

Salwa Nassar: Lebanon



The year 1977 marks the tenth anniversary of the premature death of Dr. Salwa Nassar, an internationally known nuclear physicist, and it seems appropriate, in this issue of al-Raida, to provide a glimpse into the life of this pioneer who devoted herself to active service particularly in the fields of scientific research and education.

Born in a family of moderate means, from Dhour Shweir, Lebanon, she worked all through her college years to earn the expenses of her education. After receiving her B.A. in physics with honor, having spent two years at the American Junior College (BUC now), and two at the American University of Beirut, she worked four years as a high school teacher to raise the necessary funds for resuming her studies in the United States. At Smith College she obtained her M.Sc. in physics and at the University of California, Berkeley, she had in 1945 a Ph.D. in nuclear physics, thus becoming not only the first Ph.D. in this discipline in Lebanon but the first and only nuclear physicist in the whole area. Thereafter, she devoted most of her time to scientific research in various centers, attending conferences on atomic studies, studying and continuing her research in the United States (Ann Arbor, Michigan), in England (Harwell and Bristol universities), in

Paris, (Ecole Polytechnique) and in Beirut, Lebanon. For 3 years she was head of the science department at Beirut College for Women, and for 15 years, professor, then chairman, of the physics department at AUB.

Her publications in the *Physical Review* and in other science journals dealt with atomic energy, cosmic rays and other technological topics. She represented Lebanon in more than ten international conferences on atomic physics.

But her interests outgrew her laboratory. As a professor she was a friend and guide to her students, trying to inculcate in them her love for science and her faith in it as a factor in shaping a modern personality and a force operating for the peace and welfare of the world.

As president of BUC during the last two years of her life, she laid out ambitious plans for the development of that institution and was able to create and endow the Salwa Nassar Foundation for Lebanese Studies. She organized the first lecture series for it, a few months before she died.

Salwa Nassar's life and achievements remain a source of inspiration to her friends and students who, we hope, will pass on her example to each new generation.