

TESTING ABOUT WORLD CONGRESS-WOW!

About this time I attended two meetings when there was some excitement about whether Subud Britain should apply to host the next Subud World Congress. The first took place when a visiting International Helper came for a rare local visit here. I stood in a circle of about 15 or more men and felt that it would not be a good idea for this application to go ahead. I –and one other man there- also received that “this testing was a waste of time because the decision to apply had already been made.” There were some positive receivings but on the whole the group seemed less than enthusiastic about it. Nonetheless, we were eventually to hear that the application had already gone ahead!

My second testing session was far more dramatic and took place at the National Congress later in the year.

As soon as the testing started I received a surprising image of Subud Britain being like a pregnant woman whose time for delivery had come but the birth was not happening! And this was getting more and more painful for the mother. It looked as if the baby would have to be born as a result of outside intervention and soon *because the mother's and the baby's lives were in danger!* I understood from this graphic and startling receiving that there were things seriously wrong here and they would need to be put right *before Subud Britain could fulfil this role of hosting a World Congress*. I also understood that Subud would not put this right *by itself*- something external to it would have to happen to cause that!

Then we tested how it would be if Subud Britain was “as God wished it to be.” What a receiving! This time the birth was natural and happy and –this really surprised me- the birth became like the Christian Nativity: many people from all over the world would come to see this baby (not just the wise men and the shepherds!) I felt that it would be like the time when Subud first came to the West: exciting and involving an explosion of the “many who would come...”

Could I really believe this? I did not know. I would have liked to have tested further (especially about what specifically Subud Britain could “put right”) but my receiving was clearly not in line with the majority who received happily that the bid should go ahead and for whom there were no complications. This puzzled me and a few others who had also received negatively, so I decided to

await the outcome before I decided whether to take my response seriously or not. Well, the bid was unsuccessful and the Congress was going to be held in Germany. Perhaps I had something to take seriously from this testing then?! Perhaps we could really experience again the excitements of those early days when Subud was a world-wide attraction? I found myself thinking what that would be like:

Subud 1957 And Now- What A Contrast!

Subud came to the West from Indonesia in 1957 when it quickly spread all over the world. It is hard for people like me who see how difficult it is to hear of Subud nowadays, and to see how few world-wide members there are, to appreciate the excitements and incessant activity of Subud members at that time. John Bennett was a key figure in Subud's arrival in the West. He writes about this time in his book "Witness":

"Subud acted with explosive violence...Visitors from America, South Africa, Canada, France, Germany, Holland and Norway came... and were opened. Subud was beginning to be known.

Then came an unexpected invitation to California for two months....We were swept along by the stream of surprising events...Two months of incessant travelling between San Francisco, Sacramento, Los Angeles and Carmel, lectures, talks, meetings, openings, latihan with great crowds...

We flew to Australia, via Honolulu and Fiji...

Before we reached the customs, the reporters were on us. I had no means of knowing what had been told them, or why I was being bombarded with questions...we discovered that a hand-out to the Press had aroused such interest that I was to have a Press conference with about twenty reporters, an interview on television, two radio talks.

At last, ready to drop, we left the airport at five p.m. to learn that I was expected to open about forty men and Elizabeth (Bennett's wife) fifty women that very evening. To cap it all I had to give an introductory lecture...

I walked in and found about three hundred men and women filling the hall and waiting for me to speak. I have no idea what impression I made. I spoke for twenty minutes, and probably told them that it was not the explanation, but the experience that mattered. With great trouble and much confusion, the hall was

cleared. Reporters were firmly told that they could not be present at the opening. All the men left the room, and Elizabeth was left alone to face sixty or seventy women...

I could not get a moment to sit quietly and bring my disturbed and revolted feelings into some semblance of calm. After forty minutes, I went into the hall with the men. There were not far short of fifty... I pronounced the formula usual at the opening, asked them to keep their eyes closed whatever might happen, and commended myself to God...

After ten or fifteen minutes, I opened my eyes and an extraordinary sight met them. Nearly all the men in the room were already responding to the latihan. More had happened in an hour than I had seen in England in a month. In that moment, I became convinced beyond all doubt that the Power that works in Subud has nothing to do with me or any other person. I could no longer question its real-that is, its objective- presence.

We left for Singapore and Ceylon (Sri Lanka)...

By this time, interest in Subud had spread all over the world. People in at least fifty countries had expressed the wish to receive the contact... Pak Subuh went first to Singapore, Hong Kong and Japan, and then...Australia and New Zealand to Mexico, where we would meet him..." (pp 329- 340)

And To-Day?

All this is such a far cry from to-day! Subud is so low profile, so out of the public eye that it may seem virtually non-existent! There is no media interest; you are unlikely to find any books about it or many references to it anywhere; there are no public talks or lectures...There is a website but you will need to know the word "Subud" before you can access that and how are you going to come across that word in the first place, except by chance? To me, it is amazing that Subud continues to exist at all without any publicity or any obvious attempts to promote it! A small number of people still continue to find it, however, sometimes by personal contact and sometimes, as in my case, through a string of unlikely events.

As you might expect Subud does not have a large membership nowadays but small (usually) groups still exist in many countries of the world. There are still enough members to keep the world-wide organisation functioning. But many groups have ceased to exist or have an ageing membership or are made up of

the minimum number that can keep a group going. For example, my own group is just surviving with 2, sometimes 3 elderly men and two elderly women; the next group along has 3 elderly men and 2 women. 2 other local groups have ceased to exist in recent years. Some groups have expanded but most have not and for some years now openings have become rare. The National Council Minutes for Britain have noted for a number of years now that Britain has an “ageing and declining membership.” In fact, the future of Subud looks very uncertain to a number of Subud members world-wide because so many are now coming to the end of their lives and are not being replaced.

Bapak’s vision for Subud being for “all of humankind” with enough members to create various “enterprises,” which would fund a variety of cultural and charitable activities, is far from being realised. With so few members and an “ageing and declining membership” how then can this vision become a possibility? Is it likely that Subud is, in fact, in a *terminal* decline? How can we prevent that? Can we really experience again- as my testing suggested- the excitements and expansion of those early days when Subud first came to the West? This question became more and more important to me as my attempts at stimulating some discussion- let alone renewal- in Subud had so obviously failed.

And then came a bombshell which had far more effect on Subud Britain and its members than people like me ever could hope to achieve...