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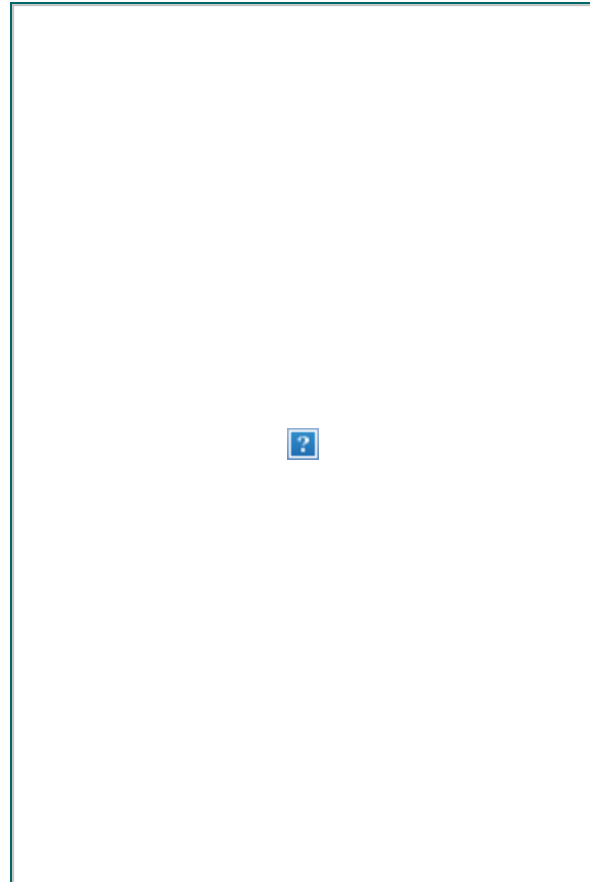
Remembering the Knights of Bahá'u'lláh

## Remembering the Knights of Bahá'u'lláh

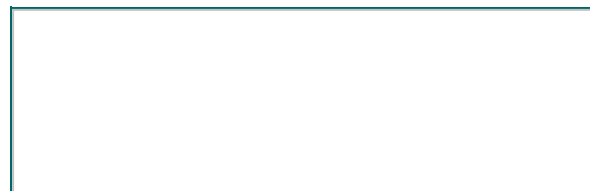
EXACTLY FIFTY YEARS AGO, a handful of fearless souls arose to diffuse the good news of the coming of Bahá'u'lláh to the countries and territories of the world where His light had not yet reached. Shoghi Effendi named these intrepid teachers of the Cause, “Knights of Bahá'u'lláh”, whose exploits will be remembered for centuries to come. The Guardian inscribed their names on a long, illuminated scroll – a scroll which now lies sealed beneath the floor of the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh as a lasting testimony to their sacrificial endeavours which resulted in His religion truly becoming a World Faith.

Shoghi Effendi announced the “fate-laden, soul-stirring, decade-long, world-embracing Spiritual Crusade” on October 8, 1952. The Crusade, combining twelve national Ten Year Plans, aimed for the “immediate extension of Bahá'u'lláh’s spiritual dominion as well as the eventual establishment of the structure of His administrative order in all remaining Sovereign States” and territories throughout the planet. The Guardian called upon the “entire body of the avowed supporters of Bahá'u'lláh’s all-conquering Faith” to “achieve in a single decade feats eclipsing in totality the achievements which in the course of the eleven preceding decades illuminated the annals of Bahá'í pioneering.” When one considers the richness of sacrifice that had coloured the first 110 years of the Faith, one can sense the high hopes Shoghi Effendi had for these pioneers and the importance of their task. “The hour is ripe,” he wrote, “to disencumber themselves of worldly vanities, to mount

the steed of steadfastness, unfurl the banner of renunciation, don the armour of utter consecration to God’s cause, gird themselves with the girdle of a chaste and holy life, unsheathe the sword of Bahá'u'lláh’s utterance buckle on the



Diá'u'lláh Asgharzádih – Channel Islands



shield of His love, carry as sole provision implicit trust in His promise, flee their homelands, and scatter far and wide to capture the unsundered territories of the entire planet.”(1) In just the first four months of the Plan, no fewer than 28 territories and islands were opened to the Faith. The number of believers who arose to pioneer passed three hundred. Within nine months, almost three quarters of the goal countries were opened.

In these islands we are privileged to have had amongst us many such intrepid souls – some still alive – who rank amongst the Knights of Bahá’u’lláh. Roshan Knox – née Áftábí – now living in Devon, was the first of our Knights to arise, arriving at her pioneer post of the Portuguese colony of Goa in July 1953. The Channel Islands were opened to the Cause in September 1953 by Diá’u’lláh Asgharzádih, a distinguished early believer in this country, who pioneered at the age of 73 and spent the last three years of his life on Jersey, and by 70 year old Evelyn Baxter, a former National Spiritual Assembly member who had already pioneered in the Six Year Plan to Birmingham, Nottingham, Hove, Oxford and Cardiff. Hugh McKinley and his mother Violet opened Cyprus that same month. Brigitte Hasselblatt opened the Shetland Islands and in October 1953, the inimitable Yorkshireman Charles Dunning from Cardiff opened Orkney where he suffered extreme persecution. The daughter of Hand of the Cause of God George Townshend, Una, went to Malta, to be followed shortly afterwards by Olga Mills. Clare Gung travelled to Southern Rhodesia, staying in the African continent until her passing in 1985. Ursula Samandari (née Newman) pioneered to Italian Somaliland in November 1953.

Keykhosrow Dehmobedi, now living in Havering, Essex, arose at the age of 22 in December 1953 to live on the impoverished Diu Island in the Indian Ocean. Two months later ‘Aziz’ulláh and Shamsi Navidi arose to pioneer to Monaco. In April 1954, French Cameroon was opened to the Faith by Mehrangiz Munsiff, whose pioneering exploits and teaching trips are legendary the world over. Two remaining Knights arose in 1954 – Paul Adams went to Spitzbergen in the Arctic Circle and Dr John Mitchell consolidated the work of Olga Mills and Una Townshend in Malta.



Charles Dunning – Orkney



Brigitte Lundblade (née Hasselblatt) – Shetland



Uiga muis and Una townshend in Maia. It was not until the late 1980s that the UK Bahá'í community celebrated the naming of another Knight of Bahá'u'lláh – when the youthful Sean Hinton opened Mongolia to the Cause, fulfilling an outstanding and long-cherished goal of the Ten Year Crusade.

Let Shoghi Effendi's clarion call to the believers of five decades ago ring in our ears as we now arise to carry out the provisions of the Divine Plan at this time, a Plan which calls for sacrificial services no less demanding than those made by the Knights of Bahá'u'lláh fifty years ago, whose memory we honour and cherish: "Let them ... vow with one voice, one heart, one soul, never to turn back in the entire course of the fateful decade ahead until each and every one will have contributed his share in laying on a world-wide scale an unassailable administrative foundation for Bahá'u'lláh's Christ-promised Kingdom on earth, swelling thereby the chorus of universal jubilation wherein earth and heaven will join as prophesied by Daniel, echoed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá: 'on that day will the faithful rejoice with exceeding gladness.'"(2)

Rob Weinberg

1 Shoghi Effendi, Messages to the Bahá'í World, 1950-57, p. 49

2 Messages p. 44

Sean Hinton (r) in Mongolia

Roushan Knox (née Aftábí) in 1953 – Goa



