

The Universal House of Justice

Riḍván 1973

To the Bahá'ís of the World

Dearly loved Friends,

We announce with joyful and thankful hearts the completion in overwhelming victory of the world-encircling Nine Year Plan. The Army of Light has won its second global campaign; it has surpassed the goals set for expansion and has achieved a truly impressive degree of universal participation, the twin objectives of the Plan. With gratitude and love we testify to the unceasing confirmations which Bahá'u'lláh has showered upon His servants, enabling each and every one of us to offer Him some part of the labor, the devotion, the sacrifice, the supplication which He has so bountifully rewarded. At this Centenary of the Revelation of the Most Holy Book, the Community of the Most Great Name lays its tribute of victory at His feet, acknowledging that it is He Who has bestowed it.

The Cause of God at the end of the Nine Year Plan is immensely more widespread, more firmly founded, and its own international relations more closely knit than in 1964 when the Plan was launched. Ninety-five new territories have been opened to the Faith; the 69 National Spiritual Assemblies which shouldered the world community's task have become 113, 5 more than called for. These embryonic secondary Houses of Justice are supported by more than 17,000 Local Spiritual Assemblies, 3,000 in excess of the goal and 12,000 more than at the beginning of the Plan. Bahá'ís reside in 69,500 localities, 15,000 more than called for, and 54,000 more than in 1964. Bahá'í literature has been translated into 225 more languages bringing the total number to 571; 63 Temple sites, 56 National Ḥazíratu'l-Quds, and 62 National Endowments have been acquired bringing the total numbers of these properties to 98, 112 and 104 respectively; 50 Teaching Institutes and Summer and Winter Schools are playing their part in Bahá'í education and 15 Publishing Trusts produce Bahá'í literature in major languages of the world. The Mother Temple of Latin America has been built and dedicated. Among those goals whose achievement is dependent on favorable circumstances outside our control are the incorporation of Assemblies and recognition of Bahá'í Holy Days. It is gratifying to record that 90 National Spiritual Assemblies and 1,556 Local Spiritual Assemblies—181 more than the total number called for—are incorporated, while Bahá'í Holy Days are recognized in 64 countries and Bahá'í certification of marriage in 40.

This great expansion of the Faith required an army of international pioneers. Two major calls were raised, for 461 and 733, which together with others for particular posts made an overall total of 1,344. The Community of the Most Great Name responded with 3,553 who actually left their homes, 2,265 of whom are still at their posts.

At the World Center of the Faith the collation and classification of the Bahá'í Sacred Scriptures and of the writings of Shoghi Effendi have been carried forward in ever increasing volume, a task supported and enriched by the labors of a special committee appointed by the Persian National Spiritual Assembly. The material at the World Center, includes some 2,600 original Tablets by Bahá'u'lláh, 6,000 by 'Abdu'l-Bahá and 2,300 letters of Shoghi Effendi. There are in addition some 18,000 authenticated copies of other such Tablets and letters. All these have been studied, important passages from them excerpted and classified, and the subject matter indexed under 400 general headings.

A Synopsis and Codification of the Laws and Ordinances of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas—completing the considerable progress made by the beloved Guardian in this task—is being published on the Centenary of the Revelation of the Most Holy Book, which, as already announced, is to be celebrated both in the Holy Land and throughout the Bahá'í world during this Riḍván.

The Constitution of the Universal House of Justice, hailed by Shoghi Effendi as the Most Great Law of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, has been formulated and published.

The gardens in Bahjí and on Mount Carmel have been significantly extended and plans have been approved for the befitting development and beautification of the entire area of Bahá'í property surrounding the Holy Shrines in Bahjí and Haifa.

The worldwide proclamation of the Faith, an intensive and long-to-be-sustained process initiated during the third phase of the Plan, opened in October 1967 with the commemoration of the Centenary of Bahá'u'lláh's Proclamation to the kings and rulers which had centered around His revelation of the Súriy-i-Mulúk in Adrianople. This historic event was commemorated at six Intercontinental Conferences held simultaneously around the planet. A further nine Oceanic and Continental Conferences held during the Plan gave great impetus to this proclamation program. The fifteen Conferences were attended by nearly 17,000 believers and attracted great publicity by press and radio and were made the occasion of acquainting dignitaries and notabilities with the Divine Message. The presentation, on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, to 142 Heads of State, of a specially produced book containing the translation into English of the Tablets and passages of Scripture in which Bahá'u'lláh, some hundred years before, had issued His mighty Proclamation to mankind, initiated this campaign, which will continue long beyond the end of the Nine Year Plan.

The outstanding development in the relationship of the Bahá'í International Community to the United Nations was the accreditation of that Community as a nongovernmental organization with consultative status to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. The Bahá'í International Community now has a permanent representative at the United Nations and maintains an office in New York.

The loved and revered Hands of the Cause have rendered sacrificial and distinguished service throughout the Nine Year Plan. They have, in all parts of the world, inspired the friends, assisted National Spiritual Assemblies, promoted the teaching work and played a vital part in the success of the Plan. The lagging fortunes of more than one national community have been revolutionized by a visit of a Hand of the Cause; swift and energetic action, inspired by the Hand, has been followed by astonishing results, completely reversing that community's prospects. They have added distinguished works to the literature of the Faith.

The goal of the Plan to develop "The institution of the Hands of the Cause of God, in consultation with the body of the Hands of the Cause, with a view to the extension into the future of its appointed functions of protection and propagation," was accomplished in stages, leading to the establishment of eleven Continental Boards of Counselors, whose members were appointed by the Universal House of Justice and who assumed responsibility for the Auxiliary Boards for protection and propagation. The beloved Hands no longer remained individually identified with any particular continent—except insofar as their residence was concerned—but extended their sphere of action to the whole planet. The Continental Boards of Counselors, advised and guided by the Hands of the Cause of God and working in close collaboration with them, have already, in their brief period of office, performed outstanding and distinguished services.

Three highly portentous developments have taken place during the Nine Year Plan, namely, the advance of youth to the forefront of the teaching work, a great increase in the financial resources of the Faith, and an astonishing proliferation of inter-National Assembly assistance projects.

The first, the heartwarming upsurge of Bahá'í youth, has changed the face of the teaching work; impenetrable barriers have been broken or overpassed by eager teams of young Bahá'ís, dedicated and prayerful, presenting the Divine Message in ways acceptable to their own generation from which it has spread and is spreading throughout the social structure. The entire Bahá'í world has been thrilled by this development. Having rejected the values and standards of the old world, Bahá'í

youth are eager to learn and adapt themselves to the standards of Bahá'u'lláh and so to offer the Divine Program to fill the gap left by the abandonment of the old order.

The vast increase in the financial resources of the Faith called for under the Plan has evoked a heartwarming response from the entire Bahá'í community. Not only the Bahá'í International Fund but the local, national and continental Funds of the Faith have been sacrificially supported. This practical proof of the love which the friends bear for the Faith has enabled all the work to go forward—the support of pioneers and traveling teachers, the raising of *Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs* and acquisition of Bahá'í properties, the purchase of Holy Places in the Cradle of the Faith and at the World Center, the development of educational institutions and all the multifarious activities of a vigorous, onward-marching, constructive world community. It is of interest that sixty percent of the international funds of the Faith is used to assist the work of National Spiritual Assemblies, to promote the teaching work and to defend the Cause against attacks in many parts of the world. Without such help from the Bahá'í world community many National Assemblies would be paralyzed in their efforts of expansion and deepening. The administration of *Huqúqu'lláh* has been strengthened in preparation for its extension to other parts of the world. An International Deputization Fund was established at the World Center to assist pioneers and traveling teachers who were ready to serve but unable to provide their own expenses, and this Fund was later extended to the support of projects on national homefronts. Contribution to the Fund is a service which will never cease to be open to all believers; the growth of the Faith and the rise of its Administrative Order require an ever-increasing outpouring of our substance, commensurate in however small a measure with the bounty and liberality of the outpouring confirmations of Bahá'u'lláh.

When the Plan was launched 219 assistance projects were specified whereby national communities would render financial, pioneering or teaching aid to others, generally remote from them geographically. The intention was to strengthen the bonds of unity between distant parts of the Bahá'í world with different social, cultural and historical backgrounds. At the end of the Plan more than 600 such projects had been carried out. Intercommunity cooperation has been further developed in the field of publishing Bahá'í literature, notably in Spanish and French and the languages of Africa. A vast field of fruitful endeavor lies open in this respect.

In some countries due to lack of freedom, to actual repression in others, to legal and physical obstacles in yet others, certain particular goals—mainly those requiring incorporation or recognition—could not be won. Foreseeing this, the Universal House of Justice called upon national communities in lands where there is freedom to practice and promote the Faith, to exceed their own goals and thus ensure that the overall goals would be won. It has proved still impossible to begin work on the erection of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* in Tehran, but contracts have been signed for the preparation of detailed drawings, geological surveys are being made, and everything made ready for immediate action whenever the situation in Persia becomes propitious.

During the period of the Nine Year Plan a number of important and interesting events, not directly associated with it, have taken place. First and foremost was the commemoration, in the precincts of the Qiblih of the Bahá'í world, of the centenary of the arrival at the prison city of 'Akká, as foretold in former Scriptures, of the Promised One of all ages.

The Mansion of Mazra'ih, often referred to by the beloved Guardian as one of the "twin mansions" in which the Blessed Beauty resided after nine years within the walled prison-city of 'Akká, and dear to the hearts of the believers by reason of its associations with their Lord, has at last been purchased together with 24,000 square meters of land extending into the plain on its eastward side.

The raising of the obelisk, marking the site of the future *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* on Mount Carmel, completes a project initiated by the beloved Guardian.

The decision has been made and announced to the Bahá'í world, and the initial steps have been taken for the erection on Mount Carmel, at a site on the Arc as purposed by Shoghi Effendi, of the building which shall serve as the Seat of the Universal House of Justice.

The progress of the Cause of God gathers increasing momentum and we may with confidence look forward to the day when this Community, in God's good time, shall have traversed the stages predicated for it by its Guardian, and shall have raised on this tormented planet the fair mansions of God's Own Kingdom wherein humanity may find surcease from its self-induced confusion and chaos and ruin, and the hatreds and violence of this time shall be transmuted into an abiding sense of world brotherhood and peace. All this shall be accomplished within the Covenant of the everlasting Father, the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]