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The Passing of Philip Hainsworth

Philip Hainsworth (1919 - 2001)

The following obituary appeared in *The Daily Telegraph* on December 12, 2001 and is printed with permission.

PHILIP HAINSWORTH, who has died aged 82, was a leading member of the Bahá'í Faith in Britain; a prolific writer and lecturer, he was also an enthusiastic worker for the United Nations Association and the World Congress of Faiths.

Philip Hainsworth was born in Bradford on July 27, 1919. At 13 he had to leave school to become the family's main breadwinner after his father, an auctioneer, was seriously injured helping to rescue people caught in a factory fire. Philip's ambition was to become a journalist, but work in the local mill was better paid.

He began each day attending to the family allotment and chickens (he sold the hens' eggs), while evenings were spent studying for a City and Guilds exam.

Hainsworth first heard about the Bahá'í teachings in 1938, and for the rest of his life he promoted its ideals of world citizenship, internationalism, and the eradication of prejudice. The Bahá'í faith – which originated in Persia in the mid-19th century – has no clergy and is administered by elected bodies with a headquarters at Haifa in Israel.

Central to Bahá'í spiritual teachings is the belief that there is only one God and that the major religions of the world have been established progressively by "Manifestations", or "Messengers" of God, who have delivered teachings appropriate to humanity's stages of development.

The faith promotes equality between women and men; compulsory education for all children; the establishment of a world language; elimination of the extremes of wealth and poverty; and world peace through world governance. Today it numbers more than five million members worldwide (although they are few in Britain).

At the outbreak of the Second World War, Hainsworth was the first British Bahá'í to register in the Armed Forces. Following his father's example, however, he was a committed pacifist, and he was summoned to appear before a tribunal in Leeds. His statement that he had renounced absolute pacifism in favour of the Bahá'í teachings which advocate justice and the nation's right to defend itself impressed the tribunal, which granted him exemption from combatant service.

Hainsworth served in the Royal Army Medical Corps as a stretcher-bearer. During the North Africa campaign he was accorded the unusual – for a pacifist – accolade of being granted a commission; he left the RAMC in the rank of captain.

Prior to his release from military service in 1946, he spent five weeks at Haifa, in what was then Palestine. There, he studied his chosen faith first-hand with the then leader of the Bahá'í Faith, Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, the greatgrandson of its Prophet-Founder.

Returning to England, Hainsworth moved to Nottingham to help to establish the first Bahá'í group there. His mother, Lizzie, who had also become a Bahá'í, moved there with him. As

the faith's British community grew, so did Hainsworth's prominence as an enthusiastic and capable administrator.

He was appointed to a number of national committees and in 1947 elected to its national governing body. There were further moves to Oxford and Blackburn where again he helped to establish Bahá'í communities.

In 1951, responding to a call to take the Bahá'í teachings to the African continent, Hainsworth joined a small international group which travelled through North Africa to Kampala, in Uganda. Within two years, some 300 Ugandans had become Bahá'ís, representing 29 tribes; today the Bahá'í faith has around 105,000 members in Uganda.

Hainsworth served on the first local Bahá'í governing council of Kampala in 1952 and the Bahá'í Regional Assembly for Central and East Africa in 1956. That year, he married Lois Houchin, a PA at Rank Films and an aspiring opera singer who turned down a job at Glyndebourne to join him in Uganda.

Their eldest son, Richard, and daughter Zarin were born there. They returned to England in 1966, for the children's education. Another son, Michael, was born and Hainsworth was re-elected to the national Bahá'í governing body, a post he held for three decades.

In the 1980s Hainsworth published a number of works, including "The Bahá'í Faith" (with Mary Perkins), which became an established textbook in schools. He was the author of "Bahá'í Focus on Human Rights" and "Bahá'í Focus on Peace", and editor of "Unfolding Destiny", a 500-page collection of Shoghi Effendi's letters to the British Bahá'í community.

From the 1970s through to last spring, Hainsworth was a familiar and well-loved figure at national Bahá'í events. Though often forthright and brusque in public discussion, he was, on a personal basis, a generous and kind-hearted man whose experience and knowledge inspired many. He was always reliable, never failing to deliver on promises and honouring engagements.

Only a few months ago, Hainsworth returned to Uganda with his family to mark the 50th anniversary of his work there.

He is survived by his wife and their three children.

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Messages of condolence

THE MESSAGES of condolence published below show the extent of the regard in which Philip was held by the Bahá'í community worldwide.

December 18, 2001

DEAR BAHÁ'Í FRIENDS,

The news of the passing to the Abhá Kingdom of your beloved friend and co-worker, Philip Hainsworth, was received with much sadness.

Philip's deeds and activities have been seen and recognized by Bahá'ís in Australia, as well as around the world.

We send our sincere sympathy and condolences to your Assembly which will especially feel the loss of this dedicated servant, and to Philip's family. We also assure you of our prayers at the House of Worship for the progress of his soul and for the comfort and well-being of all his dear



family and loved ones.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of
Australia

December 18, 2001

OUR DEAREST FRIENDS,

The National Spiritual Assembly of South Africa was very saddened to learn of the passing of dearly loved, much admired servant of the Blessed Beauty, Philip Hainsworth. His services to the African Continent will never be forgotten and we, his heirs, are eternally grateful for his selfless devotion. Please convey our heartfelt prayers and loving thoughts to his dear family and assure them of our prayers for the progress of his precious soul throughout the worlds of God.



Philip Hainsworth in 1946, around the time he would have met the beloved Guardian

With deepest love,
The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of South Africa

December 18, 2001

DEAR BAHÁ'Í FRIENDS,

The news of the passing to the Abhá Kingdom of our deeply cherished brother, Philip Hainsworth, has caused profound sadness to so many hearts.

For over sixty years Philip served the Cause of God with unremitting energy and dedication in the teaching and administrative fields on two continents. His personal qualities of unflinching staunchness and absolute reliance on Bahá'u'lláh won the profound love and admiration of all those who knew him. Philip's enthusiasm was boundless and his driving force was his unswerving devotion and obedience to the beloved Guardian and the Universal House of Justice, qualities that we recall with immense admiration. In the last few months, Philip arose in the fulfilment of the provisions of the Plan in hand with a joyful vitality and single-mindedness unmatched by many who are a fraction of his age. To the very end, stout of heart, deep of spirit, Philip was a brilliant gem of rare hue.

Our sympathies and condolences are extended first to his dear family, all of whom, too, have distinguished themselves in service, but beyond, to the entire European Bahá'í community which has lost a treasured co-worker. We offer fervent supplications to the Blessed Beauty for the progress of his soul and cherish the hope that the shining record of a consecrated life will inspire new generations to arise in his stead.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

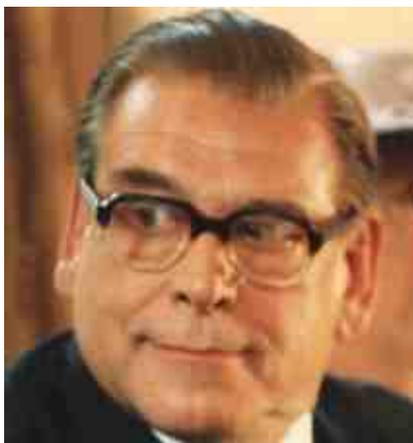
Shahriar Razavi,
The Continental Board of Counsellors in Europe

The Passing of Philip Hainsworth

An appreciation from Lois Hainsworth

DEAR FRIENDS,

ALTHOUGH Philip's carcinoma of the bone was diagnosed last June, we had been given to understand that he might have at least two years left, and treatment was initiated. At that time his doctors advised against our trip to Uganda, but I told them he had been looking forward to it so very much that it would be much worse for his peace of mind if he did not go. Additionally, I knew how much the Ugandan Bahá'ís were looking forward to his visit as he had played such a leading role in the development of the Bahá'í community in Uganda.



in the development of the Faith in Uganda, and they wanted us to be present at their Golden Jubilee! The doctors agreed that this was my responsibility and authorised additional radiotherapy treatment to help on the long journey. He was always in considerable pain, controlled to some extent by drugs, and found walking and long car journeys progressively difficult – hence our absence from the last Teaching conference in November.



A recent photograph of Philip

He spent the last months of his life going through all his papers and sorting out all those of historical value for the Afnán Trust. With Michael's help he had filled seven large boxes and it had been planned to take these on Sunday, December 16, so we had arranged for Michael and Katherine, Zarin and Soroush and their children to come over to help us to deliver them, first paying a visit to the Resting Place of his beloved Guardian.

On Saturday morning we had been planning a three-day pilgrimage to Haifa as he so wanted to see the Terraces. That afternoon Michael and Katherine arrived to drive us to the Sevenoaks' Ruhi Institute and, although he was dressed ready to go, at the last moment he said he did not feel up to it and that I should go alone. When we returned he was in bed, and played a game of chess with Michael. He was asleep when I came upstairs and on Sunday morning he was sleeping peacefully when I got up to let out the dog, deal with breakfast and prepare lunch for my family before we left for Arnos Grove.

When I went back upstairs it was clear that there had been a sudden deterioration – he did not wake when I touched him. I called Michael to ask him and Katherine to come earlier than arranged and we called the doctor. After she had examined him she told me that he had not long to live, but it would be days rather than weeks. At this time Zarin and her family were already on their way, unaware of this sudden change, and arrived after the doctor, surprised to see the medical car.

I telephoned Hassan Alaei, to say that Philip was very ill and we would be unable to bring the Afnán Trust boxes as expected and telephoned Richard in Moscow to tell him of this change.

Although he never really recovered consciousness on Sunday, his Fadaie grandchildren were able to say their "Goodbyes" before being taken home by Soroush. Zarin, Michael, Katherine and I spent the day beside him; he was surrounded by prayer and seemed to be free of pain throughout the day and evening, passing away peacefully in his sleep at 10.14 pm. At the moment of his passing we were intoning the Persian chant associated with Bahá'u'lláh's visit to Tabarsi, which is why this was chanted at his graveside. Zarin, Michael, Katherine and I were with him all day and through the night.

I would like to thank everybody who travelled on a cold, cold day to attend the funeral, especially those who had to stand in the chapel, and most especially those who stood in the freezing cold because there was no room in the chapel. My family and I were particularly touched that Mr Ali Nakhjavani, who had been his friend for over half a century, had travelled from Haifa to be there.

There have been hundreds of messages of condolence and tribute from all over the world, from Bahá'ís, organisations with which he was associated and non-Bahá'í friends of his and mine, and it has so far been impossible to reply to them all. I would like to thank all those who remembered this remarkable man.

Also I wish to pay tribute to my family: to Michael and Katherine, who have been so supportive and helpful, choosing to live close to us in order to help us; to Zarin and Soroush, who took upon themselves the enormous responsibility for all the arrangements for the funeral and the reception which followed, and their children; to Richard, for his loving support and dignified conduct of the funeral and to Corinne and the Hainsworth grandchildren who could not be with us, but who have arranged a suitable memorial in Moscow

Lois Hainsworth

National Memorial Service Arrangements

THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY is pleased to inform you that the national memorial service for Philip Hainsworth will take place on Saturday, February 16, at the Assembly Hall, Baden-Powell House, 65-67 Queen's Gate, London SW7 5JS (nearest underground stations: Gloucester Road and South Kensington). The meeting will begin promptly at 7.30 pm.

Please note that the special meeting of the National Spiritual Assembly with the friends which was scheduled for the same time and place as this memorial service has now been postponed to a later date.



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