers the work will prosper and new souls be attracted.

Since your letter was received the wonderful conference of South American believers was held at Buenos Aires - which your delegate attended. The Guardian hopes that the great inspiration which the friends attending this conference so strongly felt, will be carried into far reaching action throughout that Continent and in your own country.

The news that you hope to have a second Assembly, in Quito, established this coming April, greatly rejoiced him, and he will pray that your labours there, and in other parts of Ecuador, will yield a rich harvest before 1951, when the South American N.S.A. is established. The Latin American friends have a great future to look forward to in the service of God and humanity!

You may be sure he will pray for your Assembly and all its members, that Bahá'u'lláh may strengthen, guide, and bless you in your service to His Faith.¹

With Bahá'í love,

/S/ R. Rabbani

(P.S. in the Guardian's handwriting)

Dear and Valued Co-Workers:

I was deeply touched by your letter and value your contribution as an evidence of your strong attachment to our beloved Faith. I will pray for the success of your efforts for the promotion of the Cause of God and the consolidation of its institutions.

Rest assured, and persevere in your noble task.

/S/ Shoghi

And on February 18, 1947 the Guardian's secretary wrote to the Quito group on his behalf;

The Bahá'ís of Quito, Ecuador,
Mr. Hans Dory, Sec.

Dear Bahá'í Friends:

Your letter dated Sep. 13th, 1946, has been received, together with the check you forwarded as your contribution towards completing the Bab's Shrine on Mt. Carmel, and our beloved Guardian has instructed me to answer you on his behalf, and to send you the enclosed receipt.

He was very touched by your gift for the Báb's Tomb, and to see that the believers so far away are yet so near in heart and spirit to the Holy Land.

He hopes that your Bahá'í work in Quito will progress sufficiently rapidly for you to have a Spiritual Assembly there by this April. He attaches great importance to the work there, and assures you all his loving prayers are offered for the success of your devoted labours.

With warm Bahá'í greetings,

/S/ R. Rabbani

(P.S. in the Guardian's handwriting)

Dear and valued Co-Workers:

I was deeply touched by your letter and by this evidence of your exemplary devotion to the interests of our beloved Faith. You are often in my thoughts and prayers, and I will continue to supplicate Bahá'u'lláh to aid, sustain, and guide you in your meritorious and historic labours for the promotion of His Faith.

Your true and grateful brother,

/S/ Shoghi

Again the small struggling group of believers in Quito was destined to witness the fortune of another of their beloved pioneers decline as the menace of an insidious skin disease began to ravish the health of Hascle Cornbleth. On December 8, 1946, the secretary of the group notified the Inter-America Committee that Hascle was not feeling very well. When the group became aware that the Committee had suggested to Hascle that he could go to another country at a lower altitude or return to the United States for the sake of his health, they became alarmed. They loved Hascle dearly and did not wish for him to leave if his health would permit him to stay in Quito. On March 31, 1947, the secretary of the group Hans Dory, again contacted the Committee informing them:

Presently there are EIGHT active Bahá'ís in Quito which may be considered as "prospects" to form part of the projected Spiritual Assembly. In this number Hascle Cornbleth is already included, which cuts the number of Bahá'ís living in Quito permanently down to SEVEN. It is therefore apparent that the election of the Quito Assembly is by no means assured, because we are still waiting for the declaration of another member to make up a total of nine and even then Hascle Cornbleth included. While we propose to hold the election anyway, we have no definite assurance what the result of the election will be, for you will easily realize that with six or seven members left, a normal operation of the Assembly would be out of the question, and Quito which was a goal city for a long time would again be reduced to a group status. And even if we do achieve the establishment of the Assembly, which as explained appears somewhat dubious, Hascle's presence here in a way of supervising the proper functioning of the Assembly would be invaluable and almost indispensable for at least another couple of months in regard to the future development of the very operation of the Assembly and until the local Bahá'ís become accustomed to properly take care of all these matters.²

On April 10 the Committee replied:

We have already written to Hascle telling him that we are granting your request to the extent of asking him to remain in Quito, if his health will permit, until such time as he could leave without imperiling the assembly... We would be more than happy and deeply grateful if it were possible to arrange some way whereby Hascle would remain in Ecuador indefinitely, for we know that he loves the friends there very much, and that they truly appreciate his loving, spiritual qualities.³

In addition they related that Hascle had informed his family of his great sufferings and that they knew the details long before the Committee was notified, and that,

If we had known what Hascle was really going through, we would have sent one of the pioneers to him and tried to bring him home before. Hascle writes us that he feels quite well now, but still has to be careful not to expose himself to the sun. We earnestly hope that the feeling 'quite well' is really true. They stated that they did not wish to take him away nor wish for the health of anyone to be seriously impaired through Bahá'í service when this is avoidable. However, six days later it was necessary for his dear friend,

the secretary to write to the Committee regarding the worsening condition of his health. Hans reported on April 16, 1947:

*I am sorry to say that Hascle's health is not the best. He has some disease of the skin which requires time and patience to cure. He is attended by a specialist who says that he is too weak to travel for another couple of months. He really feels weak and I am rather worried about him. His actual constitution is all a consequence of the serious illness he had in his arm. Inasmuch as the doctor's advice coincides with the instructions from the Committee Hascle has decided to stay on for another two months.*⁴

He also informed the Committee that there had been two more enrollments the previous night and that "the Election seems to be assured."

If Only Johnny Were Here

On April 21, 1947 the historic moment arrived and the following cable was sent to the Inter-America Committee:

ELECTED QUITO ASSEMBLY SUNDAY NIGHT WONDERFUL ACHIEVEMENT COMBINED
PRAYERS JOYFUL GREETINGS TO COMMITTEE AND BELOVED GUARDIAN

HANS DORY SECRETARY

In view of the intensity of their seven year struggle to keep the flame of the Cause aglow in Quito, brought here in 1940 by John Stearns; the sacrifices and humiliations which they had to endure; the flame abating to a spark for nearly a two year period when there was only one active believer; and after having to witness ravishing illness overtake two of their beloved pioneers, this inestimable victory of attaining to Assembly status overwhelmed this little band of Bahá'u'lláh's followers. Hascle Cornbleth who was ill but present at this momentous event recalls:

*I was present at the establishing of the Bahá'í Assembly of Quito a few years after Johnny's death. The assembly was formed in April, 1947 in the Centro Bahá'í at Calle Sodiño No. 133, a half block up the cobblestone street from the Alameda. There I witnessed the tears of the men who formed that Assembly when someone said, "If only Johnny were here." and the answer came, "I think he is."*⁵

The privileged nine who held the primacy of being elected members of the first Bahá'í Assembly of Quito were:

Hascle Cornbleth, Chairman
Hans Levy, Vicechairman
Hans Dory, Secretary
Rosario Vera B.
Luis Alcivar Z.

Eithel Santos, Recording Secretary
Eloy Moran, Treasurer
Nelson Sanchez, Librarian
Jose Elias Cedeño

Of the sixteen members in the community, ten took part in the election.

The Inter-America Committee wrote that they:

... were deeply thrilled by the wonderful telegram that you sent us regarding the formation of Ecuador's second assembly located in Quito. Our most loving good wishes and congratulations are hereby sent to all the beloved friends in that community. Because of John Stearns' sacrifice and the many tests and trials that have been met and overcome by the Quito friends, that community should have an especial spiritual power and strength.

In June 1947, Ecuador lost its second resident pioneer, Hascle Cornbleth because of his health. It was a very sad day for the many friends he had made in the country. He had spurred on the Quito group to Assembly status, reactivated the radio programs in both Quito and Guayaquil, had met the President of the Republic along with Gayle Woolson and introduced the Bahá'í Faith to him and had visited various localities of the Republic to proclaim the Cause. Hascle, writing of his experiences as a Bahá'í pioneer in Ecuador in an article entitled: "Ilusiones", reminisces about cities he visited and taught in:

I left Quito by plane one day to bid the friends in Guayaquil good-bye. An interesting evening was spent there with the pangs that go with the parting of friends. The plane next day was bound directly for Cali (Colombia). However, a change was made and the plane stopped in Quito for repairs. We were grounded for the night. There was no place at the airport to check my baggage. You can imagine the surprise of Flora Hottes (a travel teacher from the United States visiting in Ecuador) when I arrived at the pension with my bags.⁶

In another article entitled "Sidewalk Cafe", he sadly remembers the friends in Guayaquil reliving a happy evening there:

We talked till about midnight, said our good-nights to Else and walked Judith home. Then we walked Colette home, talking all the while. Then we walked Bolivar (Plaza) home. Bolivar was interested in conversation so we walked back the length of the 9th of October Street to the Malecon on the waterfront. Someone started singing. We sang all the way to Hazel's hotel. Hazel wanted a cup of coffee, so we stopped at a table on the street and talked. Then we walked to the rotunda again and watched the boats and moon and the rippling waters as we spoke of Haig Kevorkian and Virginia Orbison, and sang. We took Hazel to her hotel and serenaded her... Pepe bade us good-night after asking for some literature. It was four o'clock. We sang as the boys walked me to my hotel... They waited until I had climbed the three flights to my little room and appeared on the balcony above them to wave goodnight. I looked longingly after them as they went singing down the street. They stopped a block away to wave again. I was annoyed at being separated from them....

That was yesterday. Tonight I sit in the patio of the home of relatives high in the hills overlooking the lights of Hollywood fanning out as far as the eye can see. I am alone, separated, useless as an

amputated finger. The radio and television bring me no solace as I think of the friends... Like empty sterile pages in a book, devoid of the traces of the Word of The Author, my days go by slowly, blankly, by. Fruitless, each day a year adding its quota of white hairs to my beard as time recedes into the past. Dear God! How can I choose to pray until I can find again a chair at a sidewalk cafe, somewhere. Somewhere, where a friend can find me and we can read together the exquisite poetry of Bahá'u'lláh's prayer, "Create in me a pure heart O my Lord and renew a tranquil conscience within me!" But then His words came to my mind: "Be not grieved if thou performest it thyself alone. Let God be all-sufficient for thee. Commune intimately with His Spirit, and be thou of the thankful."7

Although Hascle was lonely and depressed, his humanitarian spirit could not be reconciled seeing others suffer. Therefore, he wrote to Shoghi Effendi asking for prayers for a dear sick Bahá'í brother in Los Angeles. On August 5, 1949 the Guardian's secretary answers on his behalf:

The troubles of this world pass, and what we have left is what we have made of our souls; so it is to this that we must look - to becoming more spiritual, drawing nearer to God, no matter what our human minds and bodies go through... He will also pray that you may find some relief from your rare illness, and a profession which will enable you to live a more normal life, and serve the Cause to your heart's content. Teaching individually is of great importance, and often enables you to confirm people, whereas public speaking, while it carries the message to more people, does not confirm very many. You can do both. He urges you not to become discouraged, but persevere with a happy heart.

(P.S. in the Guardian's handwriting)

Assuring you of my loving and fervent prayers for our dear and precious brother Mr. and for your own self that God may bless you both, dispel your cares and anxieties, and you to recover your health and render our beloved Faith notable services in the days to come.

Your true brother,

/S/ Shoghi

There is no doubt he was consoled knowing of the Guardian's prayers and concern for his health and well-being.

The Quito Community in rendering homage to his imperishable services stated that:

We will never forget his services to the Cause in this part of the world. No one knows better than we nor can appreciate the arduous and difficult task that was his. He came to a strange land hardly knowing the language and began to work with faith and determination; his spiritual gift inspired us all. A serious illness overtook him and indeed tested him, but not even this great physical suffering could cause him to waver, let alone deter him in his endeavours. He arose with faith and sincerity and nothing nor anyone could inhibit him nor cause him to deviate from

*his course. He knew that the Invisible Kingdom of Abha was protecting him... For Hascle Cornbleth our eternal gratitude.*⁸

The depth of Hascle's sadness, hopelessness and eagerness to see his Ecuadorian friends - to laugh with them and to pray with them, is mirrored and deeply felt as one reads his letters and articles. It is noted that regardless of being ill he taught his Faith in every country through which he passed, en route to the United States and in a number of localities in that country before arriving at his destination in California. Here, it seems, the spirit that moved him to pioneer never died. Some years later, in 1950, he evidently wrote of this to the Guardian because on October 4, 1950, he advised him through his secretary:

He feels that as you are improving in health it would be unwise for you to make the effort at present of going back to South America. There have been a number of pioneers sent forth recently and, although you could no doubt do much good there, the need is not so acute as to demand this sacrifice from you just as you are getting better.

No doubt the way will again open for you to follow your heart's desire and serve the Cause actively in a needed capacity in the future.

Meantime, he urges you to go on taking care of yourself and to do whatever lies within your power to serve locally.

(P.S. in the Guardian's handwriting)

May the Beloved guide and sustain you, remove all obstacles from your path, and enable you to promote effectively the best interests of His Faith.

Your true brother,

/S/ Shoghi

In spite of the fact that Quito was striving to build up its own community during these seven years to Assembly status, when circumstances permitted they carried the teaching to other areas, such as Quevedo, Santo Domingo de los Colorados, Ambato, Manta and Bahía de Caráquez. In this way the Faith began to be spread throughout the country.⁹

During the years of the Second World War and the post war period, there was a lack of available funds to carry out the far-reaching goals of the small Bahá'í communities of the world. The bulk of the financial and teaching responsibilities fell on the shoulders of the North American Bahá'í Community. For this reason, it was impossible to sustain pioneers in every republic. The Committee, in attempting to explain to the Quito Assembly why it was not feasible to send another pioneer to replace Hascle related "funds are contributed for the most part (voluntarily), through the very real sacrifices of only (a few) comparatively poor believers."

and that the available funds had to cover the expenses of Latin America teaching, of the European and North American Campaign, the Canadian teaching, as well as complete the interior decoration of the Bahá'í Temple in Wilmette. The Latin believers were not numerically strong enough to assume complete responsibility for the development of the Faith in their areas. Therefore, the Guardian placed his first emphasis on travel teaching.

The Quito Community became inactive again as soon as they lost their pioneer, Hascle Cornbleth. The contacts and isolated believers were left solitary and bewildered without any news of what was happening.

Then, Mr. Estéban Canales arrived in Quito on July 16, 1948 on a teaching mission. He found ten believers, all inactive. The Spiritual Assembly had not been elected that year and was not elected until October 22 when he had reactivated the Community. He found a new location for the Bahá'í Center and immediately began to give public talks and deepening classes. Through a friend of his, who was a newspaper reporter in Quito, at least ten different articles were written about the Faith, some very long, and quite accurate. Through the publicity in the newspapers, many people became interested in the Faith and as a result the attendance at the deepening classes increased and there were enrollments, two of which were newspaper reporters. Shortly thereafter, there was another period of inactivity. The Inter-America Committee, always concerned, sent Mrs. Marcia Steward Atwater in February 1949, who was later to become a Knight of Bahá'u'lláh. She was a renowned newspaper reporter and writer, and came to stimulate the believers of the country. She received extensive publicity for the Faith in Quito and Guayaquil. Immediately after her departure, the Community was happy to welcome the "loving, tactful and wise benefactress of the Faith", Mrs. Amelia (Millie) Collins.

Although there were a constant stream of visitors in 1949, because there was no resident pioneer/teacher, the community would become inactive after each visitor's departure. They did not understand Bahá'í Administration, nor administrative principles, and therefore, there were many conflicts as to how an assembly should function and the role each should play. Robert Miessler arrived in early 1950. He found that for five months there had been no meetings - not even Assembly meetings to accept new believers. An attempt was made but they were unsuccessful in getting a quorum. On March 6, 1950, he reported to the Bahá'í Teaching Committee of South America, CEBSA:

As I am coming to the end of my stay in Quito, leaving possibly the end of this week or sometime next week, I would like to give you a condensed report of Quito which I hope will serve until we meet again in Lima sometime before Congress.

As far as community action is concerned, things were really inactive here. However Roxana Gallegos and one or two others continued being

active Bahá'ís and largely thru the efforts of Roxana two new believers were attracted to the Cause, Sr. and Sra. Lagillardaie, a Frenchman and his Colombian wife. The assembly did get a quorum a couple weeks before I got here to accept these people. This was the first meeting in something like five months.

There was misunderstanding and immaturity which I believe sums up the causes of the difficulty. Because of this long period of inactivity, Roxana thought the assembly was automatically dissolved and felt that Regional was responsible for activities, especially since these two new people for quite some time wanted to come in but were unable to because of lack of quorum. Regional wrote to CEBSA (the National Teaching Committee for South America) to clarify this situation and CEBSA replied that Reg. (the Regional Committee) cannot interfere with an assembly, and then I don't think they knew what to do, except to ask for an instructor to get them out of the mess they were in. Hans Dory, Sec. of Ass., maintained that the assembly was not dissolved (sic) but in such a way that discussion or even meetings were impossible, less yet consultation. He also thought that Reg. should report to Ass. and in the Ass. meetings under reports of committees the Reg. was giving a report, included in the Ass. acts. (minutes). In all this, Hans Levy, Chairman of Ass., got discouraged and ceased to attend meetings.

We have started having Assembly meetings again, meeting on the average of once a week to catch up, which will be diminished to twice or a minimum (sic) of once a month as conditions warrant. Also a teaching committee has been named and weekly meetings for deepening of Bahá'ís or others already close to the Cause (two at present) with the idea of preparing themselves for more public teaching work. In the Ass. there is emphasis on learning how an assembly functions, or principally - CONSULTATION, so they will be able to continue under their own steam (I hope) without an instructor, and be able to handle any other problems as they come up.

They now realize the independent and complementary nature of the Ass. and RTC. and that there is no cause for friction between them...

The community is making a united effort to enable their delegate, Roxana Gallegas, to go to the Congress, which represents a real sacrifice on the part of most of them as money isn't too plentiful around here. I hope it will be possible for her to go as she and the community will benefit immeasurably and I think it will give the community more of a feeling of being tied in with the rest of the world and help overcome their feeling of isolation and need of a pioneer.¹⁰

CHAPTER VI

THE FATAL FIFTIES

As indicated earlier, there were many doubts on the part of the believers as to the functioning of the Quito Assembly especially in relation to the Regional Teaching Committee. Mr. Miessler was able to clarify this question and many other troublesome issues for the believers, as well as to reactivate the Assembly before his departure. A few months later on September 2, 1950 Señora Blanca de Campos from Panamá arrived for a six month visit. She soon had the community actively participating in firesides and deepening classes; constantly a stream of inquirers visited her in her hotel seeking more information. Nevertheless, one could very well coin this period as the "fatal fifties" with unprecedented problems which arose affecting the Faith and its believers in the country. Providentially, another visiting teacher arrived during the height of the crisis. As a result of his visit, he in turn would be the third resident pioneer to Ecuador. The young, warmhearted, kind and spiritual Lawrence (Larry) Kramer, arrived in Quito on January 17, 1951 from Costa Rica where he had been serving as a pioneer. Due to his experience in teaching in Latin American countries, his ability to speak Spanish fluently, and the fact that he had served on the Inter-America Committee, it was felt that he would be ideal to "heal the situation" which had arisen in the Quito Community, causing concern in other parts of the country.¹

A number of interested, professional people had accepted the Faith during the late 1940's and there were still two or three, reactivated by the new pioneer, who had accepted the Cause when it was first brought to Ecuador. For lack of constant guidance in those early days, the majority, if not all, had not fully grasped what it means to be a Bahá'í. Some, however, had been privileged to travel and meet Bahá'ís in other countries; then, there were others who had been enabled to spend more time with the traveling teachers and pioneers. Most of those who fell in these categories seemed to feel the thing to do was to impress upon the newer adherents that they had special understanding and were favored with a higher rank and therefore should be listened to and obeyed. The pioneers and teachers observed this and patiently tried to help them overcome such delusions through prayer and study of the Sacred Writings. Albeit, this attitude and other factors led to jealousy, hatred and recriminations which embroiled many within and outside of the Faith. There were accusations of adultery, embezzlement, prostitution and machinations to use the Faith for one's own advancement. The disharmony and hatred which had been engendered incited a member (or some members) of the community to retaliate by attempting to scandalize the Faith through the press. This was evidenced by corroboratory testimonies of those who heard a believer talking about the matter sometime before it was published, and by a confidential letter (dated January 11, 1951) written from one of the believers to another who later suffered legal charges. This letter, which the receiver gave to the Assembly, was warning him that: "... the

Faith is in danger of suffering a serious judicial calamity, due to some mess...." involving him. It was never revealed how a non-Bahá'í, who knew nothing of the Faith, received such inside gossip which caused him to file criminal charges against a new Bahá'í. He later withdrew the charges under oath after an investigation indicated that he had erred. However, as a result of the charges, the following article appeared in the daily papers El Sol (The Sun) on February 8, 1951 and Las Naciones (The Nations) on February 18 which caused much damage to the prestige of the Faith and the tranquility of the community:

THE OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS HAS DISCOVERED ANOTHER
MAGICIAN OR HIGH HINDU PRIEST

Another Creole deceiver, dedicated to fleecing the incautious, was discovered by the Office of Investigations of Pichincha.

The new example of magician answers to the name of Oswaldo Díaz and came, posing before his clients and admirers as an ambassador from India representing a new religion called Bajay (sic).

The program of the "sacred aspirations" of this Hindu ambassador consist of being kinder to others than to oneself. With the object of fulfilling his original hopes of sancitification, he sought sympathetic young ladies with sufficient economic resources, and to these he proposed marriage and offered them a honey-moon traveling around the world adorned with the honorable title of Bajaula (sic).

The Office of Investigations knew of the fabulous stories of this potentate through the denunciation made by Mr. Abraham A. Cabezas, who complained that a member of his family has been caught by this deceit.

In effect, Oswaldo Díaz took the girl referred to from her home and robbed her of a valuable pair of emerald earrings worth 3,000 sucres. The pair of earrings and also a wrist watch, the high Hindu priest pledged in a pawnshop, receiving for them the sum of 700 sucres. After a while, he took them out of this shop and pledged them in another one for 1,000 sucres.

Oswaldo Díaz has associated himself with Mrs. B. de Campos, who lives in the Savoy and has taken advantage of this situation in order to perform his exploits easily.²

The stunned Communities of Quito and Guyaquil, immediately upon reading the above publicity, notified the National Assembly and the Inter-America Committee seeking advice as to what steps must be taken to protect the name of the Faith. However, as soon as this article appeared, Sr. Díaz presented himself to the Tribunales de Justicia to refute the claim and clear his name. The Committee also wrote to the Quito Assembly to investigate the accusations made in this article against a member of the Quito Community. On February 15, 1951, Sr. Díaz was cleared of all charges by the court when the ex-wife of Sr. Cabezas appeared

and said that it was she who had given the jewels to Sr. Díaz to pawn and would herself reclaim them. She was in the home of one of the Bahá'ís when she took off the earrings and gave them to him to pawn. They had been friends but he severed the relationship after accepting the Bahá'í Faith and when he was informed that such a relationship was against the Bahá'í principles. The Spiritual Assembly of Quito chose the larger daily newspaper, *El Comercio*, to inform the public of the Bahá'í principles and to offset any misapprehension in the minds of those who read the article; the following explanation was published February 13, 1951.

CONCERNING AN ERRONEOUS ANNOUNCEMENT

In the Feb. 8th edition of the newspaper "El Sol", there appeared a calumny against Mr. Oswaldo Díaz and Mrs. Blanca de Campos and the Bahá'í Faith, because of which the Bahá'í Spiritual Assembly of Quito publishes this explanation to clear the matter in the public mind.

Sr. Díaz is a member of the Bahá'í World Faith and he is distinguished for his upright and honorable conduct and his high moral sense. Mrs. Blanca de Campos is a Bahá'í teacher in Quito, a lady of irreproachable conduct and greatly respected by society in general; for these reasons the charges made against these persons fail to have the slightest foundation of truth.

Finally, we wish to explain that the Bahá'í Faith is on a very high plane of morality and philosophy. It is well that the public should know what are its fundamental principles and its noble and humanitarian objectives, which it seeks to fulfill and also the profound, philosophic inspiration which animates it. We will enumerate only a few of these principles: the hope of universal education, aspiration to form a Universal Court of Justice, the Unity of Mankind and a lasting universal peace.³

During this emotional tumult, several of the believers became very ill including Sra. de Campos and the new pioneer, Larry, who had worked diligently to clear up the entanglement equably and "heal the wounds". The community again was alarmed and concerned about the seriousness of Larry's illness and the prospect of losing the third pioneer. On April 18, 1951, just two months after Larry's arrival, Hans Dory found it necessary to cable and write the Inter-America Committee regarding his condition:

After 24 hours of treatment in the hospital Larry was yesterday almost back to normal. He is still very weak, but can speak again and is gaining strength rapidly. He had been treated since last week by some doctor at the pension against amoebas and for some reason or other the remedy they gave him resulted worse than the illness. In fact the drug which he was given developed some sort of serious poisoning inside his body. On Monday he got worse and the friends at the pension found him in a semi-conscious state and unable to speak or recognize people. So the Bahá'ís decided to carry him to the hospital. His condition was positively dangerous on Monday and we were all quite

alarmed. This was the reason for my first cable....

Through sheer determination and an ardent desire to live, Larry was able to leave the hospital and proceed to Lima, Peru a few days later for the election of the first National Spiritual Assembly of South America accompanied by the delegate from Quito, Hans Levy.

He returned with a refreshed spirit and renewed vigor. He stopped over some days in Guayaquil with the hope of animating that community to greater activity. By December 1951, he was quite disheartened again by the periodic recurrence of inactivity in the Quito Community. The community seemed to be unable to recuperate from its earlier trauma and would lapse into its detrimental habit of diatribes against each other. Larry wrote to the committee that he felt very sad over the conditions in Ecuador and that first one member and then another asked to be placed on the inactive list. Yet it was obvious some mysterious power was stirring the community toward its destiny. One by one, the contacts began to accept the Faith even when they would have to wait for some months for the Assembly to meet to accept them! The Spiritual Assembly of Quito was also incorporated and officially registered with the government during this year. It is now obvious that these were growing pains and strenuous tests, so that the young sapling might weather future storms. How well it would weather the storms a decade later will be revealed in later chapters. There were always some who continued struggling for the progress of the Cause and their positive efforts proved to be stronger than the negative influences.

Regional Teaching Committees had been established in South America under the supervision of the Inter-America Committee in 1946. The purpose and aim for the formation of these committees was to prepare the believers, through interrelated service for the Cause, to carry on the administrative responsibilities which they were destined to assume in 1951, when the first two Regional National Spiritual Assemblies would be elected in Latin America. However, when these assemblies were elected, they were not too effective outside of the immediate country in which they were situated due to a lack of adequate funds and the expense and distance from one region to another.

The first South American Bahá'í Conference, "foreshadowing the future unity of the ten South American Republics in a single National Spiritual Assembly to be elected in April 1953," was called for by Shoghi Effendi, and it convened in Buenos Aires, Argentina in November 1946. Ecuador was represented by "the young doctor, Luis Guillermo Molina of Guayaquil, one of the brilliant scientific minds of his country." The generosity of the benevolent, Mrs. Millie Collins, Hand of the Cause of God, enabled Dr. Molina and several other representatives to attend the Conference who otherwise, due to insufficient funds, could not have attended. Unfortunately, Dr. Molina later left the Faith and entered politics - at the present writing, he is awaiting trial on

criminal charges in his native city.

In June 1947, the first believer of Ecuador was sent to Spain as a traveling teacher. He performed outstanding service there the short time he was permitted to stay. However, due to a government decree that all foreigners must pay an unusually high daily tax, he could remain only for a short time, and then he was sent to Venezuela to assist with the teaching work in that country, and later he went to Chile and helped with the work. The Guardian wrote him as follows:

July 4th 1948

... He very deeply appreciated, and highly valued the services you rendered our glorious Faith in Spain, and in Portugal. He was very sorry to hear you had had to leave Spain; however he knows that, wherever you are, you are constantly teaching and serving your fellow-men with devotion and love in the name of Bahá'u'lláh.

You may be sure he will continue to pray for you, that your labours may bear a rich harvest and your highest hopes be fulfilled.

With Bahá'í love,

/S/ R. Rabbani

(P.S. in the Guardian's handwriting)

May the Almighty abundantly reward you for your notable and historic services to the Faith, and graciously assist you to render still greater services in the days to come.

Your true and grateful brother,

/S/ Shoghi

Sep. 3rd 1947

... Your labours for God are most deeply valued and are surely being richly blessed by Him. It is a great blessing for you to be able to give the Message to your mother country, and you may be sure the Guardian will pray for your success and protection.

Please extend his loving greetings to all the believers, and urge them to serve wisely and devotedly Bahá'u'lláh's Cause. He will pray for them all.

*With warmest Bahá'í greetings
and love,*

/S/ R. Rabbani

(P.S. in the Guardian's handwriting)

Dear and valued co-worker:

I rejoice to hear of your magnificent initiative, your splendid labours, your exemplary devotion to our beloved Faith. I will supplicate Bahá'u'lláh on your behalf, and feel confident that your historic services will be richly blessed. You have truly set a noble example to your brethren in Latin America, and I wish to assure you of my great admiration and abiding gratitude.

Your true and grateful brother,

/S/ Shoghi

The first National Teaching Committee for South America was formed in June 1947 - it was known as CEBSA (Comité de Enseñanza Bahá'í de Sur America). The aim and purpose of this committee was somewhat parallel to that of the Regional Teaching Committee, transferring even more of the responsibility of the Inter-America Committee to South America as a further step in affording them the necessary training in the conduct of teaching projects and of stimulating a spirit of mutual fellowship and interaction among the believers.

Among the objectives outlined in the Guardian's second Seven Year Plan was the establishment of two National Spiritual Assemblies, in Central and South America. The date was later set for April 1951 and the Convention for the election of the first Regional National Body for South America was held in Lima, Peru.

In spite of the fact that it was often very difficult to get the believers to meet as a group and to perform the assigned tasks given by the Guardian, he never mentioned their frailties and shortcomings to anyone. He wrote letters of encouragement and often of camaraderie to them and continued assigning new responsibilities added on to the unfinished and often untouched ones. He never spoke of their incapacities or lack of ability; rather, he addressed the potentialities in the individual in such a unique way that one aspired to be what "the Guardian said I am."; and to attain the goals which "he just said I achieved." Cited here are a few examples of letters he wrote to these embryonic communities after the election of the first Regional National Spiritual Assembly of South America, which was indeed a milestone in the history of the Faith in these countries. On July 11, 1951, his secretary wrote to this new National Assembly on his behalf:

Your letter of May 7, as well as the report of your first Convention and the minutes of your Assembly meeting, was received, and our beloved Guardian has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

His heart was filled with joy upon hearing of the success of the first convention, and the sentiments expressed by your Assembly touched him deeply.

He feels sure these two new National Bahá'í Bodies will greatly enrich the Bahá'í World Community, and accomplish noble feats in the service of Bahá'u'lláh.

It is truly significant and inspiring to think that there are now four National Assemblies in the New World. It shows what vitality and promise these young nations have, and these characteristics will aid them in their Bahá'í service.

Your Assembly is called upon to direct and safe-guard the activities of our Faith in a truly vast and impressive area. But the very newness of the work, the room for spiritual conquest, the great need of the people, both aboriginal and European in origin, to hear of Bahá'u'lláh, is stimulating and challenging, and must call forth the best in every believer.

Now that you have the privilege of building from the very beginning a new National Institution he feels special attention should be devoted to laying a deep and permanent foundation. The basis of all successful work in this Faith is that true brotherhood and unity should prevail amongst the believers. To promote unity and love amongst the friends is your first duty.

Your second is undoubtedly the teaching work: to maintain and increase the existing assemblies, develop the groups into new assemblies, carry on extension teaching work, and bring the Cause before the public.

Next to this comes support of the National Fund: all the believers must be encouraged to give financial help to the work; the Guardian realizes the friends are for the most part not well to do, but they must realize that the act of giving, however modest the sum, is a sign of unity and brings blessings to the united work all are undertaking for Bahá'u'lláh.

The Guardian feels that special efforts must be made to enroll the primitive peoples of South America in the Cause. These souls, often so exploited and despised, deserve to hear of the Faith, and will become a great asset to it once their hearts are enlightened.

It is truly inspiring to think that in relatively so short a time the Bahá'í Community of the United States should have given birth to these two beautiful daughter-Assemblies in the southern part of the New World. He therefore, considers it wise and proper that for a few years your Assembly should keep in close touch with its "parent", who, like all parents, has had the benefit of long years of experience, and passed through many trials, and is therefore in a position to help you with advice and other support.

For the first time in Bahá'í history we see constellations of National Bodies, so to speak, cooperating for the good of the Faith: In Africa, England is working closely with the N.S.A's of Persia, Egypt, India and the United States. Upon the success of the close cooperation between your Assembly, that of Meso-America, and the United States during the

coming years will depend, to a great extent, not only the speed of achievement in the future, but also plans to be undertaken by the National Bodies of the New World.

*All your work will be watched by the Guardian with the keenest interest, and his loving prayers be offered for your success and guidance.*⁴

When copies of his heart-warming letters were shared with the believers, usually a flurry of activities would commence; unfortunately such activities would soon be abandoned by the majority of the believers until another stimulus attracted them.

After the formation of the first Regional National Assembly in South America, the first National Teaching Committee for the Indigenous was established for Ecuador with its seat in Quito. The seat of the Regional Teaching Committee for Ecuador for that year was also in Quito.

The goals assigned to Ecuador for 1951 - 1952 were:

*Increase the number of believers in Quito and Guayaquil.
Where there are 15 believers raise the number to 19.
Where there are less than 15 believers raise the number to 15.
Guayaquil was given the task of locating a Bahá'í Center.*

The Regional Teaching Committee, a few months after their appointment, reported to the National Assembly that it was practically impossible to have an Assembly meeting in Guayaquil or in Quito for lack of a quorum; that the activities of both communities were being carried out "unofficially" by a few believers. It was feared that if the Regional Committee had to wait for the Assemblies to meet, name their committees and discuss the goals, the extension work would suffer and the goals would not be accomplished. They desired to know if the Committee could begin the extension work of the Assemblies with whatever active believers available until such time as the Assemblies met and named their committees for the extension teaching work. Guayaquil did have a few meetings according to their minutes, and named its committees, which did not function. The annual report for 1951-52 of the National Teaching Committee noted that they had lost all contact with the Guayaquil Assembly, but that minutes showed that there was a flurry of activities from time to time during this period and that during one of their lulls in activity the capable pioneer to Bolivar, Miss Gwenne Sholtis, arrived in Guayaquil for a two-week visit. The secretary of the Assembly reported that up to that time, her activities were unequaled in that city. She received newspaper publicity and spoke over Radio "El Telegrafo" and inspired the community with ideas and practical suggestions. This was her second visit to Guayaquil. They also acquired a new Bahá'í Center but lost it due to lack of attendance and support of their Fund. There were some joyful moments however, such as the Bahá'í wedding of the North American pioneer Lawrence (Larry) Kramer to the devoted Ecuadorian believer Yolanda Moya

Tutiven of Guayaquil on October 19, 1952. Larry also spent as much time as possible in Guayaquil working with the believers.

They were also happy to have one of their believers, the secretary of the Assembly, Sr. Bolivar Plaza, as their representative to the convention in Buenos Aires to help elect the first Regional National Spiritual Assembly of South America. Señor Plaza was a great help to the pioneers and traveling teachers who came to Guayaquil, as well as for the National Assembly who depended upon him a great deal to assist the pioneers and teachers and to arrange their affairs. As the years passed, he too suffered the vicissitudes of the time.

He served as Assembly secretary from time to time over the years, as well as secretary of the Regional National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador for one year, and member of various committees. He became a Bahá'í in 1946 and is one of the oldest members of the Ecuadorian Community.

On July 12, 1951 the first Youth Committee was organized but there was only one youth between the age of 15 and 21 years old, Gualberto Chiriboga, of Quito; the members of this first historic Youth Committee in Ecuador were: Jorge Pérez R., Larry Kramer and Alfonso Peñaherrera, and there were no non-Bahá'í youth contacts.

In spite of the inactivity of a number of believers in both communities during this period, the optimism of the few active members in Quito soared when they were able to move into a new, lovely Bahá'í Center with "some beautiful chairs and sofas in it"; and they were also proud to have a delegate attend the First South American Convention in Lima that year. It may be recalled that the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, whose jurisdiction Latin America was under at the time, decided to call into being the two Regional National Assemblies of Central and South America in 1951 instead of waiting for 1953, the end of the Second Seven Year Plan as had been called for by the Guardian. He happily approved of their initiative. The purpose of the United States National Assembly establishing these Secondary Houses of Justice, "the highest legislative body in the administrative hierarchy of the Faith", at this time, was that they would be able to give greater support to the Ten-Year Crusade which would open in 1953; also, they would be able to give these newly born institutions more help in developing so that they would be better prepared to collaborate with their sister Assemblies in carrying "the Faith to the rest of the planet where it had not been established", as called for by Shoghi Effendi. This was the beginning of a new stage in the evolution of the administrative order in Latin America.⁵

It is thrilling to observe in some of Shoghi Effendi's letters how he guided and nurtured these embryonic communities step by step as a kind father or mother would guide a child. Through reports from the various Assemblies and committees, he well knew the status

of the Faith in these countries and the condition of the adherents of the Faith as well. Regardless of their condition it seems that it never dimmed his vision of success - he saw a glorious future even in present tribulations and woes, and directed the attention of his "master-builders" (the national representatives) to the day of triumph, conquest and victory for the Faith. One can feel the rhythm in his words when he wrote such happy commendable letters as the following after the establishment of these two new institutions:

July 12, 1951

Dearly Beloved Friends:-

The formation of the first National Spiritual Assemblies of the Bahá'ís of Central and South America - an event hailed by the entire Baha'í World - constitutes a landmark of the utmost significance not only in the history of the evolution of Latin America, but in the annals of the Formative Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation as well. It signifies the termination of the first Epoch in the rise and establishment of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in Central and South America - an Epoch that was ushered in, on the morrow of the revelation of the Tablets of the Divine Plan, through the pioneer services rendered by individual believers, among whom ranks as foremost that immortal and heroic soul Martha Root, and which culminated with the successful prosecution of two successive historic campaigns initiated by the North American Bahá'í Community in pursuance of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan.

This second and momentous Epoch in the unfoldment of the Faith, now being entered upon, is signalized by the emergence of two newly established, independent, firmly knit regional communities, embracing all the Republics of Central and South America, stretching from the borders of Mexico as far as the southern extremity of Chile, comprising no less than forty organized local assemblies, many of them already incorporated, every one of them animated by the spiritual verities of one common Faith, and all of them functioning in accordance with the principles of a vigorously operating, divinely-appointed administrative order.

This new phase in the development of an irresistibly advancing Faith presages, moreover, the formal association of these twin newly emerged communities with their parent community in the North American continent in the prosecution of the Plan, conceived by the Center of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant, among the Latin American races now awakening to the clarion call sounded by Him in His immortal Tablets. Though not enjoying the status and privileges conferred in that same Plan by 'Abdu'l-Bahá on the North American Bahá'í Community, yet, in view of the momentous and stirring summons issued by the Author of the Revelation in His Most Holy Book addressed to the Rulers of all the Republics of the Western Hemisphere, both of these communities may be said to have been invested with rights and duties which no community in any continent of the Eastern Hemisphere can claim to possess.

This association, which will be formally inaugurated with the termination of the Second Seven Year Plan, and which is destined to reveal its potentialities in the course of the unfoldment of the Formative Age of the Faith, and particularly as a consequence of the formation of separate National Spiritual assemblies in each of the Republics of Latin America, is a distinction which every adherent of the Faith, whether a native believer or a North American pioneer labouring in Central or South America, must constantly bear in mind. Its importance cannot be over estimated, nor can its full significance assessed at the present hour.

The consolidation of the existing assemblies; the multiplication of groups; the steady development of the process of Bahá'í incorporation; the expansion of the all-important task of translating, publishing and disseminating Bahá'í literature in Spanish and Portuguese; the consolidation of the recently inaugurated national and local Funds, the strengthening of such institutions as Bahá'í National Committees, Summer Schools, Conventions and Regional Teaching Conferences; the acceleration of the highly meritorious work already commenced amongst the Indians in both Central and South America; the progressive proclamation of the verities of the Faith to all sections of the population of Latin America; above all the triple task of constantly deepening the spiritual life of the individual believer, of enriching his understanding of the spiritual and administrative principles of his Faith, and of cementing the unity of each local community; - these stand out as the foremost responsibilities to be assumed during these two concluding years of the Second Seven Year Plan by the two newly formed National Spiritual Assemblies of Central and South America, in preparation for the launching of specially conceived, clearly defined plans, the initiation of which must mark the formal association of the Bahá'í communities of Latin America with the National Bahá'í communities in the United States and Canada for the furtherance of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's world-embracing, master Plan, now still in the embryonic stage of its development.

Afire with the vision now unfolding itself before their eyes; conscious of the sacred responsibility which, as implied in the ringing words recorded in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, they must increasingly shoulder; fortified by the contemplation of the manner and rapidity with which their beloved Faith has struck its roots into the soil of their homelands; confident that the same mysterious and unconquerable Power that has watched over the operation, and ensured the consummation of the specific Plans undertaken by various National Bahá'í Communities in recent years in both the East and the West will, as they prepare to launch their own collective enterprises in the years immediately ahead, vouchsafe to them Its sustaining grace and unfailing guidance, the members of these newly emerged communities and, above all, their recently elected national representatives, must display, during this period of transition, a spirit of dedication a tenacity of purpose, a willingness for self-sacrifice, that will surpass anything as yet exhibited in their past history, which will at once excite the envy and admiration of their older, sister communities in all the continents of the globe. and enable them to acquire the spiritual potentialities that will assist them to take their honored place in the ranks of those same communities, which, in various regions of the world, are collectively and energetically

carrying out their own national campaigns in the service and for the glory of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.

That they may prove themselves worthy of the mission with which they will soon be formally invested; that they may never allow anything to interfere with the successful conclusion of this present preparatory phase of their historic task; that they may, through the quality of their devotion, and the solidarity of their achievements, rejoice the souls of the Concourse on High, and above all, the Spirits of the Holy Báb, of Bahá'u'lláh, and of His beloved Son 'Abdu'l-Bahá; that they may contribute their share, as independent pillars, in sustaining the House, whose erection must mark the culmination of the establishment of the Administrative Order of their Faith, is the dearest wish of my heart, my constant hope and my ardent prayer.

Your true brother,

/S/ Shoghi

Participation in Regional Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations held in Quito

A very important achievement of the Ecuadorian Bahá'í Community in 1952, was their participation for the first time in the Sixth Latin American Regional Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations held in Quito from April 5 - 12, 1952. Larry Kramer, Roxana Gallegos and Hernan Pasquel were the delegates who represented the National Spiritual Assembly of South America. The representatives reported to that body that:

The Bahá'í delegates took relatively little part in the plenary sessions, but they naturally had far greater opportunities to make constructive contributions during the meetings of the working committees; and the resolutions which they presented and which were approved during the final plenary session were all presented during meetings of the working committees... with only one or two exceptions, none of the other delegates had apparently heard of the word 'Bahá'í' and, as a result, they were curious to know what it meant and what was the nature and purpose of the organization represented by the Bahá'í delegates. This, naturally gave the Bahá'í delegates a perfect opportunity to explain the purpose of the Bahá'í World Community, and these explanations, in turn, produced various requests for Bahá'í literature, which was provided immediately. Several of the delegates (the majority of whom were from Ecuador) were apparently very well impressed with the basic principles of the Faith, and a few have shown interest in really investigating the Cause... On the other hand, a very important accomplishment has been to increase the prestige of the Cause, inasmuch as the delegates to this Conference now know that it is not a tiny group which has its meetings in Quito, but rather an international community which exists in more than 100 countries...."⁶ This report was forwarded to the Guardian by the National Spiritual Assembly.

Looking retrospectively and considering the circumstances of the time, one marvels at the spiritual stamina of the handful of devoted followers who refused to allow the flame of the Cause to die out in this country. The Regional Teaching Committee learned that there were isolated believers in several localities where the believers from Quito and Guayaquil had transferred over the years, primarily for the reason of work. There were isolated believers and/or contacts in Ambato, Azoques, the province of Cañar, Conocoto, Ibarra, Manta, Machala, Naranjal, Otavalo, Quinindé, Santo Domingo, Sangolquí and Bahía de Caráquez where a believer had had no contact with the Bahá'ís in four years and he was very happy when the Committee contacted him. Also the city of Quevado, where John Stearns visited the week after arriving in Guayaquil, Señor Arcenio Lopez was the first believer of Quevado. This was in the early 1950's and nearly 30 years later a pioneer from Iran came and went to serve in Bahía de Caraquez where she met Señor Eithel Santos, who became a Bahá'í in Quito and served on the local Assembly there during the 1940's. He was evidently too shy to tell her he was a Bahá'í having been isolated so many years but he would often inquire from her about the progress of "her work" - he knew she was a Bahá'í. She did not know he was a Bahá'í until after he had passed away and she had left the area.⁷

Some of the old believers who survived the many struggles during the early days and are still active are:

Señores Emilio Minervina and Alberto Carbo, Hernan Pasquel, Luis Arguella, Bolivar Plaza, Señora Roxana Gallegos and Señor Luis Martinez. Sr. Minervina said he was very Catholic before accepting the Bahá'í Faith during the early 1940's, his friend Les Gonzalez introduced him to the Faith but he really did not understand it until he spoke with Mrs. Mary Barton who was aboard a ship passing through Guayaquil. She was able to talk with him in his native tongue, Italian. Then he was anxious to know more and went to Quito to meet John Stearns. He said he spent three days with John in his Kandy Kitchen and what impressed him most and moved him was John's character. He was the first to actually accept the Faith in Guayaquil and he is proud that he had the first Bahá'í wedding in that city. He was wedded to the lovely Señorita Carmen Lanuta in 1956.

Alberto Carbo accepted the Faith on April 20, 1950. He has served here in innumerable capacities including as member of the National Assembly, as homefront pioneer, travel teacher and served on various committees both national and local. He also has been an ardent supporter of radio often paying the bill himself for a spot on radio to talk about the Faith and he has been a constant contributor of articles on the Faith for newspaper publicity.

Sr. Martinez accepted the Bahá'í Faith in 1946. He is not only characterized by his excellence as secretary of the Guayaquil

Assembly for so many years, but for his staunchness during some of the darkest days of the Faith in his city and country.

Unfortunately Señora Gallegos has been completely incapacitated for sometime and it is impossible to interview her - prior to her physical disabilities the writer was disabled and was only able to talk with her briefly. However, the records reveal that she was a very devoted Bahá'í since the 1940's and also suffered many tests especially during the early 1950's in Quito. She was a member of the Quito Assembly for a number of years and was its secretary. She resigned from Bahá'í activity during the scandal in Quito since some of the participants involved her but she returned and continued to be a pillar of the Cause in the community.

All of these old believers deserve the highest commendation especially these outstanding men from Guayaquil who had been long time friends of the first believer of Ecuador, Eduardo (Les) Gonzalez, who was also their Bahá'í teacher, for having sufficient faith and the courage to separate themselves from him when he was declared a Covenant-breaker. It is not easy to separate oneself from someone who has been a childhood friend, companion, co-disciple, and teacher - some fell away but these weathered the storm!

CHAPTER VII

LAUNCHING OF WORLD SPIRITUAL TEN-YEAR CRUSADE - The Role of Ecuador

The launching of the World Spiritual Crusade constituted a new chapter in the evolution of the Bahá'í Faith in the Republics of South America.¹ Although the Faith had embarked on one of the greatest undertakings since its inception there were many obstacles to overcome, especially in inexperienced communities like Ecuador.

On April 20, 1953, five members of the Guayaquil Community met for the election of the local Assembly. Some ballots were received through the mail but only one was valid, making a total of six valid ballots. The believers present assumed that nine persons must be present or at least there must be nine valid ballots before an Assembly could be elected. Even after the sixth person arrived later in the evening, they did not change their minds and preceded to declare themselves a group and elected their officers. When the National Assembly, whose site was in Lima, Perú at the time, learned of this it was greatly concerned to lose one of its two pillars in Ecuador on the eve of the launching of the 10-Year Crusade and in view of the fact that the Guardian had urged all National Spiritual Assemblies not to lose any of their "hard-earned victories".¹

Just prior to this in March the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States cabled that the Guardian desired Ecuador to be represented at the Intercontinental Conference to be held in Chicago. Ecuador was one of the countries especially invited by the Guardian to send a representative to this conference. Unfortunately, not one of the native believers from Quito or Guayaquil was financially able to attend the conference and there were no funds available to assist them. Therefore, Larry Kramer, the third pioneer to this country, volunteered to go so Ecuador would be represented by someone. After the conference, due to circumstances beyond his control he was unable to return to Ecuador - and again they lost one of its devoted pioneers at a very critical period of the development of the Faith all over the world.²

On May 23, 1953, the Hand of the Cause of God, Mr. Valiollah Vargha, arrived in Guayaquil accompanied by Miss Eve Nicklin, a pioneer and the spiritual mother of Perú. The National Assembly expressed its hope that his visit would stimulate the friends in both communities to activity. This was the first visit of a Hand of the Cause of God to this country. He was well received in both cities. One of the old believers who was present in a meeting in Guayaquil said he was very sad that they had lost their Assembly. There is a copy of a letter however in the Archives from the National Spiritual Assembly to Mr. Bolivar Plaza, dated May 25, 1953, who was the secretary of the Guayaquil Assembly, expressing their regret that the Assembly had not met since election, which indicates that there was an Assembly for 1953. Available records of the period do not indicate when the National Assembly or the Regional Teaching Committee informed Guayaquil that they did have a genuine Assembly and was not a group as they had thought. Learning of this unfortunately did not stimulate the community to action and later in the year they did not function at all. Nor did

the visit of the Hand of the Cause leave the visible result desired in these two cities. Mr. Vargha wrote a kindly letter of appreciation to the few believers in Quito he had met on July 12, 1953 and a similar letter to the believers in Guayaquil before leaving the Western Hemisphere;

Within a day or two I shall be leaving America for the Stockholm Conference and I cannot go without sending my farewell greetings to my dear friends in Quito.

The happy time that I spent with you I shall always remember and I beg you to accept my grateful thanks for your wonderful hospitality and assistance to me. I cannot adequately express my thanks for all your kindness.

With warm wishes for your success in the service of our beloved Bahá'u'lláh.³

In devoted service to His Threshold,

/S/ Valiollah Vargha

On May 27, 1953, the monthly activity record for the Quito Community sent to the National Assembly indicated that all of the old Bahá'ís were inactive, and the "inclination" of the majority of the believers, active and inactive, was: Materialist, Rosicrucian, Evangelist, Jehovah's Witness, Occultism or Political. This report naturally caused the Assembly even more consternation because they so desperately needed active dedicated communities to achieve the goals of the Ten-Year Plan assigned to this country.⁴

Shoghi Effendi never seemed to become discouraged after receiving such adverse reports. His letters always focussed the attention of the believers to a brighter future. It appears that he had his fingers on the pulse of the world for he was well informed of the conditions in connection with the Faith in every land and he responded according to the need of the time. On June 30, 1952 his secretary wrote to the National Assembly of South America on his behalf:

He fully appreciates the fact that the believers are still somewhat attached to the different cults from which they have come; this is a problem which always faces the Faith in a new region; it existed a long time in America, and seems part of the growth of the Cause. He feels your assembly can afford to be patient with the friends, while at the same time educating them into a deeper understanding of the Cause. As, their awareness of the true significance of Bahá'u'lláh grows, they will become weaned from the old ideas and give full allegiance to His teachings.

It is obvious that Shoghi Effendi wished to instill into the mind of the National Assembly these salient points which he had called to the attention of the older national bodies. The letter continues:

The Latin American communities are still on the threshold of their international Bahá'í life; he feels sure that they will rapidly grow into it. Compared with the length of time it took the North American, the British, and the French communities to grow up and spread, their growth is like lightning. As the Cause spreads all over the world its rate of acceleration increases too, and new centers in Africa, in some mysterious way, have spiritual repercussions which aid in forming new centers everywhere.

And in a letter written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of Central America on this same date, June 30, 1952, the Guardian continued on this same theme:

You must always bear in mind the genuine difference between the peoples of the south and the peoples of the north; to use the same techniques as those adopted in the United States would be disastrous because the mentality and background of life are quite different. Much as the friends need administration, it must be brought to them in a palatable form. Otherwise they will not be able to assimilate it and instead of consolidating the work you will find some of the believers become estranged from it.

Whenever you feel at all discouraged you should remember how many years it took for the administration to get as well established as it is at present in North America. Problems repeat themselves, and in the earlier stages in the U.S.A. the body of the believers was very loosely knit together, many of the friends were, as they now are in Latin America, affiliated with various more or less progressive cults (from) which they had come to the Faith and from which they could not be suddenly cut off; they had to be weaned and educated; the same thing you must now do. He urges you therefore to be very patient with the believers and, through loving consultation and education, gradually insist that the old allegiances must give way to the great and all-satisfying bond they have now found with Bahá'u'lláh and His Faith.

Shoghi Effendi goes on to point out the need for qualified, committed teachers for the work; his secretary continued on his behalf:

Mature teachers are the greatest need of the Faith everywhere, and no doubt in your area too. One wise and dedicated soul can so often give life to an inactive community, bring in new people and inspire them to greater sacrifice. He hopes that whatever else you are able to do during the coming months, you will be able to keep in circulation a few really good Bahá'í teachers.

South America progressed so rapidly that three years later on November 10, 1955, the Guardian's secretary wrote to the National Spiritual Assembly of South America on his behalf:

The Guardian feels that the instructions issued concerning membership in the Masonic Lodges in the British Isles and the United States must likewise apply to membership in Freemasonry in South America. He has in mind of course his previous letter, in which he indicated that the

National Assembly should have patience with Baha'is who have been Masons, Rosicrucians, Theosophists and other religious and spiritualistic movements and they should be gradually weaned away from these former attachments.

The Guardian now feels that the friends must gradually give up these previous beliefs, and become firm and vigorous Baha'is, endeavoring to establish and spread the Teachings of Baha'u'llah. He therefore feels that your Assembly should take this matter in hand, to see that the friends gradually give up their attachment to their previous beliefs, including membership in the Masonic Lodges.

As a result of the unfavorable reports of community inactivity both in Quito and Guayaquil, the National Assembly decided to send an itinerant pioneer-teacher to Ecuador to help strengthen the communities and to work with them toward attaining their goals. They sent Mrs. Gayle Woolson who was well known and loved in both communities. She found that there were only two Assemblies in the country and neither was functioning properly - it was her responsibility to reanimate and reactivate them. This was the beginning of the Ten-Year Crusade and the goals for an embryonic community like Ecuador were indeed challenging. They were:

1. To establish a National Spiritual Assembly by 1963,
2. To incorporate the National Spiritual Assembly,
3. To open the virgin territory of the Galapagos Islands,
4. To consolidate the Faith in Ecuador,
5. Duplicate the number of local Spiritual Assemblies,
6. Duplicate the number of incorporated Assemblies,
7. Establish a National Haziratu'l-Quds in Capital city of Quito,
8. To establish endowments.

ECUADOR'S VIRGIN TERRITORY - THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

...he feels there is no service in the entire Bahá'í World as important as their pioneering work in the virgin areas. They have achieved a great station of service....⁵

On June 11, 1953 the Guardian's secretary wrote to the National Spiritual Assembly of South America on his behalf, explaining that it was urgent that the new virgin areas be opened and that pioneers who had volunteered for such posts be sent as soon as possible. He also asked the Assembly to assist and to stimulate the pioneers. Among the virgin goals assigned to South America were the Galapagos Islands of Ecuador. Three believers offered to pioneer in the islands: Haig Kevorkian, Francis Steward and Gayle Woolson. Haig was offered the post the year before by the National Assembly and he accepted. He ran into obstacle after obstacle trying to settle in the Galapagos by the prescribed date and the National Assembly did all they possibly could to facilitate his arrival on time but to no avail. The Guardian initially asked that the pioneers be in their posts by October 16, 1953 (the end of the Holy Year commemorating the hundredth anniversary of the mystic revelation of Bahá'u'lláh's Mission received in the Siyáh-Chál, the subterranean dungeon of Tihrán), but that was not possible in some cases.

The National Assembly of the United States decided, based on information received from their investigation of the Islands, it was too primitive and not a place for a woman to pioneer, especially a single woman. Therefore, they did not accept the offer of Francis Steward (who later became a Covenant-breaker) because of the difficulty of the post. Later it was learned that Gayle Woolson had written to the Hand of the Cause of God, Mrs. Dorothy Baker, confiding in Mrs. Baker about her desire to settle in the Galapagos and asked for advice. On September 11, 1953, the Western Hemisphere Teaching Committee was informed of her request and responded with the following letter:

...This committee feels that you could both settle this post and continue the consolidation work in Quito, by establishing your residence in the Galapagos and by spending some time in Quito on your way to and/or from N.S.A. meetings. We are sure you could do this and, if you agree, will recommend this arrangement to both N.S.A.'s.

You probably realize that this is a difficult post. We have been doing some research on the Islands which indicate that not only are the living conditions rugged, but also that they may be dangerous. On the other hand, it would appear extremely difficult for most people to obtain permission to go there and we believe that you could.

We know that you want to enter the vanguard of soldiers called for by our beloved Guardian.

However, we want to warn you of our findings and are enclosing a brief digest of them.

*We suggest that you go there with the intention of settling, subject to the approval of the N.S.A.; and that, if you find it impossible to stay there, you make a survey of the Galapagos sending us your suggestions as to how this goal can be won.*⁶

Evidently the Committee had not consulted with the National Assembly regarding Gayle's offer and received their opinion, for on September 26, 1953, the National Assembly of South America received the following cable from the National Assembly of the United States:

WOOLSON IMPOSSIBLE GALAPAGOS REASONS ALREADY DISCUSSED....

Then on October 21, Haig wrote to the National Assembly of South America asking if they were still saving the post of the Galapagos for him. They assured him that it was waiting for him and they felt sure he was the ideal person for this post. In the meantime the Guardian extended the time for the pioneers to get to their post to Ridván 1954. Time passed and it appeared Haig would not make it before Ridván because even after arriving in Ecuador he would have a lot of red tape to go through in order to travel to the Archipelago de Colon, the Galapagos. Being aware of this and the lateness of the hour, the National Assembly cabled the National Assembly of the United States on February 22, 1954:

SETTLEMENT GALAPAGOS NOT CERTAIN BY RIDVAN WELCOME ASSISTANCE....

The National Assembly of South America also investigated the conditions of the Archipelago and learned among other things that it was not a suitable place for a woman without a family to attempt to live; there were no hotels or boarding houses - women and girls alone were often raped; that one island was a penal colony and not a fit place for ladies. Having received such information, it was determined that it was not suitable for Francis or Gayle to go there alone, besides, permission would not be granted by the Ecuadorian Government for a woman to go alone. But when it appeared that Haig would not be able to make it before Ridván the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States gave Gayle permission to go with the understanding that she must have a woman companion. She could only find a non-Bahá'í friend to accompany her for a short period of time, Mrs. Rebecca Kaufman, who promised and then changed her mind about going due to some obstacles.

Gayle's problems continued - in Quito she made arrangements to take a boat from Guayaquil to the Islands. So she arrived in Guayaquil early to finalize the arrangements for the trip and had quite a shock when she was told that she could not sail on the boat contracted for her by a Sr. Muñoz because it was a military boat and she had been given a permit to sail on a commercial boat. Sr. Muñoz kindly wired the Commander in Quito for special permission for Mrs. Kaufman and Gayle to sail on the military boat with this

permit but it was not granted. (Gayle obviously felt that Mrs. Kaufman's problems would soon be resolved in time for her to accompany her). Then Gayle was informed that a commercial boat was scheduled to leave the end of the month. She reported to the Assembly:

I explained to him that I would gladly go on his commercial boat but that I could not wait until the end of the month... I went to see the head commander in Guayaquil, who is under the commander in Quito, and he kindly sent a wire, recommending a special permit for my sailing on the military boat. He suggested that I go back to Quito and make personal efforts too, and as I didn't want to take any chance of being denied again, I took the Plane...and went to Quito to the Ministry. I saw the Commander and the permit was given for both Rebecca and myself. It has all worked out wonderfully and this is the only boat on which I could have gone in order to get to the Galapagos in time. There is not supposed to be any other boat sailing until the end of April. If the earth had shifted on its axis, I don't think I would have been more shocked than when I was told I couldn't sail on that boat. Everything seemed so hopeless as both the head commander and the Minister in Quito had denied my going and it was truly miraculous the way everything worked out in the end. When Sr. Muñoz wired me telling me of the sailing of the boat he did not tell me that the boat he had contracted was a military boat nor did he know that I would need a special permit, besides the regular one to go on a military boat. Another miracle was that the boat was supposed to leave last Friday, then it had to be delayed until Monday and due to this I had the opportunity to continue my efforts ... The Hand of God was seen in the whole arrangement but for a time I had lost all hope of going on that boat and even talked to an aviator to get prices for a special trip in his little plane (but it turned out to be a little too dangerous and expensive).⁷

Before Gayle left Quito to go to Guayaquil to check on the boat for the Galapagos she telephoned Rebecca; Gayle said:

I called Rebecca Kaufman...to ask her to try to accompany me as she had decided ...that she could not go due to some obstacles she had but said she would go in the next boat and could not go with me at this time. But when I had to go back to Quito to the Ministry I saw her and she told me she thought I had already sailed and that she found that now she could accompany me. We left Quito the next day together and here we are, both with permits to travel on the military boat. We felt that the reason for my going back to Quito was so that she would accompany me. It would not look quite right for a woman to be travelling to the Galapagos alone and she probably would not be able to gain the confidence of the people so readily...⁸

They left Guayaquil on April 5, 1954 and arrived on April 9 and notified the National Assembly of South America. On April 10, 1954 the following cable was sent to Shoghi Effendi:

SHOGHI EFFENDI RABBANI
HAIFA ISRAEL

GAYLE WOOLSON ARRIVED GALAPAGOS APRIL NINTH.

BAHAI LIMA

The Guardian replied on April 12, 1954:

ASSURE WOOLSON LOVING PRAYERS

SHOGHI

Gayle Woolson's perseverance gained her the revered crown of a Knight of Bahá'u'lláh.

There were about 200 people on the island of Santa Cruz where she chose to reside, most of them were living on haciendas in the mountains. Gayle and Rebecca found a place on the coast where there were about 25 or 30 houses. Gayle spent most of her time there making friends and looking for a place in which Haig Kevorkian could live upon his arrival. She reported to the Assembly that there were no stores or pharmacies on the island, but one could buy rice, sugar, beans and flour. There was one nurse, a first aid station, a doctor and a dentist who visited the island on occasions.

The international situation between Perú and Ecuador was so delicate at the time that the Galapagos were considered to be in a strategic military position. Fearing that they would be thought of as spies, the National Spiritual Assembly in Lima would not send cables nor letters to Gayle directly nor could she correspond with them directly. However, on June 21, 1954 Gayle notified the National Assembly of her present whereabouts and the status of the islands:

My stay in the Galapagos was exactly two months and I am very grateful for having had the experience of going there. Life is so different there that it seems like being in another world. Haik arrived on May 29th and Rebecca Kaufman and I were there nine days with him before we came back to the mainland. The three of us held the Nineteen Day Feast of "Light" together, on June 5th, although Rebecca is not yet a Bahá'í. I was happy to have been able to give seven people of the island the Message, most of whom are now studying our literature. The seventh of these was a resident of the island who traveled on the same boat with us on the way back. He has "Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era" which I loaned him and when he returns to the island in about three months, Haik can carry on from there. I will let him know about it. We connected Haik with all of our contacts and friends, and he moved into our little one-room house after we left. I feel that he will be very successful there. When he went to the Galapagos, he had as a cabin mate a young man who lives in Santa Cruz. They became very good friends and he is also studying the teachings now.

Rebecca and I returned on the same military boat that we went on. Its arrival to the islands was unexpected and we requested permission to go on it as I felt I should get back as soon as possible and not wait for the commercial boat that travels in July... I feel out of touch with all the news and can't know what the plans are for my work (Gayle was a member of the National Spiritual Assembly and was named to the first Auxiliary Board while she was on the islands).⁹

Knight of Bahá'u'lláh Haig (Haik) Kevorkian

SHOGHI EFFENDI RABBANI
HAIFAISRAEL

June 21, 1954

HAIK KEVORKIAN ARRIVED HIS TERRITORY RELIEVING GAYLE WOOLSON.

BAHAI LIMA

He replied:

BAHAI LIMA

ASSURE KEVORKIAN PRAYERS SHOGHI

Haig (also known as Haik) Kevorkian was present in Guayaquil as an itinerant pioneer-teacher in 1945 when the first local Assembly of that city was formed. He returned in 1954 to fill the virgin goal of the Galapagos. The Guardian had given Ecuador the responsibility to open these islands during his Ten-Year Crusade. Haig was very lonely at his post as he so often mentioned in his frequent letters, and he has portrayed vividly what life was like for an isolated pioneer. I will quote from a number of his letters which were written to the National Spiritual Assembly of South America and the New Territories Teaching Committee, which were individualized for him by the incomparable secretary of both the Assembly and the Committee, Dorothy Campbell. These letters begin with his efforts to arrive at his post and the difficulties he encountered trying to do so, and no doubt they will reflect a glimmer of what the "valiant Knights of Bahá'u'lláh" suffered *"amidst the remote, lonely, inhospitable islands of the archipelagos of the ... pacific...."*, thereby acquiring a greater appreciation and insight of why these pioneers were deemed worthy by the Guardian of being designated and crowned with such noble titles as: *Bahá'í Warriors, Knights, Valiant Knights, Bahá'u'lláh's Crusaders, Knights of Bahá'u'lláh, Spiritual Conquerors of the Planet, and Knights of the Lord of Hosts!*

In September 1953, the Assembly wrote to Haig to ask him if he was still interested in filling the post in the Galapagos Islands and if so, they urgently needed him to be there by October 16, because the Guardian desired all virgin posts to be filled by the end of the Holy Year. The following day another letter was sent informing him that the Guardian had extended the time until the Ridván period of April, 1954. He cabled that he could leave Buenos Aires in January. On November 3, the Assembly sent another confirmation to him that the post was being held for him with instructions as to what steps he must take to facilitate getting permission to enter the islands.

There was a lot of correspondence back and forth and somehow there arose a misunderstanding regarding means of transportation and funds so he postponed his trip until the third week of February. The Assembly wrote and informed him that the persons who opened these goals must carry sufficient funds to sustain themselves until

they found work. On December 26, 1953 Haig wrote to the New Territories Committee and explained that when he met with the National Assembly earlier in the year in Buenos Aires, he made it very clear his financial situation and that he would need assistance for his trip and for one month after his arrival. Little did he or the Assembly know that there was no work to be found on these primitive islands. He said that he was sorry that there had been such misunderstanding and cancelled his offer to fill the post since there was a lot of Bahá'í work there he could do. On January 9, 1954 the Assembly answered his letter clarifying their position, apologized for the misunderstanding and let him know that they were confident he was the person to fill this important goal.

Perhaps it is noteworthy that the Hand of the Cause of God, Mrs. Dorothy Baker, played an indirect role in the settlement of the two pioneers in the Galapagos. In a letter sometime later Haig wrote of his great love and admiration for her and how difficult it was for him to fathom her tragic death. That after meditating about it he came to the conclusion that he must arise and go teach and found himself willing to go to the Galapagos in spite of the previous misunderstanding. So on February 1, he wrote to the Assembly that due to the gross misunderstanding he had resisted making the trip to fill the goal, but after the sad death of "our dear Dorothy Baker", he was moved to the realization that teaching and increasing the number of believers was the most important thing and "if it is not too late I am disposed to make the trip...."

More obstacles arose for him to tackle but finally a cable arrived stating the date of his arrival in Guayaquil. The cable of course went to the National Assembly of South America in Lima, and there was no one to receive him in Guayaquil when he arrived on April 7, 1954. After finding a "pensión", he went and found one of the believers, who received him but was quite distant and cold. He had hopes of finding his old Bahá'í friends.

Haig was delayed in Guayaquil for over a month waiting for permission to go to the Galapagos and for transportation. However he was not idle during this time - he made every effort to re-activate the community after he found the members, and he tried to get them to meet and elect their Assembly on April 21, without success and unfortunately the Assembly was lost for the year 1954. He discovered that the majority of the believers were inactive due to the influence of the first believer of Ecuador who still resided there. Some of the believers related that they did not wish to be associated with anything he was associated with. The available records do not reveal what Sr. Gonzalez did or said that caused this reaction and it was some years later before he was pronounced a Covenant-breaker.

After going to see the Port Captain nearly every day seeking a permit to enter the Galapagos without any results, Haig decided to go to Quito and ask for an interview with the Minister of Defense.

His trip was successful - he received his permit, but when he returned to Guayaquil, he learned that the permit arrived the day he left for Quito and that the lawyer he hired had been lying to him. He found that a boat was leaving the next day for the Galapagos and he had to make a frantic scramble to prepare himself to leave on it. He had hoped to travel on the Ecuadorian battleship, but it was not leaving until the end of the month and he feared to postpone the trip further; therefore he bought a ticket on the boat "Don Lucho". It was old and in such bad condition, the Ecuadorians refused to travel on it! Haig gave a description of the boat to Dorothy (Dorothy Campbell was the National Assembly of South America's secretary and also secretary of the New Territories Committee. She was a North American pioneer who was renowned for her outstanding services for the Faith for many years in Latin America. Haig's letters to the Committee or to the Assembly were usually addressed to "Dear Dorothy"): ¹⁰

I saw already the ship, it is not a ship but rather a boat and a very old one and everything stinks, believe me, but I am happy to because I know that there are worst (sic) cases. So dear Dorothy this is a farewell and hope to see you again and you can't imagine how much I have to thank you for all your dear coloboration (sic) and your kindness that I can never forget always will remember you because there is a link between us that can never be forgotten. And also tell to the friends of Lima that I am sending my love to all of them and another spot is occupied by a guy that tries to be a Baha'i....

Guayaquil, May 24, 1954

Dearest Dorothy:

Perhaps you will be surprised to receive this letter from Guayaquil. I myself am surprised also. I had written to you that I was going to sail on Friday, 21st of May, at 6 o'clock P.M. so I went to the port with all my bagages (sic) and they told me that "sorry, Don Lucho is not leaving today but tomorrow at six o'clock sure." that means on Saturday. So I have to turn back to my place. Next day I go to the port at five and they tell me that the boat is going to leave at eight instead of six, so I had to wait on the deck for two hours or more at last I was in, but they told me that they can't serve anything because it was too late so I had to pass without food that night, even they didn't a sandwich or a cup of coffee. We sailed all night against the wind and storm and Sunday at ten o'clock the ship stopped for reparation and we were for four hours in the middle of the Ocean, which it was impossible to continue so this morning at eight o'clock we were back again in Guayaquil and I came again to the boarding house where I used to live. Everybody tells me not to go because its bad luck already but they don't know what is my really desire is. I hope to sail tomorrow and when I get there I'll find the way to let you know. I don't know Dorothy why we have to pass so many trials and troubles, the boat that I am traveling (sic) with, doesn't have refrigirator (sic) or sweet water only from 7 to half past seven to wash our faces and from

eleven to half past eleven there is only one toilette for all the passengers but doesn't have running water I tried to enter in but it was impossible to enter because of the stinking smell and dirt and let us not talk about the food. But thank God I'm taking (it) easy and making fun always, otherwise don't know how I'm going to feel. When I get there I will write you again. Bolivar Plaza gave me the books and let me tell you he was extremely nice to me and many times he invited to me to his house but (I) had to go to Quito....

Although Haig arrived in the islands on May 29, 1954 he did not write to Dorothy until June 7, announcing his arrival on the island of Santa Cruz and after receiving his letter the Assembly cabled the Guardian. Once there, Haig kept up a regular correspondence with the New Territories Teaching Committee and from his letters we catch a glimpse of his living conditions and at times feel his anguish and his heartrending experiences in his descriptive reports - in his letter of June 7, 1954 he continued:

Life down here is very primitive... When somebody is here (they) can really appreciate what it means to have an electric light, or to have a bathroom, even a small shop on the corner street of your house where you can buy small things that you need - you miss them all, but with all this you can understand better the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who had to suffer for a life time and understand better His Sacrifices.

If you have any old magazine you can send them to me because they may be very handy down here.

Unemployment and lack of food were among the tests Haig had to face. The very little food he was able to obtain was often shared with guests whom he invited, or who called unexpectedly.

Santa Cruz, June 18, 1954

Dearest Dorothy:

To-day I'm writing you for the first time after Gayle left for Quito. Now I may say that I'm getting along very well by myself and doing contacts with the people and already gave the Message to four people but its going very slow because some of them are on the hills and they are coming once in a week, but I'm sure that there are possibilities to form a nice group. Here you have to learn everything, how to cook, to wash and go to the hills to cut lumber for fire and for cooking and also to learn how to keep small things and many times it doesn't work out, because I had two pieces of onions left and wasn't using them just keeping for a special ocasion and when I had a guest and wanted to use the onion it was all spoiled, it meant something for me that day. Last Saturday there was very little meat and could buy only ten pounds for all week, but, when you come home and start to clean, at least you have to throw away two pounds or more because its filled with sand and flies and all clases of dirt. and later two friends came down and told me that they couldn't (get) meat, so I have invited them for dinner on Sunday and Monday, Tuesday (Tuesday) and Wednesday I had always one or two unexpected guests so I had to share the very little I had. Didn't know what to do for to-day even I didn't have bananas because the person who

promised to bring them didn't show up the only thing I had some powdered milk, cafe (coffee) and rice and oil I have some soup but I'm keeping (it) for emergency cases. but something marvelous happened yesterday two people came down from the hills and brought me papayas, agua cate (avocados), bananas, lemon, and when I went to buy bread I was talking with a person and all of sudden he asked me if I like goat meat I said yes. So he gave me a big piece of leg almost a courter (quarter) so for today I had everything on my table with a prayer of thanks giving to Baha'u'llah because it was quite an experience for me. Here you don't have any place to buy things, just you have to order once a week and many times you don't receive them and also the season has been very dry and (they) may say that they have nothing to sell, only bananas, papayas, but all this is worthed (worth it?), because you come to know better and understand the strigle (struggle?) of life and soul.

For today dear Dorothy its enough I guess and don't know when the next boat is coming but mean time I'll write you from time to time and wish you the best of all with my special love to you all always.

Haik

Dorothy's regular letters as secretary of the National Assembly and of the New Territories Teaching Committee were a great source of encouragement to the solitary pioneer. On June 26, 1954 during one of his loneliest periods she wrote to him:

I am sending you some "Time" Magazines which I have on hand and will send you others from time to time as I can. Your life and work there will not be easy, Haik, but it will have its great compensations, not the least of which is to know that you have filled the heart of the Guardian with great joy and that the Hosts of the Supreme Concource will surround you constantly and give you a power that you've never had before. Our sacrifices always bring us great rewards and one of them...is to come to a deeper realization of the sufferings Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá underwent. You will have great confirmations there, Haik, and we shall be praying constantly for you and for your teaching work.

Haig had written about the lack of morals among the people of the island; he was greatly disappointed and his sensitive soul was quite discouraged. Dorothy answered him on behalf of the Committee;

We knew that moral conditions on the islands were very bad but your comparison to walking on muddy ground and finding stones to keep you away from the filth is very good, and you are so right. No matter how bad conditions are there is always some hope and you have done wonderfully to find seven people to whom you can talk about the Faith in such a God-forsaken spot. Of course, you get lonely but don't ever feel abandoned by your friends because we all think of you constantly and you are in our prayers every day.

Santa Cruz, June 20, 1954

I hope within 15 days you will receive this letter because until one month more there will be no boat coming to this island and from now on only one boat every two months. So you can understand the difficulty but always

happens something good. The reason I'm writing you is this, I'm short of food and also of cash but this time..I'll fix the account when I get to B.A (Buenos Aires). Because there no possibility to find a job either on the hills or on the shore if you find one they pay you 80 cents of dollar not in cash whey they sell their fish in Guayaquil which means you have to wait around four months and many times they don't get paid, that's why everybody owes money to each other.

Santa Cruz, July 4, 1954

...As time pass by I'm forming better idea about the island; in the first place the moral isn't good and hard to trust people, everybody owes money to each other and no body pays. The fishers that work to (for) the only company that is in San Cristobal, they receive only papers to buy food from their own stores, and the local fishers... they start to work I mean to fish on October until the end of March.

You have to wait until April or May in order they may go to Guayaquil and sell the fish and bring the money and when they return they have already spended the money and most of people have to wait for another season. Upon the hills where there are some farmer people (they) can't afford to have workers only sometimes once or twice a week they hire some one. Let me tell you something that may form an idea about people down here. Some farmers and fishers they trusted their coffee and fish to a person in order to sell them in Guayaquil. So he did, but when he returned he had no money to pay because he had bought a motor for his boat and promised them to pay at the end of the fishing season which makes about the end of April of 1955.

Moral life is too low also as there are many young men around the only thing that they do is to get drunk and chase somebody's else wife. that's why you see a woman has several children from diferent fathers, and it is something very normal. Let us not speak about backbitting and that stuff. But with all that there (are) possibilities....

July 12, 1954

...If I only had a job to make a living I would have gone to Buenos Aires and get marry and bring her to the island which will be easier for the contacts with familias. When you are alone there are always some handicaps.

...Life is very monotonous and primitive and there is shortage of everything. You buy meat once a week and only thing you have for cooking some yuca (yucca) and (?), "they both stinks" and rice and some oil and garlic, that's why I roast some meat and for three days at lunch I have a sandwich and at night coffe and bread and some bananas and same thing for the breakfast plus some papayas. But this doesn't bother me at all, the same way other amusements just like goint to movies or to theatre but be sure I miss some good music... there are no cigarettes on the island that's something you miss here because it's a sort of friend who accompanies you in your loneliness. Sometimes I feel myself very lonely and sad also because most of the time its raining ... and its quite cold specially at night but all of a sudden I find an opportunity to give the Message and I kneel down and pray saying "thank God it was worthed

(worth it)." and you feel yourself happy and gay, and go to bed with a praise in your heart and wait the dawn for another day. No wonder why Los Incas used to adore the Sun.

On August 16, 1954 he felt that he should give the National Assembly and the Committee some advice which would help future pioneers to the islands.

Let me tell (you) about the situation of this island, not for my sake but only for the person that will come after me and he may not suffer the same disappointments that I'm passing through (passing through), in the first place don't ever dare to send a "she" pioneer to this island if married couple is O.K. and the pioneer that has to come must have some knowledge of English.

Let nobody even dream that when he comes to this island he will be able to find some kind of work, because there is none unless he comes with a strong capital to start a new business and even then I wouldn't advise anybody to do it because he won't get anything out of his money, will lose it just the way that many people lost it.

By September 1954 Haig felt that he had more or less become accustomed to the island and stated in one of his letters that if the 200 people on the island of Santa Cruz could stand that sort of life, so could he. He assured the Committee that he would be willing to stay after the following April, and if possible, he would try and bring his fiancée to his pioneering post after marrying her in Buenos Aires. He was now teaching English in a school to 15 students twice a week. His Bahá'í spirit and way of life must have impressed the people for he writes on September 21:

With great joy and happiness I received your two letters dated July 11, and August 3, including the copies of messages from the Hands of the Cause and also William B. Sears' notes of pilgrimage to Haifa. I really can't explain you what I felt, I read it over and over again, it didn't make me laugh, but made me cry and also gave me some sort of joy with a better vision of understanding what is really our duties and responsibilities as pioneers. It came to me at a moment when I was yearning for some sort of spiritual food to nourish my soul and you can't imagine how grateful I am to you all for remembering me and the only thing I can say May God Bless you All....

...I am the only foreigner that has come to the island and been friendly with the natives; for that reason they are very nice to me in every respect.....

Unexpectedly, two days later troubles surged for Haig as well as for the Faith, which would persist for some time. In Santa Cruz where Haig was living, there were no priests and no churches, just a "wooden hut with a few fabricated saints." When the priest came from another island to baptize four children after Haig's arrival, he was alarmed to find this person there teaching a new religion, and he decided to see to it that Haig be told to leave the Island. He warned the people to "beware (of) these people

because they have some truth with some poison in it which is enough to kill your souls for ever." In his letter of September 23, Haig continues:

...Also I received an indirect message from him (the priest) that better I return to Buenos Aires, because the priest was mad at me perhaps he may do me some harm. I told to the fellow who brought me (the) message, "go and tell to your priest that I am not going but staying, because nobody is going to run me out from this island... So dear Dorothy don't ever think that there is danger of any kind and besides I am not looking for trouble here, but if they come to start it I have to know how to react I mean with Bahá'í dignity... they can't do me anything with the Help of Baha'u'llah, ... and after I read what (that) Our Beloved Guardian wants us (to) stay we will stay.

The opposition that the priest started caused some of the inhabitants of the island to become more inquisitive about Haig's religion. Some went to his hut and spent hours discussing the Faith. A few days later Haig wrote that he had no fear at all and that he knew that a special force was taking care of him and he felt protected. He thanked the friends for their prayers. The attacks of the priest however did not stop. On October 22, Haig reported what was happening:

...Last week the bishop of San Cristobal came to Santa Cruz with another priest, and to come down here they had to hire a boat and during three days he was ringing the bell in order (that the) people may go and listen (to) him but he didn't have much success so he was very mad and went to the port captain telling him that if the people will not show up this evening in the church they have to pay ten sucres as fine, so everybody went including the port captain because the priests down here they have some military grade as captain or majors (majors) and he told to them that there are some suspicios (sic) pastors going around in these islands, and not to pay them any attention because they have a funny religion...but the most funny part of the story, one morning with the company of the other priest he came to see me and we met on the way and started to talk, but he was so stupid in his statements that two marinos (marines) were listening (to) us and they started to laugh because he couldn't answer me, so the bishop told me "come let us talk in privacy" and so we did, and after two hours of long argument and discussion he had to give up and listen to me for a long time and believe me I can't deny the Help of Baha'u'llah and at the end I gave him some pamphlets and also El Gran Anuncio, and the bishop told me "I'm afraid you will make a Baha'i (out of me) (just trying to make a joke), and I answered him back saying that you will not be the first bishop to become a Baha'i because before you there has been some others.

First Bahá'í of the Galapagos, Part 1

The power of the Message of Bahá'u'lláh and Haig's loving and perseverant spirit seemed to have been effective. Four people were very interested in the Faith, one of which stated he wished to become a Bahá'í. The opposition of the priests, however,

frightened this young Norwegian man and he never accepted the Faith, and it was the island school teacher, a native Ecuadorian, Señor Moyses Mosquera Zevallos (recently deceased) who on January 8, 1955 was the first to accept the Bahá'í Faith in the Galapagos. The Galapagos Islands were now opened to the Faith and Señor Mosquera was destined to suffer dearly for taking this step for sometime to come.

On November 21, Haig writes that he would like to return to Buenos Aires to visit with his fiancée, for a short time and have a talk to my girl, and tell her everything and how it is and if she doesn't want to come I'll return alone, because I know it is not an easy spot and my life doesn't mean much to me, whenever I look back to (on) my life, the years that I have worked for the Cause gives me happiness and (I) really feel that I have lived... so no matter what happens I'm at your service,...

On Christmas Eve he writes again:

... Lately many things have happened, and almost I was going to leave the island but I think every thing is O.K. now at least by (for the) time being. About three weeks the port Captain called me to his office, telling me that he had received a cable from the governor that I have to leave the island, because I have come only to visit the island and my permit is over and (I) have to take the first boat to go to Guayaquil. I knew more or less from where it was coming, ... because the bishop went to Quito at the same time that he was there the governor was there too, and when he returned he just send me that cable in order (that) I may leave the island...

Until now I was never been molested by anyone, but lately there is a character (sic) better say an outlaw who is living here and still stealing now and then other peoples houses at night and nobody is doing anything about (it) and with all that he is good friend of priests, he started to molest me that (saying) I'm Peruvian spy and many other things, he did the same a month ago, I just didn't pay any attention (sic) but day before yesterday I was passing by a store, they were drinking there, I entered in and again he started to question me and in a way menacing me that if the authorities are protecting the undesirable (sic) peoples on this island we have to do something about (it). But this time I got mad, and told him what I have to tell him with same language that he understands and at night I went to the Port Captain and told him... he told me please forgive them that they are ignorant people and don't know what they are saying etc.etc.

So dear Dorothy, I'm going to stay until the end of March and at that time I have to go to the main land or perhaps to Quito in order to ask for a permanent visa as (colono ?) but I have to get out from the islands and like very much to see you and talk over many things that I can't explain by letter...

I don't want to tell you how is the island in this week the only thing I can tell you almost everybody is drunk, of course with some exceptions, but it was pitiful to see people just drinking over four five days and just looking for trouble, and most of them they can't effort (afford)

drinking practically are naked and the place where they sleep if you put a dog there to sleep he will feel insulted, so many times I'm so disappointed I just don't know what to do or can't see any possibility to whom I have to give the message, I know that all needs very badly but nobody is willing to listen you...

If I would have written you this letter two or three days ago it was not going to sound like this because I passed those days very angry and very sad but to-day I'm again O.K. but little homesick that's all but not very serious one, but many times I miss a Baha'i conversation a heart to heart talk and I miss that Baha'i atmosphere where you have the feeling that you are among friends and people really love each other.

On the 28th of December, Gayle Woolson, who was residing temporarily in Quito, wrote to the National Assembly regarding a plot against Haig which she had heard about:

I learned through a friend who recently came from the Galapagos that the Monseñor (something like a Bishop) of the Galapagos had arranged with the Ministry of Defense to have Haik taken off the Islands. But just at the time when he was supposed to come back on the next boat, I obtained authorization for a temporary extension on his visa in the Departamento de Extranjería and took the letter of authorization directly to Ministry of Defense to have the authorization radioed to the Governor... The man I talked to there told me that there were orders for Haik to be brought back on the next boat, but the authorization of the Extranjería superseded the other orders. At the time I didn't know what was behind all this, but learned later from this friend who had just come from San Cristobal that it was the doings of the Monseñor... .

Again on January 17, 1955, Gayle wrote to the Assembly:

So much has been happening that I don't know where to begin. Haik arrived in Quito this morning to get the necessary papers to get back on the Islands. He was asked to leave the Islands by the Governor of Galapagos on the grounds that his visa had expired. The authorization which I got for him either was not radioed, on purpose, by the office in the Ministry of Defense where I took the authorization or else the governor purposely denied that he had it. Haik spoke to him in San Cristobal and he said that he didn't receive the authorization. This afternoon we're going to the Ministry of Defense to check on this and take steps for his re-entry into the islands. The monseñor is, of course, behind all this... He had to sell all of his belongings and mine in order to get enough money to get back. They only gave him two days' notice and the Governor was hostile towards him at first, but when he showed him papers that he had and talked to him he seemed to change his attitude and apologized for hurrying him off the islands; and he was a person that used to attend Bahá'í meetings about 10 years ago in Guayaquil when Haik and Virginia Orgison were there, and Haik reminded him of this, after he himself had recalled it.

Haig returned to Guayaquil to see if there was a boat leaving soon for the islands. His visa was only good until April

which meant that he could stay there for two more months. Since there was no boat going to the islands immediately, he decided to return to Buenos Aires to arrange his personal affairs and get a resident visa for Ecuador; he applied for it while he was in Quito. Haig did not receive the visa in Buenos Aires as he thought he would and had to return to Quito where he received a visa for one year! His fiancée was not ready to come to the Islands with him. He wrote to the Committee saying: *In my case the Cause comes first, so I made up my mind to go for another year.* He desired to return to the islands as early as possible but it was a very difficult trip for him:

The trip was awful, it started before I left, because over four days I used to pack thinking that the boat is going to sail, I get there and they tell me 'going to-morrow', so at the end we sailed on the 27th of April, and instead of sailing at 6 o'clock P.M., it sailed at half past ten....

May 16, 1955 - We sailed with 130 passengers on board and the boat has space for 18 people most, and I was one of the lucky ones that had a place to sleep, one couple allowed me to share their cabin with them, but the rest were worst than the cattles because most of them were sleeping on the open deck, and every now and then the high waves used (to) cover their bodies, but the worst part that there was no water for all and they had to mix sea water with fresh water in order may have sufficient to drink only, and everything used to stink because there was one toilet for all, and the next day it was filled with papers and dirt that no-body could go in, even the people of the island, so it was customary to see women and children with their night pot sitting in front of every body, just ignoring the presence of others, like a big and happy family. If something happened to the boat which might happen at any time, there was no security to any one because they had two life-boats which each one could carry only 15 persons.

On June 18, 1955 Haig wrote that he was in trouble again with the priest who attacked him in public that day:

To-day I had my second hot discussion with the priest of the island though I always tried to avoid it, and this time started in public because the port captain gave some news that there has been some troubles in Argentina, so the priest was furious and started to insult Argentina and etc....and there I told him he has no right to insult a nation as far as they are majority and the minority has to obey to their government, and things like that, that he was speechless and had no argument to offer and all of sudden he told to me that I'm a Baha'i and I don't believe in Christ that had no relation with our talk and there where our argument started and I told him in very polite way what we think and meantime told him that ... if really he is seeking the truth let him try to be just with himself and also with God. Because now we have a new port captain and he asked me some Baha'i literature ...and finally I found one New Era which I had given to some one before I left, he is studying and at the same time the Priest also, but the only think he is trying to find out to twist the truth and argue with me I mean the priest, but the port captain is very polite but even that I don't trust him.

So dear Dorthy I'm living in a very unfriendly atmosphere and if you add all the troubles I have to face honestly it doesn't make a very desirable place to live and I remember in Nabil's (The Dawn-Breakers) the saying of Vahid. "Through whichever village I pass, and fail to inhale from its inhabitants the fragrance of belief, its food and its drink are both distasteful to me." the water we drink is already salty and the food is quite bad and the inhabitants are quite far to understand the Faith. You can judge the rest.

I'm writing this because at any moment they can create a trouble and careful always to be ready for every event, and until I hear from you I will stay here because don't ever think that I am yellow and that's why I like to go back, because of my material situation which I have no chance to make a living here that's all.

At this moment how I would have liked to have someone to talk with I mean to some one that you can trust a heart to heart Baha'i conversation, and sometimes Baha'is are not aware when they live places where there are assemblies or groups, because it is a real blessing to live among Baha'is no matter how they are.

The moment that I'm writing this letter it is Saturday night and every thing is still out side and dark also and believe me many nights I can't sleep and stay awake just thinking how to find a way to introduce the Faith to this people and still can't find the formula.

I think it is enough for to-day honestly I needed some one at this moment to talk with and I believe what Abdul'Baha said about a letter that it is a half conversation, but I don't want to bore you with my personal troubles (troubles) because I know that you have lots of your own too.

For a long period of time Haig's physical, mental and spiritual sufferings were so intense and his pathetic letters to the National Assembly Secretary so profoundly heartrending, that she suggested to him that he write to and share his experiences and tribulations with his beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi. Lamentably, copies of his letters to the Guardian and of the Guardian's replies are not available to the writer. Mrs. Campbell often sent copies of the Guardian's letters to him when they arrived at the National Bahá'í Center, so he would feel the love from the World Centre of his Faith and would not lose his feeling of oneness with his fellow-Bahá'ís. He certainly evinced fortitude under such troublesome circumstances. He tells how the island was when he returned from his short visit to Buenos Aires:

...I'm a little disapointed, first with the work, because I was so sure that I was going to make a living, and on my return I found out that it is impossible, second there is nobody who may be interested by the Faith, and that's the worst part.

On the first of May (I) arrived here but I found the island worst than ever everything was dried up, you can't find any green stuff to eat no fruits only Bananas, no potatoes and no eggs, and worst than all no light

and not only here but also in San Cristobal... and this is going on over 20 days, what a place!

The National Assembly of South America and the New Territories Teaching Committee were deeply concerned about Haig and the attacks from the priest. On June 12, 1955, Mrs. Pattie Beane, Secretary pro tempore for the Committee answered one of his letters on their behalf:

We were greatly distressed and concerned with the difficulties you are having on the island and pray that soon all the obstacles will be removed, and that through the power of Bahá'u'lláh you will soon find some receptive souls to teach. We know how starved the soul can feel when one cannot speak of the Faith to others and hope that things will be better for you. We realize that your post is a very difficult one and that it took great courage to accept it and we are confident that the noble sacrifices you are making will be richly blessed by our Beloved Bahá'u'lláh. We take this opportunity to quote to you an excerpt from a letter of our dear Guardian to a pioneer who was also facing great difficulties:

"I would urge you to persevere in your efforts and do not feel discouraged if they do not yield any immediate results. The Bahá'í teacher must be all confidence. Therein lies his strength and the secret of his success. Though single-handed and no matter how great the apathy of the people around you may be, you should have faith that the hosts of the Kingdom of God are on your side and that through their help you are bound to overcome the forces of darkness that are facing the Cause of God. Persevere, be happy and confident, therefore."

Haig continued to lament over the fact that things had not changed for the better on the island while he was away and he repeats that:

My coming back to the island was as bad as my trip, I found everything dried up and most of the people have gone back to the mainland...Speaking of going back I'm really disappointed, because I came back with the hope that I will be able to make some living and the one that comes after me can continue it, but now all my calculations is frustrated and believe me I don't want to live on the expenses of the Committee... for (the) coming three months you can't find a green stuff on the island, or even potatoes or eggs, which makes living more expensive, because we have to use canned stuff and believe me that is very expensive because most of them they import from the states (United States) plus the high duties and high profits.

...I can't see any possibility for this time, last time I had some hope because there was some interested people for the Cause, now they have gone and those whom left doesn't interest them at all, including the foreigners and the people are worst than ever, the day that I arrived to San Cristobal some ten young men had invaded the house of a woman whose husband was out of the island and they had abused her among all (of them), and on my arrival to Santa Cruz a man of 45 years old whose name is.... (and he is really bad) was lying in jail over four days because

he had kidnapped a girl of 13 years old, all these things when you bring them together and many other things that happens every day makes you feel sick in stomach.

I'll wait until I hear from you and if someone is coming (i.e. coming to replace him) I will wait for him too, and if nobody is coming I will stay as long as you want me to stay, believe me if I could see some further possibilities I don't mind the difficulties which you meet on every moment, for instance on my arrival the house was filled with rats and cockroaches and centipies and when you are out it is hard to open your eyes because of small mosquitos that goes right to your eyes and burns you like fire, the water pump that I was relying on it is broken too, so everything is against me...."

...Now I understand how much my father must have suffered of being isolated believer in his town for more than twenty years .

On August 12, 1955 in an obvious effort to bolster his spirits he confided:

... still I'm not disapointed yet, and I think I'll never be, no matter who hard the circumstances are, the result will be better, if even I don't see the result, one day the stones and the trees of the island will witness, of the coming of the Glory of Baha'U'llah, because they heard many times if not always thepraises and the prayers, the name of Ya Baha Ul Abha all over the island, wherever I could reach, that the Glorious name of Baha'U'llah was mentioned in this lonely and forgotten part of the world, that's why I believe that one day the hearts of the people will be more receptive and vision will be more cleared to see the Truth which is the only salvation of this crazy world.

Might not these soothing words written by the Guardian himself in a postscript to a letter dated June 2, 1955 to the National Spiritual Assembly of South America, have cheered his downcast heart at this time?

The eyes of the world are now upon those who bear the Bahá'í name. Its redoubtable foes fondly cherish the foolish hope of a decline in its fortunes and of its ultimate extinction. Our oppressed brethren cry out in their distress to the more privileged among their co-workers to arise and compensate for the loss they have sustained.

Now is the time to display, in a never to-be-forgotten way, those sterling qualities that will unmistakably proclaim, to foes and sceptics alike, the incorruptible grandeur of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh and demonstrate the enduring verities on which it has been founded, and the creative, the regenerating and irresistible power which has brought it into being, which has sustained it to the present day, and which will, no doubt, continue to impel it forward until its destiny has been fully consummated.

Your true brother,
/S/ Shoghi

In another moment of loneliness however, he laments:

...the only thing we have, it is raining like hell, and the people from the hills can't come down because the mud gets to their knees, so it is impossible for me also to go and visit...you see everything is against me, just stay and wait, wait until your guts make you sick, and wait until you learn how to wait...

In spite of all this and more Haig remained for almost two years as he promised and would have stayed longer if his visa had not expired and he had to legally leave the country. The hardship had also taken its toll on his physical self and he needed a rest - physically and mentally. Before leaving the island, he ruefully wrote:

Now that the time has come to my depart, I have a strange feeling that invites me to stay longer, I know that, I am not well here, don't have any confort or tranquility, and still more, I have three teeth to be fixed (though I fixed two before I left Guayaquil) which gives me a hell of time and plus some 'bichos' (amoebas) (I don't know how I got them) but still, I like to stay longer, believe me, it is strange a very strange feeling.

Haig returned to his home in Buenos Aires, Argentina in January 1956. His family came from Turkey but he was born in Syria on October 1, 1916 and came to Argentina as a youth with his family. He married his fiancée Miss Aurora de Eyto on October 19, 1957. His wife reported that he had colds continuously after returning from the islands, and on August 3, 1970 Haig passed away at the age of 54. The Universal House of Justice cabled:¹¹

SADDENED LEARN PASSING KNIGHT HAIG KEVORKIAN STOP SUGGEST
HOLD MEMORIAL MEETING HIS NAME STOP PRAYING DIVINE THRESHOLD
PROGRESS HIS SOUL.

The First Bahá'í of the Galapagos, Part 2

On the evening of March 8, 1955 on the island of Santa Cruz, the Bahá'í pioneer Haig Kevorkian and a young friend of his who was quite interested in the Faith, met to welcome Señor Moyses Mosquera Zevallos as the first believer of the Galapagos and accept his enrollment card. He was a school teacher from the mainland of Ecuador working on the island. To make sure that there would be a permanent record of this historical occasion a statement was signed by the three of them noting the purpose of the meeting. It was a joyous moment for Haig and for the time being made his efforts appear not to have been in vain; and besides, he knew the Guardian would be very happy that another one of his cherished goals of the Ten Year Crusade had been attained - the Archipelago de Colon, The Galapagos was opened to the Faith!¹²

On June 2, 1955, Shoghi Effendi appended a postscript to a letter written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of South America highly praising this accomplishment and others:

The work initiated throughout the virgin territories assigned, under the Ten-Year Plan, to your assembly has been successfully accomplished and is indeed highly meritorious in the sight of God....

In a personal interview with Señor Mosquera a few years before he passed away, he related the reason he accepted the Bahá'í Faith. He said that he really accepted it as a protest for what "they" were trying to do to that nice young man, Haig, and to see if they would try to do the same thing to him since he felt secure as an Ecuadorian. He confided that he really did not understand what the Bahá'í Faith was all about, but he felt that Haig should be free to practice his religion and he decided to help him. However, when he decided to help he did not believe that he would be attacked so viciously by the priest and lose his job as a teacher on the island. He proudly explained that he would not recant the Faith regardless of the pressure "they" put on him, and that he was happy he did not do so for he began to really study the Teachings to make sure of what he had embraced and while studying he became deeply confirmed in the truth of the Cause. In spite of being attacked and suffering the loss of his job, which also caused his wife to lose her job - she taught in the same school - when Moyses learned that Haig would be leaving the islands, he volunteered to return as a pioneer in his stead. He wrote to the National Assembly saying:

Perhaps you remember my name for I was the chosen one of God to be the first Bahá'í of that island where I spent nearly seven years in my profession. Learning that Sr. Haig Kevorkian is going to return to his country, being aware that it is very important that some member of the Faith be there, I hurried to replace our beloved pioneer...as a good Bahá'í. I am married and have two children.¹³

When Haig returned from Buenos Aires he was deeply upset to learn that the teacher who had accepted the Bahá'í Faith on the

island had been dismissed from his job and was forced to leave the Galapagos due to accusations made against him of immoral acts with some of his students in spite of the fact that the teaching space was such that his wife was constantly with him. In August 1955 Haig notified the National Spiritual Assembly that he had heard from Sr. Mosquera and sent them his address and suggested that they contact him. He had not answered his correspondence because he did not know if the charges against him were true or not and some of the islanders told him that Moyses had lost his job in Naranjal for the same reason that he was thrown off the island of Santa Cruz. Haig was sorry that he allowed this gossip to affect him and his relationship with his first spiritual son of the Galapagos. So he wrote to the Assembly, but now I found out that was another dirty lie that the people of this island can tell very easily without any fear or shame.

From this point on the National Assembly was frequently in contact with him and after receiving his offer to pioneer and replace Haig, they expressed their appreciation for offering his services and explained that they had accepted another volunteer before they received his offer.

It appears that Moyses Mosquera was destined to suffer from some violent tests in connection with the Faith over the years, and that the purpose of this suffering or these tests were to strengthen him for his future role in the Faith. For indeed he was one of the unsung heroes during the dark days of Covenant-breaking in this country when the National Administrative Body was formed; he was able to help the Assembly immensely as will be later related.

On June 12, 1957 the Regional Teaching Committee received a letter from Sr. Mosquera stating that the Parish Priest in Naranjal had begun a vicious attack against him and had convinced the director of studies of the province to dismiss him from his position as a teacher.

This is to advise you that the priest of this Parish has unleashed a campaign against this servant such as one might call "tigers...." I received orders to transfer to Olon in the Parish of Manglar Alto, some 250 kilometers from here near the border of the province. I obeyed the order but before leaving, shaking the dust of my feet, I committed myself to God and to our Bahá'u'lláh. My wife and I went to Guayaquil where we transferred to the Libertad (a launch)... When I was very involved in the most strenuous part of taking our cargo out of the launch, a man appeared who came to tell me not to remove the baggage from the launch for a large commission had arrived from Naranjal to request me to return there. The same Director of Studies who was nearly ready to strike me was there begging that I return to Naranjal and save him from the predicament he had gotten into for his treatment of me! The parents had threatened that they would publish protest after protest in the daily paper and do the same with the Minister of Education until he fired him.

*There was nothing else to do but to put myself in the hands of God and unceremoniously we returned to Naranjal where I will be for perhaps the next year.*¹³

Moyses was fired from his job because of his religion but the parents liked him and the beautiful "principles" he taught the children. He remained at this school until his retirement during the late 1970's. For a time it seems that he acted as a catalyst in the resolution of problems in the Ecuadorian community that tested the very souls of the staunchest believers. He had a family in Quito and from time to time he would come to visit them and the Bahá'í Center. Because he had been an isolated believer all his Bahá'í life, visiting the Bahá'ís meant a great deal to him, as can be discerned from his letters to the Teaching Committees and to Dorothy Campbell, the secretary of the National Assembly. His wife and children were not against the Faith, he said, but never felt moved to accept it.

The Third Pioneer to the Galapagos

On January 3, 1956, the New Territories Teaching Committee wrote to Sr. Luis Peñaherrera thanking him for his offer to replace Haig Kevorkian in the Galapagos Isles. It was suggested that he settle on another island, San Cristobal, instead of the island where Gayle Woolson and Haig resided. He was informed that the Archbishop lived on that island, the same one who had attacked Haig, but in spite of this Haig had made some important contacts in San Cristobal and the names and addresses were forwarded to the new pioneer.

Señor Peñaherrera arrived at his post in early February 1956, and immediately ran into difficulties - he found a place to live but no place to eat and had to live off fruits and coffee because there was no gas on the island that he could buy and use in his gas burner to cook. Within a month's time, he too was attacked by the Archbishop from the pulpit as one teaching a false religion. He managed to stay for about a year on the island, but finally through the instigation of the Bishop he was notified to leave. Based on the fact that he was an Ecuadorian citizen, he appealed this decision but was finally taken off the island as a prisoner, but not before however he had had the opportunity to enroll a new believer, Sr. José María Vallejo Asencio, who was to be the only Bahá'í in the Galapagos for a number of years. In a report to the Committee, the pioneer informed them:

The Monsignor, especially opened a campaign against me from the moment I arrived in this port. He has tried to arouse the inhabitants against me so that they would not give a place to sleep nor food to eat nor allow me to visit their homes. In spite of this, I enjoy a great appreciation in all circles, social and political, and, I am currently eating on the Military Base of the Marines after having suffered, with joy of spirit, every privation... God and Bahá'u'lláh have not ceased to assist me...

Mrs. Gayle Woolson, the Auxiliary Board member reported to the Institutions that she had been informed that the Bishop of the island who was the instigator of Sr. Peñaherrera's troubles was the same one that caused difficulties for Haig Kevorkian. She advised that inasmuch as the island is so small, whatsoever one says or does is almost immediately known all over the island.

Through the example of his moral life on the island and his service and helpful advice to many islanders, he gained the respect of the majority of them. It was they, in a general assembly meeting to prepare the welcome for the President, who, through majority vote, selected Sr. Peñaherrera to participate. As efforts were already being made to get him off the island, he used this opportunity to make known what he stood for so that it could be seen that it was nothing bad. This was his motive in giving the speech...

The day he was expelled, he was called to the office of the new governor who had just taken over his post the day before, and was told that he was to leave the island in four hours on the boat that was leaving that day; a few soldiers were instructed to accompany him to make sure that he would carry out the orders.

As it is illegal to expel an Ecuadorian from the islands unless there is really a legitimate reason, he is now making every effort to have his rights as a citizen...¹⁴

/S/ Gayle Woolson

The Catholic hierarchy wielded far greater influence than Sr. Peñaherrera and he was not given permission to return to the islands. The Galapagos again was left without a pioneer and with only one Bahá'í, an old man, who had not had time to become deepened in the Teachings before the pioneer had to leave. Nevertheless, Sr. Vallejo remained steadfast in his faith until his death on November 1, 1966 at 100 years of age on San Cristobal Island.

The National Spiritual Assembly tried to find a replacement for the pioneer when he was unable to return to the islands. The Galapagos was and is a hardship post and the qualifications required for a pioneer to these islands are, if possible; "to be Latin, to speak Spanish, to be single and a male." During this period, there were only a few eligible and willing men, young or old, who had these qualifications and above all, who were willing to suffer all the uncertainties which were assured for anyone who accepted the post. Because of the importance of the Archipelago as a virgin goal during the Ten Year Crusade, the National Assembly called upon the Western Hemisphere Teaching Committee of the United States to help in filling this vital post. One could well feel that Divine intervention was involved in the following transaction between National Assemblies.

The National Assembly of the United States wrote to the National Assembly of Ecuador regarding the pioneer situation for the Galapagos and inadvertently sent the letter to the Nicaragua National Assembly

instead of to Ecuador. The error was the cause of the Galapagos receiving a pioneer sooner than anticipated. The letter was advising Ecuador that the Committee had shared their letter with them regarding the problem they were having finding a pioneer for the islands, and they noted their request for assistance in finding someone with the mentioned qualifications and who could endure the difficult conditions of living which they had described. The National Assembly of the United States also mentioned that:

In view of the fact that the pioneer should be a Latin American and one who speaks Spanish, it is impossible for our Western Hemisphere Teaching Committee or our National Spiritual Assembly to find anyone in the United States or elsewhere who could fill that post satisfactorily...

If you can locate a pioneer who will make the necessary sacrifices for Bahá'u'lláh, we will be glad to provide the budget that will meet the costs of his living.

When the National Assembly of Nicaragua received this letter they knew it could not be for them, but also understood that Ecuador needed a pioneer for the Galapagos. Of course when the National Assembly of the United States discovered their error they sent a letter of apology to Ecuador on March 15, 1962:

For some unknown reason we are guilty of a serious mistake, for which we wish to apologize.

On March 9th we wrote the National Spiritual Assembly of Nicaragua with regard to the problem of placing a Bahá'í pioneer on one of the islands of the Galapagos Archipelago. This letter should have gone to your Assembly which has jurisdiction over that virgin goal. We enclose a copy of the letter with our regret that our error was not noted earlier. We are sending a copy of this letter to the National Spiritual Assembly of Nicaragua to explain why it received our communication which must have been very puzzling to them.

/S/ Hugh E. Chance, Secretary

On March 31 the National Assembly of Ecuador notified the National Assembly of the United States, that:

Another one of Bahá'u'lláh's miracles has happened and we have an offer, through the NSA of Nicaragua, from a magnificent Costa Rican Bahá'í who has been serving as a pioneer for more than a year in Nicaragua, to go to the Galapagos! As you can see from the attached letter, we have written giving him details about the living conditions in the Galapagos, and hope soon to have more information about the pioneer and the consent of the NSA of Nicaragua for him to leave their territory. From your error in sending the letter about the Galapagos to the NSA of Nicaragua instead of to us, came this offer to go as a pioneer to the Galapagos, so Bahá'u'lláh even uses our mistakes for the advancement of His beloved Cause!

The Fourth Pioneer to the Galapagos Islands

On July 13, 1962 the Galapagos again received a pioneer, Sr. Juan Vargas Ayara from Costa Rica. The young pioneer soon became somewhat discouraged when the people did not respond to the Bahá'í Teachings as rapidly as he had anticipated. It is normal to expect a tropical island to be a paradise in every respect regardless of warnings to the contrary, and on an island one would expect a captive audience. Juan did not find either to be the case, even though he received warm hospitality in the home of the one and only believer of the islands, Sr. Vallejo. The atmosphere began to change gradually, and on September 12, 1962, he notified the Assembly that he was a "little happier", now that he had found one more believer, but not completely satisfied. He sent in an enrollment card for Sr. Gerardo H. Segovia Lara, who would later become a pioneer on the mainland of Ecuador for five years, and assist in mass teaching in the Indian area of Otavalo. Sr. Segovia later married and returned to his native Galapagos where he is still serving as an active member of the community as of this writing.

The Hands of the Cause of God in the Holy Land were very happy to have this post filled at last, it was 1956 when the last pioneer was there. On September 20, 1962, in a letter to the National Assembly of South America, the Hands of the Cause said:

We were happy to hear the news of the departure of pioneer Juan A. Vargas Ayala to San Cristobal in the Galapagos Islands. When you write him, please convey our love, and assure him that we have prayed in the Holy Shrines that he will be guided and strengthened to win many wonderful victories in the teaching field, dear to the heart of our beloved Guardian.

In 1968 the National Assembly recalled Juan from the islands to help with the goals of the Nine-Year Plan on the mainland of Ecuador. He was asked to serve six months in San Cristobal and six months on the mainland. By 1969, there were six believers in the Galapagos and everyone desired to have an Assembly, but this was not to be during Sr. Vargas lifetime. It was during this year that he returned to his native country Costa Rica after spending nearly seven years as a pioneer/teacher in this country, and Ecuador is very grateful for his services. Then again the Galapagos was left without a pioneer. The qualifications for a pioneer now have changed with the times and conditions. The islands are now tourist attractions, and the transportation by boat and air has improved tremendously, which means that the food supply is better and the islands now have the civil status of a province (Statehood).

From time to time over the years the National Assembly would send travel teachers to visit the believers of the islands, when they were available. One such visit was that of Carmen and Donald Stewart in 1976, who went to San Cristobal with the hope of electing its first Spiritual Assembly, a goal of the Five-Year Plan. Following the "good advice" of the Hand of the Cause of God,

Dr. Muhajir, who told the National Spiritual Assembly that the way to have success in teaching, is to find Bahá'í families and not make so much noise as to wake up the village dog.... Using this method the Stewarts were able to enroll 9 new believers, 7 adults and 2 youths in the island of Santa Cruz. They spent 9 days there but needed more time to find enough believers to establish the first Spiritual Assembly of the Islands.

The following year, in May 1977, the National Assembly asked pioneer, Bahiyyih Rashidpour if she could make a teaching trip to the Galapagos. It was August before she was able to leave and then Nooshin Burwell volunteered to accompany her with her little two-year old daughter, Taraneh. Their trip was very successful. They went to Santa Cruz where they enrolled 9 new believers which made a total of 18 believers on the island and assured the election of the first Spiritual Assembly of the Galapagos.

First Spiritual Assembly of the Galapagos Established in Santa Cruz¹⁵

On September 14, 1977 the first Spiritual Assembly of the Galapagos was established on the island of Santa Cruz by this teaching team thus completing a goal long desired by the beloved Guardian Shoghi Effendi. These are the members of this first local Spiritual Assembly of Puerto Oyora, Santa Cruz, Galapagos:

Sr. Carlos Patiño	Sra. Luzmila Villacis de Salinas
Sr. Galo Paredes	Sra. Vilma de Arguello
Sra. Nilda Peña	Sra. Soila Robalino
Srta. Esther Margarita Paredes	Sr. Victor Hugo Arguello
Sr. Gonzalo Salinas	

Immediately the team sent a cable to the National Assembly with the glad tidings that a long awaited local Spiritual Assembly had been formed in the Galapagos. The Assembly hurriedly notified the Universal House of Justice who cabled on September 22, 1977:

DELIGHTED ELECTION SANTACRUZ GALAPAGOS PRAYING SUCCESS

The Universal House of Justice

Miss Rashidpour and Mrs. Burwell, in their official report to the National Assembly, explained that;

After the election of the Assembly in Santa Cruz, that same night, we boarded a cattle boat that carried us to the island of San Cristobal. We found a Señor Segovia, he and his family received us very warmly and showered their love and attention on us as if they had known us all their lives and we were members of their family.

We began teaching immediately and were surprised to learn that many people knew of the Faith through Sr. Juan Vargas, who was a pioneer there some years after the Knights of Bahá'u'lláh Gayle Woolson and Haig Kevorkian pioneered there. The Segovia family introduced us to some of their friends and acquaintances - a few became Bahá'ís. It was

not necessary to invite the people to accept the Faith; on the contrary, they asked us how they could become Bahá'ís!

This unusual experience calls to mind the young Knight of Bahá'u'lláh from Syria, who never dreamed that his prayers would one day be answered through the efforts of two young Persian women from the Cradle of the Faith; and it also brings vividly to mind his lamentation: *... if even I don't see the result, one day the stones and the trees of the island will witness, of the coming of the Glory of Bahá'u'lláh, because they heard many times if not always the praises and the prayers, the name of Ya Baha'u'Abha all over the island, wherever I could reach ... in this lonely and forgotten part of the world, that's why I believe that one day the hearts of the people will be more receptive and that their vision will be more cleared to see the Truth.* He predicted that in the future, the people of the island would be asking to be accepted as Bahá'ís!

As a result of the efforts of this teaching team the first Assembly of San Cristobal was formed on October 3, 1977.

First Spiritual Assembly of Puerto Baquerizo Moreno-Isla,¹⁵
San Cristobal

Sr. Gerardo Segovia Lara
Sr. Guido E. Rosillo Ojeda
Sra. Gloria de Panchana
Sr. Manuel Panchana
Sr. Juan Pallo Barros

Sra. María Freire Delgado
Sra. Lilian de Segovia
Sr. Carlos Delgado
Sra. Graciela de Rosillo

When the National Assembly notified the Universal House of Justice that an Assembly was formed in San Cristobal, they cabled on October 11, 1977:

DELIGHTED ELECTION SAN CRISTOBAL PRAYING ACCELERATION SUCCESSFUL
PROSECUTION ALL GOALS PLAN.

The Universal House of Justice

After the election of this Assembly Nooshin and Taraneh had to return to the mainland but Bahiyyih stayed three extra weeks to visit another island and teach, the island of Santa Isabel. She reported:

I arrived on the island of Santa Isabel, an old penal colony, on October 12, and remained there until October 25, 1977. There are no hotels on the island but I found hospitality in a dispensary. This was a virgen island with no Bahá'ís upon my arrival, but I found teaching very easy and the inhabitants very receptive. During this trip, four adults were enrolled and six childrens' classes were begun.

In order to meet people I would go walking each day for there was no public transportation and there is only one automobile on the island. The auxiliary nurse who is in charge of the dispensary is very kind and living there gave me the opportunity to teach the patients who came for

treatments. Each morning prayers were said in the Persian tongue and one day the nurse asked me if I were praying. I said 'yes', she responded that "your prayers sound like the sea - so tranquil."

Guayaquil Receives First Pioneers

When Gayle Woolson returned from the Galapagos Islands, where she earned the distinguished title of Knight of Bahá'u'lláh, the National Assembly requested that she would urgently visit the city of Guayaquil inasmuch as they had lost their Assembly leaving only one partially functioning Assembly in Ecuador, Quito. She visited there in March and found that there were only five active Bahá'ís in the city and they were determined to re-elect their Assembly that year. A great stimulus for this weak community was that on April 12, 1955 they received their own resident pioneers, for the first time, Mr. and Mrs. Ervin and Wilma Thomas. By April 21, they had helped to reactivate the community and elected the local Spiritual Assembly. They also encouraged some of the community to do extension teaching into Duran and Daule. Their son Robert Ridley, a Bahá'í youth, soon came from the United States to join them. Unfortunately they were unable to find work in Guayaquil and for this reason the National Assembly invited them to try to establish themselves in Perú, which they did. They are still lovingly remembered in Ecuador by the native believers who were active at the time. They later transferred to Colombia and became members of the first National Spiritual Assembly of that country and served in this capacity until they settled elsewhere. Eventually Wilma served as a pioneer in Venezuela where she was named to the Auxiliary Board. She passed away on June 10, 1977. The Universal House of Justice cabled on June 13, 1977 regarding this beloved pioneer:

GRIEVED LEARN PASSING DEVOTED DEDICATED MAIDSERVANT BAHÁ'U'LLAH WILMA THOMAS MEMBER AUXILIARY BOARD PIONEER SOUTH AMERICA NINE YEAR PLAN STOP ARDENT PRAYERS PROGRESS HER SOUL OFFERED AT SACRED THRESHOLD STOP CONVEY LOVING SYMPATHY HER FAMILY.¹⁶

Homage should also be paid to the wonderful lady who became the ninth member of the first Spiritual Assembly of Guayaquil in 1945. It should be recalled that on Ridvan 1945, only one Bahá'í was needed to form the Assembly of Guayaquil. Time was running out and on that last day Miss Virginia Orbison, desperate to help form the first Assembly of the Country and City, decided to go and get her hair re-styled by Miss Else Jorgensen, a hairdresser and their last contact for the Faith. Just as Miss Jorgensen was finishing, and Miss Orbison was losing hope, she told Miss Orbison that she wanted to join the Faith. Thus, the first local Spiritual Assembly in Ecuador was formed. Miss Jorgensen, after leaving Guayaquil in 1948 continued to perform outstanding service for the Faith in her home town of Trondheim, Norway and in Spain and Uruguay, where she was appointed to the Auxiliary Board. She became ill there and return to her home where she passed away on January 27, 1977. The Universal House of Justice cabled:

GRIEVED NEWS PASSING ELSE JORGENSEN DEVOTED MAIDSERVANT BAHÁ'U'LLAH STOP SUPPLICATING SACRED THRESHOLD PROGRESS HER SOUL ALL WORLDS GOD.¹⁷

Circumstances attending the development of the Faith in Ecuador

During the 1950's, in spite of the long periods of inactivity in the two major cities of Ecuador, Quito and Guayaquil, and the problems of unity among the believers, there remained a binding spiritual unity among them as evidenced by their actions when they learned, for example, of the distressful situation of their brethren in the Cradle of their Faith. The dire, unjust persecution of their fellow-Bahá'ís caused them to join forces to render assistance in accordance with the requests of the Guardian and their National Body. Shoghi Effendi was moved to have his secretary write to the National Assembly of South America on his behalf on November 2, 1955, stating that: *In cases such as this, one realizes what a chain of unity has been established throughout the world, through the unifying spirit of Bahá'u'lláh. He further stated that, The manner in which the Bahá'ís in all parts of the world are arising to support the fund for the aid of the persecuted Bahá'ís in Persia is a great testimonial to the unity of the Faith.*

Also, when the Ecuadorian community became aware of the suffering of their co-religionists in Chile after the great earthquake of 1955, again they felt duty bound to help in spite of their being young and inexperienced in such matters. Being able to help gave them a strong sense of brotherhood with their fellow-Bahá'ís around the world.

For the first time, in 1955, Sunday School classes were held in Quito for the children of the Bahá'ís and their friends. The community had grown and there were now 43 believers in Quito. In retrospect we find that there was very little consolidation of the Faith in Ecuador during these years; but in spite of the lack of sufficient travel teachers, insufficient funds for literature and transportation and the inactivity of the majority of the Bahá'ís themselves, one stands in awe at the marvelous job of expansion that was accomplished during these years. Other new communities suffered too some of the same disabilities as well as great achievements in some areas as can be noted through the correspondence of the Guardian. In a postscript to a letter written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly dated June 2, 1955 he informed them of his appreciation for their accomplishments:

Dear and Valued Co-Workers:

The activities which the South American believers, under the guidance and through the impetus given by your assembly to the forward march of the Faith in the South American Republics, have achieved in recent years constitutes a notable chapter in the history of the marvellous unfoldment of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh in Latin America. These successive historic achievements, in both the teaching and administrative spheres of Bahá'í service, may well be regarded as a befitting prelude to the opening of yet another chapter in the annals of the Faith in the South American continent - a chapter that will commemorate the emergence of Regional as well as independent National Assemblies which are destined,

first indirectly and later directly, to play their part in the ultimate formation of the Supreme Legislative Body in the Bahá'í world - the International House of Justice...

Though much has been accomplished in these spheres of Bahá'í activity, the work that still remains to be undertaken, prior to the emergence of the Regional National Assemblies of South America is enormous and highly challenging. Time indeed is very short. A brief span of less than two years separates the South American Bahá'í Communities from the historic and shining goals they have set themselves to attain.

A systematic effort of unexampled intensity, at once sustained and consecrated, must needs be exerted on the part of individuals, groups and local and national assemblies, in order to befittingly pave the way for the convocation of the forthcoming memorable Bahá'í conventions and the subsequent election of the pivotal institutions that are to presage the definite establishment of the pillars of the Universal House of Justice in the South American continent.

Beginning in 1955, with the assistance of Gayle Woolson, and a few years hence, Ecuador had a very active Regional Teaching Committee with its seat in Quito. The members of this Committee made many teaching trips to various localities where the Faith had not been established and to areas where there were only isolated believers in order to encourage and assist them. Cuenca was opened to the Faith during the early 1950's. A young man from Cuenca accepted the Faith in Quito and then returned to his native city. For a few years no one knew where he was and he was the first Bahá'í of Cuenca. The first Bahá'í Group was formed in that city on October 9, 1959. All during the years when the pioneer or travel teacher would leave the country activities would cease until someone would appear again. It was during one of these lulls when the noted travel teacher from Chile, Sr. Esteban Canales came to Quito and put the affairs of the Cause in motion again. He was extremely active and his devotion to the Cause was contagious, and this enabled him not only to attract the old believers back to the Faith but he also attracted many new adherents and friends to the Cause.

The Bahá'í Faith was taken to Otavalo and Ibarra in 1954 by Mrs. Gayle Woolson and Mr. Luis Arguello of Quito. The Faith was carried to Ibarra first. The records do not reveal whether or not John Stearns, Hascle Cornbleth or Larry Kramer visited these cities or surrounding area; there are letters however from them to the Inter-America Teaching Committee stating that they anticipated visiting the Indians in these areas as soon as possible. Because many of the records were unwittingly destroyed, one cannot verify some occurrences. However, there is a letter from the Regional Teaching Committee to the National Teaching Committee dated December 13, 1954, and a letter to a sympathizer dated February 7, 1955, corroborating that Mrs. Woolson and Sr. Arguello visited Ibarra and Otavalo during this period and Mrs. Woolson gave several talks. As a result of her talks for a number of months she was corresponding with at least 25 or 30 interested professional people and students.¹⁹

According to the minutes of one of the teaching committees, dated February 16, 1957, it is noted that contact was first made with the Otavalan Indians in 1957, that is, the ones who live in the city proper and around it. In the report it is related that "they are not tribal and are 'half-civilized", that they are known for their physical cleanliness, long braids (even the men) and their manner of dress." The Committee suggested to the Assembly that it would be better to have the city Bahá'í youth go and teach the young indigenous whom they had met because the older ones would be more difficult to teach being that they were set in their traditional ways.¹⁸

Indian Teaching Begins in Otavalo 1957¹⁹

The group who went to Otavalo to teach the Indians were members of the Teaching Committee. They first met 13 youth, and when they returned for a second visit with them they chose nine which seemed most promising to deepen and later the group grew to 30. On the third visit the speaker spoke to these youth in their native tongue "Quechua" and this time they seemed to capture the spirit of what was being said. Shoghi Effendi was happy when he learned of the 30 young Indian contacts and he had his secretary to write to the new National Spiritual Assembly of Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela on September 11, 1957, to ask;

Can you also advise what tribes are represented in the contacts which you have made with some 30 young Indians in Otavalo, Ecuador. If you could send this information by return airmail, it would be very greatly appreciated.

As a result of the teaching efforts of the Bahá'ís of Quito and the Regional Teaching Committee, on August 18, 1956, Señor Cesár Vasquez Fuller, the Director of the Municipal Library of Otavalo, accepted the Bahá'í Faith. He was the first Bahá'í of Otavalo, that now renowned "market town". He was also the first to translate literature from the Spanish language to the Quechua for the indigenous. He translated the pamphlet, *Como Ser Un Verdadero Bahá'í* (How To Be A True Bahá'í), *Normas de un Vivir Sano y Correcto*, (Rules of a Healthy and Correct Way of Life). This pamphlet was translated into the dialect of the region, which served for the North of the Country but not for other areas. It was approved by the National Spiritual Assembly in August 1957.

As the years passed the Faith grew little by little in this country and the Bahá'ís began to feel more and more the need to arise and go teach the Cause, that is the native believers, for without them the travel teachers and pioneers could not have had the same success. More and more pioneers also began to fill the posts in the country which so urgently needed them. Perhaps such letters as the following from the Guardian helped to spur them on. On July 13, 1955 his secretary wrote to the National Spiritual Assembly on his behalf:

He hopes your Assembly is doing all in its power to encourage the pioneers who have left their homes and gone out to neighbouring territories and islands under your jurisdiction. At all costs, these precious goals must be kept open and the work strengthened. This is the primary duty of your Assembly. In preparation for a greater degree of administrative responsibility in the near future, the Assemblies in the far-flung area over which you have jurisdiction should exert their utmost to strengthen their own foundations, to carry on extension teaching work in nearby Centres, and to encourage any surplus members that they may have - by 'surplus', the Guardian means any number over fifteen - (providing the Assembly is firmly established), to go out and pioneer in new Centres, or reinforce existing Groups and assist in the creation of the greatly-needed future Spiritual Assemblies.

And on June 29, 1956, his secretary wrote on his behalf:

He hopes that, during the coming year, the Bahá'ís labouring in South America will, encouraged by the sight of the feats they have accomplished already, forge ahead on the teaching front and establish many new centers and assemblies.

His loving prayers and thoughts will be offered on their behalf and for all of you on the National Body who are so arduously and conscientiously toiling to lay the foundations of Bahá'u'lláh's World Order in that important continent of the globe.

In a postscript to this letter the Guardian himself wrote:

...I truly marvel at the vastness of the work accomplished, the multiplicity of the activities which have been initiated, the steady consolidation of the institutions that have been created, the increasing maturity of the rank and file of the believers, their unity and solidarity, and the growing evidences of their ability to conduct, independently and efficiently, the affairs of the Faith, and to carry it a stage further along the road leading to its eventual triumph and the fulfilment of its high destiny.

While appraising the work done Shoghi Effendi never forgot to praise the institutions and the believers for doing it. In this same letter he continued his appraisal of the activities while simultaneously calling attention to the Interim Regional Assemblies which would be called into being the following year:

He is indeed proud of the labours of the friends; and feels confident that, with such a spirit, and with this ever-increasing zeal and devotion which they are manifesting, they will be able to attain all their objectives, and, by the end of the Ten Year Crusade, have laid a truly firm and lasting foundation for the new national bodies which must be elected to represent the Bahá'ís of each republic of South America.

No force is as important in spreading the Faith and carrying forward the teaching work as unity amongst the friends. When they cooperate with each other to achieve their objectives, they receive divine inspiration and assistance, which otherwise would be denied them. Unity is like a mirror, which attracts the rays of the sun of God's bounty.

The above two paragraphs are also from the June 29 letter written on his behalf and below is a continuation of the post-script written in the Guardian's own handwriting:

Particularly gratifying has been the success that has attended, in the course of the past year, the exertions of your Assembly to multiply the institutions of the Faith, to establish its administrative centres, to purchase its endowments, to swell the number of its supporters, to enlarge both the local and national Funds designed to support its institutions, to expand its literature, and consolidate the foundations laid by its pioneers. The Concourse on high cannot but applaud such vigorous action, such concerted effort, such selfless devotion, such dogged perseverance, such fidelity to the wishes of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and such unwavering determination to achieve their part of the global task entrusted to His loved ones under the Ten Year Plan.

Though much has been achieved, in divers fields of Bahá'í activity, the year destined to usher in this highly promising era, which is to witness the erection of the pillars of the Universal House of Justice in that vast continent, must needs witness a still greater consecration on the part of the South American believers, young and old, of both sexes, whether veterans or newly enrolled, at home as well as in the newly opened territories, in both the teaching and administrative fields, and in spite of any obstacles, however formidable that may stand in their way.

As the day approaches when the long-awaited provisional regional Assemblies will have emerged, an effort, on the part of each and all members of this valiant, this firmly established, great hearted, high minded community, more determined and consecrated than ever before; a spirit of heroism nobler than any that has thus far been displayed; a courage more inspiring than that which has animated them thus far, and a self-abnegation unsurpassed since the inception of the Faith in Latin America, must needs be displayed, in order to adequately meet the challenge of the mountainous tasks that are to be faced in the future, and to discharge befittingly the responsibilities which are soon to confront them.

The South American Bahá'í community, through the qualities it exhibits, the acts it has performed, the strides it has made, the fame it has won, ranks high amongst its sister communities both in the Western Hemisphere and throughout the Bahá'í World.

The Author of the Cause it serves so diligently and devotedly, is well pleased with the range of the exertions of this community, the victories it has successively won, the bright prospects now opening before it. His manifold blessings will, no doubt, be fully and unreservedly vouchsafed to its members, without exception, if they but persevere along the path they have chosen to tread.

I will, in my admiration for their high endeavours, for their extraordinary progress, and their enduring achievements, continue to pray for them all, with redoubled ardour, that they may, in the days to come, march to victory, and enrich immeasurably the annals of God's Cause in that highly promising continent.

/S/ Shoghi

CHAPTER VIII

LAUNCHING OF THE SIX-YEAR PLAN - Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Cause Passes Away

The year 1957 would witness "world-shaping and world-shaking" events in connection with the Bahá'í Faith in Ecuador and the Bahá'í World in general. This is the year in which Shoghi Effendi called into being four interim Regional Spiritual Assemblies in Latin America which he said were destined "to hasten the erection of twenty pillars of the future Universal House of Justice." In this same message he requested the assemblies "to stimulate the process of conversion of both the Negroes and the American Indians and to ensure their active participation in the administration of the affairs of Bahá'í communities." This year also witnessed the launching of a Six-Year Plan by the new Assemblies which was to terminate concurrently with the Ten-Year Crusade.

Shoghi Effendi constantly mentioned the various ethnic groups in his messages, and stressed the necessity of carrying the light of Bahá'u'lláh to them. His response was always happy when he heard of a new tribe or minority race that had embraced the Faith, or that contact had been established by the Bahá'ís with one of them. In many of his letters to the National Assemblies and individuals, he would emphasize over and over Bahá'u'lláh's and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statements regarding the Negro and the American Indians respectively. In one letter regarding the negroes his secretary wrote on his behalf on July 8, 1942 to an individual believer:

The coloured friends need the Faith very much, as they have suffered and been downtrodden in the past a great deal, as they must realize that in the propagation of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh lies their hope for a better future, just as much as the hope of the entire world.¹

And regarding the Indians his secretary wrote on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of South America on July 11, 1951:

The Guardian feels that special efforts must be made to enroll the primitive peoples of South America in the Cause. These souls, often so exploited and despised, deserve to hear of the Faith, and will become a great asset to it once their hearts are enlightened.

In another letter dated May 25, 1957 written on his behalf to the four Latin American National Assemblies, he continued the theme:

The Guardian feels that we cannot longer delay our response to the Master's ('Abdu'l-Bahá) pleadings because the conditions in the world do require the fulfillment of His Divine behests, at least on an initial basis...

The Guardian hopes your Assemblies will pay the utmost attention to the teaching of the Indians in your respective areas. He is sure your efforts will meet with Divine Success.

Perhaps noting the Guardian's concern for these two groups will enable the reader to grasp the reason why so much of the work in this country is with these "down-trodden" races.

In 1957, Ecuador had two local Assemblies, no groups and five isolated centers. Under the Six-Year Plan, its goal was to acquire two more local Assemblies, in Otavalo and Quindé, three groups and five isolated centers during this period. This was in addition to the goals unattained for the Ten-Year Crusade. One of the goals of the Crusade was to purchase a house for a National Hazirátu'l-Quds (Bahá'í administrative headquarters) in Quito.

The Quito community had a very difficult time locating a suitable building for the Bahá'í administrative center within a fixed price range. Finally the Commission in Quito located an ideal place and notified the National Assembly of South America on February 7, 1956; they in turn notified the National Assembly of the United States who was acting on behalf of the Guardian with the funds for this project. Sr. Luis Arguello, a devoted Bahá'í for more than 30 years in the Quito Community, was a member of the commission to purchase the building. He related in an interview how difficult it was to find a house for this purpose within the limits of their budget and when they did find an ideal place it was sold while they were waiting for their check to be verified by the bank. This caused further delay and disappointment so when they found another building, even though it cost a little more, they were given permission to purchase it. The community was very happy to finally have a permanent meeting place and on March 2, 1957 the local Assembly of Quito wrote a letter of thanks to the Guardian:

The members of the Bahá'í Community of Quito, Ecuador, send you their warmest heartfelt greetings and wish to express to you their loving gratitude for your generous donation toward the cost of our lovely Haziratu'l-Quds. We recently completed the purchase documents and now that the house is definitely ours, our hearts turn to you with feelings of deepest appreciation for your far-reaching vision, your financial and great sacrifice toward the fulfillment of this very important goal.

The purchase of the Hazira has given a wonderful boost to our local activities and has impressed many people. They are amazed that such a fine and dignified construction should be in the possession of a mere handful of believers, and they are even more impressed with the growth of the Faith when we tell them that all the other Latin American countries also have their Haziras.

We never can be grateful enough for the Divine guidance of our beloved Guardian who is leading us with such great strides toward even greater victories for the Holy Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

/S/ Jorge Efraím Páez
Secretary

The Assembly also wrote a letter of appreciation to the beloved benefactress of the Faith, the Hand of the Cause of God, Mrs. Amelia Collins on March 2, 1957:

Mrs. Amelia Collins
Box 155
Haifa, Israel

Beloved Baha'i Sister:

The members of the Baha'i Community of Quito, Ecuador, send you their loving Bahá'í greetings and convey to you their sincerest appreciation and deepest gratitude for your generous donations toward the purchase of our Haziratu'l-Quds and endowment. We are indeed fortunate to have been the recipients of your wonderful gift and to now be the administrators of these important Bahá'í properties.

Our Hazira is a lovely two story house in a growing part of the city, and our endowment is in an Indian village six hours away from Quito by train. It overlooks a beautiful lake at the foot of two adjoining mountains and the region is known here as "a piece of Switzerland in Ecuador".

Your generous heart has showered its blessings upon many parts of the world and has given an enormous impetus to the growth of our beloved Faith. May Bahá'u'lláh richly bless you for your outstanding services in His Holy Path and for helping us, your sisters and brothers in many parts of the globe, to forge ahead toward increasing victories for the blessed Cause we all so dearly love.

With Sincere Bahá'í love,

/S/ Jorge Efraím Pérez, Secretary

On March 18, 1957 the Guardian's secretary responded on his behalf to the local Spiritual Assembly of Quito:

Your letter of March 2nd has been received by the beloved Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

He is very happy to hear that the Bahá'ís rejoice over their Haziratu'l-Quds, and that it is a means of teaching the Faith to the non-Baha'ís and of raising its prestige in their eyes.

You may be sure he will pray for the rapid advancement of the Faith there, and for the unity and happiness of all the friends in Ecuador.

He sends you all his loving greetings, and assures you of his prayers.

With kind regards,

R. Rabbani

Postscript in the Guardian's handwriting,

May the Almighty bless your constant and valued efforts for the promotion of His Faith, guide every step you take, and fulfil every desire you cherish, for the furtherance of its interests.

Your true brother,

/S/ Shoghi

Mrs. Collins also contributed \$1,000 toward the purchase of land for the site of the future Mother Temple of Ecuador, and the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States contributed \$3,500. The endowment mentioned in the letter to Mrs. Collins from the Spiritual Assembly of Quito refers to the 3,154 square meter endowment property purchased in 1956, which was a goal of the Ten-Year Crusade, north of Lake San Pablo, near Otavalo.

Little did any of the believers realize that this year would bring such sorrow to the hearts of the ardent lovers of Shoghi Effendi all over the world. Nor could anyone visualize that these Plans were the last ones he would outline for the Bahá'í World - for everyone was so accustomed to his guidance through his letters and messages. Often, his messages would lift the veil of obscurity little by little, so that glimmerings of greater horizons could gradually be discerned. This can be observed in his letter of welcome to the newly born National Assembly dated July 3, 1957:

Dear and Valued Co-Workers:

I welcome with feelings of exultation and pride, the formation of the Regional Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís residing in the Northern Republics of the South American continent - an event of enduring and far-reaching significance in the annals of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in Latin America. The emergence of this interim Regional Spiritual Assembly should be hailed as the forerunner of the independent National Spiritual Assemblies which, in the course of the evolution of the Ten-Year Plan, are to be firmly established in these Republics, and which will signalize the triumphant termination of yet another epoch in the history of the evolution of the Administrative Order of that Faith in the South American continent.

That the Bahá'í Communities, labouring so devotedly and so assiduously in these five Republics, should have, as a result of their steadfast exertions and whole-hearted response to the Message of the New Day, reached so swiftly so important a milestone on the high road of their glorious destiny, proclaims, in no uncertain terms, the high quality of the faith which animates their members, and evokes in the hearts of all those who have, in recent years, watched the development of the institutions committed to their charge, feelings of unqualified admiration, and reinforces their confidence in the capacity of these rapidly advancing, steadily consolidating communities to achieve their ultimate objectives.

The self-same diligence, fidelity and perseverance which have so markedly characterized their stewardship to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh in the past, must henceforth distinguish their collective endeavours. Nothing short of the highest degree of dedication, of complete unity and harmony, and of an inflexible resolve to attain their goals, can guarantee such a consummation and set the seal of triumph on the historic undertaking upon which they have embarked.

The Six-Year Plan, on which the attention of the members of these communities must be focused should be regarded by them as the chief and unfailing instrument for the execution of their high purpose. All, both young and old,

veterans as well as newly-enrolled, must participate with unflinching energy, with complete consecration and undeviating loyalty.

A supreme effort must be made to swell, as rapidly as possible, the number of the avowed supporters of the Faith in each of these Republics, and to multiply the isolated centres, groups and local assemblies constituting the foundations of the rising Bahá'í Administrative Order in these extensive territories. All firmly established assemblies must, moreover, be incorporated in order to consolidate the foundations of this Administrative Structure. Recognition must, likewise be secured from the authorities concerned for the Bahá'í Marriage Certificate as well as the Bahá'í Holy Days. The historic work initiated, so laboriously and so auspiciously, in the newly-opened territories, allocated to the Bahá'í Communities of South America, must be zealously pursued, extended and reinforced. The translation, publication and dissemination of Bahá'í literature... is yet another task which must be carried out with the utmost care, efficiency, vigor and vigilance. The increase in the number of summer-schools, and the lending of a fresh impetus to the conversion of the American Indians and of other minorities must henceforth receive the close and uninterrupted attention of all those who are primarily responsible for the prosecution of this Plan. The Publishing Trust to be established in the capital city of Brazil, and constituting one of the foremost objectives of the Ten-Year Plan, should be speedily and firmly established. And, last but not least, a site should be selected and purchased in each of the five remaining Republics, for the purpose of the construction, at a future date, of a Mother Temple in each of these countries.

Upon the complete and befitting discharge of the admittedly weighty responsibilities now resting upon the privileged, elected representatives of these five communities, in this crucial, transitional period of their evolution within the orbit of the embryonic World Order of Bahá'u'lláh must, to a marked degree, depend their entering a new and still more significant stage in the unfoldment of the potentialities of the Mission which, as decreed by the Almighty, they are called upon to bring to a successful conclusion.

The opportunities now given them by the Supreme Author of their destiny must be seized with eagerness, confidence and promptitude. Theirs is the golden chance to approach and discharge their tasks, which are at once sacred and inescapable, in a spirit and in a manner that will win the unqualified esteem and unbounded admiration of their sister as well as parent communities throughout the Western Hemisphere.

My fervent and constant prayer for the members of this newly emerged assembly, as well as for all those who they represent within the confines of these Republics, is that they may never falter, fail or flinch in the task they shoulder, that they may rather go on from strength to strength until they hold the palm of total victory in their hands, and merit thereby the applause of the Concourse on high and a still fuller measure of the blessings promised by the Divine Author of their Faith to all who will arise to glorify His name and contribute to the ultimate triumph of His divinely appointed Order.

/S/ Shoghi

On November 4, 1957 the inevitable came to pass. The "world-shaking", heartrending event was cabled on November 5 to the Bahá'ís all over the world informing them of the passing of their beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi.

SHOGHI EFFENDI BELOVED OF ALL HEARTS SACRED TRUST GIVEN BY MASTER PASSED AWAY SUDDEN HEART ATTACK IN SLEEP FOLLOWING ASIATIC FLU STOP URGE BELIEVERS REMAIN STEADFAST CLING INSTITUTION HANDS LOVINGLY REARED RECENTLY REINFORCED EMPHASIZED BY BELOVED GUARDIAN STOP ONLY ONENESS HEART ONENESS PURPOSE CAN BEFITTINGLY TESTIFY LOYALTY ALL NATIONAL ASSEMBLIES BELIEVERS DEPARTED GUARDIAN WHO SACRIFICED SELF UTTERLY FOR SERVICE FAITH

RUHIYYIH

His ardent lovers and followers, deeply bereaved, caught up in an ocean of sadness, pledged to triumphantly attain the goals which he had so meticulously outlined and given them. The Quito local Assembly expressed the wholehearted sentiments of the Ecuadorian Community in a cable addressed to his widow, the much loved Rúhiyyih Khánum.

HEARTS CRUSHED PROFOUNDLY GRIEVED PASSING BELOVED GUARDIAN PLEDGE UNSEVERING LOYALTY ESTABLISHED INSTITUTIONS

SYMPATHY LOVE
BAHÁ'Í ECUADOR
NOVEMBER 9, 1957

The recently established interim Regional Spiritual Assembly of Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela likewise in a cable expressed the intense sorrow and their undying loyalty to Rúhiyyih Khánum and all of the Hands of the Cause of God who just two months prior to the passing of the Guardian were named by his Standard Bearers of the Cause in addition to the title of protectors of the Faith.

Rúhiyyih Khánum, in spite of her utterly helpless state of despondency and gigantic responsibility of keeping in contact with the Bahá'í world, sent return cables as follows:

BAHÁ'Í LIMA

DEEPLY APPRECIATED NATIONAL ASSEMBLYS MESSAGE STOP HISTORY HOLY FAITH DEMONSTRATES GREATEST CALAMITIES PRECEDED GREATEST VICTORIES STOP EARTH-QUAKE BELOVED GUARDIANS PASSING SHAKEN ALL HEARTS BELIEVERS LIKE CHILDREN DEPRIVED LOVING WISE FATHER MUST NOW ATTAIN MANHOOD AND WITH MATURITY PROFOUND CONSECRATION PRUSUE ATTAINMENT GOALS HE SET CLINGING HEM BAHÁ'Í MERCY KNOWING HIS LOVING PROTECTION WILL NEVER FORSAKE US IF WE ARE STEADFAST UNITED STOP TWENTYSIX HANDS VISITING MOST HOLY TOMB MEMORIAL MEETING WILL JOIN THEIR SUPPLICATIONS WITH THOSE BELIEVERS WORLD OVER FULFILMENT PLANS HOPES PRECIOUS GUARDIAN WHOSE LIFE WAS SACRIFICED PATH SERVICE

RUHIYYIH
NOVEMBER 17, 1957

BAHAI LIMA (for Quito)

NOVEMBER 19, 1957

KINDLY CONVEY MY BEHALF FOLLOWING MESSAGE INDIVIDUALS GROUPS
 ASSEMBLIES LISTED QUOTE DEEPLY APPRECIATE OUTPOURING LOVE SYMPATHY
 FRIENDS HOUR GREATEST SORROW ALL HEARTS UNQUOTE

RUHIYVIH

For the next six years the Bahá'ís were swept into a vortex of teaching activities in order to win all the goals assigned by the beloved Guardian for the Ten-Year Crusade and the Six-Year Plan to Ecuador. They loved him and were determined not to fail him in this last Plan which he had given to the world, and that they would place a crown of victory at his feet in London during the Most Great Jubilee in 1963, the end of the Crusade. In 1963 many were privileged to attend the Centenary of Bahá'u'lláh's Declaration (the Most Great Jubilee), in London where the body of Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith is interred. Thousands of believers were privileged to lay "the harvest of victory" at his feet. Ecuador was well represented at this joyous and significant event with seven believers present!

The second Annual Regional National Convention for the South American countries of Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia and Venezuela was held in Guayaquil on April 22-25, 1958. This was the highlight of the year for Ecuador being that it was their first time to host a National Convention. The delegates for Ecuador were: Juan Luis Aguirre and Alberto Carbo Medina from Guayaquil community and Gayle Woolson and Guillermo Sotomayer from Quito. At the time Ecuador still had only two local assemblies, four isolated centers and only two new believers for the year.

On May 31, 1958, a young man wrote a letter to the National Teaching Committee of Ecuador asking to be accepted as a believer in the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. This young man, Raúl Pavón, later a Counsellor, was destined to play an important role in the development of the Faith in this country, and especially in Indian teaching. Unfortunately, his spiritual father became a Covenant-breaker.

By the end of the year, the Faith had grown sufficiently in Ecuador to be attacked by the Jehovah's Witnesses in their magazine *Despertad (awake)* on December 8, 1958, in an article entitled "Que es la Causa Bahá'í?" (What is the Bahá'í Cause?).

On December 18, of that same year, the National Assembly informed the Regional Teaching Committee that they had asked a descendant of two of the dawn breakers to come and help Guayaquil since she had expressed her desire to help in the teaching work in this part of the world. This outstanding renowned lady, Dr. Ghodsea Ashraf will be mentioned later in this history.

In 1959, the new Regional Assembly agreed to the request of the Hands to have four local Assemblies in Ecuador by 1960

in order that the country have its own National Assembly in 1961. They chose as goal cities those of Otavalo and Cuenca, because they seemed more promising than any other cities where they had been teaching. The small band of believers in the country recognized that there was a need for further deepening in the spiritual and administrative teachings of the Faith if they were to be able to function as leaders, administrators and true followers of the Cause. Therefore, they initiated and carried out many deepening courses in the form of institutes, teaching conferences and firesides in the homes, and every week Guayaquil produced a radio program about the Faith.

In 1959 the believers in Guayaquil had been without a pioneer since Ervin and Wilma Thomas left in late 1955. When the National Spiritual Assembly notified the community that a pioneer would soon be coming from Argentina to help them, they were again very happy and extremely pleased to learn that their new pioneer, Qudsiyyih Khánum-i-Ashraf, better known as Dr. Ghodesia Ashraf was a descendent of two of the dawn breakers of the Faith, Mullá Muḥammad Mihdíy-i-Kandi, the bearer of a message from Bahá'u'lláh to the Báb and one of the teachers of Bahá'u'lláh's children, and his brother Mullá Báqir who was the thirteenth Letter of the Living.* Likewise, Mullá Báqir was entrusted by the Báb with His documents and Tablets, His pen-case, seals and ring and a letter to be delivered to Mírzá Aḥmad who in turn was instructed to deliver them to Bahá'u'lláh. He also was accompanying Bahá'u'lláh to Fort Tarbarsí when they all were arrested in Mázindarán. This dear lady was about 70 years old but had a strong determination and an indefatigable spirit as one can surmise by her letter to a Bahá'í pioneer couple in Perú describing her trip from Perú to Ecuador by bus. This is a trip that one dreads even today with somewhat "better" buses. We share excerpts from her letter that those who were privileged to know her may recall her personality more readily, and those who were not may become acquainted with her spiritually through her own words.

Friday Jan. 9, 1959 3 PM

Dearest Pattie and James!

I know you are on pins and needles to know how matters continued the morning I parted from you dear souls... I must apologize for not having paid the taxi that brought us back from that outlandish place. When the driver spoke of it in my anger I split out to the bus office, but I really meant to pay him. And with all that excitement you pushed me in the car and off I went leaving you to pay our taxi fare too. Another 'cross' on the top of all the others for dear James!

Well the taxis took two other passengers and started off at six, reaching Piura at nine. The bus had gotten there at 8 A.M. Naturally, I had to wait four hours. The man at the office only laughed when I told him he had to pay my taxi rent. He was very kind though and promised to fix me a seat which he did by a window. I had a nice young man from Lima for my

*See Dawn Breakers, pp. 152-53, 223, 227, 368, 440, 424, 504-05

seat mate and I gave him a pamphlet with address of Hazira and told him to call on some Saturday eve. to begin. I arrived in Tombes (sic) in due time and had a good bath and rest, but the next morning I jumped on my heels at six, for fear the bus would leave before 8:30. I got packed and ready and down stairs by seven. Went to the bus office and found it locked. Horrified because of the former nightmare, I returned to the hotel and entreated the clerk to help me. A gentleman (guest) who knew English and had a car took me to the office, police place etc. and found everything closed but he found out for a certainty that my bus would leave at 9 A.M. However in bringing me back to the hotel he said be sure to be on the square by 8:30.

I instructed the hotel to bring down my luggage and off I went for my police business (I had already been investigated three or four times the day before), This morn. I went to three more places and had everything signed and "visaed" and had my luggage at the "square" in front of the bus office by 8:30. I had my ticket sealed and asked repeatedly if the bus hadn't left. At last the bus came and I got myself seated but the old creaking bus went to a hundred and one back alley-ways and picked up his filthy passengers from dirty old holes, and never left the city till 11 o'clock. We reached Aqua Verdes (sic) by 12:30 P.M. Custom and passport control over, I got to the Ecuador side of the bridge to find all Ecuadorian offices closed to open at 3:30 P.M. and to find my match-box of a bus to Pt. Boliviari (sic) to leave at 2 P.M. Now don't you think that was a nice "how do you do?" Well, to make a long story short I had to appeal to officers and soldiers for assistance to make a special case of me "poor little strangerio (stranger)" and do all the investigations needed before 2 o'clock. And I managed to get them to do it if you please. In the meanwhile I would go behind the offices where the bus was standing to see that the old thing would not go and leave me in that barren place hot and thirsty as I was. Many were sitting in it and some of the ladies would say that they have kept a seat for me! "How kind of them to think of the stranger!" ...

When I was ready to climb the thing some six or eight feet everybody was so courteous, putting a blanket under me, making room for me to be comfortable etc. Asking me if I was a missionary thus giving me a chance to talk of the Faith and give out pamphlets. I noticed that the women did not pay much attention to the pamphlets, but the men devoured the words and asked if they could keep them. I was sorry I did not have more to give out.

Finally 2 o'clock came and off we started 'clickety clake' amidst clouds of dust. Stopping every 5 minutes for investigation most the only passport of the only strangerio. In about half an hour appearance of an auto-mobile in the distance made the greatest commotion in the bus there-upon were pushed on, under and around me shabby old hand bags, boxes of liquor, packets of all sizes and description containing I know not what, pushing these under my arms, legs and on my lap saying that international ticket is allowed to take these things, but they are not. Then I realized that I was amongst a bunch of smugglers and understood their motive in their kindness. I tell you, I was "flabegasted!" To be rude to them and throw their objects at them after I had tried to be kind and attract their love! The moment was one of the greatest test of judgement, I tell you! They were to leave the bus for thorough searching. The strangerio, of course, could keep her seat. I only prayed for help and the police didn't

search that row much. Two more such searchings and each time money was given to the searcher and the stuff got by. The distance should have taken one hour but we made it in four hours and got to the boat by six or a little more. Needless to say that I neither ate or slept, but only drank cocoa (coca)cola. On leaving the boat, I was again begged to take a no. of hand bags etc. which I refused, but the last minute a packet (package) was pushed under my arm. But I decided I would tell the custom officer about it and I did, but strange to say the officer, a lady, didn't take it seriously and didn't even open it. When I got through the custom and went out, it was still dark 5:30 A.M. There was no one at the port to meet me. I waited for a while, then took a taxi and came to the hotel where I am writing to you from.

After bathing and having a little breakfast, I went to the nearest of the addresses Dorothy had given me, a Sr. I had the cold chills from him, but I returned to the hotel and called a Sr. Agirra (Sr. Juan Luis Aguirre) who was very kind and came to see me with another gentleman later. We had a very nice time together talking about different plans...

Give James and the girls my best love and thank them for me please for all they did for me, though it was not really for me. Who am I? How audacious to think that any body would consider me were ~~it~~ not for the sake of Bahá'u'lláh and the Faith! Who in the world would even want to know me and speak to me let alone all the wonderful love and kindness they shower over me? It is just "custom" that I thank you all. I have really no right to do so....²

Devotedly yours,

/S/ Ghodsea

Dr. Ashraf was rather disappointed to find the Guayaquil community practically inactive and the city so undeveloped - it was indeed a challenge. She wrote to the National Assembly secretary that:

The city of Guayaquil is the filthiest, unhealthiest spot I have ever put my foot in, and the people are the... most selfish and most prejudiced that you could imagine, but that is just the reason why I should stay on. I have not come to these parts of the world to rest on the bed of ease. The more the hardship and the greater the obstacle, the more eager I am made to persevere... I don't believe any part in (of) the world could be in greater need of some one as much as this place.

So she took an apartment and continued to appeal to the Assembly members until finally they began to meet, they initiated study classes and began to celebrate the Holy Days. One room of her apartment served as a Bahá'í Center and the believers assisted her in furnishing it with things from their old Center. When the National Assembly learned of this they wrote to her:

It's a real victory that after four unsuccessful tries, the Assembly finally met with eight members! That must be something of a record for them! It's a great step forward that they pledged a certain amount to buy some chairs and tables for you and will be anxiously waiting to know if they deliver the goods.... Little by little you are making a dent...

Dr. Ashraf's home was open to everyone. The first pioneers enroute to Cuenca had the privilege of being received and hosted for some days in her apartment and many friends and believers basked in her love and hospitality. The apartment was dedicated to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and she called it 'Abdu'l-Bahá's home. She recalled how 'Abdu'l-Bahá came to the Pilgrim House when she was on pilgrimage as a young girl in the Holy Land and told her to transfer her things to His house saying "that my place was in His house and not there!" She soon made a lot of friends for the Bahá'í Cause and the community began to have wonderful meetings in their new Center, her apartment. Due to her age her health began to deteriorate a few months after her arrival in Guayaquil and she had to be hospitalized. She made a speedy recovery but soon fell ill again. Finally she recognized and accepted the fact that she should be around someone who could take care of her when she did not feel well. Her family who was pioneering in Brazil wanted her to return there and live with them or go to Colombia as a pioneer where she could be cared for by the devoted pioneer, Habib Rezvani. They both had pioneered in Brazil and she simply adored him as if he was her son; he visited her in Ecuador. She had learned to love the believers in Guayaquil and felt that she was needed there and appreciated. The believers loved her and responded to her great love for the Faith and for them. A number of them became quite active because of her gentle "coercion" and enjoyed it and her.

Since she was reluctant to talk about her self and her background, it might be of interest for many of the friends who worked with her and cared for her to know that she was the first Persian girl to go to the United States to receive her education and to take off the *chadur* (veil). 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave her permission to go to the United States to study and it was her intent to return to Irán when she finished her education and dedicate herself to the education of Persian women. She arrived in New York on June 3, 1911 at 22 years old. Dr. Susan Moody (she was a Bahá'í and an American doctor living in Irán at the request of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to serve the Persian women) arranged for a friend in Chicago to act as young Ghodsea's hostess.

She travelled to Liverpool with Dr. Lotfulláh Ḥakím and from London to New York with Mr. Luis Gregory who was returning from the Holy Land from his pilgrimage. Dr. Ḥakím would later become a member of the first Universal House of Justice and Mr. Gregory would become the first Negro to be named Hand of the Cause of God. Being the first Persian girl to come to the United States to study, she naturally received extensive newspaper publicity. She arrived in time to attend the First Annual Conference of the Persian-American Educational Society. She was also invited by President and Mrs. Taft to their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. Thus she was the first Iranian woman to be invited to the White House and as a result many important women in Washington, D. C. gave parties for her. In a personal interview the distinguished and well-beloved Bahá'í

and poetess, Mrs. Shokat Ardjomand of Tehran, who now resides in Ecuador, was a close friend of Dr. Ashraf for many years in Iran and in a personal interview she recalled that:

Once in the United States she (Dr. Ashraf) lived with a woman in Chicago who was close to several Covenant-breakers. This woman continually belittled Ghodsea, making life very difficult for her. Then when Ghodsea met 'Abdu'l-Bahá on April 29, 1912, He asked her to be patient with her landlady and assured her that soon she would be free. When 'Abdu'l-Bahá returned to Washington, D. C., Mrs. Parsons, the wife of a senator, begged Him to allow her to serve him. He suggested that she accept Ghodsea as her own daughter and support her until her studies were finished. She willingly did so, bringing her to live near her home and paying all of her expenses for the rest of her stay in the States. During the nine years she was in the United States, she was five months in the home of the woman in Chicago and the rest of the time in the care of Mrs. Parsons.

When she returned to Irán, the Ministry of Education would not accept her degrees because she was a Bahá'í. She was very disappointed at first but it turned out to be a blessing as she could devote all of her time to the Faith. She organized a committee for the progress of women, the first of its kind, and she spent nine years working for her sisters in Irán. In 1956 she felt that she was redundant in Irán as many women had arisen to encourage the development of women, so she decided to pioneer to Brazil...

Dr. Ashraf came to Ecuador from Brazil and when she left Ecuador she went to Colombia to pioneer. The believers in Ecuador were happy to have had a descendent of two of the Letters of the Living to come so far to help in the development of the Faith in this country. Because of poor health she returned to Irán about 1967(?), where she passed away a few years thereafter, the exact date we do not know, but she is still remembered and deeply loved.

First Pioneers settle city of Cuenca³

On August 31, 1959, Frank and Eda Rae Keith arrived in Guayaquil enroute to their new pioneer post in Cuenca. On September 13, Cecile Hargis arrived and on the 15th, two days later, the three left Guayaquil for Cuenca and that city thereby received its first Bahá'í pioneers. The Keiths had been in the pioneer field since 1953 in Central America. However, learning of the greater need at this time in Ecuador, they offered to come help prepare for its first independent National Spiritual Assembly. Miss Hargis states, "...It was a letter from the Hands of the Cause read at the 1959 Annual Convention in Wilmette which motivated me to volunteer to go wherever I might serve the Cause." Upon their arrival they were delighted to learn that the first believer of Cuenca was now residing there, Manuel Ignacio Rodriguez. Señor Rodriguez accepted the Faith in Quito and in November, 1950 he transferred to Guayaquil; there is no record as to when he returned to his native city of Cuenca. However he kept in contact with the Bahá'ís from time to time and he was receiving his Bahá'í Bulletin. One day he read in the bulletin that pioneers were scheduled to arrive in his city, which made him very happy as he had written to the Regional Committee that he hoped pioneers would be sent to his city and that he felt sure the people were receptive to the Teachings, at least the ones whom he had spoken with but his knowledge was quite limited.

The records do not reveal when Cuenca received its first Bahá'í visitor or teacher, but it is known that when Sr. Rodriguez visited his hometown he tried to teach his friends and eventually succeeded in introducing some to the Faith and two became Bahá'ís sometime after the pioneers arrived. When a teaching committee was established in Guayaquil in 1956 some of the devoted, staunch believers such as Alberto Carbo and Luis Arguello and others from Guayaquil did make teaching trips there.

On October 9, 1959 the four believers officially declared themselves a Bahá'í Group, which was an historical occasion!

The pioneers received job offers the first day of their arrival in Cuenca at the United States Information Service Cultural Center as teachers of English. They naturally accepted and the next day the Center advertised that three new North American teachers would be teaching there. Thus began their trials and tests, for immediately this announcement drew attacks from the Archbishop of Cuenca against the Cultural Center, the Lutheran Mission and the Bahá'ís. The Lutherans were starting a kindergarten there. The Bishop in his article threatened the Catholics if they sent their children to the North Americans, who were not Catholics, to learn English. In a pioneer report by Mrs. Keith she informed the Committee:

The principal of the Centro (Cultural Center) came to visit us the same morning (that the article appeared in the newspaper) and we showed him the article. We told him that we refused to teach if we were going to have problems with the Catholic Church. We told him we were not Catholics but we did not intend to teach our religion in the Centro Cultural - we

intended to teach English. He was very concerned and said that we must teach or they would have to close the Centro Cultural. He apologized for the article by the Archbishop.

A few days later on October 26, 1959, the pioneers informed the Regional Assembly of current events:

We are certainly going through a Divine Comedy here in Cuenca. Here is the latest report - the Archbishop has put out an edict that the private catholic schools may not hire foreigners to teach who are not catholics.

The pioneers however soon won the admiration and respect of their students. Two of Frank's students were asked to take over his classes of English at Colegio Borja but they refused on the grounds that they were good friends and did not wish to hurt him. One of them told the priest that if the Archbishop continued to persecute the Bahá'ís he himself would write to the Pope and "tell him what the Archbishop is doing and ask him how he hopes to unite the religions of Christianity when his archbishops are doing things like this." The report continues:

The student came directly from the priest's office and told Frank the story. Things at the moment seem to be pretty calm...and the priests here have just been wonderful to him (Frank). Also there has been no public opposition to the Faith or to us. But as you say, opposition is always good and it has been the means of three people getting the message who probably would not have if the Archbishop had not opposed us. Our classes are increasing in numbers, each class at the Centro Cultural. The word is being passed around that we are good teachers. THANK GOD".

Later, Frank won a contest to teach English in the Normal College, but they were informed that the Minister of Education in the Capital held up the contract and the person who finally received the contract was the person who won fourth place. The pioneers wrote to the Assembly:

We heard that the director of Normal received a telegram from the President ...saying that he did not want Frank in that position but did not give any reasons. Everyone seems to be of the opinion that it is because Frank is not a Catholic. There were two very strong editorial protests against the Archbishop regarding the matter. One in the 'Mercurio' and the other in 'El Tiempo'.

To write such editorial took courage during this epoch, and it is amazing that in so short a period of time the pioneers received such wonderful response and support from the public.

The persecution opened many doors for them to teach their Faith. They soon reported that "our Firesides keep increasing with each new pioneer that arrives." Soon after the arrival of pioneers Patricia and George Conger there were two Firesides weekly with 17 and 18 or

more inquirers. There were doctors, lawyers, college professors and students, and even one of the men who wrote one of the articles about the contest in the Normal College, came to inquire about the Faith. He said that the answers that he received to his questions were the most sensible answers that he had ever heard come out of any religion! The attack from the Archbishop also was conducive to inquiries from the ex-Governor of the Province and the Consul-General of Guayaquil regarding the Faith.

On January 14, 1960 the small group of Cuenca happily welcomed the new pioneers George and Patricia Conger, who, at the time of the writing of this history, are still at their post in Cuenca. Grove Becker, Freydoun and Vida Monadjem arrived in March. With the arrival of these pioneers the Assembly was assured. Then on April 21, 1960 the first local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Cuenca was formed by joint declaration. The members of the first Assembly were all pioneers except for the one native believer. The members of the first Spiritual Assembly of Cuenca were:

*Freydoun Monadjem
Eda Rae Keith
George Conger
Frank Keith
Manuel Ignacio Rodriguez*

*Cecile Hargis
Grove Becker
Patricia Conger
Vida Mohadjem*

This new Assembly was overjoyed when within a month's time they were privileged to enroll two new believers, José (Pepe) Guerrero and José Rodrigo León. Thus began the growth of the Faith in Cuenca and it has continued to be one of the more progressive Bahá'í communities in Ecuador.

The 1960's - Preparation for the first National Convention of Ecuador - Signs of defection

At the beginning of 1960 there were only two local Assemblies and 58 believers in the whole country. Therefore, every effort was made by the Regional National Assembly and its teaching committees to strengthen the existing communities and establish new assemblies to support the new National Assembly which would be formed in Ecuador in 1961. The goal was to have no less than four assemblies in the country as pillars for the incoming National Body. With the aid of the National Assembly of the United States and its Western Hemisphere Teaching Committee pioneers were sent as rapidly as possible to assure Assemblies in Cuenca and Otavalo. There were Assemblies in Quito and Quayaquil and they were far from being strong. In their endeavour to accomplish their goal the teaching committees sponsored weekend schools and national and regional teaching conferences to deepen the believers during the year. There were a number of visitors who came to help, foremost were the Hand of the Cause of God Dr. Hermann Grossman, Auxiliary Board members Mrs. Gayle Woolson and Rangveld Taetz; they visited and spoke in various communities. The Guayaquil community was honored on February 19, 1961 to have the Ex-Ambassador to the United Nations

from Ecuador to come to hear Mr. Taetz speak. The Ambassador, Dr. José Vicente Trujillo spoke with Mr. Taetz after his talk about his role in helping the Bahá'í representative to the United Nations, Mrs. Mildred Mottahedeh, save the lives of the Persian believers in Iran. He asked that the Bahá'ís keep in touch with him as he had a deep interest in the Bahá'í Faith. Mrs. Mottahedeh had conversed with him about the Faith on several occasions in New York. There were also weekly radio programs sponsored by the Guayaquil community. The Otavalo community through extension teaching witnessed the declaration of 13 indigenous believers in Vagabundo, which assured Ecuador of its first all Indian assembly in April, thereby fulfilling a cherished desire of the Guardian of the Faith.

It seems that the first believer of the Galapagos Islands, Professor Moyses Mosquera was destined to play a major role in the protection of the Faith in his native country. He was always an isolated believer and was often very lonely for Bahá'í fellowship he said. When the Regional Teaching Committee discovered his whereabouts in the mid-1950's and began corresponding with him he was overjoyed and thereafter when he came to Quito on his vacations to visit his family he would also visit the Bahá'í Center. Here is an excerpt from a report he wrote early in 1961 after attending a Bahá'í meeting in Quito one night, about what happened after he arrived there:

The Community of Quito, with Guillermo Sotomayor as its head, has decided and has recognized Mason Remy as the Guardian, and Sotomayor has written to Mason Remy and offered to spread his claim and form a community and to be a pioneer, with subsistence, and offered to travel to the United States and all of South America. Since he is a great talker, he has convinced the poor possessed ones who have listened; they are Alfonso Peñaherrera, and his father, wife and children, ... (and another believer and his wife and daughter), Jorge Efraim Paez and his wife, in a word, all the Quito Community.

I was animated with the desire to hear something good, to pray with the friends, etc., I was stupid enough to go on Saturday night. But what a surprise! the first thing they asked me was, 'What do you think about the Guardian? What do you have to say about it?' They showed me some circulars which they said they had kept hidden from Gayle Woolson (the Auxiliary Board member). Well the discussion began with shouting, screaming, contradictions, with consultation here readings there, referring to the texts, etc.

The upshot was that they were always trying to get me to accept Mason Remy as the new anointed Guardian and considered those of us who did not accept him as Covenant-breakers, in short there was chaos. I told them - Look gentlemen, until now I have been following religiously the precepts of Bahá'u'lláh ... I had advice beforehand that we should not continue talking about Mason Remy, but if you all are with him, you can count me out. If it is necessary to resign from the Faith, then give it to me in writing and I will sign that I have resigned from the Bahá'í Faith and declare myself a free thinker, an atheist or whatever

except a Bahá'í follower of Mason Remy. It is true that there were some who desired to appease me, always trying to convince me, but I said, GOODBYE! I immediately wrote to David Beckett a pioneer the news - now its finished and we are going to Naranjal (he was referring to his wife and himself).⁴

Moyses was invited to attend the first National Convention of the Bahá'ís in Ecuador but due to his bad experiences he declined the invitation. He felt that if the subject came up regarding the Remy claim and he was there as a witness to the scenes in the Bahá'í Center regarding this man, that this would lead to a division in the community which would be unfortunate. However, the Regional Assembly and the National Teaching Committee assured him that his presence was needed and would be invaluable - therefore he attended.

Earlier in the year one of the members of the National Teaching Committee, Mr. Freydoun Monadjem, made two trips to Quito, first to attend a weekend school and the second time in February 1961, for the National Teaching Conference. He said that he felt it was a duty to share with the National Teaching Committee what he had observed and heard in Quito while talking with some Bahá'í friends. One of these friends was Moyses Mosquera and that is when he realized that there were grave problems in the community:

*The Community is divided into so called majority and minority sections. they have problems about the Guardianship, that has led them to a grave situation. On the reception night of the National Teaching Conference, we were talking with the friends trying to find a teacher among those who were present in the Conference and especially from the friends in Quito, to teach the theme of "The Institution of the Hands of the Cause and the Universal House of Justice."*⁵

Mr. Monadjem related that the person who had been assigned this subject was unable to attend the Conference and that Sr. Sotomayor insisted that this subject could not be handled by the members of the Quito Community "because all of them have problems in this respect..."

The only member of this community, according to Sr. Sotomayor, who doesn't have problems in this respect is Miss Gayle Woolson who at this time was not in Quito. Because Sotomayor spoke of unity and keeping quiet 'until due time', one of the believers, referred to him as a 'traitor'.⁵

He spoke of how during the whole congress and even in the public meetings, the strange feeling of uncertainty, disunity, disagreement and absence of love was evident within the Quito community. While lamenting the situation he continued his report:

We are in the very near future going to have our own National Spiritual Assembly in Ecuador, while the capital community is so sick. This situation to my deepest grief, is endangering the whole National Community.⁵

The report revealed that the Quito community was divided into two factions, namely, "pro-Gayle" and "contra-Gayle". The "contra-Gayle" party had direct communication with Tony Fillon (Covenant-breaker). When the National Assembly received a copy of his report which was addressed to the National Teaching Committee, they asked if he would return to Quito later to investigate the feasibility of having the Convention there and to observe the general conditions of the community at the time.

Mr. Monadjem returned to Quito and on March 31, 1961 he reported that Sr. Sotomayor had direct contact with Mason Remy and had been appointed by him as his representative in South America; "and he has converted other members of the community such as Alicia and Jorge Paez, Sr. and Sra. Penaherrera, Jr., who are members of the local Assembly of Quito and thus the majority of the Assembly are believers in the false claim of Remy." His report continues:

They have decided to stop the formation of the convention and the National Spiritual Assembly. It seems to me that it is not at all convenient and wise to have the convention in Quito. because the enemies will do everything they can to stop it, and maybe we can't have any publicity here. So I suggest that the convention be held in Guayaquil... I studied the approved registered By-Laws of the Quito Assembly and it is not at all conforming with the By-Laws approved by the Guardian.

He further reported that the By-Laws which were registered and approved by the Government were written in such a way that this group could take over all the belongings of the Faith including the National Ĥazira, Temple Land, etc., "because they have the majority vote!" He continued,

Moreover according to this (the By-Laws) they have the right, and the government has approved it, of establishing centers all through Ecuador... Using this they have terrible plans for the already established centers in Ecuador... Guillermo said he is a good friend of the newly appointed Minister of the Government so if he knows that we are taking action on our statutes he will stop it. Also with his influence he has mentioned that pioneers should be sent out of the country and let the administration grow on a natural basis rather than an artificial basis!

Two days later Mr. Monadjem with Auxiliary Board member Mrs. Woolson, who had just returned to the country, met with some members of the community and found that "the situation has changed after continuous effort, study and prayers." After hours of discussion they (the discontents) did not clearly state that they believed "Remy was the Guardian", but before the discussion it seemed that they did believe it. He felt that this change made the seemingly hopeless situation look better and that under the present circumstances the committee could proceed with arrangements for the convention to be held in Quito.

FIRST BAHÁ'Í ANNUAL NATIONAL CONVENTION OF ECUADOR⁶

The first annual National Convention of the Bahá'ís of Ecuador took place in Quito on April 24 - 26, 1961. The purpose of this historic event was to elect the first independent National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Ecuador, an event which the Guardian stated in connection with the election of the 21 independent National Spiritual Assemblies in 1961, would be "the last stage in the administrative evolution of the Faith throughout Latin America."

The Hand of the Cause of God, Hasan Balyuzi, was present representing the Hands of the Faith in the Holy Land. Being aware of the smouldering enmity and the raging fury roaring in the breasts of the discontents, and which had been manifested in previous meetings, the Hand of the Cause of God requested all the delegates to sign a document declaring their loyalty to the Cause and to the Hands of the Faith. Mr. Balyuzi and the delegates were well aware of the possibility that attempts to disrupt the Convention to prevent the election of the National Spiritual Assembly could be made by the supporters of Remy's unsubstantiated claim.

The nine delegates to this Convention were:

From Cuenca:	Freydoun Manadjem	From Quito:	Gayle Woolson
	Khalil'u'llah Behjati		Guillermo Sotomayor
			Jorge Efrain Paez
From Guayaquil:	Juan Luis Aguirre T.		
	Alberto Carbo M.	From Otavalo	Raúl Pavón M.
	Luis Martinez B.		

The Convention was officially opened with prayers. Then prayers were offered in commemoration of the first pioneer to Ecuador, the one who brought the Bahá'í Faith to this country Mr. John Pope Stearns. Prayers for the Hand of the Cause of God, Mr. Horace Holley, who had helped to develop the Faith in South America as secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, and for the Hands of the Cause. Mrs. Clara Dunn and Mrs. Corrine True, who had recently passed away.

The representatives for the sponsoring outgoing Regional National Spiritual Assembly of Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela were Mrs. Dorothy Campbell and Mrs. Gayle Woolson.

The elected officers of the Convention were Sr. Juan Luis Aguirre T., Chairman and Mrs. Gayle Woolson Secretary. The election took place in a prayerful atmosphere and the following believers were elected to the National Assembly for 1961 - 1962.

<i>Freydoun Monadjem, Chairman</i>	<i>David Beckett</i>
<i>Guillermo Sotomayor, Vice Chairman</i>	<i>Patricia Conger</i>
<i>Dorothy Campbell, Secretary of Correspondence</i>	<i>Juan Luis Aguirre</i>

Raúl Pavón, Recording Secretary
Khalilu'llah Bihjati, Treasurer

Gayle Woolson

The following cable was sent from the Convention to the Hands of the Faith in the World Centre:

HANDSFAITH HAIFA ISRAEL

April 24, 1961

DELEGATES VISITORS FIRST HISTORIC CONVENTION ECUADOR EXPRESS DEEPEST GRATITUDE MOMENTOUS MESSAGES REJOICED GREAT TRIUMPHS DETERMINED INCREASE EFFORTS ACHIEVE ASSIGNED TASKS DEEPLY APPRECIATE GENEROUS CONTRIBUTIONS HANDSFAITH AND AMELIA COLLINS. DELEGATES UNANIMOUSLY PLEDGE UNRESERVED LOYALTY HANDSFAITH

CONVENTION

The Hands of the Cause responded:

OVERJOYED LOYALTY DETERMINATION ECUADOR BELIEVERS PRAYING SHRINES UNPRECEDENTED VICTORIES

HANDSFAITH

Thus the concerted and historic endeavours of the institutions of the Faith, of the early pioneers who suffered immensely for this moment, and of the steadfast travelling teachers both national and international, were crowned with success in spite of the many setbacks and obstacles which arose over the years to impede their efforts. Their unconquerable spirit and reliance on the sustaining grace of the Founder of the Faith, imbued them with the driving force that was necessary to achieve their hard-earned sacred goal, the "last stage of (its) administrative evolution through the election of (its) independent National Spiritual Assembly."

This new body was welcomed into the fold with warm greetings from National Spiritual Assemblies as far away as Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to Barcelona, Spain; Karachi, Pakistan to Paris, France and from Bevedere, Tunis to New South Wales, Australia. There were beautiful messages of joy and happiness from the Hands of the Cause of God, from more than 24 National Spiritual Assemblies and a host of individuals and friends. Among the many inspiring letters received was one that came in March 1961 from the National Spiritual Assembly of Italy and Switzerland which was quite moving, we cite :

Dear Friends;

This is truly a year of "PILLARS" in our beloved Faith -- PILLARS of stone and steel, rising in three new Houses of Worship -- PILLARS of spiritual power, rising, 21 strong, in Latin America, and destined to bulwark the first Universal House of Justice in the history of mankind.

How blessed you are to be playing a part in this stirring drama! How grateful we are that you have brought yet another ardent wish of our beloved Guardian to complete realization!

Be assured of our loving prayers for the confirmations of Bahá'u'lláh as your newly erected Assembly advances toward ever greater victories!

These messages were as soothing balm to the pains being suffered, caused by the mechanism of the imminent Covenant-breakers, and which prevented the Convention from having the happy, relaxed atmosphere which makes birth easier. However, now the few devoted staunch Bahá'ís were destined to arise and attain even greater achievements during the years ahead, through the reinforcement of their labor by their very own independent, divinely-ordained, recently born institution to guide them.

The new Assembly needed to establish the institution of the National Fund immediately as outlined by the Guardian. This fund was initiated by a \$1,000 contribution from the Institution of the Hands of the Cause, \$1,000 from Mrs. Amelia Collins and \$900 from the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States "in loving appreciation of the great spiritual victory which has been won." The Bahá'í Publishing Trust of the United States presented the new National Assembly with a book by Shoghi Effendi, Messages to the Bahá'í World, 1950 - 1957, its first book for the National Library.

Sr. Pacora Bluemountain, the first Indian of Inca descent to accept the Bahá'í Faith, had arrived as a pioneer to Ecuador a short time before the Convention and was present at this historic event. He presented the National Assembly with a bowl which was given to him by Saffa and Vafa Kenney, his spiritual parents in New York, he was told that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had used it (it is presumed that 'Abdu'l-Bahá used this beautiful dish when he visited the Kenney home in New York).

Although the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador was born in adversity and it was tested by the smouldering fire of animosity, of treachery, of backbiting and of lies which caused acute anguish to this newborn institution and its handful of faithful followers, having been guided by the Chief Stewards of the Cause, the Hands of the Cause of God, they achieved victories far beyond their expectation. But the days immediately preceding the formation of the Assembly were days of stress and tension.

Unfortunately, the Hand of the Cause Mason Remey, had visited a number of the embryonic Latin American communities not long after the Faith was established in these areas. Many of the neophyte believers were very impressed with his erudition. Therefore when he contended that he should be named successor to the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi based on unjustified reasoning and unsubstantiated and well-nigh stupid evidence This man sent out what he called "encyclical letters" to Assemblies, the backbone of the Bahá'í communities, new Bahá'ís and many individual Assembly members "declaring himself the guardian".

When the Hands of the Cause in the World Centre received a report regarding the situation in Quito and that there was a possibility that the local Spiritual Assembly of Quito would be lost due to sympathizers of Mason Remey, they sent in four pioneers, Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Schechter (Mr. Schechter is now a Counsellor) and Mr. and Mrs. William Sears, Jr. (Mr. Sears is the son of the Hand of the Cause, Mr. William Sears), so that there would be a sufficient number of firm believers to elect the Assembly - a much needed pillar for the new incoming National Spiritual Assembly.

These four pioneers who were sent to assure that there would be a local Assembly in Quito, since five members of the Assembly leaned toward Remey, were not allowed to participate in the local election even though their international credentials and letters of transfer were in order, besides being accompanied to the meeting on election night by the Hand of the Cause Mr. Balyuzi, the secretary of the Regional National Assembly, Mrs. Campbell and the Auxiliary Board member, Mrs. Gayle Woolson. Led by Sotomayor, an emergency Assembly meeting was called and it was decided that since the voting list had already been made up previous to the election, these people could not participate! Thus the Assembly denied them membership in the community with this decision and they could not legally participate in the election.

The First Meeting of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Ecuador

On April 24, 1961 the new National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Ecuador held its first meeting with the Hand of the Cause, Mr. Hasan Balyuzi present representing the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land. In this meeting, it was brought out that the Vice-Chairman, Guillermo Sotomayor, had Covenant-breakers' material in his possession from different parts of the world. This man was also the chairman of the local Spiritual Assembly of Quito and was the instigator in the refusal to allow the names of the newly arrived pioneers, Schechters and Sears, to be added to the voting list for participation in the election of the Assembly. There were some irregularities found after the election - it was learned by the National Assembly that one of the tellers showed the ballots to another believer, Sotomayor, so that he would know who did not vote for him, etc.

Mr. Monadjem, the chairman of the National Spiritual Assembly informed the Assembly that Sotomayor had related to him the manner in which the Assembly of Quito would convey the "new truth" to new believers. The Vice-Chairman contended that he could not recall making such a statement on the night referred to, but this was nothing new, for he had expressed himself in like manner on various occasions. He promised the Assembly that he would not continue to talk about the matter but if he decided to talk later, he would inform the National Assembly twenty-four hours in advance and he "would not proceed in an underhand or secret manner".

Mr. Balyuzi advised the Assembly to contact all believers and request any and all correspondence received by them from Mason Remy or his followers. Then, Mr. Sotomayor admitted to having received mail from Covenant-breakers. Before the meeting adjourned, he turned over to the Assembly letters, articles and part of a book he had received from this group.

On May 14, 1961 the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land wrote to the National Assembly thus,

The nine members of your Assembly so greatly honored and richly blessed through being elected to the first historic National Body of that country have a unique opportunity to rise to new heights of service, to enthuse through the love and unity animating them, the hearts of all the believers in that country, and to carry on the work of the Crusade given to us by our beloved Guardian until every objective is won and all his hopes fulfilled.

We thank Mr. Sotomayor for turning over to us the material enumerated in your letter, and which you will be forwarding to us shortly. It is a great pity that the Ecuador Community should have been troubled by the efforts of a few misguided and disaffected persons to disrupt the faith of the believers on the eve of their great step forward as an independent National Bahá'í Community within the world-wide Bahá'í family. However, we must expect these tests; as the beloved Guardian so clearly demonstrated in "God Passes By" every crisis in the Faith has led to greater victories, and every effort to create a schism has proved futile. Were it not the will of the Guardian, his work could under no circumstances have gone forward in such a miraculous way since his passing. His blessings are seen on every side, and we all rejoice with thankful hearts.

You may be sure in our visits to the holy Shrines we will pray for the success of the work of your Assembly, and that each and every one of you may be assisted to serve Bahá'u'lláh and the Community of His followers in that country.

With warmest Bahá'í love,

*In the service of the beloved Guardian,
HANDS OF THE CAUSE IN THE HOLY LAND.*

Guayaquil was also troubled by the Remy claim and its effect among some of the believers in the Community. On March 27, 1961 Sr. Luis Martinez B., long time, devoted secretary of the Guayaquil Assembly, wrote to the Regional Assembly for advice regarding Sr. Luis A. Penaherrera A., who was in Guayaquil and "has presented a denouncement regarding the campaign that is being realized in Quito by some members of that Community in support of the Declaration of Sr. Charles Mason Remy as the second Guardian of the Cause of God." It was further explained that Sr. Penaherrera was asking for their moral and economic collaboration, i.e., in the sense that the Guayaquil Community would help to defray his living expenses and his trip there and back to Quito. He said he had prepared a

study outline to counteract the campaign in favor of Remy. This Sr. Peñaherrera was the same man who back in 1954, according to a letter from the Quito Assembly to the Regional National Spiritual Assembly dated February 3, 1954, was causing problems by wanting to express "his views and desire to write 'a work' against the Bahá'í Faith based on the Baptists' books." He was an evangelist before he became a Bahá'í.

It should be noted how insidiously far-reaching, how rapid and virulent disaffection from the Cause of God can be, for in the next session of the National Assembly meeting, Sotomayor told the Assembly that he had correspondence in his possession from Covenant-breakers in Spain, Venezuela, Colombia, Pakistan, England and Australia, and that he had circulated copies of Remy's proclamation to four other believers, but he refused to give their names. He agreed to turn over all this correspondence to the Assembly except those he considered of a personal nature. All of this the new Assembly had to cope with wisely in order to preserve and protect the Faith and its followers.

Early Indian Teaching - A Recapitulation

You must attach great importance to the Indians, the original inhabitants of America. For these souls may be likened unto the ancient inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula....

'Abdu'l-Bahá

One of the most important chapters in the history of the Bahá'í Faith in Ecuador is when the Bahá'í Message was carried to the Indians of this country during the mid-1950's by members of the Regional Teaching Committee; Señores Luis Arguello, Gayle Woolson, Martha Nuñez, Arturo Cifuentes and Jorge Paez. Records of the Teaching Committee reveal that the first visit to the Otavalo/Ibarra area was in 1954, but it is not noted what transpired on this (or these) visit(s). However, in early January 1955 a Señor Oswaldo Orbe and his brother were visiting Quito where they came in contact with Señor Arguello; he talked with them about the Bahá'í Faith and they invited him to visit Otavalo to talk more about it. Then on February 13, 1955, Señor Arguello and Gayle Woolson made a five day teaching trip to Ibarra and Otavalo - the brothers were helpful by introducing them to friends.

On this visit Gayle was invited to speak at three different high schools in Otavalo where she addressed about 300 students and teachers. She also spoke later in Club Otavalo, where three different social and sports clubs collaborated in sending out invitations to their members. In Ibarra, Mrs. Woolson spoke at the Hotel Turismo to a group of professors, school directors and a judge, Dr. Francisco Moncayo, who showed a great deal of interest in the Faith and asked for a book to read. She also spoke there in three different high schools to over 250 teachers and students. Mrs. Woolson personally corresponded with over 25 of these students and teachers for a year or more on a very regular basis in spite of the multitudinous duties she had to perform.⁷

As a result of that particular trip, Gayle received three inquiries from people who were interested in studying the Faith and they also inquired as to how to become a Bahá'í. As a matter of fact some other people who heard her speak, not students or teachers, expressed their desire to become Bahá'ís and made inquiries as to what procedure one must follow to be accepted. The records do not reveal whether they ever became Bahá'ís, it seems that the standard phrase was "you should study a little more." Because of the extraordinary amount of red tape during those days, it appears that the spirit of a number of individuals cooled before the committee, who was responsible for enrolling new Bahá'ís ever got around to accepting the inquirers! Later this came to the attention of the Hands of the Cause of God in the Holy Land and they made an effort to alleviate the situation.

First Bahá'í of Otavalo

On April 5, 1957 Sr. César Vasquez Fuller of Otavalo accepted the Bahá'í Faith, and he was the first Bahá'í of that city. He had opened his home for Bahá'í meetings even before he accepted the Faith. In March 1957, there was a public meeting in his home with 30 indigenous present; and during this same visit to Otavalo, through the courtesy of a Dr. Carlos Carillo, an admirer of the Faith, the teaching team held a meeting in the Parroquia of Monserrate with 10 indigenous present - eight of the ten gave their names to form a sports club and to learn to read and write. The Regional Teaching Committee reported on February 16, 1957 that members of their committee, on three different teaching trips to Otavalo, had contact with some indigenous youth. The first time was in the Central Park where they had the opportunity to converse with them; the second time, they spoke to them about the Faith, but felt that they did not comprehend, therefore, on the third occasion, they spoke to them both in Spanish and their native tongue Quechua. Also on the third trip they were privileged to speak on radio in Spanish and Quechua about the Faith. After this the committee decided to concentrate their attention on Otavalo and ask the National Assembly for pioneers to settle in the area. The 30 indigenous who heard about the Faith in the home of Señor Vasquez in March, are the same ones the Guardian wrote and asked about shortly before he passed away on September 11, 1957 (see Indian Teaching Begins in Otavalo 1957).⁷

During 1955 and 1956 there were many teaching trips made to Ibarra and Otavalo. In October 1956, Señores Martha Nuñez, Arturo Cifuentes and Jorge Paez made contact with a few indigenous in Otavalo proper and in the village of Quiroga. The four indigenous from Otavalo were: Germanico Hermoza, Cesar Hermoza, Hugo Hermoza and Oswaldo Hermoza, and those of Quiroga were: Luis Guevara, Alfonso Arias, Nelson Haro, Mesias H. Echeverria, Rogoberto Guevara, Antonio Mora, Manuel Arias, Medardo Vacay and Milton Guevara. On October 17, 1956, the Teaching Committee for the five countries of the North and South, wrote, "It seems to us that there is more hope in developing a Bahá'í Group in Otavalo, where there is land for a future summer school and where there

are more contacts, including some indigenous; therefore, we suggest that you concentrate on that goal for the rest of the year." Details of the activities with the indigenous thereafter are not recorded (or perhaps they were lost or destroyed) There seems to have been a hiatus in the work for about a year from 1958 to late 1959 after pioneers began to arrive in the region.

Preparation for Mass Conversion in Ecuador

The first foreign pioneers to arrive in Otavalo were David and Mary Beckett and their little children Harriett, Rosemary, David Jr. and Joyce in June 1959. In August, Marian (Kit) Goldstein came and Dorothy Campbell came for a short time for she had to return to Lima, the seat of the Regional National Spiritual Assembly of the five fore-mentioned countries because she was the secretary of this Assembly. Dorothy became known to all the children as Auntie Dorothy. In March 1960, Fred and Betty Kappus arrived with their small children, Tom, Nancy, Gail and Janet, and Lillian Middlemast, a Knight of Bahá'u'lláh. Cecile Hargis and Grove Becker transferred from Cuenca some months later to help out with the teaching work in Otavalo. Kit Goldstein, who was a professional school teacher from New York, was a blessing for the pioneer children. She was their dearly beloved teacher until she was asked by the National Assembly to transfer to Ibarra. Also Grove Becker was asked to transfer to that city in order to open up that area to the Faith and from where Grove could work the Chota, a Negro and campesino area. Grove's area of service was very difficult for a new pioneer. He was a musician and used his music to help spread the teachings throughout the Chota. A large part of the area is very, very poor and extremely dry - Grove referred to it as a place "where not a blade of grass or even a thistle grows." He was allowed to have a Bahá'í meeting at the telegraph office where there was "only the one light bulb in the village."

Jamshid and Zurra Meghnót were also pioneers in Otavalo arriving in late 1959 and he was also a member of the Regional National Assembly. Because Colombia was in desperate need of experienced Bahá'ís and had so few pioneers he and his wife transferred to that country in 1961. In 1963 he was declared a Covenant-breaker.

On April 21, 1960 the first local Spiritual Assembly of Otavalo was formed with the following members:

Mary Beckett
Fred Kappus
Lillian Middlemast
Marian (Kit) Goldstein
Jamshid Meghnót

David Beckett
Betty Kappus
Dorothy Campbell
Zurra Meghnót

These first pioneers who arrived in Otavalo were conscious of the Guardian's exhortations regarding teaching the Indians

and his desire to see all-Indian Assemblies established and his anxiety to see mass conversion started in these countries. The pioneers started out by trying to make friends with the Indians and showing them their love. The Kappus family had open house every Saturday. All the pioneers and children would go on picnics with the villagers around Lake San Pablo and other nearby areas. The Indians were often shy about coming to the house alone; therefore, one of the Kappus family or a new believer in the area, Señor Gonzalo León, would go to the market place and bring them to the Kappus' home on Saturdays. Betty related;

When we visited the Indians, if we could, we would try to help with whatever they were doing, shelling corn for example. Janet, our five year old daughter, was a big help. She would walk in and start working immediately helping with whatever they were doing or whatever she felt like. It helped to break the ice, of course wisdom was used. We felt that the most important thing was to show love in every way we could - even in the way we greeted them, 'Buenos días'.

Visitors, native teachers and pioneers, went to help with the teaching in the city and the surrounding area. Pacora Bluemountain, the first of the descendants of the Inca Indians to become a Bahá'í, who had come to Ecuador as a pioneer, enjoyed making teaching trips to Otavalo so that he could teach the Indians. They loved him very much and desired that he stay with them as their teacher. He was also a talented concert pianist and during a public meeting to proclaim the Faith in Otavalo, he too participated with a beautiful musical program.

I talked with some of the old pioneers and native teachers about what procedure they used to get mass conversion started in their respective areas. They confided that they prayed, meditated and pondered about how to go about beginning mass conversion for it was something one reads about happening in other parts of the Bahá'í world. But soon to join the pioneers and native teachers was another native believer, Raúl Pavón, who, as previously mentioned accepted the Faith in 1958. When asked how he got involved in mass teaching and what inspired him to do so, he said that he had caught the spirit of mass conversion from reading the Guardian's letters on the subject, and he felt inspired to try it in the campo (countryside). Initially he never thought about that there would be trials and failures before success came, he knew however, that one had to begin!

Raúl began literacy classes for the indigenous in 1960. He made the rounds to nine villages beside Vagabundo and Cotama where the first indigenous became Bahá'ís. He would first go the civil authorities in a village and introduce them to the Faith and receive permission to teach in the area; then, after receiving permission he would go to the school when there was a school available. He would tell the teachers that he was collaborating in a literacy campaign under the auspices of the Bahá'í World Faith! In cases where there was a school, he was permitted to have classes in the school, otherwise, someone would give the use of their home.

Then, little by little, and at first indirectly, he would introduce the Faith. The first nine villages where he held classes, and some were two hours apart by foot, were:

Pijal, Gualacata, Kaluquí, San Roque, Yacuchimba, Olmedo, Carabuela, Loma Gorda and Compañía

In November 1960, nine Indians from Angla/Vagabundo had accepted the Faith, gaining the distinction of being the first indigenous believers in the Country. Then in January 1961, eleven more enrolled from Vagabundo. Thus, at Ridvan, April 21, 1961, from this group was elected the first all-Indian local Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Ecuador!

FIRST ALL-INDIAN LOCAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY - VAGABUNDO, ECUADOR⁸

*Espiritu Quembia
Luis Cacuango
Felipe Anrango
Nicolas Quembia
Francisco Cacuango*

*Antonio Noquez
Rafael Perugachi
Segundo Curillo
Jose Maria Anrango*

On November 18, 1960, the National Spiritual Assembly wrote to the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land;

Our hearts are overflowing with joy and gratitude to Bahá'u'lláh for a great victory just won in our territory. We have nine Indians in Vagabundo, a village near Otavalo, Ecuador... they are not only the first Indian believers in Ecuador, but will form an all-Indian local Spiritual Assembly next Ridvan, the first in Ecuador and in all our territory.

This victory is the direct result of loving cooperation on the part of many Bahá'ís. Mrs. Lillian Middlemast (a Knight of Bahá'u'lláh), a North American pioneer who came to Otavalo in March to help us form the local Spiritual Assembly last Ridvan, had to return to the States because of ill health, but since she couldn't stay to serve, she offered \$50 a month to sustain a young Ecuadorian (homefront) pioneer, Raúl Pavón Mejía, so that he could go live in an Indian village and begin teaching the Faith there. He first began to teach them to read and write Spanish, then gave them the Message little by little. The other Bahá'ís in Otavalo have helped him with classes and now have a group of 17 Indians who come to the home of one of the Bahá'ís there (Fred and Betty Kappus) every Saturday to spend the day studying the Faith....

The Hands of the Cause responded:

We were delighted to hear of the progress of the work amongst the Indians as we cabled you...

Please convey on our behalf our deep appreciation of the services that have been rendered by the friends in that area to the Secretary of the Assembly of Otavalo. We will pray that they may continue, in

collaboration with the Indian believers, to spread the Faith amongst these original inhabitants of America, whom both 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi praised so highly."

And again on June 20, 1961 after the election of the first all-Indian Assembly they wrote:

Your country won a precious victory last year by establishing the first all-Indian community in the entire region of Northern North America at Vagabundo. We are anticipating the good news of a rapid spread of the Faith in this fertile field, and are hopeful that soon you may be vying with your fellow-believers in nearby Bolivia.

Sr. Julio Hidrobo, a new believer of Otavalo, offered to go live in Vagabundo with the Indians to help in their daily activities, and teach them more about the Faith, in other words, to deepen their understanding of the Bahá'í Teachings. Later, Señor Hidrobo went to Cuenca as one of the first homefront pioneers to settle in another area. Raúl constantly travelled.

The pioneers in Otavalo felt humble and spiritually rewarded when on July 29, 1961, three indigenous, that is; mother, father and son, came from Carabuela to the home of Fred and Betty Kappus and asked if they could make their declaration of belief in Bahá'u'lláh! This sounds simple- but it is generally felt that only one who has had a similar experience can truly appreciate the heavenly fragrance of such an occasion!

National Haziratu'l-Quds in Hands of Discontents

When the National Spiritual Assembly was established in Ecuador, it was natural that they would need their National Headquarters which had been purchased for them by the Guardian Shoghi Effendi, the Hand of the Cause of God, Mrs. Millie Collins the devoted Bahá'í benefactress and the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States for their own offices. The local Assembly of Quito was permitted to have jurisdiction of it until such time as the National Assembly would be formed. The local Assembly had permitted a family to live there who was still occupying it and they would not vacate the premises nor would they turn the keys over to the National representative. In their desperate design to keep the National Haziratu'l-Quds, they pretended to be unable to find an apartment. When their scheme did not work after about three or four months, they moved and the National Assembly was able to set up its offices. This couple, Jorge and Alicia Paez were expelled from the Faith a short time later, because of their close association with Tony Fillón, a Covenant-breaker from Chile who visited them in their home in Quito. Tony's father became a Covenant-breaker in France and later his son Bernard, who also came to Ecuador to recruit followers for the Mason Remy cause.⁹

By June 1961, there was a calm, for a very short time, before the storm, as reflected in the following report of the National Assembly to the Hands of the Cause on June 29, 1961:

Since the Sears and the Schechters had originally been sent here to help in the crisis in the Quito Community, which no longer exists, we felt that we should consult with the Hands of the Western Hemisphere first to find out if they would permit them to stay on in Ecuador and help us with this teaching work for mass conversion....

It appears that they sincerely felt that the crisis was over in Quito even though a crisis had recently arisen in Guayaquil, which was the fountainhead of the Quito crisis. Nevertheless, the Assembly reported:

The crisis in the Quito Community, caused by a few of the believers who were disposed to accept Mason Remey, seems to have passed and we are confident that there will be no more difficulty on that score though we are alert to any recurrence. We are profoundly grateful to the Hands in the Holy Land and to the Hands in the Western Hemisphere for their prompt and wonderful help in this emergency.

Why such a decision was made is difficult to understand when they had received such unfavorable reports about Guayaquil, and the National Assembly had commissioned two of its members to go there to investigate the situation. Records reveal that the National Assembly and the Auxiliary Board member for Protection of the Cause were concerned about the activities in Guayaquil. It was in June a few days before the above report that the Assembly received a letter from pioneer, Pacora Bluemountain, who seemed to have an uncanny perception about Covenant-breakers and those who were wavering in the Faith, notifying them that the first Bahá'í of Ecuador, Eduardo (Les) Gonzalez, was openly proclaiming Remey's claim that he was the second Guardian and that he had offered a copy of his "encyclical letter" of proclamation to Alberto Carbo who had refused to accept it. Since Pacora was the pioneer in Guayaquil, Alberto consulted with him and Pacora immediately notified the National Assembly's secretary. The Assembly asked their secretary to accompany the Auxiliary Board member, Mrs. Gayle Woolson to investigate the matter. They left immediately and the Auxiliary Board member reported to the Hands of the Cause on July 3;

We met with the local Spiritual Assembly on the night of July 1st with the following quorum present: Alberto Carbo, Juan Luis Aguirre, Luis Martinez, Miguel Vargas and Pacora Blue Mountain. It was stated that Eduardo Gonzalez had talked to Alberto Carbo in which conversation Eduardo upheld Remey's claim. Alberto turned down what Eduardo had said and also Eduardo's offer to give him a copy of Remey's proclamation to read. After this conversation Alberto immediately informed Pacora, (the resident pioneer), and Pacora wrote Dorothy (the National Assembly secretary).

They sent a cable also to the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land stating:

WEEKEND TRIP GRAYAQUIL REVEALED INFLUENCE REMEY TWO BELIEVERS. BEG EXTENDED VISIT HAND. RECOMMEND TRANSFER SCHECHTERS GUAYAQUIL.

WOOLSONCAMPBELL

The week after the commission returned from Guayaquil, the local Assembly of that city wrote to the National Assembly notifying them that Eduardo Gonzalez was upholding the Remy claim and passing out his literature. He also had the key to the Assembly mailbox and was using the box to receive his Covenant-breaking material. Then on July 11, Alberto Carbo sent in a report corroborating the information the local Assembly had furnished:

The daring and abuse of Gonzales of having the correspondence of a Covenant-breaker like Mason Remy sent to the post office box of our Assembly has caused me to lose all patience with him. The fact that we took possession of one of the letters, as did the other day, which letter should have arrived in your hands, obliged us to take action about this... Today he went to see (two believers), and at the same time is giving out Remy's proclamation material. Truly he is doing a lot of harm...."

In January 1961, Gonzalez and his wife wrote to the local Assembly of Guayaquil and asked to be considered inactive members of the community -they were members of the local Spiritual Assembly of Guayaquil. Further evidence also came to the attention of the National Assembly that Gonzalez and Sotomayor were aiding the Covenant-breakers. The Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land were notified and on July 20 they sent the following cable:

OWING CONTINUATION ACTIVITIES UNDERMINING INSTITUTIONS CAUSE GOD
SOTOMAYOR GONZALEZ EXPELLED FAITH ALL ASSOCIATION FORBIDDEN.

HANDSFAITH

Immediately the National Assembly secretary notified all the Bahá'ís in the country explaining to them what had happened and contacted all the National Assembly members and brought them up to date on the subject. Sotomayor had gone to Cuba supposedly for business purposes but information received from the Hands of the Cause revealed that he was in Cuba working against the Bahá'í Institutions and breaking the promise that he made to them that he would not talk about these things, i.e., "the new truth", which he was teaching before the Convention. Since Gonzalez had requested to be placed on the inactive list early in the year, he had already been replaced on the local Assembly of Guayaquil. But Sotomayor was a member of the National Spiritual Assembly and the local Assembly of Quito, therefore, he had to be replaced on both Assemblies. He was also the delegate from the Quito Community. The person who was next in line as delegate soon lost his voting rights. The Hands of the Cause sympathized very much with this baby Community and on behalf of the Hands in the Western Hemisphere Mr. Khádem wrote on August 6, 1961:

In spite of our great sorrow for the grave test which ended with Sotomayor and Gonzalez's expulsions from the Faith, we recall the beloved Guardian's words of great wisdom, when he pointed out that every test purifies the community, it casts away those who were not

sincere in the Cause of God and augments to the devotion and enthusiasm of those believers who are steadfast and devoted. The Faith as it has proven, always overcomes these tests and will be victorious.

In September two more members of the Bahá'í Community who lived in Quito were excommunicated from the Faith. The following cable explains:

OWING DISLOYAL DISRUPTIVE ATTACKS UNDERMINING INSTITUTIONS CAUSE
JORGE ALICIA PAEZ EXPELLED FAITH INFORM FRIENDS ECUADOR.

HANDSFAITH
September 19, 1961

There were now only a few active believers in Quito, for after the election of the National Assembly six believers were lost to the Community - two expelled from the Cause and four moved to other localities. Two had been expelled from Guayaquil. Mr. William Sears, Jr. was elected to replace Sotomayor on the local Assembly of Quito and Alberto Carbo to replace him on the National Assembly. The Sears and Schechters were asked to remain in Quito in case some of the five people who were inclined toward Remy were expelled and the local Assembly would be lost.

Helen Gonzalez, wife of Eduardo (Les) Gonzalez, was expelled from the Cause while they were living in Chile for her continued association with a Covenant-breaker. Evidently she was not sufficiently firm enough in her faith to completely separate herself from the Covenant-breaker, even though the Institutions of the Cause would have sustained her and her children until such time as she could have become self-sufficient; she elected to stay with her husband and later she died very broken and sad.

As of September 15, 1961, in spite of all the problems, the National Spiritual Assembly was able to report that there were 101 believers in the country, 29 of which were new believers for the year and 28 of these were indigenous—nine more believers to enroll than enrolled during the entire year of 1960. One all-Indian local Spiritual Assembly was established at Ridván, and the community of Otavalo now had 12 adult members and one youth. Also at Ridván of 1961 there was only one native believer in the community and by September there were nine.

By November 1961, it seems that the worst of the agitators had either been expelled from the Faith or lost their voting rights for lesser infractions. And there was a general feeling that there would be no more problems with Covenant-breakers in Quito, for in spite of all the problems they had the Faith really began to grow both in the campo and in the cities. By now there were 13 active believers in the Quito Community alone!

On November 16, 1961, the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land wrote to the National Spiritual Assembly:

... The loyalty and steadfastness of the friends everywhere in the service of the Ten Year Crusade is one of the signs of the power of the Covenant, and particularly so when it comes from an area in which misguided souls have tried to lead the friends astray. We pray that the Bahá'ís of Quito may progress from strength to strength and that their Assembly may become an ever firmer pillar of the National Assembly, which is a pillar of the Universal House of Justice.

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

Although we have mentioned the unpleasant things first in this section, they were by no means the most important things but rather the most unpleasant that one likes to be rid of. Nor were they the first items on the agenda facing the new Assembly. Some of the most important items that had to be treated immediately were: (1) Teaching the Indians, which had already begun in the country, (2) finding a pioneer for the virgin territory of the Galapagos - this territory was now assigned to the National Assembly of Ecuador, (3) getting pioneers assigned and settled in their posts, (4) transferring the property, including the Temple land and the Hazíratu'l-Quds and also the Bahá'í Funds from the local Spiritual Assembly of Quito to the National Spiritual Assembly, (5) open new localities and begin mass conversion as soon as possible and (6) resolve community disharmony and incipient Covenant-breaking activities, which they learned later were permeating the entire National community.

The historical fact that the first all-Indian local Spiritual Assembly was elected in Vagabundo at Ridván 1960 through the efforts of Fred and Betty Kappus, pioneers to Otavalo, and native believer Raúl Pavón, should not be forgotten. The National Assembly was keenly aware of the great bounty they had received, and gave a happy, emotional welcome to three of the members of this first all-Indigenous local Assembly in the country, who had come to Quito to attend the pre-Convention School and stayed for the first National Convention of the Bahá'ís of Ecuador. The Hands of the Cause were delighted and continued to inspire them to teach the Indians. One April 26, 1961 they cabled from the Holy Land:

ASSURE NEW ASSEMBLY LOVING ARDENT PRAYERS SHRINES SUCCESS WORK ALL
FIELDS PARTICULARLY INDIAN CONVERSION.

HANDSFAITH
April 26, 1961

The first thoughts of some members of this Assembly were of mass conversion and proclaiming the Cause in general. Therefore, they were happy indeed to learn that the Hand of the Cause of God, Dr. Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir, who had a number of years of experience in mass teaching, would be visiting Ecuador during the month of May 1961. A special National Assembly meeting was called to welcome him to this country and to consult with him. He told the members of the Assembly that he came shortly after the birth of this new Assembly to talk with them about mass

conversion in this country which had such a wonderfully large Indian population. He visited the areas where teaching had begun - Vagabundo and Otavalo, and shared with the teachers and the Assembly some of his experiences with mass teaching. We share a few of the suggestions he made on this visit:

Mass conversion has very exact rules and if we make a mistake at the beginning, we may prevent it. One mistake is to help the natives financially - if they expect this they are not pure in heart. Through love and happiness, they (the pioneers) make the Faith contagious to others. 'He mentioned that 120 Bahá'ís came to a conference in Bolivia, many of them walking for four days to get there', and not one cent spent for travelling! 'He continued saying that', Mass Conversion is new and we don't have much experience; each country makes a contribution, like Raúl's system in education, which is new.

Don't say to them that they shouldn't drink, as they will pass the word on to others and they will all run from us. Don't tell them anything that is against their customs. 'He gave an example by explaining what happened on the island where he and his wife pioneered earning the titles of Knights of Bahá'u'lláh. He said that', In Mentawai Islands, the Moslems explained their Faith by saying that they must pray five times a day in the Arabic language. They said, 'all right, we will pray but you must translate the prayers into our language but the Moslems refused. Then the Moslems told them that they must fast for 30 days a year and they said, 'but we eat every hour. How could we fast for 30 days, it would kill us! Then the Moslems said that they must be clean and not eat pig, but since pig was the only meat they had, they said, 'what do you want to do, have us starve to death?' So they decided they would never want the Moslem faith. The rules and laws of the Bahá'í Faith should be taught to them after years. We should learn the customs of the people and go along with them - don't fight them... We should teach all the people of the village at once and not just a few. It creates a separation between them and other members of the village, and if we teach just a few they will not have enough knowledge to teach the others, and we never get any of the others.

There are a few rules for mass conversion; if we observe them we will have great success; if we do not it will be a loss for the Faith. Choose the most backward, isolated and primitive places. The method of teaching and accepting believers in the villages is not the same as in the cities. Teach them first of Bahá'u'lláh and nothing else. If they understand that He is a Messenger of God and love Him, that is enough to accept them as Bahá'ís; they don't need to know Administration or anything else. (He referred the Assembly to a letter from the Guardian to a National Assembly in Africa) Don't make it too difficult for illiterates, don't be too exacting - the heart may be chilled and interest die out. Their education in the teachings, laws and precepts can be added to as the years go by... Even if they drink go slowly trying to help them change... There is a difference between civilized and primitive people. We can fool each other but we can't fool them.

'Dr Muhájir gave many wonderful examples of how the love for Bahá'u'lláh had changed the lives of so many primitive people - he brought out the fact that the pioneers and teachers'...are not creating the capacity in these people, but helping them to find their own capacity. Bahá'í teachers are like midwives we help them to be born spiritually. We as teachers have to have conviction ourselves and faith - then, we can inspire it in others... When we mention Bahá'u'lláh to someone, a connection is made between that soul and Bahá'u'lláh. 'He strongly stressed being very simple in our speech radiating love, and the importance of smiling faces. He continued': In the beginning it was difficult for me to know how to teach them... In one place where the majority were Moslems, they and the Government decided to send 17 people to the village where the doctor was and where all had become Bahá'ís, to try to get them to change their religion. They went with police, government officials, etc. And they said to the people, why do you listen to this man? He is a foreigner and you are Indonesian. They said, no, our religion is Bahá'í and our government is Bahá'í... We don't know how they understand as they do, but it is there - the deep faith and understanding. The officials said, why he doesn't even smoke. They replied, no, he doesn't smoke but he gives us tobacco and you smoke and don't give us tobacco. They said, but he means harm to you and he might kill you. They said, no, he doesn't even have a small knife, and you come with police, soldiers and guns... In one place after they had accepted the Faith, I suggested that they start a school, and they said we will make it tomorrow. I didn't see how they could do that as they needed wood that had been seasoned, which takes months, but the next morning they began arriving with two planks of wood each one, and with 100 of them working on it in two days the school was finished. When I asked where they had gotten the seasoned wood, they took me and showed me where each man had taken two planks out of his own house and brought them so that they could have the school right away! There was a catholic priest in this place who had a school with 14 teachers and almost no students, while in a short while, the Bahá'ís had five schools and no teachers!

In Bolivia, the Indians don't believe in obeying the government. The Bahá'ís told them they must obey the government and many villages could not accept the Faith because of the emotional block. Some who accepted the Faith are now doubtful because of this. The mistake of a pioneer can halt the progress of the Cause for years. The Guardian said, bring them into the Faith and through the years - teach them... Do not put obstacles in the way of their coming in. Do not put obstacles in the way of their coming in. Do not be rigid - be flexible. The direct method of teaching should be used and not the indirect. Like through setting up literacy classes. If it is done indirectly, suspicion is created as to why this is being done and also it is not an effective method for mass conversion. The Faith is like a beautiful girl; don't cover it with veils which have to be taken off one by one until its beauty is discovered.

'He suggested that a new plan for Indian teaching be made in accordance with the information he shared and that

pioneers be re-assigned to cover as many areas as there are pioneers. The primitive people cannot take much teaching at one time, he said, they get bored by too much teaching.'

After Dr. Muhájir left, the Assembly called another special meeting to study the best places in the country to begin teaching in order to start mass conversion. They chose ten provinces with the largest Indian population and assigned these areas to ten pioneers and five native teachers to work in. Each local Spiritual Assembly was also assigned the province in which it was situated as well as the responsibility for teaching in the Indian villages all around it. The assignments were as follows:

Province

Imbabura	Marian (Kit) Goldstein	Pioneer
Azuay and Cañar	Julio Hidrobo	Homefront Pioneer
Chimborazo (Northern)	Alfonso and Raquel Peñaherrera	Homefront Pioneers
Chimborazo (Southern)	Pacora Blue Mountain	Pioneer
San Lorenzo	Grove Becker	Pioneer
Bolívar	Mariel and William Sears, Jr.	Pioneers
Cotopaxi	Julia and Fred Sehechter	Pioneers
Tungurahua	Mary and David Beckett	Pioneers
Napo-Pastaza	Raúl Pavón M.	Homefront Pioneer
Morona-Santiago	Patricia and George Conger	Pioneers

The Assembly outlined a teaching plan for the rest of the Bahá'í year and one to deepen the few believers in the country, so that they would be able to combat the vicious rumors and false suggestions by the still active "discontents" and "disaffected". The National Teaching Committee was dissolved. It was unable to function properly due to the disharmony which had surfaced in the community. Nevertheless, it was later re-established when it was learned that the National Teaching Committee was the important right arm of the National Spiritual Assembly and its influence should be felt throughout the national community as an instrument for propagating the Faith. The Assembly was made aware that there was disharmony and disunity on every side on the part of the pioneers, teachers and a number of believers, when they began to receive such letters as the following from the local Spiritual Assembly of Otavalo, dated June 4, 1961:

Because it seems that sometimes the National Teaching Committee and the Indian Teaching Committee are working at cross-purposes, it is our recommendation that we have but one national teaching committee to be called 'Conversión en Masa Comité' (Mass Conversion Committee) Since this phase of the Crusade is concentrated on mass conversion, which involves all races and strata of society, it would seem that one

committee might work more efficiently, leaving the deepening of the believers to the local community. If this does not have the approval of the National Assembly, we suggest that the National Teaching Committee work more closely with the Indian Teaching Committee....

It is obvious from the efforts that were being made that everyone knew that if they desired mass conversion to become a reality and the Faith to spread, cooperation and love were essential. The participants were extremely happy when on November 5, 1961, the first Indian Bahá'í Teaching Congress was held at the Granja Atahualpa near Lake San Pablo, there were an attendance of 95 Indians and 19 Bahá'ís from other communities. Twenty of the Indians were Bahá'ís and the others were their friends and relatives. The Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land had sent this inspiring message dated October 11, 1961 to the National Assembly:

Mass conversion in one area can ignite it in another, and thus if we truly 'vie' with each other 'in the service' of the Cause, as commanded by Bahá'u'lláh, we can touch off a chain reaction of teaching and conversion that will truly astound the entire world. Your country may very well be one of those which help to bring about this long-awaited day....

Otavalo - Testing Ground for Pioneers and Natives

A great deal of hostilities arose in the mass conversion area in and around Otavalo against the foreign pioneers and Raúl Pavón. The pioneers were very unhappy and bewildered for they did not know how to cope with it inasmuch as some of the hostilities arose from prejudice, an emotional thing, against non-nationals, that is to say, foreigners, as will be seen later.

In January 1962 one of the pioneers felt the need to write the following letter to the National Assembly:

It is with regret that I feel it necessary to write this letter, however because of the lack of unity in Otavalo, I believe it might be well for the North Americans and Raul Pavon to sever themselves from this community. For many months I have felt that perhaps with patience and kindness the situation would be corrected, but now, I believe we are a source of irritation. For my part, I do not believe I am furthering the interests of the Cause and it would seem it is having an adverse affect on me spiritually.

...the native believers are anxious to have Blue Mountain, and it is my understanding he wishes to transfer here. Why not allow him to come, if the North Americans leave? If this unifies the believers, then, surely one more believer may enter the Faith before next April....

Our firesides are practically non-existent. If we could get anyone interested in the Faith, he would immediately become embroiled in the disunity here and be driven away as one Bahá'í has. We believe that all foreign pioneers and Raul Pavon should leave for this reason. Then there would be no scapegoat....

All the pioneers finally left! But, parallel to the dishearteningly sad news came happy news which gave those who were steadfast in their religion the will power and stamina to continue to work toward their objectives. The encouraging note at this time was that in spite of the fact that Quito had suffered such soul-shaking birth traumas a few months earlier, by September 1961, there were three new believers since Ridván of that year, and many new people studying the Bahá'í Teachings. Also there were children's classes with an attendance of 16 to 17 children each week. Otavalo also had shown improvement by this time. They had 12 adult members and one youth at Ridván, and of the 12 adults only one was a native believer, and "now there are nine native believers" in Otavalo. By March 1962, there were 51 new believers in Ecuador, 31 more than the year before.

The National Assembly was committed to the idea of mass conversion and determined to continue working to attain this goal. Soon, there was a second and third village, Cotama and Iluman, opened by Raúl Pavón and Kit Goldstein. In spite of Kit's very severe rheumatism, she managed to teach the children and the indigenous people in the area and often gave dramatic presentations with puppets for them. When she and Grove Becker transferred from Otavalo to Ibarra, she was soon busy teaching the Indians in Iluman and was pleased when she enrolled the first indigenous there, Enrique Cáceres. She writes of her experience that day to Dorothy Campbell:

...Enclosed is the card for Enrique Cáceres, the first Indian Bahá'í in Iluman! Grove and I went there and unluckily, his brother had gone to Quito...so we just had our little fiesta in Enrique's house with his wife and mother and father, and little Maria Concepción ... You remember I had told you about her, bread doll, that I gathered got eaten? Well I got a doll and dressed it (I still had some of the felt from the shop, that you got in Quito, remember?) So I dressed it like an Indian, with gold beads at the neck, a cerise shawl and black skirt with a white underskirt and a white head scarf, and I put red embroidery floss at the wrists, as I hadn't red beads for the bracelets. I wish you could have seen her face Dorothy. You know she's a little flirt all dimples and laughter usually, but her face was solemn! And her eyes were huge and she kept looking at me with such an expression of love that I was almost moved to tears. She held the doll, and just stood holding it like a baby in her arms and looking at it for a long time silent and was then reminded to say 'thank you'. She didn't need to; her eyes had said it!

I had one of the straw dolls with a bell inside it for Enrique's baby as she is too small for the other kind of doll, and Grove and I took candy for everybody. We sang and Grove played, and let Enrique play his precious guitar, and the darling grandmother sang and danced a San Juanito for us. Then Enrique signed (his enrollment card) and we or rather he read aloud the prayer, "O my Lord! O my Lord! This is a lamp..."

This is an example of just some of the joys one experiences in the 'campo' (country) with the loving pure-hearted indigenous people!

Continuing to pursue its objective, the Assembly sent three of its members Raúl Pavón, Patricia and George Conger out on a reconnaissance teaching trip to the Oriente (the jungle region of Ecuador), to investigate the possibility of teaching the Indians and starting mass conversion in this remote area. They first went to the town of Puyo on the limits of the Amazon Basin and made friends getting data on the jungle region which they hoped to visit. From there the Congers went by air to the region of the tributary rivers of the Amazon and here meeting again with Raúl they traveled on the Napo River to the frontier town of Nuevo Rocafuerte situated a few minutes by canoe from the frontier between Ecuador and Perú. The river trip lasted 10 days and enroute they looked for the best place to choose for a more permanent stay, in order to teach the Faith to the Indians they met along the way. They later returned to the village of Tereré where they spent 15 days trying to teach the people living on the river banks but who in most cases lived far from one another at a distance of various hours on foot. After a limited stay with the natives, they felt they could not do any more useful work there due to the distances and difficulty in obtaining canoes and canoeists. When they arrived back at Nuevo Rocafuerte, they held several meetings in the home of the local Chinese merchant. All the inhabitants of the town came to know of the Faith as well as several military officers and troops at the border. Thus, proclamation of the Faith in Ecuador began in various localities at the same time.

During the year of 1961, this national community received constant guidance and inspiration from the visits of the Hands of the Cause of God, who came to teach and encourage them to strive for greater achievements. The first to come was Mr. Hasan M. Balyuzi, then Dr. Hermann Grossmann came, Mr. Alí Akbar Furútan, Dr. Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir and Mr. Abú'l-Qásim Faizí who arrived in September and spent several days visiting including the mass teaching area of Otavalo.

On January 19, 1962 the National Secretary reported to the Holy Land that "...the Community of Quito is stronger than it has been for years and Guayaquil is holding its own...."

Traditionally the New Year brings glad-tidings and it is a time when one promises to turn over a new leaf, especially one who is overburdened with problems. The wistfulness for happier times can be perceived in the above-mentioned letter to the Holy Land and in other correspondence on file. Fortunately, the devout believers seemed to have looked to and lived in the future rather than the past or present - and their strength was drawn from Him who advised all to, "Turn thy sight unto thyself, that thou mayest find Me standing within thee, mighty, powerful and self-subsisting." Instead of glad-tidings and happiness, the year 1962 opened with an aggregate of traitors to the Cause as well as apostates and unfortunately the Assembly was unable to thwart their activities before they had caused insurmountable damage. Again, Moyses Mosquera, the first Bahá'í of the Galapagos Islands, and an isolated believer who lived in Naranjal where he taught school,

telephoned the National and local Assembly secretary, Dorothy Campbell, and informed her that two believers had prepared a "Manifiesto" (Public Declaration) which they "are going to give to the newspaper by the name of "La Calle" (The Street), asking that all members of the next National Assembly be Ecuadorians."

The Manifiesto was sent to the local Assembly of Quito without a signature, protesting the validity of the election for delegates in the community of Quito and asking for another election, also asking that the members to be elected to the next National Assembly be nationals. It stated that "they" would not consent to foreigners being elected to the National Assembly, and threatened to take the matter to the newspapers of Ecuador so that the whole country could be informed of it, and that they would not permit false delegates to be elected to represent their country. The Manifiesto also demanded that;

...the nine members who should form the National Assembly, as its very name indicates, be represented exclusively by Nationals and without pioneers, ... because the pioneer is directly subject to the National Assembly and on forming part of that body, becomes a judge and a part of the deliberations of that Assembly, which is entirely contrary to what it should be and is even immoral.

In the event that our last petition above not be accepted, as true Ecuadorian Bahá'ís we ask that the name of Ecuador not be used, nor that our country be sneered at because of sham representatives, because we are in no mood to tolerate them, and in the last resort we will make our rights respected by appealing to the National Government.

We want to make it clear that our Manifiesto has no personal interest, nor do we make it expecting to obtain any benefit ... but our exclusive object is to defend our Country and, of course, the Religion whose authentic standard-bearers we are and to defend it in any field of action.

It should be noted that they referred to themselves as the standard-bearers of the Cause, taking the title which the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi bestowed on the Hands of the Cause in his last letter to the Bahá'í world. It is apparent that they were not well-versed in their religion or they had been affected by the Covenant-breakers. Some who upheld the theme of this manifesto were known to associate with them. The National Assembly notified the Hands of the Cause of these most recent events and on April 11, 1962, the Hand of the Cause Mr. William Sears answered on their behalf :

The information of the difficulties which have arisen relative to the delegates to the Convention for the election of the Universal House of Justice has reached me. I am sure that this matter will be lovingly but firmly resolved by the National Spiritual Assembly. I am sure when the dear friends reflect on the greatness of this Cause, they will readily recognize that it is a World Faith - and that we should all be world-embracing in our vision. While we are devoted and loyal to our native lands, and endeavor to serve our countries to the best of our abilities,

We are not Italian Bahá'ís, Australian Bahá'ís, Ecuadorian Bahá'ís or Canadian Bahá'ís. We are Bahá'ís. An Ecuadorian who lives in Japan is respected and admired for his spiritual qualities, is as eligible for election to that National Spiritual Assembly as any Japanese. The qualifications for election are: unquestioned loyalty, steadfast devotion, a well-trained mind, recognized ability and mature experience - the qualifications are not skin-color, religious background, bracket of income, or national origin....

The clear explanation was shared with the believers. It was because of the word "national", being a part of the title of the National Spiritual Assembly, that some of the believers arrived at the erroneous conclusion that only nationals (native believers) should be members of the National Assembly - forgetting or not knowing perhaps, that this is a temporary appellation and in due time it will be known by its proper name of "House of Justice". However, if one should ponder for a moment about how this group misinterpreted the meaning of the title of the Assembly, it would be clearly understood and appreciated why Bahá'u'lláh, the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, named an Interpreter of His Teachings and endowed Him with infallibility!

A special meeting was called by the Assembly to talk with the two people who were accused of writing the manifesto about who really prepared it and what was the motive behind it. They denied sending it or writing it, but said that they agreed with some points mentioned, e.g., members of the new National Spiritual Assembly should be nationals; and that many of the Bahá'ís with whom they had spoken felt the same way. One of the two who were being interviewed accused the Assembly with prejudice; saying, that whenever a native person with capacity arose among the Ecuadorian Bahá'ís, immediately this person was expelled from the Cause. The other individual stated that natives should elect the House of Justice and foreigners should not represent Ecuador. They refused to promise to cease spreading these ideas among the Bahá'ís. One of the two who were being interviewed afterwards lost his voting rights for his behaviour and for upholding the ideas of the Covenant-breakers, as well as for his association with them. His wife resigned from the Faith.

Another one of the group informed the Assembly that they would not permit the delegation elected for Ecuador to attend the World Convention if any of them were foreigners. The Covenant-breakers whose activities for awhile had been clandestine, now again felt enough support to make an attempt to take control of the Faith in Ecuador. They began to telephone some of the believers, to attend their firesides without their permission and discussed the points of disunity within the Faith with the inquirers present, while two of the Covenant-breakers would spread their materials at the firesides. The Auxiliary Board member of the area sent the following report to the Hands of the Cause:

... in March of 1962 there was a Bahá'í visitor in Quito who gave erroneous information at a meeting saying that the Hands of the Cause were going to pay the passage of the NSA members of the World to go to Haifa to elect the Universal House of Justice. Since this was five or six weeks before the election of the National Assembly, three members of the community had time to campaign against the foreign pioneers, Americans and Persians; saying openly in meetings that if Ecuador is to be represented in Haifa, it had to be represented by Ecuadoreans and not by Bahá'ís of other nationalities. We tried so hard to make them understand that in the Bahá'í Faith, the aspect of nationality did not count but it did not do any good because they had in their minds the matter of the free trip to Haifa. Our Quito Community again became a hornet's nest. Even at my firesides in my home, they would bring up the same subject and show great antagonism and poison against the foreign pioneers. We told them repeatedly that this sort of thing was prohibited in the Faith, but they didn't pay any attention.

Gayle finally found it necessary to temporarily suspend her firesides which some of the principal agitators always attended. In regards to the manifesto the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land sent a letter dated June 21, 1962 to the National Assembly which was very encouraging:

The whole question of the manifesto was very surprising. We consider that your Assembly handled it very wisely, and trust that by now whatever stir it caused has completely subsided.

It is unavoidable that the new national communities should pass through storms of varying severity. We know from the teachings, particularly from the book of our beloved Guardian, God Passes By that there is a mysterious relationship between tests and victories. The important thing is not so much whether we have tests, as how we meet them, and we are very happy to see the spiritual strength demonstrated by your Assembly in handling the affairs of the Community at a difficult time. The fact that you held so successfully your Annual Convention, and that a fine spirit prevailed, is eloquent testimony to the soundness of the Community in your country, and their determination to forge ahead in the path laid down for them by their beloved Guardian, and achieve great victories in the service of Bahá'u'lláh.

During the 1962 National Convention, the National Assembly learned that one of the delegates had tried to influence the election of National Assembly members. One member of that present Assembly was called aside by a delegate, who had been selected as one of the tellers, and was shown some ballots so that he could see who did not vote for him, thinking that he would recognize the handwriting of the few delegates. This delegate also told the National Assembly member that the Auxiliary Board member and the National Secretary had accused him of immorality and other "calumnious things". The delegate was from the Quito Community and when the local Spiritual Assembly learned of the situation, they tried to investigate for there was also the matter pending of his absconding with the local Funds after he was elected treasurer of the local

Assembly. He would not respond to their letters asking if he would meet with them, nor could they locate where he was actually living. Finally, this convinced the Assembly member that the delegate was a troublesome liar, but not before he himself had hurled terrible insults at the two women. There had been two vacancies on the local Assembly of Quito that year caused by the expulsion of the Covenant-breakers. The delegate involved had recently accepted the Faith and was elected, practically immediately to the local Assembly. Then he was elected treasurer and a delegate to the National Convention. A very heavy responsibility for a very new adherent. When the matter was officially reported to the National Assembly and they had had time to act in early September, they wrote to the Hands of the Cause for advice as to what steps should be taken. On September 20 1962, they replied:

While the actions of ... as described in your letter of September 13 concerning the election at Ridvan and his reported abuse of his position as a teller, and his reported maligning of other Bahá'is are grave indeed, still they are by themselves not sufficient reasons for the expulsion of a believer from the Faith. Such actions, and attitudes, if not corrected, could be reasons for a National Assembly to remove the voting rights of a believer. However, it would be unwise to remove such voting rights in September for a situation on which you failed to take action in April. The beloved Guardian urged the National Assemblies to exert the utmost patience, and to remove the voting rights of a believer only as a last resort after repeated warnings. Association with Covenant-breakers however is an entirely different matter, and they must be immediately and completely cut off by every believer, as your Assembly so clearly understands....

Attempting to clean up the community, the local Assembly of Quito in April decided to remove the names of the completely inactive people from the voting list. The Assembly consulted with the National Assembly and it was agreed to remove the names of four members of the community from the list due to their indifference to the Cause and complete inactivity; also, because of their being affiliated with other religions and practicing spiritualism. There was one who practiced spiritualism who said in an interview that he would have to "talk" with Bahá'u'lláh about the matter (that is, about removing his name from the Bahá'í registry); he said he often talked with Bahá'u'lláh! It was very difficult for the Assembly to follow a planned course of action to achieve its objective when they were trying to cope with such overwhelming problems.

Just prior to the election of local assemblies in 1962, one of the believers, Sr. Peñaherrera, visited the Vagabundo community with Raúl Pavón. Due to his lack of experience with the Indians and lack of discretion, he antagonized those who were present to hear him speak, to the point that it was not known if any of them would remain in The Faith. When the 21st of April arrived, Raúl went to help them elect their Assembly but only four persons attended the meeting. He could have held the meeting and election but he knew this was not the wise thing to do at this time. The other believers

were still in a negative state of mind, and it could not be determined at that time whether they still considered themselves as Bahá'ís. It seems that Sr. Peñaherrera did not follow the advice of the Hand of the Cause, Dr. Muhájir. He stressed the Bahá'í laws so strongly that the indigenous people felt they could not live up to them. Even on a second visit Raúl could not elect the Assembly; they had to be further deepened in the Teachings with much love and tact so that the damage could be repaired before there could be an election. Finally, on November 28, 1962, with special permission from the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, he was able to elect the local Assembly of Vagabundo for 1962 - 1963.

The Hands of the Cause of God in the Holy Land were somewhat concerned by the enrollment procedures, that is the procedure for accepting new Bahá'ís, and on November 29, 1962 they called the Assembly's attention to their often long delay in enrolling a new believer which they felt was not in accord with the spirit of the Faith:

Beloved Friends:

We note in your minutes of September 1 and 2, comments on the teaching work among the Indians and the problems which are involved. We note also the statement that "when a new person is to be accepted, the National Teaching Committee should be informed and it will send a representative to see him."

We leave it to your Assembly to work out the most effective and wise method of enrolling these precious new believers into the Faith, but urge you to take every step possible to eliminate excessive administrative procedure, and above all any delays in such enrollments, except where absolutely necessary for the protection of the Faith. Many a precious spirit has been put out in the past in different parts of the world while awaiting a visit of a representative of an Assembly or Committee. ... every effort should be made to reach and enroll the masses, and every National Assembly has been repeatedly encouraged to do all in its power to facilitate the entry of new believers.

The devotion and dedication of your Assembly to the all important teaching work is greatly admired, as is the loving sacrifice of all the friends in the teaching field in that important country. We shall remember you all when next we visit the sacred Shrines.

/S/ HANDS OF THE CAUSE IN THE HOLY LAND

<i>Ráhíyyih</i>	<i>William Sears</i>
<i>Leroy Ioas</i>	<i>Jalal Khazeh</i>
<i>Paul Haney</i>	<i>Mohájir</i>
<i>A. Furutan</i>	<i>John Ferraby</i>

The Faith continued to grow and more and more people became cognizant of the Teachings and attended the meetings. Even in the most difficult city for the Faith, Guayaquil, there were over 200 people present at a Bahá'í public meeting in the Teatro Bogotá during this turbulent period. Large meetings were also held, with success, in other parts of the country.

In March 1962, Auxiliary Board member, Mr. Mas'úd Khamsí visited Ecuador to assist in initiating mass conversion. He was a pioneer to Bolivia where they had successfully begun mass teaching. His visit was very helpful but soon after he left problems again surged with the Covenant-breakers and their sympathizers with a greater intensity and audacity than on previous occasions. The new Bahá'ís began to receive correspondence from those groups in Santa Fe, New Mexico and Spain - again their tentacles were out in every direction.

In 1960, the Regional National Spiritual Assembly, whose seat was in Lima, Perú, and the first local Spiritual Assembly of Otavalo, requested Señores Cesar Vasquez Fuller and Jamshid Meghnót to make up a literacy program, which would include some Bahá'í teachings, to be used by Raúl Pavón to attract the Indians. Since Raúl was the key person in initiating the teaching of the masses in Ecuador, many biased and unfounded accusations were made against him both by individuals who did not like him and some of the Spiritual Assembly members of Otavalo who did not agree with his method of teaching. And, of course, there were those who did not feel he was effective in teaching the indigenous people; there were complaints that his visits were too irregular to the various teaching areas, and there were even those who were not in agreement with the responsibilities the National Assembly assigned to him nor did they appreciate the trust it had in him. It is true that two of the Hands of the Cause were not in agreement with his method of teaching, but they deeply admired his devotion to the Cause and his desire to teach the Indians. All this caused great concern for Raúl and much sadness and for this reason he decided to resign from the National Assembly and he requested a transfer to another country as a pioneer.

Counsellor Pavón found it very difficult to relive this period of his life and give me the story of mass conversion and his role in it for this history. Often, over the years, he would visit and relate many of his experiences in the teaching field and I rue the fact I did not record it. However, on this particular subject it took two or more occasions before he could calmly relate the events. He said he had often begged God to forgive him for not having sufficient understanding during that time to know that the Hands of the Cause were trying to help him and for becoming upset with them, especially Mr. Kházeh. He was not aware they were counselling him to aid him to become more effective. Later when Dr. Muhájir began to spend more time with him in the teaching areas during his visits, he acquired a deeper understanding and a greater love for the Hands and their role of service.

These two Hands of the Cause saw in Raúl great potentials of service and they did not wish to see his spirit dampened. This they related to Mrs. Woolson and the National Assembly. Raúl did resign from the National Assembly and the reason he gave for his resignation was that he was ill. He said he just wanted to get away for he was also suffering from attacks from his fellow co-workers. When Mr. Kházeh received notice of his resignation from the Assembly he became very sad and he wrote to the Board member, the Assembly and to Raúl telling them of his deep love and admiration for his sincerity

and for what he was trying to do and that he did not wish to see him leave the teaching field and suggested that he immediately revoke his resignation from the Assembly before they had time to act on it.

Reminiscing, Raúl said that those days spent with Dr. Muhájir teaching and learning were some of the happiest days of his life. He also related that when he received Mr. Kházeh's letter he obeyed and revoked his resignation, and was a member of the National Assembly every year until he was appointed to the Continental Board of Counsellors.

One wonders what happens in the world of the spirit to cause such commotion in the air!

Although the local Assembly of Otavalo and the teaching committee, as well as the pioneers had requested the service of Raúl, the time came when they requested that he be recalled by the National Spiritual Assembly due to the disharmony and the division among the believers as to whether he was or could be the "key" to mass conversion, or was worth his keep. They resented that a former pioneer had helped to sustain him in the teaching work. This pioneer, who was physically unable to continue her service in the field of pioneering, admired Raúl's stamina and initiative, so she followed the advice of Bahá'u'lláh, Who instructs His followers thus: *Center your energies in the propagation of the Faith of God. Whoso is worthy of so high a calling, let him arise and promote it. Whoso is unable, it is his duty to appoint him who will, in his stead, proclaim this Revelation, whose power hath caused the foundations of the mightiest structures to quake, every mountain to be crushed into dust, and every soul to be dumbfounded.*" (Advent of Divine Justice, p.70) When problems became rampant in the area between the pioneers and the native believers, Raúl was not treated as a native, but rather as a foreign pioneer. The secretary of the local Assembly wrote to the National Assembly on June 1, 1962:

I strongly recommend that Raul's name be transferred to the list of another community. Not because he has not conducted himself in an exemplary manner, but for his own protection.

Also in 1962 the Bahá'í year began with 5 local Spiritual Assemblies, 9 groups and 5 isolated centers. By the end of the Bahá'í year, the number of assemblies remained the same but there were 12 groups, 7 isolated centers and 26 new believers in the country. It was the year (March 1962) that witnessed the entry into the Faith of the radiant, diminutive, spiritual and well-loved indigenous believer from the Imbabura area, Rufino Gualavisí. Rufino, who is quite aged at this writing, was destined to play a very important role as a mass conversion teacher. He was destined to play a very important role as a mass conversion teacher. He was destined also, it appears, to suffer persecution of various kinds, including being beaten and left for dead, while carrying the message of Bahá'u'lláh. Sometimes he was alone and sometimes he was with other teachers who also suffered persecution. He was the

first of his race in Ecuador to be privileged to serve as a member of the Auxiliary Board.

It was also in 1962 when a young Bahá'í from Costa Rica, Juan Vargas, arrived in Ecuador to serve as a pioneer for the still virgin territory, the Galapagos Islands, which had not had a pioneer since 1956, and the teaching activity there was dormant.

On January 14, 1963, the legal incorporation of the National Spiritual Assembly was approved by Executive Decree No. 7, and signed by the President of the Republic - an historic act which completed the last Crusade goal for Ecuador!

This year, 1963, brought few joys, although some were historic joys, but many sorrows were experienced. One of the first sad notices received from the World Centre was that former pioneer and Regional National Assembly member, Jamshid Meghnott had been expelled from the Faith on March 31, 1963. He had been one of the instigators of some of the problems suffered in this country before he transferred to Colombia. Witnesses stated that after he went to visit Guayaquil to "straighten out" Covenant-breaker Eduardo (Les) Gonzalez upon learning that he had been supporting Mason Remy, he returned to Quito after visiting other cities, speaking indirectly the same as Gonzalez did, in favor of Remy (he had been advised by the Hands of the Cause not to go to Guayaquil to visit Les when he expressed a desire to do so). He later went to Colombia and became a member of the first National Spiritual Assembly of that country. There he continued his undermining activities and was requested by the Institution of the Hands of the Cause to return to his country. In Iran, they hoped, he would change once he was around old deepened Bahá'ís, his family and friends who were steadfast in the Cause. Returning to his country however, did not help him. He continued his undermining the institutions of the Faith and finally he had to be expelled from the Cause.

CHAPTER IX

TERMINATION OF THE GUARDIAN'S TEN-YEAR CRUSADE AND THE SIX-YEAR PLAN

Election of the first Universal House of Justice - members of the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador participated

Five members of the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador were privileged to visit the World Centre of the Bahá'í Faith in Haifa, Israel, that historic year, April 1963, for the election of the first international Institution of the Faith, the Universal House of Justice. Then seven Bahá'ís of Ecuador attended the long-awaited, Most Great Jubilee which took place in London, England. This centennial event commemorated the hundredth anniversary of the Declaration of Bahá'u'lláh's Mission and the termination of the beloved Shoghi Effendi's Ten-Year Crusade, during which time the Faith was carried to every point of the globe and every stratum of society. The spirit that was wafted over the Bahá'í World from these twin events was sufficient to sustain the Bahá'ís in their endeavours for years to come. They received substantial publicity through various news media for the Faith regarding these events, as well as for the imprisonment of some Bahá'í young men in Morocco. The Bahá'ís all over the world invoked the Almighty God on behalf of their persecuted brethren. The young National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador felt distressed over the matter but also felt proud to be able to put on its robe of responsibility as an independent national body and join its sister spiritual assemblies of the world in appealing to the King of Morocco for release of their innocent co-religionists.

First Contact with the Shuara (Jivaro) Indians

It was in May 1963 when the National Assembly commissioned a team of three to endeavour to make contact with the Shuara Indians (also known as Jivaros and "head-shrinkers") in the jungles of Ecuador. The three were: César Vásquez, Raúl Pavón and Gonzalo León, J. They made their first contact with this tribe in Arapicos on May 12, when they met Arturo Guambia and his father. A couple of days later in Sevilla Don Bosco, they met the wife of the "Teniente Politico" for the area, Señora Monica Caravajal de Jaramillo; she gave them food and lodging. They met a number of Jivaros and found them to be very hospitable and courteous. They listened to the Bahá'í teachings "with obvious respect and receptivity." In a village called Macas, they met a Señor Miguel Gomez, a colonizer, and Jivaro named Domingo Chacay. There one of the members of the team became ill and had to be left behind in Sevilla Don Bosco but in spite of this he continued to teach the Indians.

When they found themselves short of money it was necessary again to leave one member of the team behind in Macas until two of them could go to Ambato and get sufficient money to send to the one left behind for his transportation and to pay the hotel bills. Due to the intense jungle rain the truck they caught enroute to Ambato could only make part of the trip because of a landslide

which blocked the road. They had to walk with their heavy bags some 10 kilometers to the town of Baños where they found lodging in the most inexpensive hotel. Raúl said that the room and the beds were so smelly and bad they were unable to sleep; at least he could not sleep, nor could they rest their weary bodies. They were able to change clothes and the next day they arrived in Ambato where they were warmly received by the pioneers Mr. and Mrs. David and Mary Beckett, who gave them comfortable lodging and a warm meal. It would be eight years before these new contacts, the Jivaros, would be visited again by the Bahá'ís and seven of them would then become members of the Bahá'í Faith.¹

In 1963, Auxiliary Board members who were also members of a National Assembly, were asked to choose which institution they preferred to serve on for the time had come when they could no longer serve on both Institutions. Mrs. Gayle Woolson chose to remain on the Auxiliary Board and she resigned as a member of the National Assembly in July 1963. A by-election was called for by mail and the delegate who had been selected as a teller the year before and had shown the ballots to an Assembly member, was elected to replace her on the National Assembly even though he had not been active for more than a year. There was also another mid-year election and the Assembly became split into two antagonistic groups or factions as a result of this election - the majority and the minority groups. Three of the members of the Assembly were relatively new Bahá'ís and had never served on an Assembly before, therefore, their being allied with the majority group caused terrible clashes of opinion and much unnecessary suffering. The new members wanted to change practically everything the previous National Assembly had planned. It was known that the five, that is the majority group, would get together at one or the other of their homes and decide what they wanted to place on the agenda, and since they were the majority they did as they desired.

To introduce one of the most devoted and staunch native teachers Ecuador has had, we must go back a couple of years when on August 4, 1961, Dorothy Campbell wrote to one of the believers that "Teresa Jara from Machachi will be here tonight for the class and is getting very close to the Faith too, so please pray for her...." During the month of December of this same year, Señorita Jara embraced the Bahá'í Faith and has been extremely active ever since. She played a predominant role in mass conversion and seems to have an innate capacity to relate to the indigenous people and capture their admiration and respect. She is unusual in that no task for the Faith is too lowly for her to perform; even as a new Bahá'í she helped with the agriculture as well as functioning as caretaker of the National Hazíratu'l-Quds and the Bahá'í Institute in Otavalo. No Bahá'í in the country has served in as many different capacities as she has served. Her letter dated December 17, 1961 to the local Assembly of Quito requesting to be accepted as a Bahá'í exemplifies her humility:

This letter I write with the desire that you accept me and give me the privilege of life to be one more slave of God and one more messenger of the sublime teachings of our beloved Prophet, now that I find myself

imbued with the (spirit of the) Bahá'í Faith.

Now that I am taking this most transcendental step in my poor life, I feel so happy and full of a sublime sensation, such as I have never felt up to now. I beg of God and Bahá'u'lláh that I be given the strength from now on to fight for this beautiful Cause and to carry the truth to my brothers and sisters who live in obscurity.²

(Free-handed translation from the Spanish to English by writer)

Teresa's prayer was answered - the years of her historic service attest to this fact! At one time in the mass conversion area she was responsible for nine different localities, and these areas were in the high Andes Mountains and distances apart. There were times when she and Raúl Pavón or Julio Hidrobo were responsible for the entire mass conversion zones. They needed help desperately but none was available. The few native believers who accepted the Faith during this period and showed some promise or desire to help in the teaching work - were immediately utilized in teaching, in spite of the fact that they knew very little about the Faith. They deepened themselves in the Teachings as they taught others or while listening to the experienced teachers teach.

Notwithstanding the set-backs which confronted them from time to time, the institutions and the believers of Ecuador kept their sights fixed on mass conversion. They were encouraged and guided by the Universal House of Justice, the Hands of the Cause and their Auxiliary Boards, and their faith spurred them on to attain their highly meritorious objective. Therefore, during the remaining years of the 1960's we see this small Bahá'í community facing the opposition and periodic harrassment of the old and new Covenant-breakers and their sympathizers, with courage and determination to defeat their purpose and to achieve their fixed goal - bringing in the masses.

It was found in some areas of the country that mass teaching differed from that in other countries since the indigenous were "closely coerced economically and morally by the clergy and the hacienda (farm) owners." The Assembly was advised by Auxiliary Board member, Hooper Dunbar, that it might be wiser to initially "teach the influential people who would give us access to the Indians," and then through them find those who could be trained as teachers and encourage them to return and teach their own people. It was decided to test this suggestion of Mr. Dunbar by accepting an offer of an influential doctor who was friendly with one of the Bahá'ís, Norberto Castillo, to help him and other Bahá'ís to spread the Bahá'í message in some difficult areas. As a result the areas of Pelileo, Patate, Baños, Río Negro and El Puyo were visited and in Pelileo a teacher and the director of a school began studying the Sacred Writings. Then this method of reaching the indigenous people who lived in difficult areas was adopted for use in other such localities.

Also during the year of 1963 the national community suffered the loss of five members who resigned from the National Assembly and eight active pioneers and believers. The believers transferred to other countries and the pioneers returned to their respective homes in the United States. Therefore, in July it was necessary for the

Assembly to ask Teresa Jara to go to Juan Montalvo to help with Indian teaching as a homefront pioneer. She had been assigned to Otavalo to help save that local Assembly when the community dropped to less than nine members. This community was given the responsibility for the teaching activities of Vagabundo, where the first all-Indian local Assembly had been established.

Due to the political situation which prevailed in the country at the time and the twisted interpretations which had been given to the teaching of the Faith, several Bahá'ís suffered imprisonment. A legal commission was appointed by the National Spiritual Assembly to meet with the Military Junta and other authorities to try to obtain a special authorization to continue the teaching work without impediment of any kind. Contact was made with the Military but the Bahá'í representative was referred to the Ministry of Government and Cults. They informed the representative that they would not interfere with the Bahá'í work since freedom of religion existed in the country and on the contrary they would support our work. It was learned that since there were civil and military chiefs in each capital of the provinces, they were authorized to control this kind of meeting and the pioneers should always deal directly with them.

But the very next month the devoted teachers Rufino Gualavisí and Teresa were arrested by police in Cayambe and they were accused of having large communist meetings. They were of course Bahá'í meetings. Rufino was jailed for eight days and Teresa was held for only a few hours. Senorita Jara said that they were unforgettable hours and that she felt a spiritual assurance and power which she had never experienced before!

House of Justice Spurs Assembly on Toward Mass Conversion

The Universal House of Justice was aware of the nature of the problems which the National Assembly faced from time to time in Ecuador. There was a debilitating influence from these problems, which included personality conflicts and harassment by the Covenant-breakers. So, in a letter dated October 23, 1963, the House of Justice kindly reminded the National Assembly of the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá regarding teaching the Indians and gave the Assembly advice about how to reap a "harvest of victories":

Teach the Indians, whom 'Abdu'l-Bahá said would astonish the world even more than did the Arabs in the early days of Islam, once they have taken hold of the Cause. As has so often been pointed out to us, and as our own experience shows, city dwellers generally are too sophisticated and occupied to appreciate the value of the Cause, and it is among the simple and Indigenous peoples that mass conversion is beginning. We feel sure that if you put aside your differences for the sake of God, and make a great effort to extend the teaching work among the Indians, the Hosts on High will come to your aid and you will reap a harvest of victories in which all minor considerations will wither away.

They made an effort to follow this advice and on November 12, less than a month from the date of the House of Justice's letter, the Assembly was able to report:

Two weeks ago we had 11 groups in Ecuador, now we have 32 groups (which includes) 21 new all-Indian groups, and 134 new believers among the Indians ... Now we have a total of 305 believers in the country.

And in a letter dated December 30, 1963 to the House of Justice the Assembly reported an increase of believers to a total of 673 in the country, 72 groups and 14 isolated centers, and there were five Indian tribes; Oyacachis, Otavaleños, Puruces, Mohandas and Rocachis. To help achieve this success the relatively new, devoted Indian teacher, Rufino Gualavisí walked 4 days visiting 38 localities and carried the Faith to 279 Indians.

In October of that same year the Hand of the Cause of God, Mr. Jalál Kházeḥ, wrote to the National Assembly expressing his happiness that he had been assigned to work in this continental area, and that he was looking forward to working with them. After having been informed of the success Ecuador was finally experiencing, he lovingly wrote on November 27;

When Bahá'u'lláh wishes to shower His Grace on a Community, whether they are weak or strong, whether they are happy or have problems, He specifies His Bounty for that Community, and the confirmations from on High surround them, and great success comes to them through the instruments which He created for them.

This was soon evidenced for by January 13, 1964, there were 1,347 believers in the country, 123 groups and still 14 isolated centers. The number of Indian tribes increased to 9, the 4 additional tribes were: Gualacatas, Tocagones, Cayambes and Imbabura.

Regrettably, in December of 1963, the first native Bahá'í of Otavalo, Señor Cesár Vasquez Fuller, resigned from the National Spiritual Assembly and from the Bahá'í Faith. He was the Director of the Municipal Library in Otavalo, and he had performed outstanding service for the Faith as a teacher and translator even before he became a Bahá'í in 1956. From what can be gleaned from the records it seems that he was unhappy over procedure for some time.

Also in January 1964, the National Assembly happily announced that mass conversion had really begun in Ecuador! there had been 1,901 new enrollments in the Faith in a two and a half month period in 176 localities and in three provinces of Imbabura, Pichincha and Napo Pastaza. There was a total of 1,930 indigenous believers now. On January 10, Rufino Gualavisí alone sent in a list of 470 new believers. In an effort to train some of the new believers to become teachers, weekend schools were held. On February 29, the National Assembly made a report to the House of Justice explaining their method of training:

Next week eight or ten will go to Cachaco for about a week's training. we are selecting them from each area for the schools so that each one can go back and teach in that area.

You asked about how the teaching efforts are being carried out among the Indians. From the Indian schools which have been held in Cachaco about twice a year during the past two years by Raúl Pavón, one devoted Indian believer, Rufino Gualavisí, offered to go out on teaching trips. Raúl went with him on several occasions, as did Teresa Jara, until he felt enough confidence to go alone. Now Rufino goes alone to new areas, tells the people that he has been sent by God to give them the glad tidings that Bahá'u'lláh has come; that he has been sent by God to teach a new law to men, to teach that all men are brothers, to establish unity, peace and justice on earth; that now the staff or authority and power has passed from Christ to Bahá'u'lláh, but that Christ and Bahá'u'lláh are the same Spirit from God. Those who accept what Rufino says are enrolled, then on a later visit Raúl or Teresa, or both, accompany him and each visit brings new members. Teresa and Raúl make visits to other areas alone and accept new believers, and later Rufino visits their areas. The three of them work in a team, planning everything together, and make their trips alone and also together. Through the schools we hope to find many more devoted souls like Rufino who will go out alone to spread the Message, so that in a few months we may have many Indian believers traveling all over the country teaching the Faith. When they go out on the trips, they can go part of the way sometimes by bus, but the majority of the trips are walking. Sometimes they walk eight hours from one village to another. They take no food with them, and rely on being invited to spend the night in an Indian home and so far they have always been offered the most loving hospitality. They sleep on the dirt floor of the Indian homes and share their food, so the Indians really feel that they are their brothers from the first moment.

...In some cases the Indians have said that their father or grandfather had told them that a new Teacher would come, but in most cases, it seems to be the love of the pioneers and the simple way in which they give the Message which reaches their hearts.

Teresa Jara lives in Juan Montalvo, an Indian village, in an Indian house under the same primitive conditions so they all love her and recognize her sincerity. The long hikes, all in the mountains, and the extreme cold at nights sleeping on the ground floor of the Indian huts, and the poor diet are compensated by the victories they are winning now, but both Teresa and Raúl are really heroes in their self-sacrifice and devotion. Raúl feels that their success has been largely due to the advice and help Dr. Mohajer, the Beloved Hand of the Cause, gave us when he was in Ecuador two years ago.

(Dr. Muhájir said that "the growth of the Faith is like the growth of a man: spiritual, physical, mental and material.")

The National Spiritual Assembly was pleased to receive a letter from the Universal House of Justice advising them that the Minister of Defense of Ecuador, Sr. José Aurelio Naranjo C., had visited the Shrine of the Báb in Haifa on Friday March 13, 1964.

On March 30, 1964, the Hand of the Cause of God, Mr. Jalál Kházeḥ made his first visit to Ecuador. The primary purpose of his visit was to visit the Indian areas where mass conversion had begun. He made two trips to the area accompanied by Mr. David Beckett, a pioneer who translated for him. Mr. Kházeḥ found in some areas, to his dismay, that the Indians they interviewed did "not know who Bahá'u'lláh was nor did they know the difference between Him and Christ." Mr. Kházeḥ said that they had no concept of what the Faith was all about. He met with the National Assembly on three different occasions during his visit and also attended the fourth National Convention where he spoke on several occasions to all the Bahá'ís present.

During his first meeting with the National Assembly they spoke with him about their concern of the readiness of many of the Indian communities to form their local Spiritual Assemblies, since there had not been time or people available to prepare them in administration, and they asked him to visit some of the Indian communities to see what he thought about them. This is when Mr. Kházeḥ acquired the above-stated opinion. He visited four of the communities and later advised the National Assembly that he felt they were too immature to form Assemblies and he offered to cable the Universal House of Justice for their advice. The National Assembly was not aware at the time of other difficulties that would arise to hold up the elections of these local assemblies. By the time an answer was received from the cable it was May 20, and too late to conduct the elections therefore no new local Spiritual Assemblies were elected that Riḍván (There was a mail strike in Haifa which held up all mail).

The cable received from the Universal House of Justice was as follows:

IN VIEW CIRCUMSTANCES REPORTED YOUR LETTER MAY FIRST JUST RECEIVED
DIRECT YOUR ASSEMBLY PROCEED IMMEDIATELY FORMATION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
LOCAL ASSEMBLIES ALL LOCALITIES WHERE MINIMUM NINE ADULT BELIEVERS
RESIDED APRIL TWENTYFIRST STOP ASSURE PRAYERS HOLY SHRINES VICTORIES
FURTHER EXPANSTION CONSOLIDATION FAITH

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

Due to unexpected difficulties, only 23 local Assemblies could be elected at Riḍván 1964. In some areas, the pioneers and teachers had to walk from house to house to collect ballots which took from two to four days for each Assembly. In some other cases almost the entire village had gone far away to work for several months on large estates due to the drought that year in the sierra; therefore they could not find the believers. And in other areas the Military Government was beginning to put land reform into effect and was parceling out land to the Indians. There were uprisings among some of the Indians and troops were patrolling those areas; no one was allowed in while the troops were on duty. Teaching itself was not without hazards. In one area the indigenous people had been stimulated to attack the Bahá'ís. (See interview with Vicenta Anrango).

Because of these difficulties, the House of Justice permitted the local Assemblies in the Indian areas to be elected up to August 15. It was also impossible to elect Assemblies during the Feasts of St. Peter and St. John in these areas.

In a letter from the Universal House of Justice to the National Assembly dated May 25, 1964, they recalled the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Tablets of the Divine Plan, regarding teaching the Indians:

Nearly fifty years ago in one of the Tablets of the Divine Plan addressed to the America believers, the Master enjoined them saying - "You must give great importance to teaching the Indians ... they will become so enlightened as in turn to shed light to all regions."

The small flame so recently ignited in the area around Imbabura and Pichincha must not be allowed to die. Any delay in strengthening the community life of these newly-enrolled friends could seriously retard the growth of the Cause.

The House of Justice was concerned about the resignation of Raúl Pavón as can be noted in this same letter. Evidently they had not received notice that Raúl revoked his resignation from the Assembly and returned to the pioneer-teaching field as suggested by Hand of the Cause, Mr. Kháze. Unfortunately in a couple of months he had to leave the Sierra, the mass teaching area, and go to a lower altitude for health reasons. The letter from the House of Justice continues;

If Raúl Pavon's resignation as a pioneer means that he will withdraw from his active participation in teaching in mass conversion areas, we feel that this would be a great loss to the vital work of the Faith in Ecuador at this time. He should be encouraged to continue his valuable services. 14

Shortly after Raúl had to leave, the National Assembly asked a young believer from Cuenca to come and help in the mass conversion area in Otavalo, Macario Guillén. He became a well-known, outstanding teacher and speaker and for a number of years he has been a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador and its chairman.

In April of 1964, the launching of the first great Plan of the first Universal House of Justice, the Nine-Year Plan, was embarked upon in Ecuador with great determination as well as with some inquietude about their capableness to achieve this fixed objective. They knew that since the House of Justice called for it that somehow it would be accomplished but could not fathom how with such limited resources. They felt so small in numbers, and of course the country itself is small. Notwithstanding this the House of Justice gave this community a lion's share of the goals of the world in spite of their meagre resources, that is to say, funds, pioneers, teachers and essential vehicles for transportation. There were only two teachers in the mass conversion area and a couple of indigenous believers who helped as their time permitted. The most difficult goals that were given to this National Community were:

To raise the number of localities to 300 including at least one in each province and 2 in the Galapagos Islands

Increase the number of local Spiritual Assemblies to 120

Increase the number of local Spiritual Assemblies incorporated to 10

Obtain from civil authorities recognition of Bahá'í Holy Days and the Bahá'í Marriage Certificate

Translate and publish Bahá'í literature into Jibaro

They were also assigned an international goal. The House of Justice explained:

In the field of international co-operation, so vital to the world-wide development of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, your Community is privileged to assist the National Spiritual Assembly of Tanganyika and Zanzibar in the acquisition of a Temple Site in or near the city of Zanzibar.

There were only two regular functioning Assemblies at the time and two which functioned now and then. It appears that the Hand of the Cause Mr. Kházeq was aware of the concern and distress of the National Assembly over the seemingly impossible goals and such limited assistance. He wrote to them in April:

The friends in South America should not become discouraged if the Assemblies do not function as explained. They are new Assemblies, like a child. Correct them gradually. Don't feel bad if they are not like in other places. A child cannot act as a man. Be patient, guide them. They will mature. I am hopeful of this because this is the Cause of God.

In the Book of Aqdas, Bahá'u'lláh says that when the members enter into the Assembly, they are in the Presence of God. This means this Assembly is in the Presence of Bahá'u'lláh. When we consider that we are in His presence, would we sit improperly, would we argue, show anger? Would we look at each other with hatred in the Presence of Bahá'u'lláh? If we know we are in His Presence, we will not do this. We will consult for the benefit of the Faith and with pure motives.

On August 17, the National Assembly informed the House of Justice of the formation of 19 Spiritual Assemblies in the mass conversion zone, and also they asked for advice, on this same date in another letter, as to "what action a National Spiritual Assembly can take in the case of a Local Spiritual Assembly which is completely inactive" For years, the majority of the time the local Spiritual Assembly of Guayaquil did not function and the National Assembly desired to dissolve it "due to their apathy and lack of sense of responsibility by the majority of the members of the Community toward the Faith."

On August 30, 1964 the House of Justice responded to both letters:

We joyfully acknowledge receipt of your letter of August 17, announcing the formation of nineteen new Local Spiritual Assemblies in accordance with our previous instructions. This is a great victory and we commend you on the manner in which you have carried out the instructions in the face of many difficulties. Please convey our loving greetings to these Assemblies and express the hope that they may become the instruments for the diffusion of the divine fragrances among the people of Ecuador...

The number of delegates to your national convention is now raised to nineteen, beginning with the 1965 convention. The convention should be held in Quito and every effort should be made to enable all elected delegates to attend.

Delegates should now be elected by the electoral unity system. As soon as practicable prior to the call for election of delegates your Assembly should designate the boundaries of electoral districts assigning the number of delegates to be elected from each electoral district in ratio of the Bahá'í population in that district to the total number of voting Bahá'ís in Ecuador. All adult Bahá'ís whether they are members of an Assembly area or not, are eligible to vote and for this purpose a convention should be called in each electoral district....

And regarding the dissolution of a local Assembly they wrote;

Since dissolution of a Local Spiritual Assembly is a very serious step, and one which should be resorted to only in the most extreme cases, your Assembly will naturally want to make every effort to re-activate the Local Assembly and to persevere in this direction.

If you are not successful in your efforts, please furnish further details including a resumé of efforts made by your Assembly and a statement of the manner in which the inactive Assembly is impeding the progress of the Faith.

The Assembly further notified the House of Justice that they had planned to have the convention of that district in Guayaquil, but found that the committee had not even met to make any plans so therefore they were changing the site to Cuenca. They further clarified that;

The Bahá'ís of Guayaquil are unusually capable and could do wonderful work for the Cause if they would work at it. When visitors arrive they will come to meetings and the visitors are always impressed by them, but when the visitors leave, they lapse into inactivity... All through the years when there has been a pioneer in Guayaquil, the friends have been more active but have never learned to take their obligations very much to heart, and when the pioneer leaves, they fall back into a state of inactivity...we feel that if the Local Spiritual Assembly were dissolved now, perhaps the shock would bring them to their senses.... 19

The National Assembly also notified the House of Justice of the return to Guayaquil of the Covenant-breaker, Eduardo (Les) González. The House of Justice responded:

We have reviewed your letter concerning the situation in Guayaquil, noting the presence of Eduardo Gonzáles (sic).

Because this Covenant-breaker is now living in Guayaquil, it becomes extremely important that everything possible be done to strengthen the Bahá'ís Community there, and to assure the re-election of the Local Assembly at Ridván.

At this juncture I should think it would be interesting to meet one of the young indigenous women who is a product of mass conversion, and is now one of the most successful native teachers in the country. Before Vicenta Anrango held her present position with Radio Bahá'í in Otavalo, she was a travel teacher, and has travelled to a number of countries. She was appointed to the Auxiliary Board for Propagation where she served until she was asked to work as an announcer using the Quechua language.

How did you hear of the Bahá'í Faith Mama Vicenta? (Mama is a term of endearment among the Quechua speaking people)

My father was a Bahá'í Raúl Pavón would come to my house to visit and I asked my father why does this man come here and he said, "to teach the Bahá'í Faith". Then he taught me too and I went to meetings and now I am a Bahá'í.

How old were you when Raúl Pavón first began visiting your home?

I was 17. At that time I was in school and I was a very naughty girl. I went to school and was a nuisance. Then my father told me about the new teachings of the Faith.

Who is your father?

My father is Nolberto Curillo. He lives in the community of Angla. He was one of the first Bahá'ís of that area. At that time I was very innocent, I only played and went to school, nothing else.

How did your belief in the Faith develop and when did you begin travel teaching?

First I left school and then other Bahá'ís came to visit like Señorita Teresa Jara and there were meetings in Otavalo and Quito. They brought me to the meetings with my family and little by little I got to know the Faith from the meetings and I understood more. Later I went teaching with Señorita Teresa after being a Bahá'í for a year.

Was it difficult for you to teach the Faith initially?

Yes. For me it was very difficult. When I was with Señorita Teresa I had to learn how she taught the Indigenous people and what she said. I listened and listened to all this for a long time because I couldn't learn quickly. But little by little, I knew that Bahá'u'lláh was the Glory of God, that Bahá'u'lláh was our new Manifestation of God, but I didn't know how to give the message to the other friends.

What were some of the problems you found when the people did not accept the Faith?

The country people especially did not want to accept quickly because Teresa spoke Spanish and I spoke Quechua, but I couldn't give the message clearly in Quechua so it was very difficult for them to understand. I was with her for a while and I learned many things and I was helped by the pamphlet "Camino Grande de Bahá'u'lláh". I took it and read it. I began to teach from the pamphlet to the villagers. Thus I learned but they had doubts; they did not understand why we were there. There are many critics in the villages. When Teresa went with me they were more confident seeing that I was indigenous and Teresa was from the city. There were people who believed that we had come to steal their souls and wanted to sell them to the gringos - things like that. There were bad comments.

Tell us in more detail and also let's talk about your experiences with the nuns and priests.

Even they wanted to beat us saying that this religion isn't worth anything. Only the Christian religion with the priests was worthwhile and they could not understand our Faith and because of this they hit me. They caused the whole community to rise up but we did not pay any attention to them. First, they attacked me above Tumibamba near Cotacachi in the province of Imbabura. I was with Counsellor Raúl Pavón. The indigenous people arose against us with sticks and stones. Then we returned without doing anything. Another time in this same zone, there was a community named Perafón. There was a close friend who gave us lodging and kept us there a night. Another time, we went with other teachers to teach the Faith and deepen the people and this man was drunk and he rose up and hit us and so we went back to our houses to consult and tell about this problem. Later, they took away my information book and the other teaching materials. Then we went back but they were hidden because they were afraid that we could take them to the jail or prison.

I have not been able to talk to priests but I met some nuns from San Pablo and they were Italians. They were very attentive listening to María and me. One day we were going down to a meeting in Otavalo, we were late and we were running. In front of our community there is a school, the Angla School, and they were celebrating mass. A nun came out and called to me and María, we stopped. She said that we were on a bad path and that we were following the devil and other things like that. We explained that God Himself sends His Messengers in every age, every epoch like Jesus Christ, who we know so well, just the same as Christ came, Bahá'u'lláh now has come! We spoke like this to the nun but in the end she could not say any more, and she was very angry when she returned to the school.

Were there repercussions afterwards?

Yes. There were problems in my community from the nuns and the priests. They said that some devils had entered the community of Angla. From then on, because of this, it was very important to go house to house sprinkling holy water to bless the houses. They had a plan. They went house to house and sprinkled holy water including Mama María's house (to get rid of the devil). At last they said that the houses were blessed and we

must never return to the Bahá'í Faith. When the Bahá'ís come, if possible, we must send them away by beating them or insulting them and we must not let these people come in. But my father said that the nun was not worried about our souls, and that she should be worried about her own soul; and that we were free to follow the Bahá'í Faith.

Fortunately the other people didn't understand and they did not say anything to us. My relatives were laughing about it. Only (one relative) was a bit upset because he said maybe the Bahá'í Faith isn't true and because of that the sisters are worried about us and advising us. Then (my relative) went to the church to baptize his son and to have his son and his daughter married there. Now (this relative) is a good Bahá'í travel teacher.

Now Vicenta we would be pleased if you would answer these questions for this history: I understand that there were other vicious attacks against the teachers in the mass teaching areas, will you tell us about it; and after being attacked did you ever return to these areas? Did you have many encounters with people drinking and with the Evangelists?

Yes. One time they attacked me in Ambato. There is a community, a very small town, where César Villacís and my cousin María Perugachi and I went to invite the people to the district convention. We were sitting in a house and soon the indigenous people arrived swinging machetes, ropes and sticks. We said, "Brothers, where are you going? How are you? Brothers are you ready to harvest?" We greeted them like this but they were coming to attack us, to tie us up with the rope and to cut us with the machetes. They were going to take us to bathe us and then tie us to a pole and do something to us. But there was a friend who said that they could only take "these people" to the village police. Fortunately, they all agreed and took us to the village official who saw that we had our Bahá'í credentials and asked if we had done anything bad and said that they shouldn't beat us because we had permission from the government to teach. They couldn't do anything after that. So we returned to our dwelling places safely in spite of the 200 people or more ready to attack us.

Upon returning to this community two years later, I visited with some of them and they were very respectful and good, they were much better than before.

Now, about some of the problems in the villages when the people are drunk. They always bother us when they are drunk, especially when a woman comes. They make jokes and speak badly so we can't teach the Faith. When I see they are drunk, I turn and go away. When there are a lot of drunks together it is a little dangerous and it's better to stay away from them. I don't drink even though they try to make me. I don't accept it. They don't force me, they know I am a Bahá'í because now we talk about the teachings on Radio Bahá'í and many of them know that the Bahá'ís do not drink. Because of that however they criticize us calling us Evangelists. They still mix us up with the Evangelist (that is to say, the native or indigenous people).

As far as the Evangelists are concerned they mix up Jesus Christ and Bahá'u'lláh a lot. I have taught the Evangelists the Faith but they can't think or answer. That's how Evangelists are, they do not reason or meditate because they think that there is only one Messenger and no more. I have

tried to make them understand but they are not able to. In the end I tell them that this is a new age and that God has sent Bahá 'u'lláh with a new message and later they understand a little.

What about your experiences with the Catholics, their images and Saints?

In Cuenca, they believe a lot in saints but not so much here in the North. The people here don't know what the images, saints or virgins are really. People from Cuenca have asked me about this and what I thought of this and I answer that we should have respect for the saints and virgins. I teach like this. I have been a Bahá'í for 16 years. The first few years I did not know what the Faith was. Then I went with the Pavóns to a place in the desert (actually Cachaco is more like the jungles). We were a group of indigenous. Also there were Clemencia and Raúl who taught us who 'Abdu'l-Bahá was, songs, everything. After that, I learned a bit more about the Faith and now I am a Bahá'í and teach those who speak Quechua. I served as an Auxiliary Board member for about six years then I was asked to work on the radio. My Spanish isn't good so I make Quechua programs. I am studying some Bahá'í books and what I understand I tape for the Quechua programs. My other function for Radio Bahá'í is to receive those who bring messages for lost children, identification cards, lost cows, donkeys and dogs, etc. Every Thursday I go to the villages with the radio personnel where we interview the people for the radio and we broadcast it from 3:00 PM on Sunday until 7:00 PM. This program is made by us for the people of the zone and they like it very much.³

The year 1965 opened with a concatenation of tests and successes for in spite of the fact that mass conversion was in process and the desire of the Bahá'í community was being fulfilled, there were still misgivings about it. Some of the National Assembly members who were opposed to it felt that because the emphasis seemed to have been placed primarily on mass conversion once it started and all help was concentrated only in that work, and that the rest of the national community were apathetic and felt like spectators. Only a chosen few were permitted to go into the mass conversion area. The National Assembly found it necessary on March 15, to solicit guidance from the Universal House of Justice regarding the election of local Assemblies in the mass conversion areas:

We have another problem which we would like to present for your consideration. As you know, our goal during the Nine Year Plan is to establish 120 Local Assemblies, 19 of which you allowed us to form in July of this year because of special circumstances. We have only two pioneers working in the Mass Conversion field, Raúl Pavón and Teresa Jara, and they have five Indian believers who work with them when they can spare time off from their work, but who are not sufficiently mature and trained in Bahá'í Administration to carry out elections by themselves, and mainly act as guides and translators from Spanish to Quechua for the pioneers. The Indian believers here in Ecuador do not live in villages but their houses are scattered out over a large area so that the pioneers usually cannot get a meeting of them all together but have to visit them house by house. We are trying to get enough white believers to help the two pioneers, and accompanied by the Indian believers, to be able to elect the 19 LSA's on April 20 and 21 but it will

be very difficult to accomplish even this. There are other groups which are large enough to elect their LSA's this year, but in order to do so, we would need at least a week for the elections with the limited personnel available.

In another letter to the House of Justice they pointed out that the majority of the local Spiritual Assemblies were weak and some inactive; that contributions to the fund were made by only a few individual believers; that a great deal of the Assembly's time was spent defending their actions because of what the believers thought and said against them and that under such a situation the Assembly was called upon to form, fortify and consolidate more than 100 new local Assemblies with practically no instructors or pioneers. The few pioneers in the country had to earn their living in such a poor and undeveloped country - a nearly impossible task. Also there was the problem that there was no consensus of opinion regarding when to enroll a new believer, whether in the mass conversion area or in the cities. Even the Hand of the Cause, Mr. Kházeh questioned the readiness of the people he attempted to interview to form their Assembly, due to the manner in which they had been taught, and the fact they knew practically nothing about the teachings. The fact that the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi had set a standard for acceptance of new believers seemed to have been forgotten or overlooked by some of the teachers and perhaps the Assembly since it appears that there were no guidelines established. On August 8, 1957, a few months before the Guardian passed away, his secretary wrote on his behalf;

Therefore, those responsible for accepting new enrollments must just be sure of one thing - that the heart of the applicant has been touched with the spirit of the Faith. Everything else can be built on this foundation gradually.

And he gave the following instructions regarding the election of local assemblies without qualification:

"...it is of the utmost importance that in accordance with the explicit text of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book, in every locality, be it city or hamlet, where the number of adult (21 years and above) declared believers exceeds nine, a local Spiritual Assembly be forthwith established...."* (Bahá'í Administration, P. 37)

(*When the number of believers in a community is exactly nine, they constitute themselves as the local Spiritual Assembly by joint declaration).

In response to the letter of March 15 the National Assembly wrote to the House of Justice, they cabled on March 22:

LOCAL ASSEMBLIES MUST BE FORMED FIRST DAY RIDVAN LETTER FOLLOWING

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

Investigation into the Effectiveness of Mass Teaching

When the Auxiliary Board member was asked by the Hands of the Cause to visit some of the communities where mass enrollment had begun,

she found that some of the people whose names were on a list as Bahá'ís, had never heard of the Faith. She learned that the system used by some teachers and instructors was that when a home was visited and a member of the family accepted the Faith the teacher would ask for the names of all the members of the family including the children and they were listed as Bahá'ís even though they were not home at the time of the teacher's visit nor had they ever heard of the Faith. In one case she found that a four year-old child was enrolled and a seven year-old.

Even before Ecuador's independent National Assembly was formed there were problems regarding accepting new believers. At the time the acceptance of new believers was under the jurisdiction of the National Teaching Committee. A person who wished to become a Bahá'í during those days, often had to wait two or three months until someone from that committee could visit their city or village to determine the readiness of the applicant! Some instructors were permitted to enroll new adherents that they taught as well as those taught by others. Prior to this, in 1962, the Hands of the Cause being aware of this policy and concerned about its effect on the new believers as well as the pioneers and teachers, cautioned them about this matter saying:

We urge you to take every step possible to eliminate excessive administrative procedure, and above all any delays in such enrollments, except when absolutely necessary for the protection of the Faith. Many a precious spirit has been put out in the past in different parts of the world while awaiting a visit of a representative of an Assembly or Committee ... every National Assembly has been repeatedly encouraged to do all in its power to facilitate the entry of new believers.

The Guardian also was deeply concerned about obstacles being placed in "the way of those who wish to accept the Faith." On July 9, 1957 his secretary wrote on his behalf:

He feels that the friends should be very careful not to place hindrances in the way of those who wish to accept the Faith. If we make the requirements too vigorous, we will cool off the initial enthusiasm, rebuff the heart and cease to expand rapidly. The essential thing is that the candidate for enrollment should believe in his heart in the truth of Bahá'u'lláh. Whether he is literate or illiterate, informed of all the teachings or not, is beside the point entirely. When the spark of Faith exists, the essential message is there, and gradually everything else can be added unto it...."

On April 17, 1965, the Hand of the Cause Dr. Muhájir arrived in Ecuador for his second visit. He spent nine days and during his stay he visited with the Indians and assisted in the election of two local Assemblies in the indigenous areas of Juan Montalvo and San Roque. He also visited Ambato and attended the National Convention in Quito. He had written that the purpose of his visit to Ecuador at this time was "to study the ways and means of carrying out the goals of the Nine Year Plan, particularly those of mass teaching in consultation with the National Spiritual Assembly and the friends."

One of the happiest moments at this Convention was when it was learned that two Indian believers were elected members of the National Spiritual Assembly. There were seven Indian delegates and eight other indigenous believers who were not delegates attended the convention. The Indians elected to the Assembly were Nolberto Curillo and Miguel Morales (Miguel is now deceased).

As a result of Dr. Muhájir's visit, the Assembly set goals of having 5,000 believers in the country by Riḍvān 1966; forming 60 local Spiritual Assemblies by April, and establishing a permanent teaching institute in Otavalo where the Indians could come regularly from all over the country to study for five to ten days. Dr. Muhájir also asked the National Assembly to permit Raúl Pavón to go to Perú to help that country to start Mass Conversion. In his talk to the convention regarding mass conversion, he said that this was the most important goal of the Cause of God now in which "everyone - absolutely everyone that calls himself a Bahá'í can participate if we wish to see realized the victory which the beloved Guardian so ardently desired." He suggested to the convention that they should recommend to the National Spiritual Assembly the creation of the first Institute for teaching with the possibility of buying a building in Otavalo, which could later serve as a point of convergence of the mass conversion area. He stated that this was extremely important for the consolidation and expansion of the Faith, and that this had been proven in other areas, especially in India, and that it could also serve as a center of preparation. After weighing this guidance from the Hand of the Cause, the Assembly resolved to take the above-mentioned actions. It was an historic moment when three indigenous believers volunteered to be travel teachers or instructors in the mass conversion zone! They were: Nolberto Curillo, Segundo Curillo and Miguel Morales. Rufino Gualavisí had been helping for some time.

Again a shadow was cast over these radiant hearts just as they began to feel their worst problems were over. It was during convention time when a letter was received from the National Assembly of Chile, dated April 17, 1965 advising this Assembly that the Covenant-breaker, Helen de Gonzalez had returned to Guayaquil; then on May 14, the Assembly received notice that the Covenant-breaker Sotomayor had returned to Guayaquil. Eduardo Gonzalez had already returned to Guayaquil the year before so this made three Covenant-breakers in that city. The National Assembly immediately alerted the believers and sent them an article entitled "Spiritual Health", which they had sent out twice before under similar circumstances to remind believers, old and new, that they should not associate with the breakers of God's Covenant if they wish to maintain their spiritual health and well-being.

Because of her willingness to cooperate in the teaching work, the National Assembly decided to ask Señorita Jara to live in the house which they had rented in Otavalo for a Teaching Institute. It was agreed that she would be directly responsible for the weekend schools and Dorothy Campbell was asked to transfer from Quito to Otavalo to help her. Here was also a Regional Teaching Institute which, for a time, operated from Lago San Pablo (Saint Paul Lake)

in the home of Raúl Pavón. Soon the Assembly was able to report to the House of Justice "that our teaching institute has begun operation with amazing success as reported by the glowing smiles of Señorita Jara, Raúl Pavón and Nolberto Curillo and their written report. Their first effort was a week long session of study (seven hours a day) leading to the preparation of native Bahá'í instructors. Classes began with six selected students and ended with nine.

During the year (1965-1966) there were 3,000 believers in the country but only 123 new enrollees for the year throughout Ecuador, including the mass conversion areas - the National Assembly had set a goal of 5,000 new believers. They were pleased when one of their goals of the Nine-Year Plan was completed when a Bahá'í transferred to Santa Cruz island in the Galapagos. The goal was to have two centers opened. There were 19 Provinces in the country and all had to be opened during the Plan - up to this time they had opened eight. Because of the great need for a permanent Teaching Institute in the mass conversion area and of the difficulty there was in finding even a house to rent in the area, the Assembly decided to inform the House of Justice of their need for a suitable permanent Institute since there were 3,000 Bahá'ís now in the area to be deepened and consolidated. The Hand of the Cause, Dr. Mohájir, had suggested in the Convention that year that they should have a permanent Institute owned by the Faith. The House of Justice approved their request and made it a supplementary goal to the Nine Year Plan for Ecuador. The need for a permanent place for consolidation and deepening had become evident as the years passed with hundreds and hundreds of people entering the Faith annually. The goal was to buy or construct a permanent institute for the indigenous believers in the area of Otavalo.

During the National Assembly meeting on November 6, 1965, the regional instructor reported:

Planning of the work at the Institute has taken on various characteristics not taken into account initially. Factores such as the lack of persons to serve as connecting links and providers of students for the Institute, have made it impossible for the Inst. to function on a permanent basis. Once the friends from immediately surrounding areas had attended, we found ourselves without students. Also the lack of funds making it impossible to bring these friends in from distant areas or to maintain them at the Inst. It is absolutely necessary that the Inst. continue functioning, as this is the only way to further the consolidation process because of the small number of capable persons willing to collaborate (sic) in the work. The continuation of the Inst. can only be carried forward by transforming it into a mobile unit, that is, instead of hoping the friends will travel from distant areas to the Inst. in San Pablo, the personnel available in the Mass Conversion work themselves transfer into the areas where the friends live in order to work in deepening the believers and teaching literacy. For these reasons, houses have been rented to serve as living quarters for the Reg. Instructor and various of the available friends in order to carry forward the consolidation work, working in units giving enfasis to the basic teachings, rudiments of administration and at the same time selecting adults

and youth to voluntarily assist the unit in other areas. In this way 3 areas of the mass conversion work would be covered at the same time.

That's all we have been able to accomplish as of this moment, relatively little, taking into consideration the extensive area and the goals given us at the national convention.

Areas not attended: In spite of the work carried out it is on all points impossible to think of consolidation work being attempted in other areas, such as Pichincha where the number of believers enrolled pass 1000, persons that because of lack of attention and because of lack of personnel, are completely lost in major part, remaining only certain persons as yet firm in faith of whom we hear of casually from time to time. Even within the Prov. of Imbabura, there are areas lost for special reasons such as the lack of attention, such as the lack of comprehension and patience on the part of city Bahá'ís who have visited them. In conclusion instead of increasing the numbers of Bahá'ís, they have been reduced to 1/5 of those enrolled, i.e. if on the lists we have 3000, we cannot now say that in fact there are more than 500.

This is the alarming truth in the area of Mass Conversion and it could be worse if we can't count on the means both human and economic to carry forward the work in actual process.

This is the report of activities and the present condition of Mass Conversion.⁴

With sincere Bahá'í love

/S/ Raúl Pavón Mejía, Regional
Instructor

It was at this same November 1965 National Assembly meeting when the decision was made to ask Vicenta Curillo Anrango to work in the teaching field with Teresa Jara. Thus she was the first indigenous woman to become a Bahá'í travel teacher in this country.

On the basis of the above report of Raúl, the Assembly decided the consolidation work would be limited to the area surrounding San Pablo and Otavalo and leave the rest of the areas which are practically impossible to visit or to consolidate until such time as it would be possible to attend to them. This decision was reached because of the lack of funds and personnel. They hoped to maintain some of the Indian local Spiritual Assemblies instead of losing them all by trying to work the outlying areas. However, based on a letter received from the Universal House of Justice the Assembly soon learned that if they abandoned these areas they would lose some of their delegates to the National Convention. As a result of their review of the situation it was decided to make every effort to reactivate those communities which had been abandoned.

In January 1966, the National Assembly was happy to receive news from the World Centre that the Bahá'ís of Ardistan Village in Persia, had donated approximately \$10,000 to various National Spiritual Assemblies for purchase of property requested under the Nine Year

Plan. The House of Justice said that they had designated these funds to be used for the purchase of Teaching Institutes and \$3,300 of this sum had been apportioned for Ecuador. When Dr. Muhájir suggested that Ecuador needed a permanent Teaching Institute the Assembly members lamented the fact that they had no funds to make such a purchase and could not see having sufficient funds in the near future. He told them to make their plans and the money would come!

In March 1966, the National Assembly decided to send out the ballots early to the delegates for the election of the next National Assembly due to the extremely unstable political situation in the country. They requested the return of the ballots as soon as possible so that if it became impossible to hold the National Convention the election of the new Assembly would be assured. A committee was named and its members were assigned to act as tellers and count the votes. Fortunately they were able to hold the Convention where they welcomed six Indian delegates and two new pioneers to the country - the first in six years! The new pioneers were Bahman Ashraghi from Irán and Roger Rains from the United States.

During this period the first mass conversion congress was held with 10 communities present and there was a deepening institute held in Cachaco for 20 days.

Also to help the teaching efforts, a former pioneer couple to Ecuador, gave a large contribution (20,000 sucres, over \$1,000) towards buying a jeep to be used for the mass conversion areas.

Some of the instructors in the Imbabura area informed the Assembly of an enrollment problem they had, that is, the Indians in that area were very superstitious and believed that giving their names when they are enrolled in the Faith, and having them mention their names in the result of the elections of local Spiritual Assemblies means that Saint Bernard, the Saint responsible for deaths put them in danger of dying. This created a special problem for the teachers. "Although over the years they have gained some confidence in the Bahá'ís there are still some areas where they are timid and superstitious - this is being overcome gradually with deepening and love."

A moving moment occurred at the National Assembly's July 1966 meeting, when one of the indigenous believers came and asked for an interview, which was granted. He was Segundo Curillo, the father of Vicenta, who had come to offer a piece of land (50 X 50 meters) to the Assembly to be used as a cemetery for his people who had no place to be buried after becoming Bahá'ís, and also for the construction of a Bahá'í Center for meetings and for teaching. This donation was made by Segundo Curillo, Espíritu Quimbia (she was one of the dynamic women teachers and promoters of the Faith in the area before she passed away), Nolberto and Josefina Curillo, all believers in the same community. It was land they had inherited from their parents. The National Assembly graciously thanked them and suggested that they discuss the offer with their local Spiritual Assembly first, and then they should immediately take legal steps to transfer the

property to the National Spiritual Assembly. The Assembly assured Señor Curillo that they were ready to help the local Spiritual Assembly with the details.

Again, the Bahá'í community was plunged into sorrow when it learned that yet another of the apparently learned and active believers had begun to attack the Sacred Institutions of the Faith. Luis Alfonso Peñaherrera, a native believer, and who had been a very active teacher and homefront pioneer to the Galapagos Islands to replace Haig Kevorkian, when he had to leave the Islands for health reason, turned away from the Cause. When he was confronted with witnesses that he was teaching his own ideas which were contrary to Bahá'í Teachings, he readily admitted it and added that he had always had these ideas. After interviewing him about the matter the National Assembly sent all pertinent data to the Universal House of Justice and on August 15, 1966 a cable was received from the World Centre:

OWING CONTINUATION HIS ATTACKS SACRED INSTITUTIONS FAITH DESPITE REPEATED EXPLANATIONS WARNINGS ANNOUNCE EXPULSION LUIS ALFONSO PENAHERRERA STOP WARN FRIENDS ALL ASSOCIATION FORBIDDEN.

/S/ HANDSFAITH

Salomón Pacora Estrada (Pacora Blue Mountain), First Known Bahá'í of Inca Descent and First Pioneer of his Race

Salomón Pacora Estrada, better known as Pacora Blue Mountain, was born in Sullana, Perú, in 1899. He was of Inca descent and trained as a concert pianist. As he was from a well-to-do family, he was able to go to New York around 1938 where he met a Bahá'í who took him to the Bahá'í Center. He met the Kinneys there and the friendship developed until they eventually became his spiritual parents. After becoming a Bahá'í, he spent most of his time in small towns teaching the Faith. He would return home on weekends and give concerts for crippled children and at other hospitals. He married an Ecuadorian young woman and after that he always wanted to pioneer to her country.

In March 1961 he came to Ecuador as a pioneer and at Ridván he was elected to be a member of the local Assembly of Guayaquil. He was so well liked by the Bahá'ís and appreciated that the local Assembly made an official request to the National Assembly that he be allowed to remain with them in that city. However, Pacora enjoyed working in the more primitive areas of the country and devoted time to the community of Naranjapata where he kept a room for Bahá'í meetings. During the year, he was privileged to attend the first major Indian Teaching Congress in Ecuador at San Pablo near Otavalo.

While in Guayaquil, he gave many piano concerts interspersed with the Bahá'í writings and also radio programs on "Ondas del Pacífico" (The Waves of the Pacific). He received many letters from the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, to whom he was extremely devoted and he composed a chant for the Guardian entitled "Ya Shoghi Effendi Val-e-Amrollah." Rúhíyyih Khánum said that the Guardian loved him very much. She also said that, "The beloved Guardian considered Mr. Pacora Blue Mountain to be the first known Bahá'í of Inca descent and for this reason had a photograph of Mr. Pacora Blue Mountain placed in the Mansion at Bahjí where it may still be seen."

In 1967, Mr. Blue Mountain acquired a house in Sullana, Perú his birth place, which he hoped to use as a teaching Center. The land was later given to the National Spiritual Assembly of Perú.

It was obvious that he had a very deep love for the Faith as well as a profound reverence for Shoghi Effendi. At times it appeared to some that he was a borderline fanatic, especially when it came to the protection of the Faith against its enemies or those he thought might be or become its enemies. Since he was the only pioneer in Guayaquil for a time, the believers, who loved and respected him, naturally turned to him when they had perplexing questions or problems. He was a very able and learned teacher. Therefore, when rumors were brought to him about the possibility of another Guardian, and an American of all people, without a drop of the deceased Guardian's blood, it was more than he could bear! He reported the matter to the National Assembly, who thanked him for his alertness and devotion.

property to the National Spiritual Assembly. The Assembly assured Señor Curillo that they were ready to help the local Spiritual Assembly with the details.

Again, the Bahá'í community was plunged into sorrow when it learned that yet another of the apparently learned and active believers had begun to attack the Sacred Institutions of the Faith. Luis Alfonso Peñaherrera, a native believer, and who had been a very active teacher and homefront pioneer to the Galapagos Islands to replace Haig Kevorkian, when he had to leave the Islands for health reason, turned away from the Cause. When he was confronted with witnesses that he was teaching his own ideas which were contrary to Bahá'í Teachings, he readily admitted it and added that he had always had these ideas. After interviewing him about the matter the National Assembly sent all pertinent data to the Universal House of Justice and on August 15, 1966 a cable was received from the World Centre:

OWING CONTINUATION HIS ATTACKS SACRED INSTITUTIONS FAITH DESPITE REPEATED EXPLANATIONS WARNINGS ANNOUNCE EXPULSION LUIS ALFONSO PENAHERRERA STOP WARN FRIENDS ALL ASSOCIATION FORBIDDEN.

/S/ HANDSFAITH

Salomón Pacora Estrada (Pacora Blue Mountain), First Known Bahá'í of Inca Descent and First Pioneer of his Race⁵

Salomón Pacora Estrada, better known as Pacora Blue Mountain, was born in Sullana, Perú, in 1899. He was of Inca descent and trained as a concert pianist. As he was from a well-to-do family, he was able to go to New York around 1938 where he met a Bahá'í who took him to the Bahá'í Center. He met the Kinneys there and the friendship developed until they eventually became his spiritual parents. After becoming a Bahá'í, he spent most of his time in small towns teaching the Faith. He would return home on weekends and give concerts for crippled children and at other hospitals. He married an Ecuadorian young woman and after that he always wanted to pioneer to her country.

In March 1961 he came to Ecuador as a pioneer and at Ridván he was elected to be a member of the local Assembly of Guayaquil. He was so well liked by the Bahá'ís and appreciated that the local Assembly made an official request to the National Assembly that he be allowed to remain with them in that city. However, Pacora enjoyed working in the more primitive areas of the country and devoted time to the community of Naranjapata where he kept a room for Bahá'í meetings. During the year, he was privileged to attend the first major Indian Teaching Congress in Ecuador at San Pablo near Otavalo.

While in Guayaquil, he gave many piano concerts interspersed with the Bahá'í writings and also radio programs on "Ondas del Pacífico" (The Waves of the Pacific) He received many letters from the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, to whom he was extremely devoted and he composed a chant for the Guardian entitled "Ya Shoghi Effendi Val-e-Amrollah." RÚḥíyyih Khánum said that the Guardian loved him very much. She also said that, "The beloved Guardian considered Mr. Pacora Blue Mountain to be the first known Bahá'í of Inca descent and for this reason had a photograph of Mr. Pacora Blue Mountain placed in the Mansion at Bahjí where it may still be seen."

In 1967, Mr. Blue Mountain acquired a house in Sullana, Perú his birth place, which he hoped to use as a teaching Center. The land was later given to the National Spiritual Assembly of Perú.

It was obvious that he had a very deep love for the Faith as well as a profound reverence for Shoghi Effendi. At times it appeared to some that he was a borderline fanatic, especially when it came to the protection of the Faith against its enemies or those he thought might be or become its enemies. Since he was the only pioneer in Guayaquil for a time, the believers, who loved and respected him, naturally turned to him when they had perplexing questions or problems. He was a very able and learned teacher. Therefore, when rumors were brought to him about the possibility of another Guardian, and an American of all people, without a drop of the deceased Guardian's blood, it was more than he could bear! He reported the matter to the National Assembly, who thanked him for his alertness and devotion.

It seemed that Mr. Blue Mountain was highly intuitive. It is interesting to note that those whom he accused of being in association with Covenant-breakers, and the majority of those he referred to as Covenant-breakers turned out to be so in the end even though they had not been declared as such at the time. For example in a letter dated April 22, 1962 to the National Spiritual Assembly he wrote, "I advise you that I would like to be mistaken in manifesting to you that I have a presentiment that there will be more Covenant-breakers in these communities." Among his experiences as a travel teacher in Otavalo he mentioned, "...I discovered that there is hatred in those communities among the natives for all the foreign pioneers. But this comes from the future Covenant-breakers of the Quito Community."

Again the National Assembly thanked him for the information and his concern. Again they advised him not to talk about these matters with the believers for he had no tangible proof of the validity of his allegations. However, he was unable to contain himself when he heard of things that were not in accord with Bahá'í teachings. Since talking about the rumors he heard from others, the Assembly advised him, fell within the scope of "backbiting", which is strongly condemned in the Bahá'í Faith, he was subject to lose his administrative rights for being disobedient to the exhortations of the National Assembly. In an effort to help him and also to investigate his allegations, the Assembly asked the Executive Auxiliary Board member, Mr. Donald Witzel, to come and talk with Pacora and try to explain to him that he must function through administrative channels and not talk about one believer to another and cause dissension between them. He, Pacora, would warn a believer that someone was a Covenant-breaker and not to associate with him, even though the person had not been declared to be such by the Institution designated for this purpose, and only this Institution could declare someone a Covenant-breaker. As a result of the interview between the Board member and Blue-Mountain, Mr. Witzel reported:

He is normal in everything except on two subjects: 1. Covenant-breaking, and 2. The Administrative Order.

Mr. Blue Mountain was taught by the "exemplary steadfast pillar of the Faith" Saffa Kinney. His idea of dealing with Covenant-breakers dates back to a time before the institutions of the Faith were developed, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá was cut off (1914 - 1918) from the friends. 'Abdu'l-Bahá asked the friends to turn toward certain strong believers for firmness in the Covenant and support. Therefore, Mr. Blue Mountain shuns and "hold aloof" as soon as he sees "a trace of violation." For instance when he sees ... or Mr. ... , he crosses the street and runs the other way.

I carefully explained to him that only the Hands of the Cause residing in the Holy Land with approval of the Universal House of Justice can determine who is a Covenant-breaker and expell him from the Faith....

Then on February 15, 1967 the Universal House of Justice wrote a very kindly, informative letter to Mr. Blue Mountain, which states in part:

The love and affection that the beloved Guardian cherished for you, your steadfastness in the Cause, as evidenced by your long standing and devoted services to it, and your deep and genuine longing to serve its best interest at all times, were all clearly outlined in Mr. Witzel's reports, and are testimonies we wholeheartedly uphold. However, we must all be especially careful, lest in our enthusiasm to protect the Faith, to promote a particular project or to solve a special problem we lose our perspective and unwittingly neglect to appreciate the relative importance of the component parts of the over-all Divine Plan. This is why we are urged to observe moderation and maintain a balance in all things.

It is precisely to assist you in fully appreciating the need for this balance in evaluating the services you can offer to the Faith that we are writing to you this letter. We wish to share with you the following extract from a letter written on behalf of the Guardian on this important subject:

"Concerning individual Bahá'ís' letters to the Guardian and his replies, the friends are free to write to the Guardian when they feel the urge to do so. However, for the believers to suppose that the Guardian's letters to them, however full of loving encouragement they may be, give them any special powers or authority to go against or ignore the wishes of their local or national Assembly, is to grossly misinterpret his true meaning. The Guardian has been at great pains to build up the Administrative Order and teach the friends how to use it. How could he possibly himself act in such a way as to ignore or belittle the functions of these bodies? He often encourages believers to work, to teach, to pursue some plan they propose in their letters to him, but this does not mean a veto of the Assembly's rights, or that the individual thus becomes free to ignore its authority. He trusts this will make the matter quite plain to the friends." (To the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand, April 18, 1942)

We call on you therefore in the spirit of the principle outlined above, to discard from your heart any lingering thought that you have been given a position in the Faith outside or above the jurisdiction of the Local and National Spiritual Assemblies, or that you bear a responsibility that others do not and cannot have. No individual believer can be immune to the decisions and authority of the agencies of the Administrative Order.

Perhaps as a result of his training as a new Bahá'í by his spiritual parents, Mr. and Mrs. Saffa and Vafa Kinney of New York, as outlined in Mr. Witzel's report, Mr. Blue Mountain felt that he had a special duty to act as "the Guardian's policeman" and protect the Faith and when the House of Justice was formed, he felt the same obligation to it. Even with all this wonderful advice he found it difficult to control himself and finally lost his voting rights.

In some of the letters he wrote he seemed to be quite irrational and in others humble and contrite. I recall a conversation with his wife some years ago in New York who said that he had suffered a great deal especially when he went into hazardous areas of the jungles of Ecuador to teach the Indians. Often he was hungry for days and not

sure he would get out safe. He told her of one such arduous long trip he made, either on a boat or a canoe, when a letter reached him, stuck in a magazine so no one would question his foreign mail, from his beloved Guardian Shoghi Effendi and which lifted his spirits for he was rather despondent and did not expect any mail since no one really knew where he was at the time. This caused his love to wax even stronger for the Guardian. Perhaps because of his age these hardships were too much for his body; it was known that he had diabetes for some time but how often he suffered from hemoptysis no one knew. He lived alone with no one to care for him.

Loving the Faith as he did he was indeed stunned when he lost his voting rights and pledged that he would try to conform to the instructions of the Assembly if his voting rights were restored. The Universal House of Justice knew of Pacora's love and devotion for the Cause as well as of his long time service for the Faith, wrote to the National Spiritual Assembly on March 5, 1965 (his administrative rights were suspended in December 1964):

... in view of the devotion of Sr. Pacora Blue Mountain to the Cause and in view of his long service we call upon you to persevere in your efforts to bring about a healing. If there is any sign of repentance, we feel you should immediately act to restore his voting rights.

It was on March 8, 1965 when he asked the National Assembly for forgiveness and pardon - it was granted on April 17, 1965. Everyone was happy, for he was highly regarded. The Assembly advised him that he could live in Guayaquil as resident pioneer again or wherever he desired. On May 11, 1965, the House of Justice wrote to the National Assembly expressing their happiness that Pacora's voting rights were restored. And when Rúhíyyih Khānum visited Ecuador in 1968, she told the National Assembly that she felt they had been most patient with Pacora but that he is 'Now 65 years old and with a head hard as iron and that we cannot change him; but that he does love the Faith. He won't ever leave South America since Shoghi Effendi sent him here, he will die here. He is a very difficult person but a very dear one! In her next visit, after his passing she congratulated the Assembly for the kindness and patience shown Pacora until the time of his death "enabling him to pass into the Kingdom as a Bahá'í in good-standing."

By 1969 he was spending a lot of time in Duran, a city near Guayaquil, and continuing the work of another pioneer, Juan Vargas, who had returned to his country. As previously mentioned Pacora had diabetes for some time and on December 25, 1969, he had a violent attack of hemoptysis and passed away. His funeral was held the same day and the Bahá'ís in Guayaquil attended the services and in the cemetery Bahá'í prayers were recited for him. On January 3, 1970 the National Assembly informed the House of Justice of the death of this beloved first Bahá'í descendent of the Incas:

It is our sad task to inform you of the death of our beloved Bahá'í friend Pacora (Blue Mountain) Salomón Estrada in Quayaquil, Ecuador, on December 25, 1969. He was buried that same day in a cemetery in Guayaquil ... Pacora has served the Ecuadorian Bahá'í Community

as a pioneer since the establishment of our first National Spiritual Assembly in 1961, and was constantly occupied in giving the Message of Bahá'u'lláh wherever he travelled....

On January 13, the Universal House of Justice responded:

We were deeply grieved to receive your letter of January 3, 1970 informing us of the passing of Pacora (Blue Mountain) Salomón Estrada. His long and devoted services to the Faith in Latin America and in Ecuador will be long remembered.

Be assured of our loving prayers at the Holy Shrine for the progress of his soul in the Abhá Kingdom. ⁵

Centenary Year of Proclamation of Faith; More Covenant-breakers, distinguished Author and Bahá'í Rosey Pool visits Ecuador

During the Nine Year Plan, Ecuador's goals were among the largest in the Bahá'í World. In their March 1967 meeting, the National Assembly made a detailed review and revision of their goals and their accomplishments during the previous year. They were shocked over the enormity of the goals and wondered how to go about fulfilling them with their very limited resources. It was discovered that they had not advanced much in their accomplishments and decided to consult with the Universal House of Justice about the matter. In a letter dated April 10, 1967 to the House they confided:

...it was decided to share with you our concern that we have not been able to accomplish more in the fulfillment of our goals in the Nine Year Plan and we ask for your help. Ecuador's goals are among the greatest in all the Bahá'í world and we are lacking in personnel and funds to be able to carry them out.

The letter continued explaining their need for more pioneers and teachers and of course the need for funds to carry out this work.

This was the Centenary Year of the Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh's Mission to the Kings and Rulers of the world, which was being celebrated all over the world with each Bahá'í community taking part. Ecuador began its proclamation activities early in the year. The committee for this purpose presented all the secondary schools in the country with a booklet, "Rumbo hacia el Futuro" (Journey Toward the Future). One each was presented to the principal, the assistant principal and the school library. This same booklet was presented to the Provincial Directors of Education, their secretaries and libraries as well as copies to each of the high officials of the Armed Forces, the Police Force, Customs Police and the National Government.

The National Spiritual Assembly had so few teachers at this time that they found it difficult to concentrate on any particular region and to properly develop it, because the areas were so vast. For example, Teresa Jara served 12 different regions, some distance apart, and Gerardo Segovia served 13 areas. There were only 12 travel teachers named for the entire country and often not all of them were free to travel when needed. There was also a need for a Bahá'í couple to live in the Teaching Institute in Otavalo who knew the Quechua language and who would be patient and loving with the indigenous people. For this reason, the Assembly decided to ask the loving couple, Mr. and Mrs. Segundo and Clementina Pavón, to transfer from the Institute in Cachaco to the one in Otavalo where the need was much greater. They were destined to render immortal service at this Institute for the Cause and to the Indigenous people.

Again dark clouds began to hover over the community when it was learned that two more members of the Quito Community were on the brink of defection from the Cause. They were Alfonso and Raquel Peñaherrera, formerly homefront pioneers to Riobamba and who admitted

associating with the Covenant-breaker Luis Alfonso Peñaherrera, who had pioneered to the Galapagos Islands some years before and since then had been expelled from the Faith. The believers were all advised that association with Covenant-breakers is forbidden in accordance with the Divine Teachings. When the National Assembly learned that the two families were still associating with each other, they invited the son, Alfonso and his wife Raquel for an interview, but they failed to respond. The wife told the National Assembly chairman, who delivered the invitation, that she doubted that her husband would come, but that she would do everything possible to appear. She further explained that if her husband retired from the Faith, it should be understood that she would also have to retire because of their large family (a number of little children). When he did not come for the interview and after receiving this report, the National Assembly appointed a commission to visit him. "He expressed himself violently", they reported, and it was obvious that he had been greatly influenced by his father - expressing the same doubts about the validity of the Divine Institutions.

Sr. Peñaherrera told the commission that he did not agree with the Institutions and therefore could not be with them; that he belonged "to the small group which gave the alert cry in Ecuador several years ago." That made it clear as to who the group was that a member of the Quito Community had been referring to when in October 1966, he informed the Auxiliary Board member that, "they are trying to form another group of Bahá'ís in Quito." This information was referred to the House of Justice and the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land. Then on August 18, 1967, the following cable was received from the Hands of the Cause in the World Centre:

BAHAIQUITO

OWING DISLOYALTY INSTITUTIONS FAITH ASSOCIATION COVENANT BREAKERS ANNOUNCE
EXPULSION ALFONSO RAQUEL PEÑAHERRERA WARN FRIENDS ALL ASSOCIATION
FORBIDDEN.

HANDSFAITH

What trials and tests this small country and Bahá'í Community had to endure in order to develop! Only a firm belief that God would not forsake His Own Cause kept the few firm believers' courage alive for so many years. For some time the National Spiritual Assembly had been making appeals for a strong pioneer couple to reside in Guayaquil due to the existence of Covenant-breakers in that city. Now their appeal was even stronger.

Laying of the Corner Stone for the Mother Temple of Latin America -
Representatives of Ecuador present

An extraordinary event, which rejoiced not only the believers of Latin America during the year but the Bahá'ís of the world as well, was the historic occasion when the foundation stone was laid in Panamá where the Mother Temple of Latin America would be erected - a second Bahá'í Temple of the Americas. The stone was laid by the eminent Hand of the Cause of God Rúhíyyih Khánum. This event occurred

concomitant with the Intercontinental Conferences called for to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of Bahá'u'lláh's Proclamation to the kings and rulers of the earth, and to remind the believers that they were "called upon to proclaim once again that Divine Message to the leaders and masses of the world,..." and that, "Upon our efforts depends in very large measure the fate of humanity...."

Some of the Ecuadorian believers were quite excited over the possibility of attending such a conference. Four of them who desired to see their mass conversion area represented by the mass conversion teachers themselves who, they felt, would be better qualified to speak on the subject to the participants, contributed \$400 to help defray the expense of those teachers. The teachers were, Rufino Gualavisí, Vicenta Curillo Anrango, Raúl Pavón and Teresa Jara. The National Spiritual Assembly scheduled a regular meeting of its members in this propitious and spiritual atmosphere in Panamá. The Assembly members who were present and represented Ecuador were: Alejandro Bernal, Isabel de Calderón, Dorothy Campbell, Macario Guillen and Raúl Pavón. The Hand of the Cause, Mr. Kházeḥ and his Auxiliary Board member, Mrs. Gayle Woolson also met with the Assembly to make plans for post-conference teaching activities and for taking advantage of international travel teachers who would be going out after this Conference to teach in various countries.

After the Panamá Conference, Mr. Kházeḥ had to make a scheduled visit to Guayaquil. My husband and I (the writer) were with him a great deal in Panamá and one lasting impression for me was that for two or three days before the end of the Conference, Mr. Kházeḥ, with tears rolling down his cheeks, would ask us for prayers for his protection because he had to visit the Guayaquil Community and face the Covenant-breakers. He said that there were five Covenant-breakers in that city. Having been a Bahá'í and a pioneer to Colombia for only a very few years, seeing this big important man who everyone seemed to listen to and obey, and who was a Hand of the Cause of God, in tears, more than anything else, made me deeply conscious of the seriousness of Covenant-breaking and the need for a deeper understanding of what it was and the need to constantly pray for steadfastness.

The Hands of the Cause were aware that many believers lacked understanding of the gravity of Covenant-breaking and of its nature and significance, called this to the attention of all National Assemblies of Latin America on September 17, 1962:

This lack of understanding concerning the true nature and significance of Covenant-breaking is even more true among the younger communities of Latin America. The warm, open hospitable nature of the Latin Believers when coupled with inexperience represents a very real danger to them and to the Cause they love when they are confronted by such sly and ruthless enemies. The presence of any Covenant-breaker spreads a deadly and negative atmosphere which subtly and gradually can poison an entire community unless all association is immediately cut off.

Mr. Kházeḥ confided in a letter to Mrs. Woolson dated November 2, 1967, that after his arrival in Guayaquil he decided to first tell the Community about the greatness of the Conference in Panamá and that it would have been interesting if some of the Bahá'ís of that city could have attended the Conference to see the greatness of the Cause for themselves and witness the historical laying of the cornerstone of the Temple which overlooks two Oceans. 'Then I found it would be wise to talk about the deterioration of Mason Remey's activities, about the letters he has written to his so-called believers and the full story of his claim on the properties in the Holy Land....', a claim which he lost. As a matter of fact, he lost all the claims he filed for ownership of Bahá'í properties. Mr. Kházeḥ expressed his hopes that by relating these facts to the believers in that city, and expressly to those who were wavering in their faith, this would demonstrate the futility of turning away from the Cause of God. He said, "We especially spoke on the subject of Remey because it was evident that some of the friends may have direct or indirect connection with the Covenant-breakers... Perhaps ...it could make the wishy-washy believers recover from the poison of the Covenant-breakers... because Ecuador is the nest and home of almost eight...."

After the Panamá Conference the community of Ecuador was overjoyed to receive and welcome a number of visiting teachers. Among those visitors was the renowned social anthropologist, writer and lecturer, Dr. Rosey F. Pool. She was a native of Amsterdam, Holland, but after World War II she resided in London, England when she was not travelling or living temporarily in some other country working as a guest professor in some college or university. She was better known as the teacher of the famous, brave young Jewish girl, Anne Frank of Holland, and the translator of her famous diary after the war and persecution were over. Dr. Pool was also Jewish and was a member of the Dutch underground resistance. Being of Hebrew background she was imprisoned in 1943 by the Nazis but escaped and lived in hiding for many months. She met the Poet-Laureate of the Negro World, Dr. Robert Hayden of the United States, who became one of her Bahá'í teachers. She later accepted the Bahá'í Faith and wholeheartedly became one of its ardent teachers and espoused the Cause at every opportunity, especially in universities and colleges where she was often a guest professor. She was warmly received in Ecuador by the Bahá'ís as well as the press, which further enhanced the Faith in Ecuador in the eyes of the news media and the public. She remained in Ecuador from March 17 to March 23, 1967.

First Visit of Hand of the Cause of God, Amatu'l-Bahá Rúḥíyyih Khánum to Ecuador- Gayle Woolson leaves South America for Central America

January 1968 brought regrettable news which dismayed all the Bahá'ís and many non-Bahá'ís of Ecuador; it was that their dear loved one, Auxiliary Board member Gayle Woolson was being transferred by her employer, USAID, to another country. She had served Ecuador with distinction since the early 1940's. She was privileged and honored to host Rúḥíyyih Khánum before she left.

The Hand of the Cause of God 'Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhiyyih Khānum arrived in Ecuador on March 20, 1968 accompanied by her devoted travelling companion Mrs. Violette Nakhjavāni. Bahá'ís from eleven communities were at the Airport to receive them, and they were extremely pleased that they had arrived in time to celebrate Naw-Rúz, the Bahá'í New Year. The report to the House of Justice was, in part, as follows:

The Naw Ruz program was wonderful, brightened with many communities represented, including three Indian ones. The Quito Community had prepared a charming welcome for Ruhíyyih Khanum: loving words of welcome, the singing of two beautiful songs composed by an Ecuadorean Bahá'í, the words of which were dedicated to Ruhíyyih Khanum. This was followed by a very inspiring talk by Ruhíyyih Khanum, a large part of which was concerning the Indian teaching work. The Quito Community presented her and Mrs. Nakhjavani (sic) with gifts of Ecuadorean handicraft.

The following day she gave an interesting talk at a girls' high school, Colegio Simon Bolivar. Over 300 students and 15 teachers were present and the girls crowded around her after the talk and asked many questions. The next day she made an half hour radio talk from 'Radio Cordillera', one of the principal radio stations of Quito. In the evening she gave a public talk in a conference room of one the hotels ... About 130 persons attended. As a result of this meeting, a group of young people who were present requested her to give a talk especially for the youth. She consented to do this after her return from the Indian area which she was to visit for a week. A trip to Otavalo was scheduled for the following day and 22 Bahá'ís from several cities of Ecuador accompanied her on the bus.

The main objective of Ruhíyyih Khanum's visit to Ecuador was to visit some Indian Bahá'í Communities and she carried out this activity during the following week. The National Bahá'í Mass Teaching Committee of Ecuador arranged for her to visit 17 Indian villages within that period of time. On the last day, a teaching institute was held in Otavalo at which Indian Bahá'ís from 14 to 17 villages were present. Ruhíyyih Khanum was impressed with Otavalo, the principal Indian town in the region, and the rural Indian villages that surround it. It was necessary to go by jeep up the mountains surrounding Otavalo as far as she could then walk and climb the rest of the way, because very few of the villages could be reached by car. Ruhíyyih Khanum was charmed with the beautiful scenery and with the many wild flowers, and one day she sat down on the road to make a crown of those she had picked for her hat.

Her spontaneous love for the indians and the sincere appreciation she unfailingly showed them won their hearts immediately and they lost all of their shyness. In most of the villages a meal had been prepared for her. On one occasion it was hot milk followed by soup, potatoes and beans. Most often it was a filling soup of grains... Often they gave her eggs or coins for the Fund. In one place the owner of the house presented her with a big Ecuadorian flag ... In another place all of the friends descended a long hill chanting "Allah'u'Abhá" as we approached in the jeep and escorted us back up the hill to the house.

In many of the villages, Rúhiyyih Khanum drew a map of the world on the ground with a stick, using it to teach them the history of their own people and telling them of their own glorious past. Then she told them how she had always wished she were an Indian and how happy she was to be with them; she related the wonderful promises in the Bahá'í Writings about the Indians of the Americas - that when they have become illumined by the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh they will in turn illumine the whole world. She told them how difficult it is to teach the Cause in the cities but that they who live in the midst of such great natural beauty are more receptive spiritually, and when they have learned the Teachings they will be able to go and teach the Faith to the people in the cities. She stressed everywhere that they should not think of themselves as being ignorant because many cannot read and write and that only the whites are intelligent. She said that many times men are like gourds - they look fine outside but inside they are empty. Only when they accept Bahá'u'lláh are they full of a new understanding.

She told them to teach the Bahá'í prayers to the children as they would protect them from bad dreams. She told us (the believers who were travelling with her) to teach the children about all of the Manifestations of God so that they will become firm believers. In several villages she explained that we have no clergy or nuns in the Faith. She told them of the marvellous dream of Bahá'u'lláh's father and of Bahá'u'lláh's great love for all humanity. She said that they should feel very honored because Bahá'u'lláh loved them very much as was proven by the wonderful promises He made to the American Indians.

She was impressed by the work being done in the Teaching Institute in Otavalo ... but suggested that we also use a mobile institute to go out and teach in the communities, as this would reach whole families instead of just one member. She found many capable and receptive souls among the women and said that with the mobile institute we could train many of them to go out as teachers....

Rúhiyyih Khánum visited all 17 villages which had been arranged for her to visit and on Saturday morning, March 30, a farewell meeting was held in the Institute in Otavalo and 16 communities were represented. She told them that the Universal House of Justice and the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land would be praying for them and the teaching work there. Several of the Indians thanked her for her visit. When she returned to Quito she was running a very high fever and was exhausted from her months of travel in South America. However she did not allow this to interfere with her meeting with the National Assembly—she arose from her bed to meet with them.

She told the Assembly that she had been thrilled with the past week spent visiting the Indian believers in the mountains and she could see that the Indians here have the same qualities as those in Perú and Bolivia and that they are very good. She explained that it was not her place to give orders but only to make suggestions and she said that she felt very strongly that we should teach those who want to learn and that if we do not, we will be responsible to God. She further emphasized that 'we cannot establish the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh without people - we can't do it with 1,000 people but with thousands upon thousands; that in one of the last messages

of Shoghi Effendi he said that we should teach on the steppes, and in the mountains - meaning that we should teach everywhere. This is a marvellous message - I don't know whether it has been translated into Spanish. The Bahá'ís in the cities ask what kind of Bahá'ís are these in the country. Shoghi Effendi's whole heart was in mass conversion which began in the South Pacific and in Africa. He sent out cables announcing that 500 then 1,000 had entered in the Faith. Why did he do this when he was divinely guided and he knew that they were ignorant and unlettered? If he was thrilled over their entering the Cause and he knew they were Bahá'ís we should also consider them Bahá'ís. We know that in the early days of the Cause there were also members who were ignorant and unlettered but they gave their lives for the Cause. Shoghi Effendi said that they were our spiritual ancestors and we are all proud of the 20,000 martyrs. They were similar to the Indians here and lived much as they do. Can any man measure the amount of faith another individual has? Only God can do that. The educated and intelligent believers often become Covenant-breakers - on the other hand the simple ones are like grains of wheat. She said that she had met marvellous Bahá'ís in the 17 places she visited in the campo and that some of these good believers would become outstanding teachers and will help with the teaching in the cities (This has now come to pass in nearly every city of the country). She mentioned that there should be mobile institutes everywhere...that those who have not gone into the mass teaching area cannot imagine the importance of the mobile institute and that both classes of institutes are necessary. With the mobile institute all the family can be taught. She said that the women whom in many cases 'I found very receptive often cannot go to the Institute in Otavalo and usually someone has to stay at home taking care of things and doing the work....' She reminded everyone that they should not forget that the Indians have been the most abused by the Catholics and that all the Bahá'ís who love the Indians should go to teach them while there is still receptivity.

Ruhíyyih Khánum was physically unable to give her talk to the youth as promised but Mrs. Nakhjavani ably filled in for her and gave a beautiful, inspiring talk.

It was a very sad community that went to the airport to bid them farewell, for the love she poured out in such great measure to all of the friends made this an unforgettable and very treasured experience....

First Native Bahá'í Woman of Ecuador Passes Away

On April 20, 1968 the local Spiritual Assembly of Guayaquil notified the National Spiritual Assembly of the death of Judith Franco, the first Ecuadorian woman to accept the Bahá'í Faith. She became disenchanted with the Bahá'í community where she resided sometime before she passed away and asked that her name be removed from the Bahá'í membership list. Fortunately, the Bahá'ís in Guayaquil loved her and appreciated her steadfastness throughout the years of trials and tribulations in that community. When she became old, ill and bedridden a few of the staunch believers, most often, Alberto Carbo, would visit and pray with her. Finally, before her death, she asked to be reinstated in the Faith, which was granted, and all the Bahá'ís who knew her were very happy.

On May 24, 1968 the National Assembly met with Mrs. Gayle Woolson in order to express formally and officially their thanks and gratitude for her many years of noteworthy service to the Faith in Ecuador. The time had arrived for her departure to her new post in El Salvador. Prayers were said that she would have a safe journey and achieve continuous success in her new endeavours and that some day she would return to them. Before leaving she graciously contributed many tangible, needed articles to both the national and local community of Quito as well as an ample donation to the National Spiritual Assembly for the construction and furnishing of the Teaching Institute in Otavalo.

It was in this same month of May, that five Indian teachers were selected to devote full time to mass teaching. Rúhíyyih Khánum made a contribution to sustain three of these teachers for one year and the other two were sustained by two members of the Ecuadorian community.

The Bahá'í community was very happy to welcome their first Chinese believer in the country, Dr. Chik Lan Wang, the First Secretary with the Chinese Embassy and his family who arrived in Quito on June 16, 1968. He was the first Bahá'í of Formosa and assisted in the translation of Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era, into the Chinese language. Then in August 1968, the community extended a warm welcome to Charles D. Hornby, the Auxiliary Board member for protection who came from San Andrés Isla, Colombia as a pioneer, to carry out the services which were previously rendered by Mrs. Woolson. His wife was ill and had to go the United States for medical care when they left the island but she later joined him in Ecuador.

In July of this year the House of Justice called on Ecuador to accelerate the pace of its activities so that all the goals of the Nine Year Plan might be won before Ridván 1973. These goals included 80 remaining local Spiritual Assemblies and 67 localities to be opened. In a letter dated July 15, 1968 they advised:

All the believers, whether newly enrolled or of old standing in the Faith, are summoned at this time to re-dedicate themselves individually and to recall that it is 'the Latin American travelling teacher, who ... must

increasingly bear the brunt of responsibility for the propagation of the Faith in their homelands.'

In this same letter they praised the accomplishments of this community which rejoiced their hearts:

We are happy to pay tribute to you as we view the initial victories which you won in the first half of the Nine Year Plan, for you have formed 35 new Local Spiritual Assemblies, have opened 189 localities, and have doubled the number of believers in your country. Such feats can only presage more resounding victories in the future.

Inspired by the House of Justice's message and proud now to feel able to accept the challenge without trepidation, that is, "the Latin American ... must increasingly bear the brunt of responsibility for the propagation of the Faith in their homelands," three young Indian instructors (the youngest Manuel Cabrera, who was 17 years old), with the regional instructor, Raúl Pavón, accepted the request of the National Assembly to try to open three provinces to the Faith in an effort to achieve the goals as soon as possible. These Provinces were: Loja, Cañar and Cotopaxi. The other two instructors were Rufino Gualavisí and Nolberto Curillo. They left Otavalo on September 11, 1968 to begin teaching in these areas. Here is an excerpt from their report to the National Assembly:

Rufino's goal was to open the Province of Loja where the Saraguro Indians form the entire indigenous population of the southern part of the country and retain some of the same customs that they had during the Inca reign. They have a high regard for themselves as persons and speak Spanish well. Like the majority of the Indians in the country, they love parties and are addicted to "chicha" (a fermented drink made with corn). They are timid with the white or 'mestizo' element of the population.

With Rufino's arrival at the village of Chiquinker it was the first time that Bahá'u'lláh's Message had been carried to that part of Ecuador. Some of them accepted ... The most outstanding in their acceptance were Miguel Matico Japon and Luis Avelino Medina. These two friends sent a note to Raúl as follows: 'Dear little brother: We have heard the Message brought by our brother Rufino and it has filled our hearts with joy to hear that the Glory of the Father, our Redeemer of the World, who is Bahá'u'lláh has arrived. Bahá'í love....'

Rufino then went to the villages of Yucucapa where the people were very receptive and to Llandanpamba - the people here wanted to know more before accepting. Two young men from there accepted the Faith, then Rufino returned with to Loja to tell Raúl of the results of his trip and Raúl returned with him to visit these same friends. The two young men who accepted the Faith were Santiago Medina and Juanel Montano. The village where Santiago lives is called Paquishapa and is a rural parish where Saraguro Indians and whites live. Rufino stayed with them another week to teach them. He had meetings at nights and taught them some prayers.

In a village called Payana, which Rufino opened, the inhabitants were very enthusiastic about the Faith. In one meeting when he was teaching them Bahá'í prayers, the indigene who teaches them the catechism arrived

on the scene and tried to confuse Rufino by insisting that Rufino teach them the rosary. Rufino explained that he had not come to teach them the rosary or the catechism but to teach them new prayers, explaining their source and their power. He explained that he was only telling them of the coming of Bahá'u'lláh and teaching them prayers for their material and spiritual benefit. When he finished talking all those present openly showed their interest in the Faith so much so that the Indian who had come to confound Rufino did not even try to make them say the rosary but sat down by Rufino and showed him respect and friendship.

As a result of Rufino's trip three Saraguro villages were opened to the Faith: Chiquinker, Yucucapa and Payana. He opened Loja Province to the Faith and the village of Llandapamba (Paquishapa) where the Saraguros live mixed with mestizos and both groups accepted the Faith. Nolberto and Manuel had the assignment to open the Province of Cañar and in the village of Tambo Viejo, 8 Canari Indians accepted the Faith.

While the Indian instructors were busy with their projects Raúl went to the Province of Zamora looking for the Jivaro Indians. He found that they no longer lived there except for a few who now has assumed the same way of life as the other colonists. Rufino tells more about this trip and others in a personal interview:

First I will tell you directly. For me it was very difficult to understand that Jesus Christ was in the world and had returned to guide the world. I could not understand quickly because I had Jesus Christ in my heart at all times and for the future when He would take me. Later I realized that God sent another Messenger and that He had come to take care of us like a shepherd who cares for his flock. Now, Baha'u'lláh is taking care of us. I finally understood. I understood more when Raúl Pavón left me in the campo. He would leave me someplace like Cayambe for a week or fifteen days by myself teaching the Faith. He would say, 'Don't go down to the city because the other teachers will come here (referring to missionaries).' I understood everything and I walked among the village people and with all their love they received me and listened to me attentively. They heard these new things from God and they said, 'Why don't we learn these things and practice what God has sent us.' Then I continued teaching. I was there for fifteen days.

Once there was a meeting of about 500 people in San Vicente de Ibarra. I was there with Raúl. Each one of them had brought their food and they spread it all out on a cloth. There was too much even for me. (Rufino is such a tiny little man with an enormous appetite). We all ate and they gave us gifts of food and eggs. The people one by one came to ask Raúl for a blessing but he never gave them one. The people confused Raúl with a priest. Because Raúl did not give a blessing the people went to the priest in Ibarra and told him bad things. The priest excommunicated them because of being Bahá'ís. We completely lost these people...

Then I went again to Shirihuasi and was there for about a week and the workers were in the forest working. They left the forest when I asked them to come and all the people came like goats bucking, and when they came close Raúl became afraid of what they would do and he said, 'Let's go. We will get a ride and go.' I was used to them but Raúl was not. When we left no one

said goodbye to us. There were many people - about 60 workmen who had come. We left without fulfilling our promise to speak to them and then they thought me to be a liar and would say, 'Go away, liar!' The next time I went with another Bahá'í they only said, 'Shut up, liar!' They said that all over Imbabura and so we lost them.

Later I went and talked to a professor who was among them and he said, 'The people are now completely confused. They don't understand but I do. I am still firm!' He was in San Clemente and I said, 'If you want to serve the Cause of God and of Bahá'u'lláh, help me to return to give the word of God to these people again...' - but I never saw him again. I also went to Abra. What happened in Shirihuasi was passed on to Abra because they are neighbors. The same thing happened. A man sitting in the front said, 'Shut up liar.' They did not want to hear me.

Raúl left me in Loja in the plaza and I went into the campo to give the message. I arrived at Payama and gathered about 60 people, men, women and children to teach. About 9:00 or 10:00 P.M. the caretaker of the area came with two men and three women. I was praying the 'Tablet of Ahmad'. I have faith and I like to pray long prayers when there are many people. Before I would have felt afraid in a situation like this but when the people came in I felt such power and courage. I told them, 'Brothers, understand that this is a prayer of God. I am begging God to help humanity. I am praying this long 'Tablet of Ahmad!' The men did not bother us at all and let me finish the prayer. Then the caretaker of the five communities said, 'I have permission from the Pope to see that the people learn the litany and the rosary. You are like Fidel Castro. You are a Socialist. You are a Communist. You are here to ruin the people and corrupt their belief. You can not stay here now. Go away!' But the ladies said, 'No, this is from God. The man is talking about God. He is doing very well and now you must let him continue.' Then the man said for me to say the rosary and the litany and I said, 'I only asked you to allow me to finish my prayer and now I have finished. Now it is your turn to say your prayers.' I think he could not do it because he took out some cigarettes and offered them to me. I told him that I do not smoke. This is what happened in Payama.

In the province of Chimborazo we were giving the Message to a priest at a convent and he became afraid. I said that our life is to follow the Cause of God and that we must always teach. We gave him the Message and he stood there and said nothing at all....

I have a friend in González Suárez. He is a friend of my father-in-law, who always loved him very much. I had to get a ride to San Pablo and was waiting for one when my friend invited me inside. There were 60 Catholic men in a meeting in the patio inside drinking 'chicha'. They tried to give me some to toast me. It was important to drink and they encouraged me. The priest said, 'Drink, drink!' I didn't take it and he asked me why I didn't want to drink. 'I won't drink because we Bahá'ís are prohibited from drinking for Bahá'u'lláh says that our senses must be free and capable. These drinks kill the brain and make us lose consciousness that belongs to Bahá'u'lláh.' One man came to make me drink. He took me by the arm and wanted to pour it down my throat. I said, 'I came to give the Message and I am here to do what you want to ask of me, but I will not drink.' The priest told him to let me go and he said

that he did not want me to dirty his town. I took the people the message of love and I did not hurt anyone, but they threw me out.

They put Julio Hidrobo in prison in San Rafael for the Bahá'í Faith. Raúl freed him. The police said he was tricking the people and they tried to kill his spirit.

In the community of Cercado I met a man and he said, 'Father, they wanted to kill you in Cercado but I defended you myself.' I don't remember offending anyone there but the man said that I had. I used to know his name but I forgot it.

In Cayambe they took Teresa Jara and me prisoners. She was in the jail for six hours. They took me to Quito to prison and there I taught the other prisoners about the Faith. They all said, 'A new thing! I have never heard of it. It is a new religion.' I was there for 8 days and I wasn't ever afraid. Bahá'u'lláh gives us heart so we are never afraid. I felt proud and happy, never afraid.

In the community of San Fernando above Ambato I was gathering the people to talk about the Faith. The Mayor came and said, 'What are you doing here?' I said that I was giving the Message of Bahá'u'lláh. 'Who needs that?' he asked. 'We live with our saints and the fathers and the Holy Virgin. We follow them and need nothing else. Go away and leave us alone.' The owner of the house probably had signed a card and believed in the Cause (Bahá'í Faith). He said, 'He is not guilty of anything. You are making a mistake. Don't bother him!' They wanted to throw me out of town but the owner defended me. I slept well. The next day he told me that it is the custom in that place to burn the house and kill the people they don't like. They are a barbaric people. They would have enjoyed taking us to the waterfall and bathing us and beating us with stinging plants.⁶

The instructors met again in Cuenca and made plans to visit the Province of Chimborazo where Rufino had made a successful trips some months previous. He visited an area he had formerly opened and had a very good meeting. Then he visited four more villages and opened them to the Faith. Nolberto and Manuel took the goal of opening the province of Cotopaxi, a very difficult area indeed, but there in the village of Cushis six people accepted the Faith! These instructors were very happy when they returned to their respective homes. The National Spiritual Assembly was delighted with their outstanding services and in their November meeting, they voted to write a letter of thanks to them for their wonderful teaching work and commended them for opening up the Southern part of the country to the Faith, which included new Provinces and six new tribes of Indians.

Presentation of The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh, to the President of the Republic

On August 11, 1968, the National Assembly was happy to inform the Universal House of Justice of their success in presenting to the President of the Republic, Dr. Otto Arosemena G., a copy of the book, The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh. The National Assembly had named a commission for this purpose and they had tried for some time, after the proclamation year began, to get an interview with the President, but to no avail. It was through the innocence and audacity of a young Persian pioneer, Bahman Ashraghi, that the interview was granted. What happened, as understood from Bahman's own recollection and recounting of the occasion, was that the President was in the city of Riobamba for some civic occasion. Bahman was there at the time and was nearby when the President was getting into his limousine. The country, at the time, was in a state of peace, and the President was not surrounded by bodyguards as one might expect, so no one interfered when Bahman approached the car, stuck his head in the window, and initiated a conversation with the President. He explained who he was and that the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Ecuador had been trying unsuccessfully to obtain an interview with him. (No one except Bahman would have the temerity to stick his face inside the window of the President's car without being invited to, even though it was a smiling and pleasant face). No doubt, Bahman was only thinking of the fact that the Commission of the National Spiritual Assembly, of which he was a member, had failed in their assignment.

Bahman asked the President if he would be kind enough to accord a commission from the National Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Ecuador the privilege of presenting him with a centenary commemorative book on behalf of the highest administrative and spiritual body of the Bahá'í Faith, The Universal House of Justice and the National Bahá'í Community of Ecuador. The President did not take offense, he promised to receive them and told his secretary to make an appointment. Thus it was made possible for the goal set by the Universal House of Justice to be accomplished. However, it was the end of April before the Commission, composed of Bahman Ashraghi and Isabel de Calderón, was able to see the President. This was their third appointment and after a wait of four hours they were able to see him. They were

warmly received and presented the book sent by the House of Justice to him along with the same book in the Spanish language. He was asked to be sure to read it and he exclaimed that he surely would, that he knew of the Bahá'í Faith through a Bahá'í friend of his in Guayaquil, Sr. Bolívar Plaza, and that he had given him the book, Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era to read sometime ago. When the Assembly notified the House of Justice of the accomplishment of this mission, they responded on August 22, 1968:

We were delighted to receive your report of August 11, 1968 concerning the presentation of "The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh" to the President of the Republic of Ecuador, Dr. Otto Arosemena G.

Thank you also for sending us the photograph of Mrs. Isabel Calderón and Mr. Bahman Ashraghi presenting the book to the President....⁷ (See Bahá'i World, Vol. XIV, p. 209, 1963 - 1968)

CHAPTER X

FIRST MASS CONVERSION CITY IN WESTERN HEMISPHERE, ESMERALDAS; MASS CONVERSION BEGINS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY

The year 1969 was to be a turning point in the development and growth of the Faith in Ecuador. Since 1961, the Faith, as well as its followers, suffered from all kinds of tests having to do primarily with human frailties, physical and spiritual such as lack of unity, disharmony among native believers, between natives and pioneers and among pioneers themselves. But the worst of all were the eight Covenant-breakers the Institution had to cope with during its eight years of existence, plus those Covenant-breakers who came to visit the ones in Ecuador and to visit the dissidents trying to gain a larger following. There were also some pioneers and natives mixed up with Yoga and other organizations whose doctrines were not in accord with the Bahá'í teachings as mentioned earlier in this chronicle. Now this year would bring much happiness to the community, for mass conversion would become a reality in first one region of the country then another.

On March 3, 1969 the Hand of the Cause of God, Mr. Jalál Kházeḥ, wrote a farewell note to "All the friends of the Western Hemisphere ..." informing them that the services of the Hands of the Cause in each zone had been allocated to the Inter-Continental field and now the services rendered by the Hands in their respective assigned zones would henceforth be carried out by the Continental Board of Counsellors, as successors to the Hands of the Cause. He thanked all for the kindness and affection which was extended to him and his wife over all the years he was permitted to serve them.

A happier note in this same month was that the Bahá'í community had the pleasure of receiving Mrs. Maurine Kraus, the secretary of the International Goals Committee of the United States, for a short visit. This committee had the responsibility to see that countries within its jurisdiction received pioneers according to their needs. Mrs. Kraus desired to visit some of these countries where they had sent pioneers, on behalf of her Committee, to learn firsthand about the conditions under which they labor and their needs. And above all to let those who were often isolated and lonely know that their efforts and self-sacrifices were really appreciated by the Institutions, the Committee and the friends everywhere. In a meeting with the National Assembly, she explained something about the work assigned to her Committee and the difference between that Committee and the Pioneer Committee for the Americas. She promised to try to send some vigorous young men as pioneers to Ecuador. Then she explained that with the arrival of Helen Hornby in Quito the week before and with the imminent arrival of Julie Collen from California to Guayaquil, the goal of her committee for Ecuador for the Nine Year Plan would be finished.

The Assembly offered to have her taken to Otavalo for a two day teaching trip so that she could see a little of the mass teaching work and thereby have a better idea of the needs of this country. In one of the areas they visited, they encountered some hostile Indians who had cut a trench across the road to make it impassable

even for the jeep, and a group threatened them with bodily harm. It was an exciting trip that Mrs. Kraus would never forget, and everyone was happy that she showed such courage for it was not unusual for some of the teachers to be beaten by the natives - nor was it unusual for the teacher to return to the place later and be heartily welcomed by the inhabitants who would then carefully listen about Bahá'u'lláh and His Teachings, then enroll as Bahá'ís! Some of the teachers felt it was a wonderful experience for her to witness a little of what they encounter constantly from the campesinos (farmers) who had little or no contact with civilization or outsiders, so that she could return and relate it to the institutions responsible for sending out pioneers and teachers in order that they too could empathize with the work in the hostile areas of the campo better and the uncertainties one often suffers even of returning to homebase alive at times!

✓ For some reason, which is not clear, the National Assembly felt that they needed an Auxiliary Board member to work full time in their mass teaching areas. On April 8, 1969 they wrote to the House of Justice thus;

In the last meeting of our National Spiritual Assembly held in Quito on April 5 and 6 it was decided to write to you explaining our need for a member of the Auxiliary Board who can devote his time to helping us with Mass Teaching. As you know, we have more than 6,000 Indian believers in the Provinces of Imbabura and Pichincha and have eight new Indian communities in the Province of Chimborazo as well as new Indian believers in the Provinces of Canar, Azuay and Loja. The believers we have in all of the cities and towns of Ecuador do not amount to more than 200 so that our greatest need for the Auxiliary Board Member is to help us with Mass Teaching.

On May 8, the House of Justice responded:

Your letter of April 8, 1969 concerning the need for someone to help you with the mass teaching evidently crossed in the mail with our Ridván Message and the information concerning new pioneer assignments.

As you know, we have called for fifteen new pioneers to assist with the teaching work in Ecuador. Perhaps one or more of these can be called upon to assist with the mass teaching work in the areas indicated in your letter.

Meanwhile, we wish to advise that matters dealing with the work of Auxiliary Board members should be taken up directly with the Continental Board of Counsellors.

Also on May 8 the National Assembly sent in a report to the House of Justice regarding the annual elections of local assemblies and of their National Convention:

We are happy to report that we were able to elect 50 LSA's in the Mass Teaching area this Ridván with the help of three believers from Cuenca,

four from Quito, and one each from Riobamba and Ambato, besides three from Otavalo who came for two days to help ... Six LSA's were elected in the cities.

Twenty-two of the thirty-eight delegates were Indians and three of the Indian friends - Rufino Gualavisi, Vicenta Anrango and Nolberto Curillo - were elected to the National Assembly. The Convention was the best we have ever had and for the first time the Indian delegates took active part in the consultation without timidity. It was so impressive that one of the friends from the city (Sr. Mosquera, a school teacher) who had never believed in the Mass Teaching work asked permission to speak to the Convention just before it closed to express his sincere admiration for the work. He was so moved as he spoke of the Indians that he began to cry....

Then on May 14 the Assembly again wrote to the House of Justice regarding their preoccupation in fulfilling their goals:

In order to fulfill our additional goal in the Nine Year Plan of buying or building a National teaching Institute, our National Spiritual Assembly has searched for two years for an appropriate place. A commission ... has looked at many houses and pieces of land for that purpose without being able to find one that filled our needs. Finally, it occurred to us that the property donated to us in Cachaco was the place indicated for the Institute...

We have a two-story house built by many Bahá'ís and pioneers, some of whom are no longer in the country, at great sacrifice.

The house belonging to the Bahá'ís was constructed in one hectare of land in the middle of Mr. Segundo Pavón's property which Mr. and Mrs. Pavón donated to the National Assembly for that purpose. It was necessary to have the Bahá'í house near the house owned by Mr. Segundo Pavón, so that someone could look after it when no further courses were in session....

SALASACA INDIAN AREA OPENED TO THE FAITH MAY 31, 1969 - AMBATO RECEIVES PIONEER

In 1963 the last of the Persian pioneers left the country. They had performed outstanding service in helping the Faith to become established in Ecuador. Unfortunately, one of them was later declared a Covenant-breaker, but not before he had created havoc in the country as previously mentioned. Many of the Bahá'ís in the Occident always have felt it was a privilege to have someone from Bahá'u'lláh's native land in their midst. Therefore when young Bahman Ashraghi arrived in Ecuador as a pioneer from Irán on April 16, 1966, he received a very warm welcome. For more than a year after his arrival the National Assembly assigned him to visit and help the teaching work in various areas of the country including the mass conversion area of Otavalo and the lone pioneer in the Galapagos Islands who had not had a visitor for about five years.

At the end of 1967 he was sent to Riobamba, where he assisted in the formation of the first local Assembly of that city at Ridván 1968. One of his most memorable achievements while living in Riobamba

was his brief talk, already mentioned, with the President of the Republic informing him that the National Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Ecuador desired to present him with a special book.

In 1968 Bahman settled in the city of Ambato where he would reap victories which had eluded former pioneers and teachers for so many years. Much earlier, in 1946, a young believer from Guayaquil, Sr. Lauro Sánchez, went to Ambato in search of employment and remained there for some time. He was one of the young people who heard of the Faith through John Stearns in Quito, but he returned to his home in Guayaquil as a number of the young people who heard of the Faith from John did. There were no administrative institutions then as we know them today, during those early years of the Faith in South America. For that reason it was some time before the new pioneer to Ecuador, Hascle Cornbleth, learned that there was a Bahá'í in the city of Ambato. Hascle and the Inter-America Committee were very happy for this made three cities then open to the Faith in Ecuador. There existed the newly-fledged local Assembly in Guayaquil to which Hascle had written suggesting that they transfer Lauro Sánchez officially as a homefront pioneer to Ambato. It was in May 1947 before they transferred him officially as a homefront pioneer and as an isolated believer. The Guayaquil community had reason again to be joyful for now after having acquired the first Spiritual Assembly they were able to send out their first international travel teacher to Spain in June 1947 after having a voluntary homefront teacher in Ambato.¹

Hascle Cornbleth was particularly interested in continuing the Radio programs which John Stearns had developed and left off due to his illness. He visited Ambato with the travel teacher Robert (Bob) Meissler in 1946 and again on February 14-16, 1947 with Sr. Juan Luis Aguirre, a believer from Guayaquil, to investigate the possibilities of having radio programs in that city which could reach the Indians surrounding the city. On February 4, 1947, Mr. Sánchez had written to Hascle from Ambato, regarding his project to have radio announcements in that city. He informed him that the reason that he had not succeeded so far was that the radio station was "in the hands of intransigent Catholics, who as soon as they saw the proposal they rejected it saying they could not make propaganda for strange religions." For this reason the two went down to try to help him and he was successful in having a guest travel teacher to speak on radio in that city after she arrived on May 2, 1947, Miss Flora Hottes from the United States. This young believer continued to try to teach and interest others in his Faith as long as he remained in Ambato but finally, because of his need for work, he left and went to live in Manta, thereby opening up this city and of course he was an isolated believer again. The next pioneers to Ambato were Mary and David Beckett, who transferred there from Otavalo on September 7, 1961.

Bahman arriving in Ambato fifteen years later long after the Becketts had left, made many friends for the Faith and he found a number of friends of the former pioneers still interested in the Faith. One young couple who accepted the Faith through him were César and Angelita Villacís, who became very active and later served as homefront pioneers to Esmeraldas when the foreign pioneers left.

Ambato is surrounded by several large Indian tribes and one day, by chance, he met a very friendly Indian in the park and asked him what was the name of his tribe and if he could visit them. He learned that the Indian was a Salasacan and lived near Ambato. He related that *"On the following day I ran there and asked first to speak with the chief of the tribe ... I was successful that day. The chief soon understood that my profession was agronomy and he invited me to go to the campo with them the next day to help them plant maiz. I accepted the invitation and I went and became very good friends with his whole family."*²

Bahman recalls that he visited and taught in the area for more than six months without knowing how to enroll anyone into the Faith. He said that he believed that before a person could be called a Bahá'í he had to know many things about the Faith. He confided,

*One time I invited Charles Hornby into the Salasaca. As soon as he met some children, he taught them the name of Bahá'u'lláh, which created a powerful spirit. My intention of inviting Charles was to learn from him the method of mass teaching. Sometimes later I invited Helen Hornby and Isabel de Calderón. They enrolled for the first time two of my oldest friends there. 'Do you think they are Bahá'ís?' I asked them. 'What more do you expect from them if they declare their belief in Bahá'u'lláh?' one of them asked laughingly. 'If this is so I can enroll over a hundred of them', I responded. Then I began, and within a week or more I enrolled about 150 new believers of the indigenous in Salasaca.*³

He reported that the spirit of mass conversion was so powerful in the area, that he and the ones who came at that time to help him were so happy and so filled with that great spirit its influence permeated the friends in the city of Ambato. One day in an area of Salasaca some of his friends who lived there asked him why he was so joyful and happy, he said that from that question and with some explanation they all became Bahá'ís.

As members of the National Teaching Committee, Sra. Isabel de Calderón and I accepted Bahman's invitation to visit the area where he had worked so ardously without success. He showed us the mountains which he had traversed so often and which surround the Salasaca area and told us how he would walk for hours, often from morning 'til night, praying for success in this area. He had made contact and taught among 15 different tribes and villages in the region. The Salasaca area was officially opened on May 31, 1969, when Manuel Pambasho Masaquiza and José Masaquiza Pambasho accepted the Faith. They were like two shining orbs when they were asked if they believed in Bahá'u'lláh and would like to enroll in the Faith as one of His followers. Bahman had taught them very well and they knew what they were accepting. They said that Señor Bahman had taught them for a long time but he never asked them if they desired to be Bahá'ís. Bahman naturally overcame his hesitancy and soon mass conversion had begun in the Salasaca!

Everyone was happy over the success of the Salasacas and surrounding area. Then in January 1970 the opposition began with Bahman being

attacked by some unknown Indians. They closed the roads and took his coat and brief case. He went to the local Governor, Señor Rodrigo Borja Alveréz, and explained to him what happened and his purpose for being in the area. The Governor gave him a letter to the Comisario (police inspector) of Pelileo permitting Bahman to teach his "creed" in accordance with the law of the country, that is, freedom of religion. The letter stated that such acts could be tolerated and asked that an investigation be made and that the ones who were involved in this attack be severely punished. The Comisario acted immediately and found Bahman's stolen articles and imprisoned the ones responsible. He did not desire such severe punishment for them but it was the law of the land. At any rate he was enabled to continue teaching in the area without fear. He had been accused by his attackers of being a communist.

In his earlier years of pioneering, despite the usual suggestion of the institutions that teachers should work in pairs, Bahman often was a loner, not necessarily oblivious to danger, but confident of Bahá'u'lláh's protection. Perhaps he felt that martyrdom was not such a bad fate after reading about the rewards of a martyr. He did not allow the lack of a companion to keep him from teaching - often there was no one available to accompany him. Pioneers are often warmed by the words of Bahá'u'lláh, "Be not grieved if thou performest it thyself alone..." and "Let God be all-sufficient for thee."

One day Rufino Gualavisí, César Villacís and Bahman Ashraghi began to teach in the Chibeleo area near Ambato. Pioneers and teachers came to help because many people were embracing the Cause. Deepening classes were begun for the adults and classes for the children. Each visitor was warmly greeted by the inhabitants, and by the children especially, who would cry out, "Allah'u'Abhá, hermanitos" (Allah'u'lláh little brothers and sisters). Charles Hornby and Gabriel Jijón painted the school in the area where meetings were held. The Faith began to grow so fast there that the attention of the priests was attracted and the persecution of the local Bahá'ís became so intense that for a long time no one could go and visit them. However, one of the families which proved to be very strong in the Faith was Segundo Til and his wife who continue, to the present, to be enthusiastic Bahá'í teachers.

In spite of these mishaps the pioneers and teachers experienced success after success. A number of travel teachers were sent to help in the area and two foreign pioneer families settled in and outside of the city proper. Dennis and Karen Maloney and their children settled outside Ambato in a town called Santa Rosa, a hardship post indeed; only true devotion to the Cause of God could sustain one in such post, and having had to live under such circumstances as they lived. Jack and Nooshin Burwell settled in the city of Ambato with a young native believer, Señorita Rosario Mier, who along with the Burwells rendered outstanding service for their Faith and for the many Bahá'ís who visited there.

Jack and Nooshin took advantage of the famous flower and fruit festival of Ambato to proclaim the Faith each year they were there. With the assistance of other pioneers and teachers they used Bahá'í exhibitions in the park to attract hundreds of people and each night they had successful public meetings and fire-sides. They made hundreds of flowers with small streamers attached with quotations from the Bahá'í Writings and these were presented to every available person.⁴

One day Bahman walked from Ambato to a village called Pasa and from there up a mountain. He was warned by a woman not to go up there alone so he found a young man walking with a donkey and went with him to his home. He helped the man gather oats and taught the man and his wife the Faith. They were kind and when he left they walked with him to the plaza. On the way down he helped a group of men who were plowing their land. He ate at the plaza and then returned to teach the Faith. He said he prayed, saying the "Tablet of Ahmad", by Bahá'u'lláh. On his way down he met a drunk man who stopped him and asked what he was doing there. Bahman attempted to calm him but he began to shout and soon a big crowd of women wearing black and men wearing red ponchos surrounded him. He was outwardly calm and continued to explain his reason for being there. He began to joke with the people and a few of them smiled at his jokes but his situation remained critical. It suddenly occurred to him to ask for food although he had just eaten. The drunken man who had started all the problems brought him a plate of potato soup and he began to eat very slowly still continuing to laugh and joke with them. After a time the chief arrived. He asked him why he was there without permission and asked him to come with him. Everyone else followed. He related, "I felt very happy to be in the center of such a multitude of Indians and I thought how beautiful it would be if I could enroll them all in the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh."

He said the chief began to study a pamphlet which he gave him while he was teaching. Then the chief explained to the people that Bahman's mission was for the good of the people but he asked Bahman to please come to him first the next time he desired to teach in the area. A lot of visits were made and the chief and even the priest became friendly with him. Today there is a local Hazirátu'l-Quds built on land donated by a native believer for their Bahá'í meetings!

When he was leaving the area going down to a bus he met a young man who told him that the year before two government officials had come to that area to take census. The officials were unable to explain to the people their purpose for being there and they were attacked. One of the men escaped but the other was covered with gasoline and set ablaze! This is what they call giving one a bath - a treatment for undesirables (See Rufino Gualavisí's interview). Later this village became one of the strongest rural Bahá'í communities in the country.⁵

Finally, another Nine Year Plan goal was attained, the property for a permanent Teaching Institute was found and purchased in Otavalo -

6,276 square meters. The cost was \$9,500 (United States currency) with taxes, etc. This purchase was made at the suggestion of the Hand of the Cause, Dr. Muhájir.

On June 15, 1969, the National Assembly was able to report to the Universal House of Justice that they now had 56 local spiritual Assemblies, 190 groups, plus one in the Galapagos, 5 isolated centers, plus one in the Galapagos. There was a total of 251 localities plus 2 in the Galapagos, and a total of 6,606 believers in the country, plus seven in the Galapagos. Then on July 14, 1969 the National Assembly further advised the Universal House of Justice that:

Inspired by your Ridván Message to the Bahá'í World, the National Indian Teaching Committee suggested to our National Spiritual Assembly in its last meeting on July 5 and 6 that we set a goal of 9,000 new believers by next August to coincide with the Continental Conference in Bolivia. In a joint meeting of the National Teaching Committee and the Mass Teaching Committee, both pledged themselves to fulfill this goal with the collaboration of the National Proclamation Committee.*

The National Assembly approved the joint teaching campaign and set the goal of 9,000 new believers. The campaign will begin in the Province of Azuay in August with teams of believers from the city and the Indian areas who will go out into the Indian areas for a week....

The House of Justice lovingly responded on July 20, 1969:

We also acknowledge your letters of July 14, 1969 and we wish to commend you on the goal of winning 9,000 new believers by next August. We shall pray for your success in this teaching effort. The friends should be reminded, however, that expansion and consolidation are twin processes which must proceed together. It is not enough merely to enroll new believers; they must be deepened in the Teachings as well.

(*The number was eventually increased to 15,000)

After reviewing the semi-annual report of the National Assembly (1968-1969), the House of Justice wrote on July 22, 1969:

We were pleased to learn from your semi-annual statistical report that you gained a total of sixteen additional local Spiritual Assemblies and opened seven new localities to the Faith during this past year.

We know your joy at learning of the formation of the new Local Spiritual Assemblies must have been marred by the loss of over 40% of the existing Assemblies. We are confident that the devoted friends in Ecuador have already joined with your Assembly in uniting to press forward to redeem those prizes and are determined to hasten towards total victory.

The deliberations and plans of your Assembly at this juncture, now past the midway point in the Plan, must mark a veritable turning point in the progress of the Faith in your country. We think you should re-phase the remaining goals of the plan, giving prayerful consideration to selection

of the most promising of the 190 existing groups, and devise a carefully developed teaching and consolidation plan designed to stimulate all the friends and to utilize their services, whether as teachers in their own community, circuit teachers or homefront pioneers....

Lest the Faith suffer any set-back, every believer must be urged to focus his attention on the requirements of the present hour, rededicating himself individually to the sacred task of teaching the Cause. It is essential that your program should of course include plans to deepen the friends in their knowledge of the fundamentals of the Faith and in their responsibility to the Cause, and to train them for future pioneer activity.

We ardently pray that the fifteen additional pioneers assigned to your country will soon arrive at their posts...

It is urgent that you give immediate and thorough consideration to the points set forth in this letter. The importance of planning at once to perform your primary task of fulfilling all the goals of the Nine Year Plan cannot be overemphasized.

Beloved friends, we are aware that the tasks are awesome and the difficulties are great, but we are supremely confident that the members of your dearly-loved community, under the energetic leadership of your Assembly, will not fail to fulfil the glorious destiny that lies before you.

We shall offer special prayers at the Holy Shrines, supplicating ardently for an increasing response of the friends and the befitting discharge of the mighty tasks being shouldered by your community.

The special prayers were evidently effective because before the year was over, Bahá'ís who did not "even believe in mass conversion" began to arise to assist in the mass conversion areas.

It was also in July when the National Assembly received the following cable:

HAND MOHAJER CONVENING CONFERENCE AUXILIARIES REPRESENTATIVES FIVE NSAS
QUITO AUGUST EIGHT ELEVEN GREATLY APPRECIATE MAKE PHYSICAL ARRANGEMENTS
HAZIRA ADVISE HORNBY.

COUNSELLORS

In August 1969 the International Teaching Conference called for by Dr. Muhájir, was held in Quito at his request. When he, and Continental Board of Counsellors members, Mr. Athos Costas and Mr. Donald Witzel, and Auxiliary Board members, Messrs. Peter McLaren, Habib Rezvani and Señorita Lenora Porras arrived, they all met with the National Spiritual Assembly in the home of the resident Board member so that Dr. Muhájir would be relaxed and comfortable in the high altitude. He asked that this joint meeting be called for the purpose of orienting the distinguished members of those institutions about the purpose of the conference.

Dr. Muhájir stated that the purpose of the conference was for the participants to learn something about what is happening in mass

conversion in other countries; the expansion of the Cause in indigenous areas, deepening and consolidation and how to overcome obstacles. Different methods of proclamation in the cities and in the country would be studied as well as Bahá'í education and literacy programs, teaching the Negro people, summer schools, collaboration between National Assemblies and other institutions of the Faith, and about international travelling teachers. Some of the participants found it interesting to observe Dr. Muhájir's method of teaching during the week and his approach to accomplishing his wishes. He adroitly outlined the themes which he desired to discuss during the sessions, and when it was feasible he formed workshops. For example, he questioned the participators about the number of Negroes in the country and where they resided. Someone recalled that they "used to live in and around Esmeraldas, but now they may be living back in the jungles since no one ever hears anything of them." Someone else remembered that there were some in the North of the country around Chota, but was not sure if they were still living there. There had been no efforts to contact the Negro minority in the country for a number of years. John Stearns, Hascle Cornbléth and Gayle Woolson had made an effort to contact them but this was not known during the conference - only a few of the old believers remember.

After this discussion Dr. Muhájir sent some of the attendants to borrow Ecuadorian history books from libraries and friends. Then he had them to look up the minority groups in Ecuador and gather all the data possible about them including where they were located when the book was written, and to find out from some source where they were at that time. This was accomplished in a few days but no one understood why he wanted so much data nor exactly why he was having them to "go back to school, for what does this have to do with teaching!" Then on his last night before he closed the conference, he sat on the sofa "Buddha style", and looked up towards the heavens - no one could keep their eyes off him for he looked saintly (some mentioned that surely the beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi was inspiring him or speaking through him as the words flowed from his lips).

He explained why he had requested this research during the week; that the Universal House of Justice desired that the other minority groups be found and taught the Faith in these Latin American countries. The veil was soon lifted from our eyes and we felt rather that we had not been able to understand what he was leading up to earlier. It was not apparent that all the stress previously had been placed on enrolling the Indian minorities and the campesinos over the years, while other minority segments of society had been overlooked in these countries, and now the House of Justice was calling for all to be brought into the fold. When Dr. Muhájir learned that there was large groups of Negroes in Ecuador and also in Perú, he said that we must teach them and bring them into the Cause. He suspected that they were still pure-hearted and not so tarnished by society as yet! ⁶

During the latter phase of the Nine Year Plan the National Assembly had encouraged the stronger local Assemblies to set goals and assist in achieving the goals in the overall plan - especially

for establishing new local assemblies. The Quito Assembly chose Esmeraldas as a goal city with the objective to open up the area and form a local Assembly in 1970. José Lucas, who had learned of the Faith from Dorothy Campbell in Otavalo, considered himself a Bahá'í but had not been officially enrolled or registered. He frequently telephoned the Bahá'í Center in Quito asking if they would send someone to Esmeraldas to teach his people. He also came to visit asking for teachers to come to his city. For this reason Quito decided to choose Esmeraldas as a goal city and the National Teaching Committee immediately offered to help by sending teachers into the area until the city was opened to the Faith. Thus the choice of Esmeraldas was the direct result of Dr. Muhájir's visit and Dorothy Campbell's contact with José Lucas, aiding him when he had been robbed in Otavalo. Also, the stress which Dr. Muhájir placed on teaching the minorities at that time, especially the Negroes, was an added impetus in getting a teaching project underway in Esmeraldas. Hence the following report:

Helen Hornby had volunteered both herself and her husband to make teaching trips to Esmeraldas as soon as the Quito Assembly chose it as a goal. Therefore, taking advantage of the Holy Day, the Anniversary of the Birth of the Báb, which fell on a weekend, they decided to make their first teaching trip there. A few days after their decision, Doctor Laverne B. Johnson and Mr. Jerry Bagley came to visit them for a few days while taking care of other affairs in the city - so Helen naturally invited them to accompany them on the teaching trip. Jerry later said that he felt it was right to go and that is why he accepted the offer immediately. Dr. Johnson was not so sure he could do but "with a little strong coercion" from his hostess he decided to go and later fell in love with the place, and volunteered to settle there as a pioneer.

'José Lucas was waiting to receive us in the airport', Helen related, 'and immediately after breakfast we started out to visit José's contacts and those of other Bahá'ís who had visited the city previously. They were more or less the 'upper class' people. I recalled Dr. Muhájir's instructions to me the morning before he left Quito in August, that to teach the Negro was my mission at this time in Ecuador. He had a long letter, appeared to be legal size, from the Universal House of Justice, presumably, with instructions to him as to what must be done in various countries. He pointed out to me one paragraph where the House spoke of the necessity of teaching the Negroes in these countries - my eyes were full of tears therefore I could not see it myself, I just listened as he talked to me. (It was an answer to my prayer and my perplexities as to what was my mission in Ecuador as a pioneer as distinct from my husband's duties - he had been requested to come because of protection problems and Gayle Woolson had to leave.) I asked José where we could find the Negro people. He was very happy for he said he preferred to teach them for they were more spiritual.

'That same afternoon he escorted us to a very poor barrio called "El Pampón". The people were very simple and lovely - the children came from every direction to meet us and in a few minutes about 75 or a 100 had gathered around me singing "Negra gringa, Negra gringa" (American Negro lady, American Negro lady). All of them wanted to touch me - it was apparent that they had not seen or been close to an American Negro before. José was deeply concerned;

he thought I would be offended and unhappy but I assured him that I had never felt so welcome before in my life nor so happy, for their little voices sounded like music in my ears! Many of these children understood the Bahá'í Teachings immediately and thereafter often helped to teach their parents. The people listened attentively, then asked questions. That first afternoon sixteen new believers were enrolled. The following day we made a visit to a village named Same, about one and a half hours distance from Esmeraldas. A meeting was held in the streets, for there were no homes large enough and approximately 100 people, including youth and children, were present. After listening to the Bahá'í Message the people still seemed very cold and unresponsive, different from the people of El Pampón. So fearing they did not understand the foreigners, José was asked to speak and repeat some of what had been said and he was also asked to explain that we were not political, Catholic nor Evangelists in case they had some problems regarding any of these organizations or churches. José began by saying:

'Brothers and sisters, listen to me. Now I am not an Evangelist any more - I am a Bahá'í. Brothers, the Bahá'í Faith is a true religion from God for all the world. You know that I thought that all religions except the Evangelist were false and that is what I told you. But now I am here to teach you the truth which I have found. I feel that is my duty.' (José had been a lay minister for the Evangelists when he met Mrs. Campbell in Otavalo and she told him about the Bahá'í Faith and gave him literature to read.) He told them that he had found peace in his heart for the first time and that he did not participate in politics anymore. Without a doubt he showed courage and honesty. The people were very poor in this village, some were ill without any hope of recovery, but they were literate and after José's explanation of the Bahá'í teachings, thirteen adults and fourteen youth accepted the Faith that day. This surpassed the goal which I had set on my own accord for the weekend of nineteen new believers! - one for the Báb and one each for the eighteen Letters of the Living, the Báb's Disciples. Since we started out on the date of the celebration of the Báb's birthday, I felt, without a doubt, that we would accomplish this goal, but never dreamed of how much we would surpass it that weekend. The natives of Same asked us to please return soon and teach them more. We returned again to El Pampón that afternoon and night where 40 more people accepted the Faith, making a total of 56 new believers for the city of Esmeraldas (This number includes José Lucas who had not been officially enrolled), and seventeen for Same. (Pronounced - Sä-m - mee) There was a total of 72 new believers for the weekend and 73 believers for the province.†

It seems that the mass teaching that was begun in Esmeraldas stirred a new spirit into the rest of the country. Through the efforts of Lauro Cellerí and Rufino Gualavisí, the Valley of La Chota was opened to the Faith with 109 new believers - all Negroes; and in the city of Ibarra they enrolled 50 Negroes which assured the National Assembly of a local Spiritual Assembly in that city the following year. Pioneers and teachers were arriving in the country constantly to help in this mass teaching endeavour.

Now with such success in teaching the National Assembly made plans to complete their goals for the Nine Year Plan by 1972 instead of 1973, in spite of the unforeseen obstacles which they knew would

appear. And there were obstacles over which they had no control. For example, the lack of personnel to help elect the Assemblies on election day; in some places the inhabitants of the whole village left for months to work in other areas, and at other times they would be absent from their villages for several days on work projects organized by the Andean Mission just at election time.

On November 29, 1969, the homefront pioneer to Ibarra sent in a report to the National Assembly about his visit with María Perugachi and Vicenta Curillo Anrango to the village of Chirihuasi, where Rufino Gualavisí had been threatened with bodily harm and was "expelled" from the village and called a liar. Señor Célleri informed the Assembly that they did not receive a warm reception on the contrary it was very unpleasant and a man reminded them that they had "expelled" Rufino for lying and threatened to give him the "palo" (stick), that is to say to beat him and possibly burn him alive. Later however, they were able to teach from house to house in this village!

On December 13, 1969 the National Assembly approved 833 more new believers from Esmeraldas, which made a total of 905 for that area, and accepted 109 new believers from the Chota, 50 in Ibarra and 150 in the Province of Azuay. On September 20 they had approved the enrollment of 129 adults in the village of Quinche and 62 children.

Then on December 16, 1969 the National Assembly was overjoyed to submit this happy progress report to the Universal House of Justice:

Since our cablegram to you on October 27 advising that seventy-two believers of the Negro race had been won in the Province of Esmeraldas in two centers, great progress has been made in the expansion teaching and we are happy to report that there are now 905 new believers in the Province in 21 centers. The city of Esmeraldas now has 651 adult and 120 youth, making a total of 771 believers in the city. Two of the new believers are members of the Indian tribe, the Cayapas, a new tribe to be enrolled in the Faith (these first two Cayapas were enrolled by Charles Hornby in Esmeraldas, El Pampón sector). One of the new believers in the city of Esmeraldas is a woman 100 years old!

Charles and Helen Hornby, Jerry Bagley and Dr. Laverne Johnson were the first team who enrolled the first believers there and have made several other teaching trips, and Charles Hornby has gone there every weekend practically... Bahman Ashraghi from Ambato and Isabel and Gonzalo Calderón, Gabriel Jijón, Fausto Maldonado, Segundo Davila and Ramon Armas from the Quito Community have all made at least one teaching trip there.

Dr. Laverne Johnson, who was a pioneer in Otavalo, asked to be transferred to Esmeraldas after his first teaching trip there, and the National Assembly accepted this transfer. Both he and the Bagleys will move to Esmeraldas before the end of December to work in expansion and consolidation in the Province...

A team of three Indian teachers, Teresa Jara and Raul Pavón went to Cuenca two weeks ago and won 150 new believers among the Indians in the Province of Azuay, making a total of 650 in that Province....

Actually the first to make teaching trips to Esmeraldas were: Señores Gonzalo and Isabel Calderón, Gabriel Jíjon and Fausto Maldonado, on behalf of the local Spiritual Assembly of Quito and its Teaching Committee. The National Assembly wrote to the local Assembly of Quito thanking them for initiating the teaching work in Esmeraldas and for the victories which were being won and which "have taken a turn beyond our highest hopes having reached more than 1,000 Bahá'ís in the province, of which the major part are in the city of Esmeraldas." Therefore, "due to the turn of events" the National Assembly felt it was necessary to take over the responsibility for that area and made plans for expansion and consolidation.

In January 1970 the members of the National Assembly had reason to feel exhilarated for never, since the inception of the Faith in this country, had they been able to share such thrilling victories with the believers as they were able to share during the district conventions that year. Some of the victories achieved were;

The opening of two mass conversion areas - one in the North of the country assisted by the community of Cuenca, and the other, the province of Esmeraldas opened with the assistance of the Quito Community and the National Teaching Committee. A number of pioneers and teachers helped in both areas.

For the second time on March 24, 1970 the National Assembly was able to send the National Assembly of Tanzania \$100 to help purchase their Temple site. It was one of the goals of Ecuador to assist Tanzania to achieve this important goal.

The Chota Valley was opened with four centers being opened in the Province of Carchi and three in the Province of Imbabura.

The Salasaca Indian Area was opened and progressing very rapidly.

The subsidiary goal to teach the Negro race in the country which was adopted at the International Teaching Conference which was held in Quito in August 1969, was now completed.

The Nine Year Plan goal to establish a permanent National Teaching Institute was completed with the purchase of a house in the city of Otavalo for this purpose.

The goal to acquire 300 Bahá'í Centers in the country was exceeded by having acquired 351 centers.

Of the 19 Provinces in Ecuador there were now Bahá'ís residing in 14 - lacking five to complete the goal of a believer in each Province of the country.

As the number of believers continued to grow over the years, the House of Justice augmented the number of delegates from nine initially to 19,

then 38 and beginning with the year of 1970, there were 57 delegates allotted.

The devoted indigenous believer and travel teacher Rufino Gualavisi was named to the Auxiliary Board for Propagation. He was the first indigenous person of this country to be named to this position.

Mrs. Gayle Woolson delighted the hearts of all her old friends and co-workers when she accepted an invitation to visit Ecuador again before taking up her new duties in the Holy Land.

Among the great bounties bestowed upon Ecuador during the year were visits from two Hands of the Cause of God, Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum and Mr. Enoch Olinga with their esteemed travelling companions Mrs. Violette Nakhjaváni and member of the Board of Counsellors, Mr. Hooper Dunbar respectively (See separate section on Rúhíyyih Khánum).

A sour note, for some reason always creeps in when there is success, came from Manta where the instructors ran into problems with the Evangelists. The Bahá'í instructors, Ida Solomon, the pioneer to the area, Oscar Salazar, José Lucas, Lauro Célleri and Enrique Peñafiel were all quite prudent and left unscathed.

SANTO DOMINGO, QUINENDE AND ESMERALDAS⁸

John Stearns made many friends for the Bahá'í Faith while he served as a pioneer in Ecuador. From time to time, one encounters some of the men, at that time quite young men, who knew John and heard of the Faith through him and without exception, they speak of him reverently. It is doubtful that John ever dreamed of how far-reaching his teaching efforts would extend. The same is true about the second pioneer to Ecuador, Hascle Cornbleth. When Hascle arrived he diligently looked up all of John's old friends and contacts and let them know that he was here to continue the work John had initiated. Many of the young men John met were students in the University; they later graduated and scattered over the country looking for jobs or settling in jobs .

In February 1946, the Bahá'í Group of Quito received a letter from a nurse, a Señor Francisco Samuel Lopez who was transferred by his employer from Quito to Santo Domingo de los Colorados, notifying them that he was no longer living in Quito. Because the Quito Group was not functioning after John's death, no action was taken on his letter until Hascle Cornbleth, the second pioneer to Ecuador, made contact with him after his arrival. In September 1946, made a teaching trip to Santo Domingo with the aim also to visit with the lone Bahá'í but he was unable to locate him and left his card. On October 17 Señor Lopez wrote a heartwarming letter to Hascle expressing his happiness to know that someone was now in Quito to reorganize the Bahá'í activities with the objective to establish a Spiritual Assembly. He seemed to have been well grounded in the Bahá'í principles and he said he missed the meetings. He mentioned "remembering the principles left by our beloved and remembered Mr. John Stearns, that still live in the hearts of the Bahá'ís. "

In January 1947, the secretary of the Quito Group wrote to advise Señor Lopez that if he was unable to come to Quito as he had promised in his letter, that they would be happy to send him some books and teaching materials so that he could help in spreading the Bahá'í Teachings. They also inquired if he was permanently stationed in Santo Domingo or if he would be returning to the capital city to live in the near future. The records for this period are very scanty, therefore, one has to surmise in some cases as to what really happened in between based on future actions. In this case, it seems that Señor Lopez notified the Group that he would be residing for sometime in Santo Domingo for on May 27, 1947, the minutes indicate that he was officially transferred to that city and they now considered that city opened with an isolated believer. Nor do the records reveal when Señor Lopez became a Bahá'í, if it was before John Stearns left Ecuador or afterwards, but there is no doubt that he is the first Bahá'í of Santo Domingo de los Colorados.⁹

Afterwards the Quito Group and the Regional Teaching Committee chose Santo Domingo as a goal city with the hopes to establish an assembly there. Travel teachers from Quito made regular scheduled trips there and they were quite successful in finding people to teach but did not get an assembly. The teachers who visited Santo Domingo and Quinindé were: Señores Luis Arguello, Gayle Woolson, Martha Nuñez, Jorge Paez V. and Arturo Cifuentes. Unfortunately, every time a number of people accepted the Faith, they would leave for some other area. Finally Señor Lopez himself was transferred to the Esmeraldas area, becoming the first known Bahá'í in that area.¹⁰

Once while in Santo Domingo, the travelling teachers met a Señor Juan Vallejo Alemán who had attended meetings in Quito some years earlier when John was there. He finally got courage enough to introduce himself to the visitors and invited them to visit his family and friends in Quinindé. His invitation was accepted for the following visit and on their next visit they spent two days with Señor Vallejo and his friend Señor Frederico Maldonado and their families. Señor Arturo Cifuentes, one of the teachers from Quito, also paid a visit to some of his personal friends and found that an intimate friend of the Maldonado family had passed away. They were in a quandary because the priest of the village was not there; therefore, they had not planned a religious service for the dead. The Bahá'ís immediately offered to prepare a religious service for the deceased and the offer was readily accepted by the family. Señor Cifuentes conducted the funeral service and spoke of the Bahá'í concept of the unity of mankind and on the Bahá'í Teachings on life after death. Afterwards, he read the long prayer for the dead and another shorter prayer for the dead was also said. More than 150 people were present to hear this Bahá'í funeral that day in Quinindé—all except five were Negroes. The family appreciated the collaboration of the Bahá'ís. Unfortunately, the name of the deceased individual was not recorded because this unknown individual was the cause of the Proclamation of the Bahá'í Faith in Quinindé and it was the first Bahá'í funeral in Ecuador!¹¹

There was a lot of interest engendered in the Faith and the Regional teaching Committee kept in contact with these groups. Then on April 21, 1957, the committee received a letter from Sr. Juan Vallejo Aleman asking to be accepted into the Bahá'í Community. His wife also accepted the Faith thereby forming the first Bahá'í Group in Quinindé. When Señor Vallejo was able to come to Quito, a nice reception was given in his honor in the Bahá'í Center to officially receive him in the Bahá'í community. While the team was in Quinindé this time, it was suggested that they should visit some outlying areas. They visited the hacienda "Los Angeles" which belonged to the Astral Banana Company. The administrator was very kind and allowed them to talk with the employees about the Faith and they showed a great deal of interest. Señor and Señora Vallejo later transferred to Quevado, the second city visited by John Stearns upon his arrival in 1940.

In 1955 Guayaquil selected the town of Daule as their goal city to open to the Faith and establish an assembly. The pioneers Ervin and Wilma Thomas, recently arrived in Guayaquil, were among the first to visit Daule. There they met a very interesting young man at the University, Señor Benito Velez. He was very useful since he knew a little English and helped by translating for them, when it was possible. He demonstrated a sincere interest in the Bahá'í teachings and would visit the apartment of Ervin and Wilma in Guayaquil, when feasible, to study the Writings. When he decided to accept the Faith he was transferred to Esmeraldas. It happened before the pioneers had time to return to the University in Daule to accept his enrollment. Observing the letters he wrote to the pioneers he seemed to have considered himself a Bahá'í. They were concerned that he was now isolated working for a banana company in Esmeraldas. Therefore, before they transferred to Perú that year they informed Gayle Woolson about his interest in the Faith and she immediately contacted him and sent him the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in those days everyone who became a Bahá'í and could read had to read this document before he was accepted into the Bahá'í Community unless there were none available. Gayle also sent an enrollment card. Aldo during those days enrollment cards from South America were sent to the Inter-America Committee in the United States and all their records are now in the Archives of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States in Wilmette, Illinois. During my research there the archivist, Mr. Roger Dahl, gave me Xerox copies of all the records available regarding this country, and, an enrollment card was not among the data. However the records of this committee had not been completely assembled and organized at the time. Señor Velez wrote and invited Gayle to come to Esmeraldas on several occasions to talk with his friends whom he had been telling about the Faith and to teach him more. For some reason she nor any of the Regional Teaching Committee members ever made the trip. According to some records the roads from Quito to Esmeraldas were nearly impassable during those days and it took many hours to make the trip even in the dry season. So, it is not known if he was the second Bahá'í of Esmeraldas or not, but it is known that he taught the Faith there in 1955 and 1956. It is not known who was the first Bahá'í teacher or pioneer to visit Esmeraldas.

The last letter received from a Dr. Rodrigo Viteri of Esmeraldas, was directed to the Teaching Committee and dated June 23, 1957.¹²

There is a large gap in time between the last known contact with Santo Domingo, Quinendé and Esmeraldas. I was unable to find any mention of these cities after 1957 in any of the records in Ecuador, until Mrs. Dorothy Campbell met Sr. José Lucas when he was visiting Otavalo, the city where she resided at the time. Señora Isabel de Calderón while returning from a teaching trip in Esmeraldas en route to Quito, by chance it seems, met a lovely young woman who got on the same bus she was on in Quinendé. Because this young lady's skin was black the chauffeur's helper insisted that she not sit in the seat next to Isabel, whose complexion was fair; it was the only seat left on the bus and she would have had to stand all the way to her destination. But Isabel interrupted the argument between the helper and the young woman and insisted that she sit beside her. The young woman was visibly moved as Isabel initiated a warm conversation with her speaking of the principles of the Bahá'í Faith. By time they arrived in Santo Domingo, the destination of the young woman, she had accepted the Faith for not only did she like what she heard but had witnessed it in practice by one of its adherents. Later Isabel returned to take her literature about the Faith and to talk with her more in detail, in other words to deepen her in the Teachings as well as to accept her enrollment card. Thus the city of Quinendé was re-opened to the Faith after more than twelve years.

On October 10, 1956, the local Spiritual Assembly of Quito had the occasion to write to the Ecuadorian Ambassador to the United Nations, Dr. José Vicente Trujillo, who was a native of Esmeraldas, to thank him for his noble stand in taking the case of the persecuted Bahá'ís of Iran to the Commission on Human Rights. There was widespread persecution of the Bahá'ís in Iran by the Muslim hierarchy during 1955 and 1956. A committee appointed by the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi had the task of trying to alleviate the sufferings of the Bahá'ís by bringing the attention of their plight and of the threats on their lives, to be carried out on a fixed date, to the United Nations. A clearer understanding of what transpired in connection with Dr. Trujillo's role in the matter can be gleaned from the following letter from Mrs. Mildred Mottahedeh to the writer. It should be recalled that Mrs. Mottahedeh and her husband were the first international Bahá'í travel teachers to Ecuador and they played an important role in helping John Stearns to proclaim the Cause in Quito:

October 15, 1979

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

It is fitting that I am writing this account of my friendship with Dr. José Vicente Trujillo in my apartment in which he visited us so often. From my window I see the building of the United Nations where Dr. Trujillo and I often had long visits.

Our friendship began in the summer of 1956 when Amin Banani and I went to Geneva, Switzerland to attempt to see one of the delegates to present the case of the persecuted Bahá'ís to the Commission on Human Rights. In 1955 we had at least stopped the massacre of the Persian friends. Now we were trying to have the local Bahá'í centers returned to the Bahá'ís and to plead for the restoration of their human rights. Dr. Jose Vincente Trujillo was Chairman of the Commission that summer as well as being the highly respected doyen of all the Latin American diplomats. The representative of Iran was also sitting on the Commission that summer.

Amin and I divided up the delegates so that we could call on all of them. It fell to me to present our case to Dr. Trujillo. I went to see him one morning an hour before the session, and presented him with the documents setting forth the numerous persecutions and abrogations of the human rights of the Persian Bahá'ís. He was very gentle and cordial and promised to read the documents carefully. During that day I met him in the corridors of the Palais des Nations and he greeted me with a beaming smile and the words, 'I have decided to present your case myself. I will speak not as the Chairman, but as the delegate from Ecuador. Be sure to come and listen tomorrow morning.'

You can imagine that spirits soared and I rushed to tell the good news to Amin. Just before the morning session next day I again met Dr. Trujillo and he said to me very sadly, 'I cannot present your case because my colleagues say it would be tantamount to a declaration of war.' I was, naturally, deeply disappointed but I answered, 'Don't feel so sad, Dr. Trujillo, we will find another way.'

We began our efforts to find someone else to present our case without success. Next morning I was standing in the corridor of the Palais des Nations, near the door where the Commission of Human Rights would be sitting. I felt a gentle hand on the back of my neck. I turned and saw a beaming Dr. Trujillo who said, 'I have decided to present your case regardless of the wishes of my colleagues. Come in and listen.'

We heard him open the next session welcoming the delegates. Then he said, 'I speak now, not as your Chairman, but as the delegate from Ecuador.' He then briefly presented our case and recommended that the situation be investigated by the Commission. The exact text of his words was reported on a news sheet circulated at the United Nations next day and is now either in the files of the Bahá'í International Community or the Archives in Haifa.

It is interesting to note that the Iranian delegation applied pressure to the United Nations and had Dr. Trujillo's words deleted from the record.

When we returned to New York my husband and I became friends with Dr. Trujillo and he came frequently to our house in Connecticut, and to our apartment in New York. He said we were his American family, and he felt welcome to come whenever he had time. One night he was expected for dinner at 7 p.m. I heard the door bell ring at 5:30 and saw Dr. Trujillo at the door. He beamed and said, 'I needed a little visit with my American family, so I came early.' He was very welcome.

Often when we were together he would say, 'Teach me about the Bahá'í Faith.' He would then proceed to pour out questions, listening carefully to the answers...

In 1961 when I was elected to the International Bahá'í Council I went to Haifa to live for two years. During that time I lost touch with Dr. Trujillo and no Bahá'í contacted him during my absence. When I returned to New York after the election of the Universal House of Justice in 1963, I immediately telephoned the Ecuadorian Mission to the United Nations and asked for Dr. Trujillo. I was told he had returned and was living with his son in Guayaquil, (Ecuador)....¹³

With warmest Bahá'í greetings
Sincerely,

/S/ Mildred R. Mottahedeh

Some time after mass conversion had begun in Esmeraldas, a business man and his wife, residents of that city, came to visit my husband and me in Quito. His wife was an ardent Bahá'í but he did not like the Bahá'í Faith - he liked us therefore he accepted the invitation to visit us when he came to Quito. For some unknown reason while I was talking with him about the Faith, I reached in the book case and took out a Bahá'í World book and opened it at random. My eyes fell on the name of Dr. Trujillo and I began to read the article. I had never heard of Dr. Trujillo nor had I ever seen the article before. It was an excerpt from his address to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in defense of the Bahá'ís as forementioned by Mrs. Mottahedeh. I decided to translate the article for our guest and tears came into this man's eyes and he said, "Now I understand, now I understand!" When he was able to control his emotions I asked him what he was commenting about. He related that he was a good friend of Dr. Trujillo, that the Ambassador was his idol and was much older than he, that everyone loved him and he was a good friend to everyone and a dynamic politician - therefore his own interest in politics. He said that when Dr. Trujillo returned from foreign service around 1960 or 1961, there were many political problems in Esmeraldas and everyone was awaiting his arrival to straighten matters out. He said that they built a large platform in the park downtown for him, but when he arrived he preferred mingling with the crowd; that hundreds of people were present all agog waiting for his accustomed political oratory. But instead, he said, the crowd and politicians were indeed taken aback when he began to speak so softly and gently about the need for peace, love and unity. He spoke as well about the oneness of the people and that they themselves must consult and try to find a solution to their problems. He said that Dr. Trujillo spoke so kindly, fatherly and spiritually, which they had never heard before, that everyone was left aghast and they wondered out loud if he was ill, especially when he refused to stay in Esmeraldas and help them to solve their grave differences as he normally would do when he came home.

After talking about this with me this gentleman said he wished to become a Bahá'í for now he knew that Dr. Trujillo's speech that day in the park was 'Bahá'í' without mentioning the name; and that Dr. Trujillo was such an intelligent and upright man that if he believed in the Bahá'í Faith it had to be right. I gave him books to study for he had destroyed his wife's Bahá'í books and pamphlets. And from time to time over the months he would come back and ask

questions. He was ashamed to attend meetings in Esmeraldas initially due to his previous actions with his wife and children about the Faith. She was jubilant when he accepted the Faith. Eventually, however, he became inactive because his acceptance was based on his admiration of Dr. Trujillo instead of Bahá'u'lláh, the Prophet/Founder of the Bahá'í Faith!

One day in the late 1970's, while I was standing in the Airport in Quito a very distinguished Ecuadorian lady approached me and pointing at me said "Bahá'í". I said "yes" groping for some recollection of her face without success. Then I asked if she was a Bahá'í - she seemed a bit surprised that I asked and she said "yes, don't you remember me. I am the second person you enrolled into the Bahá'í religion in Esmeraldas back in 1969 when you came to my place of business on the seaside with José Lucas." She said, "You taught my employee Antonio Andrado and he was the first to accept the Faith in Esmeraldas proper and I was the second." She recalled that I would go for awhile nearly every day to teach them when I was there on teaching trips. I was very ashamed I had not remembered her and could not recall her name - so I asked what was her name and all I seemed to hear was 'Trujillo' and it was necessary for her to repeat it for me, Olga Trujillo de Gomez, Then I asked if she knew a Dr. José Trujillo who was the Ecuadorian Ambassador to the United Nations. By now it seemed she was a little exasperated with me for she exclaimed, "He is my father, of course." This initiated a warm conversation for I told her that her father had been very kind to the Bahá'ís and related part of the story to her which made her very happy. She then invited me to her homes in Quito, Guayaquil and Esmeraldas to teach the Bahá'í Faith to her family, especially her children and sisters who had shown some interest when she mentioned the Faith. I wondered while talking with her if she really considered herself a Bahá'í after not having contact with the Bahá'ís for eight or nine years or more because we lost contact with her after a few months and she said she did not know how to contact me, the person she felt she knew best, Nevertheless, when her friend who was accompanying her asked her if she were a Bahá'í she unhesitatingly confirmed that she was.

When Dr. Trujillo returned from his mission with the United Nations he settled in Guayaquil where he looked up the Bahá'ís and attended two or more public meetings in that city and expressed his interest in the Bahá'í Movement and asked to be notified of future public meetings and offered to render any service he could for the Bahá'í Faith. This beloved statesman and good-will ambassador, Dr. José Vicente Trujillo, died at the time mass conversion was beginning in his native city of Esmeraldas. Unfortunately, it seems that no one ever invited him to become a Bahá'í or ask him if he desired to be an enrolled Bahá'í. But perhaps in the realm of Glory, he was one of those blessed souls mentioned by Bahá'u'lláh when He says that "The light which these souls radiates is responsible for the progress of the world and the advancement of its people."

Development of the Faith in Esmeraldas

Susana and James (Jimmy) Jensen have served as pioneers in Esmeraldas since 1974 until the present. While reminiscing about the development of the Faith in that Province, Jimmy concludes:

All the problems that are inherent in mass conversion have taken place in Esmeraldas it seems. After the pioneers left it seemed that there was a lot of disunity amongst the native believers. There were two or three different groups and if the local Spiritual Assembly meeting was in the home of one of the believers from one group, the members of another group wouldn't go. And there was constant criticism and constant backbiting and it was almost impossible to get the local Spiritual Assembly to meet.

During this early growing period the member of the Board of Counsellors Mr. Mas'ud Khámsi would visit Esmeraldas two or three times a year and I remember I always expected him to really let the Bahá'ís have it for not living Bahá'í lives, for always being involved in gossip and backbiting - but this never happened. He would meet with the Bahá'ís and be the essence of love and patience and just the most radiant and loving Bahá'í. In the meetings he would never point out the shortcomings of the Bahá'ís. On the contrary he would always give us some idea of who Bahá'u'lláh was, ... igniting the fire of love in the hearts of the believers.

Mr. Jensen continued saying that the pioneers there had to learn to function on the level of the understanding and interest of the community, for they were there to serve the people. For example during consultation he said;

When we started talking about the content of our Sunday deepening institutes, or the teachers or classes that were going to be given, the consultation would last 20 or 30 minutes. But then when we started consulting about the meals that were going to be prepared for these events, the consultation would go on for two or three hours, and everyone would participate, and this was something that got the local Spiritual Assembly functioning, and people became interested in the consultation when it was something they could consult about - something they could contribute with their knowledge about preparation and serving food for the institute.

About opposition - we have encountered that too from time to time. The Catholic Church has thrown up some obstacles for the Bahá'í Faith in Esmeraldas. In 1976, all the Bahá'ís of Tabiazo withdrew from the Faith in writing on their ballots for the election of the local Spiritual Assembly because of the intimidation of the local priest who had threatened not to baptize their children otherwise.¹⁴

The priests have also issued mimeographed diatribes against the other religions, including the Bahá'í Faith and there has been one such leaflet in Tachina aimed solely at the Bahá'ís.

Esmeraldas had developed sufficiently that it was able to be of assistance to other areas of mass teaching as early as in 1972 during the 40-day campaign in Santo Domingo de los Colorados. Sometimes as many as 30 teachers would travel there to help. And during the Five Year Plan, when Esmeraldas had fulfilled its goals of one local Spiritual Assembly in each canton, it was assigned the goal of Manabí with thirteen cantons and one of the largest territorial areas of all the provinces.¹⁵

On January 13, 1970 an exceptional Bahá'í family arrived in Ecuador unexpectedly. They were Oscar Salazar, his wife Teresa and their three small children, Bahiyyih, Taharih and Nabil from Perú. Both of the parents spoke Quechua as well as Spanish and the entire family was extremely devoted to the Faith and they made every effort to serve it. The National Assembly was indeed very happy to welcome this family and they felt it was an answer to their prayer when Señor Salazar offered to stay in Ecuador as pioneers for the Assembly was desperately in need of Quechua speaking teachers. This family, including the children, had suffered a great deal for the Cause and all of them at one time were held prisoners by the police who thought they were part of a revolutionary group wandering over the countryside. However, this is part of another country's history. They were on a travel teaching trip with the children. When those small children listened to their plight being related, they seemed to enjoy it immensely and their little faces would light up like candles, in fact, these children would not smile when they first arrived here unless the Faith was mentioned. Since mass conversion had begun in Esmeraldas and seemed to be spreading to other areas of the country, the Salazars were sorely needed both to help in Esmeraldas as well as with the Quechua speaking areas of the country.

As a result of the success in Esmeraldas where mass conversion had been initiated among the Negro people, the Bahá'í community of Ecuador was overjoyed to receive a letter from the House of Justice announcing the coming visit of Rúhíyyih Khánum, the letter was dated January 21, 1970:

We gladly announce that we have requested Hand of the Cause Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum to attend your convention as the representative of the House of Justice, and she has informed us that it will be possible for her to do so.

Rúhíyyih Khánum was making her famous "Safari" throughout Africa at the time and knowing her love for the African people, the teaching work was accelerated on all fronts especially among the people of African descent in Esmeraldas.

In the National Assembly's meeting of January 17, the Assembly made new plans for systematic expansion and consolidation by areas.

It was brought out in this meeting that "during various years in the past, the teaching work in Imbabura and Pichincha was done by accepting groups without taking down names, thus leaving many communities within these same areas unopened to the Faith,..." The plan was to have the teachers visit all the communities village by village. The Assembly also asked for a Bahá'í census through the method of holding large meetings at night. Possibly it was overlooked that in 1968 the National Teaching Committee reported that for three years the names of the Indians were not written down due to the Indian superstitions.

During this same meeting Nolberto Curillo, one of the indigenous believers from the Otavalo area, was selected to be the teacher in the first Bahá'í Literacy School for the communities of Arriendo, Cuvilche and Anglango. Dr. Laverne Johnson and Jerry and Florence Bagley were asked to transfer from Otavalo to Esmeraldas and put into effect the plans which the Assembly had elaborated for expansion and consolidation in that area. José Lucas was asked to serve as homefront pioneer in his native city of Esmeraldas and two devoted young believers Diana María and Piedad Cellerí, two sisters, were asked to help with the 800 indigenous believers in the province of Azuay. They would later serve as homefront pioneers to Otavalo and Ibarra as well as assist with Radio Bahá'í.

On January 24 the Assembly was pleased to inform the House of Justice that:

During the past month 57 Indians have gone to the Institute on their own initiative and have asked to be accepted as Bahá'ís. They had been taken to the Institute on several occasions by Indian Bahá'ís who are not teachers but wanted their friends to know about the Faith. They arrive about seven o'clock in the morning and stay until five o'clock in the afternoon,.... In this way we have gained back the community of Panecillo which had been lost to the Faith for several years.17

In March 1970 a teaching team was sent to Manta to help pioneer Ida Solomon to begin mass teaching in that city if possible. The team had a lot of success especially with youth enrollments but they had difficulties with the Evangelists. They even came to the Bahá'í meetings with the intent to disrupt them. The dissension was so intense against the Bahá'ís that when the team left it was necessary for the Teaching Committee to ask the National Assembly to send someone to live with Ida for her protection for awhile. Shortly thereafter a number of Bahá'ís went in to help with the teaching in and around this city. The members of the teaching team were: José Lucas, Oscar Salazar, Lauro Celleri, Enrique Peñafiel J. and Ida Solomon.

On April 6, 1970 a cable was received confirming the arrival date of Amatu'l-Bahá Rúḥíyyih Khánúm:

ARRIVING FOURTEENTH BR 979 ANXIOUS VISIT ESMERALDAS BELIEVERS FOUR FIVE DAYS FLYING BOTH WAYS PLEASE MAKE ARRANGEMENTS ENSURING RETURN QUITO NOT LATER TWENTYTHIRD SHARE THIS HORNBY'S LOVE.

RUHIYYIH

The Bahá'ís were excited over having the opportunity to welcome this beloved Hand of the Cause of God and widow of their beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, and her gracious travelling companion, Mrs. Violette Nakhjaváni for their second visit to Ecuador. And of course when the highly esteemed member of the Continental Board of Counsellors, Mas'ud Khámsi arrived from Perú to join them and to attend the National Convention - there was such a joyful spirit that the days and nights seemed to be one! Rúhíyyih Khánum was extremely pleased about mass conversion in the city of Esmeraldas and desired to go there as soon as possible. Plane reservations had been made for her to go there two days later, allowing her time to rest in Quito, but she decided to leave the following day by bus since there was no plane that day going there.

There were many new Bahá'ís at the bus station to receive her and her entourage. A great shout of acclamation arose from the crowd as she descended from the bus, as if they had known her long ago. She gave numerous of talks and met hundreds of Bahá'ís and non-Bahá'ís including the Governor of the Province and other dignitaries. At nights there were large meetings in the barrios and during the day she would speak to the women and children present in these same barrios (neighborhoods). One day she spoke to a number of fisherman on the wharf. It was extremely hot and humid and there was no shelter for her to sit or stand under while addressing these men and a few women. There was a canoe turned upside down and she chose to sit on top of it in the hot, boiling, tropical sun and address her eager audience, who was enchanted with her. She never flinched nor attempted to fan herself - she seemed cool and confident as she turned her face toward Bahá'u'lláh and began to speak. Those who accompanied her were ashamed that they lacked the stamina and detachment which she demonstrated that day. They indeed learned from her the true meaning of "A lover feareth nothing and no harm can come nigh him: Thou seest him chill in the fire and dry in the sea."

The old opera house was acquired in Esmeraldas for her public talk that week for there was no other place accessible. This huge building was not in use any longer but it was opened up and cleaned for the use of the Bahá'ís. And although the Bahá'í Faith was recently carried there and Rúhíyyih Khánum was known only by a few pioneers (of course they had tried to convey the love and esteem which they felt for her to the new believers) there were between 500 and 800 people in attendance to hear her speak about the Faith.

She returned to Quito in time to rest up for their National Convention. Then, on the first morning of the Convention, after she read the message from the Universal House of Justice, she was asked to address the Convention. The House of Justice's message was read in Quechua by Señora Clementina Pavón and Counsellor Mas'ud Khámsi read the message from the Counsellors of South America. The keynote of Rúhíyyih Khánum's talk was love, unity and harmony among the Bahá'ís, especially between pioneers and teachers of the Faith. She explained that our concept of unity is, in a large part, a vocal concept; that the spirit of love, devotion and unity attracts the blessings of Bahá'u'lláh and, in truth, God has blessed the Community of Ecuador.

After her address, the exemplary indigenous believer Rufino Gualavisí, who was noticeably moved, asked if he may speak for a moment. The floor was granted to him and he recited the following beautiful poem which he composed for Rūḥīyyih Khānum during the session: (This is a free translation by the writer from the Spanish)

*Rūḥīyyih Khānum has brought us light and understanding
We must welcome this mysterious unfathomable message
of God and Bahá'u'lláh,
Divine Wisdom, Mother and Queen of the entire world -
Amatu'l-Bahá Rūḥīyyih Khānum.¹⁶*

(Rufino Gualavisí)

It was interesting to observe Rufino's face as he was composing these lines. It was as a light and one could see that he was oblivious to everything happening around him except Rūḥīyyih Khānum. It was also noted that the indigenous people seemed to see or feel something about her and responded to that "something", that no one else seemed to recognize. It was observed that the women, young and old, appeared to melt in her loving embrace as well as the indigenous men, and such rapturous joy reflected from their faces. Never one sees the Indians rushing in a social situation, but the young women as well as some of the men were seen running to greet her when they caught a glimpse of her. Certainly, no one has ever seen a happier face than hers when she is with the indigenous people. To attempt to convey her love in a tangible way she wrote and dedicated this poem to these descendents of the Incas and copies were given to all those present:

TO THE DESCENDANTS OF THE INCAS

*You drew your bow,
O men of the Andes,
The long bow of the mountains themselves
The great backbone of a world,
Half of a new world,
And from its string
In the pure clear air of the heights
A thousand arrows sped
Like blades of light
Into my heart,
And I was pinned, transfixed,
Pierced all my breast right through
With a strange love
I had not asked for.*

*Distance did not draw those arrows,
Other days and other ways
Eased not the pain
of those shafts of love.
O men of the Andes
What did you do to the heart
That all unsuspecting*

Came that far off day
Into the high hills?

Every note of your flute
Was like a drop of water
From a hidden spring
Falling into the silent dark cavern
Of my tranquil heart,
Like tears that flow back from the eyes,
Hidden deep within,
An ache and a comfort
In the depths of the soul
The sad small notes echoed away
But were never again lost.

Why has the black net of your hair,
The soft sweet tones of your voice,
The sheen of your eyes ...shutter to a memoried pain...
Cast such a spell on me?
Why do the men of the Andes
Call me back
From far away?
Those barbed arrows
Will never more be drawn
From a heart that lies defenseless
To a thousand winds.¹⁷

Rúhíyyih

Quito, April 25, 1970

The National Assembly was gratified to inform the Convention that the goal of 300 localities and over was achieved; that there were more than 10,000 believers in the country and 85 local Spiritual Assemblies had been elected leaving a total of 35 to be elected before the end of the Plan. This made everyone happy especially after hearing the reminder from the Universal House of Justice that 40 per cent of Ecuador's local Spiritual Assemblies were lost the past year - there had been deep concern over this setback. The House of Justice was notified about the success of the Convention and on April 27, they responded as follows:

HEARTS WARMED NEWS CONVENTION GRACED PRESENCE AMATULBAHA ATTENDANCE
COUNSELLOR KHAMSI REPRESENTATION SEVERAL TRIBES STOP CONGRATULATIONS
ELECTION EIGHT FIVE ASSEMBLIES PRAYING DIVINE THRESHOLD FULFILLMENT
ALL REMAINING GOALS

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

This National Convention was one of the happiest events ever witnessed in Ecuador by the Bahá'ís. Never had so many Bahá'ís congregated before in this country and the occasion bought out representatives of the cross cultures in the country for the first time. The presence of the representative of the Universal House of Justice, Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum, added immensely to the

spiritual joy of the occasion. Many of the new Bahá'ís who had never seen her or heard of her before, appeared enthralled over her presence and extremely attentive when she spoke. The National Assembly happily expressed their gratitude to the House of Justice on May 23, 1970:

We are grateful to you for Amatu'l-Bahá's presence in our National Convention this Ridván, which made it a wonderful occasion of loving fellowship and enthusiastic planning for further teaching work. Most of the consultation time was used to set goals all over the country between the Convention and next August and the total number of new members pledged was 7,363 before the Conference in Bolivia. There were 47 (of the 53) delegates present and 50 other Bahá'ís from all over the country.

For the first time in our National history three native believers offered to serve as pioneers wherever we needed them. They are Angelita and César Villacís, a married couple from Ambato, and Aurelio Carpio, a young man from Guayaquil. The National Assembly accepted their offers with great joy and beginning May 1st they were assigned. Aurelio Carpio will work in the Province of Los Rios where there are no Bahá'ís with Bruce Suttles, a North American pioneer who arrived in February. The Villacís family (there are four small children) was assigned to Manta to work with Ida Solomon, a North American pioneer who arrived in October, where a mass teaching team recently won 63 new believers.

We are indeed grateful, too, for the teaching visit of the beloved Hand of the Cause Enoch Olinga, who will arrive in Ecuador on June 19 for ten days and are making plans to take full advantage of his visit.

The hour came all too soon for the departure of the distinguished visitor and her travel companion. A number of believers gathered at the airport to thank her again for coming and to bid them farewell as well as to assure them of their love and appreciation. Then on June 24, 1970 she wrote this heart-warming letter which again reflected her profound love for the "men of the Andes":

Beloved Friends,

I have just arranged with the National Spiritual Assembly here to transfer to you the sum of \$600 which I informed some of the members of your Assembly just before I left Quito that I would be sending to you. \$400 of this is for the specific purpose of enabling some of the Quechua speaking Indian Bahá'ís to attend the historic Conference in La Paz, Bolivia as representatives from Ecuador. As you no doubt know, the first language of the Conference is to be Quechua and the second Spanish, which in itself makes it a unique occurrence in the history of the Bahá'í Faith and perhaps in non-Bahá'í history as well. This represents a contribution from the Bahá'í Youth Class in Telran. If you will forward the receipt in their name to me, I will see that it reaches them. The other \$200 is a contribution from me to deputize the two Indian teachers that are needed in the Central zone during the next few months to help win the goal of 5,000 new Bahá'ís. You remember that this was mentioned on the floor of the Convention.

I cannot tell you what a joy it was to me and to Violette to once more visit Ecuador and see so many of our dear friends there. Meeting the new Bahá'ís in Esmeraldas was likewise a most happy experience. I am sure that the tremendous progress is now going to be made, not only in that province but all over Ecuador. In so many of the meetings that I have visited since leaving your country I have told the Bahá'ís about what a wonderful spirit prevailed at the Convention in Quito. The unity, love and enthusiasm for teaching that welded together all our hearts there is surely the force that will carry the Bahá'ís through to victory. I am sure that with the help of the new Bahá'ís, the new pioneers, and the solid core of old believers which you have in your country, wonderful progress can be made in the coming months. My heart and thoughts and prayers are with you as you make every effort to attain the goal of your "5,000". I shall always be anxious to hear what is going on in the different teaching fields.¹⁸

With warmest love to all of you,

/S/ Rúhíyyih

The National Spiritual Assembly wrote a letter of thanks to her for her generous contribution and the contribution from the youth of Tehran. She was informed that Rufino Gualavisí, Vicenta Anrango and María Perugachi would attend the Bolivian Conference as representatives from Ecuador as well as a number of non-indigenous Bahá'ís.

In a letter dated July 1, 1970 the Assembly expressed its joy and appreciation to the House of Justice for the visit of the Hand of the Cause, Mr. Enoch Olinga and related to them something about his activities. They reported that he visited the Otavalo Institute for a one-day school with the Indian believers then he visited the Negro believers in the mass conversion area of Esmeraldas and Quinindé for three days. As a climax to his visit a National Teaching Conference was held in Quito for two days so that believers from all over the country could benefit from his inspiration and knowledge. The Quito community was very happy to have him present for this happy event. His participation was indeed an inspiration to all those who were privileged to hear his clear and erudite explanations of the Teachings, and his spirituality left a profound impression on all those who were blessed to meet him." He was accompanied by the esteemed Counsellor, Hooper Dunbar. (See section on Mr. Olinga)

Mention should be made that before mass conversion began in Ecuador and it was still an ardent desire on the part of some of the believers, the Universal House of Justice was aware that large scale enrollment was imminent in some countries and had begun in others. A letter dated July 13, 1964 informed all National Spiritual Assemblies that:

The declarants need not know all the proofs, history, laws, and principles of the Faith, but in the process of declaring themselves they must, in addition to catching the spark of faith, become basically informed about the Central Figures of the Faith, as well as the existence of laws they must follow and an administration they must obey....

While mass conversion was in process in Esmeraldas it was observed that this guideline was not being followed as consistently as it should have been by the teachers. This matter was brought to the attention of the National Assembly with the reference to the above-mentioned letter from the House of Justice. The Assembly was concerned about this as well as in their past practices in teaching the indigenous people and they decided to consult with the House of Justice explaining that in teaching the Indigene, *We have not tried to tell them about the Báb and 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the beloved Guardian before they accept the Faith. That has been done in the consolidation work after they become Bahá'ís because we found that if we mentioned too many things at first and too many new names, the Indians were confused and did not get the impact of the Message.*" They told the House of Justice that their letter of July 13, 1964 was recently called to their attention and that: *We are troubled because it seems to put in doubt all of the Indian believers we have accepted in the past without teaching them of the three Central Figures of the Faith before they were accepted, and also about the policy we should follow in the future....*" They asked for further guidance and desired to know if there could be some flexibility in the cited instructions. On July 15, 1970 the House of Justice replied:

We have considered the points raised in your letter of May 23, 1970 concerning the enrollment of believers in mass teaching areas and we wish to re-affirm the principle stated in our letter of July 13, 1964. It is not necessary to go into detail about the Central Figures of the Faith and about the laws, but prospective believers should be given basic information about the Central Figures of the Faith and be told that there are laws which they must follow and an administration which they must obey.

Those who have already declared should be continued on the rolls....

On July 30, 1970 the National Spiritual Assembly wrote a letter thanking the Bahá'í Youth Class of Tehran, Irán for their welcome contribution:

Dearly beloved Friends.

We have recently received a letter from the beloved Hand of the Cause, Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum, sending us a check in the amount of \$400.00 as a contribution from you to enable some of the Quechua speaking Indian Bahá'ís to attend the historic International Conference in La Paz, Bolivia. You will be glad to know that we will be able to send three Indian teachers to the Conference with this generous contribution.

We are profoundly grateful to you for your loving assistance, which is yet another demonstration of the bonds of love and unity which exist between the Bahá'ís of the East and the West

In the National Spiritual Assembly meeting in August they approved membership for 4,493 new believers; 3,167 of which were from the Esmeraldas area, 1,144 from Imbabura. There were 43 new localities in the province of Esmeraldas. They decided to write to the House of Justice to ask how to go about consolidating 3,000

new believers in one small city. There were also more problems to face for the first pioneer couple to Esmeraldas left to settle in another country, and a number of other pioneers left for various reasons.

During this period the National Community learned of the pending visit of Miss Carol Berglund and Miss Lauretta Haynes of the International Bahá'í Audio-Visual Center. The majority of the believers did not understand what these two young ladies would be doing for they were not acquainted with the functions of the Audio-Visual Center as a matter of fact only a few believers knew there was such a center - so they were eagerly awaited. Upon their arrival they visited the country from September 21 to October 21, 1970, demonstrating the use of audio-visual materials especially in mass conversion areas. They also made a series of slides and photographs about Bahá'ís and Bahá'í institutions. Everyplace they visited they left a lasting impression on the believers.

On October 9, the National Assembly wrote a letter to the Counsellors relating that the teaching work among the Indians in the Province of Azuay had to be abandoned for lack of personnel. There were approximately 800 believers there and the Assembly had hopes of training some of the believers as instructors.

On November 14, 1970 the Assembly again notified the House of Justice of its progress:

When the beloved Hand of the Cause, Mr. Enoch Olinga, was in Esmeraldas he was so impressed by the receptivity of the people in that Province that he and Mr. Hooper Dunbar strongly recommended that we push the teaching work there while the conditions were so favorable, so our NSA planned and carried out a month's intensive teaching campaign with 14 teachers for an allout effort to conquer the Province spiritually. This campaign was very successful, giving us a total of 3,500 new believers in the Province before the La Paz Conference. Our NSA spent a thousand dollars on this campaign, which was well worth it. We also carried out a week's teaching conference for foreign and native pioneers for a week in Esmeraldas, which cost us a total of \$600.

On January 29, 1971 the House of Justice expressed appreciation to the National Assembly for its accomplishments up to this time:

We have received your semi-annual statistical report with gratitude, and were delighted to note the enrollment of 7,430 new believers since Ridván. It also brought us great joy that the 63 new localities opened to the Faith are already at group status.

Shortly after mass conversion began in Esmeraldas and other parts of the country, many problems also began to emerge in these communities. These were problems different from the Covenant-breaking situation. Initially everyone was so very happy with the overwhelming success in teaching that there was hardly time to notice these unwelcome; ugly problems gradually surging forth for they only seemed to affect, at the time, the participants and the National

Assembly, who was trying to help solve them. These problems pestered the Assembly and affected the mass conversion areas, especially Esmeraldas and were due to the immaturity of the pioneers there in most cases. There were also problems of immorality, of abuse of one's privilege to be a Bahá'í, of gossip and backbiting, of marital problems and the breaking of various laws. This occurred among some of the new pioneers and also involved some of the new believers in the mass conversion area. The pity of it was that in some cases, the new believers had to appear before the National Assembly and testify against those who came to teach them and also against their fellow believers who had become involved. Although these incidents left scars - scars for some which will take years to heal. Still, the Faith continued to progress, even though it was at a slower pace, for soon young vibrant, dedicated pioneers and teachers came with a fresh, wholesome new spirit and began to organize and consolidate previous efforts. Among those new faces were Nooshin Eskandari (later 'Burwell'), Alan Fryback, James (Jimmy) Jensen and Suzanne Smith (later 'Jensen'; she became the bride of Jimmy), and a host of others.

No doubt that at certain stages in the administrative evolution of the Bahá'í Faith, the institutions suffer from internal problems from time to time and this Assembly was no exception. There were times, certainly, in their zeal to serve, that one or another of the members of this Body put himself in a position that seemed as if he were speaking for the Body itself without prior authorization, which certainly caused some conflict at times. Also new believers who became members of the Assembly failed to take the exhortation serious that they were not to talk about the believers' personal problems outside of the meeting of the Assembly. However, the reader should take into account that this body was only about ten years old at the time and had suffered a great deal from growing pains, as all bodies must suffer, and from sheer malice of the dissidents. For as late as 1969, when the writer arrived in this country, there were two factions because the dissidents had split the Quito community and this had happened before. There were two Nineteen-Day Feasts being celebrated in Quito and one of course was without administrative sanction. But, the National Community, especially Quito, demonstrated a strength far beyond its natural capacity and proved that, "There is a power in this cause - a mysterious power - far, far, far away from the ken of men and angels ... directing it towards its destiny."

On May 16, 1970 the National Assembly decided to abolish their National Teaching Committee and the Mass Teaching Committee and appoint four Regional Teaching Committees for all teaching work. They did the same thing back in 1961 and again in 1965 because of their frustration over the disharmony prevalent at that time. By October, they realized that this was too much additional work for the National Assembly and they were spending too much time directing the work of the Regional Committees so they again appointed a National Teaching Committee to guide the work of the regional committees. And in order to avoid conflict between instructors, they abolished the position of national instructor. On January 29, 1971 the House of Justice kindly gave the following guidance:

The primary task of your National Spiritual Assembly, at this crucial juncture of the Nine Year Plan, is exemplary in nature. Through your example and instruction you must, considering no sacrifice too great, achieve a higher level of love and unity throughout your entire community.

We note that you have, at present, two National Teaching Committees, one for mass teaching and one for teaching and that the Regional Teaching Committees you have formed are functioning under the guidance of your National Spiritual Assembly. You might consult on the advisability of forming one strong National Teaching Committee, with the direction of the work of the Regional Committees becoming its responsibility. We feel that this might prove more effective and lessen the burdens of your National Spiritual Assembly....

When the Assembly made their decisions to abolish the National Teaching Committee evidently they overlooked or were not aware of the Guardian's instructions on the subject. He advised the Assemblies of the essentiality of a strong National Teaching Committee and that this committee is the right arm of the National Spiritual Assembly and "its chief auxiliary institution". That it was designed to relieve the over-burdened National Assembly and to absorb all of the petty details which, according to the Universal House of Justice, "manifestly injurious to efficiency and an expert discharge of Bahá'í duties."

Since one might well wonder why pioneers and teachers were sent out who would cause problems for themselves and others, or ask why institutions are not more discriminating in accepting adherents to this beautiful new Religion. The Guardian, Shoghi Effendi answered these hypothetical questions himself years ago when his secretary wrote on his behalf that, *The Cause of God has room for all. It would, indeed, not be the Cause of God if it did not take in and welcome everyone - poor and rich, educated and ignorant, the unknown and the prominent - God surely wants them all, as he created them all. And on another Bahá'í occasion his secretary wrote on his behalf: When a person becomes a Bahá'í, he gives up the past only in the sense that he is part of this new and living Faith of God, and must seek to pattern himself, in act and thought, along the lines laid down by Bahá'u'lláh.... Again, to pretend they are perfect, that the Bahá'ís of the future will not be a hundred times more mature, better balanced, more exemplary in their conduct, would be foolish.*

And again on March 30, 1971 the Universal House of Justice wrote giving them the key to the solution of their problems, 'consultation':

Beloved friends, we know you are gravely concerned about the needs of the Faith in Esmeraldas and we are confident that solutions to your problems will be found. Bahá'í consultation in the spirit of loving fellowship will strengthen your relationship with each other, with the pioneers, and with all the friends whom you serve so ably, and we are confident that you will continue to administer the affairs of the Faith with distinction.

We shall supplicate Bahá'u'lláh that his followers in Ecuador achieve a resounding success in the tasks you have pledged yourselves to fulfill.

An unusually sad note sounded during the year, for it had to do with prejudice against children - strong enough to uproot a much needed pioneer family from their post. The family, Oscar and Teresa Salazar and their children found it necessary to transfer to another country because of the prejudice against their children, especially their eldest daughter, in spite of the fact that she was born in Bolivia (the father is Peruvian and the mother is a native Argentinian). Ever since the cessation of the war between Ecuador and Perú there have been border disputes and many of the citizens, it appears, of both countries, harbor hostilities against each other. It was the teachers in the schools who encouraged the native Ecuadorian children not to accept Peruvians because Perú still holds part of the territory which once belonged to Ecuador. Some of the people are very nationalistic.

Although the National Convention for 1971 was a happy occasion there were poignant memories of the past convention when Ráhiyyih Khánum was present. The Convention desired that she should know that they were thinking of her and loved her so they agreed that a cable should be sent to her expressing their sentiments. On July 11, 1971 she kindly responded to that cable:

Beloved Friends -

I was deeply touched that you should have thought of sending me a cable from the Convention, many, many thanks. As my thoughts were very much with you all on the year following the time I was able to share it with you it made me so happy. I miss you all and think of you all so much more often than you would imagine, Ecuador occupies a special place in my heart and I always long to see the friends there again and go back to the places I visited in both 1968 and 1970.

Please excuse this long delay in writing to thank you for the cable, the trip in Africa was so exacting and I find it almost impossible to get letters written when we are motoring from place to place all the time. We came here to Europe to attend the European Bahá'í Youth Conference at the request of the Counsellors and Universal House of Justice as I will give some talks to the youth, about 600 - 1,000 are expected, something quite new in the Faith in Europe; as we were coming here we decided to have a real rest, very much needed, and medical care here; we feel much better now and able, I hope, to go on with our African tour, which never seems to end!

I wish you would extend my love and greeting and those of Violette too, to all the dear friends there.

*With love to all the members of
your Assembly,*

/S/ Ráhiyyih

During this year there was a series of Oceanic and Continental Conferences. One of the largest of which was held in May 1971 in Kingston, Jamaica. The Counsellors, on behalf of the House of

Justice, informed the National Assembly that they would like to have two representatives from Ecuador, an Indian believer and a Negro from the mass conversion areas, to attend the Caribbean Conference in Jamaica. For some reason the National Assembly decided to send only one representative, perhaps due to insufficient funds. They chose Bernardo Jérez, an Indian from the Salasaca area. Since the writer was going to the conference, she was asked to be responsible for him. He had never even been to a sizable city before so it was interesting to observe his adaptability, beginning with residing in the ultrasophisticated Panama Canal Zone for a couple of days, hosted by pioneers Fred and Lucy Berest. The second day he was there he surprised everyone by asking for a pencil and paper, since he was illiterate. He had observed a moola (?) made by the San Blas Indians hanging on the wall above the table, and he copied it beautifully and took it back to his people.

In Jamaica, he was the apple of everyone's eye. It seemed that all the ladies who came on the boat, The New Bahama Star, from the United States wanted to kiss him and try on his beautiful heavy white hat. Besides this they nearly fed him to death. By the second day the experience was somewhat traumatic for him. After trying to digest so many lunches and so many Bahá'ís he slipped away and quietly went to sleep at the pool side of the hotel for a time. How we looked for him for it was feared that he had gone out and gotten himself lost. He showed up in about two hours or more smiling - asking what could he do with the extra boxes of lunch which the friends from the United States had so generously showered on him. He had seen other people around the pool side reclining and without shoes on so he decided to rest there and pull off his shoes for it is not their custom to wear shoes continuously, even though it is cold in the Salasaca region.

The affect of the conference on this young indigenous believer who had recently accepted the Faith was greater than my pen can describe. When he returned to Ecuador, obviously imbued with the spirit of the conference, he asked the member of the Board of Counsellors, Mr. Mas'úd Khámsi, who was visiting Ecuador at the time, if he could appear on radio because he wanted to share this spirit with his people. And if they hear him on radio they would believe that he attended the conference and what he said was true. He offered to pay the cost himself and on two radio programs he spoke to the Salasaca Indians and told how wonderfully he was received and treated in Panama and Jamaica and the love the Bahá'ís showered over him. And he spoke beautifully about the Bahá'í teachings.¹⁹

Another highlight of the year was when two native believers, Raúl Pavón and Lauro Céleri, and a young Persian woman, Nooshin Eskandari, went to the Oriente (the Amazon jungle region), on a teaching trip. Raúl desired to recontact the Shuar Indians (Jivaros - also known as "head-shrinkers") who had not been visited for several years. They found the Jaramillo family, to whom a small pamphlet and a prayer book had been given at that time. They still had the prayer book and had been teaching their children prayers which they had memorized. It was a very dangerous and difficult journey but

they were enabled to enroll seven new believers on this trip, thus opening up a new area and welcomed a new tribe into the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.

By September the National Assembly had reason to be concerned over the teaching situation in the country, because seven of the fifteen pioneers they had received over the past year had returned to the United States. The National Assembly asked the International Goals Committee if they would send eight more pioneers to make up for the loss. In spite of the Assembly's fear of losing ground the teaching continued. In this same month a young pioneer, Edward Jones and a young Bahá'í who had found the Bahá'í Faith while travelling through Ecuador in the city of Riobamba, Ralph Dexter from Canada volunteered to help win some of the goals. They began a teaching trip "up the north coast of Esmeraldas to the northern border and on to Tumaco, Colombia." They formed a musical duo to attract people - Ralph played the guitar and Edward played a melodeon. They visited many towns and villages - they opened the villages of Palestina and La Tola in the Province of Esmeraldas and later opened up two of the three remaining provinces in the country to be opened before the end of the Nine Year Plan. The Assembly was happy to notify the Hands of the Cause at the World Centre on October 3, 1971 that:

We are happy to tell you that two of the three Provinces in Ecuador which had not been opened to the Faith have now been won, so only one Province remains unopened. Ralph Dexter and Edward Jones went on a teaching trip last month and a young man in Morona-Santiago and a young man in Zamora-Chinchipe accepted the Faith....

Before we begin talking about the last year of the Nine Year Plan it should be interesting to listen to another one of the indigenous Bahá'í teachers who has rendered outstanding service to the Cause here both with Radio Bahá'í and in teaching.

I have been a Bahá'í for about 17 years. I am supposed to talk about the activities that I have taken part of in the country. It is difficult to remember everything but I will tell you some of the basic things. It's a privilege to be a Bahá'í and I would like to talk about some of the experiences I have had in the teaching field.

First, I will tell you of some sad things. Like we all know, in teaching we meet with successes and problems. During my 17 years as a Bahá'í there have not been that many problems but once I was threatened to be burned to death in the province of Tungurahua in a place called San Fernando. I went with César Villacís, Vicenta Curillo Anrango and Diana María Célleri to teach. We did not know the people there and they had never heard about the Faith. We approached a community where they were very political and they were not interested in religion. More than 250 people approached us and threatened to kill us and burn us. They said that religious people were harmful. We were innocent so we went house to house teaching. At one house some men came out with ropes and machetes. I knew that they were country people and have to harvest the crops and I thought that they were going to a "minga" (Communal work) to harvest the crops. They began to converse among themselves, "Shall we kill them or burn them or just tie

them up and take them as prisoners? What shall we do?" One of the men said that they were going to kill us because in this community strangers were not wanted especially when they talked about religion. I told them that we were not doing anything wrong. They told us to go with them and took us up a big hill. There were many men and they said that way up on the hill there was a place to burn strangers. We laughed and said, "Why? We are not doing anything bad." They said that they were doing to kill and burn us and then asked, "Why are you happy and laughing? You should be crying and you should be sad but you are laughing?" They they said that we were not normal and that we had something of God because we were not afraid and that is why we were so calm. They began to converse among themselves and they decided not to kill us because we might have something good but to take us to the political leader and the people asked him to keep us as prisoners for a few days. There were more than 250 people to deal with the three of us! The leader said to them, 'Go back to work. These people are not doing anything bad. They are trying to raise you spiritually. You do not understand that they bring you good teachings. It is better if I make you prisoners. Then he told us, "You can go." And he wanted to make them prisoners. We left and got a bus but we were not sad. Instead we were calm and happy. This was about 12 or 13 years ago.

In the province of Chimborazo I had another moving experience. Vicenta, Rufino and I were teaching with some Bolivian friends. We walked and taught all day and the people received us well and gave us things to eat. They seemed to be good people. They themselves asked us to come back on Thursday to have a big meeting in the school and teach everyone. To fulfill our promise we returned on Thursday. The five of us got there at 2:00 in the afternoon. The meeting was called for 3:00 P.M. We did not find anyone so we decided to wait for them in the school. The community is called (Trepabamba(?)) We sat down and waited in the school. A very angry woman came to us and began to insult us. We did not know why she was there. So we continued to wait. She spoke Quechua but we could not understand it the way she spoke. Then two men approached us and asked us to leave. They said that they had had a meeting last Tuesday and had decided that we had come to divide the community and the people who live there; that they do not need religion and that they live alone and do not want anything to do with religion. In a public meeting they had decided this and they said that if we did not leave right away they would kill and burn us and that that there were more people coming with machetes and rocks to kill us. We understood and obeyed them and said, "Thank you very much...we will go." We began to leave. There was a hill and children from about seven to twelve years old began to gather and throw stones and dirt. We knew that they were only children but after them there were dogs and after the dogs came a lot of women and after the women were a lot of men. I could only say, "Ya Bahā'u'l-Abhā" (O Thou the Glory of Glories! - a form of the Greatest Name of God), because there was not time to pray or meditate. The children threw rocks and sticks at us. From the other side a very brave young man approached us. He spoke to us in a kindly manner and asked us what we were doing. We told him and the children came closer and began to throw rocks again. There was a youth with a big rock of about two and a half pounds, he threw it and hit the young man. He became angry and said, "What are you doing here? These people are saying something beautiful from God. You do not know how to listen. I can do anything I want with you." I gave thanks to Bahā'u'llāh because God is Great. The young man told us to go because there was nothing we

could do with those people. He said he wanted to know about the Faith but the people would not let him hear. He then took us to the highway and got a bus for us.

I would like to talk about the successes now. For example, when a Bahá'í teacher goes out to teach with his whole heart for Bahá'u'lláh and for no other reason, this is of great value for the teaching work. Sometimes, though, because the process is slow we become disillusioned, thinking that we are doing nothing and for days there are no new Bahá'ís, one feels bad. But little by little there are communities that show the result of the sacrifices made. In these communities where we have had problems and have been kicked out, later on they themselves begin to investigate what the religion is and why it exists. For me, these are the products of the suffering and sacrifice of the teachers.

Here in the province of Imbabura, there was very slow progress but now thanks to the radio there are many deepened families. Many people ask for me and Vicenta to visit them and teach them prayers and ask why we do not see them more often. They tell us to please come and visit them because they have marriage problems or other family problems they know we can help them with these things. For example, in one community, Quinchuquí Bajo, there are about 12 Bahá'ís there now, it was very difficult to teach there because of all the political parties actively working there. There is one family, who have been Bahá'ís for about five years, who know so much about the Faith, it is really incredible. They know the obligatory noon day prayer, the dawn prayer, the night (evening) prayer - they know 12 prayers in all - all the family even the children. When I think of these things I know that the teachers, sacrifices bring these things and that the suffering and the walking is not in vain. They give results. During these 12 years that I have worked teaching full time or part time, I have seen a lot of progress in the campo.

Another important thing that I would like to talk about is my dreams. Bahá'u'lláh makes each one of us understand in one way or another. I have always been interested in new things whether cultural or religious or whatever. I always liked to investigate but not necessarily accept something. But I found the Bahá'í Faith to be so beautiful that I decided to become a Bahá'í. I felt it in my heart but could not say it. But, one time I had a beautiful dream. I was very sick and I remembered that the friends who visited us had said that Bahá'u'lláh was miraculous and very good. I said to Bahá'u'lláh, "Bahá'u'lláh, if you are miraculous, please help me and cure me." At that time I did not know His prayers but in this way I asked Bahá'u'lláh for help. Then I slept and in a dream I saw Sra. Clementina de Pavón (the mother of Raúl Pavón, member of the Board of Counsellors), come down like a bird from heaven dressed in white to my house. We indigenous always have a space in the front of the house called a patio. In the middle of the patio stood Señora Clementina, she said, "I come in the name of Bahá'u'lláh and His teachings and I want to cure you. But with one condition. When you are better and are healthy you have to serve humanity and Bahá'u'lláh." I answered in my dream, "Yes, I will teach and I will obey you." She took some of the water which we always collect for the house and she put her fingers on my head and said that I would be cured but that very soon I had to go out teaching. I said, "Yes, yes, yes."

Cure me, I will serve Bahá'u'lláh." That was a marvellous dream. When I awoke I became a Bahá'í and began to teach. After all, these things help us to understand how important it is to seek the aid of God and of Bahá'u'lláh and learn more things.

I would like to talk more about my dreams because the indigenous, especially our ancestors, have said that our dreams are real and true. After about seven or eight years of being a Bahá'í and having been a full time teacher, the time arrived when I needed to work. I had a son and he needed things and my father was ill - so because of these needs I decided to go to Quito to work. I did not have any experience as a servant or as a cook but I decided to learn. I wanted to learn and get work. Thank God I found a good family who understood my problems and were kind to me. I felt at home there. I lived there and learned quickly. They were rich and they gave me a good salary and good food and even gave my son and father what they needed every month. I was comfortable for a year. I wanted to work and I did not want the Bahá'ís to bother me. I did not want to go to the meetings, I thought that if I worked, I should dedicate myself to work and if I taught I should dedicate myself to teaching and should not mix the two things at the same time, so I did not give the Bahá'ís in Quito my address. I was very happy with the family. After a year I began to dream almost every night that I was at a meeting with many people and I had the opportunity to teach them - I had never been able to teach so many people before. I was teaching 500, 1000 to 2000 people. I also dreamed of many thousands of sheep. These dreams worried me and I thought that I should dedicate myself to teaching again because it seemed that Bahá'u'lláh still needed me. My parents and grandparents have always told me to listen to my dreams. They tell us what we should do. So, even though I had enough food and money and was comfortable, I was not happy. I met with the Bahá'ís again and I asked them to invite me to the meetings and tell me what I could do for the Faith. I had worked for 15 months and my father told me that many Bahá'ís had been looking for me and missing me. He asked me if I was going to come home and begin to teach again. I said 'yes' because I wanted to go home and see what I could do to teach the Faith again. I began to teach in the campo and I also began to work for the radio and now for three years I have been working for Radio Bahá'í as well as teaching in the campo. The Bahá'í Faith still needs Bahá'ís who teach! ²⁰

Final Year of the Nine Year Plan, Highlights of

Ecuador witnessed a number of highlights during 1972, the final year of the Nine Year Plan, and the most important, without a doubt was the visit of Hand of the Cause of God, Doctor Muhájir and the simultaneous visit of Counsellor, Mas'ud Khámsi, which was quite a stimulus for the Bahá'ís of the country. Whenever notice arrived of a pending visit from Dr. Muhájir, excitement mounted, teaching projects and activities were reviewed, reports with ready-answers were prepared, pioneers and teachers prepared themselves spiritually and mentally for a package of surprises from the much-loved Hand of the Cause, who, inevitably, upon his arrival would happily unfold some new breathtaking plan of activity which would stagger the mind and challenge ones' mental capacity to cope with it.

During this visit he placed stress on mass conversion in the cities, that is, the need for planning to reach the literate, the financial able, the relative highly educated. He felt that there was a need to balance the enrollment with people of intellectual development and capacity. It seemed that he touched the hearts of the indigenous participants when he told them that they must be the ones to do the job of carrying the Faith to this class of people. He stressed the teaching of youth, especially the university students and was somewhat impatient with the haggling about when the cities and universities could be reached and observed that the morning had been spent deciding whether to teach! He suggested a 40 day teaching project in the cities with the attempt being made to reach professional and university people as well as such as might be interested found in the streets and parks. He told of the initiation of this same type of project in Hong Kong, China with wonderful success.

Dr. Muhájir also spoke on the importance of teaching children and the need for making a statistical book on Bahá'í children in the country. He encouraged them to institute as many children's classes as possible and suggested that the pioneers in Esmeraldas should establish as many classes in that city as feasible and told the pioneers there that later on during the year they should hold a national conference for children. He praised the National Assembly for beginning the teaching of children and said:

I hope that you become outstanding in the Bahá'í World for the teaching of children. There should be a book of statistics about the Bahá'í children in the whole country. This will serve to make plans and control ages and future programs. The mothers must lull their children with Bahá'í songs, thereby educating the mother and the child. The best way to teach... is when they are sleeping. If we sing to the children while they sleep and recite prayers, they will grow in knowledge. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said that if the indigenous people of America become taught in the Faith, they will illumine the world. A plan for literacy should be begun now. You should publish the literacy book that you have or request (the ones) which have been done in Colombia... This is the time to begin literacy training. With this the Faith will be proclaimed and we will deepen. The Negroes and the Indians should take the message to the whites.²¹

The National Assembly approved a national conference for children to be held in Esmeraldas, and a national youth conference to be held in a Chibuleo Indian village at Christmas vacation near Ambato. In the city of Esmeraldas there were 60 children's classes established. The Assembly set a goal to open 50 centers in the barrios with children classes, deepening classes, weekly public meetings, Nineteen Day Feasts and to enroll 5,000 new believers. There were ten children's classes held daily, six days a week, by the audacious, untiring pioneer Nooshin Eskandari (Burwell). She performed a superhuman job in helping to prepare so many children for their new role as Bahá'í children and their big outing. A report to the National Assembly stated:

The Regional Teaching Committee of Esmeraldas shouldered the responsibility of making arrangements for the conference. The pioneers to Esmeraldas, Jim Jensen and Nooshin Eskandari accepted the challenge and dedicated themselves to the project. Invitations were sent to all Bahá'í communities in the country, and to the different neighborhoods of the city of Esmeraldas to send Bahá'í representatives to the conference for children. With the cooperation of local Assemblies and Regional Teaching Committees, children from Chota, Ibarra, Otavalo, Quito, Salasaca, Chibuleo, Carchi and Riobamba braved the cold rainy season, unpaved roads and poor buses to join their Bahá'í brothers and sisters from other parts of the country, in the hot port city of Esmeraldas. Sixty neighborhoods of that city were represented; the coastal villages of Tachina, Rio Verde, San Vicente, Las Piedras and Palestina moved their children en masse to Esmeraldas.²²

There were children also from Quinendé, and three boys came from the Chota area. The Chota is a primitive area of nearly pure African people who are isolated and independent, retaining some of their old African customs.

The Conference, held in March 1972, was the first of its kind in Ecuador and was a tremendous success. There were nearly 1000 children present—the available figures nor estimates agree. The site was a patio of a government school. The children were colorfully dressed in their native costumes typical of their ancestral region. It was enchanting to hear the voices of nearly a thousand children singing the prayers of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The visiting children presented the programs that they had prepared for this event. They were treated to a visit to the sea to look at the ocean and to swim. They were also given two feasts, one deepening class and a Naw-Rúz party.

As a direct consequence of Dr. Muhájir's visit nearly a hundred children's classes were established throughout the country, a successful national children's conference was held and a teaching campaign was launched in the city of Santo Domingo de los Colorados; although originally it was planned for 40 days because of its success it was continued for two and a half months. During this campaign 475 new believers embraced the Cause and three new local Spiritual Assemblies were established in the area. Nine individuals of a new tribe, the Colorado Indians, accepted the Faith during the campaign including the Cazique (chief or headman) Señor Abraham Calazacon, (now deceased). This is a very colorful tribe of Indians. The men use

the seeds from the annatto (achiote) tree to make a paste with which they dye their hair an orange-red color and stiffen and style it like a cap with a visor. The women dye their bodies - making perfect multicoloured stripes round and round the body and sometimes the breasts of the women are covered with a piece of very beautiful rainbow coloured cloth woven by themselves.

Among the first Bahá'ís to visit this tribe in the Santo Domingo de los Colorados area during the teaching campaign, was the highly respected indigenous Bahá'í teacher, Rufino Gualavisí, who was later appointed by the National Assembly to teach and deepen the chief and his family after they became Bahá'ís. Other visitors on this first occasion were Raúl Pavón, representing the National Spiritual Assembly, Señorita Teresa Jara, Miss Nooshin Eskandari and Helen Hornby. Unofficially pioneer Shirley Ibsen and her young son went out to visit the Colorados on one or more occasions, but she did not try to teach them the Faith but perhaps she planted spiritual seeds through her prayers, because the Bahá'ís from the teaching campaign were well received.

When the Chief of the Colorado Indian tribe, Señor Calazacon, and a number of the inhabitants of the city of Santo Domingo embraced the Faith, the National Spiritual Assembly called for their July 1972 meeting to be held in that city for they also desired to go out to pay their respects to the Chief of the Colorado Indians and his family. It was a very spiritual occasion and the Chief was visibly moved by the courtesy and respect paid to him by this distinguished group and seemed to have sensed (for there was no way for him to know) the honor and blessing which this body brought with them. As a matter of fact there was a spirit hovering over the Santo Domingo de los Colorados area during this campaign akin to the spirit which lingered over the city of Esmeraldas and its surroundings when mass conversion was begun there in 1969. The Chief, in his desire for his children and people to know and learn more about the Bahá'í Faith, later, on his own initiative, contributed a sum of money to the Bahá'í Fund, earmarked for Bahá'í radio programs - he had chanced to hear one or more such programs from a station evidently in the area because this was before Radio Bahá'í was purchased and inaugurated. He desired that broadcasts of the Teachings be continued so his people could learn and practice them. Unfortunately, his people were not as attracted to the Cause as he was.²³

The Santo Domingo project was also supported by the members of the Youth Summer Project from the United States. They were: Kathy and Larry Burkett, Janet Fulton (now Dexter), Marguerite Gipson, Orville Kadre and Jeanne Soennichson (now Serrano). All of the members of this project except Miss Gipson and Mr. Kadre remained in Ecuador as pioneers or returned as pioneers. The campaign was naturally supported by the pioneers and everyone was overjoyed that for the first time native believers from every corner of Ecuador came to help in this campaign week after week. When some could not spend the entire week they would come on weekends until the campaign terminated. Many of the believers had never been out teaching

before and they became constant participants. In fact, this was an emotional confirmation for the pioneers who had been laboring for several years, for here was visible proof that their labors had not been in vain!

Because of the success of the Santo Domingo campaign, the National Teaching Committee decided to start a similar project in Quito. They focused on five very populated neighborhoods for the teaching campaign: El Tejar, El Camal, Ferroviario, Toctiuco and Chiriacu. Meetings were held one day a week in each of these neighborhoods and the interested contacts were invited to come to the Hazíratu'l-Quds (Bahá'í Center) on Saturdays and Sundays for the afternoon talk and deepening class, the Bahá'ís of Quito, the teaching teams and pioneers were present to help with the teaching and deepening sessions. Dr. Muhájir himself had tried to initiate the city-teaching technique when he first arrived in February. It brought a new spirit and new blood into the Quito community, but the project was not as fruitful as had been expected.

When mass conversion began in Esmeraldas it was as a flame had sprung up throwing its sparks in every direction. This teaching "flame" even sprang up in the jail, and as a result it was necessary for the National Spiritual Assembly to consult with the House of Justice on January 23, 1972 as to what actions should be taken:

We have a situation about which we would like to ask your advice and decision. One of our Indian believers near Riobamba was arrested on a false charge of stealing from another Indian and has been in jail for several months in Riobamba. Alberto Carbo, the native pioneer there, has been visiting him in jail and, with the permission of the jailer, has been giving talks about the Faith there. We now have 18 new members in the jail. Since the prisoners cannot come out to meet with the other believers in Riobamba, and there would be no privacy in the jail, we are wondering if an L.S.A. should be elected in the jail... We know that there have been believers in jails in other parts of the world, but we have never heard if they elected Assemblies in the jail....

On February 9, the House of Justice replied citing a letter which they had written to another Assembly on June 11, 1964.

... referring to teaching in the prison in ... and to the formation of Local Assemblies in cell blocks. While this teaching work is commendable those who accept Bahá'u'lláh under these conditions cannot undertake administrative responsibilities, nor can Local Assemblies be formed in prisons. However, they may observe Nineteen Day Feasts, Bahá'í Holy Days, and other Bahá'í events. When they return to their own communities they may participate in administrative affairs as well.

During this prolific period of expansion there was the constant thought of how to consolidate all these new areas for the House of Justice had recently wrote that: *...Expansion of the Cause should not be neglected in the name of consolidation, difficult through the demands may appear. The friends both newly enrolled and veteran believers, should be made conscious of the vital needs and arise to do whatever is necessary to continue the expansion of the Faith during these days when so many are responding eagerly to the Message.*

Prior to this back in early 1969 the idea of owning their own radio station had been born. The National Assembly had written that:

To help with the teaching and consolidation work in the area of mass conversion, we think that it would be a positive step forward to install a small long wave radio which would also serve as a Proclamation medium for the same area reaching all levels of society. We think that the radio station would be the key to Proclamation in an area of about 60,000 inhabitants....

Two recently enrolled believers from the mass conversion zones were overwhelmed when they were chosen to represent the Ecuadorian National Community at the historic dedication of the Mother Temple of Latin America, April 28 - May 2, 1972, in Panamá City, Panamá. These two special representatives were, Angel Shaca, a Chibuelo Indian, and Haidé Angulo from Esmeraldas. They were accompanied by Raúl Pavón, who was chairman of the National Assembly and its representative. Twenty-two believers from Ecuador attended the dedication - the others who were present were: Patricia, George and Michelle Conger, Fay Dudley, Guillermina de Bernal, Lauro Célleri and Ilene Fox de Valdivieso, all from Cuenca and from other parts of the country were: Nooshin Eskandari, Shirley Ibsen, James Jensen, Alberto Carbo, Bahman Ashraghi, Rufino Gualavisí, Jacinto Pacari, Wolfgang and Tarasieh Werle, Piedad de Pavón, Ralph Dexter and Charles and Helen Hornby. Helen went early at the request of Doctor Muhájir and the National Spiritual Assembly of Panamá, to help with the teaching projects around the Temple area; the object of which were to find as many new adherents as possible in its vicinity so that the Temple would have as much support as possible around it.

Satellite Conferences were called for after the dedication in various Latin American countries and travel teachers were called for to visit as many Latin countries as possible. Ecuador was richly blessed to be the recipient of so many international travel teachers as a result of this call as well as it received fifteen permanent pioneers after the Satellite Conference in Bogotá, Colombia (see list of pioneers). They were sorely needed, especially to help with the heavy consolidation work with thousands of new believers in the country to be deepened in the Faith which they had accepted. By December 31, 1972 the Universal House of Justice seemed well pleased with the success Ecuador achieved during the year and so advised it thus:

Your semi-annual statistical return dated December 10th presents a wonderful picture of your accomplishments. You have far exceeded all your teaching goals and the unity, zeal and dedication of the Bahá'í community in Ecuador is heart-warming and exemplary. We send you all our loving congratulations and commendation and will supplicate at the Sacred Threshold for divine confirmations to continually descend upon you.

The National Assembly felt blessed to have had the attention, guidance and help from the members of the Continental Board of Counsellors for South America, Messrs. Athos Costas, Hooper Dunbar, Masú'd Khamsí and Donald Witzel. Thus the year ended on this beautiful note!

Dorothy Campbell - Rendered Imperishable Service as Pioneer/Secretary

It is fitting that we should pause for a moment while closing the first decade and entering the second decade of administrative independence of the Faith in Ecuador, a decade of laborious, challenging, yet highly rewarding service, to offer a heartfelt, well-deserved tribute to one who rendered imperishable service for over two decades to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh in South America and especially Ecuador. The pen of the writer is unable to describe or even brief the many services rendered by the incomparable pioneer-secretary, first for South America and later for Ecuador, Mrs. Dorothy Campbell (Rougeou). She was a Spanish teacher in the United States and seems to have been stimulated to overseas pioneer service by the Hand of the Cause of God, Mrs. Dorothy Baker, in 1950. Dorothy can better tell her own story:

The Inter-American Committee assigned me to La Paz, Bolivia but asked me to stop in Mexico, Guatemala, Panamá and Venezuela on the way to Bolivia to help give a course in 'The Divine Plan' which had just been published in Spanish. I also stopped in Lima, Peru to meet with the South American Teaching Committee, so, although I left the States on July 1, 1950, I did not arrive at my post in La Paz until December, 1950.

When I came to South America, I was filled with gratitude that, being a teacher by profession and vocation, I could have the privilege of dedicating all of my time to teaching the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, but such was not to be my mission. When the first National Spiritual Assembly of South America was elected in 1951, which I missed because I was recuperating from typhoid fever, they asked me to be secretary of the Publications Committee in La Paz. Most of my time was devoted to working with Mr. and Mrs. Arturo Cuellar in the revision of translations of Bahá'í literature into Spanish, planning their publication, keeping books....

The following year, she was asked by the National Assembly to move to Lima, Peru to be secretary of the Teaching Committee of South America (CEPSA). During that year she recalls that a member of the National Spiritual Assembly left and she was elected to replace him, and the following year she was elected a member of the Assembly and was its secretary. In August 1959, she transferred to Ecuador to assist in forming one of the goal local Assemblies required before the National Spiritual Assembly of the country could be established. She was still the secretary of the National Assembly of South America and just before the election of the 21 National Assemblies of Latin America she had to return to Perú to help in the separation of the archives which had to be sent to the respective countries.

In 1960 she again returned to Ecuador and established herself in Otavalo. She had to commute between Ecuador and Peru for her National Assembly responsibilities. She was elected to the first National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador in 1961 and was also elected Secretary of that body. She loved Otavalo and the Indians and desired to live among them, but then it came to the attention of the Universal House of Justice that the National Assembly secretary was

not residing in the capital city, so they suggested to the Assembly: "...We think you should consider what can be done to permit your National secretary to operate from Quito, which is your national headquarters...." So she transferred to Quito where she had lived for a time previously.

Over the years, Dorothy became quite tired. At times her health was not very good and at times, in spite of all the Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í friends, she became lonely as all pioneers do from time to time when they are far away from home and family. When Dr. Ghodsea Ashraf was a pioneer in Guayaquil, Dorothy had a confidant and a spiritual mother figure to turn to when problems became overwhelming, for they were enamoured with each other and comforted each other through correspondence at times when they both needed it. Some of Dorothy's concerns can be discerned in this letter to Dr. Ashraf, written on March 3, 1959:

Ghodsea, I am wondering if it wouldn't be better for me to retire as NSA secretary, after the Convention. This is confidential as I have only talked with Jamshid about it, but it seems to me that the other members more and more rely on me to do and decide everything and that it is weakening them. If the way could be found to get their whole hearted cooperation or if we could have more frequent meetings of the NSA, perhaps I could go on, but I get so very discouraged and feel so very alone in the work. Not a single letter has been received from two of the members since the meeting in November - more than 4 months - and I have asked consultation from them all on many, many things. Please pray for me that I may have the wisdom to know what to do. They all seem to be so busy with their personal affairs that there's no time for the NSA work and no dynamic contribution on their part. I feel washed out, no longer able to do any creative work, and I think a new secretary, no matter who it was, would come to the work with a fresh vision and be able to do a better job than I. Sometimes you get stale on the job and I think I've stayed here too long and would be able to contribute more if I had a change of scene....

Nevertheless she stayed on for another fourteen years, working tirelessly for the progress of the Faith. Surely she was often inspired, perhaps by the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, who referred to her so often in his letters to the Assembly as "My dear Sister", for reading some of the hundreds of beautiful letters she wrote to the isolated pioneers especially and to others, that is institutions and friends, one feels a bit of the spirit which evidently helped her. She remained in Ecuador as the National Spiritual Assembly secretary until her marriage to an old schoolmate in 1973. Ecuador did not wish to lose her but preferred her happiness over theirs and gave her all their love and blessings! However, all her friends here hope that some day she will remember her words written a long time ago and that one day she and her husband will return:

Those of us who have been in the field longest can see so clearly that we will be needed for many years to come, and that only the surface has been scratched. We yearn to have others come to work with us in the difficult but glorious task of constantly taking the Message to other waiting souls,

*especially the Indians, and of helping train the native believers in the teaching work so that they may have the privilege of going out as pioneers among their own people!*²⁴

The year 1973 opened with everyone astir here in Ecuador trying every possible method to win all the goals assigned to it for the Nine Year Plan, and even to accomplish greater feats before the Plan terminated in a few months at Ridván.

During the year, including after the termination of the Plan at Ridván, there were teaching campaigns in various sectors of the country which allowed an opportunity for contact with the principal authorities in these areas. The authorities were interviewed, when it was possible, and acquainted with the precepts of the Bahá'í Faith, which they seemed to appreciate. In the majority of the cases they gave the teachers their permission to teach in the areas under their jurisdiction.

It was a sad moment when the Minister of Education denied the National Assembly the request that Bahá'í children be allowed to observe the Bahá'í Holy Days. On February 21, 1972, the local teaching committee of Quito also solicited the Minister of Education to grant the Bahá'í students and employees the right to celebrate the nine Bahá'í Holy Days in a year. On February 26, 1973 the request was refused, stating in part:

The secular sense of our education causes us to respect all religions without establishing concessions to any of them. Finally, the desire of this government and of the minister is to limit the school vacation days. (Translated from the Spanish to the English by the writer)

On the same date another letter was received from the Ministry stating that it was not possible to have an appointment with the President of the Republic, General de Brigada, Guillermo Rodríguez Lara. Sadly, on April 28, 1973 the National Assembly wrote the following letter to the Universal House of Justice:

From verbal reports received from travelling teachers, we have learned that many Local Spiritual Assemblies were not elected on April 21 although we do not yet have written reports from each regional committee, we know that we have fallen far short of our goal of 300 LSAs.

It happened that April 21 fell with the Easter celebrations of Good Friday and Easter Sunday; celebrations which are still combined with Incan celebrations of offering to ancestors. All activity stops during these periods and entire communities are found involved in these observations. Additionally, Ecuador has had unprecedented rains, floods and land slides with roads closed for days with the result that many communities were visited and elections planned, but the travelling teachers were unable to return on April 21 to carry out elections.

On April 25, almost all travelling teachers began a national proclamation campaign planned for the cities of Cuenca, Guayaquil and Quito and will be

involved in these activities until a few days prior to the National Convention on May 26 - 27.

For the above reasons, we request additional time after the National Convention to finish the election of Local Spiritual Assemblies. Please let us hear from you as soon as possible.

The House of Justice sent a cable on May 13 approving the Assembly's suggestion that they be allowed to finish the local Assembly elections after the Convention.

It was on May 20, 1973 when the National Assembly notified the House of Justice that the Ministry of Public Education had denied their request for Bahá'í children and workers to be granted leave on Bahá'í Holy Days; they were happy however, to be able to forward documents from the Government approving the incorporation of eleven local Spiritual Assemblies, by Executive Order Number 476, dated March 16, 1973.

On May 7, the House of Justice was informed that:

Many individuals in communities of the major cities, especially Quito and Cuenca, have asked for and received permission to observe these days. This includes students, teachers, and employees of private firms. They have also, in some cases, been denied such permission. It is not possible for us to say, in numbers, how many have been granted permission.

We are trying to encourage believers throughout the country to seek such permission, and will publish throughout the year in our monthly bulletin to 19 Day Feasts, the approaching Holy Days, with a reminder that the friends seek permission to observe same."

It was certainly a red letter day when the National Assembly received the following letter, dated June 3, 1973, from the Universal House of Justice:

We are very happy indeed to share your joy in the tremendous accomplishments of the believers in Ecuador during the Nine Year Plan. In 1964 your country had only 5 Local Spiritual Assemblies, and no more than 45 localities were opened to the Faith. You now have 164 Assemblies and have established the Cause in 525 localities. Surely the bountiful harvest you have reaped will be remembered by grateful believers in Ecuador for generations to come.

We are pleased to note your careful planning for the current year and assure you, dear friends, that we eagerly and confidently await reports of the results of your endeavours.

And on August 27, 1973 the Department of the Secretariat wrote a letter of commendation on behalf of the House of Justice to the National Assembly:

The Universal House of Justice has asked us to commend you on its behalf for the excellent semi-annual report you submitted which showed an increase of 43 Local Spiritual Assemblies. This is indeed noteworthy and evidence

of your unceasing labours for the establishment of the Cause in Ecuador. You may be sure that your efforts and the fruits they produce are appreciated at the World Centre.

There was a special goal also that the National Assembly had assigned to itself during this time period and that was of thoroughly training up to 100 new Bahá'í teachers using the visual aid training program devised by Counsellor Donald Witzel and others and presented in Ecuador by Auxiliary Board member, Charles Hornby. There was also reason for the Assembly and the National Community to be proud of having one of its own outstanding young believers, Señor William Rodriguez, volunteer as an international pioneer to a hardship post in Leticia, Colombia in the Amazon River Basin in 1973. His admirable spiritual qualities were indeed contagious.

On September 6, 1973 the following letter was sent to Ráhiyyih Khánum by the National Assembly:

The NSA feels honored to extend to you a very cordial invitation to attend the dedication of the Institute that bears your name. The dedication of the Amatu'l-Bahá Ráhiyyih Khánum Institute in Otavalo and the International Conference take place December 22 and 23 of this year. Your presence would truly be a bounty for all of us, especially the many indigenous Bahá'ís who still cherish the remembrance of your last visit...

The NSA would like to request a portrait or photograph of you to place in a special place at the Institute. This would fill the hearts of many with joy for all the years to come. It would also be a bounty to receive some sort of remembrance from the Holy Land for the archives at the Institute. We trust you can aid us in this request...

She replied on December 5, 1973:

I regret very much not having answered your letters before and your kind invitation to be present at the opening of the Institute that bears my name. You can imagine how much I long to be there and see the faces of the dear Bahá'ís of Ecuador, especially those whom I already have had the pleasure of meeting in the past, and particularly the friends in the Otavalo area. My visits to Ecuador are ever fresh in my mind and in my heart, and I miss you all very much and follow with the greatest interest what is going on in your country and the progress our beloved Faith is making amongst the promising peoples of that wonderful and historic South American land.

I would be most happy for you to use the poem that I wrote when I was in Quito last time in any way you care to (see "To the Descendants of the Incas", pp. 202-203). I have been so busy, as you well know, that it has been far from my thoughts to go over things that were written on my different trips - in fact, I cannot even keep up with answering my own letters. However, I changed the position of the lines in a few cases in the English version of this poem and I asked the Spanish-speaking friends here to go over the translation in view of this. Herewith I am forwarding you the latest translation in Spanish which you are free to use instead of the one you sent me, if you care to do so. I am also sending you by air mail post a photograph of myself which you might care to hang in one of the rooms of the Institute.

My thoughts and prayers will be with you all and I hope that the meetings and Conference will be a great success. Please give my warmest love to all the Bahá'ís who will be gathered there and tell them that because of their devotion and services the name of Ecuador is famous throughout the Bahá'í world, and that those of us who know that country and love its people are hoping that the Bahá'ís will become ever more distinguished, carry the Faith to many more of the tribesmen and other groups within their own country and win, as our beloved Guardian used to say, many more laurels for their crown of victory.

My prayers will be offered for you all when I visit the Holy Shrines.

/S/ Rúhíyyih

On October 4, 1973 the International Teaching Centre wrote to the National Assembly in regards to their calendar of events for the inauguration of the Teaching Institute in Otavalo in December. The letter advised:

We are impressed with your calendar of events related to the dedication of the Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum Institute in Otavalo and the International Conference to be held at the same period.

Although it is not possible for any of the members of the Centre to be present with you personally, we will surely be accompanying you in spirit through prayers and our warmest wishes for the success of these occasions. It is a source of joy to see that members of the Board of Counsellors for South America will be present with you. We feel assured that together you will be able to lift the spirits of the friends and fire them with renewed dedication to the Faith so that poised with new laurels you may approach the opening of the next global plan.

It was a very beautiful, happy and spiritual dedication and Conference. Many pioneers found spouses there or cemented acquaintances which also led to marriage (See pioneer marriages in back of book). Five members of the Continental Board of Counsellors were present at the dedication and Conference: Messrs. Athos Costas from Argentina, Peter McLaren and Donald Witzel from Venezuela, Masú'd Khamsí from Perú, and representative of the Universal House of Justice, Raúl Pavón and also resident Counsellor. Mrs. Lenora Holsapple Armstrong could not attend due to the altitude of Quito and Otavalo. However, after the dedication and Conference she was able to attend the Counsellor meeting in the city of Guayaquil, this was her first visit to Ecuador, she was heartily welcomed in the name of all the Bahá'ís of Ecuador. Over 350 persons attended; the participants came from Bolivia, Colombia, Perú, the United States and Venezuela. And in preparation for the dedication of the Institute, a radio series was prepared explaining who 'Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum was and mentioned the letter which she had written to the Indians. The letter was translated into Spanish and Quechua.

CHAPTER XI

1974 - 1979 - THE SPECIFIC GOALS AND ROLE OF ECUADOR DURING THE FIVE YEAR PLAN

It has been noted that the believers have often felt overwhelmed and anxious when awaiting a new Plan from the World Centre. Even during the time of the Guardian they would nervously await receipt of the Plan feeling each time that their portion will surely be staggering and in self-defense they allow that it will be impossible to accomplish - thereby, should they fail in gaining all their goals it is easier to say "we knew it was unattainable". Ecuador, as no doubt many other countries, after winning its goals of the Nine Year Plan, appreciated the respite before beginning a new Plan. The Nine Year Plan closed on a high note of achievements and they now boasted of having the first and only city in the Western Hemisphere, Esmeraldas, where mass conversion had succeeded.

For some time Ecuador had felt a need for the use of radio in teaching due to the scarcity of teachers and pioneers who were so desperately needed to spread out over this rugged country and consolidate the areas where mass teaching had been taking place over the years. There were and still are some areas where the believers have not seen a visitor, not even once a year, because these areas are so remote it takes days to walk there. For this reason, Ecuador has utilized radio from time to time for teaching purposes (because little pocket transistor radios are like Coca Cola in these parts - everywhere!). The idea more or less crystalized in early 1969 that they should own their own radio station which would help in teaching, consolidation and proclamation. But it was brought out that they were not really ready to own a radio station for lack of finance as well as personnel specialized in this work. But they did not give up and continued to produce programs and purchase time on various radio stations (for details about Radio Bahá'í see brief summary in back of book). Nevertheless on January 6, 1974 the National Assembly again wrote to the House of Justice advising them that at this stage of the development of the Faith in this country, in order to be as effective as possible in their Bahá'í work that the time had come when they really needed their own radio station. They expressed their need and desire as follow:

In our last meeting of the National Spiritual Assembly we decided to ask you for assistance in buying a radio station to be operated through our National Radio Committee...

At present there are four Bahá'ís (an indigenous youth from Otavalo, a former radio announcer of Radio Turismo who recently accepted the Faith, a young woman from Cuenca and a pioneer from the United States) who are working full time preparing taped programs for broadcast on seven commercial radio stations throughout Ecuador. We have leased, in each case, at least one half hour daily of radio time. At present we are broadcasting a total of five and one half hours daily on stations in the provinces of Imbabura, Cayambe, Tungurahua, Chimborazo, Cañar and Azuay and are also reaching many other provinces with the healing Message of Bahá'u'lláh. In March, we plan to expand to include a station in Guayaquil and one in Esmeraldas.

We feel, however, that there is now a need to begin operating our own Bahá'í radio station. At first, it would be low-powered and would be heard only in the province of Imbabura. The rest of Ecuador, for a time, would have to be served by taped programs broadcast by leasing space on commercial radio stations as we are now doing. In time, however, our Bahá'í station would gradually be increased in strength until it served the whole country and eventually the whole continent.

There are several reasons why we feel the need to have our own station. Perhaps the most important is that under the present circumstances, we are at the mercy of the owners of the radio stations. They are free to raise our rent beyond our capacity to pay any time they wish. Also, in the near future, as the Faith gains even more prestige, we are bound to provoke criticism and possibly persecution by religious authorities here in Ecuador, which would spell the end to our leasing time on these stations which are all owned and operated by Roman Catholics, and would certainly cause the rejection of any petition by us for a license to purchase and operate a radio station. Another reason is that instead of paying to lease time on radio stations owned by others, we could be gradually establishing our own station and gaining experience. Friends from other countries could come and share our experiences and profit from our mistakes, preparing them to enter the field of teaching by radio in their own lands. Having our own station would eliminate an embarrassing problem, that of non-Bahá'í announcers interrupting our programs with inappropriate music or commercials or not broadcasting the programs in their entirety.

The type of station we would need to start operating would cost about 10,000 dollars. We already have most of the accessories needed to begin operation, such as tape recorders, records, tapes, record player, scripts, etc. In February, the Government is to publish a new law permitting the granting of licenses to buy and operate new or existing stations. During the past year this has not been possible.

We would also like your help in locating Bahá'ís with experience in radio management who are interested in pioneering to Ecuador. This would facilitate the development of the station, although we are prepared to begin operation with the existing personnel....

Assuring you of our abiding love, we are

The National Spiritual Assembly of the
Bahá'ís of Ecuador

Ralph Dexter, Secretary

The radio personnel at the time were Señora Clementina de Pavón, Señores Rodrigo Quintero, Alfonso Tulcanazo, who Señora Pavón taught to read scripts in the Quechua language, and Miss Ann Miller. Perhaps it was on the basis of the positiveness of their appeal, their persistence in acquiring more and more experience and knowledge in developing radio over the years, and their acute concern for and foresight of the needs of the Bahá'í community, helped to motivate the House of Justice's decision, while drawing up the Five Year Plan, to assign Ecuador the goal:

Expand the use of radio for Bahá'í broadcasts aimed at proclamation of the Faith to greater numbers of listeners, as well as for deepening the faith of the believers in Ecuador;

As forementioned during the Esmeraldas campaign two Cayapa Indians, man and wife, enrolled as Bahá'ís thereby bringing into the Faith a new tribe of Indians and since that time a number of others were accepted. Afterwards a native believer who was a member of the National Assembly was instrumental in getting a prayer translated into the Cayapa language, Sr. Joe Montaña. In February 1974 the Assembly informed the House of Justice that a pamphlet had also been translated into the Cayapa language and they followed up requesting that they follow up the achievement with translations of one or two Hidden Words or some short prayers to be memorized. They wrote. "We congratulate you on this achievement and ask you to extend our loving commendation to Mr. Joe Montaña for his devoted efforts in this respect...."

Naw-Rúz 1974 - the second of the many great Plans of the Supreme House of Justice was received! The number of goals assigned for Ecuador to accomplish within a five-year period was indeed staggering. But as usual, the Assembly and the community knew they could depend on the advice and assistance of the House of Justice, the Hands of the Cause of God, the Counsellors and their Auxiliary Board members and the Board members' Assistants. The Plan was read and discussed during the National Conference and there was an unanimous resolve to meet the challenge and conquer the stated objectives. A cable was forwarded from the Convention to the House informing them that 124 local Spiritual Assemblies had been elected and that there were 39 delegates present in the Convention and they all wished to thank the House of Justice for the Five Year Plan and begged for their prayers.

For a long time there had been a national goal of attaining a cemetery for the indigenous believers in the Imbabura area for when once they became Bahá'ís they were not permitted to be buried in the Catholic cemeteries in the area. The Indians brought their problem to the National Assembly and since they were unable to acquire any other property for the purpose they decided to use the endowment property of Espejo. In one set of minutes of the National Assembly, the House of Justice noted that the Assembly was anticipating using the endowment property for a cemetery. In a letter dated September 14, 1974 they asked for an explanation as to why they were considering using the Espejo endowment near Lake San Pablo for a cemetery. On October 10, the Assembly replied:

In answer to your letter of September 12, 1973, asking for the rationale of a decision to investigate the possibility of using the "Espejo endowment for a cemetery"...this tentative action has gone no further. In fact, the wisdom of pursuing it is now in question, due to the increasing value of land in the area of Lake San Pablo, and the increasing desirability of the use of our national endowment for another purpose.

The original investigation was prompted by the need to satisfy burial problems of the indigenous of the Imbabura area. The Bahá'í Indians have

been denied burial in church-controlled cemeteries. This was brought to the attention of the National Assembly last year. There is a serious social problem created for these Indian believers upon the deaths of their children, and others. No solution has as yet been found. The question was raised again by some Indian believers of the Imbabura region at one of our Regional Five Year Plan Conferences in June.

As to the desirability of the Espejo site for a Summer School: it's close proximity to the Instituto Nacional de Enseñanza Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhiyyih Khánun, dedicated last December and now fully functioning, makes it a questionable site for another such Bahá'í school or institute.

As of this writing the Indians do not have their cemetery. The National Assembly is trying to purchase land for this purpose but there is a lot of legal rigmarole when it comes to purchasing land to bury a non-Catholic Indian in that area!

However, the House of Justice responded to the above letter saying:

In view of the problem described by you in your letter of 10 October 1974 affecting the Indian believers who are denied burial in church-controlled cemeteries in the Imbabura area, the Universal House of Justice feels it is important for you to provide a Bahá'í cemetery for them. You should, therefore, investigate the possibility of obtaining land from the government for this purpose, and if your efforts are not successful you would, under the circumstances, be justified in using, either partly or wholly, the Espejo endowment as a Bahá'í cemetery. It is left to your discretion to decide what area of the land should be set aside at this time for this purpose, if you find that only part of the land needs to be used in this way.

HOUSE OF JUSTICE APPROVES PROJECT FOR RADIO STATION IN ECUADOR

A red letter day for the Bahá'ís of Ecuador and indeed for the world, was December 12, 1974 when the House of Justice approved the project for a radio station in Otavalo, Ecuador. The historic letter of authorization follows:

The thorough and informative documentation on the Bahá'í radio project submitted, on your behalf, by Mr. Stephens, together with the copies of your own letters of July 8th and September 10th to Mr. Stephens have greatly assisted us in coming to a decision about the entire project.

We now authorize you to proceed with the first stages of the program outlined and are sending you herewith \$3500 for the initial expense of the studio, the AM transmitter in Otavalo, the requisite licensing and the cost of expert consultation. We are asking Mr. K. Dean Stephens to work in close collaboration with your Assembly in carrying out this project.

We recognize that an early realization of the program as visualized by Mr. Stephens and your Assembly may be hampered by a number of apparent obstacles. However, we have great confidence that you will be guided to surmount all difficulties and will achieve your aim. Mr. Stephens will be of the greatest assistance in such things as preparing engineering specifications and exhibits for the license application, for assisting you in procuring the necessary equipment once the licensing is assured

and in supervising installation and early operation of the station. We hope that the equipment purchased abroad will, in view of the educational, cultural and religious purposes of the station, be entirely exempt from or subject to reductions of customs duties.

The religious and cultural content of your programs is important alike for achieving the goals of the Faith and bringing education and services to the non-Bahá'í community; your committee's schedule and suggested topics are most helpful, but a further consideration of program content will be of great assistance. Likewise you will need to work out a timetable which will enable you to fit together the many components of the project. One of the priorities is undoubtedly the search for a manager-engineer, or a manager-program director, namely the key person who will coordinate the operation of the station, participate in production and broadcasting and work with the volunteers. Finding the most suitable person for this position may well determine the early success of the pilot program and your choice must obviously be made with great wisdom and judgement.

We are delighted at the prospect of your engaging in this pioneer action, which has come about as a consequence of your own initiative and hard work of the past two years. Your perception of Bahá'í needs and their satisfaction through radio broadcasts has prepared you for what may well, in time, be hailed as an historic forward step in proclamation, expansion and deepening through the medium of radio, a medium which the beloved Guardian hoped would be exploited on behalf of the Cause of God. We congratulate you and look forward to news of your progress in this significant initial program.

Spurred on by the confidence the House of Justice expressed they had in its capability to "surmount all difficulties", the National Spiritual Assembly proceeded on January 23, 1975 to make application to the government of Ecuador for a Bahá'í radio frequency and also submitted an application for medium wave.

Dr. Raḥmatu'llāh Muhājir to make special visit to Ecuador - 1975

It was on August 29, 1974 when the House of Justice notified the National Assembly of the imminent visit of the Hand of the Cause, Dr. Muhājir to the Caribbean, South America and Central America, and sent his tentative schedule. He did not arrive in Ecuador until January 1975 and the community again felt privileged to receive him. About 40 believers met him at the Airport in Quito and extended him a hearty welcome. He first arrived in Guayaquil on January 11 and as soon as he arrived the Bahá'ís took him directly across the street to a television station for an interview about the Faith. As luck would have it Auxiliary Board member, Patricia Conger did the interviewing and Tarasieh Werle translated from the Persian to Spanish.

When Dr. Muhājir arrived in Ecuador he was accompanied by Auxiliary Board member Charles Hornby and a lovely new pioneer from Iran, who was just arriving at her post, Miss Bahiyyih Rashidpour. All three had gone to Lima, Perú to attend their Summer School. It is interesting that the House of Justice had specified what the Hand of the Cause's points of interest would be in teaching on this trip

and how all the doors seemed to have opened for him to do exactly what he desired to do. Here is an excerpt from their letter of August 29 to the National Assembly regarding this visit of the Hand;

On this particular journey to Latin America Dr. Muhājir hopes to be of service not only through counselling with National Assemblies in their work of the Plan but also by going into the rural areas in support of the teaching and deepening programs, and particularly reaching the Indians, Bush Negroes and other minority groups. For this service outside the cities, Dr. Muhājir will usually require the assistance of a translator familiar with the needs of the rural communities, who should be nominated in consultation with the Counsellors and their Auxiliary Board Members. In addition he hopes that his visit may be the occasion for events of proclamation via radio and television; your Assembly will be alert to these possibilities, making arrangements in advance of his coming...

The two Continental Boards of Counsellors in Latin America will assist in the coordination of Dr. Muhājir's travels, and you will be able to consult the Counsellors in making plans or modification of plans as may be called for in order that the very greatest use may be made of the services of this distinguished Bahá'í teacher and standard-bearer of the Cause.

In Quito the Hand of the Cause had a 30 minute television interview. It was taped in the home where he was hosted and presented on Channel 4 as part of the evening news which covers the entire country. He received an unusual amount of publicity for the Faith on this visit through television, radio and the press. On this trip he also visited the city of Cuenca where he spoke to a group of non-Bahá'í women in the home of Mrs. Ilene Fox Valdivieso for about two hours (This was the International Year of the Woman). He also spoke in the home of Patricia and George Conger, pioneers who have served the longest period of time in this country; here in their home a priest had come to hear him, newspaper men, and a number of Bahá'ís and non-Bahá'ís. He also received excellent publicity for the Faith in this city.

He placed a great deal of emphasis on radio and its role in proclaiming the Faith; that one of the phases of the Five Year Plan was to increase the number of believers in the Cause. He said that "today we have the radio facilities to support the teaching." He suggested that Ecuador try to enroll 10,000 more new believers.² A problem of course was lack of sufficient pioneers and teachers to undertake such campaign. However, bearing his suggestion in mind, the National Assembly communicated their needs to the House of Justice on February 5, 1975:

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Ecuador, in its meeting of February 1-2 studied the communications from the Universal House of Justice of January 13,, advising the Assemblies of the world of the increase in the goal for international pioneers under the 5 Year Plan, to 933. Of this number, 7 from the United States and 2 from Iran are assigned to Ecuador.

In considering this country's needs, the Assembly decided to ask the United States and Iran, that whenever possible the pioneers assigned here be sustained,

so that they can give full-time to teaching, and not have to remain in Quito or other large cities because of their need for employment.

This led the Assembly to consider the situation of many of our current international pioneers who are tied to jobs which barely support them, and who are experienced in teaching the masses or have other special skills (such as a knowledge of Quechua), which could be important to the national teaching effort at this critical time. Ecuador's uniqueness in the field of teaching the masses - her past successes in large enrollments of rural peoples in areas not easily accessible; potentially great numbers of local assemblies unelected for want of traveling teachers; the new national radio project which requires constant visiting of the countryside for "follow-up" and "feedback"; -leads us to feel that at least several of the experienced pioneers now here should be freed for active teaching, and for the developing, under their instruction, of native travel teachers. These points were considered by the National Assembly in consultation with Dr. Muhajir during his visit to Ecuador this month. Under his guidance, the Assembly adopted a new teaching plan aiming at a "vast increase in the number of believers" during the year, January 75 to January 76, Specifically, 11,000 new enrollments were projected....

From time to time it had been called to the attention of the National Assembly that the statistics, as to numbers of believers, groups and localities in the country were inaccurate due to the former system of enrolling believers. It appears from the records that this subject was brought to the consideration of the Assembly back in 1968 and since then, on two or more occasions, attempts were made to take a census of the Bahá'í community. So again on January 8, 1975 the Assembly advised the House of Justice that their statistics as to numbers were only approximate:

"...in the years of conversion of the masses, many villages were enrolled, as a group, and individual names were not recorded. Consolidation has been slow and difficult, so that there are not now adequate records of exactly who and how many were enrolled in some of the indigenous areas. It is believed that there are between 30 and 40 thousand Bahá'ís in Ecuador.

The National Assembly has begun a National Bahá'í Census, in the attempt to improve our lists. It will be a long slow process. In the meantime, we have based our statistics on only those whose names have been recorded in the National Office. It must also be stated however, that these lists are not current....

It seems to be an impossible task to do even a superficial Bahá'í Census, for lack of personnel or volunteers, and because it is a challenge to go into some of the remote, backward and inhospitable areas where so often new people are not so well received and the majority of the people who enrolled, most of them years ago, are no longer available or living. As of this writing, the census has become stymied. Happier information was sent to the House of Justice on February 7, 1975:

The National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador takes great pleasure in informing you of the translation into Quechua of the entire book, "The New Garden". It is ready for duplication by mimeographing and presentation at the

All-Quechua Conference to be held in Cuzco, Peru in August of this year, under the auspices of the Board of Counsellors.

This has been the work of the Pavon's - Clementina and Segundo - home-front pioneers in Otavalo, the heartbeat of the National Teaching Institute Ama'u'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánúm, outstanding servants of the Cause in Ecuador. Though very elderly and often seriously ill during the past year, they have dedicated themselves to completing this work, passing it all to stencils through hours of patient labor, and correcting and checking with infinite care. We are so deeply grateful and touched by their efforts that we thought you would want to know of their splendid achievement.

In an interview with Mrs. Pavon in our February meeting at which she presented the completed work, she informed us that their efforts over the years have produced translations into Quechua of 40 prayers, 30 episodes from the Dawnbreakers, various passages from Spanish pamphlets on the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and more than 100 original songs, rondas and children's verses. It seems to us that the work of a lifetime has been compressed into several years of devoted service. Not all of the above has been published or even mimeographed, but has been extensively used in radio programming, and is conserved for future publishing.

The House of Justice was pleased to receive the information and highly commended the Pavóns in a letter written on their behalf to the National Assembly on February 28, 1975:

The House of Justice was delighted to learn, from your letter of February 7th, 1975, of the dedicated and effective services of Mr. and Mrs. Pavón in translating Bahá'í texts and books into Quechua. This is indeed a highly meritorious service and you are asked to express to these two dear friends the commendation of the House of Justice for their devoted work over so many years.

In March 1975 Ecuador was privileged again to receive a Hand of the Cause of God, Dr. Adelbert Mühlischlegel and his charming wife, Mrs. Ursula Mühlischlegel; everyone fell in love with her. Dr. Mühlischlegel had visited Ecuador previously but this was to be his last visit and it was limited to Guayaquil. He was unable to visit the Quito Bahá'í Community because of the altitude and his heart condition. He and his wife arrived in Guayaquil from Cali, Colombia where he had met with the Counsellors and Auxiliary Board members from Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela in an inspiring conference. Unfortunately, when he arrived in Guayaquil only a very few believers were at the airport to receive him. They were accompanied from Cali to Guayaquil by the Auxiliary Board members, Patricia Conger of Ecuador, Mercedes Sanchez of Perú, and Charles Hornby of Ecuador and his wife. He was an extremely interesting and profound speaker, but only a few believers came to hear him in Guayaquil because his visit had not been well publicized and there were only a few active believers in the city proper. The National Assembly could not meet with him inasmuch as only four of its members were present. However, this did not seem to faze him that only a few people were present to hear him each night. At one point

in one of his talks he began to lose consciousness - his wife recognized what was happening to him before most of us did and with the help of Señorita Arminda Vera (now Mrs. Greg Suhm) massaging and talking to him, the Hand came back to consciousness and he continued his talk, which lasted about two hours, including a question and answer period!³

Another highlight and accomplishment of 1975 was that in May nineteen Bahá'ís met at the National Teaching Institute in Otavalo for two weeks for the purpose of developing and testing a literacy book, which contained ten lessons and when a lesson was completed it could then be carried out into a nearby community and tried. It was devised to be presented to the Quechua Conference in Cuzco, Perú and entitled, "Nosotros Aprendamos Leer" (We Learn to Read). It was further tested later in Esmeraldas, the site of a literacy project in November of the same year. A version of the book was also developed in Quechua.⁴

The Proclamation Committee in collaboration with three key local Spiritual Assemblies obtained a great deal of publicity during the year and was able to proclaim it to a cross-section of society throughout the country by means of the mass media, street exhibitions and music as an added attraction by the teaching teams in every sector they visited.

FIRST BAHÁ'I RADIO STATION IN THE WORLD! HOUSE OF JUSTICE INITIATES PILOT PROJECT IN ECUADOR - CUZCO CONFERENCE CALLED FOR 1975

On May 25, 1975 the Universal House of Justice announced to all National Spiritual Assemblies the following historic decision:

The Universal House of Justice has initiated a pilot project in Ecuador for the purchase and operation of a Bahá'í radio station, and at the present time this is the only one for which sufficient funds are available....

Thus was spiritually born the first Bahá'í radio station in the world!

The Continentental Board of Counsellors of South America in 1974, desiring to further the development of the Cause among the indigenous people in the mass conversion countries, Bolivia, Ecuador and Perú, as well as other countries, called for a conference to take place in August 1975 in Cuzco, Perú with the special objective of arriving at an understanding and agreement regarding the written Quechua language system or structure, which could be used in the publication of Bahá'í literature for the three Quechua speaking countries. Quechua speaking people from these countries were invited for consultation and to examine literature already published in the Quechua language in these countries, to observe the Quechua artistic works, such as original songs, folklore dances and works of the theatre, etc. Other objectives of the conference were:

- A. How to complete the goals of the 5 Year Plan.

- B. *Developing the Bahá'í community life in the villages through the functioning of the local Spiritual Assemblies and morning prayers.*
- C. *To present a literacy text book in the Quechua language, "The New Garden", which was translated and published in Ecuador as their contribution to the first Quechua Conference (Tandanakuy), and Bahá'í Prayers and pamphlets in the Quechua language outlining the basic principles of the Faith.*

The contributions of the Ecuadorian delegation to the artistic aspect of the conference were:

1. A recording of the Quechua songs they sang in the conference, and
2. Presentation of a drama on the road and in Cuzco proper.

The Ecuadorian delegation to the Quechua Conference in Perú had a delightful teaching experience on their first rest stop in Cuenca. Some of the local Bahá'ís lent the equipment necessary for videotaping the dramatization of a poem written by Counsellor, Raúl Pavón. It depicts the near death the Indian has suffered at the hands of the white man, and the hope that the dawn of a new day brings. At the appearance of "Father Sun", they begin to feel their return to dignity and pride, only to be interrupted by the entrance of the white man. The Indians are taken aback, but "Father Sun" explains that he has brought the light of truth to all men, and that they should associate with each other. The dramatization ends with everyone dancing the "San Juan", the typical dance of Otavalo, and singing the Quechua song "Chilbalito", which later was so popular in the conference in Cuzco.

The friends also videotaped a more direct presentation of the Faith, telling about the principles of the Faith and the reason for such a long trip, and presenting many Bahá'í songs in Quechua and Spanish. For most of those who went, the experience of taking part in a drama was an unforgettable "first", that aroused great interest. This was their first real project carried out as a group, with the good-natured cooperation of all. The National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador still has these videotapes and they can be used on television stations all over the country.

Forty Bahá'ís from Ecuador made the long trip to Cuzco by chartered bus to attend the first International Quechua Language Conference. They travelled over hundreds of miles of desert coast and over the frigid altiplano for eight days in an uncomfortable, unforgettable, "home-made" bus. The Auxiliary Board member who travelled on this bus with the believers to help with their needs reported:

If one can imagine five passengers to a row, instead of the usual four, on seats that were not built to recline, with only two overnight stops, and when most people had to sleep on the floor and only two opportunities to bathe en route, perhaps one can empathize with the tests which this mixed group had to cope with in order to have the privilege of participating in this historic event! It was a thoroughly mixed group both young

and old from a six month old pioneer baby, Sonia Dexter, to a 78 year old campesino.

In spite of all of the discomfort and the tests the group arrived in Cuzco in good spirits - one of the several miracles of Divine Assistance! There was a lot of street teaching enroute and returning from the Conference. In two cities in Ecuador, portable expositions were set up and teaching was carried out during the rest stops. In Cuenca, they taught in the main square and were hosted by pioneers George and Patricia Conger, and in Machala, all 40 of them were hosted by the Persian pioneers Bahman and Zhinous Ashraghi. There they taught in front of a secondary school where afternoon and night classes were held, which enabled hundreds of people to receive literature and hear about the Faith. The large sign about the Cuzco Conference on the side of the bus and the presence of the Indian Bahá'ís added to the attraction and interest. When they arrived in Chiclayo, Perú, they paused to teach and taught in the main plaza until threats of a political demonstration and a long line of soldiers with their canisters of tear gas made it seem wise to leave!

The greatest proclamation was in Cuzco and the greatest spirit to respond to it, it seemed, was found there. For four days during the conference, there was teaching on one or more of the public squares, using three portable expositions and several thousand people received pamphlets. For four days after the conference, the three who remained from Ecuador as an international teaching team, continued with the teaching work, and carried their exhibition to Arequipa, where a half day of intensive teaching was accomplished...5

There was further teaching in the city of Lima and the experience of teaching in the cities proved to the participants the effectiveness and the potential of teaching with street expositions, which was dignified but nevertheless presented the Faith in a direct manner.

Later in the year the Assembly found itself in difficult financial straits, which of course was not unusual in the undeveloped, or what is now known as the developing countries; therefore, they found it necessary to call on the House of Justice for aid;

The participation in the Cuzco Conference, August 20 - 24, 1975 on behalf of our National Community assumed proportions hitherto unplanned for. Over 1,200 dollars were spent. This included the publication of "The New Garden" in Quechua, the delegation of indigenous Bahá'ís from Ecuador that attended the conference and participated en route to Cuzco, and the expenses of two travelling teachers who taught in Peru the month prior to the conference and helped with its preparation.

Visit with the Shuara Indians - also known as the Jivaros

During December 1975, James (Jimmy) Jensen, and his wife Susanna Jensen made a teaching trip to visit the Shuara Indians (Also known as headhunters or headshrinkers, because their forefathers shrank the head skins of their enemies). They had been visited from time to time by the Bahá'ís since the early 1960's, when Patricia and George Conger and Raúl Pavón first visited there on behalf of the National Assembly.

Jimmy and Susanna first paid a courtesy visit to the President of the Federation of the Shuara Center and explained their reason for being there. He listened attentively and respectfully and then Señor Domingo Antuni, the president said that: *The Shuaras are now divided between the Catholic and the Evangelists and they do not wish to be further divided.* The President said that "they pretend to apply in a wider form their own religion", which according to him is a religion perfected. He said that they "do not need a religion from outside, and he very courteously asked that we should not be offended and that we should not waste our time for he was sure that not one Shuara would accept the Faith. He said that we would not have success because in the last meeting of the Federation it was purposed that only the Shuara religion be fostered. The Shuaras seem to be very organized, the same building in which the Federation of the Shuaras has its headquarters the Catholic priest has his offices."

The team reported that at mid-day they went to Sevilla don Bosco on the other side of the river. A Bahá'í in Macas told them that a lone Bahá'í, a Shuara named Domingo Pidro, lived in Sevilla. They did not go to this village with the intention to teach and enroll new believers. However, when they arrived at a store there they met a Shuara Indian lady named Ines Chiriap de Sando who was the wife of the storeowner. She treated them with such love and gave such wonderful attention to them that they told her about the Faith which she accepted immediately. These teachers felt that if the other Shuara Indians in the area was anything like this lady all could be Bahá'ís.⁶ They would again visit the Shuaras and have the desired success. (p. 255)

The Stalwart Cuenca Community

The Cuenca Bahá'í Community has been one of the firm pillars of the National Bahá'í Community of Ecuador ever since the arrival of its first pioneers and moreso after the establishment of their first local Spiritual Assembly with a dynamic, young group of pioneers and one native believer in 1960. The community has been fortunate to have a number of gifted native families devoted to the Cause, such as the Bernals, the Célleris, the Guillens, and the Valdiviesos, and others. This has been the cause of a very stable community as well as the fact that it has had a stable pioneer couple ever since its inception, George and Patricia Conger. The progressive spirit of this community was demonstrated in its first administrative year, that is to say, after the establishment of its first local Spiritual Assembly. In the very first meeting of this body on September 10, 1961, the need for a Bahá'í cemetery was discussed. However, it was not until one of the native believers, Señora Barbara Lemus, accepted the Bahá'í Faith some years later, and she had had to give up everything Catholic, including her right to be buried in the Catholic cemetery, which she had paid for, that the need to do something urgently became evident. It was after a period of time that the Assembly considered her plight and realized that this could happen to others who accept the Faith. It was in April 1976 when Señora Lemus' husband passed away. Although he was not a Bahá'í and could be buried elsewhere, his wife naturally wanted his remains

to be where she expected to be interred and with a Bahá'í funeral. The local Assembly permitted the burial of this devoted believer's husband in the Bahá'í cemetery.

Sr. Macario Guillen was commissioned by the Assembly to find a suitable place for a cemetery and it was through his friends that he learned that land was available and for sale in the Municipal Cemetery, and that this could be developed as a Bahá'í cemetery. After over coming a number of problems, 160 square of meters were purchased and a fence was constructed to enclose the property. The National Assembly notified the World Centre of the Faith about this purchase on February 15, 1973:

In April 1972 the local Spiritual Assembly of Cuenca purchased land in the Municipal Cemetery of Cuenca to be developed as a Bahá'í Cemetery. We enclose title to property. A copy is being held by our National Spiritual Assembly and the original is with the Local Spiritual Assembly of Cuenca.

The believers in Cuenca saved a portion of their contributions for about 5 years and spent many hours negotiating with municipal functionaries until they were able to purchase at a reasonable price and with their means. The property is 160 square meters.

This enterprising community also felt a need for their own Hazíratu'l-Quds, as the community was growing and often there were no homes available where the Bahá'ís could meet. To finance the project six believers were chosen to contribute 60,000 sucres. It was 1974 before the property could be purchased. When they were ready to start building they found that because of inflation they had insufficient funds. Therefore in the midst of construction the local Assembly had to appeal to the National Spiritual Assembly for help, who, in turn, appealed to the House of Justice but because Ecuador had "not been assigned the goal of obtaining a district Hazíratu'l-Quds", funds were not available for it, they advised on October 27, 1975, in a letter written on their behalf:

The Universal House of Justice was pleased to learn from your letter of 12 October, 1975 that the Spiritual Assembly of Cuenca has acquired property on which its Hazíratu'l-Quds can be constructed. However, while appreciating the great desire of the friends in Cuenca to achieve the construction of their Hazíratu'l-Quds, its realization must come about through their own efforts to raise the necessary funds... The House of Justice will offer its prayers on behalf of the friends in Cuenca that they may be enabled to achieve their hearts' desire.

In 1978 conditions had not changed and Cuenca had not been able to raise enough money to finish their construction so they appealed to the National Assembly again who in turn forwarded their appeal to the House of Justice on December 12, 1978:

Since the beginning of the Plan, the community of Cuenca has been struggling to make it possible to build their local Hazíratu'l-Quds. The community finally gathered \$20,000 from among themselves and started construction. Now, due to inflation, the total cost of the

construction has soared to \$52,000 and funds are insufficient to finish the construction.

The Cuenca community is very strong with many Ecuadorian believers with much capacity for serving the Faith. Cuenca is the seat of the District Teaching Committee of the southern part of the country which encompasses three provinces of the sierra and two of the oriente. There are now 26 Local Spiritual Assemblies in the provinces, 20 of which have been formed during the Five Year Plan. Many of the new believers are from Shuara* or Quechua background. In other words Cuenca is the center of a zone that shows much promise for expansion not only among the white and mestizo groups, but also in these two indigenous groups. For this reason, there is a need for an institute or Haziratu'l-Quds for this half of the country located in Cuenca.

We know that an Institute or district Haziratu'l-Quds is not a goal of Ecuador in the Five Year Plan, but given the situation of Cuenca, and the promise of the zone, we would like to ask your opinion on the best way to finance this project.

The House of Justice responded on January 30, 1979:

Following consideration by the Universal House of Justice of your letter of 12 December, 1978 concerning your difficulties in financing the construction of a local Haziratu'l-Quds in Cuenca, we have been directed to make the following comments.

It is clear that the teaching work in Cuenca has been fruitful and that there is an apparent need for an Institute or district Haziratu'l-Quds for the continuing expansion of the Faith in that zone. However, as you know, Bahá'í communities that have been given a goal for such a property were assured of a contribution of \$4,000 where needed for such a project.

You seem to have misjudged not only your ability to carry through such a project from the contributions made therefor, but also the extent to which the cost would be increased in inflation.

It is suggested, therefore, that you carefully consider how you can modify the size of the structure you have initiated to more closely come within the range of the funds available to you from the Cuenca community and from other contributions you may be able to generate for this project. The House of Justice is sending you the sum of \$4,000 to assist you in its accomplishment.

As a result of the above letter the National Spiritual Assembly sent a representative to Cuenca to consult with the local Assembly about the lack of funds to complete the construction and how they could modify the edifice to cut cost. They were also presented with the \$4,000 from the Universal House of Justice. With this money the Assembly decided to finish the first floor of the building and to plan the construction of the second floor in stages. Finally, with much sacrifice, they were able to inaugurate their district Haziratu'l-Quds on October 8, 1980. It was through the determination,

cooperation, sacrifices and perseverance of the friends over a long period of time that enabled them to realize their dream of not only having a local meeting place but a combination district one also. And now it serves as a local Hazíratu'l-Quds with its normal functions, and as an institute for national activities as well. For a long time there were insufficient funds to enclose the land after it was purchased, but finally a member of the community contributed the necessary funds to complete the work.⁷

The youth of Cuenca are very active Bahá'ís and a stimulus to the older believers not only of their own community but to the national community. The exemplary, devoted youth, Marcelo Valdivieso, formerly from Cuenca was privileged to work in the World Centre of the Faith for the Universal House of Justice. The Cuenca community has been the recipient of a number of youth pioneers and travel teachers over the years. The young pioneers Suzanne Smith and later Peter Newton pioneered and studied in the University in that city were an inspirations to the youth and other young pioneers and teachers. And as a result of their efforts and example a number of youth arose and carried out teaching assignments in various parts of the country during their vacation, and they continue to do so. 'Fantastic', is the only expression to describe the beautiful youth of this community.

After the National Teaching Conference in February 1972, called for by Dr. Muhájir, and the success that followed that Conference in mass teaching in various parts of the country, the local Spiritual Assembly of Cuenca asked that their community be given the opportunity to learn mass teaching methods which had proven so successful in Esmeraldas and other areas in the Sierra. The National Teaching Committee happily responded and teaching teams were sent into Cuenca to help them get started. They were very successful in their teaching endeavours in spite of the Catholic conservatism in that Province and in some areas, extreme fanaticism. To teach a strange "religion" in some of the villages there can be hazardous for one's safety!

Over 500 people accepted the Faith during their campaign and the participants as well as the institutions were extremely happy. This success of course was accompanied with some risk of "life and limb", since there were some unanticipated escapades which were hair-raising. For example, one team of three men were talking with a woman outside of her home. She seemed to like what she heard of the Teachings; but, before deciding to accept the Bahá'í Faith she would have to wait for her husband who worked away from home all week. At that point, the husband came over the hill arriving for the holiday weekend. He was apparently offended to find three men talking to his wife. That fact plus the warning given by the parish priest about communists who would come to try to delude them, provoked him to action. After the team said its goodbyes, seemingly without any problems, and they started off down a ridgeline, they heard shouting of hurrying men and a gunshot. Looking back they realized that they were being pursued by a local posse, the irate husband with his rifle was leading the group. One of the members of the team, Charles Hornby, related that the Bahá'ís did not wish to run but they made long and fast steps. He reported that they managed

to keep ahead of the men. At the end of the ridge when they went down hill toward a stream bed, stones were thrown over their heads and shoulders. They got down to the bottom of the gulley and back up to the dirt road without getting trapped, but then it seemed to be the better part of wisdom to await their pursuers. The men shouted their accusations against the so-called "communists" and would not be convinced of the innocence of them. They said that they had to prove they were religious. First they demanded Lauro Célleri, another team member, to recite the Ten Commandments, which fortunately for the team, he managed to call-up from his childhood memory. Then they turned to Bahman Ashraghi, who had not believed in the Virgin Mary before, and they demanded that he tell them about his attitude toward the Virgin. Bahman showed his versatility and told of Bahá'u'lláh's sympathetic writings of the immaculacy of Mary and went on to teach the group something of the origins and development of the Faith, even to the existence of the Supreme House of Justice.

Before further ruckus could follow, Raúl Pavón arrived on the scene in a jeep to rescue the teachers, and drove off down the road where other local people were seen with their machetes - apparently ready to deal with the "communists"!

WOMEN, CHILDREN AND YOUTH

For a number of years there were few children or Bahá'í youth activities in Ecuador. In Quito, for example, there were only three Bahá'í youth and children for quite a long time and this caused great concern for the Bahá'í community for they were acutely conscious of the many appeals Shoghi Effendi made to the youth. In a letter written on his behalf to the youth of India, he reminds the youth that:

You who are at present in your teens, or twenties, must realize that tomorrow, to a large extent, the burden of the Cause will rest on your shoulders; you will have to be the administrators and teachers and scholars of the Faith. Now is the time to prepare yourselves for your future duties.... (Dawn of a New Day, p.182)

This was a cause for concern for some time. A number of pioneer children resided in the country from time to time but there is no record of native children or youth where the pioneers lived. Nor does the records reveal what happened to the group of children who were attending children's classes in the Hazíratu'l-Quds in Quito every Sunday during the early sixties nor are they identified. However, beginning with the mid-sixties, a gradually expanding group of children quietly grew up in Cuenca and a few in Guayaquil. These children were members of Bahá'í families where one or both parents were Bahá'ís but the non-Bahá'í parents permitted their children to be trained as Bahá'ís. Many of these children are now married and are rearing third generation Bahá'ís who are as active as their parents. These parents deserve to be proud to have reared such a lovely, active group of Bahá'í children and grandchildren who epitomize the concept of Bahá'í youth.

It was not until the Five Year Plan, when the Universal House of Justice placed great emphasis on the need for education of women and children, that an organized, systematic teaching plan was inaugurated throughout the country on a national level for the training of women, children and youth. Classes were initiated in the countryside and in the cities with the cooperation of Bahá'í mothers. Although the women had had no previous experience in teaching and most had little or no academic training, they themselves attended classes to learn how to teach the children and also to learn more about the Faith. The House of Justice was quite pleased with these achievements and noted the outstanding service the devoted Bahá'í mother, Sra. Raquel Valencia, performed. She assumed the responsibility of teaching several classes in different areas, covering long distances on foot in spite of her own home responsibilities and obligations.

There had been, however, sporadic activities for children near the close of the Nine Year Plan. Some very special, such as the First National Conference for Children held in Esmeraldas in 1972; this event was highly praised by the Universal House of Justice and Dr. Muhájir. After the House of Justice made the education of children and of women one of their special goals, this led to the

opportunity of having the mothers do their practice teaching with their own children and the neighbors' children, thus, studying, learning and educating themselves with the help of travel teachers and pioneers. In turn, this gave many of the women the confidence needed to arise and teach their Faith in other areas as well as to family and friends. It was thrilling to see the Indian women in conferences and conventions arise and volunteer to go long distances to teach and to observe how they were able to express themselves with such clarity and determination.

After Radio Bahá'í became a reality and a social-cultural and educational institution, the children within its area of service were given very special consideration and programs were initiated to heighten their awareness of their capacities (See section on Radio Bahá'í).

The statement that there were few Bahá'í children during the 1950's and early 1960's, should be clarified. Emphasis here is placed on native children because these are the ones who grow up and become the backbone of a community and pioneer children are often quite transient. It should be mentioned here that large number of children were the first people to respond in the mass conversion city of Esmeraldas in 1969 and they in turn introduced the Bahá'í teachers to their parents.

Now regarding the pioneer children. We spoke of the suffering of the first pioneers who came but we did not speak of their children. If the parents suffered economically so did the children. These children are now parents and some recall their suffering as well as their joys quite vividly. I am referring to the first pioneer-children of the late 1950's and early 1960's. Some of these children have felt the need to return "home" to live as pioneers or to come on teaching trips, such as the children of former pioneers to Ecuador, David and Mary Beckett.

Rosemary Beckett de Beckett returned from England with her husband and two children and now they reside in Ecuador.

Joyce Beckett de Chiriboga and her two children live in Ecuador with her husband who is a Quiteño (from Quito)

Fred and Betty Kappus returned to Ecuador with their daughter Janet as pioneers for a period of time during the 1970's and resided in their old pioneer post, Otavalo, where they are fondly remembered. The daughter Nancy came earlier on a teaching trip with her mother.

Regarding the education of these children, some were sent to Quito to study and lived in the Bahá'í Center with "Auntie Dorothy" the National secretary, who was kind enough to look after them when it was necessary. There was also a pioneer in Otavalo who was a very talented school teacher from New York, Marian (Kit) Goldstein from New York who took the pioneer children under her wings of experience and taught them using whatever materials she could find and that which friends would send to them from the United

States. All were aware that they were receiving an inadequate education, especially in their formative years, but it had to serve for the time being if the parents were to fill this important goal in the Indian teaching area and help lay the ground work for later mass teaching in the Imbabura area and from there throughout the country. The "sacrifice" of these pioneers and children, was a contributing factor to thousands of indigenous people becoming enlightened! And the children now have been able to carve their niche in life with a variety of professions and talents.

During 1975 the National Committee for the Education of Women and Children made presentations in two national gatherings, on the child, the home and the Bahá'í family with illustrated talks in an effort to promote local women committee activities. The committee developed a series of 24 programs for use on Bahá'í Radio which were broadcast in eight cities at two week intervals. The spiritual, cultural and educational programs were designed primarily to instruct Bahá'í women in the rural areas as well as with the expectation to capture the attention of other women. Week-end classes for indigenous children of the Province of Imbabura were begun regularly in November. The children from several mountain communities were brought to the National Teaching Institute in Otavalo for classes. They could look with pride at the fact that in a relatively short period of time there were regular children's classes, and, when feasible, the mothers were enlisted as teachers and also other volunteers. During this period successful children's classes were initiated in Esmeraldas, Tachina, Ambato, Santa Rosa Cuenca, San Fernando and Otavalo and other localities.

Morning prayers were started on a regular basis in the Teaching Institute in Otavalo and the Hazíratu'l-Quds in Quito, and two other areas around Otavalo. There were five children classes each week in the Imbabura area.

In January 1975 and again on February 2, 1976, the National Spiritual Assembly was notified by the Counsellors of South America that they felt that during the course of the year, a National Children's Conference should be held, sponsored of course by the Counsellors. On behalf of the Board of Counsellors, Señor Raúl Pavón called for the conference to be held in the province of Esmeraldas in the village of Tachina. Children from all over the country were invited and the Regional Teaching Committees were instructed to bring one or more of the children in their respective area as representatives of their region. The objectives enumerated by the Counsellors for the conference were:

1. *To encourage the parents to teach the Faith to their children, and help these parents to initiate tutorial schools during the months of preparation for the conference,*
2. *To stimulate music appreciation and preparation of Bahá'í literature suitable for children,*
3. *To bring children from different areas and races together that they may know each other and grow up without prejudices.*

In preparing for the conference they had the opportunity to find people to give children's classes, especially mothers and other interested women, thereby helping to complete the goal of the Five Year Plan in respect to the education of women and children and establishing tutorial schools. Also members of various communities helped by teaching the parents and children Bahá'í songs, starting children's classes and by teaching them how to memorize prayers. The Universal House of Justice was pleased with the success of the Conference and on May 9, 1976 wrote a letter lauding the accomplishments of the local Spiritual Assembly of Tachina and all the believers there who worked for the success of the Conference, especially the indomitable, determined believer, Señora Raquel Valencia. The Department of Secretariat wrote on their behalf:

We are asked to say that the Local Spiritual Assembly of Tachina and all the believers who participated in the conference and in the classes and other events leading up to it deserve warm commendation. The selfless example of Raquel Valencia and the other women who fearlessly and without concern for their limitations are striving to establish these classes on a firm and permanent foundation, the House of Justice feels, will surely result in a great strengthening of the very roots of the dearly loved Bahá'í community of Ecuador and will attract to it untold spiritual bounties.

After receiving the semi-annual statistical report for June 1976 and noting the loss of local Assemblies, the House of Justice expressed its concern in a letter written on their behalf on July 3. By August the situation still looked grave and they dispatched another letter on August 17 advising:

Further to its letter of July 3, 1976, the Universal House of Justice instructs us to again convey to you its grave concern about the status of the Local Spiritual Assemblies in Ecuador and feels that a concentrated effort must be exerted by your Assembly during this crucial middle year of the Five Year Plan to move forward resolutely toward your goal of establishing 300 Local Spiritual Assemblies... If the pace of growth not be accelerated from now, it is quite possible that it will be difficult, if not impracticable, to achieve the goal by the end of the Plan. The House of Justice therefore request you to initiate vigorous plans, in consultation with the Counsellors, in order to achieve a major advance this year toward your goal.

Then on August 29 they sent another letter to the National Assembly consulting further on the goals of the Five Year Plan:

The Universal House of Justice thanks you for your letter of August 8th and expresses its delight with the attention you are giving to the important subject of Bahá'í education for women and children. Your national committee in charge of this work is to be congratulated upon its work in preparing the plan which you have received with such satisfaction...

The House of Justice instructs us to point out that the goal of the Five Year Plan is not only to provide for the Bahá'í education of women and

children but to encourage women to assume greater responsibilities in both the teaching and administrative fields. Some encouragement can be given in this respect by the appointment of women, where suitable, as travelling teachers and to committees. We are to point out that it has been observed that when women take an active part in Bahá'í activities the life of the Bahá'í community is greatly enriched.

On September 4, 1977 the National Women's committee sponsored a one day local Bahá'í Conference in the city of Quito in the home of the Werle family. Many outstanding women of the city were present who were members of various women's organizations and of varied professions. They were respectfully interested in the Faith and invited some of the Bahá'í women to participate in their conference for women. A representative number of Bahá'í women attended.

The National Spiritual Assembly chartered a bus to make it possible for a number of women to attend the International Women's Conference in Lima, Perú. After their return two regional women's conferences were called to stimulate women's activities and children's classes in the country. A Regional Women's Conference held in Guayaquil on July 30, 1978, was quite successful and there were about 50 women present.

It was during the seventies also that the Continental Board of Counsellors of South America, in collaboration with the National Spiritual of Colombia, Ecuador and Perú, called for and helped to initiate frontier or border teaching. This has continued as of this writing - the Enoch Olinga project is one of the projects where Colombia and Ecuador are collaborating and Mr. Olinga so ardently desired to be a part of.

International Year of the Child¹⁰

With high esteem for the idea to commemorate 1979 as the International Year of the Child, a plan was conceived to take advantage of the inimitable opportunity to proclaim the Cause in Ecuador as well as offer a unique service to the Ecuadorian National Community through its children. The idea was born by a group of women who were returning to Quito from a teaching trip. Inspired by a drawing contest sponsored by the Bahá'ís of Chile they decided that they too could organize one in Ecuador on a national level. The group met on December 20 1978 and resolutely drew up the following plan to present to the National Assembly:

1. To inaugurate a drawing contest for children from 6 to 12 years old,
2. To proclaim and teach the Faith throughout the International Year of the Child,
3. To exhibit the winning drawings in the principal cities as part of an exhibition using photographs obtained from UNICEF and quotations from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá,
4. The contestants would select one of the following themes from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh:

- A. *"So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth...."*
 - B. *"The earth is but one country; and mankind its citizens,*
 - C. *In the garden of thy heart plant naught but the rose of love...*
5. *The best drawings would be selected by qualified judges. First prize 1,000 sucres, second prize 800 sucres and third 600 sucres. (1,000 sucres at that time was approximately, \$35.00 USA money)*

The National Spiritual Assembly approved the plan and named the same women who came up with the idea as a commission to develop the details of the "National Contest of Infantile Drawings". The women were: Mrs. Gretchen Mansuri, Sra. Carmen de Stewart and Mrs. Tarasieh Werle-Vahdat. The National Assembly invited Auxiliary Board member, Sra. Isabel de Calderón and Doctor Aída de Davila to collaborate with the commission. The Assembly sought permission from the Ministry of Education and Culture Matters, to hold the contest at the primary school level and on a national scale. They explained the relationship of the National Bahá'í Community to the United Nations and that the Bahá'í Community had been invited to sponsor events to honor the child during this historical year. Further, being conscious that one of the rights of children is education with all its expressions, and inasmuch as drawing is one of the educative skills, the Bahá'í Community of Ecuador proposed to carry out this event with the technical support of the high office of the Ministry of Education, thereby obtaining a better and greater success of this national educative and cultural event. However, it was only through the persistent efforts of the members of the commission to make personal contact with the officials of the Ministry, and their perspicuity, that their authorization and support were obtained.

Then on January 30, 1979 the Ministry of Education and Cultural Matters sent a circular letter to all primary school directors and supervisors in the country, both private and public, informing them of the authorization given to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Ecuador to initiate and sponsor a contest of drawing on a national level, "a consequential event in connection with the International Year of the Child". The letter further stated that:

The Ministry of Education, through its Department of Cultural Matters welcomed with great satisfaction, the proposal of the (Bahá'ís). We think that this will provide a magnificent opportunity to interest the child in the study and investigation of this cultural activity. Therefore, THE RULES FOR THE NATIONAL CONTEST OF INFANTILE DRAWINGS, elaborated together with the Bahá'ís, are enclosed with sufficient copies to be distributed to all schools in your area.

With this information, I officially convoke all the schools in the country to participate in the fore-mentioned contest under the established rules.

Dear Director, I suggest that you supply the necessary facilities to the supervisors of education to enable them to provide the instructions for

schools which need them, in order to derive the greatest possible success from this important cultural event.

The first prize winner was a 10 year old boy, Segundo Efraim Ushco, who attended the Julio Enrique Paredes school in the city of Ambato. He chose the theme, *In the garden of thy heart plant naught but the rose of love,...* All the teachers of this school and the boy's father and mother came to Quito for the formal presentation ceremony. This child definitely captured the spirit of the Bahá'í Teachings in his drawing and he spoke with such dignity and confidence about his appreciation for the Teachings of the Bahá'í Faith before a very large audience.

The second prize winner, Marina Guerrero, was a 12-year old girl from the Victor Manuel Arregui School of Guaranda, a very humble rural school in the province of Bolivar. The girl was from a very poor and humble family of ten brothers and sisters and on the same day she was notified of her good fortune, that is that she was the second prize winner, her newest baby brother was born. The Bahá'í representatives, Señoras Isabel de Calderón and Cecilia Pavón were taken to this small school in the car of the provincial supervisors of education. When the pupils were convened one could not help note their shining faces and their perfectly clean, flimsy clothing which were inadequate for the sharp cold of the Andes. The Bahá'ís explained the reason for the contest and spoke briefly about the Faith and its purpose. Then the children sang and presented an informal program in honor of the guests, who related that the emotions were so strong during this program that one could hardly speak.

The Bahá'í visitors were accompanied by the outstanding poetess and writer, Señora María Tapia de Velasco, who volunteered to accompany them when she heard the name of the little school of the second prize winner. When they were inquiring as to how to get to this school in the office of the Provincial Supervisors of Education, Señora Velasco was present and said that this was the school where she began her education and her heart immediately went out to this little girl. When they left the school Señora Calderón mentioned that she would like to visit the president of the Patronato Nacional de Niños (National Foundation for Children), who had offered to help the child Mariana Guerrero. She learned that her hostess and the president, Señora Nicola de Tapia, were sisters-in-law. They went to her home and it was agreed she would help the child with a scholarship for secondary school.

The third prize went to Alvaro Correa Martínez, an 11-year old boy who lives in Cuenca, Ecuador. This child was motivated by his mother inasmuch as his school did not participate. He chose as the theme of his drawing, *The Earth is but One Country, and Mankind its Citizens*. His drawing was so descriptive of the theme, so colorful and pleasing to look at that it seems that he was spiritually motivated, and for many of the Bahá'ís he too should have been a first place winner.

Many schools were visited by the Bahá'í representatives, especially those of the winners and those who received honorable

mention, with gifts of school supplies and they were all invited to participate in the awards ceremony which was held in Quito. Tremendous support was given by the Ministry of Government who contributed 4,000 sucres for text books and supplies. Ninety-two books were donated to be given as prizes to the three top winners and to those with honorable mention. School materials were also donated by the Mayor of Quito and from various banks and social clubs as well as from the various local Spiritual Assemblies around the area. Radio Bahá'í played a key role in the promotion of the event as did various television stations and newspapers. The Bahá'í children chorus, directed by Miss Anita Miller, also appeared on television and sang Bahá'í prayers and songs with Bahá'í themes. This chorus also performed for the award-giving ceremony.

While visiting the schools in some areas the Bahá'í representatives were asked again and again to please continue with this type of contest annually. They said that it should not be just for the International Year of the Child, but should be established as an annual event for children, sponsored by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís; that it was the first time that children of humble origin from all over the country had been rewarded with first prizes and that one could see clearly that the Bahá'ís are just!

The municipal officials graciously donated the auditorium of the Municipal Library of Quito for the awards ceremony. An adjoining salón was used to exhibit the prize-winning drawings as well as photographs from the United Nations relating to the development of the child, with appropriate quotations from the Bahá'í Writings. Three or four hundred people attended the awards ceremony and thousands viewed the exhibit during the following week. Bahá'í volunteers attended the exhibition and were on hand during the week to answer questions from the viewers. The distinguished judges were: Señor Germán Pavón, the famous Ecuadorian painter who did the original painting for the poster commemorating the inauguration of Radio Bahá'í, Licentiate Jorge W. Terán A., representative of the Ministry of Education; Señora Germania de Breilh, representative of the Executive Commission for the International Year of the Child, Mr. Donald Stewart, secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Ecuador, and Señorita María Perugachi, member of the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador.

Bahá'í Youth Club - Catholic University¹¹

In 1972 the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States sent out their first youth project teaching team to Ecuador (see Final Year of the Nine Year Plan, p.218). Among those who were members of this project, two decided to stay in Ecuador as pioneers. One, Jeanne Soennichsen decided, with the permission of her parents, to finish her education at the Catholic University in Quito, and the other, Janet Fulton (Dexter) found work as a school-teacher.

Donald Stewart was a pioneer from Canada and an English teacher in the Catholic University in Quito as well as the prime-mover of the student activities being initiated in the University. Bruce Suttles, was a student of Spanish and the Quechua language and also taught English there and Jeanne was a student and also taught some classes in English. The three met William Rodriguez, an Ecuadorian, who was also a student in the Catholic University, and as a result of having contact with these young Bahá'ís he became a sympathizer and soon thereafter a devoted follower of the Faith. These youth got together and petitioned the Dean of Students, Padre Daniel Carrasco, to allow them to form a Bahá'í Club in the University. Permission, surprisingly, was given with alacrity because there were little or no student activities on the campus at the time and the Padre was more than happy to turn the responsibility over to someone. This was the first non-Catholic organization ever formed on the campus!

The four young Bahá'ís were very active and the Dean was quite impressed with their initiative and after a year of activity, he gave them all the responsibility for planning and developing the student activities for all the students in the University. This unexpected honor was indeed a challenge to their ingenuity. The first year of the clubs existence there was a direct presentation of the Bahá'í Faith in the main auditorium by Counsellor, Masú'd Khamsí, the Ecuadorian Bahá'í Choir sang and the film of the Panama Temple dedication was shown. The club sponsored public meetings monthly in the "Aula Magna" (Assembly Hall), and the speakers spoke on such Bahá'í themes which are universally acceptable, such as, the Unity of Science and Religion, Equality of Men and Women and Unity in Diversity. The Bahá'í members of the club were very active in teaching the Faith not just in the University but all over the country.

The youth who came on the special project from the United States seemed to have brought a very special youthful spirit with them for many young people became attracted to the Cause through them. The native youth were happy to be able to visit with youth of other countries and capture new ideas.

Jeanne made appearances on television to talk about the Faith in various cities - she also played her guitar and sang. With this new spirit many youth activities began to emerge. In 1974 there were National Youth Conferences held in Tonchigüe, Esmeraldas, Ibarra,

Guayaquil, Limones, Otavalo, Quito, Riobamba, Rio Verde, Santo Domingo de los Coloradas and Tahigue. In these conferences the youth placed emphasis on the House of Justice's Five Year Plan, the goals assigned to Ecuador and the part they could play to assure that these goals were achieved. Later a team of youth from the center of the country went into the "Oriente" (eastern jungle area) to teach and won a number of goals.

Today Ecuador can boast of the fact that they have a group of the most active Bahá'í youth in South America and a number of them are now assistants to Auxiliary Board members. Some conduct their own children's classes and they eagerly work and study with the older Bahá'ís.

The Ecuadorian Bahá'í community during the next three years of the 1970's accomplished feats far beyond the imagination of the participants - one could say the impossible was achieved.

In January of 1977 the National Bahá'í community was happy to send participants to the historical International Teaching Conference in Brazil. Ecuador was represented by two Indian believers, Nolberto Curillo, who wrote an humble but beautiful thank-you note to the National Assembly after his return for giving him this privilege, and, Señorita María Perugachi.

The goal to acquire two local Spiritual Assemblies on the Galapagos Islands was completed when pioneers Bahiyyih Rashidpour and Nooshin Burwell elected Assemblies on the Islands of Santa Cruz and San Cristobal (See section on Galapagos Islands).

For this particular year however, stress was placed on acquiring a radio frequency from the Government and on the Tantanakuy (Quechua Conference) which was to be held in August.

The National Assembly however was conscious of and called attention to the fact that to "obtain the victory" it was necessary for the National Community to redouble its efforts to complete the goals of the Five Year Plan. They pointed out that there was the lack of 63 localities where Bahá'ís resided to complete the goal of 750 localities called for; and there were 102 local Assemblies needed to complete the goal of 300 called for and to have 60 local Assemblies in 60 cantons (counties).

The idea was born and plans were initiated to purchase an institute in Esmeraldas as soon as possible. The Hand of the Cause, Dr. Muhájir envisioned the need for one there and also Counsellor, Raúl Pavón. Perhaps they prayed for it, for soon afterward an unusual offer was made for a lot at a very low price situated in a lovely ideal place for an institute. When the member of the Auxiliary Board in Esmeraldas notified the National Assembly about it they purchased it immediately. The intuition of the Hand of the Cause and the Counsellor has proven to be correct for the Institute is part of the community life there now and it has been enhanced by the diligent labor of the pioneers, Jimmie and Susan Jensen and the believers of Esmeraldas who have learned to love their Institute.

On December 30, 1975 the National Assembly appealed to the House of Justice for guidance for it found itself in a dither, that is to say, that due to having opened up so many new areas and having enrolled so many new believers, they realized that it was physically impossible to elect all the local Assemblies ready to be elected, but needed assistance or someone to guide them in the election:

Due to the lack of teachers helping with the election of Local Spiritual Assemblies it has been suggested that the new communities which have been prepared and some of which currently have more than nine adult believers not be elected until shortly after April 21st. The majority of the Assemblies in our mass teaching areas need help from traveling teachers with their elections. If these newly formed communities elect their Local Spiritual Assemblies now it will be quite difficult to send teachers again on April 21st without jeopardizing the older areas (Esmeraldas in particular which is responsible for the entire province of Manabí). For the same reason it would be very difficult to have these new Assemblies elected on Ridván itself. Since we are referring to communities that are to elect their Spiritual Assemblies for the first time and due to the dire need of keeping our few teachers in the older mass teaching areas until April 21st, the National Assembly would like to know if it is permissible to elect these new Assemblies shortly after April 21st, even though there are nine or more adult believers before that date. If so, the teachers can dedicate more of their time to the older areas before Ridván and assure the election of all the previously elected Local Assemblies. After the 21st they can immediately assist the new communities to elect their Local Spiritual Assemblies which will then have almost an entire year to work together before the next election.

The Department of the Secretariat responded on behalf of the House of Justice on January 25, 1976:

The Universal House of Justice has considered your letter of December 30, 1975, and in view of the circumstances outlined by you it approves your proposal, for this year, to elect some of the Local Spiritual Assemblies after Ridván although they may have nine or more members in the community prior to Ridván.

The House of Justice commends you warmly on your dedicated efforts to organize the entire community in Ecuador along sound administrative principles as the surest way to promote the teaching work.

The National Assembly called to the attention of the community through its teaching committees, the generosity and consideration of the Supreme House of Justice so that they would not have to feel that they were facing the impossible. And thus the hearts were further moved to dedicate themselves to excel their goals.

To aid the indigenous believers to understand what day the Holy Days should be celebrated and the Nineteen Day Feast especially, the believers, Tarasieh and Wolfgang Werle devised a beautiful large calendar which was printed for two consecutive years in great quantities and contributed to the National Assembly. They were presented

to the indigenous Bahá'ís by the teachers of the area so they could explain how to use them. The Indians, as well as other campesinos, were very, very happy with such a beautiful object to hang in their houses and very appreciative, for they had never had Bahá'í calendars before and these also had the noon day prayer in both Spanish and Quechua the first year, and the next year they had passages from *The Hidden Words* included. The House of Justice expressed its appreciation for their ingenuity in designing such calendar in a letter written on its behalf dated November 11, 1976:

The Universal House of Justice has received your letter of October 6, 1976 enclosing a picture of your National Spiritual Assembly, the passages from the Hidden Words translated into Quechua and a copy of the Bahá'í calendar for this year edited especially for the indigenous Local Spiritual Assemblies.

The House of Justice commends you warmly both on making the translation and on your ingenuity in editing the calendar in such a way that it will be useful and interesting to the indigenous friends.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 1976, 1977 and 1978

In 1976 the National Bahá'í community was to be privileged a second time with a visit from the Hand of the Cause of God, Mr. Enoch Olinga and also another visit from the dearly-loved Hand of the Cause, Dr. Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir. In 1970 not only was Ecuador blessed to have the two mentioned Hands of the Cause as visitors but also the beloved Hand of the Cause Rúhíyyih Khánum. This was the last visit of Mr. Olinga before his tragic demise (see section on Enoch Olinga). The two Hands brought a renewed teaching spirit to Ecuador and it was felt that the most important results of Dr. Muhájir's visit was the decision of the National Assembly to begin an extension teaching project for the duration of a year in the province of Chimborazo, a very difficult and sometimes dangerous area to teach in. But soon there was active teaching in this area and in most parts of the country.

One of the very active teaching committees at this time was the Regional teaching Committee of the North, whose members were: Señoritas Vicenta Anrango and Diana M. Célleri, Señores Gerardo Melo, Marcelo Quinteros and Jaime Ruano. One of their happiest moments in teaching came while teaching in the province of Carchi with two other native teachers Señores Luis Vizquete and Humberto Farinango. In the city of Tulcán they met and enrolled three new believers in November of that year; Señores José David Lopez, 100 years of age, Luis Cornelio Vallejo, from Julio Andrade, and Señora Carmela Paez de Vela, from the same place both 70 years of age. The teachers and the committee were overjoyed to welcome these senior citizens into the Faith.

During these years the National Assembly called the attention of the believers to the fact that Ecuador was far behind in its goals often enough to make everyone acutely conscious and anxious enough to do something about. Therefore believers who had never or rarely gone out on teaching trips began to arise to help from one

end of the country to the other. There were all youth teaching teams, all women teams and mixed teams of men, women, youth and children. The decision to go out to a goal area was often a spontaneous by a group of pioneers, youth or other believers who were not a part of a regular full-time teaching team. There were many harrowing as well as wonderful experiences and heroic achievements.

Counsellor Raúl Pavón was very busy during this period stimulating and convincing believers that they should lay aside everything else and go out to help win the goals. The goals were quite far behind in the South of the country so he went to Cuenca to help the situation and while there he visited his old co-worker in mass conversion, Lauro Célleri who had left mass conversion teaching to find work to support his growing family. He was on vacation and Raúl persuaded him and pioneer John Warner, who was also on vacation, to form a team and help "win the victory". They were joined by Auxiliary Board member Jimmie Jensen and his wife Susanna - they had wonderful success and formed Assemblies in each of the cantons assigned to them except one. When Lauro and John had to return to work, Jimmie and Susanna formed a husband and wife team and accepted a Shuara Indian's invitation to go and teach his people.¹²

The team had been teaching in the canton of Gualaquiza and Jimmie had gone out one morning to the park when he had the unusual luck of meeting a young man who was very friendly. He was named Carlos Churay. He did not know that this young man was a Shuara Indian at the time since he was dressed in ordinary clothing. He thought that he belonged to that area and he began to talk with him about the Bahá'í Faith, hoping that he would believe and accept the Message for they were trying to find enough believers in that town to form an Assembly since there was no assembly in that canton, this would have been another goal won. Sr. Churay told Jimmie that he liked what he heard, indeed he was all aglow, but he said he did not live there and before accepting this Religion he would like for him to visit his village and tell his people about this. At the time he was not sure that he could accept the invitation because they had other cantons to visit. So, he gave the Shuara a lot of pamphlets and prayer books and told him to go and teach his people for he was not sure he could come soon and if some of his people could not read he should read the literature for them and explain it. He was very excited over the way this young man responded to the teaching and the young man was excited over the Bahá'í literature and spontaneously took off a necklace, made of very tiny beads and some kind of feathers or bird tail, and said "I do not know if you will accept this"; he had taken the necklace from his own neck and was handing it to Jimmie. Jimmie cannot recall if he put it around his neck or handed it to him in his hands; he said, "I would like to think he put it around my neck himself but I really think he was too shy for that so I would have had to put it on and the young man seemed very happy." He gave Jimmie instructions as to how to get to his village. After consulting with his team Jimmie found that they had two extra days so he and Susanna set out for a very long walk - they had to cross two rivers. When they crossed the second river they were at the point of deciding they were lost and were ready to turn back when they looked and saw some people down the river bank. They inquired

as to how to find Señor Carlos Churay and discovered that these people were his family and he had sent them to wait for them for when he told them about Jimmie and the Faith they were sure Jimmie would come! He and Susanna had a wonderful time teaching these people and as a result of their efforts the whole village accepted the Faith. Later it was learned that this young man went to Cuenca and found the Bahá'ís and asked for someone to return and teach them more about the Bahá'í Faith!

While in summer school in Lima, Perú, listening to the successes in teaching being related by Mr. Sergio Couto from Brazil, Auxiliary Board member Charles Hornby got the idea of preparing a mobile institute or center to teach in some of the difficult localities. These were to be temporary centers for expansion, consolidation, deepening of teachers, etc., with emphasis on opening new goal-areas and establishing local Spiritual Assemblies. When he spoke to the Counsellor about this idea he in turn spoke to the National Assembly and they were quite pleased with the idea and suggested that he initiate this project and be responsible for it.

He worked in the most difficult areas of the sierra where the population is predominantly white. The white villagers of the sierra are known for their religious intolerance and for this reason teaching teams were more inclined to try to satisfy the goals in the campo, when possible, by teaching the Indians. In each locality he would rent a storefront or a house, whatever was available and set it up as a Bahá'í Information Center, and a place to eat and sleep for himself and for the volunteers who came from different areas to help as well as for international travelling teachers. Among the travel teachers who helped were: Señoritas Diana Montenegro and Clara Grueso from Colombia, Miss Christine Hoyt, a United States pioneer to Mexico, Mr. Keykabus Vahdat, at the time a travel teacher from Germany, who was an eager participant in Baños and a key factor in the enrollment of several people in that city. He was very grateful for the steadfastness of Bahiyyih Rashidpour and Teresa Jara in Quero in putting up with the physical discomforts of sleeping on the floor of an old flea-infested house and the terribly cold nights. It was they who with Christine enrolled the key family of the community, the Freire sisters.

An unexpected benefit of the campaign was the carrying out by the Regional Committee of a successful youth conference in Baños, utilizing the established center for sleeping, deepening and above all, teaching. The constancy for several weeks in each of five difficult localities resulted in the formation of four Spiritual Assemblies, in Pillaro, Guaranda, Quero and Baños.¹³

The Third International Quechua Conference¹⁴

The Third International Quechua Conference was held in Otavalo Ecuador, July 28 - 31, 1977. Its objective was the same as the first one, to try to invent a form of writing the Quechua language, spoken by the Quechua speaking Indians. It was desired that this conference be held in the Indigenous territory, that is, in their own environment or setting. Not knowing how many would participate

the idea was born by Raúl, the Counsellor, to build a hut on the Institute grounds - the Indians themselves would be invited to build it. The construction of the "hut", also called choza in Spanish, Diosmanta Cusijuna Wuasiy in Quechua, meaning, (the House of God's Happiness). The Tantanakuy (Conference) was made possible through contributions from the National Spiritual Assembly, the Board of Counsellors and from individual believers. Mr. Pavón suggested to the Assembly that they hold a Tantanakuy annually in the choza, which the Assembly agreed to do and to pass the decision down to the following assemblies year after year. In a report to the World Centre the National Assembly succinctly describes the Conference and its aims:

Its aim were to invent one form of writing for the Quechua languages spoken by the indigenous in Bolivia, Ecuador and Perú and also to unite the Indians of the Faith from the three countries to learn more about each other...

The report gives a birdseye view of the preparation for the occasion:

...the Bahá'ís from the campo were invited to mingas (work parties) which were held with the purpose of building a hut (a thatched roof building) and was named by the participants "Diosmanta Cusijuna Wuasiy" - the House of Gods Happiness. Bahá'ís from more than thirty communities collaborated and their numbers successively increased in each of the eight mingas... the edifice itself was a symbol of the Indian race with its roof of straw and its earthen floor. It has nine sides of brick and a diameter of 12 meters, height of twelve meters and forty centimeters... It was their (the Indians) hut and they dedicated it to Bahá'u'lláh.

The Quechua friends extended the invitations to their own friends so that all could share in the Tantanakuy. Many teachers arose at four in the morning to bring the Indians from distant communities to the Amatu'l-Bahá Ráhllyih Khárum Institute ... The first day a chosen group of ninety people participated. Delegates representing the three countries (four from Bolivia and one from Perú) addressed the Conference with a few words about their experiences teaching the Faith. Typical music from each country was played and was followed by dances that everyone joined in on..

Later on in the Tantanakuy the friends were divided into work groups to study the pamphlet that had been prepared ahead of time by one Quechua Bahá'í from Perú, Bolivia and Ecuador. They were to choose the words in the pamphlet that they could understand, as this would serve as the basis for later consultation in the Conference...

Four hundred and fifty friends were present on the last day and all participated in a spirit of love and unity and happiness was seen on all faces... The happiness of the friends was expressed in their shining faces when they exchanged hats, ponchos, laughter and above all, their love for Bahá'u'lláh.

The House of Justice was well pleased with the report which can be seen from a letter written on their behalf dated September 9, 1977:

The Universal House of Justice has been highly delighted by a report from Counsellor Raúl Pavón of the third All Quechua Conference recently held in Otavalo and instructs us to tell you how uplifted and encouraged it has felt by this demonstration of true Bahá'í activity. Mr. Pavón's report was accompanied by a number of photographs of the stages in the building of what was described as 'a small hut', which, however, was large enough to accommodate not only the Tantanakuy but will eventually be able to shelter more than 450 believers. The zeal and truly cooperative efforts of the believers who completed this structure in one month is heartwarming and a matter for the warmest congratulations.

The House of Justice is sending the news of this event to the beloved Hand of the Cause Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánúm whose heart will be rejoiced by it... The House of Justice is sending you, under separate cover, a picture for presentation to the "Diosmanta Kusijuna Wuasiy" which you may hang in an appropriate place.

The highly meritorious task of distilling from the various dialects of Quechua a lexicography acceptable to everyone is a truly Bahá'í undertaking, for not only will it promote unity among all Quechua-speaking peoples but lead to an increase in the standard of education and particularly of the ability of these vigorous and talented people to immerse themselves in the ocean of God's Revelation for this age. The House of Justice believes this to be a highly commendable undertaking...

We are to assure you and all the believers concerned of the ardent prayers of the House of Justice at the Sacred Threshold for divine confirmations to reward all efforts made to promote the ideals and objectives of the conference.

It is surprising how the indigenous communities of Ecuador participated in the preparation for the Tantanakuy. They functioned as never before in deepening courses and training to be ready to participate in the Conference.

A cable was sent to Rúhíyyih Khánúm inviting her to participate in this conference but unfortunately she was not able to come. She responded:

September 4, 1977

To those who were present at the Quechua Conference

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

Your cable informing me of the third Quechua Conference held in Otavalo brought great joy to my heart. I have been out of the Holy Land for over a month and was not able to reply to you before, and I am just leaving for a six-months' trip to Asia.

It is a great step forward in the history of the Quechua-speaking people that a third All-Quechua Conference should have now been held under the auspices of the Faith. Undoubtedly this will release great spiritual bounties and blessings not only upon the Bahá'í communities that are

Quechua-speaking but upon the people of Quechua background all over that part of South America.

The days that some of us were able to spend in Cuzco together are always fresh in my memory. It was a wonderful, never-to-be-forgotten occasion, and I also remember the time I visited Otavalo and was able to meet the Bahá'ís in many communities.

I miss you all and assure you of my most loving prayers and my warmest greetings.

Rúhíyyih

A Pioneer carries Faith to the Auca (Guarani) Tribe

It was also in 1977 when one of the Indian tribes of Ecuador that had not been reached and taught the Bahá'í Faith, the Aucas or Guaraní tribe, was visited by pioneer Edward Jones. Traditionally they had lived in small clans and viciously attacked and killed outsiders who ventured into their territory. By 1977, however, some of them lived in villages which were semi-westernized and were connected, by trail, to the white civilization. These seemed to have lost their habitual aggressiveness. One village in particular, Dayuno, was visited regularly by tourists, who made the two-hour canoe trip, plus a nine-hour walk to arrive at the small group of houses on the banks of the Rio Nushiño. The hamlet was presided over by a woman chief named Wiñami, who helped to support her tribe by charging a handsome price for meals, lodging and for interpreting in case someone wanted to interview a fierce warrior.

Edward was working on a book at that time about this tribe so he was deputized by Wolfgang Werle, a believer in Ecuador from Germany, to go to the Aucas both to gather information for the book and also to teach the Faith to this tribe. Edward reported that:

The trail to Dayuno starts at the banks of the Napo River, at a village called campana cocha, and leads through about 13 miles of ravines, some of them filled with waist-deep water. About two-thirds of the way the traveler must cross the Nushiño River, sometimes by wading, at other times by swimming, depending on how high the water is. I made two trips there, one in August and the other in October 1977. The first time I was guided by the school teacher of the hamlet, who was not an Auca. I did not have an opportunity to teach the Cause, but I said prayers on the river bank. The second trip I made alone. It was an unforgettable journey I made through the dark forest. I slept overnight in a rude shelter, and finally saw the first Indian at three o'clock the following afternoon. I had passed 24 hours without seeing a single human being. This time I was able to discuss the Faith with Wiñami, and we became friends. She later visited me in Puyo, in the Amazon region, where I had decided to settle.¹⁵

A Tantanakuy was called for by the Regional Teaching Committee in the Guamote area and successfully carried out during the days of September 17 - 19, 1978. It was ably supported by the native believers in the Sierra and the Quechua-speaking North American pioneer Phillip Turner, who has been a mainstay in those areas in the center of the country.

When it appeared that Radio Bahá'í was about to become a reality and up until the time of its inauguration, most of the stress was placed on this project. It was indeed like waiting for the arrival of a firstborn. So in spite of the overwhelming responsibilities involved to attain the other goals, Radio Bahá'í took precedence.. Then on August 21, 1978 the National Spiritual Assembly joyfully sent the following cable to the House of Justice:

JOYOUSLY ANNOUNCE INAUGURATION RADIO BAHAI STOP 150 PARTICIPANTS FIRST DAY TEACHING CONFERENCE 200 OFFICIAL INAUGURATION STOP 1500 MUSIC FESTIVAL ATTENDANCE BAHAIS FIVE NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES 20 TEACHERS AROSE INSPIRED WIN ASSEMBLY GOALS BY NOVEMBER GRATEFUL YOUR CONSTANT PRAYERS.

LOVE
NSA ECUADOR

28 AUGUST 1978

DELIGHTED YOUR CABLE MAY FORMAL INAUGURATION STATION RADIO BAHAI BRING WIDESPREAD REALIZATION NOBLE AIMS PURPOSE FAITH SERVE PEOPLES LOCAL AREA BRING ADVANCEMENT ECUADOR STOP DELIGHTED PROGRESS TOWARD GOALS PLAN AIDED BY HAPPY EVENTS OTAVALO PRAYING SUCCESSES CONFIRMATIONS BEYOND EXPECTATION.

LOVING GREETINGS
UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

By October 1978 there were 300 local Spiritual Assemblies established including one in each canton. The National Assembly informed the House of Justice as to how they were attempting to conquer all the goals by the end of the Plan. They expressed their gratitude for the teachers and pioneers from Bolivia, Colombia and Perú, who were instrumental in gaining many of the Assembly goals. As a stimulus for all the teachers in the Sierra they were invited to meet with the National Assembly every two to four weeks as well as with Counsellor Pavón, when he was available, the National Teaching Committee and/or members of the Auxiliary Board to discuss the progress of the teaching and to make further plans. Six additional cantons had been added in the country since the beginning of the Plan and the Assembly was concerned as to whether or not they would be included in the Plan to establish local Spiritual Assemblies. They rejoiced to be informed by the House of Justice that their goals were not increased to establish Assemblies in these cantons, but on November 20 1978 the Department of Secretariat wrote on their behalf that: *The House of Justice would consider it highly meritorious if you succeed in forming assemblies in any of the remaining counties (cantons) that have been added in your country since 1974.*

The following report will demonstrate how some of the pioneers and teachers fared trying to elect local assemblies during Ridván of 1979 to help win the goals of the Plan. Janet Fulton Dexter kindly taped this report:

It was a Sunday in April of 1979 and we were electing the Assemblies in Otavalo. It was in late Ridván and I was seven and a half months pregnant. Because of this I was unable to elect the Assemblies in my zone and Rufino

(Auxiliary Board member, Rufino Gualavisí) had come to help us. Ralph and Rufino were going to elect a community very near Otavalo. It was called Guananci on the Bahá'í list but recently the community took its old name again of La Bolsa. It is on the other side of the hill called Cotama Loma. They went with Sonia. They went to several communities that day and left the vehicle on the road near the community they were visiting. They approached a home which Rufino thought he remembered to be a Bahá'í home. The corn was very high and it is always quite difficult to judge the homes when the corn is high for they look quite different. In these indigenous communities one always stands away from the house and call out your greeting and wait for them to invite you in to talk. At this house an old woman came out and when she saw them she was very angry. They entered the patio and she went in and called out for the men - it seemed she was the group head. They rang a bell and all of the neighbors came with big six inch thick sticks and poles and began chasing Rufino and Ralph through the corn field. They lost the path and they both received several blows - the people were trying to kill them. Ralph was lost and could not handle the situation, he gave little Sonia to Rufino and he stopped so that Rufino could get away with Sonia. Ralph was hit and fainted or was knocked out. It was a miracle that Sonia was not killed.

I was home sewing when Rufino came in alone. He could not hardly stand for he was bleeding and Sonia was on his back. He could not talk and his face was purple and he was completely exhausted and could hardly breathe. He kept trying to tell me what happened and couldn't for some time. Finally he was able to tell me - he had seen Ralph fall and knew he was down but nothing else. I calmed Sonia down and saw she was not hurt so I left her with the maid and we went to the police station. I wanted to leave Rufino at home but he insisted on coming with me. When we arrived at the police station there were only two men on duty and when they heard the story they really hesitated but they did get tear gas and asked someone to take over the office. Just the day before they had had a problem. The owner of the hacienda there had had his car burned and there were tremendous problems. We all got into my car and drove to the community. On the way the car stopped. I stayed with the car and Rufino went with the police by foot. Rufino must have been close to having a heart attack, he was confused and led them up the wrong road. They came back after a very long time not having found the house or the Bahá'í vehicle. We decided to walk back into Otavalo. It was ten kilometers to the police station and then we went on to the house. Ralph was there beaten up and his ears were bleeding, his clothes were ripped into shreds and there was blood all over the place. He was very calm and serious and he was hurting.

Later he was able to tell us that when he was unconscious he had been dragged back to their house. He did not know how long he was unconscious but when he gained consciousness, two men and the old woman were speaking Quechua. (Ralph speaks Quechua fluently but they had no way of knowing it) They were talking about how they were going to kill him. They felt that they had to kill him because of what they had done. They knew they were in big trouble and did not want the authorities to find out about it. He explained that he was a Bahá'í and was electing Assemblies. They were adamant that they did not want foreigners in their community and they did not want to hear about religion. He told them that he had a family and

and that he would not hurt them in any way. Finally they decided to let him go and he drove home. He lost the keys in the corn field but the Bahá'í vehicle was so bad that you could stick anything in it and it would start, even your finger would make it function!

It was the first time that he felt that he would die. It was so unexpected - with no chance to say good-bye. We were very grateful that he had escaped. We had a lot of financial problems and a series of severe tests of which this was the first.

A few weeks later Ralph's wounds were getting better. We wanted to make sure that he did not have any problems from the blows but he was alright. About a month later he became ill with a high temperature. We went to the doctor and he gave him medication but nothing helped him for two or three weeks. It was a viral infection we later found out. At this same time my pregnancy was advancing, and we had crops ready to be picked. We had thousands of lettuce ripe and Ralph had to sell them. We did not want them to rot in the field so I had to harvest them and take them to sell. Ralph was still ill but we did not know what was wrong with him - he finally got well. It was just two weeks after that that I went to Quito to have the baby. I was in the hospital having Sarah and Ralph went back to the house to tell Sonia and Tommy that they had a baby sister and he found Tommy with a bottle of pills and he had taken some - he found a couple of the pills and the bottle but it was all in German and he could not understand it. He took him to the hospital where they pumped his stomach out and he seemed all right afterward. Ralph then went to telephone his parents and while he was placing the call Tommy fainted. He picked him up and ran out of the building as fast as he could. He was still sick himself but he kept trying to keep Tommy awake but he did not respond. When he arrived at the hospital he ran directly to the emergency room. I heard the call on the loud-speaker for a doctor but I had no idea that it was my own child that was in danger. Ralph said that Tommy's heart had stopped beating and he was not breathing. They had to rip his clothes off and he was given a shot in the heart...The heart responded but luckily they called in a drug specialist who was in the hospital for the summer. They did not have space for him in the intensive care unit and he needed the heart and lung machine, so finally one of the doctors moved someone else out so that Tommy could be saved. The pills had started to work on his system. That night Ralph came and told me what had happened but the doctor had strictly forbidden me to leave the bed.

Soon the electricity went out and it was one minute until the auxiliary unit turned on - I knew that my son was under the machines at that time, then after fifteen minutes the auxiliary unit stopped. We had just had a pioneer conference a few months before and the Báb's prayer for emergencies suddenly came to me from the conference and I prayed. No one believed that he would live but that night the crisis passed - we cabled the House of Justice for prayers and when I got back from the hospital I prayed, "Please, no more tests." 16

CONCLUSION OF THE FIVE YEAR PLAN - VICTORY ACHIEVED

On December 31, 1978 the National Assembly joyfully submitted the following information to the Universal House of Justice.

That there were now a total of 315 local Spiritual Assemblies, 15 over the goal; 402 groups; 104 isolated centres; 821 localities; 11 incorporated local Spiritual Assemblies and 30,818 believers in the country.

They reported that they expected that before January there would be 16 incorporated local Spiritual Assemblies, and that now out of 112 cantons in Ecuador, 109 had local Spiritual Assemblies, another victory.

After receiving this report the House of Justice's Department of the Secretariat wrote on their behalf January 11, 1979:

The Universal House of Justice has asked us to acknowledge your letter of 16 December 1978 in which you provide an up-to-date status report on the number of Local Spiritual Assemblies established, the number of localities opened, and local Hazíratu'l-Quds acquired. It has also directed us to make the following comments.

The House of Justice is pleased that you have surpassed the locality and numerical Local Assembly goals, and it notes that you have yet to form Assemblies in five more cantones in order to complete that goal. We are to express the confidence of the House of Justice that this goal will be fulfilled in the near future.

The House of Justice was concerned lest all the goals of the Five Year Plan would not be achieved; therefore, on April 10, 1979 the Assembly sent them a current report:

The only goals which we lack at this point are the incorporation of Local Spiritual Assemblies and translations into two additional languages. The work for the incorporations has been done and ready for the signature of the Minister of the Government, but because of grave political problems within the government, these papers have been waiting for this signature since November. We beg your prayers that the Minister of the Government sign these papers before Ridván and thus complete this goal.

As to the goal of translations into two additional languages, we have a pamphlet of prayers in Shuar ready to print, but are running into delays in the translations into Cayapa. Again we beg your prayers that this be completed as soon as possible.

After a delay of almost six months, the Minister of the Government signed the incorporation papers of the local Spiritual Assemblies of Riobamba, Limones, Bajito, La Tola and Canchimalero the morning of April 20! On May 1, the National Assembly informed the House of Justice:

We would like to explain our cable of 20 April, 1979 indicating the final state of the goals of the Five Year Plan in Ecuador. After a delay of almost six months, the Minister of the Government signed the incorporation papers of the Local Spiritual Assemblies of Riobamba, Limones, Bajito, La Tola and Cachimalero, the morning of the 20th of April. We also enclose copies of the pamphlets in the Shuara and Cayapa languages.

It was in February that the National Assembly found it necessary to write to the House of Justice and request permission to delay calling the National Convention on the usual dates during the Ridván period and requested that it be held the following week. Their letter of February 12, 1979 explained:

It has come to our attention that the national election day for Ecuador is the 29 of April, and we were planning our National Convention for the 26 - 29 of April since it is the only free weekend during Ridván, the weekend being the time when the majority of Bahá'ís and delegates could attend the convention. However, on election day, all Ecuadorian citizens have to vote, and have to be in their homes to be able to vote in their home communities. No means of transportation between cities and towns will be running on that day. This makes it virtually impossible for many of the delegates and the grand majority of all Bahá'ís in Ecuador to attend the National Convention that weekend.

They asked if it would be possible to reschedule the Convention to the following weekend even though it would be after Ridván. Permission was granted. Also to assist the Assemblies to complete their goals of the Plan the House of Justice had given permission to all Assemblies to elect assemblies during the entire twelve days of Ridván, which relieved a great deal of pressure everyone was working under. However, everyone was anxious for the Convention to begin in order to find out if all the goals were met. This is the report the National Assembly forwarded, in part, to the House of Justice and presented to the Convention:

*The goals were.**

1. *To raise the number of localities where Bahá'ís reside to at least 750. Goal attained - total localities 843*
2. *Raise number of local Spiritual Assemblies to minimum of 300. including at least one in each canton, and one in the Galápagos. Goal attained - total local Spiritual Assemblies 332.*

There were 96 cantons at the beginning of the Plan. These were all the Assembly was responsible for but the Government added 16 more cantons to the country during this period making a total of 112 cantons and out of the 112 cantons in Ecuador now 109 have Assemblies - another great victory! The Galapagos had two local Spiritual Assemblies - this is a hardship post indeed and to establish two Assemblies there was quite a feat!

3. *Raise number of incorporated local Spiritual Assemblies to at least 14. Incorporated Assemblies raised to 16 - goal surpassed.*
4. *Acquire at least 19 Hazíratu'l-Quds - goal surpassed, 20 acquired.*
5. *Expand the use of radio for Bahá'í broadcasts aimed at proclamation of the Faith to greater numbers of listeners.... Overwhelmingly achieved.*
6. *Encourage and organize regular Bahá'í activities and classes for women, youth and children of the communities in your area. Achieved with great success.*

*This statistical information was based on corrected reports submitted during the year and not on the June 15, 1979 Semi-Annual Report.

All the goals were won and even more but some that were won and not listed were the following published translations:

Prayers in Quechua, Prayers in Shuara, and, Bahá'í Songs in Quechua.

Works translated but were not as yet published in the Quechua language: *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* and *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh.*

Further at the end of the Plan there were 399 groups, 34 believers in the Galapagos (at the beginning of the Plan there were only eight believers in the Galapagos), and there were over 32,214 believers in the country. There were three Bahá'í radio programs; "Cultural, Human characteristics and Spiritual Labor...." For example, under human characteristics, programs have been developed on the following subjects: Culinary art, Agriculture, Health Education, Social Service for the public and Syntony Centers were organized.

Thus ended the Five Year Plan gloriously - and the end of the History of the Bahá'í Faith in Ecuador for the years 1940 - 1979; but, for the pioneers and teachers the memories of the beautiful varied experiences linger and of the trials and tribulations suffered in the path of Bahá'u'lláh - they are engraved on their souls and no doubt this is what they have "been made to endure in the path of God." (*Gleanings*, P.156)

S U P P L E M E N T

HISTORY OF THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH IN ECUADOR

<u>Supplement</u>	<u>Page</u>
Radio Bahá'í	267
Appreciation	276
Virginia Orbison	
Gayle Woolson	
Lawrence (Larry) Kramer	
In Memoriam	277
Pacora Blue Mountain	277
Wilma Thomas	277
Eda Rae Keith (Peterson)	
Dr. Ghodsea Ashraf	
Blanca de Campos	
John Stearns	278
Haig Kevorkian	279
Moyses Mosquera C.	280
Hascle Cornbleth	281
Clementina and Segundo Pavón	282
Hand of the Cause, Mr. Enoch Olinga	284
Hand of the Cause, Dr. Rahmatu'llah Muhájir	289
Juan Vargas A.	293
Member of the Board of Counsellors, Raúl Pavón	294
Early recollections of, by Elizabeth Kappus	297
Pioneers and Travel Teachers to Ecuador	309
References and Bibliography	320

RADIO BAHÁ'Í

The medium of radio has been used for Bahá'í secondary proclamation since the first pioneer to Ecuador, John Stearns, arrived and initiated its use to proclaim the Bahá'í Faith. In a country where the roads are bad, travel teachers are few but where transistor radios are relatively cheap, the airwaves are a practical way or proclaiming the Faith to seekers and deepening those who have already accepted the Faith. Thus Bahá'í teachers for many years have been keenly aware of the importance and need for radio.

Hascle Cornbleth, the second pioneer to Ecuador, continued the work after John's death and over the years various Bahá'í communities were able to utilize this medium for proclamation. A major breakthrough occurred in 1969 when the National Spiritual Assembly foresaw the need of their own radio station and wrote to the Universal House of Justice on May 9, 1969:

In order to fulfill the requirements of proclamation, expansion and consolidation in the mass conversion area covering the Provinces of Imbabura and Pichincha, our National Spiritual Assembly feels that it would be of great value to establish a radio transmitting station on top of one of the mountains in the center of the area with a long wave 1000 watt transmitter with which we could broadcast programs in both Quechua and Spanish to reach both the entire Indian and white populations of the area. The programs in Quechua would be of proclamation to all of the small cities located in the area. In all over 60,000 people could be reached in this manner at a relatively small cost and it would help greatly in the consolidation work. All of the Indians have transistor radios and we could make the programs very attractive to them.

On May 27, 1969 the House of Justice responded:

We have your letter of May 9, 1969 suggesting the idea of a radio transmitting station for the broadcasting of programs in both Quechua and Spanish to reach the entire Indian and white population in the mass conversion area covering the Provinces of Imbabura and Pichincha.

While there is no objection in principle, we think you should first investigate all of the various factors involved. First of all, you will need to know the regulations governing radio broadcasting and what will be expected of you in the way of programming; all of the costs involved including equipment and the cost of technical staff and other personnel necessary to maintain and operate a radio station; the cost of developing programs and the availability of personnel to do so; and ways and means of financing the entire operation. We think you should go into these factors in depth and in detail and consult those who are experienced in the operation of radio stations.

You should also consider whether it is possible to obtain radio time on existing radio stations and whether or not you could achieve your objective of reaching the masses in these two provinces with less effort and less expense through this means.

The secretary of the Radio Committee of the National Spiritual Assembly, Miss (Margaret) Ann Miller, a pioneer and extremely proficient in whatever tasks she undertakes, reported to the Assembly on January 10, 1973, on the progress of the radio activities. She stated that among those who were presently involved with the radio, were two people who had been working with it since its inception: Sra. Clementina de Pavón, who was working full time writing and translating programs into the Quechua language as well as announcing; Rodrigo Quintero, an Otavalan youth, who is now a Bahá'í and then manager of Radio Bahá'í, who began working with the radio as a non-Bahá'í technical expert and Alfonso Tulcanazo, an Otavalan Indian who began work taping programs. He was trained to read Quechua scripts by Señora Clementina Pavón. She also trained him in the art of translating from Spanish to Quechua and how to use a typewriter.

Later in the year Señorita Diana María Célleri went to work with the Radio Committee and was trained to work as an announcer and soon she began to help writing programs and helping with the secretarial work, followed by her sister Piedad and Luis Vizúete.

When the Radio Committee first began to function, programs were being broadcast for two and a half hours each day, seven days a week, on Radio Turismo in Otavalo, half an hour six days a week on Radio Otavalo, one hour daily (half hour programs repeated) six days a week in Radio Ecos de Cayambe, and a half hour program free once every two weeks in Radio Nacional in Quito. To tape the half hour programs someone would hurriedly choose writings from a book (usually The New Garden) and tape the shows as best as possible, dividing the readings in the most logical place and to hunt for appropriate music. Often the programs of one day was not related to that of the next.

After that time the Radio Committee developed a series of programs based on five major topics: "What is the Bahá'í Faith", "What does the Bahá'í Faith Teach?", "Bahá'í History", "The Relationship between Christianity and the Bahá'í Faith", and "How one becomes a Bahá'í". In November of that year programming on Radio Nacional was terminated because the new station manager objected to programs of a religious nature. On February 15, 1973 the National Assembly brought the House of Justice up to date on its Radio activities:

We wish to let you know of a wonderful teaching and consolidation opportunity which has been made possible for us and is mentioned in the minutes of our meeting held on February, 10 and 11 which you will be receiving shortly.

We have rented a small radio station in Otavalo which reaches the majority of the many Indian believers and Local Spiritual Assemblies in that area. For only 3,500.00 sucres a month we have use of equipment 24 hours a day and the services of 3 employees (2 announcers and an electrician).

Mrs. Clementina de Pavón, of the National Institute in Otavalo and Mr. Ralph Dexter, a Canadian believer, are now busy preparing programs in the Quechua language. We have asked them to use as much as 5 hours

a day for direct Bahá'í teaching of Bahá'í teaching and consolidation purposes. They plan to present Bahá'í programs beginning at 4.30 PM until 7.30 PM. The time in between will be used for commercial, social and cultural purposes with a mind to indirect teaching of Bahá'í principals and virtues in the Spanish language. Raúl Pavón will be in charge of the commercial hours and general management of the station which is known as 'Turismo, La voz del Pueblo'. We will not change the name of the station or identify it as a Bahá'í station. Then after the 6 months contract is up or if for any other reason we have to abandon the project it will not reflect unfavorably on the Faith.

The House of Justice answered on March 4, 1973:

We were very pleased with the highly interesting news contained in your letter of February 15th of your renting a small radio station in Otavalo. You have undertaken a very arduous and demanding task which can undoubtedly be of great service both to the teaching and consolidation work of the Cause.

We shall be very interested to receive news of the progress of this project and ask you to keep us informed of plans and programs as they develop.

Then on March 15, 1973 the Audio-Visual Department of the Universal House of Justice wrote to the National Assembly:

Your letter of 15 February to the Universal House of Justice concerning your new radio program has been given to us for our information, and we hasten to write to express our happiness at the splendid opportunity which will be, we feel sure, a most significant first experience for the Faith in the prolonged and intensive use of radio as a medium of direct Bahá'í instruction, as well as of lay proclamation and teaching, not to mention the added social and cultural programs which themselves can be strongly influenced by the Bahá'í social and moral principles. With the keenest of anticipation we shall hear of your development of this program on behalf of your National Community.

And again on April 11, 1973 the National Assembly communicated to the House of Justice:

Public acceptance of Bahá'í teachings as heard on the two stations in Otavalo has been such that the National Institute 'Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khanum has received various visits from Indian believers thanking us for the programs and from non-Bahá'ís thanking us for the teachings in Quechua. A group of students from the city of Otavalo came to ask for more information about the Faith. Programs taped in Otavalo are bilingual in Quechua and Spanish.

And the National Assembly was happy to receive the following letter dated July 8, 1973:

Your letter of 11 April reported most helpfully upon the progress of your radio programs in Ecuador, in Otavalo, Ambato and Quito. What you are seeking to do is very praiseworthy in the range of subject presented and in the apparently effective support which you are giving to the teaching.

and deepening work in areas of mass enrollment, particularly among the Indians. Plainly, the field of radio broadcasting is open to your devoted efforts, and may well prove to be a most effective instrument of proclamation as well as a regular way to reach and teach the new Bahá'ís.

... there is a keen interest throughout the Bahá'í world in the power of radio to serve the interests of the Cause, its prestige and its expansion. Your own intensive efforts deserve support, since their scope and duration mark a kind of program never before undertaken in the Bahá'í world community, hence of real significance. Therefore, we are happy to inform you that, through the generosity of a believer who has contributed funds specifically in support of radio systems development, we are making available a grant...to meet your radio budget for the coming year. We will expect, of course, that the production staff will not only report fully on its work, but will also share with others who may join them in similar work in Latin America and elsewhere such materials as may be developed'

By early 1974 the National Spiritual Assembly was firmly convinced of the need for a Bahá'í owned Radio station in this country, which is rugged and a large part of it is inhospitable even for those who are accustomed to it, but the airwaves penetrate where the teacher often dare to tread. So on January 6, 1974, a letter from the National Spiritual Assembly was sent to the House of Justice expressing such need and why:

In our last meeting of the National Spiritual Assembly, we decided to ask you for assistance in buying a radio station to be operated through our National Radio Committee...

At present there are four Bahá'ís (an indigenous youth from Otavalo, a former radio announcer of Radio Turismo who recently accepted the Faith, a young woman from Cuenca and a pioneer from the United States) who are working full time preparing taped programs for broadcast on seven commercial radio stations throughout Ecuador. We have leased, in each case, at least one half hour daily of radio time. At present we are broadcasting a total of five and one half hours daily on stations in the province of Imbabura, Cayambe, Tungurahua, Chimborazo, Cañar and Azuay and are also reaching many other provinces with the healing message of Bahá'u'lláh. In March, we plan to expand to include a station in Guayaquil and one in Esmeraldas.

We feel, however, that there is now a need to begin operating our own Bahá'í radio station. At first, it would be low-powered and would be heard only in the province of Imbabura. The rest of Ecuador, for a time, would have to be served by taped programs broadcast by leasing space on commercial radio stations as we are now doing.

There are several reasons why we feel the need to have our own station. Perhaps the most important is that under the present circumstances, we are at the mercy of the owners of the radio stations. They are free to raise our rent beyond our capacity to pay any time they wish. Also, in the near future, as the Faith gains even more prestige, we are bound to provoke criticism and possibly persecution by religious authorities here in Ecuador, which would spell the end to our leasing time on these stations which are all owned and operated by Roman Catholics, and would certainly

cause the rejection of any petition by us for a license to purchase and operate a radio station. Another reason is that instead of paying to lease time on radio stations owned by others we could be gradually establishing our own station and gaining experience. Friends from other countries could come and share our experiences and profit from our mistakes, preparing them to enter the field of teaching by radio in their own lands. Having our own station would eliminate an embarrassing problem, that of non-Bahá'í announcers interrupting our programs with inappropriate music or commercials or not broadcasting the programs in their entirety.

Then on March 17, 1974 the Universal House of Justice addressed the following letter to Mr. K. Dean Stephens in San Juan, Puerto Rico with a copy of the letter to the National Assembly of Ecuador:

We write to enlist your help in considering this matter and extend to you a warm invitation to visit Ecuador on our behalf to investigate the possibilities of acquiring a radio station there within reasonable limits of \$10,000 mentioned in the National Spiritual Assembly's letter. We can offer you no detailed guidance in this investigation as your professional expertise will lead you to make all the necessary enquiries both for the establishment of such a station and its maintenance and efficient use. What we need is a report evaluating all the factors concerned which would enable us to come to a decision whether or not to embark on the project which undoubtedly would be of great service to the Faith.

If you can find the time to undertake this task you will be rendering a meritorious service and may well initiate a new era in the proclamation and teaching of the Faith. If at the same time you can visit Bolivia with the same objectives in view it would be very agreeable to us.

The House of Justice sent to Mr. Stephens a copy of the letter from the National Spiritual Assembly addressed to them on January 6, 1974, with a copy of the National Radio Committee's report dated January 15, 1974. The House of Justice informed him that "These two documents support the proposal of that National Spiritual Assembly to establish a radio station for the Faith in Ecuador." On April 7, the House of Justice addressed both the National Assembly of Ecuador and Bolivia:

Further to recent correspondence on this subject, we have sought the consultative services of a distinguished Bahá'í radio and television engineer, Mr. K. Dean Stephens, now of Puerto Rico. Mr. Stephens has indicated to us his availability to visit your countries, and we have authorized his direct correspondence with your assemblies in making his travel arrangements.

Mr. Stephens is a highly qualified technical expert in radio and television engineering, holds a number of patents for television innovations, and currently manages several stations in Puerto Rico, hence is keenly aware of managerial as well as technical matters in relation to radio broadcast operations. He will be able to advise you and the House of Justice about the feasibility and costs of a range of possible radio operations which may be considered for Bahá'í service.

It is our hope that the great power of radio for proclamation, teaching and deepening may be mobilized wherever possible, and with the promising initiatives which have occurred in Ecuador and elsewhere we now antici-

pate the development of more widespread uses of the medium which will be of service to the Cause and to mankind.

Following up the House of Justice's invitation to Mr. Stephens to visit Ecuador on their behalf, the National Assembly sent a warm invitation to him on April 9, 1974:

We received a copy of the letter of the Universal House of Justice inviting you to visit Ecuador to investigate the possibilities of establishing a Bahá'í Radio Station here. The National Assembly wants you to know that you are most welcome to come anytime that is convenient for you and that we will do all in our power to make you feel at home and to help you with your investigation.

Then came the inevitable tests. The license was applied for, based on frequencies recommended by Mr. Stephens, but was denied in May because of a new broadcasting law. Undeterred, the National Assembly decided to try again on some other frequency and the House of Justice was in accord.

House of Justice approves first Radio Project

The thorough and informative documentation on the Bahá'í Radio Project submitted, on your behalf, by Mr. Stephens, together with the copies of your own letters of July 8th and September 10th to Mr. Stephens have greatly assisted us in coming to a decision about the entire project.

We now authorize you to proceed with the first stages of the program outlined... We are asking Mr. K. Dean Stephens to work in close collaboration with your Assembly in carrying out this project.

We recognize that an early realization of the program as visualized by Mr. Stephens and your Assembly may be hampered by a number of apparent obstacles. However, we have great confidence that you will be guided to surmount all difficulties and will achieve your aim. Mr. Stephens will be of the greatest assistance in such things as preparing engineering specifications and exhibits for the license application, for assisting you in procuring the necessary equipment once the licensing is assured and in supervising installation and early operation of the station. We hope that the equipment purchased abroad will, in view of the educational, cultural and religious purposes of the station, be entirely exempt from or subject to reductions of customs duties.

The religious and cultural content of your programs is important alike for achieving the goals of the Faith and bringing education and services to the non-Bahá'í community; your committee's schedule and suggested topics are most helpful, but a further consideration of program content will be of great assistance. Likewise you will need to work out a timetable which will enable you to fit together the many components of the project. One of the priorities is undoubtedly the search for a manager-engineer, or a manager-program director, namely, the key person who will coordinate the operation of the station, participate in production and broadcasting and work with the volunteers. Finding the most suitable person for this position may well determine the early success of the pilot program and your choice must obviously be made with great wisdom and judgement.

We are delighted at the prospect of your engaging in this pioneer action, which has come about as a consequence of your own initiative and hard work of the past two years. Your perception of Bahá'í needs and their satisfaction through radio broadcasts has prepared you for what may well, in time, be hailed as an historic forward step in proclamation, expansion and deepening through the medium of radio, a medium which the beloved Guardian hoped would be exploited on behalf of the Cause of God. We congratulate you and look forward to news of your progress in this significant program.

On January 22, 1975 the National Spiritual Assembly again applied to the National Frequency Office for allocation of a radio frequency, which was denied on May 27. This was quite a shock so they turned to the House of Justice for advice on June 2 and on June 18, 1975 the Department of the Secretariat responded on their behalf:

The Universal House of Justice has received your letter of June 2 with its enclosed copy of the new Decree No. 256-A, the law on television and radio broadcasting, and has instructed us to convey its comments.

It is regrettable that the application has been denied. However, the House of Justice fully approves your making a new application after consultation with Mr. K. Dean Stephens both on the terms of the application to be made and on all the implications of the new law in respect of your radio programmes.

The House of Justice assures you of its prayers at the Sacred Threshold for the overcoming of all difficulties facing you in this new endeavour in which your National Assembly is a pioneer. Your success and experience in launching the project will be of great value in all future undertakings for the setting up of Bahá'í radio stations.

It was only through the audacity and diligence of the National Assembly's representative for radio, Sra. Isabel de Calderón, and a number of unusual "coincidences" that the frequency was finally granted.

When the request for a radio frequency was submitted, all the required documents were attached to it; however, there was no law for cultural radio stations in Ecuador, even though there were several stations operating bearing the name "cultural", so this department transferred the documents and request to the Office of the Minister of Education where all 200 documents were lost! And copies of all these documents had to be gathered and presented again.

Then on July 5, 1977 a letter was issued from the office of President of the Republic, National Secretary of Public Information, to the Director of Frequencies submitting "a favorable report so that the frequency requested by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís may be granted for a Radio Station to be installed and operated in Cajas...."

On July 19, 1977 the Ecuadorian Institute of Telecommunications wrote to the "Representative of the Bahá'ís" (Dr. Ernesto Muñoz, lawyer), that:

When the National Secretariat of Public Information submits a favorable report regarding personnel and programming of radio "Bahá'ís" in conformity with the requirement of Article 1, Paragraph h, of the Regulation of the National Secretariat of Public Information, the Direction of Frequencies of ITEL (Ecuadorian Institute of Telecommunication) will proceed with the reservation of the frequency of 1420 KHZ, and grant a term of 90 days for the purpose of proceeding with the installation and tests of your station, after which this office must be notified for the purpose of proceeding with the technical inspection prior to the legalization of frequency 1420 KHZ.

At the time of issuance of this document most all available manpower in Otavalo was engrossed in the construction of a giant thatched—roofed "hut", to seat about 450 people for the International Quechua Indigenous Conference or "Tananakuy", which was to be celebrated the last weekend of the month. Nor had the land for the transmitter been purchased at this time and there were problems with the Agrarian Reform. It was essential to purchase the site planned upon because this was the basis for the authorization of the frequency. When Mr. Stephens arrived to specify locations for the building and antenna, the decision had been made to proceed on the land with an informal agreement with the landowner, a calculated risk indeed, and now 60 days only left to get on the air. At this point the World Center approved for Counsellor Raúl Pavón to assume the responsibility for the construction of the building and stimulation of the radio staff.

Ninety days were granted for the construction and installation of Radio Bahá'í with the option that an extension of time would be granted, if needed and requested. Initially there was no hope of being ready in such short time, so, the urgency was not felt that prevailed sometime later when it was decided that it was not wise to count on such a permission.

IT WAS ON OCTOBER 12, 1977 WHEN THE FIRST BAHÁ'Í RADIO STATION IN THE WORLD BEGAN ITS TEST BROADCASTING!

The awarding of the frequency and the permission to begin construction was granted on July 19, 1977, the same week as the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the first radio broadcasts from Ecuador! The National Spiritual Assembly had asked for an inspection on October 11th so that on the 12th, "El Día de la Raza" (the day Columbus discovered America, the first broadcast could go on the air, this was one week before the expiration of the deadline, October 20, 1977.)

The target date to commence full power, (one Kilowatt), full schedule transmission (6 hours daily) was December 12, 1977. This date was chosen because of its spiritual historical significance, the arrival of Bahá'u'lláh in the city of Adrianople on December 12, 1863 where He proclaimed his mission to the world's secular and ecclesiastical leaders...

This was not the end of the struggle, however, for there were problems with customs officials and of having part of the equipment impounded by them in the airport just a few days before the target

date of the first test broadcast. While Mr. Stephens and the radio manager, Mr. Kamram Mansuri went to the airport to seek the release of the equipment the other Bahá'ís waited and prayed. No doubt the prayers helped for the manager himself aided them in securing the equipment and instead of charging \$400 deposit plus fines he had it released to them for about four dollars.

The complete history of Bahá'í Radio in Ecuador must of necessity be treated in a separate book. Herein is just a sketch of its development and a bare mention of those who worked so hard to make it a reality. Until such time as the history is written by future historians the memory of those who played such historic role in its development should not be forgotten. Among those who have not been mentioned in this abridgement are: Donald and Barbara Barrett, Dorothy Campbell, Michael Stokes, Kurt Heim, Ralph Dexter, Carmen Stewart, James Theroux and others.

Those who were fortunate enough to be present no doubt will always remember when "Bahá'í Radio of Ecuador - Goes On the Air" and recall that,

It is 11:13 exactly, a voice, a prayer, "O My God! O My God! United the hearts of thy servants, and reveal to them they great purpose...", revealed by Bahá'u'lláh and recited by the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador's secretary, Señorita Teresa Jara N., in the Spanish language. All stand with bowed heads in reverence. Another prayer in the Quecha language by Alfonso Tulcanazo - heads are still bowed - tears are rolling down cheeks - more prayers followed by a brief melody. Now, for the first time in Bahá'í history one hears the announcement over the air:

BAHÁ'Í RADIO OF ECUADOR, ECUADORIAN STATION - AN ANTENNA FOR THE SERVICE OF THE CULTURAL PROGRESS AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE FAMILY. THIS IS A TEST BROADCAST OF OUR EQUIPMENT AT 1420 KILOCYCLES, MEDIUM WAVE.

IN

APPRECIATION

VIRGINIA ORBISON

ITINERANT PIONEER TEACHER

KNIGHT OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

GAYLE WOOLSON

ITINERANT PIONEER TEACHER

KNIGHT OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

LAWRENCE (LARRY) KRAMER

PIONEER

Special appreciation to Miss Orbison for the yeoman service she performed in gathering the scattered believers together which John Stearns had left behind due to his tragic illness, and finding, through prayer and perseverance, enough believers to establish the first local Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador in the city of Guayaquil. For health reason Miss Orbison was called home by the Inter-America Committee and she later went out to the Balearic Islands where she won the crown of Knight of Bahá'u'lláh.

The Community of Ecuador is deeply grateful to Mrs. Woolson who won this sacred distinction for being the first to carry the sacred Fire of Bahá'u'lláh to the virgin territory of the Galapagos Islands in 1954. Before this she visited Ecuador in 1946 and with pioneer Hascle Cornbleth was privileged to carry the Bahá'í Message to the President of the Republic, Dr. José Velasco Ibarra and his wife, the First Lady of the Republic, Señora Corina Parral de Velasco Ibarra. They were well received by both. Mrs. Woolson returned to Ecuador on August 4, 1952 as a pioneer even though she was an itinerant teacher during those early years in several South American countries. In spite of this she found time to help Ecuador to develop and when the need was acute she always returned to help until she finally was able to settle here for a number of years. Prior to her work in South America she rendered outstanding service in Central America, the Guardian wrote about her saying:

Dear and Valued co-workers. I wish to congratulate you most heartily on such a wonderful and glorious achievement. Future generations will extol your labours, follow in your footsteps, and derive inspiration from your pioneer activities.

A special measure of thanks to Larry Kramer who arrived when it seemed that the light of the Cause was being extinguished in Quito because of the scandalous newspaper publicity the Faith was receiving as a result of the immature acts and disharmony among the handful of believers. Larry's complete devotion to the Cause, his tact and humaneness in helping the believers during those dark days, to overlook the short-comings of each other, through his own actions, caused him to be referred to as a model pioneer with a saintly character.

TN

MEMORIAM

PACORA BLUEMOUNTAIN
(Salomón Pacora Estrada)

(?) 1889

December 25, 1969

We were deeply grieved to receive your letter of January 3, 1970 informing us of the passing of Pacora (Blue Mountain) Salomón Estrada. His long and devoted services to the Faith in Latin America and in Ecuador will be long remembered. Be assured of our loving prayers at the Holy Shrines for the progress of his soul in the Abha Kingdom.

*The Universal House of Justice
January 13, 1970*

He was particularly happy that Mr. Blue Mountain an Inca descendent, should have embraced the Cause, thus bringing nearer the realization of the Master's command to confirm the Indians.

*Letter to Saffa Kinney written on behalf
of Shoghi Effendi, October 16, 1941
(Bahá'í World, Vol. XV, p.467)*

WILMA THOMAS

June 3, 1913

June 10, 1977

Beloved pioneer to Guayaquil, Ecuador in 1955.

Date of death of these pioneers to Ecuador unknown but their service to the Faith here is ineradicable.

Eda Rae Keith (Peterson)

Blanca de Campos

Dr. Ghod a Ashraf



IN
MEMORIAM

July 24, 1907

JOHN POPE STEARNS

November 7, 1944

FIRST PIONEER TO ECUADOR

FATHER OF BAHÁ'Í RADIO IN
ECUADOR AND SOUTH AMERICA

The services of these sincere and dedicated souls who have arisen to serve their fellow men with selfless hearts cannot be overestimated, and it is fitting that their names and their example should be cherished by those people to whose lands they have brought the healing remedy of our Faith.

*Letter written on behalf of
Shoghi Effendi, February 8, 1945*

SHARE GRIEF AT PASSING OF DEVOTED FAITHFUL PIONEER (JOHN STEARNS). HIS SERVICES HAVE BEEN UNFORGETTABLE AND HIGHLY MERITORIOUS. ADVISE THE CONSTRUCTION OF A MEMORIAL. ASSURE FRIENDS IN LIMA MY DEEPEST, LOVING SYMPATHY.

SHOGHI EFFENDI
November 19, 1944

He was very sorry to hear of the death of John Stearns, he was a fine believer, and it is a pity he should have passed away so young - but his reward is assured and his name will be forever preserved in the roll call of the early Bahá'í pioneers to South America.

Ibid, August 14, 1945

We proudly affirm that his sacrifice shall not be in vain. John's loving kindness and the Faith he gave us will live on forever and ever.

*Bahá'í Group of Quito
Hans Dory, Secretary*



IN
MEMORIAM
PIONEER
KNIGHT OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH
HAIK (HAIG) KEVORKIAN

October 1, 1916

August 3, 1970

Haig Kevorkian, another one of God's unsung heroes, passed away on August 3, 1970 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Unfortunately the community of Ecuador was not made aware of this sad event and was therefore unable to pay the proper respect to this devoted pioneer teacher who first came to Ecuador in 1945 to aid in the preparation for and formation of the first Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador in the city of Guayaquil. He also visited at the time the forlorn Bahá'í Group in Quito who was still very sad and disconcerted after the recent death of their beloved pioneer, John Stearns. They felt abandoned but Haig lifted their spirits and gave them hope to continue to pursue the course which John had pointed out to them.

Haig won the immortal crown of Knight of Bahá'u'lláh for his heroic, unforgettable service as a pioneer in the formidable, virgin islands of the Galapagos. His sufferings there can readily be compared with the sufferings of the Dawn Breakers during the time of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. Certainly during some of the cold dark and rainy nights on the islands and without a ray of light to read or write by (he lived in a hut without water or lights, not even a lamp, just one little window facing the sea without a pane) he recalled the plight of the Saintly Báb when He was imprisoned and suffered even more than he in the icy cell of Máh-Kú. Surely the Báb, from His Retreat on High, looked down on Haig with love and compassion. He served in the Galapagos from 1954 to 1956. As one reads his reports from the islands, which are included in part in this history, one can see and feel his suffering for the Cause he loved so much, and admire the qualities of this stalwart warrior of the Cause of God.

We pray that he was well received in the Abhá Kingdom and was able to recount to the Prophets of God, "the Maids of Heaven and the inmates of the loftiest mansion", what he was "made to endure in the Path of God, the Lord of all worlds." (Gleanings, p.156)

SADDENED LEARN PASSING KINGHT HAIK KEVORKIAN STOP SUGGEST HOLD MEMORIAL MEETING HIS NAME STOP PRAYING DIVINE THRESHOLD PROGRESS HIS SOUL.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE



(?)

IN
MEMORIAM
MOYSES MOSQUERA C.

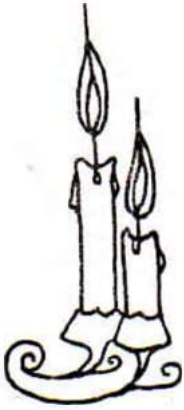
January 26, 1981

FIRST BELIEVER IN THE VIRGIN TERRITORY OF THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS.

He initially accepted the Faith as a protest against Haig Kevorkian's attackers and in an effort to help defend Haig. But later decided he had better really investigate and find out "what the Bahá'í Faith was all about." He soon became a confirmed believer and in spite of the fact he and his wife lost their jobs as teachers and had to leave the islands, he remained steadfast in his faith. Later when he inadvertently encountered defectors and enemies of the Cause, his strong faith in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's *Will and Testament*, and in the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, they were unable to sway him. He really did not know very much about the Faith for he was always an isolated believer with little opportunity to be with other Bahá'ís or attend conferences and deepening classes. But his faith was strong and he was instrumental in helping the new National Assembly when it was established. Unfortunately many of the believers never knew of the role he played in helping the few firm believers who were trying to prepare for the establishment of the new Administration. The defectors and Covenant Breakers underestimated him.

The Prophets and Messengers of God have been sent down for the sole purpose of guiding mankind to the straight Path of Truth. The purpose underlying their revelation hath been to educate all men, that they may, at the hour of death, ascend, in the utmost purity and sanctity and with absolute detachment, to the throne of the Most High. The light which these souls radiate is responsible for the progress of the world and the advancement of its peoples....

(-Gleanings, pp156-57)



IN
MEMORIAM
HASCLE CORNBLETH

(?)

June 22, 1973

PIONEER

In June 1947, Ecuador lost its second resident pioneer, Hascle Cornbleth because of his health. It was a very sad day for the many friends he had made in the country and for him. He had spurred on the Quito group to Assembly status, reactivated the radio programs which John Stearns had initiated both in Quito and Guayaquil, he had met the President of the Republic along with Gayle Woolson and introduced the Bahá'í Faith to him and his wife, and he visited various localities of the Republic to proclaim the Cause. Hascle relives some of his experiences in an article entitled, *Ilusiones*, in the *Bahá'í World*, Vol. XI, pp. 753 - 756, 1946 - 1950. In this article he reminisces about the places he visited and taught in.

In another article entitled *Sidewalk Cafe* he sadly remembers the friends in Guayaquil reliving a happy evening there. It was because of a rare skin ailment he caught that he had to leave his pioneer post. In his article *Sidewalk Cafe* he laments:

That was yesterday. Tonight I sit in the patio of the home of relatives high in the hills overlooking the lights of Hollywood fanning out as far as the eye can see. I am alone, separated, useless as an amputated finger. The radio and television bring me no solace as I think of the friends... Like empty sterile pages in a book, devoid of the traces of the Word of the Author, my days go by slowly, blankly, by. Fruitless, each day a year adding its quota of white hairs to my beard as time recedes into the past. Dear God! How can I choose to pray until I can find again a chair at a sidewalk cafe, somewhere. Somewhere, where a friend can find me and we can read together the exquisite poetry of Bahá'u'lláh's prayer, "Create in me a pure heart O my Lord and renew a tranquil conscience within me." But then His words came to my mind. "Be not grieved if thou performest it thyself alone. Let God be all-sufficient for thee...."

When he was better but far from being well about three years later, he wrote to the Guardian about returning to his post. The Guardian kindly advised him through his secretary on October 4, 1950:

He feels that as you are improving in health it would be unwise for you to make the effort at present of going back to South America...the need is not so acute as to demand this sacrifice from you just as you are getting better. Meantime, he urges you to go on taking care of yourself and to do whatever lies within your power to serve locally.



IN
LOVING MEMORY OF

CLEMENTINA MEJIA DE PAVÓN

September 20, 1900

May 17, 1979

GRIEVED PASSING BELOVED CLEMENTINA DE PAVON OUTSTANDING INSPIRING
TEACHER FAITH WORTHY EMULATION ALL BELIEVERS STOP OFFERING LOVING
PRAYERS DIVINE THRESHOLD PROGRESS HER SOUL.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

SEGUNDO PAVÓN BARRERA

February 5, 1894

July 14, 1979

PRAYING PROGRESS KINGDOMS GOD SOUL SEGUNDO PAVON CONVEY FAMILY LOVING
SYMPATHY.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

The Hand of the Cause of God, Dr. Muhājir, greatly admired and loved this outstanding lady, Señora Pavón, for her consecrated work with the Indians, the campesinos and children. On one of his visits here a few years ago, he called her to come before the audience at a community meeting; he then embraced her and presented her to all of the believers as the "Mother of the Bahá'í Community" of Ecuador. Even before this moving event, she was widely known as Mother Pavón, and was indeed, in the true sense of the word, the beloved "mater-familias" for all who needed her, be it a kind word, a smile, sage advice, the need for prayer or material needs, she was always cheerfully obliging. In spite of the hardship she suffered from time to time, she never complained and always saw someone else in greater need. On one occasion she and her husband heard that there was a mother in the market-place trying to sell her partially paralytic four year old child, who was also mute. Disregarding the fact that they had a house full of children of their own, they went and bought the child, fearing that someone would take him who would not give him love. He grew up with their children as one of their

own brothers. There is no doubt that it was through their love and their unwavering faith that they were able to teach the child including how to utter a few words. José Manuel Perugachi is a man now and a very devoted Bahá'í - ever ready to be of service, even beyond his physical capacity.

As the years passed the health of the Pavóns began to fail. The damp climate of Otavalo was not conducive to their physical well-being and Señor Pavón suffered from acute asthma attacks along with other ailments. Nevertheless, animated by his ardent desire to serve the Cause, inspired and sustained by his deep love for Bahá'u'lláh and his complete devotion to his wife, at the time of her passing in the hospital, Señor Pavón was quite ill himself and very fragile, but he kept busy critiquing her translation of the book, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, to make sure that her last work was complete and well done. After her passing it seemed that his sole desire was to complete this task and join her.

Their staunch and unyielding faith in Bahá'u'lláh was the cohesive and unifying influence that motivated this inseparable couple to greater heights of service to the Cause - far beyond what one could imagine just seeing them when their health had broken. Happily they were richly rewarded spiritually in this world by having the privilege to serve the Cause using their diverse talents, by seeing their second son Raúl, who is also their spiritual father, named to the Continental Board of Counsellors for South America, and one of their beloved daughters, Isabel de Calderón, named to the Auxiliary Board.

When writing to the National Teaching Committee requesting to be accepted as a Bahá'í, Señor Pavón wrote: *I have found the light which the Lord our God has deemed to inspire His Divine Messengers to spread true faith in God, and being convinced of this reality, I desire to be accepted as a new believer in the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. This is the spirit and the light which guided his activities until he passed to the realms beyond.*



IN LOVING MEMORY OF THE HAND OF THE CAUSE OF GOD ENOCH OLINGA

1927 - September 16, 1979

HAND OF THE CAUSE OF GOD ENOCH OLINGA VISITS ECUADOR

On May 18, 1970 the following cable was received by the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador:

BAHAI QUITO

HAND CAUSE OLINGA ARRIVES QUITO NINETEEN JUNE BRANIFF FLIGHT 082 ...
SUGGEST CONVENE NATIONAL CONFERENCE QUITO....

COUNSELLOR DUNBAR

In 1969 and the early 1970's all eyes were turned toward the first mass conversion city in the Western Hemisphere, Esmeraldas, Ecuador. This was Mr. Olinga's first visit to Ecuador and he was warmly received in the Quito Airport by a number of believers. He was hosted in the home of Auxiliary Board member Charles Hornby who was privileged to travel with him and his traveling companion, Counsellor Hooper Dunbar. Mr. Hornby wrote to his wife who was out of the country:

First let me tell you that the Hand of the Cause, Enogh Olinga sends you his love. He was really taken by the Esmeraldas people - I mean that he liked them very much. He did not even have to start teaching Pampon to say "these people are ready, you can teach all of them... you must reach all of them, what are you going to do about it?" He strolled from house to house, patting the children, shaking hands with everybody, ... saying "How are you, are you happy?" and just smiling and being loving. The people loved it. When we went by the house of the man with the marimbas, he was invited in and they got down the marimbas and played for him ... and he danced as did Hooper. The people laughed and loved him very much Thursday we went to Quinindé and found a surprisingly large number of people at the hotel. José (Lucas) had been there stirring up interest. They loved him even more it seemed and we walked down the mainstreet in a throng before dark, two women holding his hands. And again we went from house to house, and he kissed babies and spoke to the oldsters and held their hands. It was an unusual experience for everyone...

The friends could not get over the warmth and the wisdom of the Hand. He talked about spiritual qualities with such a depth and firmness, yet with such a humility. As he walked to the airplane this afternoon, one believer was saying, "The king, the king, the king of Africa!"

When the National Spiritual Assembly learned that Mr. Olinga would be representing the Universal House of Justice at the International Teaching Conference in Brazil, on July 24, 1976 they wrote and invited him to visit Ecuador suggesting that: "Such a visit will no doubt be of inestimable value to the Bahá'ís here, most of whom will not be able to attend either of the Conferences that will take place in Latin America, and will provide a much needed stimulus toward the achievement of our Five Year Plan goals." He accepted the invitation and on November 30, 1976 he arrived in Quito once again where a number of believers were present to receive him. That same morning a reception was held for him in the home of a Bahá'í family in Quito. Here he met and consulted with the Counsellor, Sr. Pavón, the Auxiliary Board members and the National Spiritual Assembly about his itinerary and the winning of the Five Year Plan goals. The following day he visited Cuenca where he spoke to about thirty believers and friends. He shared with them the confidence admiration which the House of Justice has expressed regarding the capacity and potentials of the believers and institutions of the Faith in Ecuador, and he expressed his own delight in being able to visit the community of Cuenca. On December 2, he visited Guayaquil accompanied by Auxiliary Board member Patricia Conger. They were received in the airport by pioneers Bahman and Zhinous Ashraghi and their little son Farzin. Newly arrived pioneer Behrooz Khomasi was also present and the devoted native believers, Señora Carmela de Garces and her daughter Patricia, Señor Aurelio Carpio and Señorita María Leon.

Señorita Arminda Vera who had lunch prepared for the friends when Mr. Olinga arrived at the Garces home, had travelled all night with Srta. Leon and Sr. Carpio to inform the Persian pioneers and the believers in Puerto Arturo of the arrival of the Hand of the Cause of God. Mr. Olinga addressed the gathering of some twenty believers. He spoke of the days of victory soon to come in which Bahá'u'lláh tells us that everyone will say "I believe", but that history will record the names of the first believers who stood firm in the Covenant during the time of trials and tests and that these young new believers entering the faith will be proud to have had the privilege of knowing them and will recognize the value of their constancy and devotion to the Cause of God." (Taken from report of Auxiliary Board member, Patricia Conger)

That evening he was received by 45 or more believers in Puerto Arturo where he spoke on the renewal of the Covenant of God in the manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh. He asked to be personally presented to each believer and child alike as well as to their friends and neighbors in the village. He spent three days in Balao with as the guest of pioneers Bahman and Zhinous Ashraghi.

On Saturday Mr. Olinga went to Esmeraldas, where he was received in Tachina, a small village across the river from the city of Esmeraldas. A meeting was held that day in the home of Susana and Auxiliary Board member James (Jimmie) Jensen. There were more than 50 Bahá'ís present. The following day he attended the Regional Convention which was held in Quinindé. He was accompanied by Lucrecia de Menendez, Vicente Quiñones, Virginia de Suttles, Joe Montañó, Arminda Vera, Birmania Cheme, Susana and Jimmie Jensen.

They all attended the District Convention in Quinindé. Señora Lucrecia de Menendez was the National Spiritual Assembly representative. Mr. Olinga said he was impressed by the quiet and serious manner they conducted their convention and he spoke on the importance of the Bahá'ís attending their meetings and for deepening themselves in the teachings and then teaching the Cause. After lunch he visited the wife of one of the newly elected delegates who was resting after having a baby a few days earlier. Mr. Olinga prayed for the child and held it in his arms - the father immediately named the child, Fenix Enoch.

That evening back in Tachina a meal had been prepared by the members of the local Spiritual Assembly for him and they were pleased when he said that there was no difference between it and the food at his home in Africa. They were really impressed by this statement. After the meeting they all walked to the property where the local Spiritual Assembly of Tachina plans to build their Haziratu'l-Quds. Mr. Olinga marvelled that the majority of the Bahá'ís in Tachina were women and had worked extremely hard clearing away the brush and stumps on the property. They had prayers on the land. He had another meeting in Esmeraldas that night and told the believers there that he would always be there in spirit united with the Bahá'ís. He returned to Quito on Monday December 6 and the believers gathered that evening to hear of his experiences.

On Tuesday December 7, he visited Otavalo where he met and talked with members of the Bahá'í Radio staff. Then he recorded an interview for future use by the Bahá'í Radio. He was taken to visit a spot near Lake Cuicocha where it was hoped to have a short wave antenna one day for the radio; he offered a prayer especially for the achievement of this goal (His prayer was since answered - see section on Radio Bahá'í). He then was taken to Angla, an indigenous community situated very high on the slopes of Mount Imbabura "where a meeting had been in preparation for two days. Two arches of flowers and fruits had been built at the entrance to the village, and upon his arrival the Hand of the Cause was asked to pass beneath the arches, after which he greeted the approximately 100 Bahá'ís, adults and children, who had formed two long lines on either side of the path. Sr. Segundo Curillo, secretary of the spiritual Assembly of Angla, and Sr. Nolberto Curillo, chairman of the Assembly greeted Mr. Olinga on behalf of all those present and expressed profound gratitude on behalf of the Community of Angla for the visit of the Hand of the Cause. In the meeting he spoke about the necessity of being very good Bahá'ís and emphasized love for everyone without distinction, unity, the obligatory prayers, and teaching the Cause."

Before leaving Otavalo Mr. Olinga recorded more programs to be used later, then he returned to Quito where he was interviewed by the press and television. That same evening he spoke in the Aula Magna of the Catholic University of Quito. Leaving an indelible impression on all those who were privileged to meet him, he left Ecuador on December 10 to continue his Latin America tour. He left in his wake a wave of love" that enveloped every one and all the believers anxiously awaited his return which he promised to make. Unfortunately this was not to be for during the time everyone was awaiting his visit to teach in and around the Esmeraldas area the tragic news arrived announcing his brutal murder and that of some members of his family.

Before leaving the Western Hemisphere he wrote this inspiring letter to the National Spiritual Assemblies of South America, North America, Central America and the Islands of the Carribean, dated October 28, 1970 while enroute to the Pacific and Asia:

Beloved Bahá'í friends,

Before leaving the Western Hemisphere, it is my wish to try to express the love and gratitude flowing from my heart to all the believers who have welcomed, assisted and sustained me in these travels. For the past six months, in South, Central and North America, and the Antilles, rare experiences in the company of the soldiers of the Blessed Perfection have been granted me. Indeed, when I recall how the beloved Guardian expressed the hope to me that some day I would travel in the Western Hemisphere, to meet the friends and teach His Cause, it is now one more sign to me of the kindness of the Loving Creator to His servants that this experience should have come my way and these months be spent in a manner so pleasing to my soul.

For what can bring more happiness than seeing, from the tip of South America to the far reaches of Alaska, the triumphs of self-sacrificing soldiers in the army of the Blessed Beauty? The promises of the Master, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, are everywhere evidenced in their fruition, for now that the healing Word of God is being carried to the masses, they are entering our beloved Faith in troops and we are seeing the rapid expansion and simultaneous consolidation predicted for these days.

So many moments of joy and profound gratitude have been experienced during these months. It is impossible to cite them all, but to share the sweetness of one of them, I would mention the evening spent in Harlem in the company of Mr. John Birks Gillespie and a large group of Baha'i friends. All my memories of visiting this beloved friend and brother, dear John Birks, are treasured; and it is my feeling and my prayer that with his deep devotion to the Cause and his many spiritual qualities, he will be of great service to humanity and hopefully to the work of the Faith in Africa.

And so it is with all the soldiers on fire with the love of God in this day.

With many, in different lands, I shared the healing memory of an evening spent in the presence of the beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, when he said to us that Bahá'ís should be very happy, always; that we should never permit anything to disturb the tranquillity of our heart, or its peace and happiness, for we are really living in wonderful days.

The beloved Guardian said that Bahá'ís should be very happy indeed that they have been enabled by God himself to recognize the greatness of this day, to accept the universal Manifestation of God and to wear His holy name. That is the first condition, the condition of happiness and gratitude to our Father that we have been permitted to recognize His Cause in this great day.

And then the beloved Guardian reminded us that the Master taught that although there are very few states in the spiritual world, there are many spiritual conditions and degrees of perfection. Therefore, it is not enough to say that we believe in Bahá'u'lláh, but we must also accept this Supreme Manifestation and attempt to promote His Cause. Bahá'ís are

spiritually higher than those who are not believers, for they have fulfilled that requirement made of man in the day of the coming of each Messenger of God, to recognize and accept that Messenger. He is the Manifestation of Truth, and the Revealer of the Will of God, of which the Lord Jesus Christ spoke when He encouraged us to pray that the Will of God "may be done on earth as it is in heaven."

One evening the beloved Guardian was explaining to us that an African Bahá'í in a small African village who believes that Bahá'u'lláh is the Manifestations of God for this day, that He is the return of the spiritual reality of all the Manifestations, the Lord of the Vineyard - - that Bahá'í, unable to read and write, before God occupies a position higher than the honored prelates of Christendom.

And so the beloved Guardian made clear to us that many people believe the principles and find them beautiful, but they remain sympathizers, while a Bahá'í is the one who believes in the divine unity, and makes no distinction between the prophets of God, centering his energy in promoting the Faith of God for this day through the teachings of the Ancient Beauty, Bahá'u'lláh.

Therefore, dear friends, with this in our hearts, with the assurance of the beloved Guardian himself as to our high station, may we not review the Writings and the messages from the Universal House of Justice, to find what our share of heroic action in the army of the Blessed Beauty may be in this day? Inspired by the Writings of the Glory of God, Bahá'u'lláh and His Holiness the Exalted Báb, encouraged and supported by the example of the blessed Center of the Covenant, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and our beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, with the supreme, infallible body, the Universal House of Justice to channel our efforts to their fullest advantage, may we become soldiers armed with divine instruments. These instruments are love, devotion to the Faith, steadfastness, service, and complete attraction to the Abhá Kingdom. Wherever we go with these arms, we will conquer that city and that place.

O my beloved sisters and brothers, make effort in this manifest Day of God and win the favour, grace and pleasure of the Lord. "What result is forthcoming from material rest, tranquillity, luxury and attachment to this corporeal world," asked the beloved Master, "it is evident that the man who pursues these things will in the end become afflicted with regret and loss." We should close our eyes to these things, and these thoughts, long for eternal life, the sublimity of the world of humanity, the celestial developments, the Holy Spirit, the promotion of the Word of God, the guidance of the inhabitants of the globe, the promulgation of Universal peace and the proclamation of the oneness of the world of humanity. This is the WORK!"

The Master used to say that the general does not love most the man in the back of the ranks - - He loves most the man in the front, leading the way.

I hope and pray that "with hearts overflowing with the love of God, with tongues commemorating the mention of God, with eyes turned to the Kingdom of God" you will, all of you, arise like never before and diffuse the divine fragrances, assured that "in whatever meeting ye enter, in the apex of that meeting the Holy Spirit shall be waving and the heavenly confirmations of the Blessed Perfection shall encompass" you....

/S/ Enoch Olinga, Hand of the
Cause of God.



IN
LOVING
MEMORY

DR. RAHMATU'LLAH MUHĀJIR
HAND OF THE CAUSE OF GOD

December 29, 1979

PROFOUNDLY LAMENT UNTIMELY PASSING IN QUITO ECUADOR BELOVED HAND CAUSE RAHMATU'LLAH MUHAJIR FOLLOWING HEART ATTACK COURSE HIS LATEST SOUTH AMERICAN TOUR. UNSTINTED UNRESTRAINED OUTPOURING OF PHYSICAL SPIRITUAL ENERGIES BY ONE WHO OFFERED HIS ALL PATH SERVICE HAS NOW CEASED. POSTERITY WILL RECORD HIS DEVOTED SERVICES YOUTHFUL YEARS CRADLE FAITH HIS SUBSEQUENT UNIQUE EXPLOITS PIONEERING FIELD SOUTHEAST ASIA WHERE HE WON ACCOLADE KNIGHTHOOD BAHU'U'LLAH HIS CEASELESS EFFORTS OVER TWO DECADES SINCE HIS APPOINTMENT HAND CAUSE STIMULATING IN MANY LANDS EAST WEST PROCESS ENTRY BY TROOPS. FRIENDS ALL CONTINENTS WHO MOURN THIS TRAGIC LOSS NOW SUDDENLY DEPRIVED COLLABORATION ONE WHO ENDEARED HIMSELF TO THEM THROUGH HIS GENTLENESS HIS LUMINOUS PERSONALITY HIS EXEMPLARY UNFLAGGING ZEAL HIS CREATIVE ENTHUSIASTIC APPROACH TO FULFILLMENT ASSIGNED GOALS. URGE FRIENDS EVERYWHERE HOLD MEMORIAL GATHERINGS BEFITTING HIS HIGH STATION UNIQUE ACHIEVEMENTS. MAY HIS RADIANT SOUL ABHA KINGDOM REAP RICH HARVEST HIS DEDICATED SELF-SACRIFICING SERVICES CAUSE GOD.

The Universal House of Justice

December 30, 1979

MOUNT YOUR STEEDS, O HEROES OF GOD!, was Dr. Muhājir's motto. Whenever a new teaching Plan was received from the House of Justice everyone knew a visit would soon be forthcoming from Dr. Muhājir to put into focus any perplexities that might have been engendered by the vastness of the Plan. He always praised the institutions and believers for their endeavors and accomplishments but nearly always with a sweet calm suggestion: "it could be amplified a bit more!"

The Hand of the Cause of God, Dr. Raḥmatu'lláh Muḥájir, arrived in Ecuador on December 26, 1979 from Lima, Perú about 3:30 PM. A host of friends were at the airport to receive him including the Counsellors of South America, who were in the country for one of their scheduled meetings. As an expression of love and appreciation bouquets of red rose buds were presented to him by two young girls, Najin Mansuri and Elizabeth Wilson Pavón in the name of the National Bahá'í Community, and by two indigenous believers, Auxiliary Board member Vicenta Anrango and National Assembly member, María Perugachi in the name of the indigenous Bahá'í community, and from little Taraneh Burwell and Diana Werle in the name of the Bahá'í children. Rose buds had been presented to the Counsellors who in turn presented them to Dr. Muḥájir, then he lovingly presented them all to the two indigenous believers from Otavalo as a token of his love and esteem.

He shook hands and embraced the friends saying "Allah'u'Abhá". When he finished greeting the friends he jokingly said, "Now I am sure I have said Alláh'u'Abhá 95 times for the day."

His schedule was hectic. He did not pause to rest after arriving as he usually did in this altitude. From the Airport Mrs. Tarasieh Werle-Vahdat drove him to a television interview which she had arranged, but due to technical problems with the lights the interview was cancelled. From the Television Station they went for a radio interview which was very successful. About 6 PM he was taken to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Kamran Mansuri where the Counsellors were meeting and being hosted in the village of Cumbayá. The same night he spoke in Quito to the Bahá'í community and afterwards had a brief interview with members of the National Spiritual Assembly about his proposed agenda and length of stay in the country. The following day, Thursday, he went to Esmeraldas accompanied by Auxiliary Board member Charles Hornby and Keikavous Vahdat, who had returned to this country as a pioneer.

From the airport in Esmeraldas they went directly to visit the new Bahá'í Institute which was being erected and named in honor of Hand of the Cause of God, Enoch Olinga. Afterwards they were invited to the home of Auxiliary Board member, James Jensen and his wife Susana for lunch. In the afternoon he did three radio broadcasts, gave a fireside in the evening and did a television broadcast that night. For technical reasons the station was off the air but providentially for the Bahá'ís the program was video taped and is now part of the Bahá'í Archives. The Hand of the Cause was interviewed by a youth Angel Jara Lucas, an outstanding announcer, having studied and worked with Radio Netherland in Europe. Although he had accepted the Faith at the age of nine during mass conversion in Esmeraldas, he had had little contact with the Bahá'ís in recent years, he still remembered a prayer from children's classes.

He returned to Quito near midday Friday, December 28 and continued his busy schedule, meeting in the afternoon with the Counsellors and that evening in another meeting with the Counsellors, Auxiliary Board members and the National Assembly. A pioneer conference had been called for Monday December 31, by the National Assembly

on behalf of the Counsellors. The Hand of the Cause expressed the desire that the meeting scheduled with the pioneers be advanced to Saturday; that it would bear more fruit if a plan or plans could be presented and he insisted that the active native teachers be invited as well.

Mount your steeds, O heroes of God!, This was his motto, and was epitomized first by the anxiety of those waiting to see how many projects he would call for, and substantiated by the prompt movement of pioneers and teachers responding to his call. He would always open up different avenues of approach to teaching; on one known occasion he sent a group to the history books of the country to investigate how many different ethnic groups there were in the country, where they were located and to learn something about their culture - then he asked the National Assembly to formulate a plan to reach these groups. After such session he would leave heads swirling by his edifying presence, his high spirit, his clarity of vision and by his simplicity and of course by the amount of work he would outline to be accomplished and at the same time giving the group the feeling that the ideas were theirs and they themselves planned the course of action!

The National Assembly secretary reported that in their meeting with Dr. Muhájir, he asked to be brought up to date on the progress of the Cause in the Country and asked also about the numerical goals. He was pleased with the Assembly's plan of increasing the Bahá'í population in areas which historically had been so difficult. He suggested that more Bahá'ís be looked for in the mass conversion areas and that teaching should be started in the large cities and that a certain number of cities should be selected and the following fireside method be used in order to get new believers;

Start teaching in one Bahá'í home and invite contacts there for firesides, not stopping this fireside teaching for ten consecutive nights, then rest one or two days then this should be followed by another ten nights of firesides in a different Bahá'í home, rest again one or two days and start in another home....

He suggested to continue doing this for nine months thus obtaining mass conversion teaching results. He then left the Assembly meeting to join the friends in the Ḥaẓirātu'l-Quds for a public meeting. He said to his Auxiliary Board member travelling companion, "What would you think if I were to stay several days more. I would like to visit all of the teaching areas...." He also expressed his desire to stay the following week and travel teach with Mr. Hornby as his companion again later that night after dinner. It was after 11 PM when the Hand and the Counsellors arrived at our home for dinner that night and he seemed very relaxed, happy and hungry. Laughingly he said he was going to eat all the food and not leave any for the Counsellors. They left to go and retire around one in the morning.

The following morning, Saturday December 29, he did not seem tired at all but rather one could say "angelic and happy." The pioneer conference opened that morning with prayers in various languages and then the chairman of the National Assembly gave a

brief explanation of the purpose of the conference and invited Dr. Muhájir to speak, but he in turn called on Counsellor Pavón to speak first, and when he began to talk Dr. Muhájir began to tease him in the Spanish language which pleased the native people and created a happy atmosphere among the audience. Shortly thereafter he arose and quietly left the room with a radiant smile on his face - no one had any idea he was ill. He walked around the building to the kitchen door where he sat down and asked the ladies Arminda Vera and Julia de Jijón, who were working in the kitchen, to massage his chest. A short time later I went to the kitchen and was surprised to see Dr. Muhájir sitting in the doorway being massaged. I recognized he was having a heart attack. Help was called for and he was soon taken to an Emergency Clinic nearby for medical attention and oxygen. All the time when his pain was not too severe he was saying the Greatest Name of God with those who were caring for him and smiling and talking with the doctor and nurse. The Counsellor, Mr. Khamsí was with him continuously and never left his side. About half hour after his arrival at the Clinic he fainted and soon passed away. It was shortly after 11:00 AM.

When it was noted that he was not recuperating all the Counsellors were called to the hospital. It was the National Secretary, Mr. Donald Stewart who made the sad announcement to the friends that Dr. Muhájir had suddenly passed away with a heart attack. The pioneers and teachers had been called from all over the country were present for a conference and this news came as a traumatic shock. Everyone was stunned and deeply saddened by the catastrophe and found it difficult to believe and accept.

In order to allow for the possibility of delegations from other countries, the burial date was extended to Monday, beyond the usual 24 hours normally observed by Ecuadorian custom. Mrs. Muhájir and her daughter Gisu arrived in Quito on Sunday morning and she personally selected a lovely grave site. Representatives from Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia and Perú were present for the funeral.

The presence of the Board of Counsellors which met with the National Assembly in making decisions and planning the program, assured compliance with the expressed wishes of the Universal House of Justice that the funeral be carried out with all the dignity and respect befitting the honored, revered and respected Hand of the Cause of God. He was the youngest of the Hands of the Cause appointed by the Guardian in his last message to the Bahá'í world.

On Monday morning, December 31, 1979 over 100 Bahá'ís and friends gathered at the National Ḥaẓirātu'l-Quds for the funeral. There were many prayers in various languages again and after this when the casket was placed in the hearse; the Bahá'ís made a symbolic walk behind the vehicle the length of the block with the Counsellors leading the way. Then the friends mounted cars and buses to follow the casket to the cemetery, the Parque de Recuerdos (Memorial Park), The ceremony was simple, beautiful and tranquil - many of the believers lingered on after the casket had been lowered into the grave, being reluctant to leave and relinquish the dear beloved Hand of the Cause to the next world.



IN MEMORIAM

PIONEER

JUAN VARGAS

March 8, 1915

July 2, 1983

As to those that have tasted of the fruit of man's earthly existence, which is the recognition of the one true God, exalted be His glory, their life hereafter is such as We are unable to describe. The knowledge thereof is with God, alone, the Lord of all worlds.

- Bahá 'u'lláh

Juan Vargas arrived in Ecuador on July 13, 1962 as a pioneer to the Galapagos Islands, which were still virgin territory. He lived there for five years without a single outside visitor. In 1968 the National Assembly called him from the islands to help with the goals of the Nine Year Plan on the mainland of Ecuador. He was to assist with mass teaching for six months and return to the islands for six months. He returned to his home in Costa Rica in 1969 after spending nearly seven years as a pioneer in Ecuador. He left six new believers on the islands but was sad he never could form a local Assembly there because the believers frequently left to look for work on the mainland of Ecuador.

He is fondly remembered by the natives and especially those he taught the Faith in the islands. According to his letters he was often very sad and felt he was not doing enough for the Faith. No doubt the spirit of the following words of the Guardian touched him when he volunteered for this lonely, isolated post where Haig Kevorkian before him had suffered so very much:

It is hard for the friends to appreciate when they are isolated in one of these goal territories and see that they are making no progress in teaching others, are living in inhospitable climes for the most part, lonesome for Bahá'í companionship and activity, that they represent a force for good, that they are like a light-house of Bahá'u'lláh shining at a strategic point and casting its beam out into the darkness. This is why he so consistently urges these pioneers not to abandon their posts.

(From letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, July 18, 1957: Messages to Canada, p.68, Lights of Guidance, p.443)



IN
MEMORIAM
RAÚL PAVÓN MEJIA

30 September 1933

21 October 1983

DEEPLY DEPLORE LOSS ZEALOUS SERVANT CAUSE BAHÁ'U'LLAH RAUL PAVON DISTINGUISHED PROMOTER FAITH AND INDEFATIGABLE WORKER IN TEACHING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES LATIN AMERICA. HIS OUTSTANDING SERVICES AS MEMBER BOARD COUNSELLORS AMERICAS AND UNIQUE ENDEAVOURS ESTABLISHMENT FIRST BAHAI RADIO STATION WARMLY REMEMBERED. PRAYING HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS HIS RADIANT SOUL WORLDS GOD AND SOLACE LOVING COMFORT HIS BEREAVED FAMILY. FEEL CONFIDENT HIS DEARLY-CHERISHED PARENTS REJOICE ABHA KINGDOM RANGE HIS DEDICATED SERVICES. URGE ALL COMMUNITIES AMERICAS HOLD MEMORIAL GATHERINGS BEFITTING HIS HIGHLY-VALUED CONTRIBUTIONS BELOVED FAITH.

*The Universal House of Justice
October 22, 1983*

Although the death of Raúl occurred after the period which this history covers since he is indeed one of the chief subjects* of this history we felt we must make mention of this tragic event, realizing, that only the future will be able to assess the varied activities and projects spearheaded by him to promote the objectives of the Cause he so ardently espoused. We, his co-workers, stand too close to him to be able to view, in perspective, the importance of his accomplishments and the visions he held and shared for the future spread of the Faith throughout these countries through the mass media, especially radio and eventually television. This, no doubt, will be ably traced by future historians.

The following photo-history was furnished by a co-worker of Raúl in memory of the wonderful days they spent in Cachaco, working studying and learning (pages 297 to 310).

(*See pages, 109, 116-117, 126, 134-135, 137 - 139, 142, 133, 147, 154, 165, 171, 236 et al)

RAÚL PAVÓN

Since teaching in the Bahá'í Faith is regarded "as the most meritorious of all deeds", certainly Raúl Pavón acquired many merits during his 25 years as a Bahá'í, twenty three of which he served as a volunteer teacher of the Cause, as member of the local Assembly of Otavalo and Quito, of the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador and of various committees. For the last ten years of his life he served as a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors of South America and later, of the Americas. He was elected to the first National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador and served on it until he was named to the Board of Counsellors in 1973.

He related that as soon as he heard of the Bahá'í Faith he knew that this was what he had been searching for and felt that he had a special mission but he could not fathom what it was. When asked how he became interested in mass conversion, he said he became enthralled with the Guardian's letters when he was introduced to them; that he studied them carefully and somehow became imbued with the spirit of mass teaching. He said he felt he understood the Guardian's messages spiritually and felt inspired to try mass teaching in the campo since he was convinced that was what the Guardian desired.

He was really very shy and avoided the limelight when possible. His shyness however did not obscure his vision - a vision the scope of which often extended far beyond the mental reach of those who worked with him and quite often caused conflict: for example, his vision of mass conversion in this rugged country was certainly far beyond the imagination, initially, of many members of the community which included some Assembly members and pioneers. He often stated that had it not been for the staunch support of the National Assembly secretary, Dorothy Campbell (Rougeou), who had a lot of faith in him, he was not sure what he would have done - the pressure was so great at times against mass teaching and his efforts. He often mentioned Dorothy and said that she was his constant teacher and indeed played a tremendous role in making him to be what he was.

Raúl's vision regarding radio and the need for its potentials in developing and proclaiming the Faith were both praised and challenged. He deeply admired John Stearns, the first pioneer to Ecuador and was astounded that John, in those early days, had captured the vision of the role radio could play in proclaiming the Cause, and had initiated the first Bahá'í broadcast in this country.

Raúl was responsible for his parents accepting the Faith and gradually his whole family. He knew that the Guardian advocated the use of radio for the spread of the Teachings and he diligently pursued this vision until it became a reality as Radio Bahá'í of Ecuador - the first Bahá'í owned and operated station in the world. This is a feat that no doubt the Concourse on High applauded!

With the unification of the Boards of Counsellors of North and South America, his talent for mass teaching and proclaiming the

cause being well recognized were now utilized from Chile to Alaska and a number of States in the United States. Future biographers will need to research the archives of the various National Spiritual Assemblies of the countries he visited to evaluate his influence on their teaching work and on the believers, especially the youth, he helped to motivate. Unfortunately there are no records in Ecuador of his activities in other countries, it seems that he did not write about himself.

On Sunday morning, October 23, 1983, the soil of Lima, Perú again claimed the precious remains of one of Ecuador's champion-builders of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, Raúl Pavón Mejía. He was interred in the new extension to the English Cemetery where John Stearns is buried. He loved beauty and there were many beautiful flower arrangements from those who loved and appreciated him: The Universal House of Justice; the International teaching Centre, the Continental Board of Counsellors, Auxiliary Board members, various National Spiritual Assemblies and individual Bahá'í friends and admirers and of course, his family. It is a tranquil cemetery similar to the one in which Dr. Muhájir is interred in Quito. Counsellor Donald Witzel read a moving eulogy which follows in part:

... Raúl Pavón distinguished himself by his creativity in his work with the indigenous, in mass conversion in general, in the proclamation of the Faith, both by radio and television as well as by other media of mass communication. He encouraged the youth in the creation of music for the Faith throughout all Latin America. We also recall the mobile institute, the regional and national children's conferences, his book and system for literacy training. We remember his ingenuity and original creativity in general and his constant happiness and contentment with the Will of God,....

Raúl Pavón

This is the story of a descendent of the Dawn Breakers from South America, Raúl Pavón.

When our family arrived in Otavalo, Ecuador in March of 1960, Raúl Pavón, a young man about 28, had been a Bahá'í about a year. Even in those days his drive for teaching was very strong. Our conversations a large part of the time were on how to teach the Indian people.

As it was difficult, for a white man, to approach them from a distance, he decided to live and work with them. He rented one of their thatched roof, adobe houses consisting of one room with a door and a porch, in the Vagabundo area high in the Andes Mountains above Lake San Pablo. The first day he appeared to work, the community was working on the road in a "minga", or community effort for the common good, much like a barn raising. Raúl, whose Quechua was fluent, could overhear them talking about him, wondering what he was doing there, had he come to steal their chickens, etc. In time he gained their confidence and taught them. After staying there about a month he had to leave for San Pablo as even then his health was not good, however he did not abandon them but walked up during the day to continue his teaching.

I had the privilege of being there with the rest of the Otavalo community when the first Indian people of Ecuador became Bahá'ís. It was a big day for all of us as the time of sowing seeds had been long. Loaded with huge baskets packed with rolls, a roast leg of lamb and bananas, we boarded our rented bus for the trip over the cobblestone road to San Pablo. That day our bus trip would not end at San Pablo as it usually did, but would continue up the mountain as far as it could go on the rough path we usually had to walk. The last leg was made on foot. This was no problem, even for the smallest children as children in Otavalo were used to walking long distances.

When we arrived the whole community was waiting for us near Raúl's house. As we presented a sandwich to each one it was quickly hidden under a poncho confusing us, much to their amusement, and upon

being asked if they had a sandwich yet, they would solemnly shake their heads "no" with a twinkle in the eyes. After guitar music by Raul and others of the community, someone stood up and said that all those who were to be Bahá'ís should go to a spot indicated a little apart, a shelf of land jutting out from the side of the mountain overlooking Lake San Pablo far below.

The program the Otavalo community had planned included a song by the children, "Ya Bahá'u'l-Abhá". Much to our surprise the new believers sang with us. As those powerful words rang out over the mountains and the valley in that very moving moment, I thought of the changes that must surely come there and in the country with the potent Word.

By this time our home had become the Bahá'í center for Otavalo. On Saturdays, the day of the "feria", market day, all the people from miles around came to Otavalo. Some came by bus, but the majority came walking down the mountains in long lines like ants doubled over with loads bigger than themselves that they had carried for several hours in the darkness before the dawn. This was the day to buy and sell. This was the day we held open house when Raúl, who traveled daily to the villages, would bring the friends, Bahá'í and non-Baha'i alike to our house. With "esteras" spread on the floor for seating they would shyly accept a "dulce" (candy), a banana, or if it was mealtime, beans or other food to which they were accustomed. After a time they came alone, but it took time to break down the walls that prejudice had built through ages.

Here Raúl brought them to meet for the first time Hand of the Cause of God Mr Faisi, other Hands and other travel teachers. Rufino Gualavasi from Cayambe was one of the Indian people that often came. He was a man who would actually leave his plow in the field if the Faith needed him. When Mr. Faisi came one time, Rufino was present. Mr. Faisi, trying to encourage us all to teach even though it seemed we were doing nothing, told us the story of the man the Báb sent to teach in India who died thinking he had done nothing; but Mr Faisi said

that in reality the thousands of Bahá'ís in India were due to the work of this man. Then Raúl told Mr. Faisi Rufino's dream. Rufino said he and Raúl were plowing a field, but there were no furrows left behind them, then other people came and sowed the seed, and others came and harvested.

Rufino, who had been taught by Raúl, was like the early Bábí's in that he had a deep knowledge of the Faith he had learned through the heart. He was a small man with little education, but one felt humble in his presence because he was a spiritual giant. Later he was named an auxiliary board member.

Raúl owned a piece of land in Cachaco, an undeveloped area in the western jungle more or less halfway between Ibarra and San Lorenzo on the northern coast next to Columbia. He gave this land to the Bahá'ís. At that time Raúl's parents lived in Cachaco as homesteaders on land they owned next to Raúl's, which they also donated to the Bahá'ís. It was decided to build a school there that would not only serve as a summerschool for the Bahá'ís, but would also serve as a school room for the little elementary school that Sra. Clementina (Raúl's mother) had started for the children of the area, who had to walk an hour over difficult and dangerous paths to the school the government provided.

Raúl assumed the role of chief of the expedition as he was the only one familiar with the area and the methods of construction used there. The work crew consisted of twenty people in all including four children of another Bahá'í family in Otavalo, and our family of six.

After loading our supplies for our month long sojourn, the crew boarded the "autocarril" in Ibarra with high spirits. (An "autocarril" is a bus modified for running on railroad tracks.) As we passed through the villages on our five hour trip away from civilization, women and children would rush out to sell hard boiled eggs, "fritada" (fried pork), "biscochos" (biscuits) or fruit through the open windows. The green sea of the jungle rolled by our windows as the "autocarril" strained up the last mountain, its wheels slipping and sliding in

spite of the sand the conductor dropped through the trap doors onto the wet tracks, its rattles intensifying with each increased effort. After descending the other side of the mountain, we arrived at the station in Cachaco, Ecuador, a rough board building lost and alone in the greenness beside the river.

After everyone was loaded with big burlap sacks of food, blankets and a change of clothes for each person, we started up the steep path deeply corrugated over the years by the footsteps of the horses, the only sounds the receding clack of the "autocarril", the birds and the ever-present rustle of the leaves. The path, the only sign of civilization, difficult in dry times, was made treacherous as ice by the rain. My old sneakers with no treads made it doubly so.

After an hour's walk, muddy halfway to the knees, we arrived in the clearing that was to be our home for the next month. The house, a rough camp style on stilts, consisted of two small bedrooms and a veranda upstairs, the lower dirt-floored space was surrounded by a bamboo stockade. At night after supper we gathered here around a gasoline lantern to play games and tell stories. This space also served as our dining room.

The men spent the mornings cutting posts in the jungle to form the framework for the two story building. They had to be cut by hand, trimmed with an ax by a carpenter hired for the purpose [He became a Bahá'í], and dragged to the clearing by the men. Jungle construction requires that wood be off the ground to dry as it quickly rots on the ground, thus the posts were set in concrete, the framework completed, the galvanized roof finished that first year. The work of construction was directed by Raúl. (The next year we made the trip to cut the boards necessary to finish the job. They were cut from logs a small crew had cut and stored on the rafters to dry during the year. The log was put on a platform higher than a man. One man stood on the platform sawing while the other stood below on the other end of the saw.)

While they did that Sra Clementina and I cooked over half of an oil drum, singing the songs she taught me that she "heard in the wind." The children did whatever errands there were to do and played.

The afternoon was deepening time, usually taught by Raúl, and bath time in the river which was also the laundry. These days among loving Baha'is seemed like paradise.

Raúl was the first in his family to be a Bahá'í. The first of his parents to accept was his mother. Raúl felt that this would be very difficult for her because his father was a devout Catholic, said prayers every morning, etc. and their religion would be divided. One day not much later Raul came to the house and said his father had become a Bahá'í. The way it had come about was that his mother had broken her glasses in Cachaco, five hours from a place to get them fixed, and not having radio or television to entertain them she asked her husband to read the Bahá'í books to her. Thus he was attracted.

Raúl loved to joke and laugh and often teased the children of the pioneers, who adored him, or the rest of us often speaking of the "cold North Americans", but readily admitted in serious conversation that, taking away our language and our culture, we were no different. Before he left on his first trip to the Jivaros, a head hunting tribe formerly, he described in detail exactly what kind of monument he wanted for his "martyrdom" when he returned without his head. He was an excellent artist and writer and wrote and illustrated in collaboration with his brother one of the first original Bahá'í books in Spanish called "La Voz de Dios" (The Voice of God) for the "campesinos" (country people).

In later years Raúl often spoke of the evenings spent in our kitchen next to the warm wood cooking stove when the Bahá'í writings were read and spiritual subjects discussed (He lived with us much of the three and a half years we were in Ecuador).

When he went to the Holy Land the first time as a delegate to the election of the first Universal House of Justice, he was deeply moved and wrote such letters that one reading them felt present there.

He was also a lover of justice. One day he saw one of the "campesinos", or country people, often used instead of the word "Indian", being dragged through the streets by the hair. Very angry and not thinking of the consequences he reprimanded the policeman who was taking his prisoner to jail. The policeman responded by saying, but the man wouldn't go otherwise. Raúl quietly assured him that he would and the man whom the policeman let go walked peaceably to jail much to Raúl's relief.

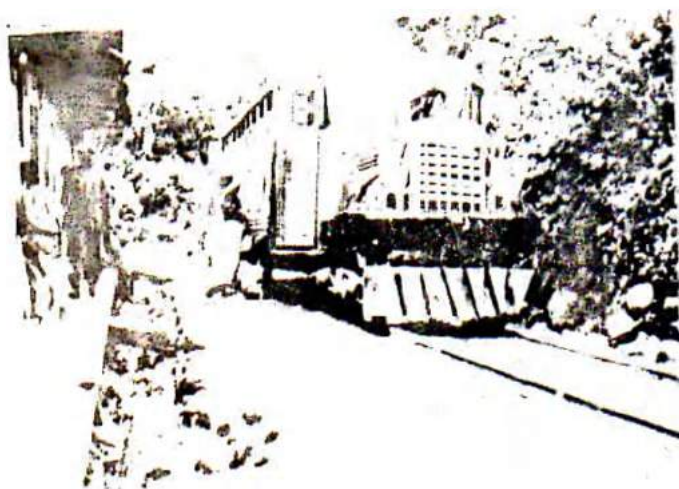
At that time the "campesinos" rode in the back of the buses. Raúl was taking some of the country believers to Quito and had reserved front seats for them. When they boarded the bus and sat down the conductor asked them to move. Raúl told him quietly that he had reserved those seats and that was where they were going to ride. Nothing more was said.

Not only the joys were shared in those years, but also the tears as the covenant breakers and mischief makers began their work. Many a time the Fire Tablet was our breakfast, and the Tablet of Ahmad our supper. These trials were only the beginning for the great trials he was to have later; but we will leave him to the telling in the Abhá Kingdom for innocent people could suffer in the telling here.

Our last contact with him was a letter written in the airport in Guayaquil en route to Bolivia on October 8, 1983, the trip from which he did not return. It seemed perhaps that an intimation of his passing had come to him. He spoke very lovingly of old times and his recent visit with us when he saw the lung specialist in Buffalo, that of late years he realized how much he had learned from us [as far as we are concerned this should have been reversed!], that his love and prayers are with us always. He said he could never stay very long in one place, that as God wished he had to go, whether he wanted to or not. This was the theme of his life.

Raúl Pavón with some friends at our house. Girl on left, Teresa Jara, home-front pioneer, man on right Espiritu Quimbia one of first Indian believers.





The autocarril in the station in Cachaco.



Walking to Pavón's up the path



Raul and some of Pioneer children in Cachaco.



Raúl, his mother and
one of his twin
sisters.



Road to Cachaco twenty
years later. Note shelf
of land on extreme
upper right where dirt
road passes today, when
only the railroad seen
in the valley passed
before.



Summerschool Cachaco
2nd year. Left to right
rear: Teresa Jara, Rosa
? from Perugachi,
Espiritu Quimbia,
Mesias Caceres, Rufino
Gualevasi, me, Manuel
?, from Vagabundo,
Front: son of Mesias,
son of Rufino, Mrs.
Pavón, Raúl's mother,
Mr. Pavón, Raúl's
father.



Children of Cachaco
helping to carry out
boards for their
school.

Raúl Pavón in Cachaco
twenty years later.



Fred Kappas, Raúl Pavón, Ralph Dexter and Ingrid Houglund

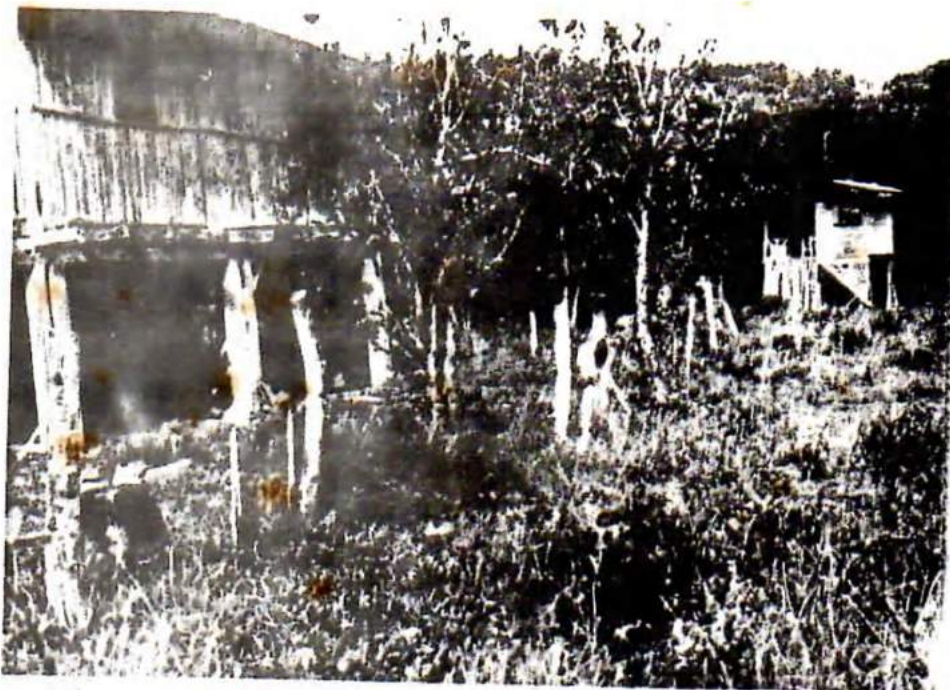
Vagabundo twenty years
later



Left to right:
Fred Kappus, Elizabeth
Kappus, Diana Maria
Célleri, home-front
pioneer, Mr. Perugachi,
one of first Indian
Bahá'is of Ecuador.



A pause for refreshment on our trip by jeep twenty years later. Left to right: Raúl Pavón, Fred Kappus, Ingrid, a pioneer in Otavalo at that time, Ralph Dexter, director of programming of Radio Bahá'í, Otavalo.



School in Cachaco twenty years later on left. Building on right the Pavón's homesteading house where we stayed while building the school.

AN
APPRECIATION

FOR

THE FOLLOWING PIONEERS AND ITINERANT TEACHERS AND PIONEERS WHO KEPT THE FLAME OF THE LOVE OF BAHÁ BURNING IN ECUADOR EVER SINCE THE DEATH OF JOHN POPE STEARNS WHO BROUGHT THAT ETERNAL LIGHT TO THIS COUNTRY, FROM 1940 to 1979.

<u>Pioneers</u>	<u>Year Arrived</u>	<u>Pioneer Post</u>
Ashraf, Ghodesea (deceased)	1959	Guayaquil (Descendent of the Dawn-Breakers)
Ashraghi, Bahman	1966	Ambato, Machala, Cuenca, et al.
Ashraghi, Zhinoos	1974	Machala, Cuenca, Ambato
Bagley, Florence	1968	Guayaquil, Otavalo, Esmeraldas
Bagley, Gerald (Jerry)	1968	" "
Baker, Sylvester	1970	Ibarra
Barrett, Barbara	1973	Quito
Barrett, Donald and and daughter Terry	1973	" "
Becker, Grove	1959	Cuenca, Otavalo, Ibarra
Beckett, David	1959	Otavalo, Ambato
Beckett, Mary and children Rosemary, Harriett, Joyce and Norman	1959	" "
Bihjati, Khalil	1960	Cuenca
Bihjati, Pari and children Khalilullah and Parvindukht	1960	Cuenca
Burkett, Kathleen	1972	Guayaquil
Burkett, Lawrence	1972	" "
Burwell, Jack	1973	Ambato, Quito
Burwell, Nooshin, nee Eskandari	1969	Ambato, Quito, Esmeraldas
Campbell, Dorothy	1959	Ambato, Quito
Campos, Blanca de (deceased)	1950	Quito (Itinerant pioneer)
Chalmers, Joyce	1969	Quito, Cuenca
Chalmers, Robert and children Karen, Robert and Valerie	1969	" "
Clark, Margaret	1976	Guayaquil
Clark, William and daughter Lou	1976	" "
Collens, Julie	1969	Guayaquil, Riobamba
Conger, George	1960	Cuenca
Conger, Patricia	1960	" "
Cornbleth, Hascle (deceased)	1946	Quito - served all Ecuador
Dexter, Ralph	1970	Riobamba, Otavalo
DuBois, Samuel	1972	Quito (Student)
Furoudi, Hessam	1976	Quito (student)
Fryback, Alan	1973	Santo Domingo

Pioneers, contd

Dexter, Janet, nee Fulton	1972	Quito, Otavalo
Goldstein, Marian (Kit)	1959	Otavalo
Haley, Harvey (deceased)	1970	Otavalo, Esmeraldas
Hámásí, Bihruz	1976	Quito (student)
Hargis, Cecile	1959	Cuenca, Otavalo, Riobamba
Hornby, Charles	1968	Quito, Cumbayá
Hornby, Helen	1969	Quito Cumbayá
Houglund, Ingrid	1976	Latacunga, Otavalo, Quito and Guayaquil
Hovde, Laurel	1966	Baños
Hubbard, Cynthia	1979	Ibarra, Esmeraldas
Ibsen, Peter	1971	Esmeraldas
Ibsen, Shirley and son Eric	1971	" "
Jamachi, Anastascio	1979	Otavalo, Salasaca, Pillero
Javid, Ali	1979	Quito, Ambato
Javid, Shadi	1979	Quito, Ambato
Jensen, James	1971	Esmeraldas
Jensen, Susana, nee Smith	1973	Cuenca, Esmeraldas (student)
Johnson, Laverne Dr.	1969	Otavalo, Esmeraldas
Jones, Edward	1972	Manta, Quito, Puyo
Kamranpour, Soheil	1978	Quito
Kappus, Betty	1960	Otavalo
Kappus, Fred and children Gayle, Nancy, Janet and Tom		" "
Keith (Peterson), Eda Rae	1959	Cuenca
Keith, Frank	1959	" "
Kevorkian, Haig (Haik)	1945	Guayaquil as Itinerant pioneer to Galapagos Islands
	1954	Quito, Guayaquil
Kramer, Lawrence (Larry)	1951	Riobamba, Guayaquil
Landry, Claude	1969	" "
Landry, Jean and children	1969	Guayaquil
Lyons, Eileen	1973	" "
Lyons, Robert	1973	Santa Rose, Riobamba, Guayaquil
Maloney, Dennis	1972	" " "
Maloney, Karen, nee Mooring and children Karine, Erica and John	1972	
Mansuri, Gretchen	1976	Cumbayá
Mansuri, Kamran and children Najin, Mehdi, Amín and Sarah	1976	" "
Mansuri, Kamran	1976	Cumbayá
Mason, Carol and children(2)	1969	Quito
Mason, Ralph	1969	" "
McDonald, Carol	1970	Otavalo
McDonald, Wallace	1970	" "
Middlemast, Lillian	1960	Otavalo
Miller, Anita (Margaret)	1972	Guayaquil, Otavalo
Monadjem, Fereydoun	1960	Cuenca
Monadjem, Vida	1960	" "

Pioneers, Contd

Monzavi, Mahnaz	1979	Quito, Loja (Student)
Newton, Peter	1976	Cuenca (Cuenca)
Nikjou, Navid	1977	Cuenca (Student)
Orbison, Virginia	1944	(Itinerant) Guayaquil
Poskitt, Clare	1977	Quito
Rains, Roger	1966	Guayaquil
Rashidpour, Bahiyyih	1975	Ibarra, Bahia, Quito
Rogers, William (Billy)	1977	Quito
Salazar, Oscar	1970	Imbabura
Salazar, Teresa and children Bahiyih, Tahirih and Nabil		" "
Schechter, Frederick	1960	Quito
Schechter, Julia	1960	" "
Sears, Mariel	1960	Quito
Sears, William, Jr.	1960	Quito
Shulman, Rina	1970	Guayaquil
Silver, Lauren	1971	Loja
Silver, Marina	1971	Loja
Smith, Jerry	1970	Esmeraldas, Otavalo
Solomon, Ida (deceased)	1969	Manta
Soennichson, Jeanne	1972	Quito (Student)
Stearns, John (deceased)	1940	Quito - served all Ecuador
Stewart, Carmen	1974	Quito
Steward, Donald	1972	Quito
Stogre, Stephen	1972	Esmeraldas
Stokes, Michael	1978	Otavalo
Stull, Mary Chavez	1975	Quito (Student)
Suttles, Bruce	1970	Esmeraldas, Quito, Babahoya Guayaquil
Thomas, Ervin	1955	" " (deceased)
Thomas, Wilma and son Robert Redley	1955	
Turner, Philip	1974	Quito, Riobamba (Student)
Songers, David	1979	Quito
Songers, Nancy	1979	" "
Vargas, Juan Ayara	1962	Galapagos Islands
Warner, John	1976	Santo Domingo, Guayaquil
Woolson, Gayle	1952	Quito, Guayaquil
	1954	Galapagos Islands

TRAVEL TEACHERS TO ECUADOR FROM 1940 to RIDVAN 1979

<u>Name</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>From</u>
Allen, Evelyn Larson	1958	United States
Allen, Dwight	1973	" "
Arjomand, Daryush	1975	Iran, USA
Atwater, Marcia Steward	1949 ^A	United States
Baker, Crystal	1970	USA, Bolivia
Baker, Bobby (Robert)		" "
Baral, David	1969	United States
Baral, Sue	1969	" "
Bartlett, Keith		
Barton, Mary	1942	" "
Baskin, Dorothy and son Ben Hanson	1970	Bolivia
Baskin, Reginald	1970	" "
Bernado, Bernice	1957	USA, Venezuela
Binda, Mary	1949	Chile
Bley, Debbie	1973	USA, Colombia
Bricker, Bernice	1945	United States
Brdarevic, Omar	1978	Peru
Burgland, Carol	1970	United States
Cabon, Juan	1972	" "
Canales, Esteban	1948	Chile
Caswell, Louise	1966	USA, Guatemala
Chandler, Reed		Chile, USA
Cheney, Elizabeth	1945	United States
Collins, Amelia	1949	" "
Czerniejewski, Jane	1970	Panama, USA
Dahl, Greg	1976	United States
Dahl, Dawn Smith	1976	" "
Douglas, Majorie	1976	Peru
Douglas, Wayne	1976	Australia
Feris, Celia	1973	Panama
Forge de, William	1958	United States
Fritsche, Gloria Sanchez de	1955	Colombia
Fryback, Adis	1976	Colombia
Fryback, Allen	1976	Colombia
George, Juanita	1970	Honduras, USA
Gonzalez F., Maria Eugenia	1978	Peru
Gottlieb, Randie	1978	United States
Gottlieb, Steve	1978	" "
Greer, Donald	1957	" "
Grueso, Clara	1979	Colombia
Guerrin, Jose	1976	Peru, France
Haynes, Loretta	1970	United States
Hottes, Flora	1947	" "

(*Some records of travel teachers and date of visit not available)

Travel Teachers, continued

Howard, Mr.	1979	United States
Hoyt, Christine	1978	Mexico, United States
Humphries, Madge	1976	United States
Jachakollo, Isidro	1978	Bolivia
Jamachi, Anastacio	1979	" "
Jara, Felipe	1975	Chile
Kahn, Janet	1976	Australia, United States
Kahn, Peter	1976	" "
Kalantar, . K.	1969	Iran, USA
Kerby, Kim	1979	United States
Kevorkian, Haig	1945	Argentina
Khâmsi, Bahia		
Khâmsi, Dorothy		
Khâmsi, Gary		
Klinger, Carmen Eliza	1975	Colombia
Kraus, Maurine	1969	United States
Lamb, Artemus	1947	Chile
Lawrence, Etta Mae		United States
Lozier, Joan	1957	Venezuela, USA
Leach, Martha	1976	United States
Matton, Edwin W.	1949	" "
McClusky, Helen	1976	" "
McCormack, Margaret	1970	" "
McLaren, Edith	1961	United States
McLaughlin, Kathleen	1955	" "
Meissler, Robert	1950	United States,
Menking, Cristina	1976	United States
Mini, Marty	1970	" "
Mobine, Nura	1955	" "
Montenegro, Diana	1979	Colombia
Mottahedeh, Mildred	1941	United States
Mottahedeh, Rafi	1941	" "
Munns, Jennifer	1975	Colombia, USA
Nicklin, Eve		Perú, Uruguay
Noskia, Dara	1973	Colombia, USA
Porras, Lenora	1968	Colombia
Peterson, Charles	1969	Panama
Peterson, Eda Rae	1969	" "
Pool, Rosey	1967	Holland, England
Pritchard, Doris		USA
Reed, Betty	1966	England
Rezvani, Habib	1959, 1969, 1971	Colombia, Irán
Rice-Wray, Edris	1960(?)	United States
Quiñones, Raymundo	1978	

Travel Teachers, continued

Sabet, Simin	1976	Irán, Colombia
Sala, Emeric	1945	United States
Sala, Rosemary	1945	" "
Sanchez, Enrique Jr. (Kiko)	1971	Perú
Schreiber, Elise	1953	Colombia
Semenoff, Paul	1978	Canada
Sholtis, Gwenne	1945, 1951	Bolivia, USA
Serrano, Arturo	1973	Mexico
Shaw, Grey	1973	USA
Shoai, Manucher	1971	Irán, Bolivia
Simmons, Ines	1968, 1975	Colombia
Simmons, Tom	1975	" "
Solomon, Ida	1977	United States
Sprague, Phillip	1951	" "
Sprague, Phillip Mrs.	1942	" "
Stewart, Frances		
Stronach, Yolanda	1966	Venezuela
Taez, Rangveld	1961	Argentina
Thomas, Elizabeth	1979	United States
Theroux, James	1978	" "
Trillis, Fernando	1957	Perú
Worley, Margot	1957	Brazil

Members of the Continental Board of Counsellors who assisted in teaching or who visited the country:

Ahmadiyah, Dr. Hedi	Belize
Arbáb, Dr. Farzam	Colombia
Armstrong Holsapple, Lenora (deceased)	Brazil
Costas, Athos	Argentina, Bolivia
Dunbar, Hooper	Argentina
<u>Khamsí</u> , Mas'ud	Perú
McLaren, Peter	Venezuela
Witzel, Donald	Venezuela

REFERENCES and BIBLIOGRAPHY

(Photocopies of all letters from Shoghi Effendi to the Regional National Spiritual Assembly of South America, to the local Spiritual Assemblies of Quito and Guayaquil, and to individual believers of Ecuador that are cited, are to be found in the Archives of the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador, and the local Spiritual Assemblies of Quito and Guayaquil have copies of letters to individual Bahá'ís of their respective letters to and from the Guardian in their files. Therefore these letters are not noted in the references.)

Chapter I: John Pope Stearns

1. Cora Oliver to Inter-America Committee: World Order Magazine, 9/40, p.227
2. John Stearns to the Inter-America Committee: National Archives Wilmette, Ill., photocopies in Archives of National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador.
3. Bahá'í World, Vol. X, 1944-1946, pp.771-779.
4. Ibid, Volumes, VIII, 1938-1940, p.146; IX, 1940-1944, p.197; X, 1944-1946, pp.700, 775-778; XI, 1946-1950, p.754.
5. Club Czechoslovakian to John Stearns: Photocopy of letter in Archives of National Spiritual Assembly of Perú and Ecuador.
6. Bahá'í News, No. 147, 10/41, p.5
7. Horace Holley to Eve Nicklin, November 3, 1944, National Archives of Perú.
8. Bahá'í World, Memorial Article by Bahá'í Group of Quito, Vol. X, pp 539-540.
9. Ibid, pp 540-541.
10. Edna True to Eve Nicklin, November 16, 1944: National Archives of Perú

Other references: Minutes of the first meeting of the Bahá'í Group of Guayaquil dated, August 28, 1944

Chapter II: Formation of First Spiritual Assembly in Ecuador

1. Virginia Orbison: "History of the Bahá'í Faith in Guayaquil" National Archives of Ecuador, Local Spiritual Assembly of Guayaquil's files.
2. Bahá'í World, Vol. X, 1944-1946, pp.771-779.
3. Shoghi Effendi to Miss Virginia Orbison, June 15, 1945: Type-written copy shared by Miss Orbison with National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador.
4. National Archives, Inter-America Committee files, Wilmette, Ill.
5. Passim

Chapter III: First Ecuadorian Woman to Accept the Faith

1. Annual Report of Quito, 1946-1947: Archives of Local Spiritual Assembly of Quito.
2. Madame Marie Claudet to the Universal House of Justice and the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador: National Archives, Quito:

REFERENCES and BIBLIOGRAPHY

3. Bahá'í Group of Quito to Inter-America Committee, October 9, 1945: Local Archives of Quito.
4. Ibid, October 18, 1945.
5. Ibid, October 26, 1945

Other references: Old minutes and letters of the Bahá'í Group of Quito: Archives of Local Assembly of Quito.

Chapter IV: The President of the Republic Introduced to the Faith: Gayle Woolson folder: National Archives of Ecuador.

Chapter V: First Local Spiritual Assembly in Capital City

1. Report to Inter-America Committee: National Archives, Wilmette, Ill., copy Local Assembly of Quito's archives.
2. Ibid., March 31, 1947
3. Inter-America Committee to Bahá'í Group of Quito: Archives Local Assembly of Quito
4. Bahá'í Group of Quito to Inter-America Committee: Ibid
5. Hascle Cornbleth, "Ilusiones": Bahá'í World, Vol. XI, p.754, 1946-1950.
6. Ibid.
7. Hascle Cornbleth, "Sidewalk Cafe": World Order Magazine, Vol. XIV, No. 11, 2/49, pp. 389-392.
8. Local Assembly of Quito to the Inter-America Committee: Copy in Local Archives of Quito.
9. Report to the Inter-America Committee from Hans Dory, secretary of Bahá'í Group and later Assembly: Ibid
10. Robert Miessler to National Teaching Committee of South America, March 6, 1950: Ibid

Chapter VI: The Fatal Fifties

1. Report to the Inter-America Committee and to the National Teaching Committee for South America (CEBSA): National Archives, Wilmette, Ill., National Archives, Quito, Ecuador.
2. Ibid, Photocopies
3. Report to Inter-America Committee, Ibid
4. Ibid, Photocopy in National Archives of Wilmette, Ill., and in Archives of National Assembly of Ecuador.
5. Bahá'í News, No. 197, 7/47, p.1
6. Report to the National Spiritual Assembly of South America: Archives Local Assembly of Quito.
7. Personal interview with Miss Bahiyyih Rashidpour, who pioneered to Bahía de Caráquez.

Other references: Letter from Inter-America Committee to Larry Kramer dated January 3, 1951; Regional Teaching Committee Files, 1951 - 1952

Chapter VII: Launching of World Spiritual Ten-Year Crusade

1. Report to National Spiritual Assembly of South America See Guayaquil Regional Teaching Committee folder 1952-53. National Archives, Quito.

REFERENCES and BIBLIOGRAPHY

2. Cables to local Spiritual Assemblies of Quito and Guayaquil from Regional National Assembly on behalf of the Guardian National Archives of Ecuador.
3. Valiollah Vargha to Bahá'í Assembly of Quito, July 12, 1953: Local Assembly Archives of Quito.
4. Local Spiritual Assembly of Quito to Regional National Assembly, Activity Report: Ibid
5. Messages to Canada, p. 43.
6. Western Hemisphere Teaching Committee to Gayle Woolson: National Archives of Ecuador, Gayle Woolson folder.
7. Gayle Woolson to Regional National Spiritual Assembly: National Archives, Ibid
8. Ibid
9. Gayle Woolson to Regional National Spiritual Assembly, June 21, 1954: Ibid
10. Haig Kevorkian to Regional National Spiritual Assembly's secretary, Dorothy Campbell: Ibid, Haig Kevorkian folder.
11. Information regarding Haig Kevorkian's death furnished by his widow: National Archives, Quito, Ecuador.
12. Letter from Haig Kevorkian and enrollment card to Regional National Assembly of South America: Ibid, Regional Teaching Committee folder, 1954-1955.

(All reference material regarding the Galapagos Islands can be found in National Archives and local Assembly of Quito archives in special folders labeled: Woolson, Kevorkian, Galapagos, National and Regional Teaching Committee folders labeled according to year.)

13. Moyses Mosquera to Regional Teaching Committee: Ibid
14. Gayle Woolson reporting to Regional National Assembly on behalf of third pioneer to Galapagos: National Archives, Galapagos folder, 1956.
15. Reports from Travel Teachers to the Galapagos Islands: Ibid. 1976-1977
16. Bahá'í World, Vol. XVII, 1976-1979
17. Ibid
18. Regional Teaching Committee files, 1954-1955.
19. Ibid, 1956-1957.

Chapter VIII: Passing of the Guardian, Launching of the Six-Year Plan

1. Lights of Guidance, p. 411, No. 1125
2. Original letters of Dr. Ashraf in folder labeled 'Guayaquil - 1958 - 1959', etc. and copies of Dorothy Campbell's to her in the same files: National Archives of Ecuador.

(Other references: Star of the West, Vol. II, Nos. 7-8, pp. 3-4, 7-9)

3. Regional Teaching Committee files also folders labeled "Cuenca": National Archives.
4. Moyses Mosquera to the Regional National Assembly: National Bahá'í Archives, Quito.

REFERENCES and BIBLIOGRAPHY

5. Monadjem report to Regional National Spiritual Assembly of South America and Regional Teaching Committee of Ecuador: National Archives of Ecuador; Teaching Committee folder.
6. Minutes and reports of the First Annual Convention of the Bahá'ís of Ecuador: National Archives, 1961
7. Minutes of the Regional Teaching Committee in 1956-1957 folder in National Archives
8. Ibid, 1960-1961, also minutes and correspondence of the National Spiritual Assembly
9. Reports to the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land from the Regional National Assembly and new National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador - correspondence files, 1960-1961, 1961-1962. National Archives, Quito, Ecuador.

Chapter IX: TERMINATION OF TEN YEAR CRUSADE

1. Personal interview with Raúl Pavón - see reports to National Spiritual Assembly and National Teaching Committee on same subject: National Archives: National Teaching Committee folder 1961-1962
2. Teresa Jara to Local Spiritual Assembly of Quito, December 17, 1961. Local Assembly Archives, Quito.
3. Personal interview taped with Vicenta Curillo Anrango.
4. Report of National Instructor Raul Pavón to National Spiritual Assembly, November 1965: National Archives, Minutes for November.
5. Pacora Blue Mountain file. National Archives
6. Personal taped interview with Auxiliary Board member, Rufino Gualavisí.
7. Bahá'í World, Vol. XIV, p. 209, 1963-1968

Chapter X: FIRST MASS CONVERSION CITY IN WESTERN HEMISPHERE

1. Minutes and reports of the Bahá'í Group of Quito, travel teachers, etc., Local Assembly Archives, Quito.
2. Written report from Bahman Ashraghi: National Archives, in Ambato folder.
3. Ibid - National and Regional Teaching Committee folders: National Archives
4. Reports - Regional Teaching Folders, National Archives
5. Personal interview
6. Personal observations - conference held in home of the writer.
7. Report in National Archives
8. Reports and letters in Local Assembly Archives, Quito.
9. Copy of letter from Bahá'í Group of Quito to Sr. Lopez in Archives of Local Assembly of Quito.
10. Minutes of Quito's new Local Assembly and of Regional Teaching Committee; Local and National Archives
11. Ibid
12. Reports to Regional National Assembly from Regional Teaching Committee in Guayaquil: National Bahá'í Archives, Quito.
13. Mildren Mottahedeh to Helen Hornby: Photocopy in National Archives

REFERENCES and BIBLIOGRAPHY

14. Taped Interview with Jimmy Jensen
15. Ibid.
16. Poem by Rufino Gualavisí in Convention Folder, 1970: National Bahá'í Archives, Quito.
17. Poem by Rúhíyyih Khánum (All correspondence to and from Rúhíyyih Khánum as well as other Hands of the Cause can be found in special labeled folders): National Bahá'í Archives, Quito.
18. Ibid
19. The writer escorted Bernardo Jerez to Jamaica on behalf of the National Spiritual Assembly.
20. Taped interview.
21. Minutes of National Assembly, reports of National Assembly and National Teaching Committee: National Bahá'í Archives, Quito.
22. Report in file of Regional Teaching Committee of Esmeraldas: Ibid
23. See National Spiritual Assembly July and August 1972 Minutes, Santo Domingo file and Mass Conversion file: Ibid
24. See file on Pioneers: Ibid

Chapter XI: Goals of Ecuador during Five Year Plan

1. Copy of report from Auxiliary Board member Patricia Conger sent to writer.: National Bahá'í Archives, Quito.
2. Minutes of National Spiritual Assembly, February 1975: Ibid.
3. Report to National Spiritual Assembly: Ibid.
4. Ibid
5. Carbon copy of report from Auxiliary Board member Charles Hornby to writer.
6. Report of Jimmie and Susana Jensen to writer for this history.
7. Minutes of Cuenca Assembly: National Bahá'í Archives, Quito (Further references on Cuenca: Interviews with Patricia and George Conger, pioneers, and with the local Spiritual Assembly secretary, Maracio Guillen)
8. Report from Auxiliary Board Member Charles Hornby and Regional Teaching Committee: National Bahá'í Archives, Quito.
9. Reports of Regional Teaching Committee of the North: Ibid
10. Bahá'í News, January 1980, pp.6-10.
11. Copies of reports to the National Assembly and the local Spiritual Assembly of Quito in respective Archives (In National Archives folder labeled "La Juventud")
12. Written report from Auxiliary Board member Jimmie Jensen for writer.
13. Written report from Auxiliary Board member Charles Hornby for Regional Teaching Committee of the Center and Counsellors.
14. Reports on Quechua Conference in Radio folder 1977 in National Archives.
15. Written report from pioneer Edward Jones regarding his trip in the jungles to teach the Auca Indians to the writer.
26. Taped report from a pioneer regarding problems during election time in the mountains.

NATIVE HOME FRONT PIONEERS

Carbo, Alberto	Riobamba
Carpio, Aurelio	Quinindé
Célleri, Diana Maria	Ibarra, Otavalo
Célleri, Esperanza	Ibarra
Célleri, Lauro	Ibarra
Célleri, Piedad	Otavalo
Guillen, Macario	Otavalo
Angular, Haydee	
Hidrobo, Julio	Cuenca
Jara, Teresa	Otavalo, Imbabura, Cayambe, Riobamba
*Peñaherrera, Alfonso and family	Riobamba
*Peñaherrera, Luis	Galapagos
Rodriguez, William	Otavalo and Colombia
Vera, Arminda	Guayaquil
Villacis, Angeliana	Esmeraldas
Villacis, Cesár	Esmeraldas
Vizquete, Luis	Otavalo
Segovia, Geraldo (From the Galapagos Islands)	Otavalo, Imbabura

*Separated from the Faith.