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National Committees and Departments

YoS Desk UK

Thenna Abbas is a YOS volunteer serving at the World Centre.



MY PLANE TOUCHED down at Tel-Aviv airport at 3.20 am. After I had my passport checked, I picked up my luggage and was met by four Bahá'í youth holding my name up on a card. I found that there was another Bahá'í on my plane, Leila, from Argentina. Two of the Bahá'í youth led me to the car and the four of us went on to Haifa. The journey took about an hour. Then the two of us were given letters with our names on them. They contained personal and housekeeping money, keys, schedule etc. We approached Haifa at sunrise just in time to see a sunbeam illuminate the Shrine of the Báb. We dropped Leila off at her flat

Thenna (right) with Nima Honarmandan from England and Emma Barry from Ireland

first then came to my flat on Hillel Street. Once I had been shown around the place I went to bed and slept till about 5.30 pm.

When I woke up I could see that the accommodation department had left me some chocolates and soap on the desk, which was very nice. I looked around the flat and saw that there was a large box inside the fridge with my name on it: it contained bread, milk, cheese, hummus, cereals and much more. I met with my first flat mate who had arrived the previous day; he was also a security guard. I found out that his name was Sasha and he lived in Latvia. I was still pretty jet lagged so I slept through the night. I awoke early the next morning and it was quite warm and I ate some breakfast. Then I met with my second flat mate, Daniel, from Vanuatu. Daniel had been a security guard for a year already so he informed Sasha and me of what to expect. I looked at the orientation schedule and it told me what would be happening over the next week of general orientation.

It was now Friday and I had to meet up with a contact who would take me to Bahjí for the afternoon. Once I met with him and some other Bahá'í youth from around the world we made our way to Bahjí, which took 90 minutes. It was a very hot day and we were told to drink plenty of water. After visiting the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh and a quick tour of the garden we boarded the van and went back to Haifa. The next day I met up with a man called Andre from South Africa who took me to visit the Shrine of the Báb. After this I went for my first kebab in the Hadar (centre of Haifa).

The next morning all 26 new staff members had to meet up for a formal welcome to the World Centre which was held in the multi-purpose room in the Seat of the Universal House of Justice. We went around the group and introduced ourselves: there were people from the UK, Canada, Papua New Guinea, Latvia, Lithuania, Tajikistan, Mexico, Australia, the USA, Liberia and many more places. Our group co-coordinator was Missy Martin who looked after us during the week-long orientation. Every department in the World Centre gave us an introduction about what they do and how we deal with them. These departments

include banking, accommodation, health clinic, food centre, telecoms, library, purchasing etc. After this, Universal House of Justice member Peter Khan came and spoke to us about the importance of the YOS. Also, Universal House of Justice member Ian Semple gave a short talk and answered any questions we had.

The week's orientation went by quickly. After the general orientation most of the new staff members split up into their various departments and began work but the security guards had one more week of training, learning codes for radio and a series of highly confidential talks. I was given a radio/mobile, uniform, badge, notepad and pen. On the one or two days we had off I managed to go to Carmel beach, have a barbecue on the top of a roof overlooking the Shrine and visit Haifa Mall. I've been to one presentation by Dr Firaydoun Javaheri (member of the International Teaching Committee) about 50 years of the Faith in Zambia, and I have been to two youth classes by member of the Universal House of Justice Mr Dunbar about the dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh.



Mr Hooper Dunbar and Thenna

The food we have is all in the food centre, which is a large supermarket underneath the International Teaching Centre. Each staff member gets a bank account and a monthly allowance – whenever I want to purchase food I go there and take what I want and give the till operator my account number and the money is taken out of the account automatically. Soon the pilgrims started arriving. I haven't had much chance to meet with them because I was busy training but I saw one of my friends from the UK and I invited him back to my flat for a meal. There are different classes to attend; dancing, poetry, writing and study circles but my shift work is difficult so I am not sure how many I will attend. At New Year (Dec 31 - Jan 1) I was working at Terrace 19 which I thought would be bad as I would miss all the parties but at 11.45 pm 60 Bahá'ís and over 200 Israelis came to watch the fireworks. Mr Ali Nakhjavani gave a talk to the new staff about living at the World Centre which was very interesting. I've been practising my Arabic with the local guards and my Hebrew. Apart from this I have been enjoying my work and making many new friends.

Two days ago I went on a staff visit to the Ridván Garden and the House of 'Abdu'l-láh Pashá. The weather here is hot but cold in the nights and the winter weather is starting. Each day/night I work in a different area (200 area is the Shrine, 100 is the Arc Buildings etc). In the day I stand at the gates and check IDs, use metal detectors, check baggage, check for firearms etc., at nights and evening I patrol around the areas and check for trespassers and open gates for pilgrims/staff members. Sometimes I can stay at the House of 'Abdu'l-Bahá for the night and patrol around Rúhiyyih Khánum's resting place. If I'm at 100 area I can lock and unlock the House Members' office doors. I have a unit number like the police force .

With the situation in Iraq everything, including security, is being tightened up – gas masks are being issued tomorrow as a precautionary measure. I've also applied for a staff nine-day pilgrimage at some point during my service and I will be planting a tree at Bahjí with my name on it.

Year of Service Desk (YOSDeskUK)

Secretary: Sylvia Miley — email: Esmry Koomen <yosdesk@bahai.org.uk>,
Website: <http://www.bahai.org.uk/yos/>

Office of Bahá’í Education

Call for materials for children's classes

EVER TAUGHT children's classes? Ever stayed up late the night before a class making up some resource for it or writing out your lesson plan? Then you will know how helpful it can be to have materials to hand you can refer to, ideas to help you out or lesson plans you can follow.

The Office of Bahá’í Education has recently been set up by the National Spiritual Assembly to provide educational resources, among other things, and as one of our first projects we would like to begin working on the task of gathering already existing materials from the friends that have been used in the past for children's classes. Many people in the UK have worked hard over past years to create some wonderful materials and we feel it would be of great use to all the friends involved in teaching children's classes if some of these resources could be collated and made more widely available. Once we have obtained a range of resources we will then make them available in paper form, on a CD and the website, depending on the nature of the resources.

Do you have any resources you think would be useful for others to use? Perhaps you have made up games, plays, stories, worksheets or wordsearches or maybe you have ideas for craft activities, or pictures you have found useful, or maybe you have kept lesson plans for lessons you have taught. The Office of Bahá’í Education would be extremely grateful if you do have anything like these (or other things we've not thought of!) if you would be happy to let us have copies so that we can make them more widely available.

We all know what it is like not to be sure how to approach a particular topic and what resources to use etc. and if the wealth of educational material that has been created in the UK over the years can be made available to other people teaching classes, it would be a big help for many people.

If you do have anything to send then please contact:
Mitali Peckham at obe@bahai.org.uk

Soft copies (i.e. digital files) would be wonderful so that we could easily make them available electronically but we would also welcome anything on paper as well. Thank you so much in advance.

Committee for International Pioneering and Travel Teaching

Travel Teaching in Slovenia

A FEW MONTHS AGO I decided to go travel teaching and after consulting the Committee for International Travel Teaching and Pioneering, I was advised to go to Slovenia. On October 11, 2002 I arrived in Lubljana and was given accommodation in the Bahá’í Centre.

Slovenia is a small country with a population of around two million most of whom are Catholic. There are about fifty Bahá’ís throughout the country and the majority live in Lubljana, the capital. Apart from two Iranians, one from Canada and one from England, the friends there are all local and as the cost of living is high, they have to work hard to earn a livelihood.



A group of Bahá’ís at the Bahá’í Centre in Lubljana

The small community is well organised: regular Local Assembly meetings take place as well as Tranquillity Zones and Feasts, and The Holy Days are also well observed. However, as there is no special committee for the purpose of teaching and proclaiming the Faith, no regular firesides are held. Despite this many young non-Bahá'ís are invited to take part in some of the gatherings and are encouraged to demonstrate their talents in music and song. This kind of activity brings the youth closer to the Bahá'í community and strengthens the ties of friendship between the two.

I thought the most useful service I could render during my stay, was to do some deepenings and therefore I participated in all their functions and contributed by answering questions and explaining many subjects related to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. I also gave deepening materials and some texts on the Faith to the local member of the Auxiliary Board who promised to distribute them among the community.

I also had the opportunity to meet a young woman, a classical singer, who was taught the Faith by Shomaïs Afnan, and who claimed to be the first local Bahá'í in Lubliana. I made an attempt to have an interview with the local press, but met with a great deal of prejudice from the person responsible and sadly it did not materialise. I also had the chance to do some individual teaching, both on the way into and out of Slovenia: I talked at length to two young British men who asked me to send some literature about the existence of God, and on my return flight, I talked with another interested person from Slovakia.

I thoroughly enjoyed my travel teaching experience in Slovenia and would recommend it to all the friends,

Sadiq Mehraban (Mr)

From the Desk of the CIPTT

...over 200 travel teachers have arisen

ANOTHER RIDVÁN is behind us. Another Bahá'í decade has started. Maybe this is a good time for each one of us to take time out to make an assessment of where we want to go in the next ten years, what we want to have achieved with our life so that we can look back and be pleased with the outcome. Of course most of us are not totally free agents in what we intend to do and, as the Writings instruct us, we should consult with all those who may be affected by our plans.

Given the agony of recent events, the level of death, devastation and destruction and the total confusion, fear and uncertainty that now permeates all societies, it is clear that the Major Plan of God is moving to a climax. Where is the best place for us to be? Striving to

be the beacons of light in the darkness of a suffering humanity. The characteristics of a beacon are that it can be clearly seen near and far, that people know what it stands for and are attracted to it and that it never stops shining through the dark. Most of us will continue to polish our lamps and attempt to burn brightly in our local area. Some will want to take their lamp and go on regular journeys to other countries where the beacons of light are fewer and extra light would be welcome. Some will want to take their lamp to other countries and not leave until the point where no one would notice if they did, so brightly has that country become illumined!

As we in the UK stand on the threshold of year three of the Five Year Plan it is heartening to know that over 200 travel teachers have arisen out of the target 500 for the Plan and that some 60 pioneers, both short and long term, out of the 150 target over the five years, have volunteered for service. However, that means that we have only just managed to stay on course to achieve our goals. We urge you to look at the fantastically informative CIPTT website for information on the needs of each place. The website is at: www.bahai.org.uk/pioneers: User name: friend Password: cipatt19uk

We know, of course, that you will not forget the goal countries in the Philip Hainsworth Campaign Five Year Plan Goals in Europe: Bosnia & Herzegovina; Corsica; Croatia; Cyprus (Southern); Faroe Islands; Macedonia; Malta; Kosovo; Montenegro; Serbia; Slovenia; Vojvodina. The countries underlined remain unloved and unvisited by either travel teachers or pioneers from the UK.

**Yugoslavia (Serbia & Montenegro, including the regions of Vojvodina and Kosovo)
Category 1 goal.**

Teaching is done mainly on an individual basis. Pioneers experienced in Institute process are needed to assist in strengthening local believers by initiating small study circles and devotional meetings. Pioneers are needed to settle throughout the country. Young English-speaking students can enrol in a number of universities. Unique opportunities for service exist for older or retired friends who are financially self-supporting.

In Serbia assistance is needed to help support the local believers in Belgrade, Novi Sad, and Subotica. Long-term pioneers, especially families, are needed to establish local centres of activity, help deepen the friends, and initiate study circles and devotional gatherings. Those coming from the UK need a visa to enter the country, for which an invitation from Serbian residents is necessary.

Montenegro has been divided into six clusters – five of which are not yet opened to the Faith and one that contains a few isolated localities and groups. Pioneers are needed to assist with the task of opening new cities to the Faith and helping to develop the Institute process. Capital Cities: Belgrade (Serbia), Podgorica (Montenegro). Climate: Mediterranean conditions in the southwest, while inland, summers are hot (and rainy), with cold and snowy winters. Population: 11,219,000. The Dinaric Alps dot the southwest coastal area, while in the north, there is a rich fertile plain. Much of the country is high hills with numerous rivers draining into valleys. Major rivers include the Danube, Sava and Tara. Languages: Serbo-Croatian, Albanian, Hungarian.

If, or rather, when, you decide to plan the details of your act of service please get in touch with the committee and let us help you get local contact names and numbers. Contact the CIPTT at pbellamy999@hotmail.com.

CIPTT

Secretary: Peymané Adab – email: peymane@onetel.net.uk

Visit the CIPTT website at: <http://www.bahai.org.uk/pioneers/>

Travel Teaching and Homefront Pioneering Service

Jersey's Golden Jubilee

THIS YEAR SEES THE GOLDEN JUBILEE of the Faith in Jersey and the small Bahá'í community in there would welcome travel teachers and pioneers. They will endeavour to set up firesides and/or public meetings. Individuals may be able to be put up in one of their homes. They don't have the manpower for a big event so a series of visitors would be really beneficial. Please make contact before booking. Anyone who speaks Portuguese would be useful as there is a large Maderian/Portuguese minority.

Jersey is very suitable for short term pioneering. People who are needed to work there are granted a five year licence. There are always opportunities in the finance industry and professionals thinking of pioneering may watch their publications for jobs. Please contact Marlene at: jsyedu875@localdial.com. Please inform TTHPS of your plans as well.

Travel Teaching Offer: Sebastian Lopez, age 25, is available to travel teach in the UK preferably with other youth in the next few months. His specialised areas are journalism and religion. He speaks Russian and Spanish, has experience in devotionals and study circles. He has done travel teaching in Russia and Bolivia. For more information please contact him directly (sebastian-lopez@excite.com) and inform TTS.

TTHPS

Email: tts@bahai.org.uk — Website: <http://www.bahai.org.uk/tts/>

