

May 26, 1981

Executive Committee
URANTIA Brotherhood
533 Diversey Parkway
Chicago, Illinois 60614

Dear Friends:

This letter is my report to you on my trip last month to Bogota, Colombia. I stayed at the home of and for nine days, and met daily with various groups of readers. Since not all members of the Executive Committee may be familiar with the development of our relationship with the Colombian readers since my last report almost two years ago, I shall begin with a review of events from that time to the present. Following this review I shall describe the current status of the movement in Colombia. I shall then draw some conclusions based on my experiences there and make recommendations for ways in which we may move forward toward our goals in Latin America.

REVIEW

Lynn Kulike and I went to Bogota in June 1979 at the invitation of the group there. You have a copy of my report of that trip dated July 18, 1979. Interestingly, at this very time the first misunderstanding between us and the Colombian readers was occurring. Acting upon the advice of their attorneys, the trustees copyrighted The URANTIA Book in Colombia within weeks of our return. This was done without consultation with the Colombian readers or involved readers here. However, the lawyers in Bogota used by the Foundation called one of the members of the Bogota group the day he received the initial inquiry from the Foundation. "Isn't this something to do with that book you were telling me about?" he asked. You can imagine the reaction of the Colombians. Within weeks of our return the Foundation spends several thousand dollars to "protect the copyright." And from whom did they think the book needed protection, the readers there asked me. I wish I could share with you the sadness and disappointment contained in a letter I received from one of the readers there commenting on his feelings about this affair. They felt betrayed.

Still, they continued meeting and slowly the group has grown. Their meetings consisted of the few readers who could read English attempting to translate, during the meeting, portions of the text for those who could only listen. As the number of bilinguals grew and the discussions over the correct translation into Spanish became longer and longer, the frustration of the non-English readers grew apace. Last summer this problem was successfully resolved by splitting the group in two. There is now a translation group as well as a regular study group which meets to read the translated material.

October of 1980 saw an event which was, for me, a joyous occasion. came up from Bogota, Douglas Fraser from his new home in Houston, and I from San Diego. We all, along with Lynn Kulike, met with the trustees. We were told that this was the first meeting of the Foundation in which there was simultaneous translation (superbly provided by Lynn Kulike), a fact which seems to me to be a real step forward. Although a number of substantive issues were discussed, and although had another meeting with the International Fellowship Committee the following weekend, the outcome was something less than I had anticipated.

First, and for reasons which are still not entirely clear to me, came away from his visit to Chicago impressed with the hospitality and friendship shown him, but convinced that the Spanish translation was, for the trustees, a low-priority item. Secondly, he left with a very blurred and confused idea of the distinction between the Brotherhood and the Foundation. This occurred because, as he explained it to me when I visited him, "At our meeting with the Foundation I heard a great deal expressed by Martin Myers. The following weekend, when I had been told I would be talking to the Brotherhood, there was Mr. Myers again. And from time to time when the Canadians present or I would bring up a point about the need for translations, Mr. Myers would comment, 'That is Foundation business and we covered that area in our meeting last weekend.'" It was very difficult for to see that the Brotherhood could have a point of view or interests different from the Foundation since, for him, the spokesman for one was the spokesman for the other. I should add that I have encountered a similar reaction from readers in France with whom I correspond.

Two months later, in December 1980, an annual review of Philosophy, entitled Kier, was published in Buenos Aires, Argentina. This review has been published there

for many years and apparently is widely read in Latin America. This year they printed an article on The URANTIA Book. Douglas Fraser, who you may remember was president of a Colombian publishing company for a number of years, and whose company translated and published three to five books per month from English into Spanish, tells me that he is very familiar with Kier. In his experience they frequently will publish a lengthy review of a book as a marketing technique. If they receive a favorable response, they then translate and publish the book. He states that they have been known to leave out entire sections of a book if they feel that it would impede sales. Furthermore based on his extensive experience in such matters, he believes it would be impossible to prevent Kier from doing this to The URANTIA Book if they so desired.

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On a more positive note, this spring the Spanish translation of Vern Grimsley's Growing Spiritually was finally published. I am enclosing a copy for your examination. As you can see, the only person mentioned is Vern himself. None of the translators desired any recognition. Furthermore, the only organization mentioned is The Family of God Foundation. On the last page is _____ mailing address.

This is precisely the way in which everyone, from Douglas Fraser to the members of the Bogota translation group, have stated they wish to participate in the Spanish translation of the book itself. That is to say, no mention of anyone other than the owner of the copyright would be made. I should add that this pamphlet was translated and published in Bogota at the expense of the readers there. I believe that this pamphlet is a real step forward. It is a shining example of the possibilities inherent in a cooperative, trusting relationship between the Brotherhood here in the states and our brothers to the south.

CURRENT STATUS

There is currently a vital and active Urantia movement in Colombia. In Bogota, as mentioned, there are currently two groups. The translation group, as it is referred to

meets every Tuesday night in the home of
 There are now five members of this group. They meet
 to discuss and revise their work. Since all these men
 have jobs, families, etc., their progress has been
 rather slow. On Wednesday night the regular study
 group meets to read and discuss material already trans-
lated. This group also meets in the home.

also serves as a contact person for information
 from Chicago, for example, or from Douglas or myself, as
 well as from other interested readers around the world.
 is a remarkably dedicated man.

The translation work itself is proceeding understandably
 slowly, given the commitments of the translators. They
 are a good many years away, at their current pace, from
 having a completed text. Their work is of high quality
 being a group effort among several translators, as well
 as having the review and discussion by the Wednesday
 night students. In this respect it appears that their
 finished product will be vastly superior to the French.

Currently the readers are exploring the possibility of
 forming their own organization. They have a copy of
 the constitution and the charter guidelines. They view
 them as exclusionary, and perceive them as penalizing
 all non-english readers. How, they ask, can non-english
 readers form a society when it is a requirement to have
 10 or 20 members who have read the entire book, at a
 time when there is no book to read? Many of these fine
 people have been involved with the book for six or
 seven years, giving more of themselves to the spread
 of the teachings than the vast majority of society
 members in the United States. Yet, through lack of
 a Spanish translation, which is certainly no fault
 of theirs, the Colombian readers find themselves barred
 from participation, in a more formal way, in the affairs
 of the Brotherhood.

I advised them, after a talk with Duane Faw on this
 subject, to make application to the Brotherhood regard-
 less of the existing regulations. Duane can elaborate
 to the executive committee or thinking on this point.
 In simple terms, these people are doing the work of the
 Brotherhood in Latin America, and may wish to be more
 formally associated with us. To refuse to accomidate
 this desire will simply impede the work of the Brother-
 hood in this part of the world and will serve to keep
 us apart. We should instead be looking for ways to
 bring us together.

Finally, I am pleased to report that there has been a
 slow but steady growth of the network of readers in
 Colombia. Currently there are five cities with readers

but only Bogota has a study group. The individual readers in the other cities are, for the most part, professional friends of the readers in Bogota who have learned of the book while the study group members were in their area on business. They have little direct contact with the Bogota group as a whole. I hope to begin visiting some of these other readers on my next trip.

CONCLUSIONS

The Brotherhood is alive and well in Colombia despite the misunderstandings and perceived lack of support which have been encountered thus far. A certain lack of communication is inevitable when groups from two countries of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds attempt to work together. In and of itself this should not be a cause for great concern, though the sources of conflict need examination and resolution.

The social and political climate in Colombia and indeed in Latin America in general doom to failure any attempts to control their behavior by negatively-aggressive legalistic means. Fo

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It did not work in France, and the social-political milieu in Latin America makes any such attempt even less likely to succeed.

The URANTIA Book will be translated into Spanish, likely within the next five to ten years. The question for the Foundation and Brotherhood is simply one of their role in this process. Do we wish to participate or just be interested observers? If the translation is not done by the Foundation, then it will be done by the Colombians or the Spaniards or the Argentines, or perhaps even by another group unknown to us at the present time.

I believe it is critically important that we all, Colombians as well as Americans, acknowledge that our criticism of the URANTIA Foundation for their lack of action on the Spanish translation is, to date, largely unfair. To be responsible for the translation of The URANTIA Book from english into all the other languages of the world, in addition to all the other responsibilities of the board would be a near-impossible job for five seasoned professionals in the publishing business. Yet we are expecting such a performance from five volunteers with no experience or formal training in either publishing or linguistics. Not even a group of professionals, working only

on weekends, could possibly handle such a job without help. To expect this from a group of volunteers is simply a fantasy. I will suggest a possible solution to this problem, but it is an issue which we must, in all fairness to the trustees, recognize as a reality.

Finally, I would suggest that it is a very difficult if not impossible task to function as both a trustee and chairman of the International Fellowship Committee. I believe the problem is structural and related to the roles of the two organizations, and has nothing whatsoever to do with personalities involved. I draw my conclusion from the repeatedly confused concepts which I have encountered in readers on two continents with respect to the roles of the Foundation and Brotherhood. In all cases, this confusion has arisen from contact with the same person functioning in two different organizations in two different roles, i.e., as both trustee and Brotherhood committee chairman.

I wish to state, in the strongest possible terms, that I do not believe that this confusion has anything whatsoever to do with the individual now functioning in these two capacities. To the contrary, my personal experience has been that Martin has done as good a job as anyone else could have done, and probably better than most. The problem exists not in any particular personality but in the human species itself.

The problem fundamentally is one of two-point discrimination. Two-point discrimination is well-known to physiologists and physicians, and is something we have all experienced. Each of us knows that, as we move farther and farther away from two objects located close to each other, our ability to perceive them as separate entities diminishes with our distance from them. Similarly, from a distance of thousands of miles and a different language and culture, the discrimination of any trustee in his or her position as trustee, and his or her position as International Fellowship Chairman will be extremely difficult if not impossible for foreign readers.

The entire relationship between foreign readers and Chicago will begin with efforts of readers in other countries to develop a translation. This will inevitably bring them into contact with the trustees. It may very well come to pass, as the relationship grows that contact purely on a social, fraternal level may be desirable separate and independent from contact with the Foundation. I am not speaking in abstractions but am describing the situation recently encountered with John and Duane's visit to Paris. I believe that, of all committee chairs which a trustee could hold, none has confused or will continue to confuse foreign readers more than does this particular combination.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We must continue to build bridges of understanding between ourselves and Latin readers. I suggest periodic letters by responsible members of the Brotherhood and Foundation. They need not be translated into Spanish. Write them directly! These communications would serve as personal links, and enable a variety of relationships to be formed.

Lynn Kulike must be asked to visit Sevilla, Spain this summer when she is in Europe. It would be tragic to waste such an opportunity to get to know Sr. Darnaude and his group. Yet, as of my conversation with her last week she had not been asked to go. The Executive Committee should ask her to go, and if there are insufficient funds in the Brotherhood treasury to reimburse her for the trip, then I shall gladly provide the necessary funds to the Brotherhood.

I have already recommended to Tom Kendall that a status report on the Lira translation be sent to This is the burning issue with them presently. This letter must be specific. It should include the progress made thus far by those evaluating the translation. In addition, specific information on the legal problems surrounding the use of this translation by the Colombians should be given. To say, as has been already said, that " There are problems with this " is to say nothing. Life is filled with problems, which we are given to learn how to overcome. What is being done to overcome the legal problems associated with the Lira translation? What has been done to date? What issues still remain and how do we intend to resolve them? These are questions we must answer for the Bogota group. If we really expect the cooperation and trust of these people then we must show them that we ourselves are trustworthy. When I commented during one meeting in Bogota that there needed to be brotherhood in the absence of a translation one reader present responded that " Obras son amores y no buenas razones." Translated loosely, " Actions speak louder than words. " They are looking for action, for a substantive response to their need for help, and not just for platitudes. We must recognize that, while it is the Foundation's responsibility to oversee the publication of the book, it is the Brotherhood's role to foster social relations. This ongoing communication by the Brotherhood cannot be omitted. Separate communication by the two organizations with foreign groups is not inimical, but

rather can be greatly complimentary, as was shown by John and Duane's recent trip to France.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I respectfully recommend to the URANTIA Foundation that it invite the Brotherhood to become involved in the Spanish translation, and in a specific way. As I have pointed out it is unreasonable to expect anything to be done by five overworked trustees in terms of structuring and directing a translation effort. Indeed, this is not their role, at least as I understand it. I believe the Executive Committee, at the Foundation's request should appoint a committee to examine the problem of the Spanish translation, and to recommend solutions. Members of this committee should be the most expert in the field within the Brotherhood. This committee should be composed of both Latins and North Americans. This committee should be prepared to travel both within the United States and to various parts of Latin America as it strives to develop a suitable plan for the translation of the book.

This committee would have no control over Foundation matters, such as choosing translators, use of existing translations, etc. Rather, it's purpose would be to identify resources and costs, and to outline a plan for proceeding with the translation, while attempting to coordinate, under the guidance of the Foundation and Executive Committee, the effective use of those resources. I suggest that Mr. Douglas Fraser, in view of his vast knowledge and experience in precisely this area, be the committee chairman.

Each translation effort will be different. Each will involve different social situations in the countries involved and each will present unique problems. I believe a plan such as I have outlined, or one like it would allow the Brotherhood and Foundation to take advantage of our growing human resources while simultaneously creating deeper understanding between national groups. Additionally, it would free the Foundation from the impossible task of such an undertaking by itself while allowing the trustees to focus on the portion of the job which only they can do.

We must continue to learn how to work together more effectively. We must learn to trust one another more, and this applies to those of us here at home as well as to persons far away.

I am grateful to the Executive Committee for the chance to play even this small part in the task of bringing this amazing revelation that we enjoy to another 400,000,000 hungry souls.

Sincerely,