

**Appeal  
for the  
new  
Geneva  
Quaker  
House**



### **Why a Quaker House in Geneva ?**

By establishing its headquarters in Geneva in 1920, the League of Nations attracted around it a number of private organizations concerned for world peace. Friends were among the first to come ; but their earliest representatives were individuals acting under personal concern and it was only in 1926 that the Society was officially represented by the appointment of Bertram and Irene Pickard to direct the Friends International Centre, one of a number of "Quaker Embassies" founded during the inter-war period. As such it had the double function of expressing a Quaker point-of-view at League of Nations meetings and of informing the Society about the progress and the setbacks in the League's fortunes. Under the Pickards' leadership the Centre played an important part in the international life of Geneva ; the enduring memory of their work was demonstrated by the expressions of sympathy received at the Centre when Bertram's death was announced at the moment when this appeal was in preparation.

The establishment of United Nations brought about two important changes. First, the kind of relationship which Bertram Pickard had pursued informally with the League was now formally recognized : that is to say, through the Friends World Committee for Consultation, Friends became one of a large number of Non-Governmental Organizations enjoying consultative status with UN. This gives them the duty and the right to report on UN activities and to try to influence them. Secondly, though the headquarters of the new organization was located in New York, this did not mean the eclipse of Geneva. On the contrary, the size and range of international activities are now so much larger than before the second world war that United Nations requires two major centres of activity and has retained Geneva as its European Office. Consequently, Friends now require two "embassies to United Nations", one in New York and one in Geneva.

### **The Quaker International Affairs Representatives**

The work of the Friends' representatives in Geneva has continued to develop along the lines established in pre-war times. Three of Geneva's important fields of activity are of special concern to Friends : the first is humanitarian and relates to services to refugees, for Geneva's Palais des Nations contains the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ; the second is economic and relates to the right sharing of world resources, for Geneva is the head-

quarters of many organizations serving the Third World, including the UN Conference on Trade and Development, the body which set the target for aid at 1% of the Gross National Product ; the third is political, for the Palais des Nations has housed most of the important post-war negotiations for Disarmament, the current series being under the aegis of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament. In none of these great problems of our day do Friends work alone : in Geneva we are surrounded by fellow-workers, including the Red Cross and the World Council of Churches. These and other Non-Governmental Organizations play an important role in Geneva's international community. Their work figures—along with that of UN and its agencies—in the programme of the Geneva Summer School, a residential, two-week course for Young Friends which the Centre has organized annually since 1955 in co-operation with the Friends Service Council.

### **The Conferences and Seminars Programme**

Friends have also recognized the continuing international importance of Geneva by making it the base for the European section of a world-wide programme of Conferences and Seminars. The purpose of this programme is to promote personal encounter between people who would not otherwise have an opportunity to meet informally, in a friendly atmosphere, for the serious study of human problems. For many years the conferences provided these opportunities exclusively for diplomats ; recently invitations have been extended to journalists, politicians, academics and leaders of liberation movements. Seminars have brought together youth leadership from a wide variety of political and cultural backgrounds. For more than twenty years these meetings have been organized from an office in the Centre, profiting not only from Geneva's international resources but also from its political neutrality.

### **Geneva Friends Meeting**

There has been a Friends Meeting in Geneva ever since 1920. Save during the second world war, it has always had an international membership drawn from the French-speaking Swiss who inhabit Geneva and from their largely English-speaking guests who are working for one or another of Geneva's international institutions. At first the Meeting gathered in the home of one of its members but when the International Centre was opened there began a continuous close partnership between it and the Meeting which has

used the Centre premises for most of its gatherings, whether for business, discussion or worship. This partnership is vital to the Quaker witness in Geneva, for our voice in the international community is that of a religious society whose concerns arise from spiritual insights and not simply from humanitarian, economic or political considerations. Furthermore, Geneva is a crossroads and it receives many visitors who come for the brief duration of a conference or for longer periods of service or study. This stream of visitors includes its quota of Friends for whom our Meeting provides a spiritual home-from-home.

### The need for new premises

We have long been dissatisfied with the premises on the fourth floor of an apartment block in the Rue Adrien Lachenal which have housed these activities since 1958. These premises are not far from the centre of the city but this renders them increasingly noisy and difficult of access in modern traffic and parking conditions; they are on the left bank of the lake, whereas the international organizations are now concentrated on the right bank — indeed all of those which were our close neighbours in 1958 have now migrated to the other side; they are both ill-placed and ill-adapted for friendly encounters with delegates to international meetings, and this important aspect of Quaker work in Geneva has hitherto been conducted at the home of the Centre Directors; they are, of course, rented premises and thus subject to the constant rise in prices of recent years; finally, the use of the same rooms for office purposes during working hours and for Meeting purposes at other times is awkward and inconvenient.

For all these reasons we decided some years ago to seek a home of our own on the right bank, and in 1967 set up the Geneva Quaker House Foundation to own and manage such a property. The Foundation, which is registered under Geneva Cantonal law, consists of representatives of Swiss Yearly Meeting, the Friends Service Council, the American Friends Service Committee and the European and Near East Section of the Friends World Committee for Consultation.

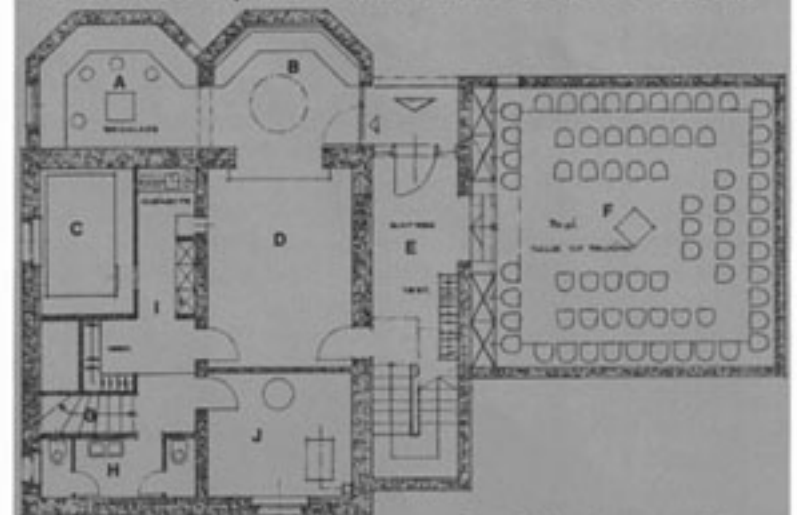
### The new Quaker House

The search for a suitable property has been long and arduous but in November, 1972, our hopes were finally realized when, through the extremely generous assistance of Friends in England, we were able to secure an attractive

villa at 13 Avenue du Mervelet in the district known as Petit Saconnex. The Foundation entered into possession in February, 1973.

The villa stands in its own garden in a quiet road close to public transport. It is within easy reach of the numerous organizations with which we are in regular contact. Its first and second floors contain adequate space for our offices; in contrast to our present premises, its ground floor is admirably adapted for the small informal meetings, often over a meal, which are a distinctively Quaker method of conducting discussion of international or religious affairs.

However, we need to make some alterations if this new home is to house satisfactorily all the Quaker activities in Geneva. First and foremost, we need a meeting room of larger capacity than any of the existing rooms in a house designed for private occupation. This will be needed not only for Meetings for Worship but also for larger gatherings arising out of our international work. Secondly, we need to find accommodation for the activities of our children and young people, and for additional cloakroom facilities which can be provided by alterations to the existing basement. The architect's plans to meet these needs are below.



- |                                 |                                  |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| A } Rooms for younger           | G Stairs to ground floor         |
| D } Friends, linked by —        | H Toilets (to be installed)      |
| *B Vestibule                    | I Kitchenette (to be installed)  |
| C Oil storage tank              | J Boiler Room                    |
| E Vestibule for —               | * Additions to existing building |
| *F Meeting Room (terrace above) |                                  |

### Why do we seek your help ?

Some have honoured Geneva with the title bestowed upon Oxford, "the home of lost causes", arguing that the League of Nations failed to live up to the aspirations of its founders but overlooking the fact that it has given birth to a lively successor. Others deride Geneva because it stands for world order based on international institutions; to them, order and institutions are irrelevant — or even hostile — to revolutionary change, but they forget that any new order will need its institutions as much as did the old. We believe that Geneva is one of the great names in the history of Man's attempt to bring reason and humanity to bear on the conduct of his affairs. We do not regard this cause as lost or irrelevant. We have faith that the city of the Red Cross and of the League will continue to play its vital part in the advancement of human happiness. We believe that, in the words of Robert Cecil, "here is a great work for peace, in which all may participate". We are convinced that the participation of Friends is as important now as it was fifty years ago.

Believing that you share this conviction, we invite you to join with us in raising the funds needed to pay for the necessary extensions and adaptations to our new home.

Our target is : —  
SF. 200 000 or £25 000 or \$64 500.

This is a large sum, for building costs are high in Geneva and the Swiss franc is an expensive currency. Do not let the figure daunt you. Some time ago a member of Geneva Meeting opened our campaign with a gift of SF 5000; since then we have received two very generous promises, one of SF 50 000 from friends in Geneva, the other of SF 25 000 from another member of the Meeting. We are greatly encouraged by this generosity and we invite you to continue the work of these courageous pioneers. Do not be afraid or ashamed of the "token" contribution, for we assess our support in human terms, not in cash alone. Furthermore, the new Geneva Quaker House is to serve the concerns of our Society and its friends all over the world and we hope that this will be reflected in the response to our appeal. We look forward to welcoming our friends at the new home which their generosity will help us to create.

Oliver M. Ashford, Chairman — J. Duncan Wood, Secretary,  
on behalf of the Geneva Quaker House Foundation.



SKETCH MAP SHOWING SITE OF THE NEW GENEVA QUAKER HOUSE

