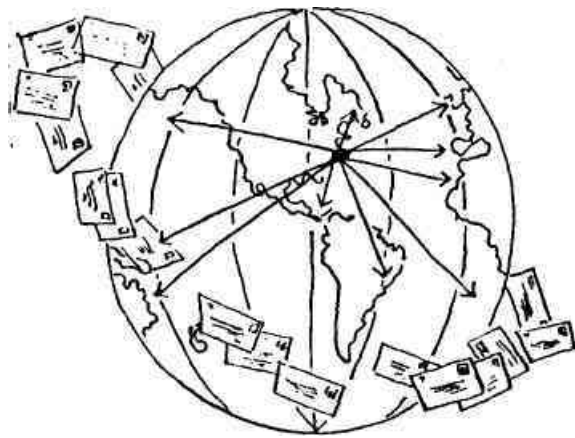


September 1954

# AA Worldwide



A REPORT ON  
AA ABROAD  
AS PRESENTED AT  
THE 4th GENERAL  
SERVICE CONFERENCE  
IN APRIL, 1954

NOT long ago a woman visited General Service Headquarters as the result of a State Department referral. It turned out that she works with the Ministry of Social Welfare in Argentina and is intensely interested in AA as a possible solution to the problem of alcoholism in her country. Had she come a few days earlier we might have had no one to whom to refer her in Buenos Aires, as our lone member there is frequently out-of-town; but as it happened, on the desk as we talked was a letter

from a Spanish-speaking AA newly arrived in Buenos Aires via Texas where he had found sobriety.

His letter expressed an eager desire to find other alcoholics with whom to share the message of AA ... as a result, the Senora left us with the assurance that she would be contacted on her return home; and she assured us that she had every intention of referring those alcoholics with whom she comes in contact in the course of her work, and she says there are many, to our little AA group of two, in a

few months or weeks to be two no longer!

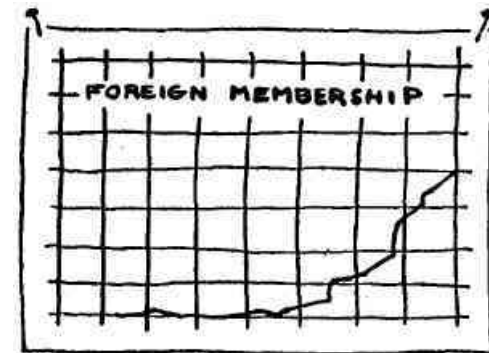
This brief story illustrates the importance of linking people who can further our purpose of helping the alcoholic to find AA. There are many, many more such stories. A man in Africa writes for a contact for a friend of his stationed in Korea; a woman writes from New Zealand and asks if there are women's groups in the States and if so, how can she start one? A Chilean writes in Spanish that he has read about AA in a local publication and how does a person get sober? Your General Service Office provides the bridge which makes help a reality to these people. The results are an ever-increasing growth of AA membership throughout the world. In 58 countries exclusive of Canada and the U. S., there are approximately 9,359 members in 354 groups. Here are a few highlights.

## SCANDINAVIA

According to the latest reports there are now approximately 3,500

members throughout Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark. Some difficulties have arisen in this area during the past year because of a difference of thought concerning alcoholism and the best method of dealing with it. The problem of Public Health in these countries has been successfully dealt with so far through government-operated agencies. Therefore when AA began to grow in Scandinavia and the question of service offices, literature, national publications similar to *The Grapevine*, etc., began to be an urgent necessity, it was considered a matter of course that government aid should be sought to assist the growth and progress of AA.

Part of the monies garnered through the government-controlled sale of liquor has been allocated to AA. As a result a precedent has been set which may take some time to dislodge. However, in every country there are groups or individual members who are thoroughly grounded in our Traditions, and who wish to see the AA movement as a whole in Scandinavia



follow along the lines which have proved so successful here. Since there is no real unity concerning the general policy of how the needs of the alcoholic may best be met, progress in disseminating information about our Traditions is necessarily slow. The taking of Antabuse in Norway and Denmark is an accepted part of the program and in some instances a requirement for a period of two years.

Another problem has been a lack of understanding or interest in what we refer to as "the spiritual side" of the program. For instance, in Norway, a translation of the Twelve Steps omits the word God in Steps Five, Six and Seven. It is to be hoped that new translations which have been prepared here will do something towards bringing about a realization of the fact that AA is unavoidably a spiritual program. While it might seem that here is cause for "viewing with alarm for the good of the movement," in actuality we must keep in mind what Bill has referred to as the right of any AA group or member to be wrong; and also, that in spite of all these seeming "heresies," alcoholics in Scandinavia are continuing to remain sober and to recover.

## GERMANY

Last year we reported three groups in Germany. Since then, the membership has grown rapidly, and there are now approximately twenty groups in Germany. As before, most of these groups are comprised of Armed Forces personnel, but a group of German

nationals is now a reality in Munich. A German translation of the text portion of the book "Alcoholics Anonymous," which was made by one of our German members living in England, has been sent to this new group for their use and two of our pamphlets in German have been made available to them for reprinting and distribution.



## FRANCE

In France, our group in Paris is doing well. They have finally found a permanent meeting place in the American Church and several Frenchmen have been added to the group! There are also groups in Metz and Verdun; both are composed of members of the Armed Forces. A lively exchange of meetings and visitors between the French and German groups goes on. A small group of Armed Forces members in Austria is progressing rapidly and its members have visited both the French and German groups.

## HOLLAND

There are approximately five groups in Holland and, through the efforts of

one of our Internationalist members who has left the sea and is living in Rotterdam, a newssheet in Dutch is being distributed amongst the membership. Work has been started on the translation of some of our pamphlet literature. The usual problem of funds for paper, postage, etc., has, as yet, to be met.

## THE BRITISH ISLES

AA is now firmly established in the British Isles and many of the initial difficulties experienced by the groups and members in Great Britain have now been overcome. A much wider understanding of AA on the part of the medical profession has contributed to this progress, the result of a meeting of the British Medical Association at which AAs participated, and it is no longer "hush hush" and disgraceful to turn to AA for help—an attitude rather prevalent in the past.

Members of the groups in Great Britain, Ireland, Scotland and Wales meet together frequently to discuss common problems. Alanon Publications, Inc., is now established in London. Soon it will be publishing and distributing our books and pamphlet literature to groups, members and prospective members in the sterling areas, a solution of the difficult exchange and customs problem which has heretofore been a bottleneck in securing literature from AA Publishing, Inc. The subject of AA and the alcoholic is being brought out in the open and some excellent newspaper and magazine articles and BBC broad-

casts are making the general public realize that alcoholism is an illness and that AA is a way to recovery.

## AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

The growth and development of AA in Australia and New Zealand is continuing apace, with Central Service Offices recently established in Brisbane, Adelaide and Melbourne in addition to the already flourishing AA Sydney Services Council. The Australian newsletter "The AA Reviver" continues to do its job of unifying AA activities in Australia. Part of the solidity of AA "down under" stems from members who have visited the U. S. to see how we operate, and AAs from this country who have gone to Australia to visit or emigrate.

## AFRICA

On the vast continent of Africa, AA continues to grow and expand. There are approximately 35 groups with a membership of 1,139. The most populous AA centers are Cape-town, Durban and Johannesburg.

## ISRAEL

An exciting new development in the last year has been the growth of a group in Israel. Stemming from an inquiry received in New York, the group has now grown to approximately eight. The present group secretary who found AA through correspondence only and through the reading of our literature, is doing a wonderful job against very difficult odds—no money, no Hebrew literature.

## JAPAN

During the last year we have been corresponding with a Japanese who is very much interested in adopting the AA program for the Japanese people. Since at the present time the program which they have instituted differs so widely from AA as we know it, we have thought it best to wish them God speed, but not to include them, for the time being, in our rapidly growing international family. The good news is that definite steps are being taken to help the Japanese alcoholics.

Our AA group in Tokyo fluctuates and changes as U. S. civilian and Army personnel are transferred and there are scattered members throughout Japan. A solid core remains, however, to continue the work.

## SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA

These countries now have a combined membership of approximately 375. There are 15 groups in Brazil, where most of the membership is still centered in Rio de Janeiro. In addition in Argentina and Buenos Aires, there are groups or members in British Honduras, Costa Rica, Cuba, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela.

## INTERNATIONALISTS AND LONERS

The members of our Seamen's correspondence group, "The Internationalists," now numbering 98, continue to be our best AA ambassadors wherever they may go. Reports from



groups all over the world who have been visited by members of this group are glowing. A letter from one of the members aboard the *H.M.C.S. Ontario* returning home to Canada after visiting Australia and New Zealand gives a little of the reciprocal feeling existing between visitors and visited:

"I want to thank you on behalf of Ken, Fred, Cy, Charlie and myself for your making our trip so enjoyable. The first we knew of your letters was at Hobart, Tasmania and from then

on to Dunedin, Wellington, I went to Auckland, Sydney, Brisbane. We have spoken at 31 meetings, one radio broadcast, and on a forty-five-minute tape recording. We have been entertained royally, and dined most excellently by our good friends down under. Believe me when I say that this new kind of life has rewards, because in my twenty-four years of going to sea I never have met so many grand people that it hurt to leave. It is like meeting blood relations 9,800 miles from home. AA in the antipodes is wonderful and I only hope that we were able to help them, as much as they helped us."

A bulletin of excerpts from letters from "The Internationalists" is mailed to them from General Service Headquarters which helps to keep alive the feeling of fellowship between group members and enables news of the group to reach each member, wherever he may be.

## "LONERS"

In lonely outposts world-wide—Formosa, India, Java, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Trinidad, and the Australian bush, to mention just a few—AA

members continue to practice the program on their own, ever alert for new prospects so that "Loner" may be turned into "Group." An up-to-date listing is kept of these "Loners," so that they may correspond with one another, and in this way feel a part of AA.

Translations of three of our pamphlets, "AA—44 Questions and Answers," "The Traditions," and "The Fortune Reprint," are available for distribution in Swedish, Finnish, Norwegian, Spanish, Portuguese and French. In addition to this material, mimeographed copies of the text portion of the book, "Alcoholics Anonymous," are available in Spanish and French through the groups in Puerto Rico and Quebec City respectively.

The picture of AA outside of the United States grows brighter and more distinct every year . . . membership overseas has increased by almost 2,000 in 1953. Reports of AA world travelers are evidence of the warm solidarity and friendship which exists amongst us all, in spite of our occasional differences concerning methods and procedures.

Ann M.