

The Universal House of Justice

Riḍván 1986

To the Bahá'ís of the World

Dearly loved Friends,

The Divine Springtime is fast advancing and all the atoms of the earth are responding to the vibrating influence of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation. The evidences of this new life are clearly apparent in the progress of the Cause of God. As we contemplate, however momentarily, the unfolding pattern of its growth, we can but recognize, with wonder and gratitude, the irresistible power of that Almighty Hand which guides its destinies.

This progress has accelerated notably during the Seven Year Plan, witnessed by the achievement of many important enterprises throughout the Bahá'í world and vital developments at the heart of the Cause itself. The restoration and opening to pilgrimage of the southern wing of the House of 'Abdu'lláh Páshá; the completion and occupation of the Seat of the Universal House of Justice; the approval of detailed plans for the remaining edifices around the Arc; the expansion of the membership and responsibilities of the International Teaching Centre and the Continental Boards of Counselors; the establishment of the offices of Social and Economic Development, and of Public Information; the dedication of the Mother Temple of the Pacific, and dramatic progress with the building of the Temple in India; the expansion of the teaching work throughout the world, resulting in the formation of twenty-three new National Spiritual Assemblies, nearly 8,000 new Local Spiritual Assemblies, the opening of more than 16,000 new localities and representation within the Bahá'í community of 300 new tribes; the issuing of 2,196 new publications, 898 of which are editions of the Holy Text and the enrichment of Bahá'í literature by productions in 114 new languages; the initiation of 737 new social and economic development projects; the addition of three radio stations, with three more soon to be inaugurated—these stand out as conspicuous achievements in a Plan which will be remembered as having set the seal on the third epoch of the Formative Age.

The opening of that Plan coincided with the recrudescence of savage persecution of the Bahá'í community in Iran, a deliberate effort to eliminate the Cause of God from the land of its birth. The heroic steadfastness of the Persian friends has been the mainspring of tremendous international attention focused on the Cause, eventually bringing it to the agenda of the General Assembly of the United Nations, and, together with worldwide publicity in all the media, accomplishing its emergence from the obscurity which characterized and sheltered the first period of its life. This dramatic process impelled the Universal House of Justice to address a Statement on Peace to the Peoples of the World and arrange for its delivery to Heads of State and the generality of the rulers.

Paralleling these outstanding events has been a remarkable unfoldment of organic growth in the maturity of the institutions of the Cause. The development of capacity and responsibility on their part and the devolution upon them of continually greater autonomy have been fostered by the encouragement of ever closer cooperation between the twin arms of the Administrative Order. This process now takes a large stride forward as the National Spiritual Assemblies and Counselors consult together to formulate, for the first time, the national goals of an international teaching plan. Together they must carry them out; together they must implement the world objectives of the Six Year Plan as they apply in each country. This significant development is a befitting opening to the fourth epoch of the Formative Age and initiates a process which will undoubtedly characterize that epoch as national communities grow in strength and influence and are able to diffuse within their own countries the spirit of love and social unity which is the hallmark of the Cause of God.

The goals to be achieved at the World Center include publication of a copiously annotated English translation of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and related texts, education of the Bahá'í world in the law

of the Ḥuqúqu'lláh, pursuit of plans for the erection of the remaining buildings on the arc, and the broadening of the basis of the international relations of the Faith.

The major world objectives of the Plan have already been sent to National Spiritual Assemblies and Continental Boards of Counselors for their mutual consultation and implementation.

Dear friends, as the world passes through its darkest hour before the dawn, the Cause of God, shining ever more brightly, presses forward to that glorious break of day when the Divine Standard will be unfurled and the Nightingale of Paradise warble its melody.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]