

NOVEMBER 15, 1941

## They Seek for a City

By J. W. E. NEWBERY

"After a voyage of twenty-four days, our ship sailed into Buenos Aires on December 17th with eighty-one of us on board. We all feel deeply grateful to God for His wonderful protection during this voyage, especially as our pioneer group includes forty small children, of whom twelve are still babies.

"At Buenos Aires we boarded the *Ciudad de Corrientes*, the little river steamer that was to take us up the Rio Parana into Paraguay. It was here, on our long river journey, that we first began to realize what 'change of climate' really means, and our bewildered northern bodies received a fierce shock. The conditions third class on the South American ship were absolutely disastrous. It was nothing less than a miracle that the health and strength of us all was preserved during these ten days on the Rio Parana and further inland on the Rio Paraguay. The conditions, especially sleeping accommodation, were bad beyond anything that we had expected.

"On December 25th we found ourselves at Asuncion, the Capital of Paraguay; it was blazing hot and not easy for us to believe that it was, in fact, Christmas Day, for it is mid-summer now in Paraguay. We were now moved from our steamer to a small barge which was attached by ropes to another boat and after two days waiting we proceeded up the river. Living conditions became now even more primitive and the only compensation was the excitement, especially of the children, upon catching sight of real live crocodiles, storks and beautiful parrots upon the green banks of the Rio Paraguay. But the mosquitoes that plagued us became less and less a novelty and more and more a nuisance.

"At long last we arrived at Puerto Casado, a tiny river-side port, lying just north of the Tropic of Capricorn. Here we spent a memorable night encamped on the river bank accompanied by innumerable insects. The following morning we caught the one and only train into the interior, travelling due west. The only adequate description of this railway is by comparison with those running in England in 1860. It took us eleven hours to go less than one hundred miles. Then the railway came to an end and we encamped that night at the 'station.'

### Who Are These?

What is this that we have been reading? Who are these pioneers so boldly pushing into Paraguay, "the poorest and strangest land in all the world"? And what is the reason of this journey?

The above was written in 1941 in the chronicles of the recent journey of the

Cotswold Bruderhof from England to Paraguay. Theirs is a pilgrimage of peculiar significance and interest for us in this war-torn world. For they are a people who believe they have the plans of the city of peace and have permitted themselves to be driven from country to country if only at last somewhere they may be permitted to raise that city on the God-given foundations of justice, peace, purity and simplicity. Now in far-off Paraguay they begin again.

In 1920 Dr. Eberhard Arnold, for many years General Secretary of the Student Christian Movement in Germany, deeply disquieted by the unhappy and divided life of his post-war homeland and by the failure of the organized Churches to demonstrate the Christian life of Fellowship and Community, gathered together a group of like-minded people into a "Bruderhof" at Sannerz (other such communities immediately sprang up) for the purpose of demon-

strating and holding before men as a way of life what he had learned from Christ of true Christian Fellowship. In the Community "Love" was to be the only law. Pacifism, common ownership of property, purity outside and in marriage and individual equality were the conclusions upon which it was believed the main problems of mankind could be solved. These Bruderhoefe continued to make noble witness to their faith until the National Socialist revolution in 1933. After three years of hardship under Hitler's rule, a Community was established at Ashton Keynes, Wiltshire, England, in the Cotswold district, to which at first a few and later many of the German brothers fled.

A description of this progressive community will follow in another article. Suffice it to say that the influx of German refugees finally swelled the numbers of the Cotswold community to about two hundred and fifty. There until the winter of 1940, on two hundred acres of arable land they carried on their fine farm, printing press, handcraft shops, progressive schools, hospital, etc. With the deepening shadow of war over England the Community became subject to

(Continued on page 28)

come to build a better world and thereby keep faith with the Dead of 1914-19 and 1939-1941

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(Continued from page 18)

sad abuse because of its German brethren. At last, after searching through many lands, and having been refused in all—Canada and the United States included—it was little Paraguay which gave a welcome to this noble band.

As they left the shores of England last winter to begin their long and difficult pilgrimage, three of the leaders gave this expression to their faith:

"What our earth needs in this historic movement is that a people out of all nations shall arise in which the love of Christ alone rules, where there shall be no longer any national, class, or educational distinction—neither Greek nor Jew, but all one in love. It must be a people in which all citizens reject for themselves and for all, any compromise with the power of lying, hatred and injustice. This means complete surrender to the spirit of love. 'It is easy to say, I believe in God, but to believe that the world can be changed demands faithfulness unto death.' Only in the spirit of love and in absolute surrender to its power is redemption to be found. There are many hearts in our time crying for this salvation. We feel compelled to give the joyful message to the people of our time that there is a solution, there is a way of active, constructive peace in the love of Christ. We wish with Him to gather all to this unity. For this we give our lives and we call you to do the same."

In Paraguay the Community has established itself on twenty thousand acres of land thirty miles east of the Paraguay River. Here among the great forests and grass lands of South America, among conditions very strange to them, plagued by terrific heat, hordes of insects, and strange tropical diseases the Bruderhof is boldly building its new home in the firm faith that "in spite of hardships and difficulties it has become absolutely clear to us that God wills to unite us all in this land, that we, together with all others who feel called to join us, may carry on at all costs an uncompromising witness for real peace, brotherly love and economic and social justice."

The Bruderhof is in need of friends. Little could be carried with them from England. Shelter, medicine, equipment of all sorts is an immediate need. It is in the hope of raising up friends for this vanguard of a new day that this and a following article are written.

"In faith in the coming Kingdom," they call to us from Paraguay. "In faith in the coming Kingdom we greet you."